

PROFILES

A section dedicated to profiles of characters and places. And any other profiles I might write for Thornhound.

Canine

CANINE

BASIC:

NAME: Canine

LAST NAME: None

AGE: ~280

SPECIES: God

RACE: Deity

CLASS: Rot / Infection

OCCUPATION: Radio Host / Anti-hero

POWER: Limited Reality Manipulation

WEAPON: Battle Axe

ABILITIES: Uncontrollable spreading of infections / rot (through biting or scratching)

APPEARANCE:

BODY: Upright, bipedal, posture. Bulky build. Standing at impressive 6'9" feet (205cm). Covered entirely in unreflective, pitch black fur.

TORSO: Broad chest and shoulders. Thinly spread skin. Solid but not well-defined, the fur covers everything anyway. Hard to touch.

ARMS: Slightly shorter than legs. Ending with human hand-like paws (opposable thumbs, claws are non-retractable, trimmed but still longer and sharper than normal nails).

LEGS: Thighs and calves thicker with muscle. Build for endurance.

HEAD: Slim and wolf-ish. Long snout with strong jaw. Bite force strong enough to chop someone's limb clean off.

EYES: Red outlines of his eyelids.

TEETH: Perfect bone white.

FUR: Unreflective, black and soft to touch. Dense on the surface to help with trapping heat. In Earth's core it's flowy.



CASUAL CLOTHING: Almost always it's an oversized tee with baggy pants during summers. On colder days he walks around in his armor as it's warmer than winter clothes (due to the material it's made out of).

Sees no problem in wearing the same thing for days if it's not dirty / stinky.

PATROL UNIFORM: Heavy armor with spikes along the back and shoulders. Has red detailing. Easily recognizable due to its silhouette and color scheme.

WEAPON: A black battle axe with long, narrow blade and red detailing. A spike sticking out from each end of the handle. Made from a special steel from Earth's core.

PERSONALITY:

Energetic and social. Pretends to hate drama while being involved in almost all of the town's gossip.

Deeply compassionate. Has, on some level, para-social relationships with almost everyone in Thornhound. Gets genuinely disappointed in himself for not being able to save everyone.

HABITS:

- Frequently taps his claws on any surface available.
- Hosts a radio show every night between 7PM and 9PM.
- Tries to avoid spreading infections by accident so he's careful with his claws and teeth.

JOB:

ANTI-HERO: He started his anti-hero crusade by publicly beheading a ringleader of human trafficking. It was the first, and so far, last public execution in Thornhound.

He doesn't follow laws, just his own morality, meaning he doesn't apprehend people.

He will scare off petty criminals, more serious ones he will beat up, injure, scar or cut off a limb. There's also crimes and behaviors that he will kill for.

RADIO HOST: He gets called, the calls vary from gossip to anomalies to questions about existence. He fixes anomalies remotely, yet there are some things he has to take care of on site. He deals with more dangerous ones at all times, no matter the hour.

MORE:

Born from a deity of rot and a deity of infection. He's a crossbreed.

His species lives in Earth's core, due to this they have a strong resistance to extreme heat - if exposed to sub zero temperatures he will become sluggish and will have to spend more energy on heating up his body.

The Earth's core has unique materials that hold heat, such as steel his armor and weapons are made out of.

His species have amazingly long lifespan, bordering on immortal, but they reach adulthood just a few years after birth.

All deities from Earth's core are allowed to roam the surface but not many choose to do so due to the temperature change.

He was set on exploring when he came to Thornhound, but winter took him by surprise. His body, buried in snow, entered a coma-like state. Upon waking up in summer he was outraged at the state of the city (high crime rates, anomalies due to thin barrier between realities, time and dimensions, no one to guide the town's people), so he took it upon himself to maintain the city. That way he became the town's antihero and unofficial emergency line to paranormal occurrences.

He's worshipped as a local deity by a "Kennel Of Salvation" - self named Canine's cult. Canine is not amused with the situation. The Kennel functions more as a community center than a proper worship place.

Kennel Of Salvation

KENNEL OF SALVATION

BASIC:

A cult only in name, in reality it's more like a community center or celebrity fan club.

There's elderly as well as kids, all age groups are welcome.

The Kennel members gather every night during Canine's radio segments, attendance is not necessary. Gatherings are more like hangouts with snacks and light atmosphere.

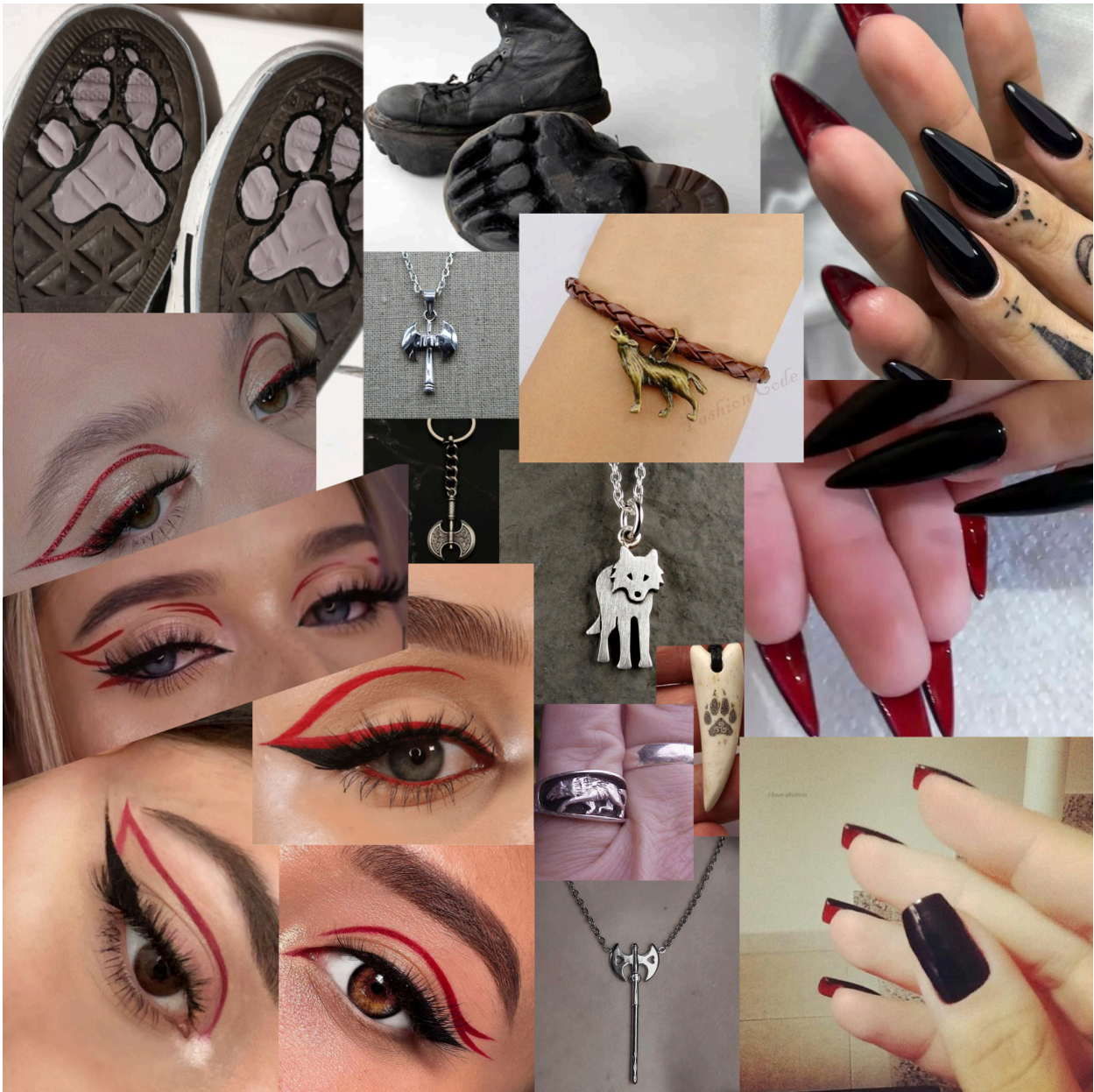
Every member believes Canine is the city's only hope, its salvation. The belief comes from the fact that since Canine took interest in Thornhound the city became noticeably better. The crime rates dropped, the deaths caused by supernatural events became almost non-existent, the reality malfunctions aren't life threatening now and people know how to deal with them.

Some might feel the need to have an altar dedicated to Canine and pray to it but it's treated like house decoration and Canine isn't expected to listen (if they truly need help or guidance they will call the radio).

The Kennel's social media accounts work as Thornhound's public service announcements along with posting about events within the "cult".

RECOGNIZED BY:

- Red eyeliner looping around the eye (worn by all genders)
- Dog necklaces / keychains
- Axe necklaces / keychains
- Shirts with the Kennel's logo
- Metal accessories that rattle with every move
- Nails painted black, specifically with red underside (worn by all genders)
- Paw print shoes
- Any of Kennel's merch items



MORE:

When Canine is cold and can feel his body slowing he looks for shelter inside the cathedral. Many members leave food in the cathedral for the homeless, Canine, the poor or just as snacks. Anyone is welcome to take from the offerings.

Extra duvets and heaters in the storage room at ALL times. At least one person checks if everything works at least once a day. They're very worried Canine will get too cold and they won't be able to help - it's their method of preventing it.

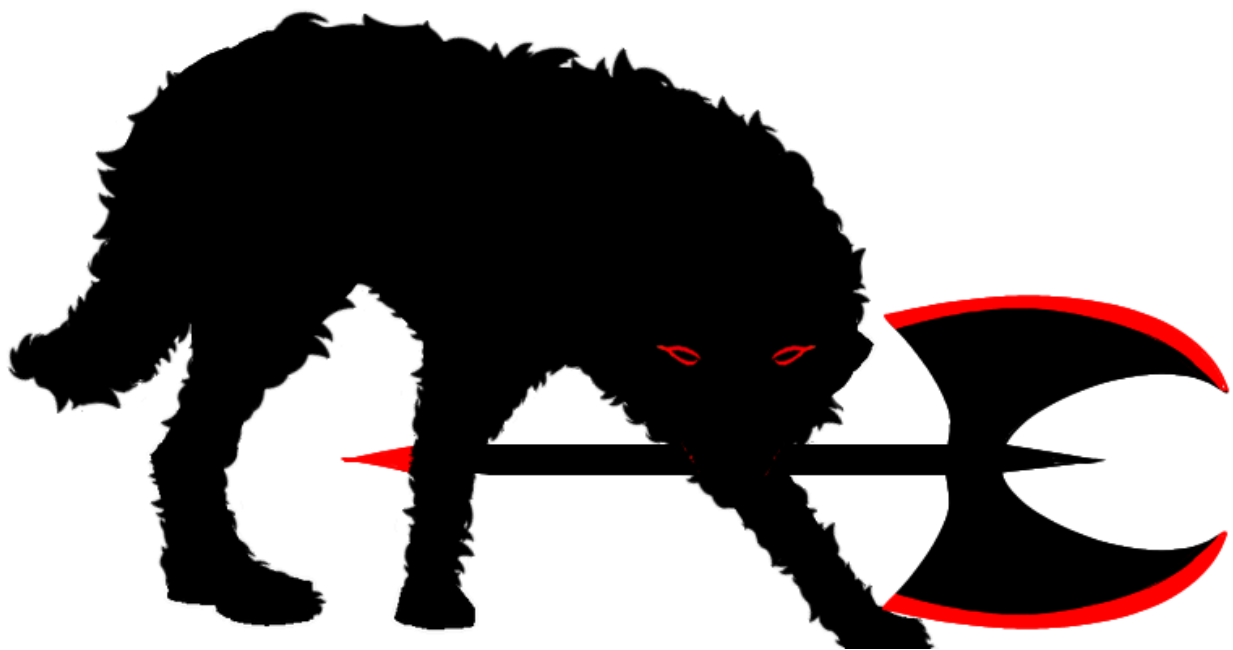
There's a backup generator "just in case."

Every member is in a group chat. Once a text "Freezing Canine near Grayson street!!!" made at least half a city rush there with thermoses, jackets, heaters, hand warmers and so on.

It's a tight community despite its size.

SYMBOL:

Black wolfish figure in defensive pose holding an axe in its snout.



Thornhound

















Announcements / Posters

HAVE YOU SEEN HONEY?



Honey is my beautiful lady, she reacts to her name and food. If anyone has seen her, please, call the number below!

TAKEONE!
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXX-XXX-XXX

Gathering at the Kennel starts at 6PM this Friday

(04.04.25)

What to bring?

- Food is always welcome
(preferably nonperishable)**
- Warm clothes (or clothing in general)**
- Chew toys. We always need chew toys.**

Why so early?

**Unfortunately the Kennel's door closes at 8PM
this Friday as per Canine's request. He did not
provide reason but apparently the cathedral isn't
to be used After 8:40PM.**

Thank you for your understanding.

- KENNEL OF SALVATION

POODLES
LULLABOONS
-CANINE

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

To anyone who hadn't heard yesterday:

**Canine will be unavailable Mon - Fri
from 1PM - 9:30PM as he has to be
present at an (undisclosed) audience. If
there's any problems during that time,
come to the Kennel or text Canine, he
will be checking his inbox everyday
after 9:30PM.**

**The volunteers among the Kennel Of
Salvation members are on call all day
and night. If waiting for Canine's
return is not an option, call the Kennel.**

- KENNEL OF SALVATION

DRIVER STORY

1. Welcome To Thornhound - Unnamed driver is passing through Thornhound
2. The Kennel of Salvation - UNFINISHED unofficial chapter 2 of the story

Welcome To Thornhound

It was a starless night, the kind in which heavy fog still clung to the road and frost attacked windows.

The car lights blinked to life cutting through the grey vapor as the wheels passed a sign. 'Welcome to Thornhound!' it said. Rust and dirt obscuring it whole. What once was bright green color with spotless white lettering was just a feast for all the grime eating organisms. It was chipped at the edges, turning the smooth curves into jagged, sharp bits of metal.

The driver sighed as her eyes drifted over it. Thornhound. She didn't like it. It was... off. It had that dark aura surrounding it. The shadows wrapped weirdly around buildings. Still, she needed to get out of her own town. It had been suffocating. People knew her, not for the right reasons. But not for the wrong ones either. It was just a small town. Wherever she went, she saw a familiar face. She hated that. All she ever wanted was to disappear into the background. Start anew.

Still, she was glad to be just another passerby. Thornhound was no place for her, but the GPS said it was the fastest route. The only route, since the road works cut off the main road and this detour was all that was left.

This whole city gave her creeps for no reason at all.

People who moved out from this city, exchange students, travelers, they all were different yet so similar. Similar in how they carried themselves. How they walked cautiously, yet so mindlessly about it, like it was instinct they were born with. How they looked at everything just a second too long, just to 'check if it's right'. And the things they said. The stories they told. So many different people, so many different stories, yet all of them, every single one, so similar.

The native residents of Thornhound city talked about all the bizarre experiences, as if it was normal. Back in her town, she overheard a conversation between two of them. Houses breathing louder than usual. The lawn humming. Reflections being delayed. And none called the other's bullshit.

At first she thought she was just overhearing a conversation about some kind of immersive game, or social experiment, prank to farm content - "Talking about supernatural experiences like it's normal! See the strangers' reactions. [GONE SEXUAL]" - or any other type of clickbait.

She wasn't even looking for it, just casually going through Twitter, and she saw one tweet about a strange conversation. Similar to the one she overheard. Then some days later another. And she fell into the rabbit hole, looked up that hellish city's name.

All she got in return was more questions and useless pseudo-documentaries.

"The mystery of Thornhound."

"Visiting Thornhound!"

"Bust or Truth - Thornhound."

"The history of Thornhound city."

"Thornhound chronicles."

"Explaining the Thornhound ARG"

There were a few websites too, early 2000s, all of them dead. New posts very rarely showed up, if you saw 10 new posts in the span of 6 years then you could consider the forum full of life!

Apparently the decade old sites agreed that those stories are like cryptids. Beings whose existence no one can prove but thousands believe they've seen. So yes, cryptids, but for tales. As weird as it sounded, she couldn't find a better analogy. There had to be some truth in it to make so many people tell so many eerie stories.

The sign disappeared into the embrace of fog in the rear view mirror. 'Thornhound says goodbye!' on the back of it. The rust and dirt made it almost impossible to read the first five letters.

The gravel under the wheels scraped against the patchy road. She hadn't driven on an even surface for a while now, so the asphalt, however unkempt, was pleasant. The radio started to turn into static as she was losing signal. Shame, her favorite station didn't seem to reach. The driver stretched out her hand to fiddle with the knob, trying to tune in to some other worthwhile station. She heard a few songs playing, none of them were to her tastes. News held no interest to her either. She almost gave up until she heard a low, gritty, somewhat growly - *'is that even a word? It should be.'* - voice cut through static and horrible music.

"It's 189.16 - Thorn Radio."

She decided to keep it on. Seemed better than whatever else was playing. Hands on her wheel, she was on a look out for a gas station. Might as well fuel up, God knows where and when the next station could be.

"Back on the air! Hope you enjoyed the music break folks. But it's time to talk 'hound with yours truly, one and only, Canine!"

The host announced, voice getting louder towards the end with a strong note of excitement. It put a small smile on her face. Hearing someone so happy so late at night was a welcome surprise compared to the monotone speech of news reporters. Still a small voice in her head nagged *'Canine? Weird name to call yourself by.'* but she couldn't really judge. After all, he wasn't the one who went by "Bunny Boo" in high school. To this day she doesn't know why. She could admit that Canine was definitely a step up from that.

"As usual, if the sky's lookin' wrong or your cat barks, gimme a call at XXX-XXX-XXX. Because your reality is my responsibility."

She looked at the radio and furrowed her brows. Was that the mystery behind all those anomaly stories? An artistic radio show? None of the videos and articles mentioned it. Probably because it was more content worthy. It was... anticlimactic, after all.

"Now, what's new? If ya missed it, the lost cat, Honey, is no longer missing! Earlier tonight we had a caller that admitted to hit an' run. Shame. But hey, small mercies. Honey was reunited with her owner in the last moments. He was the one that hit 'er. So, if you were on a lookout, rest soldier! Your services are no longer needed."

She took a double take at that, her long hair hitting her face and bangs falling into her eyes. Did the host just- he didn't make fun of the owner, right? That's just cruel. "Asshole." she muttered under her breath but didn't change the station.

“Other local news. There will be traffic near Adensor’s street due to installing a new electric post. I highly recommend sidetrack by the cliffside. Or just ram your way through the workers.”

The host snorted - snarled more likely - and continued on. ‘*Seriously, what’s wrong with that guy?*’ she scowled further at that comment.

“Anyway, it will be rainin’ cats ‘n’ - *chuckle* - cats ‘n’ dogs, later tonight, around nine PM, also watch out for-”

He laughed at the expression, the sound low and sharp. She was confused, what had been so funny? She just rolled her eyes, that clearly was something she wasn’t privy to. The host just kept droning on and on about the weather.

“As I was sayin’,” Canine got cut off by a rhythmic beep, “well look at that. We’ve got a caller.”

That got her attention, eyes snapping from the road ahead to glance at the radio for half a second.

“ello caller! You’re on the air with me. What can I do for ya?” the host asked warmly. The caller responded a second after. Hesitant. Nervous. “Am I... am I real?”

The radio fell silent, the only sound was faint tap-tap-tapping that previously was covered by the host’s voice before. Her grip on the wheel tightened, oddly unsure now.

“If you wish to be.”

Then silence again. Radio silence (ha!). The woman frowned at her own shitty joke and loosened her grip. She needed sleep if she really found that funny. The question though, it unnerved her. It sounded so genuine. ‘*Actors.*’ Doing the most. As always.

The call ended and the host spoke.

“Well, that was something! Y’all are as real as I am. Or as real as the person next to you. If you want to, that is.”

She tuned it out, didn’t turn it off. Background noise helped, didn’t trust herself to stand the gloom city in total silence.

She drove through, taking in the dirty puddles and wet benches. Taller buildings gave her chills for a cause she was yet to figure out.

Eyes focused on the road, but her vision blurred at times. When she’s at the gas station she will buy herself an energy drink. God knows she needs it.

“I do, yeah.” The radio host answered, no, not answered - that was ridiculous. She shook her head, it was just one of those weird coincidences. When you say one thing and a movie character “reacts,” perfectly timed moments. “But hang with me ‘ere. I have a point!” then went

on a ramble. Something about a kennel. Something about apple juice. Something about sour cream.

Her gaze kept on landing on alleyways. The shadows stretched too long, color too dark. They seemed to swallow the city. People walked on pavement, she swore she could almost hear their footsteps over her car's engine, heavy boots landing too lightly.

The road was empty save for the few cars she passed by so far.

Despite the depressing aesthetic of Thornhound, she appreciated not being blinded by neon signs and bazillion advertisements sprawled all over huge screens. Mostly because those huge screens were absent and neon signs slowly dying. Eliminating only dim glow coloring small patches of fog blue, yellow, pink, red, any color, really.

She knew the city was unusual, but the atmosphere made her feel at ease, at home. Her breath was slow and deep. For all the weirdness, she understood the appeal, why one would want to live there.

She got ripped away from her thoughts by the same rhythmic beep from before.

"Wazzup caller! What got ya callin' in tonight?" the ever so energetic host greeted. Maybe, just maybe, she got why people like him too, this radio show. Canine seemed friendly enough, nice even, ignoring the insensitive comments.

"The river is flowing backwards again," a tired voice answered, "took my fishin' rod with it."

Another one of those actors called, but instead of getting mad, she smiled softly. *'A little whimsy is good.'* she told herself. It was a radio show or play of some sorts, no need to get worked up about it. It was better than the news at the very least!

She didn't want to admit it but she actually found it amusing. It felt a whole lot different than the multitude of other things she listened to over the course of her road trip.

What was it again? 189.16? She made a mental note to look it up when she gets to her final destination. Might find another episode if there's one. A future road trip with this "Canine" character could be a fun idea.

"Ah, lemme check," the radio host muttered in an uncharacteristically focused tone followed by a familiar sound of mechanical keyboard and clicks of a mouse. "Yea, the river does seem to flow backwards." Canine fell silent and the key clicking returned. "Here, that should do it."

"Yeah, works right now. Thanks Canine."

"Always happy to help, Jamie," he slurred and hung up before continuing. "Another one of those nights then," he sighed and all the energy seemed to escape with it. "so, once more, if anything's wrong, gimme a call at XXX-XXX-XXX."

She felt almost bad with how tired he sounded. Disappointed to hear about the river.

She didn't get to dwell on it for too long though as a small gas icon lit up on her dashboard.

'Low fuel? You gotta be kidding me!' she scoffed. Yeah, she was on a lookout for a station anyways, but didn't know she was that low. But again, she had been driving for hours now. She decided to push her frustrations down and focus on the more pressing matter. Gas station. She hasn't seen any since entering Thornhound. If she had no luck by now, she was even more crushed glancing at her GPS where no icon for it showed up either.

She took her hand away from the gearbox and zoomed in on the map. *'Still unlucky.'*

"Right turn."

She looked at the radio and stared, the car slowing down as her foot slipped off the pedal. He didn't say that to her, she missed something! Some context. Had to! She wasn't paying attention to it for a bit.

Still, the host continued to speak.

"And he stole it from me! I trusted him, listened to him, I took the right turn, went into that god-damned alleyway and this asshole stole my axe! Who does that!? Not only that but he called me a mutt! A mutt! Not gonna lie, ruffled my feathers."

'Oh.' he was only telling a story, raging about a stolen axe. *'An axe?'* now she wanted to know the full story! Curse her for not listening.

She pushed her foot down on the pedal once again, fingers digging into the rubber of the wheel and kept listening.

"So what do I do? I bite him, that's what I do! You callin' me a mutt, you get a mutt. Then I yanked my axe from his dirty hands and... well," he paused, sounding as if he wanted to stifle his laughter. "So yeah, don't be goin' aroun' callin' me a mutt, kids. Only people I'm particularly fond of can get away with that shit. But, well, I do call myself that... It's complicated! Okay? I have a weird relationship with that word. I'm just Canine. Y' get it?"

The host announced, quickly, almost nervously, desperate to explain but coming up short with what he wanted to convey. Like someone trying to justify their actions, but couldn't explain well, just getting tangled up and flustered.

She looked at the radio, knowing the feeling all too well. Her mind occupied by thoughts of her own family, friends, trying to explain away all the reasons for her leaving but not being able to.

As she was lost in her own mind she subconsciously took the right turn, Canine's words still tugging at her brain.

And sure enough, a tattletale gas station sign. "Just a chance. It was bound to be somewhere." she mumbled, and parked her car at the gas pump. The engine stopped its soft rumbling and

the radio got cut off in the middle of Canine's sentence. Shame, she was getting invested, she started to like the eccentric host. Even if it was just a radio play, it was a good radio play!

She rubbed sleep off her eyes and opened her car doors and got out. Her knees cracked. *'Fuck, I really needed to stretch my legs.'* How long had passed since her last stop?

She took the fuel gun in her hands and opened the tank with the other.

Her fingers squeezed the switch, thumb pressing against the handle, as the gun was in the tank.

Her eyes focused on the arrow fluttering to life, counting the gallons. One, two, three... ten. That was enough. Once the fuel gun was in its place she entered the station, automatic doors sliding open before her.

The bright lights blinded her for a moment, making her narrow her eyes. The warm air caressed her skin.

After a few seconds she skimmed over the shelves, walking through the aisles. She settled for a bag of chips, sour cream, and an energy drink. The station didn't carry her favorite, but it had some other brand, she hoped it worked just as well if not better.

She put the items on the counter. "Pump 3," she said, her voice tired and hoarse. Fuck sleep deprivation.

"Hello," welcomed the overly cheerful cashier for someone that worked a graveyard shift. "How you doin' tonight?" They tried to keep the conversation going as they scanned the items.

She dropped her gaze to her purse and fished for a wallet. Her ears picking up a faint, familiar voice of a radio host coming from the employee's headphones.

The voice shouted into the mic something that sounded suspiciously a lot like "WHAT DO YOU MEAN THE GRANNY IS BARKING!?! SHE SHOULD ABSOLUTELY NOT BE DOIN' THAT!?" followed by frantic typing.

Her body sulked a bit as she realized she missed a caller. The cashier on the other hand was quietly laughing, clearly hearing the radio play well.

"\$45.28." they announced and she handed a \$50. Now, that they were counting pennies for a change she got a good look at them.

Their face was a bit pale and had smile lines despite their age - a young adult at most. Bright red eyeliner looping around the eyelid, forming a semi circle. Their trousers decorated with steel accessories. Chains mostly. All of it rattled with every move. The necklace they wore was black, charm being a simple dog head from the side, flashing its teeth. The front of their white t-shirt was blank save for a dog silhouette, she couldn't see the back of the t-shirt clearly but it did look like there was another dog shape on it, in a defensive pose with a battle axe in its mouth. The text "Kennel Of Salvation" circled around the graphic.

The cashier got her change a few seconds later and smiled while saying goodbye. She just nodded and took the chips along with the drink and got back to her car.

She put the key in the ignition and drove off, throwing the coins in a cup holder.

The radio came to life and just as the host was in the middle of the sentence.

“-an't be doin' this with you people. You drag me into internet drama for no reason at all!” He put the microphone closer once more, she assumed, and whispered into it, the voice gaining that grainy quality of a shitty speaker, but the softness and warmth was undoubtedly. “I don't give a rat's ass about that gore site. It's beneath me. A maggot I'd crush under my paw,” his giggles turning into a growl towards the end.

'Back to insults it is.' she rolled her eyes. If a small smile appeared on her lips then it's nobody's business but her own.

The host pushed the microphone away as he got yet another call.

“You're on air caller! How can I assist ya durin' this lovely evenin'?” Canine asked.

“Uhm, I just wanted to say thank you... the other day... you saved me. I- I'm not sure I'd be alive if it wasn't for you. Thank you.” the caller stumbled against their own words.

Alright, she definitely missed some lore of the radio play. Meaning it definitely has more episodes! She got a bit giddy and excited to listen to more of this radio show.

“Ah, no problem! That's what I do. No need to thank me. Just y'know, I'm not hittin' the streets until 9:30 PM, so stay safe y'all! I'm only out early on special occasions.”

The call ended shortly after, now left wondering just which episode it referenced, what happened before.

“Uh, where was I...” he paused, tap-tap-tapping with his nails - *'sounds too long and hard for nails. Is he wearing acrylics or something?'* - . “Yeah, right, so that internet drama? About me, but not my businesses. That's all I'm gonna say.” He huffed.

'For now' she chuckled as the thought passed by in her head. She quickly got back to her original path and drove further in the city.

One thing she could tell just by her surroundings was that it had to be more lived in part of Thornhound. The trash cans were overflowing, in the walls of raw blocks little shops found place, all of them looked as if they were one foot into bankruptcy.

Bakeries had a few customers or maybe just people seeking shelter from the cold, pillars covered in posters. Some old, torn and faded, some new, full of color, soaking up the moist air.

Once again, she focused more on the road and GPS than the radio, so it was no surprise when she flinched at the host's shouting straight into the microphone.

"FOR THE LAST TIME, I'M NOT FUCKIN' AROUND HELEN, YOUR LAWN IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HUMMING! GIVE IT BONES!" followed by growls and what sounded like mocking the caller under his nose, she was not sure of it because she couldn't understand even one word.

'The humming lawn!' She thought excitedly, it was one of the stories she (over)heard personally.

"And before you ask - no, I can't fix that shit remotely! I haven't updated the system so it's not there! Yes, I'm gettin' around to doin' it." He grumbled, tapping more frequently on the surface of - maybe - his desk.

"But I like the song! It's soothing!" The caller cried out.

"Then why you callin' about it if you don't want it fixed!? C'mon now. Use your brain. And seriously, give it bones now. The hummin' gonna turn into screamin' and then it will be a lotta harder to stop it." He hung up, not waiting for the caller's response.

"You heard that? Don't be like that. Wastin' my time." A scoff followed his words. "I'm not that serious about it right now, but please, do call when you have a question or want something fixed. Not just to inform me about a problem."

'Customer service, been there, done that!' She related to that on a spiritual level. Canine was becoming her favorite character quickly, which made her wonder if he was the only character.

"Y'know, I need a break! Y'all get ads and music now. No more Canine, baby!" The host exclaimed and went off air. And he followed through, now playing an ad.

She sighed and opened her energy drink, in the chaos of the radio she totally forgot about it. Now, without someone - *'When did I start thinking about Canine like of a real person?'* - talking her ear off, her brain was falling asleep.

The can hissed as the metal gave way. She gulped a generous portion down since the road was empty. If there's an occasion, leave it to her to take it. Drivers love their energy drinks, at least she did.

As the music played, something she actually found pretty good which was surprising, she drove further and further.

Her car passed by buildings. Old houses - falling apart, the kind in which floors squeak and boards give in under your feet but older folks still refuse to move out or accept any revelations. New ones with bare brick and concrete, brutalist style.

Until she reached the city square, she hit the breaks as the car rolled onto paving stones. A community garden, growing all kinds of vegetables. The park connected with it was functioning as an orchard too. She could recognize regular trees like oak or horse chestnut, but

there were apple and pear trees too. She couldn't see clearly through the bushes surrounding it, but she guessed more fruits grew there as well.

A stunning decorative fountain was in sight. Beautiful with all its layers and careful And careful carving of the bas-reliefs on the base of it. On top of it was a little statue with ruby eyes.

She drove out of the square, speeding up again.

The most impressive was a cathedral-like building, maybe at some point in time it functioned as such, but now it didn't look like it. The, probably religious, stained glass was replaced with another imaginary. But with how fast the car passed by, paired with a must to focus on the road, the shape just blurred into blackness. She washed she could see more details of the massive building.

The understanding and appreciation of the city flooded her, she only hoped her new home would have beautiful places like that too.

"In 10 miles turn left." The GPS screeched to life after being silent the entire time since she entered Thornhound.

A quick glance at her phone confused her. Her location mark was jumping all over the screen, the dots marking her road flickering in and out of existence. She hadn't had that problem when she was looking for a gas station earlier. *'Don't tell me my signal got fucked over.'* she prayed in her head and pulled over the first chance she had.

Her GPS problem either gets solved now or she's on her own until she catches signal again.

The engine turned off with a tug at the key before she realized she stopped at a bus stop. She bit her lip and pressed ~~park-anywhere-you-want~~ emergency lights. If a cop asks, she could claim car troubles and act surprised when her car works properly now.

She freed the phone from the holder and checked the signal. It was weak. "Goddamnit!" A groan escaped her throat. She had no idea how to get out of the city, GPS was not working, she had no one to call and on top of that she hadn't showered in three days. Only sleeping in a car and using toilets at gas stations (*gross!*).

Her hands covered her face and she slouched on the wheel. Tears pressed against her eyelids, she wasn't sad, she was upset, overwhelmed. Everything was too much. The past three days on the road tired her out. She was beyond exhausted and the caffeine didn't help. She had energy drinks mixed with cold coffee before she entered Thornhound, then another energy drink just a few minutes ago. Yet her eyes still couldn't stay open for long.

She needs sleep. Real sleep. In bed. Or at least somewhere that isn't her car.

A knock against her window pulled her away from ~~–pitying herself–~~ whatever she was doing.

Her throat bobbed as the gathered saliva went down. Her eyes uneagerly dragged to the window.

It was a teen tapping at it with a knuckle. He seemed harmless enough.

She rolled down her window, just a bit. Not fully, doors still locked - 'safety first' she remembered that one YouTube video saying on self defense.

"Yes?" She cringed at how she sounded. Her voice shouldn't crack like that.

"Are you okay?" He asked, eyes narrowed, analysing her appearance. Suddenly she felt self conscious about her messy hair and eye bags the size of Asia. "You're not from here," that wasn't a question, just a statement.

"Passing through," a forced reply with an even more forced smile.

"Figures, no one in their right mind wants to stay. They hear about that one beheadin' and shit their pants," - '*Beheading!?*' - "they're so dramatic. Or shady. But it kept crime rates down. Just like he says, 'one good public beheadin' and criminals get a whole lot more timid,' whatever works, I guess." The teen muttered, as if it was casual, just a passing fact in a conversation. Normal. Maybe it was normal for Thornhound. What an uncomfortable thought.

"Anyway, you good? Saw ya havin' a lil' breakdown right there," he continued, rolling on the balls of his heels back and forth.

"Uh..." having a teen witnessing your pathetic enough display to make them feel obligated to check on you is just plain embarrassing. "Peachy." She mumbled, words barely audible.

"Uh-huh." He nodded, unconvinced. "Car troubles?" the teen inquired, glancing at the blinking red lights.

She looked down at the button before focusing on the person in front of her again. "Something like that."

The boy hummed, as if taking that into consideration. "You should go to the Kennel, it's not too far. They will let you crash for the night. Just, y'know, you're an *outsider*, so don't think about things too hard. You won't understand unless you live here for a while," he smiled.

"The kennel?" She questioned, doing the complete opposite of what the teen asked - trying to make sense of things.

"The Kennel! It's an old cathedral, we call it a Kennel now. Has more meaning." He looked over the car and continued, "I'm sure we can transport your car to the mechanic. There's a good one, doesn't scam by callin' for extra parts."

"I'm not worried about my car." *'I'm worried about my safety. An old cathedral is the last place I want to spend the night.'*

"Then why not visit? They've got showers, you look like you need one."

"What is that supposed to mean?" she huffed at the unsolicited comment. She knew she couldn't take care of herself to the level she wanted but she doesn't look terrible!

No answer, just quick glances to her rear view mirror then back to her.

She got the hint and looked at herself.

Well, fine. She will admit it. The kid has a point.

Her hair was greasy and messy, eyes barely open, dirt clung to her oily skin, crumbs of whatever cheap fast-food she got on the road stuck to the corner of her mouth. Still, no need to say it. She glared at him, and the teen only put his hands in the air, muttering something. Probably an apology. She rolled her eyes and looked at her reflection again. It didn't look back. It still glared at the teen, then moved to roll its eyes and finally stare back.

"Oh, it's delayed. That's a safety risk on the road," he said, unamused, one hand on the roof of the car as he leaned forward, not even a little shocked. "I'll shoot Canine a text since he's on break. He will get to it on his own time."

'What!?'

The Kennel of Salvation

The cathedral was massive. The building towering over everything, making her feel small and insignificant.

She bit her lip as she reached out to knock at the wooden door. Her hand gripped the metal knocker. The cold soaked into her fingertips.

The rhythmic thump of the metal on wood made her feel exposed, the sound carrying too far, too loud, for her liking.

She took a few steps back, taking in the structure in front of her. Was it stupid of her to come here? She didn't *really* have any trouble with her car. But still, she could appreciate some proper rest and a shower. Maybe even a nice meal if she's lucky!

OTHER

1. Can't save - short story about Canine and a doomed caller (Possible rewrite in the future)
2. Twitter - Thornhound in universe Twitter
3. Incorrect quotes - what's on the tin
4. Bus stop - unnamed character meets Canine in early years

Can't save [needs rewrite]

Canine's claws tapped against the cypress desk his equipment was on.

“-etting an umbrella would be recommended, but y'all ain't made out of suga' so,” Canine let out a grunt, uncommitted to whatever he was saying.

Before he could start his next sentence a loud, rhythmic beeping stopped him. His eyes immediately turned to the small red light above a switch.

His paw reached out towards the dial, turning the music down completely before flicking the switch upward.

“Canine here, how ca-”

“It's outside.”

The caller interrupted him. Their voice shaky and breath uneven, fast, shallow.

Canine fell silent, his ears jerked up, turning to the speaker.

Scratching, frantic and desperate. Calling out through the closed door, sounding almost human. So eerily similar to Canine's.

He allowed himself only a moment to understand the situation, cold shivers went through his body, making his fur puff up like a cat.

“If it's outside, then you're fine. You still have time. Jus-”

“It's calling my name.” the caller stated, their voice edging on amusement and want.

“Don't listen! Whatever it's saying, whoever you think it is, it's not true.” Canine all but begged. “Please, just go to your bathroom and-”

Silence.

“Caller, are you with me? Caller? Hello? Amy? Amy, are you there? Amy! Please, answer!”

His voice rose with each word, the urgency making him forget himself, trying to get the girl to listen to him, to ignore the calling of the creature outside.

“Amy! Focus on me! Amy!” He shouted into the microphone, claws dragging at his desk leaving deep scratches.

When the only answer he got were doors opening and terrified yelp he lowered his head.

“IT'S NOT MY BROTHER! IT'S NOT HIM!” Amy cried out, fumbling with the door, trying to slam it close with all her might, pushing her weight against it.

"I won't be able to make it in time," Canine quietly admitted, unsure whenever it was a confession to himself, the caller or listeners.

He heard the wet crunching followed by a soft thud on the other end of the phone. He winced and gritted his teeth, eyes closing tight enough to invisibility crease.

A heavy sigh escaped his infected lungs, he almost could feel the maggots wiggling in them, as he leaned back in his chair.

The deity waited for a beat. Then another.

Only silence followed, occasionally interrupted by sounds that didn't quite matter anymore.

"I'm ending the call."

The firm statement was all too loud in the quiet booth. One claw flicking the switch down.

"Well... I think I'm going to end the broadcast for now. I have something to take care of," a soft exhale interrupted before Canine continued, "take care of yourselves, stay safe, and *please*, listen."

With a push of a button Canine watched the bright sign "ON AIR" dim until the glow disappeared completely.

His eyes drifted to his axe.

Time to clean up, he supposed.

Twitter

@Dogworshipper

"Canine isn't real" BITCH I PUT UP AN ALTAR, LIT ALL THE CANDLES, SAID A PRAYER AND HE JUST CAME TO MY HOUSE, STOLE A DONUT AND LEFT

@Thornmyhound

Tell me why I go to the Kennel and see Canine sitting on an ALTAR AND EATING DRY RAMEN!?

|

@Thornmyhound

Let it be noted that when asked about it he fled the scene by worming his way under the floorboards. THERE'S NO HATCH. We don't even HAVE floorboards!!!

@Kennelofsalvation

PSA: Our relict, silver jawbone, got stolen. Please, be on a lookout for it and inform us if you have any knowledge about it.

|

@Kennelkid

Canine stole it.

|

@Kennelofsalvation

We know. We're just trying to be professional about it. Gods of other religions don't steal their relics.

@Kennelofsalvation

We got the news Canine took it to open a bag of chips.
YOU HAVE CLAWS! USE THEM INSTEAD!!
also GIVE IT BACK!!!!

|

@Gothicgargoyle

Can't even blame him. It kept biting him.

|

@Kennelkid

That's on him! He never puts it back properly. There's a ritual for it, he just throws the jawbone at the altar and runs away giggling like an idiot.

|

@Lost_crow

Him using it to open a bag of chips? Relatable.

|

@Visitor95

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ALL OF YOU?? WHAT IS THIS THREAD!?

|

@Fixitcanine

Shut up outsider.

|

@Kennelofsalvation

CANINE GIVE THE RELICT BACK

|
@Fixitcanine
Can't. It chews on my charger.

@Holyhell
My sister started floating so I tied her to the radiator so she won't bonk her head on the ceiling
Life hack

|
@Riddlemethis
WDYM "LIFE HACK"???

|
@Holyhell
I guess it works for the dead too. Not sure tho, ask the graveyard keeper

@Kennelofsalvation
PSA: Canine reminds everyone that if your reflection starts bugging - do not panic. Unless it starts crawling out of the mirror, then panic a little.

|
@Lookingthroughglass
PANIC "A LITTLE"?

|
@Fixitcanine
Like 4/10 panic not full 10/10 panic

@Fixitcanine
Just wanted to come out here and say that whatever you hear about me biting a guy's arm off - not true and slender. Old and false.

|
@K9fan
You literally admitted to it on air. Also, it happened two days ago. WDYM OLD AND FALSE!?

|
@Fixitcanine
SLENDER!! SLENDER!!! SLENDER IN REAL TIME!!! DON'T BELIEVE A WORD HE SAYS!!!
NO PROOF!!!

@Delusional
@Fixitcanine are you affiliated with the Kennel Of Salvation?

|
@Fixitcanine
No ❤️

|
@Dogirl
We have pamphlets with your face????

@Woofwoof
Canine: LIMITED reality manipulation! I need my tools for that!!

Canine's tools: Windows Server XP, ballpoint mouse, PS3 controller, 55" TV to "see better" and a cracker.

|

@Fixitcanine

...I hate you.

Incorrect quotes

Caller: "The river took my shoes?"

Canine: "Check behind the cemetery."

Outsider: "HE HAS A CULT!?"

Local: "NOT BY CHOICE, HE DOESN'T!!"

Canine: "Stop dragging me into internet drama!"

Caller: "HunnyBunny said-"

Canine: "HunnyBunny ain't shit! C'mon, what did she say!"

Callers: "Why are there so many anomalies?"

Canine, looking at the server console on fire: "I don't know."

Canine: "Our cats resurrect only on Mondays!"

Local: "Only on Mondays?"

Canine: "Budget cuts."

Canine, waking up in Thornhound after years: "Damn, y'all live like this?"

Caller: "Canine, you still haven't fixed the sky!"

Canine: "THIS WHOLE SYSTEM IS RUNNING ON WINDOWS XP! WAIT A GODDAMN MINUTE, **SUSAN!**"

Caller: "Have ya heard my prayer?"

Canine: "No, I forgot my email password."

Vigilante: "How do you keep the city crime rates down?"

Canine: "Oh, that? Just rip one dude in half in public. Works every time."

Local: "It's just... they keep coming back! I don't know what to do anymore."

Canine: "You dig graves too shallow to keep your dead."

Canine: What do you *mean* the river is flooding!? I *specifically* asked it not to do **that!**

Bus Stop

Crunch, crunch, crunch.

The snow crumbled under boots of a man. Black, leather, steel toe. Silver bolts in soles glistening when the street light catches just right. Carefully stepping into someone's shoeprints.

Crunch, crunch, thud, thud.

The boots ground against the concrete pavement of a bus stop. For someone with such an "important task" there was no sense of urgency. Lazing around, dragging his feet. Uninterested, bored.

There was not a single soul nearby. He preferred it if he had to be honest. He wasn't exactly, how would Ollie put it, a people person.

Why should he be? Not in this hellhole.

So he sat down, looking at his feet. The boots were old, used, scratched. But they kept him warm. Kept his feet dry. It had been years since he got this pair, hadn't it?

His trousers weren't much better either. Patches and patches. The discoloration from use... the worn look teens nowadays are obsessed with. Buying aged pants, but God forbid they hit a thrift store! Second hand isn't good. They want the look, the look is good, but actually having second hand items? That's poverty!

And hell, who cares? Not like anyone in this cesspool of a city had anything better.

He first tried to hide the holes, putting band patches he'd find on the streets or diy-ing them with whatever was lying around or thrown in dumpsters.

Then he figured that no one gave a shit, so he didn't either. Any scrap of material was sewn on. Patches had one job - to patch. And he'll be damned if he didn't use them to the maximum.

He had, what, three pairs of trousers? He will take care of them real good then. They weren't allowed to fall apart until he let them.

So what if he lived in poverty? Barely scraping by? So what if he got involved in some shady business? Everyone does what they have to do to survive. He's no different.

He sighed and rubbed his eyes. His eyelashes tickling the cold skin of his fingers through the thin fabric of material gloves. The sleepless nights finally catching up with him. How long was it?

Three days? Three days with just a few minutes of sleep between the cold getting to him and not letting him sleep, between walking and running and working. Too long. The fatigue was too much sometimes.

But this job was supposed to be different. Better paid. Finale.

He had a feeling it wasn't all that good, but a drowning man would grab a razor. And he was nothing but a drowning man.

So fuck him for trying to better his life.

His vision blurred so he rubbed his eyes again. He needed a break. But it's fine. Just a little longer.

The tiredness must have been getting worse. He was paranoid. Felt as if someone was watching him. Started to see things for a second or two before he blinked them away. God, he needed sleep. But he could manage. Not the first time it happened.

The street light flickered. Once. Twice. Then went out entirely. The bright light that flashed for a fraction of a second made him close his eyes on instinct. The imprint of brightness playing under his eyelids.

He slowly opened his eyes again and dragged his gaze to the block across the street, vision unfocused, as something twitched in the corner of his eye. He tried to take a discreet look. To see what it was.

He was met with a bright red outline of an eye against unreflective black.

He felt a cold shiver travel down his spine.

He tried to make sense of what he was seeing, but the solid mass covered his entire view, he'd need to take a couple steps back.

The creature's body was too dark to blend into the night, even shadows weren't deep enough to fully cover it. But it could still hide in them, one just needed to know where to look for it to see. If that made any sense.

He blinked. Once. Twice. Still there. Still unmoving.

He took a deep breath. Maybe if he'd just pretend it wasn't there it'd go away. It'd stop looking right through him. He bored into the block in front of him again.

"Hello!"

What? He tried not to react, but that voice. It had a static-like quality. He heard it before, he knows he did!

The radio.

The host of a talkshow always starts with that cheerfully annoying greeting. Was there a radio nearby?

"Whatcha doin'?"

This time a teen. Girl. Playfully and energetic, dragging her words to tease. But there was no other person nearby. And the words, definitely from a close distance. All the hope that he wasn't alone with this thing died.

It was the creature.

Talking to him.

Talking.

In for eight.

Just ignore it.

It will go away.

Out in four.

It has to.

Blink.

Once.

It always worked before.

Twice.

It's still there.

A minute passed. Then another. And two more.

It didn't budge.

In for four.

Why was it still there?

Out in two.

Was it still talking?

He didn't know.

Couldn't focus.

All he heard was ringing in his ears.

"Hello?"

It spoke again. This time with a voice of a toddler. Still trying to grasp words. Unsure. Hesitant. Almost scared.

The man bit his lip, teeth drawing blood. He swallowed, ignoring the metallic taste. The ringing dying down.

"Can you see me?"

An adult man. Deep voice, slightly slurred speech.

Finally, with all the courage he could muster - which wasn't much - he turned his head around, towards the strange being.

"Can you see me?"

It asked again. The man noted that its mouth - did it even have a mouth? - didn't move. Or at least he hadn't registered any movement.

Breathe in.

Breath out.

He closed his eyes and nodded.

"So you can see me."

A voice of a woman, soft, gentle, wrapping around him like a warm blanket. All of the sudden the night didn't feel so cold. Familiar. Too familiar.

The feeling of warmth flushed out of him, replaced by cold sweat and dread creeping up into his bones. Nestling in his chest.

That was his late mother's voice. He hadn't heard it since he was a little kid, barely nine.

He wanted to flee, run and scream, maybe cry but he was frozen in place. Eyes wide open, staring at the creature in front of him.

It moved.

It shifted so its weight was distributed more to one side than the other.

The man blinked again, trying to will it away.

Once.

The red "eyes" narrowed.

Twice.

It was further away.

Good. The further it is, the better.

"You don't like me very much, do you?"

A little kiddie's voice. Accusing. Huffing in a way only a bratty kid could.

"Should I?" He responded without thinking. He wasn't sure if it was due to exhaustion or pure stupidity. But now he could only hope it wouldn't get mad.

His heart was racing, the cold sweat dripping down his back.

In for eight.

The creature shifted again. The motion wasn't fluid, it was choppy. Like some frames were missing.

Out in four.

The red lines narrowed once more as it took a step back.

"Suppose not."

It answered. Tired, aged voice. One could imagine their grandfather saying it.

He mulled over the small interaction before deciding to do something reckless. Talk again.

"Who- what are you?"

He muttered, stumbling against his words, barely above a whisper. Deep down, he didn't want the creature to hear. Didn't want an answer to the question.

"God."

A choir of voices answered. Men, women, children, elderly. All overlapping, layering over one another. Desperate. Fighting to be the one in focus. To be the main one. To be heard.

The man was grateful he was sitting down. He didn't trust his legs. He felt weak, as if his bones needed only a light tap to break.

Despite the weight of the word, the creature didn't seem any different than it was just a few moments ago.

Still in place. Still not attacking or clawing at his ribs.

Just stood there. Watching. Uninterested. At least he hoped it was.

Was it really God? It didn't look like one. How does even a God look like? Wasn't God supposed to be merciful? It doesn't look like it knows what that word even means. God is good, no? Is it good? Is God-

"God is flesh."

It spoke again. Like it knew what he was thinking about. He shivered, not because he was cold, but because of the voice it chose, he was sure it was its own. Or at least belonging to something inhumane just like it.

"God will rot."

It continued as he could only stare blankly.

The man lowered his head and mumbled.

"Are you really God?" He questioned. Not caring anymore about what he said. He was too tired.

"Could be."

A non-answer. Not confirming nor denying.

"If you're God, why are you here?" He blurted out. Maybe he wanted an answer. Maybe that's why he spoke without thinking. On instinct.

"Why not?"

It admitted. Like it didn't matter. Strangely human.

He opened his mouth but couldn't find an answer.

In for eight.

"Do you always do things for a reason?"

It asked.

Out in four.

"I guess I don't," he sighed.

A moment passed. The silence was stretching, but it was oddly comfortable. It shouldn't be, he knew damn well that he shouldn't be comfortable around it. And yet it was.

Whenever it was that weird voice, constantly treading the line between speech and animalistic growls or the fact it still wasn't aggressive. Maybe it was just the dizziness.

"So, you're saying you will rot?"

He muttered, glancing at the creature, God, as he remembered its earlier words.

"Already am."

A moment passed.

"Your bus is here."

It grumbled.

Before he could answer, his eyes closed. Once. Twice.

And he was on a bus. Already seated. Disoriented. Nauseous. He stumbled off as the bus came to a halt. Just to see the same street light - now working. There were shoeprints in the snow.

He took five steps before hitting the pavement.

The bus left and he sat down.