

“The Fur Coat” - By Mac Mckechnie



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“It was a rather nice party though, I’ll admit,” said Mike Thompson. Susan gave him a lack lustre smile and remained wrapped up in her brand new very expensive fur coat. Mike had objected to her getting it and had said fur products should be banned.

The Bentley drove to a halt in their driveway, and they turned in for the night and slept as they had done for the last seventeen years, back-to-back in the big double bed.

Silence pervaded the village, and their home. That was, until about 3.00am whilst Mike and Susan were still at the peak of their dreams, at the deepest of their sleep, and they never heard the creaking of a leather coat beneath the stairs, as the fur coat began to move against it, sliding off its hanger, and moving slowly to the door which was always open slightly. It pushed against it and slid out of a six-inch gap to float unhurriedly into the hallway, where it stopped to regain its composure.

The room was black as pitch, but the coat seemed to know where Mike was, as it stopped at the foot of the bed, hovering, as though

contemplating what to do. It drifted across to him and lowered enough to place the right forearm on his face, where it slid down his neck and around his back.

It took a few seconds for his mind to wake him up, his dream ending instantly. His eyes opened, and his mouth was covered, so he could not shout. He could not fathom what was happening and felt something sliding down his back and along his arms.

The coat was manoeuvring and twisting itself, so he was wearing it. The first word he screamed was: “Susan!” when the coat could not cover his mouth anymore. His wife woke instantly, looking around in the blackness in an almost state of panic. “What? What?” she asked.

“Help me!”. Susan turned and put the bedside lamp on, then looked at her husband and could not immediately see what was wrong, as the duvet was still near his shoulders. He began to rise slowly, the duvet sliding away as he drifted away from the bed, near a mirrored wardrobe, where he turned to stand upright on the carpet, facing Susan. “What’s happening to me?” he yelled, unable to move. Susan could only stare at him, frozen. Then the inner lining of the coat began to rapidly grow hotter, and burned away continuing onto his skin, where he screamed as it seared his flesh, burning his nerves, the stench of burning flesh permeating the night air of the bedroom, the sizzling audible to Susan who still lay there staring. Slight wisps of black smoke billowed from the edges of the coat. His eyes were closed as the pain tore through his very being, his blood seeming as though it was boiling as well.

The last nerve burned away, and the pain ceased, but the coat’s fur at the neck fused with Mike’s hair. The coat had wrapped itself around him to become his skin, but unable to reach his lower legs and head, but the essence of the Siberian tigers from whence the coat came from had penetrated his core, which meant his toe and fingernails had become white claws. When he opened his eyes, they were the same as a cat’s. His teeth, also like feline fangs.

Susan still lay there, not knowing what to do, watching as Mike crouched on all fours, then leaped onto the bed, and within a second

his mouth had clamped around his wife's throat. she gave a yell of fear before she could make no more sound, and the teeth sank and squeezed tighter, Mike was breathing through his nose as he waited for Susan to die. Her head was pressed into the pillow, and rivulets of blood ran down onto the fabric. Mike had no choice, he raised his head, and howled with a banshee scream of unearthly proportions, shattering the stillness and quiet of the last remnants of the night, through the house the village and beyond.

The tension in Susan passed and she relaxed as she passed away. Mike clamped even further and tore away the flesh, swallowing it whole. His sharpened claws then proceeded to tear open her stomach, and he ate most of its contents, including what she'd recently ate. He leapt to the floor, and down the stairs. He went into the kitchen and knew instinctively that he had to be away from prying eyes, and also that beyond their village community, there was a large stretch of countryside. If he could just get there. Dawn was breaking and he knew he had to escape.

With the instinctive knowledge and collective intelligence of the four white Siberian tigers, and Mike himself, it knew what to do. It must hide out there somewhere, away from the danger that was human, whilst feeding on that very threat, and anything else that could satisfy its hunger. It bounded up the stairs and threw on a discreet collar and tie and dark suit as his body slowly returned to the form of Mike, and with the last of his fading feline strength, without hesitation leapt through the pane of glass onto the patio. The noise shot through the improving light of the early dawn air but was soon lost to the wind.

Running into the garden, he easily leapt over the small fence separating the house from the country road beyond, and ran out towards the darkness of the countryside up the rain dampened road glistening in the dawn light like a macabre tarmac ribbon, he glanced over his shoulder and saw the lights on the car behind him just coming round the corner, and wondered if they were in pursuit, he bared his teeth, and ran all the harder.

As Mike sprinted along the road, the first rays of dawn began to illuminate the horizon. His mind was a chaotic blend of human and feline thoughts, both battling for dominance. His heart pounded, driving him forward with the primal urgency of a predator on the run. He was acutely aware of the transition his body was undergoing, the shifting between man and beast, and the agony that accompanied it.

The road stretched ahead, wet and glistening from the early morning rain. Mike's nostrils flared, catching scents that were once imperceptible to his human senses. The dewy grass, the musk of small animals, and the distant scent of smoke from village chimneys filled his awareness. He could hear the faint rustle of leaves in the trees and the scurrying of nocturnal creatures retreating from the dawn.

Behind him, the car's headlights bobbed as it navigated the winding country road. Mike's newly enhanced vision allowed him to look over his shoulder to see the occupants clearly - a middle-aged couple who had been out for an early drive. Their faces showed no awareness of the horror that had unfolded in the Thompson household just hours before. Mike bared his teeth instinctively, a low growl rumbling in his throat. He felt the burning need to distance himself from any human contact.

He veered off the road, leaping over a fence into a field. His landing was silent, his movements fluid. He sprinted across the field, feeling the soft earth beneath his claws. The sun was rising more rapidly now, casting long shadows, and highlighting the rolling hills of the countryside.

During his run, Mike noticed a transformation. The adrenaline surge that had initially driven his flight began to wane, replaced by a methodical, almost calculating mindset. The tiger's instincts and intelligence were merging seamlessly with his own, creating a creature of terrifying cunning and strength. He was no longer just fleeing; he was strategizing, planning his next move.

He reached the edge of a dense forest, its canopy thick with spring foliage. Slipping between the trees, he found the shadows comforting, the dappled sunlight masking his movements. He paused briefly,

listening intently. The forest was alive with sounds - the chirping of birds, the rustle of leaves, the distant trickle of a stream. For a moment, Mike felt a sense of peace, a connection to the wild that was both foreign and exhilarating.

His tranquillity was short-lived. A rustling in the underbrush caught his attention. Mike crouched low, his eyes narrowing. A small rabbit emerged, nibbling on a tuft of grass. His muscles tensed, ready to pounce, but then he stopped. The human part of him recoiled at the idea of killing an innocent creature. Conflicted, he watched as the rabbit remained oblivious to the predator mere feet away.

The sound of footsteps crunching on gravel pulled Mike's focus back to his immediate danger. He could see through the trees the couple from the car had stopped at the fence and were looking out, scanning the fields and forest. They hadn't seen him yet, but he knew it was only a matter of time. He needed to keep moving, to put more distance between himself and any potential pursuers.

Deeper into the forest he went, his movements swift and silent. He followed the stream, using its gentle noise to mask his footsteps. As he ran, he began to think about Susan. The image of her lifeless body, the blood on the sheets, haunted him. Despite the tiger's instincts within him, Mike felt a pang of guilt and sorrow. He hadn't wanted to kill her. He hadn't wanted any of this.

But the coat - Susan's prized possession - had done something to him. It had awakened a part of him that he didn't know existed, a savage part. He could still feel the searing pain as it fused with his skin, the way it had wrapped around him, becoming a second skin. The memory made him shudder.

Hours passed as Mike moved through the forest. He avoided paths and trails, keeping to the densest parts where he could remain unseen. The forest was vast, but he knew he couldn't stay hidden forever. He needed a plan, a way to survive without drawing attention. As he thought about his predicament, the tiger's instincts presented a solution: he had to hunt, to feed, and to find a safe place to stay during the day.

He found a secluded spot beneath a large oak tree, its roots creating a natural den. Curling up in the hollow, Mike allowed himself a moment to rest. His body was exhausted, the transformation taking a heavy toll. Sleep came quickly, filled with fragmented dreams of tigers prowling snowy landscapes and the life he had left behind.

When he awoke, it was late afternoon. The sun filtered through the canopy above, casting a warm glow on the forest floor. Mike stretched, feeling the stiffness in his muscles. He was hungry, his stomach growling loudly. He needed to hunt.

Slipping out of his makeshift den, he began to prowl the forest. His senses were on high alert, his feline instincts guiding him. He spotted a deer grazing in a clearing. Crouching low, he crept closer, his movements silent and deadly. With a final burst of speed, he leapt, bringing the deer down with a single, precise strike.

As he fed, he felt the power and energy of the tiger coursing through him. The hunt had been exhilarating, the kill swift and efficient. He ate his fill, then dragged the remains into the underbrush to hide it from scavengers. As he cleaned himself, Mike realized that he was adapting to his new reality. The merge of human and tiger was becoming more natural, the two parts of him coexisting in a delicate balance.

With nightfall approaching, Mike knew he needed to find a more secure location. The forest was safe for now, but he couldn't stay here indefinitely. He needed a place where he could plan his next move, where he could think and strategize without fear of being discovered. Inside the forest, the world was different. The sounds were muted, the light filtered through the canopy of leaves creating a dappled effect on the forest floor. Mike's new abilities allowed him to navigate the terrain with ease, his feet barely making a sound as he moved deeper into the woods. He knew he needed to find a place to rest and think, to understand what he had become and how to control it, but for now he was content to just keep moving.

As he moved through the forest, he began to formulate a plan. He would head towards the mountains, where he could find a cave or

some other secluded spot to make his lair. From there, he could figure out how to live in this new form, how to control the beast within, and how to stay one step ahead of any who might come looking for him. He could feel the eyes of the forest upon him. Creatures that had once fled from his human presence now watched him with curiosity and caution. He was no longer just a man; he was a predator, a force to be reckoned with. And somewhere, deep inside, Mike knew that his journey was just beginning.

Mike was content to move under the cover of darkness, the forest his sanctuary, the hunt his solace. The transformation had changed him in ways he was still discovering, but he was determined to survive, to adapt, and to find a way to live with the creature he had become.