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THE COCKATOO AND THE CROW

*Walykutjukurr
(June Richards)

This play is written for children to produce themselves as well as act. It needs only one scenery set and could be acted in a classroom or on a stage.

The story is one which has been handed down through generations to one of the writers and she tells it from the traditional lifestyle in which she lives. For this reason, she has included a diagram of the required scenery and props, so that presentations of the story will be authentically set.

CAST

Mother: Aboriginal lady.
Three Children: Aboriginal children.
Eagle Man: Wearing grey/brown wings on his arms.
Crow Lady: Wearing black wings on her arms and always
 carrying her baby in her piti (wooden carrying dish).
Cockatoo Lady: Wearing pink and white wings on her arms.

PROPS NEEDED

Spear, Digging Stick, a Piti (baby dish), a Lizard, Billy Can, Fire Stick, Meat (looking like a kangaroo leg). See diagram for authentic description of props and scenery at end of play.

* A teacher aide in the Warburton Ranges Primary School, June has been producing some very interesting traditional language and culture materials within the school program.

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The scene is of an Aboriginal mother telling her children a story around the campfire. Behind her, as she speaks, the story comes to life.

Children: (running in from the side stage) Mother, Mother, we want to listen to a story.

Mother: (stoking the fire) Which story do you want this time?

Child 1: The one about the cockatoo and the crow.

Mother: But you had that one last night.

Child 2: Yes, but we liked it so much we want it again.

Mother: All right then, are you ready and listening?

Children: Yuwo! (means yes and sounds like Yes Sir!)

Mother:

There was once an Eagle Man who had two wives. One was a Crow Lady with shining black wings and the other was a Cockatoo Lady with wings like clouds at sunset. (Ladies enter and sit around centre campfire.)

Now the Cockatoo Lady was the favourite wife and she always had the best part of the meat that her husband brought home. The poor Crow Lady didn't have much to eat - just the scraps on the ground to feed her and her little baby.

Crow Lady: (complaining voice)
Look at you eating all that good meat while I have all the scraps...nothing good to feed my little baby. (Cockatoo Lady turns her back on Crow Lady)
Don't turn away from me, why don't you listen. My baby is crying for meat and you won't give him any. Little baby don't cry. Nobody will listen to you or give you anything. Look! Here comes your father, Eagle Man, with lots of meat. Now we can have a good feed.

- Eagle Man: Hello my cockatoo wife. Can you bring me some water? I have some good kangaroo meat for you. It will make you strong and happy. (Cockatoo Lady goes to get a billy can of water for him to drink out of.)
- Crow Lady: What about me? I always have scraps and there's nothing good for my baby. You give it all to her just because she's waiting for her baby.
- Eagle Man: You dark woman with only white eyes showing, you talk too much. You can have the scraps when she is finished. I'm going to get wood for the fire. You two, go and get some bardis (*edible grubs*) for tea.
- Crow Lady: I don't want to go and get bardis. I always get the little black skinny ones, while she finds big juicy white ones. My poor little baby never gets the juicy ones because she won't share them. She just eats them all herself.
- Eagle Man: Stop talking, you black boney Crow Lady. You're always talking and not working, while my Cockatoo Lady is always quiet and gets me water and finds me good bardis. I don't like eating your black bardis. Go and find some good ones. (Ladies go out. The man sits in the shelter.)
- Mother: (While mother is speaking, Cockatoo Lady hides behind the windbreak and Crow Lady comes in to sit by the campfire).
- That Crow Lady was angry with the Cockatoo Lady and she thought of a plan to get all the good meat from her. When the Cockatoo Lady's time came she went a long way away from the camp and made a little shelter and had her baby there. The Eagle Man still kept the best meat for her and he called to the Crow Lady to take it to her.
- Eagle Man: Go and take this meat to my Cockatoo Lady so it will make her strong again and she can come back to my camp.
- Crow Lady: I won't take this meat to her. I'll eat it half-way and give some to my baby.

Eagle Man: If you do that I'll see you are no longer a skinny black crow. You will be fat and I will spear you.
(Eagle Man goes off stage.)

Crow Lady: (Walking around the stage laughing like a crow.)
Caw! Caw! No! I have a better plan in my mind to get this good meat. Caw! Caw!.
(She reaches the Cockatoo Lady's shelter.)
Come Cockatoo Lady. I have some good meat to make you strong. Come here and get it.

Cockatoo Lady: No! No! I'm too weak to come out. Bring it inside my shelter for my baby and me.

Crow Lady: If you don't come and get it, then I will eat it all and you will become weak.

Cockatoo Lady: (Hobbles slowly out.)
All right! I'm coming out...don't eat my meat. I'm so weak. I need it to become strong again.
(Crow Lady picks up the digging stick lying near the windbreak and hits the Cockatoo Lady on the head until she falls to her knees.)

Crow Lady: You have been a spoilt lady, but now I've caught you and the Eagle Man cannot help you.

Cockatoo Lady: Don't hit me! I'm too weak and my baby is too small. If you hit me too much my baby and I will turn into cockatoos and fly away.

Crow Lady: (Hitting her.)
That will be good for me and my baby. Then we will have all the good meat. (Laughs like a crow.)

Cockatoo Lady: I cannot take any more. Keep my meat. I'm going. I'm going. (She crawls back to shelter.)

Mother:

The Cockatoo Lady crawled back to her shelter but she was so weak that she lay down. She and her baby turned into pink and white cockatoos and flew away into the sunset. But the Crow Lady went back to Eagle Man still carrying some of the good meat in her hand.

Eagle Man: Did you see my Cockatoo Lady? Why are you still carrying some of the meat?

Crow Lady: Do not worry Eagle Man my husband. Cockatoo Lady found some food of her own. She is all right and has plenty of bardis to make her strong. She doesn't want any of your meat and she said to give it to me and my baby.
(Goes off stage eating the meat).

Eagle Man: (Sharpening his spear.)
This is not right. My Cockatoo Lady always likes good meat. If she has so many bardis to make her strong she should be here by now. (Sharpens his spear some more.)
I'm going to find her while the Crow Lady is away getting her bardis. (He picks up his spear and walks around the stage. Stops near the windbreak and points to the ground.)
What's this? My two wives' tracks together and they were fighting. Oh no! My Cockatoo Lady is crawling back to her shelter. She must be hurt. (Looks in the shelter and then at the sky.)
She is not here. She has turned into a cockatoo. I can see her and her little baby flying towards the sunset. That Black Crow Lady has tricked me. I shall have to get rid of her. (Walks around the stage brandishing his spear.)
What's this? A lizard. Aha! I will catch him before he goes down his hole. (Throws his spear and gets the lizard.) Now I shall have good meat for tea. Aha! This hole of his has given me an idea to catch that Black Crow Lady. She loves to eat snakes, so I will put snake tracks around this hole.
(He kneels down and makes tracks with his hand.)

Mother:

The Eagle Man went back to his camp and said nothing to the Crow Lady until the next morning when she was making the fire to cook breakfast.

Eagle Man: (Picking up a fire stick.)
My Crow Lady, with cunning eyes, I saw some snake tracks yesterday.

Crow Lady: Where did you see them. (Picks up digging stick.) Show me and I will dig them out and we will have juicy snakes for breakfast.

Eagle Man: I will show you but you can do all the digging. (They walk around the stage a couple of times and then stop at the box covered with grass.)

Crow Lady: I can see the tracks and they are big. It will be a good feed for you, my husband, when I catch these snakes. (She starts digging.)

Eagle Man: You will have to dig deeper. Climb into the hole and dig. This nest must be low down under the ground. (She lowers herself into the box.)

Crow Lady: (With only head showing.) I'm still digging. It is deep, but still no snakes.

Eagle Man: (Picks up grass and throws it over Crow Lady.) There are no snakes down there, my Black Crow Lady. It was a trap to catch you. You have sent away my Cockatoo Lady and now I will burn you until you are a black crow. (Throws the fire stick.)

Crow Lady: Stop! Don't burn me or I will turn into a crow and fly away with my baby and you will have no wives and no children.

Eagle Man: My heart is broken already. I do not want any more wives. I don't want to be an Eagle Man any more. I want to be free and fly with the eagles in the sky.

Mother:

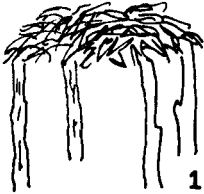
As the flames burnt around the Crow Lady, she and her baby became blacker and blacker and then flew away towards the dark night. The Eagle Man was so full of sadness that he lay down and turned into a strong, proud eagle and soared up into the high mountains to where proud strong eagles live. And that is the end of the story.

Child 3: Mother, is that a true story?

Mother:

You tell me, my children. Are crows black as the night? Do they eat good food or do they steal the scraps from others? And what about the cockatoo? Isn't it pink and white like the clouds at sunset? And doesn't the cockatoo always look for the good bardis? Think about the eagle! He's proud and strong, looking for his own food and living in high places. Think about these things and you will tell yourselves the answer.

SCENERY



1

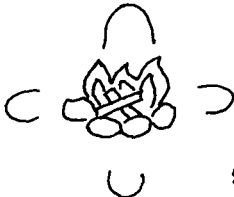
back stage



2



3



5

front stage



4

1 SHELTER — four posts with branches on top

2 LARGE BOX — hidden with dry grass

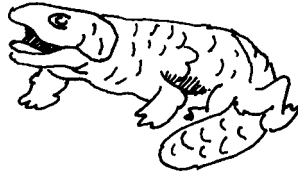
3 EAGLE MAN'S CAMPFIRE

4 WINDBREAK

5 MOTHER AND CHILDREN'S CAMPFIRE

The mark  is the imprint made when sitting in the sand.

BOBTAIL LIZARD



SPEAR
two metres — shaped barb attached to the end



DIGGING STICK
one metre — pointed at one end



PITI
baby dish



BILLY CAN
preferably black



KANGAROO MEAT

