How Coyote Stole Fire

In this Native American myth, can a clever coyote trick the Fire Beings?

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Characters
Circle the character you will play.
*Storytellers 1, 2, 3 (S1, S2, S3)
Man
Woman
*Coyote
Grandmother
*Fire Being 1 (FB1)
*Fire Being 2 (FB2)
*Fire Being 3 (FB3)
Squirrel
Frog
Wood
* indicates large speaking role

Myths
Every culture has myths, or stories from long ago that explain something that was important to people. As you read, look for what this play explains.

LOOK FOR WORD NERD’S 5 WORDS IN BOLD

Scene 1
S1: Long ago, when humans were new, they did not know about fire.
S2: When winter grew near, humans became worried.
Man: The air is growing cold again.
Woman: Soon the snow will come.
Grandmother: The children and I might not live through the deep chill.
Man: If only we could have a small piece of the sun in our tepees during these months.

Scene 2
S1: Coyote overheard this and felt sorry for the humans.
Coyote (to himself): Perhaps I can help.
S2: High on a faraway mountaintop lived three Fire Beings.
S2: These Beings kept fire to themselves, guarding it carefully.
Fire Being 1: Man must never acquire our fire and become as strong as we.
S3: One evening, Coyote crept up to their camp.
Fire Being 2: Quiet! I hear something.
S1: The three Fire Beings looked all around. Their eyes glistened like bloodstones.
Fire Being 3: What is it?
FB2: A thief in the bushes!
FB1: No, just a coyote slinking among the trees.
FB3: Go rest, my sisters. I will sit with the fire until the wind whispers from the east.
S2: During the night, Coyote saw that the Fire Beings took turns watching the fire.
Coyote (to himself): Ah, I think I have a plan.

Scene 3
S3: Coyote went down the mountain and spoke to his friends.
Coyote: You know, of course, of humans.
Squirrel: Those hairless creatures who take my acorns!
Frog: They are not your acorns. The Earth nourishes all creatures.
Coyote: Yes. Because humans have no fur, winter is harsh for them. Will you help me bring them warmth?
Squirrel: Eek! Is there danger involved?
Coyote: Great danger. I must steal fire from the Fire Beings.
Frog: Ack! I hear they can tear open the face of the Earth.
Squirrel: Ooh! I hear they can boil the rivers and melt our eyes.
Coyote: We must try to help. If I call for you, will you come?
Squirrel and Frog: Eek! Ack! Oooh! OK.

Scene 4
S1: Coyote sped back up the mountain.
S2: He waited until dawn, when the Being on guard went inside to wake her sister.
Coyote (whispering): Now is my chance!
S3: Coyote leaped from the bushes and snatched a glowing piece of fire.
FB1: Sister, Birdman is bringing up the sun. You must rise.
FB2 (yawning): Yes, my sister.
S1: As the Fire Being emerged from the teepee, she saw Coyote bounding away.
FB2: Aaaahaaa! Thief!

Scene 5
S3: The Fire Beings flew after him.
FB3: Catch him!

Scene 6
S3: The Fire Beings gathered around Wood.
FB2: Nice, nice Wood. Give us the fire.
Wood: Wood said nothing.
S1: The Beings pleaded.
FB3: Please, oh please, return the fire to us!
Wood: Still, Wood did not reply.
S2: The Fire Beings became furious.
FB1: Give it back!
S3: Their crackled faces contorted into rage.

Scene 7
S3: Coyote knew how to get fire from Wood.
S1: Back at the village of people, he showed them.
Woman: Wonderful Coyote!
Coyote: Thank Squirrel and Frog as well.
Man: Dear friends, we will use this fire to make a great feast.
Grandmother: Please join us.
S2: They all gathered around the flames and warmed their bodies.
S3: And from that time forward, humans were warm and safe through the cold of winter.

WRITE TO WIN!
Why has fire been important to humans? Answer using evidence from this myth and from "The Discovery of Fire." Send your answers in a well-organized essay to "Fire Contest" by January 15, 2014. Ten winners will each receive a copy of *Trickster* by Matt Dembicki. See page 2 for details.

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