

Over The Moon

by John Riley

When I first laid eyes on her Horace was leading her toward the cattle truck and even though I was standing a good distance away one look was all it took to make me feel like I was going to swallow my heart; she was as beautiful as flowers in a dream; legs almost too dainty to hold her up and eyes that weren't the usual watery Holstein dull black but shiny the way the night sky in the summer is shiny next to the moon. The white spots on her hide were perfect round circles like God himself used a school compass to draw them. I knew I had to have her, 'specially after I asked Horace where she was going and he said she was on her way to be turned into veal cutlets and that was why I'd never seen her, she'd been kept in the feeder barn and fed the milk that had made her so soft and beautiful. I told Horace I wanted to buy her but when he told me how much she'd go for at the auction I near about teared up. I hadn't ever had that much money at one time in my life, but when he saw how tore up I was he said I could have her on a payment plan, and she was mine. I keep her staked during the day some place where she can graze and have shade. Nights I put her in the stall I built out in the old barn. I have my own bed out there, up in the loft beneath the hole in the roof I need to fix someday, and on warm nights I lay there and watch the stars and listen to her stir around and I tell you the feeling I get from knowing she's alive, that there is at least one of God's beautiful creatures walking the earth because of me, is nearly as powerful as the sound of a dying man's last sigh.

