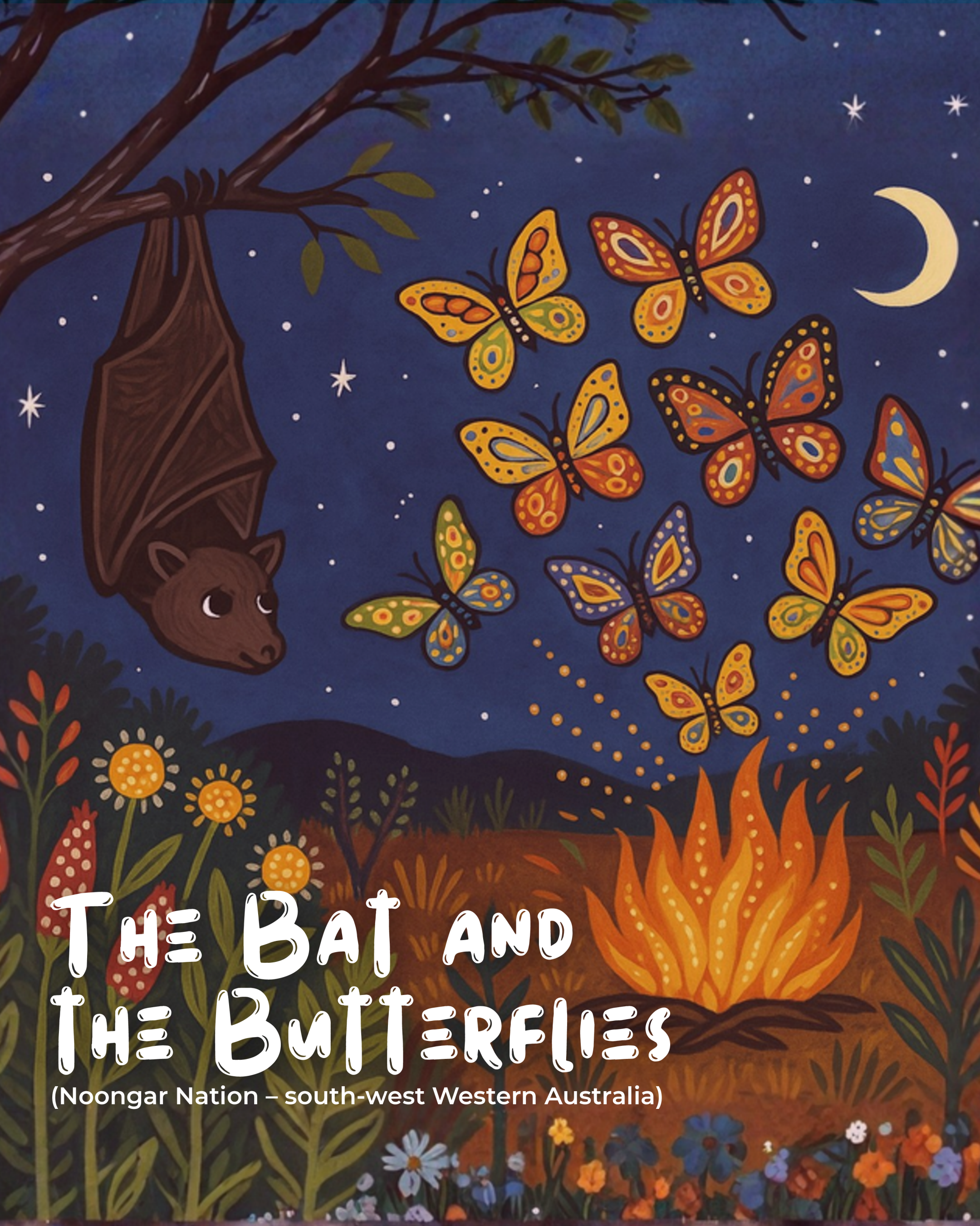

The Bat and The Butterflies

(Noongar Nation – south-west Western Australia)

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A long time ago, in the Dreaming, Bat was not the secretive creature we know today. He lived happily in the daylight, spreading his wide wings in the sunshine. He was shy, but gentle, and he liked to sit quietly and watch the butterflies as they danced among the flowers.

The butterflies were dazzling — red, yellow, and blue, their wings catching the light like jewels. Bat often sighed as he watched them flutter and glow.

“Oh, how bright you are,” Bat told them one morning. “When you fly, it is as if the sun itself is caught in your wings. I wish I had colours like yours.”

The butterflies laughed kindly. “You have your gift, Bat,” they said. “You have wings strong enough to carry you swiftly through the sky. We cannot fly so far or so fast as you. Be glad for what you have.”



The whispers begin

Not all the animals were kind like the butterflies. One afternoon, Magpie sat on a branch, watching Bat glide overhead. “Look at him,” Magpie muttered. “He says he is like us, but he is not. He has wings, yet he has no feathers.”

Crow cawed in agreement. “He is no bird. He is covered in fur like the animals. And yet he flies with us. Where does he truly belong?”

Soon the other birds joined in, their voices sharp and unkind. “Not bird, not beast. Not one of us at all!”

Bat heard their whispers and his heart grew heavy. He landed nearby and said softly, “I am your friend. I have lived among you all this time. Why should I not belong?”

But the birds turned away, and their eyes were cold.

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Bat's sadness

Bat flew to the butterflies for comfort. "The others say I do not belong," he told them. "They say I am not bird, not animal — nothing at all."

The butterflies fluttered close, their wings brushing his fur. "You are our friend," they told him. "Do not listen to unkind voices. You are Bat, and that is enough."

But Bat could not shake the sorrow. That night he folded his wings and crept into a dark cave. The stone was cool, and the shadows closed around him.

"If I am not welcome in the light," Bat whispered, "then I shall live in the darkness. Better to hide than to be told I do not belong."

The butterflies searched for him. They flew into the cave, their wings glowing like little sparks in the gloom.

"Come back, Bat," they pleaded. "The sun is warm, and we miss you."

But Bat only shook his head. "No. I will stay here. The light is not for me."

Life in the twilight

From then on, Bat chose to live apart. He slept while the sun was high, curled in caves and hollow trees. Only when the light was soft — at dusk and at dawn — did he stretch his wings again.

At twilight, when the sky turned gold and purple, he flew silently across the land. His dark wings carried him smoothly through the evening air. The butterflies sometimes joined him for a little while, their colours glowing as the last rays of sun touched them. Then they returned to the daylight, and Bat returned to his shadows.

Still, Bat found his place. In the cool hours he hunted insects that troubled the camps, keeping balance in the world. The other animals began to understand: even one who is different has an important role.

