The Vanishing Sun

When Jaguars Ate the Moon - Toba Nation, South America

Have YOU ever wondered why - the Moon sometimes looks red in the sky? Maybe you have never seen it, maybe you have never thought to look?

But sometimes - when there is what we call a lunar eclipse - the Moon looks red in the sky. Because - when the Moon moves into the Earth's shadow, the Sun's rays are blocked from reaching the Moon. Only some the Sun's light which can sneak around the sides of the Earth, can reach the Moon. And these rays of light are red, which makes the Moon turn bright red, as if it were covered in blood. At least that is the scientists say...

But the people of Toba - they say something different!

Long ago when the world began, long before there was the country called Peru ...

The people of Toba lived in the Amazon rainforest that covered the land beneath the tall tall mountains we call The Andes.

The Toba people thought that the Moon was an pot-bellied old man. On the night of the dark Moon, when no Moon is visible in the Sky. The Toba people used to say that the Old Man Moon was off hunting for food. Once he returns from his hunting and begins to eat his food - then he grows fatter and fatter and fatter in the Sky. Until of course he begins to run out of food! And then - he starts to get slimmer and slimmer and thinner and thinner - until all the food has gone. And then he has to go hunting again! And that is why the Old Man Moon changes shape every night - depending on how much food he has eaten.

One night ...

When the old Moon Man was full of food and shining bright with contentment - as you do after a good meal. Down on Earth, all was quiet in the forest for everyone was asleep. Everyone that is - EXCEPT for the Jaguars! The fastest and fiercest cats in the whole of the Amazon forest! The Jaguars were so hungry - they had not caught any food for days. They looked at the Moon ...

The old Man Moon, he looked very tasty up there in the Sky! The Jaguars licked their lips hungrily, the Jaguars flexed their claws carefully. The Jaguars looked at one another, and then up to the sky, and slowly their tails began to twitch, to and fro, to and fro ... And then they crouched and then they leapt! Up into the air and onto the staircase of stars!

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They leapt from star to star, to star, closer and closer and closer to the old Man Moon. And then they crouched and then they pounced! And bit the poor old Moon Man on his nose! Ouch! And it hurt - very much!

**OUCH!** cried the Moon as the blood ran down his nose and all over his body. **OUCH ouch ouch, ouch, OUCH**

The people of Toba woke up!
What was that noise?
They ran outside, they saw the Moon glowing red, they saw the Jaguars trying to eat him!
They had to help!
They ran back inside, grabbed their pots and pans and ran back out again.
And began banging their pots and pans with a spoon, beating a rhythm as loudly as they could.

**Ba, ba, ba, ba, boom, ba, ba ba boom!**
**Ba, ba, ba, ba, boom, ba, ba ba boom!**
**Ba, ba, ba, ba, boom, ba, ba ba boom!**

The little children hit the smaller pans, the elder people beat the great big pans
And together they beat:

**Ba, ba, ba, boom, ba, ba ba boom!**
**Ba, ba, ba, ba boom, ba, ba ba boom!**
**Ba, ba, ba, ba boom, ba, ba ba boom!**

They made SUCH a fearful noise

**Ba, ba, ba, ba boom, ba, ba, ba boom!**
**Ba, ba, ba, ba boom, ba, ba ba boom!**
**Ba, ba, ba, ba boom, ba, ba ba boom!**

The noise was so loud the Jaguars were - terrified!
And they let go of the Moon! And they slid all the way back down to Earth!
And slunk back into the forest with their beautiful tails between their beautiful legs!
The Toba people went back to sleep.
BUT if ever the Moon turns red - they know what to do!
They grab their pots, they grab their pans, they grab their spoons and they:

**Ba, ba, ba, ba boom, ba, ba, ba boom!**
**Ba, ba, ba, ba boom, ba, ba, ba boom!**

And THAT is why the Moon turns red - whenever the Jaguars grow hungry and want to be fed!
Or at least that is what I was told!

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Stealing the Sun - Korea, Asia

Long ago .... according to Korean legend,
there were many, many worlds spinning across the Sky
One of those worlds was OUR world, the Planet Earth.
The Planet Earth was special - because above our planet,
the Sun shone all through the day and the Moon was bright all through the night.
And our planet was surrounded with shining, sparkling light, day and night.

And so our world, the Planet Earth, was called - the world of light.
DUT - what about the other worlds?
There was one world, far across the Sky, a long, long way from Earth,
that had NO Sun and had NO Moon - it had no light at all!
And this world was called - the world of darkness.

And as for all the animals and all of the people living on the world of darkness
Well - as you can imagine - it was very difficult!
Nobody could see where they were going!
And they kept bumping into things - all the time!
One day, rabbit was hopping along and hopping along and he hit his nose upon a rock:
PENG!
And it hurt: Ouch!
And rabbit was cross: Enough is enough - we need some light!
One day, tiger was walking along and walking along and he hit his nose upon a tree:
PENG!
And it hurt: Oo. Ouch!
And tiger was very cross: Enough is enough - we need some light!
One day, eagle was flying along and flying along and he hit his nose against a mountain:
PENG!
And it hurt! Oo.Ouch. Oo!
And Eagle was very, very cross! Enough is enough - we need some light!

So - all the animals and all the people gathered together and they all agreed:
Enough is enough! We need some light!
So - they marched to see their King.
Enough is enough! We need some light!
Enough is enough! We need some light!
Enough is enough! We need some light!

Now, it so happened that the King of Darkness had a dog, who loved the King very much.
This dog would do anything for the King! And he could run as fast as the wind.
So - when the people of the land of darkness came to ask for some light:
The King had an idea! He would send his dog to steal some!
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The King looked into the distance and saw the Sun shining over our planet Earth and he thought: **Ahah! That is what I want!**
The King turned to the Dog.
He pointed the Sun!
And the King said: **Fetch me the Sun!**
**WOOF** said the Dog **Yes master!**

So the huge dog galloped across the dark sky, his great big feet slapping against the air.

**Gdom, gdom, Gdom! Gdom, gdom, Gdom!**

It was such a long way!

**Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, gdom, Gdom!**

He began to grow tired:

**Gdom, gdom, Gdom! Huh, huh, huh!**
**Gdom, dgdom, ggdom! Huh, huh, huh!**

It was so far! But he kept on going!

**Gdom, gdom gdom! Gdom, gdom, Gdom!**

And - as he got closer and closer and closer to the Sun, the air grew hotter and hotter and hotter! The dog began to pant in the heat:

**Phew, phew, phew!**

**Gdom, gdom, gdom! Phew, phew, phew!**
**Gdom, gdom, gdom! Phew, phew, phew!**

It was so hot! But he kept on going! He had to do what the King had asked!

**Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, gdom, gdom!**

Until at last - he reached the Sun!

The Dog opened his great mouth and took a huge bite! **Ohm!**
And it hurt! **Owwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!**
The Sun was so hot - it burnt his mouth! **Owwwwwwwwwwwwwww!**

He closed his jaws around the Sun and began to pull it back through the Sky
Meanwhile on the planet Earth - the people saw their Sun begin to disappear!
It grew dark ...
The Vanishing Sun

What is happening to our Sun?  
Someone is trying to steal it!  
Quick - we must scare them away!

And they grabbed their drums and began to drum:

Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng! Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng! 
Peng, peng, peng, peng - peng, peng, peng, peng, peng!

Up in the sky - the poor dog heard the noise:

Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng! Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng! 
Peng, peng, peng, peng - peng, peng, peng, peng, peng!

And it hurt! Owwwww!  
His ears began to hurt.  
His mouth hurt, his ears hurt. and so he realised - he could not do it!  
He could not steal the Sun! And so the Dog - let go!  
And the poor dog whimpered all way home

Whine, whine whine, whine, whine!

Gdom, gdom.gdom! Whine, whine, whine, whine, whine! Gdom, gdom,gdom!

By the time he got back to the land of darkness, his mouth hurt, his ears hurt and his paws hurt - everything hurt! Whine!

He galloped up to his king and flopped down at his feet  
And the dog said: Whine, whine, whine, whine, whine!  
Very sorry, I could not do it! The Sun is just too hot!

And the King was furious!  
What! What? What!  
You have disobeyed my command!  
Too hot! Too hot? Too hot!  
This is NOT good enough - you must try again!

The King looked once more into the distance.  
And now he could see the Moon shining over the Planet Earth!  
The King turned to the Dog, he pointed to the Moon and he said:  
Fetch me the Moon!

WOOF said the Dog YES master!
The Vanishing Sun

So the huge dog galloped across the dark sky,
his huge feet slapping against the air

Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, gdom, gdom!

It was such a long way!

Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, dgdom.gdom! Gdom, dgdom, gdom!

He began to grow tired:

Huh, huh, huh!

Gdom, gdom, gdom! Huh, huh, huh!
Gdom, dgdom,gdom! Gdom, dgdom, gdom!

It was so far! But he kept on going! And, as he got closer and closer and closer to the Moon, the air grew colder and colder and colder! And the Dog began to shiver

Brr, Brr, Brr!

Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, dgdom,gdom! Brr, Brr, Brrr!
Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, dgdom,gdom! Gdom, dgdom, gdom! Brr, Brr, Brrr!

It was so cold! But he kept on going! He had to do what the King had asked!
Until at last he reached the Moon!
He opened his great mouth and took a huge bite! Ohm!
And it hurt! Owwwwwwwwwwwww!
The Moon was so cold - it burnt his mouth! Owwwwwwwwwwwww!

But - he closed his jaws around the Moon and began to pull it back through the Sky.
Meanwhile, on Earth - the people saw their Moon begin to disappear!

What is happening to our Moon?
Someone is trying to steal it!
Quick - we must scare them away!

And, once again - they grabbed their drums and began:

Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng! Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng!
Peng, peng, peng, peng - peng, peng, peng, peng, peng!

Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng! Peng, peng, peng, peng, peng!
Peng, peng, peng, peng - peng, peng, peng, peng, peng!

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Up in the sky - the poor dog heard the noise
And it hurt! Owvwww!
His ears began to hurt.
His mouth hurt, his ears hurt. He could not do it! He could not steal the Moon!
And so - he let go!

The poor dog whimpered his way home
Whine, whine, whine, whine, whine!

Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, dgdom, gdmos!
Whine, whine whine, whine, whine!

Gdom, gdom, gdom! Gdom, dgdom, gdmos! Gdom, gdom, gdom!

By the time he got back to the land of darkness, his mouth hurt, his ears hurt and his paws hurt. Everything hurt!

Whine, whine, whine, whine, whine!

He galloped up to his king and flopped down at his feet.
And the dog said: Whine!
Very sorry, I could not do it - the Moon is just too cold!

The King was furious!

What! What? What! You have disobeyed me once again!
Too cold! Too cold? Too cold! This is NOT good enough - you must try again!

Once again, the King turned and once again, he pointed to the Sun and once again, he said: Fetch me the Sun!

And that poor Dog - he always tries to do what the King asks.

And THAT is why when you see the Sun or Moon begin to disappear from view,
what we call a Solar or Lunar Eclipse
It is because of that Dog who is trying to steal them once again!

Or at least that is what I was told!

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Setting Free the Sun - Maya Nation, Central America

Long ago, in the time before there was a country called Mexico, the people who lived in that land were called the Maya. They lived high in the mountains, and deep into the rain forest that spread across the land we now call Mexico.

And, in at the edge of the rainforest, there was a village. And in that village, there was a house. And in that house, there lived a family, a man and a woman and two children, an older girl and a younger boy. And the two children would play together, running in and out their house, their village and their forest.

And when they wanted to hide from the burning hot sun, they would escape into the dappled shade of the forest, and there they would sit, under a tree and dabble their feet in a cool, cool stream.

But - as the sister grew older, she grew tired of their childhood games. She would wander off by herself, to find somewhere to sit and play with her long black hair. She would comb it over and over and over until it shone.

But she left her brother - all alone.

And so it was, on one hot day, the brother could not find his sister anywhere. Where could she be?

He searched the whole village, but there was no sign of her! And it was so hot! All he wanted was a friend to sit with him by the cool cool stream.

But his sister was nowhere to be seen. She had hidden from him, once again, so completely that though he tried long and hard to find her - he could not.

He stood by himself in the hot, hot Sun, and he felt the heat of the Sun burn his skin and the sweat trickle down his back and arms.

And as he stood there he thought:

Enough is enough! I will teach her to hide from me!
I will teach her to love her long black hair - more than she does me!
A lesson she won’t forget in a hurry!
Hah!
And as for you Sun, that burns my skin so carelessly.
I will teach you too - not to ignore me!

That night, whilst his sister was asleep, her brother watched her from his own mat on the floor. And as soon as her breathing slowed, he pulled back the sheet and silently got to his feet. He tiptoed across to his sister, who was by now fast asleep, with her long back hair strewn across the mat and onto the floor. And as he stood there looking down at her - with his knife held tight in his hand...

Very quietly, taking care not to wake her, he bent down, and began to cut off her hair! He pulled her hair taut, very, very carefully and he cut it strand by strand as quickly and gently
The Vanishing Sun

as he could. Done! And in his hand was a huge bundle of long black hair - longer than you have ever seen!

Now for the second part of his plan!
He crept out of the hut and into the forest.
And he began to braid the hair into a net, that grew bigger and bigger and bigger! Big enough it seemed to catch the sun!

Which was the third part of his plan!
He attached the net to a long, long rope, which he coiled around his waist.
He crept through the forest until he reached a clearing, where he could see the sky above and the faint gold glimmer of the sun, as it began to rise. He uncoiled the rope and spun the net into the air like a lasso - whoo, whoo, whoo,- and it whirled around and around - it came down - and captured the Sun!
The Sun tried to pull free - but the boy, though young, was too strong!
The boy pulled and pulled and pulled on the rope that connected the net and held the Sun tight in his trap. The Sun was forced to the ground and hidden from view under the mass of netted hair. His plan had worked!

Meanwhile back home, the villagers had begun to rise with the Sun.
Then - all of a sudden, the Sun disappeared!
The sky grew dark, eerily dark.
The birds stopped singing, and all was deadly quiet.
Then the dogs began to howl and the sound of their howling was somehow worse than the silence. People ran out of their huts. There was confusion everywhere!

What has happened to the Sun?
No-body knew. Nobody knew what to do. The air was filled with the sounds of fear.

The girl woke up and heard the noise.
She ran outside, and saw for herself what was wrong - the Sun, the Sun had gone!
And then she realised too - that something else had gone!
Her hair!
Could this two things be connected?
Who could have done this? And then she thought: MY brother!
She looked around for her brother. There he was, sat under a tree, looking very innocent as only younger brothers can:

What have you done!
Me! Nothing!
Yes you have!
I Haven’t!
Yes, you Have!
I Haven’t!
You Have! What have you done?

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I cut off your beautiful hair that you love so much and made a net to capture the Sun! And there is nothing you can do to set it free!

Well, his big sister was not going to stay and listen! She ran into the forest, looking for some way to set free the sun. She saw a rabbit, hopping about in the darkness:

Rabbit, rabbit will you help me, to set the sun free?
Me, said the rabbit What can I do?
I am far too small to help

She ran on, further the forest, looking for anyone who could help her to free the sun. She saw a deer, leaping frantically through the trees

Deer, deer, will you help me, to set the sun free?
Me, said the Deer What can I do?
I am far too scared to help!

She ran on - but there was no one who could help. They were far too scared of the strange dark to listen to her pleas. But then she heard a tiny voice:

I will!

And there, nestled amongst the leaves at the foot of the tree, was a Mole, a little Mole, with its silky long fur sweeping over his body and onto the leaves, making them rustle gently.

You! But what can you do?
I don’t know - but I can try!

She picked him up, and stroked his long, long fur. She curled her arms carefully around him - and then together, they ran, on and on and on! They ran to the very edge of the forest - and there on the ground, was a huge glowing ball of heat and light - the Sun! Tied up in a huge net of hair!

My brother WAS telling the truth. He has captured the sun!
We must set it free! But how? What can we do?

Put me down ordered the Mole

And she did. He run towards the net, and began biting, biting and biting at the tangled mess of hair. Ouch! It hurt! The sun was so hot, it burnt his mouth and his teeth - and his beautiful long fur! But still he carried on biting, biting, biting the hair, undoing the trap - until at last the sun was free!
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The sun rose up into the Sky - whoosh- and its golden glow filled the air! But as for the poor little Mole, all his long fur had gone, burnt by the sun. The Sun's golden rays came down to Earth and gently stroked his skin.

From now on said the Sun Your fur will be very short, as a mark of the price you made to set me free! But in return - your hands will be bu - so you can dig yourself out of danger. And keep yourself free!

And as the girl watched, the Mole's hands grew larger and larger and larger. The Mole began to dig at the Earth - so fast - that soon he had disappeared from her sight. She never saw him again. But she did not forget.

And THAT is why, every time the Moon sails through the sky and passes between the Earth and Sun, so that the Sun is hidden from our view by the Moon - what we call a Solar Eclipse. The Maya people they stop and remember the Mole, who had set the Sun free - the very first time!

Or at least that was what I was told!
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The Buried Moon - England, Europe

In the far, far East of England, there lies a very special land, the marsh land, a strange place that is somewhere between land and sea. And those who go into the marshland - will only go when there is light. For without any light - it is difficult to see that the difference between a safe path and unsafe bog - is very small indeed.
It is so very easy to take just one step, away the path on solid ground, and into a quick, quick death sinking beneath the marshy sand.

And what is more, it is said that on the nights of the Dark Moon, when no Moon shines at all, the Marshland is filled with evil spirits, will o’ the wisps, and worse. Who are waiting to lure people away from that safe path and to their death in that quick, quick sand. Nobody at all would ever dare go into the Marsh without any light.

But, luckily for the dwellers of the Marshland, both the town folk who follow one path and the gypsy folk who follow another, the Moon always shines the brightest over the Marshlands of East England, because she loves the people who live there, she loves them all so very much.

Because ...

Long ago one night the Moon, as she was rising in the sky, she looked down and saw ...

A gypsy man following the gypsy path through the Marshland. He had never been on his own before. He took one fearful step, just one step. He foot slid, and found himself, falling sinking down, down, down. He struggled to get out, but of course his struggles made him sink even faster.

Help, please someone anyone, help me, he cried

But there was no one to hear
Save for the Moon, so very far away in the Sky.
What could she do?

The Moon, she pulled her cloak of midnight around her, and covered her shining silver hair beneath its hood. And then she threw a shaft of silver light down to Earth. And she followed it down, down. Until she stepped onto the Marsh land - and felt it shift beneath her feet.
Just one step was all she took. But the Marsh was waiting ....
The will o’ the wisps and worse. They hated the Moon, for the light she sent that kept the people safe from harm. This was their chance for their revenge
And they grabbed her, by the foot and pulled her down. Down off the path, and down into the marshy land and down she sank into the mud
They whispered into her ears -

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Bury Her, Drown Her, Smother her, Kill her
Bury Her, Drown Her, Smother her, Kill her!

But the Moon would not give up. She grabbed a branch, and pulled with all her might! And her hood threw back - and freed her hair and the air above was filled with its shimmering shining light. And the gypsy man, he saw this shaft of light - and it showed him the way out. He threw himself out of the mud, and onto safe land and then he ran as fast as he could, out of the Marsh. Towards the light, the firelight of his camp, his home. And his people standing there around the fire, they saw him and, exclaiming at his plight, wrapped him into warm blankets and placed a warm drink into his shaking hand. And, within the light and warmth of the fire, he forgot, he forgot the one who had saved him. And so the Moon she was alone, alone with the creatures of the Marsh

They whispered into her ears -

Bury Her, Drown Her, Smother her, Kill her
Bury Her, Drown Her, Smother her, Kill her

And the will of the wisps slithered against her skin, as they took hold of her arms and pulled her down. And the bogles shivered against her face as they grabbed her hair and pulled her down. And then, the dead hands of the ghosts slid around her and grabbed a stone and placed it upon her and pressed her down, down into the mud. And slowly, surely the Moon disappeared and her light went ... out.

And at first no-one noticed. But, as the days, weeks, months passed and still no Moon in sight. The town folk and the gypsy folk knew that to cross the Marsh at night without no light meant death. But the townsfolk had to get to market and the gypsy folk had to get to their next camp.
What could they do?

The townsfolk they held a meeting, to which, of course, the gypsies were not invited. But one of them came and stood at the back and listened.
And he remembered:

Excuse me, I think I know what might have happened to the Moon

Men turned to listen and when they saw who it was, most of them turned back again. But some of them, some of them, they listened.
He told them, of how he had been trapped in the Marsh, and a strange silver light had appeared which he had followed until safe at home.
Could it have been the Moon, trying to save him and been trapped in turn?

Hah, most of the townsfolk said it's just another gypsy tale.
And they turned away.
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But some of them believed him, and chose to follow him back to his camp. He led them
to the camp where the head woman sat waiting for them. She listened to his story whilst
watching them all. And, as the story ended she nodded:

It is true, the Moon has been captured by the spirits of the Marshland and she is
trapped there, buried beneath a stone.
And you must go and pull the stone from her and set her free.

US - but, but, but we cannot go into the Marsh without any light! It isn't safe!

Oh yes you can!
You - she pointed at some of the gypsy men. You go out at night when there is no
Moon, poaching, stealing to bring food for us all.
And YOU, she pointed at some of the townfolk, who looked a little shamefaced. You
are gamekeepers, yes I know you are, don't try and hide!
I know you go after our men to stop them. I know you are enemies, sworn to stop
them, by whatever means you can.

But tonight is different. Tonight you must work as one.
For only you can walk into the marsh at the dead of night.
And you must all go - for it will need all of you, to lift that stone.
And, mind, you must be as silent as you can.
So the Marsh spirits, do not capture and bury you in turn

And the gypsy men poachers and the townfolk gamekeepers -
it was the first time they had walked anywhere together.
But this was different - tonight they had to change.
So they walked side by side into the Marsh.
With no light at all to guide them, they walked barefoot so they could feel the path
beneath the sole of their skin. And as they inched their way together
It was if they moved, they breathed as one.
If one - was to hesitate or falter, the other would gently guide him back, safe on the path.
And it didn't seem to matter who saved who.
Together they walked, together they moved, together they breathed as one, as men of
the Marsh trying to keep safe their home.
And together, they found the stone.
And together, they stooped, together they grabbed and together they heaved.
And there was a flash of light so bright - they had to close their eyes.
And when they opened them again - the Moon was back in the sky!
And then Moon sent a silver shimmering shaft of light - to guide her people home.

And THAT is why the Moon shines brightest over the Marshlands of East England
Because she loves both the townfolk and the gypsy folk who live there so very, very
much. Always has and always will....
Or at least that was what I was told!

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The Sun and the Moon at War - Batammaliba Nation, Africa

Long ago, the people of West Africa, they believed that, during times of war, a solar eclipse would occur, as a sign that it was time for warring tribes to make peace.

Because ...

Long ago, according to West African legends, the Sun and Moon were once the best of friends. They each had many children and lived happily side by side, shining brightly together in the sky.

But that you see - that was the problem.

They both shone with equal brightness and the Sun was jealous.
He wanted to shine the brightest of all. So he hatched a cunning plan.
One day, he invited Moon and her family for a swim in the river that ran across the sky.
Moon and her family, they loved to swim and they boasted that they were the best swimmers in the whole sky! So Sun challenged them to a contest.

Let’s see who is the fastest to cross the river!
You go first with your family, and I will time you.
And then I will go second with my family and you can time me!

So Moon and her family, they dived deep into the water.
But - a storm had been raging the night before and the river in the sky was filled with flotsam and jetsam, jagged pieces of rocks and wood. And these pieces of wood and rock, they battered poor Moon and her children. And so when they reached the other side - their beautiful shimmering shine had been dimmed and was almost gone. And when Moon saw the barely hidden smile on Sun’s face ...

Well - she plotted her revenge ...

She invited Sun to a meal and over that meal she complained and complained about how noisy her children were, how untidy, how unhelpful!
In fact, she declared that she wished she could get rid of them - for once and for all! Sun agreed! He too complained, how noisy his children were, how untidy, how unhelpful!

In fact, he declared that he wished he could get rid of his children too - for once and for all!

Lets do it! said Moon.

We can put them into a giant mortar and grind them to pieces with a pestle. Then, we can throw the pieces into the river and watch them go.

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Then, there will be peace in our homes once more. And afterwards - we can meet by the river and have a picnic - in perfect peace and quiet!

And Sun agreed to this terrible plan.

So, the next day - Moon and her children, they arrived at the picnic place first. They walked carefully upstream and filled her mortar with red flowers and ground those flowers to pieces. They tipped the pieces into the water and the water turned red and the red water floated downstream

Where Sun was waiting.

He saw the red dye in the water, he thought it was blood! So he placed his children into his mortar, picked up his pestle and ground his children into pieces, and threw those pieces into the river. And watched them go.

And when they were gone - he walked upstream and what did he see ...

Moon, Moon with her children, chatting and laughing so happily. He knew he had been tricked, dreadfully so. He swore his revenge. And Moon and Sun are no longer friends. They fight constantly. Sometimes the Moon is so full of rage she engulfs the Sun (what we call a Solar Eclipse) and sometimes the Sun is so full of rage - he denies his light to the Moon (what we call a lunar eclipse)

And when this happens ...

The people of West Africa, they take that moment to tell this story, and to remind themselves of the horror of war.

And what can happen to so many innocent children, caught up in the conflict.

And so - they try to befriend their enemies, to let peace to come finally to Earth.

Or at least - that was what I was told!
The Vanishing Sun

The Tale of Oona Manna - retold. An original tale based on a Zulu folktale

Long ago, the people of West Africa, they believed that a solar eclipse would occur, during times of war, as a sign that it was time for warring tribes to make peace. It was said, that when the Sun disappears from the sky, hidden from view by the Moon, that the Sun will only re-appear, when there is peace once more.

And of course, this is just a saying - I am sure it cannot possibly be true! But, sometimes a clever person can use a saying - to make it come true!

There was once a woman named Oona Manna.
Now - Oona Manna was tall and Oona Manna was strong.
She was so tall and so strong - that no-body, nobody ever dared argue with Oona Manna!

If Ooona Manna said Yes!
They all agreed: Yes, yes, yes, yes! Oona Manna you are right!
If Oona Manna said No!
They all agreed: No, no, no. no. no! Oona Manna, you are right!

Nobody, nobody, nobody at all ever dared to argue with Oona Manna - they were all far too scared!
Nobody at all - except for her two small children, a girl and boy - who argued day and night!
They fought over everything!
Who would have the first spoon of porridge in the morning, to who would have the last drop of milk at night.

It's mine, it's mine, it's mine, it's mine!

This cry would echo through their home - morning, noon and night!
They could not agree on anything and of course they never listened to their mother!

Oona Manna asked them again, and again and again

PLEASE, please stop arguing!

But would they stop? No

No, It's mine, It's mine, It's mine!

Morning noon and night!

Until, one day, Oona Manna knew that an eclipse was coming. She had learnt the signs from her elders long ago.
The Vanishing Sun

So ...
When the Sun started to disappear from the sky,
And the sky began to turn from gold to black
And a shadow started to creep over the grass ...
Oona Manna pointed to her children and said:

You two - are to blame!
The Sun is so fed up with your arguing -
it will not come back until you promise to stop!

The children were so frightened! They gulped with fear. Gulp
They looked at each other, they looked at Oona Manna and then they looked up into the
Sky. And with quivering lips, they said:

Sun, please come back! We promise, not to argue, ever again!

And it did! The Sun reappeared in the Sky, whoosh, just as if it really had been listening!
The children were so relieved - they never, ever argued again
Or at least that is what I was told!

Authors Note - For those using these stories in English Language Learning sessions
Storytelling is an ideal tool for empowering children, not just to listen but to actively
participate in the telling of a story and in doing so - increase their confidence in speaking
aloud - in any language.

When Jaguar Ate the Moon and Stealing the Sun - are two tales designed especially for
young learners of English. They are designed to encourage the children to join in with the
sound effects, the rhythm of the drums etc..

Sound effects and exaggerating the sounds of spoken English - are a great way to
introduce “phonetics”. I over - enunciate my words so that each and every syllable can
be heard.

In these two stories - there are lots of sound effects - all included in the written script.
I encourage children to create their own sound effects and of course then to spell them.
This encourages children to experiment with the writing of English

What would be the sound of a huge pair of feet slapped against the starry sky?
And how would I spell that sound?

This encourages them to play with the English Language and reduces their anxiety about
“getting it right”.
Instead they share their ideas and we create our own version of the story - together!
So please - play with these stories in whatever way works for you!

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