

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.

[Biting wit](#)

"Don't bite me!"

"Ba ba looloolee."

"Argh."

"Yaaah!"

"Ouch!"

"nanananana."

"And don't bite the dog, either!"

Giggle.

Clatter of claws as the dog takes off for another part of the house.

"Sure. Chew on the coffee table. It's a distressed piece already, so who minds a few teeth marks? I really, truly don't

mind that. Oh, so as soon as I don't react, you are going to head for something else?"

Giggle.

"Play the piano. That sounds like a good idea. As long as you are making noise, I know what you are doing. I can work in the kitchen for a few minutes."

After three minutes, silence falls.

Yelp!

Giggle.

Sigh.

"No! Not the catbox."

Yell!

"Don't...don't...don't...myfeetareticklishdon'tbiteMYTOES!"

Giggle.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Jester Queen](#) gave me this prompt: Before you bite me, there's something you should know.

I gave [Grace O'Malley](#) this prompt: It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.' — Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Searching

Mama, what happened to Father?

He couldn't stay with us, little one. He had to go.

Tell me a story, Mama. Tell me about when he left.

I have to tell you a new one. I never remember all the details.

How could she not remember when her husband left her alone with a little child? How could she not tell me what she remembered?

I want to know the real story, Mama.

I'll tell you later. Let's go to the park!

Always deflecting or coming up with something new. When I was tiny, the stories were fantastic, dragons and knights, my father always the hero, but there was always another kingdom to save, more people who needed him. Those became harder as I grew older. I needed him, too. The stories changed, then, to disappearance from kidnapping or on a plane that was shot down, a huge variety of ways that my father ended up unable to come home. She was fair about one thing; she told me she was making things up and imagining the stories. She never pretended to be telling the truth.

Mama, you are dying. I need to know what happened to Father.

Isn't that why you became a journalist? To satisfy all of your curiosity? And you married such a beautiful girl who happens to have all the security clearances you could wish for. What have you found out?

He disappeared, Mama. He just walked out the door and never came back. No contact, no sightings, no body. No one knows. You know something, though. I know you do.

She turned her head away.

It's better that you don't know, little one.

She would say nothing else on the subject.

After she died, I went through all of her things, carefully looking for any clues as to what she meant. I found a letter. It was written in handwriting somewhat like mine, but I did not recognize it.

Dearest Sylvie,

You know why I had to go. I hope this keeps both of you safe from the worst of what is coming. Please don't ever tell him. I don't want this darkness in his life.

Love, always.

Nothing else.

I still don't know. I still can't find him. I am old now, and my grown children sometimes ask about their grandfather. I tell them stories just as my mother told me. I don't know what else to do. They got their wish, but I carry a different darkness. I don't know half of my past, and I never will.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Lance](#) gave me this prompt: It's better that you don't know.

I gave [kgwaite](#) this prompt: I like long walks, especially when they're taken by people who annoy me. — Fred Allen

[All's well that...oh, wait.](#)

The land all the way to the horizon was smoking gently. A haze hung in the air. No wind came to blow it away; no rain loomed.

"Why did you tell me to push the button, sir?"

"I didn't tell you to push the button. I was on two calls at once. I was trying to get the Prime Minister to understand that we were not going to push the button, but the call got switched to your line just as I said the last part."

"I asked if you were sure."

"I thought you were the Prime Minister. Your voices are very similar."

"So I pushed the button."

"Yes, you did."

"And then they pushed their button."

"We had worked so hard to get to this point. It was all going so well."

"Up until I pushed the button."

"It's not your fault, young man."

"Well, I guess I have a long time to think that over."

"You have enough food and water to last until it's safe to go outside again. I hope that they provided some entertainment, too. I doubt you are going to get any news or outside information, since even this line won't be up for much longer. The blast did a lot of damage. We won't release your name. No one will know that you pushed it. I hope you make it through until it's safe."

"I'll do my best, sir."

"Thank you."

The call ended and the line was suddenly dead. No dial tone. He turned on the television and saw only snow, something he

remembered vaguely from his childhood. He looked out the window one last time, closed the shutters tightly, and locked and sealed them. Everything was battened down, safe from the aftermath, except, perhaps, his sanity.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Michael](#) gave me this prompt: And everything was going so well, too..

I gave [Eric Misener](#) this prompt: Write from the perspective of someone in the same situation as the Greek, Cassandra – she sees the future but no one believes her.

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

Ask your mother

For once, I'm not writing fiction.

My mother was in town this past weekend. This move has been challenging; Xander and Katja have both been sick, the dog and cat are having a hard time adapting, and we needed a lot of help this weekend to move the piano and big pieces of furniture. A couple of people we were expecting to help didn't show up. My mom, however, offered to come and babysit Katja while we moved.

It helped. It helped more than I can really express, which is slightly embarrassing for a self-styled wordsmith.

My mom has been there at odd times, but when all else fails, I call her, even if it's only for someone to talk to while the world crumbles.

In college, I had a huge paper due and an awful case of writer's block. I woke up my mom at some weird hour asking her to talk to me about abortion, which was the subject of the paper. She calmly helped me on it and I didn't realize until later that being awakened in the middle of the night by your daughter wanting to talk about abortion with no context was probably not the easiest moment.

I talked to her about rights for people with disabilities when I was dealing with that a lot. I talked to her about infertility and adoption.

When Katja was born and spent days in the NICU, during the time that Xander and I had to work out a lot of last-minute pieces with Katja's biological family, my mom showed up. She sat with Katja, held her, and fed her. She took shifts when we couldn't. All we wanted to do was be with our baby, but to be able to take her home, we had to get other things done, too. My mom made friends with the nurses (well, most of them) and let us deal with the necessities, knowing that our little girl was under the watchful and loving eye of her grandma.

We don't always agree. We don't always get along. We have certainly had our differences, which is to be expected. When it comes down to it, though, when there is need, I can call my mom. If she can help, she will. Not to say the rest of my family won't, of course. I'm just saying that this week it's very important to me to recognize that she simply does what is needed. No fuss, no drama. She's just there. I really appreciate that.

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Tara Roberts](#) gave me this prompt: When all seems lost, ask your Mother..

I gave [Cameron](#) this prompt: I'm cuckoo for copepods. — Bill Nye

Midnight

He sat waiting, watching the altar at the cathedral. He knew the madman was coming soon, even if the police didn't believe him.

"The madman is coming! The madman is coming!" He almost laughed as the refrain began going through his head. He had imagined being Paul Revere when he was a little boy, and he had loved the thought of warning everyone that the bad guys were coming. This time, he'd tried to warn everyone, but no one listened. He was alone, watching for the man who had killed at least eight people.

There was movement in the narthex, a shadow moving, becoming a tall man in dark clothes. He was carrying a cloth bag that the watcher knew held the spoils of his gruesome hobby. The watcher texted to his friend. "He's here! Get the cops. Please." The watcher was careful to not let the light from his phone show anywhere the murderer might be able to see. He tucked the phone away and continued his vigil.

When the murderer made it to the altar and began setting up his presentation, the watcher decided he had to act. He picked up the heavy flashlight, crept up behind the murderer, and hit him over the head. The murderer collapsed, and the work of months was finally over.

When the murderer was being taken away to the ambulance, he looked at the man who had captured him and said, "I guess I should have come earlier. You knew I always did this late at night. I should have come just as they closed. Nothing good happens after midnight."

The watcher smiled a little. "I guess that just depends on which side you're on. Today, something good happened after midnight."

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For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Michael](#) gave me this prompt: □"Whatever you want to do can be done before midnight...Nothing good happens after midnight." -Vanna White.

I gave [Eric Storch](#) this prompt: The first rainfall after weeks of heat

Some days

She liked a lot of children's books, but one line had been used more than any other growing up. By the end of the day some days, she felt like she shouldn't have gotten out of bed in the morning, let alone tried to slog through such an awful day. She hadn't ever woken up with gum in her hair, but the way today had gone, the sentiment was appropriate.

It had started with the stupid raspberry tart. She had made a tart the night before. When she woke up, she discovered that the heat of the day before had gotten the ant colony that lived under the house moving in high gear. The tart was crawling with the little creatures. She had resisted the urge to shriek or throw things, but it was difficult. No matter how many times she called an exterminator or put out ant poison, they always came back the next year. She hadn't seen any yet this year. She had put the tart on the stove, where they seldom bothered going, on top of a cooling rack, but one enterprising ant had found it and now the stovetop was covered with them.

She had been looking forward to that tart.

She threw away the tart, sprayed down the stovetop, and got ready for work.

Work wasn't much better. There was a voicemail waiting for her when she arrived from a client who had misplaced an important document and needed another copy immediately. When she called him back, he swore at her at great length because she hadn't been there at 5 PM the night before. He didn't seem to remember the time difference; she was already at home and making the tart by the time his emergency came up. He had been so worried about the document that he'd come in early, so she got it to him before his day started, but swearing was never a good way to begin.

The copy machine broke. The fax machine only worked intermittently. The power went out at 3:12 PM because of a thunderstorm, leaving her unable to help most of her clients. When the power started coming back on, the lights in her office flickered for a while; by the time they had stopped, she had a blazing headache. She wanted to go home and crawl into bed, but she had a blind date set up by her best friend from high school.

She came home to a drenching thunderstorm just as she stepped out of the car, bills in the mail, and a message from her neighbor that they would be pruning the tree and that there might be falling limbs in the next day or two. She got dressed for her date, checked the mirror, and went to the restaurant. Everything seemed fine until she checked the mirror one more time as she got out of the car and realized that one of the two matching clips in her hair had disappeared since she left the house.

After a frantic search, she gave up, repositioned the remaining clip, took a deep breath, and walked into the restaurant. She met her date. They sat down and the first thing he asked was how her day had gone. She looked at him a little blankly – that wasn't usually a question for the first

date.

“There was a book I read a lot when I was little, and one line perfectly describes today. ‘Some days are like that...’”

“‘Even in Australia!’” he broke in, laughing.

She smiled at him and decided that the end of the day would be better than the rest of it had been.

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I’m late this week; I thought Friday was Thursday. Sorry! For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Barb Black](#) gave me this prompt: raspberry tarts and a missing hairpiece.

I gave [Last Mom On Earth](#) this prompt: Survival of the fittest.

[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.”

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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.