

# Drawing Change

I stomp into my new bedroom, throwing my bulging backpack onto the smooth dark brown wooden boards of the room. I slump on the bed and look around. Across from the door is my bed. It's a low bed, unlike my old bed, which was so high, I could touch the ceiling every morning when I woke up.

It's not like I'm *that* upset about the move. I never fit in at home anyway, but it feels all wrong: this new house, the new neighborhood. Mom sent me upstairs to unpack and decorate my room. I unzip my backpack, pull out some books, and stack them under my bed. I need a bookshelf. I start to unpack some clothes but decide against it. Instead, out comes my sketchpad and a pencil case . Grabbing a freshly sharpened pencil, I begin to sketch. I furrow my brow, erase a few lines, then draw in one more, the branch of a tree. Satisfied, I grab

a light blue pencil, and fill in the sky. The blue stands out against the gray sketch. In my drawing, the trees are packed together, mostly maple and oak, some sycamore trees, old, and wide trunked. I can almost see a dog and elf running through the woods. Something from a book I read? I finish adding color, and grab a couple thumbtacks from the box mom sent me up with. I carefully hang my drawing up on the wall, stand back, and smile. Perfect. I start putting my clothes away, but whip around when I hear strange sounds. Sounds that shouldn't be in my room. I hear wind, shifting branches, and birds chirping. I see, where my wall was before, a window, impossibly clean. Am I going crazy? Outside is almost an exact replica of my drawing, in the exact same place, but when I reach out, my hand goes right through and touches a branch. It's a hole. A portal? I pick an oak leaf. It feels real, and as I touch it, a tingle runs through my hand and all through my body. I feel a pull, like I need to go where this leaf came from. Like I belong there.



Without thinking about what I'm actually doing, I step through my wall. When I reach the other side, I feel myself growing, my legs becoming shorter. I gasp as I fall forward, expecting to crash onto the hard ground, but instead I land on my front legs. My front legs? My nose becomes a snout, and suddenly I can smell everything. The earth beneath me, trees, and air. I swear even the birdsong has a smell. Sweet and tangy, like a fresh peeled orange. I stand there, changed. I know I should go back, away from this place. I know I should be scared, I mean, I'm a wolf, but it feels right, familiar. I step toward an overgrown path, all my muscles straining to run. I step forward, then run, delighting in the blur of trees on either side, the way my legs stretch and pound out a rhythm. Growing tired, I stop, and walk, following the path into a clearing, a old well in the center. My eyes widen as I see someone, sitting on the edge of the well, facing

away from me. I see pointed ears poking out of silver-white hair. An elf? “Welcome back, shifter,” the elf says. Her voice is strong, and...sad?

“Shifter?” I ask, surprised that my voice comes out in a human squeak, not a bark.

“Shapeshifter” she replies. Suddenly, a memory flashes, a memory of color as I race, dodging trees. I remember the silver-white-haired elven figure, racing behind me, yelling “No fair, shifter!”

“W-what?” I stammer, the memory fading. The elf turns to me, smiling.

“You’re remembering.” Our eyes lock. Her voice is clearly sad now as she says, “You were never a human.”