



A Story by Cynfall

The Hunt

by: Cynfall

Stupidity just might be his middle name, and he'd be lying if he didn't admit he expected better from himself. The timing was awful and the circumstances dire; if not absolutely horrendous.

Being a shifter in a totally new town was bad enough if it was just a normal human population center, but here he was announcing himself to the world like a foolish pup. Another past lesson he had yet to properly apply in adulthood.

He could smell it the moment he was within miles of the Hollows. It was a highly deceptive visage really; a bland backwater and innocent appearing factory town of significant age and history, but at second inspection seemed completely lost to the flow of time itself.

There was a very significant presence beyond mere humans. Their marks were all over the place, labeled on every street corner and back alley dive. This was their territory, and he was now greatly second guessing himself on lingering at all. Most packs had very strict regulations and protocols when it came to interlopers or strangers, and the reactions ranged anywhere from mildly civil to outright bloodlust.

There was one advantage, however small. This was still a human dominated town, albeit to the untrained eye. He wasn't fully aware just how deeply entrenched the wolves were, but safe to say they'd gone to significant lengths to ensure they were not outright exposed to the greater world. If they didn't care about such a handicap, then he'd likely have been killed or chased off the moment he approached their domain.

The human thugs were easy enough to dispose of, but he made the cardinal sin of giving in to his inner beast and allowing the blood to run hot and thick, far too thick for keeping a low profile. The howl he'd let echo across the urban landscape would no doubt stir up a rapid response, and he could only hope that for his sake it wouldn't be written in his blood.

Cynfall's edged claws carved into the chalky brick stones, keeping himself perched up on the outer corner of the aging building. The street below was still strangely devoid of activity, the rain having let up but minutes before as police sirens responded in kind to the "reports" of strange, odd behavior and noises.

The bar he had just been frequenting was no doubt a hub of sorts. That was made obvious by the strong presence he'd felt earlier. The woman that brushed by him on his way inside; eyes of steel clarifying a deadly will and dire warning – though brief and seemingly devoid of worth to any others. She had warned him in full, and that was likely to be the only chance he'd receive.

Several police officers had stopped to investigate the scene, though limited to just a single male

and his female counterpart. While she seemed quite inquisitive toward the case, the senior officer seemed to brush it off as nothing more than another gang power rush gone wrong. He couldn't help but sigh in relief as Alice devolved into a rather disheveled and non-coherent rant about monsters and yetis. The incident would certainly permeate in her mind for years to come, but the officers seemed content in chalking it up to drugs on parade.

An ambulance was called for Gage and his goons, though the rather gruff and nonchalant nature the technicians handled the scene with were of peculiar interest to him. The woman cop also seemed rather put off, constantly attempting to help secure the victims in a more civil manner, only to be brushed off and scoffed aside with outright scorn. Her partner often turned and gave her small glares, seemingly sending invisible messages to not stick her nose in such business. Very odd for a cop, but this was obviously not a normal place.

His furred ears perked upward, twitching some as the moon's glow remained concealed in shadowed cloud cover. Something was most definitely amiss on these streets. A deeper corruption and trail of questions that only made things more obvious to those trained to spot them. Was this pack at the center of it all? Had they really grown so powerful or so arrogant that they were willingly pulling the strings of an entire population center?

It wasn't completely unheard of in werewolf society, though it was more often than naught seen as nothing but a fantasy indulged in by those too outlandish to think they'd ever be affected or trapped. While his kind was very powerful, they were far from invincible, and such a system would no doubt leave tracks behind. If they overstretched or pushed the limits, they'd be wiped out by numerous human forces within weeks if not days.

The scene below had calmed completely, the ambulance having long since departed down the soaked street, an ominous darkness having set in over the concrete landscape that spoke to him in a way he could oddly understand. Linger here was not warranted, it was time to move, and quickly. Thanks to his stupid stunt this pack would be on the hunt, and likely in force.

"I have to get the hell out of this town ... or I'm chow for the ferals." he growled softly before twisting his frame and digging his free paw into the loose brick, biting down on his rubbery lip firmly as it nearly broke loose. Getting places was never the issue; moreso simply doing so in a way that avoided attention. Lifting one arm over the other, he scaled the wall with ease, traces of decayed dust dropping into the dumpsters below as he reached the pinnacle, climbing over the edge and resting on one knee.

He could sense it out there, an unusual quiet that came by virtue of his ignorance. It was like the entire town had gone to sleep, or locked the doors in anticipation of what no doubt was likely to happen. No announcement came in response to his howl, and he knew it was on purpose. They would strike hard and fast from the shadows, without warning and without mercy. At least, that was the extreme option.

Wasting no further time, Cynfall bolted forward, the powerful stature of his lycan form allowing him to bound from rooftop to rooftop with remarkable ease and precision. Once upon

a time, this was the most fantastic thing in the universe to him, but that was seldom the case these days.

Most werewolves had access to two base forms, though one was far more common than the other. Feral wolves were the most base and popular shape they took, as it was the way they all entered the lupine world in general on the first turn. It appeared like any other wolf would in the wild, though larger and far more diverse by virtue of their lineage. The canid shape was useful for stealth and precision; aiding one in blending among the environment and interacting in a more natural way both in and out of werewolf society.

The Lycan form, on the other hand, was one achieved by those more disciplined and at “ease” with their wolf blood. Alpha or Beta wolves could achieve it with remarkable ease, while more grounded wolves, like himself, often had to practice years on end to perfect the process. Those turned by a common bite often could never achieve it. One might see it as the zenith of what a werewolf could achieve, offering extreme power and stamina, though at the cost of subtlety and control. It wasn't often released unless the most dire measures were required, or if a statement needed to be made.

Mentally slapping himself was becoming a daily ritual, as he'd allowed his beast to fully take hold and force him into a shape that wouldn't truly benefit him in his current ordeal. He continued onward - aiming for the southern border of the town, using all four limbs to push himself rapidly into the night. If he was lucky, they'd allow him to peacefully leave, but that was wishful thinking.

His eyes sharpened and ears twitched, responding to a shadow in the corner of his vision. No sooner had he picked it out it had vanished, but the reality of the situation persisted - they were surrounding him. Only one rooftop remained now before a darkened drop into the more suburban environment below, his muscles and mind pushing him onward toward the edge in dire haste.

“Leaving so soon? We haven't gotten to know each other yet.”

Cynfall stopped in his tracks, lifting himself onto his hind legs and staring back over his shoulder. The cold eyes gazing back seemingly pierced his soul. It was an uncomfortable feeling, and one he truly never wished to experience again. Her blonde hair stood out like a cold blade in the pitch black night, arms crossed over her chest as she leaned against the upper entryway to the apartments below. She was tall for a woman, hovering close to six feet, and her limbs, while appearing delicate and lifeless, screamed of a dangerous energy that could be called upon within a moment's notice.

“I was just leaving. I'm not here to cause any trouble. I've had my share of annoyances already tonight, I'm not looking to add to the pile.” he responded coyly, not turning in the slightest as his bushy tail flicked. He towered over her in this form, but not only did he not know her true capabilities, but just how many others of her cohorts were currently lying in wait. She wouldn't have been so eager and bold in her words if she didn't have a plan.

“That so? Well, you have a very odd way of not causing trouble. I would have thought our little meeting before made it obvious enough for you. This isn't your turf ... and the Hollows is seldom a vacation destination. The last loner that passed through here made the mistake of thinking this town was up for easy pickings. I think you'd rather not know how well that went for him.” she responded curtly and with a growing half-smirk.

Cynfall said nothing, eyeing her frame slowly and with growing concern. He could already feel his heartbeat starting to take off, every human and wolf instinct within him screaming to escape the closing cage. No, he couldn't be rash about this. She was challenging him, clearly looking to take stock of the shifter before her, and gauging his reactions in kind.

“Yes, I suppose I shouldn't have bothered detouring here at all ... I knew the territory was claimed, but I wasn't looking to - “

“Yeah yeah, cause trouble, stir the pot, stick your ...” she coughed in mocking scorn, “Appendages where they don't belong – I've heard it all before big guy. Look, whether your intentions were simple or not, the fact remains that you made a mess back there, in a place that we go to great lengths to keep clean. Had this happened elsewhere in the city ... perhaps it wouldn't matter ... but that's not the case.”

“What do you care about a few doped up humans?” he interrupted with an irritated growl. “I find it hard to believe I'm the first to put a few of them in their place. It happens all the damn time.”

She offered up no real response, though she slowly stepped toward him, sliding her petite hands into her jacket pockets. Her eyes sharpened, irises having narrowed as she stopped but feet away from his bulk.

“Firstly, if you're not some milk-bound whelp, you are well aware just how delicate the balance can be between humans and our kind. We are not looking to be on the front page of the local feed anytime soon. Secondly ... our reasons are our own and not up for you to interpret as you see fit.” She moved even closer now, stare unwavering and lips diving into a devious frown. “And last ... and most important ... I **hate** being interrupted.”

Cynfall barely had time to register the movement as her torso swung fluidly, leg having been brought to bear toward his skull with precision and accuracy. Diving rapidly, he barely managed to avoid the tip of the strike, though he could feel the delicate slice of air as it drew past his earline, shaving off the upper lengths of the fur and forcing him to back away.

She stood there smirking at him, her hands still in her pockets, seemingly unmoved and unwinded from such a power move. Drawing his gaze downward toward her shoes, he could see the shine, the moonlight having broken through the clouds for but a brief moment to offer up a reflective aura. Razor sharp claws had burst from her left foot, the savage looking talons clicking against the concrete rooftop before seemingly retracting back from whence they'd

come.

Such control, it was both breathtaking and terrifying to witness. Sure, he could also call upon various individual elements of his transformation at will, but it took time. One had to be in the proper state of mind and in complete control of their beast blood. He stared back at her, the unflinching persona unnerving him and causing his tail to almost tuck away in fright, though he fought off displaying that kind of weakness even as his russet fur just shaved away descended through the space between them.

“Look, I could use a good workout, but I'm nothing if not generous to my brothers and sisters. There hasn't been much action around here for a few weeks, and when the runts start getting restless ... it grows bothersome. I'll tell you what: If you can manage to survive and get to the outskirts of town ... I might just be willing to overlook this whole ordeal and let bygones be bygones. Based on the way you're shaking ... such odds are heavily in my favor. Please do exert yourself, they desperately need some practice.”

Cynfall backed away gingerly, her words tearing through his mind even as four other shadows descended to her flanks, eyes piercing through the blackness and gathering about her like obedient servants eager to prove themselves. They all appeared male based on proportions, two smaller than himself, while one was larger and the other about equal. Her smirk only grew, sliding her head from one shoulder to the other as her neck rolled.

“Please don't bore me, I haven't been this intrigued in months. Would hate to see it end on a sour note,” she stated lowly and with cruel jest. “Five second head start sounds very fair.”

He didn't need to hear more, having backed up enough to reach the edge of the building, Cynfall vaulted his frame over it with ease, the ten meter drop being nothing to him in this form as he rolled against the dampened grass and bounded off; streets being lightly lit by rustic lamps that were in dire need of a makeover.

That was when he heard the howls just behind him, the moon having fully broken through its cloudy prison and illuminating the streets in full. It wasn't long before he heard the clicking and patting of movement around him, shadows starting to jump in his peripheral vision as they used the environment for their deadly purpose.

He was playing this game on their turf, and it could be a costly disadvantage. While his pride demanded that he stand and fight, the odds were not to his liking. Even if he had experience and strength, they had simple numbers, and even untrained and reckless werewolves could overpower one seasoned fighter, especially when they knew the playing field..

No, he had to play this smart and with strategy. Find a way to split them up, use their over aggression to your advantage. Outwit them and even the odds. Easier said than done, especially when in the middle of a town where anyone paying attention might witness the supernatural romp.

Bounding himself forward, he dived sharply to his left, forcing his way beneath a deep clump of brush and debris that had been piled up on a street corner, the resulting haze of airborne garbage creating a slight screen for his movements as he heard barks of confusion behind him, though it was all but a slight deterrence to afford him some breathing room.

The streets all looked the same, lined with older houses that made up the outskirts of the cityscape. At least it seemed safer than the urban center, offering up more places for him to avoid detection. The town line was perhaps a mile off, but even if he managed to shake these grunts, he knew that more likely than naught **she** would be waiting for him.

“All I wanted,” he panted. “Was a goddamn drink. Why can't I ever catch a freaking break!”

The howls picked up once more behind him, knowing that they'd reestablished the trail. His eyes darted to the left and right, finding himself at an empty crossroads. A single, blinking red light pulsed above him, the lights from a distant truck playing off the cold tarmac.

There had to be something around here that could be used to his advantage, but what and where was it. Another howl split the air, making him double take before his eyes caught the ominous shadow of a smokestack peaking above various houses. Smirking to himself, he bounded forward with renewed determination, the yelps of his pursuers telling him they'd sighted him as he lifted himself up and over one of the many fence lines that divided various yards and houses like an over-saturated grid.

A shadow leapt, catching him by surprise as his right arm lifted upward, blocking the fangs from his maw as they dug into his forearm with deadly purpose. Cynfall couldn't help but grimace as beads of blood began to soak his fur, though it blended well with his deep russet pelt.

It was a feral wolf, therefore one that was likely inexperienced or far too eager for their own good. Cynfall did the best he could to remain at pace, though the extra mass tearing away at his arm made it increasingly difficult. After failing to simply buck the determined grip, he stopped completely and rose to his full height, lifting the smaller lupine upward and releasing a deep rooted snarl, the feral responding by attempting to claw at his abdomen in desperation.

“I don't have time for this.” he barked before lifting his opposite paw and launching it forward into the feral's neck, finding the windpipe with ease and taking a deadly grip on it, causing the creature's eyes to widen in fear. “Want a hint? Never openly expose yourself to an attack from something far stronger than yourself.” he whispered while leaning in, twisting his grip and causing the windpipe of the feral wolf to be cut off, not going so far as to tear it completely as the deadly grip of its jaws loosened and then fell away.

Cynfall grunted and tossed the limp wolf aside, pressing his limb back down and grimacing in pain as he found his pace once again, still pressing toward the factory he'd located earlier. Pain was something he was used to dealing with, this wouldn't deter him, and it had worked to his advantage either way. One down, three to go.

One of the pack wolves stopped to check on their fallen companion, but the other two pressed on as if nothing happened, both in feral form and eager to draw blood. Cynfall didn't let up until an impressive stone wall before him forced a halt. It was at least twenty feet high, almost like an ancient fortress that had seen better days.

Backing up slightly, he burst forward and nearly scaled the wall with one jump, his claws unsheathing and finding root just inches from the top; grip slipping away almost as easily as he'd established it. Calling on his focus, he fixed his position and lifted himself up and over the barrier, the tracking barks of the pursuing weres growing more frustrated. He landed next to a large construct, eyes studying the surroundings quickly, most objects covered in aged sheets and tarps for reasons unknown.

He couldn't help but smirk now, seeing the vast array of old machinery and decrepit buildings before him that could offer up the perfect opportunities for which to defend himself. Bounding into the waiting shadows, he located a dumpster filled to the brim with corroding garbage, sniffing it and nearly choking at the sensation before shaking his head in sad realization of what had to happen.

“Damn it ... not what I had in mind for today ... but you gotta do what you gotta do.” he grimaced before practically diving into the trash heap, lifting up clumps of debris and pressing them into his fur with a defiant groan. He could only hope he'd be alive to experience his next shower.

The two feral beasts burst through two sections of rotten wooden fence on the other side of the compound, their more canine based frames not affording them the same amenities offered up by the lycan form, though they could still track and outrun their quarry with ease. The two male wolves joined together, one nodding while the other took to sniffing eagerly. Surely he couldn't be stupid enough to corner himself in this place. There was no way out other than through them. They would have the advantage for sure now, and the hunt would be successful, therefore validating themselves to their brethren.

“You two need to calm the hell down, now.”

They both turned to gaze at the larger shadow that had descended from above, the larger being standing up and taking a deep breath, paws clenched together and fur rustled. He was a large lycan, one of the largest in the pack, and one that generally commanded respect. He stared down at them, piercing brown eyes investigating their twitching outlines.

“Dexter will be alright ... thankfully. Our prey chose to not completely rupture his throat. Let it serve as a lesson to both of you that making rash decisions will not result in a successful hunt. We do this together - or not at all.”

Both of the ferals stared at the larger lycan and nodded in acceptance of his advice, though both still seemed more than impatient to get on with the pursuit.

“He came here for a reason, my best guess is he's trying to confuse us and turn the tables. We do not splinter. Now let's get moving before Mai gets impatient with this game.”

The trio moved forward, both ferals in the front as they attempted to identify a trail. The larger lycan stayed behind, often turning his head to investigate the various elements of their surroundings. The factory was old, even by normal standards, having been built back at the turn of the twentieth century.

Old textile and lumber mills were the lifeblood of the town upon an age, though they served little purpose now other than sheltering those not wanting to be found or for dumping all elements of trash. It was even whispered that those who displeased the Alpha enough were often last seen being led to one of the abandoned facilities for “repurposing”.

A noise caught his attention, glass shattering and causing both ferals to dash forward in a seemingly mad search for the culprit responsible. The alert lycan kept his eyes trained forward, knowing that if anything it was just a distraction. One of his comrades suddenly barked, bringing the attention of his mates to bear as he lowered his nose to one of the nearby dumpsters.

“Well ... it seems our prey has a plan after all. Masking his scent with trash ... very unbecoming, but not unexpected.” spoke the lycan while kneeling down, brushing one paw against the cobbled stones outside the dumpster, traces of white fur evident as his eyes shifted. Another noise pierced the air, this time the sound of metal on metal screaming outward.

The ferals both barked, brandishing fangs and claws as they jumped for a reason to be let loose and hunt.

“Patience. Don't play right into his trap.”

Both of the smaller weres paced in frustration, their blood seemingly starting to broil as the lycan huffed. Control of their base forms was not yet perfected by this lot, and it was starting to show. Perhaps this was done on purpose by Mai to test their metal and see who was and was not ready to take another step forward in their ranks. Either way, it wouldn't be easy when the prey was - for once - more experienced than perceived.

What would Mai do right now? She was rather brilliant when it came to the matters of hunting and stalking, much like anything else she seemed to do. Her meteoric rise through the pack hierarchy was impressive to say the least, and was the cause of much envy to those who'd been around far longer. It mattered not to him, for she had the attention of the Alpha, and that's all that really mattered at the end of the day.

Perhaps she would use her comrades to her benefit. Not for the sake of fighting with them, but using them to draw the prey out. Yes, she wasn't one to overvalue cooperation and companionship, typically seeing such notions as a means to an end. Was that what she was

looking for out of them? Out of **him**?

Lupine ears drew upward as he took a deep breath, staring out toward the swinging door of the factory interior, the soft motion seemingly inviting them further into the bowels of the insatiable beast.

“Alright, you two, stay together and move forward. I want you to investigate inside ... I'm going to patrol the perimeter and rejoin you. Howl the moment you find anything suspicious.”

With that, the lycan bolted from the pair, leaping into the shadows and crawling up the side of an abandoned conveyor belt into the night. The two ferals watched him depart with both curiosity and excitement, the larger of the two smiling and motioning for the other to follow as they bound toward the doorway confidently.

Blue eyes watched the scene with interest, taking full stock of what had happened before vanishing into the murky depths of the factory in kind. The pack lycan wasn't as foolish as his comrades.

Both ferals peeled down the corridor rapidly, still not catching any hint of scent or trail as they continued to seek some measure of guidance. Surely they were more than capable of handling this mutt with or without the more experienced members. How else were they to prove themselves if they couldn't handle something so simple.

Various creaks and cracks emanated around them, echoing down the abandoned hallways as if some lost record player was stuck on loop. It made the entire atmosphere unnerving. Made more so by virtue of scent blindness. The larger were turned again, sensing his companions greater unease and just bumping his forehead against his flank in reassurance. This resulted in a small huff of appreciation before a loud bark pierced the veil surrounding them.

Both sets of ears perked up as they caught the shadowy blur before them, claws leaving a trail of scratches along the plastered walls before vanishing around the corner. They bolted after the darkened figure without a moment's hesitation, gnashing with their fangs and claws as the scent returned to them in kind. No doubt it was their quarry, and he was completely at their mercy while cooped up inside these dirtied walls.

The shadow lured them deeper, always just far enough away to avoid complete detection, but making no real effort to hide. These facts, of course, were completely lost upon the blood minded ferals. The only thing that mattered was the hunt, and proving they were capable of cornering the enemy that had violated their borders.

Droplets of water descended from the ceiling, various pipes and mechanisms lining the massive room they'd found before themselves. It was clearly the heart of the factory, and at one time was alive with the pulsations of creation and progress. River water still poured through the pipes, though it served little purpose at this point in history. Large gears decorated massive rods of metal, though many were starting to rust through decades of non-usage.

Both ferals gazed around uncomfortably, but eventually managed to push forward together, the scent still lingering upon their noses. Another growl pierced the shadows, resulting in the smaller feral jumping at the nearest shadow. Before his companion could calm him, the sound of metal on metal began to grind around them, causing both to stare upward in confusion.

One of the larger machines suddenly whirled to life, various lights and barometers surging brightly as power suddenly returned to the factory, gears starting to grind loudly before coming to an abrupt halt, water feeding into the aged system and causing it to complain in despair.

The larger feral raised his head, howling alertly as to call upon their more experienced companion, though over the constant symphony of machinery about them, who knew if the message would be conveyed in full. The smaller canine backed into the other, causing both to jolt as the machinery continued to hiss and scream all about them, forcing both to do turns in growing confusion, the scent now being almost everywhere as fear set in.

Something didn't seem right, as the gears continued to moan and complain while refusing to budge, water still dripping from the various pipes as the metal limbs began to shake rapidly and with growing force. The two ferals approached the machinery, hoping to at least discover the source and end it before it caused further problems. At the very least they could find out just what the bastard was up to.

Various gauges and dials whirled rapidly, all of them seemingly rising upward without much control as the larger feral tilted his head, gaze lingering on one dial in particular as it rapidly approached the red line. Pressure.

He had created a powder keg. Barking to his companion in fear, he attempted to convey the situation before them, but was it too late? Understanding the worry, both ferals turned to escape the way they'd come, albeit to be slammed with a massive wave of pressurized steam as the pipes above them began to burst one by one, causing bolts of metal to soar across the room like bullets.

One of the projectiles struck the older feral, causing him to crumple to the ground in pain. His companion was no more fortunate, as the scalding steam blinded him in full, causing his frame to collapse into a whimpering pile of fear as he pawed in desperation at his scalded cranium. The hissing steam continued to vent throughout the massive room, causing everything to be blanketed in a cloud of humid saturation.

Having the wind knocked out of him by the bolt, the older feral attempted to stand, searching for his companion with loud whimpers. The only response he heard was that of a guttural snarl. Feeling an aggressive force latch onto his tail and pull him back with great force, releasing a chorus of whines as the sound of banging metal permeated the halls.

The younger feral slowly started to stand, eyes stinging and watering by virtue of the brutal release of elements. Fur plastered against his rather slim frame, displaying one who was still

clearly not fully grown. He could hear nothing save the hissing of steam, the cries of his companion having been lost on him completely as he stumbled about in search of relief.

An immense force on his spine caused him to yelp, legs collapsing as his belly met the wooden boards, splinters wasting no time in finding purchase against his abdomen. The last thing he remembered before slowly slipping into unconsciousness was the hardened gaze of two glowing blue orbs.

Both ferals were dropped in a heap in the corner of the factory, the steam slowly starting to evaporate as water trickled through the now busted piping. Cynfall was very careful to ensure the gating system still operated before trying his little surprise. He certainly didn't want to drown himself or even his attackers.

They would both live, though not without some scars. Either way, they were not his primary worry at this point. They'd been sent off by themselves for a reason, and he'd already deduced what it was. A new voice confirmed it.

“Never send ferals to do a true lycan's job - I've always said.”

Cynfall didn't even turn, knowing who the voice belongs to and just taking a soft breath. He gazed down at the two unconscious wolves and then sighed.

“It's a shame that you chose to sacrifice their well being in order to further your own position.” he replied coldly.

“Isn't that how any pack works? In the end, the goal is to achieve that which we set out to accomplish. How we accomplish it is not of any importance, only that it gets done. For the good of the whole.”

Cynfall laughed dryly and turned, setting his sights on the large, brute lycan before him. His size was impressive. Muscles worked and hardened; eyes brimming with purpose and belief. His deep brown eyes offset the rich mahogany patterns of his pelt.

“Well, I don't know about you ... but if that's how a pack is ‘supposed’ to behave ... then I've made the right choice all these years in avoiding them.”

“That or they have no need for you. Selfish behavior doesn't sit well within a family. It's never about any one wolf ... it's about the good of us all. Lone wolves are always looking to give us a bad reputation. You come into our town ... disturb our peace ... insult our leadership ... then just expect to walk away like nothing is wrong?”

Cynfall couldn't help but lift his lip, snarling in warning before brandishing his claws. He didn't prefer fighting in anger, but sometimes it couldn't be helped.

“If I had any intention of truly screwing with your family, I would have killed all of your

friends here ... and I would kill you. I have no desire for violence and only seek to move on in peace, but if you refuse to allow that ... then I have no choice but to end this.”

The large lycan smirked, uncrossing his arms and starting to crouch slightly, displaying his impressive bulk.

“Oh believe me, I've known that from the very start. I knew you wouldn't let us get close to you as a group - you intended to pick us all off one by one. Perhaps you would have, but instead, I opted to get you to myself. I'm more confident with those odds.”

“Shows the respect you have for others I suppose, can't say I'm too surprised. Strikes me as the kind of thing **she** would do.” replied Cynfall with a half-smirk, placing emphasis on the obvious.

The lycan frowned slightly, taking the snide remark as an insult and letting his emotions rise to the surface. “Don't even dare to speak about her in such a way. She's the best of us ... and the Alpha's chosen. She's going to lead us into the future!”

“Teaching these kinds of tactics? I fear for your pack's future then. This manner of thinking will doom you all.”

“Enough!” bellowed the beast before swinging his muscled arm forward, aiming to catch Cynfall high with a powerful blow. The russet werewolf responded with an easy dodge, tucking his frame down and away, curling to his opponent's side and striking him with a firm slash to his exposed flank.

The pack enforcer bellowed before stumbling forward, one paw retreating to his side and feeling the wound, the incision precise and shallow, resulting in light trails of blood. It was simply a warning shot, as if the prick was simply playing a game.

“Slippery bastard aren't you? Well, don't expect me to get riled up like that again. I should know better than to let my emotions dictate actions.”

Cynfall just smirked widely, facing his hunter from the opposite angle now, the two having changed positions. He wasn't stupid, this was not the time to be overconfident. One precise strike from this hulk could result in a crippling blow. He was strong, likely far stronger than himself, so he had to plan every move carefully and wisely.

The brute stepped forward again, raising both paws and brandishing wicked claws of ebony. Cynfall slid his feet back slowly, giving ground, but not much. He had to know his advantage, he would play to get in close and get Cynfall off-balanced. A contest of strength was the end goal for the hunter ... and perhaps that's what he should be given.

“Once again, not overly impressed. If this is all she can send at me then I'll be out of here in no time at all.”

The brute frowned and then smirked, breaking out into billowing laughter which echoed about the hollow walls. Such echoes caused more of the assorted plums of dust to flare about.

“Aren't you the thick one! You don't understand, do you? Even if you somehow get past me ... you're not leaving this place. Mai won't let you ... the Alpha won't let you! You think I'm a handful? She'll carve you up and spit you out with the morning bacon. Never has there been a more complete beast of beauty such as herself. There is a reason the Alpha fancies her ... after all.”

Cynfall noted the tone of his voice in the last bit, finding this sudden surge of information quite useful for his predicament. Needless to say, this wolf lusted after his superior in silence.

“Mai, huh? Well, nice to have a name for that deadly face. Hate to say it though, you really think anything you do here is gonna impress her that much? Even if you bring back my pelt ... she doesn't strike me as the type to stick with one love sick puppy very long.”

“That's enough! Enough of your big mouth ... I'll show you just what it means to cross the Hollows Pack ... and if not me, then Mai certainly will!”

He charged forward with alarming speed, playing the part of an enraged bull perfectly. Cynfall could see the murderous intent in his eyes, and knew deep down this was really gonna hurt. He sidestepped the bull rush, putting himself between the enraged lycan and the wall, taking note of several concrete pillars supporting the creaking, raised walkways.

Cynfall blocked his wild strikes with skill, though each stung like a thousand needles piercing his flesh. Most of his wild shots resulted in Cynfall ducking away, playing the patient game as he avoided an outright brawl. Slash after slash missed the mark, finding purchase in various pieces of rusted equipment or crippled walls.

“Stop ... your RUNNING!!” he roared in seething anger before suddenly catching Cyn by one arm, bringing him forward and then shoving one knee into his gut. The russet lycan felt the wind leave him, abdomen screaming in soreness before lifting his bowed head upward, catching his tormentor in the jaw with the back of his skull and forcing him back in pain, dark blood dripping from his nose.

“Rgggh ... cheap son of a bitch ...” muttered the bloodied brute before recovering, grinding his claws against one of the rising pillars, refocusing on his baited prey as the smaller male licked his snout.

“Then stop whining! Come get me!”

Another charge burst toward him, reminding him of an out of control locomotive. Rolling away at the last second, Cynfall watched as the momentum carried the brute into one of the pillars, causing the entire structure above them to rattle in pain, elements of dust and forgotten debris

showering down upon them. Even some of the skylight above them shattered, raining pieces of glass into the chamber beneath.

“Almost, but not close enough. Come on! Try again!” Cyn called out tauntingly, beckoning toward the brute with one claw.

“Oh you wait ... I'm gonna break each rib one by one. Quick is too good for you!”

“I think Mai would be disappointed.”

Another charge, this time playing completely into Cynfall's paws. Waiting until the very last second, he sidestepped the enraged lycan and used the momentum to his advantage, locking his arm against his armpit and then bringing the opposite paw to the base of his massive skull, roaring and using all his strength coupled with the resulting speed to throw the lycan's cranium forward into the waiting machinery behind him.

The concussive sound once more sent a wave of forceful shocks throughout the compromised structure, sparks of electricity dancing and snapping as Cynfall forced the brute's skull into the massive electrical panel, causing an intense surge of currents that caused him to shield his gaze away. All the while, the brute struggled, but Cynfall wouldn't relent, using the power his position offered to keep him pinned in place.

After several long moments, the fight seemed to die away from his opponent's limbs, sensing them drop forward in defeat followed by an audible groan. The russet lycan tore him backward, holding up the limped male by his scruff to inspect the searing wounds.

His snout and face were quite gashed up, not to mention the smoke currently rising from his charred fur. He'd also likely have quite the lump on that thick skull of his. Either way, he'd live, he was too damn big not to.

Grunting in effort, Cynfall dragged the last of his pursuers into the pile alongside his companions, leaning him up against the wall so that he wouldn't crush the smaller weres. He could already tell that their transformations were starting to wear off, some of the fur patterns and limbs slowly receding into more human-like proportions.

Taking a deep breath, Cynfall rose to his feet, inspecting himself in full, being no worse for wear save a couple bruises that would swiftly be gone. The bite on his forearm had already healed up - one of the truly enjoyable benefits of the wolf blood. More annoyingly, the scent of garbage still stained his pelt.

Leaving the disabled pack members where they were, he turned to make his way out of the increasingly unsafe location. It was bad enough before they turned it into a werewolf arena. Odds were the entire place might collapse if he so much as sneezed. One could only hope that this pack cared enough about their members to at least retrieve them safely.

He exited the dreary depths eagerly, still smelling of trash and breathing tiredly. He wished that it was over, but was well aware it wasn't. The presence was evident the moment he stepped out into the moonlight, the empty courtyard before him eerily silent. He could no longer deny that she was to be taken extremely seriously. The brute hadn't been lying when he described just how unique she was and getting a first hand education was more than enough.

"Not bad. Not bad at all."

Cynfall felt the hairs on his muscles stand on edge. What an effect just her voice alone could have. There she was standing before him, not moving a single muscle. Calm and collected, not once appearing out of control.

"I take it you took in the show?" he stated flatly.

She tilted her head in one direction, eyes rolling back dramatically before stretching her arms above her head. She had discarded the jacket she wore but an hour beforehand, displaying her deceptively toned arms and bare mid drift. Long, blonde hair melted into the wind, one portion of her bangs nearly always covering her left eye. It was then he noticed the collar she wore. It was a simple trinket – a thick, leather band dotted with sharp spikes.

"Mmmm .. I caught most of it ... I did get a tad disinterested while you were setting the scene. Have to say: nobody has come around these rust pits in a few years. Some of the paranoid whelps like to gossip about how we use these abandoned shit holes to make folks 'disappear' ... but that's just hot air. Even a dumbass werewolf is more valuable than a dead werewolf."

Cynfall just grunted and brushed his tongue between his fangs, not once letting his guard down. "Glad I could impress you. Unfortunately, I haven't hit the city limits. I don't suppose you'd be willing to let this whole thing slide? Have I at least earned the courtesy of another head start?"

She snickered and nearly doubled over in a fit of disturbing giggles, causing one brow to raise. It was some moments before she recovered and stared at him, though any traces of humor now long gone.

"I suppose I could ... but I told you: I need a good workout, and you still haven't reached the edge of the city. I was hoping this lot could handle you competently ... but per the usual, I have to do all the dirty work myself."

She stretched her limbs upward then outward, an animalistic purr coming forth as he noticed her skin almost vibrate.

"You should really consider it an honor ... I rarely have to work hard when it comes to catching my prey ... but you are proving to be an exception."

Cynfall seized at the small opening, darting forth with great speed and aiming for her hip. He still had no intention of killing anybody, but a disabling blow would still be direly necessary.

His eyes widened when he caught nothing but air, eyes darting back and forth alarmingly while his nose attempted to adjust.

“Over here, pup.”

He gazed over his shoulder to see her leaning into a nearby rusted tool shed, still smirking as one of her fingers tapped the metal sheath. By the audible tapping, it was obvious her claws were now in play. Cynfall had never seen a shifter move so fast before. Her connection to the beast inside was practically singular, streamlined, perhaps something beyond that entirely.

“That's ... incredible ..” he spoke at a dull whisper, gazing down at his paw and then back toward the increasingly dangerous lupine.

“Oh please, I'm not even warmed up yet. Though you did come pretty close. I can't recall the last time anyone came within a few inches,” she responded before a wicked smirk plastered against her face, sliding one paw forward and bringing herself to a crouching position, both her hands now illuminated by the moon, displaying a wicked set of pearly daggers. “Ready or not pup, here I come!”

The speed she moved at was unworldly, even by werewolf standards. Her strikes were made with lethal precision and perfect force, not once breaking a sweat or letting a motion go to waste. The entire time she assaulted him, that grin never left her face. The moment Cynfall made any motion to strike back, she was gone, once more resulting in empty results.

The scary part was, she wasn't even a beast yet, and she still seemed to be toying with him. Each time she moved in and struck she proceeded to fade away with expert timing, likely by virtue of studying his moves earlier that evening. She was more than prepared for him, and the same could not be said on his end of things.

Her blows were strong, but not overpowering, and he was sure that was completely by design. Likely it was about the waiting game for her, tiring out her quarry and then moving in for the lethal strike. He wasn't going to survive this way, even in lycan form.

She approached him rapidly, going head first and brandishing her wicked claws. Cynfall moved to block, but discovered the feint far too late. All of a sudden, a set of lithe and powerful jaws dove down at his flank, forcing him to pull away sloppily to avoid massive damage. The sharp instruments skimmed his side, likely drawing blood but not enough to make him worry.

What did make him worry was the rapid pace of her changes. She had complete mastery over her forms, able to slide in and out at a moment's notice and without second thoughts. Once again, he was stumped at just how out of his depth he was. He'd seen his fair share of powerful werewolves, even got the better of them at times, but this was a whole new level of mastery.

“I'm starting to get warmer now, might not want to get too distracted again. Just an inch closer and you'd be bleeding out all over my new shoes.”

Cynfall couldn't see her, but could hear the confident giggling emanating from around him. He had to do something, **anything**. He needed a distraction. Needed as much distance between himself and her as he could muster. One thing he was very confident in was his will to survive, no matter what the odds against him happened to be.

“You look lost in thought. Shall I make things more simple?” The moon's light vanished, shadow once more covering the facility in another inky cloak.

Another insidious yowl pierced the darkness, yellow eyes flashing as her frame dove from above, this time covered entirely in a piercing layer of auburn fur. Cynfall dove forward and rolled again, feeling his muscles bruise by virtue of the rocky ground texture. His blue orbs rose to quite the sight. A powerful and deceptively elegant candid slid around him like a vulture, yellow eyes burning with the thrill of the hunt and nose twitching at the scent of blood. He couldn't help but be amused at the sight of her bangs still covering one eye.

“What's the matter? Not intimidated are we?”

His ears perked up as he backed away slowly. The ability to talk while in feral form? That was another rarity among their kind, but at this point he was ready to throw the book of expectations out the window.

“You certainly do amaze. I can see why your comrade spoke so highly of you. He's got quite the thing for you if it's not overly presumptuous to say. Wouldn't shut up about how great Mai is.”

Her snout turned down before flashing her fangs mockingly. “Conrad has a habit of saying what's on his mind. Tonight only proved that further! He could only be so lucky to be worthy of a bitch like me.”

Cynfall backed up a bit more, ears pinning against his skull as a short breath escaped him. “I would think a leader would treat their subordinates with a tad more respect. I mean, they almost died trying to please you.”

“Oh shove it, such is their place in this world - just as mine is above them. I'm not sure what you're trying to accomplish with this rambling other than stalling the inevitable. I've seen how you fight ... I'm not very worried.” She took a step forward, her feral frame crouching low against the littered ground, signaling deadly intent as her instruments marked up the soiled dirt.

Cynfall gave off a resigned chuckle, feeling his back against something solid and familiar. He could only hope it was what he guessed. “Yeah, I suppose you've got me there. I was never the best fighter in the world, though I think I have one advantage.”

“What could that possibly be, pup? I don't see anyone coming to rescue you.” her claws unsheathed, making ready to strike at the jugular.

“I'm very resourceful ... and don't call me **pup** ..”

He suddenly ripped away the massive clothed sheet, displaying a giant construction floodlight which he immediately activated. The resulting high powered beam caused her to yelp, recoiling away painfully and then leaping forward at her intended target blindly. Had Cynfall not moved away beforehand his throat would've been torn out. She snarled and lashed about violently, making to strike at anything in range as her eyes plastered shut.

“You damn bastard!! Such a cheap trick ... I should have expected something so low!”

As much as he enjoyed the tiny victory, this was not the time to admire the scene. Bolting away rapidly, he bounded over the massive wall from whence he'd originally come, hitting the darkened tarmac with another thud as the bellows of anger continued to fume behind him. He could hear her smashing the floodlight to pieces, taking out her rage on the only thing available.

“Now to really get the fuck out of dodge ... but not like this ...” he spoke to himself before staring at his lycan frame. He wouldn't escape in this form. The situation called for stealth and urgency. He eyed a nearby hedge of overgrown foliage, finding the location suitable enough. He had to make this fast, not knowing how long Mai would be seeing stars.

Shifting from human to any kind of were-form was often painful until one really got used to it, but swapping between lycan and feral forms was not too difficult or taxing a process for the seasoned werewolf. Thankfully, years of avoiding dodgy situations made it somewhat of a specialty for him.

The shrinking of his limbs to a more canine proportion took all but a few seconds, followed by the crunching and compacting of his muscles and chest into a more barreled shape. Sweat coated his pelt and his veins bulged in - rapidly increasing blood-flow, bones having forcibly reshaped themselves much faster than usual given his current predicament. Thank goodness he found a perfect chain for holding his tags, one that wouldn't snap under any situation or transformation.

He had to have set some kind of personal record, as he was off and running not fifteen seconds after making the decision. His four limbs carried him quietly and briskly into the crisp, evening air - darting through yards and under fences as if they weren't there at all.

Howls began to pierce the air from ahead of him, causing Cynfall to stop dead in his tracks. Has she contacted them already? Or perhaps she had prepared for the possibility that he'd elude her ambush. The scents hit him full force, causing him to do a double take and gaze back toward the heart of the Hollows.

Damn it - this is what she wanted; herding him exactly where she planned. She had surely recovered by now and was hot on his trail, if not on top of him. Living through this ordeal was

becoming less and less likely.

Another howl, this time much closer. He could sense the anger in this one and knew right away that it was Mai. Seeking more options, he initiated a hard right, darting down another street in the hopes he could find some manner of shelter or escape from this literal hell.

He made use of every deterrent possible in hopes of shaking the pursuit, often tracking through various yards and obstacles with surging urgency. This list included a construction yard, local park and even a full on human barbecue, his appearance resulting in nothing more than a child's nagging urge to pet him. No matter where he went, he didn't stop for but a moment to catch his breath, and even then it was nothing more than a few seconds. The howls continued to split the air, though more distantly and spread out.

Only once was he forced to ground, finding cover within what appeared to be an old homeless shelter hastily constructed in a back alley. What had to be over a dozen shadows moved past in various directions, fanning out in a wide arc to more effectively find their target. He was careful to pick and choose between waves, only moving when he was certain the shadows and wind were to his benefit.

His heart soared when he felt the streets opening up and yards becoming less sporadic. He'd been traveling west for at least half an hour, no doubt close to the town limits. He almost yelped with joy upon seeing the dense woodland before him, making a mad dash through a creek and instantly regretting the decision. Damn it was cold for a Summer. He felt his tongue loll in excitement at the notion of evading sure death yet again, only for his eyes to widen and heart to race; stopping dead in his tracks.

The scent. It hit him full force and with nothing held back. Something almost snapped inside him, only for it to be overruled by his brain with potent force. Think you moron, it's **her** scent. She's here, luring you into yet another trap. How the hell did she find him again? He was so careful. He drew his snout back and took another long whiff of the air, sensing something oddly different – yet familiar.

"It's ... Mai's scent ... but at the same time ..." he trailed off before sighing, resting on his haunches, feeling the cold aluminum of his tags pressing against his heaving chest.

"I suppose there isn't any escaping it this time. I don't think I have a goddamn choice now. If I've gotta go ... might as well go out on my own terms."

He rose from his sitting position, gazing up at the moon and finding some sense of solace within her welcoming glow. Being a werewolf wasn't all that bad, and if he had his way, he'd keep living to try and do right by those he'd wronged. No matter what, he was gonna die on his own two feet ... or his own four paws. He'd lived a life of many regrets, hurting many people he never had the intention of pushing away. Living this kind of life wasn't easy, but he still could have made something more of himself had he simply chosen to do so. Instead ... he did what he always did in the end; just plain ran away from his problems.

Some days he just felt like hiding in eternal shame. Just digging a damn hole out in the middle of the woods and hiding there forever, content to stop causing problems and just let people forget he existed. It was so easy when he thought about it, but at the same time, he could never bring himself to fully disconnect from what was going on around him.

Perhaps that was the most maddening thing about how he lived his life now. Sure he didn't just lay down and die, but he damn sure wasn't making much of a difference. Hell, being a werewolf might be seen as the ultimate blessing for some. Who the hell wouldn't want the ability to do the things he could do. The chance to walk the line between man and beast while returning to tell the tale. Not all were that lucky.

No, this could be a very cruel existence, as if the past couple hours hadn't reminded him fully of that fact. A slap in the face and tumble back to reality was sorely needed to keep his beast blood in check, but based on what he saw in this place, that rule was about to be completely shattered.

He stared at the flowing stream behind him, taking stock in his reflection, staring at the scar dragging across his left eye. It was a cruel reminder to him at all times just what he was capable of becoming. All these years, he'd managed to keep it in check, even train it in a way to live in complete co-existence with his other half. It would never be fully tamed - as it wasn't meant to be - but he at least learned to accept the best ... and worst ... of both worlds.

Turning his head, the scent hit him full on again, snapping him back to the matter at hand. One thing was certain, if he was killed, he wasn't gonna give any information freely to this group of psychos. He crawled along the riverbank slowly until finding a suitable, round rock, kicking it over and then leaning his head down, allowing the smooth, metal tags to slip off his scruff and onto the ground. He stared at the flashing metal for but a moment before readjusting the rock back into place, throwing some dirt on top for good measure.

“Alright Mai, if you want it to end with blood ... then I promise I'm gonna make you regret it.”

Vanishing into the thick brush, Cynfall let his senses guide him, frame staying close to the ground as he shimmied through the foliage like a beast stalking the perfect game. It felt like hours, but really was mere minutes. He could smell the smoke, and could see the billowing flames nearby. Had she prepared an entire spectacle for his downfall? He wouldn't put it past her in the slightest. It was beginning to clear up now, and the scent was overpowering. At long last, he strutted into the clearing, eyes brought to bear for what very well might be his final fight.

“That Alpha bitch must be really close ... her scent is all over the place ... “

His jaw suddenly dropped like a hammer, maw agape and eyes wide at what was now in front of him. It was the scent's source alright ... but not at all what he was expecting. His heart stilled and blood burned anew.

“That's .. not her!”

She gazed over her shoulder toward him, seemingly having lost some sense of time and perception by virtue of what she was currently going through. Her body was locked in the torments of the change, and not just any change by the looks of it. No, she was a newblood ... had to be – not that he was super focused on that fact right now. His heart only raced faster, becoming completely captivated by this seemingly helpless and pained woman.

“W – Who is she!? Sh – should I say hi!!? Or maybe I shouldn't bother her ... but maybe ...”

Why the hell was he acting his way? He forced the knot in his throat down, trying to catch his breath and make sense of what was in front of him. This night was truly throwing him for a loop. Crunching him up into a little ball and spitting him back out again and again. What the hell else could possibly happen to him now?

Her actions snapped him out of brazen thoughts, gaze lingering on her sweaty frame, taking in the looks, but his brain once more overruled those sensations in favor of logic. She was struggling, seemingly fighting the changes happening to her. That was something very unwise for a werewolf to do ... especially newbloods. The process should have been over minutes ago, at least with proper guidance.

“Huh? Is she still changing? The full moon rose well over an hour ago. You can delay the upcoming changes ... but ... only a **new** lycan would do that ...”

This was indeed worrying, and he absolutely couldn't believe that he'd found himself thrown into such a sensuous event. After all the threats and dangers the past few hours, this was the last thing he should be mixed up with. Nevertheless, her cries of agony shook his soul to the foundations. Her bones were cracking and limbs stretching. Every fiber of her body was screaming to accept the change, but her mind was refusing to oblige.

“The more she resists the changes, the more it hurts ... and ...”

Her growing tail suddenly raised up, exposing her extremely fertile and receptive backside in full force. The fluids were dripping from the open spout, coating her thighs in a thick layer of enticing juices that only further stimulated his already bouncing brain. The scent was starting to completely overpower him now, and he wasn't ashamed to admit that he didn't care.

“Her **scent**, now I can tell that it was similar to hers ... but it's quite different all the same ... if I could only ...”

What remained of his logic and reasoning was quickly drained away, each step forward being something completely out of his reason and control. At this point, who cares. Hell, he was expecting to be ambushed and mauled by a pack of ravenous wolves here ... and instead he found a beautiful young shifter who was in dire need of a companion. Werewolf copulation

wasn't out of the ordinary for first time changes, in fact, it was a practice most common among their kind, as the pleasures offered did wonders to offset the mind from the constant agony the body must endure. Then of course ... there was just pure chemical instinct.

“It smells so good ... If I could only ... just a bit ...”

Her words were drowned out by the flood of emotions and hormones now coursing through his limbs, pushing his snout forward without any regard for thought and dragging his thick, lupine tongue against her swollen folds. The taste was divine, lingering in every corner of his mind and launching him beyond the stratosphere of base pleasures. He wasn't coming down from this cloud anytime soon.

She screamed in obvious pleasure and surprise, her gaze drawing back to him in both shock and inquisitive fear. Damn it, what was he doing? Did he really just go through with that? What the hell gave him the right to intrude on her like that regardless of her difficult situation. Moments like this were the reason he wanted to just slink away and let the world forget him, he never made the right decisions on anything. Mentally chastising himself, he turned away from the young lycan, hanging his head with growing shame.

Her stare told him everything he needed to know. That's what he got for letting his instincts run completely rampant and push the boundaries of what was appropriate. Perhaps it really was time to start digging that hole ...

A sudden grip on his tail caught his attention, eyes widening and focusing back on her sudden motion. She had stopped him dead to rights, turning his frame and pressing one of her growing hands against his jaw tenderly. Her touch was like silk, even as the wolf blood tried to take her. Never did he feel such a sensation as what was now invading his soul, waging war on his mind and seemingly planting a flag of victory within the broken stronghold. That's when her voice melted his senses.

“D – Don't leave. I mean, you can't understand me, right? In any case .. I wouldn't mind ... I just don't want to be **alone**.”

His brain was now on fire. What a damn night. Oh hell yes!

She let herself drop to the forest floor, hands never leaving his jaws as her eyes told him everything he needed to know. Yes, those beautiful amber eyes. He wanted to dive right into them and never come out again.

The sensations now exploded, and he leaned himself forward- content to give her exactly what she desired. Hell, if Mai and her band of creeps caught him now he wouldn't give any shits.

Everything that came afterward seemed like a blur in his mind. She guided him to exactly where she wanted, all the time giving into what her wolf blood commanded. This was the way it was meant to be. While pain would always be a constant, the pleasures that came from such

powerful, feral desires easily helped dilute any complications, and helped expedite the process.

He fed from her deeply, using his lupine tongue to reach her most sensitive depths, all the time being aware of just how far along she was in the changes. The more he tended to her needs, the easier it seemed to come forth, but it was still far from over for her, and he more than intended to see the event done properly.

Her barrel chest began to form as she flipped over, offering herself to him all over again as her growing tail helped spread her luscious scent, captivating him even more if that was even possible. She truly wanted him in full, offering up her most sacred depths to him in totality. Perhaps this was nothing more than a quick fuck, but did she know that? He felt himself torn in that one split second, knowing that it was highly likely she'd never even remember him beyond this one night.

None of that mattered. She wanted him, and he would oblige her, the scent completely intoxicating as the wolf blood surged to the forefront of both their minds. Nothing else mattered now, not the hunt ... not the chase ... the death ... or the mistakes. All that mattered was her. Making sure that she was going to be alright. That he could at least provide her what she truly needed on this night.

He pierced her veil not long after, using his growing length to stimulate her throbbing pussy, knowing full well that her moist cavern was in the process of altering itself as well. Her folds collapsed around his organ, suffocating it in the best way possible, sending surge after surge of unfathomable stimuli throughout them both. He would be careful ... he would be slow. She deserved the best he could offer a woman ... and then-some.

She eased back into him, inviting the motions and tranquility of their organs being tied together. He couldn't tell what she was thinking, only that she desired more. He used his hind legs to drive the pace, slowly feeling it grow more intense as her body continued to grow and pop beneath him. Thankfully, the cries of pain were now replaced with that of wild pleasure.

The sweat fell freely, her sensitive nipples pulsed openly, her core accepted him fully, and the moon basked them both with an ethereal glow that only grew more intense alongside the roaring fire beside them. This was truly beautiful .. in both body and mind. Their souls seemed to join as one for that moment of time, regardless of where they'd both come from or where they were going. This is what it truly meant to feel something with someone beyond both body and mind. Yes ... being a werewolf wasn't always so bad.

Her limbs grew out more and more, nipples collapsing back into her barreled chest as her mouth openly snapped in violent jolts, drool falling from her sharpened ivories. Yes, the muzzle, one of the final pieces of their glorious forms. His groin snapped against her for what seemed like an eternity, and for once, he begged that the change would slow itself. He wanted to give her this for as long as he could, even though he could feel himself bursting at the seams already.

It had been years since he last had a woman, and even then, it was nothing like this. His werewolf blood and stamina often caused problems when it came to laying with human women. Not that it wasn't possible, but it had to be done with extreme temperance. That was something else he'd added to the list of personal failures over the years.

This? This was how it was meant to be. With one of his own kind, one that accepted him in full and wasn't scared of what was meant to be. Or was she? She seemed so perturbed when he'd stumbled upon her - fighting her changes and seemingly wishing to be anywhere other than where she was. Did she fear the creature within? Was she afraid of losing a piece of herself like he had once been? These were all questions that he couldn't imagine getting answers too once this night was over, but they still ate away at his consciousness.

A pool of fluids formed at the base of their hind limbs, the rutting growing more intense by the second as her pelt filled in, limbs stretching to their final proportions. A beautiful ash and white pelt, one suitable to her more gentle frame. Her tail arched up against his abdomen, coaxing him into a final release as he felt his sac start to swell, member following in kind as she pressed back against his advances aggressively, ready to accept him in full as the process saw itself through to a natural conclusion.

She was perfect, absolutely perfect. What were the odds of this happening? The night from hell, yet here he was finding a blessing. After all ... the night was always darkest just before dawn. Corny phrases like that did exist for a reason.

A sudden notion burst through his mind. Her name. What was her name? He wished he knew, he wished he could cry it out in pleasure. Let her know just how much this meant to him and how much he wanted to hear the same in return. Oh to know her name ...

He kept asking that same question for the last fleeting moments, each thrust bringing both of them closer to euphoria, feeling her muscular lupine pussy tighten and ready itself for an intense tsunami of fluids and sensation. His organ couldn't hold out any longer, and he found himself biting down on her scruff, wanting to mark her in more ways than one as he hilted himself forward with one beastly motion, loins slamming into her backside even as she caved and gave her womb to him, claws tearing at the naked earth. The explosion was brilliant, blinding and basked with supernatural heat.

They both arched ... and they both howled, tails curling upward as he released his heated seed inside her. The howl pierced his soul, more so than any word or pleasure he felt before. His mind released itself and cascaded down a river of passionate surrender.

Oh to know what she was thinking ... and would he even be here to find out.

His head was pounding, even as the sun's rays teased his skin. Man it was almost like a hangover, but not really. Werewolves didn't even get hangovers ... at least, he'd never seen it actually happen to one. He stared upward for a time, seeing the canopy of leaves that cast

gentle shadows upon their skin.

Wait ... them?

Cynfall's eyelids shot open, nearly launching himself upward. He quickly inspected his surroundings, taking a deep breath in realizing they were still alone. The sun was just barely breaking the horizon, birds softly chirping as the forest began to stir around them. The fire had long since died out, leaving nothing but a pile of ground ashes and spent timbers. He then looked to his side, finding one of his arms still resting across her frame.

They had both reverted, though not fully. It wasn't uncommon for some effects to linger, and his and hers nails were still elongated, canines also sharp enough to shred game. Lifting his arm away from her hip, he drew it back cautiously, gazing down further and ensuring that **all** of last night's effects had worn off.

Her flesh was warm and breathing relaxed, causing his head to stir as he gave a frustrated sigh. He couldn't be caught like this ... not out here, not now. He did a double take just then, realizing that she was wearing something. She was wearing ... wait ... a collar?

Orbs shot open once again as he backed away from her rapidly, taking a deep breath upon noticing it was nearly the exact same to the collar Mai had been wearing. What the hell ... that means .. she had to be part of the pack. She was in with them, he had done nothing but dig a deeper hole for himself. When they'd learned he'd laid with one of their own ... especially if she was someone of importance, they'd think of the worst sort of fate for him.

"Fuck ... FUCK!!" he snarled loudly before grabbing a piece of broken wood, launching it across the clearing and causing several critters to take off. He rubbed one palm through his thick hair, realizing that he was now completely out of options. He stood up, staring at the sky for an elongated moment, taking a shallow breath before staring down at her still naked and sleeping frame.

"I'm ... sorry ... I really wish ... I knew your name."

With that he bolted from the clearing, paying no mind to the thick brush that tore at his skin. Something inside him screamed, most likely the wolf itself. Tearing into him for what he was about to do once again. Cynfall ignored it. It wasn't possible, he couldn't stay here now. Not only was it best for him ... but it was best for her. If he stayed ... she might turn him in. Or she would toss him aside after serving his use. Even if she wanted him, he would remain hunted by Mai and the others - which could only endanger her as well.

It was then that something inside spoke up, forcing him to slow to a crawl, eventually halting completely as he stared off at the horizon. Think this through for a moment. Don't decide on anything before thinking through the options. It might just lead to the biggest mistake of your life.

Cynfall found himself collapsing to the ground in supposed defeat, sitting cross legged on the dirt before cupping his head in frustration. What did he owe this place? Ever since he'd arrived nothing good had happened.

Last night happened ...

But last night was a disaster in every sense. He'd made more enemies. He'd made more mistakes. It wouldn't be safe here for him.

That's not all that happened ...

No, but it's all that really matters, isn't it?

You tell me ...

He didn't get it, what was this voice? What was this feeling? Why was he having second thoughts on everything now? What has truly changed?

Are you that dense? Open your eyes to what is right in front of you ...

I've known her all of one night? These feelings can't be authentic already. It was just one night, one moment. One .. perfect, beautiful moment.

Sometimes that's all you really need ...

Is it? I wouldn't be so sure. Acting so rashly based on those feelings is dangerous, idiots get killed over them.

But also the most worth it in the end. She needs you ...

How the hell do you know that?

Think ... accept ... stand up ...

Cynfall leaned back, staring up at the cloudless sky again before falling onto his back, arms spread out on the grass, observing random clouds coming into view. He swore he could make out her face. Those gentle and deep eyes, curved cheeks and soft smile. His eyes closed, unable to shake the vision from his head.

She had been out there all alone, all exposed. She wasn't with her own kind. He thought back to his previous thoughts. Was she scared of what she was becoming? Was she scared of the other lycans? Did she seek solace in being alone by virtue of that growing fear? Cynfall felt something click into place inside his head, chest rising upward as he leaned back on his arms, suddenly finding a stupid smile gracing his face even as the wind brushed his naked frame.

He'd fallen into the trap head first, but didn't give a shit. It didn't matter that she was part of this pack, she clearly wasn't of a similar mindset as them. She wanted peace, desperately seeking a resolution that might never come. She was uncomfortable with who and what she was. He knew the feeling well ... and perhaps - it was time he started using the pains of his life to help someone else. No more running, she deserved **better** than that.

He suddenly felt ready to take on the world; invisible weights seemingly removed for a brief time. He groaned again and stood up, gazing toward the road and taking stock in exactly where he was. Certainly west of the Hollows, and for all he knew, still well within their territory. He stared down at his completely exposed frame, grinding his teeth in familiar frustration.

“Now I just have to remember where I left those damn tags and find some pants ...”

About an hour had passed before he returned, still finding her sleeping frame in the clearing that had forever changed his life. He still didn't want to wake her, fearful of just how she would react to his presence. That fearful voice in the back of his mind spoke up once again, urging him to leave now while he still had the chance. It wasn't too late.

He just sighed and shut it down. Enough of that already, it was time to think of someone else rather than himself. Running away was never again going to be part of the plan.

“This is by far the stupidest thing I’ve ever done. Alright ... screw it ... all or nothing.”

He lightly pressed his hand against her shoulder blade, nails still elongated as he shook with care. After several moments she stirred, causing him to smile instinctively before a piercing scream struck his senses. It was loud enough to make the birds fly off in flustered alarm, Cynfall backing away and covering his ears some before a visage of seething rage approached him.

“W-WHO the FUCK- A-ARE YOU?!” she screamed before reaching out toward him, swinging her smaller limbs wide as he instinctively pressed one palm against her skull, holding her at an arm's length with relative ease. Many thoughts raced through his mind, but he opted for the more direct approach.

“Damn it! Calm the fuck down! I'm not some prowling perv ... I - I am the wolf!”

She suddenly backed away, eyes softening and arms dropping away as realization began to spread about her thoughts. He took a deep breath, grunting softly as she eased back. At least that got her attention.

“Look, I'm sorry if what I did last night ... bothered you. I just .. well ...”

“Oh GOD!!! What did I DO!”

She really knew how to raise an alarm, his brow furrowing in genuine moments of tenseness.

This was not the best of moments to be locked in a screaming match over a spontaneous night of fantastic sex.

“Hey! It’s **alright**. I don’t mind that! You were changing ... and I ...”

“I thought he was just a **wild** wolf! I was such a **PERVERT!!**”

Wild wolf? She was certainly spiraling a bit, and he was gonna have to do the best he could to make her calm down, and fast. It was already a miracle they hadn’t been discovered yet. Many options ran through his head, not that he had the best sense or experience when it came to calming women.

“Look, if that is the case ... I- ... I’m,” Damn what could he even say in this kind of moment. Oh well, thinking logically was often overrated. “I’m a **DOUBLE PERVERT!**”

He really just blurted that out, but as wrong as it may have sounded, it was true, and it got her attention. She had been huddled on the ground in a clump as the distress hammered her brain, and at his sudden outburst she suddenly turned, eyes caught somewhere between confusion, embarrassment and curiosity.

“What?”

Her voice was soft and meager, though that brought his heartbeat down and relaxed the fight or flight mindset rooted in his cranium. This was progress, no screaming was very good. He simply still couldn’t believe what he’d just said.

“Ok,” he started “That didn’t come out good ... but it’s OK, seriously!”

She continued to stare, mind attempting to pick a direction in which to flee. This was one hell of a hole climb out of, even by his standards. Out of options, he pressed on.

“Actually I think you’re a pretty ... nice girl ... and, it was one of the best nights I’ve ever had.

What a master of Shakespeare he was, but it felt like the right thing to say. He took a deep breath when her frame started to relax, eyes returning to the soft state in which he’d become familiar as her voice began to squeak, pushing her clawed fingers together in obvious discomfort. Something else was clearly on her mind.

“Oh ... thank you ... me too ...” That bit made his heart skip a beat as she continued “But ... May I ask you something?”

“Sure, **anything!**” He blurted eagerly, her face remaining obscured from sight.

“Could you get my clothes first? I think they should be nearby.”

Cynfall's eyes widened as he felt his eyes bulge, forcing his vision away moments later as reality began to set in again. Really smooth dummy.

“Oh - **that!** Right! Right!”

He sounded like a high school student tripping over his first date already, an unusually comforting stupidity that was only born from very stimulating life situations.

She felt him move away, hearing small mutters the whole way, most about how stupid and blind he was to the obvious. It was cute, certainly not what she expected when a random canine happened to stumble across her in such a vulnerable state.

Rina had been absolutely terrified of what might have happened had Mai or any of the pack been present during her times of ... distress. Matters like these were not seen as moments of delicacy requiring aid or guidance - but rather times of savage instinct where pleasure and beastly desires were at their peak.

The red headed male continued to rustle about in the bushes, often cursing or groaning out a continual chorus of frustrations and personal criticism as she covered her chest with her arms, staring up at the clearing sky. Yet this felt ... different.

From the moment she had received the collar - the “Gift” - as her sister liked to call it, Rina could not bring herself to indulge in the dark actions they often performed. She may not have been a beast like them long, but she had seen the very worst of its capabilities.

She had told her that it was something to treasure, to embrace, to accept. The harder you fight it, the more it will fight you - those were the “simple” words her sister had given her after it became obvious she wasn't comfortable with what they'd become.

Rina felt the sting of tears in the corner of her eyes, burying her head into her arms in painful realization all over again. It was no good to keep thinking about this, about what Mai constantly reminded her of. All those words ever gave her was more pain and distress about the creature lurking within.

She could feel her claws still digging against her palms, having not yet reverted from the intensity of last night's events. What has this painful “Gift” done for her yet?

“Ow! Damn rock!”

She turned her head and couldn't help but giggle again, her expression suddenly changing as the symphony of newly risen birds began to echo about her, having returned after their “forced” eviction some minutes before.

The beast she hadn't thought of it like this before. She hadn't looked past or felt anything beyond the words her sister gave her. She hadn't experienced anything else other than vile

savagery and brutal exploitation. She'd never known what it was like to embrace ... the wolf.

This other shifter, this flustered young man ... had he possibly shown her a piece of herself she never knew existed, not when it came to the wolf? Shown that it wasn't about using their abilities for nothing but power and indulgence?

A pair of garments were suddenly spread before her, the young man having returned as her thoughts were drained away. His eyes remained averted due to her currently bare state, choosing to move back toward the smoldering remains of the fire from the previous night. Again, she couldn't help but smile as she took to human appearances and rules once again.

He turned halfway, ideas and statements seemingly forming in his mind as she covered her bust with one of her favorite olive fabrics. There were other realities that had begun to sink in ... such as what just might happen if her sister found out about her current "state".

This wasn't something that Rina could just wave off ... not without a good scrubbing that is, as mating musks tended to linger for undetermined amounts of time. Considering the intensity and length of their romp, it was safe to say that it wouldn't escape detection from one as astute and attuned as Mai.

He had turned to face her now, her cheeks flush as their eyes met for but a moment, not knowing why it caused her to wave away such dire thoughts. It had been so long since she'd felt a connection, not since ... she was growing up. Instinctively, she followed the voice inside her, curiosity easily being the most notable.

"I ... think we got this backward, huh?" she asked almost awkwardly, causing his eyes to soften as his head tilted.

"Huh?"

"You know, having a date before the first ... kiss and all that"

Her words both flustered and emboldened him, blue eyes lighting up in apparent realization. This was not smart, but that ship had long sailed, and he was more than eager to see this newfound page through to the end.

"Oh, right ... right. That's something we can still get around to, as humans?" he reached out softly, letting his half transformed palm cradle her delicate wrist. "**Miss** Wolf?"

Her eyes locked with his, feeling his touch stimulate both mind and body to such a degree that everything else drained away into nothingness. She had to learn more about him ... learn more about herself. Living in fear was all she knew, it was the only "Gift" she'd ever truly received from the Hollows. Something new had been born last night within her soul, and whatever it was, she was keen to explore it with his help.

But first thing's first: baby steps.

"Rina ... that's my name ... **Mr** Wolf'?"

He snickered as she returned the sentiment, both of their frames now relaxing as the soft breeze pressed up against his bare abdomen, tags coolly brushing his pectorals.

"Cynfall."

She giggled playfully, causing his head to tilt once more as his cheeks became flushed. "What's wrong? There something wrong with my name?"

Rina stroked pieces of rogue hair from her face, still stifling a laugh as the embrace endured. "Oh no! nothing wrong with it, it's just ... you know - all that just happened."

Cynfall hummed and returned the laugh, knowing that about fifty steps in the normal process of "relationships" had been blown away ... not that he was disappointed, it tended to make things far easier ... or destructively worse.

"Oh! Well ... the good news is that it can't get any more awkward from now on, right?"

Rina's face beamed as they laughed together, the sun's rays starting to envelop the foliage as the night that had so changed their lives passed into blissful memory. This was something she truly wanted.

"You may be right ..."

The callous snickers from the brush some meters away escaped their notice, just as she'd intended. This was almost too good to be true ... though it still caused a deep wound in her pride all the same. Perhaps it was all just meant to be, and serve as her vehicle toward a greater calling she'd longed to ensnare.

"You fools ..."

Shuffling brush stirred against her flank, a darkened lycan of familiar breed poking his nose out of the underbrush and eyeing the nearby coupling with eagerness.

"So, is this the wolf you were looking for? They are unaware of our scent, if you're gonna strike it must be now-"

Mai's gaze didn't avert from the jarring scene beyond, her half transformed state broiling within - though seemingly being content as a cup of water to all others. How could a single rogue half-breed force so much into play. She had been pushing Rina for weeks to embrace the howl within ... to let the beast be free ... but not like this, not at the expense of damaging her standing within the Alpha's eyes.

“Oh, I will strike alright, but now things have become more **personal** than I initially anticipated.”

She could feel the rage within, the bloodlust, the calling for slaughter. She loved Rina and only wanted her to experience a life worth living ... a life beyond that of simple humans and sheep. Surely she could understand that it was all for her benefit, everything that was to come was to make her truly see.

“Who would’ve thought a mutt like him would spice things up with my **sister** of all bitches around, the nerve ...”

As for that russet mongrel, she had a special surprise in store for him, one that would show Rina once and for all what being a member of the pack was truly about - and show the Alpha that her loyalty was absolute. Perhaps everything from this past evening was meant to be, and she’d roll with the punches.

“Oh, Rina ...”

The couple continued to laugh, not caring in the slightest about the dangers around them, nor being wise enough to avoid them. Something within Mai stirred, a feeling that was gone as fast as it was introduced. No, fools will always be blind ... only the strong can know this. Their weakness had led her straight to them, and now the game was over.

“You haven’t realized, but your scent has changed ... and with that, you’ve just sealed your destiny in these woods. As a woman and as a wolf.”

The time had finally come, to give Rina the push she’d put off for too long. The mutt may have started it, but Mai was sure as hell going to finish it ... in the only way that was proper.

“Embracing your true nature is just one howl away, and when that happens,” She stepped out from the brush, a dozen lycans and ferals of various sizes accompanying her, wind whipping the leaves as the bird were abruptly silenced, “You’ll see the world as a true predator.”

Cynfall’s eyes widened, fear gripping his heart as he gripped Rina’s wrist in alarm, causing her once fun and relaxed state to collapse. He was cornered, the trap had been sprung.

Mai’s wicked talons brushed against her hair, not even needing to verbally state her desires as the pack moved in, dark pelts enveloping them like a prowling tide.

Howls and gasps were all he heard as everything went dark and the promise of what could have been slipped away into the darkness of thought. The hunt was truly over. She smirked as the sensations of victory surged forth before meeting Rina’s shocked gaze.

“As a real **werewolf**. And only then, I’ll welcome you sister.”

End - The Gift Chronicles: The Hunt

A/N: I was inspired to write this over a few days last year, and in the end, it was decided that this would be a fun piece to help grow the world around some of the characters that many have come to enjoy. I'd like to extend my thanks to my friend LoboLeo for allowing me to work with the characters and potentially expand this story in a way that would be fun for everyone, as it can only lead to more of the werewolf shenanigans that we all know and love. None of this would have happened if he hadn't decided to resume the project and also suggested that we include Cynfall as the opposite for Rina. I'd also like to thank Roshea and Anayu for edits and suggestions.

Also, in terms of chronological order, there is another story that does take place before this one, which tells just how Cynfall arrived in the Hollows and how he gets in trouble to begin with, unfortunately this project will take more time to come out, but I look forward to seeing it through as well to help give more backstory and motivations for Cynfall's character.

Needless to say, this isn't the end of the story for these characters, and I can only hope we get the chance to expand upon the world and watch as two sisters become embroiled in a deep struggle for what is right and wrong within their respective views of the world. Who is the Alpha? What is to become of Rina and Cynfall? What might Mai want so desperately? What more is there to the Hollows? All questions for another time. I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it! Until next time.

-Cynfall

Disclaimer: I do not own the characters of Rina and Mai nor the setting in which this story takes place, this belongs to LoboLeo

My characters: Cynfall, Conrad, Gage, Alice



LEO
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