

Chapter 45

The full moon rose in the east at 8:15 PM. When it was still low in the sky, it took on a reddish hue. This didn't happen very often, only when the atmospheric conditions were just right. However, it did happen often enough so that the family referred to the full moon as the Blood Moon.

The red color didn't last long and in just a few minutes it turned to orange, then butter yellow and then to its natural cream color. This was the sign that called the family to their monthly gathering.

The main chapel had been transformed in preparation for the assemblage. Conner led the small team of cousins who moved the pews to the sides of the room and placed the mattresses, rugs and mats in the center. Crisp, freshly washed cotton sheets were laid down to cover the exposed areas.

In one anteroom of the chapel, Brundy's and Treydore's work was laid out and ready for the monthly rite. Without Isach, they had to work extra hard but were able to accomplish their task on time. As they always did, the Gorstrum hoped their efforts would be appreciated by the family and that Uncle Franda wouldn't find a reason to punish them.

When the moon rose, many of the family were still in the back parking lot of Desert Rest. Sharing the rising of the Blood Moon was just one more part of the monthly ritual many of them enjoyed.

As the moon ascended into the heavens, they slowly made their way into the other anteroom of the main chapel. Before entering the chapel, for the Ceremony of the Blood Moon, they changed from their street clothes into the long white robes waiting for them.