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## The Hollow of Echoes


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# ***THE HOLLOW OF ECHOES***

***KATHLEEN DANKER***

***FELIX WHITE, SR.***



***Nebraska Curriculum Development Center***



# *The Hollow of Echoes*

**Kathleen Danker**

**Felix White, Sr.**

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*To*

*All the Winnebago people,  
to whom the stories belong.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Forward .....	vii
The Crow Family .....	viii
Glossary and Pronunciation Guide .....	ix
I Ho Chuhnk Land.....	1
II How the Buzzard Got to be So Ugly .....	9
III The Sons of Earthmaker and the Sorrows of Man .....	18
IV What Should I Do? .....	29
V The Orphan.....	33
VI On Keeping Your Wings Flapping .....	44
VII The Language of Praise and the Hollow of Echoes .....	52





## FOREWORD

*The Hollow of Echoes* is the result of collaboration between Mr. Felix White, Sr. and myself. Mr. White, who resides in Winnebago, Nebraska, is knowledgeable in many areas of traditional Winnebago culture including language, history, legends and law. During the spring of 1973, he recounted to me a number of Winnebago legends of which I made recordings. I have incorporated these legends into a fictional account of a present-day Winnebago grandfather using the stories to instruct his grandchildren in traditional ways of viewing situations they encounter in their daily lives. Almost all of the views of the grandfather in the work are paraphrases of the recorded views and observations of Mr. White. The characters and plot are fictional, but intended to reflect aspects of the community of Winnebago, Nebraska as it appeared to me in the early 1970's when I lived there as a UYA-VISTA worker.

Mr. White and I hope that *The Hollow of Echoes* will serve to preserve the legends it contains for the benefit of Winnebago students and other interested readers.

*Kathleen Danker*  
*February 25, 1978*  
*Lincoln, Nebraska*

## *The Crow Family:*

*George Crow*

*Winona, George's daughter*

*Winona's Children:*

*Kunu, or oldest boy, also called Mike, 17 years*

*Henu, or second boy, also called Danny, 12 years*

*Haga, or third boy, 8 years*

*Hinu, or oldest daughter, 16 years*

*Wihã, or second daughter, 7 years*

*Frank, George's son*

*Esther, Frank's daughter, 17 years*

*(Esther is also a Hinu or oldest daughter)*

G L O S S A R Y  
OF WINNEBAGO TERMS AND PHRASES

- Chó·ka: Grandfather  
 Chos·gé·ni·ka: a woolly woodpecker  
 Chy·ki·lu·xe·wi·lá: 'the-month-when-the-deer-breed'; November  
 De·ga: Uncle  
 Há·ga: third oldest son  
 He·lesh·gu·ni·ga: 'He-Who-Is-and-Isn't'; an evil supernatural being  
 He·lush·ga: a certain set of religious beliefs and observances  
 He·nu: second oldest son  
 Hi·nu: oldest daughter  
 Ho Chúh·nk: 'The Voice of Praise'; the Winnebago people's name for themselves and their language  
 Ho·já·lá·lá: the hollow (small valley) of echoes  
 Ká·ka: Grandmother  
 Ksap Ki·di·nuhk·gi: 'he sat and had consciousness about him; he sat in a conscious state'  
 Kú·nu: oldest son; in legends refers to Māūna's oldest son, the Trickster  
 Mā·ū·na: 'The Earthmaker'; the deity who created the world  
 O Wy·nuh·ni·ka i·xuh·ji·le·na: the little orphan is going by again  
 Wa·gūz·e·la: 'The Creator'; another name for the deity referred to most often as Māūna  
 Wa·kã Chúh·nk: the mysteriousness and sacredness of a supernatural being  
 Wa·ke·dó·gi·ya egi nuhk·shuh·na: a big mother raccoon  
 Wak·juhng·ká·ga: 'The Trickster' or 'The Foolish One'; the Kunu or oldest son of Māūna  
 Wang·gé·je·la: 'up there somewhere in space'  
 Wa·ny·ksap: sustained consciousness of moral responsibility  
 Wash·chihng·gé·ga: 'The Hare' or 'The Rabbit'; the fifth oldest son of Māūna  
 Wa·xo·pi·ni Xé·de·la: 'The Big Fair-Complexioned One'; another name for the deity most often referred to as Māūna  
 Wi·hã: second oldest daughter  
 Wij d'eh: 'This island'; the earth

Winnebago (pronounced Wih·nuh·bé·go) 1. the name generally used to refer to a particular woodland tribe of North American Indians, most of the members of which live today in the states of Wisconsin and Nebraska; 2. the name of an Indian reservation and a town in the state of Nebraska

Wo·lak: stories told about the legendary history of the Winnebago people

Wy·kūh: sacred legends about supernatural personages told only in the wintertime

Wy·nuh·ni·kuh: 'the little orphan'

### Approximate Pronunciation of Sounds in Winnebago

a as in <u>ah</u>	uh as in <u>ugly</u>
ã as in <u>conked</u>	ũh as in <u>sunk</u>
e as in <u>ate</u>	y (vowel) as in <u>kite</u>
eh as in <u>fed</u>	y (consonant) as in <u>yes</u>
i as in <u>meet</u>	g as in <u>go</u>
ĩ as in <u>bean</u>	ang as in <u>long</u>
ih as in <u>fit</u>	ihng as in <u>sing</u>
o as in <u>coat</u>	uhng as in <u>rung</u>
u as in <u>too</u>	x as in (German) <u>ich</u>
ũ as in <u>tuned</u>	l is a cross between an l and an r

All other consonants and consonant clusters pronounced as in common English usage.

## *I. Ho Chuhnk Land*

It was a winter Sunday morning in Winnebago, Nebraska as George Crow walked from the Dutch Reformed Church up the hills south and east to his house. He pulled his cap down over his ears and enjoyed the bright sunlight and brisk air. As usual, it had made him feel good to sing in the Sunday morning choir and participate in the worship service. He had seen and visited with a number of old friends, and Joe Bear had given him a copy of the Winnebago Indian News which he had missed getting the week before. As he avoided the ruts on the frozen streets Mr. Crow glanced down at the newsletter to where it noted that in the Winnebago language November was called 'Chykiluxewila,' "the month when the deer breed." He recalled when he was a little boy and his grandmother had taught him the names of the months and told him stories with each one. She had even taught him the name of the thirteenth month although at that time no one used it any more. He tried to recall what she had called that thirteenth moon with no success and decided to ask his Uncle Bill the next time he went to visit.

The names of the Winnebago months would be a good thing to teach the grandchildren, Mr. Crow thought to himself as he walked. Mr. Crow's daughter, Winona, and her five children lived with him. The children ranged in age from Mike, or Kunu, who was a senior in high school, to Wihã who was seven. Mr. Crow also had a married son, Frank, living in Winnebago who visited often to take a hand in the raising of his nephews and nieces.

Usually the whole family went to church together but today Winona had taken Mike, Hinu, and Danny, the three older kids, to Sioux City for a Sunday School meeting. Some family friends had invited the younger ones, Wihã and Hega, to go up to Mass at St. Augustine's Mission later in the morning.

November days could be pretty dreary in Nebraska but this day promised to be fine. Strong sunshine sparkled on

yesterday's fallen snow and gave a little warmth to the air in spite of a light breeze. As Mr. Crow approached his house, he turned to look back over the rolling hills of prairie farmland extending west from town. Today this sight was too dazzling for more than a brief glance and he let his eyes move down to the familiar landmarks of Winnebago itself.

As in many little Nebraska towns much of Winnebago looked as if it had been constructed at least fifty years back. This was true of most of the buildings downtown along Highway 77: the post office, the grocery store, the bar, the restaurant, the hardware store, etc. To his left Mr. Crow could see the big square Indian hospital, the first building to catch your eye as you drove north through Winnebago. He recalled that in 1932, when Winona was born, the hospital had only been under construction, so he had taken his wife Mary out to the old hospital east of town. That building, originally part of the Winnebago agency, was long gone and Mr. Crow reflected that, in spite of the dilapidated look of the downtown area, Winnebago was steadily growing and changing. Much had changed even in the few years since Mary had passed away.

A quarter of a mile south of town along the highway was a new bright orange metal structure, the Winnebago Cedar Timbers Construction Co. Between Mr. Crow and the hospital was the Projects, a brick housing development built in the 1960's. To the east of the Projects the building of more government housing would resume in the spring, and Winnebago looked forward to a lot more construction in the coming years. Mr. Crow felt that new jobs and housing were optimistic signs for the survival of the town and the tribe.

Turning around, George Crow contemplated his own home. It was a moderate-sized white wood house facing downhill on the southeast corner of a side street a few blocks up from the highway. The family seldom used the front door or front yard but entered the house through the back porch. On the south side of the house was the spot reserved for the summer garden, the skeleton framework of the round lodge he and the kids had built the year before, and the cooking pit and barrel where Winona boiled meat and corn soup in the summertime when they had a lot of visitors. The back yard was accessible to the street through the alley, and it was there that Mr.

Crow kept the family cars. Only the Chevy was running right now, but the '68 Ford wasn't in bad shape and would run fine next spring once it became warm enough for him to replace the radiator with the one from the '66 Galaxy. Today, as George Crow entered the yard, he found Frank working something loose from under the broken-down Galaxy. Frank looked up to explain that Joe and Emma White Beaver needed a muffler and so he had offered to get them the one off their old Ford.

As Mr. Crow watched his son work he heard barking and laughter coming from behind the old shed that he and Mike used for stretching hides. Looking around the corner, he saw Wihã and Haga playing with their dog, Blackie. Wihã had the dog by a rope and was holding her tightly while Haga made horrible faces and advanced on them saying, "I'm gonna eat that dog. I'm gonna make her into hot dogs and fry her on a stick. I'm gonna put chili on her and make her into a chili dog." Then the children started laughing again and Blackie ran back and forth between them barking in excitement.

"Ho," Mr. Crow said, "What are you kids up to?"

Wihã ran over to her grandfather and uncle and gave them each a kiss. "Oh, Choka," she said to her grandfather, "We're just playing about that lady we saw down there that time."

"What lady?" he asked.

"That white lady down at the Pow-Wow. They were from New Jersey and they got stuck in the mud. And when that man got out, that dog got out too. She yelled at the man to catch him because she said if he got away and we caught him, we'd eat him."

"Yeah," said Haga, "And she got out of the car and got hold of his leash but it got caught under one of those logs and she couldn't get it loose. We were going to get it loose for her but she yelled for that man if we started to come over there. So she just stood there getting muddy until the man came back for them. She sure was funny."

"She sounds funny," George Crow agreed, "and foolish too. She reminds me of a story my grandmother told me a long time ago."

"I bet I know what kind of story you mean, Dad," said Frank, who had finished disconnecting the muffler. "It sounds like one of those Trickster stories they used to tell when I was a



kid." Turning to the children he added, "You two better go in the house and clean up before church. You're as dirty as Blackie."

They all wiped their feet on the enclosed back porch, hung up their coats, and went into the kitchen. Mr. Crow poured himself a cup of coffee, sat down at the kitchen table and lit a cigarette while Frank wiped the grime off the muffler.

Wihā went to wash up and Haga got his good coat from upstairs. When the children came back to the kitchen, Frank checked their hands and behind their ears to make sure they had washed properly that morning.

George Crow looked over at his grandchildren. "Since your ride isn't here yet, why don't you sit down and I'll tell you one of those stories Frank was talking about. The story is about Wakjuhngkaga, the one we call the Trickster or the Foolish One. He's also called Kunu because he was the first son Māuna, the Earthmaker, sent down to help those-who-walk-on-two-legs, the human beings, when they were being threatened by monsters and giants. My Kaka told me this story and it went like this:

It seems that the Trickster had been traveling all over the world and visiting all the people as he usually did, just going about his foolish business, and he was coming home. As he walked over the hills he counted them because he was getting pretty close to the Ho Chuhnk or Winnebago land, to their town. It just so happened that Kunu was going up the steep north side of a hill rather than the south side which was washed away and more gradual. It was almost high noon and as he climbed he thought, "Ah, this is the last hill." He was anxious to get back home and he started to climb the steep slope very rapidly. As the Trickster neared the top he thought he heard drums. He wasn't quite sure he heard them and he hurried on climbing; then he stopped again to listen. "Sure enough," he thought. "They're drumming over there in the village. Maybe the people are getting together because I'm coming home. The scouts must have seen me. I'd better listen real good." So he listened and he heard the drums going thump-thump, thump-thump. "Oh boy," he said, "They're really putting on the dance for me."

It was high noon when Kunu got to the top of the hill. He was huffing and puffing, and he stopped to catch his breath and to enjoy the breeze. As he looked down the hillside to the valley below he saw the bright feathers of a great crowd of dancing people. "They must have known I was coming," the Trickster thought. So he stood up on a stump and yelled, "Hey, I'm home!" However nobody stopped dancing and Kunu could hear the drums continue to thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump. "Oh well," he said to himself, "I'll try again." So he yelled like you do when you're hollering at a person who's way off in the distance—"A-hee-a-ye." And the echo of his call reverberated—that is bounced again and again off the other hills. Again no one paid any attention to the Trickster's calls. The drums were beginning to get fainter when Wakjuhngkaga suddenly had a thought. "They're having a dancing contest down there and so it's no wonder they won't stop. Well, I've just gotten home in time. If dancing's what they want to do, I'll show them who's the champion dancer."

Wakjuhngkaga had a pack with him which he carried on his back. It contained a raccoon blanket that he used as a bedroll, a little box which he always kept with him, a bag of songs, and whatever else he needed on his journeys. The Trickster took off this pack and set it on the hilltop. Then he gave a few war whoops and started dancing. He danced and danced and as he danced he thought to himself, "I've got the advantage on those people down there in the valley since I'm here on this hill where there's more breeze to keep me cool. I'll certainly outdance the lot of them."

Well, Kunu kept on dancing from high noon until the sun was about to go down. At this time the breeze quit blowing up on the hilltop. He looked into the valley and noticed that all was quiet down there. "Ha!" he thought to himself. "They've finally seen a good dancer and they are all watching me dance. I outdanced the whole lot." Wakjuhngkaga kept up his dancing for a while longer. Then he decided, "Well, now I'll go down and get the praise of the people." So, after picking up his gear and making sure

to place his little box where it belonged, he walked down the hill. When the Trickster came to the place where he had thought he had seen many dancers, he found himself standing alone among some sumac bushes. It was late summer and the sumac leaves had begun to change colors. Some were a bright yellow and some were a mixture of red and yellow, sort of orange. Later on, about frost time, why they would turn red, plum red. Kunu realized that it was these brightly colored leaves blowing in the breeze of the day which had died down at sunset, that he had thought were the feathers of a crowd of dancing people. "It is no wonder," he said to himself, "that people call me the Foolish One."

"That's one story about Wakjuhngkaga, the Trickster," said George Crow as he finished.

"Choka," asked Haga, "Where did that drum come from?"

"Well," he replied, "You know when you exert quite a lot of energy in doing something your heart will pound and sometimes the sound seems to be up in your head. The Trickster had been climbing hills all morning and the sound he heard was his own heart beating, not a drum, but he didn't know it. It was especially easy for Wakjuhngkaga to be fooled about this because his heart was not always a part of him at that time. I mean that the different parts of his body did not always work together as a whole. Why once his left hand got jealous because his right hand was skinning a buffalo, so it tried to grab the buffalo and skinning knife away from the right hand like this. Mr. Crow made a fierce face and grabbed his right wrist and shook it. "So the right hand got mad and attacked the left one with a knife." As Mr. Crow made his hands struggle back and forth, Haga and Wihan laughed and laughed.

"Oh, Choka," said Haga, "that's funny."

"Yes," said Mr. Crow when he managed to stop laughing. "The Trickster was all cut up before he realized how stupid he was and made his hands stop fighting. Oh, he was quite a fellow. He was just getting into trouble all of the time. Why one time. . . ."

Just then they heard the sound of a car honking in the street alongside the house. The Brooks had come to take Wihā

and Haga to church. You two go on, now, and I will tell you some more stories about the Trickster another time,” said Mr. Crow.

That night after the younger kids had gone to bed and the older ones were watching TV, Mr. Crow and his daughter were sitting in the kitchen figuring out the monthly bills. Winona was employed as a secretary for the Tribal Council and Mr. Crow worked part-time as a maintenance man at the B.I.A. building. Their combined incomes were enough to keep the family fed and clothed and to pay for upkeep on the cars and house. George Crow’s old house was cramped for a family of seven, but it had belonged to his mother and was paid for.

As Winona addressed the last bill, Mr. Crow spoke up. “You know, I haven’t thought about any of those old Winnebago stories for a long time, but today I told Wihã and Haga the one about Wakjuhngkaga and the sumac. Do you remember that one?”

Winona was putting a stamp on an envelope. “Well,” she said, “Uncle Bill used to sit around and tell us those stories about Wakjuhngkaga, Washchinggega and them when we were little, but I don’t remember the one about the sumac. I guess I’d recognize some of the stories if I heard them again. But, you know, I feel bad that I never learned more about those old things to tell the kids.” Winona put the last bill with the others and went over to her sewing table on the other side of the stove. She sat down at the sewing machine and began to work on a dress she was making for Wihã.

Mr. Crow lit himself a cigarette. “Yes,” he said, “I was just thinking. Kaka Crow used to tell me stories and talk to me by the hour. She used to say that it wouldn’t be her fault if there came a time when I was supposed to know what to say at some public occasion or ceremony and all I’d be able to do would be to sit and scratch my head and cough because of my ignorance. Well, some of it I remember and some of it just seemed to go in one ear and out the other. That was before I was nine and they sent me away to Indian school at Genoa that she told me those things. Later on I guess I heard some more stories from my uncles and so on. But, you know, I always sort of thought about those stories, like the Wakjuhngkaga ones, and wondered what they meant. Some of us guys used to get together and try to

figure out why they'd tell a certain story. We decided that a lot of them, especially some of the ones about sex, were warnings so that we wouldn't do those kinds of things in our own lives."

Winona concentrated for a minute on gathering a sleeve. "I think it would be a good thing," she said, "if you would tell the kids those old stories more often. I'd like to hear them myself again too."

"Ha-unh," agreed Mr. Crow. "I'll have to think about that. Times have changed and the kids go to school all day, but I guess the schools don't teach them everything. I've always thought those were good stories, and I think I've got pretty fine grandchildren. If Kaka Crow was willing to try to get things through my thick skull, maybe I could try to do the same for these ones here."

Soon after this conversation the Crow family went to bed. The next day was Monday and everyone had to get up early for work or school.

## *II. How the Buzzard Got to be So Ugly*

The sled was long and swift. Everything about it from the bright varnish on the blond wood to the shiny red paint on the runners showed that it was new. Danny or Henu (second oldest boy) felt proud of his twelfth birthday present as he pulled it up the long hill between St. Augustine Mission and the Winnebago public school. As the sleds of other boys and girls came whizzing down the slope he skillfully stepped aside only far enough to avoid being hit. Sledding had always been one of his favorite winter games, even though he had had to use Mike's old sled which didn't steer worth a darn. On this Friday afternoon with his new sled, Danny had discovered that he could weave around the other sleds with more precision, control, and a lot more speed than he had ever done before.

When he reached the top of the hill Danny met Haga England who also had a sled, and a pretty good one at that. Haga England was in Danny's class and they did a lot of things together—swimming at Homer Lake in the summertime, hunting down by the river in the fall and spring, playing baseball by the tracks. The two boys quickly arranged to race to the bottom, and they lined up their sleds at the brink of the slope. Danny backed off for a number of yards and, on Haga England's signal, raced forward and flung himself face down on the sled.

What a burst of speed! Danny felt like he was flying on the ground, and powdered snow blew up into his eyes as if he were in a blizzard. Almost without thinking he reacted to the number of things he had to do at once. He squinted his eyes to see through the dazzling snow and guided the sled down over the contours of ground in a path which would allow it the quickest and smoothest passage. At the same time he was on the look out to avoid other sledders and climbers. Whenever the view permitted, Danny glanced to the side to check on the position of Haga England. Halfway down the hill the two boys were still

pretty much even. Henu strained himself forward and guided his sled to the left around a rise in the ground. Suddenly, from the right, a sled came shooting into his path. Danny jerked to the left and his sled wobbled back and forth for a long minute as if it would upset, before coming to rest in a snow bank. At first he just lay there to clear his head and to get used to the sudden lack of motion. Then he pushed his sled once more onto a downward path and continued to the bottom.

“Slow guy,” Haga England commented after Danny came to a stop. “You take your time coming down.”

“Slow nothing!” exclaimed Danny, “Some fool just about wiped me out. Let’s do it again and I’ll be so far ahead you’ll need binoculars to see my boots.”

“No way,” countered his friend, “but I’ll give you a second chance to see how fast I am. Let’s go.”

The two boys started with their sleds back up the long hill. On the way up, Danny saw Hinu and their cousin Esther, Frank’s girl, driving towards him from the north on the road past the St. Augustine gym. Esther was 17 and her dad had let her have a car for the afternoon and evening in order to drive to the basketball game in Rosalie. Esther and Hinu went everywhere together and were good friends, even though Hinu was a year younger than her cousin. Today Esther had promised to drive Hinu and Danny to the game with her when she went. As Danny reached the top of the hill, Hinu and Esther were waiting for him.

“Hey, Henu! It’s our turn,” they said. “You promised you’d let us use the sled when we drove you over here earlier.”

“But Haga England and I are having a race right now,” Danny objected. “You can have the sled later.”

“No, there won’t be time,” Hinu pointed out. “We have to be home real soon to get dressed to go to the game.”

“Tough!” said Danny. He signaled to Haga England and they quickly lined up and took off. As he went down, Danny heard Hinu yell after him that he was selfish. There were fewer sleds on the slope this time and neither boy had any mishaps. His new sled responded well to his directions, and Danny made it to the bottom first. This pleased him. But when he looked back up to Esther and Hinu he saw that they had driven off. He would have to pull the sled back to the house.

It was getting late and the wind was beginning to grow cold, so Danny decided to call it quits and walk back into town. About 20 minutes later he got to his own backyard. Danny became apprehensive when he didn't see Esther's car and he sprinted into the house only to find everyone gone except for his Uncle Frank, who had apparently been waiting for him.

Danny sat on a chair in the corner of the living room and stared at his feet. He didn't even turn on the TV set. Frank finished a chapter of the book he was reading, and without looking up, commented that the others had left about ten minutes back. In a sullen voice Danny complained, "They said they'd take me so I told Mom to go on ahead. Then they went and left. They're just mean. I got here in time for us to get there, so they would have had time to wait for me, but they didn't. All they think about is themselves."

Frank Crow disregarded his nephew's complaints. "They said you've been real selfish out there today," he said. "You've been playing Wakjuhngkaga again, enneh?"

"I don't know what you mean, Dega," said Danny. "I'm not Wakjuhngkaga."

"You know what I'm talking about, Henu," countered his uncle. "Since the Trickster seems to be your favorite character, I think I'll ask Dad to tell a story about him when they get back tonight.

Frank left it at that. He hadn't felt up to going to the game in Rosalie because of a bad cold and he didn't feel like arguing. He laid down his book, went over to the phone, and called his Aunt Alice for a long chat. Eventually Danny turned on the TV.

A few hours later Frank and Danny heard car doors slamming in the back yard. George, Winona, Haga, Wihã, Hinu, and Esther came in and hung up their coats on the back porch.

"Oh, Dega," cried Wihã, "you should have seen Kunu. He made ten baskets and we won!"

"Yes," said Winona, "he did real well tonight. The team went out to celebrate afterwards and I said he could go. I hope they're careful."

"Ho," said Frank. "He'll miss the story. I told this one here that I'd ask Dad to tell a story about Wakjuhngkaga tonight. Esther, I think you should stay and listen, too."

While the family ate supper George Crow thought about



what he would say. He knew that Frank wanted him to tell a story that would teach Henu and the others something about the bad effects of selfishness and revenge. From among the stories his grandmother had told him as a child he recalled one that should fit the bill.

“Okay,” he said when everyone was finished eating. “Be quiet and listen.”

The last time we talked about Wakjuhngkaga he had danced all day alone with the sumac. Now, I don’t know for certain whether it was the next day or when, but sometime after that the Trickster was traveling around and he climbed a high hill where stood several trees. Some of the trees didn’t have leaves or branches, some were just trunks, and some others had plenty of leaves and gave good shade. Kunu found a shady spot. He wrapped himself in his raccoon skin blanket, laid down on his back, and propped his hands under his head for a pillow. Lying there he looked straight up in the sky and way above him saw a bird. It was sailing around up there with ease, no struggle at all.

The Trickster thought to himself how wonderful it must be to get so high and from that high spot see a great area of the country below. At the same time that the Trickster was looking up, this bird happened to be looking down, and he saw that there was something by the tree. It looked like an animal, possibly one that might make a nice meal, so the bird sailed down around a little closer. As soon as he circled close to Wakjuhngkaga, the bird saw that he was being watched. He lit in a dead tree without leaves or many branches. As he sat in this tree the bird thought to himself, “I’ll just brush off my feathers a little bit and let that one down there enjoy my beauty.” This bird was very vain. He was a buzzard, a beautiful bird.

Well, Wakjuhngkaga was lying on the ground watching him and he called out, “Hello little brother. What brings you down here? Oh, I certainly enjoyed watching you up there sailing around without any effort. It must be wonderful to do things like that!” The bird didn’t answer him. “Oh little brother,” began the Trickster again, “Did I ever tell you that you are a very handsome bird?”

“No,” said the bird.

“Well you certainly are. If you make just the slightest movement while you’re standing up there your feathers look so beautiful. Aw, you are a handsome bird. But I think your ability to fly way up and see a large part of the country from just one place is the best. Would you give me a ride up there so I could get a little glimpse of what you enjoy?”

“That I might,” said the beautiful bird. He was pleased that Wakjuhngkaga had praised him and buttered him up. “We’ll try it,” the buzzard said. But when he flew closer to where he could see the Trickster he objected, “No, you’re too heavy and you’re too big. I don’t believe I could even get off the ground with you.”

“Oh,” said Kunu, “I’ll fix that up right away.” So Kunu immediately thought about his stature. He said to himself, “I’ll become just the right size so that the bird can carry me and my pack.” In an instant it happened; the Trickster was no larger than a baby.

The buzzard said, “You’ll sit on my back.”

“Yes,” Wakjuhngkaga agreed, “and I’m going to hang on, too.”

Well, Kunu got on the buzzard’s back and they took off. As soon as the bird was airborne he flapped his wings, got up speed, and circled around and around. He probably hit an updraft or air current going up and away they went!

“Oh!” exclaimed the Trickster, “This is the life! Eh, brother, you certainly have the life to be up here where you can see all over. Eh, you must have to have good eyesight too. Brother, you just have a wonderful life sailing around.”

Well, they flew around for quite a spell. The bird had planned to take the Trickster for a short ride and bring him back, but Wakjuhngkaga kept asking for more. “Brother, will you take me over there?” he’d say. Then when they got over there and looked around he’d say, “Will you take me back this way . . . no, over here, not over there . . . over this way.” Evidently Kunu started getting bossy. This irked that beautiful bird and he started to whirl around and around and suddenly he banked way up there in the

air. "Hey, hey, oh, oh! You take it easy—you'll make me fall!" the Trickster cried.

This outcry gave the buzzard an idea. He cruised around and around and started going lower and lower. He was thinking of a hollow tree he had seen somewhere. Finally the bird located the right tree. He passed over it and quickly did a sort of flip which dumped Wakjuhngkaga right down into its empty center. This tree had no branches and the inside was burned out and smooth so that the Trickster, being the small size that he was, could not climb out. As this took place, the Trickster called the buzzard all kinds of evil names. "You are an evil bird," he said. "You are an evil spirit, doing this to me. When I think of a way to get out of here I'm going to punish you somehow." The buzzard paid no attention to these threats and flew away.

Down in the hollow tree center Kunu thought of his former ways of traveling around and he said to himself, "Here I am imprisoned." As the Trickster thought of the way he used to be he suddenly changed back to the size of his normal self. Then he was stuck so tight he could hardly move. Just then Wakjuhngkaga heard what sounded like women chopping down trees and talking in the Winnebago language. He thought quickly, and when the women came close to the hollow tree he sang out in a deep voice, "I am a big mother raccoon."

"Weheheh," the women said, "there's something singing over here." So they came around to the hollow trunk and listened again, saying, "I think it was right here that we heard that song." Sure enough, they heard Wakjuhngkaga singing again, "I am a big Wakedogiya egi nuhkshuhna, a big mother raccoon."

The women said, "We should get this raccoon," and they began to chop at the tree. When they had chopped a hole through the shell of the trunk, the Trickster held up his raccoon-hide blanket in the opening. "Oh, my, that is a big one," said the women.

"Yes, I am a big one," agreed Kunu in a deep voice. "You don't dare cut me up with that ax—just chop the hole bigger." So the women chopped and chopped and chopped. When the opening got big enough for Wakjuhng-

kaga to get out, he dropped his blanket and laughed at the women, "Ha, ha, ha, ha." Then he stepped out of the hole in the trunk. The women were so angry at the Trickster for fooling them that they chased after him with their clubs and axes, but he got away.

For a long time after this the Trickster did his thing. He went here and there tricking other animals and what not, but he always had it on his mind that he wanted to get even with that buzzard. At first he didn't know exactly what he could do to him, but he formulated a firm resolve to set about his revenge some way or other. He didn't care how long it took. Wakjuhngkaga thought about plan after plan. "No, that won't work." Finally he hit upon an idea while watching a herd of buffalo. "Now there! I'll become a buffalo and I'll die out there and become just what that buzzard is always looking for—some carrion."

The Trickster entered among the buffalo herd and changed himself into a great big buffalo. He ate grass and grew fat, and one day he laid down and he died. Only he probably looked up to watch for that big bird every once in awhile to see if he was being taken in. So the Trickster, as a dead buffalo, lay there all day long in the hot sun and rotted. It was terrible.

After awhile there was a bird flying up in the sky—a little woodpecker that the Winnebagoes call Chosgenika. I guess he's the wooly woodpecker, the one that's always hopping up and down a tree looking for bugs and talking. He's a noisy little fellow. Well, he's the one that spotted that buffalo, and he went into the woods and told all the meat-eating birds that there was a big meal out there going to waste. All the birds came out and looked the buffalo over. My, he was a big fat buffalo! But not one of the birds could puncture his hide. They pecked all over him and even tried to peck out his eyes, but he had them closed tight. His hide was so tough that there was nowhere that the birds could penetrate. Finally they called on the magpie, who was a large and strong bird. They wanted him to dig a hole in the buffalo's side, right in his flank.

The magpie pecked and pecked and almost bent his beak. Finally he said, "Why don't I do it my own way? The easiest way to enter a tough animal like this is right below

the tail.” So the magpie went back to the buffalo’s anus and began pecking away. Sure enough, he soon found an entrance. Then all of the meat-eating birds started coming down, pecking inside, and flying away with a piece of fat.

Eventually word got up to the big buzzard. He flew in and settled on the top of a high tree from where he could look down on the scene below. He said to himself, “I must remember to watch out for that Wakjuhngkaga because he is probably out to get me, to play a trick on me.” A long time went by and the meat-eating birds had to go way inside the buffalo to bring out the fat. They hollered up at the big bird, “Hey, brother, we’ve gotten to the most delicious part. You’d better come on down.” Finally the buzzard thought, “Well, I guess this is it. That buffalo’s been dead awhile and they’ve about got him eaten up. I’ll just go down and see what they’re talking about.”

The big bird flapped down to the buffalo and looked inside. Sure enough, there was nice juicy fat way in there. “We saved it for you, brother,” the others cried. “You most handsome of all us birds, we saved it.”

Well, grandchildren, I can just see that beautiful bird. If he was a human being I would say he rolled up his sleeves and prepared himself to reach way in there and take a big peck at that fat. He stuck in his head and when he had it all the way in the buffalo closed up his anus opening. Then the beast stood up with the bird dangling behind him and he started to eat grass. He went down to a creek and drank a lot of water. Then the buffalo ate more grass, just the nice juicy grass, grass which would make nice, strong, hot, ‘that which makes the grass grow green.’

After a day or so, the buffalo released the bird and changed himself back into Wakjuhngkaga. “Now, most handsome of all birds,” Kunu said, “I hope you enjoyed your dinner.”

Well, the bird just sat there kind of woozy, you know. Finally he came to his senses, saw the Trickster, and flew up into a tall tree. There he sat until his feathers dried on his neck. The buzzard decided that he’d better preen himself after a good shake. But when he went to give his head a shake, the feathers all fell off. The buzzard didn’t

have a feather left on his neck or head.

The Trickster looked up at him and said, "Now, you most handsome of all birds, henceforth you and your kind will be like you are now. That's what you get for playing tricks on good people." After that the Trickster left and went on his way. And even today you can see birds with no feathers on their heads. I guess they call them turkey buzzards. It would be hard to believe that such a bird was beautiful a long time ago. This brings that story to a close.

George Crow sat silently at the table for awhile after the story ended.

Danny said, "Choka, you didn't tell us what the moral of the story was this time."

"That's right, Henu," he replied. "Sometimes I don't think I have to say, 'Well, that's why, grandchildren, we tell the story, so that you might not do this in your life.' Maybe sometimes I'll just let you think about it. If you're curious enough to ask, then I'll tell you. Other times, I can see that you are observant, that you are coming on now, and I don't have to tell you the answer because I know you are getting it."

### *III. The Sons of Earthmaker and the Sorrows of Man*

After work one evening George Crow decided to go visit his brother Bill and sister-in-law Alice. They didn't get to town much from their farmhouse north of Winnebago because it was difficult for Alice to get around in her wheelchair. Today the roads to their house were frozen solid and passable, so after work Mr. Crow drove over for a visit. He stayed for supper and got to teasing with his sister-in-law so that it was late by the time he got home. Walking into the kitchen he came upon Danny who was bent over a piece of paper and surrounded by paints and drawing pencils. Mr. Crow saw that his grandson was busy and left him alone.

Eventually Danny laid down his paints, looked around to see who was there, and said, "Choka, come and see what I've done for my art project." The boy showed his grandfather a scene of sky above a forest. It was a green summer forest, made up of the kinds of trees found in the Timbers east of Winnebago. There were elms and oaks and a few walnut trees, and in the center of the forest there was the smooth shell of a dead hollow trunk. Directly above this tree trunk flew a large bird with an enormous wing span and brilliantly colored green and purple feathers on its neck and head. Midway between the bird and the hollow tree tumbled a small topsy-turvy creature with a pack on its back.

"I like the way you drew Wakjuhngkaga," said Mr. Crow. "A skinny fellow with long spindly legs. Yes, I like that."

"What do you think he looked like, Choka?" asked the boy.

"Oh, I think of him as looking basically like a human being except when he changed himself into an animal or something. Most of the time he was really big, I believe, rather like a giant. He would have had to have been big to have the kind of appetite he did. The Trickster had such an enormous appetite that one day he roasted and ate an entire bear and her two cubs. He

had the dilating powers of an anaconda. Wakjuhngkaga was a gangly and uncoordinated fellow, too. In the Hebrew language there is a word that describes him fairly well: 'meshegana.' 'Meshegana' means that of the Trickster's mind, soul, and body, each didn't know what the others were doing. Wakjuhngkaga just didn't seem to have sense enough to know what he had control over and what he could do.

There is a story in which the Trickster caught some ducks, he continued. . . .

The Trickster roasted the ducks in the ashes of a fire and was preparing to eat them. But every time he raised a piece of meat up to his mouth to take a bite, there was a tree close by that would go "eeeeeeee" and disturb him. Kunu said to the tree, "Ehhh, cut it out, knock it off." Of course the tree didn't answer the Trickster because he didn't like to be scolded. The Trickster reached down to get another piece of that duck, and the limbs of the tree rubbed together again, going "eeeeeeee!" Kunu warned the tree to stop making that noise or he would climb up there to see what he could do about it. There happened to be a wind blowing that day, and when the Trickster began to take another bite the wind blew and of course the tree went to squeaking again. "Boy, that's it!" said Wakjuhngkaga. "I'm coming up there."

He climbed the tree and found where the limbs were rubbing. He reached up, got hold of them, and was going to pull them apart or something when all of a sudden the wind stopped blowing. When that happened Kunu's hand was caught between the limbs and he couldn't get himself free. He hollered at the tree to move, and while he was making all of that noise some wolves came by. If Wakjuhngkaga had kept still, the wolves would not have known he was around. He was caught up there in the tree, his meat was down below, and the wolves were coming. Even so, he forgot his situation and began to visit. "Hey brothers," he called out.

The wolves looked up and saw him. One of them said, "Oh, that's Wakjuhngkaga up there. I wonder what he's been up to. What are you doing up in that tree?"



the wolf asked the Trickster.

“Oh, I’m just sitting here,” Kunu answered.

“Well we think you’re up to something,” said the wolves, and they started moving around.

“Hey! Don’t go over that way!” yelled Wakjuhngkaga. So the wolves said to themselves, “He doesn’t want us to go over that way. There must be something there.” They stepped over to where the Trickster had been roasting the ducks in the ashes. “Oh! No wonder!” they exclaimed.

“Stay out of there!” hollered Wakjuhngkaga.

But the wolves looked up at him and said, “If you aren’t going to come down to eat, why then just stay up there. We’re hungry.” So the wolves sat down and ate up the Trickster’s ducks. “Thanks brother,” they said. “Thanks for the dinner,” and they went their wolfish way.

Wakjuhngkaga began scolding the tree again and finally the tree spoke. “Brother,” he said, “we only move when the wind moves us. We are not like you who have power and do not use it. We stand here for years in one spot and we don’t move around. You have power and don’t use it. We are not that way. We are powerless. We are put where we are and that is where we stand.” In this way the tree called Kunu’s attention to his gifts. Then Kunu broke himself free from the tree. That was something he should have done before. This story calls attention to the fact that some people do not even think about their resourcefulness in predicaments. They begin to holler ‘help’ and this and that until something else happens to them.”

“Yes,” said George Crow to Danny after he had finished the story, “I do like your picture.”

“I hope Miss Fischer thinks it’s O.K., too,” said Henu. “I didn’t get one done for her at school today so she said I should do it at home.”

The next day Henu told his grandfather, “My art teacher wanted to know in class today if she could come over to the house to talk to you. I think it has something to do with the Trickster stories.

“Ho,” said Mr. Crow.

Later on Miss Fischer, Danny's art teacher, called and made arrangements to visit Mr. Crow at 7 p.m. Winona made fry bread that evening and after supper she left some on the stove to stay warm. She would feel rude if she didn't offer a guest something to eat, and she hoped that Danny's teacher would be polite enough to accept. White people, especially outsiders like teachers, often didn't know the right ways of behaving in Winnebago.

During supper Joe Green dropped by. His car had died up by the Mission and he asked George Crow if he would come with him to look at the engine. When he was done eating Mr. Crow put on his coat and boots and the two men went off up the hill. At seven, Miss Fischer rang the front doorbell. She was a young woman, new to the Winnebago school that year. Henu let his teacher in and took her to the kitchen to introduce her to his mother. The two women shook hands. "Where is Mr. Crow?" asked Miss Fischer.

"He's out getting a friend's car started," said Winona. "You wait. He'll be back."

"I was wondering if he would be willing to tell my art class an Indian story," the young teacher inquired.

"You'll have to talk to him about that," Winona replied. Winona offered the young woman fry bread and coffee. While they ate Winona asked where Miss Fischer was from and where she stayed. The teacher explained that she was from Lincoln and that she lived in Walthill because of the housing shortage in Winnebago. Actually, she had also decided to live in Walthill because that town felt a bit more familiar and comfortable to her than the muddy streets and run-down buildings which had been her first impression of Winnebago.

They talked about Danny's art work and Winona told Miss Fischer that she also thought Wihã's paintings were good. Winona went to the living room and took some of Wihã's drawings off the wall for the teacher to see. After this, Miss Fischer asked for the recipe for fry bread and Winona was explaining to her how to deep-fry the dough when George Crow came in the back door.

Winona introduced Miss Fischer to her father and they shook hands. "What I came to see you about," said the art teacher, as she looked Mr. Crow in the eyes, "was to ask if you

would come to school and tell an Indian story to my class.” Mr. Crow knew that white people often started talking about business right away without any preliminaries and that they didn’t really mean to be rude. He mentioned to the two women that he and Joe Green had succeeded in starting the car. Then he asked Miss Fischer if she would like a cup of coffee, where she was from, where she lived now, and how Danny was doing in class. The young woman told him that she had a cup of coffee, that she was from Lincoln, that she lived in Walthill, and that Danny’s work was very good. She was beginning to think that they would never get around to the subject she came to discuss. She explained that she was very pleased with Hena’s painting of Wakjuhngkaga and the buzzard, and that seeing it had given her an idea for a class project. She would like Mr. Crow to come and tell her afternoon class a Winnebago story and afterwards she would have the students make drawings of whatever parts of the story struck their imaginations.

Mr. Crow was silent for a while. Then he explained, “You know, I work at the B.I.A. building during the afternoons in order to help support Winona and the kids. I could probably get off work some afternoon to go down to the school but I wouldn’t get paid for the time I missed. During the evenings I sometimes tell the old stories to my grandchildren here, but it would not be fair for me to have to lose wages in order to conduct a class that someone else is being paid to teach.

“Anyway, it is not the old way that the stories should be told for free to anyone who asks. In the old days somebody would come to visit the storyteller and he’d say, ‘Ehhh, Choka, come on.’ Then the visitor would give the old man some tobacco or something else of value, and the storyteller would tell a tale. Maybe the visitor would say, ‘What have you been telling them here?’ ‘Well,’ the old man would say, ‘We’ve been talking about Wakjuhngkaga.’ ‘Oh,’ the other would say, ‘Where did you leave off?’ Then the old man would begin telling the story that came next after where he had stopped before.”

“It didn’t occur to me that I should pay you for telling the stories,” said Miss Fischer, “But you’re right. I’ll talk to the School Board next Monday at the meeting and see what can be arranged. If I can get the money to pay you, would you be willing to come talk to the class?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Crow. “I think your idea is a good one, and these stories should be told to the young ones more often. But you’ll find out that not all of the parents and grandparents will be pleased. Sometimes the tales are told differently by different people. When they hear that I’m going to tell a story they will talk about me and say, ‘What does he think he knows, that he should be the one to speak?’ They will say these things. I am telling you this now so you will know.”

Miss Fischer said that she still thought the idea was worth working on. She thanked the Crows for their hospitality and left. At the School Board meeting she learned that part of the Johnson-O’Malley Indian Education funds supplied to the school each year had been earmarked by the Parent’s Advisory Committee to pay for Indian speakers. Miss Fischer explained her project to the School Board and they agreed to let her use some of the funds.

In this way it happened that the next Wednesday afternoon George Crow drove over to the old brick building on the north edge of Winnebago which housed the public elementary school, junior high school, and high school. He went in and walked across the main hall that doubled as the gym and as the school assembly room. At its north end was the stage, and on his way to the art room Mr. Crow looked with pleasure at the brightly colored murals which some of the students had painted on either side of the stage. One of these murals was of an Indian man sending off smoke signals. It was composed of square blocks of paint and was very impressive.

When he reached the art room, Mr. Crow recognized the children and grandchildren of many of his friends and acquaintances. A number of the children said “hello” to him. Henu was there and he looked a little uncomfortable to have his Choka in the classroom. Mr. Crow greeted Miss Fischer and the class. He said, “Miss Fischer here has asked me to tell you an old Winnebago story. But before I do, I think I’ll tell you something about the kinds of old stories there are and about the five sons that Māuna, the Earthmaker, sent down to earth to help the people there.

“The old-timers told two kinds of stories. Some of the stories are sacred stories and are called Wykūh. Those are the stories about Māuna and his five sons and the other sacred

beings. Wykũh can only be told in the winter when the snow is on the ground. The taboo on the whole thing is that you cannot tell Wykũh while the snakes are out. If there wasn't snow outside I wouldn't be able to tell you any stories about Wakjuhngkaga or Washchihnggega or the others. Then there are the wolak, the stories that you might call legends, or history, or something like that. They are just stories and mainly about human beings. They can be told any time."

Now Maũna created the earth, and then he created the animals and the plants, and 'those-who-walk-on-two-legs,' the human beings. He noticed that the human beings were having a rough time. Maũna thought to himself "I'd better do something. My creation is all going to pot there. The two-legged ones are having quite a difficult time with all kinds of evil spirits and big animals and giants." So to remedy this, he sent down his number one son, Kunu, the one called Wakjuhngkaga or the Trickster. But Kunu didn't do so good. He failed to rid the world of the evil spirits and monsters that were killing those-who-walk-on-two-legs.

Maũna sent another boy down. This son was the Turtle. But the Turtle used to go around bragging and he always thought he was the answer to all the maiden's prayers. By being such a warrior and a ladies' man and a braggart, he also failed to accomplish what Maũna wanted. Then Maũna sent down He-Who-Wears-Human-Heads-As-Earrings. The story goes that this son would go around talking to people, and if you happened to look at his earrings you'd see that they were the faces of men, the faces of human beings which he used for earrings. These little faces would see you looking at them and they would wink at you or make some kind of face at you. Anyway, this son also came short of the goal.

So then Maũna sent down to earth the one they call the Bladder. It seemed that when anybody would praise the Bladder he would actually start to bulge up, you know, like a big balloon. He'd get so big you wouldn't want to be around when he let the air out because it was going to really come—whoosh! He could concentrate on putting a

stream of air right where he wanted it. He was just like a whirlwind, like a tornado; he had that kind of power. But the Bladder used to get so puffed up, he'd just keep getting so big, that he couldn't see anybody but himself. He thought he was the super-duper of all people. The stories connected with him talk about how persons who are praised so much at all times get inflated egos and they disregard other people. With the help of his gifts, the Bladder killed a great one-legged evil spirit named Heleshguniga. But it was his mission here on earth to kill *all* of the evil spirits, and that he didn't do.

Finally Maūna sent down the fifth one, the last one, who the Indians named the Rabbit. Some called him the Hare. Washchihnggega is his name in the Winnebago language. It means a hare or a rabbit; they're the same thing. So Washchihnggega came down, and he was the one who got rid of the big monsters and the evil spirits and so forth. Then he established the Medicine Lodge for the Winnebagoes to have a ritual by which they could preach to each other and direct themselves through life. This Medicine Lodge was a road to salvation and just like a church. Some of the old-timers have talked to me about the Rabbit and they likened him to Christ because he showed the Winnebagoes the way of life. He showed what the Great Spirit intended man to be like—to be good to people, to take all kinds of criticism, and all things like that.

“As I tell you this I wish you could have seen an old time story-teller in a big Winnebago lodge. They used to have as many as ten smoke holes in one of those long lodges, and the story teller would be situated maybe half way between the ends. He'd sit there and tell the story, and he had to be quite an actor, too. He'd make gestures and maybe even get up and act part of the things out. I can't reproduce how funny some of those old stories are in the Winnebago tongue. But I'll do the best I can for you in English since most of you don't know the Indian language.

“Let's see. I'll tell you one about Washchihnggega, the Rabbit. I'll try to cut it down short, as much as I remember of

it. Of course if I were to go ahead and talk Winnebago, then I'd use certain terms and put in different actions to make it funny, to bring out the humor."

The Rabbit did a lot for those-who-walk-on-two-legs, but he pulled some pranks, too. He was an orphan who lived with his grandmother, Mother Earth. Well, Washchihnggega, he used to get up early in the morning and run out to a certain place where there was always a track where something went by. He thought that it was a big animal or something. When he got there the thing had always gone by already. He didn't know what it was, and he was determined he was going to find out. The Rabbit tried to catch it with a rope trap made out of nettles, but when he came back to the trap in the morning it was destroyed. Then he tried to catch the thing with traps of deer sinew and traps of basswood bark, but it seemed like they were always broken and destroyed.

So one time Washchihnggega asked his grandmother, "Kaka, what material could I use that would make a rope that will hold anything?" Mother Earth asked him why he asked and he replied, "I've been trying to catch something over here and it breaks all the ropes and snares that I made."

"Well," she said, "I'll give you something to use that will stop anything. You just wait and I'll get it for you." Thereupon Mother Earth pulled some of the hair off of her body and gave it to Washchihnggega. He made a lariat out of this hair and made the lariat into a snare.

Sure enough, the next day when the Rabbit went to check on the snare it held something big and shiny and so terrifically hot that he couldn't get close to it. This creature hollered, "Washchihnggega, turn me loose! I've got to be on my way. This is my job. I've got to be on the job! Washchihnggega, let me go!" The Rabbit went back home and told his grandmother about it.

"Oh!" she said. "You caught the sun and you've got to turn him loose. Things will die if he doesn't get around to the other side to give them blessings."

So Washchihnggega went back to try to turn loose

the sun. But the sun was so hot that the Rabbit couldn't face him. So what he did, he backed up and went backwards toward him. In that way the Rabbit could withstand the heat, untie the sun, and turn him loose. In doing so he was properly scorched. That's why a rabbit's tail will just come off real easy when you skin it. His hide is not too thick, just like it had been scorched. You can pull it right off him.

"Well," said Mr. Crow, "that one was pretty short. Would you like to hear another?"

Henu Brooks raised his hand. "Tell us one about the Bladder, Mr. Crow," he said.

"Hmmm," said George Crow, "I don't know too much about him. Maybe because I was so foolish my Kaka and uncles mainly gave me the Wakjuhngkaga side of the stories. Now, that Bladder, I only remember just one on him and probably have forgotten some of the details. The Bladder was a very powerful person and he was after the devil."

"Was the devil really there?" someone in the class asked.

"Yes, they called him Heleshguniga and he was a very evil spirit. He represents the devil, the evil one. . . ."

Now it was the Bladder's mission to kill evil spirits and such and he was really after this guy. So Heleshguniga stayed clear out of his way. Probably things would have been all right, but the Bladder said to himself, "I'm here alone. I've got to do this work alone and I'm lonesome for my brothers." He meant the Trickster and the Turtle and the others. He said to himself, "Why should I be lonesome? I can make myself some brothers." So the Bladder made himself ten brothers. After he made them he said, "Now brothers, don't wander away from the lodge here. You might see certain things happening a little ways from here that might lead you away, and I don't want to lose you."

The Bladder would go on journeys away from the lodge to look for Heleshguniga. Now Heleshguniga was also a super being and he knew what was going on. One time when the Bladder was away he came to the lodge, talked with the brothers, and left again. Soon after this one



brother heard something going on quite a distance from the lodge. He went down there to investigate and he never came back. The nine brothers asked themselves, "Hey, where's the little fellow?" One said, "He was here a little while ago and he went down there." The others said, "You'd better go look for him. You know what big brother says." That brother went to look for the missing one and he also didn't come back. Another went to search for the first two without returning, and they just kept on going that way. The last one left said to himself, "I can't be sitting here alone when big brother comes. I'd better go try to find them." He went down in the same direction as the others and was gone.

When the Bladder came home, he looked around for his brothers and saw their trail leading from the lodge in a certain direction. The Bladder went over there and read the signs. He knew right now what had happened. "Uh-huh," he said, "that one I was looking for has been here and he's got my brothers." The Bladder followed the trail until he came to the lodge of the evil one-legged-one, Heleshguniga. Heleshguniga had killed the Bladder's ten brothers, skinned them, and made them into tobacco pouches which he had hanging on the wall in his lodge.

Well, the Bladder gave Heleshguniga a good thumping and got him under control. He took his brothers off the wall and brought them home. Then he revived them again; he resored them to life.

After reviving them, the Bladder said to his brothers, "You want to roam? I've kept you cooped up in the lodge for a long time but now I'm going to turn you loose. You can roam the valleys, hills, woods, and mountains. From this day on you are going to be wolves. Goodbye my brothers." The Bladder turned the brothers into wolves and set them free. That is why there are wolves now in many places.

As George Crow finished this story the bell rang which announced the end of the class period. He said goodbye to the students and Miss Fischer thanked him and walked him to the front door.

#### IV. *“What Should I Do?”*

Mike Crow’s head felt like a throbbing balloon filled with a heavy liquid that hurt every time it was jostled. He couldn’t remember having done any fighting, but whenever he used a muscle on his body he could swear he had taken a severe beating in the recent past. This was all not so unusual. He had felt this way other mornings after a night of drinking with the gang. The difference this time was that when he had come to about a half hour before, he had found himself in a strange place which appeared to be a jail. Kunu carefully turned on his cot to see who else was there. Ohhh, how his head hurt! Bill Wilson was on the next cot.

“Hey,” Mike said, “Hey Bill, hey, wake up.” Bill groaned once and turned over. “Bill, Bill, wake up.”

“Let me alone, man,” Bill whispered as he folded his arms over his head.

“No, Bill,” said Mike, “Come on, wake up.” Slowly Kunu shifted his feet to the floor and raised himself to a sitting position. He stood up and swayed over to where Bill was lying. “Come on, Bill, wake up,” he said, shaking his friend by the shoulder. “Where are we?”

Bill opened his eyes half way. “Jail. In Pender,” he said in reply to Mike’s question. “The deputy sheriff brought us here last night.”

Mike felt very tired so he sat down on Bill’s cot and tried to think. “What are we in for?” he asked.

“I dunno,” said Bill. “You ask someone the charges.”

Mike went over to the cell door and called out. Pretty soon a policeman came over. “What are we charged with?” Mike asked.

“Drunk driving and minor in possession. Court’s Friday. You can make a telephone call to get bail. Phone’s over this way.” The officer unlocked the door and escorted Kunu to the phone. He didn’t feel like facing his Uncle Frank just then, so

he called George Crow at the B.I.A. building. His grandfather told him that he'd come to bail him out over the noon hour. After that Kunu was taken back to the cell where he got Bill up so that he could call to arrange bail for himself. About 12:30 the officer came to the cell and signalled Mike to go along with him. He took him to where his grandfather was waiting. Mr. Crow had paid the bail and Kunu was free.

As they drove home over the rolling hills between Pender and Walthill, Mr. Crow asked his grandson what had happened. "Not too much," said Kunu. "We bought some beer and wine in Homer and went driving around. Bill was driving and I passed out. The next thing I remember was waking up this morning."

"Ho," said Mr. Crow. "The deputy said they had to carry you out of the car. Well, what are you going to tell them at school today?"

"I don't think I'll go back to school today. I'll go tomorrow."

"No, you'd better go. How do you expect to keep up in your studies if you aren't there? If you miss too many units, you'll get behind."

"Oh, I can keep up," said Kunu. "At least enough to graduate this year. But what's the point, really? I don't like to study all that math and English and the other stuff. And I don't know what I want to do after I get out of high school. I guess I'll have to do something, get a job maybe."

"What kinds of things do you think you could do next year?" asked Mr. Crow.

"Well, you know," said Mike, "Uncle Bill thinks I ought to enlist like he did in order to serve the country and so that I'll be able to dance with the veterans someday. I don't know, I suppose that would be something to do for a few years. On the other hand I could move up to Sioux City and get a job. That way I could come back here real often to visit. And then, I know you'd like it if I went to college and became a lawyer or something. But right now I'm tired of studying. It seems like some people think they know what I should do. But I don't know, and I wish I did."

"Ho," said Mr. Crow. "That's the way people have always been. This is what my Kaka told me about it":

After Maũna made the earth, he created everything that is in the earth—the animals, the birds, and the insects. He gave all of them a task, and since the beginning of time they have been doing what they started out doing. Their offspring have had offspring and the old ones have died off and become food for other animals. But what these creatures are doing now is what Maũna meant for them to do at the time he created them. Maũna also created the-ones-who-walk-on-two-legs, the Winnebagoes, the human beings. He gave them free minds with which to realize the identity of their creator and which they could train to do things. But you might say that the-ones-who-walk-on-two-legs had no specific duty set out for them to perform. They had to train their own minds to live, to find out the ways of Maũna, to exist and continue.

So, it saddened Maũna that he had created mankind down there with this freedom of mind because they were the lowest and weakest of his creatures. He wanted to do something for them. So Maũna created the plant tobacco and gave it to those-who-walk-on-two-legs in order that they could use it to ask for blessings. Maũna then decreed that all of the spirits would desire this tobacco plant because of its pleasant odor. He said to the spirits: “Listen, if the two-legged-one offers you even a little handful or pipeful of tobacco and gives you an offering, before you can even smell it you are going to give in to his requests. He is going to pray to you for certain blessings and so forth and you must bless him before you can accept the offering. For all of your power you can’t take the tobacco from him. I am Maũna speaking, even I cannot take it. This is a promise.”

“And that is how it came to be that among the Winnebagoes tobacco has been a sort of herb that we’ve used as a kind of incense in our prayers and requests,” said Mr. Crow.

“So, Kunu,” he continued, “human beings have always had to seek out knowledge about themselves and the world and what to do. Such knowledge is never just given to you. But while seeking this knowledge it is good to know that we can pray to Maũna for help and guidance. He has not put those-

who-walk-on-two-legs here on the earth without help.”

“Well, Choka,” said Mike, “I’ve heard before that the old Indians used tobacco in their ceremonies and such, but I’ve never known exactly how they did it.”

“It was used in a number of different circumstances,” said Mr. Crow. “For example, sometimes the clouds coming in would look very ominous. There would be winds and you could see things turning in the sky. Ah, tornadoes could be coming! Now, we Winnebagoes say that the thunder spirits are the ones that control the winds and storms. So the old folks would say, ‘Hey grandson, come here. Now, go give some of this tobacco.’ These old Winnebagoes believed that small tots should start learning early. So the little grandson would go out to a place used as an altar. Usually this place was an oak tree, but if there wasn’t an oak tree he would have some other place outside to put it. The child would pour out a handful of tobacco, about the amount that would fill a pipe. Then he would address the heavens saying: ‘Uncles, or Grandfather—depending on what clan he belonged to—he’d say, Uncles, or Grandfather, remember we are here, and when you come, be careful and remember our presence.’ The child would give the tobacco and go back inside. ‘Huh, did you tell him?’ the old folks would ask. ‘Yes, I told Grandfather. I told him that we are here and that when he comes by to be careful and just remember that we are here.’”

“So this is the way, you know, the Winnebagoes never had any worry about tornadoes wiping them out. This was their belief,” Mr. Crow said.

“Well,” said Mike, “I’m not sure all that helps me very much in trying to figure out what to do after I graduate.”

“Be patient, Kunu,” said Mr. Crow. “It is important to be humble and to seek knowledge with an open heart.”

## *V. The Orphan*

Riding back in the team bus from Decatur, Kunu looked silently out of the window. Night had darkened the view, but as he had no desire to talk or kid around with the others, he let his mind wander over the familiar landscape, picturing it clearly even in the darkness. The hills over which the bus rolled on Highway 73 were green and lovely—they were the bluffs of the great Missouri River which lay a few miles to the right. There were a couple of places not very far out of Decatur where the view from the highway opened out on a panoramic vista of the river as it lay twisted and sleeping like a huge blue serpent, bordering the distant green and yellow checkered quilt which was Iowa.

When he was younger, Mike and his friends from Macy had scrambled many times up and down the timber-shrouded trails and underbrush leading to the river from one of these viewpoints south of Macy known as Blackbird Hill. As the bus moved closer to Winnebago, Kunu envisioned the stands of river timber that sometimes were a mile or so to the right of the highway and sometimes showed themselves to have crept much closer as one came over the crest of a hill. This country was so pretty and clean it gave Kunu a sense of pleasure and freedom which was always new no matter how many times he saw it. Even the houses and farmyards, whether prosperous or poor, seemed fresh and unsullied.

As the bus neared the turnoff to the Winnebago agency, Mike thought with particular pleasure of the tribal Timbers and Big Bear Hollow, and of the stretches of river east of Winnebago where he had spent so much of his youth hunting and exploring. When he was a child, Big Bear Hollow had seemed an immense and uncharted forest. On sunny days the Timbers had sparkled an emerald green and the air was musical with the voices of small birds. When it rained, or fog and mist rolled over the Timbers from the river, every sound seemed muffled

and all of nature drank in the moisture, bathing and renewing herself.

The Timbers had always been wonderful and sometimes very frightening to Mike when he was a boy, especially if he happened to be alone or if it was nighttime. At night in Big Bear Hollow, the sound of an owl's cry used to send shivers through his body and make him think of the huge owls that were said to carry off misbehaving or abandoned children. Kunu thought of how his Choka had been born in Big Bear Hollow and lived there part of his childhood. That was before the government Allotment Act had forced most of the tribe out onto the open hills farther west in an effort to make the Winnebagoes give up their clan system of government and start individual family farms.

In spite of the often impassable roads and the lack of running water and electricity, Kunu sometimes wished that his family lived in Big Bear Hollow now, and that he could wake every morning to a world of trees and green plants, the fresh-air smell of soil and growing things, and the sounds of small animals and birds. He felt this all the more strongly as the bus turned to the right onto Highway 77, which runs through the middle of Winnebago. The sight of Winnebago was always quite a change to Mike from the surrounding countryside. He didn't like the narrow, noisy highway which formed Winnebago's main street—a main street that could never be calm or quiet for long because of the trucks and other traffic traveling through on the way to Sioux City. Also there were the unpainted little shops and buildings in the center of town, too many of them boarded up and falling into disrepair.

With the dirt and exhaust from the traffic and the mud carried down from the unpaved side streets, Mike found nothing very refreshing about downtown Winnebago. The side streets, too, were a constant aggravation to him since in the spring and fall they were rivers of mud, and in the winter they were often so icy that the steep ones were impossible to drive for days at a time.

Mike was loyal to his school and his community. When he thought of Winnebago his mind turned to family and good friends and to the important experiences he had there which had comprised the main part of his life up until that time. But,

as a place to look at, he couldn't help comparing Winnebago to a town like Decatur with its wide paved streets, unmuddy sidewalks, and neat buildings. The mental picture of Decatur flooded Kunu's mind anew with thoughts of his recent disappointment.

In Decatur after the game was over, Kunu's fatigue and discouragement had been complete. With the score Decatur 112 to Winnebago 67, and no more time to alter the difference by even a point, the cheerleaders had come over to talk to the basketball team. Mike hadn't felt one bit like being cheered up and he just gave the girls a dirty look. "Sheei! Mean guy!" Mary Elk had commented to Ramona Fox, and the two of them had walked away from him.

Now as he climbed down from the bus at the high school, put away his things, and walked the dark hills to his house, Mike thought bitterly of how it just didn't seem like anything ever turned out right. This had been the game the team had really wanted to win, but Decatur had outplayed them all the way—and as for himself, Mike had only made six baskets and a free throw. Couldn't the team beat anyone much better than Emerson?

Mike thought bitterly how this season he had tried as hard as he knew how. He had paid close attention to the coach's suggestions and criticisms, and had practiced for hours every one of the four evenings a week that the school gym was free for use by the high school team.

Mike crossed the yard and wiped his snowy feet on the back porch. Once inside the house he dutifully took out his geometry book to study and sat down at the kitchen table. He had difficulty, however, concentrating on the figures. His mother was mending the beadwork on Hinu's dance moccasins, Wihã was doing the dishes, and George Crow was making a feather bustle for Danny's dance costume.

Everyone knew how much Mike had wanted to win the game that evening and eventually Mr. Crow suggested that the boy stop trying to study and talk about it.

"It's not fair, Choka," the young man explained. "Decatur has a big modern gym for their team to practice and play in. And they don't have to share it with all of the grade school and junior high school P.E. classes. We didn't even start playing



basketball until seventh grade, while they've always had fifth and sixth grade teams. It's only been this year that Coach Jones has been having me help him start out the fifth and sixth graders here in Winnebago. I've really enjoyed coaching the little guys, but it's cut down on my practice time and doesn't help the fact that I started late myself."

Mike continued, "It seems that since I've only played and practiced as long as I have, I just can't do the things I want to do with the ball. The only one on our team who's really good is Bill White Buffalo, and his father set him up a hoop and taught him how to play when he was little. I think maybe it was stupid of me to go out for the team in the first place. Do you think it's fair, Choka?"

"Of course it isn't fair," Mr. Crow answered. "Compared to Bill White Buffalo or to the boys on the Decatur team you are at a disadvantage. But advantage or no advantage, you are not going to succeed at everything you try. That doesn't mean you shouldn't try or that one failure means you will always fail. I noticed tonight that you scored higher than Bill White Buffalo did whether he's actually better at the game than you or not. I think he decided ahead of time that the team didn't have a chance, and so he was defeated before he even went out on the floor. It's important that you keep trying if you want to change things."

"Oh, nothing ever changes around here," muttered Kunu.

"That's not true," Mr. Crow said. "This coming summer they're going to start building a new high school wing onto the school. When it's done, all the grades won't have to share space any more. Also, do you know those abandoned buildings along main street just across from the jail and the sweet shop? Next year they're going to be cleared away and the town is going to build a new community center in their place. It's going to house the tribal offices, a library, kitchens, a new jail and post office, and meeting rooms for dances and assemblies. It took years of effort by a lot of people to get the proposals for the community center and the school expansion approved and funded. But that effort has finally begun to pay off.

"I know you feel bad about your experience with the team this year, Kunu, but not everyone else does. I met Coach Jones down at the post office last week and he told me what a fine

team member you are. He said that when he tells you things to try, you listen, that you work well with the other boys, that you practice hard, and that your game has improved a lot this year. It made me feel proud and happy to hear those things about you. If you always go about what you try in such a way I am sure that you will accomplish much of what you want in life.

“The Coach also told me how pleased he is that you’ve been willing to help him teach the younger boys this year. Without your help he couldn’t have started the program since he didn’t have time to undertake it single-handed. He said that you were the one he especially wanted as an assistant, because you not only have a good grasp of the basic elements of basketball, but also you’ve got the ability to work with people that makes for good coaching.

“I want you to remember that regardless of advantages or disadvantages your mother and I feel that it is very important that you kids be kind and helpful to people in this way. You need to be strong in this world, and it is in kindness, the show of kindness, that the strength of a person is shown. You must keep your mind on kindness at all times, for the days have not passed when Winnebagoes need to grow up to be strong warriors.

“I remember my grandmother telling me a story of how many years ago when the world was new, there was a grandmother who was raising her grandson who was an orphan. The little grandson’s father may have been killed in battle. His mother may have died when he was a baby. But it was the grandmother’s responsibility to raise this grandson. So, as a young lad, she taught him to be kind to all people regardless of the treatment he received from them.

“She taught him to be kind to those things that could not do him harm and to those that could do him harm. She explained to him that he should respect all of creation, that he shouldn’t trample on the plants or kill anything unnecessarily. She told him to live and let live. One thing she pointed out was that he shouldn’t be afraid of wild animals like rattlesnakes or cougars. If he was frightened, the animal would pick up on his fear and strike at him in self defense. Above all the grandmother wanted her grandson to be a kind man. She believed that a

strong man is gentle and that through self-discipline in kindness the orphan would show his strength. She reared the little orphan to keep his mind on kindness at all times for he had to grow up to be a brave warrior some day."

So the orphan grew up, and as he was growing he had all of the problems that other little boys had, with the exception that, unlike them, he had only to contend with his grandmother. He was obedient to her teachings and so he grew to be a kind lad. In those days, when a boy reached a certain age, about nine on up, he had to go out and fast. The belief of the tribe was that a youth needed to fast in order to seek a totem, so that when he grew up to be a warrior he would have a guiding spirit to call upon when he was in dire need of help. Boys were encouraged to fast for other reasons, too. Fasting taught self-discipline. Also, alone in the wilderness, a youth was forced to observe what was going on around him in order to pass the time. In this way he learned to pay close attention to nature and to Mauna's creation.

So it was that the orphan used to blacken his face with charcoal and go to the woods and fast like the boys did at that time. This fasting consisted of going without water and food and concentrating for four days and four nights in the forest. A faster was supposed to cry out to the spirits, but he was not to talk to any human beings. He blackened his face so that if any people came by and saw the markings they would know that he was fasting and concentrating and they would leave him alone.

Time after time the orphan fasted four days and four nights and then returned to his grandmother who would ask, "Did you have a vision? Did you have a dream? Have you received a blessing?" Each time the answer was no. The orphan began to think that maybe the spirits were something like the people of his village where they called him the orphan. "Wynuhnika," they would say—which means 'the little orphan' in Winnebago. They would say, "O Wynuhika ixuhjilena—the little orphan is going by again." In this way they would make fun of him.

There came a time when the orphan grew to be a

young man, about the time when the other young men of his age had become warriors. He went up to fast again. This time he had a feeling that the spirits probably looked on him like he was a little orphan, that they were almost human and had the same human feeling about orphans, and wouldn't bless him. He cried out, seeking a blessing from the thunder spirits, or thunder birds, the emblem of whom we wear in our beadwork today. He spent his last fast of four days and four nights crying out in this manner. Then at dawn on the fifth day he broke his fast, and being very thirsty, headed for the spring where he and his grandmother got water. He was so thirsty because he was an honest faster and had not even put a pebble in his mouth.

As the orphan neared the spring, he saw that a short distance away there lay a very bony horse covered with mud. A horse was something the youth had always desired to have. But since he was an orphan and his grandmother did not have the means, he had never been able to have one. As the orphan came closer the horse spoke in a horse language, as many a horse will do, he made the noise, "hrr-hrr-hrr-hrr-hrr."

The youth went up to the animal and, looking, saw that his lips were parched. He immediately went and drew water for him and the horse probably thanked the lad by repeating the same noise. Then the orphan set about pulling up grass by hand and carrying it over to the horse by armloads. He tried to groom him by brushing the mud and dirt off his body and he watered him again. The orphan promised the horse that he would be back again to take care of his needs and then went on to see his grandmother.

Upon his getting home the grandmother of course put the question to the youth, "Did you receive a blessing? Did you have a dream? Did you have a vision?"

As usual, the orphan boy answered no. But he said, "I have found a horse." He explained to his grandmother how he had fasted four days and nights and did not cheat, that he had cried out to the thunder people, the thunder bird, for a blessing and he didn't even have a vision. He told her how upon waking the fifth day the first thing he had

thought of was to walk to the spring to get a drink of water, and how there he had found the horse. He told her everything he did and what the horse looked like. It was not too handsome of a horse, but it was a horse.

The grandmother, again being very patient, spoke to the young man advising him to be kind and helpful to those who can't help themselves. The lad told his grandmother that he had promised the horse he would return again later that day. He did so, and in the fashion I have told you he nourished the horse back to health and strength so that he could lead him back to the tent.

When the people saw how skinny a horse it was that the orphan was leading to his grandmother's tent they said in Winnebago, "Oh, the orphan now owns a horse." The words they picked to say this were used in a taunting fashion, and in this way they teased him about his horse. Time went on and it seemed like the bony horse did not fatten up no matter how much the boy gathered feed for it. The animal just remained in an ugly state, as if his hip bones were about to pierce his hide.

It happened that some of the hunters were gone from the village for a number of days and then returned with the news that a herd of buffalo was coming. The buffalo were about four nights away. Other scouts went out to determine when the buffalo would be in a place where the hunters could have a big kill. Later one of the scouts came running back to camp and said that there was a white buffalo in the herd—a snow white buffalo!

At this time there was a powerful leader in the tribe. I wouldn't call him the chief because I don't believe the Winnebagoes had the kind of absolute rulers who could be called chiefs. This leader had a daughter who he put up for a prize. He said that whoever brought him the hide of that white buffalo could have her in marriage. Now, it so happened that the orphan boy was in love with this leader's daughter, and she had observed the orphan as a kind lad and was somewhat secretly in love with him, too.

The orphan's grandmother said to him, "Now the men are going to go and hunt. They are going to try and get that white buffalo, and whoever gets the white buffalo

is also going to get himself a wife. Ah, she is a very beautiful girl, fitting for any warrior to have for a wife. What are you going to do about it?"

"Well," the orphan said, "I am going to try."

The buffalo came closer. The hunters decided to wait until the buffalo were just one night's travel away, and then on the next day they were going to go out and round up the buffalo for their needs. The orphan boy had his horse now, and he decided to get in on this hunt. The day before the hunt he took the horse to water, as usual. But he himself was in a very pensive mood; he wasn't as talkative as usual.

The young man watered the horse and he was taking him out to graze in a nice pasture when all of a sudden the horse spoke. The horse said, "Well nephew, why are you so quiet?" Of course this was a surprise to the orphan. He didn't believe his ears at first. He decided that maybe he had spoken his own thoughts out loud without knowing it.

So he said, "Well, I was thinking about the hunt. I want to get that white buffalo."

The horse spoke again and said, "Nephew, if that is your desire, we'll get it."

This time the boy heard where the voice was coming from and he thought to himself, "My! If this horse can talk to me, he must be really something."

That day he looked for more pasture for the horse, nice pasture because on the morrow they were going on the hunt. When they were returning to the grandmother's lodge, the horse spoke again and said, "Nephew, what you have heard *you* have heard and no one else has heard. So say nothing about it."

The orphan just said, "Ha-uh," which was his way of expressing his agreement to the pact of secrecy between the horse and himself. So it was.

On the dawn all the hunters got together. Of course they hunted according to the tribal rules. One of these rules was that the Bear Clan people would say when the hunt should begin. When the orphan went out to get on his bony horse, the horse said to him, "Nephew, when you

get on, you sit yourself tight, whatever you do just sit like you should." The appointed members of the Bear Clan gave the word and all of the hunters on their horses started off. In the twinkling of an eye, the orphan and his horse were gone. In fact, no one even thought to look for the orphan and his horse or to wonder how they were doing. But when the hunters got to the herd, there was the orphan on his mount returning, and he had with him the hide off that white buffalo. He had already been there and got him.

So it was that the orphan won the prize. The rest of the men went on hunting and killed many buffalo, so that there was plenty of meat and great rejoicing in the village. After they all got home and celebrated for a while, the lad went out to look for his horse and entered into conversation with him. He said, "Uncle, or Grandfather, who are you?"

"Ha, ha!" the horse said, "You have fasted many days and nights, time and time again, and we have watched you. We tried your patience. Thus it was that I came to you to bless you. And now you ask who I am. I am going to leave you today just like I appeared to you. But at sundown I will show you who I am. You will look towards the setting sun and observe." Then the horse vanished.

Later that day just at sundown a black cloud formed in the sky to the west which colored the setting sun. The cloud grew into a terrific storm of huge black ominous clouds and the people became alarmed. It was very scary and there was that quiet before a bad storm which might mean a tornado or whirlwind of sorts. Lightning began to flash and you could hear the thunder. The clouds grew until they covered the sun and everything became dark. The orphan, still wanting to know who had blessed him, all of a sudden saw a great white horse break out of the dark clouds. Bolts of lightning flashed out from the horse's eyes as he blinked, and he raced across the dark heavens with terrific speed. So it was that the orphan learned that he had been blessed by the Thunder People.

"And so it is always said," concluded George Crow, "that some of our greatest blessings are disguised when we have them."

Mr. Crow looked thoughtful for awhile after he finished the story. He said, "My Dega told me that one, but I'm not real sure it's originally a Winnebago story. It doesn't fit into any of the main groups of Winnebago tales, so maybe we borrowed it a long time ago. That's O.K., though. It's a good story, and I told it to you to let you know that I think you've been doing well this year, trying hard, and we've been proud of you."

The next week Mike came home from school with some news for his grandfather. "The coach asked me today if sometime I'd like to go up with him to Vermillion where he went to school, to check out the university's P.E. department. He thinks I should go to college next fall and work for a teaching degree in coaching. What do you think of that?"

Mr. Crow kind of laughed. "Well, I thought he probably had an idea like that up his sleeve when he collared me last week about your being such a good coaching assistant. Now I guess the question is up to you whether you want to go to school to be a coach or not. You know that I think, myself, that if you go to college you could major in just about anything. Winnebago could really use an Indian lawyer, and if you put your mind to it, I'm sure you could go through law school."

"I don't know," said Mike. "I'll have to think about it. But I don't suppose it would hurt to check out some coaching departments while I'm making up my mind."

"No," said Mr. Crow, "it wouldn't hurt at all."



## *VI. On Keeping Your Wings Flapping*

The clattering of silverware, the scraping of benches, and the sound of many voices combined to make an incredible din. The lunchroom was packed tight and even those who were finished with their lunch stayed over to see what would happen.

The tension had been mounting in the Winnebago public school for 45 minutes, ever since the news had spread that the administration had abolished the high school student lounge. Various students urged Esther to stand up and say something. She had been one of the original handful of high school students who had come up with the idea of starting a student lounge the year before. That fall their efforts had resulted in the establishment of a lounge in which to hold high school activities and provide a place where the students could go when they had no scheduled classes.

An empty classroom had been turned over to the young people. Esther, Hinu, and others had scavenged Winnebago to find old couches, tables, and chairs with which to transform the room into a comfortable and hospitable place to relax. From the first the lounge was popular. Quickly it developed into a type of club that sparked projects and activities. The student lounge committee staged a dance and organized a trip to a Pow-Wow in Vermillion, South Dakota.

Almost from the first, as well, the school officials felt uneasy about these activities which were going on under school auspices but without much school control. When the lounge committee began to consider inviting Indian speakers to talk on topics of current interest, the administrators became alarmed. They informed the committee that they had decided to impose a veto power on lounge activities. The idea of an administration veto met with opposition from the students and the resulting clash in opinions had come to a head with that day's abolishment of the lounge.

Esther stood up on a bench and clapped her hands to gain

attention. "Brothers and sisters," she said, "yesterday we learned that two of our Red brothers who fought at Wounded Knee, along with another brother who opposed that fighting, were willing to accept an invitation from the student lounge committee to come and speak to us about their experiences and views. The recent Battle at Wounded Knee was an event of great significance for us as Indian people. We have a right to learn what went on there. We are willing to listen to all sides, but the administrators of this school have decided to prevent us from hearing the words of our brothers. Perhaps they are afraid of being called AIM sympathizers. They have closed our school lounge although our activities there have never been disruptive or interfered with any school functions. The student lounge was given to us to use and that is what we have tried to do. I, for one, am going there right now to show that I won't be kicked out so easily."

Esther stepped down from the bench and headed out of the lunchroom. Hinu stuck close by the side of her cousin as did the other members of the lounge committee. There was an instant tumult as most of the other students in the room followed them. In a few minutes there were over 150 people packed into the student lounge and the corridors outside.

Events happened quickly after that. An announcement came over the intercom that all students not in their proper classrooms were thereby expelled from school and ordered to leave the building. A rumor spread that police were being called in.

The crowd of expelled high school students walked out of the building and spent the remainder of the afternoon sitting outside on the front hill of the school yard by the highway. Grouped there in the snow they looked as if they were taking part in some sort of winter festival. While sitting outside, the young people eventually received word that Esther was expelled from school permanently and that the others were expelled for five days.

That evening Frank Crow had a long talk with his daughter and went to a parent's meeting at the Tribal Building. When it was over, he decided to speak with his niece as well. He found her in the Crow family living room with her mother, talking on the phone to Esther. When she was finished, he said, "Hinü,

I hear that you're expelled from school."

"Yes, Dega," Hinu replied. "Me and the rest of the town."

"We're not talking about the rest of the town right now. We're talking about you. What is your purpose in going to high school?"

"To learn things, I guess," replied Hinu.

"Well," said her uncle, "How do you expect to learn anything if you are kicked out of school?"

"But it isn't our fault we were kicked out!" exclaimed Hinu. "There was nothing wrong with the way we were using the lounge and they should never have closed it."

"That's not the point, Hinu," interjected George Crow, who had been listening to his son and granddaughter talk. "Until you graduate, you should concentrate on finishing school. There is an old story about sticking to what you're doing. Maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to take time to listen to it right now."

Out of respect for her grandfather, Hinu indicated that she was listening.

George Crow began. . . .

The Trickster had been on a long journey. Maybe, like his younger brothers who were sent afterwards, he was traveling over the earth looking for evil spirits and monsters to destroy, as he was supposed to do. Anyhow, he had been walking and walking and he was pretty weary. He was a fool, too. He could have just said, "Well, I'll go home now," and have commanded a cloud or something like that to come pick him up and deliver him home. But he was foolish and forgot he was a son of the creator. He had to do a lot of suffering for his foolishness. At this point in his travels Wakjuhngkaga was wandering around in the far north lands by a lakeshore. As he came upon the lake, a flock of geese began to gather there. They were coming from all different directions and as Wakjuhngkaga looked up in the sky he saw them sailing along and flipping, and diving, and coasting in, and landing on the lake.

"My," he thought, "that's wonderful. I must talk to the leader of this band." The Trickster went up to some of the geese and said, "I greet you, my Little Brothers. Oh,

it's fine to see how you sail through the heavens with ease. It's so graceful and beautiful! I'm just thrilled at you! I can see that you're all getting ready to go someplace. You've been into the woods and had a nice meal of buckthorn berries to clean you out and condition you for a long flight."

Wakjuhngkaga went on buttering up the geese, which is the proper way of approaching people who you're going to ask for a favor. He told them how good they looked gliding gracefully up in the sky and commented on how wonderful it must be to be way up there flying over the world and seeing such a great amount of land. After making this nice speech, Wakjuhngkaga said, just loud enough for some of the geese to overhear him, "I think it would be wonderful if I could travel that way, too."

So then one of the birds there reminded the Trickster that he could do anything he wanted to do. The goose said, "Big Brother, you could do it if you wanted."

"Well, in that case," said Kunu, "I must talk to your leader." This was just like in the movies nowadays when people say, 'Take me to your leader!' The geese took Wakjuhngkaga to the goose leader so that the leader could speak for the flock. Kunu and the bird greeted each other as Big Brother and Little Brother and they sat and visited for a bit.

"Little Brother, where are you headed?" asked Wakjuhngkaga.

"We're going to the South, Big Brother," the goose leader said. "The real bitter cold is coming here soon. Big Brother, what brings you here to see me?"

"I just made the remark that it must be wonderful to be able to fly, to sail over the land instead of walking like I have to do, and someone said I could do it if I wanted to."

"Yes, Big Brother," said the bird, "You can if you want."

"But I don't have any feathers," Kunu pointed out.

"That's a small item; we'd be able to fix up that part of it," said the leader. "It's really true, Big Brother, that you could fly with us if you wanted. But remember, in

these flights we set goals and we have to keep our minds on where we're headed. We don't allow ourselves to be distracted by any noise or commotion. We just set a goal where we're going and we arrive there. It must be that way. Tomorrow we are going home to the nice warm Southlands. While it turns cold and snowy and icy here, and the cold north wind blows his best, we'll be in the sunny warm South. If you make up your mind to go home with us without letting anything distract you, you may come along."

"Oh thank you, Little Brother!" said the Trickster. "I will go with you. I have decided! This is going to be real nice. But I still don't have any feathers."

The goose leader sent word to the flock that the Trickster needed feathers. Each goose donated a feather and they arranged them on Wakjuhngkaga's body so that he looked like a goose. The geese asked the Trickster to practice a little honking. Kunu took a deep breath and went, "Honk!"

"Well," the geese said, "that sounds pretty good. Now remember, we are leaving early in the morning before the sun comes up."

"But what will I do?" asked Wakjuhngkaga. He was really stupid and didn't know what to do because he had never paid attention while a goose was taking off.

"When we're on land like we are now," the geese said, "we just run a little bit and flap our wings. You don't have wings but your arms have feathers now and you are like one of us, Big Brother. So that is what you should do."

It became night and the geese did what geese do at night—some sleep and some squawk and talk. Wakjuhngkaga went to sleep. The lead goose woke him in the morning. "Now it's time to go," he said. "We have to start now because the cold is coming near. Big Brother, remember we are going to fly over the settlements of the two-legged-ones, the people. We will fly right over the place where the Winnebagoes live. Now, you'll be able to hear them, but don't look down and don't get your mind off your flight. They are going to make noises and shout and so forth to

see if they can distract some one of us from our goal. You've got to keep on flying. When we're past them, then you will be with us in the warm Southlands."

"Why, sure," said Wakjuhngkaga, "I'll do that. That's nothing! If that's all there is to it, why I'm with you. I'm in the South right now!"

The lead goose honked and woke up his flock. They all took a little run, flapped their wings, and became airborne. The Trickster started to run along also. He flapped his arms and thought, "I'm with them!" And lo and behold there he was! He was airborne! He climbed up with the geese in formation and they all gained altitude until they were flying pretty high and heading South. They flew over all kinds of villages. The Trickster saw how large the country was and how beautiful the streams looked from way up in the air. As they came closer to Winnebago country, the lead goose hollered at Wakjuhngkaga, "Remember, keep your mind on what you have decided and honk once in a while."

From in back Kunu said, "Yes, Little Brother, Honk! Honk!"

"That's it!" said the geese and they all joined in the honking to make a lot of noise and drown out what was happening down on the ground.

"Oh," said Wakjuhngkaga, "this is the life. Yeah," he said to himself, "we're going to fly over the Winnebagoes, my people. Wouldn't they be surprised to know that I was flying along with the geese? If they could see me they would really envy the glorious thing I am doing. I wonder, in a way, how I could let them know that I am up here."

Every once in a while all the geese would honk and tell the Trickster, "Honk there, Big Brother." So he would say, "Honk! Honk!" and everyone would join in with him and they were all honking. Yet, even while he was honking Wakjuhngkaga's mind wandered and he began to lose altitude. Just then the flock flew over the Winnebago settlement.

The Winnebagoes came out and started to beat on drums and hollow logs. The women were out there shouting

and hollering and the men were shooting up in the air with arrows. The Trickster's mind went down to them and he looked to see if anyone recognized him. He got all excited and forgot what he was doing. He probably forgot to flap his wings and just put them in the sailing or coasting position, so that soon he lost his ability to fly.

As the people were making all this racket down there, suddenly someone said, "Here comes a big one." It was Trickster. When he hit the ground in a weed patch, why, there were dozens of women there with clubs and they started beating him. Wakjuhngkaga hollered at them to lay off, but it was not until they had given him a good beating and the feathers came off that they recognized who it was.

"Ehhh, Wakjuhngkaga," they said. "It's Wakjuhngkaga again." And some of them beat him some more.

"Well, Hinu, this story tells you to pay attention to your business, to know whatever it is you're doing, and to keep your mind on it. Otherwise you're going to get into trouble sooner or later. When you set your mind to accomplish something, don't put yourself ahead of your goal. Accomplish the thing first and think of yourself later," Mr. Crow added.

"Yes, Hinu," said Frank. "Your main goal at this point in your life is to get through high school. The teachers up at the school have always said you and Esther were both real smart ones. You could graduate with honors if you wanted. Instead, what do you do? You get mixed up in this political business. You should think of your education."

Hinu did not think her uncle was being fair. "Dega," she said, "you don't understand. I do want to become educated. But education should mean learning how to do things and how to understand things, not just sitting in a classroom. If we could have had speakers come here to talk, it would have been educational. It's not fair to say that Esther and I are like Wakjuhngkaga. If Esther is like that story Choka told, it's because she took the beating for the rest of us."

Hinu appealed to her grandfather. "What Esther did was a brave thing, Choka, don't you think?"

"Yes, it was brave, but also foolhardy. She was bound to suffer for such actions and since you could not prevent that,

there was no reason for you to suffer with her. No matter how good your ideas are, students are not the ones who say what goes on in a school. Your purpose there is to search for knowledge, to gain power over yourself, and to humble yourself before others if that is necessary. I think you should listen carefully to what your uncle says. Although his path is hidden from you, it leads the way you want to go.”

“Ho,” agreed Frank. “It would be foolish indeed to let this trouble at school prevent any of you kids from graduating. Esther, of course, is in more trouble than you are. At the parent’s meeting tonight a number of us agreed that we felt the school was punishing her too harshly for what she did and that it is not at all a good thing that she be permanently expelled. So we are going to hire a lawyer to take her case to court in Lincoln. One of the Vista workers at the meeting said that other court cases like hers have been successful and there is a good chance that the school will have to take Esther back.”

“Ennah?” said Hinu. “That’s great! Can I go along to Lincoln to watch?”

“By the time Esther’s case comes up you will hopefully be back in school,” said Frank. “You’re going to be missing a lot of time anyway.”

As it turned out the lawyer that the tribe hired managed to have Esther’s case scheduled within three days. The Crow family and a number of others went down to Lincoln to lend moral support. At the hearing, the court room and the complicated legal procedure fascinated Hinu. She could not understand some of what went on, or catch all of the points made by the lawyers on both sides during the proceedings, but she was impressed by the amount of previous court rulings, called precedents, which Esther’s young lawyer presented on her behalf.

On the way back to Winnebago Hinu told her Choka that she was sure the judge would decide in favor of Esther. “I don’t know,” said George Crow. “I’ve seen quite a few court cases and it’s real hard to tell ahead of time what a judge will think. Even so, I think Esther has got a good chance.”

The next day the family got a phone call from Frank who had stayed in Lincoln with his daughter to wait for the verdict. The judge had decided in Esther’s favor.

“Heh, heh!” laughed Hinu when she heard the news. “We won that one, Choka. That’s great!”



## *VII. The Language of Praise and the Hollow of Echoes*

The highway through Winnebago, Nebraska had started out as a dirt road skirting the steep bluffs of the Missouri River. By the mid-twentieth century, it was a busy arterial connecting Sioux City, Iowa to the urban and rural areas of eastern Nebraska—and traffic accidents were common. However, like other Winnebago families, the Crows were shocked as well as saddened to hear of an accident that happened a few weeks after the expelled Winnebago students returned to school. On a chilly Saturday morning a group of young children decided to “play chicken” with the traffic as it entered the town limits. A girl of seven was hit and killed when she slipped after jumping in front of an approaching truck.

Hinu, especially, was shook up about the incident because the child, Sally Jones, had been like a little sister to her. Years before, when Hinu was around nine years old, she had helped Sally’s young mother take care of her new baby. Whenever Hinu hadn’t been in school she had taken the infant around with her to show people “her baby.” After Sally started to walk, Hinu did not spend so much time with her, but she always had a special fondness for the child. Now she grieved to think of the way Sally had thrown her life away in a foolish game. During the wake, the funeral, and the days that followed, Hinu did not seem able to shake her depression.

George Crow knew that his oldest granddaughter was unhappy and brooding over the death of her young friend and he wished to help her. He believed that there was a great deal of comfort and guidance in the old Winnebago creation stories, but it was a long time since he had heard many of them—ever since he, himself, was a child. Some of these sacred stories he had never heard in their entirety because they were the secret property of the Medicine Lodge Society to which he did not belong.

A few years before, one of Mr. Crow’s Wisconsin uncles, a

member of the Medicine Lodge, had entrusted him with a tape to take back to Nebraska in order to encourage and strengthen a sick relative. This recording in the Winnebago language told of Maũna's creation of the world in more detail than Mr. Crow had ever before heard. George Crow's uncle asked him to promise that he would destroy the tape after playing it once for the purpose it was intended, and he did. Afterwards he was only able to recall bits and pieces of the story.

Because he was not sure he was qualified to speak about these matters, Mr. Crow did not bring them up for a long time. Late one Sunday afternoon, however, he came upon Hinu sitting listlessly by herself in the living room. Usually when Hinu had a problem she tried to do something about it. Now she felt a loss that she could see no way of making better.

"Granddaughter," said Mr. Crow, "it is a sad thing for family and friends when somebody dies who has barely begun to live out her years. But it is not right for you to grieve too long. Maũna has seen the plight of those-who-walk-on-two-legs and has taken pity on us. He has provided us with ways of asking for assistance and blessings, and to aid us in this world. It is up to you to exert yourself to put your faith to work to do yourself some good."

"But Choka," said Hinu, "I hardly know anything at all about the old religion."

"I know," said Mr. Crow, "I haven't heard all about it either because the Medicine Lodge died out here in Nebraska and, anyway, I'm not an initiate. But no matter what religious organizations they have belonged to, I think that thankfulness for life and the preservation of life has been the main religion of the Winnebagoes. You have to have this feeling and belief within yourself in order to have people say that this is your religion."

George Crow looked over at Hinu and she seemed to be listening, so he went on. "In the past the Winnebagoes' whole lives were hinged to this religion. They respected and valued their relationship to themselves, to Maũna, the Earthmaker, and to what he had created. An individual believed that even a blade of grass would witness his actions as he passed it and that he couldn't have a good relationship with Maũna unless he respected his creation. This old religion was also what they

called the Helushga. It was to preserve life. You had respect. The Winnebago in the past, as I see him, lived religiously the life of which he himself was maker.”

“But Choka,” said Hinu, “I thought they said it was Mauna who made the Winnebagoes, or maybe Wagunzela, I’ve heard that name, too.”

“Oh yes,” said Mr. Crow. “The Winnebagoes have three names for the Earthmaker, who other people might call God. He created the human beings, but then he gave them freedom to do what they want because he gave them a mind to think. Because of this they are the lowest and least blessed of all his creatures. So to help them, he sent down his messengers and he gave them special blessings. I’ve already told you kids about some of these things. If you like, I could tell you now about the Earthmaker’s names and what they mean.”

“All right,” said Hinu. “I’d like to hear about them, I guess.” She settled back in the old sofa and George Crow sat down in an equally ancient armchair.

“To begin with,” he said, “he is sometimes called Waxopini Xedela. That name has something to do with his complexion, very fair complected. In fact, the word for Frenchman used to be Waxopini because they were light-skinned. But Waxopini Xedela means the Big Wahopini, a very special kind of man, a spirit actually.

“Then, as you know, he is referred to as Maũna most of the time. Maũna is considered a very active being. He is the Earthmaker. “‘Mā’ is the earth and ‘ũna’ means ‘the maker.’ But the Earthmaker moves from one phase to another. While he was making this earth, he was Maũna. Afterwards when he started to devise different kinds of life and other things on the earth, he became the Wagũzela, the Creator. Wagũz means ‘to outline, plan, create.’

“You know, I once had a long tape about the creation from Uncle Hobart that I erased after Joe Green over there listened to it. Throughout that recording every time he’d mention that Wagũzela would send out his voice, he’d beat on a water drum like they use in the Medicine Lodge. The drum was used to represent the voice of the Creator. Whenever Wagũzela would send out his voice as to what he desired, it would be.

“Then there is this other word, too, ‘Wakã Chuhnk,’

which means the holiness, the sacredness, the mysteriousness of him. It is what he is, not who he is. You can't say, well, 'Wakã Chuhnk, here it is.' Rather, you would say, 'He is holy. He moves mysteriously. He's got to be Wakã Chuhnk.' When people attribute a happening somewhere to Maũna, Waxopini Xedela, or Wagũzela, they say he did it through his Wakã Chuhnk. It is the method by which he can accomplish things. Because he is Wakã Chuhnk he can change personalities, move around, and so forth."

"So then it was Wagũzela who created us human beings?" inquired Hinu.

"Yes," said Mr. Crow. "That's who he is in certain circumstances, but most of the time we just go ahead and call him Maũna. The story of his creating or molding of man is similar to that which is in the Bible. Only, in the Winnebago case, it is said that Wagũzela breathed into him. This human being opened his eyes and knew his Creator, and he got up and walked with him. They didn't say for how long. But they walked until there were many. Then when the human population had increased a great deal, the people thought, 'We are a great number. We should do this.' They began to use their minds and to devise different things to do which turned out to be contrary to the rules that had been set up for the animals. Therefore the human being was the lowest of all creation, because he was given a mind to think. This is just opposite of what the Bible says."

Now, after the Earthmaker had created the earth and everything that is on the earth, he was pleased with his creation but he also saw that there were a lot of things there that were not right. Either because of his misbehavior or because he was the poorest of all creation, man was getting into trouble. Maũna said, "There has got to be order. I must have someone there to see that these things are kept in order, especially the-ones-who-walk-on-two-legs."

Maũna called together a group of spirits who were his handymen, his workers, or messengers. From this group he chose twelve, and he told them, "Now you go down and be the caretakers of this, my creation. Four of you will

overlook the skies and the clouds and thereabouts. Four of you will be on the earth, and the other four will be in the earth, on the earth, and in the water.”

Mr. Crow hesitated for a moment. “Did you know, Hinu,” he asked, “that our clans have the names of these twelve spirits? The clans of the air are the Thunder, the Hawk, and the Eagle, and there used to be a Pigeon Clan. Those on the earth are the Bear, the Wolf, the Buffalo, and the Elk. Those under the earth and whatnot are the Snake, the Fish, the Deer, and the Water Spirit.” George Crow went on with his story. “Now this is where the gift of the tobacco comes in. I think I’ve told you about it before.”

Māuna took pity on those-who-walk-on-two-legs because they were having a hard time. He sent out his voice that there should be a plant for man to control. Māuna told his messenger spirits that whenever a man would offer them tobacco and ask for wisdom or for some other favor, they would have to give it to him. Māuna said to them, “Never deny him. When man comes to his senses and needs help, needs a blessing, he’s going to ask for it. The tobacco is his. Even I myself am not so that I can take it back from him. It’s for him to use to become something.”

“Well, Hinu,” said Mr. Crow, “thinking about those twelve spirits, one thing leads to another. The story goes on to talk about the Winnebago language and the meaning of Ho Chuhnk, our name for ourselves.”

“Go on, Choka,” said Hinu. “I’m listening.”

“All right. I’ll just get a cup of coffee here first.” Mr. Crow went to the kitchen and returned with a steaming cup. Settling down in his chair he started in where he had left off. . . .

Before beginning their journey to the new creation to take over their posts, the twelve spirits got together and asked each other, “What language are we going to talk when we get there?” In this group there was an elder spirit, one who had more seniority than the others. He said, “We’re going to talk Ho Chuhnk, Winnebago, of

course.” It was so. The spirits came down to oversee their areas and they began to converse with one another. Those that were on the surface of the earth spoke, perhaps, with those above the earth; and the people, the-ones-who-walk-on-two-legs, overheard them. They understood the language being spoken for they also spoke this language, Ho Chuhnk, Winnebago, the Voice of Praise.

For it is said that when the-ones-who-walk-on-two-legs first began to converse with one another on the new creation they spoke the language of praise with the voice of praise. They spoke in such a manner because it was a new creation and they understood the Creator. Regardless of the situation they were always praising their Creator when they spoke. They didn’t have any swear words then. Even in reprimanding someone or using language in anger, it was always the language of praise. That is the what the word ‘Ho Chuhnk’ means; it is the Voice of Praise. The root word is ‘Chuhnk’ which means ‘praise’; and ‘Ho’ is ‘the voice.’ Since that time, the population has so increased that these precepts which were set, the thinking of the people, and the praiseworthiness of their language have degenerated into what they are today. But in the beginning it was a language that praised Maũna when it was spoken, and we Winnebagoes have always called ourselves the Ho Chuhnk people.

“But to get back to what we’re talking about. I wanted you to understand, Hinu, that Maũna has taken pity on our condition and has given us ways of asking for blessings and help so that we can learn how to live. First he sent down those twelve spirits to oversee things and to give blessings to the two-legged-ones. But the human beings still had problems. I guess there were large beasts and spirits and whatnot around at that time which had turned evil. They must have gotten hold of some loco weed and gone berserk. They were giving the people a lot of trouble.

“So Maũna sent his five sons down to help. But the first four didn’t do what their old man told them to do. They came down here, looked around, and saw that it was a good place to goof off. These are the characters that I’ve told you about

before—Wakjuhngkaga or the Trickster, the Turtle, the Bladder, and He-Who-Wears-Human-Heads-As-Earrings. If you enjoy the stories about these beings and think about them, after awhile you can see yourself in them. I mean they drive you to self-scrutinization.

“Finally the last son, the Hare or Rabbit, came down and he did what his father wanted him to do: to get rid of the evil beasts and spirits and to help the Winnebagoes. I remember them saying that when Waschihnggega, the Hare, was here on earth and he first found out that the human beings would have to die, he was heartbroken. No one could console him for a long time. Then he started the Medicine Lodge to show the Winnebagoes the way of life. But I don’t know much about that story because it’s secret, like the story of Māuna creating the Earth. They only tell it during the Medicine Dance and I haven’t seen one for 63 years.”

Hinu was surprised. “I didn’t know anyone could go who didn’t belong.”

“That’s true. It’s a secret lodge and what goes on when the tent is closed down you’re not supposed to know. But I used to be sitting right inside the tent. It was when I was real little. My grandma used to take me to those functions, and if it would rain or storm, she’d raise the tent up and let me slide under the canvas so that I’d be sitting right behind her.

“You might say I was a very bulgy-eyed kid. I looked everything over as much as I could, although it was dark in there even with the fireplaces lit. Parts of the function lasted all night and parts were in the daytime. I saw most of it. I got so that even outside of the tent I could remember for a particular day of the dance, like the last day, where the speakers inside would be located, the sequence of the rituals and so forth. I wouldn’t be so sharp at it now; it’s been 63 years.”

“Do you remember the story of how Māuna created the Earth?” asked Hinu.

“Only the very first part of it,” said Mr. Crow, “and that’s from listening to Uncle Hobart’s tape. I don’t recall the stories very well from when I went to the Medicine Dances. I was too young. But I’ll tell you what I can about it if you’d like.” Mr. Crow stopped for a moment to concentrate his thoughts. Then he began. . . .

It was said at the beginning of the creation story that Maūna was sitting ‘wangejela,’ which means ‘up there somewhere in space.’ They didn’t say where but there he sat. All of a sudden he became conscious. The word they use for becoming conscious is ‘ksap kidinuhk’ which means ‘he sat and had consciousness about him.’ It was as if somebody had knocked him out and he regained consciousness.

Then he observed what he was doing and he caught himself doing absolutely nothing. It grieved him so much to find himself doing nothing that he started to weep. So wherever he sat, he sat weeping. Then he looked below him and there was a great sphere of water where his tears all fell into space. I don’t know how the old time Indians knew it, but any liquid that is free in space will, by surface tension, pull together and form a sphere. This sphere is what he looked upon.

Now, that Maūna could sit and weep showed that he regretted that he found himself idle. From that time on, he began to do something. He used cosmic dust or whatever to formulate the solid part of the Earth, the dirt, the land. But he had trouble getting this ‘wij d’eh,’ this ‘island in which we live,’ to be stable. Eventually he had to send some of his helpers to weight it down.

“In the recording it went through all of the processes of what he thought and what he created. But I don’t want to go on and talk about it because there is a whole lot of it in there that I don’t know about, that I couldn’t get from listening to it once. I got the tail end of it. Because the rest of them, you know, don’t tell outsiders. It’s a secret society. But if we don’t nurture this knowledge and teach others like this it’s going to go down the ‘hollow of echoes,’ the ‘hojalala.’ In the end it’s going to disappear and no one will hear it.”

The room was silent for awhile after George Crow finished speaking. Outside the house the shadows of trees and buildings were very long and the sun dropped behind the horizon.

“You know, Hinu,” he said finally, “there is so much that we have lost and now people are crying out and saying, ‘Let’s get back to our culture.’ I don’t know. I think maybe it’s a



little bit late because we have been polluted with other things. It took the process of many years, but the Winnebagoes have strayed away from their ancient customs. Now they're like anybody else; they've learned to lie and to hurt each other.

"But we have a word, 'wanỹksap,' that we use to explain what happens when you have sustained consciousness. At all times you know who you are, where you're at, your responsibilities, and your privileges. This is what Mũna is to me. When I address him as Earthmaker, I can see that he is busy, that he has blessed me enough to give me life, and that I can seek him. Maybe, in time, I will see him."

As she sat in the darkening room, Hinu had been thinking of what her grandfather had said about the hollow of echoes. "Well," she spoke up, "if it isn't going to disappear I suppose it's up to us younger ones to learn all we can about it."

George Crow looked over at his granddaughter in surprise. "That's a tall order, Hinu," he said. "It won't be easy. But if I believed that I got you kids to think that way, I'd feel that maybe I'd done something for you."

Night had fallen while George and Hinu had been talking. As they got up, they could hear Winona in the kitchen making supper and, more faintly, the rumble of traffic from down the hill. East of town, in the Timbers, the day creatures had all returned to their nests and burrows and the night creatures began to scurry around in the underbrush and to wing silently among the trees.

***cover photograph:  
uncovered framework of a Winnebago Medicine Lodge  
Nebraska State Historical Society***