

The Crow and the Iguana

derived from the narrative of Jerzon Ayongchi

Long, long ago, there were two creatures called Crow and Iguana. They appeared very differently in the old days as they do today, for back then both Crow and Iguana were white.

One day, Iguana was alone and was feeling restless so he went for a stroll. He walked along the riverbank where he chanced upon Crow.

“What are you doing today?” Iguana asked.

“Oh, nothing... just walking around, searching for food,” replied Crow.

“What do you say we meet here tomorrow so we can think about what we can do together?” proposed Iguana.

“Sure, I’ll see you here then,” agreed Crow.

At dawn the next day, Iguana went to their meeting place. Crow arrived even earlier since he could fly. “Good morning to you, Crow,” greeted Iguana.

“Same to you, Iguana.”

“Now what do you think can we do today?” Iguana inquired.

“Whatever you wish. Perhaps you’d like for us to tattoo each other?” Crow suggested.

“Okay, that sounds good,” Iguana agreed.

“Where do you think can we find some charcoal?” asked Crow.

“Why don’t we look for a mountain that has had a brushfire? Perhaps there would be charcoal there,” said Iguana. Crow agreed.

Because Crow had wings, he carried Iguana on his back and flew around to look for a burnt mountainside. They soon saw a hill with plenty of charcoal and so there they went.

They gathered lots of charcoal which they brought to the stream where they can mash the charcoal. They put the charcoal in a concave rock they found, and pounded it into a fine powder. Then they mixed it with water and with enough stirring turned it into a fine charcoal paste.

“We need a piece of thorn,” stated Iguana.

“Why don’t you do try to find a thorn since you have teeth. I may damage my beak if I did it,” requested Crow. Iguana looked for thorns. When he found some thorns, he broke a few off, wrapped them in leaves and took them back to the stream.

“So, who will go first?” asked Iguana.

“Why don’t you go first?” suggested Crow.

“Right, make sure you do it well okay?” Iguana replied.

Crow took three pieces of thorn and started tattooing Iguana on the head and nose, by the ears, neck, and back. He did it slowly, very carefully. It took Crow a very long time because he meticulously followed the proper way of tattooing. “Close your eyes,” he commanded Iguana. “This is a surprise.” Crow soon reached Iguana’s belly, back and feet until he has covered Iguana’s entire body with tattoos.

“You may open your eyes now, I’m through,” Crow ordered Iguana.

Iguana opened his eyes and was so pleased. “Hey, this is beautiful! Beautiful tattoo! I didn’t know you were so skilled. Even if it hurt, the result is excellent,” he blurted out.

“So now, it’s my turn,” said Crow.

“Okay. You should close you eyes too,” ordered Iguana. Crow obeyed.

Iguana grabbed a piece of charcoal. But instead of using it to make a tattoo, he simply wiped the charcoal onto Crow. He started from Crow’s head. “Hmmm, beautiful tattoo,” muttered Iguana. He kept rubbing and rubbing the charcoal while repeatedly mumbling, “Ahhh beautiful tattoo.” On and on he went from head to tail and even on Crow’s feet.

After a while, Iguana suddenly stopped rubbing. “You may open your eyes now so you could see my work on you,” he told Crow. When Crow saw himself, he was shocked. His whole body had turned black. “Why did you do this to me? You ruined my pristine feathers. You blackened me. What sort of friend are you?” he squawked.

Crow was furious, “We can no longer be friends because you tricked me. From this day on, I will put a curse on you. All your children and their children will look and behave like you. All my children will appear and act like myself. And our descendants can never ever be friends,” cursed Crow.

Since that day, all crows became black and all iguanas wore tattoos. They are never seen together.