

# Constrictum

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## Chapter One

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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I remember the first time I tried to escape. No one ever forgets what that feels like. I can remember every little detail from the time I left my room to the time I was returned to it.

The rest of the day before my attempt was blurry. Only one thought stood out in my mind: freedom. It wasn't freedom from what I was; that kind of freedom I knew would never come. Maybe it was the idea of being able to live. Actually live, not just exist.

It was foolish, actually. I had only been here a month, and already I wanted to get out. But of course, I was a year younger then, and it does me no good to think about how foolish I was then or what I should have done differently.

The plans weren't even that carefully laid out. I have to tell you now: If you're planning to escape from any kind of captivity, you'd better plan for a good six months in advance. Not getting caught is probably also a good idea, but I guess you already knew that. Really, I had just got it in my head three days before that I had a chance of escaping.

Truly, I don't know how I got to the surface without being caught. I think I made entirely too much noise. All that matters I guess is that I got at least that far.

I had carefully placed the cover for the ground opening back down, concealing the dark hole and the ladder that lead down it. Seriously, they could have been more inventive. It looked like the opening to a sewer system. Of course, I reminded myself, they didn't think of us as much more than sewage. It fit.

As I recall, back then I hadn't come to terms with what I was yet. I still thought of myself as human, which was only half-true.

No one had ever actually told me the details of my condition. I had to figure that out by myself, day by day. And everyday, I learned more about what I could and couldn't do. Knowing now what I only thought I knew then, I'm surprised that I'm still alive after all the crap I pulled.

The ground was uneven beneath my feet, and I stumbled along blindly.

It was so constricting dark that night. There were no lights on the surface. They really didn't need them to tell the truth. Living things were rarely found on the surface.

I knew there were walls somewhere. I had seen them when they carried me in a month before, only half-conscious.

So I stumbled along with my hands outstretched. I imagined the sight I would have looked had anyone been watching (or more importantly, if they could see in this cursed darkness).

A short time later, the cover opened. I could hear its hinges creak, resounding like a gunshot to my ears.

Someone shouted. Frightened, I picked up my pace until I was nearly running. The ground was more uneven here, and I hoped that meant that the walls were nearing.

I fell once, but stood up and kept going. There was more shouting, this time closer, and I knew that my pursuers had heard me. Silently, I cursed myself.

Suddenly I bumped into something cold, solid, and undeniably hard. It dazed me for a second before I was able to regain my bearings and figure out what it was.

Shakily, my fingers grazed across the surface of what I guessed was a wall. Handholds materialized beneath my fingers. As I grasped them, I was sure that they would be able to find me just by the sound of my rapidly beating heart.

The moment my hands wrapped around the bars, blinding pain erupted through my body. I fought the urge to cry out.

My every pore felt afire. Telling myself that this was the only way, I started to climb and hardened my reserve.

Everytime I let go of one bar to grab another or lifted my foot to put it on another bar, the pain started afresh. My breath came in ragged pulls, and I prayed to whatever deity that had left me here like this that they wouldn't hear me.

Too late. Cruel laughter floated up to me. I grimaced because I knew that voice.

"You won't get far, girl," it said mercilessly. I gritted my teeth and grabbed the next handhold up.

My fingers wouldn't hold it. They refused to close around the bar. Frightened now, I tried to bring the other up, and it did the same. Now I was only balancing on my feet, which were resting on a very slim bar.

I cried out as I fell backwards. The last thing I remember hearing before the world went black was that cruel laughter.

When I woke up a few days later, I was under the care of what I assumed amounted to our version of a doctor.

He was moving about the room, collecting different jars of substances and pooling them on a counter. I tried to say something, but it only came out as a muffled choking noise. Starting, he looked over at me and sniggered.

"Oh, you're awake. I must fetch someone to get the Alpha."

I tried a groan.

"Hmm, yes. You don't like that idea, do you?"

When I didn't answer, he continued. "For your information, Greyback has asked me to inform him when you wake. He seems to think the pup needs to learn a lesson."

Not. A. Pup. I resented being called that. I was nearly twenty, for heavens sakes. When was I going to stop being a child?

I didn't know what lesson that Greyback thought he was going to teach me. Of course, I didn't know that much about werewolf packs.

Come to think of it, I didn't really know much about werewolves at that point. As I've said, I hadn't yet come to terms with what I was.

Even not knowing what was going to happen to me, the aspect of the Alpha being angry with me was terrifying. I was so young and arrogant, and when I had attempted to escape, I had actually thought that I would succeed.

Lost in these thoughts, I didn't even notice when the stone archway that served as a door was filled with the hulking figure of Fenrir Greyback.

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About a month after that, when I was fully recovered from both my failed escape attempt and the Alpha's 'punishment', I was sent to another faction of our 'pack'.

It was amazing. In those few short weeks, I had learned that the Alpha's word is law, and that to challenge his word is to challenge him. Of course, I had opted to learn the hard way. I think I still have the scars.

Torture. It was pure torture when he sent me to work in the rough equivalent to our infirmary. I had just spent a month laid up sick and was looking forward to either hard labor or something that resembled it. But no. It was just back to the hospital.

Three escape attempts and several more beatings later, here I am.

Even our healers have a strict social hierarchy. After my last attempt to get out (which was about five months ago), I had been dropped back to the bottom of the totem pole. I've worked my way up since then, and now I'm the fifth in command. It's a pretty fair deal, once you think of it. And healers aren't even at the bottom social bracket.

I don't think I'll try it again. In fact, I've kind of gotten used to this (sort of). Just another among the ranks of the cursed.

Just another shapeshifter.

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As the fifth in command, it's my petty job to prepare all of the lower ranks for the arrival of another wave of Omegas.

Omegas are simply werewolves that haven't been found yet. When Voldemort had won his war, a great many of us had been contaminated and sent to the Dens (what he calls the compounds we are confined to). I'm one of the new ones. Omegas, on the other hand, were bitten when the world was still free.

Most went into hiding when the Dark Lord had taken over. More were found every month. When they got here, Omegas were in pretty bad shape. They didn't want to come quietly.

So it was the infirmary's job to heal them so that they could be put to work and earn their place among the pack. And I got the wonderful (hear the sarcasm?) pleasure of being in charge of this movement.

After my fourth round of Omegas, I had begun to believe that the world didn't like us. They were just like me, albeit a little more experienced in dealing with our condition.

I had also learned, however, that most all of them were like everyone else. They didn't want to live normal lives. They ran from society when it shunned them. Of course, I hadn't had the chance to decide, but I think that if I was still free I wouldn't shut myself up just because of what I was.

Most all of them are like our Alpha. They were proud and damned society because they shunned us. They deliberately placed themselves close to civilization in hopes that they would teach civilization a lesson. This never worked, just served to create more monsters like themselves.

They are the ones that I don't mind labeling monsters and killers. They are the ones that set us all into this bracket that we can never escape. I can't despise them because they are living with it just like I am, but I want to. I want to hate them so bad it's not funny just for the simple reason that it was one of them that bit me.

I know that it's cliché and all, but I don't know how I'm supposed to fit in. I'm not welcome among humans, but I'm not welcome among my kind either.

They think that I'm weak for not wanting vengeance on the human race. Why would I want that? It wasn't the humans that had sentenced me to live the rest of my life in fear of the moon. The only reason that humans shunned me was because of what the monsters had made me. They were the innocents in my opinion.

But I have no room to be idealizing. It's not like it all matters, anyway.

I'm going to die eventually, whether it be down here among the werewolves, or up on the surface with the humans.