**How the Old Man Made People**

**Blackfoot Creation Story**

Long ago, when the world was new, there was no one living in it at all, except the Old Man, Na-pe, and his sometimes-friend and sometimes-enemy A-pe'si, the Coyote, and a few buffalo. There were no other people and no other animals. But the Old Man changed all that. He changed it first because he was lonely, and then because he was lazy; and maybe be shouldn't have, but anyway, he did. And this was the way of it.

Na-pe was sitting by his fire one day, trying to think of some way to amuse himself. He had plenty to eat--a whole young buffalo; no need to go hunting. He had a lodge; no work to do; and a fire. He was comfortable, but he wasn't contented. His only companion, A-pe'si the Coyote, was off somewhere on some scheme of his own, and anyway he had quarrelled with A-pe'si, and they were on bad terms; so even if he had been there, Old Man would still have been lonely. He poked some sticks in the fire, threw a rock or two in the river, Lit his pipe, and walked around. . . then sat down, and thought how nice it would be to have someone to smoke with, and to talk to. "Another one, like me," he thought. And he poked some more sticks in the fire, and threw some more rocks in the river.

Then he thought, "Why not? I am the Old Man! I can make anything I want to. Why shouldn't I make another like me, and have a companion?" And he promptly went to work.

First, he found a little still pool of water, and looked at his reflection carefully, so as to know just what he wanted to make. Then he counted his bones as best he could, and felt the shape of them.

Next, he went and got some clay, modelled a lot of bones, and baked them in his fire. When they were all baked, he took them out and looked at them. Some of them were very good, but others were crooked, or too thin, or had broken in the baking. These he put aside in a little heap.

Then he began to assemble the best of the clay bones into a figure of a man. He tied them all together with buffalo sinews, and smoothed them all carefully with buffalo fat. He padded them with clay mixed with buffalo blood, and stretched over the whole thing skin taken from the inside of the buffalo. Then he sat down and lit his pipe again.

He looked at the man he had made rather critically. It wasn't exactly what he had wanted, but still it was better than nothing.

"I will make some more," said Na-pe.

He picked the new man up and blew smoke into his eyes, nose, and mouth, and the figure came to life. Na-pe sat him down by the fire, and handed him the pipe. Then he went to get more clay.

All day long Na-pe worked, making men. It took a long time, because some of the bones in each lot weren't good, and he must discard them and make others. But at last he got seveal men, all sitting by the fire and passing the pipe around. Na-pe sat down with them, and was very happy. He left the heap of discarded bones where they were, at the doorway of his lodge.

So Na-pe and the men lived in his camp, and the men learned to hunt, and Na-pe had company, someone to smoke with, and they were all quite contented.

But the heap of left-over bones was a nuisance. Every time one of the men went in or out of Na-pe's lodge, they tripped over the bones. The wind blew through them at night, making a dreadful noise. The bones frequently tumbled over, making more of a disturbance. Na-pe intended to throw them in the river, but he was a bit lazy, and never got around to it. So the left-over bones stayed where they were.

By this time A-pe'si, the Coyote, was back from wherever he had been. He went around the camp, looking the men over, and being very superior, saying that he didn't think much of Na-pe's handiwork. He was also critical of the heap of bones at the door of the lodge. "I should think you would do something with them--make them into men," said A-pe'si, the Coyote.

"All right, I will," said Na-pe. "Only they aren't very good. It will be difficult to make men out of them!" "Oh, I'll help, I'll help!" said A-pe'si. "With my cleverness, we will make something much better than these poor creatures of yours!" So the two of them set to work. The discarded bones, clicking and tattling, were sorted out, and tied together. Then Na-pe mixed the clay and the buffalo blood to cover them. He fully intended to make the bones into men, but A-pe'si the Coyote kept interfering; consequently, when the job was done, the finished product was quite different. Na-pe surveyed it dubiously, but he blew the smoke into its eyes and nose and mouth, as he had with the men. And the woman came to life.

A-pe'si and Na-pe made the rest of the bones into women, and as they finished each one they put them all together, and the women immediately began to talk to each other. A-pe'si was very pleased with what he had done. "When I made my men," said Na-pe, "I set them down by the fire to smoke."

And even to this day, if you have one group of men, and another of women, the men will want to sit by the fire and smoke. But the women talk. And whether it is because they were made out of the left-over bones that clicked and rattled, or whether it is because A-pe'si, the Coyote --who is a noisy creature himself--had a part in their making, no one can say.