

The Abnormal Life of AI Norm

By Cody Knox

Chapter One: Summer

First Full Moon of Summer

My name is Al Norm.

I had always been content with living an ordinary life. Most people might find themselves bored spending the whole day at the office in front of a computer screen, but not me. I was brilliant working as a normal, average, everyday, mundane businessman.

In fact, I was so good at my job that my boss gave me an opportunity; I could move to a private office out near a small town, and work from home, the peace and tranquillity of nature just outside my window. Well, I couldn't say no to that. So I packed my bags and moved out to the town of Normal.

Normal. Population of 8362. A normal place without any major dramas. A fine change from the hustle and bustle of the big city.

Just opposite my new home was a small botanic garden. The scent of flowers wafted through the air and filled my nostrils with heavenly bliss. I could get used to this. Normal had a certain rustic charm which I loved.

In fact, upon the first day I moved in, I saw somebody wearing a hooded black robe, riding a white horse down the street.

I don't know why he wore that black robe. Maybe it's part of his religion? I'm cool with that. Whatever. Not my business.

I asked this hooded figure what his job was as he and his horse trotted past my home. To which they replied, in a deep, gravelly voice, "I am a reaper,"

So I guess that means he does farm work? I asked him what his name was. He replied, "Grim". So like the Brothers Grimm? I guess the guy must be German.

So, Grim is a nice guy. He said he was hosting a party over at this tavern, 'The Bloody Thorn'. He gave me an invitation. Pretty cool. I took the man up on his offer, and I made my way to The Bloody Thorn at 8 PM sharp.

The place had this whole late Victorian atmosphere to the place, like something out of a creepy children's book. The full moon shone through the glass-stained windows. There were quite a lot of people here – socialising, getting a drink, dancing, flirting, all of that.

A fair number of people appeared to be dressed up in costumes. For example, there were a number of people dressed up like fairies, and others were wearing what must have been fake vampire teeth. I felt a bit left out.

Why hadn't Grim told me this was a fancy dress party? I had a rather convincing ghost costume I wore last Halloween, and I can tell you it left more than a lasting impression on some of those trick-and-treating kids!

I could see Grim at the other end of the room. He was talking to some young woman wearing a werewolf mask. He looked like he would be there for quite a while. I went over to the bartender.

“No, wait, don't tell me. I have a gift for prediction,” a man with a thick Transylvanian accent said, “you want a blood orange vodka? No? Perhaps a wolf cocktail is more to your taste?”

“Just normal beer will be fine, thanks,” I said. He poured me a glass of normal beer, and I mingled amongst the crowd. This was a loud party, louder than I was used to. But I did my best to make myself comfortable. Eventually, a young woman with flowing ebony hair approached me.

“It's been a long time since I've seen somebody like you in a place like this,” she said. I turned around to look at her. She was dressed up like a witch, flowing red silk robes flattering the contours of her body, and a black pointed hat with red lacing. She was smoking hot.

Now, I've never been skilled at chatting up women, but this lady did not seem to care. She was just all over me, telling me how handsome I was. She told me her name. It was Arabella.

Eventually, she asked me to join her behind the gazebo. If she wanted to make out, wouldn't it be more romantic to do it on the actual gazebo? She didn't seem all that shy.

“So, what do you want to do?” I asked, playing dumb. She pulled out a long black stick. Is that like her eye liner or something? I think she looks fine without make up.

“I just needed some idiot to test this new spell I've been working on,” Arabella said. She began chanting in a strange, made-up language that I had never heard before.

She pointed the stick at me, and jets of hot, scalding flames shot out of the end, missing me by mere millimetres.

What the heck was that?!?

“What's wrong with you?!? Was that meant to be some practical joke? How did you do that anyway? Is there a miniature flame-thrower installed in that...” I paused. The stick was sparkling. Like a wand. No, that's stupid. There's no such thing as witches, right?

She looked at me and started another chant. I don't know what she chanted, but it sounded unholy. A strange glowing pattern appeared under her feet, and moved with her as she came closer. White jets of light shot out of her stick and shot me with full force. I looked down at my shoes, and saw that I was turning to stone.

“Ah, now that's more like it. You will make a lovely statue for the back garden,” Arabella said.

“Wait, stop! What is this? How are you doing this?” I asked, as my legs turned to stone. In a few minutes, I'd be this lady's garden ornament.

“Are you thick or something? Have you never heard of the supernatural? Hundreds of vampires, werewolves, fairies, and, of course, witches have called Normal their home for centuries! What a fool you are!” Arabella said, following this with an evil cackle.

“What a fool *you* are,” came a deep, gravelly voice. It was Grim. He was holding a scythe in one bony white hand. A shot of green light shot out of one of his skeletal fingers, and I was back to normal.

“Grim? Are you trying to prevent this man's death? That goes against the rules, and you know it,” Arabella said.

“You have already broken the rules. As the leader of witches in this community, the Reapers have forbidden you from using your powers for evil. Under Rule 389 of the Reaper Proclamation of 1251, you must leave this town and never return,” Grim said.

“And what if I don't?” Arabella asked with a smirk.

Grim took his scythe and dragged it through the air, opening a glowing portal.

“Then I am obligated by my superiors to send you to the next world,” Grim said. Arabella laughed, then drew her wand. Flames shot towards Grim, which he deftly blocked by spinning his scythe around like the propeller of a helicopter.

Green electricity shot from Grim's fingers and headed for Arabella. It struck her hat, which she quickly cast aside. She then launched a jet of ice from her wand, and Grim countered with a green energy beam. For a short time, the two attacks mingled in the air, fighting against each other, but eventually, Grim got the upper hand and she was struck with the full force of Grim's power. She collapsed down in tatters, unconscious.

“Let us hope that in the next world, you choose to be a nicer person,” Grim said, as he carried her body to the portal. She began to float away into the glowing void, and it sealed itself shut behind her.

I stood there in shock for a short time.

“You're the Grim Reaper?” I asked.

“A Grim Reaper. I have been the reaper of this town for a hundred years,” Grim said. He took off his hood, revealing his skull. Was it possible for a skull to look regretful? Because this one sure did.

“I thought you knew who I was. I never would have brought you to this party if I'd known you were a simple mortal,” Grim said, “Every full moon, the supernatural people of this town come together for a celebration. Despite what you just experienced, I can assure you that most supernaturals just want to go about their business, the same as ordinary mortals,”

“What was all that stuff you were saying about reapers and her being the leader of the witches?” Al Norm asked.

“Every community has its supernaturals. As the reaper of this community, it is my job to find a representative of each group to keep their respective group in line,” Grim said.

“But it didn't work. The leader of the witches in Normal just tried to kill me,” Al Norm said.

“Yes, and now I will have to appoint a new witch. But don't let this night's events discourage you, Al Norm. I believe if you continue to stay in Normal, you will live quite the fulfilling life,” Grim said. He snapped his fingers, and instantly before him was his white horse. He hopped upon this horse, and rode off into the night.

Wow. My entire world-view has just been changed. Before tonight, I thought things like the supernatural were just made up.

Should I ring up my boss, and tell her I'm calling it quits? No, I mustn't. A real businessman never quits. I must choose to stay here, here in this abnormal town of Normal.

Second Full Moon of Summer

Things went back to normal right after that, and the month passed with amazing speed. I came to think that perhaps what I had witnessed that night was but a dream, an illusion.

But then there was a knock at the door. It was Grim. And so, with Death knocking at my door, I reluctantly answered. Had he come to collect my soul? No. He was having a meeting with the other supernatural leaders at his house, and so, before long, I found myself at Death's doorstep.

His house looked suitably macabre and Gothic. I was curious, of course, as to why Death would require access to a bathroom, bed and kitchen, and I was tempted to ask. But I thought better of it.

We came to the dining room, where there were three other people. These were the people:

Victor, leader of the Normal vampires. He had pale, lifeless skin, as well as blood-red eyes and blood-red hair. Every time he smiled, his sharp vampire teeth shone in the light. He looked muscular. He was sipping absent-mindedly at a blood pack. I sure do hope that whoever he took that from gave it to him consensually.

Ruby, leader of the Normal werewolves. Tan skin, and messy blonde hair. Her eyes glowed golden. She had sharp teeth, which were chowing down on a large tuna fish. Most of her was covered in a light brown fur. I wonder if I pet her fur, would it be like petting a dog? Her tail thumped the back of her seat enthusiastically. This was, of course, only her werewolf form. In human form, she looked pretty much the same, except without all the hair. And the tail.

Daybreak, leader of the Normal fairies. Tan skin, and black hair. For the most part, he looked just like some normal guy you'd see on the street. But then you would notice the huge reddish-white wings sprouting from his back.

Grim said that the replacement witch would be coming by shortly.

I introduced myself to these three in as professional a manner as I could muster.

At first, they were sceptical about allowing a mere mortal in their sanctuary. But they did start to warm up to me, I think.

Victor bragged to me about how many hours he was putting in at the gym. He said he should train me sometime. Gym lessons from a vampire? That sure would be something.

Daybreak told me he had a large garden on the edge of town, where he grew all sorts of fruits and vegetables. Apparently, his 'fairy sense' or whatever gives him natural talent with growing things, because he's all 'in touch with nature' or whatever.

Ruby told me she was thinking of buying a cat. Interesting choice of pet for a werewolf. I'd have thought she'd prefer a dog. She also told me she has plans of becoming an artist one day. She's got hundreds of paintings back at her house. I may have to visit her one day.

Some time later, the new witch arrived. Her name was Dawn. She had light tan skin and blonde hair. She was a nice young woman, though very shy. She liked to keep to herself, and for the most part didn't even look like a traditional witch.

I don't want it to seem like I'm prejudiced concerning witches, but when a witch almost turns you to stone, it makes you a bit biased. So, to me, a witch who doesn't really use her powers is, well, preferable. But even if she did, I still would be all like, 'live and let live', so long as she wasn't using her magic to hurt people.

Anyway, the dining with death was over before it started. Grim confided in me that it's nearly impossible to get all the supernatural leaders to stick around in the same place for more than ten minutes. I sometimes have similar problems with my co-workers.

So what else happened during this month? Let me just think for a second here.

For a start, Victor (the vampire) took me to the gym for a training session. What are we even training for? Don't know. He carries an umbrella over his head wherever he goes. Don't want to run into the sunlight, do you, pal?

I hung out with Daybreak, too. We hung out in the forest with some of his fairy pals. He showed me he can make himself into this small little red sprite, where he parties with the other fairies. Most of the fairies tend to stay away from humans. I also learnt he likes his practical jokes. He made my pants start screaming until I took them off. That was not fun explaining to the cops.

I also went to the park with Ruby. Played a nice game of fetch. She licks me on the face whenever she comes back with the stick. I think it's a compulsion, she gets real embarrassed about that. To be honest, I don't mind. In fact, if I'm really honest, I actually kind of liked it. I might be developing a tiny crush on her. No big deal.

I did try to hang out with the new witch, Dawn, but she's just too shy to even hold a conversation with. And Death was busy most days, collecting souls and what not.

Oh! There was also the summer party. Victor held a party at the beach. He didn't even seem to care about the sun at first, as he showed up in some hot red speedos. (Though he still brought his umbrella) He hit on a lot of guys. He tried to hit on me, too, but I'm just not into him like that.

I mean, I had to put up with bloodsucking parasites all the time at work, and now I've got a vampire trying to make some moves on me? Sorry, is that a prejudiced thing to say? Probably.

Look, I'm just a normal guy. I'm still getting used to all this supernatural weirdness going on.

Third Full Moon of Summer

So what's new this month? Well, my job has been going well. I think being able to work in this private office has rather improved my mood.

Ruby told me she's gotten a job at the local police station. Turns out being a werewolf gives her a good nose for sniffing out crime!

Of course, it was that nose of hers which managed to sniff out my true feelings for her. Over a cup of coffee, she said:

“I can smell you have romantic feelings for me,” which is pretty dang blunt. So, now we're pretty much officially dating.

Our first 'official', proper date was on the third full moon of summer. It went pretty well. There was a carnival in town, we both got hot dogs. And we entered a pie-eating contest. Ruby won, of course. What a voracious appetite! We went to the park, and then watched a movie together.

It was a lot more exciting than I'm making it sound. It was a lovely date, and I spent the night over at her house, where I met her new cat, a white short hair named 'Amy'. Over the course of that night, well, one thing led to another, and, well, let's just say it was a fantastic way to spend the full moon.

Not a lot else happened that month, and I'm OK with that. I'm happy that things in this town tend to be normal most of the time, and I'd be happy if they stayed that way. Unfortunately, certain hands of fate had other plans for me...

Chapter Two: Autumn

First Full Moon of Autumn

The days were getting shorter, and there was a nippy feeling to the air as the seasons changed and the leaves began to vacate the trees. Everyone began dressing up warmer, and spending more time indoors than normal. And so, for a while I didn't hear from my friends... at least, not the supernatural ones anyway. Although of course I would see them around town now and then, like bumping into Dawn at the grocery store.

She really doesn't look like a witch at all. In fact, I've never seen her perform a spell at all. I kind of wonder if Grim just pulled some random woman off the street and was all like, 'you're a witch now,'.

One thing that did happen upon the first full moon of Autumn was that Daybreak invited what must have been at least a quarter of the town to come to his harvest dinner. He didn't want to waste any of his food once winter came, so every year he would hold this big harvest shin dig at his house. Man, there was so much food there! And a fair bit of variety too.

There was pumpkin pie, vegetarian chilli, apple pie, pumpkin soup, tomato soup, mushroom soup, vegetarian burgers, vegetarian lasagna, and vegetarian dumplings.

By the way, I forgot to mention this, but Daybreak is a vegetarian. You may have guessed that by the constant presence of vegetarian meals that he was serving. He says meat drains his fairy powers.

We got a demonstration of these powers later that night, when the dishwasher broke down. Daybreak shrunk down into his red sprite form, got into the machinery, and fixed everything right back up again. Man, I wish I could do something like that. But I don't want to become a fairy. Not that there's anything wrong with fairies! Fairy magic is kind of cool. He showed me a small jar he keeps in his pocket for emergencies. It was full of magic fairy dust.

To be honest with you, I'm sort of starting to get used to all these supernatural people around, although I certainly have zero intention of becoming a supernatural being myself.

Admittedly, this makes me stick out like a sore thumb. I'm the only normal human surrounded by vampires, werewolves, witches and fairies. Which makes me the not-normal one, at least in this situation.

So, what else happened at the harvest dinner? Well there was a lot of dancing, for a start. Also, Grim ate way too much chilli and spent the rest of the night next to the sink, serving himself glass after glass of cold, refreshing water. Why would the/a grim reaper have taste-buds or whatever? I think it's best not to think about it.

Victor brought his boyfriend along – some guy called Chuck. The two were all over each other almost the entire party. I noticed he kept on looking over at me, as if he was trying to see if I was getting jealous.

I'm not jealous. If anything, I'm happy for them. I just hope Chuck knows that Victor's a vampire. But I'm not jealous. I've got Ruby.

Speaking of Ruby, she was disappointed in the lack of meat at the harvest dinner, but she kept her chin up and kept up a positive exterior until it was time to go, after which she moaned about how boring it was.

Dawn didn't show up to the harvest dinner at all. I guess she couldn't handle such a large crowd.

Anyway, that was it for that month. No bad omens or portents that were about to warn me that this little event would be the last time I would feel at peace for quite a while.

Second Full Moon of Autumn

Ruby and I went to the library, where they were holding an art class. Everyone was standing around a big bowl of fruit. I'd have thought it would've been some naked guy or gal, but in this cold weather, I can't blame them for not wanting to leave the house. The library didn't have heaters, so I had to wear an extra jacket. That was annoying.

I was not an artist myself, of course, so I spent most of my time hanging around the main entrance of the library.

It was then that I noticed a book at the front of a stack titled 'Most rented'. The title of this book was "FOR A NORMAL WORLD", by Gordon Johnson. I picked up this book, and looked at the back cover. This was what it read:

30 years ago, divorce and single parents were almost unheard of. Boys are falling behind girls in class and Men are growing up unmotivated and unemployed. Society is collapsing, and nowhere is that more apparent than in the town of Normal.

Who is to blame for this? We all know the answer, though nobody dares to speak about it openly. They are the supernatural, and they are the enemy of all that is natural and normal. They are real, and they are dangerous.

That is why I have written this book, to bring awareness to normal people like you and I. Together we can make Normal normal again.

I was taken aback by this. I was under the impression that the vast majority of ordinary humans like myself had no idea of the supernatural.

Surely this person would just be dismissed by everyone as some crazy guy ranting about witches and dragons, I assumed.

Out of curiosity, I turned to a random page and began to read.

The town of Normal has the largest population of supernaturals gathered in one town. Based on demographic studies, I have confirmed that at least 46% of the population in Normal are supernatural in one form or another. Soon, they will outnumber the normal, and not just in Normal. We cannot let this happen.

I turned to a different page.

Is the female obsession with vampires driven by the biological female desire to be dominated by a strong man? Scientific evidence would suggest so. But let's not just blame supernatural men, here.

Female werewolves, for example, have been destroying society by challenging traditional gender roles. They are much more assertive than their normal female human counterparts, often making the first move in relationships and shunning traditional marriage structures. From a biological perspective, normal females who do not marry tend to end up depressed and suicidal. This is not the case for all females, but the exceptions do nothing but prove the rule.

I turned to a different page.

For years, reality-denying terrorists have been trying to shut down any and all attempts at legitimate scientific discussion of fairies. I'm an evolutionary biologist. Why are so many people afraid of rational debate?

I turned to a different page.

I am not saying that we need to hunt down and burn anyone suspected of being a witch. I am just saying the world would be a much better place if they were all killed somehow, preferably with fire.

Good grief! This guy sounded completely off his rocker. nobody would ever take a guy like this seriously. I put the book back.

Another thing that happened this month is that I was attacked by a clown. And trust me, it's not as funny as it might sound.

I had gone for a late-night walk through the forest, seeing if any of the fairies wanted to talk with me. No such luck. I didn't see so much as a glowing sprite. I guess Daybreak is just a lot more social than the other fairies in Normal.

It was then that I saw the clown. He looked back at me. He did not look like a very happy clown. He looked like something had been depressing him for quite a long time. I also noticed that everything around him was dead. He came towards me, and as he did so, every tree, every flower, every blade of grass shriveled.

I got the distinct feeling that if this man walked all the way over to me, I too would shrivel. I began to back away, slowly. The clown reacted by beginning to run towards me. I turned and ran, not knowing which way went back to town. I eventually came to the river. I could see my house from here. I looked behind me.

The clown was quickly gaining, leaving a path of dead birds and flowers in his wake. Against my better judgment, I dived right into the river. It was as cold as ice, but I swam and I swam as fast as I could. I managed to cross the river, shivering and almost frozen. Kind of reminded me of the time I'd almost gotten turned into a statue.

I looked behind me again, and I saw the clown was swimming across the river, headed straight for me.

What could I do? Would Grim show up and help me like with the witch, or would he just help me move on to the next world? All I could do for now would be just to run. I had made it halfway to my house when the clown was struck by an arrow of red lightning. I turned around to see who my saviour was. It was Dawn. She looked terrified. The clown began to make its way back up. Dawn blasted it again, and it turned to dust.

"Is he dead?" I asked.

“He was never alive in the first place. He was a malevolent spirit. We get those sometimes,” Dawn said.

“How did you know where I was?” I asked.

“The fairies saw it happen. They called Daybreak, who called me, and I came over here as fast as I could,” Dawn said.

“Well, tell the fairies I said thanks. And thanks to you too,” I said. Dawn blushed.

“I just did what I'm supposed to do. Protect the town,” Dawn said.

“Alright. You keep up the good work,” I said, and made my way back home.

When I got there, I found a flyer advertising Gordon's book – FOR A NORMAL WORLD. I wondered what Gordon might say about a man like me having their life saved by a powerful woman like Dawn. Nothing good, I imagined. I threw it in the bin. I don't need that kind of nonsense in my life.

Third Full Moon of Autumn

I have been getting into the habit of going on morning runs, to keep my level of fitness up. I guess all those trips to the gym Victor had taken me to had an influence on me, for now I welcomed the morning runs that I once spurned.

This particular morning, I saw Grim grooming his horse and showering it with affection. He sure does love that horse. He told me its name is Midnight. He seemed somber this morning for some reason. I asked him why, and all he said was that something might happen tonight, or something might not happen tonight. He said he didn't know because it hadn't happened yet. But he had alerted all the supernatural leaders to be on their guard.

I admit, all of Grim's grim talk had made me a fair bit paranoid. However by lunchtime I had practically forgotten all about it.

In part, this was due to Ruby Brooke, sitting next to me on the park bench as we cuddled. It was unusually sunny today, and we welcomed the heat with open arms.

It was then that we were approached by a tall man. He had with him a Labrador retriever. I could tell just by looking at him that he was a werewolf, just like Ruby.

"Hey, Chase. I wasn't expecting to see you in town this full moon," Ruby said.

"I wanted my visit to be a surprise. I trust I'll see you tonight at The Bloody Thorn?" Chase asked.

"Of course," Ruby said.

"Who's the human with you? I can smell he's not one of us," Chase said.

"He's my new boyfriend, Al Norm. And you better be nice to him," Ruby said.

Chase looked me up and down, as if he were sizing me up. His dog sneezed. Chase turned to the dog, and the two stared at each other, as if they had reached some sort of understanding.

“Of course. See you tonight,” Chase said, and abruptly left.

When night time fell, Ruby and I went to The Bloody Thorn. Once again, it was rather busy, filled as it was with fairies, vampires, werewolves and witches.

I think that this is as good of a time as any to point out that, as far as this town is concerned, the term 'witch' can be applied to both genders. Both the men and the women call themselves witches. So that's that.

So anyway, we more or less milled about until Chase showed up. When he finally did, he'd brought some friends with him. They all looked like tough biker types. They were also all werewolves, just like Chase and Ruby.

“Hello, Chase. It's a lovely evening, isn't it?” I asked.

“It is a most fine evening. Ruby, may I speak with your boyfriend alone for a minute?” Chase asked.

“What are you asking her for? She doesn't own me, I can speak for myself,” I said. Chase acted as though I had not spoken.

“Sure, you can talk with him,” Ruby said. I raised an eyebrow. Isn't she the leader of the whole werewolf pack, at least in Normal? Why is she being so obedient to him?

Chase dragged me to the other side of the bar, his friends tagging along.

“I see that Ruby has taken quite a liking to you. Make sure you keep her busy this evening. I've got a big surprise for her, and I don't want it spoiled. So make sure you keep her here for as long as you can,” Chase said.

And with that, Chase and his friends left, though not before one of them dropped something out of their pocket.

It was a piece of paper. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a certain word that was written upon it. This word was 'bomb'.

Making sure nobody was looking, I quickly picked up the piece of paper and went back to be with Ruby.

“Hey, Al. What did Chase want to talk about?” Ruby asked.

“Nothing important. Just guy stuff. I have to use the men's room. I'll be right back,” I said, and went off. I didn't really need to use the men's room, that was just a clever ploy so I could read the piece of paper in private.

The full text of the paper read thusly:

Thomas, make sure you stay away from the main street supermarket. That's where we've planted the bomb. You will wait outside 12 Main Street until receiving further instructions. - Chase.

I ran back to Ruby post-haste.

“Ruby, you've got to read this,” I said.

“Just a minute,” Ruby said, “Chase is on the phone,”

“Ruby, please, this really can't wait,” I pleaded. Ruby ignored me and continued to listen to her cellphone.

Angrily, I slapped the phone out of her hand.

“What the hell is your problem? Are you jealous that I'm paying so much attention to Chase? Is that it?” Ruby asked.

“I think Chase means to do us harm. I found a note from him,” I said, handing over the note. She read over it, still looking skeptical.

“I can't imagine Chase ever taking part in something like this. He's a good guy. He even saved my life once,” Ruby said.

“Well, we should at least call the police, to warn them,” I said.

“Alright, if it'll stop you freaking out,” Ruby said, rolling her eyes as she grabbed her cellphone.

Just then, there was the sound of a large explosion a few blocks away. Everyone in The Bloody Thorn ran out to see that the nearby supermarket was on fire. There had been some kind of explosion at the back end.

I saw many people rushing out of the front doors. Unfortunately, this was exactly what the werewolves were counting on, as they proceeded to savage each and every person who came running out, dragging their screaming bodies off into the woods.

“This is too big for the police to handle,” Ruby said, “Oh, I should have listened to Grim!”

I had the feeling Grim was going to show up quite soon, but not to help us – only to collect souls. Hey, he's just doing his job. Still, what of the other supernatural leaders? Would this be a repeat of the time with the clown?

Ruby ran over to the supermarket, as fast as a real wolf. She attempted to fight off the other werewolves, but there were too many of them!

“Ruby! You should retreat!” I said, but she didn't listen. She didn't listen, until finally, she was kicked so hard she hit a tree. She gave a yelp, and fell unconscious. I ran over to help her. She was still breathing, but she needed medical attention. I called the ambulance. Ten minutes later, they had arrived, along with the police, and the other supernatural leaders – Daybreak, Victor and Dawn. The werewolves had been shot down by the cops now, but the damage was done. Dozens of innocent people were dead.

I could see, out in the distance, Grim collecting the souls. Methodically. One by one. At least once or twice he looked over at me. He looked disappointed. Don't ask me how a skull can look disappointed. He just did.

This was an absolute disaster. A travesty. A massacre had just taken place here, and the veil of normality in the town of Normal was beginning to slip away.

Grim invited all the supernatural leaders, and me, over for a meeting the next day. He said we needed to organize something, to make sure something like that ghastly werewolf attack never happened again.

“Chase just didn't seem like the kind of guy who would ever have done something like this,” Ruby had said. Obviously she had been mistaken. I wondered what had given her such a high opinion of him. She did mention he saved her life once. I'd love to know more about that.

I don't remember who suggested it, but somebody said that it might be better if we had something better than just having the supernatural leaders scattered around town, where it could take ages to get organized when anything happens.

So what was the alternative? It was suggested that we needed to create some kind of 'task force building' that could handle any attempts by any supernatural group to do anything to harm the community. I guess kind of like a police station, but for the supernatural?

Everyone would live in the same building, each with their own room. That actually sounded pretty cool. We would build it next to the forest where the fairies lived. This could actually work. I looked forward to seeing what might happen next month.

Chapter Three: Winter

First Full Moon of Winter

I have been doing a lot of thinking since that horrendous night, when the werewolves attacked Normal. A serious deal of thinking. About my place in this world. About all the new things I have learned and discovered. Only a few months ago, I was a completely normal guy. I still am a normal guy, but I've found out about all this weird stuff that's going on. It's freaked me out on more occasions than I can count, but it's also... kind of cool? I kind of like this odd life I have had in Normal, if you ignore the vicious werewolf attack or the crazy witch or the weirdo clown.

Besides all of that, I like spending my time with the supernatural. I may be normal myself, but I like spending my time with vampires, werewolves, fairies, and witches.

I got a phonecall.

“Hello, who's this?” I asked.

“I'm Death,” the voice on the other line said.

“I'll speak louder then,” I said, raising my voice a few decibels.

“Ha ha, very funny. You know who I am. The building is complete. I am inviting you out to see it,” Grim said.

And so, I got into my car, and went off to see this new task force building. How would this building protect us from supernaturals who would use their powers for evil? Well, I was about to find out.

I pulled up to an enormous white mansion in the shape of a crescent. There were two strange giant white spires rising from the ground in front of it. I could see Grim's horse was munching away at a vegetable patch in the front of the yard. Daybreak ran out of his room and started shouting at the horse to stop eating his vegetable patch. It ignored him.

I made my way to the front door, and was instantly greeted by Dawn.

“Hello, Mr Norm. It's good to see you. I don't think I've seen you since... well, the werewolf attack,” Dawn said.

“Yeah, I've been pretty busy with my work since then,” I said, which wasn't really the truth. This past month, I had kind of been avoiding all the supernatural leaders – Ruby, Daybreak, Victor, Dawn, even Grim. But to be fair, they had been ignoring me all month too.

“Well, let me give you a tour of the place,” Dawn said, and then she proceeded to give me a tour of the place.

Entering the main entry-room, the first thing that I noticed was that the architecture was a very art nouveau style. All... twinkly. Look, clearly I'm not the best with descriptions, so just use your imagination to embellish.

We went to the main lounge, which was a pretty basic setup. You had your big comfy couches, big stereo, big TV. Much better than the one at my house. Dang, I kinda wanna live here. But I think that might be against the rules. I mean, the only reason I'm living here in Normal in the first place is because my boss sent me out here to work.

Next to the lounge was a small kitchen and an average dining room, both giving off a good view of the whole general area.

In addition to this, each supernatural leader had their own personal room.

For example, Victor's room had his own personal gym, with barbells, treadmills and bench presses all over the place. He had his own 'juice bar', except it was hooked up to a blood bag. He assured me that he had obtained the blood through ethical means. I didn't press the issue. There was also a big mirror that he liked to flex in front of, which didn't make much sense to me since he's, you know, a vampire and as such had no reflection.

Daybreak's room was like an indoor forest, with green carpeting that looked just like grass, and crawling vine wallpapers. There was a huge bookcase shaped up to look like a tree. The whole room was full of paintings of flowers and daisies. Seemed like it would be paradise for a fairy, but not so much my thing.

Grim had his own personal space, too. It looked a lot like his old place, a sort of sophisticated Gothic feeling all around the place. I'm not even sure yet why Grim and the supernatural leaders all insisted on leaving their original homes yet. I think it has to do with this 'supernatural task-force' Grim has in mind. Still, I can't believe how quickly they just decided to move out of their homes and into this building.

Dawn had a rather spooky Witch den, with a big, black cauldron in the centre of the room. The walls were decorated with various runes and sigils. There was an enormous bookcase that looked straight out of a fairy-tale. But instead of being full of books, it was full of all kinds of weird-looking potions.

Last but certainly not least there was Ruby's room. It looked the most normal of the lot, with lots of cat toys lying around for the cat to play with, as Ruby laid down on the couch watching TV. She turned it off as soon as I walked in, however. She smiled and wagged her tail as I walked up to her.

"Al! It's good to see you again," Ruby said.

"This is a pretty nice place," I said.

"You're always welcome here. It gets lonely here at night," Ruby said.

"I'll come when I have time. My job has been keeping me quite busy lately. So what was the story between you and Chase? You said he saved your life," I said.

Ruby rose up off the couch so she could better face me.

“It all happened back when we were pups. Our families used to socialize together a lot. I'd play with him out by this big river. One day, I tripped and fell into the water. While everyone else panicked, he dived in and rescued me. I don't know what happened to change him, but it must have been something big. Grim has his own theories on that. You should speak with him later,” Ruby said.

After she had explained all this to me, I began to wonder why Ruby had chosen me as her boyfriend.

After all, she's the leader of the werewolves in this community, and I'm just some normal guy. If she was going to end up with anyone, my money would have been on Chase.

Come to think of it, the weirdest thing of all so far was the fact that an ordinary human like me was still alive while surrounded by all this supernatural weirdness. What was so special about me?

I spent a little time snuggling with Ruby, her warm fur rubbing up against my skin. After a while, though, I left to have a talk with Grim. I wanted to understand exactly how this 'task force' thing was going to work out.

I found him sitting in the lounge, reading some musty old tome. I sat down next to him.

“What are you reading?” I asked.

“A book,” he replied.

“Those werewolves attacking the supermarket last month. Did you know that was going to happen?” I asked.

“No, I did not. I had a strong feeling that a lot of people were going to die somehow that day. That was why I warned all the supernatural leaders that something was about to happen. Obviously, that failed. I have been here for 100 years and I have never seen a supernatural attack on this scale happen. Not just in Normal, but anywhere.

At worst, you'd have random travelers disappearing down long, winding roads. Lone wolf attacks. But these werewolves attacked a busy town street. It makes me think that there may be some larger force guiding these events. Until we can find out what that force is, we have a general plan in mind.

Those two white spires you saw out front were enchanted by Dawn. They're kind of like weather predictors, except for the supernatural.

It will predict when a strong negative supernatural event is about to happen, and where it will take place, hours before it happens. It will send a message to the computers of each supernatural leader. That way we will be able to better mobilize ourselves," Grim said.

"I'm impressed with how you've managed to get all the supernatural leaders to live under one roof to protect Normal. But what if it's a false alarm? What if it's just some bored witch blowing up rotten pumpkins in their backyard or something?" I asked.

"Better for it to be a false alarm than to have a big pile of bodies for me to clean up," Grim said, as he turned a page.

Well, I couldn't argue with that. Still...

"Those were actual people, not just a pile of bodies. I know you're Death and everything, but us humans care about our dead," I said.

"You could have fooled me," Grim said, slamming his book shut and leaving the room. And that was that.

Second Full Moon of Winter

The days have been getting colder, and the ground has been getting snowier. This particular day there must have been five inches of snow. And yet it was still snowing. Snow, snow, snow and then more snow.

In this kind of weather, you'd think that it would be impossible to find a way to party. A normal person would prefer to spend their time huddled up inside, perhaps with a roaring fire, a hot drink, a good book, and the person they care most about in the world cuddled up beside them.

But Vlad isn't your normal person. And I'm not just saying that because he's a vampire.

See, most vampires around in Normal just drink the blood of animals, and while that may do for a series of small snacks, it doesn't replace the vampiric bloodlust. Vlad told me it's kind of like an addiction. An urge. And if that addiction can't be fed through fresh, human blood, then some other substitute must be found. For Vlad, that addiction was exercise. He was obsessed with it.

Pumping iron, getting swole, making himself as muscular as possible... all that was in alternative to grabbing random humans to suck their blood.

Vlad had told me all this when I'd finally gathered up the guts to ask him where the freakin' heck he was getting all those blood packs to suck on. He told me not to worry, they were mostly just animal blood packs taken from his part-time job as a vet.

But still, that wasn't enough to fight what Vlad called 'the urge'. So, he controlled his urges by going to the gym. But also through going to parties.

He had already thrown quite a few parties at this point, so I saw no reason not to go to this one. He said there might be more vampires there than I'm used to.

Well, I've been around here in Normal for this long, and I still haven't gotten killed. So I'm not too worried about your vampire friends.

So, most naturally, I came along to the party. It was being held at this bar on the edge of town. It looked like any other bar, except this bar was this this bar and not any other bar. The most that could be said for this bar was that it was a bar.

All the other supernatural leaders were busy with other stuff that night, so I spent most of my time hanging around with Vlad. His boyfriend was there too. What was his name again? Chuck.

To be honest, I was bored for a good deal of the time. I was more at home in front of a computer, writing up office work. I'm not the kind of guy who likes to party every single weekend. Vlad and Chuck were having a blast, though, as they tore up the dance floor.

We just have two different personality types. Doesn't mean we can't hang out with each other. Maybe I'll think of some activity we can both enjoy some time.

But that was for later. For now, I was noticing what looked like a few troublemakers hanging near the front doors.

They were vampires, I could tell that surely enough. Over the months I'd gained a sense for who was a vampire and who was not. Certain things tended to give them away, such as abnormally sharp teeth, extremely pale skin, and no reflections.

Why did I think they were troublemakers? Much of my deduction had to do with how they were dressed. They were all wearing black trenchcoats, and wore heavy black make-up that obscured their facial features. Around their necks were gas masks. And in their hands were large glass orbs, filled with some kind of white liquid.

Outside the window, I could see two spires far out in the distance. They were beginning to glow. Uh-oh.

At that very moment, Victor got a notification on his phone. Whatever the message was, he looked quite concerned, something he did not do very often.

The trench-coat vampires were coming closer. It was then that I noticed a pungent odour coming from the glass orbs. It was the smell of garlic. The other vampires in the bar began to notice it too, standing up to attention like meerkats. Some of them looked disgusted and offended. Most of them looked scared.

What kind of vampires bring huge orbs of garlic juice to a vampire bar? I didn't want to wait to find out. I didn't want to see a repeat of that werewolf attack.

I walked straight up to this group of vampires, before I could even think about what it was I was doing.

“Good day, ladies and gentlemen. What brings you here this evening?” I asked. Inwardly I groaned. I sounded like some kind of clichéd bus-boy or something, not the tough bouncer I had set up in my mind.

“We're just here to join in on the fun,” one of the trench-coat vampires said.

“You do know it's against the rules to bring any garlic into this bar,” I said in what I hoped was a tough-sounding voice.

The vampires laughed and pushed me to the ground. They walked over to Victor. One of the trench-coat vampires began cradling his balls right in front of Victor. Wait, that came out wrong. He pulled out his garlic orb and softly fondled it in a way that gave Victor a good view. Victor had turned serious all of a sudden, something I was not at all used to.

“If you're trying to threaten me, you should know that I am the leader of the vampires in this town. An attack on me will be considered an attack on all Normal-dwelling vampires,” Victor said. Chuck, who was nearby, looked ready to throw down fists.

“That's just what we're hoping,” one of the trench-coat vampires said. In unison, the trench-coat vampires began smiling, showing off their pearly whites.

“My friends are going to be here very shortly. I suggest you leave before something bad happens,” Victor said. The trench-coat vampires roared with laughter.

One of the trench-coat vampires grabbed one of the garlic orbs and held it above his head. Victor cowered in fear. But then, out in the distance, came the lone howl of a werewolf. Within seconds, Ruby had burst through the doors, looking absolutely ferocious. She was shortly born by the other supernatural leaders, Daybreak and Dawn.

The trench-coat vampires looked like they weren't expecting this level of resistance.

“Put the garlic down!” Ruby shouted. Still, one of the trench-coat vampires tried to stay cocky.

“Are these your defences? A mangy she-mutt, a nerdy witch and a sissy fairy?” The very, very stupid trench-coat vampire asked.

“Sissy?!?” Daybreak repeated, looking outraged. He floated over to the vampires, looking like a giant dainty butterfly, which only seemed to confirm to the trench-coat vampires what a sissy he was.

They laughed and hollered, right until Daybreak sprayed their faces with magical red fairy dust.

Then they were all rolling on the floor, screaming in agony. But only for a moment, then they weakly rose to their feet. They looked exhausted, but they also looked like they hadn't come this far to throw in the towel just yet. The trench-coat vampires grabbed their garlic orbs and began holding them up above their heads.

“Hold on there, sport. You don't want us to do anything dangerous, do you?” One of them asked.

“You guys are vampires too. If you're not careful, you're gonna end up killing yourselves,” Ruby said. Just then, one of the vampires tossed a glass orb, and it hit Ruby in the stomach, covering her with garlic juice. Of course, because she wasn't a vampire, it didn't hurt her. In fact, her resilient werewolf skin absorbed most of the blow.

“Alright, that's it, you're leaving this bar in a body bag,” Ruby said. She looked absolutely ferocious, baring her sharp teeth. She growled, and took slow steps towards them.

“What the hell did you doev that for?” One of the trench-coat vampires asked of their comrade. To which their comrade replied, “I thought she was one of us!”

“She's quite clearly a werewolf,” another one of the trench-coat vampires said. Ruby was getting closer.

In a final act of desperation, the trench-coat vampires began to toss each and every garlic orb they had across the room. The results of this were not pretty.

Next to none of the garlic orbs struck their intended targets. Instead of hitting vampires, they struck the walls, the windows, television sets and so on.

Dawn and I managed to catch a few with our bare hands, just by moving into the right place at the right time.

One of the garlic orbs struck one of the trench-coat vampires, sending him reeling backwards in agony.

Vlad jumped in the place of one of his vampire friends, and the garlic orb hit him in the leg, toppling him over. His boyfriend, Chuck, went over quickly to comfort him.

Now that the trench-coat vampires were all out of their garlic orbs, Ruby and Daybreak were able to overcome them quite easily. The trench-coat vampires were held safely away from others until the cops arrived.

And that was that for that little adventure. The official story was that they were just some hoodlums looking to break stuff. Vlad ended up being okay, just had to stay in bed for a few weeks. We did offer to take him to the hospital, but he said he didn't trust himself in a place with so many blood packs just ripe for the taking.

But still, this was a good result. A group of supernaturals had tried to bring trouble to Normal, and the task-force had stopped them. We'd succeeded in what we'd set out to do. We'd stopped what could have been a massacre. Though that still didn't explain why all these supernatural attacks kept happening. Or if there would be any more...

Third Full Moon of Winter

So far, this month had been a mixed bag. On the one hand, I was happy about what had happened at the vampire bar. The task force had succeeded, and we had foiled an attempted vampire attack with few injuries.

But the memories of the werewolf attack still lingered in people's minds. There were starting to be random attacks on supernatural citizens.

Vampires were having garlic thrown through their windows, werewolves were getting their mailboxes filled with wolfsbane, and numerous bug zappers were being hanged everywhere fairies were known to hang out.

It wasn't just effecting supernatural citizens, either. Random people holding umbrellas, suspected of being vampires protecting themselves from the sun, would have their umbrellas snatched from them.

Anyone who was vegetarian was accused of hiding their fairy wings. Anyone who ate a lot of meat was accused of being a werewolf.

Just stopping supernatural attacks was clearly not enough. We needed to convince people not all supernatural people were bad. I guess I could be an entry point for that. Perhaps I could hold some kind of party at the task-force building, to show that we have a group of supernatural leaders who will protect everyone.

I was thinking about this on my daily jog to work, when I spotted a curious sign on the window of the book store.

It read 'GORDON JOHNSON BOOK SIGNINGS TODAY'.

Gordon Johnson? I'd heard that name before.

Before, he would have been seen as a dangerous nutcase, but after that werewolf attack in full public view? People were afraid and they wanted to be protected. I noticed that in the bookstore there was quite a large crowd. Much larger than I was expecting.

I began to continue on my way to work. It was then that, in the distance, I saw two spires glowing. Uh oh. I know what that means. Somewhere, there was going to be another supernatural attack. Or one was already taking place.

I looked at the park nearby. Half of the trees had been turned into solid gold. I ran to them to get a closer look. There was this middle-aged woman, prancing about the place, touching random objects and turning them to gold. Just like Midas. What if she started turning people into gold?

I saw a big van stop at the other end of the park. Out of it jumped Vlad, Ruby, Daybreak and Dawn. Perhaps I should just continue to work. I'm not a supernatural leader. Maybe I should stay out of this for once.

But then I saw her touch Ruby, and instantly my girlfriend was turned into a pillar of gold! I ran right into the park, terrified that my girlfriend might be dead. I ran straight into the middle-aged woman, and everything went dark.

When I came to, I was lying on my back, lying on the grass, looking up at the faces of Vlad, Ruby, Daybreak and Dawn.

“What happened?” I asked as I stood up.

“That middle-aged woman turned you to gold. Dawn turned you back to normal. We think she was enchanted. Her ability to turn everything to gold faded off about thirty minutes ago, and now she's at the police station talking like she doesn't remember a thing. Could be the work of another rogue witch, like Arabella. Or maybe she stumbled upon a den of fairy dust,” Daybreak said.

“What do the police think?” I asked, turning to Ruby.

“We're putting out a story that there was a gas leak that made everyone think the trees had been turned gold. But it's been taken care of and now there's nothing to worry about,” Ruby said.

“I hate to say this, but I think the police need to be doing more about these supernatural cases. For centuries, both mortals and supernaturals have lived together in Normal with few problems. Until the last few months. There must be somebody behind this recent spate of attacks,” Dawn said.

“We don't really have any good leads on the matter, though I agree that there must some bigger fish out there who's guiding all of this. But who? And why?” Ruby asked.

Out in the distance, I could see a small crowd was forming. At the head of this crowd was a short, pale-faced man wearing a dapper black suit. He wore on his face an obnoxious smirk that was already annoying me.

“Well, will you all look at this? Those supernaturals have messed around with Normal again. How long are us normal people going to sit by and say nothing? Are we just going to stand around and let ourselves get butchered by these supernatural freaks?!” the man asked the crowd. There were a few shouts amongst the crowd.

“Hey! At least give us a chance to defend ourselves!” Vlad said, taking a few steps towards the crowd. The other supernatural leaders and I followed in his wake.

“And who are you?” The man asked.

“I'm Vlad, leader of the vampires of Normal. Besides me is Ruby, the leader of the werewolves of Normal. There is also Daybreak, leader of the fairies of Normal. And there is also Dawn, leader of the witches of Normal. And trailing at the end there is Al Norm. He is not supernatural like us, but he can vouch for our ethics. He is like our spokesperson. Or something,” Vlad said.

“When was that decided?” I asked.

“When we let you start hanging out with us all the time,” Vlad said.

“Right. Listen, I need you to understand how you look right now. If this were anywhere but Normal, you'd be called insane for talking the way you're talking right now. So please, just take a breather. First, can you tell me your name?” I asked.

“Gordon Johnson,” the man said. I raised my eyebrows. Gordon's smirk grew larger.

“Oh, I see you've heard of me. Well, as recent events have proven, I am not insane. Every day, more and more normal people are becoming aware of the existence of werewolves, vampires, fairies and witches,” Gordon said, then pointed a finger at Ruby, “and I have people like you to thank for it, after you sent your furry friends to attack that supermarket,”

“I didn't order them to do anything! I did everything in my power to stop them! And you say that more and more people are coming to be aware of our existence? Only in a place like Normal. Everywhere else, we're just folk tales,” Ruby said.

“Not for long. Soon, the whole world will know the reality of you freaks,” Gordon said.

“Listen, we're not your enemy, buddy. We want to stop these supernatural attacks as much as you do. After that werewolf attack, we formed a task force that will alert us to a supernatural attack. We stopped a vampire attack just last month,” Daybreak said.

“We wouldn't be having attacks of any kind if you freaks did not live amongst us normal people! In the good old days, the supernaturals stayed in the woods. They didn't pour our coffee or drive our taxis. In the good old days, if a bunch of werewolves were approaching the village, we would shoot them down, not invite them inside for a cup of tea!” Gordon said.

“Not in Normal. It's been a haven for both the supernatural and the normal for centuries,” Dawn said.

“We used to burn witches like you,” Gordon said, pointing one finger directly at Dawn, then at Victor, “and vampires like you used to get the stake. But now I see you out here in public with an umbrella over your head like it's nothing. I even heard that there's a werewolf working for the police!”

“That would be me, and that's a good thing, because I'm keeping our community safer,” Ruby said.

“Nothing is safe when you people are around! Just by being here, you are a direct threat to all of our lives! You should go find some wolf pack to join out in the woods, not patrol our streets! As if it weren't bad enough for you to be a career woman, when you would be happier staying at home having children! Because that is what a natural woman is naturally meant to do in nature! But the supernatural have, of course, never cared about what is natural. What's natural is what's normal. Tolerance of anything not normal will doom us all! None of you, whether you're fairies, werewolves, witches or vampires should be living amongst us. You don't belong here,” Gordon said.

“Well, whether we belong here or not, it is not your decision. We will continue to live in Normal and we will continue to protect ungrateful jerks like you,” Ruby said.

“Did you hear that? She thinks all normal people are jerks! Is this who you want as your protector, normal people?” Gordon asked.

“I don't think all normal people are jerks, you idiot!” Ruby exclaimed. Gordon's smirk grew even wider. He turned back to the crowd.

“See how aggressive these werewolves are? Are these the sorts of people we want to allow to live in the normal town of Normal?” Gordon asked.

There was a chorus of resounding 'no's from the crowd.

“You keep talking like that and I'll show you just how aggressive us werewolves really can be!” Ruby exclaimed, raising her police baton. Oh dear. I decided I'd better step in before we had a case of police brutality on our hands.

“Dear, please calm down, he's just trying to rile you up,” I said. Gordon looked over at me.

“Dear?!? Do you mean to tell me that this dog is your girlfriend?!?” Gordon asked with a chuckle. Many members of the crowd joined in enthusiastically, practically laughing their heads off.

“She's not a dog, she's a werewolf,” I said.

“She's not just a werewolf. She's the leader of the werewolves in this community. An alpha female. Something that certainly never occurs in nature. She is your superior, and you are her pet, pretty much. She goes to work while you stay home and cook? Does this seem normal to you?” Gordon asked.

“Actually, I'm an office worker,” I said, but Gordon did not seem to have heard.

“This wasn't how it was in the olden days. A family used to be a strong bread-winning father, a caring housewife, and 2.5 children. And the father would go out into the woods to protect their wife and children from the big, bad monsters. That's the way it always was, and the way it was always meant to be.

But now, that's all in the past, and the present is a disaster! Is this what we want the future to be? Dangerous and unpredictable? Is that what you want, Al Norm? Because that is what will happen when the supernatural and abnormal are allowed to prosper.

I will leave it at that for now, but I hope you will think about what I said. And about what company you choose to keep,” Gordon said, and stormed off.

Chapter Four: Spring

First Full Moon of Spring

So, it's time for a whole new moon and things... have not been going completely well. The good news is, there's been no supernatural attacks since we put a stop to that woman with the golden touch. Also, there's been less attacks on supernatural people this month.

Despite how much support Gordon appeared to have when we last met, word of our little 'supernatural task-force' had spread around amongst normal humans, and many of the non-supernaturals seemed satisfied that the supernatural leaders of this community were taking responsibility in keeping the situation under control.

So what's the bad news? Well, for a start, we still haven't found any leads for who's behind this sudden spate of supernatural attacks in Normal.

Also, I lost my job. It was very sad, but I don't regret giving it up.

I remember my boss, Mrs Herrick, had called me to her office to address with me her concerns. She told me that she had lost her father in those werewolf attacks, and could never trust the supernatural again. She went on and on about how she had been reading Gordon Johnson's "For A Normal World" book, and that she agreed with a great deal of what he had written. She said the problem with society was everything was changing, things weren't like how they were in the olden days, and how she blamed the supernatural for that.

When she'd heard that I was friends with the supernatural leaders, she was horrified. Even more horrified to hear that I was dating a werewolf woman.

"Gordon Johnson says that female werewolves are destroying the nuclear family, causing young women to get silly ideas about becoming big, important businesswomen," she had said to me.

When I pointed out that she was a big, important businesswoman, she said it didn't matter. What mattered was that things were not like they were in the olden days, and the cause of that was letting the supernatural integrate into our society in secret, changing our values and morals. And by having an employee who welcomed the supernatural with open arms, I was helping bring in an age of moral decay.

And so, she asked me to choose. Between helping these supernatural leaders and between my job. I chose to help my friends, and my werewolf girlfriend. And so, she fired me.

What was she going to tell everyone about why I was fired? That I had gone to dance with the fairies? Everyone would think she was insane. I'd been a hard-working employee until now, and she just fired me just like that.

Whatever she would tell them, it didn't matter. I was fired now. I had to move out of the private home. I moved in with Ruby at the task-force building. It's nice here, though I miss my old home. And I don't know what I'm going to do with myself from now on. Will I find another job? Or will I just be the house-husband who stays at home doing chores while Ruby goes to work?

Most days I just spend mulling around the hallways. Some times the others are around. Vlad got a job at the local school as a sports coach. So long as he only plays sports indoors he's fine.

Daybreak has moved all his plants to the task force building, and takes loving care of them each and every day. He seems to prefer talking to his plants over talking to others these days.

He told me he's expressed sadness that more fairies have not wanted to integrate into Normal. But then again, hiding a huge pair of wings is pretty hard, and given the general public's views of the supernatural right now, it makes sense why they would want to keep a low profile.

Grim, of course, has his job as a reaper. He tells me it's normally an easy job. Most people are willing to leave this mortal coil quite peacefully.

What did Dawn do for a living? I honestly don't know. She still spends most of her time to herself, in her underground basement, mixing up potions and such.

I don't know, maybe I should join a book club or something. I'm not quite used to unemployed life just yet. But I still don't regret choosing this life over living a lie just to keep my boss happy.

Still, it brings to light what a toxic influence this Gordon Johnson is. I hoped that I wouldn't have to deal with him again. No such luck. One day, when I was wandering around the courtyard, I saw him approach the gates. I rushed over to him as fast as I could.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Al Norm! Just the man I wanted to see. I feel we got off on the wrong foot last month. I would like to talk to you, so that you could perhaps understand my point of view," Gordon said.

"I think I understand perfectly fine, thank you," I said, blocking his path.

"I am a time traveler," Gordon said.

I remained silent. Great, now in addition to vampires, werewolves, witches and fairies, I find that time travelers are real too. Now I'm curious. Do aliens exist too? Or super-advanced robots?

"I come from a future version of Normal. A version of Normal where there aren't all these supernatural freaks running around. Everyone is normal, and nothing bad ever happens. No random attacks, no crime, it is a peaceful utopia. Everyone knows their place, and nobody thinks outside their box. Just like they were in the good old days. In the future, things will be more like the past. But you see, there's a problem. Namely, you.

The future is not set in stone, and the timeline can be changed. We need to get all these supernatural freaks out of Normal, so that the future that we all want is the future that we will all have. I want you to give up being a puppet for these supernatural leaders. If you follow them, the future will be a place of chaos! A n unpredictable future of confusion and weird stuff!" Gordon said.

"Some time ago, I had no idea that vampires, werewolves, fairies, witches or reapers existed. And now you're telling me that time travelers exist too. So what else is out there? Aliens? Gods? Well, if there's a Hell that exists out there too, you can go there," I said. I was surprised at my own rudeness, but it was what Gordon deserved.

"You should think about why you are so averse to what I am promising you. Don't you fear for the future? Can you really bare living in this world of supernatural weirdness, where you never know what's going to happen the next day? Where you might lose all your friends? Where anything and everything can change? Living in a world like that, that is already Hell. At least let me take you to my time. Let me show you how good life can be when everything is normal," Gordon said.

I admit, I considered his proposal for a moment. But only a moment.

"Sorry, but I've made my choice. And I must say no, thank you to your offer," I said.

Gordon made no response. He just walked away. Good riddance.

Second Full Moon of Spring

This month, things have been looking up quite a bit! Still no more supernatural attacks, and attacks on the supernatural are practically non-existent.

My girlfriend, Ruby, has proposed marriage to me, and thus she is now my fiancée and is soon to be my wife.

I was, of course, very happy to hear this, and agreed to her proposal straight away. It did seem kind of fast – we'd only known each other for a few months. But I guess werewolves are more impulsive than normal humans or something. Still, it's quite exciting! Ruby is an amazing woman, and I look forward to marrying her.

Anyway, the wedding will be held during the next full moon. Now, I know what you're thinking – a whole wedding planned out in only one month? That's not normally how it goes. Can we really do that? Well we're going to need a fair bit of magic to make it work, but we have plenty of that at our supernatural taskforce!

And, as Vlad would say, “we're supernatural. Not being normal is what we're all about.”. I mean, except for me. I'm normal.

We've decided to tie this into the big party we had planned, a sort of way to show normal people that the supernatural are not the enemy. Everyone who wants to come to this wedding can come, supernatural or not.

So, naturally, the supernatural leaders have been thinking of things to do for the wedding party. Cool supernatural stuff.

This was quite a busy month for us all, organising all the different bits and pieces until we had an idea for how the wedding event was going to proceed.

So who was going to organise all this? Well, everyone at the taskforce was playing a role, but especially Vlad, leader of the Normal vampires and local party-planner.

For some odd reason or another, most likely a plot convenience, I found myself knocking on Vlad's door.

“Vlad, you've got a letter from Chuck,” I said.

From behind the door came Vlad, who said, “bring it to me, I'm just on the treadmill,”

I pushed open the door, to find that almost the entire room was black. The brightest things in the room were Vlad's eyes, and his teeth. The only sound was the treadmill running, and Vlad's panting as he ran. I handed him the letter.

He opened it quickly but gracefully, then began to read. He did not falter even slightly in his pace on the treadmill. He just kept on running.

“It just says he wants to know what the seating arrangements are going to be at the wedding. Speaking of the wedding, who are you bringing?” Vlad asked.

“I don't think I want my relatives to get involved. They don't know anything about this supernatural stuff,” I said.

“Alright, well what about co-workers or friends?” Vlad asked.

“I lost my job, you know that. The only friends I had were co-workers, and none of them kept in touch with me after I lost my job,”

“Ah. Well, never mind all that. Focus on the wedding. I am very happy I get to plan a wedding once more. The last time I organised a wedding would have been back in 1894,” Vlad said.

“Wait. Vlad, how old are you?” I asked.

“168 years old. I know I look like I'm about 25, but that's when I first became a vampire,” Vlad said.

“Why did you never tell me this?” I asked.

“You never asked,” Vlad said.

“Right. So what other weird vampire powers do you have?” I asked.

“Well, my speed is obviously a big one. We can also be pretty strong. Of course, werewolves too are well known for their speed and strength. I suppose we share a good deal in common, vampires and werewolves. Of course, werewolves usually don't live as long as vampires,” Vlad said.

“I suppose that over the years you've seen a lot of different supernatural leaders,” I said.

“Well, yes, but I've only been the vampire leader for the past 50 years, after Astrid passed on. Back then, Arabella was just this sweet young girl. I still can't believe she turned bad,” Vlad said.

“Do you think that perhaps she could be behind all these supernatural attacks? Like an attack beyond the grave?” I asked.

“Once a reaper sends your soul to the next realm, it's pretty hard for one to interfere in Earthly affairs. That's one of the reasons some people choose to become supernaturals, to stay in this realm for as long as they can,” Vlad said.

“How does one choose to become a supernatural?” I asked.

“Find an open-minded werewolf or vampire. Locate a fairy mound. Unearth some unearthly spell. There's a variety of ways. Why? Are you thinking of converting for Ruby? Becoming a werewolf would be a gigantic change. And, to be frank, I think she likes you the way you are, mortal and all. Otherwise she would have left you for the first impressive male werewolf that strutted her way,” Vlad said.

“If Ruby and I had children, would they be werewolves as well?” I asked.

“It is possible, but it is not a certainty. It is considered... abnormal for a full human to start a family with a werewolf,” Vlad said.

“I see. What do Ruby's parents think?” I asked.

“They're fine with it, as far as I can tell. They're just happy that their daughter is happy. Of course, I could be wrong,” Vlad said.

“I see. Well, thanks for helping to organise the wedding,” I said.

“My pleasure,” Vlad said, his teeth shining up the whole room. I left, thinking about what the next month would hold. If I had any idea what was in store, I probably would have hid under my bed and cried.

Third Full Moon of Spring

The wedding was a rocking success! But what happened afterwards... well, I won't get too far ahead of myself here. I'll begin at the beginning then go from there.

There must have been at least a thousand people there, and all of them seemed to have a good time. My suit was superb, Ruby's dress was beautiful.

The guests arrived at the main gates at around 5 PM, all of them greeted by Daybreak and a variety of his fairy friends. Nearly all fairies tend to stay away from humans, so this was pretty special all in itself.

The fairies sprinkled every guest with fairy dust, filling the guests with a sense of happiness and joy.

As the guests approached the front door, a cadre of witches, both male and female, led by Dawn, handed out magical sparkly potions that were safe for mortal consumption.

These potions would make people sparkle, just like vampires don't. Some liked the potions, some didn't. But the effects were only temporary, so it wasn't a big deal or anything.

The guests would then be shown to their seats by a group of very friendly vampires, headed by Vlad, all dressed up in traditional Victorian garb.

Then, finally, Ruby and I would approach the wedding arch thingy whatever the heck it's called and the priest bloke would say stuff. The full moon rose behind us, and Ruby took on her wolfy form, with a chorus of howls from Ruby's fellow werewolves. The howling was loud and lasted for several minutes.

Ruby and I then took our vows, exchanged rings, and we were declared husband and wife. This was followed by a long, drawn-out sloppy kiss.

This was the weirdest wedding I'd ever been to, and on top of all that, it was my own wedding that was this weird. But I still had this nagging thought at the back of my mind.

There was something... missing. Something that was normally here was not here. What was it? It suddenly hit me like a ton of bricks.

"Where's Grim?" I asked, all of a sudden feeling quite panicked.

"Darling, are you alright?" Ruby asked.

"I just realised we haven't seen Grim all day," I said.

"Maybe he's busy reaping or something. Just calm down," Ruby said.

"No. Something is very, very wrong here. Grim should be here. The fact that he isn't... I need to find out where he is," I said, and ran off the altar and into the task force building. Vlad and Dawn came in after me.

"Al, buddy, when you've just dedicated your life to the person you care about the most, you don't just run away like that," Vlad said.

"I just... I feel like something bad is about to happen. Grim should be here," I said.

"The spires haven't started glowing. I don't think anything is going to happen," Dawn said.

"Seriously, you're not the first guy to have second thoughts at the wedding altar. Although usually it's right before you get married," Vlad said.

"That's not it. I've got to find Grim," I said. I ran off.

I entered Grim's section of the house. I entered the lounge. The room was as silent as the grave. I approached Grim's favourite reading chair from behind with a sense of trepidation.

I then came to be in front of Grim's chair, and, lo and behold, Grim was on this chair, but he wasn't moving. He looked like he was frozen solid. Almost like he was dead. Can a grim reaper even die?

“He's not dead,” came a voice from behind me. I turned around. It was Gordon Johnson.

“What have you done to him? Why?” I asked.

“I froze his time stream. Every creature has a time stream, even reapers. If he weren't frozen, he might have tried to warn you of what's about to happen,” Gordon said.

Before I could ask Gordon what he meant by that, there was a huge explosion upstairs. I instinctively ran to the door, but Gordon pulled out a large remote and zapped me with it. I found myself frozen, unable to move. Clearly Gordon had frozen my 'time stream' or whatever. But still, I could see and hear everything happening in normal time all around me. I just couldn't move.

“I have put way too much planning into this to have anybody mucking this up now. Are you wondering why those spires haven't gone off yet? Because they only detect supernatural attacks, and that explosion wasn't supernatural.

Who do you think it was that has been behind almost nearly every one of these supernatural attacks over the past year?

I got a variety of supernatural freaks to work for me, in exchange for quite handsome sums of money. I got a witch to summon the clown poltergeist. I made Chase and his band of werewolves agree to work for me. I gave that gang of vampires a collection of garlic bombs. I sneaked a potion into the drink of that middle-aged woman, giving her the ability to turn everything she touched to gold. All this to drive public opinion away from the weird and supernatural. But then, these accursed supernatural leaders created their so-called 'supernatural task-force', as a way to stop supernatural attacks from happening.

For a while, I thought this supernatural task-force might actually succeed, and cause a future where the supernatural are allowed to co-exist with normal humans! But no, the events that I have caused tonight will change all of that, and will change the future into what it ought to be. A normal future! A future without change!

Let me tell you what is going to happen now. The supernatural task-force building is now on fire. It will kill every supernatural leader, along with countless werewolves, fairies, vampires and witches. Of course, a large amount of mortals will die too, but they must be sacrificed for a greater cause.

The fire will spread to the nearby forest, where the fairies live. A rumour will begin that this was a deliberate attack on the fairies, and the fairies will retaliate on the mortals, creating the nastiest supernatural attack the town of Normal has ever seen. And then there will be no hiding. Everyone will know about the supernatural, and everyone will know that they are a threat.

Of course, we believe in freedom for everyone, so the supernatural will be given a choice – get out of our towns or die. We will make Normal a safe and truly normal place, a place without anything weird or out-of-the-ordinary. It will be the most normal utopia!

I know this because, in the future, I rule over Normal!

You're probably thinking right now that I'm some kind of cruel monster, for killing your friends and wife. You're probably thinking of coming up with some idea to stop me and make the future one where the weird and the normal co-exist. You have let yourself be brainwashed by these supernatural freaks. You don't understand that normal is good. When you see what Normal looks like when everyone is normal, you will understand that the ends justify the means," Gordon said. He then grabbed my hand, pushed a button on his remote, and the whole room began spinning like crazy.

Chapter Five: Future Normal

When the room stopped spinning, I found I was in a different time, a different place. Or rather, it was a different time but the same place. I was clearly confused. I tried to take a few seconds to take in my surroundings.

I was in what appeared to be a large city filled with flying cars and people riding jet packs. The sky was blue, not a cloud to be seen. What could be seen, however, was that the sky looked oddly... glassy. I would later learn that this was because the entire city was inside a square glass dome. Nothing could enter, and nothing could leave. Nothing could be changed.

The next thing I noticed was that I could move once again, that I was no longer frozen in time. Man, me getting frozen or turned into a statue or something seems to happen to me a lot. Hope it doesn't happen again. But anyway, I needed to focus on the task at hand.

I could tell that I was clearly in the future, but what I couldn't tell was the location of the person who had sent me here. Where was Gordon Johnson? I looked all around me, until I looked down and realized I was standing on the roof of an immensely tall building. I lost my balance and began to slip. I would have fallen to my death if it were not for the helping hand of somebody. Somebody clearly strong.

Once I was back on my feet, I looked over at my saviour. A young man with muscles to spare. He had neat, tidy hair and wore plain grey clothes.

“Who are you? What are you doing up here?” the man asked.

“It would take too long to explain how I got here or who I am. Let's get onto solid ground and I'll explain to you the whole story,” I said.

“Alright,” The man said, guiding me down an escalator that went into the building.

As we both traveled down the escalator, I noticed holographic images on either side of me. All of them showed men and women and children all doing normal things. Going on normal picnics. Going to their normal boy's normal baseball game. Going to their normal girl's normal ballet recital.

But something didn't look right about them. For a start, each man and boy had exactly the same tidy hairstyle, and wore the same grey clothes. Each woman and girl had exactly the same tidy hairstyle, and wore the exact same grey dress.

Underneath these holographic posters were written slogans like "Being Normal Is The Best!" or "A Normal Life Is A Happy Life!".

Once we'd reached the bottom of the escalators and went outside, I felt more confident in talking to this strange man.

"Alright. Now I feel like we can talk. My name is Al Norm. What's your name?" I asked.

"My name is John Smith. I've never heard of any body called Al Norm living in Normal," John said.

"I'm not from here, I'm from--" I began, before John interrupted. His face turned angry for a moment.

"You're not from here? You're not one of them, are you? One of the supernatural," John said.

"No," I said, "But I-" I tried to continue, but John interrupted once more, his expression turning back to a smile.

"Good! I've never met a supernatural, but our leader, the great and noble Gordon Johnson, tells us that the supernatural want to ruin our peaceful, normal society. But anyway, if you're new, that means you deserve a proper introduction to Normal!" John said, then made a loud whistling noise with his fingers. Out of the dark came many men and women. All the men looked identical to all the other men, and all the women looked identical to all the other women.

And then, I am sorry to say, they started singing. What follows are the lyrics.

**We Welcome You To Normal
Where Nothing Can Go Wrong**

**We Don't Fight, We Don't Argue
We Always Get Along**

**We Don't Cry, We Don't Complain
We Always Stay The Same**

**Change Will Only Lead To Pain,
Darkness And Bitter Shame**

**We Keep Things The Way They Were
Back In The Good Old Days**

**Our Lives Are So Much Better
We Live Without Malaise**

**We Keep Our Lives Natural
The Way They're Meant To Be**

**If You Want To Be Happy
Normality's The Key**

**We Stay Away From The Weird,
The Bizarre And The Strange**

**We Stick To The Status Quo
Life's Better Without Change**

**Our Men Know That Their Place Is
Being The Breadwinner**

**Woman's Place Is In The Home
Cooking Up Some Dinner**

**That's The Way It Always Was
That's How It Must Always Stay**

**Don't Try To Change Or Fix Things
There's Just No Better Way**

**Change Is Unpredictable
The Future Comes Too Fast**

**But You Can't Fear The Future
When You're Living In The Past**

**We Welcome You To Normal
A Place That's Proud And Strong**

**The Town Where Nothing Happens
What Could Possibly Go Wrong?**

Had they... had they finally stopped singing? Yes, they'd finally stopped.

It's not that the song was bad, but it wasn't good either. It was just... fine. OK. Normal.

“So basically what you're telling me is you all have flying cars and jetpacks, but you still act like this is 1950's America? What is this, The Jetsons?” I asked. I really didn't mean to sound so flippant, really I didn't. But considering what I had just been through, I really wasn't in the mood for any nonsense. I needed to find a way to get back to my own time so I could save everybody.

“You still seem to be a bit confused, Mr Norm. That's alright! I'll help you get used to Normal. I'll show you everything this town has to offer!” John said.

“I need to find somebody called Gordon Johnson,” I said.

“Gordon Johnson? That's our leader. He's very busy keeping Normal safe from the supernatural. You can't just go visit him,” John said.

“Well, you must at least know where he lives,” I said.

“Of course, he lives in that big tower over there,” John said, pointing to a tall skyscraper on the other end of town, easily the largest building for miles around.

“They have historic tours inside the tower every day. That's about as close as one can get to Gordon Johnson,” John said.

“Alright, let's go there then,” I said.

“You can't now, the tours don't start for another two hours,” John said, “but until then, I'll show you around,”

And show me around he did. First we went to a restaurant. It was called 'Normal Restaurant'. Everything there looked normal. The tables were normal. The chairs were normal. The walls were normal. The floor was normal.

John and I sat down at a normal table while a normal-looking waitress handed us our normal menu. All the listings were normal and non-descriptive. They had names like 'Chicken Soup' or 'Beef Stew', with no exciting descriptions or anything to spice things up.

"I'm glad you arrived right when all the men finished work, otherwise we wouldn't have been able to give you that musical number before," John said.

"All the men in this town end work at the exact same time?" I asked.

"Of course! All men work from 9 to 5 and then go home to their families. To do otherwise wouldn't be normal," John said.

"So what is your job?" I asked.

"I'm an engineer. That's a strong, manly job for a normal man to do, isn't it?" John asked.

"My sister is... or was... an engineer," I said.

"Why would a woman want to be an engineer? They'd break a nail. There are a few jobs women are good at, such as being waitresses, but it's not normal for a woman to be an engineer," John said.

"Well, who does all the work after all the men go home at 5pm? You still need people working after 5pm, like doctors, firemen, the police..." I said.

"We never need any of those! Normal is a perfect place where nothing bad ever happens. Every day in Normal is the same. Well, until you showed up, that is," John said, suddenly looking suspicious.

"I guess we ought to order our meals now," I said, "What's 'the special'?"

“Oh, that's great. It's a beef steak coated with garlic butter and wolfsbane, served with a big glass of water. It's great because each of those things corresponds to a weakness the supernaturals have,” John said.

“But wolfsbane is poisonous to us normal humans as well,” I said.

“Oh, it's not for eating, it's for protection from the supernatural,” John said.

“Are there still any supernaturals living in Normal?” I asked.

“Nope, not a single supernatural lives in Normal,” John said, “Anyway, let's get something to eat. I think I'll get the chicken soup,”

“I'm not hungry,” I said. I looked over at a nearby newspaper. It didn't say what the date was, or even what day it was. It just read 'NORMAL TODAY'. The weather page showed that it was expected to be sunny every day for the next week, with zero chance of rain. The rest of the newspaper was blank. No news. Because everything stays the same.

John called over the waitress, and ordered the chicken soup. And then we returned to awkward silence. After a while, John broke the silence with his voice.

“So tomorrow, I'm going to help you get a job and start a family. It's not normal to be in Normal and be a single unemployed man. People will start spreading rumours that you're one of them – one of the supernaturals,” John said.

“I'm not planning on staying here for long, John. I just need to find Gordon Johnson and then I'm out of here,” I said.

“We in Normal all love Gordon Johnson, of course. He helped make Normal a normal place to live. But why are you so interested in him?” John asked.

“You wouldn't believe me if I told you,” I said.

“Try me,” John said.

“You all seem to think that Gordon Johnson is pretty great. But he's not,” I said. John's face became very, very pale, reminding me of Vlad.

“I'm from the past. Gordon Johnson murdered my friends and sent me into the future, which is now,” I said. John covered my mouth.

“I thought you were normal like the rest of us, but now you're talking all this crazy nonsense about time travel and Gordon being a bad person! You keep talking like that, and they're going to throw you out into the wastelands. Just like they did with my sister,” John murmured. I lowered my voice.

“What happened to your sister?” I asked.

“Well, see, we have very easy rules to follow in Normal, but my sister, for some reason, did not want to follow them.

Women in Normal all agree that it is not normal for a woman to get tattoos. It is not normal for a woman to dye her hair. It is not normal for a woman to get her nose pierced. It is not normal for a woman to drink alcohol. It is not normal for a woman to gamble. It is not normal for a woman to want to divorce her husband. It is not normal for a woman to not wish to have children. It is not normal for a woman to show interest in science or the arts. But my sister was doing all that and more.

She must have been brainwashed somehow, most likely by the supernaturals. Some witch or something enchanted her to go against her nature as a woman and do things a normal woman would never do! She had to be kicked out before she could infect our innocent minds with insane propaganda.

Oh, those crazy supernaturals. Even though I've never met one, I know exactly what they're like. They're against everything that is natural and normal.

They want us all to live in an irrational world filled with things that go against all logic and reason. I'm so glad I'm normal, unlike my sister," John said.

"But it doesn't sound like your sister was doing anything bad," I said.

"Maybe not, but it could have led to her to doing something bad! It's better not to change things. It's not normal for us, as normal human beings, to think outside of our boxes. Gordon Johnson teaches us that such a path will only end up making everyone unhappy. Do you want to make everyone unhappy?" John asked.

"Of course not, I was just saying--" I began, before John interrupted me once more. Should I tell him it's not normal to interrupt people?

"If everyone listened to people like my sister, we'd all be a race of degenerate, fat, ugly cretins with no standards or morality! Criminals would be running rampant through the streets!" John said.

"How do you know that's exactly what would happen?" I asked.

"It might not, but if there's a chance something bad might happen, we should not follow that path. We should not do things that are not normal, because things that are not normal are not natural, and when we do things that are not natural, we are dooming the human race to extinction!

What would the world look like if we ignored nature? Armies of women in business suits and men dressed as ballerinas? And what's more, if we weren't normal, we'd be leaving ourselves open for an attack from the supernatural. Those supernatural freaks are just waiting for us to soften up so they can invade and destroy us all," John said. His tone of voice was growing angrier.

"You need help. You all need help," I said.

"What, you think we're the crazy ones? For being normal? Clearly you have let those supernaturals brainwash you into thinking everything abnormal is good!" John said.

“I don't think everything abnormal is automatically good. But just because something isn't normal doesn't mean it's automatically bad!” I exclaimed. There was a sudden silence all across the restaurant.

“I'm sorry for raising my voice like that,” I said. A woman on the other end of the room stood up and walked towards me.

“Don't be sorry, raising your voice is completely normal for a man to do. It was what you said while you were raising your voice that was cause for alarm,” the woman said, “your remarks very much make me regret taking part in that musical number before. And do you have any idea how long those take to practice?”

Let me make something very clear to you, Al Norm. Humans are meant to behave in a normal way, just like birds are supposed to fly!” the woman said. Later it would occur to me that I had never told this woman my name.

“But there are lots of birds that can't fly. Penguins, ostriches, emus, kiwis, wekas, and so on. Granted, I don't know how many of those still exist in the future, but they're all still birds. And the same goes for humans. They're all still birds. No, wait, that's not what I meant,” I said.

“Enough of your disgusting talk. Can't you see how upset you're making everyone?” the woman asked. I looked around the restaurant. Nobody looked upset. In fact, quite a few of them seemed quite interested in what I was saying.

“What are penguins? Tell us more about penguins,” an elderly man asked.

“They're a type of bird that can swim,” I began, before the woman interrupted me.

“WHICH IS NOT NORMAL FOR A BIRD TO DO, AND SO WE SHALL CEASE DISCUSSION OF IT!” the woman shouted. I ceased discussion of it.

“Well, I've finished my chicken soup, so we shall go now, Al,” John said, forcefully grabbing my hand as he began to make my way to the door.

“Not so fast. I just so happen to work for Gordon Johnson. I believe it would be for the best if Gordon and Al had a little chat,” the woman said.

“I certainly have some choice words that I would like to share with him,” I said.

“Well then you're coming with me,” the woman said, grabbing me by the scruff of my shirt. She dragged me out of the restaurant and to a long black limousine. It stuck out like a sore thumb, as all the other cars were all normal, all the same model and all the same colour.

I wondered about what would happen, about what my punishment would be. As it turned out, we did not have to wait for very long, for very soon we came to the tallest tower in the town, and we rode the elevator in silence all the way to the top floor.

Once we had reached the top, I found myself facing Gordon Johnson, sitting at his desk, a window behind him giving a view of all of Normal.

“Well, well, well. I'd like to say that I'm surprised, but that would be a ridiculous lie. I already know how you have been adjusting to the future normal, that is to say, not at all. I give you the chance at true normality, a life free of supernatural strife, and you squander it with your disgusting words and remarks,” Gordon said.

“What is your real story, Gordon Johnson? How did you come to follow such an extreme point of action, meddling about with space and time so you could have Normal just the way you wanted it?” I asked.

“In my original timeline, I grew up in a world surrounded by all these supernatural freaks. Nobody ever treated me like I was somebody special! Why? Why did they get to be special?!?” Gordon asked.

Gordon paused for a breath, then continued.

“So I grew to be proud of my normality, my lack of uniqueness. I was happy not to be a vampire, a werewolf, a witch, or a fairy. I was normal, and that was what mattered. Being normal yourself, I would have assumed you knew what that was like.

But still, the supernaturals meddled in my life. A werewolf stole my girlfriend. A vampire took my job. And their influence just kept on making everybody act weirder and weirder! Nobody was acting in a natural way! Single parents! I couldn't stand it. So I dedicated my life to learning about time travel.

I found out there was a certain event in the past, an event that would decide the fates of the normal and the supernatural alike. That would be the night you married your beloved werewolf fiance, Ruby.

This world, this normal world where nobody has to fear their lover leaving them, or losing their job, or coming into any sort of conflict, is so much better than the world I left behind!

If you can't see that, then the only option is to get rid of you. But I won't be satisfied with just tossing you aside into the wastelands, no,” Gordon said, then pushed a button under his desk. The window behind him opened.

“Dear all normal citizens who can hear me down there, I thank you for your normality. To make sure your normality continues, and you aren't tempted into believing fairy tales of embracing the weird, the abnormal and the unnatural, I will be executing this citizen for high acts of treason!” Gordon declared, grabbing me by my shirt, and holding me over the window. How was he so strong all of a sudden? It didn't matter, what mattered was that I was now at his mercy.

“So, do you have any last words before your deserved demise, you filthy, disgusting morally-reprehensible lover of freaks and the unnatural?” Gordon asked. I thought about it for a moment. The words just came to me, like water through a stream.

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I do.

Listen to me, people of Normal. I can understand why you feel the way you do. Why you would prefer a world of dull normality over a life filled with unpredictable events. But ask yourself, is this really what we are destined for? To just mill about day after day after day, nothing ever changing, always the same thing? Never anything new or interesting to discover? Everything always the same and predictable?

And if that really is the way the world is meant to be, if it is impossible to embrace the weird and live a happy life, if it is impossible to co-exist with the supernaturals, if it is impossible to ever make things any better than they are right now, if, in short, a normal world is a broken world, why should we spend it simply content?

Even if a better world is completely impossible, it seems to me that I would never be happy just to accept living in a broken world. It seems to me that a better life would be one spent doing everything one could chasing the possibility of a better world, even if that world will never, ever come. That is much better than to just accept that it's natural and normal for everybody to be a certain way.

The future terrifies me as well, but without the future, we cannot have dreams. The solution to fearing the future is not to live in the past, to go back to some fabled 'good old days', it's to face the weirdness head on, to accept it, to live in a world where you don't know what might happen next. Maybe your wife will leave you. Maybe you'll lose your job. Maybe your town will be destroyed. Maybe your whole life will change. But it's better that way!

You can tell me it's not natural, you can tell me it's not normal, but if this is what a normal world looks like, then I embrace the supernatural! I embrace the strange, the weird and the chaotic! I embrace it all, with every risk and danger that carries! I want to live in a world where I can feel miserable, angry, shameful, disgusted and not just be contented with everything!

I don't want a world of normality and safety! I don't want a world where I feel content! I want a world that has a future, even if that future isn't what I might want!

That is why you all fear the supernatural, isn't it? It isn't the fact that they're vampires, or werewolves, or fairies, or witches, is it? It's the fact that they're not normal, and if they're not normal, then you don't know what to expect! That's what the word supernatural means – to go above and beyond that which is natural!

And if that's the case, then you have it all wrong! We shouldn't live lives of natural contentment, we should set our sights to go beyond nature! I will never become a vampire, a werewolf, a fairy, a witch or any other manner of otherworldly creature, but I will always be a supernatural, I will always go above and beyond what nature commands of me, and if I can't, then I shall die trying!" I said.

The silence in the air felt like it lasted forever. But then... one person began clapping. Then a group of people began clapping. Then just about everyone was clapping, and there were numerous cheers.

"Why are they cheering? Surely they can't agree with what you just said," Gordon said.

"I believe they're cheering because, despite everything you did to turn people away from the supernatural, there is still a part of them that wishes for something more than just the normal. Though you certainly tried very hard. You set fire to the supernatural task force. You gave a woman the midas touch. You hired gangs of vampires and werewolves to attack Normal. You sent an evil clown after me. You even sent Arabella to kill me when I first came to Normal, but they all failed," I said. At that, Gordon pulled me back into the building.

"Arabella? Who in the name of all things normal is Arabella?" Gordon asked. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the woman who had brought me here. She was smirking. I turned to face her.

"Hello, Arabella," I said.

The woman began cackling madly, and there was a sudden flash of lightning and a boom of smoke. Once the smoke cleared, Arabella was there, just as she had been when she had tried to turn me into a statue. Her red dress was radiant, and her face held a devilish grin.

“What's going on?” Gordon asked. Arabella struck him with a bolt of lightning, sending him reeling over the desk.

“It's nice to see not all mortal men are completely thick. I was an assistant to Gordon Johnson for years, and he never suspected a thing. But as far as normal men go, you are anything but normal, Al Norm,” Arabella said. The room was slowly beginning to glow red.

“What are you doing here? Death sent you to the next world,” I said, already looking around the room for some form of escape. Well, there was the window. But I preferred a method of escape that didn't mean my immediate death.

“Indeed he did, and it has taken me centuries to come back. I've had a lot of time to bring my plan to fruition. And Gordon here is the reason why I was able to come back. No supernaturals means no supernatural defenses, and thus it was much easier to cheat my way back into this realm. For years I have watched these normal mortals live out their pathetically dull lives. But now, they will answer to me,” Arabella said, and with a flick of her wand, a red beam of energy flew out the window and struck the people below.

They began to all transform into strange beasts and creatures. I could not even begin to describe what I was seeing.

“What are you doing, you crazy witch?!? These are my people!!” Gordon said.

“Oh, Gordon, Gordon, Gordon. Gordon... is there something wrong? Or are you just upset that your life isn't a perfect little fairy-tale where the good guy saves everyone from the big, scary dragon and goes home to marry his sweetheart and everyone lives happily ever after?” Arabella asked. She laughed maniacally.

Her laughter echoed off the walls, and with each echo, the walls turned into scorpions. Soon there were scorpions everywhere. The roof was beginning to melt like grilled cheese, and the desk grew a pair of buxom legs and began goosestepping out the window. Arabella pointed her wand directly at Gordon's face.

“But before I kill you, I want you to know this is all your fault. By making everything around you unbearably normal, you just made it far easier to attack. I would never have this kind of power back in the old Normal. And now that you've rid Normal of the supernatural, there is no force that can stop me. You created this world. Isn't it beautiful?” Arabella asked, as more than a trillion purple-and-pink butterflies rose out of the floorboards whilst each one sang the star-spangled banner (but each one managed to sing it horrendously off-key)

I was finding it difficult to keep my balance. Everything was falling apart. The roof had disappeared now. I could see the dome that covered Normal. Or rather, what had been the dome, and was now a giant wobbling structure made of jelly. The sky was a mixture of dark red, bright green, black purple and a menagerie of impossible colours. At this same moment, meteors made from the physical embodiment of hatred and toilet tissue rolls rained down from the sky, bombing entire buildings into oblivion.

“I'll stop you. I'll somehow stop you. The way of the righteousness will always prevail, and I shall make Normal a normal place again!” Gordon said, as he whipped out his time remote.

“What are you going to do, you stupid mortal?” Arabella asked as the ground below us began to turn to grape-flavoured computer speakers, “Travel back in time, try to fix what went wrong? You idiot. You're what went wrong,”

“I'm not wrong! I am normal!!! I am NORMAL!!! I AM NORMAL!!!!!!!!!!!!” Gordon shrieked, his voice now downright hysterical. Arabella continued laughing. She sounded like a demented accordion.

“Stop laughing. This is all wrong. You're a young woman. You should be getting married and starting a family,” Gordon said.

“I'm turning over every law of physics like child's-play and that's what you're upset over? You really are an idiot!” Arabella said, and blasted Gordon with a seemingly endless ray of purplish-reddish-blackish-whitish-greenish energy, shooting him into the sky. Then he exploded in an amazing display of multi-coloured fireworks that spread all over the town and tore open small vortexes that let in green-smelling flying demonic entities with a hunger for mortal flesh and over-analyzing the works of Edward Gorey.

Only one thing survived this horrific explosion, and that one thing was the remote that Gordon Johnson had been holding, which was quickly falling down straight towards Arabella and I.

“Ah, this is wonderful. With Normal as my capital city of chaos, neither any supernatural or natural force anywhere in the entire universe will be able to stop me. I'll become the goddess of this world! And all shall worship me! MUWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!” Arabella said, stressing the last 'HA'.

This speech of hers was good for me, as she wasn't paying attention to the time remote, which had just fallen into my lap. She looked over and saw me, and saw my holding of the time remote, as that was what I was doing.

“What are you doing? Didn't you just say that we need to embrace the supernatural?” Arabella asked.

“You're not embracing it. You're abusing it for your own selfish wants, just like Gordon abused the natural for his own selfish wants,” I said. Arabella suddenly turned red-hot furious.

“How dare you compare me to that boring, normal, everyday mortal. I won't just be content with killing you, Al Norm. I shall turn you into my torture puppet for endless generations!” Arabella said, shooting a ray of pure bright green evil directly at me.

On a leap of pure faith, I pushed every random button I could on the time remote. Something, anything here must be able to save me.

The whole room began spinning, and everything began to vanish in front of my eyes. Arabella glared at me as she began to turn to dust.

“You can go back to your own time, but I will return in the future. Are you afraid of that, Al Norm? Do you fear the future?” Arabella asked. She was only a pair of red, red eyes now. Just there in the endless black abyss. And the sound of her voice reverberated in my head as the last echoing strains of her turned to nothing. And they spoke to me the following words:

***You Can't Fear The Future
When You're Living In The Past***

And everything went dark.

Chapter Six: Back To Normal

The darkness faded, and I found myself back in the lounge of Death. I felt insanely tired. Every part of my body was screaming in pain. But I couldn't stop now. Grim was still frozen. Without knowing what I was doing, I pushed a random button on the time remote, and zapped Grim. Then, I collapsed to the floor.

As I began to lose consciousness, I saw a bony hand reaching for a scythe.

...

I came to in a hospital bed, surrounded by the other supernatural leaders. Daybreak was there. Vlad was there. Dawn was there. And Ruby was there. Ruby, my new werewolf wife.

"Al, are you alright? We were so worried about you," Ruby said.

"I'm OK, I'm just dizzy. Is everything OK with all of you? Is the building OK?" I asked.

"Yes. The whole building was on fire, but Grim came in at the last second and saved everyone. The building's somewhat damaged, but we can fix that pretty quickly. Luckily, nobody was killed. Grim told us what he knew, about that dastardly time traveler and what he did. But perhaps you can help us fill in the gaps," Ruby said.

"I will, later. But for right here and now, I just want to celebrate being alive here in the present, with the people I care about. That's all that matters to me right now," I said. Ruby embraced me in a tight hug, almost crushing me. She let me go when she saw I was struggling to breathe.

Eventually I explained the whole story to them, about the future version of Normal, about Arabella, about everything that had happened.

“So Arabella could come back to attack us some time in the future?” Dawn asked.

“I don't think so. I changed the timeline so that the supernatural task force never burnt down,” I said.

“But you're not certain about that,” Vlad said.

“No,” I said.

“It would be nice to be certain,” Daybreak said, pulling out the time remote, “we found this near your body. You could always go back to the future and see if you truly fixed things,”

“Give it here,” I said, and Daybreak handed over the time remote. With all the strength I could muster, I snapped the cursed thing in half. Ruby raised an eyebrow.

“We'll worry about the future when the future comes,” I said to Ruby, planting a kiss on her left cheek. I felt tears dripping down my face. Tears of joy. Real joy, not the synthetic, bland joy that Gordon Johnson had wanted. I didn't know what the future might hold, and I preferred it that way. I was happy to live in Normal, a place that was unpredictable and sure to change. And so, everything went back to normal, as normal as a weird world could ever be.

THE END