During my time fighting alongside the Defiant, I thought I’d seen enough surprises. I thought the truths long suppressed by a controlling government couldn’t make me further question the lies taught to me not just in school, but by society itself. Heterosexuality being the only sexuality? The Defiant being responsible for nameless dead and clipless destruction? Our own neighbors being everything except spies employed by the secret police, including my own former best friend? None of those harsh truths prepared me for knowing my boyfriend’s name.

“Gabriel Lowell Farthing.”

I said the three names aloud, feeling as if all but one of them belonged together.

“Y-Your last name is…is Farthing?” I asked the wolf, still struggling to feel my legs at the weight of such a disbelieving statement. “You’re a…a member of the Farthing family? I mean, the Farthings. Those Farthings?!”

“Keep it the fuck down, will ya?” He hissed at me, then heaved a massive sigh, his ears still folded and his back hunched. “Yeah…I…I am. Or rather…an extended member of the Farthings.” He turned back to me, struggling to look up at me, instead down at his paws clenching and unclenching. “It’s all fucking true…my grandfather was David’s older brother, the one who disappeared not long after the Republic states seceded. That makes me his…his great-nephew.”

“Great-nephew?” I parroted him, then shook my head. “My God, you’re…you’re serious.”

“Yeah, I am.” He replied in a blunt manner. “I fucking am.”

“Are you…” I paused my question, then chose another one. “Do you like, have any…y’know—”

“—proof?” Lowell finished, glaring directly at me. “You don’t believe me?”

I waved my paws at his accusation, and told the wolf, “No! No, of course I believe you, but…even you have to admit this is a really wild claim.”

“Goddammit. Of course, I know it’s a wild claim!” He growled, making me flinch back. He realized his mistake, and muttered, “Sorry…I’m sorry for snapping at ya like that.”

I gathered my next words carefully. I wanted to know more, but at the same time, didn’t want to create another divide between me and my wolf.

“If…” I stopped myself again, then leaned forward to hold his shaking left paw in mine. “So, your name is Gabriel Farthing, huh? How...Can you tell me how you wound up here?”

Lowell smiled warmly and relaxed somewhat. A melancholic glaze could be found in the iris of his beautiful eyes, as if he were remembering tainted memories.

“Long story short?” He explained, “I take so much from my Grandpa Alex. He and my grandma were probably the biggest critics of the Farthings…while being Farthings. Heh.” He chuckled dryly, then cleared his throat before returning to the story. “I’d graduated from kindergarten back then. We…We’d been estranged from Great-Uncle David and his family long before the Revenants came to power, or even before this civil war started. When it did break out, and every protester tried being a rebel, David tricked them—my grandparents, my parents, me and my older sister, into fleeing to a remote compound somewhere. To flee all the angry rioters and mob violence on the streets. At the time, I thought we were going on a fucking vacation…”

The puzzle pieces from the months we spent together began tumbling into their visual place.