



Under the Hospital Moon

Marianne Walker



Diane walks toward the glowing entrance of the hospital under the light of a massive, luminous full moon. The night air is crisp, and the hospital windows flicker with the constant activity of the busy night shift ahead.



Inside the Labor & Delivery ward, the hallways are bustling with nurses moving quickly between rooms carrying supplies. Diane approaches the main nursing desk, where her charge nurse Paula is already buried under a mountain of paperwork.



Paula looks up with a weary smile and greets Diane with a dry, blunt Welcome to Hell. Diane lets out a lighthearted laugh, leaning against the desk and asking what could possibly make this night so special.



Paula gestures to the monitors showing every single delivery room is occupied before dropping the bombshell that the notoriously difficult doctor, nicknamed Hot Stuff, is the one on call. Diane's smile fades into a look of disbelief as she realizes the challenge ahead.



Just as Diane is settling into her station, the telephone on the desk rings sharply, cutting through the ambient noise of the ward. She picks it up to hear Betty's hurried voice calling from the Women's Services department.



Betty gives a frantic warning that Hot Stuff has just left her desk and will be arriving in Labor & Delivery in less than three minutes. Diane grips the receiver tightly, bracing herself for the doctor's imminent arrival.



When Diane asks about the doctor's current mood, Betty describes his temperament as particularly nasty and tells her to be careful. Diane sighs and thanks her colleague for the warning, mentally preparing her most professional demeanor.



Diane hangs up the phone and immediately relays the warning to Paula about the doctor's sour attitude. The two nurses share a knowing, tired look, a silent bond formed by years of navigating difficult shifts together.



Paula wonders aloud if the doctor has ever shown a single spark of kindness or a smile since he first started working at the hospital. They stand together at the nursing station, two pillars of calm in the middle of the growing chaos of the full moon night.



The elevator bell dings loudly at the end of the hallway, and the heavy double doors begin to swing open. Diane takes a deep breath, straightens her scrubs, and prepares to face whatever the rest of the night shift has in store for her.