Night Run

Jane Davison*
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by
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English 3

THE MOON rose over the houses in my neighborhood, casting a shadow from the pole which once supported the sign "Clover Court." Crickets chirped in submission to the distant roar of the semitrucks off Route 18. I stood on the porch, breathing in the still, humid air. That antsy feeling had already started to nibble at my bones. Touching my toes twice, I began to psych up for my nightly run. Working eight hours every day in a ham factory should have tired me out by the evening, but it never did. My mother could not understand where I got all my energy.

"You work all day in that place," she would say, "on your feet the whole time, lifting heavy boxes. Then you come home and pick at your dinner like a bird. And, if that's not enough, you go out at night and run—God knows where—like some hyperactive, misguided track star!"

"Oh, Mom. . ."

"It's just not healthy, Jane. Besides you're a girl." She always ended her scolding with a feminist dig. "Why don't you work on your needlepoint?" If my mother could have her way, all females would be knitting sweaters with their hands and darning socks with their toes!

No one ever seemed to understand the pleasure I derived from jogging. No other activity gave me that feeling of self-control. Bike riding, tennis, golf—they all required some external object. And somehow those objects always controlled me! I could execute the perfect golf swing—head down, arms straight, knees bent—and then proceed to carve out a two foot divit. Any tennis racket I ever held managed to spin despite my iron grip. But nothing ever got in the way of my running except maybe a stone in my shoe or a little sweat in my eye.
I enjoyed playing King of the Road on my nightly journeys. White carpet sidewalks unrolled at my approach. Broken glass crumbled under my mighty step. I cleared manhole covers in a single bound. Dogs stopped barking at my command, fearful of my foreboding shadow. Occasionally, four wheeled dragons with blinding white eyes would challenge my authority, but they always retreated as swiftly as they charged.

"Are you going running again tonight, Jane?" The familiar voice startled me out of my thoughts. I turned to face my father, a stocky man with kind eyes and a balding head. He was smoking a cigarette and wore no shirt.

"You want to go with me, Dad?" I asked, already knowing what his answer would be. He took a drag of his cigarette and shook his head slowly, letting the smoke exhale from his nose.

"Oh, not this time, honey. I'm just too tired tonight. Maybe tomorrow, though. OK?"

"Sure, Dad," I said as I headed down the driveway. Dad never understood me, either. He probably figured I had a crush on Bruce Jenner, the Olympic gold medal winner.

Actually, I liked to start out alone because God would usually catch up and join me. He and I had our best talks when we jogged together under the stars. Pounding happily down the pavement, I impulsively exclaimed to the man in the moon, "I (puff) love (puff) you!" To my astonishment, the old guy winked back.