



Piggiebillah the Porcupine

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Australian

Advanced
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Piggiebillah was getting old and not able to do much hunting for himself. Nor did he care so much for the flesh of emu and kangaroo as he did for the flesh of men.

He used to entice young men to his camp by various devices, and then kill and eat them.

At last the Daens found out what he was doing. They were very angry, and determined to punish him. "We will kill or cripple him," they said, "so that he, giant though he be, shall be powerless against our people." A mob of them went and surrounded his camp.

He was lying asleep, face downwards, as he did not wish his doowee or dream spirit to leave him, as it might have done had he slept on his back, with his mouth exposed.

In his sleep even he seemed to hear a rustling in the leaves, but suspected no evil, saying drowsily to himself: "It is but the Bullah Bullah, or butterflies, fluttering round." Then he slept on while his enemies closed in round him.

Raising their spears, with one accord they threw them at him, until his back was one mass of them sticking up all over it. Then the Daens rushed in, and broke his arms and legs, with their boondees and woggarahs, crippling him indeed. As he made neither sound nor movement, they thought they had killed him, and went back, satisfied with their vengeance, to the camp, meaning to return for their weapons later.

As soon as the Daens were gone, Piggiebillah crawled away on all fours to the underground home of his friend, Murgah Muggui the spider. Down he went in through the trap-door, and there he stayed until his wounds were healed.

He tried to draw out the spears, but was unable to do so; they stayed in his back for ever, and for ever he went on all fours, as his tribe have done ever since. They, too, as he did, get quickly underground if in danger from enemies.

When the Guineeboo or redbreasts, of whose family Piggiebillah's wife had been one, heard what had happened to him, they lifted up their voices and sang the death wail until its melancholy sounds echoed through the bush, as they rose and fell in wave-like cadences. In their grief they cut their heads with muggil or stone knives, and comeboos or tomahawks, until the blood ran down staining their breasts red, and the breasts of the Guineeboo have been red ever since.

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