

Otherkin Awakening

'this ain't no fairy tale'



a novel by Wedge

Otherkin Awakening - A Novel

50,000 words written in November for (Inter)National Novel Writing Month

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By Wedge

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1.0 Stirrings

Tension echoed off the flat white walls; the silence resonated.

“Could you give any pacific examples, Anya, of when you’ve achieved against difficult situations?”

The question hung about, in an embarrassed sort of way, to be banished it needed addressing. Anya couldn’t be sure what was meant by such a query, but had run through some interview techniques from a 10 99 book, so was prepared to biz-speak bullshit if she had to.

“Considering, I mean, working to tight deadlines is business-as-usual in my department, and so I’m used to delivering in a timely fashion. Recently, I ensured that the Cottingham account came together in time for the CEO’s road show, even though we we’re under-resourced and missing vital documentation. I persevered and worked some lates.”

They didn’t look too impressed; why such a formal interview for a position one-step above her current grade, within her own team? She should have just been promoted into it, thought Anya, she’d worked damn hard over the last year, hadn’t they noticed?

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“You understand,” said Brian Shingle, chipping in for the first time in thirty minutes, “that we’re looking for someone to expand the role and move the team forward; how might you go about such a feat?”

Anya took a quiet breath and tried to organise her thoughts, but she began to feel the pressure with the three of them sat staring at her, waiting for her to perform. The room was a dump, not big enough for any of the regular team meetings - it felt like a police interview room, bare and neglected.

Actually, it was quite cool in here, draughty even. Anya shifted with discomfort as her spine stretched and her abdomen clenched. The seconds were stretching out; the three stooges in front of her seemed frozen in a state of mild disdain. Her eyes scanned around looking for inspiration, but the room only echoed the engulfing blankness. Her breathing quickened in her tight chest and she felt a little light, somewhat distant. Echoes of nothing found her ears, and her eyes sought out the wisps of hair on Brian’s and then Monica’s cheeks, her eyes grew narrow and then wider as they took in the colours that were streaming from each hair, contour and line on their faces. Wisps, smoke-like trails of translucent colour streams surrounded the three managers, each had their own signature shapes and hues; Monica had a dull glow with dark yellow and brown eddies whirling up from around her midriff; Brian was surrounded by subtle shades of lavender and blue, while James Fenton was the centre of a nimbus of electric blue just hovering over a deep dark red outline, close to his body’s outline. The seconds stretched out, and Anya began to panic on account of her visions, and the time she must have wasted sat there day-dreaming.

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Before she could wrench her eyes from James, his colour pattern shifted and began strobing, black on dark red, flecks of neon blue sparking off from him. She felt a real sense of fear quicken her pulse and stop her breath, Anya new for certain that this James Fenton had something against her, and the voice in her head began to babble, 'if I'm psychic now, then he's gonna be in my head any second now - wait, was that him or me? Shitfuck it's just me, I'm talking to myself, it's just me, or,'

"Would you have the maturity to lead?" said James.

Focus returned to Anya like an unplugged bath, the spell was broken. The room and its current residents snapped back into the bright day.

"I've learned a lot over the last year, and I, I'm confident that I can, will, maintain the team's high standards and help transform the, um, division into the needed, form."

Weak, thought Anya. What the fuck was I on about then? What the fuck was all that light? What did I ever do to Mr. Fenton to piss him off so much?

"Well it's been great to see you today Anya, you've certainly demonstrated your competence here today," Monica stated.

"And we'll want to speak with you again I'm sure," said Brian.

"But we'll need some time to review your records," interjected James, smoothly, smiling but not so.

"Thanks for talking with me, I hope, I mean I guess you'll, we'll..." Anya spluttered.

"We'll let you get back now, thanks Anya."

Walking back to her desk, feeling slightly overdressed in her very best suit, Anya tried to hold back from criticising herself too much, but she couldn't

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stop repeating all the car-crash phrases that she had come out with, 'I recognise the importance of best-practice' and 'I'm passionate about excellence'; what the fuck does 'excellence' mean? But even while enduring her self-berating, a deeper part of her was worrying about the bright lights and smoky colours. That can't be good. Signs of stress? A stroke? Migraine? Out Of Body Experience? Her email brought her back to the present, her inbox was screaming for attention, and she put aside her experience and shifted her brain into work-mode. But she couldn't shake the feeling that Mr. Fenton, James, would ruin her chances.

Before leaving for lunch, Anya texted Liz and Marc to let them know how badly she'd done in the interview. As she watched the text getting sent, she thought about talking to Marc about the colours and everything; we was into all that sort of thing, and would probably tell her it was auras or second-sight or something. The thing was, he'd deem it an incredibly important talent, and demand that she 'practice' and 'work' with him to develop her skills. She'd have to meditate, visualise balls of light and maybe even chant. But seeing Marc always put her at ease, and made her feel good; he was always so certain about things, and new what to say. He was better than any counsellor, even with he chanting.

Swiping out of the office side-door, Anya was struck by the bightness of the sun, and basked for half a second while her thoughts became more positive. Marc texted back just then, and she smiled as she read 'They need you more than u need them, youve been doing 3 peoples jobs there and noone cares

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as much as u. If they cant see that its their problem not yours x'. She really
did want to talk to him, about a lot of things.

Getting home in the light of the late evening sun was great, but why did she
work 'til seven-thirty eight o'clock most nights when there was no such
thing as 'overtime'? Why bust a gut to make her bosses look good and her
company richer? What was in it for her? She'd better get this promotion, she
needed the money, as Anya was reminded as she stepped from the thin
hallway into her lounge. Liz had half filled the lounge with drying bedding
and laundry, and the rest of the floor and couch space was covered in
thousands of photographs.

"Congrats on the interview, how'd it go?" greeted Liz.

"Oh you know, fine, not so great, we'll see," Anya's mind flicked to the text
she'd sent earlier in the day, but moved on quickly, "whatcha doin'?"

"I'm sorting out my snaps, I've got literally thousands of pictures from Uni,
bit none of them are digital, so I don't think I've seen them in years. I'm
putting the good ones in an album and I'm gonna get the best ones digitised
down at Boots if they can, then I can Facebook them."

"Coolies - oh God is that Jason? Oh look at us all, we look so young, jeez the
whole bunch of us, look at Will in his suit and Janice on the floor there, God
we drank so much."

"I can't Facebook that Janice one can I, she'd kill me, but the graduation
pics are awesome."

"Listen do you wanna brew?" asked Anya as she walked through to the
narrow kitchen.

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“Yeah, that’d be great please, oh here’s Boris and John, they made such a hot couple, I wonder if they got gay married like the said they would?”

“I don’t know, I saw John joined the ‘against gay marriage? then don’t get one and shut the fuck up’ group on Facebook, but I didn’t think to check his profile to see if he was still with Yeltsin.”

She rinsed some mugs out under the cool hot water while the kettle boiled, and then found they were out of teabags. Why must she go to the shop when Liz always got home hours before her? She reached for the instant coffee and flicked the kettle off once it started getting hot - no need to boil the water for instant. Tomorrow was Friday, and she’d go out and blow a chunk of her wages on good times, Marc would be easy to convince if she offered to pay for taxis. Actually, she wanted to see him tonight but she was in no mood to leave the house after another long day, she needed some peace. Her room was the largest in the house, and it was the main reason why she continued to live with Liz and Mike. She had the space to unwind here, and spent a lot of time alone, and enjoyed re-arranging her room and tidying up. She but her tea down next to the monitor and wiggled the mouse. The screen cracked and faded-in from black to show her wallpaper and myriad desktop icons. She started changing, hanging her suit up carefully, and her Gmail notification binged and flashed quietly. As she pulled on a light cotton top, her thoughts flashed with concern for her peace lily in the window, and she turned to it to find that it was looking sorry for itself and the compost was parched. She sensed a low thrum and a wisp of dark green shimmering around each leaf as the whole plant became translucent and she saw and felt the sluggish movement of water, seeing tiny sparks of clear

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blue trapped amid the green. She shook her head and briskly walked to the bathroom to get a glass of water. As she listened to the water fill the glass, she thought about the aura of her lily, and clamped her jaw at the ridiculousness of it all. She didn't need this; she had enough worries right now, well, always in fact. Returning to her bedroom, the lily looked normal again, bedraggled, but normal. She watered it, and pulled of a crispy brown leaf, and promised to take better care of her plants.

Leaving the glass on the window, she sat down with her tea and opened up Firefox, Adium and the web version of Gtalk. Firefox told her she had two pokes and one message in Facebook, and she updated her Facebook status to say 'feeling strangely odd after a dodgy interview' and then she flicked to Adium and Gtalk to see who was online. There was Marc in MSN, Yahoo and Gtalk. She opened a chat window in Gtalk and typed:

"Hi, thanks for your text, I don't think I'll get the job, but I think I'm bored of this company crap anyhow, maybe I need a change"

"Hi" Marc's picture showed him wearing a black leather Australian hat, "are you ready to start looking for work again? You should at least have hope for the new job, they know how good you are"

"Yeah, if I get the job I'll stay and I'll be happier and all that, but I didn't realise I'd signed up to the rat race for life. I've got to stop working such long hours for them. Bastards.

Maybe I do need a new job though, but I need more money whatever, I want my own place"

"I know me too"

"Are we going out tomorrow?"

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“Yeah sure let’s get wasted”

“Actually I wanted to talk to you first maybe” said Anya.

“?”

“I want to talk to you about your stuff you know”

“Like what? Do you want a reading? I could tell you if you’ll get the job”

“No not that, something else. can you call round for me tomorrow at 7 and we’ll start early I’ll buy you dinner?”

“Its a date!”

“Thakns, I’m gonna watch tv now, but text me later yeah?”

“sure, nite for now”

Anya felt a bit better, and thought about how Marc might put her at ease, and how a few drinks would put her at ease.

‘I’ll be round for you at 7 tonight can you get a taxi for us to town?’ Marc texted before lunch; Anya texted back to say yes and then wasted some time online before lunch began at 1. As she stood to leave her desk, James Fenton walked through the office, glaring. She couldn’t say he was glaring *at* her, but it felt like it. Looking at his back as he curved away to leave the open-plan room, she took a deep breath and *willed* to see something. She thought she could see red haze above his head, but it flipped to green and Anya assumed it was a retinal after-image and blinked it away. Exhaling, she turned the other way and started towards the side door, swipe card in hand.

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She'd woken in the middle of a dream, and felt much more positive about things, she really didn't need this job, or rather, she did need the money and more of it, but this company was eating away at her soul, and ageing her before her time. If she didn't get the new position, and the much needed salary that came with it, she'd quit and throw a party. Then again, a deeper part of her chided, it's easier to find work when you have a job, than when you're sat at home unemployed. Curses, she hated being sensible, but swore to get her CV updated the moment the three stooges turned her down. She was not long for this company.

Five o'clock rolled up slowly, but Anya was prepared for it, and had tidied up, closed and put away everything except her Firefox web browser and pointless spreadsheet she was pretending to update. Surfing around Facebook and Amazon were her guilty little Friday pleasures, and once the clocked tocked onto 5, she shut down her computer, and in one fluid move stood and swept on her light jacket and bag. The corners of her eyes revealed that a great many others were going through the same motions. She said 'have a great weekend' to Chris over the way from her, and then headed to the side door.

Even leaving on the dot, she still only got home at 5 40, and so it was straight upstairs to throw her clothes off and head naked to the shower. Liz and Mike wouldn't be home for another 15 minutes, so she felt good as she dashed past the stairs and bedroom doors in the buff.

An hour later Anya pulled on some cheap jeans and an expensive top, and scanned herself in the bedroom mirror as her hands raked though her make-up bag. She called the usual taxi firm and arranged for a car at 7, knowing it

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“Hey.”

“Hey.”

A taxi drove up almost directly behind him.

“Oh, it’s here, are you ready?”

“I need my purse, tell him,” and she turned to run up stairs. Purse, money, cards, keys, bag, lipstick, perfume, jacket? No, done.

On the way into town Marc and Anya talked of the job interview in overly-dramatic and absolutist terms, and caught up on the rest of the week. In no time they were in the town centre and Marc had decided to have them dropped at the edge of the pedestrian precinct, so Anya paid and tipped and they curled out of the car.

“Always feels funny to be out drinking in such light,” protested Anya.

“I don’t think we’ve started yet, so let’s fix that - onward to the second-nearest bar,” Marc replied, and they walked past the first dump on the corner and into their favourite eatery slash bar.

By the time their meals were brought to them, they were close to finishing their first round, and were deep in conversation, Marc doing most of the talking. He didn’t seem to need much description of Anya’s experience, and assumed she was remembering it aright, while Anya doubted her own words in the cold light of the bar.

“I think you’re very lucky to have such powerful colours and shapes, I only get vague glimmers of colour and an outline around the head.”

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Anya had always assumed Marc's imagination was on a higher setting than everyone else's, but was now re-assessing her friend.

"It's not like I can see them like a painting or anything, it's like I *know* the colours are there and I can see the shapes they make, but only for a second. It's maddening, I'm seeing things and, well, if I'm seeing, I mean it's I just don't know. I was stressed."

"I understand times of stress and major life-events are often a pre-cursor to psychic awakening," stated Marc, with certainty.

"What good is it if I can't control or understand it? What good is it anyway?"

"I would have thought it obvious, you can see more about a person, you get to see how they're feeling, what they feel about you, what they're energy levels are, how healthy they are, loadsa stuff shows up in the aura."

"I'm not sure I get it. I don't think it's so helpful to know that Mr. Fenton hates me with a burning passion... and there's something else."

Marc looked up from his meal.

"I had a dream last night that as very real, I felt like myself in it, like I was really there, and yet I could see myself from the outside, from across the room, which wasn't a my room but anyway, I could see myself and my aura and it wasn't me. I mean I knew it was me, and that I was looking at me, but,"

"Was there two of you?" Mark asked.

"No, I was me and that was all, but I knew how I looked within my aura and it was scary, but really real, not like a film or anything, I *knew* it was real, um,"

"What did you look like then?"

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"I wasn't wearing anything but I wasn't naked either, I guess I just noticed the purple aura, and white light, and my wings and tail, and how tall I was, and the way I stood, like I'd been stretched, oh I don't know, but I felt right, it all felt OK, and it wasn't just some superhero dream or fantasy, it's all tied up in the colours I'm sure." Anya clasped her beer glass harder.

"Well, maybe your dream is just reflecting your stress and surprise; it's not everyone who gets to see such vivid auras." Although Marc said this with conviction, he was boiling inside. Could An be like him? She knew nothing of the wilder side of spirituality, and he'd never really opened up to her, although she knew all about his Tarot and magick circle casting.

"Can you see mine?"

"I don't know how to start it." Anya drank deeply.

"Take a deep breathe to tell your brain you're doing something special, and then let yourself relax on the exhale. Relax from the top of your head, down the forehead, through the eyes, and release your jaw. Allow your gaze to drift to my forehead, and then raise it to just above my head. You're not looking at me, you're looking past me, but without concentrating on the walls behind me. Kinda like the way you look at those 'magiceye' 3D pictures." He could see Anya's gaze soften as she tried. "Now keep relaxed, and don't try to force anything, let your brain process the new information it its own time."

Her mind was taking it's own sweet time for sure. It flitted back to hate-filled glare from Mr. Fenton and how she felt the throb of his raging feelings. Maybe it was more of a feeling than a visual thing? While her thoughts played through, Marc's face softened and went a bit fuzzy; she let

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it. Slowly, Mark's visage was encompassed in green and blue vapours, and she could make out a clear shape, following the contours of his head, then his shoulders and body.

"I've got it," she said, carefully, "I can see you, you're blue and green, and have an expanding aura field, it's really big."

"What shape is it? Does it follow my arms?" Marc asked as he spread his arms out, "Can you see any other shapes?"

"Yes, it does with, or before even, your arms. No other shapes, it matches your body, or rather, it feels like your body matches your aura's movements!"

Anya smiled, and blinked the vision away, she found Marc looking pleased but sour somehow.

"That's great," he said with failed enthusiasm, "you've got it down great, with practice, you'll see so much more."

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, I was just thinking that you might want to meet a friend of mine, he's been a bit of a mentor to me, he knows some stuff, um, if you want to take this further?"

"I'm not sure what further means, but sure, let's meet your friend, what's his name? We need drinks. How come I've not met him before?"

"I've only known him off the web for a while, I see him sometimes when I'm out. He's called Van, he's really cool you'll like him."

Anya wasn't so sure about that, what was cool to Marc wasn't always so cool to Anya, and what sort of a name was Van? German? Lithuanian? Anya

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herself was originally from Croatia as her mother had moved to England in
the eighties to join her father.

They stayed drinking for a couple of hours, getting steadily more relaxed
and jumping from one subject to another; touching on the supernatural,
then diving into reality TV and work-life. Anya needed a night like this, it
was always good to talk and talk to Marc, he had so much energy, and was
always so positive about things, even when he hated stuff, he *positively*
hated it.

"I, y'know, we could meet Van now if you like, he gets off at 10 or 11 and I
could text him now and let him know we're comin by."

"We're in no fit state to talk about auras right now, he'll think we're
drunken fools and he'd be right." Anya slurred.

"No no it'll be grand, just a social visit to introduce you n that, nothing
heavy. I'll text him."

They both went quiet as Marc concentrated on the little buttons. They
sipped their drinks while they subconsciously waited for a response. Marc
thumbed the condensation on his gin and tonic's glass.

"He say's fine, to stop by at 10."

"Oh OK, we should get one more in then go; where does he live?"

"He lives over the east side, but we'll meet him in Greenback's."

"Where?"

"A bar."

"S'OK, you wannanother G and T?"

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They walked through town holding on to each other, linking arms and walking funny. The streets were filled with similar foolishness, and as they approached what Marc assured Anya was the right street for Greenback's, the streets became positively lively with raucous laughter and women running in front of cars with inappropriate footwear, swearing at drivers and laughing with their mates.

Greenback's was loud before they even got close. Was that karaoke?

Inside, the singing became choral; there was a stage, some sort of MC and laughing and embarrassed people strewn across it.

"He's not here," said Marc, "let's get drinks and we'll find seats, maybe.

What do you fancy?"

Anya stood close behind Marc at the squish of the bar. People here seemed to be very friendly with each other, as if there were a lot of regulars in the crowd.

Walking around the bar, drinks in hand, the wailing voices and thrumping music faded just a little. No chance of finding seats, but they found a good clear wall with a drinks shelf.

"He'll be round soon, it's just so busy in here, I'll keep an eye out."

"How do you know him?" asked Anya.

"From the web, got talking to him on this message board. Didn't realise he was so near by, but one day he said we should meet, and he's really down to earth and a sorted bloke. He's a lot of fun."

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Anya wondered about the sort of fun Marc might mean. Crystal gazing and dope smoking she guessed. Anya shifted against the wall and noticed her bottle was close to empty.

“I’ll get us drinks, will you text him then?”

“Sure”

The bar was still crushed with trendy types, unruly in their haste to get served. Anya slipped in closer to the bar as a guy turned away with a double handful of bottles. She hoped to catch the barman’s eye and forced herself to focus; looking perky would get her further than looking sloshed she surmised. Watching the barman work, she allowed her eyes to travel from his broad shoulders down his bulging chest to his tight waist and beyond. He caught her look and returned it with a twinkling smile. Her blood rushed a little faster, and she smiled naturally, stupidly pleased that he had found her out already. He came to her quickly, leaning in close. She paused, expecting him to say something clever, but he was just waiting for her order.

“A g and t and a bottle of Corona please?”

“Lime in both?”

“Oh yes please.”

She knew she was drunk and had been for a while, but she basked in the glow of his attention, and felt a warmth spread through her. She was suddenly reminded how long it had been since she’d bedded anyone. She’d had a one-night stand at Christmas after she’d split from last year’s boyfriend, but it had been a dull summer so far.

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“Six pounds please.” He said, starring at her; or so she thought. He was smiling, and although he was as big as two rugby players, he was cute as hell and looked far younger than he could possibly be at that size. Anya opened her purse without looking down, and stared at his glowing brown eyes. The thrumming soundtrack dulled a little, and she found herself slipping a little further into her alcoholic haze. She slowly realised that she could see that beyond the outline of his huge bulk, a greater shape was making itself clearer, a shaggy mahogany aura was coalescing around him, and flowing over and around the bar space. Anya was alarmed to see herself swimming within the chocolate whirls. But the bar tender had already moved on, and was glinting his eyes at the next customer, a twink dressed in tight white, with a brushed forward haircut that let him toss back his feathered fringe at frequent intervals. The barman and the twinkie seemed to be sharing a moment, and Anya once again wondered about what sort of places Marc patronised. She looked and found the mocha swirls had left her, and we’re rolling around the bar and the boi, but then she felt some prickling down her spine so severe that she turned right around.

There in the closing doorway was a tall man dressed entirely in black.

Blinking, she watched as his aura swept around him in golden yellows and browns; it seemed to glimmer and spark off other people. She noticed that there was a rich red blob in the centre of his chest, which seemed to be bleeding redness down his body. A mellifluous flow of rich red was pulsing from his chest down to his groin, where it pooled about and flowed into his golden aura. Snapping back to reality a little, Anya noted the straps and webbing that covered his chest and heavy-set New Rock boots, the long

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leather jacket cascading down his tall slim frame, and his dyed black hair that tumbled round and framed his pale face. Could this be the 'Van' they awaited? His aura certainly had a pull to it, and she felt herself warming to him, despite the overblown apparel.

She had half a mind to just introduce herself as Marc's friend, but she also knew that half a mind was all she had after the night's boozing, so she fought her way back to Marc at the wall and said that she's just seen Van.

"How do you know? Said Marc, "He still hasn't texted me back."

"I saw his aura." Anya said with mock humility, while thinking that the ground-sweeping leather coat in the middle of summer was the give away.

"Oh OK, well I hope he finds us, this place is heaving; we need a table and sit down somewhere. Or maybe we could go to his van."

"His van?"

"Yeah, he's got a sweet van, why did you think he was called Van?"

"I thought that was his name!"

"Well it is sorta, I don't suppose I know his real name."

"Thought you knew him well?"

"I do. I do but he's not my best friend or anything, he looks out for me, he knows a lot, he's a bit of guide to me really. Look here he is now. Hi Van! How you doin'?"

Anya tuned her body and found it was in the shadow of an expansive chest, she worried she'd bop her head against it if she turned too quick, and smiled at the incongruous size of the lad.

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“Ahm good thanks Marc, how’s you two?” Van smiled, a big wide smile that crossed his big wide face. He didn’t show any sign of recognising Anya, but his smile included her and wrapped her in warm fuzziness.

“This is An, sorry to be so wasted, but she’s just started seeing things and we were drinking and all that, and I thought, well I knew, I thought you could talk to her about stuff and things.”

“Hi. Pleased to meet you,” said Anya, without intending to sound formal.

“Nice to meet you too Ahm sure,” Van’s coffee eyes shone, “what have you told her already?” Van turned to Marc.

“Nothing. I wasn’t sure, I felt, I’m not sure I want... Y’know.”

“He’s told me about auras,” volunteered Anya, “and I’m really seeing them, I really am.”

“But there’s a dream as well,” stated Marc, flatly.

“Oh it was jusht a dream, it’s the auras, that’s the thing, um.”

Van looked at Marc pointedly, and so Marc ventured further.

“I think she’s one of us.”

“Oh really,” said Van, without questioning, “have you had this feeling for long?”

“Pardon, what?” Anya hadn’t caught the drift and didn’t know what she was being asked.

“No she doesn’t know anything Van, man, I thought you’d tell her, can we go to your van man?”

“Marc, you can’t go stirring up trouble every time someone has a bit of...”

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“No she’s def,” Marc interrupted Van’s flow, “I’ve always had this feeling and she’s had this dream, and the, the auras have come on real fast and real string, I’m sure, I mean it this time.”

“Sounds like you’re more sure than she is to me.”

“Sure of what?” demanded Anya, feeling it was her time to get involved with this conversation.

Marc and Van looked at her. Marc looked a bit sheepish, whereas Van was staying pretty cool, if a little sceptical.

“Let’s get to the van,” resigned Van.

The van was outside through a narrow side street and out the back of the bar. The music could be heard plainly still.

The van was a beast of a vee-dubb. As camper vans go, this was far less camp and much more van. Van’s van looked like it was on steroids, not one but two roof compartments were popped up, extending the height of the van and giving it a Frankenstein’s monster look.

“You don’t live here?” Anya blurted.

“No, but it is my home away from home - depends if I feel like driving back after a long night.” Van opened up the side door and switched a light one, revealing a surprisingly modern interior. It looked like a mini hotel room and reminded Anya of the stretched limo they’d all hired for their graduation night out.

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The three of them sat snugly within, on well-cushioned low seats of some kind. Van gave them all bottles of Wicked from the mini-mini fridge and they got down to business.

“Marc’s never told you about us?”

It all fell in place. Marc’s nerves and secretiveness. He’d drunk far more than he’d intended and he was looking like a little puppy dog besides the hulking mass of Van. Anya tried to compose herself, she didn’t want her first reaction to be stereotypical, and she didn’t want Marc to think that she was surprised or *not* surprised. Fine line. Anya tilted her head by way of response.

“You’ve begun to see more of the world than most humans,”

‘Most humans’ thought Anya, doesn’t he mean most people? Shit he was still talking! Anya tried to focus her brain, she really didn’t need the WKD in her hand.

“...you’re seeing more of the information available, and so you’re gonna come across some things you haven’t thought about before, like types of souls and racial traits.”

What? What was he going on about, focus girl focus.

“Marc thinks it’s a good idea to talk to you about the Otherkin, but it’s one of those subjects that people should discover on their own. I’m not here to tell you that you’re Otherkin, but I am, and I’m happy to answer any questions you have.”

Are they gay or not, thought Anya. This is more trouble than it’s worth, I’ve heard better coming-out stories than this.

“I’m not sure what I should be asking, I might have had too much to drink.”

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“It’s like in your dream,” offered Marc, “it’s the same with me, the shape of the aura, the way you think and see the world, the way you relate to people, humans, other Kin. It’s knowing you’re far from home, it’s that feeling of being alone in a crowd, it’s knowing you’re not quite right with everything.”

“Marc, I’m drunk. Will you just say what you mean please!”

“We’re not human, we’re other than human; more than human. We’re called, in general, ‘Otherkin’ as we are kin to the Others, or we are Others but in a human body.”

“Right, that’s much clearer, and you Van, you’re Another Kin are you?”

Van didn’t look too happy about the whole affair, but his eyes danced still.

“Yes, I’m Otherkin, I’m not entirely human, I’m just in this form for this life-time.”

“And you think I’m one of these too then?” Anya looked from Van to Marc, only Marc’s face showed the enthusiasm of a positive.

“I’ve always been sensitive to these matters,” said Marc with authority,

“I’ve always wondered about you An. We get on so well, and, um.”

Anya pulled her thoughts together; she realised this was the part where she was supposed to protest and call them both deluded, then storm off laughing a little to herself, only to be confronted by some ‘truth’ come the morn. Anya had always considered herself to be an efficient, even logical person, and while the night’s revelations were disconcerting, it just seemed too trite to dismiss them from the get go.

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Anya didn't want to offend Marc, but she knew her soused brain needed some time off, and however nice to look at Van was, and however interesting his world-view seemed to be, this conversation could wait for a better time.

"What are you then Van? Metro-rugby player? Sooth-saying barman? Sage and Warlock? Look, I'm not sure I can get on with this stuff right now, let's call it a night and deal with this another time." Smooth girl, way to go name calling.

"I'll drive you guys home, s'no prob."

"I think, no let's talk about this guys, An, come on, just think about it, it makes sense."

"I understand well enough, I'm just not feeling so good about everything right now, it's too late," pleased Anya.

"You guys should sit facing forwards, where do you wanna get to?" asked Van.

"Back to Anya's please then Van, I can walk from there." Marc gave directions while Van backed out of the van and climbed in the front. Looking back over the bench seat, he said "I'll put some music on, won't take us 5 mins to get you home."

Anya and Marc grabbed the three bottles as the van lurched around the small car park and made its way to the main road. Marc waited for Anya, containing himself in a rare show of restraint. He looked at her.

"I just need a few more details. I'm not saying the subject is closed, I'm just saying that there's too much to say for one conversation," Anya said

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softly, "I'm not sure what it means to 'be human' or not be human. Why do you think you're not human?"

"I've always felt different, always been treated differently, and I, well you know how I am, I don't always understand what's going on with people, but I do have a good sense of what's going on *beneath* the surface with people. It might not make sense to you, but I've always been searching for something *real* in life; everything around me seems fake, unreal, unimportant. Life can't be so banal, it's precious, it's got to be. When I started thinking about god and the universe, M theory, the formation of stars and reincarnation, I was looking for something. You remember how I went from Buddhism to Zoroastrianism to Kaballah. I've been looking for something real since I started to read. I've always had a hole in my soul that has never been filled by anything, not family, not friends, not love. I've always felt fractured, half-formed, unable to truly see myself in the mirror. Recognising the Otherkin in me has helped me come to terms with why I don't fit."

They both sat with their thoughts as orange street lights flashed through the windows. Up front, a double been indicated Van was reading a text with only one hand on the wheel.

"You're my best friend Marc, I've always loved you."

"I know An, I love you too, but this is about who I am - who we are, it's bigger than just paying the rent and getting drunk."

"I know, I feel the same way too at times. I just get on with things, I just want to get somewhere in life. Right now that means sorting out my money and getting somewhere decent to live - but I do worry about the big stuff

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50,000 words written in November for (Inter)National Novel Writing Month too - I, you and me, we've always been open minded; how come you never talked to me about this before?"

"I haven't told anyone. Van's a new friend and he's real involved with the local Kin House, I'm meeting all sorts of people, but when I think of my Uni and work mates, there's just no way you can throw 'I ain't human' into a conversation, it doesn't make sense to anyone, or worse, it doesn't matter to them."

"You could have talked to me though, you matter to me."

"I know. But this isn't about me, honestly. I really think there's more to your dreams and visions; they're strong aren't they? Not just hints of colour, but really involving?"

"Yeah, they're pretty overwhelming. Does that mean I'm an Otherkin like some people are witches or druids?"

"No, yes, not really. Witches might have an innate skill with magick, or a natural attachment to nature, but it's their studies, knowledge and practice that makes them witches. They're still human people. Otherkin don't decide to become Otherkin, and there's no religion or book you have to have; you're born Kin, and there's nothing you can do to change that. You can ignore it, but that's like dying your hair black and pretending it isn't mousy brown - sure, you're hair's black, but y'know."

"We're her guys, can you let me know how far along?" called Van, wrenching his head up and round.

"Go to the end and stop at the street light." Called Anya, looking out the side windows.

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They pulled to a halt, and Anya helped Marc out through the sliding door.

Van gave them both a thumbs up and smiled a fair approximation of a warm smile. Anya's mind buzzed, she needed water and bed, but it wasn't that late, and... She waved for Van to get out, and she pantomimed a drink. The engine stayed purring but he opened the door.

"You sure? I mean, Marc's pretty determined that you give some thought to this stuff."

"Yeah, I can do it; I didn't mean to be rude, we've been drinking; come on in for some tea and we'll have a proper chat OK?"

Marc danced around besides her.

Anya flicked lights on as they went through the hall and lounge into the kitchen. They chatted about living in shared houses while Anya fixed up a proper brew, in a teapot and everything. She carried the tray through to the lounge with the men trailing her. Men, she thought. Van looked even younger than Marc, and he works in a cabaret bar and lives in a camper van. Bizarro inc. They settled on the big rug, eschewing the deep sofas, and Anya laid out cups and saucers for each of them.

"So tell me about Otherkin." Anya said to Van.

"What would you like to know?"

"About you, and what you think."

"That's a big question. You'd be very welcome to get to know me," and something warm and chocolaty enveloped Anya again, "I've got some Otherkin friends, and we're trying to get some things organised. We've got moots and meet-ups planned for the summer. But me? I've just always known I was Kin, I just assumed it was normal. I knew most of the kids at

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school were just human, but it didn't bother me to be different, I saw that everyone was different in some ways. It did bother me that none of the teachers noticed my Otherness, and they had no answers for me about anything important, they just banged on about god and Jesus. Not that I've got anything against mister Jesus of course, a fine prophet and no-doubt Angelkin, but he was a long time ago. Anyway, as I grew up I read everything I could about personality and reincarnation, and talked to Mediums and Spiritualists. Some of them told me I had 'healing hands' and others said I had a 'strong aura'. One of them talked to me about Starseeds and Walk-ins, and that all got very complex, but it lead me to question my own sense of self, and recognise my innate being, the very core of me. We are all of us made of starstuff. Our race is of the starry heavens, but we walk the Earth. I like the Earth, I like it here, I'm not rejecting this life or humanity, I'm just recognising that I'm not entirely human myself."

"So you believe your soul is from another planet? What difference does it make? Some people believe their souls used to be animals."

"Exactly, animals. Transpeciesism. That's exactly what I'm talking about. Different races, different species, different planets. Not me, though, I'm from this planet, just not this plane."

Anya gulped her tea, she could feel a hang-over stirring already and needed her cuppa - or a stiff drink. "You've lost me now, plane?"

"The corporeal plane of existence is just one vibratory state. The spirit world resides in a different vibratory state, a different plane. So if a ghost was here with us now, it would mean there was an intersection between our plane of reality and the ghost's spiritual realm."

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Planes and ghosts. This was getting all too obscure. Did Marc always have to get so metaphysical on her ass? Anya thought she had a handle on what they meant, but wasn't buying the vibration stuff. For her, dimensions came in four shapes, length, breadth, height and time, although she'd heard that time didn't exist and was only a function of the vectors within the three dimensions of space-time. She congratulated herself on having read Stephen Hawking, and then tried to refocus on what Van was saying.

"I've always been able to do stuff, and I don't think it's magick, I've never studied, Marc knows more about that stuff than me, but I've always had certain talents."

Anya tried not to look down on Van. If she had 'talents' she'd be more than a bar tender, young as he was. She suddenly saw herself waitressing and whining that she was really an 'actor'. She mentally shook the image from her head; the way her career was going, anything could happen.

"I can make people like me, I can have them do things for me."

Anya brought her eyes back to his. His deep brown eyes, mmm melty.

"Because you're Otherkin."

"No, because of his Kintype," Marc chimed in, "he's an Earth elemental."

"Marc!"

"Sorry."

"What?" asked Anya, switching her look between the two of them."

"I shouldn't have said sorry, it's up to Van to come out with his type to you."

"Sometimes it's easier to think of me as a Bearkin, I have aspects that are primordial and base, but I also have some aspects that are very nurturing.

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Being of the Earth, I naturally key in to people's Earth Chakras, and find that people tend to open up to me, I'm everybody's best friend."

"That must be quite burden," Anya opined.

Van raised his eyebrows, "That's quite an insight. It has made me somewhat wary of people, who needs 25 new friends each and every week... At least on the Internet I can just be plain old me."

"But you work in bar, you must see thousands of people a week, are you telling me they all become your best friend?"

Van's easy smile slipped a fraction, and his eyebrows knit for a fraction.

"I make a lot of friends, I mean, don't you?"

Anya didn't catch his drift, but then her mind wandered back to how she'd felt when her eyes first fell on him behind the bar; then she thought of the tight little twink who was served after her, how he glowed basking in Van's brief attention. Then she had a less than savoury thought about the convenience of the camper van...

"I could show you something," Van stated, detached.

"What like?"

"If I told you, you'd say I was doing it by the power of persuasion."

"Will you touch me? Can I sit here?"

"Sure, no I won't."

"OK," Anya shifted a little, but assured herself that nothing could really happen to her. But for a second she thought about some mirror magick that she and Marc had done a couple of years ago that totally freaked her out. Van didn't move, but he seemed to become calm and even more boulder-like in the confines of the lounge.

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She thought she felt lots of things. Warmer, cooler, brushed by invisible fingers.

“I haven’t started yet,” Van called out.

“How did you...”

“I could tell by the way your aura was going into protective mode that you thought I was attacking you.”

“I thought no such thing!”

“It’s just automatic. I’m not asking you to trust me, I know we just met, but don’t worry, I won’t give you nightmares.”

Anya glowered to herself, wordplay and bravado had never impressed her.

That was a lie, but it served its purpose. Actually she did like confidence, and Van was full of it, and how! He was bulging with self-assuredness in all the right places, and her eyes swept up and down him. He seemed somewhat closer to her.

She was so glad she’d invited him back, when she could have risked losing him, it was a silly drunken tantrum in the van and she was lucky her was such a good listener. He was really taking the time to get to know her, and she felt safe with him, as if she’d known him ages, he was defiantly good friend material. Or maybe more. He was certainly her type now that she thought about it, and it had been a while since she’d met anyone as attentive and interesting as him; Van sure knew how to treat you, and he was giving off all the signs. Maybe she should flirt back? Make it a little easier for him, maybe he was nervous? He was a little young after all,

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maybe he wasn't all that experienced, maybe she could show him a thing or two? Anya began to warm up, physically. Her body seemed to grow towards his, and she smelt his warmth.

The front door made a scraping noise and then softly banged shut. Liz and Mike bubbled into the lounge, touching and smiling all the while as they talked.

"Hi guys have you had a good night?" asked Liz as she lead Mike through to the kitchen.

"Great thanks," said Anya numbly, her thoughts colliding as she sunk down into the thick rug.

What had been going on? Was she just about to kiss Van? With Marc there! She flashed a look at Van and he returned it coolly, but with some sympathy. They all finished their teas while they listened to bangs and clatters from the kitchen. Marc shifted his posture.

"Did you feel something?" he asked. He was squirming inside, desperate to tell her his own Kintype, but as usual, Van has the limelight, and Anya hadn't thought of him at all. Without him, Marc thought, these two wouldn't even have met.

"Yeah I felt something alright," Anya blustered angrily to cover her embarrassment. She drank from her mug even as she realised it was empty. Liz and Mike skipped through the lounge with a merry 'Night' and quickly disappeared upstairs.

"What do you think?" asked Van, disarmingly.

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“I think,” seethed Anya, then she brought herself down and calmed herself, “I think that I understand something is going on, and I need some time to sober up.”

2.0 More Stirrings

Lilithian seethed. Across the table, Morfindien and his lackey gulped from their beers.

“This has nothing to do with *us*,” she stated pointedly, “it’s about the direction you took the House.”

“Ascension is relevant to our members, how can you ignore the subject?”

“I’m not ignoring it, Kin are welcome to believe in whatever they feel appropriate, but we can’t have the House turning into a religion, the spiritual side of Kinness is up to each Kin to discover for themselves, without it being forced upon them by their House. The Great Houses can’t become churches.”

“I never said we should become a church, it’s just that we’ve got to think seriously about our Ascension and our Kin’s Ascension, it’s not a religion, it’s just a way of living, a belief system.” Morfindien stared down; he couldn’t understand Lilithian’s continued vehemence against the more refined side of being Otherkin.

... ..