

# Maui and the Sun

## A Hawaiian Myth

The sun god raced across the sky each day. He traveled so fast that people didn't have time to finish their work in the daylight. They couldn't grow enough food because there wasn't the right amount of warm sun. They were always hungry and ill-tempered.

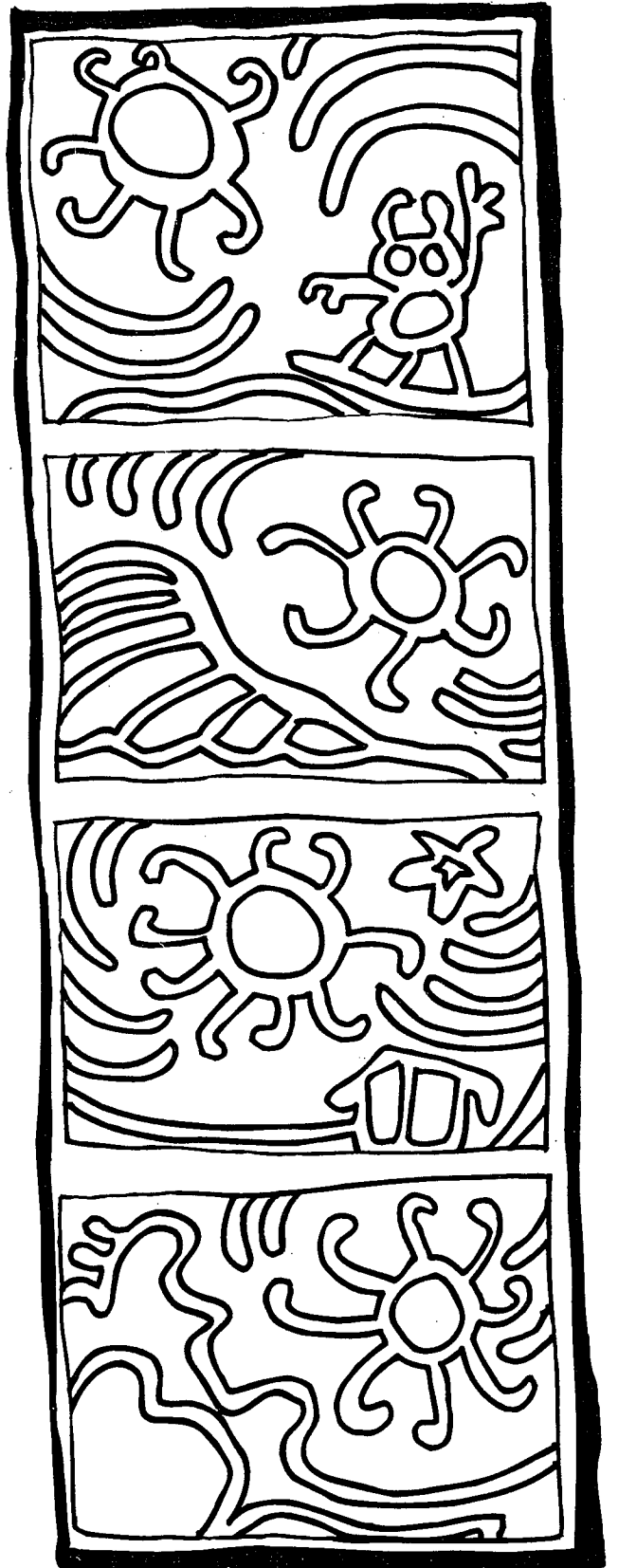
Maui's mother, Hina-of-the-Fire, complained because the days were too short. Besides cleaning and cooking, she made tapa cloth from the bark of mulberry trees. It took months to make the cloth because she could work only when the sun was in the sky. She had to soak the bark and pound it into thin cloth. Then she pasted the strips of bark together. The tapa cloth had to dry before she could make sleeping mats and clothing.

People prayed to the sun god and asked him to slow down. But the sun moved so fast, he didn't have time to answer.

"Why does the sun hurry?" asked Maui. "He should take his time and enjoy the beauty of the Earth."

"And why do fish live in the sea?" asked Hina-of-the-Fire. "It's because they've always lived there. It will always be that way. It's the same with the sun. He travels fast because he always has. He won't change. He will do what pleases him."

"I will capture him and make him move more slowly," Maui said. "Then everyone will be much happier."



"How will you capture the sun? If you go that close, the sun will burn you. No one can change the sun god's ways."

"I must try," said Maui.

Maui walked up the slope of a bubbling volcano and looked toward the east where the sun rose out of the water each morning. He waited until the sun god climbed overhead.

"Can you walk slowly today, Great Sun, so the fishermen can repair their nets before they go out to sea?" Maui asked.

The sun let off a fiery glow and hurried on his way without answering.

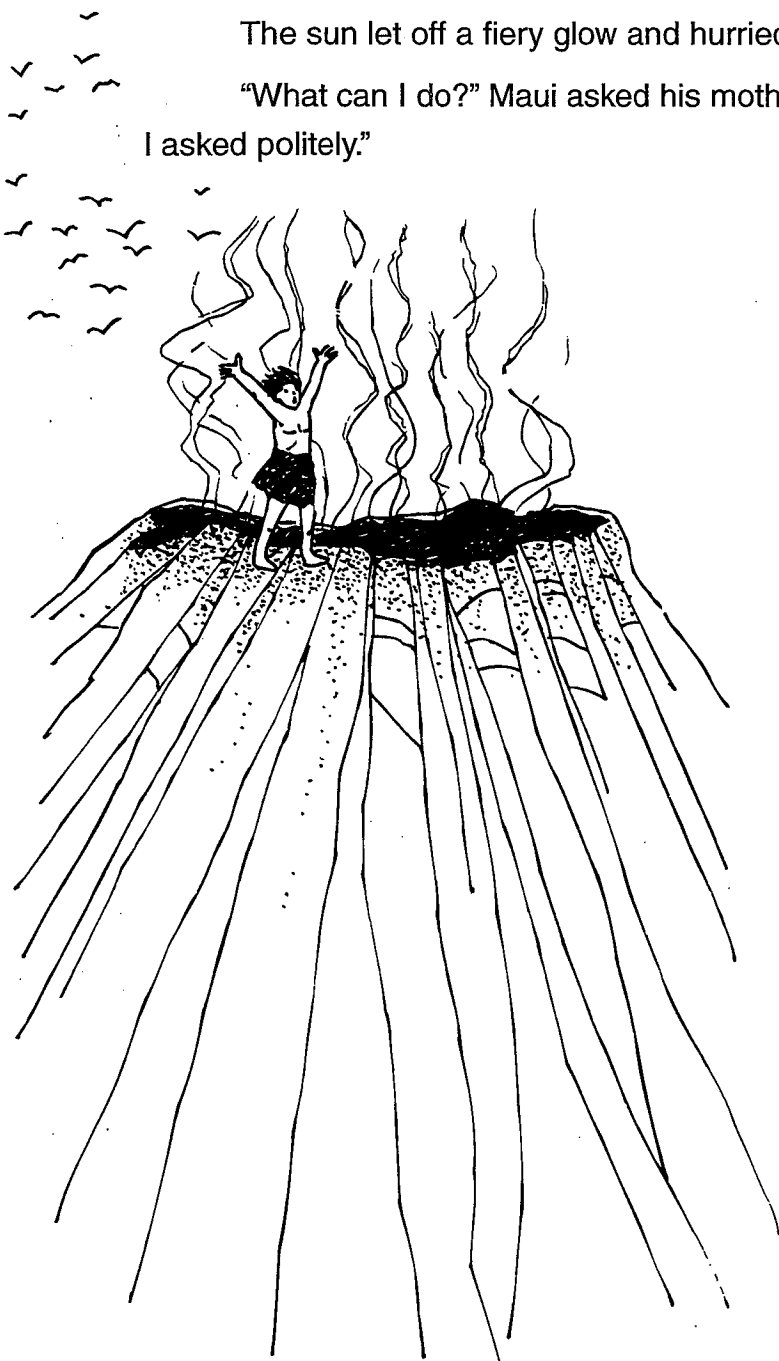
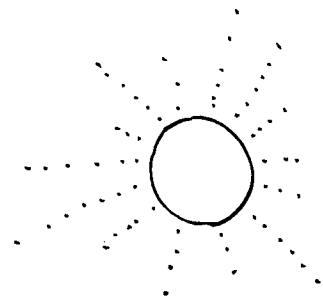
"What can I do?" Maui asked his mother. "The sun didn't listen when I asked politely."

"I don't know how to change the sun. Go to your grandmother—the one who prepares breakfast for the sun god. She sets out an offering of fruit for him each morning. Maybe she will know what to do."

Maui went to his grandmother's house. "Venerable Grandmother, I've come to ask you to help me capture the sun. He moves so quickly, there isn't enough daylight. People can't finish their work."

"No man or god has been able to slow the sun. Why do you think you are worthy of this task?" his grandmother asked.

To show her how clever he was, Maui drew a rainbow across the sky. He brought rain and lightning. Birds flew through the air and sang his praises.



"If you can change the sky, you might be able to change the sun," Maui's grandmother said. "Listen carefully. Ask Hina-of-the-Sea for some of her hair, and gather plant fibers. Twist the hair and fibers together to make a strong net."

After Maui prepared the net, Maui's grandmother showed him how to set a trap for the rays of the sun. She helped him tie the net to the roots of a giant tree. Then she handed him a magic ax to use as a weapon. Maui hid near the place where the sun came for breakfast.

When the first ray of the sun reached for the fruit, it became trapped in the net. As each ray climbed out of the sea, it was entangled. Maui closed the net when the sun was caught inside it.

The sun struggled to free himself. "Who dares to stop the sun?" he bellowed. "I am the greatest god of earth and sky!"

"I am Maui. You have behaved badly. You don't listen to the people. You must move slowly so the day is as long as night. Then people will have time to finish their work before dark."

The sun scorched Maui and tried to burn everything around him. "Let me go, or I will burn whatever is in my way!"

Maui beat the sun with the magic ax his grandmother had given him. The sun cried out, "Stop! You are hurting me. I will do what you ask, but if I travel slowly every day, I won't have enough time to rest."

"Would you agree to go slowly one-half of the year and travel at your own speed the rest of the time?" Maui asked. "That way the people will have what they want and so will you."

The sun agreed to the bargain. Now there are long days in the summer so people have time to finish their work and plants have time to grow. In the winter there are long nights so there is more time to rest.

