

## FROM “BLOOD MOON”

“Still the same old Seneca,” Missy said. They’d had a late lunch together, caught up on old times, back when they were seeing each other during their first couple of years at Penn’s College.

“Smooth, baby, smooth.”

“That’s why I left you. Too smooth.”

It was early evening, the sun was going down and they were in her hotel room. The lights were off, and he had her backed against a wall. He was grinding up against her, his eyes locked on hers, wearing that smile of his that could charm a bird from a tree. She melted as she remembered this.

“I don’t see you pushing me away now,” he said. His nose brushed against her neck. His lips and tongue danced over her collar bone.

“That’s because you know I want you,” Missy said. She was still beautiful. Perhaps more so with age. Her confidence was a magnet to him, a challenge. She was a castle he had to conquer.

“You remember this?” he said, putting her hand on his erection, which strained at his pants.

“Yeah, I remember that,” she said, breathlessly.

“It was always yours,” he whispered.

“I’m married,” she managed to get out before he kissed her.

“Me too,” he said, his fingers raking down her back. “Guess we’re one for one.”

He took her to the bed and undressed her. Their sex was better now, hungry but skilled.

She was no longer the inexperienced virgin he’d deflowered. He was no longer looking for a quick get off with her. He got to do all the things he wished he’d done years ago with Missy. And when they were finished, they did it again, his hands everywhere, his tongue everywhere.

He left her sleeping, exhausted. It was night, and he smiled down on her angelic face proud of himself. The moonlight hit her just right, seemed to make her pale skin glow. He left the hotel for his own. He’d need to shower and change and get to the pep rally to meet up with Bear, Ryan, and Terry. Hopefully, Dan had made it too.

Seneca decided to take a shortcut through the woods of Point Breeze Park, which would put him back on Lancaster Avenue. It was dark and quiet as the October wind blew the leaves across the grass. Neighborhood businesses shut down earlier here than in the city, bringing stillness to the area. Seneca didn’t miss that at all, the suburban silence, nor the nighttime darkness in these neighborhoods.

He heard a sound and stopped.

Was it a growl? A grunt?

It was unlike any he’d heard before, or at least not outside of a zoo, and maybe not even there.

Was it a dog?

*No dog growls like that.*

A long moment of silence followed, then out of nowhere was howling. Loud. Close. Sharp. Seneca froze in his tracks, his eyes wide as he searched through the darkness all around. Just beyond the park’s trees his eyes made out a dark form.

*What the fuck? Is that a wolf?*

But it was unlike any wolf he’d ever seen or heard in his life. Not even in a damn movie.

And then his words came back to him and chilled him to the bone.

*Shit happens in the suburbs, man.*

Seneca held his breath, and he realized he had never been this scared in his life.

*Yeah, shit happens in the suburbs...but not like this! Affairs, blackmail, drugs, maybe gangs, maybe child porn, a wife*

*beating, key parties. But this? What the hell is this?*

The creepy bare trees conspired against him. The moon loomed in the sky, full, large, and white. It highlighted the branches, making them look like claws. The trees stood stoic, hiding whatever was in the park with him.

Seneca spun around in a circle. Whatever it was, it was close.

He ran to a tree, breathing heavily, nearly panting. He crouched low, but he was beginning to think that wasn't such a good idea. He wasn't sure he could control his breathing, which was now raspy and audible through his chattering teeth.

There was movement nearby, and a growl followed it. Like the howling, it was close, but Seneca couldn't pinpoint its location. Left, right, in back of him? It was not in front, that much he knew.

The park was still dark and he had a way to go. Lancaster Avenue was in the distance, and if he ran really fast he could get there.

He sprung up suddenly, and started running.

Was there no one else here with him?

No, of course not. They were all at the festivities.

Seneca looked around as he ran through the park, which he should have known oh, so very well. He'd gotten a blow job in this park one winter. He fucked some other girl after smoking pot with her. There was a tree here, with a large hole in the bottom. When he was at Penn's College you could stick your hand up into the hole and find a trove of old porn magazines.

Something was behind him. Footfalls mirroring his. Seneca skidded to a stop, spun around.

"Who is it?" he panted, out of breath.

And the howling again.

*"What the fuck is that?"* And then he saw.

Something coming from out of the shadows, from behind a tree. It was tall. It was huge. And it came for him so fast, so brutally, that Seneca just closed his eyes and screamed. Screamed before he was disemboweled and strewn across the park like a rag doll that's had its stuffing torn out and littered like trash.