

Otter's Anonymous

It's a funny thing to wake up one day and decide on a whim to make a change. A change, however big or small, can influence a person's path. A seemingly innocuous act can reveal more than one expects of himself, and a large decision can have little influence such as an otter seeking approval from his fellow classmates. This otter's name is Calvin.

Calvin, standing 5 foot 3 inches is average height for an otter. He has tubby legs and has no chance of joining soccer team. That's not his goal, he thinks. Looking out into the field with all the bigger mammals standing in line during try-outs, Calvin presses his webbed hands to his cheeks, with his arms propping up his head while leaning forward against the bleacher railing. He picks out guys, one by one, from every different species. He can't help, but admire the details that make them individuals. A black & white husky at the end, a tall gray wolf, a Linx with a leopard friend chatting next to each other, a stout badger, a gray fox and even a coyote all stand together as Coach Clifford riles them up and lays out the rules.

"Come on, already," says Calvin. His tail beating against the bleachers with a pang and then a flop as something obstructs the delight of flourishing of his tail. "What?"

Calvin looks behind him with Chase pulling up his long socks over his brown, black and white fur legs. His bag is resting on Calvin's tail, heavy and filled with cloths he had changed out of. Chase is a husky, tail curled like honey glaze cinnamon roll and ears like arrow head propping out as the sound of practice starts. He has been Calvin's friend since childhood and while they had a similar upbringing, Calvin is lean as a normal otter while Chase packed on some weight due to his genetics and activity in a wide range in sports. Calvin stares at Chase's thick shoulders, a torso bulging with a well developed chest. He stands 5 foot 9 inches and towers over his otter buddy who looks back at him with a smile.

The husky says, "Are you checking me out again?"

"Maybe," says Calvin, playfully. "What if I was? You're straight. So, you don't have anything to worry about. Or, so you say."

"Yeah, yeah. Keep it with the eyes. You're not getting any of this to handle," Chase says with a gravel voice, and ribbing the coils of his six pack. "That ship sailed when I discovered girls, not that there's anything wrong with a gay otter buddy."

Chase gripped Calvin by the waist and tugged him under his arm. Calvin struggled in a feeble attempt with Chase trying to push Calvin into his gym bags, big enough to fit an otter youth. Calvin swats the husky's paws, trying to not be shoved into the black bag. Calvin brings up his foot and knocks Chase in the groin with a high-pop.

"Motherfucker, that still hurts. Ugh," the husky groans and drops Calvin on his head with a loud pang that shook the bleacher.

"You dropped me!"

"Yeah, you get what you deserve. Good thing I have a cup on. Fuck."

"So, you're still team captain?"

"Of course. It's my last year. All these juniors are going to be taking over this school. So, I might as well make sure I beat them into shape for their days of glory."

"You didn't win last year. You came close. In fact, this school hasn't won a single championship for 5 years, According to Coach Clifford."

Chase ruffles Calvin's hair on the top of his head and hops down to the running track. He looks back at the otter and shakes his head. "All that's about to change for the Gryphons. I know it."

Calvin watches as Chase jogs off. His tail swishes as if waving, 'See you later'. Calvin let out a long sigh and sits down on the bleachers. He peers inside Chase's gym bag. It's a repurposed travel bag which would fit a week's worth of clothes for any otter, but for a husky it only fits a towel and a single set of clothes to change back into and a play book that the coach had given to him to study. Calvin snags the water bottle and takes a swig while

watching Chase begin warm ups for the future team. Calvin watches as they all perform jumping jacks. The guys don't wear much, with Calvin's delight. They wear tight fitted soccer shorts and Calvin can imagine their balls and dicks flopping around like a basket of fruit in zero gravity before a jolt downward, revealing an outline of who is hung and who is modest. Chase's cup and athletic supporter obscures view, not that Calvin looks at his friend too often.

Chase and Calvin share the same room together under Calvin's parents'. And while Chase isn't gay, he often teases Calvin when they are home alone and shared bedroom can be a mine field of mental games. Chase would pull out his balls as Calvin opens the door and get full view of Chase's kiwi fruit, followed by a punch on the shoulder that always sends the otter flying to the opposing wall. Chase would say something like, "You know how I know you're gay?"

It is Calvin who came out a couple years ago and with the help of Chase, being very understanding. Calvin's parents were accepting in short time. They had also embraced Chase to having developed plans. Going to college, getting a scholarship for playing soccer, and financial aid from Calvin's parents are all on the table. Chase plans his life out, while Calvin resides in next week's big crush.

In many ways, Calvin saw Chase as a brother. They had been friends since pre-school. Calvin had always been fond of art and music. When asked about plans of contingency in becoming an activist, he drops the conversation with Chase patting him on the back for dreaming big and not settling for expectations. Of the many logical choices Chase had, Calvin always develops a crazy scheme to ride a bus to Hollywood to become an actor, hitch-hike to New York to do a musical on Broad Way or fly down to Florida to become a DJ. But really, Calvin had no ideas to pursue and it's senior year.

Watching the team running sprints goal line to goal line, Calvin tries to think of a new scheme on life or at least for this week. Something with proper foundation to start, a firm grasp on an idea and a perfectly formed bulge of Javier De Yote's package bounces in the final sprint to the goal line does his mind clear and his focus strengthen. With Calvin biting the straw, he snaps to and tears away his eyes. Everyone pants and Calvin realizes that Chase didn't take his water bottle down with him. Despite all the warnings he ever had gotten, Calvin's flat feet smack against the hot tarmac of the track to grass that felt like pins and needles against the webbing of his otter feet. Before Calvin can reach Chase, Anthony Lupin stops him with a paw of enough spread it nearly covers Calvin's chest.

"Eh! What did I tell you about coming over here to hit on everybody?"

"Leave him alone, Tony," says Quentin Del Dings. "No one has a problem with him except you!"

"Whatever, this guy is always checking us out. The little F--"

Anthony Lupin's body lurches forward and tumbles to the ground, cradling his nether region. Calvin looks up and Chase is standing over the wolf body. His fur is bristled on the back of his neck as his heavy breathing is more in bout of anger than the set of sprints he completed moments ago.

'What did I say about calling my brother that? Don't think I didn't know what you were about to say. You always have it out for guys like him. He doesn't mean any harm and you pick the fight!"

"Ch-Chase?" Calvin holds up the water bottle.

"What? Oh, Thanks, Cal. I was about to run over." Chase takes the water bottle from his webby hands and downs about half of the water bottle in one swig. "I don't want anyone hazing my little brother or anyone from band, chess club or any other avenue that isn't soccer. Don't think for a second that coach won't have you sit a game for something as petty as name calling, I'm team captain and what I say goes."

Calvin forms a proud grin that stretches across his face. He feels like shining until Chase casts a shadow over Calvin's whole body. The otter's brown eyes flick upward to be struck with Chase's expression most serious. The husky give Calvin the water bottle, and with a turn of tail curl he turns to speak with the bear who has coached the team through their entire time in high school. The bear's shoulders are like twin mountains with the face and ears tipping at 8 feet that only the most daring set eyes on.

Quentin's paw wraps around Calvin's neck and tugs him off field. His grip is a bit too firm, but like his friend Chase he doesn't mean anything by the roughness. More than a few times Quentin has pulled Calvin aside to make some gesture of friendship, but more so Calvin feels like being treated like a cub.

Quentin says, "Come over here, Calvin. Let's fill that water bottle of yours and have a talk."

Calvin says, "Why does this feel ominous?"

"I just want to talk to you. Chase doesn't always need to lecture you and he knows you're just trying to fit in, but you have to admit you have to dial it back," says Quentin, trying to make light in nearly dragging the otter the last few blades of grass

Calvin exists through the chain link fence. Quentin's paws rest on the otter's shoulder, with his claws in need of trimming. They dig into his back more than with Chase's usual rough play. It reminds Calvin that K-9 species are a bit more rougher than otter, but he can tell that Quentin is being as gentle with him as he can. He lets go of Calvin when they arrive at the water fountain, cemented in the ground, covered in pebbles, blending with the granular path that lead from the bleachers to the school parking lot. Calvin begins to refill Chase's water bottle as Quentin stares him down with his yellow coyote eyes.

"Chase care about you and he doesn't want you hurt. Don't get me wrong. It's great that you came out last year. It's just – You need to dial it back a bit with ogling the team sports."

Calvin is confused. He doesn't bother anyone on the team. Maybe he does try a little too hard to make friends with the football team, but who doesn't want to get to know a few linemen. The team has three lions, a tiger and a really big bear who isn't shy around the showers. Calvin gives Quentin a look of hesitation, wondering what he will say next. Nothing comes next. Calvin does push the conversation out into the open.

Calvin says, "I don't suppose you can spare some information as to why I'm such an embarrassment, though."

"You're not," Quentin says firm with his paws on each side of the water fountain. "It's just that you need to be careful around people like Lupin and Castleton. They are kind of set in their ways."

Calvin finishes filling the water bottle and closes the lid. He recalls Joseph Castleton is the most charismatic guy off the field. He has been dating Calvin's friend Rachael who is a linx and he is a ram. He can't be a bigot. Calvin slumps for a moment. If he had prominent ears they would be slumping back right now like Quentin's as he forces out the word.

"I never thought he had an issue with me until now. What's going on? Am I that annoying?"

"No, it's just that Chase has been getting more flack over living with a gay otter. He gets a bit of crap for it in the locker room."

That stuns Calvin and he says, "Chase is straight. How does living under my parent's roof make him a target? If he had an issue with me about me being out, he would have told me."

Chase did tell Calvin. Without words, Chase gave a look every time Calvin stood around him. He didn't have to say it, Calvin thought for a moment. He showed it in his face whenever other classmates were laughing and making remarks that Calvin is queers as a late 20th century Disney villain. Such details were something Calvin learned to live with, but not for his husky friend, it seems. Calvin slumps as he puts all the pieces together in his head. It made sense. He doesn't want to think less of Chase.

Quentin tugs the water bottle out of Calvin's wets hands as the water over filled and as he was deep in thought. Quentin pats him on the shoulder before walking back to try-outs. With a quick glance over to the field where Chase is showing a drill, weaving around the orange cones and kicking a ball in a display of agility, Calvin can't help, but feel like he is a fumbling mess inside. Questions rained over Calvin's head as he made his way back to the Herding & Turner High School parking lot. Is Chase really embarrassed about Calvin who thinks the world of his husky friend? They had been living in the same room for three years since Chase's parents died in a car wreck. They grew even more close after the tragedy. It was like having a brother. Do Quentin's words hold truth? Chase does distance himself from Calvin in the halls, at lunch period and sometimes after school when he is with his

soccer friends. He doesn't have to change for anyone. Coming out was one of the best things that has ever happened to Calvin. He no longer has questions or doubts about who he is. Perhaps, Chase now has questions about who Calvin is as a friend. Telling the truth can't be that harmful.

Calvin opened the door to Chase's car and pushes his school bag to the floor. The station wagon isn't pretty, but it was Chase's mom's car and it has held up pretty well on the road for being a 1980s throwback to a time before either had been born. Someone thought it a good idea to put wood paneling on the sides. No one should put wood on something metal with a green paint that looked like the vomit from *The Exorcist*. Calvin promises not to sulk for the hour of practice and try-outs. He doesn't do so, but can't concentrate on copying his homework for Gram Chucknan's \$10 a week he gives Calvin so he doesn't have to do the work himself. With three other students on the soccer, swimming and rifle teams, he make a decent wage to buying video games. The soccer team has more business potential than all the others.

Calvin wants to get to know a few more clients. He is saving enough money to buy proper fitting pants. His tail looks like it is being swallowed by a horse's broken condom. At least Gram's pants had a button in the back for his beaver tail. Calvin thought that beavers at one time were otters, but got their tails run over when they were cubs. It makes Calvin snicker while jotting down Gram Chucknan's name on the sheet of loose-leaf paper. With the book on his lap and chewing on his hoodie strings, Calvin takes his mind off of the concerning matters.

The time that practice goes by give Calvin enough time to do all his home work along with three other students'. Chase is last on the field, gathering up all the soccer balls, cones, and his oversized gym bag. The coach has a word with him before heading into the school. Some of the students stay after practice and it gives Calvin a chance to give Javier his homework for tomorrow. Calvin looks over his shoulder as Chase enters the school with a lot of stuff under his arms and paws. He exits the car and runs up to Javier, handing him the paper in a folder.

"Here," Calvin says.

"Done already? Thanks. I hate calculus. It's not that I don't understand it, but what's the point in doing the homework every day?"

"Right?"

Javier takes the folder and looks to his friends. "Hey, I want you to meet these guys. I was telling them about your little service. You know Jason, Don and Marco. This is Oscar. You probably heard about the new collie student who rolled in last week. This is him.

"Hi," says Oscar with his black on white tail swishing. "Are you really gay?"

"Uh..."

"Don't mind him, Cal." Javier pats Calvin on the shoulder. "He isn't going to bite. He's from mid-west and has never seen an otter before.

"Yeah, I bet. What does that have to do with anything," says Calvin. "Otters aren't all that rare."

"No," says Oscar. "But we don't have any in our old town. All we have is dog people and a really grumpy fox next door. Hell, it's the first time I met a Tiger too. Don doesn't realize how lucky he is to have stripes."

Calvin laughs, "Yeah, I once dyed my fur to have black stripes on my back. My mom got all upset as if I was entering some pack, getting into trouble."

"Hey," says Don. "I resemble that remark. Us tigers don't often meet up in packs, but considering it's Tigers Awareness Month I figure it's only right we socialize once and a while."

Javier puts his arm on Don's shoulder and leans in. "And what do tigers do at these meet ups?"

"We eat and sleep together. What else?"

Calvin is taken back by Don's size as he folds his arms and gives a toothy grin. His white stomach is showing from his tight short and jersey that meets half way down to his naval due to his long torso. Calvin can see the formation of abs as Don knocks Javier's arms off his shoulder and yawns with a stretch. Calvin's eyes look away to Marco who is shaking his head, and is pulling out an AP biology book with several papers tucked inside.

"Hey, Cal, do you mind looking at these 10 questions from class? I hate these things and they make us write out the question into the answer and it real stupid we have to do it every time."

"I can have a look, Marco. I charge nothing for looking over someone's homework, but it is \$10 for a week of home work, each subject...This." Calvin holds up the crinkled edge paper and adds, "This isn't done."

"Yeah," says Marco with his coyote tail between his legs. "Yeah, I was hoping..."

"Don't worry about it. I had AP Chemistry last year. I can easily copy your hand writing. It will be no problem. I'll charge you half since Mr. Catanza gives only two assignments a week. I can go over the points for the quiz he'll have for you tomorrow. He always quizzes after homework assignments and the work has nothing to do with the questions he has you do."

Marco nods while rolling his eyes to Don who is fumbling through his bag trying to find his own text book.

"Relax, Don. I can do your homework as well. Marco will send me the questions on MuzzleMarker and it will be 2 for \$5 for each of you with an outline of what the quiz will be on."

"Thanks, Otter-boy. You're a life saver." Don says, "I always seem to forget my book on the lab table or at home. Catanza grilled me this morning for not having it. I can't remember where I put it."

"So, guys. About Chase..."

"Yeah. What about Chase?"

"You guys don't think he's upset with me, do you?"

"What? Chase? Where is this coming from?" Oscar asks, "Is this about Lupin?"

Quentin is seen rummaging through the back seat of his car 15 feet away. His eyes are fixed on Calvin for a moment, but divert downward. His ears are still bristling for words involving him.

Marco chimes in, "No. Chase cares about you. He just doesn't want anyone making fun of you because you're--"

"Thick tailed?" Calvin says with a tilt of the head and folding his arms. His whiskers flutter keeping in a giggle.

"Yes, thick tailed. You rudder-butts are always tripping us in halls. You're as bad as some foxes," says Marco.

"I thought maybe he might be ashamed of me. You know, being out and all."

"Listen," says Oscar. "I've only been here a couple weeks. However, I can tell he isn't ashamed of you. He talks about his situation and how your family brought him in like an adopted son. My family always fought, hence the devoice and big move."

Don grabs Calvin by the head and it might as well be a sack of dirt dropping down a load of weight as the tiger scoffs and shake him to the point that the otter's knees buckle. Calvin realizes the tiger isn't shaking so much as he is laughing as he says, "He can't swim. He sinks like a rock. Quentin told me. How can you otters not teach the poor husky how to swim?"

"Easy, Don. Easy. His head is attached to his neck. Hey Quentin? How does you know Chase is a sinker?"

They all go quiet as the conversation drifts with Quentin getting into his car. Calvin doesn't get restitution from the conversation as it shifts subjects per person in this circle of soccer jocks. He feels left out aside from Oscar's interest in Otter carnival stereotypes. At some point, Marco's mom pulls up and he has to go. Javier leaves next and he is left to talk to Oscar a bit more.

"I don't think Chase will be that long. Sorry if I'm boring you, Cal."

"It's alright. I just have things on my mind."

"About Chase? You seem worried. Do you suppose you're over thinking this?"

Calvin shakes his head and sees Chase in the corner of his eye. He looks to Oscar who shifts his weight to one leg and gestures him to talk to Chase while pulling out his keys. With that, Calvin nods and waves to Oscar before walking to the car and unlocking the driver side door for Chase.

"Thanks for waiting. Coach wanted a talk with me about who I think will do well enough to make the team. We may cut two guys because one has bad grades and the other is a duck's vagina when he's speaks."

"Please be Lupin..."

"Sorry. Lupin is being considered for my replacement next year when I'm gone and he turns senior. I told coach about his mouth before, but he likes how Lupin takes charge. He's not a team player. I told coach."

"Too bad I'm not built for soccer. I'll have to settle for doing all of your homework on the team."

"Making that money, are you?"

"Yeah," Calvin says.

Chase starts the car and drives out of the parking lot of the high school campus. The two are quiet until they are on the last stretch home.

"Chase."

"Yeah?"

"Are you embarrassed with me?"

"Why would you say that? I appreciate you, rudder-butt."

Calvin can feel an eye on him, but hesitates to say a single thing of 'he said, she said'.

"What's with the long face? You're turning into a mongoose with your tail getting all frizzled. Is Lupin really bothering you?"

"No, just something Quentin said."

"Oh," says Chase with his ears turned down. "Uh, what did he say?"

"It's nothing. I haven't thought enough about how being out affects you. I wasn't trying to be..."

"Difficult? You can be sometimes, but it's not like you're one of those noisy drama club howlers. They make it their point that they're the latest a hot dog being thrown down a hallway."

"I'm in drama club."

"You know what I mean."

"No, I don't know what you mean! Am I embarrassing to you? Are you ashamed for me for being..."

"Being what? Being different is fine. You just don't know your place sometimes."

"I don't know my place?"

The last question lingers in the air. Chase bites his lip with his attention divided. For the rest of the ride home neither say anything to each other. Calvin imagines how awkward it's going to be with Chase sleeping in the same room. It also doesn't help that he feels pent up and it is rare that he gets to be left alone. It's easy to tell when Chase needs some time to himself. He emits a scent whenever huskies are feeling a little randy. Otters, on the other hand, always have a musky smell. Pulling up to the curb, they look at each other and step out of the car in unison. Chase grabs his gym bag and rolls the window up while Calvin starts to head down the street.

"Hey, where are you going?"

"Away from you. I need to know my place, remember?" And with that Calvin adds, "Stupid husky."

Chase doesn't say anything walking up to the house, but slams the door behind him. Calvin looks back and sees Chase pressing his nose up against the side window where their room is in the one story house. Calvin always had thought it cute when Chase presses his nose up against the windows, leaving an imprint of his dog nose in the glass, but right now it irritates him, knowing he'd have to clean it if they have company. Calvin needs a break and a swim at the gym might do him some good.

The gym is packed. Some of the girls from high school are there as Calvin walks in. They giggle, like they always do, checking out his tail even though they know Calvin is gay. It's something about otters, Calvin thought. Girls like thick tails. That and the swimmer's build, Calvin has a natural otter's physique, slender while toned. When he jumps in the gym's pool Calvin is like a bullet while swimming. The dogs beside him aren't as agile with their paws splashing and their heads held just above the water. A cat can't summon the courage to dip his paws in the water by the time Calvin makes a second lap. A group of old animals chat away like they own the place, taking

up four lanes of the pool while Calvin always moves over on his to make room for a coyote he knows wants to take the other side. The coyote dips his legs in the pool. Calvin can see the nice, developed bulge of the coyote. Calvin knows that bulge anywhere.

"Hey there, Cal." Javier says while putting on his goggles, "Nice time for a swim."

"Javier? When did you start a gym membership here?"

"I started today. My family owned a pool back west, but our house doesn't have enough room in the back yard for one. Moving east is a major downsizing, not that I don't like it here."

"So," says Calvin. "It's taken you three years of high school to finally join the gym?"

"Hey, I play soccer. They give enough drills and a work out to keep me lean and healthy."

"Yeah, you really lost weight after sophomore year. You went through a chubby stage back during freshmen year."

Javier makes a huff and an attempt to laugh. "That's putting it bluntly. So, you don't mind me taking up the left side? These old animals are really complaining about splashing and don't like sharing the lanes. FOUR LANES, they take up. FOUR!"

Calvin laughs with a shrug. He takes the time to adjust his white and blue speedo and checks the zip lock bag his phone is sealed in.

"Hey, Cal. Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"Shoot"

"What's up with Chase? Is he alright?"

"Yeah, besides being a jerk today he's usually can't stop his tail from wagging."

"I heard about the fight you two had. You want to talk about it?"

"Actually, I came here to swim. How did you know we had a fight?"

Javier holds up his phone and pack howl app is pulled up on his phone. It's typical for K-9 friends to make a noise one way or another whenever they are in distress. Chase is still grumpy, but so is Calvin. He watches as Javier puts away his phone in a small dry bag and shoves his ears forward to put a swim cap on.

"It's not my place, but really Chase is looking out for your best interest. None of the team mind you showing up to practice. It's just that since coming out they have become more aware of your wandering eyes."

"It isn't your place. Chase is being a jerk and I don't look at everyone on the team."

"Not everyone?"

"Ok, most. But, I don't go taking pictures or harass them. I'm kind of trying to figure this all out. Still, even now. Besides, you guys always have your tongues hanging out of your mouths whenever there is a girl and she's giving off the heat. I'm not a predator like that."

"Wow. Sorry. I'm just trying to understand..."

"You don't have to understand, Javier." Calvin adds, "I just need a swim."

Calvin swims away. Like a bullet he shoots down the lane and Javier joins in as Calvin swims back. Javier isn't too bad in water. He doesn't splash as much as wolves or some dog persons. Though, he does splash more as he passes the fat, old raccoon and bear that refuse to move out of the water to chat. For a half hour they had stopped treading water. Calvin laughs, as it is funny hearing them make high pitched screams while cussing at the coyote. Calvin swims under the water with no use of his front or back paws. Using only his tail as a rudder, Calvin looks up at Javier who sprints with all fours. He has his breathing down with his muzzle blowing bubbles on exhale and turning his head on the inhale. Calvin got a glimpse of Javier's chest, thick with fur and his abs showed through his stomach. He stopped his gaze to look up at Javier who is looking down at him. Calvin jokes by putting a webbed finger over his mouth as if yawning. Soon after, he speeds past Javier using only a tail.

"Show off," says Javier, long winded with his fur dripping wet after a long swim.

Calvin smirks and opens his locker where he realized he dropped his bag underneath the bench. He had been in such a hurry to the pool. He looks up at the dingo who is drenched from the shower and is still ringing out his fur.

"I told you I needed to swim."

"Yeah, you totally whipped me, dude."

"I didn't know it was a competition," says Calvin as he takes out a small cloth to pat down his fur.

"You otters...You are nearly waterproof and you use a small face cloth to wipe down excess water on your whole body. How do you river carnies develop such an evolutionary three steps forward?"

Calvin says, "I don't know. We provide plenty of amusement at water parks for the masses, but when it comes down to it--"

Calvin tosses the small towel onto the coyote's face and like a flag waving in the wind the coyote tries to shake it off his face, howling.

"What the hell, Calvin? Woah, you are super musky."

Javier manages to shake it off his face after a few time of thrashing. His eyes are wide as he huffs from his nose and looks at Calvin who is smirking.

"And this is after I take a shower."

Calvin laughs and puts his speedo into a dry bag to take it home. He puts on his ill-fitted pants and T-shirt while looking over to see if he has everything. Javier holds up the small towel and Calvin takes it.

"At least you aren't like a fox. They stank sometimes."

"Their musk isn't as strong as it is more fluent in pheromones."

"I know," says Javier. "Dating Danielle Volpline. She has a way of controlling males with that."

"Why, Javier...I had no idea you were a bottom."

Javier laughs and hands back the small towel.

"Thanks. See you tomorrow."

Calvin heads off, out of the gym. It's nice to get out and clear one's head, he thought. The swim did him some good and the company he had didn't feel so abrasive like another had this particular Wednesday. Calvin can't stay angry. The walk home mellows him out. The convenience of a gym nearby has advantages to slip away whenever it's necessary to get away from family. But, when Calvin turns into his street neither of the cars are in driveway. It didn't occur to Calvin until he steps inside when he smells the faint, pungent aroma of cheeses and yogurt drops his mother had prepared in a platter the night before. They're at a wine tasting and a book social. Both mother and father would not be in until late. It didn't explain Chase's absence.

Calvin thought he would later have to apologize. Not wanting to step on Chase's toes, he would have to do so eventually. They had bouts in the past and every time Chase won, not by strong arming the otter half his size, but falling on top of him and going fully limp like a rag doll. Calvin, no matter how much he tried would never be able to pull himself out from beneath the crushing weight of a 200lb husky. While punching, kneeling him in the sides, and clawing Chase in sensitive places the husky would just take it until Calvin taps the ground, submitting under his last breath. A Chases exploitable weaknesses are attacked in tandem. The husky always shows a lot of restraint. Sometimes, Calvin thinks, it's better to apologize even when it's not one's fault, especially with friends.

With a small snack of fish nachos and turning on the TV, Calvin finishes the homework for the rest of his classmates for this night. It earns him enough to buy the new Ringtail Roar video game and save a little for the elite battle controller for it next week's game night. His new pants would have to wait. He looks at the clock every so often to count the hours he has been alone. Nothing is on TV.

This gives Calvin the chance to look online to view wolves, coyotes and tigers. He would have to clear the history, but a good hour session and a few handfuls of tissue wipes later, Calvin is left more at ease. He sprays some musk-go around the computer, chair and floor. He doesn't want to get caught again. He showers just to be sure.

It's not until after mid-night that mother and father come home. Father is a bit drunk as that is the first thing that jolts Calvin awake with a thunk sound and his mother stammering something about not being in the mood tonight. Calvin covers his ears with a pillow and sees the bed across the room is still empty. Chase still isn't home, but quickly falls asleep when noise settles down.

In the morning, Calvin awakes to the smell of smoked salmon spread and bagels. Chase pushes one half in front of his nose, on top of his pillow and the other half is sticking out of the husky's mouth.

"Hurry up, we're going to be late," says Chase.

Calvin sits up and holds up Chase's offering of peace and bites into it. The salmon spread is fresh and he realizes that father hasn't gotten groceries yet. The smoke flavor and toasted edges of the bagel startles Calvin to the thought of last night that he should say something.

"Chase, I'm sorry"

"Don't worry about it. I just got things on my mind."

"Where were you last night? I was worried."

Chase tosses Calvin his bag which he left on the couch the night before. Everything has been packed. Even the homework of his classmates are neatly placed in the folder. Chase is going out of his way to make Calvin's day easier. Perhaps it's to prevent Calvin to making a scene or make something of yesterday's bad vibes.

"Don't worry about that stuff. Water under the glass house that sinks ships."

Calvin laughs and gets out of bed. Calvin reaches for a fresh pair of underwear and tosses his old pair in the hamper. It's there he smells some odor and it's not from Chase. Calvin knows his friend's smell and it's not his, but familiar. The scent makes Calvin's whiskers straighten and he can tell the smell is on Chase's pants.

Calvin says, "Hey, where did you go last night?"

"Never you mind, otter!"

Chase grabs Calvin by the scruff of the neck and shoves him out of the room with a pair of shorts and a shirt he wraps around his friend head. Chase shoves him out the door while being nearly naked and closes it behind him.

"Hey!"

Chase steps out soon after and hands Calvin his bag. Chase is already in the car before Calvin can say anything or button his shorts around his tail. With Calvin's shirt dropped over his neck, he steps into the car, flinging his bag into the back. It is then that Calvin rolls his eyes. The shirt isn't his and Chase is speeding down the road to head towards school.

"Dude, this is your shirt. Chase..."

"Opps."

"Chase!"

"Sorry, we're running late."

"No, we're going to be a half hour early."

"Oh, well..."

"Let's turn back. I can grab a new shirt and-"

"No way, rudder-butt. I don't want to hear it from the adults."

Calvin understands Chase after saying those last words. Chase didn't come home last night. His eyes were a little red. He had taken a shower, but that smell still lingers. It smelled good, whatever it was. It's almost primal.

"Ok, who is she?"

Chase says, "What?"

"It's not a fox. It smells familiar."

"Drop it," says Chase. His fur is a little bristled on the back of his neck and his claws are raking against the steering wheel.

Calvin lowers his head and doesn't say anything. He had stepped on Chase's toes yesterday. He isn't going to do the same today. Whatever Chase is upset about has a connection to whatever has been eating at him the day before.

"If there's something to talk about, I'm here," says Calvin.

Chase's ears go back and he realizes he's going over the speed limit by 20 kilometers an hour. He dials it back with the lead foot and rolls down the window. Perhaps it's to get rid of the smell he left in the driver seat from before his morning shower, but Calvin doesn't say anything except to ask what station he should change it to. It had been left on a country station, something Chase never listens to.

"Anything will be fine," says Calvin. "Anything, but country. Oh my damn.."

"Sorry. It must have reset. I had some car trouble getting in last night."

Another lie. Chase is hiding something. Calvin thinks until Chase is ready to talk he had better keep his mouth shut. There's no sense in provoking dogs. They have a pack mentality and Chase's friends are likely to take his side if it ever comes to anything.

Pulling into the petrol station, Chase looks back at Calvin with a worried look. Calvin pulls out a wad of sweaty money from his pocket. Chase takes it and runs into the station to make payment. Calvin watches the short exchange while rummaging through his bag. Something smells. He knows it from somewhere, but can't place it. Realizing it's in the car, he opens the car storage box in between the seats. He checks the back seat. He checks the bottom of the passenger side and feels something sticky. Grabbing what feels like a bag of maple syrup, the smell becomes overpowering and Calvin realizes what the smell is.

"Holy Damn."

It's a condom. It's half-full of semen and Calvin is frozen with fear, eyes look up to see Chase who waves at him with a brisk jog towards the car. Calvin freaks. He looks down at the condom again. There's so much cum in the condom. The first thought going through his mind is, how does Chase produce this much in one night. Calvin shakes his head and tries to focus on what to do as Chase grins at him from the windshield with his nose pressed up against it. His paws pressed against the glass, tapping his class. He can't see what's in Calvin's hand. Fortunately, it doesn't occur to him with his focus now on pumping the petrol. Calvin only gave him \$10 to get them to school and back home for the rest of the week. He has little time.

Calvin looks around for a place he can throw the condom. The back seat has Chase's stuff and the storage box in the middle of the seat is too close for Chase's eyes to focus. With the pump now at \$9 and counting slowly with a half a quart in change to go, Calvin looks down at the condom with towering dread. Calvin tries to open the window and the crank comes off in his left hand. He wants to cry bloody-murder looking down at both hands. Then, Chase opens his door. He sneezes and Calvin opens his door and flings the condom out of the car as Chase sits down and looks Calvin in his eyes.

"What did you do?"

"Nothing," Calvin squeaks, closing the door.

"No, not nothings. What did you do?"

Chase looks at Calvin in a stern manner. He leans in close with his eyes narrowing. Chase's nose twitches and looks down at Calvin's hand, grabbing it.

"Oh, that. Yeah, it was broken before you got in here. Don't worry about it."

Chase snags the window crank and puts it on top of the dashboard. Chase coughs and snuffles. At this moment, Calvin feels in the clear until Chase sniffs the air again and looks at him. Starting the car, Calvin watches the fuel gage rise to a quarter of a tank. Chase looks down like he is deep in thought and sniffs again. Pulling out of the petrol station Chase is quiet. He yawns and looks to Calvin once more sniffing.

"Sorry..."

"Um...I"

"My nose is numb from the smell of petrol. I keep on sniffing. Don't worry. You won't catch anything. I'm just really tired from the study group last night. Got to be ready for the quiz, right?"

Calvin is a little relieved, but the thought of Chase in a study group is a bad lie. Perhaps embarrassed that perhaps he found that thing under the seat or he really smells it in the car with his K-9 nose, Chase must know something.

"Yeah," Calvin plays off of Chase's words, "I totally get yah. So, going to prepare early in the library this morning or what?"

"Naw, Coach asked me yesterday to come in early to clean out the storage room in the gym. Call it punishment for kicking Lupin in the balls yesterday. He deserved it, you know?"

"Oh yeah..."

Chase pulls into the high school campus with the car making a terrible screeching sound. Chase likes to let the air out for dramatic effect for when he turns corners. He grins at Calvin and snaps the bottle top seal and downs the bottle of protein milk. He is guzzling it down like he walked the length of a desert. Some of the milk drips down his muzzle and along his throat and the image of Chase doing something dirty flies through Calvin's mind. Calvin shakes his head remembering Chase is straight. He's popular with all the girls and flaunts his muscular frame and chest fluff around lunch period. It's how he gets extra fries while flirting with girls.

"That hit the spot. Breakfast this morning wasn't enough," says Chase. He belches out loud.

Chase parks his car in his assigned spot in the back of the campus. The only other cars around are the vans for team sports and transporting the gear to games. Chase swings his door open with an obnoxious creaking sound. Calvin isn't far behind, swinging his bag over his shoulder and looks over to Chase who jogs toward the gym and lets himself in with the coach's key. Chase wasn't lying after all.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Calvin turns around and braces his webbed hands against the side of the car. Calvin's head hits the car with a loud 'thunk' and his left hand slips across the boot.

"What the...No."

Calvin looks down at his hand, but the smell hits first.. There is a sticky slime on his left hand. Calvin feels like crying. He wants to flail and scream. It's all over his hand, in the crevices of his webbed otter fingers and it drips down his fur on his forearm. Calvin turns quick and above the radio antenna is the broken condom on the tip of it. When Calvin flung it out of the door he did not anticipate the trajectory of the condom. He sighs, pulls off the condom and flicks it off with his soaked hand while making a dramatic wailing sound no otter had ever made in the history of otters. He throws it over his shoulder and run as fast as he can to the school to wash off his hand.

"Daaaaaaamn!"

Calvin swings the door open with his hand out stretched and it connects to something solid. It's a school logo, on a team jacket. It's not Chase, but someone bigger. Two yellow eyes of a wolf stare down at Calvin. He grips Calvin by the forearm with such strength it causes Calvin's hand to form into a tight grip. Anthony Lupin growls and bares his teeth. He breaks from his anger only to look down horrified at the silvery, ropey stream connecting his jacket to Calvin's hand. Anthony sniffs the air. For a moment in his shock, he lets go of Calvin's trembling arm. He is free from the clutches of the wolf. Calvin bolt down the hall and with Anthony hot breath on the back of his neck.

"You're dead, otter!"

Calvin cries for help. None of the school staff are in the office yet. There is no coach in the window of the physical education department. Alumni Affairs is also closed. There is a tug on the shirt Calvin is wearing and he is spun around so quick that he releases his bag as it slides on the floor. Calvin raises his arms up and the Chase's XXL T-shirt come off, allowing Calvin to slip free from Anthony's grasp. He slides on his knees and grabs his bag before running up the stairs. Calvin feels scratching on his tail and realizes Anthony is behind him, trying to grab his tail while leaping at the otter who is a fraction of his size.

"Chase!"

Calvin runs on all fours. He hopes the wolf is too tall to reach down with his size. Calvin looks back with immense, wide-eyed fear. With a foot away from his face, Anthony Lupin's stride is longer and his body is above Calvin's small frame. Calvin curls into a ball and Anthony's arm swipes the top of his head. The wolf's legs buckle over Calvin's backside, tripping him as he tumbles. Anthony's legs kick Calvin's behind and he is sent into a spin. Calvin lands on top of the wolf's stomach and Anthony's head shoots up with a snarl. With frantic kicking Calvin gets to his feet and leaps over Anthony to run down the halls and to the stairway. Calvin swings the door open and trips. For some reason Calvin turns over on his back and there is a loud crash followed by Anthony's face presses against the glass of the door. His tongue sticking out. It's splatters against the glass like a cartoon character smashing into a brick wall. One of the double doors to the stairway had still been locked. For a moment, Calvin sits on the floor, but springs up and runs down the stairs and into one of the lavatories. He huddles into one of the stalls for what feels like 15 minutes. Someone enters the lavatory. With heaving breaths, stamping of feet, and fists smash the stall walls next to him, the person sits down and sobs.

"Stupid queer!"

Calvin realizes he is in the girl's bathroom. The person next to him is one of the girls. He had never heard a girl cry before. He really wants to get out of there as quick as he could, but to be caught in the girl's lavatory would be bad. Whoever it is, it couldn't be him she is crying about. Is there another gay student at Herding & Turner High School? Calvin listens close with his webbed feet bracing against the toilet seat. His hands brace against both walls of the stall and he lowers his head in case she decides to look up and see the brown hair of an otter. He doesn't make a sound with the girl in the next stall. She huffs and throws something over the top of the stall and it hits the opposite wall, followed by a flop sound. She cries some more for five minute and then stamps her feet to the mirror on the opposite wall. Calvin freaks in seeing the door to his stall swing open by 15 centimeters. He braces his foot against the door and the sobbing stops. He doesn't make a sound and neither does she. He hears a door swing open and the pressurized mechanism allow the door to the hall slowly close with a echoing tap sound.

Calvin breathes a sigh of relief. He begins to step off the toilet only to slip and his foot falls into the toilet with a splash and he lurches forward to catch the swinging door. His left hand is slimey still from the condom and the touching the side of Chase's car, he slides down and plants his face on the floor with a hallow pop. His left ear is ringing and that side of his face is in pain. With a groan he crawls from out of the stall and sees a book under the sink. It must have been the thing the girl threw in a fit. It's the last thing on his mind as he stands slowly and limps to the sink. The sink doesn't register the motion of his hand under the tap and he lets out another sigh before looking down to see the book. He picks it up and realizes it's a biology book from last year. They discontinued this version for a more updated version. The owner must have forgotten to hand it in at the end of last year. Calvin shoves it into his bag and decides to leave the girl's bathroom before someone catches his cum-handed.

It's still mortifying. A large glob still hangs from his palm and he grimaces. He tries not to think about it and pokes his head out of the lavatory. With no sound and surveying the hallway Calvin feels it safe and slips away and across the hall to the boy's bathroom. And before he can reach for the handle, the door swings open and reveal two yellow eyes staring down at him.

"Calvin?"

'Oh. Hey, Javier. It's just you..."

"Me? Yeah, but where's your shirt?"

"Yeah, I'm having one hell of a morning," says Calvin smiles, more in relief than surprise.

"Uh, ok. Well, I've been having a bit of a start of the day too. I'm kind of relieved. It's going to get better from here on out. I'm certain of it. Woah, you look like you saw a ghost. You're shaking..."

Javier raises his paw up for a high-five and it lingers there. He makes a look like he's left hanging and Calvin raises his left fist. Wrong hand to choose, Calvin's face screws up. But, before he can retract it Javier bumps his fists with a squish.

"See yah!" Javier leaves, turns the corner and before Chase burst through the door and he hears Javier mutter with a sniffle. "What the fuck?"

Calvin scrambles to wash his hands with lots of soap. He does this until he hears the first bell and wipes his hand as fast as he can. Only a blood hound would be able to tell. He heads to the athletic department, opens five lockers before finding a hoodie before dashing to first period. The day goes smoothly until first lunch where he shares it with some of the junior class, which Anthony Lupin attends. To avoid him throughout the week will be an issue. So, he heads down to the library instead to do some light studying for calculus. He slips the homework he owes to Don and Marco into the bookcase and pulls out the \$10 behind one of the books. He shifts over to the accounting and investment book shelf never used by student or faculty. It's there to fill space, but its new purpose is to hide homework for three other students in calculus. Calvin counts another \$30 and it's enough for the rest of the week of homework compensation. Calvin takes the money and places the homework behind the books. Job done.

With nothing else to do Calvin sits down and cracks open one of his books to look over before the exam. It's the biology book from this morning. He starts to close it until he sees a risqué inking of an anatomically correct male otter. Scribbled in the corners are otter facts. 'Fact #26, River Otters can hold their breath up to 15 minutes under water. They give amazing blowjobs.'

"What?!"

Calvin had yelled louder than he wants to and a few students look up at him. He scrambles to the stair case where no one can peer over his shoulder. He cracks open the book again and reads through the writing. There is more doodles of male otters. Some are sucking dick. Some are very detailed and realistic to his own anatomy. Whoever drew these has a clear understanding of otters. He reads another few facts.

"Otters are very ticklish around their armpits and sides. Otters have very sensitive tails and scratches long strokes down causes them to...Oh my. Yeah, that's true. Otters can occupy a dick the size of...No, that's not-Yeah, who am I kidding..."

Calvin looks around to make sure no one is around to see or hear him. He thumbs through the pages. More otter facts litter the edges of each pages. More pictures of otters and very seductive poses are penned in. Some of the otters are on top of other otters. Some otters are touching themselves. Two otters are on top of each other, which isn't anything Calvin hasn't seen on some sites he's been on, but the next page it's a tiger on an otter. The next page after that is a wolf on an otter. It's a lot of interspecies fixation all with otters being the center point of all focus. It doesn't occur to Calvin that there is a loud noise up the stairs until it spills out in a bang against the door. Calvin hides away the book in his book bag. He races up the stairs and finds Javier and Quentin at each other's throats.

"What's with you? You fucking mutt!"

Javier leaps at Quentin and makes a swing with his face. It doesn't connect. Quentin tackles Javier to the ground and holds down his arm. Javier stops struggling looking over to Calvin. He sighs, more embarrassed that he's caught being over powered by Quentin. Chase burst through the door. His ears fly back like rocket fins and his eyes dart from me to Quentin and Javier.

"Knock it off," says Chase, as he pulls Quentin off Javier. "What are you thinking?! Are you trying to get kicked off the team?"

"He started it," says Quentin, wiping his nose of a little blood trickling down.

"Just stay away," say Javier with a break in his voice. He looks to Calvin and then to Chase. He pushes past Chase who tries to stop him, but is somehow over powered by Javier.

"Can someone tell me what is going on? Rudder-butt, what did you see?"

Calvin says, "I just came in and these two were fighting."

Chase waits patiently for more words. He says, "Yeah, and?"

"I..."

Quentin snorts and speaks up, "He just got here. Before, Javier told me to stay away and started threatening me after I started talking about his girlfriend. They're always together I start talking to her to ask about the quiz today and he comes up after she leaves and goes on about staying away. I'm all calm until he starts shoving me. He even popped me in the nose. That's when Calvin came through the door."

"Calvin?"

"I just came in. Honest."

"Hmm. Well, none of the teachers are here. I guess we can call ourselves lucky. I have to ask, though."

Chase looks to me and straight to Quentin and says, "Did you hit on Javier's girlfriend?"

"What? No. You know I wouldn't," says Quentin with a quick glance at me. "You know I wouldn't."

Chase rubs his neck and runs on my necks to usher us both through the door and into the stairway. He sighs, disappointed. He doesn't ask any more questions, but Chase scans Calvin up and down. He notices Calvin is wearing a different shirt from this morning, but doesn't say anything about it. Instead he points to Calvin and aims his finger out the downstairs door. He wants to be alone with Quentin for an interrogation.

Calvin leaves through the double doors and out into the hallway. He scans both ends and sees Javier walking back. He stops after looking up and seeing Calvin. His feet shift on the ground and then makes a 90 degree turn and into the athletic department. He flashes an eye from the side of his face as Calvin and looks very angry. Calvin doesn't hesitate to walk the other direction. Today is too much.

Turning a corner he meets a pair of yellow eyes and it isn't Javier. The wolf grins very mischievous and twitches as his breath escapes his clenched teeth. Anthony Lupin reaches out one paw and Calvin can't move. He feels a large paw on his shoulder and claws dig and he is pulled back. An arm wraps around Calvin's shoulder as he feels a large body pressing up against his back.

"Hello, Anthony. What's up?"

The familiar voice is Don. He towers over Anthony and makes Calvin look like a two legged stool to sit on. Don's eyes glance down at Calvin and then back to Anthony who's fur is bristling on the back of his neck. Neither of them move with Calvin in the middle. He feels the radiation, but his hands feel cold.

Don speaks up again with a sniff of the air. "Someone smells like dick."

Anthony's eyes narrow. He growls, causing Calvin's balls to tighten up close to his pelvis. Don's claws can be felt sliding out of his paws, resting on Calvin's shoulder. They are half the length of the otter's fingers. They don't grip him, but are out in case Anthony springs forward. Anthony's temptation to bear his teeth is strong, but he turns around and walks away with his tail between his legs.

"You ok?"

Calvin says, "Yeah. Everyone in a mood for some reason."

"Yeah," says Don. "I just talked to Marco. He is so upset. He lost some book again. I told him to retrace his steps."

Calvin says, "A textbook?"

"Yeah, some text book, but hey...I was looking for you to thank you for the homework assist. Those notes you sent me on Muzzleprint were a real help. Thanks..."

Don looks down at me. His towering body is like an anchor and his paw, with his claws retracted back feel like a linked chain stapled on my shoulder. Calvin stares back at the two blue marble eyes. Don's brow lifts on one side with a smirk. He doesn't say anything, but his presence is reassuring.

"We should head to class. Got the other quiz to finish. Come on," says Don. And they shuffle on to the next class.

The rest of the school day is uneventful. The quiz is aced. The next class is a lecture and the final period is a study hall which gives Calvin time to grab a snack from one of the vending machines. He never had lunch. After school, Calvin runs to Chase's car and wipes down the car of any of the dried body fluid smeared on the surface of

the car, now crusted and a cleans after a few swipes. Chase is rushing out into the parking lot and waves to Calvin. In a near race to finish, Calvin tosses the paper towels into a nearby trash can.

"Hey, we have to talk," says Chase.

"Yeah, we do," says Calvin.

Calvin and Chase enter the car and for a moment Calvin sniffs for any scent of body fluid. His sense of smell isn't as keen as Chase's. Perhaps Chase senses something Calvin doesn't, because Chase stares at Calvin with his bluish gray eyes. They feel piercing in some way, but Calvin pats his tail on the floor all playful and he pretends nothing is wrong.

"Cal, I know...I know things aren't easy. I don't make things easy for you. Sometimes I can be short tempered and sometimes I say the wrong things." Chase adds, "I wish to be there for you. These past couple weeks have been really difficult with try-outs, Coach is pressing me to make more decisions and I'm finding I have a lot of growing up to do. I guess I'm asking for your patience. Some things go missing. Some things, you can guess go without saying. I mean, can you sense that stuff. Can't you?"

"Dude, I'm an otter. My senses aren't as keen as yours. We otter folk are only good for party tricks and water acrobatics. Unless you..."

Chase is holding up a paw and his eyes drop to between the seats. He doesn't say anything, but starts the car and drives out of the campus before the buses clog up the exit. The ride is quiet. Chase looks over to Calvin every so often in short glances. Calvin keeps his eyes forward. He has to clear his throat, but avoids making any indication that he needs to say something which Chase might expect on the ride. The drive home feels longer than it should. Perhaps it is the tension rising from between the two, but Chase is driving slower. That much is certain.

Calvin's house comes into view. As if holding his breath the entire 15 minutes of the ride, Calvin takes in a deep breath. It is then that something pops into Calvin's head, pulling into the driveway. Calvin studied hand writing so that he can easily copy other people's work for money. Each person he profits off of, have different types of hand writing techniques and he can distinguish the handwriting of several people he has done work for. A total of 23 classmates compile the writing styles he uses to develop homework for. He has a library of hand signatures from teachers, students and his own parents to draw from in case something he needs signed for legitimacy. To compare the book and the series of hand writing he has collected over the years, he can distinguish the classmate's handwriting. From there, he will know who has the anonymous fetish for otters.

The car rolls into the drive way and Calvin is first to exist the vehicle. It's Chase who gets to the door first and lets Calvin in.

"You coming," says Calvin, looking back at Chase.

"I have to head out for a moment. I need to check something in the car. I'll be in a little bit."

Calvin can't help but stare back nervous and with a sense of dread. The door swings closed with the light patting of paw pads leading back to the car. Calvin rushes to his room, dumps the rest of the books on his bed and grabs from the taped folder from underneath his bed side table. He shoves it into his bag. He looks out the window to Chase who is crouching in the passenger side of his car and like a prey hearing a twig snap his head pops up and stares into their room. Calvin ducks, smacking his forehead into the top of Chase's desk. He groans and rubs his forehead. Lucky, it didn't break the skin underneath his fur. He feels a lump swell, but that doesn't worry him. He races to his parent's bedroom, twice the size of their, but cluttered with his father's bowling trophies and swimming championships from days long ago. Calvin opens the window and is nearly out when he hears Chase close the front door behind him. Calvin lets himself fall and he run through the grass onto the sidewalk as he sprints toward the gym.

As fortune has it, Chase doesn't see Calvin running after. Calvin makes it to the gym with no sign of Chase's hulking figure in a pair of dark sunglasses appear out of nowhere to say for Calvin to come with him if he wants to live. It's not a movie, Calvin thinks. Chase is a dog. He can sense things and cannot jump into the a time portal to prevent an alternate future from happening.

Calvin undresses and pulls on his speedo. He tosses his bag into a locker and latches the combo lock on it before heading for a quick shower and a swim. The water feels nice. A relaxing swim and an hour later, Calvin's mind is clear. All he needs is a quick study over the hand writings of his friends and past students for the owner of the book will be revealed. Calvin takes a quick shower and heads out of gym in his shorts and stolen hoodie he had gotten from the wrestling team. The smell of fennec lingers in the neck line.

Calvin walks back to his house and sees his parent's car is parked in front. Chase's car is missing. With no reason to be home for his parents to walk in on him, Calvin heads into town for a secluded spot to solve this mystery. With a little over a 45 minute walk he reaches the library. He hates it there and decides to head across the street to the diner. It's less populated around this time and 15 minutes is all he needs to decipher the hand writing. Before he reaches the door Calvin can see the reflection of a puke green car with wood panel siding of a car too familiar.

Calvin all too horrified to look back and thought of being caught. He then stares into the diner and sees Chase sitting at a booth being handed a milkshake with dog treat topping, his favourite. Calvin ducks and crawls to the passenger side of Chase's car. He peers through the side window and windshield and sees Chase nonchalant, rubbing his paws together and looking to the diner entrance. Calvin slips to the back of the vehicle and by chance the boot of the car is unlocked and he slips inside the back, closing it behind him.

Calvin takes out the folder of hand writing samples and skims through the papers. The hand writing is male. So, it eliminates 15 of the samples. He takes out the list of teachers, his father's signature which isn't any question of whether it's any of theirs. He takes out the book for a quick glance. The handwriting is legible, but barely. It has an almost chicken scratch style to it. For such intricate drawings, the hand writing is sloppy. With that, the list goes down to 14 hand writing samples. He cross-references again and that brings it down to seven possible cases and then it hits him. Most of the names are on the soccer team.

Calvin sits in the low lighting of the trunk. The only light coming in are from the opening of the wheel well and rust holes in the side of the car. It's enough to go through the rest, but he feels he needs a break. He lays on the floor of the trunk for what feels like a half hour. His mind drifts and before he knows it, the car doors open on each side and slam close. The weight of Chase and someone are in the car. There is no turn of the key. Instead, Calvin can hear Chase coughs and clears his throat. The sound of the vinyl rubs against his body and there is the distinct sound of two people kissing. And then, Chase speaks.

"You know I love you, right? I mean, we have kept this between us for two weeks now. I'm sorry I have been distant. We don't have to tell anyone, but it sometimes feels like I'm not worthy. I wish there is a better way to say this, but perhaps we should tell someone."

Calvin leans his head closer to the back of the bucket seats and props his foot up against the hinge on the other end. When Calvin leans in closer he kicks the side of the interior of the car, making a loud noise for anyone in the car. Calvin freezes, hearing one of the car doors open and slam behind him. There are footsteps and then silence before the boot swings open and a flash of daylight blind the otter.

"What are you doing?!"

Calvin feels the strength of large paw grip his forearms and lift him out of the car with easy. Calvin is still blind from the shock of sudden sunlight and covers his face curls up in a ball. Calvin is struggling with paws pushing his out of the way of his face and the dark shadow becomes clear. Bearing teeth and ears back he looks up at a furious Chase.

"Don't hurt me!"

"Hurt you? Why were you in the trunk of my car?!"

Calvin is pulled to his feet. There is a slam and Calvin is thrown on top of the car with Chase's fists pounding on each side of his waist, preventing any escape. Calvin squeaks with Chase growling and the feeling in Calvin's belly feels uncomfortable and exposed. Sweat drips underneath his fur from the heat of being in the trunk for so long.

"Take it easy, Chase," says a familiar voice. "He can be trusted. Besides, who knows how long he's been in that trunk."

Looking over Calvin sees a Dingo. It's Quentin. Looking back to Chase, he is still upset and folds his thick arms. Tugging Calvin off the back of his car he pulls him into the diner and seats him at the booth he sat in earlier. Quentin wanders in after with Calvin's bag over one shoulder. He walks up to the booth and sits next to Calvin, preventing any escape and with Chase staring down the otter.

"Otter, damn. You really smell musky. How long were you roasting inside the trunk? Chase, did you lock him in there?"

"No," says Chase, angry. "I found him back there spying on us. What did you hear?"

"It's clear what he heard. The question of why he's...Damn, you really stink, otter. Can we get some mint leaves or fresh cut grass to rub on him?"

The waitress comes over and is about to hand over the desert menu, but Chase holds up a paw, looks at me and then orders something for Calvin.

"Root beer float. Hold the cherry, but plenty of whipped cream," he says, looking at Calvin for approval.

Calvin nods and looks down at the table. His webbed fingers are flat on the table for some reason. Quentin's paw lays on top of Calvin's and pats it.

"We only want to talk to you, Cal," says Quentin. "We just need to be open about things," he adds, staring back at Chase.

Chase says, "I'll go first." Then Chase stops while the server hands Calvin the root beer float and begins to suck it down. He's so thirsty. When she leaves, Chase clears his throat and begins to speak again, "You see, what I'm trying to say is..."

"You're gay," says Calvin. "And you're in a relationship with Quentin."

Silence hung in the air for a long time. Chase's eyes look back and forth from Quentin and Calvin.

"Yes. I think I have always had certain feeling and attractions toward males. I like females too, but I guess this manifested when Quentin and I hung out during break. It just happened."

"Yup," says Quentin. "Us K-9s can kind of smell arousal in others. Heck, I don't know if you know this, but Chase here emits a certain scent when he's aroused and-"

"Ok, that's enough imagery about my brother," Calvin stops.

"Uh, yeah," Chase breathes a sigh of relief.

Quentin changes subject and says, "So, you were in that trunk of the car. You have a heat stroke, maybe? You smell, like really a lot..."

"We get it, Quent," says Chase. "Why were you in my trunk. Answer me that."

"I was afraid. I've been avoiding you because of some things I've been finding."

Quentin's faces grimaces and Chase ears go back. His face tenses up and Calvin can tell that his teeth are clinched. Chase looks absolutely embarrassed.

"The condom," says Quentin.

"Yeah," says Calvin.

Chase's thin fuzz above his nose goes red and he looks as though he wants to crawl in a hole and die.

"What did you do with it?"

"I threw it out the car when we were at the petrol station. It landed on the antenna...by chance. The wind carried some of the uh...I cleans up the side of the car before you noticed."

Chase's eyes wander from his car to Calvin and says, "Thanks."

There's silence for a moment. Calvin sips down the rest of his root beer float and slurps down the last of the whipped cream before the bottom is completely empty.

Quentin says, "So, that mystery is out of the way. Why are you here, though?"

Calvin ushers Quentin to give him his bag and he does so. Calvin pulls out the text book and places it on the table for the other two to gaze down at it.

'This...is a text book.'

Quentin says, "By the power of GraySkull..."

"There's more," says Calvin.

Quentin mocks, "No..."

Chase makes a face at Quentin and shrugs to Calvin who doesn't know how to continue. He picks a random page and flings the book open.

Both Quentin and Chase look down and with a shock expression they look around the diner for any eyes on their table.

"By the power of GraySkull...Dude, you're worse off than I thought."

"No, Quentin. This isn't my book. I found it. Someone has gay....a fetish for otters and I think it's someone at the school. It's someone on the team."

"Oh shit," says Chase. "Is this true about otters?"

Calvin flicks Chase's finger away from Otter Fact #164. With a stern look, he shuts the book closed and folds his arms.

"This book belongs to someone I think is on the team. I already ruled you two out despite both of you taking the course last year. This book is not used anymore by the high school. Someone didn't turn in the book."

Quentin takes the book and flips the over open to the first page.

Calvin says, 'What are you doing?'

"It says last year the book was last handled by someone named Joaquin...I can't read the rest. It's scribbled out by blue ink from the same drawings."

Chase thinks for a moment and mutters, "There was a Joaquin being called down to the office, but I can't remember who that is. Maybe this book was stolen. That's why it was never returned to the school. Or, maybe this Joaquin is some sick stalker who is waiting around the corners of hallways of the school?"

"I thought of that already, but maybe it's a relative. I can't remember anyone who might be. Does Don have any siblings?"

Quentin eyebrows raise and rolls his eyes with a shake of the head. Chase scratches his head and tilts it, just as puzzled. Calvin looks down at the book and nothing else comes to mind. Chase pays for Calvin's beverage and in standing up he grips the back of Calvin's neck so he doesn't run. Quentin gathers the book and shoves it into the bag with the rest of the papers he gathered from the back of Chase's car. Heading out into the walk way, Chase points to the passenger side of the car.

"You're riding shotgun, Cal. Quent, you're in back. I need to talk with Calvin here."

Quentin doesn't argue. He steps into the back seat behind Chase and Calvin is eased into the passenger side of the car and Chase slams it closed as soon as his tail is out of the way. Chase sits down in the driver side and with his left paw on an over-head grip, he places his right arm around Calvin's head rest, he stares at him, like he is waiting for an answer to come out of either of their lips.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you about being gay. When you came out, I was genuinely happy for you. I was too scared to come out. I didn't know how the team would react. You already know a couple of the team mates are homophobic. Being team captain I didn't want to make it an issue. I tried to hide it. I'm sorry."

Calvin speaks up after a little time passes, "I don't think you need to apologize. I just thought our friendship transcended things like fear and jealousy. Nothing is ever perfect in this world, I guess. I am glad you have someone at least. I never had any shoulder to lean on. I felt alone. I look up to you, but you are on another plane of existence, it's like."

Calvin and Chase can hear Quentin thumbing through the pages. He's quiet, but is studying the book intently.

"I don't know where this leads us," says Chase. "I'm just glad you have our back whatever happens."

"As if there was ever a doubt in your mind, Chase?"

Chase says firm, "Never."

Chase turns the key and he pulls out of the parking space. Driving off into the direction of Quentin's house it's only logical to assume that Quentin is going to be dropped off and Calvin and Chase can go home after. It's a short ride and Quentin's immature giggles flourish from behind Chase's seat. He's enjoying himself, at the very least. Either it's a dirty picture or one of the 556 otter facts that Calvin felt apprehensive about confirming. And when Quentin got out and kisses Chase, his boyfriend, on the lips he looks over to Calvin and can't help himself.

"Hey Cal, I have to ask. Do otters..."

"Good night, Quent," says Chase as he speeds off, leaving him in a cloud of dust.

The ride isn't long, just a short detour. When they arrive at the otter residence, Chase enters first with Calvin following behind him close. Both mother and father aren't happy it's nearly 7pm and dinner is in packed away in little Rubbermaid bins. With both of them standing near the front door, Chase looks back at Calvin and then to them.

Mr. and Mrs. Ottermore, Mother and Father. I need to tell you something..."

The next day Calvin awoke first, but Chase got up before Calvin can get out of bed. A quick shower and a quiet ride to school, the two brothers, otter and husky, smile at each other. They had both come out. Nothing felt impossible and everything felt like it is dropping at their feet with no scramble to the first period of school. Chase waves Calvin off as he goes into another direction of his first class. Calvin heads toward the first period, Physiology and Anatomy of Mammal Species. Before he goes in, he sees Mr. Muler and runs up to him on his way to his own classroom.

"Mr. Muler?"

"Yes? Calvin, isn't it?"

"Yes. I was wondering if you could tell me about a student from last year."

"A current student?"

"No, someone who is either was sophomore, junior or left senior last year. His first name was Joaquin. I can't remember what species he was. Do you recall a student by his name?"

"No, sorry. Not off the top of my head. I do remember the name, though. It's not exactly the most common, but you say someone's name every day for attendance and you figure I should remember that person. There have been so many students. I'm sorry I'm not much help."

Calvin is uncertain as to what to do. There are five possible names when eliminating Chase and Quentin's name off the list. They weren't high contenders to begin with, in the identity quest of the horny otter lover. Calvin puts it on the back of his mind until gym class begins before lunch. Quentin is happy to help spot for Calvin when lifting weights. They chat about what they want for lunch, but Calvin can feel Quentin's curiosity pulsing over the subject of the book and it's scribbled in contents. He never brings it up, but grins every so often when he looks at Calvin.

"Ok, light weights for you, Quentin. You have a match later today, remember?"

"Yeah. kind of excited. I hoped I'd make the team. Javier made the team too," Quentin says with a sniffle.

"Did you ever figure out what his deal was with you?"

"He thought I hit on his girlfriend. He was pissed. Short tempered, prick."

Calvin laughs at the tacked on joke at the end of his comment. Having another ally makes it easy by a little bit more. He is no longer 'only gay student' in the high school. Now, his best friends are the first gay couple. If only Calvin could know who this otter lover is, he thought. He doesn't care if it's a fetish. Some of the facts jammed into the crevices of the book were very endearing. Otter Fact #34 says otters like to hold hands with loved ones, even as they sleep. Otter fact #69 says otters have the thickest fur of any mammal on the planet and is

nearly waterproof. There is no need for a umbrella. Otter fact #187 says otters are social creatures and seek long term mates over the one night flings. He wonders to himself if there exists any indication of who this mystery Joaquin is. Also, why has Calvin himself never noticed any sense of mischievous eyes upon him?

Quentin looks up at Calvin. His paws grip the bar of the bench press and his muscle flex before lifting the weight he warms up with. Quentin is enormous in his strength. The dingo put on some weight perhaps to attract his friend Chase. His start-off weight is the top capacity Calvin can press. He isn't showing off. He pump his chest with a deep exhale and inhale upon bringing down the bar to lightly graze his chest fur protruding from the top of his shirt. After eight reps, He asks for more weight. And after another 8 reps, Calvin adds more weight. That's enough as Quentin has a soccer match.

"You're going to the game, right?"

"Chase hasn't told me if he wants me there."

"Dude, we went over this. He wants you there. He is afraid of being out. I am too, but you really laid a path for both of us. Never forget that. I'm not afraid to hide anymore."

Quentin doesn't whisper. In fact, it sounds like he is boasting. A few students overhear him and he doesn't flinch. Quentin puts on a brave face and a grin, but Calvin can tell he's trying to be brave for Calvin. Without making it too awkward Quentin smack the back of Calvin and they wipe down the machine with a 5% bleach solution mixed with water and set out to Calculus.

Lunch time is uneventful. During study period, Calvin studies the text book some more, but nods off in a chair. When he comes to, Calvin reaches for his bottled water. Guzzling it down and feeling the side of the chair he realizes the book is gone. Someone had taken it as he slept. He checks under the chair. He runs his fingers along the cushion. He looks inside his book bag and all there is are the papers of reference for homework of individuals who he makes a little profit off of. It occurs to Calvin that the owner of the book had not only taken it, but also a part of the group of clients. Peering into the book bag, all four papers of reference resided in his bag. He recalls faintly that he had left one in the pages as a bookmark. That paper now resides in his bag with the others. He isn't imagining anything. He knows how to catch the text book otter loving caper.

The list of names conclude with four people. Two are in the close proximity of the library where their classes might allow them to slip away for a short time. One has study hall with him, but uses the time in gym to get an extra workout. The last name is in Eastern History, all the way across campus. Calvin feels a little upset Gram Chucknan isn't the book caper, but he was never the top of the list. This only solidifies Calvin's theory as only a soccer team member is likely to be the otter lover and he puts that reference hand writing away for him. He looks at the three. Pieces of paper hold the key to the otter lover's identity. He scans them, trying to identify any insignia that differentiates from each other and whether he recalls anything from the book.

"Don Tigre, Javier De Yote and..." Calvin freezes while looking at the last name, but mutters, "Anthony Lupin."

Calvin hadn't done work for Anthony Lupin since freshman year. He had a homophobic agenda. The otter facts, while true could be seen as cynical. But the drawings, so intricate were more refined. An inept ability to not be an asshole has nothing to do with artistic talent and he did take a drawing course and a ceramics course the past two years. And while Anthony Lupin is currently retaking biology for failing it sophomore year, it increases his chance to get into college.

"Please don't be him."

Javier De Yote is next on the list. His chicken scratch writing is similar to Lupin's. Javier has shown no signs of artistic talent and has kept his distance to a profession level to have his home work done the past two years to play on the soccer team with the other two. Javier also has a girlfriend, and while the girl in the lavatory was crying about a guy, Calvin can't be sure if it's him. Quentin had mention Javier being with his girlfriend still and did pick a fight over Quentin for a bout of jealousy. It wasn't like Quentin to flirt, not with being in a relationship with Calvin's best friend for the past two week.

Calvin sighs, climbing up the stairs to ground level and head in the direction of AP French, the room around the corner from the stairway and gym, a short walk. He peers into the class room where the towering tiger stands, reading out in the French language. There's no way to tell if he went to the lavatory or had a dismissal slip to go to the library. He will have to wait on who Don has been a very kind face these past few weeks. And the association between the girl and the tiger isn't clear, nor is the next on the list.

Anthony Lupin is located inside the weight lifting room. Calvin slips in with five minutes to spare of his free period. Both Anthony and Calvin share a free period slot together. Neither of them spoke after Calvin came out last year. Before approaching Anthony, Calvin looks in his locker where he keeps a change of clothes and a book bag. He doesn't have the text book and he could have thrown it away after seeing it in possession of Calvin. Anthony could have taken all the evidence, but left his paper in with the rest inside his backpack. There is only one thing left to do, Calvin thinks and steps through the door to the weight training room.

"Hello, Anthony."

"Damn you," says Anthony. "What are you doing here? Isn't it bad enough you wiped that stuff on my team jacket?"

"I'm sorry about that. It's wasn't mine."

"That makes it worse, you know," says Anthony looking up with a glance as he sets the weight down on the bench press. He stands up.

"It's not what you think. Beside, I need to ask you a question."

"I'm not letting you suck my dick if that's what you're after."

"No, just a name. Do you remember a student by the name of Joaquin?"

Anthony looks up and says, "Yeah? What about him?"

"Who is he? He took AP Biology last year with you, right?"

"Yeah. I took Biology last year. I'm taking it again this year for a better grade."

"So, you're Joaquin. Where is the book?"

Anthony wipes the sweat from his brow with his tank top. He walks over in short steps, but is standing over the otter as he takes off his shirt and pats down his matted fur.

"What the fuck do you want?"

"The book, is it yours?"

"I have the course book, but you can't have it."

Anthony wraps his tank top as if it were a rope. Tightening it in his grip, drips of sweat trickle down and he positions it around his neck with both hands. He stares down Calvin and begins to growl. It's not a playful growl. It's not a something Calvin likes hearing, but he can't stop now.

"Why do it? You clearly hate me, but like otters so much. Is this some sort of fetish things?"

The last comment sends Anthony over the edge and he wraps his shirt around Calvin's neck. He holds him up to the point where he is being strangled and his legs are dangling beneath him. Calvin flails and kicks as hard as he can, landing his foot into the balls of the wolf. Lupin slumps over and cradles his groin. Calvin is free, but they are too close to the exit to swing the door open and run. He bolts past Lupin who follows after a little bit sluggish from the knock between his legs.

Lupin somehow grabs Calvin by his leg and lifts Calvin with one arm. Calvin has a firm grasp of the weight of a 45lb. weight form the rack and Calvin is in a fight of tug-of-war. The weight slips, but Calvin doesn't let go. He swings like a pendulum and the weight smashes into Lupin's shin. The wolf lets out a high pitched squeal and doubles over, dropping Calvin as he falls on his head. Calvin is a little dazed, but feels a grip on his shoulder.

"Hey, come on. Look at me."

The voice is rough, but it's clear of who it is. Coach Clifford stands over him and he is rubbing Calvin back. He checks for any open cuts on the crown of Calvin's head and flashes a light in his eye.

"Okay, you're going to be ok."

"What about me?! He assaulted me!"

"You, Tony? You're going to the hospital. You have a broken your tibia trying to beat up someone a third your size and I saw you strangling him with your shirt. I was watching you two. You're staying where you are until the ambulance gets here."

The school nurse walks in and assists Anthony Lupin as he whines and howls. Coach Clifford, almost dragging Calvin by the scruff of his neck, plops him down on a seat next to his desk of his office. He slides open one of the drawers and takes out a cup, swings his around to grab a bottle out of the mini fridge and pours a glass of cream soda. He hands it to Calvin for him to drink. He is rummaging through another drawer and takes out a bag, which he smashes against the desk. He rubs it between his two massive bear paws. He balances the cold bag on top of Calvin's head and grabs the free hand and holds it above the ice pack.

"What you did is pretty brave," says Coach Clifford.

"I was just trying to get answers."

"Oh, back there? That's what that was all about?"

"Uh."

Coach Clifford stares down Calvin. While Anthony Lupin is three times the size of Calvin, Coach Clifford is over five times the size of the small frame of an otter. He snuffles and wipes his muzzle which is the size of Calvin's own head and he sets his black, furry arms down on the desk with a crash.

"I spoke to a student earlier today who said some surprising stuff about you," Coach Clifford says. "He said you've been snooping around and it wasn't in the worst interest of the school, but you didn't report this..."

Coach Clifford pulls out the biology text book and drops it in a more gentle fashion, nudging it forward with one claw digging into the top of the book. A serious form of dread crept across Calvin and he began to sweat.

"Did you see what is inside?"

"It has to do with you," says the coach.

Calvin winces and shakes his head. "I don't know what to say about it."

"I haven't looked myself. Not that I haven't seen some crazy stuff. He did assure me that when I caught him with the book it wasn't done by you, but by himself and that it might be taken in the wrong context. I haven't looked at it, but if you need to we can figure it out together."

"No, if you haven't looked at it, please don't. It's not something I haven't seen, but don't punish who it is, even if it's Lupin. He's been through enough, I think."

Coach Clifford leans back in his seat and is tempted to flip the book open and reveal how a bear can blush. He eyes the book and flicks the cover only a crack, but clips his fist down, causing a gust of wind to make Calvin blink repeatedly.

"It wasn't Lupin. The young male who came in asked for the book back after and I wouldn't let him. I told him to explain why he hadn't handed the book in and I realized it's a discontinued book. He spoke very honest and revealed that you..." Coach Clifford pokes the center of Calvin's rib cage making him wince in a little pain as the bear spoke, "...made him realize who he is and he came out as a gay student. He said that you helped him. Helping him with his homework, seeing what kindness and understanding is. The more I listened the more I wanted to see what's inside the book, but he assured me it would hurt his future and hurt you as a friend if it ever came out. I can't think of anything more scary than standing up and saying one's true form to someone like me."

Calvin smiles and so does Coach Clifford.

"Coach, I have no idea who it is. But, yeah, these are private affairs of a student here that I happened across. If it's his book, please don't look inside. No one is being hurt by it. It's a love letter that some dumb jock wanted to express, but couldn't find the words in himself."

"Funny, that's exactly what he said...Almost sound mighty rehearsed between you two. Do you really not know who the student is?"

Calvin says, "No."

"Is there dick involve in these messages?"

"Uh..."

"Uh huh. Well, I'm not going to look if it's that private. I've been blasted by dick scribbles before. I don't want one of my key players to lose out on the match today. We already lost Tony, but after what I witnessed I'm changing my mind about him being team captain next year. Real shame too. I was told his attitude sucks. I figure putting him in a position of respect he might find respect to give others."

"Is there any way you can introduce me?"

"He wants to meet you. Damn, son. You really don't know who it is? You hang with him whenever I see him near you."

"It's not Chase."

"No, it's not Chase. Tell you what, if you're fine to go to the game today to give everyone your support, I will give you support and introduce you after the game."

"Sounds like a plan."

The last period bell rings and Calvin begins to stand up, but the coach motions for him to sit down. He isn't going anywhere. Calvin sips the glass of cream soda and braces the ice pack on top of his head. He can feel a bump forming and while it doesn't hurt, Calvin can feel drained after the conversation, waiting for answer and everything almost at his grasp.

"Sit tight. After the nurse looks you over you can go to the game. I'll have a seat saved for you, same one you always have by the railing, eighth row up."

The coach leaves Calvin in his office. He barely squeezes through the doorway and the nurse walks back to let the medics in. Short time after, Anthony Lupin is rolled out on a gurney. And soon after that, the coach squeezed out the doorway into the hall and his presence is replaced by Don Tigre.

"Hey, Cal. I heard you kicked Tony's ass. Is it true?"

"Yes, absolutely true. I broke him with my bear hands!"

Calvin and Don laugh. He sits in coach's chair and swings around like a cub. It occurs to Calvin that Don's eyes glance over to the text book.

"Hey, Don," says Calvin.

"Oh wow," says Don. "That book...I hate that thing. I had to buy a replacement after I lost mine last year. And they never used it again. They replaced the book with a newer edition."

Calvin stares at Don who is still swinging back and forth out of his seat. He begins to reach for the book when the coach bursts through the hallway door and yells at Don.

"Don, get off my seat. You break that thing you're looking for a new one with stripes for me to sit on. Calvin, is that book still there? It would be a shame to see it get lost again. Don, get your butt in gear. You're supposed to be helping Chase with the gear."

With that, Don disappears after the coach and leaves Calvin to fend for himself. He puts down the ice pack which has been on his head for an hour as soon as the bell rings. The text book lays there, full of secrets as Calvin sweeps it into his backpack and tosses out the ice pack before stepping through the door into the hall. In an hour more the team will ready. The match will begin at 4:05pm. And, at 6:45pm, he will know the identity of the owner of the book.

Calvin sits himself near the top of the bleachers, right by the railing, behind the benches set out for the home team. Chase and Don are laying out equipment and goofing off. All the team is there, except Anthony Lupin. The other team arrives and they are ready to play the game. Calvin takes center and before Calvin realizes the bleachers are full and the match has begun.

It's hard to keep it straight. Calvin's mind wanders in and out of the game's play. Several roars and howls later, the games ends in the home team wins 6-5. Chase scored three goals and assisted with on. Being down one player, they still won the match. The team's heads held high. They embrace in a circle and pat each other on the

back. Everyone begins to pack up and leave the bleachers. Danielle Vulpline is clapping her paws together and squeezes by Calvin who wave to her boyfriend, Javier De Yote. He rushes to her, hug and braces her hands with her nodding. She points to where she sat and a repetitive clanging sound of cleated hooves climb the steps of the bleachers. Looking up, Calvin sees Joseph Castleton standing over him.

"You know we nearly lost the game?"

"Yeah, you guys played your hearts out. You got a goal. I saw."

Joseph shakes his head, "Still. Just think if Anthony hadn't broken his leg in some freak accident we would have won with more points. He's our lead scorer."

Calvin says, "Well, better luck next time. You guys did so well. I'm proud of you."

"What the fuck are you playing at?!"

Joseph climbs another step. Calvin backs away and Chase's eyes connect with his. Don is tapped on the shoulder and he bolts toward Calvin's direction with half the team rushing from behind him, but it's too late. Joseph has Calvin by the shirt and shakes him. He presses Calvin up against the railing and shoots incoherent screams at him while shaking him. Calvin loses balance and before Don, Chase or the coach can reach him, Calvin falls.

Everything is black. The faint taste of Gatorade is in Calvin's mouth. He feels something moist against his face and a hot air is being forced into his lungs. He feels the wet nose brushing against the side of his mouth. Warm, salty water drips onto his tongue as tears roll down the eyes that look dipped in gold. Before Calvin realizes it, his own webbed paws grip the coyote's face and without thinking he kisses him.

"Woah," says Don. "Didn't see that coming."

The coach clears his throat and ushers everyone to stand back and give Calvin room. It's not until Chase shakes the two kissing on the ground as if begging them to stop.

"Yo, that's my brother. Can you not?"

"Yeah, Javier. There will be time for that later. You know, after a date or..."

"Can you not, Quent? Seriously, everyone's going to start kissing and it's going to be weird as..."

As Javier's face breaks away from Calvin's, there is a moaning sound as the crowd surround them sound off. Quentin is grabbing Chase and is giving a deep kiss on his mouth. Chase is shocked, but just lets it happen. And he kisses his boyfriend back.

"That is so disgusting," says Joseph Castleton as he's being pulled away by his horns with the coach not amused.

"My office, Castleton. You're going to be glue by the time I'm done with you. Two assaults on the same student, on my team? You did not!"

Calvin looks back at Javier who is grinning. Javier goes in for another kiss, but is stopped by Chase.

Calvin says, "So, you are Joaquin?"

Javier says, "I really hate that name. Only my mother calls me that. Stick to Javier, my middle name."

Chase interrupts, "You stop right now. I swear. If you are thinking of doing half the things you drew in that book about my brother, you're going to roadkill, De Yote!"

"What? They're just drawing," Javier proclaimed.

"Just drawings? Damn shame," says Calvin.

Chase shakes his head with his paws on his muzzle and simply says, "Oh no."

"BY THE POWER OF GRAYSKULL!!!"

"Ok, I'm heading to the car. Everyone get in get in. Javier, you're coming to. We need to have a little talk."

Javier shrugs and helps Calvin up off the ground. He had only had the wind knocked out of him and Javier gave him a few breaths to help restart breathing. Javier's eyes don't leave Calvin's as he guides him to Chase's car. Calvin can feel Danielle Vulpline's anger as she gives the biggest pout face the world has ever known.

Danielle is upset and curses, "Huh. Boys."

Calvin smiles with Danielle huffing and called out 'boys'. Calvin holds both of Javier's paws in his and they motion their way toward Calvin's car, not breaking eye contact until Calvin steps into the back seat with Chase still shaking his head at his two friends.

Quentin says, "Will you relax?"

Chase says, "What?"

"You saw the book. At least you know what's coming?"

"Stop it, Quent. I'm going to find somewhere very high up, like a cliff. So, I can toss one of you down if you say something like that again."

Chase starts the car, and while being held up by the other team's bus and several other patrons of the soccer game, they make it onto the high way. The sun starts to set and taking the last exit before leaving the valley on the hill top they park over the lights of a billboard.

Chase and Javier sit on top of the roof while Chase and Quentin lay on the hood of the car over-looking the town and city of lights further on.

"This is romantic," says Javier.

"No. It's not, Javier. This is an intervention," says Chase.

"What? What do you mean?" say Quentin. "We totally banged here."

"No!" Chase looks to Calvin and exclaims, "Don't listen to him."

"Dude, I found that condom, remember?"

"Condom? What condom?"

"The type of condom you're going to use if you're going to date my brother, dude."

Javier says, "Yeah, I figured that out a little too late. I smelled Quentin on him and put two and two together. For a second, I thought Quentin was playing a game behind two friends' backs. I smelled him on you and it set me in a fit of rage. I didn't want him hurting both of you. Then, I saw the condom on top of one of the team vans. It was all over Chase's car too. You two are into some crazy stuff."

Chase glares at Calvin who buttons his lip.

Quentin laughs, "Dude, that was Chase's. You should have kicked his ass, not mine."

"So, Danielle was your beard?"

"Yeah," says Javier. "She offered to stick around me in case there was issues before I came out to her when she left herself inside my room and found my old text book. She totally flipped when she found my book."

Calvin pulls his bag out from behind him and drops the text book on the hood.

"Watch the paint," says Chase.

"Is this it," asks Calvin.

"Yup, that's the one. I ran into the lavatory looking for it when I bumped fists with you. I didn't bother to look inside the girl's lavatory. I got carried away. Sorry, Quentin."

"No problem, dude."

Chase says, "Yes, problem. All that stuff in that book is not going near Calvin."

"Why," says Calvin. "I tested most of those things out on myself and I got to say. It's pretty much on the dot."

Javier, Calvin and Quentin laugh while Chase buries his head in his paws.

Calvin looks over to Javier and with a swipe of his paws he hands Javier the biology text book.

"But, Chase is right," says Calvin. "You do have some explaining to do."

Chase's pointed ears fly up to listen.

"Sure I do," says Javier, "Otter facts #1, otters consume 25% to 45% of their weight in daily in-take comprising of things that swim..."

Calvin laughs at Chase's ear flapping downward to their side.

