

Harbor Season 2
Episode 9: The Wounds We Want

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COLD OPEN, SCENE 1: GENTLE NATURE - DREAMSCAPE

Birds chirp softly. A soft breeze throughout. Reminiscent of summer. It's a lazy, liminal perpetual day.

AL:
You're here.

Grass shuffles against their skin. An insect buzzes past.

NARRATOR:
Al's head rolled down, down to the rich emerald-black blades of wild grass around them, brushing their cheekbone. Downy like rabbit fur. Strung between the web of scars along their fingers as they lay.

AL:
... It's been... so long.

A little bubbling up from the ground- viscera pushes up through the dirt. A staggering, flickering heartbeat (out of rhythm) weaves into the atmosphere.

NARRATOR:
The Field of Meat pushed itself underneath her, cradling her in it's warm, shifting breath.

AL:
Don't leave me again.

The Field roils around her.

AL: (cont'd)
... I'm not scared...

SAM:
You should be.

Al inhales sharply.

NARRATOR:
Samson's shivering face leaned over them, a topsy turvy mirror of their own head.

AL:
What're you doing here?

SAM:
Al, why- why do you keep coming back?

Al lurches up.

AL:
It's not safe- get out.

SAM:
(Cracking, fear)
This is hell.

AL:
It is, but- it exists.

SAM:
*(Repeating her words
from Season 1)*
"Don't step into it. Where the tall
grass starts, hang back from that."
Why are you in it, why are you in
this hell??

AL:
-It needs help.-

SAM:
It'll eat you alive. It'll eat. Oh,
oh God-

NARRATOR:
Flesh bubbled and sloughed down the
side of his face- an eye rolling
back, bloody fungus sprouting from
the gaping wounds-

Sam gasps in horror and pain.

AL:
No, Sam- you don't understand- We
need each other! It needs all of us!

SAM:
You'd choose it? Over me?!

NARRATOR:
His good eye welled with tears and
blood.

SAM:
It hurts, it hurts- Don't let it hurt
me!

AL:
This isn't right.

SAM:
Stop it- I need you to stop it!

Al is regaining control. The breath evens out intentionally.

AL:
I don't want this.

The words get caught in Sam's throat. Even the sounds of nature have receded. She lets out a long, firm exhale.

AL: (cont'd)
Let's start over.

SAM:
Ah-

NARRATOR:
The image of her rotting sibling flicked, his expression etched in surprise. Then...

A sucking implosion as everything in the dreamscape clears in one fell swoop. It's quiet... until a hiss of wetness slips in. Like low rushing water.

NARRATOR: (cont'd)
Darkness. Potential.

AL:
Alright. Better. How about flight? No wait, let's do a sex dream, and let's make it real weird.

A breath whispers in. Someone is there, they take a step, a fair bit away in the darkness.

AL: (cont'd)
Alright, that's better-

NARRATOR:
A clean, bright, glistening figure stood behind her. No mark of violence on the pale figure. Mia.

AL:
(A resigned sigh)
Ok, but I'm gonna have to sort through some real fucked up feelings when I wake up-

MIA:
*(Uncharacteristically
 calm)*
 -You're not listening.

TITLE SEQUENCE

SCENE 2: INT. DREAMSCAPE

AL:
 What?

Mia is crossing the distance between them. Her voice is maneuvering oddly around the space.

MIA:
 You need to stop. And listen. Leave the dead buried.

AL:
 ... No. I don't wanna do this now-

NARRATOR:
 Al focused again, willing the woman in front of her, the figment, to disappear. Mia's face flinched, but stood strong.

AL:
 ... Are you really here?

MIA:
 Yes, now as I was saying-

AL:
 -I didn't know you could come in here-

MIA:
 -We live, we die- we took our places in the dance years ago. Your own steps have been more than enough to occupy you, it's leached into the water around you- let it be enough.-

AL:
 -Hang on. Why didn't you just wait for me outside?

MIA:
 I... missed you. Stop taking yourself away. You're meant to be with me.

(MORE)

MIA: (cont'd)
 We've made so much, and I'm losing
 you.

NARRATOR:
 Her hand brushed against Al's cheek,
 warm, almost electric.

AL:
*(This isn't
 reassuring, its
 regretful)*
 You have me. You always do.

MIA:
 But you cling to a past that never
 touched you.

NARRATOR:
 A gentle smile pulled her lips. Al
 searched her face. Her spotless
 radiance. Her bolt nowhere to be
 seen.

MIA:
 Focus on the now.

AL:
(Recognition)
 ... it's real big of you to pass up an
 opportunity to remind me of what I
 did. Why are you so clean?

NARRATOR:
 The soft smile unfurled from the
 apparition's lips.

AL:
 You're not Mia.

MIA:
*(A stark release of
 pretense)*
 ... Really.

A Schloorp as Mia recedes back into the darkness.

NARRATOR:
 Suddenly- she was alone.

J:
 Interesting...

There's a rushing of water, building-

AL:
*(Viciously
determined)*

NO-!

The water stops as Al "grapples" something with effort. J yelps, surprised.

NARRATOR:
Her hands shot into the dark-
grabbing at anything, everything- A
soft coat of fur- and pulled.

J:
Wha-

J lands on his back with a thud and a gasp- Al holds him down.

NARRATOR:
Black grass blossomed underneath
them- Stars began to fall from
nowhere, and something reminiscent of
a pulse thrummed distant. Pinned
beneath Al was an enormous creature-
held by sheer will and force. Almost
painfully brilliant in his rich whites
and blacks and multifaceted grays,
locking prismatic eyes with her, the
crown of antlers branching from his
head like a bullet spray, dripping
with silver.

J:
Let go! Let me go!!

AL:
(With effort)
Who the fuck are you?

J:
(Actually mad)
You rude *beast*- How dare you!

AL:
*(Realizing, knowing
she has a leg up if
she's right)*
... Singer? Singer from the factory-
Are you... him? You're big enough...

J breathes hard, uttering something between a whine and a growl.

AL: (cont'd)
Well, I'll be damned.

J:
(Snapping)
Perhaps one day-! I, I apologize, how very crass. Why don't you release me from... *this*, and we can speak cordially.

AL:
How often do you invade dreams?

J:
I am a guardian- *the* guardian of Harbor, I do what I must to keep the flock safe.

AL:
And I ain't part of your flock?

J:
Quite mistaken, dear. You wouldn't let me help otherwise.

AL:
Yeah, there's a lesson to be learned here.

J:
-I am not the one in need of *tutelage*-

AL:
-You owe me a favor.

J gets quiet.

AL: (cont'd)
I helped you with... figuring out something, you said you owed me.

J:
I recall saying I was "indebted"...

AL:
(A exhalation of effort)
Then I'll let you go, *if* you make good on that.

J:
I can find you outside again, it will
be less difficult for you-

AL:
-Yeah, you weren't quick about making
good last time. We'll get through
this in a hurry- I just want some
answers.

J:
(A nervous laugh)
Either you're far more naive than
I've given you credit for or you mock
me.

AL:
An' you're squirrely for a snoop-

J:
-Al, I do understand that we've not
developed the most amicable of
rapport but I am not lying when I say
I am rather busy.

AL:
You had time to come into my dream
and fuck around.

J:
-Fine! Fine, ask your favor.

AL:
Debt. But before that, Old Thing...
What're your rules- there's gotta be
rules to what you will and won't
answer.

J:
Yes! One. Question. About the past,
only.

NARRATOR:
She chewed at her tongue.

AL:
I can ask about anything, so long as
it's already happened?

J:
... Five years or more, say I!

AL:
 What if I want to know what the
 checkout girl at the grocery store
 thinks of me-

J:
 Oh, well, *sometimes* she-

AL:
 That's not my question! So you don't
 want me askin' certain things...

J:
 As I am sure you don't want others
 prying into your diversions. (*Trying
 to weave a last ditch attempt at
 persuasion*) You must be exhausted-
 Arduous weeks have dogged you- I can
 give you dreamless rest. Something to
 fill your cup to overflowing.

AL:
 Keep talkin', I'm learning lots...

J:
 Ah- Hm.

NARRATOR:
 Al searched the Singer's face. An
 unnerving feeling like he thumbed
 through an old, familiar book as he
 gazed back at them. They shook it
 away and concentrated on what he had
 just shown- what he might know... Two
 faces swam in Al's heart- a face of
 pain and blood and fungus, and a face
 of pale, ghostly serenity. Sam and
 Mia.

J:
 ... How do you hold me in place?

AL:
 You know I'm a murderer.

J:
 (*Scoffing*)
 Murder... Dear one, that wasn't murder-

Al gets more exhausted as it goes on, each passing moment.

AL:
 -Well eventually you get sick of nightmares and ya look up lucid dreaming. Now, you owe me another answer.

J:
 Conversation equates haggling to you, not surprising-

AL:
 -First question. What happened to Piper? Mia's sister, what... what happened?

J:
*(Relief and regret
 in his voice)*
 ... Piper Bailey... I... don't know.

AL:
(A sigh)
 It was more than five years ago-

J:
 I am not lying. I do not know Piper's fate. I wasn't... quite all there at the time. I'm sorry.

AL:
 That doesn't make sense- *(A thought)*... That *doesn't* make sense, you're one of those old things-

J:
 -You've already asked your question.-

AL:
 -How old are you really?-

J:
 -Dear, you're getting greedy.

AL:
 You gave a cop-out answer. Mmng-

J laughs, laced with humor and the same regret, as Al grunts in effort, this time with far more pain and exhaustion.

J:
 (A little
 lighthearted laugh)
 Humans' circadian rhythm is quite
 convenient... and you must wake up
 sometime...

AL:
 (Losing their grip)
 No... No.

J:
 Oh you darling fool... tell me, are you
 a stupid elder or cruel child at this
 point?

AL:
 What do you mean?

J:
 (Another laugh)
 You keep blurring the lines! Pick a
 side.

AL:
 I'm not here to make life easy for
 you-

Another schloop as J pulls away.

J:
 (Playfully but
 sincerely)
 -But, you see, you're still my
 problem! And like I've said, I am
 rather busy. Simplify, dearheart, or
 the world will do it for you.

AL:
 Where are you?!

J:
 (Shifting space all
 around)
 Foolish, foolish, rash and reckless.
 But not to fret, I'll leave you with
 a gift. You see, I am generous,
 fierce one. Just not on your time.

He hums into a distorted tone.

NARRATOR:

A wave of haze overtook her disembodied senses- like a cloud of vapor bringing on the darkness, the scent of wet pine and aching nostalgia.

AL:

I... What did... Stop...

J:

There. I've paid back what you gave. Now, sleep well.

AL:

Tell... (exhausted) me...

The water rushes in and overtakes.

SCENE 3: CRUX'S CABIN, KITCHEN - MORNING.

Plates being set on the table. Sam is happily humming to himself. There's a light breeze through an open window. Footsteps approach, Crux has just gotten out of the shower, dressed and clean.

CRUX:

(Keeping it casual)

While it feels very nice to be all scrubbed, I was thinking we could dirty it up again for round 2 before you... *(Seeing Sam's breakfast spread)* Leave. What... is this?

SAM:

(Beaming)

Breakfast. Orange juice, sausage, eggs, or yogurt and granola-

CRUX:

(Very taken aback)

I... I do toast.

A shuffling of a plate off a counter.

SAM:

With jam? There was some in the fridge.

NARRATOR:

Sam presented the perfectly sliced toast, dabbled with red jam, with a half dipped flourish in the cozy kitchen. The morning sun glittered off his smudged glasses and stubble patterning his chin. Crux's eyebrows hadn't dropped from their position, and he slowly readjusted his mask over his coolly flushed cheeks.

CRUX:

*(Backtracking, this
is all too fast)*

Oh. You know... I'm actually not that hungry- is there-

SAM:

Coffee? Of course!

He sets down the plate, and presents a mug instead.

CRUX:

*(Deeply
uncomfortable with
this affection)*

Hah... Ah... Hmmm...

SAM:

You take long showers, I like to keep busy. I hope this is ok?

CRUX:

Did you work in hospitality? Were you a butler at any point??

SAM:

(Snorts)

No, I'd need to look better in vests for that.

CRUX:

Ah... Moving on- last night!-

SAM:

OH. Last night.

NARRATOR:

Sam gave his sultriest lidded glance. Crux nodded, the tension of daylight affection unraveling from his shoulders.

SAM:
I mean... you remember me saying-

CRUX:
*(Grinning, mimicking
him teasingly)*
-"Oh God, right there, right there,
don't stop, don't stop"-

SAM:
(Small chuckle)
Yeah, ok, you remember. It was
amazing. Wait, you're not self
conscious are you-?

CRUX:
No, it's debauchery we're talking
about. Fantastic fucking, there's
nothing awkward about that.

SAM:
Not with you. And I didn't know that
could happen all at once-!

CRUX:
What happened at-

SAM:
Don't tell me that's the part you
forgot. When we... both...

CRUX:
-Oh. Oh, when you... when I-

SAM:
-At the same *time*?-

CRUX:
*(Realizing, slightly
shocked)*
-That's never happened before.

SAM:
(A bit more tender)
Me either.

CRUX:
-And then I, we...-

SAM:
-Fell asleep in each other's arms?

NARRATOR:

Sam crossed round the little table to Crux. Crashing cold and warmth erupted between them as Sam ran his hands over his host's jean wrapped hips. Crux's eyes were unusually wide in response.

SAM:

Not to sound trite but... It was magical.

CRUX:

*(Horried at
himself and his
reaction)*

Sweet God... It was.

SAM:

*(Getting closer,
huskier)*

So, how about a little refueling and then... a lazy fuck for round two...?

NARRATOR:

Sam's teeth tugged gently on Crux's earlobe.

CRUX:

*(A hum of lust, he's
falling back into
the feeling)*

Mmm- Ah- Aha... yes, I... I admit... getting my mouth on something is starting to sound more appetizing...

SAM:

*(Whispered
sensitively)*

You're beautiful... with or without your mask, you're beautiful...

CRUX:

*(Almost getting
lost, then realizing
the feelings, and
hating them)*

Ah- AH, yes, thank you, yep- But I... need to get through this coffee! Just took a huge *shit*, but I swear there's more on the way! Ahah...

SAM:
*(a little taken
 aback, then
 readjusting)*
 Oh. Ok, yeah-

CRUX:
*(Trying to force it
 into sexy territory
 again)*
 -Yeah, just let me get all cleared
 out, then we can get back to-

SAM:
(Cheerily)
 -And it's important to stay regular
 and healthy. I'll grab some water to
 help hydrate you.

CRUX:
*(All of this is
 crashing down)*
 Hm! Yes! Water...

SAM:
 Ok!

He goes and grabs a glass, turning on the faucet, talking
 all the while.

SAM: (cont'd)
 You won't believe how often I wanted
 to refill your water, or surprise you
 with lunch, or take care of you- ah,
 you get it- Here.

CRUX:
 -Thanks.

NARRATOR:
 Crux turned about, shielding his
 guest from his drinking display. Sam
 chewed his lip, the butterflies in
 his stomach evolving into doe-eyed
 nesting doves. The look of unbridled
 adoration in Crux's eyes as they
 wrapped themselves together the night
 before, knowing the way Crux had held
 him, safe and warm in his arms as
 they slept...

SAM:
 It's cute.

CRUX:

What is?

SAM:

I just wouldn't have thought you'd be the type to get this shy after sex.

Crux sets the glass down.

CRUX:

(Laughing nervously)

Mmm-hah, and I wouldn't expect someone so, so... *sexual* to come out swinging with... this!

NARRATOR:

He gestured at the table spread.

SAM:

What can I say, I like to make a good impression.

CRUX:

Mhmmm...

SAM:

Oh, shoot, almost forgot...

NARRATOR:

Sam dug a small pill case from his pocket and popped a tablet into his mouth. He pulled a grimace and chased it with a gulp of his orange juice.

SAM:

Good ollllll' calm-me-down-pills.
(Sultry) Now, where were we...? Remind me again... ?

CRUX:

... You do make a good impression. For the 80th time.

SAM:

To be fair, this is the *first* you've seen me freshly awake, soooo...

NARRATOR:

Crux wove his fingers into Sam's belt loops and pulled them hip-to-hip.

CRUX:
I think we left off somewhere around...
here.

SAM:
No need for refueling, then?

CRUX:
No... And promise me there's no roses
hiding somewhere.

SAM:
(A small chuckle)
Where would I get roses, it's
November-

A vibration sounds, followed by a different toned one from the other room- both of their phones go off. Sam kind of "gnaahs" from the sudden onslaught, Crux caught by surprise as well.

CRUX:
Oh, buzzy...

SAM:
O-one second-

CRUX:
I think mine went off too...

Sam pulls out his phone, unlocks it, and reads the message.

SAM:
*(Whispering what
he's reading until
he interrupts
himself)*
Group text from Valen. She wants
everyone together at Sedum's
apartment- ASAP. About... the Becker
situation. And the Field of Meat?
Eeeuh...

CRUX:
Shit. ... I don't know how she
consistently cock-blocks me with work
intrigue, but by God it's amazing..

SCENE 4: SEDUM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Al, Sam, Crux, William, Valen, and Sedum are all in Sedum's living room. Sedum sets down a tray with cups and kettle. They are sitting down to their discussion.

SEDUM:

All I had were herbals in the cupboard, hope everyone's had their caffeine for the day.

AL:

It'll do.

Al sets about prepping themselves a cup.

SEDUM:

Everyone comfortable? Need to use the restroom before we get started? It's in the hall, first door on the right-

VALEN:

Everyone knows where your bathroom is- That isn't why we're here.

SEDUM:

Only wanted everyone to be set so we don't have to repeat ourselves.

CRUX:

I'll be honest, I'd be happier if I wasn't called in on my day off. But I guess tea and bathroom breaks are a fair compromise.

WILLIAM:

Y'all wouldn't call us in if it wasn't important. So, it's gotta be somethin' big. Tea is enough.

SAM:

He has a good point, though- Not to get petty, but are we getting overtime for this? Is this work-?

VALEN:

(Very serious)

No, it isn't. Don't put this on your timesheets, don't... talk of this outside of here. Please.

SAM:
So are we being asked to work for
free right now? I don't think that's
very legal.

VALEN:
No. You're not.

NARRATOR:
Amidst the clumsy circle of chairs
and the couch, Valen dug out her
wallet from her purse, slumped on the
floor. Al stopped spinning sugar into
a teacup. Valen held out a small
stack of bills to Sam.

SAM:
What's this?

VALEN:
It's 45 dollars, time and a half for
two hours. That's all I'm asking.

SAM:
I... Valen, I don't want-

VALEN:
If this is what you need, then it's
what you need. Take it.

SAM:
I, I really don't, it's... I trust you.

VALEN:
Fine. Anyone else need this?

CRUX:
Thank you.

Crux takes the stack of bills and flips through them.

VALEN:
Will? Al?

WILLIAM:
I'm ok.

AL:
I'm doin' this for fun.

CRUX:
You're 5 short.

VALEN:
 ... Ah. *(Lower)* Uh, Sedum, I'll pay you
 back, do you-?

SEDUM:
 Five you said?

CRUX:
 Alright, now I believe you.

NARRATOR:
 He handed the cash back over the
 coffee table.

CRUX:
 Here, I know how much you make.

VALEN:
 ... You should have known I wasn't
 bullshitting you before.

CRUX:
 Oh no, I did. But you still called me
 in on the weekend.

VALEN:
 Wanker.

CRUX:
 Eh.

She stuffs the cash back into her bag, everyone slightly
 uncomfortable.

SEDUM:
 Well now that's out of the way, I
 suppose we dive in. Al told us last
 night about the severity in which
 Becker is applying himself to find
 the Field of Meat.

WILLIAM:
 Yeah, anyone figured out the logic
 line on that one yet?

AL:
 It's a pride thing. And he thinks
 it's somehow integral, like a
 birthplace. He's trying to connect it
 to the Pyre as well. Wants that place
 to solve all his problems...

SEDUM:

It's beyond imperative that he is stopped. He cannot find it.

CRUX:

Why? It's a disgusting natural feature, it's not as though it's that important.

VALEN:

What do you all know about City Council?

SAM:

We have a city council?

WILLIAM:

-They do committee stuff. Like a glorified HOA.

AL:

I don't even know our senator, let alone city council members.

CRUX:

They're old figureheads, whoever they are. I've never heard of an election happening. But they don't do anything. I assumed they were a front for old Cryptids, like Roose, gaming the system.

SEDUM:

Good guess, but not correct.

VALEN:

They're not Cryptid. And they're not Human.

AL:

Are they aliens? Oh my god... are they aliens?

VALEN:

No. They're not aliens. City Council is a very important part of Harbor. And the Field of Meat leads back to them.

SEDUM:

And they don't like to be... disturbed.

SAM:

... So what are they? Are they dangerous?

SEDUM:

Not intentionally... They... They carry a clout beyond others.

VALEN:

You remember when Becker said we were law enforcement, at that Halloween meeting with the Mayor?

AL:

Oh yeah.

VALEN:

He may be right about the State branch, but... we really do best at social work here. City Council takes care of... well, let me put it this way- our jobs, this town? Our little culture here would be so much worse without their presence. I'm not even sure if we'd exist...

SEDUM:

Perdition would have ended very differently if it were not for the guidelines put forth by City Council, and their vow to make good on them.

WILLIAM:

So we have to keep Becker *not* from finding the Field but from finding them? Who aren't intentionally dangerous, but that doesn't sound like they're safe.

SEDUM:

That's because they're not safe. They *will* hurt you. All of you. They hurt us- Cryptids, Humans- by merit of what they are, they can't help it. It isn't malicious but... being close to them is painful in a way that cannot be rectified. You are hearing me correctly. This *is* a warning.

NARRATOR:

Sam's heart beat harder. A low bubble of hesitation gurgled in his stomach.

SAM:
What do they do?

VALEN:
They make you feel obsession,
compulsion- addicted! Like you'd do
anything *for* them, no matter what it
was.-

SAM:
(*A tad more intense*)
But what do they do?

VALEN:
They don't *do* anything. It's just
what they are, like he said, and what
we are. It's hard to explain- Ah,
something happened with Franklin on
Halloween, you said that something
happened, that he wasn't himself for
a moment?

AL:
Yeah. He got... like he wasn't there
for a while.

VALEN:
Well... Franklin doesn't get to live
life on his own terms anymore. *That's*
what they can do.

NARRATOR:
A chill washed through Sam.

SAM:
Oh.

CRUX:
This is all just a bit important to
have kept hush for so long.

VALEN:
We wanted to avoid a conspiracy. The
less people who knew, the better. And
exposure to this doesn't keep those
involved *healthy*, as evidenced by
Franklin. And we can both attest to
that, too. You *don't* want this. This
is a necessity.

AL:
What happens if Becker finds the City
Council?

SEDUM:

The only "if" here is *if* he finds the *Field*. If he does that, he will then *inevitably* find them. He thrives off the hunt and is rather exceptional at it too. Our best option is to head him off at the pass, before he brings in more backup.

WILLIAM:

Say we're too late. Then what?

VALEN:

Nothing good. They mustn't be disturbed by someone as volatile as him. City Council is neutral- not for Cryptids or for Humans, and they will seek balance. Becker is threatening the very little stability Harbor is built on and if he finds any more, then we can guarantee he will double down. He'll bring Raleigh here. He'll upset the balance.

NARRATOR:

The heavy moisture of the humidifiers weighed down. The glossy leaves around them seemed to exhale.

AL:

So thats what we do. We keep him from finding it. How?

SEDUM:

So glad you asked!

He gets up, walks over and picks up some papers from across the room as Valen speaks. This is the plan, all of the business- delivered with pinpointed intention.

VALEN:

He's got a small file built up on the *Field*, and we can't take back anything he's already collected- But what we can do is lead him off the trail for long enough.

Sedum slaps down some papers on the coffee table.

SEDUM:

I spent last night fabricating reports in line with our old documents.

VALEN:

We need everyone to quietly scrub this place of all Field of Meat info. We'll plant the fakes where Becker's sure to find them, and Al, we'll be counting on you to keep him on that path. Thank God for your useless boundaries. Then comes our reinforcements from State.

CRUX:

Weren't we afraid of Raleigh?

SEDUM:

The majority of them, yes. However, we have a friend on our side.

AL:

Helena, right?

NARRATOR:

Valen nodded, and Sedum's feathers lifted ever so slightly.

A rumbling croak comes from Sedum, involuntarily, and he clears his throat.

AL:

He's constantly getting calls from her- ah, the HR of the State Department. It's getting up to every day.-

VALEN:

(Back to brisk)

She's working on it. But first and foremost, we scrub this place clean. So, Sam-

SAM:

Yeah?

VALEN:

You got the shed documents?

SAM:

Yes. I put them in your office.

VALEN:

... What? ... When did you do that?

SAM:
End of the week- you said top drawer,
hidden under-

A crash from downstairs and an exclamation of excitement from a distant voice.

BECKER:
(Distant)
Yes... YES- *I found it!!!*

VALEN:
Dear *fucking* God.

All jump up from their seats, with the pushing back of chairs and clattering of feet.

SCENE 5 - INT. STATION BREAKROOM, MORNING

Becker thumbs through the papers in his hands, muttering to himself.

BECKER:
I knew it, you sneak... You *fucking*
sneak-

The door bursts open, and Valen and Sedum tumble in.

NARRATOR:
Valen and Sedum burst through the backdoor, stopping just inside the breakroom. A pin could have dropped, and all would have heard the wind whistle through the eye. Al strained her ears from her position on the deck, ducked beneath a window. Crux held a hand over Sam's shoulder for a moment, before pulling back, both wedged underneath the stairs to the apartment. William hugged the wall, cane held close as a club. All hidden from sight.

VALEN:
Puttin' in some overtime, boss?

BECKER:
What are you doing here?!

SEDUM:
Uh, ah, I live here.

BECKER:

(Scrambling)

Yeah- well- ah- what're you doing here?!

VALEN:

I'm visiting him.

SEDUM:

At the house I live in.

BECKER:

Then what are you doing down here?? You had the day off!- Sedum, you're gone on Saturdays!

SEDUM:

You know my whereabouts, lovely..

VALEN:

It's funny, I thought you had the weekend off, too!

BECKER:

I... had some things to wrap up- Besides, I have keys.

He jangles a ring of keys.

SEDUM:

And papers.

VALEN:

I could've got you anything you needed, Becker, you should've just asked! No need to come in-

Valen makes to move forward.

BECKER:

Don't.

VALEN:

It's just us.

BECKER:

Just... you. Just "ya'll". Good, great, and here I was worried that I was in danger.

SEDUM:

We thought another possum got stuck in here.-

BECKER:

-No possums, but you two play a den
of *vipers* very well.

VALEN:

Brick, if you're doing something
untoward with my belongings, we
should sort it out-

BECKER:

(*A rustle of papers*)
These aren't yours. They're the
DoAA's. You've been hoarding
government property.

VALEN:

(*Feigning ignorance*)
Ah, what do you have there anyway-?

A rustle as Valen takes a step and Becker pulls them back
even further.

BECKER:

Don't play stupid- Field. Of. Meat!
Coordinates! Cycles! Deeetails,
Hollow!

VALEN:

From my office?? How on earth did
somethin' like that get in there...?

BECKER:

Shut up- Shut up, you've been
sabotaging me from the start. You
can't deny it. I work my ass off,
kill myself for this place- and this
is the thanks I get?! Lies; lies on
lies!

VALEN:

I've never been in charge of the
Field watch process. I don't know how
those documents got into my office,
really. Wait, wasn't that your pet
project, actually?

SEDUM:

It was, you should be able to see my
name signed on almost all of the
reports.

BECKER:

You mean nothing, Sedum! This isn't about an Aberration playing office- This is about *you*, Hollow. You really won't admit it, will you?

VALEN:

I don't know what I'm supposed to admit.

BECKER:

You think you're being clever? Admit it- you've been undermining me, always. Just say it.

VALEN:

Brick, I haven't been in the office enough to pull a little subterfuge.-

BECKER:

-Get out.

VALEN:

Hm?

BECKER:

I'm firing you, Hollow. *Fired*. You're done here.

NARRATOR:

William's body tensed violently- Al, caught his eye with a hard look. He squeezed his cane, his bleached blonde hair falling into his face.

BECKER:

Clean out your office. Hop to it- take those fire hazard candles with you-!

VALEN:

*(Casually,
thoughtfully)*

Wait, wait, wait- Before that- on what grounds am I being fired?

BECKER:

(Hackles raising)

On the grounds of plotting government sabotage.

VALEN:

Ah. Have you warned me in the past about this... "conspiracy" you think I've perpetuated?*(Not waiting for an answer)* Because I haven't received any complaints. We had that one conversation about "subverting your authority", but nothing written came out of that, and that's been one instance, per anti-discrimination laws I *must* be forewarned of the possibility of being fired. I don't think I've ever gotten a notice- not even a verbal warning.

BECKER:

Conspiracies don't warrant warnings.

SEDUM:

But an *investigation*... Now that's something different. From what I remember about the legal guidelines of the DoCA, sorry, *DoAA*, the State requires an investigation of internal conflict.

VALEN:

In the meantime, until solid evidence is found, I retain my position. Or can be put on *paid* leave. Whichever you'd like best. Because otherwise it could be a targeted bias. Especially considering our... situation. So, all that being said, I don't think I actually *am* fired. Correct me if I'm wrong.

BECKER:

*(Fighting between
rage and being
impressed)*

... Haaaah...

VALEN:

Of course, you can submit all this from your recorder to aid in the case- you *do* have your recorder on, don't you? This being official business? Per your guidelines? I mean, I'd have mine on, but I was upstairs visiting my friend.

BECKER:

*(A half hearted
laugh, riding the
line of contained
danger)*

That would've been... useful, to be sure.

VALEN:

Ah- Then I could always write out a report. In fact I should, seeing how you're pursuing an internal investigation against me- Yeah, I better get on my defense-

BECKER:

-No. No, don't... waste your time, Hollow. Let's call this mess good as a... bit of a snap after a long week. Does that sound agreeable?

VALEN:

So no investigation?

BECKER:

(Tightly)

Not if you don't write out a report.

VALEN:

Then I won't get on the horn with HAR, either, just so you're comfortable.

BECKER:

Hmh... good. I'm keeping these.

He shuffles the papers again.

VALEN:

(A genial smile)

Obviously, don't think we could pry 'em from your hands if we tried.

BECKER:

You know the line you walk, Null. Keep your beak out of this.

SEDUM:

I'm simply here for moral support.

BECKER:

I don't care. Enjoy the weekend, Hollow.

VALEN:
Only if you do the same, Brick.

He opens the door, shuffles through, closes it. We hear (muffled) the front door open and close.

VALEN: (cont'd)
(A long, strained exhale)
Fuck...

SEDUM:
We must regroup-

NARRATOR:
William tumbled into the Station, stopping short of Valen. Valen clutched his forearm softly with a strained smile.

WILLIAM:
You're amazing. How'd you do that?!

VALEN:
(A stressed, exhausted laugh)
Really wanted to stab that man.
Really, really did-

WILLIAM:
Lucky you weren't in the kitchen.

Valen laughs again.

CRUX:
Lucky for him only...

NARRATOR:
Sam felt his sister's hand encircle his shoulder as he scratched unconsciously at the stubble on his chin. Her face pulled into thinly veiled dread. They hovered at the open door with Crux.

SAM:
It's not a matter of "if" he finds the Field now. It's "when".

SCENE 6: SEDUM'S APARTMENT, LATE MORNING

Al flips through a journal, fast. Spinning shuffling of paper as they talk with Valen, Sedum, William, Sam, and Crux around. Fergum pants in the background.

AL:
It has a cycle- It comes and goes in waves-

VALEN:
But changes routinely.

AL:
Seasonally. Heat makes it manifest quicker and longer. As the cold comes, the Field recedes.

SEDUM:
Though it doesn't ascribe to a schedule, not dates and times anyway.

AL:
Exactly. I've been thinking it's linked to sun exposure.

WILLIAM:
I'll look up weather for the next coupla weeks.

VALEN:
Fantastic. And Sam, you're sure there's no record of these theories in those documents?

NARRATOR:
Sam roused from his idle stroking of Crux's knee under Sedum's dining table, his co worker flipping through a dusty DoAA handbook's Employee Rights section.

SAM:
No, no, they were all photos and descriptions, and... coordinates.

SEDUM:
Yes, I didn't archive anything nonfactual. He shouldn't know of a cycle *immediately*.

AL:
Not until he applies himself to the
information.

SEDUM:
And isn't that the question...

VALEN:
How long do we have... Al, mind if I...?

AL:
Go for it.

NARRATOR:
Valen scooped Al's field journal from
the coffee table and buried herself
in the pages, wandering to the
cramped hallway of Sedum's apartment.
One of Fergum rolled onto their back
as the other two skittered away from
her pacing.

Valen takes the journal and gets up, muttering to herself,
Fergum dog-groaning slightly.

WILLIAM:
*(From the other side
of the room)*
It'll be in the 40s for most of the
week- but round Wednesday it gets up
to 60 again- then an ice storm over
the weekend... Valen, look here...

William shuffles off to the hallway as well.

SEDUM:
It's almost noon- I'm going to put
together some lunch.

Sedum gets up and walks into the kitchen.

SAM:
Here, Sedum, I'll help.

Sam pushes back his chair and goes to help him in the
kitchen.

SEDUM:
Oh, thank you, Samson. There's some
vegetables in the fridge...

Al sits down on the couch, sighing.

NARRATOR:

Al attempted to ruffle life back into their hair. All they were left with was the stench of days marinated cigarette smoke and the same limp strands flat against their scalp.

A pair of footsteps stop just before her.

AL:

Mmmh- Ah, got anything good outta that, Crux?

CRUX:

Nothing that we didn't already know- All of it's by the book discrimination, but we need evidence if we want this to go anywhere.

AL:

Shouldn't have been so stingy with wearin' those wires, hmh?

CRUX:

No, I suppose not if we were looking to trap Becker in his own web- I want to uh... talk to you about something, for a minute. Alone?

AL:

*(Hauling herself off
the couch and
leading him along)*

Sure, let's head outside.

SCENE 7: EXT, SEDUM'S APARTMENT, LATE MORNING

They walk to and open the door, walking onto the stoop of the deck.

NARRATOR:

As Al tried to stop just outside the door, Crux pulled her further along, to the top steps, shutting the door behind them. He glanced over his shoulder, then sat down, motioning for her to do the same.

Crux sits down, as does Al. Crux brings the conversation to a low whispering level.

AL:
 What's up- Oh, yeah, I forgot, you
 and Sam- How'd it go, bud? No
 exclusive details, please-

CRUX:
 Yeah, about that...

AL:
 Oh, right, I'll say this once- you
 break his heart, and... just don't
 break his heart. He's a sensitive
 guy, and if you start playin' round,
 I'll have to kick your ass or
 something, ok?

CRUX:
 Yeah, yeah, I get that but, Al, he's,
 he's... he made me breakfast! He's...
doting on me. *Considering* me! I
 showed him my *face*!

AL:
 Wow, really? ... You have a face?

CRUX:
 Yeah! I do! This was supposed to be a
 fuckbuddy fling and- When's the last
 time you saw me *date* anyone?! As in
 actually "boyfriend" someone??

AL:
 Well to be fair, there was... no wait,
 that was... uh... Yeah...

CRUX:
 It's not just him- It's... it's *me*,
 too. I showed him my face. I told him
 I cared about him- We *cuddled*!-

AL:
 -Don't need the details. But I see
 your point- You're you. And Sam's... a
 romantic.

CRUX:
 (*Sighs*)
 Yes. That's the problem.

AL:
 He's never really done casual dating.
 Tends to go whole hog into these
 things.

CRUX:

(Stressed)

We spent the night together, I know how much hog he goes.

AL:

I said I don't need the details! Geeze... So are you actually gonna date my brother? Are you asking... "permission"?

CRUX:

I don't know... No! No, I can't, it's not me!

AL:

(Confused)

But you want to...?

CRUX:

*(Frustrated,
confused)*

I don't know what I want! *(Groans)*
I'm turning into a byronic monster.

NARRATOR:

Al couldn't help the discomfort morphing her face, watching Crux rub his temples.

CRUX:

*(Confused, tender,
thoughtful)*

Sam makes me... see a home... See a future.

AL:

Well don't fuckin' tell *him* that.

CRUX:

I know! Last night was a floodgate... of emotion! I can't go on. He'll be devastated the longer it takes. It has to stop now.

AL:

You have impeccable timin', you know.

CRUX:

There wasn't a plan for all this.

AL:
Yeah, that's for sure. Generally why
we don't sleep with coworkers.

CRUX:
(Grumbling)
Believe me, I'm regretting how
magical it was...

AL:
... Have ya considered waiting and
seeing where this goes?

CRUX:
... I have. *(Shaking out of it)* And
it's him getting older and older, and
it's me tied down and the same, but
different and then... it's me back at
square one, except... alone. And
empty.

AL:
Is it not worth the meantime?

CRUX:
*(His pride settling
in)*
I'm not that kind of man. And I can't
lose myself.

AL:
(Sighs)
Ok. I mean, I can try to talk to him
and figure out a way to soften the
blow, but if he's pickin' up on any
of this that you're puttin' out there...
it... it'll be difficult.

CRUX:
I know...

AL:
Ya screwed the pooch on this one,
bud.

CRUX:
Yes, I really "fucked the puppy"...

AL:
UGH, don't. *(Groans/sighs again)*

NARRATOR:

Al clapped him on the shoulder. His black eyes implored her for sympathy in the crisp autumn air.

AL:

Just so you know, I still might have to kick your ass in the end.

CRUX:

Mhm... You smell rancid.

AL:

Yeah, sorry.

The door flings open.

WILLIAM:

There ya are- We have a day!

SCENE 8: INT. SEDUM'S APARTMENT, LATE MORNING

A chorus of footsteps as Al and Crux make their way back inside.

VALEN:

Wednesday is the best bet for an appearance, in accordance with your notes.-

WILLIAM:

-Around 3, it should be warm enough by then.

SAM:

Cool, cool- so, we plan on... distracting him on Wednesday. For how long?

Sam's phone starts ringing.

AL:

It doesn't linger, just an hour or so, with it coolin' off so fast.

Sam drifts away from the group, ear to the phone.

SAM:

(Muttering)

Ah, one sec- Hey mom, what's up?

LEAH:

Hey! Hope you're not busy- So I was thinkin'... I wanna take you out to dinner. You and Al, have a family night.

SAM:

Wha- o-oh! Uh, I mean, I'd love that-but-

LEAH:

Sweets, I know y'all got your own lives but, I really... really need to talk to y'all. Please. It's the weekend, there's no time like the present.

SAM:

No, no, it's not... it's just work stuff poppin' up.

LEAH:

It's always popping up with the DoCA.

SAM:

I know. This one's... potentially bad-I'll see what Al says. Either way, I'd love dinner. Tonight, right?

LEAH:

Yeah, after we close up here- I'll take you somewhere real good.

SAM:

Temptations abound!

LEAH:

You know I'll deliver! Try your best to convince her?

SAM:

Don't worry. I got you. I'll text you with the ok, ok?

LEAH:

Ok. See you tonight.

SAM:

Bye.

Sam hangs up and makes his way back to the group, who are continuing to talk in his absence.

AL:
I have a voicemail he left- he was
pissed as hell...

CRUX:
That's good, much better than an
email.

WILLIAM:
A legal case won't stop a raging
bull.

VALEN:
But we can't get *physical*. That's a
court case we won't win.

William sighs out a grumble of acceptance.

SAM:
*(Lowers his voice as
an aside)*
Uh, Al-

AL:
(Matching his tone)
Yeah, what?

SAM:
Mom wants to take us to dinner
tonight, can you-?

AL:
*(Half an exhale of a
laugh)*
Sam, it's... we're dealing with this-
We can't leave.

VALEN:
Wait, you're leaving? You can't
leave, not now!

NARRATOR:
The group rounded on their half-
whispered dinner plans.

AL:
See, I'm sorry bro, but, this'll take
all day-

SEDUM:
(Curious)
Where are you going?

SAM:
Mom just wanted dinner later, we have hours til then.

WILLIAM:
Oh, speaking of- didn't someone mention lunch...?

SAM:
Yeah, sandwiches in the kitchen.

WILLIAM:
Thank goodness, I'm takin' a break, be back soon.

CRUX:
I'll join you.

William and Crux meander off.

SEDUM:
You should be able to have dinner with your mother.

VALEN:
Sedum, we got shit to deal with.

SEDUM:
Yes, but it's shit on Wednesday. We're not going to be able to do anything for four days.

AL:
The sooner we got a solid plan, the sooner-

SEDUM:
-What? The sooner you *wait*, after you're exhausted? And probably developed a form of skin infection from not bathing?

AL:
Touche, *but*-

SEDUM:
We can arrange things. Al, Sam, both of you need to... eat! See your family- wash- *be* people. And be prepared. Becker will work himself to the brink. Let him. We have a chance to recoup, you must take it. It is an *advantage*.

AL:
... Hmph. I could use a shower...

SAM:
And I need a change of clothes.

VALEN:
(Realizing)
Was wondering why you went with
yesterday's suit for this.

SAM:
*(Covering his
tracks)*
Hah- Haven't done laundry!

VALEN:
(Admitting)
You have a point, Sedum. It's good
common sense. Right, both of you, get
on. We'll let you know updates as
they come.

SEDUM:
Go take care of yourselves.

AL:
... Fine. Only so I can get a leg up on
him...

VALEN:
Will, Crux, you get on too- no need
to waste your weekend.- Sorry it all
got overwhelming.-

CRUX:
(Immediately)
-Great. See you all on Monday.

NARRATOR:
Crux scooped his jacket up from the
dining room chair, furtively glancing
Sam's way, overly casual.

CRUX:
(Lower tone)
I'll talk to you later. Uh... Have a
good one.

NARRATOR:

His cold hand lingered a half second too long on Sam's bicep, squeezed too tenderly, a forced smile squishing his under eye.

SAM:

Ok, see ya later.

CRUX:

Mhm- Bye all.

Crux walks out- opening and closing the door quickly, the others chorusing their goodbyes.

WILLIAM:

I'll stick around, if that's ok. Besides... I'm not going anywhere fast.

NARRATOR:

He smacked his shin with his cane for emphasis, and winced.

WILLIAM:

Heh... ow...

VALEN:

(Small, affectionate huff of a laugh)

Thanks.

AL:

(Trying to get back into it)

But if we just figure out who we're gonna call on for a distract-

VALEN:

You smell like ass, go shower!

AL:

Neeeeeyeah...

SAM:

Come on. Mom said she was takin' us somewhere good. Somewhere special.

SCENE 9: PANCAKE SHACK - EVENING

The hustle and bustle of Harbor's premium all-day breakfast diner.

HASTINGS:

(Voice cracking)

Welcome to Pancake Shack, I'll be your waiter this evening. My name's Hastings, what can I get you started with?

SAM:

(Under his breath, unimpressed)

Oh boy, isn't this just the special-est...

LEAH:

Hi Hastings, we'd like three breakfast-after-dark samplers, scrambled on two-

AL:

Sunny-side on the last, please, and can we substitute the pancakes for french toast?

HASTINGS:

Certainly can try.

AL:

Cool, thank ya.

LEAH:

And I'll take a decaf coffee plus a water, thank you.

HASTINGS:

(Writing)

Decaf...

AL:

Orange juice, please.

HASTINGS:

Uh-huh.

SAM:

I'll go with water, thanks.

HASTINGS:

Alright, makin' it easy on me. I'll be back. Don't get into too much trouble now, ha...

LEAH:

Oh, you neither!

HASTINGS:
I won't make promises, ma'am!

Hastings wanders off as the family settles into the booth.

SAM:
Do you know that person?

LEAH:
I'm surprised you don't. He's the best waiter around.

JOAN:
(Distant)
-Howdy, Leah!

LEAH:
Oh hi, Joan. Hi, Harold.

SAM:
Are we really *this* small?

LEAH:
Well it is their favorite spot to watch the stoves overheat.

A small fwoosh and clattering from the kitchen.

HAROLD:
(Distant)
Ooooh...

JOAN:
(Distant)
Just like the old days, sweetheart...

AL:
So, what's the big occasion, mama?

LEAH:
The occasion to show off me and you beautys in public? I don't need much else.

NARRATOR:
Al flipped her long, freshly washed tail of hair dramatically, whipping against the back of the pleather booth.

AL:
No. Not a thing.

SAM:
(Nervous scold)
 Al, you're gonna hit someone.

AL:
(Goofily ominous)
 That's never not the intention.

A buzz of a text.

SAM:
 Well, I'd be lying if I wasn't
 jealous of inflicting pain on people
 from a distance, but still!

LEAH:
 It's pretty, but not worth the
 effort. Keep it shorn, it saves so
 much time.

NARRATOR:
 Al's phone vibrated into blaring
 white. A text slapping the underside
 of the table with light-

AL:
(Sighs)
 Sorry, I just gotta text real quick-
 get 'em to stop. "Where are you?
 Important breakthrough, asap,"...
 Eugh.

NARRATOR:
 From Brick Becker.

AL:
 "Out right now. Dinner with the
 family. Talk on Monday."

She sends the text and powers down the phone.

AL: (cont'd)
 Ok, I'm turning this off!

SAM:
 And all is as it should be at the
 Pancake Shack.

AL:
 Heaven, Earth, and the PS. So... How
 are you, Mama?

LEAH:

*(A smile, a hum of a
chuckle... then)*

Well, since you asked, I... am ok. Just thought it'd be a good idea to... catch up! Now everything's out on the table.

SAM:

It's been crazy lately, we should've done this a week ago...

LEAH:

If I could've fit it in, I would've. It's been way too long since breakfast for dinner.

SAM:

Mom... I'm still sorry we put you through... all of it. Last week... Last month, last... years?

NARRATOR:

Sam leaned his head affectionately on his mother's shoulder, made easier by them sharing the same side of the booth. Her home manicured nails tickled his hair.

LEAH:

You're still around and that's what counts. *(Soft sigh)* I just been thinkin' ... Can you tell me, how was... growin' up?

Hastings appears again, with drinks, declarations of the items interrupted by the family's thanks.

HASTINGS:

Coffee, decaf.

NARRATOR:

Hastings set down a stainless steel carafe of coffee and mug on the formica table, scribbles of crayon from the last guests still stuck on the edge.

HASTINGS:

- Water- water- and oj.

The family thanks Hastings in their own ways.

HASTINGS: (cont'd)
And y'all's supper should be out in
about twenty, ok?

SAM:
Thank you!

Hastings darts off again.

SAM: (cont'd)
Growing up was great. Why?

LEAH:
Mm...

NARRATOR:
Leah airily dumped three little
buckets of cream into her pungent
black brew.

LEAH:
I wanna know... What I missed! Out
bein' workin' mama for so long. You
know, I... I missed some things.

SAM:
Honestly, wished you missed more,
some recitals should've never seen
daylight.

AL:
(*Snorts*)
And some haircuts...

LEAH:
Were you two happy?

NARRATOR:
Hesitation creased the crows feet
around her eyes. The siblings caught
and released a glance, a zap of
concern shared.

SAM:
Mom, of course. I mean... it's kinda
hard when not working with a full
deck of serotonin, but, God, I can't
imagine any other childhood.

LEAH:

It's always hard growin' up, but... There were a lotta nights running round the library... Gettin' spooked by closing up, and lockin' down, and I thought you liked it, I thought we had fun, it wasn't too scary, was it? Did I scare y'all?

SAM:

(A surprised huff of a laugh)

I demanded that you read us those horrors- You reading us stories are some of my best memories.

AL:

We got the run of the place, it was fantastic. You just said it, growin' up's hard but, I had a blast, aside from just normal growin'. Especially after dad went on his way. It was great.

LEAH:

(She's serious... a hint of sadness)

I really don't want y'all to placate me. We're all adults here. You'd tell me if I wasn't enough for you, wouldn't you? I don't mean now, I mean then. Well and now-

SAM:

You were always enough. Are you ok?

LEAH:

I just... *(Exhale)* I don't want- Some folks like to say that a family ain't a full one without a father. Now... I personally don't agree. I'm glad I served your father papers, I'm glad he's gone on to his own life and doin's... But I can't speak for either of you. And I realized... I might have been assumin' for you.

AL:

I didn't need no fuckin' sperm donor, you were great. You are great- We've had our fights, but Ma, I wouldn't change a thing. Never, ever, ever.

NARRATOR:

Al grabbed Leah's hand across the table.

AL:

We're enough, all of us. And you're an amazing mother.

NARRATOR:

Sam wrapped his arms around Leah. Her eyes welled with tears, hastily brushed aside, cradling his head against her shoulder.

SAM:

We didn't need anyone else. Dad's presence in and of itself fucked us up-

LEAH:

I know, that's part of it.-

AL:

Please don't take responsibility for him being... an abusive dad and husband. That's on him. That's *all* on him.

NARRATOR:

Leah chewed her bottom lip, inspecting the darkness outside their booth window.

SAM:

(He gets a little emotional here)

If I hadn't had you, I don't know where I would be, who I would be. You lit the way for me. I'm glad I was raised by you, and that I get to know you now, and get to live with you. I love you, Mama.

LEAH:

(A bit teary)

I love you too... Just sometimes... you know that rhetoric, gets in your head- All about how you're not doing enough, you can't ever be enough cause you're not a certain person, cause you're just... a single mom and it's a... moral failing? It's absolute bs, but-

SAM:
It is bullshit! Stay there, stay at
bullshit! There's no buts.

Leah chuckles a little.

AL:
Mama, I love you like crazy. Nothing
can touch the family we have. The
family we are. Nothing. After all
we've gone through. There's no
breaking us.

LEAH:
*(Trying to blink
away the tears)*
Oh, you're gonna make my mascara run.

SAM:
(A little choked)
Mine too, and I didn't even put any
on!

AL:
*(Tongue-in-cheek,
with a smile)*
This is a nice establishment. They
require shoes here, let's have some
decorum, okay?

LEAH:
(Chuckles)
You don't know how long that's been
stewin'.

SAM:
Any amount is too long.

LEAH:
I love you both.

AL:
And we love you more. If I can speak
for you...?

SAM:
Oh, by all means, we share one brain.

AL:
Exactly. You already wish you ordered
a soda, don't you?

SAM:
I'm so full of regret...

LEAH:
We can get that fixed right up,
lickety split.

The jangling store door *smacks* open.

HASTINGS:
Welcome to Pancake Shack- Table for
one-?

NARRATOR:
Through the space between her mother
and brother's heads, Al saw *Becker*,
more manic than she'd seen him in
months. He locked onto her with a
quick scan of the room.

AL:
No.

Fast footsteps as he approaches.

AL: (cont'd)
Oh fuck, oh God-

LEAH:
Honey, what's wrong-

SAM:
-AH!

NARRATOR:
Sam turned to look over his shoulder,
finding himself blocked in by his
boss at the end of the table- suit
rumpled, a look of bright
satisfaction on his face.

BECKER:
Hah-hah, my nose never leads me
astray! Room for one more? Scooch
over, Al.

AL:
Hnngh-!

Al shifts over as Becker makes room for himself.

LEAH:

(A low hiss)

What are you doing?! Brick- no-

AL:

How did you find me-

BECKER:

Knowing the limited restaurants in town, and the general tax bracket of this family, it was easy. And I got it on the first guess! You can admit it, you're impressed! - So, what're we having?

SAM:

A family dinner, Sir.

LEAH:

(Trying not to draw attention)

It sure is somethin' that you'd stop by, but we're in the middle of a private-

BECKER:

Leah, Leah- Have they brought you up to date? I'm on the edge of something huge-

NARRATOR:

He hooked an arm around Al, who blanched.

BECKER:

With this kid right here. It's a cause for celebration. And it's about time we sat down as a family.

LEAH:

A family.

BECKER:

You all can see it, can't you? It's inevitable- you know it! There's been a hole in this dynamic for years, and who comes along just in time- Al, I'm already your surrogate daddy-

AL:

(Short circuiting)

Oh God, oh God, oh God-

BECKER:

And Sam, like we saw yesterday, you need a strong presence in your life- I'm right here, buddy! Hi! *(A laugh)* And Leah... Oh Leah... We're foils, aren't we? Masculine and feminine, hard and soft- conservative and... liberal! I wouldn't say I believe in it but... it's practically fate.

SAM:

(Horrorified)

Please, Mr. Becker- you, you're causing a scene-

LEAH:

I can't believe this, I can't believe you- You don't *know* me!

BECKER:

I will soon! I'm your answer!

AL:

Mama doesn't do well with pushing...

BECKER:

(Same smile but getting frustrated)

Shut up, Al.

LEAH:

Don't you *dare* say that to her.

AL:

Mama- it's fine-!

LEAH:

Zip it, Al!

AL:

Yes ma'am.

LEAH:

Can you not take a hint, not even the slightest of hints? I've been droppin' bucket loads since I met you!

BECKER:

Now, let's not get dramatic- Let's talk somewhere more private, we'll order this to-go, and then I'm taking Al camping for a while.

Al laughs awkwardly, terrified, confused.

AL:
What?

SAM:
What??

LEAH:
WHAT?!

NARRATOR:
The surrounding patrons' heads snapped up, awkward chewing en masse at the black hole building in the middle of the Shack.

BECKER:
She gets to be a part of it- this groundbreaking discovery- You're honored, right Al?? We just have to wait, and we will, we'll wait, day and night out there in the woods! But for now, let's talk, you and me, Leah-

LEAH:
There is no way either of my children are going *anywhere with you*, you're acting irrational!

BECKER:
(Out of the side of his mouth)
Well you were the one who said they were adults. They should choose-

HASTINGS:
Uh, ma'am, i-is everythin' alright? I hope this isn't about the wait-

LEAH:
I'll be honest Hastings, things are *not* alright.

BECKER:
This doesn't concern you-

HASTINGS:
Uh, who are you?

BECKER:

(Easy confidence)

The most important man you'll ever meet. I am the Director of the only thing keeping you safe. I'm from the government.

NARRATOR:

He shoved his DoAA ID under the waiter's nose.

BECKER:

Happy?

HASTINGS:

(Like he's had to say this more than once- company policy)

... Sir, this is a Pancake Shack. There is no God here. The only authority we recognize is the night manager.

SAM:

Just go, please, go-

JOAN:

Leah, do you need help?

LEAH:

Yes, please!-

BECKER:

We have important business right now- Thank YOU, civilians!

HAROLD:

Don't you talk over a lady!

BECKER:

She doesn't know what she needs-

NARRATOR:

The coffee had left Leah's mug in the blink of an eye. The liquid doused Becker's front-

Becker gasps, cut off. Leah slams the mug down.

LEAH:

*(Almost vibrating in
anger)*

Never. Ever. Speak for me ever again.
Do you hear me?! I will never be
alone with you. I will never go
anywhere with you! I will never speak
to you except when socially held
hostage- *THAT* is the extent of our
"perfect relationship", Brick.
Social! Niceties! That's it!! *Don't*
text me again, don't ever send
flowers again- And if you pull
something like *this* again?? I'll be
filing a restraining order. Now
leave. And you can lick my *bloody*
cunt on your way out.

SAM:

Oh my God.

AL:

Holy fuck, mama...

BECKER:

*(Regaining his
breath... confused)*

Hah... Hah... Bloody... well that's not
quite how I imagined it-

NARRATOR:

Leah threw the coffee carafe at him.

THUNK- gasps.

BECKER:

AH!

LEAH:

GET OUT!!

SCENE 10: EXT. PARKING LOT - EVENING

The family is walking out in the parking lot, the door is
open to the Pancake Shack behind them.

HASTINGS:

Enjoy your free cinnamon rolls, have
a good night!- Uh... Have a better
night...

SAM:
Thank you Hastings, for everything.

The door closes. They keep walking.

AL:
... I'm really glad they made enough
for leftovers...

LEAH:
Yeah, they're sweet about that.

SAM:
... You have amazing aim, Mom.

LEAH:
Did you know I played softball for a
bit in highschool?

AL:
Oh yeah. I remember you oh so subtly
dropping hints I should go that
route... for some reason.

LEAH:
I was trying to strategize for my
very gay child. What can I say?

AL:
I'm sorry I am beyond sportily inept.

LEAH:
Hm, you've never gone for jocks,
anyway.

SAM:
Where was matchmaking when I was in
highschool?

LEAH:
I always assumed you liked your
online fanfiction a bit better than
real folks in the teen years.

SAM:
OooooOOOOOH, LET'S STOP TALKING ABOUT
THAT RIGHT NOW PLEASE THANK YOU VERY
MUCH!!

LEAH:
It's not a big deal- you left some of
them open on the library computers!-

Al cackles.

SAM:
LA LA LA LA, can't hear you-

LEAH:
Oh hush, it's perfectly natural for
teens to figure out what kind of
romance they like-

SAM:
Not when it's you acknowledging that
I did!!

LEAH:
My GOD, you're a PERSON! (Gasps) And
I'M a person too!!

SAM:
AhhhhHH, when will it end?!

AL:
It never ends!! There's just more
PERSON.

They all mock-scream together, they continue to the car,
laughing, a semblance of them knit back together.

END

CAST

Al - Faraday Roke
Narrator - Kiarra Osakue
Samson - Z Reklaw
Mia - Erin M. Banta
J - Joseph Rathorn
Crux - John Peacock
Sedum - Marcus Cannello
Valen - Samantha Weiler
William - Jonathan Hallowell
Becker - Cory Moosman
Fergum - Joseph Rathorn
Leah - M. Kate McCulloch
Hastings - AJ Carter
Joan - Megan Brown
Harold - Chef Goldblum

CREW

Script Editor, Jacque Reiman.
Assistant Director and Script Editor, Joseph Rothorn.
Written, Directed, and Edited by Faraday Roke.

Harbor is a production of Tartarus Jenny Studios.

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