

Full Wolf Moon: A Novel (Jeremy Logan Series)

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The New York Times bestselling author of *The Forgotten Room* and *Deep Storm* is back with a new thriller that follows the trail of a killer who cannot exist . . . featuring Jeremy Logan, the renowned investigator of the supernatural and fantastic.

Legends, no matter how outlandish, are often grounded in reality. This has been the guiding principle behind the exhilarating career of Jeremy Logan, the "enigmalogist"-an investigator who specializes in analyzing phenomena that have no obvious explanation- previously seen in *The Forgotten Room*, *The Third Gate*, and *Deep Storm*. Logan has often found himself in situations where keeping an open mind could mean the difference between life and death, and that has never been more true than now.

Logan travels to an isolated writers' retreat deep in the Adirondacks to finally work on his book when the remote community is rocked by the grisly discovery of a dead hiker on Desolation Mountain. The body has been severely mauled, but the unusual savagery of the bite and claw marks call into question the initial suspicions of a wild bear attack. When Logan is asked to help investigate, he discovers no shortage of suspects capable of such an attack-and no shortage of locals willing to point the finger and spread incredible rumors. One rumor, too impossible to believe, has even the forest ranger believing in werewolves. As Logan gets to know the remote deep-woods landscape, including a respected woman scientist still struggling with the violent loss of her father in these very woods, Logan realizes he's up against something he has never seen before.

His most action-packed and white-knuckled novel to date, *Full Wolf Moon* is the perfect combination of exotic locales, provocative science, and raw action that make for a deeply entertaining Lincoln Child blockbuster.

LINCOLN CHILD is the New York Times bestselling author of *The Forgotten Room*, *The Third Gate*, *Terminal Freeze*, *Deep Storm*, *Death Match*, and *Utopia*, as well as coauthor, with Douglas Preston, of numerous New York Times bestsellers, most recently *Crimson Shore*. He lives with his wife and daughter in Morristown, New Jersey.¹

At seven thirty in the evening Palmer stopped for another snack-handmade gorp and an energy bar from the lid pocket of his backpack. He'd sworn hours before that he wouldn't allow himself a real dinner-hot and steaming from his titanium griddle-until he'd found a decent place to tent for the night.

He looked around slowly as he chewed the energy bar. He'd known it would be a rough slog, and he had believed himself familiar with the surrounding region, but nothing had prepared him for the hike in that day. Guess all the stories were true, he thought a little sourly.

It was the second weekend in July, the sun was just starting to slip behind the horizon to the west, but he could nevertheless make out Desolation Mountain, maybe four miles to the north. It stood there, alone, a mirror of blue-black lake at its base, its green flanks exposed as if taunting him. Four miles-but with this country, it might as well be forty.

"Shit," he muttered, shoving the wrapper of the energy bar into his pocket and starting off once again.

Desolation Mountain was a trailless peak of 3,250 feet, making it not high enough to be among the "true" forty-six Adirondack tall peaks. Even so, its vertical rise and distance from other summits made it worth notching his belt with. But what made the mountain most attractive to hard-core backpackers, mountain hikers, and students of the Adirondacks was its remoteness. It was situated in the Desolation Lake area, west of the Five Ponds Wilderness—perhaps the wildest, most remote section of the entire six-million-acre park.

Remoteness didn't bother David Palmer. He liked nothing better than to disappear into the wilderness and go for days without seeing another human being. It was actually getting to the mountain that was proving a real bitch.

At first, it hadn't been bad at all. He'd left his SUV hidden among the trees at the Baldwin Mountain trailhead, then hiked five miles down a private logging road until at last it petered out. This was followed by miles of virgin, old-growth timber, so tall that it was always dusk beneath and the forest floor was soft and completely free of saplings.

But then he left the Five Ponds Wilderness, the forest fell away behind him, and he began the approach to Desolation Lake. And here was where his fast, easy pace suddenly slowed to a crawl. The country grew ugly, barren, and nearly impossible to traverse. The wilderness between him and the mountain became a labyrinth of outwash bogs, blowdowns, and "kettle holes," forcing him to watch every step he took. There was no trail, of course, not even a herd path, and with ravines running at crisscrosses to each other he'd had to rely frequently on his Garmin Oregon handheld GPS. More than once he'd slipped on treacherous, barely visible rocks covered with lichen. Thank God he'd decided on wearing his off trailboots—otherwise he'd have turned an ankle, or worse, long before now.

After another quarter mile, he stopped again. The way ahead was blocked by an overlapping downfall too tight for him to squeeze through with the heavy pack on his back. Cursing under his breath, he shrugged out of the pack, found the widest hole in the downfall, shoved the pack through, then wiggled his way in behind it. The dry ends of branches poked at his limbs and scratched his face.

On the far side of the downfall he put the pack back on, making sure that the compression straps were good and tight. This late in the day a pack began to get heavy, and he wanted to make sure its contents stayed stable.

He spent a moment, shrugging his shoulders this way and that, getting the pack into position. Even though the majority of hikers used internal backpacks these days, Palmer still preferred one with an external frame—in his case, a Kelty Tioga. He tended to travel heavy, and he found externals easier not only to pack, but to carry and balance as well.

The sun had disappeared, and the landscape was growing darker by the minute. The change was actually perceptible to him, as if some god of nature was slowly turning down the dimmer switch. A full moon was rising into the black sky, lending a strange, dappled, almost spectral luminescence to the landscape, but he wasn't going to rely on the

moonlight: it had the tendency to camouflage things, hiding sinkholes and gullies, and he'd learned the hard way not to trust to chance. He reached for the flashlight clipped to his belt, plucked it off, and turned it on.

By now it was past nine. As he started off again, he did a mental calculation and determined his pace had slowed to something like half a mile an hour. Of course, he could keep going until he reached Desolation Lake and camp on the shore. But he wouldn't get there until at least midnight, and by that time he'd be too whipped for an enjoyable climb the next day. No: there had to be a spot, some spot, in this godforsaken wilderness flat and bare enough for him to pitch his three-season tent and spread out his cookware. A hot meal, a soft sleeping bag, were beginning to seem like unattainable luxuries.

Not for the first time, as he made his way carefully forward, flashlight beam licking this way and that, he wished that he was back in the High Peaks region of the park. True, the trails there were often as wide as superhighways, and you were always trippin' over other hikers, but at least you had a regular, goddamn forest around you with clearings and glades, not this alien riot of-

He stopped by a cluster of witch-hobble. He'd been so absorbed in his thoughts, and in his perusal of the treacherous ground ahead of him, that he hadn't realized there was a strange smell in the air. He sniffed. It was faint, but discernible: sour, a little musky; not skunklike exactly but definitely unpleasant.

Palmer shone his light around, but there was nothing. He shrugged and continued.

The moon was rising higher in the sky, bathing Desolation Mountain in its lambent glow. Three miles left. Hell, maybe he should just try to bushwhack his way to the lake, after all. But then there was the trip back to consider, and he had to-

There it was again: that smell. It was stronger now, and fouler: rank and animal.

Once again he stopped and searched around with his flashlight, feeling a prickle of anxiety this time. Small saplings and a latticework of flattened, fallen tree limbs reflected the beam back at him. The bright circle of light made everything outside it pitch black.

Palmer shook his head. He was letting the eerie desolation of this place get to him. He'd barely seen an animal all day, just a single raccoon and a couple of young foxes. And that had been back in the old-growth forest. No animal in its right mind larger than a mouse would live in this kind of shit. His frustrating slog had to end sooner or later. And once he had a bellyful of chili inside him and his favorite inflatable air mattress beneath his sleeping bag, he'd be-

Now the smell was back, worse than ever, and with it came a sound—a deep, guttural noise, half grunt, half snarl. It sounded angry-angry and hungry.

Without even pausing to think, Palmer began to run. He ran as fast as the heavy pack

allowed, the flashlight beam striping crazily ahead of him, panting, gasping, bounding over fallen trees and kettle holes, as the grunting and snuffling grew increasingly loud behind him.

And then his foot snagged on a protruding root; he crashed heavily to the ground; a heavy weight that had nothing to do with his pack pressed suddenly against his back—a horrible, rending pain like nothing he'd experienced in his life clawed across his face and neck as the reek washed over him like a wave, then another explosion of pain, then still another . . . and then everything faded, first to red, and then to black.

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THREE MONTHS LATER

From the suburbs of New Haven, the route led north to Waterbury, then west along the meandering line of I-84 until—after it crossed into New York State and passed over the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge—it intersected with I-87, the New York Thruway. Here the route became much more direct, arrowing north until the low, furred peaks of the Catskills began to assert themselves to the left. Traffic on this Friday afternoon grew heavier as Albany approached. It thinned out somewhat at Glens Falls, where all the trailers and flatbeds carrying Formula One vehicles bound for Watkins Glen exited. It thinned even further at Lake George, which even this late in the year drew tourists and weekendening families.

It was at the first rest stop after Lake George that Jeremy Logan pulled over his vintage Lotus Elan and—although the afternoon was lengthening and the temperature hovering just above sixty—stopped long enough to put the roadster's top down before proceeding.

It had been fifteen years since he'd last made this journey, but this last part had always been his favorite leg and he was determined to enjoy it. With each passing town—Pottersville, Schroon Lake, North Hudson—the traffic lessened and the mountains around him swelled as if heaved up from the ground. The dark bulks of the High Peaks of the Adirondacks rose skyward, proud and inviolate, clad in their October hues of green and russet and gold, dwarfing the Catskills he'd traveled through not three hours before. The air that rushed past his windshield became deliciously cool, freighted with the smell of pine. The setting sun gilded the bald tops of the taller mountains, while the valleys and cols between them—thick with spruce, beech, and birch—grew ever darker and more mysterious.

The Northway— as this section of I-87 was called— was as scarred and seamed with tar sealant as he'd always remembered, and with a little imagination he could relive the last time he'd made this drive, with John Coltrane and Bill Evans just barely audible on the half-muted stereo and Karen, his wife, sitting in the passenger seat. There was something about the ever-increasing height and bulk of the surrounding mountains, the afterglow and fast-onrushing night, that always seemed to coincide with the last leg of the six-hour drive from Connecticut, that quickened his pulse and whetted a taste for adventure.

Logan had never been much of an outdoors type—he'd been a passable fly fisherman as a youth, taught by a father with a mania for the sport, and he could usually manage to finish eighteen holes of golf with a score of less than three digits. But he had no patience for such things as jogging or running marathons—such activities seemed paralyzingly dull to him, a hamster running in its wheel. But one long weekend early into his marriage, another couple who were both assistant professors at Yale and card-carrying AMC members had convinced him and Kit to come along for a climb up Whiteface Mountain, just north of Lake Placid. Logan had accepted with reservations, only to find the mini-vacation a delight. There was something deeply satisfying about hiking up a mountain—selecting a route, navigating the trail blazes, enjoying the beauty of the changing microclimate as you ascended, pacing yourself for the truly steep stretches . . . and then at last breaking through the tree line and following the meandering rock cairns to the summit itself. Not only were the views remarkable, but there was something ineffably rewarding about conquering the peak itself. No, that wasn't right, because these mountains could not be conquered, or even tamed—it was more like coming to an accommodation, an understanding, with them. It was something you could never get from a treadmill session. After Whiteface, he and his wife had returned again, several years in a row, becoming modest "peak baggers": Algonquin, Cascade, Porter, Giant, and of course Mount Marcy— at 5,344 feet the tallest mountain in New York State.

But then their careers—his as a scholar-professor and hers as a professional cellist—had increasingly taken over their time. And what vacations they had were taken up with trips abroad to supplement his research, or to spend a week at Tanglewood when Karen was playing at the music festival there— and the three- day weekends in the High Peaks fell away behind them, just as the Northway was doing now in his rearview mirror.

At Underwood, he turned off the interstate onto NY 73 and followed the road as it wandered through thick forests and past fierce waterspouts rushing down stony gorges. He drove through Keene Valley and the town of Keene itself, then arrowed directly westward for Lake Placid and, beyond it, the village of Saranac Lake. The towns were a little larger than he remembered, and on their verges the footprint of man cut a little more heavily into the forest, but the changes were subtle and he remained irresistibly reminded of trips past.

"It's almost the same, Kit," he said as he drove. "It's like our last trip up, when we climbed Skylight and almost got lost in the fog."

He often found himself talking to Kit, dead of cancer now for more than five years. Naturally he did this only when he was by himself—save for Kit, of course—and yet it was less of a one-way conversation than one might have expected.

At Saranac Lake, he turned left onto Route 3, heading in the direction of Tupper Lake. Only the occasional car passed him now in the other direction, headlights winking in the humid forest air. He was not as familiar with this part of the park and—with an intense darkness closing in around him— he drove more slowly. About five miles farther on, his headlights illuminated a large, open gate cut into the thick spruce forest to his right. There was no

signage on or beside the gate, merely a large metal symbol: a cumulus cloud hovering over a rippling watery surface.

He turned in, followed a bumpy, heavily rutted dirt road for perhaps two thousand feet and then, suddenly, the forest parted to reveal a vast, weathered, three-storied structure of dark brown wood and rough-hewn stone. It sat beneath a massive, shingled-frame roof in Swiss chalet style that went from the serrated chimneys along its ridge vent almost all the way to the ground. Twigwork balconies ran along the entire second floor as well as the third, shorter floor, and from within the large, red-framed windows that stood in series, the welcome glow of countless lamps and fireplaces beckoned.

This was Cloudwater, Logan's destination. But it had not always been known by that name. Sixty years before, it had been Rainshadow Lodge: one of the "Great Camps" built in the late nineteenth century as summer residences of the very rich along the lake shores of wild corners in upstate New York and New England. And Rainshadow Lodge, with its quintessential "Adirondack Rustic" architecture and huge cupolaed boathouse situated on Rainshadow Lake, had been one of the most famous and grandiose of all.

But all that had changed in 1954. Now its function was to serve as far more than just an oversized rustic summer playground for one of Manhattan's wealthiest families. And Logan had driven all the way up from his Connecticut home to take full advantage of that new function.

Following a semicircular drive directly before the building, he parked the car, stepped out, ascended the steps-worn and incredibly wide-and walked past the lines of white-painted Adirondack chairs into the lobby. It was warm and welcoming, indirectly lit, with a mellow, golden, faintly hazy atmosphere redolent of wood smoke. He felt the oddly pleasing sensation of a fly sinking into amber.

A reception desk of cinnamon-colored wood, glowing from what appeared to be the application of fifty coats of lacquer, stood directly ahead. A middle-aged woman behind it looked up at his approach, smiled.

"I'm Jeremy Logan," he told her. "Checking in."

"Ju..."

Other Books

Artemis Fowl,

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