

The Sun and the North Wind

one of Aesop's fables as told by Babrius (1st century)

translated by Adam F McCune

Original Greek

Βορέη λέγουσιν Ἥλιω τε τοιαύτην
ἔριν γενέσθαι, πότερος ἀνδρὸς ἀγροΐκου
ὀδοιποροῦντος τὴν σίσυρναν ἐκδύσει.
Βορέης δ' ἐφύσα πρῶτος οἷος ἐκ Θράκης,
βίη νομίζων τὸν φοροῦντα συλήσει·
ὁ δ' οὐ μεθῆκε μᾶλλον, ἀλλὰ ῥιγώσας
καὶ πάντα κύκλω χερσὶ κράσπεδα σφίγγας
καθῆστο, πέτρης νῶτον ἐξοχῆ κλίνας.
ὁ δ' Ἥλιος τὸ πρῶτον ἠδὺς ἐκτύψας
ἀνῆκεν αὐτὸν τοῦ δυσηέμου ψύχους,
ἔπειτα δ' αὖ προσῆγε τὴν ἄλῃν πλείω·
καὶ καῦμα τὸν γεωργὸν εἶχεν ἐξαιρνης,
αὐτὸς δὲ ῥίψας τὴν στολὴν ἐγυμνώθη.
Βορέης μὲν οὕτω συγκριθεὶς ἐνικήθη·
λέγει δ' ὁ μῦθος “πράοτητα, παῖ, ζήλου.
ἀνύσεις τι πειθοῖ μᾶλλον ἢ βίᾳ ῥέζων.”

English Translation

Between the North Wind and the Sun
This rivalry took place, they say:
Out of the two of them, which one
Would strip a farmer's cloak away.

The North Wind blew both hard and cold,
And thought to rob the man by might.
The man, though, did not loose his hold
But pulled his cloak's edge round him tight;
He shivered in the blasting shock
And leaned his back against a rock.

The Sun peeped out, and he began
From cold and wind to free the man,
And then he introduced more heat,
Which held the farmer in its grip.
He threw his cloak down at his feet:
The man himself was moved to strip.

And so the North Wind lost the fight.
The tale says, “Strive for gentleness,
My child; you will win more success
Persuading than by using might.”