

## Sky People

A girl lay in her bed. It was hot and only early evening; sleep was a long way away. She felt the sweet on her skin, and the dull ache of farm work in her body. Hunger was also there. Though she was satisfied, she felt strong in her world.

The occasional breeze through the louver windows caused ripples of coolness on her skin. The girl looked up to watch the bellowing sheer curtains that hung in the enclosed veranda where she slept. They were magical, like dancing clouds just above her face. An old excitement embraced her. Boundaries of knowing slipped away. She surrendered.

The girl now flew on a current just above the ground. Earth bound she had known water; she swam like a fish. Her mother had taken her into the river. Now, this is how she flew, like breaststroke. The girl smiled to be flying in the currents above earth. Wakirr the crow appeared. Wakirr showed her how to dive, swoop, glide and soar. The girl flew above the treetops, then soared back to earth, flying up just in time. In the currents above earth the little girl knew she was not alone. This was her Ancestral self, a gift given to her by her people before. Sometimes she flew high, just above the trees, but no higher. The girl saw that in this world, there were worlds within worlds, stronger currents higher up.

This is how the girl lived, earth-bound and in the sky. She could never be domesticated.

Being the little girl who belonged with Wakirr became her identity, gave her certain abilities. The girl could dance. Her dance was not earth-bound; it was from the old people. The girl wondered if anyone would ever guess, but it seemed she was invisible to the other sky people. However, as the girl became older, she flew with Wakirr less and less. The young woman had learnt to hide her true self, so well, that even she forgot at times. Being a woman who knew about the currents of the sky held no merit in the earth-bound world where she walked.

The wind knew, the birds knew, and storms thundered as old sky people danced. Wakirr stayed with her, even when she had not flown for so long. The little girl was now woman, neither young nor old. To be only earth-bound incurred sickness, and perhaps even more so for sky people. The woman found comfort in the trees but at night the moon saw her, and Gogok the mopoke hooted. The woman stood with earth-bound people, talking of curated days, no-one knew the currents that swept past. One day the woman stood with a man. Her age had grown complacency, blindness. While words slipped from her mouth, her eyes re-focused. The man smiling in front of her, no longer stood with feet on the ground.

Familiarity like cold water, and she was awake. Gasping joy the woman leapt into the air. He could fly as she could. The woman showed off her best tricks and introduced him to Wakirr, and the treetops of Biyala. He too was happy; he smiled with a light which gave warmth. A light from his own fire. His voice fell around her, soaking into her bones. He soared higher than she had ever gone, she followed. Looking down Biyala was almost invisible, and Wakirr had disappeared. The woman could feel the currents were stronger, her childhood swimming stroke no longer worked. A small panic began to grow. In that moment he was with her, his light, his warmth swirling around her. He effortlessly shot up higher into a faster current, glided, then let himself fall in spins back towards her. The woman realised; this is where he lived. As he dropped beside her, he was laughing, happiness to show her who he really was. He flew with eagles.

Together they were sky people, he taught her how to soar and glide on the very high currents. The earth-bound sickness began to leave the woman. She learnt to trust. The woman spoke to the man of many things, the seen and the unseen. Then one day when they flew together, he spoke about his dream to fly to the moon. He explained how he had flown to the edge of the fast currents and was certain there were tunnel currents higher, which circled to the moon. The woman remembered the bellowing curtains of her childhood bedroom when she first let go. Reaching out her hand and smiling with a warmth which had grown inside her, she whispered; show me.

Flying close, searching her eyes for fear, he circled. The woman grinned, then flew straight up and the light of the man travelled beside her. The different currents became a blur, she was unsure if she was even flying higher, then together they hit a tunnel current. The woman lost consciousness.

The first thing she knew was his smiling warmth looking at her. He was proud of them both. They were no longer flying but floating just above the moon's surface. It was soft, beautiful milky white sand. The man lowered himself to the surface and grabbing the woman's foot pulled her down too. They looked around, quickly realising many sky people had been to the moon. Tracks were smoothed out for them to walk on, and there were intricate old carvings in the rocks. Not looking back to earth, the woman and the man walked towards a large moon hill. The woman felt strong walking these tracks.

Reaching the mouth of a cave in the hill, the man and the woman became very quiet. It was sacred here. Her heart pounding, the woman saw a slither of light at the back of the cave. Smiling at the man to follow she stepped through the gap. They entered a garden on the moon. The man animated, leaped from rock to rock, and the woman watching his playfulness stretched herself out on the green grass to enjoy the sparkling sunshine. In this garden the woman's senses experienced sound and light differently. There were four huge trees that stood like sentinels, an open clearing where daisies grew and large rocks with old carvings.

A bluebell vine grew over some of the rocks, but delicately, not covering the inscriptions carved into their surfaces. Entities of the garden communicated. The woman watched the man now tracing his finger along the inscriptions, wishing as she did, he could read sky people language. Slowly animals appeared in the garden; many Ulysses butterflies, blue tongue lizards, superb fairy wrens, and then Wakirr arrived. Not just one, but a whole family. The woman was unsure if she was talking to the man or not, thoughts between them had become blurred. So too between all entities in the garden, on the moon. Via the currents they returned earth-bound, but they returned many times.

It was both something they did together, and something they did alone. He would join her as she flew with Wakirr in the treetops, or as she soared through the currents or sometimes, she was already in the garden when he appeared. There were times he did not come; the woman did not mind but tried very hard to remember all she had seen so the man did not miss out. The woman rained all the details on the man the next time they flew, how she had learnt to somersault out of the tunnel currents and land on the moon with two feet and how she had heard water in the garden, she was sure there was a stream. Also, as they returned through the currents the man sometimes disappeared abruptly. Then one day shortly after losing the man, the woman saw a silhouette of an eagle flying high above her, and a beautiful stream of light following the eagle. The warmth inside the woman shone, each time she saw the man be his full self.

There were times now that the man did not come at all. One of these days the woman decided to look for the stream she heard. She sat in the middle of the garden and listened to the sound of gushing water. When she opened her eyes a Ulysses butterfly appeared from behind the tree in the north end of the garden. As the woman walked towards the north end, she whispered gratitude to Ulysses and placed her palm on the trunk of the giant north tree as she stepped around. Behind north tree the woman saw that the garden extended, opening into a larger field. The woman wished the man was here to see. She found a track and began to half skip, half dance along it, realising she knew this track well. Its width, curvature and the long grass which grew along its edge. This was a kangaroo track. Following this familiar path, the sound of water intensified. A fast-flowing river appeared; the woman rushed to sit by its edge. A belonging filled the woman, and cyclical time elapsed her. Staring into the water a glint of vibrant blue light caught her eye. Looking back towards the safety of the garden the woman shook her head at her own fears, stood up and dived into the river on the moon. Her body moved through the river skillfully and catching sight of the blue light again the woman swam deeper. Long reeds began to blur her vision, but she reached her arm out into the light, and found her hand wrapped around a rock on the muddy floor. Urgently flipping her body, the woman swam hard to return to the surface. Gasping and clambering up onto the bank, the woman dipped her hand back into the water to wash the rock.

Opening her hand, the woman saw inscribed on the rock, her own name. In shock the woman let out a single heartfelt sob. In the oneness of everything, she had always been. Dripping wet the woman stood and turned to leave. However, the rock in her hand gently spoke to her. The rock belonged in the river and could never be taken. Listening, the woman placed the rock on a ledge just under the river's surface, wiping tears away she spoke out loud to the river, she would return shortly. Out of the garden and walking fast along the smooth moon track, the man suddenly stood in front of her. His light engulfed her. Laughing loudly, he asked; how are you so wet? The woman stuttered excitedly about Ulysses, the north tree and the rock that held her spirit, as she reached for his hand to lead him back. He stepped back, explaining how he was so happy to see her, to hear her story and they would venture to the river soon but right now he needed to be earth-bound. Understanding the many worlds, the man belonged to, the woman quietly walked back to the flying ledge near their favourite tunnel current, and they returned.

For such a long time the woman flew without the man. Though not alone, Wakirr was always there, and the woman had travelled beyond the north tree many times. One day when sleeping by the river she woke up to a family of kangaroos bounding past. However, as time lapsed her heart grew unsettled. Many months later the woman walked along the milky-white moon track towards the garden and instead of entering the cave she climbed the moon hill. The sharp rocks beneath her bare feet moved slightly and cut her, so she had to half crawl up the slope to reach the moon hill peak.

Once on the summit the woman lifted herself onto a large rock ledge to get a clear sight of earth. Clinging to the rock edge she searched the currents for the approaching man, and when she could not see him, she began to search earth's surface. Realising the futility of this action the woman simply watched the earth-bound people moving. She saw men and women walking together, talking, and doing many things. Suddenly ravaged by despair tears rolled down her face. Why was she alone? Why could she not simply live earth-bound? The woman leaned forward to see better. Her crying had dampened the rocks beneath her hands, and they moved. Her body weight shifted under the crumbling ledge. Then she fell. Off the cliff, smashing through the tunnel currents, her body twisted, contorted, and spinning, descending towards earth. The woman torpedoed through the currents she usually flew along. Crashing through clouds, then her body teared as it smashed through tree branches. With a heavy thud the woman's body landed, unconscious, as the sun set with the passing of a day.

She breathed. A shallow breathing, it felt like bricks rested on her chest. The dirt beneath her was cold and damp, the dark night sky was quiet. The moon was nowhere to be seen. Only the laugh of a Kookaburra broke the silence, he told the woman to get up! Moaning as she rolled over the woman lifted herself to her feet. One side of her body screamed in pain, and her skin was covered in a mixture of blood, torn clothes, and dirt. Limping, she shuffled home.



The woman stayed home for weeks, closing her curtains, only sitting in the sun occasionally, from the new coldness inside her. However, her body slowly began to heal. One day when she hung her clothes out to dry a superb fairy wren hopped around her. She heard him. The woman lamented from her own shame, her own ego and self-pity. The handsome blue superb fairy wren said to the woman; even if this is true, you are still the girl who can dance, the one Wakirr loves. Nodding her appreciation for the superb fairy wrens' kind words, the woman lifted her arms to feel the wind. Then she smiled.

Soon after the woman was walking along a footpath after buying food, her limp was almost completely better. Carrying her shopping bags, she looked up and the man was standing in front of her, smiling. The woman was speechless from the warmth swirling through her, but the man spoke of many things quickly, from his own happiness seeing her. Then he asked; had she been to the garden lately? She explained half muttering, searching for words how she had hurt herself, so no, not recently. The man explained how he had only once, but she was not there. He expressed with his eyes shining, how he wanted to return to the moon with her. Then began to walk away, apologizing, because right now he was too busy. The woman watched his light disappear around a corner; she felt a familiar emptiness. The woman was thankful he did not know the extent of her foolishness. Resolute to hold her own healing, the woman turned to walk home. Softly saying...I am enough.

Along the way she met another woman. This woman was very beautiful, but in her eyes was the earth-bound sickness. This woman asked her when will things be better for me? Looking at the beautiful woman, wanting to speak truth, she said; perhaps you can learn to fly the currents of the sky. To her surprise the beautiful woman simply walked away, pausing only to yell back; 'if only our world still existed my sister, no one flies anymore'.

The woman wanted to run after her, tell her about the worlds within worlds, and that sky people can still fly. However, she realised, it was not her voice that would help the woman awake. Almost home the woman turned onto a gravel road. Wakirr appeared flying low, then soared high in the sky, only to return gliding low beside her again. In jest, dancing on the dirt road the woman yelled out; Wakirr is a show-off! Flocks of white corellas descended, filling the sky, screeching a cacophony of song about how happy they were. The woman listened. A short time later summer returned. The woman lay in her bed half asleep. The curtains began to flap a little. She smiled at the welcome coolness to her skin. Then the curtain fabric bellowed high, revealing the moon in the sky. The moon saw her, as the moon sees all women. The curtain lowered, and the woman lay in her bed, her heart pounding. She wished out loud for one more breeze, to see the moon again. Then as a gush of wind lifted the fabric high, the bright light of a full moon engulfed her, she saw the currents, the garden and her stone in the river submerged just beneath the water. The woman let go.

Outside in the moonlit night a flock of crows lifted from their branches, to join a light flying in the sky.

