

BLUE MOON

A Novel by

Bud Simpson

Books Written by the Author:

BIO OF MY EARLY LIFE:

The Cove

NOVELS:

The Reluctant Guest

A Dark Place

A Missing piece of Sky

Junkyard Dogs

Ninth Moon

Blue Moon

ANTHOLOGY:

Bud Simpson's Olio Folio

NATURE:

Nature's Way: Birds of the Hills: Vol. 1

Nature's Way: Birds of the Hills: Vol. 2

Nature's Way: (The Great Blue Heron)

Nature's Way: Vol. 2 (Great Egret)

Nature's Way: The Mute Swans of Lake Logan

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This book is a sequel to my last book:

"NINTH MOON"

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ISBN: 978-1-62249-687-7

Published in the U.S.A. by:
Biblio Publishing
BiblioPublishing.com

As always, I dedicate this book to my
loving and much-loved wife,
Margo Elizabeth Simpson (1936-2022) and
to my daughter, Denise Marie Simpson,
the greatest helpmate an old father could
ever have asked for.

INTRODUCTION

This story is intended as a sequel to, or a continuation of, my last book, "Ninth Moon." At this point, I have no idea what will happen to all the surviving characters I created in that book. With nothing planned or plotted, this story (to be revealed as I stumble along) may turn out to be the Great American Novel or, more likely, a complete bust.

So, bear with me as I start this journey of words and, hopefully, we will be able to make that decision ourselves. If I remember correctly, one of the main characters, Frieda (Fred) Fleischer, a gorgeous, sex-starved female Werewolf, was tied up neatly in a blue tarp, looking like a big blue burrito, and as cold dead as a mackerel. Not a good position to be in for the role I have loosely planned for her in this book.

In a moment or two, this 89-year-old writer will have his creative juices simmering (?) and we'll all see if this tale will be worth reading. Wish me luck!

Bud Simpson
Logan, OH, Oct. 31, 2023
Happy Halloween!

CHAPTER ONE

FRIEDA WAS COLD. *Very* cold! At times, involuntary shuddering racked her body. Why should she be cold, she thought? She was wrapped up snugly, but not in a warm, soft blanket. It seemed to be a firm, crinkly fabric of some sort, but it was not warm. Not by a long shot!

She could hardly move her arms. *Why*, she thought? How did she get into this mess? After hours of struggling, she had finally worked her right arm up to her chin. She could now pinch this imprisoning fabric between her thumb and forefinger and get it between her teeth.

She bit into it and tried to tear a hole through it. Suddenly, she knew what this fabric was! From its smell and feel, she knew it was a tarpaulin. Not good news at all. A tarp is tough material. One hand and some teeth were not the best tools with which to tear it open.

Worse than that, she had no memory of how or why she might be in this stupid predicament! In fact, try as hard as she could, she couldn't even remember her own name! In addition to that was this god-awful odor that seemed to emanate from her very being! Rotten eggs were not her favorite things. Now, only one urge was in her head at this moment: Get the hell out of this god-damned mess!

She knew that she needed to get her other hand up where her right one was. It seemed like forever, but finally she got the left hand maneuvered up under her chin beside the right one. This had cost her more energy than she could spare, and she was suddenly exhausted. In fact, she could hardly move her arms and fingers now. An overwhelming weariness flowed over her. Sleep crept in and in a moment or two, she was unconscious once more.

CHAPTER TWO

CLARENCE ILFORD III was a curious guy. His curiosity at times had gotten him into trouble. Like the time that he was caught peeking through the bedroom window of a friend in the town where he used to live. The local police didn't buy his excuse that he thought he had heard a scream there and was just investigating the noise.

He was lucky that the friend had taken mercy on him and didn't press charges. It was a highly embarrassing moment for him, though. It precipitated his move to his present residence in Los Angeles.

Small towns are much less forgiving than large cities. You could murder someone in a large city, and have it splashed over all the TV news stations and newspapers, and in a week or so, no one would recognize you if you got out on bail and walked back into the police station where you had been detained.

Fortunately for him, he was well off financially, and had gotten a real deal on the house next door to the very house where Frieda was now struggling to regain her freedom. He knew Frieda well, even though they had met but once before at a party when he had first moved there. He was struck nearly dumb by her beauty. After that, she had become his obsession.

He would do his morning run just to go by her place in hopes of seeing her again. Unfortunately, this was a rare occurrence, so he had slipped into his normal mode as voyeur and started sneaking under the back fence surrounding the Lepescu Mansion, as he thought of it.

Even then, he only caught glimpses of her. One evening, the guy who lived in the guest cottage in the back of the lot almost caught him. Thank god he had been lucky! The guy looked as if he could have torn him apart if he wanted to. A solid, muscular man who had "authority" written all over him.

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After that, Clarence had purchased some potent binoculars and had done his nighttime gazing from the other side of the fence. As time went by, Clarence's obsession with Frieda waned somewhat, but never disappeared. All that effort with no reward, plus a bit of fear, had taken its toll.

He still ran by her place more than occasionally, but convinced himself that it was just for the exercise. Then, one morning a week ago, there she was!

He was just abreast of the driveway entrance as she was driving out. At first, he thought it was Roman Lepescu, the owner of the house, but then he realized it couldn't be. Someone had told him that Roman was on an extended visit to his home country of Romania.

He stopped dead in his tracks as the car rolled slowly out of the driveway in front of him. Frieda was behind the wheel, and, wonder of wonders, she looked in his direction, gave him a small finger wave, and smiled at him.

He watched the car as it moved down the street and out of view. His heart was pounding so hard he could feel it in his ears! Then, all his obsessions about her came back in a rush and, instantly, he was determined to meet her again.

He felt a bit weak and decided to turn and walk back to his house. He would then set to work and come up with a plan to realize his dream.

CHAPTER THREE

FRIEDA AWOKE SLOWLY. Again, the mental confusion and weariness was with her, but a new determination was accompanying them, also. With that determination and much effort, she worked both hands to a position near her cheeks and tried to get a firm grip on a piece of the fabric wrapped around her with the fingers of both hands.

Whoever it was that had tied her up had done a more than good job. When her hands finally got into the right spot, the fabric was still so snug that she was nearly in tears before both hands had managed to get a firm grip on a fold of it. Her fingers were shaking as she jammed the fold between her teeth.

She began chewing on the tarp and working at it with gnashing teeth. Fortunately, her jaws still had the strength of a Werewolf. Under the circumstances, that strength was diminished somewhat, but only some of it was much better than none of it.

In her mind, it was still taking too much time, but finally, there it was! A ragged hole about an inch in diameter. She sucked in a long, deep breath of cold, fresh air through it. It seemed to invigorate her and give her new strength. It was unsullied by the stale, re-breathed air that she had been inhaling for God only knew how long now. She hadn't an inkling of how long she had been in this fabric prison.

Another deep, glorious breath and she relaxed her whole body momentarily. It was then that she realized how tense her whole body had been. She relaxed each part of her body, one at a time. First her neck and then her chest and the rest of her until she arrived at her feet. Then she tensed her whole body and slowly relaxed it again. Wonderful!

She allowed herself what she calculated to be a ten-minute rest and then she was back at it again. What she wanted

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was a hole big enough to put her right arm through. Then she might be able to work on the rope tying the tarp to her.

At last, she could fit her whole hand through the hole. Then, another problem There was not enough slack in the fabric to let her bend her elbow enough to get her arm through such a tight hole.

Anyone who ever knew Frieda would tell you that she was a woman with very little patience. Frustrated and near tears, she put her mouth to the hole, drew in a deep breath and screamed her frustrations to the world through it. After two more loud screams, she did something totally out of character for this Werewolf. She broke down in tears and cried for nearly ten minutes.

She relaxed again and rested once more. While resting, she thought. She knew that something was drastically wrong with her . . . physically and mentally. Her memory was in tatters it seemed. Who would do this to her, and more importantly, why? What was going on in her life that had brought her to this predicament? Something terrible, of that she was certain.

But What? She couldn't remember things and places but faces of seeming strangers would pop in and out of focus like flash bulbs going off on a camera. One was a strong face, but it had a look of pain on it. Or was it pity?

She felt drawn to the face, but then fear would come and wash it away. Then, another thought crept in. It was not a picture, but a sound. A muffled but loud POP! It came from behind her she was sure, but when she tried to make her mind look behind, it faded like the other pieces of memory.

She shook her head fiercely! "To hell with all that," she screamed. "It all means nothing if I die here in this burrito shell. Concentrate, damn it! Get out first and then see what you can do about your god-damned memory after that!"

It felt good to be feeling this anger! It seemed to have brought some of her lost strength back into her muscles. Another two-handed grip on the tarp, another fold of material in her mouth and her teeth began their work once more.

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After an estimated half-hour, Frieda stopped gnawing. She forced both hands to the hole. Her right hand went through easily. Now try the left, also. A smile lit her face. Progress! At least four of the left fingers could be forced through the opening along with her other hand. Progress indeed! She would try another half-hour of work and then see if she could fit a whole arm through.

And try she did, but this time her renewed energy faded, and she had to stop after about ten minutes. She crossed her hands over her breasts and thought, *I'll just rest for a while. I must have over-exerted myself.*

While she slept, a vision came to her. It was not like a dream at all. It was a very beautiful vision. She was sitting naked in a large field. Then a disembodied voice said to her, "Look at the moon, Frieda. Let it bathe you in its light. Then all will be clear to you."

She looked in the direction of the rising moon. It was the largest moon she had ever seen. It seemed to fill her vision and she could feel the light as it illumined her bare body. It caressed her skin like a living thing.

Sensual feelings filled her body. She closed her eyes and relaxed but opened them almost immediately. She did not want to lose these feelings. The coldness began to leave her and then, the moon began to fade, and darkness began to fill her void once more.

She heard herself saying, "No! No! Don't leave me! Don't leave me!"

To no avail. When she returned to her senses, she felt as if the thing she was wrapped up in was more of a flexible coffin than anything else. Sharp awareness gave her strength to continue her work. She knew now that she was going to get out of this confining cocoon.

CHAPTER FOUR

CLARENCE GAVE HIS obsession over Frieda a lot of thought. What little common sense he possessed told him to forget about that woman but when you possess very little of it, it was easy to push it aside and let his compulsions take the reins.

He had figured out a foolproof plan on how to get into Frieda's life. It was simplicity itself. He knew she was there, and he knew that Roman was not. All he had to do was walk up to the front door, ring the bell, and introduce himself. Why hadn't he thought of that before?

What's the worse thing that could happen? All she could do was to say, get the hell out of my life. He had to admit, that was a pretty bad scenario. But she had smiled at him that day, hadn't she? He was sure she would recognize him. If not, he could just casually chit-chat with her for a few minutes and all would be well. Just introduce himself, say he was passing by and thought it might be neighborly to drop by and introduce himself as her next-door neighbor.

People did this simple thing every day all over the world, didn't they? Of course, they did! What could possibly go wrong with that? Not a thing, he convinced himself.

He ran it through his mind again. Knock on the door, she opens it, he does the intro thing, she probably would invite him in for a few minutes, then the chit-chat, look at his watch, say, I must go now, nice meeting you, why don't you drop by my place sometime. She smiles and says, Oh what a good idea. And the rest is history.

Obviously, Clarence had never met a pissed off werewolf before. That little factor might lead to things other than what his plan covered.

CHAPTER FIVE

FRIEDA AWOKED WITH a start. Something was different! She could sense it!

"My name is Frieda! I can remember it!"

That was wonderful, of course. But the rest of her memory was still stuck in Never-Never Land. Try as hard as she could, nothing else of importance came to her. She didn't know that there have been instances in medical history, where some of what she was suffering had happened to others. Very rarely, of course, but it can happen.

One of the many things Frieda didn't know is that she was in her present condition because she had been shot! With a silver bullet by another Werewolf. As they say, things don't always go according to plan. This other Werewolf had had a very good plan. If it had worked to perfection, Frieda wouldn't have been trying to gnaw her way out of a big blue, tied up tarpaulin right now. She would be stone cold dead. And, in an iconic Werewolf way!

Unfortunately for the other Werewolf, his perfectly aimed shot was very slightly deviated as Frieda had twisted to try for a look at whoever it was that was holding that cold piece of steel, a gun loaded with silver bullets, against her back. The result was that the bullet nicked a rib as it tore into her body, and along with the nicked rib, Frieda's movement had altered its path very slightly.

The bullet had hit its target but only as a grazing wound. However, the gases from the gunpowder that were forced into her body in combination with the flattened bullet, had caused significant insult to her cardiovascular system. Fortunately for Frieda, enzymes in her body started working their magic.

Hydrogen sulfide was produced by them, and it spread throughout her body. The result was a lowered body temperature and lowered heart rate.

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Frieda also has a very valuable asset that only Werewolves have. Being nearly immortal beings, their bodies are capable of very rapid healing of wounds. A scratch will heal so fast you can almost watch it happen. More severe wounds will take longer to heal, but eventually they *will* heal.

She doesn't think so now, but it seems that fate is treating Frieda very kindly despite the best efforts of others. She is having a terrible time extricating herself from her blue chrysalis. What she doesn't know is that a neighbor by the name of Clarence is at this very moment starting his run to her place with a personal plan in his head and very personal lust in his heart.

CHAPTER SIX

CLARENCE STOPPED HIS jog and stood nervously in front of the Lepescu Mansion. It had all seemed so easy when he had thought it out. But now that the moment was at hand, he almost turned in his tracks to run back to his house.

He was sweating a bit, and his knees were trembling slightly. He breathed deeply and said to himself, "This is stupid. Clare. (He always referred to himself as Clare. He hated the name of Clarence. He, his father, *and* grandfather; all with the same name. How old-fashioned and quaint!) Use your head. This is not the end of the world. She's just a girl."

How wrong that thought was, he wouldn't find out right away. Perhaps in the future. Perhaps not. Only time could tell. So, he turned towards the house, put on a brave smile, and walked to the door before more trepidation took over.

This forefinger reached for the doorbell switch. Just a second of hesitation and that finger pressed firmly against the button. He could hear the chimes sound from inside. No answer. He tried once more. Still no reply.

He muttered, almost feeling relief, "She's not home."

He started to turn, and some inner voice told him, "Knock on the door."

He answered the inner voice and knocked loudly. Then, again and again. Still no answer. On his last knock, the door seemed to move a tiny bit. He looked closely at it. He was right! A tiny sliver of space showed between the edge of the door and the jamb.

It was as if someone else controlled his hand (probably Mr. Curiosity). He pushed lightly and the well-oiled hinges allowed the door to swing silently inward. He looked behind himself. As far as he could tell, no one was about observing him. He pushed again, and the door swung inward farther.

Then, a small inward step, and he looked about. Nothing seemed amiss. from where he stood. The place

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seemed empty. He pulled the door shut behind him and stood just inside the foyer.

His first thought was, *Wow! What a great place!*

Then, three more steps and he saw something that made him regret opening the door all the way, or even opening it at all! To his right, were the broken, or rather, totally smashed remains of what appeared to be a huge Chinese vase of some kind.

A quick movement of his eyes upward a couple of feet, and he beheld two ragged holes in the wall! Then, when he inhaled deeply, the faint smell of smokeless gun powder caressed his nostrils. Clarence, or Clare, was not the brightest match in the family matchbox, but the smell of smokeless powder was recognized immediately by him.

The he moaned, "Oh my god! What happened here?"

This is the point at which he should have turned on his heels and beat as quick a retreat as possible to his home. But, again, curiosity overcame his morsel of common sense, and he took a few more steps forward. He turned in a tight circle, observing everything in sight. Other than the shattered vase and two ragged six inch in diameter holes in the wall and the smell of gunpowder, everything appeared normal to him.

What should I do now, he thought. *Call the police? No, no, no! How could he explain his being there?*

In his slightly befuddled head, saying to a cop, I was walking by, saw the front door open, went in to make sure everything was okay, didn't even occur to him. So, instead of calling, he just stood there, steeping in his curiosity, and started walking down the hall from the entryway, shouting, "Hello! Hello! Anyone here? Hello!" repeatedly.

At this point, he was sure the house was probably empty. It didn't even occur to him that he was walking through a possible crime scene. If he had noticed the small patch of blood on the carpet, would that have made a difference to his curious nature?

CHAPTER SEVEN

"WHAT WAS THAT?" Frieda asked herself.

Was that a noise from upstairs? Had she heard a noise and possibly a voice? She stopped moving and listened intently. A moment later, she convinced herself it had just been her imagination.

Back to work then. She had worried the hole slightly larger and was almost able to bend her right arm enough to force it out through the snug opening. She was sure that in another half-hour or so, she could force her arm through far enough to reach the rope that bound her package so tightly about her.

She took a few minutes of rest, and then began once again. Grab a fold of fabric, jam it in her mouth, chew, chew, chew! *Damn*, she thought. *I'd make a good Eskimo. I could soften caribou skins with the best of them.*

The thought of being so close to freedom gave her a sense of euphoria. Almost happiness. She couldn't remember when she had ever been happy. Had she ever been a happy, carefree girl? Concentrating as hard as she could, nothing smacking of happiness came into her head. It was as if she had never been happy! Was that even possible? To never have been happy?

She could feel unaccustomed tears begin to form, so she told herself to chew harder. You can think about happiness later, you damned fool! Get out of here first.

Ten minutes later, she muttered, "Let's try this again."

She could move her arms easier this time. Twisting herself around until her right hand exited the hole, she forced her lower arm all the way through the hole. Getting her elbow through was harder, but suddenly, it popped through along with her upper arm. Her complete right arm was now on the

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outside of the blue cocoon. She reached down and her hand found the rope that was binding the Tarp.

Sliding her fingers along the rope, she felt the knot. Now what? She tried to visualize what knot it had been tied with. Her fingers didn't make good eyes though. She felt around until she found the end of the rope. If she could wiggle it enough, maybe the knot would loosen.

Nothing she could do seemed to make the knot any freer. She was about to give up on trying to untie it with only one hand. Dispirited, she thought the problem through. It seemed that all she would be able to do was to chew the hole larger, which would take forever, or try to wriggle the rope up higher so she could pull it into her blue prison and chew through the rope with her teeth.

Either thing would take a lot of time and effort. It was a truly disappointing situation. Once again, she had to stop her tears. Tears were for weaklings! One thing she was sure of, despite her lack of memory, was that she couldn't possibly have ever been a weakling!

"I'll rest a little and get back to what I must do," she said. "Weaklings give up. I will never give up!"

As she rested, she dozed momentarily. Then, something she heard woke her up with a start! From a long distance away, it seemed, were words she could hear clearly.

"Hello! Hello! Anybody here? Hello!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

"HELLO! HELLO! ANYBODY here? Hello!"

There they were again! It *was* somebody. In this house, and not far away. Then she could hear the shuffling of footsteps almost overhead.

She screamed as loudly as she could. "I'm down here in the basement! I'm down here! Help me! Please help me!"

A sudden thought hit her. She was shouting into a blue cocoon! It Was probable that whoever was upstairs couldn't hear her. She shouted one more time and tried to get her arm back into her cocoon, but she couldn't maneuver it properly. Getting it out had been difficult, dragging it back in seemed impossible!

With her left hand, she reached up and pulled the armhole as close to her right armpit and her mouth as possible. This time she shouted the words as loud as she could. "Downstairs! I'm downstairs! Come down as quickly as you can!"

Then, in a panic, she started screaming the words, " I'M DOWNSTAIRS! I'M DOWNSTAIRS, DAMMIT! DOWNSTAIRS. DOWNSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS! COME AND HELP ME!"

She heard what she thought was a voice saying he would be right down, but her screaming had hoarsened her throat until it seemed as if it had been burnt and her emotions were boiling over also, so she couldn't be certain. Now the tears were real, and she didn't worry about being a weakling anymore. The relief she felt was almost overwhelming. Someone was going to help her!

CHAPTER NINE

CLARE WAS STARTLED when he heard the voice. For some reason, he was sure no one was here. At first, he wasn't sure where it was coming from. Outside? No, not from there. Upstairs? Possibly. But when he passed by a door in the hallway, it had been louder.

He stopped held his breath as he heard it again.

"Yes," he said, "Definitely a voice!"

He could only hear one word clearly. Downstairs, he thought it was. Then again, Downstairs, but frantic this time. Someone was definitely in trouble. But where was the stairway to the basement. He didn't think that any house in California had a basement, but this one must, otherwise, why would this person be screaming, downstairs?

"Try the door where the voice seemed loudest," Clare, he said to himself. He walked back and stood in front of it and shouted, "I'll be right down. Hang tight."

With more than a bit of trepidation He reached for the knob and turned it. Sure enough, a set of stairs led down into the depths. He flipped a light switch and walked slowly down the stairs to confront whoever seemed so frantic. At the bottom of the stairs, he shouted again. "Where are you? I'm at the foot of the stairs now."

A muffled, sobbing voice answered. "I think I might be in the room across from you. Please! Please, hurry."

Clarence glanced across the room. He saw a door that was slightly open. *That must be where she is*, he thought. In spite of thoughts that he probably should go get help, he took a few steps forward. Then he regained what courage he could muster and strode across the room, pushed the door open and stepped in. He felt for a light switch by the edge of the door. He found it and then flipped the switch on.

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What he saw was more of a shock and puzzlement to him than what he had seen upstairs. There, on the floor in front of him, were two large blue packages wrapped in blue tarps and tied up along their lengths. The smaller of the two strange packages had an arm poking through and waving frantically at him!

He jumped over to the package with the protruding arm and said, "Fred! Is that you in there?"

His answer was a trembling voice that said, "I'm not sure anymore. Please! Just get me out of here and I'll try to explain as best I can. *If* I can."

"It'll take only a minute or so. Let me get my pocketknife out and I'll Get these ropes cut and I can unwind it from you."

"Yes, yes! Please! I can't take this much longer!"

Clarence cut the binding ropes in several places and tossed the pieces away. He quickly examined the tarp and said, "Look, Fred. I'm going to pull you away from the other thing. Don't panic. Then I'll have you roll along the floor and unwind yourself. Are you strong enough to do that?"

"God! I hope so. This has been terrible! Just do it. I'll be okay."

He grabbed the end of the tarp and swung it away from the other blue package. "Look, Fred. If you just roll easily to your left. This tarp will come right off. Okay? Then we can call the police and try to get this squared away."

Despite all she had been through, her instincts told her to not get the police involved in any way, shape, or form! She knew she should tell him that now, but her confusion made it extremely difficult to communicate accurately. However, her instincts also told her that this guy could be manipulated if she could put her charms to good use.

She started rolling as instructed and, in a few moments, she was unrolled and free. She was lying on her back on the final roll and looked up at this stranger who had come to her rescue. He was a pleasant looking guy. Not too used to

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adventure she judged. She tried to sit up but couldn't. Every big movement sent waves of dizziness and nausea through her.

Clarence reached over to her to help. "No. no! Not right now. Let me lie here for a few moments. I'm much too weak to stand right now," she moaned.

She closed her eyes and took a few deep breaths of wonderful fresh air. Well, not too wonderful at that. The smell of rotten eggs was still faintly there. Clarence seemed too struck by the incident and her beauty to even notice odors.

He sat beside her on the tarp and reached for her hand. He gripped it and said, with a slightly nervous laugh, "Take your time, Fredi. I'm in no big rush. What's in the other package? Not another body, I hope."

Frieda turned and looked in the direction Clarence had pointed. Because of her damaged mind, it was as if this was the first time she had seen it. She stared at it for a moment. She knew she had to give an answer, but what? She had always been a skilled liar, and the skill was still there despite everything else that had happened.

Her instincts were still protecting her. "Oh, no! That's just a bunch of useless stuff that I was going to give to the Salvation Army. The owner just forgot to do it I suppose."

If her faculties had been undamaged, she would have known that *the owner* was now neatly wrapped up *in* that blue package and if it weren't for the rotten egg smell, Clarence might have noticed the smell of death emanating from it right now.

CHAPTER TEN

"I THINK I can get up now, what did you say your name was?"

"It's Clarence, but my friends call me Clare. Here, take my hand and let's see how you do. If you feel dizzy, just lean against me. Okay?"

"You are so kind, Clare. Thank you *very* much."

Clare reached down to her and took her hand. It was still icy cold. "Fred. Your hands are like ice. When we get upstairs, I'll get you wrapped in a blanket or something."

He pulled at her and with a bit of drama on her part, she was standing. A bit wobbly, but erect. She deliberately pulled herself tight against him and they walked over to the stairway. Frieda looked around. The room did have a familiar look to it. But nothing so familiar that she could put her finger on it.

With her hand on the rail and Clare supporting her on the other side, they made it up the stairs with no problems. Clare started to pull her to the right and out into the living room, but she forced him to make a left turn down the hallway and to the room at the end. Her wolf instincts were not perfect anymore, but there was something familiar about the path that she steered him to. At the end of the hall, she opened the door and entered the room.

Her instincts had been correct. The familiarity of the room almost brought tears to her eyes. *This must be my room*, she thought.

She crossed the room and sat on the edge of the bed. *Her* bed, she was certain. On the dresser, lying face down, was a silver picture frame. "Clare, be a dear and turn that picture up. I want to see it."

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Clare did as she had asked. He turned it over and looked at it. A smile lit his face. "This is a very good picture of Roman," he said. "It caught his character perfectly."

Roman? That name sounds familiar. Maybe Clare will give me some clues to things I can't remember.

"You have met Roman?"

"Yes, one time. It was at a party. You were with him. Don't you remember? We even danced one time. You seemed to enjoy it."

"I'm very sorry, Clare. It must have slipped from my memory. What I have been through has left a few gaps in my mind that we'll have to fill in. What do you think of Roman? Is he a kind man? I mean, to you, of course."

"I actually like the man. I know it might sound a bit strange putting it like that. Roman is ... well, different. You probably know what I mean. He lives his life as he wants and doesn't really care what people think or say about him. That's a little like me. I feel different, and probably am, but I don't really care."

At this point, Frieda didn't know how Roman really is ... or was. She felt sure that at some point all this might become real again. She hoped so. Her mind harkened back to the dream/vision she had while asleep. That full moon was so beautiful and seemed, well, healing. She needed healing, in more ways than one. She was as certain of that as she could be about anything.

In a way, it scared her. The knowledge she craved, and to come *fully* back into her new-looking world. What was in store for her and what had passed in her life before? As much as she wanted to know these answers, wariness still haunted her mind.

"Fred! Fred. Are you okay? You seemed to have left us for a time."

"Oh! Yes, Clare. I'm okay, really. Ha! As soon as I take a bath and feel clean again, I'm sure my outlook on life will be much better. I don't know how you can stand me. I must smell a fright."

Blue Moon

Clare laughed heartily. "To tell you the truth, Fredi, I hadn't noticed a thing. My sense of smell and some of my sense of taste hasn't been very good since my illness. I keep hoping it will return to what it used to be."

Now it was Frieda's turn to laugh. "Thank god for little favors, I say. I have no idea how long I was in that blue burrito, but it was too long, I'm sure. I can smell me, and I don't like it a bit! Tell you what. Turn your back, promise not to look, and I'll take a shower and then we'll look about a bit and see if this place has anything we can cook up to eat. Suddenly, I am famished!"

Clare kept his word about not looking at her as she undressed, but he did catch a few views of her back in her reflection in the dresser mirror. *Hub!* he thought. *I wonder how she got that scar on her back.*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FRIEDA TOOK HER good old time in the shower. No matter how hard she soaped up and washed it away, she still felt unclean. She had no idea at this time how long she had been imprisoned or why. Just a guess, but she figured it must have been two or three days, but it could have been much more. If only she could remember! What a frustration to have her history wiped out so completely.

The shower had another effect other than getting her clean. It relaxed her more than she could remember. Of course, that was just a figure of speech now, wasn't it?

She dwelled again on her moon dream, or was it a hallucination? It had seemed so real when it happened. The more she turned it over in her mind, the more she felt it was her inner, unconscious mind telling her something. Something *important*, she thought. But what?

"Well," she said, "That will have to wait for a while. I'm starving! Better dry off and get back out there. Clare will think I've drowned or something."

She dried her body and her hair but didn't put any makeup on. She investigated her closet and selected a thick, red terrycloth robe and pulled it on. She looked in the closet one more time. *Wow! At least I have good tastes*, she thought. It was full of pricey things.

"Well, time to face the unknown world again," she muttered under her breath. "I wonder what awaits. Besides Clare."

When she made her entrance back into her bedroom, Clare was wide-eyed and speechless.

"Are you okay, Clare?" she asked.

"Uh, yeah! I guess I am. More than okay. It's just that seeing you in that red robe kinda shook me up a little. Did you know that you are one beautiful woman?"

She laughed. "Well, under these circumstances, I haven't known me for very long, have I?"