

## International Conversation Cafe

Folk Tales From Around the World

Native American: The Boy and the Wolves

Topic: Promises and Regrets

Once upon a time, an Indian hunter built himself a house in the middle of a great forest with his wife and three children, far away from all his tribe; for his heart was gentle and kind, and he was weary of the treachery and cruel deeds of those who had been his friends. For many years they lived peacefully and happily in this sheltered place, never leaving it except to hunt the wild animals. At last, however, the strong man felt sick, and before long he knew he must die.

So, he gathered his family around him and said his last words to them. 'You, my wife, will follow me before many moons have disappeared to the island of the blest. But for you, O my children, whose lives are but newly begun, the wickedness, unkindness, and ingratitude from which I fled are before you. Yet I shall go hence in peace, my children, if you will promise always to love each other and never to forsake your youngest brother. 'Never!' they replied. And the hunter died content.

Shortly after, the wife went forth and followed her husband; but before leaving her children she bade the two elder ones think of their promise never to forsake the younger, for he was a child and weak. And while the snow lay thick upon the ground, they tended him and cherished him; but when the earth showed green again, the heart of the young man stirred within him, and he longed to see the village where his father's youth was spent.

Therefore, he opened all his heart to his sister, who bade him to remember their father's words and to not forget the little one. But he would not listen, and he took his bow and arrows and left the hut. The snows fell and melted, yet he never returned, and at last, the heart of the girl grew cold and hard, and her little boy became a burden in her eyes, till one day she left to seek her brother and promised to return when she had found him.

But when, after hard journeying, she reached the village where her brother lived and saw that he had a wife and was happy, and when she, too, was sought by a young brave, she also forgot the boy alone in the forest and thought only of her husband.

Now as soon as the little boy had eaten all the food which his sister had left him, he went out into the woods, and gathered berries and dug up roots. But when the snows began and the wind howled, his stomach felt empty and his limbs cold, and he hid in trees all night, and only crept out to eat what the wolves had left behind. And by-and-by, he sought their company, and they grew to know him and gave him food. Without them, he would have died in the snow.

But at last the snows melted, and as the wolves went down to the shore, the boy went after them. And it happened one day that his big brother was fishing in his canoe near the shore, and he heard the voice of a child singing, 'My brother, my brother! I am becoming a wolf; I am becoming a wolf!'

And when he had so sung, he howled as wolves howl. Then the heart of the elder sunk, and he hastened towards him, crying, 'Brother, little brother, come to me;' but he, being half a wolf, only continued his song. And the louder the elder called him, 'Brother, little brother, come to me,' the swifter he fled after his brothers the wolves, and the heavier grew his skin, till, with a long howl, he vanished into the depths of the forest.

So, with shame and anguish in his soul, the elder brother went back to his village, and, with his sister, mourned the little boy and the broken promise till the end of their lives.

<http://mythfolklore.net/andrewlang/027.htm>

### Discussion

1. Define unknown words and retell the story in your own words.
2. Regret is how we feel when we realize that our action brought pain to someone else or to ourselves. Tell about a time you experienced regret.
3. Choose a. or b.
  - a. English author Charlotte Bronte once said, "Remorse is the poison of life."  
*What do you think the author is suggesting about remorse?*
  - b. St. Peter experienced deep regret when he denied knowing Jesus three times. In fact, he wept afterwards. Later on, Jesus confronted a more humble and wiser Peter. But instead of scolding Peter, Jesus asks him to serve him by helping those who believe in Him.  
*What does this story teach us about God's attitude toward people who regret their sins?*  
*How might this story help you?*
4. In the story, the older brother and sister regretted leaving their younger brother only when they saw him becoming a wolf. Do you find it strange that they only regretted their actions when they came face to face with their brother? Do you find it ironic that the brother and sister became what their father had tried to escape from?  
*What do you think enabled the siblings to forget the younger brother?*  
*In your opinion, what do people seek as distractions from their own pain?*

