



The Girl with the Face of the Moon

Ellis Amdur

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A young woman of samurai lineage is raised in an impoverished mountain village by bitter parents, identical to the peasants among whom they live, but for their ancestry. Unloved and mistreated, she runs off with a Matagi, a man of a caste of hunters, who were outcast but nearly free from the rules that governed the rest of Japanese society. After a few years of happiness, their child is stolen by a being perhaps human, perhaps not. Bereft, the young woman will challenge death itself to recover her child.

The Girl with the Face of the Moon is set in Bakumatsu and Meiji Japan, a transitional period in the mid-1800's, when Japan went from Medieval to Modern in only a few years. This, however, is not a book about the privileged few; rather, this is a story of those on the fringes: a blind wandering masseuse, the abalone divers, the aboriginal mountain folk, a wild yojimbo (body guard and bar thug both), the hunters who worship bears, seeing them as the true power of the mountains, and a woman with no place in any of Japan's societies.

The Girl with the Face of the Moon is a combination of two of the oldest stories of humanity, the hero's journey and that of love a driving force with a power that can triumph over death: a mother seeking to save her child from hell. The description of the hero's training and that of her allies are based on historical figures and the actual training methods and techniques of archaic Japanese martial arts, something the author learned, first hand, for thirteen years in Japan. Threaded throughout is the terrible question how one can retain one's humanity, and even further, what happens to love, in a world of pervasive terror.

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