

Harbor Season 2
Episode 8: High Voltage

Written by
Faraday Roke

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SCENE 1: COLD OPEN, INT. DOCA, DAY

General noises of the main office. Valen is talking low to Sam and Crux in the corner. Al comes in, handing forms to William. It's incredibly subdued and casual.

CRUX:
This is getting ridiculous.

VALEN:
It needs doing.

WILLIAM:
Finally, thanks.

AL:
Just let me know when they're in the system.

WILLIAM:
Yeah, it'll be a minute.-

VALEN:
-One good skimming and you're done.

SAM:
And we have pond skimmers in the closet or something?

CRUX:
Are Parks sitting on their thumbs?

VALEN:
They won't touch it with the mourner faffing about.

CRUX:
It's a *Mourner*, all it can do is wail at them-

Roose moves into the space. Everyone quiets down... There's palpable tension.

ROOSE:
(Stretching,
satisfied)
Hnnnnnugh, ooooooh boy... it's been ages since I've had a baby.

Silence.

ROOSE: (cont'd)
 You know, you just feel like something is missing, when you haven't *had a baby*. Like you're not *full*. You know what I mean?

SAM:
 Uh-?

VALEN:
 Don't, Sam.

SAM:
 Ah... hm...

ROOSE:
 It's been practically an eternity!

WILLIAM:
 (Quiet, to Al)
 ... Ok, it should be up on your end now.

AL:
 (Same intonation)
 Cool. Headed out, but I'll be by later with another round.

WILLIAM:
 As long as I get caught up on the complaint emails-

ROOSE:
 Really?? Nothing??

SAM:
 What's the context?-

VALEN:
 -Ignore her.

CRUX:
 Why didn't you tell me Ground Crew was janitor work, William?

VALEN:
 The dry spell ain't letting up.-

ROOSE:
 A BABY. SO LONG. SINCE I HAD.

VALEN:
 The Pyre's been out proselytizing..

WILLIAM:
 (From across the
 room)
 Count your blessin's, you at least
 get field trips.

ROOSE:
 PSSH. I see how it is.

She spins around and stalks off.

ROOSE: (cont'd)
 Last time I try to "connect" with any
 of you over lunch...

Her office door slams shut, distant.

SAM:
 I really hope she didn't actually eat
 a baby.

VALEN:
 Well, she can't do it as long as
 she's under contract...

SAM:
 Do you think she has offspring?

VALEN:
 Sam, I want you to think about why
 you would say something so horrible
 and never ask that again.

TITLE SEQUENCE

SCENE 2: EXT. MAYORAL OFFICE, DAY.

A bag gets thrown into a backseat of a car, and a car door slams shut behind. Glenda is bringing up the rear, with Kevin trailing behind her. Al is at the passenger side door to the car.

KEVIN:
 (From behind,
 distant)
 Ma'am, you forgot your scarf!

GLENDIA:
 Actin' like a child ain't gonna give
 you good graces for an invasion,
 Brick.

BECKER:
My mistake, I forgot to put my pinky
out for you.

KEVIN:
(A little
breathless)
H-here, Mayor. You might catch a
cold-

GLEENDA:
Go back inside, Kevin. There's a town
to run.

AL:
We're all countin' on you, Kev.

NARRATOR:
The Mayor's assistant glared at Al,
who leaned her elbows on the hood of
Becker's rental car, her hair stringy
from lack of washing, purple lines
shadowing her eyes. Glenda crackled
with keen fervency, something rising
in her presence she'd rarely shown- a
pinpointed sincerity. To which Becker
returned an annoyed, if not slightly
entertained expression.

BECKER:
Quiet, Al.-

AL:
-You got it.-

KEVIN:
-She has worked so hard for us; y'all
need some manners, some *respect*.

BECKER:
Son, you should know you're not
latched to the highest court anymore.
Back down.

GLEENDA:
I need you on phones, Kevin. I'll be
there in a minute.

KEVIN:
... Yes, Mayor Dickson. (Bursting out
of him as a parting shot) ... At least
straighten your tie, you hobo!-

GLEENDA:
-Kevin. Please.

 KEVIN:
Yes, ma'am.

He trots back.

 BECKER:
Poor kid. Do you think he knows he's
in a sinking ship?

 GLEENDA:
You ain't got a leg to stand on here-
Not from me, not from the City
Council, I assure you, and not from
our citizens- There is no *support* for
this.

 BECKER:
I'm done arguing. This whole thing
was a courtesy, alright? I'm not
asking permission. The Rangers will
be here on Friday.

 GLEENDA:
You need clearance from City Council
for something that big, I told you.

 BECKER:
So they got back to you? This "city
council"? Cause I'm still waiting on
an email! Besides, my Rangers have
encountered worse than a goofy little
town.

 AL:
 (Half hearted
 support)
Much worse, I'm sure. They're from
Raleigh, remember?

 GLEENDA:
If we're so goofy, why do you need
the troops? Shouldn't you be able to
handle it yourself?

 BECKER:
 (Bristling at the
 callout)
The Pyre, the reason you called me,
is still out there.
 (MORE)

BECKER: (cont'd)
 Quaint, though this... all is, Harbor
 is harboring a dangerous criminal. I
 have a job to do.

GLEENDA:
 Going on 5 months with that "job".
 You tend to rest on that excuse a
 little too often.

BECKER:
 Because you block me. I know
 something happened on Halloween,
 despite your lies- I know you're
 protecting your Aberrations and
 ghouls and hillbillies, oh, I know.
 "Everyone has their place" didn't you
 say? Everyone, including arsonists
 and terrorists. And then you come and
 whine to me to "fix it"- how do you
 think I'm supposed to fix it with no
 support? I need my Rangers.

GLEENDA:
 (She diverts)
 When's the last time you got out,
 Brick? When you actually talked with
 one of our Critters? If you could
 manage to lay hands on 'em, I'll be
 honest, I'd be more impressed. But
 they sure got a handle on you- well
 enough, anyway. I'm not too perturbed
 about your efficiency, sweetheart,
 just you clogging up our roadways.

BECKER:
 I'd choose your words a bit wiser in
 the future, if I were you.

GLEENDA:
 (A collected
 challenge)
 Excuse me?

BECKER:
 None of your doubt supersedes my
 work. None. Of. It. You understand?
 Mayor?

NARRATOR:
 Glenda's lip curled in disgust.

GLEENDA:

(Quieter)

Read the room, honey. You're in way over your head.

BECKER:

And that's why we bring in the professionals. Come on, Al.

GLEENDA:

This ain't Raleigh, Brick.

BECKER:

(Mocking her accent)

And I ain't afraid to get my hands dirty.-

AL:

-State Director, if I may? (He stops)
This happens in rural towns. We're years behind. You have to show us why this is the right way forward. That's all. We just need to see.

NARRATOR:

Al caught Glenda's eye. The Mayor frowned in suspicion as Becker nodded, then pointed directly back at his "dutiful" employee.

BECKER:

You're right- She's right. You see this? Less than a week, and I already have this one polished into shape. Trust me, if I can do that, I can do wonders with this place. And you can thank me for the extra cash flow later.

He pops open his door and climbs in. The engine turns over a few times, crunching and churning, before it roars into life.

GLEENDA:

What happened to your self-respect?

NARRATOR:

Al shrugged.

AL:

Taming lions keeps me busy.

GLEENDA:
What are you doing?

AL:
(In a sing-songy
trill)
My job!

Al climbs in and shuts the door. They pull out of the parking lot and begin driving.

BECKER:
Engines! (A strained laugh) Well kid!
We got some good news to tell
everyone...!

AL:
We sure do.

BECKER:
(Louder)
You're happy, right?? Don't have to
deal with inane community calls
anymore, actually get to work!
Actually get to the bottom of things,
right? You've always wanted that!

AL:
Of course. Love a change of pace.
We'll figure out your bad luck.

BECKER:
I don't have bad luck, I make my own
luck- and it's good. I'm being
attacked. It's that Field, and the
Pyre and-

The car screeches a whirl in the engine, causing both of them to wince.

BECKER: (cont'd)
This model just came out! Fuck!
(Sighs) You did good back there. We
did good.

AL:
You just won me over with the promise
of winter backpacking. So where're
gonna we start looking?

BECKER:
Where do you think we start?

AL:
If I knew I would tell you.

NARRATOR:
Focused on the road, he smiled,
nodding.

BECKER:
I know, I'm just checkin' in on that
amnesia. (Small laugh) We'll start at
Strawberry Hill, work our way around
the summit from there.

AL:
You mean Strawberry Knob?

BECKER:
I don't like that- I'm calling it
Strawberry Hill.

AL:
Good choice. You think the field's up
high, then? Or is this the Pyre or...?

BECKER:
The Field, the Field.

AL:
Right, yeah- so why do you think it's
on the knob?

BECKER:
-Hill. Because you'd have to have
been able to get there when you were
a kid.

AL:
Yeah, I would...-

BECKER:
-It has to be within a few miles at
most of your old house- the DoAA,
now. Only makes sense. You follow?

AL:
... That's a... a real good assumption.

BECKER:
I didn't get to where I am now by
luck, gotta put in the legwork. By
the way- did your mom get those
flowers I sent?

AL:
... Uh, what? You sent my mama flowers?

BECKER:
Hm, you know what, nevermind, this is work- I'll just text her later.

AL:
(Struggling to keep
her eye twitch under
control)
How, wait, when did you get her
number?

BECKER:
I have my ways.

AL:
No, really, *how*?

BECKER:
I have your emergency contacts.

AL:
(Breaking slightly)
OH- Aren't those for... *emergencies?*
Only?

BECKER:
Well, I dropped 80 bucks, I'd say
that constitutes an emergency!

AL:
(Choking back a
noise of aghast)
HMM. Yeah.

Her phone starts to ring.

BECKER:
You know, for a lesbian, you really
don't know shit about women.

AL:
Nope, not at all.

NARRATOR:
Caller ID read "Mama" on her phone.

Al inhales a little, then declines the call as Becker
continues.

BECKER:
 Let me give you the low-down, so,
 women love it when you take control..

SCENE 3: INT. LIBRARY, DAY.

Library Interior, a backroom. Leah is on the line with Al's Voicemail.

AL VO:
 Hey, leave a voicemail.

The Voicemail box BEEPS.

LEAH:
 Hi, uh... just... just thinkin', we
 should have an actual family dinner,
 soon. We should talk about
 everything. Uhm, I heard something
 weird from... someone on Halloween, I
 really want to get your thoughts on
 it. I can do tonight, or this
 weekend? Ok, love you baby. Bye.

Daisha's footsteps approach as Leah hangs up.

DAISHA:
 Knock-knock?

LEAH:
 I'm sorry, Daisha, makin' a
 phonecall. Is everything ok out
 there?

DAISHA:
 Someone made a delivery.

LEAH:
 We don't have any scheduled..

Leah takes a few steps next to her.

DAISHA:
 Uh... it's... uhm, it seems a bit...
personal. From my perspective.

NARRATOR:
 Daisha raised a small card- Leah
 poked her head around the doorway,
 eyes landing on the frozen explosion
 of baby's breath and roses on the
 library's front desk.

LEAH:
What in the hell.

DAISHA:
I know it's work, and it's really
none of my business, but...

LEAH:
W-what?

DAISHA:
Are you rebounding after that radio
host?

LEAH:
(Realizing)
... Oh no.

DAISHA:
(Reading off the
note)
Cause someone named "B.B."? went all
out on this... kind of impressive.

LEAH:
(Emotionally
sickened)
Please tell me we still got that burn
barrel out back.

DAISHA:
(Sarcastically)
That's only for books and you know
it!

LEAH:
(Almost like she's
going to throw up)
I'm serious!

SCENE 4: INT. DOCA, MAIN OFFICE, SAM'S DESK, DAY.

In the office.

NARRATOR:
Sam hunched over a DoAA compendium of
Cryptid behaviors- shoved onto his
desk weeks ago by their Lead
Director. His hands shielded his eyes
from view, freeing him to shut them
tight and cast out a line into the
fog beyond his conscious.

SAM:
 (Psychically)
 J- we got incoming Rangers from
 Raleigh, should be here on Friday,
 two days from now- Becker just told
 us- Please be there...

J:
 (Psychically)
 Strange son, I am *always* here when
 you call.

Sam sighs audibly.

NARRATOR:
 His shoulders relaxed. J's presence
 filled the cup of his mind.

SAM:
 (Psychically)
 Sorry... You'd think I'd be used to
 it by now...

J:
 (Psychically)
 It takes longer than a week,
 remember, you are only organic after
 all. Now, these invaders, how many
 were you told?

SAM:
 (Psychically)
 Three- I have no clue where we're
 gonna put them all.

J:
 (Psychically)
 Nor will you have to- Harbor has
 plans for these sorts of occasions.
 However, you must stay away,
 dearheart, for your own safety. The
 town's defenses can be thorough. Heed
 that please, I must go-

SAM:
 (Psychically)
 But I want to do something-

CRUX:
 -Did you say something?

SAM:
(Jolting out of the
link)
Mm, what?

CRUX:
Weren't you just talking?

NARRATOR:
Sam pushed himself back from his
desk. His coworker, his partner, his
source of deliciously dancing
flutters, held the back of his chair
steady. Crux pressed close.

SAM:
... I think loud sometimes.

CRUX:
Can Humans do that?

SAM:
Heh, broken brain. Uhm, (Lowering his
voice) hey, what the hell was all
that just now, am I right? This is
crazy...

CRUX:
Oh, the layaway Rangers? I wouldn't
worry too much.

SAM:
Yeah but the asshole curse doesn't
really cover incursions, I don't
think.

CRUX:
What exactly do you think the "curse"
is for?

SAM:
Heh, getting on my dad's nerves?
Making him yell... a lot...

CRUX:
... Would you like to talk about that...?

SAM:
No, no, he's gone- that was just for
humorous flavor.

CRUX:
Ah. I'm splitting my sides.

SAM:

I can see that. What do you think the curse is for?

CRUX:

Protection. Around 1965 there was a bit of a national... conscription happening. Every able-bodied man sent out to die for some sort of American pride that never mattered. Let's just say dodging the draft became easier with a particularly strong vein of that "curse".

SAM:

How strong?

CRUX:

Unfortunate accidents for military visitors. No one died... that I was aware of.

SAM:

That is intense...

CRUX:

I'm surprised you didn't know, but I suppose we've been quiet for a while.

SAM:

Has it always been like that?

CRUX:

Since I got here. I put in my time, just like all the other transplants, and it dissipated... Luckily nothing as severe as major bodily harm.

NARRATOR:

Sam frowned in thought.

SAM:

It's weird I didn't know that... Those conditions are important.- Do you know how it started?

CRUX:

No clue. It was here before I was.

SAM:

... I need to read more...

CRUX:

Feel free to ask about anything from 1920 on, it's when I immigrated. (Lightly suggestive) *Anyway*, that's not why I came over. You and I... should make some time to set an appointment, don't you think? To... get together.

SAM:

(Intrigued exhale)
Oh. Well I can't say no to scheduling appointments, yes *please*-

CRUX:

(Sultry)
-Save the begging for later.

SAM:

(Flustered, excited)
HAH, hah, oh, I will. W-w-when were you thinking?

CRUX:

Depends on if you're pining for sooner... or longer. I could work with tomorrow night, but we'd have to find our way back here in the morning.-

SAM:

(Turning it on, playful)
What about now? Now, I think, would be the *best* option.-

A rustle of fabric as Sam reaches out and touches him.

CRUX:

(Responding in kind)
-You'll get us both in trouble if you can't keep it together, Samson.-

SAM:

-It's gotten me good results before.-

WILLIAM:

-*Ah-hem*.

NARRATOR:

The two, inches apart, doused in the other's respective cold and heat, found William looking thoroughly disapproving behind them.

WILLIAM:
I get that y'all are coping an'
everythin', but can you have some
subtlety at work?

SAM:
Sorry.-

CRUX:
-Right.

WILLIAM:
Anywho, Ground Crew got scheduled for
uh, Taser training? On Friday. One of
the Raleigh Rangers is gonna show you
how to zap people, don't know why I
needed to tell y'all that when Becker
was just here, but I read the emails
how they're written! (A stressed
laugh) It's not like I'm busy playing
unofficial PR or nothin' ...

SAM:
Goddamn, I thought he was gonna let
that go.

WILLIAM:
Yep. Well then... keep it in your pants
at work, guys...

CRUX:
Thanks, Will.

He walks away...

SAM:
Um, just to wrap up, I'd like to
actually... enjoy our time. How about
Friday night?

CRUX:
I can make that work... You live with
your mom, right?

SAM:
(A little
embarrassed)
Yeah.

CRUX:
Here. -I'm trusting you with this.

NARRATOR:

He leaned across the desk and scribbled on a corner of the compendium's page.

Sound of him writing.

CRUX:

Give me two hours to wash up, then... come over. It's cheaper than renting something and more comfortable than my car.

SAM:

You sure you're not just trying to get me isolated to serial kill me...?

CRUX:

After the work week? No, no, I don't have that kind of energy. Lower your expectations.

SAM:

(Little laugh)

Cool-

BECKER:

(Calling from the other room)

Sam?

NARRATOR:

He twisted to see Becker watching them from the break room. Neither had heard him appear. Their State Director gave a tight lipped smile.

SAM:

Yes, yes sir?

BECKER:

You working on the Halloween breach?

SAM:

Uh- yes, I was just finishing up-

BECKER:

Need those by 5. Don't make your sister pick up a side project, yeah? Prosody... go make yourself useful.

CRUX:

Righto...

Becker moves off, whistling a showtune to himself.

SCENE 5: INT. AL'S TRAILER, EVENING

Pops and crackles of food cooking on a pan. Al is in her trailer kitchen, with Mia accompanying her.

MIA:

Hey. Al. Hey.

AL:

(Distracted)

Mmmh, more salt...

NARRATOR:

Al maintained a steady focus on her tiny stovetop, unmoved by the stalking nightmare oozing over her dining room table. Mia's red eyes twinkled.

MIA:

It changed again.

AL:

... That's nice.

MIA:

It's a real good one now.

AL:

Must be fun for you.

MIA:

Not as fun as telling you, though-

AL:

-No, Mia, I still don't wanna know how I die.

MIA:

But this one's juicy- Literally-

AL:

-Stop.-

MIA:

-And it's not like it's soon- mmwell, it's not like it's too far away, either.-

AL:
-That special nugget's just for you.
Enjoy it.

MIA:
(Feeling the
 approach of someone
 new)
You have company.

AL:
What- To kill me?

MIA:
No. At least I don't think- Comin'
round the back. Oh. (A little dreamy)
The little monster's here ...

AL:
... Hang on.

NARRATOR:
Al stooped and pulled back the
curtain of the kitchen window. Though
shrouded in the early darkness of
winter, she recognized the silhouette
that had their knuckles raised to
knock on the other side of the glass.
It was easy to assume their
accomplice, glowing orange behind
them. Enfys twisted their hand round
to a lackluster, silent wave.

AL:
... Huh.

She lets the curtain fall back, and turns off the burner with
a snap.

AL: (cont'd)
This is... gonna be a thing. Please
don't distract me.

MIA:
I'll be a good dirty secret.

AL:
You're amazing.

Al opens the door, walks out and down, and around to the
back.

KILN:

Hi!!

ENFYS:

Little quieter, please.

KILN:

(Quieter)

Hi!

ENFYS:

Is now a bad time?

AL:

Nah, I was makin' dinner. Hey kid.
Did you grow?

KILN:

(Excited, but trying
to hide it)

It's been like a week. Unless- Do you
think I grew?

ENFYS:

-We were running errands. Decided to
stop in. You look somewhat... better... ?

AL:

Stop lying- this is bold of you.-

MIA:

-I'm bored, how long is this going to
take?

NARRATOR:

Al flinched as Mia's throat-lodged
bolt slid suddenly over her
collarbone.

AL:

(A light shudder at
Mia's sudden whisper
in her ear)

A-and I doubt you're just feelin'
neighborly. So what's this about?

KILN:

We like you.

AL:

I like y'all too. That mean
somethin'?

ENFYS:

You've heard of the infiltration on Friday.

AL:

One of the first to hear- does news get around that fast?

ENFYS:

If you're thinking about popping out of town that day... I wouldn't. Least not by the main road.

AL:

What are you gonna do?

ENFYS:

We're going to ensure Harbor's safety. The Mayor is more than happy, no doubt, so it's time for us to step in.

AL:

She's not, actually.

ENFYS:

(Taken aback,
confused)

Really?

AL:

She was upset. Talkin' 'bout City Council not approving it, she didn't approve it- None of the Human government is supportive.

ENFYS:

Hm...

AL:

... I don't know if you need a hammer in this situation, if you were planning on another Gun Factory display.

ENFYS:

Good to know. We'll still move forward.

AL:

Y'all gonna kill anyone?

KILN:
The Pyre doesn't kill. Dad talks and
Oppy... does things.

ENFYS:
And you do your studies and be a kid,
thus, there is no we in the Pyre.
Have we covered it, young lady?

KILN:
(Sighs, sarcastic)
Yeah, I almost forgot...

AL:
"Dad talks"?

ENFYS:
Franklin is a concise speaker.
Everyone deserves to know what's
happening within the DoCA- and you
all keep it on lockdown. So he steps
in.

AL:
Oh yeah, the free seminars on how we
suck.

ENFYS:
You should come to one. Valen's been.

AL:
I've been a bit busy with the inside
job...

ENFYS:
I'm interested to see your results.

AL:
Can't say it's as satisfying as
tearing apart cars.

ENFYS:
Granted, not a lot is as satisfying
as that.

AL:
(A huff of a laugh)
But the subtlety of not resorting to
violence just, mm, hits you
different.

ENFYS:

We're not in the position to do things subtly, especially not with our timetable.

AL:

And I can't just throw away the position I have when I can do something- Trust me, it doesn't feel great. I feel pretty shitty, in fact.

ENFYS:

Yeah, you look pretty shitty, too.

AL:

Thank you. I been tryin' this thing where I don't take showers, to like... see if I can repel people away, but man, they're fuckin' dedicated..

ENFYS:

As long as you can sleep at night.

AL:

Enfys, I don't want your judgement, so you can stay quiet on that high horse of your's.-

KILN:

-Your flowers are dead.

NARRATOR:

Kiln gently lifted the dried head of a petunia in a half barrel- a spring gift from Leah earlier that year.

AL:

Yeah, that happens in winter.

KILN:

But... I mean... You left it to rot. I thought girls liked flowers.

ENFYS:

That's a stereotype.

KILN:

But you are a girl... right?

NARRATOR:

Kiln bit her scaly lip hesitantly.

KILN:
You're like... a gay girl?

MIA:
(In her ear)
Isn't that right, Al...?

NARRATOR:
The cold breath tickled her ear.

ENFYs:
(Kind of rolling
their eyes)
I'm sorry about this- Kiln, that's
not why we're-

KILN:
-I don't know many- many other girls...
It's dumb, but... It's cool. Girls are
cool. So... are you?

ENFYs:
(Low, to Al)
I didn't want to speak for you,
seeing how you weren't out when I
left...

AL:
Thanks, I'm tryin' to get more
comfortable with it... Kiln, I'm... I'm
kinda a girl.

KILN:
Kinda?

AL:
I'm like your Oppy, here- (Lower to
Enfys) Have you talked to her about
gender and bein' trans?

ENFYs:
She knows.-

KILN:
(Disappointed)
So you're nonbinary?

ENFYs:
Watch it, sweetheart.

KILN:
Whaaaat, girls are cool, nonbinary
people're cool too, but I'm not one
of you-!

AL:
Yeah, I'm nonbinary- I don't care if
you use she or they.

KILN:
... But you're still gay.

AL:
Lesbian. Yeah. Gender's complicated.

KILN:
Yeah. Can I take this?

NARRATOR:
She pinched her claws round a
withered stem.

AL:
I don't care, sure.

KILN:
Yesss...

Kiln snaps the flower off with a rustle.

AL:
(Low)
Are all kids this weird?

ENFYS:
Well, this has been so much.-

KILN:
-Can we come inside?? Something
smells good.

ENFYS:
(Noticing, sniffing
the air)
Something smells burnt.

AL:
Ah shit, my rice-and-egg!

Al darts back to the trailer.

KILN:
She's cool.

ENFYS:
They, sweetie.

KILN:
THEY said it didn't matter!

SCENE 6: INT. LEAH'S CONDO, NIGHT

Quiet, it's the middle of the night. Sheets rustle. An echo of rain- a cry of pain, wet, distant. Sam breathes hard, sleeping through the nightmare. Memories of that night seep into the room.

BECKER:
(From the past,
hushed from what it
was)
"... Then its only fair I get to use
your bones as splints..."

Sam flinches in his sleep.

SAM:
(Murmuring)
N-no... Mmfh... Stop-

He shifts in bed, a bit more violent than before. The echos swirl together and release anew.

MIA:
(From the past)
"You're pathetic-"

SAM:
(It's getting harder
to stay in the
dream, harder to
wake up)
I can't...

MIA:
(From the past)
"You KILLED her!"

SAM:
(Half choked out-
psychically)
No- Mia STOP!

The memory of a slicing through flesh jolts him awake. The sheets shift and he's panting in bed, awake.

SAM: (cont'd)
 (Gathering his
 breath, dissolving
 into a whisper to
 himself)
 Why are you doing this...

MIA:
 "Poor me, woe is me..."- It's not like
 you died.

Sam inhales long, realizing someone is in his room, and
 scrambles back against his headboard.

NARRATOR:
 A shadow sat on the foot of his bed.
 A long bolt through her neck.
 Moonlight caught her white blonde
 hair, her blood-ruptured scleras.
 Sludge pooled through the quilt.

SAM:
 (Horrorified, not a
 scream, strangled
 like a nightmare
 where one can't cry
 out)
 Ah-AH!

MIA:
 (Realizing, a low
 inhale)
 You're new.

SAM:
 (Shuddering, like he
 can't breathe, still
 quiet)
 Mia?!

MIA:
 You can see me, you can actually... see
 me...

NARRATOR:
 An ichor-slicked hand landed between
 his knees-

Sam gasps.

NARRATOR: (cont'd)
 She raised herself on the mattress,
 great splotches landing on his
 calves, his boxers- The bolt end slid
 along his cheek-

A sliding hiss of the metal- Sam flinches.

NARRATOR: (cont'd)
 -cold, wet, cruel metal as the
 spectre of Mia slipped her face above
 his.

MIA:
 Oh... I know you. You're the little
 sibling who got to live, aren't you?
 Little Sam. Little Samson...

NARRATOR:
 Her hand cradled his cheek, reeking
 of death, blood spilling down his
 chest from her smiling mouth.

MIA:
 Nice to finally meet you.

SAM:
 (Hushed)
 No, no, no- I'm sorry, I'm sorry- I'm
 sorry-

His breathing is fast, quiet, he's hyperventilating.

MIA:
 (A little laugh
 slipping into her
 words)
 Good to see guilt runs in the family.

Sam faints.

A base-drop or an echo- distorted, weird.

It's morning. There's birds. The alarm goes off.

SAM:
 (Inhaling a shudder
 of a breath, waking
 himself)
 What... what was tha...

He flings back the blankets again, and we hear him rustling
 the sheets- searching.

SAM: (cont'd)
She was- she was here- she bled-

NARRATOR:
White sheets wrinkled by the weight
of his sleep. Nothing more.

He falls back, regaining his breath. A knock on his door.

SAM:
Yeah?

LEAH:
(From behind the
door)
I'm making coffee- you want any?

SAM:
Yeah! Yeah- thank you!

LEAH:
(From behind the
door)
Mhm.

We hear her move away from the door.

SAM:
Good morning!

LEAH:
(Distant, through
the door)
Good mornin'...

SCENE 7: INT. SUV, THE NEXT DAY, MORNING

A GPS speaks soothingly. Ranger Meadows snores softly in the backseat. The windows are down.

GPS:
(Glitching out)
In 600 feet, follow the fork on the
right. Your destination is twenty
minutes away.

JORDAN:
But it's a lie, though.

STEPHENS:
It's marketing.

JORDAN:
 Calling grapes "seedless" when
 there's smaller than normal seeds is
 not the definition of seedless.-

STEPHENS:
 You can digest them, it's the same
 thing.

JORDAN:
 It's a lie and what's wrong with
 America-

An enormous THUNK on top of the car roof. The two yelp,
 while the third is roused from sleep with a snort.

STEPHENS:
 The hell-?!

The metal roof crunches in slightly.

MEADOWS:
 (Jolting awake)
 Ah-AH!! The roof!!

JORDAN:
 Pull over!

STEPHENS:
 I'm doing it- Meadows, call Becker
 now!

The car screeches under the new unknown weight and stops on
 the side of the road. The roof groans-

MEADOWS:
 Ooooh I am *not* getting crushed-

The side door pops open with a startled gasp from Meadows as
 the roof crunches again.

STEPHENS:
 Get back here-!

JORDAN:
 Meadows!

MEADOWS:
 (From outside,
 seeing what's on top
 of the car)
 Ooh, AUGH- Get out!!

STEPHENS:

Fuck it-

A pistol comes out as Stephens unbuckles the seatbelt and it whirs back into it's casing.

NARRATOR:

Stephens shoved the muzzle of his pistol against the sunroof above their heads.

STEPHENS:

Cover your ears!

The gun cocks, then BLASTS up through the roof of the car, with a crack of glass.

JORDAN:

(Grunts, flinching)

Shit...

MEADOWS:

(From outside)

You have to GET OUT!!-

ENFYS:

(From outside, beast form)

That's no way for guests to act.

NARRATOR:

A long, furred arm clawed into the cab- grabbing Stephens by the lapel as Jordan barely turned her head-

Stephens gasps-

JORDAN:

Stephe-

NARRATOR:

A scream caught in his throat as his legs flailed out the window.

STEPHENS:

AUGH-!!

A great struggle as he's pulled out the window.

JORDAN:

Stephens!!

MEADOWS:
 (Outside)
 Oh GOD-!!

A moment as we can hear Stephens struggling, he's still alive, muffled by Enfys' grasp.

JORDAN:
 Dammit, dammit, dammit-

A pair of feet alight on the ground outside. Jordan gasps.

NARRATOR:
 A gas-masked clad Human figure leaned into the car window, over Jordan. The mirrored eye lenses reflected her sweating face unnervingly close. She raised her hands shakily.

JORDAN:
 W-we are Department of Abberational Affairs employees, we're expected, people will look-

FRANKLIN:
 (Through his gas mask)
 Oh yeah, we know- This is awkward- We're the welcoming committee! Regret to say, the town up ahead is closed for a bit- You get it. But we'll see that your uh... what was it?

ENFYS:
 (From outside)
 Weapons.

FRANKLIN:
 Right, your weapons get to where they're needed. What do ya say? Let's make this easy.

SCENE 8: INT. DOCA, MORNING

In the Lead Director's Office.

AL:
 ... What's it's point, though?

BECKER:

I'm thinking a lighthouse of sorts, some way all the Aberrations are drawn here- or it might even be what created the Pyre- like a hive queen mother of monsters. But beyond all that- it's what keeps Harbor from being looked at closely, it has to be.

AL:

Interesting theory, but it's unfounded as of right now.

BECKER:

Everything has an origin, kid. Our own birth process is a mess of blood and shit and wonder- why can't their's be even worse.

AL:

Still speculation.

BECKER:

We start here. Trust me, you'll get used to it in no time. We're in this together.-

Becker's phone starts ringing.

BECKER: (cont'd)

That'll be the Rangers! Bet they're right around the corner- (He picks up) Jordan! (The smile slips off his face) What, wait, slow down-

His tension is skyrocketing, shuffling Al out of the office.

BECKER: (cont'd)

(On the phone)

Your connection- I can't hear you- (Off receiver) Out, out, out get out-

AL:

Gotcha.

BECKER:

(On the phone)

Repeat that. Jordan, repeat that- For Christ's sake, REPEAT. THAT.

The office door snaps shut.

NARRATOR:

In the break room outside of Lead's Office, the rest of the Station (minus Roose) converged, forcibly casual, with an air of held breath. Valen set aside her bagel.

Al crosses into the breakroom.

AL:

I think... there may have been a delay.

WILLIAM:

I just got bagels...

BECKER:

(A shout from behind
the door)

What do you MEAN "ROBBED"?!

AL:

Sounds like... Some folks made good on their threats.

VALEN:

Hm. We'll let them have this one. Convenience's sake. (She gets up and walks forward) So, fellas, day's gonna be yours again- get out when you can, go be of use to the community, I have to do more damage control.

CRUX:

We could use you here.

VALEN:

Wish I could, but I'm stretched pretty thin.

SAM:

Oh, can I at least know where to put the (Lowers and clears his throat) "documents" from the shed-?

VALEN:

(Shifting to more
inconspicuous talk)

You got this one...? Uh, yes, Sam, top drawer in my office, under, under some things, yeah? Yeah, good... You got this, do it on the low.

SAM:
Yes, ma'am. They've been burning a hole in my desk-

VALEN:
(Talking over him)
-Yeah! Lovely bagels, Will. You have great taste.

WILLIAM:
(Disgruntled)
That was my gift card from the Wrasslehog Championships.

VALEN:
I know... Noble sacrifice. Eat your victory.

WILLIAM:
Yeah...

VALEN:
I'm out. Al, wanna come with?

AL:
... Nah. I don't think he'd let me and anyway, he'll, uh... want a shoulder.

VALEN:
Ok... Ah... (Lowers her voice) You know the manipulation advice? It works best with boundaries.

AL:
Wish I coooooould! But I caaaaan't!

VALEN:
Try to find a way. Please. See y'all later.

WILLIAM:
Bye.

She walks out quickly as Lead's door opens.

BECKER:
No... No I got it... (He hangs up the phone)

NARRATOR:
All watched the State Director calmly stow his phone away.
(MORE)

NARRATOR: (cont'd)
In one of his hands, a plastic
briefcase. He looked up, strangely,
tensely serene.

BECKER:
There's been... a change of plans.

AL:
... No.

BECKER:
Yesss. The Rangers... ran into some
technical difficulties along the way.

SAM:
What kind?

BECKER:
An attack. Two assailants, one
humanoid, one Aberration- Cleaned
them out of... tasers... tranquilizers...
research equipment-

CRUX:
Shame.

SAM:
Are... they ok?

BECKER:
What? They're fine, they're... going to
Santeetlah's mechanic's- SO! It's
time to adapt.

CRUX:
We're going out into the community-

BECKER:
I DIDN'T ASK!! Crux! Thank you...-

AL:
-What're we doing, then?

BECKER:
Well I am not wasting a day just
because some scumsuckers- I'll teach
you how to do tasers. Now. Hop to it!

SAM:
Uh, r-right.

BECKER:
 (As they walk off,
 getting distant)
 First things first- these bastards
 can reset pacemakers, so watch where
 you're pointing..

Three sets of footsteps follow after him.

WILLIAM:
 ... Where's the EMT's number.. -

Roose's door creeeeaaaaaks open, and we hear her snuffling,
 sniffing, grotesquely.

ROOSE:
 Mmmeh, mmmmfffh- oh, that's it, (She
 starts licking and biting at the air)
 That's the ticket..

WILLIAM:
 Roose... do you have to...

ROOSE:
 Unngh, if you could taste it- the
 despair! The agony! So.. delicious..
 Auugh, yeah...

SCENE 9: EXT. DOCA BACKYARD, DAY.

A taser BZZZZTs.

SAM:
 Augh, that's loud, that's really
 loud.

BECKER:
 Oh yeah, really rattles the nerves-
 Here, one for you, Sam-

Becker hands off one.

SAM:
 Okay...

BECKER:
 Al...

Hands off another.

AL:
 Mhm.

BECKER:

And... (Inhale, exhale) You be careful with this, Prosody. You could really hurt someone.

CRUX:

Keep it. I don't feel tha-

BECKER:

-Great. It'll be in the briefcase-

He tosses it in and snaps it shut and tosses the case down on the ground.

BECKER: (cont'd)

Alright!! Continuing on- Point away from you, point away from your allies! Only aim with intention to shoot. And only aim when you're ready to teach something a lesson. Let me see you do it.

NARRATOR:

Sam and Al mirrored a tight lipped expression at each other and pointed in front of them. Crux started to lean down to sit in the dying grass.

BECKER:

Good- Good- STOP- This isn't a break, Prosody! Get back up, I need your full attention.

CRUX:

(Heavy sigh, low)

Oh, my attention, I thought anyone's would do...

SAM:

(Low, to him)

Don't poke the bear.

BECKER:

This is a lesson! So, always in front, always- Dogs!

Fergum is sniffing at Sam's taser.

SAM:

Ah, Fergum, watch out, these are dangerous.

BECKER:
 (Under his breath)
 Fuck me running..

FERGUM:
 It is of no importance, Sam, we came
 to find you.

SAM:
 Oh, what can I do ya for?

FERGUM:
 The anniversary of our meaty,
 fleshicous imprisonment draws near-
 We need comfort... We need to be
 listened to! We need your ears, Sam!!

Fergum whines.

SAM:
 I'm a little preoccupied at the
 moment, but-?

NARRATOR:
 The gangly dog's noses hovered
 unnervingly close to the viscous
 prongs.

AL:
 Those little guns get sparky, back
 up, buddies.

FERGUM:
 UHHHHM, we know what tasers are,
 thank you!! (Lower) Anyway, that day
 in late autumn, when all we knew came
 to an eternal, devastating end-

BECKER:
 Get out of here. We're training. Go
 on, Fergum!

NARRATOR:
 The pack froze at Becker's voice.
 Their heads turned in unison, ears
 flopping, tails lowering halfway.

BECKER:
 What?

FERGUM:
 ... Wh... Uhm... *Who*... are you?

BECKER:
Ok, enough, shoo.-

FERGUM:
No, really, who is this? Crux, who-
who is this? Why the orders? What's
happening?

CRUX:
Dunno, he just kind of showed up one
day.-

BECKER:
Stop it- Idiot- I'm Brick Becker,
Fergum, I've been here 5 months, I
saw you, one of you- come back to
life.

FERGUM:
Oh... Which time?

BECKER:
Transformer box- how often do you
die?

FERGUM:
No, we recall that one, but... uhhh...
fuzzy on... you.

BECKER:
I'm the STATE DIRECTOR of all this! I
should be in a air-conditioned
office, I should be in meetings about
National Security-

FERGUM:
Oh, so special...

AL:
(Snorts, then covers
it with a cough)
Need to stop smoking.

BECKER:
Yes. I am. I'm needed- I'm very
important and I have the power to do
whatever I see fit with little shits
like you. Got it? Now shoo.

FERGUM:
... Still not ringing any bells.

BECKER:
You know me!

FERGUM:
What was that name again?

BECKER:
Brick! Becker!

FERGUM:
... It sounds fake, that sounds like a
fake name, yes?

BECKER:
(Shrilly)
Target practice!!!

NARRATOR:
Ground Crew's half-buried smiles
slipped from their faces.

CRUX:
(Disbelieving)
No... -

BECKER:
You want something to jog your
memory??

FERGUM:
If you have such a thing, yes, we
would require it if this is
meaningful to you.

BECKER:
Sam.

SAM:
Mr. Becker-

BECKER:
Pick a dog- shoot it.

SAM:
(Quite shocked)
I'm not gonna do that.

BECKER:
It's immortal, it'll be fine- Shoot.
One.

FERGUM:
How would that help?

AL:
You can't ask him to do that.

Becker crosses to Sam.

BECKER:
It's good for you, just shoot it,
Sam!

NARRATOR:
Becker grabbed Sam's hand and yanked
it towards the closest of Fergum.

SAM:
-No!

AL:
-Get off!

CRUX:
-Don't you grab him!

NARRATOR:
Al pulled Sam back as Crux smacked
Becker's hand away, in a racket of
jolting, frantic movement. The tazers
spun out onto the grass.

Al and Sam land in the grass with "oofs", and a skittering
of Fergum running off.

FERGUM:
Aaaaaaaaauuuuuuuhhhh...

AL:
(Quietly, in Sam's
ear)
You ok?

SAM:
(A bit shaky)
Y-yeah.

NARRATOR:
A vein pulsed in Becker's neck. Crux
stood eye to eye with him, both
panting. Al squeezed Sam tight, the
dead grass fanned out from their legs
where they'd fallen.

CRUX:
You don't touch him or any of us like
that again.

BECKER:
(Between his
breaths, a smile, a
new shade)
So the fairy grew a spine, huh?

CRUX:
... We have protections in government
work, now- us gays. Should I file a
complaint with HAR? Or-

BECKER:
... It's a joke. (Half a laugh)
Changeling? Fairy? You get it? No one
was thinking about what you do in
your off time.

CRUX:
... My mistake.

BECKER:
Seems like none of you are ready for
protective measures yet. And here I
thought you all were getting closer.

NARRATOR:
He scooped up the dropped stun guns
from the lawn, along with the
briefcase. The three watched, frozen.

BECKER:
You made me think... I thought you were
ready to be better, Al.

AL:
... I need more time.

BECKER:
... Apparently. I'm disappointed in
you. Both of you.

He departs, walking over the grass.

NARRATOR:
Al's fingers squeezed her brother's
shoulders. He held onto the top of
her bandaged knuckles.

SCENE 10: INT. SEDUM'S APARTMENT, EVENING.

The local public access tv station is on.

SHARON VO:

Oh Sharon, where on earth did you get that sweater?

SHARON 2 VO:

Now Sharon, I don't want you to get upset-

SHARON VO:

Is that my mother's??

Audience laugh track.

VALEN:

Oooh, is this the one where Sharon makes an attempt on Sharon's life?

SEDUM:

(Distracted)

Hm? Uh, no, no, that was the third season, I thought...

SHARON 2 VO:

Sharon, what are you doing with that knife? Sharon??!

VALEN:

Hah, suck it, I'm right-

Audience laugh track and applause as the Sharons engage in a bloody battle. Sedum gets up and shuts the tv off.

VALEN: (cont'd)

Hang on, that's like the best episode of The Sharons!

SEDUM:

Sorry, I can't think with that on.

VALEN:

It's a sitcom, you're not supposed to think.

SEDUM:

I didn't ask you over to enjoy reruns, unfortunately.

VALEN:

You tricked me.

SEDUM:

Have any of the Ground Crew talked to you about Franklin?

VALEN:

... I haven't given them a chance. Been meeting a lot with the Wild Neighbors and as many townies as possible... So, no.

SEDUM:

It's rising to the surface, and I for one am not tremendously eager to be backed into a corner by loved ones for the second time in a year.

VALEN:

Ah, but we're risking a lot more Franklin's instead of one if we get into it all... or apparently three now, with his... family.

SEDUM:

Al asked. Somewhat asked, rather... warned she wouldn't stop searching. I said that you and I had to speak. Roose as well.

VALEN:

You know what Roose would say, she'd be all for it.

SEDUM:

Yes. Let alone... everything with City Council.

VALEN:

... That's a tight wire to cross...

SEDUM:

They're not equipped to understand what we're up against without some explanation.

VALEN:

To a certain extent.

SEDUM:

I don't want more of my past to be told by someone else again. It's mine, it's ours. We should take responsibility for our choices.

VALEN:

Yeah, ideally. But... but tell me you haven't been restraining yourself from going back to City Council after the summer meeting, really, I want to hear that it's been easier this time.

SEDUM:

... It hasn't. Couldn't sleep for a week after.

VALEN:

So are you hearing yourself? Do you want to expose more of our friends to that?

He pushes a bit of food around on his plate.

SEDUM:

Al's older than we both were when we first met them..

VALEN:

She also struggles with addiction.

SEDUM:

... Yes.

VALEN:

... If we tell one, we tell all three. And William. They'll all talk anyway. I want to make sure they hear the same thing, not a game of telephone.. This is four people brought into the mess. That's what we're talking about, Sedum. We need to be absolutely sure.

A knocking at the door.

SEDUM:

Sit tight..

Sedum gets up, crosses to the door and opens it. Al is there, ragged from the week, almost loopy, more severe than usual.

NARRATOR:

As he opened the door, the stench of stale smoke hissed inside.

(MORE)

NARRATOR: (cont'd)

Al stood on his second-storey stoop, her unwashed hair pulled into a stringy ponytail, and a half burned cigarette between her clumsily bandaged fingers.

AL:

Valen here? Her car's here. Where is she?

SEDUM:

What- Where have you been-

VALEN:

Speak of the devil.

AL:

Great. Y'all need to tell me some things. Now.

Al pushes in, past Sedum. He closes the door softly.

SEDUM:

Would you like dinner first?

AL:

What?

SEDUM:

Dinner. Would you like any?

AL:

Do I look like I want dinner?

SEDUM:

It is the hour, I assume you're hungry.

NARRATOR:

She blinked. Valen hoisted herself up off the couch and jostled the back of Al's shoulders.

Al makes a noise at being touched.

VALEN:

She's been playing double agent. (Loudly) We're not going to poison you.

NARRATOR:

Al shook themself loose.

AL:
I know you're not, get off.

SEDUM:
Yes, I am getting you food, you are far too grumpy to not be hungry.

AL:
I don't want food, goddammit, I want answers.

SEDUM:
No smoking in my house.

AL:
Fuck your rules!!- Sorry- I'll put it out- Where's your ashtray.

SEDUM:
I don't have one. Because there's no smoking in my house.

AL:
OOOOOH, SO CONVENIENT- sorrrrrry.
I'll, I'll, put it out-

She starts pulling out tissue after tissue from the box to snuff it out.

VALEN:
(Laughing slightly)
Jeeee-sus, this'd be funny if I wasn't concerned for our safety..

NARRATOR:
Al suffocated the cigarette in a wad of tissues, twisting and pinching hard.

AL:
I'm not, I'm not violent- look, I have two days to myself starting now- I have time to get y'all to talk, sleep, finally shower, maybe squeeze in some sobbing-

SEDUM:
You cannot be scheduling time to cry.

VALEN:
Yeah, you're rank.

AL:

THANK YOU! I'm disgusting- He won't leave me alone!! I thought if I became repulsive enough, he'd find reasons but nope! Becker's persistent with this protege fantasy and I'm getting nowhere, and he... I don't know how but he's getting closer and closer to the Field and-and he thinks it's connected to Franklin and Enfys and I don't know- I need to know before he does- you have to understand, he's talking like the Field is some origin point and I don't know if he's wrong or not- It goes somewhere. Where?! Why?? How?? I'm nowhere and he's dragging me along and..

NARRATOR:

Sedum calmly scooped the tissues from Al. Valen nodded sympathetically, moving her dinner plate from the coffee table, clearing space.

AL:

But you know what, I'm not gettin' nowhere, he trusts me, goddammit, that fucker trusts me- he's tryin' to prove himself all over again. Just like with you, Sedum, when he got you. He's gonna find the Field of Meat, he's gonna tie it to the Pyre, he's going to make Harbor the next archeological dig for the DoAA. He won't stop talkin' about a breakthrough, Becker's not leaving, not until he gets what he wants.

SEDUM:

Come here...

NARRATOR:

A scaled claw led Al to the couch and set her down. Valen came back from the kitchen, a warm plate of supper in her hands.

AL:
I have to know how to, to give him
enough to get him out, so I need
y'all to tell me what fuck is going
on, please, I have this weekend- He
might threaten us with tasers again-
No he's going to threaten us with
tasers again- God that smells good-

SEDUM:
Dear me...

VALEN:
Eat.

Al does.

SEDUM:
I'm moving your hair, oh that is
greasy-

AL:
You're greasy- Sorry-

SEDUM:
And here's a blanket, Spirit...

He drapes a blanket over her shoulders.

AL:
(Through a little
bit of food, utterly
depleted)
Thank you... Your couch is moist...

SEDUM:
It's the humidifiers.

AL:
It's gross.

SEDUM:
You're being entirely unpleasant
right now.

AL:
Sorry.

VALEN:
Is he that determined?

AL:
Mhm.

VALEN:
I thought we had more time...

SEDUM:
It's not in his nature to stop... We...
we'll tell you what we know.

VALEN:
(Acquiescing, but
not overly happy)
-After you take care of yourself. And
when we can get Will, Sam, and Crux
too.

SEDUM:
I'll round them up-

AL:
-Can't.

SEDUM:
Why not?

AL:
Sam said somethin' about bein' busy.

SCENE 11: INT CRUX'S CABIN, EVENING.

Soft music plays in the other room. Sam shoves Crux up against Crux's wall, kissing down his neck, both of them breathing heavily and moaning softly.

CRUX:
(Very much into
this)
Watch-watch the mask.

SAM:
(Same enthusiasm)
Mmf, right, how's hickeys for you?

CRUX:
Don't you dare make me have to wear a
turtleneck tomorrow- Ahh-

SAM:
(In between kisses,
and a small laugh)
So- your place- hnh- is really cool-

CRUX:
 (A half choked
 groan)
 Ungh, fuck- Thank you, God-

SAM:
 Never saw you as- a man into
 taxidermy...

CRUX:
 Ooohh, no "stuffing" jokes- Hah, I'd
 like to keep my erection.

NARRATOR:
 A glass eyed fox stared into nothing
 above their heads, Crux's hands
 feverishly untucking Sam's shirt from
 his trousers, Sam licking the side of
 his clavicle, Crux's mask sharply
 inflating and pulling tight against
 his jaw with the force of his breath.

SAM:
 (Breathless laugh)
 Leave the jokes to me.

CRUX:
 Convince me.

SAM:
 (Husky, whining,
 overly porny)
 Mmmfh, plllleease, let me make you
 laugh, nothing gets me off like
 standup-

CRUX:
 (Snickering)
 Obviously, you're fit to burst...

SAM:
 So fast? That's no fun. (Overly
 serious now) Dear sir, shall we
 abscond into the bedroom for brandy
 and stock overviews? I intend to make
 this night last.

CRUX:
 (Breathing a bit
 hard)
 You're a sadist. Come on.

NARRATOR:

He pulled Sam past the doorway into the dark of the next room, dominated by a simply dressed bed and a softly glowing lamp. A few frozen frogs peered from the windowsill. Sam bit his lip, grinning. Crux tossed a few curls aside from his brow, a coy glint in his black eyes.

CRUX:

Well?

Sam crosses the room and bridges the distance between them—their clothing rustling.

CRUX: (cont'd)

There we are... (A hmm of noticing) You bruised already?

NARRATOR:

A chill over Sam's forearm, the sleeve pulled up by Crux's trailing fingers. A red spotting colored beneath his skin.

SAM:

... Yeah. He grabbed me hard enough...

CRUX:

(A little lower than normal, almost a growl)

What a fucker.

SAM:

You protected me.

CRUX:

Let's not talk about work. It's decidedly unerotic.

SAM:

You know I have to say thank you.

CRUX:

Oh, darling, you'll say "thank you" over and over again, that's a promise.

Crux touches Sam, rustling his clothes.

SAM:

Hah... Unngh, yes, thank you... t-thank you for tonight, I don't want to sleep... hah, alone...

CRUX:

You won't have to. Not tonight. I'm here...

SAM:

Mmmf... Wait. You don't... get invested. That's always your thing.

CRUX:

I try not to. It takes effort- Can we get back to the main event-?

SAM:

You went toe-to-toe with him for me. I... I know you want me. And I want you but... there's something else, isn't there?

CRUX:

(Husky, moving back in)

Don't complicate this, pretty boy.

NARRATOR:

His cold hands ran up Sam's stomach, undoing each button slowly.

SAM:

(Sighing small moan, trying to redirect it back)

Crux, listen, I feel... I feel you-

A surge of fog overtaking him- J is in his mind.

J:

(Psychically)

My strange son, it's been a day, such a lovely wonderful day!

Sam inhales, caught off guard.

CRUX:

(Very unexpected)

Who's that?

J:
 (Psychically)
 Ah, oh?

SAM:
 (Psychically)
 Not now, J!!

J:
 Ahhh, I'll leave you to your Human
 diversions!

J leaves with a sudden swirl. It's quiet as Sam breathes heavily.

NARRATOR:
 They locked dark eyes. Crux's lashes
 flicked. His fingers had stopped,
 chilling Sam's navel.

CRUX:
 (Surprised and a bit
 deadened)
 I know everyone has a type, but you
 do know a telepathy fetish is... very
 specific?

SAM:
 It's not what you think-

CRUX:
 It's alright, I don't care- we're
 here for fun.

SAM:
 I know, but-

CRUX:
 Come on, where were we-

SAM:
 (In a rush)
 We're not together or-or anything,
 he's... like... a guardian. Of Harbor.
 His name is J- Judgment. He- he's not
 interested in sex or romance- it's
 like... he's my... my... I don't know how
 to describe him, but it's strictly
 platonic. He helps me. He's my
 friend.

CRUX:
 ... I didn't ask...

SAM:

Oh God, I... I haven't told anyone about him.

CRUX:

Like I said, I didn't ask- you don't need to... "confess" to me.

SAM:

I don't want to lie to you.

CRUX:

No, I don't suppose you would...

Sam sits down too.

SAM:

I'm not clever. Especially with Becker. That's all J. He knows the tricks here. (A light laugh) I've just... got a friend in a high place.

CRUX:

Well, you're a pretty good actor.

SAM:

... I got this job 'cause I was the only applicant meeting... stupid requirements. I read books- fairytales. I know how to speculate the roots of superstitions, and where myths converge- I'm not cut out for this. I was useless on Halloween.

CRUX:

We were held hostage.

SAM:

The only reason I've lasted this long is because J's been feeding me information. We were cut off that night- the only way I could've been helpful and it was... not there. I'm dead weight.

CRUX:

Not true. You've been stealing records.

NARRATOR:

Sam's heart thumped hard and hot- his face flushing bright pink as he stared at the well-worn carpet. Embarrassment doused his being.

CRUX:

... Bad joke. Sam, I've been around a long time, that helps a lot- I've worked this job a long time, helps even more- but even I admit the internet gives me an advantage sometimes. It's fine. Information is information.

SAM:

Heh... you're sweet. I'm sorry for the interruption. (Sighs) Wow, it's like having your mom walk in...

CRUX:

... Did he call you "son"?

SAM:

Yeah. Like I said, platonic.

CRUX:

How long have you had this... friendship?

SAM:

Uh, since I came back. I think he'd visit me when I was a kid, really infrequently, just cause he keeps an eye on everyone here. He's good, in his own way. I want... him to understand us better. I need to know him better.

CRUX:

Does he keep an eye on me?

SAM:

Uh, yeah.

CRUX:

Have you asked him about me?

SAM:

He said something about you living two lifetimes... It felt wrong to pry further. I don't want to do that to you. Your story is your's...

NARRATOR:

Sam glanced at Crux, expecting to see a sarcastically smug expression staring back. Instead the other man held his masked jaw in contemplation, casting his gaze down.

SAM:

I'm sorry. I should've told you.

CRUX:

No, it's your business- you don't have to do anything. You don't owe me anything. You could've... gossiped day and night, you still don't owe me-

SAM:

-You're in my life more than a hookup. We work together. Even if this was just only a hookup- You deserve to be respected and considered. I wanna be level with you.

CRUX:

(Struck by this
openness)
... Have you always been like this?
Vulnerable?

SAM:

(Closed mouth, wry
chuckle)
Another... "very unerotic" moment,
right?

CRUX:

(Absorbing the pure
intentions Sam
gives, tenderly)
You're a remarkably trusting person.

SAM:

Like a puppy, that's me. Ruff, ruff-

CRUX:

-No, like a... genuine person. Aren't you?

NARRATOR:

A cold hand encircled his. The apple of Crux's throat bobbed.

SAM:
... I'm trying to be. I'm trying to be
with you.

CRUX:
(Quietly)
Secrets, secrets...

SAM:
(Softly)
What's wrong?

CRUX:
I don't think... I can keep this from
you anymore, Sam.

SAM:
What?

Crux inhales and exhales a shaky breath, steeling himself.

NARRATOR:
Crux's hand released Sam's. Both
drifted to the sides of his mask. His
fingers slipped loops from behind his
ears. The mask shifted... and slipped
aside. Crux raised his bare chin.

CRUX:
I do care about you.

A barely audible inhalation from Sam. Surprised, ingesting
what he's seeing, and overwhelmed by the sincerity. We can
hear Crux breathe, lightly, raggedly.

NARRATOR:
He should have had lips. He should
have had a nose. Instead... a gash, an
open slit of scarred skin, tearing
from his lower teeth to behind the
opposite upper canine. Lop-sided
slit-like nostrils where a defined
nose was expected to be. Mangled
lesions from a past life. And Crux's
naked face was still, as always...
inscrutable.

CRUX:
(Whispered, again
telepathically)
Eye for an eye...

NARRATOR:

The words sunk into his mind as Crux's mouth remained still. Sam didn't know what he had expected. He didn't know what to say. So instead.. he cupped Crux's bare jaw. He ran his thumb over his chin, over the delicate scarred edges of his mouth.

CRUX:

(Involuntary, it's been a while since he's been touched on his face)

Ah...

SAM:

(Astounded by his vulnerability)

Thank you.

CRUX:

(After another steadying breath)

You're... welcome.

SAM:

... May I... ?

CRUX:

Yes. -

His telepathy is cut off by Sam's enveloping kiss. A moment passes, their clothes rustle, and Sam pulls away.

SAM:

(Even softer, barely a whisper)

Was that ok?

CRUX:

Again. Again... Please.

They kiss.

END

CAST

Crux - John Peacock
Valen - Samantha Weiler
Al - Faraday Roke
William - Jonathan Hallowell
Samson - Z Reklaw
Roose - Jacque Reiman
Kevin - Brendan Kane
Glenda - Gretchen Ho
Becker - Cory Moosman
Narrator - Kiarra Osakue
Leah - M. Kate McCulloch
Daisha and Meadows - Danielle Baylor
J - Joseph Rathorn
Mia - Erin M. Banta
Kiln - Carla Brown
Enfys - Tom Catt
Jordan - Breanne Nicole Wilson
Stephens - Nathaniel Dolquist
Franklin Deco - Paul Greene-Dennis
Fergum - Joseph Rathorn
Sharon 1 - Gretchen Ho
Sharon 2- Jenna Melissa Wilcox
Sedum - Marcus Cannello

CREW

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