

The Horned Serpent

Told by Mary Bobb

To W. W. Newcomb

There was a little boy who was different from other little boys. He wouldn't go out to hunt like they did. People told his grandfather that the boy wasn't any good. The grandfather decided that he would take care of the boy. He built a boat of sticks, put the boy in the boat and took him to an island. The old man built a fire on the island and told the boy to go off and kill some birds. This was just a ruse to get rid of the boy. While the boy was gone the grandfather used Indian tobacco and prayed for the little boy in order to make the boy wise.

When the old man was finished he hollered for the little boy to tell him that he was going. The old man left the little boy all alone on the island. The boy was frantic, he cried and he cried. Day after day he cried, but on the fifth day he heard someone talking to him. It was a skunk who said he wanted to take the boy home. But another voice told skunk that he was too small to do this.

The boy began to cry again. The next day, however, another voice said he would take the boy home. This voice came from a large snake with horns. The snake told him to hold tight to his horns and to warn him immediately if he saw a cloud. The boy held on to the horns and they sped toward the shore. They got about halfway and a large black cloud appeared. The boy warned the snake as he had been told to do. The snake turned around so violently that the boy almost fell off. They returned to the island and the little boy was again very sad.

The boy decided that next day he would not tell the snake about any clouds. The next day the snake told him to hold tight to his horns and to warn him of any clouds. This time they reached the shore, although the boy neglected to tell the snake about a cloud he had seen. The snake had been going through the water so fast that he ran right up onto the beach. At that moment lightning struck the snake and killed him. The Thunder Gods had been wanting to eat the snake and the seven of them did so. One took the horns, the "least" thunder bird took the tail.

The boy got home, the people met him and doctored him as the lightning had hurt him a little bit. The grandfather told the boy to go to a burned tree and build a fire, then to shoot at a blackened log and he would kill a bear. Then he would have company and they would eat the bear. The boy did all this, the company came and ate the bear and then the boy was like all other boys.