

Werewolf 261

Chapter 261 - The Meal (Part 2)

Eventually, everyone had finished their meal. Xin's parents had asked Gary a few more questions in between. Fortunately, it was just normal small talk, about his family and how he was doing in school in general. The teenager was more than happy to tell them about it, especially about being one of the Rugby stars of Westbridge, something which apparently gained him a bit more favour with the mayor.

"Speaking of school, the reason I'm here is that I heard that you wanted to transfer Xin somewhere." Gary began to address the difficult topic. "If you don't mind, Xin, I wanted to ask you if you could tell me the reason, or at least where you'll be going."

"Don't you think the reason for it is pretty clear?" Xin's father raised an eyebrow. "Your school was attacked by a gang, and my daughter got kidnapped in the aftermath. We were lucky that Jayden happened to be in town, but things could have easily ended up a lot worse."

"If we allow Xin to stay in Westbridge she would just be targeted again sooner or later. I'm happy that you care for my daughter, Gary, but even as its mayor, I have to admit that Slough is not the safest place. That's why we have decided to transfer her to another school in a Tier-2 city."

It was just as Gary had expected, so he knew it was going to be hard to convince them. Still, it was at least worth a try.

"But is a Tier-2 city really that much safer? I heard that they have even bigger gangs in the Tier-2 and Tier-1 cities. Aren't you afraid that the same thing might happen again? At least here, she would be with her family, not to mention there's Jayden and your guards. I can't imagine you can be in two places at once." The teenager questioned their decision.

"Don't worry, we have selected a special boarding academy for her. Her protection is our top priority, so trust me when I say that with how much the tuition costs, their security is top-notch. Also, although they have gangs up there, it's not the same as it's here in Slough."

"As your mayor, I am painfully aware about my own town's gang situation. You see, in the bigger cities, the status quo rarely changes. Developments don't just happen suddenly, so even if something were to happen, we could always pull Xin out before chaos breaks out."

“Slough is different. How much do you know about the gang situation in our city?” Ben questioned Gary.

“I’ve heard some bits and pieces.” The high schooler answered, doing his best not to grin.

“Sigh, I suppose in this day and age it’s nothing but wishful thinking on my part to hope that you hadn’t. Anyway, you see, Slough isn’t safe these days. Even before those ingrates tried to hold your school hostage, there’s been a wide attack from the colour gangs not too long ago.

“That’s because the two big time gangs have seemingly tried to start something. What’s more, there is a new gang that has recently risen. As if the situation wasn’t bad enough already, I suspect those Howlers might make everything even more complicated and dangerous for the average citizen.”

Hearing their gang name caused Gary to start coughing. It had been the last thing he had expected to hear at this dinner. Nevertheless, for argument’s sake, he had to push further.

“But... are all gangs bad?” Gary asked.

Saying something like that had naturally earned him strange glances from the Clove family. After all, it was a very strange statement for a person to make. Everyone knew about gangs, and somebody Gary’s age usually wouldn’t say such a thing... unless of course they would be delinquents that might intend to join a gang in the future.

“That’s... quite the ‘interesting’ statement for you to make. Care to elaborate?” Ben Clove placed his chin on his arm.

Unfortunately, Gary hadn’t really thought things through. After hearing the Howlers’ name get mentioned, his statement had mostly been referring to his own gang. When looking around the room, it didn’t seem like Xin or Jayden were going to save him from this one.

“Well, I mean...” Gary glanced at the guards that were in the room with them. “What about your guards? Aren’t they from the Rising Dragon gang? Don’t you use them to protect yourself and your family? I would say that is a good thing that they’re doing.

"I used to hate gangs a lot, but the more I thought about it, the more I started to just see them like any business. In the world that we live in... they are like a necessary evil. They might have a different name, but aren't corporations acting similar to gangs?"

"They're telling smaller companies to do their bidding, and if those don't oblige, they get bought out or just bullied out of the market. And who's to say that this new gang that has come and taken over isn't better than the old one? Maybe they want to change the status quo for the better?"

After saying all of that, Gary realised that he had gone on a bit of a tangent, and perhaps he had even gone one step too far. As such, he stopped there and waited for a response.

"For a child, your world view is quite peculiar." Xin's father finally broke the silence. "Still, I can agree with you that in a way they seem to be a 'necessary evil'. Corporations, even political parties and campaigns do act like gangs in the ways you've described. I won't deny that some things they use might be unethical.

"However, I think you're missing a key difference between the two there. Gangs kill, steal, rob, and force others to do things, in short pretty much everything they do is illegal. Take that new gang as an example. They came in, and beat another gang into submission, thereby acquiring their assets. Does that sound fair or legal to you?"

'Damn, he's talking about the Howlers and the Pincers, even the mayor even knows about that already. That only happened yesterday. How did the news travel so fast? Was it someone from the Rising Dragon that told him?'

For some reason, the conversation that Kai had with Gary in the car had appeared in his head.

'There's something Kai didn't tell me. There's a reason why he told me to be careful.'

Chapter 262 - The Meal (Part 3)

Ben Clove continued speaking about the topic, it seemed like he had switched to his job mode, making Gary realise that arguing with the mayor on a certain topic wasn't the best idea. This was more a situation for someone like Tom or his sister to deal with.

“As bad as gangs might be, at least there is a certain status quo between them which the others respect.” Xin’s father continued. “No matter how noble of an intention a new gang coming in might have, their appearance makes everything worse. The whole balance of power gets shifted. I can guarantee you that soon another gang will come in and try to get a piece of the pie.

“But fine, I’ll humour you in that these Howlers actually just want the best for the common man, but then why did they choose to go about it this way? They could have joined the police force or become a judge, or a politician like me, something that can benefit our society as a whole while still adhering to its rules.”

Gary didn’t like the way the mayor had seemingly simplified things. If it was so simple, wouldn’t people have done it by now? The high schooler was sure that many had tried and many had failed in changing things the legal way. Heck, wasn’t the lawyer he had met yesterday the best example of how easy it was to play the system?

And yet this conversation allowed Gary to see his own feelings towards this topic. When exactly had he come around to the idea of gangs? At least the Howlers’ way of doing things seemed to be just...

‘Maybe I’ve been hanging around Kai too much.’ Gary smiled at this thought, which didn’t go unnoticed by Ben.

“Say, Gary, you seem to know a lot about gangs for someone your age. I doubt many would know that these guards of mine are part of the Rising Dragon gang. Don’t tell me you’re planning to join one in the future?”

“No, no, not at all.” Gary shook his hands to deny it vehemently. “It’s just... when I was with Jayden I heard that name mentioned. Based on the tattoos your guards have on their necks, I assumed they were gang members. As for what I plan to do in the future... I honestly don’t know yet. As long, it allows me to look after my family, I’ll be happy with pretty much anything, I guess.”

When saying these words, the image that appeared in Gary’s head wasn’t just of his mother and Amy, but also of all his friends at the Wolf’s Pool Club, as well as Tom.

The intense conversation about gangs had come to an end, just in time for dessert to be brought out. Chocolate cake. Gary looked at it with mixed feelings. He could only imagine how great it would taste, judging by the quality of food he had enjoyed so far. Ultimately, he placed the fork down, though.

“What's wrong, don't you like chocolate cake?” Xin’s mother asked.

“No... it's not that... unfortunately, I’m allergic to chocolate.” Gary answered, letting out a heavy sigh.

“Damn!” Jayden commented. “If I was allergic to chocolate... I don't even know what I would do.”

Xin started to remember the time Gary got sick. It was a very distinctive memory, since that was what had started her troubles with Tiffany. There was that piece of chocolate bar as well as Tom’s bag out on the table, which had been seemingly filled with more chocolate at the time.

‘That explains why he was sick... but why would Tom give him any? Didn’t they know he was allergic until a few weeks ago? That doesn’t make any sense.’

Fortunately, it was not much of an issue. Instead of chocolate cake, Gary’s dessert became a bowl of vanilla ice cream and afterwards, he realised that it was already pretty late.

“I was thinking, does Xin really have to go to another school?” Gary finally asked. “I mean, aren’t you afraid that moving all the time will affect her studies? I understand that you're worried about the gangs, but I don't think anything like that will happen again.

“Security has been improved, and there’s people who can look out for her like me. Also, now that the gangs know that there is someone like Jayden behind her, I doubt they would try anything. On the other hand, if something like this happens with a gang in a Tier-2 city... I don’t know if it’s true or not, but I’ve heard someone say that those gangs have their own Altered.”

It was the only thing Gary could come up with to try to make them change their mind. When saying these words, he could see Xin's face, it looked as if she was in pain. It reassured him that she didn’t want to move either.

“Ah, that’s very sweet of you, Gary. I’m very happy that my dear Xin managed to make a friend that cares so much about her.” Natalia said with her hands together. “However, we have already been over this a few times. Whatever you might say, we have already thought of everything. If you really want to see Xin, she will be able to come back on weekends, so not all will be lost.”

“Actually, Mum, I decided I won't be coming back. I'll stay at the academy, I mean.” Xin clarified. “Gary, I was going to tell you when we were on our own, but this will probably be the last time we see each other for a while.

“I’m not just moving to any boarding school, but I’ll be joining the Altered Fighting Academy. I also want to be serious about this, so I plan to stay in their boarding programme and continue their training even on weekends. That's why I invited you over and wanted to speak to you today.”

Hearing those words from Xin rather than from her father or mother, it struck Gary that it was something Xin had actually decided on her own. After the meal had finished up, the conversation seemed to lead elsewhere and Gary didn't really know what to do or what to say.

Given the late hour, he eventually bid his goodbyes to the adults, and it was time for him to say goodbye to Xin. They stood by the door, her parents already gone and just her brother by her side.

“I'm sorry Gary, I didn't realise it would upset you so much...and sorry for giving you such a crappy first date.” Xin apologised, as she held Gary’s hand. The next second she leaned in, and before the high schooler could react, she already had pressed her soft lips on his cheek.

“This is my thank-you present for saving me.” She leant back, her face red, before she suddenly ran off.

Leaving Gary to stroke the side of his face.

“That girl, always trying to do what she wants but never being able to.” Jayden sighed. “Come on, let’s head outside. You’re not completely off the hook yet, streaker boy. It's time for our conversation.”

Gary hadn't had the chance to call or text Kai to come and pick him up. Honestly, his mind was still trying to comprehend everything that had happened with Xin, especially the sudden kiss on his cheek at the very end. He was still rubbing his face to the point that the side had become redder than before.

It would definitely become a memory he would never be able to forget. Unfortunately, it seemed destined to become a melancholic one, since he had no idea when he would even be able to see her the next time. Were they even allowed to keep their phones in the AFC? Were the two of them actually even a couple, or was it best for him to just forget about her and try to move on?

What's worse, Jayden seemed to insist for the two of them to have their conversation.

"What exactly do you want to talk about?" Gary asked since he had no idea. There were so many topics the Altered might have in mind, none of them good...

Instead of answering, Jayden walked off to an annex that was on the property. Another building not too far away. "Come on, you'll find out inside, why don't we finish off what we started."

Hearing this, the teenager was a little worried what those words exactly meant. Was the Altered challenging him to another fight? If that was the case, Gary didn't mind too much. There weren't many chances where one was able to fight with someone as great as Jayden.

However, based on the day before yesterday when he had seen Jayden's anger take hold of him, he was worried that the Altered might just want to get rid of him, especially after the little show of affection from Xin and what had been found in his pocket.

'Hang on, Jayden still has that, right?'

"Come on!" Jayden rushed him. "I'm not going to kill you, if that's what you're worried about."

Gary gulped, but he sighed the next moment. Xin's brother was right, if he wanted to kill the teenager, he could probably do it. He also would likely avoid doing so on his parent's property.

'Besides, Jayden isn't a gangster in the first place. I guess I've just been hanging around dangerous people for too long.' Gary shook his head.

Following after Jayden, the high schooler found himself in what could only be described as a training room. There were mats on the floors, bags on the side and even a ring on one side of the room. It was the setup which any Altered fighter would have dreamed to have in their own home.

While Gary was still being amazed by all the training equipment, Jayden threw him a pair of red gloves. "Put them on, and we'll go for a round or two, alright?" Despite his tone, it didn't seem like the Werewolf was actually given much of a choice. The Altered was already wearing a pair of white gloves.

"Wait, are you serious? But we already fought before, and you're... well, Jayden Tiger. What chance do I stand against one of our country's top 50 Altered fighters? Fighting you is just asking for a beating." Gary argued. He wanted to fight, but not if Jayden was to go full Altered on him.

"Don't worry, last time I attacked you because I mistook you for one of those goons. It's just a friendly spar, so I won't go all out on you. Since you managed to take on a few of my hits, I'm curious to see how good you truly are. You said you like fighting, right? Why not take this as an opportunity to learn. And if you need extra incentive, how about I give you my autograph if you manage to win?"

Hearing this from one of his idols, Gary started to put on the gloves. Since this was just going to be a friendly spar, and he didn't think Jayden would be going on him as aggressively as before, he agreed. The autograph reward was also enticing. He was sure it would be worth a lot of money if he were to sell it. Maybe he could use that as an excuse for them moving into a different apartment even.

'I fought the Pincers and my stats have improved since the last time the two fought. It might also be a good chance to see whether that one Pawn Point towards my next Grade gave me any benefits I'm not aware of. Let's see the gap between the two of us.' Gary thought, as he got into a fighting stance.

Meanwhile, Jayden was standing there relaxed, with no type of form or anything. The young adult was jumping up and down on his toes, seemingly he was warming up. However, seeing this sent shivers down Gary's spine.

'I thought he was going to take it easy on me, so why the hell is he doing what he does in all of his official matches?'

Before Jayden was fully warmed up, the teenager decided to interrupt him. He moved forward, and then, once he thought he was close enough, he sprinted ahead at full speed. The burst of sudden movement caught Jayden by surprise, which was what Gary had been going for as he threw out his fist.

“Clever, but you should take into account our ranges before throwing out a punch.” Jayden lectured the teenager, as he lifted his leg up and made use of the Werewolf’s momentum, to kick him in the chin. It was a strong hit, the system had told him so.

[-14 HP]

‘My Endurance has increased, and he’s not even using his Altered body... I can’t tell how strong this guy is!’ Gary thought.

Recovering, the teenager tried to throw out a punch again. He covered himself in case Jayden would retaliate further. Gary was able to bear the pain, but for some reason when he did throw a punch it was a little off target and missed his opponent’s head completely.

“You should take the time to recover.” Jayden advised. “Your sense of balance has shifted. I’m impressed you weren’t knocked out by that counter. Even if you can stand up again, it will take a few moments before you’re back to normal.”

Rather than use the opportunity to punch Gary, Jayden grabbed him by the scruff of his shirt. Immediately, Gary grabbed his arm, and used all his strength to rip it off, tearing part of the suit away.

‘Sh*t... that thing must have been expensive! Let’s hope it’s possible to mend it.’ Gary thought, as he quickly went to deliver a kick, swinging his leg outward.

It was strange because based on the movements from Jayden so far, Gary had expected for Jayden to avoid the kick. Instead, his arm was already raised, seemingly expecting the Werewolf’s action, and it looked like he was going to block it instead.

‘So you think I’m that weak, huh? Well, you’re in for a surprise!’ Gary thought as he put all of his speed and power into the kick.

[Skill activated Controlled Transformation]

His leg slammed into the side of Jayden's arm, and it caused his feet to skid a little. The Altered's arm was throbbing, but before the high schooler could react, Jayden grabbed onto the leg that had kicked him, and used his strength to push Gary to the point where he was off balance.

The teenager was hopping on one leg for a second before a kick suddenly swept it away, causing him to fall on his back. Closing his eyes, he winced in pain, and the next moment, he could see Jayden's fist coming towards his face.

'This is going to hurt.' Gary thought as he braced himself... but the punch never connected. Opening his eyes, he could see the fist inches from his face.

"Well, it looks like it's my win. If you feel like you can do better, we can go for another round, but I already got what I wanted." Jayden stated as he offered the teenager a hand.

"Oh I see, so you were just using me, telling me I could learn something from this. All I learned was you can easily kick my arse." Gary replied in a snarky manner, a little upset that he didn't fare better in the fight. That was the second time he had lost to Jayden now, and he wasn't even sure just how wide the gap between them was.

"So, what exactly did you get out of this? Revenge from me having raided your fridge?"

Jayden turned around and grinned. "Well, there's that too, I suppose, though after all my teasing during dinner I'd say you're already off the hook. There's no shame in having lost, especially since you lost to one of the best fighters out there.

"Besides, it's hardly a fair fight seeing as I'm older than you and have a lot more experience. Still, for someone your age, you really are a skilled fighter, though I can tell that your fighting style is not exactly orthodox. With more training, I'm sure you could grow up to be an excellent fighter, which brings me to what I wanted to talk with you about.

“You really like my sister, don't you? I mean, not just anyone would have gone up against a colour gang to get her back. If you want to chase after Xin... how about joining the AFA as well? Like I said, you're talented, and it would be a shame to waste all of that potential.

“Don't you think that would be the perfect place for an Altered like yourself?”

Chapter 264 - A Special Meeting

Gary didn't know what to say after Jayden's accusation. As such, he opted to stay quiet, which in itself was pretty telling to the Altered. Since they seemed to be done with their conversation, Gary quickly texted Kai, who told him that he would pick him up in around ten minutes.

It felt like a small eternity as Gary and Jayden were waiting together in an awkward silence.

‘How did he find out? The first time we met, I was buck naked... and I didn't do anything serious during our fight two days ago, did I?’ The Werewolf was racking his brain as to how he was discovered. The two of them had only fought for a brief moment until today. ‘Was it the kick on the arm? He could have avoided that blow... but he took it straight on. Was that the whole reason he wanted to fight? To test me?’

For once, the high schooler was right on the money with his guess. Jayden had had his suspicions after fighting the masked high schooler two days ago. It just seemed strange for the teenager to be able to perform that well. After all, the Altered had seen that Gary, just like himself, had fought his way through to the cabin, yet he hadn't looked exhausted.

This meant that the green haired teenager either had the stamina of a top athlete... or that of an Altered. He might have believed the former, but streaker boy had looked completely different to when Jayden had first met him. Unless Gary had started to use performance enhancing drugs ever since the time he had picked him up, something that shouldn't be able to change someone this drastically in such a short amount of time, the only other explanation would be that he had become an Altered.

The final nail in the coffin was the kick. Jayden had decided to take the full strength of his attack head on, and that was what had convinced him that Gary wasn't completely human any more. The real question was, how had the food thief been able to pay for it?

A kid being sponsored who wasn't in the AFA was practically unheard of. It wasn't that no one his age was selected, but whoever would have sponsored him, would have also paid for his tuition at the AFA, and of course they would have registered him. Since he wasn't on the register for Altered, it would mean that it would have had to be an illegal procedure, which would cost even more...

"You're not in any trouble. Your secret is safe with me." Jayden spoke up as they saw the car arrive. "I won't pry into your circumstances, but I highly recommend you think my idea over. Even if it wasn't for chasing after my little sis, I would still tell you to go to the AFA. It will completely change your life. You'll be able to move to a high tier city, and you'll also be able to look after your family."

With that, Jayden headed back inside, while Gary approached the Bersedez Menz. Before entering, though, Gary looked towards the house and could see a curtain drawn and Xin looking out of it.

He gave her a wave, which she returned, before heading inside, and he was off. Perhaps never coming back to this place ever again. During the car ride, Kai looked at Gary expectantly, waiting for his friend to share him the details. Unfortunately, the green haired teenager was just staring out of the window, seemingly in a world of his own.

"Shall I take it that the date didn't go as well as you would have liked? Is that what's on your mind?" The upperclassman asked eventually.

"No... I'm just thinking about everyone and everything." Gary answered, shifting his gaze to Kai. "Do you think... we could ever move to a Tier-2 city... I mean all of us. Changing schools and everything?"

Pondering over Jayden's suggestion, there were a few big problems. Gary didn't have a sponsor, so he would have to come up with the funds to join the AFA in the first place. Then there was the fact that it was located in a Tier-2 city.

Joining them would mean leaving everything behind, unless he could take all of it with him. Sure, if they had enough money he could take Amy and his mother when she got better but what about the gang? On top of that, the money that they had earned wasn't his money. Leader or not, it was primarily the Howlers' money, which was why he asked his upperclassman.

"It should be possible... if we're talking down the line." Kai answered after taking some time to think about it. "However, if you mean right now, then I'll have to ask you to forget about it. It's already too late. Since we've taken over the Pincers area, we're officially one of Slough's small-time gangs.

"At the moment, we are at a crucial phase for the Howlers as a gang. Taking over was just the very first step, and we'll definitely have to prepare for the others trying to challenge us for our territory now. Then, there are other things we have to do in Slough.

"Still, once we've taken over the town and can guarantee that nobody will try to pry it from our hands, we could talk about it. After all, I have my sights on the higher tier cities anyway. So if there is something that you want in those higher tier cities, then go for it. Use it as a goal to push you forward even more."

The answer at least gave Gary some hope that maybe one day he would see Xin again, though for now he would have to concentrate on the things inside Slough. They needed to deal with everything here, including the Underdogs and the Grey Elephants.

The two started to talk about what went on, and Gary had talked about the unfortunate events, such as the condom incident and the dinner table problems. He even admitted that he was worried that he might never see Xin again. Kai responded in turn by trying to hold back his smirk, some concern and lastly by pretending to wipe away a tear, much to the annoyance of Gary.

"Well, it sounds like it's a good thing that I didn't go in detail about the mayor after all. Otherwise, you might have really said some rude remark to him in that little heated conversation of yours." Kai mentioned as if to change the topic.

"What do you mean?"

"You already know that the mayor is involved with the gangs in this area. In particular the Rising Dragon, but there is a lot more to that than meets the eye. Tomorrow there will be a meeting between all five of the gangs.

"The invitation was originally sent out to Olivia, but of course with us having taken over the Pincers, we got one addressed to us personally. That means you, as our leader, will have to attend this little meeting and as for the one that called it in the first place... well I think you can guess where I'm going with this."

Chapter 265 - The Past Resurfaces

Inside a dark room where there was very little light, a young teenager was sitting down on his own in a chair. Across from him, there was a floating head in a glass container filled with a green liquid.

‘Originally I thought that maybe you would only be gone for a day or two, but you still haven't gotten back.’ Blake thought. The head that he was looking at in front of him was none other than Billy’s. ‘At least the liquid will be able to keep it from rotting for now.’

Lately, Blake had been coming down into the Hunter's base a lot. Usually he would only have come down with his father, practising what he needed in the dojo above. However, as the days went past it became apparent that his father wasn't going to come back anytime soon, so he decided to make the most of his time.

At first, he had tried a variation of different weapons that were available. Technically, some of them belonged to his father and were things he shouldn't have used, but since his last sword had broken, he required replacements.

Still, despite him training it wasn't like Blake had been rushing out to go hunting, at least not on his own. Today was one of those days when he just didn't feel like training and instead couldn't keep his eyes off Billy's head in front of him.

‘Something... has changed in me ever since that day.’ Blake thought. ‘I’ve always wanted to live an ordinary life, but now... things that I used to enjoy, like rugby, just seem so boring in comparison.’

Another thought had entered Blake's mind, and it was when he had helped Gary fight against those red colour gang members. A certain rush had come over him, he didn't just help Gary because he needed to, Blake realised he enjoyed using his skills.

The skills he had practised over and over for years, were finally being able to be put to use, but now he was at a standstill once again. Unable to move forward.

‘Maybe I could ask Gary to go hunting with me again? See if we can find any Altered? No, that wouldn't work, Gary only hunted Billy because he was dangerous to others. He doesn't have the same view on Altered as us, and besides I don't think getting close to him is a good idea.’ No,

Thinking of this, Blake decided to get up and instead of heading to the wall where the weapons were, he decided to head over to the bookshelf. The shelf contained countless books and journals from his ancestors, as well as other prominent hunters in the past.

Looking at the journals there were many that had been gathered from the different families, not just his, but most of them told the same history. How their group was created to slay the beasts that would take over the land.

The beasts carried with them something inside called the shadow. They were able to infect humans with the shadow as well, making them slowly decay into chaos. It was a bad time for humanity until those that bore the symbol of the red dragon had gathered to smite the beasts, ridding the land of the shadow's presence.

Reading one of the journals again, it made Blake chuckle. The stories that were told in them really did sound like fairy tales, yet there should be some truth to them. After all, fossils of the beast those hunters used to hunt resurfaced from time to time, and that's how they created Altered in the first place.

The hunters had continued to do the same as those of red dragon's bidding, getting rid of those that had been infected with the beast's power. Although the world might hate them in this era, theirs was a noble quest to make sure the world didn't fall into what it once was again.

'But I guess Gary is different, he's not a beast, the test said so. We say that Altered are able to go mad as their blood starts to darken, but Gary isn't the same. I wonder if there is anything more I can find out about Werewolves in these journals? He admitted that he couldn't control himself during the full moon, and it's not that far off until the next one.

'Maybe one of these books has something that might help him.' Otherwise, when my father comes back, we might end up having to hunt him again, which would break my promise. Something is telling me that it would be best if I keep it if possible.'

Looking through the journals, Blake skimmed through a lot of information, trying to see if he could find anything with the word Werewolf in them. Just like before, though, most of them just told tales of the old from different views.

What he did notice reading them, though, was that even their stories didn't exactly add up into a single truth, there were only a few things that were coherent between them all. However, there was one thing that a lot of the journals mentioned, and that was one of the strongest hunters in existence that many of them looked up to.

There was a passage about him that caught Blake's eye. This man that they spoke of was praised by many of the hunters and was seen as an idol of some sort. That man was hailed by all the sources as a once in a generation genius with the sword.

Many of those tried to replicate his mastery in the sword, and it was said that he had the ability to know where to strike. The journals claimed that he attributed his gift to a seemingly innate ability to see white lines, which told him the optimal place to strike or cut. It seemed like an exaggeration, but apparently that man hadn't been the only one among the hunters with such ability.

It was impossible to confirm or deny it. Blake only knew that he wasn't one of those people. Still, the reason he was focusing on this person was because there were many names for him, but one of the sources had marked it as Gary.

When Blake read that passage he had to blink twice to make sure his eyes weren't playing tricks on him. It was amusing, seeing that his schoolmate had the same name. Turning the page over though, that was where he spotted something, there was something about this Gary that spoke about Werewolves.

{The tension between the two Alphas had been rising. We had been informed that this would happen. Gary was told to make a decision of what to do next, whether he would be involved in this war and choose to help his friend}

{After all, we and everyone knew there was a saying between all the Werewolves. Two Alphas could never coexist.}

Reading it again, Blake was trying to get his head around what it meant. It didn't really shine any light on the situation with Gary, and since he knew nothing about Werewolves, the words didn't make sense.

Unfortunately, the other pages were too worn and damaged to make out anything coherent. It was a real disappointment, as he had been hoping to learn what happened next.

'I wonder... if I should tell Gary about this... I guess I should see if there are more first.' Blake thought as he continued to dig in to find out what happened in the past, to know what could possibly happen in the future.

Chapter 266 - A Special Mission

Tier-4 was the second-lowest tier ranking a place town or city could get. Nearly all jobs in such a place involved some type of manual labour. If one couldn't work that way, there were other means of making a living, including another type of manual labour.

The jobs in Tier-4 towns were often dangerous, yet they produced items and more for the higher ranking towns and cities. They were essentially factories for their respective countries and the whole world. As such, there was always a dark, thick smog over those towns.

The air was polluted, making the people suffer and it was unfriendly to their bodies just like the people. Just like in all the other cities, there were gangs in this one as well. However, there were more gangs than one could count their hands on. On top of that, if you weren't in a gang for protection, you would soon find yourself in a bloody mess.

Unlike in Tier-3 town like Slough, where the gangs were working behind the scenes and skimming money off other companies, here they didn't shy away from doing things out in the open. Being in no gang was risky since it meant gang members could attack you without fearing any consequences. If you were asked to fight for the gang even if you weren't a fighter you had better be there.

Of course, there were those that managed to survive without a gang. They were either too weak to join any gangs, addicted to drugs or reliant on something else such as alcohol to escape the current reality they were in. It was rare for these types of people to afford to live in a Tier-4 town for long, and usually just a matter of time until they eventually ended up having to move down to a Tier-5 town.

Then there were those that were just a little too crazy, those that needed to be avoided at all costs.

When Ozacas first entered the town of Dreadix, he thought that his stay there would be a short one. Any Alterd that would come down to a Tier-4 town would only do so to run away from something. Most likely having offended someone they couldn't afford to, on the run from the White Rose agents or some other messed up reason.

Whatever the case, the fact that he, a three-star hunter, had been called to assist two others of that rank, meant that this mission would be a tough one. Still, the experienced Altered Hunter wasn't really afraid. In fact, if he could be the one to bring down this Altered, he would only be one kill away from ranking up into a four-star hunter.

Until he realised that this job was slightly different compared to the ones he was used to.

Walking down a smoggy street, he met up with the other Altered Hunters. The two of them were covered in hoods, since this was a bad part of town, even for a Tier-4 town. As they walked down the road, they could see men and women who were all skinnier than should be healthy. They were most likely barely able to afford food, making them resemble zombies as they dragged their feet along on their way home.

"Have you considered my offer, Ozacas?" The hunter with orange spiky hair sticking out from his mask asked. His body was slightly larger than the others, but it was top heavy and didn't make him look fat, just muscle.

"I'm still in the middle of training my son." The three-star hunter replied. "However, once he's ready, I'll happily take him along to that Tier-2 city. Unfortunately, he still has a lot to learn until that time comes.

"As a matter of fact, I hope that we can deal with this matter quickly. I've been here longer than I had anticipated, and as you might know, Slough has had its fair share of problems recently."

Eventually, their group arrived in front of a crummy looking apartment building. Still, it seemed in a better condition than the surrounding buildings, seeing as all its floors were somewhat intact.

"This should be the right place... we just need to find out what is happening here and report back to the association. We need to be quick and not hesitate like last time." The orange haired man said, since he was the leader of this group.

Rather than entering through the front door, which was currently shut, they went around the side looking for an opening. Jumping off the side of the other building, the leader used the momentum to grab onto the ledge of the window that was on the second floor.

Fortunately, it was already smashed. Pulling himself in, the others followed his example. Once inside, each of them pulled out their concealed weapons. For Ozacas, it was a single longsword, though it wasn't the same one that he had used when fighting against Billy.

This one was a little more special in design. On its hilt, there were green coloured roots growing from the bottom. His colleagues had similar special weapons. The orange haired leader had two small axes in his hands, while the third member had some type of chain.

Walking through the hallway, the group had already put on their masks and made use of its special function. In this case, the special heat searching mechanism that was built in, it was easy to find. They could see a group of several people that were above them.

However, their heat signals were a little higher than usual, this was true for all of them.

"It's the same as last time, the reading isn't too high, but it's still above the norm." The leader mentioned. "Remember, they're not regular humans, so don't hesitate this time."

It wasn't the first raid they had been on. After all, they had been in this city a while, but they had a special mission to accomplish, and they wouldn't return home, until it was complete.

The leader placed a special device under the door, allowing him to look inside. He could see that there were four inside standing around, and with the mask that there was one more further in the room. The orange haired man pointed at Ozacas and his colleague, assigning them their roles.

A hand count down was made, counting down from three... two... one... the leader immediately burst through the room, rolling on the floor, and he had soon reached one of them. The next second, he swung his axe, cleanly chopping off one of the legs of the closest human, causing his top half to fall down.

But when its top half could be seen, one could see it clearly wasn't the face of a human at all. It had what looked like large warts on its body and tusks like a walrus on its face. Immediately it seemed like the rest were alerted by the situation.

Still, before they could act, a set of chains had wrapped around another one and pulled towards them. A kick in the beast's face was quickly delivered. It had hit one of the large tusks to break and caused it to bleed. The blood coming out from the human, or the suspected Altered mouth was a little darker than it should have been.

As for Ozacas himself, he had another task to deal with while the others were fighting the four in the room. He continued to charge forward and burst through another set of doors in the room. Inside there were already countless dead bodies, but there was still one person inside that was alive.

He looked just like the others with the large tusks and warts on its face, but more importantly was what was in the creature's hand. Stabbing his sword in the ground, the sword started to glow, and strange roots appeared.

They instantly travelled and grabbed the man, wrapping around him and holding him in place. He tried to resist and break through, yet the roots proved too durable. Not hesitating, Ozacas swung his sword, cutting off the man's hand, and grabbing exactly what he needed.

The Altered weren't this easy to deal with, and that was because the creatures they were fighting weren't really Altered. None of the kills they made today would go towards their stars they would carry. It was why they hesitated in the last raid but something was up with these people.

'So this is what caused all this trouble.' Ozacas thought, as he lifted the syringe that was filled with a strange black liquid like substance.

Chapter 267 - An Annoying Return (Part 1)

School these days seemed pretty pointless to Gary. He was listening to teachers' lectures, but all of it seemed to be going in one ear and out the other. The green haired teenager couldn't help but ask himself what the point of all of this was.

He still had two more years to go until graduation, but could he really continue to live a normal life until then? Or at least keep up this facade? Would his grades now even matter at all, if he were to really transfer to the AFA?

Truth be told, the main reason that was keeping the high schooler in Westbridge was that Gary was afraid social services might come to investigate if he would stop coming in. Since not going to school was illegal, it would warrant an investigation.

Gary was afraid that not even Kai would be able to do anything about the siblings not having an actual guardian with their mother in hospital. Still, there was another reason why Gary couldn't quite concentrate, and it wasn't because of the full moon that would arrive in twelve days, it was the report he had gotten yesterday. Just thinking about it, made him clench his fists and wish to just head over to the Grey Elephant gang now and deal with them.

'I can't believe those guys are still going after Amy? Is this their way of coming after me? Is this supposed to be just a warning or something? I'm just glad that Olivia was there personally. It seems like the system's rules are really keeping her in place... but I can't let this continue.'

The Grey Elephants had gone one step too far. In order to stop them from further pursuing his family, the teenager had come to the decision that it would be best to get rid of them. Whether it would be via turning their leaders to force them to follow his rules, as he had done to Olivia or kill them, he didn't care any more.

'These guys are sick in the head... how could they go after a school girl like that?' Gary thought. However, the next moment he caught himself. Lately he was thinking about killing far too easy, and he noticed that these thoughts tended to pop up more easily when it was close to the full moon. Taking a deep breath, he calmed himself.

Besides, he had something else he needed to worry about today, and that was the special meeting between the small-time gangs in Slough. After what felt like an eternity, the school bell finally rung, signalling the end of the school day.

"Hey, so Gary, my Dad told me this morning that I got accepted as an intern at the company he's working at." Tom told his best friend as they were walking out the school building. "My Mom apparently handled Headmistress Young, and she just texted me that I'll be excused. My parents will come pick me up this evening, and I'll only be back at some point next week."

At first glance, It seemed preposterous to give any student time off in the middle of a school year, however, there were always exceptions. Unlike Gary, Tom was actually one of Westbridge's smartest students, so he enjoyed certain perks. Besides, in their current year, the school even encouraged the

students to pick a couple of weeks to gain work experience, though normally it was meant to happen in the second half of the school year at a specially designated time.

Hearing that, Gary contemplated whether he should ask the school to sign off on him working at one of the restaurants in Burnham street for a couple of weeks as well. It would be easy enough to have Olivia write a report about what a great worker Gary been, and it would give him days of school then. Then again, it might be wiser to use that at a later time...

"Anyway, you know my parents work in Brocknell, so I won't be able to come back before the internship ends. However, I promise you, I'll ask my Dad your question about the beasts and see if I can find out anything about Werewolves as well. I just wanted to let you know that I will be back before the next full moon, and while I'm away, I just hope...that no more trouble comes your way." Tom smiled.

Smiling back, Gary was reminded that he was really lucky to have one of the most supportive friends. Every time he thought of Tom this way, the Werewolf felt like he was a little brother that needed protecting just as much as his sister.

'One day, Tom, when I don't have to lie to you any more. When the Underdogs are dealt with... I'll tell you the truth.' Gary thought.

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With school over, Gary was happy to see that there was no crowd in front of the school this time. He had strictly warned Kai not to pull such a stunt again, and apparently it had worked. There was no longer any reason for him to head to the Wolf's Pool Club, since they had plenty of workers, including White, so he decided to head home.

Since Amy had nearly been attacked yesterday, Gary wanted to reassure her that everything was alright. The only way he could do that was by spending time with her. Afterwards, he would meet Kai in the Wolf's Pool Club, and they could drive to the meeting with the small-time gangs.

On his way home, though, the teenager decided to stop at his go-to convenience store, grabbing his daily food to replenish his Energy. When entering, Gary was expecting to see Tyler there like he did every day, and the cashier was there, only his attention wasn't focused on him.

Instead, it turned out that the drunken man who had thrown a tantrum last Saturday had returned. Only this time he wasn't so drunk. Gary quickly and silently hid between the aisles, wishing to avoid any unnecessary attention. He also didn't want Tyler to get in trouble, but from listening to what was going on, it seemed like it was little too late anyway.

"Tyler, you need to apologise to this man immediately. The customer is ALWAYS right! You've disrespected this hard-working man, and you're lucky that he hasn't decided to press charges. Really, I can't believe you would do that, but then again, maybe I shouldn't be surprised coming from someone who is treating the store like a storage unit, and taking expired food from it! You're on your last straw, young man!"

Chapter 268 - An Annoying Return (Part 2)

Gary didn't recognise the other man's voice. From the sound of it, it seemed like it was Tyler's boss, or perhaps his manager. As he peeked around the corner, he saw a fat and sweaty man who he had never seen here before. Were it not for him wearing the uniform and talking down to Tyler the high schooler would have thought of him as just another customer.

"But, Sir, I was only handling the situation according to protocol since his card got declined! Should I have just given him the product?" Tyler argued, while his hands trembled from trying to stay polite. "How can you make me apologise when he nearly assaulted me and even spat in my hair?"

"I had cash on me!" The rude customer insisted. "You youngsters are so rude that you wouldn't even give me the time of day! Don't pretend that you were the victim in all of this! What about your friend, huh? He's the one who ASSAULTED ME!!! Yet here you are refusing to give out information on him! If he can't pay me back, then you're leaving me no choice but to ask you to compensate me! As an employee of this shop, they'll be the ones who will have to pay for it!"

Now that Gary looked closer, he could see the man had some covering on his nose. The teenager couldn't recall if he had hit the man so hard that it would break it, but even if that was the case, the drunkard deserved everything that had happened to him that day.

"I've already told you, 'Sir', I don't know his name. And even if I did, company policy forbids me from divulging our other customer's personal data! I really don't agree to your actions that day." Tyler was unwilling to bow down before the troublemaker.

“Fine, then, I guess you don't mind me talking to my friends in the Underdogs about this. If you don't want to compensate me directly, I'm sure they can just do that after increasing your protection fees!” The drunken man pointed at him, before he turned around, with an evil smile.

To Gary, it was obvious that this man had no relations to the Underdogs whatsoever. Having worked as their Transporter for as long as he had, the green haired teenager knew how Damion's group operated. They wouldn't ask, they would force.

If that drunk guy really knew someone from the Underdogs, they would have come to the shop on the very same day, teaching Tyler and everyone else involved a lesson. There would be no need for him to make such a show in front of Tyler's superiors. Unfortunately, the fat guy seemed to fall completely for the little trick.

“Hang on! I'm sure we can come to an understanding. There's no need to go that far. Our store will happily pay for your medical bills.” The manager stopped the man in a suit before he could leave. Then he turned around to his employee. “Naturally, all of it will be deducted from your wages, Tyler!”

“You can't do that! How am I meant to pay my rent? Or for my food? That has to be ille-“

In the middle of his sentence, the manager raised his hand and slapped Tyler across the face.

“You've already done enough. I will not allow you to put this shop into further jeopardy because of your actions. You will receive no pay this month.”

It was clear that Tyler was stunned by the manager's action, while the old man wasn't even trying to hide his enjoyment about the university student's treatment. His shoulders moving up and down.

“Sir, I have come on time every day! I have worked overtime whenever you have asked me, and this is how you repay me? You choose to trust this stranger's word over me? You think just because I need this job, you can treat me like a dog?” Tyler raised his hand, about to slap the manager back, only to hesitate at the last moment.

The university student was furious, but he was also aware of the harsh reality. If he were to hit his manager, he would never get his money and lose his job. It was hard for one to even get a job these days, and if the fatso spread rumours about him it might be impossible to find another one.

While thinking of a way out, Tyler suddenly heard a large whack sound. The slap sound vibrated throughout the whole shop as his manager flew head first into the cigarettes.

“How the f*ck can you hit your employees like that?” Gary asked, still shaking with anger.

‘Damn it... I let my anger take over again. I only put Tyler in an even worse situation.’ Gary realised, but when looking at Tyler he didn’t look sad, instead he looked happy.

“You... i-it’s you!” The old man pointed with his finger shaking.

Gary took a step forward, but the old man immediately ran out of the shop, afraid for his life. By then, as well, it looked like the manager was coming too. Standing up, the side of his cheek looked like a giant balloon.

“Y-YOU! YOU’RE FIRED, TYLER! AS FOR YOU, YOU GREEN HAired PUNK, YOU’RE BANNED FROM THIS SHOP!!!!” The manager shouted in fury.

Leaving it there, the two decided to head out. A little down the street they sat on the edge of the pavement. Tyler had a couple of cans of pop in his bag and offered Gary one.

“I’m sorry about making you lose your job... and causing you so much trouble back there. You’re only in trouble because of me.” Gary sighed, taking a sip of the drink.

“Nahh, it’s not your fault. Honestly, I never liked that Fatso. He was a sh*tty manager, and only came to bitch about everything. Besides, after what he did, I don’t think I could work there again. Also, the boss might fire him if I told him that he banned our most loyal customer. Without you, they’ll lose like half of their profits. It might go under without your help.”

The two of them laughed, but Gary still felt bad about what had happened, and he was wondering if there was a way he could fix things. When he saw a car drive by, an idea suddenly popped into his head.

“Say, Tyler, can you drive?”

“Yeah. I mean, I don't have a car, but I got a licence.” Tyler replied, wondering why the teenager had asked him that out of nowhere.

Hearing this, Gary decided to make a quick call. The former cashier was still confused about what was going on, but judging by the high schooler's grin, it seemed to be something good.

“How would you like to work as a driver?”

Chapter 269 - The Meeting (Part 1)

Tyler gladly accepted Gary's offer to become a driver. The teenager didn't even have the chance to go into detail before the university student had already accepted. Whether it was because he trusted Gary or really needed a job, the high schooler wasn't sure.

During the call, Gary had asked Kai about their financial details and if doing something like this was okay. When his upperclassman had asked why he wanted to know, the Werewolf had given him a short version of events. He had heard a sigh, but it was followed by a ‘fine, we can put him on the payroll’.

When Tyler asked about the pay, Gary told him that they would pay him the same amount that he had received at the convenience store. All the university student had to do was to be ready for a call whenever they required him. The car would be kept at the Wolf's Pool Club anyway, so Tyler would just have to be present in that area during his on duty hours.

Since it would be his first day as a driver, Tyler excused himself, stating the need to come to work in something more presentable. Gary bid him farewell after giving him the address. After all, he needed to do things himself before the big meeting today as well.

He ended up spending some time with Amy, eating together and watching a comedy show. For a brief moment, it had felt as if things had gone back to normal. Gary was even a bit sad, when he had told his sister that he had to go. Amy hadn't said anything, but he had noticed that she was sad about it.

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"Hey, nice suit, but you don't have to dress that formally." Gary greeted Tyler, surprised to see him at the club already. There was more than half an hour until the agreed upon time, and the university student looked like he had been waiting for a while already.

"Hey, I got in because of your recommendation, so I don't want to let you down. I need to make a good impression." Tyler insisted.

Gary felt a bit awkward inside, because he had yet to tell his driver about their new relationship and that he was actually the one who had hired him. Still, it was good to do something that made him feel nice. For the first time, the teenager was able to help someone due to the new situation he had found himself in.

Walking ahead, Gary entered, and the others waved him hello. Business was as usual, but now rather than just teens they also had a few adults in the place having an early drink and playing pool as well. However, most of the eyes in the room seemed to be attracted to a certain someone.

One of the older men seemed so distracted that he even managed to miss the ball completely.

"Is that girl the boss of this place?" Tyler whispered.

As for the person he was talking about, it was none other than Olivia Pearl, who was sitting on her own in the back. Her presence was making it so no one wished to sit next to her. Gary didn't blame Tyler for thinking she was the boss. Her clothes screamed wealth, and she just had this air around her.

The reason she was here today was because the Lady Boss would be accompanying them to the meeting. As the ex-leader of one of these small-time gangs, Kai had stated that it would make quite the impression if she was by their side this evening.

"Just wait here and enjoy yourself. Your work will start soon." Gary said as he walked over to Olivia because there was something that he needed to solve. The others were nervous seeing this, and the

new customers who had never entered the Wolf's Pool Club before were amazed that someone had the balls to walk up to her.

"I want to make something clear. I don't like you." Gary didn't mince his words.

"Well, please tell me something I didn't know." Olivia rolled her eyes.

"However... I'm still thankful that you helped out my little sister. Even if you did it only because you were ordered to... you did a good job." Gary thanked her.

"No problem, Boss." Olivia replied, and carried on as she had been before.

Gary still hadn't forgotten everything Olivia had done, and he probably never would. Working for him was just a minor punishment and although she was being obedient for now, if there wasn't a solution or things started to change closer to the full moon, he didn't feel like he would hesitate to get rid of her.

Kai had come up from the downstairs basement, and was happy to see that the two of them were there. He then called them down because he had prepared something for the two of them. Gary received his replacement uniform, and Olivia also got one of her own.

She looked at it for a while, and for the first time Kai thought he had seen a smile on her face. The Lady Boss's outfit was all one piece. There was just a zip that would go from the belly button all the way up to the neck. It was tight-fitting and of course in the Howlers' gang colours.

Gary's had no change, but before handing it over.

"Please don't ruin this one." Kai smiled. "The material for it isn't cheap nor is it easy to procure."

As it turned out, Olivia wasn't exactly shy in getting naked, causing the two teenage boys to awkwardly look away. Once all of them were dressed, it was time for them to leave, but before they did, Gary placed his black wolf mask on his face. Surprisingly, Kai also had a special mask on his face, only his was a golden fox mask, though with black highlights.

“Well, I can't exactly wear the same mask as our boss, now can I? Besides, all three of us will be at this meeting. They know Olivia's face but not ours, and I would like to keep it that way.” Kai explained, noticing the underclassman's confusion.

At this meeting, each gang leader would be present, and they were only allowed to bring two guards with them. So the others wouldn't be coming with them this time. If any gang didn't follow this rule, the meeting would be called off, and rescheduled.

However, according to Kai it would be bad for them if that happened. Although the gangs weren't working together, this meeting did bring some unison between them. It was also how they were able to survive even though there were big gangs around. And with a blooming war on the horizon, it was important to know about what the other's planned to do.

Walking out of the Wolf's Pool Club, they exited it from the back and headed down the alleyway. This way, the customers wouldn't see them leaving in their uniforms. Gary texted Tyler to head out front as he waited, and they eventually saw the car pull up.

However, when he saw the car, Tyler thought nothing of it and continued to tap his feet waiting for Gary to introduce him. Getting out of the driver's seat was Kai.

“You must be our new driver, right? It's nice to meet you.”

“Huh?!” Tyler was speechless, but all the masked stranger did was hand him the keys, and get into the back of the car. The only thing the university student could think of, however, was that he probably should have asked for more money. Once he was in the car, he saw a second masked figure in the back, as well as the woman from before.

This just strengthened his earlier assumption of her being the owner and leader was correct. Looking through the back mirror, Tyler could also see a bit of green hair sticking out from one of the passengers.

‘Is that? ... no, it couldn't be... if it is... just who the hell are you, Gary?’ Tyler thought, but not wanting to ruin his first day on the job, he kept quiet and followed the instructions to their already programmed destination.

After a few minutes they had arrived. It was time for them to attend the meeting.

Chapter 270 - The Meeting (Part 2)

The drive to the meeting place had taken a while, Gary noticed, which indicated that it was quite a bit out of town. There didn't look to be any way to get to the location other than by car. No train, no bus went to the area and the teenager could count the amount of cars he had seen go by on both his hands.

Their destination was essentially what one would call a country house, only that it really was in the middle of nowhere. It seemed as if someone had randomly decided to plot down the house there.

It made Gary wonder when the world had become like this. People lived stacked up on top of each other in apartment buildings. The only jobs available were in the city or towns, and here there were just fields of empty land where no one lived.

The car pulled up into a large gravel driveway that looked like it could fit fifteen cars or so. There were already three parked there, all of them from brands that were just as expensive, if not more so, than the one they were currently in. Then there was the house itself, which was even larger than the mayor's house.

While the Clove family's had already been a big house, what they were looking at now was a true manor. He wouldn't even be able to guess how many rooms were in such a place. This made it even stranger that something like that would be in the middle of nowhere...

"Whoa, what are you guys even doing here, and this place is huge... I guess you must be some pretty important people or something." Tyler couldn't help but say as he stared at the manor in amazement.

"Of course you can build things like this in the middle of nowhere, the land here is worthless." Olivia replied, as she raised herself to get out of the car.

It was then that Tyler felt that he should be doing his job properly and rushed out of the car to open the door for her. When each of them left, they were looking around, trying to see who else had already arrived, yet those other cars looked empty. It was impossible to see if someone was inside since the windows were tinted far too dark, similar to their own.

Just before leaving to head inside, though, Kai had a few words for their new driver.

“Your name’s Tyler, right?” Kai asked, to which Tyler nodded. “Well, I’m going to be straight with you. For your own sake, cut the small talk. The less you know the better, so don’t ask us who we are, what we’re doing, or anything about this place.

“In fact, just stay in the car, and don’t come out unless we’re back and tell you to. Your only job is to be ready to drive us wherever we tell you to. Do that, and everything will be okay.”

For some reason, Tyler felt like these words were quite heavy, and he couldn’t help but wonder what these people were doing here, but he decided to just nod along anyway. When the university student got back in the seat, the group started to walk towards the entrance, their leader naturally in the middle.

‘Damn this is nerve wracking as hell, there’s going to be four other gangs the same size as the Pincers here... and what will even happen at these meetings anyway?’ Gary couldn’t help but think.

For once even Kai hadn’t been too sure about what happened in those types of meetings. According to Olivia, they were rare and usually only held to discuss certain agendas. If she were to harbour a guess, it would be due to the Howlers taking over the Pincers in the first place. However, the meeting had actually been called for, even before that, so there should be more than that being discussed today.

Before they entered, they heard another car pulling up from behind. The group stopped for a second as they turned their heads. When the car eventually parked they could see four figures including the driver leaving the vehicle.

Out of those that left the vehicle, there was one that stood out more compared to the others. He had quite the square looking nose that stuck out that matched his face, but he also had a confidence that was being carried around him that the others just didn’t seem to have.

“Tony freaking Lock. Leader of the Lock gang.” Olivia folded her arms as she introduced the man to the masked teenagers next to her.

"Is he trouble?" Kai asked, as it looked like Tony had spotted the three of them. The gang leader smiled as he came their way.

"Trouble? Not really, it's more like he's seriously annoying. Tony and his gang used to visit the Burnham food street quite often, and it wasn't because he enjoyed the food there." Olivia explained. "Every chance this guy got he would try to talk our two sides into working together, but I think rather than getting our two gangs to join up, he was just trying to court me."

"What makes you think that?" Gary asked.

"He proposed to me." Olivia replied matter-of-factly.

Judging by the fact that the Lady Boss didn't have a ring on her finger and the two gangs had never joined up, Gary and Kai could only imagine how it must have gone after turning him down. For gangsters who were pretty petty people, Tony might just have a grudge against the Pincers.

"Well, well, well." Tony smiled. "If it isn't Olivia Pearl, alive and well. Here I heard that your gang got taken over. I cried my heart out yesterday, thinking I would never see you again. It made me realise that my feelings for you may not be gone after all.

"It's a real pleasure to see you again today. I guess those rumours were all just false."

"All of it is true." Olivia replied immediately. "This guy here is the new boss."

Tony pulled a face that clearly showed that he wasn't impressed.

"The masked clown? I seriously don't know if you're pulling my leg or what. Either way, Wolfie, don't you think it's rude to not show your face? Trying to keep the Howlers a secret when there's a meeting full of leaders isn't exactly polite."

Tony raised his hand, and it looked like he was going for the Werewolf's mask. It was slow and seeing this, the teenager was hesitating on what he should do. If he stepped back would it be offensive? Should he grab his hand, but while thinking about what to do, there was another who had already acted.

From his side, a swift kick was made, knocking Tony's arm away, before he could reach the mask. As for who the kick had come from, it was Kai, whose hands were in his pockets.

The two guards by Tony's side rushed forward, looking to cause trouble.

"Stop!" Tony shouted. "Not here. Now's not the time. Look, I don't know what type of trick you used to pull Olivia to your side, but just see what happens if you pull this crap in there. Once this meeting is over, it's all fair game out there."

Walking past the three of them, they continued inside and entered the manor, and the doors quickly closed behind them.

"Word of advice." Kai told Gary once the Lock gang was out of earshot. "Don't take crap from any of them. Don't let them push you around. Think of them as nothing but adult bullies."

"As the new gang they will see us as pushovers in this whole thing, but since we've taken over the Pincers you earned a place at their table. Heck, since you took over the Pincers, a gang at the same level as them, it means we are above them."

"We have a goal, and this place is nothing but a stepping stone. Heading inside, I want you to think exactly that. We are not at the same level. THEY are the ones BELOW US!"

"Strong words." Olivia commented after hearing everything. "I didn't realise that your plans were so high, but if they really are set high, then he's right. You're no weak sh*t, so don't let them treat you like it."

Straightening out his clothes, and letting out a deep breath, Gary pushed the doors open and the two by his side followed. There was no one inside to greet them. The entrance of the place looked empty, but there was a noisy chatter coming from further inside.

The sound of two people shouting at the top of their lungs. Others laughed. Following this, Gary soon found himself in a type of living room. It was a large room with several sofas that had been set up.

Each gang had taken a sofa as their territory. Looking at them, Gary was trying to see if there was anyone he recognised. Of course, other than the fellow Tony, and the Rising Dragon gang leader he had met before, none of them really had a familiar face.

Seeing as to who they were, the others looked their way, and it was clear they were trying to judge and gauge the new leader. It looked like they wanted to say something, but keeping Kai's words in mind, the masked teenager just walked across the room without sparing them so much as another glance.

It was silent in the room, as if they were expecting Gary or someone to say something. Until...

"It looks like you all made it here and well. I guess we should get to starting this meeting straight away."

A voice from where Gary had just entered was heard, and it was a new person. However, it was a voice he recognised and someone he didn't expect to see at the meeting at all.

'What is Xin's father doing here?!'