



Why the Sun Hides Before a Storm

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Mythology

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Beloved, many years ago, there lived a child, just like you. The world was beautiful then, with skies as blue and clear as a robin's egg. There was no grass and there were no trees, for the child was to have room to run and play unhindered by trees and forests. Only the deep blue ocean stood at the edge of the soft sandy beaches. Each day the ocean waves came gently to visit the child and urged the child to play in the warm surf. There were fish to be caught for food, and the ocean water for drinking, for the ocean was not salty in those days, but was clear and fresh. Each day, the sun came out and shone brightly and watched over the child. The child loved to laugh and to run, and Beloved, just like you, the child had humor, and liked to tease.

One day, the child went out among the waves and said to the sea, "I wish you and the sun would have a contest, to see who the best playmate for me could be!" The child said this with an air of mischievousness, knowing that both the sun and the sea lived to see the child wake each morning and fought for the child's attention. "I will be the better playmate," thought the sea, and vowed to amuse the child. The sea churned great waves and tossed the child about, always careful to make sure that no harm would come to the child. With great waves, the sea bounced the child and carried the child to shore again and again, only with such force that the sea failed to notice that great, salty rocks began to be chipped away by the force and fell into the sea, causing it to become salted. Finally, the child grew tired of playing, and emerged from the sea with wrinkly, salty hands and feet and

with the memory of waves pounding in the child's head.

The sun, not to be outdone, shone with all brightness on the child, instantly drying the child's skin, and warming the child's tired and chilled arms and legs. This was pleasant, and the child drew great happiness from running and jumping in the thin, dry air, doing cartwheels while the sun beamed down to watch over. The sun grew so jealous of the sea, however, that the sun beamed relentlessly at the child, hoping to envelop the child in his rays. The sun was determined to impress the child more with its shining than the sea had with its buffeting waves. In the bright rays of the sun, the child's skin grew dark and soon the child began to feel hot, and to sweat and feel the unpleasant prickling of too much sun on skin.

The sea, recognizing an opportunity, tried to beckon the child back into the water. He was ignored by the child, who by now had grown tired of the game. The sea, determined to attract the child's attention, made great waves and pounded at the rocks until many of the rocks were reduced to almost powder, the tiny grains of sand that you see on beaches to this day, Beloved. When the gods saw that the sun and the sea were at war for the child's attention, and when they saw the destruction that was beginning to result, they held a council, and decided to intervene.

Sophrosyne, the goddess of moderation, was charged with the task of keeping peace between the warring elements of sun and sea. She spoke first to the sea, telling the sea that he must relent at least twice a day, to give the child a chance to rest and pursue other amusements. Twice a day she granted the sea permission to create a great roar of waves, to create a stir of excitement for the child. These periods of calm and excitement became these periods, which then became the tides. Sophrosyne next spoke to the sun, telling her that she would sleep for half of each day, so that the child could rest, and so that the child's skin would not be scalded by the sun's hot rays. The sun was so saddened by this that she had to find a distraction for her time away from the child. She therefore stared at the moon, and scattered tiny eyes, the stars, all over the sky, to keep watch over the child by night.

When the sea found out that the sun had cheated Sophrosyne by creating the stars to watch over the child, he was furious. He told Sophrosyne that the sun was cheating. Sophrosyne, ever the one to ensure fairness, gave the sea an extra opportunity. The sea, she said, could churn up and throw itself down on earth as rain, even without warning, so that the sea had an equal opportunity to be with the child. When the sun heard about this, she was so embarrassed that any time it rained, she would run away and hide behind the clouds. And that, Beloved, is how it came to be that the sun hides before a storm.

What's that, Beloved? You wonder that sometimes there is a storm when the sun is still shining? You are right. It happens rarely, but sometimes the sun or the sea could not bear to be away from the child, and even in spite of the other's presence, would exist peacefully together, only to ensure that the child was still safe, happy and amused. When the gods saw this, they were so pleased that they caused beautiful flowers, fruits, grasses and trees to grow up wherever the sun and sea lived in cooperation with one another. It is only in those places where the sun or the sea has become selfish so selfish as to leave the other out that living things don't grow, and that is why we have the beautiful living things that we have today, other than in the swamps and deserts. And so, Beloved, when you see the stars winking at night, when you hear the rain pounding, or you see the sun shining, remember that you are loved and cared for, just as the child was when the earth was still an infant.

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