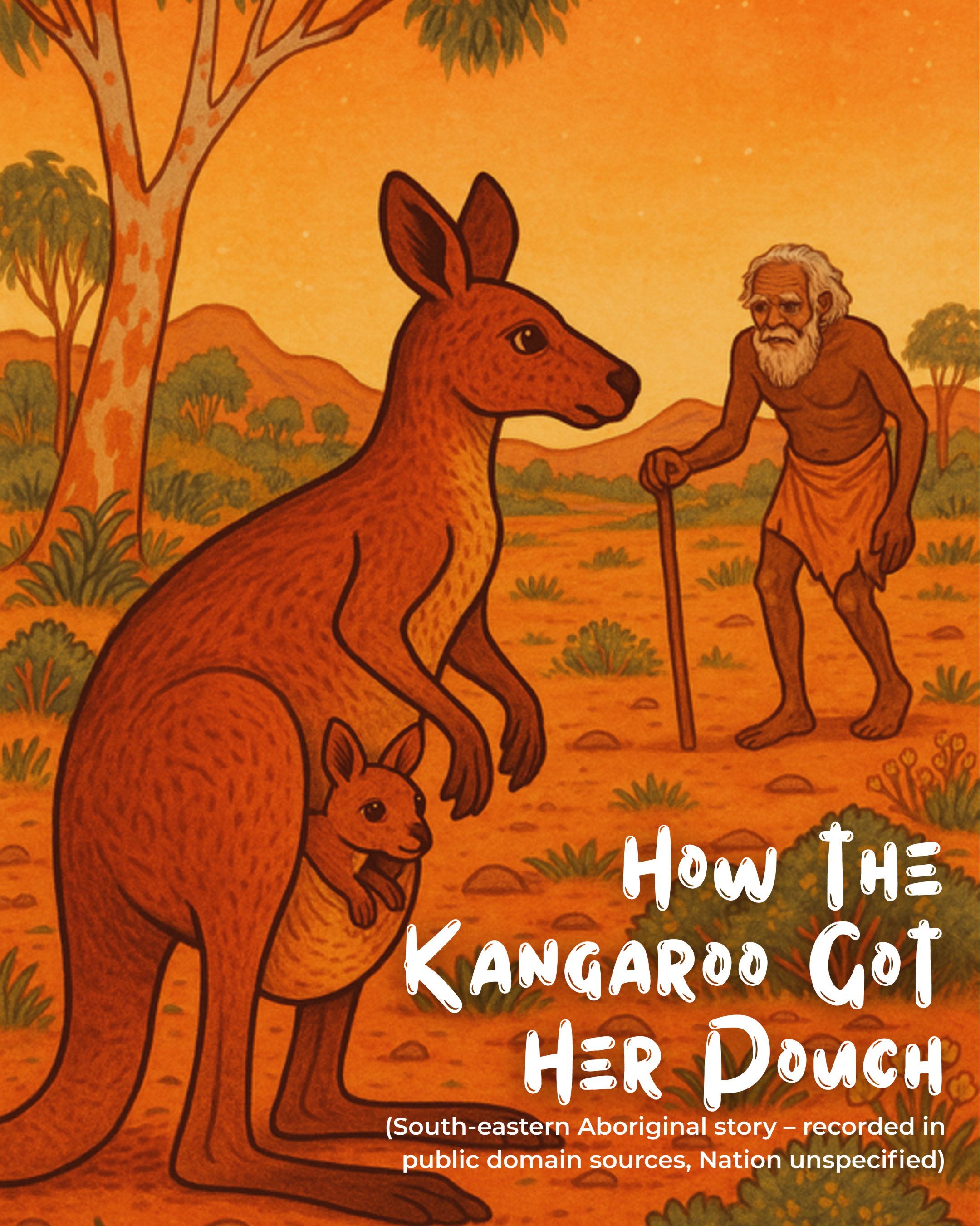

How the Kangaroo Got Her Pouch

(South-eastern Aboriginal story – recorded in public domain sources, Nation unspecified)

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A long, long time ago, in the Dreaming, Kangaroo did not have a pouch. She was a gentle mother, with a small joey who hopped beside her everywhere she went. She loved him dearly, but she worried often, for he tired quickly on long journeys, and when danger came, he had nowhere to hide.

One hot afternoon, as the sun beat down on the plains, Kangaroo and her joey stopped by a shady gum tree to rest. The joey curled against her side, weary from hopping so far. As they sat together, they heard a rustle in the grass.

Out stumbled an old man, weak and bent, his skin dry with thirst. “Please,” he croaked, “I am lost and wounded. I need help.”

Kangaroo’s heart filled with kindness. She gave him water from the hollow of a tree. She picked herbs and bound his foot where thorns had cut it. She even offered some of the roots she had been saving for her joey’s supper.

The old man smiled faintly. “You are generous,” he whispered. “You care not only for your child, but for a stranger too.”



The gift of the spirits

When the old man had rested, he stood a little straighter. His eyes grew bright, and his form began to shimmer in the sunlight. Kangaroo gasped, for he was no ordinary man — he was one of the great spirit beings, walking the earth in disguise.

“You have shown kindness without asking for reward,” the spirit said. “For this, you shall be given a gift.”

He raised his hands, and a soft light wrapped around Kangaroo. She felt a warmth upon her belly, and when she looked down, she saw a pouch forming there — soft, strong, and deep.

“This pouch will be your child’s shelter,” said the spirit. “No longer will you fear for his safety. He may rest inside, hidden and warm, while you travel across the land.”

Kangaroo’s eyes shone with joy. She lifted her joey and placed him gently in the pouch. He wriggled once, then nestled close, peeping out with bright eyes. Safe, snug, and happy.

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The test of kindness

But the spirit was not yet finished. “This gift is not only for you,” he said. “It is for all who show kindness and care. The pouch shall remain with you and your daughters after you, so long as the story of your generosity is remembered.” Then he faded like mist, leaving Kangaroo and her joey beneath the gum tree.

From that day on, Kangaroo carried her joey wherever she went. When danger came, he leapt into the pouch, safe from harm. When he grew tired, she hopped on, strong and steady, while he rested against her heart.

Other animals marvelled. “What a wonderful thing!” cried Possum. “What magic lets you keep your little one so close?”

Kangaroo only smiled. “It is not magic alone,” she said softly. “It is kindness. For kindness gives gifts greater than we can see.”

The lesson for all

And so it has been ever since. Kangaroos carry their young in pouches, close and safe, wherever they go. The story is told to remind children that kindness is powerful. A helping hand, a generous heart, and care for others can bring blessings that last forever.

So, when you see a mother kangaroo bounding across the plains, her joey peeping from her pouch, remember the story. Remember that the pouch was a gift for love and kindness — a gift born from caring not just for her own child, but for a stranger in need.

