

When the Moon Becomes the Sun

by Sheila Luecht

As a time approaches when the light of a full moon dominates the night, a darkness that has descended has been in part, lifted. The air can seem to chill a little less than it has, the winds still moving the leaves about, still whistling. Everything is different in a minute and yet nothing we ever know remains the same. Who is surprised? The animals eat the remains of the harvest, some deer eat day lilies and chomp on the still green leaves of small, relatively newly planted trees. I just don't care anymore, but I have to as I have not gone away. I am still here. Still sifting through the bits of life and judging myself on the wrong turns and the wayward wanderings of a slightly older but not necessarily wiser me.

This was and always has been my favorite time of year. It is the time when a good book becomes a good friend. I retreat back to my childhood bedroom in it's state as a teenager's room. I have it to myself, no sharing with a sibling. I see the heavy gold drapes on the windows, covering down to the floor with a bedspread to match. I have my own bedroom set, an antique grouping from my great grandmother's estate. For a girl like me, I am in heaven. It is wonderfully warm and dark. It is oblivious to the outside mood, unless I choose to draw back the drapes. I am in the midst of the reading hovel I will always cherish. A desk and chair, a massive dresser and a mirror so beautiful, all heavy dark cherry stain.

While most spread their time in other occupation, I traveled through books and grew my imagination. I knew endless bliss. I was a book eater. I would just devour books that I loved and slug through those I didn't, just to make myself eat the truths and lies of a million different times, peoples, places and lives.

I began to learn that reality is a place held very tightly in the mind. For some it was not pleasant, or kind. It was life threatening and devoid of joy, but if reality could ever be suspended, then, well, everyone could have what they desired and in that it would be as good as it might get, as the will of that person.

The problem with reality as it has always been defined, is that you can't deny it when it filters in and takes over. Like a cake that you bake, the measurements and method create something delectable or something impossible to eat.

The sharp edges of reality pierce fantasy. For some the piercing takes place very unplanned, unannounced. It is like a spider just walking on the wall, and suddenly on your face in bed.

We cannot hold fixed perimeters of our existence. We can certainly try, but after time wears on and the moon becomes the sun, we see the folly of that. Nothing is stagnant. Change is the only constant. What we thought was bad and miserable become a new kind of reality; a picturesque past and what we currently sink our teeth into, with every bite; is somehow worse.

So for some living in a book has always been better than living in reality. What is learned is expansive and what is then nurtured is possibly a guide for life. I think that happened in many ways to me. That old bedroom set may have had a kind of charm on it. When I sold it, it had gone through many incantations of reality. It had been taken and refurbished by my mother, as a 'surprise' while I spent some school time in Austria. It lost it's magic, it's dusky, worn warmth, it's first layer of secrets. The bed changed. The mirror no longer mystified. The drawers were no longer secret, endless, hidden spaces. She had cleaned it all out. The gold had all disappeared and small flowers appeared on the wall, then white

eyelet on the windows and bed. My mother was certainly in heaven. I was ridiculously not.

I got married and moved this set to an apartment on the north side in Skokie. The adventure continued when I decided after one year to divorce. I sold the bedroom set to avoid moving it to a college student at Northwestern. I know he was very happy to have it, such a perfect bit of something different. I never wished I had it back. It turned out to be something that had lost it's charm for me. Someone had invited it in and had taken off it's coat, only to further strip it of it's aged charm, and magical innocence.

Some of the history that I read in that golden room changed my life in a way that was quite unpredictable. I learned about people who had everything and then at once nothing. I learned about the pain and sorrow of material loss in a personal way that augmented my later experiences. I didn't miss the history of WWII in Europe when I was there. The scars were still fresh, gaining in perspective, for those trying to understand what happened, how things went so wrong. What I learned though years of study of it when I got home was vast. One thing was not to get too attached to what you think you know, what you 'own', what material thing that gives you great pleasure, because it can all fall away. When that full moon hangs up in the sky, there is light, there is a kind of sun. It is the reality of our lives, the earth, the universe, many seek the light of truth. We walk together through the fall woods.

