

THE SPIRIT WOMAN AND THE TWO BOYS.

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In Yamminga time, two nimma-moo (boys who have had their noses pierced) went out one day, looking for geer-bai-ju (honey). The tiny bees that make this honey are smaller than a house-fly. The nimma-moo could see the little bees in the flower-cups, but when they flew away to the hollow tree with their bags full, they were so small that the boys could not see to follow them.

So the older nimma-moo caught one, and picked up a little white feather to fasten on to the bee, which he could then see going to its home in the hollow tree. He pricked his arm with a thorn, and with the little drop of blood that came out he fastened the down of the feather to the back of the bee. Then both nimma-moo could see the bee and follow it up.

They did this whenever they could not hear the bees working at their hive, by putting their ear against hollow trees, or see the bees flying round the tree. They gathered a great deal of geer-bai-ju (honey), which they put into a little black bowl of hollowed wood.

They had both climbed a big tree, where they hoped to find enough to fill their black bowl, when a Ngarri Jandu (spirit woman) stood there and waited for the nimma-moo to come down.

The Ngarri Jandu is white like the sun, and always carries a goor-deen (bark vessel) under her arm.

When the boys came down from the tree, the Spirit Woman caught them and put them in her goor-deen. She took them to her baa-loo (tree where she lived), and put them inside the tree, where there were a great many ngarri babba (spirit boys). She pulled the bark down over the hole, and shut them inside the tree.

Then she went out and hunted opossum, snakes, goannas, and a lot of other wallee (meat), and fed them to the boys to fatten them up, and then ate the fattest. She was going to



fatten the nimma-moo, and turn them into ngarri babba (spirit boys), and kill and eat them too.

The nimma-moo saw her eating her own ngarri babba (spirit babies), and were frightened, but they did not cry, for they wanted to escape, so they sat quiet.

When she had finished eating, and gone out hunting, they pulled their kar-dim-ba (nose-bones) out of their noses, and blew through the hole of the bone at the bark that closed them in the baaloo (tree). The older nimma-moo tried first, but he could not move the bark. He blew and blew till his cheeks swelled out, but the bark kept fast and would not move. Then the little nimma-moo blew through his kar-dim-ba, and the bark moved away.

Ngarri Jandu (Spirit Woman) was a long way off, trying to pick up more boys. As soon as they blew the bark away, the nimma-moo came out of the tree and ran koo-nian (north) to where their father's booroo (ground) was, and many womba (men) who were their uncles and brothers.

Ngarri Jandu came back in the afternoon with her load of wallee, and saw the bark pushed away, and knew that the nimma-moo had gone. She tracked them, and tracked them, travelling north. When a ngarri (spirit) takes the form of a woman, it shouts and makes noises like a woman as it goes along. When it takes the form of a man, it makes a noise like the kallee-gooroo (the big bull-roarer).

As the boys ran, they met many womba, and they called to them, "Ngarri Jandu is following us. You spear her, so she can't catch us."

The womba said "Ngow-ai !" (All right)", and the boys ran on.

When the Ngarri Jandu, following the boys' tracks, came to their camp, the womba rushed at her and speared her all over and hit her with their clubs, but they couldn't kill her because she was a spirit. They speared her in the eye, but her eye was like a stone. Though they speared her till sun-down, they could not kill her.

She went on through many camps, tracking the boys, and



none of the womba could kill her till she came to a camp where one of the spears had mir-roo-roo (magic) in it.

This magic spear hit her in the nyee-wal nimbal (instep), where her heart was, and killed her.

A Spirit Woman is never allowed to come close to jeera (little boys), as she would take them away to her baa-loo (tree) and fatten them up, and make them spirit babies, and kill them, and eat them.