**True Nature**

On a summer night, in the backyard located outside the city, the tribe of the werewolves engaged in the sacred ceremony of rebirth. There were ten werewolves, all in their wolf forms, forming a perfect circle, singing a sensual song composed of a mix of words and smooth howling. Behind them, a little way off, stood Ron, a massive and formidable wolf, although he wasn’t a source of pride for his family until that particular moment. At the center of this circle of werewolves rested a metal bottle containing the precious water of salvation.

Suddenly, in the midst of the ceremony, the ten werewolves were ruthlessly slaughtered by mysterious assassins who emerged from everywhere. Astonishingly, Ron remained unharmed.

It all started three hours earlier in a family dinner. Ron, his sister, his mother, and his father were all eating their fancy dinner at home, in their human shapes. They were all silent and serious, but Ron was extremely sad. Actually, Ron, who is 20 years old, was living the saddest moments of his life because his fiancé, who is human, broke up with him after she saw his wolf shape. Sadly, Ron had lost many people he knew since he was a little boy, all because of his wolf shape.

“Why the hell do you give so much value to human beings?” said Ron’s sister in a serious tone while looking at him. She stood tall for her age, her ebony hair cropped short, framing a determined face with a petite nose and lips, and intense, obsidian eyes that seemed to pierce through the air. Despite her slender frame, particularly noticeable in her athletic attire, her wiry muscles hinted at a hidden strength. She wasn’t just any teenager; she was one of the strongest wolves in her tribe, her aura exuding confidence and power.

Ron heard what his sister said but didn’t answer her. Instead, he continued swimming deeper into his own melancholic memories, the sadness reflecting plainly on his face.

“Aren’t you going to answer your sister, Ron?” said Ron’s mother, her voice carrying a weight of authority. She stood petite in stature but exuded an air of quiet strength, her tall black hair cascading gracefully around her shoulders. Her small nose and ears accentuated the sharp angles of her face, while her wide black eyes, magnified by her glasses, bore a keen intelligence. Despite her casual attire, she occupied her seat with a regal presence, an aura of prestige enveloping her, making it almost impossible to fathom her secret identity as a werewolf.

Again, Ron refused to answer and kept looking down at the table. The truth is, Ron hated being a werewolf. He always wanted to be a normal human being and never change into that scary monster that freaks people out.

“Why can’t you be like the rest of us?” said Ron’s father with an angry face before he added “why do you refuse your gift?”. The father, unquestionably the patriarch of the house, was a stout man with a massive physique and an equally substantial mustache. His bald head was almost perfectly round, and his brown eyes, large nose, and prominent ears added to his imposing demeanor. He always wore shirts paired with black or brown elegant pants, a uniform befitting a successful businessman. Moreover, his wolf form was magnificent, making him the leader of the werewolf tribe and the guardian of the water of salvation for many years.

“A gift?” said Ron after standing up quickly. He was expressing an angry face with watered eyes as he spoke.

“You call this a gift? This is a curse! Anyone who has seen my other half feared me!” said Ron in the same angry attitude, but then he looked down and said in a low voice, “how can it be a gift when it only makes me alone,” before he left the dinner table and went outside.

Ron’s family remained at the dinner table, completing their meal in silence. Afterward, their father informed Ron’s sister that she would replace Ron in the rebirth ceremony that was happening that night. Meanwhile, far from Ron’s house, the leaders of the Dark Werewolves were expressing their strong desire to obtain the water of salvation, like they do every three years. However, their efforts were in vain as they had no knowledge of the location of the rebirth ceremony. It’s important to note that the term “Dark Werewolves” refers to those werewolves who cannot withstand daylight, unlike Ron’s people.

However, Ron walked continuously, moving from one street to another, with an aura of sadness exposing from his body. He really couldn’t accept the fact that he was a werewolf and humans will always fear him. Yet, he struggled against his mind to create a room or a hope for a reality where he can, actually, have a true bond with humans.

After minutes of walking, he passed by a small park where moms brought their kids to let them play while the mothers enjoyed chatting. He saw a man dressed in the costume of a lion, surrounded by kids who were clearly having a good time. *Why can’t I be like that man in the lion costume? Was my father right? Will humans never accept anyone other than themselves?*

On the opposite side of the street was a beautiful brown-haired Asian girl, approximately 19 years old, with long hair cascading down her back, reaching her hips. She had wide eyes, populated with astonishing gray irises. Her small face featured a petite nose, ears, and mouth. She wore a pair of jeans, a black shirt, and sneakers, giving her a mysterious yet attractive air of independence and freedom. However, she was a sad girl, physically present, but her mind was engulfed in the realm of depression, contemplating a decision that might liberate her from her misery.

Suddenly, while Ron was approaching the crosswalk, he noticed the beautiful Asian girl running toward the middle of the road, seemingly intent on being hit by a truck. Ron stood still for a moment, struck by the depth of her despair. He understood that her suffering was so great that death seemed like a merciful escape, and he briefly contemplated whether this might be a solution to his own cursed fate.

Yet, Ron’s survival instincts disagreed with the idea of surrendering to death. His body quickly changed into the wolf shape; by the time his left foot made a step forward, his right foot had already transformed into a big, strong, furry wolf foot. Then, in a fraction of a second, Ron was next to the girl, facing the truck coming fast with a determined look.

At that precise moment, Ron’s conscience was trying to calculate a safe passage from the situation where no one gets hurt. Meanwhile, the truck driver was shocked and paralyzed in his place as he saw a girl a few meters away from him, and then a wolf and a girl a few meters away from him. As for the girl, she just stood in her place, looking with the most passionate, loving eyes toward Ron, feeling tremendous warm sentiments in her heart.

In a heartbeat before the truck could engulf them, Ron’s powerful jaws enveloped the girl, mirroring the protective embrace of a mother cat with her kittens. With astonishing agility, he leaped skyward, defying gravity, allowing the truck to roar beneath them. Simultaneously, the truck driver, paralyzed by the sudden turn of events, registered the vanishing threat before him. He slammed the brakes with every ounce of strength, the screeching of tires cutting through the tension, the smell of burning rubber filling the air. The truck shuddered to a halt just inches away from the line of parked cars, the world momentarily frozen in the aftermath of Ron’s daring feat.

“Why did you save me?” the girl asked, her expression was a mix of sadness and relief.

“I don’t know. My body just moved,” Ron replied in a low voice. He was genuinely surprised when she didn’t flee upon seeing his wolf form.

“Why?” Ron asked, his tone higher, and continued, “Why didn’t you run from me?”

The girl responded calmly, “Why should I? Just because you look like a wolf?”

“Exactly,” Ron said.

“No. Also, you should embrace your true nature!” the girl reassured him.

Hearing those words, Ron’s heart trembled, as if she had peered into his very soul. His eyes revealed a complex mix of sadness and affection as he gazed at the beautiful girl.

“Sometimes, it’s difficult to accept our destiny, which defines our true nature,” Ron said, his tone gentle, accompanied by a sad smile. Then, he turned to look away and turned back to his human shape, adding, “sometimes, accepting our destiny is akin to fighting a war. Perhaps, for strong reasons, we can muster the courage to fight that battle.”

The girl was momentarily paralyzed, trying to grasp the weight of those words that resonated within her. Ron’s words penetrated the deepest recesses of her heart, touching the profound thoughts of her mind, making her thinking deeply. *Why can’t I fight the battle of my destiny? Is it impossible to win, or do I simply lack a reason to fight for?*

“I’m Lia, Lia Soroki,” she announced, prolonging her hand for a handshake, her expression adorned with an attractively innocent smile.

“Honored to meet you, Lia,” replied Ron, returning the smile as they shook hands. Then, he added, “I’m Ron, Ron Garten.”

“Pleased to meet you, Ron Garten,” said Lia, her voice exuding happy vibes.

After that, Ron and Lia spent an hour and a half getting to know each other, feeling a deep connection between their hearts while sitting on a bench in the small park. Unbeknownst to them, a mysterious creature lurked in the shadows, observing their encounter.

“You know, there’s something I need to confess, Ron,” said Lia in a low voice, her gaze falling to the ground.

“I’m listening!” replied Ron, his tone filled with excitement.

“I’m actually... Oh, excuse me,” said Lia, reaching into her pocket to answer a phone call from her father. “Yes. Okay,” she said on the phone before hanging up. Then, she apologized to Ron because she had to go back home.

After Lia left, Ron quickly returned home, where he learned from his mother that his father and sister had gone to the rebirth ceremony. This ceremony is a sacred ritual held every three years by the leaders of the werewolf tribe to select a leader responsible for safeguarding the water of salvation. Just a single drop of this water could sustain a werewolf under the daylight.

In fact, Ron was worried and nervous after learning that his sister was to become the next leader of the werewolf tribe. His father was growing old, and a successor must be selected, but the idea of his 14-year-old sister handling the responsibility of leading the werewolves at such an early age, instead of him, troubled his heart. To Ron, his sister was a treasure he could never abandon. Since the first moment she entered his world, he never ceased to love her and take care of her. Furthermore, Lia’s reaction after seeing Ron’s wolf shape and her words about embracing true nature made Ron ready to start accepting his other half, which he had hated so much.

Quickly after that, Ron got in his car and drove 50 miles to reach the location of the ceremony. He quietly entered the backyard of the house and stayed a little far away. He stood still, closed his eyes, and listened to the song his tribe was singing, which became full of love once Ron entered the backyard. His tribe members, his sister, and especially his father were extremely happy when they sniffed Ron’s scent nearby.

Moreover, during the singing, Ron listened with closed eyes and enjoyed it, marking his first time appreciating that particular song. He felt a connection to his werewolf identity, relishing the experience. His emotions were evident in his scent, detected by the others, and it brought big smiles to their faces.

Suddenly, just after the signing finished and Ron was opening his eyes, getting ready to share some words, several shadows jumped out from everywhere.

It was bizarre that the werewolves couldn’t detect the presence of someone nearby, but that was just the proof they were characters capable of hiding their presence even from wolves. To Ron and his tribe members, they knew that only the Dark Werewolves’ tribe could do such a thing, and for one reason. However, the fact that they managed to locate the ceremony location, which had been impossible for many years, confused everyone, but there was no time to be confused

In a moment, every single member of Ron’s tribe had sharp claws aimed at his back, with no chance to evade the attack. In the following moments, Ron watched in horror as his father and sister were brutally killed before his eyes by the members of the Dark Werewolves.

The weight of the shock was immense and devastating, yet Ron’s instincts told him to turn around. When he did, he found a female wolf with long, sharp claws just half a meter away from him, aiming to kill him.

Ron’s heart was racing so fast that you might hear it if you were standing next to him. But you would be more amazed to see the female wolf transform into Lia once she saw Ron.

Her shock was enormous. She stood paralyzed in her place, utterly confused. Ron felt the same way, unable to accept the connection between the events, as that would mean Lia was responsible for killing his family and his people.

Well, Lia was a member of the Dark Werewolves tribe, and she had encountered Ron by sheer coincidence. When she attempted suicide because she couldn’t stand living in the night anymore, a guardian from her tribe had initially intervened but stopped upon seeing Ron. Moreover, he alerted his people and followed Ron straight to the ceremony location, as the tribe of the Dark Werewolves sought to obtain the water of salvation and be able to endure daylight. Lia had joined the assassination mission upon learning that the Water of Salvation could be theirs, but she was unaware that they would be taking it from Ron and his family.

Eventually, Ron connected the dots and felt a burning sensation inside. He considered arguing with Lia, but he quickly realized there was no point. His family was already dead, and he would soon join them. But Lia remembered how Ron saved her, and all the warm feelings she felt. She also recalled sitting next to him and talking with him in admiration, feeling a strong connection. Then, she analyzed what she was doing at that moment with her tribe and realized that she didn’t embrace herself either. She came to the conclusion that she had done something terrible, feeling extremely guilty and angry with herself, experiencing immense pain in her heart.

Then, Lia stood against of her tribe, who already got possession of the water of salvation, defending Ron’s life.

“I will make them spare your life Ron, don’t worry” said Lia with a serious tone.

At that moment, Ron was struggling in his deeps with the shock of his family death, and Lia who appeared to him that she manipulated him. He just wanted to fall on his knees and surrender to sadness and death, but from the deepest parts of his soul, a powerful anger was raising up. All his brain was thinking were the memories of his beloved sister. He wasn’t going to see his sister anymore, neither his father, and the people who did that were in front of him. Quickly, the anger grew enough to make his claws move and penetrate Lia’s body.

Lia was, of course, shocked and in great pain, but she quickly accepted her fate. Her tribe had already killed Ron’s people, so it was only natural for Ron to seek revenge. She felt a profound sadness because after meeting Ron, she believed she had found a reason to live and endure the life of a night werewolf. However, she also felt a sense of relief that she wouldn’t have to hate her destiny anymore.

As she fell to her knees with Ron’s claws inside her body, she wore a smiling face despite the blood coming out of her mouth and said, “I hope you can forgive Ron because I didn’t know.”

Hearing those words turned Ron’s internal state upside down. For a moment, he thought he had been manipulated by Lia, but then he realized she hadn’t played him. It was a deeply messed-up situation that could drive anyone to madness, but there was no point in arguing or succumbing to madness. What had happened had happened. Ron found himself alone against ten wolves. He knew he wouldn’t win, but he was determined to die trying, seeking revenge for the death of his family, embracing his true nature for the first time in his life.

The End.