



## How Coyote Helped to

### Light the World

This is the story told by Medicine Man of the South-ern Pomos, about how light came into the world.

A long time ago when the world was very young and there was not a single beam of light anywhere, a hawk kept flying around trying to find his way in the black sky.

Down on the black earth, Coyote was stumbling around trying to find his way. Day after day, Coyote groped through the thick darkness trying to find a ray of light somewhere.

Above, Hawk flew around and around trying to find his way to light.

At last, Coyote groped and stumbled and pulled his way up a high mountain. In the darkness he bumped into trees and rocks. He skinned his haunches. He fell. He skidded backward, but he kept on going. His paws got very sore, throbbing with each step upward, but he finally reached the top.

Just then Hawk happened to swoop lower and lower over the very same mountain.

"Bang!" Hawk flew too low and bumped right into Coyote and bent his whiskers and hit his nose.

"Yeao — ouh!" howled Coyote in the dark. He clapped his paws to his face and rubbed his nose.

"Squaw — eek!" screamed Hawk in the dark as he shook his feathers straight.

But Hawk and Coyote didn't get angry and fight.

Hawk said to Coyote, "I'm sorry I hit you, but it is dark and I can't see. You nearly scared the feathers off me."

"That was not your fault, Hawk," said Coyote. "I couldn't see either, or I would have kept my long nose out of your way. You nearly scared me out of my skin."

With that, Hawk flew above Coyote and hung flut-tering in the darkness and talked about how wonderful it would be if there were light in the world. Coyote sat on his haunches on the cold mountain top and talked back about light, too.

Then Coyote began to think. "It doesn't do any good for you to fly around talking to me about the dark, Hawk," he said with a sigh. "And it doesn't do me any good to sit here on my haunches and grumble in the dark."

"You are right," Hawk told him. "But what can we do, a hawk and a coyote?"



Coyote was silent, thinking hard. Hawk grew silent too, except for the fluttering sound of his wings. But the harder Hawk and Coyote thought, the darker it seemed. Then, when Coyote stopped thinking so hard and pricked up his ears and listened to the whispering darkness, an idea came.

"I'll gather a heap of tules from the marsh," he told Hawk, "and roll them into a ball with my paws."

"How can you get light from a ball of tules?" Hawk asked. "Tules are just marsh grasses." He sniffed aloud in a great big "Sniff-er!" Then he flew away in disgust.

Coyote felt very much alone as he stumbled down the night-covered mountain to the marsh and gathered tules that grew there. His front paws ached and grew raw from pulling tules. He told himself that light was worth sore paws and a weary back. He kept on working until he had a big pile of tules beside him.

He picked up one of the long stems of grass and wadded it into a small ball. Then he wrapped another tule around that, pulling it very tight so it would be solid. He kept on doing this until he had a very big solid ball, a ball bigger than had ever been made in all the world, before.

All this took lots of time. Hawk grew lonely and flew back to be near Coyote in the dark. He was guided by the sound of the tules that rattled while Coyote waddled and twisted them together.

"I'm sorry I flew away," said Hawk. "I'll help you any way I can—if you think you can bring light to the world."

"Well, it's about time," Coyote snorted. "I've worked alone and I need help if we are ever to have light."

Coyote felt around in the dark and Hawk felt around in the dark until they touched each other.

"Here," said Coyote, and he gave the big, round bundle of tules to Hawk. He groped around on the mountain top and found some pieces of flint. These he handed to Hawk, too.

"Now what do I do?" asked Hawk, still not believing that he, a bird, could help bring light to all the world.

"Take the tule ball in your claws and the flints in your beak and fly as high as you can," Coyote told him in a sure voice. "Way up there where only you can fly, strike the flints together, make a spark and light the ball of tule. Then leave the burning ball and fly away as fast as you can before you catch on fire."

Hawk was pleased because he could fly and Coyote couldn't. He took the tule ball and the flints and strained every muscle in his wings to fly higher than he had ever flown before. He'd show Coyote how high he could go!

"Whoosh" he went up higher and higher, while Coyote called out "Ye-ou—ooo" to cheer him on.

Up and up Hawk went, so high that the "Ye-ou—ooo" of Coyote cheering him on grew fainter and fainter. Finally, he was so high that he couldn't even hear Coyote's calls. There was only silence and blackness and the rushing sound of Hawk's great, climbing wings.

"Now I'll light the tules" Hawk said to himself. "It's time because now I'm so high up there's hardly any air to beat my wings against."

He worked with his claws and his beak to strike the flints together for a spark. It was hard because he had to hold onto the big tule ball and keep his wings spread wide on the thin air.

A bright, hot spark suddenly flew up from the flints! Hawk's wings lashed the air in excitement.

But just at that instant North Wind discovered Hawk and went "Whe-e-on" very hard. "Get out of here," North Wind hissed. "Up here is where I live! Not even a hawk is allowed up here!" The spark died.

North Wind "We-e-oned" so hard that Hawk could scarcely hold onto the huge tule ball. His tail feathers were blown back and fourth until he was afraid they would be ripped off. The feathers on the back of his head blew forward into his eyes.

Hawk was discouraged, but he was proud. He wouldn't let Coyote down there on earth think that he couldn't do his part in lighting the world.

He worked harder than ever in spite of North Wind. He gripped the tule ball firmly in his sharp claws; then he wedged one of the flints just under one claw. The other

flint he held in his beak. He struck them together many, many times. Just when he had almost lost hope, a new dancing spark leaped into life!

Swiftly, Hawk touched the spark to the bundle of tules. The spark caught. Red and yellow flames licked upward around the great ball. Suddenly, the whole ball blazed with so much light and heat that Hawk's joy turned to fear. He let go and went racing downward.

Even as he flew down to the cooler air, he was filled with a sense of wonder at the giant ball of flame he had left blazing there above. Light poured over the whole sky until Hawk felt almost blinded from its beauty.

Dazzled, he looked at his own soaring wingtips. Such glitter and color! And how pleasantly warm the heat from the ball was, now that he was closer to earth.

"What pretty feathers I have!" he bragged. "And if it weren't for me there would be no sun in the sky."

Coyote heard Hawk's loud boasts but he didn't care, because he could see too, with this wonderful new light. He looked at his poor bleeding front paws and he saw the fine shiny yellow coat that he wore. He looked at the beautiful things in the world all around him: the trees and the brooks and the golden waving grasses and the snow on the mountains high above. He knew that it had taken both a Coyote and a Hawk to bring *Da*, the Sun, into the world.

But soon Coyote became dissatisfied because Sun moved so fast that time after time it disappeared and there were dark spans called nights.

When Coyote talked to Hawk about the darkness returning whenever Sun went away, Hawk only sniffed.

"Sme-erk," he said to Coyote. "You wanted the world lighted and I did it. Are you never satisfied?" He went away and sunned himself on a rock.

But Coyote was smart. He knew how to manage Hawk. He made another bundle of tules and took them to the rock where Hawk was sunning himself.

"Hawk," he said, "you are a wonderful bird! You brought light to the world because you can fly so high!" Hawk was pleased. He preened his feathers.

"Hawk, you can do something more for the world. Indians will always love you. All people will remember you, if you can do this."

"What?" asked Hawk.

"Take this bundle of tules up high, when it is night, and light them and there will never be night again."

Hawk, feeling happy to be such a fine high flying bird, took the second bunch of tules when it got dark and he soared upward.

But this time, when the spark flew up from the flints, the tules did not blaze as they had before. They burned in a pale way, with a silver smoke.

And so it is that *Alaca*, the Moon, burns with a dim and uncertain light in the night sky.

Sometimes North Wind blows "Whe-e-on" so hard that Moon is only a thin splinter of light. Sometimes Moon is only a quarter lighted and sometimes it has a bite out of it.

Coyote blamed himself for giving Hawk damp tules to make Moon.

That is why whenever the moon is full, Coyote's great grandsons and even his cousins, the dogs, sit on their haunches and howl "Ye—ouw, the moon is too dim."

