

CHAPTER TWO  
*The Slide of Doom*



Now and then, right through history, werewolf have married humans. As a result, some children – called the Fangen – will transform into wolves, but others are almost human and will not. They are called Werens. There were four Fangen in Freddy’s werewolf pack: Freddy, his father, Uncle Hotspur and Aunt Helda (who had heard the Final Howl years before). Harriet and Chariot were Werens and could never transform. Their palms were perfectly pink and smooth.

There are no rules about who will or won’t become

wolves. Freddy's mother had been completely human and yet Freddy would experience the Transwolfation. Both the twins' parents had been wolves and yet their pups were nearly human. It just happens that way, but Sir Hotspur saw it as a personal humiliation. The fact that it was Freddy inheriting the Fangen blood was an even greater insult.

'It's an outrage!' Sir Hotspur had roared only yesterday, glaring at Freddy, who had just walked dog dirt over every carpet in the castle. (And above all else a werewolf despises a dog.) Freddy had been playing with a stray dog that had somehow found a way into the grounds. This was very unusual, for normally dogs avoided Farfang Castle in terror. He had fed the animal, but didn't notice that he'd stepped in the stray's *number twos*. He was standing in front of his outraged uncle with the poo still on his shoe before he realised.

'But it was hungry . . .' Freddy tried to explain. The poor animal had fled at the smell of his furious uncle.

'It is a *dog*, sir! A dog! Not fit to be in our presence and yet you . . .' Hotspur came to a stop. There were no words for his disgust.

'I don't see what's so wrong with dogs. After all, we're *wolves*, it's not so different . . .'

‘A wolf is a *noble* being, sir!’ Uncle Hotspur’s face was sweating with fury. ‘We are not animals! I will not have an animal in my castle, sir! Never! Why should *you* transform? You are a foolster!’ Sir Hotspur shuddered with disgust. He hated the fact that it was Freddy who carried the wolf blood of Sir Rathbone in his veins and not his own pups. Freddy, as usual, had been banished to his room.



That was yesterday, and now – on his birthday – Freddy was banished to his room at the top of the tower yet *again*. And he was bored.

‘Bored, bored, bored, bored, bored, bored!’ he bellowed down the spiral stairs. ‘*Bored!*’ he added, throwing himself onto his bed.

His TV and computer had been confiscated the week before, as punishment for dropping a water-filled balloon onto his uncle’s head. (He had been aiming for Harriet, but she had outwitted him as usual.) He had tried to read, but it was no use – he was far too excited about the High Howling and his Transwolfation. In the end he had no other option. It was time to ride the Slide of Doom.

He dragged a huge metal tray from behind his cupboard. It was big enough for a grown man to sit on. In fact, one of Freddy's best memories of his father was of them sitting on the tray together. Flasheart Lupin had invented the Slide of Doom when he was a boy. Freddy dragged the tray to the doorway, placed it on the floor and sat on it. Below him the long steep spiral staircase went all the way down to the ground floor. The ride ended by racing down the passage next to the kitchen and through a doorway into the central courtyard.

Freddy sat on the tray, daring himself to push off. He had been absolutely, permanently and totally banned from the Slide of Doom by Sir Hotspur. It was too *undignified* for a wolf, especially a Lupin. But Uncle Hotspur simply didn't know how to have fun. And anyway . . . he would never know, would he?

'Doom to boring Uncle Hotair!' Freddy pushed off with a cry of delight.

He held tightly onto the tray's handles as the metal sheet shot down over the ancient stone steps. His straight black hair stood on end with the speed of the ride and his grin was enormous. Not even his sticky-out ears could slow him down. The spirals were so tight that Freddy went round and round like bathwater shooting down a plughole.

‘Yoo-woo!’ he howled. ‘Fantabulous.’

Then, as usual, everything went wrong.

Freddy shot out of the bottom of the staircase straight towards Sir Hotspur and Lord and Lady Whitehorn, who were being given a grand tour of the castle.

‘Look out!’ yelled Freddy.

‘Let me save you, Lady Whitehorn,’ cried Sir Hotspur, picking up the tiny lady chivalrously.

Too late!

Freddy whacked into his uncle for the second time that day. Sir Hotspur fell back onto the tray, knocking Freddy off and letting out a great ‘Gr-oomf!’ as Lady Whitehorn landed on his lap. The pair flew down the corridor towards the courtyard, looking rather surprised.

A little scream came from Lady Whitehorn as they shot out of the open door and came to rest in the ornamental pond with a small splash. A stone fountain shaped like a boy peed water onto Sir Hotspur’s furious red face. Lady Whitehorn threw a goldfish off her lap with a growl.

‘I had no wish for a swim, Lupin!’

‘Whoops . . .’ Freddy croaked. Nobody could be in more trouble than him at that precise moment.

‘Well, actually, you’re supposed to steer left at the last minute,’ he instructed helpfully, ‘or else you end up in the pond.’

‘I’m going to mash you, sir. Mashed like a potato, boiled and peeled. I’ll serve you up for dog food. I’ll . . . I’ll . . .’ Sir Hotspur stood in the pond, pointing a finger at his nephew and looking more than half wolf already. Freddy didn’t wait for his uncle’s potato threats to be carried out. He sprinted back up to his tower room as fast as he could and dived under his bed in a rather unheroic manner.

Freddy soon heard angry footsteps climbing the stairs. ‘Great howls,’ he croaked. What would his uncle do now?



‘Well, what do you have to say for yourself, young man?’

Freddy sighed with relief when he heard it was only Mrs Mutton the housekeeper. She was a Weren and had looked after him since he could remember. She had adored Flasheart, had a very big soft spot for Freddy, and no time at all for Sir Hotspur, who was actually a little afraid of the fat old lady. She could always be relied on to stick up for Freddy against

his horrid uncle. This time, however, Freddy did not come out from under the bed.

‘Old Hotair says you must stay in your room until midnight,’ Mrs Mutton informed the dark space under the bed.

‘But that’s not fair, I’ll miss my party. *Ouch!*’ Freddy hit his head on the bed as he jumped with fury.

‘Freddy Lupin! The most important werewolf in Britain will be there. You can’t be trusted to behave yourself,’ she said crossly.

‘Well, actually, I can. Can, can, can, can!’ he grumbled. ‘I always behave myself. *Actually.*’

Mrs Mutton snorted an incredulous laugh. ‘Remember, young pup, it’s not just *your* party tonight. The Fang Council will also be discussing next month’s re-election of the Grand Growler. Hotspur’s sure to win again, but he won’t trust you not to ruin everything.’

‘Humph,’ replied Freddy. ‘It’s not my fault he can’t steer. Dad could do it.’

‘I bet Lady Whitehorn is already too cross to vote for him,’ the old lady smiled.

Freddy laughed.

‘What would your father say about tipping your uncle into the pond?’ the housekeeper demanded, peering under the bed.

‘Good shot!’ Freddy answered cheekily.

Mrs Mutton looked at the ceiling in despair.

‘It’s your first Transwolfation tonight, Freddy,’ she continued seriously. ‘It’s time to stop behaving like a foolish pup and think about what you owe to your family. To the memory of your father, and to Sir Rathbone.’

Freddy went silent as his stomach started to churn with nerves.

‘It’s time to grow up, pup, and think of others besides yourself! As much as I hate to admit it, Sir Hotair does a great job as Grand Growler. You must behave yourself tonight.’

Freddy closed his eyes. He was half ecstatic about the night to come and half terrified.

‘Well, Freddy,’ Mrs Mutton sighed when he didn’t answer. ‘Happy birthday. If you won’t come out, I’ll send your present in.’ With that she slid a nicely wrapped present under the bed and her footsteps disappeared downstairs again.

Freddy unwrapped it eagerly.

‘A Gameboy! Fantabulous!’ It was exactly what he had wanted. Mrs Mutton was the best ever.

Freddy squirmed out from under his bed to thank the old lady and flung open his bedroom door.

Suddenly he was flying, but not in a good way.

‘Arrggh!’ he cried, as he sprawled through the air and fell down the top few steps. The Gameboy fell from his grasp and clattered down and down the spiral stairs. He looked back in fury to see Harriet and Chariot smiling at him evilly.

‘Enjoy your trip, Fred-er-rick-smell-of-sick?’ sang the twins happily.

‘You could have killed me!’ Freddy yelled in outrage.

‘As if we’d be so lucky,’ Harriet snorted. ‘You’re in trouble now, dunderbrain.’

‘Who asked *you*, piggy?’

Harriet ignored him and breezed into his room.

‘Hey, stay out!’ Freddy cried, struggling to rise as Chariot followed his sister.

Both the twins had tiny blue eyes and red hair, like their father. They were pink and plump like two piglets, a fact that Freddy was always cruelly happy to point out. They never ran, shouted, skidded or spat, never farted at the dinner table or spoke with their mouths full, never wiped snot on their sleeves, flew down the banister into Sir Hotspur’s stomach, or threw Lady Whitehorn into the pond. In fact, they never did any of the things Freddy did that drove his uncle wild.

'You put that down! That's private property,' Freddy cried in fury as Harriet picked up the photograph of his father. It was usually hidden when they were around.

The twins' eyes flashed wide with delight as they looked at each other. They had discovered a new torture for their cousin.

Freddy tried to grab the photograph from Harriet but she jumped onto the bed and dangled it out of reach. Just as he almost caught her, Chariot took the photograph and stuck his hand out of the window.

'Does Freddy-Sicky want his daddy?' he taunted. 'Will he cry-ee?'

'Give it back, fart-breath, or you'll be sorry!' Freddy demanded furiously as he made a lunge for the photograph.

'Bye-bye, daddy . . . ' Chariot said, as he let the photograph fall. The twins babbled with laughter as it caught on the wind and flew away.

'That was a' – Freddy couldn't think of a word bad enough – 'despicagusting thing to do.'

The twins continued laughing.

'Putrid pink pair!' Freddy shouted, picking up a pillow. He chased them into the staircase and began to aim blows at them.

‘Oh help!’ scoffed Harriet. ‘A pillow? You are so totally not scary.’

‘You’ll never be a wolf like my dad,’ taunted Chariot.

‘No, I won’t!’ raged Freddy. ‘I won’t be *fat* like your dad. I’ll be a hero like Sir Rathbone and brave like *my* dad. At midnight you’ll see! I’ll make you shiver in your shoes, pink piggies. Look what’s happening.’

Freddy held up his hand. The twins stopped laughing as the hairs on his palm twitched and curled over.

‘See? I’m getting ready,’ Freddy said with a gleam in his eye. He dropped his voice to an icy whisper. ‘My blood is getting warmer. And when it’s red-hot, I’ll look at the moon and . . . Yooo-woo! That’s when you’ll see I am 100 per cent wolf, not like you pathetic pink Werens. You’d better be hiding, too, because I’ll be coming to bite your farty pink backsides.’ Chariot opened his eyes with terror, but Harriet stuck her nose in the air and flounced down the stairs.

‘Oh yes! Ha-ha-hardy-ha!’ cried Freddy in triumph, aiming a final whack of his pillow at Chariot as he followed his sister. ‘Just wait till midnight, little piggies. This big bad wolf is going to blow your house down.’ He slammed his door with a flourish and then,

remembering the Gameboy, opened it again and ran down the stairs. His birthday present was broken into five jagged pieces.

Freddy vowed to be the most terrifying wolf in the history of Wolfenkind. He was going to teach the Pukesome Twosome a lesson they would never forget.