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“Originally Human”, Lupi #2

# *Chapter 1*

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excerpt by [Eileen Wilks](#)

Helen?

Too dignified. I've never been terribly dignified.

Rachel?

A pretty name . . . it didn't feel right, though. I wasn't in the mood for Rachel. I paused, digging my toes into the sand. Overhead the sky was clear, its black dome fuzzed by the lights ahead. Galveston isn't large, but tourists like a place that's lively at night. I do, too, but prefer to live outside the city proper.

Beside me the great, briny mother was in a quiet mood, her waves lapping at the sand like curled cats' tongues. That made me think of my neighbor, Mrs. Jenks--a nice woman, but with no talent for naming cats. She had three. The one she called Mona was a particular favorite of mine, sleek and black, who referred to herself as Wind-Who-Leaves-The-Grasses-Silent. Quite a mouthful in English, I'll admit.

Well, what about Mona? A better name for a woman than a cat.

No, it was too close to Molly, which was my current name. I'd be forever signing checks wrong.

I sighed and started walking again. Walking in sand is good for the calf muscles. Doing it at night with the ocean whispering beside you is good for the soul.

I'll admit to being vain about my legs. Otherwise I'm on the nice side of average, with my weight holding steady at fashionable-plus-fifteen and a thoroughly Irish face, complete with freckles and pug nose. More motherly than cute these days, I suppose; I let my hair go white several years ago. But my legs are still excellent.

Not that I was out walking for the sake of my muscle tone tonight. My calves were in better shape than my soul.

Self-pity is so wearing. Unattractive, too. Really, I needed to settle on a name. It was time to move on. Just last night Sam had commented again on how I never seemed to change.

Dear Sam. I sighed again. I would miss him. And several of the others, too, and Galveston itself. I loved the historic section and the view /name hotel/ and the /name a food/, and I lived so close to the ocean that the salt-and-sea scent drifted in my window, and I could indulge in the private splendor of walking the beach at night . . .

I was lucky, reminded myself. Most women wouldn't feel safe alone on the beach at three in the morning. There have always been predators. But some would say that's what I am, too. I'm not easy to harm.

I'd reached the narrow road that divided the public beach from the trailer park where I live. Not that the owners call it a trailer park, mind. It's a mobile-living village. That's the name, in fact--"Beachside Village." I suppose a touch of pretension is inevitable if you want to charge such outlandish prices to rent a spot, and the location is wonderful--outside the city proper, right on the ocean. I stepped onto the soft asphalt, still warm from the summer sun.

There was a soft sound, sort of a pop-whoosh! And a naked man lay at my feet. A beautiful, unconscious, bleeding naked man.

Oh, dear.

The air turned crisp and my hearing sharpened as those trusty fight-or-flight chemicals did their thing. But there was no one to fight--thank goodness--and I couldn't simply run away.

I do not need this, I told myself as I knelt on the soft, tacky asphalt. My heart was galloping. I had no idea where he had come from or how he'd arrived, but those slashes across his chest, belly and legs looked intentional. Someone did not like this man. I should head immediately and call 911.

I touched his throat, found a pulse, and exhaled in relief.

The moon was nearly full, and I have excellent night vision. He was a breathtaking man, with skin so pale the sun might never have touched it. Pale everywhere, too, not just in the usual places. His hair was short, very dark, and almost as curly as my own. His eyelashes were absurdly long, giving him the look of a sleeping child . . . a look quite at odds with one of the loveliest male bodies I've ever seen. And I am something a connoisseur of male bodies.

And the slashes on that lovely chest, flat stomach and muscular thighs were slowly closing. Blood

barely oozed now.

Whoever he was, he wasn't entirely human. Not as most people counted such things, anyway. And though I loved Texas, there was no denying most people here were not very tolerant of those of the Blood. Not that he was lupus or Faerie or anything else I recognized, but who else could heal a wound so quickly?

One of the Old Ones could.

I shivered and shut a mental door before a Name could slip into my thoughts. No point in taking any chances of disturbing Their sleep. Besides, one of Them wouldn't be so poky about healing a few cuts. The bleeding had stopped, but the gashes remained. A couple were quite deep--though not, thankfully, the one in his stomach.

One of Them could have made those cuts, though. And zapped Their victim here, or anywhere else They pleased. I did not need to be part of this. I'd call 911 and let them deal--

He opened his eyes.



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