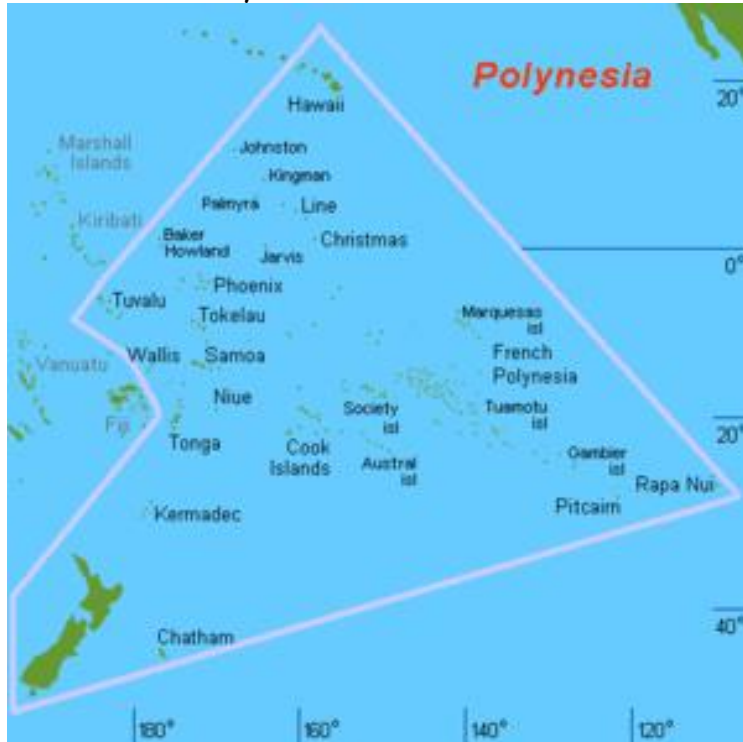


This story is from Polynesia which is a group of islands (there's a clue in the name - poly, means many in Greek and nesia is the Greek word for island). The islands share a language family, beliefs and culture. Do you recognise any of the islands in the Polynesian triangle (it's not quite a perfect triangle but that's what it's called!). If you have a moment, you should search some images of the islands - it really is a beautiful area of the world.



## The Catch

In a vibrant, verdant forest, on a dry, summer's day, a boy (who could not have been more than ten years old) was perched at the edge of a lake. At least, it *appeared* to be a lake, though the water was so low that it was like a bath whose plug had been pulled out minutes before. A handmade fishing rod - a piece of string attached to a stick - dangled in the water. The boy's head was slumped on his knee and his face was glum. It seemed as though he had been sat there for many long, tedious hours. As he waited, his eyes started becoming dark and heavy with fatigue.

Suddenly, the fishing rod wriggled. The string tugged and the stick bent over with the strain of a catch. Alert and excited, the boy jumped up eagerly. He heaved the rod with so much might that he fell backwards. Peering up, he could see a golden, orange fish swinging from the hook. However, the boy's hopeful excitement quickly turned to disappointment, when he grasped the meagre animal in one hand. It could not have been more than 5cm long - certainly not enough to feed himself, let alone a family. He pulled it gently off the hook and carried it over to a woven grass basket, slightly disheartened. Dropping it into the empty container, he breathed a deep sigh, before turning to gaze sadly at a

group of straw huts which stood in a clearing in the forest. His family had placed so much expectation on him and were completely reliant on him securing some sort of meal. Even though he was so young, it was his duty to provide for his group and he had been determined not to go back to them empty-handed. Worry began to plague his mind that they wouldn't be satisfied with what he had caught. His lip began to wobble.

#### Summary:

An unexpected, loud 'snap' sound, followed by a howl, swiftly brought the young fisherman out of his worry! He was instantly concerned for what he had heard in the trees. He scuttled towards where the sound had originated from, hoping to be able to locate the animal that had made it. Gently, he pulled back the leaves to see a fox, with a flaming orange, bushy tail, trapped in a snare! Its leg was caught and the fox was whimpering in pain, unable to free itself. Eyes wide in shock, the boy gasped. Then, with his eyebrows furrowed, he plucked a sharp, pointed knife from his pocket. Holding it high, he marched sternly and purposefully towards the creature.

The fox stared while the boy approached. When he reached it, he stood over it, his shadow looming dark and threatening. The furry prisoner bowed its head and squeezed his eyes tight shut in fear. However, the boy was not trying to hurt the fox. Instead, he used the knife to saw through the snare that had trapped it. The animal took a momentary sigh of relief, glanced at his saviour, then... ran a few metres away from him. He leant down in the grass, glaring at the boy, bearing his sharp teeth and growling in his direction! Then, it leapt suddenly towards the frightened boy, who stumbled backwards. Placing his paws on top of the boy's chest, the fox observed him wince in fear. Moments later, the animal's expression became inquisitive...there was a scent that it had caught. He bounded off the boy and charged through the trees to his basket. The boy followed it with urgency, wondering where it was going. He turned the corner to find the fox sitting by his basket, eyeing up the fish that he had caught earlier...

"Leave that! It's mine!" the boy shouted, sprinting towards his basket in panic. The fox gazed at him, contemplating his next move. It jumped into the basket gleefully, gripped the fish in its mouth and darted off into the jungle! Shocked and angry, the boy chased after him. "Give that back to me! It took me all day to catch that fish and it is the only food I have," he roared fiercely.

He kept on its tracks while it weaved its way effortlessly around tree stumps and under branches. Although it was going to be a hard task to actually catch the fox, who was much stronger and faster than him, the brave boy continued to chase it as hard as he could. He couldn't believe what the fox had done! After saving it, it paid him back by stealing his food! His family were not going to be

happy. This meant sitting for more endless hours, waiting to catch another tiny fish - if he was lucky!

On and on they went, sprinting through the jungle. The fox scrambled through undergrowth. When the young boy reached it, he paused. The thick branches were intertwined, leaving only a tiny gap to crawl through. Protruding from each one were thorns as sharp as needles. "What am I going to do now?" he thought. Wistfully, he turned to look at his family's homes. He remembered that the small community were relying on him. "I must get the fish back!" he whispered determinedly. He bent down low and started to crawl. On and on he crawled, keeping the fox in sight. After he emerged from the spiky passage, his delicate, cotton shorts were prickled and torn. The fearless boy carefully pulled himself free and continued his chase through logs, under trees and across grass.

#### Summary:

The young fisherman was getting tired now. When would this competition end? The fox pelted towards the hill ahead. It bounded up it with ease. Annoyed that it had furthered its lead, the boy furiously scrambled up behind it. The two athletes climbed higher and higher, until there was a chill in the air and a thick, grey mist descended. The wind caught the treasured hat that he had spent so long making; he had fashioned it out of leaves and was really proud of it. It drifted and floated in the air, back down to where he had come from. Anger pulsed through the boy! Everything was going wrong and it was all the fox's fault. "I should have just killed it when I had the chance!" he thought. "Why did I show such sympathy?"

On and on he climbed, the adrenalin pumping through his veins. He reached the top of the hill and came face to face with his nemesis, who still had the valuable prize hanging from its mouth and a cheeky expression on its face. There was a pause, before the fox, without warning, flung the fish off the side of the hill! This was the last straw for the hardworking fisherman! He had chased it for ages and ages, thinking (if he didn't stop him) it was going to eat his fish, only to get to the top and watch him throw it wastefully away!

#### Summary:

All of a sudden, however, the sun burst through the clouds, shining so bright that he had to squint to focus. When his eyes adjusted, what he saw absolutely mesmerised him! Metres from where he was stood stretched open water as far as he could see. The shining sun danced and glittered on the surface, making it look like heaven. He peered down into the water and saw one fish, then another, then another! They were swimming gracefully under the water in countless shoals. It was the most glorious sight.

A shadow appeared and caught his attention to look up. What he saw when he did so was spectacular! He saw the biggest fish, one the size of a whale, leap out of the water and back in again. This was a catch! A giant catch that would feed all of his family and more! Their bellies would be full again and he would be a little hero! The young boy grinned with happiness. Noticing that his eyes had been distracted away from the fox, he searched around him. Down at his feet he was waiting, faithfully, with a stick in its mouth, rubbing against his ankles, like a long lost pet who had found his owner. The boy smiled warmly. The fox had brought him to a place where he could fish successfully - his family would never be hungry again. The young fisherman stroked the fox with thanks, fashioned the stick into a new fishing rod and threw his line into the clear water. Together, they sat at the water's edge, basking in the beautiful sun's rays.

After a wonderful couple of hours fishing, the two friends wandered back to the tribe. The boy was carrying many large fish on his shoulders. The fisherman contemplated his assistant, then tossed a fish in its direction. The fox enthusiastically caught it in his mouth and gave a thankful smile. While the boy wandered back towards his home with his new, superior catch, the fox looked on, pleased with what he had done. His body began to quiver. His fur began to glisten. Hidden in plain sight, the fox disintegrated from its animal form into a sparkling cloud of orange dust, which swept magically up into the sky. Its work, for the day, was done.

**Summary:**