

# MOON IN BASTET by E.S. Danon

## Excerpt

A mosaic of moonlight drifts over the breaking waves. Designs illustrated in silvers whisper a story by the observant full moon. Anticipation rips through the midnight air as an assortment of shells wash ashore, decoration for the celebration at hand.

Several fawn play inside of a tidal pool, tripping over each other's hooves, while various crabs scurry to find cover. The does watch from the spartina covered marshes, less willing to get involved in the gambol of their children. A lone buck stands guard near the subtle alchemy of the ocean as the moonlight shimmers off his bone-white rack.

Soft pitter-patter echoes towards the beach: red, brown, gray, and white paws scurry stealthily through the wooded oasis. Streaks of fur can be seen flashing underneath the breaks in the treetops - Evergreens, Oaks, and Pines say their hellos as the creatures of the night began to gather at the shoreline.

A menagerie of insects hurry amongst the mossy forest bottom, following the outlines of fresh animal tracks.

Worker bees open their eyes and groggily buzz from the confines of their honeycombs; each of them carrying a parcel of honey. Together they dance in unison around the honeycomb, mimicking the sound of trumpets with their wings. The Queen Bee abruptly emerges to monitor her brood before inspecting herself: Every bristle is in place, held by honey made gel. Soon, the bees follow a parade of centipedes and worms traveling below.

A white wolf breaks through the trees; his body illuminated against the thick wall of forest at his back. Dozens of wolves emerge from behind him as he lets out a single howl, just before catching sight of the buck standing guard. Both alpha males nod in recognition of each other as an amber painted pup runs excitedly ahead of the pack, all too excited to meet the fawns in the tidal pool. The pup breaks through the water's edge before tumbling down a small embankment of peat.

Flop!

She yelps with glee as water springs up all around her, turning rocks and snails upside down with her snout. Some of the does prop their heads up to inspect the noise as the fawns cautiously approach the pup.

In no time, the children are engaged in a pretend search and rescue mission with each other.

What will they find in nature's watercolor tapestry?

The white wolf takes position next to the buck; both creatures now standing guard of their families.

Dolphins jump through the churning waves several feet away as a caravan of sea animals emerge through the crashing surf.

First come the sea turtles: Moving leathery, black boulders covered in mountainous ridges march forward, followed by mini, starburst-colored ovals. A single hawked sea turtle is the last of his kind to emerge, carrying a sand dollar - a token of appreciation - within his beak.

Next the seal pups begin wobbling onto shore, their mothers following close behind. Like watching fireworks in the sky, the pups reflect in awe of the celebration on shore from their discotheque eyes. Their mothers quickly nudge them forward, making way for the rest of the cohort.

Within moments, dozens of horseshoe crabs and whelks begin to make landfall.

Meanwhile, in the forest, Queen Bee flies ahead of her workers until noticing that her soldiers are slowing; she calls out to them, ordering them to keep moving.

The time has almost come.

A group of squirrels overhear the Queen Bee's calls, prompting a tizzy among lofty tree branches. Mr. Snow Owl comes to attention as they frantically collect acorns. He plucks a feather from underneath his wing before flying past the squirrels and towards the shoreline.

The time is near.

Gifts begin to pile around a mound of mud within the chasms of the tidal zones: a sand dollar, the owl's feather, and now randomly placed acorns. A garden snake slides through the mess, shedding his skin - followed by the molting of a lobster nearby.

A shadow crosses the moon then, just before various species of birds clatter to the ground below. A swan lands last with a bellow of her song, and in unison, the wolf pack returns the call. The dolphins respond to the melody by becoming more calculated in their movements, smoothing into a perfect rhythm with the songs now being sung by the ever-growing crowd of Mother Nature's tribe.

It's as if a drum is being played:

Boom.

Boom Boom.

Boom.

Boom Boom.

A heartbeat.

The expanding mound blooms into a large circle consisting of multiple sections. The inner circle holds the gifts, the middle circle shelters the juvenile animals surrounded by their mothers, and the outer circle consists of the older animals.

The time is almost here.

Queen Bee breaks through the woodlands and is met by a breeze. In response to her arrival, the congregation pauses briefly... only to erupt in song. The guardians at the shoreline bow their heads, kneeling onto their two front legs in order to greet the Queen Bee.

After kissing both guardians on their foreheads, she signals to her crew to make their final descent. A cloud of buzzing wings hums as they approach the middle of the circle with caution, then the inner circle. The Queen Bee ferociously shakes her wings and immediately, her workers dive down to smother the exposed mud in honey.

It is almost done.

The animals steadily move in a counterclockwise circle.

Tick.

Tick.

Tock.

The rhythm of the creatures becomes increasingly sonorous.

Off in the distance, the figure of a goat and her kid can be seen approaching.

Tick.

Tick.

Tock.

Mother goat and her child meticulously walk through the outer circle of churning animals. They are meandering through the middle circle when the wolf pup howls in excitement. Startled, the young kid topples over the hill of trinkets and slides into the patch of honey-soaked mud. Mother goat follows, spilling a drop of milk at her kid's annoyed squeal.

Everything stops.

Even the air seems to have come to a halt.

Mother goat nudges her kid back over the trench of gifts and into the middle circle where they wait.

Everything waits.

Minutes go by before even the faintest touch of a breeze can be felt. The Queen Bee's wings twinge at the coolness; she gazes towards the inner circle's center. The white wolf and the buck move

to stand beside the Queen when enervated rumbles suddenly upset the milk and honey-soaked patch. Something is trying to break through the surface...

Without warning, peat erupts from the patch: then two budding leaves climb their way through the film.

Swan sounds her horn, signifying that the deed has been done.

The Moon child has been born.

Finally.