

# The Moon & the First Mate

Uruguay  
Guarani  
South America



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## STORY OF THE MONTH - FEBRUARY 2026 - STORY CROSSROADS - STORYCROSSROADS.ORG

Long ago, before borders were drawn and before the land had a single name, the Moon, Yací, watched the wide plains and slow rivers of the south. She saw people moving across open grasslands, resting beneath ombú trees, listening to the wind, and sharing what little they carried. Curious about this quiet way of living, Yací chose to come down to the earth to see it for herself.

Disguised as a young woman, she walked along the edge of the forest with her companion, Araí, the cloud. As dusk settled, a jaguar emerged from the shadows, its eyes fixed on them. A hunter from the plains heard the struggle and rushed forward, driving the animal away and standing guard until the danger passed.

The man did not ask who the women were or where they came from. He invited them to his fire near the river, shared his food, and offered them rest beneath the open sky. He spoke little, as was his way, but his welcome was complete.

When dawn came, the young woman stepped into the light and revealed herself as Yací, rising into the sky with a glow that silenced the birds. Before leaving, she thanked the hunter for his courage, but more for his generosity, given freely and without expectation. As a gift, she showed him a green plant growing nearby and taught him how to dry its leaves and prepare them with hot water.

“This drink,” Yací told him, “will travel far across this land. It will be passed from hand to hand, warming people on long rides and quiet mornings. It will keep them awake to one another, reminding them that no one stands alone.”

The man shared the plant and its preparation with others, and the custom spread across the plains and along the rivers. To this day, when people in Uruguay sit together and pass the mate gourd in a circle, they repeat an old act of trust and hospitality. And when the moon rises over the campo, some say Yací still looks down, remembering the night she was welcomed as a guest.

**A Guaraní legend told in many regions, including Paraguay, northern Argentina, southern Brazil, and Uruguay. This retelling emphasizes a Uruguay-centered perspective, shaped by the land and social traditions of the Río de la Plata.**

