

New Moon

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I stare out into the night, but it's pitch black. While the sky is clear, it's a new moon, so there's no light to be had apart from the distance star-shine, and that's so faint it's of no help what-so-ever. When the moon is full, or even just a narrow crescent, you can see *them* as they creep towards you under cover of darkness, the light glinting off their sallow, sagging flesh, making it seem like they're glowing from within. I know it's just a trick of the light, but it still sends a shiver down my spine every time I see it. Even though they're dead, it seems they still have some intelligence. They know we can see them in the daylight and they lie low, hiding in dark, damp places waiting for nightfall before they emerge. When the sun drops below the western horizon, the main sense that keeps us safe, our eyesight, fails us, and we are rendered blind as they are. This levels the playing field and makes it easier for *them* to catch us by surprise. The darker the night, the more actively they roam, moving amongst the trees and across the open ground, hunting us no matter how hard we try to hide, and nights when the moon is new are the worst. Those are the nights when they swarm through the inky blackness in unimaginable numbers, wearing the night like an invisibility cloak; they attack our defences, trying to overwhelm us, pushing forward, searching for a weak spot where they can break through. They attack in small groups, swiftly and silently. If the defences hold, they disappear back into the darkness to regroup before we have the chance to kill them; if the defences don't, they make it inside. When they do, they howl with delight as they surge through, drawing more from far and wide. We know we have mere seconds to neutralise them and restore the barricades before we're overrun, and yet we have to do it without being able to see our hands in front of our faces, let alone each other or those who are attacking us. These are the nights we dread, and yet they come, regular as clockwork, once every twenty-eight and a bit days. We don't need to mark them off on a calendar, we can just watch the moon expand and contract as the inevitable night of pure darkness approaches yet again, knowing what is coming, knowing that each month we'll be lucky to make it through that moonless night unharmed. Every time the new moon comes, our numbers shrink. Sometimes we lose only one or two, at other times it's too many to count. We're being whittled down, new moon by new moon and it seems there's nothing we can do to stop it. How many more we will survive, I don't know, but one thing is certain. Eventually, a

new moon will come which sees the last of us wiped out, and when the sun rises the following morning, it will shine on a world where we are gone, and all that will be left of humanity is *them*.