



Why The Deer Has A Short Tail

Once there was a brother and sister who lived alone in their lodge. The brother said one morning, "I want to hunt, for we must have some meat." He put some water in a shell in the corner of the lodge, and told his sister not to drink it, for, if he were killed while out hunting, the water would turn red, and thus give her warning. Then, telling her not to parch the little ears of corn, he went off into the forest.

After her brother had gone away, she began to think, "What is the mystery about this corn, that I should not pop it? But I am going to see." So after a while, she got down the little ears of corn, and shelled the kernels off the cob, and began to pop the corn.

It popped, and the little grains became large and white, and smelled good. She popped and popped; and the little lodge became fuller and fuller of the white corn, until finally, when it was all popped, she was crowded back against the wall.

Then she heard the deer coming, for they smelled the corn. They crowded up to the door and began to eat. More deer came, little and big; and they ate and ate, and finally they had eaten all the corn. Then they looked around to see if there was anything else they could eat.

*Around 1858, Julia Stinson, a Shawnee woman, told this story to J. Spenser, a missionary. He published the story in the **Journal of American Folklore** in 1909.*

Archaeologists are uncertain of the relationships between Kentucky's prehistoric and historic Indian cultures. It is possible, however, that the prehistoric Fort Ancient farming people were the ancestors of the Shawnee and other Midwestern groups.

She had hidden under a skin in a corner; but they saw the skin move, and they told her to come out, and then they put her on the antlers of the big deer. Then they all went off together, the big deer first, they following.

When the brother came back, he saw what his sister had done, and he called up everything; and two big black snakes came to help him find his sister. He said, "Put your teeth together, and help me find my sister." They did so, and carried him fast to find his sister. They were the evil spirits. They knew the way the deer went, and followed all day and all night, and the next day they saw the deer.

When the deer saw the pursuit, they all gave up and stuck their heads in the ground, and the brother overtook them and got his sister. He then kicked the tails off the deer and made them short. This was the punishment they received.

Because his sister had disobeyed him, he painted her legs red; and she turned into a duck and went and swam in the creek. He himself turned into a wolf and went off hunting.



They never turned into people again.