

FAMINE  
CHAPTER ONE: GENESIS

To Helix

You think when you wake up  
in the mornin yesterday don't  
count. But yesterday is all  
that does count. What else is  
there? Your life is made out  
of the days it's made out of.  
Nothin else.

-Cormac McCarthy

It was fuzzy. But the image was there. White, ~~the~~ all around. The ~~white~~ that one  
pondered if they touched it, it would reveal itself to be snow, or ice, or wool.  
But it seemed to be made of metal. Its brightness still hurt to look at nonetheless.  
Pointing out from the wall was what seemed to be a narrow pathway that only led to  
the solid barriers. Just a little ways away from the wall, however, was something...  
Peculiar. It was rounded like a column almost entirely up its three feet. But the last  
foot differed. A red disk or bulb rested in the centre with a whitedome to cover it. It  
almost seemed like the column was wearing a hat with just a little space to look out  
from beneath it.

Then there was a faint ringing. It grew louder. And louder. And louder as the  
column got closer at a rapid pace. Just as it seemed the column was about to crash,  
its light turned on and...

"Gah!"

It was gone. All of it. No white. In fact, it was quite the opposite; there was  
barely any lighting at all.

The canid figure was up with a jolt only to wince at the blurred, yellow-tinted  
light ahead of him. His hand immediately started searching his surroundings. There  
was a rough, sand-papery object beneath him. Almost felt like wood. Then they grasped  
something furry. He yiped briefly and released the object when it writhed about.

It's ~~ss~~! It's mt tail... he concluded, and sighed.

The man's eyes still had yet to adjust. It shouldn't have taken this long. Something  
-ng was wrong.

Glasses!

The hands were off again, scouring for the spectacles that had to be somewhere  
nearby. The canid started to grope his being. There were fabric textures almost  
everywhere he touched. That was reassuring, at least he had clothes.

Upon reaching the crotch area, however, his hands picked up something cold  
and metallic. He fondled the object longer till he was sure they were glasses.  
Unfolding the temples, the man slid them onto his snout and watched as the world  
came into focus.

It was certainly night. The darkness made that clear. The canid glanced about.  
He was in an alleyway of sorts, laid on top of a bench. He sat up and peered down  
one end of the alley to see the streets of an urban city. Not far from the opening  
was a lamppost that, with a few neon lights out of view, lit up the night sky.

Across the street, a building rested quietly with no sign of activity. The darkness of the interior allowed the building's windows to act like mirrors. In the encased reflection, the man could see what appeared to be a face of a fox but the body build of a wolf staring back at him. In the little light there was, the man could make out a ruffled mess of brown hair resting on top of the reflection's head that concealed heterochromia eyes; blue and green. Its fur pattern was most extraordinary with the outer edges a desert sand red and his underbelly a greyish-white.

Slowly, the canid lowered his head and inspected his being. A sleeveless black sports coat rested over a long-sleeve light cyan shirt. A brown belt was securely fastened around his waist-part of a pair of grey jeans that ended where a pair of brown-paw shoes emerged.

How did I get here? he wondered, swaying his tail. Is this a hangover? Feels like one.

The thoughts vanished as the muffled sound of distant sirens rang through his point-ed ears. He looked back toward the opening and waited. They didn't grow any closer. After what felt like forever, the liswilk finally stood up and walked out of the alley. Quiet voices caught the man's attention. He looked up the street and saw a line of seven or eight different types of rodents making their way into a shop of sorts. The liswilk swallowed his nervousness, smoothed his fur, and approached the queue. He manoeuvred aside the line to catch a glimpse of what was happening. Behind the wide window panes seemed to be a active canteen, full of many species alike.

"All right, thanks," a feminine voice uttered.

The liswilk looked up to see a slim wesal enter the canteen as a healthy cat woman, in a button-down shirt and blue jeans, managed a tablet that lit her face up with a blue hue.

"Hi," the liswilk engaged, only to droop his ears when he noticed the agitated look of a bear who had been in line for who knows how long. "Sorry, excuse me." He paused and sighed. "Do you think you can tell me, uh... where I am?"

"Sure!" the cat answered comfortingly, and waved her furry white hand at the canteen. "This is the United Community Aid Kitcheneed. I can put down your name if you like."

"Yeah..." the canid was about to introduce, but froze. "Uh..."

His fur perked up again and his tail was swaying frantic once more. The liswilk clutched a patch of his hair as his breathing became heavier. He tried and tried but to no avail. Without a warning, he turned and jogged back to alley opening, muttering in denial.

Pawsteps made his ears twitch. Turning around, the anxious canid saw two people approach him; a male raccoon in a leather vest and short dark hair followed by a female red panda with long ginger hair and a maroon sweater.

"Hey buddy," the raccoon said with concern, "you alright?"

"It's jus-" the liswilk panted, and calmed his tail down before continuing. "I can't remember... My name."

The raccoon wheezed in amusement and turned to his companion chuckling: "Where can I get what he's on, huh?"

"No, I..." the liswilk tried to clarify, "I don't remember anything."

"Got a wallet?" the raccoon uttered, which sounded more like a proposition than a question.

The liswilk's eyes narrowed and his ears drooped.

"Why?" he questioned.

"ID?" the raccoon said, and rolled his eyes at the man's paranoia.

"Oh. Oh!" the liswilk remarked, and blushed in embarrassment before rummaging through his pockets. "No. Just a scrap paper and couple of bills."

"Lemme see," the masked canine said, and offered his hand. The liswilk handed the paper over, and perked up his ears as the raccoon recited: "Go to the corner of Fifth and Jersey, open the breifcase under the pay phone..." He smirked and remarked to the hybrid: "Pay phone?"

The raccoon sighed and offered the paper back.

"Keep it," the liswilk said, and waved his hand.

Pocketing the note, the raccoon turned toward his friend, who continued to stay silent before muttering to the liswilk: "Why don't you come inside and get something to eat?"

"Uh, what'll four dollars get me?" the canid asked, flicking his ears.

"More than nothin'," the raccoon answered bluntly.

With the sway of his tail, the couple started to head back in the direction of the queue. The liswilk hesitated, pondered if he could even trust the man, and finally followed.

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It was as noisy as one could expect. The sizzles of stoves, the clatters of dishes, or the chorus of voices each occupied in their own conversations.

The liswilk sat with a white plastic tray before him; in one section he had a small lump that somehow counted as bread, the other a slice of tomato, and just beside that a small slab of meat which he couldn't tell if it was a steak or something else. Across from him on the other end of the table sat the raccoon, who also had a single tomato slice but a patch of lettuce and a couple of oranges instead.

"So..." the liswilk started, and swished his tail. "When did I first get here?"

"This is the first I've seen of you," the raccoon answered, as he peeled away the orange skin with his furless hands. "But new people are always ending up here"

"W-what?" the hybrid stuttered, and motioned at his tray. "Everyone's here for this?"

The raccoon—who revealed his name to be Pargali—wheezed his amusing chuckle once more before licking the chops of his snout and answered: "This is a feast... For some."

Turning his attention away, Pargali's ears perked up as he gazed at a small screen TV in the upper corner of the canteen. A news channel was playing and shocking footage reeled as a woman's voice spoke over the disturbing images.

The liswilk raised his snout too and watched quietly. The footage seemed chaotic; it was a town square of some sorts, laid in ruin. Buildings were war-torn in the background, cars parked with dents or broken windows, a makeshift barricade blocked the path of a romanesque building, and bodies of avian, reptilian, or mammal alike laid littered across the scene.

"...With more shortages affecting the globe," the unseen anchor emitted, "Another forty were killed by police forces in a Berlin riot yesterday just days after the Shanghai Car Bombing. This marks the most recent organised rebellion in the city since 1953 and the most recent mass deaths since the 2016 truck attack. There has been speculation that there may be some connection to the recent terrorist attacks from PAIRD drones. While the exact motive is unknown, Russia and Germany have both declared a state of emergency. In other news, US president Donald Trump, having passed away a month ago, has his funereal break lowest attendance scores with a count of only fifteen people..."

The pair stopped watching and returned to their trays.

"It's funny," Pargali remarked, tilting his ears. "there were days where I'd fight with my mother about how I didn't want to eat tomatos." He picked up the slice and ate it as if it were a chip. "Now... Now you'd sooner thank God that you have anything at all."

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"Hello, sir," the middle-aged female hyena greeted the liswilk, as he approached the circular reception desk. "How may I help you?"

It had been weeks since the hybrid had awoken. The morning after the first day, the liswilk got up just in time to see as Pargali and two other men—one a gecko and the other a jackal—depart. The gecko had waved down a red pickup truck just outside the canteen and was discussing labour with the black snout that peered out the window.

The driver offered the trio yard work to which they agreed to eagerly. The three men heaved their tails onto the truck bed just as it began to move down the street. The raccoon stared blankly at the spectacle-wearing canid, not even uttering a word to him or a gesture of farewell while the vehicle pulled around the corner.

Everything seemed to go downhill since Pargali left. The liswilk managed to only afford one more night worth of sustenance before his earnings ran dry. The following days, he sat helplessly on the side of the rode; occasionally daring to ask any well-dressed passer-bys if they could spare any loose change to no avail.

One day, the liswilk decided to follow in the pawsteps of Pargali; labour. He waited outside of the canteen for most of the day until a white pick-up truck appeared around the corner.

"ID?" the scruffy voice of a shaggy wolf inquired from behind the wheel.

"What?!" the hybrid stuttered, his fur on end.

"Your unemployeed ID," the wolf clarified, and drooped his ears. "How do you not know? Got to have one before you can be a hired hand by anyone."

The liwilk wanted nothing more than a hole to hide from the moment.

"I, uh..." he forced himself to confess, "Don't have one."

"Not my problem, bum," the wolf sneered, as he shifted the stick into drive and drove off.

After the incident, the liswilk inquired about what any of the wolf's words had a point. Unemployed ID? Why was that required?

From what he gathered, the requirement had been instilled to make sure that only the people who could actually work were the only ones to be picked up off the streets by anyone. The purpose? The same reason the world seemed to be in a shitshow: food shortages.

"Sir?" the hyena said, her ears drooped in nervous.

"Sorry!" the hybrid replied, and steadied his breathing. "What did you ask?"

"Your name," she repeated, before she tapped the screen of a kiosk-like machine.

"I... I don't remember," he answered, and tried his best to seem genuine.

"...I see," the hyena uttered, before taking a pen from the cheap mug full of writing tools. "Can you please press your thumb down on this paper? I'll run your prints through our database."

He climbed in after the wolf informed him the kind of work he'd be doing; some house work, electricity, ecetera. Slowly, the hybrid watched as the street he had come to treat like a home got further away as the truck pulled away.

Despite his longing gaze, the liswilk failed to notice the police car parked in the shadows behind the building adjacent of the canteen.

"Thanks," the hybrid said to the wolf, as he climbed off the truck.

"Don't mention it," the wolf muttered, and groggily threw a couple of crumpled bills out the window before driving off.

The liswilk bent down and took his earnings. Turning around, the canid's ears drooped in confusion. The canteen's lights were off. That didn't make sense; it should have been open. He was certain. Perhaps he was late. But that didn't follow either. He had left the wolf's residence at eight and wasn't that far of a drive.

"Hello?" he finally called out, upon stepping in the barren space.

The hybrid was about to release his grasp on the door but his tail subconsciously swayed to stop him. If there was any more obvious of a hint that something was off, the door of a building supposedly closed for the night being unlocked was one. Every nerve in the canid's body screamed to the tips of his whiskers to bolt, but he didn't. Why he wouldn't listen even he failed to understand.

"Uh, hello?" he cried out again, ears drooped in paranoia. "Are you guys not open?"

There was a sudden flash of light followed by the sound of a generator switch being thrown. The liswilk waited for the rest of the lights to be turned on, but they didn't because the light source was from outside. New sounds appeared; a brief siren whoop and tires squealing to a halt. Doors opened and shut, pawsteps shuffled, and the hybrid heard as his heartbeat echoed frantically in his ears.

He looked back. What else could he do. Sure enough, it was as bad as he feared. Floodlights shined through the windows, police vehicles surrounded the canteen, and shadowy figures stood dutifully in the beams of light.

Shadowy figures... the liswilk thought, and wagged his tail in familiarity.

"This is the NYPD!" a speaker said in an iron tongue, "You are under arrest!"

Immediately, a uniformed female possum with a black ponytail hairdo burst into the canteen and tackled the bedazzled canid against a table.

"AH!" he screamed, and winced as his arms were forcefully pulled behind his back. "Get off of me!"

"NYPD!" the possum said, as if he hadn't heard the speaker while she cuffed the hybrid. "Keep your hands and tail down. Do not move!"

Before he knew it, the liswilk was heaved out of the building addout into the streets. Kneeling behind the hoods or trunks of their cars was an ridiculous number of cops; cheetah, hawk, ox, hare, leopard, you named it. All them either carried a standard issued pistol or AR; all pointed at the hybrid.

The canid was violently shoved against the hood of one car and watched as the world grew blurry and something clattered against the ground.

"Where's my glasses?!" the frightened liswilk asked, but was given no answer.

"You have the right to remain silent," the possum began to recite, only to pin the canid harder when he jostled beneath her. "Hey! Don't move!"

"I'm not resisting!" the hybrid defended, twitching his ears.

"Anything you say..."

"Get off of me!"

"...can and will be used against you."

"I haven't done anything!"

"You have the right to an attorney..."

"What did I do?"

"What did I do?"

Then the Lord God said; "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever"—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

END OF CHAPTER ONE.