

My Shooting Star

DesmondAndromeda

You should know this first of all. I never fantasized about my mother when I was a teenager. I never spent mornings stroking myself in bed with her in mind. Nor did she ever walk in on me accidentally -- I knew how to lock a bedroom door. I never rummaged through the dirty clothes to sniff her panties.

Your mother may stroll the house in little more than a tee-shirt and thong. My mother was completely dressed by 7 a.m., or in pajamas from neck to ankle. Let me be candid. During my teen years, not once did I see her even partially naked. She never left the bedroom or bathroom door ajar. Never.

Your mother may be a 35-year-old blonde bombshell, a Pilate-obsessed gym rat who looks 10 years younger. If so, your friends no doubt drool over her voluminous breasts, especially when she wears that trashy micro-kini while tanning beside your backyard pool. We don't have a pool. And my mother's swimsuit is stylish but very modest, her shorts, even her summer dresses, reaching almost to her knees.

So, there would be no story for me to tell had it not been for a return home during my final summer vacation in college. Previous summers had been spent away, on sweaty, low-paying temp jobs. This last stint at home was to be spent writing resumes and lining up interviews for life after

graduation. I had my eyes on some kind of job far away, maybe the west coast.

But as John Lennon once wrote: "Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans."

Life was about to get in my way.

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In those first few weeks home, I made myself scarce, didn't want to have to hang out with the folks. They were boring. Too quiet. They never did anything anymore. To avoid them, I made constant plans to head out with friends. Such was the agenda one day in early June.

My mother was sitting in the small sun room at the back of our house as I walked past, my car keys and sunglasses in hand, ready to leave. This was her favorite place, her refuge. Quiet, sunlit, warm. Her gaze was out the window at our small patio flower garden, which she brings to life each spring, while on her knees, trowel in hand.

She looked at me. "I'll have dinner ready at 7."

I left, drove a half dozen blocks, turned the car around. Her smile wasn't there. Something else. I couldn't put my finger on it. Something wrong. I went back home, into the sun room. Leaned down on one knee beside her chair. We looked at each other. She knew I could tell.

"Michael, I have cancer," she said, softly but straightforward. "Breast cancer." We both stood up, I held her in my arms and we cried together. She grew weak, could hardly stand. I picked her up in my arms and sat on the sun room sofa, she in my lap, head against my shoulder, arms around each other. We stayed there for two hours. "Where's Dad?" I asked at one point.

"He can't take things like this," Mom said. "We both know your father." Yes. As heavy-handed and stern as he could be at his small accounting firm, at home he avoided conflict or any emotional involvement. In truth, a coward. He knew about this but went on to work. She insisted. Said it was a small thing. Not to worry. For her, it was a relief that he did.

You can see why my father figured little into this. There was a time when the three of us -- I'm an only child -- would vacation at the beach, backpack down the zigzag trails of the Grand Canyon or spend a week in New York traipsing from one Broadway theater to the next. Now he just watched TV at night,

puttered in the yard on weekends, played poker with his pals each Thursday. He grew older than his years, gained weight and looked tired. Their marriage, if I had to guess, was like so many others over time: worn out. They went through the motions, each with their own lives. At least, that's my take on it.

Sitting there, with her, may have been the first time in years that we held each other. It certainly was the first time she curled up in my lap. With her knees pulled up, I reached down below her skirt and massaged her legs, then her feet as she filled in the details of her illness, her sandals dropping to the floor.

Her name is Mary. Mary Armstrong. She was 54 then. Slender. Brunette. A fascinating face. All cheek bones. An unusual, modest smile. Large brown doe-like eyes. From my point of view, beautiful. Also, quiet, thoughtful, reflective. But don't confuse that with being shy or unintelligent. She speaks when she has something to say. For years, after earning her Ph.D., she taught quantum physics at the university graduate level. She retired to write poetry. Some of it has been published.

I can't express how much I liked holding her in my lap. Our bodies fit perfectly into each other. And it had been forever since I smelled her perfume or her hair. "This feels good,

Michael," she said. When dad pulled in the driveway, we got up, she smoothing down her skirt and adjusting her ruffled blouse.

I drove us to her oncologist appointment the following day where she was told a lumpectomy might suffice. Worst case, they would have to take her left breast. They wouldn't know until they were headlong into the operation itself.

She held up well during that conversation. Stoic. No tears. Just the facts. Surgery in two days. We drove home. She took my hand, walked us into the sun room, turned on Frank Sinatra -- her favorite singer -- and motioned me to the sofa. Again she curled up in my lap. No crying this time. We had cried it all out. Just talking and quietness.

She brought her hand up and cupped her left breast through her white blouse. "It's hard for me to believe," she said, "that by the weekend I may not have one of these puppies any more."

She smiled that modest smile. I laughed out loud. I'm sorry, I just couldn't help it. Never would I have imagined my mother referring to her breasts as "puppies." She lightly massaged her breast for a moment, before putting her hand down in her lap.

I don't know why I did what I did. It's totally unexplainable. Inexcusable. But I then lifted my own hand and gently cupped her breast. Even massaged it a little. It fit perfectly in my hand. She said nothing.

I was embarrassed, put my hand down. "I'm sorry. Mom. I shouldn't have done that." She reached for my hand and put it back.

"I'd rather you than anyone else."

I caressed her breast through her blouse and bra. I felt her nipple get hard, squeezed it gently with my fingers. Her head was on my shoulder, eyes closed. I think it soothed her.

You may not believe me, but this wasn't about sex. It was, as I realized only later, about intimacy. My mother, a very private person, was sharing this very private matter with me. Crying with me, talking with me as she would with no one else. She chose me over her girlfriends, even over her own sister. She wanted closeness with me. I was only 22, but even I could see the gift she was offering. For the first time in my adult life, I wanted that same closeness with her.

We held similar feelings years before, but lost them. As a kid, our relationship was special. I was her child, of course, and she babied me enough, but more than not she approached me with respect, as one adult to another. No talking down to me, always including me in adult conversations, letting me drink a little wine at the dinner table when I was still in elementary school. She taught me how to cook, beginning with pancakes on Sunday mornings. I'm quite good at it now.

By my early teens, she turned to me as her date for social events when Dad would no longer budge from his sofa. And she was embarrassingly frank in explaining sex to me. She spent hours telling me what it is to be "a woman." That alone was worth more than my college degree. I was her son, but also her friend. That is until I rebelled as a teenager, determined to go down my own path. I paid a terrible price in those years, losing perhaps my best friend as I distanced myself from her. She, of course, accepted it gracefully and without complaint.

We knew each other well back then, which is why, seeing her sitting in the sun room, I had sensed something wrong. You see, we're both on the same page. Kindred spirits.

"You know, Michael," she said, while sitting on my lap, "There's a great irony here. My breasts are the one part of my body I've always liked, the only thing I really admire about

myself in the mirror. They're too small to attract most men, I guess. But they suit me. There's a heaviness to them. I've always thought they were quite pretty, in their own small way."

She sat up, turned to me, and straightened her back stiffly to show them off. "See. They look good on me. They're the best part of me." She was being part silly, part serious.

And once again, I did something that made no sense to me, made me feel like a fool. I said, "Can I see your breast?"

She gave me a gentle smile, ran her fingers through my hair, and closed her eyes as if deep in thought. I remembered her doing that a lot when I was younger, always asking her some weird or hard-to-answer question that made her pause, muss my hair and shut her eyes, contemplating how to respond. You see, I was an inquisitive kid. She taught me to be.

She looked down at her breasts and slowly began unbuttoning her blouse. She let it fall off her shoulders. Then slipped off her bra, lifted her head to my eyes. And then that slight smile again.

I didn't know what to do.

"You can touch it," she said. "It's okay. It's the left one."

Her breast sloped just slightly down, the skin white and unblemished, feeling almost like satin to the touch. Her nipple was brown and soft, her areola smooth. It surprised me how warm it all felt. She put her head back down on my shoulder, closed her eyes and I caressed her left breast for long moments, gliding my fingers lightly over her nipple, then in circles around her areola. Then very gently cupping and squeezing her breast. Just her left one.

"This is where the incision will be made," she said, taking my fingers and pressing them just to the side of her nipple, which was now getting hard. "I might lose some feeling in it. That is if I don't lose the whole thing. At least that's what they told me earlier."

Then she took her thumb and index finger, lightly squeezing her nipple, pulling it out, tugging on it a little. "I don't know if other women do this, but it feels so good to me," she said. "I love this tugging feeling."

She took her hand away. "Start out gently," she said.

For such a slender woman, her nipple seemed large as I put my fingers on her again. I started to realize how beautiful her breast was. Her nipple stiffened even more as I began gently pulling it. "Like that, yes. Do that awhile, will you honey?" She put her head back on my shoulder and closed her eyes.

She was sharing this with me, letting me see and feel the physicality of her breast, this part of her body soon to be cut on and maybe amputated entirely. She was allowing me into the most private part of her life. For a few minutes, I think she fell asleep.

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The surgery went well, a standard lumpectomy. We drove home, smiling at each other all the way, jubilant at the outcome. She was sore and fatigued. After 24 hours of sleep, and some days of soreness, we were back to some normalcy. But not really.

I was between girlfriends, so once Mom recuperated, I joined a few of my college mates for a long drive to the beach and quick

weekend getaway. I pulled back into the garage late at night. Mom was up, reading in the living room. She walked over, said how happy she was that I was back and hugged me close, burying her face in my neck. I could hear her breathing in the smell of my skin. I didn't know why, but I liked that a lot.

Within a few days we were readying for a long-planned family wedding out of town, a good three hours away. One of my cousins. We'd be gone overnight. Mom went shopping for new dresses. When she came home -- Dad was at work -- she asked if I'd like to see what she bought, clutching my hand and taking me to her bedroom. She had never done this before. Totally out of character, at least from her old ways.

She closed the door, pushed me into one of the bedroom's two stuffed chairs. Pressed the button on her CD player in a cabinet beside her bed. It was habit. She loved music in her bedroom. And there were surround-sound speakers all over the room.

She lay the clothes on her bed, slowly unzipped the green dress she was wearing. Just as slowly lifting it over her head, facing me in her beige-colored bra and panties. She had on thigh-high stockings. I had no idea she even owned any. I acted nonchalant, as if we did this all the time. She did too. I concentrated on the outfits she put on and took off. Tried not to look at her body.

But I was stunned that she was letting me see her in her underwear. More stunned that I found it so arousing. We didn't talk. Just listened. The music was "Bolero," Maurice Ravel's erotic orchestral piece. Both of us making eye contact occasionally, as the orchestra's heavily sexual rhythms began slowly building. Between gazes, her look was elsewhere. She seemed to go inside herself.

Of course, I had seen my mom in her one-piece black swimsuit many times. It wasn't really much different, I kept telling myself. But it was. Standing in front of me in her panties and stockings, it seemed as if she was naked. She was trim, yet soft, her hips with a gradual, though distinctive, curve to them.

How could any man not grow weak at the sight of her lovely shoulders, so perfectly toned, draping her body. Her arms long, slender, graceful. Her fingers elegant. Her slight smile that never showed her teeth, instead expressing itself with seductive lips, a little pouty and curving modestly upward. Could any man resist those lips? I had never noticed before.

Time and again she raised her arms straight up, high overhead, as a ballerina would in what they call the 5th position, slipping on one dress after another, her body swaying just slightly to the music as the dress made its way down her arms. Then over

her bra, to her waist, then to her panties, which were semi-sheer, letting me faintly see her dark pubic hair. I could easily make out the curve of her mons pubis pushing the fabric of her panties out a little as the dress slowly dropped down over it.

First it was a jersey drape dress, two shades of gray with sequins. Then a backless, sequined chiffon gown. Finally a striking aqua satin cross-front dress that accentuated those delicious shoulders

She would take off the dresses in reverse, lifting her arms high overhead to pull them off, my eyes mesmerized by her body continuing its gentle swaying to the clarinets and bassoons of "Bolero's" intoxicating melody. The music repeating itself over and over, each time with different instruments as it worked its way toward a climax.

She would bend over the bed, to pick up a different dress, her small breasts, heavy and hanging down, much of them visible even with a bra on. Her legs slender and straight, like a ballerina's. When she turned her back to me, I was confronted with the curved outlines of her buttocks and the dark, mystifying crevice between them, faintly visible through the sheer material.

Each time she lifted a dress off, she would lay it on the bed, stand up straight, one hand at each side of her waist. I watched as she would caress down the sides of her hips slowly, then slide her hands back up to her waist. Her hands then moved in a diagonal direction, down and over her abdomen, feeling her skin and the silky material of her panties. Then, hands and fingers slid down to the outer edges of her mons, one hand on each side. Still feeling herself. From there, farther down to the top of her thighs. Now moving in back of her thighs, back up, over her hips, stopping to caress them a bit, one hand on each hip, squeezing them a little. Then up and around to her waist. All in slow motion.

She was smoothing herself. A woman in touch with her own body and its sensuality. It was breathtaking.

She was looking not at me, but far away, as if I wasn't there. My mother was in her own world, by herself. She had forgotten I was watching. Or maybe she was so comfortable with me that she felt she could be herself. Or was it possible that she was just inviting me in to her bedroom to watch? I couldn't imagine that.

She was perfect. Absolutely perfect. I found myself in the throes of a full-blown erection, hoping she wouldn't notice. Every muscle in me was constraining to keep me from

ejaculating in my pants. I was about to lose control. I could feel myself leaking. This had never happened to me before.

I never imagined I could be so moved by the body of a woman.

As I watched Mom, I thought about Jennifer, Angela and Crystal, who, one after the other, I had dated and slept with extensively on campus. And there had been one or two other one-nighters. In a millisecond, I realized these were girls. Standing before me was a woman.

And this woman, my own mother, was for the very first time letting me into part of her life I had never been allowed to see: her own sexuality.

She modeled a slinky, black cocktail dress meant for the wedding's after-party. I loved the tightness of it at her waist, her hips, her thighs. It showed off her figure. I told her so. Though it still covered everything, it exuded passion. She looked sensual, yet vulnerable. As the repetition of "Bolero" became more and more hypnotic, she began sashaying around the bedroom, swinging her hips, even gyrating a little. Some really slutty moves in time with the music. She was making fun of herself, and would do this only for me. Never in front of anyone else. Never. She had no idea how erotic it really was. I

told her she was "beautiful." She came up to me, stroked my cheek with her hand.

Then Mom looked at me, did her intense eye contact.

She's done it with me all her life, but only at special moments. When we're talking one to one, close together, an intimate conversation. As I speak, she will look longingly into one of my eyes as if she's studying its colors and patterns. This goes on for many seconds. Then slowly she shifts to the other eye, with the same intense focus. Then to my mouth. As if she's committing the lines of my lips to memory. Her message is clear: at this moment I'm the only person in the world that matters to her. For me, the rest of the world fades. I sense she's looking into my soul. She wants to know my deepest, darkest thoughts. Drives me crazy. Maybe she does that with other men. I like to think it's only with me.

And this time, for the first time ever, she moved her face in closer. Then closer still. Inches apart. I could smell her skin. Her lipstick. Feel the heat of her face. She kissed me on the lips. Gently. Kind of innocent, but then maybe not.

We found reasons to kiss like that every day thereafter.

There was, no doubt, a renewed closeness between us, an intimacy. We began hugging a lot, long hugs, which evolved into long embraces, faces close together. To each other we talked in low tones, as if the rest of the world wasn't invited to listen. At night, we sat side by side on the sofa to watch old movies. She would rest her head on my shoulder, slip her hand under my tee-shirt and rub my chest -- as she had done when I was little. I massaged her neck. She would put a hand on my thigh, lightly rubbing through my jeans, me doing the same to her, caressing her leg through silk pajamas. My hand would travel from her knee up to within an inch of her sex. I would gently squeeze her thigh. I told myself this wasn't about sex. It was about intimacy. Regaining the closeness we had years earlier.

Of course, none of this occurred if my father was around. In his presence, it was just a peck on the cheek now and again. Our intimacy was displayed during those summer days when he was at work, or nights after he went to bed.

What was happening between us was unspoken -- our secret.

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The wedding was quite the soiree, at an old Virginia country estate, turned into an event center. We gathered for the ceremony on the front five-acre carpet lawn, meticulously

kept, beside a fountain spraying rose tinted water and mist. Everyone dressed to the nines. Dinner was under a white tent the size of a basketball court. The after-party, with more than two hundred guests and musicians, was inside the main building. We would sleep in the nearly 30 bedrooms available in the upper floors of the mansion.

Mom and Dad mingled during the party, separately of course. A young woman, Anita, a friend of the bride, sat at the bar with me, both of us downing martinis and flirting. Another guy honed in on the conversation. I let him. They both flitted away. I caught sight of Mom in the crowd behind me, both of us glancing simultaneously at each other.

The band slowed the music, started playing Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night," her all-time favorite. I waited to see if Dad would ask her to dance. Not a chance. How could he be so stupid? I tapped her on the shoulder from behind.

"Mrs. Armstrong, may I have this dance?"

"But of course, Mr. Armstrong. You're my favorite partner."

We talked as we moved slowly to the music. I held her closer than I should have. She didn't object.

"I was sure by now you'd be dancing with that blonde at the bar," she said.

"She wasn't my type. And I know I'm not hers."

"What about all these other young women in the room?" she asked. "Some of them are pretty hot. I've never seen so many low-cut dresses at a wedding."

"Done that. Checked them all out," I said. "None have your looks. Or your sex appeal. Besides. Who better to dance with than the woman who taught me how."

And that may be true. It was in our living room, on the carpet, when I was 10. Mom put on Sinatra and gave me my first lesson. We took our shoes off. I'll never forget that feeling of having my hand on her waist.

After a few dances on this night, Dad came up, asked if Mom wanted to head to their room with him. He winked. All of the sudden, he's my rival for her time and attention.

"I'd like to have one more dance with Mom, if that's okay with you, Dad?"

"I'd like that too," Mom said.

"I'll personally escort her to your room when we're done," I promised. He winked again, walked away.

"I think he's got an itch that he wants you to scratch," I told her as the next song began.

"It's only because he's drunk. He'll be asleep in 10 minutes."

"Sorry," I said. "So, you're not getting any action from him tonight?"

"I count my blessings," she said.

Then Mom looked at me, did that intense eye contact once again. Flirting if you will. My face turned red. But I loved it.

"Mrs. Armstrong," I said. "Has anyone ever told you that you exude more lust with one glance of your eyes than most women do with their entire body, low-cut dress or not?"

"A good dose of lust every once in a while can't be such a bad thing, can it?" she asked.

The song ended. We stopped dancing, moved toward a serving table for fresh flutes of champagne.

I leaned into her ear and whispered, "Maybe you need a lover."

"My standards are high, Mr. Armstrong. Exceptionally high," she retorted, faking a little arrogance in her voice and mannerism.

"I see. Guess I wouldn't qualify, Mrs. Armstrong."

"Now, now. We're family. I suspect that would be a crime in this state," she said.

I lifted my champagne, clinked it to hers in a toast.

"Then here's to crime," I said.

We danced on and on, all slow moving, lights-down-low dances. My hand holding hers. My arm around her waist. The smell of her perfume. The wetness of her lipstick. My senses were charged. We talked some, sometimes not. Sometimes just looking into each other's eyes. Between songs, she would lean in to say something, the tips of her breasts brushing against my dress shirt. An old girlfriend once told me that whenever a woman lets her breasts brush against you, in a seemingly innocent fashion, it's not innocent. She knows exactly what she's doing. As each song ended, for some reason our thighs brushed against each other too, only for a second.

As one song ended, Mom turned around to applaud the orchestra, her back to me. As she clapped, she lost her balance, just slightly, taking a half step backward before regaining it. Her buttocks, with that tight black cocktail dress stretched across them, were now brushing lightly against me. My semi-erection grew hard in seconds, pushing a little against the back of her hips. As the applause ended, Mom stood still, just a second or two longer than necessary, before turning back around to me. Again, that seductive, yet innocent smile.

She led me, her arm draped through mine, around the room, introducing me to friends, all the while both of us drinking champagne, flute after flute, until nearly midnight.

A photographer, not the one assigned to shoot the wedding itself, was on hand to take photos of couples and families, since we all were decked out in black tie and party dresses. Mom, Dad and I had one taken early in the evening. But now, after our dancing, Mom led me back over to the photographer for a photo of just the two of us. The woman took several. The one she seemed to like the most had Mom and I cheek to cheek, a close-up of just our faces.

I walked Mom to my parents' room, though after the champagne and a few straight bourbons, neither was sure who was escorting whom. I may have been holding on to her, rather than the other way around. Somehow, I made it to my room, five doors down from theirs. My clothes off, I fell onto the bed in my boxers, staring at the ceiling. The room really does spin around when you're drunk.

At some point my mother knocked quietly. I let her in, stumbled back to bed to lie down. She sat on the edge of the bed next to me in the dark. A silk robe covered her silk pajamas. Very pretty. Very proper. I had an enormous erection,

though I'm not sure why. I knew she could tell. I wondered if she would ignore it.

"I know you're drunk," she said in that quiet voice. "Are you okay? Are you going to be sick?" "I'm fine," I told her. Even though I wasn't.

"I took up too much of your time tonight," she said. "I think I ruined it between you and that pretty blond. You two looked good together."

"I couldn't care less about her," I said.

"So, Mr. Dancing Partner, who then do you care about?" she asked. "You haven't mentioned anyone recently. What girl is in your life these days?"

"You, my dear Mrs. Armstrong. You will always be first and foremost in my heart."

She put her hand on my bare chest, curled her fingers through my chest hair, not that I have a lot. Stroked my face again. I used to love the softness of her fingers on me. So comforting as a kid. Now so erotic. In the darkness, I still could make out the

smouldering look of her eyes, penetrating into my soul. They seemed to want me to confide in her, to tell her everything.

"I'm glad we're close again," she whispered. "I've missed our time together."

She leaned over to kiss me on the lips, then stood up to leave. I refused to let go of her hand. Pulled her hard toward me. Overpowered her. She had no choice but to fall on top of me on the bed. Her mid-section pressed against mine. I could feel the warmth between her legs. She could feel my rock-hard erection. No attempt from her to move.

She lay her head on my shoulder, wrapped her arms around my neck. I think the champagne had gotten to her a little, too. I could feel her breath on my skin. Reaching behind her, I put my hands on her hips, began feeling them. Maneuvered my hand under her robe, onto her pajamas. The silk so thin that I could feel everything. She might as well have been naked. I could tell she had no panties on.

My hands groped, kneaded, caressed her soft hips through the silk, first one side, then the other. It was blatant and boorish of me. But I was drunk. And Mom knew it. Worse yet, I slid my middle finger down the crevice between her hips, running my

finger directly over her anus, feeling the small opening through the silk. Rubbing her there. Then pushing my finger and the silk in just a little. So obscene on my part. Worthy of nothing but shame.

Yet, I could hear, very vaguely as if in the distance, ragged breathing as her face was now almost against mine, buried in my neck. My fingers felt hot between her hips. I wanted to tear the pajamas off. My erection was getting harder, beginning to hurt. I was leaking. Mom could feel my wetness, I'm sure.

She let me get away with this for a few minutes. Then raised up. "I'm afraid you've discovered my weakness," she said as she sat on the side of the bed. Again, running fingers back and forth over my chest in the darkness, touching my nipples. Then, as quietly and stealthily as she came, she let herself out the door and back to her room.

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If your mother is a physicist, you likely know something of the Perseid meteor shower, perhaps the best spectacle of shooting stars all year long in the U.S. It comes every year, in late July and early August, lasting several weeks.

Each year as I was growing up, the three of us would pick the most opportune night to view it, loading up our car with food, wine, blankets, pillows and heading to Blackburn State Park, 10 miles south of town. We'd park by the lake, lay the blanket on the hood and lean back against the windshield with pillows behind us. Without trees or city lights interfering, the night sky became a brilliant canvas of constellations and twinkling lights. Mom and I could count up to 150 shooting stars in one evening.

By the time I was seven, I was really into it. And that particular evening became one of my most vivid, now a part of my very DNA.

We were in our usual place atop the hood. Dad had fallen asleep on us. At some point, Mom let me scoot up between her open legs, both of us sitting up, my back against her breasts. She wrapped her arms around me, and we looked up, deep into the overhead night sky, searching for streaking meteors. As we did, in that very soft voice of hers, she whispered in my ear a little anonymous poem she had found:

You must be my shooting star . . . everything I've wished for,
is everything you are.

I will always be her shooting star, she would tell me, kissing my cheek. I told her she was mine, too. Each year we repeated this little act of love -- until I grew into that insufferable teenager.

So it was that time of year again. We had been home from the wedding only a few days when Mom suggested we pack up for our annual drive to the park. Dad reluctantly agreed to come along. "Seen enough shooting stars for a lifetime," he grumbled.

Pulling up to the lake, we pretty much had the place to ourselves. Nighttime at Blackburn State Park, to me at least, seemed darker, blacker than anywhere else. Since we were in Dad's mini-van, we climbed atop the roof to spread the blanket and pillows. Opened a bottle of chilled white wine. Mom lay in the middle, Dad on her right side, me to her left. Our heads resting on pillows so we could look straight up for optimal star gazing.

The high-pitched mating calls of cicadas, hundreds of them in the nearby trees, enveloped us, blending in with the chirping of just as many crickets. At times it was deafening.

We had been there an hour, logging in more than 30 shooting stars already. Dad and Mom talked a little, mostly she just listening to him. Eventually, I felt Mom's left hand move over a few inches and slowly take hold of mine in the dark. I held it lovingly, then loosened my grip, began using my fingers to trace lines on her hand, fingers, knuckles. I loved caressing her fingernails, too. They had a smoothness that fascinated me, even as a child.

I turned on my side toward her, propping my head on my elbow. Dad was rattling on about The Big Bang Theory, Mom gently correcting him when he had his facts wrong. I quietly, and very slowly, let my left hand creep onto her bare left leg, just below her shorts. Began slowly caressing the outside of her thigh, which Dad couldn't see. I suppose her legs are like any other woman's. But to me her skin was more velvety and luscious than any other woman's could possibly be. I started inching my hand up a little. Not too much at once or Dad might notice.

The two of them kept talking. Once in awhile, I joined in as I gradually slid my fingers under her shorts. Fortunately, they were very baggy. Mom all the while looking at Dad, or staring into the sky. I stopped for a few moments, with my fingers drew little circles around on her skin, very lightly. Then figure eights. Spreading my fingers, I squeezed a little, just to feel the top of her thigh.

I let my hand creep farther up, then more. Finally, at the edge of her panties. Used my finger to lift up the material, sliding several fingers underneath. Began figure eights again. Up another inch. I was on the side of her hip. Extending my fingers straight out, I began caressing the entire side of her leg and hip. Slowly of course. Loved the feel of her hip bone jutting out just slightly. So womanly. She didn't stop me.

Now, in this sacred place I had never been, I was desperate to touch more. Dad raised his arm straight up, pointing out a faint constellation. My hand moved slowly, still an inch at a time, laterally toward her abdomen. My index finger touched her belly button. She moved her hand to my arm, gently held it, squeezed. She wanted me to stop. I did. But kept my hand on her abdomen, under her shorts and panties. My other arm and elbow still propping me up. Dad still talking. Mom still listening. All of us with eyes on the night sky.

Mom asked Dad about his work, some issue I wasn't paying attention to. Her voice a little halting. Nervous. Her breathing a little uneasy. I slowly began pressing my hand, pushing in on her abdomen, just a fraction. I heard Mom take a slow, deep breath. She looked my way. Could hardly see each other. But she didn't say or do anything to stop me. I kept pressing.

Determined, I slid my hand down, just a fraction. Then some more. And more. Finally, soft fleece under my fingers. Her pubic hair. And could feel her abdomen curving slightly downward. It was her mons. Her skin was warmer than the night air. Then, fingernails digging into my arm, painfully. Even in the dark I could tell she was glaring at me. Her silent message was unmistakable: No!

Easing my hand out, I turned on my back, kept to myself. Dad eventually wound down. The talking stopped. We counted more shooting stars. Dad began snoring.

Mom and I saw a huge meteor streak halfway across the sky, one of the biggest ever. Lighting up the night, as bright as day, for maybe three seconds. We both sat up at the same time, in awe.

"You're mad, aren't you." I whispered.

She shook her head, no.

She scooted behind me, spread her legs, wrapped them around me, so I was sitting between them. She leaned in, pressing her

breasts against my back, as she had when I was a boy. And just like then, she brought her lips to my ear. And whispered.

You must be my shooting star... everything I've wished for, is everything you are

My mother never was one to cry much. She looked at life matter-of-factly. But when I turned my head back, her eyes were watery. I wiped away a single tear about to make its way down her face. I told her she was also my shooting star.

"I want you," I whispered.

"I know," she said.

Dad began waking up. It was time to drive home.

* * *

"If we do this, it would change everything between us."

Mom said this, eyes on mine, sitting in our wooden porch swing on the back patio, three days after our night of the shooting stars. There had been no privacy since that time. And it seemed to me, anyway, that she had kept a distance, had been deep in her own thoughts these past few days. But now, it was Saturday. Dad had left to play golf.

I came downstairs in the afternoon, after spending hours sending more resumes, calling friends who might have connections to good jobs.

When I saw Mom, I headed to the patio. It was a familiar place. As a kid, she and I consumed untold hours, side by side, swinging gently back and forth, talking the evenings away. She with a glass of wine in hand, me a soft drink.

"You know that, don't you?" she said as I sat down in the swing. "It would change our whole relationship. We could wind up not even speaking to each other." She had two glasses of white wine on a table beside us. She handed me one.

Though alone, for some reason we kept our voices low, almost to a whisper.

"It won't change anything," I said.

"You're my mother. You're my best friend. I can't help it if I also see you as a woman. An absolutely incredible woman. I need to be with you. I feel things for you that I've never felt for anyone else. Why does that have to be so wrong? You'll still be my mother. Still my best friend. That won't change."

"Besides," I said. "You've said yourself that lust can be a good thing."

"Not lust with your own mother," she said.

"Why do you want this?" she asked. "There are scads of young women out there to be had for the taking. Fresh, young women, really beautiful ones."

"You ask hard questions," I answered. "How do I put that into words?" I tried.

"No one is more important to me than you," I said. "I know so much about you, but parts of your life you've kept from me over the years. All parents keep aspects of their life from their kids. I want to know who you really are. And I don't think it's

possible to truly know someone -- to know who they are at their very core -- unless you know who they are sexually. It's an important part of anyone's life, yet few people are ever really invited in to see it. I would give anything if you wanted to share that with me. I guess, in the end, I just want to understand you, better than anyone else does."

"That may sound stupid," I said. "But that's the best I can do to explain it."

She looked out at the flowers in her garden.

"Everyone -- and I mean everyone -- would say what we're thinking about is an abomination."

"That's their problem," I said.

"Still, they would think it," she said, looking straight at me for reaction.

"This is private between you and me," I said. "No one else is invited."

"And what if you're disappointed?" she asked. "What then? I'm 54 years old and it shows. I don't have fresh, young skin. I like my own breasts, but they aren't pert and perky anymore. Not like all those girls at the wedding."

"Doesn't matter," I said. "I'm addicted to your skin, no one else's."

"We have to face it," I told her. "No one understands us like we understand each other. You and me -- we're kindred souls."

"We need each other," I said. "Or, at least, I know I need you."

She was quiet. For a good three, maybe five minutes. Just barely rocking in the swing. Then scooted right up next to me, did the fingers through my hair, closing her eyes to ponder. Then looked at me.

"I know it goes without saying, but I want to be very careful that no one finds out, ever. Especially your father. I don't want to hurt him. We can't hurt anyone."

I know, I told her. I know.

Now, if you'd expected her to lean over and kiss me, you'd be wrong. Because I knew, after seeing a little gleam in her eye, that she would do something offbeat. Mischievous. She has that in her. And so she did.

She extended her right hand.

"Well, Mr. Armstrong, do we have a deal?"

"Deal," I said, shaking her hand. Both of us laughing.

I turned serious. "Are you sure this is what you want, Mom?"

"If Hell exists," she said, "There will surely be a place waiting for me in it."

"But do you want this?" I asked her again.

She brought her face close to mine, kissed my cheek. Leaned even closer, next to my ear. And whispered, very softly.

"More than anything."

* * *

Of course, Dad was back home within the hour, and the following day was Sunday. He was home all day. No way to consummate our desires, which now were growing by the hour. I was frustrated. Wound tight. On edge. Sad smiles from Mom. She knew my disappointment.

Mom suggested we go out for a late lunch. Hoped Dad wouldn't go. But he did. More glances from Mom. A bitter pill for both of us.

We ate Italian downtown, sitting at a small outdoor table covered with a white tablecloth. Mom and Dad were seated almost opposite me. Mom's gaze at me was long and intense, as Dad studied his menu. For the first time, I saw desire in her eyes, frustration on her face. A nervousness in her voice. Our only appetite was for each other. We were in agony.

Under the table, as an act of desperation, I slipped my foot out of my loafer, found her foot. I had to touch her, feel her, caress her leg. Began at her ankle, moving up and under her summer dress and finally against the inside of her thigh. My foot was bare. I rubbed the top part of it against her thigh. It wouldn't

have taken much for others at nearby tables to see what I was doing. But I couldn't stop myself.

Her skin was moist from the heat. She parted her legs for me. Let me slide up to her panties. I pressed my big toe into the softness, could feel the swollen labia give as my toe pressed into her slit. Already, her panties were wet.

She grew quiet, which forced me to start a conversation with Dad. Mom turned her face away, out to the sidewalk at the passersby. Her face flushed, beads of sweat on her cheek, the look in her eyes absolutely wanton. She closed her legs, put her arm under the table, pushed me away. She could take no more.

My point was made. I wanted her badly. My mania unrelenting. I could think of nothing else but us. Her feelings were the same. I could tell. Her face was suddenly tender, vulnerable, fragile. And the look in her eyes. Those beautiful brown eyes. She longed to be held. Desperately needed to be fucked. A girl on fire.

Back home, Dad settled down and tuned in to a late afternoon, pre-season football game, oblivious to us. Mom pulled down the attic ladder from the ceiling in the hallway. I went to my room, paced the floor, came out, a bundle of frustrated

nervousness. Climbed the ladder and, at the top, looked into the semi-darkness and asked Mom what she was doing in the attic. Did she need any help?

She was 20 feet away, barely visible in an alcove, on her knees, looking into a large, old trunk she had just opened. It held our old family photos. I don't know what she was looking for. She didn't answer me. I headed toward her.

The only light was from a naked bulb at the other end of the attic. The air was thick, sweltering. Unbelievably humid.

Kneeling down beside her, I put my hand on her back, her summer dress damp from sticky attic heat. Still only quietness from her. She was looking in the trunk, not at me. I rubbed her back, caressed it, letting my hand journey down, onto the curve of her hip. Still no words from her. She reached up, closed the trunk. Stared into the darkness ahead of her, still on her knees. I lifted the back of her dress to her waist, moved over between her legs so I was directly behind her, still on my knees. Pulled her panties down to her thighs. Slid my fingers down her buttocks to between her legs, felt wetness in her vagina, my finger easily parting her labia and slipping inside. I had never felt anything so soft, so welcoming.

But no time to enjoy sensations -- of my mother's naked ass in front of me, of my fingers on her skin, or the soft opening of her vulva. There just was no time to waste. We both were driven by lust as hot and sweaty as the attic's air. We had to have this -- and now.

I unzipped, pulled out my dick -- hard, moist, throbbing -- and placed it at her slit. Could hear the intake of her breath. I pushed in, quickly, surging all the way in at once. She was snug. Her muscles squeezing me. She lay her head sideways on the cover of the trunk, her arms reaching across it to grasp the other side, holding on for dear life.

She lifted her hips up higher for me. I moved back and forth, in and out, pounding as hard as I could. Hard but slow. Very slow. And quiet. Reached around with one hand, grabbed her, cupped my hand over her mound, pressed in at her clit, held it as I continued slamming into her, slowly. She caught my rhythm, pushing back as I pushed forward. Her naked hips pounding against my abdomen, then pushing rapidly forward, pressing her clit against my hand, which was dripping with her fluids. Our clothes already drenched from the heat.

Scarcely one minute passed before she came. Both of us together. She sighing, followed by gasping for breath. Then

pushing her hips back against me, harder than ever. Little noises came from her throat each time my sperm jetted into her.

"Mary? Do you need any help up there?" my Dad asked from below. I could tell he was at the bottom rung of the ladder, about to climb up.

I pulled out, grabbed her panties, pulled her dress down, opened the trunk lid, scooted beside her and began searching for photos with her.

She turned her head toward me.

"I'm dripping on the floor."

I pulled the panties out of my pocket, reached down under her dress, hurriedly wiped up my sperm and, in one quick motion, threw the panties into a dark corner of the attic.

Dad came up and joined us as we looked at old photos. I never did know what we were looking for.

* * *

Our second time was better. Two days later. Early afternoon. Home alone together. In my bedroom. The door locked.

"Can I undress you?" I asked.

She wore a nice pencil skirt and baby blue blouse. I fumbled a little with the buttons, but finally slipped it off her. I was captivated with the beauty of her shoulders, the femininity and softness of the skin leading down in front, and into the small valley between her breasts. Let my fingers glide down her skin to her bra. Felt her breasts through the fabric -- not with my hands, just the tips of my fingers -- feeling their shape, their weight. Reached around behind, unhooked her bra. Let it drop.

We were face to face. A foot apart. I bent down, kissed her nipples. Sucked them, trying for the tugging feeling she longed for. Her legs gave a little. She grabbed my shoulders.

"Too much?" I asked.

"No. Perfect. Just perfect."

I kissed all over her breasts, grazed my fingers across her skin. Let my palms touch her nipples, just barely. They were hard and pointy. She sighed, leaned her head back, closed her eyes.

Her stomach quivered as I ran my knuckles down her skin to her skirt. I hesitated. Her eyes opened half way. Keep going, her look told me.

Unzipped her skirt. She watched me slide it down. Stepped her out of it. Smelled the mix of skin and perfume. Something Parisian, I think. Lifted her feet, one at a time, to take off her shoes, rubbed her feet a little.

I dropped to my knees, staring at the front of her panties. And those thigh-high stockings. Put my hands, one on each foot, moved them up her legs, felt their smoothness.

Her stockings. My most erotic image of this day. They may have been silk. I never asked. My fingers reached the top, at the wide band that held them up. Then, bare thighs. Lustrous, white as snow, heated to the touch. I turned my hand over, ran fingers across the smooth skin effortlessly. Moved my face closer in. That splendid smell of moistness between her legs. Breathed it in. Kissed the inside of each thigh, my lips barely brushing. Shivers from her. We did not talk.

We were evolving. From mother and son. To two lovers.

Her panties. I just had to caress them. My hands slipping around the back to feel the weight of her hips. Held them, one in each hand. Cupping them. Feeling their slight plumpness. Slid my fingers around front. With one finger, traced the narrow indent of her slit through the panties. Pressing in slightly as I went. First, a drop of moisture. Then more before my very eyes. The entire gusset of her panties damp after I ran my finger a second, then a third time. She swayed a little from my touch. Regained her balance.

She stopped me. Then, slowly, she pulled her panties down herself. Then off. Left on the stockings. I reached up, let my fingers weave through her soft, dark, curly hair, then let them dance around her vulva. Moved in closer, to smell her sex, her crease glistened. Closer still. One kiss on each thigh again. Stuck out my tongue. Touched the lips of her sex. Her taste indescribable. Undefinable. Yet I knew the taste would stay with me the rest of my life. I had to have more. Parted her opening with my tongue. Let it disappear inside, then back out. Lightly grazed the top of her clit. She gasped. I loved hearing that. So I did it again.

Our first time was sweet. Intoxicating. Lying together, side by side in bed. Kissing. Touching each other with our fingers. Looking knowingly at each other. In bed, she seemed more fragile. Had to take it slow, an inch at a time, once I put my cock at the entrance of her slit. No hurry. Neither of us. I wanted not so much to cum in her as to just be in her as long as possible.

After my final push in, we rested. Then I moved above her. Began moving in and out, small increments at a time. She grew comfortable. Wetter. I moved harder. Kept that up. Her arms wrapped themselves around my neck. Her legs raised up, squeezed me. Her hips were squirming underneath me. She was at the edge. And then, over. Her orgasm was silent, except for one gasp of breath after another. Moments later, another orgasm. This one after she felt my sperm filling her up. "So beautiful," she whispered in my ear. "So hot. Just glorious." Her legs wrapped around my waist. Her body shook hard. She came, moaning into my neck, almost imperceptibly.

"You make me feel whole," she said.

This was where I belonged.

* * *

Two weeks later. "Do you really want to know me?" she asked as the two of us were driving home from having lunch. "I mean really know me?" she said from the passenger seat while I was driving. "You said you wanted to know everything about me."

"Is there more to know?" I asked. "We've had sex a dozen times now."

"Actually 15 times. But there's a side of me you don't know. No one does."

"I'm listening," I said.

She turned to face me, pulled her knees up on the seat, wrapped her arms around her legs. Her black sweater dress, down to the knees, cinched at the waist, showed off her slender figure.

"This is something I've never told anyone," she said. "Not a soul. In bed, I've always been the good girl: quiet, demure, a little lady. With your father and with my boyfriends before him. I suppose it's partly because I don't have the body to be the kind of woman men desire. I'm too slightly built. But I've

had this lifelong fantasy of wanting to find a lover who would let me be something other than what I am."

"Michael, I want to experience all of sex, even the darkest parts." She stopped talking. Looked at me. Waited.

"What is it you want?" I asked.

"To be free to try anything and everything, as long as it just involves you and me. I want to do all the things I've read about and heard about. No shame. No embarrassment. What I'm saying, Michael, is that I want to be your lover. But I also want to be your whore. A really dirty whore with you."

"Okay," I said.

Well, what else could I say? I was at a loss for words.

She spoke: "You said you wanted to know me. So there it is. Not a very pretty side of your mother, is it. If it's abhorrent to you, tell me now. I don't want to humiliate myself with my own son if it's not what you want. You've got to be honest with me, Michael."

"Take off your panties," I said.

"What?"

"Lift your dress up to your waist and take off your panties," I said. "Then open your legs. I want to see your pussy while I'm driving."

"We're in traffic, Michael. Someone might see. Besides, I might need to clean up. We can go home. We have a little time this afternoon."

"If someone sees, then so be it. It'll be a day they never forget. And I don't care whether you're clean or dirty. If you want to be my whore, then prove it. Do the things I want you to do. So take your panties off and show me your cunt."

It was a huge gamble on my part. I wasn't sure that being "my whore" was what my mother really wanted. Maybe it was just a desire for the sex to be a little rougher, a shade on the wild side. But if she really wanted to be a slut with me, I needed to find out. What were our boundaries going to be?

I could tell. She didn't want to, but she reached down, slowly pulled her dress up where I could just begin to see her panties. They were pink, incidentally. She pivoted. Were other motorists looking? It took a few minutes to gain courage, but she pulled her panties off and raised her dress to her waist.

"Now swing your legs around and open them up," I said. Slowly she complied.

"Nice. Very nice," I said. My God, she was beautiful, sitting with her legs wide apart, facing me, the opening of her vagina already wet, those soft black curls beckoning. It was a shameless display of nakedness, hiding nothing. Reminded me of a quote I read in literature long ago, that some Greek goddesses were enough "to make strong men weep, and heroes sigh." I could have cried. This woman, Mary Armstrong, was so beautiful.

But I didn't let on.

"Now, tell me Mom, how do you masturbate? Do you use one or two fingers? Do you put them inside of you or what?"

"What are you wanting me to do, Michael?" Her voice was shaky, alarmed. Carried a sense of dread at what my answer might be.

"I want to watch you do yourself while we're driving home. You can teach me how you do it. Go ahead."

"I have to be in the mood, Michael. I can't just do it on command."

"I think you are in the mood."

She looked at me, stared at me actually, as I drove on, glancing over at her every few seconds. I wasn't smiling. I wanted her to know this was no joke on my part.

At first, hesitation. Then, keeping her eyes on mine, she took the middle finger of her right hand and moved it slowly to her vagina, slipped her finger into herself, brought it out, smeared the liquid around her vaginal lips. Repeated this several times. Began touching her clit. Fingering herself. In little circles, or more in an oblong configuration. It felt good. I could tell. Her head slowly fell back against the car window. Clear fluid oozed out onto the car seat. She closed her eyes. Began rocking her

bottom on the seat, a slight back and forth motion, falling into the rhythm of her finger circling her clit. Began pulling her knees together, then opening them up. Closing them. Opening them. Urging herself on.

By the time we pulled into the driveway at home, she was close. Very close.

"God, your cunt is so hot looking," I told her.

No way she could answer. She strummed herself faster and faster, eyes only half open. Her body was beginning to shake, almost vibrating. The smell of her sex was already reaching my nostrils.

I pushed the button on the remote garage door opener, so we could pull in. Just as the door raised up, she began cuming, groaning as she did. At the same time, we both saw Dad's car in the garage. He was home early.

Before Mom could finish, he walked out the front door and around and into the garage toward us. I whisked up her panties, stuffed them in my pocket. She yanked her dress down, closed her eyes, composed herself. Then got out of the

car quickly. Still shaking. Hurried indoors. He didn't notice. Had he looked inside at the seat, he might have seen the huge wet spot.

* * *

When I slept in, and I almost always did on those summer mornings, I knew when it was 8 a.m. That's when Dad made a racket raising the garage door and backing out of the driveway as he headed to work.

I had stayed up late the night before, working on more resumes and cover letters, but mostly replaying the previous afternoon with Mom in the car.

Not five minutes after Dad left, my mother bounded into my room, flinging herself on top of me in bed. Without saying a word, she kissed me, a deep tongue-probing kiss.

"What's that for?" I asked.

She smiled, mussed my hair up with her hand, looked me straight in the eye, and said: "Because I love being your whore."

"Yesterday was absolutely exhilarating, Michael. I couldn't sleep last night."

"I thought maybe I was too abusive to you," I said. "You seemed terrified in the car. I was worried that I had gone too far. Really, I was just playing."

"Oh, I was terrified," she said. "But I couldn't believe how exciting it was. I've never had an orgasm that strong before. It was so good. It was just exquisite."

"Do you think anyone saw me?" she asked, her eyes wide open.

"I know at least one trucker who got a bird's-eye view when he passed by your side of the car."

"Oh, God, Michael. He didn't?" she asked. She was faking embarrassment. You could see the energy in her face. Pure excitement. Sexual excitement. Probably wondering just what the driver might have seen.

"No. I'm kidding, Mom. If a trucker had seen what you were doing, he'd have laid on his horn and you would know. Everyone around us would know." We both laughed.

And so began our journey into whore-dom.

In bed, it freed her. She became exploratory, daring, reckless. Anything two people could do together we at least tried. She was often leading the way. My darkest, nastiest lust was matched by her own every step of the way, groaning, squealing, even yelling. "Do it more," she would say. "Don't stop." "Let's try this." "God, I love your dick." "Harder, harder."

Unless it required gymnastic skills, we did every position seemingly possible. Sitting in a chair, bent over railings, on the dining room table, standing up (this one in a downtown alleyway. "We could have gotten caught," she said excitedly.).

We sneaked into a sex shop, bought dildos, vibrators, beads, plugs, even a black "pleasure" whip, with accompanying mask and handcuffs. I tied her to the bed with the mask on her. She loved it. I used the whip, very lightly, on her bare ass. She loved that even more. We went through vibrators until finding one she liked. Then let me watch as she did herself, legs spread wide. My mom -- the exhibitionist.

From there it was on to anal sex. It became a favorite of hers. I remembered the night of the wedding when she mentioned that my touching her ass was a "weakness" of hers. She liked me touching her anus, sliding my oiled-up finger into her, sometimes two fingers. I wish I could convey the sounds from her as I pulled a string of anal beads out after slowly working them in. One loud gasp after another.

We graduated to full-blown anal, me pushing myself into her. She loved that "fullness" feeling of me inside her. But we went slow, very, very slow on that. She would cum, rubbing her clit with her own hand while I moved in and out from behind.

She became obsessed with my apparatus. Gave me blowjobs. Swallowed everything. Every time. Bought flavored lubes, just to lick them off. We would lie on the bed, me letting her probe and play with my dick and balls for half an hour. She launched into a running commentary of how beautiful she thought my penis was, describing in intricate detail every part of it. I laughed at her exaggerated flattery. But I loved it afterward when she began licking, kissing, fondling, blowing on me, rubbing her face on me, smelling my scent. She liked to hold my dick straight up to see how high my sperm would shoot. I loved her sweet touch as she held my hard penis in her hand, admiring it.

"I want you to play with my cunt," she asked, one afternoon.

I dipped my fingers in her until she was dripping on the bed. On her back, I forced her knees up to her chest. For better access to her pussy. It was closer to my face and fingers. And I wanted her to watch. Have a better view. She lowered her hands, pulled her labia apart and held them there for me to play.

My tongue traced along the curve of her entrance, licking across her fingers as she held herself open. I blew on her folds and her clit. Licked and sucked them. Caressed them with my fingers. Moved my tongue down a few times to lick her anus, just to ratchet up the fire that was building in her. Back to her clit. Blew more on it, circled it with my tongue, jammed it with my tongue. Coming at her clit from all angles. Then I stopped. Pulled back.

"I want to shave you," I said.

"Make me come first, Michael. I'm right there. Just a little more."

"No, we'll get back to that."

She complained. Wanting that release. Begged a little. Pleaded. I wouldn't comply. Not yet. After all, she was my whore. I wanted to drive her crazy with desire.

Pulled her into the bathroom, sat her on the toilet, got out my razor and shaving cream. Shaved it all off just for fun, her legs held up for me to access her. She was hot. Squirming. The razor making her almost cum, each time I moved it back and forth. Liquid still oozing out of her opening. But she loved the intimacy of me shaving, then washing her. Then lightly rubbing in lotion to keep her skin soft around her vagina. She loved the smoothness.

Back on the bed. Me again holding her knees to her chest. My tongue at her clit. Lashing at it. Licking. Circling it. More blowing. She watching it all. Finally, flicking my tongue at it from all angles. That sent her over the edge. An enormous orgasm.

She flipped me on my back, plunged herself on my erection, bent down, bit my shoulder hard. Left teeth marks. And drops of blood.

"That's for making me wait so long to cum," she said.

We took showers. But baths were more fun. I would sit cross-legged in the middle of the tub, she lying out full length across me, face down, resting her head on a folded towel at the end edge of the tub. That put her beautiful ass in my lap, letting me lather it to my heart's content, sliding my fingers into her anus, reaching under with my other hand to work her clit. Some of her best orgasms were in that tub. She screamed embarrassingly loud.

We were obsessed, each of us with the other's body. Daring explorers in carnal lust. Demanding each other's flesh. Each tasting the other. Each relishing and wallowing in the other's fluids and sweat.

We were vicious. Depraved. Sometimes disgusting. Beyond redemption. It was marvelous.

* * *

My desire to move far away after graduation faded. I wanted to stay close. Landed a decent job two hours from home. Not bad. Found an apartment. Mom began driving over to visit every few weeks. She spent the night, telling Dad we were going out to eat, maybe see a movie. It would be too late to drive home. Actually, we would get drunk, fuck each other

into exhaustion, then collapse, sleeping, spooning with each other, until morning. We made breakfast naked. Ate naked too.

Other times I would come home, and just like teenagers, we would make out on the sofa when Dad headed out to the store or to visit friends.

But Mom also laid down the law. We had to stop our affair anytime I began dating anyone. We could start up again if, and only if, my relationship ended with the girlfriend.

"And you know, Michael. When the right girl comes along, it will have to end for good. You know that, don't you?"

We both understood. So, I dated, but not that much. I'd rather spend the time with Mom. She knew that.

After six months of complete slutiness, we calmed down, moving toward a quieter, more loving and gentle sex. Kissing, embracing, long periods of me staying hard inside her, moving back and forth, just enough to keep my erection. Believe it or not, we often talked, long conversations, while I was in her. More than anything, I just wanted that face to face contact. That closeness.

Then again, once in a while, she'd pull out the vibrator or the anal lube. "Sometimes, Michael, a girl just needs a screaming orgasm. The kind that shakes her to the bone."

Recently, we were having lunch in a quiet bistro near my apartment when Mom asked if I'd like to go on vacation, "a week somewhere in the Caribbean, lots of sun and wine, just the two of us." We both knew Dad had grown to hate the beach. This would be just for us.

"Actually," she said, "There are a couple of clothing-optional resorts in Jamaica and at St. Martin. What about trying one of those?"

My face clearly showed my shock. "Are you shitting me?"

"Don't curse, Michael. It doesn't become you," she said, shifting into a rather stern, motherly voice.

"You absolutely amaze me, Mother. I'm stunned." I thought for a moment. Then said, "I don't know if I can do it. I'm basically the modest type."

"So am I," she said. "You know that. Which is exactly why we should do it."

"What if you meet some really handsome naked hunk?" I asked. "I'd be devastated. There would be guys with far better bodies than mine. It scares me."

"Michael, with you I have about all the hunky man-ness one woman can take. You do it all for me."

"But," she said with the most serious of expression, "I might check out some of the women."

I put my elbows on the table, covered my face with my hands. Took a deep breath. Looked up.

"Are you telling me you're interested in hooking up with a woman? I never knew. Why don't you tell me these things."

"It's just something recent, Michael. I'm just thinking about it. Just thinking. Nothing else. I was pondering it more in terms of me and her -- and you too. The three of us."

It was lunch, but I still ordered a bourbon straight. Mom laughed, then gave me that flirty eye contact that I've mentioned before. We're still mulling over the whole idea.

And that's where we are now. Last week, during another lunch at a little Thai eatery, Mom handed me a large, leather-bound book, a journal she said she had been secretly keeping. "Since I was pregnant with you," she said.

"No one's ever seen it. It's not to be shared with anyone. I want you to have it. Wait a few years before reading it. Not now. It's just my thoughts about you, and about our relationship, lots of memories. But mostly just a way to express my love for you, Michael."

I looked at the cover. Inscribed on it were the words I knew so well:

You must be my shooting star... everything I've wished for, is everything you are.

I fought back tears. Wished I had something of equal value to give her.

"You've given me everything I need," she said. "When my time comes, I will die a happy woman, mostly because of you, Michael," she said. Hopefully, that will be a long time coming. So far, so good on the cancer. Her health is fine.

As she wished, I didn't read the journal. A few days later I opened a safe deposit box at my bank, put the journal there so I wouldn't be tempted. But, as I was standing alone in the vault room, I noticed the edge of a photo protruding from the pages of the journal. I had to look. Pulled it out, an eight-by-ten glossy picture.

A few seconds passed before I recognized it. That picture of Mom and me taken at my cousin's wedding. Cheek to cheek, with looks on our faces that could not be misinterpreted. Pure desire for each other. I had never seen it. No wonder Mom kept it in her secret journal. As soon as they saw it, anyone would know. It was so telling.

Mom may have been right. You may see our relationship as an abomination -- really sick. Most people would, and I can't blame them. I don't expect anyone to understand. It's not important. What we have matters only to us. You see, this is our story, Mary Armstrong's and mine. A private story. A love story. A story about best friends.

And about shooting stars.