

Leftovers

by Barrett S.

I trail him at a fair distance. Can't have him jumping the gun too soon. At least he's going to do it out here, in the woods. Makes my job easier. Thank God for small favors. Still, we're only about 4 miles from town so I don't know how "in the woods" you could consider this place.

He steps off the gravel road and disappears into the brush. He still doesn't know I'm following. He's stomping around in the woods like a pack of elephants. He may not really be that loud to everyone else, but to me he might as well be shooting a cannon before each step. I hate cock-sure bastards like him.

I glance behind me, checking the sky. It's going that pretty orangey-purple I love so much.

No one followed us; no one's watching. And this a**hole; no one's going to miss.

I step off the road and into the brush in the same place he did. I don't even have to be all that quiet either with all the noise he's making. He's weaving in and out of the trees, heading deeper into the woods. You can only go ½ way into the woods, I think, because after that, you're heading out of them.

Thinking of him laughing in my face earlier makes me mad. I quickly check that emotion. Any other night I'd fume about it, get myself all worked up over the "I wish I had"s and the "he's lucky I didn't"s. But not tonight. No sir. Tonight's my special night; and his last night.

I feel it squirm in my guts, aroused by that last thought, and tell it to be still. It balks. I mentally jerk its leash and tell it to shut up. You'll have your fun, I say, but I have to do my thing first.

I tried to talk to him. Tried to help him. Tried to keep this from happening, but I should have known it would come to this. The forty-six people before him wouldn't listen to me so why would he? He'll make forty-seven.

I would say I'm getting tired of having to do this part, but I'm not. It's my civic duty. I am getting sick of talking to them when I find them and offer a helping hand, only to have them slap it away. Seems like all I'm going is wasting my breath.

They all thought they knew better than me. I would say I got the last laugh, but its not funny.

Death is rarely funny. And what I did to them isn't funny either; its just what I do. Dog catchers catch wild dogs; shelters put them down: I do both.

He's stopped.

I duck behind a tree, hold my breath and listen. He's getting undressed. Good. Again, this will make my job easier. Although I would prefer to be farther outside of town for this I should be thankful he's not crazy enough to do it at home, or (God forbid) in a neighborhood. Following his lead, I loosen my shoelaces but keep my shoes on. Its not time to strip... not yet. He's standing, shirtless but still wearing jeans, with his back to me, head leaned back, basking in the cool, moist air of dusk. It's the last little bit of pleasure he'll ever experience so I give him a moment to enjoy it. The crickets are starting to chirp around us and the sunlight's fading fast. I sigh. Time to quit screwing around and get this over with. The half-light has reduced my vision to a definition less world of vague shapes and muted colors. Now's as good a time as any.

I step out from behind the tree and walk toward him. My skin's starting to tingle. It's a strong sensation; not enough to make me want to scratch because I've got a tight reign on it, but anyone else would be scratching like mad out by now. He's not scratching. He's got a lot of self-control, I'll give him that, but he doesn't have enough to keep it at bay. I do.

I feel my eyes changing. My vision flutters for a second, blurring, then snaps into the enhanced acuity of a nocturnal predator.

I feel it writhing within me. It wants out, bad. I tell it to be patient and it obeys.

He finally hears me coming and turns around. He's not surprised. Not even scared. Far from it.

He's grinning from ear to ear. "You have gone and fucked up now," he says with a smile, his voice sing-songy. He's too full of himself to realize that I'm not the one who's in trouble.

I tell him that it didn't have to be this way but he's forced my hand. "I'm gonna tear you apart," he says. I'm just a few feet from him now. He growls at me, trying to scare me, but you can't out boogy the boogy man.

He glances down and sees my hands as I close the distance. Their not so much "hands" any more. More like paws with finger-like toes. I see the smile drop from his face a split second before

I wrap my right hand around his neck and hoist him up in the air. I didn't tell him I was one too, and he obviously didn't smell it on me either. Good for me; bad for him.

He claws at my forearm and kicks at my chest and stomach; but it does no good.

I feel it jumping for joy within me. It's quivering with excitement. I'm using its strength, letting it out of its cage, one paw at a time. It swells within me, filling me up and pushing me aside. I can feel its uncertainty at this. Like a dog with a treat balanced on its nose, I can feel it imploring me for permission to let it have its goodie; let it take over for a while.

He's gurgling now, fighting for breath. He sees my yellow eyes and stops fighting. I feel him give up. This is what you would call in the dog training world "submission."

The moon's not even up yet and I'm well into the change. It's an easy thing to do when you're the master instead of it. I call the shots, I hold the leash. It does what I say. He's realizing this right about now and is powerless to stop me. He won't change for a while still.

I feel my bones shifting, changing. My muscles are sliding over one another, reattaching themselves at different points on my skeleton, changing my posture, hunching me over. Making me more like it. I slow the change down, dragging it out so he can see just how "in control" I really am. I feel my ears sliding up the sides of my skull and realize I better say something before my mouth and throat change and I can't talk anymore.

"I'm sorry about this," I say with a voice that isn't my own, "I'll make it quick." His eyes go wide with fear, then dull and lifeless when I break his neck.

I didn't like him all that much, but even an a**hole like him deserves to be killed humanely. Part of him was still human, after all.

He crumples at my feet like a sack of potatoes when I let him go. Crap! Looking down at his lifeless body I notice my shoes and realize, I'm still dressed. I went and fiddle-farted around and now I'm probably going to tear my cloths up changing. Damn. At least I loosened my shoes.

As my heel shifts upward and my foot lengthens, my balance slips forward onto my toes. I step out of my shoes, leaving them neatly in place under his body. Speaking of which, his body is starting to show signs of changing.

I can see the muscles dancing under his skin. Even though he's still got a while to go until he changes completely, I reach down and grab his head with my toe-fingers and spin it around till he's looking at his own back.

Breaking his neck didn't really kill him so much as it ended his human life. So now, when he does come back, his it will be in charge. He would have no memory of what I was about to do to him, and really, this is my last gift to him. The last thing he saw as a man was the world spin into a blur as I broke his neck. The first thing his wolf will see will be my wolf's teeth ripping his throat out. This is the compromise I've worked out with my wolf. I put the man down; it puts the wolf down.

My wolf kills for sport. I kill out of mercy.

Quickly, I pull his jeans off, jerking them free of his feet and toss them over by his shirt and shoes before he craps himself. My jeans and shirt are so tight on me now I know there's no hope of wearing them out of here tomorrow morning. Even if they don't tear under the strain my changing body is putting on them, the blood I get on them will ruin them.

My fur is coming in quickly. It pours through my skin, filling the space between my body and my cloths, stretching the material even tighter. Yep. I'm definitely going to need his cloths tomorrow.

With that in mind, I kick his cloths and my shoes a little farther away from the body, just incase my pet gets a little sloppy.

He's about my size, maybe a little bigger. I think his cloths will fit me just fine. I can deal with wearing piss smelling pants for a couple hours on the drive home, but there's no way in Hell I'll be sitting in another mans feces for any amount of time.

My thighs shorten and my knees move to accommodate. My legs bow up like a dog's. Like the wolf's. I nearly double in girth. I'm also about two feet taller now. One night I scratched a tree trunk about where I thought the top of my head might be. I didn't include the ears; that would be cheating. I figure I'm about seven feet tall fully changed, give or take a couple of inches.

I return to the body and crouch down beside it. That was the last straw for my jeans and the seat gives out of with a slap-stick ripping sound. I don't care. I barely pay it any attention. I'm too busy

watching his head slowly turn back around. Ticking back to zero like an egg timer. And when it dings, dinner will be ready.

My mouth and nose push out from my face, turning into a muzzle. And with that the last of my human body is gone. I'm all nightmare now.

My wolf finishes sliding into the drivers seat, eager to do his part. I'm watching him like a hawk.

Well, more like a drivers-ed instructor. Except when he gets out of line I'm not just in control of the gas and the brake; I can snatch his ass right out of that drivers seat and make him sit in the back.

He knows this so he's on his best behavior.

Timers about to go off. Any second now.

I'm not too big on this next part so I look away. I'm not squeamish mind you. My wolf and I share in the pleasure of eating; I just prefer to think about eating something other than the skin, hair, and organs I know my wolf won't stick his nose up at. I don't have a choice in the matter anyway.

We share a body, and to a point, a mind.

Ding! Soups on, boy.

The body's eyes snap open, bright and yellow like mine, just as my wolfs jaws snap shut. "Good boy," I tell my wolf. "Eat up. You've earned it."

I'll bury whatever's left tomorrow morning.