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Moonlight in the Bedroom

Mardelle Fortier

My room was almost dead still. Not even a clock could be heard. The curtains barely breathed.

Slowly awakening, I became aware that I was lying on my side. How odd; normally, I slept on my back. I realized I should have closed the window; cool air chilled the sheet over me.

Through the window, moonlight spilled like something melting. Strange reflections danced in the mirror over the bureau.

I knew I should turn over. But I could not push myself to do it. Groggily I lay on my side, with my heart beating faster. The sheet grew cooler, and I shivered in a thin cotton nightgown. Outside, a car drove past and lights flickered wildly around the room. Afterwards, in the silence, I felt very alone.

Something told me to turn over, and look on the other side of my bed. The whole room felt peculiar, lit up with significance. It was important to find out what it was.

Cautiously I began to shift, but only my feet moved. The rest of me remained frozen.

I was alone in the house. My heart beat wildly in my chest. I tried to swing my neck around, but it remained locked. No more cars passed. The moon was carried, limp and pale, behind a cloud. My lower body hurt from remaining so long in a rigid position.

There's no reason to look around, I told myself. There's nothing in my room.

I tried to get back to sleep. Closing my eyes, I cast around for my most recent dream. But it had scattered into bones, drifting in some mysterious sea. My toes felt like ice. I attempted to shift my feet, but could not even wiggle them. They grew numb.

Like a dead weight, the moon dropped into the clouds. I could see almost nothing in the dark, except some odd snake-like things on the bureau.

Some weird presence was in my room. Right behind me. The idea burned in my brain. I stared at the walls and up at the bottomless well of ceiling. What could be in my room? Why did I feel dread in my cold stomach?

All my senses were on alert. I no longer felt at all sleepy, but I squeezed my eyes shut. I did not want to know what made the room seem so different. Mentally, I buried myself under the covers. Yet in reality, I was stiff with terror.

Curiosity boiled inside me. With all my will, I tensed my muscles to shift position. I clenched my teeth together until they hurt, but I could not move an inch.

I wanted to scream. My mouth did come open, but no sound came out. My head hurt as though someone was squeezing it with a frozen metal band. I tried to cry, but no tears came. My eyes closed to shut out the room. Each of my fingers felt cramped and icy.

Without warning, the moon sprang to life and filled the room with silver. My body relaxed; I wiggled my toes, rubbed my feet together. In the stillness I laughed out loud. All my life I'd been high strung and imaginative. Squirming, I stretched my tight, tingling skin; rolled over on my back.

Wanting to know that I was for sure alone, I stared down at the floor on the other side of the bed.

A body lay on the floor. It was wrapped in a white sheet. It lay perfectly still. I could glimpse some strands of hair. I could not make out the face, but I knew without a doubt it was my own.