

MOON

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Teresa folded the sheet of loose-leaf paper and stuffed it into the pocket of her jeans.

She was wearing faded jeans, and a light yellow blouse, and her dark hair fell over her yellow blouse in stark contrast. She had dark eyes set deeply into her face, and they always seemed lost in shadows when not hidden completely by her hair. Her nose was long and had a small bump in it, at the top, where she had broken it as a child. And she had a small snaky scar on her cheek from the same incident. Her lips were deep red, and the lower one protruded slightly from the upper, so that she always seemed to be pouting even when she was not. Her shoulders were thin, and slightly hunched over. And she had a small waist, and small breasts, although not terribly small, large enough to give her something of a figure. And when she dressed up, and pushed her hair from her eyes, and smiled widely, she could look quite beautiful, although in a sad sort of way. But mostly she wore baggy jeans, and a wrinkled blouse that she never tucked in, and her hair shrouded her face, and she smiled only haltingly, and she still looked quite beautiful, although in a sad sort of way.

She had small palms, but long slender fingers. When she took them out of her pocket they were trembling somewhat. She squeezed them into a fist to steady them. A chill passed through her. She took a deep breath, shook the hair from her face, and walked out of her bedroom.

She walked to the closet by the front door and took out a thin beige autumn jacket. Her mother would come home from work soon, she would cook dinner and worry where Teresa had gone, and Teresa didn't care. She stepped out the door and walked down the stoop to the small front lawn which, in the last two years, since her father's death, had all but turned to weeds. She strolled across it, and came to the sidewalk, and walked down the block.

It was evening, and twilight, and the air was crisp but not cold.

Teresa shoved her hands into the pockets of her jacket and fixed her eyes on the ground. She came to a traffic circle, where the railroad tracks intersected the road. She crossed over

them, and walked another block, until she was beneath the hill where her high school stood. She stopped and looked at the rectangular building. Then she climbed the hill, but did not turn toward the school. Instead she crossed the street and came to a residential section. Large houses, trim, manicured lawns. She walked on, coming finally to a vacant lot. The lot was filled with high weeds, a few gnarled crabapple trees silhouetted by the light of a full moon, which had begun to rise behind them. Teresa looked at the moon. A large orange disc towering over the horizon. She shuddered. The full moon always made her shudder.

She tramped across the lot, turned a corner, and walked two blocks up a twisting street. She stopped in front of a large Tudor house and stood gazing at the yellow light seeping through the shade in an upstairs window. She walked passed the house, then turned and walked back the other way. She hesitated in front of the driveway. Then she quickly tucked her head to the ground, walked across the lawn to the front door and rang the doorbell.

At first no one answered. Then a dog barked, the light above the front stoop was switched on, and Mrs. Bennett opened the door.

"Oh, Terry dear...Come in, come in."

Teresa stepped into the hallway. The dog, a large golden retriever, sniffed at her and sauntered away. Mrs. Bennett smiled at her. She was wearing a white evening gown, and traces of her sweet cologne laced the air.

"Well, Terry darling, how are you? I was thinking of you just this afternoon. Where have you been all week?"

"I'm fine." said Teresa.

"Let me take your coat. Did you walk all the way here? My, you must be frozen."

"It's not cold." Teresa slipped out of her jacket and handed it to Mrs. Bennett.

"Mark is up in his room." Mrs. Bennett turned to the stairwell behind her and called up.

"Mark?" A door could be heard creaking upstairs.

"Yeah?"

"Mark, Terry is here for you."

"Terry?" There was a short pause. "Well...tell her to come up."

Mrs. Bennett turned to Teresa. "Go ahead up, dear."

Teresa climbed the staircase, walked slowly to the bedroom at the far end of the hallway, and stepped through the door. Mark was sitting upon his bed, an open textbook in his hand. He pushed a tuft of straight blonde hair out of his eyes and looked at Teresa.

"Terry, listen...I don't have a lot of time tonight, I'm...I've got a lot of work to do and..."

Teresa was not listening. She had closed the door behind her and was turning the lock. Mark stopped talking and looked at her.

"What are you doing?"

Teresa turned around and stared at Mark without speaking. Her gaze fell upon a long scar that had begun to form under his left eye. She winced. But then an expression of contempt tightened the muscles in her face. She narrowed her eyes. Mark sat upon the bed and said nothing. Teresa lifted a fumbling hand to her blouse and began to unbutton it. She spoke softly.

"Alright. I'm ready now."

"Terry, what the hell are you doing?"

Teresa undid the remaining buttons, slipped the blouse from her shoulders, and tossed it upon the bed next to Mark. She stood naked from above the waist, her small white breasts heaving up and down, the pale flesh of her stomach erupting into goose pimples. Her hands were pressed flat against the door behind her.

"Come on" she said, "What are you waiting for?"

"Terry, put your shirt on. For Christ's sake, my parents are downstairs."

"What's the matter, you chicken?" she said, spitting the words at him, "C'mon, what's the matter." A line of perspiration formed on her brow, her face had turned white. She shook her head violently back and forth, her hair flying about in all directions. "C'mon, what are you waiting for?"

Mrs. Bennett's voice called from downstairs. "Mark?"

"God damn it, Terry, that's my mother. Will you put your God damn shirt on?" He picked up the blouse from the bed, crumpled it into a ball, and threw it at her. She let it roll off her body.

"Mark?" Mrs. Bennett's voice was louder, she had begun to climb the stairs.

"Terry, put your God damn shirt on!"

"I don't care" she said, "Let your fucking mother come up. I don't care about your fucking mother."

"God damn it!" He jumped off the bed and rushed over to Teresa, cursing. He grabbed her blouse from the floor and began pushing her arms into it. She did not resist. She stood there limply until he had finished buttoning the blouse.

There was a knock on the door. Mark glared at Teresa, who walked to a large armchair in the corner of the room, opposite the bed, and fell into it. Mark opened the door.

Mrs. Bennett walked into the room. "Mark, I called you three times."

Mark said nothing. His face was flushed, he turned it toward the wall.

"Well, I don't want you locking this door when you have company." Mrs. Bennett looked around the room. Her glance fell upon Teresa. She was sitting with her hands folded in her lap, her head down, her hair obscuring her face. "Terry darling, are you feeling alright?" Teresa picked her head up slightly but then let it fall down again.

"She's got a headache, that's all." said Mark. Teresa nodded.

"Oh, poor dear. Would you like something Terry? Some aspirin?"

"I...I'll be alright."

Mrs. Bennett turned to Mark. "We're leaving now. Be sure to lock the door if you go out, and remember to feed Wilfred." She looked back at Teresa. "Sure you're alright, Terry?" Teresa nodded. Mrs. Bennett left the room.

There was silence as they listened to the footsteps recede from the doorway. When Mark spoke his voice was hoarse.

"What the hell did you do that for?" Teresa said nothing, she clamped her lips together and shook her head. He smashed his fist against the desk. "What the hell did you do that for?"

Teresa lifted her eyes toward the ceiling and gulped a mouthful of air, she looked at Mark, then turned her gaze back to the floor.

"I thought...I was waiting for you to call...I thought you would call."

"Jesus Christ!" Mark sat down on the bed. Teresa shivered, and wrapped her arms around her stomach.

"I kept thinking you were gonna call."

"Terry, you knew I wouldn't call." Teresa hugged her stomach more tightly. "Terry, you didn't want me to call."

Teresa shifted her weight in the chair and began to breathe very heavily. Her face was white. "I don't feel good."

Mark stared at her. "You want some water or something?" She shook her head. "Well, just calm down. Don't get so upset." She nodded, and looked about the room. She forced her lips into a faint smile.

"I'm alright...I shouldn't have come...I'm sorry..." She pushed herself from the chair with her arms but collapsed back into it again. "I'm sorry...I can't..."

"Just relax Terry. Just sit and relax for a minute." Mark's fingers were fidgeting with the book on his bed. He glanced out the window. Teresa took a deep breath of air and let it out.

"You're seeing Mary now?" she said.

"We've...I've seen her a couple of times after school, that's all."

Teresa turned and looked at him. "You like her?"

Mark frowned. "I don't know, she's alright, she's nice. She's got some very nice...You know, she's..."

"Yeah, I know." Teresa let out a small laugh.

"It's not that...You don't know...She's a very nice girl."

"Mother Mary, queen of the hometeam whores."

"Christ Terry, you don't even know her."

"I know her."

"You don't. You don't know anything about her. You've never even spoken to her."

"Everybody knows her." Mark shook his head but said nothing. "Are you getting what you want?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You know what I mean."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Does she fuck you, that's what I mean, are you getting fucked by her."

Mark grimaced, and rubbed his nose with his hand. "You've got a hell of a mouth, you know that?"

"You didn't answer me."

"Well, what the hell do you want me to say?"

Teresa shook her head. "Don't say anything. I don't want you to say anything."

There was a long silence. Teresa pushed her hair back over her shoulder. Mark toyed with the book on his bed.

He stood and walked to the window, resting his palms on the sill. "Are you... How do you feel now?" Teresa shrugged. "Its just that...I've got a lot of work to do, Terry."

She brushed her hair with her hand, and inhaled deeply. "Its Friday."

"I know...but...I've got a big paper for history...I have to work on it, you know?"

"It can wait."

Mark pressed his hands hard upon the sill. "Well I don't want it to wait."

Teresa shuddered, and stared at him. "You're a real bastard, you know?"

"Alright. Don't get upset."

"You're a real fucking football faggot bastard."

He turned from the window and paced to the opposite side of the room. "I don't know where the hell you ever got your mouth."

She bit her lip. "You're a fucking rapist and you have the fucking nerve to..."

Mark swerved around and glared at her. "That's not true. Don't call me that."

"That's what you are. You're a fucking rapist!"

His face turned bright red. He walked to Teresa's chair and stood over her. "I don't want to hear you call me that!"

"That's what you are!" she stared up into his face and looked at the long scab under his eye. He pointed his finger at her.

"Don't ever call me that again, you understand? I don't ever want to hear you call me that again."

There was silence, except for the heavy breathing of both Teresa and Mark. Then Teresa reached into her pocket and pulled out a folded piece of loose-leaf paper. She crumpled it up and flung it at him. It hit him in the face. He glared at her, but then picked up the paper and opened it.

I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU MORE THAN I HAVE EVER HATED ANYONE!

As Mark read this all the color ran from his face. He lifted the paper up, passed it between his hands, then let both hands drop to his lap. He sat there limp. He sighed, and shook his head, and ran his fingers through his hair. Then, very carefully, he folded the paper in half, pressing the crease meticulously between thumb and forefinger. He turned to Teresa. She was sitting rolled up into a ball, her eyes fixed on the floor, her lips slightly parted. Her stomach was puffing in and out. She seemed to him like a wounded bird fallen from its nest. The thought crossed his mind that she might well have had the note in her pocket all week.

He sat on the edge of his bed, clasped his hands together and stared into them. "Terry I'm...I'm sorry. I'm really sorry." She let out a small whimper and nothing more. "I'm sorry Terry. You're so...fragile...I can't...deal with you." He rubbed his hand over his forehead, then let it drop.

Finally she looked at him. "What were you thinking?" she said.

"I don't know what I was thinking."

"Did you think you were in some fucking movie? Did you think you were gonna conquer me...that any minute I was gonna swoon all over you? What were you thinking? I want to know

what you were thinking." He didn't say anything. "I kept telling you to stop and you wouldn't. I kept screaming at you 'stop' and you kept going. Why wouldn't you stop? You ripped my shirt. You were hurting me. Didn't you know you were hurting me?"

"I thought...I thought maybe you would like it...I don't know what I thought."

"I kept screaming 'stop'..."

"I know, I know." He turned his face away. "Oh, Christ."

There was silence. Teresa's eyes became filmy with tears. "And you didn't even call. You didn't even have the fucking decency to call."

"I didn't think you'd want me to call. You said. . . "

"I didn't say anything. You said 'Go to hell' and drove away."

He shivered. "I'm sorry Terry...What can I say...I'm sorry. Listen, c'mon, don't cry."

She sniffed up her tears. "I'm not crying. I wouldn't cry over you."

"Alright."

"Just don't think I'd ever cry over you."

"Alright, alright."

Mark stood up and began pacing the room. His knees were shaking, and he clasped and unclasped his hands and shook his head. Teresa turned her head to the wall, and let her hair fall over her face, and bit her lip. Finally Mark walked over to Teresa's chair, and kneeled down next to it. He leaned his arm against her leg, but she didn't look at him.

"Listen Terry...What do you want to do? Do you want to try going out again....I don't know Terry, its just that...I don't know...I don't know what to do for you."

Teresa didn't say anything. She tucked her legs underneath her to get them away from Mark's arms, and she continued to stare at the wall.

Then the doorbell rang.

Mark's face became contorted "Oh, shit!" He stood up and began pacing the room again. "Listen, Terry...Christ..." He rubbed his hand over his mouth. Now Teresa turned and looked at him. "Listen, Terry..." He shook his head, "Shit." Teresa was watching him intently. He turned

and looked at her. "Terry, listen...don't get upset...I think that's going to be Mary...I called her up before you came and..."

Teresa's lips twisted. "I thought you had a paper...You said..." She stopped talking, her eyes grew wider. "Go fuck yourself!"

"Terry, listen..."

But Teresa had bounded off the chair and run out the door. Mark followed her. "Terry, listen to me will you?" But Teresa was turned away from him. She ran down the stairs and over to the hall closet. She fumbled with the hanger and pulled out her jacket.

"Terry, will you please listen to me?"

"Go to hell!" She pushed her arms through the jacket, ran to the front door and swung it open. A girl was standing at the door, white coat and silky blonde hair. Teresa looked at her for a moment, then shoved passed her and ran down the driveway.

And Teresa ran. She ran down one block and then the next. She turned a corner and came to the vacant lot. She began to run across that, breathing heavily. Her stomach was heaving. She clutched at it with her arms. She stopped, and hugged herself, and her knees buckled, and she fell.

She did not get up. She rolled on the ground, her face in the dirt, and tears swelled up in her eyes. Some frail floor had broken and now she was falling. She choked on the tears and coughed and spit up -- but the crying wouldn't stop. It burned her and choked her and she squeezed her arms tight around her stomach and rolled over the ground, her hair sweeping up dry leaves and dirt. And the crying continued.

Until there was no crying left. Until it had all been drained out of her and all that remained was a dull emptiness. She whimpered and sobbed a few times more, wiped the wetness from her face with her hand, and it was done.

She rolled over and rested on her back. Her muscles were limp, relaxed. Her face had no expression at all. She looked up at the sky, the stars, and the moon just overhead. The moonlight beamed into her pupils, the light breaking up from the mist in her eyes. She blinked and rubbed

her eyes in order to see it more clearly. And she lay there with eyes wide and watched the full moon, the chill white moon traveling across the night, travelling through endless nights. Teresa stared at it, and became entranced. So cool, it was. So cool...and quiet...and aloof.