

# *The Snow Moon*

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A full moon sheared the tip of a pine. Lying in bed, a woodsman and his wife saw it one December night. "Something must be done," said his wife. "I know it's a sign."

"When will you marry?" The woodsman woke his daughter in the lamp light. "It's time. The bread is almost gone; my wife and I can't share it any longer. You must go off tomorrow through the forest."

At its heart lived a witch in a small cottage. Perhaps, the girl thought, she could help her. It was rumored she trusted the elves, who cooked and swept her floor for money, and she gave them spells.

"Time has left us nothing," said the woodsman, "Snow is deeper than ever now, and the prince is too old to be your husband." "He was never here, father; he is dead," said his daughter. "He's been dead for many years."

Her father left her; the daughter fell asleep again. With holes in his slippers and robe, he tiptoed back to bed. Snow was falling on the cottage and the forest groves, and on the meadows and mountains. Before dawn, at her window, an old man knocked. Snow kept blowing through the old pines, burying the cottage.

That night, her parents froze in bed; the moon-glow was their lantern. When their daughter found them dead at dawn, she dug out a tunnel in the snow, still in her nightgown, its silk white in the sun. If she went off in the forest (no footprints were left) no one knows. Unless she was the witch, her story ended many centuries ago.