THE MOON OF ENDING
The Moon of Endine

Jacqueline Saville
Mark Pexton
Andrew Woods

Mark Pexton would like to thank:

Douglas Pexton
John Pexton

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Once upon a time
Once upon a time a stoical band of settlers were dispatched to a last outpost planet to forge a better life.

Despite Endine's obvious drawbacks, it proved an attractive prospect for those few families at the bottom of the pile.
It was a rough life.

Some died, some didn't.

Survival of the wildest.
There wasn't much indigenous wildlife,

but everyone assumed that had survived along the same lines,

and they tried to keep out of its way.
It's not easy being an outsider. In such a small, closely-related community there is a kind of collective feeling:

one for all and all for one.

Or all against one, as the case may be.
Like any community, it had its myths and legends...
...its rumours and gossip...
...and its scapegoat.
In the early days of Endine’s habitation, far-fetched tales were rife.

There was even some talk of a young woman being ravaged by a wolf.
It wasn't true of course, but she was a loner and she kept herself apart.
Just her

and her son...
...ripe targets for the town gossips.
The coming of dark makes daytime creatures nervous, and most men are creatures of the daytime. They hear predators in every creak of wood, every sigh of wind.

The moon may be bright but its light is cold and uncaring; it only helps the prey stand out.

"I know you're out there, McCord! You won't get away with this – we'll catch up with you."
By the time his mother died it had started to seem like the moon was always there.

He'd heard some say it was on a decaying orbit but Angelo McCord never was one for science, he found the mental agility necessary for the more complicated calculations out of his grasp too often, as the shaggy wolf-mind took precedence.
Besides, he didn’t need to know how or why the change was occurring, just the bare fact that it was, was enough.

Full moon had no meaning any more: it would have made friendship difficult, even if there was anyone prepared to overlook the old rumours.

any time was fair game on Endine.

Courtship was out of the question.
“Now Emmy, what's a girl like you doing out alone on a night like this?”

“Someone has to run errands around here; all you men have been wasting half the day staking out an empty house.”

“Didn't you see what happened to Louise Carter? Don't you think something needs to be done about McCord?”

“I know Louise was your girl, Connor, but you don't know it was him.”
“I do know, I just can't prove it yet – but I will. Come on, let me walk you home.”

“Sure you don't want me to walk you right up to the door?”

“I'll be fine from here.”

“Go on home, now, and behave yourself.”
“Oh Emmy, I almost forgot.”
“I’ll never forgive myself, John; I should have walked her right to the door.”

“Did you see anything?”

“No, I’d already set off down the road, like I said, I offered to walk her to the door, I should have insisted.”
“Don’t blame yourself, Connor. I’d never have guessed a wolf would come this close to the house.”

“This wasn’t a wolf, this was McCord again – did you see Louise Carter this morning?”

“He’d dropped his pipe by her body in all the excitement.”
Time was, McCord could have gone lupine, turned back and carried on a conversation.
If he’d ever had anyone to converse with.

Now, it took him a while to remember what speech was, and that he had the ability to use it.
Arguments, logical reasoning, verbal persuasion – all beyond him.

McCord was fast finding out that he had only one way to make his feelings known.
“We just need to flush him out.”

“Burn his house down!”

“With him inside!”

“Let's get our families safely out of harm's way – everyone make sure the women and children get home then meet back here in half an hour.”
“Hey Marinta. Not afraid to be in the woods by yourself?”

“I hear you were going to marry Louise Carter, Connor.”

“There's lots of rumours going around right now – doesn't make them all true.”
“You said that to me, once...”

“That you were going to marry me.”

“Remember that, Connor?”

“Sure I do. But you had other ideas.”
“His was a short life, but a brave one.”

“He died trying to protect a helpless woman...”
...Sadly he was too late...
... but as usual this town has pulled together...
...removing the, er, perpetrator’s shelter...

...and – please God – driving him off.”
Once upon a time...
...a lone wolf learned to run with a pack.