

The Moon's Moon

a fable for E—

Around the time the Moon became the Moon, but just a little before, there was no Moon.

But there was an Earth.

And she was a little girl—a *clever* little girl. She collected rocks before it was cool. She taught herself to twirl without help. And! She even had a blue dress. Kind of. (It wasn't all that blue.) (Not yet, anyway.) But that didn't stop Earth. Nothing did—which included her quest for a pet.

“What's wrong with a pet rock?” called the Sun, who was nice enough, but also kind of a hot shot around the neighborhood. (She thought that everything revolved around her.)

But Earth paid her no mind.

“Oh, nothing. It's just that I want a pet-pet. Not a pet.”
—which the Sun didn't quite understand, but let her be. (People must always let clever girls be. And with good reason.)

Now, space is a river. (In case you didn't know.)

And there was nothing Earth loved so much as watching its dark, lovely ripples and dreaming of bright things dreaming beneath its lightless waves. (Why?) Because Earth believed in things she could see when she couldn't and believed she would always find what she was looking for so long as she kept looking and kept learning to see everything she saw.

This is how one morning Earth came to dip her hands into the cool black river of space and scoop into her cupped palms the two most beautiful white goldfish she'd ever seen. She'd never actually seen a goldfish. (No one had.) (Which means they weren't named goldfish yet.) All the same and quick as you please, Earth popped the two beautiful fish into the deep watery pockets of her not-yet-blue dress.

And that's how Earth got her pets. Lovely little things she could touch, play with, and tell secrets to, all the while keeping them a secret in her pockets.

Even if that's not where they stayed.

See, the Earth was growing, and so was her dress, slowly bluing at the edges and blooming cool, gray blossoms with green borders all across the skirt—which was fine for a dress, but maybe not its pockets. Much less pockets that Earth loved to stuff with her hands to feel her fish swimming and swimming— and glowing! Growing hotter and hotter! Too hot for pockets before long, much less playing and secrets!

But Earth was a *very* clever girl. With a plan.

In the bat of your eyelash, there was Earth, going around, making a *very* big show of collecting her most favorite rocks and carrying them in her apron— a show so big, in fact, that, of course, the Sun took notice. (The Sun can be very nosy and is always shining a light on everything that everyone is doing, all the time.)

“What are you up to today, Earth?” (Days were new, too. The Sun’s big idea.)

Earth shrugged. “Oh, nothing—” she added a rock to her apron. “Just building a house for my pet.”

The Sun was intrigued. She didn’t know about Earth’s pet-pet fish. “And what kind of pet is that?”

“The invisible kind,” said Earth, which gave the Sun an amused grin.

“And just where did you get an invisible pet?”

“Oh,” the Earth reached for another rock, “Just the river.” (The river that is space.)

Which made the Sun laugh. (Big mistake, Sun.) (Who was about to learn why you should never laugh at the dreams of a clever girl.)

“What? You don’t believe me?” asked the Earth, “I’ll show you— here!” At which she held up a double handful of rocks right in front of the Sun’s face.

“Those are rocks, Earth,” smirked the Sun. “And those are visible. I can see them.”

But Earth shook her head, “Then look closer.”

So the Sun leaned in closer. Only to let out a fiery huff.

“Nope— sorry, Earth. That’s just a pile of rocks.”

“No, no, Sun,” Earth was beginning to sweat. The Sun was awfully close, making the water on Earth’s surface puff little white cloud swirls all across her skin. She was also a little afraid. But she didn’t let it stop her. “Sounds like you might be a chicken, Sun.”

At which the Sun scoffed. “I am not a chicken!” This is how the game *Chicken* came to be. (Even though no one had ever seen a chicken.) (Starting with the Sun.) (But it sounded bad all the same.) (Also, you should never, ever play *Chicken* with the Sun.) (You will lose.) (Unless you’re the clever girl who made up the game.)

“Oh yeah?” grinned Earth, “Then if you really want to see, you’re just going to have to come even closer—but be careful! If you come in too hot, you might put your eye out!”

At which the Sun huffed and puffed and leaned all the way in, putting her face as close as she could to the rocks in Earth’s cupped hands.

“Nothing!” shouted the Sun.

“You have to believe!” shouted the Earth. “Even if you can’t see it, you have to believe it’s there waiting for you to behold!” *And waiting for you to learn to see it*, Earth thought to herself, because she was learning, too.

“I’m believing!” said the Sun, who was so close to the rocks now that they were beginning to melt and squish and turn into invisibility you can touch. (Today, we call this *glass*.) Surely but slowly, the invisibility started at the center of the melting rocks and worked its way outward.

“It’s working!” called the Sun, who was fixed on the growing invisibility.

“Keep believing!” called the Earth, who, at that exact moment, seized the only time ever when the Sun wasn’t looking at everything to scoop both of her beautiful fish out of her pockets and into what was now a lovely, round house made of invisibility you can touch that was suddenly illuminated by the two glowing fish swimming in the river water of space caught up around them.

It worked, smiled the Earth to herself, wrapping her blue-marbled arms around her fish bowl.

“Great balls of fire!” shouted the Sun. “Would you look at that! I can see everything just like you said! And what I see because I believe is beautiful!”

“And it always will be,” grinned the Earth, admiring her pets.

“Whoaaaa,” pointed the Sun, following Earth’s eyes to her new bowl. “What lovely gold fish, Earth!”

“Thank you,” Earth nodded patiently. You see, what the Sun saw was the color of her own golden rays reflecting off the shimmering white— now gold— fish. But Earth paid her no mind.

“Do you think I could pet one?” asked the Sun.

But before the Earth could say “Bad idea...,” the Sun had reached a bright hand into the bowl and grabbed one of her goldfish— who promptly slipped out of the Sun’s hand and shot straight into her eye!

“My eye!” cried the Sun.

“I told you,” said the Earth with a little headshake, “Coming in too hot might put your eye out!”

Which made Earth chuckle just a little to see the Sun winking away the fish bowl water and full-out grin to see the slipped glowing fish go sailing through space, swimming around and around the Sun’s head— beautiful, bright, and free. (Today, there are many beautiful glowing fish that still sail around the Sun— except we call them *comets*).

And with a final happy sigh, the Earth turned back to her one beautiful fish, marveling at how its glittering body shimmered and glimmered and turned from silver, to cobalt, to amber, and back to silver as it twirled in its glass.

“Here,” whispered Earth, “This can be your home, Moon.” She set her fish bowl on a little shelf above her bed and felt herself smile in the ivory light, her round watery cheeks receding into a soft, little grin and back. “That way, you can be my night light, whenever I turn away from the Sun for a nap. And maybe get just a little scared of the dark.” (Even the bravest girls get scared of the dark. But they don’t let it stop them.)

“Goodnight, Moon,” said Earth, closing her eyes. “Maybe,” she yawned, “I can be your Moon, too.” She snuggled down, “You know, in case you get scared of the light.” Another soft smile drifted across her face as she drifted off to sleep, “One thing’s for sure— I don’t think the Sun will ever try to pet you again...”

This is how the Earth came to have a Moon. And to be one.

For, we must all do our best to be clever, to believe in what we see when we can’t, to have the courage to stand up to fire, and to not only find a light in the darkness, but to become it for ourselves and others.

This is also why we have *eclipses*. The Sun, you see, still gets so nervous every time Earth’s beautiful fish bowl twirls too close, that she covers her eyes! But only for a moment. The Sun is no chicken.

The End