

'Worrying dreams'

Dreamtime. My mobs out Terrawee way, Blackfella bin there forever with the Geraju mob. Dreamtime's our story of creation; it's what we were and how we are.

We follow our ancestors, the bush our home, songlines our maps. White folks have their lawn, poor buggers, we got far as the eye can see and much more. Hear about the girls from Jigalong? That old Aboriginal protector thought he got 'em but they knew the bush. Walked must be 2000 k's. Dreamtime. Keeping them going.

Our ancestors free now, soaring the skies, watching out for us. Making us safe along the songlines. I seen Europeans in Ute's cost more than I ever earned. But leave them in my country & they stuffed. Can't move from that heap of tin shit.

Settlers dreamt of cleansing out our blood from mixed stock. Still trying if you ask me, what with the grog and keeping us off our land. But we still got our dreamtime, can't take that away from us.

Once I believed the Aussie dream and that it's the lucky country. Straight up, I tried to do what the whitefella wanted, follow their dream. Did alright at school, my auntie brought me up after what happened to my Ma. Auntie strict, no grog in her house and church on Sunday. Unless there was a coroboree and then we'd go and sit with the old blokes who'd tell me of the dreamtime. Tried to teach me the songlines but I only interested in Run DMC.

I wanted the high life, money and maybe (don't tell no one) a European girl. At 17 I hit the city & got a job – yeah, too right. Missed the damp clinging air of the bush & the noise of the galahs and the burping cane toads though. But I making money, and saving too. Stayed in a church house, well they said it was a church house but their god wasn't always around when that creep was on nights. I saw lots but being a blackfella makes you invisible, so no one minded me. The job was ok, working for the council in the parks. Wanted to be a ranger but takes time. I kept my head down, would see the crows overhead and think of the dreamtime, maybe they were heading me back to Terrawee but I wanted to be a dinky di Aussie and live that life.

Yeah I know, the kookaburras laughed at my dreams too but I thought, what do they know?

But most folks don't like us. Sure they don't say it to your face but in my dreams, I heard them. What's he dreaming off thinking he's good enough to live our life, he's a blackfella, only can dream of being one of us. Then troubling dreams started to haunt my nights. Crows pecking at me, crocs creeping along river bed, following me with their eyes ready to seize me and drag me down to the bottom of the crystal water.

And I woke up and in the grey light I wondered. Perhaps I was useless, a bludger. It got too much, I had swore to Auntie no grog ever but I saw the young uns in the park drinking and partying. Having a drink seemed to make life good & I saw no reason not to. I'd dreamt of a whitefella's life, maybe this was the way in. At night now befuddled dreams, Auntie singing to me in the ochre night and the heavy eucalyptus smell of the fire but then the black snake creeping silently in the scorched embers, waiting to caress me.

Lost the job – council cuts – yeah, right.

Then I didn't want to go back. Felt a loser and the dreams told me so, 'specially in the lock up. Oh I done no wrong, honest, but they dreamt up a story about how, when he threw me out, I got that church house creep in the night & bashed him. I wish.

Life tough inside, sure I was with lots of my kin folk but not all made it. Young bloke, not right in the head, in my cell. He done nothing, just not paid a fine. No kin to watch out for him. Woke screaming in the night. Got took away, heard he topped himself. Could have dreamt that though, the pills made my thoughts a muddy swamp that I fought, every day, to wade through.

Joined a gang, big plans for when I got out. Gonna take what I want in the city, not scared of no one now.

Then one day I woke up. The sea eagle came to me proud in my dreams. He knows his place in the sky, can spread his wings, soar high, live his life, no one smart enough to get to him, he just needs the sun, rain, air. No good in the city...

Oh what's that? No worries. That's the best hunting dog in Terrawee. We're going looking for wild pig. Later we'll roast ourselves that boar. Have ourselves a big fire and swap yarns. Maybe sleep outdoors in the swag. Happy sleep, sweet dreams. Now I back in my country with my people. Dreams have changed but they're my dreams between me and my mob. I ain't telling no whitefella about them – you've got your own dreams. And you can keep them.