

Tenas Man~The Littlest Eel Hooker

For many moons, Tenas-Man yearned to hold the eel poles of his grandfather and to hook the eels for his people, but he was always too small.

He would wait faithfully every year for the nights of the hot wind, when the eel ants began their flight. These were the times of the night eel. They would swim from the ocean and up the rivers and streams to spawn. Tenas-Man would be ready, yet he was told he was still too small.

His father and the Elders would take him along every year for the purpose of building the fire, carrying the wood, picking up the eels when the men would hook them and throw them on the bank, and putting the eels in a sack to take home. Each year, Tenas-Man would wonder, “Why and I too small?”

One night, when the summer wind blew and the Elders were fast asleep, he went eeling by himself to prove to himself and the Tribe that he wasn’t too small.

He took his Father’s lantern to see the eels at night where they swam. He took his grandfather’s eel pole to hook them when they swam. All the while, his heart beat fast. Tenas-Man’s father watched on, for he was also too small at one time.

As Tenas-Man hooded, he saw visions of wonder how he would show the Elders and his Father that he was not too small. All the while, his Father’s smile grew wider, for he knew his son was still too small.

While dreaming of becoming a man, Tenas-Man reached out too far for an eel swimming on the other side and fell from the cliff to the riffle below. There he thought, “Maybe I am too small.”

As Tenas-Man reached up from the boiling water, a strong arm reached down and pulled him from the foam. Afraid, Tenas-Man looked up and wondered at the warm, knowing eyes of his Father. He wondered also at his Father’s words . . .
“Next year, my son, you will be ready. And you will no longer be too small.”