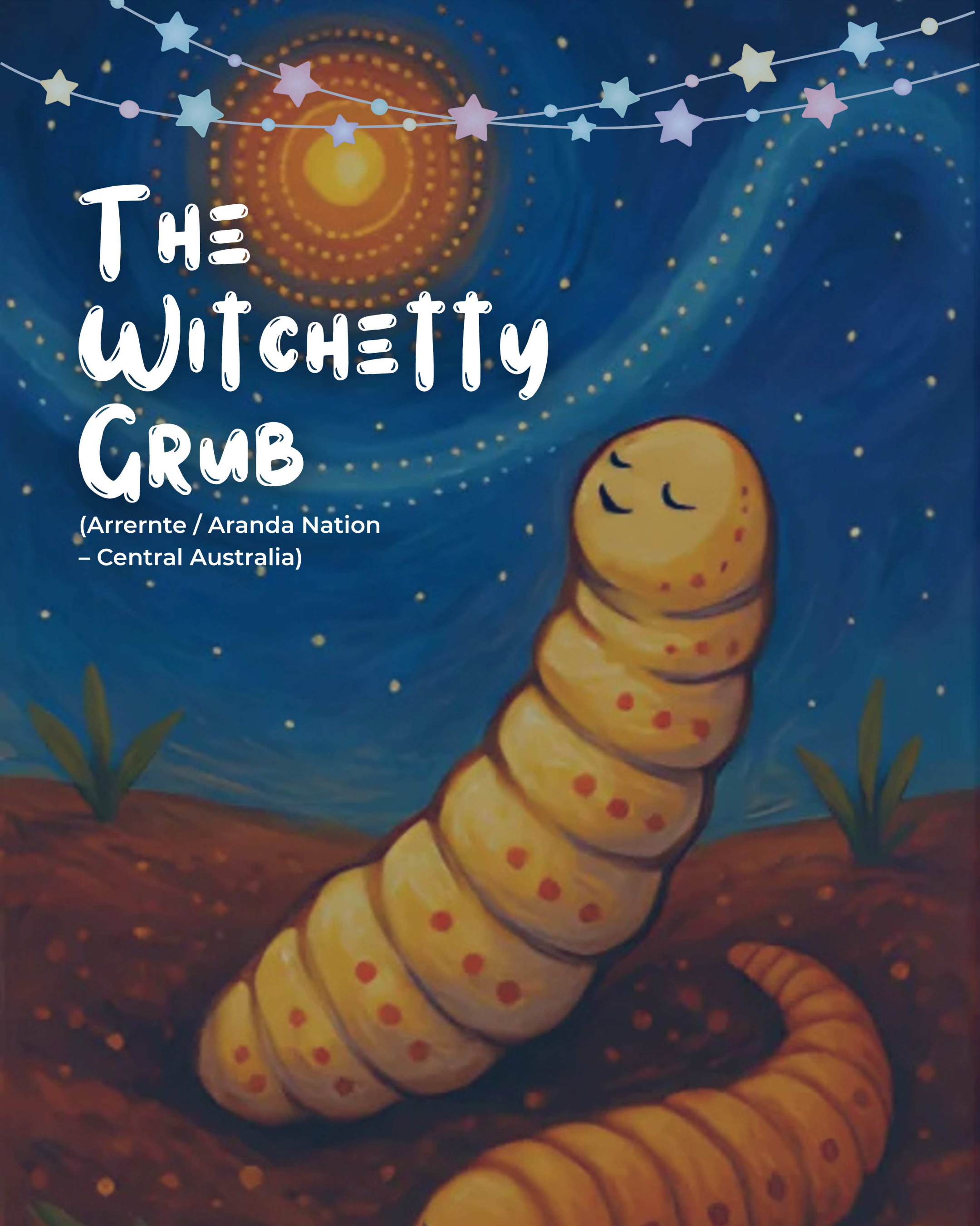




THE WITCHETTY GRUB

(Arrente / Aranda Nation
– Central Australia)

The Witchetty Grub

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A long time ago, in the Dreaming, the land was new and soft, and the ancestral beings were shaping the world. Among them was Witchetty Grub. He was not small as we see him today, but a great spirit ancestor, with the strength to carve paths and the wisdom to share food.

Witchetty Grub travelled across the red country. As he moved, he dug into the roots of the trees, leaving behind signs of his journey. Where he passed, the sweet grubs appeared in the roots of the witchetty bush, hidden safely under the bark. These became food for the people, a gift to keep them strong.

Grub's work

Witchetty Grub was tireless. Each morning, when the sun rose and painted the desert gold, he began to dig. He scraped with his body, carving hollows under the roots. He wriggled deep into the earth, leaving tracks where others would later find food.

Sometimes Kangaroo came by and watched. "Grub, why do you work so hard?" he asked.

Grub lifted his head. "The land must be full of food. The children will be hungry. I must leave something for them."

Kangaroo nodded slowly. "You are wise, Grub." And Kangaroo bounded away, leaving Grub to his work.

A greedy visitor

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The animals gather

Soon Kangaroo returned, and Emu with him. They saw Crow pecking greedily.

“Crow!” cried Emu. “Stop! This food is for everyone.”

“Greedy bird,” said Kangaroo. “You spoil the gift.”

Crow flapped his wings crossly. “I will do as I wish. Who can stop me?”

Witchetty Grub lifted his head from the soil. Though he was small, his voice was calm and firm.

“Crow,” he said, “if you eat more than your share, you will always be hungry. The grubs are many, but they must be shared.”

Crow ignored him and flew away with a full belly.

The lesson takes root

That evening, the animals gathered around Witchetty Grub. Possum climbed down from a tree and asked, “Will there be enough food for us?”

“Yes,” said Grub. “For wherever I have travelled, the grubs will grow. They will be here long after I am gone.”

“And what of Crow?” asked Echidna.

Grub smiled gently. “Crow will keep searching. He took too much, and still he is never satisfied. But those who share will always have enough.”

The animals nodded. They understood. From then on, they watched for the grubs in the roots of the witchetty bush, digging them carefully and sharing them among the camp.

The gift of Witchetty Grub

When at last Witchetty Grub’s journey ended, the land was full of food. His tracks had become sacred places, remembered in story and song. The people honoured him by eating the grubs he left, roasting them in the ashes, and sharing them with one another.

From that time until today, the witchetty grub has remained a food of the desert. Children still dig under the roots with their mothers, pulling out the fat white grubs. They taste the sweetness and remember the ancestor who gave it.

