

Big Figure

There were no schools in the days of which I speak, but there was a spot near the forest, a playground, where children used to play. One little boy that played there had a knife—what kind I don't know; it happened a long, long time ago.

The other children wanted to borrow that knife but the boy told them, "My mother and father won't allow me to lend it. My mother said you might cut yourself with it, then blame me. My father said you might lose it and never return it. That is what my parents told me."

Well, you know what kids are like. The children decided they would not play with the little boy with the knife. "Let him go by himself," they said to one another. They taunted the boy and teased him. Their backs were to the forest.

Suddenly the boy with the knife cried, "Hey! I see a big figure in the trees!"

The children did not turn around and look but kept their backs to the forest. "You're just saying that because we won't play with you," they shouted.

"No, I'm not," argued the boy. "There it is again! A big figure. It's watching us."

But the children would not listen. "You're just trying to fool us but it won't work," they chided. "We're not going to have anything to do with you."

"It's coming!" screamed the boy. "It's coming!"

The children saw it then. It was a big, big man, bigger than any other. He had hair all over his body and his eyes were set deep in his face. He carried a large basket on his back. The children's strength drained out of them in fear. They were helpless.

The woods giant grabbed the boy that had the knife first and threw him in his basket. Then he threw all the rest of the children on top of him. He set off through the forest while the children peeked through the cracks of the basket, trying to see where he was taking them.

The boy with the knife was right at the bottom of the basket and could hardly move with all the children on top of him. Finally he was able to cut a slit in the basket big enough to

squeeze through and he dropped to the ground. The man did not notice, and the boy ran back to his village crying, "Big Figure has taken all the children!"

The men of the village gathered together. They asked the boy to lead the way that Big Figure had gone. They traveled over roots and under logs. At the place the boy had fallen through the basket the trail became harder to follow. They could see where something big had gone through the bush and followed that till eventually the trail ended at a large cave.

The men of the village could dimly see some of their children hanging by the feet in the dark cave. A huge figure of a man was tying up the other children's feet and putting pitch in their eyes. His wife and children were helping him.

"What are you doing with our children?" the villagers cried.

"We're going to smoke them," answered the giant.

"Those are our children! We want to take them home with us," said the villagers.

"We're going to smoke them and eat them," replied the big man. He and his wife finished tying the children's feet and started hanging them up, one by one, with the other children.

"Don't do that," the fathers of the children pleaded. "Let us take them home with us."

The big man started building a fire under the

children. Then he said to the men, "Why are your faces so nice and smooth and not rough like mine? You have nice eyes. They don't sink way in your head like mine do."

The villagers thought fast. One of them said, "You can have a face just like ours. We can fix you up. Go outside and get a big flat rock and another smaller rock with a sharp end."

So the big man did what they asked. It was easy for him to carry the big flat rock because he was so strong. Then the men of the village said to the giant, "Lie down and use this flat rock for a pillow. We're going to fix you up just like us."

"How long will it take?" he asked as he lay down and put his head on the flat stone.

"Just four days," they answered. "Close your eyes. Close your eyes tight." Then they took the rock with the sharp end and sunk it between the big man's eyes. He was dead.

"How long is he going to lie there?" asked the giant's wife.

"Oh, about four days," answered the men. They took their children, untied their legs and removed the pitch from their eyes. Then they went home to their village where the people were very happy.