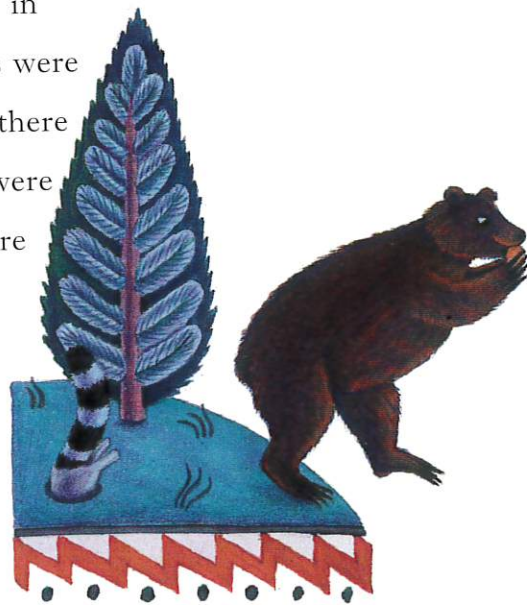




## GRANDMOTHER SPIDER

USA

Long, long ago there were only animals living on the earth. The lands of the north were covered in darkness. For millions of years the animals were content to live in this darkness. However, there came a time when they realised that they were always bumping into one another; they were always falling down holes in the ground; they were always stumbling as they ran about. There came a time when they could bear it no longer, so they decided that something must be done about living in such darkness.



Wise Owl declared, 'Let us have a gathering of all the animals in the Northern Lands.'

A special place and time were appointed for the meeting. Animals arrived from far and wide, all bringing their ideas and their hopes.

Wise Owl called out, 'What shall we do, my brothers and sisters? It is always dark here and times are becoming difficult. We must make changes, but how?'

Old Crow was the first to speak out, 'I have heard on my many flights that there are animals on the other side of the world who live in the light.'

Great Bear asked, 'What is the meaning of "light"?''

Old Crow replied, 'Where there is light animals can see all around them. They can see the whole countryside. They can even see each other.'

The animals of the dark place became very excited by Old





Crow's words. They all said, 'We must have this light, so that we too can see where we are going.'

Old Crow continued, 'Maybe the animals of the light place will share some of this light with us?'

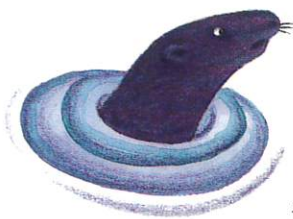
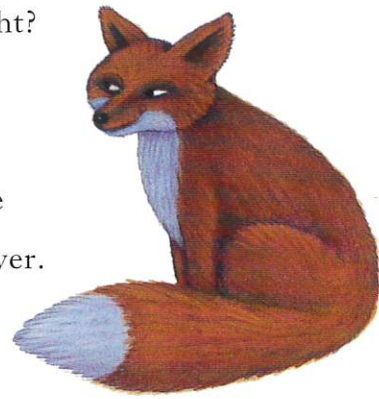
Brother Fox called out, 'No, no! I am sure they will not want to share the light with us. This light must be very precious. We shall have to steal it and bring it back here.'

Brother Otter popped his head out of the water and said, 'It's all very well, but who will go to the place of light? The journey is long and dangerous.'

The bravest and strongest animals began to argue. They all insisted that they were the fastest, or the most cunning, or the most clever. At last Brother Possum spoke up above all the noise and quarrelling. 'I shall go, my brothers, because I can hide the light under my bushy tail and so bring it to our dark space.'

Finally, all the animals agreed that Brother Possum should be the one to go. Brother Possum set out on his long journey to the land of light on the other side of the world.

The journey was full of dangers and difficulties, but Brother Possum was very determined and very curious. On and on he journeyed. As he came closer to the place of



light, his eyes began to hurt – he had not expected such brightness! He screwed his eyes up tightly to protect them. Even today, if you look closely at a possum, you will see his eyes are almost closed.

At last, Brother Possum arrived at the centre of the light. He carefully took a piece of light and placed it under his bushy tail. Then he started his journey home. But the light under his tail was so hot, so fierce, that it burnt all the bushy fur off his tail, leaving nothing but skin and bone. Even today, if you look closely at a possum's tail, you will find it is nothing but skin and bone.

By the time Brother Possum arrived back at the Northern Lands, the light had all vanished. The animals were waiting for Brother Possum. The animals were waiting for the light. How very disappointed they were when they saw him return empty-handed.





Brother Buzzard spoke out, 'I shall go to the land of light and I shall bring some light back.' Brother Buzzard flew high into the sky so that no one would see him when he arrived at the other side of the world. The flight was long and tiring. Finally he reached the centre of the light space. Brother Buzzard hovered around the light and dived down with such speed he was able to take a little bit of light and place it on top of his head. Then he started his long flight home.

The light balancing on top of his head was so hot, so fierce, that it burnt a bald patch. Even today, if you look closely at a buzzard, you will see a bald patch on his head.

By the time Brother Buzzard arrived back in the dark land, the light had vanished. The animals were waiting for Brother Buzzard. The animals were waiting for the light. How very disappointed they were when they saw him return empty-handed.

The animals were very sad. They cried out, 'Our strongest and bravest brothers have tried and have failed to bring us some light. We are still in darkness!'

Suddenly, they heard a tiny, creaky voice, 'Excuse me, brothers. You have tried your best. Now it is time for your sister to go and get the light.'



The animals looked all around them, trying to discover who the speaker was. But they could not see anyone. 'Who is speaking?' they called out.

'It is I, Grandmother Spider,' the voice answered. 'I am very old and very small, but I have a good plan. I would like to try to bring back the light from the other side of the world.'

The animals were sure that Grandmother Spider could not possibly succeed, but they agreed to give her a chance and let her go.



Grandmother Spider scuttled to a place deep in the earth that was rich with clay. She took a little piece of clay and moulded it into a small pot, with a lid which fitted perfectly.

She then took the pot, holding it with one of her eight legs, and she started her long journey to the other side of the world, to the place of light. All the while she was spinning her web, leaving behind her a trail, so that she would find her way home.

Grandmother Spider arrived at the centre of the light. She took a small piece of light and put it into her pot. She secured the lid tightly, so that the light would not escape. She started her long journey home, following the web trail she had left behind. Even today, if you look carefully at a spider's web, you will see that it is just like the rays of the sun.



The animals were waiting for Grandmother Spider. The animals were waiting for the light. As soon as she arrived back in the land of darkness, Grandmother Spider asked the animals to form a circle all around her. Then she lifted the lid of her pot, and there was light all over the place of darkness. It was of such radiance, such splendour, that the animals were amazed. From then on, there was day and there was night in the Northern Lands.

The animals were overjoyed. They could now at last see where they were going. They had a great celebration, with singing and dancing, in honour of Grandmother Spider. As for Grandmother Spider, she retreated quietly into the forest from whence she had come. She climbed a tall tree and began to spin a web.

Even today, if you look very carefully, you will see that she is still spinning.

