

Maiden of the Night

Tuesday evening, Forrest and Kathleen Preston and Lola and I happened to be along the Chattanooga downtown waterfront of the Tennessee River when darkness came. The lights of the city are impressive against a black sky.

Suddenly, an amazing spectacle caught our attention. Rising above the Market Street Bridge was a bright, golden disc – a full November moon – beginning its ride across the heavens. Its beams chased the darkness, casting a surreal glow on objects all around. It looked as if a person standing on the bridge could reach out his hand and touch it.

Even in this modern, scientific age – a period in history when man has made footprints on the moon – this great bowl of light stirs the fancy of adults and children alike. The moon is widely celebrated in literature and music. But it was the space age, which began in 1957, that opened a new chapter in man's understanding of the moon. On July 20, 1969, America's Apollo 11 landed on the moon. Man's firsthand exploration and study of the moon had begun.

Despite all this knowledge that has been acquired, however, the moon continues to be a mysterious heavenly body holding remarkable appeal – especially to romantics. What could beat these memories, forged in the shimmering light of the moon:

- Peering from the bedroom window of a country house across an autumn cornfield, its stalks and shadows forming troops of soldiers advancing into battle.
- Enjoying a wiener roast in the clearing of a dark woodland – the first camping trip of a group of young boys.
- Giggling for frogs on a wide and deep pond.
- Collecting firewood at night, beneath heaven's glow, for the hearth of home.
- Walking home from church along a moonlit lane.
- Plucking apples from the limbs of their tree, illuminated from above.
- Sitting on a front porch, gazing through the leaves of a maple tree at the night light behind them.
- Standing a moon-bathed midnight watch at the fairgrounds, gripping a submachine gun, over a National Guard encampment at Clinton, Tenn., during the integration struggle there in the late 1950s.
- Drinking in a current of gold, splashed on the calm Caribbean Sea, during a cruise.
- Burning the leaves of fall after twilight, and witnessing the flickering flames vying with moonbeams in a spellbinding competition.

As you can see, I was smitten – again – by this maiden of the night.

– Beecher Hunter