

The Moon This Night

The moon this night, playing me a trick, hid itself behind a curtain in my room; and I, lying in bed, sinking fast into the thrill which we feel when we move against the current of a fever.

The moon this night, languid and strange, lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards that primitive place that is its heart; deeper and deeper and more closely.

The moon this night hid its face in my neck and hair with sighs that seemed almost to sob, and pressed against mine a cheek burning soft. *"I live in you,"* murmured the moon; *"It is very hard to part with you."*

And you—most assuredly you—gazing in my face as you whisper, *"Hold me, hold me still. We are forever one, I and you."*

Most assuredly you; with eyes, and lips—your lips—you as you are, and you and I both young—the flicker of a candle; I caress your face with ardent hands.

*"You have been thinking of forgetting; never dream of any such thing. Come with me in the river fields, longer and longer and more lovingly."*

I cry out loud and I am wakened—the moon this night going like the wolf through my dreams, now no more than a spot fading into the first grey light.

I should be very angry at the moon this night stealing the silver from your coffin, stealing your face; while you, pale and without a smile, have passed on, a summer cloud.

I cannot help it; I curse upon the moon this night; I call it such hard names. I curse upon its masquerade, its laugh in my face.

And often from a reverie I have started when the door cracks, fancying I have heard your step inside the room where I held you once—now desolate, now silent.

## ABOUT THE POEM

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“The Moon This Night” was created from *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1872). About the poem and the process of composing it, Basiliké Pappa writes:

*“The moon, this night,”* says Mademoiselle De Lafontaine in *Carmilla*, *“is full of idyllic and magnetic influence.”* I found the moon in almost every chapter of this book, repeatedly bathing the story in its silver splendor; the moon would be the protagonist in my poem as well, present in almost every stanza. The Gothic element, the eroticism and dreaminess in which the story is immersed were also aspects I wanted to preserve. I started by picking sentences and copying them into a clean file, then scanned the text for more sentences and words to remix. As I began to rearrange my findings, my theme emerged: the moon assuming the appearance of a lover on a night where happiness and pain blend; an invitation one cannot accept; a dream whose end, unlike in *Carmilla*, brings no comfort.

