

October 19th, 2052 — Part 1: Gavin Oeste, age 35

They rolled him down the hall in his wheelchair, the ragged, crusty fur of his tail dragging along the seasick-green linoleum beneath him. The right wheel squeaked and wobbled, ever so slightly jolting him back and forth and making him feel some sort of seasick himself.

His muzzle was somber and dour; it was always this way, at least for the past fifteen years or so, but today the wrinkles in his snout were just a bit more pronounced than usual. His paws were grasping the armrests of the wheelchair desperately and his claws struggled to puncture the blue leather of the cushion to no avail. His claws—along with his sharpest canines—had been filed down and capped with silicone the moment he had arrived. (It was quite the predicament when one had an itch.)

His toes tapped uncomfortably and impatiently in his teal hospital socks; the kind that were almost the same ugly blue-green color as the floor, and had that despicable white anti-slip rubber lined up in meaningless asterisks on the soles. Long, sharp claws stuck out through the ends; they didn't bother capping those ones. He supposed that if you were able to kill someone—or yourself—with your feet, then you had earned that kill anyway.

The young, strapping buck that pushed him down the hall seemed to be plodding along as slowly as possible; something that was beginning to irk the wolf on wheels. Almost as irksome as the echoing *clack!* of his hooves on the floor tiles.

“Can we hurry it up? I ain't got all day.” The mongrel spoke his first words of the morning, besides when he mumbled a quick thank-you to the armed panther behind him earlier that morning upon receiving his last meal.

The deer frowned, though the wolf did not see, and reluctantly picked up the pace.

“Sorry, sir,” he sighed, “I figured you’d want to put it off as long as possible, is all.”

The wolf almost chuckled—the boy not only apologized, but had called him *sir*. Must be new on the job; this was also obvious by the fact that the buck had only grown four points on his pathetic rack.

“I just want to get this over with,” the wolf relented.

The rest of the walk was silent, save for the incessant squeaking of that damned wheel and the sound of hooves and boots striking linoleum. At the end of the impossibly long hallway stood two more guards in front of a keycard door. One guard swiped his card and a loud buzzer rang in the canine’s ears. The other guard swung the door open towards him and stepped aside to hold it for them.

The room was straight and narrow, the floor the same sickly green and the walls an off-white concrete that gave the air an eerie chill as if it sucked out all the heat from the atmosphere. To his left was a long, wide window—the reinforced kind with the wire netting inside. A purple curtain hung at either side, parted for now, to be drawn after the main event. *How garish*, he thought, *that purple totally clashes with the floor*. Beyond the window was an auditorium with a dozen or so chairs set up. He daredn’t look out the window—not yet—for fear of meeting familiar eyes.

The room, one that had been the setting for so many deaths (and would soon be the setting for his), had a stink about it that rivaled hospitals and nursing homes. Sweetly chemical and atrociously clean, but with a lingering tinge of the adrenaline-laced musk and sweat of a man preparing to meet his maker.

A slender marten stood in the center of the room, wearing a lab coat and scrubs and proudly brandishing a clipboard. His scent permeated the air and almost overwhelmed the wolf, whose mouth began to water.

*It was ugly fucking rats like you that I enjoyed tearing apart the most*, the canine imagined himself saying. Something about the high-pitched squeals only mustelids and

rodents made just drove his instincts up a wall. The wolf's eye twitched as the door slammed shut behind them. He was suddenly very aware of the whining coming from the multitude of fluorescent lights shining down upon his head.

The large feline, who, along with the panther, had been following behind the wolf and the buck, emerged from behind them and removed a ring of keys from his belt. This was the warden, a towering tiger who might have once been intimidating until middle age had replaced his muscle with flab and gut. He flipped through his keys and, upon finding the correct one, undid all four of the cuffs that restrained each of the prisoner's paws.

The tiger stood up—just in time, too, as the wolf was presently imagining himself wrapping his feet around the feline's neck and tearing open both his carotid arteries. The cat straightened himself out and appeared to stretch his back for a moment, as if that was the most exercise he's had all day—and it probably was. He grabbed the wolf by the arms and raised him to his feet, then turned him to face the crowd.

"Gavin Oeste," he said, and the wolf cringed at the mispronunciation of his surname. "You stand before us today convicted of seventeen counts of murder and have hereby been sentenced to death by lethal injection. The hour is nigh, have you any last words?"

*Did this bitch really just say 'the hour is nigh'? Gavin thought to himself. Where the fuck does he think he is, the Renaissance Faire?*

Instead, he said nothing and looked out to the crowd. He saw quite a few unfamiliar faces—in fact, all of them were unfamiliar except two. These were his always-stoic father, sitting with his arms crossed, and his sobbing mother with her head buried in his father's chest. His brother couldn't make it, of course. He was probably too busy being perfect and successful somewhere, the prick.

Gavin detected the slightest shake of his father's head and, had he been closer, would have seen the restrained tears welling in his father's eyes. He figured the rest of the crowd were reporters, or family members of his victims, or even sickos like him who got their jollies from watching people die. An older rabbit doe stood up, shook her fist, and shouted something at him that made his mother visibly sob harder. His usually cold father wrapped an arm around her without removing his gaze from his son.

He wasn't sure what the rabbit had said—the walls and window were soundproof—but assumed it was something along the lines of: *You killed my son, you monster!* Of the three rabbits he had killed, only one had been lop-eared. Gavin remembered her son clearly—the college-aged kid had begged for the canine to bury his knot inside him and, not long after, he was instead begging for his life. The wolf smiled briefly at the memory that had curated many masturbatory misadventures, and then stuck both middle fingers up at her in response. His father frowned; both he and Gavin were glad that his mother hadn't seen that.

“Well, if you have no further comment, I suppose we will proceed.” The tiger took Gavin by the arm, just as the wolf took one last look at his father, and led him to the gurney. “Doctor Stevens, prepare for injection.” The feline really thought he was acting in a Shakespearean play or something akin. It was abhorrent.

The canine calmly lay down on the uncomfortable cushion as the metal cuffs that restrained him earlier were soon replaced by leather ones that held him down to the bed in case he were to struggle. He wouldn't, he told himself, but protocols were protocols. The marten wheeled over two drip stands and set one up on either side of the gurney. Gavin swore he could hear his mother sobbing through the reinforced glass as the first needle probed the crook of his arm.

“Now, at first, this injection will just slowly put you to sleep, and after that, well, you don’t have to really worry about it, do you?” The marten’s voice was soft and apologetic, and this made Gavin want to rip out his intestines even more.

*I don’t care. I eat faggots like you for breakfast,* he thought, but didn’t say. He briefly wondered if marten tasted more similar to weasel or to ferret. Perhaps mink would be a closer match, though he lamentably had never tasted it. He unconsciously licked his lips, which made the mustelid wince.

After the second IV was inserted into his other arm—a failsafe in case the first injection didn’t work—it finally sunk in that he was about to be dead in fifteen minutes or less. He pulled up against the restraints just like he promised himself he wouldn’t do, thinking that maybe somehow they had been left a little loose, and he could take out the warden and the armed guards and then...

It was useless, he knew, but it didn’t hurt to hope a bit.

The marten sat down in his swivel chair and prepared the needle, drawing from a tiny bottle labeled *sodium thiopental*. “This won’t hurt a bit, I promise,” he whispered, though this offered little consolation. The doctor then stood up, placed the needle into the injection port, and depressed the plunger. There was no turning back.

It was a few seconds before the warm feeling hit his veins—a familiar one, he was surprised to find. It slowly crept up his arm and into his heart, which pumped the warming numbness throughout the rest of his body. He felt himself floating above the gurney as the ground fell out from beneath him, a distant memory of the tether that once held him to the earth. The restraints disappeared as his jaw opened and closed mindlessly, threatening to chomp down on the tongue that lolled lazily from his lips.

*It’s funny,* he thought, *dying kind of feels like heroin.*

And these were the last conscious thoughts he had before his eyes rolled back into his head to examine the inner workings of his brain.

The marten stood by in the cold, sterile room as he counted down the seconds before he could announce the Predator dead and move on with his life. He didn't want to stick around for the next part.

When it seemed like approximately seven minutes had passed, the doctor approached the lifeless wolf and held two fingers up to his neck as he intently examined his watch.

"Time of death, 11:37 am." He sighed and, through a separate door, exited the room listlessly as the curtains were drawn. From a thousand miles away, Gavin could hear the metallic clacking of the rings against the curtain rod, and the sobbing of his mother through the soundproof glass.

Afterwards, everyone exited the room save for the warden and his prisoner.