

# **WOLFMAN**

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## CHAPTER 1

### GOT THE ITCH TO GO

“I know that I’ve lived up here my whole life, but I will *never* get used to mosquitoes! How on earth can they get through this bug netting and find my ears?”

Linus just finished his junior year at the University, and he knew that next year was the year to write, submit and get his senior project accepted. He started in Natural Resources as a major, but decided early on that he wanted an emphasis in wolves. Linus was so infatuated with everything that had to do with wolves that his major professor, as well as his friends, started calling him “wolfman” or just “wolf” as a nickname.

The buzzing of the mosquitoes had distracted him from the task at hand. Linus was crawling as quietly as possible across a rocky portion of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, or BWCA for short. He had learned from this professor that there was a significant wolf population near Insula Lake, northeast of Ely. His plan was to locate a pack, and stick with them for the entire summer. He would follow their movements, learn their tactics, photograph the pack, and do some studies about some of the less well know features of the life of wolves.

Wolves once roamed this entire BWCA area soon after the glaciers had receded 10,000 years ago, which left deep gouges in the volcanic rock, quickly filling in with clean water forming the jewel-like string of lakes in the wilderness area. The wolves came into this area as soon as their prey started roaming the area as well. The wolves, which used to be plentiful, had been hunted to the point of

near extinction until recently. It was in the 1980's that wolves were once again introduced into the area and protected by legislation. The idea was to return this wilderness area to the natural state, an ecological balance, which had existed for 10,000 years. This of course was not a popular move with local area farmers and some radical groups that thought that wolves would be a safety hazard to humans. What these people did not realize was that there has never been a known attack on man by wolves, and seldom do wolves venture into inhabited areas to find their prey.

Linus stopped his thoughts about the reasons for being in the area long enough to listen closely once again to the baying of a wolf pack just beyond the ridge. It was dark and Linus was getting a little apprehensive about being so far from his base camp when nightfall was coming so quickly. He decided to mark his position on the map he carried, and return to camp. He would bring his photography gear and recording equipment the next day to start documenting the pack that he had discovered.

It had been a good day for Linus. His thoughts ran to the years of adventures that he had with his best friend Erik. He wished that he had not drifted so far from his buddy, but the fact they had chosen different schools and different curriculums to study had forced them to part ways. The main stake that had been driven between these best friends was the fact that Erik's father had died the year before, and Erik had gotten more and more depressed and morose over the ensuing months after the funeral. He seemed to have gone into a shell, and was hard to talk to about anything. This had really hurt Linus. He had spent his entire life up the in woods with his friend, and they had shared their hearts and souls around hundreds of campfires. They

shared their most intimate stories about their girlfriends, dreams about the future, and hopes for their lives.

He returned to camp and set about making supper and settling in for the night. His thoughts ran to the adventure at hand. He fancied himself discovering some new and interesting facts about wolves that no one had ever uncovered before. He saw his senior paper being published by the *Boundary Water Journal* as well as being picked up by some scientific journals. Thoughts of fame and fortune danced in his head as he drifted off to sleep. Little did he know the most unusual fact he would discover this summer was that how near to death a person could come.

## CHAPTER 2

# DEPRESSED

“Hey Erik!” shouted Tatiana, “Would you please hurry up with those cases of Fiesta string beans. The boss has been on me for the last half hour to get the shelves stocked and I need you to bring up about three cases for me. What’s the matter with you? You act like you’re 100 miles away!”

Erik still wasn’t listening to Tatiana as he slowly swept the stockroom floor of the local Red Owl grocery store. He was in fact about 100 miles away in his mind. He was thinking about all kinds of things that kept him from the work at hand. The main thing that occupied most of his thinking now-a-days was his dad. He really missed him. It was last fall just before classes were about to begin at the University, when Josh, Erik’s father, noticed that he was having some problems standing up. Josh would get dizzy easily, and one Sunday night fell in the shower and gashed his head badly.

Erik and his mom took Josh to the hospital to get the cut on his head stitched. During the examination, Doctor Roberts, their family doctor discovered the “dizzy” symptoms and ordered further exams the following day. It was that Monday that a CAT scan revealed a brain tumor. The terror of the whole story was that it was only two weeks after the CAT scan that Josh died from a very fast growing, malignant cancer called blastoma. Blastoma! A word that was burned into Erik’s mind like the cancer itself that was buried in his dad’s brain. It all happened so fast that it seemed like the proverbial “nightmare” that so many refer to when something terrible happens to a life.

“I mean it, Erik, I want those beans NOW!” snouted Tatiana once again. Her shrill voice seemed to waken Erik from his reverie, and he slowly moved, like a robot, to the back of the storage room and brought three cases of beans to aisle four and dropped off the boxes for Tatiana.

“I’m really sorry, Tat, I just can’t seem to snap out of this daze. I didn’t mean to ignore you.”

“I know, Erik,” said Tatiana sympathetically, “It’s just that you are always floating around lately – just not with it. I know it’s been tough for you these last few months. Maybe it would be a good idea for you to come over to my place after work. I have about 5 or 6 of the gang coming over for a little party. It’s my birthday tomorrow and college will be starting soon. I thought it might be fun.”

“Well, I’m not sure...” Erik started to say in a hesitant voice. Before he could get another word out Tatiana interrupted.

“No way, Erik. You’re NOT going to get out of it that easy. If you care at all about your friends and me you will be at my place at nine tonight. Don’t let me down!”

Erik agreed to meet the gang at Tatiana’s place after work. He trudged along slowly through the night at the Red Owl store, and when quitting time came he managed to get to his car and reluctantly drive over to his friend’s house. Erik knew it was going to be hard. His friends had been trying their best to sympathize with him after the death of his dad. They attended the wake, the funeral, and stopped constantly to invite him to activities in an effort to

keep his mind off his dad. It didn't work. Their kind words and attempts to make him "snap out of it" just didn't work. He kept thinking, "How can they understand? They all have their folks still around. They all have a family to return to. They all have a mom or dad to fight with, to turn to for help, to be the solid rock to come to when real problems come."

The party was fun; even Erik had to admit that. There was good music, some dancing, a lot of laughing, but he still couldn't stop the depression, the darkness that would descend on him. It would come from nowhere and hit him like a bag of bricks. It wasn't too long until even his friends started leaving Erik in the corner to brood silently in his own thoughts.

Erik's mind went back to the dad that he missed, but also to his best friend Linus. Linus and Erik had been best friends from the time they could crawl. They were inseparable all the way through high school. They were camping and fishing buddies and had lived through many adventures in the BWCA. They had actually gained quite a bit of notoriety with the rescue mission they led during the big storm of 1999 when over 1/3 of the BWCA was destroyed by straight line winds, and also with the adventure with terrorists and a Warrior's Hill ghost tribe.

Those experiences were behind him now. Erik and he had parted ways to go to college. They each had chosen different colleges as well as different curriculums to study. They had tried to correspond but with all the college studies and activities, and the many miles between the colleges, they slowly drifted apart. Erik missed his friend.

The evening wore on, and when Erik left to go home, few people even noticed. Erik slipped out into the late night to go home and to bed. The next day he intended to drive back to college, but he wasn't quite prepared for the telephone call he would get before he left in the morning, nor the new adventure with his friend that would top all adventures in his life.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BROTHERHOOD

“I’m calling the meeting to order,” shouted Douglas, making this the third time he tried to get the unruly crowd to quiet down so the meeting could start. “You blame idiots! Put down the guns and quit your screaming. We have to get some issues settled.”

Douglas had been the “grand-hammer”, or president of the Northern States chapter of the Brotherhood, which was called the NSB by the local folks. This local chapter was holding its meeting in the club house located deep in the woods by Lake Insula. The Brotherhood itself is a group of men, and sometimes fairly young boys, who are what is called the ultra-right wing of a separatist group that started in the 1970’s in the United States. This group has spread in various chapters throughout the country, and if a person was to state their reason for existence it could best be summarized by their pledge which is said at the beginning of every chapter meeting. Their pledge is to the country of “AmErika” spelled this way to symbolize a different country yet similar to “America.”.

“We pledge our allegiance to each man who wants to stand and be himself united. We pledge to topple the federal government as it stands, and support each state inside us.”

The Brotherhood groups throughout AmErika have been behind many of the underground movements to blow up Federal buildings, destroying innocent people working for both the Federal and State Governments. They also have been behind letter bombs, false rumors of foreign

threats, as well as propaganda campaigns against any efforts of the Federal government to get involved in local affairs. They simply want to be a bunch of men that are ruled by no one, willing to help no one but themselves, and willing to use any type of violence as long as it disrupts the government in any way possible.

“Thank you, brothers, for your attention. We have a full agenda this evening and need to decide some very important issues. Yes, Jake, you have your hand raised. What’s on your mind?”

“Brothers,” said a lank man in his 40’s, sporting a scruffy beard and filthy bib overalls, “I must interrupt this meeting to fill you in on the latest news from our enemies in Washington.”

Douglas looked irritated, but conceded to let Jake talk seeing that he had the attention of the men at the meeting. “Go ahead, Jake, but make it quick. We have a lot to cover tonight.”

Jake continued, “I was reading the latest news on the Internet last night that was posted on the Department of Natural Resources website. It appears that the Federal Interior Department has been pushing their legislation down the state of Minnesota’s throat once again about the darn wolf thing.”

Bent, a plump man with an intelligent face, looked over to Jake and asked, “What do you mean by the ‘wolf thing’, Jake.”

“Where in the world have you been hiding, Bent? Under a rock? The Feds have been trying for years to get

the state to not only protect the wolf population, but reintroduce them in record number up here in the BWCA. You know as well as I do that true Americans have for years hunted those treacherous dogs down, and had just about eradicated the vermin. Now what? The wolves are rebounding like crazy, spreading further south, starting to threaten livestock, and there has even been talk of wolves starting to threaten children walking home from school as far south as Cloquet.”

“How is that even poss...” Bent started asking, but he clamped his mouth shut quickly. He knew that his anger was starting to rise, and his big mouth would surely blow his disguise. At the same time his cell phone started ringing, drawing everyone’s attention to him. He quickly excused himself and recessed to the back of the room and said, “Yeah?”

Bent heard a faint voice that sounded a lot like his son’s. It surprised Bent since he knew that his son was supposed to be in the BWCA doing some project research. He knew that normal cell phones didn’t work in that area, and couldn’t figure out what was going on.

“Where are you at, Linus?”

Bent could barely make out the words, but he was sure that he heard the words “help” and “hurt” amongst all the static. Bent tried his best not to be upset and returned to the group since he knew that the meeting was about over, and if he left now it would draw undue attention to him.

Bent had been working for the FBI for 13 years and was assigned to this case late last summer. He figured that his boss had picked him not only because he was a local,

but also because he had been able to keep the fact that he was an agent secret. The fact that he was an agent had been kept secret not only from his children, but also from his wife, as difficult as it sounded. When he married, his wife Sandy knew that he was working in an agency in Duluth, but she had always thought that his job as an accountant was all that he did. She didn't know that he did the books for the FBI office, and that they had made his job contingent on the fact that he keeps his "cover." His paychecks were from a "front" organization called Johnson Brothers Inc., and the IRA made sure that his tax paperwork was consistent throughout.

Douglas once again spoke up, "So what's the plan, Jake. Are you just stirring the pot or are you proposing that we do some more 'projects'?"

Jake responded with a bit of pride. It was obvious that he seldom was heard or respected in the meetings. He was beaming when he responded with his scheme.

"It's like this. I propose that we go up north over the next two weeks. We will split up in groups of twos and take canoes and ATV's and make a sweep through the wolf implant areas. I say that we set traps, bait and shoot, and poison-gas the wolf dens so we can wipe out the wolf population. It's time that we did something instead of just talking about it! Are we true AmErikans or not?"

Jake's impassioned plea as well as his accusation that if anyone didn't act, they were not loyal AmErikans, started some rumbling among the crowd. Later that night the men all agreed that Jake's plan was a good one. They proceeded to lay a grid over the topographical maps of the areas of known wolf populations. They assigned "kill teams" to

each of the grid areas and decided on a week from that evening to meet once again to finalize their plans for the kill.

As the Brotherhood adjourned the meeting, and started filtering out of the clubhouse to go home, Douglas pulled Bent aside by his car.

“What do you think of this plan, Bent? I know that you are one of the calmer heads than the rest.” He started respecting his opinion when he had tried to bring the group to their senses periodically over the last few months.

“I guess that the plan will work, but I’m a little worried that Jake is going a bit overboard. After all, the wolves were here long before we were.”

“Hey, guy, what kind of talk is that? Are you one of us or not? Let me give you a bit of advice, Bent. It’s the turkey that doesn’t know he’s a turkey that gets shot for dinner. Remember that!”

Douglas stomped away from Bent, obviously irritated. Bent likewise drove away from the clubhouse, a little fearful that his cover was starting to slip a bit, and more concerned about what the mysterious message was from his son. He drove furiously back home to start calling Linus’ friends for clues on what was happening.

## CHAPTER 4

### DOWN BUT NOT OUT

“Rats! I still can’t get a good shot,” Linus said under his breath. He wasn’t talking about a shot from a gun, but from the new digital camera that he just bought before the trip. There were so many bells and whistles on the camera, that Linus had not had a chance to perfect all the features as yet.

He slowly crept forward toward the wolf pack when he noticed a commotion in the center of the pack as if there was a dispute over something concerning an unusually large pair of silver colored wolves. The pair was obviously a male and female by the way they reacted to each other. Surprisingly the female looked like she was trying to prevent the male and the rest of pack from running into the woods. She circled and circled the pack, whining, and nipping at the ones that first tried to leave the circle. Finally, one escaped her efforts, then another, and another. In the end there was just her mate and herself left in the clearing. Seemingly with resignation, the female followed the male into the woods.

Linus raised his camera and captured what seemed to be the best picture he had ever taken. He caught the female walking away, yet looking back over her shoulder, the sunlight hitting her eyes and making them look like she had tears streaming down her muzzle.

After the wolves had left, Linus carefully tiptoed to the place where the pack was resting to look for clues to their strange actions. He arrived in the circle and started scouting the area for evidence. After about a half-hour, and

finding nothing but some wolf scat and a few gnawed bones, Linus turned to leave. Before he got out of the clearing he heard a soft whimpering sound coming from the backside of the circle. It was an eerie sound. Mustering what courage he could, he slowly turned and headed for the continuing noise in the bush.

Linus realized that this possibly could be a stupid thing to do. What if there was a crouching wolf, luring him in close? He knew that there was never a reported attack by a wolf, but the prospect of a direct confrontation was still a little enervating.

He arrived at the source of the noise, and picked up a stick to use to slowly part the branches of the shrubs from which the noise was emanating. Suddenly, from the brush the head of a young wolf lunged at the end of the stick that Linus was using, and snapped the stick in two. Linus jumped back in terror and landed on his rear, fearing that the next sound would be the crunch of teeth on his leg.

To his surprise the young wolf that lunged at the stick had fallen himself. It was soon evident that the wolf was severely injured, and had acted purely in self-defense. Linus stood up and slowly approached the wolf, and started talking with a soothing voice.

“It’s all right, fella. Don’t get excited now. Calm down. Everything will be okay.” Linus finally worked his way to the side of the young wolf. This time he decided to act a little more cautiously than before. He put on his Little Josh fishing gloves that were fairly impenetrable by knife blades and fishhooks. He slowly started examining the wolf and noticed that the wolf had a badly broken rear leg and the wound was quite infected. Linus put his coat over

the wolf's body, and slowly picked up the unconscious wolf and carefully took him back to camp with him. Much to his surprise, the wolf was still sleeping when he got back to camp. This aided in the first aid attempts on the wolf's back leg considerably.

Linus knew that he had two things that had to be done. He needed to restrain the wolf's body, and then set the broken bone while trying to disinfect the wound. He carefully tied the wolf to a log allowing room for him to work on the rear leg. He had practiced this on humans before in advance Red Cross training, but knew very little about wolf anatomy. It was evident that the compound fracture had to be placed back into position, bone pushed back through the skin, and a splint of some type applied. He also knew that many medicines intended for humans, like those in his first aid kit, could kill an animal. He searched back to the days that he and his Dad were studying animals in scouts, and remembered that a local antiseptic and healing poultice can be made from the needles of the black spruce.

Linus worked quickly to boil some water, make a spruce poultice, cut some splints for the leg, and gather some bandages together for the operation. He acted quickly to force the wolf's leg back into position. It appeared that the young wolf who had started to wake up had actually passed out now because of the pain. Something that Linus didn't realize would happen in the animal population. With the wolf out of commission, he quickly set to work to finish the disinfecting and splinting of the damaged leg. He also started making some supper and some food that he thought the wolf may be able to eat. He left the wolf restrained and set some food by the young wolf's mouth. He figured that

when he awoke, he could at least get some nourishment, which he was sure he needed.

Linus realized that he could no longer just call the young wolf, “wolf”, so he set about trying to figure the best name for his friend. He finally settled on “Jonah”. He figured that like the Biblical character that was rescued by the whale, and lived to tell about it, so Linus rescued the wolf and he would live for at least one more day. Jonah it was!

The next morning was quite interesting. It appeared that Jonah had awoken during the night and eaten all the food set out by Linus. In fact, he had worked his way out of the restraints that Linus had left about him, yet did not run away. This amazed Linus. Linus set out to make some breakfast for himself and his new friend. No sooner had Linus started the bacon frying in the pan, than he felt a wet nose nudge his arm. To his amazement, it was Jonah begging for a handout for his breakfast. Never in all his reading about wolves had he ever heard of a wild animal responding immediately to a human like Jonah. It broke all the rules of nature.

Linus gave Jonah a healthy share of bacon, and Jonah hobbled into the brush to eat his share of the take. No sooner had Jonah entered the brush than a terrible commotion sounded from the woods. “What on earth could possibly have happened to my little buddy NOW!” thought Linus.

Linus rushed into the brush, with little concern for danger, thinking that the little wolf had just toppled over, or was reenacting some ritual of trying to kill or play with his food before he could eat it, but not so. As Linus entered the

brush he encountered two of the largest wolverines that he had ever seen, starting to approach the wolf. Obviously they were after the bacon, and Jonah was just plain in the way. Jonah was not about to give up his newfound breakfast.

Our brave adventurer knew that he had to act quickly, so he ran to camp to grab a canoe paddle, the only reasonably close weapon he could lay eyes on at the time. He rushed headlong into the brush and started swinging at the two wolverines. Linus obviously did not know how ferocious these animals can be, nor how they hunt in pairs. No sooner had he made a swing at one of the two, than the other would dive in and lock its teeth into Linus' leg, rip some flesh and then retreat. As Linus turned instinctively to his attacker who had retreated, the other would attack in a similar fashion from the other side. Blood was streaming down Linus' legs and he felt faint.

Linus started shouting and swinging in random fashion at attackers even though he was not sure if they were within a paddle's reach. The light seemed to get fainter and fainter, and Linus soon realized that he was losing consciousness. He couldn't help himself. Down he toppled, not more than two feet from Jonah.

It seemed like only minutes had passed, when a wet tongue was felt on his face. At first he wasn't sure if it was a wolverine chewing on his face or not. He slowly opened his eyes and realized that he was staring eye to eye with his newfound friend Jonah. Linus soon realized that Jonah must have let the wolverines take the bacon, and having taken their fill, left the two wounded victims to their misery.