AUSTRALIA

The tribesmen of Arnhem Land, the Aboriginal reservation located in Australia's Northern Territory, where this tale is told, have many myths about the natural world. This particular myth explains why the morning star shines so brightly.

Lighting the Way

In the dreamtime, the spirit girl, Barnumbir (BAR-num-beer), lived on the Island of the Dead. She was a happy girl, content to do her many daily chores, but she always made time to spend with her friends.

Barnumbir's friends shared many of her interests, save one. While those girls often went fishing with the men in their bark canoes, Barnumbir preferred to stay on land. She would swim in the shallow waters close to shore, but she never journeyed out on the water. She said it was because she had once dreamt that her spirit had been lost out on the ocean, and that is why she feared the deeper waters.

One day Barnumbir's two closest friends, two sisters, announced that they would soon be leaving on a sea voyage with their brother, who was planning on making his home far from the Island of the Dead. When Barnumbir heard this, she was greatly saddened. "You are my closest friends," she told the sisters. "Please don't go. I shall miss you terribly."
"Yes," Djahin replied, "I can sing a magic song and make you a

air just above my friends' canoe." she asked the magician.

"Is it true that you can make me into a star that can travel through

Paranumur went to Djahin,

unable to think of any other way she could go with her friends, the way for her friends' canoe. She considered this for a while. Finally, (in) the magician. Perhaps he would turn me into a star that could light

then someone suggested that Paranumur visit Djahin (JAHN).

but was told that the strength of one girl would not be enough. was. She offered to paddle another canoe alongside her friends' boat, all of them, but was told that her friends' canoe was the longest. There asked others on the island if there were a larger canoe that could carry how she would manage to accompany them on their sea voyage. She

Paranumur was determined to go with her friends but did not know

"to stay behind:

for three in our boat. You will have

their heads. "There is only room

The two sisters smiled but shook

leaving".

go with you. I am afraid of the sea, but I cannot bear the idea of your

Paranumur thought for a moment and then announced, "I will

must go with our brother"

journey by boat, and then we will stay to help him build his home. We

didn't, but our brother needs us. We must help him make the long

they said. The two sisters hugged their friend. "We don't wish to have, either. 

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He looked directly at Barnumbir, and then continued, "But you must know something. When you are no longer in sight of the Island of the Dead, I will have no way of calling you back. You will have to stay a star forever and forever travel over the water. You must think of this over carefully before you decide."

Barnumbir was even more confused. She went to ask the advice of two wise old women on the island. The women sat on the ground rolling fibers of pandanus root between their hands and thighs. They coiled this thin rope round and round, forming it into a large basket that sat between them.

"Please, I need your help," Barnumbir said to the old women. "I wish to become a star to help guide my friends as they journey across the sea. Djanlin the magician has said that he can sing his magic and make me a star, but that when I am no longer in sight of our island, he will not be able to bring me back home. What shall I do?"

The two women sat in silence for a long time. They continued rolling the pandanus root fibers and building the sides of the basket. At last one of them spoke. "We must think this over. Come back tomorrow and we will have something to tell you."

Barnumbir returned to the old women's hut the next morning. She could hardly wait to hear what the wise ones would say, but she waited
Dead, where she still lives.

Barrenmir's work is over and she is gone, back to the island of the
night star in the sky. Her light is small but bright. Once the sun is up,
and so it is to this day. Just before dawn, you can spot the morn-

ing light in the early morning hours.

"Who wanders about in the early morning hours?"

"When the sun has awoken from his sleep, we shall return to the
island. When the sun sets, we shall remain here on the island with
you."

"We shall see a lone piece of rope. If you reach the first old
woman she will explain to you, "We have considered your problem," one woman said. "We can

not help her."

Dead asked Barrenmir, "Tell me what will become of me when I am
far from the island of the

friends can come each morning."

magic can make his magic so that you can hear as a star above your

head."

The woman fell silent. The other woman spoke, "Let us join the

moose."

By day at night the stars high in the heavens will guide them. It is our

help you. The way we see it, the sun will light the way for your friends.

"We have considered your problem," one woman said. "We can

until one of them spoke first.