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Compare and Contrast Sun Tales

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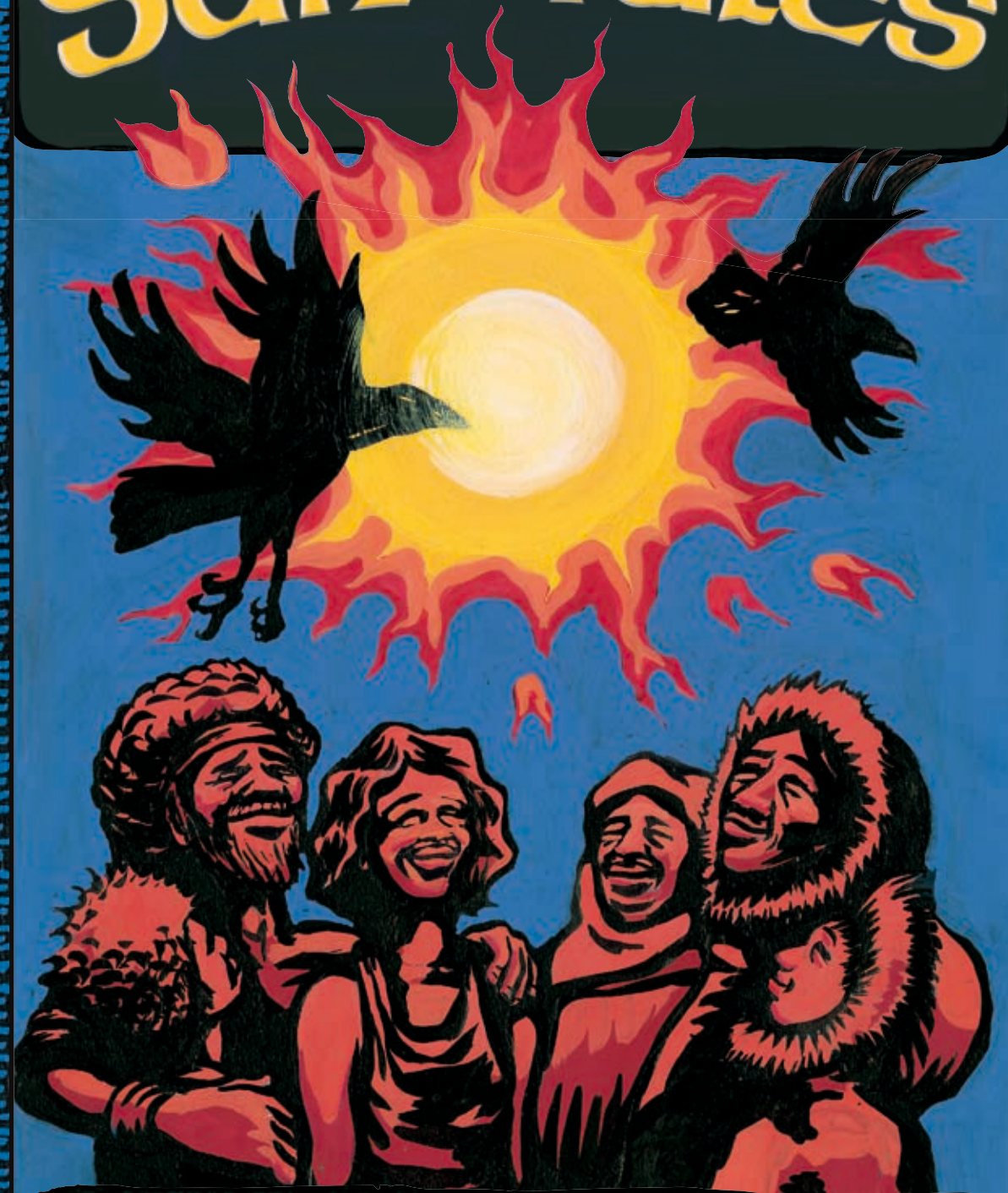
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Sun Tales



Retold by Susie Brown
Illustrated by Antony Elworthy



Sun Tales

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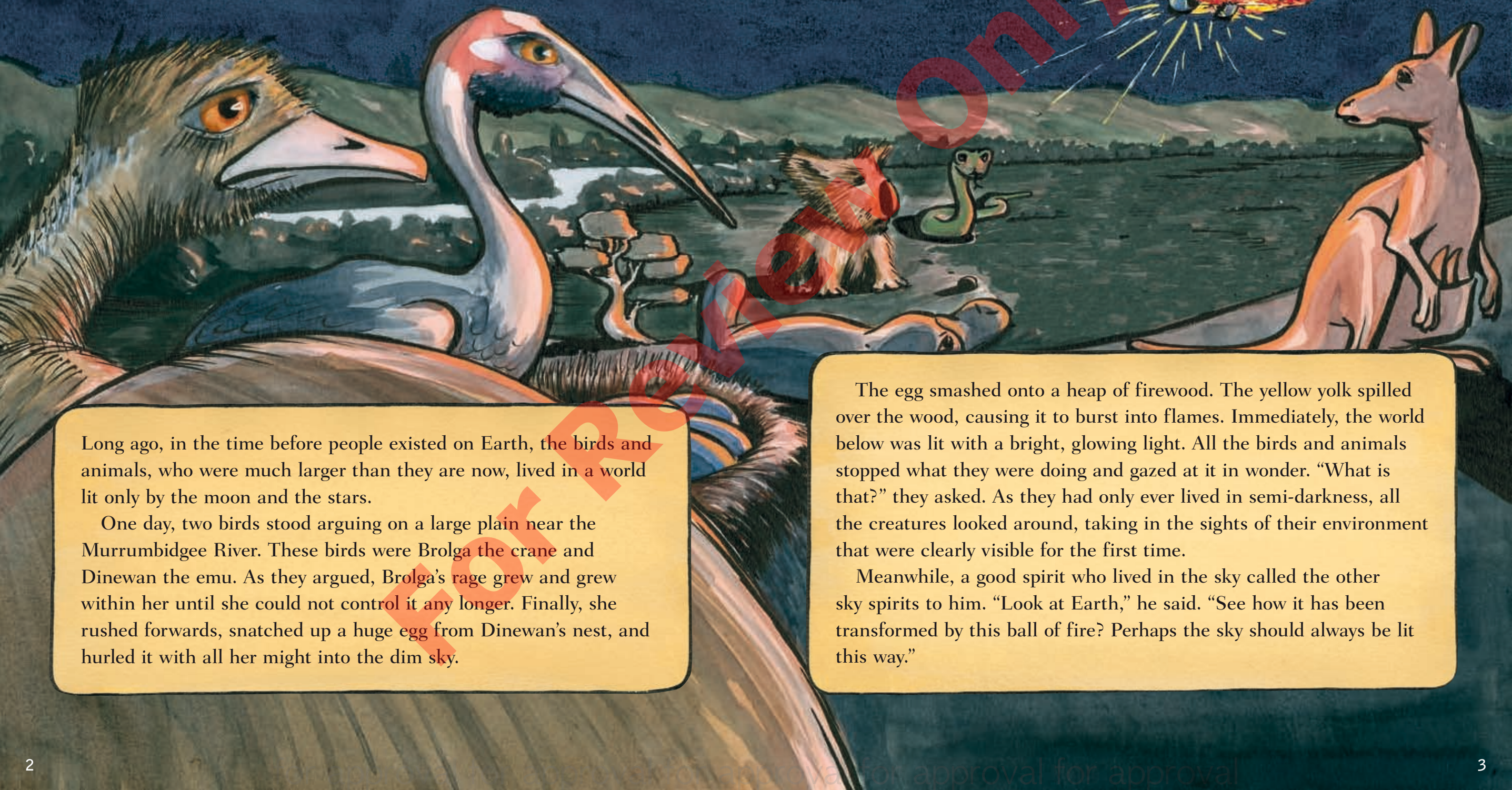
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HOW THE SUN WAS MADE

~ Based on a Dreamtime legend of the Australian Aboriginal people ~



Long ago, in the time before people existed on Earth, the birds and animals, who were much larger than they are now, lived in a world lit only by the moon and the stars.

One day, two birds stood arguing on a large plain near the Murrumbidgee River. These birds were Brolga the crane and Dinewan the emu. As they argued, Brolga's rage grew and grew within her until she could not control it any longer. Finally, she rushed forwards, snatched up a huge egg from Dinewan's nest, and hurled it with all her might into the dim sky.

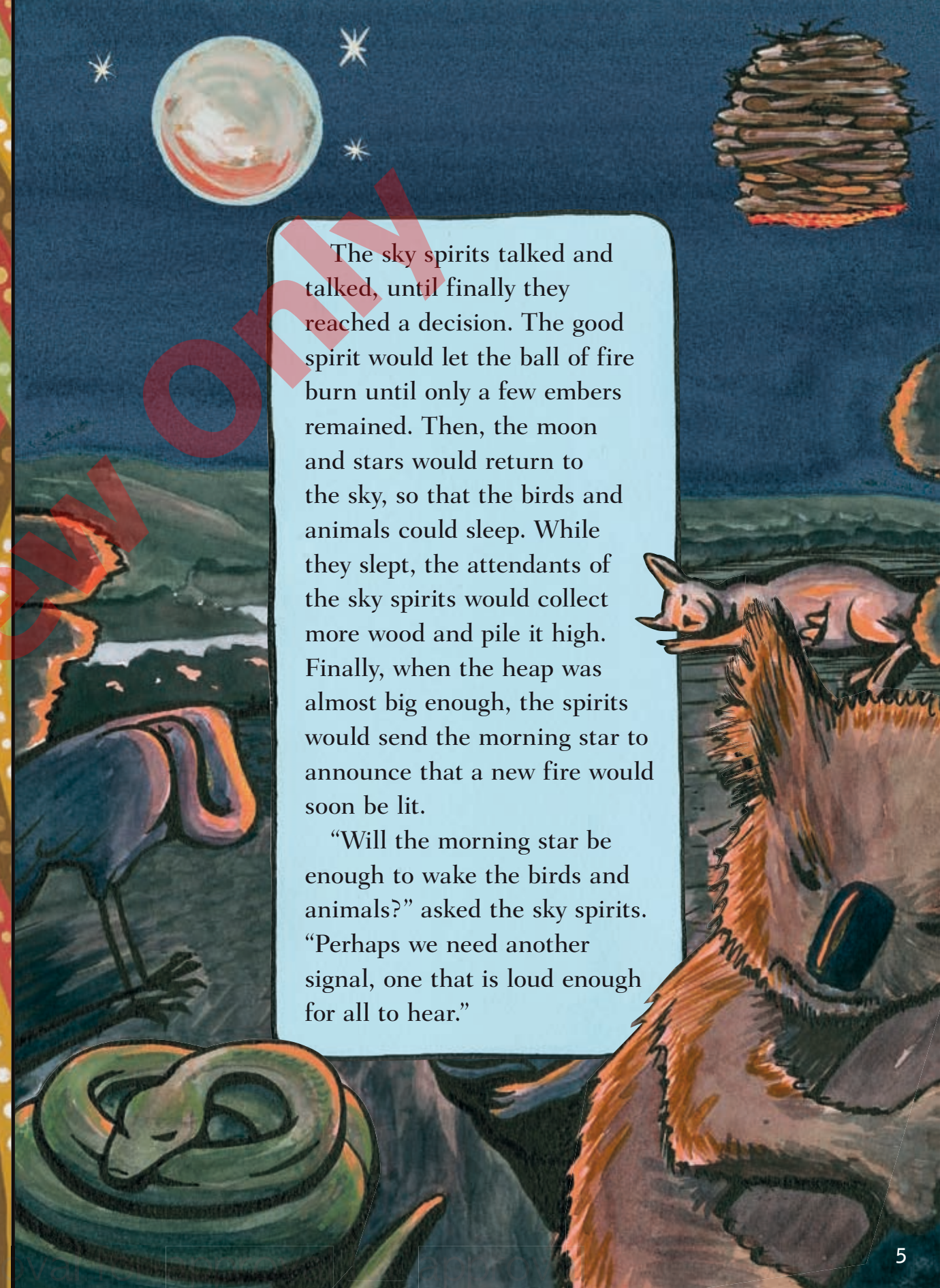
The egg smashed onto a heap of firewood. The yellow yolk spilled over the wood, causing it to burst into flames. Immediately, the world below was lit with a bright, glowing light. All the birds and animals stopped what they were doing and gazed at it in wonder. "What is that?" they asked. As they had only ever lived in semi-darkness, all the creatures looked around, taking in the sights of their environment that were clearly visible for the first time.

Meanwhile, a good spirit who lived in the sky called the other sky spirits to him. "Look at Earth," he said. "See how it has been transformed by this ball of fire? Perhaps the sky should always be lit this way."



The other spirits were not convinced. "What of the moon and the stars?" they asked. "The fire's light would engulf them and they would no longer be seen."

"That is true," said the good spirit thoughtfully, "and perhaps the birds and animals might not be able to sleep under the fire's strong glow. The light is so beautiful, though. What shall we do?"



The sky spirits talked and talked, until finally they reached a decision. The good spirit would let the ball of fire burn until only a few embers remained. Then, the moon and stars would return to the sky, so that the birds and animals could sleep. While they slept, the attendants of the sky spirits would collect more wood and pile it high. Finally, when the heap was almost big enough, the spirits would send the morning star to announce that a new fire would soon be lit.

"Will the morning star be enough to wake the birds and animals?" asked the sky spirits. "Perhaps we need another signal, one that is loud enough for all to hear."



Just then, they heard the laughter of Goo-goor-gaga the kookaburra, and they smiled to each other. "That is perfect," they declared, and called Goo-goor-gaga to them. They explained to the kookaburra that they wished for him to laugh his loudest as the morning star began to fade, so that all the sleeping birds and animals would awake in time to greet the day. "If you will not do this," explained the sky spirits to Goo-goor-gaga, "we cannot light the sun-fire and Earth will remain in dimness."

Goo-goor-gaga agreed at once, proudly ruffling his feathers. To this day, his call signals the end of the night and the start of a new day. When the sun-fire is newly lit, it does not radiate much heat. However, as the hours pass and the flames take hold, the sun-fire gets hotter and hotter, heating the whole of Earth with its glow. By the evening, the flames die away, leaving only a few embers. The sky spirits cover these embers with clouds and save them to light the new sun-fire the following dawn.