

The Moon's Shame *(La vergüenza de la Luna)*

Cubeo Indian Legend from the Amazon

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Earth hung her hammock at dawn. She lay down. She liked to look at the imaginary animals created by the patterns of the leaves and branches of her palm roof. Suddenly, she felt a warm, strong hand caressing her cheeks. She couldn't identify the visitor in the half-light. She kept still. She stopped breathing for a moment.

"Who are you?" she asked, keeping calm, but whispering to keep in her breath. There was no reply, but now she felt another hand stroking her hair like her mother used to do when she was a child. She felt more confident and little by little she began to relax.

"Who are you?" she repeated.

Once again there was no answer, but she felt the gentle and warm caress of a body touching hers. Earth allowed this unknown lover to lie down with her in the hammock and then she fell asleep. The next morning her lover was gone and Earth felt sad. The next night she lay down in the hammock waiting anxiously. Her lover arrived and lay down beside her again without showing his face, without answering her question of "Who are you?" After several nights Earth decided it was time to find out who her lover was. She prepared a red dye with annatto and put

it under the hammock in a pan. That night she rubbed her hands with the dye and caressed her lover's face until it was completely covered. The next morning Earth searched for a dyed face amongst the young men in the tribe and discovered that her lover was her neighbour, the Moon. The Moon cried. He was ashamed to have been caught out with such a simple trick.

Since then he has only gazed at Earth from the door of his home in the sky. Sometimes he paints his face with annatto dye. He hides his body behind the door and only shows his reddish complexion. This is called an eclipse of the Moon.

Eclipses of the Moon and Sun

When the Moon passes through the shadow of the Earth which hides the sunlight, this causes an eclipse of the Moon. This happens when the Sun, the Earth and the Moon form a line. The surface of the Moon becomes reddish because, when sunlight filters through the Earth's atmosphere, the atmosphere bends some colours of the sunlight more than others. The part that reaches the Moon is the red light. Solar eclipses occur when the Moon is situated between the Sun and Earth. The Moon can block out the Sun partially or totally. In order to observe a solar eclipse without damaging your eyes it is necessary to use special sunglasses. You must never look directly at the Sun.

Rosa Mª Ros



maria vidal