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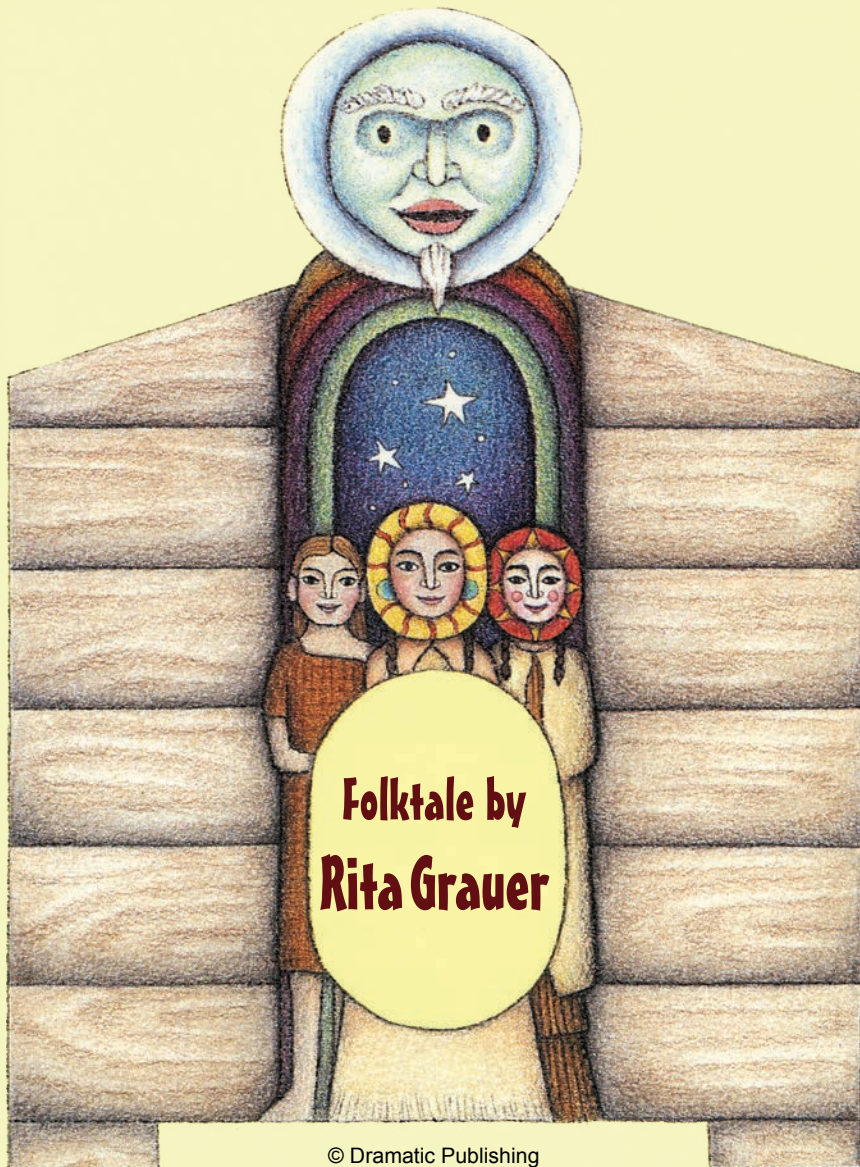
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Dramatic Publishing

The Boy Who Tricked the Moon



The Boy Who Tricked the Moon

*Folktale. By Rita Grauer. Cast: 5m., 2w., 3 either gender. This is a participatory play ideal for grades K-3, adapted from Pacific Northwest folklore by the co-author of the celebrated and award-winning *Nightingale and Fool of the World*. When Clan Chief's son is spirited away by the moon in this mystical adventure incorporating masks and creative movement, it is lowly Orphan Boy who must save him. With much help from the audience's participation, and characters Sky Grandmother and Little Sky Sister, the two boys escape from Sky Country in a triumph of friendship and ingenuity. Designed for open space and simple sets. Costumes suggestive of Tlingit Indians of the Pacific Northwest. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: BF7.*

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The Boy Who Tricked the Moon

By
RITA GRAUER



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THE BOY WHO TRICKED THE MOON was commissioned by Stage One: The Louisville Children's Theatre, Louisville, Kentucky, and first presented on November 26, 1994, with the following cast:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| ORPHAN BOY | Jeremy Tow |
| CLAN CHIEF'S SON | Joel Weible |
| SHAMAN/MOON | Roy Guill |
| LITTLE SKY SISTER | Katie Blackerby |
| SKY GRANDMOTHER | Debra Macut |
| BOY 1/ THUNDERBIRD | L. Roi Hawkins |
| BOY 2/THUNDERBIRD | Anthony Policci |

The production was directed and designed by Rita Grauer, with assistant scenic design by Kelly Wiegant, and lighting design by Chuck Schmidt. The production stage manager was Julia McCarthy.

Prerecorded music was from *Tear of the Moon*, Coyote Oldman, © 1987 Xenotrope Records, BMI; and *Thunderdrums*, Scott Fitzgerald, © 1990 World Disc Productions, Inc.

Dan Savard, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, B.C.; and the Sealaska Heritage Foundation, Juneau, Alaska, provided assistance with research of the Tlingit culture.

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Cover design for "The Moon's House" by the artist-playwright, Rita Grauer

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Story and the Culture

THE BOY WHO TRICKED THE MOON is adapted from the native folklore of the Pacific Northwest, in particular a tale from the Thunderbird Clan of the Tlingit Indians, first recorded by John R. Swanton in *Bulletin 39* of the Bureau of American Ethnology, *Tlingit Indian Myths and Texts* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909) and entitled, *THE BOY WHO SHOT THE STAR*. While the play is not meant to be an authentic re-telling of this story, the influence of the Tlingits is evident in all aspects of the script.

A great deal of research went into the development of this play and the original designs for it. I am thankful to Dan Savard, Photographic Curator for the Royal British Columbia Museum of Victoria, B.C., and to the Sealaska Heritage Foundation of Juneau for their assistance in my investigations of the culture.

Any successful production of *THE BOY WHO TRICKED THE MOON* will require a certain amount of “homework” on the part of your Director and Designers, too. Most libraries provide access to books concerning the Native Peoples of the Pacific Northwest, but care should be taken to investigate customs particular to the Tlingit Indians, renown for their artistry in the making of masks and blankets (ceremonial capes), two important design elements in the play. Additionally, videos of traditional dance (available for purchase through the Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 907-463-4844) can provide a valuable basis for the play’s dance sequences.

The cultures of the Pacific Northwest are truly fascinating and unique - - your effort to understand the Tlingits will be well worthwhile. I cannot emphasize this point enough; the more profoundly one understands the culture from which the story is derived, the more palpably the spirit of the play will be expressed and felt.

The Setting

The set for the original production was designed to reflect the interior of

a Big House, or clan dwelling. The audience was seated in four sections, along the two long sides of a large rectangle defined by burlap webbing secured to the floor (see floor plan). A 2 foot runway was clearly marked between audience members sitting on the floor and those sitting in chairs behind them.

At one of the short ends of the rectangle, stood a flat depicting the wooden exterior of the Moon's house, with a 12 foot, foam-carved, "wooden" entry totem topped by a traditional Tlingit image of the Moon. A slightly shorter, free-standing thunderbird totem, where the Moon could hang his mask and tie Clan Chief's Son, was located nearby.

Opposite this, at the other end of the rectangle, was a flat depicting the exterior of Sky Grandmother's house, with two 11 foot, foam-carved, "wooden" corner totems topped by Tlingit guardian figures. This flat was painted like the dance screen one might find inside a traditional Big House - - in red, black, and white, with a hole cut in the center through which the dancers could pass.

The entire set was visible at all times. Lighting moved from area to area to define our focus. It was also used to indicate mood and time of day. Special lighting effects are noted in the script.

Costumes and Masks

The costumes for our production were based, for the most part, on traditional Tlingit clothing.

Clan Chief's Son, Boy 1, and Boy 2 wore the ceremonial "skin" (*ultra suede* or doe skin) clothing common to Potlatch Celebrations. They carried wooden bows and skin quivers. Though Clan Chief's Son carefully removed his Chilkat Blanket (ceremonial cape) for many scenes, it was with him throughout the story. During the first dance sequence he also donned a carved-foam, "wooden" hat, topped with the image of a thunderbird.

The Shaman wore traditional Tlingit Shaman attire as well; a tooth crown and bone necklace (which he removed as the Moon), decorated "skin" dance skirt, loosely woven cape (tossed back over his shoulders as the

Shaman and wrapped around him as the Moon), leg and arm bands with strands of “cedar bark” (dyed raffia) hanging from them, and bare feet.

Sky Grandmother wore a softly woven chemise and cape, large abalone earrings and a turquoise necklace. Orphan Boy’s clothing was of a similar style to those of his sky family. He, too, wore a loosely woven man’s chemise, draped over one shoulder, and tied at the waist with “cedar bark”. Little Sky Sister wore a chemise covered with layers of “cedar bark” strands, and a softly woven cape, lined with iridescent fabric. All three were barefoot.

Strips of iridescent fabric were also used amid the “cedar bark” in the mask shrouds for the Moon and the Thunderbirds, and on Sky Grandmother’s spirit doll.

The masks in our production were based on traditional ceremonial masks. The thunderbird heads were constructed of carved foam and mounted on football helmets. The Moon’s mask was constructed of carved foam and wood and was held by two posts connected to the back side of the mask with strong metal braces. The posts allowed the actor playing the Moon to lift the mask high above his head, giving the Moon an extended height of approximately 9 1/2 feet. See the script for further notes regarding the Moon’s mask.

Music

Most of the music underscoring the dances and scene changes was provided from recordings. This was a decision based on practicality, rather than preference. If your actors are also musicians, or if your budget allows for musicians, live acoustic music is certainly an option for your company. Notes citing our sources for prerecorded music are included on the credit page.

Several “live” instruments were used in our production to enhance prerecorded sound and punctuate action: a large hoop drum painted with the image of a thunderbird, a brightly painted skin rattle decorated with strips of leather, melodic chimes strung on a wooden stand, a wood block, and a tongue drum (frog drum).

Notes regarding both music and sound effects are contained within the script.

Movement

There are five major movement sequences in *THE BOY WHO TRICKED THE MOON*: Orphan Boy's Dream, the Kidnap of Clan Chief's Son, the Journey to the Moon's House, the Chase, and the Dream Journey Home. Several involve the use of heavy masks. It is essential that your performers be adept physically, and that time, imagination, and careful consideration be given to the creation of these sequences. As indicated above, our choreography, except for the chase, was based on the traditional dance movements of the Tlingits. It was sparse and elegant, and told a story. Your movement need not be authentic, but it must reflect the spirit of the Tlingit people, and carry the imaginations of your audience to the magical realms in which these parts of the story take place.

Participation

Throughout the script you will find notes detailing the participatory elements of the play. There are many factors involved in generating positive audience participation; the pre-show warm up, characterizations, the flexibility of your actors, and your company's ability to control audience response. The following notes are provided to assist you in successfully integrating participation into your production.

Pre-show- If possible, let your actors seat the audience. This provides an opportunity to establish rapport from the moment the children set foot in the performance area. The children are led into the space by groups (classroom size, or several small groups of families and friends at public performances). Interaction during and immediately following the seating should be casual and friendly, yet controlled. Topics of discussion should prepare the children for the play and initiate a rapport which will insure the success of the participation to follow. If you prefer, the company may pose as members of a clan, welcoming visitors to their Big House to see and hear the story which is about to take place.

Should it not be possible for your company to seat the children, allow the actors sufficient time to greet the audience once they have been seated.

Characterization- Orphan Boy initiates all of the participation in this play and must therefore possess genuine qualities of warmth and sincerity in order to earn the children's trust. It does not mean, of course, that he, or any other character, should become accommodatingly one-dimensional. It simply means that from the opening of the show, his positive aspects must be evident. A feeling of playfulness, willingness, and improvisational spontaneity should exist between Orphan Boy and his "helpers", and the "helpers" must feel their verbal and physical assistance are both appreciated and respected.

Though none of them initiates participation, the above paragraph applies to any character interacting with the audience. In general, the script calls for playfulness, willingness, and improvisational spontaneity from everyone.

Remember: your actors set the "tone" for the audience, infecting them with a mood that will enhance their experience of the play.

Control- You may wish to experiment with the guidelines for control which appear in the script until your actors feel comfortable leading participations. No matter how playful a participation becomes, it must not interfere with the pacing and mood of the show. Overwhelming and uncontrolled contributions from the audience, or an actor who takes too much time soliciting the response he desires, produce a detrimental effect. The participatory elements of the play must move briskly, and be motivated by the needs of the story.

Successful audience participation is achieved when the majority of the children contribute to the action of the play in an attentive, concentrated, and imaginative manner. If your actors handle these moments selectively and honestly within the context of the play, they can provide your company with some of the most rewarding experiences possible on stage.

THE BOY WHO TRICKED THE MOON

As the audience enters, the stage area is dimly lit, and rhythmic drum and flute music are heard at a volume which allows for soft conversation. At a cue from the stage manager, the actors enter, in full costume, to casually welcome their audience. In a friendly, relaxed fashion, they address topics that are pertinent to the play, especially those concerning native peoples of the Pacific Northwest, the place where this story was born (see notes). If very young children are attending the performance, it is important they be prepared for the scarier moments in the play, involving masks. In such cases, the actors playing the MOON and the THUNDERBIRDS carry their masks with them to facilitate discussion. Of course, the participatory nature of the play is also a suitable pre-show topic.

Once the audience is calm, comfortable, and receptive to the actors, a steady drumbeat begins to play and the pre-show music fades. The actors acknowledge the sound change and excuse themselves from the children to begin the play. They leave the playing area in a quiet, noble manner, reflective of the drumming.

Prologue

(After a moment, lights shift for the opening of the play. As the SHAMAN enters and begins to speak to the rhythm of the drumbeat, the drumming grows quieter.)

SHAMAN: I am the Shaman, man of great power. I heal the body that is sick, the heart that aches. In my spirit canoe I roam the world of spirit to find lost souls. . . This is my story, my story of power. For I was raised an orphan boy and had no power - - I did not know myself, and it made me weak. One song sang in my heart, another resounded in my world. . . until. . . I met my spirit helpers. . .

Act I - Scene I

(The drumming fades and lights change as CLAN CHIEF'S SON enters with two friends and the SHAMAN watches from his "watching place". The three boys carry yew bows, but the quivers at their sides are empty.)

BOY 1: *(Slapping CLAN CHIEF'S SON good naturedly on the shoulder)* How will the rest of us ever win, friend, when **your** arrows always hit the mark?

BOY 2: *(Playfully grabbing CLAN CHIEF'S SON)* We will have to tie his hands with cedar bark. **That's** how we'll win!

(The boys wrestle each other until they fall to the ground, laughing.)

BOY 1: *(Helping CLAN CHIEF'S SON to his feet)* But, friend, have we not trained for power in the same way - - alone in the woods, without food, for days - - waiting for our spirit helpers to show themselves? Why is it your power is so much greater?

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Simply)* If you want one thing here. . . *(He places his hand on his chest)*. . . and another there *(He gestures around him)*. . . then your power will be weak. When there is only one desire *(His hands rest over his heart)*, that true desire draws your spirit helpers to your side *(He glances toward the audience)* and their help makes your power strong.

(The other boys become still, contemplating CLAN CHIEF'S SON'S words.)

BOY 2: *(Hopping to his feet, speaking to BOY 1)* Come, friend. . . stand here. *(He gestures to the place exactly in front of him)* I will help you train for power and the next time there is a potlatch, **you** will win the shooting! *(BOY 1 stands squarely in front of BOY 2)* Just do what

Clan Chief's Son says. Make your desire strong. Want only one thing. . . and no matter what I do, *(A wry smile spreads across his face)* **don't** laugh!

(BOY 1 shakes his head and laughs.)

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Crossing to BOY 1)* Look, friend... you have lost already. If you lose this laughing contest so quickly, how will you win the shooting?

(Clan Chief's Son joins the laughing contest, one of many games played by people of all ages along the Pacific Northwest Coast. Boy 1 regains his composure, accepting the challenge. Here follows a contest in ridiculousness, each boy outdoing the other with his silliness. Orphan Boy happens upon the scene and is intrigued by the others' behavior. Knowing he does not belong here, he conceals himself in the audience to watch. When the antics reach their height, he cannot control himself and his laughter eventually gives him away.)

BOY 1: *(Stopping abruptly)* What are you doing spying on us? *(ORPHAN BOY slowly rises to his feet, shamed)* You do not belong here. . . you belong with the women, Orphan Boy!

BOY 2: *(Mocking).* . . Cooking, sewing, painting our hats. . . *(Boldly, to the others)* See how he follows us like a girl with a crush - - to get a glimpse of our power. *(He mimics an infatuated girl, chasing after BOY 1)* Ooohhh. . . pleeeeee. . . shoot your arrows for me!

Boy 1: *(Joining in the charade)* Of course, my beautiful one.

(BOY 1 draws an imaginary arrow from his quiver and shoots.)

BOY 2: *(Swooning)* Ooohhh. . . see how fast and straight it flies!

(CLAN CHIEF'S SON watches somberly as the other two fall on each other, laughing.)

ORPHAN BOY: *(Quietly)* I can shoot as straight and fast as you.

BOY 2: *(Taken aback)* Oh. *(Handing him his bow, with a dare)* Is that so?

ORPHAN BOY: *(Standing his ground)* You know I have no arrows.

BOY 2: *(Taunting)* I'm so sorry. . . *(Handing him the empty quiver)* Here, use one of mine. *(Feigning surprise)* Oh. . . I have no arrows either.

BOY 1: *(Joining in)* Here use one of mine. *(Looking at his empty quiver)* I have none either!

BOY 2: *(Whining)* Poor Orphan Boy! He hasn't any arrows. How will he ever prove his power? *(He begins to cry like a baby)* Waaah! Waaah!

BOY 1: Poor **lowly** Orphan Boy. . . no one to train him for power either! Waaaaaah!

ORPHAN BOY: *(Angrily)* Stop it!

BOYS 1 & 2: *(Teasing meanly)* Stop it! Stop it!

ORPHAN BOY: *(Lunging toward them, enraged)* I said to stop it!

BOYS 1 & 2: *(Fighting him off, laughing)* Stop it! Stop it!

(They begin to wrestle. When BOY 2 taunts ORPHAN BOY by drawing his dagger, CLAN CHIEF'S SON runs to stop him.)

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Breaking it up)* All of you stop it.

(There is a moment of silence, then. . .)

ORPHAN BOY: *(Beneath his breath, to the other two)* Your power isn't so great.

BOY 1: *(Starting to fight again)* It's greater than yours.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Grabbing BOY 1)* Enough. . . let him be.

(ORPHAN BOY glares at the two unkind boys. It seems he would say something, but his anger has locked the words in his throat. He turns and runs from the scene.)

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Chiding his friends)* You wear two faces. . . one you show when we are together, and another you show to Orphan Boy. Which of them is your **true** face?

(The boys are speechless.)

No wonder your power is weak. . .

(CLAN CHIEF'S SON exits. The two boys are silent. His words have caused them to think once again.)

(Slowly, they gather their bows and quivers.)

BOY 1: *(Defending himself)* But my power **is** greater than Orphan Boy's. Isn't it?

(BOY 2 shakes his head in disgust, and exits. BOY 1 follows.)

Scene II

(After they leave, there is a moment of silence. Lights change, casting a leafy shadow pattern across the playing area, and set pieces are moved to create ORPHAN BOY's "secret place". He rushes in from the opposite side of the stage, angry. As an extended lighting fade continues through the next scene, the MOON's "angry face", hanging on the outer walls of his

house, is slowly revealed. It's grass shroud allows the actor who wears the mask to disappear beneath the grass and take on larger than human dimensions.)

ORPHAN BOY: *(Shaking his fist toward the direction of his entrance)* I'll show you! I'll show you my power. . . you boastful ones! *(In disgust, as he runs to another side of the playing area)* Aaaaaaaaah! *(Fighting his imagined foes)* Take that. . . and that!

(He continues to strike out until his arms grow weary. Then, falling to his knees, he begins to cry. Afraid that someone might see him crying, he drags himself to a hiding spot.)

SHAMAN: *(From his watching place)* There was a fire burning inside of me. . . and it burned so hot, I could not hold back the tears.

ORPHAN BOY: *(To no one in particular)* Why? Whyyyy???

SHAMAN: From the womb of my confusion, I uttered a prayer *(He begins to chant).* . .

(Soft flute music joins the chanting. As ORPHAN BOY addresses Old-Woman-Above-Who-Watches, SKY GRANDMOTHER emerges from her house. She carries a staff that has a tiny spirit doll at the top, and as she lifts it over her head, a rattle sound is heard.)

ORPHAN BOY: *(Toward the sky)* Old-Woman-Above-Who-Watches. . . you are the only one who sees what no one else can see. Look into my heart and know my loneliness. Look into my heart and quench this fire.

(The SHAMAN finishes his chanting.)

SHAMAN: *(As the music builds)* And it was answered.

(ORPHAN BOY buries his face in his hands. SKY GRANDMOTHER waves in a gesture of blessing, and LITTLE SKY SISTER appears. She uses parts of her costume to represent the evening breeze as she dances toward ORPHAN BOY. The dance and changes in the music, reflect what the SHAMAN describes.)

SHAMAN: Down from the sky came the cool breeze of evening. . . I heard it singing in the grasses. . . I felt it stroking my skin like a mother's soft hand. . . it dried my eyes. . . it calmed my mind. . . it eased my pain. . .

(ORPHAN BOY is drawn to his feet, and joins the dancing.)

SHAMAN: And I was lifted up. . . the world around me fell away. . .

(The two figures dance until SKY GRANDMOTHER waves again. This time, CLAN CHIEF'S SON appears in full ceremonial regalia, carrying his bow. He takes LITTLE SKY SISTER's place in the dance, sharing his bow with ORPHAN BOY until SKY GRANDMOTHER waves her hand one last time.)

SHAMAN: But just as suddenly as the breeze had come, it was gone. . .

(ORPHAN BOY is drawn back to his hiding place as LITTLE SKY SISTER, portraying the breeze, retrieves CLAN CHIEF'S SON and exits with him.)

SHAMAN: And I saw that I was hiding in the tall grass. . . a stranger to my world again. . . alone. . . alone. . . with only the stars for company.

(SKY GRANDMOTHER disappears into the house. The music fades, the lighting fade is complete, and ORPHAN BOY's face is buried in his hands, as before. As CLAN CHIEF'S SON enters, the SHAMAN exits. CLAN

CHIEF'S SON has been secretly looking for ORPHAN BOY. He whispers his name, then looks to see if he is being followed. The children may choose to help him find ORPHAN BOY if they are taken with ORPHAN BOY's lament. But if they do not, CLAN CHIEF'S SON does not ask for help. Instead, ORPHAN BOY realizes someone is there and unsuccessfully tries to sneak away.)

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Simply)* Do not run from me Orphan Boy.
(ORPHAN BOY recognizes the voice and turns his face toward CLAN CHIEF'S SON) I am a friend.

ORPHAN BOY: *(Incredulously, approaching CLAN CHIEF'S SON)*
Yes. . . I have dreamed you.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: I have come to help you train for power.

ORPHAN BOY: But. . . it is not allowed. . . you will be mocked for helping me.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: The words will be like arrows that do not hit their mark. My spirit helpers will keep them from me. . . as the roof keeps raindrops from falling inside the house.

ORPHAN BOY: *(Lamenting)* I wish **my** power was as strong as yours.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: You have more power than you know. Come. . . I will show you. *(Offering his bow)* Take my bow.

ORPHAN BOY: *(Confused)* But, I. . .

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: You do not need arrows. Before you can make an arrow fly straight and fast you must dream it. You must see your spirit-arrow flying straight and fast. You must see it with you heart.

ORPHAN BOY: *(Understanding)* The way I dreamed **you** before you came.

(CLAN CHIEF'S SON nods his head and gestures for ORPHAN BOY to join him. ORPHAN BOY hesitates.)

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: Come. Take aim.

(ORPHAN BOY takes the bow and pulls the string back, looking around for a target.)

ORPHAN BOY: I will shoot. . . that rock.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Amused)* Oh no, no-no-no. It is too low. . . you must aim higher.

ORPHAN BOY: *(Deciding, again)* I will shoot. . . that tree.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Coaxing)* Higher. . . aim higher!

ORPHAN BOY: *(More quickly)* That pine cone. . . I'll shoot that pine cone!

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Insisting)* Higher! There. . . in the sky. . . that star. . . Why do you aim so low, when you can aim as high as your heart desires?

ORPHAN BOY: *(Insisting)* It is too high! My arrow will never fly that far.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Impassioned)* Of course it will. Do not be weak in your desire. Want only one thing, and your spirit helpers will help you make it so.

ORPHAN BOY: *(Dropping his bow arm)* But I have no spirit helpers. . . *(with disdain)* I am lowly Orphan Boy.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Simply)* Your spirit helpers do not care if **others** call you "low" or "high". They wait and watch and listen to your prayers just the same. . . wondering when you will ask them for help.

ORPHAN BOY: *(Hopefully)* You mean they are with me now?

(CLAN CHIEF'S SON nods and ORPHAN BOY looks around.)

Here?

(CLAN CHIEF'S SON nods again.) Where?

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: *(Gesturing toward the audience)* They are all around you. *(Pointing toward a member of the audience)* Look here. . . *(ORPHAN BOY crosses to him and does as he is told)* What do you see?

ORPHAN BOY: *(Staring blankly)* Grass. . . tall grass.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: Oh no, no-no-no. *(Coaching him)* Closer. . . you must look closer. . . *(ORPHAN BOY moves toward the audience)* within the grass. . . what do you see?

ORPHAN BOY: *(Squinting at a child's face)* I see. . . eyes. *(Pleased with himself)* I see eyes! ! An animal - - a wolf! *(ORPHAN BOY can choose from a variety of animals indigenous to the Southern coast of Alaska)* Yes. . . I think it is a wolf!

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: Now you are getting close, Orphan boy. *(Urging)* Look beyond the grass. . . beyond the eyes. . . beyond the world that is familiar. . . what do you see?

(ORPHAN BOY begins to shift his gaze from child to child. A great calm comes over him as he begins to see what CLAN CHIEF'S SON has urged him to see.)

ORPHAN BOY: *(Finally)* My spirit helpers. I see my spirit helpers. *(He improvises descriptions of their qualities, rather than facial features)* They watch me so carefully. . . with **all** their heart. . . as if they could see right inside of me.

CLAN CHIEF'S SON: They can. . . that is how they know what you need. Speak to them. . . they **want** to help you.