

Chapter 7: Night of New Beginnings

The ramp to the Sky Rover slowly retracted as the opening sealed shut. The engines slowly roared to life, at the same time the Cloud Rover's giant propeller started picking up speed as it spun. After at least a couple short minutes, the Cloud Rover gently lifted up off the ground and began its flight; the autopilot program in full swing with a charted destination of Road Rover headquarters locked in. The Sky Rover, piloted by Shag, doing the same and following right next to the Cloud Rover yet trailing up to its midsection so the autopilot ship could lead the way home.

Inside the front of the Sky Rover, Shag sat in the pilot seat; focused and fully determined to get his packmates home in addition to getting their new guest to the HQ for safety above all else. In the co-pilot seat were the remains of the Rovers' destroyed attires, Shag having gone to collect the remains so as to leave no trace behind for anyone to discover (as per ordinance). The Sheepdog was also instructed by Professor Hubert, to allow the Cloud Rover to take the lead, and have the Sky Rover trail right behind.

The reason for this was because the Bloodhound scientist wanted Shag to make sure all went well with the autopilot program on its first run, to make sure no glitches or miscalculations are apparent in the least.

All the while, the five passengers sat behind the seats, silent and contemplative; taking in their current standing as well as going over the talk they had with the Master and Professor Hubert only a few moments ago.

The four main Rovers and their guest companion were still without their clothes and had only towels to maintain their decency at the moment. The sheer tedium of the long trip back to HQ now in motion was already feeling too much for the waiting five.

"Say, Hunter..." Colleen then broke the ongoing silence. The Retriever turned to her as she continued. "Do you know how Exile and I even got to that place back there?"

"Da, and also..." Exile seconded, encouraged by his packmate. "How did you get like us there too? I thought you two had cure."

Hunter and Blitz turned to each other, sharing an unsure glance. They were not sure if they should explain everything, having no idea how their comrades would feel about the truth...Robert in particular. Especially since he did not seem to understand much of what was happening either. Last thing they needed was to have a hysterical human on board. After over a minute of contemplation, the two then silently agreed.

The ride home would take a while; so in the meantime, Hunter and Blitz decided to help Exile and Colleen catch up on what they missed when they were not quite themselves. With Robert also getting the full truth as well. They ultimately felt their packmates and guest deserved to know the truth in its entirety after going through that ordeal together.

“Are you serious, comrade?” Exile said in shock.

“Yeah, you...and what I assumed was Robert, were fighting one another...and from the looks of things, it must have been to the death,” Hunter explained worryingly, as he wasn’t sure how either one would take the news.

“All...because of me?” Colleen then asked in amazement mixed with some revulsion.

“Ja, that is what it looked like,” Blitz confirmed next, only making the statement more true.

“B-But...” Robert stammered, confused big time. “Why don’t I remember any of that? Why...Why don’t either one of us remember it at all?”

“I have no idea,” Hunter shrugged, he too not sure himself.

Colleen was quiet as she looked down at the ship’s floor. Her eyes blinked as she could, all of a sudden, see through unfamiliar eyes. Watching as two large wolf-men clawed and bit at one another, but it passed as the vision glimpse ended. She shook her head as a wave of dizziness hit her; why did this happen as she tried to remember?

“So, comrades...how did you two end up like us?” Exile then asked.

“Umm...das war...entirely mein fault,” Blitz said embarrassingly as he rubbed the back of his head.

“I don’t blame you, bud,” Hunter responded back, trying to show he held no ill will to his friend.

Colleen and Exile looked confused as that didn’t answer their question, only made them more curious. Colleen then tried to get some clarification, “What do you mean? What exactly happened?”

“Well,” Blitz then started to explain. “It’s a little fuzzy, but I can remember some of what happened. I got scratched by one of the other werewolves that Shag took back before we cured it. The curse took over me completely...and then I attacked Hunter...I cornered and bit him.”

“I’ll admit it was painful for a moment,” Hunter couldn’t help but say truthfully. “It was during that moment that I lost what was left of the cure.”

“Say, hold on now,” Colleen interrupted, shocked and surprised now. “There is one thing I want to know...why didn’t Blitz take the cure when he got infected?”

The Doberman then looked uneasy, and perhaps a little shameful. "I...Hunter wanted to give it to me...but I refused it. I wanted him to use it for the people we saved first, and to give it to me last."

Exile's eyes widen in surprise, "Comrade Blitz did what?!"

Hunter stepped in. "It's true, guys; I saw and heard it. I offered to give it to him, but he told me to save it for the people we saved and to cure him last...and after you three were supposed to be cured too." The conviction in his words and voice was undeniable. Especially as his 'super' honesty was known by all of the team.

The other two Rovers and Robert were silent as they let this information soak in. Colleen then turned her head in Blitz's direction, looking at him with a stoic expression for a moment; before giving a small smile. "Blitz, that was a reckless action...yet a selfless one too." The praise and awe in her voice was clear to the Doberman.

"Da, is very admirable from you, comrade." Exile declared while looking at his teammate with a genuine smile. "You risk safety to save us and others. Is something to be proud of."

"They're right, mate." Robert added his two cents. "I may not have been able to see it myself, but that sounds like the mark of a real stand-up bloke."

Blitz found himself blushing a little, not expecting to receive such praise and admiration; especially from Exile or Colleen in particular. Normally he would have been beaming at any compliment from the Collie, but it felt different for some reason; yet was still pleasing regardless. "Aww...well, it was only the right thing to do at the time. Besides, we're superheroes and a pack; aren't we? I have my moments every once in a while," The Doberman bashfully finished.

"Speaking of which," Hunter spoke once more, as his attention is drawn to Robert. "Forgive me for asking, but I'm curious as to how you got infected. From what I can remember, you were chosen for some reason. Why do you think the werewolf pack targeted and picked you?"

The human saw as all eyes were on him; all of them were curious now. Robert couldn't help but rub at his head as he thought back to the night prior, recalling some of it yet not all. "Well, mates...before I can tell you all that, I feel it would be best to explain more about myself first...is that okay?"

The Rovers all nodded, as they also wanted to know more about their potential new friend. Especially Colleen and Exile for some reason; they weren't sure why, but it was like some certain desire of some kind.

This made Robert feel more confident about himself as he could open up more. "Well, though I know of you lot, you likely haven't heard of me...I am kind of a celebrity myself.

Only I am the current reignin' professional heavyweight wrestling champion in the United Kingdom. I am known as **Robert, King of the Highlands.**"

The Rovers all widened their eyes in surprise. Needless to say, Robert could tell that they were truly impressed to know of the human's celebrity status. Though they were familiar with the sport of wrestling, they knew none of them properly watched the professional leagues in any country; or had the time to properly follow it. Therefore, they were now interested in hearing more of what the life of a professional in the sport was like as they all listened intently. This could also explain why the now erased werewolf pack saw him as a potential 'King'...well, at least in Colleen's mind.

"Tell us more, comrade." Exile urged with Blitz nodding. They had often held interest in checking out the sport of professional heavyweight wrestling, but never found the time to watch it on television due to focusing on their heroics. Even Colleen and Hunter were eager to know, despite not having much interest in the sport before like their two packmates did. Yet, no one saw the Husky's hands clench as he seemed to be listening to the most. Almost as if he's studying the human for some reason.

Happy for the further interest, Robert felt encouraged to continue. "I had only just won the grand championship in London a couple of days back. I even have the belt to prove it...yet not on me at the moment. Ever since I was a wee lad livin' in Scotland, I always dreamed of becomin' a wrestler and eventually a champion one; I had finally reached it after much effort and training. All seemed well, especially since I was then offered a chance to transfer over to the wrestling federation over in the United States for my efforts. Though, I had just been through a heavy work schedule and wanted to take a break before doing anything else. Still, transferrin' would also come with a longer work schedule; so I needed time for myself."

The Scotsman paused for a moment, remembering the pride he felt at his achievement at the time. Holding the championship belt high for all to see, standing tall and proud amidst the crowd's cheers with his flexing muscles all on full display and flashing pictures being taken all around. He also could not forget the praise and admiration from his fellow wrestlers for his victory and honor, the way they patted his back and/or shoulders in camaraderie as they congratulated him.

"I told 'em that I would think it over in that time, so they agreed and granted me at least over a week to myself or longer if need be. Me personal vacation, you could say," Robert then gripped his head with a slight hiss as a series of flashes came to his head, his memories of that night coming back in full. A dull ache then coming to him as he could see more of the lost night in a clear fashion.

"It was the first day of me time off; I was taking a trip to the local pub for a simple drink...when then, I heard growling from behind me. I had looked around but saw nuthin'." The human could remember the shiver it sent down his spine almost as if it was happening once more. "I just kept on goin', but got the feeling of bein' watched for a long while before it happened again. It only got louder and closer the more I kept going.

At first I thought it was the sound of someone's dog growling at me, but then I heard more than one at the same time. When I looked around once more, I saw what I thought were dogs; but they turned out to be wolves...a small pack of them, and BIG wolves too. I had absolutely no idea where they came from; perhaps escaped from the zoo? I didn't know then...how wrong I was."

The Rovers' eyes widen as they had a feeling what Robert went through next. As it was similar to what they went through in their London encounter. "They were bigger than any wolves I have ever seen or heard of, more rugged with sharper claws and fangs to boot, and their eyes practically glowed under the moonlight; like there was something different 'bout 'em, and I felt like something was off 'bout 'em from the start. I was a bit on edge as they looked rather aggressive and ready to pounce. Still, I wasn't plannin' on goin' down without a fight; and I don't like runnin'."

The Scotsman's expression turned serious as he tightly gripped his own fists. "Two of 'em' leapt at me, but I tackled and knocked them back. I then managed to pin one of 'em down and it did the trick as the others seemed to back off. Yet when I counted them I realized too late that one was missing." The Scotsman then reached a hand up and gripped one of his shoulders, letting out a wolf-like growl. "The next thing I remember is suddenly feelin' a weight slammin' upon me back and then a searin' pain bein' ignited in me shoulder...I could feel the bastard's very teeth bitin' down into me flesh and maybe even deeper."

The Rovers were all shocked; both at Robert's courage at facing down the feral werewolves with only his bare hands and at the lowly tactics the wild pack used against him. Before they even knew they were doing it, both Exile and Colleen found themselves growling deeply; as if the very idea of those lowly beasts injuring Robert like that was one of the most unforgivable offenses. It almost felt to them that the pack cheated to defeat him.

Even Hunter and Blitz both found themselves gritting their teeth and gripping their hands in anger over the pack's actions. For some reason, they felt as if the attack was a dishonorable type of thing. They didn't even question why they felt as such; mainly since, as quickly as it came, it was gone from them all.

Robert let go of his shoulder and lowered his hand; taking a deep breath before he continued on. "You can likely understand how painful it felt, as well as how pissed off I was. I don't know how, maybe it was the adrenaline, but I let go of the big wolf I was pinnin' down and reached up to grab and throw off the one latched onto me shoulder. Before I could do anything else though, the wolves all just...fled. I had absolutely no bloomin' idea what was going on, it wasn't like I was too much of a threat; especially since they outnumbered me. It just felt like...they were done with me. I'm still confused even up till now. Still have no idea where they came from. Why did they leave after bitin' me?"

The Rovers shared a look with one another, Exile having a grim expression. He now knew why their new human friend was infected, especially after Blitz and Hunter told them what happened at Stonehenge. It was likely from the same group of werewolves that attacked them on the streets back in London. That they may have assaulted him some time after the Rovers drove them back that night. Yet from the sound of it, it seems like the werewolves may have been stalking Robert for a time; possibly even before the Rovers came to London to face them. Almost as if they had already chosen him before infecting anyone else. It would explain why they fled after biting him.

"I didn't bother to question their motives, because at the moment, I could not be bothered to care; as I needed to get back to the hotel I was staying at. I had no idea where those strange wolves were or if they would strike at me again so I felt it was better to just leave while I could before they came back. I also did not think going to a constable or a doctor would work either, as they likely would not believe me about the wolves and think I was crazy. Yet, another reason is that it didn't feel as bad...like the pain was lessening with every second." The Scotsman held a firm look.

"So I carefully made me way back, and everyone else was asleep; even the workers weren't present, thankfully. I slipped into me room as quietly as I could and took shower to clean myself off, especially any blood and to make sure the bite wound did not worsen. However, when I stripped down, I found that me wound did not look as bad as it did before. I was too confused and tired to contemplate the whole thing at the time. So I just cleaned off the best I could in silence before going to bed, wanting that night to be over quickly. Lookin' back now, it was all just wishful thinking..." Robert sighed softly as he remembered that moment.

The Rovers had a feeling they knew what was coming next. Colleen remembering how her and Exile's inflicted injuries were checked and did not last long until the first transformation must have happened. Even then, she did not pay much attention at the time; and she was sure Exile did not either as well as the rest of their team and the Master.

"The next mornin', I woke up and found myself in shock." Robert tapped his shoulder once more as he continued on. "Me bite wound...it was gone, like it was never there in the first place. No blood, no wound, no pain, no nuthin'. I first thought it was all just a dream, that I might have imagined it...only I found me shirt was still torn to ribbons and blood-stained." He sighed hard once more. "Though there was not much I could do about it then. All I could do was just get ready for the day, which involved me takin' me daily exercises. During which I found me strength had somewhat increased; not to mention me senses of smell and hearin' were sharper than before." The human could not help but puff out his chest somewhat.

"The day more-or-less went on like normal after that, but as soon as nighttime came around...I found myself suddenly wracked with pain, worse than any I have ever experienced, and then I blacked out." Robert put a hand to the side of his head again as he recalled that moment. "I get some flashes, bits and pieces, but that's mostly all..."

The human looked at the Rovers with an expression of awed wonder. "You know the rest, mates...I got to meet the superheroes I had heard so much about, just not the way I hoped or expected...and learned a thing or two about werewolves at the same time."

Needless to say, the Road Rovers were all in awe of their new friend and what led him to where he was now. They could see now why the werewolf pack not only infected the Scotsman, but intended him to be their King. The reasons they saw Robert as an ideal candidate for King of the pack were because of his own celebrity status. It wasn't just due to his strength or muscles which he had even before his transformation, but because of his charisma. Said charisma had allowed him to lead his fellow wrestlers and his innate ability to ignite the hearts of the people with his honor combined with his skills. All ideal traits for a King of any kind to possess.

Colleen felt a deep understanding with Robert then, possibly as deep as she now held her team. Yet why did she feel angry deep down at those feral werewolves? She wasn't sure, but it felt like they just went behind her back on something that involved her. More confusion filled her as she wasn't sure about it.

Exile, on the other hand, felt a deeper admiration and pride for his fellow Alpha; and any inner hostility or possible jealousy he might have had inside seemed to dissipate for the moment. Almost as if he saw him as an equal for now. Like Colleen, he too felt his hostility instead aimed at the feral wolveren beasts; like he recognized their lack of honor for what it meant to be an Alpha.

Even Blitz and Hunter felt vindictive towards the lower werewolves, more than they had with anyone else before then, and satisfaction that they were no more now.

"If glimpses of your memory are returning, do you think soon you'll be able to recall everything?" Hunter inquired.

"I hope so," Robert rubbed his head again. "I'm very curious as to what went down when I wasn't exactly myself. Yet...somewhat not too keen on it as well."

Both of Colleen's eyes widen at that, just as another brief glimpse went on in her mind. This time she saw four erect males going at it at her at the same time; or at least was it her? Either way, this is maybe something the human may not want to remember right now; nor any of her teammates, for it could create an unwelcome tension. "Either way, there's no rush; right, gents?"

"I guess so," Robert shrugged some, and the others followed suit, much to the Collie's relief. The human then looked at the four canines as silence filled the ship once more. "So...I've pretty much told you about me...so why not share about yourselves?"

The four canines all looked at one another, almost as if they started to discuss amongst themselves without words. A minute passed before they all looked back at him. "Sure...sounds fair," Colleen had said with Exile nodding. "Comrade is right."

The next few hours were spent as the Rovers told Robert about themselves.

.....

The hours ticked by as the four Rovers spent it talking with their human guest, explaining in detail about their own pasts and how they became the team known as the Road Rovers as well as what adventures they had up to the current; with Robert listening intently in quiet rapture.

Soon enough, they arrived back at HQ. Shag had managed to pilot the ship to the top entrance where he managed to ease the aircraft down onto the landing pad. A small jerk occurred as the wheels touched the ground; but other than that, nothing of concern happened.

Shag locked down the controls and turned the ship off just as the exit ramp opened up. Once it was deemed safe, the Rovers plus Robert all got up and exited the ship, some thankful to have the towels as blankets as the hanger was rather cold itself.

"Whoa! Why is it so chilly in here?" Hunter couldn't help but shiver, especially as his bare feet touched the cold floor.

"To help keep engines cool," Exile answered simply as he walked down, completely unaffected by the temperature; his own towel still around his shoulders. The other Rovers must have chalked it up to his thick pelt and to where he was raised.

"Blimey...you're right there, Hunter," Robert's teeth chattered a little as he held his towel around his shoulders now as well.

They didn't have to go far as once they reached the entrance, they found the Master and Professor Hubert there, the latter of the two holding some folded up clothes. "Welcome back, Rovers. I'm glad you're safe and sound."

"Good to be back, Master," Hunter responded back for all of them.

"We thought you all would want to be at least clothed once you returned," the professor responded as he held out some type of medical scrubs, the kinds doctors used at hospitals. It was an unusual clothing choice, but hey they wouldn't complain. They each took the clothing and put it on, covering themselves up, yet it still left their feet bare.

"Ahhhh, much better," Hunter sighed and smiled as he is now more covered.

"Yeah, I don't know how much longer I could stand to be like that," Colleen seconded.

"It was fine for me." Blitz mused.

"I don't see why you all complain," Exile shrugged.

"Easy for you to say, mate; you have all that fur to keep you warm," Robert said, despite being clothed now he kept the towel on for extra warmth. Yet then looked up as the Master came forth. Both of his eyes widen as he saw the human before him. The long white hair and glowing eyes caught his attention. A ton of questions bore into his mind. "Uh...hello?"

"Greetings, Mr. Kingman. I am the Master of this installation; I was the one who brought the Road Rovers together." The Master reached his hand out, which Robert took and shook.

"Wow, I've only heard rumors and speculations about if they had someone like that...I must be the only one to have seen you in person," Robert responded back, completely star-struck.

"Not only that, but the first outsider to ever step foot within the HQ," the Master responded back, which only made the moment much more surreal to Robert. In all honesty, it felt like a great honor for him; and it left him speechless. "There is no need to feel nervous, Mr. Kingman. My Rovers trust you, therefore I trust you."

Robert snapped out of his star-struck state. "Sorry 'bout that, mate. Just, this has all been a wild ride for me since a couple of days ago...oh, and no need to call me 'Mr.' anything. Just Robert would be enough." He finished with a light chuckle.

"That's good to know," The professor said as he came forward and shook Robert's hand next. "I'm Professor Hubert; you can call me by either name."

"Wow, you're a Bloodhound...right?" Robert couldn't help but be amazed at what he saw.

"That's right, and I'm very pleased that you agreed to come to the headquarters," Hubert responded back, reminding everyone the reason why Robert was there.

"What did you need to talk to him about, Professor?" Hunter then asked curiously.

"More like observe and study," the Bloodhound responded back, much to everyone's confusion. "It'll make sense in a bit; but first, let's go back to my lab, and you all can tell me everything that happened last night."

"Well, we all don't recall everything that happened," Exile brought up as everyone else nodded.

"Just tell me all you can remember, this is important and I need to know all the existing facts," the Bloodhound said as he turned and started to exit the hanger. Everyone else followed right behind.

.....

“Interesting...very Interesting,” the professor mused in thought as he tapped his chin with his finger. The whole team and their human guest just recounted everything that they could remember and it left Hubert amazed and deeply curious. “So, let me see if I have this right: You’re saying that none of you are cured...and the curse still remains within each of you?”

“Pretty much,” Hunter responded with a nod in confirmation, as he and everyone were now standing around in the lab. “We cured the other infected humans, but didn’t get the chance to do so for us.”

“And from what I can tell, you interrupted some kind of *ritual* that was going on,” Hubert said to Hunter and Blitz, who nodded back in return. “Is there anything else you could tell me about that *ritual*?”

“Ja, all we saw was Colleen standing on some kind of pillar, watching as Exile and Robert went claw to claw with one another.” Blitz explained what he could remember before being infected. “It was like they were fighting for her honor or something like that. If we hadn’t interrupted like we did then one of them might have died.”

“Huh...now that’s very interesting,” the professor mused with a hand to his chin as he then went to one of his bookshelves to look through it. He then picked one out and started to turn the pages.

“What are you doing?” Colleen asked, looking over the professor’s shoulder.

“I’ve heard of something like this. When you all left last night I decided to do some extra research, delving deeper into the sections where the cure was found; and I found something I thought would be important for later,” Hubert explained without taking his eyes off the text. “Here it is.”

Everyone then crowded up and looked over the professor’s shoulder, slowly reading the text to themselves. Their eyes then widen after reading some of what was within as Exile, Colleen and Robert blushed big time as they kept on reading. “You can’t be serious, mate.” Robert murmured amongst them.

“Yes, it is so,” the professor responded with a nod as he adjusted his glasses. “Apparently, the fight that was witnessed was one of dominance as you two apparently were candidates to be the King Alpha of the pack; and Colleen was already chosen to be the Queen. However, as tradition dictates there can only be one King, one of you had to be taken out of the picture permanently so that the winner could mate the Queen and lead the pack to a new golden age.”

Exile, Robert and Colleen's eyes widen in shock; just as a small blush returned to their faces. Even though they read it, they couldn't help but be shocked again as it was repeated. There was no way that could have happened...yet the brief flashbacks they kept on getting only made it feel more true.

Each one of them could see two heavily muscled wolfmen go at it, fiercely; claws and fangs flashing. Colleen could see them in total clarity as they bit and tore at one another. Robert and Exile could see it from the point of view of one of the werewolves. Before the winner could be decided, something happened; but it was there the flashback ended.

"That...actually makes a lot of sense when you think about it," Hunter responded, amazed at what happened. Blitz, on the other hand, was a bit baffled; but only on the last part about the winner being able to mate Colleen. "A fight to the death pretty much summed up what was going on back there."

"Exactly...but from what you told me," The professor looked back at Hunter and Blitz. "You two interrupted the ceremony, yet got bit in the process."

"What does it mean?" Hunter inquired.

"Quite frankly...I have no idea," the Bloodhound admitted, much to everyone's surprise and displeasure. Usually the professor had the answer for everything; admittedly he would have to do research, but he always did have a clue as to what was going on. To have no answers whatsoever is totally new to them, and yet not sure if it could be counted as a bad thing.

"How can that be? I mean there should be something, shouldn't there?" The Master asked, he too equally surprised.

"Well...I do have a hypothesis...one that may be far out there," Professor Hubert scratched the back of his head. "I feel there was more to it from the start, even before the rest of you put a stop to the Alpha ceremony."

The Rovers, the Master, and Robert all listened intently with apprehension.

"You see," the professor began. "I have reason to believe that Colleen, when she was a werewolf, may have possibly broken the pack's tradition that was established by ancient nature."

"Ancient nature?" They all couldn't help but ask out loud.

"Yes, the ceremony was one established by nature in ancient times; dating all the way back to the early days of Greece, which have continued to live on – albeit in secret - until now. Colleen had seemingly already chosen Exile as a mate, while in her feral state of mind, something which must have violated the werewolves' sacred traditions.

This resulted in the pack's refusal to acknowledge Exile as their rightful King, as there must have been a different way of choosing a worthy Alpha; but this law of nature was broken. This most likely resulted in the fight between Exile and Robert, the one chosen by the pack, which then led to the ceremony being delayed to when the full moon went past its apex; the appointed time of the ceremony ruined. With these aberrations you must have changed things. The change, whatever it is or could be, I'm afraid I'm not quite sure yet..." Hubert elaborated.

There was a small silence among the group as they all took this new piece of information in, everyone having all sorts of thoughts going through them, especially Robert. "Maybe that's why the lower werewolves were stalkin' me back then."

"Yes, you did mention that," The professor said with a nod. "The pack must have chosen you as their Alpha. They must have been following you for a while for them to make that choice. Your career as a reigning heavyweight wrestling champion must have caught their attention; your hard-earned peak physical strength, exceptional fighting skill, and heart-igniting charisma must have been key traits they sought in an ideal King. Still, all sorts of things could happen now that tradition has been broken."

"Are you able to give us an example?" Colleen asked for everyone.

"Hmm..." The Bloodhound started to think. "Well...there is one thing that might have happened, but it's a slight possibility." He looked back up at the five "When you all transformed, you have no recollection of what happened, nor did you have any kind of control?"

"None that we know of," Colleen answered for all of them.

"Then I believe that by interrupting and rebelling against the ceremony, the one most certain change that will be brought about by it is that the next time you all change back into werewolves...you all should have your free will." Hubert surmised.

Silence was brought about the room as everyone had a look of surprise. They never really thought about the possibility of transforming once more, yet they still are infected with the curse meaning it was a guarantee. At the same time, with the change in nature that the professor suggested, they weren't sure what to expect next time around. "Are you sure about this, Professor?" The Master asked on behalf of everyone there.

"It's a possibility," the Bloodhound nodded. "Yet it's also the reason why I asked Mr. Kingman to come back here. Because since all of you still carry the curse, I would like to do a series of tests to study the effects on your respective bodies."

"Are you bloomin' serious?" Robert couldn't help but blurt out in surprise. "You want me to be a bloody test subject?!"

"Believe me, it's all for the best," Hubert tried to reassure, without scaring anyone. The last thing he needs is for everyone to get hysterical over some harmless testing. "Nothing too extreme; just some test samples, exercises, and observations. You would be more of a patient than a subject."

"I dunno...just seems really sketchy to me," Robert couldn't help but take a few steps back as a bit of panic started rising up. "I don't know you all properly, and now you want to do some kind of weird pokin' and proddin' on me."

"You should do it, Mr. Kingman," the Master spoke up, now realizing the complications of their guest still being infected. "Besides, it's best you stay here and not in the general public as we still have no idea what could happen when the next full moon comes."

Robert eased up a bit as he thought on what was just said, realizing how right the Master was. He did not know what would or could happen from this point on now that he was a werewolf. For all he knew, he could just go rabid like before and end up either killing or maiming someone...also, what if he was spotted by doing so and was killed? Additionally, the thought of infecting someone else with his curse (even if unintentionally) came to mind then. It was a sure fire way to start this entire mess all over again. That was the last thing he needed. Plus the fact that he did not want to be taken by some other mad scientists and treated like a rare animal for dissection. Those were things he did not want to happen at all; he would not allow it. At least he had a feeling that the Rovers would still treat and view him as a human, as a person, despite not knowing them on a personal level yet.

Releasing a soft sigh after a moment longer of mulling over it, Robert faced the Bloodhound. "You're right, mate. Sorry for the apprehension, this whole ride has felt like nuthin' short of a roller coaster to nowhere. So many things happened to me all at once and I can't even remember them all clearly." Then, with a look of resolution, the human stepped back forward. "I'll stay. I'll be your patient. I'll undergo any test you need me to go through. I'll do whatever it takes to get control of this. I can't just simply walk away after coming this far, would make everything be all for nuthin' and I don't want that."

The Rovers looked at their human guest with awe. Amazed by his resolve and intent to go into things despite his nervousness and earlier reservations. Colleen and Exile in particular felt a growing respect for him which they attributed to their new Alpha nature, but knew it was true and right nonetheless. Yet, for some reason, Exile also felt a bit irked by this. For some reason, seeing Robert getting praise just lit a fire within him; almost as if it should be him instead.

"So that's why we're dressed in scrubs; you wanted to do the tests, don't you?" Hunter then asked in understanding.

The professor nodded in confirmation, "Yes, I want to get to work analyzing everything ASAP. That is, if you are ready."

Colleen nods. "We will have to be."

The professor then made his way to some of the cabinets he had. Opening them up and reaching in, he pulled out several sets of sealed packets of needles, blood tubes, vials, and medical cotton swabs. The Bloodhound is working fast as he skillfully sorted them all into given rows, and then went about making labels for each of them. "Alright then. Everything is set. Who's first?"

Exile then stepped forth confidently, and was about to speak until Robert beat him to it. "I'll go first, Professor."

The Bloodhound turned and looked at the human with interest, not really expecting that. "Are you sure, my boy? I don't want you to feel pressured in any way. I know you are still trying to take in everything up to now and I don't want things to feel like they are rushing for you any more than they already have."

Robert merely nodded his head and smiled lightly. "It's alright, mate. You inquired about me first back on the ship so I'll go first. It's only fitting. Besides, at the very least, it will give me something to do here. If I'm going to be stuck here then I want to at least provide in some way, to do something that can help me new friends."

Everyone watched in silence as Robert was motioned to a chair, which he sat in without a word. Now one saw or heard the silent growl that Exile gave off, not like even the Husky would realize it himself.

The professor then took Robert's right arm and skillfully tied a tourniquet securely around it. Pressing his furry and padded fingers around the limb to find the vein. Finding it after a brief search, he took a rubbing alcohol swab and carefully sterilized the area before tearing open the packet to grab the right needle. Connecting a tube to it once the right one was selected, the professor then pierced the skin with the needle with focused precision; the human wincing some as it stung a bit.

"Alright, here we go," Hubert said as he plugged in the blood tube and, just like that, the blood shot into the needle and then into the test tube. The small container filled up with a crimson liquid as it was soon removed and another one is placed in. A minute passed before the professor had 4 different ones filled. He untied the tourniquet and pulled the needle free; then bandaging up the wound.

"Ok, now open wide," Hubert said as he then picked up a large cotton swab. Nodding, the human opened his mouth as wide as he could and then let out a light sigh as he felt the soft-feeling cotton make contact against the surface of his tongue; the feeling rather soothing. Robert felt relaxed as his tongue was rubbed over before it moved onto the hallows of his cheeks (even stretching them out to the sides some in the process), soaking up the saliva that is present. Once enough is collected, the tool is pulled out and placed into another tube which is then capped off.

“Last one,” The professor commented as he picked up a small pair of scissors. Reaching up, he grabbed a small lock of hair, being careful he slowly snipped off the hair, separating it from its owner. Taking the lock of hair he puts it in another fresh tube, making sure to seal it so as not to risk contamination. He then took all the samples and put them in a nearby container. “Good, you’re all done for now.”

“That wasn’t so bad,” Robert gave a simple smile as he got up. Before anyone could say anything, Exile then sat down in the seat; saying nothing, with both eyes narrowed. No one had any idea what that was about, but didn’t question it as whatever it was quickly disappeared as Robert now stood with the others.

“Ok then, hold still,” The professor said as he went to work. The next few minutes were spent as each Rover took their turn giving samples. It went smoothly as there were no complications, and soon all the samples were sealed and stored. “Thank you, this is the first step of it all; know that there will be more to come. Yet that will come at a later time; for now you must rest, as you all will need it.”

Hearing that, the Master then got all their attention. “Well, since the Professor doesn’t require any further out of you for now, I declare you all are dismissed for the day. No doubt you need it to recover.”

“Yes, Master! Thank you, Master!” Hunter saluted, answering for all of them. They all needed rest as they still hadn’t fully recovered from what they have been through.

“Rah, rah,” Shag barked out, rubbing his eyes.

“Uhh...what did he say now?” Robert couldn’t help but ask, not understanding a single word.

“He said he’s going to sleep for the rest of the day; for he has been up all night long taking the civilians back home and then coming back to pick us up,” Hunter responded back normally.

Both of the human’s eyes widen in surprise and confusion, “You got all that from just two sounds?”

“Two sounds?” Hunter scratched his head. “I never really noticed.”

“Rah!” The Sheepdog waved before walking out of the lab, stretching his arms and yawning.

The Master then turned to the remaining four Rovers, “In the meantime, can one of you show Mr. Kingman around and also show him where he will be staying for the time being?”

"I can do that," Colleen happily volunteered with a smile. This earned a return smile from the human, yet a silent growl from Exile. "I too will help," Exile suddenly said, as he found that he didn't want the two by themselves for some reason.

"That is acceptable; dismissed," The Master said with a nod.

.....

Later on, night filled the outside as stars were scattered among the night sky. Thankfully, there was no full moon this time. The day seemed to have been a long one as the Rovers took the time to show their new friend around.

The human was amazed at all of what he saw on the tour and never in his wildest dreams thought he would get to witness or experience something like it. The room he would be staying in was actually far more luxurious than he ever anticipated. It made him feel like he was already part of the team with all the accommodations he had been given.

Robert had been shown the shower room and allowed to be alone to clean up, which was quite refreshing. He was given some simple fitting clothes afterwards; a simple white muscle-shirt and black shorts. They didn't really have any shoes for him, as the only full footwear they had were part of the uniform; yet he did get some strap-on sandals. While not his most common attire choice, it was all comfy and worked out for him either way.

All of that took most of the day and right now Robert found himself outside, as there is some kind of lounge just beyond the door. "Blimey," he couldn't help but say as he took in the sight of the beach that was right outside of the HQ. He could feel the light breeze blowing through the leaves of the nearby palm trees, and hear the waves from the underground spring/lake washing up against the sand. Plus, see the light-up sky above as many stars could be seen. He could not tell if it was really real or just part of the ecosystem setup underground, but he didn't care; as it was a truly amazing sight to behold.

"Hey, Rob! Over here, dude!" Hunter's voice called out.

Looking nearby, the human found the Retriever, along with Blitz, Exile and Colleen; all of the Rovers wearing casual clothing (Exile and Blitz with tight muscle-shirts like Robert while Colleen and Hunter wore simple t-shirts, but they all wore sandals and shorts), and all of them sitting on outdoor seats all arranged into a small lounge. Looking like a cozy place to just relax outside and listen to the elements, he made his way over. He saw Exile sitting next to Colleen, and a spot open next to her so he sat down there to her other side. Exile ended up narrowing his eyes at this for a moment, but did nothing else.

Colleen turned to Robert and placed a welcoming hand upon his exposed broad shoulder, "Glad you could make it, mate."

The human smiled and greeted back in good company. "Glad I could too. I wouldn't miss this for the world, luv."

Exile leaned forward from his side and gave a look of pride to their new companion. "So, comrade; what you think of setup so far?"

Robert gazed up at the sight above. "It is positively smashing, mate. It's something I never imagined I would get the pleasure to see...then again, I never expected to end up where or how I am now either."

Blitz's seat lay in front of Colleen where he flashed her a smile with a wink which she returned with a giggle. It was seen by everyone else, but it wasn't questioned; almost as if it was a normal thing now. Which is odd itself as Colleen normally wouldn't have done that before, but it was ignored by all for some reason.

Hunter, meanwhile, was seated at the side of the four where he had a full view of both sides. The Retriever had a look of contentment and relaxation upon his face as he clapped his hands before those present, catching their attention. "Alright now, everyone's here."

The other three Rovers present along with their new human companion turned their attention to Hunter who looked at everyone and giving a warm smile yet with eyes filled with conviction. "This team is no stranger to hardship and yet...here we stand, Rovers." The four were now listening intently to the Retriever's words, the Rovers knowing their leader's speeches always had a silver lining to them.

"We've all known the feeling of fang and claw tearing into us from an unexpected enemy. Plus it may have left us feeling differently in ways we still can't understand right now and yet...here we stand, Rovers." Hunter then reached and gripped his shoulder, which is where the bite had formerly been. This prompted everyone to do the same and clutch the spots on where they were bitten and/or scratched as a result of the werewolf pack; all of them did it in sync or out of instinct.

Robert, Colleen, and Exile touching/feeling their own shoulders which were bitten by the werewolves while Blitz touched the side of his neck which the werewolves had scratched. They all were still cursed, yet they felt no real shame in it and did not even see it as a curse anymore; in a way, it was now seen as a badge of honor at this point.

Despite that feeling and contemplation, they heard their leader talking still; now with a wolf-like growl to his tone. "We have all suffered under the cruel whims of those both human and non-human who wished to impose their will upon others to do what they themselves can't and yet...**here we stand, Rovers.**" Hunter pumped a fist out in declaration.

Blitz, Exile, Colleen, and Robert all found themselves joining in with Hunter's mood, feeling deeply inspired and motivated. They also thrust their arms up into the air in an approving cheer. All of them growled like wolves as well, obviously thinking of the feral werewolf pack who forced this change upon them and all those people; feeling greater satisfaction that they were no more now.

"This team is built upon an unshakeable foundation of honor and respect, and in no other way has this become more evident than with the introduction of our newest edition to the pack...Robert Kingman, the **Wolf of the Highlands**." Hunter pointed his hand towards the human who looked back at the Retriever with surprise at the new title. Yet it was overshadowed by awe and pride, the other Rovers turned to him as well and smiled in praise. "Despite not knowing us for very long, he has long since supported us like others from afar yet found it in himself to trust us after inadvertently helping to save our pack from being broken apart by something that was beyond our comprehension."

Robert found himself blushing somewhat with the praise, placing a hand behind his head bashfully. He normally enjoyed such attention; yet this kind made him feel rather warm and fuzzy, but in a good way. "Well now, mate...thanks for the new title, but I was just doin' what was right; like what any just bloke should."

"It is more than that and you know it, luv." Colleen patted the human's broad shoulder once more. "The way we see it, you practically already are a Road Rover now. You went through this whole ordeal as much as we did and helped us get out of it as much as we did for you."

"Da, comrades are right." Exile reached out from his side and pat Robert's back in a friendly manner. "You are part of pack now, like brother to me. You being here would make things more interesting with human Rover. Besides, I have wanted new sparring partner who can match me. Ever wanted to face Rover in test of strength, comrade?" The Husky then gave a competitive smirk as he pulled off his shirt and thrusting out his fists in rapid punching motions, puffing out his massive chest (even rolling his broad shoulders and bouncing his mighty pecs for emphasis) before pounding it with a hand; almost as if daring him to strike. Yet, it felt like a genuine honorable challenge at the same time.

Robert suddenly found himself looking forward to the Husky's issued challenge and removed his own shirt before thrusting out his own broad chest (rolling his own massive shoulders and bouncing his own mighty pecs) and slamming his fists together in acknowledgment, smirking back. "You want a challenge, mate? You got it! I could even teach you and the others the ways of the wrestler if you are interested in a crash course...I've never backed away from a challenge and I won't ever be, especially not now!" Most of those words were directed at Exile, the competitive nature sparking up once more yet in a friendlier manner this time around.

Exile still smirked in confidence as he and Robert then slammed their powerful chests against each other's as a show of brotherhood and sportsmanship while Colleen applauded the display, even blushing slightly at the sight of the impressive muscles being shown off. That alone caused any tension to be diminished as nothing but good clean fun filled the air around them.

Blitz then leaned forward from where he was. "If you want, I could show you how to make yourself handsome for the ladies as well as how to put on a show. Anything for a fan and new pack member to make themselves look as presentable as possible. I could even teach you to groom yourself." The Doberman even held out a hand.

Robert broke away from his 'contest' with Exile to look at Blitz and laughed heartily at what was offered. "I don't know about that, mate. Never considered myself much of a model before, but who knows? Might be something I could try out in me spare time; could be fun to learn." He grasped the Doberman's offered hand firmly in confirmation and they shook.

Blitz smiling and nodding. "Ja, I will hold you to that. I promise you won't regret it."

"We must let previous questionable decisions fall aside." Hunter picked back up, getting the group's attention once more. Hunter locked eyes with Blitz when he spoke first, the Doberman nodding in understanding; any previous regret he had for refusing the cure before now gone. "We are a team, regardless of standing. The sun has set on one of our toughest trials yet, one that left scars deeper than we ever thought possible...and yet, our bonds have never emerged stronger until now."

The Retriever turns his eyes to Colleen and Exile, both of whom nod at Hunter before smiling to each other. "We may have lost a chance to be normal, but we gained something even better...a new strength, a stronger bond, and a new pack member." He turns his gaze to Robert once more who smiles and nods in camaraderie.

Hunter then addresses them all with his sight on all of them now. "One other thing though, we were never *normal* to begin with. 'Normal' is a setting on the dryer. Our kind, we don't get normal; so this is nothing to make us any more different. Normal is boring, but different is exciting. We were different before this and we still are now. We got into this together and we will make our way through it together, like a real pack does."

Hunter then crossed his arms across his chest and stood tall, his muscles puffing out proudly. "I promise you that no matter what comes after this, I will never give up. Same for all of you, I take it?" The other Rovers and Robert all nodded with grunts of agreement as the Retriever nodded back. "We swear now that no matter what comes our way after this, no matter what tests we have to face, even if this new change of ours is permanent...we never stop moving forward, we never stop believing in ourselves and in each other, we never lose sight of who we truly are. No matter what, come what may...**we keep on living.**"

Hunter, Blitz, Colleen, Exile, and Robert all shared a look of conviction and determination as Hunter then uncrossed his arms and presented a hand forward. "I have to know, as a pack...are you with me?" With cheers of agreement, the other Rovers and their new human pack member thrust out their own hands and put them on top of Hunter's.

"Whoa...mates, look!" Robert then pointed up towards the sky.

It was then they all looked up at the sky, all five of them seeing the moon shining bright in the sky through a special 'opening'. It wasn't full, more like a half moon; yet it caught their full attention instantly, the ideal balance of black and white appealing to them for some reason. They weren't sure of what was going on, but they all stood up together; never taking their eyes off the sky. For some reason they felt bonded together...much closer than they have felt in a long while, surpassing from when they first got together. This even branched out to Robert as he felt lumped in with them.

The human felt some kind of...comradery with the Rovers, almost like he has known them his whole life. They felt like friends, comrades...but above all else, family. A feeling from deep down suddenly surfaced within him, as well as with the others. A growing feeling of need started to come forth as a primal desire came to be and took over. Together they all reared their heads back, and sucked in a deep breath. "AAAAAARRRRROOOOOHHHHHHH!!!!!!!" The five howled at the moon with all their might together, signifying a new beginning together.

This isn't the end...but more like the beginning of something new.

END