



Crescent Moon Summary

Begins with this Sun-Moon aspect relationship: Waxing semi-square (moon 45 degrees ahead of the sun)

Keywords: Fertility, growth, upward mobility

Primary Task: You're **committing** to your vision for the future

Synchronize by focusing on your future growth: Clarify your aspirations. Set concrete goals.

Gather support for young projects: acquire information, allies, resources you'll need for work further down the road. Allow yourself to dream big and affirm your future success (think of what you want to achieve this cycle and/or what you'd like to create years from now).

Cultivate the optimistic innocence of a child who hasn't learned disappointment yet.

People born at this phase are interested in upward mobility. They are the dreamers of a better future. They often struggle against the past (family expectations or cultural restrictions), hoping to better themselves and/or society in some way. They tend to work within established structures and gradually improve them. They need to believe in their dreams and calm the inner ghosts who keep whispering they'll never achieve what they want.

Finding this Moon in the sky: This Moon rises mid-morning and sets before midnight.

Throughout the lunation cycle, the Moon rises and sets a little later each day; sometimes fifteen minutes, sometimes ninety minutes after the previous day's rise and set. A special quality of the waxing Crescent Moon is how, illuminated by "earth shine," the entire orb of the Moon is dimly visible behind the crescent, making an early evening "Moon sit" especially compelling. This is a good time to think of the unknown—and all the good it holds in store for you.



The Crescent Moon^

At the Crescent Moon, “I’m so-o-o bored” is a popular phrase in our house. The eight-year-old says it to his page of math problems, the nine-year-old to the piano he should be practicing. Denied Nintendo and the Internet, the fourteen-year-old drops on the couch with ennui. Robert yawns as I discuss too much Buddhism. I do likewise when he’s praising John Wayne. Even the four-year-old succumbs, hissing “This is stupid, boring!” when made to pick up her toys.

I used to think boredom signaled a crushing absence of stimulation – to be impaled on an empty world. Yet, as my awareness of the dense aliveness of the universe grows, the less precise this definition appears. The world is too full of stimuli. This is especially so at the Crescent Moon, a Moon phase surging with fresh energy. Why should we be bored?

Anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson argues that boredom is a learned attitude. She thinks we’d do better, that our lives might be profoundly reshaped, if we learned other responses instead.¹ Curiously, we don’t; being bored seems to work for us. Viewing our bored selves with another’s eyes, we might even conclude our boredom is a great friend and co-conspirator. It arrives the moment we find ourselves stuck, wags a finger of blame at the outer world and wraps us in a haughty inertia.

In his suicide note, the British actor George Sanders declared he was bored by it all. We usually think of boredom as entering this way, at the end of experience, as a wearied “been there, done that,” the numbing result of too much repetition and familiarity. The problem with this view is that it gives us nowhere to go, which may in fact be boredom’s self-fulfilling strategy. However, if we turn boredom upside-down and see it coming instead at the beginning of experience, we discover what its weary exterior hides.

It begins with a world that’s not empty at all. In fact this world is brimming with information and requests – though not the sort we’re looking for. We get asked to do something that scares us or makes us angry. We want ice cream and rice cakes are being served. We want to roller blade and someone hands us kite string. We’re disappointed or surprised. Even familiar activities demand we take new ground. However it comes, we get a kind of toothache from all this stimuli; so we reach for a mental anesthetic to dull our consciousness. We go numb. And now our world *is* empty – because we’ve made it that way.

Boredom is our secret weapon against change. When my son is wearied by his math problems or I can’t stand to hear about John Wayne, we’ve shut the door on something unwanted or new, preserving our same old, utterly familiar selves. Understanding this is especially important at the Crescent Moon, where our psychic energy may draw quietly forward or back, without our conscious note. Things have settled down since the New Moon’s excitement. It may even seem that not much goes on. Nonetheless, our Crescent choices will have a deep effect. Ultimately they drive the subtle mystery of why our lives don’t change, even though we swear we want them to.

The Crescent Moon appears approximately three and a half days after the New Moon, when the Moon goes forty-five degrees ahead of the Sun.² Visible in the western sky after sunset, this slender, shimmering Crescent has an exquisite luminescence, as though inked with the radiance of angel wings. Its image universally inspires optimism and hope. Even the word “Crescent” seems

to draw us forward, deriving from the Latin “crescere,” meaning to increase or grow. At this phase we can lasso a dream so bold, we’ ll pattern a great leap in succeeding phases.

We’ re like Dorothy on the yellow brick road, with the sparkling Emerald City just in our view. Our adventure began at the New Moon, where getting lost in a strange territory ensured a good beginning. This meant we opened ourselves to new experiences. We broke down the solid sense of who we are, so that, like Dorothy, we could assemble a new crew of possibilities within. But as the city of our dreams comes into view, there’s always a wicked witch nearby, making the poppy field bloom. We lose consciousness before reaching our destination.

The most eager New Moon devotee often falls away from the lunation cycle here. What we need is a good witch Glenda to throw snow on the poppy field and pinch our cheeks awake. After all, fertility is promised; we need only discover what to cultivate. Setting the right goal for the cycle can keep us moving along the path. If we’ ve fixed our objective prematurely at the New Moon, we may have propped up an old goal with little power to carry us forward. But at the Crescent it’s not only right to focus ourselves, it’ s important.

Our good witch Glenda offers some advice: “Remember, not all dreams are energetically supported at all times.” She wants us to stay awake to the world, to retain some of that New Moon openness. This means our goal should respect the messages in our environment as well as the desires in our heart. We need to both direct effort and listen. This is especially true when the world is telling us something we don’ t expect to hear, something that makes yawn or drives us nuts.

As a collaboration between Sun and Moon, the lunation cycle requires we also partner our (solar) will with our (lunar) receptivity. With too much will and not enough reflection, we’ ll reject the messages from our environment as stupid or irrelevant. The opposite will make us slack. Too much receptivity and we’ ll forget what the time is for, its creative potential slipping through our

fingers. At best, the Crescent phase should bring a gradual focusing, a steady sharpening of our intention.

Studying the house and sign of the New Moon's seed can help. The energized house in our chart suggests where development is favored. The New Moon's sign hints at our optimum energetic approach. But holding even these concepts too tightly can dull our awareness to the stimulating present. Better perhaps to eventually shift our concepts to the background and keep ourselves trained on the liveliness all around.

If we did just this, we'd never be bored again. And as Bates implies, we would reshape our lives with this attitude. At the least we could keep it in mind during the days of the Crescent every month. Given our desires, the chart's seed, and the momentum of events, we can select the right target and aim. If we committed to this practice during the three to four years of our progressed Crescent phase, we might amaze ourselves with achievements by the progressed Full Moon. And if we were born at the Crescent phase, this should become the work of our lives: to raise the dream that is speaking in and around us and not stop until it's realized.

For those born at the New Moon, when possibility is so wide, clarifying a single goal is often difficult. But those born at the Crescent usually know what they want to achieve. They're inspired to better themselves, to surpass any ethnic, cultural, socio-economic or physical limits they may have been born into. They want to go beyond their origins, becoming the first in the family to get a college degree, move to an exclusive part of town, succeed at a prestigious career, join a club that previously barred their kind. I know a number of Crescents whose immigrant parents successfully assimilated into the dominant culture; now these Crescents are determined to reclaim their ethnic roots, in a sense, bettering themselves through reverse assimilation.

Crescents in our political, judicial, health and educational institutions are often working hard for social change. They're instinctive reformers, but function quite comfortably within existing systems. Crescents get promotions, climb corporate ladders. They have a gift for innovating without alienating or tearing down. They add to the prevailing culture. Through them, "the establishment" evolves.

Crescent aspirations are keen, but when pressed, many will take a cynical downshift, admitting that maybe their dreams won't come true after all, like the fox stepping away from the cluster of grapes he can't reach. Their stories often reveal curious turns of bad luck, opportunities that dissolved, big deals that got away. I think of a Crescent entrepreneur I know. Carrie is talented and ambitious, yet over the years, has found herself in the same struggles again and again. Despite the intelligent and diligent approach she brings to her work, her business doesn't grow. Year in, year out, her life stays the same.

What holds her back? Dane Rudhyar, the lunation cycle's master philosopher, would argue that it's the ghosts of her past: the fears, the insecurities, the resistance, the aggressions, the inertia, all the crystallized emotional habits from her previous incarnations; too it's the powerful influence of her ancestors, still commanding from the pool of cultural and family attitudes and traditions. These ghosts are raised by the very dreams that draw her forward. She wants a different life from her parents, she wants to break through childhood patterns. The ghosts aren't so sure. Her life becomes the field where her past struggles against her future, bringing plenty of activity, but often frustrating real progress.

There's a sweetness and naivete to Carrie that I often see in Crescents. Though she's nearly forty years old, she still wears the freshness and emotional sensitivity of youth, which is fitting for a Moon phase characterized by early growth. The Crescent mode is often imaged as a fragile seedling pushing upward against the soil, reaching downward for support with its roots. Carrie's

vulnerability is as keen as her idealism. She's endured bad partners because she wanted them to like her and because was afraid to go it alone. She's taken risks when the collective enthusiasm was high, but lost her nerve when others began dropping out.

Crescents aren't so different from the rest of us. They show us what it's like to be at the beginning of things. Big dreams often raise big hesitations. Whether we're in the monthly Crescent, or at our progressed Crescent phase, security is often an issue. Being nestled in a cozy family structure can feel reassuring, even though it goes in a direction opposite from our dreams. Crescent birth or not, we all have ghosts that hold us back. And the biggest problem with ghosts is they're invisible. So familiar and pervasive, they're like water to the goldfish swimming in his bowl. How do we confront what we can't see?

Enter the mixed blessing of the waxing semi-square. This is the forty-five-degree angle between Sun and Moon that starts the Crescent phase. The semi-square is considered by some to be a minor or "nuisance" aspect. Yet to label it this way misunderstands the subtleties of beginnings, where little moves can have big effects. So many things are possible at the Crescent, so little is fixed into place. Slight shifts can change the world. We're in the realm of aspirations, intentions and mental imprints. Our thoughts are potent, scripting what will later unfold. Yet we might altogether miss their arc if it weren't for the irritations the semi-square brings.

Irritations bring us face to face with our ghosts. The ghosts are around whenever we're annoyed, easily deterred, peeved that things don't go right the first time. Small matters will bug us inordinately. We'll act picky, impatient, judgmental, inconvenienced. Our friends might wonder at the strong reactions provoked by such small setbacks, but this initial collision between reality and our desires has huge psychological importance. These setbacks re-start an old argument we have

with the world. Like the uninvited guest who knows just how to push our buttons, what has halted us before shows up again.

As astrologer Bil Tierney writes, “(The semi-square) may reveal willful attitudes that tend to keep us rut-bound, unadaptable, and uncompromisingly resistant to needed changes taking place in the environment.”³ Whether by transit or natal aspect, what doesn’t go right at the semi-square is vital feedback. We’re seeing where our thoughts are weak, our expectations inappropriate. It’s an opportunity to fine-tune our efforts. Obviously we need to see ourselves clearly and read the world properly to realize our dreams. But if we simply project our blame onto the world, we’ll likely abandon our goal after stumbling across one or two pebbles.

Being willful and rut-bound isn’t just a modern problem. It’s the central issue in many old tales about dreamers, including an American Indian story of a turtle and his bride.⁴ The turtle is a nice fellow, but a little lonely. He builds himself a comfortable hut filled with skins. Sitting there alone one night, a dream overtakes him, the kind of far-reaching dream one might imagine at the Crescent Moon (or from semi-squared planets in one’s natal chart). The turtle wants to do something no turtle has ever done. He wants to take a beautiful young woman for his bride.

He studies the human tribe around him and approaches the prettiest, most industrious girl. “Marry you?!” She drops the beaded slipper she’s making and tries to hide her laughter. The turtle is hurt, but persistent. He pleads so earnestly that she grudgingly consents. “Okay, but you’ll have to wait until spring, I have to make so many slippers and dresses.” The turtle doesn’t like this either. He raises himself as tall and proud as a turtle can and says “Then I will go to war and take some captives. When I return you’ll marry me.”

Sensitivity and bravado often travel together at the beginning of big aspirations. It’s how ego gets mixed up with our goal. Especially when challenged, ego raises the ghosts, who spin us around; when we’re done, our objective has shifted. We’re protecting and justifying ourselves, our

self-respect more important now than our vision. The turtle gathers all his relations and announces they' ll make war on a neighboring village. As the turtles march slowly out of camp, the girl stands at her hut and laughs. "In four days," he says, "you' ll be weeping instead of laughing, as there will be hundreds of miles between us." "In four days you' ll hardly be out of sight!" she replies. "Well not four days..." he mumbles, "I mean four years."

What we dream at the Crescent won' t come true immediately. How do we bear the time? The turtle army marches for what seems like forever. It feels as though they' ve gone half way round the earth, though it's only been four little miles. They come to a great tree lying across the road. "It will take us years to get over that!" They consider how they might get caught in its branches if they try to climb over it or stuck in its roots if they dig underneath. They determine to burn a hole through the trunk. But the fire doesn' t burn far before it fizzles.

For a dream to become reality, the two need to merge. This doesn' t happen easily: one is airy, the other rock hard. Inspiration and activity must draw them together. But when the tree doesn' t burn (inspiration too weak), the army gives up (no action). The turtle leads his troops homeward, figuring nobody needs to know what really happened. He can always make up a story about some great adventure. The turtle warrior has journeyed long but never left the realm of dreams. His self-protective shell has not only slowed him down, it' s kept him out of the actual world. We can' t help asking: how could this turtle manage marriage to a spirited young woman if he couldn' t even manage a tree?

Crescent difficulties, the sort a semi-square brings, are best approached as a kind of boot camp. They' re meant to condition us for the greater challenges we' ll surely meet ahead. On the way to the Full Moon's illumination, the First Quarter and Gibbous phases will require even more action and stamina. That is why the Crescent arrives as a very personal obstacle course, which if successfully navigated, can increase our competence and confidence. Like plebes in basic training,

we might get yelled at, humiliated, stripped of our defenses, but as in all those military movies, we' ll love our drill sergeant in the end, for what he helped us to become.

The would-be warrior turtle returns to camp where his reluctant bride offers to bathe him. She gets him to jump in her pot of boiling water. There he sinks to the bottom. One by one, the turtle army follows their leader, all except for one young turtle. Noticing that none of his friends leaves the pot, he goes as fast as he can to the river. He wants to escape from that awful hut, so he lets the river carry him as far as it flows, until at last he finds himself in the warm sea.

The observant and adaptable young turtle introduces us to the next aspect of the Crescent phase: the waxing sextile, which occurs when the transiting Moon goes sixty degrees ahead of the Sun. Like the semi-square, the sextile is a predominantly mental aspect, but it carries a greater awareness of the outer world. Says Tierney, it's an "explorative aspect, eager for new learning experiences. Under its influence, we are encouraged to reach out towards the greater social environment in many directions whereby we can grasp external benefits."⁶

We are loosed from our ruts and resistance. We are stimulated to observe the world and see how to make our dream happen. We' re ready to gather information and allies at the sextile. We move forward. It' s good to remember this energetic window is also available to us during the Crescent phase. Like the semi-square, it's an optimal fit with our still young growth. If at the semi-square we' re a fragile seedling pushing against the soil that bears down on us, at the sextile we' re gathering support through fresh roots, manifesting the intelligence to seek proper nourishment.

If we genuinely want our lives to change, there are probably things we need to learn. The sextile is a flowing aspect that draws us towards learning opportunities. But it acts quietly. Because it offers none of the irritations of the semi-square, we may be content to remain in the realm of ideas and let tangible opportunities slip away. Or we might be so stimulated by the outer

world, we jump from one activity to another, losing the thread of our dream. Ideally, the waxing semi-square and waxing sextile are fine complements. The sextile relieves us of our haunted past. And if we were harrowed by the semi-square and kept our developmental nerve, the greater focus and stamina we can bring to our sextile opportunities.

As for the young turtle who escaped his ignorant fellows, I don't know what happened to him. I can only hope he made some wonderful dream come true—and that at the next Moon cycle, so will you!

Chapter Notes:

¹ Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions*, (NY: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 111.

² The lunation cycle is a cycle of dynamic relationship—between the transiting Sun and transiting Moon. When I've taught this cycle to beginners, there has sometimes been confusion on this point. The New Moon occurs when the Sun and Moon are conjunct in the same degree, 15 degrees Aries, for example, or 8 degrees Gemini. But the two lights don't stand still; both continue moving forward through the zodiac, with the Moon going at a faster rate than the Sun. When the Moon pulls 45 degrees ahead of the traveling Sun, that's when the Crescent phase begins. When she pulls 90 degrees ahead of the transiting Sun, that's when the Crescent phase ends and the First Quarter begins. Instead of calculating the phases from the fixed point of the New Moon (as might be done in a sidereal cycle), we calculate the aspects in terms of their evolving relationship (what's called a "synodic" cycle).

³ Bil Tierney, *Dynamics of Aspect Analysis*, (Reno: CRC Publications, 1983), p. 15.

⁴ *The Brown Fairy Book*, Andrew Lang, ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1965) pp. 106-110.

⁵ Tierney, *ibid*, p. 18.
