



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Little Footsteps Upon The Water

Carolyn Sherwin Bailey

Once upon a time there was a little Native American boy, and his name was Footsteps Upon the Water because he could run so fast and so softly.

One day, little Footsteps Upon the Water was chasing a squirrel, and he ran so far and so wide that he lost sight of home, and he could not find his way back. On and on ran the squirrel until it came at last to a hollow tree, and it went inside to hide. Footsteps Upon the Water went inside, too, but he was not so small as the squirrel. Out of the log ran the squirrel, but the little boy could not get out. He was stuck fast inside the hollow tree.

His father looked for the little boy many moons. His mother sat at home in the wigwam, crying, but Footsteps Upon the Water did not come back. He lay in the log, and he pounded and shouted, and he thought no one was ever coming to let him out.

But one morning, as he rapped, he heard, on the outside, rap, rap, rap, and a shrill voice calling:

"Footsteps Upon the Water, are you there? Are you there?"

Then a wrinkled, brown face, with a fringe of arrows for a cap, peered in at the end of the log. It was Grandmother Porcupine come to help the little boy out.

"I traveled three days and three nights, little Footsteps Upon the Water, because I heard you cry," said Grandmother Porcupine.

Then she scratched and she scratched at the end of the log, but she could not get the little boy out.

"I will bring my three grandsons," said Grandmother Porcupine, and she hurried away to the old hemlock tree where her grandsons lived. She brought them back with her, and they all scratched at the end of the hollow log until at last the little boy was able to crawl out.

Footsteps Upon the Water winked and blinked his eyes when he came outside, for he had not seen the sun in many days. There, in a circle, sat Grandmother Porcupine, her three grandsons, the old Bear, the Deer, and the Wolf.

"Now, who will be a mother to this little boy?" said Grandmother Porcupine; "I am too old to take care of him."

"I will be his mother," said the Wolf.

"No, indeed," said Grandmother Porcupine, "your teeth are too sharp."

"I will be his mother," said the Deer.

"No, indeed," said Grandmother Porcupine, "you are always traveling. Your husband would carry little Footsteps Upon the Water on his back wherever he went, and the little boy would have no home in the winter."

"I will be his mother," said the good old Bear; "I have a warm house in the rocks with plenty to eat in my pantry,—berries, and nuts, and honey."

"You may have little Footsteps Upon the Water," said Grandmother Porcupine, "but be sure that your cubs do not teach him any rough tricks."

So Footsteps Upon the Water went home to the Bear's house, a cave in the rocks, with little rooms just like a real house. It was a fine place in which to live.

All summer the little boy played with the cubs. When it was late in the fall, and the days were short and dark, and the nights were cold, Mother Bear tucked them all in bed and they slept until spring.

Then came another summer, and other Bear people stopped to call upon them, saying:

"We know a fine berry patch."

So they would all go away together to pick strawberries, or blackberries, or gooseberries. After a while, they went for chestnuts, and that was the most fun of all.

But Mother Bear taught Footsteps Upon the Water and the little cubs to run always when they saw a man with a bow and arrows. One day, a man came very close to the Bear's house, but Mother Bear chased him with a forked stick, and he went away.



The next day, the man came again, just as the family was starting out for chestnuts. Mother Bear threw a bag of feathers at the man so that he was not able to see, and he ran away.

The third day, the man came again. Mother Bear was starting out for a neighbor's house with a bundle upon her back. She chased the man with her forked stick, she threw some more feathers at him, but it did no good. The man shot an arrow at Mother Bear, and she fell to the ground.

“Oh, good Mother Bear,” cried little Footsteps Upon the Water, running out to help her, “such a cruel man to hurt my good Mother Bear!”

But the arrow had stuck fast in Mother Bear’s bundle, and she was not hurt at all. And the man ran up to little Footsteps Upon the Water, crying:

“My little lost boy, my little lost boy,” for it was Footsteps Upon the Water’s own father.

Then he told Mother Bear how sorry he was that he had tried to hurt her, and he invited her and all the cubs to come for a visit to the wigwam.

And little Footsteps Upon the Water went home, but he never forgot how good old Mother Bear had been to him.

Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why ririro.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share ririro.com and spread the joy of reading.

Instagram: @ririro_reading · Pinterest: pinterest.com/ririrocom