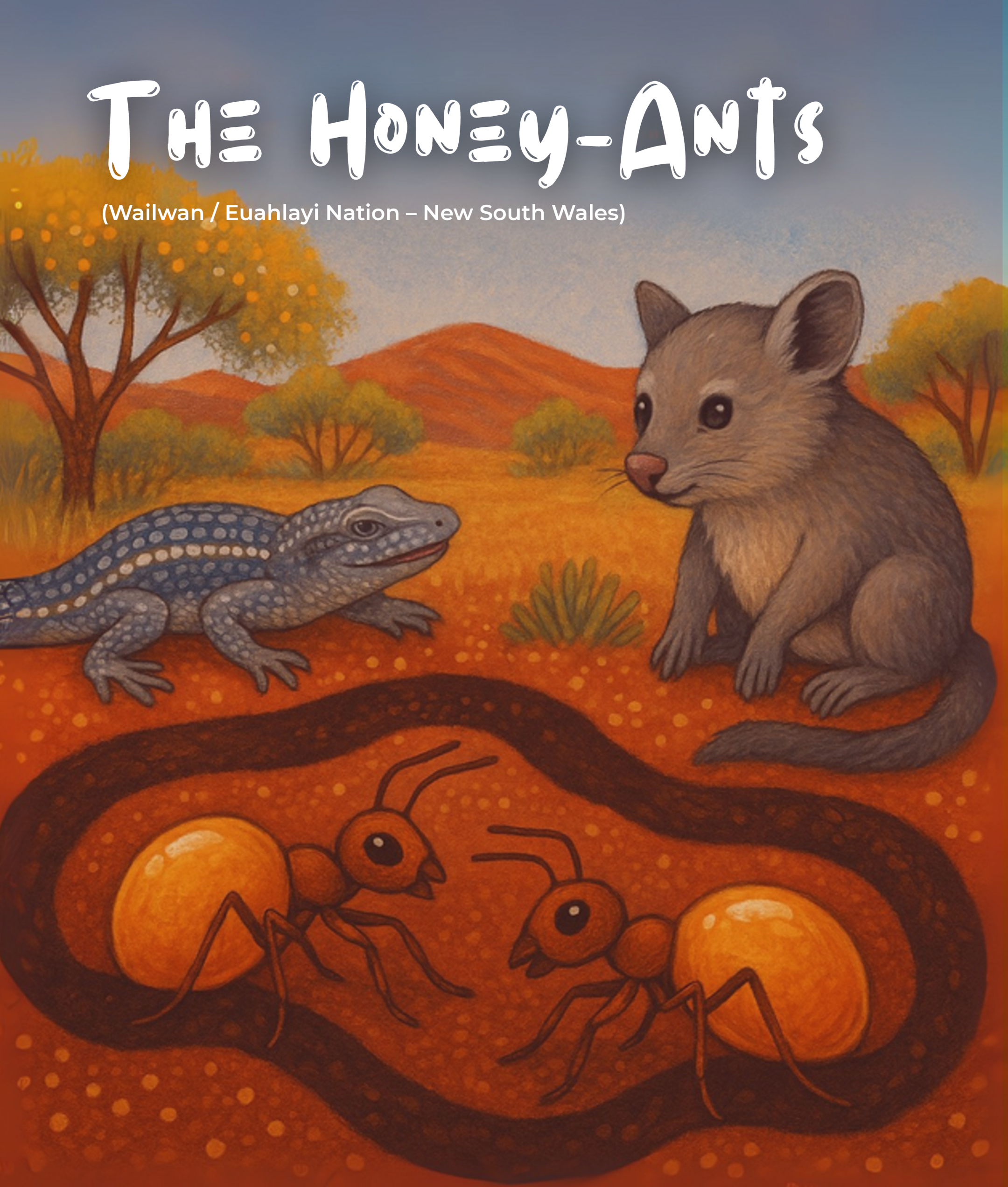
The Honey-Ants

(Wailwan / Euahlayi Nation – New South Wales)



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A long time ago, in the Dreaming, there lived the honey-ants. They were small, but they were clever and worked together under the red earth.

The honey-ants dug long, twisting tunnels. Some ants carried leaves, some guarded the entrances, and some grew fat with nectar. These ants stored the sweetness in their bellies, keeping it safe until the other ants needed food.

One hot day, Lizard came walking across the plain. He sniffed the ground and licked his lips.



“Mmm,” he said. “I smell something sweet. Who hides it from me?”

A small voice answered from under the soil. “It is us, the honey-ants. We are keeping the nectar safe for everyone, so that no one goes hungry.”

Lizard scratched at the dirt with his sharp claws. “Give it to me now! I want it for myself!”

But the honey-ants called back, “No. The sweetness is for sharing. Not just for you.”

Lizard grew cross. He dug and dug, but the ants worked together, pushing more soil into the tunnel. At last, Lizard gave up. With an angry snort, he stomped away.



Later that evening, Possum came by. She sniffed the ground and called softly, “Little honey-ants, will you share some sweetness with me?”

The ants answered kindly, “Yes, Possum. You ask with care, and you do not take more than you need.”

So they climbed up from their tunnels and offered drops of golden honey from their bellies. Possum licked the sweetness and smiled. “Thank you, little ones. I will always remember your kindness.”

From then on, the animals knew the honey-ants were not greedy. They kept their treasure safe so that everyone could share when times were dry.