

Tales from the Neck



FULL
MOON
LAMENT



J.P. CANE

Full Moon Lament

Copyright © 2020 by J. P. Cane

Cover design by Phillip Hilliker

Web: jpcane.com

Twitter: @jpcane

Instagram: @jpcane_author

No part of this work may be reproduced or photocopied without the prior written permission of the copyright holder and the publisher.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

AUTHOR

PARTNERS

Also by J. P. Cane

Shadows Within, Book One of *The Shadowless* vampire series

TALES FROM THE NECK
FULL MOON LAMENT
BY J. P. CANE

I was self-conscious enough before the curse. Already luckless in love with a jelly donut physique, now at 39, I have this extra dollop of supernal misery added to my plate. I think I smell. Not bad breath or underarm funk. Some metaphoric stench that says 'Biohazard: Stand Clear.'

With only hours to go, I feel caged. The calendar on my desk has one day marked each month, reminders of my lycanthropy. And each month, as the weeks, then days, then hours tick down, the dread grows.

Why couldn't it be like the horror films I've been watching? The ones where the guy at least has a life to ruin. Or should I count myself lucky that I don't?

By this time each month, I'm irritable, pacing my cubicle or barking at co-workers who are just too sunny. *I'm looking at you Pamela.*

I'm ravenous, too. Oh, I've noticed my khakis tightening and my tie bending where my stomach is pushing out. I eat from stashes at my desk. I eat beef jerky chips and hard salami rounds, surreptitiously, as the word-of-

the-day calendar says. I sneak snacks because once bit, twice shy. Dan and the others have caught on to my face-stuffing.

If they only knew the truth.

I can't tell them of course. Not because they wouldn't believe me, but because it's man-in-a-tutu humiliating.

Their jibes have stung before: What's that sucking sound? Is it that time of the month again? Must be Frank eating.

I have a condition!

For lunch, I get sourdough rolls and slap on slices of meatloaf slathered with peppery mustard, then I find a secluded place to wolf it down. I eat so fast, I sometimes bite my fingers or inside my cheek. Part of it's nerves, mostly it's some biological compulsion. Like my body is preparing me for tonight. I need the calories for the change.

Today I'm holed up in the conference room. Sequestered at this end of the floor I can still hear Wally and Dan chat-up their supervisor. My hearing is so acute I can detect butt-sniffing and office gossip at this end of the floor plan. It doesn't make up for having to shave twice a day.

Voices emerge from the ladies' bathroom. Rita and Pamela. I like Rita and the way she laughs, holding her hand up near her shoulder, her nose wrinkling and her head tipping back. I've made her laugh a few times. I think she genuinely likes my jokes and isn't just throwing me a bone. It's possible, right?

In the movies, the guy I'm supposed to be has fetching good looks and a girlfriend who understands. Sure he gets bit and cursed, but even then it's better than what I got. He's more confident, stronger, has sharper senses. During the full moon he turns into a wolf – a bad ass wolf. He's lethal and cunning and demands respect. Not me. I'm 5'6, my hair relocating from the top of my head to my back and I don't turn into a bad ass wolf.

Back at my desk, there's work to be done. The final month of the fiscal year is both good and bad. Good because I'm so busy, I don't have to dwell on tonight. Bad because I have no time for research. Since coming to understand what's happening to me, I've scoured the internet for a cure. Funny how cure and curse are an "s" apart. There are plenty to be found. Most haven't worked or don't apply. They're for wolves not dogs, though I've tried them anyway, thinking dogs are close enough.

First, I tried the simpler ones like recipes for herbal teas or eating cakes with monkshood. I got diarrhea. One even suggested belladonna. Then I realized belladonna is poisonous. Only to humans, the recipe assured me. I skipped that one.

The classic cure in the movies is to kill the one that bit you. Look, I cried at the end of *Old Yeller*. I just couldn't kill a dog, even if I ever saw it again. Some claimed it was run over. Does that count? Evidently not.

It had nipped my hand without warning at the block party barbeque. I was politely listening to a neighbor discuss an actuarial seminar he attended when I noticed the dog. I intended to give it a piece of my hamburger but it chomped me instead. It wasn't much of a wound, but since no one at the

party claimed him, they advised I get to the hospital for shots. By the next full moon, it was too late to get a shotgun.

So now it's down to two options. First, a balm I ordered online. The other is to bite someone else, passing it on like a game of tag. No tag backs! But who? I don't have enemies. Dan can be a jerk yanking my chain ... No. I'll see if the balm works.

Quitting time, I scamper out, nearly knocking people to the ground on my way to the car. Sorry! From the glove box I tear cellophane off more beef jerky. This curse has doubled my grocery bill. Do they mention that in the movies?

I still have time to eat dinner, undress and try the balm. In the bedroom, I carry the cardboard box from atop the dresser to the bed. Twisting the cap off, the pungent odor hits me - it's like garlic mixed with Vicks VapoRub. The instructions say to apply between sundown and seeing the full moon. This had better work. I'm nearly 40, alone and cursed. How can I ever ask Rita out?

I finish undressing and look at the jar. The whiff assaults my nose. This isn't going to work is it? Maybe it really *is* VapoRub and I've been ripped off.

The instructions are laid out on the bed. I stand over them with the jar in one hand, the goop in the palm of the other. Reading a translated Chinese incantation, I apply the yuck, feeling like a reeking idiot.

Moments later I know it hasn't worked, because I can feel the small signs of what's to come. Itchiness, rising body heat, restlessness. After that those familiar spasms occur.

Again, not like the movies where the changes are instantaneous or flow through the body like a special effect. Mine are spasms erupting in little discernable patterns. My body seizes and I fall because my feet are slick with goo. Bones pop, muscles bulge and new shapes emerge. I whine in pain and at the unfairness of it all. My form shrinks and I have no idea where the human mass goes. Maybe it turns to energy that fuels the transformation. Not a wolf, not a coyote or even a Husky or Samoyed or Malamute. No, when all the cramping, awkward painful changes are complete, I'm a Dachshund.

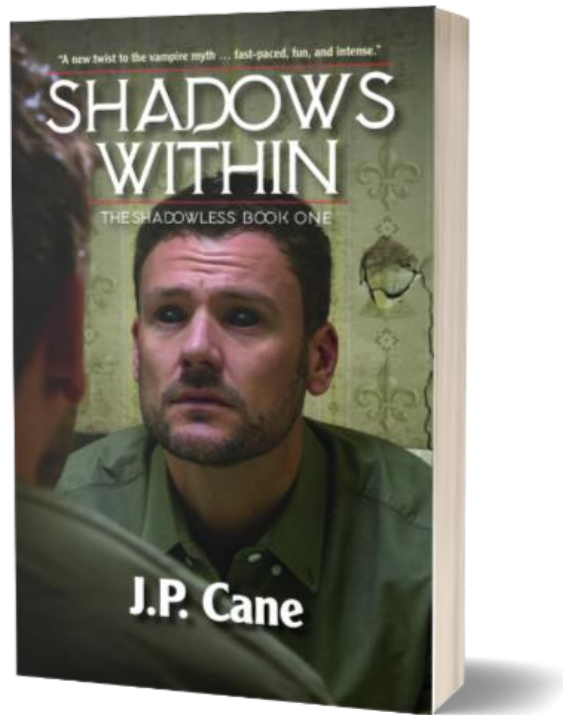
A were-weenie.

Woof.

#

Reed fights for the humanity vampires bled from him.

Shadows Within by J. P. Cane



Available everywhere books are sold