

The Town Drunk

Presents

Naked Revenge

Sonya M. Sipes

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As I drive home from work, I feel that familiar itch starting between my shoulder blades—the chafing of my clothing against my skin, the itchy dry patches that need lotion—only I can't ever seem to reach the right spots. I make a right turn on Lassiter, and then a left on Cleveland, the whole way obsessed with my need to scratch, scratch, scratch.

I wonder if my coworkers are beginning to suspect. I have been late to work the day after every full moon for months, and I am finding it more and more difficult to stay awake at my desk. My eyesight seems to be failing, and I am becoming more sensitive to sunlight. Perhaps it's just a result of staying up so late at night... not enough sleep and all that.

I pull into my driveway and throw the car into park. I see another yellow slip of paper hanging on my door, fluttering angrily in a sudden gust of wind. That witch from the homeowner's association has been by again—to complain about my lawn, most likely. It doesn't matter that I am doing everything I can to keep the situation under control... it's not enough.

I pound the steering wheel in frustration. Why did I move to such an exclusive community? *To steer clear of those shady types*, I remind myself, *like he who made me this way*. To be free of graffiti-covered sidewalks, to be able to walk the streets alone at night and not worry about getting mugged. *But you don't walk anywhere at night anymore, do you?* I yank the keys from the ignition, and small tufts of arm hair flutter into the air. Losing my hair is the worst part of this affliction.

I get out of the car and slam the door, nearly catching my coattails in the process. I rip the coat back and look around, trying to sense if anyone is watching me: trying to see what “the freak” is doing home so early on a Friday... the evening of the full moon.

I see Mrs. Cuthbertson peeking through her curtains across the street, and I consider sneering at her and baring my teeth. I swab them with my tongue and feel them becoming more pronounced as I consider the situation, and instead settle on a frown and a wave.

I stalk up to the front door, snatch down the yellow slip and spare it only a glance. It's as I suspected—another warning about my lawn. I survey the front yard, noting the lumpy texture of the grass and the long runnels beneath the cool, green surface—silent testimony to my pest problem. I flex my jaw and gnash my teeth in frustration. Startled, I realize that they are growing longer by the minute. I hurry inside, closing the door on the setting sun.

My breathing speeds up, and my blood pressure surges—the change is upon me, and I haven't been “were” long enough to control it. But I must. I must wait until dark, so no one will see my shame.

Entombed in comforting darkness, I sneak a peek between the slats of my mini-blinds, to see if Mrs. Cuthbertson is still watching my house. She is, and when she notices me she pulls her curtains closed with a decisive gesture. I pull back, worried now that my game is up. My stomach is jumping with nerves, and my pulse has quickened more. The itchy dry spots on my shoulders and back have spread to my entire torso, the hair on my head is falling out in clumps, and the hair on my arms and legs is all but gone. I strip my clothes off to prevent myself from scratching. It's almost time. I catch my reflection in a mirror; I see my elongated fangs, the reddish shine of my eyes, the raw pink nakedness of my irritated skin. I watch as the change begins.

There's a shivering, a series of cracks and pops, and suddenly I am standing on all fours. The scent of my anger and fear is strong in my nostrils as I step over the puddle of my discarded clothing. I swish my tail in agitation, a growl buried in my throat. I pick my way through the maze of my furniture, using my nose as a guide now that my eyesight has failed completely.

I exit out the back and squeeze through the hole in my fence. I scent the air for others, wary of meeting anyone in my current state... of what they might do—of what I might do in return.

I zero in on the aroma of Chanel No. 5 wafting from the house across the street. It clogs my nostrils, and suddenly I am enraged—enraged because of the watching, the whispering, the yellow citations left on my front door. I am not going to take it anymore!

I dash across the street, my claws clicking faintly on the pavement as I rush to the edge of Mrs. Cuthbertson's lawn. And there I stand, my nostrils flared, my whiskers quivering in anticipation and fright.

And I begin to dig.

The revenge of a naked were-molerat is neither quick nor clean, but for the president of a homeowner's association, it is horrifying indeed.

By day, **Sonya M. Sipes** battles gremlins as a SQL Server DBA. By night, she disguises herself as the Managing Editor of CatsCurious Press and its imprint CatScratch books. During spare moments in between, she soaks up the love of her husband, their three kids, two cats, and

numerous houseplants. Sonya enjoys reading, writing, cooking, sewing, and gaming. She does not enjoy exercise or going to the dentist, but those things she does anyway.