

Chapter II
ANIMAL LEGENDS

NATIVE CAT, OPOSSUM AND EMU

(Twilight Cove)

In dhoogorr (dream or ancestral) times, Giniga (native cat) and Kallia (emu) were man and wife. They lived between Willilambi and Drollinya and their burna (ground, domain, territory) was a very fertile one in which there was plenty of game at all times of the year. Every day Giniga went out meat hunting, and every afternoon he came back to the camp with plenty of meat food. Sometimes turkey, duck, wallaby and cockatoo would be hung from his nanba (hair belt), and fall all round him, hitting his legs as he walked. He carried kangaroo and large game over his shoulder, but all the smaller game he fastened in his nanba. Always they went out together from their fire (camp), but soon separated, as men meat-hunters must go by themselves and woman root and seed gatherers go by themselves also.

Kallia took her thaggulu (wooden vessel) and would soon fill it with gooyana (native gooseberry), ngoora (native currant), minu (wattle seeds) and gum and nala (roots of a species of mallee, edible) and sometimes she would find a ngannamura's (Mallee hen's) nest. Then she would have a difficulty in carrying them all home, there were so many. Always they had plenty to eat, with good fires, and cool shady places in summer time and they never forget to burn the patches where the gooyana was most plentiful, for they knew that if they did not burn them, the gooyana would get sulky and would not come up again. Ngoora came of itself and did not want them to look out for it. The ngoora bushes grew very big and fat in their burna, and often when they met each other in their day's hunting they would both sit down beside a ngoora bush and pick the fruit off and eat them until they were satisfied. On these days they did not bring any ngoora to the camp.

They were thus living very happily and comfortably, but Giniga loved Kallia more than she loved him. Kallia was always admiring herself, walking on her toes, turning her head this way, that way, and looking at her ngoowan (shadow) as she walked about mincingly.

One day Kallia had gone out to get kalda (stump-tailed iguana) for their supper, for both had been over-eating, because it was the summer time and the native fruits and roots were abundant, and the meat food easy to obtain, as the birds and beasts used to come to drink at Giniga's waterholes, and he always knew where to find them sleeping or resting in the shade during the hot days. Kallia caught several kalda and came back very early. She had nothing to do but wait for Giniga, as the kalda must not be cut open and cleaned till just before they are put on the ashes to cook. They are walyi ("no good") if they are cleaned when they are caught. Kallia used to hit them with her kandula or wanna (digging stick) and then, when they were stunned, she caught hold of their stumpy tails and knocked their heads on a stone or on her kandula. As soon as she placed the kalda in the camp, she began to mince along on her toes, turn her head about and look very proud and saucy. Presently her bright eyes caught sight of a jamma (opossum) sitting some distance away and looking most admiringly at her performance. Kallia displayed her little tricks for some time after she caught sight of him and then sat down in her camp. The opossum came over to her and said, "How beautifully you walked and held your head, and how small and pretty your feet are, and you are altogether so nice and fat that I like you very, very much and want you to be my yogga, mundurn (woman, wife).

Kallia was very greatly pleased at the flattery, and smiled encouragingly at him. Jamma then came into the camp and sat beside Kallia, and they played with each other and fondled one another till at last he said, "I must go back to my camp, but before I go, I must put murdar (red ochre) on you, for I've never seen such a nice girl as you are."

So Kallia sat covered with murdar which men should put only on their wives. Then Jamma went away, and Kallia sat covered with murdar, thinking of all the nice things he had said and how all of them were quite true.

By and by Giniga returned with a kangaroo. What was his surprise to see his wife covered all over with murdar which he had not put on her, and which she dare not put on herself. He hissed fiercely at her, "Where did you get that murdar?" "I found it," said Kallia, who now knew the wrong she had done. Giniga could say no more for a time for he was hissing and spitting and biting his beard with jealous rage. He looked round for the tracks of the man who had put murdar on his wife, and presently saw the place where Jamma had sat down, and where Kallia had danced before him. Then he traced the tracks right into his own camp. He said nothing for a little while, for he was too angry to think that Kallia would let a strange man come into her own husband's camp.

When he could speak he called to Kallia, "Make a big fire. First make a hole and then make the fire in it."

Kallia began to make the hole, thinking that Giniga wanted it to cook the koalber (kangaroo). But when she had made it and was putting more and more wood on it, she looked at Giniga, and then she knew that the fire was for her, that she was to be burnt for having let Jamma talk to her, come into her camp, and put murdar on her. She began to cry and her tears fell on the fire, hissing and spitting just as Giniga did in his anger. She cried aloud as she heaped the wood on, but Giniga sat and waited, biting his beard and spitting it out, until he saw the fire was burning well. Then he caught hold of Kallia by the legs and threw her on her back into the middle of the fire. Kallia struggled and screamed, and moved her arms this way and that way, trying to get out of the fire, but having been thrown on her back, her arms got quite burnt off. Then with one big scream she got out and ran away, and when Dheogurr changed her into a bird, she had no wings, for she had no arms.

Meanwhile Giniga, who thought no more about Kallia after he had thrown her into the fire and left her struggling there, had followed Jamma's tracks. On his way he gathered his brothers, as many as he could see, to come and help him punish him for breaking the law. All the brothers got their clubs. They also took other weapons, but they relied more upon their clubs, for they were big and strong and had great muscles on their bodies.

Jamma knew that Giniga would follow him up for what he had done, and that Giniga would kill him, so he too called to his brothers to come and help him fight Giniga.

"What did you take Giniga's wife for?" they said, "You have your own wife and it's no good taking a woman that doesn't belong to you. You know Jamma can't take Kallia, that's forbidden. Jamma have their own wives from proper wife stock, and they must not touch Kallia who are ngallara (blood relations)."

Jamma tried to excuse himself, saying that Kallia made big eyes at him and danced for him, and the brothers who knew that all Kallia were vain and empty headed consented at last to help him fight Giniga and his brothers.

So when Giniga and his mob came there was a great fight. All the Jamma speared as many of the Giniga as had come to do battle, and the Giniga hit Jamma always on the head with their clubs, always on the top of their head, so that by and by, when Dhoogurr changed the Jamma into opossums, every one had a flat head, flattened at the top by Giniga's clubs, and all the Giniga whom Dhoogurr changed into native cats had ^{the} white holes of Jamma's spears all over their bodies, for Jamma didn't hit in any one place, but the spears stuck all over them.

Jamma and Giniga will sometimes meet and fight now and Giniga fastens on Jamma's head where the clubs hit him in Dhoogurr times, and Jamma snaps at Giniga all over his body, and not in one place as Giniga does.

In another version Giniga does not collect his brothers. He goes alone to Jamma's ground. The guilty Jamma took refuge in a hollow tree, and let all his brothers throw their spears at Giniga, but Giniga found the tree and stooped down and hit Jamma on the head with his club. Now Jamma always run into hollow logs or trees, frightened, but Giniga come out in the open.