

Take a walk in the light of the gibbous moon and marvel at the flickering shadows and the spangling lakes; your own moon shadow marching ahead. Listen to the birds, tricked into their dawn chorus, as the night appears as day. The moon is waxing, as if light is being pumped into it until it burgeons into fullness.

It is then the 'man in the moon' might visit the child in the night, hovering and smiling through her window pane, softly swaying to lull her to sleep. Or the wolf may howl, or the madman become crazed, or the witch on her broom may cast a silhouette as she flies past.

Take another walk and see the light deflate and wane, day after day until the last shaving is squeezed from view. The moon disappears into a black night. The birds are stilled, the shadows blend into the darkness. Quietness descends as the wolf settles into its den and the madman calms his mind.

But wait, see, there is the light once more; a crescent moon, a perfect sliver; the final piece precision cut by the craftsman who gently places it in the gap to complete the work of art. Look and you may see the small boy sitting at the end fishing for Jupiter, tantalisingly out of reach.

How the ancients must have revered this silver globe, changing shape in the night sky, appearing and disappearing, waxing light dawning and waning light closing. No wonder this illuminated curiosity is full of myth and romance; of song and poetry.

Yet the scientist will tell you the truth is more beautiful, "Look how the mighty oceans are pulled to and fro by a tidal force. Think about how rare is the Blue Moon rising to fullness twice in the same month, and how warm is the Blood Moon as the earth's shadow falls across it. Give thanks for the Harvest Moon that lights the darkness for gatherers of crops. Be spellbound by the greatest moon of all, the Super Moon, terrifying in its size and brightness as it rises from the horizon; never has it been so close to the earth. Remember too those crackled words, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.""

But when the truth is known it cannot be unknown and what then of magic and poetry - with the New Moon, will they be confined to the dark side?