Everyone in town knew her for her extremely dark red fur, and her beautiful voice... But that was pretty much it.

Aylen didn't have many friends -- well, true friends anyway -- and was often wandering the streets by herself. No one really took notice of it, except for the occasional dog that would mock her, or male that would whistle at her. So she stayed in her home most of the time. To her surprise a lot of male dogs actually took interest in her, but they're not exactly what she goes for.

She ran into her friend Bea, the klee kai husky mix.
- "Aylen, Aylen!!" she hopped happily around the taller dog, until Aylen put a paw to Bea's forehead, stopping her.
- "heh.. sorry."

- "What's up, Bea?" Aylen grinned.
"My mom just gave me the most beautiful collar... She said it was her's when she was younger!"

She proudly flashed the black collar with the golden heart-shaped tag at her friend.

"Nice, huh?" Aylen wasn't particularly interested in the collar, but smiled and nodded anyway.

"Yeah!"

Bea and Aylen were huge opposites. Bea couldn't go out without having to be pampered and groomed for a full 2 hours, whereas Aylen could care less about collars and accessories and grooming. Bea was often enamored with many dogs in the town, but Aylen only had her eye on one.

The sled team pulled in, panting and huffing from their early run. Patch, the leader, gave a nice, hearty chuckle and turned to the team.

"I'm ready for the day! Nothing like a good morning run, right guys?" They all cheered happily in response as their musher unhooked them. One of the swing dogs walked up to Patch and pushed him with her paw.

"How's your ear been bro?" Patch looked up at his torn right ear.

"It's getting better. Thanks Saomik." On their last run, the team was attacked by a wolverine. It was a small thing, and Patch fended it off easily, but had his ear torn in the process.

Aylen dazed off, looking at the swing dog. Bea suddenly interrupted her daydreaming.

"Her again? Aylen, what's with you? This has been going on for an entire season already! The town's gonna start looking at you funny..." Aylen sat and sighed. She knew that was the reality of her situation.
"You really love her, huh?" Bea sighed, shaking her head, but pushed aside her conservative ways for a moment. She didn't think it was right... but if it made her best friend happy...

She backed up, and shoved Aylen as hard as her small body let her. Aylen gasped, and stumbled over her two feet, in the direction of the swing dog. The icy ground made it harder for her to balance, and the stumbled right into Saomik. Saomik fell over, and her brother watched the bundle of dogs, stupefied.

- "You okay, pup?" he asked, cocking his head to the side. She started panicking and shot straight up.
- "Yes sir, fine sir! I'm so sorry miss!" she squeaked, helping Saomik up. The other swing dog, Hima, noticed the accident. She knew that red dog anywhere. She had seen Aylen once on one of her runs, and knew that right then and there her whole life was changed. There was a new, strange feeling inside her whenever she saw the red hybrid, but she kept silent as the conversation went on.

- "Gee, this one sure is polite, huh sis?" Patch began, chuckling. Aylen blushed and looked to the ground.

- "Heh, yeah." Saomik said, rubbing her head.
- "It's fine, pup it was only an--" Saomik stopped mid way, looking up at the slightly larger hybrid.
- "hold on... I've seen you before..." Patch joined her.
- "yeah, now that you mention it... That really dark red fur, she looks like...

- "...Jenna...!" Hima finally exclaimed. She knew that Aylen was the daughter of the town's hero.
"You mean she's Balto's pup?" Saomik gasped.
"No way! This is too cool! I just gotta thank you!"

Aylen laughed, and blushed hard as the tan dog shook her paw.
"Thank me? Why?"

Saomik laughed along with her.
"Ah, I just got so excited! This is great, your father is legendary! He saved my dad!"

Patch grinned at his sister, nudged her playfully, then walked away, gesturing for Hima to come with him. Hima looked back at Aylen gloomily, not really wanting to leave, but took off anyway. Saomik rolled her eyes at her brother's actions as the two sled dogs faded away in the distance. Aylen cocked her head in confusion, but shook it off once Saomik started up again.

"So, think I could meet your dad? I've always heard amazing stories about him, especially from Kirby's team." Aylen nodded happily and led her to her father's boat. The two hybrids talked about their families along the way.

When they got to the boat, Aylen led her in.
"Pa?" She found him asleep on the floor, and she nudged him. He woke up with a grunt, and got up groggily.

"Aylen? Who's that?" he said, noticing Saomik.
- "This is Kaltag's daughter, Saomik. She's on one of Nome's best teams! She wanted to talk to you!"

Saomik smiled at him.
- "So you're THE Balto! This is amazing! It's just an honor to meet you!" He chuckled.
- "And it's great to meet you too, Saomik! How is your father doing? I haven't seen him in a while!"
- "He's doing alright. He's by Momma's right now, if you wanna see him." she grinned. Balto smiled back.
- "Alright. Sure!" The three canines made their way back to the town, and spent the rest of the day with Kaltag's family. Saomik was thrilled when she finally got back home. She could barely even sleep, it was an amazing day for her. And she couldn't wait to see Aylen again, either. It was great to have a gentle, kind friend like her around. The two hybrids continued to see one another day after day, and became remarkably close. A month passed by quickly.

Right after her usual morning run, Saomik went straight to Aylen's house. She poked her head through the doggy door and went inside, only to find the hybrid asleep in the glimmering sunlight that broke through the windows. Her red fur seemed even more brilliant than before, and Saomik could only smile. She didn't want to disturb the girl, and began walking away, when she suddenly heard a soft voice.

- "...Sao?"

The tan hybrid turned toward the gentle red female before her and smiled.
- "Finally awake huh? It's late!"
"I'm sort of sleepy... You wanna have an in-day?"

"Me? In-day? Are you kidding? C'mon sleepyhead, let's go!!" She pushed her front paws on Aylen's rump, moving her forward.

"Okay, okay fine!" she laughed.

The two spent the entire day together. The sun began to set, and Saomik laid down on the soft snow.

"Gosh, I'm really beat..." Aylen pawed at her face playfully.

"What? The big strong sled dog's ready for nap time already?"

Saomik grinned.

"You're such a damn night owl, you know that?"

"Well, I am part wolf after all. We're known for like, moons and whatnot." On the word moons she
took a silly pose, mimicking a ghost. Saomik laughed and pushed some snow in the red hybrid's face. She paused as Aylen rubbed it off with her front paws, and recovered.

- "Nah... wolves are really majestic and beautiful."

At this, Aylen stuck her tongue out at Saomik.
- "Yeah, right. You're just saying that."

- "No way! I mean it!" Saomik yowled.

- "Have you ever even seen an actual wolf before?" Aylen questioned.

- "Yeah. I'm kind of looking at one right now." Saomik said, with a smirk.

That smirk always got Aylen. She blushed hard, and turned around. She looked out to the horizon and noticed the sun was about to rise.

- "Say, Sao... There's something I wanna show you."
- "Alright, Princess of the Moon!" she mimicked a bow, and stretched a front paw forward.
- "Lead the way."

Aylen rolled her eyes, chuckled, and began doing just as Saomik asked. They returned to the town, and Saomik began looking inside of trash bins near each human's home.

- "What're you looking for? The best trashcan in town?" Saomik scoffed at her friend light heartedly. Aylen rolled her eyes and finally found a decent bag to hold the broken bottles she collected while looking through the trash. She gestured toward Saomik to follow her, as she led her up on a hill overlooking the town.

- "Alright. You find a nice pile of trash and drag me up a hill. What gives?"

Aylen dumped the shards out onto the snowy hill and smiled down at them.
- "Just close you eyes, Sao."

- "No way. There is no way I'm closin' my eyes while you smile gleefully at all those nasty looking shards. I don't trust you!" she laughed. Aylen raised and eyebrow and grinned at her, then turned away and piled the pieces together at the perfect angle.

- "whatever you say, swing dog."
And right then, the broken shards revealed a mimicry of the northern lights. A small one, but visible enough in the dawn.

- "W-what... How did you do that Aylen!?" Saomik gasped, taking a step back.

- "My father taught me." She smiled. She circled around Saomik and sat next to her as they watched the tiny spectacle, while the sun was still low enough in the sky for them to see it.
- "When I was a little pup, I was afraid of the dark. Pa showed me this trick, and made me my own little night light."

Saomik grinned.
- "The dark? C'mon Aylen..."

- "No! Really! I got constant night terrors. I still have them... even now. Not as often... but still. They are horrific." Saomik didn't understand the full extent of Aylen's fearful nights, but knew it must have been terrible. She didn't want to ask her to explain them, but she hated to know the hybrid had to go through all of this.
- "It's beautiful, Aylen, the lights... But you don't need these anymore."

Aylen was taken aback, and lowered her ears. She could already see Saomik teasing her about being afraid of the dark, and telling her she was too old for that kind of stuff already, or how uncool it was... However, it wasn't exactly what she was expecting.
"I'll protect you from those nightmares. I'll be your light every night from here on out." Saomik declared. Aylen blushed slightly, but wasn't sure of how to react. Was she just being a protective friend.. or was this just some kind of joke...?

The tan dog then advanced toward the dark red wolfdog slowly. Aylen looked around awkwardly as Saomik continued to move forward, without bit of hesitation. The tan dog pressed a paw on Aylen's shoulder, lowering the hybrid onto her back. Aylen felt her face flush hard, and she turned her head to the side, just looking at the snow on the ground. She had no idea what her friend was up to.

Saomik then lowered herself onto the girl, and Aylen jumped in shock.
- "S...Saomik?!..." she squeaked. Their faces were only centimeters apart. Aylen could feel her friend's soft breathing on her's. Saomik's crystal blue eyes were locked onto Aylen's chocolate colored ones. Saomik felt her heartbeat speed up intensely with nervousness...

- "Aylen... I love you." Aylen's muddy eyes widened as she stared into Saomik's.

- "I love you too Saomik... so much... I always have. But... you don't think..." Aylen paused.

- "What...? What is it Aylen?"
"You don't think that... this... this is wrong... do you?" Aylen looked up at the tan dog with such a deep look of concern, and slight fear. Saomik could only smile at the beautiful hybrid below her, and she slowly gave Aylen a lick on the neck.

"Of course I don't. I never would Aylen. You're the most amazing thing in the world to me."

"I'm glad... Saomik." she relaxed into the snow, and the sun fully rose into the sky as the time passed.

The news spread very slowly, of their secret love. At this point both Balto and Jenna were fully accepting of their daughter, as well as their son Kodi. Kodi was extremely happy for his sister, and his mate Kirby was, as well. Bea was also very happy with her, despite her constant questioning on how the couple could possibly raise pups, or if they should even be called mates. All was well, until the fateful night when Gunner's owner came to Saomik's home.

Gunner was Steele's son, and a champion racing dog. Saomik, being the sister of another champion racing dog, Patch, was requested by Steele's owner to breed with his Gunner. Saomik listened to the two men talk and discuss the profits on the litter, and Saomik's owner finally agreed.

Saomik's heart sunk, and she panicked. She looked outside to see Gunner standing there, in the distance. He was boasting to his friends about having yet another litter, with another female. Saomik wanted to cry. She wanted to run away. But how could she possibly betray the man who raised her and trained her to do what she does best? How could she possibly turn on her owner like that?
...She couldn’t. And... Aylen... What of her true love, her best friend? She had to end it now. Before it happened. Before... she heard Gunner and his group let out a huge cacophony of laughter. She began to sob. Despite all of this.. she knew what she had to do, for the safety of herself... her pups... and especially Aylen.

She came into Aylen’s home the next morning. Instead of the usual cheery feeling she would get upon seeing the red female, she could only feel heavy, empty, loss.

- "Aylen.. we need to talk." she started, as the red hybrid sat down. She cocked her head to the side innocently, wondering what Saomik would say.

- "I think it would be best... if we didn't see one another anymore."

It shocked Saomik to see her friend suddenly get angry, as opposed to the expected depressed.

- "What? I don't understand... Why?"

- "Just... for the safety of us both Aylen." Saomik couldn't tell her the truth. She would tell her once it was all done and over. She wouldn't be seen by any dog in town anyway, she'd be cooped up in her home for two months, carrying Gunner’s pups. The thought sickened her.
But while the news of her and Aylen was still fairly low, she had to cut their ties. If Gunner found out about them.. He'd surely attack them both. But worst of all, Aylen, or the pups. They were still going to be her pups, and she refused to allow anyone to hurt them. And for Aylen... She wouldn't be there to protect her. She wouldn't be able to. So she had to keep her safe from Gunner and his group, too.

- "But you said you'd protect me... and that this would be okay..." Tears began to form in Aylen's eyes, and she started to cry.

- "Aylen... I wish things were different but--" she raised a paw out to her, but Aylen swatted it away.

- "Just get out. I need to be alone." the red wolfdog snarled. It was the first time Saomik had ever seen her get so aggressive, and she did as Aylen commanded.

A few days later, Saomik found out she was pregnant, much to her dismay. Hima accidentally overheard Saomik's owners discussing it while passing her team mate's home, and she gasped in shock. She couldn't believe what was going on... and she knew that it would be best if Aylen knew. Although she was still very nervous to even speak to her crush... especially about such awful matters as these, she knew it would be the right thing to do, as opposed to just watch the scenes unravel before her eyes, as she always had. She refused to do that, not today, and not ever again.