

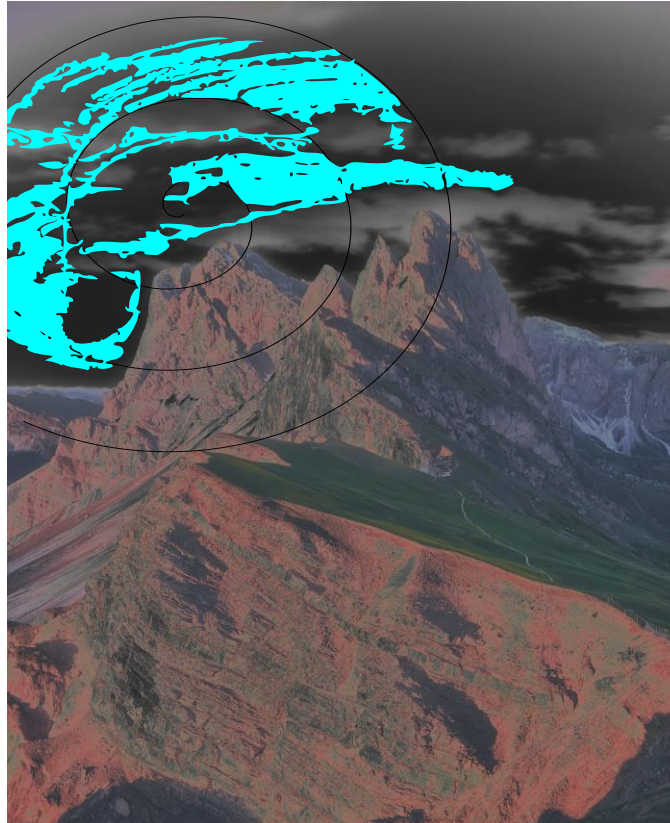


VITA ET MORS

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(Photoshop made in Adobe Illustrator with images from Pexels)



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Imagine if you were able to be anywhere in the world at any time. You could be in the Swiss Alps one second, and in Hokkaido the next! No place on earth is private to you, and no force can stop you! Except, there's a few catch; You need to have never been born.

Welcome to the world of Purgatory! Follow our main character, who goes by Rev, as they search for the meaning of life, and get up to all sorts of shenanigans to have the best un-life ever!

For as long as life on Earth has existed, the world of Purgatory has been it's proverbial sibling, albeit one they never knew. Whenever a would-be living thing never has the chance to obtain life, yet somehow manages to obtain a soul, they are taken to the world of Purgatory and become a Wisp—Small, ethereal beings that make up the denizens of Purgatory. They are able to retain some form of sentience and speech, but they have no real identity. They merely exist to float about in the world with no real purpose. The only thing that does give them something close to it is when they join their forms together in order to make one collective consciousness. It was through there they learned of the existence of planet Earth. While most were dismissive of it, thinking the planet to have nothing of interest to them in comparison to this new hivemind, it began to sew seeds of curiosity into a select few deserters of the collective. This led to the first batch of Wisps to cross the border between worlds and experience all Earth truly had to offer.

Several hundred thousand years later, a new Wisp that manifested was about to join the hivemind, when they noticed another Wisp take on an odd form and leave through a portal to Earth. Curious, they followed them through and were greeted with a myriad of new and different sensations from sounds to smells in the bustling city of New York. Experiencing what would be best described as a panic attack, the soul that they were following scooped them up and took them back to purgatory. This was the first meeting of Rev and Hugo.

Rev: A denizen of Purgatory who became inspired to live among humans to learn the meaning of life. They're always upbeat and excited for adventure, but most importantly, they love humans, even if they can't interact with them.

When Rev was first formed in the world of Purgatory, they were a mere wisp floating amongst the ether with no real purpose. However, as they were developing their senses, the first thing they saw was another wisp manifest a humanoid figure and disappear into a portal. They followed them and were greeted by a world filled with so many different stimuli in contrast to the darkness they were accustomed to, which will later be revealed as Earth's very own New York City. Experiencing what would best be described as a panic attack, Rev was overwhelmed by the many sights, sounds, feelings, etc. to the point where they felt they would annihilate themselves. However, the figure from before rushed to their aid and took them back into Purgatory.

After a brief introduction, Rev learned the figure's name was Hugo, and he often visited the parallel world of Earth. Despite not being able to truly interact with the beings that lived there, he was always curious and intrigued by the lives of humans. This sparked something in the wisp and begged Hugo to take him back. The latter was hesitant at first, given what happened just a few moments ago, but relented and agreed. This time, when the two stepped out of the portal, they were in a much quieter and secluded environment. When Rev asked where they were, Hugo shushed them and pointed to the horizon. From there, the dusk skyline was slowly bathed in a warm, golden light as the sun arose over their location of Mt. Fuji. Rev was struck with another overwhelming feeling, but this time, fully embraced it. This was the day they decided to learn more about the planet Earth.

As the years went on, Rev and Hugo formed something of a parent and child bond. Hugo taught Rev basic human language, mathematics, and history while also teaching them about Purgatory and its purpose: To house the souls of people that were never meant to exist. In addition to that, he also taught Rev how to manifest their own form, something the other denizens scoffed at. They chose to appear as a teenager with dark brown hair, hazel eyes, pale skin, and a hoodie with ripped jeans. Sadly upon mastering this, the first thing Rev went to do was run up to a human in order to hug them. However, the human easily passed through them as if they didn't exist. It was there Hugo dejectedly explained the cost of using their powers, while everything is open to them and free to explore, they can never interact with the life there. While saddening, this only proved to further Rev's resolve to love humanity.

Hugo: Hugo is one of the original wisps that first journeyed to Earth those many eons ago and a father-figure to Rev. While ostracized by most of his community, he doesn't really care about how the other wisps view him and tends to spend more time on Earth as a result. He often manifests as a man in his late fifties with a beige tweed suit and gray hair. When he's alone, he likes to visit empty campus classrooms and pretend he's a university professor, especially after Rev pointed it out to him. Despite parting ways with them nearly a decade ago, Hugo will follow Rev from afar just to make sure they are safe and happy every once in a while.

Douglas Thompson: A thirty-two-year-old man that lives in Henderson, Nevada. While he isn't the most conventionally attractive man around, he's got a big heart. He's deeply in love with his girlfriend, Kelly, and wants to settle down with her and start a family. However, he comes from a broken family with a father that left Doug and his mother around the time he turned four. Every time he thinks he's ready to propose, he sees the image of his father storming out of his childhood home for the final time and decides to put off his proposal for another month. One day, however, Rev happens to see Doug sorrowfully staring at the ring and pieces the situation together. It was then and there they vowed to get Kelly and Doug together by the end of the week.

Phoebe Jenkins: A seventeen-year-old girl that lives in Newport, Rhode Island. She's your typical popular All-American Girl; She's on the cheerleading squad, she gets straight-As, and she volunteers at the library every weekend. However, she recently discovered she is a lesbian. Her friends and peers all support her for it, but her main concern is her conservative parents. To make things worse, the moment her parents find out thanks to petty outside forces, Phoebe's life comes crashing down when they threaten to disown her if she doesn't "stop" her lifestyle. When Rev watches these events unfold, their spirit breaks. I may very well be the first time in their un-life they truly can't see the outcome becoming better for either party.

The Red Spires: In the world of Purgatory, there stand three enormous reddish rock formations similar to mountains that the wisps refer to as The Red Spires. The denizens apart of the hivemind claim that they were raised from the ground beneath in order to make connecting with others outside the hive much easier. With this in mind, The Red Spires are tall enough to give a sweeping view of the world, from the eastern all the way to the western ends. To give a comparison to Earth, it would be as if the tallest mountains in the world were all stacked on top of each other.

The Void Cavern: A narrow hole near the western end of Purgatory. At a first glance, it is not that different than a manhole from the width of it. However, the depth of the hole goes deep enough to the point where any wisp that would attempt to go down it would hurry back to the surface out of fear of never being able to climb back out. The farthest any wisp has been stated to go down was 14 kilometers, and said wisp also claimed there was ample space beneath them. Like The Red Spires, the origin of the cavern is unknown. The hivemind speculates this is where The Red Spires emerged from.

The Ether Spiral: The sky of Purgatory is, for lack of a better term, empty. It is nothing but an endless mass of gray that envelops the world, giving it an incredibly drab atmosphere. That is, until you reach the exact center of the sky and find the Ether Spiral. The Ether Spiral is a collection of the denizens of Purgatory that rotate amongst the sky to give the area below them the closest thing to light thanks to their natural luminescence. It is in here that the hivemind is gathered and gains knowledge that spans from Purgatory, to Earth, to the very edges of the galaxy.

- While the denizens of Purgatory have no race, they chose to identify themselves as “Wisps”. This is because, on their own, they have no real uniqueness or individuality and will be left as ephemeral specs that don’t have a purpose in life. That is, until they join with the hivemind to become a part of something greater.
- The concept of the hivemind itself is similar to religions. It was founded when two Wisps joined together accidentally and claimed to see “visions”. Said visions were of Earth in the early days of mankind. Soon after this, more and more wisps began to join themselves together in order to see these visions. After nearly every denizen of Purgatory at the time joined, the pure ethereal energies that were present caused a rift to open from their side, but the primal humans were unaware of this event.
- All Wisps are capable of doing what would be considered as magic, however, most of them tend not to apply themselves and learn how to do it. In fact, more often than not, the teachings of magic are greatly looked down upon. Regardless, the magic a Wisp is capable of can be broken down into two categories: Transformation and Transportation.
- Transformation magic is the process of changing one’s wisp body into a humanoid body. While this change is considered cosmetic at most, many prefer to use a human body to feel closer to the Earth.
- Transportation magic is the ability to tap into the rift that was created by the hivemind in order to summon a much smaller rift they can travel through in order to get to any location on the planet.

After watching the sun rise atop the roof of the fancy French hotel they were residing in for the weekend, Rev gathers themselves and begins plotting where they will continue their quest of searching for the meaning of their life, while also enjoying their un-life. They look for the nearest map to check when they discover they haven't been to the United States in about twenty years, so they decide to head back to their "roots" for old times sake. From there, the main plot involves Rev spending time hopping from state to state in order to see how the American lifestyle has changed. They attend fairs and carnivals, go out to movies, and accidentally stir up rumors about ghost sightings in a small town due to carelessly messing with random objects. However, their favorite hobby of people watching still goes unchanged. In one such instance, Rev "indirectly" inspires a man in Nevada to propose to his girlfriend after putting it off for nearly a year.

Sadly, their fun comes to an end when they happen upon a domestic dispute between parents and their child. She was in love, but her parents weren't happy about who she was in love with. Or rather, which gender. The argument ended in the father grabbing the girl by the arm and throwing her out of the house, right in front of Rev. While she sat on the porch bawling her eyes out, the specter was sharing in her sorrow, as he'd never seen an act so cruel, done to one's own child at that. Worst of all, no matter how hard they tried to console her, the curse of being a denizen of Purgatory prevented their words from being heard. With no idea left of what to do, they ran back into Purgatory, now unsure if they want to continue to search for what life is if it was anything like what just occurred.

However, after two months of uncertainty, Rev returns to find the girl. When they do, she's with people that aren't her parents, and is looking much happier because of it. From there, a weight seems to be lifted from Rev's shoulders. They learn that despite the pain life gives, it'll find away to slowly heal that damage over time.

Rev watched with bated breath as Douglas pulled into the driveway of the one-story house. When the middle-aged man stepped out of his car, a woman who they assumed to be Kelly opened the front door and ran towards the disheveled man.

“Doug? What’s up, I thought you were staying home tonight?” she asked, looking the man up and down. “And you’re as pale as a ghost! Are you alright?”

Rev was slightly offended by that remark, but kept their mouth shut to continue listening.

“Kelly, I’ve had a lot of time to think about this, and...and I think it’s time to tell you something!” Doug said, accidentally shouting the last two words.

“Oh, okay...What is it?” she asked, looking at her boyfriend with a mildly concerned expression.

Rev heard the brown-haired man take a deep breath and sigh before he parted his lips again.

“I...want to adopt a dog!” Doug blurted out.

Rev slapped their forehead and groaned. “Dude, you practiced this line like eighty times in the car.” they said. Despite knowing that neither party could hear them, Rev thought it was a good way to vent their disappointment.

“Oh...Yeah! Yeah, that sounds great!” Kelly responded. “What breed were you thinking of getting?”

It took Doug a while to respond before he let out another sigh. “I’m sorry, I can’t do this.” he said as he grabbed her hands.

“Doug...?” Kelly asked.

“Kel, today I finally mustered up the courage to ask this, and I’m not going to waste it,” the man said as he got down on one knee. “For as long as I can remember, I was afraid to love someone because I was scared. Scared to connect with another person. Then I met you. You changed me. I see you, and I know I won’t turn out like my dad.”

“Doug...” Kelly quietly said, wiping away a tear from her face.

“Will you marry me?” Doug asked in the most confident voice Rev had ever heard from him

“Absolutely.”

Rev coyly looked away as the two shared a loving kiss, satisfied at seeing another aspect of life they may never, love. True love, at that.