



The Myth of Bear and Fire

An Alabama Tribal Myth

At the start of the world, Bear owned Fire. It kept him and the other bears warm and let them see even when it was dark, because back then there were no lights like we have today. One day, Bear came to a forest. On the forest floor, he found tons of acorns. He set Fire at the edge of the forest, gave it some wood to burn and began to gobble up all the delicious acorns. As the acorns around him began to run out, he wandered deeper into the forest.

While Bear was eating, Fire was burning at the edge of the forest. Soon, though, Fire had burned up nearly all of its wood. It began to shout “Bear! I need more wood to burn! Feed me! Feed me!” but Bear was too far away to hear Fire calling.

Man, however, was not far away. He heard Fire’s cries and wandered over. Man hadn’t seen Fire before, so he asked it what he could feed it to help out. Fire explained that it ate wood, so Man picked up a stick and fed fire. Then he grabbed another, and another, until Fire’s hunger had grown big again. Man was amazed by Fire’s light and he was so happy to warm himself up. He sat nearby, feeding it for a long time.

After a while, Bear returned to Fire, but Fire was angry at Bear for abandoning him. Fire blazed brighter and brighter until it was so bright Bear couldn’t even look at it. Fire blazed hotter and hotter until it was so hot that Fire had to back away. Fire told Bear to go away. Man and Fire were left alone and after that, Fire belonged to Man.

Adapted by Sweetgood for the newsletter and blog,
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