

*I'll make it simple...*

*There are things that crawl from graves. Shadows that move; craving blood. Howls and screams under a full moon and yes, something inside the closet and under your bed.*

*It's all real. The things you call "monsters" exist and they kill people.*

*But I kill monsters.*

*My name is Jonathan Portray – people who know what I do call me the Parannihilator. There's my sister Nancy and our NSA liaison Andrews. We've got resources. We've got weapons. We've got body armor.*

*But the monsters? They have the numbers.*

The Portray Protocols: "What Big Eyes You Have..."

She walked through the woods, twigs and branches sighing until breaking under her footsteps.

Each tree loomed out to snatch her up by her red hood and carry her off. Bushes and shrubbery came to life in the bright full moonlight and clawed at the short dress and her bare legs.

Caught in the forest wind, waves of red hair caressed the young woman's face perfectly. Big blue eyes looked around the leafy walkway and darkened forest. She wondered if something was out in the night.

She looked for something waiting for her, something wanting her.

Only a fool would be out tonight, skulking through the woods alone.

But she had to get to Grandma's house, a lone cabin set against a purple sky.

A billowing plume of smoke reached up from the chimney. A light flickered in one window while the others remained blackened.

The wooden door was unlocked and it opened with creaking whine.

The young woman nervously licked her thick red lips as she entered.

"Come in, my dear..." The voice spoke from the far-set bedroom; the sound was aged.

And the red-haired young woman did so as the wind got its last taste of her body, her full lips and the crimson hood and cloak.

Clutched as if life-saving was the tightly-held basket in her arms.

The door closed.

*Log entry 001101-010:*

*No matter how many times I see one, each attack is newly gruesome. The victim's are almost always the same: devoured, arms locked in death reaching out to keep the monster at bay. They're entrails ripped out and eaten, meat here and meat there.*

*And that's all a human being is to Lupos Anthropos: the werewolf.*

*Like the old gypsy tells Chaney in the movie, you can be a God fearing, loving person during the day, but when the moon is full, the curse takes over.*

*And I think that is the true tragedy.*

*However, the crushed and torn head staring up at me with one wide eye is silently begging to be the most tragic sight to date.*

*PROTOCOL – TARGET: Lupos Anthropos. RESOLUTION: Silver-based weapons.*

*Entry (paused)*

"PA-1, what have we got?" Andrews started up, his agents were sweeping the area, making casts of prints and checking for other clues. The prints showed two sets of human prints and then suddenly one set and a set of something pawed and large.

"Lycanthrope," Jonathan answered, the armour adding digital sound to his voice. "And this is the hiker that had been missing from town."

The armored Portray knelt, closing the remaining eye. The armour reported back details of the environment including temperature, blood scans and bestiary options. "

I'm sorry," he whispered to the dead. The Parannihilator returned up, standing nearly a foot over his liaison. "Any leads, G-Man?"

“Besides the local chatter about shape-shifters and haunted woods that got us out here in the first place, no, no leads at all...” the NSA operative answered. He stared up at the sky. The moon was large, beaming its reflected light over the forest and its bed of drying, dying leaves.

“Not a damn one---“

“PA1, Liason, this is PA2, copy!” Nancy’s voice burst through the communications link. Jonathan heard his sister in his helmet, Andrews’ caught her in his earpiece. The female Portray, ponytail and glasses, was stationed in the mobile base unit miles away. The van was non-descript on the outside but filled with surveillance equipment, communications arrays and a team of five. Nancy herself was painted in the greenish glow of holographic controls and touch screen technology.

Andrews put his hand to his ear. “PA2, we copy. Go.”

“We were analyzing the forensic data when a message, weird as it sounds, was phoned in. It was placed to the local NSA office about thirty miles north of your position. And it knew about what we’re doing out there!”

“What?!?” Andrews snapped, “Damn! Security breach---!!!”

Jonathan waved his sentence’s end.

“One of Andrew’s people red flagged it and just got it here,” Nancy continued, “I’m playing the call now....”

*“You are looking for a shape-shifter in the north woods. You’re too late for the hiker. However, the next killing will be in a wooden cabin fifteen miles north of you. The victim will be a young woman.”*

“Voice is masked. Intel is good. Anything else?” Andrews could hear himself breathe in the night and the wispy warm air trailed from his mouth. Portray, in armour, stood silent.

“The call broke up but it comes back...”

The sound clicked back to the caller’s distorted voice. *“She will be killed at midnight.”*

The Parannihilator looked to the internal clock. Its digital numbers reported the same time as Andrews’ watch on his wrist. The time was 11:38pm.

Jonathan shot a look to his teammate. Andrews stepped close and broke stoic decorum.

“That’s fifteen miles, Jon. Come on, man. Even at top speed? And in twenty-minutes? Wait. I could get our air transport---“

“No time, G-Man.” There’s a ridge with a slight drop about a mile ahead, I’ll take that, shave off some distance.”

“That *slight* drop is several hundred meters---“ With the agent’s last words in the air, Portray broke into a break-neck run. The armour provided Jonathan with extra speed and let him create a wake of leafy forest debris in his sprint into the night. The Parannihilator leapt and for a moment, hung as a silhouette before the silver orb in the sky.

Then he was gone.

Andrews furrowed his brow, narrowing his eyes. “Damn it, Jon.” His hand went to his collar-mike.

“Move it, people! Air transport, I need immediate air transport and EVAC!” The agents broke camp, awaiting the arrival of a team of Blackhawks.

*Log entry 001101-010:*

*Most of my werewolf kills have been loners.*

Portray continued his run through the woods. The charcoal gray and black armour was a shadowed blur as he sprinted, somersaulted and free-ran over hills, between trees and across ravines.

*They themselves were victims of ill-fated late night walks and shortcuts. Victims whom welcome death so they’re be spared the haunting of what they’ve done. I’ve hunted and killed over thirty but their society remains hidden.*

A final leap, clearing ten feet, and Jonathan Portray, the Parannihilator, perched in the thickest of a trio of trees. There in the distance, the only object amongst a sea of dead foliage was a cabin.

A pillar of smoke rose from its chimney. A lone light flickered in a window.

“This is PA1, wide broadcast. I’ve got visual on possible location. Time is 11:58pm. No movement. Switching to imaging procedures including thermal, real-time radiography and ultrasonic.”

Andrews spoke into the collar-mike. Nancy listened from the nearby mobile base.

“Clear PA1 but wait for backup. Situation could be a trap. *Who* sent that message? How would *they* know that intel plus who we are?”

Jonathan’s communications were set to private. The armour’s visual sensors zoomed in on the cabin. Thermal imaging had begun. “Dually noted, Liaison, but we’ve acted on less in the past. And what if it’s good scoop?”

“Liaison is right, PA1,” Nancy agreed, “Pause for backup.” In these missions, the Parannihilator was not an operative but her brother. In his protocols on the supernatural, his concern for his own safety was lacking.

Metal-shelled, Jonathan listened to his friend and family. He gave pause.

“PA1, ETA ten minutes,” reported Andrews. “Hold on and we’ll---“ Suddenly, a scream broke the air and the Parannihilator dove from the tree’s embrace, landing with an eruption of leaf and dirt. He cut a path towards the cabin. The professor’s mind raced with images; another ravaged bloody corpse reaching out as its insides were gorged. Screams cut off as a throat was bitten out and bristled hair slicked with human blood. He cocked a 9mm Sig with silver bullets in his gloved hands.

Andrews watched the digitized dot that was the signal within Jonathan’s suit. It moved towards the target location.

“PA1!!!”

“No time!” answered a huffing Portray. “When you’re here, give me an outside perimeter - five yards, snipers, silver hollow points! And I’m IN!”

The door to the cabin splintered with the boom of servo-motors and amplified strength tearing through wood and metal hinge. The Parannihilator dropped to one knee and held the weapon out, posed to fire.

And the metal man was caught off guard.

His helmeted head cocked to one side.

There was a young woman, bright red hood around her and in a bed, an elderly woman who, from their similar looks, must have been her Grandmother. They froze, gawking at the armoured gun-toting madman who had just burst into their house.

“Uh...,” Jonathan started, lowering his weapon. “Sorry. Filming a movie---“ Before Portray could finish his sentence, the old woman threw back her blanket with a flurry of motion. She rose out of bed and began walking towards the unexpected guest.

With every step, she began to change. It was fast but seemingly slow in motion.

Skin stretched, whining out like tightened plastic.

Bone popped and stretched.

Muscles expanded and twisted while gray hairs tore through flesh.

Her wrinkled face elongated, her round glasses broke and canine teeth grew in.

What was once human was not. Something feral stood in exchange. The immense lupine stood before the Parannihilator.

He looked up at the giant shape-shifter. Wolf eyes looked down at him. Caught off-guard, the metal man had no response save for one.

“Shit.”

“You’re interrupting something,” she growled.

Portray looked down for a moment. “Yeeeah...” he returned. Then the Parannihilator sprung to action. The firearm spat out silver bullets. The creature side-stepped the attack. The barrage tore the cabin apart.

The red-haired girl ducked into the corner.

A massive blow struck Jonathan and sent the gun spiraling. He pulled a Schrade blade from his side and swung, slashing the lycanthrope and it howled, shaking the very cabin itself. Blood sprayed but it managed to crash both paws down, striking the metal man and rocking the house foundation.

Having never experienced a lycanthrope this strong, fast or durable, Portray found himself dizzy. The familiar taste of blood was in the left side of his mouth.

The grandmother clamped a paw around the suit's neck. The strength was incredible and able to rend the armour asunder. She lifted him off the ground, thrusting him against the wall.

"I don't have the time for appetizers," she said, her words lay atop forest sounds and wolf growl. Her left paw clicked claws together, ready to slay Jonathan with one quick blow.

"Good," Portray returned, "Look at me? You know how nasty canned food can be." Putting his remaining strength into a shaky fist, Portray delivered a blow to the wolf's face and sent it back hard.

"RUN, girl! MOVE IT!" The young woman moved to a far corner, still clutching her basket. Jonathan concluded she was in shock and unable to think or react.

A somersault saved him from another claw swipe. He delivered a series of his own blows until two swipes tore deep into the chest plating and into the backing. The Parannihilator flew into the wall, accidentally knocking the red hooded young female to the ground. Her basket fell, spilling all its contents out onto the floor.

The armour's wires fizzed and sparked. Part of the armour's systems went dead. The operating systems were reporting impending motor failures, targeting capabilities and additional failing components.

Grandma was stronger than any werewolf Jonathan had faced before. She stood over him as he refused to stay on the cabin floor with its plush rug and floorboards.

Another blow cracked his helmet. Portray soared and crashed in the far corner away from the red cloaked woman.

His vision was shaky.

Blood and sweat mixed in his eyes.

His skull pounded against itself and his communications went dead.

The furred force turned its attention from the broken Portray. Amber eyes shifted to the red-haired girl in the corner. Walking upright, its muscles rippled in bloody anticipation.

A sound broke the air, it was an echoing CLICK.

The wolf-thing turned its head, peering over its mammoth shoulders. Drool ran from its clenched maw. Portray's hand shook as did the gun he held.

He fired and the shots drove through the wolf's skull. Each slug tore a hole through the furred skull. Each shot took blood and tissue.

The shape-shifter howled into a gurgle, twitched and went limp.

It crashed to the floorboard.

And an old woman lay dead in the wolf's place.

Blood ran in pools from her head.

The metal man slumped to the ground as the servomotor systems twitched and died out. Jonathan was left unable to move like Pinocchio cut from the strings.

"Rest in peace," he said. Portray's words went to the hiker. Jonathan was sure he had just avenged the dead and killed the thing responsible.

"Mister, are you all right?" The red mane woman asked, kneeling beside Jonathan, battered and broke. Her dress was small and revealing. Her body curved and well-rounded.

Jonathan thought to himself:

"*Damn.*"

However, he answered "Yes...I'm fine," he groaned. The battle to stand was lost and a treaty of sitting almost halfway up would be enough.

"Can you call for help?" Her eyes looked over at the sparking gouges in his helmet.

“Not...yet, pretty banged up. But don't worry...help...”

Her eyes widened. The Parannihilator expected her to cry.

“...is on...”

Then her eyes narrowed and she smiled with a mouth full of fangs.

“...the...way?”

Portray's blue swollen eyes looked over to the corner of the room, over to the area where the basket had spilled its contents. There was no food. There were no picnic items or packed goods.

That was a gun, a very large Desert Eagle Magnum XIX.

The red-haired woman slid closer to him. Her skin stretching as her bones popped and reconfigured.

Her fanged maw smiled and drool ran from her mouth.

“I know, I know, this is so a *What The Fuck* moment!”

Her eyes blinked and were replaced with an amber gaze; a slight chuckle rose from her expanding ribcage.

“So, you ARE real,” she began, her words hard to hear over the cracks of her metamorphosis. “Wow. It's an honor, whatever-your-name-is: the famed monster-killer. I wasn't sure you got my phone call in time. Plus I had a crappy signal!”

Fingers and manicured nails rounded out into paws. Clothes tore under pressure from sudden musculature and twisting joints.

“It took some thinking where to call it in. I had a couple of sources, you've got yours, we have ours...and a major leap of faith hoping it'd get to you.”

Portray lie useless and angry.

“Talk about so M.Night Shyamalan, right? TWIST ENDING!”

Portray rasped and his vocal communication faltered. A distortion was the last of his heard words.

“...bitch...”

The shape-shifter winked an eye at him. “Most people call me *Red*. I had challenged Grandma, the alpha female of our pack. Old woman taught me a lot. Between you and me, she would have kicked my cute red haired ass. So, I needed help - you.”

The transformation was over. The wolf was sleek and had a bright reddish-brown hue to its fur. It swayed up to meet the Parannihilator eye-to-eye.

“I'm going to let you live for two reasons. One, is that I know your backup will be busting in here soon. Second reason...”

Fangs let slip hot saliva onto the armour's surface. The wolf laughed a little.

“I owe you for your 'work' tonight. Debt paid by letting you live. Well, I'm off. I need to go grab a bite...”

Jonathan shook as he tried to raise a hand to grab the creature.

“Hikers aren't as filling as they used to be.” With that, she ran to the back of the cabin. Jonathan Portray knew she was gone and out into the night.

Andrews and his agents filled the cabin. The team had their weapons drawn but they were seconds too late.

The Parannihilator, before he lost consciousness, swore this mission was far from over.

The End