

Coyote Wisdom

by Caryn Colgan

This morning I scared myself with a coyote. I say it this way rather than “A coyote scared me this morning” because I am taking responsibility for the choices I made.

Instead of exercising in my living room, I choose to take a walk in the snowstorm. As I approached the base of a rocky, tumbleweed-covered hillside, movement near the crest caught my eye. Expecting to see the customary jackrabbit or quail, I was surprised to see a coyote. She stood motionless, her attention fixed on me. I froze to watch her. We observed each other for a couple of minutes until the three Magpies perched on branches beside her began to flap their wings. The spell had been broken.

Midway between us and to my right, a jackrabbit bolted up the hill, saw her and ran away. She didn't race after it but climbed atop a nearby boulder and watched. The Magpies flew after the rabbit and to my surprise, positioned themselves as if to indicate the path the rabbit had fled.

I was stunned. Could this be an accident or were they exhibiting intelligent, symbiotic behavior? Did the coyote and the Magpies have an understanding that if the coyote caught the rabbit, she would share the meal?

The coyote turned her head and that's when I saw the second coyote. I was transfixed watching the drama unfold. The troops were gathering. While the first coyote oversaw the action, the second coyote followed the Magpie markers. Suddenly the rabbit bolted from its hiding place, racing furiously to escape. Both coyotes chased it, the Magpies flying above. Only when they disappeared over the ridge did I move from my spot.

While I felt sadness for the rabbit, I also realized that this is the cycle of life and death in action and judgment-free. I continued my walk, reveling in how fortunate I had been to witness Nature in Her wildness on a snowy spring morning.

I was still high on the experience when I rounded the hill and noticed the dirt and rock trail snaking to the water tank above. Many times in the past I have contemplated hiking the path, but each time I decided it was too steep or too rocky or made some other excuse.

However, today I was intent not only to firm the body and lose weight, but my curiosity provoked me. I wanted to know if I could spot the coyotes once again. Had they caught the jackrabbit? I decided to investigate.

Climbing felt great for the body but my mind raced with the possible danger I could face. What if they surrounded me and attacked? What if they are starving and I'm the only food they can catch? I reminded myself that I have never seen a report of a full-grown human being consumed by coyotes, but then again, I don't know everything!

My mind vacillated between exuberance and fear. I was still delighted with the events of the morning so far, but a bit frightened to be pursuing skilled hunters. I decided that the coyotes would be more afraid of me than I was of them. After all, they were wild animals and most wild animals don't like humans. Nonetheless, I stopped every few steps to scan the hillside for furry predators.

Having lived in Alaska, I learned to make noise to alert bears of my presence. I figured the same strategy would serve me in this situation, so I walked and talked loudly.

Nearing the top, I paused to catch my breath and enjoy the serene scene around me. A soft white fog of snow obscured distant mountains. Visibility was less than one-half mile.

Turning to resume my climb, snow smacked my cheeks with such force they felt like hot needles. I felt her eyes on me before I saw her. I froze and studied the rocks and weeds nearby. I forgot to breathe.

While observing the coyotes earlier, I had noticed that when they are stationary, they are extremely difficult to spot, even when I knew where to look. Again I surveyed the hilltop and then I saw her. Actually, I saw her ears first. Their peaked pattern stood in contrast to the haphazard edges of the rocks beside her. She was about two hundred yards away, close enough to stimulate the fearful visions of being surrounded and attacked.

I was frightened but had learned that predators, like bears, often see running things as food. Not keen on the idea of becoming a meal, I waved my arms over my head. To make myself more menacing I yelled, "Go away".

She didn't run away as I had envisioned. She stood her ground, watching me. I decided on a bold move. Waving my arms and yelling, I stepped toward her. Only then did she begin to trot, not away from me but along the ridge perpendicular to my path. I backed away, still waving and yelling. When she disappeared behind some bushes, I took that as my cue to run away. As before, every few steps I turned to watch and listen. I never saw either coyote again.

While I walked home I reviewed what I had learned from the encounter and how they might relate to my recently released book, *Ancient Pact*:

1. All Is One. Humans share this one physical world with many other beings. In this situation, I was the interloper in their world. They were doing what coyotes do, chase small animals for food.

How often have I imposed my desires on others?

Have I ever been angry or upset when they defend themselves?

2. Only A Free Mind Knows Reality. Ego and an over-stimulated mind prevent many of us from knowing the reality of the world around us. We create a heavy curtain between our intuitive, spiritual selves and our physical self.

I sensed her presence before I saw her. That perception is beyond the basic capabilities of the physical body. Had my mind been occupied with thoughts, I might have placed myself in greater danger.

What can I do today to keep my mind free and clear?

What am I willing to do to ensure that I maintain a clear channel to my intuition?

3. Reality Is Greater Than Perception. I perceived danger when I saw her ears. While this is a logical interpretation of the data, motivated by survival instincts, it may not have been the correct one. I don't believe the animals would have bothered me. They were probably either curious about me or trying to protect their meal. There may also be other explanations that I haven't considered.

How often in daily life, interacting with humans, do I attach the wrong meaning to their words and actions?

4. Karma Rules Until Free Will Changes. Karma is a sort of self-created destiny. I made the choice to put myself in possible danger. Through the use of my free will, I made choices.

Do I make choices and then blame others when things don't go well?

Do I always take responsibility for my choices?

Safely seated at my computer, I watch the snow float past my window. Out there on a hillside near my home, two coyotes go about their day, oblivious that they have taught me some marvelous lessons. Then again, maybe the animal world is far more intelligent than any of us presently perceive.