

THE SONS OF MA'AFU

a traditional story from Tonga, retold by Feana Tu'akoi



Long ago, there lived a great Tongan chief named Ma'afu. He had two sons named Ma'afutoka and Ma'afulele. They grew up to be handsome and strong, but they were always getting into trouble.

The brothers loved to practise throwing their spears but were never careful about where they threw them. Sometimes their spears landed close to people and frightened them. Sometimes they hit fale and made holes in the walls. And once, a spear hit a man's leg and broke it. The man could never walk properly after that.

The people were very angry about the boys' behaviour, but Ma'afu loved his sons, and he made excuses for them. Then the boys started using *him* for target practice.

"You boys have no respect!" the people cried. "You're throwing spears at your father!"

The brothers were shocked. "We weren't trying to hit him!" they said. "We were trying to land the spears as close as we could *without* hitting him!"

"But what if you missed?" the people cried. "You could have killed our chief!"

The boys hadn't thought of that. They were very sorry, but it was too late. The people decided they'd had enough.

"Send them to get water from 'Ātavahea!" the people shouted. "That should teach them a lesson."

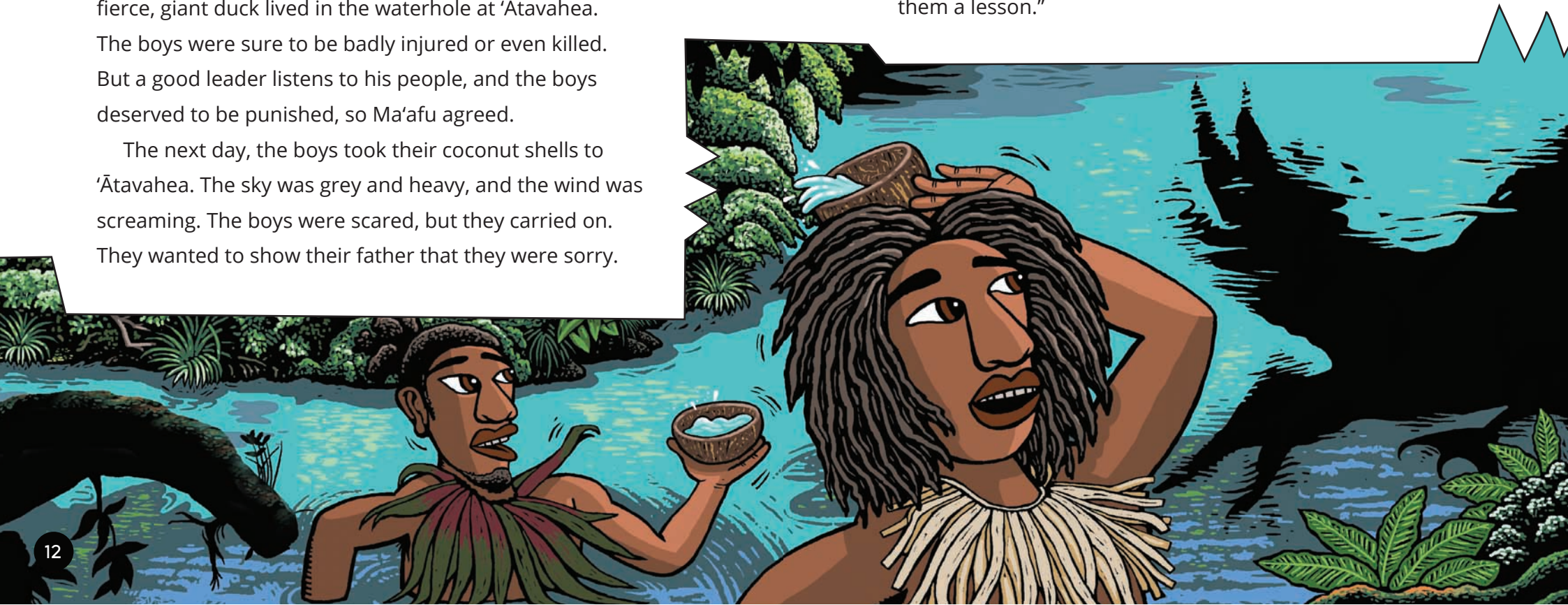
Ma'afu didn't want to send his sons there. He knew that a fierce, giant duck lived in the waterhole at 'Ātavahea. The boys were sure to be badly injured or even killed. But a good leader listens to his people, and the boys deserved to be punished, so Ma'afu agreed.

The next day, the boys took their coconut shells to 'Ātavahea. The sky was grey and heavy, and the wind was screaming. The boys were scared, but they carried on. They wanted to show their father that they were sorry.

As soon as the brothers got to the waterhole, the huge duck attacked. It battered them with its wings and tore at them with its huge beak. The boys fought with all their might, and finally, they overpowered the bird. They filled their coconut shells with water and started back to the village, taking the duck with them.

"This will show Ma'afu that we're sorry," they said, grinning to each other. "We can cook the duck in the 'umu. There'll be enough meat for the whole village."

But the villagers weren't happy. "Look at them grinning!" they cried. "They're not even sorry. Send them to Muihātafa to get water from the bottom of the pool. That will teach them a lesson."



Ma'afu shook his head. He knew that there was a vicious triggerfish at the waterhole. His boys wouldn't stand a chance. But he had to listen to his people, and the boys didn't look sorry, so he agreed.

When they got to Muihātafa, everything looked peaceful. The air was still. There were no insects screeching and no birds singing. It was way too quiet. The boys were terrified.

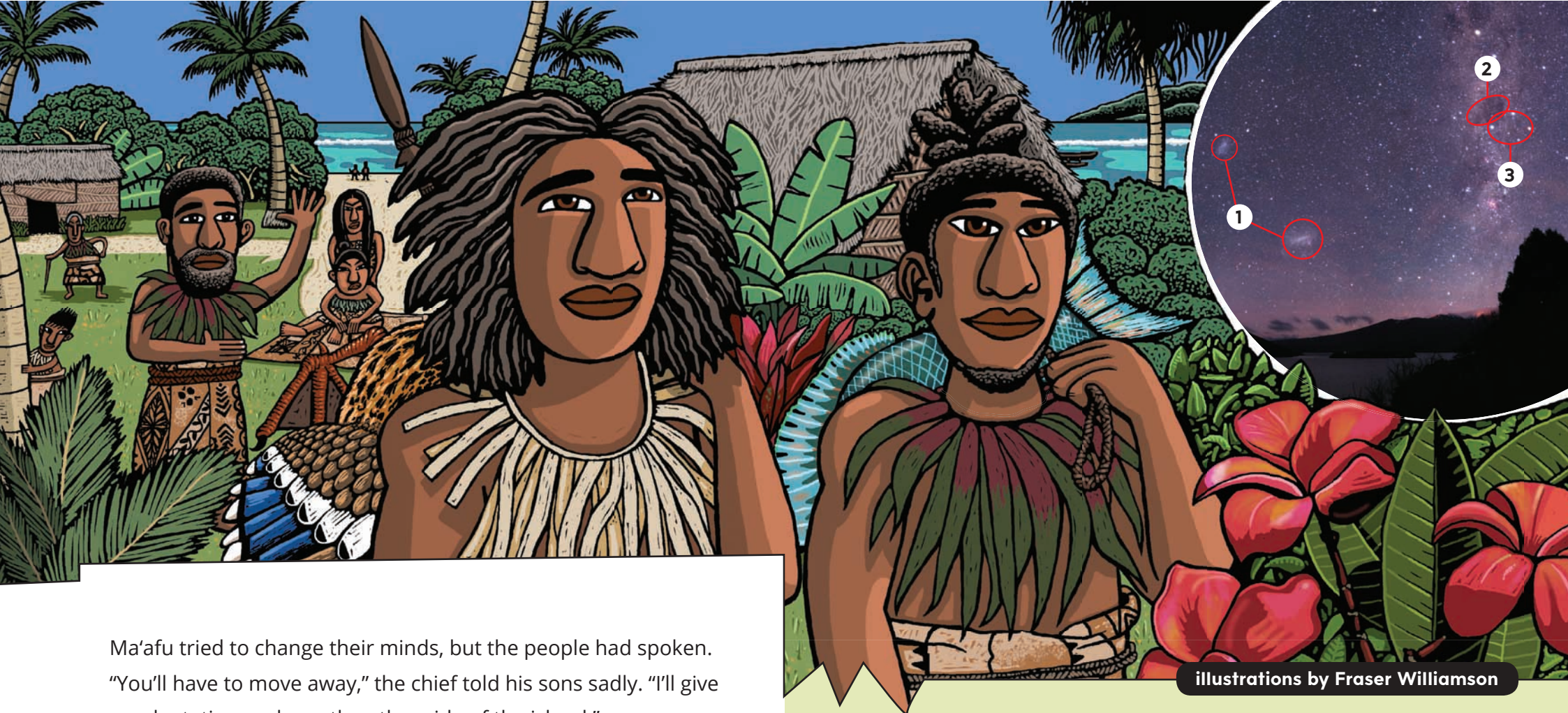
"Let's just fill our coconut shells from the edge of the waterhole," said Ma'afutoka. "The people will never know."

Ma'afulele shook his head. "We have to show we're really sorry," he said. "We have to get water from the bottom of the pool."

As soon as the boys dived into the waterhole, an enormous triggerfish rushed towards them, snapping its giant jaws. The boys fought as hard as they could, but they were running out of air. Just as they thought they might drown, Ma'afutoka thrust his arm through the fish's gills. After a few moments, the triggerfish stopped moving. The boys filled their coconut shells from the bottom of the pool, heaved the fish onto their backs, and headed back to the village.

The people weren't happy to see the boys again. They were scared. "Those boys have killed the two most dangerous creatures on the island," they cried. "We're not safe when they're around!"





illustrations by Fraser Williamson

Ma'afu tried to change their minds, but the people had spoken. "You'll have to move away," the chief told his sons sadly. "I'll give you a plantation each, on the other side of the island."

The boys hated to see their father so unhappy, but they didn't want to leave him.

"No," they said. "We'll move far away so that the villagers can feel safe. But it has to be a place where we can always see each other."

Ma'afu hugged his sons proudly. Then the boys took their duck and their fish and went to live in the sky.

On clear nights, we can still see the boys. They form two bright patches near the Milky Way that we call the Magellanic Clouds **1**. We can also see the triggerfish (Humu) and the duck (Toloa). Humu is a dark patch known as the Coal Sack **2**. We know Toloa as the Southern Cross **3**. Traditional navigators used the Magellanic Clouds to find north, and they used the Southern Cross to find south.

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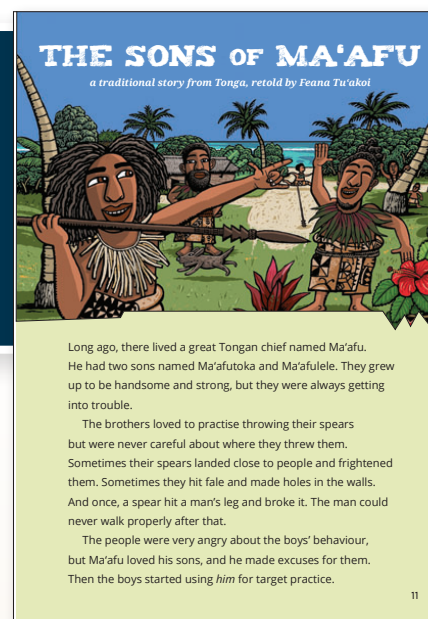
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