

**Buried moon. A bit of a scary story.**

**An English fairy story by Edmund DuLac.**

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**In my old Granny's days, long, long--oh, so long ago, Carland was just a collection of bogs. Pools of black water lay in the hollows, and little green rivulets scurried away here and there like long lizards trying to escape from their tails, while every tuft that you trod upon would squirt up at you like anything. Oh! it was a nice place to be in on a dark night, I give you my word. Now, I've heard my Granny say that a long time before her day the Moon got trapped and buried in the bog. I'll tell you the tale as she used to tell it to me. On some nights the beautiful Moon rose up in the sky and shone brighter and brighter, and the people blessed her because by her wonderful light they could find their way home at night through the treacherous bogs. But on other nights she did not come, and then it was so dark that the traveller could not find his way; and, besides, the Evil Things that feared the light--toads and creepy, crawly things, to say nothing of Bogles and Little Bad People--came out in the darkness to do all the harm they could, for they hated the people and were always trying to lead them astray. Many a poor man going home in the dark had been enticed by these malevolent things into quicksands and mud pools. When the Moon was away and the night was black, these vile creatures had their will.**

**When the Moon learned about this, she was very grieved, for she is a sweet, kind body, who spends nights without sleep, so as to show a light for people going home. She was troubled about it all, and said to herself, 'I'll just go down and see how matters stand.' So, when the dark end of the month came round, she stepped down out of the sky, wrapped from head to foot in her black travelling cloak with the hood drawn over her bright golden hair. For a moment she stood at the edge of the marshes, looking this way and that. Everywhere, as far as she could see, was the dismal bog, with pools of black water, and gnarled, fantastic-looking snags sticking up here and there amid the dank growth of weeds and grasses. There was no light save the feeble glimmer of the stars reflected in the gloomy pools; but, upon the grass where she stood, a bright ring of moonlight shone from her feet beneath her cloak. She saw this and drew her garments closer about her. It was cold, and she was trembling. She feared that vast expanse of bog and its evil creatures, but she was determined to face the matter out and see exactly how the thing stood.**

**Guided by the light that streamed from her feet, she advanced into the bog. As the summer wind stirs one tussock after another, so she stepped onward between the slimy ponds and deadly quagmires. Now she reached a jet-black pool, and all too late she saw the stars shining in its depths. Her foot tripped and all she could do was to snatch at an overhanging branch of a snag as she fell forward. To this she clung, but, fast as she gripped it, faster still some tendrils from the bough whipped round her wrists like manacles and held her there a prisoner. She struggled and wrenched and tugged with all her might and main, but the tendrils only tightened and cut into her wrists like steel bands. In her frantic struggles the hood of her cloak fell back from her dazzling golden hair, and immediately the whole place was flooded with light. As she stood there shivering in the dark and wondering how to free herself, she heard far away in the bog a voice calling through the night. It was a wailing cry, dying away in despair. She listened and listened, and the repeated cry came nearer; then she heard footsteps--halting, stumbling and slipping. At last, by the dim light of the stars, she saw a haggard, despairing face with fearful eyes; and then she knew it was a poor man who had lost his way and was floundering on to his death.**

**Now he caught sight of a gleam of light from the captive Moon, and made his uncertain way towards it, thinking it meant help. As he came nearer and nearer the pool, the Moon saw that her light was luring him to his death, and she felt so very sorry for him, and so angry with herself that she struggled fiercely at the cords that held her. It was all in vain, but, in her frantic struggles, the hood of her cloak fell back from her dazzling golden hair, and immediately the whole place was flooded with light, which fell on muddy pools and quicks and quags, glinting on the twisted roots and making the whole place as clear as day. How glad the wayfarer was to see the light! How pleased he was to see all the Evil Things of the dark scurrying back into their holes! He could now find his way, and he made for the edge of the treacherous marsh with such haste that he had not time to wonder at the strange thing that had happened. He did not know that the blessed light that showed him his path to safety shone from the radiant hair of the Moon, bound fast to a snag and half buried in the bog. And the Moon herself was so glad he was safe, that she forgot her own danger and need.**

**But,as she watched him making good his escape from the terrible dangers of the marshes, she was overcome by a great longing to follow him. This made her tug and strain again like a demented creature, until she sank exhausted, but not free, in the mud at the foot of the snag. As she did so, her head fell forward on her breast, and the hood of her cloak again covered her shining hair. At that moment, just as suddenly as the light had shone out before, the darkness came down with a swish, and all the vile things that loved it came out of their hiding-places with a kind of whispering screech which grew louder and louder as they swarmed abroad on the marshes. Now they gathered round the poor Moon, snarling and scratching at her and screaming hateful mockeries at her. At last they had her in their power--their old foe whose light they could not endure; the Bright One whose smile of light sent them scurrying away into their crevices and defeated their fell designs. 'Hell roast thee!' cried an ugly old witch-thing; 'thou'rt the meddlesome body that spoils all our brews.' 'Out on thee!' shrieked the bogle-bodies; 'if 'twere not for thee we'd have the marsh to ourselves.' And there was a great clamour--as out-of-tune as out-of-tune could be.**

**All the things of darkness raised their harsh and cracked voices against the Bright One of the sky. 'Ha, ha!' and 'Ho, ho!' and 'He, he!' mingled with chuckles of fiendish glee, until it seemed as if the very trickles and gurgles of the bog were joining in the orgy of hate. 'Burn her with corpse-lights!' yelled the witch. 'Ha, ha! He, he!' came the chorus of evil creatures. 'Truss her up and stifle her!' screamed the creeping things. 'Spin webs round her!' And the spiders of the night swarmed all over her. 'Sting her to death!' said the Scorpion King at the head of his brood. 'Ho, ho! He, he!' And, as each vile thing had something to say about it, a horrible, screeching dispute arose, while the captive Moon crouched shuddering at the foot of the snag and gave herself up as lost. The dim grey light of the early dawn found them still hissing and clawing and screeching at one another as to the best way to dispose of the captive. Then, when the first rosy ray shot up from the Sun, they grew afraid. Some scuttled away, but those who remained hastened to do something--anything that would smother the light of the Moon. The only thing they could think of now was to bury her in the mud,--bury her deep. They were all agreed on this as the quickest way.**

**So they clutched her with skinny fingers and pushed her down into the black mud beneath the water at the foot of the snag. When they had all stamped upon her, the bogle-bodies ran quickly and fetched a big black stone which they hurled on top of her to keep her down. Then the old witch called two will-o'-the-wisps from the darkest part of the marshes, and, when they came dancing and glancing above the pools and quicks, she bade them keep watch by the grave of the Moon, and, if she tried to get out, to sound an alarm. Then the horrid things crept away from the morning light, chuckling to themselves over the funeral of the Moon, and only wishing they could bury the Sun in the same way; but that was a little too much to hope for, and besides, all respectable Horrors of the Bog ought to be asleep in bed during the Sun's journey across the sky. The poor Moon was now buried deep in the black mud, with a heavy stone on top of her. Surely she could never again thwart their plans of evil, hatched and nurtured in the foul darkness of the quags. She was buried deep; they had left no sign; who would know where to look for her?**

**Day after day passed by until the time of the New Moon was eagerly looked for by the good folk who dwelt around the marshes, for they knew they had no friend like the Moon, whose light enabled them to find the pathways through the bog-land, and drove away all the vile things into their dark holes and corners. So they put lucky pennies in their pouches and straws in their hats, and searched for the crescent Moon in the sky. But evening twilight brought no Moon, which was not strange, for she was buried deep in the bog. The nights were pitch dark, and the Horrors held frolic in the marshes and swarmed abroad in ever-increasing numbers, so that no traveller was safe. The poor people were so frightened and dumbfounded at being forsaken by the friendly Moon, that some of them went to the old Wise Woman of the Mill and besought her to find out what was the matter. The Wise Woman gazed long into her magic mirror, and then made a brew of herbs, into which she looked just as long, muttering words that nobody but herself could understand. 'It's very strange,' she said at last; 'but there's nought to say what has become of her. I'll look again later on; meantime if ye do learn anything, let me know.'**

**So they went away more mystified than ever, and, as the following nights brought no Moon, they could do nothing but stand about in groups in the streets discussing the strange thing. The disappearance of the Moon was the one topic. By the fireside, at the work-bench, in the inn and all about, their tongues went nineteen to the dozen; and no wonder, for who had ever heard of the Moon being lost, stolen or strayed? But it chanced one day that a man from the other side of the marshes was sitting in the inn, smoking his pipe and listening to the talk of the other inmates, when all of a sudden he sat bolt upright, slapped his thigh and cried out, 'I' fegs! Now I mind where that there Moon be!' Then he told them how one night he had got lost in the marshes and was frightened to death; how he went blundering on in the dark with all the Evil Things after him, and, at last, how a great bright light burst out of a pool and showed him the way to go.**

**When they heard this they all took the shortest cut to the Wise Woman, and told her the man's story. After a long look in the mirror and the pot, she wagged her head slowly and said, 'It's all dark, children. You see, being as there's no Moon to conjure by, I can't tell ye where she's gone or what's made off with her--which same I could tell ye fine if she was in her right place. But mebbe, if ye do what I'm going to tell ye, then ye may hap on her yourselves. Listen now! Just before the darklings come, each of ye take a stone in your mouth and a twig of the witch-hazel in your hands, and go into the marshes without fear. Speak no word, for fear of your lives, but keep straight on till ye come to a spot where ye'll see a coffin with a cross and a candle on it. That's where ye'll find your Moon, I'm thinking, if ye're lucky.**

**So the next night as the dark began to fall they all trooped out into the marshes, each with a stone in his mouth and a twig of the witch-hazel in his hands. Never a word they spoke, but kept straight on; and, I'm telling you, there was not one among them but had the creeps and the starts. They could see nothing around them but bogs and pools and snags; but strange sighing whispers brushed past their ears, and cold wet hands sought theirs and tugged at the hazel twigs. But all at once, while looking everywhere for the coffin with the cross and the candle, they espied the big, strange stone, and it looked just like a coffin; while at the head of it was a black cross formed by the branches of the snag, and on this cross flickered a tiny light just like a candle. When they saw these things they all knew that what the Wise Woman had told them was true: they were not far from their beloved Moon. But, being mighty feared of Bogles and the other Evil Things, they all went down on their knees in the mud and said the Lord's Prayer, once forwards, in keeping with the cross, and once backwards to keep off the Horrors of the Darkness. All this they said in their minds, without saying a word aloud, for they well knew what would happen to them if they neglected the Wise Woman's advice.**

**Then they rose up and laid hands on the great stone and heaved it up. And my Granny says, that as they did it, some of them saw, just for one tiddy-widdy little waste of a minute, the most beautiful face in the world gazing up at them with wistful eyes like--like--I really can't remember how my Granny described them, but it was either 'pools of gratitude' or 'lakes of love.' At all events, this is exactly what happened when the stone was rolled right over, and it was said so quickly that not one of them could describe it afterwards: 'Thanks, brave folk! I shall never forget your kindness,' as the Moon stepped up out of the black pool into her place in the sky. Then they were all astonished beyond words, for, suddenly, all around was the silver light, making the safe ways between the bogs as clear as day. There was a sudden rush of weird things to their lairs, and then all was still and bright. Looking up, they saw with delight the full Moon sailing in the sky and smiling down upon them. She was there to light them home again. She was there to stampede the Evil Things--the Bogles and the Bad Little People--back into their vile dens. And, as the people looked around and wondered, it almost seemed to them that this time she had killed the Horrors dead--never to come to life again**

The end.