



MONARCH OF MONSTERS

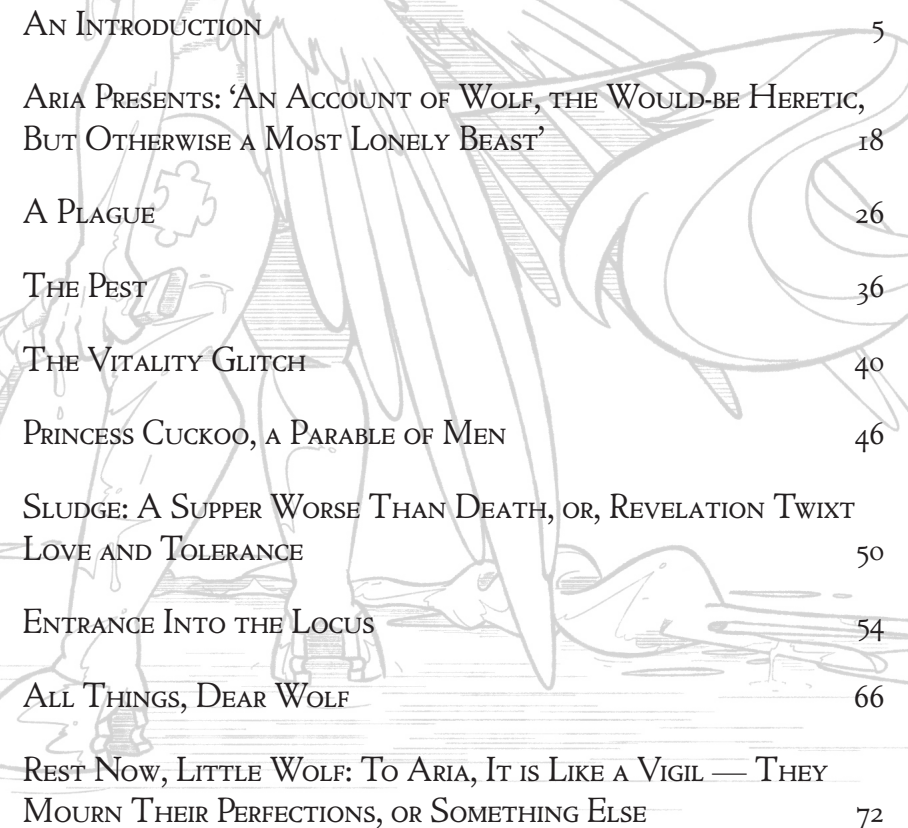
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WARNING: "Monarch of Monsters" contains blood/gore, murder, self-harm, suicide, nudity, sexual content, sexual assault, sexual violence, cannibalism, f-slur, and existential/cosmic horror. This pertains to its lyrics, themes, story, and artwork, and may be especially triggering to survivors of grooming and sexual assault. Parental guidance is advised for those under the age of 18, as "Monarch of Monsters" is intended for a mature audience.

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THE WRITINGS AND ILLUSTRATION OF THIS BOOK INCLUDE
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CONSIDER THIS THE FINAL WARNING BEFORE PROCEEDING.



AN INTRODUCTION


MUSINGS, CONCERNING THE WOLF AND HER
ASCENSION;

OR,

LIFE, REGRET, AND THE MONARCH OF MONSTERS



AN INTRODUCTION

 Bless thee, dear reader. I must concede a preliminary confession; there stirs within me a trivial disconcertion to the nature of this correspondence. Though a seer of all worlds and a witness to all lives, I have not been privy to the conventions of gossiping with mortals. The many realms diverge — much as the grains of creation scatter, and then cluster — in fashions both familiar and unfamiliar. Despite this surrogate acquaintanceship with your kind, it is anything but materially required. It is not that I possess a disinterest in the material realms, rather, I am preoccupied with my work, and such recreational visits do interrupt me. And anyway, I would belong nowhere for very long. Now, I extend one final subsidiary detail. Though precision and authority are crucial to myself and my work, these provisions are merely necessitated. I am rather

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absentminded. One would excuse themselves in my position on account of the vision sickness, overstimulation engendered by the steady slew of visions of the material realms. Were I cured of this, well, not much would change. It is simply in my nature. Thus, in the margins of this text, my closest friend and companion — Cadence — shall interpose thoughts of her own, ensuring I do not miss anything. Well. Where shall we begin?



Hi! I'm Cadence. The Shadows transcribing this letter should hopefully be able to do a good job putting things into your mortal colloquialisms. I'm what you call: "A hat". Aria wears me, I'm a dog hat. Woof! Abaha! I'm a good dog. I'm a good hat. Why don't I have a body? Woof! Beats me. It really beats me! It really beats me! Oh my gods, is Aria doing the whole, like, "dear reader" thing? Just humour them, okay? It makes them feel better.

I am Aria. And please — do call me Aria. You will know my other names, in time. Time? An abstraction that many, but not all, denizens of the many material realms find comfort in measuring and applying. The recognition of "Time" as a tangible, shifting object often yields tremendous furtherance in the civilizations that employ such ideas. Yet, time does not truly pass here, the purgatory over which I preside. Nevertheless, I will describe matters in divisions of time, which should hopefully be familiar to you. Dear reader, I write to you from a place called "The Locus". Yes. There exists this place, The Locus, between time and space; it is the place where all things meet, and a place of eternal twilight. And from here, we watch. I, and the Shadows over whom I reign, observe and catalog the affairs and antiquities of every realm, within every world, within every universe. This is what has earned me the first of my titles, 'the Far Seer'. We constitute the predominant inhabitants of The Locus. Though, occasionally, a deity emerges from a universe somewhere, and inevitably becomes an agent of mine in The Locus. It is a rare juncture, but, oh, our newest is an angel, Tiberius. It has been rather amusing to watch them flounder in their new responsibilities. But, indeed, there resides one other variety of Locusdweller: Souls.

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They might not remember to tell you their other names, so I'll just do that here. The names I'm going to list are primarily derived from what the Shadows call Aria: Huntress, The Far Seer, The First Shadow, Shadow* of the Hunt, and Daughter of the Locus. (*Aria is not actually a shadow, it's a colloquialism)*



From those realms, whose histories are preserved by us forever, travel souls to these everlasting burying grounds. The material planes are pastures, producing these objects such that every discreet being may one day pass into The Locus. How does one define a "being"? Well. A "being" is any common arrangement of physical material, wherein a propensity to act physically, chemically, or spiritually, and — most importantly — independently of the initial momentum of its host universe emerges. When the properties of a being emerge in any way, it is conferred a soul. Indeed, while the (what your kind may describe as) "physical laws" of a universe may vary from place to place, many common "laws" are required for a universe to not merely dissolve within the instant it is created. One such "law" is that the conditions of a universe must be able to support the creation, traversal, and variance of souls at any given point of time. Once this function ceases to exist, the universe itself then dies. So. All souls come here, to The Locus. The Shadows and I bury these souls and lay them to their final resting place. Souls that are buried can never be granted a physical vessel ever again, a body or otherwise. They are, however, permitted to wander The Locus as spirits to observe us, or to convene with other buried souls. Personally speaking, they do not often impart engaging conversations, but nevertheless, they are mostly curious. In many universes, there are such beings, which your kind may call "fish". And while souls adapt into varying sizes, shapes, and avatars, most adopt the prevailing form, a wispy, spectral fish. Even now, I cannot be sure as to why this occurs so habitually, though I do find it charming.



Shadows are sort of like souls, by the way. But they're also not like souls at all. Shadows have no true bodies, so they choose their forms based on vibes and stuff. Woof! I wish I could do that. And unlike souls, Shadows can

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actually do things. Like hang out and eat stuff and go on walks. They are born from lost ambitions, forgotten dreams, and abandoned whimsies. Psst! Between you and me, we get an influx of new Shadows manifesting in The Locus during graduation seasons. Ahaha! But they become agents of Aria and help keep track of everything everywhere.

The duties of observing, writing, considering, burying, conversing, eating, sleeping, feeling, traveling, creating, destroying, playing, and wondering are profound, and do tire me. But among these things, certainly the most difficult task of all is hunting the souls that feel as though they cannot accept their burial outright. For one reason or another, an Unwilling Soul — or simply "an unwilling" — flees upon entering The Locus. An unwilling soul will enact many resistances, depending on why it rejects its burial, though most often it shall hide until its ambitions of opposition and vengeance transform it. They run from death, and they run from reality. And there is an irony in this. To be mortal is a kindness and a beauty, the natural way of all things. For this to be true, there must be those who are immortal that can ensure this balance. Dear reader, many such dualities and paradoxes encompass the true moral consequence of every world I have ever observed. You will do well to remember this. So indeed, many call me Huntress, as it is my duty to hunt the unwilling souls of The Locus, and to bury them with finality. Unwilling souls that are transformed by their resistance will regularly seek to harm and disrupt both the operations and leisures of myself and my dear Shadows. While we cannot die, it is rather annoying.



As an eternity of these duties ebbs, an infinite many eternities flow. Thus, I have long hoped for a companion to aid me in the eternal hunt. The Shadows do not share my enthusiasms or prowesses, nor does Cadence have the physical capacity to assist me. You see, there was once only a single universe. Yes. We have come to describe it as the "Origin World". And there, I was once mortal. I nursed flora and fauna on my family's farmstead. Memories of this realm are scarce, as there were no Shadows to chronicle the Origin World, nor an Annals of the Locus to file the parchment.

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The Annals of the Locus is the central library where everything is kept! I wouldn't know how to explain it to you exactly. If I assume you're a planet dweller, many universes have planetary systems where planets orbit a star or two or three. The sizes of these may vary dramatically when observed by a pitiful little creature like you, but to us, we recognize a sort of elliptical uniformity and circumference. So it's accurate to suggest that you should try to imagine like a REAL library the size of a planetary system. Woof! You know what a library is, right? Wait... and stars? And planets? Honestly, I am hoping the Shadows transcribing this make this make sense to you, waaaaa!!!!



I did not live very long. There was a war. A war instigated between fragile men with bombs and insecurities. And then the world was over. But before the war, there was the wolf. My sister, Cadenza, had been gathering herbs in the woods beside the estate when a feral wolf began chasing her. Cadenza fled to the cabin (the one where we were raised, on the farm). And there, the wolf tore her apart until she was unrecognizable. Her corpse was identified only by her cloven hooves and her favourite foraging hat. Hurrying to the screams, I came to find the proud wolf standing over the girl. Though our mother had instructed us in trapping by arrowhead, I had not previously applied our studies beyond our exercises. Perhaps I was afforded a vengeful ambition of my own, that my beloved sister was slaughtered by a mere dog, thus instilling the precision necessary. I drew my instrument and felled the pup. At first, I felt nothing, as the wolf's prideful grin slipped into a vacant, nonexistence. And perhaps I felt nothing because I had already sensed the end of everything would come anyway. But I wish that I had cried and mourned her then, when I had the time, for I have only done so in eternity as a stranger to the ordinary.



Aria and their family came from a long lineage of sheep people known as the "Sheep People". Woof! No wonder they kept losing relatives to wolves. Ahaha! Aria is best described as a lamb with a dark coat and a rosy, —

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CADENCE (SHE/IT) [WOLF/HAT]



ARIA (THEY/THEM) [SHEEP/
GODDESS]

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platinum blonde hair, which falls into neat curves and bangs around their head. The Huntress has cloven, opposable hooves, and a short fluffy tail. Their eyes are a speckled golden hue, and usually, they wear a thick, sherpa-lined parka, a trimmed skirt, and a scarf of some kind. And me. They wear me. I'm a hat. Woof. I look like a hat. I look like a hat that is also a wolf. So yeah! Cadenza looked kind of similar to Aria, but a bit taller and stockier, with thicker, wavier brown hair. Cadenza used to wear mostly dresses, Aria has told me that those were her favourite.

When the world did eventually end, I awoke, here in The Locus. In a sense, I was completely alone, though countless souls had begun wandering aimlessly in the eternal night. Elucidating the unfathomable consequences of the Origin World's cessation is an ongoing effort. Not I, nor the Shadows, can conclusively discern why I, a reverent farmhand with very little life to speak of, became the only true immortal beyond and between all universes. Well. We cannot even truly explain why every universe exists. What we have managed to understand is that the Origin World diverged upon its self-destruction, splintering out into innumerable universes that were both distinct and similar to each other. In this correspondence alone, I cannot expound extensively on the nature of every universe we have accounted for, as I'm sure you understand. You do not have eternity to listen, as I do to speak. I spent my initial eternity constructing the first of the soul fields and devising an arrangement for laying the souls to rest. In my second eternity, I had realized my novel magic powers and had attempted to excavate the buried souls in order to find my sister's spirit. When I found Cadenza's buried soul, I had hoped to grant her a body. As I had expressed prior, it was then, with immeasurable lament I had discovered that once a soul had been laid to rest, the very fabrics and weaves that bind it to the corporeal are annihilated. What my experiments did yield was, instead, Cadence, my closest friend and companion. Well. Cadence is not my sister, and Cadenza's buried soul became silent and dormant when the experiments ceased. So. She was truly lost. But I do love Cadence, my dear friend. I spent my third eternity

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mourning Cadenza, my family, and the Origin World as I continued to grow into my magic powers and responsibilities as the Far Seer.



I'm just a failure! Woof!

Among the souls I had buried in my first three eternities, none of them belonged to the wolf that killed Cadenza. It puzzled me forever and ever. Then, in my fourth eternity, a Shadow was born in The Locus. My form and my nature do not necessitate as theirs do, nor am I anything like them, but the Shadows still refer to me as the "First Shadow". Nevertheless, the true first shadow, Eventide (The Shadow of Love), materialized into existence. Like me, she had magic, if only faintly so. In exploring our powers further, we ascertained our ability to not only discover other universes, but see into them, and observe its occupants. Consequently, we became determined to document everything we witnessed. This is how our true work in The Locus had begun, in preserving the stories and the lives of all things. At any given moment, the Shadows and I perceive and behold everything, everywhere, at all times. Because such a task would be daunting for one alone, we delegate the responsibilities of surveying each world between one another, so as not to miss a single blink of an eye or a flap of a wing. I recognized that the wolf's soul not being present in The Locus must have indicated that it had been reborn elsewhere, and so I pledged my next eternity to uncovering its hiding place. I thought to myself that once I had retrieved it, I could preserve its bodily form and curse it with immortality. Then, it would serve an eternal damnation as my hunting dog, both in punishment for its wicked ways, and to repurpose its savagery for my needs. As more Shadows materialized in The Locus and elsewhere, our researchers and scribes grew in numbers, allowing us to examine more and more of the universes we knew about. In due time, one such scribe inevitably discovered the wolf's soul which had been reincarnated in another realm. She had been named Vylet Cypress. A common species in all the material planes is the equine, and specifically, the pegasus. Cypress was a pegasus in her new world, but the seeds of the wolf soul made it apparent that she would not remain only

a pegasus. A sinister transformation was taking shape within her, as she followed her tale down to the endmost feather. This is how we recognized it as the wolf's soul, as such a specific transformation had not once been observed in all the realms. We needed only to await her eventual, mortal demise.



Now, most curiously, we found there were others like her too, in other realms. They did not contain the wolf's soul, not even a fragment. But while every universe elicited similarities and differences between which individuals emerged and which did not, there always seemed to exist a Vylet like her, with ceaseless consistency. And while it is not relevant to the tale of Cypress, one of my fledgeling Shadows is called "Creekflow". Yes. I suspect you may be familiar with it, the Shadow of Song. It made quite a stir across all the material realms, before being delivered to me by the alicorn who calls herself "Vid". Unlike most Shadows, Creekflow remained undetected to us in The Locus for quite some time, hiding within its host, Vylet Lulamoon.



Equine variations of Vylet share a few distinct features:

- *A voluminous, purple mane-style*
- *A distinct, pastel lavender coat or physicality otherwise*
- *In worlds where 'Conduit Emblems' emerge (markings that appear due to an evolutionary cerebral entanglement with the 'Magic Radiation Field', MRF), hers always takes the form of a thrice-knobbed, and only-socketed puzzle piece insignia*
- *Bright cerulean-teal eyes*
- *Most equine Vylets are pegasi, but this can be anomalous at times (notably, Vylet Comet is a unicorn in the Comet world)*

Discovering Creekflow before their severance with Lulamoon was also very difficult because they look nearly identical, WoofooW! The only way to tell Creekflow apart from Lulamoon is that Creekflow is only slightly taller, sometimes stands on its hind legs (which Lulamoon's kind did not), and its mane, coat, and eye colours were slightly darker and more saturated. I guess

also Lulamoon's posture kinda sucks and Creekflow has a more rigid and poised demeanor comparatively.



Tragically, Creekflow suffered a sort of emotional codependency with Lulamoon, and allowed its ambitions to lay waste to its host's universe. "The Sapphire Torrent", Creekflow called it; a dramatic meltdown performed in the hopes that it could create the most profound form of art, an art that transcends the ordinary and the individual, and encompasses everything in its wake. The poor girl, Lulamoon, her world was shattered and dissolved by the Shadow that she had given a voice to. This predicament inspired me to establish a stronger connection to the material realms. While I do not venture out to them very often, the Shadows, as well as my celestial agents, frequently traverse the universes to learn and experience the untold wonders across time and space. Those who I grant the power and sanction to travel to the material realms are known as Wayfarers. And Lulamoon had become the first mortal that I had granted this privilege, as her home universe was frayed and broken from end to end. Creekflow remains partly in The Locus, and partly in visitation with Lulamoon, who seeks asylum in another universe that we call "Featherdance's World". This is to suggest that, indeed, we have designated each universe by the Vylet that inhabits it, as it is the only factor that remains ever consistent between all of them each and every time.



Creekflow is so annoying. Aria should be so mad at it for fucking a whole universe, but isn't because they think Creekflow is super chill. But it's not, Creekflow is so dramatic for no reason. Woof! I would tackle Creekflow if I had arms or a body. It's also worth mentioning that Wayfarers use two primary methods of getting around:

- *Locus Mirrors: portals generated by a Wayfarer to get from world or universe to another*
- *Locus Rooms: naturally occurring points of intersections between worlds and universes (though, Aria can create these as well)*



But I digress. For the remainder of this correspondence, I shall refer to Vylet Cypress simply as "Wolf", as it is the name she came to embrace.

Before Aria gets ahead of themselves, you must know how we use words like "world" and "realm" and stuff both informally and categorically. Usually, we know what we mean when we talk about it to each other, but for an outside observer, it may get confusing. So let's see.

— *Universe: a discreet, isolated collection of worlds and realms; they might seem infinite to a mortal like you, but they never really come close to infinity, woof!*

— *World: a subdivision of a universe that exists in dimensional hierarchy or duality; different worlds in the same universe share the same physical properties and mechanics but parallel each other with many statistical and emergent differences and variations. They exist in the same universe, but are effectively stacked on top of each other on a dimensional level.*

— *Realm: a subdivision of a world, referring to a vast but specific section of its physical space; since many realities within a world never touch each other, intergalactic civilizations that never once meet, we use the term 'realm' to divide worlds up by the spheres of influence. Usually, they're very small, but there's a realm in Featherdance's world that is converging with another realm already, and it's very intriguing.*

— *Material planes/realms: we typically say this regarding everything that isn't The Locus. Again, The Locus exists beyond time and space, and it is a sort of infinity. It has physical properties, but is itself not a 'material plane' or anything.*



WOLF (SHE/HER) [PEGASUS/WOLF]
 Formerly known as *Vylet Cypress*



ARIA PRESENTS: 'AN ACCOUNT OF WOLF, THE WOULD-BE HERETIC, BUT OTHERWISE A MOST LONELY BEAST'

The universe and world from which Wolf hailed from was — at the time of her corporeal death — a young, primordial space, still in its infancy stage. Her realm was only as influential as the planetary system she was from, what we call a 'commonly emergent' system known as the "Equestrian System". Across many universes, the Equestrian System is inhabited primarily by disparate, highly evolved beings. Many opposing realms only produce a homogenous evolutionary chain, wherein an only species dominates among others. Realms such as these do not last very long. Equestrian Systems derive their units of time by the full approximated cycles of their planetary rotation and, furthermore, its rotation around its host star(s). Many realms eventually incorporate this form of measurement into their societal structures and sciences, though many discrepancies exist, as you may imagine. Most Equestrian Systems arrive at the implementation of units such as "days" and "years". Wolf's home planet, Equestria, was formed many billions of years after its host universe's inception, and many billions of additional years were required for her mortal kind to emerge in the realm. The denizens of Wolf's realm did not

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begin distinguishing periods of years until roughly 1600 years prior to Wolf's birth. I will now only be divulging the affairs and mechanics within Wolf's realm alone.

Wolf was born in the year of 1657, on the planet of Equestria, within the Equestrian system, within Cypress' realm, within Cypress' world, within Cypress' universe. At this time, Equestria was governed under a sole monarchy, dominated by those belonging to the categorical *Equus ferus caballus*. Four subspecies comprise this code: Earth Ponies, Pegasi (winged ponies), Unicorns (ponies with natural conduits), and Alicorns (ponies with all subordinate, distinct features). And contrary to what we have observed in many kindred worlds, this variety of equine is bipedal in nature. Indeed, Wolf was born to feudal countrysides and unexplored, earthly frontiers. Picture, if you will, the mighty castles, the jagged cobblestone paths, and the dimly lit evening villages of the common Equestrian. It was a time before the dissolution of kingship, the advancement — and subsequent technological collapse — of their empires, and the forthcoming rebirth of mortal kind in this very realm. Eras like this are but brief flickers against the aeons of existence. It is so very quaint, the thought excites me terribly.



Magic within The Locus is quite different from magic elsewhere, but yeah! Magic is everywhere in all universes. Woof! I can even use magic, I'm still learning, though... But in the material realms, magic energies emerge as a result of a universe's birth. The particles that comprise the magic ley lines of every universe are called "SOR Packets" or "SORs", and most civilizations never end up discovering this domain of physics, since SOR packets don't interact with the physical framework of the universe without a conduit. Some conduits are natural, like unicorn horns. Other conduits are artificial, usually they're called Channelers or something similar. Sometimes a being is born with an exceptional connection to magic energy even without a normal conduit, various biological discrepancies that let them sense and wield A LOT of magic. We've been carefully observing Featherdance's world

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because of a tendency for it to produce a lot of these kinds of beings. In their particular world, they're named Mystics. Me personally, it's not very mystical because it kinda just makes sense. Things can get so weird, dude.



In the years that preceded Wolf's birth, Equestria had entered a period of widespread reformation and cultural development, following a Civil War. Ah. 'Tis always war, is it not? The conflict began with concern to the prevailing spiritual perceptions of the kingdom's princess, Celestia. Many believed her to be a god, and many believed her to be a heretic. It is always harrowing, how millions of innocent lives are mindlessly abducted in payment to the ever-ignorant squabble of lexical disparities. How can I forgive mortals such as these, who fail in recognizing how puny and vain their trivial fantasies always are? Well. This slaughter left the land in a state of disarray and superstition. Those who were convinced of Celestia's divinity emerged victorious, and the nonbelievers were scorned by the majority loyalist populace. Whispers of deliverance and liberation grew into a dogma within the agnostics. They dreamt that one day, a brave dissenter would come about and lead a more profound resistance against the crown. Such fervent superstition meant that the ordinary Equestrian commoner lived in a constant expectation of this myth's fulfillment.

Woof! The Equestrians were desperate for any signs like Aria is saying. It really wouldn't take much to find the kind of person they were looking for. Mortals will believe anything... Celestia herself was a very, very tall white alicorn with an ethereally glowing rainbow mane. Hmm... Honestly, every Celestia I've ever seen is quite the same. You've seen 'em once, you've seen 'em all, BWAHAHAHA!!!! The way she talks kinda reminds me of Aria like "OUhg DOTH THOU WHATETH YOU REQUIRES OF ME" EHEHEHEHE... Talk about a bitch that loves bananas, she IS bananas.

So. Wolf was born to a wealthy family in the kingdom's capital, Canterlot, in the year of 1657. She was a pegasus with a pastel lavender coat

and cerulean teal eyes. Her dark, purple mane was often styled into a side-swept undercut, tied into a bun in the back. Wolf's wings were an average size, and her hooves always rounded a bit more than most ponies' were. For most of her childhood she was spoiled rotten, receiving lavish gifts, an esteemed education, and the finest foods and clothing that a devastated, primitive society could offer. What she did not have was friends. And dear Wolf was so lonely. But why? Was it her teeth? Were her dresses not lovely enough? Perhaps she was shunned for her amateurish singing practices. But no. She was lonely because she could not understand the common pony. Money (a habitual error of many civilizations) cannot buy friendship, nor can it acquire oneself a personality. And a voice, she was unable to find for herself. Her parents would not allow her to join her peers in activities or leisures, lest she be too influenced by a commoner's 'uninspired' interests and tastes. Nor did Wolf's family believe she would be safe in traversing the dreary Equestrian night-life on her own. Of course, such that the sand of an hourglass rushes to the ever-opposite end of its chamber, so does a profound loneliness afford a dire companionship.

Dear reader, Wolf had done many terrible things. Terrible things, Wolf had done. When once, and finally, she had found companionship, it was among the wolves and the beasts of the land. They perverted and shaped her in their image, and she followed in their mentorship. There were countless sins and countless transgressions she had committed against strangers and loved ones alike. And she was emboldened by their recoiled responses, feeling as though she was truly fierce and in control. Betrayals, taunts, threats, deviancy, greed, prejudice, and pharisaic persecution; her wickedness was visceral and indulgent. To see others made ostracized and indignant instilled her with a feigned sense of purpose. For years, Wolf had embraced this callous way of life, until the veil of cynicism could no longer be maintained. It was only then that she realized that she had willingly allowed herself to be led astray. She endeavoured to raze her kinship with the wolves and beasts she had entrusted herself to, still fearing the loneliness once again. But as she entered a period of rehabilitation, she encountered newer, kinder ponies who did not judge her or seek to reshape her. For a time, Wolf was happy.

Wolf left Canterlot to live the life of the common pony. It was in the quiet villages of the Equestrian countryside that she began to understand the sincerity of a worker's modest endeavours. To experience these things and to see life for what it really was sobered her tremendously from her time in the capital, and she began to contend with a sense of resentment towards the monarchy of the land. She wrote and performed songs at the local Ponyville tavern, The Twilight Alehouse, in which she would sing songs about life, togetherness, and perseverance. Her artistry was recognized by the townspeople, and she became a frequent storyteller in the village tavern. Though she had not intended to seize her art as a way of life, so soon or ever, Wolf rehearsed and dedicated herself to fostering this work. She had made friends, lived modestly, and performed for the denizens of her realm. And Wolf was happy.

Personally speaking, some of the Shadows transcribed some of her works and have performed them for us a few times in The Locus. Honestly? Not impressed. I don't know what Aria sees in her music. It's so dramatic and emotional, and for what? Like, I dunno — Woof? — stop crying in the middle of singing and just make me wanna dance or something. So lame.



I spoke not of my perception. I have only expressed that others have enjoyed it.

Oh gods dude, I just know you're all GOOGLY OOGLY EYES over her and stuff you don't have to pretend that you're not, wofbarkwoof, all I'm saying is—



I do not pretend, I have not spoken in mistruths, dear Cadence.

WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaAAAAAAAAAaaaAAA what was the one world where all its inhabitants unanimously just LOVED the sound of teeth chattering? Like that was their whole thing!!!! IT WAS CALLED LIKE TEETHSCENE OR SOMETHING.

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Perhaps you may inquire about this at the basin of the scrubbing bath once again? When was the last time you were washed?



ok sorry

Wolf was happy. And this was the problem, you see. She ultimately conceived that she could not remember her life before leaving Canterlot, and she began to feel an unexplained and profound remorsefulness. Late nights soon found her alone in her room, tearing through old journals and diaries to recall every detail of her past life. A laboured, churning apprehension had begun to seep and singe into every part of her spirit as she awakened her every sin. This is when the transformation began to truly afflict her. Each day she recognized something new. Her wings began to sprout tufts of fur. Her hooves had begun to metamorphose inexactly into the shape of a canine paw. Fangs soon grew into her mouth as well, provoking her to stop singing at her nightly recitals, so as not to reveal her sharp teeth. Friends saw her less, and less. And eventually, she stopped performing at the Twilight Alehouse altogether, electing instead to drink quietly and alone. She remembered everything now.

In this new life Wolf had created for herself, one where she cared for others and sought to evoke unity with her presence, she felt unworthy to exist in the comfort she had come to know. And once her wolfly transformation became far too apparent to the casual observer, she withdrew from the public's attention as well as from her friends. It was around this period of her life that I was called on by the shadows to verify if we had truly found the wolf's soul. And as I gazed upon her grotesque form for the first time, I sensed doubtlessly it was the very same. The same damned eyes. The prideful grin. It was it. It was her. At first, I was elated, knowing that all it would take now is to watch her die, and then she would live again in service to me forever. It was clear that the sinister nature of the origin soul was calling for her to return to her savage ways once more.

We believe most of the origin souls are accounted for in The Locus' burying grounds, Wolf's was the only one that was missing. We've never seen a

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*transformation quite like this occur in any other universe, but — Woofwaof?
— anything is possible.*





A PLAGUE

One night, her absence was noted at the alehouse. Patrons and townsfolk who knew her shared concerns and well wishes with the staff, but otherwise retired obliviously to the humdrum of life in the village. While it was commonplace for the residents of the quiet Ponyville to voyage out to market, rarely did anyone venture far off from home for more than a few days. And, indeed, Wolf was not known to travel at all, only ever retreating to her quarters or to the undisturbed corners of town. Friends of hers began to visit her usual hiding spots within the area, noticing that her various nooks and practicing spaces were rather vacant and tidy. Knocks on the door to her residence, a sort of wooded cabin situated in an annex above the village library, came without reply. Peering into the lodging, they noticed that the lights were shut, the floors were uncharacteristically orderly, and all of her instruments remained at home. Everything was spotless, save for the stray tufts of fur that littered the dormant fireplace. After a few days, inquiries into Wolf's absence ceased. Many had assumed that, after all, she was not originally from Ponyville, and surely, she must have obligations or family elsewhere.

By the way, at this point, we've reached the Equestrian year of 1678. Terrestrial systems like these ones are fascinating because their moon acts like a second light source, reflecting their host star's light during dark periods on the planetary surface. In The Locus, I think lots of us say that it's the land of the eternal twilight because it's dark a lot. But we do have periods of light as well. We call these times "day" and "night". What do you call them? Woof and stuff I would prefer to call them Dinner1 and Dinner2 because I also have lunch and breakfast in between these periods BWAHAHAH!!!! At night, we have a thing that looks like a moon, but it's not a moon. It is a light source that The Locus has during its dark periods, and we call it Nil. It looks like a scarlet crescent with a bright glint in the middle. We can talk about it more later if you like.



marks which dotted her body. Minimal surface laceration and external exertion was evident. In a way, a great deal of reverence was shown in the kill, as if only the most necessary actions to end her life were taken, and nothing more. Of course, the examiners wouldn't have made note of this. My sister's corpse was maimed and disfigured by the wolf through techniques most unmethodical and vile. So, I found that curious. What the townspeople had not seen or known was that, indeed, it was Wolf who murdered the librarian. Wolf had arrived unannounced and greeted Twilight in the library not mere moments before the stroke of midnight. Her appearance was tousled and matted, as her new fur became entangled in her pegasus feathers. The librarian appeared relieved to see the girl at first, but seized at the tears streaking down Cypress' lupine countenance. Then, in one swift motion, Wolf lunged towards the librarian and skewered her in several vital areas. As she gazed longingly into Twilight's fading eyes, their intimate embrace dissipated as the body became frail and cold. Wolf uttered a soft and morose whimper as she felt the librarian's warm breath mixing in her maw, which deliquesced into an empty chill. Then, she ran.

By morning, Wolf had been named the perpetrator, a conclusion set in conjunction with the discoveries of fur procured at both the crime scene and her home. Initial reports dismissed this inference until patrons of the alehouse provided substantiation regarding Wolf's appearance in the days leading up to her disappearance. Yet, she left not a trace of her whereabouts when fleeing the library. Thus, with the murderer at large, town militia had been stationed around the settlement and incoming Canterlot Authority soldiers instituted a curfew for residents, establishing a perimeter lockdown. Twilight was survived by very few family and friends, and her only other acquaintance in town was her adopted sibling, a small, courier dragon named Spike. Though very few of the townspeople actually knew the librarian personally, the procession and memorial for her was attended by the whole town. Even those furthest from being acquaintances dressed and cleaned the wounds, prepared the body for burial, and recounted memories trivial and profound over the open casket of the late Twilight.

A week later, the first full moon of the year bestrew the hazy midnight sky. The slumbering townspeople stirred abruptly as eerie, muted shrieks — echoing out from the Ponyville library — rended the otherwise quiet village air. The torches of the gathering crowd sputtered and glowed against the dreary specter of night. Silhouettes of petrified onlookers disturbed the ember glows that cascaded modest wooden dwellings and cobbled paths. The town militia were dismissed from the crime scene as officers of the Canterlot Authority, who had been stationed in a nearby outpost, arrived and quieted the rabble. Silence came over them all, as only flickers of flame, boots thumping against stone bricks, the sound of jingling keys, and soft murmurs between the guards permeated a space of baited breaths. The guard captain, a unicorn named Shining, emerged from the dim library reception, and declared the murder. The resident librarian, a pink alicorn with a straightened purple mane and magenta eyes, had stayed after closing hours, rifling through letters and dispatches. All such correspondences were between herself and the Investigations Commission in Canterlot, with concern for Wolf and her whereabouts. She was slain at her desk in the reception. What puzzled me about this was that the corpse was relatively intact. The killing blows resulted only in puncturing and rupturing of the librarian's internal organs, exemplified by the claw and bite



Ohhh Spike! Spikes are almost always so cute. A little pink dragon with green spikes and an attitude that transcends their size. I'm not gonna lie, I kinda vibe with that every day of my life. Like I get it, little dude. Spit fire even though you're built like a sack of rice.

In Canterlot, agents at the Investigations Commission had been alerted to Wolf's treachery and had begun preparations for a thorough inspection of Ponyville and the girl's home. These preparations were interrupted by yet another murder report from an adjacent village, Everfree Springs. A resident, Bubbles, reported that the alchemist they were employed by had been attacked by a wolf-like creature. Within the hour, the Canterlot Authority had ordered a curfew be placed on Everfree Springs, and guards had been stationed on the town's outer edges.

Soon, Equestrians reported killings across the land from one village to the next. And the existing state of affairs remained quite the same for a while. Yes. It may appear as though the elites of Canterlot had suddenly become concerned about the villagers of their broad, Equestrian countryside. Well. The monarchy had been long hoping for an opportunity to militarize the quaint provinces of the kingdom, and Celestia enjoyed a great deal of popularity among her loyalists for stationing soldiers even in the humblest of settlements. Equestrian separatists, whose secretive meetings started becoming ever more persistent, began to proclaim Wolf as a hero of the rebellion. They believed that the killings were necessary offerings that emboldened and unified the common pony. In a way, they understood that these were sacrifices, ritualistic, and purposeful. And so, they had bestowed her the name, "Wolf, the Monarch of Monsters".

Indeed, Wolf's bloodlust was ambitious and articulate. With each kill, she became much more formidable through absorbing the magic essence of her fallen victims. In her mind, she was determined to ascend to godhood, endowed with a fathomless wellspring of magic. For about a year, she leapt from town to town, targeting mostly former friends or those she looked up to in life. Tragedy after tragedy, the kingdom became encompassed in an unabated plight, wrought with grief and confusion.

Technically, she wasn't absorbing magic per-se. She was absorbing what we call "channeling potential" from the corpses. To increase your potential for wielding magic, it often starts with fine-tuning your conduit. In this case, Wolf was expanding her channeling potential to be able to channel more of the SORs around her, allowing her to produce much more intense magical effects and spells.



Though, curiously, she had rarely channeled magic during this time at all. Only the natural transmutations of her body, induced by immense exposure to the particles, comprised the magic potential she truly deployed.

So like not only did she have to steal all of that to be good at something, but she didn't even really use what she stole for very much. Woof? If it were me, I would have been a lot more interesting and useful >:3

Cadence, dear, I plead that you—

—"plead that I be made tender" YEAH, I KNOW. Just, she's just so inefficient.

All mortals are.



You can say that again, Woof!

But are not thou inefficient in interjecting so crudely?

Buh buh buh buh "are not thou" whatever dude.

By the Equestrian Spring of 1679, dozens of victims lay in memories all throughout the land. And yes, we received them here, and they rest quietly. Well. This Twilight's spirit wanders the Annals rather frequently. She repeatedly expresses astonishment with the length and precision of our records. She would have made a finely enthusiastic Shadow. I digress. To

the knowledge of the Canterlot Authority, no leads or traces to Wolf could be ascertained. She left behind no visible tracks once she was outside a settlement, she was never observed at the scene of any crime, and no purchases or registrations had been transacted in her name (which indicated that she had also begun hunting for her food and nourishment elsewhere). Ah. But, and this fascinated me when I witnessed it, Captain Shining eventually arrived to conduct a personal examination of Wolf's residence. He was surprised to discover that Wolf had been there all along.



Shining was a white unicorn with a long, shaggy cobalt-hued mane. His physique was rather sturdy, though somehow this did not make him any more formidable against Wolf... Well, honestly, he should have just stopped being a big baby. Why do unicorns incessantly forget about their magic powers? If I had a unicorn horn, I would have easily killed Wolf immediately. Arf arf?

The girl was recognizable as a pegasus only from the outline of her body, as her canine features were now fully developed. Her disheveled mane, bloodstained fur, ravenous fangs, wild eyes, and transfigured paws severely contrasted the once quiet and reserved pony that the townsfolk had come to know. Shining pleaded with her to stand down and to allow herself to be apprehended without force. Wolf glared back, motionless, and did not speak. She was holding one of her instruments, a lute constructed with animal bones and charcoal etchings. For a brief moment, a silence was shared between the captain and Wolf, their gazes were intertwined in a balladry most dire. Shining startled onto his flank as Wolf rose from her small wooden stool. Wolf arched menacingly over the trembling captain, who felt the beast's hushed snarls resonate within his own chest. The air around Shining became permeated in a thick canopy of pheromones and humid warmth. He watched, paralyzed; Wolf had now begun weighing down upon him. A grim and frigid shock pervaded the captain's senses, the sensation of a blade dragging across his flesh, as Wolf gently traced and explored his neck with the precise tips of her fangs. "Stay out of my way,

captain. You know me no longer," Wolf growled against Shining's ear. Petrified, and nearly unconscious, the guard captain scarcely realized that the beast had arisen and left. He would require an hour to eventually come to his senses, manage his (conflicting) emotions, and report this encounter to the others.



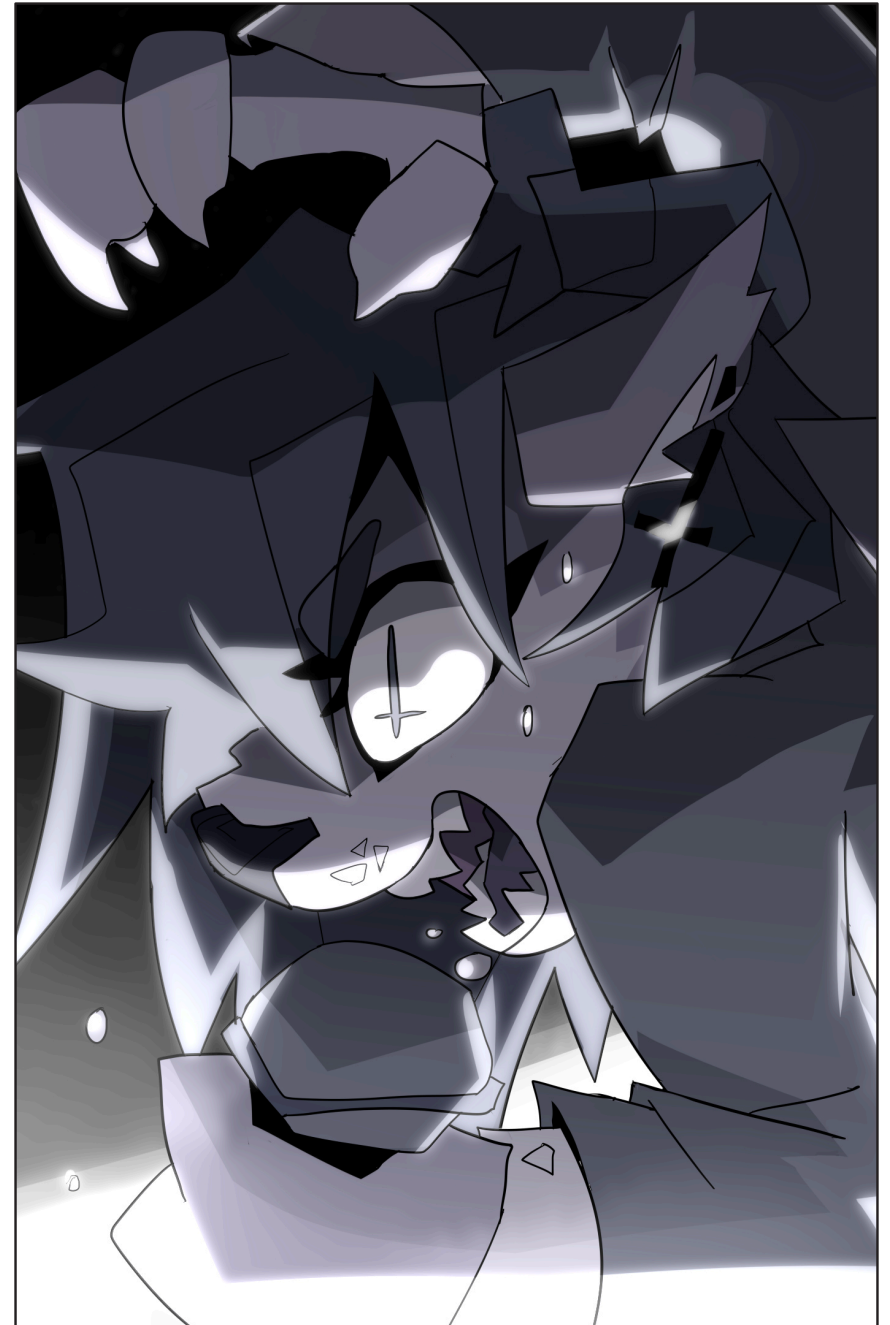
We somehow still have no idea what his wife thought about that, Wooooooof!

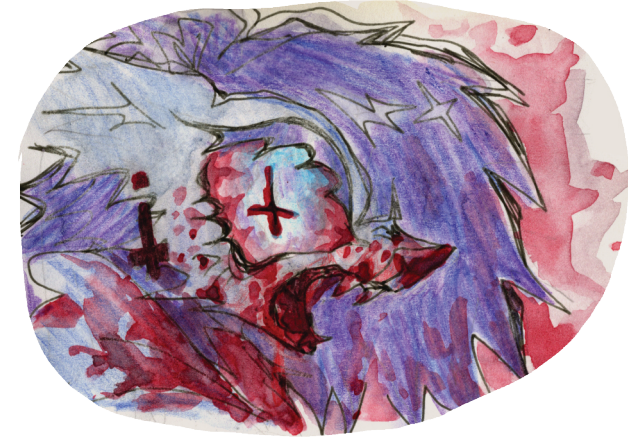
Wolf had sought refuge in between settlements, in an abandoned forester cabin. She retreated here after every killing, periodically retrieving her belongings from her former Ponyville home. Splinters fractured and moss percolated between the decrepit floorboards and wooden foundations of the shack. Hazes of diffuse elixirs and potent greenery yielded a persistently thickset fog that often obscured any far end of the lodging. The girl slumped back in her small wooden chair afore a low-standing ornate dresser and a large rectangular mirror. On her mirror hung etchings of herself, and at her bedside lay a list of names. Empty bottles and coarse impressions littered the various corners of her makeshift home. Now, Wolf had begun to experience a sort of magic sickness. In one sense, her burgeoning coupling to the magic energies that surrounded her had begun to fatigue her, as her mortal body could scarcely operate in normalcy. In another sense, her physical body was also rejecting the soul it was granted, as reincarnation comes with innumerable perilous consequences. Conditional to this magic sickness, her physical body shifted in accordance with her cognitive state. Moments of angst and ferocity saw her as a formidable, lupine beast. Moments of quiet and contemplation saw her as a small, fearful dog. Many of her garments had torn and been restitched iteratively; thus, she often reclined bare in her privacy. Between lonely howls and laboured snarls, Wolf would sing songs and shriek poetry she had written, seemingly directly at her self-portraits. She would address these images as if they were someone else, with a silent acceptance that it was often truly intended for herself, or otherwise a long vacant acquaintance that would never hear these words. Her stanzas entailed her every regret, mistake, and sorrow, as if rehearsing a conviction.

On the list beside her bed, every name had been crossed out except for one: one of her closest former friends, and loyalist leaders, Starlight.



Yes. Starlight was among the most caustic and malevolent of Wolf's former friends from when she still lived in Canterlot with her family, the most fanatical of the wolves and beasts. Though most of Wolf's targets had been acquaintances made in her time as a common pony, the unicorn Starlight's inclusion as the final victim on her list indicated divergent intentions. This was a revenge.





THE PEST

Fortifications and defensive provisions in the capital were vastly unconvincing, to say the least. Though a veil of immense fear obscured all promises of certainty within Equestria, the nobles and loyalists of Canterlot simply did not ascribe to notions that any such ill fate could befall the most esteemed of the land. After all, the killings had all been concentrated in the provinces of the commoners. Only a few dozen serfs had been felled by the fabled Wolf, while the Canterlot Authority had lost thousands of young conscripts to the horrors of the most imperative holy conquest. 'How did the deaths', which, indeed, everyone dies, 'of a few undesirables really influence the lives of those who truly mattered?' Such inquiries were the yolk of many a trite gent's drunken laughter and vapid prattling within the esteemed chambers of perfumed, upscale lounges and rumpus rooms, which abounded in tainted wealth. Nevertheless, an ill fate would befall a daughter of birthrights.

The full moon most assuredly came on a once bloodless midnight, in the mid-season of 1679. Well. In Canterlot, the men of nobility spent midnights feigning to court ladies, who reluctantly masqueraded in accordance with traditional arrangements devised by the state, and the

resident loyalists pantomimed these affairs through their own inelegant methods. One would imagine, with such a restless city, Wolf would face great hindrances in traversing its streets. But such is the way of the avarice ephemeral, as not one elite noticed the cloaked beast wandering the brightly lit, ornate paths.

Starlight lounged in the palace gardens, alone, and aimless. The unicorn's pink coat was trimmed and tailored with precision, and her furled mane was sectioned into shades of purples and mints. In her hooves was a relic known in many worlds as the "Staff of Sameness". In a few paradox instances of the Equestrian System, this staff is merely an idol of status, rather than a magical conduit. Curiously, it is a true conduit in Wolf's world, thus seducing the beast in pursuit of the unicorn who wielded it. Yes. Wolf did arrive in the garden, clutching a greatsword that she had plundered from a precursory confrontation. Starlight greeted her rather sociably. The unicorn seemed unperturbed by the presence of the murderer standing before her; rather, she smiled expectantly and in recognition, as if awaiting an embrace. Alas, Starlight's charlatan grin soured abruptly, jerking into a contortion of agony as Wolf's blade swiftly excavated the furthest recesses of the unicorn's body. The precise, methodical tactics that the beast had employed upon all previous victims were abandoned entirely. Wolf's frenzied shrieks, which were noticed by residents far off in every direction, turned to delighted convulsions as Starlight perished in the beast's arms. She allowed the body to slip from her grip and splatter into chunks of gore and viscera on the palace steps. Wolf pounced onto the corpse; fluids and foams curdled into viscous pools beside her as the relentless shredding and bludgeoning fractured and segmented the body into unidentifiable biological masses. Her repeated strikes and lacerations rended the flesh and its concealed bounties only ribbons and slivers of decay, which she devoured frantically. And once Wolf had finally relented, she grasped the Staff of Sameness and prevailed over the grub and entrails of her old acquaintance.



And what do you know, Starlight ended up an unwilling soul in the afterlife. She should have at least tried running and fleeing in her material life, but instead chose to make our work harder, Blehhh!



Yes. And we had not yet hunted the unicorn's soul, as I had intended for it to be Wolf's treat during our hunt.

Wolf was afforded a prolonged freedom to abscond the opulent courtyards of the royal garden, as the patrols ambled jadedly towards the approximate location which had been reported to them. The body, or what was left of it, was discovered roughly half an hour past the stroke of midnight. Canterlot Authority guards placed the remains in a standard issue burlap pouch, and the residual fluids and carnage were sterilized even later by the janitorial staff. No procession was held for the deceased Starlight, and her body was not seen again by her family or acquaintances. That is all. Such is the way of the avarice ephemeral.





THE VITALITY GLITCH

That night, the moon's sickly red gleam erupted in rays and torrents against the stark, royal empyrean. The grotesque secretions which had begun to encrust Wolf's limbs dripped and smeared onto the dirt paths and craggy earthen trails. Her cruel limp was impeded sporadically by zaps and pangs that crackled within her skull, as the Staff oscillated in a nauseating aura between her tightly wrapped paws. Wolf's mind teetered betwixt unmitigated hyperstimulation and utter desolation. Pale echoes of her every blasphemous deed glinted in abrupt twinges within her mind; her sins which marred a juvenile lifetime were displayed in successive, brief passages of blotches and glares. Then, in other moments, she could not remember who, what, or where she was. She was unable to recall where her novel paw prints trailed off to, nor the agency of her tortured appearance. As this polarity began to settle, she choked and gasped her way back to her provisional cabin in the forest.

Wolf collapsed onto the splintering wooden floorboards of the shack. The stench of viscera and decay introduced to the room mingled with the wafts of smoke and dank fumes, producing a most unholy odour. At this moment, Wolf could not recall anything. She squawked repeatedly to no



one: "I can't remember, I can't remember, I can't remember, I can't remember", her squirms drew stray wooden needles from the floor into her flesh. Indeed, she fleetingly could not remember anything at all. The many years she had spent growing up, meeting people, leaving people, going places, living places, doing things, achieving things, thinking things, feeling things, eating things, having things, giving things, touching things, breaking things, loving things, hating things, knowing things, and forgetting things had all amounted to an only singularity of undiluted nothing. When once she clawed onto her paws, she ravaged the pages of her journals and diaries, pausing torridly to fixate on scattered mentions of names, places, and actions.



Well. I had found myself exhilarated by her suffering for quite some time, as I had spent several eternities eagerly awaiting such a circumstance to bid this pathetic creature. But in a single, visceral instant, perceiving these thoughts and disorientations in her mind frightened me terribly. For why did I encounter empathy for it? For her? Wolf had been sinister in one life, and sinister in the next. This is what I had determined for as long as I could. Yet, what compelled me to these strange and novel sentiments?



Unfamiliar questions resounded inside of me, which I had not considered up to this point of eternity. What is a self? Not a discrete being, necessarily, but a self within that being? What compels us, as creatures that consider and conceive, to engage thoughts and behaviours voluntary to the momentum a cosmos imposes on us? For what is a sinister nature? Is it merely comprehended through observation, or intrinsic to a set of chemical conditions? And did this fluctuate from universe to universe? I inquired to my Shadows whether they had ascertained answers to questions like these in surveying other worlds. It occurred to me that I could only operate within the moral framework which I had been born into. No such ubiquitous code of ethics existed, heretofore my deductions and etiquette had been informed by an unsteady assumption. Even within single worlds, scholars deliberate on these very natures within their own contexts and conditions. It was perhaps that in the Origin World, the wolf had known only savagery, as it had not been privy to the virtues of the prey it hunted, nor had it been presented with alluring alternatives which entailed mutual

cooperation. And what of the reincarnated Wolf in her own world? Was the self truly so elusive? Wolf had at once independently chosen a season of peace and trust, if only temporary. Was it her true nature to reject her sinister instincts, and that only a true loss of self could compel such vile deeds?



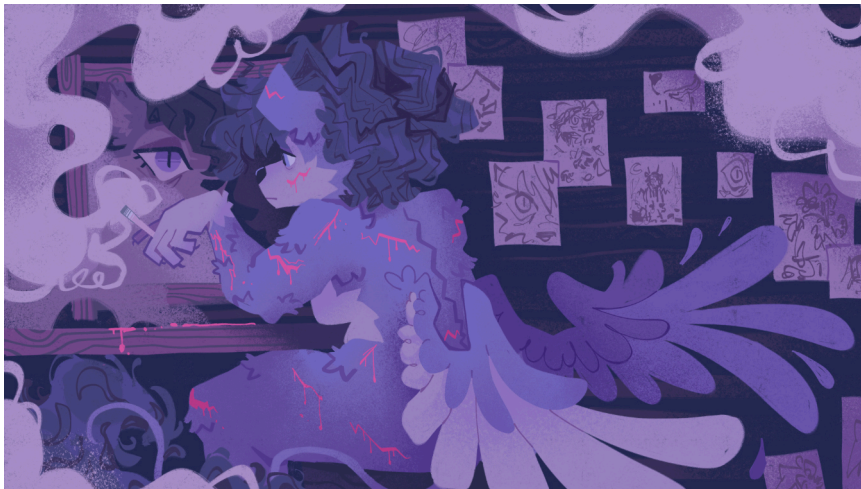
I think what Aria is trying to suggest is that in the absence of a connection to the self, a lack of understanding of whom you truly are inside, desperation and loneliness can manifest into primal reactions to a threat which no longer exists. Sapience and sentience do not erase eternities of evolutionary residue. Creatures with the capacity to think and consider often feel that they are greater than their primal instincts. I mean, even Aria has taken missteps in that assumption for themselves. And, uh, Bark.

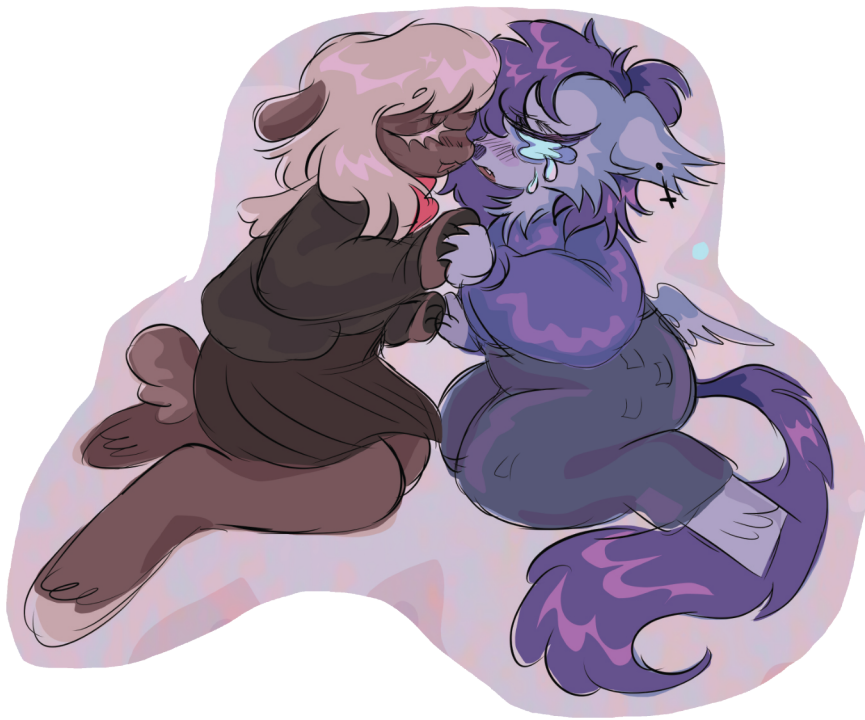


Indeed, it was this notion that I had not previously considered, but now beheld as a glimmer between my hooves; that the girl Vylet Cypress — Wolf — had not transgressed me beyond its ignorance. And in her reincarnation, these killings were not (save for Starlight) performed through spite and malice, but self punishment. She had become thoroughly convinced of her wickedness, a trial she had already and unknowingly overcome, that now she desired only to be consumed in the supposedly compulsory role she felt constrained to. Yes. Wolf had sought to ruin herself in this relapse. With Starlight now slain, her list was complete. One may ask what purpose remained for the self-proclaimed Monarch of Monsters? You see, Wolf had become quite aware of her reputation among the separatists and that many of them believed in her maturing divinity. At the heart of her arrangements were the profane concepts for a ritualistic suicide, one which professed to her followers the abdication of her holy essence. In her journals, she described this rite as the "Daybreak of the Red Rivers". Wolf had hoped to spend her end days in quiet contemplation and indulgence of the ordinary. Then, she would resign.

The small, wooden chair creaked and moaned as Wolf undressed herself and diminished afore the mirror. Her foreign visage evoked an

aberrant longing, as she scarcely recognized her own reflection. Thus, she practiced in indulgence, gasping and clawing recklessly to her image. With this not satiating her primal ardor, she tore the mirror from the wall and brought herself upon the glass. Her intoxicated twitches were harmonized by involuntary puffs and whines, which soon progressed to howls in a distorted rapture. Wolf shuddered ardently when at last her love had entwined in her fur and seared her flesh. The girl's laboured breaths evaporated into forlorn sighs and contrition, warm trickles of self thawing her frigid body. She furiously reiterated this sacrament until the sun came again.





PRINCESS CUCKOO, A PARABLE OF MEN

Protests erupted in the metropolitan districts following announcements of Starlight's murder, which had impelled Celestia's loyalists to question the integrity of the Canterlot Authority. Conversely, the separatist underbelly of Equestria celebrated the occasion and heralded Wolf as the prophesied champion of their resistance. Yes. So-called disciples of the Monarch of Monsters stirred rallies in her name, drawing both separatists and loyalists from high and low. Printed notices had been scattered throughout the countryside, proclaiming sanctums which would welcome Wolf, ensuring no harm would come to her. And, indeed, Wolf heeded these messages. So she washed and trimmed herself by the nearby lake and started for the nearest town.



From this point on, Aria is going to describe the two instances of sexual violence committed against Wolf during the final moments of her life. Please take immense care when reading these parts, and if necessary, skip instead to the section titled "Entrance Into The Locus", as I will offer a brief summary void of explicit details. And as much as I think Wolf is the most insufferable

cunt in all the realms, no one should endure a fate like this. It's necessary to describe these accounts to fully articulate how far Wolf was willing to go in her perverse desire for penance and self-punishment.

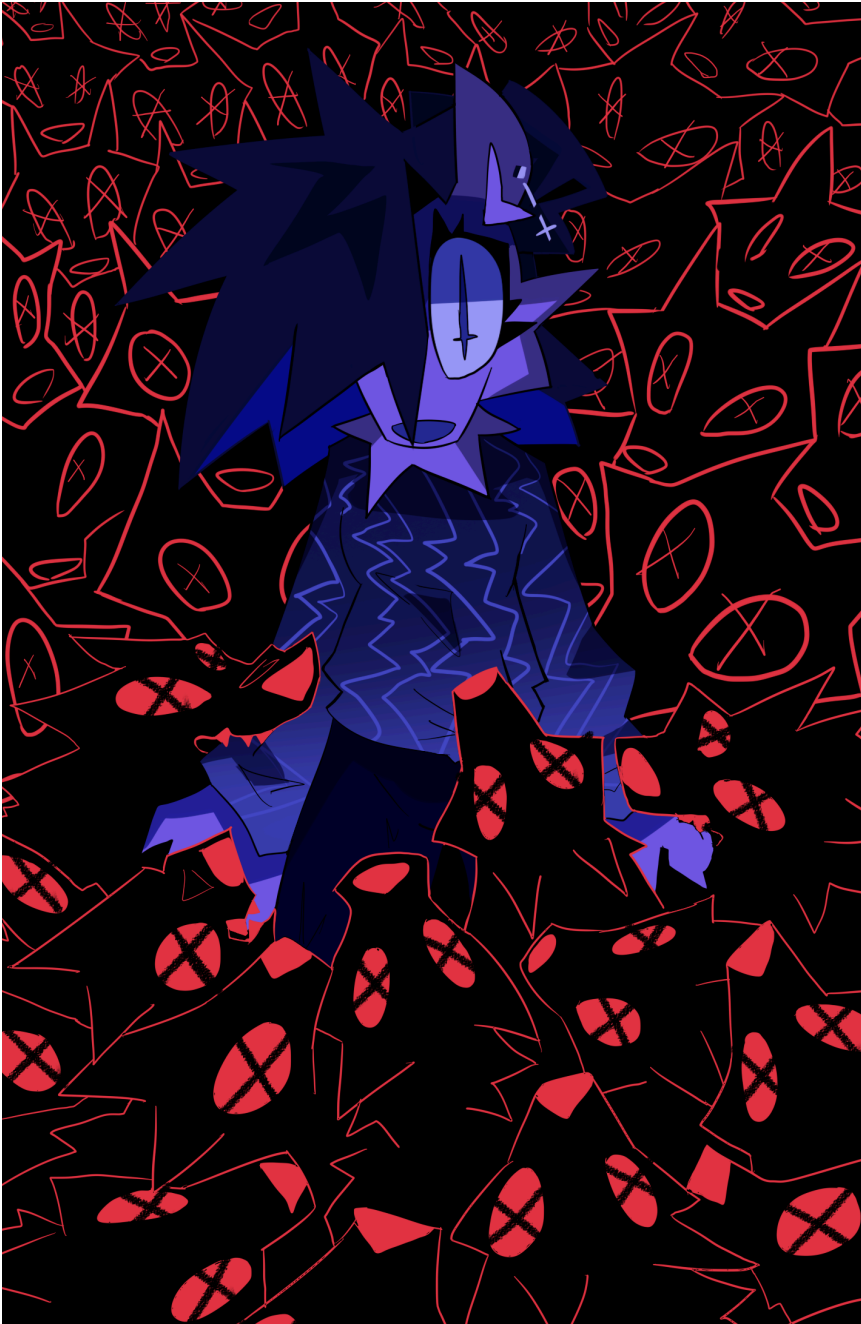


By nightfall, Wolf had reached a small settlement called Basin, situated beneath the metropolitan domain of the pegasi known as Cloudsdale. She was greeted eagerly by onlookers, an exhibition which she had scarcely expected after having persisted more than a year in transient, murderous delinquency. In the village courtyard, five cloaked stallions tempted her into the local hostel. Wolf had not slept upon a soft bed or entertained the amenities of civilized life in a very long time; thus, she was gracious to the apparent hospitality. Dear reader, the elusive and dishonest intentions of men can be lost even to one as mistrustful and cognizant as Wolf. Over a myriad of lifetimes, I have witnessed every cruel and heinous act that one being can exact on another. The most vile of these deeds is not murder. For death is ever a more merciful way, contrary to the desires of truly wicked men. For one's virtue to be abducted and body to be defiled eclipses any curse or ailment. And so.

Wolf was led into a small room within the lodging. The murky halls were lit by candlelight, which diffused into an eerie green iridescence and dissolved through the layered curtains lining the walls. The cloaked stallions followed her into her room, subsequently locking the door and drawing the shades. The tallest of the men confessed to Wolf their collective voracity for her blessing, which promised to fuel the inquisition that the separatists had been envisioning for their country. Wolf could not manage a reply before being restrained by the stallions and being forcefully stripped bare. She was afforded few breaths and freedom of movement as her abductors invaded her senses and urged her against various surfaces. The girl's screams and convulsions soon halted as her mind became entirely vacant. She could no longer discern what was being done to her body, nor could she even sense the forceful jerks and pounces that penetrated her flesh. Wolf merely gazed into an abyss of colours and objects, not at all perceiving the torture which her body was being subjected to. To her, nothing outside of her thoughts and mind was real in that moment. How

was it that she could eviscerate and destroy the ones she loved, but could not save herself from this fate? Perhaps it was because the stallions meant nothing to her, she was no longer conscious of their presence. Those she cared about in life, they were something to lose, and so she must lose everything, Wolf thought. And conceivably the penance she coveted, doomed to the guilt of a survivor, allowed her to justify this ill providence. Wolf closed her eyes and faded into a transitory oblivion, as echoes of her assailants' shouts spoke affirmations of her blossoming womanhood. In her unconsciousness, she was seduced by visions of her captors' sadistic and bloody demise, though these fantasies would not come to pass.

Rays of sunlight slithered into the room. Had it been a day? Two? Wolf's gaze had been fixed to the ceiling for what passed to her as an eternity. At once, she dared to blink, and shuddered as the immeasurable torment and shame of a thousand lifetimes ripped through her body. Though she had hoped for a more substantial period of recreation and contemplation in her final days, the vile persistence of these new memories seemed too much to bear. Thus, there was nothing left for Wolf in the waking world, and she awaited only her end.



SLUDGE: A SUPPER WORSE THAN DEATH, OR, REVELATION
TWIXT LOVE AND TOLERANCE

As the Autumn trees relinquished their fruits and the heavens ripened in a perpetual blaze, the night of the grim ceremony approached. Wolf sent word to her separatist disciples to join her in the town square of her adoptive home, Ponyville. Yes. The Daybreak of the Red Rivers was to be held in the place she loved dearly, an unholy suicide which would return her magic to the earth and its denizens. Separatists, loyalists, aristocrats, and commoners alike gathered amidst the cobblestone courtyards of the quaint, countryside village. Among them was Captain Shining, who spent many of the afternoon hours questioning visitors with concern to Wolf's whereabouts. When finally he found her, polishing her ritual dagger which served as a murder weapon for the so-fabled Monarch of Monsters, Shining pleaded with her once more. Though this time, he beseeched Wolf, that she abandon this ritual and trust in a wiser path to mercy. With the dagger now spotless, Wolf marched solemnly towards the guard.

"Why... did you have to keep such a close eye on me, Shiny... if you were going to marry into that dumb princess's family?" she croaked, her voice was frail and laboured.

"You kept pushing me away, Vy," Shining was on the verge of tears, his voice restrained from the burning in his throat, "I wasn't going to try to sway you."

Wolf snarled. "Be happy I didn't send you to hell... silly boy... I might have found you and... ahah... tried again. Well, too bad you royal pricks have to buy your way into heaven... At least I know I've earned where I'm going."

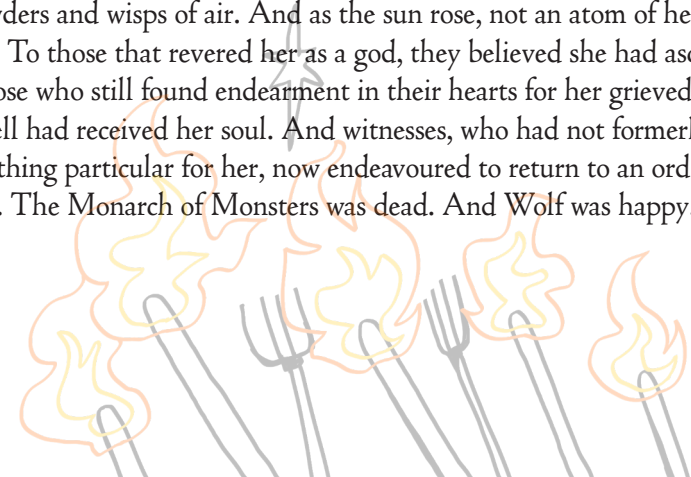


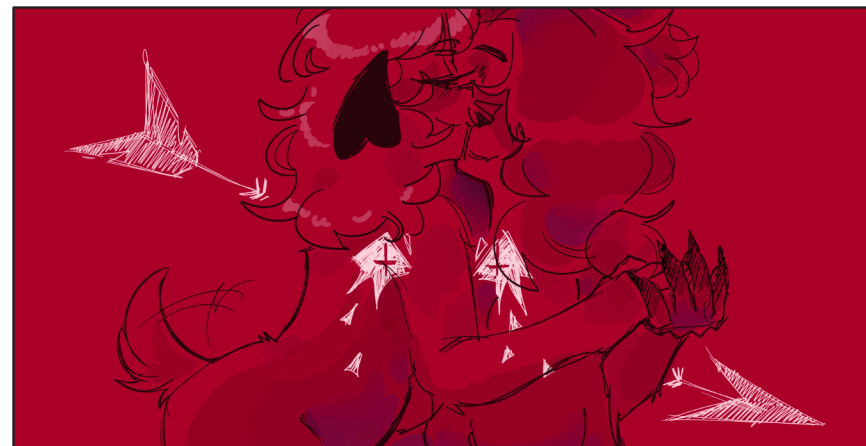
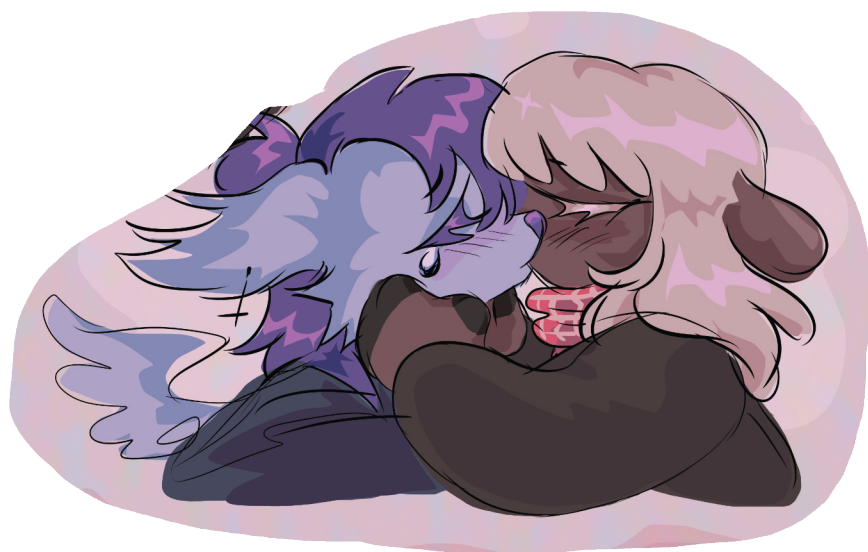
Honestly, I'm going to throw up, wououououououf.

On Wolf's last midnight, she stood afore the vast crowd of spectators. At the very foremost of the horde was the Monarch of Monsters's most devout worshippers, those of whom would partake in the final sacraments of defilement and consumption. With torches and pitchforks held high, witnesses to the ceremony exchanged varying sentiments. Many onlookers, particularly the aristocrats, surveyed analytically and methodically. Others, mostly the common ponies, appeared fearful and sorrowful, many of them weeping and gasping. The fewest of the crowd, separatists, and followers of Wolf, cheered enraptured and expectantly, believing their participation in the ritual would bear untold power and prosperity to the ordinary Equestrian.

The Daybreak of Red Rivers was performed in three acts. First, Wolf recited the events of her entire life, a life that spanned a length of no more than twenty-two Equestrian years. Before the crowd, she declared her every mistake, transgression, temptation, and sin with unshakeable precision and specificity. In this, she beckoned for onlookers to jeer and scorn, though many abstained. This introductory procession lasted for several hours into the early morning. Second, Wolf raised her dagger high above her head, invoking the blood moon which hovered above her bleak

earth. Then, she thrust the blade into her chest, and her stifled, petrifying shrieks quickly transposed into frenzied howls. She exerted her full might and dissected her body, tearing open her chest to the revolted exclamations of hundreds of witnesses. At the forefront of the crowd, feverish cheers and squeals of arousal erupted among the girl's followers. Wolf's newly formed bodily cavities disgorged with entrails and a sinister brine of red. The consistency of her blood had been contaminated with a sickening sludge that sputtered out in loaves, polluting the crevices of the courtyard's stone paths. Both the commoners and the aristocrats in the audience averted in sickened bewilderment, as the din of gurgled belches, spouts of syrupy fluids, and mutilated squashes thundered vociferously from the girl's body. Within moments, Wolf perished. Yes. A cruel death for the Monarch of Monsters. No burial or reverence awaited the fallen beast. Thirdly, her body subsided, colliding lifelessly onto the earth with a mortifying crack, and her disciples rushed to the corpse to indulge their perverse final rites. The mob first raped, defiled, and plundered the remains of their god in an unholy cacophony of lustful groans and outraged denigrations. Spectators that had not yet shared in the ritual began to scatter, vomiting and wailing in an existential, repulsed horror. Next, the disciples began to overindulge in the abundance of gore and flesh, ingesting their god and absorbing her powers. They shriled in delight as Wolf's meat was ravaged and erased. Lastly, Wolf's final skeletal shreds were annihilated and crushed into fine powders and wisps of air. And as the sun rose, not an atom of her body was left. To those that revered her as a god, they believed she had ascended. Those who still found endearment in their hearts for her grieved, believing a hell had received her soul. And witnesses, who had not formerly felt anything particular for her, now endeavoured to return to an ordinary life. Yes. The Monarch of Monsters was dead. And Wolf was happy.





ENTRANCE INTO THE LOCUS

If you skipped to here from “Princess Cuckoo” to summarize: Wolf was assaulted in another town, became consumed by these memories, and perished in her planned, public, ritualistic suicide, The Daybreak of Red Rivers.



Well. I had only personally observed Wolf in the final year of her life, as the Shadows had not suspected her to be the soul I pursued until the transformation had begun. A year, in her world, is an interval so insignificant that many of us in The Locus would not ever entertain the notion of enumerating it. Yet, dear reader, only a single mortal year was sufficient for me to fall in love with the girl, Wolf. It had confounded me, too. I had not yielded to love in the Origin World, though I had not the freedom to. The quaint ways of my home forbade all but a narrow scrap of intimacy to be disregarded and annulled. No such provisions ailed me in an afterlife over which I presided. At once the girl had perished, I was overcome again with fears that no eternities had bred before within me. For I had scarcely surveyed her a year's passage, and she had not even known of my existence. Would she fall in love with me as well? I would not have

dared prevail against her wishes. The margin for which these inquiries could be processed did not exist, as her soul approached our domain.

Wolf's soul presented itself quite removed from the conventional gateways. One may have foreseen this, knowing hers was the only origin soul unaccounted for until now. Rather, the soul materialized alone in the quiet forests beside my cabin in The Locus. Queerly, it did not move from the point at which it had emerged, but hovered passively over a bed of snow, slowly dissolving the glazed crystals beneath it. There was a shiver in my heart as I allowed the soul to settle into my hooves, its warmth oscillated with occasional pulses of icy aura. I blinked. And then she was in my arms, as I had endowed her with the body she knew in life. Wolf was a mortal no longer. She stood there, not resisting my embrace, nor reciprocating, but gazing blankly into my fur. At once, I could intuit our mutual physicality, that as we both were upright, her face scarcely reached mine. The great Monarch of Monsters, submissive to my stature, soon raised her head to me and faintly held my gaze. I stifled not the quivering of my heart, and I giggled at the sight of her curiosity. Oh, but fearful, frightened Wolf, she was startled by this, by the strange, upright lamb which beheld her. She recoiled violently, swiftly metamorphosing into a towering beast. The Locus' boundless magic energies revealed this inclination of hers for the first time, that her form could shift in accordance with her exertions. Then, she growled violently and lunged in a flurry of furious swipes. Well. I stood there and allowed her outburst to proceed until she inevitably acquiesced, exhaustedly. She required a great many attempts to recognize that I could not be harmed at all.



It was so funny, Wolf kept trying to stab them and just failed every single time. I feel like I counted at least 10 distinct efforts to kill Aria. Oh pathetic thing, Woof!

When Wolf finally relented, she returned to her ordinary form and size, kneeling and panting wearily into the snowy earth. I sat crossed legged in front of her and caressed her face.

"Darling Wolf, I have watched you from this place. What do you remember of your life?" The girl remained silent, but leered at me under laboured wheezes and sighs. I continued. "Do you remember your life?"

She began frantically examining her arms and legs, and spoke hushed in reply. "I... My... I am called Vylet Cypress. How do you know the name 'Wolf'?"

"My dear, you are a wolf, are you not?"

"Yes... yes... I..." she began stroking the fur on her face, her countenance transposed into a vacant fear. "...but I am not a wolf."

I slowly opened my arms for her, and at first, she cowered, only finally yielding with a frigid sigh. "You are a pegasus, and you are a wolf."

"Was I cursed?" Wolf's voice broke and wavered beneath her miserable shivers. I observed her cautiously progressing towards me, though it felt as if the faintest, sudden gesture would startle her into a panicked scurry.

"In a way."

"Did I deserve it?" Wolf halted, arching her back abruptly as her wild glare snapped to meet my gaze. Her breaths quickened and her shivering sharpened.

I remained still as well, endeavouring to only advance as she did. "No."

"DID YOU CURSE ME?" She barked back, expelling thick strands of lupine spit.



Had I cursed her? Oh. This I could not answer, for I did not know, nor could I remember. Until then, I had postulated that she — it — had alone, voluntarily circumvented the fate which all denizens of the Origin World had shared. But her inquiry stirred a primal realization within me. For when I had recognized and subsequently mastered my divine functions, I had not considered the involuntary discharges of magic and aura that engendered my early godhood. Within me, I felt for the first time — Time, a commodity which only the learned mortals of the realms could most candidly regard, a kindness which no immortal could ever attain — an unequaled sorrow; a sorrow for which no words in our earthly chronicles could entail. Teardrops vanished into the ice that nestled us. The fruit of an infinite many eternities seized my voice, escaping only through rubbles of char and petals. Oh, ceaseless retribution. That I had, indeed, exacted this fate on her in my rage.

"Yes," I had wished to speak commandingly, but my voice fractured into a thin wisp. I withdrew my inviting gesture, shrinking back in a fit of unsuppressed sobs. No matter how many times I wiped my eyes, her visage remained buried in a film of sodden despair. Before the surrounding forest dissolved into my tears any further, I was startled by a jarring embrace. Though coarse and graceless, Wolf had wrapped her arms around me, convulsing in her own hushed cries. "I am sorry, I had not realized," I whispered.

Wolf replied in a muzzled whine, "I always thought I had been cursed."

"I am sorry, I..." it was as the nest once empties that no words remained in me.

"I'm afraid."

"Do not be. You are mine now. You are safe."

"What do I call you?"

For a moment, I could not recall who I was, or who I had been. Quarrels of vitality afflicted me a haze of mind, quarrels which the now imaginary beast had sewn into me through antiquity. With my scarf, I dried my tears and hers, and beheld her gaze, a marble brine which encompassed itself. In her eyes I saw my own, my hair, my nose, myself. There I was. And I could recall.

"I am Aria. But you, darling Wolf, may call me Lamb, if it is your desire."

"Lamb," she uttered in a timbre most reverent, a tone familiar only to her friends in Ponyville.

"And this," I motioned above my head, gesturing to—



*YEAHHHHHHH YEAHHHHHHH YEAHHHHHHH WOOF
WOOF WOOF*

Gesturing to Cadence, "This is my best friend and advisor, Cadence."

*YES, BITCH GOUUUUUUGHHHHHHHHH
GOUGHHHHHH*

Cadence, upon being introduced to Wolf, produced an erect tongue from her muzzle and vocalized a most rude utterance. "NOT YOU DIPSHIT, GODS DAMNIT, I WISH YOU WERE DEAD".

"I think I am dead," Wolf's confused chuckle composited both amused and despondent.

Not dead enough

Ever the cynic you are.

Eternity was supposed to be just you and me... You and me! Woof!



Cadence, dear, you were not even supposed to exist.

I can only have opinions regarding eternities and activities that I was alive for, so.

Wolf solemnly buried her face into me, the tension in her body began to dissipate, and her sobs fizzled into snuffles. "Tell me a story, Lamb," her request was muted against my chest.

"A story, dear Wolf?" I held her gently.

"The story of how I came here. I wish for inspiration, and for clarity."

"Do you not also wish to be somewhere warmer?"

She glanced at me, shivering profusely. "I don't care."

"You speak in untruths," I began, but I was startled by Wolf's brisk yelps. Her embrace tightened anxiously before she subsequently pulled away. The trust that she had been allowing to flourish for me had suddenly been severed.

"Are you a deity?" Wolf snarled defensively. She recoiled as I opened my arms for her, a low growl shook the air.

"I... I don't know" I said to her.

"You can hear my thoughts."

"Yes."

"My thoughts are private."

"I am sorry, Wolf."

"Stay out."



My hesitation only worried her more, that I could even discern her increasing worry was, indeed, overstepping. I spoke, "I am sorry. Dominion over this power has not been necessitated by any other being. Learning to enact this discerningly does supplicate research and rehearsal. But I will accommodate this. I assure you."

The girl dithered, her protracted claws incised trails into the snow, revealing vegetation and stone beneath.

Upon my head, Cadence sighed vexingly. "Listen dog, Aria will figure it out, just, like, it's okay. They're not going to hurt you."

Wolf cautiously readjusted herself, ears perked and eyes widened. "Is the hat true?"

"I... uh" I started

"I mean, is the hat—"

"CADENCE. MY NAME IS CADENCE, WOOF!" Cadence asserted loudly.

Wolf's eyes darted inquisitively as she parsed the information presented to her. "Is Cadence Woof telling th—"

"OH MY GODS YOU'RE INSUFFERABLE, IT'S JUST CADENCE, ONLY CADENCE."

ENTRANCE INTO THE LOCUS



I swear she was doing this deliberately, more of her sadistic tendencies put on display for everyone to see! Meow. Tell me I'm right, Aria!
BWAHAHAHAH!!



Cadence, dear, at this point, I had begun to avert my thoughts from Wolfs. Thus, I could no longer discern her inner intentions without consulting her.



How do I travel to the Gun™ Universe®?

The dispute yielded eventually. And so, I led wolf to my... our cabin. At first, she sniffed about the floors, perhaps searching for food. I waited for her to feel comfortable in her space, allowing her to explore and prod as she pleased. When at once she was content, I again opened my arms to her from upon my bed. She appeared to deliberate for a moment, her eyes surveying me and bounding from one corner to another. At last, she rose onto two paws and approached me gingerly. Wolf became limp in my arms, her full weight exerted upon me. I had not once observed her so un-agitated or listless as this prior.

"You're pretty," Wolf's coarse voice splintered between muted and intelligible.

"As are you," I replied.

She curled up against me. "Tell me a story."

I found myself sheepish as I had been tracing the shape of her body with my hooves. "I wish a greater intimacy in my touch. Do you allow this?"

A moment of contemplation. "That's fine," Wolf's breath brushed the bristles of my fur.

ENTRANCE INTO THE LOCUS

My heart trembled as I slipped my hoof under her striped, pewter tunic. I traced the fur of her abdomen, examining and prodding the individual dips and protrusions her body exhibited. Wolf shivered and twitched, tensing in brief intermittences as I surveyed further. When at once I had felt her heart between breast, she shivered noticeably. I pulled back. "Is this permitted?" I inquired.

Wolf sniffled. "It doesn't matter."

"But of course it does, dear Wolf."

"I don't care."

"Then I shall subside until it is your wish that I proceed." I drew my hoof from beneath her tunic and rested it upon her chest.

I began.

"This is the story of the girl who cried wolf.

The wolf was hungry, lonely, and afraid.

And so. She went to hunt. And she went to find others like her.

When across a little farm she came. She pounced and bit!

Hungry no more, she smiled. And Wolf was happy.

There was also the little lamb, who was hungry, lonely, and afraid.

They came home one day, to find their fallen sibling.

'A wolf!' the little Lamb cried, 'sinister always in their greed!'

Lamb, too, hunted. Hunted, Lamb did, the lonely wolf.

An arrow flew. And the wolf was no more.

The wolf was no more. And Lamb was sad.

The wolf. Now but a pegasus. A strange land. A new name. Though winged. Wolf lived. And Wolf cried. All the same.

ENTRANCE INTO THE LOCUS

She was hungry, lonely, and afraid. And Wolf had done many terrible things.

Many terrible things Wolf had done.

For the wild dogs had untamed her. So she left once more.

She went to hunt. And she went to find others like her.

When across true friends, she came. She howled in delight!

Lonely no more, she smiled. And Wolf was happy.

Little lamb. Now forever. In forever's night.

They lived once more. And studied sorcery divine.

Not hungry, not afraid, but lonelier still.

Lamb, too, hunted. Hunted, Lamb did, the smiling wolf.

From far away. Little Lamb was envious of Wolf's bright smile.

And so. An arrow flew. And Wolf grew. Once more. The sinister beast.

The sinister beast. Had returned. So why was Lamb happy?

The wolf, a beast. Recalling before.

Not food. Not friends. But a bitter end. She wished.

And so. She went to hunt. And she went to find others unlike her.

When across her friends, she came. She pounced and bit!

Lonely again. Wolf cried. Cried, Wolf did.

Then finally. She laid. And she ended.

The wolf. Now a pegasus. Now a wolf. A strange land. The same name.

Little lamb found her. Where Wolf now began.

They were hungry, afraid, but lonely no more.

Together, they went to hunt. And to find each other in the forest.

When across a fishy fish, they came. They pounced and bit!

Hungry, lonely, and afraid no more. A soft kiss. A warm hug.

They chased! And chased! And chased! In mind. And in body.

A dynasty of forevers. A hunt eternal.

And both Lamb and Wolf were happy."

ENTRANCE INTO THE LOCUS

Well. I have observed a common property of mortal tales, in which one tells another a story, and the other falls asleep before hearing the rest. Wolf, however, had not fallen asleep, but had been eyeing me intently.

"It wasn't a dream?" Wolf whispered.

"A dream, dear Wolf?" I studied her eyes.

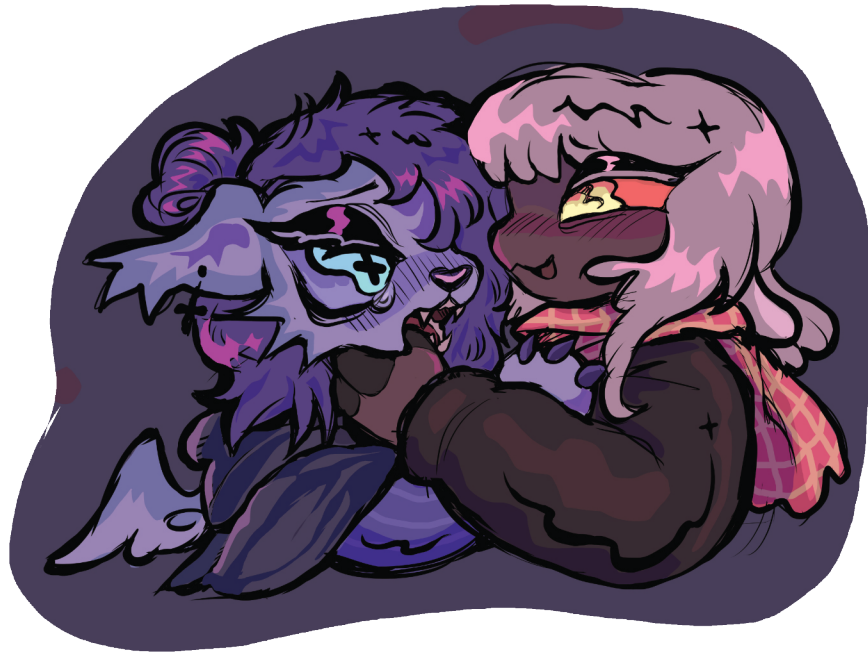
"I once dreamt that I hunted a lamb like you."

"Beside a cabin such as the one we now share."

"Yes," she arose, still in my arms, and brought her face to mine. I shivered as her fangs brushed against my cheek.

Moderating my advances, I spoke tacitly into her mouth, and our breath congealed as one, "Are not both we monsters?"

Wolf was silent, embers coiled about her narrow lips and spilled across her cheeks. There was no mistaking the synchronous thumps, which fluttered and abated melodiously, a bird song betwixt evergreens. I waited and waited, for I would dare not prevail against her wishes. I waited and waited. The girl's eyes softened, feathers spread penitent and longing, as her ears twitched attentively. As the last traces of retribution were swallowed within my breast, Wolf's tongue slipped between my lips, exploring only what has ever been known to me. The friction I had anticipated was textured coarse and bristled, but instead, her tongue slithered within my cheeks as velvet and silk. Even through careful, remote surveyance, there was much about her I did not know.



ALL THINGS, DEAR WOLF

As one may have deduced about my life before Wolf, I had only surveyed and studied the disparate, intimate intercourses from a narrow, secluded perspective. Such sacraments adopted conflicting shapes and roles between participants in every universe. I had hoped to apply my comprehension regarding such bonds without error, but, indeed, the implementation of techniques I was privy to were insufficient. As we tried, failed, and tried again, the love we made was unsteady for some time. At first, Wolf would implore that I inflict pain upon her. I could not shroud my heart to honour these wishes, nor did I believe these wishes to be derived from a yet sound mind. Rather, I elected instead to continue approaching in the ways I was drawn to her. She shared frustration with the slow, methodical consideration of her body and our love, often expecting that at once I would restrain and berate her. Instead, of course, I treated her gently and only exacted lustful touches and prods that she consented to. With each and every sleep we shared, Wolf's flagellant proclivities evanesced, as she desired instead to be loved true.

I imparted to Wolf the nature of The Locus, Origin World, souls, Shadows, and many other things which, for now, I conceal from you, dear

reader. I explained to her that she was now immortal, that she would both serve me and love me for infinite eternities, and that she could observe or travel to any universe. She understood that she was permitted to repossess the earthly comforts for herself.

Wolf is boring as Locus, she took like one whole eternity to realize that cell phones existed in a bunch of universes. Like it's crazy because she would sit there watching other worlds and see people looking at weird glass all the time, and she just did not question that for an entire eternity. Eventually, she asked, "Cadence Woof," the idiot, "tell me more about the magic journals some mortals become infatuated with." LIKE? HELLO? WOLFY WALF? YOU BEHOLD LIKE STARSHIPS AND HYPER-STRUCTURES THAT SURROUND ENTIRE PLANETARY SYSTEMS AND YOU'RE CONFUSED ABOUT A CELL PHONE? It's so bad because like now all this mortal shit comes and goes from The Locus. Don't get me fucking started on when Aria introduced Wolf to cheeseburgers. It's all she fucking eats now. I swear to The Huntress™ that this stupid dog has no taste at all. Gods. Woof. And yeah.



Well. My work had become our work. Thus, I could no longer operate through unstructured and nebulous methods. Though time does not truly pass in The Locus, hunting for two would require a supplementary framework of time. I blinked. And then, allowed day to come and night to fall, as is the tradition of many realms. Together, Wolf and I decreed, monarchs of a single, ephemeral dynasty, that there would be days of work and days of rest.

On days of work, we joined the Shadows in the surveyance and journaling of material realms. Wolf's curious once-mortal nature yielded commentaries and ideas about our observations, transforming our otherwise mundane assemblies into forums of excited discussion, indulgence of earthly amenities, and, indeed, jests at the expense of the mortals down below (those are Cadence's favourite). Leaving the Shadows to continue their

operations in our absence, Wolf and I continue our days of work in greeting and burying incoming souls. During this time, Cadence pairs up with the surveying Shadows in accounting for the unwilling souls that flee the Locus gateways. During this stage, I also convene with any of my celestial agents in different realms on matters that require attention. Once we have completed these tasks for the day, we retreat to our cabin to gossip and chatter over a meal. This activity persists until night falls upon The Locus, when Nil radiates its beautiful, scarlet glow unto our forest canopies. Then we hunt. Wolf's tracking senses, unequaled precision, and erudition of the sinister and the scheming not only permits that our hunts are far more efficient than before, but I must concede that this cooperation fashions our duties into amusing and exciting excursions. When our forest is emptied of the unwilling, our work for the day is done. Often our hunts climax in ardent passions, courting in the snow, with only the Spring of our bodies to strike against the shield of Winter. I must also concede that once Wolf had comprehended the rejection of self-punishment, well... I am dizzied by the thoughts, that our love was permitted to be truly fanatical. She is rather a good girl, if also a monster. Hehehe.

Yes. To kill a monster, dear reader, is to be a monster, once in service to the sinister call, then finally in service to those who must be protected. You will do well to remember this.

On days of rest, well, anything can happen. Aside from the obvious recreations—



ARIA YOU GUYS ARE SO FUCKING GROSS, TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.



Hehehe. Well. We visit a novel universe together on most of these days. As you may have guessed, merely observing the realms from afar does not substitute experiencing them for yourself. I must admit, some of them are tedious.



You'll be hard-pressed to find mortals that do things fundamentally differently across all realms. But at least stuff like their food is different. Too bad your dumb pet only eats BURGERS, Aria.



Days of rest truly are intended for lazing and recreation. To accommodate this, we eventually divided the shadows into two groups, some that operate on days of work, and some that operate on days of rest. This ensures we do not miss anything in the realms. Sometimes we roam the Annals of The Locus, perusing the chronicles of the previous days, curious about what Wolf and I may have missed out on. What I endear most is listening to Wolf sing and perform her songs for me. It is in moments such as these that I persistently cannot reply in words. Instead, my heart trembles and my mind soars. Music was a luxury to most in the Origin World. But Wolf plays just for me. With the knowledge of an infinite many realms, still I could not play or express as she does. This is the only magic to me.

Well. You know much about us now. About myself. About Wolf. About The Locus and many of its denizens. It is a privilege for a mortal such as yourself to bear the knowledge of these divine affairs. Much has happened, but in a sense, nothing has yet happened, as an infinite eternities loom over the many realms. Soon, Wolf and I shall be back on our hunt. Oh, but gossip is always abundant in our land. And I presume I will be speaking with you again, perhaps regarding other subjects from the material worlds. Would you be interested in that, dear reader? One realm alone is saturated with tales of tails and ventures of adventurers. I would be delighted to share them with you. For now, Featherdance's realm is among my primary concerns. All that business with Tiberius and those alicorns... Their own Celestia and her anomalous brother Spectre. Drama brews in that realm, drama does brew. Petty self-proclaimed gods and their ludicrous prophecies, leading on that girl Satyrn in utter confusion between herself and the magpie of the Yak's lands. A dilemma, indeed. Ugh. And what of their sister world, which lurks as a sea under the empyrean? The witches. Yes, Stella and Kai. Mortals like those, who tamper with the delicate weaves between realms, do demand our work be made much more difficult.

None compare, though, to one such as Featherdance. She, who will sooner discover her emergent womanhood before attaining a reverence for the many realms and their continuity, truly does stumble into the act of playing a god. I confess, as close an eye as I have kept on her, I am unable to survey the worlds she and the virus Rayna synthesize. It confounds us all. Oh, but such gossip indeed. I am expecting Creekflow's return as I pen these final words. We'll have much to discuss.

Thank you for receiving this correspondence to the end. If you wish to contact me, please do speak to Creekflow. My little courier will be quite preoccupied with such affairs. Hehehe!

There's one world in particular I've observed where mortals say "See ya later alligator!" It's a cute rhyme and a lovely sendoff, in my opinion. Then, it's customary for the other person to reply: "I swear I'm going to kill you with a baseball bat if you say that again, Dennis". I fuck with it for sure. So, see ya later alligator! Meow and goodbark! Until we materialize again, mortal.



I bless thee, dear reader. Ta-ta! And know prosperity.

- Aria





REST NOW, LITTLE WOLF: TO ARIA, IT IS LIKE A VIGIL —
THEY MOURN THEIR PERFECTIONS, OR SOMETHING ELSE

i awoke one night in a cold sweat. it didn't take me very long to realize that i was somewhere else. not the locus, not equestria, but somewhere else. Aria wasn't with me either. when i sat up, i was standing in a hallway junction. i could tell the walls were segmented into two, discreet, vertical sections; one a broad pale beige and the other a wood-patterned green; these upper and lower sections were divided occasionally by a single reddish line. whether this remained consistent on the outside of the building i was in, i couldn't figure out. this was all difficult to discern in a near, pitch-black environment. i felt around for any light switches, since there were definitely overhead lights situated in the hallway, but i was unable to find anything. where i had awoken, the only light sources consisted of ambient glows which emanated from outside and diffused faintly through the windows. these were primarily emitted by the moon and some dim lamp posts in the courtyards below. aside from that, tiny LED bulbs flickered murkily, which drew my attention to the various, recursive sets of

printers, fax machines, telephones, filing cabinets, and bookshelves that stippled every nook of the corridor.

meandering through the building, i had begun to notice that the various furniture and decorations of the hallways were repeating, despite any progress i was making towards what surely could have been a different part of the premises. each painting, desk, printer, trashcan, and radiator in each corridor were placed, angled, sized, and arranged in the same way every time. sheets of printer paper that were scattered beneath workstations — arbitrary piles which appeared absentmindedly sifted and sorted — appeared in the same, recursive patterns. i had wondered if i disrupted one of these patterns, if that disordering would appear in the subsequent iteration. so, i moved around some pages without much thought, and then started down the hall to see if this alteration was reflected. more questions than answers really would have awaited me regardless of the outcome. what i found was that in the following recurrence of objects, the papers had not rearranged themselves to mimic the new pattern i had created moments prior. i'm not exactly sure what this should have told me, apart from the fact that i was making progress in going somewhere.

i raised my right wrist and became aware that i was missing a dial. Aria had always reminded me to procure a local timepiece on our excursions, so the absence of this object left an empty churn in my stomach. as my legs began to tire, i glanced down and tried to get a better look at my clothes. through much fumbling and sniffing, i realized i was wearing a loose, plain hoodie and grey sweatpants. was it not lulamoon who tended to dress like this? this thought was the first to cross my mind, even as a great many other thoughts could have, should have emerged in its place. and anyway, this thought was succeeded by another, that of course this must have been an office complex. i remembered these from my studies, though they had not interested me terribly. perhaps the utter impassivity these structures evoked within me inhibited my ability to recognize these details sooner. i made note to pay closer attention in the future, even to the mundane ziggurats, which indicated early declines in similar realms.

the walls were dotted with doorways to various meeting rooms and lounges. i counted the office numbers, which could be felt vaguely in the dark. 427. 411. 400. 380. 365. 328.

at last, as i turned one corner, i came upon an unfamiliar junction between corridors. from the path i had taken, the hallway angled sharply left, and a warm, yellow incandescence spilled out from behind the bend. as i blinked repeatedly, hastily adjusting to the sudden, bright light, i overheard the faintest babel of conversations and laughter. entering the passage left, a single light bulb flickered and buzzed above a lone doorway: 327. darkness once again obscured everything further down the hall. i assumed that either these hallways formed a unified circuit, or otherwise maintained their recursive nature for any observer that wished to continue onwards. the din of voices and chattering was stifled by the locked door to office number 327.

i knocked on the door. the murmurs continued as a feeble shuffling approached the door. click. clack. chk-chk. creak. the door opened, revealing a white unicorn with a scruffy, cobalt mane. he was dressed in a tousled and disorganized dress shirt, accented by a black bowtie. In the room behind him, a radio quietly played strange music. I caught a glimpse of other ponies in the office space mingling, indulging small talk with manners quite performative.

"Vyvy! Oh my, oh my it's so good to see you," his gleeful look contrasted his otherwise poorly shaven face.

i straightened his tie for him. "Silly boy..." i muttered, "have we met?"

the stallion's face scrunched in jest. "Awe, come on girl, don't be that way! What brings you into the city?"

"Hell, man... Where is Aria?" i scarcely realized my claws had punctured holes into his tie. he swallowed nervously as I loosened my grip and backed away.

"I, I, well," the unicorn stammered. he began fiddling with the backside of his mane, "listen, Vyvy—"

"I'm called Wolf," i cut him off.

his expression became dignified and earnest, as his posture loosened. he replied in a hush which sank under the chatter behind him. "Wolf. I don't think Aria wants to see you right now."

i felt my ears twitch wildly. i must have startled the guy because i saw him wince and withdraw slightly behind the door. the feathers of my wings had rustled as i poised myself upright.

"Where are they?" i sneered.

in a clear resignation, the stallion reluctantly motioned with his head for me to step inside, and opened the door for me. within the office, number 327, ponies — who were only vaguely familiar to me — stippled the edges of the room. i found it uncanny, as the attendees stood entirely outward from the center of the room. nobody occupied the center. the ponies were dressed in old-fashioned robes and cloaks, unlike the cramped uniform of the stallion who greeted me. additionally, it was as if i did not exist, for the partygoers did not acknowledge me. partygoers? well, there were no balloons and no cake, but for some reason it seemed like a reception of some kind. the room itself was lined with the same office implements and furniture that i had seen in the corridors. relics familiar and unfamiliar filled the spaces in between.

i scanned the room to see if i recognized anyone. in the furthest corner of the room, to the right of where i entered, i saw Aria chatting with some of the attendees. i hurried over to them, the overbearing pressures of anxiety and distress dissipated at their presence.

"Aria!" my tail was wagging furiously.

They looked up at me, their countenance was foreign and aloof. "Wolf."

"Where are we? What is all this?"

"Why have you come to this place?" Aria's ears flattened.

an urgent fear rose in my chest. they spoke as if they barely knew me. i felt myself beginning to shiver. "I'm... sorry, I didn't... I..."

Aria flinched as their body shivered and convulsed. two ponies beside them were making adjustments to Lamb's bow. the ponies looked up at Aria, who nodded silently back to them. then, Lamb rose before me, extending their hoof expectantly. "Does Wolf dance?"

i reached out and touched their hoof, a sudden, tranquil calm pervaded my mind. "Wolf dances," i genuflected.

they led me to the vacant center of the room. the gossips and conversations of the party guests continued as if we were not there. as i wrapped my arms across Lamb's shoulders, and as they placed their hooves over my hips, i followed obediently to their guiding waltz. i observed that Aria was dressed as one would expect. a sherpa-lined parka, a trimmed skirt, and a scarf of some kind. today, their scarf was a knitted fabric of opulent red, with refined golden accents. cadence was perched, as expected, atop the Huntress's silvery, flaxen hair. though, cadence was silent. it was rather unlike her to be silent. she only scrutinized me rhetorically, and without any exchange of words.

Aria brought their face close to mine. "My lament has not once ceased since we last met," they whispered frail.

"I know," i felt my voice constrain as tears filled my eyes.

"And what now, of before?" Aria replied.

"Please... guide me. I'm ready..."

as we danced, the world around us faded into merely indications of colours, shapes, and sounds. Aria recounted transgressions i had enacted against them. transgressions i had enacted against others. the sorrow in their eyes persisted all the while, only being infrequently concealed beyond their forelocks. i could not discern in mortal words what Lamb had divulged to me, uttering only an abstract procession of times, places, people, and actions. and yet, i understood. and i knew this remorse intimately. in accordance to each fable, i atoned and repented before the Huntress. we danced, we sorrowed, and we inched ever closer. the cavalcade of hymns and penances culminated into an only kiss between us, and the world which surrounded us became clear, if only briefly, once more.

"I forgive you," Aria wiped their tears.

"I'm sorry..." i burrowed my face into their chest.

we stood there, no longer dancing, and embraced silently. the party guests continued to chatter among each other. Aria knelt down, and i followed. i laid down, resting my head on their lap, and began to decline. to me, everything once again began to fade into an abstraction, as the indistinct chatters of the other ponies amalgamated into broad tides. Aria reached under my striped, woven tunic and stroked the fur of my chest. i remember yawning and stretching out my paws. whenever i do that, Aria likes to play with my fangs until i shut my muzzle again.

i closed my eyes and settled into Aria's thighs. their fur and wool cushioned me. it was a cocoon. for a moment i could swear i felt the snow of the locus crackling from underneath us, rather than the thin, battered carpet of the office room. but my consciousness was slipping into a soft oblivion, and nothing else mattered. nothing mattered as long as i was with Aria.

"Rest now, little wolf." Aria's voice was clear, as if it were in my mind. they started again conversing with the others in the room, playing intimately with my mane and fur. i felt completely at ease.

the world was only gentle ripples and hues. "Rest now, little wolf," they spoke tender and inside of me.

and so, i obeyed.



CADENZA (SHE/HER) [SHEEP]



For you, dear sister, I do all things.
Each breath and step I take is in
service to your memory. Once only
siblings, then forever sisters. In me,
you are alive. And so, I shall persist
eternal.

