

## The Dark Side of the Moon

by Francesca Ryan

*When the moon hits the sky like a big pizza pie that's amore.*

I've been thinking about why the recent American moon mission didn't thrill me; not in the way that the old space programmes did. Some of us can be forgiven for having a weary shrug of the shoulders. You've done what now? Oh America, your own country seems to be setting the world on fire. You've spent God knows how much money to going have a look at the dark side of the moon. It's not even as if it's an Everest moment, a 'because it's there' impulse. That's already been satisfied. Been there, done that. If we're talking about bang for your buck, there's an awful lot to be sorted out down here on the mother ship. The trip feels like a vanity project. We can't even feed ourselves and take care of this home planet. As Jane Goodall says, we are the only life form that systematically destroys its own habitat. That's a kind of proper lunacy. A literal Moon madness.

Watching the launch, that rocket looked like the most phallic symbol going. One orgasmic fiery thrust, and a lonely sperm is on its way. It's headed for the pale cool ovum of the moon, spinning silently up there. And as far as spreading your sperm goes, Musk already has at least fourteen known children. He may have many more. X standing in this case for an unknown variable He's been quoted as saying that he wants to sire a legion level elite of children. The man is obsessed with generating mini-Musks. He has solicited many women to have his offspring. As a business proposition. Among them, Taylor Swift, who very publicly turned him down. He's offered his genes to friends. A shipment of his sperm donation has gone to Japan. That's a lunacy of a kind. A proper moon madness.

Artemis went to have a look at the back of the moon. And just as every astronaut on every flight has reported, the most beautiful thing they saw was their own home. The Earth. And sticking your head out of a beautiful April mornings, you can experience that reverence for our pellucid blue marble right here. The fresh green leaves, the lace appearing on the drab brown branches. The psychedelic saturation of colour from the tulips. Or the modest soft yellow of an unshowy primrose. The songs and swoops of garden birds. The magnificence of a seagull's underside, a perfect white aerofoil. No mechanically engineered rocket can compete with that perfection. It's a part of amore; the vitality of a love that sustains the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Musk's idea is that we could colonise Mars? It's Hubris, writ large. A hallmark of our current domination culture. Earth is home, as the astronauts experienced so viscerally. Whatever divine accident of stardust formed our planet, it goes to make up our bodies too. We are not separate entities. Earth could do without us. To imagine that we could sustain our life on bleakly inhospitable Mars? We're not the flesh of its flesh. Musk thinks there's nothing the resourcefulness of Man couldn't get round. That's a lunacy too far. A fantasy of unbridled ego.

Artemis returned safely from its mission. Pulled back down to Earth. Although of course, the moon still has a powerful pull on we us, literally and symbolically. We are still subject to lunar tides. Our female bodies are connected with her cycles. The three Abrahamic religions still mark their festivals by the lunar calendar; Easter Passover, Ramadan. The western business model of the world would like to do away with this inconsistency; it would prefer the Easter festival to be to be on fixed days of the calendar. Still, we resist. The movable feasts refused to be tamed by the dollar. Culturally the moon still carries changeability, mystery. And as the softly spoken outro to the end of Pink Floyd's album goes, *there is no dark side of the moon really. Matter of fact it's all dark.*

In your face, Elon.