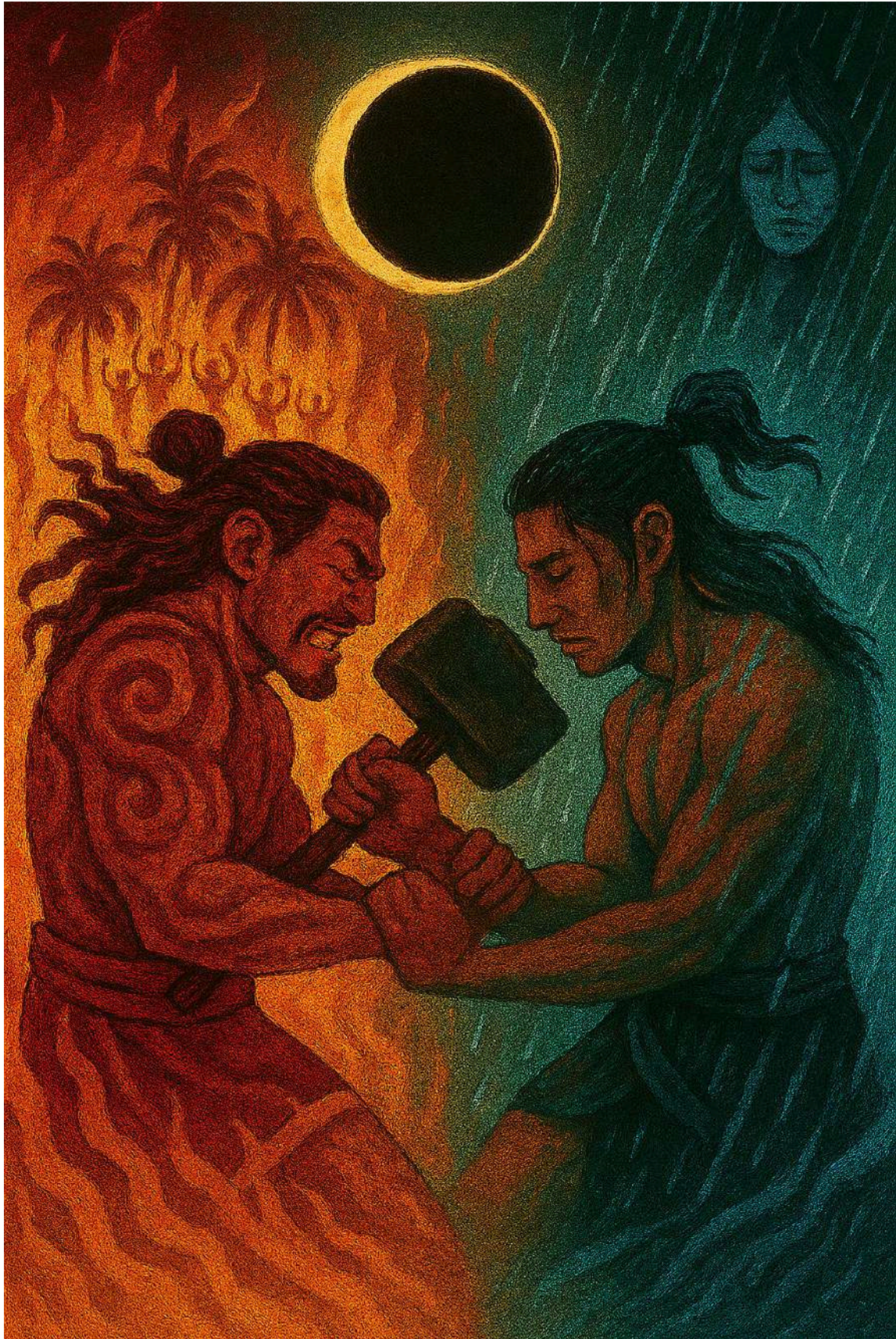


LES FLAMMES DU DÉSERT
THE FLAMES OF TOAFA



Chrismaela MANUHAAPAI

English

Fiction

Author's Note

This is a fictional tale that imagines how TOAFA—meaning “desert” in my language—was once a barren land, though today it’s the paradise where I live.

I’ve always wondered how such a lush, fertile place full of sunshine and rain, could carry a name that speaks of dryness and emptiness.

In my reflections, I imagined many versions of this story—especially the ending.

The hardest part was choosing names for my characters.

I've always struggled to remember names in real life, so I chose short and simple ones.

What inspired me to write this story?

Honestly, I spend more time reading than writing. I only write when inspiration strikes. I have many unfinished stories sitting in my drafts, but this one felt different. It needed to be shared. I couldn't let it gather dust like the others.

There are many stories in my head, though I often find it hard to put them into words.

So I truly hope this short tale speaks to you, even just a little.

THE FLAMES OF TOAFA

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Image pages 1 and 4 from Pinterest

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English

MATA-UTU, HAHAKE, Wallis et Futuna

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Listen to me children... and remember my words... this story happened long ago. It's about a proud fire, a pure love, and an island that forgot its past.

Long ago, in the village of Mata-Utu, lived the powerful TOA tribe. Their land was beautiful—clear water flowed, trees danced in the wind, and the sun warmed the coconut leaves. But peace doesn't last when pride takes over.

During the Water War, the TOA, angry at the VAI tribe, burned their village at night. The VAI died in the flames, and with their last breath, they cursed the TOA : “May your land burn like our bodies ! May your children live in endless thirst !”

From that day, the TOA land turned to ashes. The coconut trees turned black, the rice fields dried up, and no rain ever came. The island called them “TOAFA,” the land of fire—a desert. The tribe barely survived, begging other villages for fresh water.

HOKO, the TOA chief, full of regret, went to see the sorcerer on Owl Hill. The path led to a cave surrounded by burnt trees with black branches reaching to the sky. Inside, skulls hung and swayed in the wind. The sorcerer wore a wild boar skin and stared with dark eyes.

“Wise one !” cried the chief. “My land is dying, my people are starving. Tell me how to break this curse !”

The sorcerer, sitting on a flat rock, spat on the ground—it burst into flames. “It's not the sky that punished you, but your pride. You stole water from sleeping people. Their spirits cursed your tribe to live in fire. I can't help you.”

The chief lowered his head. “I know. I regret it. I'll sacrifice anything to earn back my honor.”

The sorcerer closed his eyes. “On the next full moon, bring me a piece of your dry land and a weapon from your enemy. Maybe then... a prophecy will rise.”

On the full moon, the chief returned with dry soil and a VAI spear. The sorcerer drew a circle, poured the soil in the center, and planted the spear. He walked around the circle, whispering in a strange language, then threw small shells inside. The spear broke, and a terrible scream came from the earth.

The sorcerer trembled, his eyes turned cloudy, and his deep voice echoed : “To break the curse of fire, a night will come when the moon and sun become one. Two flames will be born. When the red moon rises, only one flame will win the water. Find the secret of the water sources, spread it on the ashes, and the land will live again.”

Then he collapsed, shaking.

Ten years passed.

FATA, the chief's second wife, gave birth to twins—two boys who looked the same but had opposite personalities. NUKU, the older, had eyes like a sunset. LAGI, the younger, had eyes calm and clear like a lake. The village called them the twins of destiny. Their father believed the prophecy spoke of them. When they were old enough to marry, he would send them to fulfill their fate.

The village watched them with hope and sadness. They grew up under the shadow of the prophecy. A girl named MANA, daughter of the healer, lived nearby. The three grew up together under the hot desert sun, sharing dreams under the moonlight. But their friendship became a love triangle.



MANA smiled more when LAGI spoke. NUKU watched silently, feeling something he didn't understand. One night, hiding behind a palm tree, he heard MANA whisper to LAGI, “My heart belongs to you. May the sky god be our witness today and forever.” NUKU felt anger rise inside him and walked away. That night, a shadow entered his soul, and the flame in his heart began to darken.

As the years passed, strange signs appeared. The twins sleep was filled with nightmares. LAGI dreamed of a woman made of foam who whispered, “The water sources sleep under the ashes of the water people... but water will only return at the cost of a life.” NUKU saw burned faces telling him to do harm.

Their father, old and tired from hunger, gathered his sons and said : “My two flames, you are now strong. I gave you everything and trained you fairly. The time has come ! One of you will bring back the water. The prophecy cannot be changed. Go now and return safely !”

“Father !” shouted NUKU.

LAGI interrupted, placed a hand on his brother's shoulder to calm him, and turned to his father. “Your wish is our command. After we gather supplies, we’ll leave at dawn. I promise to return victorious.”

Outside the hut, hidden behind a coconut tree, MANA sat down with tears in her eyes and whispered, “Oh god of wind and earth, protect them on their journey !”

The brothers walked together toward their destiny. The desert swallowed them in silence. The hot sand sometimes opened, showing frozen shapes of people who had died screaming. At night, guided by their torches, shadows and smoke danced wildly—damned spirits heading in the same direction. LAGI prayed while NUKU cursed the gods.

The ground burned under their feet. After hours of walking through wind and dust, they saw the old sorcerer sitting on a flat rock.

“You're finally here. Before you continue, solve my riddle and I’ll show you a shorter path.” He drew three circles in the sand and said : “I sleep in the belly of the earth but speak to the sky. I escape all prisons but let myself be carried. I hold the memory of the dead but give life to the living. I'm soft when I fall but terrible when angry. I have no shape or color, yet without me, the world cannot exist. What am I ?”

The twins looked at each other, confused. “It must be the spirit of the wind,” said NUKU. “It speaks to the sky and travels freely.”

“No, it's water,” said LAGI. “It sleeps in the earth, rises to the sky, gives and takes life.” The sorcerer smiled.

“You understand. Water is the key to breaking the fire curse. Truth lies in the humblest element. This shell holds a magic potion to help you defeat the beast. But beware: rage is poison. If it controls you, it will destroy you.”

At the edge of the desert, the ground shook. A roar tore through the sky. TAMAKI, spirit of misery and guardian of the VAI tribe, rose from the ashes. His body was covered in coal-like scales, his eyes were two burning volcanoes. He was the beast, screaming for revenge. “No son of fire shall pass !” he thundered.



The twins charged. LAGI smashed the shell on TAMAKI's head. The potion exploded in a burst of blue light. The monster screamed and fell—but in his fall, he turned into shadow and jumped onto LAGI. TAMAKI possessed LAGI's body.

LAGI's eyes turned black, his voice became harsh. "You were never worthy, NUKU—not in your actions, and not in love. Glory will be mine."

"That's not you speaking ! Give me back my brother, monster!" shouted NUKU, burning with anger. But possessed LAGI laughed, cruel and twisted by hate.

In a moment of rage, NUKU struck his brother's neck with his hammer. LAGI collapsed. TAMAKI screamed and vanished like smoke in the wind. LAGI opened his eyes one last time. His gaze was clear again. He whispered : "Goddess of water... my destiny ends here. Promise me... protect my people." Then he died.

When his blood touched the ground, the earth shook and opened. Rice fields burst from the soil. Rain fell for the first time in twenty-five years. The desert breathed again. NUKU, soaked by the rain, fell to his knees. Water ran over his brother's lifeless body. "My brother ! Forgive me... Rage blinded me... I lost you to bring back the water... Please, forgive me !"

Far away in TOAFA, at the moment LAGI's blood touched the water's land, MANA's heart stopped for a second, then beat fast like it had lost something. She cried without knowing why, and when her tears hit the dry ground, rain began to fall.

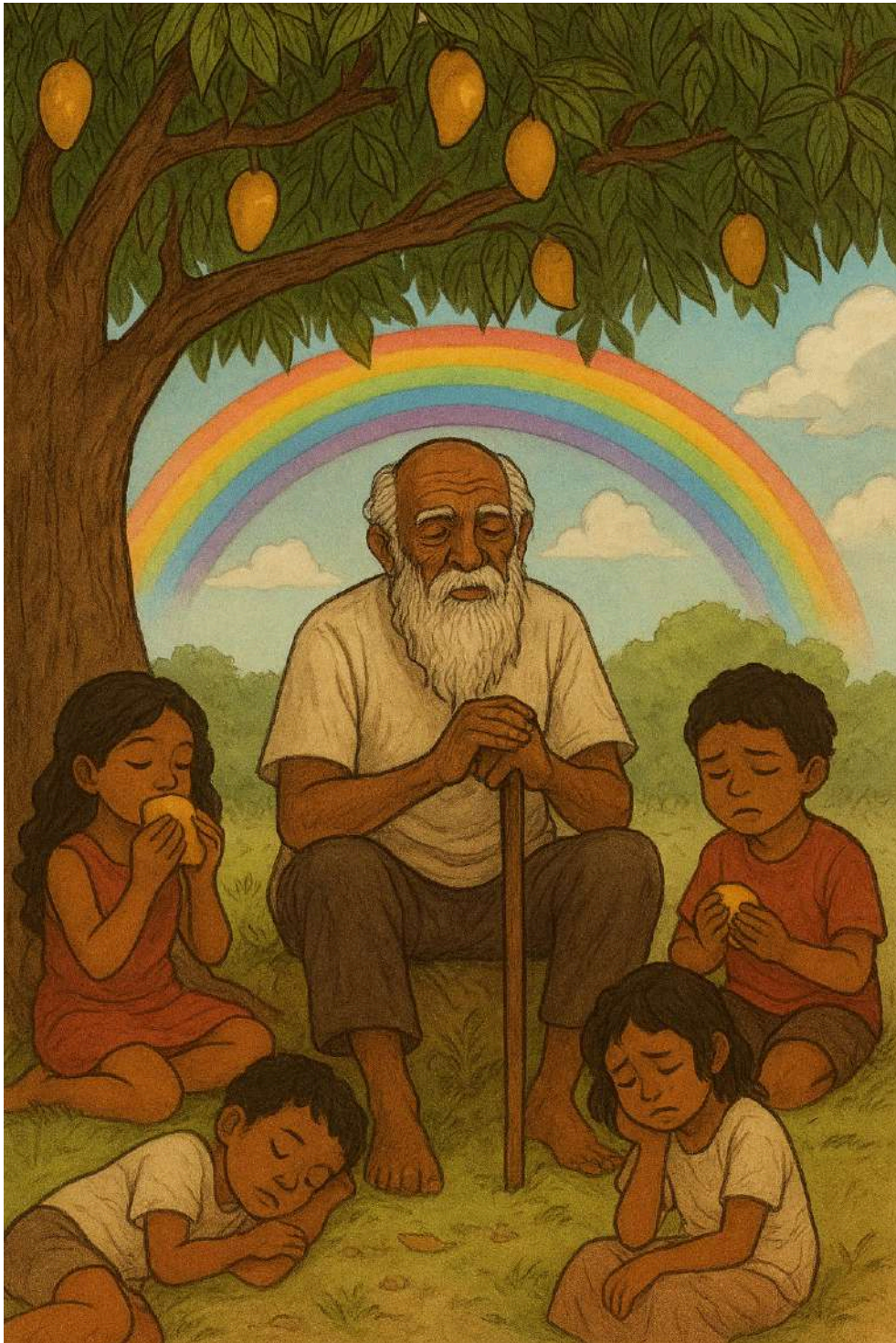
When the only flame returned, carrying the extinguished one, MANA collapsed on LAGI's body and cried : "Oiaue ! LAGI, open your eyes... don't leave me... Oiaue !"

The next week, during the festive mood, the tribe prepared for NUKU and MANA's wedding. But MANA, broken by grief and anger, became very sick the night before being offered as a trophy to the hero.

She whispered : "I curse the gods who stayed silent and let me down. With no reason to live I wish that one day, the whole island will forget you and stop worshipping you." She closed her eyes and fell into eternal sleep.

And so it happened.

Centuries later, the gods were forgotten. The people of Wallis stopped praying at the old altars. The origin of the gods faded from memory. But every time rain falls on TOAFA, it reminds us of the sacrifice of a flame and the tears of his beloved. Recounted the wizard sitting on a flat rock , "Night is falling, it's time to go home... run and don't forget !"
As the children hurried to leave one by one, the last one turned around to say goodbye but the old man had already disappeared, just then he realized something.
The child cried out in terror as he fled "Oh my god ! It's him ! Ah !"



A tale of fire, fate, and forgotten gods.

Long ago, the proud TOA tribe unleashed a fire that cursed their land and turned paradise into desert. Now, only a prophecy offers hope: two flames will rise, but only one will bring back the water.

Born under this ancient curse, twin brothers NUKU and LAGI must face a deadly journey through haunted sands, forbidden love, and a beast born of vengeance. As shadows awaken and gods fall silent, one brother will sacrifice everything.

**Will the island remember the price of salvation?
Or will the flames consume them all?**

