

THE MAGIC OF THE MOON

Lola and I were driving home Monday night after a dinner in Chattanooga with newly hired doctors of Life Care Physician Services. We were heading north on Interstate 75, preparing to cross White Oak Mountain, when a heavenly vision caught our eyes.



A Harvest Moon – the last of the three “supermoons” of 2014, so-called because of its closeness to Earth – was rising in the eastern sky. It was a yellow-gold ship sailing steadily in a calm, dark-blue sea. We watched the progress of this celestial craft, contemplating the magic it works on us mortals. With its breathtaking beauty, is it any wonder that the moon has always mesmerized man?

Early peoples thought the moon was a powerful god or goddess. The ancient Romans called their moon goddess Diana. She was the goddess of the hunt and the guardian of wild beasts and fertile fields. She used a moon crescent for a bow and moonbeams for arrows.

The moon goddess of the ancient Greeks was Selene, and early Egyptians honored the moon god Khonsu. Some American Indian tribes believed that the moon and the sun were brother and sister gods, with the moon being much more important than the sun.

Some folks feared eclipses of the moon as signs of famine, war or other disasters. According to one superstition, sleeping in moonlight could make a person insane. The word *lunatic*, which means moonstruck, comes from *luna*, a Latin word meaning moon.

Legends of various lands told how the “man in the moon” had been imprisoned there for stealing or for breaking the Sabbath. Some people saw other figures in the moon’s markings – Jack and Jill, a beautiful lady, or a cat, donkey, frog or rabbit.

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the famous English playwright, William Shakespeare, compared the moon to “a silver bow new-bent in heaven.” In *The Cloud*, the English poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, described the moon as “that orb’d maiden, with white fire laden, whom mortals call the moon.”

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Today, we know more about the moon than ever because American astronauts have been there. But despite the scientific understanding we have of it, the moon still captures the fancy of ...

- Lovers, sitting beside a dark lake and listening to its waters lap at the shore.
- Coon hunters, who squat beside a fall campfire, serenaded by the baying of dogs in the distance.
- Sailors, who stare at the golden path of moonbeams across the ocean's surface and dream of home.
- Little boys, who sit in the open door of a shadowy hayloft and ponder the future.
- Fishermen, who maybe enjoy the solitude they find under the moon more than they do the use of their fishing gear.
- Senior citizens, who relax in a rocking chair on a front porch in the late evening, and think of times that were.



We drove on to Cleveland. The moon continued its voyage.

– Beecher Hunter