



WORLD MYTHS
FOR CHILDREN

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*This book is dedicated to Kelly,
Kourtney, and Maggie. Without
their editing, advice, and loving
help, this book could not have
been created. Later days, Jokie!*



Walo the Goddess of the Sun

Bara knew that soon it would be time for "the daily walk". Each morning she would awaken, in her room at her Auntie's house, and get ready for the day. She would put on her clothing, brush her hair, and wait for her mother. And each day her mother would arrive at her door, ready and beaming. Not that her mother could be any other way. She was the goddess of the sun, after all. Today was no different.

"Good morning, Bara!" said Walo, her mother and sun goddess.

"Good morning, Mom!" replied Bara. She was beaming, as well.

"Are you ready for our walk?" asked Walo.

Bara considered the question for a moment.

"Mom, before we go, can we say good morning to Auntie Madalait?"

Wala smiled.

"Of course, sweetie. Let's go find her."

And so they did.

Madalait was busy, as usual, creating the world. This was her job, as she was the great earth mother, and everything that was on the earth came from her. She was a loving Auntie, though, and took time away from her work to greet her niece and her sister-in-law.

"Good morning, family!" she said, *"Are you going for your walk?"*

Bara smiled at her aunt.

"Yes, Auntie, we were just heading out. We wanted to see you before we left, though."

Madalait smiled in return.

"Wonderful! Well, have a good time together. I will see you when you return."

Bara and Wala waved their good-byes and began their walk across the pathway of the sky. As they walked above the Australian countryside, Bara and Wala chatted about all sorts of things. They talked about Bralga the beautiful dancer who was taken away by the dancers of nature, The Whirlwinds, because of her breathtaking dancing. They reminisced about how Babbi-babbi, the great serpent, gave up one of his ribs to the people of Australia to use as a boomerang so they could capture the flying foxes for food. They even discussed how Kidili tried to make the women of the earth his wives, and how the lizard men protected them, wounding Kidili and leaving him to nurse his wounds in the watering hole. As they walked and talked, Wala suddenly noticed the earth below them. She pointed out what she noticed to Bara.

"Bara," she said, *"look at how dry and barren the earth looks!"*

Bara looked, and saw that her mother spoke the truth!

"What can we do, Mother?" she asked.

Walo and Bara thought and thought about what might be the problem. Finally, Bara figured it out.

"Mom," she said, *"this dryness is all our fault!"*

Her mother was surprised.

"What do you mean, my brilliant daughter?"

Bara explained.

"You are the goddess of the sun, and I am your daughter. The light and heat that we give the earth is too strong when we are together. I know that it is our duty to cross the sky each day, but we are doing more damage than good! What should we do, Mom?"

Wala knew what had to be done.

That day, she sent Bara back to stay with her Auntie Madalait in the east, and from then on she walked the sky path alone. By doing this, the earth got just enough light and heat, and the plants could grow. Instead of their daily chats, Wala and Bara would spend the evenings talking together, though when the sun becomes very hot, and dries up the land, people still look to the sky and say

"Bara and Walo must be walking together again, today!"



Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom

Anansi, the spider, was a tricky and greedy spider. Though he was the son of the sky god, he often acted like a spoiled little child. In fact, this is exactly how he acted the day his father, Nyame, gave him a pot filled with all the wisdom of the world. It happened something like this...

Nyame found his son, Anansi, sitting in a tree in the middle of the African savannah.

"Good day, my son." He said.

"Good day, Father." Anansi replied.

"I have a present and a job for you, Anansi." Nyame stated. *"Here is the gift. It is all the wisdom in the world, and it is held in this large pot."*

Anansi's eyes gleamed.

"Oh! Thank you Father! Now I will be the wisest of all creatures in the world!"

Nyame laughed.

"Anansi, I am giving you the pot so that you can do the job I have for you. It is your responsibility to spread this wisdom all over the world. Inside this pot are ideas, dreams, and skills. The world and its creatures need this wisdom to survive, and I need you to give it to them. Can you do this for me?"

Anansi nodded his spider head, but in his heart he knew he wanted the wisdom of the world for himself. As soon as his father left, Anansi quickly tied the pot of wisdom to his back and began to climb the tree to keep the wisdom away from the people and creatures of the earth.

The pot was heavy though, and Anansi struggled to climb the tall tree. As he tried to escape with the pot of wisdom, one of his sons happened to walk by and see him.

"What are you doing, Father?" Anansi's son asked.

Anansi replied, *"I am trying to take this heavy pot to the top of the tree, but it weighs too much for me."*

His son was a quick and helpful young spider, and told Anansi that he could help.

"If we tie the pot to both of our backs, we will surely be able to get it to the top of the tree, Father!"

Anansi agreed, and so the two of them were quickly able to get the pot up the tree by working together.

Anansi was a greedy and spoiled spider, though, and once they had reached the top of the tree, his temper flared.

"Here I am," he said, *"with all the wisdom of the world at my command, and my young son has to solve a simple problem for me!"*

Anansi became so angry with this situation, that he threw the pot of wisdom to the ground. As the pot struck the ground, it shattered, and all the wisdom inside flew all over the earth. There was so much that Anansi could not pick it all up if he tried, and so the people and creatures of the earth found pieces of this wisdom as they walked the earth.

That is why, today, everyone has a little wisdom, but no one has all wisdom. To gain more, people must share what they have with others, and others will share what they have with them.



The Birds of Odin

The whole world wide, every day,
fly Hugin and Munin;
I worry lest Hugin should fall in flight,
yet more I fear for Munin.

-From the Sayings of Grímnir

Odin, king of the gods, awoke to the crying of his birds. His two pet ravens, Hugin and Munin cried the morning to life like twin alarm clocks.

“I need your help, once again, my friends.” Odin said to the two black birds.

Hopping from their perch to his shoulders, the birds quieted, listening to their master’s words. Odin continued speaking to them,

“I need you to fly across the land, and to tell me what you see. Fly to the land of the giants and spy so that I might know what terrible deeds they are planning. Fly over the realm of the dwarves and tell me what creations they are building. Fly over the cities of man and see what is going on there.”

The birds ruffle their feathers and gently pluck at Odin’s hair and beard. They understand that the king of the gods needs their help. After a final pause, they leap to the window and take to the air, to fly over the land and gather information to report back to Odin.

After they have gone, Odin begins to worry. Without the reports they bring him, he would not be able to make sure the world continues the way that it should. These magical birds are not only his pets, but are also his friends and helpers. What would happen if one of them should get hurt? How would he find out what is going on outside of Asgard, the kingdom of the gods, if they were not to return?

As the day passes, Odin thinks of them often, but must carry on in his duties as ruler of the Norse gods. He must help Thor, the god of thunder, keep his temper and stay away from trouble. He must watch Loki, the trickster god, and keep him from stirring up problems among the other gods. He must search out and learn the mysteries of magic so that he will continue to be the strongest of the gods. He is a busy king.

The day ends, as all days do, and as he readies himself for bed, Odin hears the stirring of wings. Hugin and Munin burst through his window, alighting on his shoulders. He happily pets the birds, smoothing down their feathers. As the last light of sunset breaks through his window, the two ravens whisper what they have seen during their flight into his ears, and Odin smiles. The world is safe for one more day.



The Birth of Athena

Zeus, the king of the gods, sat on his throne in Olympus and worried. His wife, Metis, had just told him that she was going to have a baby. Now, for most fathers, this would be wonderful news, but for Zeus, it was a problem. You see, the prophets had said that any child Metis and Zeus had would be a more powerful god than Zeus. Zeus did not want to lose his job as king of the gods, and so was very worried about how he could stop this child from being born. Not a very nice thing, at all.

He worried and worried, and finally came up with a plan. Since Metis was a powerful goddess herself, Zeus planned to trick her. He invited her to visit him, and so she did.

“Good morning, Metis.” Zeus said to his wife.

“Good morning, Zeus,” she replied. *“What have you called me here for?”*

Zeus’ face smiled, but his mind did not.

“I have been thinking, my wife, and I was wondering which one of us is the most powerful.”

Metis had been thinking the same thing, but she just smiled back at her husband. Zeus continued,

“I was wondering if you could do the same amazing things that I can.” Zeus stated.

“What sort of things do you mean, my husband?” Metis asked.

“Well, this morning I wanted to see how small of an animal I could become, so I turned myself into a fly. Do you think you could do that?” Zeus asked.
Metis smiled again.

“Surely you must be joking,” she declared, *“for that is the simplest thing for a god or goddess to do.”*

“Then show me you can do it,” Zeus stated, *“if you really can.”*

So Metis did. In the blink of an eye, she turned herself into the tiniest of flies. Just as quickly, Zeus scooped her up into one hand and swallowed her. By doing this, he thought he had solved his problem of the baby coming. He was wrong, though.

Time passed and months went by, and Zeus began to have terrible headaches. He called in his helper Prometheus, to see if he could find what was causing this terrible feeling, and sure enough, Prometheus did.

“I know what needs to be done, King Zeus.” pronounced Prometheus. *“It may seem a bit strange, but it is the only way to cure your headaches.”*

Zeus asked what must be done, and Prometheus told him that he must cut open his head with an axe. Now, a doctor would never tell you or I that this is the way to cure a headache, but you must remember that Zeus was a god, and so even a chop on the noggin with an axe would not hurt him. Not only that, but the axe was a magical one. So he let Prometheus do the deed.

As soon as Prometheus struck Zeus’ head, a woman jumped out through the wound. She came out fully clothed in armor and carrying a spear. As she flew through the air from Zeus’ head she gave a warrior’s cry, one so loud that it shook both the sky and the earth.

The child of Metis and Zeus had been born: Athena, the goddess of warriors and wisdom!



Humbaba the Ogre

Enkidu was both excited and a bit scared about the new adventure that his best friend had decided they were going to have. He knew that his friend was a powerful warrior, and that he would protect Enkidu just as Enkidu would protect him. Even so, Gilgamesh, his friend, wanted to go to the cedar forest and battle Humbaba, the giant ogre. Enkidu knew that there was nothing he could do to change Gilgamesh's mind, so, even though he was a bit scared, he got ready to go.

The trip to the cedar forest took many days, and as they camped during the night, Gilgamesh had nightmares. When he would tell Enkidu about these terrible dreams, Enkidu would try to reassure Gilgamesh that the dreams were really good, and were the god's way of telling him that he would beat the ogre. Though he was unsure that this was the truth, Gilgamesh continued on his quest.

Finally, they arrived at the cedar forest, and found the ogre Humbaba. Humbaba was huge and very strong. He had the face of a lion, and seemed to be as fierce as one. He was also very rude. He said things to Enkidu and Gilgamesh that not only made them mad, but also frightened them. He called them "*idiots*" and "*morons*". At last the two warriors had enough of the ogre's rude words and began to fight him.

The battle between them and the ogre was long and hard. The battle was so brutal that it pushed land apart, separating forests that had been growing together from the beginning of time. It went on and on, and soon Enkidu and Gilgamesh thought that they might be defeated.

Just when they thought they would have to give up and leave the cedar forest in defeat, the sun god Shamash sent them help. Shamash sent his 13 winds to strengthen the warriors and to weaken Humbaba.

Finally, Enkidu and Gilgamesh beat the ogre, and were able to claim the cedar forest as their own. They called 50 young men to come and cut down the trees for their beautiful and strong wood, and to take it back to the city. With this wood the city was made stronger, and the people of the kingdom spoke of the heroics of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.



The White Buffalo Calf Woman

One morning, two young Lakota braves were out hunting for game to feed the village. As they crept through the countryside, they searched and searched but could find no animals for the village's breakfast. They finally became tired and saw a high mountain on which they could sit and watch for game. When they reached the summit, one of the braves pointed off into the distance.

"Look over there," he said *"do you see that glowing light? What could it be?"*

The other brave was as surprised as he was, and also had no idea of what the glowing light was.

"It seems to be coming closer, though," he replied, *"Soon we will know what it is."*

Sure enough, the light came closer and closer, and soon the two braves saw that it was a beautiful woman, dressed in white buckskin with lovely porcupine quill decorations. The braves also saw that she did not walk. Instead, she floated above the ground. Though the braves were young men, they both knew that this meant that the woman was Ptesan-Wi, the White Buffalo Woman. She was a powerful, holy woman.

Even though he knew this, one of the braves thought her so lovely that he wanted her to be his wife. This holy woman was not meant to be the wife of a human man, and to try and take her was a great offense. The young brave reached out to grab the White Buffalo Woman, but before he could, a bolt of lightning jumped from the sky and struck him. In an instant, he was gone.

The other brave acted in a correct manner. The White Buffalo Woman saw this and said to him,

"I have a present for your people. It is a wonderful gift. Go tell your chief and wise men to make a medicine lodge ready for me and I will meet with them and give them this gift."

The young man did as she told him, and soon the village was buzzing with activity. Just as everything had been prepared, the White Buffalo Woman arrived. The chief of the village met her and said to her,

"Welcome, sister, we are honored that you have come to teach us."

And that is exactly what she did.

Her gift to the Lakota was the very first pipe. She taught the people how to fill it with willow bark, how to hold it, how to light it. She taught the Lakota people how to raise it to Grandfather Mystery, the Great Spirit, to lower it to Grandmother Earth, and then to the four directions of the universe: North, South, East, and West. She taught them the song of the pipe, and how they were part of the earth and sky. She taught them to be human beings.

Soon it was time for the White Buffalo Woman to leave. As the Lakota people watched her walk away into the setting sun, she stopped and rolled in the grass four times. The first time she turned into a black buffalo, the second a brown one. The third time, she turned into a red buffalo, and the final time, she turned into a white buffalo calf. That is why, today, a white buffalo calf is the most sacred and holy animal of the Lakota people.

