

Attraction In the Night

by Jerry Ratch

Everybody was out on the deck and you could feel the deck swaying a little with the weight of all the people. There was loud music inside but it was too hot and nobody was dancing and they were all out on the deck. Lisa was out there and either she would not acknowledge Philip's presence when he came out onto the deck or she didn't see him, so he moved to the side of the crowd and sat down with a bottle of Beck's beer in his hand and just went quiet inside.

He couldn't take his eyes off her now, as she stood at the railing looking out over the darkening valley, watching the full moon as it rose over the landscape. Her golden hair hanging down past her shoulders, which were bare and shiny in the heat of the night air, and it was like her hair glowed with an unnatural light in the light coming out onto the deck from inside the house. Philip sank deeper inside himself and went quiet.

He could feel something beginning to attach itself to him inside, and he drank some more from his bottle of beer and he could feel a deep hollow pit widening inside somewhere and he felt his essence hanging over the emptiness inside. And he sank deeper and deeper and went totally silent as the hollowness grew. It grew vast inside.

Then he felt diminished and he grew very quiet and he became sad. He knew sex was in the air, you could feel it, it was everywhere, and he drank down the last bitter mouthful of semi-warm beer that had been between his legs. Having driven up the hill with this same bottle of beer, after telling his wife that he just had to get out of the house and go for a drive. Somewhere. Though he already knew where, since this party had been on his mind for the better part of a week now.

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And he realized he had stopped breathing. He got up and went inside into the bright kitchen and got another beer out of the refrigerator. The kitchen was bright and contemporary with granite counters and sleek Italian faucets and it was narrow and a number of people had suddenly converged on it. They were scarfing down appetizers, thick slices of mozzarella with a brilliant red slice of tomato on it, dripping with pure virgin olive oil and topped with a green basil leaf.

And as he reached out for another from the platter, there was Lisa's arm beside his, also reaching, and he looked at the bare skin of her arm beside his and noticed that her skin looked almost purplish underneath, it was almost ugly. And yet her arm was bare and the skin looked moist or damp in the night and it also seemed to him that it was attractive, and he could see how she could even be appealing, and he wondered how much life there was left in this woman. It didn't seem as though her life was over. Perhaps her husband was missing something there, he thought.

They said hello and they smiled at each other. Philip reached for his beer and Lisa bent over to get something from the oven and he looked at her ass, which was a little wide and he couldn't help but imagine suddenly what it would be like to fuck her from behind as she was bending over. Her ass was in the air and he thought: It's just about the right height, I'd like to fuck her that way, with her bending over. And he also thought: She needs to lose a little weight in the butt. Not that much though, he thought. She's just been sitting at a desk too much at the office, now that she was the manager.

So it was at that party that the affair began for Philip. He found himself paying much more attention to Lisa. He watched every movement of her body around the office. There was a definite chemical attraction beginning to happen between them. The following week when they went on the office tour together, they

were going through one house high in the hills up behind the University, not that far from where the party had been on that hot night. It had an incredible bay view and when they both went out into the sun on the patio, Philip said, "I could live here. Do you want to buy this house and live here together?"

"You couldn't afford me," she said, smiling.

"I've made more this year than I've ever made," Philip said. "Can we have lunch?"

"We're leaving on vacation Friday," she said. "I have too much to deal with. Let's put it off until I get back."

"How long are you going to be gone?"

"Two weeks."

Philip groaned. "I won't see you for two weeks? What will I do?"

"I am married, you know."

"So am I," he said. "I'll miss not being able to look at you."

"I'll send you a dream," she said. And Philip thought: What the hell does that mean?

"Do you want to have lunch with me up at the Auberge du Soleil in Napa when you return? They have a terrific view out over an old olive grove. It's like being inside a living Van Gogh painting."

"Sounds good," Lisa said, and she smiled, and he noticed the small curves at the sides of her mouth for the first time, and the breath left him suddenly. "Let's talk about it when I get back," she said. And she touched him on his arm, and he was lost, for sure now.

When Lisa returned from her vacation, she was so tan that it made her skin kind of shiny and almost old looking. It had a leathery appearance. "I thought about you, Philip, when I was on vacation," she said. "I sent you a dream, when we were walking naked along a path at the rim of the Grand Canyon. My husband wouldn't take off all his clothes, but I did. Did you get the dream?"

What the hell! thought Philip. What the hell does that even mean?

