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# Finding Faith

by C. E. Edmonson

That night, Faith stood by her bedroom window, as she had on the night before and the night before that. A swelling moon, surrounded by millions upon millions of stars, shone from the center of the sky, and it seemed to Faith as if those stars had come out only to pay homage to the moon's majesty. According to Paul, the moon was a spirit, one of the *manetuwaks*, whose job it was to keep the People safe at night. Personally, when it came to safety at night, Faith preferred walls.

The need for safety, from walls or moon, became apparent only a few seconds later when a movement at the edge of Faith's vision—a great shaggy shadow—drew her attention. Then another moment passed, a moment of confusion, before her brain admitted that she was looking at a very large bear.

The animal ambled past the house, hugging the edge of the forest, in no apparent hurry. It stood once to sniff the air, its black head rising above the height of the window, its dark eyes so small as to be nearly invisible. Then it dropped to all fours and disappeared behind a poplar tree at the far end of the yard.

*Hoo, hoo, hoooooooo.*

Faith smiled with relief as she raised her eyes to the owl on its perch in the poplar's upper branches. The pale moonlight fell across its feathers, making them seem even more like a robe, and Faith briefly imagined the animal in some ancient court, an advisor to Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba.

Paul Crow was nervous around owls. He believed they were messengers of change, and not always for the better. Personally, Faith had a hard time imagining a change worse than the ones she'd already been through. She was becoming more and more attached to the bird. When the owl finally stopped coming around, as it surely would, she knew she would miss it.

“Faith?”

Faith turned to find her mother sitting up in bed. “Yes?” she asked.

“Is something wrong?”

The question annoyed Faith. Whenever she did anything different, her mother assumed that something was wrong. Her reaction was a mystery. Why would a mother encourage her daughter to be independent, yet become instantly panicked when she acted independently?

Wisely, Faith kept those thoughts to herself. “No,” she said, “I just like to look out the window at night. There was a bear in the yard a minute ago.”

Margaret rose from the bed, slipped into a robe and joined her daughter. The owl took that moment to hoot again.

“That owl...” Margaret said, shaking her head. “He gives me the creeps.”

“How do you know it’s a he? Why not a she?”

“You’ve been listening to Aunt Eva. But you’re right, the owl could be female.” Margaret hesitated, and then said, “How are you doing, baby? I know all this must be hard for you.”

“I feel completely isolated. You know, being here without a telephone? I want to speak to Daddy, but he seems very far away. It’s like I walked through a door into a new world and now I can’t find my way out.” Faith paused then continued. “Only it’s not a horrible world, not at all. I never would have thought that I could do the things I do now. But I can. I can put a worm on a hook and I can clean a fish. I can dig in the garden and in the woods. I’m even starting to find my way around in the forest.”

“Don’t tell me you’re becoming an Indian. I have enough to worry about.”

“No, not an Indian. But something, Mom. Something I wasn’t before.”