

The chronicles of
Wild Hollow

HIGHERION DAY

PART TWO

A **Shouting Is Funny** production.

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TITLE SEQUENCE

MUSIC: 'The Chronicles of Wild Hollow: Highperion Day (Main Theme)'

SCENE 1 - HOSPITAL ROOM. INT. MORNING.

SFX: A swirling recap of Neil's assassination attempt. Reverb, distant echoes.

NEIL (Echo) Arthur?? Arthur! ARTHUR! I need to tell you something! They're coming! It's the-

ARTHUR (Echo) No! No, Neil, stay with me. Please, Neil! Help! Please, somebody help! Please! HELP!

SFX: The echoes fade, replaced by a steady heartbeat-monitor. Footsteps pass left and right, distant busy conversations.

NARRATOR A sickly chemical smell wafted through the hospital corridor. Pale strip lights hung over long curtains, as staff hurried between beds. At the end of the corridor, in a quiet private room, lay Neil. The little hedgehog was wrapped in white sheets, his breath shallow. Wires and tubes ran across his sleeping body, connecting to several beeping machines. Arthur fidgeted outside the room, watching the hedgehog through a large window. Merlin stood beside him, his eyes scanning over a clipboard.

MERLIN Well, Mr Hoot, visiting hours are over, please see yourself out.

ARTHUR Are you sure I can't speak to a doctor?

MERLIN When the hedgehog-

ARTHUR -His name is Neil.

MERLIN When... your friend wakes, you will be informed. Now it's time to go.

ARTHUR Is that it?

MERLIN Excuse me?

ARTHUR Is that all the questions you have for me? You haven't even asked me what the shooter looked like or-

MERLIN -Are you withholding information from us, Mr Hoot?

NARRATOR Merlin met Arthur's eye, and slowly tilted his head.

ARTHUR No I-

MERLIN -Are you building up to a grand confession? Was it you all along?

ARTHUR No of course not-

MERLIN -Then we are done here. Unless you want me to arrest you for wasting agency time?

NARRATOR Arthur looked back at Neil, his eyes beginning to well up. Merlin tapped the papers clutched in his talons.

MERLIN I'm going to hand these over to the new security detail. You'd better be gone when I return.

SFX: Merlin's footsteps fading away.

NARRATOR The falcon strode off down the corridor, disappearing between the hanging curtains. Arthur took a deep breath.

ARTHUR I'm gonna get to the bottom of this, Neil. I promise you.

SFX: The beeping and whirring of medical equipment fading to silence.

SCENE 2 - A BOAT ON THE RIVER. EXT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Sounds of a river. The gentle hum of a motorboat engine.

NARRATOR Artemis and Fandango were heading up river, the bow of their boat cutting a line through the murky waters. Reeds and long grass protruded like fingers from clumps of algae on either side.

FANDANGO So by the time I get back to Dust Town, it's too late. They're gone. Billy Bob. The saloon. There was nothing left but ashes. You'd have felt the blast all the way down in Sinner's Cove.

ARTEMIS That's horrible.

NARRATOR Fandango's eyes glazed. He retrieved his trusty bottle of bourbon from within his duster, and drank.

SFX: The rustle of a coat, and the pop of a cork being pulled from a bottle. A swig, and a gulp.

ARTEMIS I'm... sorry about your friend.

NARRATOR Artemis watched as the bottle disappeared back out of sight.

FANDANGO He was the best of us. And he deserves justice.

ARTEMIS And you think the Sludge will help you find it?

FANDANGO It's my best chance. That and the explosives.

ARTEMIS Why would that...?

FANDANGO Nobody moves that much dynamite without someone else knowing about it.

ARTEMIS Right...

FANDANGO Hey, you're a smuggler. Did you hear anything?

ARTEMIS Was a smuggler. And no, nothing. Look, up ahead. There it is.

NARRATOR Artemis pointed, as the steel shell of a warehouse appeared from the overgrown trees.

SFX: Motor cutting out.

NARRATOR The pair floated quietly towards the jetty. Barrels of Sludge were piled high outside the entrance.

ARTEMIS There's so much of it. Way more than last time I was here.

FANDANGO They're still exporting.

ARTEMIS But you destroyed the Lilypad?

FANDANGO So where are they taking it now...?

NARRATOR The pair tied the boat off and hopped onto the jetty. Fandango's crutch remained behind.

SFX: Squelchy footsteps as they reach dry land.

ARTEMIS Won't you be needing that?

FANDANGO Starting to heal up nicely.

NARRATOR He limped his way towards the warehouse, Artemis following behind cautiously. The smell was pungent.

SFX: Fandango grunting, and a cloudy swirling fog descending. A distant jazz bar trumpet.

ARTEMIS Are you alright-

FANDANGO -I'm okay, I'm okay. Just... Bad memory. I'm not gonna relapse on you.

SFX: The fog lifts. The large doors creak as they enter the hanger.

ARTEMIS Why don't you... wait here. I'll have a look around to see if-

NARRATOR But before she could finish, they heard footsteps approaching from behind. Artemis turned to see a pack of coyotes in workers jackets enter the hanger. Leading the pack, the foreman grinned, revealing a cluster of sharp yellow teeth.

SFX: General excitement, laughter and anticipated murmuring from the coyotes.

GILES Well well, long time no see, Ms. Gray. And look, you've brought a friend.

ARTEMIS We're just passing through, don't mind us, Giles.

GILES Oh no, please. Why not stay for a while.

SFX: The click of a gun aimed at Artemis and Fandango.

NARRATOR The foreman drew a pistol from his overalls and pointed it at the pair.

ARTEMIS What happened to your famous hospitality?

GILES I guess it disappeared into thin air, much like our smuggler did.

NARRATOR Fandango looked to Artemis, a twinkle in his eye, and a paw in his coat.

ARTEMIS Touché.

NARRATOR Fandango whipped his Smith and Wesson from his holster, and sent a bullet flying into one of the goons. The fox and the mouse dived behind the sludge barrels as the coyotes shrieked. The warehouse exploded into gunfire.

SFX: A cacophony of gunfire, screams and yells, smashes of wood and glass.

SCENE 3 - HOLLOW HERALD, EDITOR'S OFFICE. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Office ambience.

NARRATOR Arthur took a deep breath, then knocked three times on Enid Scrupe's office door.

SFX: Three knocks.

ENID What?

ARTHUR (Under his breath) Good start.

SFX: Door opening.

ARTHUR Umm... Morning, Miss Scrupe.

SFX: The soft clicking sound of Enid's pincers.

NARRATOR Enid Scrupe sat behind her desk. A towering spider, her many hairy arms splayed across the stacks of papers on her desk. She was still as a statue; an imposing figure.

ENID Hoot? Why on earth are you bothering me?

ARTHUR I... Well, it's just-

ENID -Spit it out, Hoot!

ARTHUR I assume you heard about what happened yesterday evening?

ENID The attempted homicide in our company carpark? Yes, surprisingly it was brought to my attention.

ARTHUR Right. Of course. I only mean-

ENID -You don't want time off, do you, Hoot? If I granted leave to you for cradling a poisoned hedgehog on company property, they'd all be at it, so you can forget about-

ARTHUR -No! Umm, no, nothing like that. The opposite, actually. He's called Neil.

ENID Who is?

ARTHUR The hedgehog. He's a good friend of mine, actually. And, well... He said something to me. Before, you know, it happened.

ENID He said something to you?

ARTHUR Yes. He said, "They're coming".

NARRATOR There was a pause. Enid Scrupe became, if possible, even more still.

ENID Well, someone call FACT back to the office, Hoot's just revealed game-changing new evidence.

ARTHUR I know it's not much to go on, but-

ENID -It's not anything to go on. Do you suppose that perhaps the 'they' this creature was referring to might in fact be the pursuer who stuck a poison dart in his rear end?

ARTHUR I want to follow this story, Miss Scrupe.

ENID Out of the question. Son of Phineas R. Hoot or not, you are the cartoonist here and nothing more. Heavens, maybe if you'd shown even a glimmer of your father's talents then I might consider it, but given your very meagre circumstances... I think you'd do best to leave reporting to the professionals.

ARTHUR This has nothing to do with my father, this is an important-

ENID -Go draw a picture about it, Hoot. Close the door on your way out.

NARRATOR Arthur bit his tongue, and slunk out of the office. He stared at the ground as he pulled the door shut behind him.

SFX: Enid's office door clicking shut.

NARRATOR Not looking where he was going, he found himself, for the second time in two days, face-first in a mass of orange fur.

SFX: A furry thud. Arthur exclaiming in surprise.

RUSTY Come with me, son.

SFX: Doors opening and closing, footsteps leading up the stairwell.

RUSTY Forgive me, Hooty. I wasn't meaning to pry. I had a couple of questions for our Editor-in-Chief and found her presently indisposed.

SFX: Another door opening, a light breeze, distant city ambience.

NARRATOR Rusty pushed open a final door, and led Arthur out onto the roof of the office building. Arthur's eyes widened as he followed the tiger onto the rooftop.

RUSTY Ahhhh. Not too shabby a view, eh?

NARRATOR High Tower was spread out below them. Creatures walked along the streets like ants - and some of them were ants. The usual deafening sounds of traffic were a peaceful hum. And amidst the patchwork quilt of rooftop squares, the Highperion rose grandly into the sky, its branches scraping the clouds.

ARTHUR It's... Wow.

NARRATOR Rusty guided Arthur forwards, past a noisily whirring machine.

SFX: Loud mechanical sounds.

RUSTY The one negative up here.

NARRATOR Rusty nodded towards the large, rotating contraption.

RUSTY Still, Herald FM needs transmitting somehow, so there we are.

SFX: Footsteps across the rooftop. The machine fading away.

NARRATOR He descended a short flight of stairs to a lower platform. Before them stood two luxurious deckchairs. A small side table resided next to one, a typewriter sitting in pride of place. A bottle of Fortuna Gin and two cut-glass tumblers also adorned the table. Rusty sat in one of the chairs, gesturing a paw to the other.

RUSTY Make yourself at home. Welcome to my secret office, Arthur.

NARRATOR Arthur blushed and hopped into the opposite chair.

SFX: The creak of Arthur's chair as he sits.

RUSTY If you don't mind my saying... Enid was tough on you back there. Unfairly so, in my opinion. You said the hedgehog is a mate of yours?

ARTHUR Yes. We've known each other since we were kids. Went to school together in Petit Glade.

RUSTY I'm sorry. How's he doing?

ARTHUR He's... Still alive.

RUSTY He's lucky you were there when you were. Why was he there, by the way?

ARTHUR I don't know. I haven't seen him for months, then all of a sudden he's being chased through an alleyway shouting for me.

RUSTY Huh. Well, there's a story in that, that's for sure.

ARTHUR That's what I was trying to tell Scrupe! But all she sees is a Hoot with... no plaudits.

RUSTY Mustn't be an easy name to live up to...

SFX: Pouring of gin.

ARTHUR Sometimes I wish I was just Arthur... Just...

SFX: A gin glass being slid across the table to Arthur.

NARRATOR The owl stopped himself, blushing. He took a sip of the gin on the table beside him, and was taken aback by the burn.

ARTHUR (Splutter) Oh... wow. Surely this story needs following up on Rusty?

RUSTY And it will, son. But, with the best will in the world, it was never going to be you. Poison dart? Mysterious faceless killer? It's got to be linked to the political assassinations. Why some random hedgehog's been dredged up in all this, I haven't the foggiest. But this investigation already has a reporter, I'm afraid.

NARRATOR Rusty smiled, patting the typewriter beside him.

RUSTY You, on the other hand, won't have a chance in hell of being taken seriously until you've got a story or two under your belt.

ARTHUR But how can I work a story if the Editor won't listen to a word I-

RUSTY -If you have a good lead...

ARTHUR ...Keep it close to my chest?

RUSTY Nobody needs to know your business until you're good and ready to share your work. Yesterday, you sounded like you were onto something. Right?

ARTHUR Yes! Up in the-

RUSTY -Don't tell me, lad! Tell the world. When it's ready. I don't mean this to sound insensitive, but your friend ain't going anywhere in the meantime.

NARRATOR Rusty grunted as he pulled himself to his feet.

SFX: Rusty's chair creaking.

RUSTY Follow your beak, Hooty. Trust yourself. And remember, that name is yours as much as anyones... Right! Press conference at the Highperion. These politicians love the spotlight. The ones still alive, at any rate.

NARRATOR Arthur made to get out of his deckchair too.

RUSTY You stay put, son. If you like. You're welcome up here anytime.

NARRATOR With a warm smile, Rusty headed back into the office, his ginger tail pulling the door shut with a snap.

SFX: Rusty's departing footsteps and the door closing.

SCENE 4 - SLUDGE WAREHOUSE. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Fandango grunting as he dodges and dives. Gunfire, screams of pain, final gasps of breath from the coyotes.

NARRATOR The gunfight had been raging, but even with a wounded leg and woozy head, Fandango had picked off most of the shooters. The mouse ducked and weaved between the barrels, sending bullets in all directions. Shell casings bounced on the concrete as another coyote dropped to the ground with a thud. Then, silence.

SFX: Fandango and Artemis panting.

ARTEMIS Are they all... dead?

FANDANGO All but one. Your main man has locked himself in his office. Some show of leadership.

SFX: Footsteps as they approach the office.

NARRATOR Artemis rose and joined Fandango. They approached the foreman's office door, which was riddled with bullet holes.

ARTEMIS Now, Giles, we just want to talk.

SFX: A gunshot from behind the door, wood splintering.

ARTEMIS That's no way to have a civilised conversation.

GILES I'm not coming out.

SFX: Another shot, more splintering wood.

ARTEMIS You'll be out of ammo before I even get to you.

SFX: The click of an empty barrel.

ARTEMIS There we go.

NARRATOR Artemis kicked open the door.

SFX: The smash of the door being kicked open.

NARRATOR In the corner, cowering behind a desk was the foreman, brandishing a letter opener in his outstretched paw. The fox and the mouse stepped into the room, Fandango's gun still smoking.

SFX: Giles whimpering in fear.

ARTEMIS Put the letter opener down, Giles. It's over. We just want to ask you some questions.

GILES Then you'll let me go?

SFX: Fandango chuckling.

NARRATOR Fandango rolled his eyes. Artemis glared at the mouse.

ARTEMIS You have my word.

GILES Okay, what do you want to know?

FANDANGO Who do you work for? Where does the Sludge come from?

GILES I don't know-

NARRATOR Fandango flicked the safety off his revolver and pointed it at the coyote.

GILES I mean it! I don't know who they are. I've never met them. All our orders come in letters, via pigeon post. Everything comes from up river.

FANDANGO Up river?

ARTEMIS These letters. Where are they from?

GILES High Tower.

FANDANGO I knew this went right to the top. Neil was right.

ARTEMIS Who?

FANDANGO A kid I met a while ago. He was heading for High Tower, said he had a story that'd shake the world. We need to find him.

NARRATOR Artemis frowned and turned back to the foreman.

ARTEMIS One thing is puzzling me. The Lilypad is gone. Pistols McGee here saw to that. So, where are all these barrels going?

NARRATOR The foreman slowly raised a hand, pointing a paw to the wall behind them. Artemis and Fandango turned to see a huge

map of Wild Hollow. The warehouse was circled in black marker, with string shooting out in all directions to carefully placed red pins. Scumwarter, Sinners Cove, Old Fortuna. Cities, towns, villages.

ARTEMIS It's... going everywhere.

NARRATOR Artemis's eyes lingered on one of the pins. The Old Beacon, just south of Sinner's Cove.

FANDANGO This is bigger than I thought. We have to go. Now.

SFX: Footsteps towards Giles. A gun being raised.

ARTEMIS Hey! Stop. I meant what I said. We let him go.

FANDANGO (Sighs) Fine.

SFX: Fandango's revolver returning to its holster.

NARRATOR The coyote looked at them both and then darted from the room, skipping over the bodies in the hanger and disappearing out of the warehouse.

SFX: Giles' sigh of relief, and hurried footsteps fading into the distance.

FANDANGO But this place. It's gotta go.

ARTEMIS Agreed.

NARRATOR The pair stepped out of the office and set about pulling the corks from the barrels of Sludge, the thick black goop glugging onto the warehouse floor.

SFX: The popping of corks from barrels, the thuds as they're overturned and the viscous slugging of Sludge.

NARRATOR Fandango took a match from his pocket, and struck it alight.

SFX: A match sputtering to life.

FANDANGO Ready?

ARTEMIS Always.

NARRATOR The mouse cast the match into the air and they ran to their boat.

SFX: Hurried footsteps. A fizz of ignition... then an enormous fireball explosion. Debris falling into the water. Artemis grunting as she pushes the boat off the shore. The engine revving to life.

NARRATOR Artemis pushed the boat off into the river and the pair began sailing upstream once more, as the warehouse was engulfed in flames.

SFX: Flickering flames fading to silence.

SCENE 5 - HOLLOW HERALD. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Excitable conversation.

NARRATOR The bullpen in the Hollow Herald was abuzz. Everyone gathered around a transistor radio in the middle of the room. Arthur and Pearl squeezed in between the crowd of reporters, their ears pricked. The radio crackled.

SFX: Radio static, then Herald FM underscore. Shushes from the crowd, conversations dying down quickly.

GEORGE And now we return to the press event of the year, where our correspondent, Ruffian O'Toole, is already in full swing with the prospective candidates...

SFX: Transition from radio to situ.

RUSTY What I think we all want to know Ms Fluff, is how in good faith you can stand for re-election when Wild Hollow has found itself in arguably its most tumultuous period under your very own leadership?

FLUFF The Animal Union party has, and always will be, focussed on trying to make Wild Hollow as prosperous and safe as possible-

RUSTY -Safety is our next topic, in fact. The national security of Wild Hollow. I will now open the floor to Obsidian Vandersplat of the PDP.

SFX: Loud applause.

OBSIDIAN Thank you, Rusty. Let me ask you, citizens of Wild Hollow. What is it we want most? What is it we crave? Riches, adventure, connection? Perhaps. But one thing above all that we all deserve is to feel safe in our beds at night. And I ask you, Wild Hollow, do you feel safe?

SFX: Jeering and cries of 'No!' from the crowd.

OBSIDIAN No, I didn't think so. When our headlines are hijacked every day by death and murder, how can we feel safe? When organised crime is consuming our cities, how can we feel secure? When all of this has been allowed to happen to our Wonderful Wild Hollow, how can we put our trust in the politicians who have stood by and done nothing?

FLUFF I think that is a bit-

OBSIDIAN -The answer is, we cannot! We cannot trust those in power. And that is why I implore you to look to us, the PDP, to guide our Wonderful Wild Hollow out of the dark, and into the light on this coming Highperion Day Election.

SFX: Cheering crowd. Chants of "PDP, PDP, PDP..."

RUSTY I now hand over to the Animal Union for a response.

SFX: More jeers.

NARRATOR Kelly Fluff quickly whipped a bead of sweat from her forehead and leant towards the microphone.

SFX: Microphone feedback.

FLUFF I'd like to question the suitability of the honourable pigeon, Mr Vandersplat, for office.

SFX: Whispers emerging from the crowd.

FLUFF We cannot talk about safety without mentioning your father, the extremist, Igneous Vandersplat. It was not all that long ago that you Vandersplats made headlines of your own, with shocking and divisive rhetoric about flight supremacy and then your father's subsequent disappearance. Wasn't there also a scandal concerning inheritance, and even the death of-

OBSIDIAN -I will be the first to admit that my family has had its chequered history. My father, rest his soul, was a troubled character who battled many demons. Like his father before him. His ideals were problematic but we pigeons have thankfully left all that in the past. One thing I thank my father for is his service to the family business, the now thriving Pigeon Postal Service.

SFX: Another flurry of applause.

FLUFF Igneous Vandersplat was a fanatic-

OBSIDIAN -Imperfect perhaps, but hard working all the same. Until his final days. And, having taken over his position, I am proud to say we pigeons are now seen as reliable and essential to Wild Hollow. We wear our name with honour and pride.

SFX: Cheers from the crowd. "PDP! PDP! PDP!..."

RUSTY And it looks like that is all we have time for. Now, as the day draws nearer, this free and Wild Hollow once again takes its future in its hands. We creatures great and small coexist in the hills and dells, deserts and plains, standing together. The Eclipse will bring darkness and light, ushering in a new era. Who shall lead us through? Only time will tell. On Highperion Day. I've been Ruffian O'Toole. Thanks for tuning in.

SFX: Radio static, then a click as it is switched off. Conversations erupt and footsteps disperse.

NARRATOR The radio crackled away, and the Herald reporters dispersed back to their desks. Arthur was left beaming.

ARTHUR Wow. He has such a brilliant way with words.

PEARL Come on Arthur, stop day-dreaming and crack on with your doodles.

SFX: Footsteps as they return to their desks.

ARTHUR I'm way beyond doodles, Pearl. I've got a story to chase, bread crumbs to follow-

PEARL -Are you gonna be this intolerable every time your new stripy friend gives you an ounce of encouragement?

ARTHUR I'm playing the game, Pearl, like Rusty said. Keeping my cards close to my chest.

PEARL How wonderful.

SFX: The scraping of chair legs.

NARRATOR Pearl rolled her eyes and sat at her desk.

ARTHUR You're my only confidant, Pearl, because-

PEARL -I couldn't give a monkeys?

ARTHUR Exactly, you're impartial!

NARRATOR Arthur sat across from her, and poured over the mess of paper and scrawlings before him.

ARTHUR It just doesn't make sense.

PEARL You know I really did prefer it when the only noise that came from your side of the desk was the scratch of a pencil.

ARTHUR The squirrel from the village. The letters. I can't find them anywhere.

PEARL Maybe he got the address wrong.

ARTHUR He said they sent them here, Pearl! To the Herald directly.

PEARL If his letters sounded anything like his crazy ramblings, they would have gone straight to the complaints department.

ARTHUR Complaints department?

PEARL Do you know anything about this building, Arthur? Complaints is down in the basement... with him.

ARTHUR ...Who's him?

PEARL The Bear of Bad News.

SCENE 6 - HOLLOW HERALD BASEMENT. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: The whirring of elevator wires, the clunk of machinery as the lift arrives in the basement. Grinding as the doors open, and a buzzing, blinking strip light.

NARRATOR The basement was dimly lit, tall shelving units casting everything in a heavy shroud of shadow. Dust hung in the air and, with his first breath, Arthur could tell this was not an area frequented by many...

SFX: Echoey footsteps as Arthur walks into the darkness.

ARTHUR Errr... Hello?

SFX: The word hangs in the air.

ARTHUR Hello? I'm looking for the complaints departme-

SFX: A shifting sound from the shadows.

NARRATOR Arthur's final word caught in his throat. At the far end of the room, a huge, hulking mass shifted. Through the gloom appeared two glowing yellow eyes.

SFX: Heavy, thudding footsteps approaching.

ARTHUR Oh... Oh no... Sorry, I didn't mean to, umm... interrupt. I'll just...

NARRATOR Arthur turned to reenter the elevator, but the doors had closed, and the lift had long since ascended back up the building.

SFX: Thud, thud, thud.

NARRATOR Arthur braced himself as light finally fell across the enormous figure.

SFX: Arthur cowering.

BEAR Oh, hello there.

A pause.

ARTHUR ...Hello.

SONG: 'Ode to Lost Things'

BEAR Have you come to hear the story of my archive?

ARTHUR What? Oh, no, not exactly, it's-

(BEAR)
I'M A COLLECTOR
HAVE BEEN ALL MY LIFE
WHEN I WAS FOUR
I FOUND A CORDUROY HAT

IT WAS LEFT ON A BENCH
AND I COULDN'T RESIST
I TOOK IT HOME

AND PUT IT ON MY SHELF
AND VOILA
MY ARCHIVE EXIST

BEAR ...ed. Existed. Didn't quite rhyme.

(BEAR)

FROM THAT DAY ON
MY COLLECTION JUST GREW
A PAIR OF TWEEZERS SOME GEEZERS
HAD DROPPED AT THE ZOO

A FLIP-FLOP, A CROP TOP
A BICYCLE PUMP
I SEE POTENTIAL
WHERE OTHERS SEE JUNK

LOOK AT THIS SAUCEPAN
I FOUND ON A CHAIR
YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW I CHUCKLED
THINKING "WHAT'S THAT DOING THERE"

THE THINGS THAT SOME PEOPLE
DISCARD
BUT I KNOW MY PURPOSE
I'M HERE TO GUARD

EVERY TREASURE I FIND
EVERY RELIC DISCOVERED
ARE CAREFULLY CURATED
BY ME IN THIS CUPBOARD

THERE ARE OBJECTS OUT THERE
SOME PEOPLE DESPISE THEM
JUST BRING THEM TO ME
AND I'LL CATEGORISE 'EM, YES

IF SOMETHING IS LOST
I WILL HELP IT SURVIVE
JUST BRING IT TO ME IN MY
ARCHIVE

ARTHUR Umm... Fascinating. Sorry, isn't it pronounced archive?

BEAR No.

A pause.

ARTHUR Well, you're certainly very organised down here. I was hoping you could help me with something specific?

BEAR Specific? Oh yes! Specificity c'est mon speciality.

ARTHUR That's... Good. I'm looking for some letters.

BEAR Letters? Oh, you've come to the right place then. I'm always getting letters. Complaints, mostly. That's why they call me the Bear of Bad News. But the joke's on them...

SFX: Footsteps crossing the room, then a filing cabinet drawer opening with a rattle.

BEAR ...because I get to individually log them based on date of receipt and reason for enquiry.

NARRATOR The Bear looked extremely smug, revealing to Arthur a filing cabinet filled to the brim with envelopes and yellowing sheets of paper.

ARTHUR I'm looking for anything written directly to the Herald regarding floodings in the Frosted Peaks? Dated any time in the last month or two?

BEAR Oh, ho! You mean Entry No. 397! That made it into the official archive! Very recent addition.

SFX: Filing cabinet closing, and footsteps.

NARRATION The Bear of Bad News headed straight for one of the shelving units, reaching high up to the top shelf and retrieving a stack of three crumpled envelopes. He blew across them hard, and a great plume of dust billowed into the air.

SFX: The Bear blowing hard, then footsteps returning to Arthur.

BEAR Ugh. Could really do with a spring clean down here, but... Well, anyhow, here you are. Not sure why you'd want them, though. I don't keep official Hollow Herald correspondence down here. Naturally, I send anything of importance up the chute.

NARRATOR He nodded towards the far wall. A metal chute disappeared through the roof. A brass plaque beside it read "FLOOR SEVEN - REPORTING AND EDITOR'S OFFICE".

ARTHUR Then why have you got these?

BEAR Came back down, didn't they. Stamped with the Editor's seal. Said it was a nothing story, and that I could archive them for meself.

SFX: Rustling paper.

NARRATOR Arthur rifled through the envelopes in his hand. The Editor's seal was indeed stamped across the back of each one.

ARTHUR I... I don't understand.

BEAR What's there to understand? Enid wasn't interested, and they didn't belong here...

SFX: Patting filing cabinet.

BEAR So I popped them on my shelf. Now, are you going to look at them or can I return them to the-

ARTHUR -I need to borrow these.

BEAR Borrow? As in, take them away?

ARTHUR Only for a day or two! Please, it's very important.

BEAR Err... This is... Highly unorthodox...

ARTHUR You'd be helping a great many people.

BEAR I would...? I mean, yes, of course I would! Not the first time my archive has proved its worth!

SFX: Footsteps.

NARRATOR He hastened across to his desk, pushing aside a battered-looking tape recorder, and scribbled something onto a scrap of paper. Lumbering back, he thrust the note into Arthur's hands.

BEAR Forty-eight hours, Mr Hoot. Maximum! Then I want them returned safely to the archive.

ARTHUR Thank you, Mr... Bad News. Thank you very much.

BEAR Now off with you! I'm a busy bear.

ARTHUR Yes, of course.

NARRATOR Arthur turned, and recalled the elevator. It rumbled into place, its doors creaking open once more. Looking back, Arthur watched the Bear of Bad News return to his desk, picking up the battered tape recorder.

BEAR Right. What's next on the list. Hollow Herald Archive: Entry No. 402. Small dictaphone cassette tape found on Fortuna Beach, labelled 'Property of Digby Whippet'...

SFX: The elevator doors close.

SCENE 7 - HOLLOW HERALD BULLPEN. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Office ambience. Pearl's typewriter.

PEARL How's the best way to phrase getting 'horribly betrayed by someone close to you'?

NARRATOR Arthur was back at his desk, the letters laid out in front of him. Pearl was gazing at her horoscope drafts, chewing on her pencil.

ARTHUR This doesn't make any sense. He said he wrote to us, and here's the proof. Dated twelve days ago. 'Major floodings'... 'Significant structural damage'... 'Inexplicable point of origin'... How did this get thrown aside?

PEARL 'Beware your brother and his jealous streak'?

ARTHUR Pearl!

PEARL Oh, I don't know, Arthur! Look, Highperion Day is two days away. Maybe Enid just decided to prioritise the biggest event in the calendar year, over some random letters from the middle of nowhere.

ARTHUR These are creatures of Wild Hollow, Pearl! Real creatures, real lives. Their safety can't just be ignored because of an election.

PEARL Well, go and ask her then!

NARRATOR Arthur glanced up at Enid's office. He watched her through the glass as she sifted through a stack of papers, enclosed in a large brown file.

ARTHUR This is going to sound crazy... But I'm not sure I can trust her. She stamped these, Pearl, she called it a nothing story.

PEARL What do you want to hear, Arthur?

ARTHUR Oh, how about confirmation that our leader isn't surreptitiously stabbing us all in the back?

A pause.

PEARL That is perfect. 'You may be surreptitiously stabbed in the back'...

SFX: Enthusiastic typing on the typewriter.

NARRATOR Pearl happily added the final flourish to her horoscope.

SFX: A satisfied exclamation from Pearl.

NARRATOR Scowling, Arthur snatched up the envelopes. Opening his desk drawer, he tucked the evidence beneath his father's letters. He stood, and strode purposefully towards the elevator.

SFX: Departing footsteps.

PEARL Oooh, oat milk latte if you're buying!

NARRATOR Arthur didn't reply.

SCENE 8 - TRAIN CARRIAGE. EVENING.

SFX: The sounds of a train speeding along a track. Whistling wind. A muting effect as we transition from outside to inside the carriage.

NARRATOR Arthur sat in an empty compartment, as the train hurtled towards the Frosted Peaks. He couldn't trust Enid Scrupe, he thought. Rusty had told him to follow his nose. He was going to visit the village himself.

SFX: A crackle from the intercom.

CONDUCTOR We will shortly be arriving at Chillbrook Station, our final destination. Any passengers travelling further through the Frosted Peaks will be required to continue their journey on foot. Chillbrook Station, our final destination. All change, please.

SFX: The intercom crackling again, before falling silent. The train hissing to a halt.

NARRATOR Arthur hopped off the train, gasping at the significant drop in temperature, his breath steaming in front of his

face. He popped the collar of his blazer against the cold wind, and set off.

SFX: Crunching footsteps on the frosty ground.

NARRATOR Wooden signposts had been knocked into the hard earth, pointing him in the direction of the village. He climbed higher and higher, and crystals of ice began to form on the tips of his feathers. He shook them loose and they fell like snowflakes to the ground.

ARTHUR It can't... be much... further...

SFX: Wind picking up.

NARRATOR He took another step, and his foot slipped out from beneath him.

SFX: Arthur slipping, landing with a thud.

NARRATOR The ground was covered by a clear, thin sheet of ice. This was as if a steady stream of water had flown down the mountainside, and frozen...

ARTHUR The floods...

SFX: Arthur standing, the frost crunching.

NARRATOR Scrambling to his feet, and carefully watching his step, Arthur followed the path of ice as it wound its way up the mountain. Up ahead, a thin wisp of smoke spiralled into the sky. Could he be nearing civilisation? Upon clearing a final verge, Arthur saw the village.

ARTHUR No...

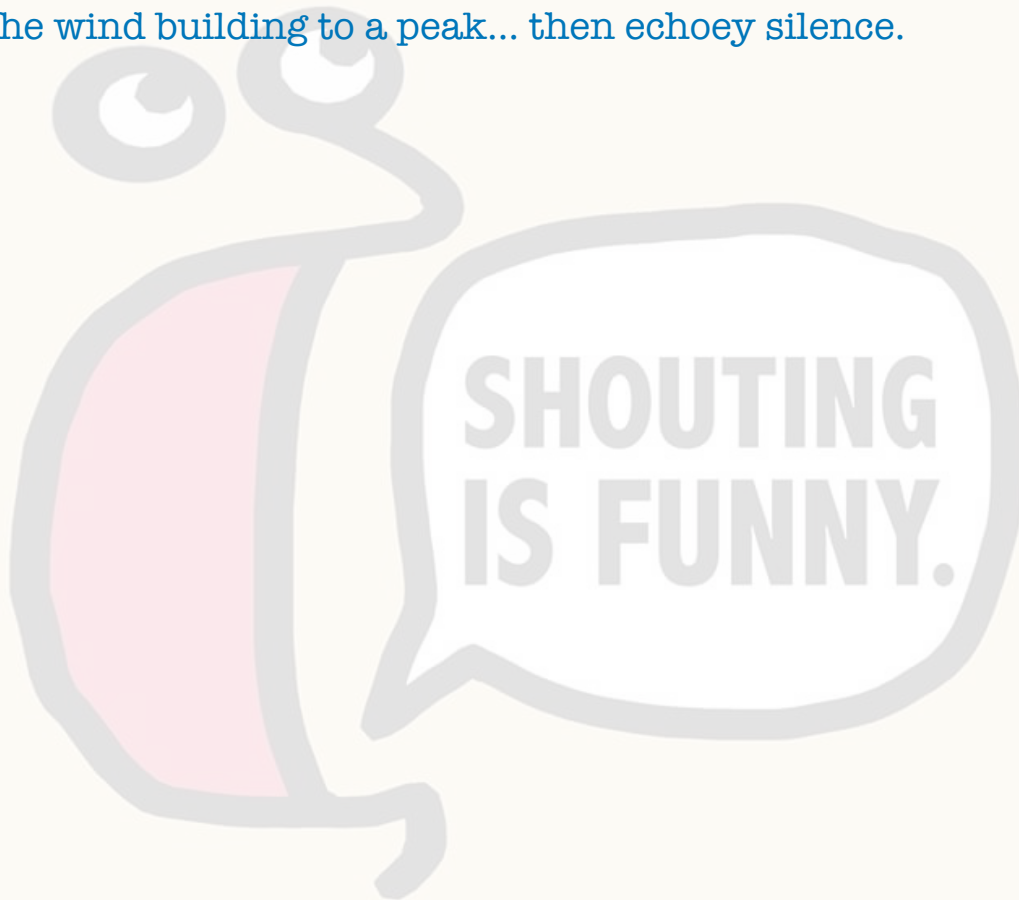
NARRATOR It was no campfire. Arthur staggered forwards, his eyes wide. His footsteps crunched once more, not through ice, but ash. Around him, wooden cabins lay destroyed, their roofs caved in. Heat radiated from the structures, beds of embers still glowing in the rubble. The entire village had been burned to the ground.

Everywhere he turned, Arthur's eyes fell on the bodies of villagers; fur, feathers, scales all blackened and charred.

ARTHUR I don't... I can't...

NARRATOR Arthur turned away, unable to look upon the sight for a moment longer. And there, lying on the ashen verge, was the squirrel from outside the Hollow Herald. He had perished, just as his village had. His arm was stretched out in front of him, a solitary finger pointing further up the mountain.

SFX: The wind building to a peak... then echoey silence.



CREDITS

You have been listening to a **Shouting Is Funny** production.

Sound design and music by Christian Powlesland.

Artwork by Harvey Badger.

NARRATOR	Joshua Riley
ARTHUR J. HOOT	Khai Shaw
ARTEMIS GRAY	Heather Gourdie
FANDANGO BOURSIN	Christian Powlesland
OBSIDIAN VANDERSPLAT	Damien James
RUFFIAN O'TOOLE	Saikat Ahamed
ENID SCRUIPE	Corinna Powlesland
THE BEAR OF BAD NEWS	Lawrence Cole
KELLY FLUFF	Lauren Ava Thomas
PEARL	Elizabeth Chadwick
GILES	Daniel Briggs
MERLIN	Aedan Day

Additional voices by Bethan Barke, Christian Powlesland and Harvey Badger.

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