

Ball Player

Told by Julius Fouts, Dewey, Oklahoma
To M. R. Harrington, anthropologist

Once upon a time there was a family. Old man and old lady told the boys, "We ought to go out and camp where there is plenty of game to kill." So they went. When they came so far, they camped where there was plenty of game and the boys soon went out to hunt, for game. And the old lady made shelves to put the meat in. There were six of the boys. And the youngest one never went hunting. He played with his ball whenever they went out hunting.

In the morning the youngest boy would go out with his ball and play all day. Sometimes he would go east. His ball was a skull of a bobcat. Whenever he would throw it, it would stick on a tree -- if he hit. The skull seems to bite the tree and stick there.

They stayed there a long time and went hunting every day, they had lots of meat, and the old lady told her boys never to go hunting very far west. The oldest boy thought, "I will go hunting west." When he traveled far out west, he saw a lake. And saw a young lady sitting on top of the water combing her hair. Her hair floated all around her. He just could see her, then she disappeared. From there he went straight home. He liked her looks very much. He never killed anything that day. When he came home, he thought, "I will try and get that girl tomorrow." But he never told his mother.

When it was daylight, he started off to the west, to where he'd seen this young girl when he came close to the lake. And he said, "Whirlwind, my friend!" And he broke a stem of grass and he went into it and told Whirlwind: "My friend, I want you to help me get that girl." And when he'd done this, a wind started to whirl, and the whirlwind took the stem of grass right to where the girl was sitting. And he couldn't get hold of her but one hair from her head. And he took it home. And when he got there, he put it on the backside of the bed. When he came home, his mother told him, "I guess you have seen that girl."

Meanwhile, the youngest boy kept playing ball. Every time he would hit a tree, it would bite it.

Next morning the girl came and brought lots of bread, and the oldest boy married her. She was a pretty girl. Her hair was shining green and blue. She came to the bed and picked up the one hair that had been taken from her and put it back in her head. She told him she wasn't supposed to get married, for a certain fellow couldn't leave her alone, the fellow wanted her, and she told her husband to watch for him, that man's name was Red-Feather-on-His-Head.

And the boys went hunting again, with their brother married. And this youngest boy grew to be bigger every day. And would play with his ball, and come

late in the evening. The oldest boy told the youngest boy to play around close to the house and watch his sister-in-law, and see that nobody takes her away. The youngest boy played with his ball close to the house. And finally he went off and stayed all day. The youngest boy's name was Ball Player.

They had lots of meat. And had plenty, and never wanted anything. And one morning the old folks told the young people that they were all tired of living, and they went out where it was marshy and the old lady sat down and said, "You can always think of me when you see this: and there stood a weed instead of the old lady. And the old man sat beside her, and he turned to a weed. And these young people lived here by themselves and had plenty of meat of all kinds.

One morning, when the boys went out hunting, the man came who is called Red-Feather-on-the-Head. Came to the house, and the woman was alone. The man took the woman and took her home. The woman pulled up trees on her way to Red-Feather-on-the-Head's house. And when they came home from hunting -- and it was a long time before Ball Player came home -- next morning the oldest boy told his brothers, "I am going to follow the woman," and picked up his flute and blew it, and said, "If they kill me, in two days blood will come out of my flute."

In two days the boys looked at the flute, and they saw blood on it. And the other older boy said, "I will follow where our brother went." And he blew the flute and hung it up and said, "If they kill me, blood will come out of the flute." In two days they looked at the flute. And saw blood, coming out of the flute. But Ball Player kept on playing with his ball, every day.

So the next older boy said, "I am going to follow our brothers," and blew the flute and said, "If they kill me, in two days blood will come out of the flute."

In two days the boys looked at the flute and saw blood. And the next older boy said, "I will follow my brothers," and picked up the flute and blew it and said, "If they kill me, in two days blood will come out of my flute." In two days the three remaining boys looked at the flute and saw blood in it. But Ball Player kept on playing ball, every day. And he wanted his brothers to let him go. He said, "I can bring our sister-in-law back." But they told him that he was too little.

Next morning, the next-to-smallest brother took the flute and blew it and said, "If they kill me, in two days you will see blood come out of the flute." When the next-to-smallest brother came to where Red-Feather-on-the-Head lived, Red-Feather-on-the-Head said, "What did you come for?" He said, "I am looking for my brothers who came over this way, and my sister-in-law." "Yes sir," said Red-Feather-on-the-Head. He told the women to "cook for the man who is very tired and hungry, he must've come from a long ways."

The women went to work cooking. They broke up bear ribs and cooked them and put them into a dish and gave it to Red-Feather-on-the-Head, and he started to give it to him. And he started to take it. Red-Feather-on-the-Head jerked it back: "You think that I am

going to give it to you? I am going to feed it to my yakwahe." He turned him loose and fed it to him and said, "Yakwahe, eat this! And crush this man's skull in, when you get through. He has been talking about your sister-in-law!" When he got through, he told the yakwahe to kill the rascal, and he went to the young man and soon killed him and took him down in the ditch.

In two days Ball Player looked at the flute and saw blood. And he went out to a branch, where they got water. He whooped and called all of his friends around him. And he took his father's otter-skin tobacco-pouch. When he whooped, all of his friends were with him. And he told the toad, "What can you do to help me?" The toad commenced to breathe. And whenever he would breathe, fire would come out of his mouth.

Ball Player said, "That is good enough. You can be my pipe." And then Ball Player took the snake and said, "You shall be my pipe stem." And he took the otter tobacco-pouch and shook it and said, "What can you do to help me?" The otter said, "I can eat on his spinal cord and break him down." He said, "That is good enough!"

Ball Player said to the weasel, "What can you do to help me?" "I can go down his throat and cut his heart off while he is fighting." Ball Player said, "That is enough!" When he'd got enough to help him, he went up on the hill and made a fire, and made six arrows. And every time he made one, he would throw it in the fire. And when it would burn to ashes, he would pick the ashes up and rub them between his hands and throw a good arrow out on the ground.

And he did the arrows that way for ten times each, and took his ball. And he had everything with him. And he took the same trail, for he could go by trees which were pulled up along the road -- which the woman had pulled up.

When he came to where Red-Feather-on-the-Head lived, he walked in. And Red-Feather-on-the-Head asked him, "What did you come for?" Ball Player said, "I am looking for my brothers." Red-Feather-on-the-Head said, "I threw some ornery little boys out here in the ditch, maybe they are your brothers. My yakwahe killed them." Then he said, "Cook for him, women! Maybe he is hungry, he's come from a long distance."

The women went to work and cooked some bear ribs, and Ball Player took his pipe out, and tobacco pouch. And started to smoke. Whenever he would draw the pipe, it would say, "We will kill him!" Red-Feather-on-the-Head said, "Gee, your pipe sounds bad." Ball Player said, "That is natural for my pipe to sound." And the weasel came out of Ball Player's pocket and climbed all over him in a second. And Red-Feather-on-the-Head saw it, and he said, "You have a pretty little pet! We will fight our pets. Mine can crush your pet's head off in a little while!"

Ball Player said, "All right! My pet never was whipped." And by this time the women had the ribs cooked. He wanted to give Ball Player the dish. But Ball

Player said, "I don't want anything to eat. I came to hunt my brothers." So Red-Feather-on-the-Head gave it to Yakwahe and told him when he got through to crush the weasel's head: "He is talking about your sister-in-law!"

The women all were glad, because they thought he would kill Red-Feather-on-the-Head. Red-Feather-on-the-Head was a fellow with one eye and had a red feather which he wore on his head. When Yakwahe got through eating, Red-Feather-on-the-Head told him to crush the weasel's head, and they went to fighting.

When the yakwahe opened his mouth, the weasel disappeared, and the otter commenced to eat his hind legs off, and broke him down. Every time the otter got a mouthful, he would go and puke it out, and go after him again. And finally the yakwahe had to sit down to fight. And the little toad got in front of the yakwahe and commenced to throw fire out of his mouth, so as to weaken him. And Red-Feather-on-the-Head said, "Take them off! They will kill my pet." Ball Player said, "No, let them kill one another."

In a minute the weasel came out of his mouth and brought out the heart of Yakwahe. And then Yakwahe fell, and he killed him. Ball Player told his pets to go after Red-Feather-on-the-Head. And Ball Player threw his ball at Red-Feather-on-the-Head and hit him on the eye that he could see out of. And the ball stuck there and Red-Feather-on-the-Head could not take it off. He couldn't fight because the ball was in his eye. They killed him in a few minutes. They cut Red-Feather-on-the-Head's head off.

The women were glad that he killed him. But they said, "You haven't killed him yet." Ball Player went outdoors and built a fire. The women helped all they could. They went and got wood to build the fire. Ball Player threw Red-Feather-on-the-Head and Yakwahe into the fire. They burnt awhile. And then Red-Feather-on-the-Head's head popped: it went to the north. And the weasel soon brought it back.

It popped four times, and the weasel got it every time. And next time it popped, it fell about the edge of the grass. They threw it back again into the fire, and then it couldn't pop anymore. The women said, "You have killed him now." The women all wanted to go with Ball Player. But he wouldn't go with them, only his sister-in-law. And from there they went to where his brothers were lying. He stretched his bow and took one arrow and shot the arrow up in the air and said, "Look out, I might hit you!" And when the arrow hit the ground, the oldest one jumped up.

And he did the rest of his brothers the same way and they all went back home to where they lived -- and took his sister-in-law with him.

This is the end of this story.