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Two Hawk Dreams

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Two Hawk Dreams

Lawrence L. Loendorf and Nancy Medaris Stone

Illustrated by David Joaquín

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Lincoln and London

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For thousands of years, girls and boys have been an important part of the story of Yellowstone. This book is dedicated to them.

Two Hawk Dreams

1. Two Hawk Dreams

The night was cold as lake ice. This was how it was at the end of September, the half-warm, half-cold month as the people called it. Two Hawk and his family lay sleeping quietly inside the wicki-up, a semicircle of sapling poles that had been set against the back wall of the cave. Even Father, who usually snored like a snuffling bear looking for honey, and Grandmother, whose breath spoke in soft whistles to the butterflies in her dreams, were silent.

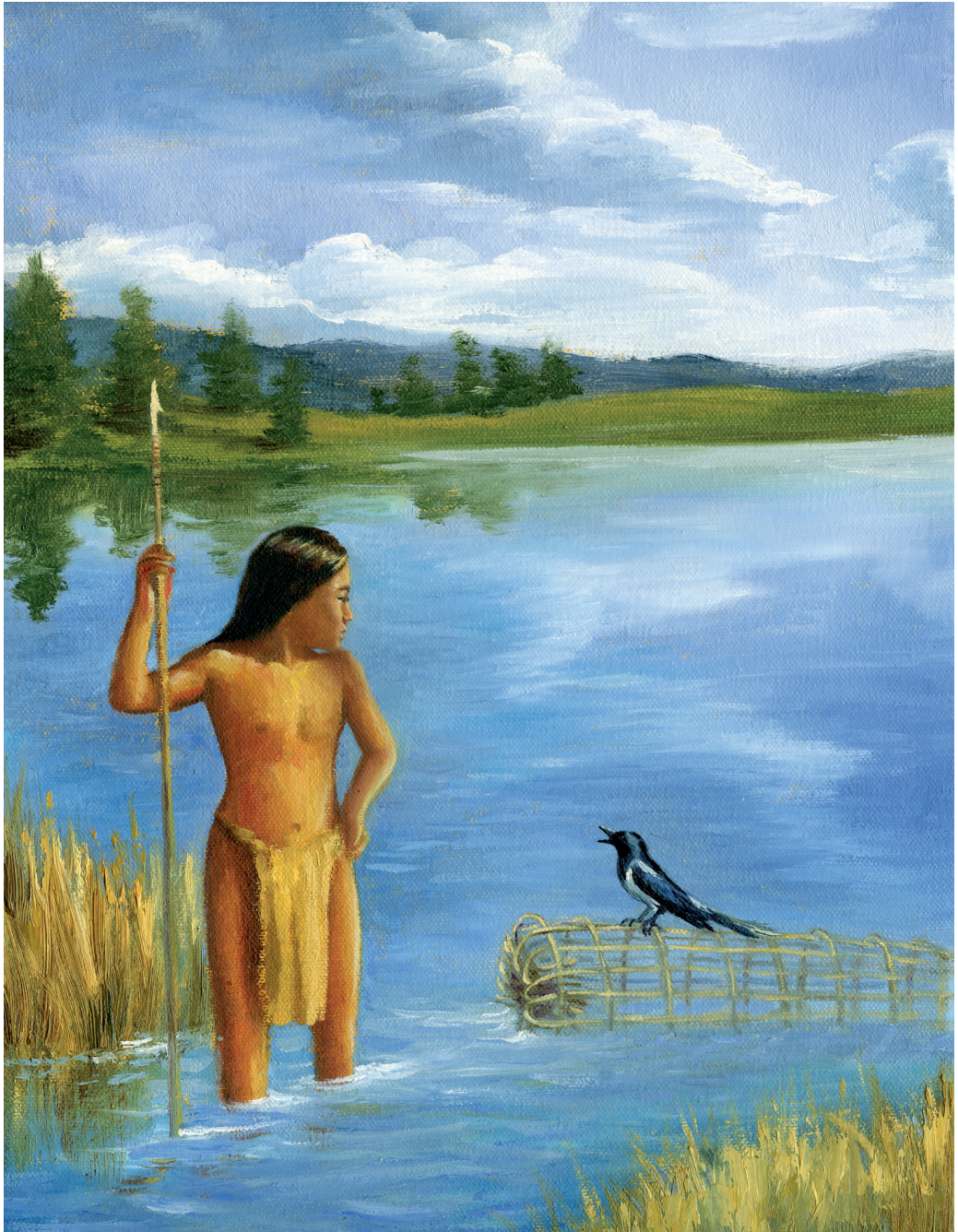
It might have been the unusual hush that woke Two Hawk. Trying to move as quietly as a shadow, he leaned on his elbow and peered out from under the warm, wooly fleece of his sheepskin blanket. Just before he went to bed, tiny snowflakes had begun to fall. Now he could see through an opening in the wicki-up wall that it was snowing heavily, and gleaming flakes the size of fish scales covered the ground. The snow blanketed the sky, too, so he couldn't see the four white jackrabbits or any other stars whose positions could tell him how long it would be until morning.

Two Hawk felt a cold, wet nose press against his ear. By shifting his body he had awakened Gypsum, the large white-and-tan dog lying beside him. Shivering, he stuck out his hand to scratch the thick hair on Gypsum's neck. The family's other dogs slept outside, but his father knew that on a cold night his youngest son needed the extra warmth of Gypsum's furry body.

Stroking Gypsum's strong neck, Two Hawk let his thoughts float like swan down in a soft breeze. *When would the family move from the mountains to a warmer place in the valley*, a sleepy voice in his head wondered. Pausing now and then, the voice murmured faintly, *Father said something . . . about a trip . . . to obsidian mines . . . soon*. Two Hawk slid into sleep as effortlessly as an otter glides from a slippery stream bank into the water.

Soon he was dreaming of the warm summer's day when Magpie, a bird with a large black head, a white belly, and long black tail feathers, had suddenly landed right beside him as he was standing guard at the family's fish trap at Trout Lake.

"Two Hawk," the bird asked cockily, "why do you have such



shiny black hair? I think your hair might be as shiny as my longest tail feather.”

Two Hawk was so startled to hear the bird speak that he dropped the fishing spear he was holding and his feet stumbled backward all by themselves. *My spear!* was his first thought when he recovered his balance, and he scrambled into the shallow water to grab it before it floated out of reach. As he stepped dripping onto the sandy shore, it occurred to him that maybe Magpie had spoken to him because he was named for a bird. Then he remembered Uncle had said that sometimes a person is lucky enough to hear an animal talk. “If that ever happens,” Uncle had said seriously, “it is wise to pay attention.”

Well, Two Hawk thought, *I’ll just answer that Magpie.* “My hair is shiny because my father lets me put some of his bear grease on it,” he replied.

“Is that so?” inquired Magpie. “I’ll tell you what. If you give me one of those long hairs to take home for my nest, I’ll be your friend forever.”

Two Hawk winced as he pulled out one of his hairs and tossed it to Magpie. “Here you are,” he said, rubbing his head, “but you’d better always be nice to me.” Faster than a frog’s tongue catches a fly, Magpie caught the hair in his black beak and flew away, and Two Hawk had not seen him since.

Two Hawk was awakened by the sound of his father putting more wood on the fire near the door of the wickiup. He watched his older brother, Night Heron, pull on his leggings and then his boots with the soft fur on the inside. Two Hawk knew that his father

and Night Heron would soon set off with all the dogs to hunt the bighorn sheep that grazed this time of year on the last of the green grass on Gets-Struck-By-Lightning Mountain. Gypsum was excitedly sniffing around inside the cave, eager to get going, but she had to wait until Father strapped the big rawhide dog pack on her back. The men and their dogs hunted as a team and then the dogs would carry home heavy loads of the meat.

Two Hawk wished that he was old enough to go with them, but Father had said, “You can’t be a hunter until you hear the bull elk’s mating call for nine seasons.” He had only heard the elk bugle seven times, but soon the valleys would again echo with elk voices, the rumble of charging feet, and the crash and crack of antlers. When that happened, it would mean he would only have to wait for one more winter and summer to pass and then he could go hunting.

It was still dark, but the snow had stopped and a pale band of light was just beginning to outline the mountain ridge off to the east. Under the covers, Two Hawk flexed the wrist of his bow hand, imagining how strong it would be this time next year. He watched his father reach for the quiver of hollow-reed arrows and the otterskin case holding his bow that hung on the wickiup wall.

In less time than it takes for a twig to snap, the two hunters and their dogs left the wickiup and set out on the trail leading to the high meadows. There the bighorn sheep would be pawing through snow to uncover and nibble on the first crisp greens of the day. Two Hawk said a small prayer for a safe and successful hunt and then drifted off into another dream, this time armed with his own bow and arrows.

A little while later he awoke and was instantly aware that Pipit, his older sister, was sitting up and putting on her clothes. He held his breath and waited for the words she always said when she got up in the morning. “Two Hawk, are you awake?” she whispered so loudly that he was sure his sleeping mother and grandmother would hear. Without waiting for his answer his sister said, “Go outside and get some wood.”

Two Hawk wanted to burrow deeper into his warm sheepskin blankets, but he knew Pipit would tug on his arm if he didn't get up. So, scrambling to pull on his warm shirt, leggings, and moccasins, and wrapping his rabbitskin cape around his shoulders, he went out into the limestone cave.

The high ceiling of the cave slanted upward, and Two Hawk could see the sun beginning to push its way over the crest of the ridge. *That sun, thought Two Hawk, is from a place so far away, I couldn't walk there in a lifetime.* In the pink-and-orange sky he saw no sign of yesterday's snow-filled clouds and knew that the day would be good for hunting.

“Good morning, Father Sun,” he said out loud. “Come make it warm in our house.” Then he went over to the big pile of dead pine branches that his mother and sister had gathered from the forest floor. He loaded his arms with wood and went inside, wishing with all his heart that Magpie would help himself to every single hair on his bossy sister's head.