



Bougoodoogahdah the Rain

Bird

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Australian

Intermediate

5 min read

Bougoodoogahdah was an old woman who lived alone with her four hundred dingoes. From living so long with these dogs she had grown not to care for her fellow creatures except as food. She and the dogs lived on human flesh, and it was her cunning which gained such food for them all. She would sally forth from her camp with her two little dogs; she would be sure to meet some black fellows, probably twenty or thirty, going down to the creek. She would say, "I can tell you where there are lots of paddy melons." They would ask where, and she would answer, "Over there, on the point of that moorillah or ridge. If you will go there and have your nullahs ready, I will go with my two dogs and round them up towards you."

The black fellows invariably stationed themselves where she had told them, and off went Bougoodoogahdah and her two dogs. But not to round up the paddy melons. She went quickly towards her camp, calling softly, "Birree, gougou," which meant "Sool 'em, sool 'em," and was the signal for the dogs to come out. Quickly they came and surrounded the black fellows, took them by surprise, flew at them, bit and worried them to death. Then they and Bougoodoogahdah dragged the bodies to their camp. There they were cooked and were food for the old woman and the dogs for some time. As soon as the supply was finished the same plan to obtain more

was repeated.

The black fellows missed so many of their friends that they determined to find out what had become of them. They began to suspect the old woman who lived alone and hunted over the moorillahs with her two little dogs. They proposed that the next party that went to the creek should divide and some stay behind in hiding and watch what went on. Those watching saw the old woman advance towards their friends, talk to them for a while, and then go off with her two dogs. They saw their friends station themselves at the point of the moorillah or ridge, holding their nullahs in readiness, as if waiting for something to come. Presently they heard a low cry from the old woman of "Birree gougou," which cry was quickly followed by dingoes coming out of the bush in every direction, in hundreds, surrounding the black fellows at the point.

The dingoes closed in, quickly hemming the black fellows in all round; then they made a simultaneous rush at them, tore them with their teeth, and killed them.

The black fellows watching, saw that when the dogs had killed their friends they were joined by the old woman, who helped them to drag off the bodies to their camp.

Having seen all this, back went the watchers to their tribe and told what they had seen. All the tribes round mustered up and decided to execute a swift vengeance. In order to do so, out they sallied well armed. A detachment went on to entrap the dogs and Bougoodoooghadah. Then just when the usual massacre of the blacks was to begin and the dogs were closing in round them for the purpose, out rushed over two hundred black fellows, and so effectual was their attack that every dog was killed, as well as Bougoodoooghadah and her two little dogs.

The old woman lay where she had been slain, but as the blacks went away they heard her cry "Bougoodoooghadah." So back they went and broke her bones, first they broke her legs and then left her. But again as they went they heard her cry "Bougoodoooghadah." Then back again they came, and again, until at last every bone in her body was broken, but still she cried "Bougoodoooghadah." So one man waited beside her to see whence came the sound, for surely, they thought, she must be dead. He saw her heart move and cry again "Bougoodoooghadah" and as it cried, out came a little bird from it. This little bird runs on the moorillahs and calls at night "Bougoodoooghadah." All day it stays in one place, and only at night comes out. It is a little greyish bird, something like a weedah. The blacks call it a rain-maker, for if any one steals its eggs it cries out

incessantly “Bougodoogahdah” until in answer to its call the rain falls. And when the country is stricken with a drought, the blacks look for one of these little birds, and finding it, chase it, until it cries aloud “Bougodoogahdah, Bougodoogahdah” and when they hear its cry in the daytime they know the rain will soon fall.

As the little bird flew from the heart of the woman, all the dead dingoes were changed into snakes, many different kinds, all poisonous. The two little dogs were changed into dayall minyah, a very small kind of carpet snake, non-poisonous, for these two little dogs had never bitten the blacks as the other dogs had done. At the points of the Moorillahs where Bougodoogahdah and her dingoes used to slay the blacks, are heaps of white stones, which are supposed to be the fossilised bones of the massacred men.

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