

Werewolf 51

Chapter 51: Perfect time

Once outside, Gary found it easier to distinguish between the two different Forced Bond Markings. Although both of them were red in colour, each one gave off a slightly different scent.

The closer he got to one of those that were marked, the darker the colour of the mist would get. It made Gary wonder if there was a limit to his Marking. Perhaps once he was far enough away the red mist would completely disappear, but even in his own home he could still see all three Marks.

His dark hood was covering his head, but he had no time to replenish the Energy he had lost so far from using Charging Heart twice and the general Energy he had used up rushing home and trying to catch up to Gil in the first place.

[88/110 Energy]

'The grey colour gang shouldn't stray too far from their territory, but they'll probably want to head into a more residential area.'

Thinking about this, Gary realised that the grey colour gang area also happened to cover where he had been on Sunday, the residential area where Billy's apartment block was located.

'One problem at a time.' Gary thought to himself. 'Besides, given how many reporters there were just yesterday, they would be stupid to go anywhere near it.'

While the Underdogs covered most of the town's nightclubs and profited from selling drugs among other things, the Grey Elephants specialised in protection of the several factories and warehouses that were located in Slough.

The organisations needed protection from the other gangs that might look to profit by stealing their equipment, products or might generally come over to harass their employees. It wasn't exactly uncommon in the business to hire some gangs to use those kinds of means to make life more difficult for their competitors.

As such, the Grey Elephants would send out their members as bodyguards and would spread the news who was under their protection. They would usually get a percentage of profits, but it was far better to the alternative, making it an arrangement that ultimately profited both sides.

As for companies that wanted to rent, or set up a factory without relying on the gang... well, they naturally had their ways of 'convincing' how much their 'service' was needed.

The air was filled with a grey smoke that covered everything including the lamp posts that were out, and it was messing with Gary's nose a little. If it wasn't for the red mist he had followed on his way here, he would have struggled a lot more to find them.

'From what I have heard, the Grey Elephants and their colour gang have quite the fighting strength given their job scope. If I see one of their main members, I'm going to have to get out of there. News about my little trick must have already spread in their circles, so I doubt they will follow me, not that there are any nearby areas that I could lead them to...'

Continuing to stalk them, the colour gang eventually stopped in front of a small workshop that looked to be a shoe and key making service. Gil was there with four other members, but there was no sign of any other members in the nearby vicinity.

The problem was, they were on a pretty open street, so there was a chance that other members could come along quite easily, so Gary needed to wait for the perfect opportunity.

"Break it, new boy!" A member with a grey bandana tied around the top of his head yelled out the order. The next second, Gil picked up a large brick on the side of the road and hurled it into the window, which immediately bounced off, nearly hitting him in the head.

The other members seeing this laughed straight away.

"Haha, that's reinforced glass, you idiot. All the shops in this area have it, otherwise they would have to buy a replacement every day." The grey colour member that had ordered Gil around, seemed to be the leader of the small group they were in.

Gil did not look too pleased at this little joke they had set up. A few seconds later, an old frail man came running out. He held a broom stick in his hand, and pointed it out towards the gang.

“What are you hooligans doing? This is my shop! How many times do I have to tell you that I have no money? My shop has been here for over thirty years! I won’t give it to you, you’ll have to take it off my dead body!” The old man shouted as he swung the broomstick widely, but all of the members, including Gil, were easily able to evade it. He tried to do it again and again, but he never managed to hit any of them, making them laugh at his antics, until he was tired out, huffing and panting loudly.

“Okay, new boy, here’s your first task of the day. We need new business in this town and this geezer hasn’t been willing to play ball, so it’s time we let someone else in who will be more willing to cooperate. You’ve heard the old coot, apparently we’ll have to get it over his dead body, so let’s put his conviction to the test!”

Gil understood what the leader was implying. When he went up to the old man, a smile appeared on his face. Seeing this, the other members stopped their laughter, interested in whether Gil could actually follow through.

There were many reasons why people chose to join a gang. Some, like Innu, did it because they were unable to find a place for themselves in the world, their only talent being that they were decent with their fists. Others, like Gary, did it because in the current times, gangs were one of the easiest ways to earn money.

However, those like Gil, did it for a completely different reason. His type was the most dangerous. The sadistic smile on his face said it all. He enjoyed the feeling of dominance, making others submit to him by using violence.

The old man tried to muster all his stealth, grabbing the broom, and swung it towards Gil, but the large high schooler managed to grab it quite easily.

“Old man, your strength is nothing for a member of the Rugby club.” Gil said, pulling on the stick and yanking it out of the old man’s hand, who almost fell over tumbling to the ground.

“You know, although these things are made from wood, they’re pretty strong. You just tried hitting me with it, so all of this is just self-defense. Let’s see how much it hurts!” Gil shouted, as he lifted up the stick, and slammed it against the old man’s side.

The pain was so great the old man instantly fell to the ground. The others watching could see that Gil showed no hesitation. It was one thing for someone to fight their way into a gang by beating up another gang member, but new members would usually still have some hesitation to fight civilians.

“Ahh!” The old man screamed rolling on the ground. “It hurts! How could you do this? Imagine if I was your Gran-”

“Shut up!” Gil shouted, whacking the broomstick on the old man’s legs again. “Shut up! Shut up!” Each time the high schooler used his full strength and the old man’s moans only got stronger.

“Hey, shouldn’t we stop him? We were only supposed to scare him, but if he kills the old man, the Grey Elephants might tell us off.” One of the members asked their leader.

“Humans aren’t as weak as you think. He hasn’t even really started to beg us to stop. The old coot still has some fight left in him. Oi, is that all you got, new boy?!” The leader shouted, trying to spur on Gil even more. “How long does it take you to convince one frail old man to do the right thing?”

Up until this point, Gil had been holding the broom stick with one hand, worried that if he were to use both hands that it would end up breaking. Getting the OK from the leader, he lifted it above his head and used his full strength and weight to swing it down on the old man.

Suddenly, a hooded person appeared almost out of nowhere and grabbed the stick, before it could reach its intended victim.

“Screw waiting for the perfect time! I can’t just watch you torment an innocent old man!” Gary yelled out.

‘System, put both points into Strength!’

[2 Points have been allocated into Strength]

[Your base Strength is now at 7]

[Current Strength: 14 (+1)]

With Charging Heart and the power of the moon, Gary pulled the stick out of Gil's hands. While the bully was still confused about the situation, the newcomer used both his hands to swing it out from the side like a baseball bat, hitting Gil across the face, flinging his head back and causing him to fly through the air for a few meters until he hit the ground...

Looking on the floor, there was a single tooth that had fallen out.

'That's a start!'" Gary thought about Tom's missing tooth, but it still wasn't enough.

Chapter 52: Illegal weapons

Although Gary was already Level 4, he had only ever assigned one of the three stat points he had received from his Level Ups. He had considered what stat he might use them for, but had decided that it might make more sense to increase them via his gym trying until he hit some kind of wall.

However, seeing Gil attack the old man who could hardly defend himself, something snapped in Gary's head. It was similar to what had happened when Steven had 'threatened' him by telling him he would go out with Amy. The high schooler imagined Tom lying on the ground, getting bullied by Gil.

Unable to wait for his 'perfect opportunity' the high schooler dived right in, running past the other members, while placing his stat points into Strength. The broom snapped after connecting with Gil's face and Gary still held one half of it in his hand, his head slightly facing down so the others wouldn't be able to see his face clearly.

"What the hell? I thought the new guy had some strength, but it turns out his muscles are all hot air. Oi, aren't you embarrassed getting taken out by such a scrawny kid?" One of the grey colour gang members turned around to make fun of Gil, not having grasped the seriousness of the situation yet.

However, the same could not be said about their leader. Unlike the other three, he had watched Gil fight, so he had seen his strength. His body didn't just look the part, and there weren't many that could make someone fall easily like that. What's more, that 'scrawny kid' had managed to make the broom snap with one attack.

"What are you guys doing? He might just be the new kid, but since when do we allow anyone to just hurt one of our members? Stop gawking and bring him in!" The leader shouted.

Seeing the other three charge in, Gary was thankful for one thing. None of them seemed to be using weapons. One of the traits of the grey colour group was that they relied on brute strength.

Still, Gary went to the injured Gil and lifted him by the scruff of his uniform.

"Don't think this is over, I'm not done with you yet."

Blood was dripping from the rugby player's mouth, and he was possibly in a worse state than Steven, but Gary had no sympathy for him, not after what he had seen him do. Making use of Charging Heart's duration he lifted Gil above his head with both hands.

Even with an effective total of 15 points of Strength the weight seemed to be a bit much for Gary but his frustration allowed him to power through. He managed to throw his schoolmate towards the grey colour gang members, crashing into two of them.

The third one, as the only one unaffected, turned around to check on his teammates, disbelieving what he had seen. This turned out to be a big mistake, as by the time he turned back to Gary, the other was already in the midst of a punch, aimed straight at the gang member's face.

"You guys are just as bad!" Gary shouted.

He could only imagine what the grey colour gang members must have been doing in this area for so long. All the chaos and trouble they had caused. The truth was, Gary wasn't the only one who wanted them gone, yet nobody ever did anything because they were afraid of those behind the colour gangs.

In the past, if Gary had seen such a scene, would he have been brave enough to help out? The truth was, the answer was no.

[New quest received]

[An Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth.]

Your anger has finally led you to this.

Deal with the one you're after as well as everyone protecting him!]

[Quest reward: 50 Exp per defeated person]

[Your opponent has been knocked out]

[50 Exp gained]

[Exp 280/460]

Receiving this message, it made Gary realise something, that Gil still had some room for a beating. Walking over, the two that were trapped under this heavy body, soon pushed him off, and got up from the ground.

"Don't just stand there, Bowden, give us a hand!" One of the members complained. Since they still had the number advantage he was confident they could win.

"No real names, you idiot!" The leader shouted at him, slapping him from behind, while he waited and watched Gary.

The three of them stayed back, and with the leader taking a step back, so did the other two. That's when he noticed that their attacker wasn't looking at them. Instead he only seemed to have eyes for Gil who was on the floor.

After being hit by the broom, Gil's head was spinning slightly. He wasn't knocked out yet and he could hear the chaos around him, though he was unable to react to it. He tried to stand back up, but his legs felt like jelly.

Recovering a little, he soon felt someone above him, and the next second he experienced a slap against his face.

"Oh no, you don't just get out of the situation by losing consciousness. You still have plenty of teeth left in your mouth." Gary said.

Gil was still struggling to open his eyes, yet before he could, his head was slammed into the concrete ground once more. It was soon lifted from the ground again. His forehead had been cut, and blood was dripping down from the top now covering his vision even more.

It was then that the grey leader was sure that his hunch was right.

"Let's just get out of here boys, that person isn't here for us."

The three left Gil behind, including the other member. The leader thought it was safe to leave him behind, since he should wake up soon, and he was more concerned about what would happen if they tried approaching the person in front of them again.

'That person...is another beast, let the two of them deal with each other.' The leader thought as he left.

Holding up Gil, Gary could tell he was still conscious. It seemed to have been the right call to cancel Charging Heart, instead of using his full strength.

“Tell me, how does it feel? Not so great when you’re on the receiving end, now is it? You still like to hurt people? I don’t get how you can enjoy this so much!” Gary shouted at him, before getting ready whack his head against the concrete ground once more.

Gil, in his desperate situation, used his hands to cover his head hitting the ground, but the impact was still strong.

“Who...are you?!” Gil blurted out, his mouth filled with blood, while his entire body still hurt from being used as a projectile. He hadn’t even realised yet that the side of his face had swollen up from getting hit with the broomstick.

Gary, still wasn’t done yet, and he wouldn’t be until the system gave him the exp for knocking Gil out. Grabbing his head once more, he was ready to slam it in the ground again, but it was then that he felt someone grab his wrist.

“Stop! If you keep doing that, you’ll end up killing him.” A male voice cautioned him.

Looking up, at what could possibly have the strength to hold Gary. He could see a man in a large black trench coat, and a scruffy beard, while also wearing a large hat to cover most of his head.

“I’ve been watching you. You managed to knock out a gang member all by yourself and you even managed to lift up this kid over your head despite the size difference, are you sure you are human?” The man asked, as he reached down his pocket to grab what looked like a baton.

“You know, there have already been a couple of killings in this area and it seems the wounds inflicted aren’t done by normal humans.” The man pressed the button and the baton lit up. Blue sparks started to buzz around the weapon.

Once upon a time they used to be self-defense weapons, yet under the ‘No Lethal Weapons Act’ they were still considered taboo. There was only one group who still used them despite this, the Altered Hunters.

Chapter 53: Survive!

[New quest received]

[There's always a bigger fish]

[As a Werewolf who hasn't even experienced his first turning, you're still too weak.]

[Survive!]

[Quest reward: ???]

Gary was quite surprised that for the first time the Werewolf System didn't even hint at the type of reward he would receive if he could fulfill the Quest. Did this mean that it hadn't decided what he would get or did it doubt his capability to actually survive the fight?

At the same time the conditions for completing it weren't really clear. What would happen if he was to run away. If he was knocked out that would clearly count as surviving, right? Or did it mean that the person in front of him wanted to kill him?

'It's impossible for the system to know all of that! It's just a system!'

Whatever the case, now wasn't the time to worry about that. Seeing the baton light up, Gary was in no way inclined to allow his opponent to hit him with the weapon. He had experienced being electrocuted when he was younger through an open plug, and this looked far worse.

As he had discovered during his Rugby training, one of the benefits of cancelling the Charging Heart skill early was that the cooldown between each use would also be shortened. The downside to this was that no matter how long the skill lasted, he wouldn't get back any of his spent Energy points.

Gary tried to pull away, only to find himself unable to do anything. The high schooler could barely tug his arm before the strange adult had gripped onto it tightly with his giant hands.

'This is insane! Just how strong is this guy's grip?!' Gary thought. With the baton coming closer, he had no other choice but to use Charging Heart again.

[61/110 Energy]

The last time Gary had been forced to use up so much Energy was in his fight against Billy. Yanking his hand once more, the sudden spike in strength surprised the Altered Hunter, and his grip weakened for a moment.

Unfortunately, the high schooler failed to completely pull away. His captor managed to grab onto Gary's other hand, this time even firmer than before, completely ignoring the teenager's boost.

'Even with Charging Heart, he is still just as strong! No, this guy might even be stronger.'

At the end of the day, these guys hunted Alteredds for a living, and they had to have some way to combat them. At this rate Gary was suspecting that the Altered hunters were Alteredds themselves, but what kind of hypocrisy would that be.

Using Gary's struggle, he threw him off balance and followed up with the electrified baton. The second it touched his stomach, Gary felt his whole body tingle all over. His green hair stood up and all the hair all over his body. No matter how hard he tried to move, while the baton touched his body none of his muscles were responding.

It was strange that the pain was quite minimal but he was unable to do anything. Although he saw the large fist coming towards his face, Gary was unable to block it. The great strength hurled him in the air, skidding him across the ground, and for what felt like the second time his nose was broken.

[You have been inflicted with a grave injury]

[-27 HP]

[68/100 HP]

[Would you like to activate emergency healing?]

[If you wish, you can set a limit as to when emergency healing will be activated.]

The only time he had experienced the emergency healing had been after Billy had broken his ribs by using the metal plate in his gloves. It had used Energy allowing him to heal his wounds and continue on fighting like normal. However, in this situation Gary didn't have a high amount of Energy points to use, at the same time, he didn't really need his nose to help him fight.

"You clearly have abnormal strength for your size, so what are you waiting for? Why don't you transform?" The Altered Hunter asked.

Wiping away the blood trickling down his nose, Gary got up again. He wasn't sure if he could win this fight or not, but he was pissed. Beyond pissed that this person had interrupted him in the middle of what he had been doing.

After all, there was still another Quest active that had to do with Gil.

'Trust me, if I knew how to transform I would have done it by now and ripped your freaking head off!' Gary charged in with this thought in his mind. He kept his eye on the baton. The second the man pressed the button on the bottom, it electrified up again.

'It looks like his weapon can only stay on for so long, otherwise he would have just kept the bloody thing electrified.'

Knowing this, Gary began to run in. The man confidently swung the baton towards Gary's head, this time perfectly timing his attack, but Gary had dashed forward now running at his full speed that the Charging heart skill gave him. Ducking down at the same time, it allowed the hit to go over his head. He then threw an overhead punch as hard as he could towards the man's face.

"Impressive, you fooled me into thinking that you were using your full speed the whole time. It's just too bad that you weren't the only one who held back." The man said, as he lifted up his arm blocking the incoming punch.

As it hit, Gary felt something hard, far harder than bone, and his knuckles were sore. The man seemed surprised on his end as well, about how much force the punch had behind it.

'Damn it, is he wearing armour underneath his clothes or something? Goddamnit, of course he is! How could an Altered Hunter work without that type of stuff?'

Jumping back, Gary was observing the situation. He was getting low on Energy, yet his opponent still seemed fine, not even hurt. Gil appeared to be barely conscious rolling about on the ground, while the abandoned grey coloured gang member seemed to be regaining consciousness, getting up on his feet.

Right now, Gary was sure that there was nothing he could do against the Altered Hunter. He didn't like it, but he had to run. Turning away, Gary started to sprint as fast as he could. Slightly regretting not having put any points into Dexterity, he was praying that the Energy he still had would allow him to escape.

Turning around though, it looked like the Altered Hunter hadn't bothered to chase after him. Nevertheless, Gary didn't stop running, not even after he received a notification that the Quest for catching Gil had failed for getting out of range.

[Quest failed]

Eventually, Gary stopped by the convenience store. Although he had already completed his Daily Quest, he was in dire need of replenishing his Energy. He was already feeling hunger pangs the closer he came to reaching 0 Energy.

After spending the last of his money, Gary practically gobbled up the meat in an alley. He used some of that Energy to restore his broken nose before continuing on his way. Gary made sure to go through some alleys and only returned home, once he was absolutely sure that he wasn't followed.

His mother had already arrived but Gary played everything cool with his family. Judging by the fact, she hadn't immediately given him a lecture, it appeared that Amy had kept her word. After spending some time with the two of them, Gary headed back to his room, his head and whole body were shaking as he sat down on the bed.

'That...that was so freaking dangerous! If that Altered Hunter had caught me... or if he had come in a bit later when I was weaker from fighting the others... Damn it!' Gary wanted to punch something in his frustration, but before he did, he recalled what had happened to his school wall.

Above all, he was most upset that he had been unable to teach Gil more of a lesson. Sure, the 50 Exp he had failed to earn had left a bitter aftertaste in his mouth, but he was now worried about what the bully would do. Without knowing why he had been punished, there was an actual risk that he might try and do something to Tom again.

Gary swore that he wouldn't let that happen.

Still, there was at least one piece of good news that came from the unfortunate encounter.

[Congratulations, you have managed to avoid getting captured by the 'Suspected Altered Hunter'!]

[You've learned the importance of a strategic retreat in the face of an opponent who vastly outclasses you! Fortunately, as an apex predator, you'll be able to grow in due time. Here's something to pay him back, if you ever see him again!]

[Quest reward: Choose one skill]

Chapter 54: Targeted

Tuesday morning alone proved to be a far quieter school day for Xin than Monday. A big reason for this was the absence of Gary and Tom. She didn't know why, but ever since the two friends had shown up at the Karate club, the transfer girl had started to pay more attention towards them.

Turning her head, she stared at their two empty seats.

'I heard that the green haired boy got excluded for fighting with Steven, but what about his friend? Is it just some coincidence that he's also missing or has he decided to skip classes, so the two of them can hang out?'

As she wondered about the reason, she felt a certain group of girls whispering things about her, no doubt spreading some nasty rumours, as they were staring daggers at her.

'Right, I should probably worry about my own problems first. Why is it so hard to find that one opportunity to apologise and clear things up between us? Just when did she convince the entire class to avoid talking to me as if I had the plague?'

Ever since Xin had accidentally thrown Tiffany into Gary's puke, she had tried to apologise. Last week, she had failed to make any progress. The transfer girl had sincerely hoped that after the weekend, the queen bee might have forgiven her or at least shown herself more willing to listen to reason, but she had no such luck.

Yesterday, Tiffany's two goons had gotten in the way each and every time, not even letting her speak with their ringleader. It had gotten to the point that the new girl had wanted to just beat them up, to get through them. The only reason she hadn't done so was because Xin feared that it would only escalate her situation.

When the bell signalled their lunch break, Xin planned to catch Tiffany on the way to the canteen, to finally settle things between them. Following her down the hallway though, she eventually encountered someone else who was walking through the halls with a bandage over his head.

"Steven?! Is that you?" Xin called out to her clubmate. The karateka seemed pretty zoned out, so she wanted to make sure he was okay. "Is your head alright? I heard what happened. What made that guy attack you like that?"

Based on the few interactions she had with Gary, he hadn't seemed like the type of person to just attack someone for no reason. Then again, she hadn't exactly expected to find him challenging their Karate club either. Still, unlike Gary, Xin felt like she knew more about Steven and his character.

It wouldn't surprise her to learn that he had felt embarrassed about the loss and had decided to fight him again, only this time without any gear on. Of course, the amount of force Gary had used was undoubtedly excessive.

Steven looked at Xin for a few seconds and just brushed her off, walking past her. Although part of him knew that it wasn't her fault, another part blamed her for what he had gone through yesterday.

“He can have you...” Steven mumbled as he walked away.

His words were annoying, and she was about to push Steven for more answers, yet it just so happened that she saw Tiffany enter the toilet... on her own!

‘Wait, are those other two not with her?’ Xin rushed to the toilet, finally getting the chance she had been waiting for!

Opening the door... a trash can landed on her head.

Xin didn’t understand what had happened. One moment, she had followed behind her classmate, the next she was covered from head to toe in banana peels, dirty food and other garbage. The girl immediately took it off, throwing it to the side, only to see Tiffany pointing at her, laughing with her two friends who had already been inside.

“Hahah, well I can safely say this is far worse than you throwing me in that puke, but it’s not enough. This is just the start. You humiliated me in front of everyone, so you have to pay for this!”

The next second, Xin picked up the trash can from the ground. Walking to one of the two goons, she swung at over her head, causing the girl to fall to the floor accidentally bite her lip.

Seeing this, the other goon stepped back, and fell down on her butt. Before Tiffany could react, Xin was already heading straight for her. With her forearm, Xin pushed her back until the queen bee was against the wall, and her forearm pressed against her neck.

“ENOUGH! I have had it with you. I’ve been barely here for a week and you’ve done nothing but torture me for something I did to you on accident!” Xin shouted. “Ever since, I’ve been trying to apologise to you, but you’ve made it abundantly clear that you don’t want me to. What’s wrong with you? Are you on some sort of power trip or something?”

It was then that Xin saw a smile on Tiffany’s face, a reaction she hadn’t expected.

“You screwed up.” Tiffany declared. “As the Mayor’s daughter, I bet you thought you were pretty safe. Truth be told, I actually planned to keep this between the two of us. Pay you back for another week or so, before I would eventually leave you alone, but now you laid your hands on me...”

With this threat, Xin wanted to finish her off here. She was ready to use one of her powerful kicks, but the words of her father rang through her head, and she decided to let go, leaving the toilet.

Slamming the door behind her, it had caught the attention of a few students. Another noticeable thing was the strange smell and some items that were still stuck on her clothing.

‘Things never seem to change around here.’ Kai mused, walking through the hallway, staring at his phone. Frankly, he enjoyed observing his fellow students and their problems, but he had just received a text from an important person.

[Thank you for helping me out the other day! I seriously don’t know who would do something like this, but I’m just glad you knew the right people who could get rid of the problem. Anyway I owe you a big favour.]

Innu had called him in the middle of the night, to inform Kai that a human limb in the shape of an arm had been left outside his apartment. Panicked and not knowing what to do, he had called Kai to see if he could do anything. To his surprise, his fellow gang member had been easily able to fix his problem with a simple phone call. The fighter hadn’t asked any questions and had simply done as instructed.

‘Just what is going on for both Gary and Innu to receive human flesh in front of their doors? This isn’t something the Underdogs would do. Could it have been a rival gang trying to scare them? ... No, that doesn’t make any sense. We’re barely a gang and even if those guys from Eton High found out that we’ll be fighting them in the tag team tournament, they would simply try and beat them up. Whoever did that must have wanted to leave a message to the two of them. In that case, what exactly do the two of them have in common to receive such a thing?’ Kai racked his brain.

Chapter 55: New Skill

Waking up that Tuesday morning, Gary had expected his body to be sore from yesterday’s fight against the Altered Hunter, but thanks to his now supernatural body he felt good as new. However, he noticed something strange. For some reason he seemed overly hungry and this didn’t seem to be his normal type of hunger that a simple breakfast would solve.

What's more, he should be overly full from yesterday. Before heading back home, he had stopped by the convenience store to replenish all the Energy he had used up in his fight. After that, he also had a nice dinner with his mother and sister. If anything, he should still be full, not hungry.

Wondering what's wrong with him, he decided to check his system and the first thing he noticed were a few notifications he had missed, since he had gone to bed before midnight.

[As the date of the full moon approaches, the power of the moon strengthens you further.]

[Current bonus: All Stats +2]

[Your bloodlust grows]

[7 days until the next full moon]

'Whoa, another boost! How many more will I get? Since it's a bonus my guess would be that after the full moon passes the bonus stats will go away. However, what happens after that? After each full moon, there will be a new moon.'

'If the moon is like the thing that grants a werewolf his powers, doesn't that mean I'll have to worry about getting weaker and suffer penalties?' Gary thought to himself. He chose to ignore the countdown notification as it seemed impossible to turn it off. Instead, he looked over his base stats, all three of which displayed a (+2) next to them.

[Strength 7 (+2)]

[Dexterity 3 (+2)]

[Endurance 9 (+2)]

It was scary to think how strong he might possibly be in a week, and when he actually transformed. Looking over his Energy and Health, he saw that they still didn't benefit from any bonuses, but that's when he noticed something strange.

[81/110 Energy]

'What the hell? Why is it lower than before I went to bed? Was I sleepwalking and using Charging Heart or something?'

Thankfully, the Werewolf System decided to enlighten him this time and offered the following explanation.

[The more your bloodlust grows in tandem to the state of the moon, the more Energy is required to empower you. It would be advisable to increase your Energy.]

'Goddamnit, why do you tell this to me now when I no longer have any stat points?! Sh*t, I still haven't found a method on how to increase that stat naturally! Why doesn't this stupid thing have a tutorial or some help function? Who the hell designed this junk system?!'

Gary's cursing unfortunately didn't result in anything. He didn't know whether the system felt insulted and had decided against cooperating or if it was just the way it worked, however he had no way of finding that out. Instead, the high schooler chose to do something about the problems he could fix, albeit temporarily.

'I should have known that the system doesn't give me anything for free. Alright, I should be able to fix this by purchasing more food to replenish the Energy that way. I will also have to avoid getting into any fights and probably refrain from using Charging Heart during practice.'

Quickly getting dressed to keep up the ruse of going to school, Gary headed to the fridge. It seemed like he had only recently filled it up completely, but as he thought about it, that way one week ago. He wasn't the only one who had access to it, so right now it was rather empty. It had an opened milk carton, some juice, eggs, butter and jam, but he craved something else right now.

“Damn, I already used up the rest of my money yesterday to buy meat, so what the hell am I supposed to do now?” Gary wondered. He knew that he still had his emergency fund of five hundred, but he was adamant in wanting to use it to help pay off some of their family’s bills. Alas, if he didn’t come up with a solution soon, he might have no other choice but to use it.

Gary would have to come up with one on the way though. It was already time for him to leave for school. He was thankful that his sister hadn’t told his mother and because of this he was free to do what he wished, which happened to be finding solutions to the ever increasing amount of problems.

Picking up his feet walking around, after a couple of hours Gary had entered the high street and noticed that his Energy had gone down by a bit.

[78/100 Energy]

‘I still have a week to go, just how bad will it get in the future? If I get into more fights, or get called by Kai to fight, then this could end very badly. I don’t want to create any more Billys.’ Gary kicked a pebble in his way out of frustration.

Following its flight path the high schooler noticed a poster in one of the window shops. He had actually been hoping to see if there might be any odd jobs he could do, but this one caught his eye because it had certain words that stuck out to Gary.

{AFC Academy. Train to become the next big fighter!}

‘An Altered Academy that trains Altered? How great would it be if I could attend something like that? It’s not like I can fake it, Altered are able to transform at will. Too bad, with how much money Kirk makes, I bet I could get rid of nearly all of my problems at once.’ Gary began to daydream.

Trying to think of something positive was a nice little escape from reality, but eventually he left the high street and started to head to the parks where there was a nice woodland area nearby. He had chosen this area for a specific reason.

After entering the woods, he looked around him to see if he could spot anyone, but it didn't look like there was anyone nearby. Despite all his setbacks yesterday, his system had surprised him with one good reward at the end of the day.

[Showing skills that are available to be unlocked at current level]

[Claw Drain]

[Hardened Will]

'Don't you usually get presented with a choice of three? Whatever, I can't really complain about getting a free skill. However, this system could have at least given me a slight description. I have only the name to go off of to guess what they do.' Gary had thought to himself.

From the notification, he could infer that his skill choice was limited by his current level, so there was a chance that whatever he didn't choose might become available later. Claw Drain sounded like an offensive skill, whereas Hardened Will sounded like a defensive one.

Seeing as Endurance was still his highest base stat, even without having put any stat points into it, he wasn't very keen on the latter. Besides, what would be the point of him being able to take a beating for a longer time? It wouldn't have changed anything in his fight yesterday. No, what he needed was some fire power.

[Are you sure you would like to select the skill 'Claw Drain?']

[Yes / No]

After selecting [Yes] on the menu that had popped up in front of him, a certain set of information had entered his head. He knew he would just need to think of the skill name and it would allow him to use it, but he needed to know how it worked first.

[Claw Drain (Level 1)]

[Once activated, half of the damage inflicted by the user will be used to recover Health.

The skill will take 15 points of Energy to use.]

The skill will last 2 seconds.]

'This is awesome! Up until now I could only heal passively by converting Energy into Health. It would have been even greater if it had some function to boost my strength like Charging Heart, but that might have been a bit much to ask. Still, now I can actually trade blows with my opponents without having to fear hitting 0 Health.'

'The only downside seems to be the rather short duration... and the Energy cost. If I use Charging Heart and Claw Drain together that's 25 points of Energy, which is nearly a quarter of my overall. Looks like skills, although helpful, really have quite the burden.'

Gary wanted to test out his new skill, which was why he had come to the woods in the first place. The only problem was that he was now worried about his Energy bar. He was already losing it passively, so was it really wise to experiment with it? On the other hand, not experiencing the skill seemed dumb as well.

As he was debating whether he should or shouldn't test it out, he felt a vibration from his phone. Grabbing it from his pocket, he saw a notification about breaking news.

'Sh*t, so this time a university student has been killed, and it says their body was mauled.'

Gary had a bad premonition that it was Billy. Putting his phone away, he was going to try and attempt to solve his Energy problem, but in that moment his secret phone vibrated. There was only one number saved on it, and it was someone he didn't want to make wait, especially after he had helped him recently.

[Gary we need to meet up ASAP and discuss something. It's about Billy!]

Chapter 56: Billy's targets

After reading the message, Gary had worrying thoughts going through his head. Why would Kai bring up Billy now of all times? Had he somehow discovered that all of those recent murders might have been his doing? Or could he have encountered a hairy creature at night and linked the whole mess back to him?

'Hang on, if Kai has actually found some lead on Billy, then that would be a great thing! I might finally be able to track him down and stop him before he can do any more harm!' Gary thought, pacing up and down in the woods.

He looked at the clock on the phone. It was nearly lunch time and although he was only allowed in school for club practice, which would be at around 3PM, he just couldn't wait that long. Kai's message sounded pretty urgent and if he reached out to him about Billy then it was vitally important to hear what his upperclassman had to share.

Gary decided to rush back to school, even running for it. While he was still worrying about his Energy bar, this clearly took precedence though he refrained from using Charging Heart, as he should still make it in time.

The high schooler managed to arrive quite quickly at school, it was quiet so the lunch bell didn't seem to have gone off yet. Given his uniform, it was unlikely that someone would report him if they saw him. Even if someone did recognise him, they would likely just think that he had been called in by Headmistress Young.

After all, who would use the 'free holiday' that was exclusion, to get back to the school ground?

Rushing through the gates, Gary hurried through the hallways while trying to avoid the few teachers and students who were outside. Everyone was busy with their own thing, but it couldn't hurt being cautious. Right now he was following Kai's instructions and was heading to a certain storage room.

Gary had expected that Kai would call him over to the school's roof, but with the bell ringing any moment now, there would be students who would go up to the school roof to enjoy their meal up there. Given that his upperclassman seemed to care about secrecy in the matter concerning Billy just added to Gary's worries.

He texted Kai that he had arrived and was now pacing up and down in the small storage room. Unfortunately, he could only make four steps before having to turn around. This 'room' was basically an

oversized supply closet, filled with cleaning supplies and piles of toilet paper. A few paces later the school bell had rung and students had begun running through the halls, yet Kai had yet to reply.

There was a sudden knock on the door. Gary panicked, looking left and right, trying to search for a hiding spot, but there was nowhere to hide apart from a mop sticking out from a bucket. For once it didn't seem like any of his werewolf powers were going to help. As it slowly opened, Gary moved behind the mop and turned around, stopping his breathing.

"Yeah, you might wanna try that again when you don't have green hair. It sticks out like a sore thumb, and what was the point of turning around? 'If you can't see me I can't see you', what are you five?" Kai held back his laughter as he closed the door behind him. "I knocked to let you know that it was me. I mean seriously, who else could it have been? The only ones visiting this room would be either the janitor or some horny teens looking for some quiet time. Do you think either one would have knocked?"

Realising how stupid he had been, Gary felt a little embarrassed about what had just happened. Standing up, he brushed off some dust from his clothes.

"So, how come you have mentioned Billy so suddenly? Have you seen him lately? Did he look any different?" Gary asked, wanting to change the subject, hoping that Kai would soon forget his earlier actions. The upperclassman thought that it was a pretty strange question to ask off the bat, but decided to tell him the reason why he had called him in so suddenly.

"No I haven't, otherwise I would have already reported him to the police. Anyway, just be quiet for a moment and listen to what I have to tell you. Also, try not to panic since it won't help you and I would like you to help me figure out what to do next." Kai answered, looking into Gary's eyes.

The former didn't miss that the latter was gulping just from his warning, so Kai didn't have high hopes about Gary not panicking. However, he couldn't exactly fault him for that. Gary had already tried to reach out to him about Billy, yet Kai had shot him down at the time, believing that his underclassman had just been looking for trouble.

"You know about all those murders that have been happening on the news lately? Well, I'm convinced that this is Billy's doing. I mean 'Son goes missing after his mother and father have been found dead, yet doesn't show up despite news outlets stating that police are looking for him', doesn't really take a genius to figure out that unless he's dead, he would be the prime suspect. Heck, I think you figured that out when you sent me that text."

“If you’ve watched the reports you should know that the victim of one of the recent murders in our town was a high school student like us, whereas the most recent one was a university student... and wouldn’t you know it, both had connections to our fugitive friend.”

Hearing this, Gary felt relieved. He had strongly suspected that Billy was the murderer, yet learning that his victims were people he knew meant that at least his family members were likely safe.

“What are the links, and how did you figure all of this stuff out?” Gary asked.

“To be honest, that was a bit of a coincidence. I was actually looking for a link between you and Innu. You remember the new guy that recently joined our gang?” Kai asked and Gary just nodded. He had only seen their newest gang member once though, so he wasn’t sure what exactly kind of link they could have had. Most importantly, how did Billy fit into all of this? Or the murders for that matter?

“See, turns out you weren’t the only one who received a nice little gift from a secret admirer in the middle of the night. Fortunately, Innu was just as smart as you and let me take care of that problem. As you can imagine, I have no desire to keep sending over people and taking care of such things.”

“I did a little digging into who exactly would do such a thing. Unlike you, Innu doesn’t really have any connection to the Underdogs nor does he have beef with any of the other gangs. The only thing that I could find that the two of you shared, apart from both being in the same gang now, was that both of you participated in the fighting club.”

“You know who else was participating? That’s right Billy... and so were his two latest victims. Now, here’s where things get interesting. Not only were the deceased high schooler and university student both fighters, both of them fought against Billy Buster!”

Now knowing that Billy was out for revenge, it made Gary wonder a number of things.

“So does that mean he’s after everyone he ever fought?” Gary asked. “Say, how do you know their names? I don’t recall the news mentioning them. Heck, didn’t the family of the high schooler even request for it to be scratched from the records?”

“Does that really matter now? Just be glad that I did find out and that I discovered the connection. As for your first question, it’s not as simple as Billy going after those he fought.” Kai replied. “In fact, he seems to target those he lost against!”

“I have a feeling that the body parts that the two of you received might have come from his other two victims. I need the both of you to be careful. Heck, it might be for the best if the two of you could start hanging out and look after each other.”

Having Kai figure out all of this, Gary started to wonder. Was there actually a way for Billy to track him down? Gary had never found a way, but Billy had somehow found the houses of all of those he had lost to.

That information had to come from somewhere!

Maybe, Billy hadn’t found Gary’s home due to being a werewolf but had seeked him out just due to this revenge. Otherwise how would he have found Innu’s home?

Now Gary knew that Billy was out for more blood, and it looked as if Innu had made it on the Omega’s hit list. And all of this... was his fault!

All of the people who had died so far were because he had bitten Billy. On top of that, if Billy could find out where he lived somehow, it certainly meant that the Underdogs could.

Gary hesitated a little before asking the question that was on his mind: “How many people did Billy lose to?”

“Four, including you. Two of which are already dead and you can pretty much guess who he had lost thrice against, right?”

“Fu*k”

Chapter 57: Get him, before me!

Learning a bit more from Kai about the other victims, it seemed like Billy had been going through his revenge list by order of those he had lost to. Which in turn meant that Innu was next.

'From what I remember Innu is quite the strong fighter. He might be able to handle himself in most situations, but that's with a human as his opponent, not against a werewolf.' Gary thought. 'It's also possible that he's gotten stronger because of the moon like me, and to top that off, he's apparently killed at least four people if we include his parents. Yeah, there's no way Innu will survive that on his own.'

"You're a more caring person than I thought. While that might not be the best quality for your average gang leader, for our little group it's not exactly bad." Kai mentioned, making Gary flinch as he had completely forgotten about his role in their little gang.

"Anyway, I think it's for the best if you two start to hang out together. Although Billy seems to go after his victims in the order he lost against them, we have to account for the fact that you got your 'present' before Innu. If that's something like his calling card, then he might be coming for you first actually. Either way, there's safety in numbers and at least you know that he's coming after you."

"After your practice, give Innu a call. Let me add his number to your phone. I was going to get you two to meet up with each other more often anyway. Use that time to learn how to cooperate for the next underground fight."

Gary was in the middle of giving his small secret phone to Kai when he realised something.

"Come again? What's that about an underground fight?" Gary asked.

"Oh yeah, I never got a chance to tell you since someone managed to get themselves excluded yesterday. This weekend our little gang will have their gang debut and the two of you will be entering in a tag team match against Eton High."

"Don't worry, it's a couple of days after that rugby match of yours. Who knows, maybe you'll see your opponents out on the field." Kai casually said as he headed for the door.

'Sh*t, out of all things. I've barely had a single match, never mind with someone else. Heck, it was because of that stupid match in the first place that I ended up turning Billy!

"Wait." Gary called out, stopping Kai before he left. "I wanted to ask you about something."

Kai sighed as if he knew what the question would be.

"Let me guess, you're worried that since Billy found out where the two of you lived, then it must mean that he had somehow gotten that information, which means the Underdogs might as well. You don't have to worry about that."

"It's in my own interest to prevent them from finding you. I've already begun looking into how he found out about you in the first place and once I do, I will make sure to make it impossible for them to do the same."

Although Gary was worried about this, it was more so about something else. At least he knew that Billy was only attacking opponents he had lost to, so maybe his family wasn't in any danger, but there was another problem.

"Thank you very much, but I was actually going to ask... if you could spot me some money. I used up everything I've earned to help my family pay off some overdue bills, but we got some new ones coming in, so I needed some more. It won't be for long, you can just deduct it from whatever we'll earn in that tag team match!"

Hearing these words, Kai's hand left the handle, and a smirk appeared across his face.

"Borrowing money from a gang, now that would be quite troublesome. wouldn't it? Although I would like to say yes, you're not the only one who is a bit short on cash. You see, I never really accounted for having to call for the cleaners, much less having to do it twice in a row. As you can imagine it's not exactly cheap to get them to work without asking questions and keeping it off the record."

"I'm down to what I've earned by betting on you, but those are gang funds. The rest of my cash is tied in with the Underdogs, so there's no way I can access it without someone getting suspicious. You wouldn't

want to be borrowing money from an Underdog member, now would you? That could end up being very dangerous.”

“If you need cash that badly, try Innu. Otherwise, you will just have to make do until the tag team match. I promise then you will get a big pay day, as long as you win of course.” Kai said, leaving the room before Gary could say anything else.

Gary didn't have high hopes for Innu. They didn't really know each other, so why should he give him his money? Gary was the gang leader in name only and they both knew that. Since there wasn't much for him to do, the high schooler simply decided to stay in the small storage room with his thoughts until lunch was over so no one could see him.

In the end, he hadn't figured out anything at all. He had pondered over going back to the woods, but then he would just have to get back to school, which seemed like a waste of time, and probably Energy. As such, Gary decided to just wait out the last two hours before club practice started.

The Bond Mark on Tom was barely visible today, indicating that his best friend was far away, most likely still in the hospital. Gary couldn't imagine how worried his parents must have been after being notified that their boy had been assaulted to that degree.

Then there was Gil. The Mark from their Forced Bond was also very weak, so it seemed as if he hadn't attended school as well. If he were to wager a guess, the bully was also in a hospital, though Gary hoped it wasn't the same one as Tom's.

Gary didn't want to see his face so soon again anyway. The only one whose mist had been very noticeable ever since he had entered the school ground was Barry's. Gary knew that he had been there when Tom had been bullied, so he intended to pay him back.

—

Eventually, it was time for rugby practice. Gary turned up and people were actually pleased to see him, most noticeably Mr Root and Blake. The latter came up to Gary and gave him a friendly shake and a pull in. It was something that Gary had only seen people who were very close with each other.

It wasn't quite a shake, nor was it a hug at the same time. To say the least Gary found it a little awkward.

"What was that?" Gary asked.

"The two of us went through that crap with Eton High together and honestly I've been thinking about that day for a while now. Without you, I could have seriously gotten hurt, it might have even ruined my entire rugby career. And I see you're getting better at rugby by the day. I think it will be good if the two of us stay close together."

Before, when interacting with Blake, Gary had shrugged him off, and he was only starting to realise now it was because he had been... jealous. With how perfect Blake was, it had only highlighted how imperfect Gary had been. However, now that those on the rugby team had started to accept him, he was realising that Blake was just a nice guy.

Not everyone was happy to see Gary though. When he saw him and Blake exchange their greeting, Barry's eyebrows furrowed. The strange thing was that Gary seemed to notice it and turned his head around, though Barry looked away, as if avoiding the death stare.

"Are any of the team members still causing you problems?" Blake asked, noting the change in Gary's mood. For a second he considered whether confiding in the helpful athlete, but ultimately decided against it. Even if Blake had some power to punish the duo who had done that to Tom, most likely by getting them kicked off the team, that wouldn't satisfy the anger that was inside of Gary.

"Thanks for the offer, but it's okay, it's nothing that I can't deal with." Gary shook his head, walking past Blake, not even looking at him again, but just staring at one person.

Rugby practice that day was probably the worst performance Gary had ever put on since he had become a werewolf. The main reason for that was his Energy problem. With no reliable way to replenish it, he hadn't used Charging Heart even once and he was trying to conserve his Energy as best as he could, which translated poorly for his team.

He might have gotten into trouble, but as it turned out he wasn't the only one who was performing subpar. Barry had messed up catching the ball as it was thrown to him a couple of times in a pass, thumbling and allowing it to fall to the ground.

After yelling at them all a couple of times, Mr Root decided to call off the practice early today, in hopes that maybe some rest would do them some good. He hoped that by that time Gil might be back as well. As the others left the field, Gary turned around to stare at Barry again, causing him to flinch.

'Damn it, I can't concentrate on the practice match at all today, and it's all because of him! Gil...he was in the hospital and he was badly beaten. I can't prove it, but it just has to have been him! He might not look that part, but after what he did to Steven it's clear that he's hiding a few things. I knew we shouldn't have messed with his friend, and look what's happened now.'

'The way he's looking at me, I just know he's going to come after me next.' Barry thought.

Eventually, everyone ended up going to the locker room, and were happily getting changed, but for Barry, he had yet to open his locker to change out of his rugby uniform. His hand went to open it, but it was visibly shaking.

'That stare... I can tell, he's...he's going to kill me! If it wasn't for the guy saving Gil from his assailant, Gary would have surely killed him! I can't let it end like that!' Barry thought, as he opened up the locker, and inside there was a four inch kitchen knife he had brought with him from home.

'He can't kill me, if he's dead!'

Chapter 58: Low on Energy

Gary had left as soon as rugby practice was over, following an unexpected message on his secret phone from an unknown number. Given the content of the message it wasn't hard to figure out who it was though.

[Kai gave me this number and told me to text you. He told me that the two of you have already talked about our little Billy situation and our upcoming tag team match. I'll be waiting here.] The sender had attached his location on the map, marking his position.

Honestly, Gary wasn't looking forward to meeting Innu so soon, mainly because the high schooler figured that the other would want to either have a sparring match or just train together. Until he had a way to solve his Energy problem, neither option seemed like a good idea.

[52/110 Energy]

His Energy points were going down far faster than he had expected, even though he hadn't felt like he had actually done much during rugby practice. It seemed as if just staying awake was taking up Energy today.

The primary reason why Gary had decided to meet up with Innu was in hopes of solving this very same problem. He intended to follow Kai's suggestion and ask his fellow gang member to borrow some money.

Arriving at the location, Gary was surprised to see that it was quite a nice looking park. There was a large open green field where people were playing football, a set of swings and some families. It was half way between Gary's school and Innu's school.

'I don't even know what gang runs this part of Slough. Although the Underdogs have most of the Slough under their thumb they don't own all of it, this place is so...peaceful.' Gary thought, which was why he was wondering why Innu had asked him to meet up in such a place.

"Over here!" Innu shouted, waving with one hand in his pocket. The first thing Gary noticed was that both of the fighter's hands were still bandaged up. He looked almost exactly the same as when Gary had first seen him in the arena, the only difference was that he was wearing familiar looking clothes. It took him a moment to recognise them as the gang uniform that Kai had prepared for them.

"What gives? Here I do my best to make myself presentable by wearing our gang outfit, yet our 'mighty leader' isn't wearing the clothes himself?" Gary wasn't sure whether Innu sounded more annoyed or embarrassed about the fact that he was the only one who seemed to have put some thought into this meeting.

"Sorry? I didn't really consider this like a gang meeting and I also just came out of school. Besides, is it really wise to wear our colours so openly? Isn't this like sending a challenge to all the other gangs?" Gary asked.

At this point, Innu couldn't hold it in any longer and let out a big sigh. Someone who was in a gang wasn't supposed to act like that in front of their leader, but the more he interacted with Gary, the more

he was convinced that Kai must seriously be pulling his leg about who the actual leader of their gang was.

“As long as the big gangs don’t know who we are and who is supporting us, they won’t be messing with us. They just don’t roll that way. Why do you think so many colour gangs are able to roam around freely sprouting their colours? Unless it gets pretty serious, those behind them don’t usually get involved.”

“Secondly, brandishing your colours is the whole point. A gang isn’t meant to show any fear, or back down from those around them. If you’re serious about starting this gang stuff then you need to do it right!”

Gary wanted to stop Innu there. This whole creating a gang business had never been his idea in the first place. However, explaining to the other that Kai had practically forced him to act as their leader, didn’t really seem like it would be possible or actually help in this situation.

Innu had already gotten in a fighting stance, pointing for Gary to go opposite him in the large grass field. They weren’t even too far away from where the kids were so the parents were able to easily see them.

“Really, here?” Gary questioned.

“Well from what I’ve heard, it’s not like we have a hideout yet, so yes, here. Don’t tell me you’re shy, Green Fang. When I fight, I always intend to win. You’re my partner so I need to see what you got.” Innu explained and straight away threw out a kick.

Out of reflex Gary tried to evade it, but he was too slow and as such was only able to partially block the attack. As soon as it hit though, he realised how heavy the hit was and just how powerful the strike was.

[-5 HP]

‘Damn that hurt, and it didn’t feel like he was serious yet. Sh*t, if I keep losing Health then my Energy will be used up to heal me once I’m idle, which will just worsen my situation!’

Innu didn't give Gary much time to think and just kept on attacking. His opponent couldn't do much but try his best to evade and block, but it was near impossible for him to counter given his passive fighting style. Thanks to the buff the moon provided him, Gary's speed was faster than usual, but it was a far cry from him using Charging Heart.

After some more of what could only be called a 'one-sided bullying' Innu called off the fight. Gary was very thankful for that since he was left with merely 31 points of Energy and the pangs in his stomach were getting stronger.

"What's wrong with you? You seem distracted and a little... weak?" Innu asked. "Are you that worried about that whole Billy situation?"

Gary shook his head. "No, it's just that I'm exhausted. As I told you, I just came from rugby practice, and these days I can't really afford to eat anything decent. Actually I was hoping you could-"

"I can't." Innu replied straight away, not even letting Gary finish his sentence. "Finance wise, I'm not exactly in the best situation myself. Otherwise, I would have never ended up joining your gang. If you're really hungry, you'll figure something out, I had to do the same. Whether you need to hunt for food yourself, steal or what, a really hungry person will find a way."

"Alright that might explain the lack of energy, but not you being distracted. Look, I know Kai said the two of us should look out for each other, but honestly you just need to look out for yourself. You don't need to worry about me. I also don't have time to babysit you either."

"Heck! I beat the guy three times already and now that I know that he might be after me, I won't mind beating him a fourth time. Maybe I'll even get some sort of reward if I can hand him over to the police."

Gary wanted to say that Billy had changed since then, but there was no way that Innu would believe him if he started talking about werewolves. He would probably consider him to be crazy on top of being an incompetent leader and fighter.

"Anyway, that was my pep talk. We can meet up and train here before the match. When you have more energy I'll show you a few things, you might know about fighting, but you don't know how to fight." Innu said and got ready to leave. "Next time make sure to have more energy! Also, come in uniform, so I won't look like an idiot!"

“Wait!” Gary called out. “If...something happens... if you happen to see Billy or if you think he’s somewhere near you, promise you’ll text or call me! I’ll be there straight away!”

“I already told you, there’s no-“

“Please, just tell me!” Gary insisted.

Innu looked into Gary’s eyes. He didn’t know why it was so important for his leader, but there was more fire in his eyes when he made his request than the whole time the two of them had been fighting.

“Sure, whatever.” Innu shrugged and waved him goodbye as he walked off.

[30/110 Energy]

[Your Energy is now extremely low]

[in order to conserve Energy, Marks will no longer be visible]

‘Huh? Wait, that was an option? Couldn’t you have told me about that earlier?!’ Gary felt a migraine coming up due to the system’s seeming antics. ‘Well, it’s as if knowing that would have solved the issue anyway. Looks like I have no choice now, I’m going to have to use the secret stash. I’ve never felt this pain before.’

The mist from the Marks that would usually hover around in the air had disappeared. The only good thing was that the Energy was now decreasing at a seemingly lower rate. It seemed like nearly everything the Werewolf body did required Energy.

Gary thought about how much meat he had already eaten since he had become a werewolf and more importantly how much money it had cost him. He shook his head, to think about something else. Gary passed by his school and headed home. The more he thought about food the hungrier he was getting.

'Is... is this hunger or is my eyesight worsening as well? ... No, my sense of smell is also... could it be that I'm becoming more regular?' Gary realised his situation. He checked his menu. While his Energy points were low, his stats remained unchanged, which was a good thing to find out.

While walking down the street, Gary was pondering whether he should stop by the gym after replenishing his Energy. He had missed yesterday's session and now that he had increased his base Strength, he was sure he would have to train even more if he wanted to further raise it.

Although his hearing had also suffered, he noticed the sound of someone coming up from behind. Gary didn't think anything of that. It was still the middle of the day and he was on a public street. At most he thought that he might have dallied around too long and someone wanted to pass him. Gary turned around to let whoever it was pass him, but in that moment he recognised the guy behind him.

"Barry?!" He called out in surprise.

The next second, Barry had closed the distance between the two. Suddenly, Gary felt a familiar type of pain. It was a dull ache that continued to worsen, and a warm liquid trickled down his leg.

[You have been stabbed!]

Chapter 59: First kill

[You have been stabbed!]

[- 30 HP]

[70/100 HP]

[While your Energy is extremely low, emergency healing function is unavailable!]

[You are bleeding!]

[Your Health will decrease by - 4 HP per minute until you're patched up or healed.]

Gary didn't need the system to figure out that he had been stabbed, it was a memory that he would probably never be able to forget. The really worrying part were the messages following it. Unless Gary could somehow replenish his Energy to have his system automatically heal the wound, or at least bandage it, he would bleed out and die.

'Barry, you damn bastard! Where the hell did you come from and why did you stab me?! First you hurt Tom, and then you do this! I should just...just!' Gritting his teeth, his bloodlust was leading him to only one logical conclusion. 'I should just kill you!'

Barry looked up, yet rather than seeing a scared expression on his victim's face, Gary was the picture of pure unbridled anger. He had expected him to be either screaming, scared or in shock, but instead his schoolmate seemed ready to take him along to the next world.

Instinctively, Barry stepped away from him. His hand, which had still been on the knife handle, ended up pulling the weapon out. He had never stabbed anyone before, so he himself was still in shock at what he had done.

"I'm sorry, but I don't want to die!" Barry cried out, attempting to stab Gary one more time. However, Gary stood there, already waiting for the other's attack.

'Screw you!' He thought as he activated Charging Heart.

[18/110 Energy]

Showing no hesitation, he grabbed the knife before it could stab him again. Gary held it in place with his Strength, even though his hand was now cut.

[-5 HP]

[65/100 HP]

[A deep cut has appeared on your Hand]

[-5 HP]

[Your blood loss quickens - 2HP]

[63/100 HP]

'What kind of psycho is he? How can someone just grab onto a knife like that?! How isn't he hurt or scared from all that bleeding?!

"You're a monster!" Barry eventually blurted out. Not wasting time on talking back to his assailant, Gary swung his hand out. It was too fast for Barry to even see as Gary hadn't held back. His strike connected to the right side of his head, close to his temple.

His whole body turned and he nearly fell over. Lacking the power, he let go of the knife in his hand and Gary kicked the knife down the alleyway, before kicking the bully in the same direction.

"Why...did I even try...why did I even think about getting that marking off!" Gary muttered, yet it seemed more as if he was speaking to himself than to him. He knelt down and punched Barry in the head once more, leaving the larger teenager dazed. Gary's punches were harder than anything he had ever received, even though the bully had actually seen and had his fair share of fights.

Barry soon felt his body being dragged deeper into the alleyway, being pulled by the hoodie he had worn to not get recognised immediately by passerby. He didn't know why the other was doing that, but whatever his reasoning was, it couldn't be good for him.

Desperate to get out of this situation, Barry looked for anything that might help. He managed to find a brick on the ground and quickly picked it up. Gary was still busy dragging him along, so he was surprised when the other suddenly jumped off the ground and smashed him in the head with a brick.

[-10HP]

[51/100 HP]

[Your skull is partially fractured.]

[Congratulations! After repeatedly taking a beating your body has grown stronger. Don't get used to this though, you might lose some brain cells.]

[Endurance +1]

Unsurprisingly, Gary let go of Barry. For a moment, he even saw black and by the time he recovered, he only saw the backside of Barry running away. Following an instinct, he immediately started to run after his target. After closing the distance, he leapt up in the air, landing on Barry's shoulders, causing him to fall to the ground and smash his head on the floor. Quickly turning him over, Barry was now pinned, by the weight of his knees, but was too weak and had no energy to try to lift Gary off him anyway.

"What the fu*k is wrong with you? Not only did you torture Tom to the point he had to go to the hospital, you freaking stabbed me in broad daylight and tried to bash my head in! All because your stupid friend might have to sit on the bench!" Gary shouted at Barry as he had pinned him down. He no longer cared about what would happen to him.

He wasn't using fists, instead he was attacking Barry as if his hands were made from claws. His nails had ripped through the other's school uniform, and were now piercing Barry's chest. Skin was being ripped off from it, as the poor high schooler continued to scream in pain.

"HELP ME! A monster... he's a monster!" Barry could only pray that someone would help him, and hear his cries for help.

"Did you stop when Tom asked? If it's my life or a scumbag like yours, I'll easily take yours!" Gary thought as he lifted his hand once more.

"Police, put your hands up and get off him!" A man shouted.

Gary could tell the voice was coming from the front, but instead of listening to the police officer, he decided to pull up his hood, and began to run back into the alleyway.

The middle-aged policeman came running forward and wanted to chase the culprit, but looking at the state of the person on the ground it was obvious that the high schooler needed an ambulance and first aid straight away, perhaps by the time they arrived it would be too late.

“This is Chief of Police, Anton Milstun, reporting in. We have a culprit who has attacked what looks like a high schooler, heading down 163 street alleyway. Need an ambulance sent to my location ASAP.”

Anton quickly went down to look at the kid’s chest, and could see that the wounds were deep, and the markings looked as if they were done by claws. It didn’t look like something a normal human would be able to accomplish.

That’s when he noticed that the boy was mumbling something under his breath.

“It’s okay, conserve your energy. The ambulance is on the way.” Anton said.

Listening carefully he could just make out.

“M-monster ...monster...” Coming out from Barry’s mouth.

“Was it an Altered?” Anton wondered.

—

Running through multiple alleyways as fast as he could, Gary was still bleeding out and to make matters worse his Energy was still incredibly low. His Charging Heart had also come to an end and he thought he at least had made it far enough to get away from the policeman.

‘Stupid police! Only there when you don’t freaking want them to be... why don’t they go and stop some real criminals for a change!’ Gary cursed, as he went to lean against a wall and was applying pressure to his wound.

“Craaap!” Gary shouted out in pain. “What do I do now...I was going to...I was going to - what was I going to do?”

Then it hit him.

‘Was I really just about to eat another person to replenish my Energy? If the police didn’t stop me...’

Gary shuddered to finish that thought. Not being able to move much, and with his Energy about to hit 0, there weren’t many options he had left. He was far away from home, not even sure where exactly he had run off to.

Suddenly he heard the sound of squeaking. Squinting his eyes, he could make out the shape of several rats who had scurried over to him. Curious as to what was in front of them, and then eventually a few of them had come out.

“I’m so...hungry.” Gary mumbled, and as soon as one of the rats got within distance, he immediately grabbed it.

The rat was struggling and bit down on Gary’s finger.

“I...deserve that for what I’m about to do... I’m sorry little guy, but I need to live.” Gary apologised.

[+10 Energy points gained]

Chapter 60: The hunting target

Gary wasn’t sure how many times he had to close his eyes and just continue chewing, but eventually the message that he had been waiting for finally arrived.

[Your Energy has been fully restored]

[110/110 Energy]

The alleyway had been filled with rats that Gary could use, and after consuming the first one his Energy was being replenished allowing to catch more. Three rats later and his emergency healing finally kicked in, though it meant that he would have to eat even more of the rodents.

On the plus side, the wounds on his body and hand had started to heal as if it was magic, but what he had done, what he had eaten to get to this point, felt like a distant memory in his mind.

The taste of the rats themselves had actually been far better than he had anticipated, though he had the feeling that this was thanks to him being part werewolf now. He was sure if he was still a complete human, he would have thought very differently. Nevertheless, they had the same iron-like taste that he had begun to enjoy in the steaks he had been purchasing from the convenience store.

[Daily quest achieved]

[Eat 2kg of meat]

[285/460 exp]

Walking out of the alleyway, Gary used his enhanced senses to check if anyone was following him, but so far he seemed safe. However, he had to do something about his clothes. They were a blood mess, not least of all because of his impromptu snacks.

'Blood is so hard to get out of a white shirt... yeah I will have to dump this one. There's no way in hell I can get the stench of rat entrails out of it. I'm going to have to buy a new one. Here, I tried so hard to save that emergency money and yet I'm still going to have to use it.' Gary thought.

For the time being, he kept the uniform with him as he needed to find some way to dispose of it discreetly later, preferably somewhere far, far away from his fight with Barry. He still hadn't figured out what to do with his other clothes that were covered in blood from the construction site and he had no desire to have a closet full of 'evidence'.

'The taste of those rats...they weren't that bad, and it's cheaper than buying meat.' Still, the thought of what he had just done was making him feel quite sick. It was then he heard the sound of some pigeons and could see them flying above.

'I suppose it doesn't have to be rats necessarily. It should also work with other things, right? If I can keep up my Energy without having to spend money, and if it stops me from...' Gary didn't want to finish that thought. He changed into his rugby uniform for now, placing the bloody clothes in his bag, and headed home. The high schooler decided against going to the gym for now and he wasn't sure he would go there after having dropped off his bag at home.

The good news was that Gary had not only replenished his Energy, but that he had essentially solved his problem on how to get a free supply. At least for the coming days he could test out his new skill and more, but there was still the problem with Barry.

'Will he tell anything to the cops? I mean he was the one who stabbed me. Everything I did was pretty much just self-defense. If he tells the truth, he will just get in trouble as well.'

After getting home, speaking to his mother and sister, it was this thought that was making it hard for him to fall asleep. Eventually he saw a familiar message as the clock hit midnight.

[Your bloodlust grows]

[6 days until the next full moon]

— —

Earlier in the day, Anton Millstun had stayed behind to investigate the crime scene. More police had arrived to help him while the ambulance had given the injured high schooler some treatment, before taking him to the hospital.

After reporting what he himself had witnessed, the Chief of Police had left his subordinates to gather any clues, while he himself had decided to go to the hospital, hoping to talk to the victim. Despite it being dark outside, he continued to wait for the boy to wake up.

While in the hallway, a young police officer named Roo Game walked up to Anton with a few files in his hand, but he had a worried look on his face as he approached.

“Just tell me what it is.” Anton sighed and waved to Roo to hurry up.

“Yes, Sir. Unfortunately, it seems like we will have to hand over the case to White Rose. We tested the weapon that was found at the scene for fingerprints. It appears that the one we have apprehended isn’t the victim, but actually the assailant. However, we have also found the blood of what we can only assume to be the actual ‘victim’.”

“The blood splat report states that our injured friend most likely stabbed the one you have scared away. Now here’s where things get interesting. While we don’t have that mysterious person’s identity in the database, we do have this blood on record.”

“You remember the gang members that we found at the construction site. Well the blood matches up. Whoever that person is, he was at the construction site on that day.”

Anton let out an even bigger sigh, because he now understood why White Rose would grab this case. If the blood matched up, it was most likely the same Altered who had killed the gang members that had attacked the high schooler.

“What about Billy Bruntin? He was a high school student and his last two victims were teenagers. Is there any possible link to him?” Anton asked.

“Not that we are aware of. We have Billy’s suspected DNA on file that we recovered from his home. White Rose has made a forensics check, but his DNA wasn’t the one found at the construction site nor anywhere near the alleyway or the other cases. It seems these are two separate Altered killing cases.”

Shaking his head, Anton was wondering what the world was coming to.

“Thanks Rookie. Report this to White Rose, and while you’re at it, try to look for some links between the two. I know that there hasn’t been anything so far, but the fact that these are both high school students and have run in with suspected Altered, I just have a feeling this whole thing is connected.”

It was then that the sound of panic was heard not too far from where they were. The nurse came storming out of the room, and quickly brought a doctor back with her.

Even more panic started to ensue, and they were wondering just what was going on. Inside the hospital room itself, Barry was shaking. His whole body seemed to be undergoing some type of fit and he had foam in front of his mouth.

Not too long after, a certain someone received a notification screen.

--

[Congratulations, you have successfully hunted your first Marked!]

[Reward: Additional stat points]

'Huh?'