



The Unifier's Tempest

By Jacob Clark

The Unifier's Tempest


Key Characters:

- Mirnyth, the white dragoness*
- Aneirin, the raven-haired elf*



Chapter One



The background of the image is a misty, dark green forest with tall evergreen trees. In the foreground on the right side, there is a stylized, high-contrast illustration of an anime character with long, spiky white hair and a black visor covering their eyes. The character is wearing a white garment with black accents. The illustration is composed of sharp, angular shapes and is overlaid with several thick, dark blue diagonal lines that cross the entire image.

Tears, clinging to the corners of her eyes—memories, if she wanted to remember. She blinked them away. Shallow breaths and heaving chest, gasping for air that would not come, the wind parted with a roar, it clawed at her tired eyes and cradled her wings no more.

Nameless, ageless, savage, seething pain of heart and soul and body, icy pins and needles to her wingtips with each hard-fought beat—no more. The wind had been a haven, the wind had carried her into the skies—no more. It parted with a roar. Her eyes were closing.

Above, a canvas both moonless and starless; below, beneath the clouds, a distant shadowed landscape of gray, black, and blue that rose even now with welcoming solicitude. Her eyes fell shut. She surrendered to that blissful unawareness, clung to it, rigid muscles going limp.

Time slowed gently down, her white wings trembling like flags as the wind whirled by.

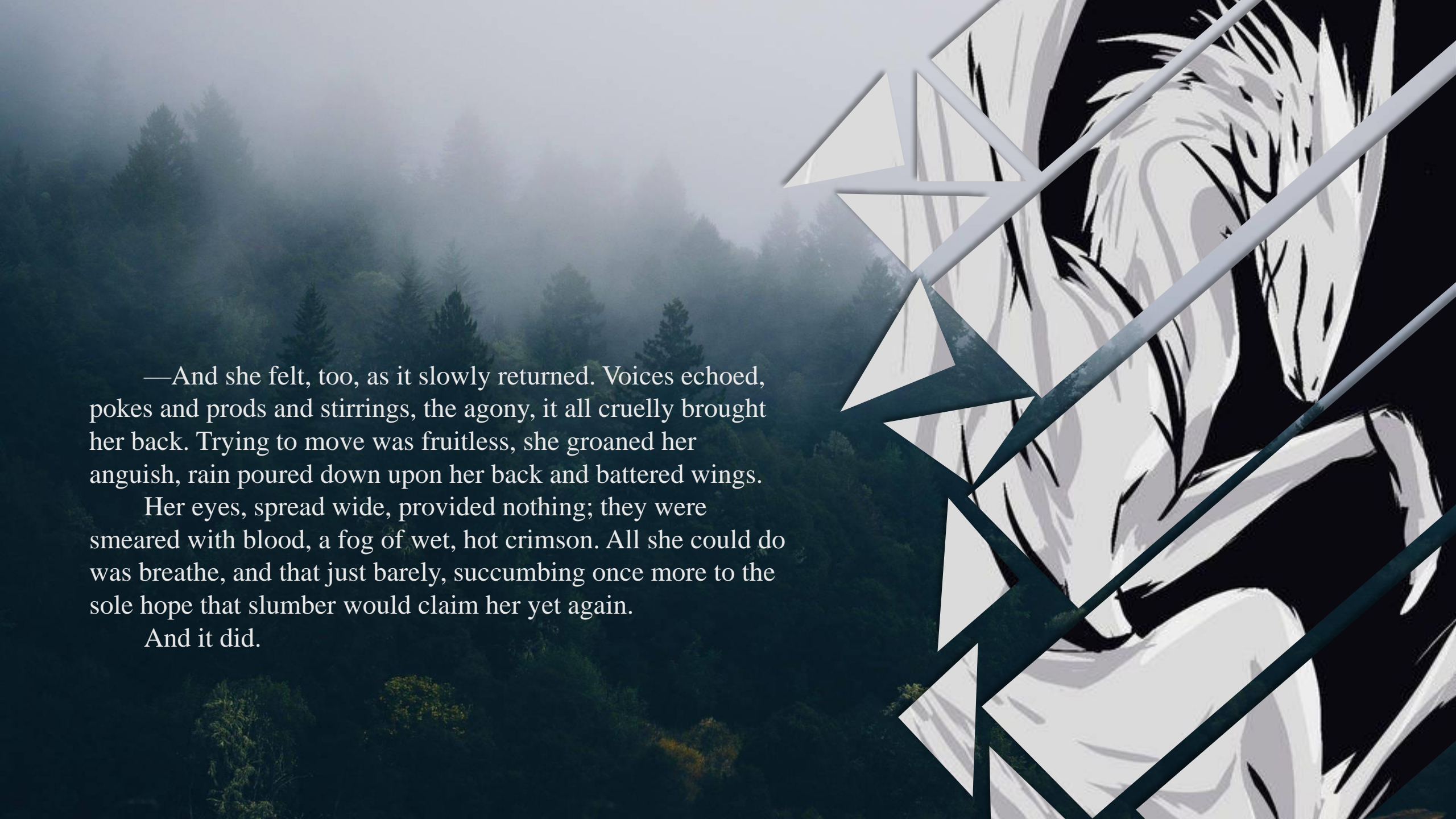
Whirled slowly, gently by. She fell at a soft angle.

The first impact was a crack, a sound like thunder—but distant, far away, she didn't care. Another, another; splintering trunks, thick firs, their bark and branches shattered, they would hardly stop her. Staggering, jagged shocks, surely she carved a path of devastation.

And then a final, brutal blow; she hit the ground and shook the earth.

She felt, keenly, as consciousness at last fully deserted her—





—And she felt, too, as it slowly returned. Voices echoed, pokes and prods and stirrings, the agony, it all cruelly brought her back. Trying to move was fruitless, she groaned her anguish, rain poured down upon her back and battered wings.

Her eyes, spread wide, provided nothing; they were smeared with blood, a fog of wet, hot crimson. All she could do was breathe, and that just barely, succumbing once more to the sole hope that slumber would claim her yet again.

And it did.

Birdsong rode the breeze, a gentle calling to her will's revival. Her eyes cracked open, washed of blood, but things were blurry. She dared not dedicate herself to waking.


The sun was out, casting shadows in the clearing in which she'd settled, a small meadow walled with firs and mighty pines. It was plain much time had passed. Hours, if not days.

Maybe days, because the pain had numbed; now only a pervading tenderness, almost torturous, throughout her delicate and aching frame. The breeze caressed her nose.

It carried the scent of food.

Her eyes focused in upon the platter, a large mound of all manner of grilled and boiled meats, certainly every kind, it had quite thoroughly materialized while she slept. She shifted herself to a more bearable position, sighing off a weight that seemed to grip her soul, and took a nibble. The stuff was good to eat, most definitely delicious.



The background of the image is a misty, dark green forest with tall evergreen trees. On the right side, there is a stylized, high-contrast illustration of a white anime character with spiky hair, wearing a white garment. The character is partially obscured by several thick, dark, diagonal lines that cross the image from the top right towards the bottom left.

She ate as much as she could and resigned herself to rest, keeping no track of time, not allowing herself to care or wonder after anything.

A great throbbing in her head had her often in and out of consciousness, but she was comfortable, waking only to the thunder up above or to the smells of food before her snout. Her descent—she would not admit it to herself that she had crashed—could have been an eternity ago, for all she was not able to pay deliberate attention.

From another sleep, long later, whispered voices roused her all at once and she dared not move. Those who spoke used a language she could not understand, maybe elven. She stayed stock-still by instinct—so thoroughly awake now that she began to notice things.

A canopy of green-beige canvas had been erected over her body, a tarp on tall stilts, covering her full length. Waning sunlight filtered through the misty air; it was evening, and raining again, though not pouring. The droplets were large enough to make a pleasant trickle-patter sound upon her tent, refreshing her ears, bringing life anew.

The breeze, however, brought a dreadful chill to her bare scales, and a shiver ran her spine, trembling briefly down her wings and tail. The voices fell silent—they knew she was awake. But she couldn't run or fight regardless. Or perhaps she could. Damp grass kneaded under her claws as seconds of strain crawled so slowly by.




Not a wing's length away, something moved to her left—a she-elf, walking calmly, each step set and steady. The slight wind tossed what strands of her raven-black hair were unbraided, and her face showed only confidence—kindness, even. She continued her stride until she sat down on the wet grass under the canopy, uncomfortably near.

“We had worried you would not recover,” said the she-elf in the common-tongue, the language that all knew. Her eye-contact was exacting, yet her bearing was soft and welcoming. “What is your name, my dear dragoness?”

She eyed the elf, deliberating. Perhaps this was the one who cared for her as she slept. “Mirnyth,” she answered, deciding upon trust. Her voice was hoarse.

The elf took a deep breath and twiddled some grass between her fingers. “A beautiful name,” she finally said, smiling warmly. “Quite becoming of you, I must say. You are the most breathtaking lady of the scale that I have ever had the honor to behold.”





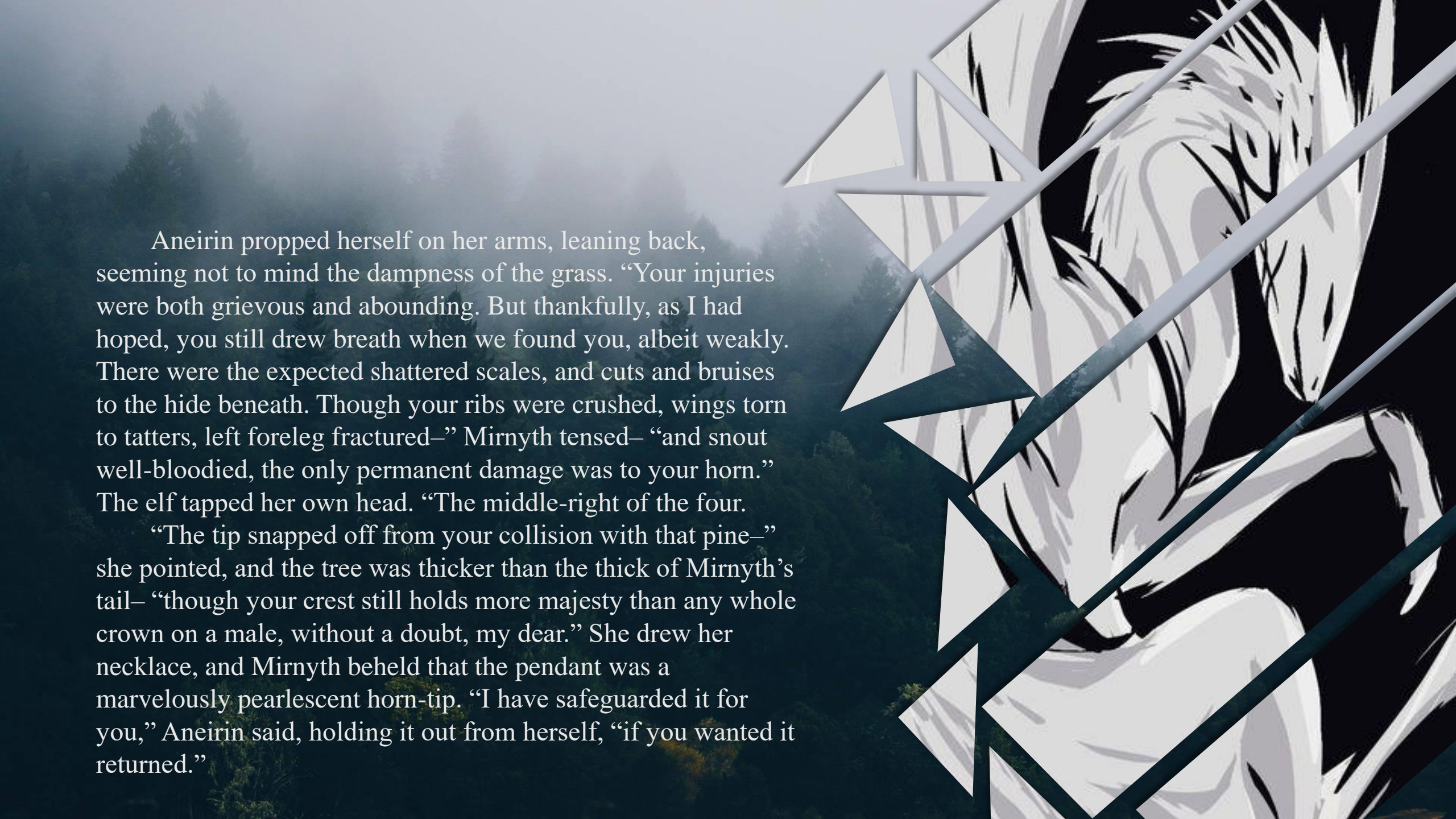
“Thank you,” Mirnyth said. She tried a tactful cough to ease the scratchiness that plagued her throat. “And what would your name be, she-elf?” she asked.

“Aneirin.”

Mirnyth shifted her weight, examining herself for injuries; craning her neck, she saw the seams sewn in innumerable spots upon her wings. “You have been caring for me,” she said, gaze returning to Aneirin.

“Others, too. They have departed.”

“Is there any permanent damage, Aneirin?” asked Mirnyth, recalling the pains she’d suffered. “Please speak honestly, I must know the truth.”



Aneirin propped herself on her arms, leaning back, seeming not to mind the dampness of the grass. “Your injuries were both grievous and abounding. But thankfully, as I had hoped, you still drew breath when we found you, albeit weakly. There were the expected shattered scales, and cuts and bruises to the hide beneath. Though your ribs were crushed, wings torn to tatters, left foreleg fractured—” Mirnyth tensed— “and snout well-bloodied, the only permanent damage was to your horn.” The elf tapped her own head. “The middle-right of the four.

“The tip snapped off from your collision with that pine—” she pointed, and the tree was thicker than the thick of Mirnyth’s tail— “though your crest still holds more majesty than any whole crown on a male, without a doubt, my dear.” She drew her necklace, and Mirnyth beheld that the pendant was a marvelously pearlescent horn-tip. “I have safeguarded it for you,” Aneirin said, holding it out from herself, “if you wanted it returned.”

Mirnyth looked from the horn fragment to the elf. “Though you could have hidden it, you choose to freely return it to me. Keep it as a token of my thanks, Aneirin.”

“Thank you Mirnyth.” She rose lightly to her feet, smiling again a most contagious smile.

Mirnyth shifted weight upon her folded forelegs. “How many days have passed?” she asked, somber despite her own weak grin.

“Twelve, dear.”


“That explains why I feel only soreness,” she mused.

Aneirin rolled on the balls of her feet. “Do you think you can manage to walk?” she asked. “My homestead is but a half-mile’s journey.”

“I can try,” said Mirnyth, mustering her strength to lift herself from the now-dead grass. With her left foreleg aching and pressed to her bruised chest, she gained her balance and awaited Aneirin’s lead.

The she-elf smiled still. “Off we go, then.”



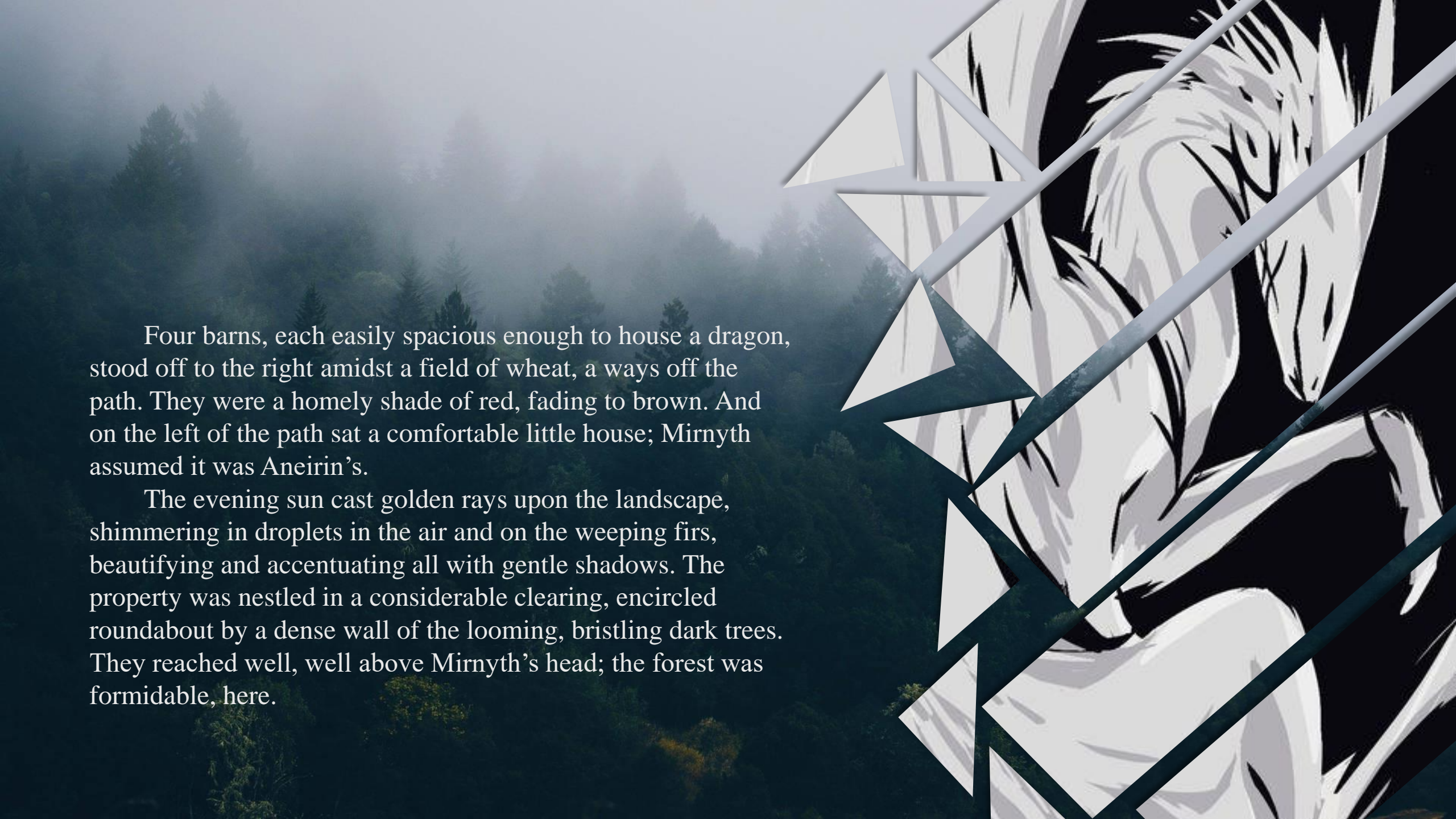
The background of the entire image is a misty, dark green forest with tall, thin trees. In the foreground, on the right side, is a stylized anime character with long, spiky white hair and a white face. The character is wearing a white garment and has a dark, shadowed area around their eyes. The character's body is partially obscured by several thick, dark blue diagonal lines that cross the image from the top right towards the bottom left.

Mirnyth was extremely short of breath, and limping was tedious, but they eventually reached the threshold of Aneirin's place of living.

"You should know," Aneirin said, opening a wide-set gate on silent hinges, "that there is another dragoness also living on my land, and two dragons besides. You need not mix with them if you don't wish to. They come and go as they please, so I don't know if they're here at the moment. If you want, when they are around, I can tell them to leave you alone as you recover."


"It may be best to avoid them," Mirnyth agreed, panting quietly.

"Very well. I'll show you to your place."



Four barns, each easily spacious enough to house a dragon, stood off to the right amidst a field of wheat, a ways off the path. They were a homely shade of red, fading to brown. And on the left of the path sat a comfortable little house; Mirnyth assumed it was Aneirin's.

The evening sun cast golden rays upon the landscape, shimmering in droplets in the air and on the weeping firs, beautifying and accentuating all with gentle shadows. The property was nestled in a considerable clearing, encircled roundabout by a dense wall of the looming, bristling dark trees. They reached well, well above Mirnyth's head; the forest was formidable, here.

The background of the image is a misty, dark green forest with tall evergreen trees. On the right side, there is a large, stylized, high-contrast illustration of an anime character with long, spiky white hair and a white garment. The character is partially obscured by several thick, dark, diagonal lines that cross the image from the top right towards the bottom left.

Following a well-trodden path through the wheat, Aneirin led Mirnyth to the largest barn, the one situated farthest down the row. “Please call this place your home as long as you need,” said Aneirin, looking up at Mirnyth. “I’ll make sure to keep you fed, and healing, and such, whatever as you need it.”

Mirnyth stalked halfway into the hay-filled place. Its massive sliding doors were quite accommodating. “Thank you, Aneirin, for everything.”

“Of course, my dear,” said the elf.

The shelter was both adequate and comfortable. Hay amassed in dense piles all about, making for a bed most excellent. Mirnyth slept and lazed away the days, at ease for all but a pervading chill in the air—a chill that reached her even past layers upon layers of straw, past the heat and warmth of summertime even with the barn doors closed.


So she learned to ignore it, content to lay submerged in straw or sit with the barn doors open, gazing out at thunderstorms with her tail strewn about the hay. Aneirin insisted on multiple occasions that Mirnyth did not have a fever—and that she was recovering nicely.

Mirnyth agreed. Except, try as she might, she could not quite remember anything.

Anything before the crash. As in, she remembered the moments just before the crash quite well, and everything thereafter when she was conscious. But before that? Her mind was unyielding, and her thoughts permitted nothing...

Again she shut the doors, settled back into the hay, and again she closed her eyes.



The background of the image is a misty, dark forest with tall evergreen trees. On the right side, there is a stylized, high-contrast illustration of a character with long, spiky white hair and a dark, possibly black, outfit. The character's face is partially obscured by the hair and the image's composition. The overall aesthetic is dark and atmospheric.

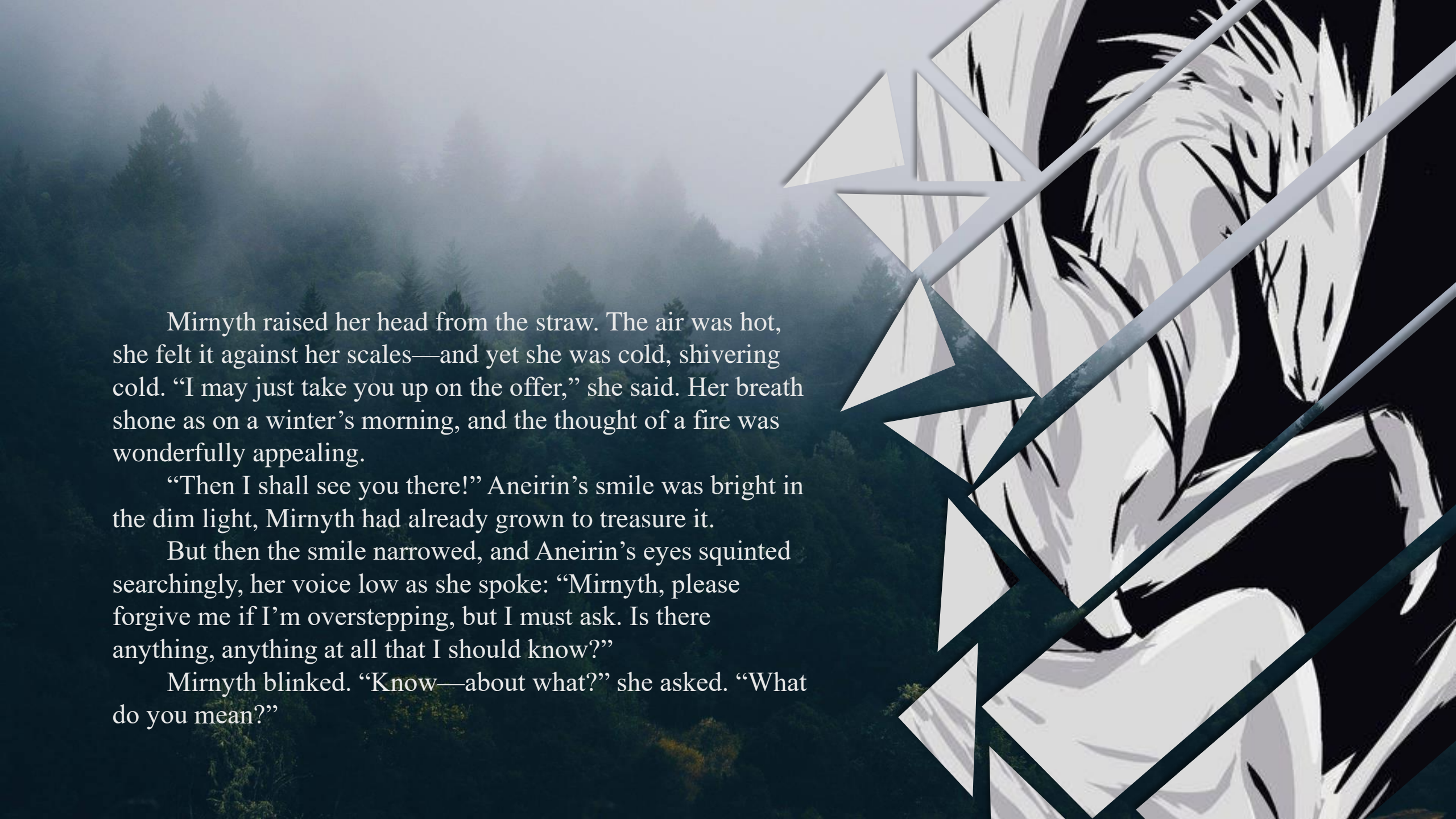
Days later, a knock came at the door: three short raps as was customary of Aneirin's touch. "Mirnyth, my dear?"

"Come in," Mirnyth answered. Her voice had returned fully to raspless elegance.

"How are you doing today?" Aneirin asked, cracking open the right door.

"I'm feeling fine. Much better. I thank you again for your hospitality."

"Think nothing of it. I come with news of my winged tenants' return; I've told them that this is your barn, and that you are in here but nothing else so as to keep your privacy." She stepped in and closed the door. "You are fully welcome, though, to come out and visit if you feel up to it, my dear. My groundsmen are fashioning up a great brush pile for a bonfire we're planning tomorrow tonight—if you would like to join us?" She smiled expectantly.

The background of the page is a composite image. On the left, there is a photograph of a dense forest with tall evergreen trees, partially obscured by a thick mist or fog. On the right side, there is a stylized, high-contrast illustration of an anime-style character with long, spiky white hair and a dark, possibly black, outfit. The character's face is partially visible, looking downwards. The entire right side of the image is overlaid with a network of thick, dark grey or black lines that form a complex, geometric pattern, resembling a stylized web or a series of overlapping planes.

Mirnyth raised her head from the straw. The air was hot, she felt it against her scales—and yet she was cold, shivering cold. “I may just take you up on the offer,” she said. Her breath shone as on a winter’s morning, and the thought of a fire was wonderfully appealing.

“Then I shall see you there!” Aneirin’s smile was bright in the dim light, Mirnyth had already grown to treasure it.

But then the smile narrowed, and Aneirin’s eyes squinted searchingly, her voice low as she spoke: “Mirnyth, please forgive me if I’m overstepping, but I must ask. Is there anything, anything at all that I should know?”

Mirnyth blinked. “Know—about what?” she asked. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, a capable flier such as yourself... How did you come to where you did, here in Erdimok? I’ve thought endlessly on it, and I can’t figure it out.”

Mirnyth shifted her wings beneath the hay, curling her tail against her side. “I... don’t quite know, Aneirin.” She pondered on it openly, meeting the elf’s eyes. “I don’t know.”

The answer seemed to satisfy. “I see, my dear.” Aneirin’s smile returned, if not a little solemnly. “If you ever wish or need to speak with me, I am always here. But I won’t keep you any longer.” She creaked open the door. “Rest peacefully, White One.”

Closing the door behind her, the elf left as gracefully as she had entered. Mirnyth herself eased back into dozing, mending, and from there into sound sleep. The large, warm bonfire danced freely throughout her dreams—and still she was cold, though it was a summer’s day.



The background of the image is a misty, dark green forest with tall evergreen trees. On the right side, there is a stylized, high-contrast illustration of an anime character with long, spiky white hair and a determined expression, wearing a white garment. The character is partially obscured by several thick, dark blue diagonal lines that cross the image from the top right towards the bottom left.

The Unifier's Tempest

Book One, Chapter One

By Jacob Clark

Thank You!
Any Questions?



Image Credits:

- *“Into the Darkness” by Rix-P*

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/1003317623211327507/>

*Used here in accordance with
Fair Use as defined in Section
107 of the U.S. Copyright Act*

- *“Chill 4k Foggy Dark Pine
Trees Wallpaper” by SSSS*

<https://wallpapers.com/wallpapers/chill-4k-foggy-dark-pine-trees-9qadbl855zzmeahr.html>

Free License

