Seneca - The Great Snake Battle

IN olden times the Indians had a great battle with snakes, and this is how it happened: One day when a man was hunting he saw a rattlesnake and tormented it. He caught the snake, made a hole through its body and putting a bark string through the hole fastened the snake to the ground. Then he built a fire and saying, "Now fight me," he burned the snake alive. Afterwards he tormented many snakes in this way, always challenging them to fight.

One day a man, who was in the woods, heard a great noise and going toward it saw a large number of snakes traveling in one direction. He listened and heard them say, "We will have a battle, DJISSAA (Fire) has challenged us. The battle will be four days from now."

The man hurried back to the village and told the people what he had seen and heard. The chief sent a number of men to the place, and, as far as they could see, there were snakes, all going in one direction. They were going to a council.

The men went back and told the chief. He said, "We can't help it; they will force us to fight, we must get ready."

They drove two rows of stakes the whole length of the village, then, some distance beyond, piled up a great quantity of wood in long lines. On the fourth day they set fire to the wood.

When the snakes came, they sprang through the fire; many of them were burned, but so many rushed into the fire that they put it out. Live snakes climbed over the dead and in spite of the men, who were trying to kill them, they reached the second row of stakes and again they were killed till the living climbed over the dead, got above the second stakes, and were in the village. Then the battle for life began.

The first man killed was DJISSAA, the man who had challenged the snakes. The people fought till the chief, seeing how many were being killed, screamed that he surrendered.

Then a snake, with an enormous body and head, came out of the ground, and said, "I am chief of all the snakes, we will go away from your village if you will promise that as long as the world lasts your people will not injure or torment my people."

The chief promised and the snakes went away.

Key:

Green for flora & fauna, and different shades for each one

Red/pink for motif, the darker shades correspond to the dark shades of green

Cherokee - What Became of the Rabbit

The Deer was very angry at the Rabbit for filing his teeth and determined to be revenged, but he kept still and pretended to be friendly until the Rabbit was off his guard. Then one day, as they were going along together talking, he challenged the Rabbit to jump against him. Now the Rabbit is a great jumper, as everyone knows, so he agreed at once. There was a small stream beside the path, as there generally is in that country, and the Deer said:

"Let's see if you can jump across this branch. We'll go back a piece, and then when I say Kû! then both run and jump."

"All right," said the Rabbit. So they went back to get a good start, and when the Deer gave the word Kû! they ran for the stream, and the Rabbit made one jump and landed on the other side.

But the Deer had stopped on the bank, and when the Rabbit looked back the Deer had conjured the stream so that it was a large river.

The Rabbit was never able to get back again and is still on the other side. The rabbit that we know is only a little thing that came afterwards.

The Herd Boy was the child of poor people. When he was twelve years old, he took service with a farmer to herd his cow. After a few years the cow had grown large and fat, and her hair shone like yellow gold. She must have been a cow of the gods.

One day while he had her out at pasture in the mountains, she suddenly began to speak to the Herd Boy in a human voice, as follows: “This is the Seventh Day. Now the White Jade Ruler has nine daughters, who bathe this day in the Sea of Heaven. The seventh daughter is beautiful and wise beyond all measure. She spins the cloud-silk for the King and Queen of Heaven, and presides over the weaving which maidens do on earth. It is for this reason she is called the Weaving Maiden. And if you go and take away her clothes while she bathes, you may become her husband and gain immortality.”

“But she is up in Heaven,” said the Herd Boy, “and how can I get there?”

“I will carry you there,” answered the yellow cow.

So the Herd Boy climbed on the cow’s back. In a moment clouds began to stream out of her hoofs, and she rose into the air. About his ears there was a whistling like the sound of the wind, and they flew along as swiftly as lightning. Suddenly the cow stopped.

“Now we are here,” said she.

Then round about him the Herd Boy saw forests of chrysophrase and trees of jade. The grass was of jasper and the flowers of coral. In the midst of all this splendor lay a great, four-square sea, covering some five-hundred acres. Its green waves rose and fell, and fishes with golden scales were swimming about in it. In addition there were countless magic birds who winged above it and sang. Even in the distance the Herd Boy could see the nine maidens in the water. They had all laid down their clothes on the shore.

*Dog and Brer Goat*

Once upon a time Brer Tiger and Mrs. Tiger invite all the creatures in the world to come to a party, but only Brer Dog and Brer Goat came.

So now Miss Tiger and Brer Tiger wanted them all to eat. So Miss Tiger and Brer dog begin to dance together. Brer Tiger began to sing: ‘Push him in the room door, oh, my wife, oh my, oh my wife.’ Brer dog switch his tail round and Miss Tiger could not get him in. So Brer dog sing this time and Miss Tiger and Brer goat dance. So Brer dog sing: ‘The man who can’t run better go before (they) rig (up) plan.’

So Brer goat ran away and went to the side of a river until Brer dog came. So Brer dog said: ‘I am going, Miss Tiger and Brer Tiger.’ They asked: ‘You going already?’ He said, ‘Yes.’

So they wait until he got a little way and they started behind him. So Brer dog went and cover up Brer Goat, only leaving his horn and his hind feet out. So Brer dog swim across in time.”

“Brer Tiger said: ‘Come here, Brer Dog, I got something to tell you good.’ (Min,’ Brer Tiger ain’t got nothing to tell him – just want to eat him.)

So he said, ‘Throw me that log side your feet so I can swim over on it.’ So Brer Tiger throw it to him. (In vain – it was Brer Goat.) Brer dog and Brer Tiger said, ‘One time you had your fortune in your hand, but you lose it.’

Motif: Failure