



MAUI CATCHES THE SUN

Our days weren't always long, the sun - Te Ra, used to come up in the morning and then he'd race across the sky and disappear behind the western hills again. He was always in a big hurry! The children never had time to play and they moaned and cried so bitterly that it made the grown-ups grumpy too! The women grumbled that Te Ra sped by so fast and that people never had time to do anything, the children were very unhappy, plants wouldn't grow properly and the men had no time to hunt for food! All the people moaned...VERY LOUDLY!

Maui listened to the children cry and to the people complaining and said loudly, "I'll go to Te Ra! I'll tell him to slow down!" Everyone was happy with this, but the wise old women of the tribe knew that Te Ra wasn't very easy to persuade, so at dawn the next day they gathered harakeke (flax) to plait a very special rope for Maui to use. While the women plaited, Maui chanted to make the rope strong and magical. Then when it was done he went to the strongest men of the tribe and asked them if they would go with him and catch the sun. They all agreed and as dusk fell they set off towards the east travelling in the dark so that Te Ra wouldn't see them coming.

When Te Ra came out for the day, Maui and the men hid under logs and fern to sleep. As Te Ra dropped behind the western hills and the sky became dark once more they began to walk again. It took a long time for them to reach the very edge of the world and find the huge hole that Te Ra leapt out of every morning...but they did!

The hole was well hidden but when they found it they quickly set a trap with the special rope and began their patient wait for Te Ra. The ground around the hole started to feel warmer and began to glow red. Dawn was approaching quickly. Te Ra was coming! Maui began to chant a powerful karakia to protect the warriors and himself against the tremendous heat. The light grew brighter and brighter and suddenly...Te Ra leapt out of the hole! "Pull!" shouted Maui, and he and the men pulled the net quickly over the astonished sun. "Aue! What are you doing?" roared Te Ra, "Set me free! Set me free!" The men struggled and struggled with Te Ra's might as he twisted and turned in the net. "Hold on tight men!" shouted Maui.

Maui leapt forward and began to beat the angry sun with his mere. Te Ra screamed with pain and frustration. "Whoever you are I demand that stop hitting me and let me go immediately!" "NO!" Shouted Maui to the strong



men still holding on to the net. The sun writhed in agony. "Why do you do this to me? Why do you beat Tama-nui-a-te-ra (Tama-a-nui-Ra)?" "It's because you run across the sky so fast, there isn't enough time or light in the day for anything! If you promise to go slower, we'll set you free!"

"Why should I make my travel across the sky so much longer, just for you?" replied the selfish sun. "The night is so long that the fishermen can't fish, the hunters can't hunt, the women have no time to do their work...and we're all sick of the children crying!" and with that Maui started beating him again! Te Ra struggled but he couldn't escape Maui's mighty blows. "Ae! Ae! Stop! Alright, I'll go more slowly, I promise!" Maui lowered his mere, "Okay then. If you break your promise the men and I will be back!" The men let go of the ropes and Te Ra rose slowly, too weak and sore to rush anymore.

When the happy men returned home they heard the children laughing instead of crying and saw the women weaving many beautiful baskets and best of all, there was fresh fish for their hungry bellies. Everyone was happy because of the longer days and they thanked Maui and the brave warrior. But every now and then, Te Ra speeds up his pace across the sky and the days become shorter, then he remembers his promise and slows down to make the long warm days of summer.