

“Cold Blooded”

By Lauren Rivers

Thick clouds covered the sky with a dense layer of moisture that blocked out the majority of the late evening sun. The atmosphere felt muggy and somewhat unpleasant making most hurry along with their business. The day was coming to a close but for some it had barely gotten started.

In a fire escape dozens of stories off the ground a lone dark haired woman sat cross-legged with her camera trained on the luxury apartment building across the street. She had been sitting there for hours and had started to develop a cramp in her leg. With the humid air she had started to reconsider her choice of profession. A private detective, Logan Ellison was no stranger to being in odd places to find the answers she sought. She'd been in weirder places than this before. Tonight she was keeping an eye on a wealthy socialite named Elizabeth Walters.

The woman was allegedly getting friendly with a handsome mysterious man that had begun paying her regular visits every few evenings. Her husband, who was often away on business, had started to suspect something was going on between his wife and the stranger. He had come to her because he wanted someone that was discrete. To Logan this meant he didn't want anyone either he or his wife nor any of their friends would know. She supposed it applied seeing as her client base generally wasn't this high profile. He had tasked her to return with evidence of whatever was going on there, innocent or not. Logan had a reputation for getting the job done so he'd agreed to pay her half up front for whatever she found. That meeting had lasted ten minutes.

She had spent several hours watching the apartment in the hopes that the mysterious man would appear. For the first four days she saw a lot of nothing. Elizabeth Walters apparently spent most of her evenings home alone on the telephone with one of her friends. From time to time she would go out with a few of them and Logan would hurry to keep up with their evening activities. More than once the ladies had slipped into a place she just couldn't follow either due to her need to stay out of sight or when they traveled to someplace she'd have difficulty getting access to without looking suspicious.

Tonight was a different story. Mrs. Walters had started a fire and sat on the couch having a conversation with one of her friends. Logan perked up as she watched her target react to a sound she could not hear and hang up the phone. The wealthy socialite walked to the door and opened it, letting in a man dressed in a finely tailored suit. He took a few steps inside and embraced her. Logan took several shots with her camera, being certain to capture everything she could as her digital witness. She wiped some moisture off her skin with a hand and cursed the weather as she took a moment to clean her camera's lens with a cloth she pulled from her pocket.

When she returned the camera to her target's apartment she looked through the zoomed in viewfinder to see that Elizabeth Walters was looking away from the handsome man while she fixed them drinks. The man spoke to her and made a gesture, and it was at that moment she noticed that her visitor accepted the beverage but did not drink it. Instead he set it down and continued to make conversation.

While the activities going on seemed rather banal in nature Logan couldn't help but wonder if there was some significance to the fact that he wasn't interested in the drink. He traced his hand across her back as he smiled warmly in her direction. Such behavior didn't indicate that there was an affair going on but it didn't exactly imply that all was well either. In either event she needed to observe more than just a handful of coy exchanges. She needed something incontrovertible.

He set the glass down on the nearby table. Their body language suggested both were continuing to make conversation. She seemed to be nursing her wine a bit at a time though she didn't seem all that interested in it either. It reminded her a little bit of two people that didn't really trust each other but they weren't willing to call the other person out either.

She wondered if maybe this wasn't an affair after all. More than once these sorts of things had turned out to be wives surprising husbands with a party or something along those lines. Logan tended to doubt that since neither of them seemed all that excited to be in the same room, but then she had no idea why he would be there. In her initial homework she had turned up little on this man other than the fact that he seemed to be rather well connected and independently wealthy.

The woman set her drink down and put her hand on her hip. She asked a question and the man stopped mid expression to look at her. He jumped to his feet but did not move from where he stood. Elizabeth Walters turned around and removed a file folder from a cabinet and placed it on the table. They contained photographs, but of what Logan could not tell.

Logan felt her stomach grumble. For a moment she had forgotten that she had failed to eat before she had arrived for the stakeout. Sometimes she remembered to bring a granola bar to hold her over but tonight she was just going to have to make do without anything to eat until she got home. She returned her camera's view to the apartment.

Mrs. Walters had turned away from the man and walked towards the telephone. He made a gesture to indicate she should drop it. Logan started snapping additional pictures every few seconds as quickly as her flash would recharge. Something was happening, but it wasn't what she thought. The man's hands enlarged and grew thick fur on each of them. He seemed to bulk up with every step he took towards her. So far she hadn't noticed, but Logan would not be able to warn her even if she called out. There was no way the socialite would hear her across a busy city street in the evening.

His suit strained to contain him. A tail slipped free of his pants. His gait altered slightly when his feet stretched and contorted, bursting free of his shoes and raising the already tall man a few inches higher. He grabbed her wrist with a muscular paw and squeezed, forcing her to drop the receiver and cry out in pain. She turned to face him and her face went white with horror. His appearance was no longer human. A muzzle had started to grow out leaving him halfway between features of human and wolf. Ears had migrated north on his head almost making him look like a beast.

Logan shook her head. It couldn't be. There weren't such things as werewolves. That was just ridiculous. As hard as she attempted to tell herself otherwise, she was seeing the transformation before her eyes. She looked at the last image she had taken. It showed the man, now werewolf, having ripped the woman's throat out and leaving her bloodied body on the floor of her luxury apartment. He grabbed the file she had presented to him and thrown it in the nearby fireplace. She lowered her camera still not believing what she had just seen.

Before she could decide what to do next, her phone rang. Her head jerked up just in time to see the wolf staring right at her. "No way. He couldn't have heard that," she said, right before he took a running start towards the windows and pushed it free with the force of his momentum. He leapt across the distance between them and grabbed onto the railing of the fire escape several floors below her.

“Shit!” She fumbled for her revolver but the humid air had made her hands sweaty. If she’d expected trouble she’d have worn her holster, but with the humidity of the past few days it was incredibly uncomfortable. She’d decided to leave it home and now she might pay for it with her life. She grasped it in her hand and pulled it free trying to get a bead on where the werewolf had gone. Logan leaned over the edge just in time for him to look up at her. Within seconds he’d leapfrogged up to her floor. The vibration from his weight on the railing dropped her on her ass. She heard the clatter of her gun drop down and away from her. “Damn it!” She screamed as the wolf grabbed at her.

Logan scrambled to her feet and hurried up the stairs, skipping as many as she could in her desperate bid to escape. The werewolf was not far behind, as he climbed onto the fire escape scaling the steps like they were nothing. She had no idea how she’d managed to get to the roof so fast. Her feet hit the roof and she heard a clatter as she turned to see her camera slide off to one side. She turned to get it seconds before the werewolf landed on the roof and growled with a fury that indicated she was going to die for what she’d seen. She glanced at the camera for half a second before she realized there was no way she’d be able to fight something that large.

She bolted in the opposite direction, feeling a sharp pain on her ankle as she fell onto the wet roof. Logan kicked hard as the beast tugged on her pants and long ebony hair. A kick to his chest forced him to shift his position and she felt a pressure on her arm when she threw her elbow back. He jerked backwards as she rolled out from under his massive weight and sprinted to the doorway.

With all her weight she slammed it closed and locked it. There wasn’t time to see if it would hold. She dropped down the stairwell to the floor below her and dashed out towards the elevator. With two fingers she pressed the buttons as hard as she could. The doors took an eternity but as soon as they opened she hurried inside.

Grateful for an empty car she pushed the button for the lobby. Logan reached for her phone only to realize it was not there. She cursed, as it must have fallen out during the struggle along with her camera and gun. ‘*Great going, Logan,*’ she thought, irritated. This had gone from a good night to a total crap fest in less than ten minutes. She exited into a crowded lobby and kept her head down, trying not to look at anybody. They all stared at her like she was some kind of freak, and she wondered if any one of them could be a werewolf.

Her chest tightened as she realized that if werewolves were real, it could be anyone and you’d never know it until it was too late. She thought of Elizabeth Walters, and wondered what her last thoughts were when she’d seen the face of her killer. Logan exited the building and slipped into her car. At least she hadn’t lost her keys.

She started the car and reached for the gearshift only then noticing the dark red stain on her left arm. She was bleeding, and rather badly. She pulled her sleeve back in time to realize it was a bite mark. Not just any bit mark, but a bite mark from a rather huge werewolf. “Well, shit.”

Police sirens started to get closer, and she pulled away just in time to see the red and blue lights in her rearview mirror. “This can’t get any worse,” she said to herself.

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Detective Patrick Dunn knew it was going to be one of those nights the moment he'd gotten a call right before he was about to go off shift. His captain had asked him to look into the case since at the moment they were a little short handed. As such, he had drawn the short straw. He'd arrived at the posh apartment building where everyone had suits and ties and the ladies had clothes that cost the price of a small car. He found the opulence of the lobby to be a bit overwhelming and knew if it wasn't for the murder, he wouldn't even be allowed past the front doors.

This building belonged entirely to the upper crust of society. One didn't come in here unless one's annual salary was six figures at minimum. Patrick approached the doorman, who motioned him towards the elevators. One was already waiting with a few other police personnel so he entered without comment. The ride up to Mrs. Walter's apartment was mostly silent as no one really was in the mood to be at a crime scene at this late hour but it was the breaks if you caught the call before the next shift came on duty.

When the doors opened the hallway seemed as opulent as the lobby. The carpet was spotless and the ceiling lined with crystal chandeliers. As he considered his small apartment downtown Detective Dunn considered that perhaps he had chosen the wrong career. He followed the trail of police personnel until he found his way to the crime scene. The woman who owned the lavish apartment with her husband was dead on the floor. Blood stained the otherwise perfect carpet in a wide pool around her body. Trails of it lined the area nearby suggesting that her death had been sudden and violent. She had no defensive wounds implying that the woman had not had time to react to whatever had killed her.

"What have we got, Chadwick?" he asked.

Officer Chadwick, an experienced officer with short brown hair and an incredible poker face, looked over the scene with practiced composure. "Put simply, a murder. We got a call about twenty minutes ago and we hurried down here as soon as we could get to the scene. We entered through the main entrance to find one Elizabeth Walters as you see her here. The scene's been photographed and we've been searching the apartment but we haven't found much in the way of evidence. Now, based on the violence of the death and the two glasses we know this wasn't a suicide. We haven't found any shell casings or anything to explain the missing window. There's nothing on the street level to explain what caused the glass to drop out and shatter, and it would take some serious force to knock that out of its holdings."

"Was anyone hurt down below?" he asked.

"No, sir, that's the lucky part. Sadly, given that this occurred on the twenty fourth floor at night in a rather posh apartment building there weren't any witnesses. We've been reviewing the footage from the lobby to see if there's anyone of interest but that could take a while before we have anything worth investigating."

"I see," Detective Dunn said. "Do you know who her guest was?"

"Not yet, more than a few people came in but you know how these folks prefer their privacy so they don't have a logbook for guests, only for deliveries. Nevertheless, he'll show up on the lobby security footage, then we just have to see who came and went and when. Whomever it is had to walk in and out the front door."

"Good work," Patrick said.

"Do you want to hear my theory, sir?" he asked.

Detective Dunn shrugged at the man. "All right, what do you think happened?" he asked.

"I think that her guest came in, they poured some drinks, and then the two of them started to get a little too friendly with each other. He wanted more, she declined, and he went into a rage and killed her," he said. "She probably had second thoughts about cheating on her husband."

Detective Dunn knew that the officer was only trying to be helpful, but there was something about his narrative that just didn't add up. If it was simply an affair gone badly, there should have been a lot more wounds on her body. Typically crimes of passion tended to go hand in hand with overkill. This was a single violent attack that was over in seconds. She wasn't moved from where she died nor was she even partially undressed. Whatever happened was over before the woman even had a chance to raise her arms. Given the amount of flesh that was damaged in the gaping wound in her neck it couldn't have been anything short of an immediate mortal wound. Had there been more than one strike there would be much more blood patterns on the area around her. As little sense as it made, she was killed by a single strike across the neck in less than a second.

"Officer, did you find a murder weapon?" he asked.

"No, sir, we've searched the place pretty well and there's no indication of anything with any blood on it other than the carpet and Miss Walters here. I suspect the killer took the murder weapon with him." Officer Chadwick was probably right about that, but what could cause so much damage to a human throat?

Patrick waved him off and continued to examine the area. He noticed several round drops of blood by her body that led to a trail of oval shaped drops pointing away from the window suggesting that the killer stopped right where the window had been. It was possible that after he'd broken it he'd shoved the murder weapon in his pocket or something similar to prevent the additional spread of blood evidence but then that still didn't explain the window. He found it to be one of many things at this crime scene that didn't make any sense. He looked into Mrs. Walters's eyes and saw only one thing. Terror. She'd died seeing her killer coming but not fast enough to fight back. What kind of person could take a human life so fast with such force?

"Make sure you collect everything you can, Chadwick. Something doesn't feel right about this." Patrick knew that murder was never right, but the picture had to make sense. Right now there were too many missing pieces to explain what happened.

"It's a hell of a way to die," Chadwick said.

"One thing's for sure, whoever did this is damned cold blooded." He leaned down as he noticed something he had not seen earlier. It was a piece of a shoe. "What's all this, Chadwick?"

"Oh yeah, the remains of a man's clothes were found here and there. Not all of it, but parts of what looks like a shirt, pants, a nice jacket, and some shoe fragments. It's almost like the guy tore out of his own clothes. He must've had a spare, since no one reported seeing a naked guy running away. I guess he did it to ditch the bloody clothes he was wearing." Chadwick returned to his duties.

Detective Dunn considered for a moment the possibility that the killer cleaned up what evidence he could before he left, but why leave the rest of the clothes fragments? For that matter, why would a killer even shred his clothes at all if he were just going to

take some of them with him anyway? He turned his attention to the fire. "Was that going when you got here?"

"I think so," Chadwick said. "Why?"

"Put it out and collect all of the ashes. I don't know if there's anything of value in there, but I doubt our killer took his bloody clothes with him when he left." Detective Dunn knew that most of the evidence in the fire would be badly damaged by now, but there was no sense in not checking in case something survived.

"Will do," he said. Chadwick reacted as his radio beeped, and he listened to it carefully. "Detective, there's a guy downstairs that wants to talk to you. He says it's urgent."

"Can it wait?" he asked.

"He says it can't," Chadwick responded. "He says he's got information on the case."

"All right, I'll talk to him." He left the crime scene to the evidence collection team and rode the fancy elevator back down to the lobby. When the doors opened and he stepped out he locked eyes with a man that seemed to be arguing with the desk clerk.

"About damn time," he said. "You the man in charge?" he asked.

"I'm Detective Patrick Dunn of the Baltimore Police Department. My officer upstairs told me you had some information for me." Detective Dunn looked the man over. He seemed to dress mostly in black with what looked like body armor and a number of weapons on his person. He had dark hair and the look of a man who had been up all night. He could sympathize with that part.

"My name is Kane Michaels. I tried to get up there to get a look at the crime scene but Snooty McMoneybags wouldn't let me up," he said, indicating the desk clerk who scoffed in a derisive expression.

"It's an active crime scene, my officers wouldn't have let you in anyway. Now do you have information to share, or don't you?" he asked.

Kane considered the detective for a long moment until he finally sighed in surrender. It was obvious he would not get up there without at least the cooperation of the police so he had no choice but to tell Detective Dunn what he knew. "Fine. I may have an idea on the identity of your killer."

"What makes you think anyone's been killed?" he asked, knowing that no one other than the team upstairs knew what had happened.

"Oh, please, detective, don't play games with me. This many cars and uniforms wouldn't be here for anything less than a murder. Now before I tell you what I know I need you to tell me what you saw when you arrived." Kane locked eyes with him.

Detective Dunn had come across people like this before. Crime scenes attracted weirdos that wanted their fifteen minutes of fame or something along those lines. He probably didn't know anything and was simply guessing in order to make himself seem important. Maybe he wanted his name in the paper. In any event, he didn't have time for this. "I've got a crime scene to deal with, so if you want to tell me anything else you can share it with that officer over there." He whirled on his feet and started to walk towards the elevator.

"The throat was torn out in a single strike, wasn't it?" Kane asked.

The statement caused Detective Dunn to freeze. No one could know that unless they were in that apartment. This man either knew the killer, or he was the killer. He

didn't look like the type that would make his way into a posh apartment building like this but then again, he didn't look like the kind that always asked for permission either. He turned around again. "How the hell do you know that?"

"Am I right?"

Detective Dunn hesitated. He pulled the man aside, away from earshot of anyone else in the lobby. "Assuming you were, what can you tell me about the man that killed my vic?"

Kane smirked and relaxed a bit. He leaned in a few inches. "I can tell you that you won't find him without my help."

"What, exactly, makes your expert opinion so valuable?" he asked.

Kane held up a hand. "Not my opinion, detective, my expertise. I've got more experience with this guy and beings like him than anyone else in this city."

Detective Dunn raised an eyebrow. "Beings like what?"

"Werewolves." He didn't even skip a beat. "Don't look at me like that."

"Like what?" he asked.

"Like I'm crazy. I'm not. I've been hunting these things since I was a teenager. I know how they think and what they'll do. This particular subject I've been chasing for a while. I don't know his identity but I know his marks. He takes out his victims with one single strike to the throat, not to feed, but to kill. He doesn't care about covering his tracks because usually there isn't enough left to follow up on. There are no witnesses, no weapon, and no suspects." All Detective Dunn could tell about Kane was that as insane as his story sounded he believed every word of it. He could tell by the way he spoke. He'd have to deal with this man with finesse. "Everywhere he goes he leaves a trail of bodies in his wake."

Detective Dunn decided to humor him a little. "Let's say for the sake of argument that you're telling the truth. Why haven't we seen them before?"

"Would you have been thinking werewolves when you came into the apartment?" he asked.

"No," Detective Dunn admitted.

"Most people don't want to believe in were creatures. They think they're myths created for monster movies and to sell Halloween costumes. They'd prefer to look anywhere else for an explanation because acknowledging werewolves is a bit too much for their mundane brains to comprehend. They think that they've got the whole world figured out but they don't even know what's beneath the surface." He turned away from the detective for a moment, looking over his shoulder. "There are things that go bump in the night, detective. Things that would cause you to wake up every night screaming."

Detective Dunn considered the man before him. It was beyond doubtful that the man was telling the truth but it was an equally unlikely coincidence that he would know how the murder was done at just a guess. He decided to test him. "Prove it to me."

"What?" he asked.

"Prove to me that my killer is a werewolf." Detective Dunn folded his arms expectantly.

Kane threw up his arms in frustration. "What exactly do you expect me to do, detective? Point him out to you? Whip out a handy chart that shows exactly how he likes to dispatch his victims? I can't do the job remote, I need to see the scene to tell you anything useful. Your men won't know what to look for."

“My men have got years of experience in processing crime scenes, Mister Kane.” Detective Dunn glanced over at one of the officers as he considered having the man escorted from the building. He had better things to do than indulge him in his fantasy.

“They might know how to catch a human killer but they won’t know how to interpret a werewolf crime scene.” He shook his head. “The things you see might not be so obvious if you’re looking for just a man.”

Detective Dunn shook his head. “I don’t have time for this. If you can prove what you’re saying, you do it now; right here, or I walk away from this conversation. If you’re telling the truth then you should have no problem.”

Kane rolled his eyes. “I’m used to such willful ignorance from the masses, but I’d expected more from you, detective. I thought you’d at least keep an open mind.”

“Get him out of here!” Detective Dunn shouted.

“You’re going to regret declining my help, detective. We could’ve stopped this before it gets much worse,” he said as the officers took him from the lobby.

Detective Dunn watched them drag the man away for a few moments. He was about to return his attention to the matter at hand when he paused to see someone standing on the opposite side of the street watching the whole scene with their hands in their pockets. They seemed curious about what was going on but they did not cross the street to get closer. He was about to walk across to speak to the individual when as sudden as they appeared they were gone.

Patrick looked down one side of the street and then the other. How in the world could someone just disappear like that? He scanned the area to be certain that Kane Michaels had departed before he moved to watch them remove the body from the scene and place it in a vehicle for transport. Even though the body was covered he could not stop seeing the scene of her grisly death. Her throat had been ravaged by something several inches wide enough to tear the flesh apart.

As he considered the sort of strength required to do that with a single blow, even with the perfect weapon he found it hard to believe. Regardless, there was a rational explanation. There was no such thing as werewolves. Whatever it was, he would find it. It would just take time. He sighed as he spotted Chadwick, who waved him over to the security office.

“Please tell me you have something,” Detective Dunn said.

“There’s some good news and some bad news. The good news is we know approximately when it happened,” Chadwick said.

Detective Dunn felt his chest tighten. “What’s the bad news?”

“The bad news is the cameras went down for approximately ten minutes right around our estimated victim’s time of death. Whoever did this had a ten minute window to kill our victim and walk out the front door without ever being caught on camera.”

Chadwick exhaled audibly.

Detective Dunn sighed to himself. He regretted doing it but it seemed unlikely he would be able to keep his date tonight. He pulled out his cell phone and left a message before returning up to the apartment to complete his report.

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Blood had started to soak the sleeve of her jacket and drip onto her pants. She kept pressure on the wound with one hand, but it made driving difficult. She pulled in front of a small apartment building and got out of the car. Logan kicked the door closed with her foot and walked into the lobby keeping her arm hidden in her coat. At this time of night the lobby was abandoned save for the night clerk who was engrossed in a magazine.

Logan pushed the button and waited for what seemed like an eternity for the elevator to arrive. When the doors slid open she was grateful there was no one inside. She pressed the button for the sixth floor and counted off the beeps as the car lifted upwards. When it dinged and the doors slid open she read the signs to find the right apartment. Her head was starting to feel a little light and she was finding it hard to concentrate. When she made it to the right door she knocked once and waited.

A moment later, a shy auburn haired woman answered the door. "Logan?"

"Abby, I need help ." Logan showed her the bloody sleeve.

"Oh shit, you should've gone to the hospital!" Abby pulled her inside the apartment. It was dark and took Logan's eyes some time to adjust. No doubt her eyesight was hindered a bit by the loss of blood. She recognized a figure in the chair in front of the television. It was Russell Hart, Abby's 'boyfriend'. By all estimation he was a thoroughly unpleasant man that had just rubbed Logan the wrong way every time she'd met him. Once or twice she'd tried to talk Abby into dating other guys, but she said she loved him. Maybe he wasn't as bad to her but Logan just felt the hair on the back of her neck go up when he spoke.

"Abby, what the hell is this?" he asked. "I'm trying to watch the races. Can't your friend bleed all over someone else's floor?"

Abby set Logan against the sink where the blood dripped harmlessly into it. "We'll be quiet, I promise. She won't stay long, she just needs some treatment fast or she'll pass out."

"Okay, but be quiet about it. I have four grand on this race." He turned away from her as if there was nothing else to say. Abby took some paper towels from the roll and put it under Logan's arm to catch the blood as she moved her to the bathroom, where she shut the door.

"He's all heart." Logan's ebony hair fell over her shoulder as the woman shot the door a derisive look. "Are you sure he's right for you?"

Abby ignored the question. "Right now we're worrying about you. Let me treat your wound. Take off your jacket." The woman fetched several rolls of bandages and medical tape from the cabinet and placed Logan's arm in the sink. Cold water washed away the blood that had already started to slow by the time Abby dabbed disinfectant over the site of the bites. "You really should have gone to a real treatment center."

"Didn't have time. Your place was the closest I could think of to get help." Logan looked away from her.

"You were doing something you shouldn't have, weren't you?" Abby asked.

Logan shook her head. "I was doing my job. Some shit just happened and the police almost got in the way." She wasn't certain whether to tell her friend about the source of the bites, but she somewhat hoped she wouldn't ask. Logan noticed that the bathroom was full of all sorts of medical supplies, especially things to treat cuts, bruises, and abrasions. She looked at Abby while the nurse treated her wounds but she did not

notice anything unusual. Logan held up a hand to forestall any questions. "It wasn't because of me, it was because of something else. I just didn't want to answer any questions. I don't know if I'd be able to provide some of them given that I was taking pictures of what became a murder scene."

"Do I want to know?" she asked.

"No, you don't," Logan responded. She watched Abby wrap the bandages around her forearm until she'd pretty much covered the elbow to the wrist with the white gauze. Once it was sufficiently encapsulated around her arm the nurse taped up the right spots to keep it in place before stepping back to admire her work. "How am I doc?"

"You're clearly flat lining. I'm calling it," Abby said. "What do you want me to say, Logan? You're as fine as you're going to be though I'd get some alcohol and bandages for your place for a few days. Just change the dressing every so often and keep it clean. Make sure you keep up with it or you'll have a lot more to worry about than a bloody arm." She handed her friend the bloodied jacket.

Logan stood and embraced her friend. "Thank you, Abby."

"No problem, I wish I could help you more often." Abby opened the bathroom door carefully as if she was doing her level best to avoid generating any noise. The process took ten seconds longer than it would have to simply open the door. Logan was beginning to wonder about Russell more and more. She had threatened to intervene more than once, which had often gotten a pleading Abby in between them to try and avoid Logan punching him across the face.

Logan walked across the carpet in slow deliberate steps mirroring Abby's own movements. When the race went to a commercial Russell muted the television and turned around. "I was just leaving."

"You're damn right you are. My apartment is not the f#\$king emergency room. I don't want random people coming in at all hours of the day thinking they can just waltz in and bleed all over my floor." Russell pointed a finger at Logan less than two inches away from her chest.

"I'm sorry my life threatening injury was an inconvenience for you." Logan spat the sentence out laced with sarcasm but if he noticed it he chose to ignore it.

"Next time get your treatment somewhere else. This is my place and I expect to be left alone with my girlfriend unless I say otherwise. Do we understand each other?" he asked.

Logan was about to mutter some profane statements towards him when she caught a glance at Abby. She was looking down at her feet and pleading with her eyes for Logan to refrain from causing a scene. "Yeah. We do." She headed for the door and opened it with her non-bandaged arm. The race came back on and captured Russell's attention while Abby joined her in the hallway for a moment. "What an asshole."

"He's not that bad, he just had a bad day today. It's nothing." Abby gave Logan another hug.

Logan tended to doubt Abby's statement but before she could protest the door closed without a sound and Abby was gone. She touched the door with her hand and sighed. At least when Logan dealt with monsters they came at you out in the open. She just hoped that somewhere inside Russell was a decent man. The private detective waited in the hall for another few minutes listening for sounds of anything other than the race and eventually left to return to her car.

The drive back to her office was mostly uneventful. Since she could now use both hands to steer she spent the time replaying the incident at the stakeout in her mind. People didn't just change into animals before your eyes. That only happened in the movies. There had to be some sort of rational explanation other than what it seemed to be. Logan searched for anything that would explain what had happened. She remembered watching the woman pour a drink and offer it to the man. She showed him a folder.

The folder had been burned before the police arrived so no one other than the late Elizabeth Walters and the mystery man knew what it contained. She hadn't had time to react but with the speed at which the police arrived she must have been the one that called the authorities. Perhaps her gentleman caller was not a lover but someone she had caught in illegal activities and wanted to show him first hand what she'd found. When he saw what she had on him he was nonplussed to say the least. He chose to take her out and destroy the evidence.

Most likely she had not anticipated her death. She had thought that he would simply wait for the police, or if she did have a gun to hold him at bay, she had not anticipated how fast he would be able to kill her. The speed at which he'd torn out her throat was quicker than it would have taken for her to fumble for a gun in a drawer. Logan knew that the wolf thing moved faster than anything she'd ever seen. She still couldn't believe her eyes. One minute a man was there, another a large wolf right in her face. As hard as she tried to remember, she could not recall that moment after the woman's death. Maybe she had struck her head against the building when she fell back. The entire experience was a blur.

As she pulled up she saw a rather fancy car parked out front. She knew it belonged to her client. She cursed. This was not what she needed right now. Logan pulled up to her usual spot and climbed out of her car. Grabbing another jacket free of blood from the backseat, she locked the door behind her. "Mister Walters."

"Miss Ellison. I do hope you have something for me. I just received a rather urgent call from the police insisting I come down to our apartment right away, and do you know what they told me?" he asked.

"Your wife has been murdered." Logan remembered that much for certain.

"What the hell happened? You were supposed to keep an eye on her."

Bodyguards flanked the man on both sides. The entourage followed her into the building and towards the elevator bank.

Logan held up her hand. "I was hired to watch her for infidelity. It wasn't exactly a plan to see her get murdered."

"So you did see who did it?" he asked.

"I got a glimpse, I guess." Logan felt into her pockets for her keys to her office. She entered the elevator with the three men and pushed the button to ride it up to the seventh floor, where her office was located.

Mister Walters did not appear to be satisfied with her answer. "A glimpse?" he asked with incredulity. "You didn't get a photo?"

Logan froze at the memory of her camera dropping somewhere along with her phone and gun. "I lost the camera."

"What?" he asked. "I was under the impression that you were a skilled investigator, Miss Ellison. I have just spent the last hour being grilled by the police on

questions I didn't have answers to. I was counting on you to fill in the gaps and you don't even have an image of the man that murdered my wife?"

"It's complicated." Logan did not know how to explain what she saw nor did she think the man would believe her explanation for how she got her injuries to her left arm. Even she herself was fuzzy on the details the further away she got from the incident. She knew she had to tell him something. "I was watching them when the man came in. He talked to her and they had a drink. Your wife drank from her glass but the visitor didn't drink anything. He just set it down and listened to her talk for a few minutes. I don't know what they said." Logan exited first as the elevator doors let them out. She unlocked her office door and entered the small room. "She had a folder with some photos and other things inside. I couldn't tell what they were. When the man saw what she had he got quiet and didn't say anything. I didn't know it at the time but I think she went to call the police and he killed her."

"How?" Mister Walters asked.

"I don't know." Logan flashed to a memory of the wolf snarling into her face. "I don't remember."

"How can you not remember?" he asked.

"I hit my head, I think. I just got out of there as fast as I could. He saw me and maybe he had a gun, I don't remember." It was the best explanation she was going to be able to give him. She dared not mention the creature she'd seen as she was certain it was just a result of her head injury and whatever panic she had succumbed to when she dropped her gun.

Mister Walters exhaled in irritation. "This was a profound waste of my time, Miss Ellison. You can keep what you've already been paid but you can forget the rest of your fee. I've got more important problems to deal with, like burying my wife. Your employment with me is terminated." He turned on his heel and stalked his way out of her office.

Logan found her way to her office chair and settled into it with a sigh. Her head looked up at the ceiling for a moment. She drew her head down at the calendar and noticed the small image of a full moon on the paper. Tonight was supposed to be the first night where there'd be a bright moon in the sky. She pulled the shades on her office building and looked outside at the glowing white orb in the sky.

She was about to return her attention to the client she'd just lost but her eyes remained fixated on the view of the moon in the night sky. It was rather beautiful, almost like a jewel in a sea of darkness. She'd never really been one for astronomy. Growing up in the city you really tended to not notice things like the constellations when you had so many things going on at any given night.

Logan smirked to herself in an attempt to break her fascination with the moon, but she found herself unable to do so. The more she tried to close her eyes or think of anything other than how beautiful the moon was, the harder it was to turn away. When she ran her tongue over her teeth she felt a sharp prick and the taste of blood. The pain brought her to her senses for a moment, and she looked down at her hands to see her nails sharpen into deadly claws. "Oh shit."

Her heartbeat sped up to a rapid staccato while her mind attempted to process what she was seeing. It wasn't real, it couldn't be. She had just had a long day and she was tired. Heaving breaths stretched every moment into an eternity. Logan cursed and

jumped to her feet. “This is crazy, this is not happening.” She paced in her office and reached for her cell phone only to find the pocket empty. Recalling the sounds of items dropping to the roof as she hurried away from the wolf creature she felt a sinking feeling in her gut. Her phone and her camera were left behind on that rooftop. At the realization that she had left key items behind she momentarily forgot the desire to get aid and started thinking of where they had fallen. If the police found her revolver or thought to check the roof across the street it was possible they might find a trace to her. Though they found no bullet holes in the apartment the missing window would defy any sort of explanation.

Logan cursed as she now had two problems that she would need to solve. Ebony fur grew over her hands while rough paw pads formed on each finger and the palm of her hands resembling a lupine paw print. Modified for a humanoid form she could recognize the shape. At the tingling sensation on her stomach she lifted her shirt to see the same fur growing there as well as along her arms and legs. Logan pulled up her pant leg to watch the fur spread further and further in both directions.

She ran to the bathroom to get a look at her present state. The mirror reflected her face stretched out as if it were some sort of funhouse mirror. While she attempted to speak she found it hard to form words in this intermediate state. A growl escaped her throat at the formation of a lithe tail that wove its way out of her pants and waved freely as if it had always been there.

Logan felt bones crack and reshape as her stance changed, forcing her to grab onto both sides of the sink. She felt like her body was on fire, being reshaped to some powerful will that was not her own. Her feet elongated and changed to be digitigrade, giving her several extra inches in height. Already a tall woman, she looked again to the mirror to see a wolf like face staring back at her.

“You’ve got to be shitting me.” She stared in disbelief at the face that moments ago had been her own, as black fur washed over her like a wave and left her as a humanoid wolf. Her ears, now on the top of her head, twitched in response to her surprise. She felt them swivel on top of her head, catching every sound as if her ears were radar dishes.

Logan looked at her paws surprised by the deadly appearance they provided. She looked at her reflection in the mirror and opened her muzzle to watch the reflection do the same. Amused, she made a fake growl and held her claws up as if she were about to attack herself. *‘At least I’m scary,’* she thought. *‘I still feel like myself. Aren’t I supposed to want to kill things now?’*

Still having a hard time accepting what she had just felt and seen Logan took comfort in the fact that it had at least for the time being had stopped. It led credence to the whole lycanthropy thing being real though what did this mean to her? Werewolves in the movies were always depicted as predatory killing machines.

‘Well, I don’t feel like killing anyone, but I am a little hungry,’ she thought. Logan took a few test steps on her new feet and found them to be somewhat wobbly at first. “Guess I’ll have to get used to this, remember, it’s like walking in high heels. Figures, I’ve never worn heels once since I was sixteen.” She closed her eyes for a moment and pretended she was wearing the fancy shoes. After taking a few test steps she grew more confident and started to take a few more. “All right, that’s one thing down.”

She walked to the kitchenette in her office and pulled open the fridge. The empty vessel was greeted with an unhappy growl from her stomach. “Ugh, got to remember to keep some meat here or something.” She sniffed the air and found her olfactory senses overwhelmed with an array of smells. “Ugh, shit!” She covered her nose with both hands and backed away from the fridge. “Guess I should clean that damn thing more often. Smells like bacon and hot dogs and a few things I can’t even identify.” After a few more sniffs she recognized Mister Walter’s cologne and the two men that had been there with him. She could smell the aroma of the dirty dishes in the sink and the cleanser that she’d used on the bathroom tile the day before. While the fascination with identifying new scents seemed to be an interesting challenge, she tilted her head as she detected an unusual smell. “Whatever it is, it’s a little rank. It smells like blood and sweat and a little bit of something I can’t identify.”

Logan searched the office for the source of the aroma. After a few moments, she sniffed her jacket. “It’s me, I guess it has been a bit too long since I’ve taken a shower.” Enjoying a momentary giggle at her own expense she ran a paw along the length of her tail, shivering at the sensation the brush against her fur caused throughout her body. The private detective mused that even if she couldn’t find a way to do anything about her condition she could certainly get used to this. The enhanced senses would be a great help to her in the field, not to mention how much stronger she felt.

Testing herself, she made a few test punches. She kicked the air and held her leg outward, following along its length until she focused on the deadly claws at the end of her foot paw. She was no pushover before but in this form she was positively lethal if she wanted to be. No wonder so many people put werewolves in horror films. She still wasn’t sure if that was really what happened, but what else would explain what she had seen? She was a walking talking wolfess. After a moment, she lowered her foot paw to the floor.

Logan walked to the only full-length mirror in the office and took stock of her new shape. She still looked and sounded like her, at least, for the most part. Her body type wasn’t that different and she talked the same. Other than the outer shape, she was still Logan Ellison, private detective and only child. She looked at each of her paws in surprise taking in the change as fast as her mind could process what had happened. What did werewolves eat? Did they live like normal people or would the instincts take over? Would she feel the desire to hunt and kill or just go mad? Maybe she was stuck like this. If that was the case why hadn’t anyone else ever heard of wolf people? She shook her head. She was alive and she was breathing. That’s more than she thought she’d have after last night.

There was time to answer all of her questions later. For now, she needed to get her phone and her gun if she could find it. Maybe the camera would be on the roof too. If so, she might have something she could use on it. If nothing else she might find some answers. For now, she was not certain when or if she could change back to her normal form.

Logan locked the front door to the office and slipped out onto the fire escape. She needed to get her things back and to test out what this body could do. “May as well do both at the same time,” she said, climbing up to the roof. She got a running start and leapt across the gap to the next building, her foot paw catching on the ledge and sending her tumbling upside down into a tangle of limbs. “Note to self, work on landings.”

* * *

With a gentle click a man slid aside the locking mechanism that had secured this roof doorway in place. He emerged onto the building's rooftop silent and unnoticed. After closing the door he examined deep claw marks in its surface. Evidence that something had tried to claw its way inside but the fact that the door was still largely intact implied that whatever it was had not tried for long. Most likely he had decided that trying to pursue his quarry inside a populated building might encourage more trouble than he wanted to bring upon himself.

He touched the claw marks with his fingers and looked down at his own hand. He shifted it into a large paw covered in thick black fur and held it against the marks. No match. Whatever it was, it was smaller than a werebear. He turned to examine the area for signs of what had happened. His paw slowly reverted back into a human hand, fur receding to give way to skin.

After a few steps he knelt to find a digital camera on the ground. The silver object was a little scuffed but it looked intact. He picked it up and tested it. A chime revealed that it still worked. Once the viewfinder came up he moved it to display pictures already taken, the first shot was of a werewolf fresh after a kill. A woman's body lay dead on the floor of her apartment. The picture had to have been taken nearby and the photographer dropped the camera in their effort to get away. He walked in the opposite direction from the door to the roof access and stopped at the fire escape.

Across the street was a building with a missing window. Emergency tape covered the large rectangular hole with plastic. The evidence team was long gone but it didn't take a genius to guess what had happened. He had seen no police presence over here so more than likely they had not realized where their suspect had gone, or perhaps even what he was at all. Police generally tended to look away from the possibility of Weres and in fact such deaths were rare since the average were creature did not want to kill but to live in society unnoticed. As such, anonymity was a key element to the Were lifestyle. Were that the case, it would suggest a possible motive for the murder.

Kameron Sinclair had long been an Agent, a person whose job it was to monitor rogue Were activity and if necessary bring them in for judgment, terminate if necessary. By and large it was a solitary and mostly unobserved job but an essential one. His assignment here had been at the mutual request of the powers that be, both because he was geographically the closest but also due to his level of success when it came to dealing with unusual Were problems.

He knew that reports had been made through the usual channels of a werewolf or some similar creature building a power base in the city. They would not answer the calls of the Pack nor would they submit to review when requested. Typically such activity required approval from the Pack or the appropriate overseeing entity for any such actions to be taken but this individual had cut all ties and started to build his own. The body count in this city had been low enough that no one noticed but in a city of several million people no one missed the odd individual or six.

Kameron had been sent with almost no information on his target's identity. Until he had found the digital camera he didn't even know what species of Were he was dealing with. He flipped through the rest of the images and noted that the observer had

watched the couple for some time. They had been interacting for several different meetings, but it was when he got to the earliest photos that he spotted a picture of two women. He generally despised the practice of taking selfies but in this case he was grateful for it as he saw the camera's owner, one of two women. Perhaps she would know more about the werewolf he sought.

The woman on the left was a black haired Caucasian female with a bright smile and a tough expression on her face. To the right was a shy but gentle auburn haired woman with a meek but obvious grin. Neither woman wore anything that would allow him to easily identify them but it was a start. Kameron deactivated the camera and put it in his pocket. He continued to search the area for signs of anything but he was limited to what his human senses could detect. Once he was certain there was no one around, he shifted slowly into his bear form. His body bulked up slightly as muscles increased and fur spread across his body in an ebony layer. His hands bulged into muscular paws with deadly curved claws at the end.

In truth he had felt the urge to change ever since he'd stepped onto the rooftop. On a normal night he could remain human unless he chose to transform, but on a full moon one either had to stay out of moonlight or consciously resist the transformation. Experienced Weres could delay their changes but had he remained much longer the full moon would have insisted regardless. He likened it to the feeling of having to urinate when someone else was in the bathroom. You could hold it for a while, but nature would not be delayed forever. The animal inside needed to be free. He felt a release unlike any other sensation as his face pushed out into a muzzle and his feet enlarged, stepping out of his shoes to protect them from the increased mass.

Once he had become a large werebear he knew his clothes felt tight but they stretched to accommodate his larger size. Contrary to popular belief Weres didn't tear out of their clothes every time they changed. Most only did that if they grew in mass or just wanted to tear at outfit apart but really for many the size difference was not enough to destroy their clothes. In fact, it was a little odd seeing a nude werewolf unless they were just an exhibitionist. Kameron rolled his eyes at the memory of the assignment to bring in the werewolf nudist colony.

"Why do I always get the weird ones?" he asked no one in particular. He sniffed the air and followed the scent on the camera to a nearby cell phone. After a few good sniffs he was certain it belonged to the owner of the camera. He activated it and an image of a teddy bear came up. He raised an eyebrow and attempted to unlock it but cursed as it requested a password. He sighed and put it in his pocket as well when he smelled something else.

Blood.

Kameron chastised himself for not detecting it sooner. Human noses were so inefficient. They could not detect a number of scents that his ursine nose was far better at picking up and tracking. The blood went to the door from which he had came, but he already had been in that direction and most of it had been cleaned up with an obnoxious smelling pine cleanser. He followed it in the other direction and it led to the fire escape he had just been standing over.

Lowering himself onto it he smelled the blood until he found the strongest and largest deposit of it, down a few floors on the metal of the fire escape. He also detected another smell he could not immediately identify, but knew it to be the werewolf from

across the street. Wolves had a certain aroma, one that Kameron knew well enough having tracked more than a few of them that had gone rogue. He gauged the distance from the shattered window to the point where the blood started and shook his head.

Few Were creatures could match the jumping ability of a werewolf at full speed. Kameron was fast, but he was heavy. He would have fallen to his death if he attempted a jump like that. Werewolves were light and fast. With enough of a start the werewolf probably cleared that city street in a single graceful leap.

The blood present meant one of two possibilities. Either the woman that had been here was dead, or she would become a werewolf that night. Regardless of which possibility, it was another loose end he would need to wrap up. Kameron spotted something another floor or two down and descended to examine it. It was a revolver, fully loaded.

The woman had not had a chance to fire, but it had gotten caught on the ledge a short distance below. No doubt she had determined that it would not be possible to retrieve it, and going up would be faster than going down this high up. He added it to the other pieces he had collected and returned up to the roof. He peered up to see if anyone was there and once satisfied, walked towards the door to the fire escape. He picked up his shoes and grabbed the door handle with his paw, grumbling to himself.

He sighed as he used one finger to operate the handle and pulled it open, slipping inside. Once he no longer felt the moon's call, he slowly shifted back towards his human self. His muzzle receded; his muscles melted back into his body and he felt his clothes relax against his flesh. The rest of the fur receded into his skin as he walked down the empty hall. Once his feet were human enough he slipped his shoes back on and headed towards the elevator.

His first step would be to see if any women with dark hair had shown up in the morgue tonight, and if none had his next job would be to find the owner of the phone. Given the size of the city before him it was going to be a complicated task. He just hoped that he could get to her before anything happened. There were other forces not all of them benign wandering through the world looking for Weres. If any of them were to come across her she might end up being in over her head.

Kameron checked his phone for any alerts from the Pack, but none seemed present other than the one that had sent him here. With any luck, he had a little time before his mystery werewolf made his next move.

Now that a human life had been taken his orders had escalated. Such actions were no more tolerated among Weres than they were among human society. It brought attention to all of their peoples and had the risk of putting them all in somewhat severe danger. He knew that if he encountered the werewolf it was no longer a matter of bringing him in for judgment. Now it would be a matter of protecting their entire race. He only hoped that the werewolf had at least been smart enough not to leave any evidence behind that would lead them to the fantastical conclusion that werewolves were real.

Kameron sighed as he hit the lobby. The suggestion that he should take a second wasn't sounding so crazy anymore after all.

Traveling from rooftop to rooftop wasn't that hard when you had a werewolf's strength and stamina. She found herself sailing across impossible distances and landing with a smooth fluidic motion. Once she'd gotten the hang of it she made impressive time across the city towards the site of the stakeout. She found it hard to believe that it had not even been six hours since she had been bitten but so much had happened. While at first Logan had been a tiny bit frightened and perhaps even shocked at what she had become she had started to grow to feel like it was natural. In fact, the more she tested what this body could do the more she found she enjoyed it.

The sensations were all heightened. She could hear more, separate scents into their various components, and track things with her eyes from a distance impossible without aid in her human form. She could feel the breeze against her fur as she leapt from one rooftop to the next. Getting a running start she leapt from the edge and looked down at the city street below. Time seemed to slow as she glided through the air on only her muscle power and momentum. It turned out werewolves were like liquid steel when their muscles were pushed. She effortlessly landed on the other side and kept her stride as she fell to all fours to cover the distance of the roof more quickly. In the time it would have taken her to get to her car she'd made it half the distance already going as the werewolf leapt.

She could get used to this body. Her tail counterbalanced her weight as she took a sharp turn and leapt off the next rooftop, sailing between two buildings and coming to a stop. Taking a moment to get her bearings, she turned to identify her location and nodded to herself. Almost there. Logan dashed into a running start and leapt across the street to her next rooftop.

Less than five minutes later she stood on the same rooftop where less than six hours ago she had ran for her life from a werewolf that had tried to kill her. She smelled the air. Something had been here. She could not identify the scent but there was a strong musk indicating another animal. There wouldn't be one on the roof, not in a city apartment building. Maybe a cat or dog, but this idea seemed doubtful. Another werewolf, perhaps. Maybe there were more of them than she knew of in this city.

Logan smelled the trail and noticed it stopped at three places. At each of them her scent was relatively strong. Someone had taken her phone, camera, and probably her gun too. She cursed, knowing that given enough time they could track her down and she'd have no idea what was coming her way. She looked down at the fire escape and her blood scent was still strong. No one other than a being like her would notice it with such a small amount but to her it was powerful and fresh. She was about to leave when she sensed a presence behind her and turned.

Before her stood a man with dark hair and the most piercing hazel eyes. He wore body armor and was well armed. He made no move at first as he looked over her. She did not know for certain but it felt as if he was sizing her up. For what reason she did not know but she knew that she needed to be cautious. She recalled last night that the werewolf she had encountered had tried to kill her to protect his secret. If she had to make the same choice, what would she do to keep her identity safe?

The man held something cylindrical in his right hand. He watched her carefully while she remained still. Neither of them spoke or moved for a full minute while they looked each other over. "I know you're not the one I'm looking for. The werewolf I'm after has been around for a while. I've tracked him through a few cities and he's

obviously got some experience. You, you're new. I can tell because you're not afraid of me. If you knew who and what I am you'd have attacked the moment you saw me. I don't know how long you've been a werewolf, whether you got changed on purpose or are just some unfortunate soul that got bitten on the arm." He gestured towards her still visible bandages. "Either way, it doesn't matter. You're not one of us anymore. You see, Weres and those like them are a danger to mankind. I'm not going to go and tell you that you're a plague to be eliminated or a lower form of life because that's simple ignorance. The fact of the matter is that you're no more dangerous than anyone else wandering the planet. Despite what the movies tell you, you're not a monster and you're not going to go on a mass-murdering spree unless you're just that kind of person in the first place. Changing into a werewolf doesn't affect who you are, simply what you are."

"Good to know, I guess," Logan said.

"That said, I couldn't let you leave here alive." He held up a hand. "I know what you're thinking. I'm just a human. I couldn't possibly stand up to the power you now possess by blood. You're right, on an even playing field you could probably kick my ass. The thing is, I have the benefit of knowing how this works. Unlike you, I've got a lot of experience with werewolves and other creatures and I know how they move and what they can do. The sad truth is, I just know more than you."

Logan kept her face neutral. He hadn't attacked yet so he was obviously waiting for her to say something. "I don't mean any harm to anyone."

"Oh, I know you don't. You're not the one that killed that woman across the street without a second thought. You just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time," the man said.

Logan couldn't argue with that statement. In the course of a single evening her entire world had turned upside down. She'd gone from a private investigator with a fairly mundane case to a werewolf with some guy in body armor looking to kill her. It wasn't her best day ever. "We don't have to do this."

"Sad to say we do," he said. "My name is Kane, by the way. I'm a Were hunter. What that means is that I track down every one of your kind and kill them. It's not about hatred, I don't really care that you're a werewolf or what your story is. The thing is, you can make any one of us like you just by a bite. It really is that simple. If a tiny bit of your DNA makes it into my body, I become like you. You could end humanity with a little bit of spit on a slide. Kind of ironic, isn't it? We could cease to exist simply because you all decided that the world should be more like you." He shook his head. "Werewolves have been around for a long time, and they're not the only ones. The thing is, they're in all the movies because they make the most noise. Now, you might tell me that you've no intention to turn anyone and that you just want to walk away from this. The only problem with that is I have no guarantee that one day you might get a little bit too tempted. That's a chance I'm not willing to take."

Logan backed up a step. "Don't do this."

"Sorry, but I have my orders." He chuckled to himself. "Now I know you're new. Only a fresh werewolf would ever back off from me." He charged at Logan and touched the side of his cylinder to her leg.

She screamed as electricity surged through her leg muscles. Pain shot through her leg all the way to the tip of her tail as she struck him with the back of her paw. He fell backwards and rolled to standing position almost as if he had anticipated her move. What

was it he had said? He knew how she would move and what she could do. She was outmatched and she knew it. Maybe a more experienced werewolf knew what to do in this situation but she was still too new in this form to know how to use it effectively. She turned to run and felt a bolas wrap around her legs, sending her to the ground.

“Shit!” As the cord coiled around her ankles she felt electricity surge through her body again. “Argh!” She screamed in pain as she attempted to pull them off of her feet. The cord was metal and would not tear under her sharp claws. She crawled behind an air conditioning unit and fumbled with the ends of the bolas, throwing the weights around so that she could loosen their hold. Once she was free she peeked around the corner to see where he was.

Kane looked down on her from above with brass knuckles on each hand. He dropped down to face her and punched her hard in the ribs several times. Though her werewolf body was able to withstand the damage he seemed to know precisely where to strike to inflict the most pain.

With a strong kick from her right foot paw she sent him flying backwards. She needed to get some distance between them. She ran across the roof, dodging Kane’s aim as he fired several shots at her from a pistol. As one cut her arm she felt the burn of hot metal and leapt from the rooftop across the way. She landed with a somewhat awkward roll and pressed up against the ledge.

“If he can make that jump I’m going to shit a brick.” She breathed in deep rapid bursts until she had enough courage to take a peek. He stood there on top of the air conditioning unit watching her. His pistol would not be effective under these circumstances, but she was not willing to take any risks. Kane watched for a good long moment until he finally turned and entered the stairwell.

One he was gone, Logan finally collapsed onto the roof and held her midsection. He had not broken anything but it was possible at least one rib was bruised. She felt pain any time she moved, and it was not going to be easy to get back to her apartment in this condition. It was closer than her office at least, so she could make it there without too many rooftop jumps. She rose slowly using the ledge for support until she could stand, and knew that it was going to be a difficult journey home. Taking a test run, she leapt from one rooftop to the next and found that as long as she was careful, she could make it. Sharp turns were out of the question, though.

After a half hour of jumping in straight lines she returned to her apartment building and dropped down the fire escape to her floor. She descended onto the balcony and fished her key out of her pocket. She slid open the glass door and entered her apartment. It was fairly nice for her income level. It was a two-bedroom place though at the moment she lived alone, a fact for which she was grateful in her current state. Logan had scored the place when she helped the building owner solve a couple of problems he’d had with some of his tenants. For the favors she got an apartment at a much lower rent than it would otherwise go for.

Making her way inside she took off her jacket and set it on the chair. She walked towards the bathroom feeling like she desperately needed to bathe herself. Despite the fur covering her body at the moment all she wanted was some warm water to soothe her injuries. She had a hair dryer, it wouldn’t be that bad. She entered the bathroom and removed her shirt with some effort. The injuries still felt raw and uncomfortable, but the

sharp pain that she had felt during that first attempt to get up had slowed to a dull ache. Accelerated healing must be part of the package.

Logan started the water and felt it run over her paw. It felt good to the touch as she increased the water pressure. Removing her pants took a little bit more effort, but it was only when she was naked did she get a good look at her entire new form. She was lithe and sleek with wolf like features blending seamlessly with the human frame. Her body was strong and the ebony fur that covered her body was beautifully silky with a fabulous shine. Had she not been nearly killed that night she almost might've considered taking some photos for later. It was then that she remembered her camera and phone were both gone and someone had it. She hoped that it was not Kane, though she would need to be more careful in the future about when she turned into a werewolf. Did she even have control over the changes?

Too exhausted to think about it at the moment she stepped into the flow of warm water and felt it soak into her fur. She closed her eyes as the liquid cleansed her body of the sweat and blood that covered it and drained into the hole at her feet. She brushed hair out of her face and glanced at the mixture of liquids that swirled down into the drain and recalled what Kane had said.

Every Were carried the condition in their blood. All that had to happen was some human needed their own mixed with a drop and it would change them. For this reason they were hunted and killed by whomever it was he worked for. She shook her head and let the water wash over her back. Leaning forward she waved her tail in slow gentle motions behind her simply letting her body heal itself.

Logan had thought life was complicated before, but now she had a whole different world to deal with and no idea what was coming. She didn't know how one learned to be a werewolf or where one would even go to find out this information. It wasn't like you could check the internet on being a werewolf. Did they have support groups?

She mused at the idea of a group of people in a circle talking about being a werewolf and shook her head. Imagining herself in one of those chairs she pictured the moderator being a werewolf and looking around at all of the new folks that had just earned themselves a fur coat and claws. He'd probably wear one of those sweater vests and have glasses and a coffee mug that said 'Be Calm and Werewolf On'. He'd sit at the head of the group and ask everyone to talk about their condition and how they got turned. Then he'd look at her and ask who she was.

"My name is Logan Ellison, and I'm a werewolf."