



Thomas gently rubbed Pallo behind the ears, watching with satisfaction as her tail fluttered about contentedly. The familiar fluffiness of wolf fur did little to improve his mood, but he wasn't panicking anymore. As long as he kept close to Pallo, he could continue thinking clearly enough to sort through his feelings. So far, he'd managed to come to terms with the fact that he simply didn't like talking to people. He didn't hold any ill will toward them - yet - and he still had nature to keep him company, so he wasn't particularly upset about that. His problems weren't with who he was, they were with who he would become. There were simply too many maybes and what-ifs for him to reach a satisfying conclusion. Perhaps divination could help?

<Thomas.> Pallo's head perked up. <In the bushes.> Her ears swiveled forward. <I smell a you. Why do I smell a you?>

"That's easy." A man walked out from the forest's underbrush. His appearance was similar to Thomas's, but he looked several years older - biologically, at least. His expression revealed him to be much older than his body would imply. "Time shenanigans. Time shenanigans and self-fulfilling prophecies."

Pallo was briefly silent. <...I do not like time shenanigans. They confuse me.>

"That makes two of us." What present Thomas could only assume was future Thomas smiled peacefully. "You know, hearing Pallo talk like this again is really nostalgic. Takes me back to the time when she spoke awkwardly because she hadn't fully wrapped her head around grammar, and not, because - and I quote: 'Human speech is overrated.' "

Present Thomas blinked in confusion. "So you are the person I become?"

"Well, I still have a lot of learning and maturing to do, but... yeah. Obviously." Future Thomas let out a sigh. "Geez, I really was slow on the uptake at your age, wasn't I?"

Present Thomas didn't really know how to feel about being insulted by his future self. "Are you here to reassure me, or to give me guidance?"

"Neither." Future Thomas shrugged. "I mean, I wasn't *that* unstable. I didn't do anything drastic like attack someone or refuse them aid. I just got really passive aggressive for a few decades. At worst, me not coming to console me would have led to me being extra mopey for a few years."

"Then why *did* you come?"

"I told you, self-fulfilling prophecies. I was visited by my future self when I was your age, so I had to come visit you, since it already happened." Future Thomas grumbled a little. "Yeah, there's a reason everybody hates self-fulfilling shit."

A note from the ~~author~~ ninja:



Time travel. It's confusing and everyone hates it. So why do they keep doing it?

Well, who knows. On a different note, future Thomas is a lot more snarky than I was expecting. Maybe all the time shenanigans made him grumpy?

Or all those wolf hunts in Europe. Now that I think about it, the systematic elimination of all European wolves seems like a fast way to piss Thomas off.