

Blood Moon

Natasha Gauthier

I'm walking in the woods under a blood moon and I come to a tree that looks like a relative. Relatively friendly. I lean against it. It opens. I go inside.

There's some kind of mix-up. Someone isn't doing their job, because I'm at school again, and nothing is right. Nobody is who they're supposed to be. A girl my age walks up to me. She looks familiar.

Is that you, Tasha? she says.

Metis. Makes a sound in the mouth like muck.

Makes a sound like something that doesn't know how to sound.

May. Tee. May t. Perhaps it will. Perhaps not.

Disyllabic jungle mouth.

And where are my feet?

There is a game you can play by yourself. Get a long rope. Find the middle. Put one hand on either side. Now pull. Now see which side won.

Grandma became very alert when I mentioned it.

Don't ever tell anyone you're Indian, she said.

I never saw her eyes so open.

I can't understand you, Tasha. Her head kept shaking back and forth. She made her beer disappear. Work was implied. She had worked so hard to make people

think she was white. But to look at her, there was no question. Straight black hair, high cheekbones, tan skin — not suntanned skin, but brown from the inside.

She had *the look*.

If anyone ever asks you, you tell ‘em you’re white.

She made another beer appear.

Hey, where’d you get that? said my uncle.

She smiled.

Well, I’m not gonna tell *you* that.

Don’t worry,
I’m going back
in time with her
in the next scene.

SCHOOL

A Play in Three Acts

IN which I find out what happened to my grandma (see: Ouija board)

Act One

Nothing happens.

Act Two

The first thing is this is really happening. That’s the first thing you have to remember throughout this play.

Me: First we’ve got to tie up the teachers, like this.

Grandma: Yeah?

Me: You take their hands, like this.

Grandma: Okay. Now what?

Me: Now we let all these kids go.

Grandma: Go where?

WIND whistles. FOOTSTEPS pack the snow.

Me: Back to their families.

The children CHEER.

Grandma: Oh, I see. How?

Me: How what?

Grandma: How do we find their families?

The children look frightened/concerned.

Me: We'll just call them.

Grandma: (to kid) Do you know your phone number?

Kid: *shakes head.*

Act Three

Me: Well, shit.

You're doing it wrong, Grandma says. *Her whole face smoothes out when she smiles she knows something.*

That's not how it happened.
Well, we never talked about it, so what do I know?
We never talked about it?
I shake my head.
Hmph. *She looks at her Pilsner.* Oh.
Well, you could've come to visit more.
I know. I'm sorry, Grandma.

Let's get a beer, she says.
You don't drink beer yet, Grandma. You're 8 years old. Quit jumping ahead.
She shrugs with her eyes closed. Looks like she's already had a couple.
Come on, I say. We gotta go.

She's not my grandma anymore. She's my best friend. I'm breaking her out of here. I can do that now that I'm a writer. I'm breaking her out so she doesn't have to go to school.

We hold hands and run down the hallway. Past the ladies in their mean black dresses. Past the men in their sneaky suits. Past all the lowercase t's on the wall with a sad, dying man on them. Way past all that. Past the other kids, too. Come on, I say. They peek out from their classrooms. There are whispers. The chalk drops and rolls on the floor.

Do
Not
Fucking
Touch
It

The thing is she never talked about it. She never talked about her childhood. Dad says she went to a Catholic school. That's all there is. There are a few photos of her as a young girl. She looks happy for the most part. She looks like she's having fun. Balancing books on her head. Dancing with a bunch of other girls. Some of the girls in the background look unhappy, but my grandma is always smiling. In other pictures, like some taken in the 1970s a few years before I was born, my grandma holds a beer. The men always look at her *in that way*.

She smiles.

She's always smiling.

And over here

I hold

my grandmother's hand

and we run down the street

together,

because I never did that

with her

and I wonder what it would be like

to have her as a friend,

yanking each other

this way and that

and stealing something —

a coat for her

and sunglasses for me,

anything.

And we're pretty cute, the two of us.

We're a couple of
cute chicks out on the town

(cut

to —

1952

Women's Day subscriptions,
sexy black and red

apron,

a book

on new ways to prepare beef
for dinner)

(but her everyday was
a plaid jacket when I
knew her).

Well, alright,

she says,

smiling,

ready to party.

Alright,

alright.