

## A Not so Quiet Halloween

W. S.

11/02 - 11/03

It was a quiet Halloween night. The weather had pushed back trick-or-treating and it was postponed until the weekend. The rain wasn't quite so loud against the roof as it had been earlier. When I finished watching "Bride of Frankenstein" the noise of the weather outside was barely audible.

I was refilling my glass with ice cubes and another pour from the bottle, when I noticed the back porch flood light was on. I walked to the back door and opened it. Normally the light functioned well, only occasionally tripping on when a neighborhood cat wandered by. Still I wondered what had set it off. Was it kids messing about? It was Halloween night, but in this weather?

I stood there peering out into the rain and something caught my eye. I flinched as I saw someone standing there, just at the edge of the light. A moment later I felt another shiver as I realized it was the form of a wolf, standing as a man. I held my breath as I studied the intruder. It was dressed in a tattered pair of pants, both the fabric and its brown fur looked soaked from the rain.

I felt my heart beating faster as I watched. It's head swilled around. Had it heard a sound I didn't mean to make. It took another step towards me, further into the pool of light. It's head pointed towards me and I saw its eyes studying me.

My voice caught in my throat. I swallowed hard as I fought to hold still. The creature studied me, its eyes unblinking. I felt another shiver run down my spine, but then I noticed its posture. Its back was slumped, shoulders down, as were its ears. The creature's tail lay limp on the wet, leaf-covered ground.

I felt the fear dissipating as I watched it. It had surprised me, but it no longer looked as scary; more pitiful than menacing.

I found my voice and called out to the creature, before even realizing what I'd meant to do. "Are you okay? You look horrible... Would you like to come inside and get warmed up?"

I felt a pang of regret. Was inviting him in a smart thing? I forced a chuckle. No that was just for vampires.

The change in his mood was apparent. He stood up taller, his ears perking up at my invitation. He lifted his tail off the ground as he stepped quickly across the wet lawn to close the distance towards me. Whether or not it was a good idea, it had been done.

He slowed when he reached the porch and stepped inside my kitchen humbly. The werewolf even did his best to wipe his giant paw feet on my welcome mat. He still left damp prints on the linoleum floor, but it wasn't bad. At least he wasn't tracking wet leaves into my house.

We stared at one another in silence. I didn't know what to say to a literal mythical monster I'd invited into my house on all hallows eve and he appeared to be lost for words himself. It was my cat, who had wandered into the kitchen to see what was going on, who broke the silence. He let out a surprised meow and turned tail and ran.

The werewolf dropped his ears and looked at me sheepishly. I smiled despite the odd situation. He didn't look quite as imposing when he adopted the sheepish look of a dog caught misbehaving.

"It's okay, he gets spooked easily. He takes a bit, but he'll warm up to strangers..."

The werewolf looked at me, pausing before speaking his first words to me. "Thank you... for your hospitality."

"Well you looked awful, like a drowned dog..." I hesitated, not wanting to seem rude.

He chuckled. "That's okay. I guess I am a sight for sore eyes. I've gotten used to my... condition, but it's nights like these when even a fur coat doesn't help against the sour weather."

"Do you need to stay out all night?"

He cocked his head, perhaps pondering the question. "No... not the whole night I guess."

"Well the weather should be clearing in a couple of hours. You could rest here a bit continuing your prowling later?"

His ear flicked as he considered the offer, then his mouth opened in a toothy grin. It didn't look that frightening, more endearing, and I again couldn't help comparing him to a happy canine, though I kept my thoughts to myself.

I ushered him to the bathroom and gave him a couple of towels. I figured with all that wet fur, he'd need them.

I gave him a sheepish smile when I offered him my cat's brush. "Sorry I don't have more to help with the grooming, but if this would help..."

His ear flickered again and he gave me another warm chuckle. This time it rumbled in his throat, louder than before, but not sounding anything like a growl. I saw his tail twitch in amusement behind him.

He cleaned up well. When he emerged from the bathroom, his fur was dry and he'd managed to get it combed into a semblance of order. He had wrapped a towel around his waist to keep his tattered wet pants from soaking my furniture. He looked more relaxed as well.

I offered him a drink. He took a sniff at my scotch but that was too strong. I offered him a beer, suggesting the harvest shandy with its nice mellowed spices. He took a swig from the bottle held in his large paw and gave me a satisfied nod.

"I was just watching some classic horror films." I said as I motioned to the couch in the living room. "Does that sound good to you?"

"Anything but the Wolf Man" he said with another rumbling laugh as he sat down.

I chuckled with him and brought up "The Invisible man" as I sat down next to him.

The movie commenced and we sat in a nice silence as we watched the classic black and white film unfold before us. My cat eventually joined us on the couch, shy at first, but then he was curled up and purring between the two of us; the strange visitor accepted. The werewolf reached down a hand, tentative at first, but was soon stroking him softly.

I turned and glanced at both my cat and the werewolf. No matter how odd a scene, no matter how surprising the guest. This was a good surprise on a quiet and perhaps a bit lonely of a Halloween night. This was nice.