

## Werewolf 251

### Chapter 251 - A Better Life

It was Sunday evening and the night sky was out. Inside Black Rock orphanage, Kevin was helping Suzan tuck in the other kids since it was bedtime and Innu was tucking in one of the little girls that was rubbing her eyes.

“Is... Big Brother Innu still not coming today?” A small girl yawned, as she was struggling to keep her eyes open. Usually she would have been asleep by now, and Kevin knew she had stayed up just to see him.

“I’m sorry, Innu seems to be busy this weekend, but I’m sure he will visit us soon. Don’t worry, you have a lot of time to see him.” Kevin smiled and waited until she fell asleep.

It wasn’t something he had to do, but since he was a bit older than rest, he had volunteered to help out, just like every other night. They all knew that Suzan had a lot on her plate, so the teenager wanted to help her at least a little.

Kevin let out a little sigh.

“Innu asked me to apologise to you that he was unable to come yesterday and today. He also wants us to tell the other kids that he promises to make up for it next weekend.” Kevin informed the woman, as they had just left one of the large rooms where the young kids were left sleeping on just a mattress.

“Innu really has grown up, hasn’t he? I can tell he’s working hard and really cares for us.” Suzan sighed. “As happy as that makes me... sometimes I would prefer that he would concentrate on himself and his own life rather than looking after us.”

Just then, they heard a soft knock on the door. Kevin was a bit surprised who it could be at such a late hour, but Suzan told him to go to his own bed. As he watched the woman run off with her hair in a mess, he could only wryly smile.

‘Innu and us other kids want the same for you, Suzan, that’s why he’s trying so hard...’

Out of curiosity, the teenage boy decided to take a look at who it was. The orphanage didn't get many visitors, and at this time of night it couldn't have been someone looking to adopt a kid. Hidden behind the corner, he peeked and recognised the men at the door. They had come over a few times already, and he wasn't sure if that was a good or bad thing.

After they had been let in, Kevin waited by the side, and could see that there were three of them, who followed the woman to the kitchen. Sneaking his way through, he waited by the door, so he could listen in to what the conversation was about.

"Have you considered our offer? You won't be able to survive much longer on your own." He overheard a gruff man's voice.

"I have... I assure you, I have been thinking about it a lot. It's just this place is like a home for everyone if they were to move out of this place..."

"Forgive me for saying this, Ma'am." Another voice interrupted. "But I think your refusal is quite selfish."

Hearing a strange man call Suzan, the most selfless person Kevin had ever met, his fists tensed up, but if he tried anything then he knew he would get the woman in trouble.

'What would Innu do?' Kevin wondered, since his best friend was a person he looked up to. However, he could only imagine Innu head into the kitchen and tell those men to shove something up their backside and get out of here. Shaking his head, the teenager knew that to be a very bad approach.

"With all due respect, but it's obvious that you're lacking the proper funds. Just on the way here, I saw multiple areas where this place is falling apart. The new location would be ten times better for them.

"If it's a question of money then I can reassure you, you have nothing to worry about. Our boss even allocated some extra funds today. We told you, he is a generous man who was in the same situation as them. That's also why he wants to help them out.

"Unfortunately, it just doesn't make any financial sense to give this place a complete overhaul. It would be cheaper to demolish it and rebuild it up from scratch. Please, think about the kids and their future."

It was then that Kevin relaxed the tension in his fists. What the man said was true, the government's help hadn't increased in over a decade and with inflation doing its thing, Suzan had been forced to spend her own money to compensate, making next to nothing from the place.

The number of orphans was also steadily increasing, and each new mouth just put additional strain on the funds. Simply put, they were lacking money, yet now a private organisation was willing to take over.

"Suzan." Kevin said, coming out from the hallway and into the kitchen. When seeing the teenager, she was surprised and about to tell him to go to his room.

"You should accept the deal. You have already done so much for us. We all know that, so don't worry. It's not like they are going to put us in the worst place, right? If you're worried, I bet you can come and visit us. Nobody will blame you if you decide to rest, and it would stop idiots like Innu from having to worry about you as well."

Suzan was in two minds with what to do. For some reason, it just felt wrong for her to no longer be involved in these kids' lives and just hand them over to someone else, especially a stranger she had never met. However, hearing these words from one of the oldest and smartest kids she had looked after, she was finally willing to agree. Suzan picked up the pen, and signed on the dotted line. The deal was done.

"Thank you for being so cooperative. It will be a few days until we can move them, but we will inform you about everything that needs to be done in due time." The man with the gruff voice said, and with that they were on their way.

The moment they walked out the door, that man immediately picked up the phone to make a call.

"Boss... it's done."

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On the other side, Brandon placed the phone down, and smiled at Raven.

## Chapter 252 - Pawn Upgrade

Waking up, it felt like Gary had possibly gone through one of the longest weeks of his life. So much had happened on the weekend, it was quite unbelievable. The red colour gang had attacked the school.

Gary had saved Xin's life and fought against Jayden Tiger, who turned out to be her brother, and the Howlers had taken over the Pincer gang. To top it all off, Gary had actually even created something called a beta wolf and turned himself into an Alpha.

[12 Days until the next full moon.]

[Your bloodlust is increasing.]

[50 Exp has been gained from current Bond Marks (5)]

[Exp 846/3002]

Seeing this message, Gary wasn't too concerned about himself, instead he was more concerned for Olivia. He started to think back to what happened last night in their little training session.

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Without her little guards around, Gary had found it a lot easier to deal with the Lady Boss during their little fight. It was apparent that she was a lot faster at using the whip than at attacking him head on, and even she knew that as well.

However, it didn't look like Olivia was too used to fighting herself, even though she did seem experienced with the whip, though Gary had started to suspect that to stem from non-fighting related reasons.

The Alpha Werewolf had used this chance to vary his speed during a fight. Using Controlled Transformation, he benefited from small bursts here and there, making sudden movements, so he could reach his opponent easier, helping him disarm her.

Avoiding her whip made for good practice. It was a fast and painful weapon, despite his high Endurance. Despite his advantage in speed, Olivia managed to surprise him a few times, allowing her to get a hit in.

Pain was a good way to make someone not make the same mistake twice.

After that, Gary had attempted to train Olivia herself, since he wanted to know what exactly she could do. Her natural strength and such had improved, but she was nowhere near the level that the teenager was at. He estimated her to be around the same level as he had been, after he had just been turned, making him think that Billy might have been a special case.

'Maybe... it's due to the person themselves before they were turned. Billy was already strong, after all. I already struggled to beat him when he was fully human, so no wonder he was such a monster. I should note this down as well somewhere.'

However, he was afraid that if he were to write it down, someone might stumble upon those notes. As such, Gary decided to just leave it as a mental note in his head. Unfortunately, all their attempts to have Olivia transform failed.

It was already a hard thing to explain, especially since the high schooler realised that it was actually something his system took care of for him, but even showing it did nothing for the woman. She was unable to do it, be it partially or fully. The only thing that did occur was that her eyes changed colour briefly, glowing in a slight blue when trying to activate that power.

They would fade soon after, though. Gary half expected this, since he had been unable to control his turning initially, and he guessed that Billy had also only succeeded after the first night of the full moon.

Still, they did make some progress. For one, they verified that Olivia still benefited from fast healing. After scratching her skin with his claw, they waited for a while, only to see it heal on its own. Naturally, this consumed Olivia's Energy, making her hungry, but without a system to tell her exactly how hungry she was, she would have to rely on her stomach.

In the end, trying to figure out a few more things, Gary decided to open the system and see if he could spot anything. Underneath the Pack tab, he could see Olivia's name.

Here he also saw that she had no class and was only at the Pawn Grade.

'If she has all this information as well, then it should mean she can evolve, right? If she gets stronger, she might also be able to choose a class as well. Or maybe I'm the one who gets to pick the class? It could also just be automatically assigned, depending on what suits her the most?'

There was another issue, which was how to level her up? This was something the system didn't have a stat for. Did she have to just keep fighting, go to the gym like he did? These were the only things he could guess.

'Olivia... I want you to start going to the gym... also you should be eating 2kg of meat every day.'

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Recalling given her that order, his face went bright red. The woman had looked at him like he was some type of freak. He had done his best to keep his composure, recalling that she was just his experiment. Now that he had her as a guinea pig, this really seemed like a game. If only this was some type of VR situation and not real life, he would be quite pleased.

After all the tests, Gary had come to one decision, while he was putting on his school uniform he had decided what to do with the Pawn Point. As tempted as the high schooler was to convert it into Stat Points or more Skill Points, he wanted to find out more about those Grades.

Since those points were so rare, and putting them into his Grade appeared to be the 'natural' way to use them, he decided to see what happens. If all went well with Olivia after the full moon, then he might consider turning the others as well.

Hopefully, a higher Grade would also increase his chances for successfully creating another Beta Werewolf. He didn't want to gamble on what happens if it fails.

[1 Pawn Point has been assigned to increase your Grade]

[...]

“What the f\*ck?!” Gary cursed out loud.

#### Chapter 253 - A Bad Day

“Gary, why are you swearing so early in the morning?” Amy questioned, as she was rubbing her eyes. She didn't usually sleep in late, it was just her brother who had developed a tendency to start the day incredibly early, so he could wake up to prepare breakfast for the two of them.

“Ah, I'm sorry, it's just that my uniform is really tight. It seems like I can't delay buying a new one.” Gary replied as he flexed his muscles, almost ripping his shirt and popping one of the buttons off, which he didn't expect to happen. It had revealed a couple of his abs that his sister was surprised to see. The shirt was indeed too tight for him. Ever since his body had changed, he had yet to order a new set of school clothes, something which cost money.

'System, don't you think you should have warned me that I needed more to upgrade myself?' Gary was fuming as he looked at the message. He could practically see a mischievous grin from whoever had designed it.

[1 Pawn Point has been assigned to increase your Grade]

[You need a total of 5 Pawn Points to upgrade your body to the next Grade Werewolf]

[1/5 Points]

If he knew it was going to more than one Pawn Point, he would have rather saved up to use them all at once. After all, what use were there when assigned like this? At least, he could have converted it, in case a situation arose where he might need it.

With how useful Last Stand had proven to be, more skills wouldn't have hurt, either, and possibly there would be more to chose from.

'Be honest, system, did you choose 5 Pawn Points as the requirement on purpose? Is this your way of making me try to turn Kai and the others? 'Cause I doubt you expect me to hunt down four more Werewolves.

'Argh, whatever. If it costs so much, then it better be quite the good upgrade once I get it! ... and you better let me change my frigging hair back to normal as well!' Gary smiled bitterly, however the next moment he thought about the potential boost in strength.

Reaching the next Grade, maybe he could ask Jayden for a rematch. However, he had no reason to just outright challenge the Altered fighter. Who knew, perhaps one day the two of them could meet in the ring.

'Should I try making extra money as an AFC fighter?'

Thinking about another certain individual, Gary's mood became quite pleasant as he headed out. There was even a hop to his steps as he rushed to school. He hadn't bothered texting Xin, there had been too much going on since her rescue. Besides, he didn't want to appear as a needy person.

Gary needed to get everything perfect. Too many times he had read in Webtoons how the guy put in too much effort, and only ended up creeping the girl out. That was the last thing he wanted to do.

Walking around, Gary waved over to old man Morten, who was the head of the apartment blocks, as well as Tyler who was working at the convenience store again, yet there was something he noticed. The Underdog gang members that had roamed all over the Chavley area had disappeared.

'Does that mean they're finally doing something else?' Gary wondered. 'That guy from the Grey Elephants should know my name and what school I go to, and the same goes for the Underdogs. After the red colour gang incident, the school must have at least increased their security, so they shouldn't attack any time soon.

'In a way, their stupid stunt actually helped me get the big gangs off my case for a while. Still, Hawk's brother already knows about Amy's school. I'm a bit worried that he'll come after her again.'



Thinking about this, Gary decided to text Kai, asking him if they could set up some protection for his little sister. Now that they had Olivia's people to utilise, it should hopefully be possible.

[Yeah, no problem. I'll pick out someone reliable. BTW I won't be at school today. If you need anything else, just send me a message] was the reply he got from Kai a few moments later.

'Won't be in school...well, I guess there's not much point in us being in school if this is going to be our lives from now on... but we only have two more years, right? No, wait, Kai should only have one more year ahead of him.

'Isn't he worried about this whole gang stuff not working out? What is so important that he's skipping school for? ... Must be something to do with that lawyer and the Pincers. Yeah, I should probably thank him for taking care of those things...'

Thinking about this, led Gary to start thinking about money once again. He could only imagine the things he could afford to buy. Perhaps he could get that new phone for his sister after all, and it might relieve his conscience for lying to Amy.

'Shouldn't I start to think bigger? If it really is a lot more money, wouldn't it be great to move out of that crumpy apartment and move to a nice place like Cipeen?' Gary smiled. 'Yeah, I can't exactly invite the Mayor's daughter to our current apartment. Shoot, but how will I explain it to Mum and Amy? There's no way they'll believe me I got enough cash from a measly part-time job as a waiter...'

Eventually when coming to school, he saw Tom and Innu who waved back at him. Innu had his head down on his desk as usual, while Tom seemed as happy as him for some reason.

"What's up with you?" Gary asked, not used to seeing his best friend in such a good mood.

"It's nothing, I just think I'm in love." Tom replied, which was the last thing Gary had been expecting to hear. And for some reason, seeing the dumb grin on the other teenager's face, part of him felt the urge to hit it.

“Well, as long as it's not Xin, then I'm happy for you. Not that she would go after you anyway... she's already got a date.” Gary couldn't help but brag as his thumb pointed on his own chest. On top of that, saving her life, he was sure she had fallen for him already.

At that moment, Mr Gray entered the room, he had a bandage around his head from being hit by one of the Red Gang members, but the wound didn't seem to be too bad. If anything, the bandage seemed to be a bit excessive.

“Alright, settle down, everyone. Unfortunately, we'll have to start off the week with some disappointing news.” Mr Grey announced, holding the desk in front of him with his two hands. “Although she hasn't been with us for long, I'm sorry to inform you that your fellow student, Xin Clove, will no longer attend Westbridge. I've been informed earlier that her father has chosen to transfer her out of school.”

Gary was in the middle of getting his bag out at that moment, and dropped it straight on the floor.

#### Chapter 254 - Nothing To Lose

Gary hadn't known Xin for long. In fact, he had only been able to talk to her occasionally. Whenever he did, though, everything always seemed to feel so natural to him. Although his heart was beating at a rapid pace when he would approach her, she had never been afraid even with his awkward actions and stupid face. Despite all his flaws that others had said to him, she had even agreed to go on a date with him.

'My wonderful future days at Westbridge are over?'

“Hey, what should we do, bro? He hasn't moved since this morning?” Innu asked, as he waved his hand in front of Gary's eyes, who still hadn't snapped out of it.

“It's heartbreak. I don't think there's anything we can do.” Tom shrugged helplessly. “Gary always had a fragile heart. I remember when he confessed to Lily when we were in grade three, and Betty in grade five. Whenever he got rejected, he would be like this for a while. Last year, he even confessed to Yon Lee, but she said she wasn't into nice guys... wait a minute, Gary is that why you came back with green hair?!”

“You're not alone, Gary, I understand your pain!” Innu put his hand on his friend's shoulder. “Even if they say that 'you're too much of a nice guy', 'you're not my type', 'I see you more as a brother' or 'I'm

not looking for someone right now', no matter which words they use, they were never going to go out with you. Those are all just excuses and lies!"

Judging by Innu's reaction, Tom guessed that the transfer student had also experienced his fair share of rejections.

"It's different this time." Gary finally spoke up, yet his eyes continued to be lifeless. "This time I wasn't rejected. Xin actually even agreed to a date... however, before we had a chance to go on one... she's moved away."

After all those years of rejection from countless girls, this hurt even more than that. He felt like fate was telling him that he was destined to end up alone.

It was currently lunch break, yet the green haired teenager lacked any appetite for once. Instead, he stared down at his phone, and hovered over Xin's number. She had left him with it, so they could organise something, but he hadn't received a text... the high schooler thought they might just talk about it in person.

'Why am I still hesitating? It's not like I have anything to lose, anyway. If she agrees, then I might at least have the chance to see her off.'

Tom noticed the change in Gary's face as his best friend held the phone firmly in his hand.

[Mr Grey told us that you're transferring. It's a real shame, I was actually looking forward to that date and getting to know you more. I guess your father didn't want you in Westbridge after what happened. I don't know if you're even still in Slough, but if you are, do you think we could meet up?]

He had typed the message in one go, not really thinking too much about it. The high schooler didn't want to worry over making it perfect, or trying to write it again, otherwise he felt like he was just going to chicken out, yet his thumb soon hovered over the send button, hesitating to press it.

'I...'

In the middle of his thoughts, Gary could feel heat creeping in on either side of his cheeks, and slowly a black nose and a white nose came into view.

“Just hit send, bro!” Innu encouraged him, snatching the phone out of his hand. “And let me adjust this a bit for you.” The teenager quickly added something before he hit the send button.

Immediately, Gary snatched it out of Innu’s hand. He didn't hold back with his speed, and his friend was quite surprised.

“Ahh! What the F\*? Why would you add that?!” Gary shouted as he read Innu's little adjustment.

[From your Romeo, Gary.]

“She's going to think I'm so cringy!” Gary complained, yet while holding the phone in his hand, almost crushing it, all three heard a ding.

Looking down at the phone, the other two peeked over and all three of them read the message together.

[Sorry Gary, I'm still coming to terms with transferring myself. Thanks to Tiffany, I wasn't really able to get close to anyone at Westbridge, so apart from you, there wasn't really anyone to tell that I would move. Honestly, it's pretty sad to admit, but you're probably the only person I will miss. I'm still in Slough at the moment. Depending on how my new school life will be, I might come back some weekends, but I'll probably be in another city most of the time.

[Anyway, a promise is a promise. While I would have loved to have a classical first date with you, I'm afraid that's not really possible, but do you want to come over to my house for a meal today? It's the only way I think you'll be able to see me. I would like to see you again, so I can explain everything to you in person. Oh, and it will be a meal with my parents, so if you want to make a good impression now would be the time.

From your potential Juliet:P]

“Whoa, that text actually worked, and you’re skipping right to meeting her parents? I don't know, man, aren't you crapping your pants right now?” Innu asked teasingly, turning to look at Gary’s face, but instead of worry, he was all smiles.

“Hey Gary, just to make things clear, you do remember that her father is Slough’s mayor, right?” Tom reminded his best friend. “You're going to have to put on a suit or something, and I know you ain't got one. I would have let you borrow mine... but I’m afraid that won't fit you anymore. ... also, you might change something else about your appearance.”

His sudden happiness started to disappear when he saw Tom point at his green hair, which thanks to the system might stay this way until the end of his days. There was nothing he could do about that, but getting a suit should be easy enough. Unfortunately, he didn’t know anything about them, but there was one person who he felt like would know where to get a suit from, and a good one at that.

Getting back on his phone, he sent two texts out, one accepting the ‘date’ as he asked Xin what time he should be over, and another asking his go-to person to get him a nice suit. The rest of the day couldn't move fast enough for Gary, and the good news was Rugby practice was cancelled until Mr Root was better and out of the hospital.

This meant he had even more time to prepare himself before the date. While walking out the school with Tom and Innu they could hear a bunch of the other students talking about something.

“Hey, did you see that car that's waiting outside the school gate?!”

“Yeah, I saw it from the window. Other than Xin’s bodyguards, I’ve never seen such a nice car in front of this school. Do you think there’s a celebrity waiting to pick someone up?”

“Dunno, but I’m pretty sure that was a Bersedez Menz, and those easily cost over a 100K!”

“What, that’s easily more than what our house is worth!”

The three of them could clearly hear the excitement of the students, and it was spreading around quickly.

“Huh, who the hell would be stupid enough to buy such an expensive car? If it was me, I would save that money.” Gary scoffed as he heard it.

“I wonder who is here, though? Xin is no longer in the school, so they must be here to see someone, right?” Innu commented.

As the three of them continued to walk out of the school gate, they could see that students were crowded around the car. So much that the others couldn't even see it. Which was why the other three thought to continue on walking. That was until someone called out their name.

“Hey, Gary, where are you going?!” A familiar voice shouted. Turning around, Gary could tell it was coming from the direction of the crowd.

“Hey guys, would you mind moving out of the way?” A charismatic voice asked the students, and they quickly complied since there was a scary looking man in a suit standing right next to the teenager.

“Kai!” Gary shouted out of surprise, having recognised the voice. Judging by how close they were to the car, and the fact that he had claimed he wouldn't be at school today, it was clearly his. He knew Kai was a rich kid, but to be this rich?!

“What the?! If you had such a nice car from the beginning, why didn't you tell us about it?!” Innu complained. As he got closer, he noticed that the car wasn't completely black. The chrome details on the windows, as well as the grill at the front, had a golden colour to it. Gary also saw this, which was giving him a weird feeling.

At that moment, Kai chucked over the keys, and his underclassman caught them mid-air.

“What are you on about? The car isn't mine, it's Gary's.”

All the students' heads turned to look towards the green haired teenager, even Tom. How could a normal school kid, like Gary, ever afford something like this?!

Gary looked down at the keys, and then up at the car again. He repeated this process two more times. The teenager was searching for the right words to say in this situation, but it was as if they had gotten stuck in his throat. He had heard what Kai had said, yet none of it made any sense to him.

“Hey, were Kai and Gary always this close?” One of the students asked curiously.

“What's with the fancy car? Did he win the lottery or something?”

“I don't think so. Wouldn't they have announced such a thing in the local news? Maybe one of those Nigerian prince scams turned out to be actually true?”

‘Why... why would you do this in front of everyone?’ Was Gary's only thought, as he clenched the keys and walked forward.

“Kai, you're really a jokester.” Gary said as he returned the keys. “I haven't even had driving lessons, so how and earth could this be my car? Does your Dad even know that you took out his car?”

The teenager had made sure to be extra loud, so those around them would hear him. Gary's schoolmates felt like it belonging to Kai's father was the only logical explanation. The blonde teenager was often walking around with his expensive watch, so for his father to have such a car wasn't much of a stretch.

Of course, Tom wasn't buying it, it was clear his best friend was just trying to deflect the situation.

‘These people, that business and now this expensive car... that isn't simple money, Gary. Was all of this made when you were gambling... or did they pull off something even shadier?’ Tom worried, still unaware that Gary was the leader of the whole suspected gang.

Before anyone could ask him any questions, Gary quickly got into the car, followed by Innu. They would usually go to the Wolf's Pool Club anyway. Kai got in the passenger seat while the man in the suit returned inside and was ready to drive off.

Rolling down the window, Gary didn't forget his best friend. "I'll see you tomorrow, Tom. Depending on how it goes, I might text you later."

With that the car was on its way. Gary was going to stop by for a couple of hours before heading off on his date, as that was what they would typically do, and his sister thought of it as his part-time job.

While in the car, Gary had a lot of questions on his mind, but he honestly couldn't stop looking all over the car. There was a screen in the back of the seat. Cup holders down the middle, a digital screen to control the air condition. The stitching was nice, and even the back seats were being heated.

It was a luxurious life he could quickly get used to.

"Judging by the smile on your face, you seem to approve of the car. That's nice." Kai commented with a smirk.

Immediately after hearing those words, the smile on his underclassman's face dropped.

"Why did you do that, Kai?" Gary asked in a serious tone. "Why did you buy this car, come to our school and tell everyone that it was mine? Are you trying to change my life?"

Unwilling to get in between the two, Innu decided to look outside the window, while enjoying the seats.

"Because the car is yours... Well, it's ours." Kai clarified. "Innu kept complaining about how we as a proper gang didn't have a nice vehicle and I actually agree with him. Besides, we'll need it for when we'll set our sights outside of Slough."

"And what do you mean by 'am I trying to change your life', Gary? I don't want to tell you any of that 'once you're in, you're in for life' bullsh\*t, but after everything you've been through, but how exactly do you picture returning to your 'normal' life?"

Was it true? Was Gary really thinking that way? He realised today, when trying to meet up with Xin or playing Rugby, he enjoyed these things because it reminded him of his ordinary life... but could he really



go back to that? Quitting the Howlers would be one thing, but how would he quit being a Werewolf? ... and did he even want to do one or the other?

“Now come on, don’t tell me you haven’t at least entertained the possibilities about what you could do with the extra income we’ll generate from the Pincers gang. It would be weird if you and the others hadn’t been daydreaming at least a little. It’s not wrong... but if you are going to use that money, then you have already stepped to this side, Gary.

“Knowing you, I bet you want to move somewhere nice. However, you’ll need to explain to your sister and mother how you were able to obtain all this money. What are you doing to tell them? Right now, after having taken over the Pincers, we are a gang that no longer needs to hide.

“Us Howlers should not shy away from spreading our name, otherwise it might actually become dangerous for us. Right now, the other gangs are all desperately trying to find any information about us, but our mystery factor will quickly cool off, if we don’t do anything. The other gangs will believe that what we did was just a fluke, so we have to make them afraid of us.

“We want to create the image that saying that you are under the Howlers, will offer more protection than saying you are not. We aren’t any small-time colour gang any more, Gary. We are the damn Howlers.” Kai stated with pride in his voice.

Listening to the blonde teenager speak, whenever Kai talked, he was always looking into the future. Every decision he made was one step closer to his grand ambition. Perhaps the reason he had not come to school today was also because purchasing the car was just another step needed in that plan.

“In the future, the Howlers will have to deal with corporations, among other things. We are going to be a business, Gary. We have to make a good impression and show that we can look after ourselves, otherwise why would anyone believe in us? This car was one of the first steps towards that. Also, I have not forgotten that you can’t drive, which is why we have our own driver.

“What I want from you all, is to be proud that you are in the Howlers gang, this isn’t any kiddie crap any more... only our leader needs to stay secret from the others. It starts off with one car today but a fleet soon.”

Gary was taking in everything that Kai had said, and it made him think a lot. He was right about it all. He had been thinking about using the money for his own benefit, yet as a sixteen-year-old teenager, he couldn't help wishing to lead a normal life... even though he knew that as someone who had already killed, it would be impossible.

Just then, the car had driven past the convenience store, where Tyler would work at. For a brief moment, Gary could see the university student through the window staring at their car. Then again, nearly everyone on the street was doing the same. All pedestrians stopped for a moment, not used to such a sight.

The windows were tinted so no one could see who was inside. This feeling was strange, and off in the distance Gary could see the area where his apartment block was, and it made him think of his old landlord.

"Kai... since we have enough money to buy this car... can we buy the apartment blocks where I live? Also the shops we just went by." Gary asked with some hesitation.

Hearing this request, Innu was also thinking about using the money to help out the orphanage. Perhaps they could purchase it and then upgrade it, so that Susan would no longer have to worry.

There was a silence before Kai answered with a surprising no.

"Gary, we might have a lot of cash on our hands, but at the same time we don't have an unlimited amount. We aren't a charity, either. Do you really think those places make that much profit? They would be more trouble than what they're worth.

"Since you're the boss, and I know you well enough to know you wouldn't just ask if you didn't have your reasons, there is one major problem that I think you're overlooking. That shop and those apartments are in the Underdogs territory. To put it simply, they're not for sale.

"We should also not try to expand outwards just yet. That's just asking for a war that we're not ready for."

The answer somewhat upset Gary, but it reaffirmed his goal of wanting to get rid of the Underdogs.

“By the way, your suit is in the boot. I chose you the best of the best, and Gio here is going to give you a lift to your girlfriend's place. Make a good impression and woo her off her feet.” Kai grinned as he threw over a box. “Also, I wasn't sure you had protection, so I picked you some up.”

“How do you...” Gary looked to his right, and Innu was trying to look away even harder. “You told him!”

— —

At the same time, on the other side, Xin had just told her family about a guest that was soon to arrive.

‘Hopefully, you picked something fancy, stalker boy.’ Jayden smiled, as he was actually looking forward to today's dinner.

#### Chapter 256 - Clack Clack

Ever since Stacy had stopped coming to school, it had been impossible for Amy to enjoy her school life. To keep her mind occupied, the teenage girl had focused even more on her studies, which was seemingly the only good thing to come out of it.

During the lunch break, when Amy was eating her homemade meals, it always hit the hardest. Just a few days ago, she had still blamed Stacy for transferring away, believing that her best friend had done so to avoid her. However, after learning that she had died, the teenage girl couldn't help but be depressed that their last shared memory had been of Stacy walking out on her.

Seeing her alone, some girls from her class did invite her over to come eat with them. In fact, even though he had still prepared her a homemade lunch, seeing as it was cheaper, today Gary had left her money on the table, so she could go to the canteen.

Amy understood that to be his attempt to cheer her up, yet she declined. Although she did seek some companionship in such a hard time, she also felt guilty about accepting an invitation out of pity.

‘It's time like these, that I wish I went to the same school as Gary... at least then I would have someone I know, and I could talk to. Should I go and visit Mum again, after school?’

Thinking about this, she thought back to Gary's smile in the pool club. Her brother seemed to be unaware of it, but he smiled so wide when he was lying that his eyes would become upside down crescent moons. Amy was sure he was only trying to look out for her, but it still hurt knowing that he wanted to do everything on his own.

'If only I hadn't accompanied Stacy that day, then I wouldn't have to worry about a gang being after Gary now... no, who knows what would have happened to her if she had gone on her own... Oh, just why did you have to agree to that day in the first place, Stacy?

'Gary doesn't seem to be too worried about it, though. Did he meet all those people, so they could protect him? Did he have some type of deal with them? But then I can't figure it out... why did she call him Boss.' Currently, Amy was writing in a notebook.

She had written down all the clues she had gathered so far and was making a spider diagram connecting all the points she had in her head. Of course, she didn't write down exactly what they meant, in case anyone ever found her notebook.

Amy used acronyms and doodles so that it looked like nothing in particular. BC, which stood for 'bloody clothes' was connected to a doodle of a bird, representing Hawk, accompanied by a question mark. That one was also linked to a doodle of a music note, which symbolised the karaoke club, as well as GE, for the Grey Elephants.

She wasn't sure about it, but then there was Stacy's death as well, shortly after they had confessed. 'Was this perhaps the Grey Elephants doing? If so, then could they be after me next? But why would they go so far? They already have Gary's information, and they know what school he's going to? Do they know what he looks like? They never asked me anything like that.

'But then...what did Gary do that day, after he found out about Stacy, coming back with his clothes full of blood again... is it all linked? Maybe I should pay a visit to Stacy's new school and find an answer there.' Amy thought.

Since her brother wasn't going to give her a clear answer, then she was going to track all the steps and clear it up. Amy was worried that if she could figure everything out, there was a good chance that the police might be able to as well.

It was the end of the school day, and Amy stood there just by the school exit. Up ahead around 40 metres away she could see the gate where all the students would exit from. She just stood there in place, frozen. For some reason, it felt like her body wasn't listening to her and was refusing to move forward.

'What is happening to me? I know I had trouble after the attack, but I was able to walk home on my own plenty of times even after Stacy had transferred. Why can't I move now?'

After thinking about it, she came to the conclusion that there was one major change. Stacy had died, and it didn't seem to be a coincidence. The longer the teenage girl waited, the more students would leave the school, meaning she would be on her own if she continued to hesitate.

Soon she realised that her breathing was getting deeper. Her surroundings were darling. Lifting her hands, she started to hold her shoulders, rubbing them.

'I don't understand what's happening to me right now? Should I call Gary, ask him to pick me up?' She thought, but instead started taking deep breaths one after the other, she knelt down getting lower, and eventually she started to feel better. She didn't want to bother him with something like this.

When looking up, though, there were only a few students left.

'How long...was I like that for?'

Amy's sense of time was off, even after thirty minutes there would be students hanging around the front gates. Still, she couldn't stay here forever and eventually started walking. Taking a taxi wasn't an option for two reasons.

One of them being that taxis weren't exactly safe in the first place. More and more horror stories were coming out, and Amy believed that was an easy way for her to get captured again. They didn't have a car, and no one that could even drive it to pick them up.

Finally, making it out of the gates, the high school girl felt somewhat relieved. It might have been a small thing for most of the girls at school, but for some reason for her today it felt like she had just climbed a mountain.

Still, she continued to walk and looked around constantly. Amy walked close to the wall, and away from the curb. Unfortunately, every time she heard the sound of a car driving past, she would freeze up, stopping in her tracks. Her heart would thump, and Amy was prepared to run at any second.

'Come on... come on, I'm not that far away from home.' The teenage girl encouraged herself. She continued and now was on a more pedestrian street. There were fewer cars here, so she was a little less panicked, but possibly even then a car had come down this street and Amy still stopped, but there was something else she noticed.

\*Clack\*, \*Clack\*

Amy looked around, but she was unable to see where it had come from. Thinking it must have just been her imagination, she started to walk forward again. At a traffic light, she stopped to tie her shoes, but then she suddenly heard it again.

\*Clack\*, \*Clack\*

This time Amy was sure that her ears weren't playing a trick on her. Worst of all, it seemed to be nearby.

## Chapter 257 - Protectors

Without a doubt, Amy could tell that she was being followed.

'If I turn around now, they will know that I know that I'm being followed. ... please just let me be overly paranoid, but I need to make sure.' The high school girl thought to herself.

At the moment, she was on a quiet street. A residential area rather than the main street, but she could see that there was a family at a crossing not too far away. Hurrying herself but not making it too obvious, she eventually found herself waiting at the crossing with them.

When the man turned green, she crossed the road, and while looking left and right for a second, she could see a glimpse of someone that wasn't too far behind her.

'This is too much of a coincidence to cross with us at the same time? They have to be following me, but why? Don't they already know where I live? Do they plan to kidnap me again, to get Gary to come to them?'

At the moment she was staying close to the family as she walked, and perhaps because of her panicked state she didn't realise it, but the family she was following was one that lived in the same apartment block area, she had seen them before. Normally this would have been a good thing, but with the situation Amy was in, she would be leading them right to where they wanted.

Looking around, she wanted to see if there were others, but there weren't any.

'Sh\*t... if I keep following them, then they will follow me until I'm home... so what do I do?'

It was then that Amy decided to try and shake them off. Maybe she was being paranoid, and went to the next crossing and waited.

'We're still on the same street, so if I cross from one side of the road to another, and they do the same, then they're definitely following me...'

The thing was in the middle of her walk across the street, she could hear the clacking behind her, and the fear had gotten to the young girl. She could no longer keep it in, her legs started to move before she knew it.

She was sprinting across the street, and when making it to the other side, and looking behind, she could see a man in a suit running as well.

'No, no, no!'

Amy ran for her life, ran as fast as she could, not worrying if she would tire out or not. She wanted to get her phone out, but not being the best runner, she was afraid taking it out would only slow her down.

'Run, I have to run, my legs need to move faster!' These thoughts were just repeating in her head and she couldn't think straight. However, her mind was clear enough to think one thing, to not run towards her home.

Still, as she continued to run straight not knowing where she was going, and refusing to go down an alleyway to make it easier for her to attack her to get her in a secret place, she eventually was slowing down.

'I have to call someone...the police, but they won;t know where I am...Gary...I promised him I would let him know whenever I was in trouble!'

Her legs were hurting and so was her side, and finally he had come to a stop. Taking a large gasp of air, she took out her phone and looked behind her... but there was no one.

'What the... was I imagining things?' Amy thought.

— —

Not too far from where Amy's position was, down one of the many allies she had run past, there was a man in a suit on the ground. His lip was busted, bleeding, and there was fear in his eyes as two of them approached him.

"You know, when I was given this job, I was sure it would just be a waste of time. 'Who would be interested in such an innocent looking girl? Surely nothing will happen.' However, I'm not exactly in a position where I can just let things play out..." A woman spoke as she dug her high heel into the chest of the man on the ground.

The poor man started screaming in pain, as the woman started twisting and turning it, but the next second, he was gagged by two other men, while a third one was blocking the hallway.

"I thought about it... if they asked me to look after that girl, then she must be important and unfortunately for you, I decided to come myself. So now tell me two things, what gang do you belong to... and why were you following her? It's your choice if you want to make this nice and easy... or if you



want us to 'convince' you to talk. Feel free to choose the latter, but I guarantee you, the latter option will make death seem like your only escape." Olivia said, with a big smile.

Still worried about his sister, Gary had asked Kai to make sure she would be protected, just in case. Since the upperclassman had been busy today, he had naturally delegated this task to their newly recruited reinforcement. However, even he hadn't expected for the Lady Boss to go out personally.

They had been staying away from her, thinking nothing would happen. After all, they didn't know who this girl was, or what her relation to the Howlers gang, yet Olivia had been told that this was an 'order' from Gary. As such, part of her told her that she had to give it her best.

Muffled grunts and screams filled the alleyway as Olivia and her men did their work, and eventually she had gotten every single bit of information she could from the man. Unfortunately, it turned out that he was as clueless as they were. Cleaning the blood from her hands, the woman looked off into the distance, down the street.

'So the Grey Elephants were the ones who hired this guy, the question is why would a big time gang be after a girl like her? And what relation does this all have to do with the Howlers?'

'On top of that, if they wanted to do something, they could have done it themselves. They have gone to a lot of trouble to hire someone else to do their dirty work... You Howlers seem to already have your share of trouble with you. I guess this might be exciting after all.'

Walking through the street where the others were, there was a man with a leather jacket and sunglasses. Smiling away and looking ahead.

'So they have protection on the girl, and if my eyes aren't deceiving me, that woman was Olivia Pearl, the leader of the Pincers. ... although according to the rumours it would be the former leader. Seeing how she has come out personally, it seems there has to be some truth behind it all.

'Now, why have the Howlers gone through all this trouble to hire guards to protect this girl? That is interesting. Very interesting.' Raven smiled.

The meeting time was upon them, and it was finally time for Gary to leave the Wolf's Pool Club. As he walked up the stairs from the basement wearing his new suit, he started to adjust his cuffs a bit.

"So... how do I look?" Gary asked, looking for the opinions of his fellow gang members.

Each of them couldn't help but stare at Gary, the suit was almost a perfect fit, as if it had been tailor-made. It was a standard suit, black with a white shirt and a black tie, and they had never seen Gary look more presentable than at this moment.

"You look like a damn mob boss!" Innu blurted out excitedly.

Hearing this, the high schooler didn't know whether to take that as a compliment or not. After all, he was trying to make a good impression on Xin's parents, not other gangsters.

'I knew it, it's the hair, but I can't change anything about the damn colour.' Gary thought, but with nothing else to do, he walked outside where the car was waiting for him. Along with his driver, and interestingly Kai had come along as well, stating that he had some things to talk with him about.

"So why is he all dressed up, does he have a date or something?" Marie asked.

Innu, who was the closest to her, just gave Marie a look, but didn't say a word otherwise. He still remembered what had happened last time. The teenage boy had no desire to end up as the punching bag. Unfortunately, Innu's silence was just as telling...

"Who is she?!" Marie demanded to know.

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Outside, Kai held the car's door for Gary as he sheepishly made a grand bow, making him look like a butler. The green haired teenager didn't know how to react to this, but with bigger problems to worry about, he just ignored his friend's behaviour. His upperclassman followed right after, and pressed a button to lift the divider between the teenagers and the driver, ensuring their privacy.

"I can see you're nervous about this whole thing, and I don't want to add to your worries, but there is something you should know." Kai revealed. "It's about Xin's father, I need you to be careful about what exactly you tell him, today. And I don't mean that just because he's the mayor."

"I understand." Gary let out a sigh. "I'm already aware that her father seems to have relations to one of the gangs to run the street properly, so I won't say anything about the Howlers. Anyway, I'm just going there today as the potential boyfriend of his daughter."

Kai gave Gary a wry smile, contemplating whether he should tell him that he had found documents with Ben Clove's name on them or not. Ultimately, he decided against it. It seemed better to let his friend continue to believe that the mayor's involvement with the Underworld was limited to just that.

"You still have my gift?" Kai asked. Immediately, Gary went to pat his inner pocket. He could feel the ring of the outer packaging.

'Sometimes I don't know if you're brave or stupid.' Kai shook his head but didn't say anything. In the first place, it was meant to just be a little joke. 'It's your first date with the girl, and you're going to her parent's house, yet you actually bring them along.'

It was then that the two felt the car coming to a halt. The divider was rolled down and so was the window. The driver and what looked like a guard talked for a while, before the gates were eventually being opened for them.

A short while later, they approached the house, and standing at the top of the steps, Gary could see both Xin and Jayden had come out and were waiting for him.

"Oh, that's quite the nice car. I guess he's really pulling out all the stops. Do you know what his parents do to be able to afford a car like that?" Jayden asked his sister, who had not been paying attention.

The teenage girl was too excited for someone to be coming over to their home for the first time, especially in such a grand manner. Initially, her parents had refused her suggestion, one because Gary was a boy and two because they knew nothing about him.

Fortunately, Jayden had been there to convince their parents, stating that the boy had really helped out looking for Xin. Hearing that, their mother's opinion towards Gary had instantly improved, believing him to be someone who truly cared about her daughter. While Ben Clove had remained somewhat reluctant, the trio had managed to make him agree eventually.

Repeating his question, Xin realised that she didn't have an answer for Jayden. What did she even know about Gary? What did his parents do, who was he, and why was he riding in a car like that? When exiting from the car, they could see Gary leaving all dressed up in the suit, clearly nervous, as he walked up the stairs and thanked his friend before leaving.

"Just give me a call when you need to be picked up again. I wish you good luck, Gary." Kai gave him a thumbs up. As the car was ready to drive away, for a second, both Jayden and Kai's eyes met each other. Neither broke contact.

"Gary, I'm glad you made it, and you look great. I'm sorry for the short notice, but thank you so much for coming today." Xin greeted him with a smile. It was the first time Gary had seen her in something other than her school uniform, not counting the time at the Karate club. She was wearing a blue long dress, and he could hear her heart beat as fast as his. It seemed like she didn't know whether to hug him, shake his hand, or just let him in.

"Thank you." Gary said. "And Xin you look...even better than I imagined."

The words were hard to leave his mouth, and both teenagers became red-faced.

"Ah jeez, am I a ghost or something?" Jayden asked, scratching the back of his head. "Food thief, please remember that this is a family dinner, not a real dinner date. Still, I'm also happy to meet you again. I hope you don't have any plans afterward, since I have a lot of questions that I wanted to ask you, and I'm sure Xin has a lot to tell you as well."

'Questions?' Gary wondered what type of questions the Altered might have for him. Would he question him about the red colour gang that day? Why the two of them fought or something else that was even more worrying? Suddenly it felt as if meeting the parents would be the easy part of this evening, yet he had his own agenda for being here.

Whether it was the right thing to do on their first meeting or not, Gary had made his decision. Seeing Xin here in front of him, he was going to at least try to convince them to keep her in school. He wasn't the type of person to run away from things.

"Come on, let us show you to the living room. Dinner will be ready in a bit." Jayden said as he walked inside. Gary couldn't help but admire the large house, imagining how much it must have cost. The teenager didn't know the exact numbers, but he didn't believe that mayors would receive such a generous wage to be able to afford such a luxury home, not in a Tier-3 town like Slough at least. It was clear that the level of wealth was influenced by something else, which made him think about Kai's words.

'It looked like he wanted to say something else back there.' Gary thought.

He suddenly felt a hand placed on his chest. He had only taken one step into the house.

"I'm sorry, but we need to frisk every person who enters the house, even if you're today's guest of honour." One of the guards explained, and without being able to say a word, another had already started to pat him down from head to toe... Until the man, eventually, started to pat his breast pocket, and a crumpling sound was heard.

'Huh... oh sh\*t, I completely forgot about it!'

The next second the man reached into the pocket and pulled out a square packet.

## Chapter 259 - The Clove Family

'What the f\*ck is that guard doing holding that thing like he's at a show and tell?!' Was Gary's first thought, as he saw him hold it in his hand. The teenager could tell by the look of shock on Xin's and Jayden's face that they had clearly recognised the item for what it was.

"Er...er..." Xin was fuming, unable to find the right words, while Gary had yet to make up his mind on whether he should just snatch it out of the man's hand or pretend like it wasn't his.

"Hey, calm down, it's not like a condom is going to be used as a weapon." Jayden said as he walked forward. "Actually, on second thought, you could probably suffocate someone with one of these things."

The Altered snatched it out of the guard's hand before he could even react. Then, he turned to Gary, staring right in the eyes, an evil smile on his face.

"While I'm happy to see that you care for protection, I really hope you weren't thinking of using this anytime soon, Gary. Otherwise, I might have you assist me in testing out my theory of how lethal a weapon such a thing would make."

All Gary could do was gulp and shake his head, as he quickly opted to use his plan B.

"That's not mine! ... yeah, you've seen my friend in the car earlier, right? It's his suit! He must have left it inside as a prank! I'm sorry, I would never think of doing something like 'that' with your sister."

"Oh!" Jayden gasped theatrically. "So you're saying my sister isn't pretty enough for you now?"

Gary was aware that this was one of those situations where no matter what he said, it was going to be taken the wrong way. Unfortunately, understanding his own situation, didn't help him get out of it. Right now, he wanted to kill Kai for his 'gift' ... even though he knew it was his own fault.

Since a suit didn't have the pocket space, it would have been impossible to take along the whole box in the first place. Still, after he had changed, Gary had taken out a single one. The teenager had little hope that anything would happen tonight, yet as the saying went 'better safe than sorry' ... yet now he felt like any second he might see his life flash before his eyes.

Thankfully, Xin was also there and came to his rescue by pulling on her brother's ear.

"Stop acting this way towards Gary, you dolt. He just said that it was a prank, so why are you still teasing him about it? Besides, I don't need you deciding things for me!"

---

A little while later, Gary was escorted to the living room, where Xin had sat down on a single sofa on her own. Meanwhile, her guest was sitting on a sofa next to Jayden, and he was still unable to look either one in the eyes. Since the condom incident, the atmosphere was a little awkward to say the least.

“So Gary, why don't we use this time to learn a bit more about you? Maybe something that only we would be interested in. Apart from you being a horn dog, I mean.” Jayden broke the silence. “Not just anyone can take one my punches. You're clearly more durable than those other guys that day, so I've been wondering where you learned to fight like that? What style are you training in?”

“Wow, it's not often Jayden praises anyone. That sounds like you were a lot better than when you came to the Karate club. Be honest, did you hold back in your fight against me that day? Since you're in the Rugby club that means you must have learnt outside school, no?” Xin added, and Jayden was making sure to pay close attention to the green haired teenager's answers.

“Ah... I'm not in a club or anything like that.” Gary replied nervously, still keeping his head down. “I've had an interest in fighting ever since I was young. My Dad was actually the one who introduced it to me. Now I watch the Altered Fighting Championship all the time. Those guys are athletes that are meant to be the best of the best.

“I don't even remember when, but at some point I started watching the most skilful fighters who have practised nothing but punching and kicking, ways to beat their opponent. Those fights always got me heated up, so I've been studying them a lot...”

Gary started to trail off there. In the world of fighting, just hard work wasn't enough. Everyone worked hard. Unfortunately, the cold hard truth was that while reflexes, flexibility, and strength could be improved on, there were things like talent that one couldn't change. And on the world stage, where the best fought against the best, those people had often been born with a natural advantage.

Of course, becoming Altered changed everything even further. He himself knew that best. While becoming a Werewolf was surely different, even a fraction of what he was doing these days would have been impossible with his old body.

“Anyway, recently I found someone else who is really interested in it as well. He does a lot of Muay Thai fighting, and ever since the two of us have been practising quite a lot.” Gary answered.

He had learned that the best way for him to tell a lie, was to mix it in with part of the truth. That way, the teenager didn't really have to make up a lot of stuff. As long as he avoided telling certain bits, the other person would just fill in the blanks.

"I see, so you must be quite the fan of mine, huh? Is that the reason you chose to get close to Xin? To get to me?" Jayden asked, glancing over to the teenager who was finally looking up. Just as Gary was about to explain that it wasn't the case, the Altered just waved it off.

"I'm just kidding, I already know that you had no idea. Still, that is actually one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you. Me and Xin's relationship, the fact that she is my little sister, is supposed to stay a secret.

"There's more than one reason for it, but I won't bore you with any of the details. If you want what's best for Xin, I ask you to keep it to yourself. Right now, it's even more important than before."

Gary nodded away, immediately agreeing, he didn't want to make her life any harder than it was.

"Say, Xin, now that we have time, mind explaining to me what's going to happen to you?" Gary eventually asked. "Why will you no longer be going to the Westbridge? Is it because of what happened? And where will you go, since you said you might only come back on the weekends?"

To try to convince her parents, he needed to know the reason they wanted her gone in the first place.

"Actually it's--"

"Dinner is ready." A beautiful woman who was nearly as bright as Xin opened the door. Her hair was in curls rather than straightened like Xin's, but it was undeniably the same ashen colour. To put it simply, Gary could clearly see who the teenage girl had gotten her good looks from.

"Oh!" The middle-aged woman said, as she noticed the boy in the room and placed her hands together, smiling at him. "And this young man must be the one joining us today. Sorry I didn't introduce myself. My name is Natalia Clove, but no need to introduce yourself now, you can do that at the dinner table."



After saying these words, Gary noticed something, and it was the fact that Natalia was staring at his face. No, looking more closely, it seemed to be slightly above that... the hair on the top of his head.

“Ah...it's my natural colour... I can't change it?” Gary blurted out, since this was somewhat the truth now, at least according to the system.

Unsurprisingly, his response earned him a chuckle from everyone in the room. Gary was embarrassed, but he thought that making them laugh might have been a good thing. Following the mother along, the three of them finally entered the dining room.

There was a large rectangle table, with seats already sorted out, and each one had a name plate placed on the table. Gary saw that he had been given a seat right next to where the mayor was, at the head of the table. The high schooler gulped down hard once again, but sat down, next to the corpulent man.

Seeing the mayor in person was different from seeing him on TV. There was a certain aura around him, an aura of confidence that Gary had felt around certain people before, Damion, Brandon...and Kai. The aura of a leader.

‘I feel like this dinner is going to be a battle itself.’

“Welcome to our humble home, Gary Dem.” Ben greeted him by offering him a handshake.

#### Chapter 260 - The Meal (Part 1)

Gary had noticed that the mayor had slightly flinched once he had seen him come in. It wasn't hard to guess what had elicited this type of reaction. Right now, the teenage boy didn't feel like he had green hair, but a giant glowing beacon growing on the top of his head.

‘Should I have tried to just shave it off before coming here, or would it have simply grown back?’

Since the first impression was already negative, Gary decided to be on his best behaviour, and so he naturally accepted the handshake. However, for some reason, it felt as if the mayor was trying to crush his hand. The high schooler wasn't sure if the adult man simply had a strong grip, or if this was supposed to be some sort of test.

'What the hell is this lard doing?' Gary thought to himself as he kept up a friendly smile, mimicking Xin's father. Not wanting to come off as weak, the Alpha Werewolf increased his grip, though he made sure not to injure the man.

"It looks like you're quite the strong one." Ben praised him, seemingly impressed by Gary's strength. He then looked his body up and down as if he was inspecting him. "You know, I would often tell Xin that she should look for a boy who is at least as strong as her brother here, if she wanted to date anybody, and you're the first guy who at least seems decent."

The mayor patted Gary's arm, who allowed him to do so. Ever since his body had changed, the teenager had gained the body of an athlete. Although he knew that this was something his system was responsible for, and not his own hard work, he didn't mind taking the credit.

'Another benefit of becoming a Werewolf, I guess.' Gary thought to himself, while Xin turned a few shades redder at her father's comment.

Strangely, the mayor continued to stand there opposite him. Gary looked around, and saw that the others were also still standing, so he felt it would be rude if he sat down before the patriarch of the family. Honestly, he just wanted to start with the meal, but the adult man continued to stand waiting for something. In the end, Gary just nervously laughed, which seemed to change the mood of Ben Clove in an instant, his smile disappearing from his face.

"I thought you might have known better after seeing the way you were dressed." Ben sighed. "I'm guessing you brought no gift?"

'What?! Was I meant to bring a gift in this type of situation? I thought this was just supposed to be dinner? But I've never gone to anyone's house before other than Tom's. I never knew that... and it's not like I ever had the money to buy a gift for someone else before. Is this something rich people do or something?'

"I'm sorry, I didn't realise... I'll be happy to buy you something next time... to make up for it." Gary managed to stutter out in a mix of confusion and panic.

“Brave of you to assume there will be a next time.” Ben stated as he sat down in his seat. With that, everyone else sat down as well. Still, there was one girl that wasn't pleased by her father's antics at all.

“Dad, why are you hassling Gary about a gift?” Xin asked. “He's not one of your guests, but my classmate. Why would he have to bring you a gift, especially since all of this was on such a short notice?”

“I know, I know, darling.” Ben started to laugh it off. “I was just teasing the young man. He should be able to take this much at least, don't you think?”

There were a few chuckles around the table, and Gary nervously joined in, but he had a feeling the mayor hadn't been joking. The teenager was also starting to rethink his choice of trying to convince the man.

Fortunately, the food was served that moment, giving Gary a much needed reprieve. As much as he wanted to dig in, he waited for Xin's father to take the first bite. Unfortunately, that's where his manners ended. The others couldn't help but stare at his eating etiquette, as he quickly took large bites, seemingly afraid someone might take away his food.

“Whoa, you're eating like you haven't eaten in weeks, slow down there, buddy.” Jayden commented. “You seem to be a big eater, like me, no wonder you stole all my food back then.”

“He did WHAT??” Xin's mother gasped in shock.

“Ah, my bad, I guess 'stole' is the wrong word. The first time I met Gary, I invited him back to my hotel. I told him he could take whatever he wanted, though I didn't expect him to raid my entire fridge.”

“Wait, you two already met? When was that?” Xin asked, suddenly very curious. She had never heard her brother mention Gary before.

“Ah, it was when I went to pick you up that one time. However, you texted me that you already had a lift.” Jayden explained, knowing he couldn't reveal the full details. “Actually, it's quite the funny story. While I was ready to turn around, my light started to beam on this pale white a-“

A certain heat could be felt coming from across the table and a pair of dagger eyes were staring at him. Jayden could see that Gary was shaking his head, using his eyes to tell him not to continue that story.

“Never mind, now that I think about it, it’s more one of those things that are funnier at the moment.”

The room went silent once again. After the comment about his eating behaviour, Gary slowed down, making sure to eat at the same pace as the Altered. It was a tall task, especially since most of the food was a lot yummiier than what he would usually eat. He was even tempted to ask them for some seconds to bring home, so he could share with Amy, yet he decided against it, afraid that their opinion of him might decrease further.

‘Is my brother talking about the night we were attacked by those monsters... is that the day the two of them met for the first time? Wasn't Tom looking for Gary that day as well? What was he doing in that area then?’ Xin wondered.

She wanted to ask Jayden more about that night.