

Full moon

The forest was full of sound. I used to think it was quiet at night, but I learned it wasn't when I moved out of the city. I thought of the dark, silent, forbidding forest, full of all the scary things that go bump in the night. I decided fairly soon after moving out of the city that I needed to deal with my fear, so a friend and I walked a fire trail into the woods, found a clearing, and just sat and listened. It isn't as dark as I had thought. Once my eyes adjusted, I could see pretty well. We both got jumpy a few times when we heard weird noises, but we got over it. The forest at night is a very busy place.

We went out again last night. It has become a regular break for us. About once a month when the weather is nice, we'll go sit among the trees at night and listen to the life around us. It's a good way to calm down if the rest of life has gotten too hectic. Tonight was special; the moon was full and the whippoorwills were out.

Whippoorwills are fascinating. They lay their eggs so they will hatch before the full moon. The chicks are ready to leave the nest twenty days after hatching, so they grow fast and eat a lot. The parents use the light of the full moon as a way to get more time hunting for food for their chicks. Our timing was good; tonight was the night.

It's loud. It's much louder than I expected the first time we came across this. The birds' wings are audible, and their calls, which they are named after, get almost deafening at times when so many are calling at once. We sit very still and feel the wind from their wings around our heads. It's slightly unnerving but also incredible. We can see their silhouettes in the moonlight, darting through the night, capturing insects and taking them back to the nests.

It's a full moon. Nothing amazing, nothing freaky, just life moving around us. Birds, insects, little creatures, all doing their thing, and we're lucky enough to sit in the middle of it, silent, letting it all wash over us. Life is good.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Sherree](#) gave me this prompt: Under the full moon, something happens. Is it wonderful or horrible? No cliches please!.

I gave [Kurt](#) this prompt: You lost, but you are happier than you've ever been before.

What is necessary

Fill what's empty. Empty what's full. Scratch what itches.

When I first heard this, I thought it was incredibly selfish. I thought it meant that you should do what you want and not worry about anyone else. Do what looks right, what feels right.

I sat with it for a while. I decided that my first reaction was shallow. I decided to go outside my comfort zone. I looked at the world outside instead of just what's easiest.

Fill what's empty. What is empty? We have a library that's short of books and a lot of used bookstores. I went to the library, got a list of books they wanted, and I went looking. I brought them 150 books. Average cost of \$2 a book, so it certainly hit my savings account, but it was worth it to bring in boxes and boxes to the librarians I like so much. Now they're sending me lists and I bring them books whenever I can. It's getting less empty.

Empty what's full. That was harder. I looked around trying to find something that needed to be emptied. I ended up at the local no-kill shelter. I started working on training dogs, getting them to be very polite, gentle animals, comfortable in any situation. I've gotten six dogs adopted so far and I am working with the seven most frantic dogs in the shelter. They're getting better. They're calming down. It's working.

Scratch what itches. I think that means do what brings you joy. I had an itch; I stopped working, and I was bored. I am not bored now. I go digging for interesting books, train challenging dogs, cook good food in small amounts for myself (which, let me tell you, isn't as easy as it sounds), and I wake up in the morning looking forward to the experiences of the day. I'm getting enough sleep and a lot of exercise. I'm coming out of my funk.

I retired and a year later my husband died. All of our plans went down the drain. Now I fill what's empty, empty what's full, and scratch what itches, and two years after his death, I am learning a different kind of happiness, alone, but okay. It isn't easy. I still miss him every day. I think about things that I want to talk to him about. I write to him, kind of. I suppose I should say I write, and I write as if I am writing to him. I know he's gone. I think, though, that he would be happy to see me learning to live again.

Starting over is hard. I am glad I have found a few small things that make it easier.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Tara Roberts](#) gave me this prompt: "I have a simple philosophy. Fill what's empty. Empty what's full. And scratch where it itches." — Alice Roosevelt Longworth (You don't have to use the actual quote.).

I gave [Cameron](#) this prompt: One of life's best coping

mechanisms is to know the difference between an inconvenience and a problem. – Robert Fulghum

Drip, drip, drip

“Fish got to swim, birds got to fly, I got to love one man ‘til I die...”

The needle skipped.

“...that man of mine.”

The music and a steady *drip, drip, drip* from the living room were the only sounds in the house.

The front door slammed open. “Police!”

“Tell me I’m crazy, maybe I know...”

The two men sidled in carefully. “This is the police! We had a report of screaming. Is anyone here?”

Drip, drip, drip.

One of the men stepped into the living room and then dashed outside to vomit over the railing.

“God.” The other man was looking at the source of the dripping noise.

The first man came back in, already calling in the murder team. The two men proceeded to clear the rest of the house; no one else was there.

“Home without him ain’t no home to me...”

“Turn that thing off. Use gloves and move carefully, but make

the music stop. I can't stand it."

Both men sighed when the music went silent.

Drip, drip, drip.

"Let's go outside and wait."

One stood on the front porch, one on the back.

Inside the house, there was nothing alive anymore.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Eric Storch](#) gave me this prompt: Write whatever comes to mind from the words: "There is nothing".

I gave [Andrea](#) this prompt: Someone else is in control of a huge decision that will change the course of your life.

A smile

"This is a stupid superhero power!"

"At least you aren't aquaman."

"Aquaman was a putz, but he had cool powers. He could talk to sea creatures and stuff. I can destroy things."

"So can the Hulk, and everyone likes him."

"Argh. Don't I get a say in this?"

"It's just how people come out. You got hit by weird lightning and it changed you. Just think – if they could figure out how to harness the energy you produce, you could power a small

town!”

“And in the meantime I have to not smile. Ever.”

He snickered. “Okay, so that part is pretty funny.”

“I blow out every fuse in the area. I can take out transformers. I just point my teeth at it or something like that. It’s stupid.”

“Well, yeah, on some level. Maybe the government will find a use for you. You can get invited to important parties, smile at everyone, cause a blackout, and in the ensuing chaos other agents can steal important papers.”

“After the first or second time I did it, they’d make everyone smile before they were allowed in.”

“I’m sure they could figure out some way to block it until you can use it. You’ve only had the power for a few days. It will take some getting used to.”

“Says you. How would you know? You don’t have a stupid superpower. You can touch people and make them go to sleep.”

“It goes through my hands. Think about how frustrating that is when I’m trying to, well, you know...”

“Ew! You’re my brother. I don’t want to know.”

“It sucks. Or, in your case blows.” He started laughing at his pun, and she grinned reluctantly, carefully not showing her teeth.

“Okay, whatever. You can help me figure out how to use it for good or something. This is so stupid. I’m a teenager and I feel like I should superglue my lips together.”

“It’ll be fine, sis. We’ll figure it out.”

For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [lisa](#) gave me this prompt: Her smile could light up the world on even its darkest day..

I gave [Chelle](#) this prompt: Pull out the nearest book, open it to the sixth page, take the fourth sentence, and incorporate that into a piece of fiction.

[A door opens](#)

The door was opening!

The radiation counters outside had calmed down to a reasonable level over the 50 years that the remaining humans had been living in bunkers, surviving only because they had learned to recycle everything and keep the birth rate exactly equal to the death rate. It hadn't been easy, but it was done. No one was completely sure that the gadgets still worked, though, so everyone who could climbed into suits and hoped they wouldn't have to wear them for long.

Today was the day the rest of the world became a reality. Today, if the counters were right, they could head out towards the other bunkers. They'd been talking to these people for years, but no one knew what they looked like.

About half of the people waited behind the blast door. Those who were suited up stood in the airlock, waiting nervously. The mayor slowly pushed open the door to the outside and everyone winced. The sun was brighter than anyone had imagined.

The mayor stepped tentatively through the door, holding a just-opened counter saved for this day. It agreed with the

other counters; the radiation level had come down enough to be safe. The rest of the group crowded out when she waved them forward.

They stood on a small hill overlooking miles and miles of emptiness. Grasses and grains grew everywhere. Small trails indicated animal life, but no human had stepped foot on this earth in half a century.

The mayor took off her helmet and took a deep breath. Tears coursed down her cheeks. "It smells green," she whispered. She took off the rest of the suit and stood in the wind, laughing and crying.

The others soon followed. Once they were free of the suits, they touched plants, picked up dirt and crumbled it between their fingers, and splashed in a small stream they discovered at the foot of the hill.

The blast doors were opened and the rest of the survivors emerged. One picked a flower and held it to the sun, marveling at the colors and texture. The world was new again; perhaps this time humans could avoid trying to destroy it.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Maya Bahl](#) gave me this prompt: Out of the ground, a flower emerges!

I gave [Barb Black](#) this prompt: Sandman

[Storytime](#)

"...and they lived happily ever after."

The little girl's eyes opened.

"I thought you were asleep." Her father smiled at her.

"Papa, it's not the end of the story."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, they got married. Did they have babies? That's their story, too."

"When do you think a story ends?"

She frowned. "Maybe not until all the people who knew them die."

"What about the people we still remember, like Mozart or Aristotle? No one is still alive who knew them, but they still have an impact on people who are alive now."

"Their stories aren't done yet." She thought for a moment. "Maybe I'll do something that means my story goes on forever."

"Maybe so." He kissed her forehead. "G'night, bug."

"Night, papa."

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For the [Scriptic.org](https://www.scriptic.org) prompt exchange this week, [Barb Black](#) gave me this prompt: This isn't the end of the story. and I gave [Bewildered Bug](#) this prompt: As she watched, the lizard slowly crept over his arm.

Companionship

She was sitting at the bar looking tired and lost. She was also quite attractive, though he was sure she didn't feel particularly interesting right then. He knew he could change that, at least. He was good at that. Everyone seemed to think of him as a harmless old widow, but a surprising number ended up in bed with him. He smiled, remembering a few of his more interesting companions.

The stool next to her was empty. He walked up to the bar a few seats away and began chatting with the bartender. He was here often enough that they conversed easily. The bartender was a young, handsome man who seemed amused by the considerably older man's ability to coax women to bed. Both of them had standards; neither would sleep with a married woman or even one just involved with someone else. They weren't willing to hurt anyone, and, in a world of rakes and rogues, that gave them a place to begin a friendship.

After a few minutes of light banter, the older gentleman looked over at the woman. "Hello, my dear. Would you mind if I sat next to you? I'm rather short on company tonight and you look like you could use someone to talk to."

She blinked up at him, surprised and a little wary. Her expression softened as she took in his appearance. He was at least seventy years old, quite dapper, and he had a kind face with many laugh lines. He looked comforting and comfortable. She did not enjoy people hitting on her, but he seemed genuinely interested in her company, not just her cleavage.

"Sure, why not." She smiled.

"You should do that more often. It brings out the green of your eyes when they catch the light. May I buy you a drink, since I'm taking up your time?"

“Um, sure, I guess. I’ll have a gin and tonic.” She sounded slightly wary now, suddenly not as sure as she had been that his intentions were honorable.

Over the next two hours, she changed her opinion again. He really was a sweet old man. His wife had been dead for about ten years, but when he talked about her there was still joy and love in his voice and his face. They had been together for almost forty years, had three children, and had traveled extensively. She, in turn, told him about her breakup six months ago. She had not been happy, really, but she hadn’t expected him to cheat on her, either, and she was still recovering from that blow to her ego. She was a nurse and loved her work. Some days, like today, she was exhausted by the end of her shift. She worked hard and did well, but it was a difficult profession, especially since she did not have family or really close friends in the area. She had moved here five months ago, determined to start over and make a better life for herself, but it was not moving very quickly. She listened avidly to his travel stories and wished she could visit some of the exotic places he described. He did not ply her with drinks, but he paid whenever she asked for another. Near the end of the evening she switched to fruit juice so she could sober up and get home safely.

He walked her to the door of the bar and told her how much he had enjoyed the evening. She found herself thinking about how nice it would be to see him again.

Over the next two weeks, they saw each other three more times, always at the bar. After the third time, as their discussions carried on until closing, she impulsively asked if he would like to come over to continue talking. She did not have to work in the morning and the idea of going home to her empty apartment was suddenly too dreary to contemplate. He agreed and followed her home.

She made hot chocolate and put together a plate of crackers,

cheese, and cookies. He appreciated everything and was, as always, quite courtly. She enjoyed his company, his sometimes wicked sense of humor, and his intelligence, and she felt more comfortable around him than around any man she could think of. She told him all of this when she was tipsy enough to blurt out her innermost thoughts, then blushed furiously and mustered that he could just ignore that.

He gathered her into his arms and hugged her. "I take that as a high compliment, my dear. Please don't be embarrassed."

She leaned into him, smelling a whiff of pipe smoke and brandy. She snuggled closer as he began to rub her back. Non-sexually, she told herself, but it felt very good. It kept getting better, too. He took his time, making sure she was relaxed and happy. She looked up at him to ask if he was comfortable and found herself kissing him instead. This was not a bad thing, she decided, enjoying the kiss.

Events continued to unfold at a relaxed pace, both of them enjoying sensations and feeling relaxed and happy. At one point she stopped and said, "I'm sorry to ask this, but, well, can you get it up? I know older men sometimes have a problem."

"Oh, no, my dear. I took my pill; I'm sure we can figure out how to get my rocket to stand up straight enough to give it a good polish."

She laughed out loud and settled back into his arms.

They spent the night together.

The next morning, as courtly as ever, he made a simple breakfast, ate with her, and then took his leave. They agreed to meet at the bar the next week. They discussed the previous night, agreed that it was enjoyable for both parties, and agreed that neither was looking for a relationship. They parted as friends, both happier for the dalliance.

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For the [IndieInk Writing Challenge](#) this week, [Brad MacDonald](#) challenged me with “‘I polish the rockets and swallow those pills.’-Monster Magnet” and I challenged [Allyson](#) with “‘All our kids are screaming but the ghosts aren’t real’ U2, Get On your Boots”

[A purple love story](#)

She sat in front of the simple mirror, running the boar-bristle brush through her ebon hair. She smiled as she thought fondly of her handsome fiancé for whom she waited with trembling excitement. Their love was deeper than the deepest ocean and, according to their families, they fit together like hand and glove. They had fallen in love at first sight, and today would be another full day spent together, a joyous meeting of the minds. Tomorrow they would be married, and her heart yearned for him.

The door to her private bower was flung open with great force as he stumbled over the miniscule threshold. “My love!” he exclaimed passionately as he landed on his well-formed knees. “At last we shall have time to truly know the bliss of each others’ company!”

She noticed that his clothes were exceptionally sturdy, but even so there were small patches and rents just as her patient handmaidens were forever repairing in her appealing garments. She felt a frisson of excitement at this evidence of their similarity.

She stood and extended a hand to help him up, her delicate sleeve sweeping the small table clear of all of the bottles and colorful jars. She had learned early to make sure to put

caps back on bottles, so the mess was minor. In any case, she had more important things to consider. "Ah, darling! How I have desperately awaited your arrival! We have such pleasure to look forward to for the rest of our blessed lives."

Their fingers met—hers lovely and delicate, his rough and strong—and they both sighed at the electric magnetism that coursed through their bodies. He was suddenly hungry for her, and she was throbbing in places she had thought herself too innocent to know about.

She blushed and pulled away, but he pulled her to his manly chest and breathed in her intoxicating scent. She pushed futilely against his iron muscles. "We must not!" she whispered. "Not until tomorrow!" He reluctantly released his powerful hold, his fingers brushing her alabaster cheek. "I suppose you are right," he said.

They proceeded to the private nook in which the servants had set up an intimate repast. He pulled her chair out with a flourish that ended with the chair in pieces against a wall, and a servant quickly brought another. She sat down, flustered by his might. He settled across the small table from her. She picked up a succulent grape and reached across to place it into his inviting mouth. Her other arm knocked over the sturdy water pitcher. Both ignored the servant who put the replacement carafe on another table just out of reach.

He bit the grape gently and pulled it out of her fingers, then leaned forward to kiss the delightful extremities. The garnet wine next to his well-turned elbow spilled in a flood over her ivory dress. She stood up quickly, tripped over her chair, and managed to sprawl in a way that left her looking radiantly mussed. A single, jewel-like tear crept down her fair skin.

"Are you all right?" he gasped.

"I believe my leg is broken," she sobbed daintily.

He rushed to pick her up, forgetting, in his haste to be dashing and romantic, that tripping over her broken leg would probably not help matters any. He came down on the table with a resounding crash, and when he stood, white-faced, his arm was at a very unnatural angle.

Servants came rushing in to help, but he manfully waved them away, the rippling bicep on his unbroken arm making her gasp a little with desire despite her pain.

“I shall take her to the car!” he cried.

The servants looked very worried, but acquiesced, as they must.

He gently picked her up, feeling her faint as he put her over his muscular shoulder. “You’ll be fine, beloved.” His gallant voice was ground between his teeth, but he was determined to take care of her as he had promised her family he would.

Unfortunately, the path to the car included stairs.

As the lovers lay next to each other in pristine white traction, only their fingers touching, they both felt the depth of their love through that subtle caress. They knew that once they were both healed, they would have the wedding of their dreams and ride off into the sunset, forever for eternity.

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For the [IndieInk Writing Challenge](#) this week, [Major Bedhead](#) challenged me with “Give me your purplest prose, your heaving-est bosoms, your ebony-est hair, your single-est tear slipping down your alabaster-est cheek, your manliest man, your most delicate-est of maidens. Unleash your inner romance novelist.” and I challenged [Fran](#) with “Globe lilies and glide paths: include them in your piece.”

Famous does not equal right

Unfortunately, this guy I grew up with is now famous. He's a star in the music world. I wish I had been nicer. Everyone who knew both of us knows that he holds a grudge and that I'm the subject. He's still angry. He makes it very clear in his latest video. I have to hear what's in his head.

He's an ass.

I was the beautiful one. Not just in high school, but elementary school, too. I was the one that all the boys fell in love with. I was popular, the center of attention, a cheerleader, and not a very nice person. I'm not very nice now, either, but I am seeing a little more of what other people see. If nothing else, I will try to be more careful just so this doesn't happen again.

He was the geek, the nerd, the guy no one wanted to be seen with. He was the person you went to if you needed help with your homework, but you never actually said hello to him in the hallway. We called him Urkel, if that makes it easier to imagine. He had a huge crush on me, and I ignored him. Every time he tried to do something nice, I would laugh at him. Sometimes I would even get other people to laugh, too. I mean, seriously. Why did he think I would pay attention to someone like him?

In the video he has me sweeping stairs at the end. That's not true. I have a perfectly good job. I'm a secretary for a really big company. I'm good at my job, too, and I present a pretty face to the public, which always helps. People come in really angry about something, but they are always nice to me. I might not be very smart, but I am not as low as he shows me.

He's just being mean.

I'm trying to be nicer to those people, the unattractive ones. I try to at least pretend to listen to them, and I am getting better at turning down weird looking guys more gently. I don't laugh at them anymore. I'm engaged to a great guy who tells me I'm beautiful every single day. He has a lot of money, too, so I might not have to work a lot longer. I am smart enough to get a good lawyer for a prenuptial agreement, though. I'm not going to be dumped for someone younger and prettier when he gets tired of me.

Famous guy I grew up with? Fuck you, too. I'll bet you aren't nice to people now that you don't have to be.

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For the [IndieInk Writing Challenge](#) this week, [R.L.W.](#) challenged me with "Watch the music video for Cee Lo Green's "Fuck You" – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pc0mx0XbWIU> Use the song as inspiration or dress your protagonist in an outfit from the video." and I challenged [Cheney](#) with "Wayland the Smith in the modern world. What would he be like here and now?"

Tomorrow

"Hey, kid. Sonora just broke a toe. You're up tomorrow. Make sure you're ready."

Just a few words and her life was going to change drastically. She'd be going from a company dancer to a principal dancer because of a broken toe.

She called her family. “You have to come out. I know it’s a two hour drive, but I can comp your tickets, and I’m playing the Sugar Plum Fairy. This is a huge step up for me. I’ve been a snowflake for years, been the backup for Sugar Plum for the last two years, and this is my big break. I need to know you’ll be there.” She paused, listening, and then said “Oh, great! I can’t wait to see you!”

Rehearsal time. She found her partner and they started to work. They’d practiced it before, of course, but there was a new intensity now that he knew he’d be on stage with her tomorrow. They danced well together, though, and after a few run-throughs they decided that it would be fine. She checked in with costuming, glad that she was the same size as Sonora. They had her try on the costume to make sure. It fit perfectly.

She went out to the quiet, empty stage. The music played in her head as she practiced her solo parts, dressed as the Sugar Plum Fairy, spinning across the floor. Tomorrow she would be in full makeup, dancing with the whole company and the audience watching, but for the moment it was her time to feel the music and make sure there wasn’t a stumble or missed step.

She went home to her small apartment, ate a little, took a hot shower, and went to sleep, deeply happy at the thought of the next day’s stress.

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For the [IndieInk Writing Challenge](#) this week, [Sherree](#) challenged me with “Life as you know it, will change tomorrow (and you’re not getting married).” and I challenged [Tobie](#) with “Loki and Eris”