

Werewolf

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The night was dark, and moonlight was leaking through the faded, old, tattered curtains of the little worn down shack.

Inside, a man slept peacefully, his hair and beard greying with age, and his face weathered and tanned from many long days of working in the sun.

Beside his little metal bed lay a shepherds stick, elegantly carved with a sheep's head at the top. It was made of wood, and polished so much that one could use it as a mirror.

The little bed creaked and groaned noisily as the man shifted in his sleep, still dreaming.

It looked like nothing could wake this man. Not the gentle cooing of an owl, nor the wind rustling the trees. Not even the frightened bleating of his sheep cut short and drowned out by a loud howling.

“Mom, Why can't I go to the village by myself?” Cassie complained loudly to her mother, who was busy discussing a trade in the village square with the butcher, a tall, fair haired man named Tom.

Her mom looked over at her sternly, her blue eyes scanning Cassie with an icy gaze. “How many times do I have to tell you?” She snapped, “You should know!”

Cassie gazed up at her mother evenly, “I don't know anything.” She said, opening her eyes wide and pretending to be innocent, “Nothing.”

Her mother's disappointed sigh sliced Cassie like a knife, but she wasn't about to let it show as her mother turned back to the butcher with an apologetic look. "We'll talk about your behaviour later, Cassandra."

Now it was Cassie's turn to sigh. She hated it when her mother talked to her about her behaviour. It wasn't her fault she was smarter than her mom.

"Now, Cassie," her mother started in her trying to be nice voice, "I've talked to you a lot about this, okay? And I'll only tell you one more time."

Cassie waited patiently. She knew, word for word, what her mother was going to say, there are werewolves, they ate some shepherds sheep, blah blah. The only reason she had brought it up was because she had an argument.

"So you see?" Cassie's mom was saying, wiggling one of her eyebrows towards Cassie, which she knew Cassie hated. "That's why you're not allowed to go alone."

"Okay." She mumbled, but then spoke up. "You know, all my friends go to the village alone." She tried imitating her mother by wiggling her eyebrow but figured she only ended up looking silly.

"Yeah well, those are your friends." Her mother responded sternly, and her tone of voice told Cassie that the conversation was over.

Hey Cassie, the letter said, me and some friends are going to the village to hang out at 11:00 pm tomorrow night and we were wondering if you'd like to come. It's okay if you can't or you're scared of werewolves like your mom is, but either way, please reply as soon as possible.

Yours truly,

Astrid

Cassie crumpled the note with one hand, the other clenched in a fist, words spiralling in her mind. Too scared to go. Afraid of werewolves.

Who did these people think she was? Astrid would've never written anything like this. Cassie knew that she knew that she wasn't afraid of werewolves.

But, then again, Astrid had been growing more and more distant from her, ever since Pearl had moved into town.

But still. Something was wrong with the letter. Maybe it was the fact that the ink was red, or that Astrid was nicer than this, but whatever it was, that letter hadn't been from the Astrid she had been friends with.

With the paper still tightly clenched in her hand, she stiffly moved to her small writing desk in the corner of her room.

Cassie loved her room. It was painted a deep indigo blue, which made it look like you were looking into the night sky thanks to the little stars that her dad had painted before he'd gone to war.

Cassie felt tears spring up in her eyes, and she had to blink rapidly to keep the tears from pouring down her cheeks as they sometimes did.

Sitting down, still blinking, she grabbed a piece of paper and started to write.

Dear Astrid.

Thank you for your letter and I just wanted to remind you that I'm not afraid of werewolves. As proof, I will meet you there.

Yours always,

Cassie.

She sat back with a sigh. Now all she had to do was wait until tomorrow.

Cassie woke up just as her mom started cooking breakfast, and the smell of pancakes was so strong and irresistible that she could do nothing more than walk out of bed and down the hall as if she were in a trance. And in a way, she was.

Sitting herself down at their old wooden table, she noticed her mom was wearing a dress, something that she almost never did, and she never wore a bright yellow dress.

Her mom turned towards her, smiling and showing off all of her teeth.

Cassie stared at her, her mouth open and her mother's smile faded.

"What's wrong dear?" She asked in a kind voice, and not her *I'm trying to be kind but you're making it hard* voice, but an actual kind voice. Something that Cassie hadn't heard in a long time.

"Uhh, it's just..." She stammered, still staring at her mother as she smiled at her.

"Honey? Are you okay?"

"Yeah, um, it's just, well," she took a deep breath. "Why are you wearing that?" She looked up at her mom, afraid she'd start yelling, but instead she laughed.

"Sweetie, have you forgotten that today your father's coming home?" Her mom's smile widened and her eyes shone. "Isn't it great?"

"Wait," Cassie said slowly, unable to believe her ears, "you mean that Dad is coming home today? For real?"

“Yes!” Her mother squealed so loudly that Cassie was sure the neighbours had heard. “Of course, unless he’s been, well, he’s dead, but I’m sure we would’ve gotten a message of some sort if he had died.”

Suddenly Cassie wasn’t sure. “Are you positive that we would’ve gotten a letter?” She asked her mom.

“Yes I’m sure, sweetie.” Her mom placed her hand reassuringly on her back and Cassie gave a little contented sigh.

The dark cloudless night was cold, and the full moon hung just above the mountains in the distance.

A chill ran down Cassie’s back. A full moon was when werewolves transformed.

Oh don’t be an idiot. She told herself. You sound just like Mom.

So she continued. Creeping silently along the old, brick road that led from her house to the village.

Off to one side of her, she could see the silhouettes of a large group of people.

That must be Astrid, she thought, but something was wrong.

She started to run. Sprinting along the road, stumbling here and there, where there were cracks in the road.

And then it hit her. What had been wrong with the letter. How had she not noticed it? The words had been written in blood.

A fear so strong that it made her blood turn cold forced her to stop. But it was too late.

Astrid and Pearl stood before her. Astrid’s eyes glowed in the dark menace, her hands curled into fists. Pearl’s beautiful white hair was all over the place.

Cassie started to back away, but more people came out, hidden the shadows of the building surrounding her.

And then they started to transform.

Astrid's nose lengthened into a snout, and her eyes shrank back into her skull, becoming black and beady. Her body grew hairy and shaggy, her clothes falling off to reveal muscular arms and legs. And then, in the village, all of them began to howl.

Cassie turned, her face full of fear, "Please, Astrid, don't do this. You were my best friend!"

Astrid growled, low and menacing, and Cassie understood. Pearl had been a werewolf when she had bitten Astrid and everyone else.

"Look, Cassie," Astrid said gruffly. "You're going to have to die tonight, or you'll tell everyone we're werewolves."

"But why?" Cassie sobbed, unable to hold her terror back. "We were friends!"

"What do you mean, we were friends? You pushed me away!"

Cassie looked up in surprise, "No, you befriended Pearl and left me!"

"B-but, you left me!" But Astrid was stumbling over her words now, unsure if what she was saying was true anymore.

"Astrid," Cassie murmured softly, "it's okay."

Cassie reached out her arms, Astrid leaned into the embrace and they clung to each other.

Pearl watched on in disgust. "So, Astrid, are we gonna kill her or what?"

"I don't think we should kill her," Astrid spoke softly, still jiggling Cassie.

"But aren't you worried she'll tell everyone we're werewolves?" Pearl asked, taken aback.

“No not really,” Astrid replied.

Pearl sighed and turned towards the other werewolves. “This is what I was afraid of.” She pointed to Cassie and Astrid. “No one can know that we are werewolves!” And then, she sprang.

Cassie turned towards her just as Pearl’s teeth met her neck.

“No!” Cried Astrid, but it was too late. Pearl’s fangs had sunk deep into Cassie’s neck, the light fading from her eyes.

Cassie’s eyes met Astrid’s and she said one last sentence.

“Tell my mom I love her.”

“Okay.” Astrid said, tears running down her cheeks, soaking her fur, “I will.”

And then she slumped to the ground as well, Pearl standing over her, blood gushing out of a deep bite mark at the base of her neck.

“Oh, I don’t think you’ll be telling anyone anything.” She growled at the body.

Alone in a house, a woman in a bright yellow dress was crying, sobbing over two objects she clenched in her hands.

A newspaper clipping and a letter.

Only a small portion of both objects were visible.

The newspaper said:

...body of a 13-year-old girl was found this morning in the...been identified as Casandra Felicity Meadows, daughter...werewolves.

The letter said something different.

We are terribly...Jack Tom Meadows has been killed...

The woman continued to sob as the truth came to light. Both her daughter and her husband would never come home.