



**E**llie Orson couldn't stop shaking. Even after one of the police officers put a blanket around her shoulders, she was still trembling. "You're in shock," he told her.

Then a man in a gray suit sat down beside her. "I'm Detective Ulric," he said. "Ms. Orson, I know you've had a bad experience—but I need you to tell me what you saw."

Ellie gazed at him. "If I tell you, you won't believe it," she said. "*I* don't believe it! And I'm the one who saw—*it*!" She shuddered.

Detective Ulric gently patted her shoulder. "This brute has struck before. But you're our only eyewitness. I *must* know what you saw—no matter how strange your story sounds."

Ellie took a deep breath. She forced her thoughts back to what had happened less than an hour ago.



**E**llie was studying to be a lab technician at the local community college. To pay her way through school, she waited tables at the Top Cat Restaurant.

Tonight, just after closing, the cook had asked Ellie to haul a bag of trash out to the dumpster.

Dragging the bag behind her, she'd stepped into the alley. Next to the dumpster, she saw a man bending over a figure on the ground. At first Ellie thought they were two street people. Then the standing man looked at her.

Horried by the sight of him, she screamed and ran back inside the kitchen, slamming the door shut. Then she heard a terrible roar, and the rasping *scritch-scratch* sound of fingernails—or maybe claws—on the door.

Ellie screamed again. This time, a couple of busboys came running. When they opened the door, they saw a woman lying on the ground, groaning—but the attacker was gone!



“**T**hat’s it,” she told Detective Ulric. “That’s what happened.”

He was silent for a moment. Then he said, “Okay. Now I must ask you to describe the man you saw.”

Ellie felt sick to her stomach. “You—you don’t understand,” she gasped. “He—*it* didn’t even look human.”

Ulric frowned. “Just what do you mean, Miss Orson?”

“I don’t know how to explain,” Ellie groaned. “He looked part human, part animal. His face was covered with hair. His eyes seemed to—well, *glow*. And his teeth—” She shuddered again. “He had *fangs*,” she whispered.

Glancing at the detective, Ellie could see

that he was trying to picture what she'd seen. "I told you that you wouldn't believe me," she said.

The detective turned and gazed at her. "Oh, but I do," he assured her.

Ellie stared at him in shock. "But it doesn't make a bit of sense!" she exclaimed. "There's no such thing as a creature that's part animal, part human." She thought for a moment. "Oh, I don't know. Maybe the guy was wearing some kind of ugly monster disguise. Or—or maybe he was just badly deformed or . . ."

Detective Ulric smiled. "I meant that I believe you *think* you saw someone who's part human, part animal. But you're right. No man could *really* be part animal." He paused and his smile widened. "Now could he?"

But Ellie noticed that the smile on his lips had never reached his eyes.



After completing his interview with Ellie, Detective Ulric drove her home. "I've