

# D'harawal

## DREAMING STORIES

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*illustrated by Lorraine Robertson*

### Murrogan and Oorawong

### The Cryptocaryas





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# Foreword

Throughout the past two hundred years, society has come to regard the Koori Dreaming stories as something akin to the fairy stories they were told as children.

However, for thousands upon thousands of years, the stories in this book were used as a teaching tool to impart to the youngest members of the clans the laws which governed the cultural behaviour of clan members. The successive attempts to destroy the Koori culture and assimilate The People into the Euro-centric population were unsuccessful, and the Dreaming Stories were able to continue in their disguise as charming legends where animals became the heroes and the heroines.

Historians and anthropologists have studied the Koori culture since they first arrived on this continent, and have come to the conclusion that the D'harawal culture is dead. Of, course, this has been done without reference to the descendants of that culture, and without even asking the proper questions. The D'harawal culture is not dead, it is a strong, living, vital culture of the Sydney and South Coast regions that just had to go underground for a while to be able to survive. Now that the right questions have been asked, we have the key to unlock a vast wealth of knowledge of this part of the country in which we live.

It is difficult to explain to a society based on commerce fuelled by the profit motive, that D'harawal culture is not based on the ownership of tangible things like land and dwellings and possessions, but it does have a very strong sense of ownership of information. That information, particularly in story form, was not traded, but could be given, and given freely, but its ownership was respected, those stories were not told or passed on by those to whom they had been given, but the knowledge in them was used by the receiver whilst ever they walked in the Land of the D'harawals, This Land.

It is hoped that our present society is now mature enough to be able to accept the Koori Dreaming stories as they were, as they are, and as they were always destined to be; tools to teach the Children of The People about living with Earth, the Mother, in peace and harmony.

Each story contains several layers of knowledge, the first of which are the secrets. Which can only be passed on or discussed with persons of the same level of knowledge or higher than the story teller. These secrets are never told within a legend, but are remembered separately from the legend itself. These are very important components of any legend, and it is the knowledge of the secrets which determines the level of the person's worthiness to ownership of that story.

The next layer of knowledge within the stories was the law, or laws, to be obeyed. The laws of the stories were told and often repeated after the telling of each story, after which the laws were discussed and their application in life demonstrated in a variety of ways.

The third layer of knowledge contained in each story was the lessons which could be learned from the story and the lessons were taught to all members of the group as well as visitors. These lessons introduced Peoples to the means to live in harmony with each other, and the land and its resources.

In this series of D'harawal Law Legends, there are many lessons to be learned. The D'harawals believed that children learned better and more quickly when they were encouraged to work through a problem, rather than be told the answer. By sharing the stories of our ancestors with you, it is hoped that not only will you recognise and learn the lessons and laws of the Peoples of This Land, but you will also come to understand and respect the culture of The People and our feelings and relationship with the land.

The stories do not in themselves act as an instruction manual - rather they point the way and encourage The People to think, to learn and to live. It is hoped that by sharing our stories, you too may be able to think, to learn and to live in This Land.

With understanding and respect for each other we can learn to more easily share This Land and live together in peace and harmony.

*Frances Bodkin*

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# Murrogon and Oorawong

## The Cryptocaryas

Once, long ago, there lived a man and a woman. The man's name was Murrogon, and the woman's name was Oorawong. When they were children, during one of the big meetings at Yandel'ora, the knowledgeholders of the northern people, and the knowledgeholders of the D'harawal, noticed how well the two children played together, and a meeting between the mothers and uncles of the two children and the knowledgeholders was held. There it was agreed that when the two children became of the correct age, they would marry.

Eventually Murrogon came to live with the D'harawals, as was customary, to learn the song of the lands of Yandel'ora, before marrying Oorawong.

During this time he could not speak with Oorawong or her family, but he could observe her, as she could observe him, and oftentimes, when the clan was gathering food, one could catch the glances of love that passed between them.

Their love for each other was so strong that it did not need words, or touch for it to grow, just an occasional glance, or a smile was enough.

When it came time for them to marry, they went to live in a rainforest near the river, where they lived happily for many years, never leaving each other's side.

But, Oorawong was a very beautiful woman, and there was a man from over the mountains who plotted and planned to kill Murrogon, and take Oorawong with him back to his own country. This man's name was Berri, a child's name, because he was not yet considered a warrior by his own people.

Ever since they were children, when visiting the Land of Yandel'ora, he had wanted Oorawong for his own wife, and was devastated when the knowledgeholders had made the decision to betroth her to Murrogon. He hoped, that by killing Murrogon, and taking Oorawong back to his home lands, he would get himself a wife that would obey his every whim, and be considered a warrior by his brothers and uncles.

Berri waited and waited until one hot morning, Oorawong went down to the river to bathe and refresh herself in the cool water. He watched Murrogon as he went about sharpening his spears and painting his

boomerangs with wattle gum, then, soundlessly, he crept down to the camp and drove his own spear into Murrogon's back.

At that moment, Oorawong entered the camp and saw her beloved husband laying on the ground, bleeding from a deep spear wound. She rushed to his side, but Berri pulled her back by the hair and hit her with his nulla. He then lifted the unconscious woman onto his shoulder and began the long trek back to his own people.

Oorawong pretended to remain unconscious so that Berri had to carry her, slowing him down, and allowing her to leave signs for her clan members to follow. She believed that her husband, Murrogon had died from the spear wound, but, rather than give up and stay with her husband's murderer, the brave woman plotted and planned her escape back to her own clan.

Twice she tried to escape, and twice he struck her again, so that she could feign unconsciousness, and he would have to carry her. Finally, as they reached the other side of the mountains, Berri was so exhausted that he could travel no more. He tied Oorawong to a tree and laid down to sleep.

But he was so exhausted that he did not realise that the vines he had used to tie Oorawong were loose, and whilst he slept she was able to untie herself and escape once more. This time, before leaving, she gathered the leaves of a certain tree and placed them on the small fire he had lit. These leaves would make him sleep very heavily, and awaken feeling sick and with a very bad headache.

Oorawong travelled swiftly during the night, and during the days, slept in the trees, being careful not to leave any signs of her having travelled along the way.

But, whilst she was travelling back to her home, Murrogon, who had not been killed by the spear, was following the signs she had left. He reached the place where Berri had slept by the fire, and saw the leaves scattered around the cold ashes. He followed the tracks for a while, until he was sure that Berri was not carrying Oorawong anymore, and returned to the encampment to see if he could find what had happened to Oorawong. Apart from the leaves, there was no sign, it was as if she had disappeared from the land, completely.

Murrogon was torn between continuing the search for Oorawong, and extracting revenge from Berri. He picked up his spears and his woomera, and followed Berri's tracks.

For two days he followed Berri, then one evening as the sun began to set, he came across Berri leaning wearily against a fallen log. Murrogon challenged Berri, and together they fought, Murrogon still weak from



his wound, but Berri was still exhausted from carrying Oorawong, and also from the effect of the leaves that Oorawong had placed on the fire.

Unknown to Berri, watching from nearby were some of his uncles, men of knowledge, who had been attracted by the noise of the challenge.

Suddenly, Berri broke off fighting and ran away, disappearing into the thick undergrowth. Murrogon, still very angry, yelled insults at the fleeing man, then slowly turned and began the long walk back to his home in the rainforest of Yandel'ora.

Meanwhile, Oorawong reached the camp in the rainforest and searched for her husband's body, but to no avail. She returned to her clan and asked them if they knew where his body was, but none knew what had happened, except that one of her aunts had visited the camp, had seen the blood on the ground, but did not see Murrogon's body.

Every night she was visited by terrible nightmares of Murrogon being killed by Berri, and his body being stolen by evil spirits. Finally, she laid herself down in the small clearing, covering herself with the fallen blossoms of the trees, and died of grief.

Murrogon returned to the encampment to find Oorawong's body laying as if asleep, and he realised that if he had not sought revenge upon the hapless Berri, he would have been able to return to Oorawong sooner and perhaps find her still alive. Asking forgiveness of her spirit, he laid down beside Oorawong's body and joined her in death.

Murrogon had no need to seek revenge upon Berri, for the man was forced by his uncles to live forever as a child.

The spirits, saddened by what had happened, yet heartened by the true love between the two, caused two trees to grow from where their bodies lay.

Those trees are called Oorawong and Murrogon, and always grow together in the rainforests of the Yandel'ora, so that The People will see them and remember the story of the two rainforest lovers.

# The Law of the Story of Murrogon and Oorawong

Do not make revenge your first duty.

## Lessons from the story of the Rainforest Lovers.

*Cryptocarya microneura* (Murrogon) and *Cryptocarya glaucescens* (Oorawong) grow together in the rainforests of the lands of the D'harawal.

Wherever the two rainforest lovers grow together you will always find food and good water nearby.

Although the two lovers died, they are together forever, but their enemy, Berri, was forced to live a life of shame. This is far worse than death.

### Notes about Cryptocaryas

**Murrogon:** Occurring naturally in protected, shaded positions in rainforest, it is an evergreen tree which may grow to a height of 30m. It has fissured, reddish bark, and leaves which are narrowly elliptical to oblanceolate, green on both surfaces, with a prominent yellow midvein. The flowers are small, greenish, and occur in terminal clusters in spring. The fruit a black, globular or ovoid berries, to 2cm across.

**Oorawong:** Also occurring naturally in protected, shaded positions in rainforest, and is found in association with the Murrogon. It, too, is an evergreen tree which grows to a height of 30m, with thick, reddish, fissured bark, however, the leaves are glossy, dark green on the upper surface, and a bluish green on the undersurface, they are elliptic, and have a prominent, yellow midvein. The flowers are pale green, tiny, in dense clusters, and appear in the summer and the fruit are glossy black, compressed globular drupe. The leaves are aromatic, and were crushed and rubbed on the body after bathing.