

Stone Moons Teaser

The complete version of *Stone Moons* is forthcoming from [Eastgate Systems](#).
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This is Sarah's cosmo-agony -- the mythic battle with the moon to save her autistic child. This will give a vague sense of the range of material in *Stone Moons*.

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Sample from Sarah:

To: mmarconi@netcom.com, grahambell@aol.com, grever@ibr8smtp...

From: Sarah

Date: 5/13/97 18:24

Subject: Leaving

Dear friends,

I guess today was the big day. Well, why am I writing this when all of you knew what was coming anyway? Because I have to, that's why. I have to tell you how it happened for me.

Laurel tugs at my hand. She is in a good mood today. She squints up at the sun, laughing. It's a hot day, a promise that summer is coming soon. But we don't notice the sweat on her brow. We just watch as she whirls around on the grass, her yellow and green gypsy skirts flying out from her like

some alien flower. We stop walking, entranced, I guess, or just wondering whether to take off and tackle her before she starts running.

Laurel stops whirling and stalks us from behind. We turn to her, noting the spots in her eyes now staring wide into the sun. I can almost see the fairy wings she types about. Her throat glistens in the light. I try to walk back to her, but Marilyn gets there first and pushes behind her, herding her in.

We walk up to the red brick cottage where she'll stay (why are all these places that damned red brick? Why couldn't it be pink or purple or something, not the color of dried blood?). The windows are latched shut. A tiny blonde girl in a long blue-green turtleneck stares from the window closest to the door. I stare back. She doesn't move.

Carrie and Marilyn each take one hand and lead her inside. The heavy door closes behind them with a metal "Ka-chunk". (Why does a cottage have a metal door? And why are the locks so shiny in the noon sun?)

She does not turn and watch me leave her here.

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Sample from Sarah's subconscious

To: Sarah Murphy

From: Sarah

Subject: Dream files

DateLine: May 1997

Every night for a week I have had the same dream. I am lying in an alley with my head back against dark red bricks. It is about dusk, and I can see the horizon at the end of the long, silent alley. The harvest moon rises, slow and gravid like a blood orange. I watch the moon, and as the light travels through the alley, it touches me. I see the blood that has run down my legs and congealed in dark, shiny strips. I look completely dispassionately at my ripped open belly.

Beside me is a baby, but the cord is dried, brittle with age. I turn the baby over, and it is Laurel, the first time I saw her. Only I am not holding her. I am not touching her. Her legs, like mine, are splayed. Blood flows freely from her torn mons. Too much blood from a child.

A sudden torrent of desperation fills me. I try to touch her. To breathe all of my blood back into her. Anything to have her live, to have her untouched. Her broken body disappears in a sudden shaft of moonlight, leaving only a ghostly outline of pain. She has said nothing.

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Sample from Laurel:

IntelliType FACILITATED TYPING EXERCISE.

DATE: 1/18/97

BEGIN TIME: 13:29

END TIME: 13:47

FACILITATOR: Carrie

The moon wants a cd so she can have something to stare with, to move with. The earth will not be the moon's cd. The earth has only little lights that make too many colors, too many spaces.

The moon wants only one space. She wants a place to hide, to find her own.

The hands pummel the chest so the flesh inside can let the moon in.

The moon changes the color of the flesh, the colors of dark yellow and old blood so she can match the clouds she clothes herself in.

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Cosmo-agony

Moonblood

To: Sarah Murphy
From: Sarah
Subject: Truth files

It seems the stories I've been collecting are no more than shattered, misinterpreted fragments of the truth.

I have known this all along.

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Arkenstones

The stories skirt around the issue; they do not name it. And then the tales came to me in a dream, or maybe a time that was not a dream. I approached an altar, and I saw a book, worked in silver thread, written in the moon's own blood.

I knew it then. This is the stone treasure the dragon kept watch over, waiting lest anyone approach. This is what all men search for, though they call it different names: the grail, the golden apples, the

ark of the covenant, which disappeared in the destruction of the temple. This is what Laurel needed, the thoughts she was so frightened of, at the end.

With this gift, I understand.

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In the beginning

Once the moon was all powerful, all knowing. All the seas flowed into her; all the seas flowed out of her. She inhabited the lungs of every creature; she worked the bowels and hearts and tongues.

Everything lived in harmony with the moon. No one could wish for more than what the moon had given, what she had created.

The moon saw this, and it was good. She would come down to earth and the people and animals would feed her. All would rejoice mightily in the great white light as she came ever closer, ever stronger.

After the feasting, she would rise back across the horizon and take her place, lighting the stars from her own pale light. Her light grew dimmer as the stars grew brighter, but the people wondered at the dances of the stars. And all would partake in the dance.

This then, was the primordial happiness.

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It must be written

And the moon revelled in the rhythm of the seas. She rejoiced at the people's happiness--at the splash of the whale's tail, the flick of a cat's eye.

She knew, however, that nothing lasts forever~the rapture came from nothingness and would go back to nothingness sooner or later.

So she vowed to write it all out~to keep it for posterity. She tried first to describe the world in a single word~but the word became too powerful. So she carefully excised it from all memories--even her own~and began again.

This time, she wrote on pages of pure light, using the tips of passing clouds to press quickly, quietly into the words. But the words melted as the earth shifted below her, scattering the light. The moon decided to look for something a little more substantial.

She tried first one plant, then another. First one ink, then another. First fire, then wood, then rocks. Nothing held the words. The writing was nothing like what she had envisioned. It was merely a shadow of the way things were.

But she could not give up.

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The most precious

Nothing would hold the words of the moon but the moon herself. She tore open her skin and dribbled her hands into her flesh.

She drew the ink from her own blood, still heavy from giving birth to the entire universe.

She made her pen from her own hair, long and silver strands that rested on the sea, billowing with the breath of the waves.

She made parchment from her own fair skin, sacrificing swaths of her thin covering, revealing the bone-white stones beneath.

Thus she made ready to write.

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Flood of words

Words flowed from the moon's blood onto the neatly cut pieces of skin. And the moon thought of everything--from the soft brush of moonlight on the tip of a gulls wing to the wide curving lips of the earth as it met her each night. She followed rivers to the sea, chronicling each facet on each water-polished rock, each silvered scale on each slippery hidden minnow. She sent the wind to count, and the wind ruffled through each person's hair, numbering the strands. Her pen marked the curves in each branch, the way each sparrow bounced up and down on its claws ~ first curling to face one way and then with a feather flick facing the other.

All these things the moon wrote. And more.

Until the words themselves outnumbered the grains of sands on the beach. Until the moonskin parchment overflowed and the moon's blood flooded the land.

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Riding the floods

And the flood of words spilled out from the moon in great joyous torrents, sweeping over the world in cascades of the dark secret moonblood, the sacred red life seeds.

And then the blood came crashing in on wave upon wave. The people understood everything, from the tiniest charmed particle to the largest quasar, from the humblest diatom to the grandest galaxy.

And everyone cheered as the moon shared her knowledge freely.

And the words would be there forever ~ showing each generation what it was to live in the world.
What it was to be.

And the world rejoiced.

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No turning back

The moon tried to make things right. She erased part of a scroll, the one that talked of the ways people understood the universe, conversed with the stars, and kept faith with themselves and the animals. But as she erased the words, these things were not strong enough to reappear in the world, and so they fell out of existence altogether.

The moon tried to breathe life into the words. But the words had lost the ability to breathe with her. They stared, lifeless, on the page.

And the moon could not reach them in their tombs.

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After the fall

And as the flood abated and the sea of words resolved itself into the regular ebb and flow of waves on the rocks, it became apparent just what the moon had done.

For the words held the substance of what was once the world ~ and the world was drained of its joy.

For nothing can be in two places at once. The choice is between the shadows of words and the things themselves. And the moon's blood was so powerful that the things became words alone and left only the dead shadow husks of themselves behind.

The people saw that they had lost something precious, but could not remember what it was. So they sacrificed to the moon, once and then one hundred fold. Still, the moon could not return the lost substances.

And the moon wept.

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Hiding the real

The moon kept trying every trick she knew--or didn't know--to put the words back into life. Failing that, she tried to take the substance from the words and give it to the shadowy things that still miserably existed, dragging their shells, looking for the missing wholes.

Nothing worked. Soon the very words of her blood and pages of her skin were in danger of disintegrating from her spells.

The people kept coming to her, begging her to restore whatever it was they had lost. Or to tell them again what they had lost so that they could begin long, arduous quests for it themselves.

Until finally, she had had enough. The moon exploded into two: a brighter version of herself (which stole the light from a hundred sacrificed stars) and a paler shadow to catch the leftover brilliance.

"This is what you meant," she cried out to her people. "You missed the light. That is all. Now go and live in peace. Forget what you do not have. Concentrate on what is there ~ for those are the only things that exist now."

But the moon knew this was not so.

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In the unreal

The people were happy with the extra light, and believed that this was all that had been missing. Everything was restored. So they went on, happy with the husks of things that had once been and were no longer.

The moon gave up her quest to restore the words to life. Yet she could not give up completely. Someday, somehow, she would find the answer.

To safeguard the precious words, she wrapped the moonskin parchment carefully in a silver box and welded the locks shut so it would not open. Then she put the silver box into a slightly larger golden one, then the golden one into an oak box studded with amethyst, then an ebony box studded with sapphires, and finally a box carved from moonstones and lined with the bark of the last moontree.

She placed this in the bottom of the deepest sea, so that no one would notice it.

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Restless seas

The box holding the moon's words would not rest quietly at the bottom of the sea.

The waves jiggled it. The dark fish who had never seen the moon's light nuzzled it. The words themselves pounded from the inside of the box, demanding their freedom, demanding their power.

The box rose to the surface of the sea, where mermaids picked it up and put it on their rocks, singing to the milky colors of its moonstone covering. Seamen saw it from afar and thought it was really the moon caught under the waves. Some tried to rescue it, others to steal the pearl-hued beauty. Many drowned.

The moon saw that the earth was no longer a hospitable place for her lost bounty. On a brilliant night, she daubed herself with her own blood and came down to save her box. The mermaids cried and pleaded with her to let them keep the pretty treasure. The moon refused to listen.

She tried to take it back into herself and hide it there. But her skin rejected it, cowering away from what had once been part of it and was now quite dead. She tried to hide it in the stars, but the stars merely gathered about it in wonder and refused to shine.

She attempted many things she would not admit to herself later.

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Hold no hope

The moon saw she had no hope of finding a suitable hiding place for her words. Besides, she still could not find the way to make the words back into reality.

Only with the people's help could she return the universe to the way it was supposed to be. So she made the box impossibly small, compressing the atoms until no one would ever suspect their existence.

She placed the box in the hearts of prophets. And the prophets were driven into frenzies, calling out dreams of oracles, mixing creatures with universes, portents of politics with omens of religion. The people called what the prophets wrote wisdom and followed it the best they could.

She placed the box into the hands of kings and queens. But they ignored it completely in their rushes toward power. She gave it to courtiers, who gave her bad poetry instead. She gave it to plowmen, who could not take the time from their plowing to understand. She gave it to women who screamed out its words as they gave birth, and later forgot that anything had added to their searing pain.

She gave it to children who could understand. And they ended up as lunatics, unable to speak of what they had seen.

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Handing down doom

And so the moon kept on trying person after person. Each would go mad in their fashion ~ until people no longer gave any credence to madmen. The people hid themselves from the moon's touch ~ afraid of remembering what they once knew, afraid of knowing what they missed.

So the moon decided to create her own daughter, who might have the strength she lacked. So she took my blood and fashioned Laurel.

She mingled our cells together, sculpting the crescent nose, high arched eyebrows, long brown hair that shone dark in the moonlight.

She played with the ganglia, the nerves from in each part of her running together in cloud patterns to mirror the sky.

And waited while I gave birth.

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Bestowing birthrights

The night Laurel was born, the moon came for her. The moon drifted toward her as she lay sleeping in the hospital bed that first night. She was next to the window, in a little isolette, her tiny hands waving as she struggled under the oxygen.

The moon crept across her pillow. Whispered in her ear ~ what promises of hers held truth and what held merely echos of echos, the moon herself did not know. The moon took the box covered in moonstone, locked five times, and then welded shut. Shook it in front of Laurel, who probably giggled and reached for it ~ just as she now reaches for anything shiny.

The moon pressed her box of words, the whole wisdom of the universe, to Laurel's breast. And the cells of my Laurel entered the atoms of the box.

Together, she and the moon understood.

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Death waits for life

Laurel's atoms, imbued with the moon's knowing, proved too large for those of us condemned to breathe only in this world.

The shadows of sanity lost themselves in her senses, drowning in the luminescence that shone from Laurel's pores.

And we, living among only the husks of shadows, could not see her light.

Thus we wrapped her as we would have wrapped the moon's words, if only we had known. First in clothes of yellow and green, then in words ("autistic," "Rhett's," "retarded," "unacceptable"), then drapes of drugs (Clonidine, Risperdal, Naltrexone, Clomipramine, Prozac, Thorazine), finally sterner stuff of leather restraints and bricks.

The moon knew this. Waited. Came down for her.

And I watched her go. Again.

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