



How Man Got Fire

Adapted by Susan LaBella
From a Native American Tale

NARRATOR 1:

Many, many years ago, when humans were new to the world, they did not have fire.

NARRATOR 2:

During spring and summer, the days and nights were warm, and the humans were happy.

NARRATOR 3:

But when winter drew near, they became afraid. They knew wind, ice, and snow would come, and the days and nights would be very cold.

NARRATOR 4:

Animals also lived on Earth at that time. One of them was Coyote.

NARRATOR 5:

One day as Coyote passed the village, he heard humans talking.

Man 1:

Feel how the sun warms Earth and makes these stones hot to touch.

Man 2:

If only we could have a small bit of the sun in our teepees during the long, cold winter.

COYOTE:

I feel sorry for the humans. Hmmm. Maybe I can help.

NARRATOR 1:

Coyote knew of a faraway mountaintop where three Fire Beings lived. He knew the Beings were selfish with their fire because they thought having fire would make humans too powerful.

NARRATOR 2:

Nevertheless, Coyote went to the Fire Beings' mountain. He quietly crept up to the top of the mountain.

NARRATOR 3:

As Coyote got near, the Beings jumped up and looked around. Their eyes were blood red. Their hands were like the claws of a vulture.

FIRE BEING 1:

What's that? What did I just hear?

FIRE BEING 2:

A thief! Creeping in the bushes!

NARRATOR 4:

The third Fire Being looked closely.

FIRE BEING 3:

No...it is just a coyote.

NARRATOR 5:

So the Fire Beings sat back down and paid no more attention to Coyote. But Coyote watched the Fire Beings closely.

NARRATOR 1:

He watched them feed the fire with pine cones and dry tree branches.

COYOTE (whisper):

Look how they stamp on the small flames that fly onto the dry grass.

NARRATOR 2:

He watched them take turns guarding the fire.

COYOTE (whisper):

Look how two Beings sleep while the third stands watch.

NARRATOR 3:

In the early morning, Coyote watched as the Being guarding the fire went into a teepee and called out...

FIRE BEING 1:

Sister! Sister! Hurry! It's your turn to guard the fire.

NARRATOR 4:

But his sister, who was still half asleep, moved slowly to take her turn.

NARRATOR 5:

So Coyote came up with a plan.

NARRATOR 1:

He hurried down the mountain to tell his friends.

NARRATOR 2:

He told his friends about the humans who feared the cold winter and about the selfish Fire Beings.

NARRATOR 3:

And he told his friends about his plan.

COYOTE'S FRIENDS:

The humans need to have fire. We will all help.

NARRATOR 4:

So Coyote hurried back up the mountain.

FIRE BEING 2:

What is that? Is it a thief?

FIRE BEING 3:

No, it's just an old gray coyote hunting for food.

NARRATOR 5:

The Fire Beings sat around the fire...and Coyote waited. He waited through the day. He waited through the night. When morning came...

FIRE BEING 1:

Sister! Sister! Get up! It's your turn to watch the fire.

FIRE BEING 2:

I'm coming. Stop shouting!

NARRATOR 1:

But before she could get out of the teepee, Coyote jumped from the bushes, grabbed a glowing piece of fire, and ran down the mountain.

NARRATOR 1:

The Fire Beings ran after him.

FIRE BEINGS 1, 2, 3 (in unison):

Stop, thief! Stop!

NARRATOR 2:

Finally, the Fire Beings caught up to Coyote. One reached out...

FIRE BEING 3:

A-ha Coyote I've got you!

NARRATOR 3:

But he didn't...not really. Instead, he just touched the tip of Coyote's tail. The heat of his claw turned Coyote's tail white.

EVERYONE (in unison):

And that is why today the coyote's tail has a white tip.

NARRATOR 4:

With that, Coyote shouted and threw the fire away to his friends waiting at the bottom of the mountain.

NARRATOR 5:

Squirrel saw the falling fire first.

SQUIRREL:

Got it!

NARRATOR 1:

Squirrel put the fire on his back. He carried it through the tree tops. The fire burned his back so badly that squirrel's tail curled up.

EVERYONE (in unison):

And that is why today the squirrel's tail is curled up and back.

NARRATOR 2:

Squirrel threw the fire to Chipmunk. Chipmunk was so afraid she just stood there.

CHIPMUNK:

Ch-ch-chatter, ch-ch-chatter...

NARRATOR 3:

As Chipmunk turned to run, one of the Fire Beings reached out and clawed at her back.

EVERYONE (in unison):

And that is why today chipmunks have three stripes on their backs.

NARRATOR 4:

Chipmunk quickly threw the fire to frog just as one of the Beings grabbed frog's tail.

FROG:

Dude! My tail!

NARRATOR 5:

Frog had to think fast. So he took a BIG leap, leaving his tail in the Being's hand.

EVERYONE (in unison):

And that is why today frogs have no tails.

NARRATOR 1:

Frog tossed the fire to wood. Wood swallowed the fire.

NARRATOR 2:

The Fire Beings were stumped. They tried singing to Wood. They tried talking to Wood. But Wood would not give up the fire.

NARRATOR 3:

The Fire Beings knew they had lost their fire. They high-tailed it back to their mountaintop, never to show their gruesome faces again.

NARRATOR 4:

But wise Coyote knew how to get fire from Wood. So he showed the humans the trick of rubbing two sticks together to make flames.

EVERYONE (in unison):

And that is why today fire keeps man warm and safe throughout the cold winter.

NARRATOR 5:

But whatever happened to the selfish Fire Beings? Someone said they were last seen trying to find a way to roast marshmallows....

