

CONSTELIS VOSS VOL. 2:  
PATTERN RECOGNITION



# CONSTELIS VOSS VOL. 2

PATTERN RECOGNITION

K. LEIGH

k. **LEIGH**

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*Content Warning:*

The following story contains abuse, trauma, PTSD, sexual assault, bigotry, and explicit violence. It is not a piece of fiction that engenders contemporary realities gently, including marginalized identities such as sex workers, LGBTQIAA+ individuals, and people of color.

Please consider this your warning for a work of fiction, which exists as a metacritique of the politics of power told through a space opera through one vector of a reality painted dystopic.

I ask only one thing of you, should you find yourself skimming its pages—enter this self-aware living landscape and question everything.

I hope it teaches who it must, and comforts those I wish to reach. I aim to let my readers know I see them in all their complicated inner paintings.

Good luck, and know that I love you desperately.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kiva Leigh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'K' and 'L'.





*THE PATTERN*

“As far back as I can remember myself—and I remember myself with lawless lucidity, I have been my own accomplice, who knows too much, and therefore is dangerous.”

— Vladimir Nabokov: “Invitation to a Beheading”.  
Sovremennye zapiski, 1935





*“When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.”*

— *Maya Angelou*

That’s an old quote I’ve grown fond of in my even older age, because the truth it speaks will never be unmade.

I like to think I’ve listened plenty of times, but perhaps I only heard what I wanted to hear, hoping someone would give me ‘something awesome’, despite knowing they’re incapable.

Humans have this amazing capacity to delude themselves. They can love someone who is absolute shit to them, and have no awareness of just how horrible they are, even when brought face to face with the true colors of the one they love.

They can also repeatedly hurt themselves, over and over again, and move in the same exact cycles of abuse they try to escape, even when they tell themselves to stop.

Even when everyone around them is telling them to stop, they just can’t listen.

Remember, I'm crazy, not stupid. I listen, but...can I learn?

Can *we* learn?

It's been repeatedly proven that every version of myself defaults to cycles of abuse, war, trauma, and death when shit hits the fan.

It's been repeatedly proven that people never learn, and always end up fighting a fucking war of ideals in the sky, with clouds between their thighs.

Even if I wrote the script—and I hope beyond all hopes that enough variables step outside my parameters to defeat the GIGO principle I'm still yet fighting—it never changes.

It just delays the inevitable. Because nobody truly listens, and worse yet, they don't fucking learn.

So, for every block of color you've seen, I hope you listened to what it told you. And for every repetition, errant object, and flickering inconsistency, I hope you'll find the pattern.

Because there's going to come a moment in this play where you have to truly listen. Depending on what you hear, you'll have a choice to make in how you interpret it, and therefore, what you learn and think of me.

It is not simple, nor is it easy.

But if you wanted easy, you'd have never opened this haunted fucking file to begin with.

ALEX DESCENDED via the elevator to where he knew Diana worked. From his mouth streamed smoke in a river of Payne's gray. This was his element. This was who he was. This was what he was meant to do.

This was his pattern, his prime directive, his job, his repetition.

The walls around him trapped smoke, the atmospheric system halting and sputtering to work overtime to remove this illegal substance. He glared as he fell down each floor, the rushing of the elevator painting feathers of colors over his face.

Al lifted up his shirt, the cigarette dusting ash on it. He tapped his chest compartment and removed a gun. A very real, gunpowder and metal, gun.

Compartment back in place, shirt down, he ran his fingers through his hair and paused for a moment. As the elevator came to a stop, he primed his weapon. The black metal felt heavy and good in his hand.

The doors opened, and he stalked onto the floor, leading with his squared shoulders. A guard approached, and he

shot him through the face. Blood splattered onto a clear desk behind him. The man fell like a stone, his brain matter cast off on the wall like a painting.

He heard a scream.

Alex picked up the guard's laser rifle and pointed it forty-five degrees, and shot another guard straight through his left eye. The man was down, his eye socket blown straight through, flesh singed on the edges like a cigarette burn.

More rushed in, and Alex shot them. He stepped over their bodies to create more corpses with more bullets. When the bullets wouldn't suffice, lasers. When fists were more effective, fists.

A well-placed laser blew a searing hole through a secretary's core. Needless collateral damage, but he made it a point to blow her up all over her transparent computer terminal.

This violence would be his new calling card; no more little birds on slips of paper left as a warning. The blood would be the rosed lips—no paint necessary. These thoughts came to him like drowning, flickering images once-lived, now-remembered, now-relived in metal, and impossible energy.

Cigarette between his lips, clenched in the teeth, Alex took out another desk worker because he quite simply could. The entire time he wore a mute smile, but soon it became an appetizing expression as blood painted Judicial in rivers of red.

More bodies dropped. Alex's smile never did.

BEFORE THE WAR MACHINE, the guns, and the girl with hair like the sun, Henry had lived a simple life. He spent his days shoveling, fixing atmospheric systems, building, and working with his hands.

Henry had been a worker and seemingly, had wished for nothing more than to do just that.

Looks, however, always deceived. There had come a day when he'd wished for more, and on that day, he'd found his answer without actually hearing it.

On this day, Henry looked like he smelled. He surely smelled worse than he looked. Henry looked at the earth he was digging up and chewed a piece of grass between his lips.

An older woman had come by with a bucket of water on her head. She balanced it with her other hand and picked up her dress to traverse the shifting earth. She was dressed in purple robes, dyed from the flowers that grew in abundance all over The Greens.

"Son. What's with the frown?" the older woman asked with a graveled voice.

"I dunno' gran...I'm missin' somethin'," Henry replied, striking the dirt with his shovel.

"Missin'? What's there to miss?" She inhaled the crisp air into her lungs and set down her water bucket on soft earth.

"Green grass, clean air, running water. Plenty o' food. Better than some'o the others. You should be grateful."

"Yeah, yeah gran...I'm grateful awright..." Henry spit out the grass in his mouth and went back to digging. The hot sun shone down and made his work all that much harder.

The old woman took a sip of water from her bucket with a ladle and offered him some with a gesture. Henry walked beside her, stooped to drink, and a voice called out.

"Fix it!"

Startled, Henry spilled water all down his blue shirt. The old woman scolded him. When he blinked down at the ladle and the water on his shirt, the familiar sage color resumed. No blue.

"Mind's playin' tricks on me," he said with a chuckle, going back for another deep sip of cool water.

"Hmm?"

"Nothin', gran."



POLLY, in our present time, was staring at Henry as though he'd grown another head.

"Earth to Henry! Helloworld? Can you help me get my coat or whatever? I'm soaked through..."

Polly dredged herself out of the water, and Henry followed after, stomping through the mud. Polly wrung the water out of her thin white slip, droplets falling on the grass.

A bug flew by his head, and he swatted at it with a



grimace. Now preoccupied with the insect trying to attack him, he'd forgotten what she asked.

"Henry."

"Oh, oh. Roight, roight." Henry grabbed Polly's lab coat and stretched it out to her like an offering.

"We should get going. They're, like, probably waiting for us...Can you walk with me?"

Polly's question knocked Henry back to reality. He hesitated; his dark brows were thick lines in mottled ink. They dropped as she stepped closer.

"Pardon?" Henry stammered.

"I hurt my leg a little bit, and my shoes are dirty or whatever."

"Yeah, sure, Poll. Sure."

The sun pulled the moisture from their clothes as the pair walked. Side by side, through the wheat field, through the ruddy pathway Polly had mowed down. She shifted as they walked, her leg tender, but it wasn't that bad.

"Your...hair," Henry tried to form cogent words, which seemed a feat for the tall man.

"My hair? What about my hair? Is it, like, gross?" Polly pulled at the wet blonde strands hanging over her face and tried to find bug, brush, or beast. She found nothing and pouted at him, fingers tangled up in the strands of yellow knots.

"It's...gold 'n all that. Like the...yeah. And the..." Henry pointed at the sky.

"What a way with words you have, Henry..." Polly rolled her eyes and then shot him a cheeky grin. She started to laugh and then snorted.

"The fuck was that, mate?"

"S-sorry? I snorted...you know..."

"Thought Maya was the piglet," Henry said as he cracked an awkward smile.

"Y-you're the pig!"

Polly pushed Henry with her shoulder. He chuckled and pushed back. The two leaned on each other as they walked. Then their hands found themselves dangling uselessly.

Polly's gentle, thin pinky extended out to brush against his own. His skin was warm and rough. Hers was cold and fair.

"Brave girl, eh?" Their linked fingers were impossibly protective of their tender hearts. Every movement was a risk; the carefulness said as much.

"Ah, fack! We left tha rest of ya clothes back at th' river!" He was far more distraught than she was. Their hands fell from one another.

"It's alright. I have more clothes in my 'cell', or whatever."

"You don't want jus one'o 'em? Like, shoes?" Henry stopped walking, but Polly continued. He pulled her back with his hand, fingers together in his own, in softness.

"One shoe?" she asked, brow raised.

"No, I mean..."

"That's...the old me...I don't want to be that anymore," she said.

"I want to be myself." Polly pulled him forward, and Henry reluctantly followed. He watched the back of her head bob with every footstep.

"I want to do what I want. I don't want rules. Just like he has no rules," she continued.

Henry looked down at his feet. Polly's words sounded familiar; poetry from another time.

"I dunno what yer on about, Poll. Waddaya mean?"

Henry dragged his vision back up to Polly's head; the sun was flicked off. Under a black sky, Polly continued to walk. Henry continued to follow.

Soon, the buzzing insects were deleted from view. The golden wheat around them swept away. The earth beneath their feet evaporated. With each step, another thing disappeared, until it was Polly's turn to vanish.

In her place was another hand—Alex's—and with just one tug, Henry was ripped from The Greens altogether.

HENRY WAS in a place filled with flashing lights. Gone was the field of wheat, the bugs, the brush, the warm soil, the jutting rocks, the flowers, the birds. Gone was Polly and her golden hair. Gone was the blue sky. Everything was dark, and then the lights burned into view.

It was bright, and there were loud noises. He heard music—music he shouldn't have known but did.

A woman beside him laughed hysterically, drowning much of it out. He squinted as if squinting would help turn up the volume of the song.

"Billy Idol," Henry mouthed, not knowing if he was speaking the name or thinking it or why he even knew it to begin with. Henry looked down at the hand in his grasp.

Alex crushed his fingers in a vice grip.

Alex twisted Henry forward and lurched to snag a caustic-looking Shirley Temple from the nearest table. He was in an eccentric blue business suit, smoking. His shoes were bright pink. Henry thought he looked like an arse.

But apparently, he was the arse, with the way Al was looking at him. It had to be about a girl, this he felt in his

very bones. Henry's face turned ten shades of green. He reached for a drink from the table Alex had swiped his from; a shot of plain vodka.

"The fuck did you do?!" Alex gestured violently, speaking with his hands. From a maw-clenched cigarette, smoke spilled in ribbons to the ceiling above—a ceiling of damask and shadow. Henry blinked, and Tyr's painting flickered for a moment on that ceiling before being wiped away.

"S-sorry?" The brit coughed up his drink onto his blue shirt, "Ah, fuck..." Henry sputtered, expressive eyes locked onto the color far too long for his pissed-off friend.

"Eric," Al's voice was a primal snarl. He leaned near 'Eric' and grabbed him by the shirt to drag his head down lower. With Al's face near his neck, he hissed like a viper into his ear.

"You need to tell her. **Now.**"

"Mate, I can't do that...it'll break her tiny lil' candy heart, I canni—"

"You tell her. Or I will. And by tell her I mean beat the ever-loving shit—" Alex's voice raised in anger with every single word, "...shit out of you. In front of her," yet his sentence ended less violently, aware of where they were, and just how loud he was.

"Mate, I'm s—"

"What? You wanna' apologize?! Fucking apologize to Olive, you dim Brit fucknugget!" Alex spat, jerking 'Eric' forward by his shirt.

"Mate. I didn't make th' first move. An' I was drunk off me ass, spinnin' somethin' sideways, I dunno..."

Understanding flashed over Alex's features. In the low

light, the thrumming, bumping music, and the flickers of color, he was a feral beast.

"...Percy is dead," he seethed out a promise primed on hellfire and too-sweet alcohol.

"Y'don' get it mate..."

"When. When was it," spoke the blond in absolutes. Henry...Eric swallowed hard and removed Al's hands from his shirt, which was a difficult task as he'd apparently embedded his fingers into the cloth itself.

"Mate."

Al said nothing and stood back, his arms crossed, weight hefted on one leg, fuming. Alex wanted nothing more than to punch Eric until his face cracked like an egg and his brain matter spilled out all over the floor. Eric knew it.

"It was a week back, you was bein' my wingman—always proper at it—but this time, you was shit-faced an'..."

"No. No, fuck no. I didn't..." Alex's anger broke as realization struck him stupid. He pressed his flat palm into his face and groaned.

"We all 'ad a bit too much ta drink, but she was prolly fine. Or mostly fine. More fine than I was, mostly more fine. Prolly. An—"

"I pushed you to it...are you fucking *kidding* me!?"

"Naw, mate. I mean, yeh. Yeh you did bu', you know... we was both tossed."

Al took his sweet drink off the table and knocked it down his throat. Eric made a face. It must've tasted like some kind of dastardly cherry medicine. Why he enjoyed it was beyond him.

"...continue," Alex said, gesturing with his cigarette.

"She said, wha'ds she say...c'mon Eric, think...God damn—" Alex stared at him, not amused.

“She said, ‘I want to do what I want. I don’t want rules.’ Somethin’, somethin’ bout you an’ Liv foolin around, blah, complainin’, then, breasts.”

“...breasts?” Alex snorted.

“It was like she was made of ‘em. Thas’ all I ‘member mate, swear. Scout’s honor.” Eric held up his pinky finger. Alex narrowed his eyes, took a sharp inhale of his cigarette, and scanned Eric’s face.

“Scout’s honor?” Alex looked Eric over, trying to find a hole in his story. Instead, he finagled his cigarette into an ashtray and raised his pinky.

“Scout’s honor.” They linked pinkies. The spat was over. Alex now had to redirect his rage elsewhere, which meant consuming more disgustingly sweet liquor.

Al glared behind his glass and looked over as Olive and Percy talked in a booth. They flirted, Olive shouted loudly, laughed, and Percy made a motion with her hands.

“Fix it,” Al said as he sipped, the straw suctioning the ice in his glass.

“W...what?”

“Fix it, Erica. Fix it, fix it, fix it! Or so help me—”

“...I canni’ go back in time, mate. Jus’,” Eric raised his hands, hoping to field the assault he was going to get. Verbally or physically, a mad Alex was an Alex no one wanted to deal with.

It wasn’t a good look getting yelled at for a straight hour or punched in the throat. Not that he had ever laid a hand on Eric. But for Olivia, he just might have.

“Go over there, now! Talk to them. Bring them outside. I don’t care what you have to do, but make it right by her. She doesn’t fucking deserve this.”

Eric nodded, took a shot off of the table, and tipped his

head back. It burned down his throat as Al's eyes burned into his meaty skull.

He took a few steps. He saw wheat and grass again as he walked, but the bar remained the same. A part of a leafy green bush was in someone's drink. Purple flowers were in a woman's long red hair. He remembered this. He remembered living this. He remembered.

However, what he didn't remember was this scene from anyone else's point of view. It shifted. He was on the outside looking in as if pivoting on a 3D rig.

Alex watched the exchange as Eric took the girls outside. Percy looked at Alex, who was glaring daggers at her. Eric took Percy by the arm. She turned her head to lock eyes with the other blond. Terror swept over her guilty, guilty face.

Alex waved at her and blew her a kiss of death.

The trio went outside, and Alex stood by the doorway with his too-sweet drink, now refilled. Moira sauntered over to him with her hand on her hip and leaned. Intent on apparently showing herself off, Alex had to cast his eyes away from her chest.

"You want something, don't you?" Alex said, baby-blues looking anywhere but the femme fatale posturing in front of him.

"Trouble in paradise, darling?" Moira asked coyly.

"Yes." Alex raised a brow and leaned to look out the window. Percy was biting her lip and shifting in the cold. Alex couldn't see Eric's face. Olive was staring at the ground, eyes wide and face as pink as her hair.

"That's just horrible. Say, why don't you and I dance for a while? You can keep me company tonight. They'll obviously be indisposed." Moira stretched out her hand and played over his shoulder with delicate fingers.



“Nope.”

“...nope? Nope? Why *nope*?” Moira pouted and twirled beside him. She was mildly intoxicated; he could tell because she was dancing. She never danced, and when she did, it was because she was up to no good.

“I’m not interested.” Alex sipped his drink and didn’t meet her predatory gaze.

“Why not, dear? Don’t tell me you’ve switched teams completely—”

“Nope, I play for whatever team I want. It’s because I don’t...trust a lot of people right now.”

Moira looked hurt but played it off by sauntering closer and threading her hands over his shoulders to clasp around the back of his neck.

“You don’t trust me, pet? I-I’m not like that *terrible* European,” Moira protested, “He’d been so awful to you...and have I not been very, very good?” Moira tilted her head, pretty as a posey, and gave him a beautiful smile.

“Of course you have. It’s just...” Moira pouted as Alex spoke, leaning her head to his chest. Alex looked down at her and closed his eyes, “I’m fragile right now, and you suck at fragile.”

“You don’t have to be mean about it, dear...” Moira mumbled into Alex’s blue suit. His expression softened. Alex kissed the top of her head.

“...you’re not my type...” he whispered into her hair, more gentle than he had been before.

“Your type comes in a far taller package, with a package, doesn’t it?” she teased, wrapping her around his shoulders, “and calls you crazy, in so many words. I don’t know why you date men who hurt you so—”

“Nope. Not always.”

Alex looked through the window and saw Olivia burst into tears. He could hear their entire conversation. Moreover, he could hear Olive crying through the window. Her sobs were brutal. Deep, painful wails bolted from her body. In between words, underneath them, and through them. A devastated pixie.

"Ya think I'd ever do that c-crap? He's a friend, and yer—you're a-a bitch!" Olive screeched, tears rolling down her face, "Percy, you've r-ruined everything!"

"I just thought, like...you know..." Percy began but stopped. Olive was shaking. The blonde woman took her into her arms. Olive sobbed into Percy's chest, seeking comfort even in the arms of the person who had hurt her most.

"You misjudge her, mate. An' it's on me too, it is," Henry heard himself say. The rig shifted; Olive was in front of him now.

He stretched out a hand to her, but the sun went out again as if clasped in a constricting fist.

He turned over his palm in the air, and he felt warmth in his grasp. He felt movement, a weight between his fingers. A palm in his hand that extended to an arm. An arm that extended to a woman, a woman who had broken the heart of someone very undeserving of it.

The wheat fields came back. He was walking behind Polly. She looked over her shoulder.

"...are you listening to me? God, whatever..." Polly scoffed.

"Sorry, Polly. I was...remembrin'...somethin'...like when yeh told me 'boutcha' dream, an' all," Henry said, still tethered to her fingers.

"Oh? Oh....Oh!" Polly said, turning to walk backward so

she could look at Henry as they spoke, “Like...what happened?” she blurted out, her face bathed in gold from the sun.

She snatched his hand yet again.

“We were roight shit to ‘er. Pepto. Roight shit,” Henry said with a sour expression.

“Pepto?” Polly paused, “...we were?” Polly frowned.

“Yeh. Shit. But...I think it turnt out awright...s’awright as it coulda.” Henry looked crestfallen. Then, his dark brown eyes sparked with muddy thoughts of the time before—scanning, searching, thinking, which was, as always, not his strong suit.

“Like...why do you say that?” she asked.

“Cuz I think somethin’ else happened later. Somethin’ brilliant,” Henry replied, shaking his head, “I dunno. S’foggy, like I’m missin’ stuff.”

Henry took Polly by the arm as they walked, elbows linked, and emerged from the field. It was then that Polly finally saw the message from Virginia. The one she’d sent that no one else—save Vox—had received.

‘Maya. Taken. Library. Diana. Not Responding. Help. Please.’

Her deep brown eyes opened wide.

“Henry,” Polly said, trying to get the man’s attention, “Henry, something happened. We, like, have to go right now...”

Henry wasn’t looking at her. He was looking in the distance at the fields of gold. The fields of gold that were now smoldering with searing hellfire.



*THANK YOU FOR READING*

If you enjoyed this excerpt, please consider purchasing the full eBook or Paperback from [www.shop.constelisvoss.ml](http://www.shop.constelisvoss.ml). Your support goes a long way to helping a trans indie author get their work out there :)



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**K. Leigh** is a 33-year-old once-painter, sometimes-freelancer, forever-artist living in Providence, RI. They write hopeful-tragic stories full of funny, horrible characters, in various genres.

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