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Sandplain Afternoon *by Meg Mooney*

I'm walking with my friend Tularda
Kapangati and Isabel
we're supposed to be looking for tracks of murrinja
a little, endangered marsupial
but even I know we won't find them
in this burnt country

Tularda's greatgrandchild picks arkatjirri –
tart yellow raisins
chases little lizards
between grass clumps and fan flower bushes
fireweeds in the red sand

the sun is beginning to go down
there's no hurry, nothing we have to do
might be find goanna
pick arkatjirri

it's hot but somehow the heat suits me
I don't want to rush back
go to a waterhole with friends
like in my younger days here

always at home on this great sandplain
now I find the rhythm of these women
hunting easily
resonates in me too

we look at tracks
plants growing back after fire
I carry the little girl
follow Tularda

Meg Mooney is a natural scientist and poet and have been in central Australia for 23 years now, living and/or working in remote Aboriginal communities for most of that time. My poems often have a strong narrative and attention to detail and focus on my association with Aboriginal communities and the landscape. For the dry country: writing and drawings from the Centre, by myself and artist Sally Mumford, was published by Ptilotus Press in 2005, and I have had poems published in a range of journals and anthologies.