

WHEN MEN WALKED THE VAST LONELY DISTANCES across the Great Plains to capture horses from their enemies, they felt kinship with the wandering wolves. Feeling insecure and overawed by the space, they would sing “wolf songs” to strengthen their hearts:

*I am a lone wolf
I roam in different places
But I am tired out.*

*I thought I was a wolf
But I have eaten nothing
And I can hardly stand.
I thought I was a wolf
But the owls are hooting
And I fear the night.*

Two Shields told how the custom started: *Many years ago a war party were in their camp when they heard what they believed to be the song of a young man approaching. They supposed the singer was one of their party, but as he came nearer they saw that he was an old wolf, so old that he had no teeth, and there was no brush on his tail. He could scarcely move, and he lay down beside their fire. They cut up their best buffalo meat and fed him. After this the warriors began the custom of carrying a wolf-skin medicine bag.*

Looking Elk and others told how the wolf-skin bags had been known to come to life, and to walk about the camp and to sing:

*By my sacred power
I made the wolf people walk.
By my sacred power
I made them walk.*⁵⁵



If a man could prove to some bird or animal that he was a worthy friend, it would share with him precious secrets and there would be formed bonds of loyalty never to be broken; the man would protect the rights and life of the animal, and the animal would share with the man his power, skill, and wisdom. In this manner was the great brotherhood of mutual helpfulness formed, adding to the reverence for life other than man.
Standing Bear, Lakota.⁵⁶

Before proceeding in the hunt, it is necessary to stop, take a smoke, and offer a prayer to the Medicine Fathers. They will always hear the prayer of a sincere hunter. It is not through the great skill of the hunter himself that success is achieved, but through the hunter's awareness of his place in Creation and his relationship to all things.
Thomas Yellowtail, Absarokee.⁵⁷



I want to live humbly, as close to the earth as I can. Close to the plants, the weeds, the flowers that I use for medicine. The Great Spirit made the flowers, the streams, the pines, the cedars—takes care of them. He lets a breeze go through them, makes them grow. He takes care of me, waters me, feeds me, makes me live with the plants and animals as one of them.

Pete Catches, Lakota. ⁵⁸

All animals are *wakan*, sacred, holy. These animals are specially *wakan*: buffalo, horses, elks, wolves, weasels, bears, mountain lions, prairie dogs, ferrets, foxes, beavers, otters. Some kinds of fish are sacred. Spiders are sacred. The dragonfly is sacred. Some lakes are sacred. Some cliffs and hills are sacred. Certain birds, such as swallows, spotted eagles, eagles, hawks, are sacred.

Lakota. ⁵⁹

When the day is cloudy, the thunder makes a low rumble and we hear the rain striking against the tipi; then it's nice to sleep, isn't it?

Absaroke. ⁶⁰



SITTING BULL, LEADER, HOLY MAN, AND SEER who foretold the defeat of General Crook and his 1300 soldiers at the Battle of the Rosebud (1876), always listened to what the birds and animals had to tell him.

Once when he was hunting antelope, he heard someone singing. He could not see the singer, but looking over a fold in the ground, it was a wolf. Repeating the song, the wolf ended it each time with a long howl:

I am a lonely wolf

Wandering pretty nearly all over the earth.

He, he, he!

What is the matter?

I am having a hard time, friend.

This that I tell you, you will have to do also.

Whatever I want, I always get it.

Your name will be big, as mine is big.

Huuuuuu...! Hiuuuuu...! ⁶¹

