

## Wilhelmina the Worm Can't Sleep on the Night of the Full Moon

WILHELMINA THE WORM loved her compost pile. It was full of leaves and chicken poop, bark shreds and slimy banana peels, avocado shells, and onion skins. It was warm and dark and quiet.

One night after Wilhelmina was cozy in the middle of her compost pile that was warm and dark and quiet, the moon rose above the treetops. It was not a sliver of a moon or a half moon, or even a dull full moon, it was a Super Full Moon. Normally, in her compost pile she didn't see the moon light. But tonight, the super moon was so bright that its rays streamed down through the night sky, hitting the compost pile, wiggling through the gaps between the particles of organic matter and dirt, shining right onto Wilhelmina's skin. Wilhelmina tossed and turned, tossed and turned, tossed and turned in her compost bed.

"I wish the moon would go behind a cloud. It is way too bright. I can not sleep," she said. She tossed and turned and tossed and turned in her little compost bed. Finally she got up, squirmed her way to the top of the compost pile and poked her head out looking up at the moon.

"Moon! You are keeping me awake! I can't get a wink of sleep because of all your silver shining!"

Moon slipped behind a cloud to dim her light and Wilhelmina went back to bed in the compost pile.

She snuggled down into her warm dark quiet home and just as she was about to fall asleep she heard a noise in the open field nearby by the compost pile. She opened her eyes and listened again. There was a loud but sad sounding *meep, meep!*

"If the moonlight wasn't enough, now some animal is making noises, will I never get to sleep tonight?" Wilhelmina covered her head with an old cabbage leaf and tried to sleep. *Meep, meep* went the noise right near her head. She tossed and turned and tossed and turned and finally jumped out of bed and squirmed to the top of the compost pile to look out and see what was making that awful noise. It was the woodcock waddling around the field with his head down.

"Why do you make such a sad sound?" asked Wilhelmina.

"The moon is gone and I can't do my mating dance if my sweetheart can't even see me!" Wailed the Woodcock. "I will never find a mate now."

"Oh dear," said Wilhelmina. "This is a fine kettle of fish! I am just trying to get some sleep and what a mess I have made."

“Moon!” Wilhelmina called up into the sky. “Please come out and shine your light into the field so that Woodcock can do his dance and find a mate. His mournful sound is worse than your bright light for sleeping!”

Moon appeared and Woodcock began to dance, rising up and spiraling into the sky. Just as Wilhelmina was headed back to her compost pile resigned to deal with a little moonlight, she heard something else. A racket was coming from the wetlands on the edge of the field.

“What now!” exclaimed Wilhelmina. Doesn't anyone sleep at night anymore? First she heard a “quack, quack,” and then she heard something that sounded like sleigh bells and then some frantic whistling. Sounds like someone’s having a party!

Woodcock circled back down to the ground. “Those are the frogs. Isn’t their chorus lovely!”

“Frogs? One of them sounds like a duck to me,” said Wilhelmina.

“That’s the wood frog,” said Woodcock.

“The spring peeper has a high pitched call and they sound like sleigh bells when singing all at once.”

“And the toad, whistles, believe it or not.”

Moon looked down and for the first time that night spoke softly like you would imagine a moon to sound. “I am on my way there,” she said, “to give the baby frogs their moon jelly. It only works when I am a full moon so there is no time to waste! Join me if you like.”

Wilhelmina was intrigued. She was up anyway and not likely to sleep that night, so she and Woodcock (who had promised not to eat her by the way: woodcocks do love a worm snack) followed Moon to the wetlands. The frog chorus grew louder and louder.

When they arrived, Woodcock told Wilhelmina to sit inside the skunk cabbage to watch.

“You’ll like it in there,” he said. “It’s nice and warm like your compost pile.”

Wilhelmina crawled inside the red flower of the skunk cabbage and sat down in a small room that felt like a Queen’s throne - and it was warm and cozy!

Then Wilhelmina watched something very magical unfold...

Full Moon bent her silver rays down deep into the vernal pool until the whole pool was shining like a giant full moon come down to earth. The mama and papa frogs moved to the farthest

edges of the pool to let the Moon shine on what it had come for: the baby frogs, small black specks in the water - not yet distinguishable as frogs, or as any living thing for that matter.

The moon shone brighter and brighter and as she shone down into the pool, the water began to mold around the baby frogs, forming into tiny jelly-like moon sacs to protect the young frog embryos for their first weeks of life. They looked for all the world like tiny moons floating in the water with a black speck at the center of each.

“You see,” Full Moon told Willamina who watched in wonder at this unfolding event, “frog mothers don't hold their babies in their bellies like mammals do, they put them right out into the world. These babies need their Moon Mother to make them a home to grow in at this fragile time in their life. Frog eggs are a combination of loud croaking nights, moonlight, and life. It is a secret that barely anyone knows that tiny baby moons float in vernal pools just at this special time between winter and summer, when anything might happen.”

Willamina was awed by what she saw and realized she needed to get out more at night time. She was missing a lot by sleeping in her dark, warm, quiet compost pile every night. And from then on she wasn't upset when she was woken from sleep but took it as a summons for adventure!

**THE END**

**Prop Ideas:**

An actual worm

Woodcock sounds

Peeper sounds

Picture of skunk cabbage

Picture of woodcock

*Curricular connections!*

By Landere Naisbitt, BHHT Outreach Coordinator

