Four Days Before the Full Moon

Monday Afternoon: 2:22 PM

Ethan lie on his hospital bed, staring upwards at the ceiling. Tears continued to stream down his face, even after doctors had sedated him hours before when he broke down uncontrollably. Needless to say, those very doctors weren't aware of Josh's visit, nor the fact that Josh had nearly infected with the virus known as lycanthropy.

Nothing made sense to him any longer. His best friend, the one he would have taken a bullet for, was now oddly this different entity he no longer understood. In truth, his best friend revealing to him he was a werewolf created immediate conflict, but he at least wanted to understand it, truly understand it in order to be there for him. He wanted to support Derek emotionally. Initially, he felt it was out of intense friendship, but then he had recognized that he feared his friend would be discovered, or worse, hurt. It made him think to himself, 'are these feelings more than friend-based.'

Even that was tainted and questionable. He knew that werewolves emitted adrenaline and endorphins. He could only help but wonder if his love for Derek was merely because his wolf-side made him more desirable. He wanted to believe it was something true, not what he had with Josh, who he simply knew was using him. For what, he couldn't be sure.

For certain, Josh definitely saw Ethan as a threat, at least romantically. Perhaps it was possible he did, in fact, love Derek too, this was an all-too-humorous instance in which Derek would ultimately have to choose between a normal human being or another fellow werewolf. The whole concept seemed like something out of a trashy primetime show.

Yet, oddly enough, all of that was immaterial when he acknowledged the reality that Derek hadn't visited him. It was him as to why he was even in the hospital, why his face felt crushed and glimpses in the mirror made him ache with agony at the sight of his black and blue bruised face. He thought back to Brandon, the horrific truth that Derek had killed before. It was only a matter of time before it happened in the worst of places, such as school, and what would happen then? A truth bloodbath. Ethan was grateful he was only injured minimally. He could have lost his life. The thought of Derek being the cause of so much misery made him feel betrayed and angry, yet, he hated himself for still having feelings for him. The entire thing seemed so nonsensical.

The sound of footsteps caught Ethan's attention, who turned to the door, fearful that Josh had come back. Instead, he saw a thin, very clearly toned male walk inside. He had distinctive blond hair that was grown out slightly and curled ever so at the edges. He looked somewhat familiar - perhaps he went to one of the nearby high schools. There was an intensity about him that took Ethan by surprise, primarily by how eerily attracted it made him feel to this person. "Do I know you?" Ethan managed to voice out.

"No, you don't," said the individual curtly, before sitting down in the very chair Josh had been seated in hours before. "No, you don't," he repeated, "but you're about to." He adjusted himself in his chair. "I'm Connor, and I already know who you are, so no need to introduce yourself. I'm here not necessarily for you. Sorry about that."

Ethan remained silent, his attraction for this person now being replaced with anxiety.

Connor cleared his throat, muttering, "I wish I could smoke in this damn place." He leaned forward, staring Ethan in the eyes. "This town has an infestation within it and I think you're well aware of it."

"...Wha...What do you mean?"

Connor smirked. "Don't play that game with me. You really don't want to do that. Besides, I would have thought you'd want to eradicate specific vermin, given why you're here."

"I..."

"You were attacked by a werewolf and you know it," Connor said coldly. "My only hope is you weren't cut when you were attacked. If so, we have no other standing than being enemies. So I'll ask this once...were you infected?"

"I-I-I...don't know. I don't think so!"

Connor stared Ethan deep in his eyes before sitting back. "I believe you. You're too subdued to convince me otherwise. That's good. Means we can be friends. That remains to be seen with Derek Tremblay...was he what attacked you?"

"No!" Ethan snapped fiercely, without realizing his intensity until after he uttered it.

"So your best friend is not a werewolf?"

"He's...he's...no, he's not. Are you?"

Connor smiled and laughed, flashing his white teeth. "I'm far from that." He inhaled, leaning back. "Have you ever read Jack London's short story 'To Build a Fire?'"

Ethan stared, not answering. Connor continued, "The general concept of the story is that it takes place in the wintery Yukon Territory. The story's exposition has it that this man has been warned repeatedly not to go on his trek to camp during this wintery blitz. He does it anyway. He believes he can defeat nature. His only companion is this wolf-dog, to which the reader actually gets a vantage from this animal that even HE wants to go back, constantly wishes they were back at the fire, and recognizes this trek is futile. This wolf-dog clearly relies on its instincts and the man depends upon it, but he fully ignores what this animal is doing in order to survive in these drastic winter conditions. So, guess what happens? The man falls into freezing ice. And guess what else happens, he suddenly sees the wolf-dog as nourishment, an opportunity to survive. He fails. He freezes to death, deservingly so. In fact, he is pathetically frantic to get heat back to his body, trying to run back and forth for warmth. It's futile. He dies."

Connor cleared his throat. "I have many issues with this story. It's telling me that nature succeeds that man doesn't have the capacity to defeat nature, not ever. If the man saw his limitations and gave into instinct, animal instinct, he would have survived. This defies logic. So if we modernize this story, let's say we adapt it to our present circumstance - are we to be saying that werewolves are nature and I have to adapt to this environment in order to survive, that my instincts as a man are worthless in contrast to animals?"

"Except..." Ethan attempted. "...wouldn't werewolves be a crossing of man and animal?"

"Metamorphosis." Connor said. "No. It's a virus. These things are infected. These werewolves are infections. And when things are infected, they kill. If you try to rationalize it, that's like suggesting the rats infested with fleas that caused The Great Plague from 1346 to 1353, are truly not to blame. Maybe nearly sixty percent of Europe's population died in the span of eight years only because they couldn't truly battle nature. No, the rats were to blame. Their very presence caused an epidemic and millions died due to it. What you do is exterminate it, and that's hopefully what we shall do...starting with your friend."

"What?" Ethan stammered. "He's not."

Connor stood up. "I don't know what's worse. The actual werewolf or the apologist to one." He bit his lip, glancing up in the ceiling. It was in this moment that Ethan saw that Connor was trying to appeal to him, guide him onto his side. If not, he truly began to fear that Connor may be a worse threat to him than Josh had been.

"Derek isn't one, but I know of one," Ethan volunteered. Connor eyed him suspiciously.

"His name is Josh Handler. I think he's interested in Derek, but he hasn't done anything to him. I know - he's my best friend! I know Josh is werewolf because I confronted him last night and he's the one who beat me up and threatened to turn me if I said anything."

Connor smiled. "Interesting," he said softly, sitting back down. He leaned in close to Ethan. "How about you tell me more about him?"