

To Cry Wolf

Under grey skies and silver clouds, a cold autumn breeze left the mountain tops, flowing over the misty meadows below, and the plateaus above. The grass was left a dark green, washed down by the rain that remained still in the air, hovering overhead. Down the rocky mountain slopes lied a ruin, the ruin of Falgrey, a place that used to be a holy site, a place of worship, now neglected and left to the sands of time. The perfect hideout for the man they fought. A sorcerer obsessed with power, as was not uncommon. The everlasting lust for knowledge and arcane power had driven this man to new depths, having completed a sacrificial ritual to summon some kind of forgotten god. Of course, this sorcerer's initially personal intentions had grown into a public menace as necromancy became a staple for the ritual.

Hunter had charged the man, now trying to force him into a corner while dodging all kinds of volatile spells. The grunts under his breath left his lips as his dark hair covered part of his face, wet not so much from the sweat, but more so from the fog that loomed over the ruin. Terrowin, an elven cleric would cast spell after spell in an attempt to catch the sorcerer with one. Yet the sorcerer was agile, and they had been at this for a few minutes now. Eventually, however, there was only so much dodging that a man could do. The sorcerer was hit by one of Terrowin's spells in a stinging flash, caught with his guard down by Hunter's blade, as it cleaved into the side of the man's ribcage, leaving him sputtering up blood on the ground once Hunter retracted his weapon. The warrior placed his weapon back in the scabbard on his hip, as the cleric approached the two of them. "Now that was not so bad. Almost felt like a challenge," Terrowin spoke cockily as he looked at the dying sorcerer. Hunter let out another quiet grunt. "It is already done, it has been summoned," the sorcerer spoke, followed by a soft cackle as the room started to light up. A bright green light illuminated the walls and the altar on which a mutilated body could be found. The source dashed towards them from the other side of the room, and the sorcerer was about to welcome it with open arms, but it was not him that it struck. It hit Hunter on the back, making him gasp sharply, coughing as the air left his lungs. "No!" The sorcerer's final word sounded before he died to blood loss, his voice tainted by the pain.

The cleric took a step back when he saw the warrior get hit by the light. Hunter remained hunched over for another moment or two, before regaining his breath and straightening his back. He coughed a bit more before speaking up. "What in the name of the gods was that?!" He called out right away, his voice rough with saliva. "You appear to have been hit by the power this fellow here on the floor intended to summon," the cleric spoke smugly, "yet it did not feel like as much of an almighty force as this man proclaimed." The effects of it, however, would soon become clear, when Hunter let out a low growl in discomfort, rubbing his eyes before meeting Terrowin's gaze. The cleric's eyes widened slightly, and he took another step back. "What is it?" Hunter asked promptly as he tried to regain his stamina. "Oh, nothing really, it is just that you appear to have contracted some kind of... Condition," Terrowin replied, his white hair flowing softly in the air as the wind picked up more and more. "What kind of condition?" Hunter's next question sounded. "That is a riddle for later, we should get out of here before this storm gets any worse. Come on," Terrowin beckoned, moving back towards the staircase that would lead them out of that place. Soon enough, they would find themselves back on the way down the mountain slopes, as Hunter slowly picked up more pace, as that stinging feeling in his chest subsided with time. The wind took clouds of powdered snow down the rocky surface of the mountain slope, leaving white, watery dust in Hunter's relatively long and messy hair, leaving him to shiver just slightly in the cold. And as they passed down, they passed through the mist, the cloud that had settled around the mountain peaks. And as they got below that blanket, it immediately started getting warmer. And as the sting left his heart, Hunter started to feel an uneasy warmth in his chest. Perhaps the cleric already knew what had just happened, but he chose to ignore it, to avoid the hassle as well as to spare Hunter's temper. Terrowin knew perfectly well that his warrior companion would not think twice, before going into a shock-fuelled frenzy to find a cure.

The two travelled in silence, as Hunter tried to figure out from the way he felt what force had entered him. He felt a seething anger, deep down, a shallow flame that could grow with the release of any volition. Hunter suppressed that ember for now, refusing to foster it. Perhaps deep down he had already realised what was wrong. Something within the very essence of his being had just changed. He could feel it altering the way he thought, the way he perceived his surroundings. Right now, though, his will was strong enough to keep it all deep down, in that fiery pit in his chest, where the flame would remain contained for the remainder of the journey back. It was time to collect the reward for the threat they had just eliminated, and Hunter could use a drink.

So, they continued to descend for another hour or two, soon passing into a valley that lied below. Fields of bright green grass, with sky-blue flowers dotted about. A glistening stream of crystal clear water ran down the side of the mountain, coming from between the rocks, a reservoir of fresh spring water that never ceased to give. Now that they had gotten out of the grim-skied mountain ranges, the valley surprised them with blue skies and few clouds, a sun that shone down brightly. The sunlight did mean another thing for the elven cleric though, as he pulled a dark blue hood over his head, covering his pale hair and skin, to shield it from the light above. Hunter had grown used to Terrowin doing this. He had suspicions before about the elf's blood, but elected to simply ignore it, when Terrowin assured him that it was just because of his heavy disdain of sunlight, not because of any vampiric tendencies. Now when Hunter and Terrowin split up to pass the time in a village or city, to unwind, Terrowin could be found in the woods, hunting prey for such reasons as stated before. Hunter never did notice, and Terrowin kept his nature hidden from sight a while longer. Hunter did not truly want to know either, despite the cleric's questionable attitude at times, Terrowin always had Hunter's back, and the warrior was prepared to return that service, with or without vampirism.

The duo soon reached the lower parts of the valleys, where, by the stream of spring water, a small town was located. Old and independent this village stood, a common meeting point for travellers and journeying merchants, but not much more. The valley also was no position of great strategic value, which strengthened the valley's freedom and safety even more. And in the middle of the town, by the grey-bricked town square, with a water well in the centre of said square, an inn stood. Terrowin and Hunter did not think twice to enter, opening the hard-wooden door with a metal lock now left unbuckled, the creaking sounding only vaguely as they continued on into the building. The lower floor of the inn consisted of a tavern area, dimly lit by candles, lanterns, and a chandelier in the middle, hanging from the ceiling by the side of an upper railing that would serve as a walkway to the bedrooms upstairs. Twelve tables the place counted, some with four stools, others with less, the result of the endless moving of seats by groups that were too big to fit the four-stool maximum. The place was cosy to say the least, named 'The Hidden Veil', referring to the way the village used to be hidden from public eye entirely. Even now, not many knew of its existence outside of adventurer and merchant guilds. The locals liked to keep it that way, at least for now. They farmed their own food, harvested their own resources, and collected their own water. There was no true need for them to seek connections with the outside world.

Terrowin and Hunter walked up to the counter, where the innkeeper greeted them. "You returned! The sorcerer was not too much trouble after all," the innkeeper happily stated. "Indeed not, he proved to not be so powerful after all," Terrowin proclaimed proudly with a touch of arrogance. "He bit the dust. It is done," Hunter added, his voice just slightly deeper than it normally would be. The innkeeper nodded, his eyes lingering for just a moment on Hunter's gaze. "Right, right, well, I am sure that you are looking for this," the innkeeper handed them a pouch with golden coins, "the agreed amount. Try not to spend it all in one place." Hunter let out a low, gravely chuckle, nodding. "Let us at least spend some of it here, I need a drink," the warrior spoke to which Terrowin agreed, "yes, a drink would be good." "The usual then?"

Soon enough, they found themselves sitting at one of the tables, Hunter taking this time to rest and clean his blade, while Terrowin casually looked around at the others in the tavern area, some greedily downing an entire mug in just over a second, while others contently took a swig and set it down before them. Most of the people there were human, but there were also plenty of Tieflings and elves to be spotted. "So, want to talk about that thing that hit me in that ruin?" Hunter asked softly, lowering his voice to keep those words from other ears. "Hm what makes you think that I know?" Terrowin responded as he leaned back a bit on his seat, taking another sip of his drink as well. "Come on, you know plenty about all this magic stuff, and you saw something when you looked at me back there. What changed?" Hunter insisted. Terrowin sighed and rubbed his brow for a second before responding. "Well, you got in the way of whatever force that sorcerer was trying to summon, and that power entered you. Now it takes some knowledge to figure out what it is, but I am pretty certain about it," the cleric explained. "So, what is it?" "Do you want the pleasant or the honest version?" "I want the version where you tell me what is going on." "Lycanthropy," Terrowin finally answered the question. Hunter's eyes widened at the confirmation of his instinct. "What?" He asked in disbelief. "Lycanthropy, you know, where you get all wild and stuff during a full moon." "I know what it is," Hunter growled at the other, that increased aggression already showing now. "So how do we cure it?" The warrior then asked. Terrowin smirked a bit, "I am glad you asked. I, naturally, know a way," the cleric stated. "Somehow I doubt that it is as easy as you make it sound," Hunter muttered. "Very true, but I can do it. I just need an... ingredient." "Since when do you work with alchemy?" "Not that kind of ingredient. I need an artefact," Terrowin concluded. Hunter shrugged his shoulders a bit. "Whatever it takes to get rid of this curse," he proclaimed. Somehow, Terrowin doubted that it would be that simple of a choice. "How do we find this artefact?" The warrior then asked, ready to get it all out of his system. "It is hidden in some kind of tomb, and I do not remember its location, regrettably," the cleric replied. Hunter was about to speak up with slight panic, but Terrowin stopped him, "but before you say anything, I know someone who knows where it is. We just have to find him. And tonight is, in fact, the perfect time to do so." Hunter sighed. "Alright, we go tonight then." "As you wish."

The two would finish their drinks in relative silence, but Hunter could not stop thinking about all of it, paranoid, and slightly panicked, he felt like he would tear his ribcage open and pull it all out himself if Terrowin failed to cure him. His honour and pride as a warrior forbid him to something such as lycanthropy, such a cursed and tainted ailment. To some it could have been a blessing, but no, not to Hunter. Later that night, they would head back outside, Terrowin now having removed his hood again, as the blue light of the moon was the only light that remained. The cleric beckoned as he started to show the way, moving down the town's main road, back onto the field soon after. "So where are we going?" Hunter asked, looking around at the fields and the cloudy sky up above, with the pale moonlight only barely escaping it. "There is a ritual site further up north, it is only a short walk," Terrowin replied, not truly soothing the other's nerves with that answer. "That does not sound very reassuring, in the dead of night," the warrior muttered under his breath. "There are worse things than darkness, especially in your case now," Terrowin taunted, the situation not stopping him from having that smirk vaguely present on his face. The rest of the way there, they walked in silence. And there, at the end of the trail they followed, there stood a circle of strange obelisks, and a stone altar in the middle. The altar was bloodstained, and Hunter could smell the crimson on the wind. "Where have you taken us, Terrowin?" Hunter asked with a soft growl under his breath, he could taste the blood on his tongue, and he could feel an inner wolf howling for more. "Just bear with me, okay? I know what I am doing," the cleric replied with confidence, perhaps bravado. As they approached the sacrificial site of worship, there was a presence in the air. Something was watching them. Terrowin whispered a spell, a call, to the skies. And soon enough, from behind one of the pillars, a being shrouded in a dark cloak stepped out, now standing in front of the two. A shadow in the pale moonlight, its face invisible in the darkness, as it stood still, stoically, waiting for someone else to make the first move. Hunter moved his hand onto the hilt of his blade, but Terrowin tapped his hand with a face that said 'let me handle this'. Hunter grunted under his breath and took a step back.

“We seek guidance. And I know that you can provide the kind we need,” the cleric spoke to the figure. The figure spoke in return, its voice almost like a hiss, a taunting pitch, consumed by something otherworldly. “Guidance has a price, elf. You and your human friend have to prove yourselves. A trial by fire, to speak. Defend yourself,” the being’s only words of warning sounded, as the wind picked up again. Hunter’s hair blew up in the wind, and the pale strands on Terrowin’s head picked up as well, a distant howl, but this time not Hunter’s. Soon enough they were surrounded by almost alien creatures. Lycanthropes of many shapes and sizes, all feral, completely out of their minds. Werewolves, wererats, werewolves even. “Terrowin!” Hunter spit out under his breath, before drawing his blade. “It is a game we will have to play, Hunter. Defend yourself!”

The first one to charge at them was a werewolf, standing on its hind legs, the beast ran at them, claws raised and maw wide open, Hunter readied his sword, managing to swing in time to deflect the attack. Terrowin was the next target, as he was charged down by another werewolf. The cleric used a spell to defend himself, slinging the lycanthrope over their heads, hitting one of the obelisks behind them. Then there was no more time to organise, as the rest charged all at once. The first few attacks were deflected, but then hits started to be dealt. Hunter was grazed by a claw over his lower arm, leaving a rough, bleeding cut in his flesh. He growled in pain as Terrowin was scratched across the face. Soon enough, they were both driven back to back. The sight of the blood on his arm mesmerised Hunter for a moment. The growl under his breath grew deeper and sharper, before boiling up in a nearly inhuman roar. He could feel the fire in his chest growing ignite into a raging blaze, leaving a glint in his eyes, before he dropped to his hands and knees. His skin started to shift and peel, his limbs stretching and reforming, his hair growing, expanding, until all that remained of the warrior was a sword on the ground, and a wolf with hide black as the night. A howl into the night sky followed, as the full moon was revealed up above, and the clouds subsided. The oversized wolf charged a wererat down, jumping at its throat and pinning it against the ground, before tearing flesh from bone. A soft cackle could be heard from the cloaked being, as the other lycanthropes stood back for just a moment, surprised, before charging once more. Now that Hunter and the others met on even footing, that inferno in his heart burned even brighter, converting that roaring heat into strength and power.

Another creature joined the fray, a werewolf, lunging its supersized claw at Terrowin, who could easily dodge the first attack. Yet the werewolf was wild, unrelenting, feral, pushing further up and swinging strike after strike, in a frenzy, trying to hit the cleric. When the cleric was cornered, that smirk on his face turned into a frown. He knew what he had to do, but he was afraid of the consequences. Not necessarily scared of losing control, but more so of sparking something in others that he could not so easily revert. Either way, he had no choice. He revealed two fangs behind his lips, as the façade fell, the mask he had worn for so long. His eyes turned a vibrant yellow for a moment, and he lunged at the werewolf with a force unseen from him before, the reason of his reluctance to engage in melee combat. The werewolf was pushed back, a cloud of dust and low fog rising up from the ground as the cleric waited for the lycanthrope to attack again. With ferocity untold, the beast charged again, no mind left in the desperate brain of it. Terrowin used his newfound speed to easily dodge the attack, unsheathing a blade from his hip, and striking at the beast, leaving a cut deep enough to strike its organs, in the flesh and hide of the bear. The lycanthrope roared in pain, giving Terrowin the opportunity to briefly dash back, take a sprint back forward and dropkicking the beast into an obelisk, breaking its neck upon impact. The cleric then joined his companion in slaying the remainder of the lycanthropes. Perhaps part of Terrowin considered there to be hope for them, but that hope was far to be seen as they saw the rage in their eyes. Another ten minutes later, they were the only two left standing, besides the cloaked being. That dark shadow appeared to drift in the wind, as the fog between their feet subsided, and the heat of battle retreated into the sky. The wolf that was Hunter, stumbled a bit across the bodies, wounded himself, just as Terrowin was. No mortal injuries, but enough to hurt. The wolf soon came to a natural place of rest, dropping down onto the stone slabs around the altar, and shifting back. A more human form returned to the man’s physique, as if there had never been another wolf there. Terrowin composed himself and returned the mask to his face.

“You handled yourself better than I expected,” the entity admitted at the display of the corpses. Hunter grunted and groaned, his hair like a curtain in front of his face, dripping with sweat. “You promised us something in return,” Terrowin stated calmly, knowing that the figure was bound to those words. “I asked for payment in blood, and you delivered. The object you seek is hidden in the place where your bestial journey started. The entrance is hidden, but present, nonetheless. Draw beast blood upon entering the ruins of Falgrey, and the way in shall be revealed to you,” the figure explained, before turning around. “Go now, while you still have your mind.” The entity faded into the night sky, and the two were left to their own devices again. The cleric sighed and used his powers to heal his injuries in a moment or two, soon doing the same for Hunter. The warrior at first winced a bit at the feeling of his wounds closing, but soon let out a relieved sigh, as the pain was lifted. “Alright, let us get back to that inn and get some rest,” Terrowin suggested. “No, I will not rest until this curse is lifted. You saw what it can do, I will not become headless like them,” Hunter insisted. The cleric sighed and shrugged. “Fine, we will go tonight. Just do not come to me when you start feeling tired.”

And so, they were on their way again, not taking another moment to stand still. Back up the mountain slopes they went once more, the now windless skies clear with star and moonlight. After that change, the moon had no more effect on Hunter, but it was still a grim reminder of what he was now. At first, he had wanted to lift the curse on his soul simply out of disgust, but now much more out of fear. The thought of going feral, losing his mind to it, that scared him. So much so that he would not even take a night to rest. He wanted it gone, now. “So, are we going to talk about your little stunt there?” Hunter suddenly asked, making Terrowin flinch slightly at the breaking of silence. “My little stunt? You were the one that turned into a wolf. Is it already messing with your mind?” Terrowin knew perfectly well what Hunter was talking about, but a part of him was subconsciously trying to hide it anyway. His vampirism was not something that he was proud of. It was a stain on his conscience, and a reminder of the imperfections in him. The way he could not stand moonlight, and the way he had to drink animal blood. It told him just how flawed he was, yet there was nothing he could do about it. He had tried, so long ago, and was forced to learn and live with it. Back at the aftermath of the lycanthrope fight, he had drunk some of their blood, to satiate his thirst for another while. “You are a vampire. You never told me,” Hunter then spoke, bluntly, his voice neutrally stating the elephant in the room. Terrowin scoffed a bit. “It was just-.” “Do you not trust me?” That question took the cleric off-guard. No, that was not the reason of it. Was it? Perhaps Terrowin did not truly know. “Of course, I trust you, we have been doing this for so long, I was just-.” “Scared?” Terrowin fell silent, but kept walking, followed by Hunter, who then put a hand on his shoulder and stopped the cleric in his tracks. A little heart-to-heart was what they would have. “It is okay to be afraid. I am afraid. This curse scares me, Terro.” “As it should.” “Then tell me, why did you not tell me?” Terrowin shrugged, his eyes still on the snow now under their feet. “Hey.” Hunter shook him back and forth a bit, making the elf lift his gaze to meet his own. “Talk to me.” The cleric sighed; this was a hard thing for him to do. “I was scared, okay? I was afraid that you would not want to work with me again. I was scared that you would call the guard on me. I was scared that I would not be able to control it.” “We are in this together, Terro. You and I, we do all this together, right? It is okay to be afraid. It is okay to lose control sometimes. Nobody is truly perfect, even if you try to be.” For a moment, a tear rolled down the elf’s cheek, but he soon wiped it away, not allowing himself to cry over it. He had just been hiding these emotions, these fears, for so long, that everything just hit him at once. Hunter pulled the cleric into a hug, showing him that he would not be the one to leave him behind.

It would take them a few more moments to get back on the road, continuing up the mountain pass, with the ruins in the near distance. Now that all of that cropped up emotion had left Terrowin’s chest, he could walk a bit lighter. And knowing that there was one less dark secret between them, made Hunter a bit more confident about it all. They could take this, they always could. The snow started to fall into their heads again, less visible in the elf’s head than it was in the human’s darker hair. The wind picked up again as they met the summit, the moon lowering in the sky. “We should hurry, I am not sure if all this is bound to the night or not,” Terrowin stated, causing them to speed up a bit.

Soon enough, they found themselves back in the ruins of Falgrey. It was hard to believe that the place where all this started, was also the place where it would end again. It had only been one day, but it felt like ages. And something inside Hunter's heart started to turn a bit, and questions started to arise, questions that he was not ready to answer just yet. The shadowy and ancient pillars of the abandoned temple loomed over them, as they approached the back wall, where it was time to find the entrance. Terrowin turned his gaze to meet Hunter, who nodded in return. He drew a dagger from his hips and created a cut in his hand, squeezing with a soft grunt, watching the crimson fluid hit the floor. As soon as rumbling was heard and felt, the cleric would cast a quick spell to heal the cut on Hunter's hand, for what it was worth. A secret entrance opened in the back wall, bricks shifting and pillars rolling to the side, as a staircase was revealed, down into the depths of the mountain. The duo did not hesitate to start moving down said staircase, not wanting to spend another moment outside right now. It was time to get this over with. They would descend into the darkness, as the cleric summoned an orb of light, to illuminate the way forward. And they walked and walked, descending further and further into the depths, until they found themselves in a round, open hall. At first, Terrowin halted at the entrance of the room, intending to first cast his light across the torches that remained scattered around the walls, but those ignited on their own, filling the room with a warm orange light. In the middle of the room, was an altar. In fact, it was the exact same as the one with the obelisks, outside. In the floor was engraved a symbol, a deer skull. Behind the altar stood a familiar sight, that same dark being as before, from that same altar. It stood there; its bony hands placed on the altar in front of it. There was no more man about that creature, having descended into the same thick darkness that it was now shrouded in. "You came," the being spoke, its voice echoing between the nearly empty walls, the flames responding by flickering for just a moment. "Then you are familiar with what we seek," Hunter concluded from that statement. "You seek a way to lift the curse, just like I once did. We appear to be at an impasse. This tome holds the secrets, but you will need to pass one more trial, in order to gain it." The being's voice was sharp, like a hiss, as it bounced around the room. "If we must," Terrowin spoke briefly, as the both of them readied their weapons. "But no more facades. We will face each other on equal footing. No more secrets," the creature hissed, shedding its cloak. Some kind of skeletal creature, an undead being that hovered just a few centimetres above the ground, eerily steady as it did, hanging still. The two travellers felt a stinging pain in their heads, and Terrowin's mask was dropped.

His fangs were revealed, and his eyes turned a violent bright yellow again. Hunter groaned and fell to his hands and knees, as he shifted again. As soon as both of them had been adjusted to these conditions, the undead being screeched, a deafening, wailing sound, as it filled their heads, making them both step back, wincing. And the entity would cast a spell, a flash of light striking them both, injuring Terrowin's very spirit, but doing nothing but periodically disorient Hunter, who had taken the time the being took to recover to charge him down, striking at its arm, which remained stretched out in front of it. Now that the entity was occupied, Terrowin recovered with a hiss under his breath, before sprinting at the creature with insane speed, punching it into the wall. The entity, however, faded, and blinked to the other side of the room, casting another spell. This time, a fireball, striking Hunter, who was caught off-guard. Terrowin tried to cast a spell to heal his friend, but his vampirism stopped him from calling upon that kind of power. He dropped his hands in defeat, recognising the limits, and bowing his head in shame for a moment. Then he recalled the warrior's words. *It is okay to be afraid.* Terrowin then readied a spell again, this time perfecting his stance and the power that he gathered within himself, casting a healing incantation more powerful than he had ever been able to cast. The searing wolf hide of Hunter was healed back to normal in an instant. The smirk on the entity's face could be seen fading, a smile that it had worn ever since the dropping of its cloak. Then, the wolf and the vampire both charged the being down in the confusion. Terrowin drew a blade, and hunter showed his teeth. The cleric hit the being right between the ribs, or what was left of them, and Hunter caught it by the throat, pinning it to the ground, and breaking its flight. Another deafening scream could be heard, with a series of desperate cries. "No, no, no, no! NO!" The final sound of a soul shattering was

so loud and disorienting that it knocked both Terrowin and Hunter out on the spot, leaving nothing but the dark to linger in that room.

When the darkness finally faded, and the light started to settle again behind Hunter's eyes, he was back to his human form. His eyes fluttered open, revealing Terrowin, with his fangs retreated back into his jaw, and his eyes returned to normal. The room was now lit with a paler light, moonlight. "Are you okay?" The cleric asked with a concerned look on his face, something that Hunter had never seen before, not from this close. Hunter chuckled a bit as he rubbed his head. "Yeah, I am alright." "I healed your wounds, but you should be a bit sore." "Is it done? Am I-?" "Normal? No, not quite. You remain a werewolf, but the tome is now in our possession."

It would take a moment for Terrowin to help the heavier Hunter to his feet. The warrior looked to the ground, spotting a pile of ash where the entity had died. His gaze then turned to the ceiling above, which was no longer present. Rubble had filled the room, leaving the moon to rest her gaze upon the altar, where the tome remained. The warrior and the cleric walked up to the altar, and the cleric opened the book. Together they would read the texts that described a cure for lycanthropy. Hunter's eyes widened as he read the chapter. It explained gruesome and almost alien methods of medication. *To sacrifice five men and a goat, burn a boar alive, taste the blood of men, and finally, to get bitten by one carrying the blood of the beast.* "Well, I am willing to help," the elf spoke under his breath, a bit dumbfounded by this discovery, but hunter shook his head. "No," he stated simply, closing the book, and placing it back on the middle of the tome. "It is not worth it." The two of them looked to the pile of ash, as the wind blew over it, revealing a human body, mangled, with one eye missing, burn wounds all over, and bite marks in the neck, of a form that had once been a man. "I thought that this curse made me a monster. But to become a monster does not simply happen. If I have to lose my sanity and possibly my life just to have a shot at this, then it is not worth it," Hunter concluded.

Terrowin nodded in agreement. "So, what now?" The elf's question sounded. "Let us go get some rest." The two of them would soon climb the stairs back up to the summit, leaving the sacrificial ruins of Falgrey behind forever, along with the mangled corpse of what had once been a man. Not long after, they both stood at the edge of the ruins, overlooking the valley, with behind it, the sunrise. The golden light rose up from behind the horizon, as the sun spread all of her warmth over the earth and water below. Terrowin watched the light creep up to his boots and lowered the hood over his head again. "You know, it is somewhat comforting to know that I am not alone," the cleric then stated with a soft smile. Not a smirk, but a warm-hearted smile. The two made eye contact for a moment, before hugging briefly, and going back on their way.

To a new plot and back again, a new quest and then again, they left behind a life they thought they knew, and started another where their number of troubles dropped a few.

We fear change, but only when the sacrifices we have to make to go back again outweigh the cost of moving on, do we truly appreciate the things that we have learnt.

The werewolf and the vampire had a great journey ahead of them, with plenty of struggle, and hardship, the greatness of a sage unfolded, and the beckoning light of a better place on the horizon.

No secret is worth keeping if it hurts to keep inside.