

CHAPTER ONE
Freddy Lupin



A werewolf is only actually a *wolf* for one night each month, when the moon is full. Anyone can tell when a wolf is a wolf, but how exactly do you spot a *boy* who is a wolf? That is the challenge for a wolf hunter, as Dr Foxwell Cripp would tell anyone who would listen to him (which wasn't many people).

One clue is to look for hairs growing in the palm of the hand. Frederick Poncenby Lupin had them. Right there, a little black tuft in the middle of each palm. Frederick was called Freddy by most people, but not

by his uncle. He called him ‘that foolster Frederick!’

His uncle was the terrifying (and *very* hairy) Sir Hotspur Lupin, Lord Mayor of Milford. He was also the Grand Growler and High Howler of the Hidden Moonlight Gathering of Werefolk. In other words, he was the most pompous and powerful werewolf in Britain, and he couldn’t look at Freddy without becoming purple with anger.

Sir Hotspur liked everything to be just so. Freddy was always doing and saying the wrong thing whenever his uncle was around. And just as often when he wasn’t. Only last month he had accidentally put superglue on his uncle’s hairbrush. It was a mistake anybody could have made.

‘It wasn’t me anyway,’ Freddy had tried to lie. Sir Hotspur wasn’t fooled. Nor did he see the funny side of walking around for a week with a hairbrush stuck to his head. Freddy, on the other hand, had seen the funny side so much that he had lain down on the floor, banged his fist and cried with laughter. He had of course been banished to his room for the rest of the day. Again.

‘You, sir, are a foolster!’ Uncle Hotspur bellowed. ‘You will bring shame upon the Werepack of Lupin. If you don’t transform into the world’s most ridiculous

werewolf one day, I'll eat my trousers. Eat 'em, sir!

Relations with Uncle Hotspur had never been good.

They were about to become much, much worse.



'Where are you, little pink piggies? Wolfie is coming,' Freddy called as he ran.

It was a Saturday and the morning of his 121st birthday. (In Wolfen time, each month is counted. It makes ten years and one month for a human pup.) He had already run around the house three times, shouting triumphantly.

The *house* was in fact a castle, Farfang Castle, the home of the Lupin Pack. It was an ancient building, three storeys high and complete with battlements, a tower and a moat. Across the moat was a wooden bridge where a drawbridge had once stood. It was very grand, but to Freddy it was just home. The castle was surrounded by perfect lawns and rose gardens, beyond which was a dense wood. A high stone wall and gates protected the grounds from unwanted eyes, eyes that might see things to make their owner's hair stand on end.

Sometimes a visitor (who of course knew the Lupins only as a respectable family and not as *wolves*) was invited to visit the Mayor. After entering the large front door, they found themselves in the Great Hall, whose walls were covered with spears, swords, stags' heads and tapestries. On their tour they found that the castle was a square shape, with an open courtyard and an ornamental fountain at the centre. On the far side of the castle was the kitchen and next to it a narrow stone corridor that led to the tower. At the top of this tower, as far from the grandest rooms as it was possible to be, was Freddy's bedroom, to which Uncle Hotspur never took anyone at all. It was the very room to which he regularly banished his annoying nephew.

'I'm going to find you, piggies. I know you took my chocolate!' Freddy yelled again.

He charged up the servants' staircase that led from the kitchen to the main bedrooms but couldn't find the Pukesome Twosome anywhere.

The Pukesome Twosome were Uncle Hotspur's twin nine-year-old children: Harriet, a girl, and Chariot, a boy. The Disgusting Duo, the Putrid Pair. Freddy couldn't stand them. They were always sneaking and snitching around. They couldn't resist playing snidey tricks on him and *he* was the one who always ended up

being grounded by Sir Hotspur. But Freddy had one advantage over them: one day he would transform into a werewolf but they never would. (It will be explained soon why that was so.) It was a fact that made Sir Hotspur fume. It made the twins' eyes go narrow with envy. And it was making Freddy grin with delight, for the day that would become his Great Night was here at last.

As any werepup can tell you, the full moon on your 121st birthday is the most exciting night of your life. It is the Night of the Grand Growling, the High Howling. The night of the Moonlight Gathering of Werefolk and the Blood-Red Hunt. Most importantly for Freddy, it was the night of his Transwolfation, when he would become a wolf for the first time. He was going to show his uncle and the Putrid Pair that he was a wolf to be feared and admired.

Right at this moment, however, all he wanted was his chocolate back.

Freddy ran past his cousins' bedrooms on the first floor, towards the front of the castle, and arrived at the Red Stairs to take his usual shortcut. This was the grand main staircase, which swept down in a curve to the centre of the Great Hall. The stairs earned their name hundreds of years ago, when they had run red

with blood during the Battle of Farfang Castle in 1396. The feats of Freddy's ancestor Sir Rathbone de Lupinne as he fought off his enemies were famous among werewolf. In human form, he had defeated twenty men in order to save his pack. His bloody victory was recorded in a tapestry that hung from the Great Hall's main wall. The actual suit of armour Sir Rathbone had worn on that brave day stood at the top of the stairs. His heavy sword was still held by the hollow metal glove. Legend said that one day that sword would once again save werewolf from destruction. But Freddy wasn't thinking about legends at that moment, only chocolate – he almost knocked the armour over as he barged past. He sat on the banister and slid down at high speed.

'Freddy the Fearless flies again,' he bellowed as he shot down the rail. At the bottom he took off through the air and landed smack in the centre of Sir Hotspur's large stomach, which, with its owner, happened to be passing. The stomach gave a mighty belch and Sir Hotspur fell backwards.

'Groof!' cried his uncle, as he landed heavily on his backside. The sheets of his morning newspaper flew around his head.

'It wasn't me!' Freddy immediately cried out, looking

around for an excuse. He couldn't see anything or anybody else to blame. 'Farts!' he whispered to himself with a nervous giggle. Uncle Hotspur was still searching for breath. 'Sorry,' Freddy added unconvincingly when he saw there was no escape.

He tried to help by pulling on the sleeve of his uncle's jacket. Sir Hotspur bashed him away with a rolled-up section of newspaper.

'Step away, sir! Meddlesome menace,' cried Sir Hotspur. 'I'll be a pickled fish if you have any of Sir Rathbone's blood in your veins, sir. Pickled, I say!'

Freddy sighed. He was sick of hearing about Sir Rathbone and how little he resembled him. He tried to collect the sheets of newspaper that lay all over the floor, but he picked them up just as his uncle stood on them and they tore into shreds. He handed the mess over with what he hoped was a charming smile.

The hairs on Sir Hotspur's palms shivered with annoyance as he clambered to his feet. He snatched the pieces of paper and his nostrils flared. His long red moustache trembled as he pointed at Freddy.

'I'll have no flying through the air in this castle,' he gasped angrily. 'No sliding, running or leaping!'

'And no fun,' Freddy said under his breath.

'What's that?' his uncle roared.

‘Nothing.’ Freddy tried to look innocent.

‘You’d better pull up your socks, boy, if you ever mean to be a wolf,’ Sir Hotspur growled, shaking his head.

Freddy bent down and pulled up his socks.

‘How’s that?’ he beamed.

His uncle snarled. Before he could reply there was a loud bang on the oak front door.

‘Lord and Lady Whitehorn!’ Sir Hotspur cried, instantly forgetting his irritating nephew. He was delighted that so many important werewolf would be attending the High Howling in Farfang Castle. He thrust the tattered paper at Freddy and went to welcome his guests.

‘Clear off to your room and stay out of my way!’ he called back over his shoulder. ‘I’ll have no foolster ruining my Great Night.’

‘It’s *my* Great Night, actually,’ Freddy muttered under his breath, puffing out his belly and doing a rather good impersonation of his uncle’s fat stomach. He was quite happy to race upstairs, however. He had no intention of wasting the day meeting dull old bores who did nothing more than sit around being amazed at how much he had grown.

Freddy was banished to his room in the old tower

on most days. Alone in his room, he would often look at a photograph of his father Flasheart, who had died when Freddy was a small pup not quite four years old (in human time). Flasheart, who had been most unlike his brother Hotspur, looked back from the photograph with a smile. Freddy could only remember him a little and his mother not at all, for she had died when he was a baby.

Flasheart's fate was a warning. Werewolves have a nasty and terrifying reputation and though this is unfair they must live in secret, for humans can be ignorant and suspicious. Some, like the dreaded Dr Foxwell Cripp, can be downright dangerous. It was he who had discovered and shot Freddy's father with a silver bullet. Every werepup listened in terror to tales of the evil Cripp.

Freddy stood in front of his mirror and held up the photograph. He looked at his father and then at himself. They both had green eyes and strangely spiky, totally uncontrollable black hair. Their ears stuck out a little. Freddy flexed his non-existent muscles and posed like a great warrior.

'I'm going to be a great werewolf too, Dad, just like you,' Freddy told the photograph. 'And you'll be proud of me because . . . because . . .'

He couldn't think of a good reason and for a moment he began to worry. Perhaps Uncle Hotspur was right about him. He wished his father was with him on his Great Night; he was a little frightened of his Transwolfation. He gathered his courage again, leapt onto his bed and cried defiantly:

'You *will* be proud, Dad, because tonight Freddy the invincible, the fearsome, the heroic . . . will transform!'

It was going to be the greatest night of his life.

'The mighty blood of Sir Rathbone, Werewolf Hero, runs through my veins,' he declared. 'Well, it *does!*' he added, as if trying to convince someone.

He looked at the photograph once again. He *could* be as brave as his father, he was sure of it.

'So, Uncle Hotspur get ready . . . to eat your trousers! Eat 'em, sir!'

He laughed and flopped onto his back. Staring at the ceiling, a great notion struck him.

'With ketchup on! Because I'm going to be a great wolf, not ridiculous.'