

CHILD

*of  
the*

MOON

*a short story*

NANETTE LITTLESTONE

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CHILD OF THE MOON

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# CHILD *of the* MOON

**I**n the beginning she was there, the Great One, the Mother, the One who sees all. She walked with Wind, Fire, Earth, and Water. She danced with the stars and harnessed the energy of Sun and Moon. She spoke with all living things and healed with plants and flowers. She was the Guardian. The Protectress.

For generations, as the Moon cycled through the sky and women gave birth and our people flourished, the Great One's handmaiden came to be called Minowat. My first memory was of her, holding me close, her dark eyes peering into mine, past the shutters of present time and the veils that divide the Now and Then. Past the barriers

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of the Otherworld where we float and soar. Past all of our fears and hopes in that which always is. And even though I was just three days old and new to this world, I understood when she said, “This is the one who will succeed me.” Then she breathed into my nose and kissed my mouth and smeared my forehead and the soles of my feet with pungent red clay to bind me to her and all the realms of existence.



My mother left me for the Otherworld when I was five. I was tending the fire for drying herbs, keeping them far enough away from the flames that they didn't burn but close enough to bathe in the sacred smoke. “Everything smells awful,” I told the woman I was helping. “This is wrong. Who wants to take herbs that smell like smoke?” I leaned forward to peer at the leaves hanging down and a spark singed my eyebrow. I jumped back. It was then that Minowat found me and told me that my mother's spirit was no longer with us.

My heart squeezed so hard the world went blank. When I could see again, I wrenched the herbs from their drying rack and threw them into the fire. Then I ran to the top of the hill overlooking the water and cried out my pain.

The next day Minowat summoned me to that same hill. The weather was wild and gray with gusts of wind.

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She told me to sit and build a fire for a potion for the High Leader.

I was still angry with her about my mother. All of my questions had gone unanswered. Minowat simply said it was time. So I pulled on her arm to take her back to our village. "It's cold and windy out here. It was warm in the tent. I'll build it there."

"Here," she said and pointed to a bunch of slender twigs and branches and cedar bark.

I stamped my foot but she sat patiently, so I prepared the pile, stacking each element for breathing space as I had been taught. Then I pulled my fire rock from my pouch. Wind swept my hair into my eyes and knocked at my pile of branches. I scraped and scraped the fire rock but each time the wind ate the spark.

Fire could not live in this kind of weather. "I can't build a fire here. The spark keeps dying."

"You must flow with the elements."

"No. I need someplace quiet."

"What if there is no quiet place?" she asked.

I didn't understand her. She was asking the impossible. "This is stupid," I yelled. "You're stupid." I shoved the fire rock back in my bag and began to walk away.

Behind me I heard the sounds of an ancient chant, the chant of our elders, the invocation Minowat used for blessing all things. As I turned, I saw her wave her hands over the stack of kindling then strike her fire rock. The wind shrieked and then a spark leaped from the rock to

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the bark. A flame grew. It was impossible, and yet I saw it with my own eyes.

She gazed at me with those eyes of knowing and I felt my failure deep into my bones.



Seven years passed. It was the time of the Blood Moon, the time of Initiation. The time of my naming. As I grew from childhood to womanhood I put my mother's loss aside and learned many things. But I still could not control the elements, no matter how hard I tried. And I was afraid of my initiation. Afraid that Minowat would ask for something I could not do. If I failed, I would be banished from the village.

The day dawned bright and clear, a good omen. I looked for animal signs and saw an eagle overhead, a sign of freedom and courage, then a trail of ants at the base of our tent pole, soldiers of patience. So far so good. Whatever the task, I was sure to pass with flying colors.

Minowat came to take me to the high hill where the Elders gathered. Today she wore the ceremonial robe of Priestess, a gown of white with a shawl of red and a crown of yellow flowers. We stopped in the ceremonial circle in the middle of the hill and I stood facing the Great River. She knelt before me and painted a stripe of white down the center of my nose. "With this white I give you clarity, that you may see into the realms of the Otherworld."

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Then a stripe of red across my forehead. “With this red I give you boldness, that you may find your way with strength and certainty.” Then she painted two circles of yellow on my cheeks. “With this yellow I give you courage, that you may never doubt yourself.” Then she stared into my eyes and I could see myself mirrored in hers.

At last she touched me on my head, my hands, and my feet. Then she spoke the words of my fate. “You are your father’s daughter, with the warrior spirit. But now is not the time to fight.” She cupped my face. “Today you must put aside your fear.” For a moment my heart seized then I saw the makings for fire. My smile grew before I could stop it. The day was clear and calm. Fire would be simple.

She gazed at me again and spoke a single word. “Believe.” Then she moved to the edge of the hill and took her seat next to the Elders.

I bowed to each of them then I sank to my knees and offered a prayer to the Great One. “Bless me, Mother, she who sees all, she who walks with Wind, Fire, Earth, and Water. Give me strength, power, and mastery this day. Make me successful. For I am your daughter.”

With great care I stacked the branches and kindling and cedar bark, taking my time because of the perfect day. I had until sundown and would only need a second to strike the fire rock. So I worked with patience, feeling at ease. At last all was ready. I pulled my fire rock from my pouch and the wind stirred my hair. “No,” I whispered

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and pushed my hair behind my ears and down the back of my dress. I raised the fire rock to strike and this time the wind gusted, blowing my front then my back then batting at me from all sides. Hair whipped around my face and my careful pile scattered. "Stop," I screamed and looked to the Elders for help. But they were gone. Only Minowat remained, as silent as the Earth.

The wind continued to blow and then came the rain. Droplets splattered here and there then it seemed Wind and Water joined forces and sheets of wet began to fall, drenching everything in sight. I shivered in my dress as water poured down my face, my arms, my body. I could not leave until I finished my task but how I could do anything in this storm? I looked for Minowat to yell at, to complain to, but she had also gone. I was alone. Miserable.

The easy test had turned to disaster. My heart pounded. While I loved the forest and all the animals and plants that nourished our village, no one liked to be there at night, especially during the Blood Moon, the time when the Wild One roamed the land. We had all heard the unearthly cries that punctuated the stillness at that time of year. Like a body being torn to bits. I would do anything to escape that.

The rain continued until sunset. I sat hunched in the circle, debris all around me, as the light faded. Water ran in rivulets and pooled at my feet. I was cold and shivering and hungry and terrified. I had failed my test. I would be banished to the forest. To the Wild One. My teeth

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chattered and I huddled in a ball to hold in my energy but I could not contain it. It left my body in a high-pitched wail.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. Minowat stood before me with a sleeping roll, water pouch, and a small basket of food. She smoothed the hair from my face and dried it with her shawl. “You must go now. The forest awaits you.”

“B-b-but . . . I c-c-can’t . . .” I couldn’t stop my teeth from chattering. I took a deep breath and clenched my mouth.

“You are beloved, child. All will be well. You will return to us when you have proven yourself.”

I hugged the sleeping roll and provisions to my chest and watched her walk away. My heart sank to my toes. Prove myself? In the forest? At night?



The Blood Moon shone its eerie light as I made my way, casting everything in a reddish haze. Trees loomed over the path and small creatures skittered to and fro and made me jump at every turn. By the time I found the hollow in the Great Oak I was so tired I could barely spread my sleeping roll. When I lay my body down sleep claimed me.

I woke the next morning so hungry I devoured the seeds and berries and flat cakes Minowat had left me.

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They calmed my stomach but not my fear. The rain continued and, as much I hated the damp, it was good practice. I was strong. I was capable. I would prove myself to the Elders.

For hours I toiled, stacking branches and kindling, praying to the Great One for her blessing, striking the fire rock over and over. But not once did I see a flame. I kicked at the branches and raised my face to the sky. “Why are you doing this? I hate you. How can you do this to me? All these years I have prayed to you and blessed you and this is what I get? I will never give you anything again.” And still the rain fell. When night came I curled hungry and hopeless into the hollow of the tree and rocked myself to sleep.

Lightning woke me in the middle of the night, searing the sky with its brightness. Then Thunder roared. A wild dog howled and terror shivered down my spine as the forest came alive with animal sounds and horrendous cracks. Then some creature poked its head into my hollow, slavering and snarling, with huge fangs that could tear me apart. “Mama,” I cried even though she was dead, “help me. Mama!”

At last the beast left but now I was afraid to sleep.

I laid my head on my knees. For a long while I drifted in nothingness then something nudged my toe and I saw a red berry lying there. Then a bird dropped a twig, and another one, and a mouse brought another berry, and another, until a heart appeared in the dirt by my feet. My own heart swelled and a tingle radiated through my body.

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And with that tingle I remembered my teacher's words. *Today you must put aside your fear. Now is not the time to fight.*

I settled into a calm, a deep peace like the one called forth by Minowat. I imagined her hands on my face, her smile, her knowing eyes. All was serene. All was in harmony. I felt loved and cherished, as if a loving hand held me and stroked me. Into this serenity came a purple light that filled the energy of All. And I saw the Great One stand before me, waiting, waiting for me. I was ashamed of my stubbornness. "Forgive me, Great One."

She placed her hand upon my forehead. "Do you give me your heart?" she asked.

With her touch my body sang with joy. I would give her anything. "I do."

"That is all I ask."

With that, the heavens opened and I saw the moon in all her glory, her light bathing my world with pale wonder, illuminating the cracks in the earth, the veins in the leaves, the whorls in the bark of the trees. She shone with splendor and a sweet gentility. And then she whispered, "I am the Keeper of the Night and Sister of Shadows. I am the one who keeps you safe at dark. I am the one who guides your path when you dreamwalk. You are my child. With me anything is possible."

The vision shifted and the dark lightened and blued. The moon began to soften until her edges faded and crumbled into the sky. And Father Sun started its ascent.

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I crawled out from the tree into a constant drizzle. But I was no longer afraid. I had been with the Great One and I had the moon to guide me. With love I gathered the branches and kindling and blessed them. Then I placed my hands on my heart and with my eyes closed I called upon Wind, Fire, Earth, and Water, asking them for their bounty and giving them my trust. "I surrender to your gifts, your knowing. Blessed are you in all things." Then I readied the fire rock and opened my eyes and created magic.



Later that day I returned to the village. I set down my belongings at the edge of Minowat's tent and walked inside. She was grinding herbs for medicine, her hand going around and around. She did not acknowledge me, but I knew that she was aware of me. Before my ordeal I would have called or shouted or stamped my foot. But now I waited. I would wait all day if I needed to. At last she raised her head. "You have returned," she said, her eyes dark and knowing.

I bowed my head and raised my hands to my lips in a blessing of gratitude. The joy of coming home filled my heart. When I raised my head there were tears in my eyes. I hoped she would see who I had become. And I wondered what my new name would be.

Minowat placed her hands on her heart in greeting. Then she said, "Welcome, Ohola, she who surrenders."

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THE END

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## About the Author

Nanette Littlestone discovered the joys of writing in the summer of 1994. She loves to explore relationships and is unceasingly curious about why people do what they do. The themes of her stories focus on love (what we always strive for) and forgiveness (what we always need). Her books include *F.A.I.T.H. - Finding Answers in the Heart, Volumes I and II*, the historical novel *The Sacred Flame*, and the contemporary sequel *Bella Toscana*.

In her spare time, she loves to dream of living by the beach, read, go for walks, watch romantic movies, cook gourmet food, and savor dark chocolate. Connect with her at [www.wordsofpassion.com](http://www.wordsofpassion.com) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nanettelittlestone](https://www.facebook.com/nanettelittlestone).

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## Author's Notes

Thank you for reading *Child of the Moon*. That means so much! I'd love to hear what you thought. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at [nanette@wordsofpassion.com](mailto:nanette@wordsofpassion.com).

The world is undergoing enormous change and female empowerment is on the rise. It's especially important for young girls to have the opportunity to share their voices, their creativity, their beautiful, innate gifts.

If you enjoyed the story (and I hope you did!), please tell a friend, family member, someone in your work community, a favorite mentor or teacher. Let's spread the word and create the change we need in the world. Today!

Thank you!

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Sometimes what you fear the most  
is your own truth.

She is born to lead her people, to succeed Minowat, hand-  
maiden to the Great One, the Mother, the One who sees all.  
Despite her lessons, the warrior spirit that stirs her blood battles  
with the teachings of patience, flow, allowing. If the Elements  
cannot be controlled, what good are they?

For twelve years she has studied and practiced. And still the  
Elements toy with her and tease her. And today is the time of  
Initiation, the time of her naming. The time to prove herself. She  
will perform one task. One task to impress upon the Elders that  
she can be all that they expect. But fear and doubt gnaw at her  
protective shield. Is courage enough? Will she find a way to trust  
her learning, to trust herself? Or will she fail and be banished?



Nanette Littlestone is an award-winning author, editor,  
and publisher of *F.A.I.T.H – Finding Answers in the  
Heart, Volumes I and II*, the historical novel *The Sacred  
Flame*, and the contemporary sequel *Bella Toscana*.  
She loves good food and chocolate and encouraging  
women to write from the heart to inspire others. She  
lives in Atlanta.

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