

Contact:

The Barbara Clark Agency
1252 Old Post Road
South Salem, New York 10590
646-526-7051
barbarakclark@yahoo.com

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RETOLD TALES OF THE HOPI

by

Richard Snodgrass

...a good story is more important
than anything else in the world.

Hamilton Tyler

PRELUDE

According to some of the Hopi stories, when everyone lived in the First World, far under the surface of the earth, the first people didn't look like people at all, instead they looked like insects, like ants. And when that world, the First World, was eventually destroyed by fire, the insects, the ants, crawled up into the Second World, which was still under the surface of the earth, where they became other creatures, perhaps like tadpoles with gills and webbed fingers and bulging eyes. And when the Second World was eventually destroyed, this time by water, they crawled up into the Third World, still under the surface of the earth, where Hurúng Wuhti, the Woman of Hard Things—or maybe it was Spider Grandmother—decided to make creatures that looked a lot like people as we know them, except that they had tails. Now the people, of course, were ashamed of themselves, because they knew (even if the gods didn't) that people weren't supposed to have tails. But as it turned out they were more like people than they could ever imagine: They didn't need fire or water or some natural catastrophe to destroy their world, they mucked it up so badly by themselves that it soon became unlivable. And that's when they entered the present world, that's when they climbed up on to the surface of the earth, this the Fourth World, and people came to look just as they do today, like people. But as to how this world turns out, what people make of the Fourth World, the Hopi stories, at least the ones told outside the kivas, don't say, the outcome hasn't been determined yet, the stories are still going on....

BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

Before there was anything else, at the time when the earth was covered with water, the Woman of Hard Things lived in the East, at one end of the world, and another Woman of Hard things lived in the West, at the other end of the world. And every day, Father Sun crossed the sky between them. The Woman of Hard things of the East liked the arrangement, but the Woman of Hard Things of the West was dissatisfied.

“Big Daddy, I’m tired of you always getting up in the middle of the night and leaving me,” she said, her eyes the color of turquoise, and just about as brittle.

Father Sun sat on the edge of the bed and yawned. “Isn’t it enough that you’re the one I come to at the end of the day?” he said, scratching his corona.

“But why can’t I be the one you wake up with in the mornings?”

“Whoever heard of the sun rising in the West?”

“That’s the trouble with you, you never want to try anything new.” She got out of bed and sat on the floor, among her piles of shells and beads and precious stones—the Hard Things. “The way you always leave in the middle of the night makes me feel cheap.”

Father Sun looked around for his golden buckskin. “I’m sorry, Toots, but you know how things are.”

“You know how things are,” she mocked. She twined a string of beads around her arm,

as pouty as a child. “And now I suppose you’re going to go back and spend the rest of the night with *her*.”

“There’s nothing I can do about it,” Papa said. “You knew the situation when we started.”

“East to West. East to West. You’ve got a one-track mind.”

Father Sun got up and combed out his rays, giving them a special tilt. “Look, we’re all adults in this thing. Why don’t you two get together some time, get to know each other, have a little company for yourself? This sitting around on the edge of the world isn’t good for a god. Maybe she can teach you how to make something, something to keep yourself occupied.”

“Oh goody,” the Woman said. “We can sit around and embroider corn or grind cloth.”

“I don’t think that’s quite the way it goes,” said the Sun, trying to think. “But maybe she can come up with something. You can travel back and forth on a rainbow.”

The Woman of Hard Things ran her hands through her precious stones, lifting them up and letting them trickle through her fingers like rain. Father Sun bent over to kiss her on the forehead, then picked up a piece of coral from the pile. “That’s pretty, isn’t it? Sort of looks like me.”

She threw a handful at him and he ducked away, out the back door of her kiva, under the ocean, until he came up again in the kiva of the Woman of Hard Things of the East.

“You’re late,” the Woman said, looking out at him from underneath the covers of the bed. “Did she try to keep you there again?”

“You can’t blame her,” Papa shrugged. “It can get pretty lonely in a void. I told her you two should get together.”

“That’s a good idea,” she said, patting the bed beside her.

“I thought so.”

“That way we can compare notes, to see if you’re better with one than the other.”

“Ah-hmm,” said the Sun. “What I meant was, I thought you could show her how to make birds or animals or something. You know how to do all that stuff.”

“Come here, Mr. Star, I’ll show you how to do all that stuff,” she said and grabbed him between her knees, raised up like mountain peaks.

When the night was just about over, Father Sun dragged himself from her bed. The kiva was chilly so first he put on his gray fox skin, the gray dawn of the Hopi. The Woman of Hard Things watched him, sexy-eyed, from her bed.

“Keeping two women at the opposite ends of the earth is going to be the death of me,” he said. He was warmer now, so he took off his gray fox skin and put on his yellow fox skin, the yellow dawn of the Hopi.

“Don’t kid yourself, Old Sol,” the Woman said, adjusting her breast. “What do you think keeps you going?”

Father Sun grinned, his radiance and heat filling the kiva. He took off his yellow fox skin, posed a little for her approval, then put on his golden buckskin, bright as day. “See you tonight, Toots.” He blew her a kiss and climbed the ladder into the sky, beaming and full of himself. Again.

DAWN OF CREATION

The Woman of Hard Things sat in her kiva, juggling the Moon—weighing the matter, as it were. Then she pitched it across the noonday sky.

The Moon, always somewhat pale as a messenger, tumbled down the firmament and came to rest at the feet of Father Sun.

“She’s a hard woman, all right,” said the Moon faintly. “And she wants to see you down at her place as soon as you’re through up here.”

“You know, someday they’ll kill messengers who deliver news like that,” Papa said. “Where else does she think I’m going to go?”

“Don’t ask me, I take a dim view of the whole thing anyway,” said the Moon, crawling around the floor looking for a lost quarter.

Papa sighed and took his own time traveling down the western sky toward the ocean. When he got there, he gave the turtle shell rattle hanging on the ladder a shake to announce his arrival, and slid down into the kiva of the Woman of Hard Things. The Woman sat on the hearth, watching him balloon around the ceiling for a few minutes, bumping his head against the vigas.

“...my sunshine, my only sunshine...,” she hummed to herself, a secret smile on her face, as she stirred a pot of potions. “So tell me, what’s new in the world today?”

“It’s looking pretty good,” said the Sun. “There’s land, now that some of the water

drained off, and I touched it up here and there with some grass and trees. Tomorrow I'm going to add something I've just invented called flowers."

"Good for you," said the Woman. "Want some honey, honey?"

"What's honey?" he said. He didn't like the way she smiled.

"It's not important," she said, getting up and patting his cheek. "Come here, I want to show you something."

"Can't I eat first?" he said, thinking she wanted to go to bed already. The expression on her face said that wasn't what she had in mind at all. He shrugged and followed her into another chamber where she kept her Hard Things—shells, corals, turquoise, beads—then into a farther room where he'd never been before.

On the floor in the center of the room was a large piece of native cloth, with a lot of feathers scattered around.

"I think I've just about got it now," she said. She rubbed her body until she had a ball of cuticle, then mixed it with some clay and feathers and put in on the floor under the blanket.

"Grab a hold," she said, motioning to his end of the cloth.

They held the cloth between them and flapped it up and down while the Woman of Hard Things sang. After the fourth time, there were chirps and whistles from the cloth and something began to bump around underneath it. They lifted up the cloth and found all the different birds of the world.

"Not bad," said Father Sun, impressed in spite of himself. His heat excited the birds, however, and they began fluttering around; the room was quickly filled with beating wings.

"There still seems to be a few bugs with it though," he said, picking some guano out of his beard.

"I did it for you," she said, looking a bit hurt.

“Thanks a heap,” he muttered. “You got something I can put them in?”

The Woman found a jug the size of Asia and helped round them up.

“Now I think we should make you something,” said Father Sun. He took some handfuls of hair along with the different colors of which he was painted and put them under the cloth. Then they flapped the cloth four times while Papa this time sang a song. When something began to move underneath the cloth, they lifted up the edge and out ran antelope, deer, rabbits, sheep, mountain lions, and all the other animals of the world, chasing each other around the room.

“With my best wishes,” Father sun beamed, giving a little bow.

The Woman of Hard Things curtsied. And removed her foot from the mouth of a bear.

“Now it’s my turn again,” she said, scattering her animals to the four corners of the earth and picking up her end of the cloth again.

“Okay,” said Papa. “But what else could there be?”

The Woman of Hard Things had a mischievous twinkle in her eye. “This time let’s try making some people.”

“Uh-oh,” said Father Sun.

THEN THERE WERE PEOPLE

Hurúing Wuhti, the Woman of Hard Things, rubbed her legs and feet until she worked up a little ball of scales.

“That’s really a disgusting habit,” Father Sun said.

“Just pipe down and grab your end of the blanket,” she replied. She mixed the cuticle with some clay and placed it on the floor under her blanket. Then she and Father Sun held the corners of the blanket and flapped it up and down four times while the Woman of Hard things sang a song.

“Hey, it’s hot under here,” something said from under the blanket. The Woman and Father Sun pulled back the cloth and found a little girl.

“Oops, there was supposed to be a matched set,” said the Woman.

“Something tells me this isn’t the time to be experimenting,” said the Sun.

The Woman of Hard Things of the West pouted. “I did mine the same way the Woman of Hard Things of the East did hers.”

“Maybe so,” said Father Sun, looking dubiously at the little girl whose skin was red. “But hers turned out white.”

“Well, if at first you don’t succeed,” said the Woman, and motioned for the Sun to pick up his end of the blanket again. They flapped the blanket four more times while the Woman sang

her song. Another lump appeared under the blanket, and besides the crying of the little girl, they heard some moaning. They pulled back the cloth and found a little boy sitting next to the little girl.

“I’m roasting under here!” said the little boy, the mate to the little mana. “What’s the matter with you two anyway, don’t you know how to do anything right? Why does everything have to happen to me?”

“Yep, they’re people, all right,” said Father Sun, recognizing the complaints.

“Don’t just stand there, Mr. Bright Guy,” said the boy. “Do something.”

“Yeh, and I’m hungry,” whined the girl. “And my body’s funny too. Why didn’t I get one of those things between my legs like he has? And another thing....”

Father Sun considered turning them into charcoal steaks, but the Woman of Hard Things seemed quite proud of herself. She taught the little boy and girl a language and called them Hopi.

“This is fun!” she said. “Now let’s make some Zunis and some Tewas and some Navahos and some....”

“You’re asking for trouble,” said Father Sun.

“Piffle,” said the Woman of Hard Things and began to work up a ball of scales and fuzz from inside her naval to see what she could make from that.

“Oh well, I guess you’re right,” said Father Sun, reaching for his end of the blanket. “At least they’ll give us gods something to watch for a change.”

SPIDER GRANDMOTHER

Now, while the Woman of Hard Things of the West and the Woman of Hard Things of the East were busy with the serious business of creating people, Spider Grandmother sat in her own kiva, out of everyone's way down by the edge of the water. But what with the two Women of Hard Things, the two Hurúing Wuhtis, traveling back and forth over the rainbows to compare notes, the Old Woman soon got the drift of what was going on. Or thought she did.

“There can't be too much to making people,” she muttered to herself, “if those two sob sisters can do it. I'll show 'em they're not so special.”

So Spider Grandmother rubbed a couple of her many legs together to get some loose scales and put the scales under an old piece of web she had lying around at the back of her kiva. She figured she had an advantage over the other gods because she didn't need Father Sun to help her hold the cloth—with so many hands of her own, she could hold all four corners of the cloth herself. She sang the bits and pieces of the songs she heard the others sing, and flapped the corners of the cloth up and down four times. And sure enough, two lumps appeared under the cloth; she lifted up the cloth and found a man and woman. The problem was that they weren't at all like the red-skinned people made by the Hurúing Wuhti of the West, or the Whites made by the Hurúing Wuhti of the East; these were sort of brown-colored, and called Mexicans.

“I'll never hear the end of this,” the Old Woman said to herself as the couple jumped up

and ran around the room.

“Oh dear. Maybe I can think of something to keep them busy.”

She rubbed her legs together again, this time four legs at once, and flapped her blanket-web over the scales. This time the lump underneath the cloth turned out to be a burro.

The animal was rather funny looking but it could carry a lot so Spider Grandmother gave it to the Mexicans, hoping it might interest them in doing some kind of work. But by this time the couple had multiplied by algebraic proportions and was busy organizing a fiesta and making tortillas. She had to admit the tortillas were tasty if a little flat, and she certainly liked the jangly things the Mexicans called *bells*. But as a people they were obsessed with washing everyone else's head, something they called *Baptism*. It was not only annoying, it was a waste of precious water.

“Better try something else,” the Old Woman said and kept on rubbing. She turned out people of all sort of colors and customs as she tried to set things right again. But, of course, each new couple only made things worse. And one time she forgot that she was supposed to make only couples and ended up making a single girl.

“Oh my,” said Spider Grandmother. “How did that happen?”

“I don't care how it happened,” said the little girl. “How am I going to find a man?”

“I must have made an extra one at some time or other,” said the Old Woman, gumming her fangs. “I think he went that-a-way. You'll just have to do the best you can. As I remember he had a little dimple....”

“Crazy old fool!” said the single girl, heading over the hill in search of her elusive mate. In time she found a single man all right, but maybe he wasn't the right one, or maybe they had been apart so long that they could no longer get along together. Whatever the reason, the

mismatched couple introduced arguing to all the other couples and it soon became more popular than making love.

After all this had gone on for awhile, one day the Woman of Hard Things of the West was crossing over a rainbow when she looked down and saw what Spider Grandmother had done. She called the Woman of Hard Things of the East to come look too; neither one could believe their eyes.

“Different races, mismatched couples, arguing,” said Hurúing Wuhti of the East, shaking her head. “Just what do you call this mess?”

“What about: *Life?*” said Spider Grandmother. “We could start a saying when things get all fouled up: ‘Well, that’s life.’ Has sort of a nice ring to it, don’t you think?”

“I think I’ve had enough,” said the Woman of Hard Things of the West. “I’m going back to my kiva beyond the ocean and stay there.”

“That’s a good idea,” said the Woman of Hard Things of the East. “I’m going back to my kiva at the other end of the world. I haven’t had any peace and quiet since this whole creation business began.”

“Good luck, Grandmother, with your thing called life.” Hurúing Wuhti of the West hiked up her skirts and headed back down the rainbow, far out into the Pacific. “If anyone wants me, you can tell them where to start looking.”

THE LITTLE WAR TWINS

“Hey Grandmother,” said the oldest War Twin, “tell us about the time Dad gave the shaft to the virgin.”

“To the virgin, to the virgin,” echoed the younger War Twin.

“Watch your mouths,” Spider Grandmother said, waving a feeler in their direction, “or you’ll both be eating yucca suds.” The Two giggled into their piki bread.

The Little War Twins were the size of plump twelve-year-olds and forever young. The oldest was named Pookong, the Son of the Sun, or as he was sometimes called, the Boy, because either name seemed suitable for a child fathered by a sunbeam. His younger brother was called Balonga, or Child Of Water, because he was fathered by the Water Serpent; he was also called Echo, perhaps because a second son, even when he’s a god, tends to be redundant. Spider Grandmother did her best to give them a good home, but it was hard work for an old woman who had been around since the dawn of creation. She couldn’t even get The Two to take care of themselves properly. They were always dirty, their clothes were tattered, and their noses dribbled over their upper lips—the original snot-faced kids. Fortunately for everybody, The Twins spent most of their time playing shinny, batting a ball back and forth as they ran around the universe.

“Seriously, Grandmother,” said Pookong, helping his brother get unstuck from one of the old lady’s stray filaments. “You’re always telling us stories about Father Sun. Now we want to

go see him for ourselves.”

“Seriously,” Echo urged him on. “To go see him for ourselves.”

“There’s monsters every step of the way,” said the Old Woman. “They’d make mince meat out of the two of you.”

“Not if you gave us something to protect us,” said Pookong.

“Protect us,” said Balonga.

The older brother looked at the younger. “Can’t you say anything except what I say?”

“What’d I say?” said the younger, and stuck out his tongue.

The Twins kept pestering Spider Grandmother until she finally gave in. “All right, all right, if it will get you boys out from under my feet,”—which, considering she had eight of them, was a real problem for her. She rummaged around in the back of her kiva until she came up with a small leather pouch filled with medicine.

“If you get into trouble, which I’m sure you will, just chew a little bit of this medicine and spit on your monster. It’s guaranteed to tie him up in knots for as long as you need it. I got it from the old God of the Sky, I think he used it to bind atoms together or something, a long long time ago....”

As the Old Woman cackled at her memories, Balonga reached in the bag and tasted a piece of the meal.

“Pa-tooeey!” he said and spit it out, nailing the cat to the floor. “That stuff tastes awful! I’m not going to chew any of that rot—”

His older brother stuck a shinny ball in his brother’s mouth. “Thanks, Grandmother. We’ll say hello to Dad for you.”

The Old Woman came out of her reverie and sputtered. “And while you’re at it, ask old

Sunny Jim up there why he never stops around to see me any more. Mr. High And Mighty must be getting too big for his britches, if you ask me....”

They left her muttering to herself as she tried to find her third pair of moccasins under the bed.

The Twins knew that before they got to the Place Of Sunrise they'd have to face the four guardians of the House of the Sun—Bear, Mountain Lion, Rattlesnake, and Knife-Wing—in addition to the everyday, run-of-the-mill monsters they might run into along the way. So Pookong put on his war bonnet and slung his bow and a quiver of arrows tied with bluebird feathers over his shoulder, and Balonga put on his warrior feathers and took along his club with an egg-shaped stone tied at the end. It wasn't that they doubted Spider Grandmother's magic potions, but they figured that, just because they were gods and children, didn't mean that they had to be foolish too.

The Twins followed the long trail to the East, climbing higher and higher into the mountains. As they approached the sky, the trail narrowed along a ridge, and they came upon an old man who sat with his back against the steep wall of the mountain. He was so old and weathered that at first he appeared to be just another rock; he was sitting hunched up beside the narrow trail, his legs drawn up to his chin so anyone who came along could walk around him. The Twins nodded to him and said hello, but as soon as Pookong started to walk past, the old man's legs shot out in front of him and almost knocked the Boy over the ledge.

Pookong jumped back. “Watch what you're doing, old man!”

“Oops, sorry,” the old man said, giving a toothless grin. “I just had to stretch my legs—cramps, you know. There's just no place for the elderly these days. Plenty of room for young folks like yourselves, but us oldsters don't get a thing.”

“That’s too bad,” Pookong said.

“Bad,” Balonga said. “Our grandmother says the same thing....”

They chatted with the old man for a couple of minutes, but Pookong had the feeling that monsters could come in all shapes and sizes, that they didn’t necessarily have *Monster* written across their foreheads. So just to make sure, he popped some of Spider Grandmother’s magic meal into his mouth—and spit it out just as quickly, over the old man’s legs. The legs snapped back like rubber bands, slamming into the old man’s chin.

“Yuk! That stuff tastes worse than Grandmother’s piki bread!” said Pookong. He spit some more to get the taste out of his mouth and made an instant fossil out of a beetle that was crawling by. “But it sure does work.”

“It sure does,” said Echo. “No monster could be bad enough to get me to taste it again. From now on I’ll use my trusty club.”

“And I’ll use my bow and arrows,” the Boy said.

The old man tried to say something but his knees were pressed so tightly against his chin that his words came out only as dry squeaks. The Twins tipped their feathers to him and continued up the trail. They had only gone a little ways when a bear the size of a thunderhead lunged at them from out of its cave.

“Gimmethestuff! Gimmethestuff!” the Twins said in unison, tumbling all over themselves and spitting meal on everything in sight. Luckily, some of the medicine landed on the bear’s foot and the huge animal twisted around on himself like a spinning toy.

“Good old Grandmother,” said Pookong.

“Mother good old grand,” said Balonga, still a bit shook up.

They walked up the trail a little farther, and a mountain lion the size of a fire storm

appeared on a rock ledge overhead and leapt at them. But this time Pookong was ready and carried the vile-tasting medicine in his mouth; he spit it on the tremendous cat, and the mountain lion hung suspended in the air like a kite. A little further on, a rattlesnake was curled like a cyclone on the path. Pookong spit the medicine again, and the snake was as calm as a coiled basket.

The trail led on to a tall narrow canyon where the walls worked back and forth like a pair of giant jaws, crushing anything that came between them. Pookong spit some medicine and the stone jaws gaped. By this time, the Twins were starting to get a little cocky. Beyond the canyon was a beautiful green plateau, the Place Of Sunrise, and in the distance they could see the turquoise-blue glow of the Cloud House, the Sun's kiva. They started walking toward it when the sky suddenly pulsed and darkened. The Twins thought it must be a huge dark cloud traveling across the sky, but the cloud took the shape of a giant bird, its wings large enough to block out the sun. The earth shuddered as Kwatoko, Knife-Wing, swept down in front of them. Like the Twins, Knife-Wing was born during the time when men and women were separated, the time when many gods and monsters were born—you might say they were all part of the same generation.

“What’s buzzin’ cousins?” said Knife-Wing. “Come for supper?”

“Depends on what you’re having,” said Pookong.

Knife-Wing adjusted his perch and started a landslide. “Oh, I generally like a main course of a young virgin, or maybe a well-seasoned wife or two. But tonight I thought I’d have a couple of dirty-faced boys for hors d’oeuvres.”

“Doesn’t sound very appetizing to me,” said Pookong.

“Will you stop messing around and spit that stuff!” cried Balonga.

Pookong looked surprised at his brother. “How did you do that? You didn’t echo me at all.”

“It’s called terror. Now spit, spit!”

Pookong spit the magic meal and Knife-Wing was transformed into a giant bluff. The Twins started to walk past, laughing and pointing up at the rock formation shaped like a bird, but Knife-Wing could still speak.

“I don’t care what you think of me, brothers. But someday you’re going to have to learn that monsters have their reasons too. And that just because you’re gods doesn’t mean you’re the only things in the universe.”

The stone eyes stared at the Little War Gods. The Twins walked on, toward the House of the Sun, for once as solemn as judges.

THE WAR TWINS GET A TOY

The Little War Twins leaned over the opening and peered into the House of the Sun. The walls of the underground kiva glowed of solid turquoise, and there were piles of precious stones and shells and coral on the floor. The Woman of Hard Things pattered about the place, sorting agates from gold.

The Two slid down the ladder and stood giggling in front of her.

“Well, well, what have we here?” said the Woman. “You two look like nice boys.”

Pookong introduced himself and his brother, Balonga. “We’re here to see our father, the Sun.”

The Woman of Hard Things, Hurúing Wuhti, smiled benevolently; she seemed rather pleasant for a god. “I’m afraid you boys have made a mistake. The sun couldn’t possibly be your father. He just, well, rolls around heaven all day.”

“But he is our father,” said the Boy.

“Our father,” said Echo.

“Stop saying everything I say!” said Pookong. “You’re driving me crazy.”

“Crazy,” said Balonga.

“Settle down, boys,” said the Woman, “and tell me what this is all about.”

“The Sun is our father,” said Pookong. “He got Mom pregnant with a shaft of sunlight.”

“Oh he did, did he?” said the Woman.

“And when she tried to douche afterwards in a stream, the Water Serpent got her pregnant again.”

The two boys started trading punches. The Woman of Hard Things no longer looked so benevolent.

“That’s very interesting,” she said. “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. You boys hide here behind this cloud altar, and I’ll tell you when to come out. We’ll have ourselves a little surprise for Mr. Hot Stuff.”

The boys hid behind the clouds. It wasn’t long until a great glow appeared in one of the distant rooms, the glow becoming stronger until it filled the entire kiva. With a great yawn, the Sun came into the room.

“Hi, babe, what’s new?” said Father Sun, scratching himself through his golden buckskin.

“Oh, a couple little things,” said the Woman with a stony smile.

The Sun wrinkled his nose and sniffed the air. “What’s that peculiar smell? Something stinks.”

“I’ll say it does,” she said.

“It smells like something human to me,” said Papa. “Rotten people. What’s going on around here?”

“You tell me, Sunshine.”

“Don’t ‘Sunshine’ me,” said the Sun. “I’ve been around this world enough, I know what goes on. While I’ve been out working, you’ve been foolin’ around with some human and now you’ve got a kid on your hands.”

“Somebody’s been foolin’ around, all right. And I’ve got more than one kid on my

hands.”

Father Sun flared. “I demand to see them, right his minute!”

“You asked for it. Come on out, kids.”

The Twins ran out from behind the screen, wrapping themselves around the knees of the Sun.

“Yuk!” cried Papa. “They’re filthy! Get them away! They’ll get my work clothes dirty!”

“Don’t look at me,” said the Woman of Hard Things. “They’re your kids.”

“Woman, you jest!” The Sun wore a Twin on each leg.

“Hiya, Dad,” said the Two, giggling up at him.

“Something about impregnating a girl with a golden shaft, I believe,” said the Woman.

“Of course you wouldn’t know anything about that, would you?”

“Now just a minute here....” The sun looked as if he had just stepped in something unpleasant.

“Good Old Sol,” said the Woman. “A warm spot for everybody.”

With the Twins still stuck to him like a pair of leggings, Papa walked over to get his pipe, lifting the boys through eons.

“You’re a lot of fun, Dad,” said Pookong.

“Fun, Dad,” said Balonga.

The Sun took his great turquoise pipe painted with cloud symbols on the bowl, filled it with his own special blend, and tamped it with a tree trunk. When he lit it, the sky filled with thunderclouds.

“If you boys think you’re my sons, then let’s see you smoke my pipe.” The Sun winked to the Woman. “This should be a lot of fun too.”

“Sure, Dad,” said Pookong, taking a few tokes from the pipe and passing it to his brother. Father sun expected the strong smoke to make them deathly ill, but the Twins, not having any manners anyway, farted away the smoke as soon as they inhaled.

“Put out that smelly thing before you asphyxiate us all!” said the Woman, fanning the air with her apron.

The Sun looked at his pipe. “It does seem to smell worse than usual. Maybe it’s burning hot.”

“Smells like Dad is down to seeds and stems,” Pookong said from the Sun’s kneecap.

“Seeds and stems,” said Echo, and the Twins laughed.

“Snot-nosed brats,” said the Sun. He picked them off his legs and rolled a fireball at them. “If you kids think you’re so smart, let’s see you play with this for awhile.”

The sun expected the fireball to burn them to a crisp, but the boys used it like a shinny ball and batted it around the room between them.

The Woman of Hard Things ran around the kiva, beating out the sparks the size of forest fires. “I don’t care whose kids they are!” she screamed. “They’re not allowed to play ball in the house!”

The Sun had had enough. He picked up the Twins and threw them in the flaming stove in the corner, pouring water on the hot stones just inside the door to fill the stove with steam. The fire sizzled and the stones hissed and he kept the door closed a long time. But when he opened it, the Twins hopped out and grabbed his legs again.

“You sure know a lot of games, Dad,” said Pookong.

The Sun saw spots in front of his eyes. He picked up the Twins by the scruffs of their necks and carried them outside, setting them down on the highest mountain peak in the world.

“If you like the heat so much, let’s see how you like the cold.” The Sun stormed back to his kiva.

“Dad seems a bit under the weather, doesn’t he?” Pookong said.

“Yeah,” said Balonga. “But I think he’s basically a warm person.”

The mountain top was covered with snow and ice, and the wind blew strong from the north. But the Two wrapped themselves in their feathered headdresses, and the next morning they ran back to the Sun’s kiva and slid down the ladder.

“I thought you two would freeze up there,” said Father Sun.

“Freeze?” said Pookong. “It was too hot to sleep.” Balonga pretended to wipe the sweat from his forehead.

“Well, I guess these boys are rather exceptional,” the Sun said to the Woman. “They must be mine after all.”

“No one will ever accuse you of being modest, Papa,” said the Woman of Hard Things. “But don’t expect me to take care of them.” She looked as though she wanted to hold her nose.

“You heard what the lady said.” Father Sun looked relieved. “But before I send you back where you came from, let’s find you something to take with you.”

The Sun put them on his shoulders and carried them through the kiva, showing them the different rooms filled with turquoise and precious stones and shells, but none of these interested the Twins. So he carried them to the far northwest corner of the kiva, which was called the Cloud House. The room was filled with all the different kinds of clouds of the world—wispy clouds and storm clouds, cirrus clouds and stratus clouds, orange clouds and purple clouds and clouds with silver linings—bumping against the ceiling like runaway balloons.

“But what fun can you have with a cloud?” Pookong said. “They don’t make any noise

and they always just blow away.”

Father Sun sighed. He was afraid it would come down to this. He set the boys down on the floor under the clouds in front of two beautiful jars.

“All right, I’ve got something special for you. But you have to promise to be very careful with it.”

“We promise,” said Pookong.

“Promise,” said Balonga.

From the first jar, Father Sun took yellow lightning and gave it to the Boy; and from the other jar, Father Sun took blue lightning and gave it to Echo. The Little War Twins hugged their lightning and ran around the room squealing.

“Just make sure you don’t aim them at anything except monsters,” Papa waved a finger.

But when did a boy with a new toy ever listen to his father, much less to a god? The boys were already gone, running back down the trail to show their presents to Spider Grandmother, creating with their lightning valleys and gorges, canyons and ravines, finishing off the land and draining away the last of the floods, zapping everything in sight.

THE UNDER WORLD

Things were looking bad for the Hopi in the Under World, the Third World. As bad as they had been back in the Second World. As bad as they had been back in the First World. But this time, in the Third World, the problem wasn't fire or flood or some natural disaster. In the Third World, the problem came from the Hopi themselves. The men neglected their ceremonies, the women neglected their children, everyone quarreled with everyone else.

Obviously, something had to be done.

Had to be done—if for no other reason than that the Under World was filling up with everyone's waste. There was only so much room. Everyone was slipping and sliding in everyone else's nose slime. Spittle ran in the streets. The urine and feces were...well, you get the picture.

Then somebody had an idea. Somebody had the idea that all the trouble came from sex—which, in one way of looking at it, probably wasn't too far wrong. The problem was that this somebody didn't think the idea through far enough. This somebody thought that if the object of desire was taken away, then the desire itself would go away too. Accordingly, it made sense to this certain somebody that things would go better in the Third World if all the men lived on one side of the river and all the women lived on the other.

Sigh. Somebody's wonderfully brilliant bright idea. Of course, when they tried it and everything went to hell, there wasn't anyone who could remember exactly who that certain

somebody was. And nobody raised his hand.

But obviously, something had to be done. So they tried it.

For a couple of years, the natural competition between the two sides of the river—the two sexes—kept things going along okay. But from the beginning the men had the advantage. The men and the women had divided up the available seed, but the men took along their weapons so they could hunt, and the men were more experienced in building houses. Also, the women were used to grinding corn, not growing it, so their crops did poorly. And the women not only lacked meat to eat, they didn't have any animal skins for clothes. In a few years, they were definitely a ratty, mangy, miserable group of women.

And they sure looked awfully good to the men on other side of the river.

As it turned out, the sexual desire hadn't gone away at all. At it turned out, the sexual desire seemed to grow even stronger. Surprise, surprise. Besides, a number of new problems had come up as a result of the separation. Problems that that certain somebody never even thought of.

For one thing, the Hopi weren't getting any younger. Nobody died in the Third World, so a lack of people wasn't an issue. But the men and women kept getting older. And older. With no young, strong, healthy bodies coming along to help with all the hard work. And they noticed there was soon a lack of giggling, playful children running around too.

For another thing, there were the alternatives to ease their sexual desires that people came up with. The men tried everything from the liver of a freshly killed deer, to a gourd filled with warm rabbit's blood. Not to mention sheep, goats, chickens, dogs, each other, and their ever-trusty hands. The women tried sticks covered with buckskin, or the stem of a cactus (carefully peeled, needless to say). All of this was bad enough, of course—bad, because the substitutes only reminded everyone just how good the real thing was. But it was worse because the women,

instead of giving birth to children, began to give birth to gods and monsters.

And it was not always easy to tell the difference.

One girl, a virgin, exposed her vulva to the sunlight, moving with the warmth and pleasure, and got herself impregnated by Father Sun. When she realized what had happened, she ran to a spring and tried to douche, but the water excited her all over again and she found herself impregnated a second time, this time by the Water Serpent. In nine months she gave birth to the Little War Twins, the Two. Another girl got herself off with an eagle feather. The eagle then carried her away to his nest in the San Francisco mountains where she gave birth to Kwatoko, the monster bird known as Knife-Wing.

Obviously, the idea of separating the sexes wasn't working out.

So finally the women swam over to the men, or the men swam over to the women—it depended on whom told the story—and life went back to normal again. Normal, you know: rape, incest, fighting, laziness. A lot of nose slime and dung. Everyone hoped that somebody else would come up with a better idea. And that somebody would come up with an idea of what was making that sound that sometimes thundered overhead. A sound like footsteps, moving around in another, higher world....

THE HOLE IN THE SKY

The Little War Twins talked it over with Spider Grandmother and decided that, if the Hopi really wanted to climb up into the Fourth World, they would help by punching a hole in the roof of the Under World, the Third World. But as for figuring out how to get up there, the Hopi would have to do that for themselves.

“Snot-nosed brats,” the Chief muttered. “A lot of good a hole in the sky does, if there’s no way to get up to it.”

“What about asking one of the Two-Hearts?” said Mockingbird. “Maybe a witch would know how to get up there.”

The Chief bopped him on the head with a piece of piki bread. “A lot of help you are too. Here we are trying to get away from the Two-Hearts, and you want to ask them how to do it.”

“Well, you’ve got to admit that sometimes they have some pretty clever ideas,” said Mockingbird in the Chief’s exact tone of voice. “That trick of being able to turn themselves into an animal ain’t bad.”

“The Two-Hearts are also the ones who are causing all the trouble down here. Use your head, birdbrain.”

“Yes sire, yes sir, Chief,” Mockingbird said like a parrot. The Chief threw another piece of piki bread at him, but this time the bird caught it and ate it. “Squawk! Polly wants a cracker!”

The Chief is always right! Squawk!”

The Chief was getting discouraged. Things were going from bad to worse. The Under World was overflowing with mother-jumpers and sister-diddlers. That was bad enough; the worse part was that the mothers and sisters loved it. The only thing people wanted to do was party—morning, noon, and night. The witches, the people with two hearts, were thriving. And his best friend was a bird with visions of being a standup comedian. The Chief didn't know what to do.

In his despair, the Chief had asked for divine guidance, but the only gods who responded were a couple of tattered twelve-year-old boys with runny noses, the Little War Twins, who spent most of their time playing ball. Things did not look good for the Hopi. There were times when the Chief thought of chucking the whole idea of finding a better world and settling down to a career of deflowering virgins like all the other elders. But then he'd hear those footsteps overhead again, clomping around in the sky....

“Oy vey, Chief,” said Mockingbird in the voice of a Jewish tailor. “Have I got a deal for you!”

“Bird, I'm in no mood to listen to you do impressions.”

“Seriously, Chief. I think I know a guy who can fly up to the hole in the sky and look around. That way you'll at least know if the Fourth World looks like some place you'd want to be. The guy's name is Eagle.”

The Chief had run out of ideas of his own, so he agreed and Mockingbird sang his eagle-calling song. When Eagle appeared, the Chief explained the problem to him.

Eagle listened impatiently, whistling tunelessly under his breath and patting his bald spot. “Okay, okay, I got it. You want me to fly up there and have a look-see, right?”

“That’s right,” said the Chief. “we want to know—”

“Okay, okay. I got it, I got it.”

Before the Chief could say anything more, Eagle flapped his great wings and took off. They watched him circle higher and higher, whipping the air, until he was out of sight, then they sat and waited. The eagle was gone a long time, so long in fact that they began to wonder if he had decided to stay up there. But finally he reappeared, a speck high up in the clouds, coming down fast. Too fast.

“Damn show-off,” muttered the Chief. “That’s the trouble with this world, you can’t get any decent help....”

“That’s a negative, Chief,” said Mockingbird in the voice of Mission Control. “This bird is coming in on a wing and a prayer.”

It was true. Eagle was in a power dive and looked as though he would crash, but at the last minute he was able to pull up his beak and land in the Chief’s pile of prayer feathers.

“The eagle has landed,” intoned Mockingbird.

“Cut that out and give me a hand,” said the Chief.

They dug Eagle out of the prayer feathers and propped him up against a tree. When the bird had recovered sufficiently, the Chief asked him, “Did you see the hole in the sky?”

Eagle had trouble talking; he was still out of breath, and his beak was pushed slightly off center from the force of the dive. “Yeah, it’s up there, all right. But I didn’t see anything else. By the time I got all the way up there, I was worn out.”

“Well, thanks anyway,” said the Chief. He sat down again, under the shade of a piñon tree, more discouraged than ever. Mockingbird paced back and forth, his wings folded behind him.

“Basically, it’s a problem of what will someday be known as aerodynamics,” he said professorially. “Eagle did the best he could, of course, but he’s just not built for the job. Instead of a big bird with big wings, we need a little bird with little wings. Wind resistance, and all that.”

“And you just happen to know someone,” said the Chief.

“As a matter of fact I do,” said Mockingbird.

So, after Mockingbird summoned Hummingbird, the Chief explained the situation. “Any questions?”

“Mmmmmmmmmmm,” said Hummingbird.

“Do you think you can make it?” said the Chief.

“Mmmmm-mmmmm,” said Hummingbird.

“Now what’s that supposed to mean?” the Chief ask Mockingbird and Eagle. But the little bird was already airborne, his wings whirling. The three of them watched him fly up and out sight, then sat down to wait.

Hummingbird was gone as long as Eagle. When he finally appeared again, they could see he was in trouble too. He was coming in tail first, his tiny wings crossed over his breast, spinning out of control and looking rather green. Fortunately, Eagle had recovered enough to fly up and catch him in mid-air.

“Thank you, Eagle,” said Hummingbird when they were back on the ground. “Mm-mm. I thought I was a goner.”

“That’s okay, okay,” said Eagle, clacking when he talked because the top half of his beak still didn’t meet with the bottom. “That’s my thing, you know, snatching things out of the air.” He still held Hummingbird in his talon, and he looked at the little bird with new interest.

“Er, look, Eagle, if you’re hungry there’s some lamb stew over there in that pot,” said the

Chief.

“Yeh, sure. Okay, okay,” Eagle said, remembering himself and laughing a little. “Sorry ’bout that. I guess I still don’t have my head on straight.”

When Hummingbird recovered, the Chief asked him what he had seen.

“Mm, mm, mm, sure is purty up there. Blue as turquoise.”

“Did you see the hole in the sky?”

“Mm-mmm. It’s purty too.”

“What’s it look like?! What’s it look like?!” the Chief said, picking up the little bird and shaking him like a dance rattle.

“You’ll have to excuse the Chief,” Mockingbird said to Hummingbird. “He’s been under a lot of pressure lately.”

Hummingbird’s eyes rolled around in his head like beans in a gourd. “I mm only mm saw mm it mm, I was mm too mm tired to mm go through mm....”

The Chief dropped Hummingbird in a heap and went back to sit down. But Mockingbird had that gleam in his eye.

“Soaring,” said Mockingbird.

“Soaring?” said the Chief.

“Soaring,” said Mockingbird, with an edge to his voice like a gypsy. “Big wings can’t do it, little wings can’t do it. So you want wings that can soar.”

“Like a hawk?” said the Chief.

“Like a hawk,” said Mockingbird.

“I don’t know,” the Chief said uneasily. “To tell you the truth, that guy always scares me a little. He always looks so, you know, fierce.”

“Determined, Chief,” said Mockingbird. “Try to think of him as determined.”

The Chief wasn't going to argue the point, but just the same he sat near Eagle and Hummingbird while Mockingbird did all the talking to Hawk. Hawk listened, staring open-mouthed at the Chief as if he'd never heard of such a preposterous thing, looking at him first with one side of his head and then the other. The Chief was getting uncomfortable. Finally, Hawk gave a couple last indignant, mouth-open jerks of his head, opened his great wings, and rose like a kite, riding the air currents up into the clouds. The Chief wasn't altogether sure he wanted this scout to return.

Hawk did return, though, in about the same length of time as the others, gliding back into sight and settling down in front of them. He seemed more indignant than ever.

“And now I suppose you want me to give you some kind of report, right?” said Hawk to the Chief, his mouth open, jerking his head for emphasis.

“Well, yes, that is what I, er, we had in mind...”

“And while I'm up there battling hundred-mile-an-hour tail winds and trying to chip the ice off my wings, you're just sitting down here passing the time of day, waiting to take all the glory, right?”

“In other words,” said the Chief, “you didn't make it.”

Hawk suddenly became very interested in an itch among his tail feathers. “Well, you see there was this down draft...”

The Chief went off to sit by himself again. When Mockingbird came over and sat across from him, the Chief stared at him stonily.

“Go on. Who is it?”

“Shrike.”

“The butcherbird.”

“Shrike,” said Mockingbird. “He prefers Shrike.”

“The most obnoxious bird I know.”

Mockingbird shrugged.

“Are you going to tell me why?”

“There’s several reasons, actually,” said Mockingbird, shooting an imaginary set of cuffs and speaking in his best salesman’s voice. “The main reason, of course, is precisely because he is so obnoxious.”

“Of course,” said the Chief.

“Because what kind of bird, human or otherwise, always gets the furthest in this world?”

“The obnoxious ones,” said the Chief.

“You bet your life,” said Mockingbird, working his eyebrows up and down and flicking the end of an imaginary cigar.

“That’s one reason,” said the Chief. “You said there were several.”

“Because he’s a strong middleweight, he’s got good moves, quick wings, a real contender, he can go the distance....”

“And?”

“And because this is the fourth time we’ve sent a bird up there, and the fourth time is a charm for the Hopi. Of course, if you’re Bahana, the white man, three times is a charm, I guess there’s some Indians who consider five a charm, and I’ve even heard of a sect in the Far East who thinks that seven—”

Stop!” The Chief supposed it was what he deserved, hanging around with birds. While he waited for Mockingbird to summon their latest candidate, the Chief busied himself by scraping

off the continually rising muck of the Under World from his moccasins.

“They tell me you got yourself a little problem Chiefie,” Shrike said when he arrived, leaning into the Chief’s face. The Chief turned away: Shrike’s breath smelled of blood. Shrike nodded to the other birds, blinking at them behind his black eye mask.

“A little problem, yes,” said Mockingbird, in the Chief’s voice. “We’ve been trying to fly up to find a hole in the sky for the Hopi.”

“A hole in the sky!” Shrike laughed. “Well, what’s wrong with these other guys? Why can’t they do it?”

“Because it’s not as easy as it looks, butcher-boy,” said Hawk.

Shrike picked at his notched beak with a dusty gray pinion feather. “Then you must have been going about it the wrong way. You birds got to remember that if you’re going to work for the Hopi, you got to do things the Hopi way. Everybody should be of one heart and thinking good thoughts, even those who are just watching. That way everybody adds good energy to the task at hand.”

Shrike looked over the group and clacked his strong hooked beak once.

Maybe I’d in the wrong line of work, the Chief thought. Maybe I’m not cut out for this. Maybe I could carve some copies of the kachinas, start a line of dolls....

Mockingbird mirrored Shrike’s matter-of-fact expression. “Sometimes it’s hard to keep a pure heart, Brother Shrike, when you’re up to your pin feathers in everyone else’s toe jam and belly button fuzz.”

“But we have to try,” Shrike said, leaning into him and nudging him in the ribs. “That’s what it’s about, right Mugsy?”

Or weaving, thought the Chief. I could start a line of dance kilts and sashes...no, that’s

not good, somebody has to discover cotton first....

“All right, youse birds,” Shrike said, flexing his wings. “Stand back, give me some room here. And start generating those good thoughts. We got to make this baby fly. Up, up, and awa-a-a-a-ay!”

He took off in slow, determined circles, dipping the ends of his wings at them and grinning before he climbed up out of sight.

“It’ll be just our luck that that silly son of an egg makes it,” grumbled Eagle.

“Mmm mmm,” said Hummingbird.

“Now I’m sorry I didn’t look him up for lunch last week like I was going to,” said Hawk. “I had a chipmunk instead.”

“But maybe he does have a point,” said Mockingbird. “About thinking good thoughts and all. It’s worth a try.”

The birds mumbled to themselves, then settled down to sing their prayer songs, trying their best to think pure thoughts and keep sincere, meaningful expressions on their beaks. The Chief smoked his ceremonial pipe, thinking that few things are as silly as a bunch of birds trying to look sincere.

Shrike was gone for days. The other birds got hoarse from singing prayer songs, and Thief’s tongue was about to fall out of his mouth from smoker’s bite. Finally, Shrike appeared again, floating slowly back to earth. When the bird landed, the Chief ran over to him.

“Whatdidyousee? Whatdidyousee?”

The other birds all grouped around, wanting to hear about the hole in the sky. Shrike fluttered his eyes behind his mask, put a wing on his hip, and preened his tail feathers, shamelessly proud of himself.

“Well, I found the hole all right. At first it was a little narrow, but higher up there were some overhanging rocks so I could rest before climbing all the way through. Actually, the opening looks a lot like the opening of a kiva.”

“What’s it like in the Fourth World?” Mockingbird said.

“It was dark most of the time I was there, but I did see your basic trees and grass and water.”

The birds and the Chief all clapped each other on the back. Shrike accepted their congratulations as a matter of due.

“And there’s birds and animals and bugs,” Shrike chirped on. “In fact, there seems to be everything up there except people.”

“Sounds like heaven,” the Chief said, all smiles. “And what about the footsteps? Did you find out who’s making those footsteps?”

Shrike looked troubled for the first time. “Chief, maybe you better sit down again.”

WHAT THE SHRIKE SAW

When Shrike flew up through the hole in the sky, through the sipapu from the Under World into the present world, he didn't think this new place was anything special, and certainly nothing to write home about. There were hills and trees and animals, just as there were down below in the Third World—though up here there didn't seem to be the waste disposal problem, at least not yet. But this Fourth World was dark and murky, and there was an unpleasant sulphurous smell that hung over everything. All in all, it didn't seem a particularly hospitable or agreeable place to live, especially considering all the trouble it took to get up here. But maybe the Hopi would like it. One thing he had learned a long time ago—he thought it was about the time he discovered shish kebab by learning how to skewer a chipmunk or sparrow on a twig until he was ready for it, only to find out that on account of it people called him the butcherbird—was that there was no accounting for taste.

When he felt he had seen enough, he turned around and headed back toward the sipapu. But as he flew through the gloom, he noticed some footprints on the ground, some very strange footprints. They were shaped like a human being's but they were much larger and disproportionately long, almost as if someone was walking around on boards. He decided he better investigate to find out just who this Big Foot was.

Shrike followed the footprints across a vast dark plain until he saw a glow on the horizon.

As he got closer, he saw that the glow came from a ring of fire which surrounded some fields of corn, beans, watermelon, and squash. The air was heavy with smoke, and the flames sparked and flared up into the black sky, almost singeing his tail feathers as Shrike flew over. In the center of the ring was a huge bonfire, along with a supply of wood and coal; a man, the keeper of the fire, sat nearby on a rock. Shrike flew around the fire a couple of times, trying to get a look at the man's face, but the man kept his back turned and his shoulders hunched up to hide his head, so that it appeared that he didn't have a head at all. The only thing Shrike could tell about him was that the man was very large. Then Shrike realized that it wasn't a rock the man was sitting on, the man had apparently taken his head from shoulders and was sitting on that.

Shrike didn't like the looks of this.

Finally the man said, "Hey, you there, bird. What's all this fluttering about? Settle down."

Shrike flew down and sat on a piñon log, but kept his distance just in case.

"I didn't mean to disturb you," Shrike said. "I was just wondering what was going on with all these fires."

"You must be new around here," the man said, his back still turned.

"Well yes, actually. It's a little hard to explain. You see, I'm from the Under World...."

The man turned around then, and Shrike saw that his head was on his shoulders after all. In fact, the man was exceptionally handsome. His face was painted on both sides with two lines of specular iron from the bridge of his nose to his cheeks; he wore four strands of turquoise around his neck, and large turquoise ear pendants. What he was sitting on was a mask, a very hideous mask. It was made from rabbit skins, with large eyes and a gaping mouth; the entire mask was covered with blood. Shrike tried to appear nonchalant, as if he saw such things every

day.

“You’re the first one to ever see me without my mask,” said the man. “You caught me at an awkward moment.”

“Sorry ’bout that,” said Shrike, wondering if words were sufficient at this point. He wished he had remembered to bring some prayer feathers.

“Just what are you doing up here anyway?”

“Well, things aren’t going so well down below. You know, your basic world problems: crime, waste, pollution. And the Hopi were wondering if they could come up here to live.”

The man sighed, as if he expected the neighborhood to go to hell sooner or later. But he seemed resigned.

“You can see for yourself how I live up here,” the man said, looking away from the fire into the gloom. “I don’t have very much, only my digging stick and a few odds and ends, and there’s not much to do except a lot of hard work. But living this way is good for the spirit—builds character and all that. If your friends the Hopi wouldn’t mind living like this, they’re welcome to come up and join me.”

“I’ll tell them,” Shrike said, thinking the Hopi might just be crazy enough to do it. The man stood up and put on his mask.

“Now if you’ll excuse me, there’s work to do. Got to keep the home fires burning, you know.”

“What’s your name, masked man?”

“They call me Masau’u. This is my world up here—or at least I’m in charge of it. The Caretaker, you might say. The Guardian.”

“Any charge for living up here? I mean like hidden expenses, surprise taxes, that sort of

thing?”

Masau'u tilted his head and thought a moment; drops of blood fell from the mask and hissed in the fire. “No, none that I can think of. I guess the only thing that's different up here than down in the Third World is that everyone has to die at some time or other. Everyone, that is, except me. That's part of my job, I tell you when that time comes.”

“Okay, great. I'll tell them. And thanks again.”

Masau'u gave a little wave and went off to tend his fires. Shrike noticed that at times the man appeared like a glowing skeleton, at times like a burning bush. Odd fellow, he thought as he flew back to the sipapu, anxious to tell the Hopi the news. Now all they had to do was find out what *to die* meant.

OUT OF THE HOLE

First the Hopi tried a spruce tree, singing over the little seedling to make it grow quickly enough and tall enough so they could use it to climb out of the muck of the Under World, the Third World. But the spruce tree didn't grow tall enough to reach the hole in the sky, the sipapu. So then they tried a white fir, and after that a long-needle pine, but these trees weren't tall enough or strong enough either. Finally, they tried a bamboo shoot; this time the hollow reed grew all the way up through the sipapu and into the Fourth World. The Chief thought his troubles were over.

"You mean you dragged me all the way up here for this?" the Chief's wife said as soon as she poked her head out of the hole. "It's cold and damp and dark up here. I should have known better than to marry a man whose best friend is a bird. Well, just don't stand there, give me a hand!"

His wife was stuck at the top of the reed, her huge hips wedged tight in the opening. The Chief looked around apologetically at the dignitaries who were standing around to welcome them into the new world—Spider Grandmother, the Little War Twins, and his old friend Mockingbird. He was glad at least that the Guardian of this new world wasn't around to witness this or hear his wife's complaints: Masau'u might be tempted to throw them right back in again.

He could sympathize with his wife, though: this wasn't quite what he expected when he

thought of a better world either. It was dark as night, the air was heavy with sulphurous smoke, and they seemed to be standing on an endless plain. Far off in the distance a red glow pulsed against the low, black sky—the fires of Masau’u. The Chief thought he’d wait a little while longer before he told his wife about him.

“Stop daydreaming, you silly old fool, and get me out of this reed!”

“Aren’t the kids pushing from below?”

“Yes, and if I ever get out of this tube I have a few choice words for them too,” the woman puffed. “Now pull, pull!”

The Chief tugged again but the woman wouldn’t budge. Her torso stuck out of the ground, cut off at the waist, her arms waving in the air.

“Say Chief, could I have a word with you,” whispered Mockingbird, pulling the Chief off to one side. He was wearing a trench coat and a snap-brim hat pulled down over one eye. “You sure you want to do that?”

“Do what?”

“You know, uncork her.”

“I just can’t leave her there.”

“Stop talking to that silly bird, you old goat, and get me out of here!” screamed his wife.

“On the other hand, Mr. Bird, maybe you have a point,” said the Chief.

“Just thought you might want to consider all the ramifications of any ill-conceived or untoward actions,” said Mockingbird, now wearing a barrister’s wig and carrying a briefcase.

Suddenly his wife gave a yelp and popped out of the reed. In her place at the top of the opening were their two sons.

“Jumpy old girl, isn’t she?” said the oldest, smelling his fingers.

“I told you not to pinch,” said the other. “Oops, watch out, here she comes!”

The boys took off running across the dark plain, pursued by his wife. The Chief shook his head regretfully; already the new world was looking too much like the old one. And with the top of the reed unplugged, the rest of the peoples of the Under World came pouring out—the Whites, Apaches, Navajos, Spanish, the other Pueblo Peoples....

“You know, if we’re not careful,” the Chief said to Mockingbird, “we’re going to end up with just as many people in this world as there were in the last.”

“It’s true, Chief,” said Mockingbird, wearing a clerk’s eyeshade and holding a clipboard.

“And if any of the Two-Hearts climb up here, we won’t be any better off than when we started.”

“Worse, now that there’s this business about having to die.”

“That’s something I wanted to talk to you about,” said the Chief. “How are we supposed to know when that happens?”

“From what I hear, Chief,” said Mockingbird gravely, wearing a long mortician’s coat, “I think you’ll recognize it.”

“I hope so. I wouldn’t want to miss it, it sounds pretty important.”

“I think you could say that.” Mockingbird now wore a tri-cornered hat and a coat with admiral’s epaulettes. “But right now I think you better do something about battening down that hatch. Your bilge overfloweth.”

“But what can I do about it? The people just keep coming.”

“Well, you could always pull up the reed.”

“Somehow that doesn’t seem very subtle.”

“Look how far subtlety got you in the last world, Chief.”

The Chief and Mockingbird cocked their heads at one another, mirror reflections of each other. Then the Chief went over to the opening, told hold of the top of the reed, and pulled it up. Some of the people who were climbing up fell out, but others were trapped inside; the reed shrunk around those still inside, causing the joints in the bamboo stock. The wind whistled across the open end of the reed like the sound of small and distant screams.

“That’s great, just great,” his wife said, sitting in a heap. “Your brave new world is as cold and dark as a cave, there’s nothing to eat up here except roots and berries, and the water tastes funny. And then you not only pull up the reed and kill half my friends, but you destroyed the only way we had to get out of this place.”

The Chief looked at this lump of flesh and bitterness known as his wife and sighed. He was beginning to learn that it’s easier to change the order of the universe than it is another’s heart. So he went to talk to Spider Grandmother.

“There’s always a letdown after a long trip, sonny,” said the Old Woman, putting in her false set of fangs. “But I think I know something that will cheer up your wife. It’s called a *spoon*.”

“A spoon?” said the Chief. Well, I don’t know, Grandmother. We’ve barely discovered how to make pots....”

“Maybe *spoon* isn’t the word I’m looking for, then. What about *June*? No, that’s not it either. Anyway, it’s something like that. I think you’ll know it when you see it.”

By this time The Chief was beginning to wonder if the gods knew any more about solving the world’s problems than people did. But he sat back and waited to see Old Woman came up with.

First, Spider Grandmother wove a piece of white native cloth and cut a circle out of it.

Then she drew a face on the cloth—a rather lopsided face, if you asked the Chief—and called in the flute priest so the two of them could sing over it. When the song was finished, Spider Grandmother climbed up the darkness and hung the circle in the eastern sky.

“*Moon*,” said the Chief.

“You got it, sonny,” said Spider Grandmother. “So, what do you think of it?”

“It’s nice, but . . .”

“But what?” Spider Grandmother said, focusing all eight eyes on him. The Chief wished she wouldn’t look at him like that.

“It’s not very warm,” he offered tenuously. “And I’m afraid it makes everything look a little blue.”

“Well of course,” said Spider Grandmother. “What else would you expect from the moon?”

“Oh I think it’s very pretty,” the Chief said quickly. “I’m just afraid my wife won’t like it. And if mama ain’t happy, nobody’s happy.”

“Critics. Everywhere critics,” the Old Woman said, spitting venomously on the ground. “Okay then, if it’s fancy you want, it’s fancy you’ll get.”

This time she took a piece of flawless white buckskin and stretched it over a hoop. On the buckskin she painted eyes and a mouth with copper oxide, and decorated the forehead with red, yellow, and blue; she covered the painted face with egg yolks to make it shine—which is why roosters always crow when the sun rises. Around the edge of the hoop she worked a zigzag ridge of corn husks, added strings of red horsehair, and tied on some eagle feathers. Finally she hung an abalone shell from its forehead.

“That’s beautiful,” said the flute priest. “Can we use it for our ceremony when you’re

done?"

"We'll see," said Spider Grandmother. "First we've got to figure out if the darn thing works."

The Old Woman and the flute priest sang over it, then she climbed up and hung it in the eastern sky, moving the moon over to the west. Father Sun saw it and got the picture; he replaced the image with his own light and heat, allowing everyone to see his daily journey across the sky from the house of the Woman of Hard Things of the East to the house of the Woman of Hard Things of the West.

And for the first time the Chief got a good look at this new world that he was going to call home. It turned out to be a beautiful place after all, filled with plants and animals and trees; there were hills and mountains, deserts and streams, and over everything the blue, blue sky. There would be seasons to hunt and seasons to plant; there would be enough land so that people wouldn't be crowded; and most important of all, there would be the chance to start over, the chance to make a good and decent life for themselves. Surely, he thought, they could be happy here in this place of new beginnings, this best of all possible worlds.

He was wrong, of course.

When he got home again, he found his wife crying harder than ever, his people terrified, and the body of his youngest son cold and lifeless.

"What is it?" said the Chief.

"I think we just found out what to die means," said Mockingbird in the Chief's own voice.

The Chief held the boy. The body was as relaxed as if the child were asleep, but the head flopped against the shoulders as if it would fall off.

“But how?” said the Chief, his grief beyond tears. “When I left he was running around.”

“That’s the terrible part,” said the bird.

The man could only think to wash the boy because he wanted him to be clean, and to powder him with corn meal because he knew the meal was sacred. He could only think to attach down feathers to the boy’s forehead because he wanted him to be like the clouds; he could only think to place him seated in a hole facing east because he wanted the boy to return like the sun did each day. When the Chief covered over the hole, no one could tell that boy had ever existed.

“It’s so final,” said the Chief, numb.

“That’s one definition of it,” said Mockingbird.

“That’s not good enough,” said the Chief.

“That was the bargain when we came here.”

“I’m not buying it. There has to be more.” The Chief stumbled around in little circles. “I know what caused it, a Two-Heart must have climbed up the reed with us. A Two-Heart did it.”

Mockingbird knew better and shook his head, but the Chief was beyond reason now, even his own. He called all his people together.

“There’s a Two-Heart among us and we have to find out who it is,” announced the Chief. “I’m going to throw this ball of sacred corn meal in the air, and whoever it falls on is the witch.”

“Ah yes, I’ve always admired the scientific method,” said Mockingbird, dressed in a white lab coat and carrying a beaker.

The Chief glared at him briefly then went on. “And whoever it falls on, I’m going to personally throw back into the hole to the Under World.”

“Judge not, less ye be judged,” said Mockingbird, dressed in a robe with a gray beard down to his knees. Then he became a little boy in a beanie. “It takes one to tell one—nyah, nyah,

nyah.”

The Chief ignored him and threw the ball of corn meal in the air. The ball landed on the head of a girl, powdering her from head to toe.

“Fetching,” said Mockingbird with a lisp, holding a hairdresser’s comb. “She looks absolutely *di-vine* in white. Why don’t we use that color for brides?”

“Shut up, bird,” said the Chief. He picked up the girl and ran with her to the sipapu, ready to throw her back into the Third World.

“Wait a minute, lover,” cooed the girl in his ear. “You sure you want to throw away a nifty little thing like me?”

The Chief stopped and looked at her. True: she was very pretty. But he said he was going to throw her back and that was that. He held her over the edge of the hole to the past world, but the girl kept talking to him, cool as you please.

“I know you’re upset right now, you big lug, you. But you’ll get over it in a little while. And then I can show you that everything is all right.”

“How can everything be all right?” the Chief said. “My son is dead. We’re all going to be dead.”

“You think he’s dead, but take a look in the sipapu. He’s back down there in the Third World, having the time of his life with all the people you left behind.”

The Chief leaned over and looked in. Sure enough, his son was down there, running around as if he were alive.

“But how?” said the Chief.

“That’s what happens to the dead, I guess,” said the girl, still in the Chief’s arms, filing her nails. “They go back to the Under World. But I don’t belong down there, I’m very much

alive. I can make you glad to be alive too.”

“But you’re a witch, a Two-Heart,” said the Chief.

The girl smiled coyly. “But don’t I feel good?”

Yes, he had to admit, she certainly felt good. He shifted her around a little bit, as if his arms were getting tired, but actually he wanted to work his hand a little further up her skirt.

“You’re exactly the kind of trouble we came up here to get away from,” he said unhappily.

“You’ve got enough troubles up here without worrying about lil’ ol’ me,” said the girl, leaning her head on his shoulder and running his tongue around his ear. “And I can help you forget those other troubles.”

He looked at her and kissed her on the cheek, then carried her up the hill to a clump of juniper trees where they could be alone. He didn’t hear Mockingbird sitting on the edge of the sipapu, wearing a cleric’s collar, who said, “If you believe that one, you’ll believe anything.”

THE MIGRATIONS

“Not a bad place,” said the Chief. “Not a bad place at all.”

They were sitting on the hillside in the shade of the junipers, the girl whom he had earlier suspected of being a witch lying with her head in his lap. The old man stroked her long black hair and felt the good old stirrings between his legs.

“Still, it does seem like a long way to come,” said Mockingbird, “just to have everything turn out the same. I mean, the reason the Hopi left the Under World was supposedly to find a better world.”

The Chief shifted his legs to straight out his genitals. “I’ve been thinking about that.”

“Hold on to your ticket stubs, kids,” said Mockingbird. When the Chief glared at him, Mockingbird smiled like the Cheshire Cat.

“The reason I figure the Hopi don’t get along with the Navajo, and the Navajo don’t along with the Comanche, and the Comanche don’t get along with the Paiutes, and Paiutes don’t get along with the Apaches, and the Apaches—”

“I think we get the idea, Chief.”

“The reason why we don’t all get along better is because we all understand each other too well.”

“At least it’s a unique way of looking at one of mankind’s basic problems,” said

Mockingbird. “Just what do you suggest?”

“Well, what I think we should do is to give each group of people a different language. That way we won’t be able to talk to each other, so there can’t be any disagreements!”

The Chief looked back and forth between Mockingbird and the girl, but the girl seemed more interested in the lump growing in the Chief’s pants, and Mockingbird took a new interest in the sky.

“Well, what do you think?” the Chief asked the girl.

“I think it’s wonderful,” said the girl. The lump was reaching toward her nose.

The Chief looked expectantly at Mockingbird.

“Oh yeah, Chief. Great idea, just great. Good thinking.”

“I thought so,” beamed the Chief.

“And who are you going to get to teach all these different languages?” said Mockingbird.

“As if I didn’t know.”

“Well, old friend, you are the one who knows all the different songs.”

“But I suppose you want to keep on using the language you’re using now, right?”

“Of course,” said the Chief, surprised that the question would even come up. “Who else would speak Hopi except the Hopi? Isn’t that right?” he asked the girl.

“I think it’s wonderful,” said the girl dreamily.

So Mockingbird, always the good second man—a pragmatist of sorts, an implementer of other people’s ideas—kept whatever thoughts he had of the matter to himself and set about teaching the other groups of people their new languages. And like any good second man, he kept his thoughts to himself when the new system made everything worse.

“I don’t know what went wrong,” the Chief said, scratching his head. “Nobody

understands each other, and they still don't get along."

"Che sará sará," said Mockingbird.

"What?" said the Chief.

"Nothing," said Mockingbird.

The troubles increased until the only thing to do was to have the different peoples separate and move away from the sipapu, the opening that they used to come up from the Under World, out across the new land. The night before they left, they had a common meal together and the Chief of the Hopi laid out six ears of corn of various lengths that Germinator, the God of the Under World and of growing things, had given him to start with in the Fourth World.

"Now we must choose which kind of corn we're each going to take with us," said the Chief.

The Navajo pushed ahead of everyone else and grabbed the longest ear. "I've got a lot of wives, you know. Need to keep up my strength, heh heh."

The Chief didn't mind because he knew the longest ear wasn't very sweet and was the hardest to grow. The white man looked a little befuddled at the goings-on and simply took the ear closest to him; as it turned out he picked the ear with the meatiest kernels and the tallest stocks. The Chief consoled himself with the knowledge that the Whites would waste most of it and wouldn't really appreciate it anyway.

Meanwhile, the Paiute looked around saying, "Where's my ear of corn? Where's my ear of corn?"

The Zuni, who had come from the Under World through another opening, took his ear of corn without fuss, and the other Pueblo People took theirs.

And the Paiute kept looking around saying, "Where's my ear of corn? Where's my ear of

corn?”

The Apache and the Comanche never said a word. They stood off to one side, dressed in their war feathers, knowing they planned to travel light and would always be able to get what they needed by taking from the others.

When there was only one ear of corn left, the smallest of the six ears, the Paiute looked at it disgustedly and said, “That’s okay, I didn’t want any corn anyway. I can live on grass and cactus.”

The Chief, always the optimist, picked up the tiny ear. “Thanks, this will be Hopi corn, because it tastes the sweetest and can grow anywhere.”

Mockingbird, watching from a tree, leaned down and said to the Chief, “It’s going to *have* to be able to grow anywhere, from what I hear is going to happen to the Hopi.”

“Not now, bird,” hissed the Chief. “These guys are important. If they see me talking to a bird they’ll think I’m crazy or something.”

The Chief coughed, as if he had just been clearing his throat, and turned back to the dinner, smiling to the others. He was so busy keeping up appearances for his company that he didn’t notice an old friend, the exact size and shape of a mockingbird, flying away into the night.

The next day, all the different groups of people left the area around the sipapu and spread out across the new world, looking for places in which to settle. But the Hopi waited to start their migration until the others had left, knowing that they had to travel by themselves. Masau’u, the Guardian of the Fourth world and the God of Death, who had allowed the Hopi and the other people to come up from the Third World, had left instructions that the Hopi weren’t even allowed to travel together, as one group. Before leaving, the Hopi divided themselves into different groups, each group to travel alone, stopping when it was necessary for food and rest

along the way, but always picking up again to continue their migrations.

The different groups of Hopi were the different clans, and in time each clan would take their name from something that happened to them along the way.

The story goes that one day a group of Hopi was far ahead of the other groups when it came upon the body of a bear that had recently died. The group took it as a sign and called themselves the Bear Clan, leaving their mark on the rocks nearby. A few days later another group of Hopi came along and found the decomposing bear and the mark of the Bear Clan on the rocks. The second group cut strips of fur from the bear's hide to make carrying straps for their belongings, so they decided to call themselves the Strap Clan and they too left their mark on the rocks.

By the time the next group of Hopi came along, the body of the bear was being eaten by mice, so they called themselves the Small Mouse Clan. The next group found birds eating the remains of the bear, so they called themselves the Bluebird Clan. The next group found gophers near the skeleton, so they called themselves the Gopher Clan. The next group found a spider web among the bones, so they called themselves the Spider Clan. The next group found the skeleton picked clean except for the fatty tissue left in the eye sockets, so they called themselves the Greasy Eye Sockets of the Skull Clan. The next group took the skull to use as a jug, so they called themselves the Jug Clan. The next group found only an anthill where the bear had been, so they called themselves the Ant Clan.

Some of the stories say the clans made their migrations to reach the place of the rising sun. When the first clan reached there, touching the place with their foreheads, a shower of stars would fall from the sky to tell the other clans that they had arrived. Then, and only then, the other clans were to settle down wherever they found themselves.

Some of the stories say the Hopi went in search of their true god. Some of the stories say they went in search of the Eastern Star. Some of the stories say the Hopi followed the trail of their brother Bahana, the White Man, because he was known to be clever and intelligent and had told the Hopi he would go ahead to the East and learn as much as possible. Some of the stories say Bahana promised to come back and use all his knowledge to help the Hopi if the Two-Hearts, the witches who had snuck up with the Hopi from the Under World, became too powerful.

Some of the stories say the Hopi were ordered to go on their migrations by Masau'u himself, that Masau'u told them that they had to travel the length and width of their new land, each clan following a route that looked much like a gammadion or swastika, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the tip of South America to the North Pole, leaving their marks and villages and burial mounds wherever they went, learning the boundaries and limits of the Fourth World, before Masau'u would allow them to return to the spiritual heart of the land—the focus of its power; the center of the universe—which was to be their home.

That's what some of the stories say. Or maybe the Hopi, after going to all that trouble to get to their new world, just couldn't settled down again once they arrived. Maybe the Hopi had been without a real home for so long, maybe they had been traveling for so long, that they didn't know when to stop. And so as often happens when you start out without knowing where you're going, they found themselves headed back the way they came.

Whatever, if the Chief knew where they were going and why, he didn't bother to tell anyone else. All the Hopi knew was that they were supposed to be on the lookout for anything that resembled a walking fire or a burning skeleton: Masau'u. And if they saw such a thing, to keep moving.

The Hopi even had kachinas, real flesh and blood spirits, to accompany them on their migrations. There was Eototo, the Chief of all the kachinas, who was dressed all in white and a white dome-shaped head with a cowlick of eagle feathers on top; and his best friend Aholi, who had a blue conical head tufted with red yarn and feathers and who wore a beautiful tropical-colored cape.

“But why are you here?” said the Chief when the two kachinas appeared.

“We’re here to help,” said Eototo. On his white dome head there were only two small black circles for the eyes, and another small black circle from the mouth. “It’s what we do.”

“It’s our thing, man, as the saying will go,” said Aholi, giving an exaggerated sweep of his cape. He was a tall, dignified figure, but he had a twinkle in his eye. He looked at Eototo and held up his palm and Eototo slapped it, then he slapped Eototo’s in return. They laughed easily together, like friends who had been through light-years.

“But what do the Hopi have to do in return?” said the Chief.

“Hardly anything,” said Eototo. “All you have to do is be yourselves. We’ll sing and dance for you, and all you have to do in return is give us some good thoughts.”

“We have a real weakness for good thoughts,” said Aholi, pretending to smack his lips. “We can’t get enough of them. They’re like candy to a spirit.”

“We’ll show what roads to take,” Eototo went on, “and let you know if you get too far off the right path. And we know a couple little tricks that might come in handy on a long trip.”

“Such as?” said the Chief.

“Shall we, Mr. Bones?” said Eototo.

“Why certainly, Mr. Interlocutor,” said Aholi.

They grinned at each other, sharing a secret joke. For a second, the Chief was afraid they

were going to launch into a buck-and-wing.

Instead, Eototo took some sacred corn meal from the sack he carried and drew a cloud symbol on the ground. Then Aholi put the butt of his staff in the center of the cloud symbol and swung the top in a wide arc, singing in a high-pitched shriek: "Ah-hol-li-i-i-i-i." The two kachinas bowed to each other, pleased with their performance. Out of the ground, from the center of the cloud symbol, sprouted some beans.

"That's amazing," said the Chief.

"It's nothing, really," said Eototo, his white head blushing all the way up to his feathers.

"I think it's wonderful," said the Chief's young girlfriend, eyeing the kachinas' dance kilts.

"Well, let's get this show on the road, then," the Chief said. "Head 'em up and move 'em out!"

As his people began their long file into the unknown, the Chief stood on the hill taking stock of things. And he had to say that things were looking okay. He had his wife and his family and his young girlfriend; he had a steady job with plenty of fringe benefits and the chance to travel; and he had a couple of jolly kachinas who wanted to help and asked nothing in return except some good thoughts now and then. True, there was this thing called Death that he was going to have to face someday, but that day seemed a long way off, almost forever. Yes, all in all, the Chief figured he had it made.

As he stood there, he saw his old friend Mockingbird sitting among the junipers.

"So there you are," said the Chief. "See how everything is working out? And you were afraid this world would turn out as bad as the last one. What do you think of it now?"

But Mockingbird never said a word. The bird shied away, flying deeper into the low

trees, whistling the songs of sparrows and shrikes, as if it had no idea what the man was talking about.

THE RED CITY

Some of the Hopi stories say that it was during the time the Hopi lived south of Flagstaff. Some of the stories say that it was during the time they lived south of Phoenix, and some say it was further south than that, in Mexico or Central America. The Hopi called it Palatkwapi, the Red House or the Red City, because it was located near a tall red bluff and the stone and mud used to build the city was red. But wherever it was, all the stories agree that during the time the Hopi lived there the people grew very bad.

The problem was that it was too nice there, and life was too easy. The Hopi were guided to the location by the kachinas who were with them on the migration, Eototo and Aholi, and the people built a village there so they could rest before continuing on. But the village soon grew into a town, and the town grew into a city, a very comfortable and pleasant city with great open plazas, beautiful homes, and even running water. When the Kachinas told them it was time to get back on the road again, back to a life of roaming around and having only what they could carry with them—back to a life of sore feet and eating roots and berries and wondering where the next waterhole was—the people looked at their guiding spirits as if they were crazy. The kachinas knew what would happen to the Hopi if they stayed too long at the Red City, but they couldn't do anything about it. Like many another spirit, they found it's easier to influence an indifferent god than it is a comfortable human being.

The Hope were so comfortable that they grew lazy. They grew so lazy that they forgot why they came to the Fourth World to begin with. The men forgot the ceremonies and ignored their crops. The women didn't take care of their families or themselves. The people fought with each other and played around with each other's wives and husbands. And while they were all wrapped up in themselves, the children ran rampant. The young people mocked their parents and played cruel tricks on the old people. The Hopi recognized that things were starting to get out of hand, but they developed an attitude of "Just as long as I get mine, I don't care what happens," and blamed the troubles on the younger generation.

Through it all, the Chief knew what was going on but he didn't want to say anything to stop it—for the simple reason that he didn't want to spoil his own fun. As Chief, he could always find someone to perform his ceremonies and take care of his crops for him; he had a younger girlfriend of his own; and the unruly kids never bothered him. But one day when he was outside the village, squatting down to relieve himself, a bunch of teenagers snuck up on him from behind and pulled him over into his own pile of shit. Then, when he got back to the village, he went to the kiva to clean up and found both his wife and his girlfriend, who were there supposedly to do a butterfly dance, going down with every man in sight. It was not one of the Chief's better days.

Eototo and Aholi hoped the Chief had learned a lesson and would lead his people back on their migration. But instead, the Chief decided to get revenge.

He called his nephew to his house and said, "Kid, there's something I want you to do for me."

"Sure, Uncle," said the boy. "Anything you say."

"We'll see about that," muttered the Chief. The boy didn't understand. "Nothing," said the Chief, putting on a false smile. "I want you to go into training and become the fastest and

strongest runner in the village.”

“That’s all?”

“That’s enough. For now.”

The Chief didn’t know if the boy was as bad as the other kids or not, but he assumed that he was and counted on the boy’s mischievousness to help carry out his plan. Actually, the boy was of a good heart and was trying to follow the Hopi Way. And in the Hopi Way, a nephew always did what his uncle said.

So every day the boy ran out across the desert, each time running harder and stronger until there was no question that he was the best runner in the village. Then the Chief dressed him in four kachinas masks, one over top of the other, with the top one looking like the descriptions he had heard of Masau’u, the Skeleton Man, The Guardian of the Fourth World and the God of Death. When it was night, the boy followed his uncle’s instructions and snuck out of the village, going to a nearby ridge where he set fire to a large bush. Then, carrying a torch, he ran to the village, making the long mournful cry of Masau’u, and climbed up on the tallest rooftop where he chanted a song and ground corn. The people came out of their houses and saw the burning bush on the ridge and the torch-lit figure on the rooftop, but when they tried to catch him the mysterious figure easily ran away.

The next night the boy did the same routine: he lit a fire on the ridge, then sang and ground corn on the tallest rooftop. And again, no one could catch him. On the third night, the elders had the strongest runners waiting for him, but again the boy easily outran them. But the fourth night when they chased him, he tripped over a cripple who was trying to get out of everyone’s way. The other runners caught up to the mysterious figure and dragged him back to the plaza.

The elders gathered around and pulled off the mask that looked like Masau'u., only to find another kachina mask underneath. They pulled off the second mask and found a third; they pulled off the third and found a fourth. Finally they unmasked the Chief's nephew.

The elders asked him why he had done such a thing and scared them all that way, but the boy, still doing what his uncle told him, didn't say a word. When they asked the Chief himself, the old man just smoked his pipe and shrugged and said he didn't know a thing about it. So the elders, as the Chief figured they would, decided the boy must be a Two-Heart, a witch, and they slit his throat and killed him.

When everyone had returned to their homes and was asleep, the Chief dug a hole in the plaza at the spot where the elders killed the boy and buried the body, along with a bowl of water and a whistle used in the snake ceremony. In the morning the people found the boy's hand sticking up out of the ground with four fingers extended. Everyone agreed that it didn't look like a very good sign. The next morning the people found only three fingers extended from the hand. No, it didn't look like a very good sign at all. The next morning there were only two fingers. In fact, it was beginning to look like a rather bad sign. The next morning there was only one finger, and you can guess which finger that was. A very bad sign indeed.

People were afraid to look the next morning. But when they did, they found the same finger sticking up in the air, and they began to think maybe it wasn't such a bad sign after all. Maybe it was some kind of joke, ha ha. But as they watched, the finger slowly curled to join the other fingers in a clenched fist. Then the fist began to grow and the earth began to tremble and there was a steady rumble, a steady roar as the fist and the arm grew into a giant column of water shooting up out of the ground, a column of water that was great Horned Water Serpent.

In an instant the village was flooded. Water flowed out of every crack and crevice in the

village, from the kivas and the fireplaces and the chinks in the walls, flooding the plaza and the streets while an earthquake destroyed the buildings. A few of the people, including the Chief, made it to higher ground outside the city, but most of the Hopi were crushed or drowned. In one house, the elders sought refuge by climbing up on the shelves and crouching where the trays of corn meal were kept. The Water Serpent saw them and turned them into turkeys, their tails drooping in the foam and rising water, which is why the tip of a turkey's tail is white.

The survivors gathered on the high ground, looking down at the remains of their beautiful city. Obviously, the Chief had gotten more revenge than he bargained for. In the plaza, the Horned Water Serpent continued to tower over the rubble, swaying menacingly back and forth. And, the survivors noticed, the Serpent was looking their direction.

“Now will you let us lead you away from here?” pleaded Eototo and Aholi.

But in his desperation the Chief got the idea that what they needed to do now was sacrifice some children to the Water Serpent to make it go away. And the people, in their own desperation, went along with the idea. Parents fought among themselves for the honor of having their children chosen to be sacrificed, but finally everyone agreed upon a pair of six-year-old twins, a boy and a girl, because they were noticeably innocent and pure of heart. The people hurriedly stuck some pray feathers in the children's hands and pushed them forward, weeping and praying as they watched the little couple dressed all in white walk hand-in-hand down the hill and into the ruined village. From the safety of the high ground they saw the Horned Water Serpent spring forward and coil around the children, sucking them down into the ground. The Hopi didn't wait to see what happened after that. They fled in terror, pleading with the kachinas to lead them somewhere far away.

Now after all this had happened, the Hopi weren't exactly crazy about the man they

called Chief, but because they realized they had done so many wrong things themselves they agreed to him continue to be their leader. The clans resumed their migrations again, trekking north. But as so often happens in this world, when the people saw the Water Serpent devour the children, they saw only what they expected to see, or were afraid they'd see, or perhaps in some terrible way what they wanted to see. And as so often happens in this world, that had been good enough for them.

Actually what had happened was something quite different. When the children walked into the plaza, in front of the swaying Water Serpent hissing above them like a great wind, they were so afraid that they sat down on the ground and cried. The Horned Water Serpent heard the children and leaned down for a better look. That, of course, only terrified the children all the more, thinking it was about to kill them. But the great serpent appeared to smile.

"I suppose you're going to find this hard to believe, considering the circumstances," burbled the hundred-foot-tall snake of water, "but I'm really not going to hurt you."

The Serpent was right: the children didn't believe it for a second. In fact they yelled and screamed all the louder. The Serpent had to wait until they cried themselves out, which it discovered can take quite a long time for a couple of terrified six-year-olds. Finally the Serpent went on.

"That's the trouble with being both a monster and a god," the Horned Water Serpent sighed, a sound like a great waterfall. "Everybody respects you like crazy but nobody believes you."

"But look what you did to our village!" the little boy said, looking like he might start to cry all over again.

"But your people weren't living well," The Serpent hastened to explain. "They weren't

living like Hopis. The city had to be destroyed, it was the only way to shake them up. Who knows, someday they might even thank me for it.” The Serpent gave a couple of extra undulations.

“I wouldn’t count on it,” pouted the little boy.

“Harrumph,” bubbled the Serpent.

“And what are we supposed to do now?” said the little boy.

“Our village is all gone,” said the little girl, her lower lip stuck out like a shelf. “And and and our people wanted us to be sacrifices and and and they went away and left us all alone and and we don’t have any place to go and and and....”

“Don’t cry, my pet,” said the Serpent, a bit swishy. “There’s enough water around here already. Though I do sympathize with you about your people. What a bunch of schmucks. If I could I’d let you stay here and live, but there’s not much left to eat and I can’t stay around to take care of you, I have to go reshape a couple river channels. Besides, I think you’ll find the Hopi are better people now, at least for a little while. There’s nothing like a good catastrophe to set people straight.”

“But how will we find them?” said the little boy.

“They’re far away,” said the little girl, “and and and we don’t know where they’re headed and and and....”

The Horned Water Serpent leaned over and gave them a watery glare until they children settled down again. “That’s better. I am, after all, a god; I am supposed to have a good idea once in a while. Now then, the first thing you do is go around through the ruins and find any food that’s left, and bring the food and a sharp knife back here.”

When they returned the Serpent directed the little boy to take the knife and cut a piece of

skin from it's back.

“But I'll hurt you,” said the little boy.

“Don't be ridiculous,” said the Serpent, drawing itself up to its full height and looking tough and monstrous. “I can take it.”

So the little boy went around behind the Serpent and cut a hunk out of its skin. The wound closed right back up again.

“See, what did I tell you?” said the Serpent, giving a pained smile between clenched fangs. “Didn't hurt a bit.”

“What are we supposed to do with it?”

“When you catch up with your people give it to the Chief to make prayer sticks with,” said the Serpent. “Then send the prayer sticks to me and I'll send rain to your people.”

“Oh thank you, Mr. Serpent,” said the little girl. “We thought you were going to kill us and and and we didn't know what to do and and and thank you really thank you—”

The Horned Water Serpent leaned over and gurgled: “Go-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!”

The children started out across the desert, and the Horned Water Serpent gushed up even higher to keep an eye on them as long as it could. But soon the children were on their own, struggling day after day through the heat and rugged terrain. The little girl grew weak and the little boy carried her on his back; at night they huddled together in the darkness and cried themselves to sleep. One day when they just couldn't go any further, the little boy started to take a piss in the bushes when a tiny voice cried out, “Stop! Stop! You'll drown us all!”

The voice seemed to come from a small hole in the ground.

“Go take your piss over there by that cactus and then come back,” said the voice. The little boy did what he was told. “Now come on in.”

“But I can’t fit in that tiny hole,” said the little boy.

“Enlarge it with your toe, silly.”

So the little boy enlarged it and climbed in. It was the den of Spider Grandmother. He called his sister to join him and the Old Woman fed them mutton stew and piki bread while the children told her their story.

“That sounds just like a serpent,” muttered Spider Grandmother. “Destroy your village, kill off most of your people, then give you a lousy piece of skin off its back and thank that’s going to make everything all right.”

“He said we should go back to our people,” said the children.

“And didn’t tell you how to do it, I’ll bet,” said Spider Grandmother, stirring a pot and shelling corn and sewing a dress, all at the same time. “Just like a serpent. Well, all right, you children rest up a bit and then I’ll get you something to help you find your people.”

When the children had recovered Spider Grandmother gave them a bow and arrow, telling them that any time they didn’t know where they were or which direction to go, all they had to do was shoot an arrow into the air and follow the direction where it landed. Or if they were hungry, all they had to do was shoot the bow in the direction of the game and the arrow would kill the game for them.

“Thank you, Grandmother,” said the children, starting out again.

“Give a couple sweet kids like an old piece of snake skin and send them out into the wilderness to fend for themselves,” grumbled the Old Woman. “Sounds just like a serpent.”

It took the children a long time but they finally found their people again, when the Hopi were settled in a town near present-day Winslow, Arizona. As they approached the village, the brother still carrying his sister on his back, the people cried out, “Somebody’s children are

coming! Somebody's children are coming!"

All the people who had lost their children in the destruction of the Red City gathered around, but nobody recognized the twins, not even their own mother and father. But the twins recognized their parents and embraced them. The parents of the twins looked around at their neighbors and the Chief embarrassed, saying, "It's been so long since we've seen them. We didn't know what happened to them, we thought they were dead...."

The neighbors and the Chief shook their collective heads contemptuously, reproaching the parents for not recognizing their own children, blaming them for allowing the twins to be sacrificed in the first place, forgetting for the moment that they all had helped choose the children as victims.

"And that sounds just like people," muttered Spider Grandmother, somewhere in the firmament.

IN THE AGE OF MONSTERS

The Hopi, the People of Peace, were having trouble with monsters. And not just your everyday run-of-the-mill monsters, either. These were very large and very serious monsters, primeval monsters in fact, holdovers from the days when monsters were in a class by themselves.

There was Chaveyo, for instance, a giant who carried a long metal saber and had a large basket on his back in which to put his victims. Chaveyo wore a vest covered with arrowheads and shells, and his long fierce hair hung down over his face. As he trotted over the mesas looking for victims, he had to stop now and then to lift the curtain of hair out of his eyes so he could see where he was going. The sound of him rattling around in the distance made all the children cry because they knew he was looking them.

Then there was Cooyoko, the Cannibal Monster, and his wife Cooyok Wuhti, giants who roamed around gobbling up old men and women who strayed too far from the villages. And there Giant Elk and Giant Antelope, huge animals that gored and devoured hunters and farmers who traveled far out into the wilderness, leaving their bones to bleach in the sun. But, as bad as these monsters were, everyone agreed that the worst monster of all was Kwatoko, Knife-Wing, the giant bird that swept down out of the sky and carried off young nubile women.

Now in all fairness, the truth was the Kwatoko would swoop down and eat anybody. But

once Kwatoko made the mistake of saying that, if he had his druthers, he preferred young nubile women because their flesh was so soft and sweet. And of course as soon as that got around, everyone immediately decided that Kwatoko was the worst monster of all because nobody likes a monster whose tastes are too human.

One day after a particularly young and nubile woman disappeared, the Chief, who had been eyeing this dainty morsel for himself though he certainly didn't consider his own intentions at all monsterly, decided something had to be done about Kwatoko. So he traveled to the house of Spider Grandmother to see the gods in charge of slaying monsters, the Little War Twins. The Chief knew from the legends and stories that the Little War Twins were only children, and he even took along the customary offerings of children's toys. But when he got to Spider Grandmother's and saw the two snot-nosed twelve-year-olds running around playing ball, he began to have second thoughts.

"Are you sure those kids have killed monsters before?" the Chief asked the Old Woman.

"Hard to believe, isn't it?" said Spider Grandmother, sitting on her haunches and shelling three ears of corn at the same time. The Chief looked back and forth between the Old Woman's tangle of arms and the shinny-playing Twins.

"I guess I always think of killing monsters as somehow...er, a bit ominous."

"I know what you mean, sonny. But those kids don't take anything seriously. They think being a god is nothing but fun fun fun."

The Chief thought about it for a moment, but decided to go through with it. He offered Spider Grandmother a prayer feather, and showed her the gifts he brought for the Twins: a bow, arrows tipped with bluebird feathers, and a new shinny ball.

"Very nice," said Spider Grandmother. "And the kids will especially like the ball."

They're always losing them around the cosmos.”

“I'd like to ask the Twins to kill Kwatoko for us,” said the Chief.

“Hmm. I thought they got that one already,” the Old Woman said, scratching her head with her fifth leg. “Well, no matter. Monsters have a way of not staying dead too long anyway.”

She leaned closer and smiled. A fine coat of dust covered the bristles on her legs, and part of her lunch—it appeared to be the leg of a very large fly—was stuck in the teeth of her chelicerae. It's at times like these that man has to wonder if he's doing the right thing.

Spider Grandmother called in the Boys and explained the situation to them.

“Yay! Monsters!” cried the Twins and ran back outside with their new toys. The Chief was worried.

“Do you think they understand what I want them to do?”

“How can you tell when you're dealing with gods? We'll just have to wait and see what happens. Here, let me get you something to eat.”

The Chief swallowed hard, envisioning a large silk-wrapped dragonfly with two straws. But the Old woman set out a table for him with piki bread and corn and watermelon.

Meanwhile, the Little War Twins ran out across the mesas, batting their new shinny ball back and forth, until they found a low flying hawk that they could commandeer to take them up to see their father, the Sun.

“Guess what, Dad?” said the oldest Twin, Pookong. “Kwatoko's been at it again.”

Father Sun was preoccupied, admiring his reflection in a lake. “What's he done this time?”

“Oh, you know,” said Pookong. “The usual. Carrying off beautiful girls and young wives, that kind of stuff.”

“Stuff,” echoed Balonga, the younger Twin. As they talked to their father, they continued to hit their ball back and forth across the firmament.

The sun, who was known to be something of a ladies’ man himself, warmed to the subject. “Well, offhand that doesn’t sound so bad.”

“They say he carries them off and sleeps with them for four days,” said Pookong between shots.

Father sun beamed, remembering something.

Pookong hit a bad shot off to the side, sending his brother chasing after the ball into a thicket of cirrus clouds. “And then after four days, he eats them.”

“Eats them,” said Balonga, who was also known as Echo, emerging from the cloud thicket.

“There’s nothing wrong with oral sex,” said Father Sun. “I used to like to—”

“No, Dad,” said Pookong. “I mean really ‘eats’ them. As in gobble, gobble.”

“Oh,” Father Sun shrugged, stunting crops on four continents. “Well, Kwatoko’s an excitable boy.”

“He’s a monster, Dad. And you know it,” said Pookong, the Boy.

“He’s not very nice, either,” said Balonga.

“Some of the legends say that you fathered Kwatoko around the same time you fathered us,” said Pookong. “Or at least that you made him out of some mud. But I don’t think he’s anything to be proud of, Dad.”

“Proud Dad,” said Echo.

The Sun looked at these two dirty, runny-nosed twelve-year-olds and wasn’t exactly thrilled with any of his creations of late. “What do you want me to do about it?”

“We want you to let us blow him away,” said Pookong.

“Blow him away!” said Balonga. The younger Twin sighted down his blue lightning and squeezed off a bolt, creating a new canyon in the Rockies.

“I told you to be careful with that thing!” said the Sun.

Balonga looked sheepish. “I didn’t know it was loaded.”

Father Sun gave a sigh that could start religions. He supposed it was what he deserved, fooling around with mundane affairs instead of sticking to the business of being a star. And it was true that having his name associated with known monsters certainly wasn’t good for his image. In the end the sun decided it was better not to get involved one way or the other; he told himself he was just a ball of energy traveling through the universe like everybody else, and took his leave behind a cloud.

The Twins pumped their shoulders to each other, gathered up their toys, and hopped the next eagle heading back to earth. Father Sun didn’t say they could kill Kwatoko, but he didn’t say they couldn’t, either. Like normal twelve-year-olds anywhere, that was good enough for them. They hurried off to find Knife-Wing, who was sitting as usual on top of his conical mountain.

As the Little War Twins approached, Kwatoko did a series of his best threatening poses for them—*Monster with Wings Extended*; *Monster with Screaming Beak*; *Monster with Terrible Talons*—which usually had people rolling the aisles, dead, at the very sight of him. But the Twins paid no attention to him and kept on playing shinny around the base of his mountain. Finally Kwatoko swooped down in front of them, his great wings covering the world in shadow.

“Excuse me,” Pookong said, looking up at him for the first time. “Would you mind lifting your leg?”

“Say what?” said Knife-Wing.

“Your leg. Would you mind lifting it? You’re standing on our shinny ball.”

“Do you know what I am?” said Kwatoko, looming over the little god. The Twins barely came up to his tail feathers.

“Yes, you’re in the way,” said the snot-nosed god and whacked him on the ankle bone with his shinny stick. The great bird howled and grabbed his leg, doing a one-legged dance that started landslides. Pookong retrieved their ball and the Twins went back to playing shinny again.

“Hey, aren’t you kids afraid of me?” said Knife-Wing, hobbling after them.

“Fear, fear, the monster’s here,” sang Pookong. The Twins giggled and kept on hitting their ball.

Knife-Wing thought for a moment. “Well, if you’re not afraid of me, how would you like to go for a little ride?”

The Twins clapped their hands and danced around like foolish children. Kwatoko bent down so the Two could climb on his back, then flew them high in the air, back toward his home. There were four cone-shaped mountains forming a square, with the fifth and tallest one, his perch, rising up in the center.

“We’ve never been here before,” squealed the Twins over his shoulder, their voices nearly carried away by the rushing wind.

“Then why don’t you stay awhile?” With that, Kwatoko flipped over and dumped them off his back. The Little War Twins fell on the central peak and rolled all the way to bottom where they lay as if dead.

“Plebeians, I guess I showed them,” the monster muttered and settled back on his perch. He called to his children who lived in a cave in the valley. “Your dinner’s there at the bottom of

the mountain. Hurry up and eat before they get cold.”

The four young Kwatokos fluttered down and were all set to start picking away at the two little bodies when the Twins, who were only pretending to be dead, opened their eyes and said, “Ish! Ish!” The young monsters drew back.

“Why aren’t you eating?” Daddy Kwatoko said from his perch.

“We’re afraid of them,” said the young Kwatokos. “They’re making noises.”

“Don’t be silly,” their father said. “That’s only their bowels letting go. Now eat your supper like good little monsters.”

The young Kwatokos moved closer and opened their beaks again.

“Go bite somebody your own size,” the Twins hissed and made faces at them. The baby monsters pulled away again.

“Now what’s wrong?” Daddy Kwatoko called.

“They can’t be dead because they’re still talking,” cried the young Kwatokos.

“You kids are just playing around with your food again,” said Knife-Wing and flew down to settle the matter. With that the Twins jumped up and whipped out their lightning bolts and fried him to a crisp. The baby Kwatokos burst out crying.

“Now what are we going to do?” they wailed.

“Where’s your mother?” the War Twins asked, feeling a little guilty.

“She only comes when there’s a gentle rain,” the monster babies said between sobs.

“You kids go home,” Pookong said. “We’ll wait for her here.”

The baby Kwatokos returned to their cave, and the Boys resumed playing shinny while they waited. After a while a shower came up, the small gentle drops of the female rain, and the wings of the female Kwatoko, the Kwatoko Wuhti, covered the sky. The great bird settled on her

perch and called to her children.

“I hope you’re hungry because I’ve brought you a little treat.” In her talons she carried a young Hopi boy and a young Hopi girl, each beautifully dressed in a white mantle with a necklace of fine turquoise. As the Twins watched, she dropped the boy and girl at the mouth of the cave, and the baby Kwatokos rushed out and ate them both, tearing them limb from limb. The mouth of the cave was littered with the bones and beads of their earlier meals.

The Little War Twins were angry.

“Wu!” cried Pookong.

“Wu!” cried Balonga.

“Wu?” said Mrs. Kwatoko, looking down at the Twins. “What kind of cry is ‘Wu?’”

The Twins aimed their lightning and burnt her to an ash. The baby Kwatokos cried harder than ever. The Twins looked at each other, knowing all too well what it felt like to be orphans.

“Hush now,” said Pookong, taking hold of a boy and a girl Kwatoko. “It’s all over now, we’re not going to hurt you. But you can’t stay here any more, this is no longer your home.”

The Little War Twins sent the pair of Kwatokos to the distant cliffs. The birds cried back mournfully as they flew to their new home—*Huhu! Huhu!*—the female’s cry more shrill than the male’s. The Twins called them *Owls*. Then the Twins sent the other pair of Kwatokos to the cliffs in the other direction and the birds called back *Kaka! Kaka!* The Twins called them *Crows*.

As the Boys played shinny back across the mesas on their way home to Spider Grandmother’s, they happened on a bear who was about to devour an old woman.

“It’s pretty bad when you have to pick on old ladies,” said Pookong.

The bear took it as a personal affront. “Hey, I’d like something better myself, but the monsters get all the good stuff nowadays. What’s a poor bear supposed to do?”

“If there’s one thing I can’t stand it’s a complainy bear,” said Pookong.

“Oh yeh? Well if there’s one thing I can’t stand it’s a couple of snot-nosed kids,” said the bear.

“You can get away with a lot,” observed Pookong, “when you’re divine.”

“Praise be to god,” said Balonga.

The War Twins didn’t mean to interfere with the natural order of things, but seeing as how the bear got huffy about it they decided to try out their new bow and shot the animal with one of the bluebird-feathered arrows. Then they skinned it, stuffed the skin with dry grass, and attached it to a rope tied around Pookong’s waist. The Two started to run toward the village, the stuffed bear bumping along behind them, as they screamed at the top of their lungs.

“Uhu! A bear is after us!”

Balonga ran ahead to spread the warning. The villagers took one look at the bear following on the heels of the Little War God and fled to the rooftops. When the Boys got to Spider Grandmother’s, they threw the stuffed bear down the ladder into the kiva. The Chief ducked for cover behind the table, spilling food all over the floor, and it scared Spider Grandmother so badly that she collapsed and died. Her legs curled tight against her body like a fist.

The Chief stood numb with terror. He had just witnessed the death of a god! But the Little War Twins giggled.

“Come on, Grandmother,” Pookong said and gave the old woman a nudge with his moccasin. “Get up. It was only a joke.”

Grandmother Spider woke up, blinked her eyes, and grabbed the Twins.

“I’ll teach you to scare me!” said the Old Woman and began to spank them, her battery of

legs flailing away. The Chief decide it was time for him to go, having seen enough of the problems with controlling gods.

THE REVENGE OF THE KACHINAS

It was during the time of the migrations, when many of the Hopi lived in a village far to the east. Though the people had ceremonies for rain, they didn't know that there were kachinas living in the nearby mountains, or that the kachinas would help bring rain if the Hopi asked them. But the kachinas kept an eye on the Hopi, and they could see that things weren't going very well. The corn wouldn't grow, there was famine in the village, and the Hopi were desperate for rain.

So the kachinas decided to help. One night a group of beautiful Snow Kachinas gathered in their kiva and put on their dance kilts and sashes; across their chest they draped wide belts of abalone shells and tied turtle shell rattles to their legs. Then with a Hototo kachina to serve as their uncle and lead them, the Snow Kachinas came down from the mountains to dance for the Hopi.

By the time the kachinas reached the village, it was the middle of the night. The kachinas made their way single file through the dark, narrow streets and lined up in the middle of the empty plaza. Their uncle, the Hototo, helped the Snow Kachinas arrange their line and stood off to one side to offer encouragement. Then the kachinas sang very softly so they wouldn't wake the people and began their dance, stamping the rhythm of the song with their right foot, turning slowly in place to face the opposite direction then back again the way they started as they

performed their ceremony. The sound of the turtle shell rattles on their legs, the belts of shells on their chests, and the dance rattles in their hands beat in the darkness, down the empty streets of the village.

But the people heard the rattles and woke up wondering what was going on. They looked out their windows and saw a line of mysterious figures dancing by themselves in the plaza. The figures looked like nothing the people had ever seen before: their heads were blue, with feathers sprouting out of the top and out of the blossom-like ears; their eyes were like large snowflakes, they had tubes for mouths, and wore branches of fir wrapped around their necks. And the people, being all too human, grabbed their weapons and attacked the strangers. The Snow Kachinas ran from the village, out across the mesas toward their home in the mountains. But they could see that the villagers were gaining on them, so they jumped into a large crevice in the side of the bluff, trying to hide. The people saw where they went, however, and set fire to the brush in front of the opening, killing all the kachinas.

All the kachinas, that is, except the Hototo who had jumped into the crevice first and was covered over by the other kachinas. In the morning, when the people all returned to their village, the Hototo crawled out from the underneath the bodes of the Snow Kachinas and made his way back to his home in the mountains. As he stumbled along, clutching his buckskin shawl around his shoulders, tears running down his cheeks, he sang:

Tanayo, tanayo

Kayahatii! Kayahatii!

All the beautiful Snow Kachinas are dead.

Only I, the Hototo, remain.

At home in the mountains, the other kachinas were out in their fields, tending their corn and beans and watermelons. A Hehea kachina, using the same short wooden hoe the Hehea still use in their dance, was working along when he saw the Hototo crying and singing his song. He stopped his work to listen.

Tanayo, tanayo

Kayohatii! Kayahatii!

All the beautiful Snow Kachinas are dead.

Only I, the Hototo, remain.

Then the Hototo told the Hehea what had happened, and the two continued on to their village, sobbing as they went.

Ochitana, iyava, iyava

Ochitana! iyava, iyava

All the kachinas cried when they heard the story of the death of the Snow Kachinas and the cruelty of the Hopi. Finally, Eototo, the Chief of all the kachinas, held up his hands.

“The Hopi did not act like the People of Peace. They greeted what they didn’t know with suspicion, they reacted to what they didn’t understand with violence. Now we must show the Hopi our power.”

Eototo and his lieutenant, Aholi, directed all the kachinas to go home and put on their

dance costumes and to assemble in the plaza. When they were gathered together again, the kachinas began to dance, stamping the rhythm of their songs into the earth, raising their voices to the clouds like the sound of a great wind. For three days they danced and sang, and for three days it hailed in the mountains, the storm gathering power from the dance of the kachinas. On the morning of the fourth day, the kachinas called up a very beautiful white cloud over the mountain to be their emblem, then they went to their kivas to eat.

Meanwhile the Hopi had watched the storm gather in the mountains, and when they saw the beautiful white cloud on the fourth day, they hoped it was a sign that the storm would come their way and give them rain. By noon the cloud filled the sky, growing dark and blocking out Father Sun, and as it neared the village it began to lightning and thunder. The men stood in their fields and the women and children stood on the rooftops to welcome the rain, but the storm turned out to be hailstones that flattened the crops and killed all the people.

All the people, that is, except one man and one woman. When the storm was over, after the clouds broke up and drifted back to the mountains, the man and woman found each other and began sifting through the debris of the village, trying to start over. And in the mountains, when the kachinas noticed the survivors and what they were doing, they gathered once again in the plaza and began to sing and dance, stamping the rhythm of their songs into the earth, their voices like the sound of a distant wind, the power of the kachinas growing stronger, focused toward the survivors of the Hopi. Only this time the kachinas sang and danced to help.

COYOTE

And, of course, there was always Coyote.

Coyote wasn't a monster, and he certainly wasn't a god, but he had been with the Hopi a long time, as long as anyone could remember. Some people said Coyote was a troublemaker, some people said he was evil. Some people said he was a trickster. Some people said he had been with them in the Under World, that he had come up with them through the sipapu from the Third World into the present world. Some people said Coyote was a pet of the Two-Hearts, the witches, and that he helped establish death here in the Fourth World. But most people thought he was neither evil or powerful. Most people thought Coyote was just foolish.

There was the time Coyote invited his friend Deer to come over to his house. As he served the berries and grass and sunflowers he had gathered specially for his guest, Coyote tried to make small talk.

"I've always wanted to ask you," said Coyote. "What do you do to make your children look so pretty?"

"It's easy," Deer said, between mouthfuls. "First you put them in a hole, cover them with corn cobs, and then set fire to them. There's always a lot of smoke, so you have to cover the hole with a heavy lid. In a little while, your children will come out looking just as pretty as mine."

So, after Deer left, Coyote put his children in a hole and covered them with corn cobs,

then lit a fire. The pups barked fearfully as Coyote put on the lid, but he said, "Hush now. In a little while you'll come out looking just as pretty as our friends."

In a little while, sure enough, the pups' complaints stopped. Coyote took off the lid; it was all black inside. One pup was near the opening. Coyote took hold of its paw and the entire leg pulled off. His children were dead, the little bodies charred and burst open. Coyote howled and went to get revenge, but Deer coaxed him into a little kiva, saying they were still friends and that he could explain everything. Coyote climbed down the ladder, but the kiva was full of bucks who were waiting for him and gored him with their horns. And Coyote died.

There was the time Coyote wanted to know how the monster Chaveyo could run so fast, and the monster told him it was because he knew how to cool his bones.

"How do you do that?" Coyote said.

To show him, Chaveyo took his long knife and slit his own arms and legs to the bones, flapping the skin to let in some air, then closed himself up again.

"Want me to show you how it's done?" said the monster with a grin.

Coyote said yes, and Chaveyo took his knife and slit Coyote's arms and legs. The blood flowed from Coyote's body and his skin sagged like an old pair of clothes. Coyote didn't feel well. He tried to close himself up again, pinning himself together with soapwood needles, but his wounds kept opening. The desert wind blew through him as if through dry grass.

"You'll believe anything, Coyote," Chaveyo laughed, thinking Coyote's skin would look good as a ruff around his neck.

Coyote ran, howling with pain, until he fell from exhaustion. And Coyote died.

There was the time Coyote saw the Bluebirds singing and dancing in the trees. At the end of their song, the Bluebirds took out their eyes and threw them up in the air where they hung

from the branches like beautiful ornaments. When the birds started to sing again, their eyes returned to their sockets.

“Why do you do that?” asked Coyote.

“It’s good for the eyes,” said the Bluebirds. “It clears them up. Wanna try it?”

Coyote’s vision had been a little murky of late, so he took out his eyes and threw them up in the branches with the Bluebirds’. But Coyote’s eyes wouldn’t come back.

“Ha ha,” laughed the Bluebirds. “Your eyes won’t come back to you because you’re dangerous.”

Coyote ran howling from the darkness, but the darkness was everywhere and he couldn’t find anything to eat. And Coyote died.

Poor Coyote, he never learned. The thing was, Coyote didn’t know how to take a joke. Which is a serious flaw, considering the nature of the universe. And Coyote didn’t know how to make a joke, either. There was the time when Coyote and Masau’u, the Skeleton Man, were friends and Masau’u said, “I’ll come over to your house and dance for you.”

So Masau’u went to Coyote’s, bringing a freshly killed turkey as a present, and danced for his friend, stepping first to one side and then the other as he sang.

“That was beautiful,” Coyote said when Masau’u was finished. “Tomorrow I’ll come over to your house and dance for you.”

The next day Coyote killed a large rooster and took it to Masau’u’s. He danced for his friend, just as his friend had danced for him, stepping first to one side and then the other as he sang.

“That was fine,” said Masau’u. “Now I’d like to show you some of my things. You’ve never seen my mask, have you?”

“No,” said Coyote. He knew Masau’u, the God of Death, the Guardian of this Fourth World, only as a handsome young man.

“Then wait here,” Said Masau’u, going into the next room.

Coyote waited by the fireplace. In a few minutes there was a cry from the other room, a long descending wail like the wind through the rocks, and Masau’u entered the room wearing his mask. The mask was made from rabbit skins, with large staring eyes and a gaping mouth, and covered with blood. Blood dripped over Masau’u’s robe, a woman’s old tattered dress, and the room was filled with the smell of carrion. Coyote’s bowels let go as he ran around the room, looking for some place to hide.

“Don’t be afraid,” said Masau’u. “It’s only me, your friend.”

He took off the mask so Coyote could see who it was. “That’s why I wear it,” laughed Masau’u. “Nobody ever knows me or bothers me when I’ve got it on.”

“I think I better be going home now,” Coyote said, still trembling, covered with his own mess. “But why don’t come over in a couple of days. I’ll show you some of my things.”

So in a couple of days Masau’u went to Coyote’s for a visit. Coyote fed him some cedar berries and pine gum, and a squash he had stolen for the occasion.

“Now what were you going to show me?” Masau’u said.

“Wait here,” Coyote said, and went into the next room. In a few minutes he sang the cry of Masau’u, the long descending wail like wind through the rocks. Then he stepped into the room wearing a mask that he had made to look like Masau’u’s, except that it was made from a gourd. Coyote had cut slits for the eyes and mouth, and covered it with berry juice that dripped down over the red blanket he wore on his body.

“Don’t be afraid,” Coyote said. “It’s only me, your friend.”

But Death thought Coyote was making fun of him.

“Since you like that mask so well, you can wear it from now on,” Masau’u said, spitting on him.

As Masau’u left, Coyote tried to take off the mask to tell his friend it was all a joke, but the mask was stuck. Coyote became frightened and ran around his house, smashing the mask against the walls trying to break it, but the mask still wouldn’t come off. His neck began to swell and he could feel his face begin to stick to the inside of the mask, becoming part of the mask, the mask taking his face from him. And Coyote died.

MASAU'U

The Hopi had traveled on their migrations for years, centuries, and here they were again, back where they started. Not back at the sipapu, the opening in the earth that they had used to climb up into the present world, because they didn't want to be even that close to the Under World. No, they were back to the land where Shrike had met the God of this Fourth World—Masu'u, the Skeleton Man: Death—when they first received his permission to live up here. It was a land of tabletop mesas rising up from the desert floor and very little rain. A severe land, a difficult land, a land nobody else would want. They were back to Masau'u's land.

The Chief had seen the footprints since they arrived, enormous footprints in concentric circles on the edge of their camp and beside the springs, as if someone with feet the length of boards was walking around looking for something. Though he assumed they belonged to Masau'u, he had never seen the Guardian. Then one night when everyone else was asleep, the Chief took a walk out along the edge of the mesa. The mesa rose hundreds of feet above the desert, its bluffs a natural fortification from the outside world. When Shrike first flew up here to scout this new world for the Hopi, he found a ring of fire surrounding Masau'u's fields of corn and beans and melons, and Masau'u himself sitting at a bonfire in the center of the ring tending the fires, keeping an eye on things. But there was no ring of fire now, no fields; no Masau'u. The Chief tried not to take it personally. He stumbled along the rocks and scrub brush until he heard

footsteps somewhere off in the darkness beside him. And he saw a light.

At first he thought it was the moon rising, a blood-red moon. Then he realized this was no moon. On the edge of the mesa, a little ways ahead of him, was a column of fire the height of a man. The Chief walked toward it, but as he got closer the fire became smaller. When he was a few feet away from it, the flame was only a foot tall. When the Chief walked up to it, the fire flickered out. He started to resume his walk when the flame appeared again, further along the edge of the mesa. Again he approached it, and again the flame went out as he got closer. The same thing happened a third time as well. The fourth time, however, as he approached the column of fire, he saw a man standing in the middle of the flame carrying his head in his hands.

“Well, I guess I asked for it,” thought the Chief.

When the Chief reached the fire, the flame died down but the figure continued to glow. The figure wore an old, shabby woman’s dress, the right shoulder exposed instead of the left, and bands of yucca tied around his wrists and ankles. The head was covered with bloody rabbit skins, with large staring eyes and a gaping, horror-struck mouth. It was Masau’u. In addition to his head, he carried a short digging stick. Then the chief realized that it wasn’t his head at all, it was a mask. Masau’u put the mask down on the ground and sat on it.

“So, you made it,” Masau’u said, motioning for the Chief to sit down across from him.

“Yes, we made it. Finally.”

Masau’u was a handsome young man with a dark complexion and strong face. As he talked, the Keeper dug idly in the ground between his enormous feet with the digging stick.

“Well, what did you think of this new world.”

“It’s very beautiful. We saw many places where crops would grow, that would be perfect for faming. It must be the most bountiful, beautiful place in the world.”

“The purple mountains’ majesty above the fruited plain,” said Masau’u.

“What?” said the Chief.

“Nothing,” said the god, shaking his head.

“I thought I saw you a couple of times on our migrations,” said the Chief. “I saw a torch moving along the hills late at night, but I was never sure.”

“That was me. I walk the edge of the world every night, just to see how things are getting on. It’s one my duties around here.”

“Are you the only god here?”

“No, there’s Spider Grandmother and the Little War Twins, a few others. But you have to go looking for them. I’m the only one who comes looking for you.” Masau’u smiled, like a log popping on a hearth.

“Are you the Supreme Being?”

“Who, me? Not hardly. Or at least I don’t think so. As far as anybody knows, He’s up in the sky some place or other, but nobody seems to know much about Him. At least everybody hopes He’s up there in the sky some place. If it turns out that I actually am the Supreme Being, or what everybody has always thought to be the Supreme Being, it certainly casts a different light on things, doesn’t it?”

The Chief didn’t know if Masau’u was trying to make a joke or not. Somehow the idea that Death might have a sense of humor unnerved him a bit. The god sat there, his left elbow resting on his knee, his chin cupped in his hand, flicking stones into the night with his digging stick.

“So. You’ve completed your migrations, you’ve seen your new world. You’ve seen what is possible.”

“And what’s not possible.”

“That’s cryptic.”

“It’s a little hard to explain.”

“Try me. I’m a god.”

The Chief looked off into the darkness. “When we started out on our travels, we were very sure of ourselves. We were sure that we were going to make a better life for ourselves, sure that we were going to become better people. We lived a lot of different places, and we tried to live a lot of different lives. But when it came down to it, we always ended up just repeating ourselves in new surroundings.”

“Interesting to hear that people have the same problems as deities.”

“And we found that when changes did come, when we were actually able to change something about ourselves, it didn’t necessarily make us better people. In fact, it tended to make us worse. We might feel good about it for awhile, we might find a new tool or a new way to build a house, we might learning something that we’d think would really change the world. Would really change us. But in time we’d realize that we were just fooling ourselves, that any progress was just an illusion, that every gain brought an equal loss, that every plus has its minus.”

“It seems to be one of the problems with an unfolding universe that nobody’s been able to work out yet,” said Masau’u.

“So we want to go back to the way things were. We want to go back to the way of life we had when we started, when we first came into this world. We don’t want any more changes.”

“You can’t unlearn what you already know.”

“Maybe not. But we don’t want to learn any more.”

“Your brother Bahana, the white man, is out there setting up governments, developing art forms, discovering all sorts of technology.”

“Let him. He’s good at that kind of thing, he’s got the mind for it. We don’t. Besides, he told us he’d come back some day and use what he learned to help us.”

“Don’t hold your breath,” said Masau’u.

“We tried to become better people and so far we’ve failed. Now we’re afraid. We wanted to be better and we don’t know how. We wanted to be different and found we can’t be. So now we just want to live with what we know. We want to live here with you.”

Masau’u, his chin still cupped in his hand, looked at him. The Chief felt as though Death could see right through him.

“And what makes you think that will be any better?”

“This is our home. This is where we started here in this world, and what we started with.”

“You can’t go home again, to coin a phrase.”

“You can’t seem to get away from it either. Maybe it’s wrong to try. Maybe the only way for us to be better is to admit who and what we are and live with it. Maybe with a bare-bones existence—”

“Bare-bones?” said Skeleton Man.

“I didn’t mean it like that,” said the Chief. “What I meant was, how could we not become better people living in a god-forsaken place like this?”

Masau’u looked at him from under his eyebrows.

“I didn’t mean god-forsaken either,” the Chief said miserably.

Masau’u waved it away. The he sighed, as if he knew all along it would come to this.

“It’s up to you. You know how I live. I have my planting stick and my corn and that’s about all.

If you're willing to live like I do and follow my instructions, then yes, you can live here. You can take care of the land for me."

"Will you be our chief?"

"Not on a bet," said Masau'u. "Besides, that would be an easy way out for you. If you want to be better people, you'll have to do on your own. If you succeed, maybe we'll talk about it later. But until then, you brought your people to the dance, you take them home again."

"But what should we do in the meantime?"

Masau'u stood up and stretched. "Live. Exist. Be. That's about all there is anyway."

"It seems so hard."

"It is," said Masau'u, putting on his mask with its gaping mouth, vacant eyes, covered in blood. A drop fell on the Chief's hand. "But it's better than the alternative."

"How will we get in touch with you?"

"Oh don't worry about that. I'll be around. You'll see my torch moving around the hills. You'll hear my footsteps."

"I feel so alone."

"You are."

Masau'u was engulfed in flames, a column of fire, a burning bush, and for a moment he danced, a slow, stately dance within the fire before he flamed brightly and the fire went out. The night was darker than before. As the Chief made his way back across the mesa, he was haunted by the image of the god in the hideous mask dancing in the flames. But the more he thought about it, the more he was sure that one of those dead, staring eyes winked at him.