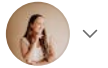


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Sleep Left Me For A Younger Woman



Lucie Frost · Follow

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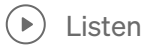


Photo by [Andrea Piacquadio](#) from [Pexels](#)

We met in high school, enjoying long, lazy afternoons sunbathing. I'd stay out late at weekend keg parties. Sleep would hold me all night to keep the bed from spinning, then we'd lounge under the covers until mid-afternoon. It was teenage love, and it was beautiful.

In college, things got complicated. I was pulling all-nighters during the week, and my weekends were laced with Ecstasy. I just didn't have *time* for him anymore. But he waited.

After college, we got back on track. I had my first full-time job, and it was exhausting. He'd lie on the couch with me after work when I couldn't keep my eyes open. When I awoke, we'd transition to the bedroom, and I'd cuddle in Sleep's arms.

Our relationship was strong and loving until the kids came along. Three boys, each thirteen months apart from the next. We felt like we never had time for just the two of us. One of the kids was always interrupting, wanting a blankie or yet another sip of water. It was a long decade of wakeful nights.

But then, ahhh, our lovely 40s. The kids knew that if they wanted to watch cartoons in the morning, they'd have to leave us alone all through the night. We enjoyed the quiet, lying in each other's arms, our lives perfectly interwoven.

But at 53, right out of fucking *nowhere*, he upped and left me for a younger woman.

He didn't tell me who she was, but I knew. One day not too long back, we were lying together on a hammock in our front yard. She walked by, pushing a double stroller, and just *stared* at us. I could see the jealousy in her eyes. She wanted what we had, and then she just came and took it.

One day, I confronted her about it. As she walked by the house with her kids, I yelled at her, "How *dare* you walk by my house like nothing happened! Like you didn't steal my Sleep and ruin my life. How *dare* you!" She'd scurried away, obviously ashamed.

I tried to move on, but I just couldn't get Sleep out of my mind. My friends got concerned and suggested perhaps I should see a doctor. "I don't need a fucking doctor. I need that harlot to take her filthy paws off my Sleep!"

I imagined them together. She would have a long day, and Sleep would stroke her hair and let her lay on his chest. The kids would be unruly, and Sleep would call her over, tell her it was going to be okay, and encourage her to rest. Sleep would surprise her with unexpected gifts, like good complexion and fits of energy.

I was desperate to get Sleep back. I thought perhaps I could lure him with drugs — some Ambien perhaps? — but apparently Sleep was not a junkie in for a quick fix.

If I couldn't have Sleep, I needed at least to gaze upon him, so I snuck over to her house with a 27-foot extension ladder. Oh, sweet Sleep. There he was. But it sickened me to see her there with him, her head gently resting on a silk pillow.

Every time I saw her in the neighborhood, I was enraged. She walked without a care in the world, with a skip in her step. She'd just spent a luxurious night, having Sleep massage the bags from under her eyes, while I was stuck watching some slimeball demand that his girlfriend “pay up or put out” on a Jerry Springer rerun.

It was time to put an end to things.

I ordered up some late-night mariachis. When she sent them away at 3:00 a.m., I sent them back at 4:00. At 5:00. At 5:06. 5:23.

Was it her son's birthday? Happy Birthday! Here is a drum set. Oh, and a vuvuzela. It's not his birthday? Oops. My bad. Here, take my apologies — and this puppy.

You're pissed, are you? Here's an apology letter, full of crickets.

You're calling the cops on me? Cool. They'll be glad to find all the pot plants now growing in your back yard. Oh, did I forget to mention those until the cops were already there? So, so sorry, sweetie.

Sadly, none of that worked. Day after day, I trudged on without Sleep. I was broken. At night, my body wept, soaking the sheets through. During the day, it would be overcome with sadness, would suddenly flush, then burst into tears of sweat. My ankles became puffy, and my privates parched.

Just when I thought I would be consumed by my eye bags, I heard the news that I had longed for. Sleep's young lover was pregnant with her fourth child. Sleep might stick around for a kid or three, but never for four. I knew he would leave her. Sure enough, just after the newborn came home to her, he came home to me.

It was on my 58th birthday that he showed up on the doorstep. He didn't bring candy or flowers, but still, I welcomed him back to my bed. It was Sleep I craved, not boxes with bows. We fell into the sheets, and he gave me the gift I had yearned for — a long night of fucking Sleep.

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Written by Lucie Frost

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Lucie is a former employment lawyer, now ha-ha writer, in Central Texas. You can find her on all the socials (@lucieHfrost) or at her website: luciefrost.com

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