Four Days Before the Full Moon

Monday Afternoon

12:33 PM

David glared at the mere sight of Josh Handler entering the coffee shop near their high school. His hands were fidgeting, his finger flicking at his cuticles, before resting his hands over the plastic coffee cup he had purchased a few minutes prior. Josh's gaze was directed to David immediately upon entrance, shifting his position and walking towards him. David could see there was an a subtle urgency in Josh's steps, and he was trying to conceal it.

"I needed to take care of something. Sorry I'm late," Josh said, sitting across from David. "I only have a few minutes, so let's make this quick."

David cocked his head to the side and stared at him sternly. "You know I don't want to see you."

"Yeah, well, your opinion isn't exactly relevant to me."

David sat back, already agitated. "That's right," he responded. "Nobody's opinion, better yet, nobody's life matters more than yours. Isn't that right?"

"Sounds accurate."

"You don't care who you affect and what you destroy to get your way."

Josh's face grew stern. "I don't have time for a morality lesson. We have a problem - "

" - that you created, I'm sure."

Josh exhaled, looking to the side, avoiding eye contact. "I fucked up and we are now in a position because of it." Looking back to David, he said, "I need to speak to the pack. Tonight."

"The pack?" David sat back, attempting not to laugh. "You mean, YOUR pack? Why don't you initiate the summons yourself?"

"They listen to you."

"I wonder why."

"Are you going to help me or not?"

David leaned forward, resting his arms on the table. "Connor McCullough," he volunteered. "I dare you to tell me I'm wrong."

"It's not going away."

"I told you it would not go away." Josh observed as David's eyes gleamed yellow for a moment, stemmed from his anger.

"I need you and the pack's help."

David shook his head. He wanted to punch Josh, leap over the table and attack him. He felt nothing but contempt for him, yet knew his whole life was tied to him. His eyes wanted to well up with tears, yet he refrained. He had long learned to not show much humanity towards Josh. "What's the pain threshold Connor has you at?"

"Organize the pack at our typical location tonight and I'll explain everything. I need to speak to my pack."

"The very pack who each and every one of them is disgusted at the sound of your name," David coldly responded. "The pack you formed with zero consent."

"I specifically chose each member of my pack, including you." Josh inhaled deeply. "We are strong because of it. A pack was needed to survive in this world."

"A coerced pack is not a pack," David snapped, trying to keep his voice low enough from others hearing. "Nobody ever volunteered to be a part of...whatever you want to call all this...union. None of this solidarity is real. Well, maybe real to you because you think it to be true. Doesn't make it so."

Josh caught himself growling low. He tightened his face and held up a finger as he spoke, "I have no regrets. I gave you all something that nobody else could offer."

"None of us ever asked for it!"

"That didn't stop you from nominating yourself as de-facto leader when I'm not commanding them myself."

David smirked to himself, then giving Josh a hard stare. "Someone has to maintain order." He pushed his coffee to the side, leaning over the table further, closer to Josh. Whispering, he said, "Your pack wants nothing to do with you. If you're as smart as you think you are, you'd walk away from it all."

Josh continued to stare David in the eyes, unwavering in his confidence. "Tonight. 7:30. You can organize it, or I'll do it myself, and you know I can." He stood up, pulling down his shirt that had bunched up. Looking down at David, he concluded, "We can discuss grievances after the Connor situation is resolved."

David didn't respond, but Connor knew his point had been made. He turned, walking out of the coffee shop. He glanced at his watch, noting the time. He had just enough time to make it back to his school for his afternoon classes. In the midst of it all, he was still a high school student, which unnerved him tremendously.