

|Introduction |

The old building was almost entirely silent, except for the distinct sound of claws tapping on the linoleum floor. The moonlight shining through the curtains threw a barely visible shadow across the dimly lit hallways, as Roya made his way through the sleeping quarters. It was probably somewhere around two or three AM, and the fox had been woken up by the urge to go to the toilet. So, the fox had gotten out of bed and snuck towards the bathroom. The bathroom door was opened ever so slightly and the lights had been turned on, however when the fox entered the room it appeared to be abandoned. As the fox sat down, he sighed and tried to keep his eyes shut as much as possible, as to not get his eyes used to the light.

It was Roya's first week at Cloudy Waters Mansion, and he still hadn't really gotten used to life on campus. The young fox was an aspiring theater actor, and he'd read on multiple online forums how Cloudy Waters was one of the best places to stay. Despite the fact that it was called a single mansion, the campus actually consisted of four buildings. The main building was the actual mansion, but the campus also had a smaller building that had been renovated into a theater, where the shows were held. Next to that were the sleeping quarters, and finally there was a building where supposedly the teachers stayed during breaks.

The fox got up again, pulled up his pajama pants, and started walking towards his bedroom. He shared his room with a freshman chameleon named Roc and a slightly older goat called Oliver. The two were sound asleep in their beds, and Roya crawled under his own sheets again. After his introduction week, the first week of lessons would start the very next morning, starting with breakfast at 8. The fox didn't want to be late, so he shut his eyes and drifted off back to sleep.

|Chapter one - Breakfast |

Roya and Roc sat down on the table marked "263", the same number as their room number. The fox was slightly more groggy than the chameleon, having woken up in the middle of the night and what-not. As the hall slowly filled with more of the students, a large wolf entered through the doors in the center of the hall. Roc looked at the wolf and tapped Roya on his shoulder, who'd slumped over on the table as if he were trying to sleep again. The fox moaned and straightened his back, as the chameleon nudged his head in the direction of the big wolf. Roya looked over his shoulder and saw the wolf too. It was the rector of the school, Samuel Cloud. The dark-grayish wolf looked over the roughly fifty students who'd

all found their places. He tapped the microphone conveniently placed on one of the tables, scraped his throat, and welcomed his new students.

"Welcome students! After the first week of introduction, we're happy to usher in the start of this exciting new schoolyear for you! Be prepared for something extremely different from what you're used to, as we're focused on unlocking your inner talent. The fifty of you have been specifically chosen as we see fit. If you go to the doorway, you'll see a list of 5 groups of 10 - those are your classes for the next 6 months. You all have an individual roster as well as a group roster, all fit in the four days of school. Wednesdays - as well as Saturdays and Sundays of course - are free days. In these you can do whatever you want, however we do encourage you to engage with the locals and study of course. Have fun!"

The wolf smiled, looked through the sea of slightly tired students, and walked out of the doors he came through.

Roya looked at the chameleon. "You reckon we're together?" the fox asked.

"Surely, right? I mean, we're roommates, so why wouldn't they match us?" he replied.

Together the two got up from their table and shuffled through the other students. They were among the first ones to arrive at the main hall and Roya was the first to find the 5 sheets of paper. "Ayy, look at that!" the fox proclaimed, pointing at the middle paper. "We're together!" The chameleon inched over the shoulder of the fox and peeped at the paper. "I'm surprised that they didn't give us a room with a third freshman though." Replied Roc. The fox shrugged. He didn't really liked the goat, who hadn't really said a lot except for excessively talking about his hobby of waveboarding. The fox rolled up his right sleeve, revealing a small wristband with a display. He pointed the wristband at the QR-code next to the paper, which downloaded the roster of his class. The chameleon followed suit, and looked at where they had to go for the first class.

"looks like we're having creativity first!"

|Chapter two - Creativity|

The two students entered the classroom and noticed that they were the last two students out of the ten to arrive, even though they were the first to check their roster. Roc threw an annoyed look at the fox, who'd returned to his table to get another round of breakfast after getting his roster. The fox either didn't see or chose to ignore, because he waltzed

straight into the room, grabbed a chair, and sat down. The other eight student had formed an almost closed circle, as Roc and Roya filled the gap. In the center of the circle was an antelope wearing a striped dress and square glasses. She had a friendly smile, and looked at all the students one at a time.

"Welcome! This must be your first real lessons. Have you all gotten familiar with eachother yet?" It remained quiet. "I'll take that as a no. Which is a good thing! Because that's going to be our first exercise. Everybody knows at least one person in the room - their roommate - so, the first thing we're doing is introducing your roommate! Tell the group their name, hobbies, and anything else you consider important. Starting with..." the Antelope looked at all the students again, eventually pointing at Roc. "you! The young chameleon." She excitedly clapped twice and smiled at him, waiting for him to start.

"Okay, so, this is Roya. He's 19 years old, his favorite food is figs, he likes to sing and plays bass guitar. He likes to watch esports, and gets really annoyed when you call him royal."

The fox rolled his eyes, knowing fully well he'd probably get to play every single royal role in the next year.

"Ah, how sweet!" the antelope replied. "I love figs too! and how about you, Roya? Who's your friend?"

"Well, this is Roc. Roc's a 18 year old chameleon, except he can't really use his camouflage because he's colorblind."

A few of the students smirked at the chameleon's misfortune.

"He doesn't really have a favorite food, but he'll eat practically every single vegetable- except for asparagus. He also finds it hilarious to hide a tiara between my clothing."

The chameleon hid a smile.

The other eight students introduced their roommates, completing the circle roughly 30 minutes later. Last but not least, the antelope introduced herself.

"Well, you guys all are a very cute group together. My name is Elyza Woodstuck, and I'm your creativity teacher for the first year. If there's anything you want to talk about, I'm practically always here. That concludes our lesson today! You're all free to go. See you all next Monday!"

| Chapter three - Unlocked |

The two roommates left the classroom and looked at their roster to see what their next lesson was. "Huh, I've got Unlocking" said the Fox. "I wonder what that means."

The chameleon looked at his own roster, and noticed that he had a one-on-one appointment with the rector.

"Oh well, guess I'll see you at lunch break!" said the chameleon, throwing his backpack over his shoulder before walking towards the main hall."

"Catch you later!" replied the fox, before checking his roster again to look at where he had to go. As he walked through the hallway, he spotted Oliver, the goat. He tilted his head up as a greeting, calling the fox closer.

"Heya kid, what class you got?" the goat asked. "I just finished my first lesson of the year with my new class, pretty cool."

The fox smiled at the sudden social interaction of the goat. "I've got.. unlocking, or something. Yeah, unlocking."

The goat's expression changed to a slightly more serious look. "Huh, already on your first day? That's quick." He replied. Royla looked at the goat confusedly. "Why, is it bad?" he asked.

"not bad, just.. different. Anyway, catch ya later." The goat replied, before scurrying down the hall.

The fox stared at the goat disappear in the hallway, before walking to the single red door at the end of the building. He opened the door, and walked in feeling slightly nervous. The room was mostly empty, having a completely different architecture than the rest of the building. There was a small desk with a computer in the corner, and there was a huge square mattress in the middle of the room. Next to the mattress was another smaller desk, with an arctic fox stood curved, as it placed down a metronome on the desk. The arctic fox heard the door open, and looked over his shoulder.

"Ah, you must be Royla! Welcome. This is the unlocking room. Please, sit down on the mattress." The fox said, pointing his left hand at the middle of the room.

Royla raised an eyebrow, shrugged internally, and put down his bag at the door. He then proceeded to sit cross-legged on the mattress.

"My name is Layne Whittaker. Nice meeting you. I'm going to be your guide with unlocking your inner talent - which should explain the name of this class, unlocking. There's a few students who really enjoy this class whereas a few don't, which is fine. I just hope you can come in here with a clear and empty mind." The arctic fox smiled. "Please, before we begin, take of your shoes."

Roya looked at the arctic fox. He seemed very innocent, but at the same time as if there was something he wasn't telling. The fox felt slightly nervous at the fact that Layne specified that certain students dislike the class, thinking back to Oliver's reaction. He decided to give it a chance though. The fox stretched out and took of his shoes.

The arctic fox sat down in front of the fox. He took a quick peak at Roya, before smiling and breathing out of his nose. He nodded, and pressed the button on the metronome, which started beating at a surprisingly low bpm.

"Alright, so what I want you to do is close your eyes and listen to the metronome, alright? Just listen to what I say whilst focusing on the slow ticking, and try to sync your breathing with the metronome - in and out."

The fox obediently followed the instructions, closing his eyes and slightly shuffling himself into a more comfortable seating.

"I want you to imagine that you're in a large plain field. It's a sunny day, the grass is gently flowing in the wind, and you're sitting right in the middle of it. Take a deep breath with the metronome and imagine feeling that fresh, clean air, filling your lungs with warm energy."

Roya imagined himself in the park, a few minutes walking from his old home back when he lived at home. He could even swear he heard the distinct droning of the old water mill on the riverbank.

"Very good, now breathe out with the metronome letting go of your inner tension. Feel it flow out of your entire body as you let go of that breath, cleansing your body of any tension you have."

He breathed out, feeling himself relax ever so slightly. *'I feel like he's hypnotizing me'* the fox thought to himself, but he didn't mind. He would play along for now.

"You're doing good. Now imagine the scenery changing to a forest. You're sitting on the ground of the forest, surrounded by sounds of the woods. Describe it to me."

As the arctic fox spoke, Roya immediately imagined the scenery changing, teleporting him to the forest where he and his parents went on their previous vacation. Roya tried to speak but noticed that it was a bit more difficult to talk than what he's used to.

"There's a bunch of old... trees.. around me. I've b.. been here before. There's a h.. hammock spun between two trees, and there's a.. small wooden box."

"Good. What is in the box?" Layne asked him. In the far distance, Roya started to zone out the ticking of the metronome. In fact - his entire surroundings started to fade away. With every breath the fox took he could feel his body get warmer and more relaxed.

"The box is e.. empty." Roya replied, opening the chest in his mind.

"Good. I want you to imagine that box being your inner growth, okay? You'll start to notice it being filled with something you find very valuable to you, okay? Every time you return to this forest, you'll notice the box filling up more. Now, I want you to walk to the hammock and imagine laying down into that hammock, okay? Can you do that for me?" The arctic fox asked.

Roya tried to nod, although he wasn't sure whether he actually did.

The fox imagined climbing into the hammock, and getting comfortable. In the meanwhile, Layne had leaned in and touched the forehead of the fox, slightly pushing him backwards. Roya barely noticed, but he immediately sunk backwards into the mattress, laying down on his back. His entire body felt numb but in a comfortable way, as if he was buried under multiple layers of cotton. But he had never felt as comfortable in his life before - floating to an empty, warm bliss whilst mentally laying in a forest in the middle of nowhere.

"Good, you're doing very well now. Letting your body take that well deserved rest as you let your mind listen to what I have to say." Roya barely heard to what the arctic fox told him as he drifted further down with every breath.

"Every time you're nervous about being on stage, or an exam, or whatever, I want you to come back to this forest, you think you can do that?"

On autopilot the young fox replied with yes, but he didn't really need to think about it - it just happened. As the fox floated through a blissful emptiness, the arctic fox got up and turned off the metronome. Slowly he began counting back up from 10 to 1, and when the arctic fox snapped his fingers Roya snapped back to reality. The fox opened his eyes, got back up and confusedly looked around the room for a second.

"I can't remember laying down? Plus how does this help unlocking my inner talent?" Roya asked the arctic fox, who was putting away the metronome.

"Don't worry. We'll get to some harder exercises as time goes on. As long as you remember to go to the forest you'll be fine." The arctic fox replied. "See you next week!"