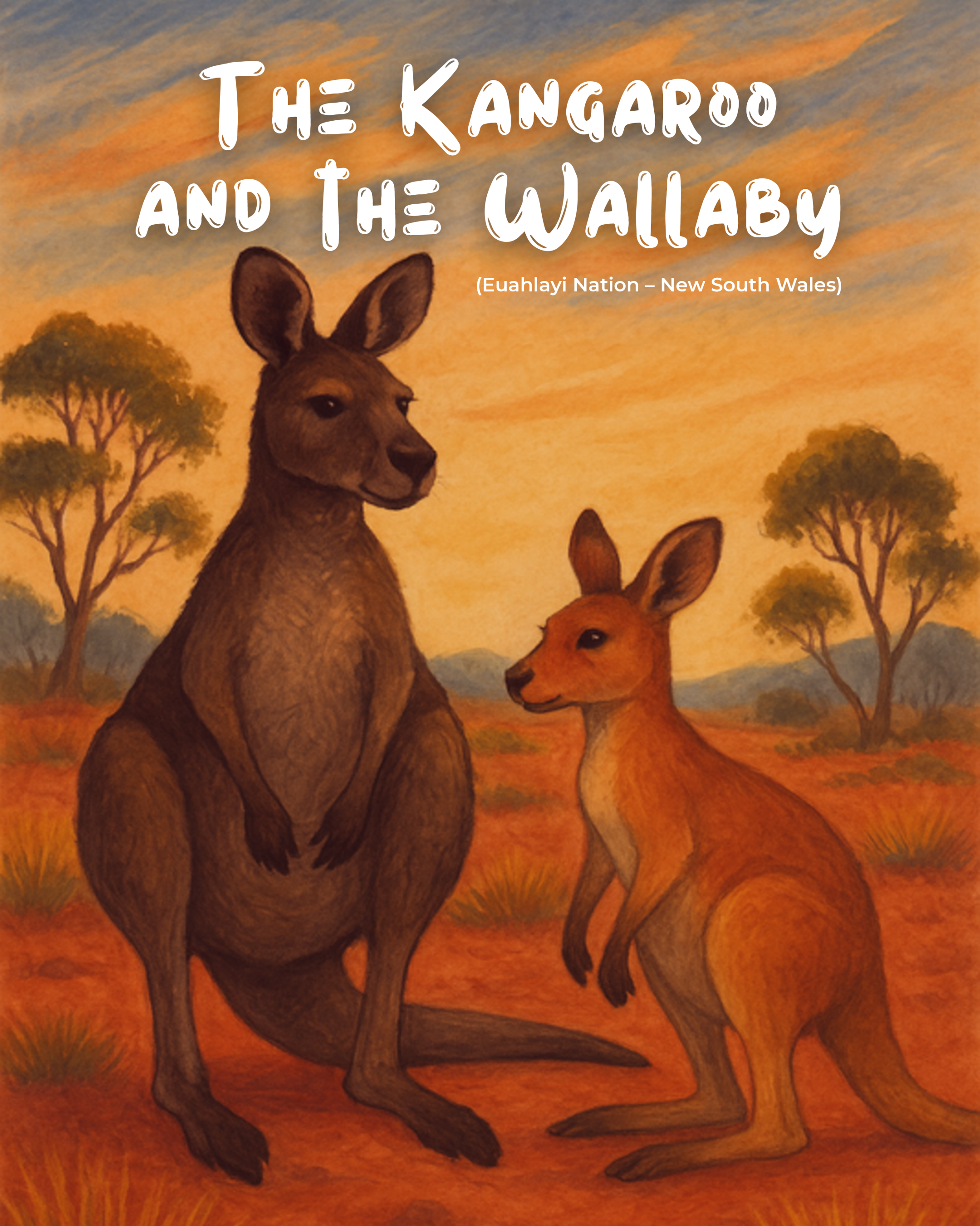
The Kangaroo and the Wallaby

(Euahlayi Nation – New South Wales)



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A long time ago, in the Dreaming, Kangaroo and Wallaby were friends. They lived side by side on the grassy plains, nibbling the sweet shoots, leaping among the rocks, and drinking together at the waterholes.
Though they were close, the two often quarrelled. Each wanted to be the best jumper, the fastest hopper, the most admired on the land.

One bright morning, Kangaroo stretched her long legs proudly. “Look at me!” she cried. “No one can leap as far as I. With my great legs, I can cross the plain in just a few bounds.”

Wallaby twitched his ears. “Ha! Your legs may be long, but mine are quick. I can twist and turn faster than you, darting through the bushes. That makes me better.”
Kangaroo stamped her foot. “Better? Let us see.”



The challenge

So Kangaroo and Wallaby decided to race. The news spread quickly. Soon the other animals came to watch.

Emu flapped her wings. “I will be the starter!” she said.
Possum climbed onto a branch to see better. Echidna waddled over, curious. Even Crow hopped from tree to tree, eager to witness the contest.

The animals gathered in a circle, chattering. “Who will win? Kangaroo with her long legs? Or Wallaby with his quick feet?”

Kangaroo tossed her head. “I will win.”
Wallaby flicked his tail. “Wait and see.”
“Ready?” called Emu. “One… two… three… go!”

The race begins

Off bounded Kangaroo, her long legs stretching far, covering the plain in huge leaps.

But Wallaby was swift. He darted this way and that, zig-zagging through the scrub, hopping over stones, and twisting between bushes.

The crowd cheered. “Kangaroo is ahead!” “No, Wallaby is gaining!”

Dust rose, tails flicked, paws thudded. Kangaroo’s leaps carried her far, but Wallaby’s quick hops kept him close.

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Neck and neck

Kangaroo panted, “See how far I leap! No one can match me.”
Wallaby gasped, “See how fast I twist! You cannot catch me.”
They bounded side by side, neither giving way. The finish line — a line of stones marked by Emu — grew closer and closer.

“Go, Kangaroo!” shouted Possum.
“Go, Wallaby!” cried Echidna.

At last, both leapt across the line together.
The crowd erupted in chatter.
“Who won?” asked Crow.
“They finished the same,” said Emu. “It is a draw.”



The quarrel grows

Kangaroo lifted her head. “I am the winner. My leaps are greater.”

Wallaby shook his ears. “No, I am the winner. My hops are quicker.”

“You are wrong!” snapped Kangaroo.
“No, you are wrong!” snapped Wallaby.
The animals looked from one to the other. Possum sighed. “You are both good. Kangaroo leaps far and strong. Wallaby hops quick and nimble. Each of you has your own gift.”

But Kangaroo and Wallaby only turned away, muttering. From that day, though they lived side by side on the land, they were no longer close friends. They still shared the plains, but they kept apart, each sure they were the better.

The lesson of Kangaroo and Wallaby

So the Euahlayi people tell the story of Kangaroo and Wallaby. It reminds children that quarrels can divide even friends, and that pride leads only to anger.

It also teaches that every creature has its own gift. Kangaroo leaps far across the plains, her long legs strong and steady. Wallaby twists quick among the rocks, his small legs nimble and light. Neither is greater. Each is different.
And when you see Kangaroo bounding high and Wallaby darting fast, you can remember this tale: that the land has room for both, and every gift has its place.