

A FULLER MOON

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Living in Alaska in the dead of winter was a challenge for many, though Tyler liked to think he had grown accustomed to the worst of it. With the holiday season months behind him, the tubby feline had to find ways to keep himself from slipping into the dreaded seasonal depression. His main source of income as a twitch streamer kept him indoors all day in the warm at least, with plenty of distraction to keep his mind off the cold and the dark. His eating habits, well... he certainly enjoyed his comfort food, that could easily be said. He had a wide array of snacks that kept him nice and warm all throughout winter.

Still, he knew better than to stay sedentary all throughout winter. Insulated against the cold by his own round belly and several layers of clothing, he stepped out into the thick snow, going for a bit of a hike into the woods to see the one thing that made the long winter nights worthwhile. Trudging into the woods and up a hill, he reached a spot where he could see the Northern Lights, enraptured as he saw brilliant ribbons of color streaked across the night sky.

He sighed happily looking up at it, chuckling softly as he remembered a well-worn joke. "Aurora Borealis, at this time of year, in this part of the country, localized entirely in my backyard."

He breathed in deeply, his hot breath turning into mist in the frigid air. He had done his due diligence, so he could indulge a bit. There was a plate of pizza rolls back in the house with his name on it, and a ten minute walk in several feet of snow almost certainly warranted that.

He began trudging back towards his home, but as the wind teased at his whiskers, the feline came to a stop, a shiver running down his spine. He could feel someone's eyes on him. Turning around, he scanned the treeline, certain he saw a pair of eyes catch a glint of the moonlight. A wild fox or wolf maybe, or God help him, a polar bear. Tyler kept backing away slowly, not wanting to lead anything on a chase, not until his home was well within sight again. He kept his eye on the trees, and saw a few branches rustling, and his heart sank. Whatever was out there was circling him, hoping to cut him off. The cat gritted his teeth, tightening his fists and watching the subtle rustling of branches. Whatever was out there, it was *big*.

It grew closer and Tyler lost his nerve, jumping up and trying to run back to his house. Soon as he started running, whatever was out there felled a tree as it leapt out of its prowling stance and began tearing up the snow.

"*Shit!*" Tyler shouted, scrambling for his door. He only got a glimpse of whatever was out there— it looked like an enormous bear, roughly as big as his car. The feline wheezed as he ran as fast as he could, his heart pounding as he kept his eyes locked on the lights of his windows— he was so close, but he saw the windows rattle as the beast chasing him down let loose a roar that shook him to the bone. In trying to match his steps out to the hill, he tripped on a snowbank, sailing until he hit the ground. Tyler pulled himself out of the snow, spitting out ice and slush and

trying to pull himself up— then he was pushed down hard, flipped over by thick paws, and his heart froze as he stared up at the monster looming over him, blocking out the moonlight.

The creature had the face of a wolf, but he had never seen a wolf this insanely huge. Its eyes glowed like lanterns, its dagger-like fangs and claws catching some of the light. He was also enormously muscular— under thick, shaggy fur rippled engorged, bulging muscle, with biceps bigger than Tyler's head and mountainous shoulders, chest muscles thick enough they seemed to press down on the feline like a landslide.

"Oh my God— Oh my God..." Tyler trembled, staring up at the awe-inspiring monster looming over him. There was something in his eye, a rumbling in his body, that Tyler recognized as *hunger*.

"L-look man, you don't wanna eat me. I'm not *nearly* as fat as I look, I swear, it's mostly fur and I'm going to be *really* gamey—"

The monster roared, snapping its jaws with an audible clap that made Tyler wince. "Ah! Ah! Okay, okay, I'm like, thirty pounds overweight, but trust me, I'm a cat, it's *not* going to be tasty."

The beast began sniffing the air, and then followed it down to Tyler, his huge snout pressing into Tyler's jacket.

"What— what is going on here? What— hah— please, no, don't— I-I'm ticklish there! No, stop— *stop!*" Tyler punched the hulking wolf on the nose, and the beast snarled in shock and surprise, jerking his head up and giving his terrified quarry a second chance to run. Tyler didn't waste it; the cat scrambled to his feet and bolted for his back door. He could see his computer in his bedroom window from here, he reached out for the doorknob, his fingers brushing against the metal—

Then he was violently yanked back and left suspended in the air. The monster had clamped its vice-like jaws around Tyler's leg, pulling him back towards the woods. With a violent jerk to the left, he tossed the feline into the air, and with one last desperate prayer to whoever was listening, Tyler swooned, everything fading to black.

Tyler breathed in sharply, blinking away the sleep. At first, he was entirely motionless. His eyes, once they focused, could see the anime and video game posters plastered on his bedroom walls, his computer tower humming quietly. A thin stream of weak sunlight streamed through his window, marking it very late in the morning for this time of year. Had that all been a dream?

"Ah! Look who's up!"

"*Ah!*" Tyler shot up from his bed, and instantly winced as he nearly tumbled out of bed, a jolt of pain shooting through his leg, which had been neatly bandaged.

"Woah, woah, easy there, big fella," a gruff, deep voice rumbled. Tyler looked wildly around as he was eased back against his pillows by a pair of strong hands. Standing over him was a tall and powerfully built wolf, with broad shoulders, a deep chest that filled out his flannel shirt and thickly roped limbs that strained his sleeves. He was almost distractingly big, his white

fur making him look like an iceberg. His weathered face was littered with scars, and his bright, luminous eyes seemed oddly familiar. "You don't wanna be movin' around after the night you had."

"Woah, woah!" Tyler swatted the wolf's arm away. "Who the Hell are *you*? What are you doing in my house?"

"Easy, easy," the big wolf chuckled, holding up a defensive hand. "Now, I don't know you, and you don't know me, and I'm sorry for taking liberties here, but I carried you in from the snow. I dressed your wound too, and uh, I got some breakfast goin' for you. Some flapjacks."

Tyler furrowed his brow in confusion. "Flapjacks...?"

"Ah, I made it from scratch, old family recipe." The wolf settled into Tyler's desk chair, scooting it close to the bed. He held out his hand. "Name's Hank. Nice to meetcha."

"Uh... Tyler." The feline tried not to react as the wolf's hand swallowed his, the larger man's grip like stone.

"So! Any idea what gotcha last night?" Hank asked.

"God, I don't even know," Tyler groaned. "I... I never saw anything like it. This huge wolf-like... thing? I know I'll sound crazy, but it was almost like a..."

"Werewolf?" Hank asked, his eyes flashing.

Tyler frowned, meeting the wolf's eyes. "Uh... yeah. How did you...?"

Hank's grin took on an apologetic look as he spread his hands, shrugging those broad boulder shoulders. "So, uh... don't freak out, but I didn't bandage you just out of the kindness of my heart. I'm the one that bit you."

Tyler narrowed his eyes, mouth somewhat agape. "*What?*"

Hank exhaled. "I'm a werewolf. And look, before you think I'm crazy, I can do whatever you want to prove it to you, I can shift forms, I can tell you all about 'em, but, heh," He chuckled a bit, in a depreciating manner as he rubbed the back of his head, a swollen bicep nearly splitting his long sleeve. "You *should* know because you're a werewolf now, too."

"Woah, woah," Tyler waved his hands, cutting Hank off. "What? No, hold on, stop— I'm getting off this train."

"Easy there," Hank planted a hand on Tyler's chest— even though he was barely putting any pressure, it was enough to plant him in place. "Look, I know it sounds crazy, but you should know this stuff."

The cat stared at Hank. "Okay. Let's say I believe you, what do you have to tell me?"

Hank wagged his finger, smirking. "You don't believe me. Well, I can prove it. Stand up— your leg should be healed by now."

"Are you crazy?" Tyler threw his covers off. "My leg was mauled by— well *you*, apparently, and you think one night's sleep will fix that?" He winced as he tried to stand, and then found his leg was sturdy as ever. "...What?"

Hank spread his hands again. "First perk of being a werewolf— you heal *crazy* fast."

"You're... you're kidding, you mean I'm really...?" Tyler left the sentence hanging.

The huge wolf clapped the feline on the back. "C'mon. We'll talk it over some of my flapjacks. I'll make bacon, too— you're gonna find that, uh. You're a *lot* more of a carnivore than you used to be," he chuckled.

Tyler followed Hank numbly, barely recognizing his surroundings as he stared dumbfoundedly at his leg. At this point, he could see the bruised skin fading, yellow fur quickly covering over it. The wolf's flapjacks were actually delicious, though oddly aromatic. Tyler felt he was able to pick up the scent of every ingredient thrown in, even down to the small pinch of cinnamon and vanilla extract added to the batch.

When he recovered himself, he finally looked up to Hank. "So... okay. Who are you? Like, really?"

The wolf rolled his broad shoulders, resting his thickly roped arms on his table. "Well, I really am named Hank— Hank Moore. I'm the foreman at the logging camp, volunteer sheriff's deputy and volunteer fireman, but I'm also the leader of my own pack."

"An... alpha?" Tyler asked.

Hank scoffed. "No, c'mon. Everyone knows that whole alpha wolf stuff is a load of crap. No, my pack is my family. My wife, my kids, brother and his family, and a few people we've adopted. My brother... Well, he's the oldest, but he's also kind of an idiot, so I take care of the pack best I can."

"Okay, so..." the feline exhaled, unsure of where to focus his eyes. "What... what happens next?"

"Well, the beauty about living in Alaska is lots of moonlight, lots of woods, we got *plenty* of hunting grounds." Hank grinned. "The first few times that you turn, it's going to be involuntary. You're gonna need help because you can't train to turn it on and off, which will be real useful. The first time you go wild, it..." Hank leaned back, a dreamy look in his eye. "Oh, you have no idea. It's like being on a roller coaster that doesn't end for hours. The thrill of the hunt, feeling all that power and speed for the first time— Ah, I wish I could relive my first time. Cherish it."

"So, hold on, hold on— you said I could control this?" Tyler asked.

Hank nodded. "In time, and with practice, yes."

"So..." the feline twisted his mouth, trying to think about how he wanted to phrase this. "Why did you bite me? I mean, I didn't try to antagonize you, and then you grabbed me..."

"Oh. Ah," Hank chuckled bashfully, his beefy chest bouncing as he rubbed the back of his head. "That. Sorry, so. There is *one* thing that you've probably already noticed, and that's your sense of smell. Your senses will all become sharper and more heightened, but nothing more than your smell. You'll start to learn to identify people by their individual smells, how to follow trails by scent. But there is *one* thing— each werewolf has a specific scent, something that will drive them completely crazy, almost feral. You happened to have *my* scent."

Tyler blinked. "What... what scent could that possibly have been?"

Hank's bashful grin grew wider, and he hesitated for a moment. "It's... pizza rolls."

The feline blinked. "*Pizza rolls?* Seriously?"

"Hey, I can't explain it," Hank shook his head. "No werewolf can. Maybe it's because it was my favorite snack as a kid? I dunno."

"So, how will I know what mine is?" Tyler asked.

"Well, you'll know it when you smell it, trust me." Hank reached over, patting him on the back. "Given I've gotten you into this, I'd like to offer my help. I'll tail you for a bit and keep on top of you, show you the ropes. What do you think?"

The cat's tail twitched as he looked at the hulking wolf seated across from him. He was quiet for a moment, then sighed. "Get me some more of these flapjacks, and sure, why not?"

The next few days were relentless in the work set in front of Tyler. Hank was many things—the burly wolf was friendly, talkative, and warm, but he was also a hard taskmaster. The first tasks set to Tyler were physically demanding, and the feline was not exactly built for such exercise. He dragged himself home the first day after the equivalent of a cross-country 5k run he had somehow finished without dying followed by two hours of weight training mixed with hauling logs at Hank's lumber camp, which also astounded Tyler by the fact he survived it all. Even though he was ravenously hungry, he fell asleep in a bowl of beef stew Hank had cooked up for him, missing his stream entirely.

The next day was the same routine, but surprisingly, Tyler managed it much easier. Whenever he looked up in shock at the weight he was able to haul, or how far he had run, he would catch a knowing, almost mischievous look on his face. He didn't make sense of it until the third day, when Tyler caught a glance of himself in the mirror.

"Woah." His jaw dropped, eyes going wide. He had never exactly been in shape in his life, and had spent most of it with a patented gamer build—fairly soft with a round paunch. That was all different now. Where Hank had the sort of build that would shame all but the biggest of professional bodybuilders, Tyler had suddenly gained the build of a heavyweight wrestler. His shoulders and chest had broadened with sinewy muscle, his limbs grew thick with heavy brawn. He wasn't svelte, as his round middle hadn't suddenly gone for a set of washboard abs—but just by looking at it in the mirror, he could see a solid slab where there had been a ball of dough.

He was left staring at his reflection for so long, he didn't even sense Hank coming up behind him, clamping a strong hand on his burgeoning shoulder. "Heh. Enjoying the view?" the wolf asked.

"How..." Tyler shook his head, looking back to Hank. "It's been *three days*."

"Werewolf power, bud. It's a hell of a tonic," the wolf chuckled. He gave the cat an appraising look. "I think you'll be ready soon."

"Ready? Ready for what?" Tyler asked.

"Ah, you'll see." Hank smacked the feline's broad back. "C'mon, we got lumber to haul."

"Actually, I was going to catch up on my streaming..."

Hank chuckled, moving out of Tyler's house. "Once we get you settled, we'll getcha a real man's job, something to put some hair on your chest."

"Some hair—" Tyler jogged after the wolf. "We're both mammals, we are *covered* in fur!"

Another day training under Hank, and Tyler had to admit, he was starting to feel the strength brimming up in his body. It felt good, invigorating even, to push himself. He could lift more, run faster, jump farther—he was starting to fall in love with it. But as the day wore on, and another short winter day in Alaska fell away to a long, dark night, he started to itch. Moreso, he was feeling restless. Whenever he sat down, he was fidgeting and bouncing his leg. He ate another of Hank's hearty meals, but he still couldn't relax. He also felt his eye drawn towards the moon whenever he glanced out the window.

Hank kept an eye on him, eventually letting out a hearty chuckle. "If we keep you cooped up anymore, you're going to *explode*. Tonight is definitely the night."

"What? Tonight?" Tyler asked. "But I have to stream tonight—"

"You wanna record your first transformation for the whole internet to see? You can stream Call of Warfare or whatever another time—you're about to feel the most free you've ever felt in your life." Hank began unbuttoning his flannel shirt, exposing the great white mounds of his bulging pecs and his chiseled, brick-like abs.

"Woah, hold on, what are you doing?" Tyler asked, trying not to stare.

Hank smirked. "I don't want to lose this shirt, son. I'd start taking your clothes off too if you don't wanna throw 'em away as scrap cloth."

Tyler's eyes widened. "What— just... strip down? Dude, I mean, I'm pan, but like..."

Hank tossed his flannel shirt in the cat's face, his entire sculpted upper body of bulging muscle on display. "You're about a minute away from exploding, kid. Take 'em off or lose 'em, and get out into the snow unless you want a werewolf-sized hole in your wall." He shimmied out of his jeans, showing off legs thick as the pine tree trunks outside. "My boots and jeans too, they were a birthday present from the missus," he explained before stomping into the snow, the wolf clad only in a pair of boxers that hugged his sculpted glutes.

"God..." Tyler shook his head. One more time, he caught the moon with his eye, and letting out a plaintive whine, he began slipping out of his shirt—it felt tight, and the sleeves felt like they were about to tear at the seams as he tried pulling them off his thick arms. He trudged into the snow, wincing a bit at the cold, but only for a moment. His attention was locked entirely on the wolf.

Hank was no longer entirely Hank; his broad lats had arched back as he let out a howl that echoed across the woods. The wolf's bright eyes reflected the moon, his thickly roped arms locking in place and he tensed his bulging muscles. His whole body trembled, and Tyler watched as he began to grow. He snapped his powerful jaws, thrashing as every part of the already massive wolf grew bigger, into the hulking beast that had bit him nearly a week ago. Tyler did have the foresight to avoid pizza rolls, so when the werewolf turned to him, he kept his composure. That huge, brutish face was strangely calm as he held out a massive head, gesturing for Tyler to step into the moonlight.

The cat hesitated, one last deep breath before the plunge. His eyes were drawn up to the moon, and as he drank in the cold, sublime beauty of the night sky, Tyler's body lurched forward. Already powerfully built from Hank's training, Tyler clenched his fist as he felt his whole body

begin to shift. He flinched as he felt and heard his bones crack and reform, his body breaking and rebuilding itself rapidly as his face elongated, his yellow fur darkened into a bronze streaked with black stripes. The pain would have been unbearable, but the surge of adrenaline left it as a prickling, tingling sensation that kept him growing. The swelling of power and energy building up inside him drove Tyler to let out a primal roar, loud and powerful.

Hank returned the howl and nudged Tyler, and then dropped to all fours, his powerful limbs churning the snow. Tyler couldn't think of anything else to do but to charge after him. He tried running on springy, powerful legs, but as he picked up speed, he felt his shoulders hunch forward, claws like daggers reaching further down until he copied Hank's gait, swollen arms and trunk-thick legs moving with surprising grace as he loped across the woods.

It was as if Tyler were seeing the woods around his home for the first time. Every sense was heightened; far from the serene, sleepy silence of a wintry forest he recalled, he could sense the woods teeming with life just beneath the thick layer of snow. He could smell the trees and hibernating animals, could hear a lone owl hooting in the winter stillness, and could even see the lights of the far-off town. He could also sense the animals' heightened sense of fear— they knew a new apex predator had just charged into the woods.

Hank led Tyler on a wild chase; the night air blew in his face as the two werewolves practically flew across the snow, and in that state of adrenaline and instinct overwhelming him, Tyler felt like he never wanted to do anything else for the rest of his life— though a small part of his brain was brimming with ideas for a werewolf streamer.

They eventually came into town— despite the ton and a half of muscle between the two werewolves, they moved with surprising deftness on the asphalt roads, their thick paws shockingly quiet. Hank, showing some of his normal character, clamped his beastly hand on Tyler's brawny shoulder, and pointed to a window.

Tyler turned, the were-cat— cat-wolf? Lycan-cat? Tyler was still thinking it over. He turned his head, and then stopped, his eyes going wide. He saw a tall and imposing beast staring back at him. That professional wrestler build he had grown for himself was now a sheer wall of animal muscle and brawn. He had to stand eight feet tall at least, given he had to hunch down to see his face in the window. His eyes glowed as brightly as Hank's, his now beastly face a mix of feline and canine features. His face was more square than the pack leader's, mixed with the fierce, dagger-like fangs he had grown, he looked almost like a smilodon.

He liked it. Tyler couldn't express in words, but he saw the raw power brimming in his body, his arms boasting triceps like anvils and biceps like steel balls, a chest like two slabs of beef flanks. He stared at his wide lats like buttresses holding up his burly upper body, his middle solid as a tank, and solid, pillar-like legs, with quads thick as tires. The beast felt like he could do anything.

Hank flashed a toothy grin, nudging Tyler to move on. They were about ready to move on, when Tyler's nose twitched. He smelled something; an intoxicating scent that was keeping him frozen in place. It was a similar bit of spice— he could hardly place the name, he was so overwhelmed by it. His ears twitched from the sharp, shrieking sound of glass as his claws were

clenching on the window, slowly starting to puncture them. He wanted it— he needed it. Whatever Hank barked never reached his ears, as the smell was driving him crazy.

Tyler couldn't hold back— he smashed the glass like it was rice paper, and lunged inside, barreling into the building to hunt down that small. With one mighty heave of his arms, he crashed through the drywall and found his prize. With reckless abandon, he fell on a huge vat of the smell that had been driving him into a feral state— an entire day's worth of Dragon Palace's sweet and sour chicken. He was licking the sauce off his claws by the end, and soon dozed off, leaving Hank to drag Tyler back to his house.

The following morning, Hank dragged Tyler out of bed to see how his first night chase went. The cat winced as they came to the Dragon Palace; the storefront was covered in police tape, and a small crowd had gathered, craning their necks to see how far the damage went.

"Jeez..." Tyler muttered. "I did this?"

Hank nodded. "What was that stuff you downed, General Tso's?"

"Uh... sweet and sour." He looked up at the wolf. "I guess that's my... thing?"

Hank chuckled. "Yeah. Just steer clear of Chinese take-out when you shift, I guess."

The cat scoffed in response, speaking low. "This was the only Chinese place in town. If people knew I did this, they'd ride me out of town on a rail."

"Quite the sight, don't you agree, Moore?"

Both Tyler and Hank turned around to see a strange figure. A bear dressed in a long trench coat, he wore a pair of large, wire-frame glasses on his muzzle, which accentuated how much he narrowed his eyes at the two.

Hank's mouth thinned, trying not to roll his eyes at the bear. Even though this strange figure only came up to his chest, he still tried to assert himself over the muscle bound wolf.

"Frank." He said curtly.

Tyler arched his brow, looking between the two. "Uh... who is this?"

"Frank Veers— Werewolf Hunter." The bear pushed his glasses up his muzzle. "I *know* this was you, Moore. What depraved plot do you have in mind, huh? Are you planning to pick the Lee family off one by one?"

"Listen you little creep," Hank growled. "Unlike you, I *actually* protect people with the Sheriff's Department. I've seen everyone of your deranged reports on me and my brother, and if you think you can—"

"Ah-ah-ah," Frank wagged his finger. "Temper, temper, Moore. If you get angry, you might have to show your true self, wouldn't you? Anyway, I'm on to you. The only thing that went missing from the kitchen was enough chicken to feed the town and a twenty-gallon vat of sweet and sour sauce. I don't know what you're planning, but I *will* find out." The bear jabbed Hank in the chest— not that it had any effect— before sinking into the crowd, drawing his fingers to his eyes in an "I'm watching you" gesture.

"Uh..." Tyler looked at the wolf. "Should we be worried about that guy?"

"Oh, Frank? No, he's an ass," Hank waved him off. "He's been trying to catch me out for years. He saw me and my brother on a drunk bender one time, smart phone in hand, and he *still*

fumbled it. Moron." He gave Tyler a sharp look. "But he is the type of moron that *is* still dangerous. The one thing he's good at is building traps— so steer clear of him. He doesn't know about you, yet."

"Still..." Tyler rubbed the back of his head. "Listen, man— this was my fault. This could put heat on you and your family, and..."

"Nah, don't worry about it. You're still learning to control yourself," Hank patted him on the back. "But I mean it— you steer clear of Veers, alright? No training today— I gotta head back to the ol' homestead, check up on the missus and the little ones."

"Well... alright," Tyler said, frowning softly as he looked after Frank, still watching them with narrowed eyes.

That night, Tyler was still feeling restless. He didn't enjoy the thought of Frank Veers skulking around, but he didn't know where to begin. Not knowing what else to do, he tried to focus on his stream, for once.

"Sorry if I'm a little distracted, guys," he began. "I'm worried about my friend— I think he might have a stalker?"

There was an outpouring of sympathetic comments, with recommendations for law enforcement, but it soon died down as Tyler turned back to his game. But then, a comment caught his eye.

VeerHelsing: Does anyone have a good sweet and sour chicken recipe? I need to make a lot of it for a... friend.

Tyler nearly spat out his drink. Could it be? He had to play it cool. "Uh... Veer Helsing, why... why don't you just buy some from a good Chinese take-out place, if you need it in a hurry?"

VeerHelsing: No good. A literal monster attacked the only chinese place in town.

Tyler's eyes nearly popped out of his skull. Of course Frank was a Fortnite fan. "Uh... Veer, you know, maybe you should reschedule."

VeerHelsing: Oh no. This guy keeps getting away from me. Actually, I think I found something. See you all later, I gotta do some hunting.

The cat tried to keep calm as Frank left the chat. He thought it out, and finished his match. For some reason, Frank thought sweet and sour chicken would draw out Hank; maybe he could beat him to the punch. After all, he only needed to follow his nose.

It was admittedly a gamble; Tyler had no idea where Frank lived, but if he was going after Hank, he had to be skulking around the woods somewhere. Using his newfound strength and power, he plowed through the snow, sniffing the air... and his efforts were soon rewarded. It

was a struggle to keep his thoughts clear-headed, but Frank was definitely somewhere in the woods. The smell of sweet and sour chicken was starting to get to him; he tried to keep his thoughts clear, but animal instinct and gnawing hunger drove him on.

The lycan feline drove on until he found it, enough sweet and sour chicken to feed ten of him. He gorged himself on it, giving in to a feral, ravenous hunger as his muzzle and claws grew sticky from the amount of sauce he guzzled down. His already thick middle grew rounder, filling his lap—and then, the trap was sprung. Tyler grunted heavily as he felt himself suddenly flung up into the air, snow and dead leaves falling away to reveal a cage big enough to hold him. His senses faded as he rushed to the steel bars, and heard a sharp, high laugh as Frank revealed himself.

"Ah-*ha!* I knew it! I knew it would work—I finally caught you, Hank! My God— so much for those washboard abs, huh?"

Tyler snorted angrily, gripping his stuffed gut.

"Oh, I don't know why, but I just know the sweet and sour chicken is part of all this— what is it? A spice or herb that helps augment your powers? Is it a natural deterrent against silver? I'll have my answers soon—"

Tyler winced as he felt the cage tremble, the branch holding the pulley that had hoisted him up groaning under the weight.

"Ah..." Frank grimaced. "Just... just hang tight while I recalibrate the weights here." The bear scurried over to the pulley system. "I didn't realize you had put on so much weight recently..."

Tyler thought quickly, and hefted up his middle, rounding his shoulders as he threw all his weight against the cage, sending it swinging.

"Ah! Stop that! Stop, that— that's not allowed! I caught you, I won, you lost, this— this is against the rules!" The bear shouted.

Tyler swung his weight against the cage again, using his stuffed middle as if it were a wrecking ball.

"This isn't how you're supposed to play! Stop being such a sore loser, Moore!"

With one final swing, the pulley finally snapped. Tyler braced himself as the cage hit another nearby tree, reduced to scrap metal as it hit the ground hard— but he was now made of much sterner stuff. Still reeling but suffering only superficial wounds, Tyler stood to his full height, roaring at Frank. The bear let out a desperate, horrified scream as he scrambled to his feet to run, but the lycan was far faster. Tyler pounced on him, smothering him under his weight. The bear had the wind knocked out of him, Tyler able to grab him by the lapels of his trenchcoat, snarling in his face.

The bear's eyes went wide. "Y-you... you're not Hank!"

Tyler shot him a toothy grin, then knocked the would-be werewolf hunter on the head, knocking him out cold. He let the bear drop, slumped over in the snow. Standing back to his full height, he looked around and thought about what he should do next. He looked back to the massive baking sheet Frank had piled all the sweet and sour chicken on, and the first notions of a

plan began to form... the hulking beast tucked the sheet under one thick arm, and threw Frank over his broad shoulder, trudging through the snow towards Dragon Palace.

It was five in the morning when Hank was called out on a break-in at the Dragon Palace. He rode out as one of the Sheriff's deputies to the restaurant, only to find Frank Veers being pushed into a patrol car. One of the other officers, a husky who, thanks to his love of donuts, certainly lived up to his species' name, waved him over.

"Hey Moore," he said. "Don't worry, we won't need any Die Hard action heroics from you tonight."

"What happened? Is that Veers?" Hank asked.

"Yeah, the little weirdo was spotted breaking into the restaurant. He's smeared with sweet and sour sauce, was clutching some of the Lee family's cooking equipment, and was ranting about how sweet and sour chicken was going to blow a giant conspiracy of werewolves ruling this town sky high." The husky shook his head. "We're thinking a night in the tank oughta get whatever's in his system out of him."

Hank chuckled. "You don't say." His eyes scanned the woods, spotting a familiar, bulky outline along the trees. "Hold on one sec, I'm gonna patrol the perimeter, y'know. Make sure he didn't drop anything." He patted the husky on the shoulder. "Try to save some of the creme-filled for the rest of us this time, okay, Kowalski?"

The husky waved the brawny wolf off as Hank dipped into the woods. "How the Hell did you pull this off, son?"

Tyler leaned into view, stepping out from behind the only tree thick around enough to hide his whole silhouette. "Ah... well, it was easy, really. You were right— he's an idiot."

Hank chuckled, glancing down at the cat's thick, round middle. "How much sweet and sour chicken did he have?"

Tyler laughed, patting his middle. "Enough."

"Uh-huh. I'll add more cardio next time we train." Hank held out his hand. "You did me a huge favor, getting that jackass out of my hair for a bit."

Tyler grabbed Hank's hand, shaking it firmly. "Well... honestly, you biting my leg was a huge favor. I think I kinda... love being a werewolf?"

Hank laughed, smacking him on the back one last time. "Ah, I knew I liked you, kid! I'm gonna spend some time with the family— why don't you come over sometime? Maybe we'll have chinese."

Tyler smirked. "Yeah? I'll bring the pizza rolls." He punched Hank's middle playfully. "Maybe you could bulk a bit more yourself."