

# new moan<sub>n</sub>

THE FIRST BOOK IN  
THE TWISHITE SAGA  
A PARODY

STEPHFORDY MAYO



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# preface

Not to be melodramatic, but I was totally about to die. How had I ended up like this, lying on my back, gasping for breath, while a shadowy figure loomed over me?

It's true what they say – your life does flash before your eyes in your final moments. Before moving to Spatula, I hadn't had much of a life, but that had all changed in the last few months. Now, it seemed like there were almost too many exciting incidents for an ordinary teenage girl to have lived through. Stephfordy Mayo had made me a total trouble-magnet.

The memories blurred together as my oxygen-starved brain flitted crazily from one recollection to the next. So one minute I was enjoying my lunch in the school cafeteria, the next I found myself tied to a chair. A ghastly cacophony of sound tortured my soul, and beneath it rang the cackle of the monster who wanted to kill me. Another jump, and I was sitting on the edge of a bed, my beloved's hand inching up my thigh ...

No time to enjoy it, though, for my memories hurled me ever onwards: a gang of zombies shuffling through the woods, intent on eating my brains; an English class in which we were studying Shakespeare (again); a man transforming into a wolf; a crowd of spotty, lust-fuelled teens pulling at my clothes ... And always, always there was the figure of Teddy Kelledy – my love, my soulmate, my stiff angel—

'Heffa Lump!'

'What?' I murmured, still lost in the visions passing before my eyes.

'Stop holding your breath; you're about to pass out.'

I lifted the plastic bag off my head and inhaled reluctantly. 'But I was just about to get to the bit where you had your shirt off! And anyway, if I don't start with a flashback, how will the readers know there's all this exciting stuff to come? There are loads of chapters which are basically just you and me talking about our favorite colors and stuff, it's only fair to reassure people that there's going to be some action, too.'

Teddy placed a frigid, calming hand on mine. 'If this is going to make any sense, I think you should just start at the beginning. Besides, Heffa, ours is a love story for the ages; how could it fail to enrapture, enchant and ...'

'Engorge?' I suggested.

Teddy looked stern. He could be so unbending, though this was usually a feature I enjoyed rather a lot. He was probably right, though. He usually was, being the most perfectest creature that ever stalked the earth. I closed my eyes again, and went back to the day it had all begun ...

## chapter 1

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# moist

I grew up in Sunnyside, Nevada. It never rains there. Ever. There's glorious sunshine 365 days of the year. In a somewhat pointed contrast, the town of Spatula in an unidentifiable northern state was the exact opposite; it never did anything but rain. I could understand why my mom had been so keen to leave. When I got to the age of six and realized that the world did in fact revolve around me, I'd made my father visit me in Sunnyside rather than suffer the indignities of a place where the sun didn't shine. But now everything was about to change.

'Are you sure about this, Heffa?' my mother asked as she hugged me goodbye at Sunnyside Airport. 'You know you can stay with me and Hunk the (Minor League) Football Player. We've got a spare room for you, and I don't have to travel that much.'

'Mom, how many times do I have to tell you? I'm just too noble and self-sacrificing to stay, so deal with it. God.'

'Okay, honey,' my mom said. She was my closest friend – almost a sister – but it was tiresome how often I had to remind her what was best for her. I was leaving her now because she had a man in her life to look after her. Hunk the (Minor League) Football Player would hold her hand crossing the road from now on. I was going to live with my father, Chump – the only parent left who would be able to give me the undivided attention my fragile soul required.

Mom hugged me again. 'If you ever need me, I'm right on the other end of the phone.'

‘Yeah, whatever. You don’t have to be so clingy.’ I didn’t look back as I boarded the plane: the thought of seeing my mom all weepy and pathetic was too much to bear.

Chump met me at Port D’Angerous Airport. Unlike my mother, he was a man of few lines of dialog. He greeted me with one of his favorites: ‘Hey, Heff, how’s it going?’

‘How do you *think*?’ I scowled, climbing into the cab of his 4x4. ‘My mom’s shackled up with a steroid addict, my life’s going nowhere fast, and I’ve been forced to come and live in the gosh–darn middle of nowhere with you. I’m not bitter or anything, but for the record, I didn’t ask to be born.’

My father likes to call himself a private detective, but I didn’t let this fool me into thinking anything dramatic would happen. I blamed his choice of career on too many Humphrey Bogart movies. He even had a fedora. But Spatula was far too dull to attract criminals, and all he ever seemed to do was track down missing cats.

‘Well, things here are just as quiet as ever!’ Chump said cheerily.

I said nothing; simply stared out of the window as we drove towards the town. Spatula is surrounded by forest – great redwoods whose rigid trunks thrust into the air. They penetrate the sky so thickly no light gets through at all, rain running down their sides in moist, musty dribbles that—

Chump touched my arm, and I jumped. I was sure I’d been on the edge of a really adult thought before he interrupted me.

‘What do you want?’ I asked, glowering at him lovingly.

‘I was just saying, things here are as dull as ditchwater!’ he said, though it was quite hard to hear over the sirens as three police cars sped past, followed by an ambulance and a fire truck. In the distance, I could see smoke clouds rising. ‘No excitement here in Spatula. I guess you’ll find it kind of boring.’

‘Tell me something I don’t know,’ I said, and rolled my eyes in a sophisticated manner. ‘Why aren’t you driving? The lights are green.’

‘Oh, uh, just thought I should wait while the ambulance gets that man off the road,’ Chump said. ‘Looks like there might have been some sort of accident, I’m sure it’s not a big deal.’

I peered up ahead – the EMTs were stretcher-ing off some guy dripping blood on the asphalt, while the cops wrestled the screaming girl with the knife to the ground. Honestly, were we going to have to wait here all day?

‘Just another quiet day in good ol’ Spatula,’ Chump grinned as he swerved carefully around the broken glass. I sighed. He was right. This place was dead.

At the stop sign by the supermarket, a crowd of teenagers were hanging around on the street corner. They were a sorry bunch, all dressed in black, with lank, unwashed hair and morose expressions. I gazed at them with sympathetic pity. One of them saw me looking and tugged at his friend’s arm – in seconds, the whole lot of them were staring at me, white-faced, though I couldn’t tell whether that was shock, awe, or make-up.

‘Dad, have you been telling everyone who I am again?’ I groaned. He just couldn’t help boasting about his amazing daughter, which did make it hard to fit in.

‘Why would I do that, sweetie?’ he muttered. He was scowling at the unfortunate teenagers like they’d really upset him. I understood, though: he was so protective of me.

Chump still lived in the exact same, mediocre, two-storey dump he’d had when my mother left him, after she’d finally realized that he was never going to become a real noir detective. I supposed there were worse backstories – at least I came from a broken home – but I didn’t see much scope for any really intriguing secrets. My parents were so selfish. Would it have been too much for them to give me up for adoption? Orphans got all the best character arcs.

We pulled up in the driveway. ‘I want to show you something, Heffa,’ Chump said. He looked very pleased with himself. ‘Close your eyes ...’

I closed my eyes. ‘Is it a car? Because I need a car. You bought me a car, right?’

‘And ... open.’

I looked. ‘You bought me a bus stop,’ I said, staring up at it.

‘I got the city council to add us to the route!’ Chump was so proud. ‘Now you won’t have any trouble getting to school.’

‘Uh, thanks, Dad,’ I said, walking into the house. Obviously I couldn’t ride the bus to school. I’d just have to take his car when I needed it.

Chump followed me inside and put my bags down in the hall.

‘Right then, I’m going to watch the game,’ he said. With that, he went into the living room, turned on the television and conveniently disappeared from the page, leaving me to explore at leisure.

I went upstairs. My room was far too small. Where was the library of long, complex novels that demonstrated my cleverness going to go? My eclectic and unusual CD collection? The knick-knacks and wall hangings that illustrated my sensitive, bohemian side? My *ego*? It was no good. I’d have to get Chump to knock down the wall so I could have his room as well. He could sleep on the sofa; it seemed only fair after all I’d given up in moving here.

Still, I’d talk to him about that later. It was time to focus on a far more pressing matter – staring at myself in the mirror so I could describe what I looked like.

Not that I looked like anything special. Despite living in Sunnyside’s unceasing sunshine, I’d spent my days inside, or dashing from one patch of shade to another. I couldn’t risk ruining my pale and interesting skin, which so successfully set off my dark hair and eyes like deep, mysterious pools of midnight shadow.

I sighed and turned away. There was no disguising it; I wasn’t pretty. Even though I was.



Hopeful that doing some useful chores would lighten my mood, I unpacked my rucksack. At the bottom, I came across the little picture book that meant so much to me; the book that was, in fact, the main reason for my presence here in Spatula.

I flicked through its pages. The little girl who starred in every illustration had black braids, and she was beaming. Around her, crowds of multicolored animals and animated cakes danced. Underneath the pictures, the words spread out in an exuberant scrawl:

*I want candy! I want cake!*  
*I want picnics by the lake!*  
*Foxes in boxes with bright yellow sockses*  
*And mermaids on rockses*  
*And a chocolate milkshake!*

The picture book *Heffa Gets What She Wants* had sold a million copies in a year. Its follow-up, *Heffa Makes Further Demands*, was even more popular. There'd been a cartoon, themed lunchboxes, T-shirts ... for a while, the whole world had known my name.

But things change. No one wanted to read *Heffa Lump Goes to High School*. These days, I was just another teenage girl, average and dull, but for one shining moment I'd been a star. I wanted that back. I deserved to have that back. And I was here to make it happen.

For Spatula, besides being home to my father, acres of woodland and about a hundred inches of rain, was the location of the Spatula Academy of Fictional Excellence. The Academy specialized in helping child stars expand their range. They were the best. They'd advised Drew Barrymore, turned Little Women into Good Wives, and managed to get Alice, Wendy and Dorothy into an Alan Moore comic. I knew they'd be able to get me what I wanted – a starring role in adult fiction,

or, at the very least, a main part in some sort of hybrid teen novel that had massive crossover appeal.

I was excited to be studying at the Academy, but I knew that the other students were sure to hate me, just like in Sunnyside. They said it was because I ignored them or occasionally maimed them, but I knew better. My clumsiness and aloofness had nothing to do with it.

The simple truth was that I didn't fit in with any group – and never would. No one understood me. I was a special, unique snowflake, with interests beyond the mundane, everyday dramas that preoccupied the people I was forced to spend my days with. I was destined for higher things – maybe even the Pulitzer one day. It was a good job I was so humble about it! I bore my solitude nobly, though I did wonder if I would ever find someone who could see beyond my unexciting exterior to the brilliance within. Perhaps Spatula would be different—

'Hey, Heffa, your mom wants to talk to you.' Chump stood in the doorway, holding out the phone.

I took the communication device – Stephfordy's writing book says you shouldn't repeat words even when using a different one is really stilted – and cheerily snapped, 'What do you want now? Can't you tell I'm in the middle of some deeply significant character-building wallowing?'

'I just wanted to see how your flight was. You know you didn't have to move so far away. Choose Your Own Adventure High is right here in Sunnyside and I'm sure they'd have let you transfer in, they're pretty relaxed about last-minute decisions ...'

'How many times do I have to tell you?' I yelled at her. 'My career is the most important thing to me right now. I have to pursue it. It's a sacrifice, but I have to do it. The world needs me. The world needs my art.'

No one but losers went to Choose Your Own Adventure. They had, like, a ninety-per-cent non-completion rate.

‘Okay, Heffa, if being in Spatula is what will make you happy, then I think it’s just great.’

‘Mom,’ I groaned, ‘you’re my best friend, and that’s an achievement to be proud of, but can’t you leave me alone for five minutes? I can’t breathe for all this love and kindness. It’s swamping me. I’ll send you a one-line email telling you to get off my back in three chapters’ time, okay?’

I hurled the phone at the wall and threw myself onto the bed. It was time for a good cry. It might have been my decision to move, but I could still get in a snit about it.

I wailed my pain and rage into the night, and the wind rattled back in overwritten and metaphoric sympathy with my despair. No one had ever suffered like this before. I mean, obviously every teenager everywhere had suffered pretty much exactly like this before, but I was still the only one. If I was the sort of narrator who wrote poetry about my pain – which I totally wasn’t, I was far too mature – it would have looked something like this:

*Rain*  
*Outside my window*  
*Rain*  
*Inside my heart*  
*Gloom*  
*And despair*  
*Surround me*  
*Dripping raindrops*  
*Like some rain.*

Having eloquently and beautifully captured the heartache of being seventeen, I drifted off to sleep.