

# Children of the Sun and Stars

Rosinda Soakai

Malia Vaurasi

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 The Asia Foundation



On a vast island in the Pacific, deep inside a mountain forest, lived a girl named Siale. She was shy and spoke little. But her curious and thoughtful eyes noticed everything around her.



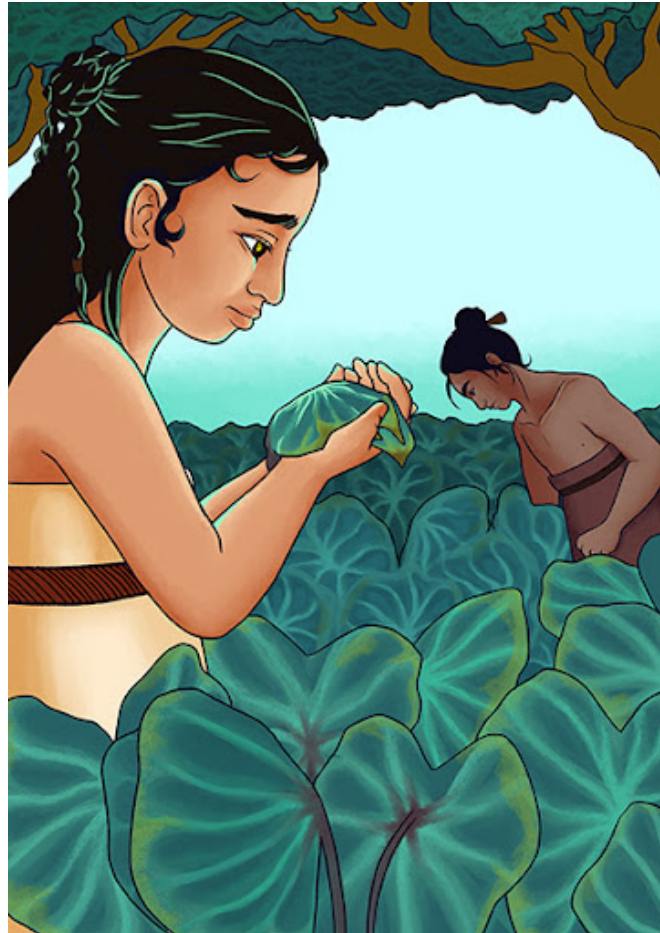
Siale's village was nestled among the tall trees of the eastern mountains. From their high grounds, the people of the village could see beautiful sunrises appearing over the water each morning.



Every day at dawn, the villagers gathered to pray to the Morning Sun. "Please give us your golden light," they prayed. "So, our crops can grow strong beneath the forest canopy."



The village elders often told stories about others who lived on the western plains of their island. "They pray to the Evening Sun and live differently," said the wisest elder, "But we must respect all ways of life."



One season, the crops began failing. The plants withered despite getting enough sunlight and worry spread throughout the mountain community. The leader of the village tasked his people to find answers.



Some villagers who had traveled down to the beach reported back on what they had discovered. "Traders from other lands say those sunset people on the western side are causing our troubles with their strange prayers," one man said with a frown.



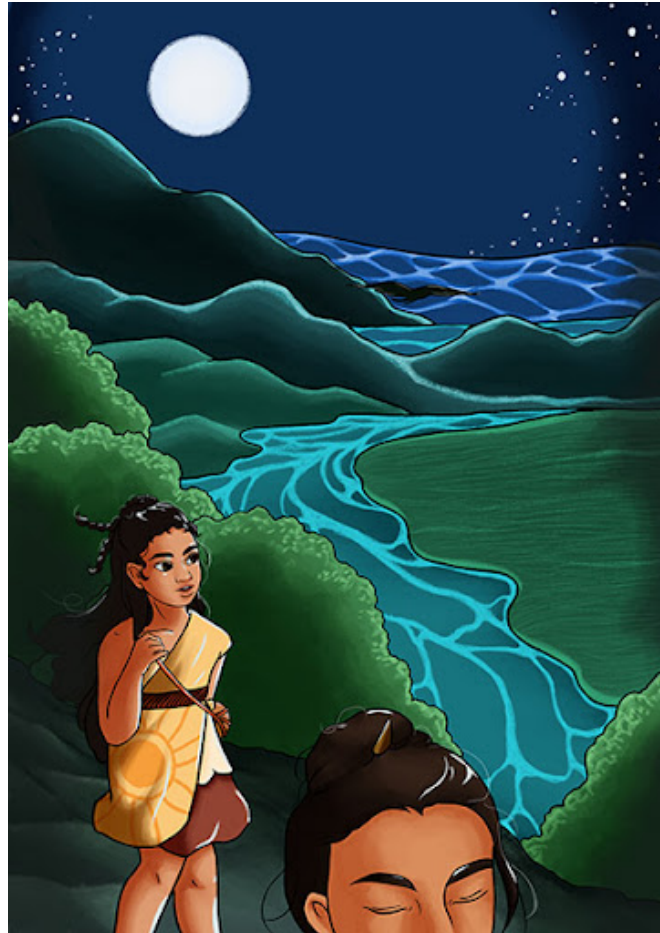
A few people nodded and agreed, but Siale's mind raced.

"How did the foreign traders know such things?" she wondered. "Could they be trusted?"



Their wise leader must have thought the same. He planned an expedition to discover the truth rather than rely on the words of strangers. "We must save our harvest," he announced. "Who will join our expedition across the island to seek answers?"

Siale's heart was beating fast as she raised her hand. "I will go," she said quietly with determination. "I want to help my village!"



The expedition set off down the mountain paths the next morning. They traveled for many days, descending the mountains, and crossing the island's central valleys.

The journey was long, and Siale had never been so far from home.



After nearly a week, they reached the western plains where trees gave way to open fields that gently rolled toward the shore. The evening sun cast long shadows across the land.



Near the western beach stood a village of round huts, with fishing boats pulled up onto the sand. People moved about, tending to gardens and mending nets as the sun began to set.



"Be careful of these people! They pray to the Evening Sun," sneered an expedition member. "Watch out, they are different from us. I hear they are dangerous!" scowled another.

But Siale didn't feel scared at all. In many ways, the village reminded her of her own home.

Siale hung back as the expedition leaders

explained their presence. She watched with wonder as western villagers gathered to face the setting sun, its orange glow reflecting on the ocean waters.



Suddenly, a boy with light brown, messy hair stepped up to greet her. "Welcome! I'm Alipate, the son of the village elder," he said brightly.



"Would you like to see our gardens?" he asked. Siale felt shy but Ali pate continued to talk. "We work in the evenings when the air cools. The plants do better when we tend to them after the harsh midday sun."



Over the next few days, while the expedition rested, Siale and Alipate became friends. Siale shared how their mountain plants began to grow strong and green but then turned yellow and wilted before the harvest.



"Our plants are struggling in the harsh midday sun," Alipate confided one evening, with worry in his eyes. "Traders from other lands will sometimes whisper to us that it's because your people pray to make the sun stronger."

"That's strange!" exclaimed Siale. "Our forest crops are failing too, but we were told that your people's sunset prayers are to blame."

She paused and added thoughtfully, "There must be another reason!"



The next morning, Alipate brought Siale a small bag of crushed seashells. "We collect these from the beach and mix them into our soil," he explained. "The shells give our plants extra nutrients to grow strong. Your mountain soil might need this too."

Siale's eyes brightened as she observed the open fields under the harsh sun. "In our mountains, the tall forest trees filter the

sunlight for our plants," she said. "Perhaps palm leaf coverings could shield your crops during the intense midday heat."



When it was time to leave, Siale hugged her new friend goodbye. "I enjoyed learning new things from you," she said. They were more connected than she could have ever imagined.



The journey home was long, but Siale's heart felt light as she carried Alipate's gift, the bag of crushed seashells.

When they finally reached home, everyone gathered to hear about their discoveries. The villagers rejoiced that the expedition was successful! The island neighbors respected each other and learned new things, while the fake stories of the foreign traders were

uncovered.



As the crops began to flourish once again, the wisest village elder reminded everyone, "We share one island, one sun, and one moon with our western neighbors."

His words filled Siale with hope. Siale smiled, dreaming of her next big journey and the friends she would make. And as promised, she never forgot her friend who lived by the endless blue."



## **Community Engagement Guide**

The following guide helps families, teachers, and communities talk about the story together. Use these three questions and activities to spark discussion, reflection, and action.



*Discussion Question #1:* Why did some of the villagers believe the traders at first?

*Sample Answer #1:* The villagers were scared and worried about what was happening to their crops.

*What to Look for:* Awareness of how scary stories can mislead us, even if they are not true.



*Discussion Question #2:* What did Alipate learn about the people in the western village?

*Sample Answer #2:* They were welcoming and not dangerous like the traders said. Both villages faced similar problems.

*What to Look for:* Understanding of how rumors aimed at suppressing traditional beliefs and values cause harm.



*Discussion Question #3:* How did Alipate and Siale help each other?

*Sample Answer #3:* Siale gave Alipate crushed shells for the soil, and Alipate shared the idea of using special oil to repel insects.

*What to Look for:* Understanding that teamwork and respect for traditions helps solve problems

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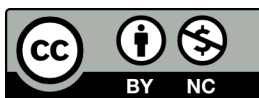
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### Original Story

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