

**Therianthropy Project**  
**Chapter Two: The New World Order**  
**Act Two: Business as Usual**

**[b]Another Day, Another Morning[/b]**

The next day, they had a guest. He turned up shortly after breakfast (Kit made omelettes and oat porridge. Not that bland oatmeal stuff north americans made, real hearty porridge with lots of condensed milk and nutmeg and cinnamon and vanilla). He knocked politely on the door, proving to be a young man with an aboriginal (canadian) tint to his feature.

He gave whoever answered a shy grin. "Before you slam the door in my face, Old Coyote sent me," he held up a sheet signed (well, printed) with Old Coyote's name in handwriting (not that they'd ever seen his handwriting) and Grant's signature.

Shelly was up mostly when Kit had disentangled himself from her. She had been sleeping a lot more heavily lately, but then again, she was used to staying up late and going to bed even later. Espically with non school days. Getting out of bed, she took a look at the time and headed downstairs, wearing her pajyams. Hearing the door knock, she absent-mindedly opened it and yawned. "Mornin'." She said and rubbed some of the sleep out of her eyes. "'Kay?" She asked.

Alessa wore her new morphsuit that morning just in case. For safety purposes she had morphed to therian form that morning. However it had been a while since she'd done that and promptly tumbled down the stairs given her inability to account for the added weight of the scales. She walked slowly on, slowly adjusting to it again. She made her way to the kitchen, but ducked behind a couch when she heard there was someone at the door. It wouldn't be right if she scared people away.

Vasily meanwhile was already sitting on the sofa after finishing the food (being in human form, he didn't like it, but agonising shifts that were common for him are doing their job at scaring him from using the therian abilities when unnececary). Then, Alessa passed by and he waved his hand, meaning something along the lines of "Good Morning" and then heard the new visitor coming in, chuckled at "sneaky" Alessa's stunt and went up from the cozy spot to open up the door, but then saw Shelly doing the exact same thing. Duh.

Alessa heard chuckling, but to avoid bumping into something she curled up into a ball. Fortunately she could still sort of hear what was going on.

"Um..." the man said, a bit confused by the fact that someone would answer the door in their nighties.

Shelly blinked a few times and yawned, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes. She focused on the signature and shrugged. "Sorry 'bout that. Just woke up. Wasn't expecting company. Name's Shelly." She said extending her hand. "Come in." She cleared the way to do so. "Lemmie just get dresed. Not sure who else is up yet." She said and headed upstairs.

//\*looks at Kit in the kitchen, Alessa falling down the stairs and Vas in the room behind her.\*

"Oh..." Shelly said seeing some of them awake, but still went upstairs. She got dressed quickly, settling for a hoodie, and kackies before coming back. "There we go." She smiled, blushing a little. "Sorry 'bout that. Ya hungry?" She offered.

"How about you find out who he is and why he's here first?" Raine offered in turn airily as she walked down the stairs with a mug of coffee in her left hand, looking like she'd already been up for awhile judging from her overall neat attire and alertness -her faithful labcoat left open whenever she was outside her lab.

When she was finally in range of the front door, Raine made a little beckoning motion with her right hand at the guest, though the gesture was more to try and snatch the paper out of his hand via telekinesis to get a better look at it herself.

"Hello Raine, how'd you sleep?" Shelly asked, keeping the annoyed tone. If Raine would let her get to that, she'd find out. Get him to lower his guard so he could be approached more easily. But nooooo. Not that she said any of that and kept it off her face.

"You really shouldn't leave the door unattended," the guy called from the doorway. "Especially after given someone something vague that could be taken as an invitation."

"Anyways," Shelly said, changing the topic. "Raine's right though. What's your name? You know mine, but we don't know yours. Or what you're here for."

"I told you, Old Coyote sent me," the man said. He held up the paper, this time a driver's license with it. "See? Abraham Konug. Algonquin. Here for combat training."

"Old Coyote sent him", Alessa thought. She uncurled stood up and moved from behind her horribly picked hiding spot behind the couch. She couldn't stand morph ball mode for that long...real pangolins were far more patient.

"I see..." Raine said, though her expression was a little unreadable if a touch suspicious, but she didn't look that bothered either way, "Well go ahead then, the more they can protect themselves the less I'll have to worry about."

"Oh..." Shelly said, suddenly worried and looked to where Kit was. He had strongly advised against taking the combat classes for her special subjects. While he didn't outright forbid it, she knew that he and Nate wouldn't be happy. At least not until she could prove that she wouldn't spazz out in combat. Not to mention the mention of that got her heart pounding. Placed in an actual situation with her normal thought process, she had the feeling she'd just freeze up.

"Oh great," Vasily said from his Ural-sofa spot, "Fighting? Shit's going to be bad..." He sincerely hoped this combat trainer won't use Old Coyotes methods of training..

"Combat training?!", Alessa said, "I'd think balance training is more important for me at least."

"I don't think that Kit would like it if I did some of that..." Shelly said and looked for him. "Though I presume there's no way to opt out of this so might as well get to it." She shrugged. She would have made a sarcastic comment normally, but instead, she just accepted it. Bottling up the frustration, she put on a smile.

"If you can't fight, you may end up a liability," Raine pointed out, "I can't always drag everyone out of the fire, and I'm going to be busy enough as is catching up to the rest of the world."

Kit was in the kitchen, eavesdropping while the rest debated.

"Fair enough," Shelly replied, unusually chipper with how she was lately. "So, when do we start?"

"As soon as possible," Abraham said. "They said you had a decent sized yard space in the back?"

Shelly blinked, honestly not expecting that. "Ummm. I guess so. But shouldn't we do this in a forest where people won't be as likely to see us or something? Still though, you're the boss. Can I get a little bite to eat before we start though?"

"Aww do we have to?", Alessa said to Abraham.

"It's near eleven for one," Abraham said, "And yes." He gave Raine and somewhat pleading look. "Your kids are somewhat... hopeless, aren't they?"

"Yes!" Kit called out from the kitchen.

"Most of us are, yes." Michael said as he came downstairs with a lack of want to question what is going on now. At least he's dressed.

Shelly shrugged again. "Meh. See you outside then." She said and left, her tone of voice still sounding... almost happy. Again, very unlike Shelly of late. She passed Kit by, made a sandwich and took it with her outside while she waited for the others to arrive, seemingly enjoying herself in the sun.

//everyone would have already made it outside. Since it's late and they would have already eaten.

//Shelly slept in late (like I do). Sue me :P

"I like to think of it as a bit of a test of one's ability," Raine said thoughtfully to Abraham with a bit of a smile that said she was halfway between murder, or just laughing hopelessly, "But anyway, do your best to educate; I plan on being neck-deep in experiments for most of the day so you children have fun now."

"Well, I could always learn rollout properly.", Alessa said enthusiastically, "Not to mention these claws."

"I'll be starting you off in human form first. Then you can work on your therian fighting skill. You won't always be 'dressed for war' when someone comes to get you." He looked around curiously as he took the logical path to the backyard and nodded appreciatively.

"Learn to fight normally then learn how to fight with the other stuff? Makes sense... I guess..." Kit said, somewhat on the wall about it.

Michael nods, "Makes sense to me... guess this will be happening soon?"

"Alrighty...just say when we're starting so I can morph back.", Alessa said to him.

Shelly just nodded as she took a bite of her food. She looked like she couldn't wait to begin.

Vasily rose his eyebrow. "So, two fighting styles minimum, all of this in one month?" he asked, feeling quite sceptical about this.

Shelly swallowed. "Why not? Stranger things have happened."

"One fighting style. I'm here to teach you how to use your body. In general. You think that everyone is going to wait until you change before to take a shot at you?" Abraham said

"Why wouldn't they just use a gun and shoot us without giving us a chance to react? Seems to be how they've operated before." Shelly asked.

"I told you, Nate picked a fight. He always picks fights," Kit muttered. [i]Do not[/i] Nate grumbled.

"I wasn't talking about that. I was talking about when we got bushwacked and kidnapped." Shelly said, genuinely curious. "Though again, that too. Personally, if these guys are as powerful as everyone makes them out to be, it makes me wonder why they don't, or won't, just do so from orbit or something. They probbaly covered up some space based weapons launches or could do that."

Michael shrugs, "You know, at this point it wouldn't surprise me if we counter that by learning how to do something crazy, like dodging bullets..." he said with no excitement at the idea whatsoever since ANYTHING that would be concidered crazy and/or impossible seems to be normal now, which is great for sanity.

"She's a weird one, isn't she?" Abraham said, finding a nice open spot in the middle of the yard. He slipped off his shoes, tossed them out of the way and patted the ground with one foot, nodding absently to himself. "Yes, this will do..."

"Okay. I'm not here to any of those off topic discussions. I'm just here to give you people a crash course in combat. So... come at me what ever way you want. Unarmed for now, though."

Shelly smiled. [i]Subconscious is running out of steam already.[/i] She thought. [i]This is gonna be... really easy. Much easier then I thought I would.[/i]

Alessa sighed then shifted back before heading out to the yard. "He wouldn't ask us to do that if he wasn't sure he could take us all on", she said. She had watched too many kung fu movies to think any differently.

"Is this a fighting invitation?" Vasily asked with a smirk.[/Nix]

"Quick on the uptake, aren't you?" Abraham said in a somewhat unkind manner.

Michael analysed this 'Abraham' person. He seemed normal enough, but Alessa had a good point, "Watch him turn into Morpheus or something..." He said with a sigh before getting into a combat stance, which looked about standard for a teenager.

Kit rolled his eyes. "For all this..." He decided to just rush in. And was met with Abraham's palm that grabbed him, jerked him off balance and sent him stumbling off to the side, trying to regain that which he lost.

[Abraham is a trained fighter, so we are just gonna go rollless with this. And not because I haven't figured out how to mechanize his style. Not at all.]

Shelly's protective instincts kicked in. While she knew that Kit was all right, she didn't care. No one would hurt him! She ran at Abraham, bracing for any counterattack that he could do.

Alessa charged Abraham lashing out with a spin kick. She was certain of what was going to happen, but figured it would be good to let off some steam.  
//wasn't she a gymnast?

He didn't so much counterattack Shelly as he just stepped into her charge and set his leg where she would have moved, disrupting her flow and redirecting it to where Alessa was heading.

(Well, if we're going statless, then I can get fancy with this) Michael ran in a little bit behind Shelly. He quickly spins around Shelly as she was redirected and sends a left hook straight towards Abraham's gut with his right hand about chest height in the middle and ready to try and deflect whatever counter was in store for him.

Rather than go for a direct counter, Bram leaned and twisted, going directly for Michael's root, sweeping his supporting leg aside with a sharp low kick to said shin and taking a half step to move so that he was facing the gaggle of people.

Yup, this guy is good. Michael was hoping the girls would end up distracting him just enough for him to do something, but Bram was fully prepared for him and he was sent to the ground as well with a bit of pain in one leg. "Yep, this guy is Morpheus; this whole day is going to hurt."

Vasily glanced at the people getting hurt and hit and stuff and with a shrug, remained in his place, "Well, I'd lie if I'd say that I didn't see this coming." he said with a usual intonation of "iduncare" in his voice. "Neat show off," Vasily added, "And you plan to somehow teach us to do it... In a month?"

Shelly, still on her attack, swung at Abraham, hoping she'd hit. Unfortunately for Shelly, she had collided with Alessa and both of them tangled in a pile on the ground.

"I've seen people apathetic like you," Bram said lightly. "They are normally the ones who get taken out first. Their is a simple point to this first day. I get to assess you, you get to experience a difference in skill, and you also get a better grasp of working in a group."

Shelly groaned and tried to shove Alessa off her.

Michael slowly picks himself up and hopes one of those two dont end up crashing into him.

Alessa crawled off of Shelly. She then rushed Bram once more.

Kit yelled and decided to just all out rush the guy, putting new Therian physique to good use and tried to leap right at Bram.

Bram proved that martial artist can be sexist too and dealt with the two chargers in two different manners. He faked out Alessa and got behind her with little effort, then literally tossed (well, it was more of a rolled) Kit over his shoulder. "Watch your directions and mind your center of gravity."

//Maybe the blur power...

//there was that Combat Concealment feat in mastermind handbook

//That works even better.

While on the ground, Shelly lashed her foot out as he was talking, trying to catch him in the knee, or groin. Whichever came first. He could only handle so many people at once, right? Hopefully this would also catch him off guard.  
[Out of Reach. She probably hits Vas]

Vasily sighed, "Whatever, this looks like so much fun." he stated, walked over to Abraham and tried to feint.

[url=<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4344019/>] Vasily Bluff: 7[url]

Meh.

Alessa ducked down and tried to sweep his leg with another kick.

He hopped over Alessa's attempt. "Such passion," he sighed at Vas. "I suppose that is enough of this. Only so much you can get from not having any lessons. Though, I take it you had some?" he added to Alessa.

Alessa dusted herself off...she'd need to wash the morphsuit after this. "Just a few years of tae kwon do and kung fu, not really enough...um...sir." She kowtowed.

Shelly got to her feet and dusted herself off. "I was kinda hoping we'd get at least one hit on ya. Oh well." She went to help Kit. "You all right, mate?"

After the respectful bow, she went to check on Vasily. "Um...hmm...you look well...", she said.

"See, now wasn't that fun?" He asked cheerily.

Kit shot him a glare. "Sure. Fun. Tossing me all over the place like that. Fun."

Shelly took Kit's hand as she helped him up.

"Good, now come around lets sit and talk about important things," Abraham said.

Shelly nodded and took a seat, curious as to what they'd be talking about.

Michael shrugs and sits down.

"What do you know about werewolf legends? Not the therian things you have been learning, but the legends."

"Weakness to silver if it hurts them by touch or if it has to get into their blood depends on who tells the story, change every full moon, are slaving uncontrollable beasts when they're changed but are either unaware of their condition or are otherwise nice. The ones that are nice lock themselves up..." Shelly said, listing off points on her fingers. "Any cut off parts of them revert to human form, as does the wolfie when killed. Mythical ones are on two legs and are kinda crossed between bear for bulk and wolf for overall appearance..." A pause. "Probbaly lots more but those are the main ones... Why do ya ask?"

"Notice any difference between the legends and what you know?" Bram asked.

"No moon?" Kit volunteered, pointed up to the sky, even though it wasn't moon out yet. Well, it was morning. So there wouldn't be a moon of any note anyway.

"No total absolute bloodlust?" Vasily asked, glanced at Kit and added within few seconds, "With exceptions of course."

"No silver vulnerability, no total lack of control yeah.", Alessa said.

"Why'd you look at me when you said that..." Kit muttered. "And I'd add not much, to Alessa's point."

"And you should have also noticed you don't really fit the man beast description you'll find in most European myths," Bram said. He brushed at his cheekbones. "And I wouldn't rule out the

silver yet. Some still have it. But there is a pretty good explanation for all that. Want to take a guess at it?"

Shelly shrugged, she'd have to test that out. "Individual differences?" She asked. "No one is the same. It's like food allergies or something."

"More like just different expressions of the therian trait...kinda reminds me of puberty in a way.", Alessa suggested, "But the silver thing is real??"

"Still hung up on the silver," Bram muttered.

"Better than waiting to touch some fine china," Kit muttered. "Silverware," he corrected himself.

Bram sighed. "The silver is just an allergy more severe in Therians than base line humans. It's something to do with silver's interaction with 'iye. Most of the ayjiiye have that tendency. But it's genetic too. Like how asians are more often lactose intolerant. European blooded ayjiiye are more likely to have it.

"BUT, I was more speaking of how you look like the art on the internet instead of the werewolf from badmoon or the wolfman."

"I doubt there's any pangolin girl art on the internet.", Alessa said to him. Though it was always possible.

//there are a lot.

Michael shrugs, "Because Therians drew themselves and people liked how they looked more?" Yes, that was a BS answer, why do you ask?

"The iye any ayjiiye? You all right?" Shelly asked. "And you' be suprised Alessa. There are a few. Not many, but some. As for me, for what I've seen, they always decide to add in the boobs and..." Her face took on more of a ruddy colouration. "Ummm... I'll stop talking now." She said. //how rude. Dissing another aboriginal's language.

"'iye and Ayjiiye," Bram said, correcting her pronunciation. "What do your people call it?"

"Oh." Shelly said. "And my people don't really have anything like that. At all..." She said, unable to recall even a single shapeshifter in her tribe's stories.

"No shaman? Spirit callers? Magic? You should have paid more attention," Bram said. "But since no one has any ideas. It's because you are all pure blooded. It helps having lines outside of Europe too." He added the last bit thoughtfully. "Old Coyote might have glossed over how significant pure bloodness is in shifting."

[i]Here we go...[/i] Shelly thought, knowing some new lies were getting crafted by her subconscious. [i]maybe they'll explain how I'm a thylacine despite them all being dead. Or why there's no prehistoric mammals... or anything other than mammals for that matter.[/i] She perked



up, keeping the humouring smile off her face as she waited. It was what her shrink said. Humour the delusions, and recognize them for what they are.

Bluff: <http://orokos.com/roll/157709>

"He surely did," Vasily replied.

"Ah that explains a lot...not really...pure blooded how? Therian blood, nationality?", Alessa asked. It was important...did mixed race therians get silver allergies or something.

"Therian blood. Nationality has nothing to do with it. Though... the way I understand it, pureblood might not be the best word... it's somewhat more about... potency. I'm not a scientist, so you are better off asking your Guardian about that."

"I was just wondering since both my parents are taiwanese, and I dunno about the others...but potency...alright.", Alessa said.

"Purebloods are strange. They have somewhat slower healing than the stock Tharian shock troops, and are a bit less dangerous, but they look far more natural. The common place therians look like... abominations is a good word. Mismatched limbs, jaws that don't fit well together, drooling, arms too long for their bodies, claws too heavy for their hands. The more typical werewolf look. Beast shapes, rather than anthro shapes. Purebloods naturally default to the perfect anthro form. The rest of them take years, to master it, if they ever do.

"But most of the Players don't employ those. Those are the ones you see hanging around the fringes of the world. People like Old Coyote, who are from places rich with near purebloods and talented on their own who also work with Players forget that."

"And that's probably one of the reasons why the humans of old wanted to kill them. That and the teenage rebellion stopped them from taking the lessons of their elders." Shelly said, recalling Old Coyote's lessons earlier. She didn't mention the other reason of "Players wanted to make all essence disappear for a while." She looked at her hand. "What about taking on a full animal form? Does it come easier for us too?"

"Full animal form?", Alessa asked, "Is that possible..."

"There's no reason why it shouldn't." Shelly countered. "I mean, it's just going more animal from the anthro form. We already managed half way so that'd be twice as hard."

"Yeah... I don't think that actually falls under 'natural'," Kit said.

"There is a reason impure blooded Therians go wild more often. Simply put; a human's mind doesn't work in an animal brain. They've done autopsies on them. The wilder ones almost always had brains more animal than human. Purebloods manage to keep their brain matter near enough human that you can think more or less like you normally do in your half form. The others... find it more difficult. From what I've seen; you can reach an animal form. Only, it's a one way street." Bram paused for a moment. "Had to take down three of them myself."

"Ah..." Shelly said. "Nevermind then." [i]Though it could be one way out of this mess... Once my brain realizes I quit, it might let me go back to normal.[/i] She thought.

"One way street...guess they can't make it easy...so if we go full animal we're stuck like that forever?", Alessa asked.

"Sounds like it. Still, good to know before we actually tried it." Shelly shrugged.

"Sounds more go full animal and you go [i]full[/i] animal..." Kit said slowly, adding emphasis.

"For the mental change yeah, but also he kinda implied you couldn't change back.", Alessa said.

"Well if you go full animal via mental change, you wouldn't WANT to go back or remember how." Shelly pointed out.

"This is generally were my understanding ends," Bram admitted. He wasn't a therian, so he didn't have much more than an outsider's understanding of it. "Still, it's a good place to end our introduction session. I've given you a lot to think about from pure blood status to movie werewolves, so...."

[i]Not really...[/i] Shelly thought. [i]Purebloods rule, halfbloods drool but hit like a frieght train. And that humans weren't completely making stuff up a they passed things on to the silver screen. Still, gives a good way to get out of here. Dunno what this has to do with combat training though...[/i] Shelly though nodded as if deep in thought.

[Calling it a week, so +2pp to spend on combat skills. 'Bram's a bit lax and flexible in his teaching, and curb stomps everyone's attempts equally while helping them grow.]

[Vasily'd get Distract (Bluff) and Improved Block]

[Alessa doing Stuff]

[Before October 22]

Alessa did her best to get her life in order during the week. She focused back on school which seemed like ages ago. And took martial arts lessons with Bram. Today though, she wanted to settle something once and for all. Which was why she was currently knocking on the door to Vasily's room. She took the breakup as well as she could but she needed closure. Maybe he'd take her back, maybe not...she needed to be able to move on.

Vasily was sitting on the bed again, poking around in his laptop while the free time finally presented itself when he heard the knocking. "Yes?"

"Hey, it's Alessa.", she said, "May I come in?"

"If you want," Vasily replied, still looking at the screen.

Alessa entered the room. "Um...hi...what's up.", she said cautiously.

"Sitting in the net," Vasily replied honestly, browsing the sites on his laptop, but looking at Alessa now instead of the laptop.

"Ah, um can we talk...um...about our relationship...I know we kinda broke up last week...", Alessa stammered out what she was going to say.

"It's over now," Vasily said with slight irritation, "For the sake of both of us, can you just drop this topic and forget about it for, say, a month at least? I know I've been a fool, jumping up at the first opportunity for intimacy, sorry for not acting properly earlier."

"No, it wasn't you...I was a fool trying to push that too quickly...I should have taken it slow...I wasn't thinking of the chance for a long term relationship...I wasn't thinking about you...about us...I still have feelings for you...and I hope...maybe we can start anew.", Alessa said to him. The words flowed. She knew she was being desperate...but it was only too late she realized she loved him last time. Now it was his turn.

Vasily smirked and replied, "I won't do a blunder this time. Let's not rush anything first. Give it a month, as I've said."

"What blunder? A month before we can try dating again?", Alessa asked, "I understand...you don't want to rush things...right?"

Vasily just nodded in reply.

"Friends then?", Alessa said finally. It really was the best she could hope for.

"We weren't?" Vasily replied.

"Right...", Alessa smiled for the first time since she walked into his room. She then hugged him, "Guess, we'll just see what happens then...Vas."

//yer turn

//any more nyx?

//Eh, dun think so.

//figure it wasn't the time for alessa to borrow his bondage rope stuff...I guess

//Duh.

//but they could still just chat

[bYet Another Day, Yet Another Evening[/b]

[i]October 22?[i]

Kit muttered as he tried to swallow, digest then regurgitate it in a manner rife with his own thoughts and words in order to avoid a plagiarism claim. School work sucked. Big time. Worse because was playing catch up. Aside from the Week That Was. He could come up with a better

name for it if he really tried. But yeah, catch up. As much as he had wanted to mold little minds in his image... He swapped his majors. Now he had a full text to read and 2500 word paper to create. And, of course, they were having their first practical lesson in magic that day. And he still had 1000 to go. He'd more or less run out of logic, and was working padding the paragraphs with bovine waste products and mentally coming up with a wordy and impressive sounding conclusion to it all.

He was in his room. His and Shelly's. It had been a rough few weeks. And, as weird as it might sound, he was getting used to it. And world view shattering life threatening side aside, it was pretty awesome. (He was all furred out at the moment, tapping away at his computer. [he called it training. Getting his typing skills in the fur up to the parr of his furless.]

As it was, their essence teacher, a young hip looking girl named Graniuelle was supposed to be there in, he glanced at the digital clock on the computer, ten minutes. He could squeeze out another two hundred words. Winging it like a boss. He hissed and tapped away soem more.

Shelly perked up from her own studies as she heard Kit hissing and looked back down. Her work had intensified as well and a lot of it was the dreaded Math Demon. She liked the math for the various games she did, yes but that was more a Math Pixie and wouldn't determine anything really aside from a few quick fixes on her sheet if she got things wrong. She looked at her hand and shrugged. She hadn't been able to shift for a little while now. She had tried, and tried often, but nothing ever came of it. Though that was evidently to be expected since she rubbed her stomach. No detectable buldge yet, but that'd change soon enough she hoped. She smiled at Kit before going back to her work.

Meanwhile Vasily did a lonely work at his room. Nathan was gone, somehow, so the room was kinda in his absolute control at the time, so he could do whatever. Too bad he decided to spend it in a manner that doesn't need to be alone, typing up another program in his laptop. This morning sucked... Apparently he managed to shift again, it hurt like hell as usual. And now his eyes are getting confuzzled by the letters on the screen. Whatever. At least he managed to kick more ass in videogames when being a furry - somehow his reflexive shooter part just got better from it all.

He considered getting to play some game again, till something important happens after his program will finish compiling but then he glanced at the time - their magick teacher was supposed to arrive soon. "Huh," he muttered, "No time for games."

With a sigh he closed his eyes and flopped back on the bed. At least this was promising to be exciting - even with the fact that their lives are in great danger, it's still more interesting than being an ordinary student that will turn in the ordinary worker that will die like an ordinary oldman. Yeah. Magic.

Michael meanwhile, was blasting his concerns away with loud trance music of his own mix as he tosses another dead pencil into the trash and shapened up another one. Since his GPA was likely being threatened due to all of this 'pureblood' crap they were thrown into, he was VERY determined to ensure he was caught up with all the school work to the point where he was forced to put that collab project he has with this female indie singer on hold for a few extra days.

Thankfully she was fine with the bs story he told her about being deathly sick and understood the importance of getting caught up, she's quite the cheerful one strangely enough...

Alessa's time was mostly spent on classes. She got to focusing on schoolwork and designing some fun little projects on the side. Something for her therian form might help too, but so far a mounted camera to help her see when rolling was turning out to be a horrible idea. The discovery of spikeball form during training was interesting though. She considered possible harnesses to use to keep her locked in ball form or other positions. Store-bought ones were crazy expensive according to "casual research". Being scrunched up all tightly in a ball was proving to be wonderful stress relief, not as good as Vasily's ropework but she didn't want to consider that for now. In any case, she didn't worry too much about that.

The doorbell rang, followed by a knock on the door.

Shelly got off the bed and after making sure she was dressed this time, headed downstairs to get it. She opened the door and stepped aside for the newest teacher. "Ello," She said happily.

There was a young looking girl with simply spectacular hair grinning up at her. Up because the girl was small. Not just petite, but also slight. She was about 4'10 and had a eurasian tint to her looks. When she spoke, you could hear the accent. Probably one of those central european places. "Hello! Do you have any tea?"

Shelly smiled. "Of course! What kind do you like?"

"It's for everyone, so put on some water," she said bubbly.

Shelly headed into the kitchen and picked out one of the random teas that she had, putting it on. "How was your trip here?" She called.

Vasily got down eventually as well and noticed the short person. "Hello?" he said-asked in a slightly confused tone.

Alessa had memorized the path from her room to the stairs...She had taken to rolling around when she was bored. Heck being in pangolin therian form was relaxing...and she was almost used to the weight of the scales. Today she finally managed to uncurl before she got to the staircase which she had taken to walking slowly down to avoid issue. Ah...new person...teacher by the look of it. "Nice to meet you....oh...hey Vas.", Alessa said stumbling over to the living room. The girl looked even younger than her.

"It was good, actually. The traffic here is better than in Toronto," she said, looking around the hour curiously. She was going to respond to Vas when Alessa showed up. "It's not really a problem with me, but you should really check who is around before you turn up looking like that."

"My apologies miss", Alessa said. Darn this staying secret thing was hard. she shifted back to human form. There was much less pain now and her morphsuit worked wonderfully.

It was around this time that Michael went to the bathroom. Since he was listening to music via headphones, he isn't aware of the visitor and left the music playing.

"Glad to hear it." Shelly said and looked at the others. "I was gonna say, yeah. Though it's probbaly for practice. I'd do the same." She said and looked to her, wondering if she'd been told about Shelly's condition. She wanted to keep it as much a secret as possible, but the teachers had to know at least since things could be dangerous for her and the little ones.

"Okay then," she said as Alessa worked on her shifting. "Aren't we missing a few people?"

"I'll get Kit." Shelly said and headed upstairs. When she washalfway up, she suddenly yelled "OI! FUZZY AND ROCKY!" Calling for both Kit and Michael.

"Oi! You'd better not be calling me rocky!" Kit called back, distracted from his flow of totally related and not made up in the least knowledge.

"Nah, that'd be Michael. But get down here!" Shelly yelled back.

"And you don't need to yell, I can hear you, ya know..." Kit grumbled.

"Just making sure Mikey boy heard me. Have ya seen him?" Shelly said, opening the door to their room.

"He's over in his room. Playing with his toys I guess," Kit said, making sure to save the document in two places. He'd once have a computer glitch eat his paper. Never again.

Shelly nodded. "All right. I'll dig him out." She said and walked along, knocking on Mikey-Boy's door. "Hey 'Coon boy! You in there?"

The sound of a toilet flushing was followed by the bathroom door opening, "I would say yes, but then I'd be lying."

//poor mikey lives in the bathroom...we must have run out of bedrooms in the house lol  
//suprising considering we should have one for kit and shelly, another for Vas and Alessa, mikey-boys, and two/four for the other four NPCs we had at the start.  
//Will it kill you guys to look at line 350? :P

"Cool. So, new teacher stopped by. Better get downstairs." Shelly said and left Michael to his own devices on how to get downstairs. She meanwhile went down and took a seat near Graniuelle as she waited for the lesson to start.

"Fun, wonder what we'll learn this time..." With that, he heads downstairs.

Kit headed downstairs. The teacher lady was clued in, so he didn't bother shifting back to human form. Fur on clothes could get annoy at times, but he honestly liked his tail, and really just couldn't bother.

The woman raised an eyebrow and sighed when she saw another person being exceptionally lax with caution. "You are all so very reckless," she said in her accented tongue.

"Tails are cool," Vasily said as some sort of reply.

Michael looks at her for a second before continuing down the stairs and into the room without saying anything since it would be wise to not question her height and young appearance.

Shelly stopped herself from mentioning that she hadn't been able to shift for a while now. "I will agree with that one, though if I know someone's coming, I hide until I can change back."

Graniuelle sat down with the tea she had to make herself since Shelly abandoned it. She blew gently over the surface of the hot liquid, setting the steam dancing in little eddies and causing a slight ripple to spread across the surface for a few moments. She took a sip. "So... before I say anything really, what do you all think magic is?"

Shelly took a cup of tea as well and stared at it for a moment, unsure if she should speak up. She spoke up, though still stared at the tea. How could one really answer that question? There were so many different kinds... Finally she said "In its purest form, I'd say it's anything that can affect the world in ways science hasn't discovered yet." Which could be accurate. Einstein himself said that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

"If you asked me before I turned into a human pangolin thing, I'd have said magic doesn't exist, but I have a hard time believing what Raine did that time to begin with.", Alessa said.

Kit thought about it. And, of course, his urban fantasy books influenced him. "It's... a type of energy that... that the current scientific process..." He shrugged. "I don't know really. All I've seen was the shifting."

Shelly was about to take a sip of her tea when she stopped herself. Right... Caffeine was bad for pregnant women. She set it aside for someone else to have or let it languish undrunk. She was gonna miss coffee... and tea.

Michael shrugs as he joined everyone and got a cup of tea himself, "Best I got is what is shown in fantasy and video games: the mage says something, waves his hands around, and suddenly there's a fireball." He was smiling though since one side of him liked magic and he can see where this conversation was going to.

"Fireballs are only one possible use of magic," she said with a small chuckle. "A very common image, but just one possibility." She took another sip of her tea. "I'm going to assume you all know the law of thermodynamics? Even magic follows it. It's a force of nature of course, generated from several sources; life, death, and even some ambient environmental levels. In humans, emotions are the best source and control for it."

"Is there a narrower definition?" Shelly asked. "Because Magic itself is pretty hard to define."

"Short answer; No," she said. "Of course, this is not considering Faith in the considerations as well."

"Ah." Shelly said and shrugged. "I still stick with my previous definition then."

"So magic is it's own science that feeds on aspects of life that were not yet uncovered completely by scientists of the mundane?" Vasily stated.

Michael shrugs, "I figure at this point magic has its own category of science that rarely if ever gets any funding by the 'mundane' scientists."

//Poor IE cant use the lower case version of " xD

//IE sucks.

//Its not IE's fault Microsoft fails at developing a browser :<

"I'd say that those 'players' keep it suppressed because they're assholes like that." Shelly mused.

"Your one sided opinion aside, magic is a dangerous thing. Even more so than a a gun. When magic goes awry, more than one person falls victim to it, and most times it's not the practitioner than it affects."

"Magic missfire equals big kaboom." Shelly said. "Same with anything else really."

"So why are we risking our lives to learn it?", Alessa asked.

"Probbaly so we don't kill ourselves accidently when or if we somehow accidently tap into it. Or so we know what to do when it's used against us. Which it probbaly will given considering we're in a war right now." Shelly chimed in.

"It's hard to use magic to do something you don't believe in or haven't experienced," Graniuelle said.

"Meaning?" Kit interjected. "Not the believe part, the experience part."

"Well..." Graniuelle fished for an explanation. "Earlier you mentioned a fireball, and I said fire was a popular choice. Even with that, it's hard for someone to start playing around with fire if they don't know the true heat of it, or the 'passion' inherent to the flames. Magic stems from emotions, and emotions are rooted in memory."

"Apart for simple kinetomancy, the mind is where most people who accidentally stumble unto a gift first play with any real control or intention. First it's something like pushing someone's intentions or feelings, then it progresses. Magic of the mind is a staining thing. Often one of the Dark Magics. Toying with the thoughts of others leaves scars on the caster, leaving them open to outside influences and impusles. In time, they often become driven by their magic's urgings rather than the other way around."



"But that's not really what I'm here to teach you about. As Therians, you don't necessarily have much more magic affinity than any other person on the street, just the awareness, and a few talents that some call Pack Magic. I'll take about that later, for now, I just want you to know what it is like."

"Sounds fun." Shelly said and wait to see how this would turn out. Still, she gazed longingly at the tea. This was gonna suck if she couldn;t have caffeine... And was dreading the lack of painkillers if they'd be needed.

"Fun, there's something we haven't had in a while. What was with the air of seriousness around you guys...well us...I guess...what I'm trying to say is I'm bored.", Alessa said. It wasn't entirely true, but at some point she was intending to go to the pool and leave all this therian stuff behind her.

"Speak for yourself. I've just gotten caught up with my shows," Kit quipped.

"Back on topic..." Graniulle said, reigning the control of the conversation back with a slight tittered. "I don't intent to keep you all long today, but just to introduce you to basics of how magic feels." She held out her hands to those closest to her [no clue who, didn't really set up a seating arrangement]. "Hold hands please."

Alessa offered her hand to whoever was next to her.

"What we are doing is forming a circuit of energy, a ring through which we can focus our own energy and senses," Graniulle explained. "Clear your mind, close your eyes and try to hold the image of a clear featureless field or a still pond at the forefront of your thoughts."  
[Roll concentration. We are going for DC15, DC10 to maintain]

"Uhuh," Kit said, not all that certain as to what she had in mind. Of course, his thoughts never cooperated and instantly turned into a virtual reality of a little anime version of himself trying to chase anthropomorphic representations of thoses away from the little image he set up. Cute. Distracting, but cute.

**Kit** rolled a die for concentration with 20 sides. The die showed: 12+1

Nate got it right away. Not that he shared.

**Nate** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 20

Shelly took hands with Kit, closing her eyes. Random thoughts though crept up and made themselves known. She was really hungry... Would they be able to get some kangaroo meat? She missed that stuff... Would she be able to go home for the holidays? but then again it could hurt the baby... Would they even be allowed holidays? The way this was shaping up and sounding, it seemed like this would be a 24 hour job with no breaks... And her birthday was coming up. That was good. She could give herself a present by getting another tattoo this year!

Concentration: <http://orokos.com/roll/161908> 7

Vasily closed the eyes, shrugging. Whatever, seemed like a lucid-dreaming meditation technique (mostly for WILD visualisation, duh).

**Vasily** rolled a die for concentration with 20 sides. The die showed: 17

Alessa closed her eyes, she kept an image of a still pond...very zen-like. And then the image was lost among other thoughts, not all of which kosher.

**mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $7 + 4 = 11$

"That's the mindset Vasily. The rest of you need to clear those thoughts," Graniulle warned.

*Easy for you to say*, Kit muttered mentally, conjuring a mental whip and trying to chase down the thoughts that morphed in goats and scattered at his [mental] approach.

**Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 10

Michael, after taking a moment to prepare himself for what they were doing, soon closes his eyes. He isn't sure how it worked so perfectly, his mind should've been noisy, reflecting all those years of him making mixes and listening to music. But somehow he was about to do what Graniulle wanted them to do. He takes a deep breath in order to prevent himself from ruining this already.

<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4378679/> 19

//music can be calming.

Graniulle's warning only making Shelly's already erratic and fragmented thoughts go even more so. How the heck was she going to hide this from Raine? Shelly didn't trust the lunitic doctor as is with her life and now she would learn about the life growing inside her? her best bet was to probbaly fall in with Grant when the baby buldge became too hard to hide... She wanted to place a hand on her stomach but had to keep the circle. Everything had to be just so with this stupid delusional world.

Concentration: <http://orokos.com/roll/162414> 3

Okay, that's it. This was his mind, and his rules. Nate gave him the look. Okay, Not entirely his rules, things were a bit broken in there, as Nate could testify, but he could still make a mindscape and keep it going the way he wanted to. So he tapped into the ferocity that churned in Nate's side of the psyche and mixed it with his fanboyism and sent out mental constructs. Mental drones styled after the chair weapons of Atlantis and modeled as felines to chase the thoughts out and leave the image of the pond, the water surface he was standing on/in (it was the mind. Weird contradictions like that happened a lot) the surface of clear.

**Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $20 + 1$

Michael and Kit would feel something like a cool wind brush over their minds. Sorta like a little tinge of... something between contentment and satisfaction. "Good. Keep that image in your mind Michael, Kit. You still aren't there Shelly."

Though the circle was incomplete, Kit, Michael and Vasily would start to be aware of each other and Graniulle. Ever been focusing on something? Like reading a book or playing a game, but can still know that others are around you? It was sorta like that. A mental sensation, the urge to look

over your shoulder to make sure that person was there or not, a slight touch on their consciousness that was more sustained than erratic like it would normally be. As well as a little... openness, a gap, a lack, were the circle was trying to link Alessa and Shelly.  
[you can interpret this in a whatever way in your mindscapes or whatever]

"Okay... this is... weird [I don't like this...]," Kit said hesitantly. With his attention focused inside, on the pool, he could hear/feel soft splashes+ripples/changes+in+the+current around him. "Creepy almost [Distracting...]."  
[Sense Motive 25 for the square brackets of Nate's voice]

Alessa concentrated again. She held the still pond in her mind for longer but it was still lost. "I'm not sure this is working.", she muttered.

Concentration: **mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $10 + 4 = 14$

"This is... Interesting." Michael said as he took to taking deep breaths to keep his mind stable and his nerves calm. After some point, he realized the reason why he was able to become focused so easily was because his mind was following the tempo of... something. Music perhaps? Whatever it was, it was a low sound that gently interacted with the pool in front of him, a tiny presense that was easily overshadowed by a ripple whenever someone talked, "Cant say my mind has ever been this... clear, before."

Shelly ignored Gran and Alessa. She closed her eyes, concentrating carefully. Her mind starting to go blank and accept this, but a sudden itch on her arms brought her back to reality. Swearing under her breath slightly, she continued trying.

Concentration: See Attempt 1, first roll. 11.

for later usage:

Attempt 1: <http://orokos.com/roll/162419> all fail

Attempt 2: <http://orokos.com/roll/162420> made it on the third (whick would about two minutes to get to... and this is simple concentration lol

//Poor Shelly xD

Alessa continued trying and eventually managed to hold the mental image. She hadn't done meditation for years.

**mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $14 + 4 = 18$

Graniulle secured the circle of power that was building, taking charge of it. She was more concerned with Shelly's apprent complete ineptitude in regards to calming her mind. From her point of view, the world was an artwork of lines and threads, glowing and overwhelming in the patterns and knots that composed life. She learned to filter them long ago, her teacher instilling that skill in her. So at the moment, she subconsciously blocked everything except the connects between the group. She was a bit surprised about the doubled connection coming from Kit, and the fact that she could sense two mind.

That had to be the issue she was warned about. She pushed that issue aside for now. Either way, the connection was sound, and threads of soft blue light ran between them all. "I will be binding your sight to mine for the moment," she warned the group. "I was going to show you magic through my eyes, but for now I'll take a look at what is up with Shelly."

Shelly meanwhile wasn't doing any better. If anything she was doing worse as more random itches sprouted up from her body. She held off against them for a while, but soon she gave up and settled for scratching the itches before they got any worse and distracted her more.

Concentration: Attempt 1, roll 2. 5

Alessa was still holding the mental image, she heard what Gran said and waited, almost as if in a trance. She became instantly aware of Mikey, Kit, Nate, and Vasily, a sort of interconnectedness between them. A nagging presence for some of them, a welcome sensation for others.

Unfortunately her past relations with Vasily were distracting to her while she struggled to maintain her point in the circle of err...magic I guess you'd call it.

//what about the sensations described a few posts up. 482. It's how the connection of the link works. It's like the mental communication power.

//wait grey wait

Kit was starting to make sense of the ripples/pressure in the 'water'. That one was Vasily... That had to be Mikie-boy there... and this major one was Graniulle... Which would make that one that just plopped into the pond was Alessa. He got a snort of derision from Nate, who had figured it out pretty much right away. Yeah, yeah, you got all the instincts, remember. I got the brains. Nate growled at him, but it was only half hearted teasing.

Vasily was a little bit confused, the sensations were kind of new to him. He decided to keep this up without intervention, remaining there as an observer, because it seems that stuff was just about to get fun.

Michael gave a mental nod at what Gran said as he kept looking at this pond in his mind. The strange sensations he was feeling from all of this was, honestly, amazing. [to be continued]

Shelly still wasn't having much fun at all. Her mind was like trying to herd cats. She couldn't really get anywhere. There was just too much tuff on her mind. "Is there a easier way to do this?" Shelly muttered, more to herself than to anyone else. She didn't want to ruin anyone elses concentration.

Attempt 1, roll 3. 7

Graniulle tangled the threads of their vision unto the links so that her own sight overrode their own [sensory link]. And she focused her sight on Shelly as she looked into her brand of the magic spectrum. Graniulle started to explain the glowing threads coiled around, about and through the things she was looking at. "You are seeing the world through my eyes, and through my magic. I use celtric druidric, and work with the connections between the world."

[Fact: different traditions will have different ways of intepreting magic, some don't even have a magic sight.]

She looked at each person in turn so they could see themselves through her magic. "See the faint blue and brown lines that run between you all and are knotted together like celtic art? Those represent your interpersonal relationship." She paused at the strands between Alessa and Vasily. Not only were the blue strands looking worn and worried, there were remnants of weak pink ones hanging tattered on it. On Vas's side, they looked like they tore and just unravelled, on Alessa's they looked more like someone kept trying to tie new ones to replace the ones that tore with little success.

"Oh... you two were together and recently broke up it looks like," Granuille assessed.

"Huh," Vasily replied.

"Yes...that is...correct...yeah.", Alessa said with sadness.

Michael was indeed amazed when his sight went from the 'pond' to the outside world and he practically stopped breathing for a second when he was looking at himself with these strands around him going towards everyone in various colors. The strands going between him and Kit were surprising, yet not unexpected. One strand likely shown Kit as a friend while another shown his general... distrust of Nate. Two souls or something then (Coming from a guy who is completely new to this stuff). He really wasn't sure what to say about all of this, he simply allowed himself to be amazed at all of this.

//more two spirits, one soul

If Shelly had been making any progress, that was instantly lost as she opened her eyes, still in reality. "Are you sure this even works for everyone? Maybe I'm some sort of... Anti-psychic or Anti-witch." She asked, keeping her voice down so as to not anyone's concentration. *Like a necron pariah... wow, why did that enter my head?*

You know the drill. First roll set, fourth result. 2

//haven't you got above 15 yet?

//it seems it'd take Shelly two minutes to get it (Yellow did a LOT of prerolls when the first one failed)

//it was a few fails and since i didn't know when i'd get to it and since i thought we'd be further along in the story (or rather this story would power ahead while i was at work) that i rolled some ahead of time. and no mew. The second set of rolls, third attempt has ONE above 15.

Kit was... interesting under the Granuille's vision. Most of the connections were doubled, like a shadow to each of them. On set more or less the same as the others, the second set seeming harsher in comparison. The second set was pretty scanty in comparison as well, with only three major connections; the one that connected the two sets to each other, one more of distaste coming from Michael and neutrality in return, and a thick one of red and green patterned together between it and Shelly. It ran along side the other one, red and pink that connected them as well.

"Huh, you two are in a serious relationship, aren't you?" Granuille mused.

//she likes gossiping it seems

//more like observing what she sees if you ask me.

//the only relationship that's working around here

//Again; just because one person is having a relationship doesn't mean you have to...

Shelly blushed, hearing those words. "Ummm... Yeah." She grinned, though kept her mouth shut lest she reveal something she'd really prefer to keep hidden.

Graniulle looked back at Kit and frowned. And since Kit was seeing through her eyes at the moment... he shifted uncomfortably under her gaze (and the weird thing about looking at yourself from outside yourself in real time). "Um... what?"

"I'm not quite sure what that double pattern means," Graniulle admitted. "It's like there is evidence of psychological trauma under it as well..."

"Well they did kidnap us and all... And did say that psychological problems were a known issue with their 'high stress relocation' BS." Shelly said, again softly.

"Aaand he apparently developed a split persona," Vasily added with a sigh, "...I should have made it clear earlier, huh?"

"Really?" Graniulle said. She quickly looked over to Vas in surprise, which might have been slightly disorienting for those looking through her eyes before looking back to Kit. She never came across anyone with a split personality that... pronounce to her vision.

"But back to Shelly..." Graniulle focused on Shelly. She was going to focus on the mental connections, to see what was interfrring with her focus, but a second knotwork, green and yellow in the core of her gut, with connections coming from Kit as well, distracted her. "Oh my..."

Shelly tilted her head, mind flashing to Geroqe Takai's famous meme. "Is there something wrong?"

Michael, who was quiet for the moment to take in this interesting way to look at the world, was very interested in that bit of uniqueness in Shell's gut. He didn't bother to move his head to look at Shelly, one reason being he's looking through Gran's eyes like almost everyone else, "...Dare I ask?" Needless to say he wasn't sure if he should ask Gran just what's going on there... well, surely Gran will explain it soon... right?

Shelly bit the inside of her lip, considering to break the circle with that since Mikey seemed to be interested in something. The gazes of the others didn't change and she didn't know what was happening here. More failing on something that should be automatic. She waited, watching the others. "What's going on?" She asked.

"Well... this will be an awkward question, but Shelly, did you know that you were pregnant?" Graniulle asked.

"AHH!" Shelly yelped, letting go of the two on each side of her in shock. She looked back and forth frantically. "Hahaha... You're kidding right?" She said all too quickly. "Me? preggers? No way. I'm not pregnant. Wh--What makes you think that?"

Bluff: <http://orokos.com/roll/163552> 10

**Vasily** rolled a die for sense motive with 20 sides. The die showed: 14

Vasily just sighed in reply, the lie not being quite believable. At least he didn't knock up Alessa... "So now a person who got drown in the pool and nearly got shot while breaking out is responsible for twice as much life." Vasily stated, "In current conditions. Yay."

"She couldn't help it, we all were reckless during that breakout.", Alessa said, "The drowning though is different...I had to drag her out of the pool...regardless...congratulations SeaShells."

"I'm not pregnant!" Shelly replied, getting quite worried now.

"Oh, sure then. Gotta make a vodka party and make sure you are horribly drunk then," Vasily replied.

"I don't drink." Shelly replied blankly and truthfully. She rarely, if ever touched alcohol and had never gotten drunk.

"What does vodka have to do with any of this.", Alessa asked.

"A women's not supposed to drink when pregnant. WHICH I'M NOT." She said firmly.

"You sure are denying it fervently.", Alessa suggested, "But I'm not going to pry."

She looked to Kit, hoping for backup in her denying of the surprise in her tummy.

Michael soon sighs, "Gran's vision thingy is interesting Shells, you should calm down and look through it." Michael rubs his head, hearing the argument from one side of the circle and seeing it in the middle through Gran with all the fancy special effects was making his head hurt.

"What do ya think i've been trying to do for the past minute?" Shelly countered, though kept her hands away from anyone else in the circle.

Kit kept his mouth shut because he didn't really want to draw attention to the other side of that matter. Well, it was kinda obvious, but he still didn't want to draw attention to that fact. "Weren't we trying to figure out what was up with the baby? I mean the Shelly? I mean Shelly's head?"

The thing with the magic spectrum? You could see people's auras (at least with Gran's vision). And the colours that ran through Kit's and Shelly's aura's were rather similar. She chuckled. "Fair enough," she said, focusing on Shelly's head again. It took her a few moments to puzzle it through, commenting on the various things she read as she did, until she stumbled on...

"This makes no sense... it seems as if someone has... linked with your thoughts for some reason..."

Shelly sighed. "Well bugger..." She grumbled and crossed her arms over her chest. "No point in hiding it anymore I guess. Yeah, I'm preggers. Though i was HOPING to keep that a secret from everyone so the players," As usual, she spat that word out. "wouldn't find out about it and kidnap or hurt them somehow."

"Um... shelly... we sorta moved on from that..." Kit said, facepalming.

"Someone really needs to give this girl a comprehensive history," Graniulle said, rolling her eyes [will10 vs disorient]. (Kit made a sound of protest at that one. Rolling eyes when it wasn't of your own was seriously wack.)

**Φαιόζγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18

**Vasily** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 9 + 5

<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4388554/> 7: Michael be disorient.

**mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 14 +2 for alessa

Shelly didn't say anything and instead just sat there, wondering what Gran was doing.

"So what's up with her linkage?" Vasily asked, "Someone's reading her mind?"

"Ugh..." Michael holds his head due to the eye rolling, "Gran? We're not exactly used to eye movement that we're not controlling now..."

"Sorry about that," Graniulle said, faintly apologetic. She spent a few more moments examining Shelly's head with a slightly unsettling focus, stripping away and adding different levels of detail until there was only a wreath of blue and red around her skull. And it wasn't the warm red of relation either, but an angry red. The wreath was knotted at the front.

"Interesting... If I am interpreting this magic correctly... it's something to do with..." the knots seemed to dances and quiver under her gaze, and though she could interpret what she was seeing, it was pretty much pretty colours and patterns to the rest. "Hmm... thoughts? Maybe... Dreams?"

Shelly shrugged. "I've been having some dreams lately, yeah. Don't we all have dreams even if we can't remember them?"

Alessa watched and listened while Shelly got her one on one time with Gran. Frankly Alessa figured she needed therapy just as much as anyone else here.

Michael slowly recovered as he continues to watch through Gran's vision thing.

"What about those weird ones?" Kit asked her.

"What weird ones? The ones I've been having lately or the ones where you show up to school naked?" Shelly asked.

"We didn't need to know about those ones...", Alessa said to Shelly.



"The former ones," Kit said, half chuckling. "Wait... I show up at school naked in your dreams?"

"See, too much information.", Alessa said to Shelly and Kit.

Shelly blushed, the dream actually occurring once... or twice. She coughed uncomfortably. "I... Meant the ones where the dreamer shows up naked."

"Still too much information.", Alessa said to her. But links between people...even magical..or supposedly magical...this stuff was fascinating.

"I said nothing!" Shelly replied. She looked to Kit. "Did I say anything about that?"

"I'll leave that between you and the rope princess," Kit said.

"And before we stray any further..." Graniulle said. "What dreams?"

Shelly shrugged after giving Kit a dirty look. She'd have to make a note to not expect Kit to back her up on silly stuff. "Just ones where I was a mental patient after going through a nervous breakdown. Is that important?"

"When did I become the rope princess?", Alessa asked, "Not like I get tied up anymore..." It was only at that point that she realized she was saying that out loud. It's true, she did like the feeling.

"So playing up to your fears?" Graniulle said. She looked... pensive. "I'm pretty sure this is someone messing with your mind..."

"How so?" Shelly asked. "They're just dreams. Meaningless dreams." She wondered what part this would play in her delusions. It seemed her mind was finally reacting and trying to keep her in.

"Because magic," Graniulle said. Because really, someone people just didn't get things when you told it to them.

"Fair enough." Shelly said and uncrossed her arms, leaning in little. "Can you tell what's being affected?"

"Being affected? what's affecting you Shells?", Alessa asked.

"I'm just getting some stupid dreams lately. It's nothing." Shelly said, still dismissive.

Michael chuckled at Gran's answer, but quickly addressed the problem Gran brought up, "So wait... you're telling us there are people who can control the dreams of others?" If that was the case, then potentially bad things might be happening to Shelly.

"What would dreams affect then?", Alessa asked, "You sound more concerned."

"That's some sort of suspiciously insistent denial. I usually do it when I am too lazy to explain, but that's probably not the case," Vasily added to the discussion.

"You... don't listen well do you?" Graniulle said after a beat to Shelly.

[And Shelly's rep continues...]

//so all these characters are known for something...and have some degree of psychological scarring...

//Well... just Shelly really... Kit's issue isn't public. The rest are relatively fine.

//Good for them that they know Shelly's reputation. Here's how much she cares: \*Shelly does absolutely nothing\*

Shelly was getting frustrated with the lack of straight answers. Still, she kept her cool. She had to keep calm. "So what now? Someone's ff-messing up my mind in my dreams. How do we get rid of him?"

Graniulle unbound the ring she had made, letting everyone's senses settle back into their own bodies with something of a jarring suddenness. [will15 disorient]

**Φαιόσυαλῆ** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 9

Alessa was carsick, well motion sickness as she was forced back into her body severing the mental link from earlier.

**mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 2

"Okay... warning next time..." Kit said, grabbing the arm of his chair.

"I think I can untangle the spellwork on you," Graniulle said, waving in a pacifying manner at Kit. "Still... I don't like the way it looks... I might do even more harm to your psyche if I do this wrong..."

"There's a right way?" Kit scowled, blinking. Out of body sight was wack, yo.

**IrbynX** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 5

Vasily gasped and was a little confused as he was pushed back into his body.

<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4396847/> failed

Michael groans again as Gran did a thing too fast. His head doesn't feel good now.

"What do I need to do?" Shelly asked.

"We need to get your Guardian down here... she'd need to give her word on this," Graniulle admitted.

"Not it," Kit said immediately. Nate chuckled, but didn't seem to disagree. No way he was going to go knock on her door deliberately. "Volunteering Mikey. Seconded?"

"Nope." Shelly said. "Not going anywhere near her with the little guy." She said, hands on her stomach to protect it.

"AHA, I knew it...", Alessa said, then fell silent again. She didn't want to think about why she was getting jealous...Shells and Kit knew each other for much longer than she ever knew Vas, so of course she'd be the one left out. She had to move on.

"I volunteer Alessa too. Mikey and Alessa on Raine Call. They can cover each other," Kit said. "We'll stay down here where it's safe."

"Why am I always the one getting into the line of fire again?" Michael doesn't seem amused at all. At least give him some shock resistant armor!

"Hey I never signed up for that!", Alessa shouted.

"Did any of us sign up for any of this?" Shelly countered.

"We signed up for testing...not to be the one who has to wake Raine...", Alessa sighed.

"Well I'll be in the kitchen if anyone needs me." Shelly said, getting up and heading to the aforementioned room.

"She does know we do need her since she is the one at the center of this, right?" Graniulle asked.

Shelly got up, unopposed and looked through the shelves, getting something together for a sandwich. She wasn't much of a cook, but with Kit around, she was learning a little. She paused to think and instead shrugged, getting together some bread and peanut butter.

"That was over a month ago," Kit said, flexing fingers, remembering how the world looked to Graniulle's eyes. It was pretty awesome. "One month and about four paradigm shifts ago. And I don't think Raine sleeps. She just holes up on the third floor and does stuff."

Michael looks at Gran for a moment and sighs before forcing himself to travel to his dea- I mean to go get Raine.

Like always, Raine appeared tired and wrecked, though her hair looked frazzled and some of the tips were burnt for some reason; the notion of having a break -however short it may be- sounded rather nice at this current point in time.

She put Deebs on her shoulder and went down to go flick the kettle on, plonking her thermas on the bench before going to investigate this magic teacher.

Shelly heard the sounds of Raine coming down the stairs and peeked her head from behind the doorframe to see her. "Meep." She said and went for cover again, eating her sandwich. Toast and peanut butter. Yum. Simple, but yum.

Vasily looked around and figured that no one was up to resolve the important issue. Sighing, he went after Raine who conveniently went down. "Doc, Granuele wants to speak with you," Vasily said.

"Yes, I got about as much from Michael," Raine said, airily examining one of her crisp bangs as she moved to the gathering and looked at the unfamiliar face amongst them.

"I don't suppose he told you about the binding I found on Shelly, did he?" Graniulle asked.

Michael went to sit down with a cup of water to drink, "I mentioned the oddness of it, but I'm leaving it to the expert to explain what's going on."

"When exactly would someone have put a 'binding' on Shelly?" Raine asked a little airily, a little too burnt out to be surprised or overly frustrated by such an event, "And why Shelly?"

The pregnant Aussie in question felt her ears burning but finished off her sandwich and opened the fridge, wondering if she could get some kangaroo meat... maybe her parents could send it for her birthday...

//can't carry meat into the country.

"Honestly?" Graniulle responded, "I'm not entirely sure. It would depend on the person and what traditions they were using. There are ways to cast from afar, but generally you would need a focus, something to aim in order to make it. Hair, blood, contact, line of sight." Graniulle shrugged. "Not all traditions are the same."

Well now there were more things to add to the list of things Raine was paranoid about, and she wasn't all that pleased to hear it since it put a few things into perspective. Namely, she was wondering about Annette's blood, and their little agreement, and possibly anything Raine might've left behind at the Gamma facility.

She kind of hoped Annette's offer was genuine now...

Raine just rubbed her temples and gave things a few turns in her head before looking at Graniulle again.

"Alright, so how do break these bindings and how do we detect their presence in the future?"

Raine asked plainly.

Shelly peeked her head out from the doorframe to the kitchen, the same thought on her mind.

"None of those are easy to do in practice," Graniulle admitted. "I mentioned it earlier, but magic affecting the mind is a very touchy area. Especially if the person casting it knows what they are doing. This binding in particular was made to be benign, subtle and passive. It doesn't affect her most times, only when she falls asleep. Then it lets the caster affect her thoughts from the inside, likely shaping dreams enough to make her doubt herself. It's a complex binding that's easy to overlook since it's not a compulsion that causes a sudden personality change."

"But I sorta did notice something different," Kit pointed out. "Shelly was acting more paranoid than normal. And even more scared of Raine than she was before."

"I busted her out of prison, why the hell would she -you know what I don't even care," Raine began looking rather perplexed but apparently lost interest half way through, "My other question still stands: how do we break these things?"

"Tasers," Kit shrugged, hiding a grin. But yeah. That was pretty much the same argument he'd tried on her. He was scared of Raine, but for reasons totally unrelated. He pulled pranks and she fought back. Totally justified. It's like a criminal fearing the judged. And that was a terrible analogy. He was casting himself as a criminal...

"He's right you know." Shelly spoke up from her position then hid behind the doorframe again.

"Right..." Graniulle said, deciding not to get too involved in the drama again. "I'm a druid. Bound to Gaia spirit and soul. I can not only see the bindings of the world, but I can make and unmake them. Pulling this one apart is technically just a matter of investing the time. But..."

Raine's stare at Granuille merely hardened in lieu of giving a verbal prompt, disliking it when people preferred to tiptoe around difficult subjects -as much as Raine didn't exactly want to hear that there were *more* things to worry about, she'd only be twice as annoyed not hearing them.

//Gran gently broaching sensitive topics, Raine hurdles over them like an olympic champ and expects people to keep up :p

//Heeelllll yeah

Shelly was nervous. Part of her wanted to leave and run off, but that wasn't what she'd do. Her psychiatrists had made it clear once she came back to normal: Just let this run its course. With how vivid the dreams were, she wasn't sure how much harm could come if she tried to force it to stop. She stayed where she was and waited.

"The spell's effects might be passive, but the binding itself is an active link between Shelly's mind and the casters. Once I start attempting to unbind it, he will know and might try something more... drastic," Graniulle explained. "With a connection like that... the mental damage you can cause is great. It's something you might never recover from."

Raine sighed, bristling but keeping a solid lid on the majority of her frustration in favor of taking advantage of rationality.

"I really hate it when people..." Raine muttered, massaging the bridge of her nose with a finger and thumb, "Alright, you said there's a connection; are we talking Essence? Can we track it? I'm sure Grant has at least one sniper on the pay roll."

"Snipers? Grant has snipers?" Kit asked in disbelief. His expression was somewhere between shock and terror. Closer to shock though. True, there were the mercenary/military/special ops guys that drove the bus, but sniper had a certain allure to it that set it apart.

"Why wouldn't he have a sniper?" Shelly called out. "He and the rest of the players can do anything they want and hire anyone to do whatever they want." She then muttered: "And say anything that he wants..."

Michael chuckles, but shakes his head. There's no way it'd be as easy as tracking the mind raper down and shooting him between the eyes with a sniper rifle. Course this world turns out to be more screwy then he thought, so who knows?

"It's a mental connection. And he is on the sending end of it. If he is killed before it's broken, it's likely the Death Shock would rush through the connected and hit Shelly," Graniulle said, shaking her head as well.

"Hocus to English translator please?" Kit said. Granted, he had an idea of what that would mean, but ideas could be wrong. people thought the earth was flat, afterall.

"At best, it might put her in a coma. At worse... she could die as well," Graniulle said soberly and softly. "We would need to distract him..."

Kit swore around here and looked like he wanted to Punch something. Yes. Capital P; Punch. Or maybe that should be Maul?

"Are you serious?" Raine said a little sourly, her hands balled into fists and her knuckles whitening, "People just throw these kinds of spells around? What if that idiot gets hit by a truck or something? -Forget that, what are our options here? Can we use some kind of binding as well to interfere?"

"There is a reason mind magics are often considered taboo," Graniulle said. "My skills with them are very limited. Just connecting conscious thoughts. Based on biology more then the actual abstract mind. Senses to link sight, the out brain for mind to mind communication and so on. Attempting to directly interfere with this binding would give him enough time to act against me and Shelly.

"The best way... it probably to distract him enough that he can't focus on exploiting the spell to it's fullest. This binding looks somewhat autonomous, with set commands and instructs it can run on even if the caster isn't directing it. If we can occupy him while I try to unravel it, it should be safer.

A chill went down Shelly's spine with all the talk of her being killed. "Who's to say he isn't sending this mental shock now? He could be watching everything that we're doing right now. In fact, should we be talking about this so openly considering i'm pretty much the ultimate spy for him?" She stood in the doorway to the kitchen, hopefully out of range of any tasers Raine had strapped to her thigh or anywhere else. This was as close as she was comfortable with Raine in visual range.

"The binding isn't active at the moment," Graniulle said. "But it is the sort of thing I don't want to leave hanging around... Ms Raine, would you and these be willing to occupy the caster if I locate him?"

"... Does it matter what happens to them *after* we've severed the binding?" Raine queried, looking a little thoughtful in a bit of a stern manner.

"I might be a consultant because of my expertise in magic, but I haven't much experience in the leagues you are in at the moment." Graniulle looked apologetic. "There aren't many Druids left in the world, and we've survived because we mostly keep to ourselves. My spouse and Archdruid might know more, but I'm not all that familiar with the agreements and treats you make. Aside from ones we had drafted for my home town, we keep out of the politics of the magic world."

"Your archdruid and spouse?" Kit asked, latching on the unimportant points to distract himself from all those morbid thoughts.

"Is there any reason we shouldn't just shank this guy in the brain once he buggers off from my mind?" Shelly said.

And right back to the morbid thoughts. Kit sighed. Fine. "What's the ceasefire wording Raine? I know I- Nate, broke it when he attacked the lady back then, since she didn't actually harm him before he attacked, would this count?"

"Any player worth their salt would know psychological damage counts, I'm not sure if it's included but it's probably expected that things get messy when it's involved," Raine said somewhat indirectly, "The price for permanently removing someone with this kind of power would have to get quite drastic for it not to be a viable option under even the most stern rules. I don't think this could be..."

Raine trailed off and looked at Granuille again.

"Do you know anything about agreements made through Essence?" Raine queried all of a sudden.

Graniulle was a bit startled by the sudden switch, but found her groove. "As in making an oath on your power and such? Hmm..." she contemplated how to word her response. "Magic might not be a living force, but it is shaped by those who use it and shapes them in return. It's like those Thrice Sworn and Truenaming. Swearing on it forms a binding on yourself. Your Word, Your Will, Your Magic. Breaking such a binding turns your magic against you. The results are a bit unpredictable, but generally it's damaging and also cuts your own abilities. Sometimes for years at a time.

"Not that I mind actually doing what I'm supposed to be doing here, no one seemed the slight bit curious in asking questions, but why do you ask?"

"Just covering my flanks," Raine started, looking a little contemplative and then scrutinizing of Granuille for a moment, finally shrugging and relenting a bit, "I made a ceasefire oath with someone that we don't inflict physical or psychological harm on one another, I always figured

there'd be a way around it but I'm still pretty new to this. It doesn't matter though, let's find this binder first; what needs to happen?"

"Word to the wise; don't go making vows you plan to break. There are some, Fae for one, who are good at it, but that's because they are also bound to their nature. They do not, nor can, lie, but they use the truth to it's fullest." Graniulle shook her head. "Anyway... I can try to find the caster. He shouldn't be too far from the subject..."

"Um... sorry if I'm butting in, but we are kinda... blithely talking about... killing someone..." Kit said hesitantly. "Isn't that kinda sorta very illegal?"

"I'd argue mind raping someone with intent to do god knows what to her and turn her into a vegetable is a mite more serious then that..." Shelly pointed out and left the words unsaid hang in the air as her hand found its way to her tummy again.

"Yeah... but a judge can't really prove that... They prove murders all the time... And we're not the ones messing around with people's head," Kit said.

"And who IS right to judge something like this? The players? They make the rules, what's to stop them from changing them on a whim?" Shelly pointed out. "I doubt we can trust any of them or really win for that matter."

"Okay... I'm not sure if these are really your issues or the caster's work, but I can clear something up. Didn't you just hear my talk about someone's word? I might not deal with any of the Players in life, but I do know something about the really old ones. Their Word carries weight. Particularly so when you can literally speak things into effect. They aren't like modern folk how easily make a promise and don't keep it. If they did, they would have lost their power long ago.

"When people talk about the Rules, the Agreements, the Laws, or whatever other name they give those overarching codes of conduct most of the supernatural world follows, they are talking about things that have been in place from before human civilization was a major threat to them with it's world spanning reach. Once you become Powerful, truly Powerful, it shapes you, it becomes a mantle or who you are and you lose some of your free will to gain it. Like the gods and the greater spirits and elementals, they can no more break their word than you can will you arm to be cut off. They might violate the spirit of an agreement, or dance at the line they set, but they won't break it."

"And Grant wants to become one of these... Tell me Gran. Do you trust him? Or you, Raine? With how powerful he wants to be, can we really trust him? Absolute power corrupts absolutely and--"

"Shelly, stop talking for a moment," Kit said, making a cutting motion with his hand. "We talked about this. What has Grant done to make you hate him? Was it arranging to have a plane waiting for us? Or hiring the Gruesome Threesome to help out? Maybe paying for school and giving boarding?" Kit said blandly. "Sure, the whole Therian thing was out of the blue, but he's been



making up for it, and he explained his logic behind it. And Absolute power doesn't corrupt absolutely. It's just likely to. You can choose.

"It probably helps you stay away from the corrupt side if the people you try to look out for don't want to stab you in the back. Um.." Kit reconsidered his wording in relation to his current worry. "Metaphorically speaking. No literal stabbing."

Shelly sighed. The psychiatrists had given her a lot of ammunition to use, but with how things were at the moment, she'd have to hold back on it. For now. Not to mention that she wasn't good at prolonged arguments. Especially with the father of her child. "Fine." She said. "Whatever..."  
//at least we assume he's the father

"Not every figure in history and legend is malicious. There are more than a few truly benevolent ones," Graniulle added. She nodded at Raine. "Should I proceed?"

"I'm almost begging you to," Raine said looking rather tired and exasperated from the chatter.

"Then we will need to take this outside then," Graniulle said, nodding. "I need to be able to drawn on the earth. And could you bring a map with you."

Alessa mostly stayed silent, following the conversation...whatever this was it was far more serious than she wanted to get involved in. It would seem that Shelly took the whole "surprise forced relocation" harder than everyone. ALESSA liked to think she survived with minimal scarring. Regardless, Gran was a druid, and something else was wrong with Shelly, that seemed fairly important.

The more Shelly listened, the more she didn't want to be a part of this anymore. She knew she had to let this run its course and so far, it seemed to make sense, but then again, so much of it didn't. On the other hand, this was just a dream... And she was lucid dreaming to boot. She could use this to her advantage. This was HER dream.

"We should just reveal the whole thing. Post everything online, get enough evidence to make it irrefutable, and blow this whole thing open." Shelly said finally. "After all, it would have happened in the real world. People with nothing to lose would have talked, secrets get leaked no matter how much those in power want to suppress them. National secrets, military intelligence... Especially now with the modern world and viral videos. Least that's how it should be in the real world..." She smiled knowingly. "But then, I'm not in the real world, am I? Haven't been for over a year now."

Raine turned about to give Shelly a very bland stare, one that kind of said just how unimpressed she was.

"You are *drowning* in denial..." Raine said disappointedly shaking her head with a helpless shrug, "If the system were that easy to break, it would already be broken; and I suggest you don't try, because the only reason we haven't been stomped on yet is because we haven't made a big enough nuisance of ourselves. Don't go dragging us into your suicidal schemes."

Raine then went to go retrieve herself a coffee and a map, intending on meeting Granuille outside like planned.

"Okay... no more parania-Os for you," Kit said with a weary sigh. He hadn't really realized Shelly was that bad that often. He ambled over. "Hey, look over there!" he said, just before sweeping her up off the floor. "To the backyard we go!"

"Hey!" Shelly yelled and tried to squirm out of Kit's grip. "Put me down! I'm serious here!"

"Should we follow them?", Alessa asked Raine and Vas.

"Nope," Kit said happily.

Shelly grumbled and went along with it as usual. She looked at the man carrying her off like a caveman carrying off his mate. She sighed and closed her eyes. "Kit..." She said seriously. "How does someone tell if they're going mad?"

"Generally... they start... I mean... um... Okay, I honestly don't know," try as he might, Kit couldn't really come up with a good go. "I mean... this is one... horrible excuse for reality, I admit, but it is what it is."

Shelly whimpered some and considered showing Kit the record of the other world she was keeping on her pocket PC, nestled safely between her breasts as it always was lately. The idea was that she'd update her journal there to keep the lessons and treatment fresh when she was in this world. "I can't tell anymore..." she admitted truthfully.

"See? That's probably a good sign of it. Now, let's go see the magic lady and let her undo the spell someone placed on you and we can go spend the rest of the evening cuddling," Kit said. "And yes, I know exactly when our lives took a turn for the bizarre."

Shelly smiled shyly. She would make her choice. With the growing life in her belly, and a hopefully soon-to-be husband, Shelly knew which life, which world, she'd take.