Duckhead Necklace
narrated by Isabel Shields
One evening two Indian girls sat outside looking at the stars. One star was very bright. One of the girls said, "I wish that bright star would come down and get me. I would marry him." The next evening a young Indian man came from an opening in the sky. He was a handsome man and he was dressed very nicely. He took the young Indian girl back with him into the sky and they were married.
It was a very beautiful place where he took her to live. She was very happy and enjoyed everything. There were many things for her to do. She could do almost anything. There was one exception. She was told not to dig large green turnips. After awhile she started to get lonesome. She would take long walks looking for the hole in the sky. One day she realized she was to have a baby. This made her want to return home even more.

On one of her walks she saw some big green turnips. Even though she was told not to, she dug one up. It left a large hole. She looked down and saw the place where she used to live. She began to make plans to go back. Every time her husband would bring game home she would tan only part of the hide. She would cut the rest of the hide into strips and dry them to make a rawhide rope. She was trying to hurry as it was almost time to have her baby and she wanted to be home when the baby was born.
One day, she thought she had enough rawhide for her rope. She connected the rawhide strips together and made a long rope. She took the rope and went to the hole she had found. She tied one end of the rope to a rock and tied the other end around her waist and let herself down the hole very slowly. The rope wasn't long enough. She was left hanging in mid-air.

In the meantime her husband came home and found her gone. He looked all over for her. He thought of looking at the hole in the sky. There he found her hanging at the end of the rawhide rope. He picked up a rock and said, "Split her in two but don't hurt the baby." He threw the rock down and hit the woman. She fell to the ground and died. The baby boy was also hurt. He stayed by his mother until he could walk.
There was an old woman living in a tepee not very far from where the little boy was. She knew there was a child living near her. One day she wanted to find out if the child was a boy or girl. She placed a doll and a bow and some arrows near where the child was staying. The next time she went to look, the bow and arrows were gone so she knew the child was a boy.
One day the boy walked to the end of a forest. He saw a lone tepee. As soon as he was close to it a voice called to him, "Come in my grandchild. I have been expecting you." The little boy went in and sat down. He saw an old woman sitting opposite him. She told him to stay with her. He had the bow and arrows that she had left at the place where the little boy was living. She taught him how to use the bow and arrows. She tied a duck head on a buckskin string and put it around the little boy's neck. She told him it was to protect him at all times. His name would be Duckhead Necklace.
Sometimes he would go hunting for small animals and birds. Often he was lucky and he would kill a sage hen, duck, bush rabbit, prairie chicken, or other small animals which made his grandmother very proud. One day when he was taking a walk he came to a big lake. He saw a large whale swimming around. He shot and killed it with his bow and arrow. He went back to his grandmother’s tepee and told her what he did. His grandmother left saying she was going after firewood. She did not return for several days. This happened many times. Each time she came back her hair would be hanging all over and her arms and her legs would be scratched up and bleeding. Long ago that is how Indians mourned for someone they had lost. Duckhead Necklace’s grandmother was in mourning. In those days animals could change to people and people could change into animals. Duckhead Necklace had killed a whale. The whale that he had killed was his grandmother’s husband. Duckhead Necklace was very sorry but he did not know the whale was his grandmother’s husband.
One day when Duckhead Necklace was walking he came to a tepee. From inside a voice told him to come in and sit down at the head of a circle of young men. Each man took turns telling him stories, hoping to put him to sleep. Duckhead Necklace went to sleep right away, but while he slept the duck head hanging around his neck was saying "Yes" for Duckhead Necklace. In the Indian way, as long as someone says yes, the stories go on and on. These young men planned to kill Duckhead Necklace after they had put him to sleep. These young men were actually all snakes. Duckhead Necklace woke up and found out about their plan. He grabbed one of them with his hands and stroked him from his neck down to his tail and said to him, "You are to crawl on the ground always." In turn, the snakes told him never to drink from a buffalo wallow. (That is water standing in small pools.) Duckhead Necklace left. Whenever he came to a buffalo wallow, even though he was thirsty, he always remembered to go on.
One day he came to a buffalo wallow. He thought, "It's been a long time since I was told not to drink from buffalo wallows. I don't think anything will happen now." He took a drink and a snake went in and settled in his head. He was in there a long time. Duckhead Necklace's body turned into a skeleton. Still the snake stayed for awhile longer. The snake finally came out. As soon as he came out, Duckhead Necklace came back alive. He grabbed the snake and rubbed his nose on a stone and made it flat and told him he would have a flat nose forever.

Duckhead Necklace continued traveling until one day when he was walking along he saw a village. He sat on a hill watching the camp. He noticed the bears and people were living together. He went down to the first tepee and went in. The people told him to sit down. They gave him something to eat. After eating, the men smoked. The people told him that at first everyone got along just fine, but now the bears took most of the meat and they let the rest of the meal spoil. "The people are starving and we can't do anything about it." the men told Duckhead Necklace.
Duckhead Necklace went to the bear chief's tepee and told him he was doing wrong by starving the people. Duckhead Necklace ordered the bears to leave and live in the mountain forest. He also took their talking away. The bears moved away. With the bears gone the people settled down to a peaceful life. Duckhead Necklace stayed in this village for awhile but then decided to travel on.
Duckhead Necklace walked along until he came to another village. There the people were living with beautiful white birds. For awhile when the men went hunting everyone shared equally. As the white birds began to get bolder, they began taking more of the meat or anything the men brought back from hunting. The people told Duckhead Necklace, "The birds have taken over. The birds eat what they want and let the rest of the meat spoil. The people are starving."

Duckhead Necklace went to the bird chief's tepee and asked the birds to move away. The bird chief refused saying he was satisfied with the way they were living. Duckhead Necklace asked them several times but each time the birds refused.
The next time the men went hunting, Duckhead Necklace went along. He changed himself into a buffalo calf. He told the men to shoot him. They did. The white birds came to eat the meat the men had killed. The bird chief chose the buffalo calf. He flew down and landed on the calf. As soon as he landed Duckhead Necklace grabbed him. With his hands he stroked the bird chief from his head to the end of his tail. The bird chief turned black all over. These birds became known as ravens. Duckhead Necklace took their talking away also. The birds no longer could rule the people. The people were very happy and said many good things about Duckhead Necklace. Duckhead Necklace knew his grandmother would be proud to know he was doing good things for other people.