



THE WEREWOLF

It was an unusually beautiful dawn at the beginning of April. After a cold night the ground and the forest trees were covered in frost. These wore pale green buds on all the branches and twigs of the deciduous trees which perhaps carried the hope of a long warm summer. It was an incredible time to find the half-eaten body of the shoemaker's daughter. It would have felt better to have found her during a cold stormy night in the autumn. But there she was, thrown away in a thicket in front of my feet like a cheap rag doll with a ghostly veil of frost which seemed to whisper: "I am your shroud and now you belong to me. Unfortunately, I was not so upset then as I would become later. She was neither the assassin's nor the werewolf's first victim, but the third. In February some insane individual had tasted my own dear brother's flesh and I was confronted with the awful possibility that the victim could have been me. So far providence had protected me, or perhaps saved me, as a later morsel for the evil beast.

At the full moon in March a maid, who wasn't particularly beautiful and furthermore, was unpopular because of her many visits to farmhands' bedrooms, disappeared. Three days later only parts of her body were found.

The terror which had stuck the village at the first crime became panic in April with the murder of the shoemaker's daughter, the beautiful Ulrika.

My name is Peter Mardvik. I am a lord and the owner of the famous Anga estate. My mansion is considered to be one of the finest in the county of Östergötland, which lies in the south east of Sweden. When my brother Mikael was murdered, my only possible competitor in future inheritance disputes disappeared. I was now the only one who could inherit the Anga estate. I really loved my brother, especially after his death!

However, the death of the shoemaker's daughter Ulrika upset me, as she was one of the girls in the village who I contemplated taking as my wife. She was well-known and admired for her beauty and good humor. It was awful to see her lying in front of me with her angelic face eaten away by the werewolf. There was now no doubt that our neighborhood had been visited by a werewolf and not an ordinary assassin.

Three full moons and three victims. Three individuals full of life had ceased to exist. My anguish was so horrible that I could easily have chosen to end it by taking my life. By his actions that human beast had spoken to me in his own gruesome way: "You Peter are in the center of my mad bloodthirsty attention."

If there had been some ties of love between my brother Mikael and the beautiful Ulrika, I could have hoped that the werewolf was not out to get me, but they didn't even know each other. I alone was the connection between the monster's first three victims and it was obvious to me that a fourth would soon be claimed in this terrible blood-curdling drama. A werewolf's hunger could never be satisfied. Would the next victim have an even closer connection with me, or would it be me? It surprised me that somebody wanted to harm me because, as far as I knew, I had no enemies.

The buds of April became the flowers of May and a new full moon was approaching. Terror reigned in the village and it was awful to see people so frightened. Many of them came to me with their desperate request for help. Of course it is natural that poor people should turn to the most influential person when they have problems, but it was too much to expect that I could solve murder mysteries.

However, a firm decision had developed in my mind: I intended to fight. I felt compelled to expose and catch the hated monster as soon as he changed from a person into a wolf and I decided to go a step further. One fragrant night in May he would be captured and killed. The werewolf was out to get me and I was out to get him! If I failed to kill him it was my most fervent wish to die in defense of those near and dear to me and my household.

My wife Veronica was mentally ill, but when I first fell in love with her, many years ago, there was no sign of the illness which would darken our lives after marriage. During the last two years she had sat in her apartment most of the time, and stared at the wall. Her only virtue was that she had given birth to two wonderful children, Fredrik and Caroline, before she became ill. It had become clear to me that I should divorce Veronica and give my children a better mother, but first I wanted to destroy the monster who had so brutally deprived them of having the beautiful Ulrika as their stepmother.

It goes without saying that Veronica was one of my chief suspects. However, I was not quite certain as I lacked proof that she was a werewolf and there were others in my household who I had misgivings about.

During the night before the full moon in May I had a most realistic nightmare. I dreamt it was winter and in the snow behind a wing of the mansion I found the tracks of a werewolf. I followed them along winding forest paths for a long time and to my amazement I discovered that I had walked in an gigantic circle and returned to where I had begun. Nightmares are evil things, but this one seemed as if it wanted to warn me that the werewolf was to be found in my own mansion. This didn't come as a surprise. However, the dream was not yet over and when I entered through the porch I saw a neat row of pictures on the floor, arranged in order: my murdered brother, the maid, Ulrika, Caroline, Fredrik and Veronica. The distance between the last three pictures was considerably less than between the first three as if somebody wanted to tell me that the whole family would die at the full moon. The day passed slowly and was filled with anguish. Finally the sun went down behind the horizon and the time for the dreaded werewolf came.

During the previous weeks I had the wildest suspicions about many people, all the way from my farm laborers to even my own Caroline and Fredrik.

However I could never have suspected what I soon discovered. When dawn came I saw not only Veronica, but also Caroline and Fredrik lying dead and torn to pieces. I had decided in advance to keep watch over my family during the night so that they could sleep calmly, knowing that I sat with them. Naturally I would never have allowed the werewolf to hurt them in any way. I would have fought the monster and willingly given my life to defend them. Suddenly, quite suddenly when I saw Fredrik's and Caroline's small dead bodies, the truth came to me and I received an almost fatal shock: The werewolf and myself were the same ghastly person!