

# Four Tales of Majjan Coyote



From Ohlone and other California Sources

# CUNNING

Right after the beginning of time, the sun god Gismen told all creatures that, when the sun rose the next morning, they would all be given their special gifts.

Coyote wanted to be sure he got the best ones. So he resolved to stay awake all night and be first in line when the sun rose.

But as the night lagged on, Coyote felt his eyelids droop closed again and again. He was resolved to stay awake so as to be first in line when the sun arose.

# CUNNING

So he sharpened two sticks and propped his eyelids open.

“That should do it!” said Coyote to himself, licking his chops in self-satisfaction.

But sleep was too strong for Coyote. As he fell to the earth asleep, the sticks twisted about and pinned his eyelids closed. So when Gismen arose in the east, Coyote slept on.

# CUNNING

As the day went on, Gismen dispensed all his gifts to the other creatures.

The bear gloried in his powerful frame and sharp claws.



The meadowlark proudly sang her new song.

Even the skunk smirked over his special ability.



As the day turned into evening, all the creatures noticed Coyote fast asleep in a manzanita bush.

# CUNNING

“Ha! Coyote thinks he is so clever. Now let's wake him up and tell him that he missed out on getting a special gift from Gismen,” said Deer. “We'll have a good laugh at Coyote's expense!”

So the bear swatted Coyote, and the mosquito buzzed in his ear and the crab pinched his nose.



# CUNNING

Coyote leaped up with a start. He rushed around and around, crying, “Oh no! Oh no! I am being attacked in the darkness of a dream. Gismen save me! Gismen wake me up!”

At first Gismen was laughing with all the rest. But finally the god took pity on Coyote and plucked the stakes from his eyelids.

When he could see again, Coyote instantly figured out what had happened. But rather than snarling angrily, or going off in a huff, he tucked his scrawny tail between his legs and began to weep.

# CUNNING

“Oh no, oh no!” cried Coyote. “Now every one else has a gift and I am left with nothing. Is there no gift at all left for me, Great Gismen?”

“None at all,” replied the Sun God. “And it serves you right for trying such a stupid trick. I thought you were supposed to be the clever one. Why would you pin your eyes shut with sharpened sticks?”

# CUNNING

Coyote saw that all the other creatures were still laughing at him. But he restrained his rage, and began to cry.

“Ah, yes, how could I have been so stupid?” he said through his mock-tears. “It is as you say: I am a great fool. I had hoped to keep your glorious rays from burning my eyes, Oh Great Gismen. But I now see that I acted foolishly. Everyone can receive the rays of your kindness without suffering hurt. I have acted stupidly indeed.”



# CUNNING

Coyote looked out from the corner of his eye at Gismen, and saw that his act was working.

So he slinked up to the Sun God and whispered, “I know that all your gifts have been given away. And I don't think that any of these creatures will ever give me theirs willingly. So, as a favor to me, could you just increase my own cunning? That way I would be less likely in the future to do such a crazy thing as pinning my own eyelids shut.”

# CUNNING

Gismen considered this request. He knew what Coyote was up to.

But the Sun God felt pity for such a sorry-looking creature that had no powerful limbs or lovely song or wings for flight.

So he granted Coyote the boon he asked for.



# CUNNING

As soon as Coyote felt the flush of his new power, he turned to his fellow creatures and said with a smile, “Well, you all seem to have the better of me today. But don't be surprised if you may come to regret laughing at my stupidity. Gismen has given me a gift worth more than everything he gave to you!”

# CUNNING

When the creatures heard Coyote's boast, they fell to arguing among themselves.

“What could be greater than my strength?” roared the bear.

“What could be greater than my marvelous fishcatching beak?” exclaimed the pelican.



“And what could be better than my little family of gatherers?” squeaked Mouse.




# CUNNING

But while they were arguing and boasting among themselves, the creatures did not notice when Coyote sheared off part of Bear's coat to make a nice mat to lie on.

Nor did Pelican notice when Coyote smuggled a fish right out of his big beak.

Nor did Mouse hear the tiny squawk when Coyote gobbled up two of her little ones.

# CUNNING

But when Coyote headed off into the manzanita bush, well-satisfied with himself, Hummingbird, who had seen everything, came streaking after him. 

“You may think that you are very clever and that no one saw you, Coyote,” said Hummingbird. “But I saw everything, and I heard everything you said to Gismen.”

# CUNNING

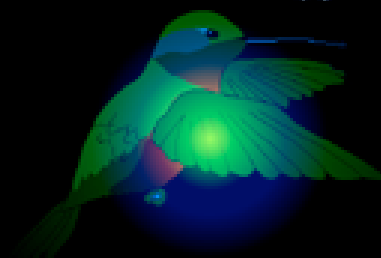
Coyote, who was so pleased with the way things were going, suddenly became angry at hearing that Hummingbird knew all about his tricks.

So, in a rage, he leaped up and swallowed Hummingbird whole.

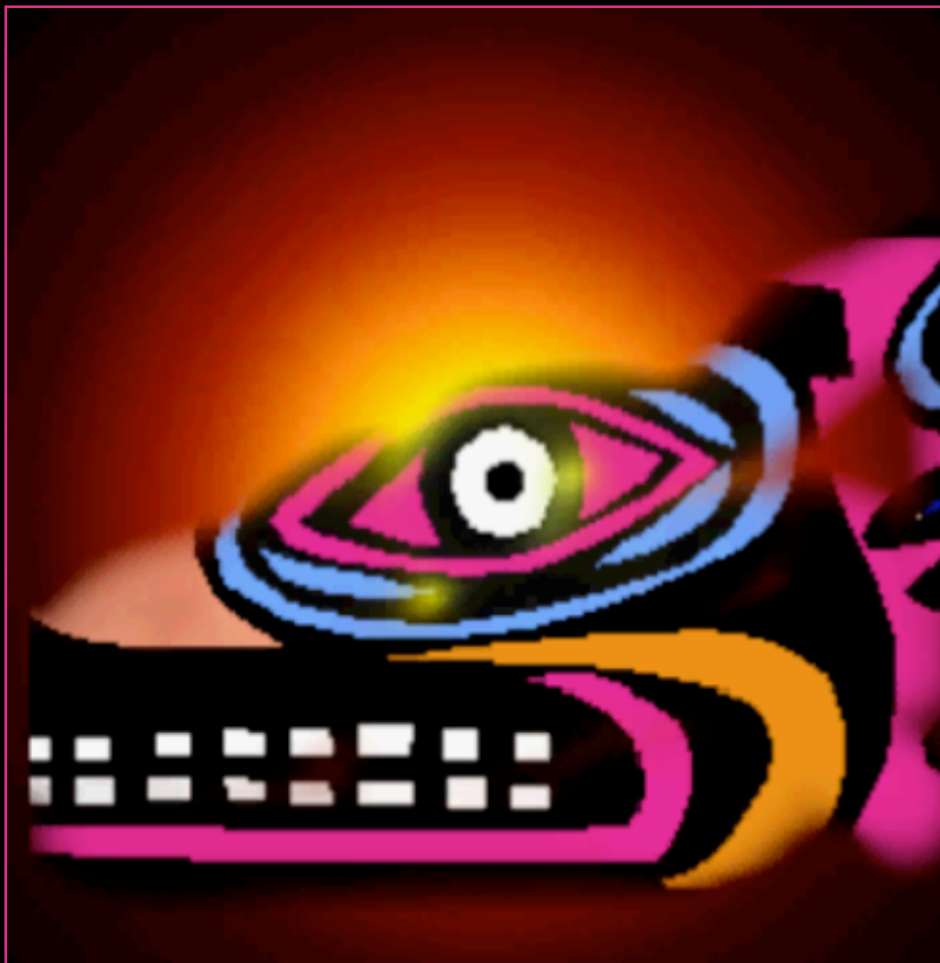
“There! That will stop the little busy-body,” thought Coyote as he crept off to enjoy the day's spoils.

# CUNNING

But Coyote was mistaken. That did not stop Hummingbird, as you shall hear in a later tale.







Invitation Coyotes  
Advice

# INVOCATION OF COYOTE

So you've come to me for advice? My friend, you couldn't have done better.

Brother Eagle and Sister Hummingbird have their own ideas about life, of course. But my wisdom is seasoned by generations of living on the ground, as you do.

Life with dirt underfoot is treacherous, seeker, as you well know already. Not strength nor love will get you your heart's desire.

But cunning will.

So heed me.



COYOTE



FIXES YOU  
WITH A STARE

To begin with, let me tell you about **anger**, since rage is the worst enemy of cunning. **Anger** is a short madness, and should be cured in solitude.

Furthermore, if you can't or won't bite, don't show your teeth.

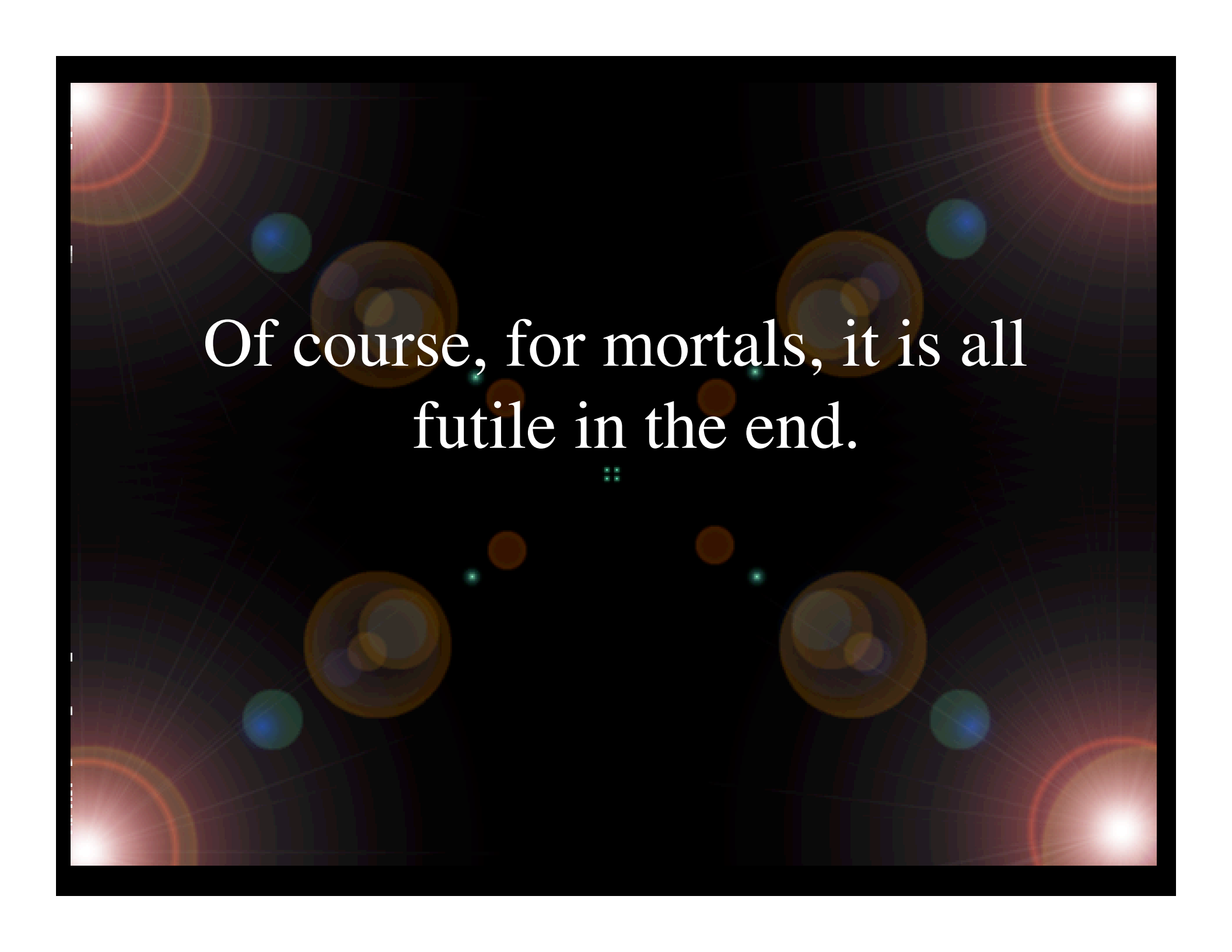
Shrewdness is better than strength; and real shrewdness is always remembering what you want.

- Now then: It is on the path that you do not fear that the wild beast catches you. So learn from me that you always deserve the consequences of your own actions.
- To be cunning is therefore to be wise, and channeled fear is the birthplace of wisdom.

THE

WIND

SIGNS



Of course, for mortals, it is all  
futile in the end.

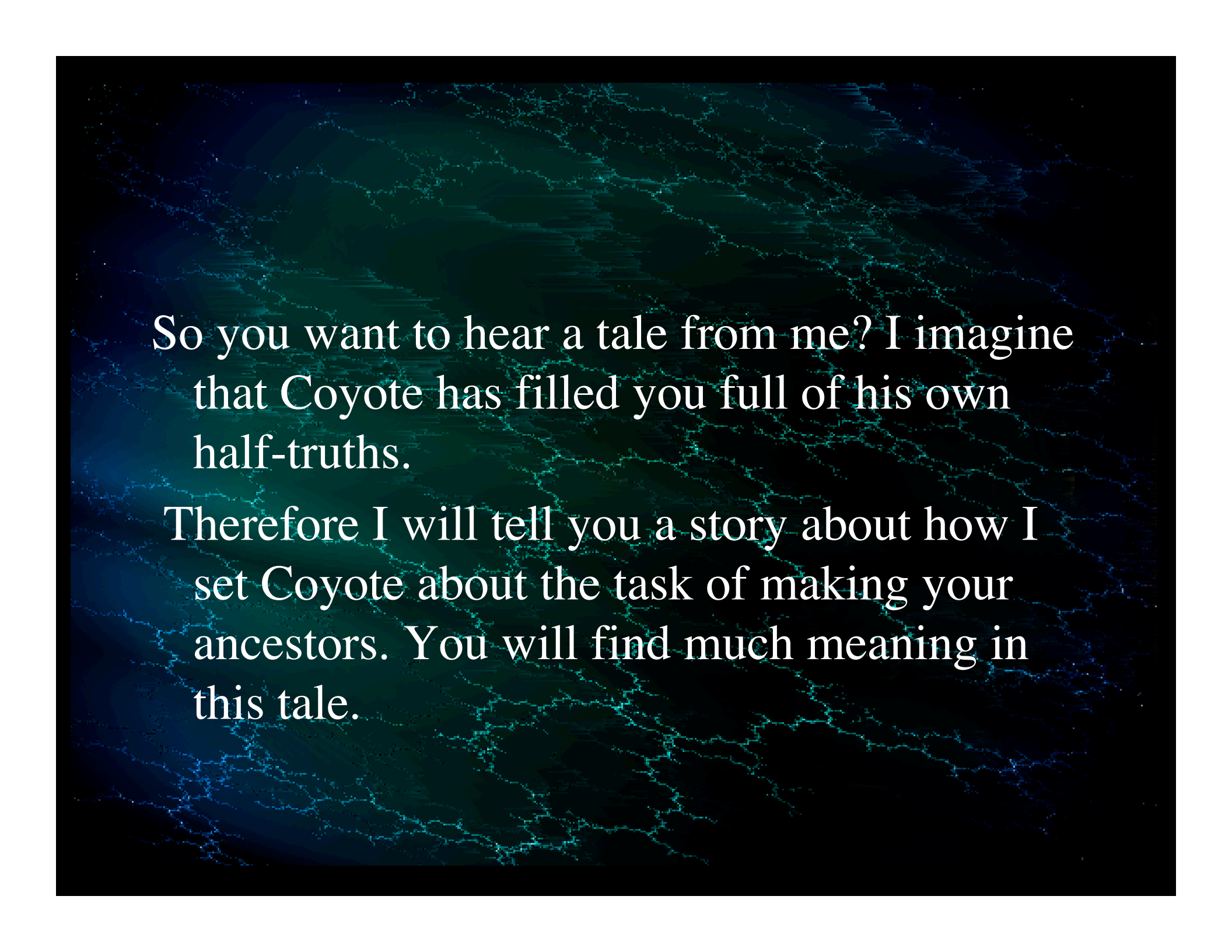






LIKE DIAMONDS  
WE ARE CUT  
WITH OUR OWN DUST





So you want to hear a tale from me? I imagine that Coyote has filled you full of his own half-truths.

Therefore I will tell you a story about how I set Coyote about the task of making your ancestors. You will find much meaning in this tale.

After the great flood, I sent Coyote down Mount Tamalpais to see what he could see.

“I see dry land now,” said Coyote after he returned, “and I see a woman by one of the new freshwater rivers.”

“Very well,” I said to Coyote, “You shall make children with her so that there will be people on the earth.”

Coyote considered this. “How will I make children from that woman?” he asked.

“From her knee?”

“No, Coyote,” I replied, “not from her knee.”

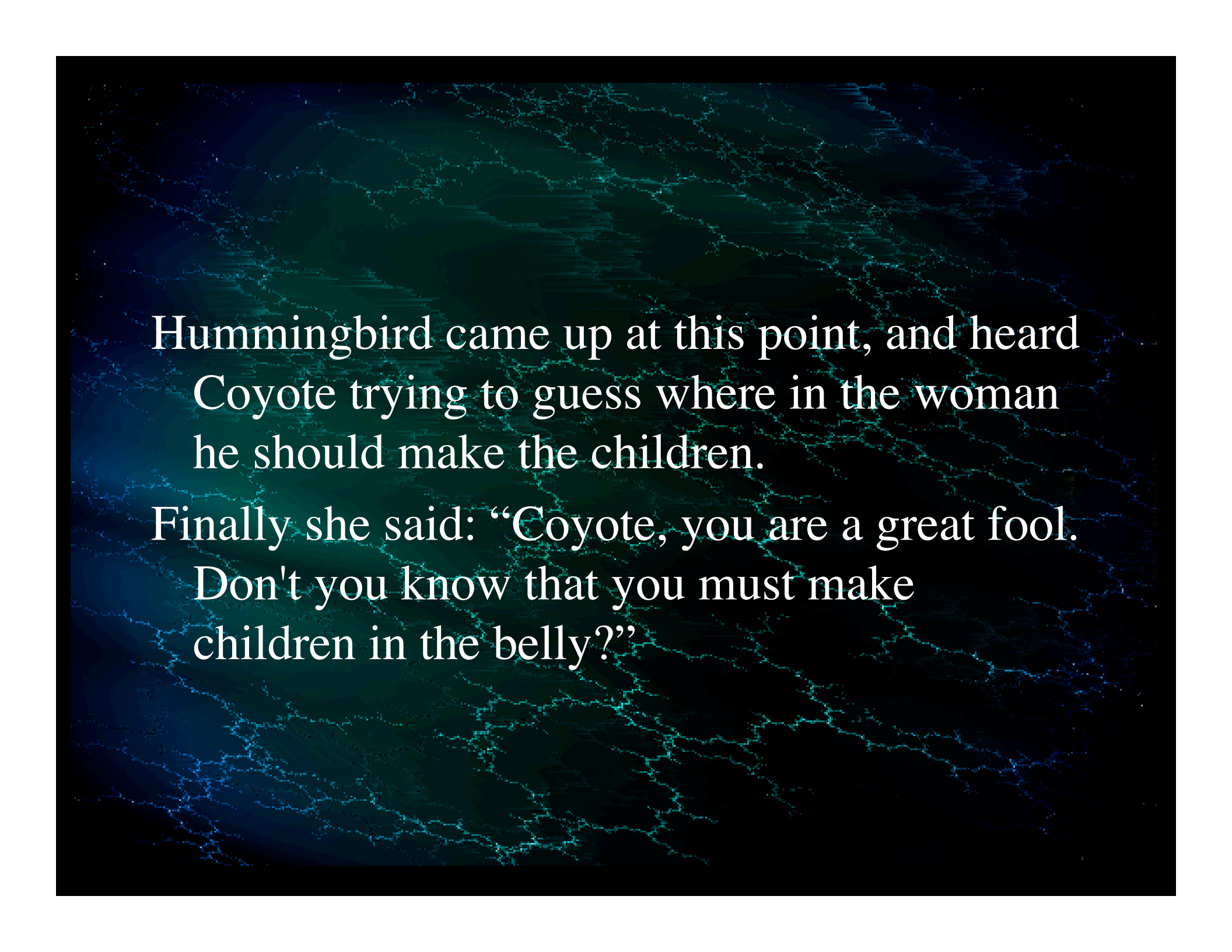
“Then from her elbow?” asked Coyote.

“No,” I said, laughing this time, “Not from there either.

I thought you were the clever one, Coyote.

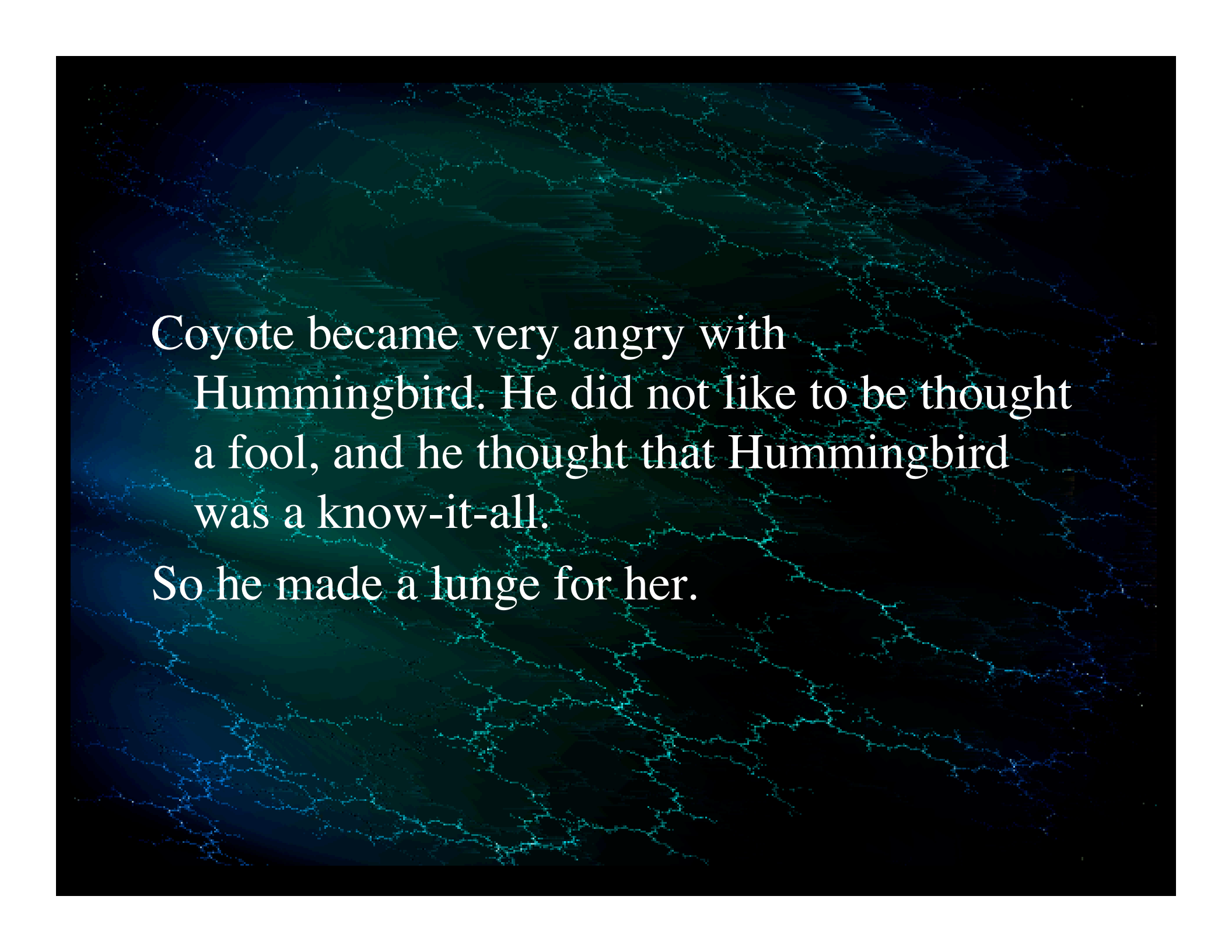
You are certainly not so clever right now.”

Coyote guessed and guessed -- “the eyebrow? the toenail? the earlobe?” But none was right.



Hummingbird came up at this point, and heard Coyote trying to guess where in the woman he should make the children.


Finally she said: “Coyote, you are a great fool. Don't you know that you must make children in the belly?”



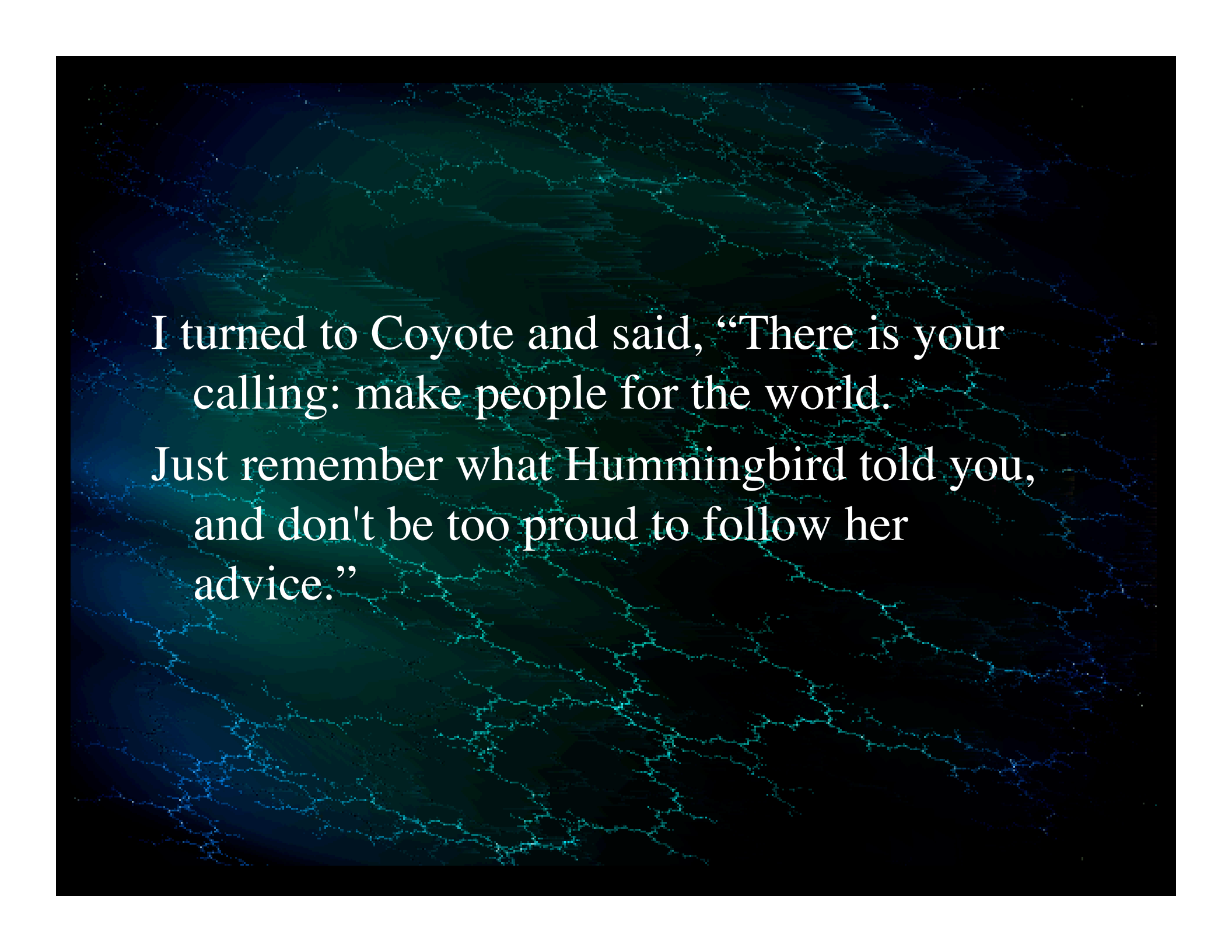
Coyote became very angry with  
Hummingbird. He did not like to be thought  
a fool, and he thought that Hummingbird  
was a know-it-all.

So he made a lunge for her.





But Hummingbird is the swiftest of all things.  
She darted under my wings where Coyote  
could not get at her.



I turned to Coyote and said, “There is your calling: make people for the world. Just remember what Hummingbird told you, and don't be too proud to follow her advice.”

So Coyote went to the woman and said,  
“Pick the bugs out of my fur.”

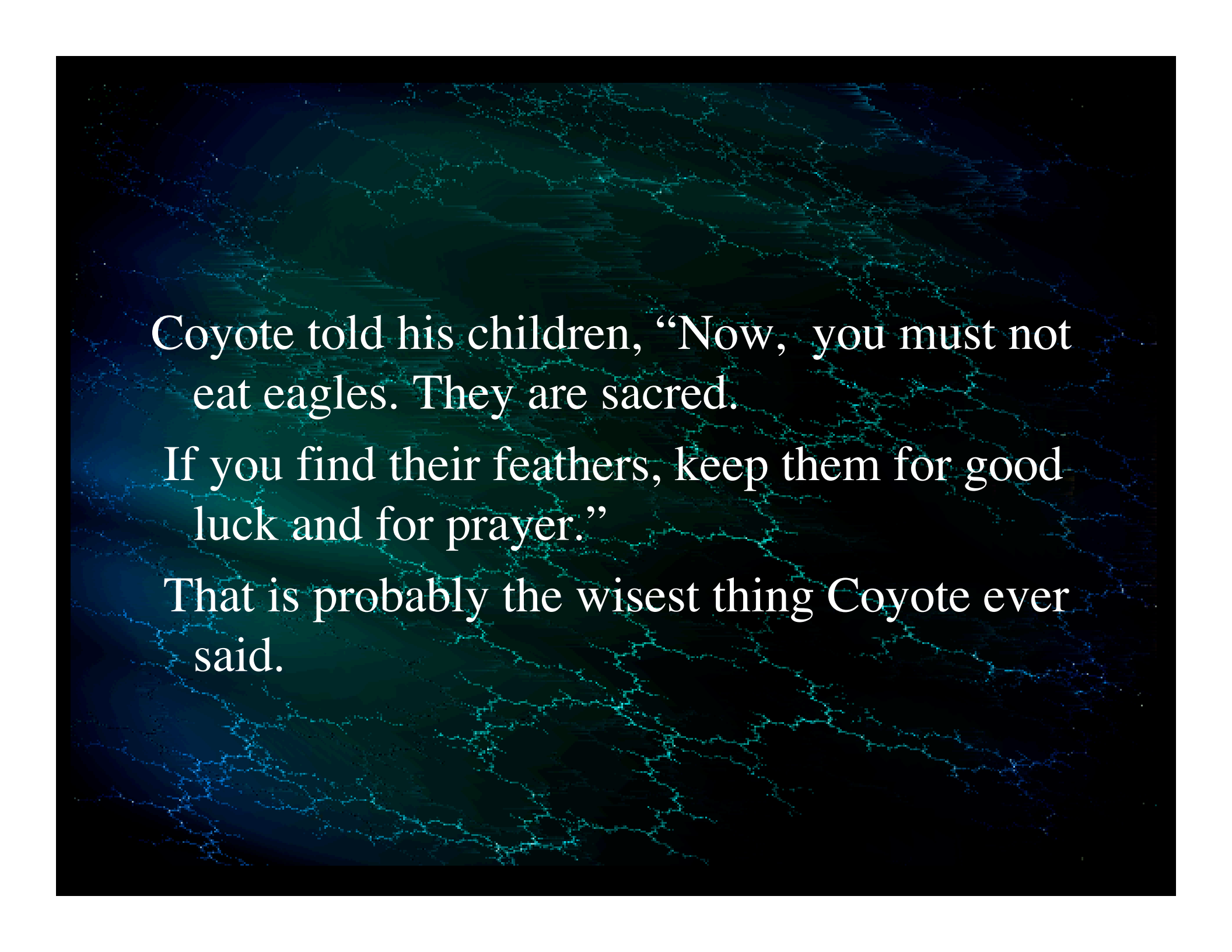
The woman did as she was told. But when  
she found a louse, she became afraid and  
tried to cast it into the river.

“No!” shouted Coyote. “Do not do that! Eat  
it! Eat my louse!”

So she put the louse in her mouth and swallowed it.

As a result, she had five babies. When the children grew up, Coyote gave them nets and bows and arrows and taught them how to prepare acorns for eating.

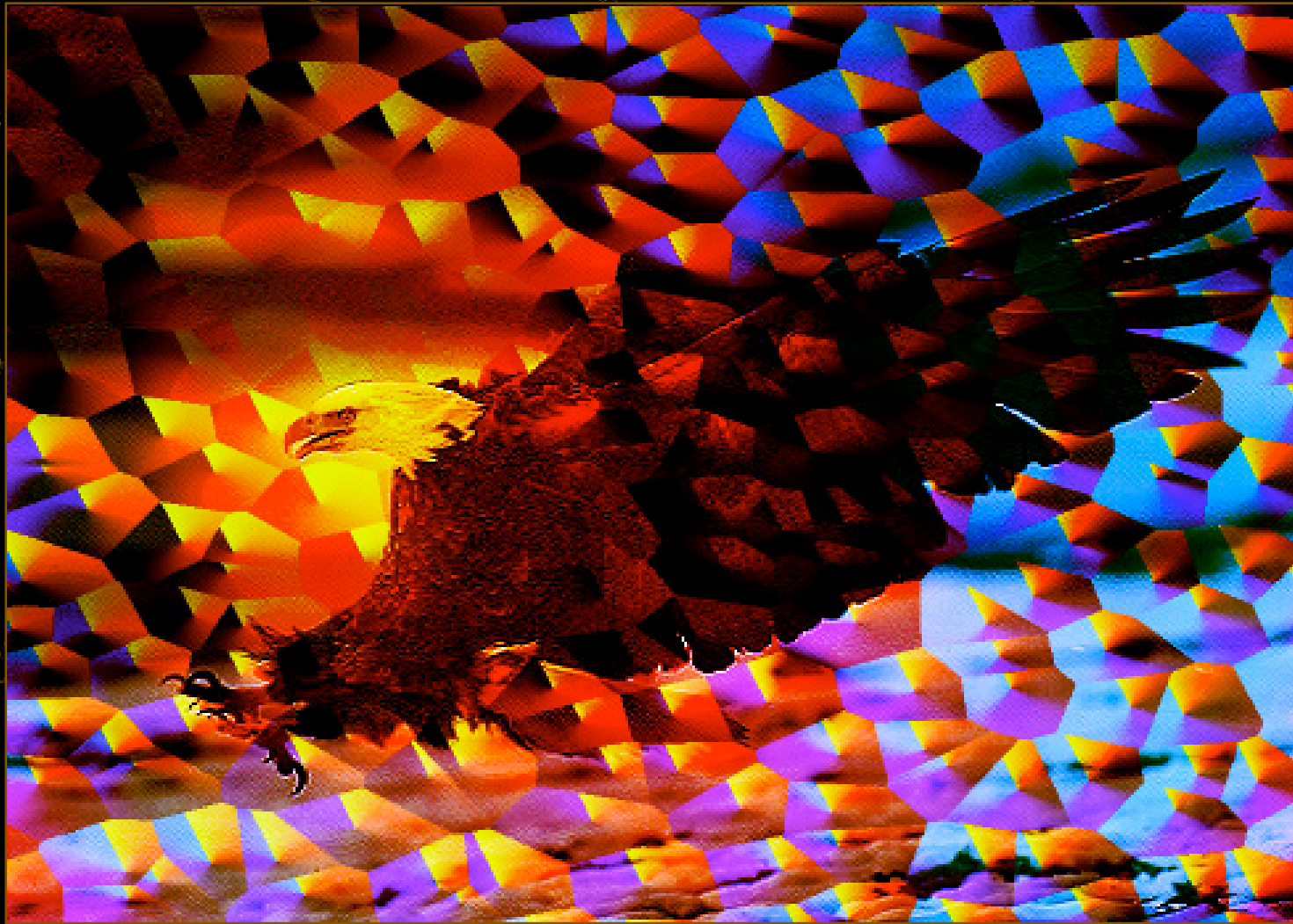
His children spread out over the land, and made the Ensen, Rumsien, Ekkheya, Kakonta and Wacharones people.



Coyote told his children, “Now, you must not eat eagles. They are sacred.

If you find their feathers, keep them for good luck and for prayer.”

That is probably the wisest thing Coyote ever said.

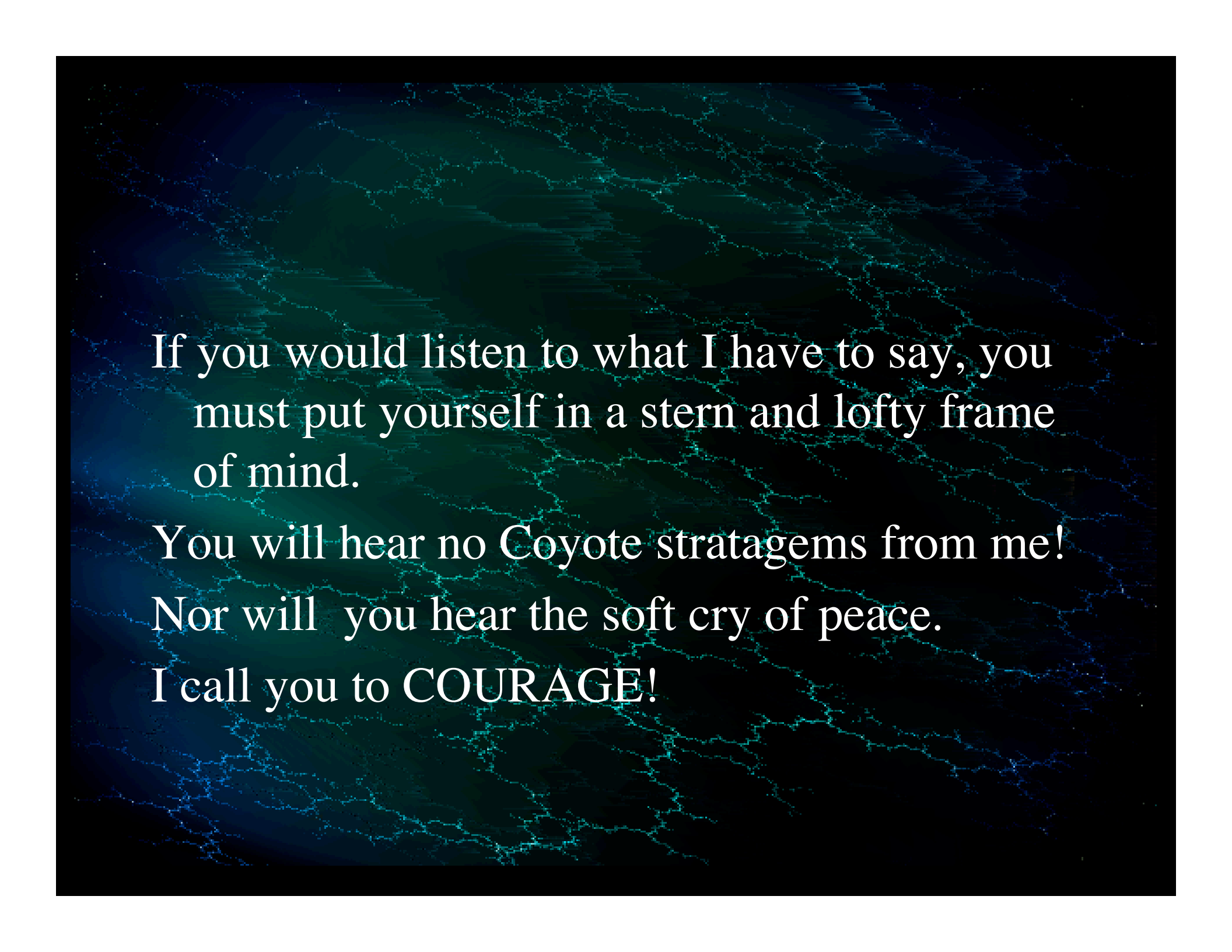


# Eagle's Counsel



Do not follow the Coyote and his path of  
dissembling and treachery.

There is a flavor of death in lies.



If you would listen to what I have to say, you  
must put yourself in a stern and lofty frame  
of mind.

You will hear no Coyote stratagems from me!  
Nor will you hear the soft cry of peace.

I call you to **COURAGE!**





All people desire courage and strength,  
though some seem to scorn it.

I have laughed many a time over the  
weaklings who thought themselves good  
because they had lame paws.



One of your greatest  
sorrows will be that it is  
the best you can do.



**FINIS**

HUMMINGBIRDS  
TALE





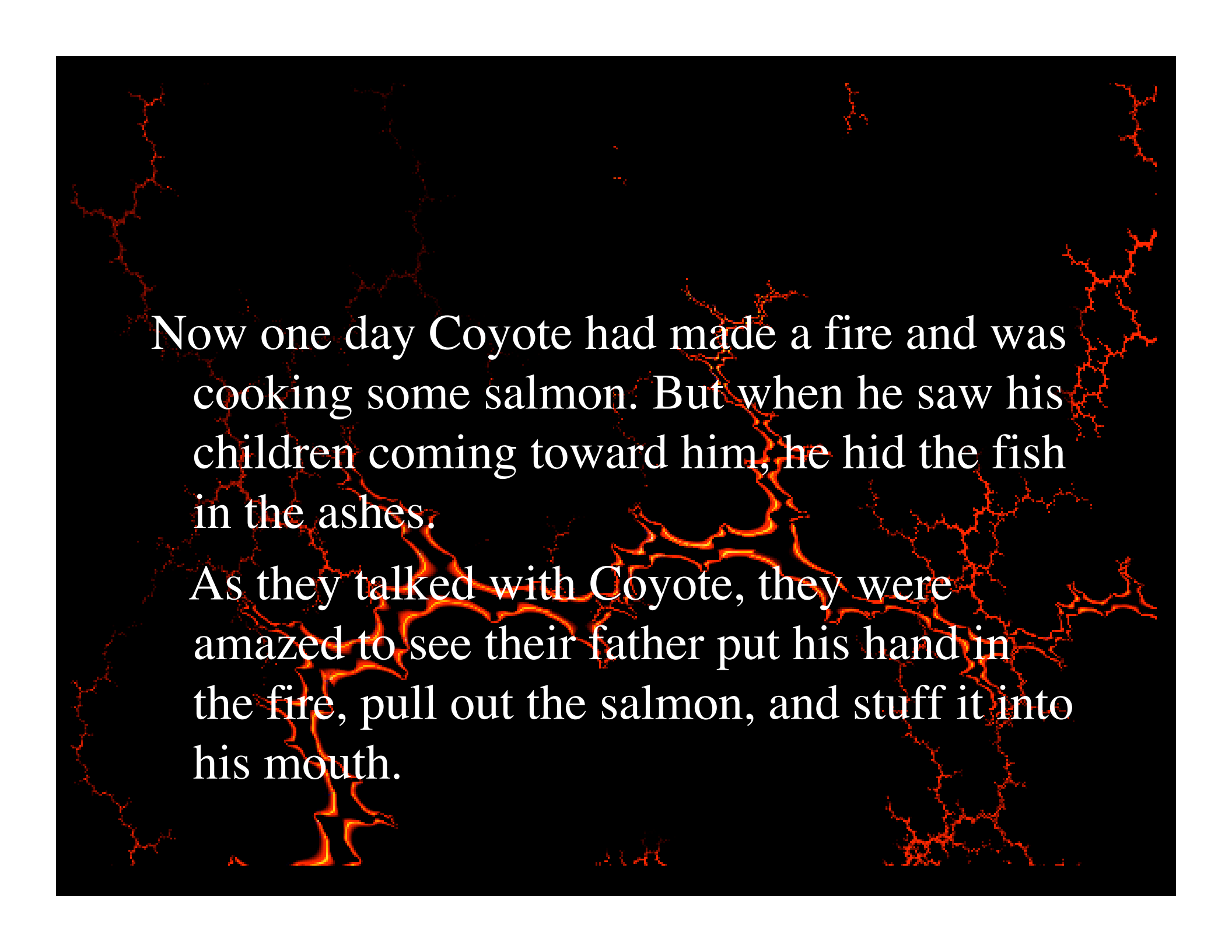
Eagle has told you about how Coyote created the first people. But Eagle did not mention that Coyote was a selfish father and had no love in his heart except for himself.

So hear my tale, and learn just how mean and greedy was the first father of all people.

The background of the slide is black, featuring several jagged, glowing orange and red lightning bolts that appear to be striking down. The bolts are scattered across the frame, with some being more prominent than others. The text is centered and written in a white, serif font.

Coyote knew the trick of making fire by using a fire stick, a drill board, and fine powder tinder.

But he would not teach what he knew to his human children. He wanted to make them always come and ask him for fire.



Now one day Coyote had made a fire and was cooking some salmon. But when he saw his children coming toward him, he hid the fish in the ashes.

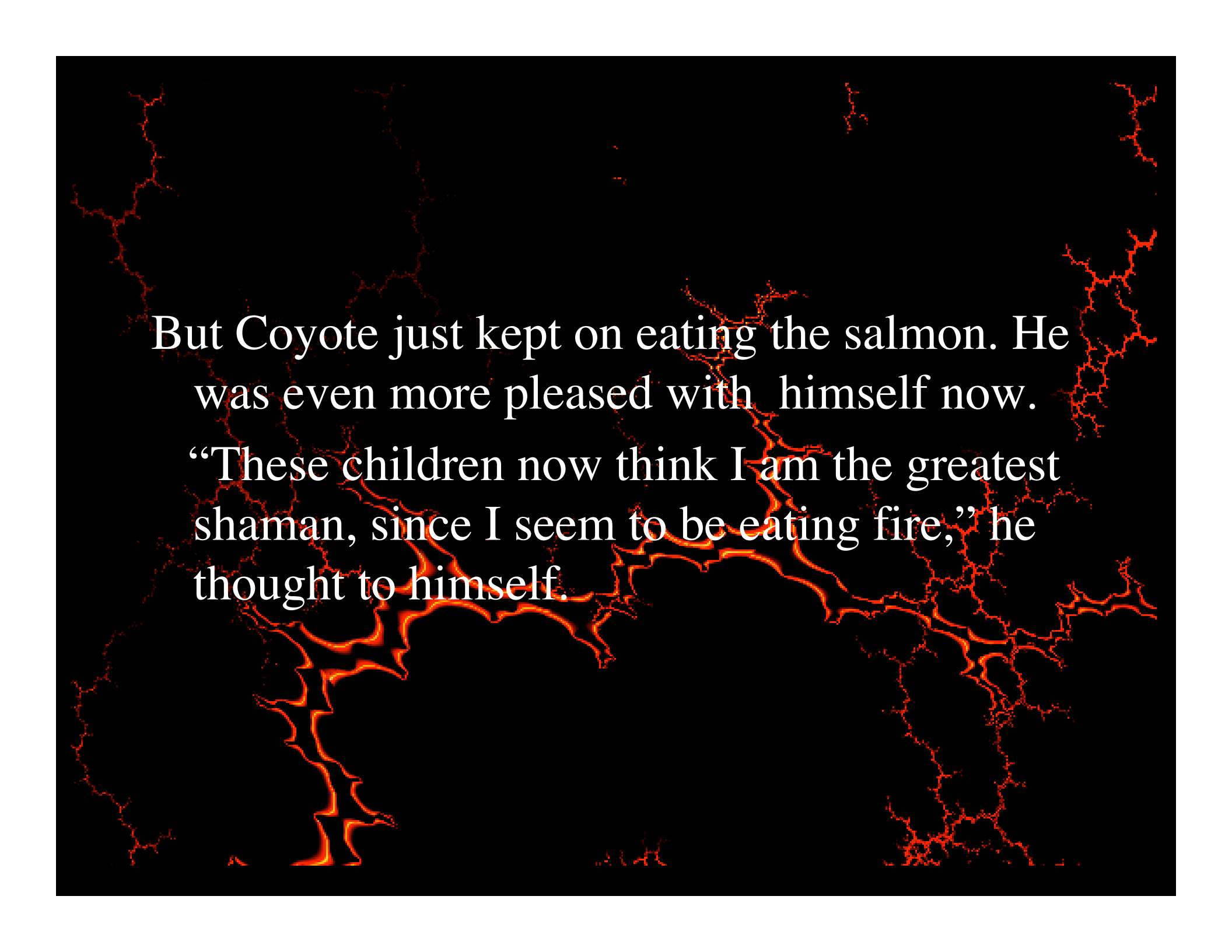
As they talked with Coyote, they were amazed to see their father put his hand in the fire, pull out the salmon, and stuff it into his mouth.





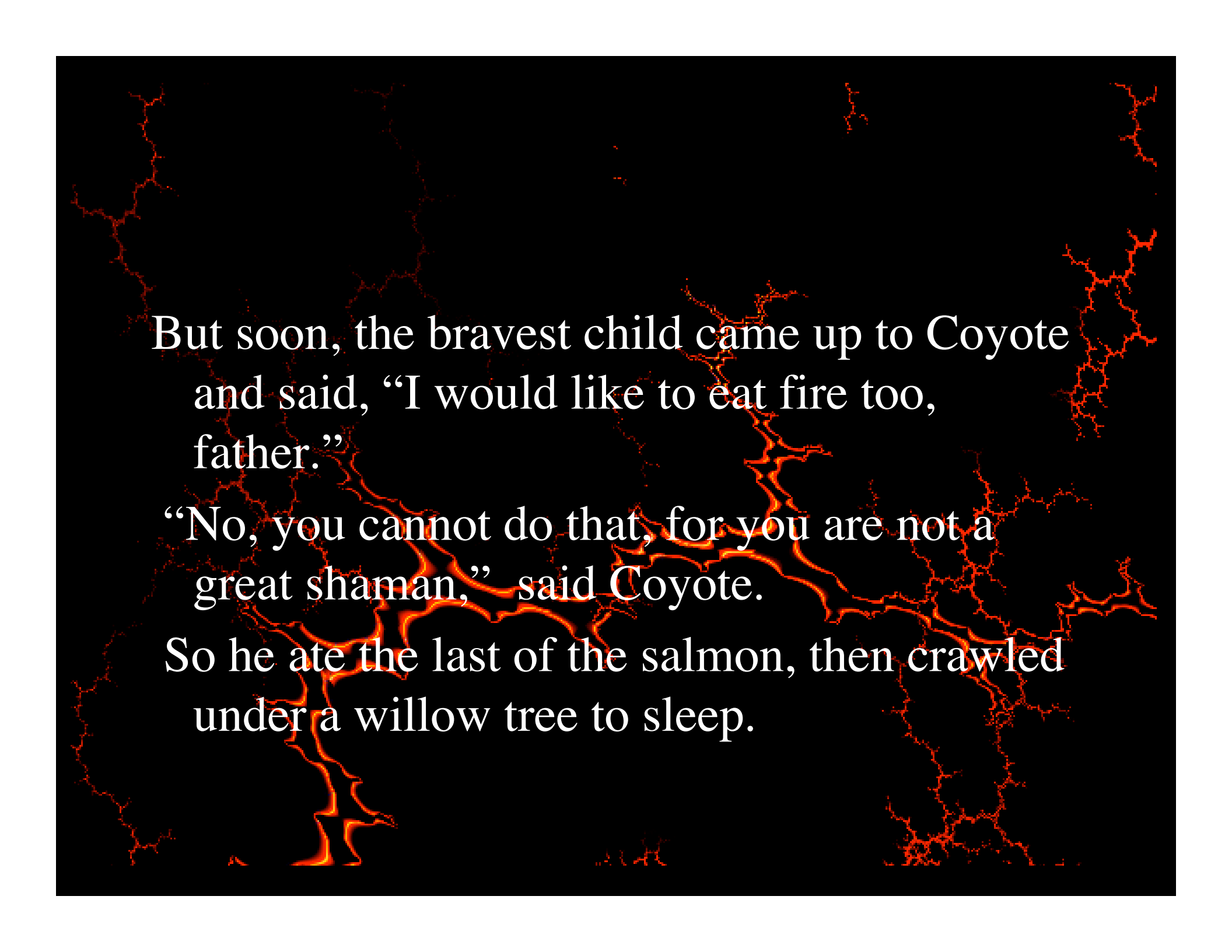
“Father! Father!!” they cried. “ Do not eat the fire! You will burn your mouth!”

As you can see, they cared much more for him than he did for them.



But Coyote just kept on eating the salmon. He was even more pleased with himself now.

“These children now think I am the greatest shaman, since I seem to be eating fire,” he thought to himself.



But soon, the bravest child came up to Coyote and said, “I would like to eat fire too, father.”

“No, you cannot do that, for you are not a great shaman,” said Coyote.

So he ate the last of the salmon, then crawled under a willow tree to sleep.

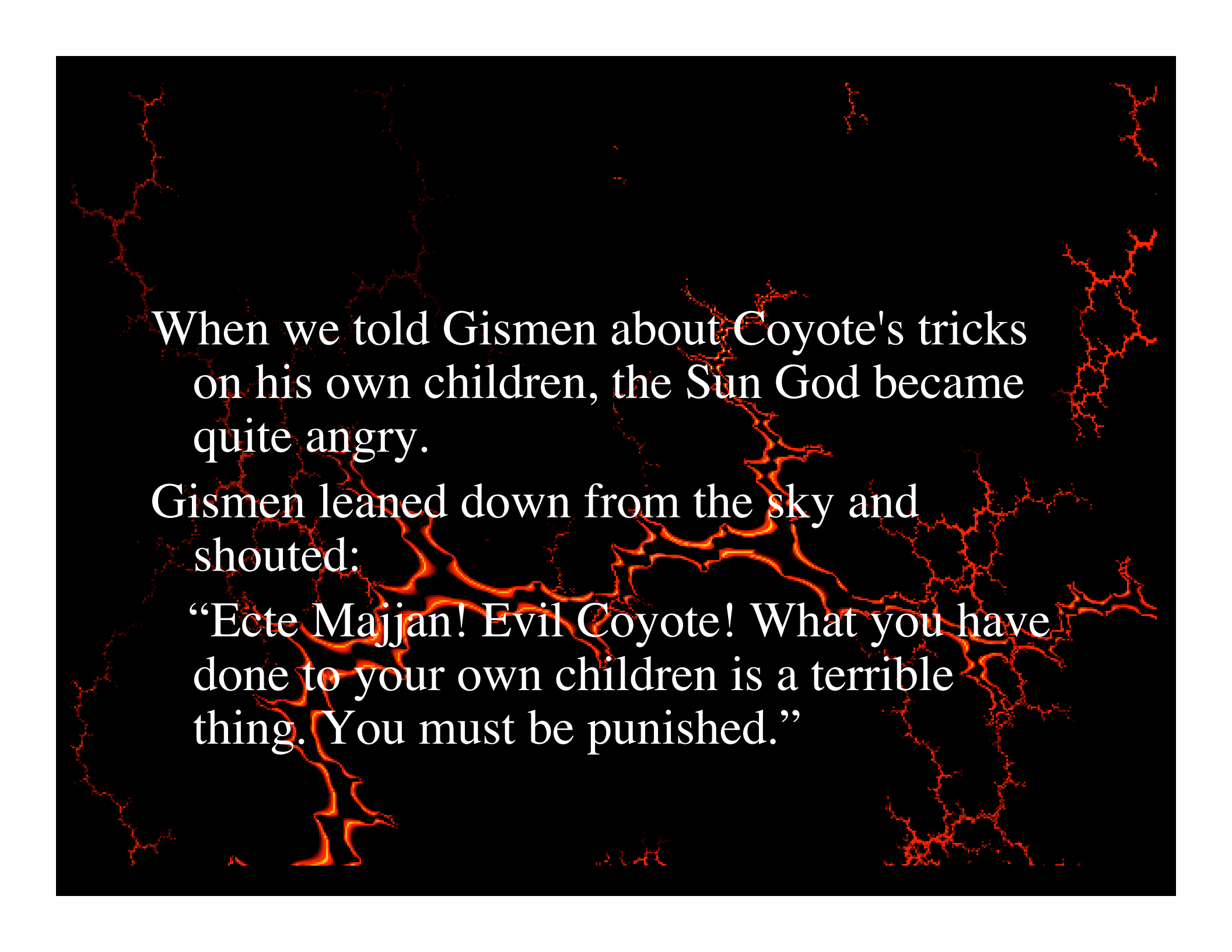


But the bravest child tried to eat the fire, and  
was badly burned.

I saw all this from a branch in the willow  
tree, and I can tell you I was disgusted with  
Coyote.

So I called on Eagle for a conference.

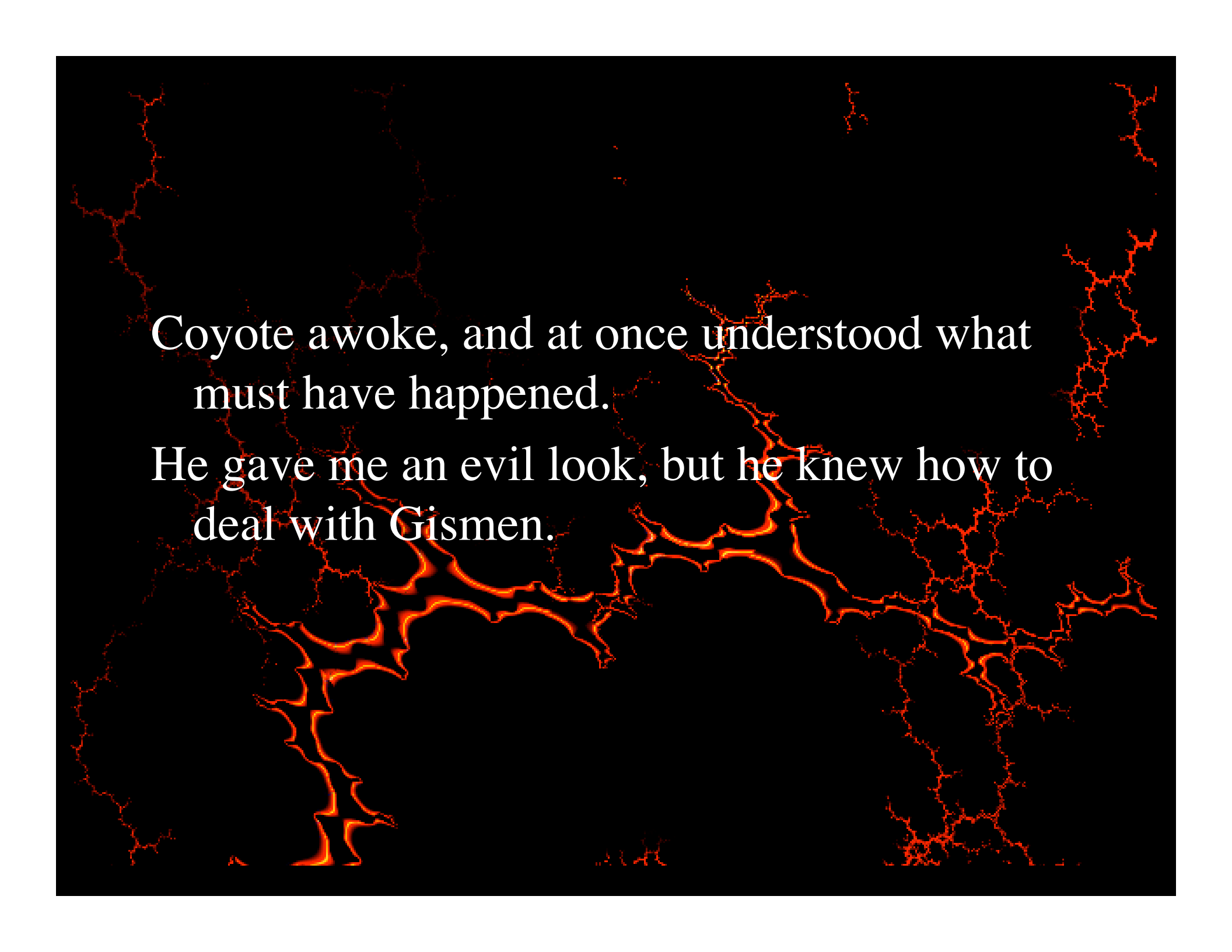
“We must take this to Gismen and ask what  
must be done,” said Eagle.



When we told Gismen about Coyote's tricks on his own children, the Sun God became quite angry.

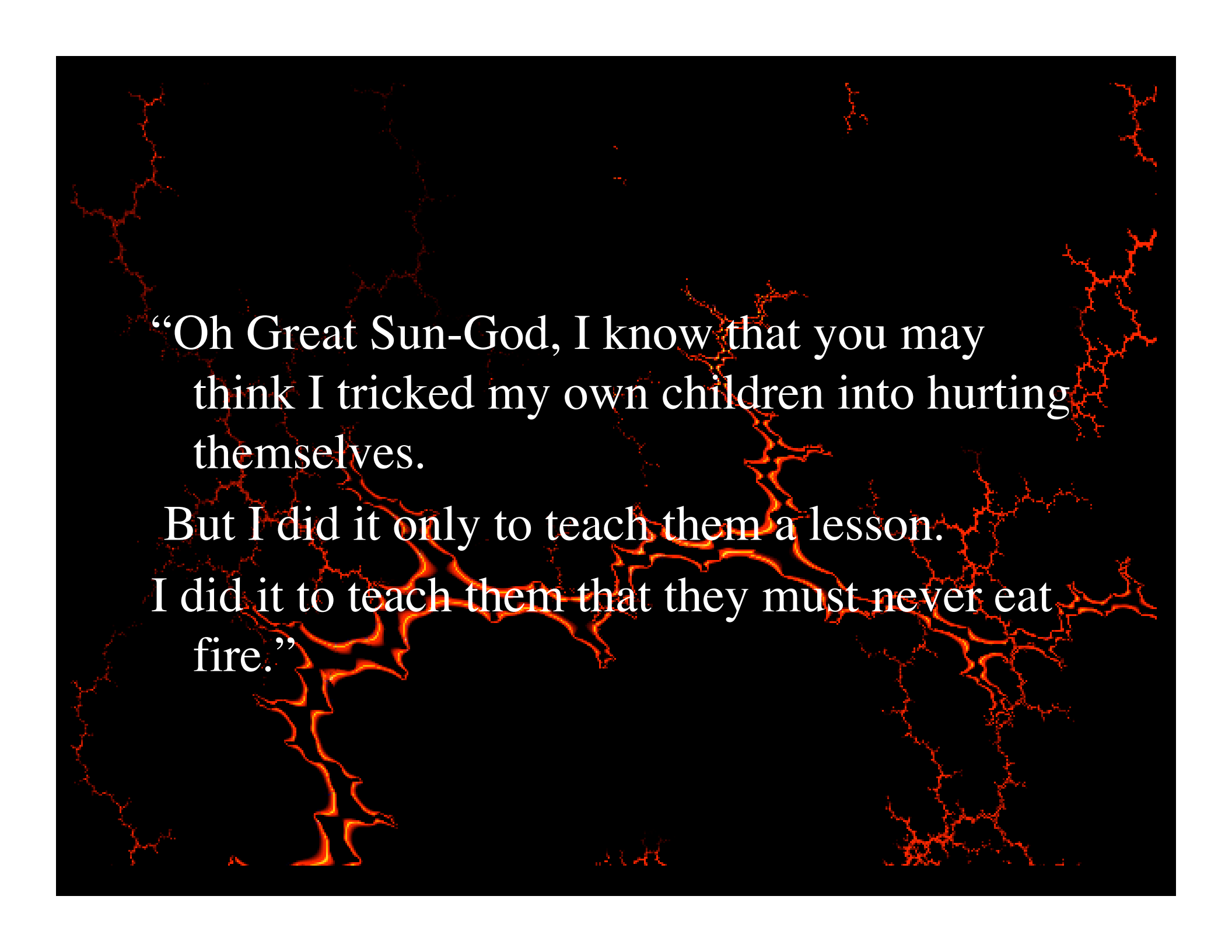
Gismen leaned down from the sky and shouted:

“Ecte Majjan! Evil Coyote! What you have done to your own children is a terrible thing. You must be punished.”



Coyote awoke, and at once understood what  
must have happened.

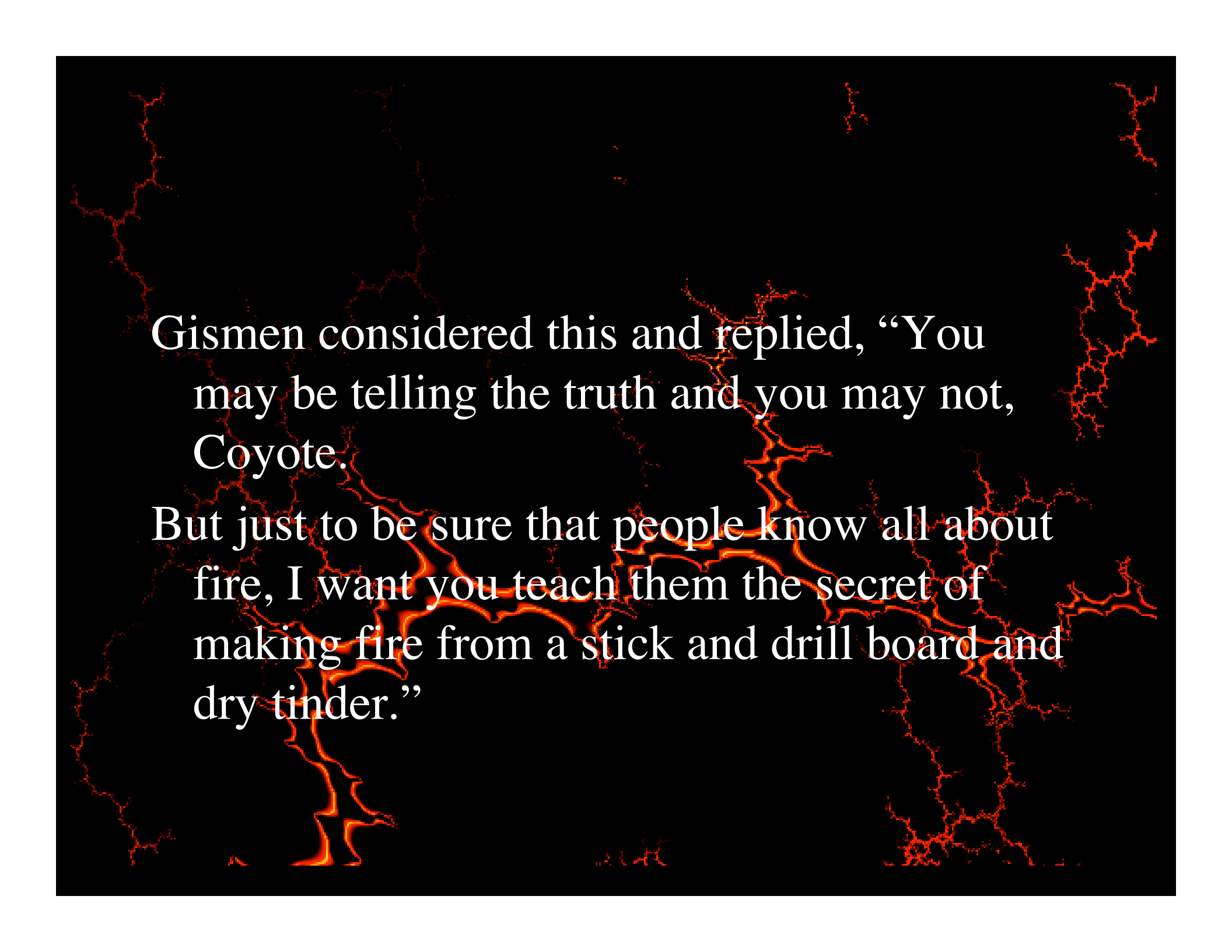
He gave me an evil look, but he knew how to  
deal with Gismen.

The background is a solid black field filled with intricate, glowing patterns of orange and red. These patterns resemble lightning bolts or the veins of a hot, molten rock, branching out in various directions across the frame. The colors are vibrant and contrast sharply with the black background.

“Oh Great Sun-God, I know that you may think I tricked my own children into hurting themselves.

But I did it only to teach them a lesson.

I did it to teach them that they must never eat fire.”



Gismen considered this and replied, “You may be telling the truth and you may not, Coyote.

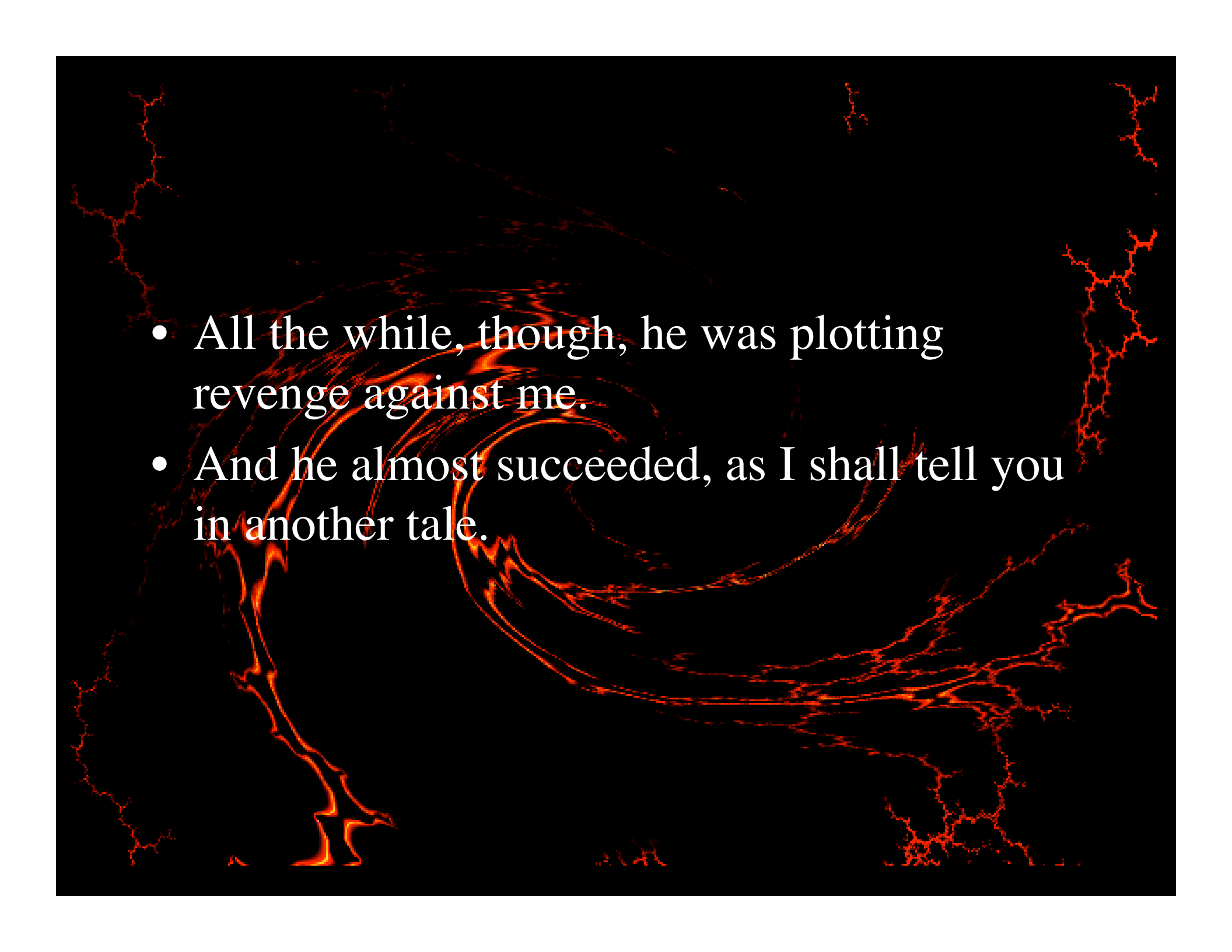
But just to be sure that people know all about fire, I want you teach them the secret of making fire from a stick and drill board and dry tinder.”

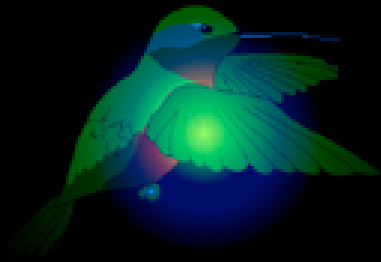




Coyote did not want to do this.

But he saw that Gismen was angry, and so he taught the trick of making fire to his children.

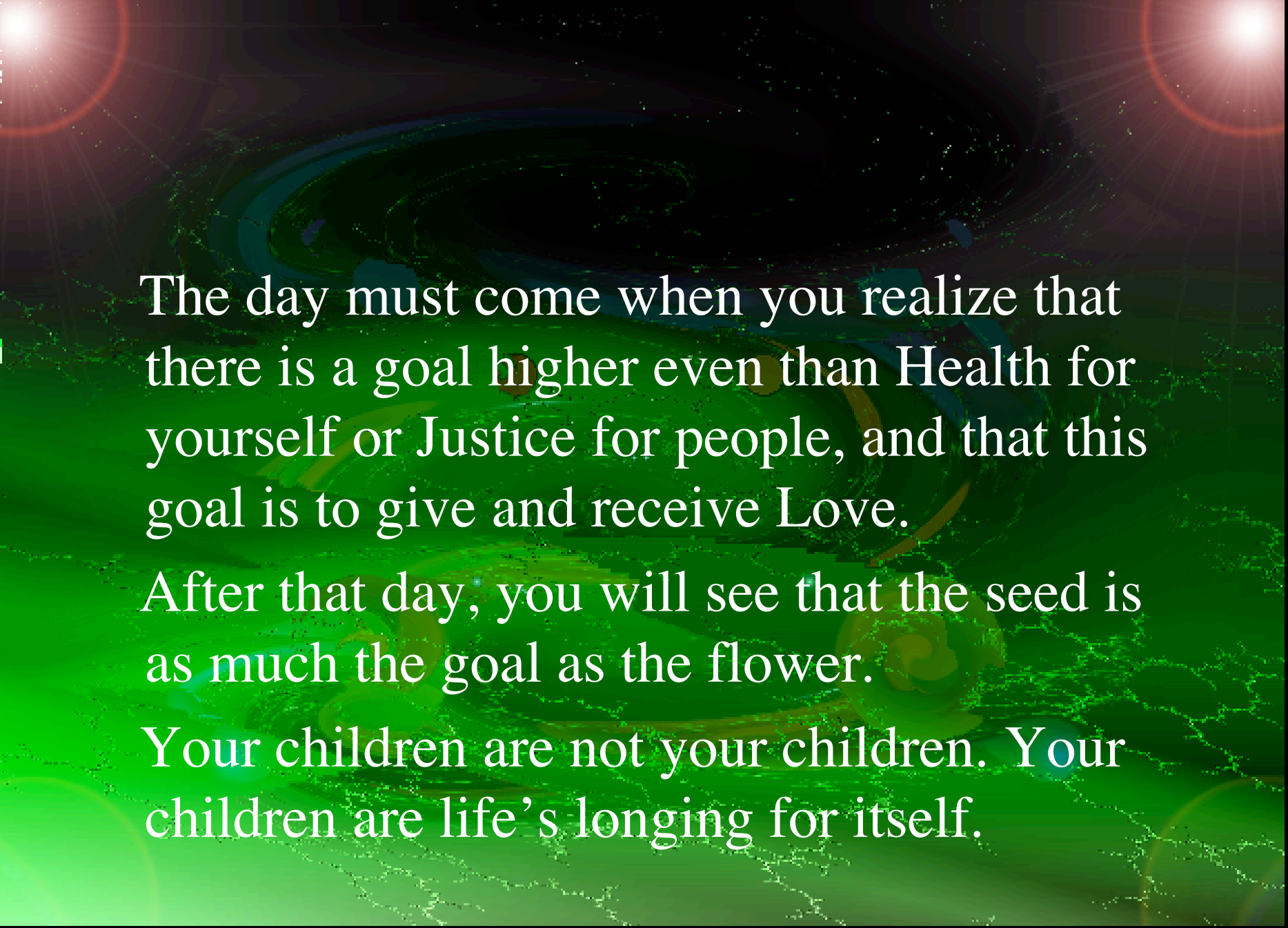
- 
- All the while, though, he was plotting revenge against me.
  - And he almost succeeded, as I shall tell you in another tale.



# Hummingbird's Counsel

The Coyote preaches craft, and the Eagle counsels courage.

- These have their place. But nothing can surpass the worth of a good heart.
- A good heart reveals itself as care -- delight in and concern for the welfare of those you care for.




The day must come when you realize that there is a goal higher even than Health for yourself or Justice for people, and that this goal is to give and receive Love.

After that day, you will see that the seed is as much the goal as the flower.

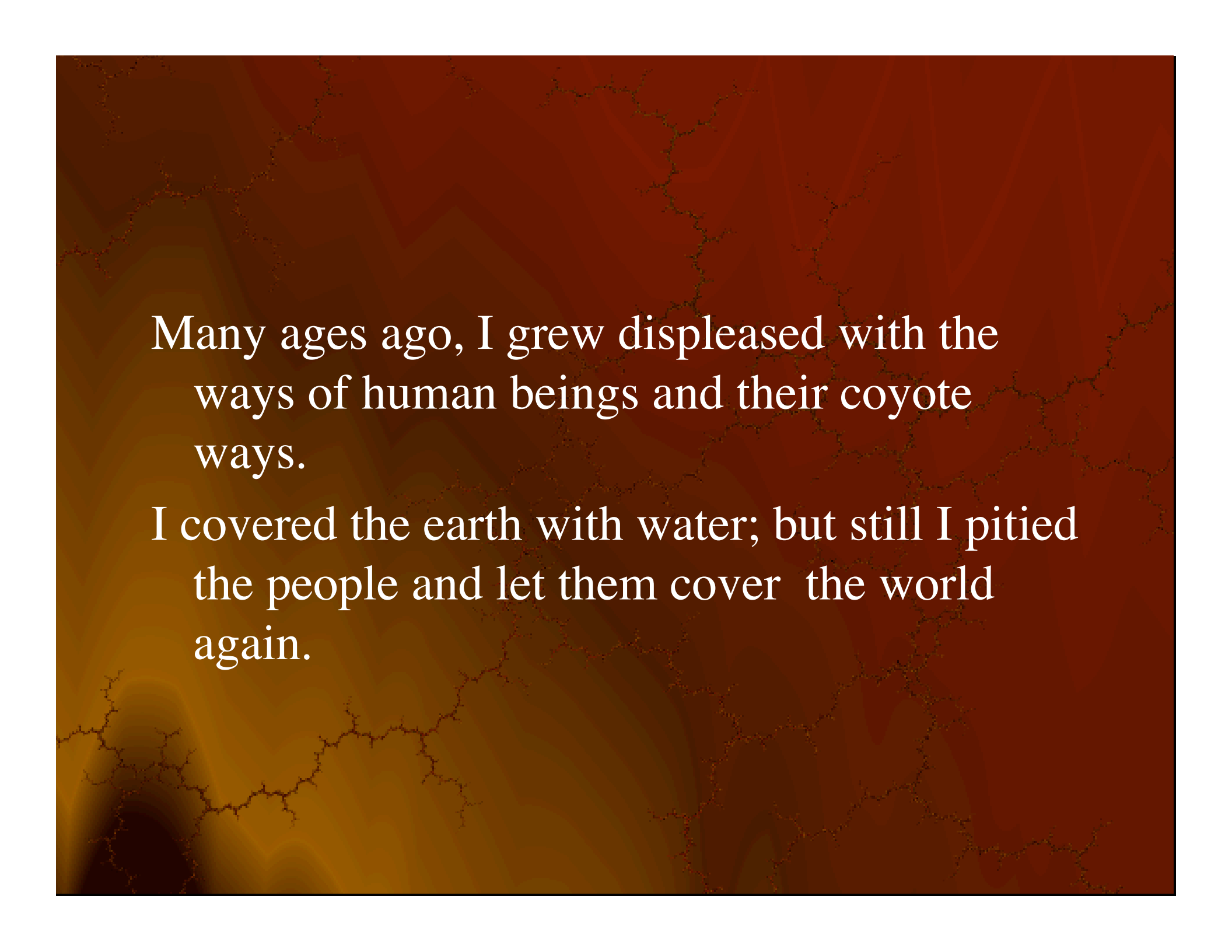
Your children are not your children. Your children are life's longing for itself.

A hummingbird is perched on a glowing green orb in the center of a swirling, ethereal landscape. The scene is dominated by vibrant green and blue colors, with a dark, starry background. Two bright, glowing suns or stars are visible in the upper corners, casting a soft light. The overall atmosphere is mystical and serene.

This is the wisdom that Hummingbird teaches  
you.  
Learn it by heart.




THE TALE OF  
GISMEN  
THE SUN GOD



Many ages ago, I grew displeased with the ways of human beings and their coyote ways.

I covered the earth with water; but still I pitied the people and let them cover the world again.





Finally I resolved to leave the world entirely.  
I called all the chiefs together and told them to  
prepare for an endless winter.  
Then I began my voyage southward down the  
heavens, never to return.

The people came to Hummingbird and cried,  
“Have mercy on us! Plead with Gismen to  
come back out of love for the human race!”

But though Hummingbird tried her best, she  
could not persuade me, and I continued my  
voyage south away from the world.

Then the people came to Eagle. “Help us, Eagle! Gismen is leaving, and we shall die of the cold!”

“You need courage,” Eagle told them. “Fate cannot be avoided. Meet your deaths bravely.”

But the people did not want to die. So all the chiefs met again.

“Though he has tricked us often before,” said the greatest chief, “We must call on Coyote to help us if he will. Otherwise a winter without end will come upon us.”

So the people went to Coyote and asked him for his advice.

“Go to your homes and start fires,” he advised. “Throw acorns into the fire and do not eat them.

Let the smoke go up to Gismen.

The delicious smell might make him come back.”

So the people burned all their acorns. But still I continued my voyage south.

The chiefs returned to Coyote and complained. “That did not work, Coyote. What else can we try?”

“Put rabbit meat and oysters on the fire. Perhaps Gismen will like that better,” said Coyote.

But I continued sinking to the south. It grew very cold.

The chiefs returned to Coyote once again.

“You might try cooking Eagle and Hummingbird,” suggested Coyote. “Perhaps Gismen would like that.”

But the chiefs knew it would be very wrong to kill those sacred birds. So they conferred again.

This time the chief of the smallest, weakest tribe had a suggestion.

“Coyote does not seem worried about Gismen's leaving. Let us see what Father Coyote is doing about it,” he suggested.



So the chiefs sent two scouts to observe  
Coyote secretly.

They crept up carefully and saw Coyote  
smoking a pipe.

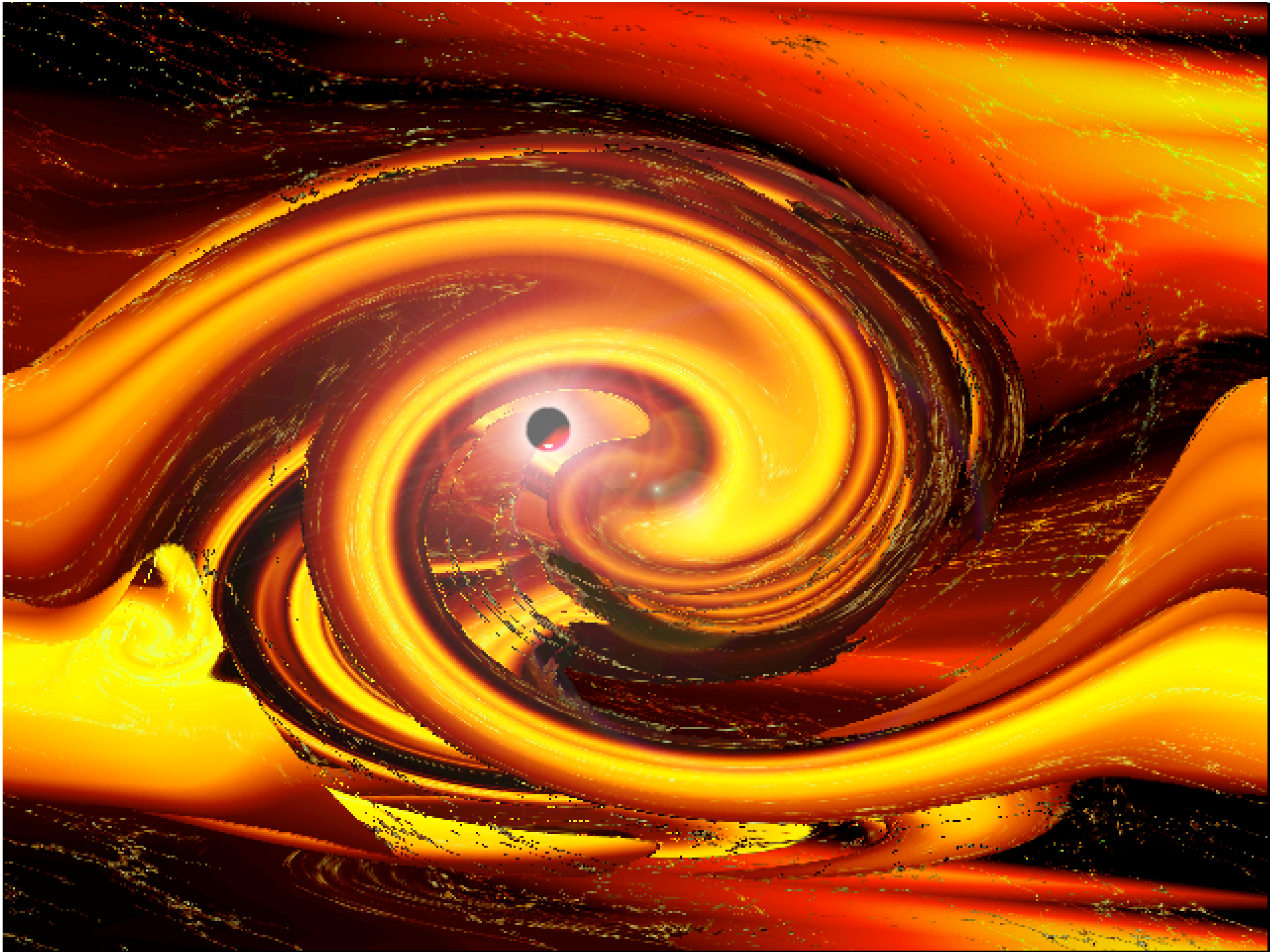
The good-smelling tobacco smoke drifted up  
to me in the south.

The scouts returned and told the meeting of the chiefs, ‘Coyote is sending tobacco smoke to Gismen.’”  
So the chiefs returned to their villages and ordered everyone to smoke tobacco and send the smoke into the skies.



When I inhaled that delicious odor, I decided to return back to the land of the people so that their small fires could send up clouds of sweet-smelling smoke to me.

And now, every year at the winter solstice, I begin my return voyage so that I might receive the homage of smoke from my people.



The background features a complex, abstract pattern of overlapping, curved shapes. The color palette is dominated by deep reds, vibrant greens, and bright oranges, all set against a dark, almost black, background. The overall effect is reminiscent of a stylized, glowing nebula or a series of concentric, swirling bands of light. The text is centered over this pattern.

# INVOCATION OF GISMEN



When your days are blue  
And heaven burns to warm  
Your small and softboned body,  
It is warm and bright and big.



When your days are green  
And the sun brightens your world  
And tans your new ripe body,  
It is hot and white and strong.

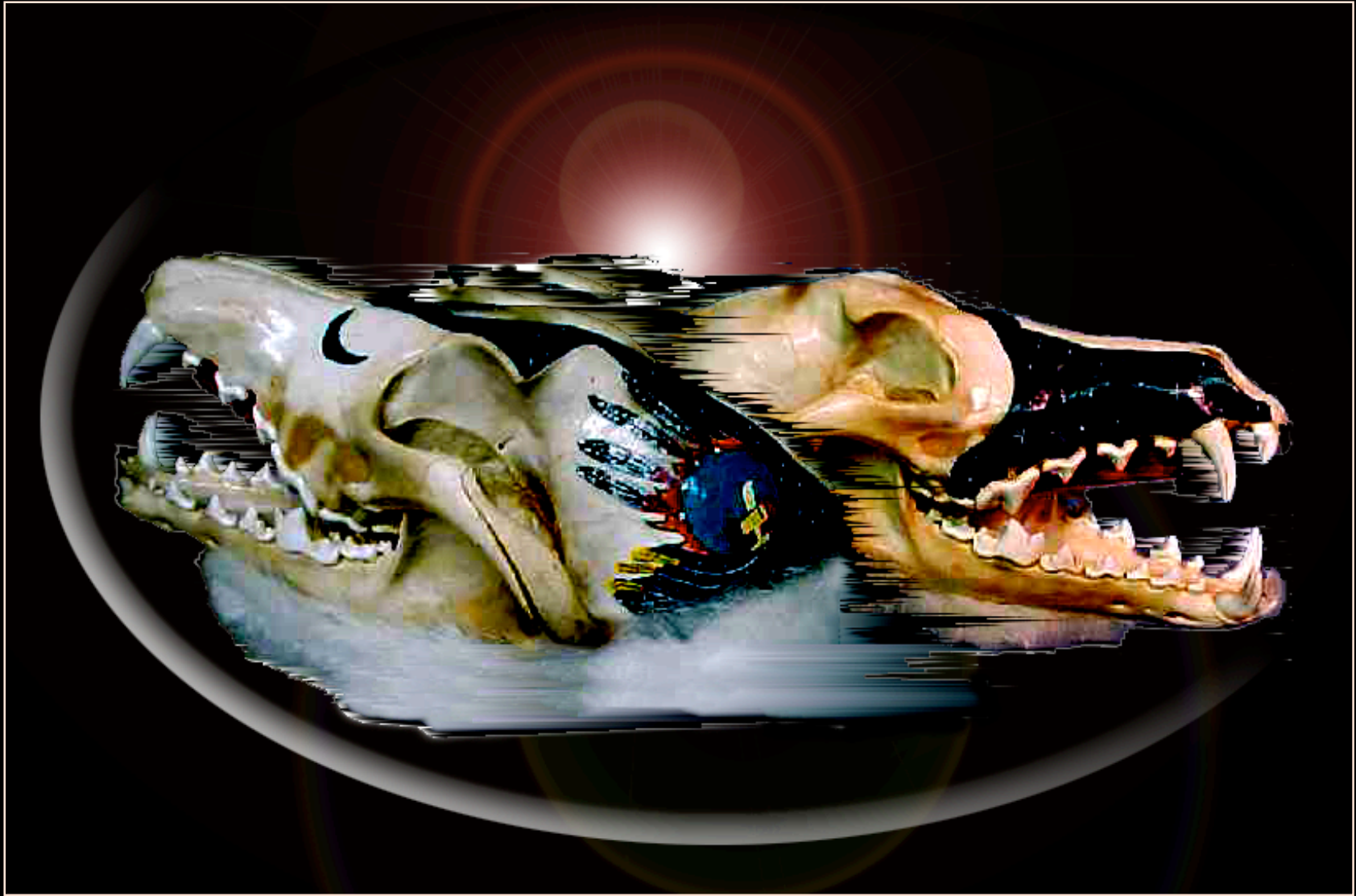


When your days are orange  
And the sun, as always, shines  
Spilling over the companion planets,  
It is dull and cool and misty.



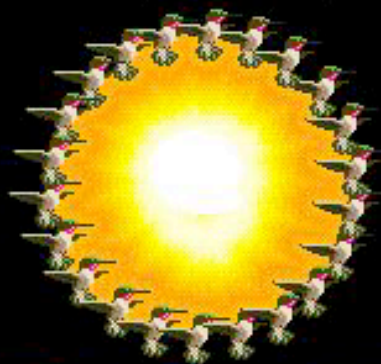
When your days are gray  
And the heavens only glow  
To spread cold light  
to anyone at all,  
Your days  
are  
gone.





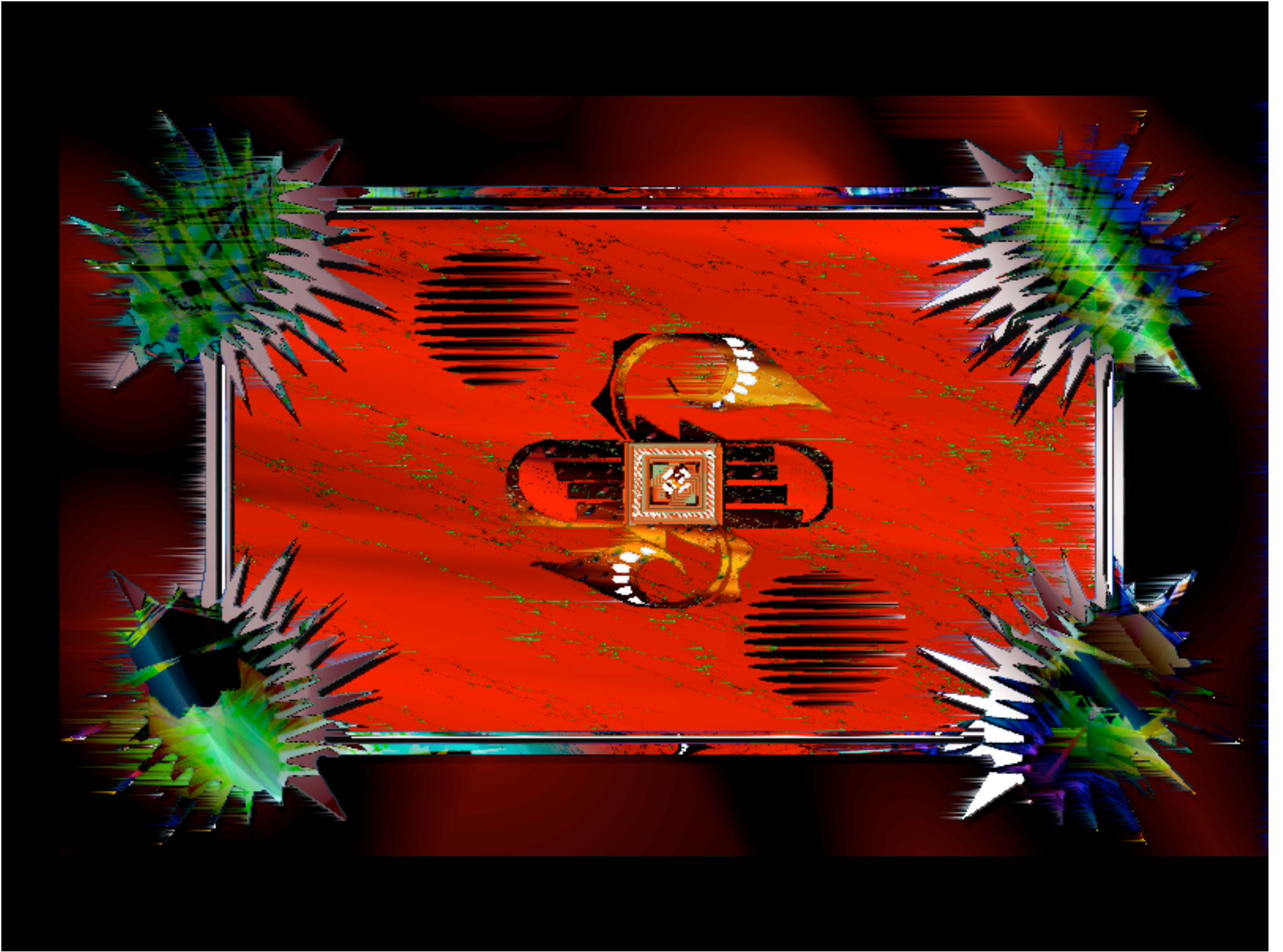


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PowerPoint Performance  
by

DOCTOR SEQUOIA

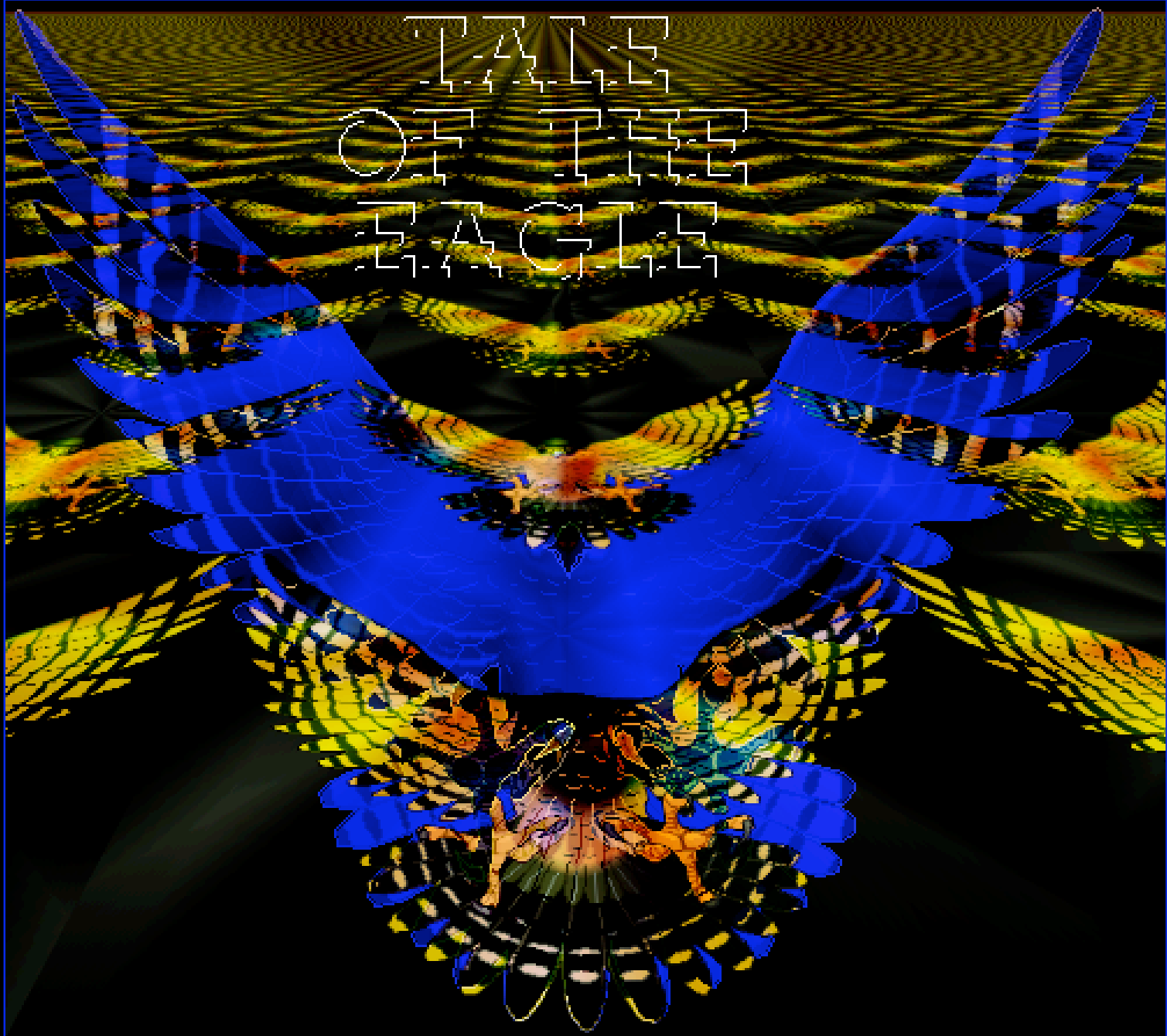


**Coyote  
of the  
Bay**



# NEWS

TALE  
OF THE  
EAGLE





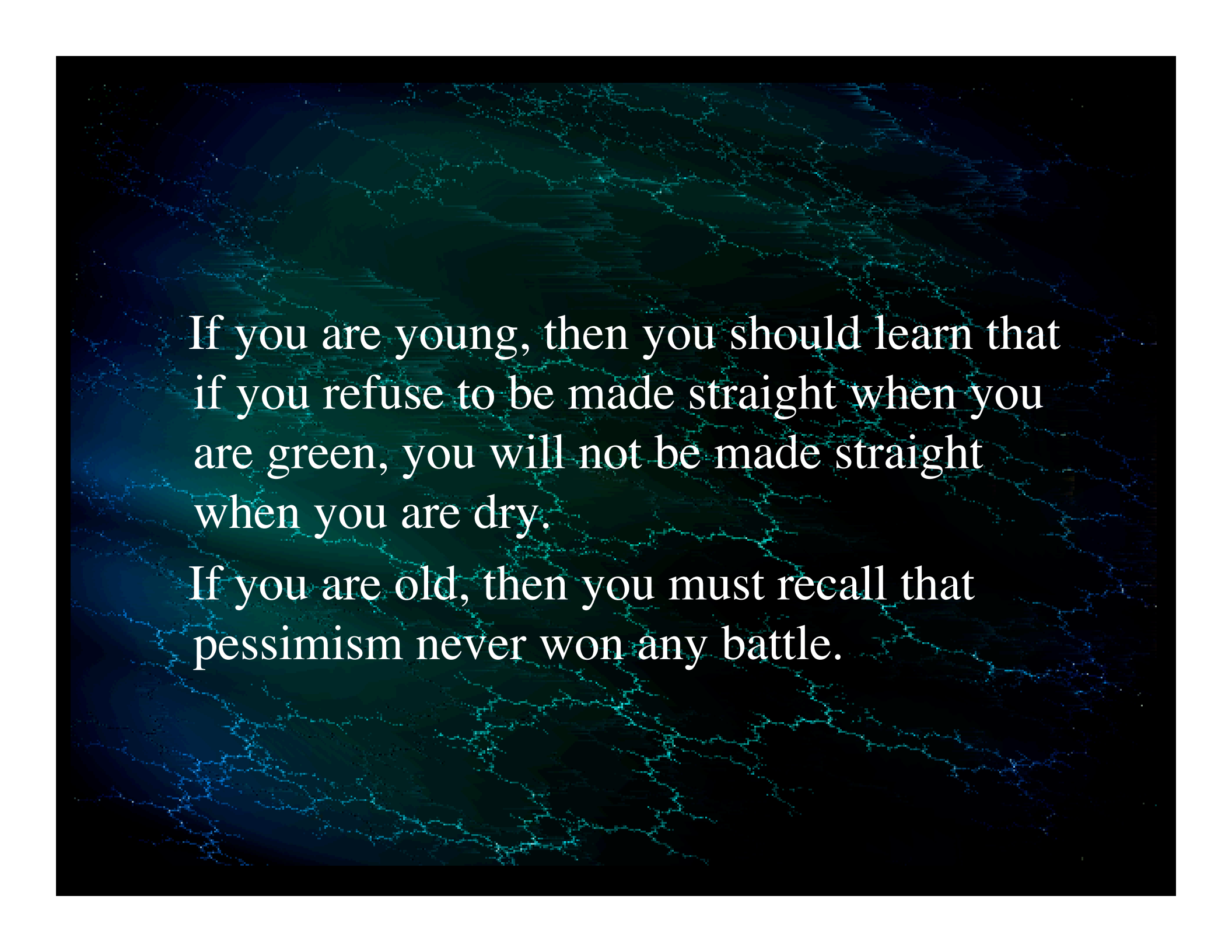
Eagles



Counsel

The background of the slide is a dark, deep blue color. Overlaid on this background is a complex, glowing pattern of light blue and white lines that resemble lightning or a crackling energy field. The lines are irregular and jagged, creating a sense of dynamic movement and intensity. The overall effect is dramatic and visually striking.

True courage is a perfect sensibility of the  
measure of danger, and a mental willingness  
to incur it.



If you are young, then you should learn that if you refuse to be made straight when you are green, you will not be made straight when you are dry.

If you are old, then you must recall that pessimism never won any battle.



Eagle unfurls his wings, and  
prepares to take flight.

You strain to hear his last words as he  
arcs far out over the blinding waves of  
the ocean.

