

HARBOR

Episode 9 - "Let it Clot, Let it Mend"

Written by M. Roke

TITLE CARD**SCENE 1 - INT. AL'S TRAILER - MORNING**

The sound of early morning outside of the thin windows in Al's trailer. She rolls over in bed, sleepless. She bleeps awake her phone, grunting at the light.

AL:

7 am... How can it be 7...

A knocking at her door, rattling it.

(Cont., Loud)

Go away.

A moment, then a harder knocking.

(Cont., Even louder)

No visitors!

Another moment. Al sighs, and rolls over. Suddenly, her phone buzzes.

(Cont.)

What the... text from Mama... "I'm outside"-

LEAH:

(Muffled)

- I'm outside!

AL:

(Loud)

Yeah, I just- Ugh, hang on.

Al stumbles out of bed, and gets to her door, wrenching it open.

LEAH:

Morning.

AL:

Mornin', why are you here, Mama?

LEAH:

We haven't had breakfast together for a coupla weeks, it's about time, don't ya think? I'll just squeeze in here...

She walks in.

AL:

... Come in, why don't you...

LEAH:

Here, shitty coffee, just like you like it- one of those pancake sandwiches...

She's rustling the bag, extracting the food.

AL:

So what happened to the hands off approach?

Leah stops.

LEAH:

(Sighs, a slight laugh)

That's fair... Can I sit down?

AL:

... Yeah.

They both sit.

LEAH:

I, *(steeling herself)* messed up. It's habit at this point- I got comfortable with you, well ... you're just stalwart, you know. Ever since you were little, like you had it all figured with one look- I've been leaving you to trailblaze by yourself.

AL:

... It's been a few years, yeah.

LEAH:

So I'm here to stop doing that and to ask for your forgiveness for being all... hands off. I'm sorry, baby.

AL:

... Ok.

LEAH:

(Gentle)

Is it that easy for you?

AL:

Sure. ... No. I don't know. It's fine... Thanks for breakfast, I'm not hungry.

LEAH:

I miss you, Allie. I can't keep going along like this, pretending like my silence isn't hurting you even if it makes things "easier" in the moment-

AL:

I'm *ok*, mama- what am I doing so wrong that you're this concerned?-

LEAH:

I know you, no matter how much you push it under the rug- you're torn up... Afraid?

AL:

(Sighs)

This isn't about fear- I've felt fear, this isn't it.

LEAH:

Ok. But it's somethin'. *(A pause)* The only way to get through whatever this is to open up, even if it sucks. Whatever sticks here isn't gonna go away unless it gets sussed out.

Al clunks her head against the table.

AL:

Why is this all so hard.

LEAH:

... I know...

AL:

I don't want to do... any of this. I'm upsetting *you*, now.

LEAH:

(Quietly)

You know I'm here for you, even when we're working through something. I got you.

AL:

I'm sorry, mama. For being like this... it's all so much.

LEAH:

You're ok, don't pull all the blame on yourself... What's got you bent up, baby?

AL:

(*Heavy sigh*)

I found out something... bad about someone. And I don't know what to do... It's easier to not think about it but then it just sits in my head and *churns*...

LEAH:

Ok, ok... Can ya give me any more than that?

AL:

My boss at the gas station did bad things a long time ago.

LEAH:

Which boss is this?

AL:

I know- Why do we even need 3- He's, uh, the one that got me into the job.

LEAH:

Ah... yes.

AL:

And, ok, so our *regional* boss came in-

LEAH:

This is an awful lot of overhead for a gas station.

AL:

It's stupid- but he comes in, stops everything and holds shit over my boss's head- and then this *dickhole* corners me with this past bullshit to, I dunno, "get" me and what do I do with that??
What... What do I do...

LEAH:

That sounds like harassment, if this new one is, cornering you?
My God...

AL:

Like we can do anything, that fucker's got power.

LEAH:

Keep tabs on all this, and the more you can get in writing, the better.

AL:

Yeah, yeah, yeah- it's not about him, though...

LEAH:

It's not?? Oh, yeah, that... so just how bad was the bad thing?

AL:

Insinuated it was jail worthy.

LEAH:

Oh. Mhm.

AL:

I didn't expect it... I can't wrap my head around it. It's ok, people have pasts, but... I thought... No, that's the problem. I never thought... He never said. After everything, and he never said.

LEAH:

... You trust him a lot. So to hear that from someone else..?

AL:

Yeah...

LEAH:

So this might be more about the level of reciprocal trust you expected?

Al thinks.

AL:

Roundabouts. Smart.

NARRATOR:

A thoughtful, half-hearted smile pulled at Al's lips. For the first time in two days, her heart began to slow its frantic, low thrum. Leah gently grasped her daughter's hand across the tiny, built in "dining room" table, her thumb stroking Al's bony knuckles.

LEAH:

Been around a time or two, fuckin' things up.

AL:

Mmm...

NARRATOR:

Something shifted deep behind Al's eyes. A pressure, a cumulation of drowsiness and thickness, feeling her mother cradle her hand...

AL:

(A moment while she thinks)

I gotta fix this. The gas station isn't... functioning right now. It can't keep going on like this. We're not perfect, but what we do at there... It's good work. And we can't let someone else barge in and derail us... Not with Harbor relying on us... Where are people going to get their gas if we just leave it behind?

LEAH:

... Probably at Square C Petrol.

They laugh, releasing some built up tension.

SCENE 2 - EXT. SEDUM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sam is climbing the stairs to Sedum's apartment.

SAM:

(Under his breath)

He doesn't... he doesn't need to know how much I know. Keep it cool, Sam, you can help... Make this better... *(Stifles a sickened groan)* It's ok, it's not like he can smell guilt. I think.

He stops at the landing, gathers his breath.

NARRATOR:

Sam's face to the sky, he raised his hand to the door to Sedum's apartment, and took in the gray morning. He knocked once. A person was on the roof, head in their hands, clothed in pajama pants and a slack T-shirt. A shimmer rippled over the form, and it was larger- a man. The air ruffled around him, and he changed, lithier, a woman instead-

SAM:

(Inhales sharply, quietly)

Jordan... ?

NARRATOR:

The woman's head snapped up and locked eyes with Sam.

SEDUM:

Samson!

(Cont.)

Iridescence wavered over the Jordan imitation, leaving Sedum sitting on the roof, looking disarmingly small.

SAM:

I... Wanted to talk.

SEDUM:

... I'll be right down.

SCENE 3 - INT. SEDUM'S APARTMENT - MORNING**SEDUM:**

Can I get you coffee? Tea? Water? I can make-

SAM:

I'll take some coffee.

SEDUM:

Good. Good...

NARRATOR:

Sam ran his hands over the shelves in the living room as Sedum clattered around the kitchen... This had been his mother's bedroom- lofty ceilings and beautiful open space, added on in the 90s... A multitude of plants lined the shelves, the soft purple glow of grow lamps over their leaves, creating a sort of otherworldly comfort Sam hadn't been privy to the last time he'd been up. His hand shook as he traced the broad, waxy leaves of a vigorous subject.

Sedum is in the kitchen, clinking about, readying the water, etc.

SEDUM:

(From the other room)

It's a bit early, isn't it?

SAM:

Mmm, I couldn't sleep... You were using a different face, up there.

SEDUM:

Yes.

Sam sits down.

SAM:

Any... particular reason? (*Lying*) I didn't recognize you?

SEDUM:

(*A pause*)

I wanted to see if I could trick myself into feeling like a different person.

Sedum comes back in, and sits on the couch.

SAM:

Was it working?

SEDUM:

(*Snorts*)

No. ... Well, Samson, before I give you the floor to... rightfully say whatever you need to, I'd like to apologise. For neglecting you. I'm deeply sorry, but I am going to try my best to focus on you and your needs more in the future. You have my undivided attention going forward, I swear.

SAM:

(*Muttering*)

God, that sounds familiar...

SEDUM:

It must all sound like empty promises at this point.

SAM:

No, I believe you, it's, it's, it's not that- Thank you. Uhm... (*Gathering his courage*) I need to... ask... you...

SEDUM:

... Yes?

SAM:

(*Softer*)

Are you alright?

SEDUM:

(A smile creeps over him)
... Not at all. I thought you knew?

SAM:

Well, what's better to hear: "are you ok?" or "you're obviously upset, I demand to know why".

SEDUM:

Hah. Yes, when you put it like that. Then no, I'm not ok.

SAM:

I'm just worried... *whatever's* going on is spreading to Al. I can't stand by and watch it happen.

SEDUM:

And I'm deeply sorry for that. It was never meant to.

SAM:

You know her. She won't... well not that she *won't*, but she sometimes needs to be kicked into talking about the rough stuff. Passivity doesn't work well with her... If you want to fix this, you need to step up.

SEDUM:

I tried yesterday- it didn't go over *great*.

SAM:

But you've done it before, right? You've been there for her at her worst moments.

NARRATOR:

Sedum leaned back against the couch, his four eyes narrowing in thought as he looked at Sam.

SEDUM:

Such as-?

SAM:

-I assume. Because you knew her during her... active alcoholic year.

SEDUM:

Mm. There's been hard times, yes. Samson, I don't know how much you've heard-

SAM:

-I haven't heard anything.

SEDUM:

Right... this is different. I can't ask anything of her, especially not now after she's been told- after it all.

SAM:

You mean whatever the Becker situation is.

SEDUM:

Yes. It was my fault, entirely. There's no reparations. Believe me.

SAM:

Is he interested in that anyway? It looks like he's getting something out of it not being "repaired".

SEDUM:

He has something of a right to that. And Al is entitled to her own thoughts concerning it.

SAM:

But do you really think she's so cold that she doesn't want to hear what you have to say?

SEDUM:

... Fair point.

SAM:

Listen... *whatever* happened, you've grown from it. You've done a lot to prove that.

SEDUM:

(Deadened)

I wonder if any of it was of my own volition, though.

SAM:

I don't think... bad people spend time worrying about being bad... and if they do, more than that, they don't work so hard to be better after they've *learned* better. That's the difference.

Right?

SEDUM:

(Muttering)

Yet I'm still waiting to be caught- I'm so sure that I'll slip up and... and *he'll* be there, and now... lo and behold, it's coming true...

SAM:

(Softer)

How so?

SEDUM:

(Laughs)

What I was just doing! Good Lord, Samson, I was just *doing* it- Pretending to be someone else- I'm a fraud. I can't even face *myself* honestly, how can I face anyone else!

NARRATOR:

Sam chewed his lip, as Sedum held the end of his beak, half in thought, half forcing himself into silence. Sam leaned forward in his chair.

SAM:

I think... being stuck in our heads, we see every bit of passing "bad" in us... it can look like it negates the good we *choose* to act on... That's what counts, though. That you choose, Sedum. Our good choices aren't fake.

SEDUM:

Mm...

Clicking of nails- Fergum's approaching.

SAM:

But this isn't just about you and Becker anymore. Al's a part of it now, too, and that's where I step in. You can't let this go on like it has been, she's suffering because of him; Because of his *obsession* and your avoidance.

SEDUM:

Samson- there's nothing- If we can get his focus back to center, then it'll be manageable, enough-

FERGUM:

Is it time to critique the Bird?? We have an addition- Your plants made us ill and the guilt lies upon you-

Sam gets up and walks over to the door into the hall.

SAM:

Not now Fergum, we'll help you later.

FERGUM:

WE NEED ANTACIDS-

Sam shuts the door.

SEDUM:

I should deal with that.

SAM:

Sedum, you need to hear this- Becker gets *off* on digging *knives* in you every chance he gets.

NARRATOR:

Sedum's eyes widened. Sam's stomach dropped, memories of red-

SAM:

(Hurriedly)

Proverbially! What I mean is, this isn't cut and dry.

SEDUM:

(Sighs, to himself)

What kind of precedent am I setting if I can't stand up after he's hurt her... When I told her I would keep her safe...

SAM:

(Swallows)

Listen, I could sit here and tell you what to do until I'm blue in the face... But only you get to decide what you're willing to put with up. And what's worth the cost. My mom told me that. I think she's right.

NARRATOR:

Sam stared at Sedum massaging his gray hands, deep in thought.

Sam steadied his own shivers against the back of his chair, willing every bit of adrenaline that pulsed in his veins to leak away into the void.

The coffee beeps in the kitchen.

SEDUM:

Coffee's done.

SCENE 4 - INT. DOCA - MORNING

Sam sighs, writing. William in the other room, having a fight with the printer.

NARRATOR:

Valen poked her head around the empty doorway from the kitchen, to Sam's back corner of the office, catching him blearily circling a spot on his paper for the fifth time.

VALENTINA:

Hey Greer 2, you're dragging your feet on those practice sheets.

SAM:

Oh- Director Ivers Hollow-

VALENTINA:

Sam, please, I appreciate what you're doing, but for the love of God, call me Valen.

SAM:

Right, sorry, so sorry...

NARRATOR:

She disappeared, back into the kitchen. Sam took the chance to clean the smears from his glasses, squinting at the same hypothetical Cryptid-and-Human based scenario essay question he'd been stuck on for the past 3 minutes. He slid his glasses back over his nose and pressed the tip of his pencil to the blank space.

BECKER:

Hollow.

NARRATOR:

Sam's heart shot into his throat, the tip of his pencil breaking against the paper. His breath froze in his chest, practically feeling the heat of the State Director emanating through the wall separating them. He pressed himself tight against his scarred desk, reciting silent prayers to stay invisible.

BECKER:

It's after 10. Where's two of your staff?

VALENTINA:

(Sighs)

You're talking about Al and Se-

BECKER:

-Of course, who else would I be talking about? Don't dodge the question; Where are they?

VALENTINA:

Well, Al's bleeding out in a ditch and Sedum fell off a bridge.

BECKER:

Excuse me?

VALENTINA:

I don't *know*, Becker- I'm dealing with my own shit today, life marches on and so forth.

BECKER:

When a Ranger doesn't show up for work, that creates a problem. When a Ranger AND your lead Director don't show up, that sets a standard. This is all of our issue, now.

VALENTINA:

Lucky for us we don't rely on one person to lead our crew then. I know what I'm doing today. Sounds like your problem, if you're *this* concerned.

BECKER:

(Forces a smile)

You know what's incredible? How everyone loves to differ blame here. Really indicative of a broken system.

SCENE 5 - INT. AL'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Al's phone buzzes. She lets it go.

AL:

(Muttering)

Call number 5 from the Station... *(Chuckles)* Lord have fuckin' mercy.

NARRATOR:

Al took deep inhale on her cigarette, the windows of her car rolled down, the mid-day heat pulsing in. The smoke drifted out with the soft cross breeze in the grocery store parking lot.

AL:

(Pause)

This isn't the end of the world... Ok. Ok...

NARRATOR:

She traced the edge of her phone with her thumb, hesitating above the call button.

AL:

God this isn't anything I ever wanted to do... Hey, It ain't too bad. Just confronting... someone you thought you trusted. Do trust. ... Mmmgh... Fuckin' hell.

NARRATOR:

She blocked out the late morning light with her free hand, tapping the edge of her phone against her head.

The phone buzzes in a text.

(Cont.)

Willie, I swear to God, you best not be textin' me now...-

NARRATOR:

Al frowned, then blinked at the screen. She ground out her cigarette in the old ashtray. 1 Unread Text from Sedum.

AL:

What in hell- *(Reading)* "Van wwe tall"...? What... Van we tall? What... Is that supposed to be... "Can we talk?"

Another text buzzes in.

(Cont.)

"At F O Mmmeat. Im noutiand..." At. Field of Meat. I'm...? Noutiand... in Mountains.

Another text buzzes in.

AL:

"L O L nut good at tgis" *(Laughs)* No you're not good at this.

She types out a return message.

(Cont.)

"Ok. Be there soon".

SCENE 6 - INT. DOCA - AFTERNOON

It's quiet, with Sam typing away at the computer, blearily.

SAM:

"Evidence" (Yawns) "Of... possible linkage to the Pyre on Main Street, from the library to Finnick's Toy Shop, two city blocks to the..." uhhh... "east! With a destructive..." (He deletes back)

No, "warping effect on the display window"-

CRUX:

Sam-

SAM:

AH- ah, Hey, *Crux*, hi, I didn't hear you get in.

CRUX:

You're filling out a report. When did you go out?

SAM:

I saw this yesterday, on my way in- I didn't get around to writing it til now.

CRUX:

Interesting- the old toy shop... isn't that something..

SAM:

Told Valen yesterday, this is just practice.

CRUX:

Mm, it makes perfect. So... half our crew hasn't shown up today. You wouldn't know anything about that, would you?

SAM:

I... (lowers his voice) had a chat this morning, but didn't get a chance to... to see Al... fingers crossed? There's a lot to sort through, from what I, uh... um, surmised.

CRUX:

Yes, the whole thing is pretty stew-like- at least from the emotional haze. Thank you for your service, Sam. You're rather gifted at that, it seems.

SAM:

Ah, uh, thanks, Crux. I appreciate that.

CRUX:

You're welcome. Look at us, learning so much about each other. What good coworkers. *(Feeling something new)*
Mmm- wait, what is that feeling-

SAM:

(Slightly flustered)
What feeling?

NARRATOR:

Crux stood up straight, still gripping the back of Sam's chair. He stared down through the kitchen, through the breakroom, and raised an eyebrow.

CRUX:

Did you do something to Roose, too?

SAM:

What?

CRUX:

(Lightly)
Well, she's headed this way and looks murderous-

ROOSE:

GREER! Why are you here, inside, now?

SAM:

Wha- Ah, what did I do?!?

ROOSE:

(Hissed)
Where. Is. Fergum?

The lights, suddenly, with a surge and a decrease, power off.

WILLIAM:

(Distant)

What happened to the lights?? And the phone- AUGH, AND my computer!

ROOSE:

(Deadly)

You forgot about walkies. And now they're in the vents.

WILLIAM:

How'd Fergum get in the vents?!

CRUX:

More likely they're causing mischief with the breakers or the transformer down the street. But who am I to say about electrical properties... -

ROOSE:

I don't care- They're corrupting the utilities! You were supposed to take Fergum out for their walk, Greer, like you have done every day for the past two weeks, and I, as I have done for the past. TWO. WEEKS. Took down Fergum's barrier- I ASSUMED YOU HAD IT UNDER CONTROL.

Sam splutters.

(Cont.)

Don't dare to even open your mouth- you are in no position to defend. Do you understand? Stick has shut off power all because you couldn't even take a pack of dogs for "walkies".

BECKER:

(Distant)

What happened to the lights?

ROOSE:

NEVER YOU MIND, USELESS BECKER- *(She dissolves into hacking coughs)* Come along Greer, it's time I show you a sliver of the power you so flagrantly take for granted.

NARRATOR:

Roose crawled towards the side door, bent double under the ceiling, and Sam *did* attempt to follow before a hand grabbed his bicep, his opposite shoulder roughly squeezed into a suited body.

Sam can't help but gasp, terrorized.

BECKER:

Don't worry, son, I'll come along, make sure the ol' gal doesn't
treat ya too rough.

SAM:

Ooooooh, good good good, T-t-thanks, Mr. Becker.

SCENE 7 - EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

They are outside, walking down the sidewalk, or rather, Sam and
Becker are running to catch up. Fergum's whining ahead.

SAM:

(Breathless)

Director Roose, shouldn't we be a bit more inconspicuous- it's
barely after 3 and you're... um, you have four arms and are 8 feet
tall and-

ROOSE:

I am not responsible for Human's small minds.

BECKER:

If you pull us into a revolution against government secrecy,
Roose, I *will* have to write you up-

ROOSE:

Try.-

SAM:

(Gasps)
Fergum!!

Sam runs forward.

NARRATOR:

Two of Fergum's bodies danced at the empty lot at the end of the
cul de sac. The neighborhood's green transformer box belched
smoke. The third of Fergum lay splayed on the ground, unmoving.

FERGUM:

HA HA HA, WE GOT SINGED- *(Whines)* It is new and horrible.

SAM:

Oh my God- are you all- Is one of you dead?!

FERGUM:

Yes! It is PAIN.

BECKER:

(Distant)

Talking dogs? Ugh, of course this would be another one of your types-

FERGUM:

Stick never plays fair..

NARRATOR:

The ripped transformer box, some oddly fleshy wires within freshly torn apart, dripped with wetness, releasing a biting stink.

SAM:

Did you... Why did you piss on Stick?!

Fergum laughs.

ROOSE:

(Distant)

OBSERVE AND COWER, IDIOTS!

NARRATOR:

With a sickening yank, Fergum's living bodies were drug away from Sam, nails flinging up dirt and grass, towards Roose, who held out a single finger.

FERGUM:

(Strangled cry)

Do not leave our burnt extension!

SAM:

I'll get it! Oh geeze, it smells-

Sam gathers up the dead body, gagging and runs back.

BECKER:

Let me help you with that, son.

SAM:

No- *(Breathing heavily, firmer this time)* N-no- Thank you, State Director. I don't... want your coat getting mussed up.

Sam moves on ahead.

SCENE 8 - INT. DOCA - AFTERNOON

The door clatters shut, lots of walking and the whining straining scrabbling of Fergum echoing.

VALENTINA:

... All three of them?

WILLIAM:

From what I heard-

NARRATOR:

The front doors into the office flung open as Roose hurled the two living bodies of Fergum in front of the reception desk.

William gasps, jerking back.

VALENTINA:

What the hell, Roose?!

NARRATOR:

Valen jumped back as the dogs squirmed on the wood floor, pushing William into the wall that he was crawling up, her arms outstretched as a barrier. Crux gagged, holding himself against a far wall, as the stink emanating from the "baggage" in Sam's arms sank into the warm air.

VALENTINA:

Take 'em upstairs- They can't be down here!

FERGUM:

Wait!

CRUX:

(Barely holding it together)
What smells like burnt jerky and piss?

Sam sets the body down.

SAM:

(Breathless)

One of Fergum is dead. What did you say, Fergum?-

ROOSE:

There, Greer. Look at the agony you caused. You wonder why, precisely WHY you cannot jaunt about town- Because this is *work* not a hobby you can breeze by on good intentions and simpering smiles.

FERGUM:

We said to wait!

SAM:

Ok, fine, Director (*Louder*) but we really need to hold on for a second-!

BECKER:

It's all a big misunderstanding. Go easy on the kid.

ROOSE:

Mistakes have consequences. I'd sooner have the invalid back out in the field than this disgrace.

BECKER:

Someone get those dogs upstairs- Now, Roose-

SAM:

(*Loud*)

No, Fergum said to wait- We should wait!

ROOSE:

Silence, Becker! Greer! Resolve this in whatever way you possibly can. Show me! Prove to me what little worth you have left, you honey-soaked NERD.

SAM:

FINE!

NARRATOR:

Sam's chest heaved, 6 people watching a hard red engulf his face.

ROOSE:

... Can you not even attempt?

SAM:

(Jaw clenched)

I am.

BECKER:

By doing nothing...?

SAM:

Fergum said to wait, they know what's going on, so I'm waiting.

NARRATOR:

All attention turned to the two dogs hovering over the corpse.

FERGUM:

... We did.

Another moment, then... the dead Fergum seizes in a great gulp of air, horrible, miraculous, hacking and wheezing.

BECKER:

HOLY SHIT-

NARRATOR:

The charred body spasmed, the streaks of burns up and down it's abdomen flinching, glistening and charred. Valen ducked down next to Sam, both of their hands tentative above the quivering flesh.

Fergum starts laughing, pained.

SAM:

(Quieter as he talks directly to Fergum)

Are ya'll ok?

FERGUM:

This is the first instance of electrocution death- It is most intriguing and full of horrors!

SAM:

What can I do?

VALENTINA:

(Low)

Sedum has some weird shit upstairs-

SAM:

Huh?

VALENTINA:

(Hissed)

-Plants! I bet there's something.

SAM:

(Whispered back)

We have drugs now- great; *(Normal)* Fergum, can you wait until they get back?

FERGUM:

It has been lifetimes since we have felt the novelty of resurrection, what are a few more harrowing hours??

SAM:

Is this enough, Director Roose?

ROOSE:

... Through no effort of your own.

SCENE 9 - EXT. THE FIELD OF MEAT - AFTERNOON

Al is walking through the grass, the heat rising with the sun.

AL:

Hey.

SEDUM:

(Slightly distant)

Hi.

She walks over to him as she speaks.

AL:

You texted me.

SEDUM:

And you're here.

AL:

I'm surprised you're hip with the kids slang.

She stops.

SEDUM:

You mean the acronym?

AL:

Yeah. Do you know what LOL means?

SEDUM:

No idea, but Valen uses it regularly. I assumed it was for a sort of... mitigating flair.

AL:

Laugh Out Loud.

SEDUM:

... Ha?

AL:

It's what it means.

SEDUM:

Oh. I must be honest, I wasn't laughing aloud when I wrote it.

AL:

(Chuckles)

Most folks aren't when they use it.

SEDUM:

That's disingenuous.

AL:

Yeah... So... you wanted to talk?

SEDUM:

Mhm. What about yourself?

AL:

Yeah. I'm ready. *(A moment as she sits down)* So... I guess... Uh, ok what did you want- with Becker and the others?

SEDUM:

That's hard to pin down.

AL:

I know you don't have a psychopathy. I mean, I think you don't.

SEDUM:

... I manufactured closeness, or rather *stole* it, from personal relationships, toyed with their realities- I got close to those powerful men- I did it because I wanted to see if their... *integrity* could withstand pressure. If what they had, what I didn't, if it was warranted.

AL:

What... respect?

SEDUM:

More like dignity. I wanted to see who they were to deserve regard and power over so many, when I felt like I could see deeper...

AL:

Did they? Deserve it?

SEDUM:

Who does, really.

AL:

Yeee, bleak...

SEDUM:

I mean to say, it-it's hard to *earn* real love. Those men... took out the anger and stress I put them through on their families, strangers, friends- themselves. And I felt superior for making them admit that. No matter what they did, *I* was disgusting- I revolted myself, but wouldn't stop long enough to- (*He stops himself, then mutters*)... it was a regrettable situation steeped in vicious insecurities. And I'm sorry you ever had to think on it... I'm sorry it ever happened.

AL:

... Thanks for telling me.

SEDUM:

Of course... I'm sorry it was this late.

AL:

I'm sorry for being a dickhead yesterday. I was still processing, but I was also... mean.

SEDUM:

It was reasonable, considering.

AL:

It didn't help.

SEDUM:

It's alright...

AL:

(Diving right in, pumping herself up)

Ok, I have to get this out- Ok! AH! I've always looked up to you. You taught me damn near everything... we're family. You were there to pick me up when I couldn't stand anyone else to-

SEDUM:

Al-

AL:

Please, hold on, otherwise it'll get stuck... Uh... Alright, I guess, what hurts most, was... That you didn't tell me.

SEDUM:

... oh.

AL:

Yeah, this is what just...

NARRATOR:

She mimed a dagger in her hand and plunged it into her heart, letting her tongue loll out, gazing out at the wildflowers.

AL:

Blah, like that.

SEDUM:

(Realizing)

Yes, of course...

AL:

Just blood everywhere.

SEDUM:

(Starting to break)

Mm, understandable...

AL:

Like *(She makes gross blood noises, followed by little bits of quiet screaming)* A whole fucking mess-

NARRATOR:

Al glanced up from her miming- Sedum's hands covered his eyes, and his beak opened slightly in an overwhelmed gasp.

SEDUM:

(Crying, apologizing for crying)

S-sorry-

AL:

(Breaking slightly)

Oh God, oh no, no, I was making a joke, it was a big dumb joke... I shouldn't've...-

SEDUM:

No! You're right! It was traumatizing! I lied to you- never gave you the opportunity to-to decide- I never wanted to hurt *you*, of all people- *(hushed, to himself)* it all rot- It's all fake-

NARRATOR:

Al slid her arm under his, under the joint of his wing, limply splayed out over the grass, and pulled him close, burying her face against the warm leather of his coat.

AL:

It's ok, this is real. You're here, I'm here... It's just uncomfortable right now.

SEDUM:

No, Al, you don't have to stay, you've never had to stay. You shouldn't.

AL:

(Tongue-in-cheek)

You don't get to tell me what to do, old man.

Sedum laughs, despite himself.

(Cont.)

Look... I just... wanna know why you didn't share that.

SEDUM:

(Sighing, scoffing laugh)

It'll be more feeble excuses-

AL:

(Serious, a little deadened)

Sedum. It's more than... you not saying. It's... You saw me on my absolute worst day. Worst goddamn day of my life. And a lotta close seconds after that. And...

NARRATOR:

Al clung to his coat, her face buried against his shoulder, eyes shifting out of focus on the tall grass and wildflowers swaying in the midday. It was clumsy, her grasping in a stranglehold, him limply accepting. The thought of being seen churned Al's stomach.

AL:

You didn't share the *memory* of your's... *(Quieter)* I've felt so alone with how *bad* I fucked up... For 6 years. When I wasn't... It's selfish but there ya go...

SEDUM:

(Slightly strangled, realizing it's gotten worse)

Mmm... *(Swallows)* ... I didn't tell you because I never, I... *(He doesn't want to say this)* I didn't want to poison you... the closest person I've ever had to a-a child. That is how much you mean to me, truly.

AL:

There's no chance in hell I'm calling you "daddy".

SEDUM:

(Laughs, again, but falling back in- her powers are limited now) Awful, but quite right... *(A moment, quieter)* The thought of you ever having to think on all of that... was so disturbing that I succumbed, stayed quiet. And, and obviously abandoned you!-

NARRATOR:

Al was pried away from him. She choked back the anxiety and stared defiantly up at Sedum.

SEDUM:

There's no apologizing enough. For everything. God, for it *all-* I'm so sorry.

AL:

Thank you, for explaining, for hearing me. Thank you. Ok...? Now can we start moving on? Let's leave this behind- you know what not to do-

SEDUM:

It isn't that easy.

AL:

You know what, you're right! It isn't! But it's the first choice- I'm choosing to take you at your word, when you say you did all this because you thought it would be best, I believe you believed that. But now you know better. So I'm pushin' forward. You wanna join?

SEDUM:

You didn't see, you didn't experience it.

AL:

What do you want to hear? That you did bad shit, some intense vigilante bullshit, I guess, ok, you did. You wanna hear how you didn't tell, then you kept on *not* telling, and it made the whole thing worse, it happened. But have you heard how it's taken you away? Even now. Glenda's already won. Becker's already won. You've been gone from the DoCA for weeks- you're just sitting in that chair. Come back.

SEDUM:

(The logic is poking holes in his reasoning)

It isn't *winning* if they're right- N-now, Becker intimidating and disrespecting you is inexcusable, and I swear to God he'll never has access to you privately again... But, I *tormented* him. That's different- it's between us.

AL:

I can't give you his forgiveness, I would if I could- but! You paid for it, either way. In Raleigh? ... He said the word "kennel".

SEDUM:

(Uncomfortable, quiet)

Yes. It was what you think it was...

AL:

You served time and got rehabilitated. So what excuse does he have now?

SEDUM:

That isn't mine to decide.

AL:

When are you allowed to be something better than you were? After punishment and betterment... Understanding why it was wrong- fuck, *repentance and change* most of all. ... Sedum, when you told me that I had to move forward and forgive myself, were you lying to me?

SEDUM:

No! No, of course not.

AL:

Then you can do it, too.

SEDUM:

You didn't hunt someone down to prove a point. You were defending yourself-

AL:

You didn't kill someone. *(A pause)* We aren't the same people we were. We've made damn sure of that.

SEDUM:

Al, you... You, you're right, you are but- he's still *here*... I have to believe there's some way out.

AL:

(Tired for him, for herself)

Stop. Please. I'm sorry I brought him up, this isn't about him. This is us. I forgive you. For keeping this from me, for making bad decisions. And I'm so thankful you've made yourself better despite 'em. *(Sighs)* I love you so goddamn much. I love you to the moon, whatever that's worth. All jokes aside... You are my dad- You're my father-figure-person. But hear me when I say I *can't* love you enough to replace you respecting yourself. *(A breath)* I'll be here to help you get used to it, though.

NARRATOR:

Al grabbed him, hitting her forehead against his chest, wrapping her fingers around the soft feathers of his wings.

AL:

(Gentler)

We're *both* worth our own hard fought, hard earned forgiveness.

NARRATOR:

His talons found rest against her shoulder blades.

SEDUM:

(Calming, nodding)

... I love you, too.

SCENE 10 - INT. DOCA - AFTERNOON

It's quiet in the office.

SAM:

William? Sorry for that freakout. Valen's got Fergum safe upstairs. You alright?

WILLIAM:

I'm better than alright, after your stunt back there- Hooo doggy, you showed 'em, Sam!

SAM:

What... (Laughs, abashed) No... I just did what Fergum said to do.

WILLIAM:

It fixed it though, didn't it? While everyone was jabbering on! You were *right*.

SAM:

(Grinning)

Ah... I mean... I guess?

WILLIAM:

Even said shove it to Roose, in your own way. Sammy, you're doin' it! Just a little coaching from your's truly and you're swinging with the best of 'em!

SAM:

Yeah. Yeah, I-I am!

WILLIAM:

Now ya need to follow this up with a bang! Somethin' to really clench the win.

Becker walks through, on his way out.

BECKER:

Hold down the fort for the rest of the night, eh fellas?

WILLIAM:

Righto.

BECKER:

Sam? Come here a sec.

Sam hesitantly walks over.

SAM:

Ah... *(Clear throat)* Yes sir? Mr. Becker?

BECKER:

I'm gonna get Roose to stop riding you so hard.

SAM:

What a way to put it- thank you-

BECKER:

-I remember when I was your age; I just needed someone in my corner.

SAM:

Please, I-I'm fine, Mr. Becker, but really thank you! It was my fault for not communci-

BECKER:

You got a good head on your shoulders, son. You're cool under pressure. That's a good trait in a Ranger... Keep it up. Night.

Becker leaves.

WILLIAM:

Can't ever tell what that guy's after.

SAM:

I'm not sure if he knows.

WILLIAM:

Ok, so, your next display's gotta show a different side of ya. You shown the calm- now comes poppin' off! Give 'em three dimensions!

SAM:

I'm not sure if I have a "popping off" side.

The phone rings-

WILLIAM:

Ah, Just a sec-

He picks it up and hangs it up again.

(Cont.)

Well, let's start with your *style*.

SAM:

Uh... ok, I like to think of it kind of like British Professor in the 40s, but with less wool.

WILLIAM:

I mean your fightin' style.

SAM:

Oh. Uhm... I guess tearing people down mentally...?

WILLIAM:

... You're sayin words, I know you are.

SAM:

What, you're talking about fist fights?

WILLIAM:

(Scoffs)

Am I talking about- Yeah, Sammy! We're dealing with the backwoods, here! Listen, ok, listen to me-

The phone rings again-

(Cont.)

Hang on-

He picks it up and slams it down again.

(Cont.)

They'll leave a message if it's important-

SAM:

Well, they can't if you keep hanging up-

WILLIAM:

Sam, who's the receptionist here? Now, people got buckshot and razors blades and TEETH out there, ya gotta be ready!

SAM:

I've never been in a fist-fight... let alone a razor blade fight.

WILLIAM:

Hmmm... What about a knife fight?

SAM:

(Same thing to Sam)

... Not that either.

WILLIAM:

Darn... Oh... We should get you tanglin' with Val! Ah, two birds, one stone! You don't know hardly jack-all about your *fantastic* Director! No better way than a wrassle with her.

SAM:

What happened to keeping this on the down-low and just getting pointers- you're bringing her in now? She's my direct boss after I get all caught up!

WILLIAM:

She's solid, and she can get you squared up in no time- She's shown me some *good* moves. And you need to know her to work with her, one-on-one style.

SAM:

I'll think about it. Today's been a lot.

WILLIAM:

Sam, if you don't stop and put your ear to the ground, then how on Earth are ya gonna see the clear course of action right in front of your nose- *(The phone rings again)* Gimme a second- *(He picks up this time.)* We're busy, leave a message!

Before he slams down the phone we hear a strangled "Help!" on the line.

(Cont.)

Ya gotta understand, your place is gonna be determined for you if you don't rise up and *collaborate* with these folks when the opportunity arises. I seen it happen before, it'll happen again. You *have* to take charge.

SAM:

Ok. Ok... I'll-I'll figure it out. I'll do something!

WILLIAM:

Clench that win!

SCENE 11 - INT. DOCA - AFTERNOON

The door opens and shuts, and two enter.

SAM:

(Inhales sharply)
They're back- Oh God.

WILLIAM:

Oh look who decide to show up! Ya'll two enjoy your day off?

AL:

(Stretching, relaxed)
Yeah it was fine.

SEDUM:

Apologies for that, William. I hope we didn't leave you all in too much of a bind-

SAM:

Well, Fergum... had an accident?

SEDUM:

... Oh, no, not my rug!-

WILLIAM:

-Well, you got a dead-not-dead dog upstairs waitin for ya.

SCENE 12 - INT. RESTURAUNT - EVENING

It's a quiet enough place, showing signs of more "upscale".

BECKER:

... Ever since my ex walked out on me, it's been hard... Mmh, then my kid won't even answer my calls- she doesn't even know how phones work, apparently! Teenagers... But when you called me, damn, Glenda, you answered a prayer I didn't know I'd been

praying! It was a tough coupla months, but then, being able to come up here, take in the fresh air, I can't thank you enough-
Never ever. I owe you.

GLENDA:

You flatterer- I am just glad it's worked so well for both of us, you wouldn't believe how much more time I have with you handling that sideshow- It's almost as though I can be Mayor.

BECKER:

Mmm, no, no, I swear, I got the better end of the deal. Gettin' back to my roots has done wonders.

GLENDA:

Speakin' of getting what we want... Let me be completely transparent, Brick. Seeing as how our home-grown terrorist situation is going far better with the Police Department, have I brought you up to speed? We've already linked the break-in at the library with the vandalism (I mean, it's obvious, isn't it?), and that certain Department not even having done *that* yet... What do you say to going ahead and putting that "DoCA" in the ground, hm? Give me a real thank you present, other than sweet wishes.

A sudden silence from Becker. He sets down his cutlery.

BECKER:

No.

GLENDA:

What was that?

BECKER:

(Getting lower, very serious)

Do you have any idea where you live, Mrs. Dickson? I could never shut that place down, doesn't matter how incompetently they run- they're your first and LAST line of defense against the infestation you have in this place. I'd be an idiot to do that.

GLENDA:

(Dryly)

Mind your manners, Brick.

BECKER:

Sorry, but no. *(Laughs)* No, no, no- The Pyre is only one part. The latest? You just want me to forget about everything that happened before?

GLEENDA:

Before we were free to use our own guns, stem back the tides rifling through our trash- trying to elbow their way into our hard-earned way of life- Now good people's hands are tied. That "DoCA" encourages Aberrations to go against their nature- if we protect ourselves at all now, its "persecution", they cry- There may have been disappearances and accidents and mind-rending every time ya turned around, but we had self-determination and a fire in our bellies!

BECKER:

Ohhh... You don't say? That bad?

GLEENDA:

(Realizing she's said too much)
Ah... You tricky son-of-a-bitch...

BECKER:

(Snickers)

And how often did those guns really help you out here?

GLEENDA:

Hit and miss, I'll say.

BECKER:

You ever seen someone try to take on a Grizzly Bear with a handgun? And Aberrations aren't Grizzlies, are they, Mayor?

GLEENDA:

Brick, sugar, you have a point there?

BECKER:

Just wondering what happens when those *things* at the Station are left without their diversions? What kind of position that puts you in. ... And you're complaining about how they're policing themselves *for* us? They may be a bunch of psychos, but they're *tethered* psychos. It's far better than standard imprisonment practice- they've convinced themselves they're *happy*.

GLEENDA:

You've been here all of 2 weeks. You don't know a lick of what it's like when they aren't on their best behavior. Constantly tugging me around with their nonsense..

BECKER:

Oh yes, they've been top of the class with me here.

GLENDA:

We don't need them, half of them aren't born and bred Harborians anyway-

BECKER:

(Through a mouthful of food, dismissive)
What's that supposed to mean?

GLENDA:

(Quickly)

Social standing, darling. *(Becker grunts)* What we need is to draw the line in the sand again. That'll only come about once this sham is eradicated, and those Aberrations playin' house are pushed back beyond the Joyce Kilmer Forest. Hell, take 'em back with you for all I care! Then I can actually make this a respectable community- a real proper town.

BECKER:

(Almost sincere)

Glenda. I know you think Harbor can be "fixed", but it's a perfect storm- old forests, tiny town... and something that protects it all. Encouraging who stays and who goes?

GLENDA:

(Laughs)

All that phooey, again- You really think we've got some nefarious machinations that you'll bust wide open? Like your old days, sugar?

BECKER:

Did you know that I just got my second rental car yesterday? I backed into a dumpster four days ago- I have never caused so much as a fender-bender. But I spill on myself like I have tremors, I drop mugs, I have hit my shin more times on my NIGHTSTAND than I ever have on any coffee table- SOMETHING makes this place distinctly unpleasant for *me* and no one else.

GLENDA:

All the excitement is gettin' to you. That or happenstance.

BECKER:

Oh, "bad luck"? Everyone else moves like they're goddamn ballerinas here. What's the difference- I'm new. Just a new guy in town... (*Scoffs*) Altitude my ass, I know Aberration tricks when I see them. This is some sort of test.

GLENDA:

Surely you're acquainted with coincidence? At least before *conspiracy*?

BECKER:

There's only so much you can ask a man to excuse away.

GLENDA:

(*Serious*)

Do you really think that I'd protect the schemes of Aberrations, be a wall against you, for *them*? I'm asking you to trust me when I say it's happenstance, Brick. I swear by my honor, all those stubbed toes aren't fiendish in nature. It's just bad luck.

BECKER:

Mmm... Getting back to Harbor Station; let's work out a compromise, Mayor.

GLENDA:

Starting there leads to weakness in execution. Only as a last resort, that's what I promised my constituents.

BECKER:

Hear me out. Just the offer- Instead of dismantling... Maybe a shakeup in *focus* would fit nicer?

GLENDA:

You'd need a right good excuse to make that happen. They're obsessed with their routine.

BECKER:

Just spitballing here... Maybe we can find a balance for both of us. If you could ever stoop to that.

GLENDA:

Don't push it, sugar. I expect decorum outta you while you stay in my town.

BECKER:

Sorry, just feeling out your limits while I can.

GLENDA:

Not for much longer, though. You've spent quite the sabbatical up here, your people must be itchin' for you to get back home. You'll finally eat dinner without dropping pasta down your front.

BECKER:

(Laughs, seeing his shirt)

Ah, look at that... You're right, vacation's gotta end at some point. But I'd hate to leave you here without giving you something, after all you've done.

GLENDA:

How sweet. Then I wish you *better* luck on rounding out your conclusions. The rest of us live here.

SCENE 13 - INT. SEDUM'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

The door closes softly.

SEDUM:

They're sleeping, now... Sedated with wounds dressed. With burns like that... Needless to say, Fergum is quite, ah, *high*.

SAM:

I'm so sorry this was even a thing today. I should've been on top of it better.

AL:

Roose could've checked with you.

VALENTINA:

Fergum could've not assaulted Stick.

SEDUM:

Well, if you all would like to stay a moment, why not some drinks? Yes? Good- yes. I need one.

Sedum moves past them.

SAM:

Thank you.

VALENTINA:

I call the comfy chair.

Valen moves away.

AL:

(Softer)

Hey. Brother, sorry for being a mess lately. But... I wanted to thank you for being there. All around. Heard what you did this morning. I don't know what I'd do without you. Thanks.

SAM:

Oh... I-i-it's ok, Al. It's... I'm just...

NARRATOR:

Sam's eyes glazed as he searched her face. Rain- lightening-pain- regret- Screams in the soaked night- All the memories that he shouldn't have submerged him, staring into Al's dark eyes. The bend in her nose. From that night. He knew, he had *felt* it, and now he was staring at the misshapen cartilage, feeling his pointer finger on the trigger, tasting blood-

AL:

-Sam?

SAM:

(Jolting himself)

Happy that things got resolved!!! I'm happy! For you! In general! So... GLAD.

AL:

... You ok, bro?

SAM:

Stupidly splendid! Why??

AL:

(Chuckles)

Cause you're spacey as hell. Still sleeping weird?

NARRATOR:

Al guided Sam back into the living room, Valen lounging in an oversized chair.

SAM:

(Resigning himself to the fear)

Uh, no, it's a new thing I'm trying out. That's all. Trying to be calmer.

AL:

Back to the drawing board with this one?

SAM:

(Cracking a smile)

Yeah, it's kind of shitty.

AL:

Just looks painful is all.

They sit down on the couch.

(Cont.)

Hey Valen? While we're here, I'll just go ahead and apologise for being a dingus yesterday. Sorry 'bout that. I'll keep that outside of work from now on. Not make it your problem.

VALENTINA:

Mm. Tell me, you gonna show up at all tomorrow?

AL:

Yep. Planning on it in fact.

VALENTINA:

(Tightly, measured, but still friendly.)

Apology accepted, then. So. Everyone got their houses back in order round here?

AL:

What, do you wanna heart-to-heart too? God I'm spent-

VALENTINA:

Yeah you'd like that.

Sedum comes back in.

SEDUM:

I hope you both like whiskey.. And coco, Al.

They mutter thanks, take a moment to themselves, reflecting...

VALENTINA:

This has been a right fuck of a week.

SEDUM:

(Ruefully)

Of a few weeks.

AL:

It's only Wednesday, dudes.

VALENTINA:

Christ. *(She gulps down a swallow)*

SAM:

Uhm, so- so he's he's a *dickhead*, right?

Al:

I can only assume you mean Pecker.

Valentina snorts.

SAM:

Yeah!

VALENTINA:

Ugh, do we have to talk about him, I wanna keep some conversations sacred. It's like he's oozed into everything...

SAM:

Then we should do something! Right?

AL:

Oh? What's the plan, Sam?

SAM:

Yeah! Yeah, well, uh, yeah, so we need to... We gotta... We gotta
FUCK BECKER.

SEDUM:

(Chokes on his drink)

Repeat that?

VALENTINA:

I'm out-

SAM:

No, no, I mean, uhm, ok, we gotta have Becker get FUCKED.

AL:

Brother, slow down.

SAM:

Ugh, FUCK HIM OVER! Teach him a lesson!

AL:

There we go.

SEDUM:

Oh thank God-

VALENTINA:

Good to know you can't hold your liquor worth shit, Sam.

SAM:

I'm upset, ok?

VALENTINA:

How're we supposed to teach him a lesson? He's our boss.

Another moment.

SAM:

... Something in front of our noses...

AL:

... Why is he here?

SEDUM:

Why do you think?

AL:

What's his excuse for being here- It's for The Pyre, now.

SEDUM:

If we got that resolved...

AL:

He goes away. In theory.

VALENTINA:

How're ya gonna do that? We don't have solid leads.

SAM:

Except for the Toy Shop, the display window was completely warped, same as the glass found at the library. But nothing else, no break in or anything... That could be the next target.

VALENTINA:

What's this prerogative anyway, if it is them. Goin' from sabotage to stealin' books and now droolin' over toys?

A moment.

AL:

The Pyre's got a family.

NARRATOR:

Valen and Sedum exchanged a glance over their cups.

VALENTINA:

How though...

AL:

Terrorists fuck, I assume?

VALENTINA:

Ugh...

SEDUM:

What are we intending to do with that Toy Shop? That as our only option doesn't leave much structure for planning...

SAM:

We'll figure it out! But we have to do *something*. Together! Isn't that the whole point of the DoCA? Finding a way where everyone thought there were only divides? ... We have to take a stand. Becker has to see that he can't *break* us.

SEDUM:

Mmm...

AL:

It'd be damn satisfying to see his face if we did his job for him... Not to mention flippin' the finger to the Mayor by proxy.

VALENTINA:

You guys are sweet. But that's not how any of this works. Both those fuckers embody a system where good intentions go to die, they'll either beat it outta you or you'll sacrifice it yourself. You can't just tell it "fuck off" and think it's done.

SEDUM:

I did, Valen. When I left, I did just that.

VALENTINA:

Yeah, but it dogged you all the way here, didn't it? Airtight plan there!

SEDUM:

But it also worked *enough* for 15 years? Maybe it would stick if it's played by their rules this time. No more running away.. Make it so they can't ignore it.

VALENTINA:

(Warning)

Sedum, come on now-

AL:

-Then let's do it! Let's bag ourselves a fuckin' Pyre!

SAM:

Yeah! Now! *Tonight!*

END