

Lyl-jc college essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

You think you know a person. You think you know them, right up until the day

they come out and tell you about all their deep, dark secrets and this whole other life

they've been leading that you never even knew about. At least, that was the case with my

good friend, Lyle Lawrence Kingly.

My name, for the information of the curious, is Niles Jameson. I knew Lyle Kingly

for a good many years and was actually an associate of his for a short time.

We eventually

went our separate ways, I pursuing my career of choice, he pursuing his. I still think he

was just a little too young to go into the private investigation business, but we called it

'creative differences' and left it at that. We stayed friends, however, and tried to remain in

touch. So I was surprised, rather pleasantly, the day I received an overseas long-distance

call from Africa.

It was Lyle, calling to see how I'd been, what I was doing, that sort of thing.

Then

suddenly his voice took on a more serious tone.

“ Niles, you have to come here. I may need your help.”

“ What is it, Lyle? What's wrong?”

“ I can't tell you over the phone.” He whispered. “ It's too important. You have to

be here.”

“ In Africa?” I said in disbelief.

“ Yes, here. It's that important.”

“ But Lyle-“

“ I'm an animal over here!” He hissed into the phone. “ I can't tell you any more. I

don't dare. Please, Niles, don't tell anyone what happens when you get here, or anything

about this phone call. It means my life, Niles, and it could mean my death.”

I caught the nearest plane out to Africa. I was worried about my friend. If I had to

go to Africa to hear it, I knew it had to be important. I stopped at his unreasonably small

office in the city, but he wasn't there. This meant, unfortunately, that I had to drive fifty

miles out of the city to his house. I was relieved when I saw his face answer the door. We

sat down and talked for a while, he fixed me a light snack, let me rest off some of the

effects of jetlag. We talked for a good long time before I finally asked him.

“ Lyle, why did you make me come all the way out here?”

“ You have family secrets, don't you, Niles?” I did.

“ Secrets that you wouldn't tell anyone but those you trusted?” Yes.

“ Well, I've got one of those secrets, a dangerous one.”

“ What is it?” I said to him quietly. And then he told me.

“ Niles, you've heard the stories, the ones they always tell at Halloween — about

people who change into animals?”

“ Yes, but I don't see what that has to do with you, Lyle.”

“ Niles, I- I find that the direct approach works best.”

“ WHAT! Lyle, what are you talking about?”

“ I — I’m a lycanthrope.”

“ You’re a what?”

“ A lycanthrope.”

“ A — A-“

“ A lycanthrope.”

I was beginning to fear for not only my friend’s life, but for his sanity.

“ A- A lycanthrope. You’re a lycanthrope.”

“ Yes.”

“ Like a werewolf.”

“ No — not a werewolf. But a shape-shifter nonetheless.”

I decided to play along, whatever his game was.

“ OK then. Well, what are you?”

“ You know, I could tell you, but then you probably wouldn’t believe me. I’m sure

you already think something about me, that I’m crazy or something, right?

Am I right,

Niles?”

I shifted uncomfortably. “ Look, Lyle, the last I knew, people do not change into

animals.”

“ Niles, please don’t make me do this the hard way.”

“ Uh — What’s the hard way?”

“ The hard way is that I prove it to you.”

I usually try to be as open-minded as possible to all things, so I said to him, “

All

right, then.”

“ You want me to prove it to you?” As he made this daring challenge, his eyes

started to take on a wild look in them.

“ Prove it to me.” He sighed, with an exasperated expression on his face. “ I hate it

when people won’t take me seriously.”

And he did prove it to me. He changed into a beast, right in front of my eyes.

I stood there, in shock, and before I could do anything else, I heard it... A low growl. The animal crouched into a springing position and, with a snarl, leapt upon me.

I was on the floor, paralyzed with shock and fright, as he stood over me. I could

feel the beast's weight pressing on me as two huge forepaws stood on my shoulders, paws

which had the dexterity of human hands. He brought his face right down to mine, and as I

stared up into round, animal eyes, he spoke. He said to me, in a ragged, snarling voice,

" Now do you believe me?"

I could not answer him. I quivered on the floor, and said; " W- What are you?"

" The same thing I always was." He responded in that ragged voice. " Your friend."

He got up off of me and, just as suddenly as he had transformed, changed back into a

human form. It was Lyle, standing there as though nothing had happened.

I slowly got up and faced him. " How did this happen?"

" It didn't just happen, Niles." He responded sarcastically. " I've always been this

way. All my life. The only person it's new to is you." He sat back down at the table

where we had been talking just a short while ago. Nervously, I joined him.

"What kind of creature are you, Lyle?" He smiled ruefully.

"I was wondering when you'd ask." He said. "I'm not even a typical lycanthrope.

I'm a crossbreed, between two species. For years, I didn't even know what to call myself."

"Call yourself what?" I asked in slight astonishment.

"Oh, that's simple, Niles. I'm a Caline."

"A Caline." I said, and I paused. "Um, Lyle... What's a Caline?"

"It's the name I finally came up with, to call myself." He said. "It stands for half-

canine, half-feline. You put them both together, you wind up with 'caline'.

Which,

unfortunately, I am."

"A Caline," I said. "Half-dog, half-cat — Lyle, what are you talking about?

That's

impossible!"

He shot me a look. “ Well, you’re talking to the world’s only one, as far as I know

of, Niles.”

“ Well, what- When did all this happen?”

“ Like I said, I’ve been this way all my life. It has to do with my — well, questionable parentage.”

“ Your parents? What does this have to do with your parents?”

“ Everything. My father was a werewolf from the States, and my mother was a

were-lion from over here.”

“ A were-li-“

“ Yes, Niles, a were-lion. It would take a while to explain. Just accept what I’m telling you for the moment. Anyway, dad came over here on a vacation some years ago. I

don’t know all the specifics, but sometime during then he met my mother, and somehow

they fell in love with each other. Dad eventually moved to Africa so they could be

together. They married on human terms, and after several months together, Mom finally

told him they needed to have ‘ a little talk’. To this day, neither one of them knows who

was more surprised.”

I just sat quietly, trying to absorb it all. He continued.

“ I grew up knowing about my parents, expecting the change... But I never knew

how I would turn out, what I would be. Not even Mom or Dad knew what to expect, since

no one knew what would happen if such two different species bred before.

But when I

finally did start to change, I was still loved and understood. I also grew up listening to a lot

of arguments. Not real fights, you know, but one constant argument: Mom wanted to stay

at home, but Dad couldn’t stand the hot climate. A few times he did actually move back,

but they just couldn’t stand to stay apart. The last I knew, Dad was still living here together

with Mom, but I can't be sure. I haven't called in a while."

"Is there anything else?" I asked, astonished.

"Oh, yes. I'm not a werewolf, not a were-lion, but a werebeast nonetheless.

I'm a

Caline. So my worst troubles occurred when I tried to find the two species I was a hybrid

from. You have no idea how hard it was for a crossbreed like me. The first group of

werewolves I came across wanted nothing to do with me. That particular pack wasn't a

perfect example of the whole species, though, and I do have a couple of friends on that

side. Were-lions, however, are a much rarer breed, and I had to ask my mother how I

could find a pride. The were-lions were much more accepting of me, I suppose because I

take more after my mother. But anyone I met from that side always seemed unnerved by

me. I suppose they just couldn't get around those inherent canine characteristics."

“ Anywhere I went, whatever species I tried to associate with, I was rejected,” Lyle

continued. “ I was tolerated, refused, harassed, and ignored, but never accepted. One time

I almost lost an ear in a fight with a were-tiger who said he ‘ didn’t like my attitude’. I just

suppose no one could accept the idea of me being a Caline.”

“ What happened?” I asked, too absorbed in the discussion.

“ Hmmm?”

“ With you — and the were-tiger?”

“ Oh, I got away without incident.”

“ Oh,” I said. “ I suppose the idea of such two different species being successfully

bred together didn’t come off too well.”

“ Exactly.” Lyle added. “ You’re not going to believe this, Niles, but the most accepting group of my situation has been you humans.”

“ Really?” I was astounded. Then I thought of something. “ Um, Lyle, how many

people have you told all this to?”

“ Only my closest friends, Niles, the people I know I can trust.”

“ Ah.” Well, I was glad to know I was in that circle of people.

“ My looks are no help, either.”

“ Your looks-“

“ You saw me.”

“ Well, I didn’t see very much of you while you were in my face.”

“ Oh.” And he changed again, so I could get a better look at him.

He was basically lionlike in appearance, but with a distinctly canine accent to his

features. His fur was a strange, off-white shade, a color that gave way to a stark white

underbelly. His sable-black, glossy mane framed his face and flowed down his neck,

hiding all but the tips of his two pointed ears. His hands and feet were now four huge,

padded paws. He turned and looked at me with round eyes that were neither canine nor

feline, but beyond description. They were almost aglow, with a look of wildness in them

that was as frightening as it was fascinating. But I could see what would have astounded a

human and caused a werebeast to judge him, what was probably the greatest problem with

his appearance; The same sable shag that comprised his mane also covered his tail.

But I didn't really concentrate on his features as much as I did on him. For right

then, I just stood there with my mouth open, staring at him in awe.

" Lyle-"

He shot me a glance out of his round, animal eyes.

" Lyle, you're beautiful."

He spoke.

" You just tell that to all the other species."

I could understand the words, but his voice sounded like paper that had gone through a shredder. And I couldn't help noticing the four, deadly-sharp fangs that flashed

in his mouth as he talked.

" What's it like... Being a Caline, I mean?"

He answered again, in that ragged voice. “ Believe it or not, Niles, it’s actually got a

few good points. I couldn’t list too many of them offhand, though. Um... Ah, yes!” His

eyes lit up. “ Well, for example, I seem to have a greater sensory acuity than most other

werebeasts. I tend to notice things that either of my parent species would ordinarily miss.”

“ It’s the strangest thing, being able both to howl and to roar.”

He sighed, glanced at me, and continued talking.

“ However, I do have trouble unsheathing and retracting my claws.”

From each forepaw came five razorlike claws that could rip a man to shreds in

seconds. Was Lyle trying to make me nervous?

“ Every time I get them into one position, I have such difficulty getting them into the

other,” he said, withdrawing the deathly blades. I had been looking at the structure of his

paws for quite some time, and soon I noticed something. “ What about your thumb —

dewclaw — whatever?”

“ I was just getting to that,” Lyle said, delighted that I had asked. “ It’s just another

one of nature’s ways of dealing with the human-animal connection.” Lyle held out a paw

for me to see. One of the joints in his hand — paw — moved, and a fifth digit equivalent to

a thumb seemed to me to appear out of nowhere. It was furry, and padded, and equipped

at the end with a retractable talon, just as all the others, but now it was in a roughly human

position.

Lyle, standing on three legs, reached up and, seizing one of the thin-stemmed

glasses from the dinner table, held it with his five clawed appendages as accurately as if his

padded paw had been a human hand. He then began to twirl it around more deftly than

most humans could have. Needless to say, I was very impressed.

He set the delicate glass back on the table and turned the paw toward me again.

The dewclaw moved back into place, conveniently out of the way. I then realized that it

had not just appeared, but had been there all along. This joint, I realized, made it very

convenient for werebeasts to get around.

Just then, Lyle let out a chuckle that sounded more like a snarl. " I just can't believe

what you said, Niles. Me- beautiful." I looked at his smile, and I saw the huge ivory

daggers in his mouth again. And I remembered the reputation werebeasts have involving

humans. " Lyle?"

" Yes?"

" Have you ever... Killed anyone?"

He looked me dead straight in the eyes.

" Once."

I stood there, shocked, horrified. Lyle should have been the one surprised by the

question, astounded that I could even ask such a thing. I had expected him to say

something like, 'Niles, of course not!', or 'What are you talking about?', or 'You know I

would never do such a thing'. I expected him to say anything, anything but what he had

said.

He's killed someone before, I thought. He could kill me... With white and shaking

hand I reached out to steady myself on the back of a chair. Lyle pulled the chair out, and

helped me sit down. I looked up at him and said,

"Lyle — how could you? Of all the people, you're not the type..." Of course, by

then I realized I was talking to someone who had just been telling me about a whole other

side to his life that I knew nothing about. I had no idea what type he really was. Lyle put

his hand on my shoulder.

“ Niles, I’m sorry. I forgot you’d have taken it this hard. I should have explained to

you first.

You see, in my profession, I have a tendency to accumulate quite a few enemies.

The very nature of the business — sticking your nose where it doesn’t belong, as it were —

can get some people really mad at you really quick. Private investigation has painted a

bull’s eye on me, Niles, and there are plenty of people who want to take shots.

This one man, the man I killed, had plenty of reason to hate me. I was directly

responsible for getting about 20 of his friends sent to prison for illegal-arms trading. I

nearly got him, too, and if it weren’t for a legal technicality, a well-placed loophole, he’d

still be alive today — and rotting in prison where he belonged.

He took out a hit on me; he put a \$20, 000 price tag on my head. That didn’t work

out too well. After all, how would you know that this strange-looking animal is the same

person you're getting paid a sweet amount of money to put a bullet through?

I just had to

stay a beast until they gave up looking for me. When that happened, the guy took his \$20

grand back and went out looking for me himself.

He found me passing through an old abandoned warehouse in the city. He had me

cornered in there, I couldn't get out. He was holding a gun on me, Niles, and he was about

to shoot. I didn't have any other choice. He didn't even know what got him.

One quick

bite to the jugular and it was all over. He didn't suffer. I'm not that kind of person."

Suddenly, I was beginning to see Lyle in a whole new light. He had killed in self-

defense; he was no murderer.

" Nobody ever found his body either. I was too upset at the time to notice, but

actually, he tasted pretty good.”

“ WHAT! You ate the guy? You ate the guy?”

“ Well, Niles, I don’t often follow the family history, but eating your enemies is a

time-honored werebeast tradition.”

Lyle spoke.

“ Really, Niles, I’m not all that sure you understand.”

“ I understand what you told me. But I still can’t believe you actually ate that guy.”

I shuddered at the thought.

“ Believe whatever you want, it’s still the truth.” He responded. “ At least I’m not

like some other werebeasts which I could all too easily name. Besides, you act as if you

still don’t understand me. You’re sitting there, fidgeting, looking at me like any second I’m

about to jump up and eat you. You’re treating me like I’m some kind of wild animal.”

“ Aren’t you?”

“ Oh. Well — yes.” Without knowing it, I had caught Lyle off-guard and thrown

him and emotional curve. But I continued nevertheless.

“ You’re making it very hard for me not to act that way. After all, you have the

qualities of some of the world’s most vicious — and successful — predators, you have better

senses than I could even hope to imagine, you killed a man—“

“ Would you kill, to save your own life?”

“ Well, I—“

“ The question is no different when applied to a human. It’s just because I’m a

werebeast that it has a little different twist.”

“ You do have a point, but Lyle—“

“ I’m one of the good guys, Niles. Think about it. ‘ Private Investigator’. Why would I devote myself so much to helping humans?”

“ Because humans were the only ones who accepted you?”

Lyle beamed. “ Now you’re catching on!” He said. “ You were right. Humans

were the only ones who accepted me for what I was, as you are learning to do, Niles. The

human world was the only one where I was treated without bias or disdain.

But still, let me tell you about one of my cases, just to make sure you understand.”

“ One of your cases...”

“ Yes! You wouldn’t believe how much help it is to be what I am, particularly when

it comes to my cases. I get some pretty weird ones. In fact, some I wouldn’t even be able

to solve if I were just a human. I could tell you...”

“ Well then, by all means, go ahead.”

“ Really? Well, okay, let me think of one...

One morning, I was at my desk when this woman walks into my office. She was

dressed all in red, just like she had come straight out of some old detective movie from the

40s. Really weird, really spooky stuff, to say the least.

She said she had come to me because she was worried about her husband.

He

worked for an oil company, and she thought that might have something to do with what

was going on with him. Her husband had been doing strange things, working with

suspicious people she didn't know, barely even coming back home. Nobody else could

find him. So she turned to me.

There must be good money in oil. She looked rich. I remember she was wearing a

white fox on her shoulders. She must have forgotten it, because she left it there and didn't

come back for it.

If there's one thing I share with other werebeasts, it's an absolute hatred for cruelty

to and mistreatment of animals. So, after I'd torn the awful thing to shreds and disposed of

it, I started working on her case."

So saying, he began his story.

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