

WIRINGI, THE BAD BOY.

Wir-ing-i was the naughtiest little jeera (boy) among all the Waddia-booloo (northern people) boys.

Every boy in camp knows there are certain things he must never do, or some harm will come to him by magic. He must not go into forbidden shady groves that are guarded by a ran-ji (spirit) or the ranji will put sickness into him and he will die. He must not touch the magic ornaments hanging from the necks of the jalnga-gooroo (Magic Men), or pluck the yirgili (edible seed) flowers, for then he will send all the yirgili seed back to Jimbin (country underground), and there will be no yirgili for his people to eat. There are many other rules that he must remember, but above all, he must never mock taloor-gurra (Old Men). He may mock his mothers or sisters, and if his fathers are in a good humour they will laugh at him, or they may tell him he must not do that, but whether he heeds the warning or not, he will not be beaten for mocking his mother.

Wiringi, however, saw in old Beedurn, an easy person to mock, for Beedurn had caught some evil magic that stiffened his arm. Wiringi would walk about the camp holding his arm just like Beedurn.

His father said to him, "If you do that, you will get mir-roo-roo (magic)!"

But Wiringi had been doing so many naughty things, and had not been mir-roo-roo-ed that he only laughed at his father, and mocked Beedurn again and again.

All the taloor-gurra (Old Men) in camp warned Wiringi, yet they could not help being amused at the funny, clever way he could mock old Beedurn. Beedurn's anger against the boy grew greater every day. He told the bad little jeera to stop, but Wiringi put his tongue out and went on with his mocking.

At last Beedurn's brother-in-law said to himself,

"I must punish this jeera who will not stop mocking Beedurn, and we must let the other jeera see that they must not mock taloor-gurra."

But he did not tell anyone what he was going to do.

One morning he went away to a ranji beega (forbidden shady grove, and took with him a warran-gujji (nose-bone). He marked it with dots for jeera's eyes, and lines for jeera's arms and legs, with a goom-bera (sharp stone).

When he had finished the markings, he held the warran-gujji close to him, sat with his legs crossed in the ranji beega, and sang this mir-roo-roo (magic) into the bone :

Warran-gujji bid-door ga-ree-na!
Warran-gujji bid-door ga-ree-na!
Bid-door ga-ree-naa!

He sang this over and over again. At last he spoke the boy's name softly to the warran-gujji, and, sticking it into the bark of a tree, he came back to the camp.

Jeera went on mocking Beedurn for a little while, but by-and-by he lay down. Then all the taloor-gurra knew he had got mir-roo-roo, but, as they all sent mir-roo-roo, none of them knew which mir-roo-roo it could be.

By-and-by Beedurn's brother-in-law went again to the ranji beega, and looked at the tree where he had stuck the warran-gujji. It had broken off, and the broken part was lying on the ground, and he knew the jeera would die. He took the two pieces of warran-gujji and put them in the fork of the tree.

Very soon Wiringi died and was buried in the fork of a tree.

The other little jeera never again disobeyed the great laws, though there were many little rules that they defied, but they were not punished for these.

Sometimes a little jeera will puff out his stomach and cry,

"Ngai dardal! Ngai dardal!" (I am sick! I am sick!).

Another little jeera pretends to be jalnga-gooroo (Magic

Man), and comes over to the sick boy bringing a koora-barl or koorab-bura (magic stick). He turns the sick boy over, puts the baa-loo(stick) on his back, then on his side, then on the swollen stomach, and the lump goes quickly down.

"Jooa maabu? (You all right?)" the little jalnga-gooroo asks him.

"Ngowai!" the patient says. "Ngai maa-bu!" (Yes, I am all right)!"

Sometimes the little jeera will have a sham fight with spears made of rushes, and toy shields and boomerangs. After a short fight, one little jeera falls down, pretending to be dead. A young jalnga-gooroo comes over, puts a finger in each of the "dead" jeera's ears, and shouts to him,

"Wanjalla ngai!" (Look at me)."

The "dead" boy opens his eyes, looks at the jalnga-gooroo, and is made alive again.

These and other games may be played by the jeera without offending their elders, but as soon as the little boy ceases to be jeera, and becomes nimma-mu (the name given to him after his nose has been pierced) he is never allowed to play those games. For when he is nimma-mu, his childish games and fun are over, and from that time he must learn to be a man.