

Full Moon over Newark. The cold light shone on a landscape from a postapocalyptic movie, an industrial wasteland of chemical dumps, abandoned factories and barbed wire with no one to keep out.

Crime boss Michael Monzo sat behind his desk in one of the cavernous, crumbling buildings. Through the grime coated window, he saw in the distance, beyond the airport, a postcard view of the Statue of Liberty and the magic skyline of New York City. The distant glow highlighted the profile of a face like a Roman statue, Julius Caesar—or Caligula. Belying the factory’s exterior, Monzo’s office was clean, well-lit and comfortable; the furniture was expensive and the blue carpet lush. The tall, lean gangster picked a bit of lint from the lapel of his dark suit with manicured fingers and pulled a cigar case from an inside pocket.

Monzo clipped the end from the cigar and drew it across his nose. As he reached for his lighter, another howl echoed through the building. Most people would have felt the hairs rise on the backs of their necks, but not Monzo. He was getting used to it now, but his half-brother Eddie wasn’t.

“I wish he’d shut up. That noise drives me nuts!” Eddie was pacing in front of the desk, nervously puffing on a cigarette. Monzo’s little brother was, pure and simple, a thug. He was big, broad-shouldered, no-necked, and hairy-handed. His chest bulged out of his suit. “I’d like to go down there and put a bullet in his head right now and be done with it.”

Monzo took a long, thoughtful pull on his cigar. He let the smoke drift out of the corners of his mouth. “Do you know why I’m on this side of the desk and you’re on that side, Eddie?” Eddie stopped pacing and turned to face Monzo head-on. “Because where you see only liability, I see possibility.”

Eddie shook his head and resumed pacing, and Monzo enjoyed his cigar, not ignoring the hellish howling from below, but calmly considering it, pondering how he could best use the odd gift that Fate had dropped in his lap.

“There’s someone I need to see, Eddie.” He wrote a name and an address on a slip of paper. “He is something of a specialist in dilemmas like ours.” He handed the paper across the desk to Eddie. “Send Paco and the crew to pick him up and bring him back here. Kid gloves.”

Eddie frowned. “Pittsburgh?” Monzo nodded. “And what kind of a name is Pegg?”

The night before, Tommy Cimino and four others of Monzo’s gang were waiting at the factory for a call to go after a shipment. They were killing time by playing poker in a downstairs room converted to a kind of lounge with sofas, a pool table, a television set and a fridge full of beer. Georgie was dealing, his coat draped over the back of his chair and a cigar in the corner of his mouth. “How many, Al?”

“Gimme three.” Al Graziano was losing more than usual and he was getting pissed off. “Gimme three kings or I’ll climb over the table and kick your fat ass.”

Georgie laughed, almost a giggle. “Maybe if you shot me first. Tommy? How many?”

Cimino didn’t answer. He started to twitch. His breath became short, his tongue lolling from his mouth. He began to sweat and yanked at his tie and collar, sending the button flying across the room. “Tommy, you okay?” Cimino’s eyes rolled back in his head. Then he began to convulse and vomit blood, and he threw himself from his chair to the floor.

His buddies jumped from their chairs and backed away. They knew better than to get in the middle; Monzo had killed disloyal employees before, and at times he disciplined screw-ups the hard way as an example to others. Poison was not out of the question. Tommy's failure of the night before and the missing fifty grand were still on everyone's mind. Tommy screamed and rolled under the table, still thrashing violently. Then he suddenly stopped.

Graziano made the mistake of stooping down to look under the table. His scream was cut off along with his head, which rolled across the floor and bounced off the nearby wall. Then all hell broke loose.

The poker table upended and the mobsters found themselves face to face with six feet of fur, fangs and paws like first-baseman's mitts ending in hooked claws. If it was Tommy, it was a Tommy nobody recognized. The beast opened its maw and howled, an ungodly keening sound, and in one bound leapt over the upset table. Georgie pulled a .38 from a shoulder holster and fired two shots, one hitting the creature full in the face. Its head snapped back, but it kept coming. The three gangsters ran for their lives and slammed the steel door to the windowless room behind them, locking Tommy in it and praying that the door held.

They saw enough horror films as kids to recognize a werewolf for what it was, but they still couldn't accept it as reality. Neither could Monzo until he arrived an hour later and looked through the mesh reinforced glass panel of the door. What he saw was evil incarnate that gave him chills, not at the raw, atavistic terror it instilled in him, but at the thought of how he could use the beast to instill that raw terror in others.

He watched in fascination rather than fright as the transformed Tommy rampaged around the room, howling like the lost soul that he was. He smashed what furniture was left intact, overturned the

pool table with one impressive heave, and even leapt high enough into the air to shatter the overhead light fixture and plunge the room into darkness.

Jimmy switched on a flashlight and beamed it through the glass. Tommy was nowhere to be seen. Jimmy put his face against the steel webbed window to peer left and right. A blur of movement streaked from the left, and although the steel webbing in the port held back the paw, the claws erupted through the glass and ripped Jimmy's face. He staggered backward, blood streaming from his forehead, and a ruined eye dangling from its socket. Jimmy's screams rivaled Tommy's howls for volume and frisson.

"Jesus Christ!" shouted Eddie.

Monzo turned toward Eddie and said calmly, "No, I don't think he has anything to do with this situation."

Monzo's men pulled their guns but couldn't see inside the room to shoot. Beyond that common response, each reacted in a different way. "Son of a bitch!" yelled Georgie. Jimmy lay on the concrete clutching his face and blood streaming between his fingers. Paul started babbling: "It can't be real—oh Mother of God—it can't be real." Eddie planted himself between his brother and the door.

Monzo knew that panic was contagious and must be stopped. He slapped Paul hard, forehand and backhand and grabbed his chin. "Look at me, Paul! I said look at me!" The panic in Paul's eyes subsided. "Get your shit together. Understand me?" Monzo's grip tightened on Paul's face. "Understand me?" Paul gulped air and nodded. "Yes, sir. I'm sorry; I—" Monzo cut him off with a wave of his hand. "I got it. Now, do I have to bring somebody else down here, or are you going to do what I say?" They all nodded. Paul was calming down, but slowly. Monzo patted Paul's cheek. "All right; just keep this door shut and keep back from the window," and to Eddie, "Call the Doc for Jimmy." Inside, the

beast's howls sounded as much like Jimmy's, cries of pain as of homicidal rage. Monzo said to Eddie, "Keep them away from the door and don't let anyone hurt Tommy."

Eddie stared with the same wide-eyed amazement at Monzo as he did a moment before at the monster. "What?"

"Nobody touches him 'til I say so."

"But Mike—he killed Al. He hurt Jimmy."

Monzo put a finger in Eddie's face. "Not one more word, Eddie. Do what I say." Monzo turned and walked away, leaving Eddie and the other gunmen, their mouths hanging open as he headed upstairs to his office.

Monzo spent the rest of the night at his desk with a bottle of scotch. The boys wanted to go in and shoot Tommy, but Monzo wasn't sure that would solve the problem. What little he knew about werewolves came from the Saturday matinees and the comic books of his childhood. If that information was correct, bullets would have little or no effect, and when the moon went down, Tommy would be Tommy again. The situation required only that Monzo be patient, something at which he excelled; wait and see what shape Tommy was in when he came back.

At 5:42 a.m., the moon set and the boys watching Tommy called upstairs. "Mr. Monzo, you should come down here."

Monzo looked through the door glass and saw a sweat-soaked Tommy, his clothes reduced to rags, lying on the floor on his side, glassy-eyed and panting. "Open the door."

The two thugs looked at each other and back to Monzo. They clearly didn't like the idea.

Ricky, a refrigerator-sized thug said nervously, “Boss, I—“

Monzo grabbed him by the throat and half-lifted him off the floor. “Ricky, when I say so, you do so,” Monzo hissed through clenched teeth. “Now open the goddamned door.” Monzo released his grip and Ricky reluctantly unlocked the steel door. “Follow me in,” Monzo said over his shoulder. “I don’t think you’ll need them, but have your pieces ready.”

Monzo stepped into the room, the mobsters behind him. The smell of flesh and blood was heavy. Gore splattered the walls and made the floor treacherously slippery. Graziano’s organs were strewn haphazardly on the floor, his intestines draped over upended furniture. An arm lay in one corner, a foot still in its shoe lay in another. “Tommy.” Monzo’s voice was soft but commanding, an iron fist in a velvet glove. Tommy didn’t move; his stare remained fixed on something far beyond the walls. A little louder. “Tommy.” No response. “Tommy!” Monzo bellowed. He grabbed Tommy’s ear and twisted it viciously. Tommy didn’t cry out. Tommy didn’t move. Tommy didn’t blink. “Damn.”

He stood up and turned to Eddie. “Tie him up, clean this place up and lock him in. I don’t think he’ll be any trouble, at least not until dark. I have to think about this for a while.” He left Eddie, Ricky, and Paul staring at the wreckage of the room and the wreckage of Graziano’s body and went back to his office and his scotch.

Certain things made sense. Monzo knew Tommy. Monzo saw what Tommy became and saw him after he was Tommy again. Monzo saw what Tommy did to Graziano. Monzo saw what Kovacks did to his men. It was no great intuitive leap to see the logical connections. He sat and smoked and thought and finally, having reached a decision, ordered breakfast and made a few phone calls.

That afternoon, Monzo read through books on magic and the supernatural that Eddie brought for him, those and an almanac. Moonrise was around 7:30 that night, and when the moon came up,

Monzo was waiting at the door to what had become Tommy's cell. He watched mesmerized as Tommy transformed then once he was in full monster mode, Monzo went back upstairs. He'd seen the rest of the show already.