

ONCE IN THE TIME OF THE RAINBOW CROW

by Claudia Haas

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ONCE IN THE TIME OF THE RAINBOW CROW

A One Act Comedy

Adapted from the Lenape Legend

by Claudia Haas

SYNOPSIS: A sudden blanket of snow covers the forest and the woodland creatures are left cold, scared and hungry. They wish to appeal to The Creator for relief. But The Creator lives two days away - past the moon and past the stars. The magnificently-colored rainbow crow offers to make the difficult journey even though the vast unknowns in the sky terrifies her. In the course of the journey, Rainbow Crow is unexpectedly aided by creatures from the cosmos - who add a little bit of science into the mix. Adapted from the Lenape legend. Music of the director's choosing should be included.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7-12 either, 0-10 extras; gender flexible, doubling possible)

CROW (m/f)	Adorned with rainbow feathers; beautiful with a sweet singing voice; very well-meaning. <i>(169 lines)</i>
DEER (m/f).....	A wise, thoughtful deer. <i>(49 lines)</i>
LITTLE BIRD (m/f)	A small, brave bird. <i>(19 lines)</i>
COYOTE (m/f).....	The mischievous coyote. <i>(33 lines)</i>
SQUIRREL (m/f).....	A squirrel who is ... well ... squirrelly. <i>(16 lines)</i>
BUNNY (m/f).....	A snow bunny who is not so sure of the snow. <i>(17 lines)</i>
KIKOOK (m/f).....	A helpful cloud spirit. <i>(24 lines)</i>
KIMOOK (m/f).....	A more helpful cloud spirit. <i>(20 lines)</i>
KISHU (m/f)	A vain moon spirit. <i>(21 lines)</i>
ILAN (m/f).....	A comet spirit who seems to be in a rush. <i>(25 lines)</i>

- ALANK (m/f) A science-minded, star spirit.
(15 lines)
- CREATOR (m/f)..... Part scientist, part professor,
spiritual leader. (68 lines)
- EXTRAS (m/f)..... Optional. Extra woodland
animals may be added to the
forest scenes. (Non-Speaking)

CAST NOTE: If Kishu is played by a male, the adjectives describing Kishu's great looks could be altered to "handsome." Doubling options are listed below.

DEER/KISHU
LITTLE BIRD/KIKOOK
BUNNY/KIMOOK
COYOTE/ILAN
SQUIRREL/ALANK

DURATION: 40 minutes

PLACE: A forest.

TIME: When the earth was new.

PROPS

- Easel, placed in the garden home of the Creator.
- Reams of Paper with data
- Glass of Water
- Berries
- Wildflower Picture
- Torch
- Sticks for Bonfire

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play is episodic so full sets and costumes are discouraged.

SETS: Levels could be used for differentiating places as could projections. In the original production, they used a series of black boxes in different configurations with fabric placed over them. Or you could use a black box with different pictures and simply turn it.

COSTUMES: For the woodland animals, noses, ears and tails are all you need. Be fanciful. It is a legend and as such a period when the earth was new. For the “outer space spirits,” anything goes – masks, hats, pieces of fabric draped differently around the actors – have fun.

MUSIC: You could certainly use original music for Crow’s songs and background music if you have that talent. Otherwise, old folk songs, nursery rhymes in public domain would work. There are many old folk songs (*particularly English ones*) that evoke love of nature.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Once in the Time of the Rainbow Crow was the winner of the Theatre for Young Audiences National Playwriting Competition administered by the University of Central Missouri. It was given a touring production by the University with the following artists:

DEER/KIMOOK Stephanie Laaker
 LITTLE BIRD/ILAN Lisa Fiori
 BUNNY/KISHU Bryson Kenworthy
 COYOTE/ALANK Adam Segura
 SQUIRREL/KIKOOK Kaelyn Whitt
 CROW Nellie Maple
 CREATOR Daniel Parman

SCENIC DESIGNER Libby Pecher
 COSTUME DESIGNER Bronwyn Fisher
 TECHNICAL DIRECTOR Andrew Peveler
 STAGE MANAGER Marcela R. Gonzalez
 DIRECTOR John Wilson

AT RISE: *There is a lovely woodland scene. A first snow has fallen. CROW is singing a song as the woodland animals play in the snow. A dance is possible. All is gentle and sweet. As the music subsides, the woodland animals play in the snow. DEER watches as SQUIRREL digs furiously looking for acorns and BUNNY hops in and out of the snow. LITTLE BIRD flaps wings trying to get in the air but just cannot fly yet – so LITTLE BIRD hops around. COYOTE comes roaring through the snow – maybe doing handstands or cartwheels.*

COYOTE: Look at me! Look at me! (*Slips a bit.*) Wait! Don't look at me! (*Gets the groove back.*) Now look at me!

BUNNY: (*Laying in the snow, flapping arms.*) Watch me! I'm making white stars!

SQUIRREL: Where's my acorn? What's this white blanket? What's going on?

LITTLE BIRD: I'm flying! Almost! (*Sinks in the snow.*) Uh oh.

DEER pulls LITTLE BIRD out.

DEER: Sing some more, Crow! Please! Another song.

COYOTE: Yes! Another song! And I shall dance! I shall cavort! I shall enchant you all with the wonders of my coyote-dancing-star-moves! (*Twirls and dances and suddenly stops.*) You're not singing!

CROW: I – was – what? In awe! That's it! I was in awe of your talent.

COYOTE: Oh! Good! (*Starts a manic dance and stops.*) Work with me here. I'm waiting for the music.

CROW: (*Starts to sing but the voice is a bit raggedy now with the cold.*) I don't know what's wrong.

SQUIRREL: It's the white blanket – it's changing everything. Stealing acorns, stealing your voice!

LITTLE BIRD again sinks in the snow and SQUIRREL pulls LITTLE BIRD OUT.

SQUIRREL: Burying Little Bird!

BUNNY: It can't be a blanket – blankets are soft. Remember the leaf blanket we slept under for two moons? It was smooth and warm.

CROW: Until a few days ago when the leaves started getting scratchy.

COYOTE: What is happening to our world?

LITTLE BIRD: Look! It's crunchy here when I jump! But softer inside – uh oh. (*Sinks back in the snow and swims out.*)

DEER: Most unusual. This new blanket is quite the mystery.

COYOTE: And it's not warm – I'm just noticing that now that I stopped moving. Did you notice that?

BUNNY, SQUIRREL and LITTLE BIRD: Yes!

COYOTE: And look! When I rub it – it turns to water. Cold. Water. Very cold water. Ice cold water!

COYOTE'S teeth start chattering. BUNNY, SQUIRRELY, LITTLE BIRD and CROW also rub some snow between their paws and their teeth chatter.

DEER: Could this white blanket be a mistake?

BUNNY: The Creator never makes a mistake.

DEER: Then why did he/she send us this?

LITTLE BIRD: To teach us how to chatter our teeth?

LITTLE BIRD'S teeth chatter. BUNNY, SQUIRRELY, LITTLE BIRD and CROW follow suit.

COYOTE: Now that we've learned to chatter our teeth – it can leave. Right? Mission accomplished? It taught us something so – it – can – go – it – can – go – Go already!

DEER: I don't think it's going.

CROW: This is – so new. So fresh – so – white. New things scare me.

DEER: The white blanket does show off your pretty feathers.

CROW: It does, doesn't it?

DEER: Maybe the white blanket is just here. Maybe if we leave this place, we will find warmth. Maybe ...

COYOTE: I, Coyote think that's a brilliant statement. I wish I thought of it! Come, friends. Let's search for warmth. Go up to the trees, scamper over to the next woodland area - let's search for a place without the white blanket.

SFX: Music, the search begins. The animals and birds scamper to other levels: fly, hop, zig-zag. They may enter the audience. The search is on! CROW could sing braving the cold.

DEER: See anything green?

OTHERS: No.

DEER: Brown?

OTHERS: No!

DEER: Purple?

OTHERS: Purple?

DEER: You never know.

The animals return.

COYOTE: Nothing but white as far as the eyes can see and the legs can take me!

BUNNY: At least the search warmed me up. For a minute.

SQUIRREL: Just a minute. I'm cold. Again. And hungry! Where're my acorns?

CROW: I don't think the Creator has any idea how miserable we are.

LITTLE BIRD: Let's show Him! [Her.].

DEER: Sad face time?

LITTLE BIRD: Definitely!

ALL except COYOTE strikes a woefully sad pose with big, unhappy eyes.

COYOTE: Sadder, everyone! *(Checks everyone's sad face.)* Bunny – you look like you're smiling.

BUNNY: No!

COYOTE: You can be sadder!

BUNNY becomes pathetic.

COYOTE: Nobody move! We stay here until The Creator notices us!

NOBODY moves for a few seconds.

SQUIRREL: Feeling the need to scratch –

COYOTE: Don't move!

DEER: My leg is falling asleep!

COYOTE: Come on! We're fighting for our lives here.

NOBODY moves for a few seconds. BUNNY'S nose starts wiggling. Then LITTLE BIRD'S wing. Soon everyone is slowly scratching and shaking limbs out until finally they collapse.

SQUIRREL: Well, that was an epic failure!

CROW: Somehow, we have to make Our Creator understand that the white blanket is not good for us. Even if it does make me look pretty.

DEER: That's an idea that might actually work.

CROW: But how do we do that?

DEER: Since we cannot get The Creator to come down to us we must go to her/him.

COYOTE: That's a task for Coyote! I'll go! I'll save us! I'll climb to the tallest peak! And I'll jump and I'll jump until I'm bounced into the sky!

DEER: Only one problem –

COYOTE: No problem! I'm on it! Point me in the right direction!

ALL point upwards. COYOTE jumps and jumps.

SQUIRREL: Sorry, Coyote. Think you're going nowhere.

DEER: It's a two-day journey. Past the stars. You need wings.

LITTLE BIRD: I have wings! *(Tries to fly but only makes it a few inches off the ground.)*

DEER: Sorry, Little Bird. You're just not ready for two-day journey.

CROW: I'm the only one. The only one who can maybe make it to The Creator.

COYOTE: So, what are you waiting for?

DEER: It's frightening.

CROW: Yes.

DEER: New.

CROW: Yes.

DEER: Challenging.

CROW: Very.

DEER: You don't have to –

CROW: I know.

DEER: Would you like to think it over?

CROW: No. It must be done.

DEER: Are you sure?

COYOTE: Of course she's/he's sure! Well ... what are you waiting for?

CROW: I'm – planning. The route. In my head.

BUNNY: Don't you just go – up?

CROW: Bur “right-up” or “left-up?”

COYOTE: Straight up!

CROW: Are you sure?

DEER: Go the highest peak.

CROW: I can do that.

DEER: And don't be afraid to ask for help along the way.

CROW: Will do!

DEER: Rest when you can.

CROW: Aye, Aye Deer!

DEER: All you can do is try. If you fail, we are no worse off than we are now.

COYOTE: But – we'd rather you succeed!

DEER: Dear Crow: we are on your side no matter what! Right friends?

OTHERS: RIGHT!

COYOTE: Here's hoping!

CROW moves away and DEER follows.

DEER: I understand it's a long, scary journey ...

CROW: It's not that. Well – it is but it's not. Deer, do you think I'm – kind of – sort of – nice looking?

DEER: Your feathers are magnificent. Everyone smiles at you when you fly by. And then you have the loveliest singing voice.

CROW: That's just it. Is that just what I am? All brightly, colored feathers and singing? Remember when the rivers rose and you were able to swim and carry other creatures to safety? And when the rains didn't come for a long time and squirrel shared that huge stash of nuts that he worked so hard to bury in the ground?

DEER: Of course.

CROW: Did the Creator make me just so I could fly around looking – sort of beautiful? Or is there more to me? That's what I need to find

out. That's why I need to try. (*Goes to the highest peak and spreads the beautiful, rainbow-colored wings.*)

DEER: Safe travels, friend!

OTHERS: Safe travels!

As CROW flaps the wings and starts to soar, the lights may change, glimmer, and glitter. Blackout.

SCENE TWO

AT RISE: *We are in the sky. It can be gauzy, glittery, with flecks of white. Clouds pass by. CROW is flying.*

CROW: Oh my! It's a long way down from here. Don't look down! Don't Look. Down! Uh oh. Looked down. Looked way down. Stop looking down! Not looking down! Just soar. And glide. And swoop. And fly. And ... tired. It hasn't even been a day and I'm – tired.

Two clouds – KIKOOK and KIMOOK float by.

CROW: Oh! Look at them! Soft! Fluffy! If I could just rest my wings a bit! (*Goes to the CLOUDS trying to rest and slips through.*) Whoa!

KIKOOK: Oh dear!

KIMOOK: Oh my!

KIKOOK: That's the third bird today, Kimook!

KIMOOK: Don't I know it, Kikook!

KIKOOK: But what a pretty one!

KIMOOK: Those feathers!

KIKOOK: Like a flying rainbow!

KIMOOK: We'll never be that pretty, Kikook!

KIKOOK: Afraid not, Kimook! I'm afraid not!

KIKOOK: Sorry, Rainbow Bird! We're not solid.

KIMOOK: We're not even substantial.

KIKOOK: It's true that we have grown larger and look like a fluffy, soft, resting place.

KIMOOK: But we're merely moisture.

KIKOOK: Condensed water vapor to be accurate.

KIMOOK: And don't forget our frozen ice crystals.

KIKOOK: They're miniscule!

KIMOOK: But still!

KIKOOK: Yes, still. One could get pierced.

CROW: You're both so fluffy-welcoming – I didn't mean to intrude. I was just getting so tired.

KIKOOK: Don't give it another thought.

KIMOOK: We're often mistaken for a bed when we're this size.

KIKOOK: Soon, we will grow larger ...

KIMOOK: And larger ...

KIKOOK: Until we burst!

KIMOOK: And snow covers the earth.

CROW: Snow! What is snow?

KIKOOK: Look down – it's the white blanket covering parts of the earth.

KIKOOK: Of course! In warm weather, it's rain but right now we seem to produce snow.

KIMOOK: We have no control over what we produce.

KIKOOK: We're merely the spirits that inhabit the clouds.

CROW: This "snow" thing is making my friends very unhappy. They're cold and their teeth chatter. I was trying to go to the Creator to see if this white-blanket-snow could be stopped. Can you stop it?

KIMOOK: We must go with the flow.

KIKOOK: The water flow.

KIMOOK: The air flow.

KIKOOK: The ice flow.

KIMOOK: I'm afraid we cannot change our make-up. It depends on the air and these days, the air is chilled.

CROW: It was worth a try! I must continue to the Creator. Flapping around in clouds is exhausting!

KIKOOK: Maybe the Moon can give you a break. It's solid.

KIKOOK: But don't stay too long. It's very hard to breathe that high up.

CROW: Which way to the Moon?

KIMOOK: Up.

KIKOOK: Up.

KIMOOK: And away.

CROW: (*Looks up.*) Looks very far.

KIKOOK: Maybe we can give you a bounce.

KIMOOK: Ready?

CROW: As ready as I'll ever be.

KIKOOK: On my count. It's a one, it's a two, it's a three!

KIMOOK: Wheeeeeeee!

As if on a trampoline, CROW is bounced into the air. The lights change. All is still and dark. SFX: MUSIC may play. CROW may sing. And fly. And finally, the moon is in sight. CROW lands.)

KISHU: That was very graceful. So much better than the asteroids and comets that are always slamming into me. How do you do? I'm Kishu – the spirit of the moon.

CROW: Nice to meet you, Kishu. I'm Rainbow Crow but you can call me Crow.

KISHU: And you may call me Extraordinarily-Radiantly-Elegantly-Splendidly-Good Looking-Kishu-Moon . If the mood hits you.

CROW: If it's all right with you, I'll stick with Kishu. It's – shorter.

KISHU: You are a colorful one! Is it fun having so many colors? I wish I were more colorful. It's true, I'm dazzling but one never minds a bit more color.

CROW: I'm fond of my feathers. It's true. It's just how it's always been. My, the air is bit thin up here.

KISHU: True. The Creator is thinking of doing away with all the oxygen up here. I don't need it. And in my circled orb – it's all about me. To what do I owe the pleasure? I don't receive many bird visitors.

CROW: I'm en route to visit The Creator. My home received this white blanket – something called snow. And it's very cold. And my friends and I would like it taken away.

KISHU: I saw the snow cover. It's very pretty. It glitters. Don't you like pretty things?

CROW: I like – pretty things – that are warm!

Suddenly, the MOON shakes and CROW and KISHU are thrown off balance.

CROW: Earthquake? Oh! Moonquake?

KISHU: That was an asteroid, I'm afraid. Happily, it was a small one. I worry about the big ones. They leave huge craters and I worry that they will take away my wonderful profile.

CROW: Not possible! We all admire you from earth!

KISHU: Truly?!!!

CROW: Absolutely! We love the soft glow when you are perfectly round. But I am partial to your early phase when you are a crescent.

KISHU: I do worry that you don't see my best side.

CROW: All your sides are perfect!

KISHU: What an extraordinary bird you are. Kind. And sweet. I do envy you those colorful feathers. I'm afraid I'm not a very good host. I am told you like food and water and I am afraid I have neither. Occasionally, I have volcanic lava!

CROW: Lava is not good for living creatures.

KISHU: I suppose not. I only know my spirit-moon life. How long will I have the pleasure of your company?

CROW: I'm just resting my wings a bit. I'd love to have a good, long rest. But my friends are freezing on earth and I cannot take forever. I still have a long way to go. I'm not sure I'll even make it. I'm still a day away.

KISHU: I wish I could fly. I'd carry you.

CROW: Why, thank-you Sweet Kishu.

KISHU: Sweet, Stunning Kishu!

CROW: Sweet, Stunning, Amazing Kishu!

KISHU: Perhaps I can help. It's tricky. But possible. Do you think you can jump on a comet?

CROW: I don't know ... what a comet is.

KISHU: It's this small, icy body that orbits the solar system and it comes by most evenings about this time. It would be chilly.

CROW: My friends are chilly. If they have to be chilly, I can be chilly!

KISHU: It moves very fast -

CROW: That would be helpful.

KISHU: And I don't know how it feels about having a passenger. It's sometimes rude. I mean it passes by here every day and has never made one comment about how extraordinarily, good-looking I am.

CROW: That's a shame.

KISHU: I know! Even the asteroids that bump into me find time to say, "What a beautiful place to crash land!" Stars smile at me and I hear

sweet sighs from all the living creatures on earth. But the comet – mum’s the word!

CROW: Can we – return to the topic about how to get on a comet.

KISHU: It should be here momentarily. I think you could just jump on it. There’s not much gravity here. It should work. Oh! I see it! I see it! Look at the tail – but don’t jump on the tail – that’s just gas. You must get on the body of it.

CROW: Must jump on body. Must jump on body.

The Comet approaches and CROW makes one giant jump into the air. All goes dark. One might just see the glow of the comet’s tail.

ILAN: HEY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

KISHU: Are you on, Crow!

CROW: I’m on, Kishu! Thank you, o splendid, elegant moon!

KISHU: Thank-you!

All is black. SFX: We may hear some travelling music. And then we see CROW hanging on to ILAN.

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