

My Spirit Animal

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One day when I was about 10, after coming back from the grocery store, I grabbed my big box of Fruity Pebbles and wandered out into the yard. I headed toward the stream at the edge of the woods, but stopped at the edge of our yard when I heard a loud rustling in the bushes in front of me. Hearing animals in the bushes wasn't uncommon out in the woods, but I could tell right away that this was something larger animals. I stopped and watched as dogs began emerging from the bushes. Three at first, then more followed until about ten of them had formed a line in front of me. They approached cautiously, staying carefully in line. They didn't have tags, they all looked like the same breed, and I didn't recognize a single one.

Coyotes. I'd heard warnings about them, and frequently heard them shouting in the night, but never thought I'd actually see one.

"No!" I shouted. "Get back!"

They moved forward steadily and the the ones at each end of the line began pulling ahead of the others to come around my sides. I backed up but they continued, staring intently until they had formed a half-circle around me.

I took another handful of Fruity Pebbles and shoved them into my mouth as I wondered if these animals were about to tear me apart or just wanted to make friends. "What do you want?" I shouted, spitting colorful crumbs.

They simply stared.

"What?!"

They gave no response. One took a step toward me and I heard a growl.

Finally I turned and ran toward the house, still clutching the box of cereal, expecting to feel their teeth sinking into my ankles, wondering if I should try to get in one last bite of fruity deliciousness before they ripped me apart.

After a moment I looked back to see the coyotes in the same location with their heads cocked, suddenly looking far less intimidating, as though they had merely been curious. I took a few more steps before realizing how rude I had been.

I turned back to offer them some of my snack, but the last of them were already disappearing into the bushes.

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