

“Winter Moonlight”
by Corrine Ardoin

A January moon shines full, lighting up the edges of the forest, brightening up the night. The blanket of fog below, that follows the snake-like course of the river, shows up clearly to me and brings a chill. It all seems so calm and so secretive, but the secrets slowly are revealed as nocturnal life become active.

Way down on the river bar, over in the pasture, a cow calls out into the fog. It can be heard by the bobcat and raccoon who leave their line of tracks along the water's edge and by the cougar who spies the cow from the edges of the grazing land. On across the canyon the sound of it goes, up through the woods above the train tracks, to the cat creeping through the half-light, persistently meowing. No answer can be heard.

Bushes swish and soggy branches creak and break. A doe and her yearling lift their heads up from grazing to sniff the breeze, ears flickering back and forth. Feeling safe, they continue to feed from the grass on the edge of the small clearing.

The stream close by splashes and flows, catching the moon's light as it hits each rock and log, then continues on down into the fog. Bright flashes hit my eye and I notice droplets of water falling from the trees all around and puddles stirring into rings of light below.

I hear it all. I am as still as the cold and wet log I sit upon, hands in my pockets, with a foggy breath before me. I run my hand over the soft covering of moss on the log, while I look outward to see vague shadows dart in and out of the moon's light.

Standing up, the slightest noise I make silences all other sounds. No longer can I hear rocks tumbling down the bank of the road as the startled deer run up it. The owls' hooting fades away while I walk back into the house. The full moon's brightness turns dim bringing mystery back into this night. I look back, for a moment, and the cat of the evening scurries quickly, its body close to the damp grass, into the shadows once again.