According to the legends, long before furkind conquered the land or mastered the seas, the All-Father of the Heavens sired a thousand and one starchildren, each one as bright and unique. From the inky black sea that surrounded the green Earth, the All-Father’s sons and daughters observed from afar. They drifted in tandem as the first male and females came into existence, and in time formed families, grew into immense populations, harvested the farms, and domesticated animals lesser than themselves.

Furkind began to amaze the starchildren. What were once a series of simple hutted dwellings transformed into sprawling cities within the blink of an immortal’s eye. What were once fertile grounds became the crop fields that could feed an entire nation. What were once unimpressive villages nurtured into towering kingdoms. From these kingdoms, the mortals also produced fantastical stories, fantastical sounds, and fantastical works of art.

One starchild of the All-Father had grown restless as of late. Known by the mortals as ‘Sirius’, the brightest star in the night sky, he desired to visit the mortal realm and experience all to see. He wished to walk the Earth, taste the foods, and engage in the extraordinary whims of man. Yet for the previous millennia, the starchild’s petitioning went unanswered…until one sunrise, when the All-Father granted his desire. However, he would only be allowed to explore and experience the pleasures of mortal life until the next midnight. Afterward, Sirius would return to his place in the Heavens once and for all, where he belonged.

Eagerly accepting the All-Father’s terms, Sirius descended to the Earth.

He awoke for the first time on a dune at the edge of a vast desert. He felt the heat of the Sun bear down on his forehead, and opened his virgin eyes, only to squint from the intense daylight. Stretching his arms and legs off the coarse sand, Sirius stood up.

He then spotted a clean river close by, and he tumbled down the dune to excitably marvel at his mortal form. Within seconds, he felt the wondrous sensations of exhaustion, adrenaline, and cool water as he stared into his reflection; a canine of twenty summers with a smoky-furred hide, golden hair as soft as wheat waving in the hot wind, lithe limbs, widened eyes the color of winter snowfall from the far North, a bushy tail swishing around him as if a storm cloud gathered around his lean waist.

Much to Sirius’ surprise, however, he also wore mortal clothes. They included a pair of satin trousers and a sheer shirt worn beneath a silky cape that wrapped around his shoulders.

“The All-Father is quite modest.” He concluded.

For the first time in existence, Sirius walked. He followed the stream with the knowledge that all rivers came from a source of water. He knew the desert could not be forever vast, and at some point, as the Sun began to rise over the warming sands, he discovered something along the riverbank. Sirius spotted not just a hooded figure on horseback, but a destination they were both facing towards a walled city in the distance!

Sirius swiftly approached the figure, discovering him up close to be a spotted dog with greying fur and wisdom wrinkling underneath ebony eyes. He appeared as old as thirty or forty winters and wore a white cloak to protect from the desert Sun. Pouches and tied bags dangled from all sides of the strong horse at his command, and from the fragrant scents of spice and perfume wafting from them, Sirius deduced he must have been what the mortals called a merchant. He traded things for other things.

“Fellow traveler,” he spoke up while waving to the stranger. “What city is this?”

“What city?” Confused at first when spotting the peculiar canine walking beside his horse, the spotted dog composed a smile. “Why, we are outside the city gates of Alshafaq.”

“Alshafaq,” Sirius remembered the name from somewhere. “Yes, Alshafaq!”

“Have you gotten lost?” The spotted dog eyed the fellow canine and his strange clothes. “I cannot recall seeing any travelling caravan along this route.”

“I have been travelling along this river,” Sirius pointed to the babbling waters within a stone’s throw to their flank. “The All-Father has granted me but a single day to see everything and experience everything to offer!”

“That is wonderful to hear, young man!” The spotted dog cheered, then glanced to the stone walls looming closer to them. Concern laced the elder canine. “Did your father provide you with currency for the toll price? You do not have a money pouch.”

“Toll price?” He pondered aloud. “Do you mean I must give silver and gold coins to the guards in order to enter Alshafaq?”

“Correct.”

At first, a lightning bolt of fear coursed through Sirius. He did not consider the intricacies and nuanced laws of furkind when falling to the Earth, nor did it occur to him how much currency played a role in the daily life of mortals. He would not be able to enter the city.

“Do not worry, young man. I can provide for both of us,” the spotted dog chuckled at the latent fear suffering all over the white-furred stranger. “The toll price is only a single coin. All I ask is that you consider this for next time if you’re to go somewhere.”

“Thank you, sir!” Sirius brightened up and bowed his head in gratitude. “Thank you!”

Upon entering the city of Alshafaq, Sirius found himself teleported to a new world. Sights and smells and scents he could only imagine drenched his virgin nostrils as he wandered through a moving sea of mortals going about their daily lives. At first, the starchild attempted to break through the waves of sunburnt or concealed shoulders, only to be miraculously swept away like a tiny leaf in random directions. His feeble form bobbed and sifted, jerked, and weaved, any effort in breaking free from the ever-moving crowd more futile.

Eventually though, Sirius gathered the strength to push through, and finally burst out of the tide’s clutches, only to find himself standing in awestruck. He discovered what the mortals called a ‘bazaar’; a gathering place for artisans and merchants from cornering regions desiring to barter their goods for either silver or gold.

Undeterred by his previous misgivings towards crowds, Sirius embarked into the densely packed row of tents, carts, and stationed caravans. He marveled at every spice and item presented to him by vibrant sellers. During his meandering, wandering from one seller to the next, the starchild encountered fascinating furs. One bearded ursine insisted the canine would be fashionable wearing a silken shirt brought all the way from the far south. A flamboyant jeweler asked if he knew who fashioned his bracelets, only to become completely distracted by a pair of newlyweds. A pair of vixens successfully persuaded him to feel a soft carpet that would be wonderful for his home, only to shun him away when he said he did not possess any coins.

Suddenly, a low grumbling vibrated in the pit of the canine’s stomach.

Sirius, startled, placed his paw to his abdomen until it stirred silent. Did his mortal form require nourishment? Without much thought, his eyes fell on several woven baskets of fruits near the edge of the bazaar, and he approached their seller.

The seller, an old crocodile with an eyepatch, stood up from his chair. “Do you have coins?” He asked the canine. “If not, we can barter. I sell the best pomegranates from here to Ursa!”

Sirius almost said he did not have anything, only to silence himself. If he told the crocodile he was penniless, he would be sent away, and what little knowledge he possessed of mortals told him there would be dire consequences of stealing. Hungry or not, Sirius did not want to return to the Heavens and explain to his siblings how an impulse led to him experiencing the agony of a sliced limb or a painful night in Alshafaq’s jail cells.

“Well?” The crocodile snarled impatiently at him. “Do you have anything? Anything?”

An idea crossed the starchild’s mind. He reached into his pocket and recalling countless memories of the other starchildren creating everything from nothing as they lounged in the Heavens. His brothers Polaris and Altair were fond of producing diamonds and obsidian from specks of dust while his sisters Aquilla and Lyra often competed for who could weave the best golden tapestries from strands of oxygen floating in the black sea.

Sirius concentrated for a precious moment. Then, he presented a lump of solid gold in the palm of his paw to the seller. “Is this satisfactory for you?” He asked coyly.

The crocodile’s eyes bulged from his sockets and Sirius resisted giggling. Instead, he graciously handed the pawful of gold to the fruit seller, only to Sirius himself to gasp when the large crocodile graciously handed him the entire basket.

“For this much gold, you may have a whole basket, young man!” The crocodile grinned sharply as Sirius grasped around the rather large basket in his arms. “Come again any day!”

As well as providing Sirius with a mortal form that could transmute oxygen into gold, the All-Father had graciously allowed for endurance and strength too. He carried the basket in his arms for several steps though before Sirius became tired of possessing such a comical number of pomegranates. In the name of the Heavens, he only wanted one of the fruits! He could not even see ahead of him without stumbling towards an annoyed mortal or two. Sirius considered simply abandoning the basket until two small figures drifted in the corners of his eye. He turned and immediately stood still, momentarily letting go of the basket, as he spotted two cubs sitting against the clay wall of a building, the eldest of whom presented a tin pot rattling with coins.

Sirius and his innumerable siblings were well-aware of starvation. They witnessed such things during wars, disease, natural disasters, vicious acts of cruelty and the worst famines.

He gripped the basket and casually strolled to the two cubs, the oldest of whom eyed Sirius warily while the youngest licked his chops. The suspicious one appeared no older than fifteen summers, if any. It was hard to know for sure due to their skeletal arms.

“Please take this,” Sirius set the basket between him and the two cubs. He snatched only a single pomegranate from the full parcel and smiled at the two mortals. “I feel you require these more than I do. Blessings to you both!”

The starchild left before either of them could refuse. Upon glancing around as he turned left on a narrow road, Sirius felt his tail wag when he saw the cubs running off with the entire basket. They wore the brightest of overjoyed smiles ever perceived by the starchild.

As he ate into the single pomegranate, savoring the sweet juices within, Sirius could not but hear whispers follow him through alleyways and streets. They questioned why he bought an entire basket of fruits, only to discard it to ‘street rats’ like the two cubs. They pondered how an unknown fur like him could afford such an impulsive purchase. They gossiped if the white-furred canine were a disguised prince, and where he could possibly be hiding more chunks of solid gold on his person. Another unique whisper spoke of a placed referred to as a ‘library’.

No sooner did that last rumor slip into his ear did Sirius suddenly feel a sharp instrument to his neck, as well as rough paws clutch his wrists behind his back. The half-eaten pomegranate rolled off into the dirt, and Sirius groaned.

“Do not move,” came a deep, menacing voice as another pair of paws searched through his pockets. “Where is it, boy?”

“Where is what, precisely?” Sirius innocently asked the mugger. “I have nothing.”

“You have money!” The canine-sounding thief growled into his ear as his accomplice, a shrouded feline in a black cloak and dark sherwal, rifled through Sirius’ shirt. “My friend and I saw you pay that crocodile in solid gold.”

“It is nowhere, boss,” the shrouded feline hissed.

“Where is it?!” The ‘boss’ snarled impatiently with a fidgeting wrist holding tightly to the sharp blade. “Tell me where it is or I will end your life right now.”

“Tell us!” The accomplice hissed at Sirius’ face.

A fruitful idea came to the starchild. Not only did he desire not to test his immortality, but the yearning to escape the uncomfortable situation led Sirius to testing his powers again. He lightly tapped his footpaw to the earth, feeling his toes glide through the stone and accumulated sand, and he called for it to transform into what those brutes were after. It worked instantly.

Sirius grinned at them, saying, “Look to your feet, fools.”

Metallic clinking on the ground caught the attention of the hapless muggers. They gaped in unexpected awe at the pool of silver and gold coins littered around them. What had been an unassuming patch of earth and sand from the desert outside the city walls had been miraculously transformed into enough riches to end the debts of many.

Without waiting, Sirius broke free from the distracted thief’s grasp, the knife long forgotten as it fell to the ground and its owner feverishly tried grabbing at the coins like a starved madman. So too did the accomplice, as well as an assortment of other curious souls who noticed glints of gold and silver scattering across the alley. During the scuffle, Sirius decided to snatch away the abandoned knife and escaped into a nearby street. As much as he

It emboldened him to be reminded how much furkind did treasure simple acts of kindness.

Makes his way to the sounds of music.

Run into cub who is accompanied by mother. Insists he be invited for lunch.

At lunch, befriend the family and enjoy their company. Plan to dine on pomegranates.

Learn about everyday life as a family in the city.

Ask where to find a library, given directions.

Momentarily be distracted by intense perfumes, follow to a caravan that suddenly goes into the palace, where he is mistaken for a harem boy and returned to the harem.

>>>>>>>escape scene and giggle as he disappears easily without magic.

Find the library and be overwhelmed with how many scrolls can be read.

How could such insignificant creatures be so creative, yet so destructive as well?

Befriend a handsome young canine who is attempting to learn.

Help him learn and give advice on astronomy. Form a small friendship.

Provide coin to merchant upon finding him.

“I found it by chance,” Sirius held back the truth but once, “and thought of you.”

Join a celebration of the incoming new year.

Party.

Join him as he travels up the mountain to see the stars. Be confused as to lack of seeing the brightest star in the sky. Clouds are given as an excuse.

>>>>>>>entire story is a road trip journey taking place from sunrise to midnight.