

Walking with the Moon

by Erika Byrne-Ludwig

I heard a voice. It was calling me as from a far-off cloud. I listened, holding my breath, and heard it again, though fading away, barely audible. If I hadn't known my name I wouldn't have decrypted it. Three hazy syllables clearly detached with a sigh between each of them. Calls you hear in dreams. Once or twice, making your closed eyelids twitch in response.

I stood up. Night had fallen long before. A cloudy moon, as if scantily dressed in fine mourning muslin. I walked around the house, crushing as softly as I could the autumn leaves that had collected on the path, trying somehow not to disturb nocturnal creatures. The trees were whispering. The hushed noise of a bird's flight. A light breeze touching plants on its passage. I could feel it going through my fringe, slicking it back. Nights are rarely silent. I could imagine the piercing eyes of rodents, foxes, birds: night people with feathers or fur, beaks or fangs, tails and paws.

As for the plants, even blind I would have identified them. I've touched the roses' thorns on occasion just to feel life in me. To remind me I was real. The drop of blood on my finger trickled down like the sap on the bark of trees. Low branches stretching over the path brushed me. I could have bent my head in anticipation but instead I let them play their own rustling tune. Below the moon they tended to acquire subtly different forms which shadows enhanced. Strangers might think of folkloric ogres and giants. I was a regular here. Having given each one names had made them more human than beast in my eyes.

A fine rain was trickling down the moon's face. I continued my walk around the house for the second time. Murmurs and whistles sometimes reached me. I was trying to guess each sound when all of a sudden I felt a touch. A firm grip, robust, brutal even. It pulled my hair. This time it wasn't a branch. I raised my hand and put it on my head - it felt like another hand under mine.

I sat up. My cheeks were damp, my mind swirly. I lay down again. The pillow had captured the moistness of my night walk. Before closing my eyes, I looked up. The partly concealed moon seemed to stare at me through the window. I slowly and gingerly took off its veil.

