The Bear Mother and the Deer Children

1. A Bear was about to go off to gather food. She called her children and gave them instructions. After I go away, you are to burn those two Deer children to death there, and they shall put away for me; and after I come back from gathering food, I'll eat them, she said.

2. She went away, and then, 'Let's play!' Let's pretend we're smoking one another. Let's play!' they said, and so they began to do. "You, you two first, go in there, and then smoke you," they [Bear] said, and so they began to do. They made a fire; they made it [house] smoky. These Deer children already had listened to it [Bear mother's instructions]. At the bottom edge of the house they made holes running out and there they stuck their noses out and then, after quite a while, they ran out unharmed.

3. So, "Now you, you two, go in there!" they [Bear] said. It was no use.

The Bear children went in. Not knowing how
it was, they two burned to death. Afterwards the two children did it; they pounded up the two children. They pounded; they pounded up and put away both of them for their [beak] mother; they pounded them up and put them away; and then they ran away from there.

7. The bear came: she started to eat.

"Oh my; my children minded me; I see that they've pounded them up and put them away for me," she said; she was eating voraciously. And then she felt her child's claw in her mouth. "Oh my, right there just my children, I see they've done it to them; what they pounded up and put away for me, I did it, I see I've eaten it," she said. 9. Then she tracked the two children. She tracked them down to the river; on the other side, the two children kept running downstream. "Me?" they kept saying along. So she spoke to a woman who was sitting there: "How won it, these two have apparently run across over there, on the other side?" she said. There was nothing.
to it; this [leg] here I put across and there they ran across, she said, and so she did. "You too, do you want to walk across there? I was as I am," she said. She put her leg down across, and the bear was walking along across there, on her leg. With a cane she was poking her along. Right on her knee she poked her, and the heron said it; "Ouch!" she said. She twisted her leg a little, and the bear fell into the river and there she drowned long ago, it is said.


For the episode of the stream crossing (paragraphs 9-13), cf. Lewis, UC-PAAE 36:342, text 2, paragraph 3. Cf. the versions of this story by H.P., R.J., T.W., and C.F.