

Werewoof

By Norm Cowie

“Beware of Dog.”

Someone had crossed off ‘dog,’ scrawling the word ‘wolf’ in crude letters.

The same person, or perhaps someone else, had scratched off the ‘a,’ replacing it with an ‘e’. So now it now read, “Bewere of Wolf.”

Trug ignored the sign and trotted past the dilapidated house guarding the path to the forest.

The temperature dropped as he crossed the forest’s outermost undergrowth and the noise and bustle of civilization grew muted. His sharp ears could still catch the sounds of humanity behind him, but his attention was on the far more interesting noises and movement of the woods.

He left the path and loped through the underbrush, ducking shrubs and leaping over downed trees. The wind whistled by his ears and the pungent smells of the woods brought a rich array of aromas he’d never encountered. Each scent was its own lavish bouquet, delivered on an olfactory platter that would put the best restaurants to shame.

Suddenly a small creek loomed ahead of him. Without breaking stride, he effortlessly bounded to the other bank.

He felt so free ... kind of like doing the naked romp.

Mostly because he was naked.

Suddenly he spied a certain tree that cried ‘territorial marker.’

He spun to a stop, lifted a leg and shot some liquid on it.

That’s what guys do, right?

Cowie/werewoof

Something chomped him on the leg and he bit at it. He could smell flea but didn't think he got the irritating critter.

Then there was a rustle in the leaves. He whipped around and his ears jumped to attention. His nose twitched, trying to pick up scent. Another new thing for him. He'd never felt his nose twitch, much less been able to see it without crossing his eyes. Weird.

Anyway, it was just the wind.

An errant leaf fluttered from an oak and in joyful abandon he leaped high into the air snatching it in his jaws and crunching it with canine glee.

The only thing that would be better would be if a dog, coyote or a wolf showed up. He imagined sniffing its butt. Oh, what wonders. What bliss! There was so much to be learned about the world if people would only realize that the message is in the butt.

Wait, another tree. It must be marked! He spit out the leaf, lifted his leg again and squirted a bit of juice on it.

Suddenly something broke from cover and darted through a bush.

He couldn't see it very well, but his nose immediately put a name to the object.

A rabbit.

Trug's golden eyes went wide and he thundered after it.

Chapter One

The vampire-trainee frowned in concentration and shifted his hands behind the girl's neck. He opened his mouth and ...

Cowie/werewoof

Got slapped on the back of the head.

“Idiot! It’s not a hunk of rawhide. You’ll bruise it if you just masticate it.”

“Masticate?”

“Chew, you moron. What do they teach you in schools, nowadays? Anyway, you must treat it like a very ripe fruit. Just let your fang slide into the jugular and let the fluid flow to you. We are not savages ... like werewolves.” The last words were snarled.

The newly Undead obediently lowered his head to the exposed white neck. As he approached the juicy, throbbing vein, a pool of drool leaked from his mouth onto the pearl skin. He braced himself for another head slap.

Instead, the captive girl began weakly struggling.

“You’re losing her,” the Master said. “Get your glamour back.”

“My what?”

Another slap, “Your glamour!”

“Oh, that hypnotizing thingy?”

The old vampire sighed. “Yes, that ‘hypnotizing thingy.’”

He thought ruefully that young vampires were like green belts in karate. They have the talent, but their lack of control made them dangerous.

The young vampire leaned over the girl’s face and stared into her eyes. The void of his black eyes seemed to draw the blue from her eyes like a mini-black hole, and her lids drooped as she relaxed again.

“Very good, young cub, now back to the feeding.”

Excitement mounting, the young vampire leaned in at an angle that popped his neck vertebra. As his lips gently kissed the young girl’s velvet skin, sharp white fangs grew to nasty

lethality and slid into her neck. Suddenly one of her hands shot out, slammed into his face and she bolted upright.

“Jerk! We’re just practicing! You aren’t supposed to really bite!”

“I’m sorr-rry,” he stammered.

Winifred smoothed her dress, “Do you know how hard it was to make my blood pump like a normal human!”

“I said I was sorry,” the vampire wouldn’t meet her eyes.

She turned to the old vampire, while peeling the blue contact lenses from her eyes, “Seriously, if your little boys can’t control themselves, you can just find yourself another ‘victim.’”

With an athletic move that would have earned her at least a bronze in the Olympics, she vaulted to her feet and stormed out of the room with a walk that somehow managed to combine predator and sexiness in delicious amounts.

The Master and his protégé were mesmerized by her swaying departure. They might be dead, but they were still guys.

She went into a room and the door slammed behind her.

The two vampires stared at the spot, imprinting the memory. Hey, I said they were guys!

After the moment was exhausted, the Master held out a banana.

“What’s that?” the young vampire asked.

“A banana. You will practice on this.”

“Aw! That’s gross. You know I can’t eat normal food anymore.”

“The better to make sure you are careful in your lessons, young cub. Try not to bruise it.”

Cowie/werewoof

With that, the Master vampire faded to mist.

The young vampire grimaced at the banana which mocked him yellowingly.

“Fine,” he grouched, and let his fangs come out.

The banana cringed in fear.

Ha, no it didn’t.

Chapter Three

There are reasons butterflies and rabbits move erratically. Each of them spends much of its life trying to avoid something that wants to eat it.

Nevin the rabbit raced under low hanging branches and vaulted over stumps, juking right and left, double-juking, triple-juking, his eyes bulging with fear. His respiration would have rivaled a hummingbird on caffeine.

Behind it a huge wolf-like shape bounded in pursuit, bushy tail compensating on the turns.

Nevin hadn’t been chased like this since the janitor at the community pool caught him peeking in the girl’s locker room. He still suspected half of the janitor’s anger was because Nevin was butting in on the janitor’s own favorite pastime.

If there hadn’t been a big dog ravening on his butt, Nevin probably would be trying to figure out why he was a rabbit, and what he was doing in these woods. But with hot savage panting on his cotton tail, all Nevin could think of was to run as fast as his four legs could take him.

His eyesight and hearing were remarkable and though they were moving at an amazing pace, Nevin felt in command of his wild gyrating through the woods. Even as he bounced left

and right, he searched for a nice safe little hidey-hole to scamper into.

There was a rocky hill ahead with loose shale, and Nevin scampered through it with the alacrity of ... well ... a rabbit.

If he had been a Happy Bunny, he would have enjoyed some mirth at the panicked scrabbling sound of the wolf losing its footing in the shale, but he was too busy looking for an escape route.

He zipped over the top of the hill, and beheld something that normally would cause him dismay.

High school.

Now though, it was the perfect refuge. He knew its nooks and crannies as well as any student ...

... student ... huh ... but he's a rabbit.

He shook his head in confusion and got back to the business of avoiding becoming Kibbles and Bits.

The sound of a wolf chuffing up the shale behind him was a timely reminder of his plight.

Without further thought, he scampered down the hill.

Unfortunately, while his light frame made him a better climber than the wolf, the wolf's bulk and longer legs aided it on downhill sprints.

A looming shadow was the only warning Nevin received. Fortunately, it was the only one he needed. With finely honed rabbit reflexes, he darted to the right without loss of speed, and was rewarded by the buffet of the wolf blowing right past. The wolf snarled in frustration as it tried to halt its forward momentum.

Nevin angled downhill, trying to avoid letting gravity and momentum aid his pursuer. He

risked a glance and saw the wolf was back in full chase. Perversely, Nevin slowed, letting the wolf close.

A wide dog smile grew across the wolf's face when he saw his prey slowing. A wolf can outrun deer if given enough terrain, and the rabbit was obviously tiring.

Nevin was in fact getting winded. His path was diagonal to the building he had selected for his escape route. It was the gymnasium door, left open on this sunny day to let the smell of sweat socks blow out of the doors. Nevin knew his way around the gym.

The wolf pounded closer and Nevin slowed even more.

Suddenly, Nevin stopped and turned, raising onto his haunches. His furry chest heaved as tiny lungs pumped air furiously. He twitched his nose at the onrushing wolf and his whiskers whirled. The gym door yawned only about twenty yards away, but Nevin could see there was no way he could beat the wolf to it.

With a look of triumph, the wolf raced towards him, intent on snatching him in his long jaws.

There are very few animals with the zero to full speed acceleration of a rabbit, and Nevin used every bit of this gift.

Like a little furry heat seeking missile, he zipped directly at the wolf.

At the sight of its prey running at it, the wolf skidded to a stop in stunned amazement. Then its jaws could only snap helplessly as the rabbit dipped left and cut behind him like an All-Pro halfback. The wolf spun around in confusion as Nevin sprinted ... well ... hopped ... towards the gymnasium door. Before the wolf could recover, Nevin was inside.

Nevin tore through the gym, his tiny claws clicking on the parquet floor. He cocked a long ear and could hear the wolf thunder into the building.

Cowie/werewoof

When he saw Nevin, the wolf veered sharply, his golden eyes gleaming hotly in the empty room.

Nevin saw the room he wanted and bolted towards it. He could read the sign and if the wolf hadn't been chasing him, he might have pondered the fact that a rabbit could read English. Or anything for that matter.

But this was an opportunity he couldn't ignore.

The girl's locker room.

Naked girls.

With his little brain clouded with visions of nudity, he didn't notice the wolf had taken a more direct route, and would intercept him before he made it to the room.

Fortunately, he was saved by the janitor.

Just before the wolf would have taken his head off, Nevin's finely honed prey instincts kicked into gear and he zigged while the wolf zagged. The wolf overshot and tried to stop on a floor that had just been cleaned, polished and shined by a janitor who took his job seriously.

If it hadn't been for fur, the wolf would have had rug burns down his entire flank. As it was, he skidded for twenty feet, claws scratching frantically.

Nevin somehow kept his balance and bounded into the locker room - eyes on both sides of his head - another weird thing - on the lookout for a wonderfully curvy naked female human form. Again, he managed to ignore the fact that he was of an entirely different species.

No one. The locker room was deserted.

He blew out a rabbit sigh of disappointment just as the wolf lurched into the locker room.

Nevin whipped around and headed through the showers towards the other door. As he came around the corner of the lockers he sucked in the heady aroma of perfume and other girly

Cowie/werewoof

scents... but wait ... no time, no time! Must run!

He looked at the door going to the hallways.

Locked!

Well, maybe not locked. But it was closed, and he was way too short to reach the doorknob. That and the lack of opposable thumbs would defeat any attempts to unlock a door.

He was trapped.

The wolf's feet clicked on the tile floor and Nevin hoped that the wolf was dumb enough to be fooled again.

Nevin bounded around the locker and encountered the wolf just as he was going through the shower. Water puddled on the floor from the end of the last class or athletic event. As Nevin rushed towards the hunter, the wolf stopped, braced both feet, and readied himself to gobble up a rabbit tidbit if he tried to trick it again.

This wolf wasn't dumb.

Crap.

At the last moment, Nevin tried to change his direction, but the tiles were too slick. He slipped onto his side and went into an uncontrolled slide. So instead of running into ready jaws, he slid sideways under a very surprised wolf who just managed to nip off a bit of rabbit tail.

Nevin scrambled to his feet and ran back towards the exit.

This time, he ran for the boy's locker room, the wolf snapping at his heels.

Nevin had an escape route planned, but he hadn't counted on closed doors. Strangely, until this moment, the question whether a door was open or closed hadn't seemed like much of an obstacle.

The Coach's office was closed. Nevin spared a moment for a rabbit curse. Then he

dipped around a cart of basketballs and hopped towards the showers. The wolf was done being subtle and it simply crashed through the cart, scattering Spaulding balls which bounced errantly all over the room.

The balls were bigger than Nevin, so he couldn't risk getting hit by one. Zipping through and around the bounding balls, he headed towards the locker room conference officials used when officiating basketball and volleyball games. He sprinted into the room, only to find there was no exit.

There was only one hiding place. A pile of dirty, smelly, sweat stained clothes.

The choice? Hide in the laundry and hope the stinky boy smell was so foul it would defeat the olfactory senses of a wolf?

Or?

He looked back at the laundry. A yellowish jock strap beckoned him with demon glee. From the open doorway, he could hear the sounds of an irritated wolf tripping over basketballs. He looked back at the laundry, and made his decision.

The wolf rounded the corner, panting with frustration. Its long wicked fangs gleamed yellow in the dim light.

Nevin the rabbit attacked.

I hope you enjoyed this sneak preview of Werewoof. Unfortunately, this is all you can see for now, cuz it's not published yet. The good news is Werewoof is the sequel to the humor vampire YA novel Fang Face, so get yourself over to www.fangface.homestead.com and check it out.

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