

## **The Moon: A retelling of an old tale<sup>1</sup>**

I rub my fingers over the familiar worn wood, gouged deep with the letters of my name. First an assertive down slash followed by several or some gently looping paths. I trace these movements on my paper, mixing them up in groups of different patterns. I look. My eyes strain. But the darkness absorbs everything. I know by the constant rhythm of the Clock, that it is nearly midnight. Here the black becomes blacker and the space between objects and people opens endlessly though we are pressed together.

For we dwell in a land of darkness.

I stand. For there is an urge pulling at the fabric of my body. I turn. I walk. Into darkness, first my left foot steps and my body leans to follow willingly. Arms swing uselessly by my side, eyes open and shut, but the picture does not change. Imagine a dark so vast, so unimaginable. It is enormous. It is claustrophobic. I can never seem to draw enough air and space into my lungs, for the dark is there shoving its way inside of me. I walk. I step. I feel. The ground under me is smooth and straight and I know I am touching pavement.

I walk to the rhythm of the Clock. The mathematicians and engineers, those who do their work in darkness anyway, have created this monstrous machine. We can not escape its distant beat. We loathe it. We need it. We fear its end. Feet, bare in the cold, wet blackness, feel no stray stone or pebble, only the strong magnetic pull of the earth as legs try to outwalk the atmosphere. I do not know direction, but I do not care. I am being pulled — *by what?* — I do not know, but I do not care. The air around me is viscous and I am a knife slicing through. I divide air, I divide darkness, I divide time.

It is surprising and unsurprising that the air lightens, the black becomes less black. I know there is an edge to everything. Arms swing uselessly by my side, eyes open and shut, the picture changes. A glow. A glow! What color is the glow? All I know is black. I look down and am surprised to see that I have hands. Hands! I have felt them, but that does not mean that they are really there, that they belong to me. I stretch one out, to touch the glow. It has no weight. The

darkness is so heavy and so unseeable. But here is this light that is so weightless and so seeable. I run. *My arms pump, my legs burn, my lungs scream, my mouth laughs.*

Toward light.

And toward the light.

Light is a great disk. Round and perfect, it leans heavily against a great barren tree. And for the first time, I can see houses and people and yards and fences and streams and graveyards and churches and and and. And an old man leans up next to the light, a rusted oil can beside him. He wakes as I near and smiles at me.

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<sup>1</sup> The Moon. Fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm.

*Come to see the Moon?* he asks.

*What is the Moon?* I whisper. My voice is dusty and unused. He gestures at the light beside him.

*It is this* he says fondly.

*May I touch?* I ask

He nods. I reach my hand out, and for a second I am scared that this light will pass right through me. But I make contact. It is cool and hard, I can feel it pulsating. There is a lyrical rhythm like the Clock, but instead, I feel a heartbeat. I let my fingers slide over the Moon. Rough peaks and valleys meet the crests and troughs of my fingerprints. I love the Moon.

I am cunning, I am wicked. I want the Moon. I want what I do not have, I want what I cannot have. I have been without for so long, feeling my way through the darkness. Maybe now I can see my lover's face, I can kiss the hands of children, I can cry on the shoulders of priests all bathed in this luminous light, light, light.

I steal the light and it is mine.

When the old man falls asleep, *who wouldn't under the bright comfort of the Moon?*, I take what is not mine. The Moon is almost weightless and I lift it easily. With a few strands of my long, long hair, I tie it to my back. I am a luminous turtle. I move reverently with the light of the Moon protecting me. I walk back into darkness bringing with me, light.

I am praised. I am worshipped. I am given some money. I buy colored pencils and paints. I draw and I see what I have drawn. I am not very good. I hang the Moon in an old oak tree letting the whole valley bask in its warm glow. We are happy.

Hands are kissed, lovers embraced, children patted. With sight, with light, we are happy.

I never again see the old man. And I try not to think about the town that I condemned to live in the land of darkness. I grow old and comfortable, sitting at my desk. The worn carvings remain worn, but go no further. I paint and draw and everyone admires my ugly creations in the light of my Moon.

I grow older and more comfortable. I no longer sit at my desk to draw and paint. I sit and watch the Moon. My lover is long gone and the children all grown up. Maybe it is just my eyes, but the Moon is changing. I know that wrinkles have carved up my once stone-smooth face, just as the fierce air has carved up the Moon's peaks and valleys. The light appears weaker, dimmer and flickering. Now and then, when the wind blows especially strong, the Moon shudders and the whole valley is greyed out of existence. My heart beats irrationally and erratically in these moments, for I fear that the Moon will go out for good.

I die. I am given a grand funeral procession. My paintings and drawings are hung up in famous museums. Children kiss my gravestone and fans leave ridiculous gifts and messages. *The valley is eternally grateful to the giver of light*, reads my mausoleum.

I love the Moon.

I am cunning, I am wicked. I have the Moon. I have what I should not have. In my last few days, I crafted a moon. It is fake. It shines because my Moon shines. It taps out a heartbeat because of my Moon's heartbeat. I switch the Moons. The fake Moon looks just as lovely as my Moon. But it is not my Moon.

I love the Moon.

I do not know what happened when the Moon came with me. I went back to the land of darkness. Perhaps the light stayed behind and only the shell of what was once the Moon lies buried here with me. I hope now that this is true. I hope now, though I see no more, that the land above me is bathed in light.