

FLOWER MOON

by Rebecca Kane

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Cast of Characters:

ELLA: Woman, early twenties.

DANNY: Man, forties to early sixties.

Setting:

Something between a hospital room and a cage at a zoo.

Time:

Late afternoon, mid-May.

An alternative version of our modern day.

SYNOPSIS: Ella awaits her monthly transformation into a werewolf at a facility designed to hold in people like her for safety. An attendant, Danny, senses that she needs a little more reassurance than four secure walls for security.

CONTENT WARNING: This play contains an implication of sexual assault.

[ELLA, wearing loose, comfy pajamas, peers deep into the text of a motivational poster on the wall of a room that is a little like the calming waiting rooms in hospitals reserved for people about to get bad news. There's a mattress with clean sheets on a sturdy bed frame or the ground and soothing art on the walls. There's also chains around the mattress and bars on the windows. Ella reaches up and tries to move a poster, but it seems to be glued to the wall. She shrugs, seeming unworried.]

DANNY comes in, wearing something like scrubs or an even more utilitarian version of it, with a clipboard. He also has a watch he checks often.]

DANNY:
Ella Herman?

ELLA:
Hi, that's me! What's your name?

[She bounds over to him and reaches a hand to shake it. He hesitates but shakes after a moment.]

DANNY:
I'm Danny. I'm one of the two attendants on site this full moon.

ELLA:
The flower moon!

DANNY:
I know you signed a waiver online but I have to read you a few things before we get started today.

ELLA:
Fantastic!

DANNY:
Yeah. So the first thing is-[he takes a second look at her]
Wait, you got anything to change into?

ELLA:
Oh, I bought these from Kohl's. On sale! They're loose on purpose.

DANNY:

Not loose enough, sister. Your legs are gonna grow to three times their size. I thought April was your first transformation?

ELLA:

Well, um... I guess it's a good thing they were on sale! Too bad, they're kinda cute. Right?

DANNY:

You have to pick stuff from now on that's both loose and stretchy. Cotton's just gonna rip.

ELLA:

Do you have any recommendations specifically? I mean, it seems like you've been around the block?

DANNY:

Sixty full moons here indeed.

ELLA:

Wow! So at least five years, plus keeping in mind that some years have more than one—

DANNY:

Your concierge can email clothing recommendations for future appointments. [*reading from the clipboard*] Article one: remember above all else that Bureau of Supernatural Structuring is here for your safety. This will mean some discomfort at times; just remember it's for your own benefit as well as the safety of those around you. That said, please do not hesitate to ask your on-site attendant for anything that may make you feel more comfortable and secure before, during, and after your transformative period.

ELLA:

Maybe a chat?

DANNY:

That's it? You want to chat?

ELLA:

To feel more comfortable and secure—

DANNY:

Can it wait until I'm done with items? Mandatory to read or there's legal issues and--

ELLA:

Sure! Sorry. Go ahead go ahead

DANNY [*reading*]:

Article two: you must remain here for the entire period of your monthly transformation. Once you've entered your private holding unit, no matter the amount of time before the transformation, you are not permitted to leave until it's complete. Your attendant will let you know the time you'll be permitted to leave. [*He looks up from the clipboard*] 5:46 am.

ELLA:

Oh wow, that seems earlier than I'd think. That's good. I'm a morning person. I can go do a shift tomorrow at the bird rescue place I work at.

DANNY:

Word of advice: You may want to take the day off. It's rough on the body.

ELLA:

I know, but it's still migration season and we're losing a lot of birds this year.

DANNY:

What, do you go capture birds?

ELLA:

No no, I do research. We have field workers go out and collect data on migration and birds striking windows. Sometimes I do a little of that too but it's more of a volunteer capacity. And to get out of the office! I feel so cooped up sometimes. No pun intended.

DANNY:

Cool. I like birds.

ELLA:

Yeah I mean what kind of monster doesn't? Well. I guess *this* kind of monster *does*. Right? Ha ha.

DANNY:

We don't use that word here.

ELLA:

Just me at home then.

[He looks at his clipboard, then his watch, and sighs. He leans against the wall.]

DANNY:

You like that kind of work?

ELLA:

Oh yes. I always wanted to live in a big city but I also wanted to help animals so it's the best of both worlds. You have no idea how excited I was to get this research position with Chicago Bird Rescue. And right out of college! Some would say it's not a great match for a cat person either. I've got two at home and my eye on a little kitten from the Being Neighborly Evanston Facebook group. I also volunteer with a stray dog rescue group so when I came home smelling not just like birds but also like DOGS with my cats, well, you can IMAGINE—

DANNY:

You get stray dogs off the streets?

ELLA:

Well. Not always. Feed them, study them, neuter them, and yeah sometimes we get to perform a full rescue and rehome them. It works better if they had clearly been domesticated. Oh and vaccinations and—

DANNY:

So a lot of hands-on work with the dogs. I see.

ELLA:

Yeah... OH no no no. No, that's not how I got like this. A lot of people think that. Most people actually.

DANNY:

How many people do you tell about this?

ELLA:

Just my family. And my landlord. And my boss and like one friend. Well, not friend. Someone from my book club. Plus... technically someone else knows from the dog rescue...

DANNY:

Another word of advice... not that you're asking, you're an adult—

ELLA:

I mean BARELY plus you seem so experienced. You've been doing this for years. How'd you even get into doing this?

DANNY:

I used to work in security at... other venues. Let's just say it was a natural transition.

ELLA:

More like natural transformation, am I right? Ha ha

DANNY:

Ha. Yeah.

ELLA:

Where did you work before this? Wait, can I guess?

DANNY:

Have at it.

ELLA:

Nightclub bouncer!

DANNY:

No, but I have that vibe, right?

ELLA:

You SO have that vibe - what's your sign?

DANNY:

Um, I forget sometimes... let's see, April twentieth...?

ELLA:

Happy belated birthday! A Taurus! Yeah, that totally tracks. I mean, from what I know of you. Which isn't much. I'm a Sagittarius if that wasn't kind of obvious. December eighteenth. Maybe it's not that obvious. It would be if I had also told you that I love to travel which I know is a total stereotype.

DANNY:

Where you headed next?

ELLA:

Saving up to go to Iceland. Have you ever been?

DANNY:

Barely ever leave the Midwest. Girlfriend's got family in Des Moines. Does that count as travel?

ELLA:

Sure it does! I'd love to go there. Just to see a new city.

DANNY:

No need to save your money to go there. Just take a car out one day.

ELLA:

No one to go with...

DANNY:

Go by yourself.

ELLA:

What was your other bit of advice? The one coming after article two? Before I yap yap yapped your ear off?

DANNY:

I would advise you not to tell too many people about your current situation.

ELLA:

Well, "current", I mean, isn't it permanent?

DANNY:

The Bureau's got a whole research scientist division working on cures as we speak.

ELLA:

How close are they?

DANNY:

They're working on it.

ELLA:

So, not very.

DANNY:

Sorry, Ella.

ELLA:

I guess I'll learn not to tell people.

DANNY:

I more mean, tell your best friend, long term roommates, trusted partners. People who could benefit from knowing. Just not every Bumble or Twinge or whatever date you go on.

ELLA:

Hinge.

DANNY:

Hinge date. Whatever.

ELLA:

I don't really do those right now.

DANNY:

Might be good for a little while.

ELLA:

How'd you meet your girlfriend?

DANNY:

She did admin at a place I used to work at. I had a little crush, thought it was one-sided. After I left, she reached out. I never thought of myself as a lucky guy til then.

ELLA:

What's her birthday?

DANNY:

June thirtieth.

ELLA:

Cancer. You are lucky. They're nice.

DANNY:

She is. So... the apps aren't working out, huh?

ELLA:

No. I also tried to go on a date with a guy at the dog rescue place. Another field worker.

DANNY:

Tried? What happened?

ELLA:

I don't get it, like, he seemed so nice. So nice to the dogs. So gentle with them. We went on a date and it sort of went well, actually, like he bought my dinner and my drinks AND a dessert to go, I was so happy because it was my first date in the city, so then we went back to my place and like. Well, I didn't really want to do much more, but we did.

DANNY:

WHAT? Ella—

ELLA:

No, it's really not his fault because I didn't like say anything, but now he knew I would do it, so sometimes he would come over after work and we would do it more—

DANNY:

No. No way, kid. You gotta get away from this guy.

ELLA:

I never said anything to him so it's really not his fault

DANNY:

I don't care. He should be able to... I don't know, get some sort of idea from how you act.

ELLA:

Well, we're sort of. Intertwined, I guess you could say. Not to be dramatic.

DANNY:

So stop volunteering there. Donate to the Humane Society or something.

ELLA:

No, I mean. The reason I'm here. This. [*she points to the chains*] And that. [*She points upwards, as if to the moon.*] I guess he was about to transform, and maybe he forgot. Or didn't care... I hope he just forgot. I think it's that, yeah. Anyway, he came over. And as we were doing it. He changed and sort of... I forget some of the rest, actually. Anyway, here we are! Ha ha.

[*He definitely does not "ha ha" back.*]

I think you said at some point you had another article to read?

DANNY:

Something about attendants being able to defend themselves if they need to. Don't worry about it.

[*The door makes a loud, ominous click.*]

DANNY:

The automatic lock...

[*He goes to check. Definitely locked.*]

ELLA:

Wait! What time is it?!

DANNY:

It's time.

ELLA:

It can't be!

DANNY:

It is.

ELLA:

But... we were just getting to know each other. This is my fault. This is all my fault!

DANNY:

No. It's not. I should have kept track. It's my job.

ELLA:

Danny, I'm so sorry!

DANNY:

You didn't do anything wrong.

ELLA:

I'm stupid, I'm so stupid, going out with some idiot from the dog thing, and, and... always having to do something and not just staying at home like I should.

DANNY:

Ella, you didn't do ANYTHING wrong. Just try to relax. The chains are there for a reason.

ELLA:

If the chains work, why is there a whole thing about self defense?

DANNY:

Doesn't matter. I didn't bring my stuff in here with me.

ELLA:

And why does the door lock at all?

DANNY:

The door locks to keep us out. We start to worry. We get to know the people here and try to come in when they seem like they're in pain. People have been known to try to get close to a werewolf in mid-transformation and give them pain medicine or even a pat on the head. Like a dog. We care too much.

ELLA:

Is that why people get hired here? Because they care?

DANNY:

Yes. Before this I worked at a kids' psychiatric facility. They wanted me to be rough. Violent, even. I couldn't take it. I wasn't helping anyone. I came here to help.

ELLA:

You did.

DANNY:

Then I'm happy.

ELLA:

Then me too.

[She's starting to transform in the opposite corner of the room under the barred window. By the very end, it's taking over. He settles in against the door, resigned, calm. It gets harder for her to concentrate but he keeps talking her through it.]

DANNY:

What kind of moon did you say this was?

ELLA:

The flower moon.

DANNY:

What's that all about?

ELLA:

It's the spring so there's flowers everywhere. Spring means people change, not just plants. Not just monsters like me.

DANNY:

There are no monsters here.

ELLA:

It's a good time to try something new... and work on your bad habits...

DANNY:

And start some good ones?

ELLA:

Plant some flowers in the yard...

DANNY:

Buy some for my girlfriend, maybe.

ELLA:

Yeah. She's lucky too. It's not just you.

DANNY:

We're all lucky.

ELLA:

We're all so lucky.

*[The transformation completes.
End of play.]*