

The Story of the Boy and the Sun

A Folktale from the Hopi Tribe



Long ago, in the time before time, a young boy lived with his mother. The boy did not have a father. The boy desperately wanted to know his father, but his mother had no answers for him.

“Tsay taaqa, little man,” said the boy’s grandmother one morning, “You should go to the Sun and ask him about your father. He is sure to know.”

The boy made a special flour by grinding together a tortoise shell, coral, seashells, and cornmeal. He took this mixture and threw it towards the heavens. He created a path to the sky that is today called the Milky Way.

The boy climbed this path all the way to the Sun and asked him “Who is my father?”

Although impressed by the boy’s efforts, the Sun replied, “You have a lot to learn.” And with that, the boy fell down, down, down to the earth below.

The boy was not deterred. He built a box out of cottonwood, placed it on the river, and sealed himself inside. He floated west, down the river to find the Sun once more.

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Eventually, the box washed ashore where the river split in two.

“Is someone inside this box,” rasped a voice from outside the box.

“Yes, yes,” cried the boy, “Please let me out!”

The boy heard soft sounds scraping around the sides and over the top of the box. He heard a crack, another crack, and boom! The side of the box popped open. Outside lay a rattlesnake looking up at him, her tongue flicking in and out of her mouth as she took in his scent.

After hearing his story, the rattlesnake asked to join the boy on his quest. Together, they traveled west toward the Sun until they saw a meteor falling toward the sea on its way to the Sun’s house. They asked the meteor for a ride, explaining the purpose of their journey. The meteor agreed, and the boy and the rattlesnake climbed onto the meteor.

When they arrived, they met the Sun’s mother, who was none other than the Moon. The Moon was working on a piece of turquoise jewelry. She told them to sit and wait with her until the Sun returned.

That evening, the Sun returned from his day’s work to find the boy and the rattlesnake.

Again, the boy asked the Sun, “Who is my father?”

The Sun took a deep breath and replied, “I think I am your father.”

