

The coyote and the stars

(An adaptation for children of the tale “Coyote and the Stars” from the Navajo tribe of North America)

A long time ago, when the night sky was still as dark as coal and there were no stars to light it up, the animals gathered to discuss the problem. The night was too dark, and many were afraid of what they could not see. They decided that something had to be done.

The first to speak was the wise bear:
“I believe we should use magic to bring light to the sky. But I don’t know how to do it.”

The fox, who always had good ideas, suggested:
“We could take small bits of sunlight and attach them to the sky. That way, we would have little bright lights for the night.”

All the animals agreed, and soon they began collecting small rays of sunlight that had become trapped on the leaves of trees, in dewdrops, and inside river shells. They placed them onto a large black blanket, ready to be hung in the sky.

Among the animals was a coyote—curious and mischievous. While the others worked with great care, he paced about restlessly, staring at

the blanket filled with tiny lights. He was fascinated by the bright little specks, but he also found the process of placing them into the sky one by one to be terribly boring.

“Why do we have to be so slow?” the coyote complained. “I can do it much faster!”

The other animals asked him to be patient. They wanted the little lights to be arranged in an orderly fashion, forming beautiful shapes in the sky. But the Coyote wouldn’t listen.

One night, when no one was looking, the Coyote grabbed the blanket full of lights. With a quick motion, he shook it hard, sending all the little lights flying up into the sky at once. The lights scattered chaotically, filling the sky with bright points everywhere.

When the other animals saw what he had done, they became very angry:
“Coyote! You’ve ruined our work!”

But when they looked up, they realized that the sky—though disorganized—was breathtaking. The little lights shone as if they were dancing in the darkness, and some of the animals even began to recognize shapes among them.

The Coyote, proud of what he had done, said:
“I knew it would turn out well. It may not be orderly, but it’s full of life—just like nature itself!”

From that night on, the sky was never dark again. The lights the Coyote had scattered became the stars, and to this day, they still shine to guide us through the darkness.

And if you ever see a shooting star, remember that it’s the Coyote playing with the stars, making sure the sky is never boring.

Questions for discussion with children

Why do you think the Coyote didn’t want to place the stars one by one, as the other animals had wanted? Do you think shaking the blanket was a good idea? Why? At first, the animals were angry with the coyote, but then they saw that the sky had turned out very beautiful. What does this teach us about how unexpected things can sometimes also be special?

If you could design a sky full of stars, how would you do it? Would you arrange them in lines or shapes, or would you scatter them all over the place?

The story explains that the stars are in the sky thanks to the coyote. What other stories do you think could explain the mysteries of nature, such as the Sun, the Moon, or the clouds?

Do you think the animals could have worked together with the coyote to create a sky that everyone liked? What does working as a team mean to you?