

There was a village divided into two parts, one a quiet part and the other a boisterous part, the latter abusive to the former. Here lived a family in which there was a son named Snowy Owl. At last the family moved away to a divide in the mountains and finally the father and mother died. Snowy Owl was instructed by his dying father to send his "spirit helper" to tell his grandmother that he would come to live with her. This was done and the grandmother became the foster parent of Snowy Owl. One day she gave Snowy Owl his grandfather's bow and arrows which consisted of some pieces of ivory which she put together, telling him that whatever he shot at his arrow would not miss. Snowy Owl next started out to find the camps of human beings to get him a wife.

He traveled far to the south, and on the way noticed how the lakes and rivers were drying up. Desiring to learn the cause of the water shrinkage, he ascended the valleys and finally reached a place where he saw what he thought were hillocks covered with brown vegetation moving slowly about. Upon closer scrutiny he learned that these masses were really the backs of great animals with long teeth, Ktci-awa's, animals so huge that when they lay down they could not get up. He saw that they drank for half a day, thus taking up all the water in the basins of the land. Snowy Owl decided that someday he would have to kill them. He journeyed on and came to a place where a great witch lived with her seven beautiful daughters. Whenever these women desired food the daughters went abroad and lured sailors to come home to marry them.

On the night of the marriage it was their custom to tell the husband-to-be that he should have his hair combed. Whereupon they combed his hair and combed out his brains with a magic comb, eating the brains from it. The pain could not be felt. When at last the victim cried "Pi u!" they sent him out, where he traveled to the north and lived with the great white rabbit. (This creature lives on a high peak, always surrounded by snow where no one can reach him. When he sees anyone coming he causes it to snow until the visitor is overwhelmed. Only those who have had their brains combed out are allowed to come, whereupon they are transformed, like their overchief, into white rabbits and live on grass.)

The youngest daughter of this family, who had never yet had a husband, fell in love at once with Snowy Owl, and knowing the fate intended for him, decided to spare him and escape with him. The mother of the girls was a "night witch" who had no power during the day. Now, the girl made caps for her mother and sisters and told them they were to wear them to celebrate her wedding that night. When they put them on they fell asleep. Snowy Owl and the girl at once took flight. They ran all day, followed by the cry of the old witch, harmless during daylight, "You can't escape me, for I'll get you tonight." At last the pair came to a big wigwam and asked the old man to help them in their flight. This was the wigwam of "Great Star," known as the Morning Star.

(He is said to sleep so late that he is the last star to retire in the morning.) He took them in and hid them. When night came the old witch started in pursuit and reached "Great Star's" wigwam, asking him about the pair. "All right," said he, "my dog and I will help you. But wait till I put on my moccasins, my coat, my leggings and my belt." He was very slow, and took so long a time to put on his things that when he opened the door of his wigwam there stood the Morning Star. Night was over and the old woman became powerless for the day. The pair then fled to the north where the seven Thunder Brothers live. When they arrived at the home of the Thunders, one of them said to another, "Open your eye only a little to see who is coming."

He opened his eye a little and the lightning flashed forth from his lids, but not enough to hurt the lovers. They were taken in and when night fell the old witch came likewise. Whereupon the seven Thunders opened their eyes wide, the lightning flashed and shattered the mother witch to pieces. Now, Snowy Owl and his wife settled down in safety. Snowy Owl proceeded then to find the monsters which he had seen before. He went to where the animals had their "yards." He cut certain trees, where he had observed the monsters were accustomed to lean for rest at night, almost through, so that when the monsters would lean on them they would break. When the creatures went to rest at night leaning against the trees, they fell upon the sharpened stumps when the top bent over and broke, and could not get up again, and Snowy Owl shot them all.

Thereupon the water basins filled up again and water became plentiful. Snowy Owl and his wife returned to the village and the people were glad to welcome him for what he had done, and they made him their chief.