

JORDAN GOULD · RICHARD PRITCHARD

# WYLAH

THE KOORIE WARRIOR



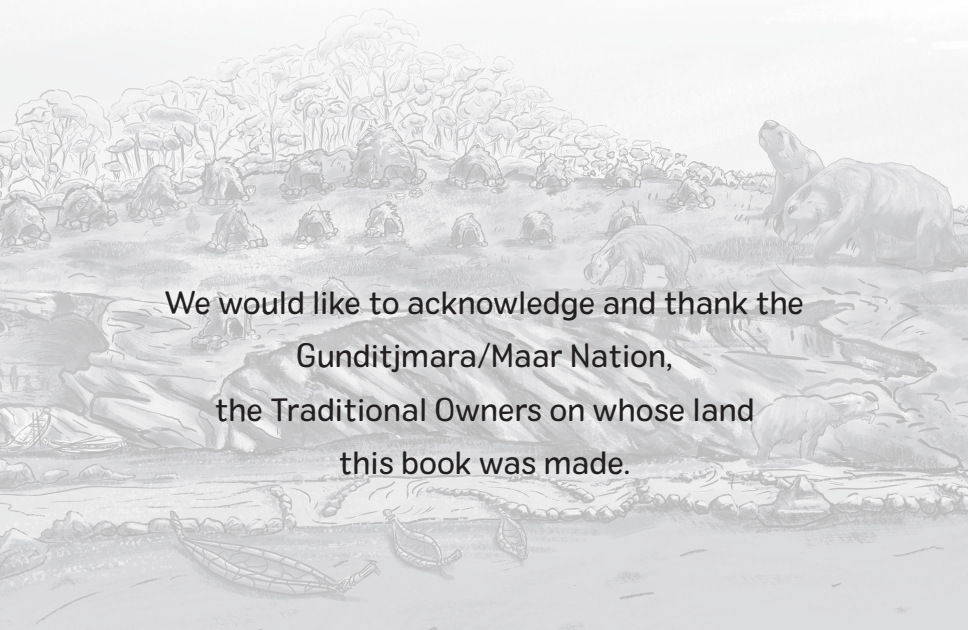
PROTECTORS



When young people read the story of Wylah  
they will all have a better understanding  
of the language and history thanks to  
Richard and Jordan.

**Uncle Robbie Lowe Snr**  
**Peek Whurrong Elder, Wungit • Chief**

Dedicated to Yuliya, Djuukan, Alajwa,  
Jidah, Ngaluwi, Willow and Krispin.

A faint, stylized illustration of a landscape. In the foreground, there is a river with several small boats. In the middle ground, there are several large animals, possibly kangaroos or wallabies, and a large bear-like animal. In the background, there is a dense forest of trees. The entire illustration is rendered in a light, sketchy style.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the  
Gunditjmara/Maar Nation,  
the Traditional Owners on whose land  
this book was made.

[www.wylah.com.au](http://www.wylah.com.au)

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Allen & Unwin  
Camberaygal Country  
83 Alexander Street  
Crows Nest NSW 2065  
Australia  
Phone: (61 2) 8425 0100  
Email: [info@allenandunwin.com](mailto:info@allenandunwin.com)  
Web: [www.allenandunwin.com](http://www.allenandunwin.com)

*Allen & Unwin acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Country on which we live and work. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.*



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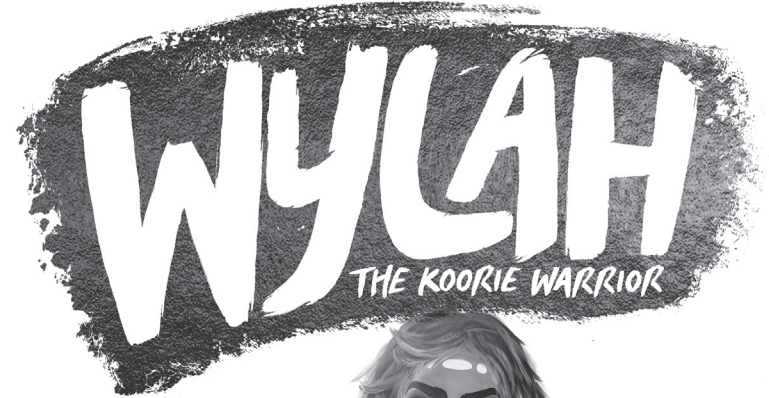
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**JORDAN GOULD · RICHARD PRITCHARD**



**PROTECTORS**

Illustrations by Richard Pritchard  
additional illustrations by Sierra & Max Pritchard



ALBERT STREET  
BOOKS

In stillness, we can find ourselves. In stillness, we can  
find Country, within and outside ourselves.

We all have a fire within us. Conceived by lightning,  
charged with life, our fire burns bright. Sometimes,  
you may find your fire dwindling with uncertainty,  
self-doubt or worry. Other times, your fire will be  
whipped to a frenzy in times of rushing, as you keep  
up with what the world demands of us. We know we  
must practise care with fire, and so we must know to  
care for our fire within us too, lest we become  
consumed and burn out.

To care for fire, you must be still. Sit with your fire,  
in stillness, and let it be a warm light that  
guides you, and others.

**Charmaine Ledden-Lewis, Bundjalung woman living  
on Dharug & Gundungurra Ngura**

For Beau & Flynn; may your friendship and unique  
creativity burn bright.

This book is dedicated to all those who have been  
instrumental in our incredible journey. My heartfelt  
gratitude goes out to my loved ones, friends and  
community who have wholeheartedly supported me in  
my aspirations. A special shout-out to my mother, who  
has been an incredible role model and raised me with  
love and care. Lastly, a big thank you to my little sister  
who makes me smile every step of the way.

**Jordan Gould  
Co-Author**

Dedicated to Sierra, Max, and my long-suffering,  
supportive wife, Rose, who have endured my creativity.  
Without you this book would not be possible. To Angel  
and all the wonderful pets and animals that make life  
so special. To Barry, Jane, Rita, Roberta, Julius, Anne,  
Marko, Esther, Miriam, Eli and Nathan.

To the Aboriginal people of Australia,  
hold on to your fire, may it burn brightly,  
the hope for generations to come.

**Richard Pritchard  
Co-Author & Illustrator**

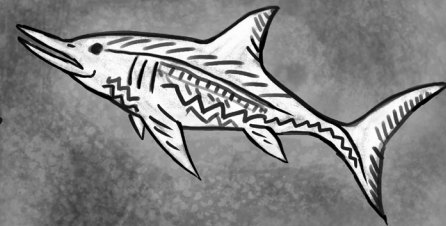
**Ngatanwarr teen Marr mirring-u.  
Ngeeye mayapa wangan wanyoo Marr  
pernmeal, Alanmeen, korrokie, pongyapoon.  
Munganoroo, wattanoo Marr koorooke,  
ngapoon pa ngaraakeetong.**

**Ngatanwarr,  
ngeeye teen mirring-ngan.  
To ngootenwal.**

**Welcome to Marr Country.  
We pay our respects to the Marr Great Spirit,  
Ancestors, Grandmothers and Grandfathers.  
From the Marr Grandmothers,  
Grandfathers and families.**

**Welcome,  
this here is our Country.  
Thank you.**

**40,000 YEARS AGO**





**WOSH!!**

**CHAPTER 1**

Lightning snaps across the sky as Pippy and I fly through the raging thunderstorm towards the Dragon Army's camp. Towards my family and friends, and my Guardians Tulna Warpun, Lapaka and Thara.

My heart beats harder than the icy hail beating against my skin as I think about the last time I saw everybody: my people in cages, the Guardians lifeless and lost, and Tiller shaming me in front of my parents and the other Elders. He told everyone I wasn't the Koorie Warrior; he made me feel small and worthless.

But now, everything has changed.

I look at Kae Kae in my hand. The boomerang is glowing bright blue and surging with power. The tribal markings on my body radiate with my ancestors' energy, and their strength coursing through my body feels unbelievable.

'I am the Koorie Warrior,' I whisper to myself.



Pippy screeches and startles me. 'Bunjil has given us hope, and now we show everyone who you are!'

I nod, gripping Kae Kae tighter. 'I'm going to confront Tiller, Livingstone and Captain Frye once and for all. I failed once, but I will not fail again.'

Pippy swerves to avoid another flash of lightning. ‘The battle will be tough, but remember your Grandmother’s lessons.’

I think back to my Grandmother. She taught me to be patient, to focus on the task in front of me, and to ask for help when I needed it. And most importantly, she had taught me my final lesson to becoming the Koorie Warrior: strength is kindness, and that is what makes a true warrior.

‘Wylah!’

Looking over, I see Jayden and his dragon, Aperior, flying in front of me. He coughs and splutters, blocking the hail from his face with his bulky arm. His Yara-ma-yha-who appearance still shocks me, but I must remember his promise to do the right thing this time.

He holds up his red amulet, and I can barely see its light through the rain. ‘The storm is affecting my tracking crystal,’ he yells. ‘I don’t think this is the right way!’

Pippy flies closer to them. ‘Wylah, now that you are the Koorie Warrior, I can train you to use *all* the powers of Kae Kae.’

‘Yes! That would be amazing!’ My heart leaps with joy.

‘Focus on protecting us from the storm, throw Kae Kae in front of you and shout the word Malka\*. It will create a barrier around us and hopefully block out the storm’s interference.’


‘Okay.’ I take a deep breath to calm my mind, then I throw Kae Kae as hard as I can. ‘Malka!’ I shout.

Kae Kae zooms about, and the blue streaks of power build to form a sphere around us. Suddenly, the the storm grows quiet, and the rain stops.

‘I did it,’ I say, giving Pippy a hug.

‘It worked!’ Jayden shouts with joy, holding up the now-glowing crystal. The red light flashes and he points it to the left. ‘That way, let’s go.’

\*Malka means shield.



We turn and head deeper into the eye of the storm.

*Hold on, my friends, I think. We are coming.*



## CHAPTER 2

Thunder shakes the ground, the noise echoing around the mountain looming above. In the camp, a tall, dark figure works feverishly at a massive stone table, undeterred by the lightning striking the ground around him. Tiller wipes the rain out of his eyes, smearing his tribal paint markings, then continues to furiously mix liquids, throw crushed powders, shake burning leaves and chant unknown words.

The mixing liquids bubble and travel across the stone surface, and soon the machine hums to life again.

In the centre of the machine Livingstone's staff pulsates. At the same time, the storm grows stronger, the wind forcefully whipping up dirt and toppling trees.

Livingstone coughs and splutters as he marches up to Tiller. 'Is it going to work? Do you have the right balance of chemicals?' he demands.

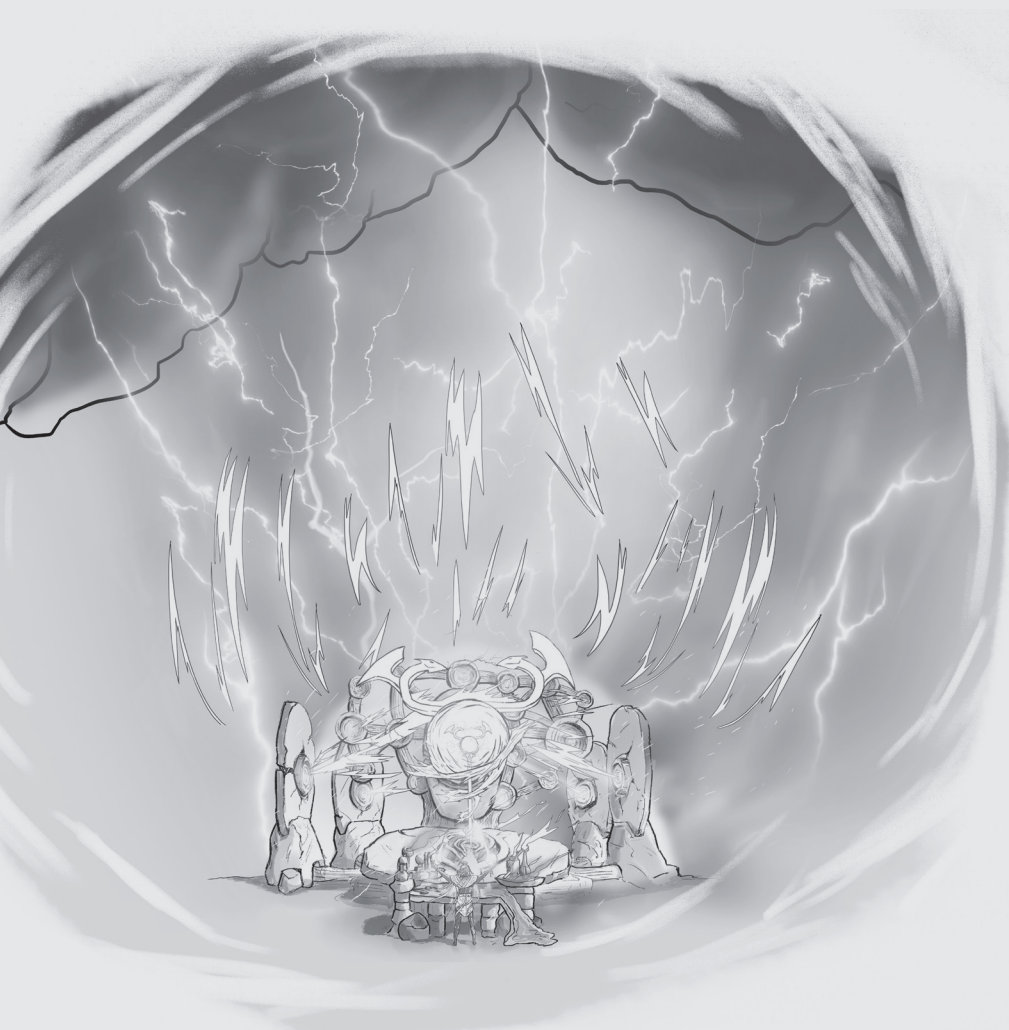
Tiller ignores him and keeps working quickly.

Livingstone grabs Tiller's shoulder and pulls him



away from the machine. ‘We won’t give you control of the tribes if it fails!’

**‘Stand back!’** Tiller screams, knocking Livingstone to the ground just as a flash of lightning splits the sky and strikes the table, causing the stone to melt like molten lava where it’s been hit.



Tiller scrambles to his feet and throws a large bowl of smouldering leaves into a massive cauldron. He begins chanting and the leaves burst into flames. ‘I told you before – without Kae Kae, the alchemy potion is unstable!’ A string of loud booms echoes, moving along the pipes connected to the Red and Black Dragons.

In a cage on the other side of the machine, Po, Merri and Kapa huddle together as green fire and smoke billow over their heads.

The koala lets out a fearful squeal and clings to Merri. ‘Don’t worry, Kapa,’ Merri whispers, ‘Wylah will come. I’m sure of it.’

‘And if she doesn’t?’ Alinta asks from another cage. She pulls hard on the cage bars again. Yapptarra, her fire hawk, screeches loudly from behind her when nothing happens.

‘She will!’ Po answers, his voice full of confidence as he gives Merri and Kapa a comforting hug.

Suddenly, dragon roars fill the camp and the ground begins to tremble.

‘Be strong, little ones,’ Bunyip whispers from the cage next to theirs.

**Roooooaaarrrrr!!!**

The machine lets off three fiery explosions, and Tiller, Livingstone and Frye watch wide-eyed as the Red Dragon slowly emerges from the smoke.

It’s now double its original size, with skin like an erupting volcano. It tips its head back and roars thunderously, causing Tiller, Frye and Livingstone to stumble backwards in awe.

‘The duality machine! It worked!’ Livingstone shouts.



‘It’s incredible!’ adds Frye, his voice filled with triumph.

Tiller gives Frye an amulet with a big red crystal. ‘Use this to control the Red Dragon.’

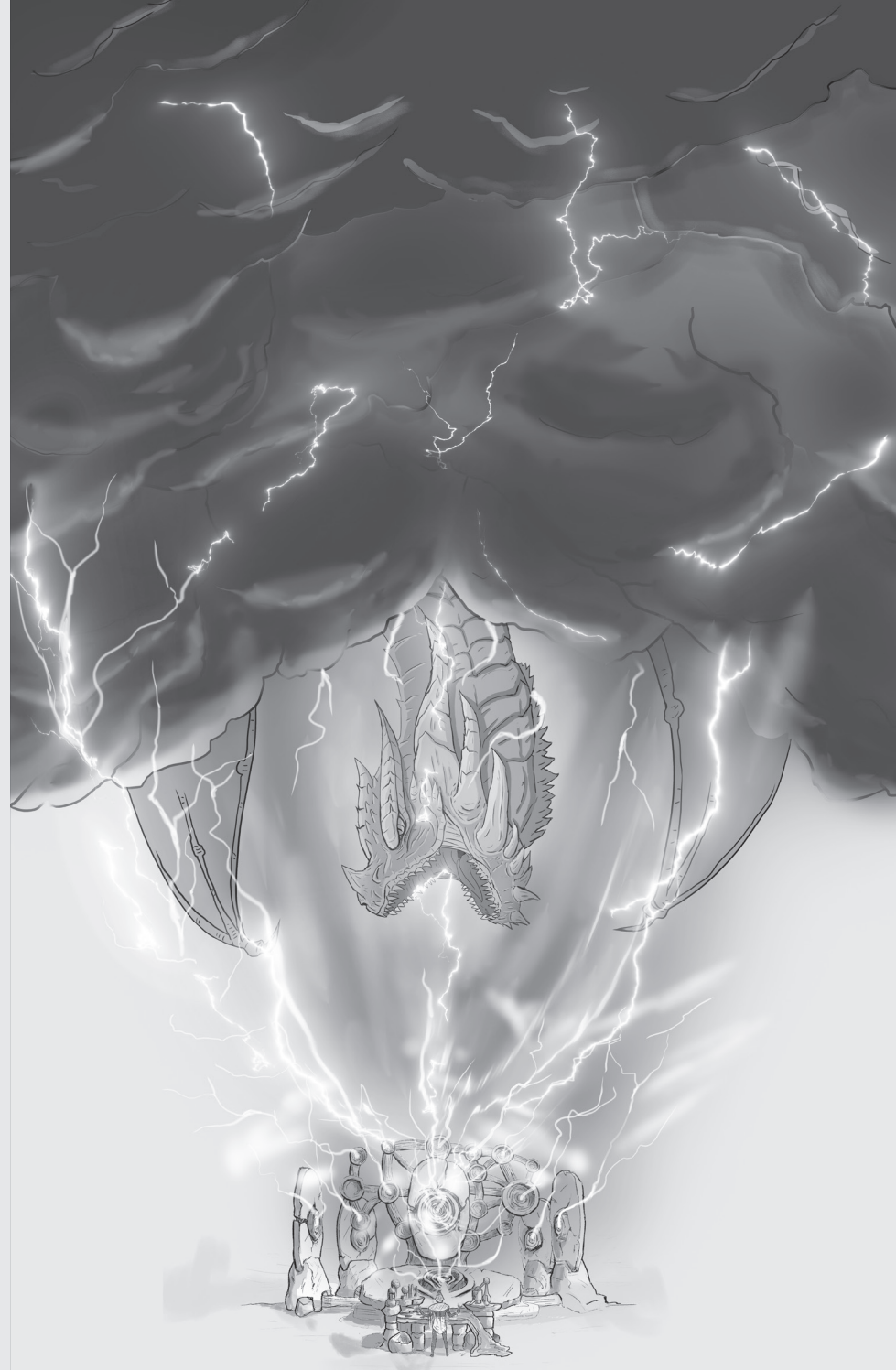
Frye raises the amulet. The crystal sparks with energy, and the matching crystal on the dragon does the same. Lightning arcs out from the Red Dragon’s crystal and connects with the amulet.

‘Red Dragon, obey my orders. Bow to me!’ Frye commands. The Red Dragon roars again and crouches low in a bow.

**CCRRRAAAACCCKKKKK!!!**

A crack of thunder rattles the ground as Tiller pulls the staff out from the machine, followed by a flash of green lightning that cuts through the enormous dark clouds that have gathered.

The Black Dragon emerges now, twice as large as before and with green energy pulsating between its scales.



‘Livingstone, take your staff,’ Tiller calls. ‘It is now your Totem Weapon and the Black Dragon is your guardian, just like ours.’

Livingstone takes hold of the staff and approaches the beast. ‘Black Dragon, return!’ The Black Dragon vanishes and the staff’s orb bursts with energy. Bringing the staff close, he peers into the orb then smiles when he sees the Black Dragon coiled inside.

‘You did it, Tiller. Total power transmutation!’ Livingstone exclaims, his voice shaking with joy.

Tiller’s eyes narrow and he nods. ‘Now remember our deal! You promised me the staff when you are done with all this, so that I can control the Tribal nations,’ he says, his expression stern and unyielding.

Livingstone glances at Captain Frye, then scoffs and waves his hand at Tiller. ‘You will get to use it once we have all the gold and the animals we require.’

Tiller scowls and stomps back to the machine.

From her cage, Merri watches on with wide eyes. ‘This is not good . . .’ she whispers. As the storm fades and the smoke slowly clears, Merri gasps. ‘Po, look!’

Po looks to where Merri is pointing and sees the Guardians lying next to the machine. They are not moving, almost drained of life. ‘How could this happen?’ he asks quietly.

One of the Elders in another cage cries out in sorrow and soon, Merri, Po and people from all the tribes join in.

‘We need to do something . . . *anything!*’ Alinta hisses, interrupting the cries. She glares at Wylah’s mother and father, her eyes blazing with rage.

Wylah’s mother grips the bars of her own cage and acknowledges her with a nod back.

Back by the machine, Frye approaches the Red Dragon. ‘Now, let’s see if this dragon has the power to turn anything into gold as you said, Tiller,’ he says. He lifts his amulet towards the dragon and the beast’s chest crystal and eyes begin to glow red.

‘Dragon! Turn this rock into gold!’ Frye commands as he point to a large boulder.

The Red Dragon steps forward, rears its neck back, then opens its mouth. Hot flames rush out and surround the boulder. The flames slowly die down, revealing a boulder-sized lump of gold.

‘Excellent!’ Frye thrusts one arm victoriously into the air.

Small cracks begin to appear in the gold and quickly spread over the whole surface. Regular stone peeks out from between the cracks.

**‘No! No! No!’** Frye rages, his face turning crimson. ‘This was meant to be *pure* gold.’

Tiller sighs. ‘I told you. Without the fifth Guardian’s power, the Red Dragon’s power isn’t complete and its fire can’t penetrate deep enough to turn the entire rock into solid gold,’ he says, his voice tinged with frustration.

Frye strides forward and pulls a piece of the gold layer off the boulder. ‘Livingstone, your experiment has failed!’ He shoves the piece in the other man’s

face. ‘How will you explain this to the Dragon Protectorate?’

Livingstone knocks Frye’s hand away and looks calmly at his staff. ‘Only your part has failed. We still have the animals, and many of them have already been transported to the Protectorate’s Island. I also have my duality machine.’

Frye peels more gold off the rock and narrows his eyes. ‘Careful, Livingstone. Don’t forget, *you* are the Head of Imperial Alchemy. It’s your job to find the gold.’

Suddenly, a loud hissing fills the air and the space in the middle of the camp begins to shimmer, then splits open, revealing a shadowy doorway. A giant owl wearing a gold helmet with a red crystal horn in the centre pushes its head through the doorway and gives an ear-piercing screech. ‘The Protectorate is getting impatient with your progress. She wants the gold and the animals now!’ The huge bird retreats back the way it came.



Livingstone and Frye watch in shock as the doorway closes with another hiss.

Frye spins and glares at Tiller. 'Did you hear that? If we fail, the Protectorate will inform the Dragon Queen, and we'll spend the rest of our lives in a dungeon!'

Livingstone shakes his head with impatience. 'Tiller, fix that machine. And you,' he points to a nearby soldier, 'get Wylah back out here, and somebody find Jayden!'

The soldier runs towards the mine where they put Wylah.

'Wait, where is the boomerang?' Tiller yells as he frantically searches the stone table. 'It was right here!'

Just then, the soldier rushes out of the mines. 'Wylah's gone, and Jayden is missing too!'

Tiller slams his fists on the machine. 'Impossible!'

Frye leaps onto the Red Dragon. 'Fix this, Tiller, or you will never have the power you desire so much. In the meantime, prepare your people to gather every bit of gold in this land. No one rests until it's done!' The Red Dragon roars and launches into the air, its massive wings swirling dust all over the camp.

Tiller watches the Red Dragon fly towards the mines, then walks over to Livingstone. 'I need the

boomerang and the fifth Guardian, or I cannot stabilise the transmutation. We can't let that silly girl become the Koorie Warrior. One of her friends must know what she is up to!

Livingstone glances towards the cages holding the tribespeople and narrows his eyes. He holds out his staff, and the orb begins to spark with small bolts of lightning. 'I think it's time to get some answers, once and for all.'

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