

The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo

ACTOR THREE

The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo! Not always was the Kangaroo as now we do behold him, but a Different Animal with four short legs.

(Business: ACTOR TWO reveals himself as the KANGAROO.)

KANGAROO

He was grey and he was woolly, and his pride was inordinate; and he danced on an outcrop in the middle of Australia, and he went to the Big God Nqong.

(Business: knocking at NQONG's door.)

ACTOR THREE

He went to the Big God Nqong at six before breakfast, saying,

KANGAROO

"Make me different from all other animals by five this afternoon."

ACTOR THREE

Up jumped Nqong from his seat on the sand-flat and shouted,

NQONG

(off)

"Go away!"

KANGAROO

He was grey and he was woolly, and his pride was inordinate: so he danced on the outcrop in the middle of Australia,

(Dance business.)

ACTOR THREE

And he went back to the Big God Nqong at eight after breakfast, saying,

(Business: more knocking.)

KANGAROO

"Make me different from all other animals; make me, also, wonderfully popular by five this afternoon."

ACTOR THREE

Up jumped Nqong from his burrow in the spinifex and shouted,

NQONG

(off)

"Go away!"

KANGAROO

He was grey and he was woolly, and his pride was inordinate; so he danced on the outcrop in the middle of Australia,

ACTOR THREE

And he went back to the Big God Nqong at ten before dinner-time, saying,

(More business: still more knocking. ACTOR THREE exits, to change costumes.)

KANGAROO

"Make me different from all other animals; make me popular and wonderfully run after by five this afternoon."

NQONG

(off)

Up jumped Nqong from his bath in the salt-pan and shouted,

(THE GREAT GOD NQONG finally appears: garish Polynesian garb, too many leis, a wooden drum, possibly a Carmen Miranda fruit hat.)

NQONG

"Yes, I will!"

KANGAROO

[Ad-lib: "You will? You'll make me different from all the other animals?" "By five this afternoon!"]

NQONG

Nqong called Dingo --

(Enter YELLOW-DOG DINGO.)

DINGO

Yellow-Dog Dingo!

(Business: DINGO'S ad-lib over-friendly greeting of the audience; DINGO exhausts himself, collapses in sleep.)

[NQONG

"Dingo! Wake up, Dingo!"
 (encourages audience's help)
 "One, two three - Wake up, Dingo!"

(Business: DINGO wakes.)]

NQONG

Do you see that gentleman dancing on the ashpit? He wants to be popular and very truly run after. Dingo, make him so!"

DINGO

Up jumped Dingo --

NQONG

Yellow-Dog Dingo

DINGO

"What, *that* cat-rabbit?" Off ran Dingo --

NQONG

Yellow-Dog Dingo --

DINGO

Always hungry, grinning like a coal-scuttle --

NQONG

ran after Kangaroo.

KANGAROO

Off went the proud Kangaroo on his four little legs like a bunny.

(Business: during the following, DINGO chases KANGAROO around the playing area, getting themselves entangled with NQONG. There are several options here for text: you might discover that no dialogue is necessary due to the enthusiasm of the audience's encouragement. Or, you can use a combination of text and/or chasing.)

NQONG

He ran through the desert;

KANGAROO

He ran through the mountains;

He ran through the salt-pans;
NQONG

ran through the reed-beds;
KANGAROO

ran through the blue-gums;
NQONG

ran through the spinifex; he ran till his front legs ached.
KANGAROO

He had to!
ALL

Still ran Dingo --
DINGO

Yellow-Dog Dingo --
NQONG

always hungry, grinning like a rat-trap,
DINGO

never getting nearer,
NQONG

never getting farther, -- ran after Kangaroo.]
DINGO

(Business: Chase through the audience. [First, KANGAROO hides and DINGO can't find him without the audience's help. Then KANGAROO hides, DINGO finds him and executes a long, protected "sneak-up". Lastly, KANGAROO follows directly on DINGO's heels, mocking his gestures and cries for help, until DINGO finally turns around, at long last recognizes the KANGAROO, and the two scramble back to the main playing area.]

And they came to the Wollgong River.
ALL

(NQONG spreads out a "river" and stands on the opposite shore. DINGO approaches KANGAROO, sure of his prey at last.)

The river! I know, I'll use the bridge!] [KANGAROO

Now, there wasn't any bridge. NQONG

I know, I'll use the ferry-boat!] [KANGAROO

And there wasn't any ferry-boat, and Kangaroo didn't know how to get over. NQONG

(KANGAROO pleads for help from the audience, as DINGO nears.)

(to the audience) [KANGAROO
How am I going to get over? (. . .) Hop? Good idea! So he stood on his legs and hopped.

(KANGAROO jumps to safety over the river, just as DINGO moves in for the kill.)

KANGAROO
Hey, it worked! Thanks!] He hopped like a Kangaroo. First he hopped one yard;

(KANGAROO tries out his new longer legs, as DINGO scurries back and forth in dismay.)

KANGAROO
Then he hopped three yards. Then he hopped five yards, his legs growing stronger;

His legs growing longer. NQONG

KANGAROO
He hadn't any time for rest or refreshment, and he wanted them very much.

DINGO
Still ran Dingo --

NQONG
Yellow-Dog Dingo --

DINGO
Very much bewildered,

very much hungry,
NQONG

DINGO
and wondering what in the world or out of it made Old Man Kangaroo hop. For he hopped like a cricket;

NQONG
Like a pea in a saucepan;

DINGO
or a new rubber ball on a nursery floor.

ALL
He had to!

KANGAROO
He tucked up his front legs; he hopped on his hind legs; he stuck out his tail for a balance-weight behind him; and he hopped through the Darling Downs.

ALL
He had to!

DINGO
Down sat Dingo --

KANGAROO
Poor-Dog Dingo --

(Business: DINGO collapses in exhaustion.)

DINGO
Hung out his tongue and howled.

NQONG
Then said Nqong, who is always a gentleman, "Why aren't you grateful to Yellow-Dog Dingo? Why don't you thank him for all he has done for you?"

KANGAROO
"He's altered my shape so I'll never get it back!"

[NQONG
(to audience)
"Perhaps I'm mistaken, but didn't he ask me to make him different from all other animals? As well as to make him very truly run after? By what time? And now it is five o'clock."]

KANGAROO

"Yes," said Kangaroo, "I wish that I hadn't. I thought you would do it by charms and incantations, but this is a practical joke."

NQONG

"Joke!" said Nqong. "Say that again and I'll whistle up Dingo and run your hind legs off."

(Business: DINGO attempts to rise.)

KANGAROO

"No," said Kangaroo, "I must apologize. Legs are legs, and you needn't alter 'em so far as I'm concerned. I only meant to explain to your Lordliness that I've nothing to eat since morning, and I'm very empty indeed."

DINGO

"Yes," said Dingo --

NQONG

Yellow-Dog Dingo --

DINGO

"I am just in the same situation. I made him different from all other animals. but what may I have for my tea?"

NQONG

Then said Nqong from his bath in the salt-pan, "Come and ask me about it tomorrow, because I'm going to wash."

(Exit NQONG, taking the river with him.)

DINGO & KANGAROO

And they were left in the middle of Australia,

KANGAROO

Old Man Kangaroo

DINGO

and Yellow-Dog Dingo, and each said,

DINGO & KANGAROO

"That is the end of *that* tale!"

(DINGO and KANGAROO bow. KANGAROO exits for costume changes. Business: DINGO continues to bow and solicit applause from the audience until ACTOR TWO returns to begin the following transition. The other ACTORS soon join in. Dance.)

ALL

One-two-three-four, two-two-three-four, three-two-three four, four-two-three

We haven't a kangaroo-y tune
 Roo-y tune, to sing for you
 But every hop's a leg tromboon
 Roo-y tune, a leg tromboon!
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-a!
 Hop a yard! (Can't! Don't!)
 Hop a yard! (Shan't! Won't!)
 Till the great god came along
 Hop a yard! (Urr! Woww!)
 Hop a yard! (Grr! Rrowwh!)
 Huzzah for Dingo and Nqong!

Rtt-ta-ta-ta
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-a!
 We haven't a kangaroo-y tune
 Roo-y tune, to sing for you
 But every hop's a leg tromboon
 Roo-y tune, a leg tromboon!
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta
 Rtt-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-a!

Now, here's our final tale
 About a painted jaguar
 And tortoise and hedgehog
 In times both high and far.