

WOTF, Chapter 39:

Four Days Before the Full Moon

Monday Afternoon: 2:31 PM

Tyler Mertens yawned as he walked down the hallway, fiddling with the hall pass with both of his hands. Playfully, he tossed the rectangular wooden pass upwards in the air, spun around, catching it one-handed behind his back.

He had always been a playful person, being a practical prankster since he was five years old. He had enjoyed putting jello in his father's slippers, putting a fake mouse in the cupboard for his mother to see. Throughout his childhood, he was familiar with the typical "Damnit, Tyler!" exclamation or the common scream from his mother. It was his personality to see the brightness of life, never giving into the negative attitudes of many. At the age of 15, it was that demeanor that allowed for him to be disarming, and welcomed to various spheres.

Football had always been his passion, starting when he was 3-years-old, clapping when he watched Saturday college football games with his father. He knew immediately that sports was his calling, to which his father immediately assisted him in his aspiration. He grew up going on jogs with his father, though when he was honest with himself, cycling was more of his interest when it came to cardio.

His hands were always on a pigskin when he was young, and at any opportunity, was tossing the ball with his father. Given the years he spent practicing, it wasn't a surprise to many that Tyler had grown into a young man whose entire being was football, along with being someone that always tended to bring a smile and a laugh to others. He was selfless, perhaps too much so, as his father tended to say. More so, he defied the odds of what others said. Being 5'8 in height and only 170 pounds, many said Tyler was too petite for football. Yet, he defied those expectations with his incredible speed and ability to take a pass single-handedly. While Coach Stevenson's announcement of him being a starter on the varsity team would have been obvious to most, Tyler was still taken by surprise.

He smiled as he strolled down the hallway. His mind wandered back to his interaction with Derek earlier in the day. He wasn't blind to the tone he had gotten from the team's quarterback, one of utter impatience and irritation. He had been so excited for the opportunity to speak with Derek that he had even caught himself sweating underneath his sweater. Even giving Derek a hug of support, he sensed total tension. Then, there was the look of surprise when he told Derek of his starting status. The lack of interest had made him smile uncomfortably and tried backpedaled his enthusiasm.

Yet there was that even stranger thing he noted. If he didn't know any better, his QB had a tail sticking in his pants...but that wasn't possible. He shook his head, relieving himself of such a nonsensical thought.

He halted at the wooden bathroom door. At his eye level, he could see two small holes that had permeated through the door. He leveled his eye towards one of them, noting he could see clearly into the men's bathroom. His face grimaced, completely confused by the sight before him. "There is legit no way a raccoon or something could have done that..." he muttered to himself.

He tried the door handle. Locked. "Oh hell no," Tyler said to himself, noting to himself how badly he needed to urinate. He could feel his bladder get heavier at the sound of the locked door. He glanced

over his shoulder, contemplating walking to another bathroom. The nearest one was one floor below, and he wasn't about to make that trek when there was a door in front of him.

He pulled out his wallet, yanking out the first credit card he saw. He had always been grateful that his parents had provided him with a credit card they had co-signed for, all of which had small money amount. Tyler held the door handle firmly, and slid the card between the gap of the door and doorjamb. He wiggled the card, becoming a little more frantic as he felt his bladder grow heavier. He bit his lip just as he heard the lock clasp open, to which he flung over the door and dashed to the nearest urinal.

"Ooooooooooh, sweet bliss!" Tyler exclaimed, urinating as fast as he could into the white ceramic bowl.

As he urinated, he suddenly heard a loud noise in the nearby stall. It startled him, causing him to jerk back. He lost his focus, aiming downwards, accidentally urinating a little on his brown lace-up boots. "Son of a..." He trailed off from his sentence as he realized someone was within the stall.

"Am I crazy in asking if someone is in there?" He ventured.

There was a dry silence in the room that hung in the air for thirty seconds, before, "Uh...yeah." The voice sounded familiar.

Tyler kneeled down, observing there were bare feet standing on the tiled bathroom floor. Oddly enough, there were tattered shoes hewn nearby. "Are you all right in there?" He asked. "I can get help if you need it."

"...Tyler?"

"In the flesh!" He said, flashing a smile. He stopped immediately when he realized nobody could actually see him.

"Yeah...um...It's Derek."

Tyler felt his chest heave with excitement. "I was JUST thinking of you, bro!" He mentally thought to himself he needed to tone down his "guy-talk," his default mannerism when he was nervous around new people.

Another awkward silence. "So..." Tyler attempted. His mind was at a blank. "I guess see you at practice?"

"All right...I'll be honest." Derek's voice sounded strained, frustrated.

"I'm pro honesty, bro." *Damnit*, he thought. *I did it again.*

The voice rang upwards towards the ceiling. "Long story short, my clothes are torn to hell and I'm naked in here and need help."

Tyler immediately tore off his hoodie, tossing it over the top of the stall. "Take my sweater!" He said quickly. He glanced at his watch. 2:34 PM. "Final bell is gonna ring in 6 minutes. I'll keep you company here for a bit and when everything is clear, I can go to your locker if you have clothes in there, or I think I

have an extra pair of sweats in mine. I think...I usually do...Yeah, I do...Er, maybe...Ok, let's say I do for right now...I'll check in a few to confirm."

Within the stall, Derek wrapped Tyler's hoodie around his waist, covering the embarrassing parts of his body that was out in the open for all to see. "You know...thanks," he attempted. He could hear Tyler relocking the bathroom door.

"Like I said earlier, bro, 'same wavelength.'" Tyler responded. "Total fate brought us together. By the way, just wanted you to know I locked the door cause I don't want anyone walking in and getting the wrong idea, you know." He laughed uncomfortably.

Tyler exhaled just as he noticed a tattered shirt lying within the sink. He focused his eyes further down the bathroom floor, noting a fragment of what looked to be jeans lying on the ground. "So....what exactly happened here?" He cautiously asked.

"Raccoon," Derek responded impulsively within the stall. He quickly held his hands up in the air and mentally berated him for such a ridiculous answer.

Tyler glanced around the bathroom. He was surprised to see patches of animal hair scattered throughout the floor, littering it along with Derek's torn clothes. He then remembering the holes in the bathroom door.

"Must have been one big f*cking raccoon," he muttered out loud.