



Love The Moon

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A full moon glows through evening haze, its luminescence obscuring stars strewn across the night sky. The moon's solid presence offers comfort to us in the world below, a world held captive by a virus so small it is almost laughable. Almost. Illnesses and deaths by the thousands mean this microscopic marauder pulls us as forcefully as the moon pulls the tides.

The moon has remained a celestial friend since childhood, a time when the sky was dark and the Milky Way's spiral arm splashed overhead. Now, sadly, light pollution has ruined stargazing: More than eighty percent of the world's population has never seen the Milky Way. Still, the moon is our near neighbor, and remains an anchor in this time of uncertainty and isolation.

My romance with the moon developed because of my older brother. While in high school he built his own telescope, grinding its mirror on the sidewalk next to our back door. He won a prize in the local science fair, but he was not finished. Even though we didn't have a car, we had a garage. My brother—and I as subcontractor—delivered papers on our bikes to earn money for his dream project, a dream I shared—an observatory on top of the garage.

When sufficient funds were secured, my brother and father began construction, fashioning a wooden framework and then coating it with some mysterious material that molded into the shape of a dome, complete with slit for the telescope to peer from. It took more than a month of working after school and on weekends. When finished, it looked quite professional—so much so that a neighbor alerted the local newspaper and an article appeared along with a photo of my brother climbing the ladder to the observatory. Fortunately, the garage held a ladder just the right size to scamper up, flashlight in hand, and emerge into the little rotunda that had room for the two of us, the scope, and nothing else.

My brother and I spent hours in the evening atop the garage anytime the sky was clear and homework allowed. I learned to use the eyepiece on the telescope to focus it on objects glimmering above, a cornucopia of marvels that satisfied our young souls. The craters and shadows on the moon popped out; Mars glowed in rust-colored splendor, Saturn's rings dazzled. Along with building his telescope my brother had drawn a star chart, which we used to find Sirius, the Orion nebula, the Pleiades cluster of stars and other wonders. It was heady, we two imaging ourselves serious astronomers. But always, the moon was the most thrilling; we could see its craters and crags. We knew the moon

once had been part of the Earth. It was enchanting to feel such connection to it.

Later my brother went off to college and I became old enough to hold a part-time job while in high school. The telescope sat alone in the observatory, until finally my father brought it down and stored it in a nook in the basement. The observatory remained for a few more months, but it began to show signs of deterioration, so my father deconstructed it. My connection to the moon had faded, replaced by studies and boys.

As I left college and embarked on life on my own I rekindled my connection to the moon. It sustained me through the imperatives of deadlines in my work life and the uncertainties that infuse parenthood. I made sure my two daughters learned to look up and appreciate the night sky—as much of it as we could see. Light pollution has only grown much worse.

And now, we live in the age of coronavirus. Ironically, with many businesses closed, the night sky has become a smidge darker. I count the months of virus isolation by full moons—the pink moon, the flower moon, the strawberry moon, the sturgeon moon, the corn moon, the harvest moon. When will life return to normal? Will it ever? Whatever lies ahead as we continue to deal with a virus that remains ubiquitous, the moon will continue casting its benevolent light over us all.

