



Title:	The secret of the hidden sun
Description:	<p><i>“Cagn (/kaggen) was the first being; he gave orders and caused all things to appear, and to be made, the sun, moon, stars, wind, mountains, and animals.”</i> (The words of 'Qing', a young Bushman of the Maluti mountains, as told to Joseph Orpen and reported by him in <i>Cape Monthly Magazine</i> in 1874. Qing also told Orpen a myth in which 'kanna', a bush which if burned gave off a smoke that could magically change people or send them to sleep. (Kanna is a real plant that grows in dry places and, if smoked, sends people into a dreamy state. It has long been used for various purposes by the Bushman people, the facts of which have recently been reported in the press.))</p> <p>The children of /kaggen were sent by the old women to steal up to the sleeping sun and <i>“to lift up the sun’s armpit that they might throw up the sun armpit that the (Bushman’s) rice (termite larvae) might dry for them, that the sun might make bright all places and goes (go) along all the sky, therefore, he makes bright all the earth with it.”</i> (The words of kabbo, an old xam Bushman, talking to Lucy Loyd and translated by her in 1874 – see the DVD of the Bleek and Lloyd archive in Pippa Skotnes’s ‘Claim to the Country’ published by Jacana Media in 2007.)</p>
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When the world was still young, Kaggen made the great mountains to rise up. He shaped valleys with laughing rivers running through them. He commanded the wind to blow and to make clouds so that the rain could water the earth. He made the animal people. He made us. And then he made the sun, the moon and the star people.

In the beginning, the sun's brightness lit the whole earth. But the sun, who was then a man, was greedy about his brightness. He was even jealous of the moon's pale light: a small part of his brightness that she stole from him when he fell asleep each evening. The sun wanted no other light to shine in the sky. So he took his knife and, bit by bit, he cut the moon back until she seemed to die. But she refused to die. She always grew again.

Gradually, as time went by, the sun became bitter and angry. He became fierce and cruel. To punish the moon, he decided to hide his brightness in his armpit – not only from her, but from all living things. Cunningly, he hid away in a cave. Only when he needed to fetch something from a dark corner would he lift his arm for an instant to show him the way.

The first people, those of the early race who then lived on the earth, were very unhappy about this. They longed for the sun's brightness which he now so greedily hid away for himself. They longed to warm their hands in his rays when the biting, cold frost covered the ground. They longed to sit with their backs against a warm rock when the old people told stories of Kaggen's making of the earth. They longed for the warmth of the sun that would also open the flowers so that the bees could collect nectar to make sweet honey for them.

But most of all, they longed for the sun's light that would bring them meat; the light that would show their hunters where even a thin buck might still be grazing the now pale, struggling grass stems. They desperately needed their hunters to bring meat again to their fire as their



bellies were now hungry and aching. They needed the light that was hidden from them in the armpit of the sun.

At last, the people had had enough of the sun's selfishness. Huddling around their fire in the cold darkness, they talked about what they could do to make the sun's brightness shine for them and all the earth again.

First, Kwassin, the best and bravest hunter, spoke up. "It's wrong that the sun now keeps his brightness to himself. Sharing is our way. Therefore it's wrong that he does not share it with us. He wrongs us. He wrongs the whole earth. And worst of all, he wrongs Kaggen who did *not* make the sun's brightness for him alone!"

The people nodded. "Eh! Eh! It's true! It's true!" they said.

Shaking his fist in the air, Kwassin said, "Leave this to me. Even though the sun is fierce and cruel, am I not brave; am I not strong? I'll capture him in my net. I'll throw this selfish sun high into the sky so that he can no longer hide his brightness from us!"

The people cheered. "Do it for us, Kwassin! You're brave! You're strong! Do it for us!" they called out with one voice.

So Kwassin picked up his net of tightly knotted thongs and set off for the sun's cave. As he drew near, he bent low. Silently, very slowly, he stalked from rock to rock. He could now see the dark shape of the sun hunched up on a ledge at the entrance to his cave. Quietly, he spread his net, ready to throw it over the sun.



But at that moment, the sun turned to face him. “Ha!” he cried. “So you think you can creep up on me so easily, do you? Your footsteps were as loud as those of a clumsy buffalo!” he laughed. “You think you’re brave. You think you’re strong. Well, try this!” And with that he lifted his arm. The sun’s brightness stabbed straight into Kwassin’s eyes. So close it was, so fiercely hot and bright, that Kwassin was blinded, altogether blinded. Staggering backwards, he sank to the ground crying out with the pain of his burned eyes. Still crying pitifully, he groped and crawled away towards where the people were still gathered.

When the people heard Kwassin’s cries of pain, they knew that he had failed. They knew that, brave and strong as he was, he had failed to capture the sun. “What’ll we do now?” they asked each other. “If our bravest and strongest hunter cannot capture the sun, who can?”

For a while, there was silence. Then, Tsitsi, a beautiful and clever young maiden spoke up. “Let *me* try,” she said in her soft, musical voice. “Am I not beautiful? Am I not clever? The sun must be tricked. I’ll tempt him into my arms with my beauty and my smile. Then, when his eyes are closed in bliss, I’ll throw him high into the sky.”

There were chuckles from the older women. “It’s sad, but true,” said one. “No man can resist the smile of a beautiful young maiden! Let Tsitsi try her smile on the sun.”

So it was that Tsitsi set off for the sun’s cave. Stepping boldly through the grass, her beautiful, soft skin shining in the light of the moon, she could see the sun watching her. Swaying her beautiful, young body, she approached his ledge. Not a word did she say but, dropping her head, she smiled temptingly up at him from the corner of her eyes.



The sun just laughed. “Ha!” he said. “So you think you can trick me so easily, do you? Your smile is indeed beautiful but your eyes are as cunning as those of the wily jackal. They give you away.”

Then angrily he said, “Now you’ll pay for your trickery. I’ll melt you into stone. For as long as my brightness does not shine, you’ll be but a beautiful, stone maiden: a maiden of stone to remind all men of your tempting ways.”

With that the sun flashed his fierce, hot brightness at her. And, with one brief wail, she was melted into rock: a beautiful stone maiden who for an instant shone golden in the light of the sun’s brightness.

When the people saw the bright flash and heard Tsitsi’s wail, they knew that she had failed. They knew that, beautiful and clever as she was, she had failed to capture the sun. Again they asked each other, “What’ll we do now? If our most beautiful and clever maiden cannot capture the sun, who can?”

For a long moment there was silence. No one could think of an answer. Then, softly on the wind, they heard the voice of Kaggen. “Send our children to capture the sun,” he breathed. “It is they who understand the ways of the sun: it is they who know the secret of how to send him to sleep so that he will not awake and harm them.”

So Kaggen’s wife called her two sons to her. “Kogas, you and your brother Gwi know the sun’s secret,” she said to her eldest son. “Your father, Kaggen, has told us so. Because only you two know his secret, it’s you who must capture the sun and throw him into the sky so that his brightness can shine again for us.”



Knowing what had happened to Kwassin and Tsitsi, the boys were afraid.

"But mother," said Kogas, "we may know the secret of what sends him to sleep, but even if we do, the sun may wake up and burn our eyes!"

"Ai, Ai!" cried Gwi. "He...he may even melt us into stone!"

"And how are we to throw him into the sky?" asked Kogas. "We're not strong like Kwassin. We're not clever like Tsitsi."

Their mother put her arms gently around them both. Looking into their eyes, she said, "Trust in your father, Kaggen. He knows all things: he would not otherwise have told me to send you. Kaggen will help you. Be sure of that!"

So the boys set off for the sun's cave. Quietly, silently, they stepped. As they slipped through the bushes, they made not a sound.

First, they searched for a kanna plant. "Sniff the air, Gwi," whispered Kogas. "Sniff the air for the scent of kanna. If we burn it just a little, its smoke will send him to sleep."

Very soon, Gwi found a kanna bush. Without a word, he beckoned to Kogas to come and help him. They both picked handfuls of its soft, scented branches. Then, silently, stealthily as mice, they crept towards the sun's cave. He must not hear them. He must not see them. If he did, he could flash his fierce brightness upon them: blind them; melt them to stone.



Hiding well out of sight below the ledge, they carefully put some kanna leaves on a little burning coal they'd secretly taken from their fire. Then they waited. Tensely, they waited for the light breeze to carry a soft curl of smoke to the sun's nose.

At last, "I can hear him snoring!" whispered Gwi in Kogas' ear. Kogas held his finger to his lips and simply nodded upwards. It was time for them to move over the ledge.

Without stirring even a pebble, first Kogas and then Gwi crept over the ledge. The sun lay sleeping in the back of his cave.

Then, just as Kogas drew near, the sun stirred.

He grunted.

The boys froze.

They dared not even breathe.

Quaking with fear, they waited...and they waited....

Then, at last, very gradually, he began snoring again.

With a sigh, the boys began to breathe once more.



Finally, Kogas nodded and, with their hearts in their mouths in fear that he would wake again as they tried to lift him, they bent, trembling, down towards the sleeping sun.

But at that very moment a great wind, Kaggen's wind, gusted through the cave. With a powerful thrust, the wind swept the sun far over the hills and high up into the eastern sky.

As Kaggen's wind whirled and tumbled the sun through the air, his arms were thrown up and he could no longer hide his brightness in his armpit. With a golden glow, the sun lit the very tops of the mountains in the west.

Kogas and Gwi danced with delight around the ledge. "See the mountains, Kogas!" laughed Gwi. "See how they glow!"

"And look, look how the sun's brightness grows, Gwi!" sang out Kogas. "Soon he'll light everything! Soon we'll feel his warmth on our faces!"

Then, with a gasp, he shouted, "Look Gwi! Tsitsi's come alive again!" Laughing with joy, Tsitsi took the boys' hands. "Come, quick," she said, "let's run back to the others."

When the people saw Kogas, Gwi and Tsitsi, now shining in the sun's brightness, running towards them, they cheered. Even blinded Kwassin cheered. With one voice, they hailed their young heroes who had released the greedy sun's brightness; had brought their beautiful Tsitsi back to life.



Soon, as the sun rolled further up the sky, the birds in the bushes began to sing. Then the flowers lifted their heads to his warmth and the bees began to hum happily amongst them: gathering nectar to make sweet honey for them again.

At long last, the hidden sun's brightness could warm and light the whole earth.

The Bushman myth

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