

Moon Bound

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The sand beneath their tiny webbed feet had finally turned cool, a faint salty scent had filled the air. Four sets of little wide eyes stared up at miniature particles of sand tumbling one after the other as the evening sea breeze whisked across their nest. Tarcoola knew this was it. The moment his mother had been preparing him and his siblings for. The most dangerous mission of all was now only moments away.

Tarcoola, a Flatback baby sea turtle was the eldest of three siblings. The four baby Flatback turtles had learnt from their wise and beautiful mother about the great mission to the moon they must take. It was the mission all turtles must embark on. For the turtle who finds the moon, finds the great sea and only then will life's big adventure really begin.

The white light was much brighter tonight, dancing across the sand just the way his mother had described it would. The moon was finally calling them. Calling them home.

Tarcoola had spent the last few nights staring up into the starlit sky with his friend Djinda from the turtle nest next-door. Tarcoola couldn't imagine there would ever be another turtle kinder than Djinda. She told Tarcoola fascinating stories about the stars that her mother had taught her. Djinda didn't have any siblings that survived to hatch like she had. She was grateful to have found a friend in Tarcoola. He was grateful in return for her company too. He could listen to her tell stories of the stars all night long. Tarcoola loved that he had found a friend who loved the night sky as much as he did.

Tonight was a very different night to the previous nights he'd spent with Djinda staring up the stars though.

Tarcoola was now listening intently to his mother's final words of wisdom with his brother and sisters as they got ready for their big take off.

"Stay together. As fast as your legs can carry you, run towards the moon. It will get brighter as you get closer. The sound of the sea will get louder, that's how you'll know you're getting closer. Follow Tarcoola all the way until you reach the moon. Once you feel the water beneath your feet, you'll be there. You'll be at the moon. Keep running until you feel yourself become weightless in the ocean. You'll know when you've made it. There is no feeling quite like it".

Tarcoola knew it wasn't just a matter of running fast towards the moon. His mother had told them of the dangers that lurked in the moonlight. Predators. Seabirds were known on this beach for making baby sea turtles their dinner on the night of a full moon.

Tarcoola wondered if Djinda was being given a similar final lesson right now too. He hoped that they would find each other at the moon. That they would share more stories of the night sky as they became weightless in the sea for the first time together. He wasn't sure though.

Turtle families kept to themselves on the night of the full moon. It was a final time for families to be together. All he knew was that all baby turtles on the beach would be charging for the moon tonight.

It was time to go. The turtles lined up one behind the other and waited for their mothers command. "Get ready my babies, GO!" yelled Tarcoola's mum.

They were off. Tarcoola charged out of the nest with his brother and sisters following closely behind. As they came out into the bright moonlight, things got confusing. Tarcoola paused. Why were there two moons? Two moons in opposite directions? He remembered his mum telling them the sea will get louder as you head towards the moon. He started to run again. It was happening, the sound of the sea was getting louder. Just as he hit full speed he noticed something in the distance. It was Djinda running in the wrong direction. She was running towards the other moon. He didn't understand why there were two moons but he knew the one Djinda was running towards was not the moon that lead to the sea. He had to do something. He had to stop her.

Tarcoola yelled out to his brother and sisters "Keep running in this direction. I'll be right behind you again soon. I have to get Djinda". His siblings nodded with wide fearful eyes and they kept running towards the sea.

Tarcoola spun around in the other direction and ran as fast as he could toward Djinda. "Djinda, stop!" but she didn't stop. She couldn't hear him. The sound of the sea started to fade as he got closer to Djinda. Instead, other sounds became louder. Cars and the sound of human voices were on the air. It wasn't another moon they were running towards. It was human's manmade lights. They were everywhere on the streets, drowning out the night sky.

Tarcoola caught up to Djinda who's eyes were wide and teary now. "Oh Tarcoola, what have I done?". "It's ok" Tarcoola replied. "The humans made a fake moon but we're going to be ok. The real moon is this way. Follow me".

The pair of baby turtles were now in full pursuit towards the real moon. The sound of the sea grew louder. They were getting closer.

Then another sound echoed behind them. The squawk of seagulls filled the air. Tarcoola knew what this was. The seagulls were awake and turtle was on the menu.

"WE HAVE TO RUN FASTER, DJINDA. FAST LIKE THOSE SHOOTING STARS YOU TOLD ME ABOUT".

The turtles legs were spinning faster than ever. The birds squawks grew louder but all of sudden, SPLASH. Tarcoola and Djindra suddenly became weightless. They were swimming in the moonlit sea for the very first time. Tarcoola saw his brother and sisters smiling with delight just up ahead. They had made it. The great turtle adventure had begun.