

Hunter's Moon

By Dan Shaurette

I've never been one to be superstitious. Granted, being a vampire hunter has made me more aware of the supernatural forces around me. I mean the only talisman that I have, if you can call it that, is my silver ankh with the amethyst mount. But I certainly never put any credence to the stories about Friday the 13th. Too many horror movies in my misspent youth ruined my appreciation for the day.

I mean, come on, is some goalie-mask clad axe murderer going to come get me? *Get real*. I mean, even vampire movies set you up for great expectations. But I've learned the hard way that vampires follow none of Hollywood's rules.

Even still, the power that surrounds a Friday that happens to be the thirteenth day of a month should not have been underestimated. Combine the fact that it landed in October of 2000 and the power was stronger. Finally, discover that the moon was perfectly full - and I shudder to realize how foolish I was.

This October's full moon is the Hunter's Moon, hence the reason that I was out on patrol. There seems to be an almost palpable fear in the air during a Hunter's Moon. The hairs on your neck stand a little straighter. The air has an even crisper chill to it. This all adds up to making the vampires a little friskier.

While the mundane world is planning their Halloween parties and visiting Haunted houses, I find myself acutely aware of the real things that go bump in the night. I made the rounds of the graveyards in town. I rarely find any activity there, but in October, I've learned that you can never be too careful. No fresh graves, but I did notice something by the old Johnson family crypt.

With my crossbow loaded, I made my way around the rear of the aging stone and marble site. I could make out the muffled argument between two men. One sounded frightened and the other was egging him on. It sounded like they were discussing some kind of prank. I disarmed my crossbow and set it down next to a shovel near me. I decided to scare them off by pretending I was a groundskeeper. I picked up the shovel and walked casually around the corner.

"What the hell are you guys doing here?" I shouted as I came upon them in a gruff voice. Startled, the two men snapped their heads to look at me. The younger looking man in the leather jacket started to stutter a response. The older guy wearing a black trench coat told him to shut up and asked me, "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm the groundskeeper, and you're trespassing. Who are you?" I returned.

"Groundskeeper, my ass!" he yelled. Before I knew it, he whipped out a pistol and pointed it in my direction. His movements were too fast. This guy wasn't mortal. He cocked the gun and barked, "Get out of here before I pop you, fool."

The young guy piped up, "Dude, what's with the gun? I didn't sign up for this shit."

"Shut UP," the older guy shouted back to his friend. "We're going through with the ceremony tonight and we don't need any distractions." When he turned back to face me, his eyes were glowing red and his canine teeth were extended.

Fuck, was the only thing that crossed my mind. *Can never be too careful, eh?* Now the only weapon I had was a shovel, and with his reflexes, I knew I wasn't going to be

able to dodge his gunfire. That is, if I thought he was going to shoot. I tried to calm the vamp down, "Dude, there's no need for this. I'm just doing my job."

"You leave now, and I won't have to kill you," he demanded.

"Fair enough," I said as I put the shovel down and ran into the shadows. When I saw that they didn't follow me, I went back to the crypt and grabbed my crossbow. I loaded it and crept around the corner to find that the duo had disappeared.

I couldn't find any trace of them. I was about to go and see if they were still on the grounds when I heard a faint noise come from inside the crypt. It sounded like muffled crying. I had this image of those two up to no good inside a crypt. But when I saw that it was locked from the outside, I couldn't imagine that they could have locked themselves in.

I grabbed the shovel that I had dropped earlier and I used it to smash the rusting lock off the door. Crossbow at the ready, I pushed the iron door in. As it creaked, I started to be afraid of what I was going to find inside. It was pitch black within the crypt. It was only by the moonlight that I was able to see any shapes. I took out my lighter and flicked it to life. I was shocked to find a naked woman tied onto a table, blindfolded and gagged. It was also obvious by the way she was tied and the blood on her that she had been raped.

Quickly, I took the blindfold off of her and held the flame to my face so that she could see who I was. I didn't know if she saw her attacker, or not, but I wanted her to know I meant her no harm. She was definitely frightened. I told her I was going to help her and I was going to remove her gag. She didn't scream and licked her lips because they were dry and sore from the gag.

"My name is William, what's yours?" I asked as I began to burn off the ropes around her wrists, which were tied behind her head.

"Jessica... Lupinsky," she struggled with the words as she tried to catch her breath.

"Like Tara Lipinsky, the skater," I asked, trying to get her to feel at ease with me.

She started to giggle at the comparison, then choked a little and added, "Yes. I think she's beautiful."

I finally burned through the ropes binding her wrist, and she was able to sit up. As she did, she hit the moonlight. "I think you are beautiful, too." I don't know why I said it, even though it was true. She smiled a little uncomfortably, but knew it was an honest compliment. Before moving on to the other ropes, I took off my jacket and put it around her. She thanked me.

"You're most welcome. So, can you tell me what happened to you?" As I began to burn at the ropes around her legs, she began telling me about how she was kidnapped by someone she thought was her friend. Him and some old guy she never met drugged her and that was all she remembered.

I felt uncomfortable asking her, especially as I burned away the ropes from her spread eagle legs. But I needed to know more, so as the rope fell away from her left leg, I asked, "Do you remember... them harming you in any way? I'm not sure, but it looks like they raped you."

"Oh my god, no, I.. I can't remember, but I do feel sore. Oh no," she began crying.

I stopped on the last rope and went over to console her. "I'm sorry. Do you mind if I ask how old you are?"

As she continued to cry, she said, "I just turned 18. Today is my birthday." That made her cry louder. At that point, I just felt compelled to hug her and give her a shoulder to

cry on if she needed it. She took advantage of it and cried some more and squeezed me tight. *My god, she smelled good.* Her crying slowed down, and she whispered in my ear, "Thank you William".

"Bill. Bill Johnson," I told her.

She laughed, "Like the restaurant?"

I laughed, too. "Yeah. Speaking of, are you hungry?"

"Famished," she replied.

"Are you OK?"

"I am now."

I left her side to finish the ropes on her right leg. For some reason, I couldn't stop staring at her legs. I didn't dare look higher now that the moonlight was perfectly illuminating the chamber. As I finished the last rope, I could sense some strength in those legs. But I remained a gentleman. I went back to her side and helped her off the table. She said she was very sore and she appreciated the help.

"So, Bill, what are you doing here? Are you in the business of rescuing damsels in distress?"

"Let's just say I was at the right place at the right time."

She smiled and said, "I'm glad you were."

I searched the crypt to see if the men had left her clothes behind, but I could not find them. "If you like, I can take you home so you can get some clothes."

She agreed that was a good idea. I picked up my crossbow and I walked to the doorway to see if the men were anywhere nearby. When I was certain the coast was clear, I turned back to her. She looked scared again. I realized that the crossbow has that effect. I said, "It's a long story."

She nodded understanding, at least for now, and took my hand. We walked to my car and we drove to her place.

By the time we arrived at her apartment, I had told her everything about myself. Including the fact that I moonlight as a vampire hunter. While she seemed skeptical at first, I tried to explain that the older man that kidnapped her was a vampire. The younger guy, I couldn't be sure of, but I suspected he was one as well. When I reminded her that she was raped in a crypt, that helped her believe me. It also put her at ease because she knew she could trust me.

Once inside her apartment, she immediately rushed to her bathroom. I didn't need to know why, but I could imagine she needed to go. She yelled out for me to make myself at home. I shouted back, "Do you mind if I ask you some more questions?"

"Ask away," she said as she flushed. She came out of the bathroom wearing a robe and handed me my jacket. "Would you like something to drink?" she asked.

"Thanks," I said. "Yes, whatever you're having will be fine. So, how long did you know the young man?"

"Only about a month, on campus at the University. He was hitting on me after class one day. I thought he was cute, so we started dating."

"Can I ask if you two..." I started.

"Yes.. I mean, it's OK. No, we didn't. In fact I'm a virgin... or *was* until tonight. He told me that he wanted to do something special for my birthday, my God. I can't believe I let this happen."

"This is not your fault. *He* did this to *you*. Did he ever seem aggressive?"

She handed me a drink that looked like ginger ale. I took a sip and nodded thanks for the drink. She answered, "No, in fact I thought he was very sweet. I guess it was all just a game."

"Perhaps, but maybe there's also a connection to this night."

"Because it's my birthday?"

"Yes, but more than that, it is also a full moon tonight. And, though I know I'm reaching with this, it's also Friday the 13th."

"Do you think he's some kind of psycho?"

"Well, he may be a part of a cult, a vampire cult perhaps. This could have been his initiation. They were willing to kill me to keep me away. They may have planned to kill you, too, until I spooked them off."

We both sat down on her couch. She sat close to me, and I didn't mind. "Then I owe you my life as well. How does one pay back such a debt?" While she was in the bathroom she must have put on some perfume, because she smelled incredible. It was a heavy musk, but very feminine, not masculine like a musk cologne. I'd never smelled anything like it before. It was intoxicating. I wanted to kiss her. I watched as she took another drink and my heart ached as she licked her lips.

"You don't owe me anything," I said, my heart beating faster.

She leaned forward to kiss me and her robe started to open. My hand wanted to reach inside but instead I forced it to close her robe. I wanted this so much, and yet I couldn't let her do this. She didn't stop. Her lips met mine and they tasted like rum. A spicy-sweet, warm flavor that was carried not only by her lips but her tongue.

I gave in and enjoyed the kiss. She took a breath and said, "I've never done anything like this before. And I don't just want to repay you for saving me, but I want... *you*."

My head was spinning from her kiss, her beauty, her perfume. Here was a naked 18 year old coed trying to seduce me. I wanted so much to take the robe off, but something inside me told me this was wrong. This girl was just raped. She was a virgin before that. Now she was drinking rum and fondling me. She knows exactly what to do to turn a man on. This doesn't add up. But, I couldn't escape her kiss.

When I did get a chance to breath, I tried to stop her. "Jessica... Jess... *stop*."

She began kissing my neck and I had to push her away. She looked at me like I just betrayed her. She couldn't believe I didn't want her. She got up and ran to her bathroom again, and locked the door.

I got up and ran to stop her, but had the door slammed in my face instead. "I'm sorry, Jessica. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. This just didn't feel right. Does this make any sense to you?"

"What's happening to me, Bill?" she cried.

"I don't know. You're confused. I think you're beautiful, but I also know you have had a terrifying night."

"Now what?" she sniffed.

"Are you hungry, still? Do you want to go get a bite to eat?" There was no answer. I prodded, "Jess, did you hear me? Are you hungry?"

"**YESSsss!**" she hissed with a voice that was no longer her own. The door opened up to reveal Jessica with longer hair, fingernails, and teeth. Her naked body was hunched over and she looked like... *well*, she looked like she was changing into a werewolf.

She ran out of her bathroom and knocked me over, onto my back. She pinned me down and immediately bit into my neck. She was too strong to push her off, and the longer she held me the weaker I got.

I was able to get one arm free, and pushed her away from my neck by choking her. She sat up and grabbed at me, which freed my other hand. I grabbed my silver ankh and shoved it in her mouth.

She screamed in pain as her mouth began to froth. She jumped back and looked more like the beauty she was than the beast that just attacked me. She howled and then started crying. Through sobs, she asked, "What's *happening* to me? *What am I?*"

I just lay there, bleeding, too weak to do anything after pushing her away. That was when I remembered, only too late, that the October Moon is also known as the Wolf Moon.