

The Nunne'hi Cherokee Legend

A 10 or 12 years old boy was playing one day near the river, shooting at a mark with his bow and arrows, until he became tired, and started to build a fish trap in the water. While he was piling up the stones in two long walls a man came and stood on the bank and asked him what he was doing. The boy told him, and the man said, "Well, that's pretty hard work and you ought to rest a while. Come and take a walk up the river."

The boy said, "No"; that he was going home to dinner soon. "Come right up to my house," said the stranger, and I'll give you a good dinner there and bring you home again in the morning."

So the boy went with him up the river until they came to a house, when they went in, and the man's wife and the other people there were very glad to see him, and gave him a fine dinner, and were very kind to him. While they were eating a man that the boy knew very well came in and spoke to him, so that he felt quite at home.

After dinner he played with the other children and slept there that night, and in the morning, after breakfast, the man got ready to take him home. They went down a path that had a cornfield on one side and a peach orchard fenced in on the other, until they came to another trail, and the man said, "Go along this trail across that ridge and you will come to the river road that will bring you straight to your home, and now I'll go back to the house." So the man went back to the house and the boy went on along the trail, but when he had gone a little way he looked back, and there was no cornfield or orchard or fence or house; nothing but trees on the mountain side.

He thought it very strange, but somehow he was not frightened, and went on until he came to the river trail in sight of his home. There were a great many people standing about talking, and when they saw him they ran toward him shouting, "Here he is! He is not drowned or killed in the mountains!"

They told him they had been hunting him ever since yesterday noon, and asked him where he had been. "A man took me over to his house just across the ridge, and I had a fine dinner and a good time with the children," said the boy, "I thought Udsi'skalā here" -- that was the name of the man he had seen at dinner -- "would tell you where I was."

But Udsi'skalä said, "I haven't seen you. I was out all day in my canoe hunting you. It was one of the Nunne'hi that made himself look like me."

Then his mother said, "You say you had dinner there?" "Yes, and I had plenty, too," said the boy; but his mother answered, "There is no house there -- only trees and rocks -- but we hear a drum sometimes in the big bald above. The people you saw were the Nunne'hi."