

## Werewolf 421

### Chapter 421 Strange Blood (Part 2)

This time, Gary mustered enough strength to open his heavy eyelids and he was greeted by a bright white light above him. A plain colour. It was a familiar feeling, a familiar scene as if he had been here before. The soft touch of the bedsheets in his hands acted as the last piece of the missing puzzle.

‘Sh\*t! I'm back in a hospital bed again, aren't I? What happened this time.’ The green haired teenager tried to recollect his thought as he clenched the sheets tightly. He could only remember bits and pieces, with most of it just being a reminder of how painful that hunger had been.

Eventually, the memories of what had happened were slowly coming to him, and thankfully not one of them had him eat, kill or injure anyone else. Still, he also had no clue how he had ended up in this room. He remembered the teacher Eddy getting involved with the fight towards the end, but that was it.

“Well... I can always ask someone later. I guess it at least all worked out in the end.” Gary let out a sigh of relief. He took in his surroundings. The Werewolf knew that he was in a hospital bed again, seemingly in a private room, though slightly different from the last one, with a plant pot here and there, but that's when he realised something.

Slowly the pain in his stomach was coming back to him, the pain of hunger.

[10/300 Energy]

Seeing the low value, he felt relieved. He was a bit surprised that he still had Energy left over, but then he noticed the IV drip connected to his body, ensuring that he would have enough nutrients to survive.

[30 Days until the next full moon]

‘Wait, did I read that correctly... the full moon... it already passed! I don't have to worry anymore!!’ Gary thought excitedly in his head. He would have cheered if he had the Energy, but for now, he just enjoyed the comfort of the pillow. ‘Great, I can finally eat without holding back.’

Unfortunately, his joyous moment didn't last long. The realisation hit him how close a call it had been, the third turning. The pain he had gone through and the amount he needed to hold back was worse than the previous two times.

On the first night, surviving just the night alone had been enough, though he had been occupied with his fight against Blake at the time... Then there was the second turning, and suffice to say, three hungry Werewolves being cooped up in one room had turned out to be a recipe for disaster... yet Gary had learned a lot from it. Enough to survive this third turning, at least that is what had been his assumption.

In a way, the starvation method coupled with his draining of Energy had worked. Perhaps without that match, he might have made it the entire day, but if things would get harder and harder, then he might have no other choice but give in to his urges.

To just eat, and then transform on that night to go out hunting?

'I guess I could always just make someone who I don't like a hunting target.' Gary tried to joke with himself, but he knew it was a serious matter.

In all honesty, he wished that either Tom or Kai would walk in through the door. Speaking of the Beta Werewolf, he was curious how his Pack members had fared with their own turning. Was it also getting worse for them each month, or was it just an Alpha thing?

Whatever the case, he could at least put off his own suffering for another thirty days, and Gary was great regarding postponing problems he could do nothing about.

'What is going to happen to me now, though? I didn't reveal myself, did I?' Gary wondered. 'Xin should have only seen my arms transform and my eyes, she can't think I'm a Werewolf.'

There was a worry in Gary's head, if one person he wanted never to see him fully transform, then that was it. Because, she and the rest of the gang had been attacked by Billy that time. Although he had joined, he was in his Werewolf state.

If she was to find out, it might take her some time, but eventually, she would put two and two together. If she had to know the truth, then he wanted her to find out from his own mouth.

Just then there was a knock on the door. At least the Werewolf didn't feel the need to escape from the room this time, but he was concerned about who might walk through that door and what they would say.

Surprisingly, Numba was the one to enter the room. "Hey, you're awake, I didn't expect that." The Goat Altered greeted him, as he pulled out a chair and sat down next to him. "How are you feeling?"

"Hungry," Gary replied without an ounce of hesitation.

Hearing the green haired teenager speak in his usual manner brought the largest smile on Numba's face.

"You're back to normal... I thought something had happened to you. I was worried you might have stayed like that forever... You knew something like that was going to happen, didn't you? That's why you told me to hold you back, right? It's why I came alone and didn't bring any of the others with me either."

"Hold me back?" It was then that Gary remembered mumbling something like that... At the time, he had been close to being delirious. If he hadn't been knocked out, then he wanted Numba to lock him in a secure room, and leave him in there, making sure he didn't escape.

"Thank you," Gary said, looking his friend straight in the eyes. "Thank you for getting into the ring that time. I... I don't know what would have happened if you didn't... You've really proven to really be a wonderful friend. I don't know what I can do to ever repay you for that."

Numba stood up from his seat, and headed towards the door. "Stop that. Isn't that what friends do for each other? Let me grab one of the nurses to bring you some food. They might want to take your blood before that, though." Numba said opening the door.

"Blood?!" Gary shouted out. "Hang on, Numba, does that mean they haven't taken my blood yet?!"

The Werewolf instantly remembered the voices he heard moments before he had passed out.

“Umm, no, I don’t think so. I’m pretty sure they were waiting for you to wake up. To be honest, I shouldn’t even be here. I snuck in here to make sure you were alright. Because of the way you acted, Eddy suspected you might have been turning into a crazed Altered, but since you’re all okay, there should be nothing for you to worry about.”

Alas, there WAS something to worry about. Gary already knew about the blood test thanks to White Rose. And he also knew that his blood wasn’t that of an Altered. While White Rose might not have cared about it, how could he explain to the AFA, an academy EXCLUSIVELY for Altered how he had made it in and how he was able to transform without being an Altered himself?!

“Numba, I don’t have the time to explain things but I need a huge favour from you. I need your blood to pass that test!”

#### Chapter 422 Fake blood

Hearing Gary pleading with his voice, Numba stared out the door to see if anyone was coming their way. He slowly closed the door and kept his back against it, so he could buy them a few seconds if anyone did try and come in.

“Gary, what are you talking about? You’re not seriously trying to pass my blood off as your own, are you?” Numba asked. “You seem normal enough, so what is even the point of that?”

It was a confusing thing to do. Gary was behaving like his normal self. Even if he might be someone who could get easily angered, that wasn’t the same as being a crazed Altered, so there had to be another reason for that. Perhaps he was just not feeling well, but in that case, why not just tell the nurses that so they could test him another day?

Gary sat there in silence. He had been in this type of situation before, and he remembered how Tom had taken him to the medical room at school. Back then, he had still been debating whether to tell the truth or not. Still, this was different. Tom had been his best friend who had arrived at the right conclusion on his own, whereas Numba, no matter how great a friend he had proven to be, was someone he knew for less than a month. Furthermore, as far as he or everyone else was concerned he was just a Wolf type Altered...

“Look, Numba, I can’t tell you everything right now, and I know that might make you feel like sh\*t, but I promise I’m doing it for your own good. I don’t want to get you into trouble.” Gary explained. “I wouldn’t ask for your help unless I really needed it, but if they take my blood...”

While the Werewolf was still searching for the right words, Numba just had a big smile on his face. “It’s ok, Gary. We haven’t known each other for too long, but in that short period of time, how often have we stuck our necks out for each other? When you came to me in the assessment, when I helped you with that black ball test, you with Sty and all of that until we are here right now.

“To me, you are a person who can... accomplish anything, so if you need my help, but can’t explain things, then I’m trusting you that you’re doing it for a good reason.”

Gary was surprised by this reaction, though this feeling of trust made him feel even guiltier for not reciprocating it. Still, there was just too much he didn’t know about the Werewolf System, and the fewer people knew about it, the better.

“Thank you... so you’ll take the blood test for me?” Gary asked.

Numba pulled a strange face. “I mean, I’d be happy to, but how exactly are we supposed to do that? It’s not like I can hide in your bedsheets and stretch out my arm when they come. I also can’t just go out and tell a nurse that I’ll bring them your blood, nor can I go out and pretend to be you.”

Now that Numba brought up the issue, the Werewolf didn’t exactly have a solution for that problem, either. Before they could rack their brains together, a slight pressure came down on the door handle. Numba, immediately sprinted towards the bed, hoping to hide underneath it, but it was too late, the nurse had already opened the door.

“Hey, who are you? You’re not meant to be in here!” She shouted loudly. “Someone call the guards, we have an intruder!!!”

“I’m sorry, I just came to visit my friend because I was worried about him.” Numba tried to explain him being there. He made sure to put up his arms as a sign of surrender while showing off his AFA uniform so that she knew he was a student. The nurse simply looked him up and down, before she pointed to the door.

“Alright, I’ll leave. I’m sorry for intruding.”

As he exited the room, Numba gave Gary a disjointed look. However, the green haired teenager didn’t notice it. He was too busy staring at the tray full of equipment the nurse brought with her, specifically at the needle and a strap.

‘I can’t just leave Gary, he’s not going to be able to figure this out himself, but I don’t have any ideas either.’ Numba thought, but fortunately, he knew just the right person to help them out.

Running out of the hospital wing, the Goat Altered headed across one of the hallways that connected several of the building. He was headed for their new rooms, going straight to one of the rooms, which turned out to be unlocked.

“Izzy, I need your help!”

“Ahhh! What the f\*ck do you think you're doing, close the door!” Izzy shouted.

Numba stood there motionless as his eyes stared at Izzy who had just come out of the bath. Thinking she would be on her own, she didn’t even have a towel covering herself, only one to cover her hair, allowing the teenage boy to get a great look at all her assets.

“Get out!” Izzy screamed, and Numba instantly escaped the room.

“Uh... I’m so sorry, but we don’t really have much time. It's about Gary, he’s in trouble.” Numba revealed from behind the door. He was glad that there was nobody else around to see his beet red face.

‘I saw... everything.’

In less than a minute, Izzy came out of the room, now dressed in the AFA uniform. The only sign that she had been naked moments ago was the still wet hair.

“He better be close to death for you to barge in like that.” Her finger pressed into his chest, as she was barely resisting the urge to beat him up for what he had done. She took a step back, her arms crossed as she waited for more information, yet Numba could only stare at the floor to avoid looking at her.

“Whoa, what’s got you so mad?” Ian suddenly appeared from the hallway, coming back from the kitchen after his meal. He had heard the commotion on the way, but he had been too far away to make out details. “What did I miss? Did you confess to Izzy or something?”

“Shut up!” Both Izzy and Numba answered in unison.

Ian was shocked why they reacted to his teasing this way, but he let it go. Since he was already there, Numba didn’t want to send him away, especially since they were all friends of Gary.

“Look, I came here because we need your brain,” Numba said. “I’ve just come from Gary’s room. He’s awake and from what I can tell, he’s back to his regular old self. However, the moment I mentioned that they needed to test his blood to make sure his outburst yesterday had nothing to do with him being a crazed Altered, he started freaking out. He even begged me to cover him by taking the blood test for him.”

“What? Why? That doesn’t make any sense.” Ian chimed in.

Numba could only shrug his shoulders. “I asked him the same thing, but from what he could tell me, it was best for me not to know. We didn’t exactly have a lot of time to discuss what he meant by that because a nurse came in and tried to call the supervisors on me.

“Maybe his blood is a little crazed, and he’s worried about what the school might do if they find out. Whatever the case, we need to help him. We owe him at least that much. If it weren’t for him, we all would still be in the facility.”

Hearing all of this, Izzy let out a big sigh. “Alright, sounds like this is really serious. We might be able to do something, but it's going to be hard. The good news is, due to the rules around Altered, they are only allowed to test the blood for black particles, which means they aren’t allowed to store or keep the blood sample in any way.

“After all, the corporations, and other groups, don’t want to risk an independent company having their Altered’s blood on file. That means, giving our blood, or swapping the sample before they test won’t be a problem, it's just how we do it.

“If a nurse is already in the room with him, that means we don’t really have the time to come up with something. We're just going to have to come up with a plan on the way there. Let’s hope that Gary manages to buy us some time.”

Standing up, all three of them were ready. They knew that getting caught in an attempt to temper with a medical test could land them in huge trouble, but for their friend, they were ready to take that risk.

#### Chapter 423 Fake Blood (Part 2)

The three walked through the hallway at a fast pace, they didn't want to run to attract any attention, because currently, they were now in the official academy. They were supervisors, teachers and students that would appear once in a while, in certain places.

The reaction to this little mission that they had was different for all of them, Numba nervous, Izzy focused while Ian, he was excited. Never did he think his life in the AFA would amount to so many things happening and a life like this.

In fact, he didn't even get a second to relax, either.

“Alright, so there are two things that need to be done. First is to get a test tube they use for blood, and also, get a syringe to draw out the blood. I’m guessing neither of you knows how to give yourself a blood test?” Izzy asked.

“I feel a little sick just thinking about it, they need to find a vein right in your arm, and they wrap that thing around your bicep,” Ian replied.

“Alright, well we don’t know why Gary needs Numba's blood, but if I were to guess it doesn't matter who it comes from, So Ian, that's going to be your job. As for the second task, that's getting Gary’s blood sample and swapping it. This is going to be the harder one.” Izzy explained.



When arriving at the medical bay, there were quite a few students with different injuries, what surprised them was there were also some supervisors here as well. When training Altered with all different types of abilities, they guessed it was just a normal thing.

The Medical ward wasn't too big, there was an oval desk in the centre with staff members working at it. Nurses were walking back and forth, looking a bit too busy to deal with anything.

Then there were the patients that would sit outside a particular door on a cold metal seat.

"I was going to tell you Izzy, the sneaking part, I don't think will be so difficult." Numba explained. "When I came here earlier, everyone was just so busy, and they seemed to trust the students not to do anything crazy here.

"The problem is, probably wherever they have the Blood samples. I mean, sneaking in and getting a few things, fair enough, but snooping around was bound to get caught."

Before Numba was able to fully finish his explanation, Ian was already off, he had seen where the nurses were going, in and out with their troubles of equipment. He went through the double doors, and everyone waited nervously for a while.

Five minutes had passed, ten minutes had passed and then. After fifteen minutes, Izzy was going to go in herself, but that's when she saw Ian walking back towards them. The group regathered, and stepped a bit away from the reception.

"What took you so long?" Izzy asked.

"I was getting this," Ian replied. "I wanted to be careful, make sure it was a clean needle, where to dispose of it, and do you know how scary it is to stab yourself with a needle?" Ian asked.

"Aren't you a beast that makes needles?" Numba asked.

“That's different, anyway, it was terrifying, and I missed a few times, but I eventually got what you wanted. You know on the internet I could probably sell my blood for a fortune and here I am, giving it away for free.” Ian joked, but Izzy had already snapped it out from Ian's hand.

“So what are we going to do, about the other part, the swapping the blood? I couldn't find the lab.” Ian replied.

“I'm going to need you two to make some type of distraction for me, just something to get all the nurses out here. Something big, and I'll go in and have a look.” Izzy stated.

“What if the door is looked at, or if anything is looked at, don't we need a key or to force someone to tell us?” Numba asked.

Izzy smiled.

“You know, I only accepted because I thought there was a chance of this working, you can let me deal with that.”

The two boys were standing there thinking about how they could make a large distraction when Ian had come up with an idea and whispered it to Numba.

“No way, why would I let you do that?” Numba asked.

At that moment, Ian pushed Numba strongly across the room.

“Why are you trying to steal my girl, man, can't you get your own!!” Ian shouted.

Like an actor, his facial expression and tone of voice had changed in an instant just like that.

“Come on, what if you really want to do something, then why don't you fight me right here, right now!” Ian shouted.

Everyone had stopped, including the nurses, as they looked at the commotion happening in front of them, and one had even picked up the phone.

“Oh, so you're not going to say anything, well good defence!” Ian shouted, throwing out a kick and transforming his leg. Spikes grew out of it that dug right into Numba's own leg.

“ARGHHH, you bastard!” Numba shouted. Even if it was all an act, Numba was now annoyed.

“Stop fighting, please stop fighting!” The nurses were shouting.

It was perfect for Izzy, and she had already disappeared. It didn't take long for her to find the room that they were looking for.

There was a lab with a thick glass window, where all the samples could be seen. It looked like the facility had on site testing, so there was no need to send it off.

Placing her hand toward the handle, Izzy's finger started to change, and a clicking sound was heard. It was easy for her to get into the room.

Closing the door and looking at it again, she stayed low, Izzy was looking through the test tubes at whatever she could find.

If someone was to come in, she was also looking for appropriate hiding spaces until they left. Eventually, she found it, in a tray with a couple of other blood tests.

There was a sticker on it, with Gary's name. Taking the tube, she took off the sticker and put it on the one Ian had given.

After that, she placed it back in the tray, as if everything was there as it was, but the question was now what to do with the blood.

There was a bright yellow container for rubbish that was to be destroyed, and there was also a sink not too far by that she could have poured it down.

‘Gary wanted us to get this for him, but why? Is he really a crazed Alter, or is it something else?’

In the end, rather than throwing the tube away, Izzy decided to keep it. Her curiosity about Gary had gotten the better out of her.

#### Chapter 424 The plan (Part 1)

After Numba had left Gary alone with the nurse, the woman had asked Gary a few routine questions before attempting to get his blood sample. Biding his time, the green haired teenager had asked for some food, but the medical professional had told him that the doctor ordered her to get the test done first.

With no better idea, the Werewolf told the woman that he really needed to go to the toilet, and with him just having woken up, she understood why he might need to go. Unfortunately for him, she had accompanied him right to the door, and since he stayed inside for over five minutes, the nurse was just about to call the doctor. Naturally, the green haired teenager had quickly left his impromptu hideout.

During that whole time, Gary himself was thinking of a plan, any plan to get him out of the situation, even climbing out of the toilet window, turning into a werewolf and never coming back to the academy again.

In the end, he could think of nothing.

After returning to the room, the nurse was ready and had eventually taken his blood, though not before Gary had destroyed one needle by ‘accidentally’ flexing his muscles during the procedure, he was devastated. Now more than ever, he would have loved for someone to tell him what to do.

In the end, he just laid there in his troubles. The only good news was that he could finally eat having taken the blood test. After a short while, the food had arrived and he was drawing his sorrows by eating.

‘Goodbye academy, this could be the last meal I eat.’ He thought as he stuffed his face.

Suddenly he heard a commotion outside, and since the voices sounded familiar, he decided to take a look outside. Walking down the hallway, he saw that everyone had gathered around the reception. The next second he had to blink several times and rub his eyes as he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

In the reception, there was a Goat Altered who was currently fighting a Hedgehog Altered. At the start, Ian had just been playing around, but after hurting each other a few times on accident trying to make it realistic, there were some real feelings involved.

"Numba... Ian? What the hell are the two of you doing?" Gary asked loudly since they both had bloody wounds. He was confused about what could have happened in the short period of time that he had last seen his friends, that might have led to the two of them to fall out this brutally.

While the attention shifted to the new arrival, Izzy took the chance to exit the hallway, briefly giving the Goat Altered a thumbs up to signal that she had completed her part of this mission, before disappearing.

Instead of answering him, Numba ran towards Gary and hugged him in front of everyone.

"We've got it resolved. You should be all good now." The Goat Altered whispered to him, before he let go.

Ian raised an eyebrow, unsure whether he should continue with the script about this merely being a spat over a girl. Ultimately, he decided to pretend to take this as his win.

"Yeah, you better run to your boyfriend. If I see you next to her again, nobody will be able to help you!" He loudly harrumphed and ran out before anyone could stop him.

"This is what friends do, we look out for each other." Numba silently mouthed those words as he walked away. Gary received the message loud and clear, and believed that the fight had been part of a bigger plan to help him with his problem.

Later that night, there was worry in the room. Gary was starting to think if he had gotten the message from Numba all wrong. When the nurse entered, she had given the results of the blood test, informing Gary that they found no abnormalities in his blood. He was also informed that the blood had already been disposed off, and taken off file.

After that, he was told to go to his new room. It was a bit hard to find with the AFA being so large, but once he saw the red, yellow and blue building he was sure that was in the right place.

The apartment block could hold around five hundred students, and although there wasn't a giant ranking system that dictated every student's quality of life, the colours did serve a similar function.

The reason the AFA had such a great reputation for raising talented students, was because they wouldn't allow just anybody to progress to the AFC. For the time being, Gary had been told to head to the red section of the building, and enter room 114, which was on the bottom. Once he proved his worth, he would eventually climb up to the other buildings.

'Well, it looks like I won't be bumping into Xin any time soon, but it does make me wonder. All those students we fought should be in the blue dormitory, but if we had beat them, would we automatically have been assigned to the blue dormitory? Or was that never possible and it was really just some type of assessment?'

Gary felt a little left out since all of that had probably been told to Numba on the others earlier today. While they had all enjoyed the first day of the AFA, he had spent it in the hospital bed, praying that whatever Numba had done to his blood test had worked.

Since that had been taken care of, if he couldn't figure out a good way to get out of the next full moon, lock him somewhere or escape far away in the woods, then he would leave the academy before then. While here, though, he would learn as much as he could and make plenty of connections... at least if they weren't stuck up arseholes like Sty that is.

#### Chapter 425 The plan (part 2)

Finding his room, Gary pressed the key card the nurse had handed him against the door and it had unlocked, opening up. The smell of freshness wafted into his nose. It felt similar to the sensation one experienced when checking out a hotel room.

To the left, there was a nice kitchen area with two stoves to allow the students to do some home cooking. Then there was a fridge next to it. To the right, was a large bathtub that doubled up as a shower.

Finally, walking on a bit more, there was quite a large empty space with a high ceiling, as well as a few basic tools in the room such as dumbbells, and finally a double bed. For an apartment for a single person, it was beyond what Gary had expected, especially since he still remembered where he had slept in the facility during the first few days...

Of course, it was nowhere near as high-end as the luxury rooms he had enjoyed at the end, but as the professors had already stated, that was special for the facility's circumstances. Living the life he had lived, he was not one to complain that he had suddenly been robbed of his luxury.

'Crap, why does my heart hurt a little?' Gary thought. Thinking of the joy of this place, and everything he started to think about his mother. Before he had left, he had visited her at the hospital, but her state had not changed. He wished that she would have woken up, so he could have told her not to worry about him anymore.

Alas, he knew that wishful thinking wouldn't change anything about her condition.

When heading to the bed, Gary saw that a sheet had been left out for him, and it looked like it was his rota for the week. It had a timetable with what time all his lessons would be and when he should arrive.

It reminded him of being back in school again, just as he was about to read the thing, he heard a knock on the door. Looking through the peephole, Gary smiled as he opened it.

"HEY, Look at you, it seems like everything was okay in the end," Ian said, already walking in.

He wasn't and with him was both Izzy and Numba as well. They instantly made themselves welcome, just like they had done in the facility. Ian casually took a seat. While Numba sat next to him on the bed.

"How did you guys know that I was here?" Gary asked.

“The supervisors told us.” Numba chuckled. “After that little fight we had to distract everyone, it was impossible for us to get out unscathed. Fortunately, they bought our story about us fighting over a girl and since we’ve just arrived they chose to be lenient.

“However, they did warn us that the next time we’ll get a severe punishment, but we’ll just have to avoid there being a next time. Anyway, when we asked about you, they told us that you’ve already been discharged and sent to your room. By the way, we’re your next door neighbours.”

It wasn't too big a surprise, it would make sense for them all to be in the red part of the building and next to each other.

“Thank you...thank you all for helping me, and I’m sorry for acting weird the last couple of days as well. I know what you saw might have been a bit scary.” Gary finally said.

“Hey, I already knew you could break bones.” Ian pointed at his leg. “And did you see the look on Ryan's face? I swear, he must have shat his pants when you nearly clawed!”

“How...how did they stop me in the end?” Gary asked.

“It was Xin.” Izzy immediately replied. “She got up behind you, and knocked you out on the spot.”

Of all the people that were present, Gary had expected that Eddy would have been the one to stop him. He didn't remember the teacher doing such a thing, so he had assumed that one of supervisor must have snuck up on him to knock him out. Xin hadn't even been on his list of suspects.

‘Is she really that skilful? I might have been out of my mind, but I still had a lot of Health left... I wonder how I would have fared if she had been my opponent from the start. Oh well, maybe we’ll have the chance in the future. Now, should I thank her for knocking me the next time I see her?’

‘There's Xin the rest of the AFA, Altered Hunters, White Rose, and a number of gangs that still could topple me when it comes to terms of power.’



It was then that Numba picked up Gary's rota off the bed.

"Ah, that's good, you have the same rota as me," Numba said.

"Don't we all have the same rota?" Gary asked.

"We do, but I'm guessing he's talking about another thing," Izzy replied. "Numba's sheet was the only one with another lesson called, 'Special Lesson'. It's a class that's being taught once a week, but neither one of us has it."

Looking at the sheet, Gary could see it was there, and it made him wonder what it was.

"Alright, I guess we should let you rest up." Ian stretched. "Today was pretty chilling for us, but I imagine tomorrow, they will start pushing us. Especially since we got in trouble. We should let you get an early night in a proper bed."

The others agreed and headed to the door, but before closing it, Izzy had one more thing to say.

"Take a look in the wardrobe, there is a nice surprise waiting for you." With that the female Altered closed the door.

"The wardrobe?" Gary thought, when opening it up, there was a small box with the top open. He pulled it out, and opened the lid. Inside, there were a few of his valuable items that he needed to hand over before joining the facility.

The most important one of all that was inside was his phone. Picking it up, Gary immediately went to turn it on, and luckily it still had a bit of juice left.

'I can finally contact the others, and see how they are doing.' He thought with a smile on his face.

Chapter 426 Update from the outside

Gary knew that he should focus on getting a good night's rest, but such a simple task felt impossible to him. Now that he finally had gotten his phone back, he was dying to find out what had happened during his stay in the facility.

For all he knew, something serious could have occurred without his knowledge. The Howlers might be in serious trouble and require his help... or they could be just fine on their own. Fortunately, his phone didn't let him wait for long. The sounds of several dings let him know that he hadn't been forgotten.

Noticing that his phone about to die with merely 3% battery, the green haired teenager hurried to plug it in. The AFA had planned everything perfectly, allowing him to lie on his bed while scrolling through his contacts and their chat log.

Marie: [Gary, I hope you're kicking some serious butt at the academy. It feels really weird without you here. I can't wait to see you on TV!]

It was a short message, but sent during the beginning of his time at the academy. Of course, all of those in the Howlers knew what he was really doing.

Austin: [Stay strong.]

'Short but precise. I might have had to worry if it had been anything but coming from him.'

Innu: [Happy that you're on your way to become a famous superstar. Sorry to have to ask you like this, but I'd like to borrow some cash from the Howlers Bank. Without you around, Kai is even more of a stingy arsehole than before. I even explained that I don't need it for me, but to look after Kevin.]

Gary pulled a face at that last one. Because he was a leader, it was only natural that from time to time. he would actually need to make a decision, yet in terms of money he felt like Kai would know best. If he denied that request then surely there would be a good reason for it. As such, he merely told Innu that he would talk about it with Kai, stressing that he could not make any promises.

Tom: [I got an Apprenticeship at NIRV, so it looks like we are both onto big things. Don't worry, I won't hold it against you if you don't reply anytime soon. I know you're busy, and they must have rules about limited phone access. If you can, tell me that you're fine, otherwise, I guess, we'll have a long discussion next time we meet.]

Reading the message from his best friend reminded him of the bittersweet days in the past. During peaceful moments like this one, part of the teenager wished he could just go back to playing video games, not having to worry about so many adult things. Still, he knew that it was just wishful thinking. He had had people to look after, especially his family.

'I should give Tom a call at some point. Maybe when it's the holidays time, I should go see him. We should have enough money to visit a Tier-2 city, surely?' Gary thought.

Amy: [Gary, I never thought I would say this... but I actually miss waking up and finding your clothes lying around because you were too busy hurrying to school. I don't want to sound ungrateful. The apartment you got me is great, and your friends look after me. I also managed to make some new friends but... every time I come home it just feels so empty. I've been visiting Mum nearly every day, and while her condition is stable, there are no signs of her waking up. The doctor told me it could be tomorrow, next week, or next year, there's no way to tell. Anyway, I don't want to be your whiny, little sister. I understand you have important things to do, but it would be nice if you visited once in a while.]

This message pulled at certain strings in Gary's heart. It was painful to read, and it was the one that actually made him question his decision to come to the AFA in the first place. He cared about his family, everything he was doing was for his family, but was it really worth it, if he left behind the people he cared about?

'Am I being selfish by joining the AFA. If I just spent time with the Howlers, then we could have just lived off the income off that, right?'

The more he thought about it, the more his heart tried to persuade him to leave, but taking a long breath he shook his head. His brain told him that he hadn't been gone that long, and leaving now would make his journey to this point meaningless. Besides, the life they had now, could easily change at the drop of a hat.

Being in a gang wasn't safe, nor was it something that a person could... take it easy with.

Finally, Gary scrolled back up to the message he had skipped earlier.

Kai: [I bet you were expecting me to give you an update on the Howlers' progress and how we're doing, Gary, but you won't find that here. I don't want you to worry about any of that stuff. You've earned the right to be selfish, and even then your success will also help the Howlers, so just concentrate on your honeymoon with Xin. ;) ]

Kai: [By the way, knowing you, you probably didn't bother reading their policy, so here is the short version. Once you're a student, you should be able to come and go as you please. They know that due to the students' connections, sometimes they have to leave. You'll probably have to ask a teacher or something for some time off. Don't overuse that privilege, though, and don't do it to meet up with us. We'll be fine on our own. ]

Then there was another one which was very recent.

Kai: [You must have been worried sick last night, about how we dealt with the full moon. The short version is that Olivia and I are doing fine, so please don't worry about us. In fact, I'm more worried about what might have happened to you. I hope you didn't eat anyone. I guess we'll find out in a couple of days on the news. :P ]

For some reason, reading Kai's messages had caused Gary to grip his phone a little tighter. Perhaps it was the fact that Kai was nearly spot on with his prediction. Even if his smiley told him that he was jesting, they both knew that the possibility had been there...

Kai: [I know I said I wouldn't update you with gang business, but the gang has gone through some big changes lately. Look forward to seeing it. Apart from that, things are going well and there have been no problems. Still keep your phone on you if possible, perhaps I'll contact you.]

After reading the message, Gary's first instinct was to reply to his friend. He couldn't imagine what he would be needed for, when Kai had the whole gang. The only scenario would be if they needed him for additional fire power, but who would dare to go against them in Slough?

Yet the context of the message said they were fine. In the end, Gary decided to not reply to any of the messages yet. Knowing Kai, Gary had been given all the details he deemed necessary.

'Kai was right about one thing, though, I need to focus on me.' Gary told himself. 'Tomorrow is my first day in the academy. I need to work hard so I can catch up to Xin, and even Jayden. If the group needs me, he'll let me know.'

Gary, placed his head on the pillow, and it didn't take him long to fall asleep.

#### Chapter 427 The first day

Waking up, Gary was in a great mood. After all, the first thing on his Rota was breakfast. The canteen was linked to the red section of the dorms, so unfortunately, just like before, he had no chance to meet up with Xin. At this rate, if Gary wanted to meet her, then he would just have to go over to the blue section, or outright go search for her during a free period, hoping that she would be free as well.

At breakfast, a kind of buffet awaited the students. The food there wasn't as extravagant as in the facility, but there was plenty of meat such as sausages, bacon and chicken breast. Since he had missed the first day, and thus the opportunity to meet his dietician, he just picked everything he liked, which resulted in him carrying several plates of pure meat to his seat.

The eyes all around the room naturally landed on him as he carried his towers of meat.

"You know what, I'm happy for you, Gary." Ian said as the green haired teenager sat down. All four of them were back together, enjoying their meals. "We've been worried when you were fasting, but now that you're eating like that again, it's all good. It's also good to know that whenever you go on a hunger strike, we'll have to be careful that you might go all cray cray on us."

Izzy kicked Ian on the shin, telling him to shut up. She was sure that their friend didn't need to be reminded of that event, but that's when they saw that he was just happily stuffing his face as usual, seemingly not caring about that at all.

Once breakfast was over, the four decided to head to their first lesson together. Gary was lucky that he had them to lead the way. Numba revealed that they had actually arrived ten minutes late for the first lesson yesterday, due to how big the AFA was and how many buildings they had.

The rota had the name of the building and class number, but that didn't help much when they had no idea where they were going. The initial tour with Eddy had helped, but it had been too much to take in at once.

The first lesson of the day was a theory lesson. It had nothing to do with fighting or martial arts, but the history of Altered themselves. It wasn't the most interesting subject in Gary's opinion, since he was only early interested in the fighting part, but it was good that he didn't have to show off anything today.

'I wonder when we will have a more combat focused lesson?' Gary thought. 'Since I had to conserve my Energy in the fight against Ryan, I couldn't really go all out... at least not while I was conscious. I still don't know how much I've really improved compared to before... but it makes me think.

'Other than Xin and the teachers, Is there even anyone for me to fight in here? Or learn from? If not, maybe there is a way I can skip all this, and go to join the AFC as quickly as possible.'

While daydreaming about his debut match, Gary and his friends arrived in class. It was held in a large room, almost as big as a cinema, and the seats were set up that way as well. There was a large bench with rows going upwards looking down at the centre of the class where the white board was.

A start case in the middle that devised the two sets of rows as well. It seemed like it was a bit of a free for all when it came to seats, but coming early allowed the students to sit wherever they wanted.

While waiting for the teacher and seeing the new students enter, some of them looked Gary's way. They whispered about his green hair and his earlier eating habits. Rumours were also spreading as to why he only arrived today, rather than yesterday.

The new students were always interesting to those that had passed, and just like the facility, everyone had been here, for different amounts of time. Although, the classroom looked small, with about five other students entering.

'I guess I shouldn't be surprised since this class is called 'Beginner Altered Theory'. That means that there should be an Intermediate or Advanced Altered Theory class, though. I wonder how you go up... Is there a test for each subject or something? And you have to get a certain score before you go up another level?'

While pondering about this, three more students arrived, Wu, Snow and Apollo. Noticing the new arrival, Apollo nodded towards the Werewolf with a big grin.

'Well, I made it big, but sorry to disappoint you, I didn't make it through as the number one.' Gary thought in his head.

The group went to sit on the other side. Strangely, when Sty entered, rather than sitting with the three of them, he sat on Gary's side, but several rows above.

Eventually, the teacher entered and one of his helpers handed the Werewolf a text book and a bag with utensils to write notes and such during the lesson.

The first lesson was about Beasts, and how they were related to Altered.

"We have found that in the past, Beasts had been ranked into different tiers based on the crystal inside them, which played a major role in how powerful they were. This could be one of the reasons why there's such a difference in the Altered powers.

"However, we are unable to determine how strong the Beast was that would be used for Alterification at this point and time. Or at least we haven't found an easier way."

The lesson continued, and Gary discovered that he found the subject far more interesting than he had initially anticipated, perhaps it was because it was his first day and everything was to do with the Altered he had always found utterly fascinating.

After that, Gary had a personal lesson with the dietician, while the others had a free period. He had to answer a few questions, such as what he would normally eat. He was a bit embarrassed, yet he answered honestly, because the one thing he wanted to avoid was to have his access to food restricted in any way.

"I think your diet is quite suitable for you." The female dietician springily said. "Your Altered form, it matches quite well, so your stomach must have changed. Although if I didn't see you myself, I would have worried you might be overeating, your body doesn't show any signs of that. In my professional opinion, I can only advise you to continue with your diet.

“I have made some adjustments, taking out some fatty foods for you, but tomorrow morning, at lunch and dinner, everything should be prepared for you. If you feel like you need any adjustments, please make a booking at the reception and come and see me.”

A free pass to continue eating like he had done put him in a great mood, and it was a good thing as well, because the next lesson was the mysteriously titled ‘Special Lesson’. It was in a completely different part of the building, and there looked to be a lack of students in the current place.

Gary stood in front of a giant steel door, tapping his foot away, waiting for his friend to arrive.

“Thanks for waiting for me. I'm glad I'm not doing this alone.” Numba said.

“Me too, so what is this lesson?” Gary asked.

“I don’t know. Eddy just told me that it will be something special, but it's the first time for me as well.”

After waiting a while, they saw another familiar student arriving, Sry. This came as a bit of surprise, though part of Gary had also expected it. Since neither Izzy nor Ian had it on their rota, he had theorised that it might be something exclusive to the top three students.

A moment later, Apollo, Wu and Snow arrived, further proving the Werewolf’s theory.

Whatever this special lesson was, apparently the AFA only wanted the top students to participate in it.

#### Chapter 428: Special Lesson (part 1)

Despite everything Gary had been through, Apollo still had this strange aura surrounding him that told the Werewolf on an instinctual level that the person was quite dangerous. It wasn’t that the Altered used it in any conscious way to threaten him, it was just there and made Gary aware that he should treat him with respect as he had done the head supervisor.

The visits between the two of them had been short, their interactions practically nothing, and yet, his words were quite weighted on Gary’s mind the last two times they had spoken. When thinking about it,



before thinking about getting better than Xin, or anyone in the AFA and AFC, he needed to beat this person in front of him, he just had no idea what level Apollo was at, or his two teammates that were with him.

“I’m happy that you took my advice and made it through your group at the top.” Apollo said.

It was good that Apollo had broken the ice, because the conversation between the two groups was lacklustre for a while.

The three from each group stood opposite each other, looking into the other's eyes. Sty, had his arms folded as he looked away from the group. Clearly something had happened between the two of them, because before Sty was a part of them. First the classroom and now this, it wasn't hard to put the two things together.

Numba was feeling nervous. Out of all the people that were currently there, he felt out of place. After all, he knew that he hadn't done enough to deserve his place, and he felt like the weakest of the lot.

His draw against Sty could be considered a fluke, and he felt like if the two were to fight again, Sty would surely win.

“Unfortunately, I didn't quite manage to stay at the top.” Gary replied, pulling Numba into a friendly type of headlock, while he was still dazed and in the middle of his thoughts. “This guy took that from me.”

Hearing this, Apollo's eyes landed on Numba.

“Huh, what are you saying, Gary? I only made it here because of you in the first place.” The Goat Altered quickly refuted the praise, not wanting to set up the wrong expectations like he had done before, with the last group of people they had met.

Hearing this, the look on Apollo's face changed.

‘Huh, I didn't take him to be a softie.’

For a brief moment, he even questioned his evaluation of Gary. He had taken the green haired teenager to be the same as him, but if Apollo was in the same shoes, he would have never given up the number one spot, even if they were a close friend. Yet, there was still a feeling that the two of them were similar.

“Since you guys arrived here before us, care to tell us what this special lesson is all about?” Gary asked.

Both Snow and Wu looked at each other before giving an answer. “This is our first time here as well. Although it was on our timetable, we were told to wait until we were called, so here we are.”

It was strange, that only the six of them were involved in something, and it made Gary even more curious what they would be taught. Was it just a coincidence that the AFA didn't start those lessons before there were six of them? Did it have anything to do with the number? Was it hard to prepare, so they preferred to do it with a larger group at once? There were too many reasons to guess. The only fact they did know, where they were the top three students that passed the facility.

“I've heard from the students before about this.” Apollo stated. “Those that pass through the facility as one of the top three students in under a month get rewarded by the AFA by being allowed to take part in a special course.”

Although the others started to get excited after hearing these words, Gary was getting nervous. What if this special course was some type of training that only Altered could do. Lately, his Werewolf self was getting into more trouble, and he had already come close to getting caught a few times.

Although he wasn't a cat, he felt like he had already used up many of his nine lives.

While the teenager was worrying about the unknown, the sound of the double doors could be heard opening up. The doors looked to be made of thick steel, an entire arm's length thick, and coming out was an extravagantly dressed adult who they could only assume to be the teacher.

Black was the predominant colour of his outfit, mixed with a few tinges of red. He was dressed in a black coat, had a pair of black boots, and his black gloves were holding on to a large staff, with a large ring at the end. That ring was further adorned by many black feathers, seemingly coming from the same bird as

the one his golden necklace had. His onyx hair was pointed upward like a feather and his neatly shaved and groomed beard covered up his round face.

“My name is Crowley Corvus!” The teacher introduced himself, lifting both his hands. “I will be the one to act as your teacher, if you choose to participate in my lecture. If you think you have what it takes to be, then please come and follow me.” A bang of the staff on the floor ended his sentence.

The teacher said nothing else, as he turned around and entered through the doors, while also somewhat flapping his arms, making his cape look like wings. It was as if a human was trying to fly, but clearly Crowley was moving nowhere.

Numba looked at Gary.

“What was that all about?” The Goat Altered asked.

“I don't know, maybe he's just role-playing or something.” Gary replied with a shrug. Unsurprisingly, all of them followed him into the room. As if on cue, the moment Sty entered, the steel doors behind them shut closed, and once done, a locking mechanism was heard.

There was a worry in Gary's head, why would they need such a thick steal door, and why did it need to be locked.

Chapter 429: Special Lesson (part 2)

From the size of the large steel doors, everyone thought that they would be entering a fairly large room, but instead they were now in an even smaller room, with another locked door in front of them.

The room was hardly large enough to fit around twenty people. There were a few seats, and a TV, where Mr Corvus was standing at the back.

“You have been specifically chosen by the academy for this task. It is a job that not everyone can do. If you have a problem please ask. Which is why, before we are even to proceed, I must hand you all the documents you need.” Mr Corvus waved his weird staff, and from below the seats where the students were sitting a piece of paper emerged, landing in their laps or hands.

It was like magic, but clearly that wasn't the case. Gary assumed it had something to do with the Teacher's Altered forms power.

"Please read all the terms and conditions carefully before proceeding, and remember you have the option to accept or decline."

Honestly, Gary didn't like all this mystery mumbo jumbo. He would much prefer just getting a straight class, but remembering the words that Apollo said, he at least wanted to see what this class was like. After all, this was most likely what had allowed Xin to improve at the rate she had.

Perhaps, all of those that had become big and well known in the AFC had gone through this, it was just hard to ignore such a special class.

{By signing this document, I hereby agree to all the stipulated rules.

I understand that this is a contract that binds me for life, and I hereby give permission for NIRV to hand out the consequences should I break any terms of the contract.}

The company name, NIRV, stuck out like a saw thumb. Although they had all heard that NIRV had certain connections to the AFA, they had all just thought that they were one of many corporations. Now, this document made it look like the whole special lesson was somehow connected with them.

{Rule #1: Whatever happens during the special lesson is to be kept completely secret. The only exemption from this rule are those who also took the special lesson, as well as your handler, Mr. Crowley Corvus.

Rule #2: No electronic devices, nor recording equipment of any kind are to be taken into the lesson. All personal items will be left in a basket before entering and will be returned upon the end of the special lesson.

Rule #3: NIRV will do its best to ensure the safety of every student that agrees to take part in the special lesson. In the unfortunate case of a student's death, their respective corporations, sponsors or family members will be compensated greatly. Please read the terms and conditions on the next page for more clarification.}

“Gary, did you read Rule #3?!” Numba exclaimed. “Just what type of lesson is this? What do they want us to do that we might end up dead?!”

The Werewolf had just read the same rule, and was wondering the same thing. At least now he knew why they only allowed the strongest students to participate.

“Stop being such a baby!” Sty sneered from the side. “As Altered there’s always a risk of dying. Don’t tell me you didn’t know that when you chose to become an Altered. People don’t enter the AFA just to become a better fighter to protect themselves out there in the real world. You can’t just keep hiding behind your friends.”

Numba closed his mouth, unable to retort that point. He gave the Fly Altered a dirty look, but otherwise continued to read the rest of the rules. Gary wanted to say something, but he had promised the professor to let bygones be bygones. As long as Sty was merely running his mouth without threatening him or anyone close to him, he would overlook those antics.

{Rule #4: Anything found or obtained during the special lessons, will be regarded as property of NIRV. Students will still be rewarded with an appropriate compensation.

Rule #5: By agreeing to every rule, the student will automatically become an Apprentice Recoverer. This means that NIRV is able to call upon you at any point and time, to do Recoverer related tasks. Please read the terms and conditions on the next page for more clarification.}

‘What is all of this Recoverer stuff? Signing this basically means I work for NIRV? They make it sound like there is no way to back out of this, and they don’t really make the consequences for breaking these rules clear, either.’

When looking around the room, Gary saw that Apollo, Snow and Wu had already signed their pieces of paper, and handed them over to Mr. Corvus. Numba was still wondering what to do, while Sty was also signing it, after noticing the other three had done so already, and quite aggressively as well.

“What will the two of you do?” The adult asked them. “There is no second chance. You can either sign it today, or leave it forever.”

Looking at Apollo, thinking about Xin's rampant growth, and then thinking about the future of the Howlers, there was a chance that if NIRV called on him, he might be unavailable. This would mean he would have to face the consequences... whatever those might be.

With NIRV being involved it just made everything more dangerous, but there was something inside of Gary that told him he shouldn't miss out on this opportunity. There was no way of telling whether there would ever be a time conflict in the future, but even if there was, he would just have to deal with it then.

Having made up his mind, he signed the piece of paper. Seeing this, Numba plucked up the courage and did the same.

"I'm looking forward to the special lesson, Mr Corvus."

"Excellent. With all six of you, your survival chances should be great!"

Chapter 430: Special lesson 1 (part 1)

"I knew you would sign that piece of paper in the end. Still, I'm surprised it took you so long to make up your mind." Apollo addressed Gary in a teasing tone.

"I value my freedom, that's all. Getting told what to do by a giant corporation I don't really know much about doesn't sit too well with me." The Werewolf responded. He wasn't lying. If the AFA had been the one to organise everything, the teenager would have signed a lot sooner. Especially if there was no commitment clause to indefinitely serve them for as long as they were alive. However, suddenly finding out that NIRV was apparently the one behind this entire special lesson had been really off-putting, especially with all the secrecy they had to uphold.

Gary had already learnt a few things and secrets about them from Tom.

Only time would tell whether he would regret signing that piece of paper. He could only hope that him restricting his freedom was actually worth it. Of course, if Xin's powers actually originated from her having participated in this special lesson, then him selling his services might be a small price to pay.

"I'm happy to hear that was your only reason for hesitating." Apollo added. "There aren't just downsides to this deal, though. NIRV is far more than meets the eye. They seem to have their hands in a bit of everything, not to mention, they have enough influence to indirectly control the happenings of even Tier-1 cities.

"No matter your background, it won't hurt having a connection with them. This way, both parties benefit from it. This is just how things are in our world, and you have to get with it, if you don't want to lose out."

Gary chuckled a little bit, after hearing this. "I didn't realise you were the type that would rely on others, just because they were above you.." Gary replied, tensing his fist. "Because for me, I never want to be in that situation again, where I'm helpless from those above."

Before the two could continue on their conversation, Mr Corvus whacked the bottom of his staff onto the floor.

"Please, children, if you wish to bicker, do it in your own free time. For now, let's rejoice in the fact that we have a full house. Although that is usually the case, let's just hope it stays this way. Everyone, please proceed to follow me, and make sure to not stray."

The second set of doors opened up, and just like the first pair they had gone through, it was made of thick steel, though not as reinforced as the first pair. From the looks of it, they were being led through a tube tunnel.

The flooring was white and so was the surrounding metal, and there was no destination in sight. It made them wonder if their destination was even going to be inside the academy, o

r some place entirely different.

Suddenly, Mr Corvus stopped, and turned around holding a basket in his hand. It appeared out of nowhere like a magician.

"Now, before we proceed, I'll have to insist that you leave behind all mobile, and recording devices. Don't worry, you'll retrieve them all once the special lesson ends."

Nobody protested, and one by one, they emptied their pockets, filling up the basket. When everyone was done, Mr Corvus turned around, his hands free, with their items nowhere to be found.

He continued walking, and the students had no other choice but to follow him. What Gary and the others did notice was that there were cameras every so often in the hallway. A red blinking light could be seen, indicating that someone was clearly watching them.

Eventually, the long tunnel split up. Without stopping for even a moment, Mr Corvus took a right turn. Once it happened again, they ended up in front of three possible entrances, where he took the middle one. As time passed, the tunnel started to resemble a maze, and Gary wasn't sure he would be able to find his way back on his own with how many turns they had taken.

In the end, they had finally arrived in front of a sturdy looking door. This one had a hand scanner next to it. The adult placed his hand on it, and a beep resounded. The next moment, the doors opened up.

The group entered a fairly large square room, and for the first time they saw a change to the bleak white colour. One half of the room was covered from the bottom to the top in red. There was a bench, with different outfits. Seemingly par for the course, there was also a large metallic steel door. On the other half of the room, everything was the same, only coloured in blue.

"Firstly, if you could all please get changed into the uniforms that have been provided with your name tag, and once you are done, remain standing in place." Mr Corvus ordered.

The Werewolf scanned through the outfits before he found his own name tag in the blue section of the room. As he walked over, the teenager looked at the other two outfits and stopped, before turning around. At the same time, Apollo, who had been heading to the red side met Gary's gaze. The two of them had an unhappy look on their face.

"Sh\*t." Numba cursed. "Looks like we're not in the same group."

"You're correct. The teams have been created based on your performance reviews. This way, both groups should have roughly the same strength. Since we have an even number of you, I won't have to fill it out." Mr Corvus informed them.



There was a worried look on Numba's face. The Goat Altered had been hesitant about signing up in the

first place. A major part in his decision was him trusting his new friend, but now it looked like they would be split up.

As if that wasn't bad enough, the red team consisted of him, Apollo and Sty. At least the two of them knew each other, but his relationship with the former was non-existent, and antagonistic with the latter. That was less than ideal in this special lesson that actually mentioned the death of a student as a possibility.