

THE STORY OF BANJIL

Banjil, the wife of Binjerung, brought a little baby with her from the stone at Bokabiring, where she had gone to get it. Banjil was quite, quite young, and she loved and fondled her baby all the day. She rubbed it with fat and with ashes and soft powdered charcoal until its little body gleamed again. Binjerung who was very much older than Banjil used to watch her playing with the baby, and he was not angry when he came home with meat from his day's hunting and found no roots or vegetable food waiting him, for he said, "By and by when koolong grows up, Banjil won't want to stay at the maia all day playing with him. They can play now," and so instead of being angry, Binjerung would go and get the wood and make the fire and cook his meat, giving Banjil as much as she wanted.

Banjil was the happiest little mother in all the place, and she would be glad when the older women came and called her "Mother." Banjil would smile up at them and rub and fondle her baby, and blow upon its neck for kisses. Sometimes her older sisters would bring some vegetable food and leave it at her maia for Binjerung, and in all the camp there was no one who did not like Banjil, for she was gentle and soft and kind to everyone.

Day by day the little baby grew and Banjil watched his growth, and suddenly baby stopped growing, and the fat went off his little legs and body and the sleekness went away with the fat and baby's eyes got bigger and bigger, and he would lie all day in Banjil's arms, looking up at her without winking. Banjil rubbed him with more and more fat, but his little body shrivelled up and his eyes got still larger, and he still gazed all day at Banjil. And as the days passed and baby grew still more thin, Banjil would rush frantically with him to her grandmothers, and to the bulyaguttuk, but they said to each other, "Baby has caught mulgar (magic), someone has bulyaed him, or he may have caught it on its way to someone else." The bulyaguttuk pinched the baby, and blew upon it and tried to suck the magic out of it,

but all was of no use.

One morning Banjil held a dead baby in her arms, yet baby's eyes were still open and watching her. Binjerung's moorurt and Banjil's moorurt buried the baby in a little hole in the rocks near the hillside and they closed up the entrance and swept a path clean so that when baby's kaanya came out it would go along the path to Koorannup. Banjil carried her little baby and laid it down, but made no loud moan or cry, only the tears kept falling, falling like rain. Banjil walked a little way back towards the camp with the others, and then leaving them she returned to the grave and going to a moojoor tree whose branches lay across the swept path, she gathered a small bunch of these, and tying them all together she put the little bundle into her goota, for she now believed she had baby's kaanya with her.

She took it home with her, and all the time she sat in her camp she had the little bundle beside her, and at night it was by her side. Yet she made no loud moan as women always do over their dead, for she felt the kaanya tugging at her breast and her heart, day and night it pulled at her and it was gradually pulling the strings loose. And then Banjil's eyes grew big and the fat went off her bones and the tugging inside grew greater, for the kaanya wanted to go away to Koorannup, but it wanted to take Banjil too. And at last Banjil went away with the kaanya of her baby and they buried her as near to the baby as they might go, for one must not go to the place where there had been a burial for a certain time, otherwise the kaanya may be disturbed and lose its way to Koorannup, in which case it will turn into a janga and come back and haunt them. Banjil was put in the ground, and round the head of her grave they made a little semicircular mound. They then cleared the ground beyond where the feet pointed west towards Koorannup, for the kaanya would go along the cleared path.

Half way between the grave and the camp they lighted a fire in case she should turn round and come back towards the camp instead of going on to Koorannup. But Banjil's kaanya and her

little baby's kaanya went on to Koomanup. And Binjerung went a long way away to some far away moorurt, for he could not again go near the spot where he had watched Banjil and her baby boy.