

# AGES ELEVEN TO THIRTEEN



## Moonlit Dance

A full moon hung in the star-strewn sky, shedding its light over a glittering lake. The air was crisp and cold, and starlight transformed the surrounding forest to silver. The world was at peace.

From the wild depths of the night came a breathtaking shriek that shattered the silence. Then a lower call answered, filling the calm with richness. The duet sang together for several moments. Then they came.

Two Barn Owls flew out over the lake, dipping and turning about each other. Their feathers caught the light of the stars. The female, her face like the moon above her, spread her tawny wings and her black eyes gleamed. Her mate dove and spun while making a joyous chorus of hoots. The faint traces of wind cupped the owls in its icy fingers, ruffling their snowy down. The pair softly brushed their wings together closer and closer until they seemed as one.

But, as quickly as they had come, the owls left, swooping back to the caresses of the night shadows while the earth slept. And the moonlit lake under the inky sky was silent again, filled with the eternal secrets of the night.

Olivia J Goodheart  
Home School



## Sleep

Night is a routine to her now. It's become more part of her schedule than brushing her teeth or going to work. Night is dependable; it's solid. She needs some solidity in her life, she thinks, *sometimes I feel like I'm on a ship in a storm. Any day now I might just wash away.*

So, when it comes time to go to bed, when it's pitch black and the neighbors have turned off the TV and all is peaceful, she sets about her apartment.

Every light is extinguished, every appliance turned off. The room is cleaned, the stereo is silenced, the bed in her tiny closet of a room is made. She stumbles blindly into her minuscule accommodation, instantly knowing where her mattress is. Falling back on it, lying still for a moment and letting the absence of light and sound tumble over her, washing away the fears and anxieties and creating a new slate.

After the shuffling of bed linens and position, she finds a place of comfort, tangled beneath the blankets in her own little sanctuary of quiet. One thousand sensations that aren't really there find their place in her subconscious - like the patter of rain on a roof, or the whisper of lips against the skin of her shoulder.

She delights in it, tastes it and feels it like a thing of substance. She lets it embrace her like a warm hug from an old friend. *Here, she muses, here I feel at home.*

Somewhere in the back of her mind, the memory of past nights remains. Nights when she and her sisters would lay awake and listen to the silence, pretending it was a symphony of sounds seeping through the floorboards of their room. *Maybe I can hear it now.* But she can't. It's just quiet, there's nothing beyond it, lacing it. It is just night. It is just what it is, the childish wonder seems to be lost.

But when she lingers on the edge of sleep and conscious, it finds its way back to her again, that magic. That wonderful feeling that perhaps only children at the peak of innocence and ignorance can perceive. They hold it like putty in their tiny hands and mold it to any which shape they wish it to be, this sensation.

And she thinks on until she sleeps soundly: *Night is wonderful for bringing this to me.*

She slumbers until the sun rises, and suddenly it's gone. The atmosphere fades into the dawn of a new day, waiting until the next night to reopen itself to the world.

Halley Balkovich  
Walterville School

