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Product Code A0559-F

Werewolf at Bay

by Jeffrey T. Heyer

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Werewolf at Bay

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CHARACTERS

6 M / 2 W

STUART MORGAN; *large, athletic, with a passionate face haunted by confusion and dread*

VICTOR; *tall, pale, thin scientist of great intellect, now in a half alive state*

ILSE; *attractive young woman with a kind of feral innocence, yet afflicted with an inhuman inheritance*

YEAGER; *middle-aged bounty hunter; brutal, assured, blunt and very mercenary*

FLACK; *wild young woman living out her fantasies of violence and power by training under Yeager to become a bounty hunter*

GERHARD KLIMT; *young, ambitious, fit, educated plain-clothes detective from Lucerne*

LLYWELYN RHYS; *weather-beaten man in his mid-fifties with a deeply lined and badly scarred face, a patch over one eye, a missing arm and a decided limp; a former Police Inspector from Cardiff, Wales, out to kill the beast that ruined him*

THE BEAST; *Stuart Morgan's animal side; there is a touch of nobility in the beast, for it is the gateway to all the hidden wonders of the psyche, but it is a primitive, ruthless animal, as resistless as a tidal wave*

SETTING

A windowless chamber in an ancient building somewhere in Switzerland

TIME

The 'Forties': or, if you prefer, any time thereafter

ETC

The House of the Moon is a period piece of stylish horror set in the nineteen forties. An atmospheric mystery in which monsters from European legend (and Hollywood movies) take us just far enough from our waking reality to allow us to actually enjoy facing the mysteries and horrors of our human psyches. As Prof. Leonard Wolf put it in the introduction to his book *Monsters: Why monsters?* Anyone who dreams at all, or who is lonely, or who owns a mirror that tells too much of the truth too much of the time, knows the answer...The monster is a message in our sleep from someone or something trying to tell us how to love, or what to hate. Most of the time, the monster is fear, raw and hungry, taking shapes that almost teach us what we need to know – until we wake up, or turn reasonable or pretend that the foul beast on its haunches sitting there is an optical illusion. The monsters in this book have a certain dignity because, taken together, they represent several thousand years' worth of strange messages from within. But just because these beasts and things have familiar shapes, it would not be wise to treat them lightly. Their very familiarity is a clue to their power.

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Act One, Scene One

SETTING: *It is early in a sharp fall evening in the 1940s. Somewhere in Switzerland there is an ancient building. We are in a windowless, stonewalled chamber of that building. It is a gray, colorless place, devoid of decoration. There is a doorway leading toward an exit from the building, another leading deeper into the structure and another which leads to a crypt and is kept shut. Within the chamber there is an old-fashioned writing desk, an old chair set in the shadows, and against one wall some disused furniture covered with a sheet to keep off the dust during decades of storage.*

AT RISE: *From somewhere outside, far in the distance, comes a lone wolf call. VICTOR, a tall, pale, thin man clad in simple black clothing sits on the chair in the shadows, his head in his hands, motionless as the furniture. If possible, he, like his possessions, is covered with dust. The wind moans through other parts of the building increasing the sense of desolate isolation.*

In comes MORGAN, a large, athletic man in a slightly outdated double-breasted tan suit and hat, carrying a cane with a heavy silver head. He has a passionate face haunted by confusion and dread. He carries an old map. MORGAN moves cautiously, ready for danger.

MORGAN

Are you the Doctor?

(VICTOR does not respond)

Are you the Doctor?

VICTOR gives no sign that he is aware of the intruder. MORGAN looks around for some indication that he has indeed found the place he has been seeking.

He sees that the room is virtually barren – yielding no indication that it is even inhabited. He examines papers from the desk, keeping an eye on VICTOR, but VICTOR does not react. Dust sifts from the papers he lifts – old notes which tell him nothing. MORGAN returns to VICTOR.

MORGAN

Won't you help me, please? I've come a long way. If anyone can help me, it's you.

(Frustrated, he seizes the man by the lapels and snarls)

What's the matter with you? I've crossed a continent to find you....

(He flings down the old map)

...wandered through the Alps.... You can't just...

VICTOR slowly raises his head to look up at MORGAN. VICTOR's eyes are dull like a dead man's and his stare makes MORGAN's hot blood run cold. MORGAN releases him and backs off. He speaks with respect.

MORGAN

Sir, I followed every clue I could find to track you.

VICTOR

(Dryly)

Quite the hunter.

MORGAN

(Suddenly very angry)

What do you mean by that?

VICTOR

How long did it take you to find this place?

MORGAN

(Evasively)

Years.

VICTOR

How many years?

MORGAN

You might not believe me if I told you.

VICTOR

(Speaking in a dry, desolate monotone)

I have no beliefs, Mr. Morgan. Only provisional theories that change with the available data.

MORGAN

How do you know my name?

VICTOR

There are not so many like you, Mr. Morgan. I have collected unusual information for “many years.” The mind cannot rest from collecting data except to collate.

(Sighs)

Endless collation.

MORGAN

(Unsure what to make of this)

You know something of me, then. You know why I am here?

VICTOR

Death.

MORGAN

Death?

With an abrupt movement VICTOR flicks open MORGAN's coat. We see that MORGAN wears a pistol in a shoulder holster, a large knife in a belt sheath and three metal spikes hanging from loops inside the coat.

VICTOR

Yours. Or mine. You are a desperate man, Mr. Morgan. If I do not help you, my own survival will be at stake. Is that not so?

MORGAN

I do not intend to leave here until you help me.

VICTOR

And you are on a strict timetable. If I do not solve your little problem in less than a month, nature will take its course. And nature is ruthless.

MORGAN

You understand my problem?

VICTOR

(With the ghost of a smile)

I am aware of it – that is not the same thing. Do you think you can threaten me into helping you?

MORGAN

You must help me.

VICTOR

For the sake of innocent lives? Have you any concept of the deep well of bitterness my years in this society have engendered? I have never been a conformist, Mr. Morgan. I was once something of an idealist. I was a child at the time, of course. Our society does not like nonconformists does it?

MORGAN

Are you...? Were you...?

VICTOR

What, Mr. Morgan? My skin is white, so I have not been subjected to racial prejudice – except, of course, from people whose skin is not white. Am I – was I – homosexual? My sexual history has been more or less orthodox, but yes, I have been subjected to hatred, fear, loathing and subsequent violence for being perceived as homosexual, heterosexual, sexless and sexist; for being a Nazi, a Communist, a Capitalist, an anarchist, a Jeffersonian Democrat, a populist and an elitist. I have been insulted and assaulted for being too rich, too poor, too educated, too ignorant, too dull, too frightening, too average, too different. I have been in this twilight world so long I have been accused of everything. No man is my friend, no woman my lover and no child my own. Perhaps if you could point out to me some innocents I might interest myself in saving them as a rare and endangered species. But people in general have worn out their welcome with me. You, on the other hand, are.... something different.

(He considers)

If the mind does not have a sufficiently engulfing goal, it fixes on old memories. Replays them, rewords old arguments, as if it could refight old battles, convince old rivals, deter old enemies. But a brilliant argument flawlessly couched is useless in retrospect. I can never convince them. They are memories. They cannot change their minds.

MORGAN

But you remember your studies – even after all these years.... your experiments...

VICTOR

Experiments. Life is experiments. I remember that. Hmm. Can two such predators make an alliance? Or must they kill each other? Yes. I will experiment. I will help you. You might be interesting. Where to begin?

MORGAN

I was bitten in 19...

VICTOR

We have all been bitten by something. And time is irrelevant here. Let us eliminate ground which has already been explored. How have you tried to overcome your problem?

MORGAN

Over the years several gifted scientists have tried to cure me through hypnosis, brain surgery, tinctures of the Marifasa plant. Sooner or later, I always revert.

VICTOR

Yet you had an idea I could help. You crossed a continent and an undisclosed number of years to find me.

MORGAN

You have done things no one has duplicated. Experimented, learned the secrets of the ebb and flow of life. Could you...could you.... drain my life energy and bring me death?

VICTOR

There is a way. If I time it correctly, I can prevent you from stalking. But I cannot free you that way.

MORGAN

It doesn't matter. I'll stay here. You can repeat the process?

VICTOR

Perhaps indefinitely. You would remain – like a dog chained to my laboratory?

MORGAN

Perhaps indefinitely. It's been growing worse over the years. My.... transformations can be triggered now at any time.

VICTOR

Interesting. Have you any medical records from these earlier attempts at a cure? Tolerances to drugs – that sort of thing?

MORGAN takes a folded and worn file from his coat pocket. Clearly he has carefully protected and carried this object for years, and is as reluctant to hand it to this stranger as he is eager to gain his help.

VICTOR

Choose, Mr. Morgan.

MORGAN hands him the file. VICTOR flips it open and gives its contents a quick, professional scan.

VICTOR

Hm. Novel approach.

(Skips to another section of the file and reads a bit)

I trust this fellow paid a heavy price for wasting your time?

(Skips to another doctor's records in the file)

Wrong track but good technique.

He reads further while wandering about the room. MORGAN fidgets in near agony. VICTOR rhetorically addresses the doctor who wrote the file entry he is currently reading.

VICTOR, Continued

Thank you, Doctor, that's what I wanted.

(Skips quickly through the rest then closes the file)

I will return this when I have appended my own notes. That will not take place until the end of the experiment. Judge me by my results if you wish my aid.

MORGAN

Very well.

VICTOR starts to move away with the file but MORGAN seizes him by the sleeve and stares into his face with dangerous eyes, one hand inside his weapon-filled coat.

MORGAN, Continued

But how do I know you are the man I seek?

VICTOR eyes him silently. He moves to the heap of covered furniture near the wall, grasps the sheet covers and whips them free revealing a very large medical table which pivots on a central axis so that its occupant may be examined supine or nearly upright. Various pieces of exotic chemical and electrical machinery of an oddly out-of-date appearance surround the table or are attached to it. VICTOR gives MORGAN a moment to take in the sight.

VICTOR

My credentials.

After a moment he gestures toward the apparatus and starts to ask about VICTOR's past experiments.

MORGAN

Did you really...

VICTOR

My history is not a happy one. I will not go through it again with you.

MORGAN

If you are that man....

VICTOR

Do you remember the myth of Prometheus the Titan? He brought a spark of divine fire down to earth to relieve the darkness in which mortal man was forced to dwell. The Gods were jealous of their enlightenment and chained Prometheus to the living rock of Mother Earth. They sent an eagle to tear open his living flesh and feast upon his liver. Being a Titan, he did not die. Gradually, his terrible wound closed. And the next day the eagle returned to rip him open again. By and large, humankind has learnt to emulate the Gods only in their preference for tormenting the light-bringer rather than being enlightened by his gift. And that is all I will say about my experiments.

MORGAN

Doctor...

VICTOR

Call me Victor.

MORGAN

Call me Stuart.

VICTOR

You have gone by other names in other countries.

MORGAN

I am Stuart Morgan now. I need to remind myself of it.

VICTOR

Very well, Stuart.

MORGAN

Before we...proceed, I must know something more about you.

VICTOR

Why?

MORGAN

It matters to me. I've heard things about you. Not just about the experiment. After. Rumors of your death many years ago.

VICTOR

Yet you found me.

MORGAN

Eventually. Along the way, I also found rumors that you were glimpsed here and there after your supposed death. Rumors that you were still alive somewhere, but that you have not seen the light of day for.... a very long time.

VICTOR

Nor shall I.

MORGAN pulls out a hand mirror and looks into it, angling it toward VICTOR.

MORGAN

I can see your reflection.

VICTOR

(Looking into the mirror for a moment)

Curious. I see nothing.

MORGAN

What does that mean?

VICTOR

Nothing. Do you want my help?

MORGAN

There is something not right about you and I need to know what it is.

VICTOR

Accept my help. Or try to destroy me. There will be consequences either way. Choose, Stuart.

MORGAN

Help me.

VICTOR

There is something you must do, first. I need an assistant. I cannot recruit in the usual way.

MORGAN

How can I help?

VICTOR

I never leave this place. I need you to post a letter for me. And play a part in a deception.

MORGAN

(Alarmed)

What is in your mind?

VICTOR

It would be best if my assistant were of the same blood as myself. Of course, all the surviving members of my line have heard and believed the stories of my demise. None of them know I have returned to Europe.

MORGAN

I don't understand.

VICTOR tries to write on a paper on his writing desk, but has to discard several of his old pens and ink bottles before he can find something which will still write.

VICTOR

There is one who bears my name who will suit my purposes.

(Indicating the useless pens and dried up ink bottles on the desk)

I will need you to bring in some fresh supplies. You will wish to avoid allowing the local merchants or anyone else in the vicinity from realizing that you are staying here. They believe the place deserted, which will continue to suit both of us. Ah, here is something which still works in this place.

(Writing)

This is the name and address to which you must write. Inform her that you wish to purchase this property from her. As far as she knows, it is a disused family holding. Ask to meet her at the entrance to look over the building together. I expect you will find her willing enough. Contrive to guide her through the passages to this place.

MORGAN

Guide her? It's like a labyrinth in here. How big is this castle?

VICTOR

I have no idea. I no longer venture into the lower dungeons.

MORGAN

There are more rooms below us?

VICTOR

Cut deep into the living rock. I do not know how deep.

MORGAN

More places to get lost in.

VICTOR

Stick to the ground floor. Bring her here.

MORGAN

I'm not sure I can find my way back to this chamber.

VICTOR

Find your way by scent if you have to.

MORGAN

(Scowling)
That isn't funny.

VICTOR

I am not much of a humorist. I want the girl here.

MORGAN

I'm not sure I like the sound of that.

VICTOR

You are concerned for her?

MORGAN

Frankly, yes.

VICTOR absorbs this, his eyes moving clinically over MORGAN's tense features.

VICTOR

Bring her to me. She is essential.

MORGAN

Convince me.

VICTOR

Go.

MORGAN

Understand me, Doctor. Nothing happens to this girl.

VICTOR

Something will happen. Something will always happen. I do not intend harm to her. She is already one of my own.

MORGAN

I mean it, Doctor. If anything happens to her that I don't like...

VICTOR

You will come hunting for me.

MORGAN

I always bring down my prey.

VICTOR

Yes. I rather expect that you do. According to my sources, you were in the Carpathian Mountains when Bathory and Thorko were dispatched there. Considering what happened to them, I hardly think your presence a coincidence. A strange man who fit your description – but with another name – was in Finland a year ago – were you the one who rid the earth of Thorolf as well? And perhaps Ziska in Catalonia?

MORGAN

You have some very interesting sources.

VICTOR

You have no idea. They described the condition of the bodies. Am I correct? Were Bathory and Thorko your handiwork?

MORGAN

And Thorolf.

VICTOR

And Ziska? She was a particularly nasty bit of business – as was her demise.

MORGAN

I stopped them all. I – or the beast.

VICTOR

Now, now. It is dangerous to think of it as separate from yourself.

MORGAN

It is! I was bitten – an infection...

VICTOR

I am familiar with the means. But what you call “the beast” is a part of you – of me – of all of us. We are individuals, responsible for our choices, yet each of us carries within our psyches and our cells the pattern of every form we have outgrown. The “infection,” as you term it, released a part of you normally kept under lock and key so deep in your psyche you never even perceived it until it erupted into violence.

MORGAN

None of that really matters.

VICTOR

It does.

MORGAN

What matters now is that if any harm comes to this girl from you, I will set the beast on your trail.

VICTOR

Then watch her closely, Mr. Morgan. Be her guardian. Her shadow. I must have this woman as my assistant or the experiment is impossible.

MORGAN considers, then takes up the pen and paper and begins to write. VICTOR looks over his shoulder.

VICTOR, *Continued*

Very good. The name of this place is Labrys – The House of the Axe. She will know where it is. When you post this, see that no one follows you back.

VICTOR returns to his chair and sits, as at the beginning, face in hands. MORGAN regards him and then the letter, then commits to his choice and leaves to post it. LIGHTS OUT

Act One, Scene Two

AT RISE: *The machinery is again under the sheet. Victor is gone. Morgan ushers in ILSE, an attractive young woman in expensive, tasteful clothing. She introduces the first bit of color into the scene. Despite fashion or politics, she wears a fur. There is a certain innocent, animal-like grace to her movements.*

ILSE

(Charming him)

There you go again, Stuart. You must call me Ilse. None of us go by the family name.

MORGAN

Well, Ilse, here we are.

ILSE

And where is here? This room looks as empty as all the others. Tell me again how you come to know the layout of all these corridors?

MORGAN

(Smiling charmingly)

You've caught me. I was so certain I could persuade you to sell the place that I took the liberty of finding a way in and exploring.

ILSE

I suppose I should be glad enough to be rid of the place – you must know it has a bad reputation?

MORGAN

I've heard some stories.

ILSE

You intrigue me. What on earth do you want it for? It has the strangest architecture – so many additions – remodelings over the centuries – it is hardly practical for anything. And its history really is as terrible as people say. Can't you feel it?

She moves close to him and stares into his eyes.

MORGAN

I feel it.

She smiles a little and moves away. She is about to lift the sheet from the surgical table when he distracts her.

MORGAN

I like the structure. It's fascinating. I'd never think of tearing it all down. I think a lot could be learned by the right people studying this place.

ILSE

And you know the right people? You don't feel like an archaeologist to me.

MORGAN

(Shrugging)

Sort of a hobby. I could hire experts.

ILSE

A wealthy man's eccentricity?

MORGAN

If you like.

ILSE

(Laying a hand delicately on his sleeve)

You are not a wealthy man, are you, Stuart? It's all right – I don't value a man by the size of his bank account.

(Perfectly at ease)

You lured me into this maze with some ulterior motive. I can't help but be curious. You could never afford to purchase property. Is that your only suit?

MORGAN

I get by all right.

ILSE

I am sure you do. What is it you want from me?

He stares at her – she looks so innocent and appealing. His hand reaches out of its own accord and he finds himself gently stroking the backs of his fingers down the fur she wears.

MORGAN

It was you, not the property. I had to meet you.

ILSE

Because of my last name? My family heritage?

MORGAN

I was drawn to you. I'd like to do something for you. I would take this place off your hands if I could. But you are right. It isn't easy for me to lay my hands on money these days.

ILSE

(She laughs a little)

That's good. I couldn't imagine a man choosing that suit to meet me if he had any others.

MORGAN

What's wrong with it? I like this suit.

ILSE

You feel like a traveler to me – no, a wanderer.

(She runs a hand lightly down his sleeve)

So you have no roots. You are adrift. Looking for some connection to a world in which you have lost your place?

MORGAN

Something like that. I like your fur.

ILSE

Thank you. What else do you like?

MORGAN

All of you.

ILSE

You haven't seen all of me.

MORGAN

I'd like to – to know you better.

ILSE

Is that why you lured me into an abandoned building on a lonely hillside away from the nearest town?

MORGAN

I suppose it is. I know you don't know who I am – everything I told you was a lie – but I do like you. And I think you can help me. I was told you could help me and now that I've met you I believe it to be true.

ILSE

You are the strangest man.

MORGAN

Yet you're not afraid of me, are you? Lost in this maze of hallways and antechambers, no one for miles, luring you here under false pretenses.... You're not the least bit scared, are you?

ILSE

I don't believe you could hurt me, Stuart. But why would I help you?

MORGAN

Because I need you. And because I feel that you will.

ILSE

(She laughs)

Is that your whole argument? The best persuasion you can offer?

(She moves close to him again, resting her hand on his chest)

The only thing stopping me is curiosity.

He looks down at her, very much attracted, yet her strange attitude does not make sense to him and he is afraid he is about to lose her interest. He impulsively takes her to the sheet and flings it back from the machinery. She backs a step.

ILSE

It was for my family heritage.

MORGAN

I know you can help me.

ILSE

These experiments never helped anyone. They opened a door into a world of suffering you cannot imagine.

MORGAN

Oh, but I can.

ILSE

(Regarding him)

Yes. You are trapped there, too. That's what it is about you. I should stop this. It never ends well.

MORGAN

I've got to keep trying.

ILSE

I cannot help you. I was never a scientist. I steered clear of that part of my heritage, at least.

MORGAN

But Victor told me you could assist....

ILSE

Victor? The Victor who...shares my last name? You've seen him? He has been dead for a long time.

MORGAN

(Shaking his head)

He's here. Somewhere in this complex. He'll show you what to do.

ILSE

He's done enough already.

MORGAN

No, you don't understand how far I've gone...the clues I scabbled for...how many years I've struggled with this thing...

ILSE

No. I don't understand. You are what you are. We are all what others have made us. There is no changing.

MORGAN

There must be. There must be.

ILSE

(Moving into his arms)

There is only one thing I can do for you....

She regards him with big, innocent eyes, then tilts her head. He leans down for a kiss. VICTOR appears in an entranceway and stops them with his voice.

VICTOR

Ilse.

They look at him. MORGAN releases her. She does not release him or change her position, except to turn her face toward VICTOR.

ILSE

It is you. You want to bring me into this, too.

VICTOR

Come, Ilse.

ILSE

I can stop this right now.

VICTOR

Come.

She looks up at VICTOR, her face afire with defiance, then looks up at MORGAN.

ILSE

I could do it, you know.

VICTOR

Come here.

ILSE releases MORGAN and moves to VICTOR's side. VICTOR raises the hypodermic in his hand.

VICTOR

I have been preparing in another room.

He gestures toward the table.

VICTOR, *Continued*

If you please, Mr. Morgan.

MORGAN hesitates, then pivots the table upright and steps up onto it. VICTOR presses all the bubbles out of the oddly colored fluid within the hypo.

MORGAN

That won't do any good. When the rage is on me, it burns any drug out of my system...

VICTOR

This is very potent. It will sedate you while the operation is underway. If I am successful, the rage will not transform you.

MORGAN

Then you can use this machinery to draw off my life-force.

VICTOR

Explanations later.

(Turning to ILSE)

While he sleeps I will make clear your part in this.

They lock eyes a moment.

ILSE

As you wish.

MORGAN has been getting groggy and loses consciousness. The LIGHTS DIM as we hear VICTOR's electronically distorted voice.

VICTOR

Quickly, Ilse. The moon is rising.

BLACKOUT.

Act One, Scene Three

AT RISE: *MORGAN stirs restlessly on the table, which is now in the prone position. We hear a voice from his dream.*

VOICE OF RHYS

Identify yourself. This is Inspector Llywelyn Rhys of Cardiff. I repeat, come out of the shadows and identify yourself!

(We hear a ferocious animal snarl)

My God!

MORGAN awakes abruptly and the sound breaks off. He is disoriented and has some difficulty in sitting up. He rubs his throat, which is sore, and licks his dry lips with a pasty tongue. He discovers that there is a bandage around one of his wrists, which is also sore. He looks around, absently rubbing his wrist. There is no sign of the others. He gets to his feet, a little unsteadily, and moves leadenly about the room, peering out each entranceway for a sign of the others. Seeing nothing, he pulls out his watch.

MORGAN

AM or PM?

(Looks at the backs of his hands and rubs them; feels his face)

I need a shave. *(Laughs)* I need a shave! It's daytime. I didn't transform. It worked! Whatever he did worked!

MORGAN puts a hand on the table to steady himself and blinks, dizzily. His eyes fall on a plate of food, a bottle of wine and a carafe of water set out on the writing desk. He drinks thirstily straight from the carafe, then pours some wine and attacks the food voraciously.

Taking more food to nibble and wine to drink, he moves about the room looking for clues to help him understand these strange people and the situation into which he has intruded himself.

On one wall he finds a heraldic display with swords crossed behind a shield embossed with Victor's family crest. MORGAN is puzzled as he does not remember any decoration in the room when first he arrived – indeed, there was none.

MORGAN pulls a sheet from another wall hanging, revealing a large mirror. He looks in the mirror and an image appears – not his reflection as we see him, but a werewolf. Though shaggy and lupine, the figure stands quiet and dignified, dressed in a kempt, even stylish suit. There is no blood on its teeth or claws. It is as much man as animal.

MORGAN reels back in shock. The figure mirrors his movements, but with none of the dismay evident in MORGAN's body language. MORGAN forces himself to move closer to the mirror, staring in amazement and horror at his alter ego. He covers the mirror again, then moves away, his sense of reality shaken.

MORGAN, Continued

What kind of drugs did you give me, Doctor?

MORGAN looks about the room again and moves to the one closed door. With some difficulty he manages to force it open. What appear to be stars in a night sky shine from beyond. Even more disoriented, since he had come to the conclusion that it was daytime, he moves back from the door and looks at his watch again. The door closes by itself. MORGAN gauges the growth of his beard once more, looking at himself in his pocket mirror. Certain that it is not night, he returns to the door and tries to open it again but cannot.

He moves away to continue his search, but there is nothing else to find in the room. He looks out the doorway through which he originally entered, but decides not to go out into the maze of other rooms beyond. He moves back to the heraldic display and removes one of the swords. He tests the blade and finds it to be good, sharp steel. He uses it – and a good deal of brute force – to pry open the stuck door.

The illusion of a starry sky beyond the re-opened door proves upon closer inspection to be a wheeled screen painted like a night-time horizon with light coming through pinpricks in the screen. He rolls it aside. Beyond is a single standing lamp like the ghost-light of a theater. There is also a closed casket.

MORGAN looks back at the table and its machinery, then at the casket. He tries to open it, but it is sealed. He uses the sword to pry the lid free. MORGAN lifts the casket lid and sees within the lifeless body of VICTOR. He is shocked and steps back, then lunges impulsively forward with the sword as if intending to drive it through the body.

MORGAN stops himself, troubled. He closes the coffin, replaces the screen, shuts the door and paces about the room, sword in hand, unsure what to do.

There is a sound from the door leading back into the building. MORGAN spins toward the door, half crouched, immediately ready to leap at an enemy. He listens intently. He starts to speak.

MORGAN, *Continued*

Ilse...

He stops himself, shaking his head, certain she is not the person approaching. Abruptly, two figures burst into the room. They are a middle-aged man and a younger woman: YEAGER and FLACK, both dressed in heavy-duty all-weather clothing, including unzipped jackets which reveal Kevlar bullet-proof vests underneath. Both level short, close-range shotguns at MORGAN and are well-armed with sheath-knives, holstered pistols and ammunition pouches.

YEAGER

Don't move! Don't move! Hands in the air!

FLACK

Drop the blade! Show me your hands, now!

MORGAN sets aside the sword.

YEAGER

Stuart Morgan? AKA Morgan Stuart, AKA Lou Channing, AKA Art Lawrence? You are under arrest.

MORGAN

You aren't police. You're not even Swiss. Who are you?

YEAGER

We're authorized agents of the civil authorities and we're taking you in.

FLACK

Don't make me shoot, Morgan, I'll do it in a second. I'm not takin' any chances with you – I know what you've done.

MORGAN

You're bounty hunters. You've been tracking me since Paris.

FLACK

Way before Paris – since America, man. You've cut quite a swath since then.

YEAGER

He doesn't need to know our business.

FLACK

No, I want him to know I've seen what he does to people. I'm ready for him and I ain't takin' no chances.

MORGAN

And you want to take me back to America? How? In those handcuffs? By plane?

YEAGER

What? You wanta' approve the itinerary? Put on the cuffs and we won't shoot you – maybe. That's all you need to know.

FLACK

Do it, man!

MORGAN

You can't do this!

YEAGER

We're doing it! Put on the cuffs!

YEAGER lunges forward and strikes MORGAN in the head with the shotgun, then jumps back and levels it at him again. MORGAN claps a hand to the bleeding wound and staggers back upright.

MORGAN

You don't understand! Do you think I want to do those things? I tried to lock myself away, but it always gets out – and now it's starting to happen whenever I get mad or.... It's not connected to the lunar cycle anymore.

YEAGER

Shut the hell up and put on the cuffs or it'll get worse for you.

MORGAN

If you put me on an airplane, those cuffs won't stop it. It'll come out and tear up you and everyone on the plane!

YEAGER

Can it! Cuffs! Now!

FLACK

You just don't want to pay up, Yeager. I won the bet! Morgan, here, or whatever his real name is, is a bona fide lycanthrope.

YEAGER

Don't start with that.

FLACK

I told you. This proves it. He's no run of the mill murderer. He really believes the full moon makes him kill people. Hell, maybe it does, somehow. You did some time in a nut house, didn't you, Morgan? Isn't that what the head shrink called you: lycanthrope? Come on, man, I got money riding on this – you're toast either way, so why not make me happy and spill it?

MORGAN

I can't let you take me.

YEAGER

I'm not tellin' you again – it's the cuffs or you get every round I got loaded. We're takin' you in. Dead is just a little less money.

FLACK

That's the way it is, wolf-boy.

MORGAN

I've been shot before. You're not the first hunters to come after me, you know.

YEAGER

Yeah, we're just the best.

This time FLACK jumps in and beats MORGAN brutally with the shotgun, kicking him repeatedly once he's down. MORGAN groans, but is unable to put up a struggle. FLACK cuffs him, then pulls him to his feet and backs off, shotgun aimed again.

YEAGER

Not bad, kid. Don't let him bite ya.

FLACK

Come on, ya crazy bastard. Your crime spree is at an end. It's up to you now. You wanta end up fryin' slowly on the electric chair – or stuffed on my mantelpiece.

YEAGER

(Slapping MORGAN around a little for amusement)

Not so tough now, huh?

FLACK

Yeah, what happened to "It doesn't have to be the full moon anymore, I turn into a wolf and kill people whenever I get mad." Huh? What's the matter? Aren't we makin' you mad enough?

MORGAN

The doctor... the treatment – it worked. But it won't last! For your own sakes, you better listen! I'll turn – sooner or later! You can't put me in prison! You can't put me on a plane!

YEAGER

He's just a coward like all of 'em. Gutless, once you've got the drop on 'em.

FLACK

If ever you needed to turn into a wolf, this would be it. I'll give ya 30 seconds, then we haul your ass out of here and put you on a plane.

MORGAN

I can't let you! I can't let you! God, I need the wolf. It's got to be in me – it's got to come out.

FLACK

Here, wolfy, wolfy. Nope. Nothin'. You're toast.

Desperate, MORGAN tries to summon his rage and fight, but he is too drained. FLACK and YEAGER both club him down. FLACK starts to drag MORGAN toward the exit. The door to the crypt opens and there stands VICTOR, his coat off, held in one hand by its collar.

VICTOR

Good evening, gentlemen.

FLACK swings MORGAN around as a human shield between herself and VICTOR, her weapon pressed against her prisoner. YEAGER moves back into the room, weapon aimed at VICTOR, positioning himself so that VICTOR cannot attack both bounty hunters at the same time and so that the two hunters are not in each other's line of fire. VICTOR is relaxed.

YEAGER

Down! Down on the floor! Now! Get down on the floor, now!

FLACK

Do what he says and no one gets hurt!

VICTOR

Stop yelling, please, I do not like noise. I am not lying on the floor, and you are not taking my patient, but I dislike being shot, so I will allow you to leave, now.

FLACK

Recognize this guy? I can't make him.

YEAGER

He's not on any wanted poster I've seen, but what kind of creep lets a twisted piece of garbage like Stu, here, into his house?

(To VICTOR)

And what the hell are you doing in an abandoned building anyway? You must be wanted for something!

VICTOR

It isn't abandoned. I take it by your accoutrement and general lack of social graces that you are bounty hunters. How did you track down my guest?

FLACK

It wasn't that hard.

*YEAGER suddenly explodes in a fury –
nevertheless keeping his aim tight on VICTOR.*

YEAGER

Shut up, Flack! Jeez, I wish my first partner hadn't a' got his fool head shot off! Selfish bastard – leavin' me stuck with a rookie! And a damn woman! And a double-damned bloodthirsty woman who won't shut her God damned mouth!

FLACK

(Addressing VICTOR)

Yeager's got a mean mouth on him, but he's got a point: your buddy here is a repeat killer. Wiped out a biker gang in Arizona – tore up some crime bosses in France. Not to mention a man here, a woman there who just seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

VICTOR

What are you suggesting?

YEAGER

(His fury tucked away out of sight again)

The little punk is "suggesting" that normal people don't like to hang out with psychos like Stu, here. Why are you hiding this bona fide...? What is that word, Flack? Lycanthrope?

FLACK

That's right. And you owe me a hundred bucks for it.

(To VICTOR)

Your good buddy here couldn't handle being a whole man so he split off part of his personality. Thinks he turns into a wolf. Your best pal, here, gets into biting, clawing, lapping up blood – that kind of thing. Not pretty.

VICTOR

If what you say is true, the authorities must be offering a great deal of money for him.

FLACK

Especially since the cops can't seem to catch up with him.

YEAGER

(Disgusted)

Cops!

FLACK

(Very full of herself – proving she's the toughest man-hunter in the world)
FBI, Surete, Interpol – none of 'em.

VICTOR

But you tracked him here.

YEAGER

(Amused)

We don't play by the rules. Sue us.

YEAGER signals FLACK who attempts to cow both the prisoner and the unknown quantity in the doorway so that the bounty hunters can safely remove their catch without resistance.

FLACK

Don't try anything with us, psycho. See this?

(She slams MORGAN's head with the shotgun)

No kid gloves. Just so you know: Mr. Yeager, here, used to be with the French Foreign Legion.

YEAGER

Used to be.

FLACK

They threw him out for unnecessary roughness.

MORGAN

All right, we get it – you're tough, more than a match for anything you've ever seen. But there are things you've never seen and you don't want to.

YEAGER

My father died in the Ardennes. I've been there. Saw what the Great War did to the French. What the French and the Arabs did to each other in the desert. Bagged a warlord in Afghanistan. There's nothing I haven't seen. I'm just not weak-minded like you, lunatic. You got anything to say, Mr. Black? 'Cuz I'm going to take you along, too – see what we can find on you.

VICTOR

That should prove interesting. I will not resist.

YEAGER

Damn smart choice.

MORGAN

I'm not leaving this place. You have no idea how many years I've searched...

FLACK

That's right. They told us you were a copycat killer. When you aren't thinkin' you're a wolf, you think you're some dead psycho, don't you? What was that guy's name, Yeager? The guy they called The Welsh Horror?

YEAGER

Shut up! I've told you before, I just hunt them for the bounties, I don't collect their trading cards.

VICTOR

I am sorry, Stuart, but I am unarmed.

At an unhurried pace, so as not to alarm the bounty hunters, VICTOR raises his hands together before him to be cuffed.

VICTOR, *Continued*

I have never liked chains.

YEAGER carefully moves toward him, tugging a pair of handcuffs from its pouch on his belt. Abruptly, VICTOR flings his jacket into YEAGER's face and ducks low, plunging forward at the same time, so that YEAGER's shot goes over his head, and before YEAGER can re-aim, VICTOR is in too close, sweeping one hand up to seize the gun barrel and with surprising strength, rip it from YEAGER's grasp. VICTOR's other hand grabs the man by his lapels and swings him between himself and FLACK as the assistant bounty hunter shoves her prisoner aside, brings her shotgun to bear on VICTOR and fires. The shot catches YEAGER in the back and knocks him flat.

MORGAN, on his side on the floor, lashes out with a foot, catching FLACK behind the knee and knocking her forward, off balance. VICTOR springs in quickly, twists the shotgun from FLACK's hands, tossing it onto the medical table. FLACK whips out a large and lethal looking handgun, but VICTOR catches her wrist, seizes her shoulder with his other hand, and wrestles her back against the table. VICTOR bares his fangs and bites FLACK in the throat. FLACK's struggles grow weak.

YEAGER, saved by his body armor, begins to gasp air back into his lungs and struggles upright. He sees VICTOR killing FLACK, draws his sheath knife and kicks MORGAN in the stomach before MORGAN can warn VICTOR that he is coming. YEAGER attacks VICTOR from behind. VICTOR drops FLACK, spinning to intercept the charge, and knocks the onrushing man backward across the room. VICTOR is on him as he tries to rise, with one hand seizing YEAGER's wrist and holding the knife away to the side, and clamping his other hand around YEAGER's throat. The bounty hunter struggles, but cannot break VICTOR's grip as his throat is crushed and he strangles.

VICTOR drops the body then kneels and searches its pockets until he finds the keys to the cuffs. MORGAN has made it to his feet and VICTOR uncuffs him. They look into each other's eyes.

VICTOR

Yes. This is why I am still here after so many years. The reports of my death were not exaggerated. I am neither a mortal man, nor yet a Titan, but a shade – a remnant of what I was.

MORGAN

But you did help me. The moon is nearly full and I didn't transform. Even when they attacked me....

VICTOR

If you learn to control the wolf – bring it out only when you need it...

MORGAN

What are you saying? These were human beings!

VICTOR

Exactly: more deadly than any animal.

MORGAN

You can't just feed on them like.... like....

VICTOR

Like they feed on animals? Because they have souls? These bounty hunters, these profiteers of death? Everything has a soul, Stuart, even such desolate creatures as myself. A damaged, deadened thing, but a soul nevertheless.

MORGAN

But you studied the wonders of life...

VICTOR

By learning of death.

MORGAN

...and you just killed them.

VICTOR

They were lesser carnivora. If the rat bites the wolf, the rat will be eaten.

MORGAN picks up the sword he had dropped earlier and looks silently at VICTOR for a moment. VICTOR remains motionless.

MORGAN

(Quiet and dangerous)

Where is Ilse?

VICTOR

She went for something to eat.

MORGAN

If you are lying...

VICTOR

Do what you must, Mr. Morgan. I regret many things, Stuart. The loss of my humanity. Everything that led to that loss. But not the deaths of these killers. If innocence is in this world it is not in the likes of them.

MORGAN

I hope I never become so cold.

VICTOR

As do I, Stuart. The beast can keep you warm. You need hot blood to keep you alive. You need to be able to kill men like these when they come hunting for you.

MORGAN

(Shaking his head, unable to accept that)

You have been hunted, too. You must have done terrible things...

VICTOR

Yes. You see how I must take life since I have none of my own. So long as no one knows I am here, only those who track me can find me. For all my distrust of your word “innocents” I do not choose to prey on the general populace. I prefer to take the lives of those who seek me out.

MORGAN

Like me?

VICTOR

No one has sought my help in many dark years. But you did hunt down Bathory and others of my kind and put an end to them.

MORGAN

Because of what I am, I know things ordinary people never have to know – some of the horrible things that walk the earth, whether human or animal – or something else.

(He hefts the sword)

And I cannot die in the ordinary way. Once, shortly after I was bitten – after my first victims – when the wolf took over my body, it was struck down by a silver weapon. But when the full moon rose, so did the wolf. I have drowned and washed up alive again on the shore. Once, someone who cared for me melted down a crucifix that had been blessed by a priest and shot down the beast. But I woke to the sound of the first nail being driven into my coffin and broke open the lid.

(He looks from the weapon to VICTOR)

If I cannot rid the world of the beast inside me, I can use that ability to survive and my knowledge of the things that move in the dark places of the world to kill creatures worse than myself.

VICTOR

(Nods approvingly)

You have taken the first step. Now return to the antechamber. Ilse should be back, soon. Meanwhile, I prefer that you do not watch me feed.

Despite his mixed feelings, MORGAN returns the sword to the display and exits. VICTOR watches him go, then looks down at his victims. He is moving toward them when he hears a strange voice very much like his own, but muffled and distant.

VOICE

Victor.

Victor looks about, alert, mystified, but without any of the disbelief or horror displayed by MORGAN when he found the mirror.

Victor.

VOICE

VICTOR cocks his head as if listening, then moves to the wall and pulls the sheet from the mirror. In it he sees a version of himself – as he was earlier in his thirties, before he became a vampire, dressed in a doctor’s white smock. VICTOR stares, fascinated.

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VICTOR

I have been unable to see my reflection for decades. What are you?

VOICE

Release me.

VICTOR

How?

VOICE

Find me – and I will feed you.

VICTOR

I am blind with looking – tell me the way.

VOICE

I am where I am. Journey within.

VICTOR

I spend every night within these walls, searching. Where are you? How do I reach you?

VOICE

You must. You must.

The image fades from the mirror leaving it empty.

VICTOR

Again you taunt me. Turn to mist in my grasp. Leave me with nothing to go on but the need to go on.

He looks at the emptiness a moment. FLACK stirs slightly, starting to regain consciousness. VICTOR sees this and covers the mirror with the sheet again. Then he turns toward FLACK and closes in for the kill. LIGHTS FADE OUT.

Act Two, Scene One

AT RISE: *The dead bounty hunters are gone, of course. VICTOR has his arms about ILSE and is drinking blood from her neck. This does not seem to be a surrogate sexual act between these two, but there is something tender, in a ghostly way, about their embrace.*

Victor.

ILSE

VICTOR stops and disengages from her. He takes from the table a small bandage he had previously prepared, which he places over her wound. She covers it with a scarf.

It will be enough for you?

ILSE

For the night. You are all right?

VICTOR

Of course. When will Stuart come back?

ILSE

I expect it depends on how well he does. Perhaps not until the night before the full moon. I am sure he cannot control the wolf then.

VICTOR

I want him to come back.

ILSE

(Watching her closely)
He has human warmth. Animal fire.

VICTOR

(Playfully, though a little wan from the bloodletting)
Worried about me?

ILSE

Be careful.

VICTOR

ILSE

Aren't I always?

VICTOR

Far too seldom.

ILSE

Would you have me like you?

VICTOR

Never.

ILSE

He does have a very human warmth. This place needs it. I need it, after....

VICTOR

Yes. We must balance these energies carefully.

ILSE

Everything is experiments and science to you, isn't it? Even the three of us.

VICTOR

So long as I move, I think. My mind was a wonder and a blessing, once. Not to mention a rarity in a world which has seen too little thinking. Now it is an engine which never stops so long as I move. Without direction, the mind circles endlessly over old pain. I, too, wish Stuart would return, alive and struggling for redemption – wholeness. The mind only stops when the still moment comes in the dead of night. The sun is still far below the horizon – the earth is steeped in darkness – yet every prescient thing that wakes can feel the moment of change. That instant when the night stops moving deeper into darkness and begins to move toward light. I do not know how it is for all the walkers in darkness, but for me, no matter where I am, no matter what I am doing, when that one moment comes, the stillness takes me. I am kin to those specters whose hours are strictly allotted. When the night turns on the corner of that moment, this solid-seeming shape of nerves and bone and sinew melts from all sensation like a mist and at last, at last, the engine stops. No dreams. No sensation. No awareness. It is as if I were sucked back into the core of the earth, lost to all being. Until the shadows grow long again and awareness floats up from the deeps, and I am a motionless, thoughtless spirit, watching but unthinking in a cage of gristle and borrowed blood lying in my tomb. Then the shadows swallow up the sun and I arise, my power growing, my mind more restless with each passing moment. But without the wonder. Without the blessing. I am a land forever locked in winter.

ILSE

You should leave this place sometimes. Seek after life.

VICTOR

Do not tempt me. It took me years to build up this careful existence. My balance is brittle.

ILSE

You could hunt other predators, like Stuart did before he found you. Take life from them. The two of you together would be a formidable threat.

VICTOR

There was a time when I did just that. I killed the thing that made me what I am. Destroyed the pricolitch, the vorvolicka and other creatures you have never had to face. The bitterness has grown too sharp. Combat does not distract me as once it could. Besides, there is something about this place.

ILSE

Yes, there is. But I can never feel quite what it is. Sometimes I wander the halls looking for it.

VICTOR

We are not alone here. There is something hidden in the heart of this place. Lost in the labyrinth of corridors and chambers.

He stands near the sheet-covered mirror and stares at it.

ILSE

What do you mean? A ghost? A living person?

VICTOR

A presence. It haunts me. I need you and Stuart to find it.

ILSE

I do not understand a word you are saying.

VICTOR

You are not ready. But if I can balance the energies of you, Stuart and myself, I believe I can finally reach it. Stuart is split – half maimed. But he lives – lives so intensely – lives through everything, so he may be the key.

ILSE

And me?

He touches her with a distant gentleness.

VICTOR

You are vital. You are....

VICTOR lifts his hand to stroke her hair, but the place in his heart where love should be is burnt-out and hollow. He drops his hand.

VICTOR, *Continued*

If I can release the unknown being in the center of this maze, I can change everything.

ILSE

You think you could – live again?

VICTOR

I could change everything.

(Pause)

I must walk the halls for a time.

VICTOR exits. ILSE pulls the sheet from the mirror and looks at it in surprise. In the mirror her reflection fades away, replaced by a painting of a stone-walled room like the one she is in, with a table in the center on which sits a truncated pyramid, above which floats the eye of a fish. She hears a voice much like her own, but distorted and distant.

VOICE LIKE ILSE'S

Find me. Look into the deeps. Open the floodgates of the soul.

The image fades away and the mirror again shows her reflection. ILSE covers it with the sheet again. She starts to leave the room, but MORGAN arrives, taking a pack from his back. He is delighted to see her.

MORGAN

Tired of me already?

ILSE

Stuart!

(They embrace)

Where have you been?

MORGAN

You missed me. That's good. I brought back supplies: food and wine and a few things Victor needed. I just needed to get away for a few days. To feel alive.

ILSE

You always feel alive to me.

MORGAN

The doctor's treatments have been working. No more rages. No transformation. I thought I'd feel free of it. Free to live a little. But I've felt empty, dragged down, weak. I don't know.

ILSE

It felt good to be away. Do any hunting?

MORGAN

Why would you say that?

ILSE

You wanted to live a little.

MORGAN

I spent time with people. Walked through towns I'd never seen before without being afraid something would trigger the beast. I didn't push my luck, though, I came back today. I need to talk to Victor: I think maybe I'm developing a tolerance for the sedative. I seem to be waking earlier each time from the treatment.

ILSE

I should get out more, too. Victor lets me go now and then, but he insists I don't show my face anywhere around these parts, so I have to use up most of my time in traveling. Victor thinks he can control everything.

MORGAN

But not you, huh? You make up your own mind.

ILSE

Oh, I leave the mental realm to Victor.

MORGAN

You follow your own heart, then.

ILSE

Maybe. I follow something of mine, anyway. It's all right, though, I don't really want to be gone long right now. I've been waiting for you to come back. I did miss you. I didn't want you to miss a treatment, either. Maybe Victor should treat you tonight, before it gets too late.

MORGAN

Are you all right?

ILSE

Am I too intense? I don't mean to drive you away. I just had a tiring evening.

MORGAN

You look paler than usual. Here, I brought some wine. It's good. I had some on the train on my way back.

ILSE

Where did you get the money? From Victor?

MORGAN

Yes. Ilse, where does Victor get money?

ILSE

From the same people whose lives he takes. He used to be very good at the sort of hunting you do.

MORGAN

I'm... not in that line of business anymore.

MORGAN pours some wine for the two of them into cups from his bag. She sips lightly at one.

MORGAN, *Continued*

Wait – to you, Ilse: may you always engender such loyalty and admiration.

He taps his cup against hers and drinks heartily. She barely sips the wine.

ILSE

Is that what brought you back to me?

MORGAN

To say the least.

ILSE

Perhaps you should say the most.

He sets down his cup and kisses her. She responds, more dreamy than passionate. He looks into her eyes, trying to sense what she feels about him, but cannot.

MORGAN kisses her again, more actively, more passionately. She becomes more dreamy, almost limp in his arms. He gazes at her again and is moved to a more aggressive exploration of the sensations of her. But abruptly he stops himself and pulls away.

ILSE

It's all right, Stuart. Have some more wine with me. I like you.

MORGAN

It's not all right. Where's Victor?

ILSE

He could be anywhere in the complex by now. Sit with me again, Stuart.

Flinging open his coat, MORGAN draws his revolver from its shoulder holster. He looks at it, speaking slowly.

MORGAN

The bullets are silver, blessed in Rome. If it comes to it, this will stop me – for a time. Long enough.

ILSE

I don't need...

MORGAN

(Handing her the revolver)

Take it. For me.

She starts to demur but he seizes her hand and wraps it around the pistol. She walks to the writing table and sets down the weapon.

MORGAN

At least remember that it's there. And get Victor.

ILSE

Now?

MORGAN

Ilse, go get Victor!

ILSE

(Sighs slowly)

Victor is not the one you need. Besides, I don't want to see him right now.

MORGAN spins toward her, the fierce expression on his face startling her.

MORGAN

(Demands)

What do you mean?

ILSE

Stuart, Victor is...not seeing things clearly.

MORGAN's hands clench and unclench, his body growing taut.

ILSE, *Continued*

His mind is in darkness.

MORGAN

You think he's mad?

ILSE

He's...lost.

MORGAN

You think he's making some kind of mistake? And that's why I'm waking from the treatments earlier and earlier? He's confusing the dosages?

She sighs and looks away across the room for a moment, then meets his eyes again.

ILSE

Something is happening here. I feel it. You must feel it, too. Victor can't feel – or he misinterprets. He thinks.... Stuart, he thinks this place is alive, and we're all just parts of it – or it's a reflection of his mind – or.... I don't know what. His theories never did mean anything to me, even when he was sane.

The ferocity in MORGAN's face turns to fear.

MORGAN

He's changed while I was away? Can he still....

(He swallows)

Has he hurt you in any way?

ILSE

I watch him sometimes.

(Indicates the covered mirror)

When he's lost in his thoughts he sees – he thinks he sees - his reflection in that thing; talks to it. Stuart, he'll never leave this place; never let me leave.

MORGAN paces, struggling with his emotions. ILSE's dreamy passivity vanishes and she leans forward, gazing at MORGAN's back intently.

ILSE, *Continued*

He wants to keep me here forever. I couldn't bear that. Not even with you, here. We could go away, together. You could take me away...

VICTOR has entered silently from the coffin room.

VICTOR

I thought I sensed your presence.

MORGAN

I was doing fine until....

VICTOR

Ilse.

ILSE exits without a word. MORGAN meets VICTOR's eyes, struggling to control his swirling passions.

MORGAN

I let down my guard. It was nothing – just a little moment of romance and....

He shakes his head.

VICTOR

Ilse is bringing it out of you.

MORGAN

The beast.

VICTOR

I am tempted to experiment – to see if you can integrate the wolf into your relationship with Ilse.

MORGAN

My God, she's your own flesh and blood!

VICTOR

(Regarding him for a moment)

Get on the table.

MORGAN gets on the table and VICTOR injects him in the throat as before. ILSE appears in the doorway and watches eagerly. BLACKOUT.

Act Two, Scene Two

AT RISE: *VICTOR is gone. Where MORGAN had been lying on the table there is now a shaggy man-BEAST with wolfish features including long canines and claws. [The BEAST is, of course, dressed exactly as we just saw MORGAN – though played by another actor in order to allow a sophisticated makeup for MORGAN’s wolfish side with no more break between scenes than it takes for one actor to take the other’s place onstage.]*

ILSE has removed her finery and is clad in a simple shift. In contrast to the ghostly tenderness of the non-sexual blood exchange from ILSE to VICTOR in the previous scene, ILSE is now crouched over the sedated man-beast with her mouth to his wrist. She makes a soft, almost purring sound as waves of powerful emotion and sensation surge through her. She is so rapt in this experience that she does not see that the man-wolf is beginning to stir uneasily. It opens its eyes and gazes about dazedly, then sees ILSE.

Furious, it heaves her off. As she clears back from it, the BEAST strains against the restraints fastening it to the table, afire with all the fury of one who has been betrayed. The restraints snap and the BEAST is loose.

ILSE is now by the desk where the pistol with the silver bullets sits, but when the BEAST charges her, instead of seizing the weapon, mad with the hot blood she has drawn from him, she springs at him like an animal. They snarl, snap and claw at each other. He is larger, stronger, fiercer – and furious.

He flings her to the floor and for a moment she stops fighting and reaches gently toward him. She sings wordlessly to him. Puzzled, he is distracted and therefore somewhat calmed by her voice. His homicidal aggression becomes a purely animal sexual aggression instead. She caresses the sides of his face, accepting this. He rubs his face against hers, rough but not violent.

Her mood changes as abruptly as a cat's and she scratches his face, scrambling away. He is again overcome with fury and pounces on her, pinning her to the floor. He is about to tear her throat out when VICTOR runs in with MORGAN's silver-headed cane and swings it aloft, aimed to strike the back of the BEAST's skull. BLACK OUT.

Act Two, Scene Three

AT RISE: *MORGAN awakes on the table to discover his head and wrist bandaged, and the restraints broken. He gets up and looks around the room, seeing no other signs of damage. His pistol is gone from the desk. He pulls a sword from the heraldic display and tries to open the crypt door, but even prying at it with the sword has no effect. He prepares himself to wait, weapon in hand. LIGHTS DIM.*

Act Two, Scene Four

AT RISE: *MORGAN is still waiting. The crypt door opens and MORGAN is up and poised with the sword. VICTOR enters, quiet and still.*

MORGAN

You made her a monster. You made her like you!

MORGAN charges VICTOR, who pulls the other sword from the wall and defends himself. MORGAN hacks and stabs with vigorous fury, but VICTOR is clearly a trained swordsman and coolly and easily deflects each attack.

Finally, VICTOR presses back with a flurry of swings and drives MORGAN before him, ending with a disarm move which leaves MORGAN defenseless.

VICTOR

(Referring dryly to his own swordsmanship)
Benefits of a classical education.

MORGAN

Go ahead – cut my throat. I’ll be back for you.

VICTOR

That’s the point, Stuart. You’re not like us. You’re overflowing with life – from its most primitive fountainhead.

MORGAN

Enough analysis, you cold devil.

VICTOR

Must I puncture you to let in a little knowledge? Like you, I was assaulted, infected, reduced to this half-dead thing. But Ilse is of my blood – Ilse was born what she is. That is why she has some warmth to her. But she still needs to draw strength and life from others. Bringing her here kept her safe, kept her from preying on others, gave her the full primitive passions of the hot blood she took from you and kept your wolf-side from coming out to attack others. But now Ilse can’t do without you.

MORGAN

She fed on me!

VICTOR goes to the desk, pulls out MORGAN’s medical file and flings it to him. MORGAN carefully puts it in his coat.

VICTOR

Did you expect my methods to be neat and gentle? We all give and we all take – that’s how it is.

MORGAN

The scarf round her throat to hide the wounds – you lie! You did prey on her!

VICTOR

She gave of her strength – borrowed from you – so that I need not hunt. She shared with me willingly – we are of the same blood.

MORGAN

This cannot go on!

VICTOR

We can go on year after year, decade after decade. You are the one with the power of life – the power to change – to grow – to live! You think you are cursed by the savage you cannot control – I can only taste afar off the sheer life you enjoy! You should embrace the beast...

MORGAN

No!

VICTOR

(As he speaks, a violent passion wells up abruptly in him)

It is your bridge to the deepest instincts of your soul – the roots of your humanity – all that binds you to the whole past of humankind – and I can barely taste a shade of what you feel through what you make her feel!

*VICTOR stabs MORGAN who falls to his knees, clutching the wound with a gasp. [In so doing, the actor masks wetting the tip of the blade with blood from a sponge hidden in his coat.]
VICTOR pulls the blade free.*

VICTOR

You can feel! Feel the nearness of death that sweetens every instant of a life than can never be more for me than an aching nostalgia. Feel the life that pounds in you so strong that your wound already begins to knit, the flesh to close; the desire to fight leaps in you, even drained as you are. You should worship the wolf you dread.

VICTOR holds the sword point near his face to savor the scent of blood.

MORGAN

(Realizing in anguish)

Without the wolf I am prey and not hunter – I am half empty like you. But when the wolf comes out it is so primitive, so savage, it destroys everything I love.

VICTOR

It calls to me – to run and hunt and exult in the fresh blood of my kill – to race free and savage and unstoppable, one with the forces of nature, one with every fierce passion; pure of restraint, clean of doubt, of care, of moral qualification, of thought – all sensation and passion and one with the simple, single moment. Shall I taste and cast down the towering intellect, the hated tyrant? If I dive into them, the depths of my passions will be as profound as my intellectual strivings were high – shall I unleash them at last? Shall I feel – something?

MORGAN

Don't, Victor. Think what it will cost.

VICTOR

Think? You want me to stop and think, Stuart? It takes a long time to get past all my thinking to anger me. It takes far longer for the anger to stop. You have no idea how many angers have slowly distilled into fury within me – down in the dark depths, waiting for some fool like you to cross steel with me and let them all out, so at last, in one fiery rush, I can feel.

ILSE enters. There are traces of the wolf in her appearance – her hair is loose and wild, and her nails and teeth are longer. But she is again in her finery and furs. She looks at VICTOR the way a woman looks at a rabid animal threatening her loved one.

ILSE

Victor?

VICTOR

(He hesitates, looking at her)

You are the one in all the world whom I could never hurt.

ILSE

You know seeing you like this hurts me.

VICTOR

Is this not what I am?

ILSE

You are important to me. How would I live without you?

MORGAN

You love her.

VICTOR

As close as I can come.

ILSE

You are like an uncle to me.

VICTOR

Ah.

MORGAN

I didn't understand. She's like a daughter to you. Don't you see it, Ilse?

ILSE

I see a dear friend about to lose himself.

VICTOR's smoldering rage subsides into an ashen depression and he returns to the chair in the shadow where we first saw him.

MORGAN

You're not an experiment to him – not a lover – not a friend. You're family. That's what he needs from you. You can anchor him to something human.

ILSE

But I am not fully human. You know that, Stuart. I know you hate me, now.

MORGAN

I don't hate you, Ilse. That's not what I feel at all. Whatever else you are, you are human enough to bring a breath of spring even to him. You can't turn away from him – you're the same blood.

MORGAN takes from the desk a badge bearing VICTOR's family crest – the same as that of the armorial bearings on the wall – and pins it on ILSE. She accepts this. ILSE moves quietly to the chair in the shadows and lays a hand on VICTOR's shoulder.

MORGAN

Victor, I never meant to take Ilse away from you. It's just that...well, I...

THE THREE of them stop, each suddenly sensing an approaching presence.

ILSE

Something's coming.

MORGAN

(Chilled and repelled)

I have to get out of here.

VICTOR

(Drawn toward what he senses, eagerly analyzing his sensations)

Intriguing. Most intriguing.

Enter KLIMT, a young, ambitious, fit, educated plain-clothes detective with his weapon drawn. Behind him enters RHYS, a weather-beaten man in his mid-fifties in a long, loose overcoat. RHYS has a patch over one eye. One empty sleeve of his coat is pinned to his shoulder and he walks with a decided limp. His deeply lined face is drawn and badly scarred. KLIMT flashes his ID.

KLIMT

Commissar Gerhard Klimt, Homicide, Lucerne. Identify yourselves.

VICTOR

(Indicating RHYS)

Who is this? He is no officer of the law – he has something about him – an energy that isn't human.

KLIMT

What is this? An “energy”?

RHYS

Former Inspector Llywelyn Rhys of Cardiff, Wales. Does that name mean anything to you, Morgan?

MORGAN

Should it?

KLIMT

We are here investigating a series of attacks and disappearances. Herr Rhys was struck by similarities to the case he was working before he was.... pensioned off...

RHYS

(Cutting in to correct KLIMT's deliberate oversimplification)

Maimed, then stripped of my job and left to rot. I've been tracking you ever since, Stuart.

VICTOR

You have something – some object of power – an amulet, perhaps?

MORGAN

(Snarling at RHYS, repelled, though he is unsure why)

Stay away from me!

KLIMT

(Indicating MORGAN)

You were right, Herr Rhys: this must be the man. He even looks like the photo you gave me of the murderer you were tracking in Wales. Just as you said he would.

(He pulls out the photo and compares it to MORGAN)

In fact, he looks exactly like that murderer. You are quite certain your suspect was killed?

RHYS

I am quite certain the man called The Welsh Horror was buried for four years. Until his crypt was broken into by grave robbers, who removed certain special items and made the fatal mistake of exposing the corpse to the rays of the full moon.

KLIMT

Excuse me? I don't see the relevance of any of that. This man must be a close relative of the killer...

RHYS

It's a dead line. He has no relatives.

KLIMT

Plastic surgery then? He made himself look like the original? Perhaps this other man, here, was the surgeon.

(Indicating VICTOR)

We have evidence that certain repeat killings nearby in Germany were committed by a tall, thin man with the hand of a surgeon.

MORGAN

(Looking at VICTOR in dread of what he may hear)

What kind of killings?

KLIMT

I will ask the questions, Herr Morgan.

MORGAN

I'm not going with you.

KLIMT

You are, Herr Morgan, and so is your accomplice. The woman, too, for questioning.

VICTOR

It is not that simple.

RHYS

No. It is not.

RHYS pulls out his pistol and thrusts it against KLIMT's side.

RHYS, *Continued*

You got me into the lair, Commissar. Your services are no longer required.

KLIMT

What are you doing?

VICTOR

Most interesting.

MORGAN

You want me, don't you? That's what this is all about.

RHYS

I'll shoot you down, Klimt, if I have to. You have no idea what Stuart, here, is. By killing you I save a hundred lives.

KLIMT

You were an officer of the law, like me...

RHYS

Not anymore.

(To MORGAN)

You took that from me, Stuart, when you took my arm, my eye, a piece of my leg.

MORGAN

I can't remember you...

RHYS

I remember everything. Place your weapon slowly on the ground, Klimt.

He does so.

KLIMT

You are endangering both our lives.

RHYS

I'm saving us. Now get over there and cuff yourself to the desk.

VICTOR

You came in with a plan.

KLIMT

There is no place in Swiss law for private vengeance.

RHYS

Toss the key over here.

Having cuffed himself to the desk, KLIMT tosses the handcuff key near RHYS.

MORGAN

You know what I am.

ILSE

You have one foot in our world.

RHYS

And I'm taking you out of ours. I saw what attacked me, back in Wales. It was you, Stuart, but it wasn't all human, or all animal – the thing that tore me up like a hound shaking a rabbit. But it didn't break me. I tracked you here, Stuart. I did. Not the Welsh police, not the bloody English, not the Americans when you crossed the sea. And the Swiss never would have found you without me. I've followed you around the world.

KLIMT

You are experiencing a psychotic break, Rhys, you must pull yourself together before you do something you can never undo.

RHYS

Keep talking, Klimt – say all the things they taught you to say to crazy people. You think this is your big break? You think I am your chance to rise to the top of your profession? You don't have a clue what's going on in the world – what Morgan is.

MORGAN

You were bitten, but you survived. You must have been infected, like I was. You know about us because you are one of us.

RHYS

I am not like you!

ILSE

You are trying to be.

VICTOR

You have an amulet.

RHYS pulls out a silver amulet which hangs on a silver chain about his neck, then again points his weapon at MORGAN.

VICTOR

Yes, that's what I sensed.

(To his companions)

You sensed it too, an energy not quite human – an amulet, a symbol charged with a particular power.

MORGAN

Silver....

RHYS

I'd seen a lot of weird things in the ancient parts of Wales. Every officer does. I learned there are a lot more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in Herr Horatio's philosophy.

(Indicating KLIMT who shakes his head)

MORGAN

The amulet prevents you from becoming what I am? Who made it for you? How can I find him?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes