

Moonlight

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (May 2025)



Girl in the Woods (Vincent Van Gogh, 1882)

The setting is a camp toward the close of the season. The campers are not disabled but deemed to require a higher-than-average ratio of counselors to campers.

Eleanora, a fifteen-year-old camper.

Vivan, in her 20s, a psychology student with a special interest in language, a counselor.

Cora, a counselor, 20s, considered quite practical.

After the divorce, her mother re-married quickly, her father

has a live-in girlfriend. They may love their offspring, but neither one wants her now. Each wants a holiday from parenting.

For her, this is dangerous. The more she feels abandoned, worthless, the more she abandons herself. Her sense of deficit becomes, "If only I were a stunning beauty or a world-class genius, they might not want to part with me. They'd surely treasure a star, wouldn't they?"

"What she has met at a tender age seems to tell her she's close to homeless,"

"Their own love—what they started with before. I was even born-ended. It could be the same with love for me."

"No. A child is forever."

"I don't feel forevered."

"Parents aren't forever but they make it so. By haunting?"

"I wish her attachment to life had that no-doubt-about-it force past all question. Her own consent to live seems to require reliable, unconditional love."

"How old?"

"Fifteen."

"I've tried the standard way, even think it's true. You don't know what may happen. It might be really good and close to what you need or even dream. That doesn't seem to reach her."

"No one calls me by my full name. I'm not Eleanora, or even Ellen, but El."

As I adjust my sweatpants and look for my hoodie. I know that even if I had a whole new wardrobe, I could never be that girl in the song. The girl in the song is magical.

*Moonlight becomes you
It goes with your hair
You certainly know the right things
To wear*

I could never become that girl.

“You don’t have to justify your right to be alive.”

“Don’t I? Wouldn’t they want me more if I were a star? If I’m doomed to live an uninspired life, why should I bother? And why should anyone bother with me? They might do better as mourners than if I’m always here.”

“She walks slowly in traffic. Some days she doesn’t get to sleep, refuses food.”

“Could she be trying for the most serious attention by seeming at urgent risk?”

“If only ... But she isn’t even aware of us with these refusals. I hate the thought, but it seems a morbid warm-up for suicide. I’m afraid for her and in ways that defy explanation for myself.”

“Is there money to send her away to a private school?”

“For the quality she needs, I’m not sure. Her parents aren’t poor enough for predictable assistance or rich enough not to feel the pinch. That problematic in-between. I sent an inquiry to a work-study school where students pay most of their own way—constructing, mending, repairing. They sent photos, generally rustic and basic in a pastoral setting. I left the photos for her. Somewhere austere might just work.

“She’s responded with, ‘Not that I’s crazy about hammer and

nails but I like not feeling beholden.'

"That she feels not only unworthy but indebted toward immature, ungenerous parents, provoked me to gather my courage, challenge her solemn treasure.

"Eleanora, do they have genius? Stunning beauty? Are they moonlit? No answer, but I know she heard.

"She has seen the photos."

Afterward—The setting makes me gather that something through summer and winter stays the same. Austere pastel.

"I think she'll go to that school."

"At times I think she lives in a different idiom. Yes, the divorce, adolescence, solitude—but something more. She has a special attunement to risk that might extend in a benign way. What I'm searching for is the idea and its word that comes to us, I think, through Icelandic. Doomeager. Nothing grim but a way of setting forth towards a venture that's exhilarating, severe. Life itself?"

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Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French and Spanish have appeared in *Parnassus: Poetry in*

Review, ART TIMES, Chelsea, The Literary Review, THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry (in Ireland), The Tribeca Poetry Review, Vallum (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's Essays in Criticism.

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