

MOONDANCE

By Glen Lamont

I can't even remember the last time I had a decent meal. This vegetarian crap just doesn't cut it for me. Sprouts, tofu, fucking veggie burgers, who decided they were a good idea? Vegetarians just want to force their way of life on everyone. You don't see meat eaters hassling them. "See this sirloin strip, doesn't it look delicious? Guess what? It tastes exactly like a carrot." No, we don't try and impose our lifestyles on them. Sanctimonious bastards is what they are. Whatever. At the end of the day this whole thing is my own fault anyways. If I could just eat meat like a normal person I wouldn't be in this situation. I miss the change. I miss the change so damn much it hurts! Mind you that was before things got out of hand. That was when I could still change in safety. Before it all went to shit.

That's the story of my life. I was always different. I couldn't be or act like the so called normals. I always knew there was something different about me, even when I was just a kid. I could be in a room full of people and still feel completely and utterly alone. It was like all those other people knew something I didn't, something intangible that I couldn't quite see. I always wanted to be something or someone else. Basically anyone but who I was. I was full of fear. I didn't even know what I was afraid of; I was just plain scared of life.

Then one day Dad sat me down and told me about the change. I'd heard about it but I didn't really understand what it was all about. He explained as best he could to a ten year old what would happen to me when I reached puberty. How it would be quite sore the first time around but that my body would adjust and how it could be an exhilarating experience and that our kind were special. He also warned me of the dangers. Dad said that certain members of our society were different. They didn't change like the others. The change affected them differently than the rest of us and they couldn't control themselves like most. This particular breed broke our laws and ignored our traditions; they were a danger to themselves and others like them. He told me that my Mother was one of them and that the normals killed her because of it. It wasn't her fault, she was born that way, she was sick.

The first time I changed I was twelve. It wasn't sore or scary or anything. It was the most amazing experience I've ever had in my life. It was better than sex or any drug you could possibly imagine. At first I couldn't change at will. That took a bit of practice. Once I mastered that I did it all the time. I loved it. You see in that altered state I wasn't afraid of anything or anyone. If I'd had my way I would've stayed like that all the time. I was ruler of my own destiny. I was a fucking God.

When I first began to realize I had a problem was one day I changed spontaneously. It just kind of happened. It was in the showers after P.E. class. I had been thinking about Marie DiAngelo and what I like to do with her when bang, it just came on and there was nothing I could do to stop it. Gary Rawlins was showering next to me and literally pissed himself. I threatened to come to his house in the middle of the night if he ever breathed a word of it to anyone. That poor bastard hasn't been the same since. The last I heard he was in a psychiatric hospital.

It was really when I made my first kill that I knew I was different. There was me, Jonny Perkins and Sarah Yablonski. It was a crisp clear autumn night and there was a harvest moon. We had been experiencing an amazing Indian summer and it was exceptionally warm for that time of

year. The three of us had decided to take in the annual Fall Fair and travelling carnival. Jonny had borrowed a bottle of gin and a bottle of whiskey from his old man's liquor cabinet.

Sarah had her Mom's car and I paid for the gas. It was shaping up to be one helluva good night. It was everyone's first kill. We'd been talking about it for weeks and now here we were all three of us ready to pop our cherries. We were kind of a weird group. Me and Sarah had been pals since the third grade when her folks moved into our street. Jonny came along a couple of years later and we'd been hanging out ever since. Both Jonny and I had a thing for Sarah but no one wanted to break the unwritten rule. Nobody wanted to split up the team. I always secretly hoped that Sarah would choose me and I'm sure he thought the same thing. This particular night she had on a white cotton, off-the-shoulders, peasant blouse with embroidered flowers that showed off her dark summer tan. Tight faded denims and her dirty blond hair hung straight down her back. She looked good enough to eat. Jonny was going through his James Dean phase at the time. Loads of product in his hair, black leather jacket with the collar turned up and wrap around shades. He looked like he was auditioning for the touring company of Grease.

We drove up to Breaker Point to have a few drinks and loosen up before we hit the fair. The whiskey went down a treat and I was starting to get pretty anxious. Those two wanted to stay and drink some more but I was in a hurry to get started.

'Jonny, what about them?'

'What's your hurry Michael, let's look around.'

'Look, there are four of them. That's more than enough to go around and they're heading towards the beach. Come on guys.'

Sarah slipped her hand in mine and gave it a quick squeeze. 'Don't you think that's a bit much for our first time out Mikey?'

'Fuck it, I'm hungry.'

'Don't worry about it Sarah. I bet when it actually comes down to it he'll be the first one to pussy out.'

My two best friends didn't know how wrong they were. We followed the two couples down to the beach and waited for them to start groping each other. I was the first to change. I didn't even wait for the other two. Until the day I die I will never forget the sensation of biting into the poor girl's jugular. That first taste of human blood and sweet flesh was the most intoxicating feeling I've ever experienced in my life. Nothing else has ever come close. Drunk on power and blood lust, I proceeded to kill and eat all four of the young lovers and was still left wanting more.

'Jesus Mike! What the fuck was that?'

'Yeah Mikey, you greedy bastard. What about us?'

'Sorry guys. I'll find us some more I promise.'

'What the fuck is wrong with you man? Come on Sarah; let's go make our own kills.'

'Don't be so hard on him Jonny; he just got a little over excited on his first time out. There's plenty more where they came from boys and the night is still young. Now let's all go to Grandma's house and find some more to eat.'

That was Sarah. Always the peacemaker. They both made their first kills that night and respectable kills they were. But long after they had both changed back and fell asleep on the

beach I was still feeding. Hell, I didn't even change back until the sun came up. From that night forward that's how it would always be for me. Once I started I just couldn't stop. That's when I found out I was different from all the rest. That's the night I discovered I had inherited my Mothers' illness. My life would be nothing but misery and pain from that day forward. I suppose I should probably introduce myself. My name is Michael and I'm a

lycanthrope. This is my story.

I've been unchanged for a little over a year now. It's not easy, but I get through it a day at a time. I'd be dead right now if I hadn't found Lycanthropes Anonymous. Those people saved my life.

Let's face it, if the normals didn't hunt me down and shoot me I probably would've got a hold of some bad blood and contracted H.I.V. or some shit. Either way I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them. Like I said it hasn't been easy. I mean seriously, whoever heard of a damn vegetarian werewolf? Their whole program is based on total abstinence from meat because that's the only thing that keeps us from changing. If we don't change we don't kill. Why? Because I'm one of the ones who can't kill safely. So as long as I stay away from meat, listen to what my sponsor tells me and go to my meetings I won't change. I still remember my first meeting. I was in some state, I can tell you. The man who would eventually become my sponsor brought me to my first L.A. meeting. Now this guy was an old Lupus. He's been unchanged for over twenty years now. That still blows my mind. He picked me up at my place and I still remember the first thing he said to me.

'You look like shit. Did you eat meat today?'

'Nope', I mumbled.

'Well come on son, let's get you better.'

My sponsors name is Bobby, but everybody calls him Hooker Bobby because he used to have a thing for eating prostitutes. He said they just tasted better. Whatever floats your boat. Personally I never cared what kind of normal I ate as long as I got the rush. That's all that mattered to me. I needed to get right out of my head with the blood lust. It was the only way I could feel alive or for that matter feel anything at all. So there I was sitting in a room full of Lycs who were exactly like me except that they looked healthy and happy and I looked like a bag of shit.

So there was this guy sittin at a table telling his story. As he spoke I realized that there were others out there exactly like me. Once they started eating they couldn't stop. This guy told us about the time he killed and ate an entire busload of commuters. I mean that's the kind of stuff I used to get up to. All of a sudden I didn't feel like such a monster. Just knowing that someone else ate like I did made me think that if they could get better, then so could I. When they went around the room and others shared their stories I started to get a little nervous the closer it got to my turn. I'll never forget that moment I first spoke at a meeting.

'My friend, would you like to say anything?'

My throat was as dry as sandpaper. 'Uh, my name is Michael and I'm a Lycanthrope.' And then I just started pouring out my story. I don't even know where it all came from. I was crying like a baby. That's right. What? You think I never felt bad about eating all those poor folk. Damn straight I did. I always woke up the next day and was just riddled with guilt. I felt just sick about it every single time. But as I came to learn, I couldn't help myself. I was one very sick werewolf. I've learned a lot about myself and this illness since coming to these meetings. Mostly what

I've learned is that in order for me not to go through the change, I had to change. That's one of their clever little sayings. Basically I had to change my whole way of thinking. They taught me how to think of the normals as people instead of prey. You know put names to the faces and all that. I used to look at a normal and see, well basically lunch or dinner depending on the time of day. You have to look at photos of all your victims and learn their names and

personal details until you could actually start to feel for them. All this stuff is part of the recovery program. I suppose all things considered I'm doing pretty well with the whole thing. I still have my moments. Like the other day when my bank manager was being a real prick about my overdraft. I thought to myself if he says one more condescending word to me I'm just gonna bite his fuckin arm off just to see the look on his face. He would've shat himself. Actually he probably would've died of shock and loss of blood and then I would've had to eat him. But whatever. I don't do those sorts of things anymore. But I can't help thinking it from time to time. So, I make sure I go to plenty of meetings and I stay in close contact with my sponsor. I can only take it a day at a time.

I've lost touch with most of the old crowd but I still see Sarah and Jonny. Sarah's been just brilliant through this whole thing. She's been very supportive, a real shoulder to cry on. Now that I'm making an effort to be a better person I think her and I might actually stand a chance. Jonny's been great as well. The three of us get together every week or so and go for a few beers and talk about the good old days before things went to shit for me. I don't know what I would've done if those guys had turned their back on me. Everyone else has. There's one guy who's real pissed off. Mainly because I ate his wife. Which wouldn't have been so bad except it was at their anniversary party.

Part of working this program is making amends to people you've harmed. Now this can be a daunting task at the best of times, but this guy just wasn't having any of it. When I walked up that path and rang his doorbell I really didn't know what to expect. I didn't know if I was going to be greeted by a hail of silver buckshot or God himself come to judge me. I know what you're thinking. The answer is yes, the silver bullet thing is true. Basically it's a severe allergic reaction resulting in something similar to anaphylactic shock. Nothing supernatural about it, just a scientific fact. Anyways he opens the door and all I could think to say was, 'Hey Dave how's things?'

'Oh you know the usual working away, Stevie passed his s.a.t.'s, Janey's started driving lessons and there was something else. Oh yeah! A guy I thought was my pal turned out to be a werewolf and ate my fucking wife! Other than that things are good. How are you Mikey?' He really looked unbalanced. Quite frankly he shouldn't be left unsupervised with the kids.

'Dave I know you're upset.'

'Upset? You ate my wife! I'm way past upset. I don't think there's a word for what I am. If you kissed my wife, I would be upset. If you slept with my wife, I'd be downright pissed off. What you did is just pure evil, you sick bastard. What kind of a person does a thing like that?'

'Dave, let me explain. I have an illness.'

'Oh my God! Are you alright, have you seen a doctor? An illness, well that explains everything. That makes it okay then. Are there any other family members you'd like to kill and eat while you're here? I've got a cousin that I never much liked dropping by later.'

'You don't understand I've gotten help.'

'Did you recruit other werewolves? Do you have some sort of werewolf gang now?'

'Not that kind of help. It's like counselling. You see, I don't do those kinds of things anymore.'

'And that brings back my dead wife, how?'

'I just want to make this right with you Dave.'

'Do you Mike? Do you really?'

‘Yes. Whatever it takes, just tell me.’

‘Kill yourself Mikey. Burn yourself alive. Do that and maybe, just maybe I might be able to sleep again. You’re a monster and you deserve to burn in Hell for all eternity. I’m going to go now and drink heavily. Do it Mike.’

And with that he shut the door in my face.

That definitely could have gone better. Its times like that that I realize what an asshole I used to be. I mean the guy was my friend. Most of the people I ate were strangers. It just goes to show you how far down I’d gone. Totally out of control is what I was. Eventually I ended up on the street. I was so bad that the only places I could make a kill were senior centres and skid row bars at closing time. Think about it. Old people in wheel chairs and winos don’t put up much of a struggle. Not to mention the fact that neither of them provide much nourishment. I think one of the worst was when I bit into this old lady and her colostomy bag exploded. I had two eat to drunks that night just to get the taste out of my mouth. It got worse. Eventually I moved into an old tenement block which was slated for demolition. It was also a crack house. No heat, no hot water and no electricity. But it was okay because there was always a steady supply of crack heads.

All I had to do was wander down a couple of floors and take my pick. These sorry bastards didn’t even blink when they watched me eat their pals right in front of them. They thought they were hallucinating. It didn’t last long though. Their dealer showed up one day with his homeboys trying to find out what happened to all his customers. To make a long story short, they bumped into me while I was in my altered state, proceeded to shit themselves and emptied their 9 mm’s and Mac 10’s into my hairy ass. Okay so only pure silver bullets can kill us but the regular ones don’t exactly tickle. I was so pissed off that I ate all three of his henchman and the dealer ran screaming from the building. I kept their bling though. Those gangster rapper types wear one helluva lot of gold. I figured I could probably sell it. I wore it first though. Can you just see a big old depressed werewolf wandering the halls of an abandoned apartment block wearing a big Mercedes medallion, baggy jeans with his baseball cap on backwards listening to Fifty Cent? Snoop Doggy Wolf, that was me man. I’d pretty much lost the plot at that point. One of the crack heads showed up looking for a hit and was so fucked up that he actually thought I was his dealer. I played along, he gave me money for crack and then I ate him.

That’s when Sarah and Jonny found me, brought me home and cleaned me up. Shortly after that I called Lycanthropes Anonymous and well, here I am. A veggie werewolf. It’s been a long strange trip I have to tell you that. Some of the things that have happened to me since I’ve been unchanged have been very surreal. There is one thing that happened that I just never suspected. I really didn’t see this one coming.

I think I mentioned how I felt about Sarah. Well the other day she phoned me up and asked if she could see me and that there was something very important that she needed to talk to me about. She sounded pretty serious and I thought something bad had happened. Anyways I agreed to meet her. We met at this place down by the beach where you could sit outside on the balcony and watch the sunset. It’s one of the things I’ve learned to appreciate in my newfound spiritual life. When she showed up that day she looked absolutely stunning. I’ve never seen her look more radiant.

‘You look good Mikey.’

'Thanks, so do you, but then again you always look good. So what's so important? I mean you sounded all serious on the phone. Is everything all right?'

She smiled that smile that just lights up a room, puts angels to shame and melts my heart all at the same time. 'I was waiting for the right time to tell you this and you seem like you're doing really well what with your meetings

and your sponsor and all. I, I, oh God I don't even know where to begin.'

'I've never seen you at a loss for words Sarah. You can tell me anything you know.'

'I know, I know. Okay here goes. We've been friends for a long time right? I mean hell, we grew up together. You know how much I love you right?'

'Yeah, I love you too.'

'Mikey, sometimes two people who've known each other for a long time, well their feelings for each other can change, they can, uh you know, grow into something more than just friendship.' My heart stopped dead and leapt into my throat. Was she saying what I thought she was saying?

I'd been in love with her for so long but I never really imagined this moment would come. Is this for real? Does she really feel the same way about me?

'I'm not sure I understand.'

'Sometimes friends fall in love with each other and it doesn't have to be a bad thing. I might as well just come right out and say it. Mikey, Jonny and I are seeing each other. Please be happy for us.'

Is it possible for your heart to stop twice? Actually it was more like she had reached right into my chest and ripped it still beating right out, tossed it into a food processor and then proceeded to drink it in front of me. Her and Jonny? You bitch. You cold hearted bitch. Fucking Jonny? Which was exactly what she was doing. I thought I was gonna puke.

I could hardly believe my big pointy ears. This was my worst nightmare come true. I didn't know whether to scream or cry.

'Mikey? Please say something.'

'You and Jonny? Wow. I mean that's great.' I lied through my teeth. My gut was doing somersaults.

'Can you be happy for us?'

'What? Are you kidding me? I think that's great. He's a great guy and you, well you're you. You know. I mean hell you guys were meant for each other.' She leaned across the table and threw her arms around my neck and kissed me on the cheek. I was fucking dying inside.

'I'm so glad you're okay with this. I love you, you're the best.'

'Hey come on now, enough of this mushy emotional crap. Let's get drunk and celebrate.'

I can't remember much of the rest of the conversation. I mostly just sat there with a big stupid shit eating grin on my face trying my best to look like I wasn't planning on gouging my own eyes out with my shrimp fork. When it was time for her to go she got up and smiled that smile of hers and kissed me on the forehead. As I watched the most amazing ass in the world walk away I knew then and there that my heart was walking away with her. I knew what I had to do. I went straight over to Hooker Bobby's. He was just getting into his car when I pulled up.

'Bobby, thank God I caught you.'

'What's up kid?'

'Something's happened. I really need to talk it out man.'

'Well hop in son. I'm just on my way to the Lycanthropes convention down in Jamaica Beach. I'm a guest speaker. Come on we can talk on the way.'

'Uh, I think I'll pass. I don't feel much like being around other folks.'

'Okay, well tell old Bobby what's on yer nut.'

'It's okay. It'll keep until you get back.'

'Are you sure son?'

'Yeah, yeah, you go on I'll speak to you when you get back.'

'Okay. But if you need me I'll be staying at the Howard Johnsons. All right?'

'Yeah I will. If I need you I'll call you. Have a good time.'

'Okay, I gotta book kid.'

So much for talking it over with my sponsor. I was completely lost. I'd never felt more alone in my entire life. The one thing that was keeping me going, that was keeping me on the straight and narrow was gone. I wasn't angry, I wasn't sad; I didn't even feel like changing. I was empty. Void of any emotion whatsoever. Nothing mattered anymore. I just wanted it all to end. Maybe Dave was right. Maybe I should just burn myself or eat a silver bullet. I'm not a shape shifter and I'm not a normal. I'm nothing. Maybe the families of all those people I killed would finally get some closure if they knew that I'd ended it all. Who the fuck would miss me? No one, that's who.

I knew what I had to do. I went to a hardware store and bought a gallon of paint thinner. I then went to the drugstore and bought four packets of paracetamol. Last but by no means least, the liquor store for a forty ounce of Wild Turkey. I thought I'd take a drive down to the beach. For a touch of irony I was listening to Credence. Bad moon rising. It's funny, because after you make the decision to take a dirt nap a kind of calm comes over you. Maybe we can all get a little peace now, me included. Yeah, it was time to sit back and enjoy the ride.

By the time I got to the beach the bourbon was starting to do its thing. Oddly this seemed like the most rational thing I'd done in some time. It all made sense. I can do my penance and get a little retribution and most importantly, the big thing, no more heartache. You'd think that after all I'd done and been through. All the heinous acts I'd committed, all the carnage I'd caused and it wasn't angry villagers with guns torches and pitchforks that were the cause of my demise. It wasn't a silver slug between the eyes. No. It was a woman.

The beast dies of a broken heart. How fucking ironic is that? A suicide kills two people Sarah. That's what it's for. I took a handful of pills and a long pull of Turkey. The sun was just starting to set and the sky was just beginning to glow crimson and pink. Or maybe it was the booze. Either way I looked up and off in the distance I found myself looking straight at Breaker Point. That's where it all started. All those years ago. Me, Jonny and Sarah. See that night, if I'd had a choice between making my first kill and making love to Sarah, I would've chose Sarah. Then none of us would've had to suffer. I wouldn't be here waiting to do my impression of a Buddhist monk. It could've been me and her and the rest of this shit would never have happened. And Jack Kennedy woulda ducked and Buddy Holly woulda missed his plane and Dr. King would've stayed in bed that day with laryngitis. Woulda, coulda, shoulda. Fuck it.

After I'd built a small fire I sat down and started to write my suicide note. Why do they call it a note anyways? Things to do today: pick up dry-cleaning, pay gas bill, blow brains out with 12 gauge. No. This was my epitaph. This was the tome that was gonna make her cry her eyes out at my funeral damnit. I wondered how many people would show up. Loads I bet. I mean I hoped so. Wow, how much would that suck? The only people at your funeral are your two pals, the fat chick you slept with when you were real drunk and a guy with a shovel who's just waiting to kick some dirt on top of you. Eternal rest grant unto him oh Lord, May the big loser rest in peace. I also wondered what would happen next. I mean suicide's a sin and that means you go straight to hell, if you believe in that sort of thing. But because I'm a werewolf if I kill myself then I set free the souls of all those whose lives I took. So by that logic by killing myself

I should go to Heaven. If I don't then I'll be pretty pissed off. Or what if it's nothing like that? What if the Buddhists or the Hindus were right? In which case I'll be coming back as either a Dung Beetle or a lawyer, that's a certainty.

Then I started to think about what I might've been if I hadn't been a werewolf. With my luck, probably an alcoholic. I had a lot of regrets as well. For example; my Magnum P.I. moustache and Hawaiian shirt phase (Ferrari optional). Becoming a card carrying member of the communist party because my girlfriend at the time was a Marxist with a body that just wouldn't quit. I joined a monastery once in the hopes that I might redeem myself in the eyes of God. Unfortunately when I was confessing my sins to the abbot he didn't believe me so I had to change to convince him and then, well you can guess the rest, I had to eat him and the rest of the monks as you do. Oddly I have absolutely no regrets about the busload of Hare Krishna's that I killed and ate. Dave's wife, I still feel pretty shitty about that. Every Pauli Shore movie ever made. I had had nothing to do with them; I just regret they were ever made. Not eating Howard Stern when I had the chance. (It's a long story). The list goes on and on.

Next I thought it might be a good idea to write some sort of a will. I had a small portfolio that I acquired when I ate this stockbroker one time which I completely forgot about. I decided to leave every penny I had to Sarah just too really hammer home the point. Just my little way of saying I killed myself because you broke my heart you bitch. It'll probably go along way to making my so called best pal feel like shit as well. That was about it. Now all I had to do was douse myself with petrol and put another wolf on the barby. Easier said than done. I definitely wasn't drunk enough yet. A couple more pulls off the old Wild Turkey and the next thing I knew I was howling like a coyote. Believe me there's no more eerie and lonesome a sound than a werewolf in the throes of self pity. It makes the hair on the back of your neck stand straight up. And I didn't even care who heard me. And that's when the fucking dog came around the corner. It was huge. I think it was some sort of Alsatian crossed with a Shetland pony. Anyways it sat right down in front of me and started howling right along with me. I stopped and then he stopped and cocked his head to one side. I started again and so did he. Just then I saw movement out of the corner of my eye. And that's when I met Amy.

'Don't let me interrupt.'

She was absolutely stunning. She had long black hair that hung down to her waist and these eyes that you could just get lost in. With her dark complexion and the way she was dressed she looked like some sort of gypsy princess. I didn't know what to say. 'Is this your dog?'

'Uh huh. Is that your Wild Turkey?'

'Yeah.'

'Can I have some?'

'Fill your boots', I said and passed over the bottle. This was possibly one of the most beautiful women I'd ever seen. She took a long swallow and wiped her mouth with the sleeve of her jacket.

'Mmmmm. That'll grow hair on your chest. Do I have to howl now?'

'Only if the mood takes you.'

'So, tell me slick, what's a nice guy like you doing down here getting drunk and howling at the moon?'

'I'm not really to sure now.'

'Okay let me put it another way. What were you planning on doing before me and Rebel showed up?'

'I was seriously considering killing myself.'

'Really? Why whatever for?'

'It seemed like the thing to do at the time.'

'Well that sounds like a shitty idea. I think you should get drunk with me and Rebel instead.'

And that was that. I never did torch myself. But I suppose that's obvious since I'm telling you this story. Amy and I talked long into the night. The fire died out and the sun came up. I found myself walking along the beach hand in hand with her and Rebel the dog was jumping into the surf to retrieve a piece of driftwood. It really was a Hallmark moment. She made me forget all about suicide and Sarah and all the horrible things I'd done. Thanks to this wonderful, exotic, beautiful woman I realized that life was worth living after all.

Its funny isn't it? I mean how one minute we can be full of utter despair and contempt for our own existence and the next be raised up and filled with awe and wonder at the world around us. And once again all because of a woman. It was a woman that broke my heart and a woman that restored it. This story might even seem to some like it has a romantic ending, if somewhat ironic one. And what of the angelic Amy who delivered me from my hell? Oh she's still here somewhere. Or at least what's left of her. She got a good portion of her torso and a bit of her femur and, well I just had to save that beautiful head.

What? Ducks quack; dogs bark and werewolves kill and eat people. Who did you think was telling this story Walt 'fucking' Disney? And when I'm done here; I think I'm gonna go and sort those fuckers out at Lycanthropes Anonymous.