

**HARBOR**  
**Episode 4 - "Moth to the Flame"**  
Written by M. Roke

**TITLE CARD****SCENE 1 - INT. SEDUM'S OFFICE -EARLY EVENING**

The door closes.

**SEDUM:**

I'm sorry about that, Samson. Is peppermint tea suitable?

**SAM:**

That sounds good, thank you.

**SEDUM:**

It seems to help settle the stomach after seeing the Field.

**NARRATOR:**

Sam watched as Sedum flipped on the electric kettle, then glanced over his shoulder and smiled. Sam half-heartedly returned the gesture before averting his eyes from his host's knife-like beak.

**SAM:**

Thank you.

Sedum sits.

**SEDUM:**

Continuing our conversation. About Al... You know her differently than I do, of course, but here, she's... deliberate in her personal organization? The line that she's refused to cross until today was you and your mother. She didn't want these worlds to mingle. For what it's worth, it was rather naive. Though understandable.

**SAM:**

So it was always her call to let us... wallow in ignorance? It wasn't some big conspiracy?

**SEDUM:**

I think, in her opinion, you needed to chase success outside of our "eccentricities". Which you did.

**SAM:**

That's a nice way to say she couldn't trust me.

**SEDUM:**

She's carried the immense weight of her work for a long time, Samson. I doubt she was thinking entirely of your perception when she made those choices. It took strength for her to be vulnerable with you. She rarely shows that depth of faith, even if it is... delayed.

**SAM:**

*(Tired, quiet)*

It hurts. It makes me feel like I was the only one investing...  
*(Jolting himself)* I don't know why I'm dumping all of this on you- I'm sorry. I shouldn't be putting her reputation at risk like this, with you working together...

**SEDUM:**

*(Almost snorts)*

We're not that type of office. I have known Al a very long time- you remember? You're not revealing secrets.

**SAM:**

Then do you know why she chose to tell me this now?

**SEDUM:**

... Because I told her to. It hasn't been easy for her-

**SAM:**

*(Sighing chuckle)*

She didn't even do this because she wanted to...

**SEDUM:**

Did she talk about wanting to keep you safe?

Sam is silent, angry.

*(Cont.)*

She made decisions, misguided ones maybe. She still cares, deeply. And she wasn't exactly *wrong* for choosing this route. The DoCA isn't safety, in career or knowledge. ... Are you familiar with William Kappel?

**SAM:**

Yeah, of course. Everyone is.

**SEDUM:**

He works here, in the same unit as Al. He's presently in the hospital recovering from a broken leg. Well, *snapped* would be a better descriptor, it resulted from an assignment.

**SAM:**

*(A little taken aback)*  
... That's... bad.

**SEDUM:**

And at the beginning of May, another member of Al's team disappeared entirely. We don't know what happened to them. Both instances have been incredibly trying. After yesterday, Al is the only functioning member of her team left, aside from her Director.

The kettle whistles, Sedum gets up and shuts it off.

**SAM:**

Alright... It's dangerous, it's scary, I get it. I understood that up at the murder meadow...

He's pouring the water into Sam's mug.

**SEDUM:**

But do you fully comprehend *why* Al has been withholding information? She made that choice- to bear it so you wouldn't have to, so you wouldn't be caught in the crossfire. It's more complex than her wanting to feel superior.

**SAM:**

Yeah, she's selfless and demeaning me so I'm safe- but why do you care about me knowing?

**SEDUM:**

*(A moment)*

Well. To gauge your honest interest in joining us. As part of Ground Crew, her team.

**NARRATOR:**

Sam swallowed down a bubble of fear in his throat as Sedum crossed close and placed the steaming mug on the desk in front of him. He caught sight of the large hand as it slipped from around the cup- The ring and middle fingers were oddly devoid of claws... because there was no nail bed, the tops of the fingers had been sheared off. He glanced back up at his host, who smiled and retreated back behind the desk.

Sedum sets the mug down on the desk.

**SEDUM:**

Let it steep.

He seats himself again.

**SAM:**

So you, excuse me, but you decided to *lead* with the bit about snapped legs?

**SEDUM:**

When possible, transparency is necessary.

**SAM:**

This is a *lot*.

**SEDUM:**

You wouldn't be offered the position until after we test you, if you pass. You may decline before, during or after, though.

**SAM:**

What'll happen if I say no? Will you erase my memories... ?

**SEDUM:**

*(Laughs)*

No. It's all open "secrets", for the most part. There's little we can truly keep confidential. Al said that you have an... interesting relationship with your past experiences? This can be another memory you neglect to remember, if you like.

**SAM:**

... Why Harbor? I've been around. There's not many places like this.

**SEDUM:**

This is a sweeping generalization, but Cryptids- we prize individualism. We don't share a cohesive species, even the term Cryptid is a misnomer but better than alternatives at present, nor do we share *culture*, but we do have something- many of us are the only ones, left or from the beginning. In Harbor, we have miles of protected forests and Humans who generally don't harass us... They tend to respect what they don't understand, here. I suppose word travels and the rest is history.

Sam takes a sip.

**SAM:**

Are you the only... *(Clears his throat)* Beak'd person?

**SEDUM:**

Not where I'm from. But here, yes. That I've seen.

**SAM:**

*(Disarmingly curious)*

Are you happy?

**SEDUM:**

*(Smiling)*

I'm not lonely, if that's your concern.

**SAM:**

Good. Mr. N- Sedum? I'm a raging ball of anxiety and stress. I just want something stable, where I can try to be normal... I don't know how I'd benefit this Department of... Cryptids, being who I am.

**SEDUM:**

It may not look it to you, but Samson, this *is* normal. This is our everyday. It's Al's 9-5, give or take; She has a desk, a retirement plan, sick leave and... adequate insurance.

**SAM:**

Wow... Kind of set.

**SEDUM:**

We want to take care of our people, however we can within this system. *(Pause)* We should end our conversation here for the evening. Let you digest.

**SAM:**

Wait.

**SEDUM:**

Is there something else?

**SAM:**

I came here to close the door on this part of my life. *(Deep breath, steeling himself)* I walked down a mountain. I'm pretty sure I'm still hungover.

**SEDUM:**

You... are?-

**SAM:**

-I don't want to go home and pretend like today didn't happen. I don't mean to impose, but, can I sleep here tonight?

**SEDUM:**

Ah... pardon?

**SCENE 2 - EXT. DOCA - EVENING**

Al is locking up her shed, the crickets boisterous, but fading.

**NARRATOR:**

Al clenched a half burned cigarette in her teeth, curling smoke mingling with her hair as she locked up her shed, the light reduced to distant street lamps and the moon above.

**AL:**

*(Mumbling)*

I can't believe I let it get this bad... can't even let my family into my life... *(Takes a deep drag)* Double down and make it a thing, full-time trigger-happy redneck, move from the trailer into a bunker... Wanna get to know me?! Like hell you will! Fuck. And had to go and waste my time on those files... Stupid for even trying...

A song is being hummed, soft and distant.

*(Cont., Grumbling)*

... Who's the singing ass-face. *(Curious)* Well... that's a big 'un.

**NARRATOR:**

A mass purred amongst the trees behind her, obscured in the leaves. A soft, pale light caught the underside of the foliage, as diffused as clouded moonlight.

**AL:**

Hell, about as big as a lifted truck, maybe bigger... *Who* are you... *(Louder, removing the cigarette)* Hey.

The singing stops.

**NARRATOR:**

White refraction flashed out from the depths. Ash dropped into the moist grass at Al's feet.

**AL:**



Ya lost? Can I help you?

She moves forward.

**NARRATOR:**

The eyes blinked, retreating deeper into the trees.

**AL:**

It's alright, I won't hurt you. You new 'round here?

**J:**

Not at all... Simply taking a tour out of my usual haunts, fierce daughter... You'll forgive my trepidation.

**AL:**

*(Caught off guard)*

Uh... right, don't let me stop you... come back around if you wanna get introduced.

**J:**

I'll consider your invitation, dear one.

J begins to hum again, and grows more and more distant as he moves away. The noises slowly return.

**AL:**

*(Waits a moment)*

Goddammit, why can't folks have some chill in this town...

**SCENE 3 - INT. SEDUM'S APARTMENT- EVENING**

A sheet flutters over Sedum's couch.

**SEDUM:**

And, a pillow. I apologize, Samson, I don't have many visitors up here. But the spare couch is fairly comfortable. Hopefully it will be adequate?

**SAM:**

Thank you. You know, this was Al's room.

**SEDUM:**

It remembered it's use for sleeping!- a study no more.

**SAM:**

Heh, yeah... It's cool to see how you converted the second floor into an apartment. It's really nice. I'm glad... I'm glad you're taking care of the old place. It's poetic.

**SEDUM:**

*(Rather proud)*

Well, it's how it ended up. But high praise, indeed, thank you-  
Oh, wait a moment, I'll be back!

**SAM:**

Ok.

The door creaks closed. Sam sits down and dials his phone.

**LEAH:**

Sam?

**SAM:**

Hey mom! I'm sorry I'm not home-

**LEAH:**

It's alright, *(Laughs, releasing her nerves)* are you ok? I didn't see you this morning, and you were gone, and have been gone-

**SAM:**

I'm fine, everything's ok. Just staying over at a friend's tonight. Thought I could use some fresh air.

**LEAH:**

But you're safe? Which friend?

**SAM:**

I am. Uh... well, a friend of Al's.

**LEAH:**

*(Dryly)*

Al has friends...?

**SAM:**

Don't worry, I think they... They're good. I'll see you tomorrow.  
Is that ok?

**LEAH:**

... Ok, honey. Keep me posted? Oh, I'll try to take it easy on  
you. *(Laughs nervously)* I'm not used to you being so  
independent, being home...

**SAM:**

*(Chuckles)*

I know, I'm making some... leaps. I love you. See you tomorrow.  
Good night.

**LEAH:**

I love you, too. Night, sweets.

He ends the call. Sedum is walking back down the hall- when  
suddenly he is intercepted by a multitude of dog nails clicking  
and clattering.

**FERGUM:**

*(Muffled)*

Who is the Human inside? What did you procure for them?

**SEDUM:**

*(Muffled, but coming closer)*

No, Fergum, you are not to disturb him, he's a guest-

**FERGUM:**

We wanna knooow-

There is a tremendous scratching on the door.

**SEDUM:**

Back, get *back*, Fergum.

The door opens again, Sedum wiggles through.

*(Cont., unmuffled)*

Get your noses out of the door, or they *will* get pinched.

**FERGUM:**

*(Sniffing viciously)*

Young... man... *sweaty*...

Sedum closes the door forcefully.

**SEDUM:**

You must be hungry!

**SAM:**

*(Terrified)*

UH... Ah, yeah?

**SEDUM:**

Don't worry about Fergum. They're just curious- Now, I don't have much, considering our differing digestion capabilities, but I do happen to havvvve...!

He hands Sam a plate.

**SAM:**

Mashed potatoes?

**SEDUM:**

*(Proud of his consideration)*

Potatoes provide every essential nutrient for human function.

It's the perfect food for you. And strikingly, they are genetically similar to you as well. Though, that can be said about bananas, too... Most things, I suppose, now that I think...

**SAM:**

It looks delicious!- With the little chives on top... Thank you.

**SEDUM:**

Ah of course... Yes, I'll retire, let you enjoy your... Moving on!  
Emotional journeys! Closing doors, you said.

He grabs ahold of the doorknob and remembers.

*(Cont.)*

Oh, that's right, please *lock* the door, Samson. For your  
safekeeping. Sleep well!

**FERGUM:**

*(MUFFLED, under Sedum's lines)*

Let us in!

**SAM:**

Good night.

The door closes.

**SEDUM:**

*(Muffled)* Come along..

There is a lot of whining from Fergum... It's quiet.

**SAM:**

*(Weakly)*

God...

He turns the lock. Sam exhales, a laughs slightly. Frantic  
sniffing erupts at the door.

**SAM:**

Ah!

**FERGUM:**

*(Muffled, hissing)* You smell like meat.

**SEDUM:**

*(Distant)*

Fergum!

**SCENE 4: INT. DoCA - MORNING**

Coffee sputters in the machine and groans into brewing. Al sniffs and coughs, tired and worn. Birds chirp outside the windows. A door to the outside clatters open and shut, as Al opens a cupboard, looking for a mug. Fergum approaches.

**AL:**

Someone took my mug... Roose... *(Grunts)* Fergum, what're you doing in the Station? You're supposed to stay upstairs.

They lay down and get comfortable on the tile.

**FERGUM:**

It is uninspired up there.

**AL:**

I'm not gonna babysit you.

**FERGUM:**

We do not need *sitting!* You show signs of exhaustion, Al.

**AL:**

Perceptive for an entity with no eyes.

**FERGUM:**

That *you* can see. Is your free-roaming lifestyle difficult on your mortal cocoon?

**AL:**

Mhm. *(Yawning)* Folks are gonna start showing up soon, you sure ya'll wanna be in the kitchen when they come in?

**FERGUM:**

We didn't maim *them*. We don't understand why resentment is so heavy...

Coffee spits out and finishes with a hiss.

**AL:**

People are empathetic and loyal, I guess. Fuckin' pain in the  
ass, right?

She pours herself a cup.

**FERGUM:**

Fallacious! Ridiculous! That human's wound will heal.  
Industrious screws and metal rods to stabilize leaking marrow  
and flesh-

**AL:**

It's 8:30, stop talking about leaking- move, you're blocking the  
fridge.

One of Fergum moves, Al opens the fridge and grabs the cream.

**FERGUM:**

*(Sighs, belabored)*

It doesn't matter how many legs we have at our disposal, we are  
chained to pacing... *(Whines, getting excited)* Run with us again,  
Al. Our link to the mortal world grows restless. Come along with  
us, the heads hold confidence in you.

She stirs in the cream, letting the icy air of the fridge spill  
out.

**AL:**

What do you mean by link, Fergum.

Al shuts the fridge and goes on the hunt for sugar.

**FERGUM:**

*(Groans)*

Bodies! Our *bodies*.

**AL:**

There ya go. Make peace with having bone buckets sometime in the next century.

**FERGUM:**

*(Glowering)*

That is to succumb...

**AL:**

Ya gotta call it sometime.

**FERGUM:**

We didn't *choose* to be in these meat cases. And we certainly didn't choose to be stuck in this Human outpost.

**AL:**

*(Growing tired)*

That again? Look, unless you got an escape plan, I don't know how to help you.

**FERGUM:**

*(Snickers)*

As though *they* would grant you party. They may kneel to your ilk, they still condescend you behind your backs.

**AL:**

Oh, my favorite vague riddles have made a comeback...

**FERGUM:**

*(Slyly)*

You still don't comprehend what we speak of. Such a shame, when we supplied you with wild excursions and drink, you were far more driven. You'd have figured it out by now. Maybe you should pick up a bottle again- give yourself over to the chaos of fear-

Al slams down the sugar shaker.

**AL:**

Fergum? It's been years since- You know what, you complain and *bitch* how no one will listen, no one can help, then literally *bite* the hands that offer. I want to help you- you know, I could



use another project, and I would if you could let go of your  
goddamn condescending-

**FERGUM:**

*(Slightly more sincere)*

It is more merciful than to let others go forward thinking they  
can do anything.

**AL:**

You *don't* know. You're sabotaging any chance you have! Take  
people at their word. Anyone!

A door to the outside opens and closes, quietly.

*(Cont.)*

We were god-awful... ugh, can I even use the word friends...? I  
still gave a tiny shit about you- even now. It's *agonizing-* to,  
to see you bein' such a gang of clowns- Apologize! Own up to  
your *shit!* I'll start, look- I'm sorry for threatening you, I'm  
sorry for ignoring you. I'm sorry I used you, after everything  
y'all did to... help me in your very misguided ways- I took  
advantage of that. And I regret it. *(To herself)* I have to  
apologize for so much. I'm so *stuck* in being, being *better*,  
being the martyr- Fuck. Why did I think I was entitled to make  
decisions for everyone... Fuck, I fucked up!

**FERGUM:**

... We feel as though this is not about us anymore... Return to the  
grovelling.

Sam coughs softly.

**AL:**

*(Very surprised)*

Sam?

**SAM:**

Mornin'.

**FERGUM:**

*(Suddenly alert)*  
The sweaty one..

**AL:**

How long have you.. What are you doing here?

Fergum rushes up to Sam, sniffing viciously.

**SAM:**

Uh... hey, Fergum, right?

**FERGUM:**

You no longer stink of viscera.

**SAM:**

I must've slept it off. Hey, do you like scratches?

Fergum tenses up and eeks out half a growl, before Sam dives in for deep, behind-the-ear scratches.

**AL:**

Careful-

**SAM:**

*(Softly)*

I always thought life would be far nicer if we gave more head scratches. Nice to meet you, Fergum.

**FERGUM:**

Hmmm, hnnngh... acceptable..

Sam continues petting Fergum, Fergum reluctantly enjoying themselves.

**SAM:**

I came here to wrap up some loose ends, Al. That and Sedum let me sleep over. Heh... remember how the vents carry noise?

**AL:**

So you heard-

**SAM:**

Yeah, well I was standing here for that part.

Sam stops scratching Fergum, and stands up again, at which Fergum whines.

**AL:**

I didn't want to apologise like that. Cause I know, I need to-  
It needs to be sincere and not... full of profanity.

**FERGUM:**

More!! The "scritchess"...

Fergum rakes their paws across Sam's jeans.

**SAM:**

*(Chuckling)*

Ok, ok, which one of you is next, hmm, here you go... *(He bends down again and pets more, getting lost in his sincerity now)* Al, I should've seen what you were doing. I should've listened- You were... were sincere, you were investing in me, you were trusting me with this- and I was selfish, I was only thinking of myself, my... mad dash for "normal". I'm so sorry, I should have been there for you, as your brother. As your friend. *(Chuckles ruefully)* Your best friend needs to be better than that, especially seeing what... neat ones you have around here. I might get usurped, if I don't step up.

**AL:**

Sam- no, it was me, for years, I refused to see you grow up- I'm sorry-

**NARRATOR:**

She collapsed on her knees in front of him, one of Fergum's bodies pinning their ears back at the sudden proximity.

**AL:**

I'm sick with how I treated you. I demeaned you. And I'm so sorry. You don't deserve that.

**FERGUM:**

Al is too close, now. No, it's ruined. Too much!

**SAM:**

*(Mingling sincerity and emotional)*

Hey, I accept your apology. Please, accept mine? Don't let me get away with being an egotistical asshole cause I'm your little brother.

**AL:**

*(Swallowing, laughing a little)*

You're not an asshole. Come here. *(Muffled into his shirt)* I love you so much.

They embrace, over Fergum, who is DISTINCTLY uncomfortable.

**FERGUM:**

Let us out, we take no part in your familial embrace-

**AL:**

*(Teasing)*

You're responsible too, Fergum.

**FERGUM:**

No, no no no no, we are *not*!!

Fergum scrabbles up and away, breaking them apart.

*(Cont.)*

AUGH, disgusting!

They skitter out the door. A moment. They speak simultaneously.

**AL:**

I really am sorry.

**SAM:**

I'm so sorry, Al.

**AL:**

*(Laughs)*

We should stop.

**SAM:**

*(Sniffing)* Spiraling insanity of apologies... I love you.

**AL:**

You, too. ... Let me grab you some coffee-

Someone is entering through the main door, rooms away.

*(Cont.)*

Eeugh, people. Let's share my cup. Come on, out the side door.

**SCENE 5 - AL'S OFFICE, DOCA - MORNING**

Al's office door closes.

**AL:**

Take the chair.

**SAM:**

You'll be on the floor.

**AL:**

I want to.

**SAM:**

Ehhh, fine...

Sam sits in the chair.

*(Cont.)*

This is cozy. From potting shed to personal office. Things change... Hey at least you have a/c in here.

**AL:**

Barely manageable with that... but I begged for this place. With reception there, I couldn't think in the living room..  
*(Correcting)* the main office. It's still an adjustment, it's been less than a year.

**SAM:**

So... William? Is out now, recovering?

**AL:**

Yeah... No thanks to me... I really need to get him some... "get well" thing. Maybe cat food, he always needs more... Sedum told you about all that?

**SAM:**

Yeah. It's awful.

**AL:**

*(Chuckles)*

You surprise me.

**SAM:**

Why?

**AL:**

You say you're all manners manners, suit an' tie- And then you go and snuggle with the Cryptid that fucked William up.

**SAM:**

*WHAT? WHO?- Fergum??*

**AL:**

Oh, so he didn't tell you everything-

**SAM:**

Why'd you let me do that?! Fergum was the one who..

**AL:**

*(Laughs)*

You're crazy nadsy when you don't overthink! It's useful! I'm encouraging you!

**SAM:**

Oh my God... No *(Inhales, deep)* no, I'm ok. Fergum... liked me? They wouldn't... *snap* my leg.

**AL:**

Probably.

**SAM:**

These folks... Sedum and the tall... "armed" ... lady...?

**AL:**

*(Slightly sour)*

Yeah. Roose. Social worker. And Research Director on occasion.

**SAM:**

They don't know me. Why would they want me to be a part of this?

**AL:**

Well they know me? They know how close we are... they trust me. By extension, they trust you. Especially with the history degree, the debate and public speaking stuff- They're banking on you being a communicative wunderkind, I guess.

**SAM:**

But people are disappearing and, and getting ripped up. What does talking do?

**AL:**

*(A moment)*

Harbor's not doing fantastic, Sam. Everyone's twitchy... Nostalgia's kind of keeping us afloat, but then there's... this active crumbling that's happening. I don't like the thought of you with all this but... What you did with Fergum back there, for instance. *(Relaxing)* You're kind and gentle. We could use more of that. I can see the reasoning.

**SAM:**

*(Sighs, muttering)*

I'd kill for an above minimum wage- it *isn't* minimum, right?

**AL:**

No, but it's not the best, either, for the work. But by Harbor standards..

**SAM:**

What is it?

**AL:**

Roundabouts \$15 per hour, but salaried, full-time. It's the flat rate for everyone here, we're all the same, only difference is working more. I get weekends most of the time, the Directors don't, they're always here... We're routinely underfunded, too. Sometimes we take cuts, when it gets real bad... Government work.

**SAM:**

Al, I thought I'd be... organizing antiquated manuscripts and dusting pots or some shit.

**AL:**

You still can.

**SAM:**

No I can't. Not after all of this... I was obsessed with this when I was a kid. And here I am, I can finally *satisfy* that obsession! How am I supposed say no?

**AL:**

You could think of self-preservation.

**SAM:**

*(Snorts)*

Say... that I *am* interested..

**AL:**

It'd mean you'd have to stay. In Harbor.



**SAM:**

I know.

**AL:**

And you're good with that?

**SAM:**

... What're the tests?

**AL:**

*(Sighs, though conflictingly happy)*

Alright... So yeah... It's three individual interviews with the Directors. Psychological. Physical. Personal, er, uh, I guess "management", but that doesn't start with a P and I was... trying something there... Oh, and a group interview with all three. 3 outta 4 of the tests are talking, so, you'll do good.

**SAM:**

Ohhhh... *(Sighs, and laughs)* But I just know I'm gonna end up... pissin' myself at some point.

**AL:**

It'd fit with the "P" theme.

**SAM:**

*(Laughing a little)*

You're gross.

**AL:**

... You're talking about peeing yourself, and you call me gross?

Sam giggles.

**SCENE 6 - INT. DOCA - MORNING**

Valentina makes her way through to the kitchen.

**VALENTINA:**

Crux, are you even routing calls my way any more? It's radio silence down the hall.

**NARRATOR:**

Crux followed behind Valen, who carried a bakery box into the kitchen. The receptionist adjusted his surgical mask into a respectable presentation, or as best he could make it.

**CRUX:**

You're hardly *in* your office. I figured you'd prefer some quiet when you are.

**VALENTINA:**

Oh, you know that's a mistake.

**CRUX:**

Well, then, what's determined to be of worth? You should hear some of these people, calling in, going on about aliens and Satanic cults... Neither are our department, and most are bull.

**VALENTINA:**

Hey, that'd be nice too, that's what I'm sayin'. Do you really gotta read every person that calls in? Taking away the mystery? It's like googlin' a date.

**CRUX:**

*(Unimpressed)*

That is the full description of my job, Valen. I delve into the intentions of their emotions, assess their lies, their truths of their words-

**VALENTINA:**

Ehhhhh, just toss me something every once in awhile? A consolation prize for your favorite Director?

**CRUX:**

I'll be sure to pass along one nonsense call per day, just to satisfy your need for noise, how's that?

Crux goes back to his desk.

**VALENTINA:**

You're a doll with a heart of gold, my friend!

**CRUX:**

*(Distant)*

Stop, you're making me blush.

Crux flips on the radio in the next room, tinny music filling the background.

**SEDUM:**

Coffee?

**VALENTINA:**

Please. *(Teasing, as he pours)* Tell me, how exactly is it possible for me to see your *multiple* under-eye bags through your feathers?

**SEDUM:**

Wonders never cease. Here.

**VALENTINA:**

Mmm, thanks- So, busy night, eh? Gettin' any tail? Any... scales? I don't wanna assume taste-

**SEDUM:**

No, no, *vulgar*. Samson Greer slept on my couch last night. And with Fergum being who they are...

**VALENTINA:**

Eugh, yeah hope you're not gettin' anywhere NEAR any one of those tails-

**SEDUM:**

-Yes, again, vile-

**VALENTINA:**

That sure is bold of baby Greer, isn't it! The way Al went on, it was like he was this itty bitty teacup. Where is he, then, around? Ready to interview?

**SEDUM:**

*(Surprised)*

Are you? I was thinking next week.

**VALENTINA:**

I'm getting concerned about the summer storms- I can feel the Window-Lickers gearin' up and we gotta get those PSAs out. We need a new way of tellin' folks "Close the blinds and never look out the windows during a thunderstorm at night, please God, you will not like what you see" ... but snappier.

**SEDUM:**

Oh, I forgot. One more thing...

**VALENTINA:**

Don't tap out on me now, we're only in June!

**NARRATOR:**

Valen punched her fellow Director lightly on the elbow, causing Sedum to twitch, his wings scrunching together. She jerked back her hand.

**VALENTINA:**

Eh, sorry... Too rough.

**SEDUM:**

No, it's alright, sorry- It's early-

**VALENTINA:**

This summer's looking to take off, all I'm sayin. Gotta keep up the endurance.

**SEDUM:**

More assistance would be wonderful...

**VALENTINA:**

*(Barks out a laugh)*

Yeah. We can count on those State DoAA pricks tossing cash our way when hell freezes over.

Crux chuckles softly.

**CRUX:**

You two? You'll want to hear this.

**VALENTINA:**

What ya got, Crux-

He turns up the radio.

**RADIO HOST:**

... including a scaffold collapse, holding four contractors from Charlotte, suffering injuries. It seems Mayor Dickson's Eaton Gun Factory has been, without a doubt, marked *Haunted*, with several other incidents of violence striking the construction site overnight, including arson and property damage. Surviving trucks and uninjured contractors left in a parade down I 40, a *spooky* end to the industrialization... *(Chuckles)* Maybe we can start a Haunted Harbor tour, ending on that ugly slab-

Crux turns back down the radio.

**CRUX:**

This *will* be a good day.

**VALENTINA:**

Mmmm...

**SEDUM:**

*(Calling)*

Thank you, Crux. *(Lower)* What's "mmm"? A cog in the war-machine is gone- that's... well, that won't do wonders for Mayor Dickson's mood... But, it's a win.

**VALENTINA:**

It's... Christ, can't believe I'm saying this but that slab *could've* bumped up traffic round here.

**SEDUM:**

Valen. Correct me if I'm wrong, but you *wanted* the gun factory to succeed?

**VALENTINA:**

Didn't say that! I... *(Low)* doesn't it exhaust you? Watching this place decay in front of us? This isolation isn't doin' Harbor any favors. *(Sighs)* Look, I ain't defendin' that shit, but it was the first time in years something rattled this town, and people started waking up. It's like a mosquito pond up here..

**SEDUM:**

Blood-sucking?

**VALENTINA:**

*Stagnant.* The whole concept was... Jesus, dastardly, *horrible*, diggin' up bodies and making killin' machines... I was tryin' to find the bright spot in a shit-pile. Trying to find a bit of hope when my hands were tied was all.

**SEDUM:**

I... can see your *general* point.

**VALENTINA:**

Well. I'll be the asshole smilin' in the face of garbage, rather than feed Glenda Dickson's hankerin' to see us wither. Whatever that's worth. Anyway.

**SEDUM:**

I understand.

**VALENTINA:**

It's done now. Something came in the clutch, aging hippies or whatever. We're back to normal. Oh, eeeugh, don't you have that meetin' with our dear ol' Mayor this afternoon?

**SEDUM:**

Yes... *(Sighs)* Maybe I should take a sympathy gift. Make her a fruit basket... Humans like fruit baskets, don't they?

**VALENTINA:**

Humans *hate* fruit baskets. We just tell ourselves we like 'em. It's a bold-faced lie that helps us sleep at night.

**SEDUM:**

Ah. I learn more every day.

**SCENE 7 - INT. DOCA - MORNING**

The door to the outside opens and shuts.

**AL:**

*(Distant)*

You'll do great, brother.

Al and Sam approach.

**SEDUM:**

*(Mutters)*

Ah, Valen, make a good impression, yes?-

**VALENTINA:**

In a minute- Al! Pastry Day! Got your maple donut.

**AL:**

Have I told you how incredible you are lately, Boss?

**SAM:**

Good morning, ma'am. Sir.

**SEDUM:**

Good morning! Did you sleep well, Samson? I would have offered breakfast but you'd gone.

**SAM:**

Oh thank you, I just had to take care of something.

**VALENTINA:**

*(Cutting in)*

Perfectly fine, Sam, let me grab you a danish at the very least, better than a breakfast of hashbrowns!

**SEDUM:**

*(Slightly defensive)*

Potato based nutrition is the superior way to start the day for Humans.

**SAM:**

Thank you, Sedum, I'll take you up on that next time. And thank you, ma'am, this looks great.

**VALENTINA:**

Ground Crew Director Ivers Hollow. Pleasure.

**SAM:**

Pleased to meet you, Director Ivers Hollow.

**AL:**

*(Dryly)*

Come on, Valen.

**VALENTINA:**

Yeah, yeah, just call me Valen, Sam. Rest is formalities and only the Hollow part gets used around here... My human name doesn't garner much recognition. Nice, firm handshake! We'll get on just fine, no doubt.

**SAM:**

I certainly hope so. Well, then, this is the perfect opportunity, uh- I would like to apply for the open position, in your team. *(Nervous)* I'd... I'd like to have opportunity to do something, I think. Give back to my town.

**VALENTINA:**



Good to hear! Ya got a streak of crazy in you, right? (*Barking laugh*) You'll be a star, after we check your teeth, of course. Stay here, I'll get some of your paperwork. Maybe we can even squeeze you in for your brain evaluation today!

**AL:**

Oh, not off the bat, have some mercy-!

**SEDUM:**

It *is* a bit out of order, we really should do the group interview first.

**VALENTINA:**

You're booked and I'm booked- She's the only one with a free slot, if she bothers showin' up today, so let's get the ball rollin'! No time to waste. You said you wanted assistance.

**SEDUM:**

Well, if she's in an approachable mood... This shouldn't hurt, Samson.

**SAM:**

(*Incredulously*)

Oh, uh, who exactly is your psychologist?

**SCENE 8 - INT. VALENTINA'S OFFICE, DOCA - LATE MORNING**

**NARRATOR:**

Al trod the same long three strides down the narrow strip of Valentina's office. Her boss flicked back a few loose strands of black hair, chewing at the end of her pen and staring intently at the topographical map on her desk.

**AL:**

He isn't prepared to deal with-

**VALENTINA:**

He'll be fine, your brother seems competent, enough- Help me plot this out- there's a few more fires what sprung up around city limits over the week.

**AL:**

It's Roose we're talking about, Valen! No one knows what the fuck goes on in that head.

**VALENTINA:**

There's a reason why we call 'em tests. Hell, it's a test just to get past that blank stare, am I right? *(Chuckles)* ... He'll be fine. You did fine, and you were a baby- Huh, they found some symbols at the scene of one of the fires... scratched into a tree. Look at the photo. What's that look like to you?

**AL:**

Either some old runes or... Huh. Does that look like a... pyramid... half moon... One looks like a letter "B"? The hell...

**VALENTINA:**

Is that the fuckin' alphabet? Why in the hell would that be carved into a tree.

**AL:**

Could be latin or something. But, alright, what I was saying, I did fine with a few years of hanging around the old Station, and getting to know what to expect from her. Sam doesn't have that.

**VALENTINA:**

Gotta cut those apron strings soon, if he's gonna be workin' here.

**AL:**

That's not what this is.

**VALENTINA:**

I'm a send you in to see Roose next if you don't get your jitters under control. Now come on, you said latin?

**SCENE 9 - INT. ROOSE'S OFFICE, DOCA - LATE MORNING**

This office is far quieter. Sam is waiting, Roose is looking at his paperwork, a flip every once in a while. A clock ticks.

**ROOSE :**

Mm.

**NARRATOR :**

Roose's blank face betrayed nothing, milky, lidless eyes trained on the stack of papers Samson had filled out earlier in the day. He drug his teeth over his bottom lip, trying to find another spot to look at, anything else, *except* the wet moth wiggling from a spot on Roose's upper shoulder. It's wings pulled away from her skin, and were in fact, born of her skin, agonizingly separating with each flinch. One of her fingers trailed along her arm absently, brushing under the little thing, until finally it sat, fanning it's wet green wings, fully independent on her nail. Sam traced the back of his teeth with his tongue.

**ROOSE :**

It's rude to stare.

**SAM :**

I'm sorry! I, didn't mean to... That's a lovely moth. Are they your children...?

**NARRATOR :**

She met his gaze, and in one swift movement she encircled the thing with one of her lower hands, and *squeezed*.

The moth crunches, Sam inhales.

*(Cont.)* She let the crumpled insect drop to the floor. The second pair of arms folded in her lap, the others lightly tracing the edges of his papers.

**ROOSE :**

Your admission here to years of therapy and medication is extensive. Humans aren't known to be proud of weak mental status. Why are you?

**SAM :**

I wouldn't say I'm proud, ma'am. Just honest. It's the best policy, after all?

**ROOSE:**

Idealism has little use within these walls. In fact it is actively discouraged. It leads to poor life choices.

She makes a note.

**SAM:**

*(A little startled)*

Well, uh, maybe realist, then?

**ROOSE:**

You're aware of what we are charged to do here?

**SAM:**

Yes, ma'am. You help people. Cryptids, specifically.

**ROOSE:**

The position you're seeking consists of protecting the structure of Harbor. Enabling Humans to nurse their ignorance without major incident, and assisting Cryptids in being able to exist without the need to bloody their hands. *(A pause)* Do you know what Cryptids do, Greer?

**SAM:**

*(Trying a joke)*

Heh, sudoku?

**ROOSE:**

*(Weighted)*

We do whatever we want.

**SAM:**

... Does that include sudoku?

**ROOSE:**

*(A moment)*

We must have pity, for your species is stunted and stupid... Unobservant being the least of your sins. The Cryptids that remain here, Crux, Sedum, they are some of the most sympathetic to humans I've known.

**SAM:**

That's kind of them and you to be so thoughtful.

**NARRATOR:**

A creeping, twisting smile pulled her turtle-like mouth, sending a chill through Sam's gut.

**ROOSE:**

Your assumptions are remarkable. ... You have a spilling sea of fear in you, boy.

**SAM:**

*(Laughs nervously)*

Is that entirely appropriate, Director Roose?

**ROOSE:**

Is there a game of formalities I am expected to abide the rules of? Are you, but a *child*, instructing me how to conduct my authority in my den?

**SAM:**

I, I didn't say that, I didn't say this was a game.

**ROOSE:**

What do you assume I owe you in this exchange, Greer?

**SAM:**

N-nothing!

She takes a note.

**ROOSE:**

You're skittering out of your chair.

**SAM:**

I, uh, well ok, I'd appreciate a fair shake, is all.

**ROOSE:**

I wait with baited breath for you to give me a reason to shake you fairly.

Sam is losing ground rapidly, and knows it.

*(Cont.)*

Currently you have a SSRI coursing through your veins, dousing your brain in altercations to merely function. Six years on scheduled chemical modifications- Have you ever welled physical pain in your skin intentionally?

**SAM:**

Ma'am?

**ROOSE:**

*Harmed* yourself.

**SAM:**

No ma'am.

**ROOSE:**

Have you ever harmed another being?

**SAM:**

Only emotionally. *(Laughs a little. She doesn't)* ... no.

**ROOSE:**

Are you prepared to harm another being?

**SAM:**

*(Exhales, tired)* I thought we were suppose to help people.

**ROOSE:**

The Ground Crew are saddled with crises. You have no firearms, they are *useless* against Cryptids, by and large. Only your own

wits and whatever flaccid excuse for a "non-lethal" weapon to HUMANS comforts you- and now the Ground Crew are only Human-based beings. A flagrant disadvantage compared to what we have been accustomed to. Can you rely on your fragile emotional state to keep your comrades breathing?

**SAM:**

How often do things get out of hand?

**ROOSE:**

Answer the question.

**SAM:**

Al said Harbor was doing bad..

**ROOSE:**

The *question*, Greer.

**SAM:**

I've never had an experience like what you're describing, Director Roose. I can only assume that when the time is right, with guidance from you and the others, I'll know what to do.

**ROOSE:**

Your world is small and sheltered..

She's writing.

**SAM:**

I only mean to say that without proper training, I doubt anyone would know the right way to deal with... *anything* new.

**ROOSE:**

We do not have resources or time to devote to elaborate tutoring- which I expect you'll need. Your degree, this schooling experience, do you know what that tells me?

**SAM:**

What?

**ROOSE:**

That it takes 4 years for you to commit yourself to rote memorization. ... Ah. 5 years.

**SAM:**

Well that's one way to interpret it, isn't it!

**ROOSE:**

We work in action, choosing the *correct* decision in a split second. This is no place for a passive, cloying *academic*.

**SAM:**

What is your problem with me?? You all wanted me here!

**ROOSE:**

*(This is where she begins to lean into her anger)*  
Greer, have you ever been in the same room as a spider?

**SAM:**

*(Sighing)*  
Sure, yes, I have!

**ROOSE:**

Every step you take is it's life or death. It exhausting to even walk with such dainty things underfoot.

**SAM:**

Then why stick around? Why do any of this if we're just pests.  
I'm just *assuming* that's the metaphor-

**ROOSE:**

Think how corruptible one human is. *Think*. That plight spreads, the social webbing of your kind so tightly wound, a single drop of poison coats each and every thread of a society. And that spreads to the flora, then to the herbivores, then to the carnivores. One. Drop. From a hubristic, chattering, *breakable* Human and *I* am left doing the wet work to cleanse the land anew.



A heavy pause, she realizes she's given away an edge.

(Cont.)

... Which is neither here nor there, to a simpleton such as yourself.

**SAM:**

No! Hah! Ok, ok... so, you can't bear to trust any of us- If you *did*, you'd have to let go of control and you can't manage that.

**ROOSE:**

(Irritation)

Remarkable deduction.

**SAM:**

(In a bit of a frenzy)

This whole thing is about helping people. And you, your issue, isn't with *me*, you, *Director Roose*, can't trust anyone else to do it as good as you, can you? But I don't care! You can have your issues, that's fine. But this, this Department of Cryptids, can't exist without people. Otherwise all you'll have control over is how fast you want the town to go down in flames! Yeah! So, so... here I am! Alright? Take me or leave me.

A moment. She pushes back her chair. Sam gets up as well.

**ROOSE:**

... You'll make me aware of any changes to your medication *before* you instigate it. You'll submit to check-ins if I find your mental state slipping- our first is three weeks from now, if you manage to muddle your way through the remaining interviews.

**SAM:**

(Tense)

... Yes ma'am. T-thank you.

**ROOSE:**

If you assume my motivations again, I'll tear out your tongue.

**SAM:**

Yes. I'm sorry. I-I'll be going now.

**ROOSE:**

Greer. Have you had any notable dreams since you returned?

**SAM:**

*(Wary)*

I have a lot of weird dreams. What are you looking for?

**ROOSE:**

I ask the questions of *you*, Greer.

**SAM:**

... I'll let you know when I have a good one, Director Roose.  
Maybe at our next meeting?

**NARRATOR:**

Sam held out his hand, only slightly trembling.

**ROOSE:**

Don't touch me. Get out.

**SCENE 10 - INT. DOCA / VALENTINA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON**

Roose's office door closes. Sam takes a step away, getting distance. He collects himself, then breaks.

**SAM:**

*(On the verge of tears)*

Oh my God...

**NARRATOR:**

The large wingback chair in the break room to his left rattled, the occupant facing away from him. Al's head popped over the top.

**AL:**

You're still alive?

**SAM:**

*(Worn, hissed)*

Barely! She's a nightmare, Al!

**AL:**

Sorry, brother. You'll... well you won't get used to her, but she'll get used to you. Also, don't trust her- Come 'ere, look at what we've been working on.

They burst into Valentina's office.

**NARRATOR:**

Al led him by the shoulder down past Management's office, past the bathroom, into a open door to the right of the foyer's set of double doors. Valen glanced over her shoulder and frowned.

**VALENTINA:**

He's not technically allowed to be in here.

**AL:**

Sedum's out, we're fine.

**VALENTINA:**

You're really getting the inside scoop. Right, so what do you think?

**SAM:**

Gotta a fine map there, Director Ivers Hollow.

**NARRATOR:**

Valen smiled awkwardly and shook her head as Al began pointing to marks on the map.

**AL:**

Fires here, here and here... and here. All within the last two weeks.

**SAM:**

That's not smart, there's pretty stringent bans this year... Why...  
 does it look like they're in a line on... yeah, all on city  
 limits..?

**VALENTINA:**

Doesn't look accidental, does it.

**AL:**

Funny thing is, they were tiny from the photos; barely even  
 enough for a campfire. Doesn't seem like arson.

**VALENTINA:**

Park Rangers filed it under illegal camping... But we have free  
 grounds all round these parts, why would someone rough it in  
 uncleared brush? *(She sighs, getting aggravated, thinking)*  
 That's just useless.

**AL:**

Where's that report with the details, the photos, from Monday..

Al crosses and starts digging around in a folder.

**NARRATOR:**

Al dove into a mound of folders, the mid-afternoon sun glinting  
 in from the street facing window. Sam struggled to gather his  
 bearings in the room- their old laundry washer would have been  
 be directly to his right. He shook himself from the past and  
 focused back to Valen's desk, only then truly seeing the  
 defining "feature" of her office- a cascade of wax and candles  
 affixed to the edge of the tabletop in a mound of use. More than  
 a dozen spent wicks, four actively burning down.

**SAM:**

*(Stirring out of his watching)*

Uh... huh... maybe we have some very organized backpackers?

**VALENTINA:**

Whatever they are, they're adding to an atmosphere of *CHAOS!*

**AL:**

Got it- (*Muttering*) No trash... three feet diameter average scorch but no remains of what burned... Now there's something. Look, a sort of crumbly, smooth gravel, set apart from the terrain.

**SAM:**

In the burns?

**VALENTINA:**

Rocks. Rock, rocks, rocks, what does that mean? Are they... stone masons? Backpacking stone masons? Lurking in the woods? That's ominous but not unheard of..

**AL:**

The pebbles and dust were scattered around. Not concentrated..  
Wow they take shitty notes.

**SAM:**

They're park rangers. I'm guessing they don't really want to play detective.

**AL:**

You like assuming for them don't you.

**SAM:**

Nah, I like using me big smart brains.

**VALENTINA:**

Alright, alright-

A door slams somewhere.

**SAM:**

What was that?

**SCENE 11 - INT. DOCA - AFTERNOON**

They dart into the hall.

**NARRATOR:**

The three rounded the corner, cutting directly to the entryway doors, which Al flung open, finding a very flustered Sedum holding the front door shut, the Nuller mirage dissipating.

**SEDUM:**

*(Slightly breathless)*

It's ah... rather blustery outside today?

Someone pounds hard on the door.

**AL:**

That's some insistent wind.

**VALENTINA:**

Get on back, Sedum, let's hash it out- Whatever it is.

**SEDUM:**

Valen, no, she's-

A HARD SLAM against the door.

*(Cont.)*

She's out for blood.

**VALENTINA:**

Fruit basket didn't go over well?

**AL:**

What poor soul you shove a fruit basket on?

**SEDUM:**

*(Snapping)*

I didn't go with the fruit basket! Valen I need to talk to you and Roose *immediately*-

A loud THUMP as Glenda kicks the door.

**VALENTINA:**

*(Loud)*

Mayor, calm yourself and we can talk like adults-

**GLENDA:**

*(Muffled)*

This nonsense is *going* to stop. I know it's you, I *know it is!*  
You will let me in, or I *will* get Police Chief Gary-Joel to take  
his ram to this door, *(shrilly)* so help me Jesus!!!

Soft walking approaches. Roose enters.

**SEDUM:**

Glenda, *please-*

**NARRATOR:**

A shadow towered behind the trio of Humans from the Director's  
hall. Roose's long, white hair tickled their backs.

**ROOSE:**

Enough noise. Let her in.

There's a moment...

**SEDUM:**

Alright.

He opens the door. Glenda stalks in and slams the door shut.

**GLENDA:**

Oh! So glad *all* ya'll could make it. That ya took time out of  
your busy schedules to come watch the show; to gloat?!

**VALENTINA:**

What're we suppose to be gloatin' about?

**GLENDA:**

*(Shrieks out a laugh)*

OH, *and* you brought a civilian in here, too; Sammy Greer, get  
that conceited look off your face. And you, Al! You luckless  
girl- Do you know you keep company with *terrorists?! Do you??*

**AL:**

Mayor, don't be mean-

**SEDUM:**

None of us sabotaged your gun factory!

**GLENDA:**

I can see the guilt on each and every one of your faces- how dare you, Al. How dare you let yourself get wrapped up with these bullies, thinkin' laws don't apply to them. (*Almost getting choked up*) It breaks my heart to see you stoop so low for any scrap of affection from these *monsters*. Your hands aren't as tied as you think! We can get you some dignity, darlin', I promise-

**CRUX:**

(*Low*)

She sincerely believes all this...

**SAM:**

Ah! Damn, you're so quiet, Crux, when did you get here...?

**CRUX:**

Just now.

**GLENDA:**

Well, Al- your friends crushed the contractor's machines and trucks. They torched the lumber, seared the foundation- They *loosened* the scaffold brackets and caused 4 people to fall?! DO YOU THINK WE HAVE TIME FOR WORKMAN'S COMP ON MY GUN FACTORY?!

**VALENTINA:**

Well, yeah, unless you want a *twice Haunted* gun factory.

Al and Crux snicker.

**GLENDA:**

You sit here, snug as ROACHES in trash, so self-satisfied with gettin' my contractors to pull out... thinkin' this town needs



you, that *I* need you, well let me share a little secret, Aberrations, you *demons*, you have a mighty big storm comin'. (*A slight pause, low*) Especially you, Sugar-Beak- you'll be sweatin' bullets about far more than budget. We'll see just where you go to roost by the time I'm through with this shit-show... Maybe I can pull some strings for ya, get ya a cozy lil' nest back in *Raleigh*? How does that sound?

**NARRATOR:**

Glenda tucked a wild poof of hair behind her ear, gathering her breath. Sedum's clawed fingers flexed by his sides, all eyes wide for half a moment.

**GLEENDA:**

So. Make this place look presentable, if ya'll can't even manage yourselves. I have visitor on the way. Thank goodness for good timing. Leave the light on for us.

She clicks out, SLAMMING the door shut behind her.

**ROOSE:**

... Observe, nothing to fear. All bark and no bite.

**SEDUM:**

*(Composed, but it's a struggle)*

Crux, please finish up early. You have the rest of the day off.

**CRUX:**

Alright, if you want. Night.

Crux walks out of the room.

**SEDUM:**

Good night. Al, Sam, you're free to head home as well.

**AL:**

*(A bit shocked)*

What the hell was that at the end? I've never seen her gun so hard- Want me to go try and uh, talk her down? I can do that-

**SEDUM:**

No. Don't worry, go... go have a nice day. Please- Roose, Valen?  
If we can talk. Now.

Roose growls an acquiescence.

**VALENTINA:**

Mmm, yeah. Let's.

**END**