

2019 International Latino Book Award Winner

Sun Night

E.H. de la
Espriella

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**This is a complimentary excerpt from
Sun Night, by E.H. de la Espriella.**

This excerpt titled “The Day the Sun Bounced on Earth”, is a tale that Sebastian tells his brother Santiago one evening while their parents were entertaining friends at home.

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When my brother and I were young, we fantasized about whatever we could think of when the lights went out in our bedroom at night. We talked about dreams, our realities and how we were going to change the world when we grew up.

One night, Santiago asked Sebastian about the sun and where it had gone that night. Sebastian may have not been paying attention because he asked his brother to repeat himself.

“Oh, yes, the sun...” Sebastian turned facing his brother while softly laying his face on his pillow. He thought for a while, as his brother watched.

“So?” Asked Santiago.

“Wait a second, I am thinking.” Replied Sebastian. He began to remember where he had been before, and thought about Spain and the geography classes he had been learning that year in school.

“The sun appeared in Spain the next night. It materialized from behind a wall of carved wooden fans that could have only come from Valencia, you know like the one mom uses at church. The fans moved naturally, as if a hand was shifting them gently back and forth. They stirred the visible heat waves created by the sunlight, which in turn generated more

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waves that could be seen miles away. Then, mimicking the clouds, the fans started to close down and disappear one by one, from right to left, allowing the sun to be fully visible. The color of the sun was golden yellow like on the Spanish flag: brilliant and captivating. It felt like an illusion the way the sun shined in Spain that morning.”

All the while, Santiago felt himself transported into this world he had never seen or heard of.

“As the sun came through the fans, it shined over the highway of Cantabria in the northern coast of Spain, near the little town of Villahormes. The road was quiet. Nothing could be heard for miles, just the sound of a gentle breeze and the crashing rhythms of ocean waves exploding to the north, echoing in the distance like the beating claps of Asturias flamenco. The day was picture perfect as the light from the sun reflected on the sandy earth like a mirror toward the sky, fracturing the light into a million directions. The air, however, was still, cool and crisp. A little passenger bus came into view on the highway and it slowed down toward a sign that read Beach Stop.”

Sebastian continued, “So...a woman and two children got off the little red bus. Standing on the ground outside the bus door, the woman turned around to ask the driver how late the bus would run. The kids ran off toward a dirt path, framed by bright

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green grasses and weeds. The woman hollered at the children to wait for her as she finished her conversation with the bus driver. The bus door closed and the woman in the blue and yellow patterned dress waved goodbye and turned around to walk toward the path where the children were playing. The youngsters were about 6 years old and appeared very similar to each other, with the exception that one was a boy and the other, a girl.”

Sebastian unexpectedly climbed up on his bed and pointed to the sun collage he illustrated on the wall and said with a deeper voice, mimicking the TV commercial announcer they often made fun of, “The sun was shining bright as some small round clouds moved along inland pushed by the strength of the ocean breeze. It was shining high but then low, it would slowly move up and down toward the earth like your bouncing basketball when you play in the garage downstairs. In sllowwww motionnnnn, uppp and downnn.” Sebastian slowed his speech as he rambled the words, then giggled, amusing himself. It was like a different person inside of Sebastian, Santiago thought.

Sebastian sat down back on his bed and extended his hands as he said, “The mother, seeing the bouncing sun in the sky along the sea, became very frightened and extended her hands out to call her children back to her. She was still a couple

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of steps behind them, for she could not match the energy of her little creatures. She finally got a hold of the girl and held her hand as all three stopped abruptly when they felt the heat of the sun reach them closely in one of the sun bounces. The earth moved, like that earthquake rattle we felt at Christmas time last year. Remember when the Christmas tree fell down all over our gifts? The woman kneeled down to protect her daughter, who was by now weeping from the sudden movement below her feet, and the boy ran back to his mother and grabbed on to her leg with his head secured under her arm. They all stood still while the sun bounced once more and finally came back down from the upper sky, punching against the earth so powerfully that it created a sinkhole in the ground. It was almost as if it wanted to tunnel a hole through to the other side of the planet. From the pressure forced into the ground, the mother and children were thrown like cloth dolls backwards toward a grassy field and landed on their backs about 10 feet behind them. The sun then went up again into the sky high above them and slowly stopped bouncing altogether. The supernatural event left a fair amount of dust and a confusing gale in the region. As it started to subside, the woman and the two children stood up, all coated with dust on their clothes and faces. The lady looked at her children's skin, noticing a tan line forced on them from the power of the light.

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She then looked at her arms and noticed the same. They looked around and as the dust settled, they saw the sinkhole that the sun had formed around a rocky area closest to the sea. The sun's heat had created a patch of what appeared to be creamy colored sand. The family walked slowly toward the gaping hole. It was actually mesmerizing, beautiful, like a mirage." Santiago's bright green eyes opened wide as if he were there.

"The little boy couldn't believe it, and rubbed at his eyes to check if what he was seeing was true. The light of the sun started to reflect on the million particles of sand that the sun had left off on that patch of ground. After a moment passed, they felt safe enough to walk toward the sinkhole. Rocks appeared to have been pushed back from the intense power of the sun as it punched into the earth. They approached the sandy area with caution. The kids separated from their mother and walked around the shell-shaped platform that the sun created. The mother was completely quiet, still in shock that she had been present to a miracle, looking around to see if anyone else had been witness to such an inexplicable phenomenon. She sat down on the sand bank and sank both her bronzed hands into it as she felt the heat of the sun still emanating from within the dunes. She looked to both sides and saw her children running now more comfortably on the sand. Then she laid down on her back and looked up to

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observe the sun. It was still there, high above her in the sky, no longer bouncing. The kids played on the sand and after a moment, they heard a strange noise in the distance. It sounded like when the water is turned off and the pipes get full of air when turned back on. They could also hear the waves from the sea pounding the coast. The sound of the air pipes didn't go away; in fact, it became stronger. Deep in the sinkhole toward the rocky area in the back, they gradually saw water spreading from under the sand and rocks. It was as if the ocean water was being pumped slowly into the sinkhole. The woman yelled for her children to come to her, unsure of what would happen next. They obeyed and sat next to her as they all watched how water slowly filled in the sinkhole to create a perfect shell-shaped beach. The water reached up to their feet and then receded, gentler than ocean waves. It was like the sun had known what it was doing."

"Wow!" It was the only thing Santiago could say as they heard intense laughter coming from outside the door of their room. Their parents' friends were still visiting and now appeared to be inebriated. Sebastian stayed quiet for a while just listening to the noise coming from the living room. He then laid back down on his bed. He covered himself and looked up at the friendly space of the ceiling he was so accustomed to visiting

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every night. Santiago asked Sebastian where the father of the family in his story was.

“Their father died.” Sebastian just blurted it out, not even thinking for a second.

“And what happened to the woman and her kids at the sinkhole?” Asked Santiago, in search of a happy ending. Sebastian responded that they stayed there at the beach and the children played on the water for hours until it was time to leave.

“By the late afternoon, the woman packed up while the children dried themselves with a towel. Then they left the sinkhole and began walking, the woman looking back at the sinkhole beach to see if it was still there, and it was. The children followed her toward the highway just a short walk away. All the while, the sun shined down on them. After about six that evening, the sun started to pull further away from the land toward the west. The children could see their long shadows on the left side of their bodies as they crossed the highway over to the little neighborhood of Villahormes. The highway was quiet and empty of any traffic just as it was earlier that morning. While crossing the highway, they heard bells in the distance, and the woman and her children followed the sound for a couple of blocks. After a long, straight, one-way road lined with tall Italian

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cypresses, they reached a big white house that stood two stories high next to a little dilapidated chapel. The children looked up and saw a sign and above it two bells on the tower, releasing the distinct sound they had heard during their walk. The bells stopped as the front doors of the little chapel opened and an old man dressed completely in black appeared. Beautiful choral music could be heard coming from inside the chapel.”

All the while Sebastian had been looking up into the ceiling of his bedroom not realizing that his brother had already fallen asleep, as he continued telling his story.

“The man greeted the family with a warm handshake and kind words. No one could hear them because the choir music drowned their voices. The man made a motion welcoming the family into the chapel. The sound of the music increased as they entered deeper into the little dark space.” Sebastian then stopped and yawned heavily.

“Inside, past the door, the children looked up at a beautiful chandelier that shined of gold. Toward the end of the room was a wall decorated with a lifelike painting of a wooded area, and in front of it was a half size wooden sculpture of Jesus Christ on the cross. The choral music was actually coming from above them but they could not see the singing choir. As they walked to the center of the chapel, the music quieted down and

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the woman was finally able to speak to the priest. She explained the details of the phenomena that had transpired earlier on their way to the beach as she shed fearful tears.”

Sebastian turned toward his brother who was clutching his favorite old Topo Gigio doll and eyes closed.

“Santiago!” Exclaimed Sebastian. He called on him again but he didn’t respond. Sebastian yawned once more.

“I’ve been telling you about these people and you’re asleep? Santiago!” Santiago, feeling disturbed, turned sideways away from his brother and responded with a grunting sound. Sebastian took a huge sigh and closed his eyes for a period of time. Wanting to end the story that had now taken him far away from his reality, he looked up at the ceiling and waited for the clouds to come back. Sebastian continued to hear the voices of his parents and their friends outside in the living room. The sounds of the voices quickly transformed in the darkness of the bedroom. The voices were almost ghostly and distant. He could in fact see the visual rhythm of the tones reverberate on the ceiling of the room like sound waves made out of curvilinear shapes. The clouds followed soon after. The waves of sound appeared over the clouds and released rays of light like those corona mass ejections on the surface of the sun. The light radiating from the ceiling was bluish green and at times

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bright red and purple. The waves created by the voices would sometimes disappear below the swirling gray clouds. And the sound of laughter reacted differently in the clouds. Laughter would release sudden lightning-like rays of light. The white light was so bright that it prevented Sebastian from looking at it directly. The sounds dissipated slowly as time progressed, then the room went quiet, like the chapel in his story. He then, feeling completely fatigued, fell asleep.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

E.H. de la Espriella is an award-winning author and designer born and raised in Panama. He is a design and branding creative leader at The Walt Disney Company. He is also a fine artist working in oil, collage, drawing, and photography. Mr. de la Espriella lives in Orlando, Florida with his family.

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