

Story #342 (Collected orally and then in written form; not taped.)

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The Crow and the Snake

There was once a crow who had a nest on a tree at the top of a mountain. Near her nest was the pit of a snake. Whenever the crow laid eggs, the snake would swallow them. The crow felt very sad about this situation. One day she described her plight to a jackal, and said, "I want to tell you what I have decided about it. I want to peck the snake's eyes out and make him blind. This is the only way I can get rid of him."

The jackal replied, "The remedy that you suggest is a bad one. Find a remedy where you will not risk your own life, or else you will be like the fisher (a foxlike marten) who tried to kill the lobster and was killed himself."

"How did this happen?" asked the crow.

And the jackal told this story:

"They say that there was once a fisher who had settled at a place where there were many fish. He had lived there a long time and had become very old. As he was no longer able to fish, he was suffering from hunger. One day as he was sitting with his head in his paws and frowning, there came a lobster and looked at his sulky face and asked, 'Hey, fisher, why are you so sorrowful?'

"The fisher gave this answer: 'Why shouldn't I be sorrowful? Here I have earned my livelihood by fishing. But today two fishermen passed by here, and one said to the other, "There are many fish here.

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We had better fish here." The other one said, "I saw a great quantity of fish in another place. Let's start there, and come here afterward to catch the fish that are here." So I understand that after they have finished fishing at the other place they will come here and finish all the fish that are here. If they do so, I will die of hunger.'

"After listening to the fisher, the lobster went and told the fish what he had heard. So all the fish came and asked the fisher for advice: 'We came to ask advice from you because those who are intelligent for intelligence even from their enemies.'

"The fisher replied, 'I cannot oppose the violence of the fishermen. I can tell you to go to a river where there is much water and reeds. If you can only get there, then you and all your children and grandchildren will be saved.'

"The fish replied, 'We shall be happy to go if you will take us there.'

"So the fisher agreed to take them to safety. Every day he took two fish along. But he took these fish only as far as a certain hill, where he ate them. This went on for some time.

"Then one day the lobster said, 'I am lonely and frightened here. Please take me to that river.'

"The fisher agreed. When he and the lobster arrived at the hill where he had eaten the fish, the lobster saw fishbones on the ground, thought of his fate and said to himself, 'Whether a man wants to fight or not, when he knows that he will die and he meets his enemy, the thing he must do is to protect his honor and fight. With these words he squeezed the fisher's neck and killed him. After saving his own life,

he went back and told the rest of the fish what he had done."

The jackal said that he had told this story to show the crow that he must destroy a cheater by tricks. "Let me tell you how to kill the snake without risking your own life."

"Yes," replied the crow. "What can I do?"

The jackal explained his plan: "Just fly around and watch carefully. Then take one of the precious jewels of a lady and fly away with the crowd watching you. Without disappearing from sight, take the jewel to the pit of the snake and leave it there. On seeing this, the crowd will kill the snake to recover the jewel. In this way you can get rid of the snake."

The crow, taking this advice, flew away, and from the roof of a house she saw a girl taking a bath, with her clothes and jewels laid aside. Immediately she swooped down and grabbing a jewel she flew away. Those who saw her grabbing the jewel started to run after her. The crow, without disappearing from the sight of her pursuers, flew to the pit of the snake and dropped the jewel there. On seeing this, the pursuers ran to the pit, killed the snake, and recovered the jewel.

Thus can intelligence defeat power and force.