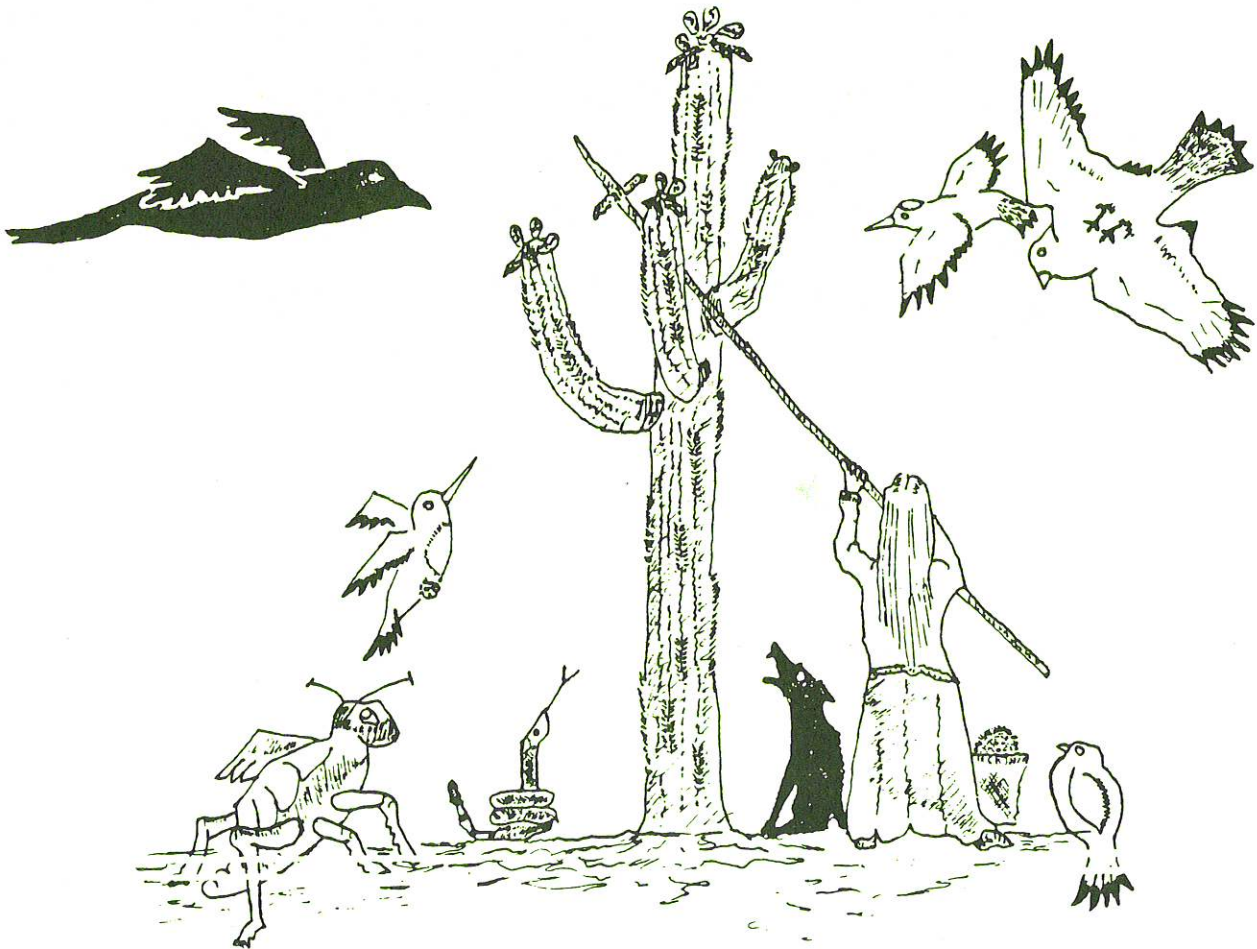


THE LEGEND OF THE SAGUARO



Sanda Lo:sa La:nju

Maşcamakud O'ohon

THE LEGEND OF THE SAGUARO

As told by
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A long time ago there lived a lady in Siwañ Wa'aki, known now as the Casa Grande Ruins. This is where the people lived until they divided into the Tohonno O'odham and the Akimal O'odham. The lady had a little boy. He was a good-looking little boy of four or five years. He had long, shiny black hair and a strong sturdy body. It was said that his mother could only think about playing games, especially toka.



The little boy was left alone a lot because his mother went to play in all the toka games in the area. There was no family to take care of the little boy. He just had to take care of himself as best he could. The other kids made fun of him because he was alone so much and wouldn't even play with him. He had to feed himself and play by himself. His mother only came home between games. As soon as she heard of a toka game that was going to be played somewhere, off she went.

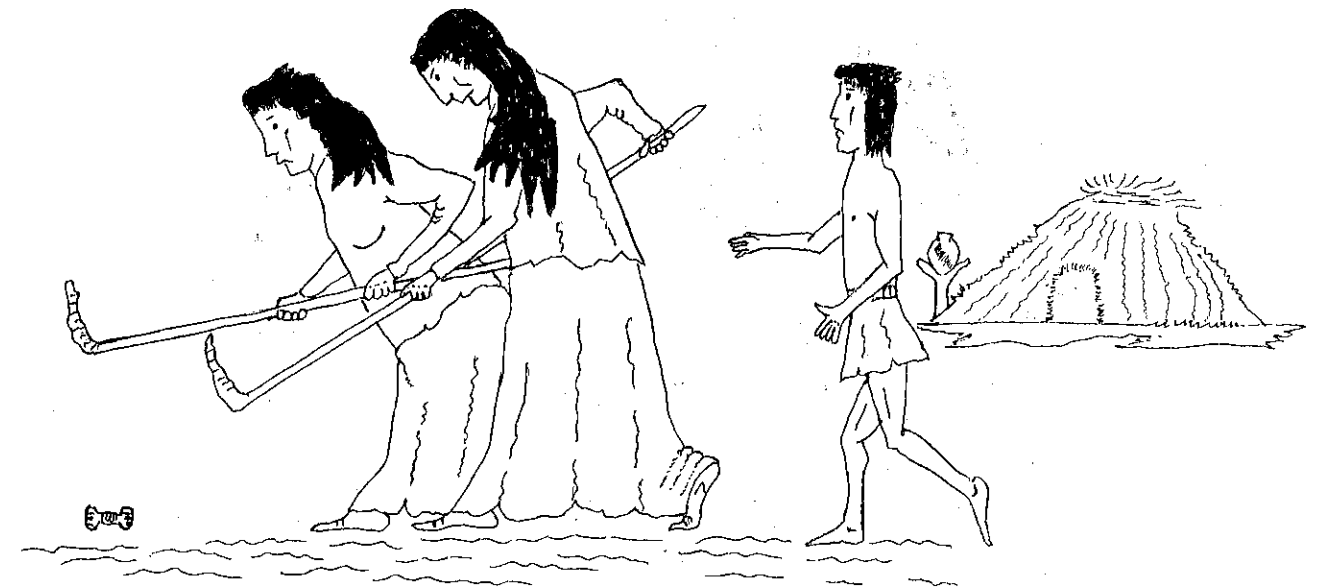
One day the little boy just couldn't stand being alone any more. He started out to look for his mother. Not too far from the village, he came upon Crow. Since Crow flew all over, the little boy thought he might know where his mother was. He asked Crow if he had seen his mother. Crow said he had and told him the way to go.

When the little boy came to where the women were playing toka, he didn't go to them. Instead he sat down where they could see him. He was hungry, so he started digging up earthworms and eating them. The other children who were hanging around the game saw what he was doing, and made fun of him. They called him names and said mean things to him.

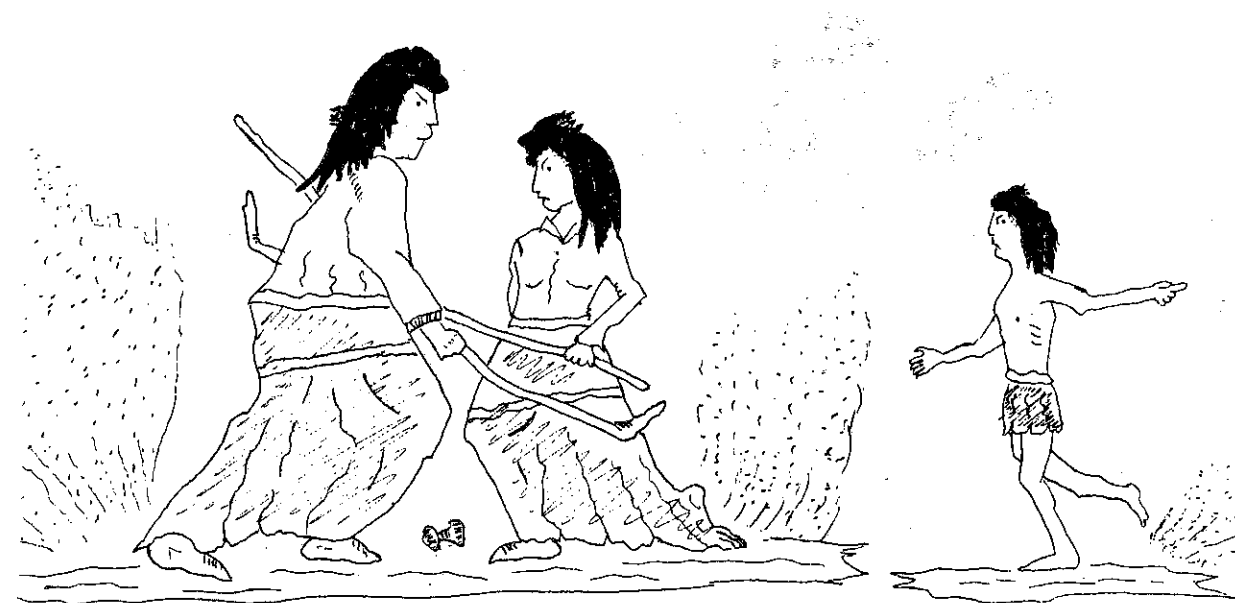
His mother finally noticed what was going on. She went over to see what was going on. When she found her son eating earthworms, she felt guilty that she hadn't fed him. People had told her that something like this would happen some day. But the urge to play toka was too great. She went back to the game.

After she had gone, the little boy wandered over to a tarantula hole. He stood on it for a few minutes. Then he started stamping on the ground and singing, "Tarantula, tarantula." The other children had followed him to the hole. They couldn't figure out what he was doing or what he meant. Only he knew.

Suddenly the ground softened and became like quicksand. The boy slowly began sinking. The children saw what was happening and were frightened.

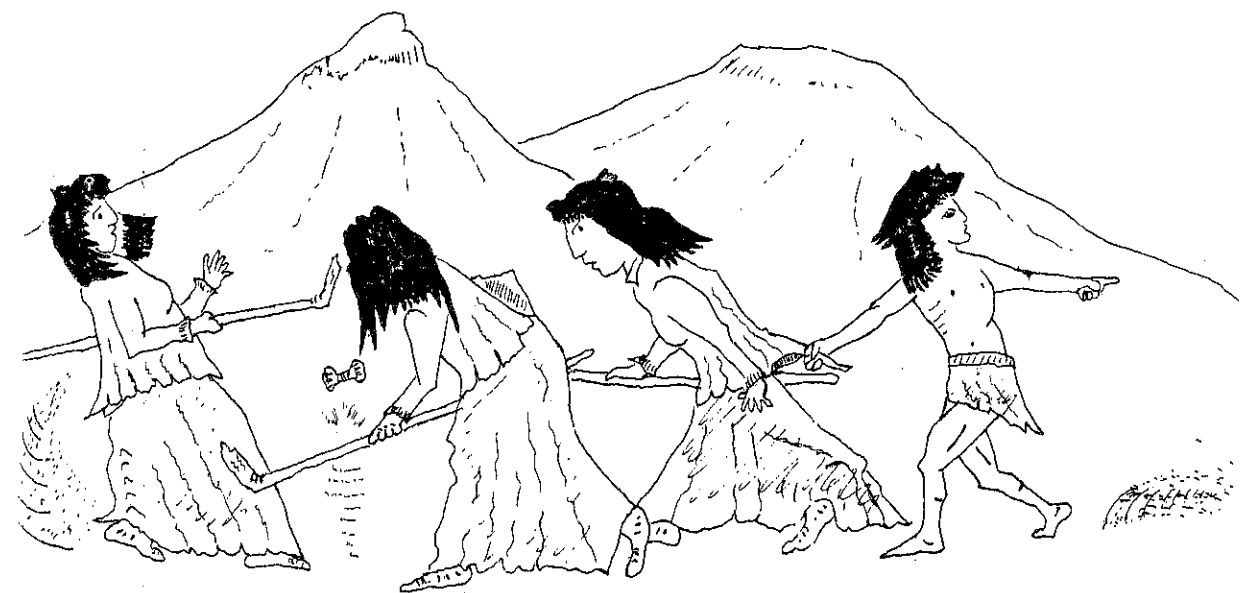


One of them ran over to tell the little boy's mother what was happening. She didn't pay any attention. She just went on with her game. The little boy sank farther.



Another child ran over and told the mother, "I don't know what's going to happen, but he is still sinking!" The mother ignored the child. Soon a third child ran up to the mother and reported that the little boy had sunk to his chest.

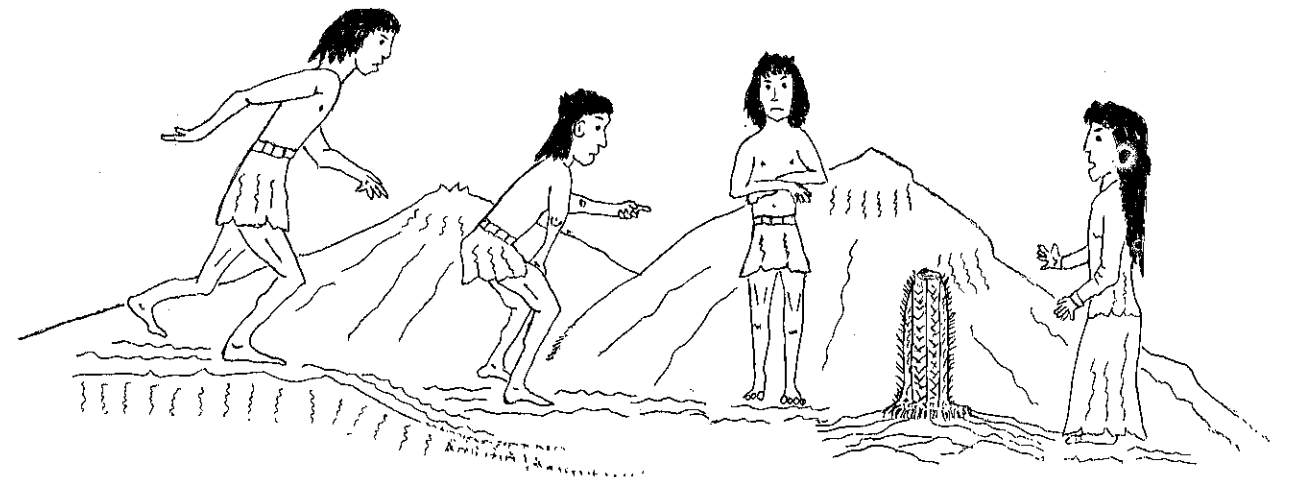
When the fourth child raced over screaming that only the little boy's head was showing, the mother dropped her stick and left the game.



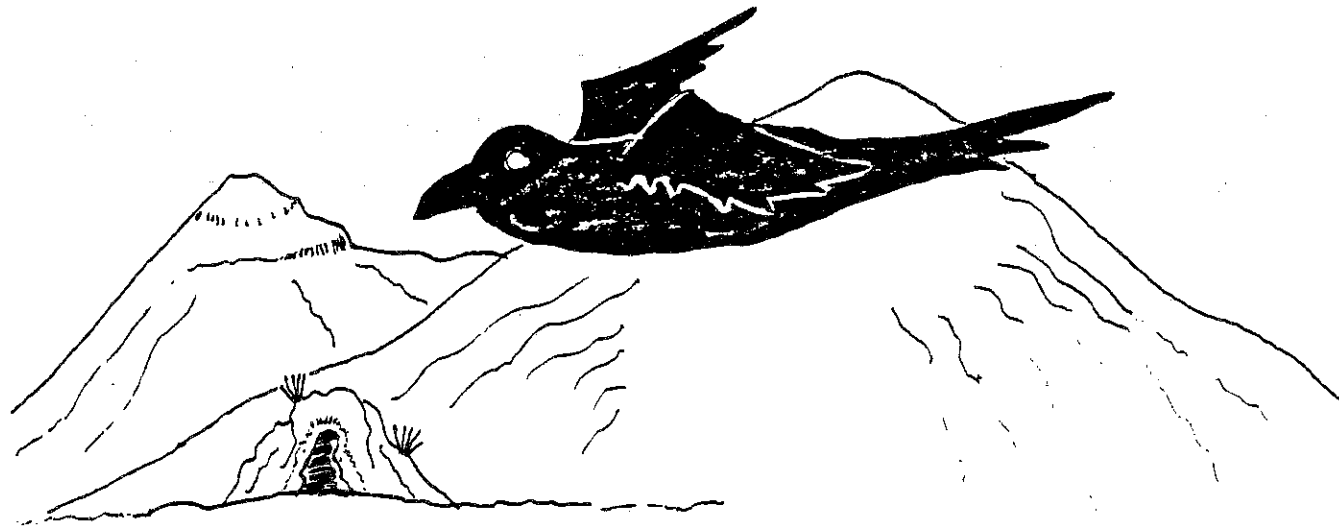
By the time she got to her son, only the top of his head was still showing. She tried to grab his head, but all she got was the feather from his headband. The boy disappeared into the ground.



The little boy was never seen again, but four years later, a small cactus began growing on the spot where he had disappeared. The children noticed it and saw that it was different from any cactus they had seen before. They poked at it with sticks and threw rocks at it.



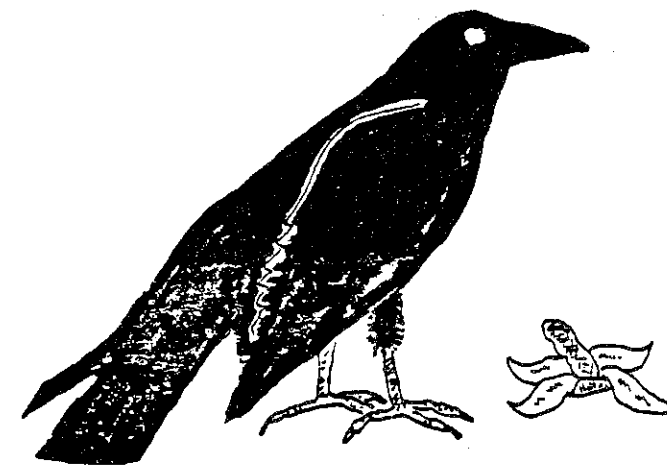
No one knew who or what the strange cactus was, but it was the little boy. He had returned. The children were just as mean to him as they had been before. When he could take the beatings and rocks no more, he disappeared again.

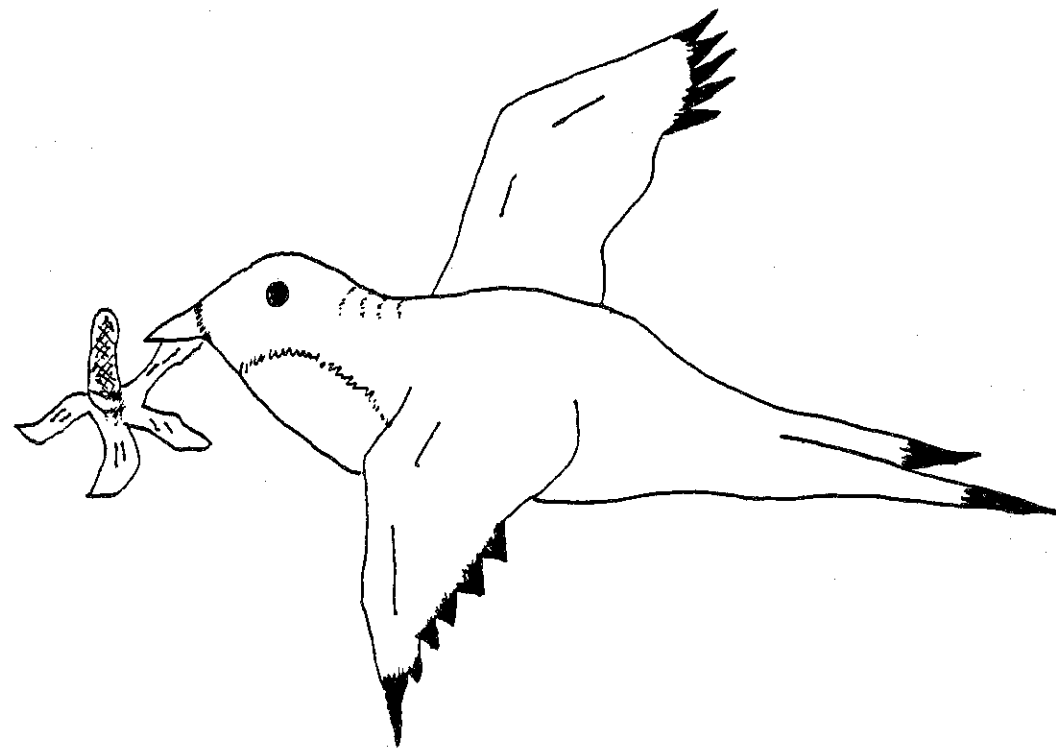


One day when Crow was out hunting, he spotted a lone cactus below a cliff on the slope of Giho Du'ag. The cactus was covered with red, ripe fruit. Crow picked one of the fruits and took it back to the people.

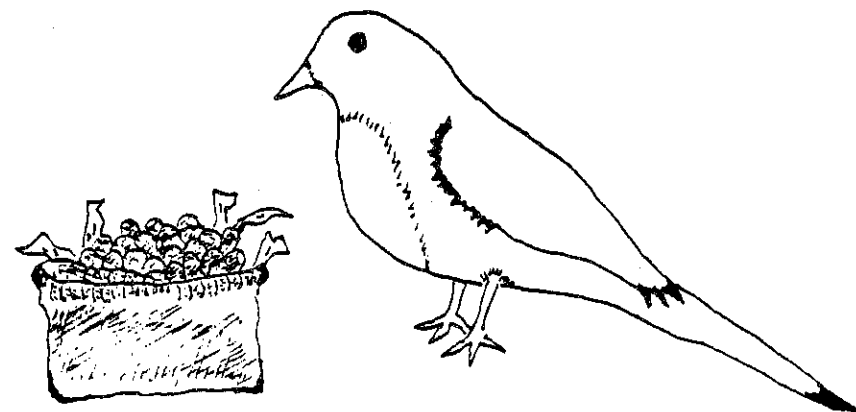


When Crow was showing the people the fruit, he said, "I found the one who disappeared from here. This is his fruit. Little did we know that he was something important to us. We didn't watch out for him and take care of him as we should have. That is why he disappeared."

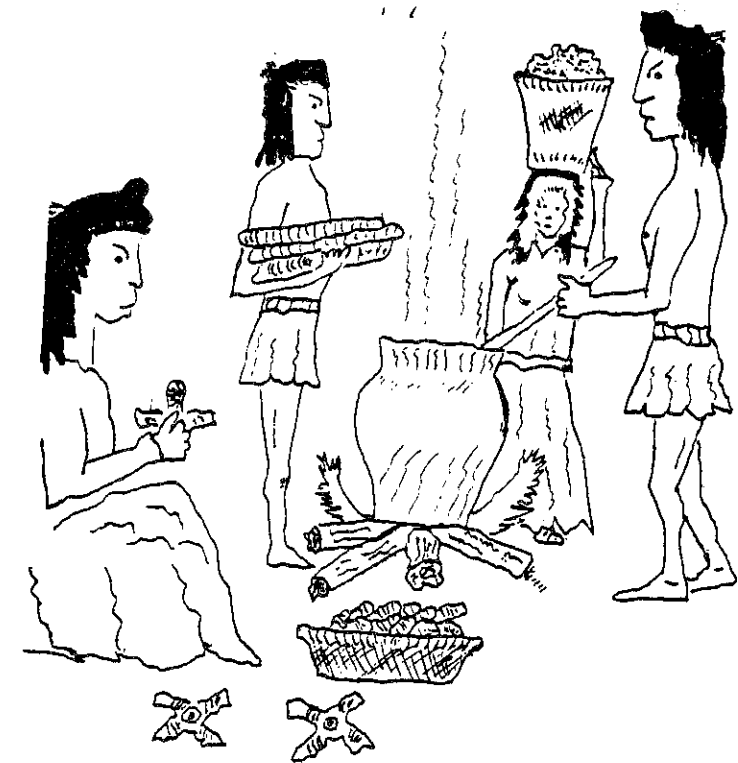




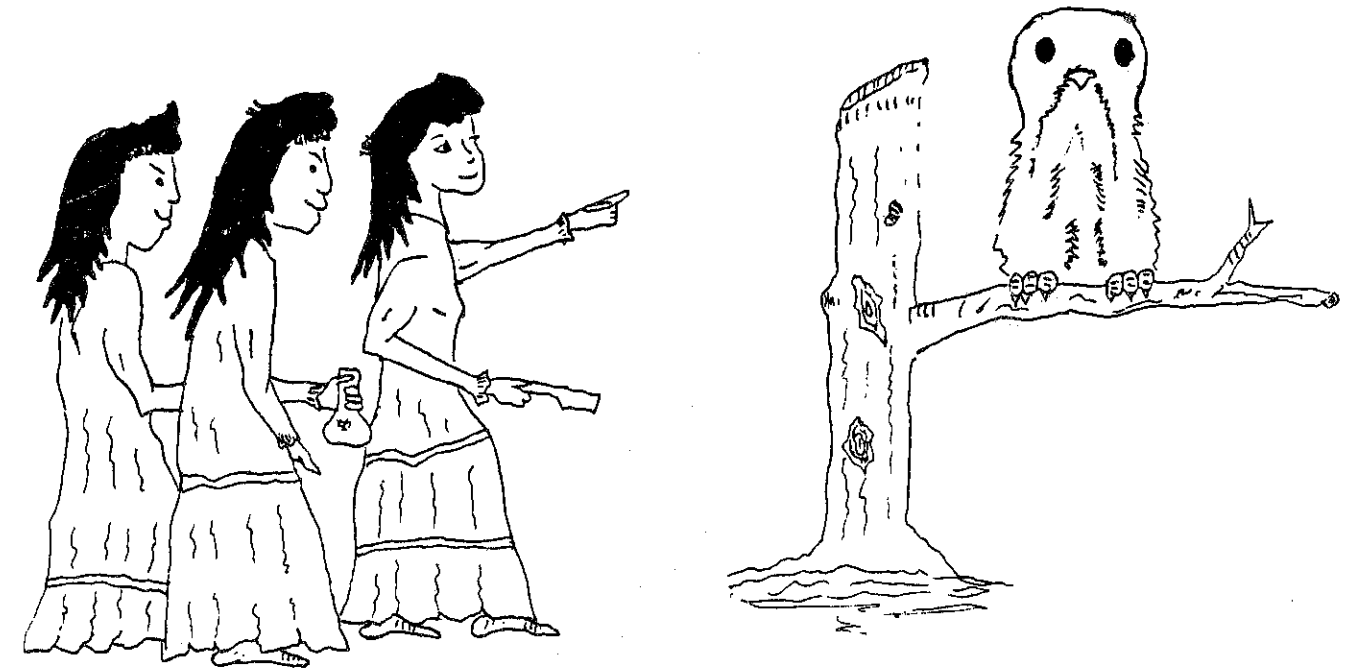
The people talked about the little boy and the fruit. Finally, they decided that they should harvest the fruit. They sent the white wing dove. Soon he had gathered a bunch of the fruit.



The people ate some of the delicious fruit raw and made syrup and other things from the rest. It just tasted so good. Even the pulp and the seeds were good. They also set some juice to ferment. This is how the tradition of the nawait 'i'i began.

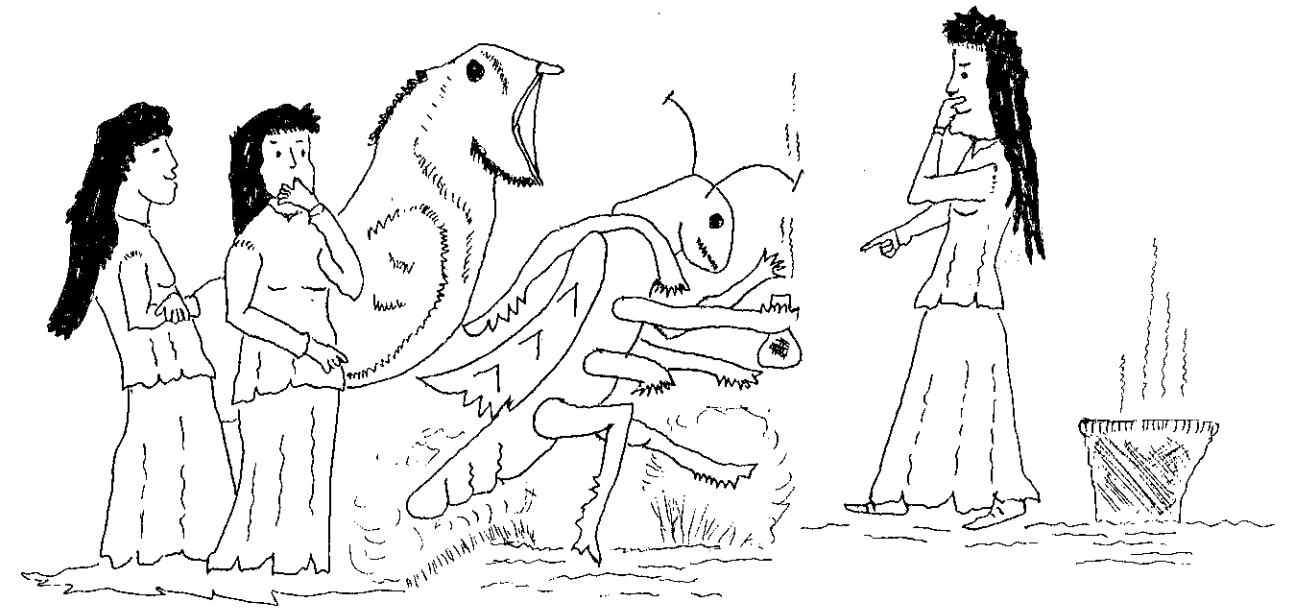


After four days, the wine was ready. Everyone had been invited for the first wine feast, even the animals. Of course, in those days they were called people too. All the animals came, those of the air and those of the ground. Everyone was ready to have a good time. The many kinds of birds all began singing their beautiful songs. And, as at the many feasts that followed this first one, there was much happiness and celebrating.



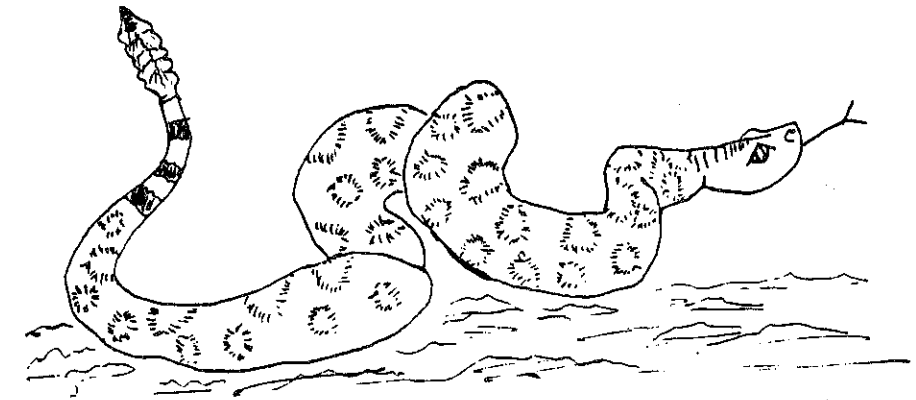
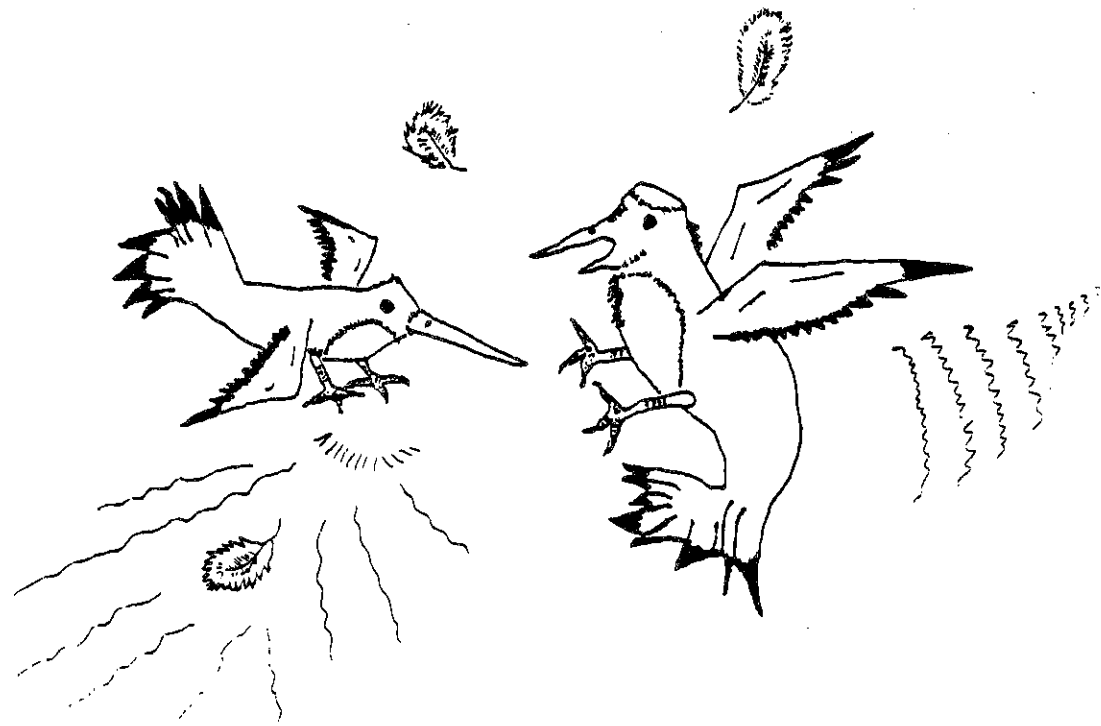
Nighthawk was sitting off to one side surrounded by women. They seemed to think that everything he said was funny, and he was such a handsome bird.

Grasshopper became jealous of him and said to himself, "What can I do so that the women will pay attention to me?"



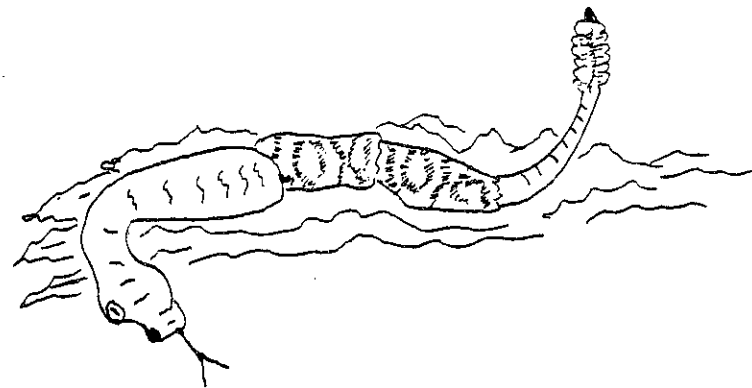
Since there was singing going on, he started dancing. He did all his best steps. All of a sudden after he had gotten the women to look at him, he pulled off one of his legs, threw it over his shoulder, and kept dancing. Nighthawk burst out laughing. He laughed so hard that his mouth tore all the way up to his ears. That is why the nighthawk has such a big mouth and comes out only at night. He is ashamed of his big mouth and doesn't want people to see it.

At about the same time that all this was happening, Woodpecker and another bird got into an argument, maybe also over some young ladies. Woodpecker knocked the other bird down and stomped on him. Naturally, this made the other bird mad, so he pecked Woodpecker on the head and drew blood. That is why Woodpecker has a red forehead today.



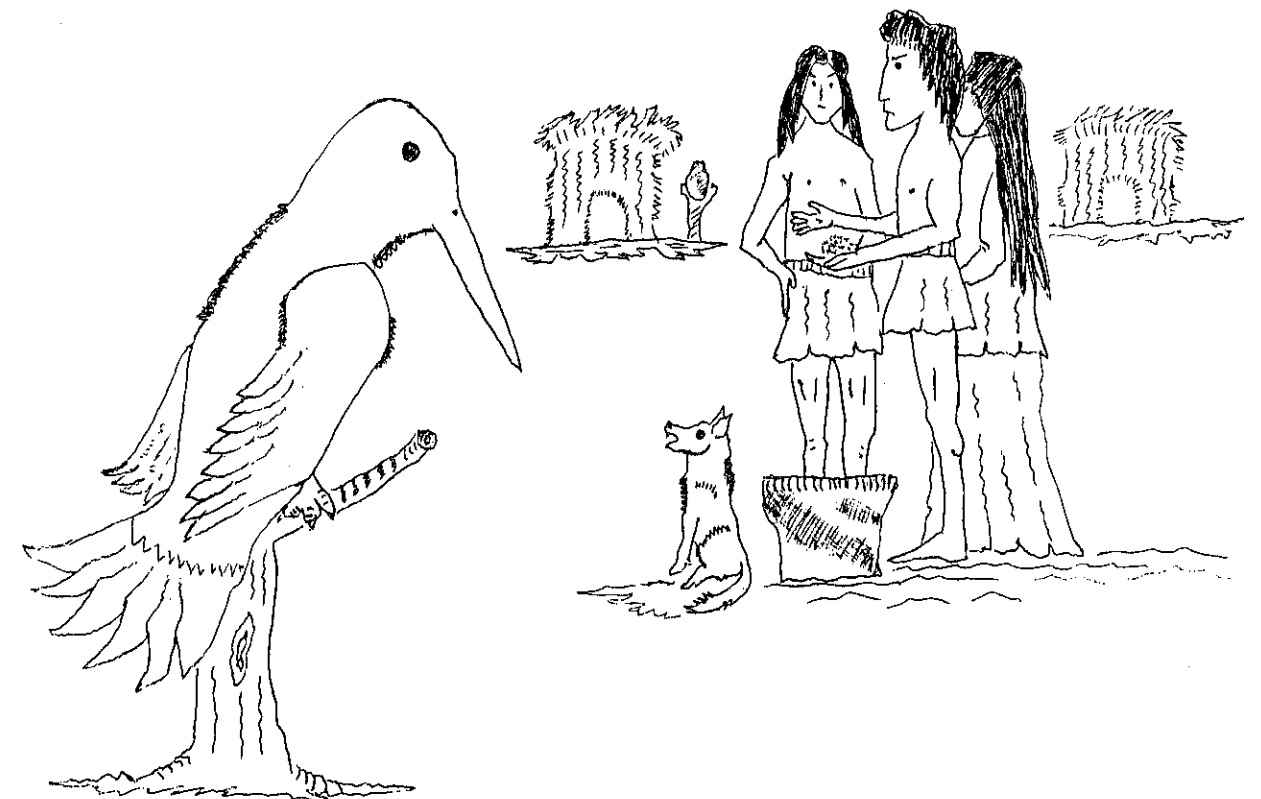
Rattlesnake was at the feast too looking his best with his bright and pretty designs. People were envious of him. They looked at him and said, "Iiii, you can't even walk. You have to crawl everywhere. Yet look at you, all brightly colored!"

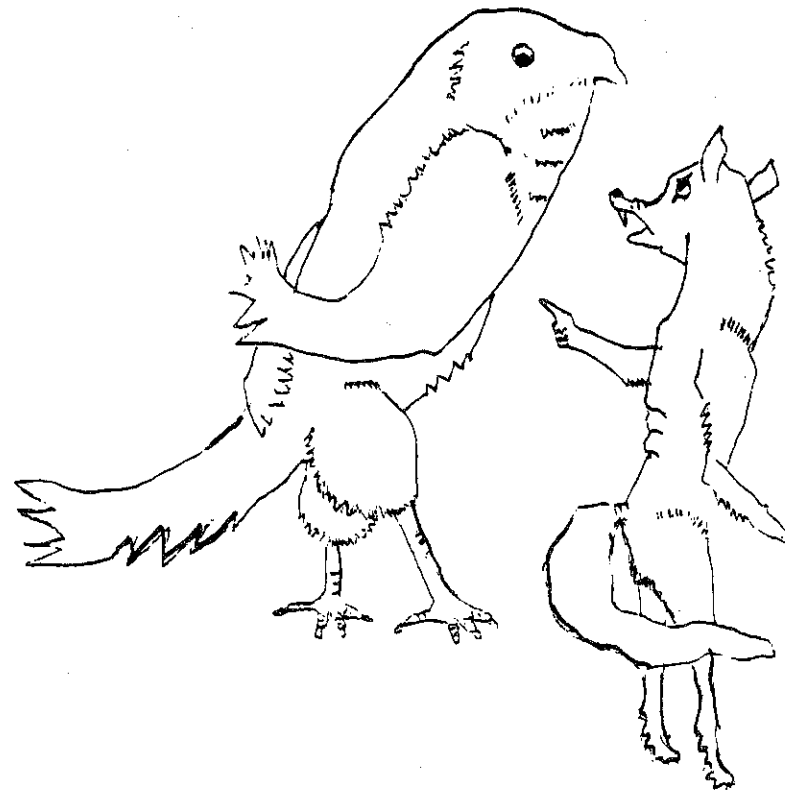
They said it in such a mean and hurtful way that Rattlesnake got upset and threw himself in the ashes. That is why the rattlesnake even today has such pretty designs but dull colors.



When the wine feast was finally over, the people got together and talked about what had happened. They decided they had to do something. They didn't like some of the things that had happened at the feast but the fruit had come from the cactus that had once been a little boy. They had to show respect. After a lot of discussion, they decided to send the seeds back to where Crow had found the cactus.

Hummingbird was chosen to return the seeds. The people warned him to be very careful with them. He was not to drop any or to give anyone any seeds. He wasn't even to let anyone see or touch them. After listening carefully to all the warnings, hummingbird promised to do just what he had been told. He left early the next morning.





Hummingbird didn't have any trouble until the fourth day when he ran into Coyote. Coyote stopped him and asked, "Hey, brother, what do you have there?"

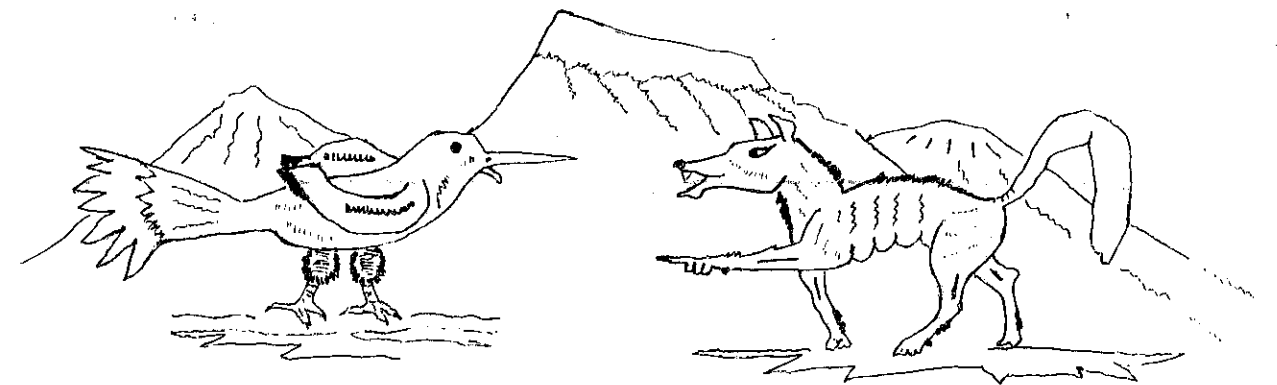
"Just something," replied Hummingbird.

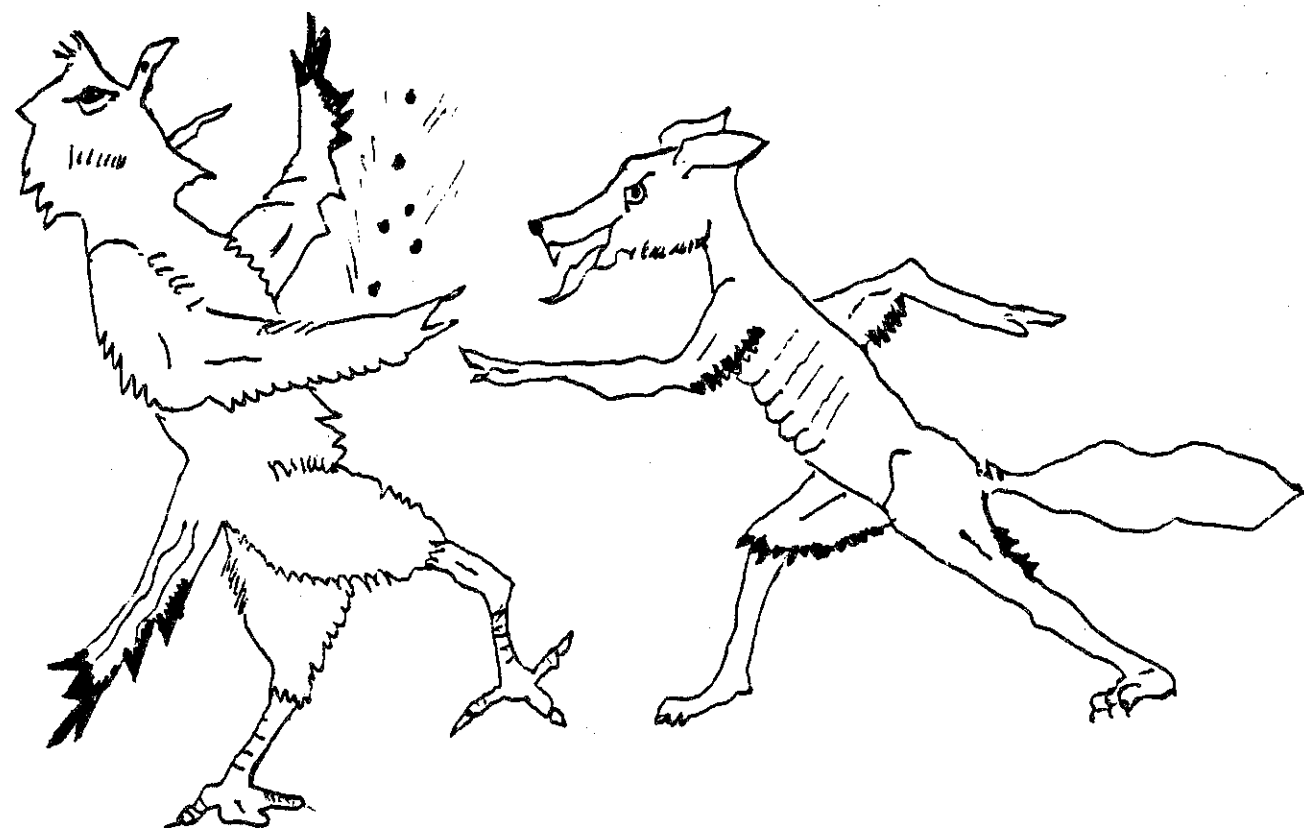
"What is it?" Coyote asked. "Let me take a peek. What is it? What does it look like?"

"I can't tell you, and I can't show you. I promised," said Hummingbird.

"Just give me a little peek," begged Coyote.

After Coyote had asked four times, Hummingbird decided that it couldn't hurt anything if he let Coyote have just a little peek. Maybe Coyote would stop bothering him and let him go on if he did. Hummingbird opened his hand just a little, but Coyote couldn't see anything. "I can't see," he said. "Open your hand just a little bit more."





As Hummingbird opened his hand, Coyote leaned over close as if he wanted to see better. Suddenly, he hit the bottom of Hummingbird's hand. The seeds flew up in the air and scattered all over the land.

This is how the saguaro cactus came to be. Where more seeds fell, more of the cactus grow. This is how the story of the ha:šsañ was told to me.

