

## **Main Information**

\*His vision's blinded.

Welcome to...



## Intro

Hello, hello! Introducing: UTY Starfruit!

I had originally made this AU in February 2024, but I've been elaborating on it ever since. Granted, there have been many—and I mean *many*—changes that have been made over the months; the concept has stayed the same, though!

This is the first AU I made for UTY, a marking of my slow descent into my inevitable obsession with this fangame... I've been afraid to share the story for a while (mainly because of how underdeveloped it used to be), but now that it's more developed, I can do whatever I want!!! Yippee!!!

## Credits

- ❖ Toby Fox - creator of Undertale
- ❖ MasterSwordRemix and the UTY Team - creators of Undertale Yellow
- ❖ AeroArtwork - inspiration of some design elements (also a UTY dev :3 )
- ❖ EldritchDream/Reaper - creator of UTY: Rusty Redemption, inspiration some design and character elements

❖ ZipZedZiltch - inspiration of some design elements

## Basic Summary

UTY: Starfruit is an Undertale Yellow AU, in which the Starlo seen in the Meta Flowey fight becomes a reality. It takes place after a Neutral Route, but Clover dies like they do in the Flawed Pacifist route.

## AU Overview

After losing in a showdown with Clover, everything seems to be over for Starlo. He's lost it all—his friends, his status, and now even his life. His last interactions with everyone close to him were all fights and arguments. If there was any chance to make it up, it was long gone now.

Strangely enough, he finds himself revived. But nothing feels right. Nothing *is* right. With the help of his odd (but appreciated) flower friend, he manages to adhere to his new form. Anger, fear, shock, sorrow—all of these confusing emotions stir in a volatile concoction. Nothing is right. He needs to be free. But he is free, isn't he? Not anymore.

If only someone's morale could snap him back.

## Navigation!

Characters

🌸 Additional Info

Timeline

External Links

## Characters

## Main Page



### Main Characters

#### Starlo

The victim of this tragic tale. After being reborn into a new body, the confident lawman is now lost to the dusty sands of time. With his boisterous facade shattered, only fearful fragments remain. Despite receiving the gift of life again, he lives in constant paranoia and agony—all thanks to the vines strangling his fragile form. Without said vines, the fallen star's body would be reduced to nothing but the pile of dust it was before. Even though a few thoughts despise the greenery's grasp, most of them find comfort from being trapped in the flora. Or have they simply given up on the idea of freedom? It's hard to make out anything through the contradictions.

Residing in the secluded Greenhouse, Starlo finds it hard to socialize. No longer the extroverted entertainer he was before, his friends are few and far between. He doesn't know who to trust anymore. ...Well, he knows he can trust his best friend. And maybe his visitor, too. Fear is a strange thing.

#### Clover

Luck didn't seem to help them this time. Jumping into the underground with a justified mission, the cowpoke had a goal to find the ones who had fallen. With the guidance of their best friend, they had wanted their endeavor to be as peaceful as possible... but when faced with a sheriff who genuinely wanted them dead, there wasn't much they could do. Perhaps it was a bit unfair to force the lawman to let his guard down first, but what other choice did they have? It was only self-protection, right? Starlo wanted to kill them; he held Clover at gunpoint! That doesn't matter much anymore, thanks to their quick skills. Was it wrong to hurt him at his lowest? Was it wrong to kick someone who was already down? Maybe, but they had won the quick draw and took him out in one shot.

After making it past the Wild East and traversing through the Steamworks, they were finally met with Asgore's throne room in New Home. *Finally*, after so long,

they could go home. They would find those missing children, and they would be free, right?

Wrong. Asgore came prepared; they were killed in an instant.

## Flowey

The truth is smothered beneath a growth of lies. Being condemned to a singular floral form, it really limited how much chaos he could really cause. Especially since he was getting tired of the same old attempts and the same old people. After leading the human through the Underground, he managed to get to know them better than he already had. Of course, a strong relationship was nothing that would stop him from getting what he wanted.

At least, that was until he found out *Asgore* had Clover's soul now. How irritating, spending all that time with that human, just for all of it to go to waste again! But he wasn't going to let this timeline go. Not quite yet.

He dug deep within the cracks of this world, pulling out the "code" for that sheriff. He wanted to have a little bit of fun, toying with the people he used to hold so dear... With a little bit of determination, vines and flowers, and a couple failed attempts... He was back. Built to his eldritch perfection and basically all his.

Flowey would become the new Starlo's closest friend. He'd talk to him when no one was around. He'd quell his fears and maybe even raise a few if he was feeling up to it. And on the side, he sent ill dreams to the youthful and excellent. Just to rile them up and prepare them to find their long lost friend.

## Moray

They're treading some dangerous waters. When Starlo left, they were faced with waves of denial. "Is he really gone?" "Did our fight really cause him to leave?" "Are we at fault after all?" No one took it lightly, of course, but their greatest regret was never hearing him apologize. Or apologizing themselves. It nagged at them every waking hour, leaving their sadness to pool in their heart.

Nightmares of strangling vines began to infest their mind. And eventually, they managed to trace the roots back to their source—with the help of the flowers along the way. Seeing their sheriff, their *friend*, in this... corrupted state made them feel uneasy. Part of them hated that he looked like this. Another part said that it was still him, and they just had to accept it. Acceptance was hard. Moving on was hard.

They had a lot of empathy, though, and they couldn't help but put it to use. Maybe, with time and care, they could rebuild their lost friendship. Maybe they could nurture this dying plant and help it grow again.

## Side Characters

### Orion

His hope is dimming like a dying star. Orion thought that his brother should finally learn that, at this age, there was no place to mess around as if he was a child. Work came first now, and Starlo was too wrapped up in his playful delusions to realize that. So maybe he lashed out at him. So maybe he took it too far. So maybe he didn't regret it, watching him walk out that door in defeat.

He didn't regret it at the time, but he sure did now. He regretted it a whole lot. That was the last time he ever saw him. That was the last time he ever spoke to him before he just... left. Left for good. It was infuriating—what he himself did and what Starlo did. If only—*if only*—Starlo had half a mind to listen to him for once. Maybe then they wouldn't have had that talk. Maybe then Orion wouldn't have to live with the guilt.

### Crestina and Solomon

Their constellation of a family seems more empty without him in it. The farm didn't feel as lively without Starlo's enthusiasm. The parents were struggling to handle their own grief alongside Orion's. It was hard to accept that Starlo was truly gone, and without a proper memorial, too. There was no dust to bury. That did bring the possibility that he wasn't actually dead... Or was that wishful thinking?

The searches kept bringing up nothing. Crestina and Solomon tried asking around some more, but they all brought the same results. No new information and more condolences. Even Starlo's friends were unsure of where he was. The pictures on the wall only served as taunts. The idea that Starlo wasn't coming back was becoming all too real. Life went on, after all. But in the back of their minds, there was hope. Hope that this will pass. Hope that Starlo would return.

## Ace

Playing the right cards seems to be tricky this time around. As the Five's voice of reason, he agrees that making any attempts to find Starlo—especially so long after he had disappeared—is nothing but feeble. So witnessing Moray leave at ungodly hours of the day was nothing short of concerning for him. Grief was a tough thing to deal with, he knew, but this was getting closer to insanity or just plain denial. It was something he could tolerate for the first few days. Now...

Arguing with them hadn't gotten them anywhere. They were insistent that he was somewhere out there, still alive... The thought was nice. But if they weren't willing to let up, then riling them up didn't seem like a good idea. Maybe an experiment would be nice. After making a small doll that resembled Starlo and gave it to Moray, he was willing to change his view until they proved him wrong.

## Ed and Mooch

Not even brawn nor bribery can reverse these actions. Calling out their leader and friend wasn't something they thought they'd ever do, but it had to happen eventually. Ed had been set on bringing Starlo to his senses; Mooch was hesitant but followed along in the end. Once they had left their former sheriff in the dust, it didn't take long before someone wanted to go back and apologize. Despite the uproar of disagreement—weren't they moving too fast? they could've at least given him a few hours—Mooch went back into the Wild East to check in on Starlo.

Ed thought he had been too harsh with him. ...Then again, if he wasn't going to talk about it, then who would? Would they just let Starlo continue tossing them



aside, to put on a show where they're nothing but side characters? Mooch didn't know what to make of it. Of course, Starlo had been extremely unfair. Who prioritizes a *stranger* over people they've known for years? It was insane! But if that was what led to his disappearance, maybe it would've been better to lay it on him lightly or something. Ugh, but Starlo was damn stubborn. Always had been. So maybe this was for the best? She just wished he hadn't run away like he usually did...

## Ceroba

Devoted, decisive, determined. The moment Ceroba had caught up to Starlo and noticed his absence, she spent days looking for him. She probably searched the whole Dunes two times over. The missing posters brought no responses. People recognized his face—of course they did—but they didn't know where he had gone. It felt emptier without him.

As the hours rolled past in an indescribable blur, the fear and guilt only grew stronger. She was at the end of her rope here. Starlo wouldn't have run away as a joke or because he was mad; even if he did, he would always return. The possibility that he *couldn't* return was becoming more viable. And that was the worst thing. First her husband, then her child, now her best friend. Was she really losing everything and losing herself in return? She couldn't help but feel like she really could have done something. She was there when Starlo was reaching his lowest. And she let him go.

God, Starlo, why did you have to leave...?

## Guardener and the Lil Bots

Mechanical parts whizz to life from within the expanse of white. The Lil Bots are curious, Guardener is still. Upon meeting their new roommate, the smaller mechs get more and more curious by the day. They peer around corners, whisper theories about who he is... Eventually, the littlest one with the biggest heart approaches the newcomer; the larger two follow. Lefty, Righty, and Three quickly connect with Starlo, realizing he's not as scary as they made him out to be.

As for Gardener, she remains in hibernation mode unless necessary. Although dormant, the flora thrives because of Starlo's efforts and new blooms have arrived as well. The two are close, drawn together by their connections to the plants around them. Starlo knows how to be quiet around her; the Lil Bots... not so much. But at least Starlo can keep them busy.

## Flower Girls

The flowers of new beginnings have sprouted. After finding the [Wild East's sheriff](#) once again—looking a little worse for wear—the Flower Girls made the decision to help ease him back into their world. Pedla was the one that suggested the idea to her sisters. Her outgoing personality helped her establish a quick connection with Starlo.

Violetta and Rosa's relationships took longer, but eventually all three of the girls had managed to bring Starlo out of his shell. Under the sweltering heat of the Swelterstone, these four find comfort within themselves. Gone is the intricate mess of a plotline, and in comes the easygoing feeling of day-to-day experiences.

## **Additional Info**

## Main Page



### Starlo

- ❖ Both of his legs are broken
  - When he moves (slides? slithers?), you can slightly hear the crunching of bone
  - One of his legs is falling off due to being strangled by the vines too much
    - It would be gone without the vines; it's only attached because of them
- ❖ Memory is absolutely wiped
  - The only thing he remembers pre-corruption is dying at Clover's hands
  - Flowey tested giving all memories back; didn't go so well
    - The poor guy was too panicked and too distrusting in Flowey
- ❖ The current Starlo is actually attempt 4 of creation
  - Attempt 1 dusted immediately
  - Attempt 2 lived for a bit longer, but was too flimsy to survive. He couldn't move without being in excruciating pain, and died due to the exertion
  - Attempt 3 had to be killed by Flowey himself; he was able to survive on his own but became restless since there was no way for him to speak

### Clover

- ❖ Only Starlo and Flowey can see them
- ❖ Their favorite pastime is "visiting" Starlo
  - They can't physically hurt him, but they can talk to him and gently touch him (Does he like it? No. Do they care? Somewhat, but not enough to stop)
    - All they want is to let him know they're sorry
  - They only do it to "check in on him"; they're just curious about his new form
- ❖ They still talk to Flowey, and still sort of sees him as a friend
  - The feeling's not reciprocated as a whole, but neither of the two seem to mind
- ❖ Even after Starlo comes out of the Steamworks, they come to him occasionally

## Flowey

- ❖ He can see the other humans' spirits if he wants to
  - Not as important to the plot but still a cool detail
- ❖ Revived Starlo to entertain himself for a bit before the next human fell
  - He wanted to mess with everyone in this world just a bit longer
- ❖ Didn't want to fully break Starlo's trust in Moray, just wanted to stir up enough doubt so that it would have a noticeable effect on him
- ❖ For a while, he actually liked being around Starlo and watching him figure out how the world around him worked
- ❖ Went to Moray since he knew he was the most empathetic and easiest to work with
  - Even though Mooch wanted to apologize first, she had an attitude Flowey didn't want to put up with
- ❖ In the end, he's still watching from a distance

## Moray

- ❖ Was actually in severe denial that Starlo had been brought back to life
  - Didn't think they were seeing things right, but as time went on they knew this was real
- ❖ Aside from Flowey, they were the one Starlo trusted the most
  - It took very long for that trust to be gained
  - This is the case since Moray is naturally empathetic, and regrets that their last interaction was a fight
- ❖ Introduced Starlo back to the outside world, was the one who guided him out in the first place
  - Was also there when exposing him to his family again
    - They still occasionally visit Starlo while he's at his family's farm
- ❖ Golden flowers now have a new meaning to them
- ❖ They still have a few scars from the times Starlo accidentally attacked them

## Side Characters

### Orion

- ❖ Struggled placing the blame after his and Starlo's fight
  - Tried very hard to convince himself that his brother was in the wrong and he was only trying to help him
  - It got even harder when Starlo died
- ❖ Used work as a distraction to keep the regret at bay
  - Sometimes it stirred up old memories that didn't help with the "distraction" element
  - It was hard to work when he needed time to grieve
- ❖ Seeing him again after weeks of nothing but guilt nearly pushed him to tears
  - Key word is nearly
- ❖ Now reunited with his brother, he's dedicated to repairing their relationship and gaining his trust back
- ❖ It's easier to move on now that he finally has some sort of closure

### Crestina and Solomon

- ❖ Initially struggled with accepting Starlo's death
  - Accepting his rebirth was easier
- ❖ Crestina loves telling old stories to Starlo; it reminds her of when he was younger
- ❖ Solomon lets Starlo help him with various chores
  - The help is appreciated, and it makes it feel like things are finally going back to normal
  - Starlo also likes helping
- ❖ Both of them still see and care for Starlo like a son, disregarding his terrifying form
  - They missed him
- ❖ In the end, Starlo lives with them on the farm

- Starlo decorates the place by spreading his own flowers everywhere; it gives it a bit more character
- He can sleep inside if he'd like, but Starlo prefers sleeping outside

## Ace

- ❖ Definitely thought Moray was stuck in denial—or worse, losing their mind—after Starlo died
  - Considered actually getting them professional help; refrained from doing so
    - Mainly because he knew that he and the others could still help
- ❖ Light sleeper; woke up to talk to Moray every time they woke from a nightmare
  - Even if Moray wasn't too receptive, he'd still try to rationalize them
  - Rationale wasn't what they needed but it took a little while for Ace to figure that out
- ❖ Not that good at sewing and whatnot, but he tried making the Starlo plush as accurate as possible
  - He wasn't all too sure if Starlo was really alive at the time, but seeing Moray calm down was good enough for him

## Ed and Mooch

- ❖ Mooch was the first to actually forgive Starlo
  - Went back to the Wild East to look for him, waited for the others to come back
  - Surprisingly the thought of apologizing came to her first
- ❖ It took Ed a good while to simmer down after the initial fight
  - Still somewhat salty about it, but knows that Starlo is “renewed” in this form
- ❖ When Starlo was reintroduced to the posse, Mooch was the first one to come over
  - She also gave hugs almost immediately
    - She was attacked ever so slightly but she didn't mind
- ❖ Mooch and Starlo like to go on little adventures with each other
  - Usually they climb trees or venture out somewhere into the Dunes

- ❖ Ed and Starlo sometimes fight for fun
  - They can both hit pretty hard; they're resilient, though
  - None of them get too hurt, but sometimes someone has to break them up

## Ceroba

- ❖ Spent days looking for Starlo after he initially disappeared
  - Put up missing posters, asked around on the daily, checked in every place that could've possibly been accessible to them
- ❖ Absolutely crushed when she realized he was dead
  - She couldn't handle the fact that she had lost everyone she loved
- ❖ Had to deal with even more grief than before
  - Struggled to handle it all on her own
    - I really mean she struggled here
  - The Four had to help her out since they knew that she was definitely not taking any of this lightly
- ❖ She cried upon seeing Starlo make his return
  - She hadn't cried like that in a long time
- ❖ Still sees Starlo as her best friend even if he barely remembers her

## Guardener and the Lil Bots

- ❖ Starlo's first four friends (excluding Flowey)
  - In order, Starlo made friends with: Three, Righty, Lefty, Guardener
- ❖ Lil Bots were hesitant about getting close to Starlo because of how scary he looked
  - Plus, not a lot of people came into the Greenhouse due to its abandoned nature
- ❖ Starlo played with the Bots almost every day
  - It was a nice change of pace for both parties
    - Lil Bots had someone new to play with; Starlo wasn't as lonely anymore
- ❖ Lil Bots introduced Starlo to Guardener



- Up until then, she was unaware of his presence
- She doesn't mind that Starlo was there since he respected the flora like she does
  - He also keeps the Lil Bots busy so she doesn't have to
- ❖ Still visited by Starlo even after he left the Greenhouse
  - They won't be left alone any longer

## Flower Girls

- ❖ Made friends with Starlo after he's released out of the Greenhouse
  - Pedla was the first one to connect with Starlo because of her friendly personality
    - She also remind Starlo of his golden flowers
  - Violetta, surprisingly, clicked with Starlo quite well
    - The two of them take care of the little sprout in Oasis Valley; Starlo also grew more of his own plants there
  - It took longer for Rosa to truly warm up to Starlo
    - She spreads a bunch of gossip to him; even though he doesn't quite understand, he likes listening anyways
- ❖ All three of them visit with Wild East and Sunnyside Farm more often now
  - Pedla and Rosa sell flowers like they do in the canon Pacifist Route
  - Violetta sticks back with Starlo and tend to various flowers
- ❖ Sometimes they make flower crowns for each other
  - It's a little hard for Starlo to make them, but he's getting the hang of it

## **Timeline**

## Main Page



### Before the Fall

Brotherly squabbles weren't a rare occurrence. If anything, they had been part of Orion and Starlo's normal for years. They had been close ever since they were kids, but they had drifted apart over time. Starlo stopped visiting the farm as often. Orion barely went to the Wild East. They used to follow one another around, now they were separated by their own differing views.

Orion sided with their parents. Roleplaying wouldn't get Starlo all too far in life. Starlo thought otherwise. There was more to life than working non-stop. Besides, didn't Orion realize his "nonsense" was actually helping their family out with crop sales? He wasn't— Did he just call him *delusional*?!

Petty threats and jabs eventually escalated into full-blown arguing. Orion wanted Starlo to settle down and actually do something with himself. He told him to grow up, that those days playing pretend were over for good. Starlo told him to shut up. He hadn't done that in years. He was an adult! He could make his own choices in life! He was responsible for himself; just because Orion was his older brother didn't mean he could control his life like this!

Starlo got fed up quickly. After a while, he picked up the pieces of his broken pride and walked out the door with the remnants of the fight lingering in the air. He... He couldn't believe it. His own brother. Turning against him. Acting like he couldn't live for himself. Betrayal, that's what it was.

But Orion stayed. How typical of Starlo to turn on his heel and run from his problems. Can't he just come to terms with reality for once? ... Maybe he went a little too far. Starlo wasn't delusional or narrow-minded, he just— No. No, he has to face the music somehow. He has to realize that life down here isn't as action-packed as he wants it to be.

Just three weeks later, a human fell into the underground.

## Dusty Patches

After jumping into Mt. Ebbot with their mission in mind, Clover wasn't going to let anything deter them from completing it. It was a dangerous and risky endeavor, sure, but the young child knew how to hold their own. Although lacking proper protection, they managed to peacefully force their way through the Underground. Of course, with how pacifist they were, they had a few allies rooting for them. Most notably, though, was Flowey—a slightly enigmatic flower who was there with Clover from the start. He and Clover shared a goal: get to the Barrier so the human could go home. Even if they got a bit sidetracked with all the friendship-making, they were still willing to get home as soon as possible.

Exiting the Dark Ruins and wishing good luck to Dalv; walking through Snowdin and joining Martlet on her raft; and eventually falling head first into the Dunes with no one by their side, for the most part—Clover began to approach the Wild East. They had reunited with Martlet right before reaching Oasis Valley, but she was thrown in jail right after meeting Starlo and his posse. (So much for “I’ll protect you with my SOUL” ... She’s trying her best.)

The time spent with the Feisty Five was an enjoyable one, that was for sure. Gear upgrades, good food, and an environment that Clover felt was fitting for them; what was there to hate? Flowey was less than happy with them partaking in such entertainment, but he just advised them to play along for now. Starlo, being the so-called “sheriff” and all, would obviously let them go eventually.

But right after the posse fell apart, it was clear that Clover would have to fight their way out. They tried being as peaceful as they could; it proved to be futile. No matter what they did and how they ACTed... they had to kill the lawman. It didn't take long for his guard to fall—that is when Clover shot. After a short encounter from the sheriff's best friend and his family, a small dosage of guilt began to settle in.

They moved on from their... misdemeanor, venturing through the Steamworks and putting almost every bot they saw out of commission. Despite how their bullets pierced the metal, they never felt their will to kill increase. (If anything, they still felt

bad for their previous murder...) It took them a good while, but they finally got out of the abandoned factory. They were now in the home stretch.

## Clover's Fate

Now that they had finally reached New Home, Clover knew their freedom was arriving. They hadn't lost sight of their original mission—to find where the five missing humans had gone. Perhaps arriving at the Barrier and talking to Asgore would help bring justice to those children.

After meeting the King face-to-face in his throne room, it became clear that Clover wasn't making it out alive. Albeit hesitantly, Asgore was set on gaining another human SOUL to help his citizens. Being led to the barrier, Clover also found out where those children were—though they were definitely more dead than alive. No... They were shaking, but fear didn't stop them from wanting to avenge those who had fallen.

Asgore, however, had other plans. Throughout their fight, he never let Clover have an opening to attack or heal. The human died at Asgore's hands. Their SOUL, gleaming that brilliant yellow, was safely contained in a glass vial.

## Strangled Secrets

Well. There went another.

Losing Clover wasn't too big of a deal. Their SOUL was held captive now. Flowey was *so close*. But every moment he waited was another moment closer to Asgore getting that final SOUL before him... He just had to wait for the next human to fall. He'd do it then.

For now, though, he wanted to do something to pass the time. Watching the monsters down here could only entertain him for so long. Watching the monsters in the Wild East grieve over the loss of their famed sheriff would probably get old very quickly. Hm...

Maybe he could get involved in their lives? They've already changed for the worse. He could stick back, pull a few strings—or vines, for that matter—and watch as it all unfolded...

So into the Steamworks he went, trying over and over to recreate Starlo using the materials around him. It was getting irritating, though, and dispersing of all the dust was annoying. A bit of his own determination, the sheriff's remaining "code" and dust, and an ungodly amount of vines and flowers... And there he was. Starlo, in all his plant-infested glory. He was so confused about literally everything. Flowey was good enough at giving tutorials, this wasn't really any different.

He didn't want anyone to find their sheriff too early on. That was something he'd touch up on later. It was good they were already in a secluded place. Starlo was probably too scared to leave or explore more parts of the Steamworks, which meant no one would see him until everything was set in place.

This was only stage one.

## A Hazardous Home

Starlo has made himself familiar with his newfound surroundings. It's... a little worse for wear, but all the flora seems to welcome him as one of their own. It's nice to know that he's not alone in this place.

He wasn't sure what was behind the doors of the Greenhouse. And he didn't want to know. Here, it was secluded and quiet. It was all he wanted. At least he knew what would happen here. Outside? He couldn't wrap his head around what he could encounter out there. It was too unpredictable. *He* was too unpredictable.

But even the safest of places could bring upon danger. That— That *traitor*, that human child, kept on coming to visit him. To look at him, to gaze upon their work." This was all their fault! This was all because of them! Every time he saw that glimmer of yellow, he'd lash out. His vines just went straight through them; their form rippled like water but no damage was done. That just made him angrier. Despite *everything* they've done, he couldn't give them what they rightfully deserved? He couldn't give them the same treatment they gave to him? He couldn't *kill them* like they killed him?!

Sooner or later, the white of the Greenhouse was covered with his green and yellow. Did he feel bad? Yes. No. He couldn't tell. It looked pretty. But that human...

Flowey told him not to worry about them. He's been visiting too. It was nice to have company.

Whatever. The human didn't matter. They didn't matter anymore, because he had better friends. Three little robots, much smaller than he was. Lefty, Righty, and Three. They were nice. He loved playing around and talking with them. They didn't see him as a monster. They just saw him as... him. That was what he wanted. There was a much larger robot, too. Her name was Gardener. She watched over the flora and didn't mind that Starlo was making more. He liked her. Someone else had respect for the plants that covered him.

He wouldn't be leaving here any time soon. He had everything he needed. Who needed the outside, anyway?

## Lost to Time

The Wild East felt less lively without their beloved sheriff around.

Everything was so conflicting. Who in the posse would take Starlo's role? They felt like *someone* should be the leader, but it felt almost wrong to stand in his place. They had to admit, it didn't feel right being without Starlo. Ceroba spent her time asking if anyone had seen Starlo, putting up missing posters and praying for anything—anyone—to show up. Nothing for the first hours. Nothing for the first day. And the days after that.

The town was bustling with soft whispers of rumors or theories. Tension tainted the air. The hope that he was just "missing" began to twist into a darker truth. Maybe he wasn't missing, but gone for good.

The thought didn't settle well in anyone's mind.

Sleep didn't come easy for Moray. Nothing came easy for any of them. Waking up didn't feel right without Starlo's energetic greetings. The worst part of it all were the dreams. Perhaps they just needed to let out some steam; perhaps this whole situation was taking a toll on them. But their dreams... They were strange. They always involved plants. They always involved Moray themselves. And seemingly endless wandering.

They were always one to have positive, optimistic views. ...They didn't want to admit that they were losing hope, too. And yet there was something within them that clung to the belief that Starlo was still alive...

## The Thorns of Trust

None of Moray's dreams were letting up. In fact, they only seemed to get even worse and even violent. How many of them ended right before their demise? They've been seeing these for how long now? A week, almost nine days? They couldn't shake off the feeling that all of this meant something deeper...

Upon exiting their home, a little flower greeted them, going by the Told them that he knew where Starlo was. ...He might be hiding deep within the Steamworks? They probably should've been suspicious of the tip, but they had to admit that they were a bit desperate for anything at this point.

So off they went, traveling through the decrepit facility in search for their lost sheriff. They couldn't help it. It didn't feel right without Starlo. The town felt less lively without his rambles and high-stakes adventures. ...They never even got to apologize after the posse fought with him. Look where that got them now.

When they got to the Greenhouse, they were in too deep to back out now. Lo and behold, Starlo was there. But he was different. Oh, so different. He was restrained by his own vines and flowers, a far cry from the freedom he once had. His face looked almost corrupted. He didn't even talk like Starlo. Multiple voices rang out from the echo flower perched on his hat, and... was that dust on his boots?

Starlo was hostile. Fearful. Paranoid. He struck first, and Moray had no choice but to fight back. They didn't want to fight him; they only wanted to get him *back*. They only slashed at him once, and that hurt more than anything. They came close—very close—to getting seriously injured, but they managed to remind Starlo who they were. Who *he* was. Starlo had come to his senses. Scrambled apologies were heard from him; Moray accepted every one, relaxing as he healed them.

They went back to the Wild East afterwards. It quickly set in that Starlo was *alive*. He was different. But more or less alive. The realization was messing with their heart. Everyone else thought he was gone... but he was there.



## Secluded Delusions

The hours after Moray's escapade were full of questions.

Ed wondering why they didn't meet them at the saloon. Mooch begging to go with them next time. Ace wanting to know where they went, and why. It was all a bit too much. Maybe everything that happened in the Steamworks was just another, horribly vivid dream? ...No, the fresh scars on their body definitely said otherwise.

So they twisted the truth a bit. They were looking for Star again. Even speaking his name made them notice the mood drop. They went over to the Steamworks and got themselves into a bit of a scuffle; they managed to leave before things got bad. Nothing too serious, and they even added that they weren't quite in their right mind at the time.

Ed was the one to remind them—remind *all* of them—that Starlo was probably gone for good. It was hard for everyone to accept, especially since it only happened a week ago. Everyone except Moray, though. But if there was one thing they were good at, it was acting. They said they knew that already, but there wasn't any harm in trying. Maybe one day, they said, he'd come back. Maybe one day it would happen, because Starlo was alive and only partially unwell.

But until then, they would just have to play along.

Within the Greenhouse, a small flower stirred.

Flowey was back again. Amidst Starlo's happy chirps and the eager swish of his vines were little rambles about his new friend. Or old friend? Memories were weird and uncomfortable and he bet half of them were unreliable, anyway. But still! Another person! After so long! Maybe living in silence *was* getting a bit old...

But Flowey told him not to trust Moray. ...Because they'd hurt him? Why? They seemed nice enough— Well, they did technically hurt him today, yeah, but... Oh. Betrayal didn't sound nice. It made him want to break something over and over until there was nothing left of it. Moray wouldn't do that to him. Moray put their trust in him and he did too. He was safe with them around. They wouldn't hurt him in his safe haven, would they? He wasn't sure what he'd do if they did...

## A Shift in Perspective

The Swelterstone's light barely shone through the windows. Ace didn't know if Moray knew, but he was wide awake.

He had been thinking about them recently. They had been oddly secretive as of late. Why? Maybe that one escapade had only been the beginning. All the times they had appeared out of nowhere, or stuck back because they were "busy," or woke up later than everyone else—maybe those were all times spent "looking for Starlo"... or spent in the Steamworks.

Their demeanor hadn't gone unnoticed. Oh well. Everyone had things to hide. Though if it was relating to their fallen sheriff... He couldn't help but get involved.

So he waited. Waited for Moray to get out of their sleeping bag, waited for them to prepare for another outing. Then he got off of his hammock to approach them. Confronting them was easy enough. Starlo was obviously the first thing on their mind—it had been the same for the past two weeks. Moray was shocked, but only in a way that made Ace think they had been waiting for someone to figure it out.

Then came the gift. He wasn't the best at giving people things, nor was he the best at making presents. He supposed that a good way to prove that Starlo was out there, and that Moray was actually seeing him, was to assign Moray a task.

"Go to the Steamworks tonight—or wherever you've been going. If Starlo's really there and you really are looking for him... On the chance that you find him, I want you to give him this."

Moray hesitated. They took him up on this deal, though, and off they went.

Starlo enjoyed the plush as much as Moray did.

It was adorable, watching him poke at the little thing and listening to the happy—and partially confused—comments that came out of the echo flower. Moray couldn't help but wonder what would happen when they came back empty handed.

Ace was proved right, yes, but what would he do about that information? Keep it to himself? Spread the news? Doubt Moray's results?

They couldn't tell. When they returned and met his gaze, his expression told them nothing.

## **A Flower in Full Bloom**

There it was.

A week after they had given him the plush, Moray had finally convinced Starlo to step out of the Greenhouse. Not just for a few minutes or hours—for good. It took almost three weeks, but they had finally done it. They made sure to take it slow for him, no matter how much it would worry the others. Their sheriff was going to come home. And he was actually going to stay here this time.

The cold, decrepit metal gave away to sunlight and sand. The hostility and fear was replaced with... intrigue? Confusion? Moray couldn't quite tell, but he knew he was starting to feel safer. But maybe that could've just been their presence helping him out.

Outside was... weird. There were so many colors and sights and new things he hadn't felt before. Moray introduced him to people. People who reminded him of... of something. He couldn't locate what it was. Those were his "parents"—Crestina and Solomon... or Ma and Pa—and his "brother." Orion. He knew that name. They were something called "family"? He liked the sound of that. He wasn't sure why they looked so sad when they saw him. Moray said family was something that was happy. But they reassured him that everyone was happy, just in a different way.

Next, Moray showed him to their own friends. Apparently, they were—are?—Starlo's friends as well. There were three of them. He knew their names because Moray had talked about them a lot. Ed, Mooch, and Ace. Hey, Ace was the one who made the mini him! He didn't think they were expecting to see him. And there was Ceroba. He remembered her. And she remembered him. There was a lot of hugging and more of the "different" happy. He kinda liked it. He could actually hug all of them with the vines on his back!

There was finally a sense of normalcy. Of course, Starlo wasn't... as they all remembered him, but it was still him. Past the vines and the broken mess he was, it was still him. And they wouldn't let him go again.