

The chronicles of *Wild Hollow*

HIGHERION DAY

PART THREE

A **Shouting Is Funny** production.

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TITLE SEQUENCE

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

SCENE 1 - HIGH TOWER CENTRAL STATION. EXT. DAYTIME.

SFX: The squeal and hiss of an arriving steam train. The bustle of a busy station platform.

NARRATOR The wheels of the locomotive squealed as the train pulled into High Tower Central. Arthur hopped down from the carriage and pushed through the billows of steam, an anxious look in his eyes. He'd been replaying it over in his mind for the whole journey. The charred ruins. The black ash in the cold white snow. The curling finger pointing into the sky.

SFX: A thud and scuffle of footsteps.

HEN Ey! Watch where you're going, will ya!?

NARRATOR Arthur blinked the dark thoughts away as a large hen pushed past him, followed by a gaggle of chicks.

SFX: Soft chirping from the chicks.

ARTHUR Sorry!

NARRATOR He followed the crowd out into the daylight and made his way to the Hollow Herald, muttering to himself as he went.

ARTHUR I have to tell someone, I have to, those poor villagers.

NARRATOR He hopped between the pedestrians on the pavement, engrossed in his conundrum.

ARTHUR Think Arthur, think... Who can you trust?

NARRATOR Arthur cut down a side street. The gutters were littered with leaflets, the faces of political candidates staring up from where they had been crumpled underfoot.

ARTHUR Something's going on. First the letters were hidden, now everyone in the village is...

A pause.

ARTHUR The letters. I need the letters. Then I've got something to show.

NARRATOR The owl turned a corner and emerged at the rear of the Hollow Herald. He made his way towards the back entrance, but before he could cross the street, the doors opened.

SFX: The Herald doors creaking open.

NARRATOR Merlin stepped out, followed by Enid Scrupe. Arthur froze. They spoke a few words to each other, but Arthur was too far away to hear. The spider reached out and shook the FACT official's hand, before the falcon turned tail and disappeared into the back streets. The Editor stood for the briefest of moments, then went back inside. A cold shiver ran through Arthur's bones.

ARTHUR No, they can't be...

NARRATOR Before the owl had a second to utter another word, a black station wagon pulled up in front of him with a screech.

SFX: A car screeching to a halt, and a window rolling down.

SAMSON Master Hoot, you need to come with me.

NARRATOR Sat in the driver's seat was a wizened mule, his deep brown eyes staring at Arthur. He adjusted the thin-rimmed spectacles on the end of his nose.

SAMSON Your father is most insistent.

ARTHUR The last thing I need right now.

NARRATOR Arthur gave a final glance to the Herald and then climbed into the car.

SFX: A car door opening and closing, the city ambience fading. The engine revving as Samson sets off.

ARTHUR Now look, Samson, I really don't have the time or the patience for this-

SAMSON -And I've about lost all patience with the both of you. You and your father do have one thing in common, you know. A stubbornness like no other.

NARRATOR The mule shifted gear as the car headed out of the city centre.

ARTHUR Well, whatever he wants to tell me, I'm sure it can wait.

SAMSON On the contrary, Master Hoot, wait it cannot. He's reached a new level, I tell you, those incessant radios he tinkers with won't stop, and neither will he! I feel you need to talk some sense into him.

ARTHUR What am I going to say to him?

SAMSON Frankly sir, I don't care, as long as it gets him out of that bloody workshop.

NARRATOR They reached the edge of the city and set off down a country road, the towering trunk of the Highperion slowly shrinking in the rear view mirror.

SFX: The car's engine fading into the distance.

SCENE 2 - HIGH TOWER GATES. EXT. AFTERNOON.

SFX: A light breeze, distant city ambience. The rustling of bushes.

NARRATOR Fandango and Artemis stepped out from behind the thick bushels, as a black station wagon disappeared out of sight.

FANDANGO That was close.

NARRATOR The bounty hunter leant gingerly on his wooden crutch, as the duo gazed ahead at the grand entrance gates to the city of High Tower.

ARTEMIS Well, aren't you a sight for sore eyes.

NARRATOR It had been a full night's trek to arrive at their destination, with barely a moment to rest. But with Senator Brittle's death still fresh in their minds, they knew time wasn't a luxury they had.

SFX: Footsteps as they approach the gates.

FANDANGO Busier than my last visit.

ARTEMIS Yeah well, lucky us for popping by during election week. Okay, let's go.

FANDANGO Err... Umm... I might have forgotten to mention...

ARTEMIS Go on?

FANDANGO I may or may not have a bounty on my head.

ARTEMIS A bounty?!

FANDANGO Big one.

ARTEMIS And you didn't think to tell me this before recruiting me as a travelling companion? Hell, there are FACT agents right there!

SFX: Marching footsteps of a group of patrolling agents.

NARRATOR At that very moment, a FACT patrol had appeared at the gates. Artemis seized Fandango and the two of them pressed their backs to the outer city wall.

SFX: A thud as their backs hit the brick wall.

FANDANGO Would you have come with me if I'd told you?

ARTEMIS Absolutely not.

FANDANGO Well, there's your answer.

Pause.

ARTEMIS What's it for?

FANDANGO I don't know. Woke up one morning and had to shoot my way out of Dust Town. Still owe someone a horse and cart...

ARTEMIS Listen, there's probably nowhere worse for you to be right now, two days before the biggest event in Wild Hollow. So might I suggest we keep our heads down, and move quickly?

FANDANGO Not a problem.

NARRATOR With a final incredulous shake of her head, Artemis slipped around the corner of the wall, and into the city. Fandango followed suit, his eyes darting left and right. Artemis wasn't wrong. Patrols were marching the streets in every direction, heavy truncheons hanging at their sides. The pair ducked down a shaded alleyway, emerging at the other end into a bustling crowd.

SFX: Crowd ambience.

FANDANGO You know where we're headed?

ARTEMIS Roughly. Never been inside the Herald myself, but I've worked a few jobs nearby. There's a route through the old markets.

FANDANGO You're turning into a regular tour guide.

SFX: Fandango swigging from his bottle.

ARTEMIS Are you serious?! I need you sharp here, Boursin.

FANDANGO Don't sweat it, ginger. Let's get back to the walking tour.

NARRATOR Artemis glared at the mouse, before pressing on into the crowd, her head bowed. Fandango popped the collar of his duster, and followed.

SFX: The crowd noises swell.

ARTEMIS I think we're close.

NARRATOR They turned another corner. At the far end of the street, with the iconic stork proudly displayed above the doors, was the Hollow Herald office.

ARTEMIS Bingo.

SFX: Shouts off left.

TOFFEE No! Please, no, I didn't mean anything by it!

FACT 1 Make a habit of tearing down party property, do you?

TOFFEE No, I was just-

FACT 2 Freedom of speech not a concept you agree with or something?

TOFFEE It was covering my opening times! I was just moving it!

NARRATOR The labrador barista of Toffee's Coffees cowered as one FACT agent raised the poster high in the air.

FACT 1 Highperion law dictates that the removal or attempted removal of any party campaign material is to be seen as a direct act of aggression towards said party.

NARRATOR The PDPs slogan of 'Skies, Land and Sea' flashed into view as the agent waved the poster in Toffee's face.

TOFFEE I was just moving it from my door, I wasn't taking it down, I swear!

FACT 2 I wouldn't lie to a FACT agent's face, if I were you.

FACT 1 Maybe we ought to call The Plague down here. Reckon they'd be interested in hearing about this.

NARRATOR What happened next, Artemis couldn't explain. One moment, he was standing beside her. The next, Fandango had seized one of the guards by the scruff of the neck.

SFX: The sound of a fist closing around a shift collar. The indignant cries of the FACT agent.

NARRATOR He launched his head forwards, making contact with the agent's nose with a sickening crunch.

SFX: A crunch, and a scream of pain.

ARTEMIS No!

SFX: Dashing footsteps.

NARRATOR Artemis dashed forwards, pulling something from her pocket. Launching it at the ground, the smoke bomb activated, plunging the group into a plume of thick, grey smog.

SFX: The smoke bomb exploding, the hiss of the smoke filling the street.

NARRATOR The fox grabbed Fandango's paw and dragged him down another alleyway. They ran as fast as the mouse's wounded leg would allow, before diving behind a low wooden fence.

SFX: A thud as they drop down behind the fence.

FANDANGO Why did you-

ARTEMIS -Shut up!

FACT 1 They went this way! Come on!

SFX: Footsteps passing by their hiding place, then dying away.
Fandango and Artemis panting.

ARTEMIS What... the HELL... was that.

A pause.

ARTEMIS Hey. Hey! What was that?

FANDANGO I'm not a fan of bullies.

ARTEMIS No, no, I'm not stupid, Fandango. One mention of The Plague and you were on top of them.

A pause.

ARTEMIS Well? What's The Plague?

FANDANGO Who.

ARTEMIS What?

FANDANGO WHO is The Plague. They're a bounty hunter.

ARTEMIS Like you?

FANDANGO They are nothing like me.

ARTEMIS Okay... Okay. I'm sorry. But we had a deal. Heads down, move quickly. What you just did could have put us both out of the game before we'd even started. So you need to tell me, Fandango, what is going on?

A pause.

FANDANGO I told you I lost someone. Billy Bob. The Plague killed him. That explosion in Dust Town. It was them.

NARRATOR Artemis's eyes widened.

FANDANGO There was nothing I could do. The Plague used him. To get to me.

ARTEMIS But why? No offence, but you're hardly priority number one. Why target one bounty hunter?

FANDANGO I've been wondering the same thing. Taking out the Lilypad must have ruffled a few feathers. Then I worked a job for FACT not long after-

ARTEMIS -You worked with FACT?

FANDANGO I didn't know any different at the time. They were offering a payout to bring in a fugitive. Normal job.

NARRATOR Fandango shifted, stretching his bandaged leg out in front of him.

SFX: Fandango grunting in discomfort.

FANDANGO Didn't quite go to plan. They sent me after a bogeyman, but really it was just Neil, the kid we're after now. He'd uncovered some dirt on FACT that they wanted to be kept hush hush. I told them he'd been dealt with, but... Well, it's clear now, they've got eyes everywhere. Maybe it was some kind of test after the frogs? Guess I failed. Next thing I know... Priority Number One.

A pause.

ARTEMIS You deserve justice, Fandango. For your home. Your friend.

FANDANGO Thank you-

ARTEMIS -But what you just did was careless and stupid. You can't punch your way to the top of this. We have to be smart.

FANDANGO You make a habit of carrying smoke bombs?

ARTEMIS Some friends of mine stocked me up. Courtesy of the Pirate King.

FANDANGO The Pirate Ki-

ARTEMIS -A story for another time. Come on. We have a hedgehog to find.

SFX: Clambering to their feet.

NARRATOR She extended a paw, and helped Fandango back to his feet. Cautiously peering out from behind the fence, they slipped back out onto the street. They glanced in the direction of Toffee's Coffees. The windows were shattered. The FACT, and the labrador, were gone. Fandango's fists clenched.

ARTEMIS We'll make this right.

NARRATOR Artemis gently guided the mouse away. Reaching the end of the street, they spotted a tabby cat emerging from the doors of the Hollow Herald. Fandango made to call out, but Artemis nudged him.

ARTEMIS Maybe I should do the talking? Excuse me!

SFX: Artemis jogging across the street.

PEARL Oh, hiya. If you're after a personalised horoscope I'll say it now, I'm a proper bargain.

ARTEMIS No, I'm actually all good for prophecies of the future. I was wondering if you could help me, though.

PEARL Suit yourself. What can I do you for?

ARTEMIS I'm looking for someone. They might have come this way, asking for an Arthur J. Hoot?

PEARL You're looking for Arthur?

ARTEMIS No. Someone called Neil. Just wondered if any hedgehogs have been sniffing around with a story to tell?

PEARL Hedgehog? Hmmm... Well, there haven't been any hedgehog's IN the office, no.

NARRATOR Artemis sighed, beginning to turn away.

PEARL But one did get shot in the carpark last night.

SCENE 3 - HOOT MANOR. EXT. DAYTIME.

SFX: The station wagon pulling onto the drive, the engine cutting out. Doors opening, and footsteps on gravel. A soft wind.

NARRATOR Arthur and Samson had arrived at the house. It stood defiantly against the bruising sky, and the trees that surrounded it seemed to lean in, like hands around a candle flame. The words 'Hoot Manor' coiled through the stained glass windows above the front door. Samson ushered Arthur inside.

SFX: The front door opening, and the footsteps transitioning from gravel to wood. The wind fading away as the door closes.

SAMSON He was never good at relaxing, your father, finding anything he could to keep himself busy.

ARTHUR Anything but be with his son.

SAMSON Well, quite... But it's... escalated.

NARRATOR They walked down a wood-panelled corridor, and then up a narrow flight of stairs. Samson paused to straighten a small picture frame, then continued.

SAMSON I try my best to maintain the place but...

NARRATOR They arrived at the top of the stairs. Samson pushed the heavy oak doors open, releasing a cacophony of buzzing, beeping and whirring noises from inside.

SFX: The door opening, and a variety of mechanical and electronic sounds emerging from inside.

NARRATOR The carpet of the room was littered with notes, scrunched-up balls of paper and empty coffee cups. Cables and wires ran like snakes, winding around pillars of machines with flashing lights and displays. In the middle of the ceiling was a small skylight, with a large telescope beneath it, perched on a plinth of stacked boxes. In the centre of the room stood Phineas R. Hoot.

PHINEAS Arthur, finally, you won't believe it! Look at this transistor.

NARRATOR The grey-haired owl turned to one of the bleeping machines beside him.

ARTHUR Nice to see you too, Dad.

PHINEAS There are voices coming out of the radio!

ARTHUR Isn't that the point?

PHINEAS What? No! Hidden voices! Voices we're not meant to hear! Secrets, I'm sure of it!

NARRATOR Arthur looked to Samson, who gave him a shrug. Phineas was tinkering frantically with the dials on the machine.

PHINEAS If I can just...

SFX: An electronic surge and a loud bang, accompanied by sparks.

NARRATOR Sparks flew up into the air like the spout of a whale.

ARTHUR Blimey, dad, you're going to hurt yourself, why don't we just-

PHINEAS -I've been tracking the voices, Arthur, the signals. Look!

SFX: Hurried footsteps.

NARRATOR Phineas shot across the workshop and pulled down a wall chart to reveal a large hand-drawn graph.

SFX: The chart being unfurled.

NARRATOR Across it were dozens of spidery scrawlings and hastily sketched diagrams of what looked like...

ARTHUR The... Moon?

PHINEAS Exactly! I've cross-referenced the increasing regularity of the radio fluctuations against the upcoming lunar positionings, all the way up until they meet. And boy, just you guess where they converge!

ARTHUR (Sighs) Dad, I really think-

NARRATOR Phineas released the wall chart and it snapped back up with a crack.

SFX: The chart spiralling back into place.

PHINEAS The Eclipse! They're building to the Eclipse!

ARTHUR Who is 'they'?

PHINEAS The voices, Arthur! The secret voices! Voices we aren't meant to hear, my boy.

ARTHUR Dad, I know you love your radios-

PHINEAS -There's more to it than that, Arthur-

ARTHUR -I know, I know, setting up the radio station was your last big hurrah at the Herald, and that was great, but maybe you need a new hobby, now? Have you tried backgammon?

PHINEAS Don't mock me, lad, this is serious. Something is coming. On Highperion Day. It's all building to the Eclipse. You need to forget the Herald, we have to leave Wild Hollow before it's too late.

ARTHUR Oh, you'd love that, wouldn't you! Me dropping everything and following you blindly off to who knows where. I've got work to do, Dad.

SFX: Arthur's footsteps towards the door.

NARRATOR Arthur turned to leave but Phineas grabbed his arm.

PHINEAS This is more important.

ARTHUR You don't get to decide that. Not anymore.

PHINEAS For goodness sake, Arthur, forget the drawings and-

ARTHUR -You just don't want me at the Herald, sullyng your achievements!

PHINEAS Arthur, I got you the job at the Herald. You're a Hoot!

ARTHUR Well, I never asked to be!

SFX: Sudden sparks from the transistor.

NARRATOR The transistor crackled loudly behind them, sending a couple of sparks into the air. Phineas ran to his notebook.

PHINEAS Arthur, if you just wait another minute, I can show you. There's a transmission due any second.

ARTHUR Dad, I don't have the time-

PHINEAS -Have some patience damn you!

ARTHUR Patience?! All I've ever had is patience with you, dad, and still you go on and on, about nothing but yourself. I've had it.

SFX: Arthur's footsteps leaving the room and fading down the hallway.

NARRATOR Arthur stormed off down the staircase. He called out as he left.

ARTHUR Don't try to contact me again!

SAMSON Master Hoot, please!

SFX: The distant slam of the front door.

NARRATOR But Arthur was gone. Samson stood awkwardly for a moment, then left the room. A tear began to form in Phineas' eyes, then he blinked it away. He turned to the machine and tweaked the dial delicately.

SFX: A crackling of static.

GEORGE -earlier this morning, Jasper Bosch was arrested for the fifth time this year, for assaulting a Scumwarter resident -

SFX: More crackling.

ADVERT VOICE -and with just one wash, your fur will be softer than a piglet's belly-

NARRATOR Phineas inched the dial clockwise, and adjusted the arial. The static hissed.

SFX: Static giving way to a distorted voice.

VOICE -optimisations are on track. Magnetic field density increase, successful.

NARRATOR The strange voice crackled away, the static returning. Phineas sat back in his chair, his eyes wide. He leant over his notepad and continued to write.

SFX: The scribbling of Phineas' pencil.

SCENE 4 - HOLLOW HERALD OFFICE. EXT. DAYTIME.

SFX: A cab slowing to a halt outside the Herald. City ambience.

NARRATOR Arthur tipped the cab driver and hopped out onto the street. He took a deep breath, then he entered the Hollow Herald.

SFX: The door opening and the sounds of the city replaced by gentle conversations of office staff.

NARRATOR The owl ducked and weaved through the hallways, trying to avoid any unwanted coffee orders. He turned into a quiet corridor. A copper plate hung on the door in front of him. 'Ruffian O'Toole, Senior Journalist'. Arthur quickly glanced around him, then let himself in.

SFX: The door clicking open and shut. Arthur's footsteps slipping inside. A ticking clock.

ARTHUR Oh, wow.

NARRATOR The office smelt of fresh pine, and hanging on the walls were front page spreads, framed in gold. Above the mahogany desk were black and white photos, showing Rusty shaking hands with various celebrities and politicians, or posing majestically in expensive-looking knitwear. Arthur stood for a moment, admiring the display, then shook his head.

ARTHUR Focus, Arthur!

NARRATOR The owl stepped behind the desk, grabbed a piece of paper and began writing a note.

SFX: Pencil scribble.

ARTHUR Rusty, I need your help. Meet me at the Sheep's Baa - seven o'clock. Regards, Arthur.

NARRATOR He folded the paper and popped it into the tiger's drawer, tucking it gently under a heavy metal stamp.

SFX: A drawer opening and closing.

ARTHUR See you later, Rusty.

NARRATOR He turned and slipped out of the office, clicking the door shut as he went.

SFX: The door closing and Arthur's footsteps fading.

SCENE 5 - PDP HQ, OBSIDIAN'S OFFICE. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Wind howling outside the window, a pen scribbling on paper.

NARRATOR Obsidian Vandersplat sat at his desk, documents stacked in neat piles before him. He was busily writing a letter, when he was distracted by the distant approach of footsteps outside his office.

SFX: Distant running footsteps, then the door slamming open. Panting as Giles enters.

BERTRAND I'm sorry, sir! He just ran straight past me!

NARRATOR Bertrand panted nervously in the doorway, as a coyote barrelled into the room. His fur was singed, and his boots left sooty footprints on the red carpet as he gingerly approached the desk.

GILES I'm... I'm so sorry to interrupt, Mr Vandersplat, sir. I came here as fast as I could.

NARRATOR Obsidian gazed calmly at the foreman, before returning the lid to his pen, setting it precisely beside the half-written note. He waved a wing at Bertrand, who bowed and left the

room. Then he looked back at the quivering coyote, expectantly. All in complete silence.

GILES Umm... There's been... an incident, Mr Vandersplat. Umm... At the depot.

A pause.

GILES We were visited, last night, by Artemis Gray, sir. She used to move the Sludge for us, into Fortuna City. There was a mouse with her, sir. Reckon it was Boursin, the one you told us about...

A pause. A gulp.

GILES They destroyed the depot, sir. Burnt to the ground. Two-hundred barrels. And they might be heading for High Tower.

SFX: Obsidian's chair scraping backwards. His footsteps approaching Giles.

NARRATOR Obsidian stood. Emerging from behind his desk, he walked calmly towards the foreman, his wings clasped as ever behind his back. Only when they were face to face, did he finally speak.

OBSIDIAN Not to worry, my dear fellow. Giles, wasn't it?

GILES Mhm...

OBSIDIAN Naturally, I received word of all this several hours ago, but I do appreciate you taking the time to deliver the news personally. Boursin and Gray are indeed within the city walls. They are being closely monitored. Out of interest, just how much did you reveal to our slippery friends?

GILES Oh, nothing, Mr Vandersplat, sir! Nothing at all!

OBSIDIAN And yet, they visit your depot, and then immediately arrive in High Tower. A curious turn of events, wouldn't you say?

GILES Oh, well, you know... Letters from High Tower... The Sludge locations... They sort of, pieced it together...

NARRATOR The pigeon extended a wing, wrapping it around the foreman's shoulders. He walked him towards a large portrait hung upon the stone wall. It depicted a young Obsidian Vandersplat, with an older pigeon standing proudly by his side. His father, Igneous.

OBSIDIAN Mistakes happen, my friend. Terrible shame about your depot! You must be in need of alternative employment? As it happens, a position has just recently opened up. Most fortunate.

NARRATOR Obsidian pressed a button, neatly concealed within the portrait's intricate frame. A panel in the wall slid open, a clinical white light pouring out.

SFX: The button clicking, and the wall panel sliding open.

OBSIDIAN We've simply been waiting for a willing volunteer. An opportunity to redeem yourself, might I add. Thank you, Giles.

NARRATOR He gestured forwards with his wing.

SFX: Giles' footsteps disappearing through the concealed doorway. The crackle of a radio being activated.

OBSIDIAN New test subject coming your way.

SFX: The radio shutting off, then another click of the button in the frame, and the panel sliding back into place.

NARRATOR The pigeon slowly crossed to the window. Snow flecked against the glass, the Frosted Peaks towering above him on either side. In the valley far below, High Tower glimmered in the evening gloom, the Hyperion standing sentinel.

SFX: Distant wind swelling.

SCENE 6 - THE SHEEP'S BAA. INT. EVENING.

SFX: Ambient chat, glasses clinking and the sound of a band in the corner of the room.

NARRATOR Nighttime welcomed the sunset, and the revellers that came with it. The Sheep's Baa was a dimly-lit tavern in downtown High Tower, sandwiched between tenement blocks. Creatures of all sizes sat hunched around small tables, or whispering in shadowy corners. The sound of the band wafted through the smokey bar, a ewe crooning gently into a microphone.

SONG: 'Darker'

(THE CROONING EWE)

THINGS ARE GETTING DARKER IN THE HOLLOW
LONG SUMMER DAYS BEGIN TO TURN
FLOODS IN THE PASTURES
UNNATURAL DISASTERS
THE EMBERS OF FEAR BEGIN TO BURN

RUSTY They were all dead? The whole village?

ARTHUR It was awful, Rusty. And I don't know what to do.

RUSTY And you say they sent us letters?

ARTHUR Yes! Direct to Enid Scrupe, I've seen them, got her stamp on them and everything. Hidden away where no one would find them.

RUSTY But you found them.

NARRATOR Rusty gave Arthur a wink and a reassuring smile. The owl beamed.

(THE CROONING EWE)

THINGS ARE GETTING DARKER IN THE HOLLOW
TRUST IS A CURRENCY IN DECLINE
IF YOU SEE SHADOWS IN DOORWAYS
HEAR FOOTSTEPS DOWN HALLWAYS

AND FEEL A SENSE THAT YOUR LIFE IS ON THE LINE...

YOU BETTER WATCH YOUR BACK
LOOK AROUND
GET YOUR FEATHERS, FUR OR WHISKERS
ON THE LAST TRAIN OUT OF TOWN
THE TIME HAS COME TO PACK YOUR BAGS AND SCARPER
IT MIGHT BE DARK RIGHT NOW BUT IT'S GETTIN' DARKER

WATCH YOU BACK
SAVE YOUR FUR
RUN TO THE DESERTS OR THE MOUNTAIN TOPS
WHICHEVER YOU PREFER
THE KNIVES ARE OUT AND ONLY GETTING SHARPER
IT MIGHT BE DARK RIGHT NOW BUT IT'S GETTING DARKER

SFX: The ewe chuckles as the band takes over.

RUSTY And to be clear, you haven't told anybody else about this? Not your father, for instance?

ARTHUR I need your help, Rusty. Nobody else's. You're the only one I trust, especially after seeing the Editor and that creepy Merlin from FACT looking so friendly with each other.

SFX: A glass being lifted from the table, ice cubes clinking merrily.

NARRATOR Rusty took a slow drink of his gin and tonic, the ice cubes twirling as he set down the glass.

RUSTY Hmm... This is heavy stuff. But I think you're onto something. I've had my suspicions about Scrupe for some time. She's always seemed a career type.

ARTHUR This could be the beginning of something huge, Rusty.

NARRATOR The tiger nodded, rubbing his paws together pensively.

RUSTY This is good work lad. I think your old man would be proud.

ARTHUR He's too busy tinkering with radios to care about what I'm up to.

(THE CROONING EWE)

OH WATCH YOUR BACK
LOOK AROUND
SAVE YOUR SKIN
FLEE THIS TOWN

THE TIME HAS COME TO PACK YOUR BAGS AND SCARPER
IT MIGHT BE DARK RIGHT NOW BUT IT'S GETTIN' DARKER
HEY!

SFX: Polite applause from the crowd. Conversations strike up again.

CROONING EWE Thank you, thank you. You're very kind.

ARTHUR We can't let them get away with it. Whatever Scrupe's hiding... I bet it's in her office.

SFX: Arthur's stool scraping back.

NARRATOR Arthur leapt to his feet, knocking back the dregs of his beer before starting towards the exit.

ARTHUR You're right, Rusty! We need to nail Scrupe!

RUSTY That's not what I said-

NARRATOR But the owl was already halfway to the door.

SFX: Arthur's footsteps travelling across the bar.

CROONING EWE I wrote this next song after a particularly torrid affair with a goat last summer. It's called "You Make My Heart Bleat".

SFX: More applause. The piano starts up again as the door to the bar opens and closes.

SCENE 7 - HIGH TOWER MEDICAL FACILITY. INT. DUSK.

SFX: An elevator grinding to a halt. The doors sliding open.

ELEVATOR Floor Six - Toxicology Ward.

SFX: Fandango and Artemis' footsteps echoing off the deserted corridor walls.

NARRATOR Fandango and Artemis exited the elevator, walking out onto the sixth floor of High Tower Medical Facility.

ARTEMIS The cat said he'd been rushed straight to hospital. He's got to be here somewhere.

NARRATOR However, as they proceeded along the corridor, a looming absence became apparent to both.

FANDANGO Where is everyone?

NARRATOR The ward was deadly quiet. Their words echoed off the walls.

SFX: A door creaking ajar.

NARRATOR Fandango poked his head through the first doorway, and was met with the view of several empty beds.

FANDANGO Who killed the party?

NARRATOR Artemis walked further, turning right into the doctor's office.

SFX: The office door opening. Artemis' footsteps crossing the room.

NARRATOR A single sheet of paper lay on the centre table. "URGENT: all patients and staff on Toxicology Ward to be transferred to floor seven by 8pm this evening. Emergency gas repair to take place tonight. IMPORTANT: Do not transfer room 209." The note was signed with an unintelligible scrawl.

ARTEMIS Fandango...

SFX: Approaching footsteps.

NARRATOR The mouse appeared at her side. Artemis nodded towards the desk.

FANDANGO What are you betting...

NARRATOR They returned to the corridor, peering towards the far end. Room 209.

SFX: Two sets of echoing footsteps.

ARTEMIS Something's very wrong here...

FANDANGO This is an attempted murder case, so where's the security detail?

NARRATOR The mouse drew his trusty Smith and Wesson from its holster, aiming down the barrel as he approached the door. Artemis pulled her dagger from its sheath, the blade poised.

SFX: The dagger sliding from its sheath.

FANDANGO We go together, I've got you covered.

NARRATOR Artemis nodded. They breathed as one... then Fandango kicked the door open, and the pair swiftly entered Room 209.

SFX: The door slamming, the rush of Fandango and Artemis moving forwards. Then the steady beeping of a heart monitor.

NARRATOR The room was quiet. A hedgehog lay in a hospital bed, his eyes closed, wires protruding from his tiny arms. Artemis checked behind the door, then crossed to the window, peering out at the street below. All was dark, and still.

FANDANGO Hello again.

NARRATOR Fandango stood by the bedside, looking down at the sleeping creature.

ARTEMIS They sent a bounty hunter after him?

FANDANGO I should have gone with him. He was in danger, and I sent him off to High Tower alone.

ARTEMIS You couldn't have known.

FANDANGO I could have tried.

ARTEMIS Listen, we all have things we wish we could go back and change. I... I know I do.

NARRATOR Fandango turned away, fists clenched. His eyes fell on the bedside table, a clinical metal tray sat atop. On it, lay a single feathered dart.

SLUG HUNTER (Echoed) You fool, you fool!

NARRATOR Fandango's heart began to beat faster in his chest.

SLUG HUNTER (Echoed) They're everywhere! They-

SFX: The echoing in Fandango's mind of the smash of a window, the whoosh of a dart and the squelch as it impacts with Slug Hunter's neck.

FANDANGO (Echoed) NO!

NARRATOR The mouse shook his head hard.

FANDANGO We need to go. Now.

NARRATOR Without another word, Fandango began detaching the wires from Neil's limbs.

SFX: Wires being pulled from Neil. The heart rate monitor flatlining as it loses its readings.

NARRATOR Sensing this was not the time for questions, Artemis dashed forwards, lifting the brakes from the bed's wheels and steering the comatose creature out into the corridor.

SFX: The squeaking of the bed's wheels and the hurried footsteps of Artemis and Fandango.

FANDANGO Stop, stop, stop!

SFX: Skidding and squeaking from the sudden halt. The grinding of elevator wires at the end of the hall.

NARRATOR The numbers above the elevator had begun to rise. Someone was coming.

ARTEMIS Back!

SFX: Renewed squeaks from the bed frame.

NARRATOR They turned, pushing the bed back along the hallway.

FANDANGO In here!

NARRATOR Fandango pushed open the door of a supply closet, and Artemis swiftly guided the bed frame inside. Fandango took one last glance towards the elevator, before slipping in beside the fox, and pulling the door to.

SFX: The creak of the closet door closing, as the elevator doors grind open. The elevator voice once again, distant and echoing off the walls.

ELEVATOR Floor Six - Toxicology Ward.

SFX: Fandango and Artemis breathing. Heavy footsteps approaching down the hallway, accompanied by a soft fluttering sound.

NARRATOR Before they had even stepped into view, Fandango knew who it was. The Plague slowly made their way along the corridor, their overcoat rustling with every step.

ARTEMIS (Whispered) Fandango...

NARRATOR The bounty hunter had stiffened, his every muscle tensed. The Plague was almost directly outside the closet door.

ARTEMIS Fandango, please...

NARRATOR Fandango's paw wrapped around the handle of his revolver. The Plague drew closer, and closer.

SFX: The Plague's footsteps approaching... and then passing by.

NARRATOR The footsteps disappeared further down the corridor towards Room 209. Fandango was shaking visibly.

ARTEMIS You'll get your chance. I promise.

SFX: The door slowly opening.

ARTEMIS Coast's clear. Let's go, quietly.

SFX: Soft creaking from the bed's wheels.

NARRATOR They rolled the bed back out into the corridor, and began the excruciating final stretch to the elevator. Fandango looked over his shoulder, ensuring they had remained undiscovered.

ARTEMIS Fandango, the bed!

SFX: An enormous clatter as the bed clips a trolley, sending medical equipment crashing to the floor, echoing throughout the hospital.

ARTEMIS RUN!

SFX: Loud rattling as the bed frame is launched along the corridor.

NARRATOR The pair took hold of the bed and sprinted the length of the corridor, slamming the elevator's button. Sudden heavy footsteps approached from behind.

FANDANGO Come ON!

SFX: Hammering against the elevator button. The doors creaking open and footsteps dashing inside, pushing the bed with them.

NARRATOR They piled inside. The footsteps were getting closer. Fandango turned. The Plague was striding down the corridor, their coat billowing out behind them, their pointed mask glinting horribly.

SFX: Heavy approaching footsteps, the fluttering sound intensifying.

THE PLAGUE Hurry, little mouse... Time is running out...

NARRATOR Fandango's blood ran cold, as the doors closed, just in time.

SFX: A final snatched gasp of breath from Fandango and Artemis, before the elevator doors slide closed with an echoing thud.



SHOUTING
IS FUNNY.

CREDITS

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

Sound design and music by Christian Powlesland.

‘Darker’

Music and lyrics by Harvey Badger
Arrangement 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
SAMSON	Rose Quentin
PHINEAS R. HOOT	Richard Hough
THE CROONING EWE	Emma Levy
TOFFEE	Bethan Barke
FACT AGENT 1&2	Henry Avedian
PEARL	Elizabeth Chadwick
GILES	Daniel Briggs
BERTRAND	Alice E. Mayer
THE PLAGUE	Eve de Leon Allen

Additional voices by Emma Levy, Loris Scarpa, Rose Quentin, Tom Chudley-Evans, Christian Powlesland and Harvey Badger.

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