



A Moon in All Things

Jennifer Elwell Comeau

12 Willows Press

(372pp)

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Atmospheric, subtle, and captivating, the fantasy novel A Moon in All Things is about revived magic and community bonds.

Paganism runs through Jennifer Elwell Comeau's touching fantasy novel *A Moon in All Things*, about family traditions and diverse beliefs.

Morrigan's rare red hair, unusual en caul birth, and taste for adventure all make her stand out in her Irish fishing village, where standing out is not a prized trait. Part of a hardworking Christian family, curious Morrigan feels stifled by strict customs and the church. While her family has deep roots in nature, healing, and magic, these inheritances are ridiculed or banished in her day, including by the oppressive schoolmaster, Winnett. Then Morrigan receives guidance from spirits, learning that her village may be in danger. This spurs her to honor her history and forge a better life for her family and neighbors.

The characters live modest lives, fishing by trade and supplementing their income where they can. They go to church, school, and work; after full days, they commune at the pub. The families around Morrigan sing, dance, and weave stories to preserve their heritage, but they also live immersed in the present moment.

Morrigan's inner fire makes her a powerful heroine: She stands up for herself and others and follows her intuition. Her interest in the "old ways" leads to inspiring turns, though she has few allies in her related evolution beyond Cathleen, the village healer who acts as a friend and mentor; her father, Tommy, who encourages Morrigan's individuality despite the town's expectations; and Mary, the daughter of the town's wealthy landlord, whose class-bending bond complicates situations further.

With a straightforward plot enlivened by vibrant prose, the book is moved along by a nagging sense of danger, shaped by Winnett's crusade to shame Morrigan for her perceived misbehaviors, scars, and differing beliefs. Winnett is a complex foe whose inner demons are concealed by his cruel demeanor. Excitement is generated when others summon the courage to confront his authority.

Atmospheric, the story evokes the salt sea air and the townspeople's longing for change. The descriptions of folklore and magic are subtle and captivating too. Both are present in small events like the emergence of critters from the woods and in dreams with keen meanings. As Morrigan grows in courage, such enchanted impressions become stronger. She converses with a wolf spirit and has a meeting in a forest with the divine, learning to preserve history better. Through her, the story models welcoming differing beliefs on their own merit.

Making room for future exploration, the intimate fantasy novel *A Moon in All Things* centers Irish villagers, led by a powerful girl, as they experience discovery, hope, and change.

BRANDON PAWLICKI (January 5, 2025)

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