

# **White Crow Hides the Animals**

Kiowa

Out on the plains there was a camp where the hunters were never successful. They could not understand this. Every time they went out to hunt, the game scattered and hid where it could not be killed. This caused the people to starve.

The people did not know that there was someone who went out and told all the buffalo and deer within reach that the hunters were coming and to hide. There was a man in camp who could turn himself into a white crow. He went out and told all the animals to make their getaway. This person, White Crow, would come back later in the day when no one could see him and turn himself back into a man.

The starving people moved their camp in various directions trying to find where the game went. White Crow did not move. Under his lodge was a hole where all the buffalo were. This is where he got his food.

When the people returned to one camp, they found this man still living there. He said, "Why did you come back? I have nothing to eat. I have been having just as hard a time as you. I have had nothing to eat since you left."

One day, some of the men were playing a game with sticks and White Crow came toward them. The players smelled the odor of buffalo fat coming from the direction where the man was standing. They noticed that the man had on a good-looking buffalo hide, turned inside out to disguise its newness. He also had a sacred stick rubbed with buffalo fat that they could smell. He did not like their looking at him. He slipped away so they could not ask him questions.

Coyote was there in that village. That night he called the men together and offered to look around White Crow's camp and tell them what he learned. Coyote watched White Crow's camp for a while, then came back and told the men he needed two good men with good eyes. Owl and Dragonfly were the ones chosen. Coyote told them to lie down in the grass and watch White Crow wherever he went. Dragonfly watched so hard, his eyes came out. Owl strained his eyes until they became larger than ordinary eyes. Owl watched the man until he saw him go down in the ground.

When Owl came back, Coyote told the men to gather everyone together and announce they were moving camp. Coyote was going to change himself into a little pup and they were to leave him behind. White Crow had a daughter, Coyote told them. "When the people leave she will search the camp for anything left behind and will find me."

The next day, everyone moved and Coyote turned himself into a dog, but he forgot to put on the whiskers of a dog. The little girl found him and brought him to her lodge. When White Crow came in he asked to examine the dog. He saw that

there were no whiskers and he told his daughter that he was afraid of this. He said it was a person disguised as a dog. But the girl said she wanted to keep it anyway. She refused to throw it away. She gave it a piece of meat while her father went out to warn all the game to be alert. One day when the man was gone, the little girl removed the stone that covered the buffalo hole. She called the puppy over to look into the hole but he acted as if he were afraid. "Come over here. Look in here pup, see what we have." When she said this, the pup came over. Suddenly he jumped into the hole, and turned into a man and began to holler, "Scatter all over the world! Scatter! Scatter!" The buffalo came out of the ground like a big river. Coyote turned himself into a cocklebur and stuck himself on the fetlock of the last buffalo that go past the girl, who was waiting for him with a club. After the buffalo got out of White Crow's lodge and were a long way off Coyote became a man again and shouted "Scatter! Scatter!"

When White Crow returned to his camp and saw what had happened, he said to the young girl, "See what you have done! I was afraid something like this would happen. Now we are going to have a hard time."

Coyote returned to his people and they began to enjoy the buffalo again. This mad White Crow angry. He directed the buffalo and the other animals to hide from the hunters. Soon the people were starving again. White Crow let them know he was going to make it harder than before. He flew over the camp saying, "I want you to know it was me who kept you from killing the buffalo before. You are not going to kill meat animals any more."

That night, Coyote called the men together and told them he had a plan. They would have to follow his instructions carefully. They were to announce that everyone should move over to a forest a few valleys away. Coyote would turn himself into a bull elk and hide in the brush where White Crow would not see him. When the people came along they were to kill and butcher him, but they were to leave behind his skeleton and his head with the antlers attached.

So, the next morning, the people moved to where he had directed them and some of them went out to look for game. A hunter scared up the elk, chased him, and killed him. They butchered him the way they had been told.

While they had been chasing him, White Crow had flown over Elk and said, "I wonder how I overlooked you. I should have told you they were hunting and to hide. I am to blame. But you can run fast and save yourself."

After the hunters left: White Crow found the skeleton. He lit on its antlers and thought to himself, "I know this is not an elk, I know what Coyote did before. This is just Coyote, who has disguised himself again. I will test him and find out." So White Crow stood on Elk's head and began to strike at Elk's nose with his sharp beak saying, "I know you are Coyote! I know you are Coyote!" He kept on striking. He stopped just as Coyote was about to cry out. "Well, I will try another

place." He moved back to the hind leg, to the kneecap. He struck with his beak. "I know you are Coyote! I know you are Coyote!" Again, Coyote was just about to yell when White Crow stopped.

"Well, you must be an elk, but I do not see how I overlooked you." White Crow then decided he would pick out the scraps of meat left on the ribs. When he stuck his head in between them, Coyote closed his ribs and held White Crow in a vise. Then he got up and turned himself into a man. "Now, I have got you!"

White Crow said, "Coyote, please turn me loose. I will not do anything bad again. I will be good to you all. Please, turn me loose!" The people were watching from a distance and when they saw that Coyote had White Crow, they began to shout.

Coyote said, "Now I have caught you and I am going to take you to camp and let the people do as they please with you." He took him to the camp and the people said, "This is the one who has caused us a lot of misery and starved us. Now that we have him, what shall we do with him?"

Spider Old Woman said, "Let me have him. I want to see the one who has caused us to starve." As she held White Crow, she was entangling him with her web but no one knew this. As she was doing it, White Crow got out of her hands and flew up into the air. He circled the camp, laughing. "This time I will have no compassion on you. This time I am really going to starve you!"

Coyote turned to Spider Old Woman and said, "I am going to tell the people to kill you for letting White Crow get away." Spider Old Woman said, "That White Crow doesn't know what he's talking about. I will get him." She began dragging in White Crow as though she was pulling on a rope. White Crow said. "Hey, I was only joking. I will be good. Have compassion on me." But Spider Old Woman went on pulling him in until she got him in her hands. She gave him to Coyote. "Do whatever you want with him," she said.

Coyote ordered the men to go and get firewood. They built a big fire and put White Crow in it until he was burned all black. Then Coyote said, "I am going to make it so you can never do anything your own way. All your life you are going to be a bird flying about looking for scraps. You are going to be frightened by everything." Now, this is the way with Crow.