Silver Penny Moon Legend

James Vigaris

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SILVER PENNY MOON LEGEND
A Fairytale

TANACITY didn't care. Why should she. She was a rebel, a free-spirit, a girl without constraints. She would say it to herself all the time. "I'm a rebel," she'd say. "A free-spirit. One without constraint." And it was true. Countless times she had proved it. Who was I to cast doubt.

The time: around midnight.
The season: Fall.
The place: the outskirts of Florido village.

The landscape before Tanacity mirrored her form: *dark*. I saw her leap over a barbed-wire fence and dash like a nocturnal nymph into fields. I saw her, a magical shadow, running with dazzling speed towards the crest of the tallest hill. I watched in wonderment as she flattened long grass with the wave of an arm. I gasped when she called an owl to her side and made the ready-to-fall leaves of a nearby tree dance in anticlockwise spirals. Yes, Tanacity was in a playful and rebellious mood that night. The time: around midnight. The season: Fall. The place: the outskirts of Florido village.

Fatefully she stopped, deadly still and silent, her silhouette stark against the amber nightlights of the village.

What's she thinking? I thought. What's going through her mind? What's she planning? (I just knew she had an agenda.) She only ventures into the uplands when she's about to do something that will upset them.

(Them? Who is Them?)

The Authorities. The Authorities is *Them*. The ones who relentlessly watch us, who choose to silently quash any kind of "non-standard behaviour".

Tanacity roamed the hills like a blest shadow, and the moon had been above her all the while, as full as a glutton's belly, hanging like a bauble in the lusciously black sky, a pearl in the night, the queen amid starry spangles: and unbeknown to me at the time, it was Tanacity's secret target.

What ambition. What an epic dream.

Unseen I watched as she stretched out her right arm and wriggled her long fingers towards it.

Surely not?

Oh but yes. I gazed in awe as those magically dark fabulistic fingers took the moon from the heavens as though it were a white button plucked from a sluggard's cardigan. I watched as she slipped it softly into one of her trouser pockets.

A rebellious act indeed, Tanacity!

I was impressed.

Who wouldn't be.

Well, there's always somebody, and that *body* was the Authorities: the ones who relentlessly watch us, who choose to silently quash any kind of "non-standard behaviour". They certainly would not be amused.

Without delay I switched on the screen, for I knew that Tanacity's unprecedented act would not go unnoticed for long.

During an advertisement in which a youthful geriatric extolled the benefits of a miracle moisturizer —

NEWSFLASH … . THE MOON HAS BEEN STOLEN … . WITNESSES CLAIM TO HAVE SEEN A GIANT, SHADOWY HAND SHROUD THE

MOON AND PALM IT AWAY AS THOUGH IT WERE A SILVER PENNY IN A STAGE-MAGICIAN'S TRICK … .

The moon-stealing culprit was described as a "treacherous pickpocket", and the Authorities were already "homing in on the perpetrator", confident of making a "swift arrest".

I flashed back to Tanacity, who was standing atop the dark hill, her silvery eyes gazing at the nightlights of Florido village, her hands seemingly churning loose change in her trouser pockets.

She wants to be caught, I thought. No doubt about it. This is the greatest, most rebellious act she has ever dared to do.

Even though my head was spinning, I managed to tune-in to her secret thoughts … . "T'will make me famous and notorious 'yond the confines of Florido," she said in her mind. "I will be a star. A superstar. A megastar. *I will*. Notorious and great. An iconoclast. A legend."

It wasn't long before spotlights from helicopters beamed down on the nonchalant Tanacity: her tomboy form exposed completely. The Authorities had tracked her with suspicious ease.

Turning the loose change in her pockets, Tanacity closed her eyes and waited to be seized.

Voices boomed through loudhailers commanding her to put her hands in the air. Tanacity complied. There was no need to rebel further.

I saw them, the goons of the Authorities, black-suited and stern, I watched with my spying eye and live on TV as a mob of figures marched Tanacity into one of the landed choppers accompanied by the triumphant headline: *THE GUILTY ONE DETAINED*.

Childhood photographs of Tanacity were plastered all over the news broadcasts. Experts in the studios were saying: "She always was a troubled child," and "A ticking time-bomb waiting to bring catastrophe to the world," and (oh it doesn't matter now!). The long and short of it is I never saw the strange and enchanting Tanacity again. She was tried and found guilty in a kangaroo court, slung into a faraway prison and, well, even her parents were deported.

But what about the moon? you ask. How did she do it? No one can steal the moon!

Listen: Tanacity did it. She stole the moon from above a hill near the village of Florido on a clear Autumn night. I saw it with my own eyes.

The question: *what happened to the moon?* is a little trickier to answer. But let me say this: if we were to go outside right now, and if we were to gaze at the starry heavens, we would certainly and indisputably see it, our satellite. Yet something would be different: it would be full, always full, and bigger than ever it was before. And upon its surface we would see a shape, an outline, the profile of a human head. And if we looked carefully we would notice that the silvery profile was that of Tanacity. Yes! Truly! "Give us back our moon!" the Authorities demanded (threatening torture). So she did, and flicked to their catching gloves one of the special coins from her pocket. "Throw it at the starry sky," Tanacity told them, "and you'll have your precious moon back."

And so a few nights later the moon returned to the sky. Astronomers were flabbergasted. Every television and media channel gave airtime to the story of the re-appeared moon. Politicians were asked to comment. The people of Florido named the hill overlooking their village, *Tanacity Hill*. The President promised a lunar mission to explore the strange phenomenon. Public opinion overwhelmingly wanted Tanacity's immediate release from the faraway, unknown prison.

But alas it wasn't to be. Tanacity was never seen or heard of again. Her rebellious and free-spirited act on the lonely hill overlooking Florido village had proved to be her last.

Yet it made you an earthly legend, Tanacity. As long as there is night your name will live in the human mind, and deep down, whether you believe it or not, that is the only thing Tanacity ever wanted. And she did it. She actually did it. The old man in the moon is now a girl . . a magical girl called Tanacity.

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