

The Lost Boy

(Lenape)

There was once upon a time three boys who were crossing a large stream. The stream was normally shallow. But when they entered, a great wave of water came rushing speedily down the river.

The boys, seeing their possible danger, hurried. But one of them was overtaken by the rushing water and was drowned, supposedly.

No more was seen of him. Which led to a search for his discovery, and it arose a great mystery as to whether he was dead or alive.

But he was not found.

This boy being the only child of his parents, some assistance was sought leading to his discovery, the parents learning that there was an aged man living near, who possessed some mysterious power, clairvoyant perhaps.

They went to consult the man concerning their son. This mysterious man was part-blood Shawnee and Delaware.

Upon learning the customs of the mystic man, the father of the missing boy had taken one gallon of good whiskey and one pound of chewing tobacco. And after an interview with the man, the father was told that he, the old man, would meditate. And in two days the father could come back, and he would tell him whether his son was alive or dead and where he was.

Upon the father's return, the aged man told him that he had taken the tobacco and one-half gallon of the whiskey into the forest and drank and smoked, and communicated with the spirits of the departed members of the tribe, and was told that their son was alive, had been taken by a woman to abide with her at the mouth of a great river.

Then on the evening of the second day, when the announcement was to be made to the tribe, the aged man told the father of the missing boy to announce that anyone wishing to see the mystery was to encamp on the bank of the great river opposite its mouth and that at sunrise they would see the missing boy.

Before the hour, a great crowd gathered at the appointed place, and the mysterious deep began to roll and throw forth great whirlpools. And thunder or rumbling sounds burst into the air.

At sunrise, behold, they saw on the waves of the great river the missing boy. At his side was a beautiful humanlike personage, said to be a mermaid.

No, this boy could not communicate with his parents. But greatly to their satisfaction, they had seen their son.

Confidently knowing it was the departed son, they left the boy in the deep mysteries of the river.

Unto this day they do not know, but it is supposed, that he still remains there.

Anonymous, Oklahoma. The White Deer and Other Stories Told By the Lenape. Edited by John Bierhorst.