

HARBOR

Episode 2 - "Dog Days"

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SCENE 1 - EXT. LEAH'S NEIGHBORHOOD - EARLY MORNING

The front door to condo closes. Leah takes a few steps onto the porch, and in the background there is a soft "whapping" of a broom against the branches of a tree. *(The whacking continues throughout.)*

LEAH:

Good mornin', Teeny.

TEENY:

(A little out of breath)

Mornin' Leah.

LEAH:

Cat stuck up in the tree?

TEENY:

Oh nah, she'd come right down. I wouldn't be needin' the broom for that.

LEAH:

Whatcha got then, neighbor?

TEENY:

(With effort)

Oh just 'nother one of them two-headed opossum's... eatin' my apples...

Leah walks off the porch and crosses to her neighbor, who continues to steadily, lightly, beats at the branches.

LEAH:

You sure it ain't the same one from last time?

TEENY:

No, this one's heads are on upside down. And won't get outta the tree. Other one weren't near as ornery...

LEAH:

You don't say?

Leah stops underneath the tree with Teeny.

NARRATOR:

Sure enough, an opossum clung to the underside of a branch, mid-way up the skinny tree, crunching calmly away at a swaying, under-ripe apple with alternating mouths. It flinched at the gently batting broom.

LEAH:

I'll be.

The opossum eats cooly, intermittent crunches punching through the conversation. One head ceases to hiss softly at the pair.

(Cont.)

...You sure it ain't the body what's upside-down?

TEENY:

Wouldn't make much difference. Still a fucked up opossum. Get. Out. The. Tree!

LEAH:

(Not overly concerned)

Aw, God makes all things special.

TEENY:

Yep, made this one extra snazzy... Stop eatin'. My. Apples...!

LEAH:

...Well, good luck with that, Teeny.

Leah walks back across the grass, onto her porch, and into her house.

TEENY:

Thanks Leah. Got... damn... *get-out-the-tree!!*

Teeny forcefully whacks, which the Opossum hisses faintly at and continues to eat.

TITLE CARD

SCENE 2 - INT. SAM'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

SAM:

I'm awake, what... What is it, Ms. Smeets?

MS. SMEETS:

Well! Samson! It's bad news! I... just got the word that our funding fell through!

SAM:

What-

MS. SMEETS:

Oh, no, well, actually *your* funding fell through. The Museum is fine.

SAM:

(Blinking away the blariness)

My funding? Wait, I, my living stipends?

MS. SMEETS:

Yes, those would be the ones.

SAM:

H-how do those- The Museum secured them for me.

MS. SMEETS:

Yes. And the Museum is informing you that we.. lost them! Believe me, it's embarrassing to be the one to deliver the news but *apparently* our Patron who was fronting has decided to invest elsewhere. *Apparently* it was a verbal promise made at an exhibit that no one thought it wise to follow up with paperwork!

(Laughs) These rich bastards, huh?

SAM:

(Cold shock, swallowing)

Mhm...

MS. SMEETS:

If you ask me, it'd do the whole system well to hold those idiots on the board responsible but, ah... you know it goes.

SAM:

I actually don't.

MS. SMEETS:

By and large in their favor.

SAM:

Oh.

MS. SMEETS:

So, I know it's a bit of hiccup, but something you can work with, if you put your mind to it. You have a month to secure living expenses for July through October, that should be plenty of time.

SAM:

It was \$10,000.

MS. SMEETS:

It was.

SAM:

What-What if we... talked more about the job offer itself?

MS. SMEETS:

Ah, hmmm, Samson, you do know we need to actually know who you are aside from a good school record, right? That's what this internship is for. The Museum of Antiquities is well worth the investment- I shouldn't have remind you! With your application going on and on about our institution being your dream! Our serendipitously concurrent interests in medieval folklore, your speciality-

SAM:

Oh, no! Obviously! Obviously, I didn't mean to insinuate anything other than the highest respect-

MS. SMEETS:

Excellent. Now, I have other calls to make this morning-

SAM:

(Attempting sympathy)
Other scholarship students?

MS. SMEETS:

No, thank God. You were our only one.

SAM:

... That's... good-

MS. SMEETS:

But if you want to call me back, we can brainstorm, maybe... for a few minutes, in a couple of hours. Around 10? I could squeeze you in.

SAM:

Yes, ma'am, I'd appreciate that.

MS. SMEETS:

Lovely. We'll speak soon.

SAM:

Mhm, bye.

He hangs up. A moment.

(Cont.)

... Fuck.

SCENE 3 - INT. AL'S TRAILER - MORNING

NARRATOR:

Al's toes flexed against the linoleum as the coffee-maker spat out it's final drips. The tiny trailer kitchen crowded into her

tiny dining room set, the front door shoved next to that, a jumble of multipurpose spaces in the tin can of a house.

Al pours hot coffee into her mug, mumble-singing.

AL:

Hmmm, hmmm, hmmm... Get in my belly, you delicious, smelly, coooooOoooffeee...

Her phone rings aggressively on the table. She continues her tune.

(Cont.)

Oh my GoooooOOD, it's not even 8 fuckin' 15, leaaaavvvve me alllloooooOOOOOONE-

She picks up the phone and answers, cutting herself off.

(Cont.)

Good morning, Valen.

VALENTINA:

Mornin', Al. Sleep well? Ready to give me a full day of top notch work?

AL:

Yeah, sorry for ditchin' yesterday.

VALENTINA:

No trouble at all- Don't do it again. We got a situation stirrin' up, need ya to bypass the Station and meet me out on assignment, ASAP, can you do that?

AL:

Sure, what's up? *(Drinks her coffee)*

VALENTINA:

William crossed paths with a certain pack of dogs not ten minutes ago. We need to intercept them, on the double, as he now

has Fergum on the run, per usual. I'm thinkin' you, me, both our cars, and a few yards of rope. He said he'd route Fergum down to the old clay basin, on the north edge.

AL:

Sedum told me last night that *I* was supposed to *talk* to Fergum-

VALENTINA:

Oh, Sedum told you! Funny, very funny, isn't he *Management* Director? Resident pencil pusher? And, let's see, aren't I the one puttin' it all on the line day after day as Ground Crew Director? Right? I swear that's how the arrangements been for, oh good GOD, how many years now?-

AL:

Yes, ma'am. That you are, that he be, that it is. (*Drinks*)

VALENTINA:

Good. All's right in the world. Now... my trust in calm discourse with Fergum is shot, they've proven time and again to be hostile little shits with no regard for others. The other Directors may have the ability to actually talk to Fergum without worry, but right now, today, it's up to us three squishy *Humans* to deal with 'em. (*Serious*) And I ain't plannin' on losing any more crew members this month for any reason.

NARRATOR:

Al's tongue ran over the empty space in her teeth's marching order for a moment. Second bicuspid, gone, leaving a void, but useful for nervous tics.

AL:

... Wanna talk about it?-

VALENTINA:

-I won't put you or William harm's way.

AL:

Hokay. Good.

VALENTINA:

Where our Cryptid friends give a mile, we'll give an inch, got it, Greer? I need you stable today.

AL:

Me? What about William's... *impulsivity*?

VALENTINA:

You've changed your tune. It was "idiocy" last week.

AL:

I'm trying on manners. Seein' how it feels.

VALENTINA:

(Snorts a little)

Tiring, isn't it. Listen, I need YOU cool for collecting this Fergum shit all nice and neat. You're good at that.

AL:

Always wanted a fancy title, now I got "resident shit collector". Finally, some respect.

VALENTINA:

Take the compliment. I'm leavin' now. Rendezvous at the clay basin.

AL:

Sure thing, boss.

Valentina hangs up. Al kicks around a pile of boots, finding what she's looking for.

(Cont., muttering)

Today feels like a day for steel-toe boots..

SCENE 4 - EXT. LEAH'S CONDO - MORNING

LEAH walks out onto the front porch, birds chirping away, the door shutting behind her. TEENY has the radio playing next door, muffled.

LEAH:

I'm gonna head out soon, Sam- What are you doing on the front porch... in a robe...?

NARRATOR:

Sam lifted his head from his slump against the railing. A short, fluffy robe tied snug around his middle, skinny legs covered in goosebumps from the mild breeze.

SAM:

(In a bit of a manic, upbeat state)

Just enjoying the brisk air! It's so nice up here, and I've seen a jogger out on the main road; Inspiration abounds.

LEAH:

Weren't you gonna sleep in? It's only 8:20.

SAM:

No, no... *(Quieter)* Does uh, that one always broadcast the news to the neighborhood?

LEAH:

Mmmm, Teeny is quite civic-minded. *(Drinks her tea)* Here, it's earl grey. You look dead on your feet.

SAM:

Nothing like that hard tea to jolt the senses. *(He drinks)*

LEAH:

(Conspiratorial)

You know, this morning Teeny was dealing with an opossum situation out front. A two-headed little guy, with either an upside down body or noggins, it's so hard to tell!

SAM:

(Splutters)

A-ah? Really? Good God.

LEAH:

(Completely unbothered)

I'm still not sure that it wasn't the same one from last fall,
but she swears it's different.

SAM:

(Baffled and becoming stressed)

Well, there's always hope for consistency in the insanity..
Fucking- Sorry- Two heads?? It's not still around, is it... ?

LEAH:

Well, she isn't whacking the tree anymore... You know, two heads
ain't that unheard of. I thought it was pretty cute.

SAM:

(Straining a smile)

You would.

LEAH:

I have a spot for the special ones, what can I say.

RADIO HOST:

And we're back with our own *accomplished* Mayor Glenda Dickson,
ready to dive into the anticipated meat of our program-

LEAH:

(Stiffening)

Oh, quiet a minute, now, I need to hear what she's got to say
for herself on all this.

SAM:

Oh-

The news overtakes their conversation.

RADIO ANCHOR:

... And what about the controversy around the Eaton Gun Factory that breaks ground this week, Mayor Dickson? Partnering with such a *large* company, it's unprecedented for the area-

GLEND A:

There is *no* controversy. We are *honoring* those unnamed Civil war soldiers buried in that beautiful land! That factory built atop their previous restin' site will carry on the proud tradition of glory and bravery they died for, while investing in the economy of Harbor.

RADIO ANCHOR:

Oh, our "economy" (*Chuckles*) will be-

GLEND A:

-Invigorated! I know *I'm* tired of all the potholes.

RADIO ANCHOR:

But the land in question is outside of town?

GLEND A:

You know as well as I how hard it is to get zoning permits inside city limits, and that's part of our fiber, I'm keeping our town held in the highest esteem. This is my personal investment, a gift from my family to our *Harbor* family.

RADIO ANCHOR:

So the Eaton Gun Factory *will* bring in new jobs?

GLEND A:

It will *increase* job *opportunity* for the businesses already *in* our sweet lil town! Not so upsettin', is it? Wouldn't want to pull the rug out from everyone.

RADIO ANCHOR:

Meaning...?

GLEND A:

Well, those factory jobs are *specialized*, so they'll have to be contracted out- But consider the traffic the mere proximity brings in. I promise you, the splash will be like a mist of rosewater on our community.

RADIO ANCHOR:

Sounds refreshing, Mayor.

GLENDA:

I wouldn't have it any other way. Harbor's my top priority, full stop. Nothing's changed since I was sworn in. Our health and prosperity is my heart. And sometimes health means making uncomfortable changes. I want to leave you a thought, all you listeners. Ain't it about time we make our home better than it's ever been?

The radio cuts off sharply, switching to a jazz station. Teeny grumbles indistinctly.

LEAH:

What did I expect...

SAM:

Politics sure have changed around here.

LEAH:

Well, that's because that *NOXIOUS* Mrs. Dickson somehow managed to slink into office last November, and no one's been able to hit her where the Good Lord fucking split her yet, pardon my french.

SAM:

Pardoned.

LEAH:

Might pop a blood vessel if I keep carrying on, Sam. (*Breathes deep*) What woke you up?

SAM:

Just... opportunities that would cost me literally everything.
(Laughs forcefully) You know, silly stuff!

LEAH:

What do you mean?

SAM:

I got a call that... the Museum of Antiquities... well, uh, my living stipend for the internship fell through. My advisor, she says... she says coming up with \$10,000 in a month... *(Clears his throat)* Is realistic. If I "put my mind to it".

LEAH:

Well, that's just ignorant.

SAM:

(Getting emotional, never yelling, but he chokes up)
 Yeah. What *is* that? After I slaved away over scholarships for five years, working two jobs for *five* years, going to school full-time- now loan payments starting in a few months- and you, selling the house-! You sold your *house*, my great-grandparents *house*- And I'm supposed to come up with \$10,000 in 3 weeks.

LEAH:

It's completely ridiculous.

SAM:

Everything I hoped for, worked for... and then it just spits in my face.

LEAH:

... You know I'd help if I could. It's just a little tight right now.

SAM:

I couldn't take anything more from you, Mom. *(Trying to hold it together)* Mmm, God, I did all the right things and *still-*

LEAH:

Come here. Come here... *(They embrace)* I'm sorry sweets. This world can be grossly unfair.

SAM:

I didn't think I'd feel like this much of a failure. I should be trying harder- pawning my blood-

LEAH:

You passed out last time you went in for a draw.

SAM:

I should be willing to do anything.

LEAH:

You do what you need to, what you *can*. That's all that's asked of you, baby... I know you'll move forward in the best way you're able... Look, I gotta head to work, are you gonna-

NARRATOR:

From the main road, three streaks of silver darted across the overgrown cul-de-sac, cracked and sprouting with weeds.

Fergum barks, the running fades into the woods. William is not far behind.

SAM:

Those were those sick dogs-

NARRATOR:

The motion repeated itself, replaced with a solid, frisky man, black shirt covered in a thick coating of gray fur, his flounce of half-bleached and haphazardly shaved hair bouncing; William.

WILLIAM:

Howdy Ms. Greer! My dogs got out- Oh hey Sam! You're back?! Hot damn, good to see ya!

LEAH:

(Not concerned, just pointing it out)
I thought you were allergic to dogs, William?

WILLIAM:

... HA HA HA, you're funny! Wellp, y'all have a good one!!

William runs off, whistling after Fergum.

LEAH:

Bye! ... Ready for everyone to know you're back in town, darlin'?

SAM:

It was the no pants-robe combination... My signature style betrays me once again.

SCENE 5 - EXT. CLAY BASIN - MID MORNING.

Al yanks the E-brake, muffled shouting and snarls coming in through her shut car. She opens the door and approaches the scene.

NARRATOR:

Al's dingy gray sedan sunk into the orange clay slathering the forest clearing. Valentina's rock crawler sat catty-corner from her. Her boss hopped down, long black braid, glistening with occasional silver strands, swinging behind her tightly muscled shoulders. She raised a thin eyebrow at Al, then turned back to watch William dance around Fergum's three bodies, boxing them into the treeline, seemingly unable to move further.

WILLIAM:

Gotdangit, you sacks of garbage, stay still!!

FERGUM:

You will regret touching us again, Human.

WILLIAM:

I won't have to grab ya if ya just hold on until Val gets- Ah!-

Valentina approaches, Al not far behind.

FERGUM:

It is, as they say, a "free country"!!

WILLIAM:

AH shoot, ya brought Al...

AL:

Here to help, Willie.

WILLIAM:

Don't- don't call me that..

VALENTINA:

Both of you- zip it. Fergum, heard you've been busy?

FERGUM:

We need not answer you.

VALENTINA:

Causing trouble in your own home-

FERGUM:

This orgy of Human hypocrisy? Yes, it would be held in high esteem to you, Valentina *Of-The-Hollow*. You cannot even live with your own family, regulated to the wilds to save the fear of your peers. A community this warm, we *must* be unreasonable.

VALENTINA:

(Softer)

You know how Humans are... There's automatic weapons everywhere now. Bears in trash cans scare them, you know why we try to keep everyone on the down-low...

FERGUM:

You roll over as willingly as our forms desire to. We have dignity.

AL:

What, to try and OD children?

FERGUM:

To admit selfish promptings!

WILLIAM:

There's such a thing as time and place, Fergum.

AL:

And *morality*? When is a good time to try to drug kids, William?

WILLIAM:

That's *not* what I meant and that's mighty rich coming from you, making jokes yesterday-

VALENTINA:

Both of you, later! (*Lower, to Fergum*) You're soundin' like you're willing to explain your position for once, Fergum. What about your selfish promptings?

FERGUM:

Riddle us this, fuckos- How would one feel if one was trapped in an alien encampment, in a cage of jelly and hair and teeth, met with constant quivering fear by one's own mundane existence?!

Tell us. Tell us! Communicate your sympathy!!

WILLIAM:

You got 12 legs between all ya'll, why don't you use them? Get outta Harbor if you hate it so much.

FERGUM:

When did you become confused about the word *trapped*?

VALENTINA:

You're valued and equal members of Harbor, bringing something to this town; you're not *trapped*-

FERGUM:

We *are!* And we are *not* entities of servitude, to live out a predetermined price-tag- If we must poison the water supply with fentanyl to escape this prison, so be it!!

WILLIAM:

Good lord.

AL:

What do you mean by prison-

Fergum wheezes out a laugh, they are getting increasingly riled.

VALENTINA:

(Low)

We don't have to do this with any Humans, including me. Roose can advocate for you. You can stay at the Station until we can talk this through with the *folks* that can help you-

FERGUM:

Who do you think are the problem!?

AL:

Who? Wait, who are we talking about-

FERGUM:

She doesn't know? Still?!

VALENTINA:

(More intense)

Fergum, you're well aware why.-

AL:

Know what?

FERGUM:

(Growing increasingly frightening)

Again, the same *stupid, infantilising* stubbornness again, Hollow! Your self-righteous pleasure knows no bounds-

AL:

Know *what??*

VALENTINA:

Al, hold back. Fergum, I need y'all to take some deep breaths
for me...

FERGUM:

You need *punishing* for keeping this shitstain of a town in
dissarry!

WILLIAM:

Careful, Val.

VALENTINA:

Fine, we'll bring it up with the *community* that'll see I'm
reprimanded-

Fergum shrieks with laughter.

AL:

Buddies, calm down.

FERGUM:

(Vicious, they're ready to attack)

Give us a reason, Hollow! Give us one reason and we'll drench
this clay justly *red*.

VALENTINA:

(Low, dangerous, trying to intimidate, a last resort)

Well... then. It's 3 against 3 and we got thumbs, how do you see
those odds weighing out?

FERGUM:

(Grinning, in a frenzy)

Worthy of the effort.

NARRATOR:

One of Fergum's bodies leapt forward, only to crumple to a stop in front of *William*, a barrier scrambling in front of Valen.

WILLIAM:

Get away from her!!

VALEN:

Will- no!

FERGUM:

Good enough!

NARRATOR:

Several things happened at once. The first of Fergum's bodies suddenly barked, loud, *hard*, drawing attention. The second darted to the left of William, snaking around his back and circling him, again pulling William's head in a swivel- and in a flash of fluorescent white and pink, the third's mouth sunk their teeth into the meat of his calf and *yanked*, William toppling over with a smack against the clay.

Fergum bites and snarls. Valen shouts, William gasps out a scream and falls.

SCENE 6 - EXT. LEAH'S CONDO - MORNING

Phone dialing, ringing. Bird softly chirping.

SAM:

(Whispered) Please don't pick up... Please, please.-

MS. SMEETS:

Jung Smeets speaking.

SAM:

(Squeaks) Uh, hi, Ms. Smeets. It's Sam Greer- Samson.

MS. SMEETS:

Oh, Yes... it's 9, I said to call at 10.

SAM:

Yes, I, I'm sorry, I... I...

MS. SMEETS:

Too excited about our brainstorming? I understand- well, let's get into it, I have five minutes; so have you thought about donating plasma?-

SAM:

I can't do this, Ms. Smeets. I'm declining the offer.

MS. SMEETS:

... If this is about the money, I advise you to fully consider what you'd really be gaining from this experience- you can make it work if you have the *will* to, Sam.

SAM:

Ms. Smeets, I *can't*. I have to pay off my loans, I have to be able to *live*? I didn't... I didn't want to do this...

MS. SMEETS:

This is your only opportunity, Sam, correct?

SAM:

Yes. The others have started already.

MS. SMEETS:

And with our institution knocking down your door, I don't blame you for holding out. You're bright, but I shouldn't have to remind you that chances like this don't throw themselves in your lap every day, especially now.

SAM:

(This stings)

Life... is upsetting. Sometimes. *(Laughs nervously)* We don't get what we want... And... I tried to... be someone I'm not. Live a different life-

MS. SMEETS:

(Suddenly business-like)

I'm not your therapist. I'll ask you one last time, are you really going to say no to this?

SAM:

I don't come from money! I have... had to work, and work, and work- and I'm still paying for it. There is no fixing this. I *can't*. I'm sorry. I'm sorry for what I wrote about my dreams and the Museum- I'm sorry I tried to convince myself- I'm sorry, Ms. Smeets.

MS. SMEETS:

... Alright. I'm glad you chose to stop yourself. We're now free to find someone who takes their career seriously enough to make the sacrifices needed.

SAM:

Ah-

MS. SMEETS:

Best of luck, Sam.

Jung hangs up.

NARRATOR:

Sam stared at the words "CALL ENDED" blinking on his phone. The phone dropped into his lap as he clapped his hands over his mouth and-

SAM:

(Muffled behind his hands)

UGGGHHH!!-

William's distant scream cuts him off. A pause.

(Cont.)

What... the *hell* was that?? *(voice cracks)* Hey, *(clears throat, louder)* Hey, uh, Ms. Teeny?

TEENY:

Huh?

SAM:

Did you just hear that scream?

TEENY:

Yeah?

SAM:

It's 9. Who's screaming at 9 am?

Teeny mumbles a shrug.

(Cont.)

It came through the woods.

TEENY:

Yep.

SAM:

Aren't you worried about people screaming in your backyard?

TEENY:

They ain't *in* my backyard.

SAM:

Can you call the police and I-

TEENY:

Listen, I just heard you having a tizzy of your own. Pick your battles, kid.

SCENE 7 - EXT. CLAY BASIN - MORNING

VALENTINA:

Fergum, LET GO.

FERGUM:

(Snarl)

How does it feel, to be locked in place?

WILLIAM:

Ah, haha, hah, AUUUGHHH! Got DAMN, please... my leg!

FERGUM:

You know what eases the pain? Drugs.

NARRATOR:

Fergum's assaulting mouth clenched harder around the muscle of William's leg.

WILLIAM:

Got f-f-f-f-f, gaaaah! Fergum, I'm sorry!

FERGUM:

So at what point does the pain transfer from one Human to another, hmm? When do you begin bleed as he does, from sight alone, eh, *Hollow?*

VALENTINA:

(Terrifyingly controlled)

No more physical aaltercations. Just let him go. We can all walk away free and clear from this. We'll call it square for now, Fergum.

FERGUM:

Empty promises from a *Human* who thinks she can play with the big dogs... oh, goddammit that's condescendingly apropos!

VALEN:

Nobody said anything about you being dogs. You all did that one yourselves-

NARRATOR:

Fergum snarled, and ground their teeth deeper.

William reacts.

AL:

(Hissing)
Valen, let me-

VALENTINA:
(Hissing back)
Al, do NOT make this worse, I swear to Christ-

WILLIAM:
Hey, uh, team? Help ple- AGH!

Fergum tightens their bite with a sickening squelch. William cries out.

FERGUM:
Oh! He squeaks!

AL:
(Low, breathing hard)
Fuck this.

Al runs.

VALENTINA:
No-

NARRATOR:
Al ran forward, skidded to a stop on one foot and snapped the other into the belly of the nearest dog. The body crashed down, but the middle's mouth remained viced on William's calf.

VALENTINA:
(Trying to salvage)
Aahhhh, Fergum, *that* was a warning!

FERGUM:
Here is a warning for *you*, Hollow!

NARRATOR:
Fergum's middle mouth released, then snapped shut completely, catching William's tibia between their teeth, a spray of red erupting in a pop. *(Bone snaps, William gasps, cut short)*

William's head fell limply back against the ground, his leg hanging like a towel in the Cryptid's mouth, bloody rivulets pooling in the orange dirt. Al snapped her foot, again, *AGAIN* into the offending mouth's ribs. The steel of her shoe caved.

AL:

(Wincing)

Fuck. *OFF*. FUCK OFF!

NARRATOR:

The biting mouth spluttered drool and gore as it gaped at the blow, and William's leg fell, bone naked to the world.

Fergum is hacking and spluttering.

AL:

William- wake up-

VALENTINA:

(Deadly serious)

Move. Aaall of you. *(softer)* Will, Will, look at me... Hi.

WILLIAM:

(Whimpers)

'Ey... Why you lookin'... scared...? Don't...

VALENTINA:

I'm gonna wrap up above your knee with my jacket, right, you're gonna stay aaaahwake, look at me, there you go, *(She gathers herself)* get you into my car, keep that leg elevated as much as possible. Ok? You can do this.

She is tying the jacket and gathering him up.

WILLIAM:

(Ragged, flinching at the tying)

AH-ha- Sorry if... I bleed on your seats-

VALENTINA:

Shhhhuush, let's go...

NARRATOR:

Valentina gently lifted him in her arms and walked back to her car.

William groans at the movement.

(Cont.)

A trail of blood trickled down the front of her jeans. Something deep churned in Al's stomach- She couldn't look up, burning a hole in the ruined clay instead, eyes glazing over, tongue digging at the empty socket amongst her teeth.

FERGUM:

The confused one finally takes a side. (*Hacking, intermingled with whines*) What would your parents think, Hollow? Well, we must remember they aren't *Human*. Shattered away in these forests. Easy to forget *monsters* when there is no blood to bind.

VALENTINA:

(*Cooly, but stutters*)

Deal with them, Aaa-Al. Inch, mile, take whatever you need.

AL:

I'm sorry-

VALENTINA:

Stop. I'm counting on you here, now. Fix this.

Valentina and William leave. Al walks back to her car, wrenches open her door and pulls out her crossbow.

FERGUM:

(*Fatigued*)

Human flesh is revolting...

AL:

Y'all should stop biting people. Give me a sec, alright- Let's make this one fair..

NARRATOR:

Al leaned against her open car door to steady herself, her head still down, her eyes still cast away- lacing a steel bolt into the flight path of the crossbow cradled in her arms. Fergum's bodies swayed, wary, panting; the middle drooling blood from their gums.

FERGUM:

(Obviously exerting effort)

So you'd like to be left as an example, too? We hate to, old friend, our jester- but we can make a better display without an audience.

AL:

(Straight-faced, not enthused)

Do you like pain, you immortal shit-heads? What happens if I line this shot up right between your no-eyes? What happens then, Fergum.

FERGUM:

If you could manage to look at us, perhaps we would take your words as legitimized threats.

Al gathers up a breath, and the crossbow rustles at she brings it up.

AL:

(Still numbly composed)

How 'bout now?

FERGUM:

(Slightly scrambling)

Do not test our will.

AL:

You're getting in my car and we're gonna fix your goddamn life.

FERGUM:

We did not lie about being imprisoned. We could tell you. You do not know all, Al. You've not been *told* all-

AL:

My trigger fingers' itchy. Get in the car.

FERGUM:

You have an absurd amount of confidence- (*Hacking*)

She shoots.

NARRATOR:

Fergum flinched. A bolt thrummed in the wet clay in between the middle's front paws, the end brushing the dog's sternum.

AL:

And I'll back it up.

FERGUM:

(*Very weak*)

Seeing us must conflate your bloodlust, eh? A longing for times past?

AL:

(*Ignoring that*)

You're gonna get in my car, we're going to the DoCA and you are talking to the Directors. Or I will pin you together like strung *fish* and we'll do the same thing anyway. Whichever you want. You coming willingly?

FERGUM:

(*Panting hard, stressed, weak, conflicted, scared*)

... N- N- Yes.

AL:

If you do a take-back, I'll *beat* you with this crossbow.

FERGUM:

(Exasperated)

We swear! We'll go! Now, we must *expel*. *(Fergum vomits)*

AL:

(Relieved)

Beautiful.

SCENE 8 - INT. LEAH'S CONDO - AFTERNOON

The refrigerator opens, rustling the items inside. Sam is muttering to himself. He grabs a can.

SAM:

Two headed possums... Murders in the woods... That I'm now probably responsible for, in *some way*. *(Chuckles humorlessly)* After 4 in the afternoon, and... I'm alone. I truly fucked over all hope of making myself into anything.

He closes the fridge and walks back to the living room, opening the can.

(Cont.)

Second day back and it's already gone to shit. After all that work. *(He drinks)* Mmmf, damn, that's right, this is the last one. Already... Gotta get Mom more beer when I return to my job at the grocery store. Two steps forward, eight steps back. *(He sits down on the couch, and takes another drink)* Why isn't this helping... *(Scoffs)* I just feel like... shit. Wow. Wow, wow, wowiee zowiee, what am I doing... *(Laughs, tapering off, quietly, falling back onto the couch. He whimpers)*... fuck.

He starts to tear up, but sleep is overwhelming him.

(Cont.)

I'm so tired... *(Inhales)* I should unpack. I should do laundry. I should organize my closet. *(Pause, growing sluggish, drifting)* This place smells like... febreze and stale previous tenant... I should... light a candle, one mom likes. I should make this better... This is mine, I did this. It's all on me. I... should... I should...

Sam descends into deep breathing.

SCENE 9 - DREAM

Sam is back in the dream space. Hisses and fizzles are distant.
(*UNKNOWN is singing "Highland Faery Lullaby"*) Sam is tipsy.

UNKNOWN:

(Distant, soft and humming)

... Gorry og O, Gorry og O, Hovan, Hovan Gorry og O, I've lost my
darling-

SAM:

What is... Augh, I know this... *(Sighs, moaning)* I just want to
sleep...

UNKNOWN:

You, my friend, are a beacon!

SAM:

Ah!!

UNKNOWN:

Shining out a multitude of passions, savage and blinding-

SAM:

You- Get back- Don't touch me.

UNKNOWN:

Oh, I'm so sorry. You're speaking of when I left you last. My
curiosity gets the better of me. I thought perhaps I could see
you closer. To no avail. Forgive me? It was rude.

SAM:

(Warily)

... It's fine...

UNKNOWN:

It is? You still radiate such warmth. Hot, wet, angry... What will lying accomplish?

SAM:

You leaving me alone.

UNKNOWN:

Oh. You see... I just assumed that... *well...*

SAM:

... What?

UNKNOWN:

That you needed someone who didn't have a face to listen to your fire. Someone who couldn't see your's? *(Pause)* Am I wrong?

SAM:

You're presumptuous is what you are.

UNKNOWN:

Yes, one of my faults. I'm trying to eradicate those. It's a process... Oh... Oh, I feel it now. You're intoxicated. Charming, but I'm afraid it solves little, especially here.

SAM:

This place can't be real... *(Suddenly groans, struck)*

UNKNOWN:

(Worried)

Are you in pain?

SAM:

This *isn't* real! I'm... I'm dreaming. Augh, *(Laughing)* I can't see anything aside from those damn lights, and my head is spinning—
Ugh, goddammit, I hate this!

UNKNOWN:

Yes, that might be the intoxication affecting you... *(Hesitant)* I could stop it.

SAM:

Yeah, I'm a pathetic, drunk, failure asshole, (*Breathes out a long hiss*) I'll take you up on that offer, please.

UNKNOWN:

I need your effort.

SAM:

How?

UNKNOWN:

Tell me where you are.

SAM:

(*Confused*)

Same as you?

UNKNOWN:

Not in here, out there.

SAM:

Ok, I'm not going to do that. That's... that's prime stranger danger... What the fuck am I talking about, you're a synapse! A blip in my brain... (*Whispers, thinking about it, remembering*) Oh God... No, I know you. Or, not you, but this place... in a way? Your voice... You're that... that thing I had! Those nightmares, when I was a kid- I could never see you... (*Realizing*) Harbor has ergot! That or mom's house is full of spiders... Augh, am I sleeping in spiders right now?!

UNKNOWN:

Envenomated or hallucinating- whatever you deem it to be, you're reasoning remarkably well.

SAM:

(*Laughs*)

No I'm not. This is stupid. I'm stupid.

UNKNOWN :

... I am simply concerned for my home. I need to know if you're good.

SAM:

Your home? What do you mean?

UNKNOWN :

My town. My Harbor.

SAM:

What makes it your's?

UNKNOWN :

It's my duty. My aging ward.

SAM:

That sounds like a lot of... well, just a lot...

UNKNOWN :

It is. The responsibility is grueling. But it has its rewards.

SAM:

Like...?

UNKNOWN :

I get to know the most interesting people.

SAM:

(His curiosity is piqued)

What is this? ... What... are you...?

UNKNOWN :

(Chuckles)

I thought I was poison in your blood. A electrical impulse in your brain?

SAM:

I'm still not ruling that out.

UNKNOWN :

Why should you.

SAM :

And you're not disputing it either.

UNKNOWN :

Why should *I*? When you have me figured out. Clever child.

SAM :

... What do you say to us making an exchange?

UNKNOWN :

Mmm... ?

SAM :

I give you the rough approximation of where I live. You give me...
your name.

UNKNOWN :

A name- that by which anything is understood- for a cardinal
direction? Hardly equitable.

SAM :

Well, I'm offering up my location to brain poison. I don't know
what that'll do. So I need something.

UNKNOWN paces, thinking.

UNKNOWN :

People think they know me by my name. I'd prefer if you gave me
the opportunity to be assessed by my actions first.

SAM :

Must be pretty crappy... Give me the first letter and we'll call
it square for now.

UNKNOWN :

... Agreed.

UNKNOWN stops pacing.

(Cont.)

Where are you?

SAM:

On the West End of Harbor. What's your name?

UNKNOWN/J:

J.

SCENE 10 - INT. LEAH'S CONDO - EARLY EVENING

The front door closes and Al walks in Leah is talking in the other room, on the phone.

LEAH:

(Distant)

... That's insane, no. No! I trust you, good Lord, if I didn't by now- but you already have one all wrapped up- Hold on- *(Calling)*
Al?

AL:

Hey mama. It's ok I can wait-

LEAH:

No it's alright- *(Into the phone)* I gotta go. *(She doesn't wait for a response, and hangs up the call)* What're you... uh, doin' over here?

AL:

I just... I wanted to see... Sorry, did I interrupt? Was that the library?

LEAH:

... Mhm! Work stuff- What did you wanna see?

AL:

I wanted to check on Sam. Is he around?

LEAH:

(A shade of dissatisfaction)

He's in his room-

NARRATOR:

Leah beckoned her eldest back to the kitchen, setting her phone on the counter next to the previous night's take-out. A row of plates, painted with chickens, stared wide-eyed from the tops of the cabinets.

LEAH:

I got home and he was already locked up there- Want some dinner?
Are you free?

AL:

Oh, uh, yeah, sure, but I gotta head out soon- why's he locked up there- what happened?

LEAH:

Well... He is going through a job situation.

Leah dishes up a plate.

(Cont.)

He had to turn the Museum down today- They lost his scholarships. It's got him broken up.

AL:

Oh *hell*...

LEAH:

Mhm, and sleeping at 7 in the evening isn't fantastic.

The phone is buzzing.

(Cont.)

Not now...

AL:

Do you need to take that?

LEAH:

Nope. I don't get you round too often, I'm not squandering it answering the phone.

She declines the call and sets the plate in the microwave.

AL:

Yeah, sorry about that... I'll take Sam out tomorrow night... I'll make it work.

LEAH:

That's sweet, he'll love it. I know he will, just having you around makes him so at ease. You're a good big sister.

AL:

I'm the only option.

LEAH:

How are you, Allie? Are things going alright at the Station?

AL:

What?-

LEAH:

(Quickly correcting)

-The gas station. Your... pride and joy!

AL:

Yeah, um, yeah, alright enough. Same old. You know. Nothing exciting. Cars. Etcetera.

NARRATOR:

Leah smoothed back Al's loose hair behind her ear, smiling. Al repeated the movement unconsciously. Leah's eyebrows furrowed as

she glanced at Al's sleeve, pinching the fabric, holding her daughter's arm aloft.

LEAH:

Is this blood on your shirt?

AL:

No?

LEAH:

It looks like blood.

AL:

It's gas- er, uh, oil. Just oil.

LEAH:

Oh?

AL:

Yeah, they're, uh, Big Barb is lettin' me in the service station, finally, working on an old Chevy with about 7 leaks- it gets everywhere.

LEAH:

Hm-

The phone rings again. Leah sighs, frustrated.

AL:

Somebody's really trying to get ahold of you-

LEAH:

(Muttered, annoyed)

God bless that heart..

AL:

(Light teasing)

You sure its work? Sounds like a new special person, maybe.

LEAH:

(Insistent as she declines the call)

NO. Not this, no, no, no.

AL:

Oh. Okay...

The microwave beeps.

(Cont.)

Well, I should get going-

LEAH:

-Let me throw this in a container for you-

AL:

-It's ok, I'm not that-

LEAH:

-It won't take but a minute.

AL:

(Tightly)

Kay.

Leah scrapes the plate into a tupperware.

LEAH:

There. For the road.

AL:

Thanks mama, I really appreciate-

LEAH:

It's not a thing-

Another moment.

AL:

I'm gonna go. I love you.

LEAH:

Bye baby. Love you, too.

The phone buzzes again as Al exits.

(Cont., Distant)

My goodness, I'm not dead! Don't start frettin'...

SCENE 11 - EXT. FIELD OF MEAT - EARLY EVENING

Crickets and cicadas sing.

AL:

(Muttering)

No changes, no appearance. According to schedule. At... 8:43 pm.

NARRATOR:

Al sat at the edge of the mountain field, inhaling the wildflower perfume as the sun began to set. A palette of purples and blues amongst the golds and greens, a near perfect scene acting as the backdrop to the remains of her microwaved picnic.

There is a great wooshing, flapping, and a land.

AL:

Hey! What's the news? He ok, Sedum?

SEDUM:

(Exhausted)

Yes, William's going in for surgery... Valen's staying as close as they'll allow- Not being family...

AL:

I should've stopped him... Fuck, I should've stopped me-

SEDUM:

You're not responsible for his choices. And from what Valen said, it was becoming dire... You were attempting to protect him.

At the cost of instigating physical harm to yourself. That was
brave of you.

AL:

Mm... Bravery that I didn't have to pay for... *(Sighs)* Fergum's an
asshole.

SEDUM:

Yes.

AL:

Why are we putting up with their bullshit?

SEDUM:

They have a problem. They're creating problems. We are problem
solvers. Hence working with... assholes.

AL:

There's working and then there's letting 'em stay in your
apartment, though.

SEDUM:

They can't be trusted outside of the Station after today, so
they might as well be kept above the Station, with me. I can
handle them. They can stand me. It's a temporary solution.

AL:

... They kept going on about being trapped... About all sorts of
bullshit... they said I didn't know things.

SEDUM:

Ah... It's a matter of perspective. Fergum insists on approaching
it negatively.

AL:

You don't say.

SEDUM:

You have other assignments. What they're referring to is ongoing and... tedious. Believe me. And it'd be unwise to bring a new facet to the conversation at present, at any rate.

AL:

I can multitask.

SEDUM:

We did go over last night how that's not quite a strong suit right now.

AL:

Then tell me somethings being done, you got it under control? It's like crisis after crisis and I'm tired.

SEDUM:

I promise you, we're doing everything we can.

AL:

Okay.

SEDUM:

Thank you. ... How's the Field?

AL:

Almost down to a routine again, from what I can tell. But it looks like it's getting worse and there's consistent observations to back it up.

She shakes her notebook papers.

SEDUM:

The smell?

AL:

Smell, movement, vocalizations.

SEDUM:

Please don't anthropomorphize the Field.

AL:

The "sounds" are louder.

A breeze cuts through, emphasising the song of life around them.

(Cont.)

This was my favorite place when I was little, when I could get away.

SEDUM:

Before we met, I assume?

AL:

Yeah. Before the DoCA, before dad finally left... It was sweet up here.

SEDUM:

Disappointing to see the complexities, sometimes.

AL:

(Chuckle)

When it's as ugly as sin, sure.

SEDUM:

... I practically bit my talons off, wondering if it was right to help you that day.

AL:

No, *you*?

SEDUM:

You were so scared, I didn't want to make it worse.

AL:

(Dismissive)

I wasn't scared.

SEDUM:

You were backed up against that rock, there. Holding yourself. If I remember correctly, also shaking. Telltale signs of fear.

AL:

In my defense, I was like 12 and had had a hard day.

SEDUM:

Al... there's... another matter we really should, no need to talk about. Uh, considering-

The wind picks up, carrying with it sudden heavy "breathing". The Field is changing.

AL:

Finally. Lazy bones Field. Think you gave it stage-fright.

NARRATOR:

The stench of decay twisted with the fresh sweetness of violence. It hit them as a breeze exuded from the sudden, impossible blossom before them. Countless mounds of bright red meat pushed up through the earth, streaked with bright blue arteries, pulsing, burgundy gore spilling, always spilling, unidentifiable bones protruding, heaped atop of and peeking under the softly swaying golden-green grass. The wind reduced to a gentle whisper. The field was huge and bloodied and stinking and... breathing. The mounds were breathing, shuddering, moaning, wet squelching against wet, framed by the dusky purple sky.

The sounds backdrop through to the end.

SEDUM:

(It doesn't bother him)

Mmmm, yes, that *is* significant. And pungent...

AL:

(Stifling down her reaction)

Yeah. And the wailing- the sounds... Summer hits hard, now, apparently. Damn climate change. What did ya wanna talk about tonight, then?

SEDUM:

I have a proposition to go over with you. What with one of our team recovering- or rather, in surgery...

AL:

Yeah, we need someone without a split shin so it ain't just Valen and me. (*She hacks*)

SEDUM:

Yes! ... Any thoughts about Samson?

NARRATOR:

A chilly breeze cut across them. Al's eyes had gone huge, her heavy eyebrows knitting together in horror. Sedum lifted his eyes to the twilight above.

SEDUM:

Oh, the stars are going to be very pretty tonight, aren't they-

AL:

Are you insane? Do you think *I'm insane*? Did we all hop on the batshit crazy train and I was too fucked up to realize I'd bought my ticket, cause I NEVER remember *that* being an option.

SEDUM:

It's just a very convenient, accessible solution that's worth exploring.

AL:

He has a job for all you know.

SEDUM:

(*Reluctant*)

That'd be true but... Stick told me.

AL:

You took advantage of our sapient electrical grid's accommodating nature, didn't you, getting used to all her generosity with the lights- She doesn't *have* to do that, you know.-

SEDUM:

Most certainly not! She overheard it today, his job predicament, from the back porch bulb of your mother's condo. She thought it was useful for us Directors to know, (*Unhappy about this*) with our hiring stipulations from the Mayor. Though getting the information was... slightly arduous. Unfortunate she has no vocal chords...

AL:

Stick- (*Sighs*) Too too giving... we may be desperate but Sam has a degree. He doesn't need to be roped into this. He's got options.

SEDUM:

And this could be one of them.

AL:

He doesn't even know we exist. It's like you're not even looking at anyone else who's applied.

SEDUM:

No one else *has* applied. No humans...

AL:

(*Quietly frustrated*)
Good God... This day...

SEDUM:

You know we could use someone like him. Charismatic, well-spoken. Certainly better with people than... others. (*Hurriedly*) Not a fault, people do have different giftings-

AL:

I don't care if he can charm pants off the queen. You can't just take me at my word that this a bad idea?

SEDUM:

Please give me something of a reason? From my perspective, this is the only route we have to go on. The Mayor made it clear she would withhold payment if another Cryptid came on-

AL:

Here's my reason; Cause there's some things best left buried.

SEDUM:

If you're referring to what I think you are-

AL:

(Sighs) Yes it's about that. Look- Look. This isn't me wanting to be superior over him, or mama for that matter- it's about keeping them safe. What happens when my baby brother gets mixed up in all this? I tell you what, he gets hurt.-

SEDUM:

I understand the hesitation, but from what Stick said, he's also hurting now.

AL:

Oh... this is not the same. Hurt feelings aren't unmarked graves.

SEDUM:

Correct, but he is also not a child. And you aren't his guardian.

AL:

(Low)

I know that...

SEDUM:

(Kinder, reassuring)

Then let him decide for himself. Need I remind you, there's only been one instance of a grave in the past 10 years. That was an exceptional instance.

AL:

Exceptional...

SEDUM:

(After a moment)

... Al?

AL:

(Jolting out)

What- Yeah, it's fine- I mean, no, *this* is not fine, but that... that's fine...

SEDUM:

If he's aware of the dangers involved, he'll make the right decision. But it doesn't hurt to ask.

AL:

(Muttering)

... Mmmmm, maybe not you. Hate it. Hate it a *lot*.

SEDUM:

You're anxious, it's alright...-

AL:

That doesn't even begin to describe my emotions, Sedum.

SEDUM:

I could approach Samson around evening tomorrow, if that would help? You wouldn't even have to start the conversation.

AL:

He'd kill me. I'd kill me. No. If this happens, then I'll... have to tell him myself.

NARRATOR:

Al dug a small bottle out of her back pocket- wintergreen oil. She tipped it onto the pads of her fingers and rubbed around her nostrils, a feeble comfort amidst the gore.

AL:

But don't get your hopes up. And get a better idea for someone, too. And also I might need to crash at your place cause once he finds out I've been keepin' this all hush hush for 15 years, he might torch my trailer, I don't know...

SEDUM:

(Out of the corner of his mouth)
Which was your call...

AL:

Need I remind you for a very good reason.

SEDUM:

Mm. He seems stable. I don't understand why you're this distrustful of his response.

AL:

(Muttering)

Cause he ran away. *(A moment)* Cause this place is a nightmare.

(Normal) And he's a lot more stubborn than he looks. *(She smiles, chuckling ruefully)* You know what'll happen? He'll say no and I'll get in trouble for being a big, nasty liar. Fuck. Fine. Fine, I'll do it. Tomorrow. Bandaid ripped off a fuckin' bullet hole...

SEDUM:

(Sincerely)

Thank you, Al. From the bottom of my heart.

AL:

You're welcome.

SEDUM:

... Well... I hope something about this works.

AL:

Your confidence is a salve to my soul.

A PAUSE. (This is all still amicable, no one is snapping.) Sedum laughs aloud.

(Cont., Loosening up slightly, smiling)

Someone needs to be optimistic!

SEDUM:

And after all that, you expect it to be me?

AL:

It's your idea!

SEDUM:

Pick one or the other; either say "I've got a handle on this, I'll do my best" and I can be supportive and say "Yes, Al, I believe in you", or do *exactly* what you just did-

AL:

I don't control how you interpret information! Your emotional state is your own, pal, I wash my hands of it-

SEDUM:

(Sighs, laughing)

- I swear on every single pile of meat here, you can be so contrary for the sake of being contrary..

AL:

Now that's unfair.

SEDUM:

Oh it bloody well is it, then?

AL:

(Laughing)

Yeah!

SEDUM:

(Playfully)

Do you want to fight?

AL:

Yeah!

END