

## **Sun-Earth Day Storytelling Podcast**

### **Voice of Troy Cline:**

The ancient art of storytelling has been used by almost every culture; as a way to teach, explain and to instill knowledge. I'm Troy Cline, and welcome back to another Sun-Earth Day podcast.

In this special edition, our professional storyteller, Jordan Hill, is back and armed with a whole new folktale just for you! In this story he actually draws from current scientific information and then uses it as a loose framework to weave a whole new imaginative folktale. The star of the story is, of course, the Sun with a supporting cast of 8, well almost 9, planets.

So sit back, turn down the lights and turn up your imaginations!

### **Voice of Jordan Hill:**

The other stories that I have prepared for the Sun-Earth Day Audience come from many different cultures; they tell their take on the northern lights based on the knowledge they had when they created those tales.

Now, I have taken some of the current knowledge, scientifically based, and using it as a loose framework, created a new folktale, a scientific folktale that tells about the northern lights from our modern perspective.

According to some people, hardly any people these days, but some. The Sun was once all on his own. Surrounded by bleak and cold space. Dark and lonely. He would see other stars in binary systems with partners, or perhaps in other solar systems with planets. But the Sun was on his own. And he felt it. He felt it deep inside as he wandered around looking, always, for some companion. Someone to share his light and warmth with.

And so every now and then he would come across a wandering star, or perhaps a big chunk of rock and he would invite them into his home; into his atmosphere, into his corona. But always they would have somewhere else they were heading or someone else to meet, something else to do; and the Sun would have to return to his lonely course. That is, until he met the 9 wandering planets. Now they were all siblings, or at least eight of them were. Pluto it seems was something of a tag-along. But they, the siblings, had once come from a solar system where their parent star had died out, leaving them all orphans. They just had each other for company and support. Together they wandered through space looking for a new home. Looking for a new source of light and warmth. And so when they came across the Sun it seemed the perfect union. The Sun invited them into his corona and they happily accepted. Each one finding their own place within the solar system, a place that worked best for them.

And so it was that they were so happy. At last the planets had a new star, a new source of warmth and security within his atmosphere. And the Sun of course was over joyed. He finally had company, he finally had guests in which to share his light and warmth. But as happy as he was he still had so much of a stormy dark past. And those dark feelings were pent up inside of him until soon they needed some outlet. And in spite of himself they started to well-up one day and he broke out in dark spots and he started to become so upset that he began flaring in anger and weeping tears of fire.

Well this display was startling to the planets. And Jupiter being the big one, always looking out for his siblings – and Pluto, called a meeting of the nine of them. And they all came together and Jupiter spoke saying, "My brothers and sisters, and uhh.. you too Pluto". "We came here looking for security, but it seems that this star is somewhat unstable. Perhaps we should leave this solar system and find another star to look after us".

The planets reacted strongly to this suggestion. Mercury had come to feel very very close to the Sun, and had come to live very close as well. And he would hear nothing negative spoken towards their benefactor; and he turned the other way. And Pluto, well Pluto was so far out on the outskirts of the corona that such emotional outbursts didn't really effect him. And for their parts, stormy Venus and red red Mars kind of liked this behavior. In fact, they were only jealous that they couldn't be as expressive themselves. But the other five planets, Earth, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune and Uranus; they all were a little bit more sensitive and were very much effected by this display of the Sun's. They decided that is was best if they left the solar system. And so they each returned to their places in order to collect themselves and prepare for the journey.

But while they did so, Mercury, who was always eager to share a little bit of gossip, fleet footed as he was, shot towards the Sun just as the Sun was beginning to calm down. And Mercury went up to him and he said, "Hey, guess what? Those five planets, Earth, Saturn, Neptune, Jupiter, Uranus, they are all getting ready to leave the solar system, ha!".

Well when the Sun heard this he became distraught. "Oh no" he thought "I've already chased off five of the planets, five of my guests. This is terrible!" But Mercury said, "No don't worry Sun. Listen, the four of us will stay, it's not a problem." But the Sun wouldn't hear of this. He thought that if the five of them were leaving the four of them would surely follow. He thought, "I have to do something. But what? How can I convince them to stay?.. ahh.. I will give them a gift. But what kind of gift?" Well then the Sun realized that those five planets had something in common. All of them loved to dress up in beautiful outfits. After all the Earth and Jupiter were covered in all sorts of strange patterns and beautiful colors. Whereas Saturn, Neptune and Uranus all loved to wear rings around themselves. And he thought, "Yes, I will make them something beautiful to wear. I will fashion them crowns."

So quickly the Sun went to work. He gathered some of his outer particles, the brightest and hottest of them, and he started to form them into the shape of crowns. They were beautiful; two for each planet. When these were done he attached a note of apology and carefully he set them upon the solar winds that were constantly blowing through the corona. And he watched as they drifted off towards the planets; hoping that they would be met with acceptance.

When they finally arrived each of those planets received them and were blown-away. They were so beautiful. Their shapes and forms were so ethereal, the colors and the lights were so gorgeous. The planets were eager to try them on, placing one crown around each of their poles. And as soon as they had placed them around their poles they felt as radiant as the crowns themselves looked. Being somewhat impressionable planets they all quickly forgot about their upset with the Sun. All they could think of is how happy they were to have received such gorgeous gifts. And so it was, that even when they crowns, the auroras, began to fade, the planets still had only positive feelings towards the Sun; and forgot all about their plans to leave the solar system.

Of course the Sun breathed a deep sigh of relief. His guests were going to stay. And he was so so happy, and for some time he was happy. But there are always ups and downs and moods. Especially as one who has had as dark and stormy history as the Sun. Thus it came to pass that again and again those dark feelings would well-up inside of the Sun, in spite of himself. He would break out in dark spots, and he would flare in his anger and cry tears of fire.

But, as he began to calm down after each one of these outbursts he would remember how those five planets had almost left him all those eons ago. And so he would form them crowns once more out of those firey-hot particles, ejected during his flaring, and he would send them off towards the planets. And sometimes towards the other four planets as well, though these crowns weren't as well formed. And those planets would receive these gifts in joy every single time. They would wear the beautiful aurora; and they would be happy about their home... in the atmosphere of the Sun.

**Voice of Troy Cline:**

We hope you enjoyed today's storytelling podcast and can use it as a creative way to inspire a deeper curiosity about our amazing place in the universe.

Thanks again, Jordan, for an incredible trip!

Sun-Earth Day is a program sponsored by the NASA Sun-Earth Connection Education Forum at the Goddard Space Flight Center, and at the UC Berkley Space Sciences Laboratory. This is Troy Cline signing off.