

FANTASY

Moon Water

Abby Bidwell

A long time ago, in 1597, cold rains and hailstorms plagued the villagers of St. Maximin. Vicious gray clouds hung overhead for months on end, flooding their crops, which left nothing to harvest. Pastor Edmund was a wise leader of the people of St. Maximin who needed to restore the lands for all to survive.

A foreigner had once warned the pastor about witches he had described to be too powerful for their own good. Pastor Edmund had to find someone to blame for their misfortunes, so the village began hunting the witches, and when they found them, they were to be hanged. So, the witches began hiding in the woods by day. Only when the villagers were safe in their beds, and long since in a deep slumber, did they dare venture beyond the edge of the forest. The villagers believed that the witches would not enter their homes, nor would they be dangerous to them.

None of the villagers dared to go near those woods. The children in St. Maximin were told not to cross the stream, or they might wander too far into the forest where the witches would prey on them. With their heightened senses, they could sniff out a child from afar to track them down to devour their souls.

Adelinda lived with her father and sister in the village of St. Maximin for many years. Her mother died giving birth to her sister, Rowena. As a young girl, Adelinda always admired the beautiful silver cross pendant her mother had worn. One day it would be hers, but for the time being, her father kept it hidden away in a drawer, as he was too grief-stricken to look at it. With the loss of their mother, most of the responsibility fell on Adelinda to take care of her younger sister Rowena.

One day when Adelinda and Rowena were children, their father came home to find them sitting on the floor in a candle-lit room. They were playing a fortune-telling game known as Venus Glass. Adelinda cracked an egg into a bowl of water, and they both watched the gooeey, white texture disperse to tell them of their fate. This was considered heresy, and their father knew if anyone was to find out, it would not be taken lightly.

When the girls were found out, their father tried to convince the village people his daughters could not possibly be guilty of such deviant behaviour. However, the villagers were decided. When they came to take the sisters, Adelinda was out, but on returning home, she discovered her sister was gone. She knew that her sister would be hanged in the town for all to watch, and she could do nothing to save her. Her only choice was to leave while she still could before they came for her. It was no longer safe for an accused witch like her to stay in St. Maximin.

She quickly fled the village, leaving her father behind. It was then that she met the witches of the woods she had always heard about but never knew if they truly existed. She had taken only her most prized possession with her—her mother's silver cross pendant. At first, the witches thought of Adelinda as a peculiar-looking girl, with her spiralled locks as silver as the chain and pendant she wore around her neck, and her eyes as blue as the cornflowers that the children in the village made into wreaths. She must have been a different breed than any of them. They tried to make her as comfortable as one could possibly be after losing a sister. They taught her spells and how to fly, as they thought it might offer a distraction for her. They gave her a beautiful new crimson-hued gown that clung to her form and hung just below her knees, with a neckline that left collarbones exposed, which went perfectly well with her bloodless skin. After all, it was the proper attire for a young witch like herself. The witches grew very fond of Adelinda over the years, but they couldn't lessen

her grief over her sister. Adelinda's sadness made her tears overflow like a river pouring down her cheeks. It was even said that on the nights when the winds were quiet, her cries were heard in the village.

Adelinda lived among the witches in the woods for ten years and could have hidden out there for the rest of her days. Often when Adelinda braided her hair, she would close her eyes and imagine it was her sister's long black strands. She pictured her sister's soft smile and her brown eyes flecked with amber and how they glistened in the light. She had become rather weak from grieving the loss of her sister, but she decided it was time for revenge.

She could live a hundred years without returning to the village. But he took away the thing that mattered most to her, and she wanted him dead and the village to feel her pain. The village people feared that she would seek vengeance for what they did to her sister. Witches would never be safe there for as long as he lived. First, she would need to charge her magic.

On a dark and cold night, Adelinda perched in a tree at the edge of the forest and looked out at the village. She contemplated whether she should act tonight, for if she did not, she would have to wait for another twenty-nine moons to pass. She fiddled with the pendant on the chain around her neck and thought of heading back into the forest for the night. Wolves howled in the darkness, and the trees rustled from the wind. Thunder rumbled overhead. The moon was full and shone brightly high in the sky. It had to be tonight.

As Adelinda flew down, her emerald green cape trailed behind her in the wind, trimmed in gold that gleamed in the moonlight. She paced toward the stream that ran between the village and the forest. She kneeled down on the grass beside the stream, and held her hands out, palms up, toward the sky as she asked for the moon's water to make her strong and powerful. She scooped up water from the stream with both hands and poured it down her throat. Some

water trickled from her face onto her chest. She could feel her energy rising, and her magic vibrating at a high frequency. Her desire to kill grew stronger. There was no heading back to the forest now.

She journeyed to the village on foot. She would draw less attention than if she flew. As she approached the village, she noticed a man walking in the cool night breeze. Adelinda whisked away to hide behind a tree trunk. She poked her head out from behind the tree and recited a spell before she realized he was sleepwalking and had not actually seen her. She continued through the village, making her way to the church. When she arrived, she chanted a spell under her breath. A flame caught on the roof of the church.

Pastor Edmund woke in his bed to the crackling sounds of fire, and screams outside his room. He looked for an escape, but flames around him reflected off something by his bedside. He picked it up; it was his wife's shiny silver cross pendant. He had not seen it in ten years.

The flames sputtered before jumping to life on the surrounding houses. Soon the flames spread and engulfed the entire village. The shrill screams of the villagers were heard as they ran out of their homes, carrying their shrieking babies. The sleepwalker awoke from the commotion and chaos. He caught a glimpse of Adelinda that night, and her cornflower-blue eyes pierced his soul. He turned away for a mere second to see his village going up in flames, and when he looked back, she had disappeared. She was never seen again.

Centuries later, many people still say to be wary on the night of a full moon, when a witch's energy is at its most powerful. Some even believe in the sacred ritual that a glass of water left to charge under the moonlight, and drunk the next day, will harness the power of the moon.