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Moonlight on the Colorado



*-By Ida Vowell
Robertson*

Martha closes her Bible and lays it on the table by the lamp—a very special lamp—a long-ago Christmas gift from HIM. She takes off her glasses and places them on top of the Bible, and, from the habit of years, methodically pushes her thinning, white hair back from her forehead. She sits

completely inert and purposeless, totally indifferent to the clock striking nine.

Princess stretches and yawns at her feet, nibbling ingratiatingly against Martha's legs, stirring her back into the NOW.

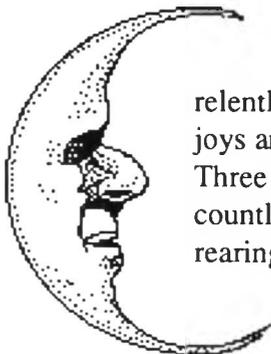
Martha pats the soft, furry head and gets to her feet. Time to check the locks and let her Royal Highness out for a few capers in the night air. Princess, as though acting on cue, marches ahead in

typical feline dignity, her tail held high, eager for adventure. Automatically, Martha opens the door and follows Princess out onto the porch. For a space she watches her as she pursues, without success, a sharp old cricket that outhops every strike of her greedy claws. Glancing up, she thinks she must be seeing things. Is that really a silver moon soloing in the clear starless sky? No delusion! That moon is silver! Large, and full and gloriously silver!

As she stands, almost transfixed as if beholding a miracle, more than half -a-century past becomes the present. A young Martha is standing on a bridge over the Colorado River. It is the eve of her wedding, and she and the handsomest, greatest guy in the world are leaning on the banister, looking up, awed and entranced by a moon of pure silver. They have never even dreamed of seeing a silver moon. Silver moons are just for poets—or just a fantasy! How beautifully the radiance of that moon reflects trails of shiney-silver streams down upon the quietly flowing river. Surely, they are receiving a special blessing: an omen of a future full of joy and happiness.

Princess' insistence for attention returns the past to a present reality. Martha, again the mature, realistic Martha, marvels that the memory of a thing as simple as a moon stands out so vividly in her memory, when she scarcely recalls even scant details of her wedding day itself.

The years have rushed by in time's relentless succession with an even ratio of joys and sorrows and successes and failures. Three major wars; the evolvement of countless scientific wonders; the bearing, rearing, and educating of children long since gone far and wide in their own pursuits—all have been a part of life's greatest pattern, marriage. Strangely, despite so many changes, one thing never changed for them—the magic of the moon, its magnetic attraction.

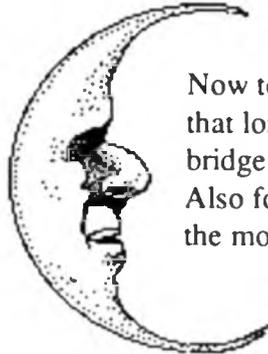


So many, yes, countless times, had her practical, phlegmatic, yet surprisingly sentimental, husband paused in his nightly ritual of “checking the locks,” to summon “Rosie, Rosie, come out and look at this gorgeous moon.” Always it was a gorgeous moon! (Rosie was a teasing name, a name that only he used. It was his connotation of “Honey,” “Dear,” “Love,” etc.—a rare expression of love.) At times, she had been thrilled at his cherishing this strange magnetism of the moon and had responded to his remembering. But many times when she was rocking a colicky baby, helping a child with homework, figuring how to meet the car insurance and a new license tag at the same time, pondering the wisdom of spending money right now for a vacation, or deeply involved in soothing a child rushing into romance too soon—or perhaps, just relaxing for a few minutes at the end of a tiring day, she had grudgingly felt, “Oh no—not just now.” But always the old compulsion would rule out all else, and she’d quickly respond to “Come, Rosie, and just see this gorgeous moon.” So they shared moons and more moons, yet never another silver moon, or never another moon over the Colorado River. She often pondered how this simple act of sharing a full moon had always made trivial a misunderstanding of the day or resolved an impending crisis; always it had.

Princess’ persistent weaving and purring woos her into action. She looks up again at the moon, still mystified that it really is a silver moon. Surely sentiment is not affecting her vision! Just then a thin, filmy gauze of cloud casts a giant shadow across the moon, dimming its sheen. Princess now

purrs and caresses more urgently, and singing, Martha moves inside and locks the door.

Tonight for the first time in fifty-six years, no voice has bade, “Rosie, Rose, come see this gorgeous moon.”



Now tonight for the first time since that long-ago night on the river bridge, she has seen a silver moon. Also for the first time she has felt the moon’s magic spell alone—all alone. Princess blocks the way, waiting a stroking hand. Martha picks her up and goes into the

house alone; she is conscious that now and forever she will be keeping a tryst with the moon alone; again she sighs and holds back a shudder. Alone.

Sharp twitches of pain in her arthritic fingers interrupt her reverie. She settles into her chair just across the lamp table from the big forever empty recliner. She reaches for the aspercreme and begins to massage her arthritic left fingers. Perhaps it is the stimulation of the pungent balm that stirs a change in mood. Almost smiling, she reflects, “Well, Martha, old girl, you’ve made it thus far. Surely with aspercreme to ease your aching joints and moon magic memories to warm your lonely heart, you CAN go on alone, and don’t you ever be “Poor Pitiful Pearl.” You are definitely alone but still too blessed to be lonely.” *

“ You are definitely alone but still too blessed to be lonely.”

Design by Scott Voigt
