

THE CHILDRENS' GAME

Jimmy's little sister ^{right off} said she saw who did it, but none of us believed her ^{hug} because she was only five and lied all the time.

" I am not ~~lying~~, " she said. " It was too Dutch Phillips and he came from there. " She pointed to the hospital grounds.

Jim said, " Now I know she's lyin' cause there's a big fence around that place and no one can get in and no one can get out. "

" Yes, they can. Dutch Phillips did it and I seen him. I didn't see him get accross the first fence, but I seen him coming accross that big yard, and they were mowin' it too and didn't even chase him. He just walked real slow like he was takin his time not in a hurry or anything. Then he walked past the greenhouse where they were keepin the old pots with the dead plants in them; he opened the gate which wasn't locked or nothin. He come on through and he crossed the fence. "

" And you were here all the time just like I told you, " jimmy said.

" Yes, I was. I didn't go anywhere and now I want my popcicle. "

" You'll get it, if you earned it. " Jimmy said. He looked at me. " How could ~~one~~ ^{Dutch Phillips} boy do all that? I know he's ~~nine~~ ^{nine} and almost ten, but he ain't that big. He had to have help. "

" There wasn't anyone with him, " Lucy said, " And I ain't lyin either. "

" Maybe he had a hatchet and chopped it down, " I said.

" There ain't no hatchet chops. " Jimmy said.

" He had a hammer with him and he hit it once and the whole thing fell down, just like that, " Lucy said. " Lucy said. " I was standin right there. He told me if I ~~xan~~ tried to run away he would ~~hit~~ knock me down, so I didn't move at all until he turned his back and knocked our fort down. Then I ran. ~~xan~~ ~~hex~~ He didn't even try to stop me. I guess he went back the way he came, across the hospital yard. "

Jimmy didn't say anything. I guess none of us said anything. We just stood there lookin' at what was left of our fort. I think Lucy started to cry. We were beat and there just wasn't any other way of looking at it. ~~The fort~~ It took us two weeks to ~~build that~~ ~~fort~~ steal all the lumber and nails and tarpaper. We named it FORT RAMSHAKLE THE FIRST and it even had kind of a second story and a roof that you could stand on, and it was much better than that ~~little cardboard box that~~ tunnel that Dutch's gang had build. But they still had a fort and ours was just a pile of wood. Even if we ~~put the~~ took the wood and straightened out the nails and put the fort back to gether again we were still beat. ~~xx~~ Dutch Phillips was the first boy to cross the asylum yard; he had taken us by surprize and he had won. It was a hard thing to take.

70 miles