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Lone Wolf

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Lone Wolf

Alena Willbur

Mother and Father howl in the light of the moon. My brothers, sister, and I follow, our voices creating a rippling song of night. While mother and father stay perched on the hill, I spot movement in the bushes below; a quick rustle of white skipping along. I dart down the hill. *Wait for us!* my brothers and sister bark.

Ha, Rabbit! The little thing hops right out of its bush and into another. I lunge after it, but the twins block me and jump in front, clawing my ear. *Yow! You dumbos!* They all bark in laughter, and I laugh along. I'm not feeling so bossy today. Happy. Just happy. The full moon shines on our white and grey fur like we are children of the sky; our barks and howls play along with the air, our bond as wolf pups binding us together in the pack. We run through the forest, chasing that damn rabbit. Father thumps over and leads us out while Mother barks to not go too far.

We don't listen.

I howl.

A single note that echoes in rings of sound.

A lone note.

A lone wolf.

Knives of fire shoot from the dry branches and pine. Red and orange tongues lick up my home, my family, my life. Fire consumes the ice white and cloudy grey of their fur, *our* fur; my world ends in fire.

We were just playing. Father led us there, but we were just playing. The fire came with a *BOOM* and before I knew it, I was running, but no one was behind me. A wind of panic pushed me

forward, and I found myself alone on the hill, mother nowhere to
be found, my father and brothers and sister—
burned to ashes.

Full moonlight streams down on my grey fur like tears.
Cold winds flow over me. I long for warmth, but not the blazes
that come from those wretched, hot knives. Just a soft blanket of
sun falling like maple from the bark of the trees. Sweet, warm.
No more bitter, cold.

On the hill filled with evergreen trees and pine, I lay,
alone, in a dying, whimpering song.

My paws sink into the dirt, and my prints are the only ones
that continue on.