

Night

By Megan Vidovich

Perhaps this was my destiny. I was walking in circles anyway. After all, there was no reason to return to my grandmother's house, the house on 25th and Maple. The house with the blood red flowers and the weeds on the brick walkway. The house that moaned in winter winds and never allowed smoke to leave its chimney. The house with the tree that lost its leaves one summer and never grew them back. The house with the five bolt door.

My grandmother has five different keys for the five different locks. She keeps them on her at all times—when she cooks, when she bathes, when she sleeps. She always knows where those keys are, and she knows I want them.

The door to my grandmother's house didn't always have five bolts. In fact, it used to have just one. When I was little, the door would be open. My grandmother and I would dance in her garden and plant beautiful flowers that she always kept in straight rows. As soon as the sun began to fall, however, my grandmother would stop dancing and grab my hand tight. She would rush us into the house and lock her single lock door.

"The night is no place for children," she would say.

I never cared to argue. Why would my grandmother lie?

Despite my compliance, I always wondered what the night sky looked like. I had never seen a glimpse of it, as my grandmother would draw the blinds tight at dusk until dawn. As I grew, so did my curiosity for the mysterious menace of Night. When I was eleven, I found myself falling in love with Night through the books at the library. As I read, I couldn't imagine why my grandmother wouldn't want to be part of the dark spectacle every night.

Perhaps she hasn't seen it, I thought to myself. Yes of course!

Determined to give my grandmother the opportunity to love Night as I did, I checked out my favorite stellar book and ran to the house.

"Grandmother, grandmother!" I called as I barged into the house. My grandmother, who had been lounging on the sofa in the living room, jumped.

"Dear girl!" she cried. "What business do you have running into my house like that?"

My excitement dwindled. "Well, I—"

"Well what? It's nearly dark outside. I've already started the evening fire!" My grandmother motioned to the hot flames in the fireplace. "You *know* you are not supposed to be out at night."

“Yes, grandmother,” I nodded quickly. “I know. But I was just thinking... maybe...”

“Spit it out,” she demanded.

“Maybe you wouldn’t mind the night so much if you knew more about it,” I blurted out. I shoved the book into my grandmother’s hands.

The book touching my grandmother’s fingertips was like acid boiling one’s skin. She barely glanced at the cover before she tore her eyes away and shut them tightly.

“Why?!” she screamed as my blood curdled. “Oh, why?!”

In one swift movement, my grandmother snatched the book away from the remnants of my weak grip and flung it towards the fireplace. The star filled pages flashed by and danced. The fire roared. The only thing I had ever loved was gone—cackling in the inferno.

“The night is no place for children!” my grandmother yelled, her red eyes burning.

Without another word she shoved me into my bedroom and slammed the door shut. I didn’t dare move.

When I woke up the next morning, my grandmother greeted me with warm jelly toast and a smile, as if last night was merely a nightmare. As I left for school, she waved me out the door with a sweet smile on her face,

leaving me utterly perplexed. When I returned at 3:10pm sharp, however, there was a second shiny lock on the house's front door.

Night was not brought up for nearly two years after the burning of the book. I had been scared out of my wits by my grandmother's sudden ferocity and didn't dare unleash the monster again. That is, until I overheard my friends talking about stargazing.

"What's stargazing?" I asked them curiously.

"You don't know?" my friend Tulip asked in reply. "It's when you go out at night and look at the stars in the sky."

"You've never been?" chimed in May.

No, I had not. But perhaps I could change that.

"Hello!" I greeted my grandmother as I walked in the door.

"Grandmother..." I took a seat next to her on the sofa.

"Yes?" she inquired.

"My thirteenth birthday is coming up... Could I go out, with my friends? To go stargazing... at night?"

I watched as my grandmother's face turned from placid to twisted. Her right eye twitched. I saw every wrinkle in her face and she sucked in her lips like she had bitten a sour lemon.

"THE NIGHT IS NO PLACE FOR CHILDREN!" she roared.

"But I will not be a child! I'll be—!"

My grandmother stood up swiftly, snatched my wrists in a firm hold, and pulled me up to her face.

"Don't. Make. Me. Say. It. One. More. Time."

Then she threw me in my room.

In the night I heard muffled pounding and stomping from the living room. I didn't dare move.

After a fretful sleep, I got up the next morning as usual to go to school. When I walked out of my room, I saw my grandmother on the sofa, no warm jelly toast or even buttered toast in sight.

"You are not going to school," she said in a monotone voice, not caring to look up from her newspaper.

"But—" Her eyes snapped up.

"You are not leaving this house."

My eyes darted around the room and found their place on the door. The

door with two locks—at least two locks on the outside. There had been a new addition. Not one, not two, but three, trapping me from the inside out in the house. The house with the five bolt front door.

The summer came and went. I was spoken to only when dinner was ready. The air grew colder and the bolts on the door stiffened, never stopping their defense of the house from the night.

One evening at dinner, my grandmother decided to speak to me more than I had grown used to. She was chewing her risotto when she said, “You know, it’s quite a shame you couldn’t learn to behave yourself. You could have had such a nice life.”

Her red eyes stared into the deepest parts of my soul. I dropped my fork with a clatter and pushed my chair out from the table, standing quickly. How *dare* she tell me how my life should be lived. How dare I sit here and take it.

I grabbed my bowl and threw it as hard as I possibly could at the living room window. It tore through the blinds and hit the glass with a deafening *CRACK!* I ran through the shards on the ground and broke through what was remaining of the window. Glass cut through my shirt sleeves and pierced my skin.

My grandmother shrieked, "Don't you dare leave this house!"

I took one look back at her, into her devil eyes.

"This house is no place for children."

"LUNA!" My grandmother called my name, but I was long gone.

I ran with Night. Her black hair caressed my broken skin and mingled with my blood, healing my glass wounds. I walked with Her for hours, not knowing what to do next.

I was beginning to worry about where I would sleep, where I would go, when I heard a soft whisper, "*Luna.*"

The voice came from all angles of the night.

"*Luna.*" Sweet as a dessert you haven't had in years. The voice of Night Herself. "*Luna, I miss you. Come home. Luna...*"

Her eyes sparkled at me. A million lights in the pitch black sky appeared and disappeared just for my eyes to see.

I was in awe, staring at the twinkling spectacle, when my eyes fell upon something unusual. Breaking the pattern of a star littered sky was a gaping black hole.

"Night," I spoke to my love, "what's happened here?"

Night did not answer my question. Instead, she sang to me, *“Luna, come home. Luna, I miss you. There’s none to replace who life withdrew. Luna, come home...”*

And I understood.

I took a deep breath, letting Night into every edge of my body.

She breathed with me. I felt my feet leave the weathered ground. Not until that moment did I realize how unnatural standing on the earth’s hard surface felt.

Night pulled me into a cool embrace that filled my heart with warmth. Her eyes opened into mine, Her stars kissed my face, untouched terrain. I looked out upon the earth, so far away, so small.

“Welcome home, Luna.”