Djūŋatjunya Yunupiŋu, storyteller

‘My name is Djūŋatjunya Yunupiŋu, and I am from the Gumatj (Gu-mach) clan. My grandfather, my mother’s uncles and grandfathers are all from Warramiri Country. I have a link or am entitled to this Country, and I am a landcarer—someone who cares for the land, the environment and the heritage, and for Warramiri stories.

‘I was told this story, and I dreamt it. I was dreaming underneath the Yirritja casuarina tree, and the wind was blowing through the leaves. The wind was singing, telling that it was time to go out and harvest the fish in the ocean . . . I travelled in the dream in Djulpan.
'I’d like to tell this story because the children have to know who their ancestors are and their link to land and animals, about every creation in this land that we dance or perform or sing about. This story has to be maintained to educate them, so they’ll learn Yolŋu stories instead of Balanda stories, understand their connections to the land, find the real meaning of where we come from and why we are here.

‘I’m telling you the educational side. There are deeper parts of the story we can’t tell you because it’s restricted, not to be heard by Balanda or young ladies and kids.’

James Daymaŋu Bukuŋatjpi who also has responsibility for the story

ancestors — those from whom a person is descended

Balanda — a word used in Arnhem Land for non-Aboriginal people of European descent
Long time ago, there was a Warramiri man. He was a Yirritja man from Warramiri Country. He set out from Dombu, travelling in a Djulpan, to look for whales and find the colourful corals. He paddled through the Manbuynŋa (Man-buy-nga). He could hear a grandmother singing a grieving song, calling the ancestral spirits to keep him safe on the water and to help him find the coloured corals.
When he felt his ancestors travelling with him, the Warramiri man was not so scared. He sang to **Luŋgurrma** (Lung-gurr-ma) asking it to bring calmer water. As he paddled, he saw fish jumping and flashing through the water. They heard the sound of his paddle and rose up to see him, someone new, passing through the waters.
'Also, the meaning of the story is that he has to explore or dig for the truth. You have to travel right away to reach the islands where hidden treasure or value lies that you have not experienced or explored, and bring back the colourful corals to beautify (enrich) your life.

'He has to go and search, just like a child has to learn and achieve something from western education, and come back with a degree he has received so his family can be proud of him. This story is something like that, like exploring the world and bringing back. Once he has been beautified by every colour, that’s his achievement; and from the exploration he takes back something to make his grandfathers and relatives proud of him. The colourful corals... *dhoru* comes from there.'

dhoru—the Yolŋu word for coral; by getting the corals the Warramiri man was gaining power
Sharing the Yirritja story in the Djambarrpuyŋu (Dhuwa) language

Baman’ birr gan nhinan Warramiri yolŋu, yurr nayi nunhi Yirritja yolŋuny. Yurr nayi nunhi rur’yurrnydjya Dombunur wänŋanur yäkuŋur bala marrtjinan.


Ga nunhi nayi walalany dhäkay–nàŋkuŋydjya nunhi walal gan malthurr nhanŋu bala nayi marrparàŋthinan walalàŋgal.

Dar’taruyrr nayi buku-gawaw’yurr łuŋgurrma wàrr nayi dhu wapurarrkum gaju. Ga nunhi nayi gan lìw’yurrnydjya nhanŋal nayi marrtjin nariŋiri’ wapthunawu nunhi walal nàkul rrirrakay marrwalany nhanukun lìw’yunawuŋyndja ga rur’yurr walal gapanur bala marrtjin nhàŋala nayi, mulkuruny yolŋuny nayi marrtjin djulkthur walalangalàŋkurr.

Bitjarrnydjya gala nayi nhàŋal wuŋpundun nayi marrtjin nhirrpanmin mali-yolŋuny, wurr walal gan nunhi nhanŋu wàth lur ga lakaraŋal nhanukal wanhal nayi ñu̱ mułŋ’maram nunhi gadharra mala. Bala nayi walalaŋ malthurra.

Ga nunhi nayi gan marrtjinany, nhàŋal nayi djàpana nayi gorrun, nunhi limurr nuli nhàma djàpana nayi nuli gorruc napurr nuli marŋgithirr nunhi nuli nula nhà limurràŋ muŋ’thun nhùnhilìyi.

Nhanukal rumbalyu nunhi lakaram nunhi nayi marrtji galkitirra nhanukalàŋawal nhàŋpàŋmirriwalanydjya walaŋgal wänŋanur. Ga nàkul nayi walalany walal gan waŋap nhanukul ga lakaraŋal nhanukal nunhi wänŋan yùnñiyin. Bitjarr walal lakaraŋal Warramiriwal yolŋuwal, “Dhiyala nhe dhu war’waryunday bala màrrram gadharrany mala, màrr nhe dhu ronjìirrnydjya nheny dhu màrrram yùtun...”
walña ga ɲayaɲu.” Bala ɲayi ɲayaɲu –djunjithinan ɲunhi nhá walal nhanju lakarañal marranharaw ga djaw’yunaraw ga gurrupananaraw nhanukalañaw bápurruw’.

ɲunhi ɲayi war’waryurrnydjia bala marrtjín wapmarañala gadharrany mala bala wapmarañala ɲaku’lila, wiripuny ɲayi miny’tji marrañal malarrkany’ (Yirritjany miyanpununy). ɲunhi ɲayi goŋ’ dhawar’yurrrnydjia bala ɲayi marrtjínan. Murrñjín ɲayi ga rulwañthhurr miny’tji ɲunhal Dholtjíj uu’tungurr-yindirnjur bala djulkthurra, ga ɲunhi ɲayi marrtjín wáña djulkmarañal bitjarrrndjia bala bulwunulilnydjia gali’lil, ɲayi marrtjin djulkthurr malarrka’ miny’tji bala ɲayi marrtjín wáñany miny’tjimirriyínan. Murrñjín ɲayi ga yan bili ga Muruñtjáñg ɲayathañal ga ɲunhiliyí ɲayi nurrkanal malarrka’ miny’tji.

Ga beŋurunjí ɲayi dar’daŋ yurr djulpunhna lakarañal ga wáñan ɲayi gan ɲanya marr ɲayi dhu nhanju djága ɲunhi ɲayi dhu marrtjinji roŋjiyrndjia, liw’yurr ɲayi ga yan bili ga ɲunhi ɲayi wáñany galkithin bala ɲayi náku djilawurrnhan ɲayi gawaw’yurr.

