

Lycanthrope Legionnaire
June 4, 2013

A Lesson on Lycanthrope Alphas

Dank, musty, and unlivd in, characteristics of a house long since abandoned by its renter, occupant, and caretaker. The residence was a haunting sight compared to how it had been just a few weeks ago. From the outside it looked fine, still the quaint, tiny home nestled beautifully amidst the surrounding trees and neighborhood of this Kentucky forest. Everything looked pristine, even the paved driveway still had a mailbox at the end of it; albeit the box was filled to the brim with unread mail.

Inside, the windows were shut tightly, all had their shades lowered and tightened closed. A few of the drawn shades had giant gashes breaking through the string-stacked rectangles that made them up. The upstairs bedroom was a mess, a flurry of loose feathers, torn sheets. Deep divots pocked the walls and hid behind torn wallpaper that had once been whole. The bathroom was moldy, a leftover remnant from water that had been left to sit for far too long covering the entire floor of the glossy-white room. The hinged mirrors that had hid a cabinet behind them in the bathroom were all shattered; remaining pieces crowded the empty sink's contents and specks of dried, coppery red liquid lined edges on some of the shattered glass.

The living room was an even worse mess than the rest of the house combined. Various spilled drinks had stained carpet and furniture alike in many places. Tumbled and forgotten pieces of food had been left to dry up and stale on end tables, the floor, crooks of the couch, and the more spacious windowsills. Solo cups usually accompanied each area of discarded food and drink, however, some were still stacked around a keg next to the serving counter of the adjoining kitchen. Yet more of the cups were just alone amidst the mess, long since drained and unceremoniously left by lazy patrons. Nobody had stepped foot in the apartment for weeks. Many feared to return while others refused to believe they ever could, or what they had seen was even possible. All but two had left and never looked back.

In the upstairs of the home, in the ruined and scattered remains of a mattress, dresser, closet, and many, many sets of clothes, two men sorted through the debris.

"Hey bro, look! Paul has a godamn diary!" Robert championed as he held the book aloft in his hands triumphantly.

The college student took the book and lowered it to his vision, cracking the slightly-dusty covers apart from each other. He went back 3 weeks in the book, to the last time he'd been in the house. The page was blank. Robert flipped the current page to the right as his friend Allan came up from behind him in interested glee.

“No way! Show me, man. Does he talk about Cindy and stuff in there?”

Robert flipped a few more pages in, scanning over the scribbled paragraphs, not spying the word “Cindy” once.

“Nope. It looks like he just lists ideas and stuff in here for his writing.”

Allan playfully punched at his friend. “So it’s not a diary you idiot.”

Robert frowned and started flipping back forward to his original page of interest. “Guess not. But hey, let’s see if he’s written anything about the party.”

The black-haired business major digested the contents of the page with mixed looks of confusion and interest as he read about that day. “Hey Allan, check it out. Some freaky shit in here.”

“Today was weird. I was planning my party for tomorrow, buying stuff for it, hanging out with the guys and having a good time. From the way they acted everyone seemed so interested in coming again so soon, it was looking like another great day. After I let Robert and Allan go-“

“Hey dude, that’s us!” Allan blurted out as he pointed at that particular line as he read through the day’s log.

“Yeah it is, now keep reading dumbass.”

Allan lowered his head and took a few seconds to find where he’d left off. He’d mistakenly removed his finger even after purposefully pointing to the line he now needed to find again. A few more seconds and the other business major was back on track.

“-Allan go I was approached by some weirdo. Bit taller than me 6’ I’d say, buzzed, blonde hair, and grey eyes. This guy was all smiles and hellos, but something felt off about him from the start. He seemed pretty interested in all the booze and food we were buying. Made some small talk asking what we were up to and we even chatted about Call of Duty. We swapped talk about our majors and I told him about the party, even invited him. So in return, the weirdo thanks me and grabs my wrist. So while he’s holding me there I stand there stupidly. I had no idea what was going on, maybe it was some social custom? I smiled and tried to pull away and he took his other hand and scraped at the back of my hand with a needle or something. I pulled away yelling and insulting. Now I’ve got this stupid gash on the back of my hand and he lets me go, just like that. He says he’ll see me tomorrow and just walks off like he hadn’t done anything to me. I would’ve chased him down if it weren’t for all of the groceries in my hand. That dick better not show up to the party.

Writing Idea: Musing revenge story against him where I have some cool superpower. Thinking super strength, living electricity.”

“Huh, that’s pretty fucking weird.” Allan thought out loud. “Sounds familiar though, I think I’ve seen that guy around the campus.

“Yeah, me too. Always being nice to people, but you just feel off around him. Like, something just isn’t right with him.”

“Oh man, I’ve totally got it!” Allan slammed his fist against his palm. “It’s that dude that always sits in the back right corner of the café.”

“Yeah? Hmm... Oh, yeah. That’s the one. Pretty weird what Paul said he did to him. Maybe he did something to screw Paul up like this?” Robert gestured to the destruction around them.

“Maybe. Let’s get ahold of Trevor and go talk to this nutcase.”

The men both stood up, taking the journal with them and about faced. They set off through the mangled room and tread carefully across the scuffed, scratched floor of the staircase’s landing. They took one creaking step down when a voice froze their stride.

A slow, sure tone tinged the definitely male voice. “Robert, Allan. Welcome back!”

3 Weeks Ago

Paul Compo scurried about his house. He'd finished setting up the drinks and food and was now working on making sure the seating and entertainment was just right. The man mumbled to himself as he double checked all of the stuff he'd prepared. Tunes, games, food, booze, smoking paraphernalia; check, check, check, check, double check. Everything was perfect and with a bit of time to spare. Rob and Allan would be over first, Paul knew this, they always were. He threw himself backwards onto his couch, flicked on the TV, and idly scratched at the back of his right hand at the slight scar that had healed over a gash there.

"Oh man... FINALLY." Paul exhaled loudly and melted against his couch. He thumbed at his pants pocket, fishing for his phone. "Everyone better get here on time."

He tumbled his phone loose from its denim container and idly unlocked it. With quick, deft gestures he scrolled a few screens over and poked at the 'Facebook' app icon. He scrolled through notifications of late party attendees, comments, messages, and a tagged picture of him, Rob, and Allan buying the keg while giving thumbs up. He chuckled and closed down the app as a buzz shook his phone. With another simple wipe of his finger he pulled open the text message that had just arrived.

"Hey man, we're outside. Mind letting us in."

Paul pocketed his phone and pushed off from his seat, heading for the door. With a few quick strides he closed the cream-carpeted gap and wrenched at the door. The giant oaken door swung open and Rob and Allan grinned back at him from the other side.

"Hey guys." Paul stepped backwards out of the doorway and his two friends entered.

"Hey man." Rob said as he passed by.

"Sup?" Allan half-heartedly asked as he walked inside.

"Not much, the party, that's about it."

Allan nodded knowingly and pulled a plastic bag from his cargo-shorts. The unmistakable scent and characteristics of the almost-legalized substance easy to discern. "You don't mind if I...?"

Paul waved his hands dismissively. "No problem. Hell, I planned on people smoking. I've got Big Bertha over on the end table in the living room."

Allan nodded the same way again, but far more enthusiastically. "Awesome, I haven't spent a night with her in a long time."

"Well you get the first hit then!" Paul proclaimed as another set of headlights pierced the haze as they came down the road. "You guys get comfortable, I'm going to hang out here and show people in."

Rob gave him a pat on the shoulder. "Alright man, I'll tap the keg."

Allan and Rob wandered off to the living room and kitchen respectively while Paul stepped outside and closed the door behind him. Gravel sounded coarsely as the green Volvo rolled up his driveway and stopped, front tires digging into the bit of stone on the edge of his apartment's garage. The car's doors opened and three of Paul's friends, one a friend's friend, stepped out and headed towards the front door.

"Trevor, Brian, Jerry. Hey guys!"

The three answered back in various hellos, Brian introduced his tag-along, and the four guys headed into the house. Down the road a grey Grand Cherokee was rounding the bend with a four door Subaru right behind it, behind that a steely-grey Cadillac, and behind that a Ford pickup truck. The Jeep, Subaru, and Ford all pulled down Paul's driveway as the Cadillac continued driving on down the road.

"That traffic light really funnels, damn." Paul thought out loud as the various cars found spots to park on his lawn along the sides of his driveway.

From the Ford stepped two men, Courtney and Codey, two of Paul's teammates from his college's baseball team. The Subaru had three occupants, Thomas, Kaitlyn, and Ashley, all were friends of Paul's. The Jeep was the slowest of the bunch and two guys stepped lazily from it. Andrew and Andrew, friends of Allan mostly, but Paul liked them well enough to have them over from time to time. As all of his guests walked towards his home he scanned over the small crowd, watching them converse, laugh, and carry assorted foods for the party.

"No Cindy yet, damn." Paul scowled as his girlfriend hadn't returned from work yet.

He continued with the base formalities, greeting and letting everyone in courteously. As Andrew and Andrew, having picked up the rear of the pack, walked inside, Paul closed the door behind them and watched the road once more. He looked to his watch, 6:30 it clearly displayed in red, digital numbers.

"Damnit Cindy... Come on hun..." He tapped his foot impatiently and waited.

Outside his front door he stood and waited, and waited some more. Ten minutes of standing out in the brisk November air and Paul had finally given up, Cindy had obviously not gotten off work early. With a huff and a grunt he wandered back inside to join his friends and their few acquaintances. Allan, Andrew, and Andrew were all gathered around the circular end-table surrounded by Paul's recliner and loveseat. All three were admiring his aptly named, very large bong. The latter Andrew reached out to touch the swirling gold inlay of the seemingly forged carb longingly, mesmerized by it. The girls were sitting at the kitchen's serving-bar playing along and mingling with Thomas and his baseball friend. All the other guys were circled around the center of the living room, talking to each other, grabbing some snacks, and most certainly crowding around Rob as he was pouring everyone solo cups of seasonally sweet, but heavy beer.

"I guess I should join in." Paul shrugged and stepped triumphantly into the fray of his party.

"Pour me one, Rob!"

Two hours had passed by in a drug-addled paradise for some, drunken blur for others, and bombastically entertaining mix of dance and swapped words for the rest. Everyone was having a great time. Paul was used to playing host, his relatively secluded apartment was such a full, though tiny, house and it was well out of earshot of all of his neighbors. Its small size made the fact that he had an entire house and property to himself rather affordable and as such Paul tended to be the center of revelry, attention, and everyone's plans as they all jockeyed for and attended to his favor, and property. With years under his belt, he definitely knew how to throw a party, and did quite often with the same crowd, give a few more "friend's friend" most of the time. Allan and the Andrews were practically knitted to their respective seats as they melted into the fabric and basked in the smooth, intoxicating tunes of Paul's music-thumping surround sound. Jerry was wandering out of the bathroom, wiping an amber film from from his lips, no doubt headed back for round 5 at the keg. Everyone else was scattered about in groups of two or three. Paul was just finishing up a conversation about Call of Duty: Ghosts with Brian when he spotted headlights beaming through his front window for just a few seconds.

"Be right back, man. That's Cindy."

"No worries, bud." Brian acknowledged as he sipped at his cup, draining the last drops.

Paul finished off the last of his own beer, craning his head back to suck down the last amber drops of deliciousness as the engine sounds outside idled and died. With a sated gasp he relaxed and planted his cup squarely on the shelf of his wall mounted coatrack. He licked at his teeth, clearing the foamy froth from them as he grasped at his door. A wide smile parted his lips and he opened the door to spot Cindy coming up the steps to his home as she stuffed her keys into her purse.

"Welcome home, hun!" Paul swooned as he spoke.

Cindy curtly smiled and curtsied as she reached the top of the stoop. "Good evening Mr. host."

"Oh please, you know I hate that hospitality crap your parents are always going on about."

"I know, just teasing." Cindy laughed and hugged at her boyfriend. "Glad to be home."

Paul hugged her back and turned to gently guide her inside with his arms. With a parting kiss on the cheek he turned from her entering the house to face and switch off the outside light. In the darkness he spotted the outline of someone walking down the driveway. Paul leaned forward and squinted, trying to make out who it was, definitely a man he figured at least. He was late, whoever he was.

"Hey man, hurry up!" Paul shouted into the darkness as the figure started to barely illuminate in the light of his garage.

The man didn't quicken or answer, he just walked steadily forward. Light crept up his legs, torso and then face as he stepped closer. Fully bathed in the light it was clearly that creep from yesterday. Paul scowled and grimaced, he had the balls to show up after all. The blonde man, Paul wasn't quite sure where he'd parked and walked from, kept walking forward silently,

arms swinging gaily at his sides. He was just about to tell him off when the man beat him to the speaking punch as it were.

“Good evening Mr. Compo! I hope I’m not too late for the festivities.” The man stopped to look around the dark, unlit grass and forest around Paul’s house. “You live in the middle of nowhere, geeze, I nearly got lost on the way here.”

Paul straightened up defiantly. “Piss off man, you’re not welcome anymore. I don’t know what that shit with my hand was, but it’s enough to get you on my shit list.”

The man in his driveway grasped at his chest mockingly. “Paul, you wound me. And here I thought we were going to be close friends.”

“We’re not friends, weirdo. Get back in your car and leave before I turn off the light.”

Cindy chimed up from behind Paul as she removed her shoes. “Who are you yelling at Paul?”

Paul turned around. “Just that asshole from yesterday, hun.”

He had barely been turned around for two seconds when he turned back to look upon emptiness. There was just floodlight light, pavement, and the sides of cars. The man was gone, and without making a sound. Paul stepped out his door into the sounds of quiet woodlands. No footsteps, no rustling, no gravel, barely any sounds of wildlife. Into this nothingness of sound he ventured, taking a few steps down his stoop to look around his property. He could see into the fields but there was nobody, not around the sides of his house, not down the driveway. Discomfort crept into Paul’s mind at the sudden disappearance of the man. He was about to search around the nearest, now incredibly intimidating, corner of his house when Cindy stopped him.

“There weren’t any cars behind me, are you sure there’s someone out there?”

Paul huffed and yelled back as he continued to look around. “Yeah I’m sure, I saw him.”

“Well, where is he?”

“I... I don’t know, now it’s like he wasn’t there.”

“That’s a bit frightening.” Cindy worried out loud. “Come in and lock the door.”

Paul resigned to his girlfriend’s wishes and marched back up his stoop and into his doorway. With a slight slam he closed his door and locked it tight.

Cindy looked up to Paul’s eyes and reached out to grab one of his hands. “Are you sure you saw him?”

Paul grabbed at his forehead as a slight, welling pain built up, the onset of a headache. “I’m actually not sure now, maybe it’s my eyes playing tricks on me. But I’m sure I heard him.”

“I didn’t hear anything and I was right behind you. Maybe you just smoked too much with Allan.”

They walked back towards the party in tandem as Paul rubbed at his forehead. “Yeah, maybe.”

Cindy and Paul headed back inside, closing the door behind them. Staring at their backs was a pair of cold, grey eyes that watched from behind the trunk of the Volvo in the driveway. They traced them from the doorway, past the front window, then through the dining window. As they disappeared behind a wall the eyes lowered and disappeared once more.

Thomas raised his cup in salute as Cindy strolled into the party with Paul in her arms, Paul looking a bit worse for the wear. “Cindy! Welcome to the party, woo!”

Cindy answered back with a smile. “Thanks Thomas. Sorry I had to work tonight.”

“Nonsense!” He answered back. “Someone’s gotta bring home the bacon, isn’t that right Paul?” He paused and looked over his seemingly-weary friend. “Hey, is he alright?”

Paul waved his right hand dismissively as he let more of his weight into Cindy’s grip. “Nah, nah. I’m fine, just a headache.”

“You sure, hun?” Cindy asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Just a bit loopy, here.” Paul gingerly broke Cindy’s grasp on him and took a few steps from her. “See, I’m fine. Right as raaaaIIIN.”

Paul stumbled sideways into the kitchen and barely managed to catch himself on the counter, saving himself a very painful smack onto his tiled floor. Thomas put his beer down quickly and darted towards his friend, Robert did the same.

“Oooookay man, I think you’ve had enough.” Rob patronized. “Thomas, get him a bucket and help me get him upstairs to bed.”

Paul fought himself back to his feet, resting his weight on one arm on the counter while rubbing his forehead with the free hand. “No, really guys, I’m all right.”

“Dude.” Rob forcefully addressed him. “You almost just cracked your head open on your counter, you’re heading upstairs to sober up. We’ve still got some party left for Cindy, but your fun’s over for now buddy.”

Paul grimaced and let himself be guided over Rob and Thomas’ shoulders. “Fine... Fine! Just don’t embarrass me or make me look like an idiot.”

“We won’t man, just don’t want you getting hurt.”

Rob and Thomas helped Paul slowly across his first floor and up the polished, carpetless wooden staircase. In the living room and kitchen everyone muttered quietly and worriedly; this didn’t last too long however, nobody was really concerned. This always happened to somebody at least once at Paul’s parties, it just had never been Paul. As Rob and Thomas started back down the stairs, sans Paul and giving a thumbs up, the party resumed, albeit with the volume turned down a bit.

Upstairs in bed Paul was less dangerous to himself, but not faring as well. He groaned, tossed, and turned in his bed. His head continued to warm up to a feverish temperature and he writhed at a slight warming of his whole body. Not a painful warming like the Sun's rays, but uncomfortable like a sickness. On his sheets he rolled about, kicking them off his legs and groaning just a bit louder. He wasn't feeling anywhere near keen, and truthfully he was worried. All of this kept scaling upwards and had started rather quickly, with no precursor of any kind. He quickly forced himself up on his arms, sweating and struggling to support himself. He looked to the bucket beside his bed instinctively. "I didn't even drink that much. I don't even feel nauseous." He thought to himself curiously as he stared into the white expanse of the bagless trash bin.

"Why the hell did I get up like I was going to pu-" Paul stopped thinking out loud to himself as his stomach cramped up tightly and he swore that someone had just run his stomach over with a car.

Beer, snacks, popcorn, spittle and water poured up and out of Paul in one swift, continuous release as his stomach expelled all of its contents for some unknown purpose. It was as uncomfortable/painful as any vomiting tended to be, but like the warmth and headache it seemed unwarranted. Paul was only a bit warm, he didn't feel nauseous or sick. As Paul hung over the edge of his bed his stomach, as fast as it had cramped up, relaxed. He breathed heavily, not feeling any worse or sick than before, just worried by his stomach's forceful expulsion.

Paul was going to resign all of his current issues to some quick-witted and acting stomach bug. He was going to just roll over and try to get some sleep. He was going to try to do both, but fate had other plans it seemed. He looked down at his right hand where it was white-knuckled, gripping at the side of his bed. The skin on the back of his hand was writhing, moving, contorting. He looked on speechlessly as a star drew itself underneath his skin, looking like a vein gone rouge and yet, artistic. The star completed and was soon contained within a circle that etched itself in his skin, finishing the process. Astonished, Paul fumbled for words as welled up in the flesh on the back of his hand where the man had "clawed" him was a pentagram.

Paul wheezed and hacked, spittle flying from his lips, carried by his labored breath. "What... the hell... is that?"

He poked at the symbol, unsure of its meaning, he didn't even know what a pentagram was. All he knew was that it had carved itself out of his own flesh and that was enough to scare him into picking up the phone and calling his doctor. He looked around his bed and night-stand, no phone in sight. He must have left it downstairs, damn. As Paul contemplated walking downstairs to call his doctor a strange tingling sensation traveled through his mouth. It was only a curiosity for scant seconds, until it sent him flying out of bed and running to the bathroom as searing pain started to fill his mouth and jaw. It felt like someone had punched him square in the jaw, he needed painkillers, fast. He groaned painfully as he dashed into the upstairs bathroom. Instinctively Paul locked the thin wood door behind him and flipped all the switches on the wall, fan included, as he fell forward to the counter, gripping its edge and breathing heavily. It felt like his wisdom teeth were coming back in, but in every slot possible in his mouth. He opened wide

in front of the mirror and looked worriedly into the slightly lit expanse of his maw, hoping to find the troublesome chip wedge that was setting his gums and mouth ablaze with agony. Instead what he found was just as unnatural as the weird man's disappearance scants minutes earlier.

In the mirror he watched his teeth cracking, fattening, and elongating. His crowded mouth was already in so much pain from the process that tears started to well up in his eyes. It was like someone was driving a pry-bar between each of his teeth and trying to part them, even though the opposite motion was true. He tried to cry out in pain but instead only uttered a wet, crude gurgle as his tongue elongated and spilled over his teeth and past his lips, further filling the dwindling space of his mouth. Muffled and fumbled shouts of fright and worry turned the room into a chorus of gurgles, blunders and saliva-laden slurps as he swung the massive tongue around, drool flying left and right. He thought he was going to choke on his morphing tongue and teeth until an otherworldly feeling washed over his head. Like a warm towel placed on a sore muscle his mouth and forehead were relieved of all their tension as the wave of soothing pleasantness passed over him. He closed his eyes in contented relaxation as all of the pain subsided and he was back in a world of transient peace. This peace lasted only until he rested his face in his hands graciously. Something was wrong, he felt at his nose and jaws and felt something very off about the shape of his face. He sprung open his eyes and looked up, this mirror was quickly becoming his most hated object in the world.

Before his very eyes his face stretched, elongated and grew in impossible ways. His skull swelled and his forehead started to slant far more sharply in the process. His upper and lower jaws, along with his nose jutted out from his face and continued to elongate among the cracks and creaks of bone as his face rearranged itself. His teeth continued their unnatural metamorphosis into menacing canines and fangs as his tongue retreaded into the length of his growing snout. Snout was definitely what Paul thought it resembled now, he watched as it snaked out farther, starting to contain the pink, fleshy length that slurred his speech. He was thankfully still free of any pain thanks to the unnaturally soothing, yet slightly uncomfortable morphing of his skull. His face was far from the only thing being rearranged by this weird bug he'd caught. The heat that had been building across his whole body finally made its purpose known as the room filled with a cacophony of twisting, cracking bone. Paul yelled out as his whole frame shook and jostled, reorganizing itself into unnatural proportions. His legs cracked at his knees' joints and lengthened, his arms also fattened and elongated to unnatural sizes. He started to resemble a man stretched out like a child's toy, at least that ass until his torso started to catch up with both and made them seem far more correct in proportion.

Paul grabbed the sink's counter with growing, sharpening claws that nowhere near resembled the constantly-chewed fingernails that they had shifted from. His body swelled in size and height, ribcage broadening and tearing at the fabric of his shirt as his bones cracked and popped from their shifting torment. His posture started to hunch over just slightly as a sickening crack signaled the final evolution of his now animalistic legs. He looked down in speechless horror as they started to darken and grey, beginning to cover themselves in what resembled a grey coat of fur. He looked to his still lengthening fingers and what he was now sure were claws that were attached to them. Connected to his once normal hand his arms were also bursting out in

the grey fur, stray patches bursting out of the widening rips and blown seams that strained all over his beleaguered clothes. He looked on in horror as his still shifting face was half covered in the gray hairs and rapidly closing in on “completely”. With a sickening snap and numerous pops his ribcage exploded outwards, completing the freakish, beastlike visage of his torso. This had been the last straw for his clothes and the fabric shredded loudly, spreading its tattered remains in dangling strands around his neck, shoulders, waist and ankles. He could only quiver his lower lip as his once beautiful visage was that of an animal now, two pointed ears sprung up from the top of his head where his ears had since shifted in place to sit and wait.

Paul, or whatever he could be called now, stepped back from the counter, his immense bulk now rather tightly packed in the once spacious bathroom. He looked down at the gross contortion that his hands had undergone to become what they were now. Powerful, articulated fists of unparalleled strength and fury curled in on themselves in self-loathing. He looked down to his legs in mute, horrified curiosity. What had once been his prized base-running legs now resembled impossibly rigid and powerful chords of toned, poised, and fur-covered muscle. Behind him he looked to a thump that had caught the attention of his now-directionally-rotating ears. Smacking up against the shampoos and gels that had been in a neat row along the wall of his tub shower combo was a waving, coarse and thick tail covered in the same grey “skin” he was already sickened of seeing. “What’s happened to me?!” he thought in his mind as he felt over his far different chest and abdomen. He looked back up and into the mirror he loathed so intensely now. Staring back at him was a grey, lupine face contorted in disgust and simultaneous intimidation. From under the slightly brown brows on his new face two golden eyes stared back, taking themselves in in their own horror. Paul didn’t pause to reason, he wanted this monster he’d become gone. He pulled back one of his new immense arms and wailed into the mirror-cabinet with a dismissive swipe. The wooden construct was nowhere near a match for this new brute strength and was smashed rather viscerally as splinters of wood and shattered mirror were cast about the room, into the sink, and sent bouncing around the tub.

Downstairs the party slowed and almost all of the assembled heads cast their gaze upwards. Amidst the music and revelry they had all heard the smash, some people had even heard the groans, gurgles, and exhales of mild agony. The latter group had all attributed the sounds to Paul praying to the porcelain god, but the glass smashing had definitely stopped anybody’s thought of harmless sickness.

“Paul?” Cindy shouted up into the expanse of the small house as Brian turned the volume of the surround sound down to 0 db.

No answer, everyone looked to each other in slight worry. Cindy quickly sprinted over to the foot of the staircase and grasped at the banister.

“Paul, are you okay?!” Cindy shouted up the stairs once more.

In the bathroom Paul watched as his fist, which had just annihilated his favorite Ikea purchase, quickly healed itself. Blood dripped from shards of glass even as they were forced to

rise up out of his sealing flesh and fall to the sink below, lined in his blood. At least he still bled, he wasn't completely devoid of humanity, he thought, grasping at straws of mental reassurance.

"Paul?"

His ears perked up and then quickly folded backwards on themselves in fear. Oh god, Cindy. What would she say? She couldn't see him like this. What was wrong with him? He looked around the bathroom feverishly, if forgetfully, for a way out. No window or laundry chute, not that he'd have a hope in hell of fitting through either, graced his worried gaze as it panned around the room.

"Paul, are you okay?"

He shook his head in panic, grabbing at his furred forehead. "What do I do?!" His panic rose to uncontrollable levels, he couldn't think straight.

"I'm fine, just dropped a glass!" he said in haste.

He immediately regretted his poor lie and muttered to himself. "Stupid, stupid, stupid. Dropping a glass doesn't sound like hitting your favorite cabinet with a sledgehammer."

Everyone downstairs shivered and hair stood up on various necks around the room. Paul's response never came. Cindy's worry had been met with seconds of silence, then a series of vicious barks that filled the house with their immense volume. These were followed with a few seconds of low, bestial growls.

"Paul...?" Cindy muttered meekly.

She worriedly took a step up the stairs as she mustered up the courage to see if he was okay. No answer again, just a tense silence that could be felt amongst all the craned-head partygoers.

Paul's acute hearing picked up on the slightest of noises as Cindy's foot fell onto the first step of his staircase. He panicked and thought about just sitting on the toilet with a paper in hand to greet her nonchalantly. "No, that would never work." He thought to himself. "I should just run and get this figured out, then explain it all to her when I'm back to normal again." He settled on this decision and spun to work at the knob furiously as he panicked. Outside his door everyone watched and listened as the doorknob furiously shook, jostled and clattered in the now eerily silent house. Cindy halted her progress up the stairs.

"Godamn door!" Paul shouted in worried frustration. He lifted his right hand and punched against the door. This was quite a poor choice.

All the guests, as well as Cindy, cowed and jumped in fright as loud, monstrous snarls echoed through the house. Cindy shrieked in terror as the frame around the knob blew outwards

in shattered, wooden debris. The knob and its assembly fell out from the door rather clumsily landing on the floor with a clang. Every assembled pair of eyes stared up at the door silently as it slowly swung open of its own accord. “Shit, shit, shit.” Paul thought to himself. “Just run. Run quickly you dumbass, don’t give them time to look at you.” Run is just what Paul did, but it wasn’t as flawless a plan as he thought. With thudding bounds his new legs carried him from the bathroom and into sight. The assembled faces recoiled in fear and curled back in fright as a grey monster bolted from the bathroom and headed for the staircase and Cindy.

Paul ran as fast as his new legs would carry him, but like with the door, he had underestimated his new physicality and sped up far too much. With an almost comical flair he tried to stop by grabbing onto the banister to his right but he slid right past the lip of the top step. His bulk slipped forward and his legs faltered for a sure step. His huge body tumbled and he landed with his shoulder, crashing down into the staircase, denting the heavy wooden steps and ruining their lacquer under his weight. A grey tornado of flailing limbs, growls, and barks tumbled down the staircase in the most ungraceful stair descent most had ever seen. As Paul tumbled past Cindy a claw on one of his toes caught and tore her dress, nicking the woman’s flesh just enough to draw a faint line of blood in the process. He landed in a low, growling heap at the bottom of the stairs. As he stood up, everyone else imitated the panic Paul had been the puppet of for the last couple minutes. Thomas and his female friends were the first out of the house. He had thrown open the porch door and bolted as soon as the monster had started running from the bathroom, the girls followed suit as soon as their frozen legs woke up and reacted. The Andrews fumbled over each other in a stoned stupor, grabbing at their various drugs and pipes to try and recover them, all while the apparent nightmare-made-real was rapidly filling the room as it stood up. Brian, Trevor, and everyone else in the house besides Allan and Cindy bolted without so much as entertaining the thought of finding out how Paul had fared upstairs with the beast.

Allan remained glued to his recliner just watching, half horrified, half too-stoned-to-react. The towering grey wolf, surely it was some kind of wolf from its build, lupine features, and tail, finally stood up and looked over the room behind it, watching its friends flee.

“Whoa... I’m pretty sure I should be peeing myself right about now... Oh... Yup, there it is.”

As clumsily as Paul had fallen down the stairs, Allan tumbled from the recliner and scurried out the patio door like everyone else had before him. He came clumsily scampering back in chanting “Oh crap, oh crap, oh crap, oh crap.” with his teeth bared in an immense grimace. He stopped at the end table, grabbing his bag of marijuana, and once more bolted back out the patio door.

Paul yelled for them to stop, he wasn’t trying to hurt anyone. He grasped at his snout-mouth as his words played back at him from the echo of his windowless far wall. Loud snarls and barks were all he heard where his voice should have been. How did he not notice this before, what the hell was going on? No wonder everyone was running, he may bleed, but there was nothing human left of him, he wasn’t Paul anymore, he was something, but it sure as hell wasn’t

Paul... The werewolf sunk his shoulders forward in a defeated posture and balled his fists, tears welled up in his eyes.

“Paul...?” said a meek voice from up the stairs.

He looked up quickly and intensely at the sound of Cindy’s voice, she hadn’t run after all. He noticed her clutching at her waist and the what-could-have-been-disembowelment-if-a-few-inches-deeper gash that she cradled in her left arm. His ears immediately flattened once again and he backed up a few steps.

“Is that you?” Cindy asked, horrified, as she studied the tattered remains of clothes scattered all over this thing’s body.

In a crude, but clearly attempted nod and thumbs up the creature answered her back and stepped forward. Instinctively Cindy stepped backwards, fumbling up one step. Paul retreated backwards at the worry she showed, filled with admiration that she stayed and knew him, but terrified of how scared of him she was.

“Oh God... Paul...” She covered her mouth with her hands in stereotypical shock as her question was affirmed.

Her mind went alight with thoughts, questions, and even more worry. She had to get him better somehow. Maybe he could just sleep it off? Maybe he was like the secondary character from the novels she loved so much. An optimism filled her as Paul seemed very much human still. He was hunched down with his tail between his legs and ears flat, like a scared dog. He stared at her scratch and she swore he was sad, even crying.

“Come upstairs, you just need a good night’s sleep and then we can figure this out tomorrow.”

To Paul’s delight his love still wanted to share a bed with him, even talk to him. With heavy footfalls he slowly and carefully stepped towards the stairs and followed the shaking Cindy up the steps. Down the hall they marched, like some procession of a fair maiden being led to her death by the monster behind her. Cindy stopped at the doorway and gestured for Paul to enter before her, something she’d done every night since they’d known each other, a remnant from her parents’ obsession with manners and hospitality. The Paul-beast strode past her slowly, reeking of dog, fur, and a slight whiff of stale breath. He paused at the bedside, turning around his immense bulk and flashing a horrid imitation of a human smile across his snout.

“Oh god...” Cindy thought out loud again as her positivity washed away in sight of the sinister, what she thought was “betraying” grin.

How could this be Paul, look at it? “It’s going to kill me.” She thought. “I’ve seen all the horror movies. I just need to run. This won’t end happily with me married to some wolf man.” Cindy looked through the doorway at the creature as it carefully pulled the scraps of clothes from itself, trying to leave itself naked and ready for bed, a very Paul tradition. She swallowed hard and watched as it acted and played out Paul’s mannerisms by sitting down on the foot of the bed and patting it with its gigantic, clawed hand. It still wore that mock, betraying smile of fangs.

She inhaled sharply and choked back a crying wail as she slammed the door shut to the bedroom and started running.

“NO!” Paul shouted as he bolted for the closing door. “Cindy, wait!”

Once again he stumbled in his new body and crashed against the door, one arm crashing through the frame and flailing around on the other side. The last Cindy remembered of the monster that had taken Paul from her was her deciding her assumptions were right. The vicious snarls and barks behind her, and that monstrous, grasping arm said it all, he WAS going to kill her if she hadn’t run. She needed no more convincing and was out the door in an instant, not even closing it as she pulled her keys from her purse and dashed to her car.

Upstairs, Paul hung limply from his arm’s place through his door. He filled the house with saddened, canine whines through the door, willing Cindy to come back. He waited, and hoped she would reach up to touch him, reassure him everything would be all right. Instead he heard the sound of a car engine, the clunk of a gear shift, and the squeal of tires. Paul’s eyes welled up and the golden orbs started to soak the fur surrounding his eyes. He howled out to the night in defeated gloom as he tore his arm free from the door, splintering most of it into a jagged mess. He spun in place flailing his arms and barking in fury and confused hatred. In his agony he set upon his bed, punching and clawing at in in instinctual sadness and helplessness. In all reality he was massacring his mattress and gutting it with reckless abandon. Fluff and filling was thrown everywhere by claws and hands until a voice froze him in his actions.

“Mr. Compo.” Said a slow, sure voice.

Paul looked back to his doorway with a snarl and bared fangs, staring daggers at the mangled door hanging off one hinge, he knew that voice. Through the shattered wood was the immense bulk of another wolf creature, jet-black in color, larger in stature, and possessed of far crueler eyes. Those same grey orbs peered back at him through the half-lit room with gleeful malice. He recognized those eyes, it was impossible to misplace such a pair of crisp, grey orbs and that voice. The other wolf’s snout curled back in the same inhuman smile that Paul had scared Cindy off with.

Present

Robert and Allan were stiff, rock solid and unmoving as they looked down at the blonde man from campus and the one described in Paul's inspiration book. Beside him, the grey monster from Paul's party sat on its haunches obediently, seemingly at the man's command. They both now knew it was in fact Paul, changed by some cruel curse, but it didn't appear to treat them like or even know them as friends.

"Glad to see you're both doing well." The man stood up cheerfully on his tippy-toes and smiled.

Rob flew to the railing, gripping it and pointing accusingly with his free hand. "What'd you do to Paul, you freak!" He shouted, a rather empty show of bravado in his stance.

"Why, I merely took his life, and changed it, molded it to something far better. He seemed so complacent, so privileged, and so happy. I just wanted to see his life, his perceived permanence of immunity to negativity that he thought himself surrounded by, ruined. I wanted it sullied, brought crashing down around him."

Robert fumbled for words at the baselessly cruel revelations. "What the fu-... Why?!"

The man chuckled evilly and full of entitlement. "Do I really need a reason to toy with humans?"

Robert scowled and strengthened his a stance of defiance; he puffed up, ready for a fight. Allan, on the other hand, was halfway between fear and flight. The cursed man from their campus peered at the book sticking out from Allan's shaking arms.

"I see you've got something of Paul's there. You know, you shouldn't steal things. It's a shame for you, really it is. I've no doubt that my marking of Paul is listed in there, since you know it was me. If you'd just stayed away or come and gone without finding that book you could have continued your lives as they are."

"W-what do you mean?" Allan stammered, switching his gaze back and forth frantically from the man and the Paul-beast that growled up at him.

"I mean that you now have two options left to you." The man turned around in place and faced the front door.

Before their eyes Robert and Allan watched in twisted awe as the man exploded in size, shape, density, and unnatural features. His clothes shredded and fell off of him evenly, landing in heaps. Flesh and bone twisted and molded in seconds, the man growing into a towering black monster amidst a storm of bone cracking and snarls. It turned around to face them, a jet-black, larger version of what was now Paul. Its penetrating gaze made Robert feel like it could look into his soul and see his fear. This was a moot point however, as the man, now wolf, could easily smell it regardless. Its voice was far deeper now, more guttural and bestial, yet somehow still aloof.

"Option one." It said, hunger tinged its voice. "We kill you here, have our fill, and go find another town to prey on."

Allan and Robert swallowed hard, their own lives seemed to well up in their throats. The lumps felt almost impossible to fight down, neither of them liked option one.

“Option two.” It said, a wicked and terrifying grin parting its snout. “You join “Paul” as a pet of mine, a beta in my pack, if you will. Most of your mind will be lost, yes.” The black werewolf reached over to appreciatively pat the obedient Paul. “At least the parts that would rebel against me, but you keep your lives, live much longer than you ever would as a human, and get to enjoy the invincibility and power that comes with it.”

The black wolf-beast thundered closer with three large pairs of steps. A wicked, knowing grin parted its snout and bared the immense fangs so purposefully and clearly that it made Robert and Allan’s decisions for them.

“So, what’s it going to be boys, hmm?”

THE END