

BLOODY BASTILLE MOON

A DUKE WULFENSCHLITZ MYSTERY



Bloody Bastille Moon

by Duke Wulfenschlitz

Dedication

For Keffy R. M. Kehrli, whose love for werewolves and noir fantasy is as eternal and inspirational as the oil in the China Terrace's deep fat fryer.

Bloody Bastille Moon

It was another god damn Bastille Day, and the moon was full. My beast growled for release, but I had other plans. I hadn't let the beast out since last Bastille Day, and there's no way in hell I was going to let it out tonight.

I call it my office, but I've been sleeping on the ratty couch since my landlord lost patience with me. My own damn fault, I know, that Bastille Day, so drunk on the moon and fresh blood that I stopped paying attention to what that bastard Michael was doing. By the time I sobered up, it was all over: the moon was down, I'd been exiled from the pack, and Carl was dead.

I'd vowed never to sober up again, and I'd kept my vow.

I wanted to howl, but I wouldn't let that happen. Instead I screwed the top off my date for the night, a bottle of cheap whiskey, but paused. I heard a clip-clop of dainty feet coming up the stairs. The steps grew closer, and closer. This was not going to end well.

She paused outside the door; I could tell she was a dame from her astonishingly well-endowed silhouette. Then she pushed the door open and stepped in.

"Mr. Wulfenschlitz?" she breathed.

"What it says on the door," I said. Duke Wulfenschlitz, lone wolf private eye, at your service. I didn't get many clients, and this dame didn't look like she was nearly down enough on her luck to need me. This was fishier than the soup at the China Terrace, the restaurant I used to go to all the time with Carl, before -

She was trouble, this broad. Curves that went on all day, tucked into a fire engine red dress so tight it might have been painted on. Waves of glossy blonde hair. Rich perfume. Innocent blue eyes that looked as if they were about to start weeping.

But there was something else... something under her scent. I couldn't quite place it, but it raised my hackles.

"I need you to find my husband," she said, all throaty and tragic.

"Can't," I told her. "I don't do missing persons." That kind of case was a pain in the ass. Usually the person who was missing wanted to stay that way, and I didn't figure that was any of my business.

She took a deep breath, which did amazing things for her bosom. "You'll do this one, Duke," she said. "It's Carl. He's not dead."



The news went through me like the Kung Pao Chicken at China Terrace. I'd never seen a terrace on the damn place, but that was its name. Maybe someday I'd find it, crack the case of the missing terrace. Maybe I was just trying not to think about what this lady was trying to sell me.

I didn't want to think about Carl and his hands and his mouth and his ass. I didn't want to think about how I last saw him, covered with blood and gasping out his last breath.

So I let myself get lost in her curves, in the up and down, side to side motion of her ocean. She was trouble. Telling myself that didn't really help.

"Carl."

His name stuck in my throat like the wontons at China Terrace. They were never quite greasy enough. I hadn't spoken his name in months and speaking it now was painful - like those damn wontons.

"Duke."

"Don't—"

"Duke!"

"Listen, lady." I pushed up out of the chair and stalked to her side. She didn't take a step backward like a dame should have. Oh, no. This one lifted her chin, looked me straight in the eye, and -

"Is that a horn, or—"

"Duke, I'm just happy to see you," she breathed all breathy and oh she leaned into me the way Carl used to and damned if she didn't smell the way he did, all redolent of China Fucking Terrace. Those shadows in the alley. He loved that alley. Always asked me where the damn terrace was, but there was only that alley. We never needed more.

"Won't you do it for Carl? He's out there—somewhere."

She was all breathy and curvy and smelled like Carl and I - I howled then.



"Tell me everything!"

"No! We have to go!" Her breath was so deep and urgent that her breasts strained against her fire engine red bodice, like an overstuffed fire engine red dumpling at China Terrace.

I grabbed her wrist and twisted it behind her back until she squeaked. I shoved her

toward the chair, and she plopped down, defiant despite her tears.

"You're just a bully," she said. "A big stupid bully! And Carl told me to trust you!"

I let go of her wrist. "Carl didn't tell you anything," I said. "He was dead. I *saw* him." And I had: his intestines strewn about like the Chow Mein noodles at China Terrace, glistening with blood. He was dead. There's no cure for that.

She sneered with those fire engine red lips. "If you're so smart, then how did Michael get the better of you last year? If you had half a brain, you would have seen what he was doing, and Carl wouldn't have been - hurt. Maybe you should shut up and listen instead of playing tough guy."

I didn't get where I was by listening to dames, so I was about to tell her to get lost. But then I paused: where *had* I gotten? Maybe I wasn't doing such a great job on my own. Maybe it wouldn't hurt to hear what this crazy broad had to say.

So I sat down and poured us both a nice big glass of whiskey. She took it with thanks and didn't even ask if the glass was clean or not. I guess she didn't have to.

"Talk," I said.

She did. She spilled like the egg drop soup at the China Terrace. Seems that after the events of last Bastille Day, the alpha called in the local crime scene cleanup team to disappear all the evidence. The cleaners, never squeamish and always happy to make a buck, figured there was no point in wasting perfectly good meat by burying it.

Carl was more than good meat. He was the best. But I kept silent.

So they sold the bodies to a local restaurant. But when they got there, the ancient Oriental proprietress put her dark magic to work, and brought him back to life.

"Which restaurant?" I asked, but I already knew.

"China Terrace," she said.



China Terrace.

The name stuck in my throat just the way Carl once had. I slammed the devil juice back and it burned a blazing, fiery, raging path inside me, looping around the beast that lay huddled in the dark. This could only end badly, in that damned alley at that damned restaurant that didn't even have a damned terrace.

"Let's go," I said, and dragged her out of the office. We'd start looking at China Terrace.

I'd known Carl had a wife. I didn't mind. But I never knew she was a looker. What had he seen in me? God, Carl, you should have just stayed home. Then you'd still be alive.

He never was as smart as he thought.

Then we were there, in the alley behind the China Terrace. The smell of grease and garbage hung in the air, just like I remembered it.

I stared at the man hauling trash toward the dumpster. It was Carl! Tattered of flesh and smelling like the depths of some unknowable and endless hell that we'd both been tossed into and neglected for what would have been a thousand years, had it not been endless. His eyes bulged from their sockets.

At least, the left one did; the right one was plum gone - "Into the plum sauce!" hissed the Oriental proprietress behind him.

"Ca—" His name snapped in two as the dame escaped my hold, slippery like the guts that dribbled down Carl's usually immaculately pressed trousers.

"Fresssssssh meat!"

The cry went up, not from me or the dame or Carl, but from the Oriental herself. She flung herself at the dame, and the dame ran. 'Course, a dress that tight, dame couldn't run proper—she ran like a girl all right, and then the Oriental tackled her and they fell and -

They say a man shouldn't know all things. They say a man can't know all things. I call bullshit on that. The painted-on dress split with the sound of a shrieking beast. *Heart song of the werewolf!* My own beast leaped to the fore.

But no.

What emerged from beneath the Oriental, a gleaming horn of death having skewered the evil old woman like she was chicken yakitori with a side of fried rice, could only be called the knowledge of all things. Then and there I knew all there was to know. I Understood.

The unicorn in fire engine red lipstick! The unicorn that had been the dame who claimed to be Carl's wife tossed her head and flung the Oriental down into the filthy depths of the alley. Blood cascaded in a crimson waterfall down her gleaming mane.



The scent of the Oriental's blood was too much for me, and my wolf sprang forward in a blistering agony of transformation. Then I padded down the alley on soft wolf paws and sniffed the old woman. Oh, she was dead. I wanted to eat her, but knew I'd just be hungry again in an hour.

Besides, there was something I wanted in my mouth even more.

I turned back to Carl. He was shambling slowly away from the dumpster. "Carl!" I howled, in the secret language known only to werewolves. His steps faltered, and I felt a terrible hope. Was it possible the man I loved was still in there? That though his body was rotting, his mind and heart were true? He stopped and turned and took a hesitant step toward me.

I howled again, in victory. We would be together!

But then I heard an insidious sound, the high-pitched whinny of a unicorn, and the unmistakable clip-clop of her heels as she approached.

"Stop," I snarled. "Carl's mine." I was not going to lose him again. She didn't speak

werewolf, but my meaning was so clear that she didn't need to.

She tossed her bloody mane and whinnied again. Carl stopped, and looked at her. He looked back at me, and at her, and back to me.

Oh, poor Carl. His confusion was agony. He never was as smart as he thought.

"Come to me, Carl!" I would help him decide.

The horny bitch whickered something that I could only guess was meant to be enticing. Enticing.

Actually, it was. It was as enticing as a fresh plate of cashew chicken at the China Terrace.

I looked at her with fresh eyes. Blood thrummed in my veins, and I made a suggestion or two. Carl was agreeable, and she tossed her mane friskily, so the three of us walked slowly toward each other, and met in the center of the alley.

She lowered her head to us, and we nestled up against her, each licking the blood off one side of her neck. She nickered appreciatively.

That damn alley. It gets the better of me every time. I stop thinking with my head when I'm there, if you know what I mean.

But right then I didn't care. I had Carl and I had the unicorn and everything was slick with the Oriental's blood.

"Happy Bastille Day!" I howled as I climaxed.



The world went hazy then, all soft around the edges and, truth be told, moderately sticky. Carl grunted mostly, and the dame, well, I've never known a horse to make noises like that. Her lipstick was smudged.

Suddenly, a mocking laughter filled the corners of the haunted alley and crept along the walls with little cat feet. Always did hate cats.

It was a laugh I'd heard a year ago this very night, another night when the brilliant unicorn light of the moon spilled everywhere, illuminating unspeakable horrors.

"What a tramp," Michael said as he walked out into the light of that brilliant Bastille moon. "Everyone's little pony!"

"She's a human being," Carl cried.

All right, Carl slurred, and it sounded more like "Sssshhhbng," but we all knew what he meant. Couldn't mean anything else in that awful alley, staring at Michael and the rest of the pack, strutting toward us. They fucking gleamed like they were werewolf archangels, but they were just werewolf cops. Dirty, stinking, rotten werewolf cops.

"Not so human," Michael said. "She's going to be a hell of a score, ain't she, boys?" He reached for his belt buckle. "Though you three creatures have come to some sort of accord

through which you've discovered what truly became of the wayward Carl at the taloned hands of the Oriental... it's now time for *us* to have our way with the lady. Even if she doth protest too much."

The lady protested. So did Carl and I, because this thug was bringing the threat of bodily violation into our alley? Against our lady unicorn? The alley became a storm of protest and blood that stained the walls crimson all over again, and if there were body parts consumed in the madness, I will not speak of them, because it was the gentle touch of Carl's rotting hand against my cheek right before it fell off that I remember most. It was the wet whisper of the dame's sodden mane against my arm as she lunged for Michael, because -

When she lunged, it was like nothing I'd ever seen, even though I Understood and knew all there was to know. I didn't know this, quite. Her horn, you see. His badge. One met the other, and glanced off, and he...

Michael was fury barely contained, all snarling lips and knives for teeth that grew under the light of the evil Bastille moon and suddenly her cherished heart was in his hand and it was a thing no man should ever know, not even when his true love stands at his side.



He stood there, in the alley behind the China Terrace, holding the dame's heart in his hand. He thrust it up over his head, victoriously, and howled at the moon.

It was over. He'd won. First he took Carl from me, and then a year later, he took the dame from us both.

I never even found out what her name was.

I'm not proud of that moment in the alley. I gave up. I thought I'd given up before, when I crawled into the bottle and refused to come out, but suddenly I could see that I was still running then, and you have to have hope to run.

I stopped running.

"You're an asshole, Michael," I said, just to pass the time.

He snarled at me.

Then out of the corner of my eye, I saw something.

It was Carl. He rose from the pile of bodies, slowly, awkwardly, and shambled over to the corner of the alley.

What the hell was he doing?

My heart beat a little faster. Was Carl just shambling randomly, obeying the blind impulses of his rotting body? Or was there a method to his madness?

I had to keep Michael distracted.

"That's right," I said. "You're a big stupid stinking idiot and a coward. Your mother fucks donkeys. Your father was a poodle."

He snarled again, and then locked eyes with me. Slowly, with a perfect and hideous grace, he lowered the dame's heart to his lips and took a big bit. Her blood sprayed out over his face, nearly black under the Bastille moon.

Then he laughed again.

I let him laugh, because Carl was at the wall, scrabbling up toward something I couldn't quite see. One last desperate lunge, and he did it.

There was a terrible groan of machinery. In an instant, the China Terrace's missing terrace sprang out of the wall and then dropped down. Michael had a moment to look up, but not enough time to leap away.

There was a wet thudding sound, and then it was over.

I ran to Carl and swept him into my paws and licked his face all over. He tasted a lot riper than I remembered, but it was Carl, my sweet Carl.

"How did you know about that?" I asked him.

"I paid attention," he said, though it sounded like "Mmmdnnnshhnn."

It turned out that the secret of the hidden terrace wasn't the only thing Carl paid attention to while he was in thrall to the old Oriental woman. He'd also learned the secrets of bringing the dead back to life.

Turns out Carl was even smarter than he always assumed he was. The man's a god damn genius, and I'll never doubt him again.

So now we all live in the Dame's place, the three of us: the werewolf, the zombie, and the zombie unicorn. Happily ever after.

I never believed in happily ever after, but now I'm living it, so it's gotta be true.

The End

About The Author

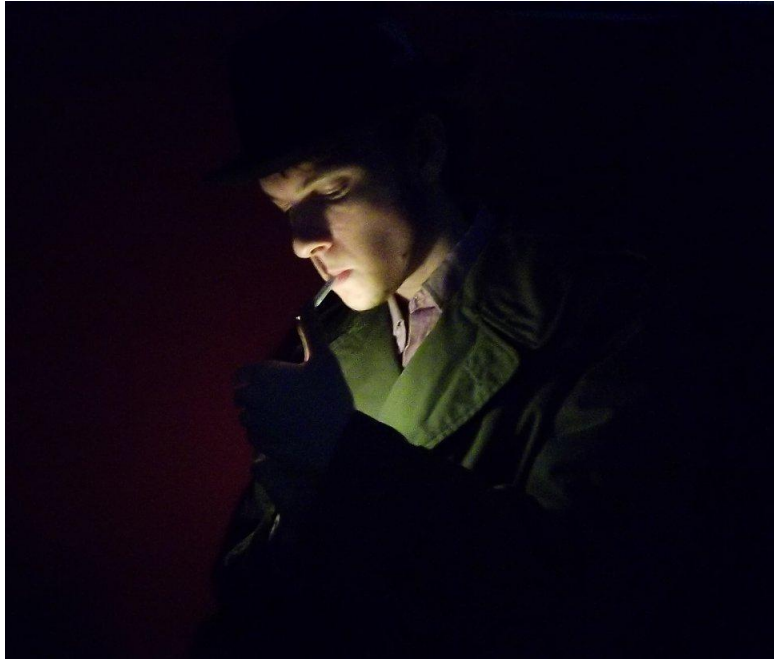


Photo by Anyman82, aka Trevor Jones.

Duke Wulfenschlitz is a private investigator, werewolf, writer, and co-owner of the China Terrace Restaurant. The mean streets of the city are his inspiration; his office is his home; and a bottle of whiskey is his muse. He lives with his partners Carl and the Dame, and no cats.

Follow his adventures at www.dukewulfenschlitz.com.