

A wild way to learn (coyote TF)

By Wolfennar

Man, we were bored.

And when I say that, I certainly mean it. Have you ever been with your friends, sitting down somewhere, staring into nothingness and trying to come up with something entertaining to do but failing miserably? Well, it was even worse than that. It was the middle of summer, both me and my friend Rick had managed to take a break from our jobs to spend some time together in memory of the good old times. But *everything* seemed utterly boring. In our attempt to find the greatest things to do, we managed to do absolutely nothing. It was now past 3 pm, we only had a few hours left to actually do something. At that point we decided that we shouldn't be picky as to what we were going to do, anything would be better than sitting here. Clearly annoyed by the lack of action, Rick spoke to me:

"Maybe we could pull off some pranks? Scare people and stuff.

- Yeah... at the point we're at now, why not? But on whom though?

- I don't know... well, I may have an idea.

- Speak, what do you have in mind?

- You know the odd gathering in the park every week? They're wiccans or something crazy, but they happen to be there as we speak. We could surely add some more excitement to the whole thing. What do you think?

- Honestly, I think they might be the perfect target. They're so eager to see something supernatural, who knows how long it'll take before they realize they're being fooled! Yes, that sounds nice. Let's do it."

Having settled on something to keep us busy and amused, we quickly packed up a few prank accessories into a backpack before heading out toward the park.

The park was a big one. It was the real deal, right beside a forest, not only an open space with a few trees here and there. Due to the nature of our targets, we had to go fairly deep in the park before we could see them. At the time, they seemed almost crazy, definitely weird, all sitting on the ground in circle right beside what looked to us like an Amerindian tent of sort. As soon as we saw the tent, we simply knew it *had* to contain something that could help us pull off a successful prank. Of course, we couldn't simply enter the tent using the entrance, no way we wouldn't be seen. No, we had to wait quite a while before, as part of their ceremony or whatever, they all lied down and, most importantly, closed their eyes. We didn't know if we would be able to get out afterward, but it didn't matter to us; now

was our only chance and we had to take it. So, without losing any time we stealthily went up to the tent's side and snuck under the piece of fabric that was making up the walls.

Once inside, we had some difficulties remaining quiet. Why? The place was filled with the most exotic of esoteric accessories. Dried plants were in a few baskets, there were vials filled with colorful liquids, plenty of dream catchers and candles, and much, much more. Looking up for something useful, my gaze was drawn upon what appeared to be an altar maybe? A few sticks of incense, a few wooden statues depicting some wild animals and an animal pelt set on a ceremonial staff were making up this strange altar. Having some basic knowledge about the local wildlife, the tan colored pelt appeared to have belonged to a coyote. But I still had some doubts about that, mainly because after getting closer I was able to fully appreciate the size of the pelt. If it truly belonged to a coyote, it must have been huge when alive, almost unnaturally so. But that didn't matter, the sheer size of the pelt meant it could probably be worn, almost like a costume. That fact brought a mischievous grin to my face; with the right setup, it could end up being one glorious prank.

Reaching inside my backpack, I pulled out two homemade smoke 'grenades' and a couple of road flares, I had every intention to make this whole prank as impressive as possible by using every mean we had available. Maybe it was a bit much, surely they would see through the overly theatrical setup, but in my enthusiasm, I didn't care. Rick did express some doubts, but he could see I wouldn't change my mind. We set up the improvised smoke grenades near the entrance of the tent and found good spots to place down the flares, places that didn't risk setting on fire the whole tent while still providing a nice red fiery light that would go through the smoke. Fortunately for us, we managed to do all of this in silence, which only increased our excitement about what was to come. All that was left was for me to put on the pelt on my back and over my head and then we would be ready to roll.

No longer wasting any time, I took the furred skin off the ceremonial staff holding it. I quickly looked it over one last time, noticing where the head and other parts were and appreciating the overall quality of the pelt. Finally, I slid it over my back and then lined the head and front paws over the corresponding parts of my body. However, when I was about to signal my friend to set off the smoke grenades and road flares, an odd dizziness overcame me, making me struggle a little to remain upright. At the same moment I noticed how hot it was with the pelt on me like that. Having second thoughts about the prank, I shook my body, expecting the pelt to slide off my body. Except, it didn't; it remained there as if nothing was happening. Trying to reach behind my back to remove it more forcefully, I couldn't help but gasp at the sight I was confronted with. All the excess pelt which had previously been simply hanging on the sides was now reaching over my chest, effectively covering it! Looking at my arms, I saw the same thing was happening there, all the excess of pelt taking life to wrap itself around my arms. Strangely, I couldn't make any sounds while this cursed fur was taking over my body. And if what was happening wasn't worrisome enough, as soon as the pelt finished covering my whole arms and hands, both

limbs felt strangely off. It was hard to pinpoint at first, but I quickly realised my hands were more like paws now. The felling of claws, pawpads, soft fur and significantly smaller fingers replaced the one of human hands. Wide eyed, I noticed how the fur seemed to ignore my clothes, as if they weren't even there, to connect with my skin. A tingling sensation went down my arms, the fur feeling not only more soft and alive, but also *mine*. Everything that affected the fur on my arms I could feel it. Of course, the pelt also fused with my torso. It started in my upper back, kind of like a chill that would crawl over your skin, down your back and over your sides and front, blanketing you in warm fur. This moment is certainly the most memorable, when the pelt latched onto my tailbone and then used its magic in order to have it fuse with the tail. The new limb came to life, naturally wagging slowly from side to side despite being so new and feeling so alien. Covering my groin and making it that of a coyote, the fur keep going down fusing with the skin of my legs now. Similarly to my hands, my feet elongated and gained pawpads, claws at the tip of my toes and all those things which characterise canine paws. As I now should have expected, the whole structure of my skeleton changed in order to make me a full-fledged quadruped. My legs overall shortened, my arms became forelegs and my spine made it so the only comfortable stance I could have for now on was on all four. Inevitably, the pelt melted with my neck, the animalistic features going up toward my head to end this transformation. The head part of the pelt contorted itself around my face, sticking to it before bringing changes. In no time my ears were forced to move up on my skull and take on a pointed shape, and also getting furred in the process. The fur on the top of my head and on my cheek progressively becoming my own, my whole skull ached, being forced to elongate. More teeth filled my maw while my nose took on a dark color as well as becoming permanently wet. My muzzle still taking shape, whiskers made themselves known. My now much longer tongue hanging from my panting mouth, the physical part of the transformation ended when I was forced to clench my eyes shut, sealing my fate as a coyote. Lying on the ground, utterly exhausted, my mind started to drift off, similarly to how one might feel when half-asleep. New instincts I knew nothing about were being integrated into my personality. Relying on scents and sounds now seemed much more natural, hunting small animals became my idea of a good meal. While I still knew who I previously was, canine and animalistic behaviours were now an integral part of how I thought.

I have no idea how long I remained on the ground, but when I woke up, I could see I was still in the tent and that there were two figures standing beside me. At this sight I instinctively wanted to flee, run away, but I was still too tired to move more than my canine head. Concentrating, I realised one of the figure was my friend Rick, the other must have been the owner of the tent, and pelt. He spoke to me and my friend, explaining to us how the pelt was a tool used by the spirits to learn to unruly men much needed lessons. I might be wrong about all this, seeing as listening to the man and understanding human speech now required a lot of concentration, but he then told us that in order for me to change back,

I had to prove to the spirits I deserved it, by going through the hardships of living as a wild animal. The incredulous look in my eyes made him repeat this a few times, to make sure I knew what I had to do. Slowly, he helped me up on my four legs and then led me to the edge of the forest, where I would begin to live as a wild coyote, hoping I'd be able to one day walk on two legs again.