


The Summer Sun and the Yup'ik Boy

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How can it be
bedtime when the
sun is still up?



In the summer, in my village in Alaska, the sun hardly goes to bed. He stays up until after midnight. I wonder what his mother is thinking to let him stay up so late.

“Wassie, time for little Yup’ik boys to

take their steam baths and get ready for bed,” my mom says after dinner.

I look outside. “It’s not time for bed,” I say. “The sun is still high in the sky.”


“*Ampi!*” my mom says. That’s a Yup’ik word. It means “Hurry up, and don’t bother arguing.”

The steam bath is between the smokehouse and the woodshed in our



“*Ampi!*”

The Yup’ik word *ampi* (UHM-pee) means “hurry up.”



backyard. In the wintertime the lazy sun stays in bed most of the day. It's too cold and dark to dawdle on the way to the steam bath. But today, in summertime, there are fireweed flowers to pick and anthills to watch and coffee-can boats to float in the river.

“*Ampi!*” Mommy calls out the back door, reminding me to hurry. “Soon the men will put more wood on the fire and make it too hot for you.”

In the steam bath I listen to Grandpa Shorty and Dad and the other village men swap stories. After a while Dad hears me laughing at one of Grandpa's jokes.

“Wash your hair, Wassie,” he tells me. “Time for little Yup'ik boys to get to bed.”

“It's still daylight,” I say.

“*Ampi!*” my dad says.

“Hurry!”

After I'm done washing, I dry off and dress in my pajamas.

No one has to tell me to *ampi* home from the steam bath. I've washed off my crust of bug spray and dirt, and the mosquitoes and no-see-ums bite me as I run to the house. It's as if they never tasted anything better than clean little

Yup'ik boy.

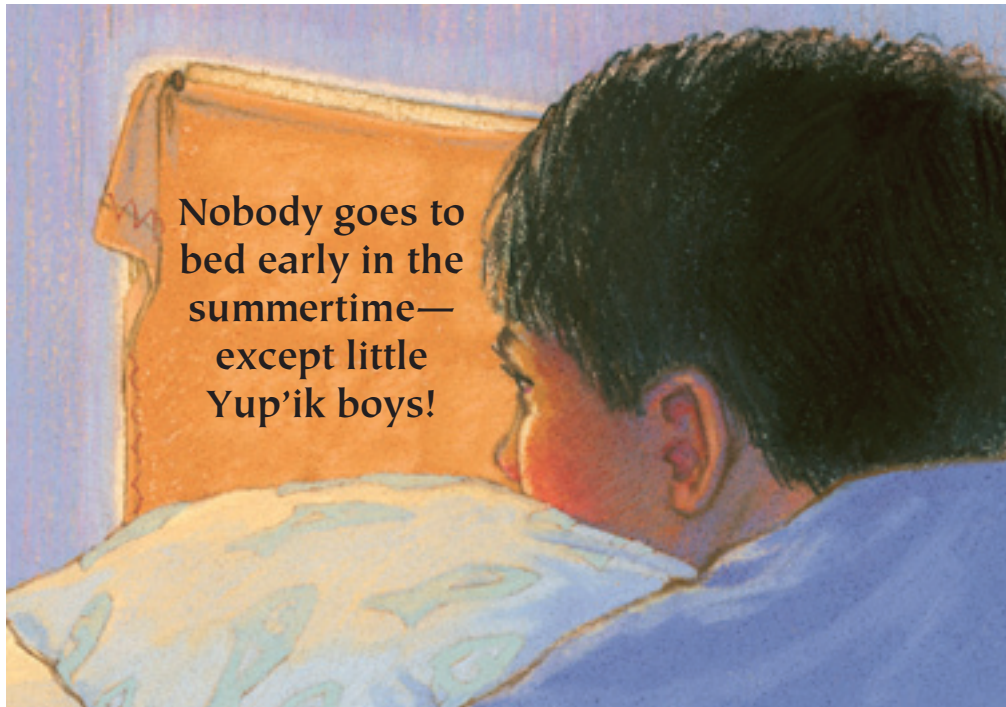
“Get to bed,” Mom says as she bends to kiss my head.

I look at my big sisters, who sit at the kitchen table weaving grass baskets. “I think I'll help make baskets,” I say.

Mom points down the hall toward my room. “*Ampi!*” she says.

I crawl into bed.

Daddy has nailed a blanket over my window. The sun doesn't mind. He peeks in the cracks at the edges. I can see it is still light outside.



And the house is hot.

And a mosquito buzzes by my ear.

And my sisters laugh in the kitchen.

Nobody in the village goes to bed early in the summertime. Nobody except little Yup'ik boys, that is.

I wish someone would tell the old sun to go to bed. *Ampi!* ❖