

THE WOLVES THAT LIVE NEXT DOOR

EXT. NORTHERN NEW YORK - ADIRONDACK PARK - DAY/NIGHT

SERIES [Ulva voiceover throughout]

On a highland with a 360° panorama of forest to the horizon.

ULVA

The glorious Adirondack Park: six
million acres of forest;

Sunset. A placid lake. Insects BUZZ. Birds TWEET good night.

ULVA

3000 lakes; 30,000 miles of rivers
and streams.

In the distance, the town of Wolf Bite snug in a valley.

ULVA

I grew up in Wolf Bite, a tiny
speck in the middle of it.

POV: A walk in the forest. A CRUNCH of twigs and dead leaves.

ULVA

My mother disappeared into this
forest -- so the town says. My
father says she got sick and died.
I was a baby so I don't remember
much ... except her scent.

Pines sway soft. A female Wolf pads along the treeline. Her
gray fur glistens in yellow moonlight.

ULVA

Sometimes, I smell it on the wind.

Travel on a narrow county road. Ahead, a ROAD SIGN --

ULVA

They say she was a nutcase.
Dangerous. I think she loved too
much. The world didn't care.

WOLF BITE 1

ULVA

Townspeople like to tell me, "You
sure are your mother's daughter."

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - COLLEGE FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

CLOSE: A WOLF MASCOT'S FACE

Magnetic blue eyes sparkle inside the gray fur head.

CROWD CHEERS rise in a rolling growl.

The home field Wolves in gladiatorial combat for yardage
against bitter crosstown rivals the Bears.

Inside the wolf, athletic ULVA (20s) pumps school spirit with
backflips and splits.

BLEACHERS

CONNOR (20s), soulful brown-eyes, hits a flask, passes it.

Ulva HOWLS, sprints up the bleacher steps.

The crowd HOWLS back.

She trips on the bushy tail and spills onto Connor's lap.

A tick, then Ulva pushes the nozzle into his face -- a furry
kiss. Connor shrinks back.

CONNOR

Whoa! Boy or girl wolf?

Connor gropes her chest, feels breasts beneath the faux fur.

She slaps him. The paw leaves a faint mark.

CONNOR

Oh shit!

Ulva HOWLS.

The Connor/Mascot mischief entertains the Crowd.

She clammers up.

CONNOR

Hey! Wait.

Ulva shakes her tail at the Crowd en route the sideline.

POST GAME

Stands empty. The home field Crowd BUZZES with Wolf victory.

Ulva carries a bag with the costume, wolf head under her arm.

Connor locks in step next to her.

CONNOR

Sorry, I --

ULVA

Sexually assaulted me?

CONNOR

I guess ... yeah. I apologize.

She studies him. A tiny nostril flare.

ULVA

You smell sincere.

CONNOR

How do you sme --

(grin)

Guess you'll have to take my scent
for it.

She slaps him again. Bare hand. The echo hangs.

Connor rubs his cheek -- half shock, half impressed.

Ulva stalks off, misses a step and pivots back.

ULVA

Buying me a veggie burger or
wasting my time?

Connor shrugs.

CONNOR

You slapped me. Twice.

She moves off again, then over her shoulder,

ULVA

Never let a good slap go to waste.

Ulva zaps Connor: One, she's intriguing. Two, she's hot.

Connor catches up, reaches for her bag,

CONNOR

Let me ...

She pulls it away and forces the wolf head over his head.

CONNOR

(sniffs)

I like your scent.

Ulva pulls Connor around to look into his eyes. Her face blooms with interest she didn't expect.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DOWNTOWN - AVENUE - DAY

Filth and glamor jostle. Hey! New York Fucking City.

Connor carries the wolf head under his arm.

A FERAL DOG

rounds the corner. Ribs show, fur matted. It bares teeth, GROWLS a warning.

Ulva lowers herself a touch. Head tilts. Breath steady.

The Dog's GROWL softens. It edges closer, sniffs.

Fearless, Ulva extends a hand with palm open.

The Dog presses its head beneath her touch.

Connor's breath catches at how she calms the animal.

She beckons Connor with a soft smile. He pets the Dog's head.

ULVA
Territory.

CONNOR
Yours or his?

ULVA
Ours.

Ulva GROWLS low. Warm.

The Dog wags its tail, bounds off.

INT. DINER - DAY

A greasy spoon. Hash slings. HUM of fluorescent lights.

A CLATTER when a Server drops a plate. The room jerks. Ulva maintains her center. He notes her stillness, envies it.

She devours the patty fast. Like she hasn't eaten in days.

Connor so rapt on Ulva he forgets his food.

CONNOR
Your mother named you Ulva?

ULVA
 Threatened to chew my dad's arm off
 if he didn't.
 (lower)
 She's gone.

CONNOR
 Sorry.

Ulva shrugs. Connor softens. Not pity. Shared ache.

ULVA
 (hard memory)
 Didn't really know her. Dad raised
 me more or less by instinct. All
 the women in my family died young.
 Back to my great-great-grandma.

CONNOR
 Lost both my parents in a plane
 crash a few years ago.

ULVA
 I'm so sorry.

He gestures thanks.

Connor and Ulva eye fuck. High voltage crackles between them.

CONNOR
 Your eyes are amazing.

ULVA
 All the better to see you with.

Smiles widen to goofy. Their faces flush crimson.

CHEERY WAITRESS (40s) stops by for a reminder-to-tip-me.

CHERRY WAITRESS
 Anything else for you and your
 wife, sir?

CONNOR
 Wife, anything else ... honeypie?

Ulva chokes a laugh.

ULVA
 No thank you, sweetiepie husband.

Cheery's eyes drift to Ulva's ring finger.

CHERRY WAITRESS

Hey! You're not married.

(chuckle)

You two do look like you've been
together forever.

She smiles and sets down the bill.

They watch her walk off. A heartbeat of silence, then Ulva
points at his hamburger.

ULVA

Don't let that get away.

He chomps a big bite.

She reaches for his hand across the table, winks.

INT. STUDENT APARTMENT - 11:59:50 PM

Happy New Year!

A pack of Fellow Students with champagne flutes at the ready.

Ulva and Connor beat the clock with a passionate kiss.

STUDENTS

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six ...

In slinky gown, Ulva's frickin' gorgeous. Connor holds his
own in an impeccable charcoal suit.

STUDENTS

... five, four, three, two, one.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Partygoers join in a chorus of *Auld Lang Syne*.

ULVA

Happy New Year, Connor.

CONNOR

Happy New Year, Ulva.

ULVA

Let's go out on the balcony.

He nods: *let's*.

On their way, Ulva snags a champagne bottle.

BALCONY

She shivers in the chill. Connor wraps his jacket around her.

Below: The world's biggest party. A million revelers BLOW horns and WHOOP it up. Central Park fireworks BOOM.

Connor's arm around Ulva's shoulder, they consider the City.

CONNOR

The city's beautiful. Gotta love her ... even though she stinks.

ULVA

Behold litt villmark i hjertet ditt, ellers risikerer du å bli for tam.

Connor, patient.

ULVA

Keep a little wilderness in your heart, or risk becoming too tame.

Wait 'til you see the Adirondacks.

CONNOR

I'd like to.

ULVA

I'd like to show you.

They kiss then pause to reflect.

ULVA

Where are you going, Connor?

He points out at nothing in particular. The future.

CONNOR

That way.

ULVA

Mind if I tag along?

Connor weighs his answer to this tricky question.

CONNOR

Aimer, ce n'est pas se regarder l'un l'autre, c'est regarder ensemble dans la même direction.

She tilts her head.

CONNOR

Love isn't looking at each other.
It's looking in the same direction.

They do look at each other ... and soft kiss.

He points to the champagne.

CONNOR

No glasses?

ULVA

Country mice don't need no glasses.

She shakes the bottle.

CONNOR

No. No! Don't do it. Don't.

Ulva pops the cork. It launches deep into the new year.

Bubbly erupts.

ULVA

WOO-HOO. HAPPY NEW YEAR!

She showers Connor. He wrestles for control of the bottle.
Sprays her back. Both laugh.

Champagne drips from their faces.

They drink from the bottle and HOWL.

Behind the French Doors, Partygoers gawk at the lunatics.

INT. CONNOR'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Connor nose deep in a Constitutional Law Casebook.

Roommate ROB (20s) fritters away on a smartphone game.

From the hall,

ULVA (OS)

Mister Wolfie, owww wooo owww wooo.

Connor laughs.

VEXED STUDENT (OS)

Shut up! I'm studying.

ROB

Your bae is weird. What're you
doing with that? Not lawyer's wife
material.

Connor's smile fades. He glares at Rob.

CONNOR

You don't get to talk about her.

Rob raises hands: *Okay, bro. Okay.*

Ulva slips in -- an alpha predator on the scent of her mate.

CONNOR

Owww wooo owww wooo, Mrs. Wolfie.

Ulva and Connor hook up for a hot kiss.

ROB

Get a room. Not this one.

Lost in each other, it goes unheard.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

New York shimmers on this exquisite spring night.

The DIN of traffic and SCURRY of people distant, irrelevant.

A pregnant Moon glorifies the park in yellow light. Hollywood
could not design it to be more romantic.

Ulva and Connor hand-in-hand. He carries her shoes.

She stops in the middle of the Sheep Meadow to look up with
reverence at the Moon.

ULVA

(re: Moon)

She's been whispering to me since I
was a child.

She paws Connor, nuzzles him. They tumble to the ground.

ULVA

Be my Mister Wolfie.

CONNOR

I am your Mister Wolfie, and you're
my Mrs. Wolfie.

ULVA

More than pet names. Wolves mate
for life. What's your promise?

CONNOR

Like marriage?

She rolls over to land astride him.

ULVA

No. Yes. Beyond ritual, but not
magic. An instinctive way to love.

The weight of her proposal resonates with Connor, but he
couldn't explain why. He presses his forehead to hers.

A playful bite on his shoulder hard enough for him to flinch.

He bites her neck -- playful but a bit hard. She YELPS.

Connor: *did I just do that!*

She laughs and rolls to lie by his side.

ULVA

Wolf pairs never leave each other.
Not even death separates them.

CONNOR

I love you, Ulva. I promise to be
at your side forever. Beyond death.

She holds Connor's face,

ULVA

I love so much. I am your Mrs.
Wolfie. Will you be Mr. Wolfie?

CONNOR

Yes, Mrs. Wolfie.

They kiss to sanctify that sacred bond beyond marriage.

ULVA

What about cubs?

CONNOR

A den full of them.

Ulva's brow furrows.

ULVA

Our wolf love is ours ... a secret.
It's too easy to be misunderstood
or judged. People won't understand
what can't be proven.

He nods agreement.

Connor scopes out the park. No one around.

CONNOR

Let's make love.

ULVA

Sister Moon will witness our bond.

They stroke and kiss on the moist grass.

Breaths and heartbeats merge.

The Moon blushes.

INT. CONNOR'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Connor's nose to the law book grindstone.

Rob plays a smartphone game.

A WEASLEY UNDERGRAD (19) KNOCKS.

WEASEL

Whelan?

CONNOR

Yeah.

He delivers a letter to Connor.

WEASEL

From the Moot Court.

Weasley beats a hasty retreat.

Connor scans the letter. His head throws back, ears RING.

He fixes on an idly-drawn wolf doodle in a notebook.

ROB

'Zup?

Connor stares past Rob, then blinks at him.

CONNOR

They dropped me as Prosecutor.

ROB

Guess they don't want prosecutors
who howl at the moon.

Connor ignores him. He texts Ulva. (Texts in italics.)

CONNOR

dropped by moot as prosecutor ♥✿♥

ULVA

✉ SUX y ♥✿♥

CONNOR

too wolfie

ULVA

not 4 me their loss ♥✿♥

CONNOR

not sure who i am wo moot

ULVA

more than their rules ♥✿♥

His fingers hover. He lingers in the phone's light.

No response.

A CRACKLE when he crushes the letter.

CONNOR

Fuck!

He misses a two-point into the wastebasket.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - DAY

Post graduation. Parents and graduates mill and snap pix.

Ulva and Connor in cap and gown with wolf ears atop.

She scans the crowd. Two Female Graduates point and snicker at the wolf ears.

Ulva fluffs the ears, flips them off.

Connor chuckles his affection for her.

The Graduates flip back and spin away.

Connor fluffs his ears for Ulva. They kiss.

She spots her dad, STORM (50s), races to him.

He holds her at arms length, exhales and reads her face.

STORM
Saw ya get yer diploma. So proud.
Your mama would be too

Storm bear hugs her.

ULVA
Thanks, Dad. Love you.

STORM
Love ya right back double.
(holds out hand)
Can I have yer tassel. To hang?

Ulva presents the tassel to Storm. He strokes it like a talisman -- a bit too long. He catches himself, pockets it.

Connor slides in next to Ulva.

STORM
Who's this?

ULVA
Dad, this is Connor Whelan. He's a law student.

Connor extends a casual hand. Storm grips it hard, notes his flinch. Storm draws in a big breath. His face tightens.

CONNOR
Pleased to meet you, Mr. Lund. Ulva talks about you all the time.

STORM
Ya got a lawyer's hands.

Ulva smiles. So Storm-like. So father-like.

He squeezes harder. Connor squeezes back ... no match. Storm releases Connor. He shakes out the hand.

STORM
Call me Stormy. Everybody does.
(to Ulva)
Who is he to you?

Ulva takes a breath, nods to Connor: *it's time*. He nods: *yep*.

CONNOR
 Ulva's husband. We got married.
 Last week.

ULVA
 We wanted to surprise you.

QUICK FLASH - STORM'S WEDDING DAY

In a bridal veil, RUNA (20s). Her laugh sounds like music.

BACK

Storm reels -- a gut punch.

CONNOR
 Ulva's the most extraordinary
 person I ever met ... Stormy.

ULVA
 I feel the same way.

CONNOR
 We love each other very much.

Storm frowns.

STORM
 Yer sure yer mother's daughter.
 (tweaks her cap ears)
 All grown up.

He smiles. Not from joy. From somewhere deep and distant.

STORM
 Yer mother and me run off ta get
 hitched. Didn't tell anyone.
 (recalls)
 This day shoulda looked different,
 my daughter.
 (in Norwegian)
 Congratulations on the wedding,
 wishing you both all the best.

ULVA
 (for Connor)
 He congratulated us.

CONNOR
 Thank you, Stormy. Join us for
 lunch after we turn our gowns in.

STORM
 Long drive back. Another time.

ULVA

We have another surprise. I applied
for a job teaching kindergarten at
Central.

Storm's eyes shock open.

STORM

Yer comin' home? To Wolf Bite?

CONNOR

She'll teach. I'll work while
I study for the Bar. We want to
build our life in Wolf Bite.

ULVA

May we stay at the cabin until we
get on our feet?

STORM

(to Ulva)

I stay in the cabin. You stay in
the house.

ULVA

Dad --

STORM

Decided.

He grips Ulva's hand for a tick, then flees.

STORM

Ain't been back for a while.

Over his shoulder,

STORM

Town ain't like it was growin' up.

ULVA

Nothing ever changes in Wolf Bite.

In Storm's eyes: you'll see. He quick walks.

ULVA

Dad ...?!

He waves goodbye with no glance back. Quickens his pace.

ULVA

Not like him.

CONNOR

Maybe not for the reason you think.

Confused, Ulva and Connor can only hold each other.

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - CAR, TRAVELLING - DAY

ROAD SIGN: "WOLF BITE 1"

The bumpy two lane winds through dense old growth forest.

Ulva rides shotgun. Connor pilots his Beater. A U-Haul trailer bops along behind.

A Bobblehead Wolf shimmies on the dashboard.

Connor inhales deep.

CONNOR

Those pines ...

ULVA

Sure you won't miss the aroma of
pee in the subw --

A Young Fox runs across the road.

ULVA

Watch it!

Connor brakes, swerves. The Fox makes it, casts a curious glance back at them.

Ulva waves. The Fox melds with the forest.

CONNOR

Whoa! No foxes on 14th Street.

Ulva sighs relief. They roll on.

ROADSIDE PLACARDS: "No Robots at Nile", "Humans yes, Robots No", "Automation has no soul, Nile can go to HELL!"

CONNOR

(re: signs)

What's that all about?

ULVA

Dunno. Most townspeople work at the
Nile distribution center about 40
miles south.

ROADSIDE: A ROBOT EFFIGY in scraps: pots, pans, ping-pong ball eyes, an axe in its stainless steel bowl head.

SIGN, TOWN LINE:

"Welcome to Wolf Bite
Enjoy The Good Life
Est. 1788 as Morsure de Loup
Pop. 3201
Home Of The World Famous Wolf Bite 5K"

They cruise into the no-stoplight berg. A teensy island in a vast ocean of old growth forest.

Throw a rock north and it lands in Canada.

CONNOR
(chuckle)
This is it? Wolf Bite?

ULVA
Contain that excitement.

Over the main drag, Wolf Street, a BANNER:

"31st Annual Wolf Bite 5K August 16th
Wolf Fest August 14 - 17"

Anti-Automation lawn signs and placards everywhere.

Townspeople gawk at Ulva and Connor. They pass --
Squat and Gobble diner
Stumble Inn bar
Church, grocery and hardware stores, gas station.

Closed antique and local crafts stores.

A tiny park with gazebo and Civil War memorial statue.
Sheriff's substation next door.

Cross streets bear clever names: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th.

Ulva waves to KAREN CONNASSÉ (50s) in the grocery store parking lot. She loads groceries into a SUV.

ULVA
Hi, Karen.

Karen does see Ulva but ignores her.

Ulva shrugs.

ULVA

Okay ...
(points)
Next left.

Connor guides the rig -- no turn signal.

Just up the street, a Sheriff Car lights up.

Connor pulls to the curb.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU (60s) leans way into the driver side window.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Failed to signal the turn. With a
trailer. License, registration.

Connor passes the paperwork the Sheriff peruses.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
New York, huh?

CONNOR
Yes, sir. You're right, Sheriff.
Would you consider a warning?

Ulva leans forward,

ULVA
Hi, Sheriff. Ulva Lund ... Whelan.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Stormy's daughter?

Ulva smiles.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Moving back?

She nods.

The Sheriff hands Connor the papers.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
This isn't New York. You're warned.
We come down on troublemakers like
a ton of bricks here. Savvy?

CONNOR
Yes, sir. Thank you, Sheriff.

ULVA
Nice to see you, Sheriff.

He releases them with a go-ahead wave.

CONNOR
Hardass.

ULVA
Good man. Been Sheriff forever. And
you didn't siiignallll, counselor.

Connor swallows a verbal response in favor of a SNORT.

DOWN THE STREET
The forest closes in.

ULVA
Third on the right.

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Sturdy. Weather beaten. Cozy.

Connor and Ulva swing up the driveway.

STORM
moves belongings to a beat up F150. "POACHER" in spray paint
on the driver side door.

Storm acknowledges them with a tiny wave.

Ulva jumps out, hugs him.

Connor stretches after the long drive.

STORM
Got here okay.
(re: belongings)
Last load. House is all yours. Put
up some food for ya.

ULVA
Thank you.

Connor waves. Stormy: tiny jut of his chin back.

Stormy mounts the truck.

ULVA
Have dinner with us tonight.
Celebrate moving home.

STORM
Ain't much for celebratin'.

Ulva points at the pickup's door.

ULVA
Who put that on the truck? Still
fighting with McDonald over the
property lines?

Storm spits, sweeps his hand.

STORM
I know my land.

He peels out.

Connor tracks Ulva's hurt. Holds her.

ULVA
Why is he so ... pissed off?

CONNOR
Not at us. What he lost.

Ulva tries but cannot hold back a few tears.

ULVA
It's a little disorienting. I hope
he comes around. He's been my rock
since Mom died.

She buries her head in Connor.

ULVA
Now you're my rock. I'm so happy we
found each other.

They hug and kiss warm. And linger to collect themselves.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Cozy. Clean (for a guy's place). Extraordinary wood furniture
handmade by Storm -- his business.

An oversize fireplace promises warmth against the cold.

Ulva giggles when Connor lifts her across the threshold.

He puts her down. She steps in tentative. Her nostrils flare.

FROM THE WOODS
Two wolves HOWL.

ULVA

A wolf pair's welcoming us. Let's
say 'Hi' back.

CONNOR

Wolves? That close?

ULVA

Sound does funny things here. It
carries. They're miles away.

ON THE PORCH

They HOWL.

FREDDIE PÉTEUX (5) cycles by on a training-wheel bike. He
brakes to take in the wolf show.

Ulva and Connor send greetings.

ULVA

Hello.

FREDDIE

Are you wolf people?

ULVA

No, just people.

FREDDIE

Wolfs howl. Not people.

ULVA

What's your name?

FREDDIE

Where's Stormy? I'm not supposed to
talk to strangers.

CONNOR

We live here now. I'm Connor. This
is Ulva. Now we're not strangers.

FREDDIE

Yes you are.

Freddie pedals off in a hurry. From a safe distance,

FREDDIE

Freddie.

Ulva and Connor snicker, then tackle the U-Haul unload.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Motivational POSTERS: "Be Kind Be Respectful Be Nice" "We Are All A Rainbow"

School principal MARGARET APPARTCHIK (50s) interviews Ulva.

MARGARET

You were a smarty-pants in third grade. Couldn't keep shoes on you.

ULVA

(chuckle)

Still can't. I liked your class.

MARGARET

Thanks. I love administration more than the classroom now.

Margaret shuffles Ulva's paperwork.

MARGARET

Everything's in order, but the district supervisor has final say. Standard probationary period is four years. Teachers can be fired for cause any time before tenure.

ULVA

That's my understanding.

MARGARET

We stick like glue to the mandated kindergarten curriculum ...

(smirk)

... and expect teachers to wear shoes at all times.

Ulva smiles and nods: *of course.*

MARGARET

Why do you think you're a good fit for the position?

ULVA

I like the idea of being the first teacher students encounter. To set a course for an entire educational experience. I love teaching and children. How they surprise you.

MARGARET

(rises)

I'll make a recommendation to the supervisor. You'll be notified by mail either way. About two weeks.

ULVA

Thank you, Principal Appartchik.

MARGARET

You survived my class. Margaret.

INT. JEFF'S HARDWARE - SAME

More a general store. DIY supplies. Sundries.

Dusty, overstocked shelves. Overall, the place needs a broom.

The owner, JEFF VISSER (60s), questions Connor.

JEFF

Nobody wants to work. Whole town's on severance and unemployment.

CONNOR

The distribution center?

JEFF

Beep-boop-bop. Robots moving shit from the front door to the back.

Jeff appraises Connor: *This soft city boy worth hiring?*

JEFF

Said you know construction.

CONNOR

My dad ran a construction company. Started going with him to sites at five. Had a toy toolbox and banged scrap together.

JEFF

Got someone needs to put up a big screen TV on plaster and lath.

CONNOR

Toggle bolt. Also called a Molly.

JEFF

What nail for framing?

CONNOR
Sixteen penny, three and a quarter.

JEFF
How do you join P-V-C?

CONNOR
P-V-C primer and solvent cement.

JEFF
One guy said use duct tape.
(shakes his hand)
Welcome to Jeff's Hardware. Start
at nine tomorrow. You represent me.
No nonsense. Good?

Connor studies his law book hands, too smooth for this job.

CONNOR
I'll work hard for you.

Jeff nods: we'll see.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - ULVA'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - DAY

Gymnastic trophies and ribbons. Cheerleader pom-poms.
PENNANT: "Central". POSTER: a yellow-eyed female wolf's face.

On a handmade nightstand, a PHOTO in an ornate carved frame.

Runa cradles baby Ulva. Her Scandinavian beauty stuns. Mona
Lisa smile. Dazzling green eyes.

Ulva sniffs. A hint of memory.

She falters before her finger caresses Runa's cheek.

Runa's green eyes draw her in.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - ULVA'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

FLASHBACK

A cascade of blue moonlight.

Runa cradles NEWBORN ULVA, trills a Norwegian lullaby.

RUNA
Barnet legges i vuggen ned/
Stundom gråter og stundom ler/
Barnet legges i vuggen ned/
Stundom gråter og stundom ler ...

Runa recollects a feeling. A spark of ache ignites in those remarkable green eyes. Gone with her next breath.

A cloud devours the moonlight to cast a shadow over Runa.

She smells Newborn Ulva.

Newborn Ulva touches her nose, sniffs. She coos.

A WOLF HOWL from the hills.

Runa's head jerks. She hears an ancient memory.

She places her daughter in a handmade crib.

Runa rests her fingertips on the cool window glass, peers into the night.

CONNOR (VO)

Owwwooooo!

END FLASHBACK

Ulva gulps a breath.

She replaces the photo on the table, a bit askew, then straightens it. Without thought.

ULVA

Owwwooooo!

LIVING ROOM

Wolf-themed belongings -- calendar, figurines.

Ulva bounces to Connor, phone in hand.

She jumps up on him, wraps her legs around his waist.

ULVA

So?

CONNOR

Nailed it. You?

ULVA

Fantastic! Went well. I'll know in two weeks.

Ulva climbs down.

Her smile holds but her breath shallows.

Ulva presses the phone to her chest before she tilts the screen to Connor --

INSERT - FERTILITY MONITOR APP

A circle graph with pointer to OVULATING.

BACK

She GIGGLES when Connor thrusts her over his shoulder for transport to the master bedroom.

She settles into him. Intellect steps aside for instinct.

EXT. MCDONALD FARM - CHICKEN COOP - NIGHT

Dirt flies. Three WOLVES dig under the coop fence.

Hens SQUAWK and thrash.

IN THE COOP

Wolves break through, work fast, efficient.

Lights snap on in the farmhouse.

The Wolves freeze with Hens in their jaws.

GRAY McDONALD (60s) slams open the back door. He wields a 12 gauge pump-action shotgun.

The Wolves scramble under the fence.

GRAY

Sonsofbitches.

He fires, misses, racks, fires and catches one in the haunch. It stumbles and drops.

Gray looms over the wounded Wolf. It WHIMPERS.

GRAY

Not today, Boy-O.

He fires point-blank.

Gray surveys the aftermath: blood and a drift of feathers.

EXT. FOREST - TRAIL - DAY

A sunny summer day. The forest vibrant with BIRDSONG.

Connor follows Ulva to her mother's burial site; a shaded rise near a gentle stream's eternal BURBLE.

A hand-carved WOOD CROSS commemorates her.

RUNA LUND
1975 - 2002
Forever My Wife, My Love, My Life

On her knees, Ulva yanks weeds and overgrown grass.

She rises to nuzzle Connor.

They bow their heads in silence for a bit.

ULVA
Let's go. It's a tough trail.

THE TRAIL

Narrow path. Loose rock. Steep. Halfway up, a vista reveals.

PROMONTORY

Hand-in-hand, they summit.

ULVA
My special place.
(points)
The Saint Lawrence. At night, you
can see the lights of Montreal.

The grandeur moves Connor.

CONNOR
Incredible.

She strokes his face.

ULVA
I love you.

CONNOR
I understand why this is your
special place. Love you.

They kiss but Ulva pushes away. Her nostrils flare.

A RUSTLE. They snap attention to --

-- an OLD FEMALE WOLF with dazzling green eyes that edges through underbrush. Burdock-laden fur. Thin. Wary.

Connor stiffens. Steps back.

Ulva holds Connor's hand. He eases.

A soft breeze moves the treetops.

Ulva matches the Wolf's gaze of recognition.

The Wolf, a slow pad closer.

Ulva treads toward her. Ten feet between them now.

The Wolf lowers her front in a bow.

Ulva bows in return. Connor hesitates, then bows too.

In a blink, the Wolf dissolves into the forest.

Connor exhales, stunned.

Ulva's eyes well.

Connor draws her close, both beyond words.

EXT. WOLF BITE - WOLF STREET - DAY

Gray cruises with the Wolf carcass across the pickup's hood.

LOCAL MALE
Fuckin' A, Gray.

Other Locals clap and holler.

EXT. LUND FAMILY CABIN - DAY

Connor arrives in his Beater.

PORCH
Storm cleans a 20 gauge shotgun. Gun oil rag over his knee.

CONNOR
Hi, Stormy. Going hunting?

STORM
Quail. What can I do ya for?

CONNOR
My tools are in storage in Queens.
Didn't have room for them in the
move. Mind if I borrow a few?

STORM
Don't like lendin'. They don't get
brought back where they belong.

CONNOR
I'm the same way. I promise to
return them.

Storm weighs the promise. He juts his chin to a garage converted to a --

WOODSHOP
A woodworker's dream. Every tool a master needs on pegboards with an outline of their shape in pencil.

Custom furniture in various stages of completion.

Connor gathers what he needs.

PORCH

CONNOR
Thanks, Stormy.

Storm nods.

He steps off but something nags at Connor, stops him.

CONNOR
How did Runa die?

Storm stills. A small shift. Not anger. Memory.

STORM
Runa? What did Ulva tell you?

CONNOR
That she got sick and died.

STORM
Then that's what happened. Last
thing Runa asked was to bury her in
the forest she loved so damn much.

Storm measures Connor, sees more than he can admit aloud.

STORM
Runa had sickness no doctor could
cure. Ulva's got her blood. Keep
her strong. Don't let her pass on
like her mama did.

He returns to the shotgun task: *conversation over.*

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Connor studies for the Bar. Highlighter, flash cards, a battered prep book at his elbow.

Ulva tiptoes in, hides something behind her back.

ULVA
Didn't wanna break the magic ...

Connor rubs his eyes.

CONNOR
S'okay. Can use a break.

ULVA
When's the exam?

CONNOR
July. I'm gonna get sooooo wasted
when it's over.

She settles on his lap.

ULVA
I threw up this morning.

CONNOR
You were okay last night.

ULVA
For a smart guy ...

She reveals a home pregnancy test. Positive.

CONNOR
You're pregnant!

He rubs her belly.

ULVA
They call it "up the stump" here.

CONNOR
Classy.

A full breath ... then joy bursts. They cry/laugh.

CONNOR
Oh, Ulva. I love you so much. My
brain is mush. What's beyond happy?

ULVA
You should do crossword puzzles.
Ecstatic? Overjoyed? Euphoric?

CONNOR
All those.

ULVA
I four-letter-word-for-adoration
you.

CONNOR
S-e-x?

She GRRRS and bites his shoulder.

ULVA
We gotta tell Dad.

Connor nods happy until she pulls into him. Anxiety flits across his face; gone before she sees it.

EXT. LUND FAMILY CABIN - PORCH - DAY

Ulva and Connor KNOCK.

Storm answers. He slips on a rumpled black suit jacket.

ULVA
Dad. What're you dressed up for?

STORM
Funeral. My friend Johansen. Hung himself in the barn. Third farmer this year took the pipe.
(to Ulva)
Ya went to school with his kids.

ULVA
Sure. The Twins. Sorry.

CONNOR
Yeah, Stormy, sorry.

STORM
Bad day.

He eyes them: so?

CONNOR
We should come back --

ULVA

It's okay. How do you feel about
being a grandpa?

It takes a second to click and Storm's eyes twinkle.

STORM

(tiny smile)

You're with child?

ULVA

I am.

Storm holds Ulva's hand.

STORM

(Norwegian, subtitled)

Congratulations on the coming baby!

He shakes Connor's hand.

STORM

Yer mother would be very happy. You
and her both near didn't make it.
Tough birth. Hope it goes smooth.

ULVA

Thank you, Dad.

STORM

Better get busy and build a crib.

ULVA

We'd love that.

CONNOR

Thank you.

Ulva hugs her father.

Storm peers at Connor over her shoulder -- a knowing. He
shakes his head.

INT. STUMBLE INN - DAY

First stone building in Wolf Bite circa 1790. G. Washington
probably got schnockered here.

Bar: a dark wood slab worn smooth by generations of elbows.

The mirror's silver backing flakes. Blackened fireplace. No
matches of any two tables or chairs from various eras.

Behind the bar, a fixture for decades. Seen-it-all YANCY (50s) -- Mr. and Mrs. Clancy's eldest daughter.

Johansen's Wake: a sea of Men and Women Mourners in black pound shots to dull the pain of a senseless loss.

Storm taps his shot glass on the bar. Yancy right on it.

He faces the Mourners, raises the glass.

STORM

Ladies and gentlemen, a toast to Johansen. In Norway we say, "Takk for alt." "Thanks for everything."

A CHORUS of toasts before synchronized gulps of booze.

In the back, Gray McDonald the only person to keep his ass on a chair. He stands for this though,

GRAY

In Scotland, we say "Awa' n' bile yer heid." Means, "Fuck off, Lund."

GROANS from Mourners.

GRAY

Wrong Boy-O hung himself.

Storm barrels toward Gray. Shoves tables and chairs aside.

GRAY

C'mon, ya goddamn thief. C'mon.

Men grab Storm before he throttles Gray.

Yancy RINGS a bell behind the bar to cool the temperature.

YANCY

Knock it off or I'll eighty-six the both of ya. Permanent.

Men hold Storm at bay. He pushes them aside.

GRAY

Not today. Not today ... poacher.

Storm's hand shakes. He slaps cash on the bar.

STORM

Next round on me. Except for that fucker.

GRAY
I'd as soon swallow cow piss than
your whiskey, thief.

Storm's face burns in crimson. He stomps through the door. McDonald's laugh trails him.

INT. JEFF'S HARDWARE - COUNTER - DAY

Connor mans the store. Jeff in the back.

Karen Connasse storms in with a gallon of paint she drops on the counter.

CONNOR
Hello. How can I help you?

Jeff returns to the front. He spots Karen, retreats.

KAREN
Who are you?

CONNOR
I'm Connor, ma'am. Is there a
problem with the paint?

KAREN
It's too coral. Not enough cerise.

CONNOR
Paint looks different on the wall
than in the can.

He opens the paint can.

Ulva enters with a letter.

A Local Man fingers animal trap teeth. He surveils Ulva too long, turns away when she notes his glare.

Ulva tiptoes to the counter, spots Karen and stops at a bin of nuts and bolts.

KAREN
I don't care what it "looks like in
the can." I want my money back.

Connor makes eye contact with Ulva, smiles hello.

She winks and screws a nut onto a bolt. Very slow.

He swallows a laugh.

Karen realizes Ulva stands behind her. Her eyes roll.

KAREN
Figures.

CONNOR
I understand you'd like a refund
but it's a custom color.

KAREN
You're an idiot. Where's Jeff?
(looks around)
JEFF!

Jeff peeks from the back room. He notices Ulva. Judgmental eyes bore into her.

She flicks the nut/bolt into the bin.

Jeff leaves the relative safety of the back room.

JEFF
Okay, Karen. Take it down a notch.
I'll credit your card.

KAREN
(re: Connor)
Teach him some manners.

JEFF
I'll take him behind the wood shed.

Karen HUFFS.

She brushes past Ulva on the way out.

ULVA
Hello, Karen.

KAREN
That your husband?

Ulva nods.

Karen ping pong a look between Connor and Ulva. She shakes her head then blasts off.

Ulva tracks Karen out. Steady. Unblinking.

METAL SNAP. The Local Man tests the spring of an animal trap.

COUNTER

JEFF
(to Connor)
Don't sweat it. She's ... Karen.
Still sore I beat her for mayor.

Connor holds Ulva's hand across the counter.

Jeff checks whether Karen's out the door.

JEFF
Good to see you, Ulva. Havin' fun
with nuts and bolts?

ULVA
Just screwin' around, Jeff.

Jeff exhales hard: *not funny*.

Ulva waves the letter.

ULVA
School board.

CONNOR
And ...?

ULVA
Waited. We're in it together --
good and bad.

She rips the letter open. Her bright face gives it away.

CONNOR
You got it.

ULVA
Got it. So excited.

Ulva and Connor lean to kiss over the counter.

JEFF
Hey! This is a place of business.

CONNOR
Jeff, meet Mrs. Whelan, the new
kindergarten teacher at Central.

JEFF
That right?

Connor and Ulva kiss.

JEFF

Okay, okay. Do I need to throw cold water on you two?

Ulva and Connor laugh it off but Jeff. Never. Kids.

EXT. LUND FAMILY CABIN - PORCH - DAY

Storm KNOCKS. Connor answers.

CONNOR

Hey, Stormy.

STORM

Come to pick up my huntin' vest in the shed. Ya got the key.

CONNOR

Ulva's in the shower. Come in for coffee. I'm sure she'd like to say hello.

STORM

Another time. She okay?

CONNOR

Perfect.

Storm not convinced. He scans the treeline.

SHED

Storm slips on a bright orange hunter safety vest.

On the inside collar in Magic Marker: "S. LUND". He nods, traces it with a finger.

STORM

Bring ya some Quail if ya want.

CONNOR

Never had it, but I'll try.

STORM

She still don't eat meat, huh?

Connor shakes no.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Where the McDonald and Lund properties abut. A creek marks the boundary.

Storm at the edge of the slow-moving water. Shotgun at the ready, he stalks slow and deliberate.

From a thicket, a CHIP-CHIP-CHIP Quail call.

The covey flushes. Shotgun fire. A bird drops.

He smiles. Clean shot.

Storm about to retrieve the downed bird --

GRAY (OS)
Them's my birds.

Storm spins around to find Gray on the opposite bank. Gray points a 12 gauge shotgun with birdshot load.

STORM
Know goddamn well the creek is the property line. West of it is mine.

Gray blasts Storm. In the heart.

Storm falls -- dead before the sound of the shot reaches him.

Gray kicks Storm's body.

GRAY
That's that ... Boy-O.

He rips off Storm's vest --

GRAY
(mutter)
Mine!

-- and scoops up the Quail.

LATER

Storm face down in creekside mud.

Clipboard in hand, NYS DEC INVESTIGATOR GRADY (50s) logs the scene. He shakes his head at Storm's cold body.

Rookie STATE TROOPER WATKINS (20s) analyzes the area.

Out of their earshot, Sheriff Corrumpu questions Gray.

GRAY
I saw movement. No orange. I took the shot. When I got closer ...

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
I know exactly what happened here.
I'm not putting it in the report.
I have your statement. Go home.

Gray does as ordered. He smirks.

Corrumpu shakes his head at Storm's body, steps around it.

INVESTIGATOR GRADY
Sheriff.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Picked the wrong day to stay home.

INVESTIGATOR GRADY
I never get the fun calls.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Shooter's cooperative. Says he saw
movement, no vest. Took the shot.

Grady jots.

INVESTIGATOR GRADY
Victim not wearing required orange
at time of incident. Real tragedy.

TROOPER WATKINS
Didn't find a vest. Straight-up
accident then?

INVESTIGATOR GRADY
That's how I'm writing it.

A rubber stamp on the report: ACCIDENT.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - SAME TIME

Margaret orients a half-dozen new Teachers including Ulva.

The School Secretary KNOCKS and calls Margaret to the door.
They speak in whispers. Color drains from Margaret's face.

Ulva leans forward. Her nostrils flare.

MARGARET
Mrs. Whelan. Ulva.

Ulva's breath stills.

INT. COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE - MORGUE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ulva waits on a bench. Empty of tears. She already knows.

A pale Connor leaves the morgue. Corrumpu follows him out.

Ulva locks on Connor's face.

CONNOR

It's him.

Ulva shudders. Connor comforts her.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

Condolences, Ulva. Stormy was salt
of the earth.

ULVA

(very low)

How?

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

What's that?

CONNOR

She wants to know how it happened?

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

Hunting accident. There's three or
four every year. He should've worn
a vest. Thought Stormy knew better.

Connor bristles.

CONNOR

Wait. He stopped at the house to
get a vest before he went hunting.
He put it on in front of me.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

Doesn't mean he wore it later.

CONNOR

Why would he put it on before
hunting then take it off to hunt?

The Sheriff shrugs.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

D-E-C, State Police and I concur.
It's closed as an accident.

CONNOR

I'm noting a contradiction that cannot be resolved without an investigation. I'll file an affidavit to that effect.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

Come down to the substation any time. We'll add it to the file.

CONNOR

You're not doing us a favor. It's a legal requirement that an affidavit be included in the case file.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

I know the law. Savvy?

CONNOR

Was a vest found at the scene? In Storm's vehicle?

Ulva who shakes the entire time now leaps up.

ULVA

STOP! My father's dead.

CONNOR

I know, Ulva. Don't you want to --

ULVA

I want to go home. Let it go.

Connor steadies her. He glares at the Sheriff.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - VISITATION ROOM - DAY

Well attended. Open casket. Eternal rest on Storm's face.

In Wolf Bite, everyone knows everybody ... and the truth.

Ulva and Connor blank nod Mourners' "sorry for your loss." One hand grips Connor like a vise, the other holds Kleenex.

GRAY

passes the casket. He pats the fold of Storm's hands in an embalmed clutch of a rosary. He signs the cross, departs.

Ulva struggles to breathe. Like she drowns on dry land.

CASKET

Karen breaks in raw SOBS. She leans over Storm's chest, catches herself. She wipes her tears and flees.

Connor and Ulva clock her reaction at Storm's passing.

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

A spectacular August day. A little humid. Cloudless.

On Adirondack chairs, Connor and Ulva watch Locals pass en route the 5K. Tourists park on their street.

CONNOR

No chance I can talk you into Wolf Fest?

Ulva shakes her head: *no way*.

ULVA

I used to love going as a kid. In high school, I had to be dragged.

CONNOR

Aw, c'mon.

ULVA

It's bad food, loud music, and a lot of people I don't want to see.

CONNOR

I understand.

She rubs her abdomen. Winces.

ULVA

You really want to go?

CONNOR

For a little while? You okay?

Ulva exhales and nods a lie: *I'm fine*.

EXT. WOLF BITE - WOLF STREET - DAY

Wolf Fest.

Sellers hawk wolf-themed shit: t-shirts, caps, posters.

Food trucks. Kiddie rides.

An awful Band performs. Only the Band's Girlfriends crowd in.

ULVA AND CONNOR

stroll. No longer a spring in her step. More zombie-walk.

They pass a --

CAGED WOLF PAIR

A male and female pace in a too small wire mesh enclosure.

Kids throw popcorn and bits of hot dog at them. The Wolves too stressed for hunger.

Her face flushes. Ulva's HEARTBEAT pounds in her ears.

ULVA

What is this?! They never had live wolves on display before.

CONNOR

It's cruel. Look at them pace.

A FAT KID (12) smacks a Wolf with leftover hamburger.

Ulva grabs the Kid's arm, shakes him.

Connor too late to stop her.

ULVA

Don't do that! How would you like it if someone threw food at you?

INCENSED MOM (30s) wrests Ulva's hand from her Son's arm.

INCENSED MOM

What's wrong with you? Don't you touch my son! Is this how you treat visitors here?

(to Son)

You all right?

He shrugs: *yeah, whatever.*

ULVA

They're beautiful living creatures.

INCENSED MOM

They're animals.

(pulls Son)

Where are the Cops?

(yells)

Police! Police!

Off they go in pursuit of justice.

CONNOR

Jesus, Ulva. That's harassment.

Maybe endangering a minor. It's jail time. Your teaching career.

ULVA
To hell with the law!
(points at cage)
That's the crime!

Incensed Mom returns with Sheriff Corrumpu.

The fracas attracts the curious. Among them, Karen and Gray.

INCENSED MOM
That's her. That's her!

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Lady says you grabbed her son and
shook him around.

ULVA
He hit the wolf with a hamburger.

INCENSED MOM
They're animals. Lots of people are
feeding them.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Ma'am, I got this.

CONNOR
(whisper)
Apologize, Ulva. And mean it.

ULVA
No!

CONNOR
(whisper)
Please. Apologize.

A defiant stare. He pleads with his eyes: *please*.

GRAY (OS)
Toss 'er in the clink, Sheriff.

ULVA
I'm sorry --
(mutter)
-- your son is an asshole.

INCENSED MOM
What'd she say?

CONNOR
We're very sorry. She recently lost
her father. She's not herself.
(to Sheriff)
(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)
I know you have discretion in
situations like this. I'm asking
you to use it if you can.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
(to Mom)
Son's okay, right? No injuries?

INCENSED MOM
No. A little shook up is all.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Okay. Move on. Enjoy the Fest.

The Mom trots off with her Son in tow.

The Crowd scatters in search of new thrills.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Both of you leave right now.

CONNOR
I'll personally make sure nothing
like this ever happens again.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Do not come back. Savvy?

CONNOR
Understood. Thank you, Sheriff.

ULVA
Another case closed, Sheriff?

Connor stares at Ulva: *don't poke the wasp nest.*

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
(whisper to Connor)
New York, that ton of bricks is
hanging by a slender thread.

Ulva resists Connor when he pulls her. They walk away, but
she cannot take her eyes off the caged Wolves. She sniffs.

The female Wolf HOWLS. Thin and pained. Only Ulva hears it.

DOWN WOLF STREET
The noise fades.

CONNOR
I can't believe I can be really
pissed and more in love with you at
the same time.

ULVA
There are greater things than laws.

CONNOR
Are you telling me you're willing
to piss away all that hard work and
study?

An ELDERLY WOMAN (70s) flashes Ulva the Peace Symbol.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(low)
Ooowwwwoooo.

Ulva returns the two finger greeting.

ULVA
A stranger understands. Why don't
you?

CONNOR
You could end up in a cage just
like the wolves. Without rule of
the law, we're animals.

ULVA
Exactly.

Confused, he raises hands: *what are you talking about?*

ULVA
You either feel it in your soul ...
or you don't.

That strikes a deep chord in Connor.

She holds him. Out of his sight, her face bunches with pain.

FEST - WOLF CAGE

Karen whispers to Corrumpu. He stiffens, swings eyes to Ulva.

EXT. WOLF BITE - WOLF STREET - NIGHT

Full Moon. Middle of the night.

Only trash left on the street.

A sharp YIP from the wolf cage.

Agile Ulva moves with Ninja stealth.

A Dog BARKS. The SOUND of a car.

She ducks.

A Sheriff Department Prowler passes.

WOLF CAGE

The Wolves WHIMPER. Their ears fold back.

Ulva scouts the area. Her breath fogs.

The CLANK of a Resident's garbage can set on the curb.

Ulva holds her breath, hesitates. Her fingers hover over a latch with no lock.

Ulva sniffs.

The Wolves watch her through the wire mesh.

The Female pokes her snout through. Sniffs. Ulva pets her.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Connor, fast asleep.

Ulva slips beneath the covers.

Connor rustles.

CONNOR

Ulva?!

ULVA

Didn't mean to wake you.

He rolls over, holds her.

CONNOR

You're cold. Where'd ya go?

ULVA

Couldn't sleep. Took a walk.

She nuzzles into his shoulder.

ULVA

I love being in your arms. I feel safe.

Her breaths out of sync with his.

FROM THE WOODS: Two Wolves HOWL. Just might mean 'Thanks'.

Ulva, a tiny grin of self-satisfaction.

ULVA
(low)
Owwwwwoooooo.

Connor lifts up.

CONNOR
What?

ULVA
Didn't say anything.

Connor quick glances out the window, then at Ulva.

He lowers head to pillow. They draw close, rub feet together.

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT LAWN - MORNING

Ulva still and barefoot. Her toes curl into the moist grass.

Connor watches from the doorway.

She wobbles on the stairs, holds the railing to steady.

CONNOR
Whoa.

Connor assists.

ULVA
(too-quick smile)
I'm okay. Baby's playing soccer.

Instinct passes through her. Her brow knits.

Connor does not press.

He lays a hand to her tummy. Awe when the baby kicks -- the first time he felt the life that grows inside her.

CONNOR
Goal.

They grin, but she turns to avoid eye contact with him.

ULVA
I set the wolves loose last night.

Connor swallows. He looks down the street. For a cop car.

CONNOR
Ulva ...

ULVA

Sorry I didn't tell you last night.

A desperate hug of Connor.

ULVA

I'm scared, Wolfie.

Connor too. He hides it in a kiss to her forehead.

INT. LUND FAMILY CABIN - WOODSHOP - DAY

Connor replaces Storm's tools on the pegboard.

He roams, picks up a HAND CARVED PLAQUE: Two hearts overlap, "Runa" and "Storm" chiseled into them.

Connor caresses Ulva's high school and college grad tassels.

WORKBENCH - HALF-FINISHED CRIB

Exquisite Cherry. Perfect joints. Traditional yet modern.

Storm's soul in it. Precise, patient, proud.

He runs a hand along the smooth rail. His fingers tremble. A wood shaving clings to his palm. He leaves it be.

Sharp inhale. Another. The weight lands. Connor forces a hand to his mouth but tears will not be denied.

He sinks onto a stool. Elbows on knees. Head down.

Connor composes, wipes his face.

He straightens an askew mallet. The way Stormy would want it.

A breath and last look at the Crib. Connor flips the light off on his way out.

The Crib gleams in a shaft of warm morning sun. It darkens when a cloud passes over.

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - DAY

Connor pilots Storm's F150 up the driveway.

Before he can kill the engine, a Sheriff's Patrol Car parks across to block the driveway.

A single, short BLAST of the SIREN.

PATROL CAR - DRIVER SIDE

Connor leans in the open window.

CONNOR
Sheriff.

HOUSE
Ulva peers through parted curtains.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Those caged wolves. Someone freed
'em. Know anything about it?

He glances the house, notes Ulva and back to Connor.

CONNOR
No, sir.

Corrumpu studies him. A cop stare held too long.

Connor, steadfast under it.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
The wolves disappear the same night
Ulva's too interested in them.

Connor shrugs: *coincidence*.

Corrumpu's jaw tightens.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
The thread? Fraying fast, New York.

He slams the car into gear. Gravel spits as he roars away.

AT THE WINDOW
Ulva paws the glass with her fingertips, holds it.

Connor paws the air, shuffles to her.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Ulva across from Margaret. Tense. All business.

MARGARET
I received a report you grabbed a
child at the Fest. I spoke with the
Sheriff. He confirmed a complaint
was filed.

A tiny nostril flare from Ulva.

ULVA

It was a mistake. I apologized.
He let it go.

MARGARET

I'm adding an Advisory Letter to
your file. I'm also doubling new-
hire classroom monitoring.

She leans back.

MARGARET

I understand losing your father has
been difficult, but we cannot
tolerate this type of incident.
With a child.

Ulva blinks. Her fingers tighten on the chair armrest.

ULVA

I understand.

MARGARET

See that you do, Mrs. Whelan.

INT. JEFF'S HARDWARE - DAY

Slow day. Quiet between Jeff and Connor.

Jeff notes the time.

JEFF

Take lunch.

CONNOR

Hitting the diner. Want anything?

Jeff shakes no. Connor starts out,

JEFF

Stay out of trouble.

Sounds offhand but he means it.

INT. SQUAT AND GOBBLE DINER - CONTINUOUS

Fifties' chrome. Tuck and Roll upholstery. Passable food.

Wolf Bite gossip/rumor central.

Connor waits at the counter while a take-out burger sizzles.

At a nearby booth, two local old timers jaw within earshot. Meet PLAID SHIRT (60s) and AARP BASEBALL CAP (60s).

Coffee and pie before them on the battered Formica tabletop.

PLAID
Heard she hit some tourist kid.
'Bout as liked as Nile 'round here.

AARP
Bullshit. I was there.

Connor: quick swivel toward them and back.

AARP
Known Ulva since knee high. Good people.

PLAID
Dollars to donuts she let them wolves loose too.

AARP
(snorts)
You got enough bullshit to fertilize the whole damn county.

PLAID
Don't get me started about Runa.

Connor bolts up, approaches the booth.

CONNOR
You two assholes should shut the fuck up!

He whips around, snags lunch and storms out.

The two Locals glance each other: *what's his problem?*

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ulva's face, white. She picks at dinner.

ULVA
I'm goin to lie down.

CONNOR
Okay. Want to go to the E-R?

ULVA
No.

She staggers to her feet, curls up fetal on the couch.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - DAY

First day of school.

Bright decorations. Construction paper leaves. A-B-Cs.

Kids filter in. A few Scaredy-Cats cling to Parents.

In a skirt, Ulva pale and sweaty. She forces a smile.

Margaret trains a microscope on Ulva.

Freddie Péteux and his Mom, GLORIA (30s), stride in.

FREDDIE

(waves)

Hello, Ulva.

ULVA

Hello, Freddie. It's so nice to see
you again.

Ulva winces when she bends to his level.

ULVA

Can we make a deal?

FREDDIE

What?

ULVA

I'm Mrs. Whelan in class? Outside
class you can call me by my first
name. Deal?

FREDDIE

Okay.

Margaret angles her head: *well done*.

Freddie tugs at Gloria's jacket.

FREDDIE

This is the lady.

GLORIA

Which lady?

FREDDIE

The wolf lady.

GLORIA
(to Ulva)
You and some man howled on your
lawn. Freddie was upset you
demanded his name.

Margaret's ears perk up. She side-eyes Ulva.

ULVA
I'm sorry you were upset, Freddie.
We wanted to know your name. My
husband and I were playing a game.

MARGARET
(to Ulva)
That won't happen again. Correct?

Ulva wobbles, holds her abdomen. Her nostrils flare.

GLORIA
I'd hope so.

Ulva quivers and doubles over. Caught by surprise, Margaret
tries to brace her.

A torrent of blood rushes down Ulva's legs.

The Children bolt into a corner. Far from Ulva.

Margaret puts herself between the Class and Ulva.

Gloria steps back from the splatter.

MARGARET
(to Gloria)
Get the nurse.

Gloria freezes.

Ulva GROANS, collapses into the pool of thick blood.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

ULVA'S DREAM

A Wolf family at play.

BEEP-BEEP.

A Mommy Wolf plays with Male and Female Cubs. On unsteady
legs, they struggle to keep pace with her.

The Cubs climb on Mommy, rough and instinctive.

BEEP-BEEP.

Papa Wolf joins the play.

END DREAM

INT. HOSPITAL - POST OP RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

BEEP-BEEP.

A Nurse fusses with a patient monitor and IV drip.

Anesthesia wears off. Ulva opens drug-glazed eyes.

Bedside, Connor holds her hand, pets her head.

CONNOR

Hi.

ULVA

Hi.

SEMI-PRIVATE ROOM - LATER

Ulva rests uncomfortable.

Connor reaches into a hospital gift shop bag.

CONNOR

Someone wants to meet you.

A small stuffed wolf. He nuzzles it to her neck.

CONNOR

Woof-woof.

She holds it to her breast.

ULVA

Thank you. You're so sweet.

Surgeon DR. WARNER (40s) knocks on the door frame then enters. He has that doctor I-hate-bearing-bad-news face.

CONNOR

Hello, doctor.

Ulva turns away, never looks at him during the visit.

DR. WARNER

Mr. Whelan. How are you holding up,
Mrs. Whelan.

ULVA

I know what I lost.

DR. WARNER

Yes. You had Endometrioma; a cyst of old menstrual blood that's been building for years. Pregnancy put pressure on it, and the cyst burst.

ULVA

I'll never have children.

DR. WARNER

Your ovaries were severely damaged. We had to remove both.

Ulva SOBS into the stuffed wolf.

DR. WARNER

A nurse will come by to go over your recovery.

ULVA

(a whisper)

Will I be able to go back to teaching?

DR. WARNER

In four to six weeks, yes.

CONNOR

Thank you.

He tilts his head and leaves.

Weak, Ulva closes her eyes, catches her breath.

She leans on Connor, clutches the stuffed wolf.

Connor sheds a tear on her hair.

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - F150, TRAVELING - DAY

Chill in the air. Leaves on a journey to technicolor.

Ulva's head props against the passenger side window, the stuffed wolf to her breast.

ULVA

I'm so sorry, Connor.

CONNOR

Please don't. How could you know?
I'm here with you. Always.

ULVA

I feel it.

He takes her hand.

CONNOR

We can --

ULVA

No.

He sighs.

CONNOR

I love you so much, Ulva.

She smiles sad, pivots to witness the passing landscape.

Ulva blows on the window to form condensation. She draws a swaddled baby, erases it with her sleeve.

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Connor leads Ulva to the stairs. She stops before the steps.

ULVA

Would you move a chair out back for
me? I want to sit outside.

CONNOR

Of course.

BACKYARD - NIGHT

A masterpiece.

The Milky Way arcs in velvet black abundant with stars.

Quiet save a whiff of air through trees.

On the Adirondack chair, the night envelops Ulva. Unmoving for hours. Stuffed wolf at her side.

Connor wraps a blanket around her shoulders. No reaction.

He plants on the back porch steps, considers his mate.
There but not. Ghostly.

CONNOR
I'm grabbing a beer. Be right back.

He leaves on task.

A RUSTLE. The Old Wolf slips through tall grass to the lawn. She stops not far from Ulva.

They still -- Wolf and Ulva -- for a heartbeat.

Ulva tosses the stuffed wolf to her. The Old Wolf starts, then sniffs the stuffed animal.

The Wolf fetches the stuffie, drops it on Ulva's lap.

Ulva pets the Wolf's head. She looks up at Ulva.

At the sound of Connor's return, the Old Wolf spirits away.

CONNOR
You okay?

CONNOR'S POV - ULVA'S BACK

She flashes a thumbs up.

CONNOR
Late. Ready to come in?

Ulva waves her hand: no.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Connor peeks in.

Ulva asleep. She hugs the stuffed wolf.

He closes the door.

KITCHEN

On a laptop, he opens an email with a link to the Applicant Services Portal -- the Bar exam results.

The cursor blinks over the Portal LOG IN. Connor hesitates.

CLICK.

INSERT - LAPTOP SCREEN

FAIL

BACK

Connor slams the laptop shut.

CONNOR
Fuck!

He holds his head in hands.

Connor straightens, feels the quiet. The aloneness. He pushes away from the table.

INT. STUMBLE INN - NIGHT

A few Barflies buzz. Per usual, Yancy mans the bar.

Connor drags in, plops on a stool

YANCY
Never seen you before. Not too many
fresh faces in this place.
(extends hand)
Yancy.

Connor limp-wrists a shake.

CONNOR
Connor.

YANCY
Ulva's husband.

CONNOR
Yes. How'd you know?

YANCY
Pass gas in this town and everybody
smells it. Sorry about Stormy. He
said you're good man.

Connor blinks thanks.

YANCY
Sorry about losin' the child, too.
How's Ulva? She's a pistol.

A so-so hand movement.

CONNOR
One foot here, the other, I-don't-
know. Somewhere else.

YANCY
She'll be back. Or you'll meet her.
(smacks bar)
What for ya?

CONNOR
Jameson. Double.

She delivers the Irish nectar double quick.

YANCY
First drink for a new customer is
on the house.

CONNOR
To life. Too much death around us.

Connor lifts the glass to her, drinks half.

YANCY
Life don't mean much without death.

He repeats the glass lift, slugs the rest.

The wet shot glass ring on the bar mesmerizes Connor.

CONNOR
Didn't pass the fucking Bar exam.
Who am I now?

YANCY
Sorry. I see more than a lawyer.

Connor taps the glass for another taste.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Margaret and Ulva en route her return to class.

ULVA
Please thank the Supervisor for the
flowers.

MARGARET
Of course. We're all so sorry for
your loss.

Ulva flinches like a hypodermic needle stabs her heart.

MARGARET
Sure you're ready to return?

Ulva's nod yes but her tremble says otherwise.

KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

Halloween: drawings of carved pumpkins; paper skeletons.
 A Teacher's Aide fails to wrangle the five year old rowdies.
 Margaret's appearance tames them. Absolute silence when she enters with Ulva.

MARGARET
 Good morning, class.

CLASS
 (sing-songy)
 Good morning, Mrs. Appartchik.

MARGARET
 Please greet Mrs. Whelan.

CLASS
 (tentative)
 Good morning, Mrs. Whelan.

ULVA
 Good morning. I'm very happy to see you all again.

Margaret motions the Aide out with her. Before she leaves, the Principal touches Ulva's arm.

MARGARET
 If there's anything you need ...

Ulva nods her thanks.

Margaret steps into the hallway. A Sixth Grader runs past.

MARGARET
 (bark)
 No running in the halls.

The door closes.

Ulva faces the Class. She sniffs.

She opens a curriculum on the desk, thumbs through it, then closes today's lesson plan.

The Children wait for her lead. An idea percolates.

ULVA
 Who can tell me about wolves?

Hands shoot up. Ulva picks Freddie.

FREDDIE

Wolfs are bad. They steal hens. My
dad says they should all be killed.

ULVA

No. Wolves take care of each other.
Like your family takes care of you.

FREDDIE

How about Red Riding Hood? The
hunter killed the Big Bad Wolf.

ULVA

That's a fairy tale. People make up
stories about things they're afraid
of. We don't need to be afraid.

She won the Children's attention.

ULVA

Halloween is coming. Who would like
to be a wolf?

CLASS

I would, Mrs. Whelan. Me. Me. Etc.

ULVA

Let's make wolf masks.

LATER

Ulva and the Class wear construction paper wolf masks.

Everyone on all fours, they follow Ulva around in a circle.
Ulva HOWLS, playful. The Children HOWL back.

No one wears shoes.

MARGARET

peeks in the classroom window. Alarm in her eyes. She watches
a few seconds more. Considers entering but moves on.

The wolf crawl over, they all rise.

ULVA

What a lovely pack of wolves.
Everyone applaud each other.

When the APPLAUSE dies down,

ULVA

Now pat yourself on the back for
doing such a wonderful job.

They pat.

A few Children, including Freddie, hug Ulva's legs.

FREDDIE
I love you.

She lowers to hug him.

ULVA
I love you too.

Kids dance around in their masks, growl and paw each other.

PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - AFTER LAST BELL

Margaret reprimands the upset Ulva.

MARGARET
There will be no further displays
like today.

Ulva drifts to a place far, far away.

MARGARET
Am I getting through? Sure you're
okay? Mrs. Whelan?

Reluctant to come back, Ulva does snap to the now.

ULVA
Yes.

MARGARET
It's Columbus Day break. You look
pale. Rest. When we return, stick
to the mandated curriculum. Okay?

With a cursory nod, Ulva rises and exits.

Margaret's desk phone RINGS.

MARGARET
(answers)
Hello, Principal Appartchik.

INT. PÉTEUX HOME - KITCHEN - SAME

Gloria on a cell.

In the wolf mask, Freddie GROWLS and chases the family Dog.

GLORIA

Principal, just what the hell is
going on at that school of yours.

Gloria holds the phone to her chest,

GLORIA

Stop that, Freddie!

MARGARET (VO)

Hello?

GLORIA

(phone to mouth)

Hello. Freddie bit his father so
hard he's bleeding, Principal.
Bleeding! All because that teacher
told him his father is, quote "bad
to wolves."

INTERCUT - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE, PÉTEUX HOME

MARGARET

I'm sorry Mrs. Péteux. I've spoken
to Mrs. Whelan. The curriculum will
be strictly followed from now on.

GLORIA

That teacher is dangerous. I'm
calling Karen Connasse to convene
an emergency school board meeting.

Freddie captures the dog and readies to bite it.

MARGARET

I assure you, we're handling this
internally. If --

GLORIA

Karen will call you. I have to go.

Gloria hangs up. She rips the mask from Freddie's face,
rescues the dog.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Late. Like, late-late.

Connor sweeps his hand for Ulva. Not in bed with him.

CONNOR

Ulva?

He jumps out of bed in boxers and a tee, searches.

Living Room: The last of a log smolders in the fireplace.

Bathroom, kitchen. Nope and nope.

He opens the back door, catches a chill. Connor throws on a hoodie and exits to --

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

He steps out in bare feet, regrets it. Cold. In the 20s.

CONNOR

Ulva. Ulva?

SCRATCHES under the porch startle Connor.

CONNOR

Ulva?

SCRATCH SCRATCH

Connor descends the steps, thinks better, returns inside. He reappears in shoes.

UNDER THE PORCH

Ulva in a sleeping bag with pine branches under and above.

CONNOR (OS)

Ulva! Come out.

She pokes her head from the sleeping bag. The stuffed wolf inside with her. Ulva waves the stuffed wolf's paw at Connor.

CONNOR

What are you doing?

Connor extends a hand she refuses.

ULVA

I have to feel earth.

CONNOR

It's freezing.

ULVA

Don't worry. I've camped out in colder weather.

Connor shivers in the chill. Baffled, he leaves her.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

At the table, Ulva lost in the pines.

Connor off for work. He kisses her forehead.

CONNOR

Feel okay?

She smiles and nods: *yep*.

He takes both Ulva's hands, holds her eyes.

CONNOR

Sure?

Smile and another nod: *yep*.

CONNOR

You're getting a bit distant from
me. I mean ... you were under the
porch last night.

ULVA

I told you why. You haven't caught
up to me yet.

Connor doesn't quite catch her drift. Yet.

CONNOR

That's what Yancy said.

She pats his hand. Thoughtful. Not condescending.

CONNOR

When you shop, buy steaks, please.

ULVA

Okay. I love you very much.

They hug and kiss.

CONNOR

Love you so much. Bye, Mrs. Wolfie.

Connor out the door.

Ulva swirls dregs of coffee and concentrates on the bottom of
her wolf mug -- as if divining her fortune from the grounds.

She runs a thumb across the mug rim. She shakes. Just a tad.

INT. FRIENDLY FOODMART - DAY

Banners guarantee big, big savings in Columbus Day sales.

SIGN: "Attention: Shirts and Shoes Must Be Worn On Premises"

CHECKOUT

Ulva in bare feet.

Karen, a few Customers behind Ulva, notes the infraction.

KAREN
You have to wear shoes.

Ulva looks down. Nope. No shoes.

ULVA
Why? It feels natural.

KAREN
It's store policy. And unsanitary.
Next time you shop, wear shoes.

Ulva 'thumbs-up', rings out.

KAREN
Only animals don't wear shoes.

She GRRRRS at Karen.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Ulva unpacks the groceries.

She sniffs a family pack of steaks, pokes it.

Ulva pushes a finger through and rips off the overwrap. She slices a piece of steak.

Tastes it.

INT. JEFF'S HARDWARE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Just past closing.

Jeff unlocks the door for Connor's exit.

CONNOR
Good night.

Jeff smirks.

JEFF

Guess you'll be working here longer
than you planned.

He holds the door open.

It takes a blip, but Connor gets Jeff's gist.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ulva sets the dinner table.

Connor through the door. They greet with a big kiss and hug.

ULVA

Dinner's ready.

CONNOR

Great. I'm starving.

Ulva sets out two plates: chopped raw meat with seasoning and an egg yolk on top.

ULVA

Steak Tartare. I Googled it.

She sniffs her serving.

ULVA

Smells good.

Connor drops on a chair.

CONNOR

You're eating meat?

ULVA

I dunno. It just ... looked good.
So I tried it.

CONNOR

Raw meat?

ULVA

I haven't had meat since I was six
or seven. Try it.

CONNOR

If you don't mind, I'm going to
cook mine.

She shrugs: *suit yourself.*

He finds another steak in the fridge, lights the stove.

Connor gapes at the stranger that sits at the kitchen table.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ulva curls up in front of the fireplace. A fire blazes. The stuffed wolf keeps her company.

Connor lies down and spoons her.

ULVA

I love lying next to you in front
of the fire.

He pulls her close.

CONNOR

The best.

(sigh)

Sorry I didn't tell you before.
I don't want you to hear it on the
street ... I didn't pass the Bar.

ULVA

I'm sorry. You studied so hard.

CONNOR

It tells me I don't belong here.

ULVA

Make love to me.

They entwine.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - PROMONTORY - DAY

Dark skies. Wind meanders through the gray, leafless forest.

Ulva and Connor huddle.

ULVA

I missed seeing fall up here.

CONNOR

Next fall.

ULVA

(faces him)

I have to tell you something -- my
mother didn't get sick and die. She
disappeared into this forest. I've
known it for a long time.

CONNOR

It didn't track for me either. Why?

ULVA

You already know why.

Connor does. It pains him.

ULVA

This will be our last time here.

CONNOR

That trail looks unpassable in
snow. Too dangerous.

ULVA

You wouldn't survive. But that's
not what I mean.

CONNOR

What do you see that I don't?

ULVA

I see through my mother's eyes.

She draws in air with her nose.

CONNOR

The wolf again?

ULVA

Snow. We should go down.

Connor inhales.

CONNOR

I smell it. How about that?

ULVA

There's work to do before winter.

And down the trail they go.

INT. JEFF'S HARDWARE - COUNTER - DAY

Winter stuff -- shovels, snow melt -- flies off shelves.

Connor tallies Customer orders. Jeff at a second register.

Two Elderly Local Woman roam. Too nonchalant.

At a glassware display, they point at Connor and whisper.
They turn when Jeff glares at them.

One Woman pretends to shop. She inspects a glass on a big display. The entire display CRASHES when she puts it back.

The store comes to a standstill. Customers look at Connor.

The Women throw up sorry gestures to a ticked-off Jeff.

He shakes his head at the Women, knows exactly what happened.

Jeff avoids eye contact with Connor.

JEFF
(points)
Clean up your mess.

The Women are gone. The mess remains.

CONNOR
sweeps up.

A few Customers smirk. The rest don't give a shit.

FRONT DOOR - PAST CLOSING TIME

Jeff unlocks the door for Connor's exit.

CONNOR
Good night.

JEFF
Cost me two bills today. Can't have it. No need to come back tomorrow.

CONNOR
What?! Jeff --

JEFF
I'm not running a sideshow.

CONNOR
I didn't break glasses.

JEFF
Unemployment's ending. Been asked by people I know for a job.

CONNOR
What do you wa --

JEFF
Need someone with their house in order.

Connor drags out.

Jeff locks the door.

JEFF
Nail's been drove.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Margaret makes rounds, passes classrooms. All in line.

A RACKET ahead draws her to the --

KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

Walls thick with wolf drawings.

With no adult voice, the Children bounce around.

The stuffed wolf at her elbow, Ulva draws wolves.

Margaret fills the doorway.

A CLATTER. The Children scramble into their seats.

Ulva draws.

MARGARET
Hello, class.

Ulva jumps. She puts on shoes, primps hair, shuffles papers.

CLASS
Hello, Mrs. Appartchik.

MARGARET
Mrs. Whelan, what's the lesson for
right now?

She checks the plan, finds the counting lesson.

ULVA
Oh, counting. One, two, three.

Ulva takes position at the whiteboard.

ULVA
Today we will count objects that
are in a line.

She uses magnets to hold six wolf drawings on the board.

ULVA
A pack stays together.

FREDDIE
Oh, cool. Wolfs.

He HOWLS. The Children SNICKER.

MARGARET
Quiet, Freddie. Class.

Hear that pin drop?

ULVA
Let's all count out loud:

CLASS ULVA
One, two, three ... One, two, three ...

MARGARET

ULVA
Four, five, six wolves.

Margaret observes a bit longer before she leaves.

EXT. MCDONALD FARM - CHICKEN COOP - NIGHT

Ulva in a fuzzy dark gray bathrobe and sneakers. Cold night. Her breath visible.

She opens the coop door. Hens SQUAWK.

IN THE COOP
Ulva snatches a plump Hen.

She leaves the coop door open. Chickens escape and run around like, well, chickens with their heads cut off.

Lights flick on in the farmhouse.

Ulva carries the Hen under her arm. It SOUAWKS.

Twelve gauge shotgun at the ready, Gray opens the back door.

She strides off. Like on a leisurely stroll.

GRAY
Who's there?!

Now 30 yards from Gray, he fixes on movement and fires.

Ulva YELPS from the sting of a birdshot that peppers her right arm and back. She doesn't miss a step.

Gray fires, misses. His mailbox explodes.

GRAY
Son of a bitch.

He dials 911.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Ulva treads the centerline. She pets the calm Hen.

Headlights behind paint a yellow aura around her.

A Sheriff's car stops next to her. A blast of the SIREN.

Ulva doesn't stray from mission.

The car paces her. Corrumpu leans out,

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Ulva. Stop.

No change in Ulva's trajectory.

Corrumpu parks in her path, gets out.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Ulva. Stop!

She doesn't comply. The Sheriff holds her by the shoulders. Birdshot pellets TINKLE to the pavement.

His hands drip Ulva's blood.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Jesus, you're shot.

ULVA
Where?

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
(re: Hen)
Let me take that.

Ulva plays keep away.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
For chrissake, why steal a chicken?

ULVA
The chicken crossed the road. I was
on the other side.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Ulva ... that doesn't make sense.

ULVA
McDonald owed me a chicken dinner.
It's not a fair trade for my dad,
but it's a start. Don't you think?

Corrumpu SIGHS.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
You need medical attention. Let's
bring the chicken back. Can't bring
it into an E-R.

Ulva agrees.

He opens the back door. She and the Hen slide in.

EXT. MCDONALD FARM - CHICKEN COOP - NIGHT

POV: Ulva in the back seat.

Corrumpu returns the Hen to Gray. It SQUAWKS.

GRAY
I wanna press charges.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
How about Assault and Reckless
Endangerment charges for you?

GRAY
It's dark. I thought she was a
wolf. It was a ...

Corrumpu seizes Gray by the shirt, shakes him.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Accident? Never say the word to me.

He pushes Gray. He trips backward. Onto his ass.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Ever!

Gray struggles up.

GRAY
I'll go over your head.

Corrumpu mounts the vehicle and takes off with Ulva.

She rubbernecks Gray through the back window.

He dusts himself off, dials his phone.

INT. HOSPITAL - ER - MINOR TREATMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Outside the drapes, Patients WAIL in pain. Gurneys ROLL by.

Ulva, face down on a treatment table.

A Doctor tweezes birdshot from her body. He drops them into a holding cup. CLINK.

CONNOR (OS)
Ulva Whelan! Gunshot. Where is she?

Someone directs him. A sec later, he throws open the drapes.

CONNOR
Ulva!

ULVA
Hello, Wolfie. I borrowed a chicken
and got shot.

Connor kisses the back of her head.

CONNOR
The Sheriff called.
(to Doctor)
She okay?

The Doctor nods yes. CLINK.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

BANNERS: school mascot (Badger); team sport accolades.

Folding chairs in neat rows for the emergency School Board meeting. It draws higher attendance than usual.

Head table: President Karen; members Jeff and Yancy. In the front row, Margaret ready to advise.

Corrumpu leans against a back wall.

GRAY
Keep her away from our kids. She
stole a chicken. In her pajamas.
She belongs in a nuthouse.

Mob-like MURMURS travel through the Crowd.

KAREN

(quiet)

If she were my daughter, this would never have happened.

Karen regrets saying it aloud. She swallows, straightens paperwork. A few Attendees trade knowing smirks.

KAREN

Others who'd like to be heard?

GLORIA

Gray's right. My Freddie growled at the priest in church. I was so embarrassed. She's not ... normal.

Attendees CLAP. Karen lets it play out, no call for Order.

KAREN

Anyone else?

No takers.

KAREN

Very well. The Board will convene in executive session to decide the matter and offer our recommendation to the District. Thank you all.

(gavel bangs)

The meeting is concluded.

Attendees BUZZ as they take their leave.

Corrumpu exits with head down. Gray side-eyes him.

Karen whispers in private to Gray. Done, she pats his back then returns to Jeff and Yancy

Gym empty now, the Board draws into a tight circle.

KAREN

We heard the comments. Let's be professional.

JEFF

This isn't hard. We all know something happened with a child. She runs around barefoot. Steals chickens in her pajamas. I wouldn't leave my kid alone with her.

Karen pretends to consider. Moot. She made her decision.

KAREN
Margaret?

MARGARET
I can't explain her behavior. She's
not suitable for kindergarteners.

YANCY
Has she hurt any kids?

MARGARET
Well ... no.

JEFF
That's not the point.

YANCY
It should be. I hear the kids
actually love her.

Jeff dismisses her with a hand wave.

YANCY
Storm's gone. She lost a baby.
She's drowning and you want to
throw her a rock? What we do here
is about us. Who we are.

KAREN
Spare me the sympathy. This is
about whether she belongs in a
classroom.

YANCY
Give her support. A leave. If we do
this, she'll never teach again.

JEFF
Let the chips fall. Call it:
termination, yes or no.

KAREN
Yes.

JEFF
Yes.

YANCY
No.

KAREN
Two to one. The Board recommends
termination.

Jeff shakes Karen's hand. She records the vote.

Yancy, miserable. Margaret fixes on the gym floor.

Karen flips the folder shut.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

HARD RAPS on the door. Ulva answers.

TROOPER WATKINS
Ulva Whelan?

ULVA
Yes.

TROOPER WATKINS
You are under arrest for Petty
Larceny, Burglary and Aggravated
Animal Cruelty.

He readies handcuffs.

ULVA
CONNOR!

TROOPER WATKINS
Ma'am, please turn around.

ULVA
NO! CONNOR!

Ulva struggles against the cuffs.

TROOPER WATKINS
Don't resist!

Connor answers her call.

CONNOR
Ulva ...

With one cuff on, she grabs at Connor with her free hand.

ULVA
Don't let them take me. Do
something. Please.

Connor, slow shake of his head: *nothing I can do.*

Watkins wrests Ulva from Connor, back under his control.

TROOPER WATKINS
Put your hand behind your back!

Ulva wriggles.

TROOPER WATKINS
Stop resisting.

CONNOR
Ulva. Don't resist.

The handcuffs pinch. Ulva YOWLS.

CONNOR
Take it easy with those, Trooper.
Make sure they're not too tight.

TROOPER WATKINS
Let's go.

Watkins yanks her by the cuffs to the --

PORCH
Ulva cries.

ULVA
NO. Let me go, you fucker. I gave
the chicken back!

Connor follows them to the --

FRONT LAWN

CONNOR
Say nothing, sign nothing. I'll
post bail.
(to Trooper)
Where are you taking her?

TROOPER WATKINS
Plattsburgh barracks for processing
then the county jail.

Ulva bites Watkin's arm. He flinches, takes firmer control.

CONNOR
Ulva! Stop it. Stop resisting.

ULVA
Don't let them put me in a cage.
I can't be caged. Connor --

Watkins secures her in the vehicle's back seat.

ULVA
NO! NO!

Watkins SLAMS the door, rubs his arm.

Ulva presses her nose to the window. Her eyes plead.

Connor scratches the window. Ulva shakes no. Over and over.

INT. CONNASSE HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tacky middle class over-decoration. Plastic on the furniture.

KAREN
(on phone)
How are Milly and Bobbi?
(nods)
She did get into Yale? That's
fantastic, judge.

Karen listens.

INT. LAW FIRM - ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Dusty stacks of paper on every surface. Diplomas hang askew.

In an un-ironed shirt and Walmart tie, Attorney MEL BONHOMME (50s) confers with Connor.

CONNOR
We'll need a good defense if it
goes to trial. They probably added
resisting, and she bit the Trooper.

MEL
Ouch! Look, I do wills, closings,
divorces. An occasional D-W-I. Want
good, go to Albany.

CONNOR
We don't have that kind of money.

MEL
Then I'll do my best. I know how
things go in this jurisdiction.

Connor's eyes sweep the uninviting office: *this is my future?*

CONNOR
I was going to open a practice.

MEL
Didn't pass the Bar, right?

An embarrassed nod from Connor.

MEL
Third time was a charm for me.

That goes down hard for Connor ... for a lot of reasons.

INT. COUNTY COURT - DAY

Old architecture. Floor to ceiling windows. Radiators TICK.

Flags -- US with yellow fringe and New York -- flank a mahogany PLAQUE: "Where the law stops, there tyranny begins".

JUDGE HERALD P ESCROC (60s) presides over Ulva's arraignment.

In the front row, Connor hangs on every word.

Mel beside her, Ulva hangs her head in a disconnect.

JUDGE ESCROC
Mrs. Whelan, you bit the arresting officer and caused an injury that required treatment. Do you understand.

MEL
Your honor --

JUDGE ESCROC
Save it, Mr. Bonhomme.
(shuffles paper)
Your client is non-responsive.
Article 730 is ordered to assess
Mrs. Whelan's fitness --

Connor leaps up.

CONNOR
My wife is not mentally ill, your honor.

Mel signals Connor: *sit down and shut up.*

Escroc's gavel BANG echoes on the marble columns.

JUDGE ESCROC
You have no voice in this court.
Take your seat and remain quiescent
or I will cite you for contempt.

A THUD when Connor drops back onto the hard wood bench.
Mel attempts to reel it back.

MEL
Your honor --

JUDGE ESCROC
It is my belief Mrs. Whelan is an
incapacitated person.

He motions to Court Officers.

JUDGE ESCROC
I am ordering her examination.

Ulva holds Connor's eyes as the Officers remove her.

ULVA
Owwwwoooooo.

CONNOR
Owwwwoooooo.

BANG BANG

INT. ST. LAWRENCE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY ROOM - DAY
Vomit green walls and furniture. Patients gather around a TV
that sucks them into a Soap Opera world.

A DOMINEERING AIDE (40s) paces to lord over the room.
Alone at a table, Ulva fits pieces into a large puzzle.
She wears the institution's required uniform: gray drawstring
scrub pants, scrub top, slip-resistant hospital socks.

A Mousy Woman (30s) bends to lay in a piece. It doesn't fit.

ULVA
Sit down and help me. Not much else
to do in this dump.

The Woman: a laugh then a violent shake of her head.

In a blink, the Aide stands next to Ulva.

DOMINEERING
Let's remain calm.

Mousy beats it -- but fast.

Ulva turns a piece in her fingers.

ULVA
I know where this piece belongs.

The Aide notates on a clipboard.

EXT. MCDONALD FARM - FARMHOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Corrumpu KNOCKS. Gray opens the door, sour looks the Sheriff.

State Police BCI Detectives Filmore and Abare, both 30s, lean against Gray's pickup.

GRAY
'The fuck you want? Who are those two pricks?

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
State Police B-C-I.
(hands over warrant)
Warrant to search your premises.

GRAY
For what, Boy-O?

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
You're under arrest for Assault, Reckless Endangerment and Murder.

Gray's eyes narrow at Corrumpu.

GRAY
What?

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
I went over your head. Savvy?

SOON AFTER

Gray handcuffed in the back of the Sheriff's vehicle.

Corrumpu searches the farmhouse.

In gloves, Filmore and Abare toss Gray's pickup.

Abare finds it in the pickup's bed under feed sacks. He SNAPS a finger for Filmore's attention.

A bright orange safety vest. In Magic Marker on the inside collar: "S. LUND".

Vest left front: A hole from a tight birdshot pattern.

INT. CENTRAL SCHOOL - KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - DAY

Snowflakes cut from paper. Crayon-colored candy canes.

Margaret introduces MISS PRITCHARD (20s).

MARGARET

Good morning, class.

CLASS

Good morning, Mrs. Appartchik.

MARGARET

Class, say good morning to your new teacher, Miss Pritchard.

CLASS

Good morning, Miss Pritchard.

MISS PRITCHARD

Good morning, class.

Freddie twists in his seat.

FREDDIE

Where's Mrs. Whelan?

MARGARET

Mrs. Whelan is no longer your teacher.

FREDDIE

Why? I want Ulva. Where's Ulva?

MARGARET

Stop that, Freddie!

He BAWLS. It infects other Children. Soon, they all BAWL.

INT. LAW OFFICE - ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Connor paces.

He exhales, moves files from a chair and settles.

CONNOR

How about a habeas writ to get her released from the hospital?

MEL

Challenge the legality of the detention? Long, long shot.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)
It has to be filed with a State
Supreme Court Justice for a
hearing.

CONNOR
This is bullshit. We gotta try.

MEL
If released -- a big if -- she
still sits an competency hearing.
If found incompetent, it's a hold
for a year due to the felony count.
It can be extended year after year.

CONNOR
I should be representing her.
(voice drops)
I can't even visit her.

MEL
It is bullshit. Escroc crossed a
line. I found your wife to be clear
as a bell. I'll prep that writ.

CONNOR
Thank you. Thank you very much.

MEL
Means a lot to you, doesn't she?

CONNOR
She hates cages.

They shake on the plan.

INT. ST. LAWRENCE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY
Cinder block walls. No windows. Uncomfortable chair.
An ATTENDING PSYCHIATRIST (40s) oversees Ulva's intake.

ON ULVA

ULVA
Of course, I understand. Do you
understand I'm not the -- the
Walter White of chicken thieves.
I gave the goddamn thing back.
(leans in)
It's justice by rumor. Waving a
"She's Insane" flag because it
makes them feel better. I'm not
confused. I'm fucking pissed.
(MORE)

ULVA (CONT'D)
This is their laundromat, and
you're washing their dirty laundry.

ATTENDING PSYCHIATRIST (OS)
Can you say more?

Ulva rolls her eyes.

ULVA
It's exactly what's happening. It's
Wolf Bite!
(gets up)
Can I go now ... please? The only
thing keeping me sane is a 1500
piece puzzle of a Calico kitten
playing with a ball of red yarn.

ATTENDING PSYCHIATRIST (OS)
Ulva, sit down. We're not finished.

Ulva plops, crosses arms.

ULVA
I know where bodies are buried. And
who buried them.

The offscreen sound of pen SCRIBBLES on paper.

She fixes her gaze. Beyond these walls. Beyond this world.

EXT. ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY SUPREME COURT - DAY

Light snow drifts down on the imposing building.

Connor and Mel hike down the steps.

MEL
Think I shit my pants.

CONNOR
You did great.

MEL
We had a tailwind and receptive
judge. Escroc wields a lot of power
around here. This judge refuses to
rubber stamp him.

CONNOR
You got her off psychiatric hold
and back to the county jail. I can
post bail. Today.

MEL

Call me for an appointment to prep
for the competency hearing ... the
honorable Judge Escroc presiding.

They wave and separate to their own vehicles.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Post-release on bail, an exhausted Ulva and Connor drag in.

ULVA

So happy to be back in our den.
(hugs Connor)
It hurts to be separated from you.

CONNOR

I walked around in a daze. I missed
your face and that smile. Terribly.

Connor strokes that face.

ULVA

I'm gonna take a long hot shower to
wash the stench of that place off
me. Then, I wanna lie in front of a
fire with you.

CONNOR

Uh, you got Registered Mail. The
District. Department of Education.

ULVA

Let me guess: fired. And they
probably want to revoke my license.

KNOCK KNOCK

ULVA

Not now. I can't right now.

CONNOR

Me too.

FRONT DOOR

Connor opens to Yancy.

CONNOR

Hi, Yancy. It's not a good time. We
just got home --

YANCY

Just need a minute. It's important.

Connor checks with Ulva: she raises arms in a tired okay.

LIVING ROOM - ON THE COUCH

YANCY

They're declaring you incompetent.

ULVA

Our attorney is certain I won't be.

YANCY

The fix is in. Karen's seen to it.

CONNOR

Hold on. I trust the rule of law.
What are you suggesting?

YANCY

He would never have been re-elected
without her. She called in a favor.

CONNOR

We can appeal to the Appellate.
Request a mistrial or recusal. File
a Grievance with Commission of
Judicial Conduct. Lots of avenues.

ULVA

Yancy, will you repeat this to Mel?

YANCY

Doesn't matter. This is not the
first time. It's been decided.

ULVA

Why? Why would Karen do this?

YANCY

Stormy, God rest his soul, was
engaged to Karen. D'ya know it?

ULVA

(chuckles)

My dad and Karen? C'mon. He had
more sense than that.

YANCY

It's true. She ain't always been
sour like now. Gray made a run at
Runa, but she fancied Stormy. He
was taken by her beauty. Got her up
the stump while engaged to Karen.

ULVA

What the hell does this ancient
history have to do with me?

YANCY

Karen's one of those empty barrels
that makes the loudest noise.
(sighs)
Forewarned is forearmed.

She lifts off the couch.

YANCY

I'll pray for ya.

ULVA

Why did you do this? Tell us.

YANCY

Because I wanna sleep sound. Stormy
and Runa were too beautiful. This
for-shit town couldn't stomach it.
It's happenin' again. Ain't right.

ULVA

Thank you, Yancy.

Silence until Yancy goes through the door.

CONNOR

Fuck! This is a nightmare.

ULVA

It's so Wolf Bite. I believe her.

CONNOR

The question is what do we do?

Connor and Ulva look for the answer in each other's arms.

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Overnight snowfall. A few inches. Light breeze.

Connor and Ulva step out and startle. A DEAD FARM CHICKEN
swings by its neck and almost smacks them in the face.

Feathers swirl in the cold morning.

Connor yanks the Chicken down. Hard and quick.

CONNOR

Fuckers! Who are you? Who did this?

Ulva requests the dead fowl from Connor.

CONNOR
We need it as evidence. What're you
going to do?

ULVA
What else do you do with dead
things? Bury them.

Reluctant, he passes it to her. By reflex, she strokes it.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Snow pelts windows. A fire in the hearth POPS and CRACKLES.

Ulva and Connor share a blanket with backs against the couch.

ULVA
I see it now, Connor.

CONNOR
Will it be different anywhere else?
I don't want to fight to live. To
love you the way I want.

ULVA
I'm going back to a cage tomorrow.

CONNOR
We go where there are no cages.

Ulva searches his face.

ULVA
You sure?

Connor moves a strand of her hair behind an ear.

CONNOR
If you're caged, it erases us both.
I made a promise under the Moon to
be myself. I honor that. I chose
you. I choose us.

ULVA
We leave for home.

CONNOR
First thing in the morning.

They melt into each other.

INT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT DOOR - MORNING

Ulva and Connor at the threshold in heavy snowmobile suits.

The stuffed wolf peeks out from a pocket in Ulva's suit.

With no fire or lights on, the house feels abandoned.

Connor touches the doorknob.

CONNOR

I'm not afraid, Wolfie.

Ulva lays her hand over his.

ULVA

I haven't had a moment of fear
since the first time I held your
hand. At the diner.

A shared breath. They open the door. Together.

Snow whips in on a gust.

EXT. LUND FAMILY HOME - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Snow falls at a fast clip.

A Sheriff Car fishtails on the snowy street, parks.

Ulva and Connor wait for Sheriff Corrumpu to hike through six inches of snow and climb the porch steps.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

Court ordered me to deliver you to
the hearing by eight. Thought you
might not show. They're right.

He reads their faces. Something like heartbreak crosses his.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

You're not gonna get a fair shake.

ULVA

We know.

CONNOR

We're leaving.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU

Nowhere to go where they won't find
you. Wolf Bite doesn't forget.

ULVA
We're going home.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Home? Where --
(realizes)
No, don't do that. You --

ULVA
Thank you for giving my dad the
peace he deserves.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Never would've happened if you
didn't steal Gray's chicken.

ULVA
Told you it wasn't a fair trade for
my dad. But it was a start.
(winks)
Make sense now?

He nods: *it does.*

ULVA
I'm not crazy. I'm the wild that
lives in their fear.

She kisses Corrumpu's cheek.

ULVA
You're a good man.

CONNOR
Goodbye, Sheriff.

Connor holds Ulva's hand. Off the porch. Together.

Corrumpu keeps them in sight until they vanish into the snow,
into the treeline.

SHERIFF CORRUMPU
Godspeed.

The heavy snowfall erases Ulva and Connor's footsteps.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - RUNA'S GRAVE - DAY

SERIES

Spring. The Cross leans a bit in the rain-drenched soil.

Summer. Wildflowers bloom. The Cross lies on its side.

Autumn. Red, orange and gold leaves blanket the Cross.

Winter. A light snow dusts what remains of the Cross.

EXT. DEEP FOREST - CLEARING - DAY

Spring.

Two Wolf Cubs, a male and female, chase their Momma -- a slender Wolf with gorgeous gray coat and magnetic blue eyes.

A strong, gray Papa Wolf with soulful brown eyes digs a hole.

The carcass of the Old Wolf rests nearby.

Momma and the Cubs help Papa dig.

HER BURIAL

Momma and Poppa drag the carcass to the grave.

The Cubs help. They GRRR and pull hard.

Before they cover the Old Wolf, Momma drops the stuffed wolf at her side. To keep her company. Forever.

THE NIGHT

The Wolf Family rests paws atop the burial mound.

They mourn with SAD HOWLS.

EXT. PÉTEUX HOME - BACKYARD - SAME

Freddie, now seven, hears their HOWLS.

He HOWLS back.

GLORIA (OS)
Freddie, shut up!

His smile widens.

The east. A Wolf Moon rises. The forest radiant in its light.

ULVA (VO)
Not much else to say, I suppose,
except every fable needs a moral.
We have a wish for your instead.

ULVA (VO)
May all your love be wolf
love. Love that cannot be
killed.

CONNOR (VO)
May all your love be wolf
love. Love that cannot be
killed.

END