Tales from Everwood

The sky shone silver above me. It was the time that the owls called Prelude, like the first song of dawn. The wolves called it Twidawn. The sky looked like twilight, but reversed. It was my favorite time. The stars were still twinkling above, and the moonlight gave everything a frosty aura about it. The birds were silent; the stillness of the night was unbroken. The tall, golden grass around me waved rhythmically with the winter wind. Ripples echoed through the grass like rolling water. The meadow was deserted. I rose, and mist wrapped its cloak around me. Now walking, the grass caressed me, tickling my paws and toying with my fur. The ink black tree in the center of the clearing was my destination. I came here often, for I had no other home but this. Both the wolves and the owls regarded me as an outcast. I have wings, you see. My mother was a wolf; my father was an owl. Somehow I was created. I, having no parents, called myself Shadow. My parents were exiled soon after the wolves unearthed my existence. I was pretty sure the owls had
killed my father because what he had done was unforgivable. I had reached the quiet tree. No birds here. I had dubbed this tree the Thought Tree, for my thoughts usually seemed to flow better when I was near it. I seated myself on a mossy patch in the tree's shadow, thinking. As normal, a thought was galloping circles through my brain. What was I? Come now, I had a name, but... I did not wish to be called a "wolf-owl" or some scrappy name like that. Let me see... I had wings like an owl and appeared like a wolf, but "winged wolf" was too plain. "A wolfwing!" I barked aloud. Praying that nothing had heard me - and imagining how horrifying it would be to see a plethora of wolves thundering through the grass -, I whispered to myself, "A wolfwing. Shadow Chaser the Wolfwing."

"What in heavens are you blabbing about?"

I jumped and spun around. "What even are you?" scoffed the barn owl on the branch above me, silhouetted against the golden band of rising sun. "A wolfwing," I woofed softly, trying
to sound calm, unafraid, and dangerous all at once.

   The owl's eyes widened. "You're that hybrid from a year ago, aren't you?"
   "So what if I am?" A growl forced it's way up my throat.
   "Th-they s-said you were..."
   "Spit it out, owl."
   "D-dead."

   This did not come as a shock to me; they considered me dead from the moment I was first alive. "So?"

   The owl's feathers ruffled in the breeze, and so did mine. We sat in silence, together, until he hooted, "You're not going to... kill me?"

   I shot him a look that said seriously? and he flapped down on the moss next to me.
   "Are you just...out here...all alone?"

   the owl said awkwardly, I assumed it was a bit of a touchy subject.
   "Well...yeah," I mumbled. Now I understood how he felt.

   "D'you know where you are?" the owl inquired. There was something in his voice—excitement?
   "In a field by a tree," I answered.
He gave me the seriously? look and hooted, "This is Everwood! And this field is Goldenfield, and this tree..."

"The Thought Tree," I finished. He gasped, "How'd you know?"

"That's what I named it."
The owl clacked his beak with a thoughtful look in his dark eyes. "What's your name?"

His question caught me off guard. I adjusted my starless black wings indecisively. Do I tell him? Do I not? Flicking my ebony ears, I made my decision. "Shadow."

"I'm...uh...Rember," stammered the owl.

"Hi, Rember," I ruffed cheerily.

"Hey, Shadow," Rember replied, catching my attempt at a positive start. "D'you... have you ever...uh...explored this place?"

I pondered this for a moment. "Well, no," I said honestly, "I just hang around here."

"Well... d'you... want to?"

It struck me like someone had whacked me with a thick branch. This owl was trying to be my friend. What was I meant to do? I had never had a friend before. "Er... I guess."
Rember gazed at me with a strange look that I had previously never seen. It was odd, the way he just stared at me. We sat like that for a few heartbeats.

"Let's see this place in daylight, how about it?" He spread his wings and fluttered above me. "C'mon, Shadow!" He soared away. Was I supposed to fly? I did not know how...

"Rember! Wait!" I howled, bolting after him and leaving a very prominent trail in the golden grass.

He hovered above me. "What?"

"I uh... can't... fly," I panted.

As I caught my breath, Rember landed beside me and demonstrated the proper way to fly. "Now, here's what you do. Just spread your wings... yeah, just like that. Make sure they're level... that's good. Okay, so now you just start running. Don't forget to flap at regular intervals. Ready... set... GO!!

We were off. I was running so swiftly that my surroundings were a blur of color. Flap. Thump. thump. Flap. Thump. Thumphump. Flap. thumpthump. Flap. thumpthump. Flap. thumpthumpWHOOSH!

With one great flap, I was airborne.

"Tilt the way you want to go!"
Rember screeched at me.

Unsteadily, I tilted my left wing downwards. WHOOSH! I jerked it back up, narrowly regained control, and flapped a few times to steady myself. When I was ready, I just ever so slightly tilted my right wing down. WHOOSH! I did not careen into the ground! I could fly! At that moment, the sun broke free of the horizon's chains and cast its radiance over the treetops. My onyx fur filled with warmth, and my wings were as light as falling leaves. Yes, I thought, I could fly. Not just could, I would. A new horizon awaited me, brighter than ever before.