

HARBOR
Episode 1 - "Pressing"
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SCENE 1 - INTRODUCTION**NARRATOR:**

All beings have homes. Origins and wombs and dark, warm earth. Most homes exist and persist without personality. Others have... feelings. They overwhelm and guide, like cats hungry for something beyond physical touch. Perhaps if the occupants knew, they'd heal the starved, mewling things.

Take, for instance, Harbor, North Carolina, USA. A simple town with a simple occupancy, no more than 2,000 strong in those old, green mountains, swathed in blue mist. Where the shadows stutter and skip in the peripheries. The pre-dawn bringing moist, distant cries; like birdsong, like ecstasy and pain. And the faces with ice-milk eyes whose bodies stay too, too long in the creek waters, undaunted by the piercing cold... All mere facts of life, and certainly *nothing* to dwell on when there's nothing to be done, with none who will see.

Besides... Harbor is home. One can't abandon home. At least not for long.

SCENE 2 - INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Generic country-pop twangs softly through the static of the radio. An engine hums.

SAM:

Alright, ok (*Exhales*) we're getting close- (*Louder*) So, everything's still looking... a-okay?

APP DRIVER:

Yeah, still good, son- I drive for a living, remember... Boy, the scenery's pretty up here! Bet this place is swarming come fall-time, makes me wish we weren't stuck in June! (*Laughs*)
Speaking of-

She cranks the A/C.

(*Cont.*) That's better.

SAM:

Swarming? No, no. Harbor's not much different from Knoxville, Asheville, anywhere. It wouldn't- You wouldn't like it... I'd take it slower up here, the bends get sharp.

APP DRIVER:

Aw, me and mountain roads go way back... But I'll ease off a bit...

The GPS fizzles.

(Cont.)

Damn GPS, keeps going in and out...

SAM:

We're on the right track. I'll be your backup.

APP DRIVER:

Such a gentleman. So, tell me more about yourself, young man,
wasit-

SAM:

Samson.

APP DRIVER:

Nice biblical name... Rather weak fella, all things considered...

SAM:

But you can't deny he had style.

NARRATOR:

Samson offered a coy grin to the rearview mirror, his large
cinnamon-brown eyes glinting behind his glasses, pale skin
beading sweat even in the A/C.

APP DRIVER:

Suuure... Well, Samson, I feel like I hardly know ya, after an
hour and a half! Ya got parents, family, out here? I don't mean
to presume, but you're such a baby face.

SAM:

Hence the beard.

APP DRIVER:

Oh, I thought ya forgot to shave. *(Chuckles)*

SAM:

Blessing and a curse... I'm visiting with my ma- mom, actually-
Before the big job starts up.

APP DRIVER:

Oh, what's she about?

SAM:

Head Librarian for our- the town system, it's for the schools
and public- Harbor's small enough.

APP DRIVER:

Ya'll must be tiny, then! So, just you two?

SAM:

Oh, no, there's my big sister, too.

APP DRIVER:

Well, go on!

SAM:

(Loosening up)

Al is... She's great. I mean, she's a bit "eccentric", and works a
ton at her... ah, well it's not a *dead end* job, per se but... she
streamed my graduation and stayed up to watch my mock trial-
even with the time-difference.

APP DRIVER:

That's sweet, that's real nice, son.

SAM:

It is. I don't know what I'd do without her. My best friend is
my sister, it's ridiculous how lucky I am, when I think about
it... You know, she's unafraid to be herself, no matter what.
Always there to help people, there to listen, there to protect...
all of us. I've really never known anyone so selfless.

SCENE 3 - EXT. DAY - FOREST

Transitional music stings out in a sudden jolt.

AL:

(Heaving, intermittent coughing)

YOU THINK YOU CAN OUTFIGHT ME, YA SACKS OF SHIT?! I'LL WEAR YOUR SKIN AS A FUCKIN' MUFF WHEN I'M THROUGH WITH Y'ALL, FERGUM!

WILLIAM:

(Also panting)

Ey, where was that spark a half mile back?

She collapses against a tree, rustling the forest floor.

(Cont.)

Agh, come on, get up, Al! We're hot on the trail, right, ending this?

AL:

Ever heard of empty threats, William? We lost 'em, might as well make 'em scared if we can. Not likely, but eh, worth a shot.

WILLIAM:

You're a disgrace to human endurance.

AL:

Against dogs?

WILLIAM:

(Laughs, though he doesn't find this funny.)

God bless your heart. Ok, Al, why don't ya call in to Valen while I go get this under control, alright?

AL:

Mmm, what'll happen when you corner 'em? You'll find some leashes already round their necks, begging for walkies? Take a load off, Willie. They're gone.

WILLIAM:

Geeze, Allie, no rush or anything.

AL:

Just sayin' we might as well catch our breath and think of a good strategy, is all.

WILLIAM:

Oh, and when's that gonna pop up? In the next six hours?

AL:

Not if you slow your roll and help me out- Oh. Now *here's* a good idea... yeah yeah yeah yeah-

WILLIAM:

What's that? We back on it- (*hopeful*) please, Al, please...!

AL:

Think Fergum dropped some weed round here somewhere, why don't you and I get the creative fires roarin' and...

WILLIAM:

Ugggh, (*Al laughs*) we don't got time for this- This is serious!

AL:

I'm joking, I'm joking, alright? We don't gotta get high, though it might help with *your* morale...

WILLIAM:

Fergum's gonna go toss drugs at the, the, the preschool or somethin'! And then we'll be back to wrestlin' narcotics outta toddlers little vice-hands again, the teachers all hollerin'-

AL:

Hey now, in Fergum's defense, it looked like they ran off thataway, towards the dump- so, they probably got all the maliciousness against kids outta their system for the day..

WILLIAM:

What is wrong with you? You know what, nevermind, I'm gonna do *something* about that *menace*.

AL:

(Less relaxed)

Don't, William. We have to stick together. We'll protect the kids, I was just bein' dumb, but look, we're a team and Fergum is dangerous-

WILLIAM:

(A mix of sadness and frustration)

When are you gonna start using the word "partner"?

AL:

Ah... mmm, so you wanna talk about that right now? What happened to doing something, huh? Let's go back to that- That's more constructive-

WILLIAM:

Al, what is this? All jokes or strictly business?

AL:

(Giving in, honest)

I'm just trying to keep us in one piece. And we're not getting anywhere runnin' like chickens in the woods.

WILLIAM:

Well, your tactics aren't working out mighty great either.
(Slight pause while he decides) I'll see you back at the Station. I'm gonna go at least try.

William runs off, deeper into the forest.

AL:

... Reckless hick...

NARRATOR:

Al pushed back her loose tangle of dark hair, clinging to the sweat trickling down, her deep eyes lidded in the afternoon sun cutting through the leaves. She squinted at her phone.

AL speed dials her phone. It rings twice.

CRUX:

Department of Cryptid Affairs, Crux speaking, how may we help?

AL:

Hey, patch me through to Valen?

CRUX:

Oh, (*Chuckles*) Sounds like you're having fun. I'll transfer you over.

AL:

Yeah, thanks.

The line rings. It stops. Then begins ringing again.

AL:

Ah, no, no-

SEDUM:

DoCA, Management Director Nuller speaking.

AL:

Heeey Sedum- I don't have long-

SEDUM:

Al! Oh, *excellent*, how are you-

AL:

Later- Why isn't Valen at the house- (*correcting herself*) at, at the Station?

SEDUM:

Ah- yesss, if memory serves correct, she's out- on a personal assignment? Not that I'd know *where*.

AL:

We lost Fergum. My boss boss should know when she gets back, if we don't intersect.

SEDUM:

That's not ideal-

The underbrush rustles, and the sound of dogs panting whispers in.

AL:

I gotta go.

SEDUM:

Wait, Al, can we please talk about-

AL:

(Hisses)

I got drug dealing dogs here, Sedum- Later.

SEDUM:

Oh! Good!-

Al ends the call, FERGUM approaches.

NARRATOR:

A trio of dogs slunk through the underbrush, panting through long mouths. The middle shook it's head, the silver hair on it's ears and the joints of it's spindly legs rippling in a cascade. The other two's tails wagged lazily in the building steam of the afternoon. All three faced her, but how they could figure her from the dense foliage was a mystery, as none had eyes. Only the same slick fur pulled over empty sockets.

AL:

Hey Fergum, I'm a ask ya'll a question. Kay?

FERGUM:

Do it.

AL:

What in the hell is your problem?

FERGUM:

As though you could comprehend...

AL:

Why are ya'll throwing drugs at people.

FERGUM:

Oh, that. A means to an end, but the way it fiddles with human brains is entertaining in the interim.

AL:

Toddlers, too? They're funny as is, why you gotta try and fuck `em up?

FERGUM:

We do not disparage age.

AL:

You gave Oxycodone to a four year old, shitheads. We have rules, doesn't matter if you're Cryptid or Human.

FERGUM:

Of course, some of us are just higher on the punishment list. It's in the very air, suffocating-

AL:

Like you can't protect yourselves- You're hurting Harbor.

FERGUM:

(Hacks out a laugh)

A fair exchange, we think.

AL:

And yourselves, idiots. Where do you think you'll end up, going on like this?

FERGUM:

Away from *here*.

AL:

Alright, then, let's head back to the Station. I'll get anyone ya'll can stand to talk to- We'll figure this out-

FERGUM:

Unappealing. Here's time to think of a better idea.

Fergum turns and runs, all three of them.

(Cont., Distant)

Come, you must convince us to be good little beings, Al!
Otherwise, we'll strike again!

Al sighs, and follows.

SCENE 4 - EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Many things are running through the underbrush, crashing through.

FERGUM:

(Distant)

Insufficient! Next!

AL:

(Panting)

Then, cause it's tacky! You're like an after-school special.

FERGUM:

But after-school is an opportune time for adolescents to inebriate themselves!

Fergum skids to a stop on asphalt.

(Cont.)

Look how far we've come, all this way to the roads, and still you are so submerged in the suppositions of your own life that it is a wonder you can even *breathe*.

Al stops as well, in the underbrush of the forest.

AL:

Can y'all not stand in the middle of the street?

FERGUM:

Our position makes you nervous? It is incentive!- we'll move when you stretch outside of your little existence enough to see another's reasoning.

AL:

(Frustrated)

Alright, fine! Then, you're... It's because... you're bored. That's it. Why else would you be running me up and down these goddamn woods!- You're lonely! You, Fergum, the infinite, indescribable entity of multitudes, *miss* having *friends*. Right? Oh I bet you even miss our stupid stoner talk, too, huh? Is that why it's all drugs this time?!

Fergum snarls, low. Al laughs a little.

FERGUM:

Lonely... Lonely?! Yes, let us tell you of our loneliness, Human who *abandoned* us. The reason for it *ALL*. You wonder why we do this, where it began, its *birth*?! It is beca-

Tires squeal. App Driver's car smacks into Fergum with a *THUNK*. Al hisses in sympathetic pain.

SCENE 5 - INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

APP DRIVER:

Lordy Moses, I- I didn't even-

She yanks the E-brake, and unbuckles herself.

(Cont.)

Sit tight, I gotta see if whatever I hit was, is... uh, just hang on!

She exits the car. Sam shifts in his seat, then inhales.

SAM:

Oh God... Oh, of *course!*

NARRATOR:

A squat sign sat on the opposite shoulder. Expertly carved into the wood in a cheery scrawl read the notorious, familiar welcome letter Sam had memorized since time immemorial: "Harbor: Are You Home?".

SAM:

Apparently I *am*, you crazy- ugh, no, no- It's charming... Good ol' home sweet home...

He unbuckles his seatbelt.

SCENE 6: EXT. ROADSIDE - AFTERNOON

Sam shuts the car door and walks forward.

SAM:

Is everything- Oh Lord.

APP DRIVER:

My car... *dogs* caved in my bumper! Augh, and my headlight! At least it's only the one... (*Gasps*)

Fergum is extracting themselves from under the car with glass falling and panting.

NARRATOR:

Two dogs shook broken glass and metal off of their bodies, the third scrabbling out from underneath the engine block.

SAM:

Holy hell.

APP DRIVER:

They ain't got no eyes! I smushed in their eyes!!

SAM:

I don't think that's possible.

FERGUM:

(Huffy, garbled)

Weak machines.

The Driver yelps.

SAM:

(Terrified)

Ah... *(Laughs nervously)* I'm hearing things, I'm hallucinating-
already- Oh, *shit*... I didn't miss this-

AL:

(Distant)

HEY!

Fergum kicks the car. The other head light shatters.

APP DRIVER:

Stop kicking my car, you crazy mutts!! Dammit!

SAM:

Hang on, it could be a seizure!

Fergum wheezes out a hacking laugh, mingled with a growl as Al crashes in, catching her breath.

AL:

They bite. Don't touch them.

SAM:

Al?!

AL:

Sam? Aw hell, your flight was-

SAM:

This morning. Did you forget?

Fergum turns tail and runs.

APP DRIVER:

They're running off! It's a horrible miracle!

AL:

Ah, uh- No, no, I didn't forget. It's just been a crazy mornin'-

SAM:

It's the middle of the afternoon.

NARRATOR:

The trio of dogs split apart, fifteen feet back down the road into town- taking different routes. Al's shoulders slumped.

AL:

Dammit... Sam, come here, I could really use a hug.

She scoops him up in a hug with a grunt.

SAM:

Ok- Woah, hold on... Hah, my lungs!

AL:

You stink like airplane, baby bro.

SAM:

(Chuckling)

Yeah, you smell like moss. Put me down.

She obliges.

APP DRIVER:

My car... What were those things made outta?

AL:

(Muttering)

Spite. *(Normal)* What do ya think, bro, ready to call it?

SAM:

(Sighing)

Yeah, I was hoping we'd miss something like this but... I'll grab my stuff.

Sam jogs back and starts digging out his luggage.

(Cont.)

Can't even get a ride into this place... Ehhh, over city limits, keep it to yourself, Sam... This isn't forever, just a visit, only a visit- Oh my God, I really am crazy... Towns can't hear you talk shit about them, remember...

AL:

(Distant)

There's a mechanic's about five miles back. They got special discounts for this kind of thing.

APP DRIVER:

(Distant)

Wha... ok? Ok.

AL:

You'll be fine, just head on out as soon as you can- If need be you can put it in neutral and roll there. And tell 'em Al sent you, they'll understand. *(Calling)* Ready, Sam?

SAM:

Here, I'm here.

He jogs back.

APP DRIVER:

Wait- it's only a couple'a miles to your address, let me finish out the trip-

SAM:

No- We're good. Focus on getting back to Knoxville. I'm sorry.
Thank you, though? I'm... really, very sorry.

They walk away from the scene, down the road.

APP DRIVER:

(Distant)

What if there's more of those freaks out there?!

SAM:

(Calling back)

What're the chances of that? *(Laughs)* Lightning doesn't strike twice!

AL:

Oh, I missed that logic, bud.

SAM:

It's a lie, actually. Lightning *will* strike twice. It's just meaninglessly positivity to try to claw out a semblance of control by way of willful ignorance... It's nice.

AL:

(Laughs)

Missed the pragmatism, too!

SCENE 7 - EXT. ROADSIDE - AFTERNOON

The siblings walk along the road. A car occasionally passes.

SAM:

So, let's get this straight, you're saying that eyeless, obviously diseased dogs are-

AL:

-Just a part of life, ya know? Hell, I don't know why William adopted them, but it's my job- *(Quickly correcting)* as a friend-

to get 'em back. When they run off. Which I... failed at. It's
 alright, they'll turn up.

SAM:

Hang on, you're talking about William Kappel, right? You hate
 each other. Since you were in like 8th grade.

AL:

(This is true, but also a lie)

We haven't always, actually... We grew. As people. Being gone for
 5 years, you might not have noticed.

SAM:

Aw, geeze Al, I couldn't just leave Washington, with the
 scholarships, and nobody ever wanted to cover shifts at work..

AL:

(Regretting her honesty)

Sorry. I didn't mean for that to sound so bad.

SAM:

Its ok... I mean, you are right, it's been awhile.

AL:

It's just enough has changed around here, Sam. But being away
 might make Harbor look like a derelict backwater town... I think
 it does and I never left.

SAM:

(Giggling a little)

Ugh, you're asking to get yourself tripped up..

AL:

(Snorts)

I was born here- I'm immune to the asshole curse. I can say
 whatever I want. Like... Hmmm, *(Louder)* Harbor's only redeeming
 quality is Lake Santeetlah and even that's outta city limits!!

SAM:

(Cracking a smile)

You don't need to make the poor place feel bad about itself,
geeze...

AL:

You'll feel sorry for anything.

SAM:

I missed Harbor... I did, it's... quaint. Cute... Weird... *(A moment of reflection)* Seattle was so different. It had half a million people going everywhere... And no one ever talked about the city like it could hear them. *(Sighs)*

He starts walking, she follows.

(Cont.)

Still a little crazy, aren't I...?

AL:

It's part of your charm.

SAM:

Thaaaanks. Really reassuring.

AL:

Accept yourself and your weird, bro.

SAM:

(Scoffing, but also laughing)

So you thought I'd forgotten about your teenage conspiracy
obsession?

AL:

Uhhh... I hoped.

SAM:

You can pretend it doesn't exist, but I'll always know!

AL:

Yeah, well- Lucky for you, you never stayed up at night thinkin' your nightmares were talking to you- Oh no, never, that'd be silly and strange, and eerily similar, wouldn't it.

SAM:

(Chuckles, sarcastic)

Hell yeah, countin' my stars I avoided that. Can you imagine the pre-teen insomnia? How hypothetically embarrassing- Now my under-eye bags are only due to *real* issues, like the ones I make up in my head... Oh wait. *(Laughs)*

AL:

(Laughs a little)

... Do you still get those? Those nightmares?

SAM:

Uh, not for a few years now.

AL:

So does that help with the, uh... ?-

SAM:

The anxiety?

AL:

Yeah.

SAM:

Yeah it's better, especially now that school's over. I'm still taking the meds, which help.

AL:

Hey! Good for you, you know what you need.

SAM:

(Touched)

Aw, ha... Thanks. *(Prodding gently)* What ever happened to Agent Al, anyway? Kinda miss not being the only "creepy" one.

AL:

(Dismissive, also blooping on her phone)

She got sucked into another dimension and replaced with me; I gotta make a call into work- They get to pump gas without me today.

SAM:

After a decade, I would've thought they'd've- *(Correcting his drawl)* they would have at least promoted you to to working at the service station instead of keeping you on register.

The phone is ringing in her ear.

AL:

You'd think. Life's bleak, innit? *(It picks up)* Hey, uh-

CRUX:

Al? William's here and- oh... Oh? What happened, you feel different-

AL:

Yeah, I can't come back in. It's not a big deal-

CRUX:

I don't need my talents to tell that you're hiding something.

NARRATOR:

Al glanced at her brother, who politely stared at the lush mountain foliage around them, dripping sweat in the June heat, underneath his smart ensemble.

AL:

(Sighs)

I ran into my brother on his way in for his visit, I'm making sure he gets home safe.

CRUX:

Oh. Oh, ho... I see... So, skipping?

AL:

(Whispered)

Come on, keep this low? The *team* lost... the *project* and we got into a snit. We both could use a cool down.

CRUX:

Oh, yes, I know. Will wasn't the happiest when he came in. I'll keep this as mum as I can, Al, but only because we're conveniently busy with a *guest* at present.

AL:

-Cool, thanks for understanding, see you tomorrow- Bye.

Crux laughs a little before she hangs up.

SAM:

That was easy.

AL:

I have a way with people.

SAM:

(Unable to help laughing)

Since when?

AL:

(Dissolving into laughter as well)

... The five years that you've been away?

SCENE 8 - EXT. ROADSIDE, NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

The sounds of "neighborhood" is all around, more cars, more life. They still journey and are showing the wear.

AL:

You're gonna love mama's new place. It's cozy.

SAM:

Claustrophobia never did bother you. God, it's like walking in soup here...

AL:

The house was too big for her by herself. One way or another,
she needed to sell it, Sam.

SAM:

Yeah, but your degree wasn't the reason reason.

AL:

She's happy in the condo. Let her have that without martyrinn'
yourself, please.

Sam suddenly stops walking.

SAM:

Why are we at this corner?... This isn't- Oh my God. We're taking
the long way!

Al stops as well.

AL:

No, we, uh, I just think its nicer-

SAM:

Al. I'm ok. I can walk *by* my childhood home, especially if it
cuts off 20 minutes from our hiking tour around town!

NARRATOR:

The saliva in Al's mouth evaporated. Her brother crossed his
arms in defiance, watching her sniff back a run in her nose,
which sat hooked and crooked on her face, buying time.

AL:

... This way's more scenic.

SAM:

More... *(Sighs)* We'll walk through a literal park by the old
house.

AL:

Ducks shit all over that park.

SAM:

I'm taking the shorter route.

Sam stalks away.

AL:

(Exhales forcefully)

Wait- wait up, hold on...

She follows after him.

SCENE 9 - EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE AFTERNOON

AL:

... I was looking out for you. It's been a busy day.

SAM:

Yes, my delicate disposition might wilt at the sight of a house.

AL:

That's not what I said, bud... Come on, other side of the street.

SAM:

What now I can't even walk past the house??

They cross the street. It is quiet in the neighborhood.

AL:

The new owner is particularly... particular... that's all.

SAM:

Someone new in town? Who the hell would move here- So who bought it?

AL:

It's complicated.

SAM:

It's complicated to say who it is? Do they have a weird name-
something Dutch?

AL:

Oh my God, you didn't tell me you got a minor in interrogation.

NARRATOR:

The trees grew thick and tall around them, silent guardians of their street. Their *former* street. Samson pushed down the knot in his stomach, re-adjusting his glasses as he caught the first glimpse of the dark wood siding. It was an enormous, oak monstrosity; ancient with additions piled on the skeleton, like a doll with a few too many replacement arms sewn on. Al gave it a cursory glance, praying the facade remained quiet..

They stop walking.

AL:

There you go, it's the same.

SAM:

It feels different.. Ah! They got rid of the emerald city door.
It's black now..

AL:

(Remembering fondly)

That was ours, anyway. I think they knew it needed to move on.. Like we do. Come on, mama said something about ordering takeout-

SAM:

The new folks must be pretty well off, look at that Caddy in the drive.. I swear I've seen that before.

AL:

(Stiffening)

Oh. *(A hiss)* Ass.

SAM:

And who needs a plaque next to the front door?? What drama...

AL:

People are weird, let them be weird- C'mon-

A door slams. A pair are walking briskly down the sidewalk.

SEDUM:

(Distant)

It isn't 5:15, we have 10 more minutes to go over this proposal.

NARRATOR:

A towering man stumbled backwards down the walkway, tripping over the hem of his leather duster, pulled taught around his hunched shoulders. His hollow, pale face twisted in exasperation as he clutched a manila folder tight.

SAM:

(Whispering)

Holy shit Mr. Nuller bought our house??

AL:

(Whispering)

He did, there, it's out, ok. Let's go.

SAM:

(Whispering)

Hold on. This is nuts...

Sam dives into some bushes. Al stifles her groan of frustration and goes in after him.

AL:

So we're spying in the bushes now?

GLENDIA:

(Distant)

I am done, Nuller, Sedum, whatever your name is today.

SAM:

What the, is that-

AL:

The mayor.

SAM:

(Snorting)

No, that's Glenda Dickson- Holy hell, she actually won?!

NARRATOR:

A small woman obstructed the abdomen of Mr. Nuller. A smart blue suit immaculately tailored around her, her curled blonde bob hardly shifting as she pushed him back with the force of her presence, towards the glossy car in the drive.

SEDUM:

(Through a tight smile)

Nuller, hence, my ah, human state, Mayor? I can explain it again, if you wi-

GLENDA:

Yes, yes, the voice, the projections, the feeble attempt to "blend in". You look like a Frankenstein, it's hardly better than the feathers. Now scooch, I have a dinner to get to!

SAM:

What on earth-

SEDUM:

I have yet to go over next quarter's DoCA budget, and I do happen to have a few ideas on how to stretch things further, accommodate our need for another member, if you recall? What I have will work out far better than us taking budget cuts, *again-*

GLENDA:

Sugar-Beak, it's your own fault you keep losing track of those on your payroll.

SEDUM:

Completely, entirely, we're working on it.-

GLENDA:

Tell me, who do you have lined up to join them hellish ranks of your's?

SEDUM:

Uh... Not sure yet. We're still looking.

GLENDA:

Don't forget my parameters. Humans only, no more sneakin' freaks in on a respectable salary, now.

SAM:

Geeze, knew she was horrible, but *that-*

SEDUM:

Yes, Mayor. We are willing to accommodate that.

GLENDA:

I know this all must be new to you, but it's called delegation, Director Nuller. I trust you to do what we *both* need you to do in the realm of our shared reality and real estate, and you pick those knees up, and do it. You should try it for yourself sometime. Maybe this place would actually get something done if you attempted to act like a leader.

SEDUM:

Personal taste, I suppose. Stringent democracy and committees works well for our crew.

GLENDA:

(Smiling)

Mmm, or are the humans here just too clever to keep in line? Reeks of excuses.

AL:

Hah... crazy... The way government folk talk- Eeeugh...

GLEND A:

Them cracks startin' to show to everyone else... ? They been bleedin' for a while from my view- It's a wonder you ain't slipped yet.

SEDUM:

Ah, well, though that's off topic- we, I assure you-

GLEND A:

Oh, Lord, you can't even bear a teeny bit of scrutiny, can you! It's how the game's played, Sugar-Beak. But you could always step down, go find respite in whatever nests you've clawed out if it's too much. Seems reasonable to me. With your constitution, it'll come sooner rather than later, I guarantee you.

SEDUM:

Thank you for the... option. I'll decline, again, though, Mayor. I still enjoy my work.

GLEND A:

You know you're just making it torturous on yourself. Drawin' it out like this... Breaks my heart. *(Sighs)* Well. Your lil' operation will just have to find a way forward without me. At least for this week. Too, too many meetings, and of course I can't show partiality to *Aberrations*, honey, *(Chuckles)* what would the sewage department think? Oh, can you imagine the police turnin' green?

She unlocks the car.

(Cont.)

They have guns, you know.

SAM:

(Very concerned)

Was that a threat?

AL:

(Exhaling steadily)

Oh my God...

SEDUM:

Mayor Dickson. Please. *Please*. Our employees have lives-families. If you're on a schedule, then, take the proposal with you. I'm begging you. All it needs is a signature, and then it can go to the state department, and then, I'll be out of your hair. We'll all be happy.

GLENDA:

(Pause)

Some of them have families. I don't know what the rest of ya'll got squirreled away in your caves and coffins... Evenin' Nuller.

She climbs into the car, snaps the door shut, and drives away. There is a pause, a diffusion of energy. Sedum starts to walk.

SAM:

(Exhaled)

Yikes.

AL:

(Whispered)

Let's go-

Sedum's footsteps stop.

SAM:

(Hushed)

Oh. Oh, he's looking this way-

AL:

(Hissing)

What are you doin'?

SAM:

(Whispering)

Al, we look like we're staking the place, I gotta let him know-

AL:

Sam-!

Sam stands up, rustling the shrub.

SAM:

(Calling)

Hello Mr. Nuller!

AL:

Son of a fuckin' bitch...

SAM:

Uh, I don't know if you remember me, Sams-...?

SEDUM:

Samson Greer... Of course. You've returned... You actually came back.

SAM:

Only for a visit- I have an internship lined up, won't be here for too long.

SEDUM:

Ah. *(Remembering)* ... Why are you in the shrubs?

Al gets up, rustling the bush bad.

AL:

Hello Mr. Nuller...

SEDUM:

(Sighing, betraying familiarity)

Al. There you are-

AL:

(Interrupting)

-Long time no see!

They both walk over to him.

SEDUM:

(Going along with it)

Ah, uh, yes. Well, this is a surprise. So, you've graduated, then, Samson?

SAM:

Yes, sir! Got back today. I... it's silly, but I wanted to see the old house before settling into my mom's new place for the month...

So, accidental shrub espionage. I promise I'm not looking to steal your valuables.

SEDUM:

That's reasonable, I suppose. And you, Al? I didn't know you needed to lurk. You *can* use the front door-

AL:

Just keepin' an eye out. Neighborhood watch on... political figures.

SEDUM:

Best to leave that to people on the clock, don't you think?

AL:

And spoil the vigilantism for the rest of us?

SAM:

So, I see you haven't stopped chasing his coattails, then, Al! I remember how you just wouldn't leave poor Mr. Nuller alone when we were kids- Oh, yeah it's all coming back; Mom forcing you to eat dinner with us twice a week for that summer with dagger eyes before she trusted you even a *little*, sir, remember? And, and then came the thinly veiled threats she'd drop all the time if anything ever happened to Al... hah, yeah... Really glad you didn't turn out to be a kidnapping sadist now that I look back.

SEDUM:

As am I.

AL:

Me three- ain't that the truth- He likes to hang out at the gas station now! That's... how we've kept up. Have such a rapport. That's the reason.

SAM:

Ah... oh?

SEDUM:

(Giving in)

... Yes! It is a lovely facility. Full of... positive energy...

AL:

We do have a wide variety of energy drinks... at the gas station. Where I have worked... for so long, now.

SEDUM:

Indeed, you have. Such diligence.

SAM:

(Laughing)

That's small towns for you! Not many places to socialize.

SEDUM:

(Tightly)

And yet, people still find a way to avoid each other.

AL:

Well, it's been swell, Nuller. Gotta... get this one home now. To the new home. Not this one. This one is your home! *(Laughs, strained)* ... See you later...

SEDUM:

Right.

They begin walking away.

SAM:

Sorry for being creepy! Won't happen again!

SEDUM:

No trouble at all. And welcome back.

SAM:

Thank you- Oh! And good luck with that proposal, sir!

SEDUM:

(Stiffly)

Mm... yes... Thank you.

Sedum retreats into the house, closing the door. They continue.

SAM:

Well, that was...

AL:

Painful.

SAM:

Intriguing. I now know you haven't given up on annoying our local weirdo transplanted, but it's since evolved a thick layer of political intrigue.

AL:

(Slyly, more relaxed)

You don't even know the half of it.

They're walking off, getting distant.

SAM:

Oooh, there's my super secret-agent sister! ... Wait, ok, I've never seen Mr. Nuller work before- to afford our old place-
What's he do??

AL:

Sam... I wasn't gonna tell you this... But, *(Whispers)* Nuller's the weed man.

SAM:

(Slight gasp)
The weed man??

AL:

I know. That's why that back there was so intense- It's all that marijuana money, just clumps of it, all sticky-

SAM:

(Laughs)
Eeugh! No sticky money!!

SCENE 10 - INT. LEAH'S CONDO - EVENING

Clatter of silverware on plates.

LEAH:

There's still so much more, sweets, here, have another helpin'.

NARRATOR:

Leah Greer's hair, cropped sensibly, auburn streaked with gray, was sufficiently ruffled out of place from the many embraces she'd claimed from her youngest over the course of the dinner. She beamed wide across the table at her children; Samson molding his own hair back into shape, and Al's long legs tangling in the supports of the table in a splay.

SAM:

Mom- I've been living off of coffee and ramen for about 6 months, I think I need a minute to catch back up.

LEAH:

(His plight pains her)
Oh Sam... But I wasn't talking to *just* you.

AL:

Pile it on, please, thank you, your arm's lookin' tastier and tastier the longer I wait.

LEAH:

I'm rather attached to that arm, so please don't, baby. When *is* the last time either of you ate a full meal?

Leah is busy scooping out another serving of takeout.

SAM:

(Joking)

February 1996.

AL:

(Honest)

Easter.

LEAH:

That job doesn't pay you well enough. And that college didn't feed you well enough!

SAM:

Nature of the game, ma, ya can't fill up the brain with excess calories during finals, it'll slow down the neurons. I took Psych 101.

LEAH:

(Unimpressed)

Mmm. Certainly sounds like science.

SAM:

How's the search for the new librarian going?

Al snorts, laughing ruefully.

AL:

People can't be bothered for shit.

Her phone buzzes suddenly.

(Cont.)

Mm- The hell-

LEAH:

(Mock Gasp)

A phone at the table? You're lucky I'm such a cool mom.

AL:

(Distracted)

Yeah, the coolest.

SAM:

Except for that time you made me do oboe for half a semester...

NARRATOR:

Caller ID trembled with the rings as Al slid the phone underneath the table top. Call from S. Nuller.

Al declines the call with a bloop.

LEAH:

Not important?

AL:

Not at all.

LEAH:

Alright. (Chuckles) Uh-huh, yeah, Sam, the applicant search is not going great. If you weren't already star of the Museum of Antiquities I might just... beg you. It's fine, though, we make do.

SAM:

(Laughs, abashed)

Mom, no, not star, just intern... For now.

AL:

What's that mean? That sounds like that means something.

SAM:

Well, uh... I wasn't gonna say but... My liason there, Ms. Smeets, has been talking about how they're seriously considering.. a job offer! If the summer goes well.

AL:

A full on gig?

SAM:

(Barely keeping his grin contained)

Mhm! Looks like working my *butt* off has finally reaped some rewards! Fingers crossed, though- it's not final.

AL:

Not final my ass, they told you and you already got the internship!

LEAH:

Sweets, that'd be fantastic. So you'd be in New York full time?

SAM:

(Very happy)

Yeah! I'd buy you guys plane tickets as often as you want, we can all see the-the lights, the people, the *history*! Augh!

LEAH:

Of course, Sam. But I'll wanna see *your* life most of all.

SAM:

(Grinning)

Mmm! Al? What do you think about visiting?

AL:

Ah... Uh... That's... a big city!

SAM:

It is. Big and *alive*.

AL:

I'd go for you, Sam.

SAM:

Don't worry. I'll find the best quiet spots to take you.

AL:

(Smiling)

Thanks. I'm countin' on it.

SAM:

Don't worry! I'll take care of you!

AL:

Yeah, yeah.

SAM:

Mom, I am sorry it's been a slog to find anyone for the library.
You know, that's just like this town- no one wants to try
anything new.

LEAH:

People like routine. Makes them feel secure. I thought you took
psych?

AL:

Keep in mind that's coming from you, bro. Changin' your room
set-up 3 times a month..

SAM:

Change yourself before someone forces you, you get ahead of the
curve that way. I've hacked the system.

LEAH:

Haven't settled down even a little at... what, 25?

SAM:

It's not so bad- Just aesthetics, I'm not changing philosophies
will-nilly.. Besides, I'm still holding Al as my example- I have

another 4 years to slow into a good routine, like she's got. 30 seems like a good age to do that.

AL:

Uh, turning 29. Not that I'm bothered but give me time.

SAM:

Sorry.

AL:

Though I thank you, being an inspiration to blossomin' homebodies is truly an honor.

LEAH:

Homebody? You haven't stopped by for dinner in two months.

AL:

Eeey, what're you doin' callin' me out like that, mama- he's supposed to think we got our shit together- We're perfect here, Sam. Completely void of problems, take it from me.

Leah laughs. There is a sharp rapping on the door. Sam sets down his glass.

SAM:

... Were you expecting someone?

LEAH:

No. (*Playfully*) It's the Witching hour...

SAM:

9:15?

LEAH:

(*Struggling to think*)

The Devil's... Breakfast time.

Sam and Leah snicker and banter lightly in the background.

NARRATOR:

Al cast a glance down the hallway, straining her eyes to peer through the distorted glass in the front door. She made out a large form, barely visible, inky black, aside from a pale face, dark hair pushed back-

Al shoves the chair out from under her.

AL:

(Quickly)

I could use a smoke- I'll get it.

LEAH:

Aleilia...

AL:

Half, I'll do half. Promise. *(Smiling)* Remember? We ain't got no problems.

Al kisses Leah on the cheek, who sighs.

(Cont.)

Love yooooou.

Al briskly walks down the hallway.

LEAH:

(Distant)

Shake out your clothes before you come back in, please! Now I think I have some short cake in here somewhere...

SAM:

(Distant)

So that's what the strawberries are for!

She opens the door.

SCENE 11 - EXT. LEAH'S CONDO - EVENING

A deluge of crickets singing wash over the air.

SEDUM:

(Nuller)

Good evening, Al.

She shuts the door with a snap.

AL:

What're you doing here?

NARRATOR:

The looming Mr. Nuller's image wavered and dissolved in a flicker of iridescence. Pale, bloodless skin gave way to an oil-spill of black feathers, flat face morphing, overtaken by an enormous, charcoal beak, his eyes splitting down the middle into two sets of two; four in all, luminous and gold. He dipped his head and gave her half a droll, toothless smile; his taloned hands finding rest in his duster pockets.

SEDUM:

Simply looking for a chat. I would have settled for a phone conversation, however the reception is quite bad tonight- it dropped my call. So! Have a minute? If you're not too busy ducking me, of course?

AL:

(Hushed)

Oh come *on*, don't be like that-

SEDUM:

What do you want me to say, Al, it hurts-

The door's handle jostles.

AL:

Wait! Ah, hide!

The door opens as Sedum takes a few steps back.

LEAH:

(From inside)

Baby, who is it-

Al crowds herself in the door-way with a thump.

NARRATOR:

Al shoved herself into the tiny gap, holding the edge of the door tight against her mother's push.

AL:

Howdy mama.

LEAH:

Who's here? Midnight Mormons?

AL:

(A choice)

My ex! ... From high school.

LEAH:

(Truly taken aback)

April? But she moved. 8 years ago, now. *(Growing wary)* ... And I moved... how'd she find you... ? This is all awfully convenient and worrisome-

AL:

Ah, well, she's *(She clears her throat, hard)* She's back in town. For old times. *(Laughs, clears her throat again, harder)* And she does her research. *(Hacks, loud)* Frog in my throat-

LEAH:

Then how's about I say hi?

SEDUM/APRIL:

(Pulling a mixture of his voice, high, and an external voice, a young woman's)

Hi Leah, I'll only be a second. And please, I look a mess, I can hardly stand having Al see me like this!

AL:

(Sweating bullets)

Ha, ha, you, you're fine, April! Just fine..

LEAH:

(Hesitant, to "April")

Ah, alright, dear? *(Lower)* I'll be inside if you need.. backup or anything. *(Back to "April")* Enjoy your stay, April.

SEDUM/APRIL:

(Same mixture)

I most certainly will, Leah!

AL:

(Strained)

Yep.

The door closes again.

SCENE 12- EXT: LEAH'S CONDO - NIGHT

AL:

(Exhales)

It would've been "Ms. Greer".

SEDUM:

(Thinking)

Hmmm.. Oh, that's right! I remember that April, now, she was higher. *(He returns to the voice, APRIL:)* Not my favorite.

NARRATOR:

His visage wavered into the shape of a small woman, a rough approximation of Al's ex-girlfriend. It trembled, the girl in the heavy leather coat smiling serenely at the self-inflicted criticism. The mirage dissolved as he hummed back into his normal register,

Sedum chuckles almost, muttering "no, no, no.. "

(Cont.)

and Sedum tumbled back, rapidly gaining in height and stooping his head away from the rusty light fixture.

AL:

Wasn't my favorite either- It's why she's an ex. Ugh, I should've picked someone else, you turning into her's fuckin' weird.

SEDUM:

(Normal voice)

Oh, yes. Sorry, that would be rather uncomfortable wouldn't it.

AL:

Would it kill you to send a text?

SEDUM:

Touch screens don't work well with, ah... Talons.

He drums his claws on the porch railing.

AL:

... Yeah, that's fair. So what do you want- on my night off?

SEDUM:

You lost Fergum *entirely* today?

AL:

William lost 'em too. Chased them across the whole fuckin' woods... They practically totalled a woman's car.

SEDUM:

Oh dear. Is everyone alright? Weren't you going to talk?

AL:

I was tryin' to. The woman was fine, Fergum's probably back at the dump or wherever. Pizza Palace, maybe...

SEDUM:

Seek them out tomorrow and find out what they want, please. This is all getting very concerning and I'm tied up with trying to scrounge up interviews..

AL:

Yeah. Ok. I'll try *again*, and with that...? I'll go back inside, have dessert..

SEDUM:

Ah... Hmm... One more thing. We need to talk seriously about where you're at, Al.

There is a pause. The wooden porch creaks.

AL:

It is still a bit early for you to be out here with no skin face, Sedum. The neighbors might see.

SEDUM:

You know it gets so stuffy in those mirages. Sometimes it's worth the risk for the breeze.

AL:

Can't feel anything with it on?

SEDUM:

Ugh, I understand the reference... Vulgar. Please don't. (*Serious, but kind*) I wanted you to look me in the eyes and tell me why you can't talk to me. Like your grand escape a few hours ago? Valen should put you on reconnaissance with that inconspicuous panache..

AL:

The shrub thing was my brother's call.

SEDUM:

Mmm. You know, we do expect a little bit more than calling out, even if it was nearing the end of the work day-

Al clicks her lighter. She balances a cigarette in her mouth.

AL:

Alright, neat, ok, so you wanna know why? I can divulge, sure. It's just been hard, I guess. Getting assignments from ya'll Directors- It's a balancing act sometimes... *(Muttering)* never being sure when I'll be the one that ends up missing.

She takes a drag on her cigarette.

SEDUM:

(Stung, but measured)

Al, nothing indicates that Enfys didn't simply leave- And I don't appreciate the sentiment that I'd ever put you intentionally in harm's way-

AL:

But at the end of the day Enfys is still gone. And that... sucks. It *sucks*. *(Sighs)* We were good, William, Enfys, and I, we were a good team- and, and then, *nothing*? What, they just left? Enfys wasn't about that, they *cared* about us.

Al stops herself.

(Cont.)

Ah... mmm... Forget it...

SEDUM:

(Therapist-like)

No, please? Go on.

AL:

... So why would they ghost? After 6 years. You can't tell me they just got bored. They weren't like the others- We relied on each other and Enfys was committed. Something happened.

SEDUM:

You know how this work goes. Sometimes people burn out and just leave. I'm 90% certain that's what happened. *(There's sadness)* The remaining 10% isn't worth... getting consumed by.

AL:

Yeah, by the way, why can't anyone give me some space, huh? Valen treating me like I'm about to explode, William hanging off my back- You showing up here. You're welcome at my trailer, always- but this place is off limits, and you know that. Why're you doing this?

SEDUM:

I am sorry, but I had to put my foot down.

AL:

Really.

SEDUM:

Yes! You've been avoiding everyone or refusing to talk seriously- You've shut down, we're all concerned. The only way you've talked to me in two weeks is through accidents! I'm sorry, I *am*, Spirit. But we need to go over the state of the Department-

AL:

Which is my responsibility? I thought that was your job, Management Director- finding a replacement, why am I being dragged into this?

SEDUM:

(Softly, but a warning)
Aleilia,

AL:

(Hissing out a sigh, under her breath)
Nice.

SEDUM:

There's the matter of chemistry. I can't find just anyone- I need to accommodate your and William's personalities. And there's been too much for us with only you two as Ground Crew- this needs to be resolved, as soon as possible. Now.. We can try

more of you two "getting along", though... neither of you seem invested in making that work. *(Sighs)* Perhaps if you start communicating, you and William *might* be able to keep up with the work of three people, maybe.-

AL:

So my this is my fault? Not William's? The one who actually ran off.

SEDUM:

I'm not talking to William right now.

AL:

(Frustrated, hurt, tired)

What do you want me to *do*, Sedum? I'm trying. I'm trying to work through this as best I can, alright? It's bad. And I feel bad. And that's where I'm at. ... In bad.

NARRATOR:

Al twirled the cigarette in her fingers, staring out at the dark woods beyond. She felt a scaly hand rest on her shoulder.

SEDUM:

(Relenting)

I know. It's simply been a while since we've had this specific stress... You know, you are doing well, considering. You were the one to stay on assignment, after all. That is good.

AL:

(Laughing slightly)

Do I get a gold star?

SEDUM:

(Repressing a smile, only half joking)

Would you really like one? I have a sheet in my desk.

AL:

Yes. As soon as possible. *(She takes another drag)*

SEDUM:

Yes, alright. *(Softer, disapproving)* Back to smoking these?

AL:

Ain't it a shit coping mechanism.

SEDUM:

Some are less cancerous than others.

AL:

(Half a chuckle)

Oh yeah, shoot, forgot about that part.

SEDUM:

Let me know if you want to talk further, yes? I'm here for you.

NARRATOR:

Al reached up, grabbing onto Sedum's wrist as he squeezed her shoulder. She smiled.

AL:

Thanks. *(Slightly dangerous)* Just don't show up here again, kay?

SEDUM:

(Hurriedly)

Of course, I am sorry for acting rashly. One time mistake.

AL:

Good. Don't want shitheads finding out where my defenseless family is.

He walks a few steps over the porch.

SEDUM:

True, that's... wise... Give my best?

AL:

You know I won't.

Sedum chuckles. He takes the steps down into the grass.

NARRATOR:

Feathery, multi-jointed wings wriggled out from under the top flap of his coat, as Al leaned against the peeling railing. She took a deep, final inhale, ash falling around her elbow. The black plumage caught the waning moonlight, reflecting green as Sedum shook loose the pins and needles.

His wings unfurl in a flapping rustle.

(Cont.)

She saluted. He returned the gesture wryly.

WOOSH.

(Cont.)

And with one forceful beat, Sedum retreated into the shimmering black sky. Al stamped out the half burned cigarette on a patch of bare wood.

The crickets are loud. Al processes for a moment.

AL:

(To herself)

I'm back.

She walks back to the door, and opens it a crack.

LEAH:

(Distant)

Come on, just a bit more-

SAM:

(Distant)

Mom- Mom, no- augh it's a whip cream mountain! You fiend!

LEAH:

It's more calcium!

Leah laughs, Sam joining in.

SAM:

Oh, no, you're right!! The science is too strong!

AL:

(Calling)

I'll take the mountain!

The door closes.

SCENE 13 - DREAM

The space has changed, beyond any of the other spaces. It is alien, but not oppressive.

SAM:

(He gasps, into the dream)

It's... *(Winces)* it's dark here. *(Something whizzes past him)* Ah!

NARRATOR:

A burst of light, glimmering photons without birth, crumbled away as soon as it had erupted in the empty dark.

UNKNOWN:

(Whispering, distant)

Tip of my tongue, on the *tip* of my tongue...

There is steady whizzing, hissing, sparks in this empty, open space.

SAM:

Stars... All around me.

He takes a step forward, further into grass.

(Cont.)

It's hailing light.

UNKNOWN:

I know him. From *when*, though... (*Laughs*) I didn't expect to be *this* annoyed...

SAM:

Hello?

Unknown goes silent. Only the occasional bursts of electricity, off distant. Rustling as he moves in, fast.

NARRATOR:

Sam's skin pricked with the sensation of almost touch in the empty dark. He spun on his heels, sightless.

UNKNOWN:

(Very close now, SAM reacts)

You accepted my invitation. (*Hisses, frustrated*) I still cannot see! You *have* changed.

SAM:

I-I didn't accept anything, I'm just here. Where are we? Where are you? You sound close- I can't see... anything except these stars.

UNKNOWN:

Yes, you would not be accustomed to this space, would you. But, a stranger who is *not* a stranger arrives in my home? I couldn't stand by.

It's quiet now.

SAM:

The lights are gone.

UNKNOWN:

Why did you return? If you *rejected* your cradle?

There is the soft padding, walking, all around Sam.

SAM:

I didn't have everything I needed. Can you bring them back? The lights- I don't like it dark.

The connection is stuttering.

UNKNOWN:

No. You are too distant... it's breaking now. You must understand, I feel you, but I don't *know* you. You see my predicament? I'm stumbling lost.

A vibration pulsing through.

SAM:

It's getting darker. (*Falling into an anxiety attack*) How is it getting darker... Please!

UNKNOWN:

Time is fickle. I'm sorry. This is arduous for you...

SAM:

Where are you- I can't feel anything! I can't feel the ground!

UNKNOWN:

I am here. (*Softly*) Don't be afraid.

SAM:

How?

UNKNOWN:

Ah... (*Smiles*) With practice.

UNKNOWN pins Sam to the ground. He hits the ground with a soft thud, reacting with an "oof".

NARRATOR:

A weight on his ribs, Sam was knocked gently to the ground that unfolded inexplicably beneath his feet.

UNKNOWN:

Flowers need pressing to preserve, wouldn't you agree? Hmm...
(Searching, but finding nothing) Still blind.. Still an unseen
 face... *(Sighs)* Don't be afraid.

SAM:

(Breath hitches)

I can't breathe with you on my chest..

UNKNOWN:

Let's see you grow stronger, then, strange son. You're home now.

Ah, I can't wait to meet you again!

The pulsing, static breaking is incredibly strong. It overwhelms
 the scene, mingling together until..

SCENE 16 - INT. SAM'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

There is no sound in his room except for tweeting birds outside
 his window, barely audible. Then another forceful BUZZ of his
 phone. Someone is calling.

SAM:

(Wakes with a small inhalation, not quite a gasp)

Hmmmgh..

He picks up his phone, and answers the call.

(Cont.)

Mmph, 'lo?

MS. SMEETS:

Hello? Samson?

SAM:

Hey yeah, hi- Oh, Ms. Smeets? What're... it's, it's 7am, why are
 you calling?

MS. SMEETS:

(Rather frustrated)

We have to... *(Sighs)* go over some details about your internship next month.

SAM:

(Blearily)

... Ok? Sure, did I miss some paperwork? Oh, I haven't got everything in for the stipend, I'm sorry, I thought there were a few more weeks-

MS. SMEETS:

Well, funny you mention that, in fact. You might want to be more awake for this.

END