

Unwerethy

The child had been born pink with only a small patch of black hair on his head. When he first opened his blue eyes and looked up into the face of his parents, the look of trust took their breath away. Despite the child's obvious deformity, his mother and father fell instantly in love with their new son, like any parents would.

Now they were running through the forest at night, his father cradling the small infant in his arms only three days after he had been born.

They had known from the start it would be hopeless, trying to hide the sick child from the rest of the village. But the midwife had sworn she would not say a word. Perhaps she had revealed their secret information in an intimate moment of weakness with her husband. Or perhaps someone spotted the child through a slit in the shutters of the small, wooden house as the firelight had seeped out into the dark night, deep within the woods where the village was located.

Likely they would never know how it had happened. The fact simply remained that it had.

The parents stopped running for a few moments, not with any expectation of sleep but simply to catch their breath. They needed to stay ahead of their pursuers who were surely gaining ground. Those chasing them were trained in tracking and the hunt; it was the role they played in the small village, hunting for the rest of the group. The child's parents were simple folk: his mother a seamstress and his father a tanner. They had never needed to learn or even imagine how to evade justice. They were simply a frightened mother and father trying to save the life of their child.

The father looked down into his child's face. Somehow the infant managed to sleep despite the race. The baby would need to eat soon, though. His small face was so pink, only that small patch of hair. How odd.

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He listened to his wife's breathing. It was rapid and shallow. She could not keep it up much longer. His thoughts drifted back to the night before, when the village enforcers had pounded on the door demanding the child be handed over. Light from their torches created a pattern of parallel lines on the floor of the dark cottage where it shown through the boards making up the rough door. The father and mother had slipped out through a window in the rear of the house with the small child in their arms and headed into the woods. They had been running ever since, a day and a night without looking back.

Overhead the clouds drifted lazily across the sky. A break in the low-hanging gray mass slowly slipped past the moon. It was full. Streams of silver light washed over the forest.

A howl blasted through the night. Their hunters were closing the distance. It would only be a matter of time before they were caught.

The child's father looked over to his wife. In the moonlight he could see her long, brown hair. It was dirty and hung off her in wet clumps. Still he thought she looked beautiful, even with her paws full of mud and pine needles tangled in her long tail.

Another howl echoed through the woods. He looked up into the full moon and howled his own challenge back. What would become of this child? Stories of human children being born in distant villages had been told to scare the pups but never had one been seen. They were more myth than fact. If this one lived, his presence threatened the very existence of the village. Had they really all been human once?

Perhaps they would never know. The tired couple climbed to their feet and set off once more through the dark wood. The pack of werewolves from the village would surely catch them before dawn.