

THE SPIRIT OF THE BUSH FIRE (BY JESSIE WHITFELD)

Elfentanz A(bars 1-16)

In every bushland there lives a fire spirit who waits for an opportunity to start a fire. One day not so long ago someone, I don't know who, threw a cigarette out of a passing car. The bushfire spirit, who was a funny little dusty grey colour, came jumping and dancing over the long dry grass and cried out with glee "Its alight still. Steady little chap."

"I want to live, I want to live" panted the glowing cigarette growing smaller and smaller "Alas Alas I die"and started to fade away.

"No, no I will look after you. I will nurse you into life." said the bushfire spirit anxiously as he fanned the cigarette with his two hands.

"I am starting to revive. I am growing and growing give me more food." said the cigarette as it munched on the dry grass and burst out into flames.

"Now for some sport" laughed the bushfire spirit. But the flames couldn't spread very far because there was a large clearing in its way.

"Bother the humans", the spirit grumbled. "They are always clearing and burning off grass. Why can't the let things alone? Oh for a tearing wind. Why won't the wind come?"

"Who calls me?" roared a tremendous voice and a great rushing sound filled the air.

"I did" said the spirit. "Blow a few sparks across the clearing for me".

"Is that all". laughed the wind and with one puff sent several sparks right into the midst of the dry grass on the other side of the clearing.

What a time the bushfire spirit was having as he grew bigger and bigger changing from a dusty grey colour to a robust red and yellow fellow with blue tinges around the edges. He shouted and danced and leaped from tree top to tree top urging for the flames to follow him.

"Spare us spare us" wailed the trees bending their head before the wind and shrinking from the flames.

"Nonsense, good for you" laughed the spirit and spring right into the heart of an old gum tree. "What do you have to say old man?"

But the gum stood like a soldier and suffered in silence.

Elfentanz B x 2 (bars 17-31 twice)

The birds and animals who lived in the bush - kangaroos, possums, koalas, kookaburras and galahs, ran and flew helter-skelter before the terrible heat. Some of the little animals couldn't run as fast as the others and they were soon swallowed up by the flames.

All the spirit laughed and yelled "More more more".

At last he came to where the humans lived. "Ah, I will burn down their houses this time" the spirit cried.

But the bushfire spirit didn't count on the human spirit. Humans worked day and night to fight the fire. When one lot were too exhausted to go on another lot took their place. They hit the spirit with canvas sacks and showered him with water from the hoses. Although the bushfire spirit was black and blue from being hit time and time again he still kept going. Jumping along fences and up telegraph poles and sometimes onto roofs of houses. 'I'll show these humans whos in control. With the good wind behind me they can't kill me.

But after a few days the wind became bored and started to die down and blow the other way.

"Come back you fickle fellow" cried the spirit in a rage. But the wind ignored him and blew off home.

No sooner had the wind gone then the rain drop elves appeared. They spread rain so fast and so well over the country that the fire had to give way. It sputtered and hissed angrily but it was no use, it was conquered.

"Don't despair don't grieve" whispered the little elves to the blackened burning trees. "Green leaves will soon grow on you again. Wait patiently and hope".

The humans one by one went exhaustedly back to their homes and talked about making more fire break clearings so the fire would not spread so quickly and widely again

As for the bushfire spirit it soon became shrivelled, dusty grey colour again. He howled at the loss of his fire. For hours he vainly tried to bring it back to life.

"Ah well next time next time", he muttered but just then the rain drop elves poured a huge bucket of water on the spirit and he disappeared altogether. The last spark was extinguished and peace fell over the land once more.

Elfentanz C (bars 32-51)