

Werewolf and Coffee

"David, I said for you have a nice day."

Sitting on at the corner of the table David taps a rhythmic beat he couldn't help, but do as the hour strikes 10:00am. Calming, though it is David, the knocking of his knuckles of his right hand and taps from his left onto the table top subtracting attention toward Helen's pleas of attention. With his hard stare toward the opposing wall with ill placed watercolour paintings lining the edge of the peg board. His own piece trampled by two tacks, subtracting from the visual esthetic. He attempts to separate from other works from the other in those who frequent the aid program.

"David, can you wish me to have a good day as well?" Dianne says this as she pokes his hand, grazing the table with her nails clicking the tabletop and innocuously causing a disruption in David's rhythm. And she says again, "David."

This desecration makes David huff and grab his things from beside his feet, and walk out. Dianne's distilled voice is subtracted by David closing the door behind him. Taking out his phone and proceeding to amend the rhythm before the 10:15 bus rolls in. Resigning \$1.60 in exact change, David sat in his seat and gazes into the reflecting image. His brown hair looks matted, eye looking back with the reflections of street signs spaced 15 metres apart for the 3.2 kilometer stretch before the university. With 7 classes and a full-time schedule David spends most of his time on campus aside from working at Copalan Coffee. Sighing, David edges himself off the seat while the bus continues its route. The driver doesn't mind the distraction as this passenger had done so many times in order to arrive at the stop approximately 10:15am, sometimes standing at the door a few more seconds before tapping on the back of his phone, but always at 10:00pm after his final class and last stop of the night.

As David steps off the bus, he retrieves a mead note pad, writing down a new entry in his schedule. Penning in the words 'Comb hair' between the tight space before 'Adam' and 'Regenerative Research and Development Course'. Like a secret a child wanted to protect, David peers around the corner where an older freshman stood handing out pink flyers. Nearly every day this month this particular student rectifies the empty space on the campus events board, trying to encourage others to join this club he frequents. After the student left pegs a couple flyers next to the campus map and event board, David rushes to pull down and place them into a red folder carefully with the others. Collecting the pink flyers for the past few months allowed David to see Adam. Not to deter this individual from gaining more student to come to the event, but to see his conviction.

David proceeds to class. The professor lectures on the potential of extracellular matrix in conjunction with stem cells without a practical method to measure success in an experimental environment. As the class drags on, David pulls out one of the flyers and read the printing. On the face of the pink sheet of printing papers, two thin lined triangles interlay each other as a border of fine print. Above the triangles was the print in large letters 'Pride Club'. Tracing his fingers along the flat of the warm paper, still resonating from the process of hot ink jet printing, he read the print in the triangles.

David mutters so that only he can hear, "Come all to the LGBTQ alliance. Find a voice. 5:30pm every Tuesday & Wednesday."

Two students sitting beside his right made a few glances at what David mumbles and tucks away into the folder containing what appear to be twenty or so copies. The professor notices only for an instant as David put the folder away and perhaps wouldn't have had it not been for the colour of the bright pink distracting enough for her to make a break in speech. She continues her lecture until David

began tapping his knuckles on his right hands and finger tips of his left, sounding the a rhythm two more times each break of a new hour.

“And with that, class has ended,” says the Professor glaring at the clock tower. “As a reminder, the student’s building is still in reconstruction. Please understand that if there is anything leading to the investigation toward who broke into the tower, do report whatever odd behavior anyone may have interfere with its function. The clock is still intact, but the sounding chime no longer rings.”

A male student wearing a team jacket speaks up being last to exit his row. “Ask Routh, here. He’s been complaining about the chime being off by 3 minutes every class for the past three weeks. I think that counts as odd behavior. “

David spoke up, “Brian Egan doesn’t know how to tell time let alone pass the last two quizzes with a score higher than 25 and 30%. To say that I scaled the wall, obstructed the chime from the clock and exit the student building before anyone saw me would require a great feat of strength. The doors to the tower are electronically locked from one side to prevent entry without an authorized staff keycard.”

“Whatever, Freak!”

“Mr. Egan!” The professor’s chest rose as her blouse constricts in the button down vest layering over in symmetry to her conviction to be professional. “There will be no finger pointing, accusations or any form of verbal assault in this class.”

Brian Egan had already left the room before she could finish. Class had ended. And with nothing else to do, David stands up and exits the room before the Professor could gather her things.

“Wait, Mr. Routh. David, wait!” Professor Banks hurries out of the room, scattering a cup of pens by her work table and grabs David by the arm. “Wait. I need to talk to you.”

David stops, not making eye contact, fixing his gaze on the wall where Adam steps out of his class with a borrowed stapler in hand. Professor Jim Tessler peers out wearing a red shirt and gray cardigan as he waits for Adam to finish stapling another pride club flyer on the wall. Professor Banks obscured his vision from viewing Adam’s blond slicked back hair and French cuff shirt which David remembers from Italia Garden where the student worked Mondays, Thursdays and sometimes the weekend.

“David, if he ever bothers you, let me know.” A hand rests on David’s shoulder as his eye dart to the stairway and Professor Banks continues. “Don’t feel that you just have to talk to me either. The Dean made it aware of your needs.”

With a nearly quiet hum, David turns his head to Professor Banks, but didn’t make eye contact. His eyes dart back to the stairway. Professor Banks lifted her hand from his shoulder and stepped in front of David’s view, freeing the peripheral view of Adam handing back the stapler to Professor Tessler who disappears back into the room and emitted a shuffling sound. Adam looked up, but David didn’t make eye contact.

Professor Banks spoke, “You do know that you can trust anyone on staff. I have an autistic son in high school who goes to the Brier Institute. He’s very creative, rather like you. Just know you shouldn’t have to deal with any antagonizing students here. David...”

David turns his head to the Professor Banks distraction and dart his eyes back to the stairway where Adam pulls out some used staples into the peg board and seem to recycle them to post up another flyer.

"Don't be afraid to voice yourself. You've done very well these past few years. David, can you look at me?"

David submits and looks Professor Banks in the eyes. He didn't see the point in looking someone in the face who had been standing in front of class for the past 4 hours and for 4 minutes David divides a small segment of his time to seeing Adam thumbing a flyer into the wall and the stairway to freedom.

"You can call me Emma. Do you remember my name is Emma? Emma Banks. I volunteered a year ago Brier Institute open house event where you met Sean too. You two take the same program."

David hums and shoots his eyes to her in acknowledgment and rolls them back to the stairway where Sean began to climb the steps to the second floor. Professor Banks pats David on the shoulder and let him pass. He turns his foot and follows Sean's footsteps until reaching the stairs and looks up with enough time to spare to see Adam's hand grip the staircase. His hands firmly placed around the 7 inch circumference rail. David imagines what it would be like to hold his hand, to grab him by the wrist and hurry him across campus as the rain pours down outside in a torrential fall and grip him close, sliding his hand on David's wrist as if to guide him closer being normal. So firmly, secure, but gentle Adam's hand grips the last feed of railing, proceeds to take his final steps and disappears from view. David sighs, wishing the time viewing Adam from afar would last a little longer and turns back down the hall, gently took the flyer loosely held by two beaten up, used staples and the other flyer down the hall, which had been stapled 21 times so that it was harder to retrieve and place into the folder containing the other flyers.

Without warning, Professor Tessler turns the corner from the lecture room with his umbrella and leather briefcase in hand. And in jolting to grab his keys, the umbrella knocks David's bag off his shoulder and onto the floor, scattering the contents of a bento box everywhere.

"Oh, I'm sorry." Professor Tessler grabbed the red folder and shook off the bits of teriyaki tofu, cabbage and carrots as he stammers, "I-I'm so sorry. I didn't hear you. I was closing up and..."

David swept up the bits of food using a packet of tissue paper and shoves them into the compartment of the bento box that it had fallen from. Looking over all his possessions, David saw the red folder in Tessler's hand, almost cracking it open with his index finger as he balances his keys and umbrella in his other hand.

"Here, let me lock up and I'll walk you out. You don't have a jacket, let alone an umbrella of your own." Professor Tessler turns and pushes the keys into the door knobs, flicking it with a click and continues to hold onto David's folder with the corner fluttering in the air with the pink papers hitting the corner of his eye like neon lights with a twist of a wrist. "Ok, where are you headed?"

"To the student's building."

"Ah," says Professor Tessler. "Here, I'll show you out then. So sorry."

David huffs and made quick glances from the eight floor tiles across the span of the hallway and 32 rows of titles to the door before his folder in Tessler's right hand would get wet from the rain. The professor wraps his arm around David with his umbrella hooking David from walking ahead. With every short step the neon glow of the pink papers flash and may well fly out of their sleeves and flutter like brilliant wings like startled pidgins. Tessler's words were distant despite his mouth flapping a foot away from David's ear. His head bobbing head side to side like a debate going on in his own head, the professor points to the door with his umbrella for David to open for them.

David swings open the door and reaches back to grab the folder, but Professor Tessler's umbrella knocks his hand away as he opens it at the doorway and positions it above his head. The professor smiles with an open grin and ushers David across campus, the folder crimped tightly under his arm with the wind flipping through the corner of the folder to give plain view of the contents. The professor stops before reaching the student building and closes the umbrella and shakes it before opening the door for David, whose eyes never took their glare off the folder. Eyes fixed on the folder, lightly coated with rain drops and teriyaki sauce.

"In you go," Professor Tessler spoke while tapping the end of the umbrella, ensuring all perspiration of the weather was gone. He looks up and speaks up again, "So, you see why you should consider taking my class? I know you are uncertain what field you might choose, but research is a noble range of possibilities for you. You have an eye for that sort of thing according to Professors Mackle and Banks."

David's eyes continue to glare at the folder. Pink flash against the indoor light as Tessler's arm flapping with every point he made. Though, most of those ideas didn't reach David, the professor could tell his speech fell on what could only be described as a distant ear.

"David?"

David looks up.

Professor Tessler hoists the folder to David and held it out mid-chest high to David's shoulder. David grabs the folder and notices Tessler's hand still held on as if to keep his attention.

"Think about it, won't you?" And with that, Professor Jim Tessler let go of the folder and reopens his umbrella with a gush of wind hitting the nylon sail as he trots off in brown penny loafers.

David turns and crosses the threshold into the student's lounge. His folder now safe, David rushes to the lift before it closes. David had preferred the stairs, but the update to the second floor includes a schedule to paint job and had been sectioned off for the past three days. Brian and his two other friends snicker. Before David could leave to the second floor, one of the basketballs either Brian or Mark held bounces off David's elbow and spills the contents of pink flyers out onto the floor as they all burst out in a high pitch laugh and a grunting cackle. They had all seen the pride club flyers and they laugh.

The lift door closes and they point hysterically before yelling in unison, "FAAAH-" The door closes, cutting off what they want to say.

David picks up the flyers and a door to the Pride Office swings open. It is on fortune's tide that a sofa obstructs Adam's view, but sees David's eyes dart down and pick up the flyers in the quickest game of 52 card pick-up.

"Hey," says Adam.

David shoves the folder into his bag before Adam can see. His eyes mellow, David could tell that Adam had not seen his secret. Adam wore a white, green and red, fitted sweater vest. His waist seems to be held up by elastic black suspenders. His hand dug into his pockets to shift out a few coins for a vending machine containing gum, pretzels and an assortment of crisps. But, David doesn't say a thing. He only positions the front of his chest in the direction of Adam.

"You know, I saw that." Adam continues, "They're in some frat house across campus. They pick one freshman every year are the quiet ones who might appear different. Haze them, knowing that the

person isn't likely to say anything. Don't let them bully you. Most of the jocks are nice. It's just that group looking for initiations."

David looks up, wanting to say something, but Adams stands there making eye contact. Even when Adam is pushing in the code for the fruit gum, he doesn't lose interest in David's eyes. Locking on like targets, Adam only breaks contact when he reaches in to grab his gum and hands David the first piece. David takes it and nods to Adam who smiles as he pops in the second piece into his mouth.

Adam says, "I don't suppose you are here for Pride Club, are you?"

David says nothing.

"Hey, it's ok," says Adam. "Listen, if you need to talk, we're here. I see you in a couple of my classes and a few across the science department. I want to ask you something, though. Have you seen anyone grab the flyers off the wall? I keep putting them up around there and in front of the bus stop and they always seem to go missing. Nowhere else, but it's a consistent thing someone keeps doing. I just keep putting them up and hope whoever does this will stop vandalizing the campus event boards."

David stays silent. He looks into Adam's eyes with a huff and a tilt of the head.

"Hey, David. It's ok. Next time I see them I will tell them to leave you alone. Ok? Don't be sad. It's a good University on most part. And don't be afraid to come in if you need to talk. Pride Club isn't just about the glitter and rainbows." With that, Adam points to the clearly labeled Pride Club Office in white letters on a black plastic. However, the walls, door and windows were covered in glittery stars, rainbows, and a cluster-fuck of battery operated lights, old candy canes and cracked lifesavers candy as if decorating the pride office in the most obtrusive fashion. Adam adds, "Oh yeah, that wasn't me. I swear."

"That is funny," David says with a smile.

"Oh, so you do speak. Three weeks of the new semester and you don't say a thing," Adam says with a smile. "You should smile more."

Adam squeezes David's cheeks and turns to enter the office. He braces against the door and looks back one more time before entering. David continues to smile and makes his way over to the door and peers in. While the front of the Pride Office is cluttered in gay memorabilia and disorganized crafts, the inside is a couch, an Ikea desk, a great deal of books ranging from Harry Potter, Oscar Wilde, art books of Paul Cadmus, and historical document to biographies of Stonewall. For such a bright, colourful amalgamation of an exterior, the inside is like a museum of sad tales, memorials and realities that the first days of Pride were about death and loss. The thought echo the feelings David recalls. With a quick flick of David's wrist he presents the flyers to place in a neat fashion into the folder space beside the door where he always places them at the end of every day. This time, he leaves them for Adam to find and replant on the campus event boards the next day when David will repeat the same act day after day on his route to the classes he makes brush with Adam.

The next two classes David attends are a course on Ethics and a lab that both Adam and David share. Adam isn't his lab partner, but in the room he is across the room facing him. The innocuous act of positioning David and his lab partner, Siera, would have no effect in how Adam views him. David can see Adam whenever he wants and it doesn't affect how anyone will create suspicion.

Siera is a talker. She relies on David, making the quick glances to the text and sometimes the microscope. Class involves the study of muscle and the affects of fatigue through electrical signal emits by a regulated power source. David can't but feel how much it feels like the two years in high school he

had attended. It's a futile experiment that brought no different outcome in methodology or change in conditions. Boring.

After Class, Siera waves to David as he stops for a moment to watch Adam pin up the flyers that he had taken down earlier in the day. He watches him for a moment to see Adam. His small hand pinning up flyers with conviction that he won't let whoever takes them down deter his will or feelings toward the importance of his pride club.

Tapping his knuckles and fingertips on his bento box pressing against the inside of his canvas bag, David makes his way to the bus stop and on the dot, at 10:00, he boards the bus and heads home. The last stop of the night, David is the only passenger on the bus. Looking at his schedule, he pulls out the mead note pad and looks. It's time to eat his granola bar. He is still hungry, not having lunch and making the quick detour to the pride office that would have taken the scheduled spot of eating a quick lunch and combing his hair again.

Home is a duplex. One side is run down and only David's side is habitable. He owns few possessions. A fork, spoon, knife and a frying pan with spatula for cooking at the stove that came with the rental. Upstairs is empty. He only inhabits the basement. There is a cot, blanket and an inflatable pillow for home comfort. One T-shirt, a polo and a long sleeve white shirt all go with the pair of black faded jeans and tan kakis that he shoves into a dry bag with a toothbrush, tooth brush and tube of body wash wrapped in a travel towel. It's not permanent. David pulls out a wifi speaker, his phone and an SD card with audio files and plays a track. As he washes up with the sink in the corner he listens.

The recording sounds, "Hello David. This is your father reminding you I will be out late. I am sorry that I can't be with you, but one day you can join me. You are still too young, but don't fear if this is your first and you are alone. I will call you every night while I am out. I promise. Do your home work and go to sleep early for school tomorrow. I am proud of you. Do not open the door for anyone except me. One day you will join me, but tonight you need to be good, be quiet and don't let anyone know. It is our secret. I will protect you and you have nothing to fear. Hold what you feel is dear in your heart. The days ahead will be difficult, but tonight you-BEEP"

The recording ends abrupt, but long enough for David to finish washing up. He places his tan kakis on the line and pulls the T-shirt over for them to dry. His towel air dry over the sink and he lays on his cot until he taps his right knuckle on the exposed metal of the cot and taps his fingers in repetition. Twelve repetitions and it's time to get up. He pulls out a tarp and lays it down in front of the back door before unlocking the latch and looks out into the dark with hesitation.

Waking up the next morning, David's blanket is covering his neck and his feet are peering out from the end of the cot. Feeling groggy and remnant growing pains in his legs and face, he stand up and stretches. He gathers the loose threads of hair on the floor that he had miss as day's light peers into the basement window. David pulls down his dried kakis and places them into the dry bag after pulling out the black pair of jeans. His T-shirt is dry and he flips it to the reverse white side to wear to today's meeting and class.

It's a quick walk to the Brier Institute. David arrives tapping his knuckle 8 times with fingertips in a rhythmic session before she opens the door.

"Hello, David. I'm glad you came. How are you?"

David looks at the grass and along the slick path from this morning's residual breath of moisture. David doesn't acknowledge her. He thinks of Adam as he is let into the office and he signs off on his appointment.

"David, I'd like to work on your eye contact. David?"

David makes a glance to her, but rests his eyes on the opposing wall. The watercolour paintings have been put away. His own piece set aside for him to take home.

"David? Would you like to talk about your schedule? You need to look at me to tell what you're thinking. Otherwise, people won't know who you are talking to."

David looks at her. She has more lines on her face from the day before. She hasn't slept well. He can see that she has been worried as her face mirrors the expression diagrams on the wall.

"You are upset."

"Yes, very good. How was your night?"

"It was uneventful," says David. "I go to sleep early. Mrs. Banks is here. She wants to talk to you."

She is hesitant to say anything until Professor Banks comes through the door, making the specific sound her heels make against linoleum. Instructor Dianne stands up immediately and walks to Mrs. Banks to give her a hug. David watches them with curious eyes. Watching the two friends hold each other as Professor Emma Banks cries into her shoulder. Professor Banks looks comfortable, her crying stops shortly after 5 minutes. They both walk out of the room to talk in the hallway. David overhears.

"So, they found him?"

"Yes, Jonathan is with him in the ER. He didn't arrive at my campus office yesterday."

"Did he get lost?"

"No," says Professor Banks. "No, he knows his way to my office. He was excited to come with me to go shopping. He wanted a new colour for painting. He wouldn't have gotten lost. He's so consistent. Dianne?"

"Yes, I know. I only thought..."

"Dianne, he's in a comma. He hit his head in the fall. I don't know why he would linger in the parking garage. He knew we were going straight to the Carson's Canvas after I got off work," Professor Banks sighs heavy. "I think he was pushed. Dianne, do you know anything about any bullying on campus?"

"David shows up with bruises," Dianne whispers. "I think something is going on. He doesn't talk much. In fact, he talks even less after his father left."

"What do you know about his father? He didn't abuse-"

Dianne interrupts her. "No, he was very attentive to his son's needs. He lives alone in that house a few blocks away. You know, the one that the street lights keep getting knocked out? They keep replacing them, but it's pitch black at night. Fortunately, he takes the bus and we made an agreement to pick him up in a half hour every morning."

David can see Professor Banks is peering in from the corner of his eyes. He carefully adjusts his yes so appears to be reading the diagrams of body language.

"Do you mind if I take him in? He has my class on Mondays and Wednesdays. I think he has Professor Carson and 3 other classes," says Emma.

David become bored of listening into the conversation and stands quiet enough to slip through the back. He grabs his watercolour of his father he painted. By memory it is an accurate rendering. He thinks of him for a moment and slips it into red folder he usually saves space for Adam's pride club flyers. Making his way out into the hall, he sees that Emma's hair is obscuring the vision of her friend. He slips through the back into the backyard which is used for cook outs and teaching gardening to other autistic youths. There is no point in walking the 15 kilometers. He cuts across the field with the campus beyond the farm house and the two town streets running parallel to the institute. It's just as long a walk ask the ride on the bus with all the stops it makes. David doesn't always take this route, but reserves it only for night time when no one can see him in the blanket of darkness. He arrives before the bus usually pulls up. It gives him time to walk over to the campus event board and grab the pride club flyer, except it wasn't there.

Before David could walk to his the coffee house on campus to grab his pre-made bento lunch, Adam appears from around the corner. A fresh stack of flyers are in his hand, warm from the ink jet printer and he has a smile on his face. David smiles back and waves even though he's standing a metre away.

"Hey, David. I was just putting up flyers. Still don't know who keeps doing it," says Adam.

Adam wore a pin stripe pants with a black sweater vest, covering his slender frame and with suspender clasps gripping his form as if keeping him contained in his uniform look. The high school prep look still lingered. His parents raised him catholic, but he didn't wear a cross or any sign that he agreed with his upbringing. His blond hair fell over his eyes as he looks down, pulling out a flyer and posting it to the wall with a stapler this time, instead of tacks from the small mason jar connected to a string. He has gotten more formidable to prevent that someone from taking down the flyers. With eight well placed stamps of the stapler he lets go of the flyer as it stuck on the wall and he puts away the stapler.

David spoke, surprising even himself, "I am going to Copalan Coffee. Would you like to join me?"

Adam stares at David. And for a moment, David thought that this is what it's like when he doesn't answer them, even when he wants to and can't.

Adam's smile creeps up as the sun gleams over the top of the side of the building, cascading light into the wet pathways of the campus. Smokey vapor emit from ground in a haze of morning mist ankle-high.

Adam speaks, "Sure, I was heading there myself."

And with that, he tugs at David's arm and ushers him like guiding a dog coming in from a walk. If he had a tail, David would be wagging. Adam leans in and nudges him a playful grin. David smiles too, just as he practiced in the mirror and goes to reach for Adam's hand. He can almost touch it as Adam slides it into his bag to grab another pink print out. He staples it eight time in each corner and every side to ensure it is planted in a more permanent method than the past few weeks of tacks and torrents of scotch tape.

"Sorry, at least I have someone here to keep me company. All the other members don't get up as early to do this. That and no one else has this problem at the dorm or the at the athletic department or...In fact, it's only the science department." Adam looks back at David and says, "I think it might be some religious nut bag who has something against the psychology department for the published a study that showed that bisexuality is inherent in a lot of species. Science department, where creationism is a fairy tale of as much as sea monsters, elves and werewolves."

"What's wrong with werewolves?"

Adam snickers, "Nothing, I like them fuzzy."

"I'm fuzzy," says David.

Adam stops and looks to David who keeps walking. "I suppose that makes me a fairy...David, is that a flirt?"

David continues to walk, but spoke as though Adam was next to him, "I have never flirted before. In fact, I am unsure as to how to. I often wonder what it is like to even hold--"

Adam pats David on the back and wraps his arm around him, resting his hand on his shoulder. "Dude, you walk too far ahead I can't hear you when you're talking. Sound waves don't bounce well when you walk away from someone. What did you say about being a flirt?"

David opens the door for Adam and ushers him in as he practiced with Dianne at Brier. Adam's smile didn't relent. His lower eyelids rise, genuinely happy. It causes David to be jealous, wanting as much as avarice. David wishes to be normal for the first time, as normal as Adam at least.

"Wow, the coffee really hits your nose when you walk through the door. Coming?"

David follows and first scent isn't coffee that he hits him. It's Adam's scent, his Ivory soap, Horse & Mane Shampoo and aftershave. It wasn't until he steps through the door that coffee snaps him out of a trance and he realizes his hands are on Adam's shoulders. For the first time he touches someone who isn't handing him a tube of paint or accidentally grazing his hand as he reaches out. He put his hands on him, as if pushing a trolley-cart, but he grips his shoulders playfully and immediately withdraws his hands, not knowing what to do next. It feels like he has Adam in his hands, like fingerprints on a glass window, but not cold to the touch. His shoulders are warm and so his fingers and palms feel warm. Adam twirls to look at David and their eyes meet before Adam approaches the counter and orders. David's boss is there and he sees David with a curious glance.

"David?"

David points to Adam and then back to himself. He had spoken briefly with his boss, Jake. David practiced small talk with Jake as he had seen him at the Brier Institute. Jake has Asperger's and helps with the younger group to introduce social skills. He doesn't go to college, but he has managed to obtain a manager status in the coffee house in the middle of the campus. He quickly notices Adam as he hands him a croissant and small coffee.

"On the house, Adam. Anything for David here..."

"You know, Jake?" Adam says.

"I work here. He said I can have coffee on the house if I bring a friend. He told me to."

Adam says, "So, you brought me here for free coffee?"

"I did not mean--"

"Clever," says Adam. "I wish I had these perks working at my job."

Jake hands me a cup of coffee and points frantically at Adam. David nods, letting him know he's the one.

Jake says, "He's the one?!"

"Who?" Adam says.

"Nothing," says Jake, and he grins at David.

David sits down across Adam, who pulls out a newspaper. He scans the first page and the picture of Sean Banks. The article doesn't say who else is involved, but mentions a streak of hazing and

occurrences of physical abuse ever beginning of a semester. There is no mention of how the clock tower was broken into and someone cut the connection between the clock and the chime that sounded 3 minutes and 22 seconds later than the clock. That was part of David's secret.

"Real shame about Professor Emma's kid. He's autistic and probably got targeted for the hazing ritual by the Alpha Decca Ram house. They always push people like Steven Cougan and Brian Egan to do things to earn a spot inside that stupid, archaic..."

The welcome bell clangs as Steven Cougan, Brian Egan and an older student by the name of Conner walk in and stand up to the counter. Brian's head slumps. He doesn't make a quick jab at David or Adam, who he knows is different. And like David, he has been a target for Brian since high school. This time Brian asks for two coffees and hands Conner his, paying for both.

"How you doing retard?" Conner says. "Jake. Yeah, you. When was the last time you changed the filter?"

Jake huffs, "I used your mom's jockstrap from last night. Do you want me use your dad's? I got it b-back here for you if you want you want our mouth washed out."

"B-Back off, D-D-Dickface! Heh. You still have that stutter. How did you even get this job with such a screwed up mouth?"

Jake went to say something they had already left. Brian left last with his head held low and didn't make a quip which he usually does.

"Damn that Conner," says Adam. "Jake is a nice guy. Look at Brian and Steve. They look like they had their balls cut off. What's up with them? Maybe their initiates. Man, that sucks. Last thing this campus needs is three of those guys hanging out. They're all on the hockey team, the ones living at the frat house, you know? I think those three though...They're on the basket ball team as well. All sport and PE courses, with the exception of a couple modes they have to take in science. This is the third time Brian took Chemistry. Kind of sad."

David sips his coffee. The bitter taste did not attract him, but Jake put in a few sugars with milk to deal with the tongue curl. David takes another sip and summons the words to say.

"He's in Professor Bank's Regenerative research class. He can only take the course three times if he fails them. I believe it was a quick course change last minute."

Adam speaks up, "At least he isn't in gender studies. Actually, it would do him some good to learn about that, what with his ignorant views. You should take the class with me. I can audit it as I took it already. In fact, you should come to pride."

David keeps his eyes on his coffee, concentrating why the taste of dish soap is so apparent.

"Uh," Adam continues, "It's a great group. You'd love it. We meet every Tuesday and Wednesday. We talk about equality and how the campus can change for the better."

David glances Adam, remembers to make eye contact and say more than one word answers without trailing off on a tangent. He clear his throat and locks eyes with Adam.

"I think," David starts, "I am...like you."

"Well, my gaydar isn't exactly flashing with you. If you are, you're the most straight acting gay I've ever known," says Adam.

David adds, "That's funny. Alex says I'm the gayest straight person he's ever known."

"Really?" Adam says and smile, looking back at Alex who still storming about the comments from earlier. "You're coming to pride club, then. Got to pop that cherry at some point."

David is bewildered. "Why would I pop a cherry?"

"Um..."

"I'm kidding," says David, still uncertain what it means, but smiles.

Adam continues to smile, pulling it into a full grin. "Well, you always come down to the second floor, behind the pride office is a conference room. We get together, drink soda and talk about LGBT news. It's great. And we head here to Copalan after and get free danishes here before they close. Jake is good like that."

David nods, keeping his eyes on Adam's, the long he has ever held eye contact before breaking it away to take a fake sip of coffee. He can't stand the taste.

"So, you coming?" Adam adds, looking at his phone wide eyed, "Out?"

"I'll try to," say David.

"Hey, no pressure. I mean, coming out to a gay friend isn't as hard as coming out to your parents or work. Really, you either like guys or you don't. But listen, I have to head to class. I'll see you later at pride. Sorry, I'm really late...Sorry."

With that, David nods and tries shake Adam's hand, but Adam has already left the table, tosses out his napkin and waves good bye before heading out the door. He should chase after him, but he is late for his own class.

David made it to his class with a second to spare. The professor of physiology and anatomy looks stunned realizing David is nearly late. The usual taps of David's knuckles determines when it was time to start the session to when it's time to pack and go. The pop quiz doesn't surprise David. He already surmised Professor Keith Winstrow and Professor Arnet had talked earlier about how they got off on surprising their students with readings one day, followed by a ten question and answer write-in. With two classes down and two to go David only have 20 minutes to meet for the pride club before hitting his 6pm class that drags onto 9pm. That is after the mode course in watercolour he had taken a liking to from the institute a short distance from the University. He ran into class only to realize that it had been cancelled, as had been the 6pm course on account of the events of Sean's accident.

The cancelled course gave enough time for David to do the route, pulling the pride club flyers off the event boards for Adam to replace every day and so he could run into him. When he approaches the event board close to the parking garage, he stops and sees Brian had beaten him there. David ducks behind a brick building with the bushes giving him chest-high coverage. Brian had enough sports on his plate that he didn't care for other extracurricular activities. David doesn't do social events himself, but the curious behavior Brian emits prescribes a distant and watchful study. There, Brian stands, staring at the peg board, shaking his head and back at the parking garage third floor. Then, out of the garage, Adam stampedes towards Brian. And then, Adam pushes Brian after a short exchange of words.

Brian pushes back, sending Adam's to the ground. He points at Adam as Conner approaches and grabs his arm. David watches as Conner pushes Adam to the ground, and it appears he spits on him. Something festers in David He can't take that, not Adam. Before Adam is back on his feet, David has caught up, looks to Adam and is about to go after Conner when Adam yells.

"Don't bother, David. Those guys are assholes. Fuck'em. Supid jocks."

David sees Adam rub his back side and picks up his backpack before walking back to the student center. He wants to say something to Adam, but can't for some reason. Before following Adam, David goes to the events peg board and is about to pull the pride flyer when he sees a picture of Sean and the

words, 'Have you seen anything?' and a number for the campus police. Brian knew something or at least appeared responsible from his previous action the past two days. His initiation into the frat house may be the key.

Brian's involvement would have to wait as pride club began in 45 minutes at the student center. David tries to summon the courage to show up. A group of 26 people line up in front of the conference room. David hides behind a vending machine, uncertain of what to do. He doesn't see Adam who would be a good liaison for meeting other people, the one person David wants to see and doesn't show. One by one they all enter the conference room. No Adam.

When the door closes behind them, David approaches and peers in, the moderator is a girl and no sign of Adam. Everyone takes their seat as David stand by the door way for a few minutes. Knees tired, David decides to sit on the couch besides the pride office to wait for Adam. Adam, always coming and going and always too soon before David can add a few words into a conversation, doesn't show. David lays down on the couch and wait until the meeting is over. He had fallen asleep.

David follows the chatter 15 metres behind the group as they head toward the Copalan Coffee. He doesn't enter, but watches as one by one each pride member exists. He listens in and overhears one of the members asking, "Where's Adam?"

"Where's Adam," says David. He walks to the parking garage to see if any sign of Adam's Sab. It's still there. "Damn."

Before leaving, David sees Brian, Conner and Steve walking out of the stairway to the second and third floor and point to the park across the street. David follows, realizing it is past 10pm. David needs to get to the bus. He sees it, but ignores it as it drives off with no one getting on. David follows the three stooges instead, following far behind and taking a different path when they come to an underpass. David approaches the over pass bridge connecting batting cages with the soccer field. It's no thought out explanation as to why an over pass was needed, but convenient for ease dropping on a conversation.

"Fucking kid. That Sean-kid has a mother who works as a professor here. If he wakes up and tells his mother, she will see to it all three of us get expulsion. Good job, Brian."

"Fuck it. I was doing as I was told. The kid tried jumping over the barrier and though it was the first floor. I didn't push him."

"Guys, it's not our fault. Spray painting a retard's head university colours was all were going to do. No harm, no fowl.

"I never wanted to do that. Conner here..."

"Shut up! I'm house-recruiter. You make the decision whether to or not to do shit. You want a home with us, you better provide.

"Provide a source of entertainment? What kind of sick fucks are you guys?"

A familiar voice enters the conversation. David tries to look over the ledge, but can only see a pair of feet and the crown of blond hair disappear into the underpass. It's Adam.

"You guys are screwed up," says Adam. "Sean just wanted to go see his mom, go shopping with her at the mall and be a normal guy."

"That freak was never normal," says Brian. "And I never laid a hand on him. I tried to convince him I'd paint his hair University colours and I'd slip him some cash. That's all. He jumped and thought it's the first floor when he had that fit retards have when they're all stressed out and crying."

Adam sighs, "You guys have issues. I need to report this."

"No, you're not!" Conner yells, "You're going to keep your mouth shut or you're going for a swim."

"Let go of me!"

With that, David turns and starts to head down to the underpass, but stops with five other big guys standing before him. One of them cocks his head forward and makes a laugh before point the other four to grab me. I try to fight them off, but it's not midnight yet. It is 10:50 and I can handle 5 jocks grabbing me by my arms and legs, carrying me down to the underpass.

"For your induction, the one who makes this guy eat the most dirt gets a room in the house. Everyone else has to bunk under the deck until they earn it."

One of them pulls David's belt off and tie his hands behind my back. They tear David's shoes off and toss them into the brush. Then, they pull down his pant and laugh at his pale legs. Their comments went on for 5 more minutes before one of them appears with a cup of dirt.

"Me first. I bet I can get this whole Dixie cup in his mouth."

The frat brothers pours dirt into the corners of David's cheeks. They laugh and in the distance I could hear Adam choking with water thrashing. They yell something about a queer baptism. This guy pours dirt into David's mouth. The entire cup of dirt is shoved into the crevices of his cheek, David cough as one of them held his mouth closed so David couldn't spit it out. Thrusting his neck back the dirt made its way down his throat as David coughs.

"That was awesome. I'm getting some more dirt!"

The frat brothers held David down and starts poking David in the groin with a hockey stick With a long, low toned "Hooo" he pats the hockey stick against David's groin as he fought. The other frat brothers returns with more dirt, but peel back his underwear to dump it down the front. They laugh as David starts to cry. He could hear thrashing of water and Brian yelling.

"Ok, stop!" Brian yells, "You're going to kill him. He can swim as it is. He told you!"

More dirt is poured down David's throat as they all howl and laugh.

"For a faggot, he sure likes some soil. Maybe we should put some seed in him mouth to see if it grows? Hahaha!"

With that, the five large fraternity brothers drags David by his shirt, tearing it off, leaving only his underwear and a sock on his left foot. One of them pulls at his underwear, giving him a wedgie to the point where it tore completely off.

"Dude, look at him."

"Naw, dude. You just got a small dick."

They all laugh as they hoist David over their head. They count to three and threw him into a pile of mud before slapping each other high-fives and howling at the full moon.

First came the clicking. It's 11:00pm and it will have to do. David knew the sound. Then, twelve crunches from his jaw as it fixed in place. David threw up the dirt as the frat-brothers cackle. A couple of them on the ground, they are in laughter.

Click. Click. Click. Click. SNAP.

The fraternity brother with the hockey stick and beer in the other hand looks over to find David missing. The mud from rain two nights prior held only a sock and some bile David threw up. Distant

thrashing in the water from Adam, and coughing from the drowning friend emits from the water only a foot deep as Conner held him down.

"That's enough, dude," says Brian.

"SHUT UP! Just do as you're told!"

The five fraternity brothers who torture David, jog around the underpass trying to find David. Two of them went above looking over the other three. Each of them look around the brush and mud for a naked, college student they fed dirt and spit in his mouth.

"Where is he? He couldn't have gone far. Yo, Derek. Check in the brush. It's the only place he could be hiding."

"No way. There are prickier bushes in there. No way he would risk getting all torn up by that shit."

"Just do it."

"Fine," he says as he starts to make his way into the dense brush and foliage.

The one with hockey stick finishes off his beer and smashes it into the cobble stone underpass following into the lake where Adam tries beating his fist against Conner's firm grip. With a fraternity howl, the five arch their necks and sounding in unison. They look at each other and laugh. Then, a low, haunting howled sounded out longer and primal from the thick. The one named Derek stopped, losing his footing.

"What was that?"

"Fuck."

"Hey, you two up there, see anything?"

The two shook their heads and dart their sights around the top view around them.

"Keep looking," one of them said in a shrill voice, "D-Derek?"

Looking into the brush, something moves. Before one of them could step close, Derek's body shot out like a cannon ball, crashing into the chest his fraternity brother and knocking him out cold.

The hockey stick wielding fraternity brother looks down and his two unconscious friends. Derek, an enforcer on his hockey team has both arms broken. His other friend, Kyle, is an offense lineman on the football team. He is missing his front teeth from when Derek crashes into him. With both unconscious, he shrieks.

"Holy shit! Conner!"

With bellowing fear, he runs into the underpass as he tries to make it to Conner. It isn't until the two fraternity brother from the over pass fall feet first to the cobble stone ground as they shriek in pain. Both suffering broken ankles they roll around in pain. The last fraternity brother stumbles back, but hits something solid and covered in fur. His hockey stick is torn away and two claws jab into his sides, lifting him high and tossing him against the 4 meter high stone ceiling. He crashes down onto the cobble stone ground. Again, he is picked up and tossed into the air, smashing into the stone ceiling like getting hit by a car. His limbs buckling underneath him that might as well be made of Styrofoam.

"What was that," says Steve.

"I have no idea," says Brian.

"Brian, go check on Jason and the others. See what's going on," Conner says as he pulls Adam up for air. Adam coughs and gasps for breath while Conner shakes him. "Who is out there? Who did you bring with you to spy on us? Who?!"

Conner shakes him some more and dunks Adam into the water again. This time, he holds him down even longer than before. Adam's grip starts to loosen. Meanwhile, Brian looks back over to Conner wanting to stop the insanity, but sees his two friends crying on the ground, their hands shaking and their ankles twisted. He sees Jason's bloody face with a rock shoved in his mouth. Brian removes the rock seeing all his front teeth care chipped and he's trying to say something while regaining consciousness. His two other friends are crawling toward the sidewalk trying to wave down passing cars.

"What the hell did this?"

Conner is furious. Holding down Adam, the grip around Conner's arms loosen completely and Adam's arms droop into the water, cold to the touch. Steven watches on horrified starts to run, but is hoisted into the air. His legs frantically kicking until he feels a large hand grip his knee. First, he feels pressure. Then, like an elephant stepping on his kneecap, there is a popping sound. He is thrown to the dirt path before the cobble stone ground. He slowly crawls away, not looking back and leaving Conner standing firm, looking down at the drowned Adam. Conner turns around and for the first time he sees a large, hairy chest, contracts with slow, heavy breath. He thought it a warm wind on the back of his neck, but in seeing two pearl eyes look down on his 6ft 5inch frame, dwarfed by the sight of a horrifying werewolf that lifts him with ease, by the shoulders. He feels the popping of claws sinking into his shoulders. Conner sideburns turn white as the moon-lit lake. A trickle of urine pours down his jeans and hit the water like a sprinkler. His legs shaking along with his stomach, breathing frantic half breaths and his arms going completely numb without a blood supply going to them the grip, The werewolf growls like there is a gate of hell in its own throat, about to be unleashed.

After Brian checks on the two fraternity brother by the road, he runs into the underpass to check on Jason and the other who he lined up in a row. He didn't look up until the last moment when his eyes meet the werewolf's gaze. He freezes in the moment. A wave of panic goes through him, but he can't move, paralyzed and holding his breath. The werewolf holds an unconscious Adam over his shoulder, looking down at the three badly beaten frat house brothers and then to Brian who stood his ground, more so unable to do anything. The werewolf stood on the spot for a moment and then proceeds to pass Brian with light brush against his arm and torso which is enough to send him off his balance and fall to the ground with knees giving way as if they had fallen asleep and become numb. Brian's hands shake uncontrollably. It wasn't until the cop cars pull up and a medic flashes a light in his eyes to see if he was ok that Brian starts crying.

Far from the park, Adam coughs, drooling into the shaggy mane of a werewolf who held him over his shoulder and repositioned him in its arms. It stops in front of Adam's room to the dorm and lay him on the grass. The werewolf lay next to him, uncaring of the passing by car that would only see a massive shadow if they really look. Looking down at Adam, the werewolf held his hand for a moment, rubbing the warm into it. It tilts its head to see Adam's face, a bloody nose and his hair matted. It combs his hair and wipes his nose with one claw. Adam's shiver ceases, and it realizes it's time to go. Adam is safe.

Taking off on all fours, the werewolf bursts into a run and crosses the field into the farmer's land. The moon light gleams over it as the beast is in full sprint, carrying a bag in its mouth to a house at the end of a dark road. It quietly trots into the back of the house and disappears into the basement where David's cot is inviting. The werewolf putting down the bag and pulls out a wifi speaker and phone

for David to listen to. The werewolf pulls out a tarp and kneels in the edge of the moon light piercing the basement window.

"Hello David. This is your father reminding you I will be out late. I am sorry that I can't be with you, but one day you can join me," the recording sounds off.

Fur began to molt. Brushing aside the loose clumps with claws retracting, a series of clicking sounds and heavy pants cut through the words of the recording.

"I am proud of you. Do not open the door for anyone except me. One day you will join me, but tonight you need to be good, be quiet and don't let anyone know. It is our secret. I will protect you and you have nothing to fear. Hold what you feel is dear in your heart. The days ahead will be difficult, but tonight you-BEEP"

David stood up and swept the rest of the fur into a pile in the corner to burn in the morning. David chipped tooth pops out with a new one to replace his front. His teeth still felt gritty. So, he brushes his teeth, opened a can of beef ravioli and ate it from the can while performing a series of leg stretches. Sighing after the last stretch and the last ravioli is devours, David lays down. He pulls out a small mead note pad, writing in to buy a new reversible T-shirt, underwear and socks. He looks over to his bag containing his jean, a bit torn, but still in good shape with a weathered look around one side where they dragged him along the cobble stone. He didn't have time to study. He had also missed his first pride meeting. He did get hold Adam's hand and brush his hair, he thinks. Looking up at the ceiling, things didn't turn out too bad. No one died and Brian would never harass him, anyone at pride club, or anyone different, for that matter. He feels liberated, free and born into a more capable version of himself. Tomorrow, perhaps, he may even experience a kiss if lucky enough.