



OLD LIKE US

*Curse of the
Silver Moon*

**SAMPLER
CHAPTER**

ROD TRENT

Sample Chapter 2

The Enigmatic Mr. Wolfe

The page stared back at her with ancient eyes, but Eleanor had seen too much history to be intimidated. Sunlight draped itself across her shoulders and spilled lazily over the common room, illuminating the book like a curious artifact. Her concentration broke like a decades-old habit as a sleek black car slid into view beyond the large glass doors. By the entrance, a sharply dressed facility director appeared, speaking in crisp, cut sentences to the newcomer. With the slow, deliberate motion of someone unfazed by hurry, the man with silver-streaked dark hair leaned on an ornate cane. His striking amber eyes made contact with Eleanor's, and the story she was reading vanished into thin air.

She watched intently, as if those doors were the pages of her novel, filled with words she couldn't quite make out. Her fingers traced the book's spine, more out of reflex than intent. The car gleamed with polished ambition, its arrival an interruption she couldn't ignore. Outside, where the world still moved with a sense of urgency, the large car settled into a parking space with the smoothness of certainty. Eleanor's curiosity turned in its direction, as inevitable as the next chapter.

By the entrance, the director maintained his stance like a bookmark against the day's disruptions. Eleanor tilted her head, a silent conversation with herself as she pieced together what she could see. The director's neat suit clung to him like protocol, every crease precisely where it belonged. Next to him, the man in question wore time differently. The outsider, leaning with an elegance that made even his ornate silver-headed cane appear incidental, said something to the director. The gesture was deliberate, a conductor with his baton. His features were an odd harmony, where the old world met the new, and his presence suggested a story waiting to be told.

Eleanor wasn't the only one taking notice. Across the table, George adjusted his glasses with a subtlety that spoke of years in quiet observation. His hand moved to his beard, a thoughtful stroke as he analyzed the newcomer. "Striking fellow, wouldn't you say?" George's voice broke the spell, each word as considered as the pause in between.

She nodded, eyes still on the man. "Indeed. I wonder what his story is." Eleanor's tone was both amused and intrigued, the detective in her never fully at rest.

The man with the cane continued to capture their attention, as did the car's open door. Its glossy black finish stood stark against the midday light, a promise of something less transparent. George's mind worked like a shutter, capturing stills and assembling them with practiced ease. The man wore a suit, distinguished and well-kept, yet it spoke of an era when suits meant something different. George leaned back, letting a small smile crack his otherwise stern expression. "Seems a bit out of time, doesn't he?"

"Perhaps he's been kept on ice," Eleanor replied with a glimmer in her eyes, humor wrapped around genuine curiosity. Her focus drifted back to the man, who now seemed an intricate puzzle, one she felt compelled to solve.

"Or he's a time traveler," came Harold's voice from a nearby table, where he sat surrounded by the mechanical offspring of his ongoing experiments. Eleanor turned, catching Harold's grin—a delightful combination of gentle mischief and the pleasure of sharing a clever thought.

"Quite a possibility," she laughed, bringing Harold into the circle of intrigue. He lifted a tablet, feigning the addition of another suspect to their ever-growing list of the absurd and delightful. "Noticed you both observing him with more scrutiny than a cat on a mouse."

Eleanor chuckled, accepting Harold's jest with the grace of someone who had known him long enough to expect it. Her attention, however, refused to drift far from the man who had so easily commanded it. He now stepped away from the car with an almost cinematic precision. Every movement seemed considered, his shoes landing softly on the polished tiles with each step more certain than the last.

The facility staff moved with professional precision, as if they too were under the command of an unseen director. One of them, uniformed and efficient, approached with a sense of controlled purpose and joined the director in escorting the enigmatic arrival. The staff member took the lead, guiding the visitor toward the quieter, more reserved part of the building. George followed the progression with analytical eyes, mentally charting the corridor that would soon claim the man's mystery.

As Mr. Wolfe disappeared down the hallway, the common room fell into a contemplative silence. Harold tapped a button on his tablet, filling the air with a playful beep that signaled yet another inscrutable discovery added to their day. Eleanor's thoughts drifted, curiosity now fully awakened and begging for exploration.

She looked to George, who met her glance with the kind of smile only old friends could share—one that needed no words to explain but carried years of understanding. "This might require further investigation," she said, a sense of adventure spilling into her voice. George nodded, each movement precise yet tinged with the warmth of camaraderie.

"And you thought today would be just another chapter," Harold teased, eyes twinkling with youthful amusement behind round spectacles. He gestured at the book Eleanor had abandoned, where forgotten history now seemed less compelling than the one playing out in real time.

"We'll have to finish this story later," she said, leaving the novel's words suspended like an interrupted thought. Her focus was clear, her determination already pointed like an arrow toward the puzzle that had just walked through their lives.

With that, they returned to their routine, but the air felt different. It was thick with questions, like the end of a paragraph that begged for more. Eleanor watched the corridor one last time, and even the shadows seemed charged with the mystery of Mr. Wolfe's sudden appearance. It lingered like an unfinished sentence, the words almost but not quite ready to reveal themselves.

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The corridor unfolded before him, each step marking his presence like an artist signing his name. Mr. Wolfe walked with an unhurried, deliberate stride, his cane whispering secrets to the polished floor. The doors stood in modest attendance, neatly aligned on either side, witnesses to his arrival. He paused briefly at each one, the action more ritual than necessity, before settling into his own room with a soft click. The walls seemed to breathe around him, their sparse decoration leaving air and time to fill the space. He placed a small suitcase on a vintage wardrobe, its surface slightly mottled with age, then paused as the irregular echo of footsteps announced itself in the distance. It sounded almost human, almost like it belonged, but not quite. A faint scratching at a closed door suggested its own possibilities.

The room felt transient, almost a space between stories, with furnishings that hinted at impermanence. Mr. Wolfe took a measured glance around, eyes surveying the barren landscape of undecorated walls and minimal furniture. A chair, modest and wooden, sat with quiet dignity beside a small desk, where a single pen lay across a blank piece of paper as if waiting for him to provide the words. His shoes made the barest sound as he walked to the window, the soft rattle of old glass accompanying his inspection.

Just outside, the corridor waited in patient silence. A silence that was only partially true. Beyond the closed door, an echo played a game of persistence. Footsteps, though not quite rhythmic enough to belong, continued their phantom procession, reaching his ears with an irregular urgency. The scratching sound persisted too, gentle yet insistent, as if eager to announce its mystery.

Back in the common room, the sunlight had thinned to a translucent veil, and Eleanor found her thoughts divided like a mismatched set of belongings. The strangeness of the new resident's arrival had rippled through the afternoon, leaving her with more questions than answers. George sat with characteristic composure, but there was an energy in his eyes, the kind that often accompanied an unsolved riddle. Harold, his tablet a glowing extension of his endless curiosity, peered at the screen with an expression caught somewhere between amusement and mild concern.

"Whiskers is missing," he announced, his voice managing to blend worry with the thrill of discovery.

"Missing, you say?" George looked up, interest piqued, eyebrows rising above the frames of his wire-rimmed glasses.

"Vanished. As if spirited away by something," Harold replied, tapping at the screen, where evidence of the cat's absence glowed in resolute pixels.

"Something, or someone," Eleanor mused, connecting dots that may or may not exist but finding the exercise too compelling to resist.

In another corner of the room, the facility staff displayed a different kind of concern. A staff member, uniformed and intent on resolving what had become an unusual day, inspected an empty cat basket. Her movements spoke of professional determination, but the emptiness stared back at her with stubborn insistence. She glanced around, briefly locking eyes with Eleanor, before continuing her search.

The air hummed with more than the usual buzz of elderly voices and shuffled footsteps. The undercurrent of disturbance had introduced a new tempo, one Eleanor noted with quiet fascination. The whole place seemed on edge, as if every door concealed a new and unexpected story.

"It's a bit more lively around here than I remember," George commented, taking in the room's atmosphere, where even the light seemed to shiver with anticipation.

Eleanor allowed herself a smile, savoring the unraveling mystery. "It does seem we're in for an eventful stay."

Outside the window, the shadows lengthened, drawing shapes on the walls that danced with the faint breeze. One particular shadow lingered with more persistence than the others, its dark form slipping past with a quiet intention. George tracked it with his gaze, his eyes narrowing in concentration as it faded from view.

"I don't believe we're the only ones who've noticed," he said, nodding toward a small group of residents. Their voices, usually mellowed by time and routine, carried the inflections of interest and curiosity. Eleanor followed George's gaze, the murmurs reaching her ears with the soft clarity of a new lead.

The group was clearly caught up in the intrigue, each voice a note in the chorus of mild alarm. Eleanor listened, piecing together fragments of concern. They whispered of missing cats and mysterious new residents, their words spinning webs that grew larger with each retelling. The tale seemed to catch fire, illuminating the room with the glow of something new to talk about.

The sun dipped lower, casting long fingers of light across Eleanor's thoughtful expression. The uncertainty that had woven its way through the day now loomed with undeniable presence. She looked at her friends, each one as drawn into the unfolding mystery as she was.

"It seems," Eleanor began, choosing her words like clues, "that our new friend may have brought more than just himself."

Harold nodded, closing a gadget with an air of satisfaction. "Whatever he's brought, it's shaken things up a bit, hasn't it?"

"An unexpected turn of events," George added, his voice carrying the warmth of approval for the challenge that lay ahead.

They exchanged knowing looks, the kind only forged through years of shared adventures. Each glance was a pact, a wordless agreement that whatever this was, they would uncover it together. The room settled into a momentary calm, a quiet before the next chapter. Even the echoes down the hall seemed to hold their breath, awaiting their turn to fill the silence.

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The hallway unfolded like a slow revelation under the waxing moon, casting shadows that lingered like old secrets. Eleanor walked through the light and dark with deliberate calm, her hand trailing along the wall as though leaving a trace of her thoughts. The soft fluorescents flickered, timid and unsure against the certainty of the moon. Her book was an afterthought now, left on the table back in the common lounge she had just abandoned. She paused by a framed painting, its lacquered wood cool beneath her fingers. And then, a sound. Low, distant, like the world itself groaning, a guttural howl stopped her in her tracks.

The noise carved a chill into the night, echoing its way through the corridors with a strange familiarity. Eleanor stood frozen in that moment, her curiosity battling with an unease she hadn't felt in years. She let the sound pass over her like a cold draft, trying to interpret it, to piece it together with everything else that had happened since Mr. Wolfe arrived. It settled into her mind like an unwelcome memory, refusing to be shaken off.

She took a breath, steadying herself, and let the tension in her shoulders slowly unravel. Her hand fell back to her side, leaving the smooth frame of the painting behind. The world seemed to exhale with her, its shadows softening just enough for her to continue. She moved with new intent now, an urgency creeping into her steps that defied her earlier calm. Eleanor's thoughts played over the day's events, each piece of the puzzle glinting in her mind like a shard of something much larger.

Behind her, the light in the common lounge blinked and hummed in uncertain tones. Her book lay where she'd left it, open to a page she might never return to, and she realized the whole room felt abandoned now, as if everything in it was holding its breath. The weight of it pulled at her, tugged at the corner of her attention, but the other mysteries were stronger, the lure of the unknown more compelling.

The soft lights overhead continued their uneasy flicker, creating a stutter in time and space. Eleanor walked through it all, her pace careful but determined, as the hallway stretched before her like a whispered challenge. The facility's nocturnal silence pressed against her ears, insistent and enveloping, swallowing even the sound of her footsteps. It was a silence that refused to settle, that kept rearranging itself around her, setting her teeth on edge with its reluctance to simply be still.

Another pause. She stopped at the junction where two hallways met, shadows intersecting in dark conspiracy. The line between what she knew and what she needed to know was thin, barely visible, but she could feel it. She closed her eyes for a moment, seeing more with them shut than open. This time, the sound came with less warning. Its low rumble rolled toward her, each swell and break vibrating through the air with unhurried menace.

Eleanor's eyes snapped open, and for a fraction of a second, she felt small in a way she hadn't since childhood. The sensation was exhilarating and terrifying all at once, making her pulse quicken with its promise. She moved again, each step punctuated by the nagging certainty that she was walking into something that would soon have a name.

The moonlight sliced through tall windows, falling in deliberate lines across the corridor. It reminded her of a code, a message only the night could decipher. Eleanor followed its length, tracing the source of the mysterious sound with the diligence of a scholar, but the anticipation of a girl who hadn't yet learned to be wary.

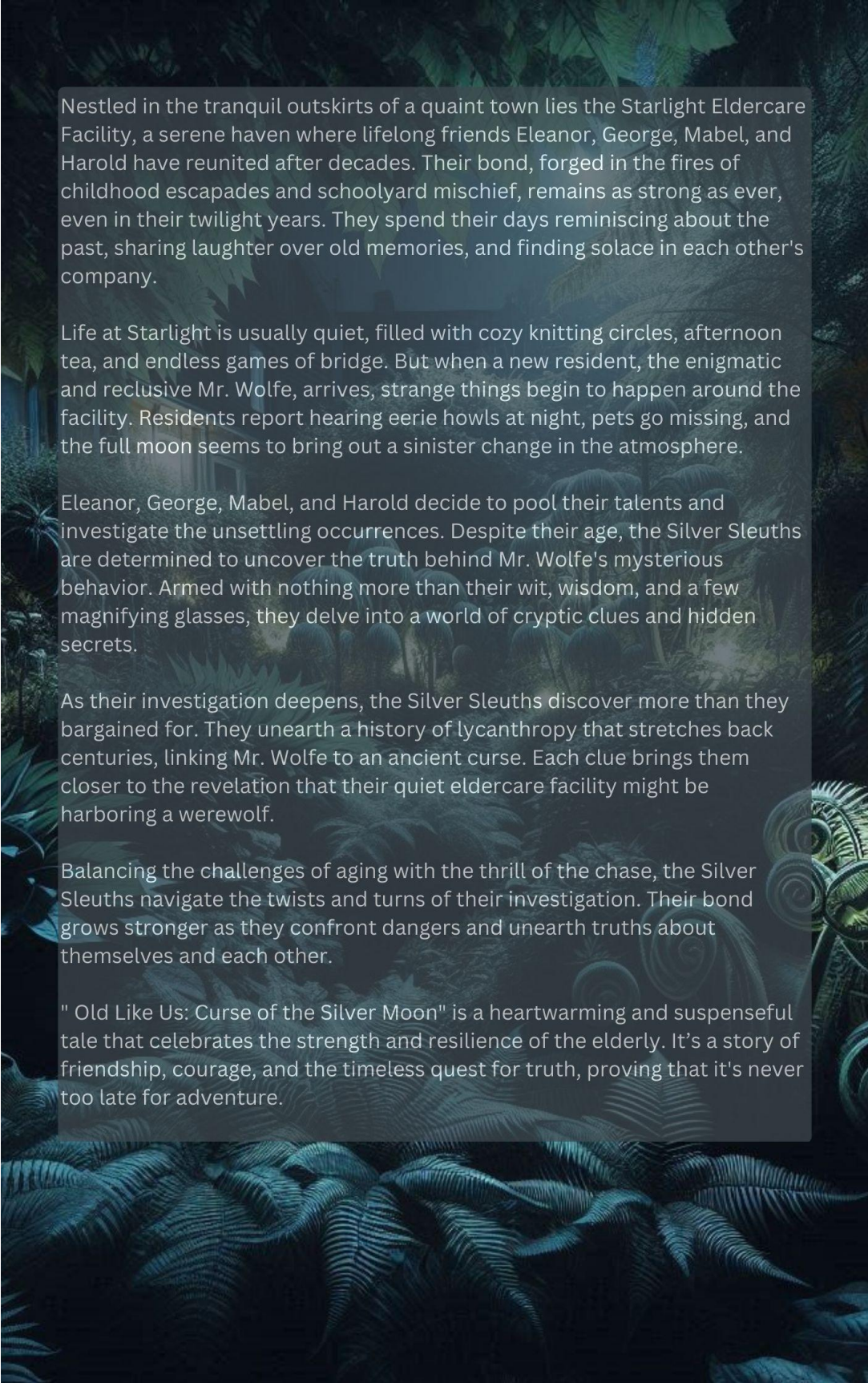
A sudden, rasping noise jolted her from her thoughts, its grating presence raw and insistent. The unmistakable sound of a rusted chain dragging pulled at her with a tangible force, shaking the air around it and adding a new dimension to the mystery. Eleanor slowed her pace, feeling the riddle close in around her, yet determined to see it through.

She stopped once more, gathering herself, absorbing the oddities and loose ends that had accumulated since she first noticed Mr. Wolfe's arrival. Each one added texture to the silence that threatened to overwhelm her, coloring it with possibility.

A quick intake of breath. A moment of stillness. Eleanor stood there, framed by shadow and moonlight, her mind working to stitch the seams together. Then she nodded, once, her own silent agreement with everything the night was throwing at her.

In the distance, an open door stared back with a blank and empty face. Long shadows leaked from its edges, pooling across the floor and stretching toward her with patient inevitability. The sound came again, a howl so deep and resonant that it seemed to rise from the building's very foundation. It rushed through the corridor, an audible shiver, and washed over her with its chilling conclusion.

She backed away, step by step, her eyes still locked on the open door as the howl faded. Eleanor felt the silence return with more weight this time, pressing down with the promise of secrets that wouldn't stay hidden much longer. She allowed herself one last look, as if the answer to it all lay just beyond her reach. The night loomed large and mysterious, but Eleanor wore its strangeness like an old, familiar cloak.



Nestled in the tranquil outskirts of a quaint town lies the Starlight Eldercare Facility, a serene haven where lifelong friends Eleanor, George, Mabel, and Harold have reunited after decades. Their bond, forged in the fires of childhood escapades and schoolyard mischief, remains as strong as ever, even in their twilight years. They spend their days reminiscing about the past, sharing laughter over old memories, and finding solace in each other's company.

Life at Starlight is usually quiet, filled with cozy knitting circles, afternoon tea, and endless games of bridge. But when a new resident, the enigmatic and reclusive Mr. Wolfe, arrives, strange things begin to happen around the facility. Residents report hearing eerie howls at night, pets go missing, and the full moon seems to bring out a sinister change in the atmosphere.

Eleanor, George, Mabel, and Harold decide to pool their talents and investigate the unsettling occurrences. Despite their age, the Silver Sleuths are determined to uncover the truth behind Mr. Wolfe's mysterious behavior. Armed with nothing more than their wit, wisdom, and a few magnifying glasses, they delve into a world of cryptic clues and hidden secrets.

As their investigation deepens, the Silver Sleuths discover more than they bargained for. They unearth a history of lycanthropy that stretches back centuries, linking Mr. Wolfe to an ancient curse. Each clue brings them closer to the revelation that their quiet eldercare facility might be harboring a werewolf.

Balancing the challenges of aging with the thrill of the chase, the Silver Sleuths navigate the twists and turns of their investigation. Their bond grows stronger as they confront dangers and unearth truths about themselves and each other.

"Old Like Us: Curse of the Silver Moon" is a heartwarming and suspenseful tale that celebrates the strength and resilience of the elderly. It's a story of friendship, courage, and the timeless quest for truth, proving that it's never too late for adventure.