

“Happy Hallowe’en, suckers!” Ethan yelled, the words muffled behind the wolf mask he wore. He tripped the weedy Asian kid who had been hurrying past. His teammates snickered as the boy scrambled to his feet and raced off, muttering to himself in Cantonese.

At twenty-one and flying through Ottawa’s Carleton University on a lacrosse scholarship, Ethan Evans owned the world. Towering above almost everyone at an impressive six foot four inches and broadly built, he played a wicked midfield game, switching easily to attack should the team be down a man.

Black hair and striking blue eyes ensured that he was the darling of his year at Carleton. There wasn’t a girl in any of his classes that didn’t want him in their beds. Obscene numbers of girls, dressed up as playboy bunnies, begged him for a dance at the Hallowe’en party at Oliver’s, the University pub-style hangout. He had nothing to prove.

He walked away from Carleton’s Uni Centre with his lacrosse teammates towards Bronson Avenue, there to await the bus that would take them downtown for a more adult party.

“So,” Harrison said with a grin. “Barrymore’s?”

“Sure,” Ethan replied in his usual I-don’t-care-as-long-as-there’s-booze-and-girls tone.

“Is Mitch coming?” Gordon asked.

“If his girlfriend lets him,” Harrison replied.

Ethan scoffed. “Man, that girl’s a bitch. I don’t know why Mitch bothers with her.”

“I heard she’s got no gag reflex.”

The group snickered.

“Yo, Ethan!” Mitch called as he jogged up the foggy path. “Ethan!”

“Man, where were you?” Harrison asked as Mitch slowed to walk beside his teammates.

“Sorry, guys. Wendy had a party at hers I had to attend.”

“Could’ve told us sooner,” Gordon grumbled. “We waited for you.”

“She sprang it on me.”

“Didn’t you tell her you already had plans?”

“Of course I did.”

“Yeah, course you did.”

“Shut up.”

“How’d you get away?” Ethan asked.

“Compromise,” Mitch said with a shrug.

“See,” Harrison said. “No gag reflex.”

Everyone snickered and Mitch threw a punch at Harrison, who dodged neatly. The two chased each other for a while as the rest of the team strode along.

The fog was horrifically thick. It added much to the ambience of the Hallowe’en night, and the boys took full advantage of it, hooting and howling as they walked along; all keeping in character. The team had decided to spend Hallowe’en as a werewolf pack.

“I’m totally team Jacob,” a very drunk freshman dressed as a mermaid said as she shuffled passed them.

Ethan snarled and leapt after her. She screamed and stumbled away, almost falling in her very restrictive tail. The boys laughed and continued on.

They talked mostly sports as they walked down the newly laid path. Only the presence of the lamps on their left indicated that they were on the path at all.

"Man, this fog is annoying," Mitch grumbled at last. "I can't see a thing." As if to prove his point, he stumbled.

"What the...?" he said as his teammates hooted their derision at him.

"Drunk already?" Ethan asked with a laugh.

"Shut up. I tripped on something."

"Oh, sure you did."

"No, I did!" Mitch walked back up the path, peering through the fog in an effort to locate the soft thing he had stepped on.

"C'mon, Mitch!" Harrison complained. "We're gonna miss the bus."

"Shut up," Mitch said. He stopped at about where he tripped and looked down.

Lying on the path, barely visible, was a long greyish thing. Mitch bent down to take a closer look. When he realised what had tripped him, he leapt backwards with a shriek.

The others fell about laughing, pausing in their laughter to mimic the high-pitched scream Mitch had managed to utter.

"Shut-up!" Mitch said. "It's a hand!"

"Eh?" Ethan walked forward to investigate. He knelt down and poked at the hand. The metallic rustle of chainmail answered his poking. "So it is."

"Is he all right?" Mitch asked.

"Who cares?" Ethan said, standing. "Probably just some idiot who couldn't handle his drink. C'mon, the bus'll be here any minute."

"I think we should make sure he's all right, first."

Ethan rolled his eyes. "Bleeding heart, honestly."

"Just, go in and check!"

"You found him. You go in and check."

Mitch stared at the small cluster of stunted firs that had recently been planted near the Campus' Bronson pedestrian entrance. In the fog, with a potential dead body, it seemed the most sinister place in the world at the moment.

"Yo, man. You go."

Ethan rolled his eyes. "Fine," he said. "Pussy." He turned back to the rest of the team, who hadn't moved. "Yo, Gordo, you've still got that flashlight?"

Gordon sighed and walked forward. He pulled the flashlight from his back pocket. "Seriously?" he asked as he handed it over.

"Shut-up," Ethan replied.

He unscrewed the top of the torch so it no longer displayed the image of a ghost and turned it on. He pointed it in the trees to reveal a body in chainmail with leather pauldrons, vambraces and an enamelled and embossed leather breastplate. The helmet was bronze looking, with a boar on the crest.

"Cool costume." Ethan stepped forward and nudged the body with his foot. "Hey, you all right bud?"

Other than the disturbance from being nudged, the hapless drunk didn't move. Ethan looked back.

"Well?" Mitch asked.

Ethan scowled and walked further in. He crouched by the body.

"Hey, Ethan," Harrison called. "I see the bus. C'mon, let's go."

"Hold up," Ethan called back. He reached down and pulled the helm off the head and nearly dropped the torch in surprise.

"Yo, it's a girl!" he called back.

“What?” Mitch said. He and Gordon exchanged a glance and edged into the firs together.

“Holy shit!” Gordon said, joining Ethan.

A young woman in full armour, with strawberry blonde hair that frizzed and escaped the long braid she wore, lay on the ground. Large, wide set eyes were closed beneath a smooth, white brow.

“She’s kinda pretty,” Mitch said. “Is she breathing?”

Ethan placed his fingers beneath the girl’s nose. The faintest hint of warmth confirmed she was. He nodded.

The sounds of the bus roaring along Bronson reached the group.

“Yo!” Harrison yelled. “The bus is here!”

Mitch left the cluster of firs to spy Harrison and the rest of the team sprinting across Bronson Avenue just as the number four pulled up.

“Yo!” he called.

“We’ll meet you there!” Harrison yelled back.

Mitch shook his head and, grumbling under his breath, went back to Ethan and Gordon.

“Well, the others have all gone to Barrymore’s.”

“Hey, look!” Gordon said, moving away a little. He picked up an object. “A sword. Man, it’s heavy. Wonder if it’s real?” He ran his thumb along the edge of the blade, and cut himself.

“Ow! Shit!” he said before plunging his bleeding thumb into his mouth. He dropped the sword back onto the ground and trudged back to Ethan and Mitch.

“You’re so stupid,” Mitch said. He turned back to Ethan and the girl. “Real armour, real sword. Wonder where she got this costume from? Wait. Dude. Is that blood?”

Ethan turned his attention back to the unconscious girl on the ground. He ran the light of the torch away from her face to her chest. A large gash in her breastplate oozed a dark liquid. Ethan tentatively reached out and touched it. It was warm and sticky and very red.

“Oh man!”

Mitch immediately pulled out his cell phone and dialed 9-1-1.

*9-1-1, please state your emergency,* a female voice on the end of the line said.

“Yo, there’s a girl here and she’s bleeding pretty bad.”

*All right sir. Please tell me where you are.*

“Uh... Um... Carleton University, the Bronson pedestrian entrance. Please send an ambulance quick. She’s hurt bad.”

*An ambulance has been dispatched. Please stay on the line, I’ll talk you through some basic first aid.*

“Uh... okay.”

*Is she breathing?*

“Yeah. We think so.”

*Can you see the wound?*

“Well... uh... she’s wearing armour.”

*Armour?*

“Yeah, like chainmail and stuff.”

*Okay. And you can’t see where the blood is coming from?*

“Hang on,” Mitch said, placing his hand over the mouthpiece of his mobile. “Yo, man, can you see where the blood’s coming from?”

“I can see it,” Ethan said.

“Okay,” Mitch answered. “He reckons he can.”

*He?*

"Yeah, my friend Ethan. He's with the girl."

*All right. Tell Ethan he needs to put pressure on the wound. It will help stem the blood flow.*

"Yo, man," Mitch told Ethan. "You gotta stop the bleeding."

Ethan glared at Mitch.

"She said put pressure on the wound."

"Oh, man!" Ethan complained beneath his breath. All the same, he placed his hand over the gash in the armour and pressed. The girl shuddered, but did not wake.

"Hey, when is the ambulance going to get here?"

No sooner had Ethan asked than two police cars and an ambulance roared down Bronson, stopping before the pedestrian entrance to the campus. In a blur, Ethan was relieved of his duties by two paramedics and he, Mitch and Gordon were taken aside by the policemen.

"Is she going to be all right?" Ethan asked as he was dragged away from the paramedics.

"Don't know, son," the officer dragging him away said. "Come away now."

The three boys were taken to the police cars where a second officer waited. She left to investigate the scene as they arrived.

"Are we in trouble?" Gordon asked.

"We just need a statement."

Ethan, Gordon and Mitch stood despondently by the police cars in a close group while the officer took down their names, their ages and their version of the events that transpired that night.

"And it was you who tripped over her?" the officer asked, pointing his pen at Gordon.

"No, Officer," Mitch said. "That was me."

"So you're the one who found her?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you're Mitch, right?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right."

Ethan half listened as he watched the paramedics lift the girl onto the gurney and wheel her into the ambulance.

One paramedic approached. "All done here, Bill," he said. "There's a lot of blood on the ground, and a couple of weapons. She's barely alive."

The Paramedic turned to Ethan and smiled. "Lucky you found her when you did. She might make it yet."

"Weapons?" the officer who'd been taking the statements said in surprise.

"Yeah. A sword and a dagger."

"All right. Thanks, John."

The paramedic grunted. "You have a good night."

"Yeah, you too."

John jogged to the ambulance and clambered in. The driver pulled away and sped off down Bronson, sirens blazing, heading to the Ottawa Hospital.

"Oh, yeah," Gordon said meekly. "I found the sword and picked it up."

"And cut his thumb on it," Ethan said. "Idiot."

"Shut up."

"But you didn't see a dagger?" Bill asked carefully.

"No, Officer. Just the sword."

Bill grunted and made a note while his companion, returned from the scene, spoke into her walkie-talkie.

“Dispatch,” she said with a thick French accent. “We need Forensics down here. Probable crime scene.”

The radio crackled an inaudible response, but Ethan was no longer paying attention.

“Crime scene?”

“Everything’s a crime scene until we decide otherwise.”

“Jesus.”

Bill raised an eyebrow at the three boys. “Werewolves?”

“Yeah,” Mitch said. “We’re a pack.”

“Right. Look, this is suspicious, and since you’re the ones who found the victim, we need you to stay close all right?”

“We live right here on campus, Officer, and it’s the middle of the term. We’re not going anywhere.”

“All right, good. I need your contact details.”

The boys gave them their details as more howling police cars pulled up, the roof lights flashing eerily through the dense fog. The police cordoned off the area and soon the foggy night was lit up with the bright flashes of cameras as Forensics painstakingly photographed the scene. One policewoman had a difficult time keeping the gathering horde of onlookers from coming too close.

“Right, that’s everything,” Officer Bill said with a tight smile. His crisp blue eyes examined each boy carefully. “You’re free to go. We will be contacting you.”

“Yes, Officer,” Ethan said absently.

“You boys have a good night, now.”

“You too,” Gordon said. “Happy Hallowe’en.”

Bill grunted. He got into his car and, lighting up the roof, roared off back to the station.

Ethan slapped Gordon on the back of the head. “Happy Hallowe’en?”

“What else was I supposed to say?” Gordon protested.

“Man,” Mitch said. “You really are stupid.”

“Whatta we do now?” Gordon said. “I mean, the others are all at Barrymore’s, waiting.”

“First thing I’m going to do is go home and wash this blood off my hands,” Ethan said. “Then I’m heading to Mike’s Place for a cold beer.”

“Not going to Barrymore’s, then?”

Ethan shook his head. “You really feel like dancing after finding someone who might have been murdered?”

“She’s not dead,” Mitch pointed out.

“Almost,” Ethan said. “Jesus. I’m feeling a bit sick.”

“Let’s head back and get you cleaned up,” Mitch said.

The three boys turned back and marched up the path to Dundas House, where Mitch and Ethan shared a room. They walked back in complete silence.

Once there, Ethan felt the need to take a full body shower and scrub himself vigorously. The other two simply changed from their costumes. Before long, they were sitting in the pub with a pitcher of Keith’s Red between them.

Mike’s Place, formerly the hangout for graduate students which had been taken over by anyone who could legally drink, had a typical small pub feel.

Tonight, however, it had a sad air.