

Review Age 20 / 12/1915
W. P. H. S.

THE MOON CHILD.

by

E. Coulson Davidson.

Characters:

Firehart.
Moonchild.
Myamyn.
Mohabie.
Minyip.
Purdeet.
Miakite.
Minhamite.
Biolite.
Murrum.
Mita.
Bunyip.
Sapling Maids and Youths.
Bracken Maids and Youths.

E. Coulson Davidson,
'Niagaroon',
Warrigal Road,
Oakleigh, S.E. 12,
Victoria, Australia.

MAY NOT BE BORROWED

T H E M O O N C H I L D .

SCENE: A valley surrounded on three sides by steep, wooded hills, whose crests are tipped with the gold of the rising sun.

The BRACKEN PEOPLE are gazing curiously upon a stranger. She is slender and pliant as the reeds that fringe the river. Her small head crowned with its silken gold rears itself above the delicate throat, in which the pulses throbb her terror. The ~~xxxxxxx~~ wondering creatures are clad in straight robes of russet brown. Their beautiful faces lift as flowers from the heart of bracken fronds that collar-wise are twined about their necks. Their eyes are fastened upon the MOON CHILD, yet their attitude is one of listening, they are alive to approaching footsteps.

A full rich voice breaks the silence, " Firehart comes!" and almost immediately he is seen hastening forward. He is young and slight, and moves as one who is obeyed unquestioningly. His dress ~~is~~ is a cloth of dull gold, caught up on one shoulder with a great black opal.

FIREHART: I am come ~~again~~ to you again.

MOONCHILD: Since you sped in the wake of Dawn Winter has laid weary arms about me, for time moved on most lagging feet.

~~FIREHART:~~ FIREHART is about to clasp her, but MYAMYN, the Bracken Maid, intercepts him.

MYAMYN: Remember the High!

FIREHART imperiously waves her aside and takes the MOONCHILD'S outstretched hands.

FIREHART: Love is the High.

MOONCHILD: Did Dawn tire you with her swift flying?

FIREHART: Love does not know fatigue.

MOONCHILD: He is a sudden guest who comes without warning as the wind out of the North.

FIREHART: He is fiercer than Typhoon's passion, and, like a mighty river in flood, he will brook no obstacle.

MOONCHILD: Mohabie is wise. I have heard too he has gentleness in his heart.

FIREHART: He is gentleness to those only who do not thwart his will.

MOONCHILD: Your words cast doubt into my mind. We have not so offended him. Have we the power to alter Love's decree?

FIREHART: Of that he will take no account, and his wrath will be heavy that I knew you mine at sight.

PURDEET, a Bracken Youth, bowing, raises his hands. The other Bracken People do likewise, and chant Mohabie's coming:
"Comes Mohabie — comes the High —"

FIREHART: Because of the light that will shine in his eyes beholding you, I will go. Do not stir his anger against us, or his rage will surely destroy. None save the Bunyip may say him nay.

FIREHART goes, glancing back frequently. MOHABIE comes. He is absolute. That is seen at once in the bearing of the Bracken who bend low to greet him and listen to his

speech as to that of a deity. About his loins is a coarsely woven cloth. Across one shoulder is swung a tawny skin, the other is bare and shows the arm brown to the finger tips. He pauses a pace from the Moonchild.

MOHABIE: I greet you. How came you?

MOONCHILD: I rode to earth with Dawn.

MAHABIE: She of the brilliant eyes and the warm breath that melts the chill of Night.

MOONCHILD: She drank up all the dew as she passed, for she was thirsty from her long chase of Night. Some time she will catch him up, then he will stay his flight seeing how fair she is.

MOHABIE: They are too near and yet too far apart in their natures. It would be grievous for both if they were to come together.

MOONCHILD: And will it not be so for you who have persuaded me that the Earth is fairer than the Heavens?

MOHABIE: My heart is as young and as old as Dawn. Come! I have halls of opal for you and white caves hung with jewels.

PURDEET: (to Myamyn) He thinks to win her as he won the dead Karinga from Badoo -- with glittering stones.

MOONCHILD: Nay, do not strive to tempt me. Thus it is one lures the child to its potion, the slave to the couch of her master. Do you think to enthrall my heart dangling promises of glittering fire held captive in white rock? Such things please an infant's gaze and delight the slave only while the hand that holds them is high above the reach. I have dwelt too long mid the wonders of my father's home to be moved by such beauty. I have ridden upon the living gold of firelit clouds, and from the gleaming

pearl windows through which we light the paths for the cloud children, I have looked down upon your world.

MOHABIE: Here Night keeps watch with his million trusty eyes.

MOONCHILD: Once those eyes were jewels my father ~~gave~~ gave me, but tiring of them I cast them North and South and East and West, and the Spirits pitying sightless Night gathered them and set them in his head.

MOHABIE: Where is the warmth that was in your voice for me when I called you from the Moon? You do not speak. Who has built this wall of ice between us? I hold you prisoner in my heart.

MOONCHILD: Go and gather Winter's congealed tears for me that I may weep for the folly of his love for Spring. (She attempts to pass him.)

MOHABIE: (barring her way.) Traitors are punished with death.

MOONCHILD: Death is but a journey to a silent land and holds terrors only for the common mind. (Her face grows stern, her eyes flash back at him.)

MOHABIE: (looking questioningly towards the Bracken.) Who came with Dawn?

BRACKEN: Firehart, oh High.

MOHABIE: Better I had told him of her coming. Some things we do wisely, some we spoil handling clumsily, feeling too sure of our fallible selves. Whence has he gone?

MINYIP: He has gone to hunt the grey wallaby.

MOHABIE:

MOHABIE: He soon forgets. A season since there were no wallaby. Hear me! When Day strikes warm guide the Moonchild to the gully between the hills. (He moves out.)

MOONCHILD: Hear me. (She holds her hands to him.)

MOHABIE: (ignores her movement.) Nay, I dare not, for a heated brain gives voice to mad speech. I will come again when my tongue lies calmer in my mouth. (He passes on.)

MOONCHILD: He is old; so old that he mingles love with reason. Alas! how could I know he was so old.

MYAMYN: It is safe to have years behind one, they bring with them a gentle tolerance.

MOONCHILD: Because of the aged Biälite's gentle ways you say so; but Time gives nothing to the old which the child does not possess, save a wrinkled skin and locks where pallid ashes cling. Age is Winter, Youth is Spring, and one can never clasp the other.

PURDEET: Mohabie's love is warm as Summer.

MINYIP: But his wrath is a volcano devouring whom it greets.

MYAMYN: He never forgives.

PURDEET: But his heart has cradled deeds from which rarest flowers have sprung.

MOONCHILD: He was not so old till I had looked in Firehart's eyes.

MINYIP: Oh, his love flows full like a deep river, but the love of Firehart is a winter-loosed mountain stream that greets with caresses all it meets and forgets as it goes singing on its way.

MYAMYN: Biolite says it is not only love makes happiness.

PURDEET: She knows. She finds her happiness in the joy of others. She is never at the call of herself.

MIAKITE: She has ears for all our sorrows.

MINYIP: And smiles for all our joys.

MYAMYN: Her eyes see good where other eyes see only evil.

MOONCHILD: What persuasion has she with the High?

MYAMYN: He listens to her gravely.

MOONCHILD: And is gentle with her moods?

MYAMYN: She is the dead Karinga's mother.

MOONCHILD: Such patience with a dead love's mother lights hope anew in me. He loves well the dead Karinga's son?

MINYIP: He loves Firehart wisely, but will not suffer him to approach the garden of his heart.

MOONCHILD: I no longer love Mohable.

PURDEET: 'Twas of your free will you came to him?

MOONCHILD: Of my own will, freely, but seen from my father's home he was as Firehart.

MYAMYN: The moon casts strange spells upon our world. It sheds so fair a light that faded flowers would not seem to have spent their beauty.

MOONCHILD: With the Sun I will go back to my father.

As the MOONCHILD moves away, the BRACKEN close in about her.

BRACKEN: We guard you with our lives.

MOONCHILD: Mohable is without mercy.

MINYIP: He is Mohable.

MOONCHILD: What ill have I done him?

PURDEET: Is it nothing to set jealousy loose in a great heart?

MYAMYN: Hear me, White Maiden. Once these whom I shall name were our sisters and our brothers. Now they are birds or beasts: The Lyre Bird nests in the shadowy gullies. The Emu paces the sand ridges. The Grey Wallaby hides in the depths of the lone bush. The Iguana crawls in the burning sun questing water. The Mopoke moans his dreariness and remorse when Night un lids his eyes. The Opossum hides in terror of Day. The Wombat tunnels a path into the ground in vain hope to escape our eyes that know his shame. Shall I tell on?

MOONCHILD: Such things I do not fear. I will look again into Firehart's eyes.

MINHAMITE: (a child Bracken) What will he turn the Moonchild into? Perhaps something stranger than the Grey Wallaby.

MOONCHILD: Who was the Grey Wallaby?

MIAKITE: (a lad older by a few years than Minhamite.) He was Garoon who looked in Meena's eyes.

MOONCHILD: Who was Meena?

MINHAMITE: She was Meena who looked in Firehart's eyes.

MOONCHILD: Where is she?

MINHAMITE: She is with Garoon.

MOONCHILD: Tell me.

MINYIP: There is so much to tell.

MINHAMITE: It made us shake as when a strong wind blows.

MIAKITE: You are too young to know.

MINHAMITE: You pushed out of the earth not so long before me. (To Moonchild.) I was uncurling my ears, but I heard - it was worse than any of the others.

MIAKITE: You do not know about the others.

MINHAMITE: I know about Yin Yin who would stir mud into Mohabie's drinking water and came back and did it ever so often when she'd been told not. (To Moonchild.) And now she's the Platypus that cannot stay all the time in the water nor yet all the time out of it. Poor Yin Yin, she must be ever so sorry now that she stirred mud in Mohabie's pool.

MIAKITE: We hear everything, because we are the common people who live in the open. We are everywhere.

MINHAMITE: Nothing kills us. We change our dresses sometimes, but we are not dead though we grow so pale.

MIAKITE: The delicate folk live between the big hills where it is very beautiful.

MINHAMITE: The sun does not burn them, and some grow tall and have long green arms that catch at each other across the stream, and dance, and always the cool water makes music for them, never stopping once.

MOONCHILD: This is not the story of the Grey Wallaby.

MINYIP: That will come.

MINHAMITE: We did not see really .

MIAKITE: You did not.

MINHAMITE: I saw Dawn coming. It was when I was shaking the earth off my back, and I looked up and saw with my new eyes a shining white finger come out of the sky and wiggle up and down, up and down everything and all over the Big Gums' bodies - oo-o-oo, and I was ever so frightened and didn't uncurl anymore three days. And when I peeped up again all the Gums' bodies were black, and one, an old old father Gum, he was lying all torn to pieces against his mother.

MIAKITE: How could you know when you were only just uncurled?

MINHAMITE: I know because I heard, and new ears are the best to listen with.

MOONCHILD: All this is not of the Grey Wallaby.

MINHAMITE: He comes at the end.

MOONCHILD: Then begin at the end.

MINHAMITE: But that is not the way to tell a story, and it happens quickly when it comes, then you'll be sorry you didn't hear the between parts.

MOONCHILD: I care for nothing but the story.

- MINHAMITE: It comes after the old old Gum got torn to pieces by the fire-finger.
- MIAKITE: I know it better because I was born first.
- MINHAMITE: But I saw Meena go by. She was looking over her shoulder, and over her shoulder all the while. Then Garoon came another way and saw me looking, and he was so angry it made me shiver like the wind blew me, and just then Mohabie made all the walls of the world fall together, and the white fire-finger ran lines up and down, up and down from the sky to the ground. I shut my eyes, but when everything was still I peeped out and saw Mohabie looking most angry, and there close to him were the wallaby, and then I knew — and that's what he did to Meena and Garoon.
- MOONCHILD: He is ~~ex~~ more cruel than Winter's breath in the snow hills of Cloudland.
- MINHAMITE: I have not said about Murra yet.
- MOONCHILD: Who is Murra?
- MINHAMITE: She was laughing Murra who laughed in Mohabie's face, and now she's the Kookaburra that can only laugh and never talk anymore. And in the morning I hear her, and often when Night is creeping on us.
- MOONCHILD: Such anger is fiercer than the fury of the Winds.
- MINYIP: Has it come to you that Firehart will share your fate?
- MOONCHILD: My fate is his fate.
- PURDEET: Does what Mohabie will do not stab your heart with fear?

MOONCHILD: You wear fear like a cloak. Listen. There are some things so worth possessing that a thousand years of pain could not take the joy from me.

PURDEET: We fear because we have seen. We are the common people upon whom the lash of life falls heaviest. The bleakest of winter winds sear us, the cruelest of summer suns burns us, autumn bleaches us, and we know no spring.

The MOONCHILD sees FIREHART returning, and runs forward to him.

FIREHART: (looks from her to the Bracken questioningly) What have you told the maid?

MINYIP: The story of many transformations.

MOONCHILD: Thus does Mohabie punish always?

FIREHART: It is the bitterer lesson.

MOONCHILD: But Death were kinder. (She points to the Bracken) Send them away — their eyes tear the secrets from my soul.

MYAMYN: We are here by Mohabie's commands.

FIREHART: Nay, 'tis but your fancy. They are as the grass beneath your feet, fair one. You may dance upon them and tread them flat — they are but the Bracken.

MOONCHILD: Yet has each its own mind.

FIREHART: They have no mind but is Mohabie's.

MOONCHILD: I cannot find it in my heart to like Mohabie's ways. Let us seek the Sun and journey with him back to my father. 11.

FIREHART: Nay, but with me come where the shadows of the mountains hide from us his cold, white face.

MOONCHILD: Nay, with me.

The MOONCHILD moves out of sight slowly, and FIREHART follows like one enthralled. The BRACKEN also are drawn to the edge of the bush where they stand a moment watching the lovers disappear.

MIAKITE: Woe to us that she nor we told him she was Mohabie's ~~bride~~ bride.

MYAMYN: Of what avail? Her speech and ours would have fallen heedless on his ears, for has he not looked into her eyes and seen himself enthroned there.

PURDEET: Alas, our end is near. We have let the Moonchild go, and Mohabie's wrath will fall heavy on us.

MIAKITE: The uncurled Bracken are safest in their grey bed.

MINHAMITE: Oo-oo, I am shivering like the wind was blowing me.

The scene darkens. Long forks of white flame flash across the black. The dull boom of thunder breaks the stillness. With wailing cries the BRACKEN fall upon their faces. As suddenly the darkness breaks, the white flames cease, the thunder halts, and light breaks through the gloom. The BRACKEN have risen, and now stand motionless. MOHABIE and the aged BIOLITE appear.

MOHABIE: Enough! Know you he has torn the heart from my breast and made feast upon it.

BIOLITE: Your words run hot like lava from the flaming hill. Your mind is full of conflicting gales. Invite reason to converse with you so you may not judge harshly.

MOHABIE: You mock me speaking of reason and harsh judgment. Too often I have heeded your pleadings. Did I not ~~bring the fire~~ at your wish stay the fire that was heaped to char the infamous Ranamite? And ~~he~~ has he not grown so arrogant that no maid is safe from him? Better that his ashes had made toys for the winds to play with!

BIOLITE: I plead for the dead Karinga's son. Let night lay a cooling hand on you ere you take a mad vengeance upon him, for Revenge is a wilful child that once born never dies.

MOHABIE: He has dared to pluck the blossom I had chosen.

BIOLITE: For the fair all men have eyes. It will give you no joy to slay them, rather will it lay desolate all your hopes. Give them their joy a willing gift. It is a thing shorter lived than a winter's day.

MOHABIE: I tell you no, and no. You know not what you ask. Firehart's will shall bend to mine or break. I am absolute. One moment of vacillation and my power has vanished. The Bracken would begin to assert themselves, to speak as beings with minds of their own.

BIOLITE: He is so young.

MOHABIE: He has stolen my fairest possession.

BIOLITE: Nay, he has not robbed, else ^{is} the child guilty that sustains life at the mother's breast; the flaming waratah a thief that it opens its heart to the sun; the bird that mates in the Spring - these too must be thieves, but you are too wise to say it is so. 13.

MOHABIE: Dawn stays her feet when Firehart looks her way. She is fitting mate for him. With her diverse moods she could hold him, he not being certain whether she will greet him chill or warm, if her looks be gloomy or joyous - such is the bride for Firehart.

BIOLITE: The Moonchild will keep his ardour with the evenness of her love.

MOHABIE: Her placid calm would drive him to seek distraction. She is not a bride for youth; she has lived too long in loneliness with her father.

BIOLITE: Nay, your judgment errs. Men grow pompous and weak when their sires mate only with common minds.

MOHABIE: She is mine. He has stolen her, and he shall die!

BIOLITE: Ah, pity, that you who are wise in so much should be blind of little things.

MOHABIE: Hear me. I have set my heart upon this maid. Her nature is calm, her eyes see things far off; she has not the distemper of impulse or vanity. In her lies the hope for my future race.

BIOLITE: Ay, mated with Firehart.

MOHABIE: In some things women are never wise.

BIOLITE: Ah, what has love to do with wisdom?

MOHABIE: You probe me with vain questions. Know you that in the Moonchild lies the salvation of my race.

BIOLITE: Love has naught to do with such vexed things.

MOHABIE: What this thing is that women call love, men know by a different name. You set it spirit wise, ^{as the plain} a thing to worship, and it blinds you to the gems set on a mountain head..

BIOLITE: Yet still I plead for love.

MOHABIE: And I for the future of my people. Dawn's caprices are the leaven~~er~~ for Firehart's passions. The Moonchild's placidity will anger him into dissolute ways. Dawn I should strangle, the Moonchild I would place on a high altar and worship. (BIOLITE mutely pleads.) Plead no more. You cannot understand the workings of such things. It is best they both die now than my people a million years hence.

BIOLITE: A blind fury rends your mind silencing the promptings of reason and stiffening ~~me~~ with hoar-frost the flower of Pity. Suffer them to live. I am not so old that I forget the sweetness of my youth. I am old, yet the face of Death, ^{now} sometimes comes between me and the warmth of Life, in the long hours ~~like~~ before Dawn wakes me, is loathesome to my mind that has learnt the horror of so much. One short season let them live to drink with the High from the goblet of happiness, to smother in the ecstasy of love, to move as the High feeling the seasons are their servants, knowing the mighty passion of the Typhoon as a weakling compared with the fury of jealousy their love could awaken. One short while let them live such things, and with the cooling of their ardour wisdom will come to them.

MOHABIE: Wisdom can find no tenement in the life of youth.

BIOLITE: I plead as the dead Karinga. Always your wishes were her wishes. The High denied you paternity, and Karinga sacrificed herself to them to gain this boon for you. She the weak kissed the fleshless lips of Death that you might look upon a son.

MOHABIE: Let us be done. I have spoken. It is enough. They may come to bid you farewell.

MOHABIE moves away with deliberate slowness. BIOLITE, bowed and broken, vainly wrings her hands. The BRACKEN gather about her and strive to comfort her.

MINYIP: Oh, that such sorrow can be born of Love.

BIOLITE: Why does the sun not hide his face?

MIAKITE: Perhaps Mohabie will relent and turn them into animals instead.

MINHAMITE: I like best to be a Bracken maid.

MIAKITE: But I sometimes envy Bidgee, for now he is Koala he will be warm in the winter in his furry coat.

MINHAMITE: And hot in the summer, Miakite.

MIAKITE: I think to be most anything is better than a Bracken.

BIOLITE: The young are learning bitter lessons.

PURDEET: I sometimes fear it had been better Mohabie had not given us life.

BIOLITE: Nay, do not speak such things in the small ones' ears. Come, little Minhamite, I will tell you a story. (The BRACKEN form a group about Biolite.) When my limbs were small like yours I saw a white cloud bird flying over the world. I wished I could go with it, and I said so softly only the grass could hear, "I would give everything to go." Suddenly the cloud bird came to me, and I sat between its wings, and we went a long journey to a place I did not know. Looking down over its wing I saw --

She pauses. The BRACKEN, hanging breathless on her words, cry in chorus: We listen, O Aged One!

BIOLITE: I saw a worn, old Biolite.

The BRACKEN start with a low cry of alarm.

BIOLITE: She was surrounded by her faithful Bracken.

The BRACKEN look at one another in awe.

BIOLITE: Behind them was the sacred pool.

BRACKEN: (in awe.) The Bunyip's pool!

BIOLITE: I looked and saw my own face peer up at me from the pool, and far, far below I saw the Bunyip coming, coming, coming to the surface.

BRACKEN: (in horror stricken notes.) You saw the Bunyip!

BIOLITE: He spoke.

BRACKEN: (pantingly) We listen, O Aged One!

BIOLITE: "You have come," he said, "riding between the wings of Future to know what will befall you. Look then into my depths and say what it is you see.

BRACKEN: Tell, tell, our hearts pant to hear.

BIOLITE: I saw a lone-hearted old woman mourning a fair young one. I beheld a broken hearted old woman pleading for the life of a stripling.

BRACKEN: Tell what the Mighty One said of the stripling, sweet Aged one.

BIOLITE: He said, "I have risen in the dusk of Day, Fair Maid, to bid you not despair. I am mightier than Mohabie in my hour.

MINHAMITE: I shall look and wish every hour for the cloud bird.

BIOLITE: Ah, little maid, my story has been vain. Know this, contentment is a great, good gift; wrap it about your life as the gum wraps its bark around its body.

PURDEET: Contentment stifles the stirrings that prompt questionings of those things of which only the High have knowledge.

BIOLITE: He who fits life's purpose best, Purdeet, need not ~~seek~~ quest further than his arms can span. Come, tell me of Firehart's love.

MYAMYN: She is fairer than the white water flowers that float on the Bunyip's pool.

MINYIP: Her eyes are the blue of evening skies.

PURDEET: Her hair is the gold of the Cootamundra.

MYAMYN: Her lips are the crimson of the flaming Waratah, and her face gleams white like the pearl Moon.

BIOLITE: Did none behold her come to earth?

MINHAMITE: Yes, Murrum saw her; he was quite alone.

BIOLITE: Let the boy speak.

MURRUM: I was keeping watch with Night when the East first moved, and over the mountain heads I saw Dawn's flaming hair. It trailed in the wind across the sky, and as she rose I saw her face and her shining smiling eyes. She was riding in a chariot of crimson fire, and the White Moonchild sat beside her.

BIOLITE: Say on.

MURRUM: It was then I heard my name called: "Murrum! Murrum!" It seemed to come from the sacred pool.

BRACKETE: The Bunyip!

MURRUM: I looked, and saw -- The Bunyip! He was smiling and looking towards the Moonchild..

MINHAMITE: Did you shake like the wind blew you, Murrum?

BIOLITE: Say what he spake, boy.

MURRUM: He was not looking at me. His eyes were seeing nothing, yet he seemed to be speaking to someone whom I could not see. "It is begun," he said. "I have risen with the new day to speak this."

MIAKITE: Some day you will be a Spirit, Murrum. The Bunyip has spoken to you, and you will rise high.

BIOLITE: Did he speak no more than this?

MURRUM: No more, O Aged One.

BIOLITE: Tell what Dawn spake to the Moonchild.

MURRUM: "He will come to greet you by the sacred pool." And even as she spoke this Firehart was there. And the Moonchild looked at him, and he at the Moonchild. Then Dawn put her face close to Firehart's and took his hand, and he went with her, leaving the Moonchild alone, and great fear was in her eyes.

MINHAMITE: It was then we woke up and saw her.

BIOLITE: Boy, look towards the hills and say if Mohable returns.

MURRUM: (from the fringe of the scrub.) I see nothing, sweet Biolite, save Day lighting the dark caverns with sunshine.

MYAMYN: Let tall Mita watch, her head reaches above the White Merya bush.

MITA: (at Murrum's side.) Something moves in the light - it is the kangaroo going out towards the plains. If Koala could speak he could tell us for he sits high on the Mother Gum's arm.

MINHAMITE: With his paws he can get the bees' honey.

MIAKITE: If Mohable hears you, little maid, there will be another new creature in the bush.

MINHAMITE: I am not covetous. I am wrapping contentment around me like the bark on the Gum's body.

BIOLITE: Hear me. When the High fall the lowly rise to power.

MYAMYN: Alas! Care comes in the train of Power.

MINYIP: And Arrogance, and the distemper of Greed.

BIOLITE: Remember always that it is well to be ever at the call of others, and to thrust self into the caverns of forgetfulness. It is nursing the wound that continues the pain, and thinking of others only that eases the ache. I am old, and have travelled far on the ways of life, and I speak thus to you that it may help you when I am here no more.

MINHAMITE: (striving to look above the scrub.) It is such a pity one does not come out of the earth tall like Mita.

MIAKITE: You are courting destruction, little maid.

MINHAMITE: I was going to say, then I should be at the call of others.

MITA: The Kangaroo is rushing like a grey wind to the darkness of the bush.

MURRUM: He has seen Mohabie, who is very angry. See, they come! Firehart is angry too, his eyes are flashing like the black opals.

MITA: The Moonchild walks behind, her head held high.

BIOLITE: I fear black shadows will soon creep o'er the sun.

BURRUM: They come!

The BRACKEN chant in chorus: "Comes Mohabie! Comes Mohabie! "

MOHABIE comes, followed by FIREHART and the MOONCHILD.

MOHABIE: (angrily to Firehart.) Say on.

BIOLITE: Give me leave to speak.

MOHABIE: It is useless - I have dethroned Reason.

FIREHART: Anger sits in state in your heart. Am I to blame that Dawn drew me to the Sacred Pool where this white pearl waited? Is it treason that I be fleeter of foot than you?

MOHABIE: To me she came of her will freely.

FIREHART: And freely I followed her. The paths you say I shall not tread are guarded. "This is Mohabie's way!" the Bracken cry, and I turn aside. But this fair jewel Dawn led me to was for my asking. The guard cried no alarm when with her eyes she drew me.

MOHABIE: You prattle as a child that has found a strange plaything. Know you the Bunyip has said that if the Moonchild is yours in a million years we are dead? With Dawn is your only safety.

FIREHART: Dawn's breath comes hot and swift; her eyes burn; she has gay moods and sombre; she smiles and she frowns, and no two moments is she the same.

MOHABIE: With you she is the hope of our future.

FIREHART: Nay, but with the Moonchild. I have heard in the beating of her heart the song of love; but to you it will ever be mute.

MOHABIE: The sapling sways in the breeze, but the grown gum stands steady in the gale. Son of the dead Karings, you know not what you want. Tomorrow Dawn could lure you to the edge of the world. She could gather you in her strong arms and strangle remembrance. She could bring fresh fruits to your lips, strange music to your ears: all this is what you seek, but you will not realise because your eyes have wandered beyond the world and seen those fair things whose habitation is your mind.

FIREHART: You speak too late. The Moonchild is mine.

MOHABIE: Hear me. Once it was said a White Moon Maiden would come to wed Mohabie, and from the twain a great new people could arise. The Bunyip laughed and said the maid would wed Firehart and not the life-worn Mohabie, and the new race sprung from them would be a feeble, resistless people ~~who~~ wandering hither and thither like the migratory birds seeking fresh nesting places.

FIREHART: This prophecy is the inspiration of a jealous mind. (To Moonchild) Come. We will seek a stream beyond the hills and follow it to the wide sea.

MOHABIE: (roughly catching at the Moonchild) In your heart is enthroned a thief. (Forces her away.) Go! but ere the dusk may the birds of evil devour your flesh.

FIREHART: Most surely Mohabie is sunk in Jealousy's mire.

MOHABIE: May her ~~XXXX~~ treachery ~~scow~~ your heart. To me she came, and now she has come the feather that she calls her heart blows whither any wanton breeze will take it.

FIREHART: Your words run hot as the fiery stream from the burning cave, but they are cold beside Love's liquid fire. (To Biolite.) Mother of the dead Karinga, say what is in your heart.

BIOLITE: In Love's house are many chambers. Some are dark where the flash of the sun's face is never seen. Some are filled with joyous song, and in one chamber Death lurks watching, watching, ever watching.

MOHABIE: Dusk comes soon, and Love counts a million years too short. (He grips the Moonchild's wrists and gazes intently into her eyes.) Is it the Bunyip's scorn that peers at me from your eyes? (He drops her hands and stands troubled.)

BIOLITE: Your anger is a spear you hurl against yourself, Mohabie.

FIREHART: Come, White Maiden, and should we find Death lurking beyond the hills we will greet him with smiles not tears.

FIREHART and The MOONCHILD are moving away when BIOLITE lays a restraining hand on The MOONCHILD.

BIOLITE: I have spent myself vainly. Now do you plead for your life.

MOONCHILD: (tenderly enfolding Biolite.) No futile words of mine will stem the current of Mohabie's wrath. It is true I came to him, for seen from my home he was as Firehart, and without farewell to my father I came with Dawn to earth. Beside the Sacred Pool she left me, and there Firehart found me. So sure Mohabie was of my coming that he tarried, but you who are wise know that love is a sweet fruit only when plucked in its season.

MOHABIE: There are yet some hours to the dusk. Drink the nectar of Love while it is day.

MOONCHILD: We shall sleep a million years locked in one embrace, and one hour of living joy cannot be ~~counted~~ counted by so mean a thing as time. Mother of the dead Karinga, farewell. (With outstretched hands she goes to Firehart, and they move outward.)

MOHABIE: Hear me, Son of the dead Karinga. I seek to save my people.

FIREHART:

You slay them with our doom. Karinga went a willing bride to death because Love bade her. I, Firehart, am her son and yours, and Love beckons. What if in her eyes Death lurks? I heed not. I go to greet her.

He leads the Moonchild out slowly through the grouped Bracken. At the edge of the Bush they linger.

BIOLITE appears suddenly very aged and frail as she looks after them.

MOHABIE stands proudly erect, his gaze upon the Sacred Pool, but his hands are tightly clenched and his eyes troubled. The BRACKEN regard him wonderingly and fearful.

BIOLITE:

So young to greet Death. (Suddenly a strange strength and passion leaps into her. She stands erect, her voice ~~ringing~~ ringing out clear and strong.) Come winds from the North and winds from the South, come from the East and come from the West, and beat to earth all upright things. Moan your dirge and whistle your death knell, for Love, young Love goes forth to die. Come, Grey Dusk, and tempt the Bunyip from the depths of the Sacred Pool. Lure him to the surface that his mirth may shake our souls with terror. The day for prayers is past, let his tongue speak what it will, since taunts, jeers, prophecies, prayers are vain to move Mohabie from his purpose. (Her strange passion and strength are spent; ~~her~~ ~~her~~ broken and again aged she moans her words.) O Bracken, droop your heads to the dust and moan your sorrow for young Love goes forth to die.

The scene darkens, but an unearthly light illumines the Sacred Pool.

MOHABIE:

The Bunyip hears you. Look! all the light of Day is sucked into one ray above his pool.

BIOLITE: Alas! when Love is doomed the world grows black.

MOHABIE: Karinga's son is as a spear upon which my people fall. Would I had struck them as they stood. Mad I was to let your pity move me. (He listens intently. Demoniac laughter is heard.) The Bunyip - the Bunyip stirs!

Horror holds the BRACKEN in its grip. MOHABIE stands statuesque, only his eyes seem alive, they flash and darken alternately. BIOLITE raises her head and gazes towards the lovers.

Slowly the BUNYIP emerges from the Sacred Pool.

BUNYIP: From the depths of a world unknown I rise, vengeance at my heel. How long I have waited this moment, at times most sorely tempted to laugh your wrath to scorn when in wanton mood you prisoned men and maids in grotesque creatures. But I curbed impulse and set impatience against patience in unfair duel. To save one puny life were not enough ~~to~~ compensate me for this hour. For this I gladly pay the Spirit's toll, and sink to my watery ~~depths~~ deeps nevermore to rise, my power lost as the dead seasons that have fled.

MOHABIE: Hear him, mother of the dead Karinga; hear him, O love demented youth and maid; hear him, O my people. The hour dawns when Mohabie's power shall wax dim as the hills at dusk.

BUNYIP: Son of the dead Karinga, go and seek the music of running water. Bracken, twine garlands for Love from the flowers you strew on Karinga's bier. Drink from Joy's goblet - life is yours, long life - a million years ere you die!

BIOLITE: O Shadow of Death, come and fold me against the light of another day.

BUNYIP: Fools! why waste a golden day. Away, there is no gloom beyond the hills. Snatch your hour for mirth and dance.

BIOLITE: Here where Day has scarce begun Night has already come.

BUNYIP: Sweet Biolite, seek the cave under the mountain where the dreamers watch, for a chill will come at dusk upon you.

FIREHART: Come! (He takes the MOONCHILD'S hand and leads her out into the day.)

MOHABIE: (to Biolite) Go with the son of your dead Karinga. Gather the Bracken around you in the valley between the hills, and when the Mopoke lifts his note in lamentation I will be with you.

BIOLITE: If my tears have betrayed you into suffering, let me stay that I be racked with sight of your desolation.

MOHABIE: You plague me with your tears. I am no puny child to hang upon a woman's neck for comfort. Go!

BIOLITE stumbles forward. The BRACKEN support her tenderly as they move away.

BUNYIP: So slow death will come to them they will not know. A flaming wind out of the North will shrivel the face of the earth. Bursting clouds will restore its fairness, but in the hearts of your people will be desolation. Hither they will move and thither questing the old life, and ever the flaming wind will sear them till they become black as the stones I have lain upon since the world began. Thus they will wander, the man followed by the woman, who will become as a beast of burden dogging his heels, and ever the flaming wind will scourge them until all hope is dead, and lo! Mohabie's people are no more. But they upon whom you worked your wanton wrath, they will live when your race has perished like

the flesh of fallen gums. I have spoken.

The light slowly fades above the pool. In the distance a weird chant is heard — it is the BRACKEN finding voice.

C U R T A I N .