

Old Devil Moon

“Under blue moon I saw you
So soon you'll take me
Up in your arms
Too late to beg you or cancel it
Though I know it must be the killing time
Unwillingly mine”
Killing Moon, Echo and the Bunnymen

CHAPTER ONE

October 1999 New Orleans

Zachary Gordon tried to be brave, but he wanted his mom real bad. The room The Man and the other Bad Men put him in was dark and smelly. He could hear grownups talking in the other room. Their laughter made his tummy hurt. Just yesterday he was eating a doughnut called *bendyays* with mommy. And now he was here in the dark. His lower lip slipped out and he gave in to the temptation to suck his thumb.

His family was visiting New Orleans on Home Leave. Dad said before they move to their next home they get a baycation. Since he had spent most of his five years living across the street from the beach in Recife, a baycation seemed similar to home except for no school. Which sounded pretty good. A sniff from somewhere in the corner caught his attention. Was there somebody else here in the dark?

“Hello?”

“Hi,” came a soft voice. A girl voice.

“How long have you been here?”

“I dunno,” came the soft reply.

Zach scooted toward the voice, “What’s your name?”

“Sammie. I’m almost five.”

“Me too! My name is Zach.” He was still scared, but having a friend made things just a bit better.

He wished he had something to eat.

“Do you have a snack?” The girl asked, echoing his thoughts.

“No,” he answered. While he was glad to have a friend and was not alone, he really wanted to go

back to the hotel. No. He wanted to go home to Wisconsin and live with his Grandma! Or even

Brazil. But his daddy said Brazil wasn’t his home anymore. Now his home would be Ecuador.

They would live in the mountains and speak Spanish, not Portuguese. That’s what daddy said.

But would mommy and daddy go to Ecuador without him? He didn’t want to stay here with the girl and the stinky smell!

If he wasn’t so afraid, he would be very mad at The Man because he lied. He’d said there was a puppy for him to pet. Zach loved dogs, so he left his mom’s side while she was on the phone. It

was only around the corner - not far away from mommy at all. The next thing he knew he was in this dark place with the little girl named Sammie.

He held hands with the girl and listened to her soft cries. If he looked really really close he could see her. She had bruises on her face and legs and he wondered how it happened. He didn’t have

any bruises from The Man. He pointed to one of the purple marks on her arm, “Did The Man hurt you?”

“No, Ken did.”

“Who is Ken?”

“My mom’s boyfriend.”

“Your daddy?”

“Ken is *not* my daddy.”

That didn’t make sense to Zach. There was the mommy, the daddy, and the children. Sometimes if you lived in America, you also had grandparents nearby. But Grandma Jo lived in Wisconsin and he didn’t get to see her much.

“Where is your daddy?”

“I don’t know. Mom said she didn’t know who my daddy was.”

Sammie said some strange things, but maybe that is what it was like in America. Even though he was an American himself, he had lived in other countries all his young life. It made him feel like a stranger when he came home to America. He was pretty sure he would always remember his daddy. Maybe his dream of living in America was not a good idea. Maybe he should stay away and so he could keep his mommy and daddy.

Zachary leaned against the cold wall. He wished he had stayed with mom instead of going to look for the puppy. The Man had seemed really nice even if his mouth was strange. It was big - like a clown - and he had a lot of crooked teeth. But he was smiling and he said the puppy was a Dalmatian. They have the polka dots, he said.

Then everything went black.

The girl’s stomach growled brought Zach back to the present

“Do you think they will feed us?” He asked.

“I got some cookies for breakfast.”

Under any other circumstances, cookies for breakfast would be fantastic. But today, sitting in this room with a sad bruised girl, he couldn’t muster any excitement.

“When they talk loud? That means they are gonna come in here soon.”

Zach nodded, his heart racing. “Yeah, but The Man said he wouldn’t hurt us.”

Sammie looked at him, her green eyes huge in her tiny face, “You believe him?”

He certainly hadn’t been telling the truth about the puppy, “Not really.”

The door opened and The Man entered with a weird smile on his face. He wore a red dress with a hood. At any other time, Zach would have laughed at him but somehow he knew he would get in trouble with this man if he tried to explain that boys didn’t wear dresses.

“Children, it’s time.”

“For what?” Sammie asked.

The Man’s lips moved into an even bigger, uglier smile. Zach knew it wasn’t a nice smile. He also knew he would never like clowns again.

“For you to be reborn.”