

Harbor Season 2
Episode 1: Old Haunts

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SCENE 1: EXT. WILCOR FARM, AFTERNOON

A sharp breeze cuts through, rattling leaves in the distance.

A voice is humming, as echos of the past are barely heard, as there is shifting of wood: Screams of the Pyre, Al's pain in the flames, Becker's shriek of "You're fired!!", Sam's cry of "AL!"

Al continues to hum, quiet and focused, an old folk song. After Sam's echo dissolves, a door opens, breaking the reverie.

AL:
(Inhales, breaking
out)
Afternoon, DoCA, Ranger Greer, here
for your worm problem-

NARRATOR:
Al flipped out a laminated ID, a
swinging, sickly photo of her, the
words Alelia Greer, DoAA Ranger
printed below... with scrawled red ink
correcting into DoCA.

LIWROC:
(Light voice, an
echo of the reversed
words undercutting)
Yeah, uh...? Al? We, uh... you came to my
wedding... ?

AL:
New protocol, Liwroc- ah, Name?

LIWROC:
... You just... Said it.

AL:
Confirmation, excellent.

NARRATOR:
An apologetic grin swelled on her
face, illuminating her lined and
darkened eyes. Her ill-fitting black
suit bunched up around her elbows,
letting her bandaged wrapped limbs
breathe. A bulbous little microphone
was clamped to her lapel, the root of
a recorder affixed to her waistband.
(MORE)

NARRATOR: (cont'd)

Liwroc Wilcor, an... almost humanoid, tilted her head, squinting her rapidly trembling eyes. Her torso felt long, like too much comprised her innards, not enough in her appendages, yet it only whistled on the edges of vision.

AL:

Can I answer any questions before the evaluation?

LIWROC:

You're doing a terrible impersonation, you know. And I am not easy to take from, so scoot on before you come to regret-

AL:

Liwroc, it's me. It's me, this is all new rules since summer. (Lower) Uh, we're being recorded. Hence the... formalities.

LIWROC:

Ah... Recorded... For your safety? Hm, I always was worried for y'all, I'm glad they're putting more measures in place for accidents- You breakable little things...-

AL:

(Clears her throat)

No, it's supposed to be for you. It's for Cryptids.

LIWROC:

(Small chuckle,
thinking she's
joking)

Al... Why would we need that?

AL:

(Inhales)

It's "To keep Rangers beholden to the highest standards of service and to grow the knowledge base of the DoCA."

LIWROC:

Have Hollow and Nuller lost the ability to ask? Or to remember a decade of community? Why must they slink?

AL:
New leadership as of... four months ago. Almost all Human now.

LIWROC:
God above, God below, well. Ah. We've been out of the loop, being... on the edge of town!

AL:
It's a good thing ya haven't needed us til now- Let's go check out your worms.

LIWROC:
Right over yonder... (Off, back into the house, and reversed) I'm headed out, stay outta trouble!

A chorus of reversed young voices slips out from the innards of the house. The door closes and they cross over the wood porch into the grass and continue on.

LIWROC: (cont'd)
Who was axed? Nuller or the Bone Snake?

AL:
Sedum.

LIWROC:
Oh, shame. Though better for the other half of town she stays in there.

AL:
Yeah, you're telling me. For the record, can you describe the, uh, aliment of the worm well?

A high pitched screeching wail, closing in on them, with rustling grass.

LIWROC:
You'll see in a second- Oh, incoming rat.

They both stop as the rat goes from left to right in front of them- swelling all the way, then the wail ends abruptly with a small pop!

AL:
So that's what that smear was back there.

LIWROC:
It's what happens when you have land-
the rats congregate in your wheat,
seasons change, and then-

AL:
-the exploding starts. Wouldn't be
fall without 'em. So the worms?

LIWROC:
They're starving out of their skin,
can't cling to the walls, and their
webs come out like cotton batting.
They're leaving carnage on the sides
of the well itself, too.

AL:
Right, right... How long ago did it
start?

LIWROC:
Two weeks?

AL:
(Concern slipping
out)
What've y'all been eating?

LIWROC:
Cleaned out the bait shops down on
Santeetlah, but Lumbricina's as good
as junk when it comes to nutrient
density and expensive compared to
raising. The kids are getting spoiled
on 'em too.

They are coming up on the well. Little squeaks and squeals
sound from the well, along with a cave-like ambiance of
drips.

AL:
You think sickness or sabato- (She
chokes on the smell)

LIWROC:
Revolting, innit.

AL:
They rotting out too?

LIWROC:

At this point I wouldn't be surprised..

AL:

Fucking hell- (Inhales) Pardon. Scratch that.

LIWROC:

Don't blame you. It's a mess.

AL:

Mhm... (She is maneuvering her camera)

NARRATOR:

Al fumbled with her camera- a hulking bit of equipment from the recesses of Raleigh's basement. The edges of her gauze peeled back, revealing a red and white lattice-work of scars snaking from her fingers. Liwroc frowned, blinking with a roll of her eyes back up into her sockets.

LIWROC:

Would you like new skin?

AL:

Hm?

LIWROC:

Your hands, the stuff you've grown is alright but I can make much-

AL:

No! No, I don't... I don't need your suggestion for a plastic surgeon, thanks.

NARRATOR:

Al's hand roughly shielded the mic, giving her a pointed nod to it, tight-lipped. Liwroc stared, confused.

AL:

(“Mouthed”)
Recording.

LIWROC:

(Understanding but
very stilted)

Oh... kay. I won't give you the name of
a very good human skin surgeon. I am
disappointed because I do know of
them and their reality and want to
help but I... won't...

AL:

Thanks, thanks... Don't wanna show all
your cards! Some... specialists are
worth keepin' secrets over... Can I
take pictures?

LIWROC:

Go ahead.

NARRATOR:

The lens cap came off with a little
more force than usual. A bright
yellow slip of paper fell into her
palm.

AL:

(Low, to herself)

What- "Take pic of Corwil
Doppleganger"- Fuck you, Becker.

NARRATOR:

She crumpled the note, the skin over
her knuckles protesting the sudden
strain.

AL:

Right, ok, smile for the camera,
babies.

The camera clicks as she inspects the well.

LIWROC:

Didn't know you'd been hurt that bad.

AL:

It's actually healing up pretty good.

LIWROC:

(Lightly)

Must've been some gas leak.

AL:

Mhm.

LIWROC:

Am I remembering that correctly- the Mayor's office said it was a gas leak...? Only I heard 'round the grapevine there was a being on fire-

AL:

Really? Haven't heard that one.

LIWROC:

Al, what happened.

AL:

You just told me.

LIWROC:

Don't be parrotin' lies, you're not very good at it.-

AL:

The gas lines were busted. I was the only person on fire. Excuse me, need a better angle.

NARRATOR:

Al hugged the post affixed to the stone side, the antique bucket swaying above them. She aimed the lens straight down the maw of the stinking well.

LIWROC:

Folks are saying it's someone new, someone who doesn't care about the rest of us, what we've got here-

AL:

You know everything, I can't-

LIWROC:

I have kids. My wife. I need to know if we're safe in our own home. Please.

A gust rattles the long grass. Al shifts and sighs.

NARRATOR:

She stared down at the camera in her spare hand... A drop of red splattered the eyepiece.

AL:

Uh- fuck, really?

The soft pattering of blood, onto the camera.

LIWROC:
Your- your nose-

AL:
It's fine, the air's just dryer now-
uhm, uh..

Al shifts down from the well, landing back in the grass.

NARRATOR:
Al grabbed the head of the microphone
on her lapel, Liwroc reaching out in
an attempt to help.

AL:
Ranger experiencing minor health
complications- removing microphone to
keep from damaging.

A click off of the recorder.

AL: (cont'd)
(far more relaxed,
normal)
I'll tell you what I know. But can I,
uh, get some tissues first?

TITLE SEQUENCE
OF SEASON 2

SCENE 2 : DOCA INT AFTERNOON

A door closes as Al rustles through. A low hum of
conversation in the other room.

WILLIAM:
(On the phone,
trying to talk with
interruptions)
Yes ma'am, mhm... mhm, mhm, I'll make
sure, oh doubly sure. It'll go off...
off without a hitch! Righto. Righto,
I'll pass along your message no
problem... yes, to Director Becker,
yes. It'll get to him- Right right,
right, ok! Ok, have a good day-
goodbye, ma'am!

The phone slams down.

WILLIAM: (cont'd)
Eegh, those State Rangers don't know
when to quit...

SAM:
It's like watching you shake off a
leech.

CRUX:
It's a pry and flick, you can't shake
those off.

WILLIAM:
See that's the difference between
y'all and me- I have a knack for
these types. You soothe and you
smile, and then mysteriously the
phone eventually cuts out.

Sam laughs.

WILLIAM: (cont'd)
It'd be nice if Becker ever answered
his own heckin' phone... Or, you know,
did his job in Raleigh. I swear one
of these days, it's gonna be me,
listenin', noddin' and then
piledriver!

CRUX:
Didn't Valen forbid wrassling on
Department property, William?

WILLIAM:
I'll do it with a smile, that'll
distract her- she'll understand.-

AL:
(As she drops bags
down)
You will not be piledriving Becker
without me, that's next on my to-do
list.

SAM:
Well now it'd be weird if I got in on
it while Al is there, so I'll let you
all sort it out.

CRUX:
 (Playful)
 But more importantly, you might
 wrinkle the starch in your shirts.

SAM:
 Do you know how long it takes to get
 them this crisp-

CRUX:
 In fact, I do, but there is an old
 saying that shirts are meant to be
 used.

SAM:
 (Dramatically)
 And I thought you were the only one
 who ever understood me, like my
 brother-

CRUX:
 Oh, let's hope not-

AL:
 (Calling)
 Sam, can ya c'mere.

SAM:
 O-oh, ok!

Sam comes into the kitchen.

SAM: (cont'd)
 (slight
 breathlessness from
 the banter)
 Hey.

AL:
 (Uncomfortable)
 Hey... you should know, I did a bad.

SAM:
 Oh, what bad, what kind of bad, what
 happened?

He reaches out and grabs her shoulder.

NARRATOR:
 Sam's grip was stronger now, wrapped
 tight over her shoulder.
 (MORE)

NARRATOR: (cont'd)

His complexion lightly tan after the summer, contrasting against her's, pale and drawn. And his pointed chin was, for the first time in years, as smooth as her's. Bright and... innocent. That's what Al saw when she looked in her brother's eyes.

AL:

(Sheepish)

Eh, I, uh, I turned off the recorder.

SAM:

(Concerned)

But those are for... community confidence. That's, that's not good.

AL:

I know, I know, it's just Liwroc was asking questions I couldn't give her without not having folks know and she deserved to know.

SAM:

But those are like the one good thing that's happened-

AL:

I don't like him having... private conversations with Cryptid's he don't know to peruse. It feels wrong... It feels... -

SAM:

I know. But... it would take so much of his time to go through every field recording- he's probably not even doing it!

AL:

You haven't been stuck in his office, Sam, the man is methodical. He wanted me to take pictures of Liwroc- it was creepy.

SAM:

... ok, yeah, it's unsettling, but you couldn't, I dunno, write her a note?

AL:

Oh, that would've been better, wouldn't it...

SAM:

(Sighs)

Yes. It's just, I mean... How're we better than... the cops if we don't use the accountability shit we're given...

AL:

(She's appeasing him)

Yeah, you're right. Don't worry, I'll get in trouble for it.

SAM:

I don't want that- (Sighs)

AL:

You kidding? It's the only sense of normalcy 'round here. Come on, let's get you some 10 second hug oxytocin to cheer up your moral conundrum and my impending doom. Please?

NARRATOR:

She held open her arms with a wry smile. Sam's knees trembled for a moment, known only in his mind. He buried the trepidation, and himself, in her arms.

They hug.

SAM:

Ah... hah, much better... It's all simple, isn't it...

AL:

TWO... THREE...

SAM:

(Joining her joking)

I am so fucking calm.

AL:

We can get ya calmer, FIVE...!

She squeezes him.

SAM:

(Squeaks without air)

Peak calm! SO calm, I'm all out!!

AL:
 (Releasing him)
 Good, job is done in half the time.-

SAM:
 We gotta get you the same, here-

Sam squeezes her.

AL:
 (Wheezing)
 Ho God- Augh, show off-

Sam laughs quietly and releases her.

SAM:
 (Moving on, not
 wanting to linger,
 but there is an
 awkward air)
 So, ah... how'd it go, aside from...
 dodging being the Big Brother
 arbiter?

AL:
 Hmh, lot's of sick worms.

SAM:
 The whole well?

AL:
 (Sighs)
 Yeah, Liwroc Wilcor's whole worm well
 is-

SAM:
 -worryingly wretched with the wilt?

AL:
 Sam-

SAM:
 -It's ok to have alliteration envy.

AL:
 Yeah, it better be, with you prancin'
 round..

SAM:
 We'll figure it out for them, that's
 what we're here for.

AL:
Yep. Got a worm in a bag for Roose.

The plastic rustles as she holds it up.

SAM:
That's... so gross!

AL:
Mhm.

She yanks open the refrigerator door, slaps it inside. The door closes again.

AL: (cont'd)
You on lunch?

SAM:
No, I gotta wrap something up and then Crux and I are headed out, more festival prep hiccups down on Main.

AL:
Fun. Cute, very fun.

SAM:
Ah, cute? Hm?

AL:
Nothin', just fall cuteness. Where's Valen?

SAM:
Oh, she went out, cause, well, (Lowering his voice) while you were gone, Valen was like pacing around, on this call, and we all knew something was up, but Crux went to put something outside of Roose's door, was there for like half a second, and then came back and said she's wary something happened with something violent. Like that pit that you get in your stomach when you're not just worried but preparing to confront, but it's not full adrenaline time, you know-

AL:
Mhmm.

SAM:
It's so cool! He can just read that
off of people.

AL:
Yeah! Weren't we talking about Valen?

SAM:
Ah, right, so she's out
investigating... whatever needs it.

AL:
Mhmm. Very informative. (Coyly) So...
would you say you're... interested?

SAM:
In what?

AL:
In him.

SAM:
I mean, he's an interesting person-

AL:
But you're kinda scoping out that
cherry tree.

SAM:
What does that mean?

AL:
That you're checkin' his cherries, I
don't know.-

SAM:
(Vaguely mortified)
Why are you talking about Crux's
cherries-

AL:
I was talkin' 'bout his eyes or some
shit, you perv-

SAM:
God, when is the last time you've
even referred to someone non-
platonically??

AL:
We are not talkin' about my love
life.-

SAM:
 (Sighs, devolving
 into a hiss)
 -I... can't be into him. It's not
 allowed- I can't and I won't. So, no.
 He's just an interesting person, and
 let's not talk about this.

AL:
 Fair... And I'm not sure if he even
 dates in the first place. But say he
 wasn't on your team...?

SAM:
 (Nervous, slightly
 giddy, not mad)
 Then I wouldn't know him! So the
 point is moot! I, I gotta finish up
 some things...

Sam walks off.

AL:
 ... Cherries aren't sexual. They're
 fruit.

SCENE 3: INT. LEAD DIRECTOR'S OFFICE, AFTERNOON

BECKER:
 (On the phone)
 ... No, I get it. No, I-... If you were
 here...! This is the place we should
 root, I don't care, no, Nick- Trust
 me, the city has nothing on this,
 there's even Aberration festivals!
 They're organized... Of course I'll
 find it-

Knock knock on the door.

NARRATOR:
 Brick Becker glanced up from his maps
 and breakdowns of Cryptid profiles,
 his cellphone tucked into the crook
 between his shoulder and left ear.
 The office door opened, and Sam's
 kind smile glinted hesitantly,
 hovering next to the new plaque
 reading Lead Director's Office.

BECKER:

Anyway, keep me updated on the Piedmont project. And let me know if Hel starts interrogating you about this. Right.

He hangs up the call.

SAM:

Sorry to interrupt, State Director.

BECKER:

Not at all, come in- Sit down, use Al's chair.

NARRATOR:

Sam considered the simple chair tucked beneath the simple desk, overcrowded and inadequately small compared to the rest of the room.

SAM:

It's... alright, this'll be quick, but as soon as I found it I knew you should hear.

BECKER:

(Hesitantly, smile faltering.)

Ahhh, Sam... I'm sure you have good intentions but... is this another tip...?

SAM:

It's not like last month! That was... ahah, uhm, my mistake.

BECKER:

Yeah. I got stuck in the bog for two hours. I didn't even know bogs existed in the mountains.

SAM:

You did say it reminded you of boy scouts though, right?

BECKER:

(A acquiescing sigh)
Sure did...

SAM:

This one's different, Mr. Becker.- It's focused, it's not a shot in the dark. It's about Perdition.

BECKER:
 (That got his
 attention)
 The Aberration-gathering? That
 Perdition?

SAM:
 I found a record of one of the first
 Cryptids who, who, I think helped
 start the tradition! If you're
 interested-

BECKER:
 (Getting excited)
 Where'd you find that?

SAM:
 (trying to sway
 Becker into not
 asking for it)
 In the margins of a really, really
 old journal, I think it's lost out in
 the shed now, But I remembered it
 after you started talking- I can find
 it, if you...?

BECKER:
 It doesn't matter.

NARRATOR:
 Sam silently thanked good fortune he
 wasn't forced to fabricate imaginary
 evidence.

BECKER:
 So what'd it say? Where's it at, how
 do you get in? Will they attack?

SAM:
 I don't know. It wasn't that
 detailed, but... The person referenced
 is still alive. I searched,

Sam pulls out a large phonebook and flips through.

SAM: (cont'd)
 In here, and either it's a direct
 descendant with his same name, and
 his wife's same name, at the same
 address, or-

BECKER:
 Here, this one?

SAM:
They never left.

BECKER:
It's a home address.

SAM:
Mhm?

BECKER:
(Soft exhale of
disbelief)
You'd think I'd be used to it by now
but... Always amazes me when they have
houses...

SAM:
... Yeah, cause, they're so old, they
should be taken care of in a
retirement home or something.

BECKER:
This is good, Sam. Good work.
Excellent work. Knew another college
grad would come in handy here.

SAM:
What can I say, I'm... good at
researching!

BECKER:
Good job... (Hesitant) It's... not near
any bogs, right?

SAM:
No, it's in the old part of town.

BECKER:
Great. Keep this up, I may just have
to get you in on Research and
Development out East.

SAM:
(Plastic smile)
Wow. That'd be somethin'.

BECKER:
Right. Think I'll be paying some very
old monsters a visit tomorrow. I'd
ask if you'd want to accompany me,
but... those damn workplace laws and
weekends.

SAM:
 (Same intonation as
 the last)
 Shoot. Next time! Ah, gotta go, do
 the town Halloween prep help-

BECKER:
 Yes, yes, go ahead. Thank you, Sam.
 It's nice to know I have one person
 here looking out for me.

SCENE 4: EXT. MAIN STREET, AFTERNOON

Outside, in town, along mainstreet, in an alleyway.

CRUX:
 Start again, please, you said you-

KEVIN:
 -That thing won't stop shocking me!

SAM:
 We'll sort this out, Kevin, ok, just
 a sec- Stick, did you mean to shock-

KEVIN:
 What else is it gonna say besides
 no?? The only other option is yes!!

NARRATOR:
 A thread of blue electricity spun out
 from the alleyway outlet, nipping
 Kevin's elbow.

Stick zaps with crisp contact. Kevin yelps.

CRUX:
 (Slight smile, a
 little amused)
 Stick, if you can hold off for a
 moment, he needs to speak clearly.

SAM:
 Ok. So, Kevin, you're stringing up
 the lights-

KEVIN:
 Which I shouldn't be doing anyway!
 I'm made for offices, not carnivals!-

SAM:
-And Stick, you have limited
communication, of course-

Stick zaps.

SAM: (cont'd)
So, so, maybe she's trying to say
something to Kevin?

Stick ZAPS.

SAM: (cont'd)
And he's not listening?

KEVIN:
Always their side, it's always the
electrocuting nonsense's side! Why'd
I even call y'all?!

CRUX:
I doubt the fire department would be
of much use.

SAM:
(A hiss)
Crux-

KEVIN:
Oh, OH, that's right, of course,
you'd be all smart- I am on official
Mayoral business, and this stupid
festival is entirely for... everyone
including ya'll and you won't even
help!

CRUX:
Well hanging up fairy lights is a
very solemn duty, I don't dare get in
your way.-

SAM:
Hah, ok, now that we're done joshin'
around the water cooler!- Were you
trying to ask him to be a bit more
gentle, Stick?-

Stick Zap zaps.

SAM: (cont'd)
Ok, so that's a no...

KEVIN:
 Good Lord, I thought you were the reasonable one. It was clearly antagonism from the Grid!

SAM:
 Why would she antagonize you?

KEVIN:
 It never needed a reason before, why're you asking for one now?

Stick zaps. Crux sighs and shuffles past.

CRUX:
 Could I borrow that cord?

KEVIN:
 Fine, take it. You know, Samson, Mayor Dickson was right, Halloween week is nothing more than a charade to exploit our generosity, and after the event of the summer-

CRUX:
 Excuse me, Sam.

SAM:
 Sorry, Crux. Kevin, next week is about helping everyone have a good time.

Crux is humming softly as he maneuvers around.

KEVIN:
 Then you'd see our side too! What happened to caring about your community?? We're the ones in danger here!-

CRUX:
 Fiat Lux.

A small whoosh of electricity. A small hum of warmth erupts. The two Humans stop.

NARRATOR:
 The pumpkin baubles above their heads glimmered behind their smiles. Crux brushed his hands off on his old fashioned trousers as he got up from the pavement.

CRUX:
The original circuit's long been
broken. So you use the one in the
case. That was latched closed? Right
above, you see?

Stick zaps.

KEVIN:
(Tightly)
Ah... hmmm!

CRUX:
Better, Stick?

Stick zaps, contentedly.

CRUX: (cont'd)
Phenomenal. Good work, lads.

He walks past them, out of the alleyway.

SAM:
Uh, we, hm- thank you for your
patience; Kevin, Stick.

Stick zaps.

CRUX:
(Distant)
Coming, Sam?

Sam jogs after.

SAM:
Call if you need anything else!

KEVIN:
(Distant)
First on my list, obviously!

SAM:
'Scuse me, gotta slip by...

STRANGER:
(Distant)
The skeletons go on the roof, Tasha,
the roof!

A few voices give little squeaks and grunts of
acknowledgment. Sam is crunching stray leaves on the
sidewalk.

NARRATOR:

The streets of Harbor glowed in fall, swirling warmth to guard against the chill infecting the town. Sam readjusted his star-speckled novelty tie, back to the comforting tourniquet. Through the loose crowd, Crux crooked a finger over his shoulder and beckoned.

Sam slows his gait to fall in with Crux.

SAM:

That was slick back there.

CRUX:

Thank you. Finding outlets is a specialty.

SAM:

(Slight laugh)

Hah, why else would I trust you?

CRUX:

Mm, have to prove myself constantly. Next on the agenda?

SAM:

Right, I got... where'd that go... Hmm...

A rustle of paper, a sigh of relief from Sam.

SAM: (cont'd)

Found it.

CRUX:

Congratulations.

SAM:

Thank you... Next stop... the hedge maze.

CRUX:

Right off Main. Lucky for us. What's the reason?

SAM:

We're supposed to... (Reading) to make sure it'll accommodate guests properly?

CRUX:

Ah. Size concerns.

SAM:

Hm! Yeah! Suppose that's, that's a discussion...

CRUX:

We don't want those over 6 feet getting a better view than the rest of us. Pretty straight-forward.

SAM:

Yes, correct! Discussion of... rapid growth. For the hedges, I mean.

CRUX:

(A bemused moment)

... Now you've got it. ... So, you and Al, have you, ah, gotten past it all?

SAM:

(Confused, worried
he knows)

Ah, yeah, uhm, what?

CRUX:

(A bit quieter)

Her getting scarred by the Pyre. The stakeout that you... well you proposed and that she accepted- the unfortunateness-

SAM:

Oh! Oh, yeah, no, we're fine on that, we're totally fine!

NARRATOR:

Crux squinted at him a moment. Sam's heart thumped in his chest. He knew his work partner could read emotions, yes, but the thought of him knowing the same secrets Sam knew writhed in his gut.

CRUX:

That's good. Seems a little tense still. Not that it's my business.-

SAM:

(Deflecting)

That, that's with everything, you know... I can just try to be the best brother possible, at this point... But thanks for checking in.

CRUX:
Sorry if I overstepped there.

SAM:
Pssh, no... you didn't... I appreciate it. I don't think I've said yet- I like the vintage vibe you've got with the dress code. It's really cool.

They're still weaving through clumps of people.

CRUX:
Oh, I just don't replace suits often. Excuse us.

SAM:
Well, you pull it off. (Correcting)
You wear it well.

CRUX:
Thank you. ... Your tie is nice.

SAM:
Isn't it! I found Orion in it.

CRUX:
Three in a row, right? The belt?

SAM:
No, no, look- There's the bow- and there's Betelgeuse, for sure. They did their work.

CRUX:
... Heh. I'll take your word for it. I never was into astronomy.

SAM:
What, never looked up and thought "That light's gotta have a name". And everything with a name has a story. And that... that's something to wonder on. You never thought about that?

CRUX:
No. The names and stories here are enough to suffice. Is that why you looked up? Things down here got old hat?

A crunch of gravel, slipping pebbles underfoot. Fluttering tape.

SAM:

Ah, uh, no, I just couldn't help it.
(Distracted) It was just... pretty.

NARRATOR:

Old caution tape spasmed around the empty sockets of Finnick's Toy Shop; dark, dusty, and exposed to the mountains.

CRUX:

(Disgusted)

They couldn't have at least boarded it up better...- Ah, that was a rat at the back. There are rats in there.

NARRATOR:

Sam brushed a shriveled mushroom cap growing from a water bloated plank nailed across the window.

SAM:

Opportunistic little beasties- Hey. You hungry?

CRUX:

What- Oh- (Loosening up) Oh no, I had a granola bar... But don't let me stop you.

SAM:

No, I really like self-sacrificing, I'll get it for you-

CRUX:

I couldn't. Take the obviously poisonous fungus for yourself.

SAM:

We've been out for so long, you NEED sustenance-

NARRATOR:

Sam tore the umbrella-like mushroom from its stem. A pop of dark liquid sprayed his lapel.

SAM:

Ah- What- AUGH. What the fuck?!

CRUX:

What happened-

VALEN:
 (Slightly muffled
 and distant)
 Stop accosting your coworker, Sam.

SAM:
 (Yelping)
 D-director Valen!

NARRATOR:
 Valen's silhouette excised herself from the dark interior. She rested against the wounded window frame, a small trail of reddish black dribbling down the outside. Sam's fingers twitched, stained from his prize.

VALEN:
 (Getting closer)
 Hi, hello. You two knocking out those assignments?-

SAM:
 HEY, did you, uh, did you notice the ooze??

VALEN:
 Oh- what happened to your hand?

CRUX:
 You'd better be up on your tetanus...

SAM:
 It's not me, it's the window, the mushroom, I don't know!

VALEN:
 Hang on, I need a better look... Hm-
 Eh, it's... (Not sure what she's
 looking at) That's odd...

CRUX:
 Are you quite sure you want to be touching that?

VALEN:
 (It clicks)
 ... Ah. It's perfectly alright, look-
 this happens on occasion- with
 certain wood, the compounds react
 with local fungus. Give me that-

NARRATOR:
She stole the mushroom from Sam.

VALEN:
Mm, yeah, this is what happens, it
liquefies from the inside out.

NARRATOR:
She tossed it over her shoulder into
the half-darkness.

It lands with a distant splat. Small squeaks of rats inside,
DEVOURING.

VALEN:
Nasty stuff.

SAM:
Yeech. Oh, it's all over my shirt...

Sam wipes his jacket.

CRUX:
This is where you were off to?

VALEN:
Kids broke in yesterday lookin' for a
pre-festival fright. Not that
anything about that statement is
surprising. Checking for anything
suspect... You two?

CRUX:
We're out to the maze.

VALEN:
That shouldn't take you long- Keep
your eyes peeled on how the rest of
it is going.

CRUX:
Don't we have anything better to do
than party planning-

VALEN:
You're, as always, getting paid.

CRUX:
Right. See you later!

Crux starts off.

VALEN:
Have fun.

NARRATOR:
Sam hesitated as Valen eyed Crux's back, her fingers slipping over the red along the wood. Her attention flicked back to him.

VALEN:
Need somethin', Sam?

SAM:
It... smells like blood, Valen. My hand smells like blood. Is that... the compounds?

VALEN:
Nature's funny like that.

CRUX:
(Distant)
Sam? Come on!

VALEN:
(A smile, kind)
Remember where you are ... Go on. Wash up when you can. You look a fright.

SCENE 5: INT. MANAGEMENT'S OFFICE, AFTERNOON

Al opens the door from Lead's office. The ticking of the breakroom's clock slips in.

WILLIAM:
... Thought I'd make you some complimentary coffee while you wait, with my own secret flair- (Stage whisper) there's hazelnut creamer in it, with a dash of pumpkin. But don't tell anyone!

GLENDIA:
I am fine, Mr. Kappel. Thank you again, but I'll pass.

WILLIAM:
You sure? Oh, it's real good- isn't it real good, Al? You like my coffee! I make it decent.

AL:
You do. It's in one of the cute mugs,
too. Try it while you talk, Mayor.
We're ready for you.

GLEENDA:
(Sighs, rearranging
a smile)
Keep it for yourself, son.

She walks into the office, past Al.

BECKER:
(From the office)
Mayor Dickson, good to see you.

GLEENDA:
Same to you, Director Becker.

WILLIAM:
(Whispered)
D'you want it?

AL:
(Whispered)
Yeah, thanks.

NARRATOR:
William took a long and careful
stride with his cane, Al snapping the
cup from his hand with a nod. He shot
her a thumbs up before retreating
back to the little split-level
stairs.

Al creaks the door closed as Glenda sits.

BECKER:
Al, stop hovering, sit down. We need
our liaison's full attention.

AL:
'Course, Director.

NARRATOR:
She seated herself behind her tiny
table in the corner of the office.
The proverbial post where her chain
was staked. Glenda scrutinized Becker
with a soft smile, him leaning
comfortably over the desk that had
never been his.

BECKER:
How've you been?

GLEENDA:
Busy, always busy. The big day around
the corner. Yourself?

BECKER:
Took the words right out of my mouth.

GLEENDA:
Who'd have guessed.

BECKER:
Almost Halloween already- After
nothing all summer, all that tension,
now we can finally blow off some
steam! Ah, oh, I should say,
hopefully blow off some steam.
Obviously we're under a lot of
pressure, but you know that.

GLEENDA:
That I do. Funny how we're all
between a rock and a hard place in
present circumstances.

BECKER:
Then reconsider-

GLEENDA:
As soon as a viable alternative is
presented, I will. Until then, no.
The curfew remains intact- As I said
a week ago.

BECKER:
I have personally cross-checked every
case file here, there is no mention
of any explosive capacities. (Laughs)
I mean, it's martial law for God's
sake-

GLEENDA:
This is for everyone's sake, Brick,
and I won't move on account of your
burning curiosity for our... citizens.
Next week we will have security, we
will have no masks, and the festival
will end at 9, right at curfew. We
will break tradition on account of
safety.

BECKER:

I'm trying to have a civil discussion about the rights of all your residents, if you'd let me.

GLEENDA:

That just so happens to coincide with complaints I've heard from Aberrations being hounded in their territory? Desperation never suits a disposition like yours, I thought you'd know that of yourself by now.

BECKER:

(Getting irritated,
Louder)

We're two sides of the same coin, Glenda. I want freedom, you want security. Police presence, I love, very wise, but the curfew? You're driving your residents into friction. Even the masks, you know there are Aberrations who won't interact without them-

GLEENDA:

I'm not moving on this.

BECKER:

... Al!

NARRATOR:

Both turned to face her. The cheap, perfectly sweet coffee swirled over her tongue a moment. She slowly lowered the mug.

AL:

Mhm?

BECKER:

What do you think?

AL:

Oh, many things, Director.

BECKER:

(Little laugh)

How about our current discussion, if you could focus?

AL:

Oh, right. Right.

A moment.

BECKER:

Well?

AL:

I'm focusing, sir, on our current discussion. What did you wanna talk about?

BECKER:

Jesus Christ- (Frustrated laugh)

GLEENDA:

The problem has already been solved, now comes implementation. Can you act on these orders, Al? Make sure everyone's safe on Wednesday, make sure you alert the police to any mischief... or worse?

AL:

I'm sorry, Mayor, I have to be honest, I was thinking about worms.

GLEENDA:

Well, this has been insightful! For as little was done before, it looks like this operation has sunk deeper still-

BECKER:

(Snapping)

-Just because it doesn't suit you doesn't mean important work isn't being accomplished, Glenda, and I am sick of your attitude.

GLEENDA:

Oh. If that's where your priorities lie.

BECKER:

Broader than a single night? Yes, that is where they lie. You're stifling progress.

Glenda gets up.

GLEENDA:

Al, come protect me from your very friendly receptionist.

(MORE)

GLEENDA: (cont'd)
Looking forward to a peaceful
Halloween, Brick. Toodles.

Glenda walks out.

 NARRATOR:
Al caught a flush snaking up from
under Becker's collar. She pointed a
thumb at the door.

 AL:
Got a job to do.

 BECKER:
Back here as soon as she's gone.

 AL:
Mhm.

Al jogs out to Glenda. They take a few strides into the
entryway.

 GLEENDA:
I expected more of you, young lady...

 AL:
Ah, me, the epitome of femininity.

 GLEENDA:
I expect you to consider your
neighbors, not to mention your
family.

 AL:
They can take care of themselves,
believe me.-

 GLEENDA:
-What happened to your balls?

 AL:
Mm, see, my scrotum got all twisted
up- think it's called a torsion.
Can't feel shit down there now.

 GLEENDA:
I can hardly tell that Leah never got
you into etiquette school.

 AL:
I need something better than forcing
out bedtimes and impeding Cryptid's
lives to back you up.

GLEENDA:
Really? But you might?

AL:
Yeah, I might. Just stop singling 'em
out. Then I might talk.

GLEENDA:
... Let me see what I can do. You'll
hear from me after the weekend. And
remember, Halloween will be safe.
That's all I care about.

The door opens.

GLEENDA: (cont'd)
Have a good day.

AL:
You too...

The door closes.

BECKER:
(Distant, a
reminder)
Greer...?

She sighs... then wanders back. Management's door creaks back
open.

NARRATOR:
Becker leaned idly against Al's desk.
She stopped in the doorway, finding
no room for herself.

BECKER:
So... should we talk about you siding
with martial law...?

AL:
I actively did not do that, though I
can see how it might be
misunderstood.

BECKER:
Don't you care about Cryptids?

AL:
That I do.

BECKER:

So their freedom is worth... nothing, in your opinion? It's hard keeping up.

AL:

I'm sorry that I'm having a hard time understanding how surveilling folks is taking their well-being into consideration.

BECKER:

The amount of time you spend circling this idea, you know, it makes me wonder if you're trying to skirt accountability? It's amazing how little you're like your brother. Sam helps, he owns up and applies himself and what do you do?-

AL:

-I'm not trying to avoid responsibility-

BECKER:

Drop the very pointed phrasing and I might believe you.

AL:

Surveillance is what it is, and I'm calling it what it is. I thought we could all be honest here.

BECKER:

I can see where you get confused, you're still learning professionalism. It's all in your tone, that's where it lives. And see, my only sin is I don't hobnob the day away and still get the job done, and that's a threat to you. But new mindsets take time.

AL:

(Cracking patience)

I thought you personally knew how disturbing it is to be stalked.

BECKER:

... Stalked? You think research is stalking- (Laughs) Ohhh, apparently we need remedial comprehension lessons...!

AL:
 (A sharp splinter of
 the old Al)
 See that's the thing, I already get
 paid to waste time by breathing the
 same air you do, by listening to the
 same shit you spout- so by all means,
 try an' teach me, Brick. It's on your
 dime.

NARRATOR:
 He dipped his head, studying her. His
 forefinger traced around the edge of
 the mug on her desk.

AL:
 ... I'm sorry-

BECKER:
 -How childishly aggressive.

AL:
 (Tightly)
 That was rude. Please try to explain
 to me-

BECKER:
 I don't appreciate being talked to
 with such disrespect. Do you
 understand that?

NARRATOR:
 The mug jolted forward an inch.

It inches again.

AL:
 Yes-

BECKER:
 I think you need consequences, Al.
 I've been too lax, haven't I?

Another inch.

AL:
 So what, you're gonna throw things?

BECKER:
 Never. Who said that was happening?

AL:
Then stop pushing the cup- It's gonna fall.

BECKER:
(Overpowering)
See, this is how I'm not feeling heard; and that makes me feel mocked- You're just not listening.

AL:
I'm sorry for being unprofessional. That was inappropriate and I will be better going forward.

BECKER:
Now it just sounds like you're being held hostage.

Another inch.

AL:
Cause I really like that cup- and it's gonna break!

BECKER:
I have to twist your arm just to get a fake apology??

AL:
No it's not- Becker- Look, it's my mug! It's my mug. You break my shit, it's gettin' reported.

BECKER:
Oh... (Hiss of breath) But we both know it's not yours.

AL:
No-

The mug tips off and smashes.

BECKER:
Shoot. Agh, ceramics are my bane, aren't they... I've got another meeting, mind sweeping this up? Thanks, kiddo.

Becker walks past.

NARRATOR:

Blue and brown baked clay, gentle and sloping, now lay in cutting daggers at her feet. Enfys' old mug and William's coffee scattered across the wood of what had once been Al's childhood den. A wet heat rose up her arteries.

AL:

(Sighs out a hiss of her own)

Where're the fucking recorders in here, you goddamn child..

Al kicks the shards, breathing hard.

AL: (cont'd)

(Whispering)

Calm down... It's ok...

A swelling in the room... Something sounds like scratching, like meaty tears in ethereal fabric.

AL: (cont'd)

(an inhale)

No- ... No, no, eyes down, we keep our eyes down... You are not welcome here...
Calm down...

A sharp knock on the door behind her.

AL: (cont'd)

Ah-

WILLIAM:

(Kindly)

Need a broom?

AL:

(The previous entirely gone)

Thanks- Hey which coffee did you use earlier, that shit was delicious, man. You've gotten good at that..

SCENE 6: EXT. HEDGE MAZE, AFTERNOON

The sharp little tweets and chirps of birds, distant traffic near.

SAM:
So. We're supposed to be checking on...
the size of it?

CRUX:
Yes.

SAM:
And... we've been worried it hasn't
been... big enough?

CRUX:
So I was told.

SAM:
Well those worries were... really
warranted.

NARRATOR:
Tucked along the edge of Main
Street's Little Monk Park, backed
against wild forest, an inadequate
hedge maze twisted up from the soil.
It was barely 4 and a half feet tall
and a shrub woefully subpar for the
region's quick biting night frosts.
If plants could talk, it would have
let loose a gasping cough into a
monogrammed hanky.

They're walking.

CRUX:
This is pitiful.

SAM:
... it could be a kids activity. Fun
for the whole small family... You know
what, I would've gotten
claustrophobic in anything taller
anyway.

Crux lets out a disappointed sigh.

SAM: (cont'd)
We're just the messengers here, it's
ok.

CRUX:
It's not that, it's the fact that...
Look around. None of this is for
Cryptids.

(MORE)

CRUX: (cont'd)

We might as well be the decor, if we can't even be accommodated. (Laughs, it dissolving into a weird echo)

SAM:

We'll figure it out.

CRUX:

Do you honestly believe that? What reason would there be to do so? Even a holiday, the holiday we made lucrative, enjoyable- fun, even that we're being pushed out of. No, it's not like we're actively barred but... if I wasn't in the DoCA, I wouldn't be allowed to take part, not with my mask. And what can I do, nothing. Nothing..

NARRATOR:

Crux held him with a viciously sad gaze. The breath that came from him, though obstructed, felt... heavy. As though something slid off of his form, welling up against Sam's skin, slinking into his gut.

SAM:

I'm sorry. I... don't know what to say aside from... I'm sorry.

CRUX:

(Backing off,
reigning it in)

... Ah... Passing frustration. We'll figure it out, like you said. ...It'll be fine.

NARRATOR:

The waves receded from Crux's lungs... He struck Sam with his depthless black eyes, squinted in a smile... And Sam found his hands twitching to draw it back out, the liquid ardor that spilled from that voice that slid into his head. The remnants sloshed inside him and only it's entirety would calm the surge.

SAM:
 (Rather struck, a
 little disoriented)
 Can I help? How can I help? I don't
 like seeing you... upset.

CRUX:
 There's no need, Sam-
 (Getting it
 together, forcing
 back to neutral)
 Right... right. I'm going to find the
 park manager.

He starts off.

SAM:
 Do you need me to come with-

CRUX:
 No, it's ok. Go ahead, gather data...
 That will help. I'll be back.

He continues.

NARRATOR:
 The last vestiges of the fervor, like
 taut eels between them, snapped as
 Crux cut across the lawns. Sam's
 shoulders relaxed. His partner
 rounded the corner of the drab park
 office.

Sam takes a few breaths.

SAM:
 (Quietly)
 ... Uh, okay... Oh God, Sam, get yourself
 together- don't gawk after him- okay,
 collect data. (He starts off himself)
 Right. Where to start...

The rustling of leaves, cooing of doves.

SAM: (cont'd)
 Have the woods always been that
 close?
 He starts forward a few steps.

NARRATOR:
 The wall of thick, old trees purred
 to his left.
 (MORE)

NARRATOR: (cont'd)
 Blackberry brambles choked their
 trunks, everything entangled in
 orange fallen leaves, salivating over
 thicket and wilds and earth.

SAM:
 I should go in. For data. Just for a
 moment. ... He'll be a few minutes,
 anyway. Yeah... just-just a moment.
 I'll find something-

He pushes through some of the leaves with a few grunts.

NARRATOR:
 Tiny grasping spines tugged at his
 hand-me-down suit. A rusted plaque
 affixed to a trunk warned of bears,
 bark swallowing the edges. The forest
 was warm and cold, still and
 undulating, painfully bright and
 suspiciously dark, wrapped in
 comfortable decay.

SAM:
 Almost- Ah-

NARRATOR:
 A stray finger of thorns caught his
 shoelaces. He twisted back, catching
 sight of the steady red recording
 light at his hip blinking out.

His record shorts with an painful electrical sound.

SAM:
 Ah- Hello? Hello, hello- cheap
 microphones...

A swell of breath, a presence before him.

J:
 Samson.

SAM:
 (An excited half
 gasp)
 J!

NARRATOR:
 The hulking deer-cryptid-man
 Judgement crouched amongst the
 canopy, bright face beaming,
 shivering light.

(MORE)

NARRATOR: (cont'd)
Sam wrenched his shoe away from the
bramble, the laces fraying, and
stumbled forward.

J:
Ooh, quite spritely today. Stay on
your toes! Ah haa, I jest. Be
careful. Oh, you've bled on your
front!

SAM:
No, it's just mushroom juice!

J:
(Slight
uncomfortable laugh)
Ha... disturbing.

SAM:
Yeah! What are you doing here? It's
the middle of the day.

J:
I run errands too, my friend. No rest
for the wicked. Another joke! I am
not wicked. Are you at work? On duty?

SAM:
Yeah, I'm checking on the maze.

J:
(Tsks)
Rather sad, isn't it.

SAM:
Mm, another thing to fix. You don't
have any pointers on last minute
plant-doctoring do you?

J:
I specialize in people-knowing, by
and large. Apologies.

SAM:
That's ok.

J:
While I have you here, shall we
continue to conspire, my son?

(MORE)

J: (cont'd)

There are plenty of little secrets
I've picked up since last we met-
I've many a mischievous diversion to
send that State Director trotting
after by your word... !

SAM:

I did!

J:

You did!

SAM:

Sent him trailing after those old
fogies you talked about, like they
could tell him the origin of the
Cryptid party or something.

J:

They'll keep him for hours- days if
we're lucky. Oh you absolute cad.

SAM:

(Grinning)

That was you, not me.

J:

But what a devilish little messenger
you are. Wondrous mischief, I am
pleased with you and your help,
strange son.

SAM:

Oh, Crux'll be back soon, I'm sure-

J:

Eeh, when can I steal you away
later, then? We have work to do, we
must keep on our toes ahead of that
intruder- And I've missed you.

SAM:

(Little laugh)

Three days is too long. Uh, tomorrow
night's not bad- oh after the party,
I forgot; come visit around...
midnight? One? I should be asleep by
then.

J:

I don't want to take away from your
cycles... specifically if you'll be
reveling in Perdition... ?

SAM:
Yeah but visiting like this wears you out too. It's my turn.

J:
Well... I am deeply grateful for the gesture.

SAM:
Of course, I'm not gonna let you wring yourself out.-

J:
-He is returning, with another. Back to the real world with you.

SAM:
(Laughs)
Like this isn't real.

J:
(Happily)
Go on, go! We'll plot and prowl later.

SAM:
(Shaking himself back to what he needs to do)
I'll see you tomorrow.

J:
Till then, strange son. Stay safe.

Sam rustles back through the leaves, calling out.

SAM:
Do we have a professional on the scene? Oh, don't worry, this isn't my blood!-

SCENE 7: EXT/INT SEDUM'S APARTMENT AFTERNOON

Outside, crows cawing. The door to Sedum's apartment opens, letting noise spill out.

FERGUM:
Hello, Crispy.

AL:
Howdy, door dogs.

Al pushes into the room.

FERGUM:
We were at the door in passing!! It
is happenstance!!

AL:
Could'a sworn y'all were gonna move
out a week ago...

FERGUM:
(Demonically low)
Squatters rightssss...

AL:
(Ignoring them)
Sedum? I got late-lunch...

NARRATOR:
A kitsch science fiction film played
in the living room of Sedum's
apartment. Something herbaceous and
musky lingered in the air.

SEDUM:
(Distant)
Hullo Spirit, just a minute-

AL:
Aw, did you get started without me-

ROOSE:
He did and will do so again.

NARRATOR:
Roose claimed the entire couch,
slumped down in her concave chest,
staring at the television, limbs
splayed like a primordial insect.

AL:
There you are. Can you actually get
high?

ROOSE:
Such simple naivety. I become lower
than never before thought possible.

AL:
Weird. You still have a job, you
know.

ROOSE:

And to that I say you're up here as well, so shall we continue this exchange? Hm? No? GOOD, get off my back...

AL:

Sedum, do you want lunch?

He's walking into the room, not overly high, just slightly buzzed.

SEDUM:

Yes, yes, I'm here, thank you...
Hulllooo.

AL:

Oh, I didn't get the memo for a pyjama party!

SEDUM:

Uh, it is laundry day.

FERGUM:

We nested in your warm clothes an hour ago!!

SEDUM:

I was going to fold those!-

FERGUM:

(In one huge breath)
Then you should have done so instead of staring at the ceiling!!

SEDUM:

Aha, that's, that was a nap! I've been busy you see-

ROOSE:

-He's in a pathetic spiral. And don't you dare move him from it! I like him this way.

Bong noises from Roose.

SEDUM:

I'm fine. Really, just taking it easy.

AL:

Good... So, what've ya been up to today?

SEDUM:
Job hunting... Job tracking... Job...
contemplating...

AL:
Well, your place is meticulously
clean.

SEDUM:
It's the only thing I have left!
(Laughs again) Ah... that's not as
funny said aloud, is it...

AL:
It's a real gut buster with the whole
ensemble. Here, I got takeout.

They walk a few steps into the kitchen.

SEDUM:
I'm not hungry... But please go ahead-

AL:
(Matter of fact)
Nope, don't get funky with it. You're
out of work, but you still deserve to
eat.

SEDUM:
(A little defensive)
That... isn't... uh...

NARRATOR:
Al glared at him, her hair limp
around her slicing cheekbones. Both
sets of his eyes flicked away... for
one pair to come back, sentinel-like.

ROOSE:
(From the other
room)
Pathetic. Spiral.

SEDUM:
(Sighs, muttering
snippyness)
I am not-

AL:
Got what you like an' all, so don't
waste it...

She sits at the table with a squeak of the chair.

SEDUM:
 (An acquiescing
 grumble)
 ... Very well. Just a little...

He sits as well. Fergum makes their way over as the two start to open the styrofoam.

SEDUM: (cont'd)
 It's surprising you got away this early.

AL:
 It's Saturday. Short days when we have 'em.

Fergum is sniffing at their elbows.

FERGUM:
 Roots... Rice... (Whines) Sauce...

SEDUM:
 (Swallowing a bit of
 food)
 How're you sleeping?

AL:
 Get on, Fergum.

FERGUM:
 None desire talk so small anyway...

They trot off.

AL:
 Good. To the sleeping. Why?

SEDUM:
 ... I know what it's like, being stuck with him. It wears on you.

AL:
 (Dismissive)
 I'm handling it.

SEDUM:
 That's true, but... you shouldn't have to.

AL:
 (Changing the
 subject)
 You still good for Perdition
 tomorrow?

SEDUM:
 I wouldn't miss it for the world.
 Couldn't, actually. Someone has to
 keep an eye on things.

AL:
 Yeah, it's not the season unless
 there's the reason... of watching
 Cryptids completely lose their shit
 in the woods.

SEDUM:
 The rules remain... For the most part.

AL:
 I got the right EMTs on speed dial,
 don't worry.

SEDUM:
 You're a true community leader and I
 am entirely too proud of you.

A buzzing comes in, from Al's pocket.

AL:
 Oh, let's see who's texting-
 (Quieter) Voicemail. From... (Louder)
 Do you mind if I... ?

SEDUM:
 Not at all, it could be an emergency.

AL:
 Mmm...

She pushes a button, and the message starts playing.

BECKER VO:
 Were you being subtle? Or is this you
 making a statement?
 Let me start over- classified
 information. ...what happens when it's
 in the hands of civilians, Al? It
 becomes... declassified. Surprising, I
 know! And, to add a little extra
 SPICE, it has a habit of spreading.
 (MORE)

BECKER VO: (cont'd)

I thought it was odd your mic cut out on the recording, but then- then Liwroc Wilcore, the doppleganger... has been talking about a tiny, fiery, unknown Aberration, instead of a gas leak! HAH! What a coincidence!(Getting his breathing right)
You are staying RIGHT at my side until you prove yourself worthy of independence. And just so you're aware, you're leaving only 2 subordinate members of Ground Crew. If you keep pushing my hand... We'll need competent reinforcements from Raleigh. I will see you... on Monday.

It ends. A moment as it sinks in.

NARRATOR:

She twisted the same mush of carrot over and over in her mouth. Her pulse throbbed in her chest.

The echoing ripping swell returns. It's building as Al's heartbeat grows loud.

NARRATOR AND AL:

Eyes down, eyes down, keep them down- Don't cause a scene- Don't let her in-

SEDUM:

... Is everything alright?

AL:

(Snapping up. Her smile is broader.)
Yep. Just a problem for Monday Al!

ROOSE:

(Holding in a toke from the other room)
Mama likes...

SCENE 8: INT. SAM'S ROOM, NIGHT

The soft patter of rain, but dampened.

MIA:

(Muffled)
You let them take her, Al-

Sam is breathing softly, asleep. He shifts in his bed, a small grunt.

BECKER:

(Muffled)

I told you, I was going to make you hurt...

SEDUM:

(Muffled)

Yes, rearrange me, make me ART, Brick!

A peel of thunder, Mia's cry of agony and rage. Sam's breathing is labored, twitching in the grip of the nightmare-

AL:

(Muffled)

Mia, just stop! Stop, please-

Sam is almost hyperventilating as the crossbow fires- and Mia is killed all over again- Cut short by his gasping awake. The room comes into full scape.

SAM:

(Panting, trying to catch reality pressing around him)

Hah... Hah... (A deep sigh, distraught)
Why won't you stop...

A knock-knock on the open door to Sam's room.

SAM: (cont'd)

Uh-

LEAH:

Everything ok? I heard- Did'ya fall asleep in your work clothes again?

NARRATOR:

Leah tilted her head, half out of concern, half out of a form of pitying affection. Sam shook his hair from his eyes- She was right. Plain black slacks and button-up crinkled up into bunches around him. He remembered the notebook open next to his chest and casually flipped it closed.

LEAH:

(A bit tongue-in-cheek but relatively tempered)

Wouldn't want your boss at the gas station to catch ya fussin' up their new dress code.

SAM:

(Rushing through)

It's the weekend! I have time to press it out- It doesn't matter- Hi! How was work?- When did you get in??

LEAH:

Just a coupla minutes ago. Got a new shipment in for the sophomore class, they'll be happy for spring. That sounded like a bit of a nightmare, you readin' scary stories?

NARRATOR:

She nodded at the notebook half tucked under his back.

SAM:

This isn't- no... well, I mean it might as well be, it's... middle school diary. Horror show.

LEAH:

Oh, you're a brave one. Teach me your ways.

SAM:

Stick to your attitude, you let things go.

LEAH:

Mm, I just stop carin'. There's a difference.

She walks off.

SAM:

(Raising his voice after her)

That feels threatening!

LEAH:

(Calling back)

Sweets, you have nothin' to worry about, especially by now!

SAM:

Wow! Even worse! (He gets up from the bed and crosses to the door- Calling again) Going to bed, g'night! Love you!

LEAH:

(Calling back)

Sleep tight! Love you, too.

He closes the door and trots back to the bed. Then... rustling of the notebook.

NARRATOR:

The pages in his hands told stories beyond their words. Water spots, traces of dirt in the creases, a single, dog eared lined passages. The scrawl inside changed inks frequently. There were shoddily drawn references and even a lost receipt, misplaced and unreimbursed. Sam flipped back to where his bookmark had managed to land before he'd drifted off.

SAM:

Alright... where were we... "December 18th, field log of Enfys O'Cuinn." Wait, when was this one again... (Flips through to a page) Five years ago. Ok. (Flips back, whispering the words as he reads) "Ice freezes the Smocked Mourners in the springs." (Writing in a separate sheet) Smocked... Mourners... Hm. "1, Do they feel pain? 2, Possible natural cycle? Amphibian hibernation... Attempt samples. Research excursion needed..." AH, again: "Request Franklin's presence" What is with this Franklin...? (Yawns, moving on) "December 19th, field log," ...

SCENE 9: INT. AL'S TRAILER, NIGHT

The door to Al's trailer opens with a creak, shuts with a rattle. She shuffles in, depositing her keys, wallet, extraneous items on the table.

AL:
 (Through her
 cigarette)
 Did I remember to make the bed... I
 would love a made bed... (Sighs)

She sloughs off her jacket, landing in a heap.

NARRATOR:
 Darkness in the little trailer. It's
 insulation didn't stand strong
 against the chill. A streetlamp
 buzzed down the trailer park's lane,
 the orange casting jagged rips in the
 dark. The festive window clings from
 her mother grinned out at the night.
 Al ground out the end of a cigarette
 in the dining room ashtray.

Working on her shoes...

AL:
 You have a day off tomorrow. You can...
 find a way. You'll think of a way to
 get through this, right? That's
 right, I'll think of a way. He won't
 smother me...

Her heartbeat is thumping again. She kicks off one of her
 boots.

AL: (cont'd)
 (starting to grind
 her teeth)
 I'll outlast him. I'll take whatever
 he's got and spit it back in his eye-
 Give me your worst, you shit- (Starts
 coughing, hard)

Suddenly, little drips, tiny, on the floor. The rips start
 again.

AL: (cont'd)
 Wh- augh, fuck, again?

NARRATOR:
 Blood dripped from her nose, spilling
 over the toe of a discarded shoe.

AL:
 Ugh, God, I'm falling apart-

She hurries to the sink, the blood pings onto the metal in a steady stream. There is an enormous TEAR from the other room, like slicing through flesh. Al stops. Ragged breath. She's here.

AL: (cont'd)
 (quiet, tired)
 ... Great timing.

MIA:
 (Distant)
 "Taileypo... taileypo..."

Al inhales, steady. She takes a tissue from a box, pressing it to her nose. She takes a few steps, crossing into the bedroom.

MIA: (cont'd)
 "Where is my tailypo..."

NARRATOR:
 Languid shadow lounged on the heaped duvet in her bed's nook. They dropped their head back, the bolt through their throat displayed like a frill of feathers. Al held a reddening tissue to her twisted nose.

AL:
 Back again, I see.

NARRATOR:
 The spectre smiled through stained teeth. Dark arterial ichor spilled onto the floor from her tongue. *Mia* dominated the bed.

Droplets of blood splatter on the floor.

MIA:
 Remember that ghost story? Little critter couldn't wait to get that tail back... What was stolen. Real justice porn.

AL:
 Yep, super spooky for 7 year olds and titillating for the rest of us.

MIA:
 (Pouting slightly)
 Don't be sarcastic... You're leaking.

AL:

Mhm, and I thought you'd be spent by now; This is the fourth time this week.

MIA:

Aren't you tired of that heart thumping so hard in there? That pressure building in your veins- how can I resist with you so fit to burst?

AL:

No, it's not tiring at all, actually. Reminds me I'm alive.- (A moment) Eh... sorry.

MIA:

Hm? Oh... no, it's fine. I might as well be. Apart from the numbness.

AL:

Guess that's a silver lining.

MIA:

I've been thinking on that story. Why wouldn't he just board up the hole? In his cabin, where the monster came through.

AL:

Cause he's an idiot.

Al sits down on the bed.

MIA:

Shallow as a puddle. As usual...

Al falls back on the bed with a sigh.

AL:

You have impossible standards. (*Small choke*) Ugh, uck, no, we're not laying down.

A rustle as Al lifts up.

MIA:

Well ghost stories are my expertise.

NARRATOR:

Mia twanged the bolt. A pip of ghostly blood spat onto Al's cheek.

Al reacts.

NARRATOR: (cont'd)
It would take a few minutes for it to
dissipate, as it always did, but the
sweet fetid smell did nothing to
endear the sensation.

AL:
Thought of a new hobby yet?

MIA:
(Hint of a smile)
Hobby? A hobby... (Little laugh) I
guess I've never described how much
energy haunting takes up... It's a lot.

AL:
No, you've said.

MIA:
(Snickers)
Believe me, when you're in my
position, it's a passion. Nothing
else comes close.

AL:
(Breathes out a
laugh)
All got different itches to scratch..

MIA:
Is it my turn to rub it in?

Al fluffs up the duvet.

AL:
Of course. If there's one thing we
have it's equity.

Mia laughs, hard and sharp.

AL: (cont'd)
(sniffing, testing
her nose)
Think the leaks stopped..

MIA:
It's what you get for smoking, you
know. But you do look good in red.

AL:
Ha, ha. So, gonna let me sleep
tonight? I've had a helluva day..

MIA:
Stingy- I just got here!

AL:
I'm gonna pass out anyway. I'm sorry.

MIA:
(Sighs)
... We've lost our spark.

AL:
It's not you, it's me..

MIA:
That job is taking too much of you
away. I see you so much more now, but
you're not even there, are you... How
is that fair, Al, tell me.

AL:
You're welcome to make more friends..

MIA:
Here we are, wasting all our precious
time- You won't live forever! So what
happened to savoring it? What
happened to the fire?

AL:
I'll make up to you... Mia... I'll... make
it up..

A moment as Al slips away. There's quiet, the plips of blood
off the side of the bed.

MIA:
(A slight chuckle
and a sigh)
Empty. Empty empty promises... "...
Taileypo... Taileypo... Give me back my
taileypo..."

Her voice dissolves out in a hiss.

END

CREDITS

Faraday Roke as Al

Kiarra Osakue as The Narrator

Jenna Melissa Wilcox as Liwroc

Jonathan Hallowell as William

Z Reklaw as Samson

John Peacock as Crux

Cory Moosman as Becker

Brendan Kane as Kevin

Avi Mercury as Stranger

Samantha Weiler as Valen

Gretchen Ho as Glenda

Joseph Rothorn as J

Joseph Rothorn as Fergum

Marcus Cannello as Sedum

Jacque Reiman as Roose

M. Kate McCulloch as Leah

Erin M. Banta as Mia

Script Editor, Jacque Reiman.

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Written, Directed, and Edited by Faraday Roke.

Harbor is a production of Tartarus Jenny Studios.

Thanks so much for listening to the show. Wanna help us out? Write a review! We also have some spiffy merch at our website, harborpodcast.com, as well as a donation link. And of course, please tell your friends, family, good-natured weirdos, and local cryptids about us- each new ear is a great gift. Stay kind!