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The Tide

Mary Graham Bonner

Billie Brownie was watching the tide come in, each wave a little higher than the last.

"Don't you ever vary?" he asked. "Rush in fast sometimes, or decide to stay out a little longer?"

"Certainly not," said the Tide, whose voice was already getting louder as the waves came on.

"It would be interesting," said Billie Brownie.



"It would be wrong," said the Tide. "We do as we're told by the Sun and the Moon — twice every twenty-four hours, in and out, at exactly the hours they've given us. Not a minute earlier, not a minute later."

"The Moon especially," the Tide added, lowering its voice just slightly. "The Moon has better judgment. I can whisper that now — the Sun has gone to bed and won't be hurt."

Billie Brownie shook his head. "I wouldn't keep such precise time for anyone."

"You're not the kind of friend we are," said the Tide. "We've been following the Moon's schedule for longer than either of us can remember. But you seem to think that makes us mechanical — like a clock."

"Well, doesn't it?"

"Not in the least," said the Tide, with a wave of some dignity. "A clock must be wound up. No one winds us up. A clock goes to the clockmaker when it breaks. You've never heard of anyone taking the Tide to be mended, have you?"

"I didn't know there was such a thing as a Tide Mender," said Billie Brownie.

"*There isn't.* That's the whole point. We never break. We never need repair. We simply do as the Moon says, and that is why, after all these years of watching us, you have never once been let down."

The tide roared up the beach.

"And now," it said, more quietly, "I really must be getting back to sea. We've been talking for hours."

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