My Inner Werewolf

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Chapter One

My Anger

Anger led me to become a monster. A real life monster, in many ways. I have anger issues beyond *issues*. Anger rules my life.

Colleagues avoid me, I have no friends. Anger led to my divorce. I have not seen my daughter for a year, she has a tough time saying “Hello.” Anyone would agree my social life is a disaster. Anger. I stew until suddenly I explode. At the heated moment it feels like I’m being reasonable, not very angry at all.

Looking back, I was a jerk.

I’ve never hit anyone. The rage is emotional. When happening, it’s uncontrollable. I don’t even know. When I feel it loping forward, I can squash it. The warning signs are feeling everything is gray, feeling disoriented, feeling my face grow hot. Suddenly I’m yelling and pounding a desk. It appears to come out of nowhere, never lasts long and after I feel empty. It is not satisfying nor is it satisfied.

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I had to do something. My life was a disaster.

After years of suffering, I was able to create a cure because I am a talented psychoneuromechanic.

It *is* an unusual profession.

For over ten years I've worked in secret military research–on the mind. The minds of their soldiers and ours. The government pays me to develop ways to hurt and change enemy soldiers and keep our own troops protected from similar weapons. That's what they pay me for, but I got into the work for personal reasons. To cure my anger. Over the years, I've learned many ways to influence the mind, leading to my real goal.

My real goal has been to physically bring out my anger, confront it, argue with it and, should that fail, beat it to goddamn death.

I am not speaking metaphorically.

For years I worked on finding a way to physically bring my anger out, to look at it, grip it, control it. Figure it out. When I find my anger I will find myself. Then I will create the self I want to be.

Confront your anger face to face? Impossible?

Obviously, you are not apsychoneuromechanic.

Nor are you familiar with what government research has already produced. (You don't know because it is used in other nations and they aren't our citizens, and that is all you need to know about your not needing to know.)

My resources included the base I worked at and my ex-wife, Madeline, a colleague. The concept and research were mine, creating the actual serum was hers. Pushing her, she created a serum to physically bring out my dark emotions. It's been hard for her. Why did she do this for her ex-husband? She saw it as a way of escaping me.

Her serum, the twentieth version, or the thirtieth?, worked. Used on test animals, it brought out the darkness.

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First, we tried it on a lab rat I named Freddie. The green serum half filled the hypo. Madeline held Freddie while I injected the precious drug into it.

For a moment, nothing.

Freddie shivered, then kind of turned inside out. It was no longer a cute lab rat. Its arms and legs were longer, the claws sharper. Its face narrowed and extended, its jaws growing. It was ugly and angry. We watched it pace its cage relentlessly.

After two hours, we put Freddie in with normal rats, to test social interactions. Before we could stop them, the other rats killed Freddie. They tore him apart, although he fought. They did not want Freddie to live.

For Freddie the experiment had not worked out well. But for me it was perfect. The serum worked!

Looking at Freddie's remains, Madeline said what she'd always said, although this time with far more conviction. "This is a bad idea."

"No, it works."

"Pinetree will find out."

"Not for a while."

"You're on the road to disaster."

"I'm on the road to self-discovery."

I suppose you need an explanation why I was so stupid.

For you to understand, I should tell you everything.

Oh, my name is Mike.

Chapter Two

From Freddie to Me

The secret military research base I work at hides in plain sight. Our cover is *The Social Media Academy.* We have a floorin a downtown mall. Our cover is training

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people to use apps like Twitter. Anyone coming in for the training is turned away. The ‘paying students’ are military in civilian clothing. Everyone else is a scientist or administrator. Behind the classrooms are labs working on experiments to alter the mind and body. It’s a nice mall, shopping is very convenient.

Madeline and I had our own labs—we separated after the divorce. Today we were in her lab—she had the serum—looking at Freddie 2. He was a sweet little chimp. Normal labs were restricted in using chimps. We did what we needed.

We needed more tests.

We gave Freddie 2 his shot. For safety, we first placed him in a small cage. He shivered just as Freddie 1 had, then with a cry I can describe only as anguished he doubled in size. His bigger eyes were bloodshot, deep and angry. His fur was wild, not smooth but standing on edge. His fingers had claws.

The serum had worked. Freddie 2 was no longer a chimp. He had transformed—something inside had come out. He bared his larger fangs, glared with his larger eyes and lunged. The bars of the cage rattled, the table shook.

We took videos.

We went to our separate homes and waited overnight. Would Freddie 2 change more? Change back?

When we walked in the next morning, his empty cage was on the floor, the bars bent open. Madeline’s lab was ransacked, papers and test tubes and laptops everywhere, damaged or destroyed. As if items had been targeted and attacked.

We heard growling.

I took a tranquilizer gun from the floor. And a few of the scattered darts. I loaded the gun and we edged in. More growling. Scary growling. I heard him, saw nothing.

Until, not far from us, Freddie 2 dropped onto a table. He’d been hanging from water pipes across the ceiling. He beat his broad chest, a display before the attack. As he opened his jaws to howl, I shot him. The dart hit him in the chest. He looked at it. I reloaded and shot again. The third dart finally brought him unconscious to the floor.

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We lifted him back on the lab table. After a nod from Madeline, I injected him with a quick death. Freddie 2 was too miserable and dangerous to live. The antidote was almost ready. We should have waited, but I pushed us to keep going.

“Two dead,” Madeline told me, putting Freddie 2 in a bag. She was forty, thin, with short blonde hair. I used to love her, or at least found her good to be with. I’m not sure I ever have loved her. But Madeline still loves me. She once said she gave her heart to me, and years later said she wanted it back. She loved me but couldn’t stand me.

“Your serum works,” I replied.

“We had to kill them.”

“His fellow rats killed Freddie,” I told her. “A human brain is better developed than a rat or a chimp’s. I can handle the serum. And you said the antidote will be ready this week.”

She sighed, defeated. “We’ll have to inform Lydia.”

General Lydia Pinetree oversaw *The Social Media Academy*. Pinetree was a hurdle. She would see this as either as a vanity project or potential weapon. Or both. Better she was out of the loop. “She doesn’t have to know until she has to,” I replied. “Or until she finds out.”

And then we had one of those arguments. I got angry and shouted. But I cooled down and apologized. She agreed to continue work on the human dose and complete the antidote, which she admitted was ready, if I agreed to speak with General Pinetree and stop yelling.

Madeline wanted to get it done and get rid of me too. Me too. “I have an appointment with her anyway,” I muttered–I hadn’t compromised much. “About the letter from staff.”

She looked at me. “I wouldn’t sign it. It was awful. But you know their point.”

“Thanks.”

“Will she fire you?”

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I suppose I smiled. “Let you know.”

The *Academy* hallways were heavy duty normal. Ten-foot ceilings for head space so no one felt confined, stiff light brown carpeting to muffle footsteps, complimented by plain eggshell walls with framed posters of beaches, hockey players and horses never in corrals.

Colleagues gave me a wide birth. Apart from my other history, they’d all heard about the latest incident, three days ago. I came out to the parking lot and saw I had a flat. I kicked in the fender. It was stupid. Colleagues came out to go home and saw me kicking a rear fender until it was a mess.

Fred approached. During a staff meeting last week, I’d angrily belittled his project. I sought him out the next day and apologized–but I’ve learned it becomes a problem when you’ve apologized too many times. He’d signed the letter to Pinetree. I guessed he was an instigator. They wanted me fired. As Fred approached, he gave me such a wide berth he hit the wall.

I walked into Pinetree’s front office. Jane, her secretary, was in her mid-thirties, wore a black pants suit and a wary look—at me. I had yelled at her a few times. There is emotional wear and tear on the people around me. My everyday encounters could be painful, reminding me of my failures.

I needed the serum to work. On me.

Jane picked up the phone. “He’s here.” She hung up and nodded to the closed door behind her. If she knew what Pinetree intended, I could not read it. Jane for a long time had been so distant she might as well have been on Mars. If I could put a number of people on a rocket to Mars, it would solve many problems. Sadly, our speciality was not rocketry.

General Pinetree’s office was large, warm, not imposing. She did not need decorations to be imposing. She herself was imposing enough. She was a heavy woman who, in hand-to-hand practise/exercise sessions in our gym kicked the crap out of anyone who volunteered. She was short, in her late fifties, with close cut hair and large eyes. On the outside she was your best friend. Inside, she had missions to accomplish.

She had an old oak desk that was clear except for files, in and out boxes, her

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notebook and paper files. Disciplinary stuff had her sitting behind her desk, the subject in front. Mostly she used the meeting table. It was pine, with four comfortable chairs around it. There was also a small couch and armchair. On one wall were books, none on the research we were doing. No windows.

There was on one wall a large print of an Andrew Wyeth painting, *Christina's World,* showing a frail woman with disabilities, on the ground in a field, looking at a distant farmhouse. You can't see her face. The framing made it look like a window. The painting was full of yearning, Pinetree told me once it was striving.

Today she sat behind her desk.

She did not stand when I entered.

She nodded to the chair in front of her desk. On her desk was a teapot and one cup, for her. When I sat, she held up the letter. "You've seen this?"

"I know about it."

"Over half the staff signed it." She spoke flatly, deliberately. "They want me to fire you."

I was angry but knew it and could control it. She would do nothing. My work was too valuable.

"I like the Academy," she told me, looking at me. "You know it's my baby. Fifteen years ago, I was handed this assignment. I inherited a bunch of buildings surrounded by barbed wire. I created the Academy and put it here. There's nothing about our work that can't be done downtown. It avoids an obvious presence. My superiors like it. So do I. The only problems have been normal ones.

"Except you. You are great, so we tolerated you. That began to wear thin a year ago. Grew worse and worse. I think the fender incident, stupid as it was, boiled them over. This letter isn't good. I won't have a mutiny."

"And?"

She sipped some tea. "And first tell me about Freddies 1 and 2."

"What about them?" I asked slowly, feeling a prickle. She knew.

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When I said nothing, Pinetree added, “I haven’t spoken with Madeline–yet.”

I took a breath. “It’s about taking a person’s basic inner dark emotions, like anger, and making them physical.” I waited for a lecture, something about fund misuse, lying or wasting resources. Or just laughing.

She waited.

“Freddie and Freddie 2 were our first tests. A rat and chimp. They transformed. Neither survived but the tests were a success. Both transformed into something else.”

“Why didn’t you come to me with this?”

“I thought it would be therapy for me. Cure my anger.” I gripped the arms of the chair. “You want to turn it into a weapon. It could be but right now the idea is to bring out negative emotions so the person can deal with it. I want it as therapy. For my anger.”

I added, “It’ll cure the problem with staff.” I had lost control far earlier than anticipated, but thought I still had a grip on steering. “It isn’t being developed as a weapon.”

“It won’t be developed into anything if you don’t keep working on it.” She sipped more tea and put down the empty cup. “The staff will hear you are on probation. You have to do better.” Then she looked at me and smiled. “Why can’t it be a mental health achievement *and* a weapon?”

Chapter Three

Cured To A Crisp

There may be a lengthy history of mental health cures being turned into weapons, although I found nothing but bad horror movies. And now, my own life.

There are cures available for many illnesses–mental and physical. Pills are one cure—although they can have unwelcome side effects. Therapy is another cure—working through your problems in the hope that you can change yourself (never worked for me.) Environment change is a third type of cure—change your job, move, get to that desert island. There are also halfway cures–to modify or

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control the illness.

Behind them all is the widespread acceptance that a cure for your illness is at least possible or due to shortly arrive. These days, the science makes anything possible (I should know!) People expect to receive soon cures for cancer or Alzheimer's. People even hope to receive, in their lifetimes, a cure for death. Some people freeze themselves, to be unthawed when those cures arrive. That thinking gives me the chills.

Curing physical illnesses involves science. Curing deep mental disorders involves faith. Either way, you cannot do it on your own. I needed the green serum. Pinetree needed new weapons.

Abusing cures is rarely made public. Authorities keep their secrets and such work is usually top secret. Secrecy is critical. The public, if it knew, would consider the abuses immoral and clamor to stop them–but the public never worries about what it does not know. (Caesar may have said that.)

My personality got me into this. I have nothing else to blame. No nasty parents who kept me in the basement or scolded me, no siblings who bullied me, no pedophile uncles or unusual traumas. Why am I this way? I'm a jerk. I become angry because I don't get what I want, including respect. It may be as simple as that, I know the reasons are complex but they all boil down to one thing: anger at never getting what I want. Never. Never, although at times I have–but it doesn't last and is never enough.

I had to be careful. Every cure comes with a price. I wanted to be cured, not to turn someone into a weapon. Although I have done that. But nothing like this. My cure was unique. No one had ever tried transforming emotions into a physical presence. Science had never travelled this far. I was breaking new ground. Beyond breaking new ground.

I thought about cures and me and the *Academy*, looking at Freddie 3.

Freddie 3 was a cute little chimp. He sat quietly in his cage. This cage's bars had been re-inforced. It was bolted to the table. Freddie 3 would be our third test, after Freddies 1 and 2—this time with General Pinetree and two security officers observing. Additional video cameras were in place, on top of the standard ceiling cams. The security officers had tranquilizer guns.

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I held a hypo half full of the green serum. The untested antidote was ready, if needed.

Pinetree nodded. The cameras began recording. Show time. It had to work. I could not risk more waiting, I could not risk Pinetree shutting it down.

Madeline stood on one side of the cage, I on the other. We talked soothingly to Freddie 3. He looked at us. Keeping him calm, Madeline stroking him, I injected the serum into his arm. Quarter of a human dose. I watched the green liquid vanish into him. He croaked—sorry, not the appropriate word—he squealed a little. We let him go and he rubbed his arm.

We closed the door to his cage and watched.

We did not have to watch long.

He jerked around the cage a moment and then his body *stretched*. He grew twice as large. His face broadened, his fangs grew bigger and sharper. His whole body was far more muscular and powerful. The fur covering him stood up, wild.

His huge red eyes glared at us as his large hands gripped the cage.

Freddie 3 growled.

He had never growled before. Chimps don't growl.

"Which is it?" Madeline asked me. "Which emotion?"

"I don't know," I replied. "Predator?"

"Predator isn't an emotion." She looked frightened. "And chimps aren't predators."

Freddie 3 howled and tightened his grip on the bars. They were thick steel. He pulled them slowly apart, bending them. In a moment, he would be out.

Pinetree nodded.

A security officer raised a tranquilizer gun and fired. Then the other officer fired his. Then they both reloaded and fired again. Four shots hit Freddie 3 before he

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finally collapsed to the bottom of the cage, snoring.

He had never snored before.

No one said anything for a moment. Then Pinetree said, “Very good. We need to keep going.”

I was relieved. Madeline was disappointed.

We took notes, reviewed the video, looking at the snoring Freddie 3, and we all agreed to wait until the following morning. “I need to know if the transformation holds or he changes back. What about the antidote? Will it work?” she asked Madeline.

“We’ll only know for certain when we try it,” she replied.

So we waited and the next morning gathered around Freddie 3’s new cage. It was solider, with thicker bars. There was a third security guard.

Freddie 3 was awake and still big and still growling.

“Which emotion is it?” Madeline asked me.

“I don’t know. It looks like anger.”

The enlarged powerful chimp stood and grabbed the bars as soon as we walked in. Previously, he would run through skill tests. That day, we could not get near him. We worried he would use his hands, now claws, to rip us apart.

Every response was hostile. Even to bananas. We waited another day. The third morning, the same. It was time to try the antidote, especially as it was it was impossible to work with him.

It took five tranquilizers to bring him down. He was still conscious. I wanted him conscious, otherwise the antidote might not work properly.

We opened the door to his cage. I injected him with the purple antidote.

It was remarkable. As we watched, Freddie 3 shrank to his original size and shape. It took only a few moments. He opened glazed eyes, looked at us, slumped and

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died.

We pulled him out, tried CPR and shock pads to his chest. Nothing brought him back.

“Okay, I’m not sure why he’s dead,” I said quietly to the others. “But the antidote worked. He transformed back.”

“He’s dead,” Madeline said.

“Maybe a combination of shock, the tranks and the serum,” I suggested to her.

“Not a setback,” Pinetree told us. “When will it be ready for human trials?”

“I’m not sure,” Madeline said.

“It’s ready,” I told Pinetree. “For me to try. For my therapy.”

“Good. I want to move fast. There is pressure on us to succeed,” Pinetree replied, firm. “For all we know, the other side is also developing this. You can be our first trial,” she told me. I got the impression she had made up her mind about me being the first already.

“For a cure?”

“Sure.” Pinetree smiled.

“Could I get a word in?” Madeline asked us. We both looked at her and she knew anything she said would change nothing. “Forget it.”

Chapter Four

Madeline Gets In A Word

I’m still in love with him. That’s the hell of it. You cannot control who you give your heart to. I wish I loved someone else. His anger was a locked room, I was trapped inside.

Nineteen years. There were many good times or I would not have stayed. But he changed. Became worse. Underneath, he feels trapped. I was part of what

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trapped him. After nineteen years it was him or me.

I voted me.

Mike saw the damage. He agreed it would be better for everyone if he lived alone. He's self-aware, just self-serving.

My apartment, two years now, is a refuge. I still work at *The Academy*, still see him every day. I enjoy my work but am increasingly troubled by it. I probably would have quit a year ago–if it was not for Mike. He wanted a serum he could use to confront his anger. I knew it was possible. To get away from him, I stayed and worked with him.

The divorce hit him. He got The Idea and pushed me on it. The idea and initial were work his. The slogging and creation are mine. What Mike thinks it will do is almost certainly not what it will do. I never should have caved but I leapt onto that slippery slope. Although I consistently told him it was a bad idea, I finished the serum. Because it was my escape.

At least I go home and there is no waiting for rage. Nothing to anticipate except opening the window and listening to traffic. No shadow over my life. Melanie is in her second year of college, majoring in performance art. I never knew you could major in such a thing. I have flowers on every windowsill.

I miss our cute little house and the garden but living there was no longer an option. Mike would have let me take the house. But there were too many bad memories, in every room, at every time of day. I was better off leaving. I miss keeping house but not his house.

Where does his rage come from? He had an okay childhood, was never attacked by a serial killer, pushed into an open elevator shaft. No traumas I discovered. His problem is himself, his personality, his DNA, his hormones—people are a complex stew, often half-cooked.

I wish to God I did not love him. Moving out and helping him was my cure.

For him, have I created a cure or opened a gateway to Hell?

Chapter Five

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Thinking It Through

Meanwhile, about me, we were ready for a human trial. Well, ready enough. Pinetree never appeared to consider anyone else for the first human trial. A trial on me, me on trial.

I had many talks with her. She was fascinated. We had never tried anything like this. For her, Freddies 1-3 were positives. And as for me, she told me that I should be the first because it was part of my therapy. She knew it was what I wanted to hear. I wondered what other calculations led her to want me as the first human to be given the serum.

You're probably thinking I was living in a dream world. That I was detached from the reality of how my cure would be used. A military application was *always* likely, if I was honest with myself. Weapons were my work. I worked on a secret military base dedicated to such weapons. Consciously, I always knew Pinetree would find out. I'd just hoped not so quickly.

And I'd believed that if my project was a success, I would be able to bury it, at least until the world was ready for such a cure. It would be easy to label it a failure. I had developed military projects for years with few achieving their goals. It was basic to experimental work. Most projects vigorously sped wildly off into the ozone.

But I knew she kept tabs on our work. Hell, Pinetree kept tabs on us. Our phones were tapped–and she'd told us they were tapped. We were top secret. She would find out and then want to know if she could use it. That road eventually led to bad news. But I truly believed that no matter what, the project would give me what I wanted: a cure. *Nothing else mattered.*

I was desperate. I would see my anger, confront it, tame it. Tomorrow.

Before, it had *always* been tomorrow. Today, it *would* be.

Pinetree had taken over setting the first trial up. The project even had a name: "Mike." It took a week for the arrangements. I was consulted, but it felt like a courtesy. My role was to be injected and react. Madeline had disappeared as far into the background as she could. She anticipated the worst. I anticipated the best. Pinetree anticipated using it.

Lunchtime, I ate in the cafeteria, alone but knowing everyone was stealing glances

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at me. They knew. They knew about tomorrow. I walked the hallways, one or two people even smiled a little. It felt like pity.

When I walked into her lab, Madeline said “Good luck,” looked at me and said, “Don’t do it,” then walked into her office and closed the door. She dropped the curtains.

When I left, the receptionist said “Good-bye.”

I drove home anxious. I wouldn’t admit it to anyone, but I was as concerned as Madeline. Well, not *as* concerned as Madeline. I was prepared to take risks. Yes, there were many ways the project could go sideways and drag me with it. Yet how could it get worse?

The night before was tough. I should note it was neither dark nor stormy. It was lovely. The sky was clear, the moon full and huge—a super moon. I stood in the back yard, listening to the neighbourhood dogs barking at something in the forest just beyond the fence.

What they were barking at was probably as alone as I was. Maybe it was as afraid.

I kicked my favourite rose bush until I killed it.

Kicked it out of the earth, trampled the roses, then dumped it in the can by the garage. I went inside, looked at myself in the bathroom mirror and punched me. The mirror cracked. As I bandaged my hand, I looked at the different broken reflections of me in the shattered mirror. Every part of myself was cracked.

I was so, so tired of this. I so wanted out. I was so ready for tomorrow.

I did not sleep. I was thinking and worrying too much. Although, in the middle of thinking and worrying, suddenly I was awake in the morning. I woke refreshed, as if I’d slept all night.

You might say it was a metaphor for my entire approach.

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