



Chapter One

Karguli Goldfields

'Come on, Eli!' shouted Dad. 'Just throw your jocks in the bag next to your socks — that way every time you change your socks you'll remember to change your jocks as well.'

'Ahh. Don't embarrass me, Dad,' replied Eli.

Ten-year-old Eli was a Noongar–Wongi kid. His mum was a Noongar from the south-west of Western

Australia and his dad was a Wongi from the north-eastern Goldfields. Eli was a gentle, shy boy with a birthmark shaped like a boomerang just above his right eye and shiny black hair down to his collar. Eli had four older brothers, two older sisters, two dogs named Bunthar (look out) and Moorditj (solid), and a fat, fluffy ginger cat named Inni (yes).

Eli had lived in Perth all his life and often went to visit his grandparents in Kalgoorlie with his family. But this school holidays, for the first time, Eli was going by himself to visit Thamu (grandfather) and Garbarli (grandmother).

Kalgoorlie is a dusty red gold mining town called 'kargurli' by the

local Aboriginal people — a karguli is a bush fruit, also known as the silky pear, with sweet tasting hairy flesh. It was the best time to be in the Goldfields because it was spring. The winter rains and glorious sunshine ripened the earth into a colourful carpet of native flowers. Blue, pink, white, yellow and purple splashes of colours spread out upon the burnna yurral (red dirt) in a unique flowering explosion.

Eli liked going to his dad's hometown because he loved spending time with Thamu and Garbarli. He especially loved being spoiled by them. Garbarli made yummy chocolate mudcake just for Eli, and Thamu told him lots of yarns around the campfire at night.

Eli couldn't wait to get there, but it took all day to drive to Kalgoorlie from Perth. They arrived just before sunset.

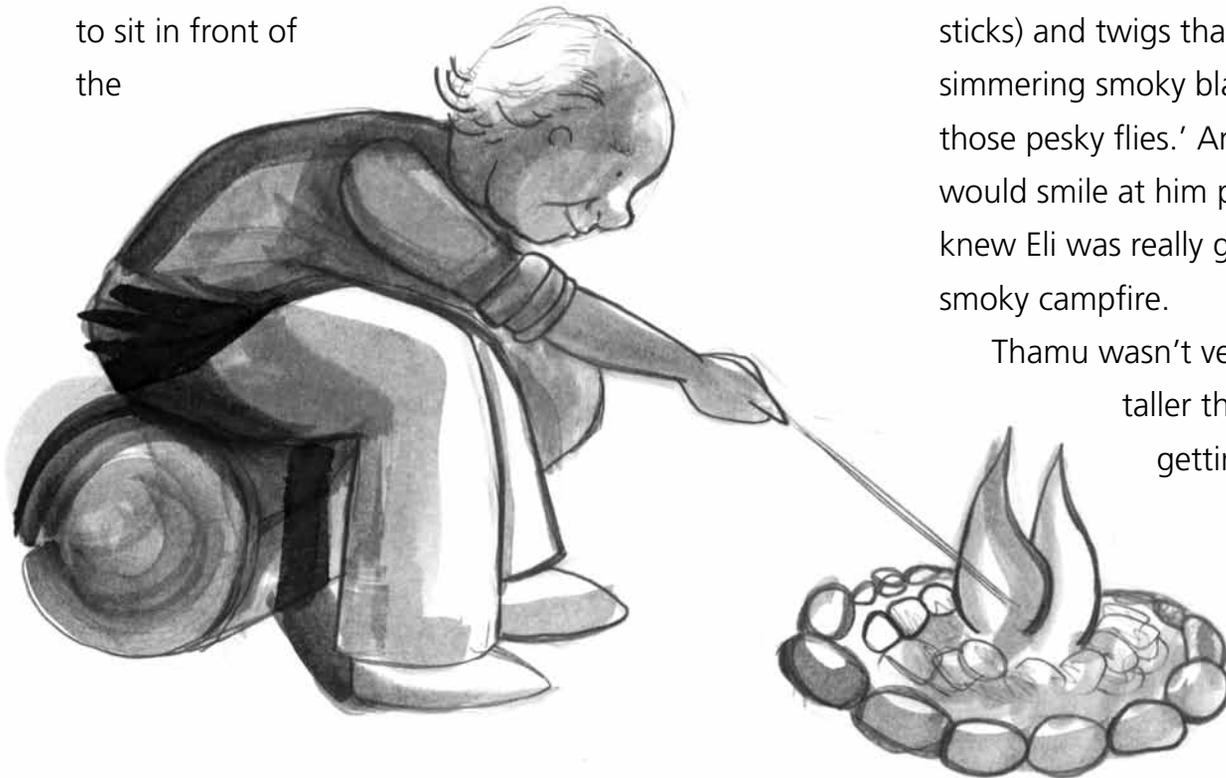
Chapter Two

Thamu

Thamu spoke with a soft but stern voice. He didn't have any teeth except for the false ones that he kept in a soapbox — he only used the falsies when he was eating meat, otherwise he was gummy. But Thamu had the largest, smiliest smile that radiated joy to everyone. He was supposed to wear glasses but didn't and had to hold the newspaper so close that it almost

touched his nose when he read. Thamu always shaved his face because if he didn't, then his grey whiskers would scratch the faces of his grannies when he gave them an oohba (kiss).

Thamu loved the smell of a campfire. He always liked to sit in front of the



flames and soak up the smoke and ash.

Thamu often said to Eli that, 'A smoky campfire is helpful when you are trying to eat food because it keeps the flies away so they don't fly into your mouth when you least expect it. It is an art to cobble together dyuwarr (dry sticks) and twigs that make the perfect simmering smoky blaze to ward away those pesky flies.' And then Thamu would smile at him proudly, because he knew Eli was really good at building a smoky campfire.

Thamu wasn't very tall — not much taller than Eli. He was getting older but that didn't stop him from walking for miles and miles

on bush trips. Thamu liked to explore in the bush and his favourite hobby was searching for unusual rocks on the ground. He especially liked to speck for gold — and sometimes he found it!

Eli wanted to be just like Thamu — strong, solid, full of knowledge, respected, proud and funny.

Eli always paid great attention when Thamu spoke because his stories helped Eli understand his part in the family and his role in looking after others, his land and his culture. Eli loved Thamu's stories because they were often shared around the campfire at night cooking yummy marshmallows.

Thamu had lots of advise about cooking marshmallows, too. 'There is a

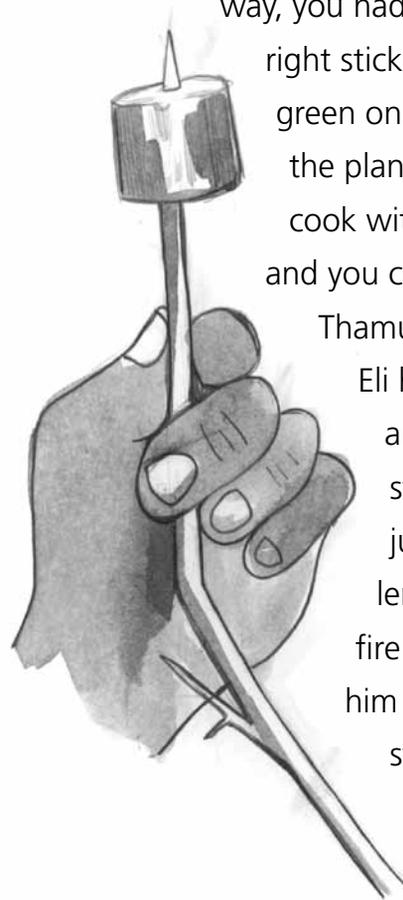
science to cooking gooey, yummy, belly warming marshmallows,' Thamu would say. To cook a marshmallow Thamu's

way, you had to find the

right stick. It couldn't be green on the inside or the plant juices would cook with the mallow and you could get sick.

Thamu had showed

Eli how to break and tweak a stick so it was just the right length for the fire. He'd taught him to take the stick out of the fire when



it started to brown and to give the mallow a blow before slipping it into his watery mouth. Mmmmmm lubbly (lovely).

Chapter Three

The smelly car ride

'Ahh Ahh Ahhhhh,' curangu (crow) echoed. Then the other curangu started radiating the familiar morning song to all the other crows perched in the gum trees around Thamu's home. Yep, you didn't need an alarm in this place because the crows sounded long and loud. They were worse than a rooster on a farm because they just kept