

Werewolf 201

Chapter 201: Blame him!

Gary stood there with his fists down by his side, his knuckles slightly bleeding from hitting the bat. In his current form, his body was still human. He might no longer have the strength and speed of a regular one, but his skin was still just as fragile. He knew it based on the amount of times he had been stabbed.

The students sat there in disbelief, that out of all people, Gary had been the one to stand up and knock out a gang member. Not counting his own classmates, hardly anyone had known about him until his contribution at the Rugby match against Eton High. While he had briefly enjoyed some friendly greetings here and there, he had quickly gone back to being 'that one kid who had dyed his hair green'.

At that moment, they all had the same thought, he was brave... or stupid. He had done something that none of them did, but at the same time, this was also an idiotic thing to do. As impressive as it was, he would face the same problem as John, there were more gang members than he alone could ever take.

The other red colour gang members understood that and were coming to surround him. They were a bit cautious after seeing him smash a wooden bat with brute strength. There were also still plenty of them, between where he was and where Mr Root and Riv were as well.

"GARY!" A female voice shrieked loudly. Everyone turned their heads to see whoever had let out this banshee cry. As it turned out, it was another teacher, Miss Bedford. The pear shaped older woman with glasses was huffing and panting.

"Why did you do that?! Don't you understand that the rest of us might get punished for what you just did!" She continued to shout. "Don't fight them! Just let them have whatever they want and they will be gone!"

"Please, you're not going to hurt us because of what he did to you, right?" The teacher practically begged Riv. "Just hurt him! Please don't hurt us!" She cried again, looking at the other gang members that were around them.

Hearing these words, Tom had to hold his tongue from cursing at their teacher. Gary was the only one that had decided to step up and stop them from further hurting Mr Root. He was risking his own hide to protect everyone.

However, unlike Tom, another voice suddenly sounded out. "She's right, please don't hurt us! We aren't his friends. We don't even know him that well." Surprisingly, it was Steven. He was one of the students Josh had asked to fight off the invaders, yet he hadn't joined in at the last moment. "He's just another one of those troublemakers and delinquents. We are no part, just take them!"

Soon, more students were chiming in out of fear, seeing this scene, Riv couldn't help but laugh deviously once again. The red colour gang leader found it deeply satisfying seeing humans reveal their true nature as beings who cared about nothing else but themselves.

"Are they all stupid?!" Innu whispered in frustration as he clenched his own fists in anger. It was one thing for the other students and teachers to be cowering in fear, hoping to get out of this situation, but actively distancing themselves from Gary...

"What do they think is going to happen? That they just beat some of us up and call it a day? What if they've come to take all the girls away, or take all of us? Would they still be so willing to sit back and do nothing?

"I bet if they were the ones getting hit out there, they would be crying and begging for his help as well."

In reality, there were more than a few students who agreed with Gary's approach. Unfortunately, just like John, they were too afraid of the consequences to voice their opinion now, much less act.

"Shut up!" Gary shouted back at Mrs Bedford and his fellow schoolmates. "I'm not fighting them or for any of you. Why the hell should I give two sh*ts about you guys and what you think? I have people I care about, and people I don't care about, so I'm getting out of here!"

Running forward, Gary was heading straight for Mr Root. Suddenly, one of the red gang members stood in front of him. Not slowing down his momentum, the green haired teenager rugby tackled him, lifting him up into the air, and slammed the person down before the other red colour gang members could do anything.

The back of their head hit the hall floor, and they were in such great pain that they weren't going to get up any time soon. Seeing this, though, the other members switched to a more aggressive approach. They intended to hit him from the back with their weapons first, but before they could reach him, another surprising turn of events occurred.

One of them felt their shirt being pulled back, while another received an elbow right into his face. Two others had been kicked in the back of the leg right where their knee was, causing them to fall to the floor. Before they could even turn around to see who had done that, they got finished off with another kick to their head.

None of the red colour gang members had come close to touching Gary.

“Let’s get out of here. I’m with you!” Innu shouted.

“I hope we’re among those people you care about.” Kai smirked.

“I hope you don’t mind me tagging along. I think I have better chances with you than all those backstabbers over there.” Blake stated.

The three of them couldn’t sit back any longer, and since Gary had decided to act, they couldn’t just stand and do nothing. This was their best chance to get out of the situation.

“Damn, look at all those guys showing off.” Marie sighed.

Chapter 202: Stampede

Seeing Marie having a strange look on her face, there was one person who was worried about her.

“Don’t worry, Marie, I know you must be scared, but I’ll figure a way for us to get out of this place while they are fighting.” Tom exclaimed, trying his best to sound confident as to not let her worry. Marie just gave him a sad smile, because she wasn’t scared. No, the high school girl was just upset because she understood that she wasn’t strong enough to openly join the others, and revealing that she had brought blades into school would cause a problem down the line.

Together with Innu, Kai and Blake, Gary was able to form somewhat of a circle to deal with the red colour gang members that were charging towards them. The four teenage boys were skillful enough to deal with them, while also not getting hurt. The students were baffled at the sight they were witnessing, for it looked like a scene out of some movie.

They couldn't understand how John and the other members from the fighting clubs had failed so miserably against the gang members, and yet these four made it look easy. At the same time, it appeared as if the gang members were getting concerned about what was happening in front of them to the point that they had kept their eyes off everyone else who was sitting down.

However, out of all of them, there was one person who stood out. Gary didn't care if he got hit, he just continued to fight non-stop like a machine. The high schooler even lifted one of the gang members by the neck, throwing him towards another wave of gang members.

At one point, another baseball bat was heading towards him, yet he grabbed it with his bare hands, swinging it, hitting another member and breaking it at the same time.

"Gary, you have to do something. Unlike you, we don't have unlimited stamina! They don't care about Mr Root on his own, so let's cause some chaos. If possible, go and open the door." Kai advised his friend.

Gary understood his upperclassman's logic. He covered his head with his arms and started to charge forward, running as fast as he could towards the back door, since there were less red colour gang members remaining on that side.

The others tried to get in his way, but with his speed and strength he was like a bull. The high schooler just rushed into people, knocking them over, but then, just before reaching the double door, a large figure stood in front of it.

It was the one red colour gang member that was nearly as large as Mr Root. The giant adult took on a sumo like stance as he got ready to stop Gary from advancing any further.

'He's a big guy, and he looks to be tough, but I need to get past him NOW!'

[3 Points have been allocated into Strength]

[Your base Strength is now at 18]

[Skill activated Controlled Transformation]

[Agility 15 (+3)]

Without hesitation, Gary placed all of his available stat points into Strength, while also boosting his speed via Controlled Transformation to change the bottom of his legs.

He had only changed them ever so slightly, in order to give him a boost in speed at the last second. Using his power to springboard himself off the floor, Gary flew up like a rocket, and the large gang member was unprepared for what he was about to face.

The gang member could hardly hold back the power, and his body was pushed back, slamming itself into the metal door. The chains and door began to give way, breaking a gap in them, and the back of the door had dug into the man's back.

"Get out of my way!" Gary shouted, as he jumped from where he was and threw out a kick, hitting the man on the side of the head, and causing him to be fly to the side and fall to the floor.

The door had given in, but it wasn't completely done yet. Grabbing the chains, Gary pulled on them. Using Controlled Transformation on his arms, his forearms grew slightly bigger, and the chains eventually snapped. Kicking the door open, the escape route was now open to everybody.

The students and teachers still couldn't believe it. The large man who had terrified all of them, had just been defeated and not only that, Gary had secured a way to freedom. Strangely, for some reason he wasn't going through it, instead he seemed to be making his way back towards the stage.

"Everyone, what are you waiting for?!" John screamed at the top of his lungs. "Let's get out of here!"

After John had screamed those words, it served its purpose to wake everyone up from their stupor. One would think the teachers and students were being chased by a zombie horde, as they all pushed each

other to be the first to run through the small exit. The power of more than six hundred people storming in one direction was too much for even the red colour gang members to take.

None of them could put a stop to it, as they were simply overwhelmed by the suddenness of their action. The large group that had been so frightened and scared one second had suddenly transformed into something akin to a wildebeest stampede.

Storming towards the exit, the only thing Gary didn't expect was for him to be swept up in the crowd of people as well. No one stopped to thank him, and for a moment he was afraid of getting trampled.

"Gary!" He heard a familiar voice. Hearing it, the teenager immediately pushed past the people, shoving them out of the way, and he could see that Tom had fallen down. The others were stepping over him, hurting him while not even caring what they were doing, and he also looked to be covering another one as well.

Seeing this, Gary quickly pushed past everyone, and went over to his best friend. When picking him up, he could see that he had shielded Marie from the mass of people. He then stood around them, like a solid wall. Making sure that no one else hurt them any more. In the end, everyone had escaped through the door, and the only ones that were left were Gary, Tom, and the three who had decided to stand up with him.

"Those people...what is wrong with them?" Gary asked, as he made sure his best friend and Marie were okay. Tom had suffered a few bruises, but he seemed to be mostly fine and okay otherwise. What Gary was most surprised about was how his weak little friend, who had never gotten into a single fight in his life before, had selflessly decided to protect someone.

"Hey!" Kai shouted, trying to grab Gary's attention.

Turning around, Gary could see that the others had already made their way to Mr Root, checking up on their teacher. They didn't want to move him, just in case he was seriously injured, but there was something else that was more shocking.

'The red colour gang, where are they?' Gary looked around, only to see the other door had also been unlocked. The dozen or so gang members that they had beaten were still on the floor rolling about in pain, but the rest had seemingly escaped in the panic.

"I think they used some type of jammer in this hall. When you opened that door, it allowed everyone to escape, so they should be able to use their phones again. They were probably afraid that the police would come soon. That's what I was hoping for, but I didn't expect everyone else to act the way they did." Kai explained, before he let out a sigh.

Walking over to Mr Root, Gary went over to see his condition for himself. The teacher's face didn't look too bad because they mainly focused on other areas, yet he seemed to be hurt everywhere else.

"Hey, broccoli head... you were... amazing back there." Mr Root coughed out, and it sounded like he was choking on something. "You know... ever since you joined I was... I was always watching you'... I saw what you did. How you were able to analyse everyone's movements."

"Stop." Gary worried that the large adult had to be hurting just from speaking.

"No... I want you...you... to know that you were always special. I was just waiting for you to shine... and I'm so happy that I...you...you got to..."

It was at that moment that Gary realised something.

"His heart rate is slowing down!" The high schooler reported in a panic. "Somebody call an ambulance!!!"

Chapter 203: No more of this!

An ambulance left the school a little while later, yet the only students who seemed to care were those who belonged to the Rugby team, as well as those like John who felt guilty about Mr Root's sacrifice. Gary, had watched the ambulance drive off into the distance until he couldn't see it any more, worried about his teacher.

'Is it my fault that everyone I actually somewhat care about ends up being hurt? Why didn't I just act sooner? I should have stood up when Mr Root took the blame... NOT after they had beaten him up so badly...'

“It’s not your fault.” Kai spoke up to comfort his friend. Turning his head, Gary could see that the others were there as well. The other members of the Howlers along with Tom.

“We should have acted from the beginning. I wasn’t much better than the rest of those scared sheeple. I was too worried about that...” Kai let out a frustrated sigh.

It seemed like his upperclassman understood how the green haired teenager was feeling and blamed himself for his earlier advice of just observing the situation first. Nevertheless, Gary understood what Kai was really worried about... whether the Underdogs or the Grey Elephant might have been behind that entire attack.

They still had no idea why the red colour gang would do something so daring in the first place.

“Kai... I want to put a stop to all of this mess. I don’t want anything like this to ever occur again, be it in our school, our town... or my home.” Gary eventually said.

“So do I.” Innu stepped forward, and the rest did as well, standing by Gary’s side.

Although Riv had managed to escape with most of his men, the high schooler had not only managed to save his schoolmates, he had also completed his Quest.

[Quest reward: Instant Level Up + Bonus Exp]

[Congratulations, you have now reached: Level 13]

[A stat point has been granted]

Aside from the Instant Level Up, which had earned Gary the obligatory stat point, he had further received 2 Exp for each person that had gotten out of the situation unharmed. Unfortunately, the number had dropped a bit, which suggested that Tom wasn’t the only one who had been hurt when people had stormed out of the main hall.

That, coupled with Gary having defeated a few gang members, meant that he was currently sitting on [Exp 1546/2346].

Gary had noticed that after getting stronger, especially after he had chosen the Warrior Class, the amount of Exp he would gain for people he could easily defeat had further lessened. As such, he wasn't too disappointed that his rewards had 'only' been in the form of an Instant Level Up and extra Exp, rather than a new skill.

Turning around, the group went back to the others. All the students had gathered at the field. Headmistress Young, who hadn't been at school at the time of the attack, rushed over as soon as she was contacted. Right now, she and the other teachers were busy doing a headcount.

The police had arrived a few minutes before the ambulance and already started to investigate the scene, while some officers had asked the teachers and students for testimony about what happened. They were confident in their chances to catch the criminals since they were able to apprehend the red colour gang members that Gary and the others had knocked out earlier.

"Hey, that's them, right? They're the ones who fought off those gangsters." One of the students whispered while pointing at Gary's group.

"Yeah, I mean, we all saw the green haired kid, but I couldn't see the others well. I'm not surprised Blake stood up for us!"

"They were kinda cool when fighting. I didn't know they were that strong."

Gary might have enjoyed the compliments from his fellow students if it had been in the past, but not today, especially not after the vocal majority had tried to make him into a straw man. For a second, he caught Mrs Bedford glancing his way, and Gary just stared back at her. The female teacher turned her head, unable to look him in the eyes.

Eventually, after waiting outside for some time, Gary, and his group had been approached by the two police officers. One of them in a long brown coat while the other looked quite young wearing a blue shirt with straps.

“Nice to meet you, kids. I’m Chief of Police, Anton Milstun, and here’s my little helper, Roo Game.” The older one introduced both of them.

“We just got the reports from your teachers and students about what had happened. Unless you want to add anything, I believe we have heard enough about your ‘courageous’ act.” Anton sighed, seemingly unwilling to say what came next.

“What you guys did back there was a very dangerous thing. While it might have worked out in your favour this time, you shouldn’t forget that those were gang members.

“Most colour gang members might be low on the totem pole and not too different from a regular school delinquent, but you never know what someone might do when pushed into a desperate situation. Of course, none of you will get into trouble for what you did. It was self-defence, after all!”

“Sigh... personally, I think all of you did the right thing. You acted when no one else did, and while it was reckless of you, I’m glad that things turned out well. I hope to have more people like you on our police force. Still, the next time you find yourself in a tough situation... Please, just run and call us!”

After saying what he wanted to say, it looked like the police chief was off, but he did have another thought on his mind as he turned around and looked at the kids.

‘This school... it’s the same one that deceased kid went to if I’m not mistaken. We only ever found his fingerprints on the knife, making it clear that he had been the aggressor. According to the gathered testimonies from her peers and lack of any criminal history, it must have been done on emotion...

‘Which means most likely it was someone they knew. We checked all those that were close to him, but could it be that maybe the person who did that to him is here? Is the one we are looking for in this school. Come to think of it, isn’t this school also the one White Rose visited because of a suspected unregistered Altered?’

Anton started to scratch his head, contemplating if all of this was coincidence or if there might be some sort of connection. It was a bit of a reach, but he had learned never to put anything off. However, that would have to be done some other time. Right now, the most important thing was to find out just why the red colour gang had gone so far against this school.

“Sir!” One of the other officers came running towards the two of them. They hadn’t moved far from their spot and Gary with his hearing was able to listen in on everything that was being said

“I have a report to make. All the students have been accounted for, apart from one. The teachers checked and checked again. The one missing is a Xin Clove. She’s the mayor’s daughter!”

Chapter 204: The Lone Wolf

After learning this crucial bit of information, everything seemed to have fallen into place for the Chief of Police. Anton had never thought a colour gang would try to abduct someone in such a crazy manner, but if their target had been the mayor’s daughter, doing so might have been their best shot.

Aside from a few officers who stayed behind to gather some more evidence, the rest of the police force promptly took action and left the school. One of them had informed Headmistress Young, yet the old woman made no announcement about the missing student.

Instead, a different announcement was made.

“All of you must have been looking forward to watching your fellow students display their talents, but given today’s tragic turn of events, I believe it’s for the best to postpone the talent show. Your parents have already been made aware of the situation and will be here to pick you up. For the rest of you, please stay safe and if possible go home in groups.”

Honestly, Gary thought the whole thing to be a bad joke. Who cared about the stupid talent show? If coming in hadn’t been mandatory, the teenager was sure, barely anyone would have shown up on a Saturday. However, based on how the teachers had acted in the situation they were in, he wasn’t too surprised that the old woman wanted to just dismiss everyone.

“It looks like our day ended early, so what do you want to do?” Kai asked, turning towards Gary for a decision.

He wasn’t sure why Kai was asking him, didn’t they already have plans? Or was it because his upperclassman was worried whether Gary was in the mood to still continue. In the end, he only had one thought on his mind at the moment, Xin.

'The police are useless... they won't be able to find her and even if they do, they will be too scared to retrieve her from wherever the red colour gang might have taken her.' Gary thought. 'The red colour gang were here today but were they really here for her? ...or were they here for me and decided just to take her for a substitute. Somehow, I have a feeling that what happened to her today is my fault.' The high schooler clenched his fist as he had made a decision on what to do.

"Is it okay for me to take a rain check on today's plan? I don't think I'll be able to work either." Gary finally said.

While Blake had gone his own way, Tom was still with the group. Seeing the look in his best friend's eyes, he was naturally worried what Gary might have planned. Perhaps tomorrow he would find out that another colour gang had gone missing in Slough over the Dark Web. Yet, what could he do to stop his friend? It wasn't like he could follow him home.

At that moment, looking at his phone, Tom had received a text. It was from his parents, who must have just received news of what had occurred.

"It looks like my parents are on their way here to pick me up. Gary... whatever you plan to do... promise me to stay safe." Tom requested, only to receive a slight nod after some hesitation. He sighed, but understood that to be the best he could have hoped for, so he left the Howlers to discuss things without him.

"It's alright, we don't necessarily need you to come in today." Kai patted Gary on the shoulder. "Today was supposed to be a simple scouting job in the first place. I can head off with the others and bring back the information and fill you in later. Don't worry about your job, either."

"Since we were going to be away, I've asked Austin to prepare some replacement for us this weekend." Kai smiled. "Since they're Austin's 'friends', their wage is on the cheap side. He sent over the three he trusts the most. With them and Mrs Degrace they will be able to look after the place."

"Honestly, what I'm more concerned about is you. It's clear you don't just plan to go home... Nobody doubts your strength, but are you sure you want to go at it alone?"

He looked at the faces of the others, and he could see they were all determined. Wherever Gary would go, they would follow. If he asked them, for the first time in his life he felt like there were people who

would agree no matter what... at the same time, exactly because they had put their trust into him, he couldn't ask them to come along.

Unlike him, they didn't have a reason to save Xin, except for Innu, perhaps. Besides, if anyone could get her out of that situation unhurt, it would be him. As harsh as it sounded, the rest might actually hold him back, if he were to go wild.

"Thank you, guys. We all have a job to do, and this gang needs to move fast. If you guys still feel the same way you did when we saw those red colour gang members here today, then we better get a move on. Let's become big enough that no gang would ever dare to pull off such a stunt in our time!" Gary smiled.

"It looks like someone has gotten into your head!" Innu commented, as he wrapped his arm around Gary's head and started to rub his knuckles in his hair.

"Eww, is this gel? How much did..." Innu was about to ask when Gary gave him a mean look which shut him up.

With everyone gone, Gary decided to head back into school for a while. The teachers weren't meant to let them in, but none of them had the gall to stop Gary after what had happened. The teenager needed something that smelled like Xin, to be able to follow where she was.

Although, it wasn't like her scent was all around, it would only help when he was close. After that, Gary would visit the places where the red colour gang frequently had been seen, and looking at his phone, Kai had already sent him all the information he required for that.

As Gary entered their classroom that was empty, he started to think back to something, and that was Mr Root. Back in the main hall, when Mr Root's heart rate had started dropping, he had been worried he might not make it.

It was impossible to tell how long the ambulance would take to reach them. For one, it was Slough, and they would be called upon at all times of the day. Seeing someone he cared about close to death, he wanted to save him, and there was something he might actually do.

'What if I bite him?' Gary eventually thought.

If he was to bite Mr Root, he might turn his teacher. Given a Werewolf's vitality, his teacher would surely recover. Unlike Billy, if he were to turn his teacher into a Beta wolf, he wouldn't have to worry about the adult trying to usurp his position.

However... What kind of life would Mr Root have to lead if he made him into a Werewolf? Would he hate Gary for turning him into a monster? Perhaps he would even become another monster like Billy, forcing Gary to do what Blake had done to Billy...

Since he hadn't been there, there was no telling how long it took for one to become an Omega wolf. Heck, he didn't even know if there was a guarantee. What if Billy had simply been a unlucky coincidence?

Even if it would work, what about the bloodlust? He still remembered that the very first thing he had read after becoming a Werewolf had been a system message that had stated.

[Your bloodlust has been lowered]

Billy too had said something that Gary remembered at that moment. "I'd killed them both. I didn't do it on purpose. It was as if the hunger and bloodlust took over me!" What if he hadn't lied? What if it was a natural instinct of a Werewolf to attack and feast on the first thing they would see...

In the end, while he had been contemplating his choice, the sounds of the ambulance car had appeared, making him abandon his idea. Still, it did make Gary wonder... whether he could help others by turning them... After all, everyone wanted to become Altered these days, and with a simple bite he could make them become something that was close enough... maybe even better?

'That's a crazy idea.' Gary thought. 'Or is it?'

Chapter 205: The wrong girl

Away from the busy parts of Slough, out in the sticks where there were more open fields and greenery, stood a large house placed behind a gated driveway. Inside that luxury home, not too long ago, Mayor Clove had been informed about the sudden absence of his daughter.

“What the hell do I even pay you for, huh?! You’ve not only failed to properly protect her, NOW YOU’VE ALLOWED HER TO GET ABDUCTED?!” The Mayor shouted and banged his hands on the table in front of him like a toddler throwing a tantrum.

He was breathing heavily due to all the shouting he had done. Ben Clove reached into the side of the suit that he wore that barely fit him these days. The middle-aged man had been gaining a lot of weight ever since he had taken on this job. Bringing out some pills, he took three of them at once and waited for them to do their job.

“Sir, please understand that we are doing the best we can, you blaming us is not helping the situation.” The man dressed in black replied. One would expect some worry when being shouted at by the mayor, but the man with the dragon tattoo crawling up his neck was taking things nonchalantly.

The one sitting opposite the mayor wasn’t just anybody, D was the head of the Rising Dragon gang, one of Slough’s five small-time gangs. Ever since the mayor’s election, they had been cooperating with Ben Clove. In fact, it was mostly due to them that the mayor was able to keep his promise of protecting the high street of Slough, as it was part of their territory.

“One, it was a school day, we were waiting to pick her up at her usual time, the time that she should have been leaving. In fact, we always come an hour early to search the area, and make sure nothing suspicious is seen during that time.

“Yet, this happened little after lunch, and in school of all things. We aren’t allowed to bring guards inside, and we thought that perhaps the school would be adequate to at least stop gang members from attacking. Not that we ever imagined that somebody would ever do this. I admit this was a fault on my part.” D replied, not bowing nor sounding apologetic in his voice.

“I don’t want to keep hearing your excuses!” Ben shouted. “I want solutions to the problem. Why have you not acted yet? It doesn’t take a genius to know that it could only have been the red colour gang who took her, so just get in there and pull her out!”

D simply shook his head there without even giving it a second thought.

“We would have a hard time against the red colour gang on their own, much less now that they have fused with the remnants of the grey colour gang. Attacking the colour gang is the same as offending the Grey Elephants. As one of the biggest gangs in Slough, they could crush our gang if they wanted to.

“Please relax, sir, your daughter will be safe. She’s too valuable as a hostage. I’ve already put in a request to the Grey Elephants leader. Once I get a reply, I will let you know.”

Hearing these words, Ben couldn’t take it any more. The mayor leaned over the desk and attempted to pull on D’s shirt, yet the gang leader simply leaned back to avoid the middle-aged man’s grab, until he felt his back hit something solid.

Turning around, he could see a young man, staring back at him with a sharp stare. He wore a tight sports shirt and his head was towering over him.

“Don’t worry, I’ll do it for you, Dad.” The young man spoke up. He was none other than Jayden Clove, Ben’s firstborn son and one of this country’s Top 50 Altered fighters. He casually lifted D by the scruff of his shirt with a single hand.

For the first time, D looked panicked, and grabbed onto Jayden’s hand, trying to push it away, but it wouldn’t budge at all. Eventually, Jayden threw the man against the wall so hard that it left a small dent on the other side.

“You guys had one job, yet you FAILED to protect my sister. I should wipe out your whole gang for that alone!

“Dad, let me deal with the situation.” Jayden requested with his hand on his chest. “I promise to find Xin. There is not a gang in Slough or anyone that I would come across that I can’t handle.”

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The sound of dripping water was the first thing Xin could hear as she slowly regained consciousness. Her body felt slightly sore all over. When trying to move her hands, the high school girl discovered that she was unable to. The same held true for her legs, only her head had been spared, not that she could do much with that alone.

'They tied me up on a chair. It feels like one of those interrogation scenes in the movies.' Xin thought to herself, trying her best to keep her mind from the bleakness of her current situation. The teenage girl might be a strong fighter, but that was in a normal situation, not when she had been abducted. Right now, she was beginning to feel very scared.

Looking around, she could hardly make out anything. There was barely any light, only a little that shone in through the cracks of the roof above her. The flooring was crooked, with wooden panels sticking out and more. Judging by the fact that they didn't tie up her mouth, she imagined that wherever she was, it would be far enough away from anybody willing to help her.

"HELP!!!" Xin shouted as loud as she could. There wasn't much else she could do, and it was at least worth the shot. Indeed, it did achieve one thing. Soon, she could hear the sound of footsteps from the dark approaching her... followed by an annoying giggle.

"Ah, it's so nice to see you like this." Stepping into a patch of light, Xin could make out a familiar face, though she had already recognised who it was by the annoying sound. The red colour gang leader Riv was standing by Tiffany's side, his smile just as big as the high school girl's.

"I wish I could say the same." Xin replied sarcastically. "You know, I wasn't too sure who set things up for me yesterday. For a moment, I even gave you the benefit of the doubt... however now I just gotta ask... Are you really this stupid?"

The taunt might have gotten to Tiffany another time, but seeing Xin unable to do anything but taunt her, made the class diva cackle.

"You seem to have yet to realise your own situation. Why don't you cry for help again, see how that works for you?" Tiffany made fun of the abducted girl. "I told you, Xin, you chose the wrong girl to mess with! And today you're finally going to pay for everything you did to me! Not just you, but your whole family will as well!"

"I wonder how much the mayor will pay for his sweet little daughter. With a large sum, we'll even be able to get out of this place." Riv commented. "It will be nice to live with you in a Tier-2 city, Tiffy!"

"Of course, darling, that's the plan!" Tiffany held onto the side of Riv's arm.

It was then that Xin started to laugh at herself.

“Haha, you did all of this for money? No wonder, you never accepted my apology. At one point, I actually felt bad for the things I did to you, even though it was an honest mistake. If you just wanted revenge, you could have tried to get me back at school, but you’re asking for money and trying to involve my family.

“You said I messed with the wrong girl... you have no idea.”

Chapter 206: One of the five

After Headmistress Young had dismissed everyone, Kai, Marie and Innu were heading to the bus stop. Austin was already waiting there, since he had been informed over the group chat that they had been let out early.

Right now, the whole gang was riding the bus, heading to an area called Burnham. On the way there, it was obvious that it wasn’t as busy as the rest of Slough, most likely because it wasn’t a residential area. Nevertheless, the area still had someone controlling it, and they made their money off of catering to a certain clientele.

“I can’t believe the red colour gang would not only come to your doorsteps but try to hold your whole school hostage.” Austin stated after getting the full story on the mostly empty bus. The news about the event had spread like wildfire, but with everyone exaggerating, it had been hard to find out how much of it had been true.

“It’s a good thing they didn’t enter my school, otherwise there would have been an outright brawl between the students and the red colour gang. We would have pounded them and taught them a lesson.”

“You mean like the time when Billy entered the school?” Innu interjected. He was sure that Austin would have acted just like Gary, and he didn’t doubt his fellow gang member’s strength... yet he had a feeling it would have turned out no different from John’s resistance. Austin’s stare made Innu quickly change topic. “Anyway, Kai, you said there were five small-time gangs in Slough, so why did you pick this one? It’s really far away, so are they easy or something?”

The second Innu said those words, it was upperclassman's turn to give him a glare, and he instantly understood the mistake he had made. The high schooler couldn't help it, he was just someone who spoke his mind before thinking. No one should ever call any gang easy, underestimating them would be a big mistake.

"We'll have to see about them being an 'easy' target, but them being so far away is actually a good thing." Kai eventually replied after letting out a sigh. "We take over this place, the chance of anyone interfering will be lower than any other location. At the same time, if we leave it alone for a bit, it will be okay as well.

"We still really haven't solved the problem with helping people run the territories we take over. We can't just ask Austin to send over his guys each and every time. If possible, we'll have to persuade some members from the gang we have taken over to work for us.

"Putting them on a payroll isn't a problem, but we still need trustworthy people at the top keeping them in check. Otherwise, other gangs can always swoop in and convince them to stab us in the back while we're small.

"Once we get bigger, and control this place completely like the Grey Elephants or the Underdogs, we'll be okay. At that point, the others won't even try to mess with us."

"Does this place have a school?" Austin suddenly asked. It seemed to be a weird question, yet Kai didn't outright dismiss it, seemingly understanding what the tall teenager was referring to.

"It does, but it's not a school full of delinquents. It doesn't look like the gang uses them as a recruitment basis, but I have to admit that I haven't looked into them too much, so what I have is probably just some surface information. They might have someone like you on the top, since they don't seem to be as disorganised as Eton High was." Kai answered. "Your guys might actually know more about it."

Austin's idea was to pay the school a visit, to challenge its top dog. The delinquents at each school cared about such a hierarchy a lot. In a way, it was a more harmless version of gang wars. If the large teenager could take down the school leaders, then the school delinquents would willingly do the Howler's bidding.

As long as they would be put on the payroll, they should stay fairly loyal. Even a little money looked like a gold mine to those types of students. In a way, this made delinquent students far easier to deal with than gang members, simply because the former had yet to experience the real world.

“Are we really just going to continue ignoring the issue?” Marie finally spoke up. “We all saw that look on his face. Gary has clearly gone off to fight the red colour gang. It’s probably for some revenge because of what they did to Mr Root... I know how strong he is, but what if he gets into trouble?”

“He’s our leader, so shouldn’t we help him?”

The groups seemed to be in somewhat of a silence at this question. Surprisingly, Innu was the one to break it.

“You heard Kai offer him our help. He didn’t want it. While I don’t like him wanting to do things alone, he’s our leader, so we should respect his wishes.” Innu stated. “He could take care of those monstrous twins, so he should be fine... as long as they don’t have more of them...”

At the end, Innu’s voice started to shake a bit and Marie noticed that he had his knee shaking up and down, and that he was fiddling with his hands. It was clear thinking about Gary made him restless.

‘When the hell did this group get so close with each other?’ She wondered, looking down and smiling at the floor.

— —

The group had finally arrived at the Burnham part of town. There seemed to be fewer people here, but the bus had stopped at the main area. It was a Saturday, so quite a lot of families were in this area.

“Wow, I didn’t even know Slough had a place like this... I think this is better than Cipeen.” Innu commented as they walked down the street, every second shop being a restaurant of some kind.

“Depends on what you’re looking for. Cipeen has the nightlife, whereas this place is just filled with restaurants.” Kai shrugged.

The group continued walking down, passing various Chinese restaurants, pizza places, Japanese sushi places, Korean barbecues. It all looked so delicious and there were multiple families inside, but there was one thing that Innu was noticing more than the others.

“There are a lot of beautiful girls here, the workers here are stunning, look at her!” Innu pointed at a girl wearing a traditional Chinese dress with a slit going up her leg. The red dress showed off her long legs, as they walked past yet another Chinese restaurant.

“Wait, now that you mention it, there are an awful lot of girls who work here.” Marie agreed with the observation. That was a signal for Kai to stop in the middle of the street.

“Remember, we are here on a scouting mission, but while we are here, why don’t we all grab a bite?”

It took a long time for the group to decide where they wanted to eat. There were far too many choices, and seeing that everyone’s favourite food was something different didn’t make things easier. Ultimately, they agreed to settle for an all-you-can-eat restaurant that had a little of everything.

Heading inside, Kai paid as they waited for the waiter to bring over their plates and drinks. Even in this place, all they could see were female workers.

“So tell me, these places aren’t really restaurants, right?” Austin eventually asked. The other two turned around, wondering what he meant by this, but judging by Kai’s smile, he was right.

“In some ways, you are right. Of course, restaurants can be a lucrative business, but a gang wouldn’t take control of a whole area just for that.” Kai started to explain. “You see at nighttime this place is something completely different. All the restaurants have a double front. You noticed a lot of girls, right? And all of them being pretty... well, that’s because the gang brings in a lot of trafficking cases and prostitution.

“The reason this place is on the edge of Slough is because their clientele don’t choose those from Slough. It’s a crucial point for us if we want to go beyond Slough at some point, and besides all the other reasons.”

Innu couldn't quite believe it as he looked around, but he started to notice the skimpy dresses they wore, the tired look on their faces and in their eyes... it was starting to make sense.

There was a look on the other members as Kai casually brought up this topic. This was the real gang life... everything was suddenly becoming a little too real for them, and they wondered how Gary would feel about taking over such a place.

Innu looked like he was about to say something, when the waitress was seen approaching.

"Hi there, here are your drinks and the table is for the four of you, correct?" The girl smiled at them all.

Looking at the girl up close, Innu felt like there was something off about her. Sure she was pretty but there seemed to be a lot of makeup on her face. He was starting to feel... bad for her. If they were doing it out of choice then so be it, but the eyes of the one serving them, they didn't seem that way at all.

"Do you like working here?" Innu suddenly asked the waitress. She was startled by the question as she raised the empty tray over her body. The waitress looked out of the corner of her eye at the one man who was in the room with them, one of the very few.

"Please ignore our nosy friend here, he just wanted to say that this here's a great place... that's all. Yes, just four of us will be fine." Kai smiled at the girl, who placed the plate down, before taking her leave. The blonde teenager had paid close attention to the girl, noticing that her name tag read Stacy.

Chapter 207: Two the same

After searching around for a while, the only things Gary found of Xin's were a few of her school books, as well as her pencil case. He had been hoping for something more tangible like an item of clothing. The teenager felt quite strange sniffing her items, but he was trying to save her life, after all. Luckily, there wasn't anyone in the classroom either... However, the smell was too faint.

'It was easier tracking Tom's shirt... then again, I was following the smell of his blood. I guess a Werewolf's nose is just extra sensitive to that.' Gary assumed.

For a brief moment, he was contemplating trying his luck with her locker, but seeing as someone had just stolen her stuff yesterday, he wasn't too optimistic. Instead, he checked his phone. Kai had sent him

a list of known hangout spots for red colour gang members, as well as some supposed bases of operations.

The upperclassman had even added a suggested order for him to check things out. At the end, he had even attached his personal analysis.

[I doubt the red colour gang that attacked today have fled far from the school. Riv himself might have returned to one of their bases, but I bet that a good chunk of those involved in the attack live close by.

[I know you didn't want us to come along, and knowing your strength I can't argue, but since you seem to be planning to attack them, you should at least wear the gang uniform. Don't forget your mask either.]

Gary couldn't help but get a smile on his face, when he read how Kai cared and trusted him.

A short while later, the high schooler found himself in an alleyway that was wider than most. He stopped just around the corner, as he could hear people talking on the other side. Having taken the advice, he was currently wearing his new black and gold blazer as well as the mask he had been gifted.

'The red colour gang came to our school just after Kai told me the Underdogs know about me going to school there. The Grey Elephants should also know my real name by now, so they must be looking for me as well. Either way, right now showing my face isn't the best idea.'

— —

Around the same time, another tall handsome figure in a tight sports shirt was walking around what looked like a fish marketplace. There were countless stalls with different types of fish. Most of them were alive in containers, while others were being freshly cut up. The whole place had a distinctive smell, which was hitting Jayden in the nose.

Still, he ignored it as he was looking for something in particular. Turning his head countless times, he finally found what he had been looking for. Along one side of the market with stalls, there were also a few storefronts.

Heading inside a particular one, Jayden triggered the bell atop of the door.

"I'll be with you as a second, dear customer." The owner spoke from behind the counter. He looked to be talking to three people in the back of the shop. Jayden could clearly make out the red clothing they all shared. Walking up to them confidently, Jayden stood right behind them and was close to the counter top.

There were countless fish on ice, and behind the chopping board the large man would do his work.

"I'll be with you in just a moment." The owner turned around, assuming the newcomer wanted to purchase something.

"It's okay, I'm not here for you." Jayden smiled. "I'm here for them."

Without hesitation, the Altered grabbed one of the gang members by the scruff of his neck, and slammed him right into the pile of fish that laid there in a bed of ice, he twisted and turned his head into the ice creating a few crunching sounds.

The two other members were too shocked at the sudden brutality, but they at least understood that they were being targeted. The one on the right was ready to make a move, though, Jayden kicked him in the side of his leg. A loud snap was heard in the shop, as the man's leg was now bent inward.

The terrifying thing was that it looked as if it had just been a casual kick without much power in it, but it had been enough to cripple the gang member. With his hand still holding onto the back of the first gang member, Jayden lifted his body out of the ice, and slammed it down again. He Lifted it one more time and slammed it into the ice while looking the other person in the eyes.

Blood was forming in the ice, and it was hard to tell if it was from the red colour gang member, or one of the fish. The owner was shaking behind the counter, and seeing as Jayden wasn't interested in him, he had decided to run into the freezing cold container and shut the door behind him.

"Today, your gang attacked Westbridge high school. During the attack, your guys happened to kidnap a girl. Where is she?" Jayden asked as he stared down the remaining gang member.

"I don't know, I wasn't part of the attack!" The twenty something year old had peed his pants in fright, hastily trying to back off, only to stumble over the passed out body of the crippled gang member.

"Well, you seem to at least know about the attack, and something's telling me, you're going to 'remember' more about it in a second." Jayden stated, walking towards him as he let go of the first guy's head. His body just slid down until it eventually fell to the floor.

Desperate to get out of the situation, the gang member searched for something to throw at Jayden. He found the knife which the owner had dropped during his escape, yet the Altered easily evaded the weapon. Jayden let out a sigh, before grabbing the last member's head and dragging him behind the counter.

He then punched the man lightly in the head, before grabbing out his arm and placing it on the table. Next, he picked up the knife that had just been thrown at him.

"Wait! I'll tell you!" The man cried out in a panic.

Not reacting in any way, Jayden swung down the knife, hitting it on the board, and slicing the man's little finger off.

"Get talking, unless you want to lose them all today." Jayden demanded, lifting the knife up once again. "Don't try to bullsh*t me, either, or I WILL be back for you! You should know something about me ... I hate gangs!"

— —

In the alleyway, Gary had found a total of five red colour gang members who seemed to be having a good time together. However, less than a minute later, only one of them was still left standing.

The group had made a bomb fire out of some wood and more, and Gary had yet to get an answer from a single one of them. Currently, he had the last one held by the back of his neck, already beaten quite a bit.

He started to drag his body closer to the fire, making the gang member intensify his struggles.

“Tell me where she is! Tell me where I can find the girl you abducted!” Gary demanded, as he pushed the man’s head closer to the flames, now only inches away.

“STOP!!! I’LL TELL YOU, I’LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING!!!” The man pleaded to be let go.

Once Gary had gotten the information to find Xin, he chucked the man against the wall, knocking him out like the others. As he walked away, he had a single thought in his mind.

‘I hate gangs...’

208 Collision

Stepping outside from an old, beaten down cabin, Riv raised his arm to shield his eyes. The light was shining quite bright outside since it was still the afternoon. He gave himself a few stretches here and there and made sure that everyone was still waiting outside, in their positions.

There were around twenty or so members in total. Most of them had been part of the attack on Westbridge high school, following his orders, and now they were standing here on guard in the middle of the woods. Of course, he couldn’t utilise the whole of the red gang for this, otherwise it would catch the eyes of those above him, which was something he didn’t want. Still, he needed a few to be here for safety. Not that he expected there to be any trouble.

“Looks like everything is going smoothly.” Riv smiled, his trouser pocket was vibrating and picking it up, he could see the name Brandon written across his phone. Looking away, he placed it back in his pocket, ignoring the call.

“With the amount of money we’ll get from this, I won’t need to rely on the Grey Elephants any more. My work has only doubled ever since that idiot Buffin got his arse kicked by some nobodies and I had to take in his stragglers, yet they still treat me like trash!” Riv mumbled in frustration.

One of the members turned around, and the red colour gang leader realised that he needed to keep his lips sealed a while longer.

‘Shit, I have to be careful. The others still think that we’ve kidnapped the mayor’s daughter, following the Grey Elephants’ order. I can’t have any of them inform Brandon now. Once we get the money, Tiffany and I will have to leave Slough ASAP. Then, we can live a happy and long life together. I really do have the best girl.’

“RIV, GET IN HERE!” A voice screamed from inside. Quickly, Riv turned around and headed back into the cabin to see what exactly was going on. The others turned back towards the cabin, and smirked, agreeing that their lander was completely whipped.

“What a simp.” One of them mumbled, making those close to him who had heard his remark snicker.

The area around the cabin was quite open, while the guards were standing around it in all directions, just where the forest trees would start. When one of them turned their head back, they continued to look forward.

‘Man, I wonder how long it's going to take.’ One of the guards thought as he let out a big yawn. The next thing he saw was a fist directly coming towards his face. It was a clean hit that nearly flipped the red colour gang member, and it was safe to say he wouldn’t be getting up anytime soon.

“Hey, who is that!” One of the members shouted, as some of them prepared to pull out their weapons. Small little pocket knives, brass knuckles and more.

“Get that masked freak!” Another shouted.

Two of them ran quickly towards Gary, throwing out a punch each, but the high schooler was able to avoid it quite easily. Charging in, he grabbed the back of their necks of the red colour gang members and pulled their heads down while lifting his knees and jumping, slamming it to their face.

Another gang member had taken out a chain and, not caring about his fellow gang members, had swung it out using it like some type of whip. One of the men who had just been injured was merely concussed, instinctively grabbed onto his assailant’s leg, preventing Gary from going anywhere.

The chains hit his back, hurting him quite a bit.

[-6 HP]

‘Something like that, will never kill me.’ Before the chain fell to the ground or the person could use it again, Gary grabbed and pulled on it. The red colour gang member believed that he would win in a tug of war, yet he was unaware that Gary had used Controlled Transformation on his biceps, adding to his already great strength.

The chain was ripped from his hands in seconds, and with the others getting closer, Gary knew exactly how to use it. He first kicked the member that was holding onto his leg, while swinging the chain at the original user, hitting him in the leg. Given Gary’s speed and strength, the heavy chain caused his leg to snap and made him fall to the ground.

Jayden shouted.

‘I have no reason to go easy on any of you!’ Gary thought, as he continued to spin the chain, hitting the others who were getting close. Eventually he swung it around another and the chain snapped in half.

It seemed to be quite old and rusty, but that didn’t matter, Gary was plenty strong to deal with them all by just using his fists and legs. All the fighting matches he had watched, all the moves he had ingrained in his head from a young age, the teenager was now able to use them thanks to his improved body.

Another gang member came running towards Gary, yet spinning on one of his legs, he kicked the charging guy with the side of his foot. The gang member fell and slid across the ground, kicking up the leaves on the floor.

‘This new uniform is great. What material is it even made out of? It seems to not rip as easily even if I use Controlled Transformation. Like it can expand with my body as well. Did Kai get this specially made for me?’ Gary wondered.

Five of the members on one side had already been defeated, and there were still a lot left. Now they were a bit cautious to go at Gary after seeing what he was capable of.

‘This guy is dangerous. We need backup. Why aren’t the other guys coming over to help us? What are they doing?’ One of the members had informed those on the other side about the intruder, though he had yet to receive a reply. It was at that moment that they could see another intruder come in from the side. He was walking calmly, approaching the cabin, and the whole group turned to look at him.

“Looks like I’m in the right place.” The man in a sport shirt said, cracking his knuckles as he got into a fighting stance, at the same time Gary recognised who the person was. How could he not? Not only had Gary seen him on TV multiple times before, he had even been saved by him.

It was none other than Jayden Tiger, one of the top 50 Altered fighters of their country.

‘What is he doing here?’ Gary wondered. ‘It can’t be... is he... working with the red colour gang?! No, that should be impossible. They’re too small for that. ... Shit, could it be that the Grey Elephants are his sponsors like the Underdogs are for Kirk?!’

The next second, Jayden had run across the area, and threw a fist, but it wasn’t aimed towards the red colour gang members, instead it was coming straight for Gary.

“I have a good sense for these things. You look like the strongest, so it's best to deal with you first!” Jayden shouted.

Chapter 209: Fighting an Altered

The fist coming towards Gary was fast, a little too fast, thankfully there was some space between the two of them that allowed him to at least do something. Lifting his arms up in a cross shaped position, the only thing he could do in time was block.

Jayden threw out the punch a bit widely, there was no technique involved, he had just run and thrown a punch out. Hitting Gary, he skidded along the ground for a bit before stopping. His arms were heavy and sore. They were throbbing like a heartbeat and each time the pain would get worse.

[You have been inflicted with a grave injury]

[-15 HP]

[79/100 HP]

[Bones in your arms have been broken]

[Energy points will be used to perform emergency healing]

[-10 Energy]

‘Holy f*ck.’ Was Gary’s first thought. A few moments later, he felt a rush of pain in his forearms. ‘I know he’s one of the top 50 Altered fighters, but my Endurance isn’t a joke... what’s more, he hasn’t even transformed yet! You’re telling me a single punch did that much damage?!’

[Emergency healing now in progress]

“Hey, isn’t that guy Jayden Tiger? I swear it looks just like him.” One of the gang members exclaimed.

“Are you crazy? What would someone like him be doing here? Did someone hire him?” Another replied.

Unlike the high schooler, Jayden wasn’t wearing a mask nor hiding his identity in any other way, simply because he wasn’t worried about some gang members recognising him. He would happily deal with anything that was to come after this event. At the same time, there were plenty of people that would happily stay clear of him as well.

‘Wait a minute, something’s wrong?’ Gary thought. ‘If Jayden was really working for them... then wouldn’t they already know who he is? ... but then why is he here? And why did he decide to beat me into a pulp?!’

“Hang on, I think there’s a mis-” Unfortunately, the teenager didn’t get a chance to explain himself.

“I told you my instincts were always right.” Jayden smiled. “You are the strongest out of them. It looks like your arms are in pretty good condition still, so let’s do this.”

For whatever reason, the Altered started to take off his sports top and threw it down on the ground, revealing his six-pack abs and his chiselled body. This wasn’t simply the body of an athlete, but one of an Altered. It looked like a person’s body which had been enhanced by performance drugs and then further photoshopped, but it was right here in the flesh.

‘What do I do? How do I get myself out of this one? ... and why THE HELL did he take off his shirt?!’ Gary had trouble comprehending the absurdity of the situation. He had come here to save Xin, yet he had somehow ended up fighting one of his idols.

Identifying him as the larger threat, the red colour gang members ignored Gary for the time being and charged forward towards Jayden, yet the Altered didn’t even look away from the masked teenager. He was like a beast who had found its prey, and it wasn’t going to let Gary go.

Once the two members were close enough, the Altered fighter swung his arms, and the next moment the two grown men were already on the ground, knocked out cold. Gary was barely able to see the punches. More so, he had heard the impact on their faces, and he was sure a couple of them had broken noses or missing teeth.

“I’m surprised to find someone like you in a place like this. Why would you work for a gang?” Jayden asked, charging forward again.

“Listen, I’m n-” Once again, the high schooler failed to correct the Altered. It was as if he had already made up his mind about Gary being part of the colour gang, even though his outfit should have been a dead giveaway...

‘Damn it, I’ll use Controlled Transformation, buy enough time for him to notice. I can’t leave now, I have to save Xin... even if that means I have to defeat him first!’

Gary expanded his muscles, and through his shirt he could feel they were now like two small cannonballs. He got into a boxing-like stance and waited for the right time. Instead of joining in the fight, the remaining gang members had decided to run back into the cabin, leaving only the two to duke it out outside.

"See, some loyal gang members you have there!" Jayden shouted to the frustration of the masked high schooler.

Gary threw out a punch, a perfect jab like Kirk had shown him. It was clean and smooth and most importantly it was fast. Unfortunately, the punch was also telegraphed, allowing Jayden to predict his actions from a mile away.

He moved his head down slightly and to the right, avoiding the punch. He could hear the sound of the hit, and could tell it was strong.

"Your body... it's not normal." Jayden commented, but surprisingly rather than panic, he could see that the masked guy's face seemed calm.

'I never thought my punch was going to hit you in the first place. Besides, I know more than just boxing.'

His hand wrapped around Jayden's neck, and Gary was ready to perform his favourite move. He had clinched him, holding him tightly, ready to knee him. The only thing was, Jayden's strength was overwhelming.

Even with a base Strength of 18 as well as the addition from Controlled Transformation, he was finding it hard to hold on to the other's head. When he lifted his knee up for the attack, instead of aiming at the head, he chose to go for the stomach instead. It was a solid hit, and Gary could feel the impact. With this strength, his opponent should have been down for the count. Alas...

"A strong blow, but I've taken thousands of hits to the stomach stronger than this. You're not bad... but you can't compare to an Altered!" Jayden shouted, as he lifted his head and broke free from Gary's grasp, pushing him back. The high schooler lost his balance, and before he had a chance to regain it, the Altered threw a punch deep and to his side, aiming for his liver.

[-16 HP]

'This attack hurts more than the last time he was holding back!'

Before Gary could recover, a kick was already appearing from the other side. The masked teenager lifted his arm, but it was useless as he was knocked to the side, and now on the ground. The kick was too heavy and strong.

[-8 HP]

'I can't beat him, I can't beat him with just the Controlled Transformation. I'll either have to use more of it... or use that again.' Gary thought, but just as he was about to get up the ground and do just that, he was kicked in the face. Flinging his head back and landing spread eagle.

"You have a good body, good power, are fast and can somewhat see my moves. All of that potential, yet you WASTE it, by becoming some gang's lackey!" Jayden sounded really annoyed as he walked over to the body and lifted him by the scruff of his shirt.

"...Streaker boy?!" Jayden exclaimed in surprise as he let go.

Chapter 210: Beast's power

With the barrage of attacks, Gary hadn't even had the chance to register that his mask had flown off from that last kick. It wasn't until Jayden had called him 'streaker boy' that he touched his face and noticed that there was nothing hiding his identity.

"I can't believe a kid like you stimulated my Altered instincts!" Jayden shook his head in disbelief, yet the young adult also looked somewhat troubled how to deal with him. "If I had known that you were in the red colour gang, then I wou-"

"I'M NOT!" Gary quickly interrupted him, finally seeing a chance to clear up the misunderstanding. "That's what I've been trying to tell you the whole time!"

Based on Jayden's earlier actions, as well as his apparent dislike for the red colour gang, the Altered fighter was clearly here on his own. Given their brief interaction on the night of the full moon, Gary hoped that the adult man would at least hear him out now. Getting called by that unique nickname proved that he hadn't forgotten about him... for better or for worse...

"... you honestly want me to believe that?" Jayden questioned the teenager as he lifted him up by his shirt, Gary not resisting. "In that case, why would somebody like you be here, huh?!"

"Does my uniform look like I'm part of their gang?" The high schooler asked back, while making sure to avoid sounding sarcastic.

Getting a closer look at Gary, it was true that 'streaker boy's' uniform, as well as his mask, were black and golden, rather than red. Holding him up, Jayden faced the forest, and behind Gary there were red colour gang members lying knocked out on the ground or rolling about in pain.

Turning around, he could see his own path of havoc, meaning that someone else had fought with the colour gang. Slowly, the puzzle pieces fit together to form a clearer picture. Jayden eased the grip on Gary's shirt and allowed him to speak.

"It might be hard to believe, but the red colour gang attacked my school earlier today. We resisted, but they managed to kidnap my classmate. I'm just here... I'm just here to bring them back." Gary explained.

"So you're not part of the red colour gang... and you're here for Xin?" Jayden summed it up. For a moment, Gary was shocked that the Altered knew who was inside, yet the teenager quickly nodded. With that, Jayden let go of his shirt, and the teenager quickly headed to pick up his mask.

'Phew, he finally let go of me. However... how does he know about Xin? ... could it be... is he her...' Gary snapped around and looked at Jayden who still had his top off. He was a good-looking man, and was also young. The age gap isn't too big between the two and maybe she's into older guys.

'If she already had a boyfriend, then why would she have agreed to a date?'

“What’s with the mask?” Jayden asked, now feeling guilty and awkward for wrongfully having attacked Gary. Putting the mask in his inner blazer pocket for safe keeping, the high schooler felt a little too embarrassed to put it on again.

“I’m not like you. I understand that what I’m doing is borderline suicidal. I mean, it’s not like I expected to encounter you here. No matter if I failed or succeeded, I didn’t want them to know who I was.” Gary answered, earning him an approving nod from Jayden, who could get behind that reasoning.

“Say, now that we know that we’re on the same side, how about... we cooperate?”

Having been given a break, Gary’s passive healing had kicked into effect, and it was already beginning to heal him, consuming his Energy. The high schooler doubted he would find anyone as strong as Jayden inside. Since he had already come all the way out here, he didn’t want his idol to get all the credit... especially if he turned out to be his rival in love.

“There’s no need. I’m going inside and will handle everything. If you want to make yourself useful, feel free to call the police...” Jayden stated, as Gary was starting to go towards the entrance of the cabin.

“No... I have to see who did this and why.” Gary insisted. “They... they hurt someone I care about!”

Seeing the look in Gary’s eyes, Jayden could tell he was serious. Just having fought him, although only briefly, the kid had at least proven capable enough to not end up as a burden.

“Fine, but you listen to what I have to say. Also, don’t even think about disappearing afterwards. I still have a bone to pick with you for all the food you stole. Don’t think I forgot. You made me very late that day for a photo shoot.” Jayden said as he walked ahead.

Ironically, Gary would probably never forget the raided fridge, since it was thanks to Jayden’s endless supply of meat that he managed to survive that horrible night. Besides, it was one of the best meals of his life, something he would forever treasure after being forced to hunt wild creatures and spend large amounts of money to fill up his Energy reserves.

When Gary reached the stairs of the cabin, something hit his nose.

'This smell... that's blood!'

The smell of blood from the members outside was consistent but this was coming from another direction, it was coming from inside, but neither of them had gone in the cabin yet. Aware of the implication, the teenager rushed past Jayden.

"Hey, wait! They're already aware that we were outside! They're most likely waiting for us already!" Jayden shouted. He had planned to enter the second floor and take them all out from above.

However, Gary had already barged through the door, breaking them off. It was a weak door, but Gary had used quite some force that would have broken a normal door as well. Quickly catching up, Jayden was now standing next to him and could see Gary frozen in place.

That's when, at the very back of the room, they could see the gang members who had scurried off inside. They all turned to look towards the door and Xin was being held up on her feet out of the seat she was in while Tiffany held a little knife to her neck. Her face was bruised, and blood was dripping slightly from her nose.

Standing by her side was Riv who nervously smiled at the situation.

"Sh*t, those reports weren't exaggerated. Of all people, why is Jayden Tiger here? Tell me, did the mayor hire you to rescue you? How much is he paying you? You know the amount of money that he would pay for his daughter right, I can give you half if you just look the other way." The red colour gang leader tried to bargain with the Altered, aware that their chances to stand up to him were slim to none.

Looking at who had busted through the door, Xin knew he would come, but as for the person standing beside her...why was he here? Why did someone she barely knew come all the way here for her? It was the first time in her life someone other than her family came looking for her.

Seeing Xin in the state she was in, Gary was clenching his fists so hard that his nails dug into the palm of his hand. Veins were popping at the top of his head.

"You...you..." Gary was so angry he was stuttering, and he was a little worried that Jayden might accept the offer.

Little did he know, Jayden's blood was boiling even more.