

ABC Stories

Editors' Note: The following collection of three short stories are what is known as "ABC stories"—a common creative writing exercise where writers must start each new sentence the next consecutive letter of the alphabet. The goal is to create something seamless, that doesn't draw the reader's attention to the alphabetic arrangement of sentences.

The Snake People

Anthony Fernandez

According to tradition, every boy of the tribe had to complete a rite of passage in order to be considered a man. Before the sun would set, they were to find a venomous snake and bring it back alive. Considering that many of the snakes in the area were fast and had a venom strong enough to kill an elephant, the task was very tricky. During this time, any boy completing this challenge would go through a series of steps to train. Every day, they would practice using either a large rope or a non-venomous snake. For all intents and purposes, whether they were ready or not, it was time.

Great cheers would ring from the tribe as the boys would set out to catch their snakes. How and when they would get them was up to the boys themselves. In the spur of the moment, most of them wouldn't have a set plan. Just as the sun was above the horizon, they would all be scattered about wondering where their quarry could be. Keeping vigilant at all times was necessary or they could meet a deadly surprise. Leaving the area and returning to the village empty-handed was not an option.

"Maybe there is one underneath those rocks?" Needless to say, the boy who thought this turned out to be right. "Oh my goodness, that

is a black mamba," thought the boy. Pulse quickening and sweat streaming down his face, he now had to apply all the training he had done. Quickly, he snatched up a long stick and used it to pin the snake's head to the ground. Random struggles from the snake made the task difficult. Snakes, as you know, do not like being pinned. Therefore, the boy had to work fast to seize the snake's head and put him in his special sack. Until it was safely in the bag, he was in grave danger.

Very soon though, he had it in the bag and returned to the village. Whatever happened next no longer mattered to him. Xylem from the grass and plants smeared across his legs as he trudged along, making the trip back seem almost worse than setting out in the first place. Yet as he entered the village, he was greeted by a crowd of over a hundred people, for he was the only one to return with his snake. Zany is the word most people of the world would have called him for the stunt he had just pulled, but here in his village, he was now a man.