

Crow and Hawk

Crow had a nest in which she laid two eggs. For a day or so she sat on the eggs to hatch them, but then she grew tired of this and went off to hunt food for herself. Day after day passed but Crow did not return, and every morning Hawk flew by and saw the eggs with no one there to keep them warm.

One morning Hawk said to herself, "Crow who owns this nest no longer cares for it. Those eggs should not be lying un-warmed. I will sit on them and when they hatch they will be my children."

For many days Hawk sat on the eggs and Crow never came to the nest. Finally the eggs began to hatch. Still no Crow came. Both little ones hatched out and mother Hawk flew about getting food for them. They grew larger and larger until their wings became strong. Then mother Hawk took them off the nest and showed them how to fly.

About this time, Crow remembered her nest and she came back to it. She found the eggs hatched and Hawk taking care of her little ones. Hawk was on the ground, feeding with the young crows.

"Hawk, what do you think you are doing?" cried Crow.

"I am doing nothing wrong," Hawk said.

"You must return these young crows you are leading around."

"Why?"

"Because they are mine," Crow replied.

"To be sure, you laid the eggs," Hawk said, "but you went off and left them. There was no one to sit upon them and keep them warm. I came and sat upon the nest and hatched them. When they were hatched I fed them and now I am showing them how to find their own food. They are mine and I shall not return them to you."

"I shall take them back," Crow threatened.

"I shall not give them up. I have worked for them. Many days I went without food sitting there upon the eggs. In all that time you did not come near your nest. Why is it that now I have done all the work to hatch and raise them you want them back?"

Crow looked down at the young ones. "My children," she said, "come with me. I am your mother."

But the young ones answered: "We do not know you. Hawk is our mother."

At last, after she saw that she could not make the little crows come with her, Crow said: "Very well, I shall take this matter to Eagle, the King of the Birds, and let him decide. We shall see who has the right to these young crows."

"Good," said Hawk. "I am willing to go and tell the King of the Birds about this."

And so Crow and Hawk and the two young birds went to see Eagle. Crow spoke first. "When I returned to my nest," she said, "I found my eggs hatched and Hawk taking charge of my young ones. I have come to you, the King of the Birds, to ask that Hawk be required to return the Children to me."

"Why did you leave your nest?" Eagle asked Crow.

To this question, Crow gave no reply. She simply bowed her head in silence.

"Very well, Hawk," Eagle said, "how did you find this nest of eggs?"

"Many times I flew over the nest and found it empty," Hawk replied. "No one came for a long time, and so I said to myself, 'The mother who made this nest can no longer care for these eggs I shall be glad to hatch these little ones.' So I sat on the nest and warmed the eggs until they hatched. Then I went about getting food for the young ones. I worked hard and taught them to fly and to find food for themselves."

"But they are my children," Crow interrupted. "I laid the eggs."

Eagle glared at Crow. "Wait for your turn to speak," he said sternly, and then turned back to Hawk. "Is that all you have to say, Hawk?"

"Yes, I have worked hard to raise my two young ones. Just when they are able to care for themselves, Crow comes back and asks to have them given to her. It is I who went without food for days so as to stay on the nest and keep the eggs warm. The birds are now my little ones. I do not wish to give them up."

Eagle thought a few moments, muttering aloud to himself: "It seems that mother Hawk is not willing to return the young ones to mother Crow. If mother Crow had truly wanted these young ones, why did she leave the nest for so many days, and now is demanding that they be given to her? In truth, Hawk is the mother of the young ones because she went without food while she warmed and hatched them and then flew about searching out their food. So now they are her children."

When she heard this. Crow approached closer to Eagle. "Oh, King of the Birds," she said, "why do you not ask the young ones which mother they will choose to follow? They are old enough to know that they are crows and not hawks."

Eagle nodded his head and turned to the young ones. "Which mother will you choose?" he asked.

Both young Crows answered together: "Hawk is our mother. She is the only mother we know."

"No!" cried Crow. "I am your only mother!"

The young crows then said to her: "You abandoned us in the nest. Hawk hatched us and took care of us and she is our mother."

"It is settled," Eagle declared. "The young ones have chosen Hawk to be their mother. So it shall be."

At this, Crow began to weep.

"It is useless to weep," said Eagle. "You abandoned your nest and it is your own fault that you have lost your children. It is the decision of the King of the Birds that they shall go with mother Hawk."

And so the young crows stayed with Hawk, and Crow lost her children.