Molly and the Muslim Stick

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Once upon a time – the night of Wednesday 26th October 1933, when I was fifteen – it happened. It. It. The dripping down my thighs. Sticky, then thickening to treacle. As bloody as flesh from Leviticus. I lay awake listening to my bleeding, above the hog-snoring of my father who rested beside me. An hour before I had tried to shut out the moonlight which was as ubiquitous as dust. It was a full moon but more incandescent than I had ever seen it, sending out a light of such strength that there were no shadows in the street, nowhere for a rat or insect to lurk. The street was silent, for such was the eeriness of light that people stayed indoors in fright. It was as if there had been some accident in the sky and an enormous continuous spillage of white paint. The light poured into the house with the force of a breached dam. It swirled around spots of dirt on the shelf, on the bed-frame, on the door handle, magnifying them so that they seemed like boulders in rapids, threatening havoc and the shredding of life. I closed the curtains but the light bore through them, fanning out throughout the room. Dad came home, banging the front door to signal his drunkenness and frustration. I had covered my face with a blanket, but he peeled it back, exposing me to his want. I struggled when he lifted my night-shirt, but then I surrendered, imitating Mum in her quiescent state. The light was relentless, making me witness all his doings, the unbuckling of his belt, the placing of his mouth on my nipple, the bunching of his fingers at my thighs. There was a moment of huge pain, then convulsions and tremors, and throughout it all explosions of light, flashes of