

# Maui, the Lost Son

by Angelica Esquivel



Hundreds of years ago, an infant demigod named Maui was thrown into the Pacific Ocean by his mother, Hina, who did not want him. Little Maui thrashed for air as he sank to the bottom of the sea. He had nearly drowned when suddenly a beam of light appeared and an enormous rainbow-colored fish swam up to him. The fish, who later introduced himself as Kaia, bubbled Maui in a sphere of oxygen that enabled him to breathe underwater.

Kaia fed Maui, nourishing him with delicious seafood and nursing him back to health. He looked after Maui until he was old enough to survive on his own.

The years passed quickly, and when Maui turned eighteen, he decided that he wanted to find his parents. By now he was a strong and cunning young man, so Kaia agreed to let him go even though he had grown quite fond of the young demigod. As a parting gift, Kaia presented Maui with a magic fish-hook that gave him the power to transform into any creature he liked, from a chicken to a shark to a soaring eagle. The hook was also infinitely stronger than a normal fish-hook and was nearly impossible to destroy.

Maui set out across the endless sea to look for his family and eventually he came upon three men who looked quite like him with their curly black hair and tanned skin. Those are my brothers, Maui thought, feeling with absolute certainty that they were. He excitedly approached them and introduced himself. “Brothers, it’s me, Maui, your long-lost little brother!” He expected to be met with hugs and handshakes, but his brothers turned him away because they did not believe him.

“We don’t have a little brother,” said the eldest, Maui-mua, as he towered over Maui.

“You are not worthy of the name Maui!” said another, Maui-pae.

“Go fetch your mother and she will tell you,” Maui replied. The brothers whispered amongst themselves for a minute.

“Fine,” they relented. “We’ll go get our mother, but we still don’t believe you.” They left reluctantly, returning a while later with their mother, Hina. She was a short woman. Her hair reached her ankles and was as black as the bottom of the ocean.

“Tell them I am your son,” Maui commanded. Hina furrowed her brow as she silently looked at Maui’s face.

“I don’t know,” she finally said as Maui’s brothers snickered.

“Look into your deepest memories, you have to remember,” Maui told her. He desperately clutched his magic fish-hook, feeling embarrassed that his own family didn’t even know who he was. Then, a sudden look of recognition crossed Hina’s face and she reached her arms around Maui, embracing him as her son.

“My child, I do remember you, your deep brown eyes and the scar on your shoulder. As atonement for the way I

treated you when you were a newborn, you will be my favorite son from this day forward!”

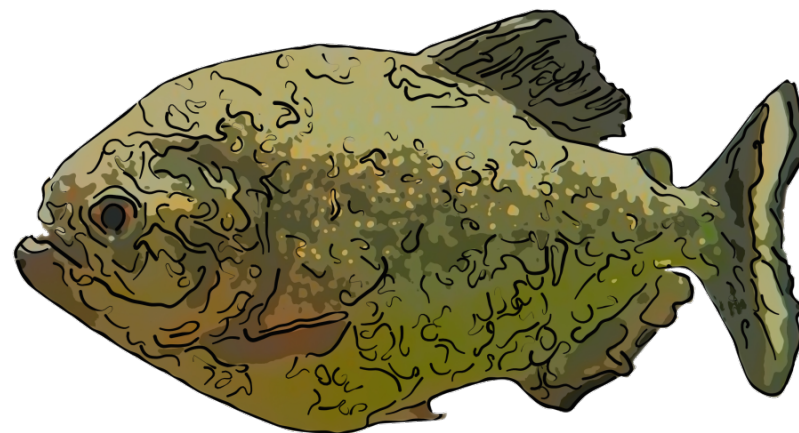
After hearing this declaration from their mother, Maui's brothers seethed with jealousy. Whenever they went fishing, they refused to let him come along, so one day Maui turned himself into a bird and sneaked aboard their fishing boat. Once they left the shore, he shifted back into human form, revealing himself to be Maui. His brothers scowled while he laughed at his own cleverness.

“Just let him stay. He doesn't have a fishing pole anyway,” said Maui-mua. Maui-pae and Maui-roto agreed with him and began to fish, ignoring Maui. Sneaky as ever, Maui took out his magic fish-hook, baited it with some of his own blood, tossed the fish-hook down into the water, and waited until he felt a tug. Using all of his strength, Maui pulled on the fish-hook until his catch came out of the water. It was a mammoth fish, as big as a continent, and Maui was excited to show it to his mother, who would be so proud.

Once they returned to the shore, Maui left the fish with his brothers so he could go clean his fish-hook. As he left, he warned them not to touch the fish. They nodded in agreement, but as soon as Maui began to walk away they scurried over to the fish.

“I've caught bigger,” Maui-roto said, crossing his arms nonchalantly.

“I'm hungry, so I'm going to take a little piece of the fish. Nobody tell Maui,” Maui-pae said. Maui-roto and Maui-mua each took a little piece of the fish, too, and it was so delicious that they immediately wanted more. Before they knew what was happening, they had hacked the fish into a bunch of pieces that scattered across the beach. When Maui returned and saw what they had done, he shook his fist angrily at them and threw the colossal pieces of fish into the ocean, where



they floated to the surface and became the Polynesian islands.

As Maui grew older, he collected the tales of his adventures like one collects seashells. His mother, Hina, enjoyed spending her days making kapa, a cloth derived from various plants and tree barks that needed ample sunlight to dry properly. However, the sun moved too quickly across the sky, so Hina went to Maui for help. She asked him, “Maui, can you make the days longer? I cannot finish my work because the fruit does not even have time to ripen on the trees before the sun disappears and the stars come out.”

Maui agreed and began to concoct a plan to chop the legs off the sun so that the days would be longer. He hid beneath some foliage, camouflaged in the green leaves and weeds, and waited for the sun. The sun had sixteen legs, so Maui needed to chop off at least half of them in order to slow him down. When the sun finally arrived, Maui leapt out from his hiding place and chopped off half the sun's legs. Then he released the sun back into the sky, the days now long enough for his mother to complete her work.

Since Maui had created the Polynesian islands (albeit

accidentally) and lengthened the day, humans were very grateful to him. They needed fire to cook their food and warm themselves at night, so Maui decided he would obtain fire for them from the fire-keepers, some smart mud-hens that lived in the mountains and possessed the power of fire.

Maui and his brothers tried to trick the mud-hens into giving them fire. From their boat, the brothers noticed that the mud-hens made a fire on the same mountaintop each day. The brothers paddled to the shore and raced to the mountaintop, but by the time they got there, the fire had been scratched out and the mud-hens had disappeared. The mud-hens had seen Maui coming and knew to hide, so Maui tricked them by making a decoy Maui out of straw and branches. The next day, when the mud-hens looked down from the mountain, they saw that all four brothers were in the boat and began to make their fire. At that moment, Maui

sneaked up to them and snatched the mud-hen that was in charge.

“Enlighten me on your fire-creating ways, mud-hen!” Maui yelled, but the mud-hen refused so Maui twisted its neck until it squawked out its secret.

“Alright, alright, I will tell you! You can create fire by rubbing two dry sticks together.” Triumphant, Maui released the mud-hen and headed back down the mountain to deliver the fire-building skill to the humans who needed it most.

After this, the humans praised Maui and told stories of his bravery. Most of his adventures were successful, but unfortunately, Maui’s cockiness and arrogance led to his ultimate demise. The last present he wanted to give humans was the gift of immortality, the ability to live forever. This was a gift preserved only for the gods, but Maui thought he could steal it for them just like he had stolen fire.

Using his magic fish-hook, he turned himself into an earthworm and crawled into the dwelling of the Goddess Hine-nui-te-po. She was sound asleep when he crept into her ear and began to crawl toward her heart, where immortality was a glistening crimson jewel protected inside her ribcage. Maui grabbed the jewel and began to escape the Goddess’s body. He was almost out of her mouth when she woke up and bit down, crushing and crunching him to death between her teeth. This was the end of the demigod Maui, but his courageous and humorous spirit, as well as the generous acts he committed for humanity, live on in Polynesian culture to this day.

