

“I believe God is managing affairs and that He doesn't need any advice from me. With God in charge, I believe everything will work out for the best in the end. So what is there to worry about.”

— Henry Ford

You ever put something big aside so you can get through the moment, and then later on it hits you like you're in a relationship with an abusive transfer truck?

“I'm gonna have to move. Or stop fighting criminals. Or adopt a brand new identity and start running around in public wearing bright colors while shouting stupid cheesy one-liners and getting fruit pie endorsements. Oh man. Everyone I know could be in danger, here. I don't know what to do!”

“Well, for starters, you could come down. You're the only house guest I've ever had literally climb the walls!”

“Pacing helps calm me down.”

“So pace on the floor and stop getting footprints on my new wallpaper! I don't even know how you're doing that!”

“Van der Waals forces. Geckos use them.”

I lift one foot up to show her the pattern on my sole, then promptly fall down with the other foot still stuck on the wall.

“Ow.”

Dr. Lemnos helps me back up as I peel my foot from the wall.

“Look, William, I know it can seem pretty bad right now, but did they meet you while you were at home?”

“No, but they were tracking me. They found me in the middle of the woods, honed in on me!”

“And did you look like a human at the time?”

“Well, no... I did my whole Hush coat and skin face thing...”

“Is that all?”

“...And I had just finished running around and shifting before then... Okay, I see your point.”

“Glad to hear it. Now, stop this hootenanny about people being in danger, alright? I doubt that they’re the types to break that unspoken rule about not going after friends and family, and even if they were I can just deny you ever told me anything. I’ve had to handle my share of secrets, too, you know.”

“...Hootenanny?”

“It’s a perfectly cromulent word.”

Okay, I have to admit those still are good points. I do tend to overthink things. Maybe I just need to clear my head a little.

“Alright, thanks, Doc. I think I just need to vent a little, and clear my head.”

“And here I thought you liked to keep your head empty.”

I swear she does this intentionally.

A while later, I make my way back home. It’s... been a crazy day. I left my dang bike back at the clearing, didn’t trust them not to put a tracker on it. And I don’t really feel comfortable enough flying around after that. I don’t know who’s watching the skies now.

As the sun sets, I finally make it back. That’s gonna be awkward tomorrow without a bike. Though on the bright side, I should be able to get to sleep pretty easily with all this exercise.

The next morning, I unfortunately get up at a decent hour, and set off into town, seeing another anti-cape protest along the way. They’ve either started getting more serious in these last few years, or the news stations are actually reporting on them more. Unfortunately, this one is somewhat close to my cape-based tourist trap of a store. I unlock the door, head in, and start prepping the place for the day. The crowd doesn’t look like they’re going away, so naturally I do the first thing that comes to mind.

I break out the anti-cape shirts and set them up in the front of the small room that makes up the store. Their money’s just as good as anyones. Not that I really need the money. I was hurting pretty bad for a while until I found out how much some biological byproducts are worth.

Do you have any idea what foreign perfume companies will pay for a ball of *whale vomit*?

The answer is “so much that I’m not gonna complain”. I am also not going to ever buy any girl I like foreign perfume, but that’s beside the point.

Point being that I run this little rinky-dink cross between a gift shop and a street stand both as a means to pass the time, a hobby, and a reasonable explanation for where I get money from.

Finishing setting up the shirts, I flip the sign on the door to “open”, walk back to the small wooden chair behind the cash register, plug in my phone, and pick up the latest book in a series while waiting for someone to come in.

The walls of the store, lined with corny trinkets, look dusty in the pale light. Most of them are bad likenesses of “The Demon of Alderdale”, wooden figures on little stands with the name in relief and some of them poorly painted. A few shirts, both against capes and in support, with a bunch relating to Alderdale’s scenery, history, and most of all, the local cryptid that I’ve become.

I should probably start making new stuff now that people have a better idea of the form I tend to go by while out hunting pedophiles and murderers. Who knows, this might even be good for my reputation. Good by being bad, I mean.

The door swings open, ringing the little bell I tied to it. In walk a few protesters, some looking angry, some looking curious, but most looking around.

I set my book pages-down on the table so I won’t lose my place, and stand up to greet them.

“Hello, how can I help you?”

A blonde guy with dreadlocks shrugs “Nah, man, we’re just looking” before one of his friends cuts him off.

“Do you know how many people those self-appointed dictators kill EVERY YEAR? That asshole in this town should be hunted down, not have his toys sold like he’s some celebrity! Most of this doesn’t even look like him...”

Ah, college.

I walk over and shake his hand. “I fully agree with you! That horror show’s got it coming.” I lean in and whisper “I hear he likes to hunt college kids, too, so watch out” before straightening back up. “But a man’s gotta make a living somehow, and we can’t all have fancy jobs, but tell you what. I’ll give you guys these ‘Go to Hell, Demon of Alderdale’ shirts at five dollars off! (Buy two and I’ll throw in a ballcap with googly eyes.)”

For some reason he doesn’t seem that impressed, and launches into a tirade against my alter ego while some of his friends look around. Honestly, it’s like something from television. One of them approaches me with a small wooden figure, some of the badly-glued-on crushed leaves for hair flaking off of the end.

“Woah, these are awesome! Are they all made from one solid piece of wood? Did you carve all of these?”

“No, I get it from some guy, though as far as I can tell he doesn’t sell them to many other people.”

After the hubbub dies down and he manages to leave, I go back behind the desk and pick up my book again. I don’t really care if they steal from me, I can make more money by just eating and creative use of my power, but it’s a way to keep myself entertained selling horribly corny Demon of Alderdale merchandise.

Finishing the book, I close it, put it under the small shelf in the corner with the other books (\$5 each), and grab another before getting my mug and filling it with apple cider from the machine (1 free drink per customer). Eventually, they filter out of the shop, some buying the shirts I mentioned with the complimentary googly-eyed hat, and one even buying a wooden miniature statue. Still have yet to sell that dog-sized one covered in Mother of Pearl, though. That one cost me a week’s worth of groceries.

Nobody ever believes it’s real mother of pearl. Serves me right for trying something so flashy. I usually have better luck with the small seashell and wooden charm necklaces strung on spidersilk.

More people come, especially once word gets to the crowd about the free cider, water, hot chocolate or coffee, and a few buy some figures, signs, or a book, a few more talk at me, and I’m pretty sure one or two steal some things.

Typical day.

One of the real reasons I enjoy this hobby, though, is when someone gets talking about cape rumors. It’s fun to make up all sorts of stories about myself, couched in “One guy once told me”. Those can be fun.

After some hours of this, when the day seems to wind down, I close up shop, and take a walk around town. It’s nice this time of year. I’ve always loved Fall.

As crazy as things can sometimes get, as horrible the types of people I meet, as much as doing what I do shakes my faith in God and humanity...

I kinda like it. It’s much more peaceful than working retail.