



2019 Grand Prize Winner
Theme: "Drove downtown in the rain, nine-thirty on a Tuesday night."

Sun and Moon

By Samantha Stark

“Ow, ow, ow!” Evanna tried to sit up. A difficult task, as pain electrified her hips and vibrated down her legs. The only limbs that felt stable were her arms. Evanna’s head felt heavy, throbbing behind the eyeballs. She tried to scoot her hips under her upper body, and screamed. Evanna’s left hip was broken. Shattered, really.

Evanna laid flat on her back, taking in her surroundings. “Sand, cliffs, gorge, no shade. I’ll wait, I’ll just wait. Someone has to come. Hikers, runners, bikers.”

Evanna waited. Patiently.

What day was it? Yesterday was Tuesday. Nothing good ever happens on a Tuesday.

It was hot. She wet her mouth and lips with saliva.

“Well, Sun. Looks like it’s just you and me for now. I may even get a tan. Don’t burn me, OK?” The sun tracked across the blue, cloudless sky. “Oh, so you’re just going to go to bed? No kiss goodnight? Fine, whatever. I’ll talk to you tomorrow, I guess.”

It was raining yesterday, I left the gym around nine, nine-thirty?

Evanna noticed a drop in the temperature. She was wearing a sports bra, t-shirt, and a zip-up running sweater, paired with leggings and tennis shoes. Her hands were still wrapped from her last workout.

Hitting and getting hit, that was my job. Train all day, every day. Get in the ring on weekends. Climbing the ranks to the center stage has taken so long.

I began in Foxy Boxing, trying desperately to be recognized by a promoter. Any promoter. I cared more for the ‘box’ part than the ‘fox’ part.

I could never get my hands wrapped as tight as I wanted. My trainer was a master, training boxers for years. He could also do it in half the time I took. Or than any other trainer I’ve seen. He put me through my paces. Classically, I shed blood, sweat, and tears for the sport. I was asked all the time why I did this. Why I fight. I was never bullied as a kid, my parents were great, no strange sibling rivalries. I just loved it. It called to me. I’m called to the sweat, the smell, the competition. I loved to be the best, and I loved the work.

“Moon, it’s getting cold. Can you call Sun to come back?” Evanna’s joints were stiff. She’d been lying still for hours, hoping for rescue. A breeze swept across the gorge; a shiver caused her to spasm. Her hips throbbed.

Downtown, the breeze is blocked by the buildings. The chill wouldn't have happened if I had just gone home that Tuesday night.'

“OK, OK. I'm sorry, Moon. I didn't mean to insult you. Sun is kind of a dick. He burns. Don't tell him I said that, though.”

Evanna found talking comforting. She'd never been much of a talker. Now that no one was around and she was injured in the middle of nowhere, talking kept the dark thoughts at bay.

“So, how are you? I'm going to do some workouts to keep warm. Hope you don't find it rude. Wanna spot me?” Evanna put her arms out straight, palms up toward the sky, and lifted them half an inch off the ground. She began moving them in tight circles, changing to the opposite direction from time to time.

“It's ironic; this exercise is called ‘Sun Gods.’” She giggled to herself.

When her arms got tired, Evanna began doing crunches, small movements to keep her core warm. She would freeze to death otherwise.

I could be warm and safe in my home, if I had just gotten into my car. It was raining; what was I thinking?

Evanna made it through the night. Exhausted. The moon began to fade.

“No, don't leave Moon! Can't you and Sun share the sky? It would really help me out if you could work out your differences. You can be in the space!”

The moon faded, despite Evanna's pleas. The sky brightened. The heat rose.

I'm not sure you could call it 'being discovered,' but when I got my break it was like something out of a cheap Rocky remake. Small-time fighter with a small-time trainer, taken on by a small-time agent. From the moment I entered the real game, I was winning. Match after match. Bigger crowds, and bigger rewards.

A year in, my team and I were angling for a title match. Geraldine, Gerry for short, she was the top dog. For a long time, only mediocre fighters were sent to her so she could maintain her title. I told you it was like a Rocky movie. I wanted a shot, but her agent kept blocking us. I kept fighting. She kept avoiding.

Evanna could no longer stay still.

You were thrown here, of course, and no one has come by yet. You would have been dumped away from common trails and paths.

Her shoulders were a bit sore from the Sun Gods she did through the night. All the hours, weeks, years of training made her arms strong and sure. Evanna painfully angled herself up and dragged herself backward.

Each pull back, she yelled and grunted. Someone walking by might think, *What is Serena Williams doing out here?* But she went on, the sun beating down on her face. Her sweatshirt caused

her to sweat more. Evanna couldn't afford to lose that much water. She worked her way out of the top and tucked a piece of it into the top of her pants. She would need it at night.

"Sun, can you tone it down a bit? I'm losing a lot of water here." Evanna's lips were drying out. Her saliva wasn't wetting her mouth anymore. The sun grew hotter as it moved across the sky.

Gerry found out about her title matches being fixed. Angry that she hadn't been truly challenged for a long time, Gerry demanded a match be set up with me. The fight was scheduled for the next year.

As it gained media attention, I watched her during news segments. Gerry's workouts were nowhere near as hard as mine. Don't get cocky, I would tell myself.

I ran farther, pushed harder, and took on more competition. I was wiping the floor with everyone, including my male training partners. I was ready, I was loose, I was confident. Ready for the title.

Then, I received a text message.

"I'm so tired. I'm tired of fighting with you, Sun. I think we need a break. My friends were right, you're no good for me!"

Evanna remembered something, in the little pocket of running pants. She dug her fingers in and pulled out a tube of chap stick and a pocket knife. The chap stick had SPF in it. It was a small amount, but it could be helpful.

"I know you want me to wear more makeup, but this is about the most you're going to get." Lightly, Evanna began to place the chap stick on the high points of her face: forehead, cheeks, and chin. "I take care of my skin, I drink water..." *Well, I did until now.* "You have no reason to complain that I don't wear foundation. I don't have a lot to cover up."

Evanna continued dragging herself backward. She could see how far she'd gone. Her socks and shoes were filling with sand and small rocks.

My body was at peak physical health. I kept pushing harder.

After a particular workout, I went to the showers. I checked my phone and there was a text from an unknown number. It said: 'cancel the fight'

I furrowed my brows, let out a huff, and deleted it. There was no reason to engage in this crap. I was going to shower, get in my car, and head to my apartment downtown.

*As I strolled down the walkway, another text came in. *ping* 'cancel the fight'*

I replied 'No' and went on.

More texts came, rapid succession.

**ping* 'cancel the fight'*

**ping* 'cancel the fight'*

**ping* 'cancel the fight'*

Heavy breathing, grumbling stomach, dry throat. The human body needs water more than it needs food.

Dehydration will kill you. You wasted too much time waiting when you woke up. Moron. How did you let-

“Oh, Sun! Are you going back to bed? I feel it getting a little cool. I better find a place to sleep. I know! How about right here, on the ground? Super comfortable.”

Evanna shifted her body around to get her sweater back on. She laid back and zipped it up to the top, mentally preparing for more crunches.

I kept my phone on silent, turned off the vibration, and let everything go. I wasn't going to let anyone intimidate me out of a fight. The thought was laughable.

Every day, the texts came in, and every day, I deleted them. I forgot the messages during the hours I was in the ring. Nothing else mattered in my small, square world.

During a sparring session, I thought I spotted a figure out of the corner of my eye. A large figure, hooded, in the shadows. This moment of distraction caused me to catch a gloved fist across the cheek.

“Damnit, Evanna! Get your head in the game!” my coach yelled. I looked back at the door. The figure was gone.

I continued my sparring match, coach yelling the whole time. He grumbled and grunted. He was like a father, and it always bothered me when I let him down.

“Don't doze off, Evanna. Don't sleep. Don't sleep. Crunches, don't even count. Stay warm.” Evanna spoke to herself through the night. Her mind was foggy, sight was fuzzy.

“Moon, you're so beautiful. I hope I get to see more of you. You're bright. I can see so much when you're around.”

Hours of talking left her throat scratched and sore. She'd had enough. Her arms lay still on the ground, breath shallow. As exhaustion took over, she felt like she was swimming, floating in an ocean, the water a soothing, medium temperature. Shooting stars streaked across her eye line.

The moon faded, another night down. Evanna drifted off under the dawn light.

After weeks of texts, I finally changed my phone number. The only people I gave the new one to were my trainer and my agent. No new texts.

After my workout, I opened my locker. Tons of notes spilled out all over the floor like dead butterflies kept in a small box for too long. They all said the same thing.

cancel the fight

A noise in the corner. I jumped, heart racing. With my fists up in a fighting stance, I peeked around the corner. Just a mop handle. I decided to grab my bag and shower at home. Too risky to be here any longer.

I walked out of the gym. It was a Tuesday night, around nine thirty, and it was raining. Heading to my car to go home, downtown.

Across the street was a figure, standing just outside the lamp light. I stood stalk-still, staring right back. My fists closed at my side, itching for some action. I threw my bag off of my shoulder and stormed across the street.

“Hey!”

Evanna woke up, slowly. She felt something cross her arm, feet like tiny, soft suction cups. She turned her aching neck towards the feeling. It was a lizard, crawling around her forearm.

Evanna opened her hand at a slow, miniscule pace so she didn't scare the animal away. She stared at the lizard, willing it to move towards her palm.

Finally, it did. Once the little creature was in the center of her hand, Evanna snatched it shut quickly. The lizard squirmed in her wrapped grip. She dug out her knife and dispatched the animal as quickly as she could.

There was no way to make a fire; nothing else to do but dig in. Evanna cut open the soft underbelly and ate the organs. Sure, her stomach would not be full, but the shot of protein perked her up immensely.

“Hey, Sun. Thanks for breakfast!”

She began dragging herself backward again. Evanna's face was so dry. Again, she applied chap stick. The stick was so soft at this point that it broke. She grunted in frustration, took the rest of the melted stick, and just rubbed it into her face, neck, and tops of her shoulders.

“Sun, I think I've had enough heat on my face. Do you remember the episode of *Friends* when Ross gets a fake tan? I'm sure my front and back look like that.”

Evanna's hips had been in pain for so long that it was now a constant, vibrating buzz. She'd grown used to pain. Since she couldn't rely on her hips to turn herself over, she swung her arms and let the momentum finish the job.

“All right. One, two, three!” Over she went. The pain went through her like a shot. She screamed so loudly, she could have sworn the gorge shook. The pain was so intense that Evanna passed out.

“Hey! Did you leave all those notes in my locker? What do you want, you freak!” The figure backed away, into the ally. I was so angry I didn’t assess my surroundings. Like an idiot, I followed the hooded person.

Then I felt a bag slip over my head. I began swinging wildly, fists going toward any sound that wasn’t coming from me. A huge crack. I caught someone on the chin. A male voice yelled out in pain. The next thing I felt was a giant, meaty hand on the side of my head, and a brick wall on the other side.

I felt instantly queasy. In my weakened state, I was punched and kicked and beat. I couldn’t tell how many pairs of feet were stomping me into the ground.

I was thrown in the trunk of a car. There was no telling how long they were driving. I bumped around the back, in and out of consciousness. My hips were stomped on, ribs bruising already, head spinning. In the dead of the night, I was yanked from the trunk and left.

The last thing I saw before passing out were tail lights.

Evanna came to. She was on her stomach now, with renewed pain in her hips. It was still day time. The surroundings, while wide, now felt small and oppressive. No amount of talking would stop the crushing reality of her situation.

Nothing good happens on a Tuesday night.

Evanna gave in. She cried. Her body couldn’t produce tears anymore, but she sobbed anyway.

After the draining explosion of emotion, Evanna felt a bit better. She forced herself to regain her breath and looked forward.

“OK, take it slow. One arm in front of the other.” Evanna began to drag herself along. Her arms were less sure now, shaky. Pulling her way along, the pain began to subside. It went back to the semi manageable buzz.

After about two hours of dragging and pulling, Evanna put her arm into something soft. Something wet. Her brain’s first reaction was, *Em, what was that?*

“Water!” It was a small drag of it, but it was water nonetheless! Evanna began to dig.

The sand was wetter and wetter as she dug deeper. She dunked her wrapped knuckles into the moisture and let them soak up, then brought her knuckles to her lips. It was warm and full of silt, but it was the best tasting water Evanna had ever had!

She kept following the trail of water, digging and soaking her wraps. Eventually, the trickle turned into a small stream. Evanna got her chap stick tube out, dug out as much leftover product as she could, and filled the tiny tube. She downed the mini shot. She had to fight the urge to keep drinking. Too much and she would have an upset stomach.

“Hey, Water. Thank you so much. I’m just going to follow you for a while, OK? I’m not stalking you, I promise.”

The word ‘stalk’ struck fear in Evanna. Someone had followed her, knew her schedule. These people were able to kidnap someone who was always aware of her surroundings. They were able to make her NOT aware; make her throw caution to the wind. It would never happen again.

The water had given Evanna an all new surge of energy. The hydration was helping her drag herself along. The trickle of water was getting bigger. Now, Evanna could scoop full handfuls into her mouth.

“Oh my goodness, it’s so good. I’ll be lucky if I get out of this without dysentery.”

Dragging, dragging, dragging. Staying close to the water. She noticed grass underneath her. The smell filled Evanna with hope and happiness. The sand under her fingernails and in the folds of her wraps were replaced with dirt. The brown sand and clay on her t-shirt were now mixed with grass stains.

Evanna’s ears perked. Laughter. Ignoring all the pain in her body, she dragged faster. Once she glimpsed people, she began yelling out.

“Help me! I’m here! Help!” The group of people heard the pitiful noise. They quieted down and listened. Through the trees, they should see a person, moving at a snail’s pace. Although, to Evanna, she felt more like Speedy Gonzales.

“Oh my god! Hey, call an ambulance!”

Two men ran toward Evanna’s broken body. She heard a lady’s voice in the background, on the phone with 9-1-1. One of the strangers brought over a bottle of water. The fresh, clean liquid almost hurt going down.

Everything happened fast then. Flashing lights, a rush of action, a fury of pain. Evanna was whisked to the hospital.

Hours of emergency surgery later, her trainer and agent got to see her. Evanna looked worse than she had thought in the wilderness. Dehydrated, bruised, swollen. Her trainer approached with tears in his eyes.

“Evanna, I’m so sorry this happened to you. I’ve been so worried.” Hearing his tough voice being so soft and caring was strange. So strange that the goal of comforting her was having the opposite effect.

“Shouldn’t you be yelling at me for missing so many sessions?” Evanna laughed a little. Her agent stepped forward.

“Evanna, I’m going to cancel your fight. You’re in no condi-”

“No! Don’t you dare. Keep it on the books. I’m still going to fight. Keep me out of the news. I don’t want anyone to know I’ve been found, or that I lived. The people who did this could try again.”

The tight-knit team agreed, and came up with a game plan. It took some... well, a lot of convincing, but the physical therapists got on board.

Evanna’s excellent health was one of the reasons she survived her ordeal. And it would help her recover from her injuries quickly. The hips were the worst part. A piece had to be reconstructed, and it slowed down her reaction time.

Gerry’s agent had been trying to cancel the fight. Evanna’s agent wouldn’t let him. The agent had been telling him they’re training a new girl that is ready to take Evanna’s place.

Gerry was fine with the change. As long as she was challenged, she could truly know she was the best.

The gamblers had been making bets in favor of Gerry in the weeks leading up to the big fight. An unknown versus a seasoned title-holder? What were the chances this up-and-comer could possibly win?

The day of the fight arrived. Evanna was not at one hundred percent. She was mentally ready, though. Weeks of nightmares and flashbacks to the sand, the heat, and the lizard guts hardened her. Her motivation to win was stronger than ever.

She was brought into the lockers through the back, blocked with a hood over her head. Her trainer wrapped her hands. Nice and tight, then the gloves over them. Evanna’s hip was hot, and kind of twitchy. Hopefully it could last a few minutes at a time. Three rounds were all she needed. Evanna could take Gerry down in three rounds.

Leaving the locker room, the energy of the crowd was electrifying. Evanna had feared this feeling would never wash over her again: the anticipation, the love, the hate. Her music started to boom: *Headstrong* by Trapt. Her pump-up song before every match. From back in the days of her headphones to now, it blared over the speakers at the title fight.

Evanna walked out, keeping her head down, the silk robe hood blocking her face. She got to center stage and threw it off. The robe fluttered gracefully to the mat, and a hush fell over the crowd. She looked up toward the lights. *Oh hey, Sun*, she thought. Her mind flashed to the gorge.

The audience erupted in cheers, and Evanna’s mind crashed back to the present. She smiled and waved a gloved hand. Gerry was looking at her, stunned. Fans rushed to the bookies to change their bets. Security had to jump in to maintain order.

The fighters were brought to the center to face off. The ref wanted a good, clean fight... blah blah blah. Gerry was shocked, and Evanna was focused.

The bell rang, and they danced around the ring, poised to pounce. Gerry hesitated and Evanna took advantage. *Hesitation kills.* Evanna could hear her trainer's voice. *Take the shot when the opportunity presents itself.*

Evanna went in with two quick jabs, then a reverse. They all landed. Gerry came in tight and locked up, taking body shots. Gerry hit Evanna's ribs, then took a shot at the hip. Evanna's joint spasmed. *How did she know to go after my hip? It was completely out of line, and how did she know?*

The referee put them in their own corners. More dancing, more jabs, and the round ended. It was a rather uneventful round. The crowds were still on the edge of their seats.

Round two started. Gerry immediately locked up again.

"Why couldn't you stay down, you stupid bitch?" Gerry asked. Evanna held Gerry tighter to her.

"How did you know?" The two exchanged body shots while holding one another at the neck.

"I found out when you went missing. I didn't know until after you disappeared." Then, "My cousins have a lot of money riding on this."

The referee broke up the fighters. Gerry looked broken. Her hands weren't even up.

Evanna saw the sunshine flashing in her eyes; tasted the sour organs of that tiny lizard; felt the silt slide down her throat. One punch. Gerry went down, out before she hit the ground. The ten-count passed by and Evanna was named the winner.

She waited in the locker room until the stadium emptied. She strolled around the ring, grateful for her survival. Grateful for the fight in her heart and soul.

Evanna walked out into the night. The moon was bright, the stars shining. Evanna slipped into her car and started the engine. "Hello, Moon. Let's go." The moon lit the way, guiding her all the way home.

About the Author

Samantha Stark is a Navy veteran and the author of *Stark Story Snacks* for It's All Been Done Presents network. After years of no writing, friends and family encouraged her to begin again. In the Navy, Samantha wrote for the Armed Forces Network News, as well as created television and radio commercials for air. Her time as a radio personality is what began her love of voice acting, which led her to *It's All Been Done Radio Hour* and the stories she's able to create today.



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