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## Star Struck

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## Star Struck

Aimee Kulp

When the living room window beside her mother's antique owl lamp shattered, she knew that the sun must be setting – and that she had forgotten to turn off the lamp before its glow escaped the boundary of her home. Another rock sailed through the window to her left, hitting the back of her leather armchair and rolling back to nudge the toe of her right shoe. With a sigh she reached down, took the rock in her hand, and began rubbing her thumb along the smooth surface. Tiptoeing through the broken glass, she made her way to the wall beside the owl lamp, and reached for its string. The pull of the lamp switch brought the roar of the crowd. “She’s in there, the thief!” a voice shrilled. “Monster!” came the lower belches of others. “Give us our light back you fiend!” came the demand of another.

For a few moments she did nothing but lean against the mint green wallpaper and rub her temples in a slow, circular motion. She knew that she could not stay – not here, against the comfort of the wall within the relative safety of her home. Her smallest handbag sat ready by the door, and she mindlessly slipped it into the inside pocket of her coat as she put her other hand on the knob of her front door.

The crowd hushed as she emerged onto her front porch. For a moment, all looked at her as she stared off into the dismal sky. Behind her the lower windows of her noble town home were covered with old boards, hiding the fragments of glass which had broken long ago. An unsure little voice broke the silence, “She doesn’t look like a monster.”

A few around the voice gasped, others joined in with the chorus of “shhh.” A whispering reassuring voice ignored the chorus, “That’s because she’s the daughter of the monster.”

Another little voice slipped through the darkness, “But she doesn’t look funny!”

A current of uncomfortable fidgeting slipped through the crowd. “Her father was a magician,” a slightly more mature voice informed.

“Her mother used to dance and laugh in the sunlight whenever it was not blocked by the clouds,” a low, hissing voice continued. “When she died, her father doomed us all to spend hours each day without a trace of the sun. Except for his daughter, and the bundle of light which she hoards for herself.”

As the silence began to occupy the air around them once more, she slowly began moving toward the crowd without separating her gaze from the darkness of the sky. Her neighbors cleared a path at her approach – some shuffling away with shame, others recoiling in disgust. A baby’s cry came from one of the unlit houses which lined the street: darkened beacons lining an oily sky. She kept her chin lifted until she had passed out of sight of the last of her neighbors.

When she let it fall, the tears came with it. She caught these in an ink bottle which she had stashed in her handbag. When the bottle was half full, a vial emerged from her handbag as well, and from this she let three silver drops fall into the salty water. With a sigh, she stirred the mixture with her hair before dipping her paintbrush into the sparkly liquid, reaching it up into the sky, and beginning her nightly task of painting the stars.