

THE EMERGENCE

In the beginning was the First World, or Black World. It consisted of a small area of solid land surrounded by burning resin, which provided the only available light. Most of the inhabitants were wingless insects and crawling creatures accustomed to living in holes in the ground, among them red ants, yellow beetles, black beetles, and white locusts. One day the insects gathered together and said, "This place is too small, too dark, and too unpleasant! We must find a new world that will be larger and lighter."

"How can we do that?" asked the ants. "You can see that we are surrounded by fire!"

Dragonfly replied, "We will all make wings for ourselves and fly toward the roof of our world."

The dragonflies, bees, flies, locusts, and ants tied wings to their bodies and flew upward. Locust noticed a crack in the roof through which a blue light came, and he led the insects through that crack into the next world.

The Second World, or Blue World, was larger and lighter than the First World. Each group of insects went off among the grasses and bushes to find a home. They had not gone far before four great birds, White Crane, Blue Heron, Yellow Loon, and Black Loon, flew from the four corners of the world and swooped down upon them. "This is our land!" the birds exclaimed. "You may not remain here! Besides, you will starve here for lack of food. We have to fly far away to the sea in order to find food, and your wings will never carry you that far."

"Have no concern for us," the insects replied. "We have no interest in your food. Here we have leaves, seeds, pollen, and honey. That is more than enough!"

"Then you may stay," the birds replied, "but see to it that you stay far away from us!"

So the insects remained in the Blue World. As time passed, they increased in number until there was not enough food to feed them all. In search of more food, they set out to find where the great birds lived. When the birds spied the swarms of insects flying toward them like great clouds of dust, they summoned all of their own kind to fight

the invaders. Led by White Crane, Blue Heron, Yellow Loon, and Black Loon, the birds won the battle.

Locust gathered the surviving insects and announced, "We must move to another world. Follow me!"

With many birds flying in close pursuit, the insects followed Locust to the roof of the Blue World, where Blue Wind led them into the Third World, or Yellow World. This world was larger and brighter than the Blue World, and it was populated with animals and human beings. Together, these became known as First People.

Here there was food for all. Grass and bushes grew along springs and rivers, and the mountains that stood to the north, south, east, and west were covered with trees. All living creatures spoke the same language, and they all had the teeth, claws, feet, and wings of insects.

Human beings, however, wore their wings as part of their furry or feathered coats, which they could remove. They lived in caves, and they ate only food they could gather and eat raw, such as nuts, seeds, roots, and berries.

One autumn four gods—White Body, Blue Body, Yellow Body, and Black Body—appeared before First People for four days in succession. Each day they silently made signs and then departed. On the fourth day Black Body remained behind and said to First People, "The gods wane to create people who look like them. Many of you have bodies like the gods, but you have the teeth, claws, and feet of insects and animals. Be clean and ready when we return to you in twelve days."

On the morning of the twelfth day, Black Body and Blue Body returned with two sacred buckskins. White Body returned carrying two perfect ears of corn, a white ear and a yellow ear. They placed the ears of corn on one of the buckskins, with the head of the buckskin facing west and the tips of the corn facing east. They placed an eagle's feather under each ear of corn, one from the white eagle under the white ear and one from the yellow eagle under the yellow ear. Then they covered both ears of corn with the second buckskin.

The White Wind entered from the east and the Yellow Wind from the west, and they blew on the ears of corn that lay between the two buckskins. When the gods lifted the upper buckskin, First People saw that the white ear of corn had become First Man

and the yellow ear of corn had become First Woman. The winds had blown life into them just as they blow life into each of us.

For many years First People lived together peacefully in the Yellow World. Eventually, though, they increased in number until there was not enough food to feed them all. Those who were strong and fleet found food; those who were clever and stronger stole it. First People sent messengers to the four corners of the Yellow World to call all the people to assembly in order to choose one who would rule them all.

From the west came the Mountain People, who suggested that Mountain Lion should lead First People because he was both strong and wise. From the east came the Plains and Mesa Peoples, who suggested that Wolf should lead First People because he was both strong and clever. From the south came the Valley People, who suggested that Bluebird should lead First People because he was both wise and kind. From the north came the Forest People, who suggested that Hummingbird should lead First People because he was both swift and just.

When no group would accept the animal that another group suggested, Owl announced, "Let Lion return to his home in the west, Wolf to his home in the east, Bluebird to his home in the south, and Hummingbird to his home in the north. Let each of them bring back something that will help us. When we see what they can do for us, we can choose our leader."

Everyone agreed, and the four animals set forth. When eight days and nights had come and gone, Wolf returned. He was dressed all in white, from the cloud on his head and the robe on his body to the stalk of white corn and the white gourd rain-rattle in his hands. "Far to the east," he said, "I found these gifts for you: springtime rain, the light of morning, and young corn."

Wolf had hardly finished speaking when Bluebird arrived. He was dressed all in blue, from the cloud on his head and the robe on his body to the stalk of blue corn and the blue turquoise rattle in his hands. "Far to the south," he said, "I found these gifts for you: summer rain, blue sky, and soft corn."

Then, from the west, Lion arrived. He was dressed all in yellow, from the cloud on his head and the robe on his body to the stalk of yellow corn and the jasper rattle in his

hands. "Far to the west," he said, "I found these gifts for you: autumn rain, evening light, and ripe corn."

Finally Hummingbird arrived from the north. He was dressed in the bright colors of the northern lights, from the cloud on his head and the robe on his body to the stalk of multicolored corn and the abalone-shell bowl of colored beans in his hands. "Far to the north," he said, "I found these gifts for you: northern lights for winter nights, dried corn and beans for winter food, and an abalone storage bowl that will always be full."

First People realized that they needed the gifts of all four leaders. They decided to be ruled by a council of wise people rather than by a single chief. From that day until this, in order to remind the Navajo people of the gifts they brought them, Wolf wears a silvery white coat, Bluebird a blue-feathered coat, Lion a coat of yellow fur, and Hummingbird a coat of many colors.

But solving the question of leadership did not solve the problem of food. First People did not know the proper way to plant the seeds they had, and they did not think to pray and bless the seeds before they planted them. Consequently, it was not long before First People knew that the time had come when they must move to another world or starve. They all flew up to the roof of the Yellow World, but they could find no cracks in it. They flew around and around, becoming more and more tired, but still they could see no way to enter the Fourth World.

Suddenly four voices called to them from the next world—one from the east, one from the south, one from the west, and one from the north. Four faces, each wearing a blue mask, were looking down from the four edges of the roof. First People divided into four groups, and each flew toward a different face. Those who became the first Navajo flew to the east and let First Woman direct them into the next world. The Bird People flew to the south and let First Girl direct them toward the warm part of the next world, where they spent each winter thereafter. The Animal People flew to the west and let First Man direct them toward the mountainous part of the next world, where they made their homes among the trees. The Insect People flew to the north and let First Boy direct them toward the cold part of the next world, where they immediately burrowed into the ground and waited for warmer weather.

To the surprise of First People, the Fourth World, or Black-and-White World, was already populated with other human beings. Their neighbors were the Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, and other Indians who lived in pueblos. They also met Comanche, Apache, and Ute nearby. First Man and First Woman taught their people how to live in the Fourth World, where the days were white and the nights were black. They added corn and beans to their diet of roots, seeds, nuts, and berries. "Learn from your neighbors who live in pueblos how to cultivate beans and corn," they advised.

First Man and First Woman had hardly finished talking when two dust columns blew upon them, one from the south and one from the north. The two columns met with a crash, deposited two bundles upon the land, rose into the air, and disappeared.

"Oh, dear!" First Man exclaimed. "The North Wind has given us Coyote, who thinks only of being lazy and playing tricks!"

"Do not worry!" First Woman responded. "The South Wind has brought us Badger, who has the industry and determination that Coyote lacks!"

One day Coyote went to the Pueblo People and challenged Water Monster to a game of chance. Since Coyote cheated, he won everything Water Monster had, even his fur coat. When Coyote returned home, he noticed Water Monster's two babies sleeping inside the pocket of their father's fur coat. "Oh, well! I will keep these along with the coat," he said. "And I will be very careful not to say one word about them."

When Water Monster found that Coyote had taken his babies along with his coat, his heart filled with rage. "I will destroy the land in the Fourth World and all the people who live on it!" he cried. He dived to the bottom of the sea and opened up all the dams that confined the waters beneath the earth. As these waters poured into the ocean, the sea rose and began to cover the dry land. As more and more water filled the ocean bed, more and more water washed upon the land in angry black waves. Higher and higher the waves stretched, until they formed a wall of water as tall as the highest mountains.

Turkey, who was a pet of First Man and First Woman, was the first to discover the invading flood. When people heard his story, they prepared to leave their homes and head for the high mountains to the west. The people were sad to leave their rich crops, but they had no choice.

Most of the Navajo, the Hopi, the Zuni, the Acoma, the Apache, the Ute, and the Plains Indians gathered a supply of food and necessary items and headed for the mountains. At the head of the procession was Coyote, who had Water Monster's children, along with many other possessions, in a great bag. By the time the last people reached the mountaintop, the land below them had completely disappeared under a great flood. Those who remained behind turned into water people, such as fish and seals.

Once the people had gathered on the mountain peak, one wise man from each of the thirty-two clans of the Navajo stood in a circle, and each of them planted a bamboo seed. For four days and nights the medicine men prayed for a quick, strong growth of bamboo. When the dawn of the fifth day arrived, the bamboo plants had joined together to form one huge, high, hollow, stalk-like tree. The people carved a door in the eastern side of the tree, and one by one went inside, using ladders they and Spider had made to climb higher and higher.

Turkey was the very last to reach the mountaintop. He had stopped to gather some of each kind of seed, which he buried in his feathers. White, blue, yellow, red, and multicolored corn, black and white beans, squash, melon, pumpkin, tobacco, and sunflower seeds were among them. As Turkey waddled up the trail, the black waters were angrily rushing upon him. Their foam brushed the tip of his tail as First Boy grabbed his head and pulled him inside the bamboo tree, and the marks of that foam remain on Turkey's tail feathers to this day.

Inside the tree, the people remained safe and dry. They showed First Woman the treasures they had brought from their homes in the Fourth World. Together they had collected everything they would need to begin life anew once the flood waters had receded. Only Turkey had remembered to bring the seeds of all the foods they ate, although these were the most important of all. The people honored Turkey for his good sense, and they honor him still.

As the black waters continued to swirl angrily around the great bamboo tree, rising higher and higher, the people climbed higher and higher inside the reed. Locust was the first to leave the bamboo stalk. He made a hole in the sky and won the island he found in the Fifth World for the peoples of the Fourth World. One by one the small

animals entered the upper world, each using the treasures he or she had brought to make that world a better place. Badger, with a little help from Coyote, enlarged the tunnel so the creatures who were larger in size could also climb into the upper world.

So it came to pass that the last of the peoples of the Fourth World traveled up the tunnel into the Fifth World. The large animals were followed by the Hopi, the Zuni, and the other Pueblo people. The Apaches and the Plains Indians followed them. Finally the thirty-two Navajo clans emerged from the tunnel. First Woman was the last to leave. She brought Spider's ladder and the sacred eagle feathers. "From this time forth," she announced to her people, "we women will wear eagle feathers on our sacred headdresses, and we shall do the weaving for our people."

Even in the new land, the flood was still a threat. The angry waters continued to rise, and a lake began to form at the top of the tunnel. "Water Monster must be angry with us for some reason. Only he could create a flood as great as this!" First Woman exclaimed. "We had better find out what is wrong, or we shall all drown!"

"I am certain Coyote is to blame for our problem," First Man said. "Everywhere he goes, he wears a fur coat that is not even his. Let us search his possessions."

First Woman and First Man discovered Water Monster's babies in the fur coat Coyote had won. "Look here!" First Woman exclaimed. "Coyote has Water Monster's two babies. No wonder Water Monster is punishing us with a great flood! We must return his children to him at once!"

First Man and First Woman placed Water Monster's coat, with his babies in the pocket, into a boat and sent the boat out into the lake. When the boat came near a large blue bubble floating in the middle of the lake, the bubble suddenly burst and the boat, coat, and babies disappeared. Water Monster never troubled the people again.