



The Man In The Moon

Templeton Moss

Humor, Magic, Retold Fairy Tales

There was once a man who lived up on a hill in a cozy cottage. And even though he had a large, comfortable bed inside, most nights he would take a blanket and a pillow outside and sleep on the grass in the light of the moon. He did this every single night, except when the moon was new, when he would sleep happily inside his own house. No one ever knew why he behaved like this and when asked about it he would just say, “I’m keeping a promise I made to someone special.” But my Great Uncle Gus is clever and knows a lot of stuff and he told me why that man behaved that way, so I’ll tell you:

It started waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay long ago, when the world was newer than it is now, in a village called Marshton, so named because it was built in a marsh (which is basically just a wet, swampy place). During the day the Marshfolk went about their business in peace and without fear. And at night, the kind moon would light up the land almost as bright as the sun. But, as we all know, once a month the moon takes the night off. And when the moon is gone and the night is dark, the Evil Things come out. Goblins and trolls and wicked witches who live in the marshlands wait for people to cast spells on.

But the moon is sympathetic and very fond of the people she shines down on and when she heard about these Evil Things bothering the people of Marshton, she wanted to see them for herself. But, of course, they avoid moonlight just as much as sunlight, so she would have to disguise herself to see them. On her night off (what people for some reason call the “New moon” instead of what it is: the “no moon”) she came down to Earth in the shape of a beautiful woman with blonde hair that shone like...well, as it happens, exactly like the moon. She covered this with a heavy black cloak and walked through the marshlands to see the Evil Things.

She was frightened and alone, and she clutched her cloak tightly around herself as she walked through the soft, muddy ground. Of course, she wasn't used to walking on the ground at all so it wasn't long before she slipped and fell. She reached out for a tree branch to break her fall, but the branch was enchanted and wrapped itself around her wrists. She tried to get free, but the branch just held her tightly. She was trapped!

The poor Moon couldn't even cry out for help. She may have looked like a woman at the time, but she did not know any human language, so all she could do was stand there, shivering from fear and hoping someone would come along. Soon, someone did come along: a young man who had wandered too far from home and was hurrying to get back to Marshton before the Evil Things got him...but he was too late! As the Moon watched, he was set upon by three ugly goblins. The man cried out for help and the Moon wanted to go to his aide, entirely forgetting that she needed help too!

But though she struggled harder than ever against her bonds, the branch would not let her go. She shook her entire body to free herself, and as she did so the hood slid from her head and a bright beam of moonlight shot from her hair and blinded the three goblins who ran back to their lair, crying piteously.

The man was so elated to be free of the goblins, that he didn't stop to think about where the magical light had come from or who had saved him. He just ran as fast as he could to his home before anything else happened to him.

As for the Moon...well, now the Evil Things knew who she was. They knew that it was she who kept them from working their mischief twenty-seven days out of the month. And they decided they would be rid of her once and for all...

The next day, the sun rose as it always had, shone for a few hours, then prepared to set and the people of

Marshton prepared to greet the new moon...but there was no moon. Days passed and the moon did not shine. The Evil Things began to run amok in the marsh because there was no moonlight to chase them away. The people were frightened and none of them knew where the moon had gone...

Except one.

The man who had been set upon by goblins suddenly remembered what had happened: A woman with shining yellow hair had freed him. She must have been the moon! She saved my life and I just ran away and let those Evil Things have her! He felt ashamed and resolved to help her, if he still could.

So that very day, just before nightfall, he went out into the marshes alone. He tried to remember where the goblins had found him and with only a few minutes until the sun was due to set, he found the spot. And there was the moon...dead in the marsh. The man fell to his knees and cradled the head of the fallen moon, begging her to live again. The sun set, and the man knew that any moment now he would be set upon by monsters of all shapes and sizes against whom he would have no defense.

"Never mind," he said to the moon in his arms. "I owe you my life and nothing less. It may be a meaningless gesture at this point, but I promise I will protect you and stay close to you for as long as I am able." The man said this fully expecting to die as he saw the glowing eyes of trolls and demons creeping up on him from all sides.

But then, something amazing happened. The power of this man's promise and the sacrifice he was willing to make awakened the sleeping moon. She sat up at once and her hair glowed again, its light dispersing the band of monsters that was surrounding them. It was a light so bright that the man had to hide his eyes. When he opened them again, the woman in the marsh was gone...but the moon was back in the sky!

From that day on, the Moon spent every night off on Earth with her new friend...lover...and husband. Yes, the brave man from Marshton married the Moon. And every night for the rest of his life, he would sleep outside to be closer to her, except the one night per month that she came down to Earth and shared a soft, warm bed inside with her husband. He never broke his promise and he stayed as close to her as possible until the day he died. And even then, the Moon used her power to join with him so that they could be together for all of time. Since then, he's been known as "The Man in the Moon."

At least that's what my Great Uncle Gus says. And, like I said, he knows a lot of stuff.

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