



Coyote and Bobcat

A Ute Mountain Ute Tale

Cultural Note

Stories with morals, like “Coyote and Bobcat,” were often used by the Ute Mountain Ute people to teach their children about proper behavior and the consequences of their own actions.

Coyote tales are only told during the winter time.

Vocabulary

pliable

sauntered

staggered

strolled

stumbled

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One day Yogwówuch, Coyote, gathered plants for a recipe that made bodies pliable, like putty or clay. After he blended the ingredients together, he wanted to test them on someone, but no one wanted to have his body molded into a different shape. Coyote went to bed that night determined to find someone to test the potion on.



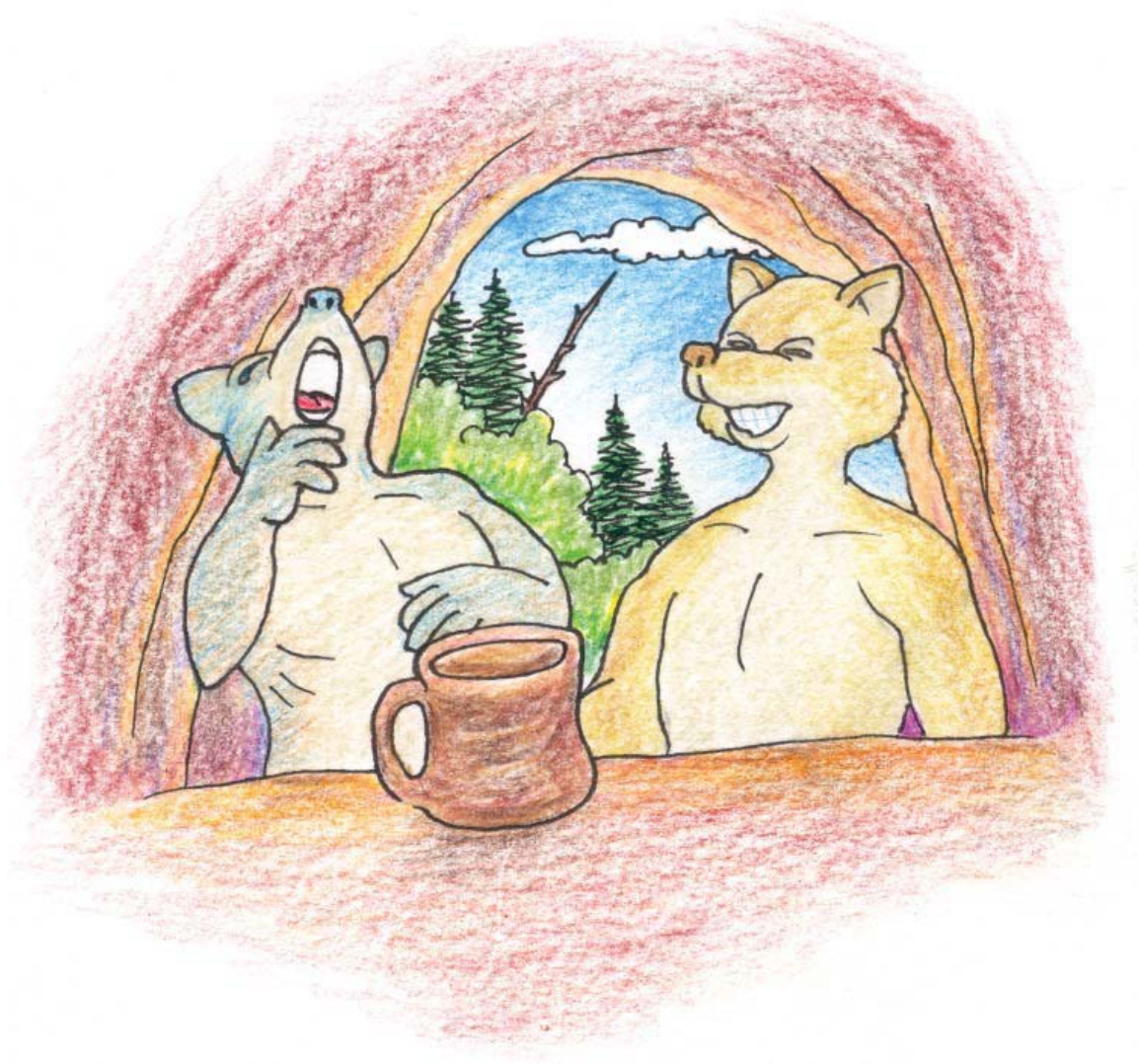
When *Kúpuch*, Bobcat, strolled by the next day, Coyote's eyes lit up. "Hey, friend, come here," he called from his door. "I fixed a big lunch just in case you dropped by. Would you like to join me?"

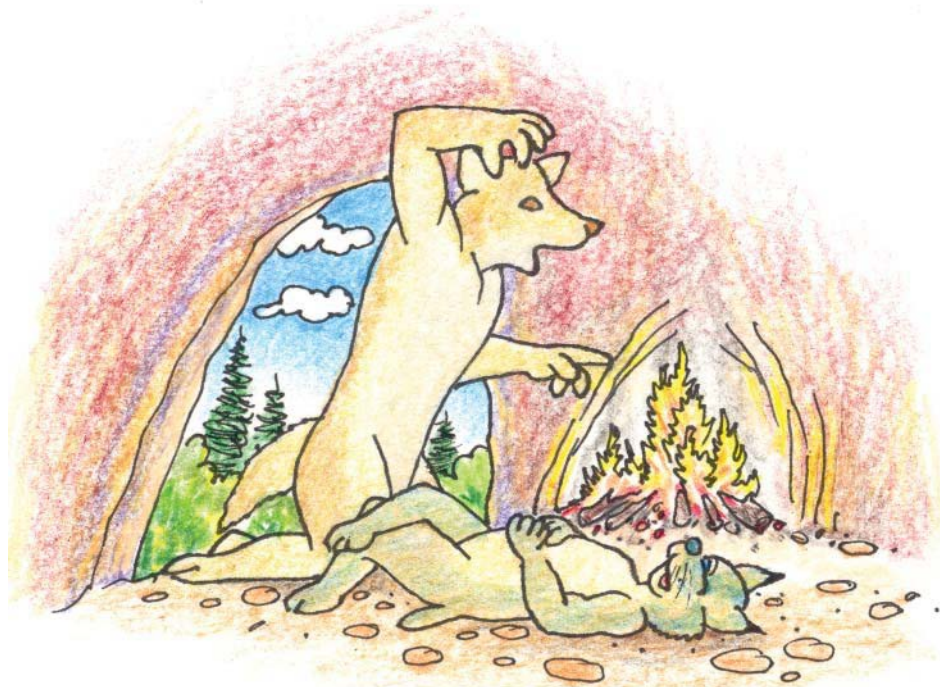
Bobcat did not suspect anything, so he nodded and followed Coyote into his house.

"Sit here and relax," Coyote said, pointing toward his rug. "Try this refreshing beverage while I dish up the food." Coyote poured the drinks, making sure his friend's pine-pitched mug contained the potion.

After lunch, Bobcat and Coyote sat around talking and laughing. In a few minutes, Bobcat yawned and stretched. The potion had made him feel tired.

Coyote pointed at his bed and said, "You can take a nap over there if you like." Bobcat stumbled to the bed and fell into a deep sleep.





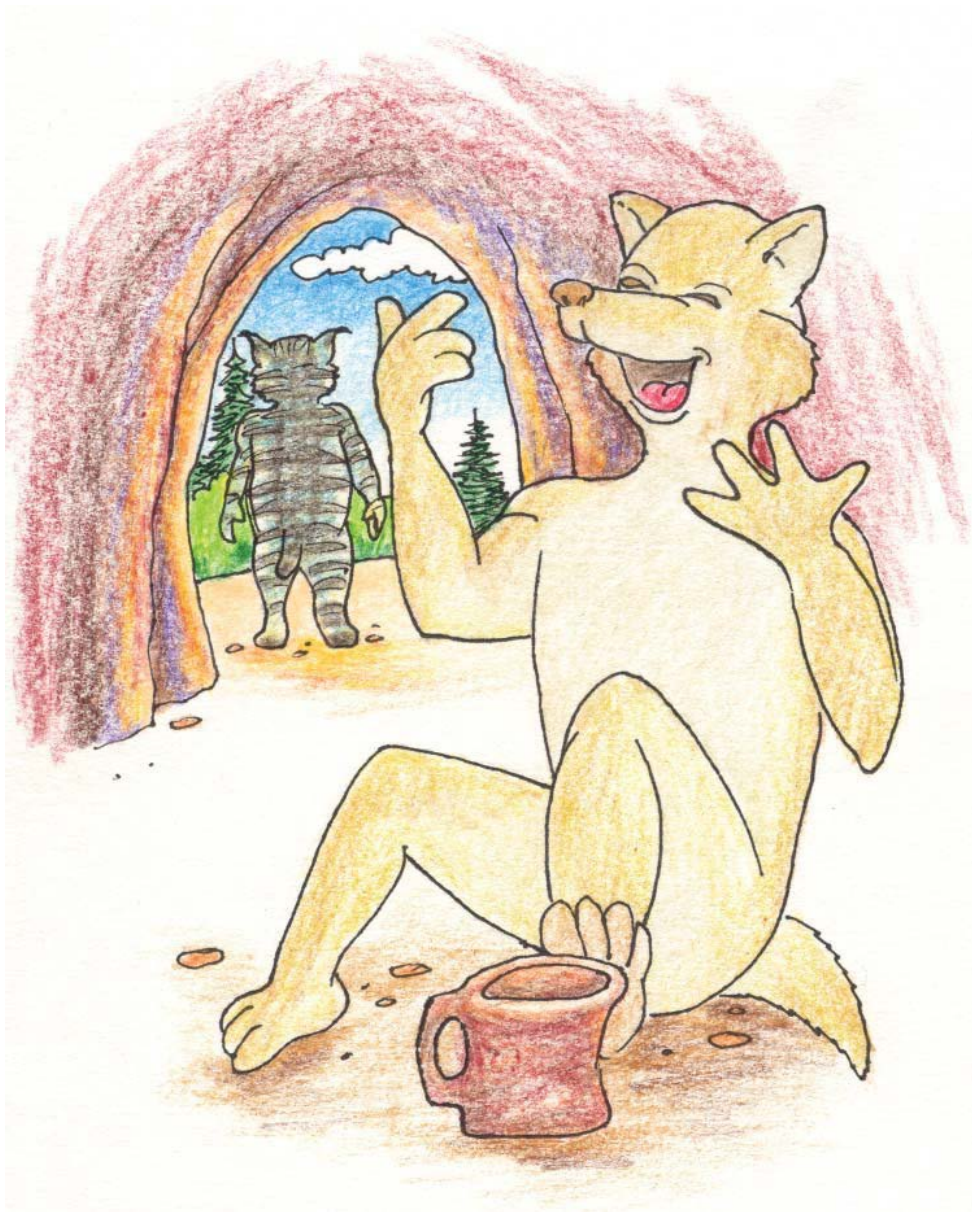
Coyote scratched his head. He wondered how to change Bobcat's appearance, because at that time he and Bobcat were large, powerful animals. "I know," Coyote thought, grinning. "I'll make him smaller."

Fearing Bobcat might wake soon, Coyote threw him on the floor. He grabbed Bobcat's long, furry tail and pushed it in, making it short and stubby. Next he shoved in Bobcat's face, so it became round and flat. Then he flattened Bobcat's paws.

"What else can I do?" Coyote wondered. An idea came to him when he glanced at the fire pit. He grabbed a piece of charcoal and rubbed it all over Bobcat, so his silver fur became dark and spotted. Coyote laughed. "There," he thought, "now Bobcat looks different."

When Bobcat awoke, he felt strange. He rubbed his eyes. "I must have been really tired," he said. "Thanks for lunch, Coyote. I'd better head home now."

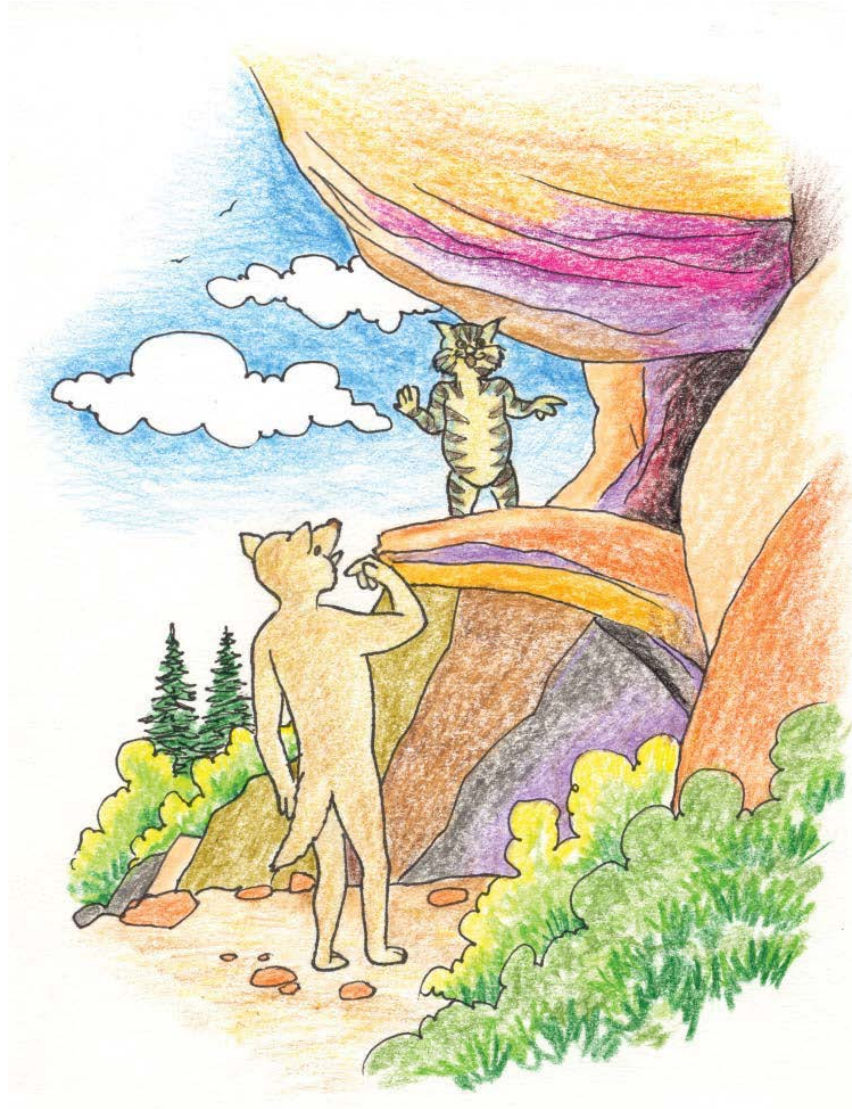
Coyote remained quiet until Bobcat staggered out the door and down the path. As Bobcat disappeared, Coyote laughed gleefully.



On his way home, Bobcat grew thirsty. He stumbled down to the paá nukwít, river, for a drink. When he saw his reflection in the water, he felt a shock go through him. "Oh, no," he wailed, "what happened to my face?" He turned and saw his stubby tail. "What happened to my tail?"

He remembered the gleam in Coyote's eyes. He knew Coyote must have used magic to change his appearance. He thought about beating up the trickster, but he realized fighting would not solve the problem. Instead, Bobcat decided to get even.





Early the next morning, Bobcat obtained the recipe for the potion. Then he prepared a feast for Coyote.

When Coyote sauntered by his house about noon, Bobcat yelled, "Hey, my friend, come here. You treated me to a wonderful lunch yesterday.

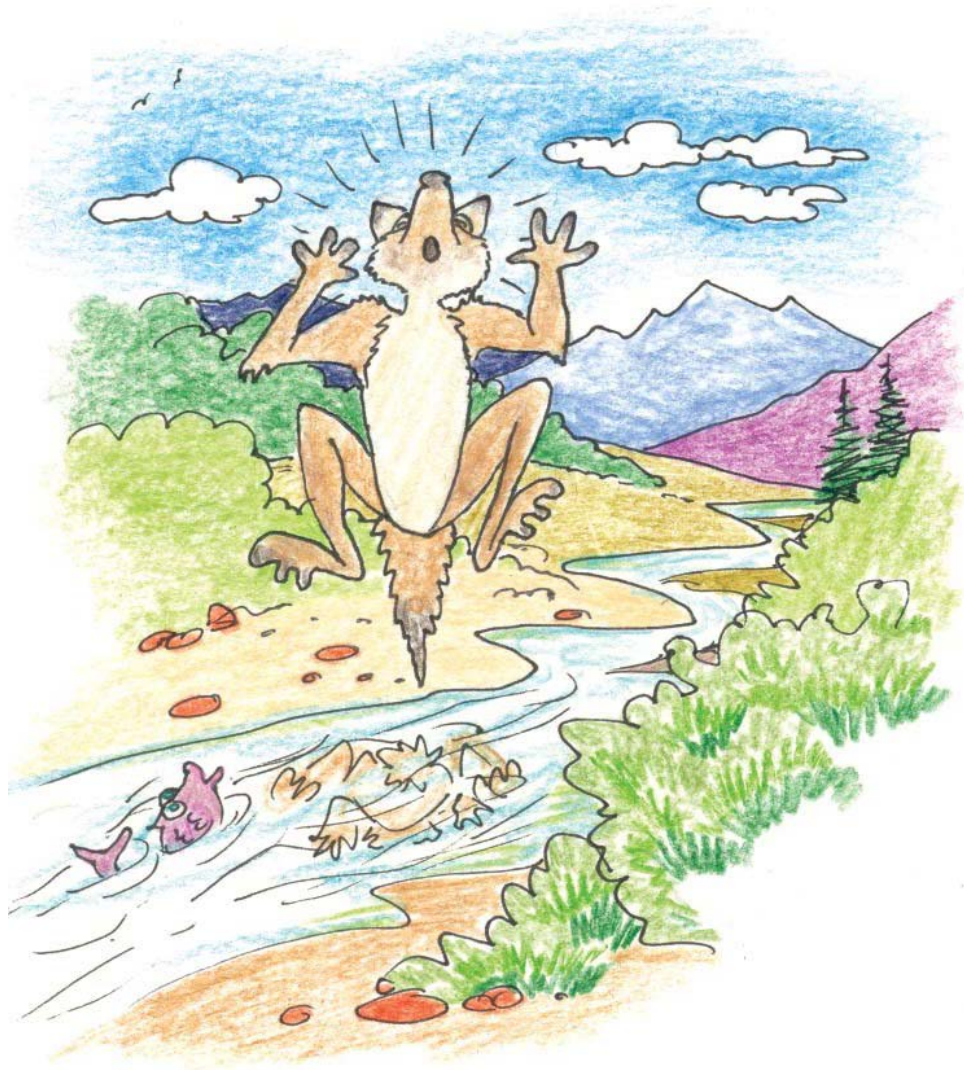
I want to return the favor, so I've fixed you a delicious meal today."



Coyote loved to eat, so he went in and settled on the rug. Bobcat brought out the food and drinks. While they chatted, Bobcat slipped the formula into Coyote's mug. Soon Coyote fell asleep.

"Hmm, what shall I do to this sly animal?" Bobcat thought, dragging Coyote onto the floor. "I know, I'll make him smaller, too." He jerked Coyote's powerful legs until they became scrawny and skinny. He grabbed Coyote's nose and pulled, making it long and pointy. He did the same to Coyote's ears. Then he wondered, "What else can I do? Oh, yes, he ruined my beautiful, shiny coat." Bobcat grabbed some *tuvúp*, dirt, and rubbed it all over Coyote's fur. "There," Bobcat said with satisfaction, "now Coyote looks different, too."





Coyote woke up. He thanked Bobcat for the meal and started home. On his way he ambled down to the stream for a drink. His nose touched the water first. "Oh, no!" he screamed. "What happened to my nose?" Then he saw his legs in the reflection and began crying and howling.

Today, when we hear Coyote crying, it reminds us that we must be careful about how we treat others, because that is how they will treat us.

Glossary

yogwówuch - coyote

kúpuch - bobcat

sátuvup - clay

paá nukwít - river

tuvúp - dirt

Reading Suggestions

- Next time you go for a walk, practice strolling, staggering, stumbling (carefully), and sauntering like Coyote and Bobcat did.
- Make some play dough. Have fun molding the clay into different shapes. Here's a recipe:
1 cup flour 2 T. cream of tartar
1/2 cup salt 1 cup water 1 1/2 T. cooking oil

Add food coloring and a few drops of vanilla or mint flavor for fragrance (optional).

Mix all the ingredients together until smooth. Stir over low heat until a thick paste has formed. Allow to cool and knead with food coloring. Keep in a sealed container and refrigerate when not being used. All ingredients are safe, even if eaten.

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