

A Tale of Two Foxes

By Andrew Sly

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CHAPTER ONE

The Other Dimension

I had spent the greater part of the morning pacing the living room reading through what I was going to say at my Interview. I stopped to look at the time. "One o'clock," I said. "I'd better get going."

I walked back through the kitchen to the garage entrance and gazed from the steps at the old Volkswagen Bug that sat in the far garage slot. It was a deep red color with visible rust on the hub caps and there were a few dents in the back from an accident I was in a few years go. The interior was just as weathered. There were tears in the leather seats and the cover of the console was missing. The car looked old, very old, but at least it ran.

I padded across the garage floor to

the car feeling the cold rough cement on my paws, wishing I had more time before the interview. I pulled the handle to open the driver's side door, and it fell right off. I looked down at the detached handle in my paw and sighed. "Not again..." I mumbled.

For the third time that week the handle had fallen off. I didn't have time to put the handle back on so I tossed it into the console and climbed into the seat. I had to slam the door closed to get it to stay.

The car was a model specially designed for foxes, but was hardly fit for one. I had to stretch a bit to reach the gas pedal, and there was no place for my tail so I ended up uncomfortably sitting on it. Some of the newer cars I had seen had those things, but my twenty year old car did not.

After making myself as comfortable as I could I stuck the key into the ignition and started the car. It roared to life spitting out blackish fumes and bounced a bit as the engine coughed.

"I'll get a new car first if I get the job," I mumbled.

I did have some money, but most of it went in to paying for my house and a few

other luxuries. After losing my last job I didn't have quite enough money in the bank to buy a new car. Food and shelter come before transportation.

With a heavy sigh I returned my focus to driving and backed out of the garage. The car made a loud "pitter-pub-pub" noise as it bounced down the road.

I arrived at the research center an hour later and pulled into a slot in the back of the parking lot to give myself more time to rehearse. As I approached the building, I saw a mouse struggling to open the large glass doors.

He stopped and stepped back. "Those humans never do consider us small animals do they," he said, turning to me.

"Here, let me see what I can do," I said.

I jumped up onto one of the small cement poles in front of the door and jumped off that grabbing the door handle as I came down. The latch clicked and the door swung open.

"Thanks," the mouse said as he walked in.

I walked in behind him. "So, do you work here?"

"I work in the storage area in the

basement. They told me it was a fitting position for a mouse.”

“That must feel rather insulting,” I said. “If you’ll excuse me, I have an interview I must be getting to. Have a nice day!”

“You have a nice day too.” he replied, turning toward an elevator.

I began to have second thoughts as I walked over to the front desk. The lady at the counter looked down at me with a bored expression.

“Welcome to Syntec Biotechnical Research and Engineering Laboratories, how can I help you today?” she asked in a robotic tone.

“I am here for an interview.”

“Name please.”

“Whispricushennik Reedwell.” I looked up meeting her gaze.

She had beautiful, deep green eyes sitting behind a pair of purple rimmed glasses.

“Alright, I will let Margaret know you are here. You may sit in the waiting area,” she said pointing to a door just across the hall.

I nodded and walked over. A stack of newspapers sat on a table next to the door.

With one in my paws, I sat by the window and began to read; it was just boring politics.

A half hour later, a tall, blond woman with bright red lipstick that made her lips look larger than they were entered. She had on a red blouse with frills around the collar, a black skirt that reached down to her ankles, and a pair of black high heeled shoes with reddish orange stockings.

“Whispricushennik?

Whispricushennik Reedwell?” she called out.

I stood up. “Yes?”

She let out a short “humph” when she saw me and studied me for a few moments. “Very well,” she said, a hint of annoyance in her voice. “Follow me.” She turned and briskly walked out of the room.

I had to jog to keep up with her. It almost seemed as if she was trying to prevent me from reaching her office. Once we were there, she sat in a large black leather chair behind the desk and I hopped up onto the wooden chair in front. I had to stand up on my hind legs to see over the top of the desk.

She looked intently at her computer

screen. "You are here for an interview?"

"That's correct."

"So you want to work in the research wing?"

"I do."

"Can you actually type with those?" she inquired, pointing at my paws.

"Yes, I can."

"Really? I imagine it must be hard," she scoffed.

"Not really. I do generally use my own keyboard though because it is designed for use with paws instead of hands."

"Hm...I suppose, but how can I be sure your work is reliable?"

"Are you concerned because I'm a fox?" I asked, becoming annoyed.

"Just answer my question please."

"My work will be reliable because I will want to keep my job. I need money same as you."

She glared at me. "Foxes just cannot be trusted, and that's exactly why."

"What?" I was stunned at her comment.

"They're all sneaky. All foxes want is easy money."

"If I were looking for easy money I

would not have applied for a job at a biology research place,” I said, my annoyance becoming anger.

“I’m sorry, but I think you should head back to the Downton and get back to dealing drugs or whatever you do. Foxes just aren’t fit for professional jobs like this.”

I was disgusted and on the verge of exploding. “I have masters degrees in both biology and physics. I worked hard to save money so I could get a good education so I wouldn’t have to live that kind of life. I don’t live in the poorest part of the city like you assume. I don’t even live in the city. I live out in Foxburrow in a fairly nice house. I am absolutely qualified to hold a job here.”

“Heh, as a janitor maybe...” Margaret muttered.

“At least give me a chance to prove my worth. I’ve been out of work for more than two months and I really need to be making money again,” I said sternly.

“Alright fine, we’ll see how you do. We’ll go to the research center and see if you can do anything.”

She stood up and led me out the door. We walked through a few hallways

and down some sets of stairs. I tripped twice trying to keep up with her. We finally arrived at the lab, though the route there seemed to be the most convoluted one possible.

She burst through the door and said: “We’ve got someone new here that is applying for a job, so we are going to see how well he can perform.”

I stepped in beside her. “Hello, I’m Whisp.”

She walked over to one of the lab coat-wearing men and whispered something inaudible to him. Then she turned to me.

“Whisp, if you would stand over there on the deck, we are going to test a dimensional portal. Take notes and write down observations and any data necessary,” she said.

She handed me a notebook and a pencil before I headed to the deck. Then the experiment started. As things were happening in the lab I started taking notes. Having no opposable thumbs does make writing difficult, but we all learn to hold the pencil properly between the inner most toes on our forepaws and put the outermost ones underneath for support.

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The portal finally opened and I leaned over the edge to examine it. As I did so, I felt something push me from behind. It's hard to stand upright on my hind legs, being a fox and all, because I am built for being down on four, so I much more easily lost my balance. I stumbled over the low railing on the edge of the platform losing my grip on both the pencil and the notebook, and fell into the portal. There was a bright flash of light and suddenly I was falling through the trees. I screamed as I fell, whacking branches throughout the descent.

I broke through the bottom layer and hit the ground hard, though it felt rather soft and fuzzy. I heard a voice say "Ooomf," as I made impact. I looked down to find I had landed on top of another fox.

I stood up a bit dazed. "I'm so sorry," I said as I got off her.

"It's quite alright, a welcomed interruption actually," she said, motioning in front of her.

I looked up to find that we were completely surrounded by wolves.

"What's happening?" I whispered to her.

"The wolves are hunting and I'm

apparently their primary target,” she whispered back.

The wolf in the middle bared his fangs at us and said, “Two little foxes do not stand a chance against us.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that,” I snapped back.

They all looked at me questioningly.

“Yea, and what can you do?” the wolf asked trying to sound intimidating.

I stood up on my hind legs. “Do you really want to know?”

He just looked confused.

I produced a large longsword seemingly from the pad of my forepaw. The blade was a shiny silver and was embroidered with the name Whispricushennik in gold calligraphy across it. The hilt was solid steel but painted gold. The wolf jumped back.

“Where did that thing come from?” he yelped in surprise.

“It’s my sword. Either you back off, or there will be lots of blood,” I said.

“You don’t scare me,” he tried to come back.

I grabbed the sword in both paws and lifted it above my head. The wolf took another step back. Then, with great force, I

swung the sword down and slammed it into the ground, feeling the reverberation in my foreleg when I did. I looked up at the wolves with a menacing grin showing all my teeth.

“Oh damn, you really know how to use that thing don’t you?” the wolf said nervously.

“I do indeed.”

“C’mon boys, it’s not worth losing our heads to get that girl,” he said as he turned. They ran off barking wildly.

“Another time we’ll get you girl, another time!” he yelled back.

I turned to the fox I had so rudely landed on.

“P-please don’t hurt me!” she stammered.

I put the sword away. “I would never.”

She let out a sigh of relief as I dropped to all four legs.

“How did you do that?” she asked.

I looked at her inquisitively.

“Standing up on two legs like that, a-and using the sword. How?” she asked.

“You mean you can’t stand on your hind legs?”

“No, of course not. The only ones

who could were the humans, but they left a long time ago.”

“What? Is this not Earth?”

“Earth? Never heard of it. Right now we are in the Nagskulk territory of the Everforest.”

“Nagskulk? But that skulk joined the Faoz centuries ago,” I said in befuddlement.

“Nagskulk still exists here...though I’m the last one. There must be other skulks out there, but I’ve never seen any. Also, what is a Faoz?”

“Do you know how to speak Faozai?”

“Never heard of it. You alright? You seem a bit confused.” She seemed truly concerned.

“Sorry, I’m being a bit rude aren’t I with all my assumptions. Your world is very different from mine.”

“What do you mean by ‘your world’?” she asked.

“I should properly explain. I think I just fell through a dimensional portal. My name is Whisp by the way, Whispricushennik Reedwell,” I said.

“You must have fallen pretty far. You’re all beat up, and how did you manage to fall into something like that?”

she said.

“I think I was pushed actually.” I suddenly realized what had happened.

Margaret had set me up.

“Well, I’d like to get out of the open. Will you be ok?” she asked.

I looked around myself a bit. There were cuts all across my stomach and back, and a few blood stained patches of fur, but I was mostly fine.

“I think I’m okay,” I said.

I took a few steps forward but felt the sharp pain in my left foreleg return as I did so. I winced and held up my leg to avoid using it as I walked.

“Your leg is broken isn’t it. Come home with me. You can stay in my home while you recover,” she said with a smile.

I thought about it for a moment and, seeing as it was my only option, I accepted.

“Thank you so much,” I said as I hobbled over to her.

We walked slowly, side-by-side through the forest. It felt incredibly familiar, but I couldn’t quite place why.

As we walked, the vixen turned to look at me. “I’m Wynra by the way, Wynrakaila Frithwood.”

“That’s a lovely name,” I commented.

She looked at me, smiled sheepishly and blushed, and then kept walking.

Slowly, and with some difficulty, we made it to her home. When we arrived she directed me to a small burrow in the ground by a tree. I was confused at the sight of it.

Wynra read my expression and said, "I'm guessing houses are different where you live."

"Yea, I'm used to houses being large wooden structures, almost as tall as the trees," I replied.

"Well, you'll find that for one or two foxes, there is enough space here," she said.

I followed her in and, to my surprise, found that there were a couple other rooms that had been dug out. From what I could see, there was a small sort of kitchen area with cabinets, a refrigerator, and a range; in the middle of the room: a small table in the corner, and a couch by a fire place with a small stack of books on the stand next to it.

"Seems cozy," I said.

"I'm sorry it hasn't been tidied up. I wasn't expecting to have company. I don't get many visitors."

“Really? Don’t you have any friends?”

“All the other animals seem to have a distaste for foxes, and I haven’t seen any other foxes here since I was young.”

“That reminds me a lot of my own home,” I mumbled.

She walked over to her kitchen and opened one of the cabinets. “Come here. I’ve got some bandages.”

I made my way over and she began covering up all my cuts.

“I’ve laced the bandages with a special herbal remedy that I created. It helps prevent infection, but can sting a bit,” she said.

As she wrapped the bandages I felt a cool liquid on my skin. It sent shivers down my spine. As she worked I began to feel the stinging she had mentioned.

“Stings-yaah-is a lighter-aah-way of putting it,” I gasped.

“It only lasts for a short while,” she replied.

She worked for a while with the bandages, and when she was done with that, she wrapped my foreleg with a few sticks to hold it straight and made a sling for it.

By the time she was done the sun had gone down, and we had moved over to the fireplace where a small fire burned and warmed the little house. I was sitting on a chair from the kitchen table and she, her couch. She sat, reading a book titled "Twisted Dragons." The book had no real covers and was held together with a few pieces of twine. It looked like a handmade binding.

"What's that book about?" I asked.

"It's about an evil dragon whose son doesn't want to be evil. I can read it to you if you'd like," she said.

"That would be wonderful."

She began reading the book aloud. It was a sweet story of a young dragon and his fox friend reuniting after being separated while running from the evil dragon.

"That is a wonderful story. Who wrote it?" I asked.

She hesitated for a moment, deciding how to answer.

"I-I did," she said quietly.

"That's really good," I said.

"Thank you." She turned to look at the fire which was now just red hot ashes. "It's late. We should get some sleep."

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“Sounds good to me,” I said.

We both stood up and she led me to a room at the back of the burrow.

“You can sleep here,” Wynra said.

The room was empty aside from the bed in the center with a small table to the right of it. The bed had a pink top sheet with flowers embroidered on it.

“Is this your room?” I asked.

“This is the only bedroom...the other room is storage. You’re my guest so you can use the bed,” she said.

“No, I could never,” I responded.

“Please, I insist.”

“I don’t want to be a burden.”

“You’re the one with the injuries. You should have the bed.”

“No, this is your home, you should get the bed.”

“Maybe...we would both fit?” she asked nervously as she examined me.

“Perhaps,” I agreed, just as nervous.

We did both fit on the bed comfortably and soon we were both sound asleep.

CHAPTER TWO

Wolves and Magic Spells

It was about one in the morning when I woke with a start. I thought I heard someone scream, and in the bed beside me, Wynra was sobbing heavily. I rolled over to face her in the darkness and whispered to her, “sshhh, you were dreaming. You’re alright, you’re safe,” as I began running my paw through the fur on her head. She snuggled up against me and sniffled as she calmed down. I wrapped my good foreleg around her, holding her tight, and began to hum a lullaby that my mother used to sing to me to help me fall asleep when I was scared or upset.

Soon Wynra was asleep in my forelegs.

“Poor girl,” I thought, “she must be

so lonely out here.”

Entranced by my thoughts, I fell back to sleep.

I woke the next morning to Wynra licking at my nose.

“Good morning Whisp,” she said with a smile.

I yawned and stretched. “You certainly seem happy this morning.”

“I haven’t slept that well in a long time. Quick, let’s go watch the sunrise.”

She hopped off the bed and ran to the burrow entrance like a little schoolgirl. I stumbled out of the bed and lumbered over next to her much more like an old man. The first night in a new place is always the hardest.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” she asked as we gazed out at the purple and pink sun-dusted sky.

The top of the sun was just barely visible in a small dip between two mountains in the distance.

“Nothing else quite like it,” I agreed.

As we watched the ball of fire rise up into the sky, my mind wandered back to last night.

“So, what had you so upset last night?” I asked.

“I-it was a bad dream...a nightmare really. I have that dream often actually, but I’ve never been able to fall asleep after having it before.”

“Really? It must have been a pretty terrible dream then.”

“I-it’s a bad memory...” she began to say.

“If you don’t mind me asking...” I began to say, but trailed off.

“The dream is a memory of the day that those wolves killed my only friend. She was an arctic fox named Layla. The wolves were chasing us through the birch grove. We both knew they were really only after me, though neither of us knew why, so she tried to act as a distraction so I could get away and hide in one of our burrows. I thought she had followed me into the hole beneath the bushes, but when I turned she was not there; instead, she stood in another clearing, a short distance off. Poking my head up from the hole, I watched through the bushes as they caught her, pinned her to the ground, and asked for my whereabouts. When she refused, their leader started slicing at her with his claws continuously asking. The more she refused, the deeper he cut until

finally he became too frustrated and bit into her neck, breaking it. After the wolves ran off I dragged her into my hiding place and did what I could to ease the pain, but his teeth had punctured her esophagus. She could barely breath and there was nothing I could do to save her. The last thing she did before her heart stopped was kiss me and thank me for being a good friend.”

“How can I be a good friend? I’m the reason she died. I’m—I’m...”

She faltered and began to cry again. I hugged her again and patted her back trying to comfort her.

“Th-that night, after I buried her, I cried myself to sleep, and for a few nights afterward. I had no one else in the world except her. In seventeen years I met no other friendly animals until you crash landed on top of me. Y-you can’t possibly know what it’s like to be alone for that long.”

I sat silently for a minute looking deep into her sparkling, wet eyes. It was only fair for me to tell her my story since she had told me hers.

“Wynra, I actually can relate to your story. You see, twenty-two years ago my

parents were framed for a murder they didn't commit and were arrested and sentenced to death. I remember the trial well because the prosecutor had no good evidence but my parents were still found guilty. I didn't even get to say goodbye before they were dragged off. They didn't even care enough to try to find a relative for eight year old me to live with. In the world I live in, foxes are seen as cunning, sneaky tricksters and criminals. Whenever others see a fox coming they turn away, practically shunning us. In all the books, and all the movies, foxes are depicted as evil. Foxes in the movies aren't even actual foxes. They're always dogs with a lot of makeup. So it was no surprise that foxes never won in court."

"After my parents were taken away, I had to find full-time work, making minimum wage, and juggle that with school so I could keep my house. My neighbors invited me over for dinner frequently because I was too young to know how to cook. School was absolute hell. I couldn't walk down a hallway without being pushed around, shoved into lockers, or having my things taken from me. The other kids laughed and made fun

of me for having no parents. So many times I came home in tears. One of the bullies even locked me in his locker one day causing me to miss my math class. I was given a detention for skipping class even though the teachers could hear me yelling from the locker. The teachers didn't care though. Even they launched spitballs at me."

"Once I had gotten through school and had an actual job, I was still disrespected. I was fired five times for things I didn't do. Then, the most recent place I applied for a job at tricked me, and I ended up here. You and I both have led sad, lonely lives...you're the only real friend I've ever had, if I can call you that..."

She sniffled again and wiped her eyes as a bright smile appeared on her face.

By then the pink and purple hues had been overpowered by the deep blue color of the fully sun-lit sky.

We sat together, enjoying the morning for almost a half hour before my stomach growled.

"My stomach says it's time for breakfast."

Then Wynra's growled too and we

burst out laughing.

"I think my stomach agrees," she cackled.

"Do you have anything in your pantry?" I asked as we calmed down.

"Not really, so I'll go out and try to catch some fish or maybe find some berries,"

"I'll go with you. We can fish together."

"No, you're hurt. You should stay here."

"But the wolves-" She pressed her paw to my lips.

"Don't worry, I'll be fine," she said before scampering off.

I began to wonder, as I sat, about how I would get home. "Maybe Wynra would know. She does know this world pretty well," I thought, "I'd do anything to get home."

I was rocked back to the present when I heard a scream.

"That can't be good." I mumbled as I stood up.

My ears began twisting, searching for the source of the sound. Then the scent of the wolves hit my nose, and blood. I bolted from the hole, running as fast as I

could and yelled, "WYNRA!? WYNRA WHERE ARE YOU!?"

The scream came again, but this time much closer. Following the sound, I turned left and crashed through a large bush coming out about ten yards away from the confrontation. One of the wolves had Wynra pinned down with his fangs bared at her..

"Finally we caught you. You're our ticket out of this damned place!" I heard him say.

I pulled out my sword and charged forward slamming the blunt end into the wolf's head leaving a bloody dent in his skull. He whined as he fell to the ground.

"You again," A voice from behind me said with a very serious tone.

I turned my head. "How is Wynra your ticket out of here?" I asked angrily.

"Well you see, The Master trapped us in this digital world and told us that if we captured and killed this here vixen we would be let out," he said with a growl.

"The Master?"

"Ain't she the one that put you in here? She's put that girl in here too; 'er whole family at one point actually. Now get outa the way Romeo."

“Margaret? I knew something was off about her. How long have you been in here? You’ve damn well turned feral.”

“I don’t know, but I want out, so I’m gonna kill ‘er. I’ve gone through enough trouble tryin’a catch ‘er. Even had to kill that other one. What was her name? Oh yea, Layla. I was hoping you’d go out to help your friend as I scratched at her and bit her, Wynra, but you’re weak. Too afraid to help your dying friend.”

“You bastard!’ Wynra yelled. There was fire in her eyes as she stood up.

The wolf roared and lunged at her throwing her to the ground in an awkward way before he landed on top, pinning her down. When he landed there was a loud “snap” and Wynra let out an agonized scream.

“Get the hell off her!” I yelled at him.

“Heh, and what are you gonna do? Your foreleg is broken and in a sling,” he growled.

“Don’t test me,” I said. “Get off her.”

The wolf instead bit into her shoulder.

“DON’T YOU DARE TOUCH HER!” I screamed as I lifted my sword.

I charged at him driving the sword

deep into his side pushing him off Wynra. He yelped and had a look of surprise as he fell to the ground. When he landed, he appeared to be choking. I had managed to puncture both lungs. To save him the pain of suffocating to death, I slit his throat when I pulled out my sword out.\

“You’ve killed TWO of my pack now. Cursed tod, you will pay!” he said as he ran toward me.

“Durakai faoz*,” I mumbled as he approached.

Suddenly magical wings unfurled from my back and I floated up into the sky. My fur turned into scales, and my tail grew spikes and became longer.

“What the hell?!” the wolf leader said as he stopped running.

I held up my forepaws in the shape of an X and screamed, “FIRIS ECTAPLOUS*!”

Suddenly I was surrounded by fire. I thrust my good forepaw forward and the flames shot down at the wolves like a rocket. They yelped and tried to run as they were hit, but quickly fell silent. I let out a loud roar that echoed through the trees, startling birds everywhere. When I finally stopped, all that remained of the

wolves were piles of smoldering ash.

Slowly, I floated back to the ground and my wings disappeared. I collapsed next to Wynra as my body returned to normal.

“W-Whisp?” she asked, wincing in pain.

“I’ll—explain—later,” I panted.

With the little energy I had left, I dragged myself over to Wynra to examine her. There were bloody claw marks across her face and chest as well as deep bite marks on her shoulder. The bone of her left hind leg was snapped in two and protruding through the skin.

“We need to get you home and bandage you up,” I said as I tried to lift her. With my injury, walking on four and carrying Wynra would have been far too difficult. So instead, I did my best to give her a piggyback ride up on two.

I was exhausted from the magic spells I had used and struggled a lot, having to stop several times on the walk back to Wynra’s den. My broken arm was in great pain, but I had to use it, so I did my best to ignore the throbbing.

As soon as we were inside, I laid her across the table and went to the cabinet. I

pulled out the bandages to wrap her up, and as I covered her stomach the solution on the bandages set in. She began yelping uncontrollably. Then I turned my focus to her leg.

“Whisp,” Wynra winced, “You need to realign my leg—and then make a cast like I did for your—foreleg.”

“Ok, but how?” I asked, examining it.

“Just grab the—two bones and push them together! Then—you’ll need to get the emergency aid kit from—the drawer, and use the rods inside—to hold the bone together.”

I nodded, grabbing the materials so I’d have them ready.

“Once that’s done—you’ll need to sew any—torn muscles together so they heal. Then—use the stitching equipment—to stitch up the skin there.”

I didn’t know much about this sort of procedure, but I hoped that what I learned in the one medical course I took was enough. I followed Wynra’s instructions as best I could and she almost immediately began screaming madly.

Hurting her like this tore me apart, and I broke into tears as I continued to

work. Her screaming continued to increase almost endlessly, until suddenly it stopped all together. The pain was so great, it had caused her to pass out. I found several rolls of various kinds of tapes in the box that were conveniently labeled with the order in which they should be used. Creating the cast was the easiest part of the procedure.

“All finished,” I whispered, putting the equipment away.

I carried her limp body to her bedroom, laid her on the bed, and began petting her head as she slowly woke up. She looked up at me with her eyes wide like she was going to start crying, but she held them back. Instead she stared at me, her expression slowly changing from upset to something more calm, but the pain was still evident.

“You’ll feel better soon,” I said as I nuzzled her.

A smile appeared on her face for a brief moment, and a light pink blush on her cheeks.

“Hey, in that box was a bottle of painkillers. Could you get me one?”

I nodded and ran to the kitchen. I returned a moment later with with a glass

of water too. I decided I would clean up the mess once Wynra was taken care of. By the time I had finished cleaning, it was mid-afternoon. I realized neither of us had eaten all day, so I left Wynra's home for a short while and found a river. I decided to take off the sling so I wouldn't ruin it in the water. I winced at first, when I let my foreleg hang straight, but my mind was off it quickly.

The river had a magnificent amount of trout in it, and I excitedly reached my paw in and grabbed a fish. I pulled it out of the water and almost immediately lost my grip. The fish whacked my snout and flopped back into the water. After several more attempts ending the same way, I devised a plan using a net. But since there were no nets here, I had to make one out of leaves and vines. I captured four fish in it while it was in the water before it promptly fell apart. Then I tried baiting them by sticking a worm on a makeshift wooden hook attached to a vine. One of the fish bit and then started swimming hard downstream pulling me face first into the cold water. When I stood up in the waist deep water, I had a new idea.

I made another net, but this time I

got in the water with it. I swished it around with the current so it wouldn't break apart, and after a few minutes I had two fish in the net. I climbed out of the river and happily ran back to Wynra's house, making my way straight to her room.

Wynra giggled when she saw me.

"Have fun swimming?" she laughed.

I was still dripping wet.

"Oh, no. I fell in trying to catch fish. I did manage to get two though. I'm just used to handling dead fish at the grocery store."

"A grocery store?" Wynra asked as her stomach growled.

"I'll explain later. You must be starving, here ya go." I pulled a fish out of the net and handed it to her.

"Ooh trout, I love trout. It's the best fish around here. Thank you Whisp!" she said with a weary smile.

I sat next to her on the bed and began to nibble on my own trout.

"So Whisp, how did you do that thing with the fire earlier?" she asked

"Well, it's an old magic my parents taught me. It's from the ancient Faozin civilization."

"You mentioned them when we met,

and I'm really curious. Who are the Faozin?"

"I might as well tell you the whole story of our people...since we know now that you are from the same world as me... you just have never been out of this cursed machine. It's a long story though, so get comfortable," I said as I pulled the blanket up under Wynra's chin.

I laid down next to her, patting her head, and began.

"The Faozii started as just a small skulk living in a clearing deep within the forests of the continent we call home today..."