

# The Awakening of a Siberian Wolf

Chapter 1, Subchapter 1



by QuantumWarrior

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## Date and Location Unknown

Jennifer woke up in an unfamiliar setting, trying to recall, put together what happened, where she was, trying to transition to being awake. As she opened her eyes, she saw over her a man dressed in a suit. She didn't quite know if she was awake yet.

The man spoke to her. "Hello, Mrs. Miller, how are you feeling?" His accent was foreign but familiar, although she couldn't identify it, or at least didn't want to. She noticed, but it didn't mean that much to her. In her fatigued state, such things didn't seem important.

Jennifer picked her body up to get a look around. And to not feel like someone was hovering over her. Her body was sore and weak, and she was cold. All this confirmed to her that she was awake. As she picked herself up, she ensured that the blanket over her was wrapped around her. But her mind wasn't focused on this. She was annoyed about what he had said. *Why do people insist on using the wrong name?*

Jennifer replied softly and nervously, "I prefer to be called Jennifer." This wasn't a typical insistence for her, and she regretted it as soon as she did it. Usually she could deal with the insistence of formality when it was appropriate. But today it bothered her more than normal. The need to answer caused her to act on this. Now she needed to try to fix this. "I am sorry. You may use my formal name if you need. The appropriate title is 'Ms.' though. I am not married, but 'Miss' is childish, disrespectful. 'Ms.' is safe."

However, the reaction to this wasn't as she expected. "I am unfamiliar with that convention. However, we can still be formal using given names, if you want. In our culture we use our first name and father's name in formal situations. I am Ivan Savvich. I have been assigned to work with you."

As she responded, Jennifer closed her eyes in thought, "In your culture?" She then turned back to face him, still speaking softly, "Where am I? What happened?"

"You don't remember? You are in a hospital in Yakutsk. We found you unconscious in the forest. The other individual with whom we found you claims your appearance scared away his attackers and you saved his life. I was hoping

you can tell me how and why you came here, and what you remember happening.”

As he spoke, Jennifer's mind returned to what had happened before she was here. She closed her eyes as she recalled. She remembered snow, trees, a man. He was injured, shot. They talked. Her memory seemed off. *Maybe it feels surreal because of the snow. Snow in June? Something is off.*

Jennifer responded, “I don't recognize that name. Where is this city?” She opened her eyes as she talked. Another thing occurred to her. *He has been assigned to work with me, asking about past events.* But he had already started to respond to her other question. *Is this guy some sort of police officer? I need to be careful.*

“Yakutsk is the capital of the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.” He paused, watching her reaction before continuing, “In the far east of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.”

Jennifer reacted upon hearing her current location, but didn't respond. She was thinking about what he told her. Something which became obvious with what he said. She couldn't really believe it. *Soviet ... Am I in the past? How is this possible.* She didn't know if to believe it. *I could ask for the date.* But she didn't say anything. She didn't know what to say.

When Jennifer didn't respond, Ivan continued by asking, “Do you remember coming to this nation?”

Jennifer shook her head slightly, more to brush off the question than to reply, and didn't speak. She couldn't figure out what to do with this. Her brain was working quickly, panicking. She could feel the sense of panic throughout her body. Her arm was shaking as she struggled to hold herself up. *What can I even say safely?*

Ivan noticed Jennifer's reaction, asked another question. “Jennifer Miller, will you please tell me what you do remember?”

Jennifer was still trying to process everything. She wanted to be left alone. She did, however, remember what she was supposed to say. *But, if I am in the past, I am stateless.* So, she responded, “I can't continue without a lawyer.”

“What do you need a lawyer for? You aren't on trial. I am not here to arrest you. You saved a man's life! I need your help as a witness.”

*Of course he would say something silly.* Jennifer didn't respond. If he didn't understand, she didn't know how to explain it to him.

“You are a hero! You risked your life to save another.”

Jennifer started to cry. *I am not a hero. I can't be a hero. He was there. I was supposed to get help. Everything else was missing. I didn't know where I was, that I wasn't where I was supposed to be. I didn't know what to do. I never know what to do.*

“Everything will be alright. I can help you. I just need you to talk to me.”

Jennifer continued to cry and didn't respond. She had fallen back to her bed by this point. After a while, Ivan got up to leave.

As he started to leave, however, several issues occurred to Jennifer. “Wait.” Her voice was still soft and weak. He turned back around. She was nervous. She didn't know what to say. *This was a bad idea.* She turned away from him, closing her eyes and focusing inward as she tried to talk, tried to find the words to explain what she wanted. Or at least to say something, to not feel alone in a hostile world.

“Is there something that you want?”

She struggled to speak and started to cry. She spoke, slowly, trying to grasp the words. “What is going to happen to me? I don't have anywhere to go. I know in the US, and it isn't unique there, that people in the country without permission, if caught, well, the detention centers are really bad. I don't want to go to prison; it does bad things to people and the culture is destructive. And I don't want to go back to the US.”

She paused, thinking, but not looking at Ivan. Her final thought wasn't based on his reaction to what she said. “I promise I won't speak out against your government.” She figured Ivan would know exactly what she meant, although wouldn't know the real reason she would be willing to make such a promise.

*Unless, of course, he is naive.*

“Can you tell me what happened?”

“What happened, it felt like a dream. I don't trust the accuracy of my memory. I need time to process.”

“Alright. For now you should remain here. You aren't yet fully recovered. We will determine what will happen by then. I still expect you to tell me what you remember, but we can wait a couple of days for your memory to recover. For now, you should rest. Later, we can have you talk to the man whose life you saved. Do you know our language?”

“No.”

“You will need to learn it. We can deal with that later.”

Ivan left, leaving Jennifer alone, giving her the opportunity to examine her environment and to think about her situation. Jennifer took the opportunity to look around.

The room was long and rectangular, with beds lining both of the long sides. Between each bed there was nightstand type table. There were larger tables with chairs between the two rows of beds. Both of the long sides had windows behind and above the beds. One of the shorter ends has windows as well. The ceiling had plenty of lights hanging down. Many of the beds were occupied and a few nurses were moving in, out, and around.

Jennifer didn't know what to make of it. The room didn't seem like what she expected from a modern hospital. *He did say this is Soviet, which would imply the past. ... Is this what hospitals used to be like?*

*I can't be in the past. How would I have gotten to the past? Maybe he is mistaken, using the older name. But this didn't make sense to her. Why would he use the old name? He didn't talk as if he were using an old name. He stated that we are in the Soviet Union. Well, he explicitly used the term Soviet. Soviet Russia. And the only way for that to be the case is if he doesn't know what happened in at least the past 20 years. A government agent would know what is the current government for which he works. Unless this is the past. ... Or an*

*alternate reality. Or this isn't real. Jennifer contemplated the possibilities.*

*What are the other possibilities? This could be a dream or a conspiracy. Jennifer tried to figure out if anyone she knew would want to create this environment as a joke. This doesn't feel like a dream. But Jennifer knew that was the most likely situation. If someone were to create this environment and put her in it, it would feel real, it would be more accurate, but nobody would do this. A pseudo-reality or alternate dimension? Is that simpler or more complex than time travel? ... I guess I will need to know the date. Why didn't I ask for the date?*

Jennifer was crying again by this time. She felt weak, tired, sore, scared and overwhelmed. *I am far from home and don't have access to people who can help me, whom I know. And I don't have a way back. ... These people, they see me and they see an American. They don't see me! Nobody ever does. They put people into these boxes, categories, and ... and don't understand. They don't understand complexity. ... And everyone is supposed to want to be American, but I don't.* She could feel the fear in her abdomen, and she felt cold. She picked up her hand and watched it shake. *I am not doing well.*

Ivan returned eventually with a woman. The woman looked Asian and was dressed as a doctor. Or a nurse. Maybe. Jennifer was guessing based on the circumstance. They brought food on a tray and put it in front of her. There was a glass with some sort of fruit juice, a bowl of soup, and some bread. Jennifer just stared at it.

Ivan spoke to try to fix this, “You need to eat to regain your strength.”

She knew that. She wasn't hungry. She felt more beyond that, as if her body had given up on trying to get food. But that isn't why she was hesitant. She didn't know what was in front of her and if she would like it.

She picked up the glass first and looked in it. “You put fruit in your fruit juice?”

“It is a compote.” Ivan paused for a bit before continuing, “It preserves the fruit.”

“Oh. Like mandarin oranges.”

“I don't understand. Isn't that a particular type of fruit.”

“It is, but I have always had it canned. It comes in fruit juice or syrup. We open the can, drain the juice, then eat the fruit with a fork.”

“Here we drink the juice.”

Jennifer put down the cup and turned her attention to the soup. “What is this?”

“Schi.” Jennifer didn't recognize the word. Ivan seemed to notice, so he explained, “Cabbage soup.”

Jennifer still didn't trust the food. She wasn't in the mood for trying new things. “What is in it?” But she knew this wouldn't give her the information she wanted, so she continued, “What spices, seasonings, herbs do you use?”

“I don't understand. It is just soup. It isn't spicy. We don't have many seasonings. I am sorry it isn't what you are accustomed to, but there isn't other food.” Ivan paused, then continued with, “Can you please try it before assuming you don't like it?”

Jen took a spoonful. She tried to avoid the leaves as she took out the other solid chunks. “This tastes ok.” She continued to eat.

Ivan was watching what she was doing and responded to this, “Do you not like cabbage?”

Jennifer stopped eating to talk to him. She turned to look at him before responding, “I don't know. I always find leaves awkward to eat. And lettuce seems like a filler in salads.”

“Cabbage isn't lettuce!” Ivan paused slightly and changed his tone again. “You should try to eat it, food isn't cheap here, we don't want to waste any.”

Jennifer wasn't happy with this comment. This isn't the first time she has had people unhappy about the way she eats. *I guess he doesn't know this. He just assumes this is the same thing typical of Americans. Or of people who come from other cultures in general.* Jennifer began to cry again. *Seriously, why do people think they scold people until they somehow act like they want? Why can't people realize that others ... have other needs I guess?*

Ivan began to talk to the woman with him. Jennifer didn't understand what they were talking about. She did notice however. She was very uncomfortable with the situation. This made it more difficult for her to speak. Her thoughts were focused on this discomfort, afraid they would scold her again. And on her sense of isolation.

Ivan eventually turned to face her. "If you want, if you don't think you can continue, we can finish this conversation later."

Jennifer looked up at him, but was still crying and couldn't speak. She eventually nodded slightly, figuring that it would be a while before she could converse again.

"When you are done eating, you can leave your dishes here." He points to the nightstand. "If you need anything, I will be in the building, and you can ask for me. The nurses won't understand, but they will know to get me, so I can translate." Then, to the woman he said, "Пойдём." Both individuals walked out of the room.

*Jennifer eventually stopped crying and started to eat again. Why can't my mother make things like this? Why does she insist on covering everything in tomato sauce, or soy sauce, or whatever spice concoction she decides to use? ... I guess this is just soup. They probably have their own way of ruining food.*

With Ivan gone, Jennifer was left alone again. Well, not completely alone as the nurses and other patients were still there. But she didn't know these people. So she felt exposed. Exposed and alone. She no longer had anyone in her life on whom she could rely. Not even family, as they didn't exist yet. Or at least she didn't exist yet. *I am nobody here, I have no legal identity, and they will punish me for this. They will punish me for things out of my control.* Jennifer started to cry again. *For being different. Because they don't understand. As people often do.*

Time passed as she thought. In her state, she didn't know for how much time. She felt that she needed to do something. But she knew that in her state she couldn't. *For now I have to let the doctors take care of me. Maybe tomorrow will be different. Maybe I will know more. Or maybe I will be back home.*



Jennifer eventually got up. One of the nurses came over to her, indicating that she should go back to her bed. “Лежите. Я схожу за Иваном.”

“I need to go to the bathroom.”

The nurse gave no indication that she understood. “Я не понимаю. Подождите, я схожу за Иваном, чтобы он перевёл.”

Jennifer tried to explain again, trying to use her past knowledge as a guide as to what may work and gesturing by holding her crotch as she spoke. “Bathroom, ... umm, toilet ...”

The nurse seemed to recognize something as she pointed towards the door. “Туалет? Вон там.” She grabbed Jennifer's arm as she held her other hand gesturing towards the door. “Я вам покажу.”

Jennifer froze upon the physical contact. The nurse seemed not to notice. When Jennifer didn't move with her, the nurse let go and continued the door. Jennifer followed. By the time Jennifer was on the toilet, she had started to cry again.

During this process and after coming back to her bed, her thought process continued.

*All my reference points are wrong now. Many sayings and terms no longer apply. Well, even the customs and language are different. But people will understand I come from somewhere else. References to history or technology, on the other hand, this would be problematic. I don't know if I can avoid this. How would I explain it?*

*And how will I be able to deal with life without technology? I guess I have been in many such situations. Especially when camping. And there is still technology here. I will learn how not to be dependent on such things.*

*More problematic is how women are expected to be domestic servants. And sexual objects. ... They won't force this on me. I will no longer be told to be someone I am not. I won't accept being treated as if I don't matter. ... I can't fight. The past is set. I can't change things, make things better. At least not on a global scale. Not that I ever knew how. I needed people with whom to work. But now there is no longer any possibility of being a part of the revolution. Things*

*can't get better than what I know.*

*I have to work on the local scale. I have to be like others? Jennifer was extremely bothered by this thought. Act as if only I matter, only my part of the world matters? But this **is** the problem which needs to be fixed. No one is free unless everyone is free. And I am not like everyone else. I don't want to be. But people think those who are different don't matter. ... But, maybe, I could still help people here. Learn what I need to so that I may fight later. If I have others to teach me and help me.*

It started to get dark outside before the nurse came with food again. The composition of the meal was similar, although the soup was different. Jennifer ate what she could.

Eventually the lights were turned off and the windows covered. Jennifer covered her head with her blanket in order to try to block out the remaining light and her surroundings. Eventually, she let herself slowly drift to sleep, despite the situation. *Perhaps this is all a dream, and tomorrow I will be home.*

Day 2

Date Unknown

Yakutsk, Siberia, USSR

The next day, Jennifer woke up after dawn to see that her situation hadn't changed. She was less tired, but still scared. She didn't desire to wake up, but she also didn't want to drift back to sleep. She tried to focus her thoughts on her dream from the previous night, although her memory kept switching back to the events of the previous day.

*The goddess, she told me, "You know this is wrong, yet you remain stuck. Let me show you a way out." She took me to the clearing. The same one in which I was yesterday. The one which took me to the past.*

*I am still here? How am I still here? Am I actually awake? ... If something traumatic happened, maybe my memories are messed up. I am interpreting this as the past. But look at the outfits of the nurses! This isn't what it should be, right?*

*The goddess told me the clearing was a portal to other places. It was connected,*

*but being inobvious it didn't have a fixed connection. She told me if I looked correctly I could see other realms, other reflections in this place. There were three planes, each with its spirit, in which I found myself this way. Three goddesses, each which gave me a pendent. The same pendent.*

*I could go anywhere, imagine anything. So I walked through the clearing and found myself in the past, in the Soviet Union. I was actually in the past! This is exciting. Finally imagining things beyond my typical limits. ... No, this is real. I am actually in the past. In an enemy state, with no identity, no friends or family. How can this be real?*

*I was lost, following my brother. We needed help. We heard voices in the distance, then gunshots. By the time I got to the clearing, my brother was gone. I think I saw several people. Four, maybe. They left when they saw me. They may have shot at me when they were leaving. I think they were carrying someone. Someone not wearing a coat.*

*When they left I saw there were two people on the ground whom had been shot. One was dead, a woman, Asian probably. The other was injured, a man. I spoke to him. I was shaking. He had a strong accent. He said something which I didn't understand. I told him this. I told him I needed to stop the bleeding, and that I was lost. He told me there was a city about an hour away to the east. That I should take his coat and hat and leave him there. I didn't think I could make it. I asked him for something to stop the bleeding. He suggested his belt. I told him it would be better to take the woman's coat, so he would survive as well. He wasn't happy with this. I fell unconscious sometime after that.*

*I think there was a wolf in the clearing. ... Was that the dream or the event? It must have been the dream.*

Some time after Jennifer had awoken, but still early in the day, a nurse came over with a tray of food. There was porridge, milk, and tea. As the nurse was placing the tray down, Jennifer tried to talk, but struggled to find the words.

Eventually she said something, just to indicate that she wanted to talk. "Umm ..."

"Da?"

*This isn't going to work.* She tried to communicate anyway. She indicated what she wanted with gestures before speaking, showing the process of drawing by writing on one hand with the other. “May I get paper and pencils?”

The nurse looked confused. “Извините. Я не понимаю.... Хотите, что я схожу за Иваном?” She pointed towards the door as she talked.

Jennifer didn't understand and was uncertain about what to say or do. Frustrated, she started to cry again and gave up trying to communicate.

The nurse responded in a comforting voice, directing Jennifer's attention to the food in front of her. “Ешьте. Я схожу за Иваном.” The nurse then left Jennifer alone. She went to another nurse and told her something before leaving through the door.

Shortly after the nurse had left, she returned with Ivan, who proceeded to approach Jennifer, bringing over a chair to sit down beside her. The nurse left them alone as she went to monitor the other patients.

Ivan began the conversation. “What is it that you want?”

“I would like to have paper and pencils so that I can write and draw in order to organize my thoughts and to have something to do.”

“Are you going to write out what happened?”

“No, that won't work. Those thoughts would be too difficult to get out in this manner. I would like draw out my dreams.”

“How would this help to organize your thoughts? Dreams aren't real.”

“Dreams come from fragments of memories, constructed when the brain processes memories. And from them I can get an interesting story, providing a distraction and helping to prevent me from being overwhelmed. Besides, people often use fiction to understand fact.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“For instance, many games are constructed as some form of simulation to learn

skills or make decisions. Fiction in writing and sometimes TV is often used to develop understandings of the society in which we live, even if it doesn't appear directly relevant. Myths and legends are used to develop a culture and the ethics of the culture. The supernatural provides a means for many to understand and appreciate human instinct and the complex processes which govern our world. These are a large part of how many experience the world.”

“Do you seriously believe in the supernatural? These are just stories told by primitive people who don't know any better.”

“Reality isn't so simple. Besides, if you were religious, you would be defensive, insisting the 'supernatural' can't be explained physically.”

“Are you religious or superstitious?”

“Neither, although this isn't really something I should discuss.”

“Fine. Will you show me your drawings?”

“I won't be able to stop you from seeing them.”

“Alright. I will get this for you.” Ivan got up and walked out of the room.

Later, while Jennifer was eating her breakfast, she reviewed the conversation in her mind. *I still can't avoid saying too much. But he doesn't seem to be pushing too hard. ... He is patient and wants accurate information. He knows that I am under his power and am not going anywhere. Everything he wants will come out eventually. He is the only one with whom I can communicate here. Every conversation must go through him and if I need to talk with someone it must be him. ... Well, him or the man I met in the clearing. He spoke to me in English too.*

She also realized that she still hadn't asked for the date. *Well, he will be back. I can ask later.*

That morning, one of the other patients walked up to Jennifer and tried to talk to her. Jennifer didn't understand what this woman was saying. She diverted her eyes from the woman and tried to ignore her. This didn't make the woman go away.

Jennifer's frustration with the situation continued to grow. She growled. More calmly, she eventually tried to talk. "I can't understand you. Will you please just leave?"

When this didn't work, she sighed and put her hands over her face. Some other patients came up to try to talk to this woman. The situation overwhelmed Jennifer, and she eventually started to cry again. Eventually, one of the nurses came and broke up the conversation, and pulled the curtain partially around her bed.

Ivan returned when lunch was served. With him he brought the same Asian woman as he had the previous day, as well as a clipboard. The woman had a stethoscope around her neck and was holding a clipboard. She called over one of the nurses, who brought food and other equipment. The nurse put the food on the nightstand before retrieving the other equipment as Ivan directed Jennifer's attention to other topics.

Ivan was standing, holding the clipboard as he talked to Jennifer. "This is Tamara Ayaalovna. She is one of the doctors here." He gestured, indicating that he was referring to the woman with the clipboard. "I need you to cooperate with her as she does a medical exam. We need to check your health, to make sure you have no infection. We have been delayed due to your poor mental state and your distrust in the translator. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Good." Ivan indicated to the doctor that Jennifer was ready, and she began the examination, asking many questions and verbally guiding her through the process. Jennifer tried to cooperate, although it was very uncomfortable. The process didn't seem too unusual to Jennifer, besides the awkwardness of needing to use a translator, although it was clear that the technology was behind what she was accustomed to. Without any knowledge of the history of the technology, Jennifer couldn't tell by how much. At the end, Jennifer was told what symptoms she should alert the doctor to if she experiences.

After the doctor had finished, she and the nurse left Jennifer, and Ivan directed Jennifer's attention to what he was holding. "I brought you pens, pencils and paper as you asked."

“Thanks.” Jennifer paused before she brought up something else which she felt she needed. “I would like to go for a walk.”

“You haven't yet recovered.”

“Yes, but unless there is too much strain on the body, exercise helps, especially for mental issues.”

“You are not to go outside.”

“I just need someone to take me around the building, in permitted areas, so that I can use my legs.”

Ivan walked to the doctor and talked with her before returning to Jennifer. “This will be permitted, but not for long. But you need to eat first, while your food is still hot. I will come to get you later.” Ivan left Jennifer alone to eat.

Ivan came back sometime after Jennifer was done eating. Still standing, he asked, “You wanted to go for a walk?”

“Yes.” Jennifer got up. “I have no idea where to go, where I am allowed to go, and I don't want to get in the way. It is probably best if you lead.”

“Wait, do you want me in front?”

“Huh? No, I think it is side by side, without physical contact. I think that is how people normally walk together, unless it is too narrow. You can go behind then, if this is necessary.”

They left the room and walked a bit down a corridor before Jennifer walked over to a window and stared outside.

“We can't go outside.”

Jennifer responded casually and somewhat distantly, turning only slightly to look at Ivan. “I am just watching the snow.”

“It does snow here in September. It is something which we learn to accept.”

When Jennifer continued to speak, she wasn't looking at him at all, and was instead distant and deep in thought. "When I was young I used to like to play in the snow. My brother and I used to build snow forts, trails, and hills for sledding. ... I wanted to go to Alaska, with the snow and the wolves, but my parents always planned vacations somewhere warm."

"Here you can't do that. It will get too cold and too dangerous to be outside for long."

Jennifer turned to face Ivan when he spoke, but not looking at him when she responded. Her voice was still distant. "I almost froze to death."

"Yes."

"How did you even find us? ... You knew he was there, didn't you? If I hadn't found him, I would have died in the forest."

Ivan eventually decided to take the opportunity to directly address a concern. "It would be inadvisable to try to leave. If the guards don't stop you, you will probably freeze in the cold."

The suggestion, however, shocked Jennifer, as this wasn't even a possibility she had considered. She turned around abruptly before responding, looking very confused. "Huh?"

"You aren't planning on running away?"

"What? Why would I run? I have nowhere to go. I don't speak the language, and even if I did, my accent would be obvious. Here there is food and shelter. ... And, you haven't yet sent me to prison, or tried to physically restrain me, chemically restrain me, or harass me to get the information I want. You let me take my time to tell you what is appropriate. If I tried to escape, this would change and my situation would only get worse."

"Chemically restrain?"

"Using drugs to make someone tired or submissive."



They started to walk again. Soon after, however, Jennifer decided to voice her thoughts. “It is fine if you need to send me back to the US. I don't know if I would be able to survive, and I doubt I would be able to be fully human, but I understand if you don't want me and that I am not the only person whose needs matter.”

“I don't understand. If you are here seeking asylum, why would you be sent back?”

“The US will frequently deport many people, people from migrant waves, even if their lives would be in danger if they returned home.” Jennifer paused before continuing. “Besides, it isn't like that.” She continued, more distant and noticeably struggling to find the words. “Or, at least I don't think it is like that. It is just, well, everything is wrong. My morality, definition of freedom, needs, conceptions, even my sense of identity, ... it feels like I am forced into this culture, told it is the best or only option. Like I am someone, and am told to be someone else.” Jennifer was crying by the end and was unable to continue.

“Do you want to go back to your bed?”

Unable to speak, Jennifer nodded in response.

Later, after recovering some, Jennifer picked up a sheet of paper and a pencil and tried to record her thoughts. As she expected, she couldn't put any of her thoughts on paper, and instead drew random shapes on the page.

Her thoughts returned to her dream. She began to map this out, starting with simple shapes and notes, from the beginning. *The goddess came to me in my childhood house and took me to the clearing. My imagination was taken out of some of my typical constrains.*

She continued her thoughts to the clearing, focusing on the clearing in her dream. *She told me to look, imagine and perceive the other planes of existence connected to our own at the clearing. The goddess then became three different people, each in their own alternative surroundings, different from but co-located with the clearing.* She drew out and wrote out each of these encounters.

*The first goddess was Athena, or Minerva by her Roman name. As a goddess of wisdom, she resided at a university, in this case at one of the plazas. She*

*transformed from a bird, evoking the imagery of an angel while remaining true to her original conception.*

*“Greetings, my child. You know who I am. Sit down besides me. We have much to discuss.” She indicated towards one of the benches, sitting down and placing her spear and shield on the opposite side of her from me.*

*I sat down next to her. “You aren't my mother.”*

*“It is an expression. You know this.”*

*“That isn't what I mean. You are a virgin. I am a virgin. Not all women are mothers, and this is important. Being a mother isn't the only role for a woman and isn't a role for all women. Being female means being more connected, and while for many this may mean raising families, for others it may mean other things. Like fighting to defend oneself and one's society. Or studying, learning and teaching. Or developing art, expressing concepts and explaining complexities in intricate ways. Or even just finding creative ways to do what one must. Besides the divisions between genders aren't sharp.”*

*“You are my child in the sense that I am your mentor and symbolize your personality archetype. I know you have often felt lost. I am here to ensure that you retain a guide in your coming journey, one true to who you are.” She indicated the other goddess, which I had followed before. “This woman will serve as my avatar. She will help guide you in your dreams.” The avatar was nondescript, a shadow in the typical dream form, representing a person rather than being one.*

*“I have a gift for you.” Athena held up a pendent. “This artifact holds great power.” She put the pendent around my neck and over my heart. “It will unlock your power and your access to this gateway.”*

*I was back in the clearing, alone, before I wandered into the next scene.*

*I was in the form of a wolf as I wandered around and found a great tree, the Tree of Life. Here it had the name Aal Luuk Mas. I think. It was strange, but I guess dreams are like that. I could feel the tree radiated with the essence of life, and every memory I have had of being in nature and being close to nature came to mind.*

*I approached the tree and retook human form, although I was still dressed as a wolf. A goddess emerged from the tree. She had large breasts and long hair. She was a Mother Earth figure, but gave her name as An Alay Khotun. Maybe. Again, dreams are strange.*

*“This isn't a name with which I am familiar.”*

*“That doesn't matter. Different peoples have different names and conceptions. Here I have one name and role, elsewhere I have another. You know this.”*

*“I can sense the clearing here. Is this place coexistent?”*

*“I did call you to the clearing, and through there, here. ... This isn't the clearing, but you are connected to that place. And the people who call that region their home, they shape what you see here.”*

*She continued, “Look, I know why you are here. You have chosen a difficult path. You prefer to take the path given to you by the spirits rather than the one presented by your upbringing. I have provided many heroes before you with help on their journeys. And yours won't be an easy one.”*

*“I am not a hero. I am just a girl.”*

*“You aren't undeserving. ... Here.” She pulled up a pendent, the pendent, from the water under the roots of the tree. I took it. “This will take you where you need to go.”*

*I was back in the clearing again, but only temporarily.*

*I came to a hut in the forest. The hut was standing on large chicken legs and surrounded by skulls. A woman flew down in a large bowl or cup, using a large club as a rudder. The design was meant to be reminiscent of a mortar and pedestal. She was old and skinny, with a large nose. Her name was Baba Yaga.*

*She spoke to me. “Did you come seek me out of your own will, or were you told to come?”*

*“I don't know. I think it was recommended to me that I come, but not required.*

*And I wasn't told what I would find, only to explore. I don't know of you and didn't come for you."*

*"You never can give an either / or answer, can you?"*

*"If the assumptions which lead to the choices offered were valid, the criticism would make sense. But like many cases, false assumptions are made. In this case, it was assumed that I knew what I sought, that it was either my own conscious desire or the will of another rather than instinct or nature, and to some extent, the existence of free will."*

*"Your insight is valid." She paused, looking at me. "But you are displeased by my physical appearance."*

*"It is just, well, you resemble the stereotypical witch, designed to denigrate women and traditional pagan society and especially female knowledge by a patriarchal, Christian elite. ... To construct a villain, to destroy fluid thinking, complexity, uncertainty. To make people submissive and obedient."*

*"This from the one who often imagines herself as an angel?" I appeared before her with wings in a white dress. "Like nature often is, I may not be nice, and I am often cruel, but I am not the villain of your story."*

*She continued to speak, but her tone changed. "You seek to regain your will, your identity, your soul. I will help you, but know that the path won't be easy. Like many, your desires are often mixed with your fears. You will be asked to do many things which you may not understand. And you shall take the form of those whom you had been told are your enemy." As she said this, my appearance changed, taking the form of a soldier.*

*"For now I will ask you to do something with which you often struggle. Take this pendent and take the time to rest." She handed me the pendent. "You will need this if you are to accomplish what will be requested of you."*

*As we were leaving each other, I responded with an unrelated question. "Why didn't you take me into your house?"*

*"Because I don't wish for you to stink up my house with your Russian scent."*

*Then I was back in the clearing. There was a wolf and the avatar, but I didn't have the pendent. I think ... it no longer existed in its original form.*

Her mind focusing back to the clearing, Jennifer started to map and sketch out what she remembered there, both from the dream and from the previous day. She drew what she remembered of the details of the three figures in their homes. She drew the wolf, the goddess, and the pendent. And she drew a map of the events of the previous day. She constantly struggled with the limits in details she remembered, creating her own details for some aspects, while retaining notes and imprecise drawings for others. As the day continued, she switched from the latter technique to the former, constructing new sketches and detailed drawings of the figures from her dreams.

Her whole afternoon, however, didn't completely consist of drawing and writing. She would often stop and just think. And many of the drawings remained incomplete at the end of the day.

Day 3

Date Unknown

Yakutsk, Siberia, USSR

On the third day, in the middle of the day, Ivan returned. "The doctor said the man you saved is well enough for you to talk. I will take you to him." There was a pause before he continued. "Do you want to go?" Jennifer nodded and slowly got up.

Ivan led her to another room, similar to although smaller than the room in which Jennifer was previously, to a bed with a young man with an injured leg. While Jennifer was very uncertain, she could believe that this was the same individual whom she met in the clearing. Ivan brought over a stool for Jennifer to sit on. She sat down. "Do you want some time alone?" Jennifer nodded, so he pulled the curtain around the bed with himself on the other side, leaving the two of them alone. She saw his shadow and heard his footsteps move away from the curtain.

Jennifer didn't start talking. She had trouble putting together her thoughts into words and was still afraid to speak. So the man began, "Thank you for helping me in the clearing." He had the same accent as Ivan, although Jennifer didn't notice.

Jennifer still had trouble responding. She started to cry.

He continued to speak, reacting to her response. "I am sorry for putting you in danger. I didn't mean to get you involved." He put her hand on her to try to comfort her. This only made her more uncomfortable. He continued to speak, "Hey, we will figure this out."

After a while he withdrew his hand. He asked, "Is there something you wanted to say?"

She nodded slightly, but didn't speak.

"I can wait. I can't really go anywhere right now, so we have plenty of time, and I could use the company."

It took some time before Jennifer was finally able to ask her question. "What is the date?"

"The 30th of September."

"What is the year?"

"You don't know the year?"

There was a pause as Jennifer didn't directly answer. Eventually the man answered the original question, "One thousand nine hundred fifty six."

There was a long pause as Jennifer processed this information. *If this is real, then there is a time displacement.*

Jennifer eventually started to talk again. "I don't know what to tell them ... about how I came here and what happened."

"Why don't you tell them the truth?"

"Because the truth isn't believable. Besides, it is too dangerous. Nobody can know."

“I don't understand. Are you in trouble?”

“If the date you told me is correct, then I am from the future. Before I came to the clearing it was June 2013.”

The man paused for a little to think about this. He asked, “Do you have anything which could prove this?”

“What! No. And it doesn't matter anyway. I can't be from the future. They can't know this. That it the point.” Jennifer turned away and closed her eyes as she thought about something which occurred to her. “Hmm, well maybe. If you had access to what I had. I had my passport. My passport isn't the new version with a transponder, but it does have a lot of modern security features. Holograms, no foil, I think. Something difficult to forge.”

“Holograms?”

“An image which looks different from different angles. I think it is supposed to mean a three dimensional image encoded on a two dimensional surface. In science fiction, it is a 3D image projected into real space, but in reality they are just flat images designed to look 3D. Or a foil image used to make documents difficult to forge. Other tricks are watermarks – faint images which show up when copied ... electronically copied, micro print – very small text, and images which appear under ultraviolet light. I don't know when these were developed.” Jennifer turned back to face the man after explaining.

“What about a transponder?”

“... I am sorry, I can't talk about that.”

“Did you have anything else?”

“I guess my clothes would have been a mix of cotton and spandex. Cotton is old and plant-based, but spandex is synthetic. It is stretchy and makes the clothes slightly stretchy. I think I left everything else in the car. Hopefully that didn't go through time as well.”

“What about what you know of future events.”

“I can't talk about that. Besides, it won't prove anything until it happens. It doesn't matter anyway. You don't need to believe this.”

“Are you afraid of changing the future?”

“This doesn't matter. They can't know I am from the future. Knowledge is power and ... it isn't my right to intervene. This doesn't belong to any of us.”

“Fine. Let's assume this is true. How did you get here?”

“I don't know.”

“You don't have a time machine?”

“No. I just was there, then we got lost ... now I am here.”

“But you believe this is real?”

“This is what I remember.”

“Do you think that you are crazy?”

“If I am crazy, or rather if they believe I am crazy, they will lock me up, deny me the right to be a part of society. I won't be allowed to contribute, or possibly be treated like slave labor. I wouldn't be considered human, wouldn't be given control of myself, wouldn't be considered legitimate. And in the 50s, the mentally ill would have been tortured. Mentally and physically.”

“You are overstating things. This isn't what the situation is like. Mental hospitals are there to help those who need it.” What he stated agitated Jennifer as she had been exposed to this type of naiveté before. The man clearly picked up on her discomfort as he continued, “Hey, whatever you believe, you aren't going to be put in this type of situation. ”

Jennifer just shook her her head and put her head down into her hands. She couldn't think of anything in the moment to begin to make him understand, and this wasn't a good time to get into a debate.

There was a pause in the conversation as the man took the time to process this



information. He eventually responded, “When I was there in the clearing, I saw the sky open up and you appeared from nowhere. I think that is why those trying to kill me left.” Jen turned to look at him. He continued, “Something unusual definitely happened.”

*So there is a consistency. How does this help me?*

He did continue, trying to offer her a suggestion, “If you want to hide your origin and ensure your safety, why don't you just say you are a defector.”

“But I am not.”

“Do you not think that an American would defect?”

“I don't have any information I can offer. ... And I am not a spy. I don't have the knowledge to appear as a spy. Or the body. This would be obvious. ...”

“This doesn't make sense! You need to prove you aren't a spy. Why would you need to prove that you are? The reason you would be in danger from the authorities is because you may be a spy.”

“No, people aren't allowed to enter because they aren't valued. Wanting to migrate isn't reason enough to be allowed. People who then migrate without permission are then undocumented, considered illegal. The US ... I guess other countries are kept poor and even destroyed, keeping the workforce subservient. Domestically, unskilled labor by migrants is also temporary. So labor can be exploited. ... They may right now not trust my intentions for one reason, but it isn't the only possibility.”

There was a pause before he spoke again. “You want to lie about your origin, but don't want to give false information.”

“I can't tell them about my origin. And, if I lie about important things for them, they will be acting on incorrect information. ... I am not the only person involved. This isn't just about protecting me. There are others too.”

“Do you know anything which could be of help but could be explainable by access to classified information?”

“I can't talk about the future! Besides, I haven't memorized all the cold war declassified documents. People don't know everything, they know pieces.” Jennifer put her head down and her hands on her head in frustration.

There was a slight pause before the man responded quietly and calmly, “If you need to lie, you need to accept that you will lie. Presumably the risks are greater if you tell the truth. And they can't tell what you are thinking, they don't know you, they won't immediately figure you out. Don't be too specific, stay as close to the truth as possible, and they will fill in the details for themselves. And tell them what they want to believe. They want to believe you are a spy, so they will believe this even if you can't prove this. So, let us put this together. Why were you in the clearing?”

“I was lost. I heard voices, so I went in that direction, hoping someone could help me.”

“How did you get to the forest?”

“I don't know. There was a wormhole or something. ... But I can't tell them that. ... I could have gotten there by ground or from the sky. But from the sky I don't have a parachute or a vehicle.”

“If you were lost, it would be unlikely to find the same location. Your gear may just be lost, or taken by criminals. From the ground you would have had to come a long distance unless you had been in this city. An American would be out of place here. You would have needed to be hidden somewhere.”

“An analyst, someone working on signal intelligence maybe.”

“Perhaps. Or you could have been a prisoner of the criminals.”

“I don't know anything about the criminals or any potential American spies here.”

“So, when you fell, you forgot your contact here. ”

Jennifer thought for a bit. “I got into a fight. I was forced out with the wrong gear. Perhaps I was the technician and was either sexually assaulted or disagreed with their politics.”

“You don't think that is too complicated?”

“It is far less complicated, or at least far more believable than me being a spy. I can't do the social stuff, but the numbers I can, so I wouldn't be a spy or a secretary. But there used to be these women who did the calculations. I have been trained in physics, so can do calculations. I don't have a husband so I need a job, but most jobs wouldn't hire women. And I can't deal with the concept of working for a private for profit corporation, so a government job would make sense. ... Sexual assault would be common in the 50s since men believe they own womens' bodies. Also, I frequently disagree with Americans on political issues, and there were the communist witch hunts in the 50s. This would explain why I don't know anything and why I don't have the right supplies, as well as why I don't trust the US. Besides, the Soviet authorities would be happy to see someone fleeing from the 'backwards American society.' ”

“You have thought about this before.”

“I disagree with Americans a lot. And I imagine things often.”

“Well, here men and women are equal. And people have the right to have a job. It is in the constitution.”

“I don't think it is.”

“The Soviet constitution.”

“Oh, right.”

“We are a modern state. We do have a constitution which governs the state. You know this, right?”

“Right, we aren't home. I need to be careful about my expectation of references.” Jennifer turned her mind back into her thoughts, closing her eyes as she continued to explain. “In the US, it is rare for people to acknowledge positive rights as required. Food, housing, health care, ... internal inequalities within the system aren't acknowledged in capitalist mentality. But socialist philosophy has commonly showed all the inherent, non-obvious inequalities and power structures. It would make sense to include the positive rights when constructing

a communist state.”

Jennifer paused, thought, before she continued, “Well, I guess the concept of a Soviet constitution had been mentioned. I had always been taught that the Soviet Union was a totalitarian state. A dictatorship. There is one person put in charge and he controlled everything. This is how communism is defined in the US. I guess they mentioned a constitution with rights, but ... these rights were second to the state's wishes. To state security.”

The man continued the conversation in a friendly tone. “Do you wish to practice what you will say with me?”

Jennifer was uncomfortable with this suggestion. *I know I need to do this. Why does this always feel wrong?* “There isn't going to be another opportunity to do this before he interviews me, is there?”

“Probably not.”

Jennifer thought for a bit. “Can we go over what he may ask and what I need to say before we go through the roleplaying?”

“We can do whatever makes you comfortable within our available time.”

They proceeded to go over this for some time. When they were done, the man told Jennifer to open the curtain. Upon doing this, Ivan came to take Jennifer back to her bed. He then left her to her thoughts.

Day 4

1 October 1956

Yakutsk, Siberia, USSR

On the fourth day, Ivan returned sometime after breakfast. He took over a stool and sat down. Then he took out a notebook and a pen. “I need to take your statement. Can we proceed now?”

Jennifer knew this was going to happen at some point. But she was scared, especially considering that she knew she had to lie, which she didn't want to and didn't think she could, and her understanding of typical police interactions. She felt she should at least try to get more support. “I should have a lawyer present.”

“This doesn't make sense given the current situation. I am the individual who has been assigned to work with you and help you with what you need.”

“Ok. You have been trying to be non-belligerent and patient. It would probably be best to get this over with. It won't get any easier later, and this is the only way for anything decision to be made.”

“You shouldn't be nervous. I am just going to ask routine questions. If you spoke with a lawyer you would need to answer them anyway.”

“That isn't how people work. This discussion will determine my fate. It will be stressful no matter what.” There was a pause in the conversation. Jennifer breathed in and out deeply. She eventually added, “But I am willing to continue.”

“Good. Let's begin with the basics.” He opened his notebook and got ready to write. “Name?”

“Jennifer Miller”

“Date of birth?”

Jennifer had done the calculation before, but was still uncertain, and scared. She hated to lie and was embarrassed to even try. Her discomfort was obvious. *I need to do this. There is no other choice. This is the believable answer.* But her uncertainty made her doubt her answer. “Um ... April 12th, 1931?”

Ivan was almost laughing at this. “You are a terrible liar.”

*What else am I supposed to say?* Jennifer responded noticeably stronger, insistent, although still frightened. “I am 25 years old. I was born in April, April 12th. There isn't another possibility.”

She paused, panicking, trying to figure out what to say. *If I can't even get him to believe something which needs to be true, how am I going to get him to believe anything about me?* Jennifer eventually continued weakly, pleading with him to believe her. “You know this age is at least close to correct, based on physical appearance and medical exams. My birthday is written on my passport. I know

you have it because you have my name.”

“What you refer to as your passport isn't real. It doesn't look anything like American passports, and it lists your birthday as the 12th of April in 1988. Since it is currently 1956, this wouldn't even be possible.”

“I am sorry. I don't have anything else. You have my only possessions here.” *I think I am supposed to come up with some excuse for why it is fake. We had a game, a LARP, futuristic like Shadowrun, maybe.* But Jennifer didn't say anything else before Ivan moved on.

“Alright. Let's move on. Can you tell me your current residence?”

“I don't currently have one.” She knew her answer wasn't what he wanted, but it was technically true and avoided the question. She figured that she should try to answer the question properly. She went to try to say something but didn't know what to say. *I have no home. How can I even expect that I could convince him I belong here.* The situation became too overwhelming and Jennifer started to cry, burrowing her head in her hands.

“Can you at least tell me your citizenship? You are American, right?”

She recited, weakly, but almost methodically, “I was born and raised in the US. My parents were born and raised in the US. My grandparents were ...” Jennifer paused, recognizing the time difference, and therefore the issue with the next statement. She continued, “My mother's side has been in the US since before the revolution. Her mother is involved with the DAR.” Realizing Ivan may not know what that meant, she added, “Daughters of the American Revolution.”

Ivan closed his notebook. “Perhaps we should take a break.”

Ivan came back later, perhaps about half an hour later. Jennifer was no longer crying. He sat down and took his notebook out again. “Do you want to continue?”

“Yes.”

“Good.” He opened his notebook again. “Before coming here, what was your job?”

“I worked for the air force, a civilian, programming computers and doing calculations.” Jennifer had rehearsed this, so she knew what to say. *The truth is more unbelievable and would hurt more people if believed.* But she was still embarrassed to lie and uncomfortable with lying. And she couldn't control her reaction, so this would have been obvious to anyone watching her. There was nowhere to run, so she just hid.

Ivan, however, either didn't notice or didn't care this time. “Where did you work?”

“Is this relevant?” *This is never going to work. I can't do this.* But she did remember some things based on her discussion with the man from the clearing. “Cheyenne Mountain Complex, in Colorado Springs, Colorado.”

“How did you get to Siberia?”

“We flew in a plane.”

“We?”

“My brother and I were there, with some of the soldiers.”

“Why were you there?”

“We were in a plane. I got into an argument with some of the soldiers. They didn't like me. They called me a communist sympathizer. I think they considered my brother to be complicit as well, since he was the one who helped get me the job. So they knocked us unconscious and threw us out at some point with very little gear.”

“That seems very unusual.”

Upon contradiction to statement, Jennifer panicked. She knew he would be able to tell she was lying by her inability to hide her discomfort. As her brain was panicking, one of her thoughts she managed to state out loud, “But how else would I have gotten here?”

“But why would they risk entering Soviet territory? Or giving one of their

people to the enemy? How did you even get past the radar?"

"I don't know much. And spy planes have been sent which evaded the radar. I don't know how these things work." After a long pause, she remembered something. "I think there is one which flies at higher altitude, like 60,000 ft., maybe." Jennifer believed Ivan didn't understand as he didn't respond immediately. So she thought for a bit, doing the mental calculation. "About 18,000 m."

"You didn't fall from that height, though, right?"

*What am I supposed to know of how these things worked.* "I don't know."

"And what happened to your brother?"

It was the first time Jennifer felt she didn't need to lie, at least not completely. This let her calm down a bit. "I don't know. He ... dropped ... first. But, when I got to the ground, he wasn't in sight. I never saw him again."

"Good. Can you tell me about the events in the clearing now? How did you get there?"

Jennifer begun to retell the story, much more confident this time, as she didn't need to lie and had prepared for this in advance. "I was in the forest, lost, cold and alone, and heard voices in the distance. So I went towards them. I heard gunshots after some time, a few I guess. After that, I heard thunder, then some screaming. I think they were startled.

"Visibility was low. It was difficult to see with the snow falling in my eyes. I may have already been in the clearing by this time, but I didn't see anything. I was focused on trying to avoid tripping or stray branches. Eventually, though, I caught sight of some of the people standing, wearing coats and hats. Three, perhaps. One of them was carrying another person who wasn't protected from the cold. As soon as they saw me, they started to leave. They fired in my direction to cover their departure. I froze, then dropped to the ground to prevent from being hit.

"On the ground I saw two people. Male and female, I believe. Both were dressed for the cold and snow. One was motionless, the other, the man, said something I



didn't understand. It took a bit for me to do anything about this. I was shaking, my heart beating rapidly.

“After the other people left, I made my way to the man. He was injured, shot in the leg. I told him I was lost, that I didn't understand what he said, that I needed to stop his leg from bleeding. He told me to take his coat and hat and go towards the east, there was a city about an hours walk away. I was so tired, my focus had shifted from saving myself to saving him. I told him I didn't think I could walk that far. On his suggestion, I tied his leg with his belt before falling unconscious.”

Jennifer paused and grabbed the clipboard with her drawings. She took out one of the clearing. “Here, I have some diagrams of what I remember. They may be difficult to read and inaccurate, but hopefully they are still helpful.”

Ivan took the drawing, looked at it, then folded it up and put it in the back of his notebook. “Thanks. Is this all you remember? Could you get any details of the attackers?”

“No. ... Well, I think they had fur hats and coats. They had boots as well. I don't know the colors, but they were not bright. I don't recall much else. ... I am sorry I can't help more.”

“Is there anything else you want to say?”

“I can't think of anything right now.”

“Ok. I will want you to sign some papers indicating your intention to defect.”

“Is this appropriate? I don't really know anything of value. I just don't have anywhere to go. And I don't want to go back.”

“Yes, and you really shouldn't undervalue yourself.” Ivan shifted the focus of his speech. “It will take time to determine what we will do. But we will probably move you to Moscow. Here is forbidden to foreigners. There we will have resources for you. If you are to stay long, I will get you textbooks from which you can learn our language. For now you need to remain in this hospital. Can you do this?”

“Yes.” Before Ivan left, however, Jennifer had another concern. “Have you seen either Nicholas or Joshua?”

“Huh?”

“Nicholas is my brother. Joshua is a friend.”

“I haven't encountered anyone by either of those names. From your story, I can understand why you would be concerned about your brother. But this is the first time you have mentioned a friend.”

“He was with us, but I don't know if he is here. By the time I was gone, he hadn't left the vehicle.” Jennifer paused, considered, before continuing. “He is black with long hair.”

“I am sorry. If we find them, I will tell you.” Ivan paused before adding, “Can you tell me anything about them which may be useful? For instance, what is their accent? Do either of them know our language?”

“They should have the same accent as me. I think their only foreign language training was in school.”

“Look, I don't know what has happened or will happen to them, but we will try to find them. Thank you for telling me that they may be here.”

“Ok.”

After they had finished, Ivan left Jennifer alone again.