THE ROBBERS AND THE MOON
by Hans Wilhelm

Based on a Balinese folktale
A long, long time ago, when the world was still a little younger, there was not just one, but two moons in the starry sky.
At that time there lived three merry robbers. Their hide-ode was under the old bridge where they shared their loot together.

They were not really bad robbers who would scare people and took all their possessions. They never took too much for themselves. The little they needed they ‘borrowed’ from the farmers or the towns people. Here they took a little pig, there a hen, here a new hat, there a new coat. Naturally they could only do this during the night when everybody was asleep and no one could see them.
During the day the three robbers enjoyed their deep sound sleep under the bridge. Their loud snoring was drowned by the noises of the carts and footsteps above them.
Everyone was on their way to the market. Except the three robbers who dreamed the day away.
When night came they would get up, stretch themselves and have a little bite to eat before they went on their secret ‘borrowing tour’.
It was a good life for the robbers and they were pretty content with their lot. But one night it all came to a sudden end - with a big loud, thunderous

**CRASH!!!!**
One of the two moons had fallen from the sky and had landed in a big apple tree. There the moon sat between the branches and was shining brightly as ever. The world around the moon suddenly became light as day.
The people rushed from everywhere to look at the moon in the tree. Suddenly there were no more nights. The earth was always brightly lit which made all the people very happy.
They could work whenever they wanted... or rest whenever they felt like it. But the children loved the moon most because they no longer had to go to sleep.
Everybody was happy except the three robbers, of course. They couldn’t work without the darkness.
“If we ever want to have ourselves a nice juicy pork again,” they said, “we have to get rid of this moon!” So they sat down and debated what to do. And as they were robbers they soon concluded that the only decent thing for them to do was to steal the moon.
But it did not work. The moon was far too big and far too heavy. As hard as they tried they could not move the moon on single inch.
“What shall we do now?” they asked. For they all feared that they may be forced to learn an honest trade if they could not get rid of the moon.

“We have to think of something else!” they decided and after a lengthy debate they agreed to cover up the moon.
A whole day they spent scavenging for scraps of paper, cloths, old carpets and the like. But when they finally spread their treasures over the moon they realized that the moon was far too big and it would take them years to cover the whole surface.
By now their stomachs were getting very noisy!
“We have to do something fast!” They all agreed.
“How about if we chop the moon into little pieces.”
Said one of them. And since no one had a better idea they went to work right away.
But the moon was far too hard. With their hammers and wedges they could barely make a scratch on the surface. Sad and gloomy the robbers returned to their hideout.
They were just contemplating their imminent fate of starvation when one of them had a brilliant idea. It was a little unusual, they agreed, but since everything else had failed it would be worth trying.
The three robbers sniggered and giggled as they climbed up the apple tree.
And as soon as they had reached the top they began to put out the moon’s light. It sizzled and crackled and the light of the moon went dim. Suddenly there was a loud **CRACK** and the darkened moon split right through the middle.
The three robbers were so surprised that they lost their balance and tumbled down - one by one. They were quickly caught and put into jail for all the pigs and other things they had ‘borrowed’ over the years.
The moon in the apple tree was no more. Night time returned to Earth and everybody had to go to bed again.
But the three robbers were not too sad. As winter was approaching they were rather happy to have found a warm place to live - with regular meals!

But - like everybody else - they keep hoping that the other moon will always stay up in the sky.