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Rainbow and Autumn Leaves

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Long before the Indians came to Canada, all the animals talked and worked like humans. Every year, after midsummer, the Great Council of animals would meet. One time, they all decided they wanted to take a look in the heavens above. But no one could figure out how to get there. The oldest and wisest animal on Earth was Turtle. He asked Thunder God to take him to the heavens and soon his prayer was answered.

There was a huge noise, as if the earth had split into pieces. When they went to look for Turtle, he was nowhere to be found. But that evening, when they looked up, they saw him moving through the air in the form of a Black Cloud. Turtle grew to love the heavens so much that he decided to stay there forever, and he would send his offspring to the Earth later. The heavenly population agreed to it, and he was allowed to stay. They asked him where he wanted to live.

He replied, "I would like to live in the Black Cloud, where there are ponds, streams, lakes, and springs, because I used to live nearby those on earth." His wish was granted. But when the Great Council of animals met during the harvest moon, he was always present. He came in the Black Cloud. When the Council was done meeting, he always went back to the heavens. The other animals were jealous of his happiness and they wanted to go with him.

Some time later, the animals were very upset and angry by the rumor that a new race of beings from far across the ocean would come to inhabit their land. They carefully deliberated and all came to the conclusion that they would be happiest if they could all go to the heavens with Turtle. There, like him, they could live without fear, problems, or worries. But they didn't know how to get to the heavens because Turtle had never shown them the way.

One day, as usual, Deer wandered alone through the forest and met Rainbow, who often built a colorful path to the sky. Deer said to Rainbow, "Take me to the heavens because I want to see Turtle." But Rainbow didn't dare to do so without permission from Thunder God. To buy time, he said, "Come to me in the winter when I am on the mountain by the lake for a long time. Then I will gladly take you to where Turtle lives."



Deer looked longingly for Rainbow during the long winter months, but he was nowhere to be seen. Life on Earth became increasingly difficult, and the animals became more and more afraid of the new race that would soon come to their land. Deer was very shy but also impatient. And finally, one day in early summer, Rainbow reappeared and Deer hurried to him. "Why weren't you honest with me?" he asked, "I waited for you all winter, but you didn't keep your promise. I want to go to the heavens now because I must see Turtle."

Rainbow replied, "I can't take you now, but one day, when there is mist over the lake, I will come back. Come to me then, and I will take you to Turtle in the sky. This time I won't deceive you."

Rainbow consulted Thunder God and got permission to bring Deer to the heavens. Shortly thereafter, a thick mist hung over the lake, and Deer hurried to the shore to wait for Rainbow. And there he came, down from the sky, driving the mist away before him. He threw his bow of many colors from the lake to the distant hills. He said to Deer, "Now I will keep my promise. Follow my colorful path over the hills, through the woods, and across the streams, and do not be afraid, you will soon be at Turtle's house." Deer did as he was instructed and soon reached heaven. Turtle was happy to see him. And Deer enjoyed it so much in heaven that he decided to stay. He roamed the sky delightfully, moving like the wind. When midsummer was over and it was harvest moon, the Great Council met again. For the first time in his life, Deer was absent. The animals waited and waited, they needed his advice but he did not come. They asked the birds to search for him. Black Hawk, Woodpecker, and Blue Jay searched for him in the forest, but there was no trace of him. Then Wolf and Fox searched for him in the far-off woods, but they couldn't find him either. Finally, Turtle arrived at the meeting, in his Black Cloud. Bear said, "Deer is absent, we cannot do without him because we need his advice." Turtle told them that Deer now lived in heaven. Rainbow had made a beautiful path for him to heaven. "Look, there it is," and he pointed to a golden cloud above their heads. Turtle advised all the animals to come to heaven until they could be sure that the new race of beings would not harm them. He showed them Rainbow's path. All the animals of the

Great Council agreed to follow Turtle's advice. But they were angry with Deer because he had left them without warning. They felt that either all the animals should remain faithful together on earth or they should all go to heaven together. Bear was the angriest. Because of his great strength, he was not afraid of the new race, and he always found Deer's shy ways a bit annoying. "Deer abandoned us, in the hour of danger. That is contrary to our forest laws." And he thought to himself, "I will make him pay for this." In late autumn, it was time for the animals to leave the earth. Rainbow again cleared his path to heaven. Bear was the first to go up because he was the leader and wanted to test the bridge to heaven with his great weight. When he almost reached heaven, he met Deer who was standing on the path to welcome the animals to their new home. Bear said angrily to him, "Why did you leave us without warning and go to heaven alone? Why did you leave the Great Council? You are a traitor to your comrades and were unfaithful to our laws." Deer answered angrily, "Who are you to doubt me? Only Wolf may ask me such questions. I will kill you for your audacity." Deer had become very proud and tough since his stay in heaven, and not at all shy anymore. His eyes flashed with anger, and he ran straight at Bear with his antlers, intending to push him off the path.

But Beer was not afraid, he had fought with deer before. His low, hoarse growl echoed through the air and he was ready to fight. They fought for a long time, until the bridge of colors trembled and the sky shook. The animals waiting at the end of the path by the lake saw the battle above them. They were afraid because they did not want Bear or Deer to die. So they sent Wolf up to the sky to stop the fight. Bear was already bleeding because Deer had pierced his neck and side with his antlers. Deer was also bleeding from wounds made by the strong claws of Bear in his head. Wolf stopped the fight and the wounds of the animals were cared for. Then the other animals also crossed the Rainbow Bridge. They too decided to live in the heavens and send their offspring to earth when the new race would come. Sometimes they can still be seen as clouds that rush through the sky and have the shape of animals.

And from then on, the blood of Bear and Deer dripped down the Rainbow road. It fell on the leaves of the trees and changed the leaves into different colors. And still, every year when autumn arrives in the north, the leaves take on the wonderful and beautiful colors that were given to them by the blood of Bear and Deer who were in battle centuries ago. Bear and Deer have never become friends again since then, and their descendants still do not live together in peace, as they used to.

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