



as retold by Ann McCutchan

A long time ago, on a lush green volcano island in the Pacific sea, lived Maui, a young hero, a fisherman, son of Hina-a-ke-ahi, Hina of the fire. Maui had magic powers....

Once, the sky hung so low that people bumped their heads on the clouds, so Maui leaned his shoulder to the sky and pushed it up, higher than the mountains. Another time, Maui went fishing using a hook hung with feathers of the [Alae](#) bird, and caught the islands of Hawaii -- pulled them up from the ocean, all in a string.

This is the story of how Maui captured the Sun -- snared him, beam by shining beam, and caused the summer and winter seasons and became known as the Spreader of Light.

Maui and his mother, Hina, lived in a cave near an ancient volcano, not far from a golden beach. Every day, Hina pounded out wet bark cloth (called [kapa](#)) on a long wooden board, and cooked food while Maui fished, casting his nets wide into the sea. And every day, the sun raced across the sky so fast that Hina could not finish her work.

"Why is the sun in such a hurry?" she complained to Maui. "The [kapa](#) won't dry, and the [kalo](#) and sweet potatoes are withering. What can we do?"

Maui thought and thought. The longer he thought, the angrier he got. "I'll show the Sun who's [luna](#) here!"

But Hina knew the great power of the sun. "If you want to tame him," she told Maui, "You will need the help of Mahuie, your grandmother. When night comes, go to Haleakala, the mountain called House of the Sun. At dawn, a rooster will crow three times, and your grandmother will place an offering of bananas at the chasm where the Sun first shines."

"[Elemio!](#) Snatch the bananas! Mahuie will be angry, but she loves a clever boy. She will tell you what to do."

Maui set out for Haleakala, and hid in a [Wiliwili](#) tree nearby. In the morning, the rooster crowed, and Mahuie emerged with a bunch of bananas, yellow as the Sun himself.

When she turned her back, Maui grabbed the fruit.

Mahuie brought more...and Maui took them, too!

"Who's stealing my bananas?" shouted the old woman, shaking her fist.

Maui peered out from behind the [Wiliwili](#) tree. "It's your grandson, Maui" he announced. "Will you help me make the Sun go slower?"

His grandmother sighed. "I know what a mischief-maker you are," she said. "All right -- I will tell you what to do. To start, you must make sixteen ropes. The strongest ropes ever made. Each rope must have a noose made of the hair of your sister, Hina-of-the-Sea."

Maui scurried off. First, he shinnied up a palm tree, and pulled thick fibers from coconut husks to braid the rope. Then he dove down deep into the sea, and plucked hair straight out of his sister's head. Using needles of the Silversword plant, Maui began to weave the ropes and nooses.

When he finished, his grandmother clapped her hands. "Good!" she said. "Now take my magic axe, and you are ready to challenge the Sun!"

It was night time when Maui crouched near the edge of Haleakala and carefully set his nooses. All was dark and quiet. But just as he was beginning to doze off...

...He heard the loud screech of the rooster. The wind burst through the chasm, the earth began to crackle with warmth. And there, advancing slowly through the chasm, like the tentacle of an octopus, stretched the first ray of the Sun, groping among the trees, lighting the green-silver shoots of [Hinahina](#) ...

...Until it stepped right into the first noose! The golden beam flashed with surprise, but it was too late -- the Sun could not cease his majestic roll across Haleakala.

A second sun-leg reached slowly into its trap, then a third, and a fourth --

Finally, the sixteenth leg heaved itself brilliantly over the mountain, and sank into the last noose with a mighty explosion.

Hunks of fire flew everywhere. The sky was bright with sparks. The Sun was burning mad!

Maui sprang up, laughing, and reeled in all the ropes, and tied them snugly to the [Wiliwili](#) tree.

The Sun flared furiously, roaring a battle cry loud and hot as bursting lava. "*Let -- me -- go!!*" the Sun screamed, spitting boiling fireworks that scorched Maui's skin.

The boy fell back, terrified. Then he remembered the magic axe, and was determined to win. "You'll do as I say," he cried, waving the axe. And with a long leap forward, Maui punched the Sun with his weapon. He struck again and again.

Until finally, slowly, the Sun began to dim -- little by little -- until he barely glowed. "All right, Maui," muttered the Sun, with a dull flicker. "What do you want?"

Maui was triumphant! "This is what I want, Sun. From now on, you must move more slowly across the sky, so the fruits and vegetables can grow ripe, and my mother can bask and work in your light."

This command irritated the Sun, who chafed indignantly at his ropes, scattering little embers all around Haleakala. "Hnnhhh," he groaned, "What about just SOME of the time?"

And Maui, delighted with his victory (and feeling some remorse for his trick), agreed the Sun could go fast six months of the year, and slow the other six months, making the winter and summer seasons of the Pacific Islands.

"Now that we've settled this," the Sun wailed, "will you let me free?"

The next morning, the exhausted Sun slept very late, and entered the chasm timidly, warming the ground slowly, being careful to avoid the ropes that lay strewn about. "Why is your trap still here?" he grumbled softly at Maui.

The young hero, who was weary from fighting and cold from sleeping by the mountain, smiled when he felt the delicate heat of his former foe. "O Sun, ...Old Sun," he chanted happily. "As the tides change and the winds blow, the traps will loosen and lighten and float like clouds."

"Even so -- in Winter and Summer, the rope shadows will mark the sand as signatures, recalling our vow of harmony between earth and sky."

If you have internet access, check out the video at:

<https://oiwi.tv/keiki/why-maui-snared-the-sun/>

It's a slightly different version. Think about how the two mo'olelo are different.