

Something is off. The grass is a clear green, the sky an almost milky blue with a few wisps of clouds adrift within its expanse. The few thin trees in the area sway slowly in the wind, just as they always do. Yet I know something is off. I lay down in the grass, listening to the murmuring of the breeze around me, just trying to figure out what is wrong with the day. A few birds swoop by, using a wind current to get to their destination faster. Their calls sound so joyful and carefree, and I can't help but wish that I could join them.... And normally I do. I flew above the land day after day, taking in the sights again and again, seeing how they changed, discovering new things about the land with those who chose to settle there.

But today.... Today I feel something weighing down the air, an invisible force of *something* which hangs thick and still like fog. I get up, shaking my head to try and get my mind off the matter. Everything is just fine, I'm probably just being paranoid. Perhaps the vast grasslands openness is putting me on edge, it's probably just one of those days. Everything is silent now, the birds disappearing over the horizon and taking their song with them, the wind barely even a whisper. It's worse now, the feeling of pure wrongness that I just can't really explain is almost double what it was just moments ago. I close my eyes to clear my thoughts but two malice filled white eyes flash for a moment in the black, the eyes of the shadow lord himself which so often haunted me in my dreams.

My eyes snap open again, but this time the scene that greets me is ever so slightly different. Again, I'm not exactly sure how or why I know, but I really do. A whiff of black fog seeps up from the ground in front of me, and I step back knowing that whatever comes out of it is bad news. The smoke isn't just smoke, it's the essence of shadow condensed into a mostly physical form... The Dark Sun himself is constantly wreathed in it, and most unlucky enough to meet him never even see his true form. The shadow continues to grow larger, all the grass it touches withering away into shrivelled black stalks. This can't be good... Then suddenly the energy changes, shifting to almost resemble some sort of twisted gate, the inside gaining an almost watery texture. I step tentatively forwards again, almost tempted to touch the strange formation. Then a sudden flash makes me jolt away, and for a moment I can glimpse strange things from it. Massive metal towers with notches of glowing ice cut into them, expansive paths of black stone in which strange things that seem to be neither alive or dead run forwards at breakneck speeds, great swathes of forest being cut down by massive monsters that look nothing like wasteland beasts, lives that flourished without fear of shadows, nights rendered near starless by the glaring light emitted from the structures below, then blackness, shadows stretching out across the land, all natural light snuffed out...

I'm enthralled by the strangeness of it all, and even though I'm only able to catch glimpses of it all, I can tell that this world is full of so much I could never hope to comprehend... And then it shines with pure darkness before something comes out. The shadowed gateway immediately dissipates after expelling whatever the thing is, but I'm too distracted to pay much mind. There is a thing in front of me, eyes closed but presumably alive. It wears no cape, no mask in sight, its clothes bright and colourful made from materials I have never seen before, body at least twice as tall as mine. What is this thing? Why has it been called here? Why does it lay before *me* in the grass tainted by shadows without even flinching? A tornado of questions batter the inside of my head, but I manage to contain them. This could be an illusion, a trick, a trap, some sort of new cage Dark Sun crafted to contain me. It has to be! None of this is real, none of it *could* be real! I know all too well what he can do... I clutch my staff, it's pale wood

quivering at my touch. This thing could be strong, and if it is then I have to do everything in my power to keep everybody safe from it.

It opens its eyes, they are blue, but also so much more than that. I can see that this was a creature of intelligence, so much more than something crafted from the fears and doubts of another. Relief floods through me, but also a little bit of uncertainty and doubt... If this thing is sentient, then why was it sent here through a gate made of shadows? It may not be made from malice but it could still cause trouble... I hesitate, not really sure what to do anymore, and then it speaks.

"Wh- Why are you dressed like that?" I tense up, was it talking to me? Its voice had a bit of a strange quality to it, an indescribable difference that I can't quite put into words. But do I respond? Do I threaten whatever it is? I probably shouldn't show aggression, provoking something not trying to provoke you back is generally a bad idea. "Why is there so much... grass? It's so soft, am I dreaming?" the thing continued, looking right at me the whole time. Again I wonder what to do, but decide that the best decision is to attempt communication.

"I- uh- What are you?" the creature blinks, obviously confused at my words. That probably wasn't the best thing to start with but I really can't go back on it now.

"Human? What else? I-" they break off, seemingly confused by something. "Wait a minute... What language am I even speaking here?"

"Language?" I reply, "What do you mean?" I shake my head slightly, this 'human' is certainly an odd thing. There aren't many widely known languages, and some physically cannot be spoken by certain creatures. Words can be a powerful thing, and spoken languages themselves can be fickle. The language most beings can speak, understand, and communicate with most often tends to hold no power, but even then there can be exceptions to it.

"Language, the different kinds of sounds we make to communicate! It's just- I'm thinking and trying to say one word but I'm saying something completely different! It's odd- I can tell you're speaking the same language as the words that come out of my mouth, yet I can perfectly understand our conversation." I blink in response, not really sure what to say back. "I'm probably just still a little tired from waking up... wherever this is. Hey do you know?"

"Well- uh- This is the Grasslands..?" My voice quivers slightly, though I'm usually quite confident even in the face of death. I don't know why, but something about this human unnerves me.

"The Grasslands?" Their voice is full of confusion, "That's not exactly a good pointer on where we are, there are thousands of wide open plains like this all over the globe!" I start to shake my head, the single statement somehow even more confusing than the last, yet the human continues to speak. "I know when you're young the world can feel massive, but there's certainly more than one 'grassland' than just the one in your life. By the way, how old are you?" Their voice has some sort of kind and patient tone to it, but all I can do is stand my ground trying to wrap my head around it all. More than one grassland? That's impossible, ever since the incident was cleared up there had been only one.

"I- I- I can't remember..." I manage to stammer, and I can feel the wind silently laugh at my sudden inability to form proper sentences.

"Well that's ok, I'm guessing you're probably five or six based on your height. Can you remember if either of those numbers are your age? I-" I cut them off shaking my head.

"No- I- I'm seven hundred- at least-"

The human laughed, "Oh, very silly! Perhaps I'm sixteen hundred then?"

Again I shake my head, "No... You can't be... If you were you would probably be dead-"

"Of what, old age? How come *you* get to be so old then?" They laugh again.

"O-old age? No... The Incident probably would have killed you..."

"The Incident? I- Ah- What- " Now it's the humans turn to stammer, as their smile suddenly gets swept off their face. "Either this is a dream or... Who are you?" Something must have changed in the past five seconds, what made them suddenly start to take me seriously?

"I- I'm Hat. And uh- you are?"

They give me a slightly funny look at the mention of my name but don't comment on it, "I'm Ivy. What is this world called and can you prove this isn't a dream?"

"Many call the world as a whole Zyaaneryth, and I know it isn't a dream because there's too many horrible things to be a figment of somebody's imagination."

"Really..?" They stare out at the windswept land and pure blue sky, "It doesn't look like it..."

"Really. This place is a refuge to many, a nickname for the grasslands is 'the dreamlands.' Even then there's plenty of evil that makes it home here." The world is honestly a pretty horrible place a lot of the time, and I can't help but think of how it was before..."

"...Do you know why I'm here?"

"I wish I did!"

"Oh... So I'm stuck then?"

"Again, I have no idea"

"I-" I stop them, remembering something.

"You need to get proper clothes before somebody else sees you and inevitably freaks out like I did..." I can feel my usual self coming back, but Ivy's presence still unnerves me somewhat.

"Was that you freaking out? Anyways that's probably a good idea, little seven hundred year old... whatever you are"

"I'm a star and yes let's g-" I get interrupted by a sudden bright flash, pure white light with the barest lick of blue within. Instantly I know the source of such light and get down on my knees in a bow, shooting a glance at the mostly oblivious human still standing next to me. Something quickly steps out of the sudden burst of light, barely visible in the harsh glare. The light recedes, though the person now standing in front of me has a visible glowing aura around him. He is fairly short, though taller than me by a head and a bit, wearing white clothes, hood, and cape with a burning blue inside layer. His skin is light grey and face that of a stone wolf. His eyes are a pure white, occasionally flickering a piercing blue.... And they are filled with wrath.

"Wh-what is that-" Ivy blurts out, still standing. I can tell they're incredibly confused at the sudden appearance of another being, but then I realize something else. The human doesn't know who this is, they don't know Lunar.

"Get down!" I whisper to the human, who is still staring dumbfoundedly at Lunar... and he looks mad. Lunar is a god, he created the land, the moon, and the stars. He chose to forsake complete power and temporarily seal his memories away to become mortal which then resulted in the incident. Everybody knows what the incident is, but almost nobody knows that it was the god of light who caused it.... Those that do tend to dislike him but I personally believe it wasn't

his fault, and he probably regrets it still. Ivy presumably doesn't know any of this though, including Lunars identity. This could go badly...

"You dare intrude upon this realm yet do not show a diminutive amount of respect?" The human keeps staring, but I can see a smile tug on the corners of their lips. In response to the lack of change in demeanour Lunar whips out a staff made up of gnarled brown wood topped with a massive glowing crystal.

"Woah- Uh, please calm down..?" Ivy starts to inch backwards a little bit, obviously starting to understand how imposing Lunar really is.

"Your ancestors defiled all they held true, your reality is that but a slice of what could have been! Your betrayal strengthened those which avert the light, your irreverence pueril!" Oh no. This is worse than I thought. Lunar rarely ever gets this mad, and this time I don't even understand why! His eyes flicker piercing blue again, advancing on Ivy ever so slightly. They're totally going to get pulverised if I don't do anything, Lunar is a god with near limitless power... I should probably stop him. If I can at all...

"Lunar no!" I suddenly blurt out, I know he won't kill me after all I've done... right? I almost regret my decision as two eyes burning with hatred lock on mine, but then he calms down. I can see the god recognises me, and slowly he lowers his staff and the energy which buzzes through the air lessens somewhat. I let out a small sigh of relief, glad to know that even in a rage Lunar still recognizes me.

"Hat." he says, voice still full of suppressed rage. I know it's probably not directed at me, but it doesn't stop me from flinching at his words.

"Lunar. Please don't kill Ivy, I don't think they know what's happening?" I tentatively reply, hoping I don't set off whatever is causing Lunar to get this mad again. Ivy, who has been standing beside us looking mildly confused and terrified, opens their mouth to give input before stopping themselves with a disapproving glare from the god. "Just let them speak, please?"

We both turn to look at Lunar, who sighs and says, "Speak."

"I was just minding my own business and then suddenly I fell into a weird shadow portal thing, then suddenly I ended up here with- uh- Hat! I'm honestly just confused here, please don't murder me?" They back up a little bit more from the still visibly annoyed Lunar, who just huffs and turns back towards me for a moment. In the momentary eye contact I can feel the pure power he emanates crackle through the air, the little bit of it that resides within my own core buzzing slightly in response. It's an odd feeling, one that I probably should have gotten used to by now that I still can't completely comprehend...

"Bryzu. you shall not acquire any aid from me" Lunar answers. momentarily slipping into the old speech that he first learned in his mortal body. Then he turns towards me again, though this time we don't make eye contact. "Hat. How has the wind been faring? You traverse the realms together, though I wish to know bofrian." he asks, but I'm not quite sure what bofrain is... maybe it has something to do with speed? Or our conversations? As I try to figure out what in Zyaaneryth he's talking about, Ivy apparently has another question.

"What are you talking about? Is there somebody called Wind I should know about?" They ask, apparently deciding that sticking their nose into everybody else's business is a good idea. The wind snickers in my ear, obviously still amused by the current situation, so I quietly tell it to be quiet for a moment.

“The wind isn’t a physical person, no. I can speak to it though, manipulate it. It helps me fly fast, among other things, but honestly we just view each other as friends.” I hold my own staff up in the air, the wind whistling through it picking up speed at my command. It feels nice, not paying attention to the current situation for even a fraction of a second... Letting my mind soar through the air like the gusts of wind I’m so connected to.

“What? The wind is sentient?” Ivy’s voice abruptly drags me back to the ground, ending my small moment of bliss.

“Of course? Most things are, after all...” I can’t believe how little the humans know, they’re probably going to end up dead if they stay here for too long.

“Foolish. I expect this *human* out of here by next cycle. Do not disappoint me.” Lunar suddenly cuts in. I’m worried, especially because he said ‘human’ the same way most things say ‘shadow’ or ‘Sun...’ Like they are the worst things on the planet. They are, of course, but it’s still worrying to me about how immediately and drastically Lunar reacted. And by next cycle?! Cycles take a long time, but the current one is almost over. I’m doomed.

“Lunar, that’s not-” I start, but then in a sudden flash he’s gone. As the silvery light recedes, I’m left standing in the open field alone... aside from the human. I know it’s not Ivy’s fault, I really do, but I can’t help but feel annoyed at them for appearing next to *me* of all things! I’m not sure how to teleport between dimensions, much less figure out how in less than a cycle!

“Alright then... we better start trying to get you back, then.” I softly hiss, trying to take the ice out of my voice, “We’re not going to get you any closer to your dimension by standing here doing nothing.” I stare out at the fresh green grass and clear blue sky, trying to ignore the dark patch corrupted by shadow. The dark spirits rarely ever show up in the grasslands, it’s strange to see the shadow-seared patch in this bright place. Ivy stands off to the side, probably one of the best ideas they’ve had since arriving in Zyaaneryth.

“What should I be doing..?” Ivy hesitantly asks, shuffling a little closer towards me. I’m not sure if they finally figured out that I should be at least a little intimidating or if the encounter with Lunar had shook them more than I thought, but the human sounded a little bit respectful.

“I don’t know, go stand over where you got teleported and try to reverse it?” I snap, still annoyed in general.

“Oh, I suppose that might work...” They mumble in reply, shuffling towards the dark patch once more. I flinch as their feet touch the shadow stained grass, still slightly amazed at Ivy’s ability to touch the darkness without getting drained in the slightest.

“Just close your eyes and imagine you’re falling back or something? I know *nothing* about portals or interdimensional travel so unless I can find somebody who *does*, we’re both doomed, you dead and me- I don’t even know what!” I yell at Ivy, though I’m truly just mad at the current situation... I do know it isn’t their fault, but sometimes I just need to yell at the closest person in order to feel a little better. It’s not the best habit, but I rarely get frustrated or mad enough to have to take it out on others so it’s one one I’ve put the most effort into stopping.

“Alright, neither do I... So I just hope for both of our sakes that you can find somebody who is.” They close their eyes, taking in a deep breath... Yet nothing changes, unless- “AH!” Ivy suddenly screams, “WH- What was that?”

“What was what?” I rush forwards, brandishing my staff in a defensive pose... It could be anything: a stray shadow, another person who went to check out the lights, even a small wasteland beast could cause somebody to shriek like that if they’ve never seen one before.

"I- I don't know... I was just closing my eyes and trying to fall back to my house like you told me, but then suddenly there were two white *eye things* there! That sounds stupid. Eyes shouldn't be scary but they eyes... well at least I think they were yes- they were *horrible*." Ivy stammers, their own eyes wide with shock- or fear.

"Oh." I let my stance drop to something a little more relaxed, though the wind still anxiously swirls around my feet blowing taller stalks of grass in a frantic dance. "These eyes, they didn't have any pupils did they? And when you looked into them- Please don't tell me you felt cold to your core... and you could feel the malice emanating from them... The hatred they thrust into you, the fear they bring out..."

"Yes, that's exactly what it was like! How- Wait... You know who those eyes belong to, don't you?"

"I do, unfortunately. I've had all too much experience with them- You know how Lunar is the god of light and all- Those eyes belong to his shadow... and if you did just see them, then we're even more doomed than we were two minutes ago." I stare up at the sky again and try to slow my breathing, the wind settling down as I do. We were already in a bad situation, and pretty much the only thing that could have made it worse just did... Yet it wasn't too late, yet.

"Right. Shadow. And that is..?" Ivy tentatively asks, but I ignore them, it's easier to explain while actually moving. Still- how does anybody *not* know what a shadow is?

"Come on we have to at least start moving instead of just standing around- I don't want The Grassland Monster to get you- Can you fly?" Flying is a pretty common skill but I decide it's best to ask- Assuming if somebody can fly or not often ends up embarrassing for one or both parties-

"Ok I'm not even going to ask about the monster, I'm already too overwhelmed to take it at this point... and fly? People here can *do that*? That's- That's kind of amazing..." The human's gaze also drifts towards the inviting sky, though I can tell it's probably more of a hopeful wonder than a calming device like it is for me. My feet itch to launch myself off the ground and into the air again, using my own gift of flight accompanied by the wind and leaving the human to probably die... but that's also a bad idea, for once it being the better decision to stay locked to the ground at least for now. Hopefully there would be a simple flight charm available at the nearest settlement, along with some proper clothes.

"Yes we can, and because you can't we need to start moving while we have time." I make a grab for their hand to start pulling the probably slower human along, but as soon as I make contact I flinch. Their skin is warm, perhaps a little cooler than most though nothing too noticeable, but a deep cold lies just beneath the warmth... The cold feels almost like a shadow, but also somehow older and more rooted in something else... Something in me doubts that Ivy isn't truly a shadow, how even a fraction of a second of physical contact could affect me like that. Ivy obviously didn't feel anything though, they just stare at me a little surprised as I flinch backwards.

"Are you ok?" They ask, their voice sounding slightly surprised but only barely like they actually want to know if I'm ok.

A quick inspect of my fingers reveal that no damage was done, and I narrow my eyes slightly, "Yeah it was nothing- let's move"

"Alright then, if you say so..." Ivy obviously doesn't believe me, but they can't do anything about it so I turn towards the nearest town and lead on. At least I think it's the nearest

town, anyways, in the grasslands towns are *constantly* popping up and abandoning themselves for some reason...

Do a travel montage or something here

Eventually we arrive at the town which had luckily stayed put since I last visited, though it turns out it did expand a decent amount. Houses cobbled together made from wood and stone line the streets, roofs made from dried grasses woven together in a surprisingly sturdy pattern. All kinds of voices drift through the air, some shouting, some laughing, some conversational, and even a few notes of song broke through the chatter long enough to be heard.

"Alright, this place should be great. Try not to bring attention to yourself please, it'll make this whole thing a lot easier if we can just get in and get out." I scan the area as I wait for Ivy to catch up, quickly spotting a market where clothes should be easy to buy.

"Huff- Alright!" Ivy runs up to my side, collapsing onto their knees, "You move quite- huff-fast, you know." They get to their feet again, slowly beginning to walk into the town's entrance. We move under an arch, presumably the main entrance, into the town proper. Luckily it's busy enough for anybody to immediately notice Ivy and their odd clothes, so we quickly pick our way through the crowd until I spot a stand selling clothing that could fit Ivy.

Buy clothes/mask for Ivy and transition into some sort of magic shops, maybe add a market scene first

Inside the shop is surprisingly tidy. In stark contrast with the faded lettering and half boarded up windows, the shelves are lined with tidy books and neatly organised items with clearly printed prices underneath each one. At the desk sits a grey cat with his nose buried in a book wearing a nice looking cloak the same blue as the sky just after it rains, apparently too engrossed in their reading material to even bat an ear at our entrance.

"Hello?" Ivy breaks the silence and finally the cat looks up, fixing us with a piercing green gaze.

"Hmph. I suppose you're here to buy something, this shop has the best staffs and charms in town." The cat gives us a sly look, "Trust me, I checked. Anyways, don't touch anything on the back shelf here," he makes a general sweeping motion behind the desk, "Or you'll be answering to me. Anyways, is there anything in particular you're looking for?" The cat leans forwards, a bronze pin with a dragon winged book emblazoned onto it flashing in the light as they do. I hesitate, where had I seen that symbol before? It seems oddly familiar, but I can't quite put my finger on why so I just move on.

"Yes, actually, we were looking to buy a simple flight charm." I walk towards a shelf, my footsteps loud against the polished mahogany floor.

"Oh? Perhaps I assumed too soon you were both stars, or are you buying for a friend?" Ivy approaches the same shelf as me, eyes wide with curiosity and wonder. They reach out to

touch something, I'm a little too short to see what, but then suddenly the shopkeeper is behind us and Ivy jerks their hand away quickly.

"Ah-! Oh sorry, I didn't hear you come up behind me, uh- What's your name?" Ivy blurts, turning to face the slightly peeved looking cat.

"I've changed my mind, you may not touch *anything* until I hand it to you. You seem far too inexperienced with magic for me to trust you with some of the charms here, I apologize." They snap.

"Hey! I-"

"Also I'd rather you didn't fly inside the shop, and it appears you are too short to reach most of the shelves. And my name is Elwan, if you must know." I have no idea what we've done to offend him, especially so suddenly, but I give the cat a glare and motion for Ivy to step back from the shelf. Elwan's tail flicks back and forth as he surveys the upper shelves and carefully reaches into a box and grabs something out of it. I spot Ivy giving the shopkeeper a similar glare from where they now stand as he inspects the small object he grabbed, giving a little shrug before handing it to the human.

"What is it?"

The flight charm, of course. Now was there anything else you wanted? Provided you have enough to pay, and if you don't I'll be taking the charm right back." The cat snapped. Wow, he sure is snooty.

I take a deep breath, trying to calm down so I don't snap back... this cat is getting on my nerves. "Yes, actually, I was looking for a book on portals to other dimensions."

"Oh?" Elwan pauses, his voice suddenly taking on a more curious note, "And why is that? Do you just want to know, or do you have evidence for or against the claim that other dimensions even exist?" He continues, excitement mounting. "You know, I myself have an interest in the topic... But sadly, I don't have any books on it in the store." Elwan suddenly stoops down to my level. "But please do tell me what you want it for, I *may* have another way for you to get that info."

The sudden and complete change of demeanour and tone in Elwan makes me stumble over my own thoughts for a moment- Is this cat really able to be trusted? He seems a little too unpredictable for my liking, but the info he promises is also way too valuable to pass up a chance at this... Not while the imposing threat of an angry god is fast approaching.

"Fine- Where is the info? We're in a bit of a hurry, to be honest."

"Oh, the individual you'll be wanting to meet is the heart of the swamp. Don't worry though, I've installed a link-stone for quick transport just in the backroom of the shop here!" Elwan gets up and dashes over to a seemingly empty spot on the wall and runs a paw along the left side of it, obviously searching for something. Then the empty part of the wall flashes with a brilliant green for a moment, the rudeness of it making Ivy jump beside me... Oh yeah, Ivy's still here, how could I have forgotten for a moment? A small twinge of doubt starts to rise within me, but I quickly disregard it. It's been ages since I've had anybody other than the wind by my side, why would I be tracking the movements of another physical body with me?

"Come on, the stone is just through here!" Elwan's voice breaks through my thoughts, and the cat motions to follow before quickly slipping through the hidden doorway into the next room. I start to follow him through, but then I get interrupted *again* by Ivy before I can do anything.

“Wait, did Elwan just walk through the wall? Can you do that too, Hat? Can you teach me how?”

I glance up at Ivy, “No, that wall isn’t there anymore. I can’t walk through walls, and I don’t think I can teach you how... Now come on, before Elwan suddenly changes his mind about this help.” I finally make it 5 seconds without any interruptions, passing through the now-fake wall and into a smaller, much more cramped room. Piles of thick dusty books line the walls from floor to ceiling, a small amount of faintly glowing papers float by the ceiling and a pile of small trinkets on the ground buzzes as Ivy and I walk in. The main part of the room, though, is the large flat stone inscribed with hundreds of faintly coloured runes which occasionally shift locations or size. I’m immediately by the side of the rock, marvelling at how intricate the entire setup must be... I know a little bit about instant teleportation thanks to an old friend, so I recognise a few of the symbols, but the vast majority of them feel completely new to me.

“Pretty neat, isn’t it?”

“This must have cost so much! It’s incredible how far teleportation magic has come. Oh and speaking of which, do you take tokens?” I take out a small leather bag filled with polished spheres of rock which clink together every time it’s shaken.

“Of course, the charm you bought costs ten, please.” Elwan holds out a paw.

“Alright.” I hand ten tokens to the cat, putting away the bag as soon as he takes them.

“How does it work?” Ivy’s voice breaks through the brief silence and I instantly get annoyed... But why? I was just thinking the same thing, and it’s a totally valid question. It’s probably the way they asked it, so suddenly and all. Probably.

“Oh, the exact workings of it all are most likely a little too complicated for you, but the basics are two stones have been linked together and now anything on them gets instantly teleported to the other once the command word is spoken in its presence! Do remember that I just gave you the incredibly simplified version, if you want the full details do the research on your own. Now, if you could just step on?” Ivy blinks, evidently not processing all the info Elwan just dumped on them, stepping onto the stone. I follow suit, stepping up onto its surface. It’s smooth and surprisingly warm to the touch, the distinct dampness of it confusingly real feeling... Ivy doesn’t notice the oddness of the rock because they wanted to wear shoes, and instead looks expectantly ahead at Elwan.

“Right, now what? Are you gonna say the words?”

I shoot a look at Ivy, why won’t they keep their mouth shut for more than 5 seconds at a time? “Just- be quiet, I’m sure Elwan knows what he’s doing.”

“I-” Ivy looks like they’re going to argue for a moment, “Alright... That’s probably for the better.”

Elwan gives us an odd look, me especially, his tail visibly flicking back and forth. “No, no, the questions are welcome... And you know, you’re lucky I recognize you Hat, or I wouldn’t have been this kind to you. There are certain types of magic that I do not tolerate and I thought you would agree with me on that... But that aside, good luck, Seek Your Knowledge!”

“I’m sorry what- What are you talking ab-?” But it’s too late for me to get in a word, as Elwan’s paw waves goodbye and the stone we stand on erupts into a pillar of glittering shining light and we are whisked away.

Whorling colours and flashing lights fill my vision, accompanied by the dread filled sensation of falling. I know most people would probably think ‘You’re almost constantly flying, why would falling be any different?’ but falling is honestly *nothing* like flying, for example when you fly you get to *move*. In this instance I can’t, even though my limbs are screaming to do anything other than sit still, I can’t. This is nothing like how the teleportation I was used to was like- But then in an instant everything stops. My mind is still reeling from the experience of teleportation and what Elwan just said, so when I try to take a step off of the stone I proceed to trip and faceplant. The ground I land on feels like warm, slightly damp planks of wood and all I can do for a moment is feel it for what it is... Just to let the disorientation fade.

“*Are you ok?*” Both the familiar voice of the wind and the unfamiliar voice of Ivy ask simultaneously.

I slowly pull myself up from the ground, placing one hand on my forehead just to make sure everything is where it should be. “I- Uh, yeah probably... Where were you, by the way?”

“Where was I? What do you mea-”

“No, not you, the other you.”

Oh, me? I was just off doing.... things. Don’t worry though, I’ll keep you safe!

A sudden gust of wind pulls me to my feet proper, and I can finally have a good look at my surroundings. We’re standing on a large deck made of slightly sun-bleached wood tied together with woven vines standing above a vast amount of wetlands. Trees occasionally poke through the marshy, uneven ground with massive branches and leaves like feathers provide a little shade where they stand. The air is pleasantly warm but a little humid, not humid enough to be uncomfortable though. The thing that catches my attention most though is the massive structure made of many different colours of what looks to be stained glass. It doesn’t look fully complete though, certainly close but something about the whole thing just feels incomplete. I’ve been to the marshlands many times before, but this strange glass building is completely new to me. It’s a little ways off, but the walkway we’ve been teleported to seems to lead directly to it.

“Come on, Ivy, it looks like that’s where we can find whatever we need to get you back.”

“Right, I’d have to agree with you on that.” Ivy steps off the rock herself, apparently unaffected by the teleportation magic... Of course they’d be unaffected, because my luck is just Like That around them apparently. I start to follow, but then suddenly the human completely disappears.

“What in the- IVY?” I call out, looking around wildly to see if I can spot where they had somehow disappeared to. How would they have even done that? Nothing I had seen that human do before tells me that they could just vanish suddenly....

There, by that tree on your left!

I turn towards the tree again, but see nothing.... Unless- There! A branch rustles ever so slightly, and definitely not in the way a breeze would have tossed it. There’s definitely somebody there, and looking closer I can tell it’s probably two somebodies- I summon a dagger in each hand from the air itself, weighing almost nothing but still incredibly deadly.

“I know you’re in that tree, now please give Ivy back or I’ll be forced to take them back by force.” I take a few steps closer to the tree, my voice deadly calm. Now I can definitely see two people crouched in one massive limb of the tree. Ivy, looking incredibly scared and generally useless, and another figure a little more covered by the feathered leaves. They have large

dragon wings and a tail that I can obviously see, as well as a blue and grey cloak that covers most of their body.

“And what makes you think you could even *try* to get them back from me? I’m sure I’m more skilled than you could ever be, and besides, I’m practically *rescuing* this thing from you! I couldn’t quite believe what I saw at first, so of course I had to take a look for myself, but it’s true!” Calls back a strangely familiar voice.

“Wait- Thing? I’m not a-” Ivy tries to get a word in, but gets cut off by their captor.

“But of course, I won’t let you take them back if *that* is how you treat them.”

“I have many reasons to believe that I am the more skilled one here,” I hurl one dagger at the tree, the blade sinking into the tree bark at blinding speed.

The stranger jerks away, “So apparently I made some miscalculations on your strength, but that does not make you the more talented! “

“Listen, just give Ivy back and nothing more needs to happen- Also perhaps explain what in Zyaaneryth you mean with any of your nonsense because I honestly have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Oh! Well most rarely do, but I do find your case most confusing. The explanation is a fairly simple one, but I will refuse to associate you with myself any longer!”

What is this person going on about? It feels like the same thing that Ewlan accused me of earlier, but it really doesn’t make sense. All I’m here to do is find out a way to somehow get Ivy back where they belong, I haven’t even used any magic since they got here!

“Fine then, I guess I’ll go save Ivy myself if you won’t bend” I launch myself into the air as gales of wind swirl around me, but something about the familiarity of the others voice stops me from attacking... The way they talk is definitely familiar too, almost as if-

“Wait- Historian?” I pause, and sure enough the head that pokes through the leaves is none other than The Historians.

“Hat?” We both stop, the winds dissipating.

“You didn’t recognize me?”

“Well you are far too insignificant compared to the vast amounts of knowledge I’ve acquired since we last met, and s-”

“All right all right I get it, you don’t care about me. But seriously can you explain what exactly is happening? I get the feeling that even though realistically I should be the only one who knows what’s going on here, you somehow know more-”

“Well actua-”

“Let me finish talking. I was minding my own business when suddenly Ivy here popped out of some sort of shadow portal out of nowhere, and now I have to get them back to whatever dimension they came from before the end of the cycle or they die!” I pause for a moment, before muttering under my breath, “And honestly? I’m starting to think that wouldn’t be so bad by now...”

“Um yeah- I feel like Lunar would have already killed me by now if it weren’t for Hat...” Ivy agrees, but I barely notice. What had I just said? Do I really want Ivy dead? Maybe I’m just as bad as Lunar when it comes to certain things, after all... Then suddenly The Historian appears in front of me.

“You met with Lunar? Recently? The god Lunar. Lunar, deity of light, creator of the moon, bane of shadows?” They roughly release Ivy, getting into my face a little too close for

comfort. "Why would he choose to visit somebody like you, *again*, may I add, over somebody like me? I have actively worked to find him for far too long already, and yet you seem to actively dislike him and yet he still comes to you?" Historian stands up again, "I must find out why, ideally soon. In the meantime, however, I'll gladly aid you! It's a great opportunity to research this newly discovered species!" They pause, seeming to finally notice the slightly alarmed look on Ivy's face, "Worry not, strange being, you will not be harmed! I just need to find out where in the universe you've come from, and perhaps a little more, so I can safely locate where your exact positioning last was and bring you directly to that spot! It shouldn't take long- perhaps around ten days, so you'll be back in no time! Probably."

"Wha-"

"Leave all questions until we have reached the Glass Library I'm having constructed! It's not *quite* done, but it's close enough that I have already begun moving most of my research and gear there. I'm sure you can see it, as it's the only real structure of note in the immediate vicinity and it has been in full view during our entire encounter thus far! Now don't fall far behind, that way the time I spend doing this instead of figuring out other important things!" And with that, The Historian finally jumps up and speeds off towards the massive structure in the distance in swift wings. How did they end up with dragon wings anyways? I'll have to ask them about that later- But now isn't the time, I should probably figure out a way to help Ivy walk faster in the meanwhile.

"Wh-who was that? What just happened? You definitely seemed to know each other, are they a threat? ...Are they really gonna find a way to bring me home?" Ivy stares into the distance at the massive glass building.

"Well... Historian is odd, but not really a threat as far as I know. They just get... really excited over certain things. Now come on, you don't want Lunar getting impatient now do you? Just try to keep up." Now I turn my head towards the library, wondering if it is worth it after all to have to work with The Historian of all life out there...

(Probably gonna add a break? May add a little walking scene but I'm not in the mood to rn)

The Library being 'not quite done' is a bit of an understatement. Yes, the main structure made up of large panes of coloured glass has been set up well enough. Yes, the inside of it appears to be filled with massive bookcases, each crammed full of ancient toms, weathered scrolls, and countless magical artefacts... But the building doesn't have a roof. Or a door. I can tell where the door is *going* to be because of the large glowing outline of where a door would go, but right now there's just a solid wall. Historian is waiting for Ivy and I where the door should be, of course, impatiently tapping a foot on the ground.

"Well that took you two long enough! I've been here for around 10 minutes, you must know, but now that you're finally here I can finally get to the interesting part and start crafting some sort of spell to bring the creature back home! Now if you would only join me inside, it's only a short flight and I see the creature has a flight charm, no?" History flapped their wings and zoomed off, again, leaving me behind and alone with Ivy... again.

"Alright come on, I don't think keeping them waiting for long would be a good idea."

“Yeah so about that- how do you *use* this flight charm? To me it just looks like a boring necklace with some shiny red bead attached to it... I’ve tried shaking it around or imagining I’m flying and stuff, but it just doesn’t work!”

“Oh that.”

“Yeah I was hoping for some help with this whole magic thing because I’m still really confused about this all...” They trail off, awkwardly holding up the pendent.