

Studies Under Moon

What I have to tell you about, tonight, is of the band of Romani in France, 1850s, thick woven shawls and layered skirts, boots, men in their woven vests, bands of wagons traversing the roads, horses and donkeys and goats in their herds, wandering through forests, their nights made of fireside circles and stories spoken in thick accents and the women dancing to guitar, the deep throated wail of duende in Spanish caves.

And their descendants, in t-shirts and hoodies, wandering from the apartment complexes that stand as prisons inhibiting generations of movement, of real living, as the moon rises, and together, just a little inside the woods into a slight clearing bordered by elms and firs straining to touch the stars, they ignite bundles of newspaper with a cigarette lighter, soak branches in lighter fluid though they know its dangers, gather around the steady crackle. One picks up his guitar and adjusts his cap, and begins in low tones. The other voices join as they stare into the burning dance, and hands clap, and some, in their song, they long to stand and twirl, round and round, kick up dust and lose the sensation of having two arms, two legs, hands and feet and torso, becoming one with the grass and dirt and stars and night and all of everything as the man strums his guitar, plucks the strings with daring, as the notes stir their blood, as the full moon rises slowly over the trees, round and ominous.

-

He excitedly runs to the telescope after revising his calculations. He shoved the chair aside and leaped up, pushing away scrolls of parchment, his spectacles askew, thinking only of the answer. His fingers shake with anticipation as he adjusts the lens. If it proved right... if it just so happened to be as he predicted... not only might the world never be the same. Depending on how well they took or didn't take his answer, he would have to leave under cover of night, acquire many faces in many places, cover his tracks carefully, and preserve what precious few hours he had left with this revelation—earthshattering, reckless and daring as the reputation preceding him.

-

Lit by an array of stars, the grasses tickling my feet, I realize that among the night's clean scents of juniper and dew, there's something of smoke-musk—the honeyed ashes of a fire—though I see no smoke or any trace for miles—traces from memories of gatherings from years past.

Evenings such as this, where I may observe the earth and heavens from my hill, I surrender my questions to the landscape. As I watch the fireflies' lightshow, a kinetic web constellating their own formations to mirror the celestial framework above; the crickets, their undulations of sound, violinists of their own making; as I experience the gentle breezes both refreshing and alluring, I ask of it all: What say you to the Moon after your joyous dance, when you've reached night's end? If I knew, maybe I could say the same when inevitably I face the Keeper of that Other Night. That in eventual old age I will greet her, having the proper words.