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“Voluntary Worker, Mr. L. Maher,
builds us a coke bin.”

LOVE AND DEATH: SKY PILOT'S LOG 2CH BROADCAST

Max had been staying with various friends in Arnhem Land for some time and most of us had become very fond of him. When visitors are rare it is always refreshing to have someone with new thoughts and fresh ideas to talk with. George and Max were staying with me for the night; when we had almost talked ourselves out, George made a strange remark:

“I don't reckon this is safe country for a crook to live in. It's the last place in the world where he could hide.”

“But” said Max, “I thought a lot of men

wanted by the police came out here under a new name.”

“A man who is wanted by the police” George told him, “may not really be a crook at heart. I ain't sayin' a lot of men here ain't made mistakes; most of us has, one time or another. What I mean is a man who is really crooked can't stay here without it bein' found out. The bushmen, yes, and even the blacks soon sum up a man for what he really is. Then they either accept him or treat him as an outsider.”

"What about poor old Jacob?" asked Max. "How would you class him?"

"No one likes him much. 'Course they have a lot of fun at his expense, but they don't trust him. He ain't done nothin' real crooked as far as I can see but — well, they don't trust him, that's a.l. Maybe it's his race of course, but he can't help that I suppose."

"What about me? You needn't mind my feelings; I'd like to know what the bushmen think of me."

"You ain't got no need to ask. They tease you a bit because you're from the town; but everyone likes you, Max. You know that."

"Well it's not race only that's wrong in Jacob's case; I belong to the same race, if you like to go back a bit."

"There's good and bad in every race, Max. Take the blacks for instance. I've knowed some blackfellows that I wouldn't trust out of my sight and I've knowed others that I'd sooner trust than any white man. 'Course you've got to know the full story before you can judge a man for his actions. The police don't always know the full story; that's why a lot of men is in jail that never ought to be there; and there's more than one in this district that's runnin' about loose that ought to be behind bars, or strung up to the nearest tree."

"That" I said, joining in the conversation, "is a long speech for you, George. What's on your mind?"

"I was thinking about that young native they call Arthur. Do you know the one I mean?"

"There's an Arthur that works for Frank; is that the one?"

"That's him. Well one of these days there's goin' to be a lot of trouble over him; but if you hear anythin' bad about him don't jump to conclusions 'till you know the whole story."

"Don't be so mysterious", begged Max. "Tell us what you know now. You've got me curious."

"Well it's this way," said the old stockman, "Arthur is a full blood; but he was born in a whiteman's camp and he's been brought up with white people all his life. He looks like a black-fellow but in many ways he **thinks** like a whiteman. I don't mean he's got no time for native law; it ain't that way at all. He's steeped in native law but he **reasons** that law in a way a whiteman would. I don't know if you get what I mean. I ain't much good at . . . what's the word I want?"

"Expressing yourself. is that the word?"

"That's it Smithy. Well what I mean is that Arthur accepts the law of the blackman and lives by it; but he's got a lot of the whiteman's outlook as well. It ain't a happy mixture."

"But about this story. I want to know the story."

"I'm tellin you aint I? Gimme a chance. It's this way: accordin' to native law Arthur should marry

the girl Rose. There's nothin' unusual about that; but you mightn't believe me, but that fellow has fallen in love with Rose just like a whiteman. He worships the ground she walks on."

"That's most unusual," I agreed, "it will be interesting to see how it works out in practice. Has he married her yet?"

"No he ain't. What's more he never can marry her. The whiteman's law won't let him."

"How's that, George?" Max asked. "I can't follow you."

"You will in a minute. Now you're a stranger in these parts, Max, but Smithy knows Frank well. What sort of a fellow would you say Frank is, Smithy?"

"He's an absolute rotter."

"And that's puttin' it mild. Well Frank took a fancy to Rose and decided to keep her for himself."

"But" asked Max, "I thought that was against the law? Isn't there a hundred pound fine or twelve months jail for that?"

"There's supposed to be", George agreed,, "but it don't work out in practice. What Frank did was to force Rose to marry one of his stock-boys — only on paper you know. She's entered on the books as Jackie's lubra, all fair and square for the Protector of Aborigines to see, if he's interested. But she ain't Jackie's lubra at all, she's Frank's."

"What does Arthur think about it?" I asked.

"He thinks the same as you and me, but what can he do? He went to Frank fair and square and told him that Rose belonged to him by native law Frank only laughed and hunted him away from the station."

"If I was Arthur" said Max, grimly, "I'd clear off with the girl some dark night."

"I feel the same way about it myself. But supposin' he does, then what'll happen? Frank will have the law — the whiteman's law — on his side. He'll hunt Arthur down alone or with the police to help him and Arthur will get a bullet in his heart or a jail sentence. What's more Arthur knows enough about whiteman's law to realise that."

"It's a darn shame! Isn't there anything that can be done?"

"Not a thing, only to sit down and see what happens."

* * *

Some time later I met Arthur again. He worked in my camp for a few weeks and I found him trustworthy and reliable in every way. But in the evenings he sat over the camp fire staring into the coals without a sound or movement and I knew that things were going on in his mind that were torturing him. The atmosphere was terrible. I felt like bursting into tears! One night I ventured to speak to him about it. He spoke perfect English and something he said gave me an opening.

"Life is not very important is it, Moningna?"

"I think it is. But life is not everything and there are some things more important than life. Is there anything I can do to help you? You are thinking about Rose aren't you?"

"I didn't think you knew about her. Yes, I am always thinking about her. She belongs to me by law. If I took her away from that white man it would not be wrong."

"No," I agreed, "but what would happen then? To you, I mean?"

"They would hunt me down till they killed me. I might live for a few week; but they would find me and kill me."

"I'm afraid so. Couldn't you go away and forget her? If you try to run away with her it will mean death."

"I cannot forget. You people think I am a blackfellow and so do not know what love is. But I was brought up as a white man and there is a deep pain in my heart that gets worse every day."

"I understand how you feel, Arthur. I wish I could help you, but all I can say is, don't do anything foolish."

"I can trust you, Moningna and I know you want to help men, but there is nothing that you can do. I have to choose between life and—love. There is nothing else. But it is not easy to choose. Soon I will have to make up my mind. If I think about it any more I will go mad and kill that white man who stole my lubra."

"That will not help you, Arthur, you mustn't think like that."

* * *

The north-west monsoon swept over Arnhem Land with a crashing of thunder and the sound of flood rains on the iron roof. I was alone. Long since the mission children had gone to bed but I sat over the lamp in the office and read Henry Kendall while the rain sounded like an army marching on the low, iron roof. I can remember the last poem I read it; was called the Maid from Gerringong. I was young and lonely and in the strange setting of the tropical wet-season the croaking of millions of frogs seemed a proper background to the sadness of Kendall's poem. When there came a tapping at the door, I felt the hair rising on the back of my neck. I half expected to see the phantom of the Maid of Gerringong and my hand was not quite steady as I opened the door.

There stood Arthur, dressed only in a hair belt with a spear in his hand and rivulets of water streaming from his black hair. His dark body glistened in the light from my lamp. Behind him, and clinging to his arm as if for protection was Rose.

"Moningna I have made my choice" said Arthur, proudly. "We haven't much time. Can you give us something to eat before we go on?"

"Of course I can. Come in, both of you, and

shut the door so no one can see. It won't take me long to get you a meal and I'll give you food to take with you. Can you stay till daylight? You will be safe here till then."

"No, Moningna, Frank has horses. We will rest for a little time then we must hurry. I want to get to the Rose River."

I found a couple of dry blankets and the two lovers huddled together on the floor and were soon fast asleep. As quickly as I could I prepared a hot meal and packed a bag with corn beef and damper for the journey, then I awoke them. They ate quickly, the girl casting quick, frightened glances behind her as she ate; then they rose to go. They did not thank me in words, but I will never forget the smile that lit up their faces as they turned and disappeared into the darkness and the rain . . .

It was nearly two months later that I heard the end of the story. Once again Max and I were together when George rode to the mission and joined us at the table. I could see that the old stockman had something on his mind and after the usual greetings were over I waited for him to speak. He tried to appear casual.

"By the way, Smithy" he asked, "do you remember that blackfellow I was tellin' you about? Arthur I mean."

"Of course. Have — have you had any word of them?"

"Yes. It's all over now. The honeymoon lasted six weeks but they got him in the end."

"Do you mean they killed him?"

"Of course. I told you it could only end that way. Arthur knew that himself when he made his choice. Ah, well! It's a funny sort of a world ain't it?"

"Do you mean" Max demanded, "that Frank shot him down in cold blood? Surely you don't mean that, George?"

"That's what it amounts to. There was a bit of an inquiry, of course; an' Frank said he only intended to shoot him in the leg. It's the first time I've ever knowed Frank to miss what he aimed for. He can shoot the pips out of a card drunk or sober."

"But surely" asked Max, "he can't get away with a story like that?"

"Why not? Accordin' to the report Arthur stole the wife of one of Frank's boys, and he was justified in tryin' to get her back — for the boy of course!"

"Sometimes I'm ashamed that I'm a white man" said Max, "I think I could choke Frank with my bare hands!"

"It wouldn't bring Arthur back to life. Oh, well, it makes a man think there must be something in love after all, when a young fellow like Arthur prefers love and the certainty of death rather than life. I'm mighty glad it weren't me

that had to make the choice."

And the final entry is taken from the first Epistle of John: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."



CHRISTMAS PARTIES: Owing to the fact that a great many individuals and organisations are now taking an interest in the dark children it has now become necessary to limit the amount of Christmas parties attended by our children. Already as many parties as are good for the children have been arranged for this year and every Saturday from now until Christmas has been booked up for the children to attend a party or an outing, or to join in a party or picnic at the Mission Farm. We do appreciate this kindly thought for the children, but would like to suggest that in lieu of a party something else might be done by those organisations anxious to remember the dark children at Christmas.

Toys are usually well supplied, but we are always grateful for gifts of food; groceries of all kinds, tinned food, fresh fruit, etc. Clothing is also very useful, not forgetting the little personal needs such as combs, hair-ribbons, socks, handkerchiefs, bobby-pins, pants and singlets.

For the library we are always glad of good used books, particularly any Australian books dealing with the Aborigines, such as those by Idriess, Harney, Lockwood and others.

But our greatest need is for finance. We are able to care for only a limited number of dark children and there are many needy children that have to be refused admittance because of shortage of accommodation. This year, to celebrate the 16th anniversary of the commencement of the Sky Pilot Fellowship, we are launching a special building appeal for £5,000 to provide extra accommodation for new children as well as a dining-room and study room for the children already in residence. Gifts to the building fund mean not just a few extra parties for the children we have here now, but new hope in life for many dark children at present shut out because of lack of space in the dormitories. We cannot stress the fact too strongly that the great need is for help with our building; not extra toys for children already well provided for but an extra bed or two for children at present sleeping in unsuitable slum areas, in overcrowded humpies and camps on the fringe of country towns.

OUR MAIL ADDRESS: Letters or parcels should never be addressed to Kellyville; our mail address is Box 29, Post Office, Castle Hill. If letters are addressed to Kellyville it means delay and the risk of loss. Our letter box at the front gate is over a hundred yards from the house and quite out of sight. Letters delivered there may remain for some hours and passers by could have ready access to them. We have lost considerably because of this in the past and we would urge our friends to post all mail to **CASTLE HILL** (Box 29). Likewise all money orders and postal notes should be made payable at **CASTLE HILL** and made payable to the order of **MARELLA MISSION FARM**.



BRIAN AND EUGENE: Two of our dark children, Brian and Eugene, are too backward to be able to attend the Public School with the other children. Brian is almost 8 years of age and he has been with us since he was a few months old. He is a very lovable child and we are most anxious that he may be given the very best training to enable him to make the most of his rather limited intelligence. He does not talk very well, but when some emergency arises he often comes to Mrs. Langford-Smith, puts his hands in hers and says softly: "Pray, Mummie, pray". Sometimes we find him kneeling by his bed, unable to express his deepest thoughts in words, but nevertheless praying as earnestly as his little heart knows how.

Eugene is also going on for 8 years. He has only been with us a few months, but he is very deaf and very backward.

There is a special training school for backward Children at West Pennant Hills, not far from Castle Hill, and it is possible that these boys may be able to attend as day-boys and come home to the love and shelter of this home with the other Aboriginal children after school. But it would cost £2/5/- per week for each child, apart from fares and transport difficulties. It is possible that the Aborigines Welfare Board may help with expenses; if not, is £2/5/- per week (during school term) too much to pay in order that a retarded Aboriginal child might have a chance to learn? Perhaps some Church or organisation would "adopt" one of these backward dark boys.