



Stories From the Earth and the Stars

The Sky Garden

A Gamilaraay Story
from Australia



Long, long ago was the Dreamtime. This was when Great Baiame created the world. Baiame made mighty mountains, rushing rivers, open oceans and fertile forests. He created life to populate these habitats – communities of humans and animals with stripes, spots, fur and feathers. The last thing Baiame did was make the world beautiful. He scattered flowers everywhere so that the Earth shone with every colour imaginable. Once Baiame’s work was done, he returned to his home in the sky.



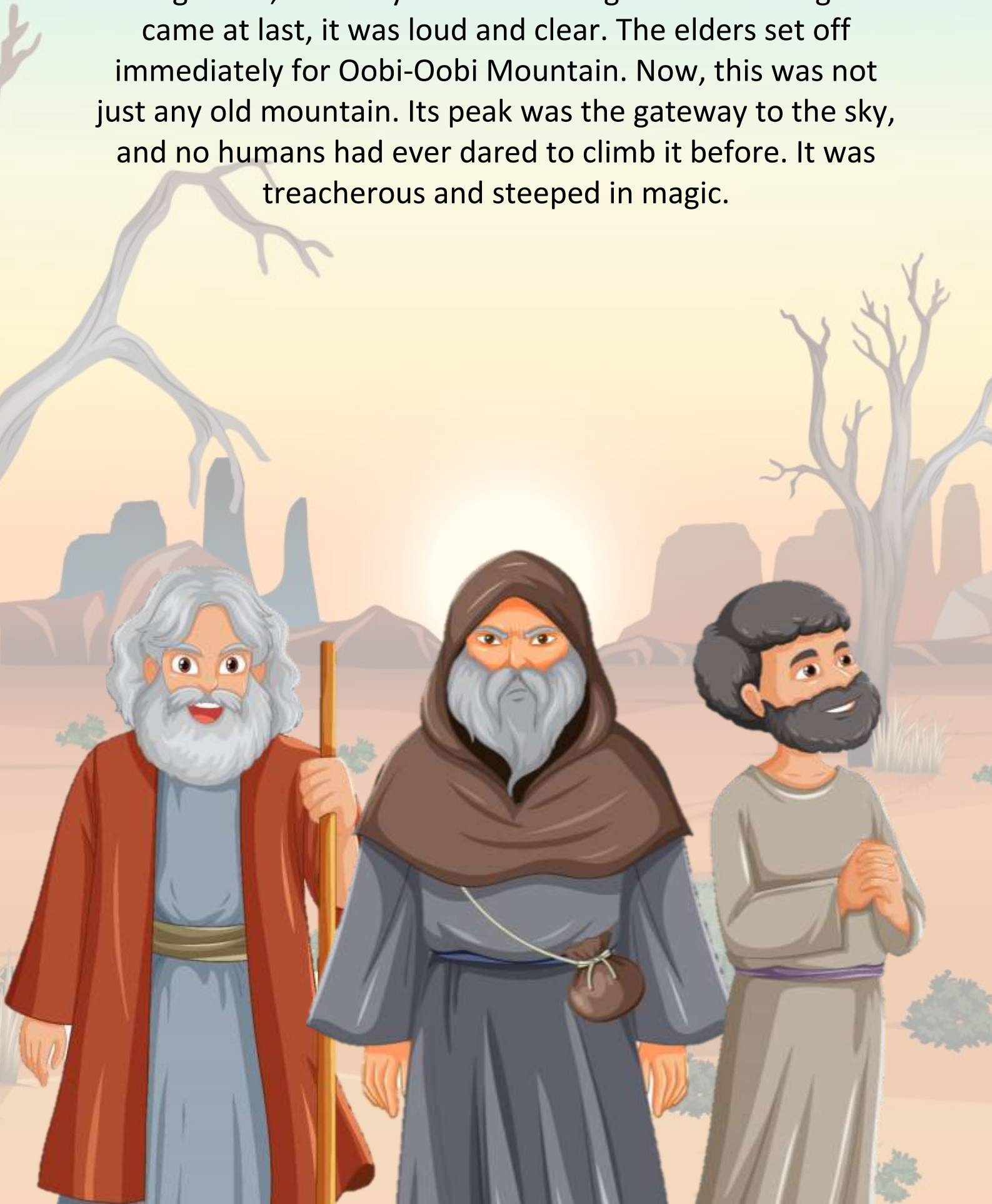
For a while, the people on Earth were happy and content. They had enough to eat, and they live in wonderful surroundings. But when Baiame stopped watching over his creation, the magic faded, and the Earth dried up. The flowers couldn't survive for long on barren soil; slowly they all began to wither and die.



The colours and fragrances of Earth disappeared with the flowers, leaving it a bleak, grey place. Without flowers, the bees could not survive. And without the bees to pollinate them, many other plant species disappeared. It wasn't long before the stores of honey ran out and crops began to fail. The people of Earth became desperate. Something had to be done.



A group of wise elders came together and held a special ceremony. They danced and chanted, they drew symbols in the ground, and they waited for a sign. When the signal came at last, it was loud and clear. The elders set off immediately for Oobi-Oobi Mountain. Now, this was not just any old mountain. Its peak was the gateway to the sky, and no humans had ever dared to climb it before. It was treacherous and steeped in magic.



When the elders reached the foot of Oobi-Oobi, they stopped short. A wall of sheer rock towered over them. There was no path. Some of the elders attempted to climb but to no avail. This was a magic mountain, and there was no way that they could tackle it without help.



Calmly, the elders chanted and sung, drew symbols in the ground and waited for a sign.

After some time, their prayers were answered and a steep path appeared in the rock face. The elders began to climb at once, but even on the path it was terribly hard going. Every step was a loose foothold. They were forced to crawl, gingerly feeling their way, knowing that one wrong move would take them tumbling back down to Earth..



For four days and four nights, they journeyed in this way, but not once was there a suggestion of giving up. On the fourth day, they ascended into the misty clouds. It seemed that they would never find their way out, but at last they dipped above the swirling fog. They had reached the peak of the mountain and the gateway to the sky! But to their disappointment, there was nothing there but a bubbling stream and a stone circle.



Once again, the elders waited for a sign. Soon enough, a gale-force wind began to blow, carrying a voice that bloomed like thunder. 'I am Walla-Bu-An, messenger to the Great Baiame. What are you doing here, Earth Children? Who gave you the right to climb this sacred mountain, and what do you want of us?'



For the first time, the elders were afraid. They bowed their heads and cowered back as the wisest among them stepped forwards.

‘Forgive us, Walla-Guroon-Bu-An. Our request is simple. When Great Baiame left the Earth, all of the flowers withered and died. This has filled the hearts of our people with such sadness. Will you help us, please?’



The elders felt themselves lifted, spinning into a twister of wind. The whirlwind transported them up to the realm of the gods and tossed down into a soft meadow. They sat up dizzily. As their surroundings came into focus, they gasped with joy. Even in the beginning they had never seen anything like this. It was a land of flowers! Blazing, bursting blooms of every colour under the sun, growing as far as they could see. The scents that rose up were overwhelmingly delicious.



'You are in Baiame's garden now,' boomed the voice of the messenger. 'You may pick anything you like to take back to Earth, but hurry, Baiame will not let you linger for long.'



In a frenzy, the elders began to pick everything in sight, gathering great armfuls of blooms. Before long, they began to feel the wind start up again.



To their horror, the flowers they had picked, turned to dust before their eyes – the colourful plumes whipped up into the air.



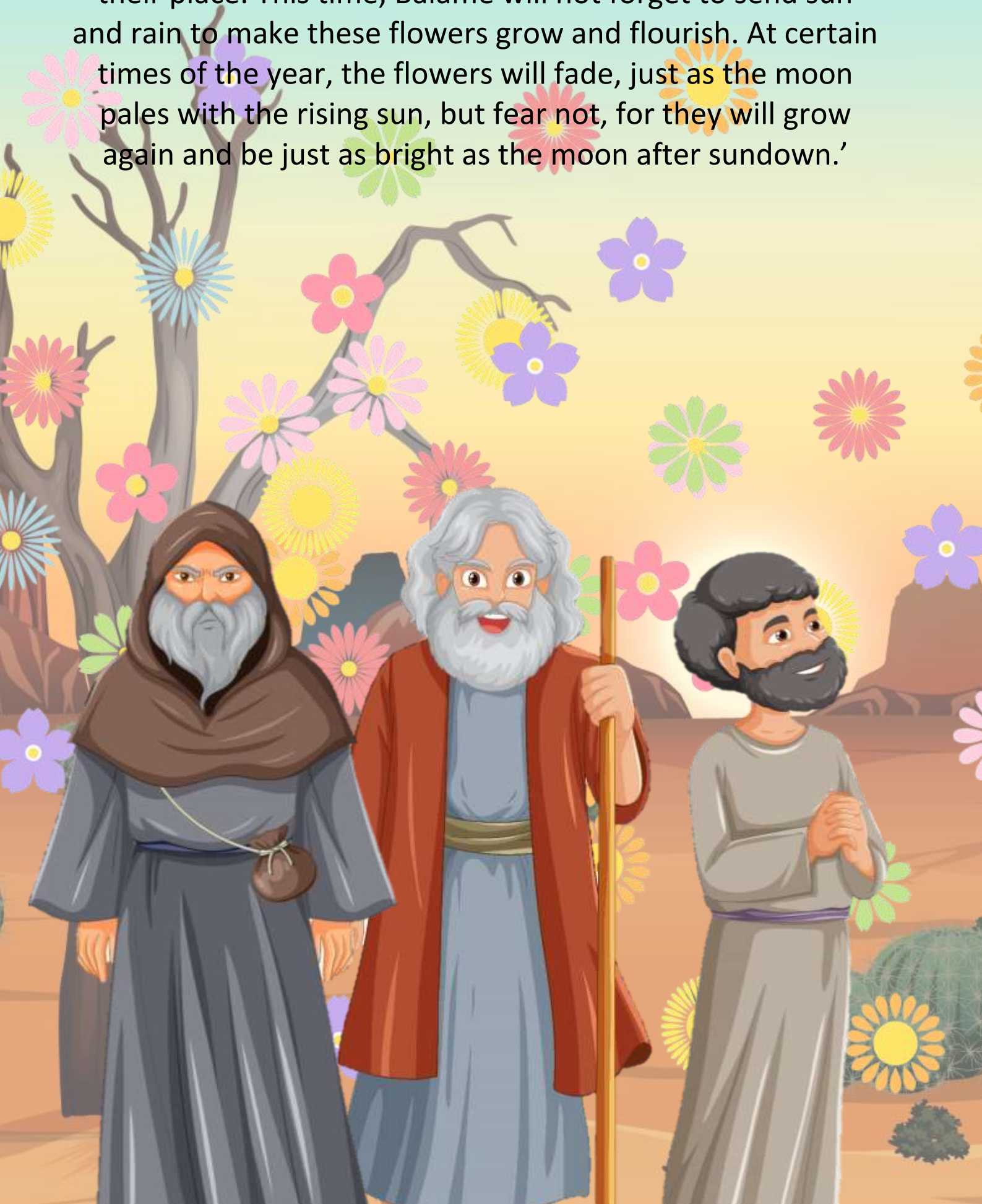
The whirlwind blew with a mighty force and the elders found themselves back at the base of Oobi-Oobi. Dazed, they stood up. The colourful dust flew around their heads, and the elders gave in the despair at last. All of their beautiful flowers were gone. The gods had used them as mere playthings for their own entertainment.



But what was this? The elders rubbed their eyes in disbelief. The whirling dust was taking shape – flowers began to rain down upon them! Everything that they had picked and more! The elders joined hands and danced for joy as the voice of Walla-Guroon-Bu-An echoed out.



‘Be careful with these flowers. You must scatter their seeds over all the lands, and when they die, more will grow in their place. This time, Baïame will not forget to send sun and rain to make these flowers grow and flourish. At certain times of the year, the flowers will fade, just as the moon pales with the rising sun, but fear not, for they will grow again and be just as bright as the moon after sundown.’



The elders returned home with their bounty and instructed the people with the words of the messenger. Seeds were scattered at every corner of the Earth, and flowers sprung up once again in the woods and valleys, the mountains and plains. With the return of the flowers, the bees came back too.



It was just as Walla-Guroon-Bu-An had said. The flowers faded every year in the autumn but they never died. Great Baiame kept his promise to water and shine light on the Earth. When the drought came again, it seemed as though the plants would never recover. But in the end, there was rain, and the flowers flourished anew, just like the moon after sundown. This is the way it has always been, ever since those wise elders brought the flowers from the Sky Garden all those years ago.





THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY

