



# LONG AGO TOLD

(HUH-KEW AH-KAH)

*Legends of  
The Papago Indians*

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*The Giant Cactus (Hah-Shan)*

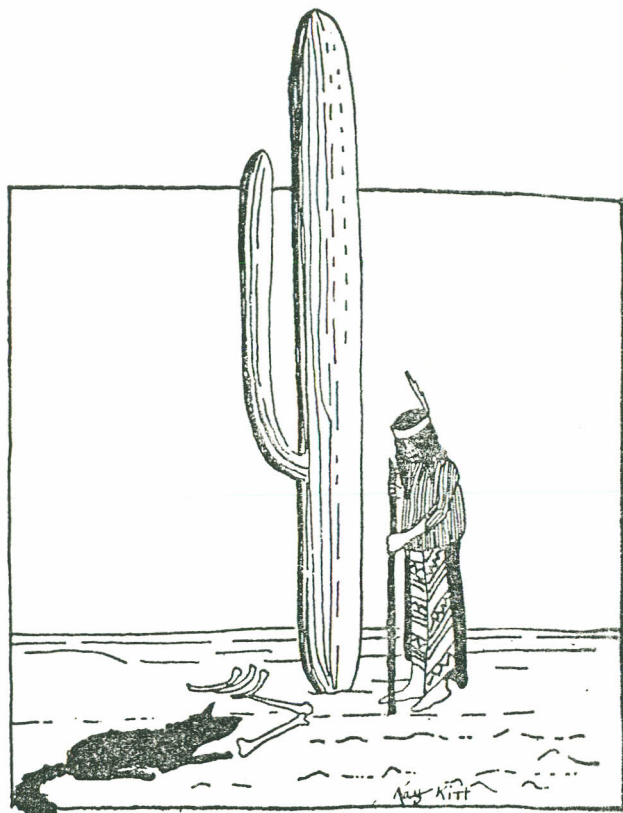
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THE GIANT CACTUS

## THE GIANT CACTUS

(HAH-SHAHN)

*Why an Indian mother; no matter what she is doing, always goes to her child when it cries. The first sabuaro, or giant cactus, and how the birds and animals behaved at the first feast of the cactus wine.*

In a certain village there lived an Indian girl who did not wish to marry.

This girl would never listen to the women when they tried to teach her things. All she wanted was to play taw-kah all day long. Taw-kah is a game very much like shinny or hockey. It is played by the Indian women. And this girl was a very swift runner and such a good player that the people who bet on her would always win.

Finally the girl's father and mother grew tired of her playing taw-kah all the time. So they

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married their daughter to a good man. And they made her a fine new house where she and her husband went to live.

But very soon the new house was dirty. There were never any beans ready for the husband when he came from the fields. Again the young woman was spending all her time playing taw-kah.

At last the young woman's husband grew tired of the dirty house and of having to work all day and then prepare his own supper. So he went away and left her.

After a while the woman had a son.

The older women of the village thought that surely now this young mother would stop running about playing her favorite game. But the young mother filled a big gourd with milk and put it beside her baby. Then she fixed her hair with a bright feather and put beads around her neck and went out to play taw-kah just as she had always done.

But the women of the village did not like to play taw-kah with any one who always won. And they did not like to think of this young woman's baby alone, crying. So the women of

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the kee-him would not play with this young mother. And she went over the mountain to another village where the people did not know her. She played taw-kah with the women of this kee-him and always won. And after a time she left this kee-him and went to a more distant village where she continued to win.

Now when this woman's child was left alone he began to grow. He looked around the room and saw all the beads and feathers and baskets and ollas which his mother had won playing taw-kah. He saw the gourd full of milk. He drank the milk and grew larger and larger.

Then he arose and put a feather in his hair and took all the bright things which his mother had won and went outside the house.

When the women of the kee-him saw the boy they said: "Here is the boy without a mother."

But the boy said: "No, I have a mother but she is playing taw-kah somewhere. Can you tell me where?"

The women could only tell the boy that his mother had gone away over the mountains.

So the boy started after his mother. He carried all the things which his mother had won

from the other women. And as he traveled he gave these things to the people who gave him food. But the way was very long.

After a time the boy came to some cultivated fields which belonged to a man who had a great deal of wheat and was busy clearing out the weeds. And the boy asked his question again: Where could he find his mother?

And the man answered that he knew the boy's mother well. He said she was always playing taw-kah and always winning; that she always wore a bright feather in her hair; and that she was in a kee-him on the other side of a black mountain.

So the boy started up the black mountain.

The trail was long. Sometimes Hoo-e-chut—a lizard—would stop long enough to laugh at him. Sometimes Oo-oo-fick—the birds—would fly very near and tell him not to be troubled.

Finally the boy reached the top of the black mountain and saw the village which lay below. There were some women playing taw-kah. And as the boy watched he saw a young woman who always won. And in this one's hair there was a bright feather.

The boy went on down the mountain to the village. But he did not go into the kee-him. He stopped in an arroyo near where there were children playing. And the boy asked one of the children to go to the woman who was playing taw-kah—the woman who had a bright feather in her hair and who always won—and tell her that her son had come and wanted to see his mother.

The child carried the boy's message.

But the woman answered: "I will come as soon as I win this game."

The boy waited some time. Then he sent another child with a message to his mother.

But the boy's mother had not yet won that game of taw-kah so she sent the same message back that she would surely come when she had won.

Again the boy waited. And the boy was hungry. So he sent the third child to his mother begging her to please come soon because he wanted to see her.

But this game of taw-kah was very long and the boy's mother had to run very swiftly. So

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she answered the messenger, "Yes, yes, tell him I will come when I win this game."

When the third messenger returned the boy was angry. And he asked the children to help him find the hole of Hee-ah-e—a tarantula.

When they had found a tarantula's hole the boy asked the children to help him sing.

So ah-ah-lee—the children—formed a ring around the boy and began to dance and sing. And as the boy and the children danced and sang the boy sank into the tarantula's hole. With the first song he sank as far as his knees. He asked the children to sing louder and to dance harder. And as they circled around him singing and dancing he kept on sinking into the ground.

When only the boy's shoulders were above ground one of the children ran to his mother, who was still playing taw-kah, and told her she must come quickly because the strange boy was almost buried in the tarantula's hole.

The mother dropped her taw-kah stick and ran as fast as she could. But the sun was in the mother's eyes and she could not see to go

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very swiftly. And when she reached the arroyo there was nothing to be seen but a bright feather sticking out of a tarantula hole. And the sand was closing around the feather.

Then the woman began to cry.

And Pahn—the coyote—who was passing, came to see what all the noise was about.

The mother told Pahn that her son had just been buried in the tarantula's hole. And she asked Coyote to help her dig her son out of the ground.

Coyote told the woman he thought he could get her son out. And he began to dig. And Pahn found that the boy was not very deep in the ground.

Now, Coyote was hungry with all his work, and he didn't see why he should take this boy to a mother who had never done anything for her son. So he ate the boy. When the bones were well cleaned Coyote took them out of the hole and gave them to the woman with the bright feather. And Pahn said to the woman: "Some one must have eaten your son. This is all I could find."

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The woman with the bright feather looked at the bones. But the bones of her son were not very bright and so she had no use for them. She told Pahn to bury them again, which Coyote did.

Four days later something green came out of the ground on the spot where the boy's bones were buried. In four more days this green thing was a baby sahuaro—ah-lee-choom hah-shahn. And this was the first sahuaro, or giant cactus, in all the world.

This giant cactus was a very strange thing. It was just a tall, thick, soft, green thing growing out of the ground.

All the Indians and all the animals came to look at it. Ah-ah-lee—the children—played around it and stuck sticks into it. This hurt Hah-shahn and he put out long sharp needles for protection so the children could not touch him. Then ah-ah-lee took their bows and arrows and shot at Hah-shahn. This made Giant Cactus very angry. He sank into the ground and went away where no one could find him and he could live in peace.

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After Giant Cactus disappeared the people were sorry and began looking for him. They hunted over all the mountains near the village. They asked all the animals and birds to help them.

After a very long time Ha-vahn-e—the crow—wandered over Kee-ho Toahk, which means Burden Basket Mountain. And Crow told the people that he had seen a very large cactus where there was nothing but rocks and where no animals nor Indians ever hunted.

Kooh—the chief—called a council of all the animals and the people. And Kooh told the people to prepare four large round baskets. Then Chief gave Crow orders to fly back to the giant cactus. And Kooh told Ha-vahn-e what he should do when he arrived.

When Crow reached the giant cactus he found the top of Hah-shahn covered with fruit. The fruit was red and large and full of juice and sugar. Crow gathered the fruit as Chief had told him to do, and flew slowly back to the village.

The people were waiting.

And Crow put hah-shahn pah-hee-tahch—the

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cactus fruit—into ollas, which are large jars, and which were filled with water. Chief placed the ollas on the fire and from sunrise to sunset the fruit was kept boiling.

For four days this syrup—see-toe-ly—was cooked. Then Kooh—the chief—told all the people to prepare for a special feast—nah-vite ee—which is wine feast, or wine drinking. They were to have a wine which they had never had before.

Oo-oo-fick—the birds—were the quickest to get ready for the feast. They came dressed in red and black and yellow. Some of the smaller ones were all in blue. Then Kaw-koy'—the rattlesnake—came crawling in. And Kaw-koy' was all painted in very brilliant colors.

The birds did not like it because Rattlesnake was painted so bright. They gossiped and scolded and were jealous. Rattlesnake heard Oo-oo-fick talking and rolled himself in some ashes. And that is why, even in these days, you will find the skin of Kaw-koy' marked with gray. The gray markings are where the ashes were caked onto his new paint.

Choo-ah-tuck—the Gila monster—gathered

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bright pebbles and made himself a very beautiful coat. And Gila monster's beautiful coat was very hard. You can see it to-day because he is still wearing it.

So all the people—Indians and animals and birds—gathered around and drank nah-vite—the wine. And nah-vite was very strong. It made some sing. Others it put to sleep. Others were sick.

Choo-hook Neu-putt — the night-hawk — who was dressed up in gray and yellow, did not wish to spoil his breast feathers so he brought a stick of cane to drink through.

All the Indian girls thought this very wonderful of Choo-hook Neu-putt and he received a great deal of attention. And Saw-aw—the grasshopper—who had borrowed Tawk-e-toot—the spider's web—and with it had made himself beautiful new wings, was very jealous to see the attention given Night-hawk. Grasshopper felt he must do something to make the people notice him. So he pulled off one of his hind legs and stuck it on his head.

When Night-hawk saw Grasshopper with his new headdress he laughed and laughed and

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laughed until he could not stop laughing. He laughed so hard he split his mouth. And it is that way even to this very day. That is why the night-hawk never flies in the daytime. His mouth is so big and white and ugly that he has to fly at night so people will not see him. And that is why he darts past you so quickly in the evening.

Often in these days, too, you will see Saw-aw—the grasshopper—jumping around without a leg.

After a while, as they kept on drinking nah-vite, the birds all began to fight. They pulled each other's feathers. And some had bloody heads—just as you see them to-day.

When Kooh—the chief—saw the fighting and the bloody feathers, he decided that there should be no more wine feasts or wine drinking like that. So when the wine was gone, Kooh very carefully gathered all the seeds of the giant cactus fruit and he called a messenger to take the seeds away off toward the rising sun.

The people watched Chief's messenger take the seeds away off into a strange country and they did not like it. So they held a council. And

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Coyote said he would go after Chief's messenger.

Coyote traveled very fast. He circled around the one who was carrying the seed and came back so that when he met the messenger it appeared that he was coming from the opposite direction. Pahn greeted Messenger and asked what it was that Messenger carried in his hands.

The one who had the sahuaro seed answered: "It is something Kooh wants me to carry away off."

Coyote said: "Let me see."

Messenger said: "No, that is impossible."

But Coyote begged: "Just one little look."

At last, after much coaxing, Pahn persuaded Messenger to open one finger of the hand which held the seed.

Then Coyote complained that he could not see enough and begged Messenger to open one more finger.

And so, little by little, Messenger's hand was opened.

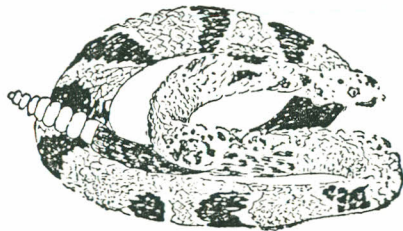
Then, suddenly, Coyote struck Messenger's hand and the seeds of Hah-shahn—the giant cactus—flew into the air.

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Huh-wuh-le—the wind—was coming from the north. And Huh-wuh-le caught up the seeds and carried them high over the mountain-tops and scattered them all over the south side of the mountains.

And this is why the sahuaro, or giant cactus, still grows in the Land of the Desert People. This is why Hah-shahn is always on the southern slopes of the mountains.

Ever since that time, once each year, the Indians have held nah-vite ee—the feast of the cactus wine.



### EYE MOUNTAIN