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## THE TALE OF THE LOST CHILDREN

The following legend of the Blackfeet Indians was written by Josephine Redstone, a Sioux:

This legend has been handed down through the ages by the whole tribe of Blackfeet Indians. At the time of this story the tribe roamed the prairies near the Rocky Mountains. This tale was told to me by the granddaughter of the Blackfeet chief. She began thus:

Once in the days when the white man had not yet discovered our country, America, the whole tribe was camped on one of their numerous camping grounds. This place they liked especially well because it was where game was plenty, water was available, and the feed for horses was abundant.

While camped here the chief's son and some of the children of the same age were playing outside of the camps among the hills. Now the chief's son was playing with a very pretty necklace of beautiful shells which his father had made for him. While the youth was playing he broke the string and the shells scattered all over the ground. The children he was playing with had always admired them so they began to pick them up and fight over them, leaving none for the chief's son. So he went back to his father's camp crying. When the chief had heard about it, he commanded the people to break camp and go in different directions, so that the children would not see them or follow their trail.

When the children had played for a while they sent a little girl to go see what the chief's son was doing, but she came back crying and told them that the whole place was deserted. Instead of finding out whether it was true they began to tease her and said she was only lying. But when they found out that the camps were gone they began to cry, and wandered out into the mountains.

As the sun was setting and twilight had settled on the land they were in a weird place along the mountain side. All of a sudden they heard a voice calling, "Come right this way my grandchildren." When they followed the voice it led them to a tepee right at the foot of the mountain. When they neared it a shrill voice welcomed them, and as they went in, there sat an old witch gray and withered from age.

Many a time had these children heard their fathers

tell of the old woman who ate people. She must have been this cannibal, but she showed them the very best hospitality that one could show in those days, and the witch told the children that they could spend the night with her. She then gave them supper, which they ate heartily, and after their supper she told them tales. When they were ready to go to bed she told them that they should sleep with their heads toward the fire which was in the middle of the tepee, giving as an excuse that her pet snakes would bother them.

Now one of these little girls had her brother with her, and she told him to wake her if anything should happen. So he lay awake. Just at midnight the old witch arose and took her hatchet and set a large pot on the fire, and began chopping off the heads of the children. Just as she was nearing the boy's sister, he woke her up, and at this she jumped up and begged the witch to spare her life and her brother's, promising she would do anything for her for the rest of her life. The witch agreed, and sent the children for some water to a lake near by. When they reached the place, there was a water buffalo standing there, and the girl readily saw her chance to make an escape, so she asked the buffalo if he could take her across. But he said, "Before I take you, you will have to take a sliver out of my head, as it bothers me." So she took it out. Then he swam across with the two children on his back.

Just as they reached the other side, the witch called for them from the tepee, but a buffalo head, lying near the door, answered her saying, "Yes, we're coming." When she called the second time she heard this head talking instead of the children and became very angry, and chopped the head into pieces.

By this time the buffalo that took the children across had swam back and the witch saw the children, so she ran to the lake and asked the buffalo to take her across. He made her the same excuse he had given the children, at which she became angry. However, the buffalo said she could ride him across, so she got on his back and just as they reached the middle of the lake he turned over and drowned her.

The children had now reached a path which led them to a valley where there were some camps. Here they

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