

A Mostly True Story about the Moon

Once upon a time I held a piece
of the moon in my hand,
a pebble no bigger
than a postage stamp.
It didn't look like moon;
it looked like desert.
It looked like it needed
documentation, an affidavit
to prove it wasn't a lie. There were people
who still believed the moon surface we saw
on television was really Arizona,
an American trick to fool
the little countries and the children.
And so I tested it.
It didn't shine.
It didn't make the level
in my water glass rise or fall.
Nothing bled or stopped bleeding.
Nothing howled.
The crumb of moon lay
in my palm like a broken off
piece of a dream,
a quarter note parted
from a hundred thousand moony songs,
love's magic gone incognito.
I tried to remember it
from when I was small and
lay on my back in
dewy summer twilight
staring up and wondering
about jumping cows and green cheese,
and who it would make kiss me someday.
I didn't recognize it
after all these years,
didn't trust it, even though
I, too, turned out
more ordinary than I thought I'd be,
further from the things I'd been a part of.
I wished I could take its lonesome self out
and show it, up close, how
the tide really feels around your feet
and what an eclipse looks like from here
and how, if I held it at just the right distance,
it would blot out the rest of itself

in the night sky.
But as I said, I too had grown
a little less sure of myself
than I used to be, so
instead I left it, knowing two things—
that I couldn't help it any more
than it could help me, and that
the moon in the summer twilight
would never be quite full again.

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June 2006