How the Seasons Gained their Beauty
By Allison Balogh

A long time ago, when humanity was just beginning, there was a group of four gods, all of them the sons and daughters of the High Reigning Sun and her lover, Moon. They each represented a season; Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer. They lived in harmony for many millennia, dictating how cold or warm, dry or wet, windy or calm the world was. They went about their business monotonously, without change or difficulties, until one fateful day.

It was Fall’s turn to govern the weather during this time, and as she wandered through the forest, cooling the dry air left over from Summer, she paused at a stream and looked down at her reflection. She cooed to herself, admiring her beauty, but feeling discontent. Fall looked around at the plants and wildlife around her, suddenly realizing that there was nothing that differentiated her from her siblings. Being vain, she wished to make herself the most beautiful, so that her brothers and sister might be jealous of her stunning individuality.

There was a rule, however, set upon the brothers and sisters, once born by their parents: they must never do anything outside of the jobs given to them.

Doing so would challenge Sun and Moon’s power and authority.

Nevertheless, Fall was determined to be unique and cause jealousy amongst her siblings, so she quickly went to work on her masterpiece.

Fall used her favorite colors to paint the world in orange, yellow, red and brown. The plants changed colors in ways never seen before, and the young species of man praised Fall, in awe of her talent. They fell to the ground worshiping her, offering her sacrifices that pleased her immensely. Fall’s pride grew, and she continued to flaunt her ability, causing the rabbits to change color, the birds to fly south, and new fruits to grow, such as pears and apples.

Winter, preparing to start his turn of the seasons, immediately saw that Fall’s power had spread over the world, and his eyes darkened with jealousy. He too wished to have something that separated him from his siblings. Filled with silent anger, Winter went to his brother, Summer, and his sister, Spring. He whispered to them of the great things Fall had created, and they too brimmed with envy. Together, the three decided to visit their mother and father, and tell them of Fall’s grand display.

As Sun and Moon listened to their offspring’s complaints, they grew angry that Fall had disobeyed them so severely. The High Reigning gods talked privately, deciding how best to deal with this grave desecration. Eventually, they agreed that a harsh punishment was needed. They were hesitant though, to take away the beauty Fall had created, because it was so pleasing to their eyes and to the eyes of the humans. To be fair, they conceded that the other three seasons should be given a gift as well, to make everything even once again. So together, they sent
Winter, Spring and Summer back down to earth with the promise of punishment for Fall and gifts for them.

While Fall was walking amongst her splendor, she suddenly felt weak. She quickly sat down, yet felt weaker still. With horror, she realized she very quickly dying. As she laid on the ground, the leaves of the trees fell down beside her, turning the grey color of death. The animals found themselves far hungrier than before, but when they searched for food they found only the bare stems of the bushes and trees with little vegetation. Fall looked at all of the death around her and cried out to her parents above her, looking for an answer to this misery. The only response she received was the declaration of her punishment, but the promise of her return the following year.

When Fall died, it was Winter’s turn to carry on with the season. Sun and Moon granted him snow and ice to insulate the earth from the death of Fall, creating great beauty in the sparkling ice and soft snow. Then came Spring, who was granted the gift of life. She helped the plants to regrow their leaves and petals, and the animals to reproduce and become numerous. Summer was given the gift of fire, so as to burn the underbrush and allow the forest floors to be clean for the wildlife and young trees. After a full year had passed, Fall was allowed out from the underworld so that she might bring great beauty to the world before dying once more. That is why, every year, the world dies and stays dormant, before coming back to life through Spring and Summer.