

# 1

Wakanda (*wah-KAHN-da*) Whooper lives among tall pines, sturdy oaks, and grassy wetlands. Hatched at the Necedah (*neh-SEE-duh*) National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin, this young whooping crane will join her family in being the



tallest birds in North America—and among the tallest birds in the world.

Wakanda’s parents, Papa and Mama Whooper, welcome their new little crane to their marshy refuge nest in the spring. About a foot wide and a foot deep, the little family’s nest is made with mud and tall vegetation on the ground alongside Wisconsin’s famous cranberry bogs. They give their newly hatched whooper a very special name—Wakanda, Wandy for short.

As they wade in the yellow-green marsh grass with its waters moving slowly toward the Wisconsin River, Mama Whooper tells Wandy, “The Sioux Indians say Wakanda means *mystical*. Here we’re surrounded by the Ho-Chunk Indian Nation who once spoke a dialect of the Siouan language. They understand Wakanda to mean *earth keeper or mystical also*. It’s the perfect name for you, our little whooper.”

Papa adds, “Oh, Wandy, you were such a beautiful hatchling! We chose your name because we think you have mystical power to help heal this earth. You will be part of making this earth beautiful, our little earth keeper. Indeed, you may possess the power to save us whooping cranes. We picked *Wakanda* just for you because you and the other new hatchlings here are the future for whooping cranes, but that future almost wasn’t possible. Little Wandy, you almost weren’t hatched. You see, our whole extended whooper family almost died out. You and your fellow hatchlings inspired a joyous celebration for all the good people here hoping for a whooper comeback.”

Wakanda fluffs out her soft, little cinnamon-colored feathers and listens carefully as Mama Whooper tells her more about her good fortune.



“Indians have clans or families named for animals like us. The Ojibwe people (or Chippewa)—an Indian nation that lives in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Canada—think cranes are really important to our world,” Mama Whooper says. “It is so important that they have a crane clan, or family, of chieftains, their spokespersons. When we whoopers speak, everyone for miles

around can hear us. And in many places of the world, such as Japan, cranes are signs of healing and peace.”