

Crane Dancer



Young Crane opens his eyes just as the sky in the east is turning pink. He **bows** to the sun coming up over the mountain and says “**Namaste**, my spirit honors your spirit Great Sun.” He lifts his head and lowers his wings to gather his first deep breath of the day. His wings give a **flutter and then he gathers the chi** of life into his lungs and body.

Next in Young Crane’s daily ritual is stretching. He **stretches his wings** and says to himself as he often does, “Today is a day of many possibilities.” As he stretches, he feels a tingle of anticipation run through his body. This makes him happy.

Young Crane picks up a stick as he walks toward the pond. He imagines the stick as a stiff **single whip** that a prince might carry when riding his magnificent horse.

When Young Crane reaches the pond, he lets the stick float away as he stands slowly **turning in the water**. He wonders what the day has in store for him. Another tingle goes through his body as he quietly hears the words “You are destined for great purpose Young Crane.” Young Crane wonders if it was the sun that spoke to him.

Out of the corner of his eye Young Crane spots a salamander swimming toward him. It dives into the soft bottom of the pond. Quickly Young Crane begins **sifting the mud** to try and catch the salamander. Even though Young Crane is careful, pieces of mud fly up as he tries to catch the slippery animal.

To his surprise and satisfaction, Young Crane catches the salamander. He carefully lifts the salamander up out of the water, holds it out in front of him, and slowly turns it in small circles. Young Crane is curious to **feel the energy** of the magical animal that can regrow its tail.

“Salamander,” asks Young Crane, “Do you know what my great purpose is?” The salamander stares at him for a moment or two and then replies, “No, I do not.” Salamander pauses and then continues, “I do know that you have mud on your ears. Please put me back in the water.”

Young Crane releases the salamander and begins **brushing his ear** to remove the dried speckles of mud. As he removes the last particle of mud, he spots his friend, Short Neck Crane coming toward him. The two cranes greet each other with a secret **wave and embrace** they created just for themselves.

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The friends decide to go out in the large lake on the other side of the mountain to see if they can practice the sport of **cranes in waves**. To their delight the wind is blowing. The lake water is rolling up and down with each puff of air. Barely a moment passes before Young Crane and Short Neck are out in the middle of the lake bobbing up and down on the water. They struggle to not let the waves tip them over.

After a particularly large wave rolls by, Young Cranes asks Short Neck, “Do you know what my great purpose is?” His friend thinks for several moments and says, “I do not, but perhaps the answer is in the sand on the shore of the lake.” Short Neck flies to the small sandy beach and picks up a ball he spots lying under a tree. Young Crane is right behind his friend trying to see what he is up to. Short Neck holds the ball out to Young Crane and **teases** him saying, “Look here is the answer written on this ball.” As Young Crane tries to grab the ball, his friend pushes him away and then offers the ball again. Finally Short Neck lets Young Crane have the ball. He flies off saying “see you tomorrow.”

Young Crane carefully examines the ball. As he expected, he finds nothing. He begins to **swing the ball down** and up and around in a manner that helps him to relax when he is thinking. There must be someone who can tell him what his great purpose is. Who could it be? What would they tell him when he asks?

Young Crane is deep in thought trying to imagine what his great purpose might be when he hears a rustle in the leaves behind him. As he turns, he sees the flash of a **snake’s tongue** striking out at him. The snake is warning him to keep his distance.

Young Crane knows he should be afraid of the snake, but he also knows the snake is wise. He has a question to ask the intimidating animal. Slowly Young Crane **circles back** giving the illusion that he is moving away. He calmly asks the snake, “You who are so wise, do you know what my great purpose is?” Snake replies with a hiss in his voice, “I do not know, nor do I care. You have wasted enough of my time.” The snake slithers down the trunk of the tree and off into the bushes.

As Young Crane turns to go back into the lake to find something to eat, he realizes that Timid Crane is standing right behind him. The two **cranes greet** each other in the formal manner that is the custom of their flock.

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Young Crane is excited to ask Timid Crane what he might think about his “great purpose.” But before Young Crane can even speak, Timid Crane flies away. Young Crane watches him join a group of cranes flying up and into the clouds. As Young Crane watches the **cranes in clouds**, he thinks what a strange day this has been.

His thoughts are interrupted by a beautiful and distinctive bugling coming from behind the rocky formation at the base of the mountain behind him. It sounds like the call of the Great & Wise Purple Crane. How can this be?

Young Crane flies towards the beautiful bugling sounds just as Purple Crane comes out from behind the rocks. Young Crane begins to **stretch and pose**. This is the respectful way all cranes greet Great & Wise Purple Crane.

Before Young Crane has even finished his last pose, Purple Crane begins to speak, “I understand you have a question that I might be able to answer.” Young Crane nervously moves his wings. It looks like he is **pulling taffy**. Softly he answers, “Yes that is true.” Without thinking, he changes the movement of his wings. It looks as if he is now **playing a small delicate harp**. A crowd of cranes is gathering as Young Crane and Purple Crane are talking. They are admiring the graceful movements of Young Crane and wondering what purpose Purple Crane has in meeting with him.

Finally, Young Crane gathers all his courage and asks, “Great & Wise Purple Crane do you know what my great purpose is?” Purple Crane nods as he extends one of his large colorful wings to point at the crowd. “This is your purpose. You will dance whenever cranes gather before me or other Great Cranes. This will be the new tradition. You will teach other young cranes how to dance so they can continue the tradition when you are old.”

Young Crane cannot believe his ears. But as the words sink in, he becomes confident. He understands that this is truly a great purpose. He combines his nervous movements into a single continuous **crane dance**.

Great & Wise Purple Crane nods again and opens both of his wings to show his approval for Young Crane’s new Crane Dance. Purple Crane stretches his neck high so all can hear him and says, “From this moment forward Young Crane will be known as Crane Dancer.” The crowd of cranes bowed in agreement.