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Duck Magic

Suggested by the Chemehuevi Myth "*Crow Was Made Black*"

CAROBETH LAIRD

Coyote was living
With his nephew, Crow.
Crow fell sick.
Coyote went into the tules
At the River's edge
Seeking for Duck.
Coyote barked, in great distress:
"My Crow-nephew
Lies sick and near to death.
You must act as shaman.
But I have nothing
Wherewith to pay you
Except this pottery spoon!"
Duck took the spoon
Made it into a bill
Which to this day remains.
Duck went to Coyote's house
A man with a duck's bill
Waddling a little
In the dawn-time
When the animals were people.
Duck sang:
 Duck-rainbow-irridescence
 Floating shimmering
 Shimmering hitherward
 Toward us two alone.
Duck sang for a long time.
Duck spoke, after the manner of shamans:
"Your nephew
Has been bewitched-v̄inin̄ini
Some evil person
Has bewitched him-v̄inin̄ini
Now this, Coyote,
Is what you must do to break the spell-v̄inin̄ini

You must paint your nephew
Black-v̄inin̄ini."
Duck went back
To the tules by the River's edge
A duck-billed man
Walking in an irridescence shimmer
In the dawn-time
When the world was young.
Coyote took white clay
Painted Crow white
Set him in the sun to dry.
Crow's sickness worsened.
Coyote barked:
"That does not become you!"
Coyote washed Crow off
Painted him bright yellow
Set him in the sun to dry.
Crow's sickness worsened.
Coyote barked:
"That does not become you!"
Coyote washed him off
Painted him red
Set him in the sun to dry.
Crow all but died.
Coyote washed him off
Painted his Crow-nephew black
Set him in the sun to dry.
Crow recovered health.
Coyote barked in great surprise:
"He got well!
My nephew has got well!"
To this day
On the glossy black of a crow's wing
Dark irridescence glimmers.