All cultures have legends to explain how fire was first discovered. This legend comes from the Aboriginal people who lived on the north coast of New South Wales.

Long ago, before even the Dreamtime, there was a tribe of people who did not live on the earth. They lived in the sky world and their camp was near the two brightest stars so that they could light their fire-sticks from them. They were the only people anywhere who had the use of fire. The people on earth had to manage without it.

As even in the sky world, life is not always perfect. There came a time when there was not enough food. Some of the most adventurous of the sky world people decided to come down to the earth world to hunt.

'We will hunt possums and collect nuts and berries. It won't take long and we can bring back enough food for everyone,' they told their companions.

Two brothers, named Kanbi and Jitabidi, brought their fire-sticks down to earth with them and left them smouldering while they went off hunting. Hunting possums turned out to be a lot more difficult than they had expected and the time drew out and the land was very quiet. The fire-sticks became bored and began to play 'chase.' They were very clever at this game, running from place to place, and everywhere they touched the dry grass it caught alight. Gradually all the little fires grew together into one big fire and the smoke could be seen from a long way off. As soon as the sky brothers saw the smoke, they left the hunting party and hurried back to put out the fires.

The Aboriginal people who lived in the area had also seen the smoke and came to see what was going on. They had never seen fire before and at first they were very afraid. It did not take them long, however, to realise that this strange phenomenon could be extremely useful to them, providing them with light and warmth. They also noticed that some possums the sky brothers had caught had been cooked by the fire and smelled wonderful and savoury. They realised that they too could make their food more tender and tasty with fire.

Before Kanbi and Jitabidi could finish putting out the fires, several of the Aboriginal men lit fire-sticks for themselves and hurriedly carried them back to their camps.

'We must watch over these fire-sticks and carefully keep them burning forever,' they told one another.

Kanbi and Jitabidi quickly gathered up their playful fire-sticks and returned to their campsite in the sky. They were terribly afraid the earth people would inflict some punishment on them for having caused such a disturbance. But the earth people were in awe of their sky visitors and, rather than being angry about the burnt grass, were excited and grateful for the wonderful gift of fire.