

PROLOGUE...

The animal, or whatever it was, kept ripping at the flesh on her right arm. She screamed hysterically but Deke wasn't there. Where was he? It was in the middle of the night. Lani looked at her other arm, which was bleeding profusely. Then it took another swipe at her, ripping off the top of her nightgown and leaving deep, gushing scratches on her chest. At this rate, she thought, she would bleed to death. She could feel fur rubbing against her skin, and she cringed at the thought of what this might be.

The beast stood back as if it wanted to taunt her, making Lani wonder just what part of the body it would attack next. Even in the darkness of their bedroom, she could see fierce yellow eyes trained on her, and behind them must be some kind of sick brain that was deliberating its next move. There were snarls mixed with deep growls that scared the life out of her, causing her legs to weaken.

She began to buckle. The demon caught her and decided to take the opportunity to sink its fangs into her shoulder.

Lani shrieked in pain again but after this latest attack her strength returned, which she used to push away from her attacker. She didn't remember getting out of bed, but she was standing on her side, which meant that the bathroom was just behind her. She turned and vaulted through the door, almost falling into the shower. The curtains were open, drying from when she and Deke had showered together earlier. She hurried to lock the door.

Complete quiet. Maybe it had given up but she doubted that. Lani took inventory of her wounds and determined she wasn't bleeding as much as she thought at first, but the night-light wasn't very bright so she couldn't really see that well. The pain was agonizing, and she knew she

was still losing blood and could lose consciousness if this continued. God, where was Deke? At that moment the door shattered.

The wood splintered like it was nothing, hitting Lani in the face and upper torso. She had been holding up what was left of her nightgown but let it go in the turmoil of being buffeted by the door's destruction. She was completely nude now and the thing stood in front of her and...gawked? "What do you want from me?" she blurted out, connecting directly with the animal's eyes. There was a moment of hesitation, almost as if it wanted to answer her.

But there was no answer, just more ululation.

Lani backed away, trying to put space between her and this savage that didn't seem in any big hurry to finish the job. It gave her the opportunity to chance a quick look behind her and she saw the open closet. But what the hell good would that do, she thought? It would just smash through the door again. She had boxed herself in with nowhere to go. "I'm naked and I don't want to die this way," she was sobbing uncontrollably now, something she rarely did.

And then it moved closer.

Standing her ground, the creature suddenly lunged forward with claws extended, fangs bared and glowing eyes that seemed to anesthetize her for what it was going to do. Temporarily bridled by fright, in a second she snapped out of her stupor and bolted sideways toward the toilet. Lani's nemesis plunged through the open closet door, letting out a high-pitched wail that curdled her blood. Then it let out a roar and she slammed the door.

Lani headed back into the bedroom to try and find out why Deke wasn't coming to her rescue. She flipped on the lamp on his side of the bed and screamed as she saw him lying there, saturated with blood. Both of his arms had been ripped off at the shoulder and there was a huge

gape in his chest exposing the cavity where his heart had been. He was missing a head. The animal had artfully mounted it on the top of the bedside lamp.

“Oh God, oh God,” she repeated over and over.

That’s when she heard the closet door being demolished as the slasher started for the bedroom. It moved through the bathroom, gnashing its canines in a fury that petrified Lani to the point she was unable to move, literally pinned against the wall. Moving around the bed, the beast grabbed one of Deke’s arms and flung it across the room. She squealed in terror as she realized what was about to happen to her.

And then it grabbed her with claws that sunk into her body with more excruciating pain and she realized she was being attacked by a werewolf.

Lani felt a jolt to her body as she was finally jerked back to reality, trembling as she took her hand off the Death card from the Tarot deck in front of her. “That was too real,” she said out loud, when the bell on the shop door signaled her scheduled client was here for a reading. That was a werewolf, she confirmed in her thoughts, but what does it have to do with me?