He lay motionless on the ground, barely breathing at all. Silver tail curled closely against his warm chest, all four paws stretched tiredly out along the flattened brown dirt, his bulking body unmoving yet majestic as the stars. He preferred to sleep in a peaceful state when no one else was watching. Silent isolation over the otherwise constant, loud noise.

 Beyond the strange reflection adjacent to his den, those same incessant noise could be faintly heard. “*…one of the last surviving timber wolves, or* canis lupus*, in all of the North American continent. His name is ‘Faolan’, and you’ll soon see our staff feeding…*”

 Faolan. That was what the noises called him.

 Strange two-legged creatures could be spotted through the equally strange reflection, beings with stubby, pink and olive-colored muzzles in every different kind of shade imaginable. Some younger ones carried long fur on their heads, elders having none, but most held what seemed to be glowing, square-shaped tablets of stone in their stubby paws. Most of the time they simply raised their companions up towards the reflection, followed by a flashing light. Sometimes from their paws.

 Honestly, he did not care about understanding the noises each foul-smelling creature made, how many of them were watching or why they gazed at him like the rising sun.

Not anymore.

The isolation in his den have done nothing to quell his hunger for more than the taste of a meat carcass appearing from nowhere. Despite living in the den, a strange place of three walls that mimicked a forest from his dreams, he remembered other things. No, he remembered a time before there were the creatures behind the strange reflection.

They were memories of another life.

He could see it as clear as the water streaming into the pond in his den and taste it on his tongue. While opening one of his aging auburn eyes, he could almost experience everything. The sensations of tiny pine needles under his paw pads, diverse scents unlike those found in his confinement, from the smell of morning dew to the aromas of wildflowers in a pristine meadow. Surprisingly though, behind the tall grass and wildflowers proudly stood another four-legged gray wolf like him—a female!

Like a mighty crack of thunder, more memories came flooding back. Passionate play between them, followed by many months guarding the same territory. Protecting it for their next of kin. Both were lonely animals whose species had been dwindled over time, their previous packs long since disappeared from the world. However, none of that mattered to either of them after mating season came.

The female’s belly grew larger each passing moon, and it remembered tending to her, guarding her, hunting for her, and sleeping alongside her in their comfortable den. There were nights they nuzzled into each other’s necks, whining and licking the other’s noses by playful gestures. She loved him as much as their pups, when they finally arrived in the world.

The strange noise suddenly echoed again from the reflection, *“…here is Faolan’s next meal, ladies and gentlemen!”*

Further noise could be heard, “*Wow, a wolf! A wolf, Mommy! A wolf!*”

“*Dad, is it true that Faolan is the last wolf in America?*”

“*I wanna see! I wanna see! I wanna see him, please!*”

Another carcass suddenly plopped into the same area of the den, but this time he did not eat. He felt entwined into the memories from before and would not untangle away. Moonlight from the cloudless night sky, a lick across its fuzzy cheek, smaller tails wagging around its sitting form, and the sounds of pups crying for attention.

Pups? Why didn’t it remember the pups until now!?

Raising its head to the reflection, it began growling and snarling at the two-legged creatures beyond the dividing barrier it couldn’t comprehend. What had they done to its pups?! If they had done anything to them, then it wanted to tear their throats out! Claw their eyes out and find its pups! Were they safe? Was his mate safe?

Wait…why couldn’t it feel the wind on its fur? Or hear chirping birds? Also, why did the tree in his territory not feel real? They felt too smooth, not right under his paw pads, yet they strangely smelled real. What was going on?

In all his confusion, he snarled and slammed himself headfirst into the reflection, bouncing against him like slippery rock. The noises beyond it rose in alarm. As the group of two-legged creatures behind the reflection fearfully disbanded, leaving him alone in solitude, he wondered why he couldn’t comprehend what he saw in his surrounding territory. However, no matter which direction it kicked or which noise it snarled at, nothing changed.

Sometime later, after growling more of the creatures away, he reluctantly turned back to his sleeping spot to rest. Glancing to the uneaten carcass in the corner, no hunger came to mind. He didn’t feel the need to eat today, let alone because of the strange creatures who wanted entertainment. In fact, he hadn’t felt that same hunger since before its imprisonment. Still, he somehow felt the need to rest and sleep.

Closing his eyes, trying to rouse for more of the distant memories, little did he realize consciousness had already left his body behind.

After closing time had finally arrived, two of the creatures stepped inside the den, and spoke before the immobile beast.

“*Why do you suppose it’s not following the proper programming?*” one of the exhibit attendants asked his co-worker as they knelt before it. “*I thought by now, ‘Faolan’ would stop acting like this and act like a real wolf.*”

Taking a screwdriver, he placed it behind the unmoving ear until a metal rod protruded from the side of the wolf’s head. Carefully and elegantly, the second creature started carefully examining it.

“*I keep telling you, he needs time to adjust*.” he replied. “*This modified android canine has all of the memories of the real Faolan, and three months isn’t enough time for a timid creature like him to adjust to a new body it thinks is his.*”

“*Almost feel sorry for it*,” the other creature spoke a moment into their diagnostics. “*I mean, there aren’t anymore like him, and all the tourists can do is see old videos and this replica. Did you hear they’re considering it for the Bengal tiger?*”

“*I heard. Hard to believe there’ll only be a few left soon. I don’t know why you’re being so sad about it all of a sudden though. They’re still alive technically, right? Not extinct per se.*”

“*Think of what Faolan is going through though…he doesn’t even know what he is. And it’s so sad his mate and puppies died in another zoo…*”

“*Don’t weep for it, kid, you’ll be sobbing all evening,*” he groaned, then carefully tapped the rod before it retracted into the camouflaging fur. “*There doesn’t seem to be anything wrong, but I’m deleting its memories from the past twenty-four hours, so it doesn’t repeat itself again. Like I said, ‘Faolan’ needs more time adjusting and such. By next morning, tell the tour guide to be wary of more ticks like what happened earlier.”*

The elder two-legged creature stood up and walked to the hidden exit within the exhibit, but the younger one lingered for a moment longer. Gazing down at the unconscious—no, unliving—timber wolf in its den, he couldn’t help himself from scratching an ear. So real yet artificial. Even though metal and wiring ran under its fur like robotic veins, he couldn’t help but think of how warm it must have felt to pet a real North American gray wolf. Dogs still existed, but no species or domesticated breed contained the majesty he could sense.

“*Kid! I know you feel sentimental, but I don’t wanna lock you in for tomorrow…*”

Sighing deeply, he stood back up and wished Faolan a good night’s sleep.

Morning trickled by hours later, and he awoke once again to a new dawn. Stretching his legs and tired tail, he then lay motionless on the ground, barely breathing at all.