

## THE THIEF

A long time ago, the animals were people. They had no fire in any part of this country.

Lizard was lying in the sunshine. He saw a tule ash, blown by the south wind from a long way off, fall to the ground near him. All the people came over to look at it and wondered from where it had come.

They sent Hummingbird up into the sky to find out. They watched Hummingbird fly up. Coyote said, "I can see him. He is high in the sky." Lizard said, "I can see him sitting up there." They saw that Hummingbird looked all over to see from where the ash had blown. Coyote was watching him. He saw that Hummingbird looked to the south and saw something. Hummingbird came down and told the people that there was a fire in the south.

They all started toward the south. On the way, Coyote stationed the different animals at intervals. They went on until they could see the fire. The people there were having a big celebration and dance. Coyote made himself false hair of milkweed string. He joined the people and danced with them. As he danced, he moved close to the fire and leaned his head over so that his hair caught on fire. As soon as it was lighted, he ran away. The fire in the camp went out, and the people began to pursue Coyote to recover their fire.

Coyote ran to the first man he had posted and passed the fire to him. This man ran with it to the next man, and in this way, they passed it along. Every time the pursuers caught one of Coyote's people, they killed him. There were fewer and fewer of them left, but they kept the fire.

At last only Rabbit remained. As he ran with the fire, he caused hail to fall to stop the pursuers. Rabbit cried as he ran. Rat, who was living alone on the top of a big smooth rock, heard Rabbit crying and went down to meet him. As he ran toward Rabbit, he tore the notch in the mountains near Lida. Rat

took the fire from Rabbit and ran with it to his house, which was on the summit at Lida.

The pursuers gathered around his house, but could not get into it. They all died right there. They can be seen now piled on a mountain nearby.

Rat scattered the fire all over the country.

The birds and animals were men. At one time there was no fire in this country.

Lizard was lying in the sun to keep warm. As he lay there, he noticed something falling slowly from the sky. When it came to the earth, all the people ran over and looked at it. They said, "What, is this?" Coyote said, "Don't you know what this is?" They said, "No." Coyote said, "This is an ash from a fire in another country. What are we going to do about it? Somebody must go far up in the sky to find out from where it came. Who can go?" Hummingbird said, "I can go."

Hummingbird started up in the sky, while everybody watched him. Coyote tipped his head and squinted one eye, watching him with the other. When Hummingbird was far up in the sky, Coyote saw him look toward the north, then turn and look toward the east. Then he looked toward the

south, and, finally, turned toward the west. He continued to look a long time toward the west. Soon he came down.

When he was on the earth again, everybody gathered around him. Coyote said, "What about it? What did you see?" Hummingbird said that he had seen a big body of water in the west. There were many people on the shore, dancing around a huge fire. Coyote said, "We must go over and get the fire."

They started toward the west. On the way Coyote stationed the people at intervals. When they got near the fire, Coyote made himself false hair out of string. There were many people dancing around the fire. Coyote joined them and began to dance, but they did not recognize him. All night as he danced, Coyote tried to catch the fire in his false hair. When it was nearly morning, he caught the fire and fled. The people had now lost their fire, and began to chase him.

Coyote ran to the first man he had posted and passed the fire on to him. This man ran with it to the next man, and in this way it was relayed from one to another until it was passed to Jackrabbit. Jackrabbit put it on his tail, making his tail black.

Rat had a house on the top of a tall rock with a smooth, vertical face. He sat in his house, while Jackrabbit was coming with the fire. The pursuers made hail fall. This hurt Jackrabbit so that he squealed as he ran. Rat heard this and came down to meet him. He took the fire from Jackrabbit, dodged his pursuers, and scrambled up to his house. The fire burned a red place on his breast.

The people below said, "Catch him, but do not kill him. We want the fire." Rat remained in his house and put the fire into a large pile of brush. The people below pleaded with him to give them some fire. Rat threw the brush in all directions. The brush now has the fire in it. You can get it out by making a fire drill of the brush.

The people in this country had no pine nuts. They talked about going off toward the north to get some.

They started off toward the northeast. Coyote was among them. They went to a big camp where there were many people gathering pine nuts. Soon after they arrived, they began to play the hand game against these people. But the next day, they did not know whether they had lost or won. They went on to another place where there were also people who had pine nuts. Here they played a game of shooting at a small round target with a bow and arrow. They bet their lives in this game; the losers were to be killed by the winners. When one side missed the target, its opponents took its arrow. Crow was shooting and had only two arrows left. Coyote watched him. When Coyote saw him losing, he walked around and shouted and wondered what to do. Crow was about to shoot at the target again. Coyote said to him, "Why don't you hit the target?" Crow shot and missed. He had only one arrow now. When he shot this one, he hit the target. Then he began to win. He won back everything they had lost and then won everything the other people owned. Finally, their opponents even bet their pine nuts, and lost them.

The people did not want to give up their pine nuts. They hung them on a tall tree which had no branches, so that no one could climb up. During the night they slept under the tree to prevent anyone getting the pine nuts. Cottontail began to play his flute, "tu hu du du du . . ." Some old women who were helping to protect the nuts knew that they were going to lose them and began to cry for help. Early in the morning, while the people under the tree were still asleep, Coyote and the others started to get the pine nuts. Coyote said, "What do these old women make a noise for? Why don't they go to sleep?" He poked their eyes with a stick and blinded them. Woodpecker (a red woodpecker) flew up in the tree and took the pine nuts.

7

When Woodpecker brought the pine nuts down, Coyote and the people took them and began to run for home. The others pursued them and caught those who became tired while they were running. They killed every one they caught. Although many people started out, nearly all were killed before they got home.

When nearly all the people were dead, Woodpecker gave the pine nuts to Crow. Crow went on with them. He hid them under his feathers, behind his ear, and in other parts of his body. The pursuers knew he would hide them this way and tried to hit him. They struck his leg and knocked it off. It went a long way through the air. Then they struck Crow and brought him to the ground. They said, "Now we will wait and take a rest."

After they had rested, they went on to where Crow had fallen and searched his body for the pine nuts. They found that Crow had left his feathers behind [i. e., shed his skin] and gone on, taking the pine nuts with him. They looked and a long way off saw where his leg had fallen, but Crow was far beyond, still carrying his pine nuts. They saw pine-nut trees all over the mountains, where the nuts had fallen from Crow's leg when it was knocked through the air. They saw smoke coming up through the trees, where the people were already out picking the pine nuts. Crow was flying about crying, "Caw, caw, I have had my pine nuts with me all the time."

All this happened up by Lida.

All the birds and animals were men. Yellowhammer and the others went to where some people up north had pine nuts. They had put their pine nuts in a deer-skin bag, hung high up on a white pine tree. Coyote's people played the hand game and other games with them. They played for many days and nights. They wanted the pine nuts. Mouse hunted, hunted, and hunted for the pine nuts, but did not see any. The people still played the hand game. Finally, Mouse found the deer-hide bag full of pine nuts hanging in the tree.

That night all the owners of the pine nuts went to sleep. During the night, Coyote and his people tried to get the pine nuts down. Coyote jumped, but he could not jump high enough. All the others tried, but none of them could jump high enough. Then Coyote asked Woodpecker to try. Woodpecker jumped, but he, too, failed to reach the bag of pine nuts. Then all the Woodpeckers took off their long beaks. Woodpecker took all these beaks and placed one upon another.

The next time he jumped, he ripped open the deerskin bag and all the pine nuts fell down.

An old man went to the owners of the pine nuts and cried, "Wake up! Wake up! Someone is stealing your pine nuts!" They jumped up and ran after the others. As they caught each one of Coyote's people, they killed him. They killed many of them, but they did not find the pine nut. Coyote's people had relayed it along to the fastest runners. Coyote said, "Give me the pine nut. I can run fast." They gave it to Coyote. He carried it for a short distance and gave it to Crow.

Crow took the pine nut and bit the end of it. Then he hid it in his leg and ran. The pursuers were gaining on him. They shot him and killed him. When

they came up to him, they kicked him, but his legs, ran on by itself, making a track to the mountains. All of Coyote's people were dead now.

By the time the pursuers arrived at the mountains, the pine nut trees had already grown. They grew all over the mountainsides. This was a long time ago. There are no pine nuts on the mountains up north where Coyote's people stole them. Only junipers grow there now.