

## The Deer Girl

*The deer has the most beautiful eyes. When I was chairman of the Seminole Tribe, my husband found a little fawn while he was hunting and brought it to me. It was Bambi, and she lived with us for many years. I would never go hunting for deer. I was always too partial to animals. Even a little bird I wouldn't kill. When the hunters would bring the deer home, I wouldn't look at it. I ate deer meat when I was a little girl, but I would never eat it now.*

—Betty Mae Jumper

Big Dance and gathering was being held near Big Forest. These dances were held for four days and four nights. Everyone got all dressed up and made their camp near the dancing area.

The first night Big Dance began with all the people dancing. There came a beautiful girl with the most beautiful eyes. Every Indian there watched her dance. She was perfect with her steps as she danced with her turtle shells. Before the end of the last dance, she disappeared into the darkness just before daybreak.

On the second night, she appeared again in her beautiful clothing. One of the braves began to dance with her. He got in front and she followed. For two nights they danced till almost daybreak. But then she disappeared during the last dance. No one knew which clan or camp she was from.

People began questioning each other about her. Even the brave who danced with her had questions. She had only told him that she had come to Big Dance to enjoy dancing and wanted to keep on dancing. But she always disappeared after the last dance of the night.

On the last night of the gathering, the brave knew he had to talk to her. This was his last chance to express himself to her. He wanted to tell her how much he liked her and that he wished to marry her.

So he went to the girl and told her how beautiful he thought she was, how her eyes shone when she talked. He had never seen any girl with such beautiful eyes. But her answer was, "I can't marry you. I am different from you."

"From what chickee do you come?"

She answered, "I don't live in a chickee." And she would give him no other real answers to his questions.

As the night was ending, he began to worry more and more about the girl with the beautiful eyes. As dawn drew near, she began to move away from him. Again, she went into the darkness, only this time he followed her. She disappeared too fast, and by the time the sun came, the young man was alone in the forest.

Then he saw a fawn, a young deer, standing there looking at him. The fawn's beautiful eyes were exactly the same as those of the dancing girl.

He knew then why she said she could never marry him. Swiftly this young doe disappeared into the thickness of Big Forest.

When you look at the eyes of a deer, they are beautiful.

