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THE MAN WHO KNEW THE LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS By Louise Jean Walker

Notwaysey was a very old Indian. He lived alone in the woods. He ate herbs, berries, honey, and wild meat.

Notwaysey was strong, patient, and happy. He loved to walk in the moonlight through the forest. He liked to watch the wild animals. He learned many of their secrets. In the forest Notwaysey always stood still and listened.

The squirrel, the raccoon, and the porcupine often would glide up the trees. They circled around through the branches. Then they gossiped and chattered. This is what Notwaysey overheard one night:

"Hi, Porcupine, where do you live?" asked the raccoon.

"In a hole in the tree, but I sleep on a branch all day," grunted the porcupine. Then he went on eating bark.

"You seem brave," said the squirrel.

"Yes, I am. My coat protects me from harm."

"How fortunate you are! I notice that it is a dusky black," continued the squirrel.

"A porcupine's coat protects him from harm all right. But it is not for the reason you think, Frisky," laughed the raccoon. "Show him what I mean, Porcupine."

Then Porcupine spread his quills. They stood up and bristled like a pin cushion. "I can be a very dangerous fellow. If a fox tries to touch me, I slap my tail. Then these quills stick into him. He cries out with pain. He is a very much surprised fellow."

"I'll bet he is," thought Notwaysey.

"Speaking of coats, can you see the woodchuck?" asked the raccoon. The squirrel looked around and so did Notwaysey.

"Here I am," called the woodchuck. She had coarse, brown fur. She was almost hidden in the dense brown leaves. "I couldn't even see you," said the squirrel.

"It's a good thing that I can't be seen easily. If I could, I wouldn't live long," said the woodchuck. "I have a bad time when hunters come. They bring dogs to look for me."

"We won't tell them," promised the squirrel and the raccoon.

The animals often looked at Notwaysey sharply as they wandered around. Sometimes, they looked to see whether he was growing on the tree. For Notwaysey was always very quiet. If Notwaysey thought he was troubling them, he would walk on. Often he sat down on a big, flat stone.

Soon he saw a little gray squirrel. The squirrel came hopping, whisking its tail with happiness. He noticed how the squirrel balanced itself with its bushy tail. It stuffed an acorn in each cheek and then scampered away to an old tree. It went into a small hole.

Soon out the squirrel popped and hurried back again for two more acorns. "I must get a lot of acorns. When the snow covers everything there isn't any other food," the squirrel chattered.

"You are a good planner," thought Notwaysey.

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The old Indian often hid in the bushes watching for a deer. After a while he would see two antlers lifted. Soon two eyes would peer from the bushes. Then he knew a deer was going to the river to drink.

Sometimes Notwaysey would see a little fawn. Then he would say to it, "What are you doing here away from your mother? It isn't safe for you to be here alone." Later Notwaysey would show the little fawn its way home.

Notwaysey learned the names of all the birds. He watched them build their nests in summer. He knew when they would leave for the South.

Often Notwaysey talked with the rabbits. They told him how afraid they were of their enemy, the owl.

Gradually, the animals learned that Notwaysey was their friend. They trusted him and told him many secrets.

Notwaysey was not only the friend of the animals but also of the children. He told his neighbors' children the stories that the animals had told him. Then he showed them how to know the animals too. Soon the other Indians also could understand animals and their habits.

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ODD BIRD
By Vera Dolores Bromley
(illustration #3)
(penguin)

The Lord above makes many things
Including a bird with fly-less wings,
The penguin, who swims instead of flies....
Now isn't that a bird surprise?

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