



Blood Relations

A High Moor Story

Graeme Reynolds



24th November 1991. High Moor, England. 22.35

Marie's eyes snapped open at the ominous creak of the staircase leading to her attic room. She glanced across at the glowing green numbers of her alarm clock then stretched out with her senses to ascertain whether the threat she anticipated was real or imagined. A lingering fragment of a nightmare perhaps?

No. Not imagined. Very real, indeed.

Her father, Norman, stood on the landing with one foot on the staircase, almost frozen in place as if he were playing a game of musical statues. Even without enhanced senses, she fancied that she'd be able to tell he was there. Whiskey fumes billowed from him, mingling with the stink of his body odor to create a unique and unpleasant smell. His heart raced in his chest, and his breathing was deep and rapid as if the mere act of ascending to the first floor had exhausted him.

Norman Williams was not a small man nor a particularly healthy one, and the years of alcohol abuse had taken their toll on him, especially in the years since Marie's brothers had died. The beatings had, if not stopped, at least lessened in frequency and severity, certainly compared to the violence she could remember him inflicting on Michael and David. In their place, however, something else had formed. A seed of temptation had taken root within her father. There had been glances that had made her feel uncomfortable. Hugs that had perhaps gone on too long. And now, beneath the stink of her father's unwashed body and the miasma of whiskey fumes, she smelled something else. The unmistakable, musty stench of arousal. Then the

staircase creaked again.

Oh God!

Marie's head span. She must be imagining things, she reasoned. He might be a disgusting, violent drunk, but he was her *father*. There could be any number of reasons why he might be climbing the staircase to her room in the middle of the night. It didn't mean that he intended to... *oh god!* Her mother had just turned the volume up on the fucking television downstairs. Turned it up *loud*. She knew what the bastard was going to do to her. Her own daughter. Her last surviving child, and she was going to let her fat, sweaty husband come up to her room and rape her. Push her down into the old mattress while he climbed on top of her and...

No. No fucking way was she going to allow that to happen. She'd die first. Or kill. Deep inside the darkness of her subconscious, she felt something stir. A presence that she'd lived with for almost five years. The other part of her, a gift that her brother, Michael, had passed to her on the night that he died. She glanced down to the four thin, silver scars that circled her forearm and let out a small snarl. Let him come. She still held on to the hope that she was wrong — that Norman Williams was simply coming upstairs to check on her (as if!) or yell at her over some transgression (more likely), but if there was anything more to it than that, then he would find that he had more to contend with than a scared thirteen-year-old girl.

The creaking of the stairs increased in frequency. Whereas to begin with, there seemed to have been an ocean of time between each step, he was now ascending at a normal, if slightly stumbling pace. She could hear his heart thumping in his chest. Smell the adrenaline mingling with the other scents emanating from him. Then he reached the top of the stairs and paused for what seemed like minutes but, in reality, was probably no more than a couple of seconds, before he reached out and turned the door handle.

Marie wanted to throw up. There was no doubt in her mind as to her father's intentions now. As he'd lost more and more of himself to the booze, the barriers between right and wrong had eroded under the liquid onslaught. And being honest, those barriers had only been paper-thin at the best of times. She remembered the beatings that he'd dished out to her brothers. Especially once, when he'd hurt David so severely that by rights, the boy should have been hospitalized. He probably would have required medical attention if he'd ever made it home. Norman Williams had left her beloved older brother bloodied and broken before throwing him out of the house to retrieve a bag of tools that David and Michael had left in the treehouse they'd been building. David had stumbled from the house, clutching his ribs with tears streaming down his face, and that was the last time that anyone had seen him alive. That was the start of the nightmare that cost her not only her two brothers but John, her best friend (and secret crush). It all stemmed from the routine, casual violence dished out by this brutal thug who was supposed to protect them. The same fucking animal that even now was standing in her doorway, his grotesque shaped silhouetted against the light from the hallway.

Marie had thought about pretending to be asleep, but instead simply said, "What do you want?"

The directness of her tone seemed to knock Norman off guard. "No, need to be like that, Pet. I just wanted to look in on ye. I thought you'd be asleep."

"I was. You woke me up. Can you go now? I've got school in the morning."

Norman seemed to be taken aback by Marie's response. He was, after all, used to having his commands obeyed and was treated, if not with respect, then certainly with caution. He stood motionless in the doorway, seemingly uncertain as to how he should proceed. Marie felt a small twinge of satisfaction as she perceived an increase in his heart rate, and just for a moment, a tiny stab of fear

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permeated his scent. Unfortunately, it was a short respite. Norman seemed to be fighting against himself, but the fear and guilt he felt quickly transformed into a small flame of anger that began to burn away the conflicting emotions.

He stepped into the room. "Don't you tell me what to do in my own house, girl. If I want to come up here, then that's exactly what I'll fucking do. Am I making myself clear?" With the question left hanging in the air, Norman closed the door behind him then turned back to Marie.

The terror she felt at that moment threatened to paralyze her. With the door closed, her father had, to all intents and purposes, shut out the rest of the world. All that existed to them both at this exact moment in time was contained within the four walls of Marie's bedroom. What had always been a refuge for her now seemed unbearably small. The air was thick and stifling, and the distance between the thing that had masqueraded as a parent and herself was nowhere near enough. Then Norman took another step forward.

"I said, 'Am I making myself clear?'"

The presence in the back of her mind roared to the surface, and it took every scrap of willpower she had to stop herself from tearing the bastard's throat out where he stood. Instead, she pushed back her duvet and got to her feet until she was standing before her father, meeting his lascivious gaze with defiance. "Perfectly clear. Now, was there something you wanted... Dad?"

"I think," he snarled at her, breathing a nauseating mix of alcohol fumes and halitosis into her face, "that you need to learn some respect, girl." He reached down and began to undo the belt to his trousers. Marie couldn't help but notice his erection. "Now, turn around, bend over and take your medicine."

Marie moved so fast that, even if he had been sober, there would have been no way Norman would have been able to react in time. She stepped forward and shot both

her hands out, palms open, into her father's chest, shoving him as hard as she could. The effect was dramatic. Norman Williams flew through the air as if he had been attached to a bungee cord that had reached the limits of its elasticity, and crashed into the door to Marie's bedroom, splintering the frame.

"Don't you fucking touch me," she growled at him. "Don't you come near me again. What the hell is wrong with you? *I'm your daughter!*"

Norman picked himself up from the floor, his face flushed red with embarrassment and barely contained rage. "Who the *fuck* do you think you are? You think you can take a couple of karate classes down the rec and tell me what to do? *In my own fucking house!* Girl, I'm going to teach you a lesson you'll never forget. You mark my words. This will stay with you till your dying day!"

Marie could see now that she really didn't have a choice. Whatever had remained of her father, as flawed as he had been, was gone. All that stood before her now was the physical embodiment of rage, desire, and a lifetime of humiliation, fueled by half a bottle of cheap blended whiskey. Before she'd fought back, she was sure part of him was convinced that what he was going to do to his daughter was going to be an act of love. Now he was going to make sure that he hurt her. The pretense of caring had evaporated with his rage, leaving only the desire for violence and control.

So be it.

Marie relaxed control of her wolf and let it come surging to the surface. They existed in symbiosis, the wolf entity and her. In ways she couldn't quite understand, they were a single consciousness. She often brought the other part of her to the surface so that she could use its strength, speed, and senses without fully committing to the transformation, but at least once a month, she would go into the woods and allow things to run their course. Let the wolf out of its cage to run and hunt. The bones in her hands snapped and

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reformed in an instant. Vicious claws burst from beneath her fingernails while coarse golden hair flowed from her pores. Her jaw dislocated and extended to make room for the array of gleaming fangs that split her gums in a spray of foam and blood.

“No, Dad,” she managed to growl through her mangled jaws, “I’m the one that’s going to teach you.”

She took an unsteady step forward as the bones in her legs elongated. She’d always been stationary when she’d turned before, but fury impelled her forward toward this man who, at that moment, seemed to be the cause of everything that had ever gone wrong with her life. Norman pushed himself backward, against the broken door frame, his eyes bulging from their sockets. And then, before Marie could complete her change and destroy the evil bastard that had dominated her entire life, he clutched his chest and slid to the floor.

Marie stopped, caught in an intermediate state between human and wolf. Her father lay face down on the floor of her bedroom and was not moving. She couldn’t hear a heartbeat and could already sense the drop in the temperature of his body. The bastard was dead. She’d killed him, and she hadn’t had to lay a finger on him. She wasn’t sure how she felt about that. The part of her that was wolf wanted to tear at the body, dig through the layers of rancid fat to find the juicy muscle tissue beneath, but the human part of her felt nothing but revulsion at the thought. No, she was never going to have any part of that bastard inside her. She would satisfy neither his urges nor the wolf’s. She was the one in charge. Despite her distorted facial structure, she somehow managed to smile.

Then the door to her bedroom swung open, and her mother saw the body of her husband and the monster that her daughter had become.

Marie took a step forward and reached out to her mother, desperate to calm and comfort her (despite the fact that she had turned up the volume on the television to

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mask what her husband was going to do to her daughter), but the woman recoiled in horror and let out a long, terrified shriek that only stopped long enough for her to suck more air into her lungs. Marie realized then what had happened and pushed her wolf back down into the depths of her subconscious, quickly turning back into a thirteen-year-old girl. However, the damage was done. When she tried to approach her mother again, the woman crawled into a corner and the shrieking, if anything, got louder.

The realization of what had just happened hit Marie like a hammer blow. Her father lay dead on the floor, and her mother, having witnessed the truth of what her baby girl was, had quite literally lost her mind. Soon a neighbor would come to investigate the noise and find her father's corpse and her mother screaming about monsters. Given the history of High Moor, that would not be a good thing for her. She only had one choice left to her.

She quickly emptied out her school rucksack and stuffed as many clothes as she could get her hands on into it, then stepped past her mother onto the staircase. She looked back at the screaming woman and said, "I'm sorry, Mum. I'm so, so sorry." Then she ran down the staircase, out of the back door, and disappeared into the night.

Two Years Later...

26th October 1993. Prague, Czech Republic. 13.47

Marie shoved her way through the crowd, sending a heavy-set man in a thick wool hat crashing into the street food vendor's cart behind him.

**TO BE CONTINUED IN
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