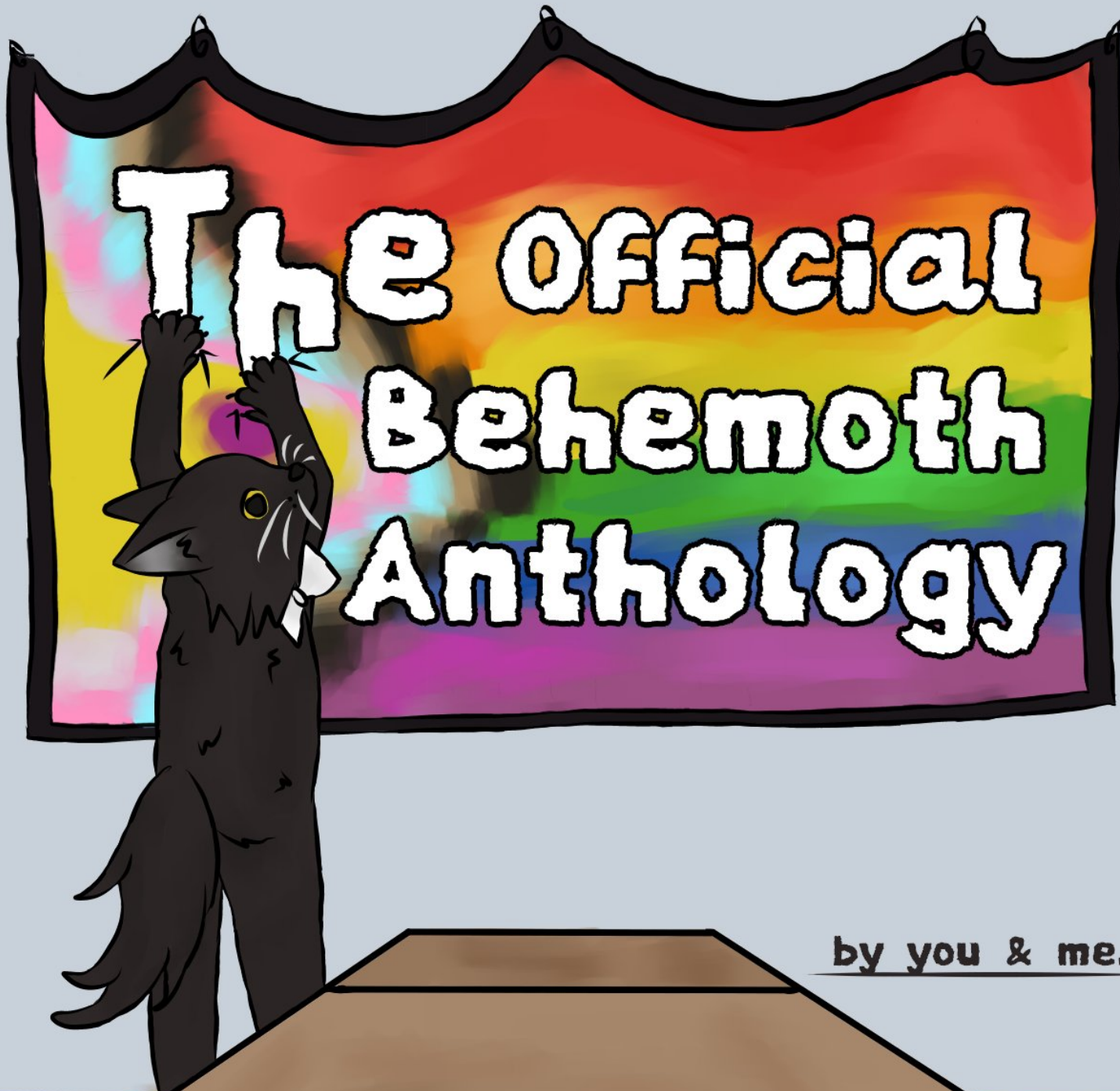




The Official Behemoth Anthology

by you & me.



Hello!

This is a collective work of (fan)fiction that emerged as a result of the Creative Writing Workshop in the Behemoth Centre on the 13th of February 2025. The stories were further illustrated by the visitors of our weekly art club!

Disclaimer: this is an anthology, and the order of the stories does not follow a linear progression. Details about the characters (including the Behemoth/Peemot spelling) are up to every author's own interpretation.

Enjoy!

First Impressions

Anonymous



It's late in the afternoon, and Peemot is about to give up on his pursuit of finding an assistant. Nobody showed up today either, maybe the poster wasn't clear enough...

He starts packing and is about to head out, but is stopped by knocking. He opens the door, and standing before him is an orange cat. The strange cat is clearly out of breath.

"I'm not late, am I? Is this Peemot..? I saw the poster... I hope I'm not late, I think I tried a wrong door before, then I got lost in..."

The orange cat talks fast, occasionally stopping to take a deep breath. Peemot just looks at the stranger as his sadness, that nobody came, turned to excitement after the knocking, turns to announce that the stranger just won't shut up. None of that reflects on his face, naturally.

"...Oh, and my name is Walter, you can call me Walt!"

"Peemot. A pleasure to meet you. Come inside."

Peemot's monotone voice is a stark contrast to Walter's lively and chirpy one. Since Walt was the only one to show up, the assistant position is as good as his, but Peemot decides to do an interview anyway. Peemot likes it when the rules are in place and followed. Unless they are stupid, like rules around conversations. Besides, Peemot wants to learn more about the guy.

New Beginnings

Liisa

The rooms were dark, unlit, unheated, small and hollow. Peemot sat in the doorway, in the shadows. It seemed like one big-ish room connected by doorless archways. The front room was especially small, only a lone cupboard and couch there. The hallway had a shelf in the wall and nothing else. There was a tiny bathroom in the hall. The biggest room was the emptiest, having only heaters but also some stray tables and two chairs.

The contract was finalized at last, today, so they could now properly begin to move things in. More was to come, a lot more, but a couch, some drawers, and some tables would be good for now. The windowsills were big enough to sit on, so they would need some blankets as well. Then, of course, the fairy lights...

Peemot sat on the couch and took in the hollow darkness, keys in hand. The shadows were a comfort, only the dim teal light of the *EXIT* sign softly glowing.

“Peemot,” M had called to him in her familiarly soft voice, though cracked and wrinkled with age. She had found him in a soggy little box many years ago, and taken him in, as was natural to her and her partner. Unfortunately, her partner had left before her, so Peemot was all that would be left.

“You should do something good with this,” M had said. She had still been there for a bit, but she had been preparing. The papers in her frail hands were of everything that would be left to Peemot – which was, indeed, everything. “Follow your heart,” M had said. “You know what to do.”

Years of thinking about his own past soggy box and seeing the injustice of the world had prepared him for this. So had M and her partner in their own way, intentional and unintentional. He was the cat to their “cat ladies who were just very, very close”. And he did not take that role lightly.

M and her partner had not had that much, though, so Peemot had to supplement it. There was so much material being wasted, so it would have been perfect if Peemot could use that for practical purposes.



That was why his bowtie today was golden and sparkling, a good fit for plain monochrome formal wear to impress the rich people. *Donate! It'll be a tax write-off! For sure! You can also make amazing PR from this!*

It was so much easier than it should have been. And now, with these rooms, Peemot could build an even greater network of queer minions to make sure no money gets used for rich people's tax evasion.

He had pulled off his first gig perfectly. No papertrail. Just enough charisma. And some fancy food on top of it all.

Peemot looked at the empty rooms. He could get so many fairy lights, pillows, blankets, a kettle, more chairs, even a fridge and other things for all this. A strong foundation for his new web of queer resistance. It would be great!

Hopefully. There was much work to be done, and Peemot had just one extra set of paws. And those paws...

The door opened.

"It's so dark here," the extra help said, "didn't you turn on the light?" Walt waltzed in, in his walt-y way, and smiled at Peemot, turning on the light. Peemot winced, but his frown could not get any frownier.

"It's cute here," Walt said, looking around cheerfully.

Walt had been the only person who had responded to Peemot's flyer. He was bubbly. Loud. Energetic. Kind of annoying. Too much. But apparently that was what people other than Peemot liked. His bowties simply were not enough charm for the people he wanted to connect with, so he begrudgingly asked for help. He even more begrudgingly hired the only cat who responded.

"So," Walt cheered, "where do we begin?"

Peemot sighed into his bowtie and silently stood up and handed Walt a notebook that needed a to-buy list in it.

To-do List

Enn

To do list:

- Buy more snacks
- Ask Darrel to move his car from our driveway
- Meeting w artist union at 4
- New project application (DEADLINE NEXT TUESDAY!)
- Check on Walt/~~invite him for a coffee~~

“Hey, what’s up?” Walt’s orange head peaked through the door. “How’s the application going? Need any help?”

Without waiting for a response, he approached Behemoth’s desk, his shiny emerald eyes curiously looking at the opened document on the screen.

“I’m good,” Behemoth quickly crumpled a post-it note he was looking at just a moment before. “Why are you here? Your shift doesn’t start till 3.”

“Well I thought we might need to restock our snack pantry.” He shrugged and put his hands into the pockets of forest green overalls. “And not like I have anything better to do anyway.”

He smirked with his disarming smile, sparks dancing in the viridian eyes, and Behemoth once again praised the universe for never making his flushed face noticeable behind his black fur.

“Yeah right.” He turned back to the laptop. “The best you can think of is to come over to annoy me?”

“What can I say, it’s my favourite hobby!” said the orange menace, walking over to a cupboard in the other corner of the room, grabbing a tote bag from an upper shelf and heading to the door. “You are too easy to bully, how could I refuse?”

He chuckled.

“Hey Walt?”

“Yea?” He stopped in the doorway and turned to look at his friend.

In the bright sunlight softly falling from the window, Behemoth looked almost burning, his black fur shifting hue to brown and amber with the slightest movement. He was silent for a moment, only his tail betraying a great deal of unrest.

“I was meaning... to ask you something.” Blood was rushing through his ears, heartbeat increasing to a crescendo.

“Of course, what’s up?”



As if a hairball suddenly stuck in his throat, Behemoth struggled to push the words out.

“Could you...”

Come on.

“Um.”

It’s not that hard!

“Could you talk to Darrell?”

“That dog left his car blocking our driveway *again*?” Walt left an exasperated groan, “I swear, the guy does it on purpose!”

“I know, I meant to call him myself but I was so busy that...”

“Don’t worry, I’m on it!” Walt gave an enthusiastic thumbs up and disappeared in the doorway. “Focus on your work!”

Not today.

Behemoth sighed. He straightened the post-it note he was tightly holding this entire time in the sweaty palm of his hand, crossed a few bullet points, hesitating at the last one and threw it in the trash bin. Dejected, he returned to his original task of filling in the project application.

At least, *tried to*. In the past month his ability to concentrate went significantly downhill, so much so that by the time a union representative knocked on the door, Behemoth was pacing around the office, resembling a restless panther in a cage, unable to write much more than a few sentences.

The meeting didn’t go much better. By the end of it, Behemoth was fully prepared to jump out of the window landing on all fours and disappearing into the far-removed woods, never to be seen again. With much restraint (and perhaps against his better judgement) he pushed those instincts away.

Behemoth was never good at talking to people, especially for long. It drained his energy even faster when he tried to act sociable and charismatic, his regular gloomy demeanor proving to be too off-putting for most. Walt was usually there to put people at ease, effortlessly carrying even the most boring conversations. But he was doing his job downstairs, probably entertaining a flock of teenagers and making tea.

The day ended, the next came way too fast as usual. The treadmill of time kept turning, without giving Behemoth an opportunity to catch his breath. Tuesday came and went, and a last minute application submission with it. Art club, volunteer meeting, youth work training, Saturday, Sunday, March, April, May. Summer flew by even faster in endless Pride organizing, preparations, work and travels while September, October and November merged together into a rainy sluggish mess. By the end of the year Behemoth resembled a shadow more, than his shadow resembled him. For this reason everyone breathed a sigh of relief when a two week winter break was suggested at the monthly meeting (and unanimously agreed upon).

“I don’t know how you do it.”

“Huh?” Walt paused mopping confetti into a big pile on the floor and looked at Behemoth, precariously balancing on a chair while removing Christmas lights taped to the

wall. The party ended half an hour ago, and two were slowly cleaning the room in silence, tired from a busy day they both had before. “Do what?”

“Everything.” Two yellow crescents glanced back at Walt. “You’re so outgoing and full of energy, you seem so effortlessly good at whatever you do.”

Behemoth removed the last piece of tape and sat down, trying to carefully roll up the Christmas lights. He accidentally dropped them and wires tangled up even more. He dropped his shoulders and sighed.

“I wish I was like that.”

“Nonsense!” Walt sat down on the floor next to Behemoth’s chair and started untangling the wires. “I’m only really good at getting on your nerves!”

The gloomy coworker chuckled, but didn’t say anything.

“But really,” Walt looked up without a trace of irony in his voice. “I think you’re great! I always admired how cool and collected you are, you always know what to do and have a plan ready. And more than that, you were the one who introduced me to this place, and I couldn’t be more grateful for all that you do.”

Behemoth opened his mouth to disagree, but got interrupted by the most baffling line he ever heard in his life:

“And you dare to be funny and handsome on top of all that? Aren’t you shameless!”

If Boris (a 30 something bear, center’s security and unofficially appointed “best hugger of the year”) did not enter the room enquiring about something inconsequential right that second, Behemoth would surely have exploded into a huge cloud of thick smoke and dust like a threatened squid chased by a scuba diver. Luckily, Boris averted a disaster with his presence, helping to wrap up the cleaning and bring the room into its ordinary state, while two cats tried their best (and failed) to act innocuously and keep the conversation casual.

“Alright, I’ll wash the dishes and close myself, you boys can go.”

Boris’ impressive frame barely fit into a tiny kitchen, but he maneuvered it with familiarity, being the center’s self-appointed chef on more than one occasion. Walt tried to protest, but with a stern look from a bear size and determination of a medium sized hill, he quickly yielded.

The snow was slowly falling, sparkling in the light of a nearby street lamp. The air felt crisp and quiet. The two stood at the top of the steps outside the center’s main entrance. One in black tweed coat and checkered scarf, the other in a neon puffer jacket and a knitted hat with a pompom. They stood there for a while, admiring the view, neither having the guts to break the silence.

“So... Any plans for New Years Eve?” Finally, Walt let out a foggy cloud of breath and took a few steps down.

“Survive the fireworks.” Behemoth followed suit. “Dodge all corporate and ‘networking’ party invitations. I don't know.”

“That’s fair.” They were now walking down the street side by side. Walt frowned, with melancholic notes in his voice. “My plan was to avoid spending the day with my family, but most of my friends are busy then...”

“Oh.”

They walked quietly until stopping at a traffic light.

“Well,” Behemoth said slowly, as if speaking to himself out loud. “Would you like to maybe..dodge unpleasant responsibilities...together?”

“I would very much like that.” Walt’s eyes met Behemoth’s and for a second, the world didn’t seem such a bleak place.

To do list:

- Buy
 - Champagne
 - Clementines
 - Ginger bread dough and frosting
- Clean up!!
- Get out the sleeping bag from the attic
- Wrap the gift for Walt

Closing Hours

Alistair



Living in the basement isn't so bad. It's dark and chilly, perfect for a cat, especially during the summer, and 'having a roof over one's head' doesn't get more roofy than having a ceiling upon a ceiling upon a ceiling — and then a roof. On Fridays, after the last human leaves, boots tied at the shoelaces, leaning down to give him a gentle pat on the head, Peemot ponders a few things:

First, he wonders once more why humans wear shoes. He understands the appeal of most human clothing. Bowties, absolutely— other types of ties are not bad either, including neck scarves, but the shape of a bowtie (so similar to candy wrappers he used to chase as a 'wee lad', so to say) just cannot be beaten. Sweaters and vests and even button-up shirts can be quite nice, if just to experiment with colors and patterns that you do not have on your own coat — and also they work well to emphasize the bowtie. Peemot even understands *pants*, though he wouldn't go for them himself due to anatomical differences; for humans with no tails, pants must serve roughly the same purpose as shirts. And hats, well, while his own soul doesn't necessarily call to them, to Walt they appear to be as enticing as bowties are to Peemot, and he can respect that. Shoes, however? As annoying as it is to get his toes wet in a cold puddle, Peemot would take an uncomfortable jolt and a minute of licking his paws clean any day over the idea of having them contained to heavy, tough sacks.

And what's the point of shoelaces, if you cannot play with them?!

The second thing he ponders is how well the visiting hours went today. Another day, another support group, another opportunity for Peemot to sit on the windowsill and listen in. He's not much of a talker, and definitely not a psychologist, but, well— people love their emotional support animals, don't they? Sometimes he'll walk in between the legs of the visitors, and he'll purr. More hands reach down to pet him. Peemot likes to think they leave, well, feeling more supported that they felt like coming in.

Thirdly, and lastly, he turns on his heels and peers into the main room to check if everything has been left in proper shape for the weekend. Not that he doesn't trust his human coworkers to do that, but, at the end of the day, he is a cat and therefore has a better sense of both sight and scent than those two-legged volunteers do, and he uses those just in case there is something lost under the cupboard or behind the radiator. Tonight, though, there isn't, and he gives a nod of approval to nobody who can see. What's to say? Even little things such as this make him proud of the little community he's put together.

"Finished wrapping up?" a deep, raspy voice sounds from above him, and Peemot turns his ears up towards the windowsill, where Boris, the local security guard contained to a harmless-seeming form of a teddy bear, is lounging. With the lights off, and with the way his

shape blends seamlessly into the bean-bag chair he's lying next to; if it wasn't for the thin strip of light that the basement windows allow in from the street, you wouldn't be able to see anyone there at all.

Harmless-seeming? Well, as cuddly as he is, and as patient as he is about being tossed around by children, Boris is nevertheless a trustworthy and unswerving guard; Darrell is definitely at least a little bit scared of him, and overall Peemot likes to think that him and Boris have things in common that aren't just the colour of their fur. (And no, being a softie isn't one of them).

"We are closed now, yes," Peemot relays; there is still a slight purr of satisfaction in his voice. He scratches his ear and then adds, before Boris can ask a follow-up question: "But I think I'm staying in tonight."

Boris perks up, leaning awkwardly from one side to another as he adjusts the stuffing inside his legs.

"You sure? I don't mind staying here for a while if you've got plans. Could practice my chess skills, I dunno." And it's not even teasing when he asks, but it feels like that anyway: "Don't got a date with Walt or anything? It's Friday night."

Peemot suppresses an itch of annoyance, only allowing himself a single irritated flick of the tail. He paws at his bowties.

"No. No date."

Walt is probably going to show up here tomorrow. He wasn't here all week because of some side work he does, and while he's definitely going to want to hear about everything that has transpired while he was gone, especially the support group meeting (he's quite proud every time he gets to be an emotional support cat), he is not here tonight. He's probably going to show up tomorrow morning, too early for a Saturday if you ask anyone who is not a cat, and Peemot is going to meet him with a paw to the face to calm his zoomies down, and he's going to make them both a cup of tea, and they are going to talk about everything and look at the birds outside.

But for tonight, he is staying in.

"Really, Boris, you can go. I am not going to be working any more tonight, perhaps just paw through a comic book or two and have an early night."

Boris hums.

"I'll wish you a good night then, boss."

He hops off the windowsill, and Peemot sees him off. When Boris' stub of a tail disappears behind the door, Peemot ponders whether he should get the bear an item of clothing

of his own. Not boots, of course not— but maybe a nice, fancy hat for the season. He ponders whether Walt would like to discuss that with him tomorrow.

When he is left alone in the centre, Peemot turns on his heels once more, walks into the bigger room, and then hops on the table. Then, on the windowsill. He curls up on one of the pillows and gazes out the thin line of street view at the people going about their night, his eyes slowly blinking closed.

**Have you ever wondered
what goes on in the center
once the visiting hours are
over? Does the infamous
black cat get up some
mischief, or is he up to his
whiskers in responsibilities?**

**...And who is that handsome
orange boy who shows up
sometimes?!**

