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MINGARI THE MOUNTAIN DEVIL

(Central Australia)

The little Mountain Devil (*Moloch horridus*) of the Central areas occupies a unique position in native legends, for the first mingari were women, who controlled a tribe of dingoes which were kept to repel all advances from men. They sent their dingoes to chase men away whenever they endeavoured to obtain a mingari for a wife. Mingari wanted no husbands and the mountain devil of the present day keeps up the old tradition by never having a husband, for no native has ever seen two mingari, man and wife, together. In long ago times the Mountain Devils were women who travelled by themselves and wherever they sat down they left babies at the spot where they rested. Before they continued their travels, they gathered their children round them and said, "You must now live by yourselves for we are going far away from you. Do not speak or whistle, for if you do you will die." The children did what their mothers told them, and so when they were changed into the mountain devils of the present day, they obey the law their mothers gave them and make no sound when resting or travelling.

The mingari, in spite of their formidable appearance, are perhaps the gentlest of all living creatures, and natives say they have never seen two mingari fighting. They attribute this fact to their belief that mingari do not marry, and so there is no jealousy amongst them to stir up enmity.

Nyiruna, a big man, who lived in those days, greatly desired a mingari kungga (woman) but she would not have him and made her dogs chase him away, whenever he came near her camp. Mingari was followed by Nyiruna always, but the dogs kept him back and she never got mingari.

Maalu and Kanyala (two species of kangaroo) and Jurrjurr (small night owl) were also friends of Mingari and helped them to keep Nyiruna away, and when the Mingari changed into little mountain devils, the old spirit mingari went up into the sky where they and their dogs who went with them were changed into stars. Maalu, Kanyala and Jurrjurr went with them and

Nyiruna followed them. Nyiruna (Orion) and Sirius still chase
Mingari, but the dogs keep them away on the one side and Kurrjurr
on another side and Maalu and Kanyala on the north side, so
Nyiruna can never come near Mingari (Pleiades).