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Mateo Izan Luna

County of Los Angeles, DPH, ebarr021@yahoo.com



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The Sun Child and the Moon Child

Mateo Izan Luna

Once upon a time there was a moon child who fell from the sky. His name was Emsie. He was small and stiff. And he liked to have messy hair. Emsie would spend hours looking at the stars. And every night he'd say, "I wonder if the sun ever misses the moon?" Emsie would turn in his bed and close his eyes, and he would dream of the moon.

One day, it was very sunny, more sunny than Emsie liked. Bright lights bothered Emsie. But then something peculiar happened. The bright lights didn't hurt. Emsie looked at the top of the crater that he lived in, and there was another boy looking down at him. The sun wrapped himself around the boy and Emsie couldn't see. Still, he kept looking because these bright lights didn't bother him.

The boy introduced himself as the Sun Child, Liu. He shared that he'd been living on this planet for quite some time, but he'd never met someone who lived in a crater before. "That's fun!" said Liu.

Liu and Emsie quickly became friends. They shared laughs and snacks, and shared stories about the moon and the sun. They both thought the sky must look so pretty when the sun and the moon get to share it together.

That's when Liu had an idea! He wanted to help Emsie come out of his crater! Liu heard that if you stand on the tallest mountain where the waterfalls babble and the wind blows north instead of south, the sun and the moon come out to play, if only for a moment. Emsie was so excited! He offered, "How can I help!?" He told Liu about the kind of minerals that composed the walls of his crater. He explained how the pressure and heat of his fall had coated the walls with specks of diamond.

Liu listened very intently to every detail. He saw how excited Emsie looked to share everything there was to know about his crater. But Liu knew that the crater wouldn't lift Emsie out. Emsie and Liu needed to work together to

accomplish that themselves. He asked Emsie if he had any ideas on how he might get out.

Emsie had wild ideas! He asked Liu to bring two giant magnets, one for each of them to hold. But every time that Liu tried to drop one of them for Emsie it came right back up! They laughed and laughed with every failed attempt. They tried to fill the crater with water, but the crater's porous floor seemed so parched. It was always gone after Liu and Emsie blinked.

Liu didn't have any rope, but he went home and brought all the blankets, shirts, and pants he could find. He tied them all together and dropped his daisy chain all the way down. Emsie cried when he saw that it was just out of his reach.

Liu wasn't discouraged, but he decided to pause to talk to Emsie. Liu reminded him that every day the sun and the moon meet on that mountain—even for just a moment! They aren't sad when they say goodbye, they smile and embrace and say, "I love you." Then they come back the next day to do it again. Emsie stopped crying. He was ready to try again.

Liu and Emsie were out of ideas. They thought about bringing a team of sharks who might be able to lift Emsie out by force. But it was too dangerous, and Emsie didn't trust sharks.

One day Liu sat, pensive, at the top of the crater. Emsie loved when Liu sat there. The light always seemed so pretty as it wrapped around his silhouette. Emsie couldn't decide if it had been moments or hours when Liu finally spoke.

And Liu had a crazy idea! Emsie always said he felt so heavy down here, away from the moon. On the moon he was light. So Liu decided he would go to the moon and bring one of its stones down to Emsie! It had to work!

Emsie jumped around and danced! Liu had never seen him so happy! "Of course! If you bring some of the moon, I'm sure I can get out! But how will you do it?"

Liu seemed pleased at Emsie's reaction. But there was something in the corner of his eye that Emsie didn't understand. Liu said not to worry. He would be back in a few days.

Emsie waited patiently. He counted the days until Liu's return. On the first day, Emsie sang all his favorite songs and wrote a play about butterflies in the spring. On the second day, Emsie wrote a letter to the sun thanking him for dropping Liu so they could meet. On the third day, while Emsie was almost done counting all the diamonds in the wall, Liu came back! He looked tired but with a smile that shone through the blinding sun's hug.

Emsie and Liu didn't know what to say. This had been the longest they'd been apart since they'd met. After a moment more they laughed as they could feel their own folly.

After a moment of hesitation, Liu dropped something into the crater. It seemed to be a stone wrapped in a blue cloth with orange flowers stitched into it. There was a note. It read, "To my dearest son, Liu told me all about your predicament. I'm sending you my favorite stone. This is the stone from which you were born. I hope that it might help you find your way. Love, the Moon."

The note was still warm in Emsie's hands, like his mother had just written it. He folded it neatly and tucked it into his pocket. Then he carefully unwrapped the stone. It was beautiful: pitch black with volcanic rock embedded into it. A remnant of the asteroid that tore the moon apart from this planet. It must have traveled so far to reach me, thought Emsie. He was filled with something he couldn't quite name. A warmth that reached every part of his body. And as he looked up at Liu, he couldn't hold back the tears.

Liu stared down. He was so relieved that Emsie was happy. The whole way back he dreamt of Emsie's smile. It was a sharp happiness as he saw the tears well and roll from Emsie's eyes.

Emsie tied the cloth around his wrist and examined the stone. It felt heavy in his hands. But he felt so light while he held it. His mother's love was almost enough to make him float!

Emsie took the stone in hand and climbed out of the crater. His body was light, and his happiness trumped the soreness that kept growing with every diamond and stone he used to pull himself up.

Finally, he reached the top. Liu looked happy. But still there was something in the corner of his eye, and this time it was bigger. Without thinking, Emsie reached to hug Liu. But Liu stepped back.

“What’s wrong? I wanted to thank you,” said Emsie.

“No. It’s fine. I’m really happy we finally got you out of your crater,” Liu said as his mouth curled down.

There was a long pause as Emsie stared at Liu. Liu couldn’t look back.

“I can’t come with you to see the moon and the sun,” said Liu. He still couldn’t look at Emsie’s eyes.

“Why not? Didn’t you want to come with me?” Emsie was confused and hurt.

“I do—I did. But I can’t anymore. The sun heard about what I did. He said that it was not my place to go to the moon and speak to her. The sun told me—that you had it in you to climb out the whole time. He said you could have climbed out if you trained every day. He said you wasted your time singing songs and writing plays.” Liu turned around. He couldn’t show his face anymore.

Emsie’s thoughts stopped. The words bounced off of him as he stared at Liu.

“No one told me I could have climbed the wall on my own. I didn’t kn—”

“But you could’ve. And you only had to try.” Liu was firm.

“I’m sorry, Liu. I wish I’d known sooner.”

“It’s fine. I’m happy you could leave your crater. I’m going to go home now. I’ve spent too much time away to come see you every day. I hope you understand but I need to tend to myself now.”

Emsie had no words. He stared at the ground. And when he looked back up, Liu was gone.

Emsie's eyes wandered for a moment, then they became fixed on where Liu had stood. There was a small crater between the marks his feet left behind. A well of tears refracted sunlight. Emsie hadn't once thought about how hard Liu was trying. He sat on the ground and held his knees. He stared at the tears for days.

The Sun watched the moon child's tears flow and mix with his sun child's own tears. And for the first time, the Sun took pity on a child born from the moon.

Liu's tears began to harden. They took the shape of a tiny sun. When Emsie's eyes were met with new light, his own tears stopped.

The Sun was bright. It came down on Emsie like molten heat. Then. The Sun spoke.

"I refuse to allow this pity, this ruminative grief last any longer. You are a moon child, damn it! You fell from the sky! You of all people should know your own worth. Your fall was not a punishment. Look inside your crater. Do you think anyone could create diamonds with their fall? How do you think my child would feel to see you so? He gave you all the tools you needed to succeed yet you wallow. Pity, boy. You are not worthy of his emblem. If you will not value this gift then I would urge you to return it to the well of love where it belongs."

Emsie never once looked at the Sun. The pain of its light was too much when Liu wasn't around. But he listened intently. And he knew the Sun was right.

Emsie sat for a moment while the Sun turned three times. He took a deep breath and shut out the Sun's voice, his light, his presence. He emptied his lungs and inhaled new life. He opened his eyes to find himself in his own time and space.

Emsie picked up Liu's emblem. It was simultaneously warm and cool in his hands. He held it up to see the light refract one more time. Then he pinned

it to his shirt, center left. Emsie looked up at the Sun and said, “I appreciate that you took interest in speaking to me—not many do. I’ll be on my way now. But I’ll see you again—in the sky.” Emsie paused to think, “And I suppose, I’ll see you again—and mother—together on that mountain.” He hummed satisfaction. Then he turned from the Sun and began to walk.

The Sun turned red. “Where are you going, moon child!?”

Emsie turned towards the Sun once more. Its boiling skin crackled to drown out Emsie’s voice, “I am the Moon Child, Emsie.” It echoed, but no louder than a whisper. “And I’m going to go find my friend. I think he needs my help!”

For a moment time stopped. And everyone looked up. The Sun had forgotten whether it was dawn or dusk.

The Moon smiled on the horizon and began to rise.

Emsie turned from the Sun, and this time, the Sun’s light, its blazing voice felt so far. Whatever he was saying, Emsie could only feel the cool side of Liu’s emblem. It kept him grounded. And although every step felt heavy, he moved forward. First, to help Liu. And then he’d enjoy the sun and the moon’s dance. Besides, thought Emsie, I’m sure it’ll still be fun on my own.

Mateo Izan Luna is a Research and Evaluation Analyst at LA County Department of Public Health.