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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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# The God of Spring and the God of Autumn

This is a story from a long time ago when the gods still walked the world themselves.

At that time, there was a lady who had something of the earth and something of the heavens within her. She was a king's daughter. She radiated and was loved. She was called the Most Beloved in the World. She was slim, strong, cheerful, loyal, gentle, but also demanding. The gods loved her, but the men worshiped her.

The arrival of the Most Beloved on earth went like this. Prince Ama Boko had stolen a red jewel from his enemies. He put it in a box on a stand. He said, "This is a jewel with a price." Then the jewel was transformed into an extraordinarily beautiful lady. Her name was the Woman of the Red Jewel, and Prince Ama Boko married her. Then their only daughter was born, who was the most beloved and most beautiful of them all: the Most Beloved in the World.

Eighty men came to ask for her hand: princes, warriors, and even gods. They came from near and far. Brave sailors came by sea in large ships. Other men came through dark and dangerous forests. They all went to see the princess, dressed in their finest clothes and brought gifts for her such as gold, singing birds, and storytellers.

The princess sat quietly in her pavilion with her servants around her. She was dressed in a golden robe, and her hair was combed with a golden comb. A white wooden hallway was built around the pavilion, and here the suitors knelt before her.

Countless times the carp jumped back and forth in the garden pond, and scarlet pomegranate flowers fell from the tree, but each time the princess shook her head, and the men left disappointed.

One day, the God of Autumn went to try his luck with the princess. He was a brave young man with fiery flaming eyes and brown cheeks. He carried a very large sword. Autumn flowers were embroidered on his jacket.



First, he bowed to the princess, then he raised his head and looked her straight in the eyes. She seemed to open her red lips to say something but then only shook her head.

So even the God of Autumn left, blinded by bitter tears. He met his younger brother, the God

of Spring.

"How are you, my brother?" said the God of Spring.

"I am sick, sick with sorrow because the princess does not want me. She is a proud lady, and she has now broken my heart."

"Oh, my poor brother!" said the God of Spring.

"You'd better come home with me because our chances are over," said the God of Autumn.

But the God of Spring said, "I will stay here."

"What are you saying?" his brother exclaimed. "Is it likely that she will accept you if she wants nothing to do with me? Will she fall for your youth and insult a mature man like me? Are you going to her, brother? She will surely laugh at you."

"Yet I will go," said the God of Spring.

"A bet! A bet!" cried the God of Autumn. "I will give you a barrel of rice wine if you succeed, rice wine for the feast of your wedding. If you lose her, the rice wine is for me. I will drown my sorrow in it."

"Well, brother," said the God of Spring, "I accept the bet. Just watch!"

Then the young God of Spring went to his mother, who loved him very much. "Do you love me, mother?" he asked.

She replied, "More than a hundred lives."

"Mother, bring me the princess, she is the most beautiful and I want her as my wife. She is called the Loveliest in the World. I long for her so much."

"Do you love her?" asked the mother.

"More than a hundred lives," he said.

"Then lie down, my beloved son, and sleep. I will work for you." So she laid him on the couch and, as he slept, she looked at him. "Your face," she said, "is the most beautiful face in the world."

That night the mother did not sleep, but quickly went to a place where Wisteria hung over a still pool. She picked as many clusters and tendrils as she could carry.

The Wisteria was white and purple, but not yet in bloom, its beauty still hidden in the unopened bud. She magically wove a robe from the clusters and tendrils, and made sandals and a bow and arrow.

In the morning, she woke the God of Spring. "Come, my son, let me help you put on this robe."

The God of Spring rubbed his eyes. "It's a simple robe for the court," he said. But he did as his mother asked. He also tied the sandals on his feet and slung the quiver with bow and arrow on his back.

"Will everything be okay, Mother?" he asked.

"Everything will be fine, beloved son," she replied.

So the God of Spring appeared again before the princess. One of her maids laughed and said, "Look, mistress, there's only a little simple boy coming to you today, all dressed in plain gray."

But the Loveliest in the World looked up and saw the God of Spring. And at that moment, the Wisteria from which his robe bloomed. The God of Spring was white and purple from head to toe and smelled deliciously sweet. The princess stood up from her white mats. "Sir, I am yours if you want me," she said. Hand in hand, they went to the mother of the God of Spring. "Oh, mother," he said, "what should I do now? My brother, the God of Autumn, is angry with me. He does not give me the rice wine that I have won from him in the wager. His anger is so great that he will try to take our lives."

"Be still, my beloved son," said his mother, "and do not be afraid."

She took a hollow bamboo reed and put salt and stones in the cavity. When she had wrapped the walking stick with leaves, she hung it in the smoke of the fire. She said, "The green leaves fade and die. That will also happen to my firstborn, the God of Autumn. A stone sinks in the sea and fades away. That will also happen to you. You will fall to the earth and fade until there is nothing left of you."



This was the story of the God of Spring and the God of Autumn. And now the whole world knows why spring is so joyful and why autumn is so sad.