

Maui,

Revelator of Birds



by Annie Parks

Maui wore his ceremonial red loincloth, the fabric made of fine silk, with tropical fern around his neck and on the crown of his head. His black shiny hair hung low down his back, and the yellow sunshine of Hawaii warmed his brown skin. He was a handsome man, and some would even call him a God, but Maui always grimaced when someone did so. He was half man and half mortal. But, Maui did manage to create those Hawaiian Islands with no help from anyone else.

It was many years before, when he was on a fishing expedition with his friends, that Maui used a magic fish hook and effortlessly pulled up several islands from deep inside the sea. It was easy for him to do that because he was a very powerful young man, and he knew that his people deserved to live in the most beautiful place in the world. To complement the perfect blue sky that hung over the islands, Maui pulled a rainbow out of the ocean as well, creating a bow that went from north to south. He stole it from the mouth of a rainbow fish.

Maui also created fire. He had spent many months in deep thought in a land of endless volcanic eruptions. The idea came to him that, instead of walking for days-on-end across coral reefs just to bring home a few glowing flames, only to have them burn out in one single night of cold winds, he would speak to the keepers of the fire. Those magic beasts never told their secret. But, since they liked Maui so much, and he charmed them with his good looks and superior strength, they finally told him that if he rubbed certain sticks together, he could create fire.

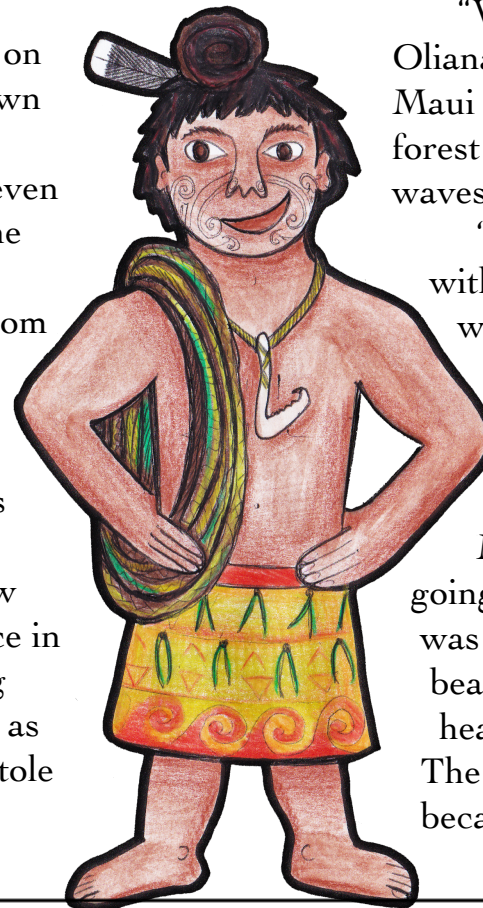
So, even though Maui had an impressive history, he was still no God, and what was even more frustrating was that he could not get the girl of his dreams, Princess Oliana, to love him.

“What’s that beautiful sound?” Princess Oliana asked on that bright morning, she and Maui taking a walk through the green clifftop forest overlooking the blue sea and crashing waves below.

“The heavens are singing,” Maui said with a smile, hoping that Princess Oliana would find his words charming.

“Such beautiful voices,” Princess Oliana replied, continuing her walk without looking towards Maui and returning his smile.

Maui frowned to himself. What was he going to have to do to get her attention? It was impossible to tell her the truth: that the beautiful music that Princess Oliana was hearing was the sound of birds singing. The reason that he couldn’t tell her that was because humans still couldn’t see birds!



They could only hear their song. Maui was the only one on earth that could see birds flying through the air, dipping into the sea, and creating their magnificent V-shape formations. It was custom for Maui and Princess Oliana to go on their little strolls each day. The princess' father was the high chief, Iosefa, and he trusted Maui and knew that his daughter would be safe when they were together. And secretly, Iosefa even wished that his daughter might love Maui, just as Maui loved her.

"Are you hungry?" Princess Oliana asked, holding up a little basket that she carried in her hand.

"Starving," Maui replied, and the two seated themselves upon a warm, soft bed of grass overlooking the sea. The breeze was gentle and inviting, and Maui liked the way that it made Princess Oliana's hair dance.

"I brought roasted yams," Princess Oliana said.

"Have I told you where yams come from?" Maui asked.

"Many times," Princess Oliana replied, playfully rolling her eyes.

"Well, let me tell you once more," Maui went on, leaning back on his hands and preparing to tell his story. "The humble yam, the greatest food that all of Polynesia has ever known, was brought to us by the god Rongo. When he went up to heaven to see his brother

Wahnui, who was the guardian of the yam, Rongo stole it, hiding it in his cloak, and carried it back down to earth."

"Stealing is wrong," Princess Oliana said, taking a bite of her deliciously sweet yam.

"But aren't we glad that he did that?"

"I guess I am," Princess Oliana replied.

"Now, the yam could not be eaten by Polynesian mortals when Rongo returned to earth. It was not fit for human consumption. So do you know what Rongo did?" Maui asked.

"Yes, because you've already told me."

"Rongo gave the yam to his wife, Pani, to cook it. Once the yam was cooked by Pani, it was edible for all humans. Therefore, Rongo brought us yams," Maui said, bursting with pride.

"But do not forget," Princess Oliana said, leaning in, "that were it not for Pani, there would be no yams that we could eat."

Princess Oliana had a point, and Maui frowned to himself again. He wanted her to be satisfied with the tale of Rongo and how he brought yams to earth, but were it not for his wife, no one could eat them.

Maui wanted to continue telling Princess Oliana stories, but stories about himself! He wanted to brag to her about how he created the islands, how he brought fire, and how he pulled a rainbow out of a fish and tossed it into the sky. But even with all those accomplishments, Princess Oliana seemed unimpressed.

Maui ate four whole yams that morning because he knew that he would need a lot of strength to get through the rest of the journey with Princess Oliana. She was a girl of wonderful spirit and energy and demanded that they walk for miles, climb trees, and swim in the ocean. Sometimes



Maui had to wonder if she had more strength than he did.

Not only did Princess Oliana love to explore the beauty of the islands, but she also had a kind heart and a love of the nature that surrounded them. When they passed by a coconut, she'd have Maui cut it open so that she could drink its water. When a butterfly landed on her head, she'd giggle and try not to move so that she wouldn't disturb it. If a nene goose crossed their path, Princess Oliana would politely bow her head.

For all those reasons and so many more, Maui was painfully in love.

As the day went on, the blue sky turned pink and the ocean sparkled with numerous colors, like a diamond. Maui sighed and looked out towards the beauty of it all, thinking that, even if he did pull up the islands from the ocean, even if he was a demigod and not quite mortal, it did not necessarily mean that he should be entitled to Princess Oliana's love. He'd have to earn it.

"There's that beautiful sound again," Princess Oliana said, looking up towards the tall trees.

When Maui looked up, he saw something much different than what Princess Oliana saw. There were countless majestic birds with beautiful feathers. They sat in the rich foliage of the fragrant trees, and their music was just as captivating to him as was their beauty. It hurt his heart that Princess Oliana could not see them as he could. All of a sudden, Maui was filled with compassion for Princess Oliana, and for the rest of humanity, that they could not see the singing birds as they flitted from tree to tree.

Knowing what must be done, Maui gently put a hand over Princess Oliana's eyes and filled his palm with love, sincerity, and blessings. When he removed his hand, Princess Oliana looked up towards the trees again and could not

believe her eyes. She could see the birds that were singing, and it filled her heart with wonder! Princess Oliana looked towards Maui and finally smiled. It was enough to flood his heart with joy to see her so happy, and from that day forth, all of humanity was able to see the birds and hear their song.

