

LITTLE GROWLING BIRD IN WINDEGO LAND



After the Greedy Glutton, Wolverine, had been driven from the Refuge Ground, Nokomis was less anxious about her stock of fish in the Smoke Lodge and found time to prepare a little surprise for Growling Bird and Yellow Hair. The children wished to go in bathing and had asked her to make them swimming suits, but before this she had not been able to spare the time. Now, however, she presented them with a suit apiece, which she had made from some of their old clothes. There were no other bathers to criticize the style of their bathing suits, so the children thought they were very fine indeed. Because Yellow Hair had never learned to swim, Big Bear took the children to a part of the river where it was quite shallow, and, after settling himself comfortably where he could keep an eye on them, he told them to go ahead and enjoy themselves.

Of course, Little Bear and Aundak, the Crow, went along as usual, but THEY did not need any special bathing suits! No! they never had to worry about ANY kind of clothes! All the preparation that Little Bear made before going in swimming was to take off his fancy moccasins, to keep them dry, because these are very unpleasant things to wear when they get wet. Now, there was a good-sized log floating close to the shore and Little Bear waded out and got astride of it! Then Aundak flew out and lit on it, too, saying that he hoped his weight would not sink it! But Yellow Hair was a little bit timid about venturing in, and Growling Bird had to take hold of her hands before she dared make the attempt. But in a little while they were all perched on the log and having lots of fun. Suddenly—



There was a great commotion in the water and SOMETHING BIG bumped against Yellow Hair's little bare feet! Then there appeared above the surface the long nose of Nah-may, the Great Sturgeon, who had been lying in the shadow of the Big Rock watching the wiggling toes of the little girl and wondering if they were not something good to eat. But because Sturgeon's mouth is like the Sucker fishes, and opens downward, he has to take his food from the bottom of the river, so he failed to get the little girl's foot in his mouth. But Yellow Hair was badly frightened—and who can blame her? Of course, Growling Bird tried to scare away the Great Fish, and even Aundak cawed out, "BACK UP!" But when Big Bear came splashing in—then things REALLY began to happen!

The log rolled over and gave them a sudden ducking, but it was on the side farthest from the danger, and, before Nah-may, the Great Sturgeon, could turn himself and get back into deep water. Big Bear had made a grab for him and lifted him clear out of the stream. Of course, Sturgeon kicked and struggled, but Big Bear hung on, and, although the great, strong fish nearly knocked him off his feet several times, he managed to get him on to dry land at last! Big Bear was rather proud of having captured the "King of Fishes," especially as Sturgeon had scared away most of the smaller fish in the stream, and, besides, he had broken through all the nets and snares Nokomis had set for his capture.



While the Great Fish was still struggling in the grasp of Big Bear, Little Bear thought HE ought to take a hand—and maybe get as much glory as he did out of his fight with Wolverine. So he bravely came up and slapped Nah-may, the Sturgeon, on the tail! It is not likely that the Big Fish felt it at all; but, in his struggles, he fetched Little Bear such a blow with that same tail that it knocked the little cub backward, head over heels! You may be sure that the children kept out of reach of such a dangerous weapon after they saw what happened to Little Bear.

When Nokomis came up she was greatly pleased to see that Big Bear had captured such a fine prize—and Big Bear, himself, was rather proud of the job! And then Little Bear had to show off a bit, also. He took up a stone and began to pound the head of the dead fish, but, even then, he took good care to keep away from the dangerous tail! Now, in the blunt nose of the fresh-water Sturgeon there is a found lump of gristle that is so elastic that it will bounce when thrown against the ground, very like a rubber ball. Little Indian boys know how to make use of this, and they make a very good playing ball out of the stuff—although it does not last very long. Little Growling Bird and Aundak both knew of this and, later, you may read how they DID play a kind of ball game with "Sturgeon's nose"!

Finally, the Great Sturgeon was conquered and lay stretched on the shore, quite dead!