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If werewolves exist, they don't necessarily conform to all the superstitions people have. They may even know fear....

By ALGIS BUDRYS

I
SUNSET. *They're coming for me, tonight,* he knew as he woke.

Sunset. Not really—if he were to get dressed, now, and go out on the street, the red globe would still be hanging over the cliffs of New Jersey. But the shadow of the building next door had fallen over his apartment windows, and he sleepily pushed a cigarette between his numb lips and swung his feet over the side

of the bed, fumbling with a match as he walked over to the small radio on the windowsill and turned it on. There was a double-header between the Giants and Cincinnati—the first game was probably in its last inning.

Sunset—odd, how the conditioning worked. Was it conditioning? Or were the old wives' tales not so absurd, after all? But he *could* go out in the sunlight—had done it many times. His tan proved it. He touched silver and cold

iron countless times each day, crossed running water—and he'd gone to church every Sunday, until he was twelve. No, there was a core of truth under the fantastically complex shell of nonsense, but the old limitations were not part of it. He shrugged. Neither were most of the powers.

Still, he liked to sleep in the daytime. His schedule seemed to gain an hour at night, lose one in the morning, until, almost unnoticeably, it had slipped around the clock.

He went into the bathroom while the worn tubes in the radio warmed up slowly, and washed his face, brushed his teeth, shaved. He combed his hair, then paused thoughtfully. Wouldn't do any harm. *No full moon in here, either*, he thought, looking up at the circular fluorescent tube in the ceiling, but he noticed no impediment as he coalesced, dropped to all fours, and ran his pelt against the curry-combs he had screwed to the bathroom door. He did a thorough job, enjoying it, and, after he had realigned, walked out of the bathroom in time to hear the Giants making their final, fruitless out of the first game. Five-Zero, Cincinnati, and he grimaced in disgust. Four shut-outs in

the last five games.

He laughed at himself, then, for actually being annoyed. Still and all, it wasn't the first time a man became emotionally involved in a mirage.

Was it a mirage? True, there weren't really any such things as the San Francisco Giants—but a man could certainly be expected to forget that, occasionally, if he were part of the same illusion at least half the time. And certainly, such stuff as dreams are made of is solid enough when you are yourself a dream.

He went out in the kitchen and started coffee, then came back and sat down next to the radio, hardly listening to the recap of the game.

ODD, how it had all started. Being suddenly marooned on this planet, forced to survive, somehow, through the long years while waiting for rescue. How many years had it been, now? Some five hundred thousand, in the subjective reference for this particular universe. He knew the formula for conversion into objective time—it all worked out to the equivalent of about six months—but that wasn't what mattered, as long as they'd all had to survive in *this* universe.

Sleep—suspended animation, if you wanted to call it

that—had been the only answer. And they couldn't do *that*, directly. They'd had to resort to chrysalids.

He smiled to himself, got up, and turned down the fire under the pot until the coffee was percolating softly.

The original plan had snowballed, somewhat.

Resolving chrysalids was one thing—making them eternal was another, and unnecessary. It was far simpler to arrange the chrysalids so they'd be able to reproduce themselves. And, of course, in order to survive, and take care of itself, a chrysalis had to have some independent intelligence.

And, so it worked. The chrysalis housed a sleeper, operating unawares and completely independent of him—or her—until the chrysalis wore out. Then the sleeper was passed on to a new chrysalis, with neither of the chrysalids involved—nor, for that matter, the sleeper—conscious of the transfer. So it would continue, through the weary, subjective years; generation upon generation of chrysalids, until, finally, the paramathematical path drifted back to touch this universe, and the sleepers could wake, and continue their journey.

And if the human race chose to speculate on its ori-

gins in the meantime, well, that was part of the snowball.

He got up again, and turned off the flame under the coffee-pot. *Now, if I were a sorcerer—as defined by Cotton Mather's ilk, of course—, he thought, I should be able to (a) turn the fire off without getting up, or, (b) generate the flame without the use of Con Edison's gas, or, (c), if I had any self-respect at all, conjure hot coffee out of thin air.* His lips twisted with nausea as he thought that nine out of ten people would expect him to be drinking blood, as a matter of course.

He sighed with some bitterness, but more of resignation. Well, that was just another part of the snowball.

Because the chrysalids had done a magnificent job in all three of its subdivisions. They had kept the sleepers safe—and reproduced, and used their intelligence to survive. They had survived in spite of pestilence, famine, and flood—by learning enough to wipe out the first two, and control the third. It would seem that progress was not a special quality to be specially desired. Most of the chrysalids were consumed by a fierce longing for the Good Old Days, as a matter of fact. It was merely the inescapable

accretion to sheer survival.

And so came civilization. With civilization: recreation. In short, the San Francisco Giants, and— He reached over, suddenly irritated at the raspy-voiced and slightly frantic recapitulation of the lost ballgame, and changed the station. And Beethoven.

He relaxed, smiling slightly at himself once again, and let the music sing to him. Chrysalids, eh? Well, they certainly weren't his kind of life, free to swing from star to star, riding the great flux of Creation from universe to universe. But whence Beethoven? Whence Rembrandt, Da Vinci, and Will Shakespeare, hunched over a mug of ale and dashing off genius on demand, with half an eye on the serving wench?

He shook his head. What would happen to this people, when the sleepers woke?

The snowball. Ah, yes, the snowball. That was a good part of it—and he and his kind were another.

If we had known, he thought. If we had known how it would be...?

But, they hadn't known. It had been just a petty argument, at first. Nobody knew, now, who had started it. But there were two well-defined sides, now, and he was an Insurgent, for some reason. The

winning side gives the names that stick. *They* were Watchers—an honorable name, a name to conjure up trust, and duty, and loyalty. And he was an Insurgent. Well, let it stand. Accept the heritage of dishonor and hatred. Somewhere, sometime, a gage was flung, and he was heir to the challenge.

The chrysalids solved the problem of survival, of course. But the problem of rescue had remained. For rescue, in the sense of help from an outside agency, would be disastrous. When the path shifted back, they had to learn of it themselves, and go on of their own accord—or go into slavery. For there is one currency that outlives document and token. Personal obligation. And, if they were so unlucky as to have an actual rescuer, the obligation would be high—prohibitively so.

The solution had seemed simple, at first. In each generation of chrysalids, there would be one aware individual—one Watcher, to keep guard, and to waken the rest should the path drift back in the lifetime of his chrysalis. Then, when that particular chrysalis wore out, the Watcher would be free to return to sleep, while another took his place.

His mouth twisted to one

side as he took a sip of coffee.

A simple, workable plan—until someone had asked, "Well and good. Excellent. And what if this high-minded Watcher realizes that we, asleep, are all in his power? What if he makes some agreement with a rescuer, or, worse still, decides to *become* our rescuer when the path drifts back? What's to prevent him, eh? No," that long-forgotten, wary individual had said, "I think we'd best set some watchers to watch the Watcher."

Quis custodiet?

What had it been like? He had no way of knowing, for he had no memory of his exact identity. That would come only with Awakening. He had only a knowledge of his heritage. For all he knew, it had been he who raised the fatal doubt—or, had been the first delegated Watcher. He shrugged. It made no difference. He was an Insurgent now.

But he could imagine the voiceless babel among their millions—the argument, the cold suspicion, the pettiness. Perhaps he was passing scornful judgment on himself, he realized. What of it? He'd earned it.

So, finally, two groups. One content to be trustful. And

the other a fitful, restless clan, awakening sporadically, trusting to chance alone, which, by its laws, would insure that many of them were awake when the path drifted back. The Insurgents.

So, as well, two basic kinds of chrysalids. The human kind, and the others. Wolves, bears, tigers. Bats, seals—every kind of living thing, except the human. The Insurgent kind.

And so the struggle began. It was a natural outgrowth of the fundamental conflict. Which side had tried to overpower the first chrysalis? *Who first enslaved another man?* he thought, and half-snarled.

That, too, was unimportant now. For the seed had been planted. The thought was there. *Those who are awake can place those who sleep under obligation.* Control the chrysalids, and you control the sleepers within. But chrysalids endure for one generation, and then the sleepers pass on.

What then? Simplicity. Group your chrysalids. Segregate them. Set up pens for them, mark them off, and do it so the walls and fences endure through long years.

This is my country. All men are brothers, but stay on your side of the line, brother.

Sorry, brother—you've got a funny shape to your nose. You just go live in that nice, walled-off part of my city, huh, brother?

Be a good fellow, brother. Just move to the back of the bus, or I'll lynch you, brother.

And the chrysalis die, the sleepers transfer—into 'another chrysalis in the same pen. *SPQR. Vive, Napoleon! Sieg Heil!*

SOME of the time it was the Watchers. Some of the time it was the Insurgents. And some of the time, of course, the chrysalids evolved their own leaders, and imitated. For, once the thing had begun, it could not be stopped. The organization was always more powerful than the scattered handful. So, the only protection against organization was organization.

But it was not organization in itself that was the worst of it. It was the fact that the only way to control the other side's penned chrysalids was to break down a wall in the pen, or to build a larger pen including many of the smaller ones.

And, again, it was too late, now, to decide who had been at fault.

Who first invented War?

The way to survive war is to wage more decisive war.

The chrysalids had to survive. They learned. They... progressed?... by so doing. They progressed from bows to ballistas to bombs. From arbalests to aircraft to A-bombs. Phosphorus. Chlorine. HE. Fragmentation. Napalm. Dust, and bacteriological warfare. Thermopylae, Crecy, the Battle of Britain, Korea, Indo-China, Indonesia.

And try to believe as you sit here, Insurgent, that none of this is real, that it is all a phase, acted out by dolls of your own creation in a sham battle that is really only a bad dream in the unfamiliar bed of a lodging for the night!

Chrysalids they might be, Insurgent, he lashed himself, but it was the greed and suspicion of all your kind—Insurgent and Watcher alike—that set this juggernaut to rolling!

He took another sip of coffee, and almost gagged as he realized it had grown cold. He got up and walked into the kitchen with the cup in his hand. He threw the rest of the coffee in the sink, washed out the cup, and turned on the burner under the coffeepot.

One more thing—one more development, born of suspicion.

For the original one-Watcher plan had been abandoned,

of course. And here, again, there was no telling whose blame it was. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodies?* Who will watch the Watchers? There had been many Watchers to a generation—how many, no one knew. They balanced each other off, and they checked the random number of Insurgents who awoke in each generation. So, more Insurgents awoke to check the Watchers—and, more.

In spite of what the Transylvanians believed, a wolf is no match for a man, except under special conditions. A tiger can pull a man down—but cannot fire back at the hunters. A seal is prey to the Eskimo.

So, "werewolves." Child of fear, of Watcher propaganda, and of one-tenth fact. The animals were Insurgent chrysalids, right enough. But, for an awake Insurgent to compete with a Watcher, the Insurgent, too, had to be a man—or something like it.

The coffee had warmed up. He poured himself a fresh cup, and added cream and sugar absently. The refrigerator was empty. He reached in and turned it off. No more need for that, after tonight.

So, that was the power the Insurgents had. The only power, and the Watchers had it, as well. They could resolve

their chrysalids into any form they chose—realign. A wolf could become a man—*without* hair on his palm, and *with* garlic on his breath, if he so chose. A man—a Watcher, of course—could become a wolf.

Thus, the final development. Espionage and counter-espionage. Infiltration. Spying, if you chose.

The Insurgent smiled bitterly, and drained the cup. And propaganda, of course. Subtle—most of it indirect, a good deal of it developed by the chrysalids themselves, but propaganda, nevertheless. Kill the evil ones—kill the eaters of dead flesh, the drinkers of blood. They are the servants of the Evil One.

He almost retched.

But, you could hardly blame them. It was a war, and, in a war, you play all your cards, even if some of them were forced into your hand.

Yes, and I've played genuine werewolf on occasion, when I had to.

He started to wash the coffeepot and the cup—then, threw both into the garbage can. He walked back to the radio and dialed it away from Eroica and back to baseball. The Giants were losing, Three-Zero, in the third inning.

The house phone buzzed. He went to it slowly, picked

it calmly off the hook.

"Yes, Artie?"

"Mister Disbrough, there's a couple of guys coming up to see you. I'm not supposed to tell you about it, but... Well, I figured..." the doorman said.

"All right. Thanks, Artie," he answered quietly. He almost hung up, then thought of something. "Artie?"

"Yes, Mister Disbrough?"

"There'll be a couple of fifths of Dewar's in my cupboard. I won't be back for a while. You and Pete are welcome to them. And thanks again."

He hung up and began to dress, realigning his chrysalis to give him the appearance of clothing. The doorbell rang, and he went to open it for the two men from the FBI.

II

WHAT DIFFERENCE did it make, what particular pen he represented? Rather, since the sober-faced men knew very well which pen it was, why should it be so necessary to them for him to confirm what they already knew without a shadow of a doubt?

"Now, then, Mister Disbrough," one of the FBI men said, leaning his hands on the edge of the table at which the

Insurgent was sitting, "we know who sent you."

Good. Why bother me, then?

"We know where you got your passport, we know who met you at the dock, we know your contacts. We have photographs of everyone you've met and talked to, we have tapes of every telephone call you've made or received. We also know that you are the top man in your organization here."

And? They were chrysalids, every one of them. Perhaps there was no Watcher behind them—perhaps. But he'd been picked up a little too quickly. The net had folded itself around him too soon. No—there had to be a Watcher. He wished they'd stop this talking and bring him out.

"Now, I'd simply like to point out to you that this is an airtight case. No lawyer in the world will be able to break it down. You'll retain counsel, of course. But, I'd simply like to point out to you that there'll be no point to any denial you may make to us. We *know* what you've been doing. I'd suggest you save your defense for the trial."

He looked up at him and smiled ruefully. "If you've got a list of charges," he said, "I'll be glad to confess to all

of them—provided, of course, that it is a complete list.”

I'm sure it doesn't list me as a werewolf, he thought. I wonder what the sentence would be—death by firing squad equipped with silver bullets?

But, then, he wasn't going to confess to that, anyway.

“Um!” The FBI man looked suspicious. Obviously, he'd expected nothing of the kind.

“No strings,” the Insurgent reassured him. “The job's over, and it's time to punch the clock.”

Which was just about the way it was. But he wanted that Watcher. If he was in the office at all, he'd almost have to come out to witness the confession. After all, the Insurgent was supposed to be a pretty big fish.

The FBI man went into a cubicle office set off to one side. When he came out, carrying a sheaf of paper, the Watcher was with him.

The Insurgent felt the hackles standing up on the back of his neck, and something rumbled inaudibly at the base of his throat. He knew. He could tell. He could smell Watcher every step of the way, from the day he had docked until now, when the scent—half there, half the pure intuition of instinct—rose up before him in an over-

powering wave.

Then he saw the look of distaste crawl across the Watcher's face, and he barked a laugh that drew curious looks from the men in the office. *Hello, brother.*

He saw the bulge of the hip holster on the Watcher's belt, and laughed again. *So, we play the game, he thought. We add up scores, and, in the end, the side with the most points wins. Forget that there should be no sides, that every point, no matter for whom scored, is a mark of shame and disgrace.*

He wondered, briefly, whether the Watcher was of his kind by choice, or whether it was simply something that had happened, as it was with him. Probably. Two separate heritages had met, represented by identical individuals who happened to have awakened in dissimilar chrysalids.

Will we remember? he wondered. *When we awaken, will we remember this? How we battled, blinded, in the shadows of our own casting? Or was there more mercy in Creation than they, themselves, had shown to the chrysalids? He had three brothers among the sleepers. When they woke, would they embrace, not remembering that each had killed the other countless*

times? Or forgetting that they had stood together, on some battlefield? Would all the old comrades, all the bitter enemies, be wiped from memory? He hoped so. With every segment of his being, he hoped so, for there was no peace, through eternity, if it was otherwise.

He stood up, lightly, tensing the muscles in his calves. The FBI men, suddenly alert, began to move for him, but he'd maneuvered things so that none of them were close enough to him.

The Watcher went pale.

"Shall I coalesce, brother?" the Insurgent asked, the words rumbling out of his throat, a grin of derision baring his teeth.

"No!" The Watcher was completely frightened. Words could be explained away, particularly if they sounded like nonsense to the other men in the room. But a werewolf, fanging the throat of a Watcher who would have to fight back with *his* spectacular weapons... Nothing in the world could keep the rumors

from spreading. The chrysalids might even learn, finally and irrevocably, the origin of their species.

"Your obligation, brother," the Insurgent half-laughed, and kept stalking toward the Watcher. *Perhaps he is my brother.*

And if he is...?

No difference. The shadows are thick and very dark. One of the other men shot him in the side, but he sprang for the Watcher, carefully human, to hold the Watcher to his debt, and the Watcher shot him three times in the chest, once in the throat, and once in the stomach.

The shape of a cross? Did he believe it himself? Was it true? A plus sign, cancelling a negative force? Who knew? Shadow, shadow, all is darkness.

He fell to his knees, coughing, in victory. Score one more for the Insurgents, and a Watcher, at that!

"Thank you, brother," the Insurgent murmured, and fell into the long sleep with a grateful sigh.

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