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O-na-tah: The Spirit of the Corn-Fields

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O-na-tah is the spirit of the corn, and she watches over the fields. The sun touches her face with the blush of morning, and her dark eyes are soft as starlight floating on a dark stream. Her night-black hair streams in the breeze like a cloud driven across the sun. She walks the air wrapped in her maize. Its blossoms plume toward the sun, and its tassels play with the rustling leaves, whispering promises to the waiting fields. Night follows her quiet path with dew, and Day guides the sunbeams down to her. Mother Earth loves O-na-tah, because she brings her children the grain that gives them life.



Once, O-na-tah had two companions: the Spirit of the Bean and the Spirit of the Squash. In the old days, when beans, corn and squash were planted together in one hill, these three spirits were never apart. Each wore the plant she guarded. The Spirit of the Squash was crowned with the golden trumpet blossoms of her vines. The Spirit of the Bean was dressed in the clinging leaves of her winding vine, her velvety pods swinging in the breeze.

One day, O-na-tah wandered off in search of the lost dew. Hah-gweh-da-et-gah caught her and shut her away in his darkness under the earth. Then he sent one of his monsters to blight her fields. The Spirit of the Squash and the Spirit of the Bean fled before the withering winds that chased them. Down in the dark, O-na-tah grew weak, mourning her lost fields. But one day a searching sunbeam found her and led her safely home.

How sad she was to see her blighted fields, and to find her companions gone. Grieving, she made a vow: she would never leave her fields again.

So now, when her fields are thirsty, she cannot leave them to call the dew. When the fiery Spirit of the Sun scorches the maize, she dares not go searching the skies for Ga-oh, to beg him to loose the winds and fan her lands. When great rains fall and blight her fields, her voice grows faint, and the Sun cannot hear her. Still she watches and guards, faithful, never leaving until the maize is ripe.

When the maize stalk bends low, O-na-tah is folding the husks around the pearly grains, so the dew can feed them in their shady shelter as they fringe out toward the sun.

When the tassels plume, O-na-tah is crowning the maize with her sign of triumph, and the rustling leaves spear up to meet the harvest breeze.

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