

My Man The Wolf

by Alex Jaloza

Characters:

SHE
FRIEND 1
FRIEND 2
FRIEND 3
HE
MOM
VIOLA
SAL
GUY
BETH
DREW
ROCCO
BARKER
GUY 1
GUY 2
GUY 3
JIM
CHICK

In the first reading of **My Man the Wolf** on March 8, 2020, the cast was as follows:

SHE.....Stephanie Gomerez
HE.....Eric Berger
MOM/FRIEND 1.....Mary Dziekowicz
VIOLA/FRIEND 2.....Danielle Nigro
SAL/GUY 3.....Lewis Gurgis
BETH/FRIEND 3/CHICK.....Stephanie Moreno
DREW/GUY 2.....Avi Mamenko
ROCCO/GUY 1.....Trey Santiago
BARKER/GUY.....Imani Pearl Williams
JIM.....David Israeli

My Man the Wolf takes place in a small town. There is a bar, someone's mother's house, a sandwich shop, a motel room, a boardwalk, a 99 cent store, and a metal foundry. The moon is always high in the night sky.

ACT I

SCENE 1

The full moon projected in the back: big as anything. The sound of wind. On a raised platform upstage, silhouettes appear. Her, stage right, him stage left. You can only see their shadows against the moon. She speaks.

SHE

People give us dirty looks when we walk together in public. I can hear the people whispering about us as we pass. I can hear all the things that they say. And their eyes tell me all the things they don't say, the things they're too scared to say. But I don't mind. I just throw my hair over my shoulder. Hold his hand tighter. I say let them stare at me and my man. My man with his crooked teeth. My man with his chewed up ear. My man with all his anger.

My man's ashamed of himself, so he doesn't stand up straight. He thinks he's too tall, that he takes up too much space--he thinks that all the space out there is for somebody else, but not for him. He's worried about someone seeing his head sticking out in a crowd, and so he slouches and he hunches his shoulders and he pulls his face down low. I don't like it. I don't like it, but I don't tell him why I don't. Not the real reason. I don't tell him it makes him look feral.

As she says this, they come together center stage. They walk around one another, circle each other until they've made a full rotation. He sniffs her. She closes her eyes, wanting him. He takes off running, back the way he came.

SHE (CONT'D)

We meet in a bar.

She comes forward, steps down off the platform, and you can see what she's wearing. She adjusts her skirt as she comes down, a short leather thing, under a pink halter top. Fuck me pumps. She joins up with her friends, who are all dressed similarly and have come in stage right. The lights have changed; we're in the bar now. Loud, indecipherable club music comes on, muffled. Guys order them beers and come across the stage to give them to the girls. They all giggle, they all drink, they dance a little. The guys keep going past them, off.

He comes on stage left and faces the bar that's there. He orders Jim Beam. He drinks it.

One of her friends notices him.

FRIEND 1

Holy shit, get a load of that guy.

The friends all look. Some laugh. Some are a little frightened. She steps away from the group, a little bit toward him, trying to get a better look.

FRIEND 1 (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

FRIEND 3

Don't tell me you're tryna talk to...him.

FRIEND 2

What, you like that guy?

FRIEND 1

You're into that shit?

FRIEND 3

Look at his... I mean, just look at him.

FRIEND 2

What would Rocco say?

SHE

Fuck Rocco.

She walks over to him, slowly, carefully.

SHE (CONT'D)

Hey.

He doesn't know she's talking to him, or he can't believe it. She touches his arm and he bristles.

SHE (CONT'D)

Hey.

They stand looking at each other for a little. People are staring at them. She takes him by the hand and tries to lead him to center stage, to the dance floor.

HE

No.

The music seems to stop. Everyone is watching.

SHE

Why not?

He looks away from her and sips his drink.

HE
I don't do that.

SHE
Don't do what.

HE
Whatever you're asking me to do.

SHE
What, dance? Everybody dances.

HE
I don't.

SHE
Why not?

HE
Let's say I don't know how.

SHE
Then I'll teach you.

HE
No.

SHE
Please. Let me teach you.

She takes his hands and backs away from the bar, pulling him with her. He doesn't resist this time. The crowd parts as they come through, making way until they're all alone in the center of the room.

She puts her hands up on his shoulders, rubbing up and down the fur on his arms. He puts his hands on her waist. They sway.

SHE (CONT'D)
You telling me nobody ever taught you how to dance?

HE
No.

SHE
Nobody ever dance with you?

HE
No.

SHE
You're doing pretty well for someone who was never taught.

HE

It's just moving back and forth.

SHE

That's all dancing is. Just back and forth. And you're doing it right.

The music comes back up, louder than ever, and people crowd in around them, dancing. He's really quite good.

SHE (CONT'D)

You lied to me. I bet you've been dancing your whole life.

HE

I haven't been.

SHE

So maybe you didn't even know you were.

HE

I want to leave.

After a while, the two of them burst out of the crowd, which disperses. They stand under a streetlight and she smokes a cigarette, stealing glances at him.

When she's finished, she pulls him along with her, back to her motel room, stage right.

She spins him around and throws him down on the bed.

SHE

You ever been with a woman before?

HE

Sure.

SHE

You ever been with a woman like me?

HE

I don't know what kinda woman you are.

SHE

Don't worry. I'll show you.

She climbs on top of him and feels his chest.

HE

Show me.

He kisses her.

He pulls her down into the bed with him.

The lights go down.

SCENE 2

The lights come back up, slowly.

She wakes up, slowly, and rolls over, hoping to find him in the bed with her. He's gone.

She gets up, stretches, puts on jeans and a t-shirt. She walks across the stage and knocks on her mother's door, stage left.

MOM

One second! I'm coming!

Her mom opens the door.

SHE

Hey.

MOM

Hey, baby. How are you? How was your night?

SHE

It was good. It was fun.

MOM

Come in.

SHE

Just for a minute.

They go into the house and She sits at the kitchen table.

MOM

You were dancing?

SHE

Yeah.

MOM

With who?

SHE

Maggie and all them.

MOM

I didn't know you were still close.

SHE
We're not.

MOM
Where'd you go? Down on Front?

SHE
Yeah. Oscar's.

MOM
Oscar's. Brings me back.

SHE
Sure.

MOM
I used to have a lot of fun there.

SHE
You're still fun, ma.

MOM
Not like I used to be. I used to... I used to be a riot.
Before your father.

SHE
Yeah.

MOM
Do you want to eat something?

SHE
Nah, I'm alright.

MOM
You sure?

SHE
Yeah. How was she?

MOM
I can make you lunch. Whip something up real quick. I was
just gonna make her some lunch when you knocked.

SHE
It's okay, we'll pick something up on the way back home.

MOM
No, don't do that. I want to spend some time with you.

SHE
We were gonna stop by Sal's.

MOM

Don't worry about Sal. Sal'll always be there.

SHE

I told him we'd stop by. You know, she said to me yesterday she wanted to get meatballs. I promised her.

MOM

Okay.

SHE

She loves 'em.

MOM

You loved 'em, too. He used to make 'em right in this kitchen. He'd make 'em and read that book to you.

SHE

Yeah.

MOM

You remember that, of course.

SHE

How was she?

MOM

She was good. She's always good. You know, she played with her Barbies. She loves her Barbies.

SHE

You play with her?

MOM

Of course. I'm grandma, it's my job.

SHE

You're good at it.

MOM

I would always play with you, too, you know. Not so long ago. You remember how you'd play with your dollies?

SHE

Sure.

MOM

It's funny. She reminds me so much of you sometimes. She's like your whaddayacallit, your spitting image. And you know how I've got pictures of you up all over? She thinks they're her. She looks just like you did, baby. Same hair. Bright eyes.

SHE
Yeah. She ready?

MOM
She's still in PJs.

SHE
That's okay. We're just going to Sal's and then home.

MOM
She should at least get dressed to leave the house.

SHE
She'll be fine.

MOM
She'll get cold.

SHE
Ma, it's a hundred degrees out.

MOM
It's not summer yet.

SHE
Practically. Viola!

MOM
And what about her hair? I didn't even get to brush it yet.

SHE
I'll brush it at Sal's.

MOM
She's up playing with her Barbies. I didn't know you were coming, I just told her I was gonna make some lunch.

SHE
Viola, come out! Mama's here! Viola!

MOM
She was good.

SHE
What'd she eat for dinner?

MOM
I made some chicken.

SHE
She eat it?

MOM

Mostly. You know, she doesn't eat her vegetables. I made brussels sprouts, too, she doesn't eat those.

SHE

She's a kid.

MOM

I know. You didn't eat 'em at her age either.

SHE

Yeah.

MOM

Viola!

Viola comes to the door. She's got three Barbies in her hands and a backpack on her back.

SHE

Hey baby, give mama a hug.

She crouches down and Viola hugs her.

VIOLA

Hi, mom.

SHE

Hey, thanks a lot for watching her.

MOM

Any time. You know that. You need time off sometimes. You okay?

SHE

Yeah, of course.

MOM

I'm serious.

SHE

Ma, I'm fine.

MOM

You know, even if it's just--

SHE

If it's just anything, I'll come to you. I know. I love you.

MOM

Alright. I love you too. Be good.

SHE

Viola, say bye to grandma.

VIOLA

Bye, grandma.

MOM

Bye-bye, Viola. You have fun with your mom. Hey. You call me if you need anything, right?

SHE

Of course, mom. We love you, grandma!

VIOLA

Love you, grandma!

Mom waves as they walk away.

SHE

How was grandma's house?

VIOLA

I could play with my Barbies and also had a chocolate cake.

SHE

You had chocolate cake?

VIOLA

Yeah, but it's a secret.

SHE

Don't worry, I won't tell anyone. Why don't you show me how you play with your Barbies?

*Viola smiles. She plays with her Barbies as they walk.
They walk up to the bar of Sal's place, stage right.*

SAL

Well, if it isn't my two favorite customers! How you doing? Hey, Viola, how are you?

SHE

He asked you a question, Viola.

SAL

She don't have to answer if she don't want to answer. She looks like she just rolled out of bed. You just wake up, Viola?

SHE

No, she's gonna answer. Say you're good, baby.

VIOLA

I'm good.

SHE

Good girl.

SAL

Well, that's good to hear. And you, mama? How are you?

SHE

I'm alright.

SAL

Yeah?

SHE

Yeah.

SAL

You want subs?

SHE

Yeah, that would be great. She just wants a meatball, she doesn't need the bread.

SAL

Of course, of course. You hear that, Viola? One meatball for you, coming right up!

SHE

Say thank you, Viola.

VIOLA

Thank you.

SAL

Just give me a sec.

Sal goes offstage right. Viola plays with her Barbies. She takes out a brush and brushes Viola's hair.

SHE

So what are the Barbies up to today?

Viola doesn't answer.

Hey, Viola, I'm talkin' to you. I wanna know what's happening with your Barbies.

VIOLA

Viola's at grandma's house. Viola and grandma are making chocolate cake. Mom's on a field trip. Mom's going to the moon.

SHE

Oh yeah?

VIOLA

Oh yeah. Mom's took a rocket ship. She's going to the moon.

SHE

Well that sounds fun. A vacation. Thank you for answering.
You see? It's nice to answer people when they ask you things.

*Viola goes back to her dolls. Sal comes on with
sandwiches. She pulls crumpled bills out of the pocket
of her jeans.*

SAL

Ah, put that away, why don't you.

SHE

C'mon, Sal, let me pay for a sandwich.

SAL

You know I don't take your money here. It's no good.

SHE

Sal. C'mon, please.

SAL

How's your mom, huh?

SHE

Let me pay for my subs.

SAL

They're on the house, alright? They were on the house when
you were a kid, they're on the house now. I wanna know how
your mom is. She doing okay?

SHE

Yeah, she's alright.

SAL

That's good to hear.

SHE

Yeah. Viola just came from her.

SAL

You tell her I say hey, okay? You tell her I miss her. I do.

SHE

I'll tell her.

SAL

And the job? That's all good?

SHE

I've still got it. That's good enough for me.

SAL

Alright. That's true. Good enough for a lot of folks. Ain't that right, Vi?

SHE

Tell him that's right.

VIOLA

It's right.

SHE

Good girl.

SAL

How was your night last night?

SHE

You know.

SAL

Where were you, down at Oscar's?

SHE

Yeah.

SAL

Fun stuff. Oscar's used to be... man. The things I did there. It's not what is used to be, and lemme tell ya, that's a good thing.

SHE

I'm sure it is.

SAL

Oh, I know it is. Hey, uh. Listen, you know, Rocco came in here the other day. And I've seen him other places, too. Rocco's been asking around for you.

Viola's head pops up at the mention of her dad's name.

SHE

Well, we didn't come in here.

SAL

Course you didn't. And nobody paid me for no meatballs, 'cause nobody came in here. You take care of yourself, okay?

SHE

I am. Nobody has to worry about me.

SAL

People can't help it. Here, I'll leave you two alone. You enjoy those, girls.

He walks off to help someone down the counter. They eat their food. She wipes the tomato sauce off of Viola's face.

SHE

C'mon.

They leave and the stage goes dark.

SCENE 3

The lights come back up, and it's the bar again. She comes on stage left, dressed for a night out. People are out--dancing, drinking. The music plays loudly. A guy comes up to her with two beers. He taps her on the shoulder.

GUY

Hey. I like your pants.

She ignores him. She's looking for someone.

GUY (CONT'D)

I said I like your pants. Hey. Hey!

SHE

Hey.

GUY

I said I like your pants.

SHE

Thanks.

GUY

You want this beer?

SHE

What?

GUY

I asked if you wanted this beer. I got an extra. It's so fucking loud in here. I asked if you wanted it.

SHE

I'm good.

GUY

You don't want it? C'mon, it's a night out, you're thirsty. C'mon, I got this beer for you.

SHE

I'm good.

GUY

No, listen. It's free, you get that? It's for you. You don't gotta pay nothing, you don't gotta do nothing. I got you a beer, okay.

SHE

Okay.

GUY

You want it?

SHE

Sure.

He holds it out and she takes it.

GUY

You wanna dance?

SHE

No.

GUY

C'mon, baby, dance with me.

SHE

I'm waiting for someone.

GUY

You're waiting for me, baby. And I'm right here.

SHE

Get out of here.

GUY

Oh come on, that's not very nice.

SHE

I'm not dancing with you.

GUY

Well, we don't have to dance. We could do something else. Anything you want.

SHE

Get out of here.

GUY

Fine. You gonna give me the beer back, then?

SHE

Fuck off. I'm waiting for someone.

GUY

Bitch.

*He wanders off.**Then she sees him. The man from last night is there in the corner, leaned up against the wall, staring out at the sea of people. No one goes near him. He's looking for something. He's looking for her. She takes her drink and walks over.*

SHE

Hello again.

HE

Hello again.

SHE

I was looking for you.

HE

Why?

SHE

I guess I wanted to see you again.

HE

You found me.

SHE

Who found who?

HE

You were the one looking.

SHE

And you weren't? I could see your eyes from across the room. Boy, you're practically aching to hold me again. Do you remember the moves I taught you?

HE

I don't want to dance.

*He takes her hand and leads her out of the bar. They go back to her hotel room.**He throws her down on the bed.**They fuck all night long.**The lights go down.*

SCENE 4

They're in bed, suspended, in front of the full moon. The moon fades away and the sun rises. She wakes up. She's got her head on his chest, rising and falling with his breathing.

She watches him slowly wake up, eyes desperate to stay closed. He stretches his arms and she holds him tight.

The bed comes down to the ground. He sits up.

HE
I need to go to work.

SHE
Where?

HE
The foundry.

SHE
You're one of those.

HE
For now.

SHE
Promise me you'll come back.

HE
I can't do that.

SHE
Why not?

HE
I don't make promises.

SHE
Not even to me?

HE
I don't even know you.

SHE
How can you say that after last night?

HE
It's just the truth. I don't know you. You don't know me.

SHE
Of course I know you. I can see right through your skull. I see it all. I know what's going on in there.

HE

You have no idea.

SHE

But don't you want someone to know?

HE

No.

SHE

Well I want to know. I don't care what you want. I want to know.

HE

Fine.

SHE

Fine what?

HE

I'll come back.

SHE

You'll come back where?

HE

I'll come back to this room. I'll come back to this bed. I'll come back to you.

SHE

You promise?

HE

Yes.

SHE

Good.

He gets up and leaves.

SHE (CONT'D)

Even when he leaves I can feel the rumbling sound of him down in my chest. His grunt, his bark, his snarl. When I saw him at the end of the bar, when I had him in my bed, I knew he was a kind of beautiful that only exists in fairy tales. And he had on a pair of jeans that made his ass look like a dream. No shirt on--all grey fur, matted down and glistening with sweat. I wasn't lying the night before. I really could see his eyes from all the way on the other side of the bar. They were hunting for me. Lover's eyes, I remember thinking.

And I was right: he does have the lover's eyes that I thought I saw, but they aren't like any eyes I've ever known before.

They're eyes in pain, the kind of eyes that are used to hiding, eyes made to be tortured, eyes terrified of the past, eyes frightened of the future, eyes that can't trust the present, eyes that don't trust themselves. Eyes staring carefully at me, not knowing if they want to trust me. I could tell all this just by looking at them for a second.

And then, this morning, watching him wake up, I looked up at his face, his snout, his maw. His mouth hung a little open. I could see all his teeth in crooked rows, crooked gravestones in a red flesh cave. I used to dream about teeth like those.

He comes back, tired from work. He sits down on the bed, hard and heavy, a collapse. She goes to the drawer and pulls out Viola's brush.

She sits behind him and brushes his fur. He's in ecstasy. Once he looks presentable, they trade places. He massages her back. They kiss. The lights go down.

SCENE 5

From stage right, they walk along the boardwalk in front of the full moon. They pause center stage. She looks at him, expecting something. He shakes his head.

HE

What?

Pause.

HE (CONT'D)

No. I don't do that.

SHE

No?

HE

I'm not going to.

SHE

Please?

HE

No.

SHE

Have you ever tried?

Pause.

HE

Yes.

SHE
No you haven't. You don't know how.

HE
I know how.

SHE
You have no idea.

HE
Of course I do.

SHE
Here you are, looking like that, and you don't even know how to--

HE
Stop.

SHE
I'll teach you. I'll go first.

HE
Don't.

SHE
Why not?

HE
I don't want to do it.

SHE
Why not?

HE
Because that's not me.

SHE
Look at yourself, baby. That's you all over.

HE
It's not. Why do you want me to be something I'm not?

SHE
Sometimes that's better. Try it with me.

HE
Don't make me.

SHE
I won't make you. But I want you to. I want to hear it.

HE
Please. Just...let me have this one thing.

SHE
Fine. You don't have to. But I want to.

She howls.

HE
Stop it! Shhh!

SHE
Why?

HE
You're too loud.

SHE
So what? I'm loud.

HE
You'll wake everyone up, people will come running.

SHE
Let them wake up. Let them come running. I'm here now.

She howls.

HE
Stop!

SHE
You do it.

HE
No.

SHE
Do it for me. Do it because I want you to.

HE
I can't.

SHE
You can. I've seen you do it in your sleep.

She pushes him and smiles. He smiles back, a half-smile.

SHE (CONT'D)
Do it. Let the world know you're here too.

He looks up and lets loose, an echoing, haunting cry, a sob, a lament for the moon. He does it for a long time, until it hurts him and her and everyone else. She joins in.

Then they kiss as the moon goes down and the lights do, too.

SCENE 6

The lights come up on her and Beth folding clothes at the 99 cent store. She's got her head down, she's focused, but Beth keeps looking over and stealing glances.

BETH

...So?

SHE

So what?

BETH

Well? C'mon. You gotta tell me. Come on.

SHE

I don't know what you're talking about.

BETH

Bullshit. That's bullshit. Come on, how long we been working here together for? We're friends. We've been working here together for like a year. But you never tell me shit.

SHE

I don't know what you want.

BETH

You know exactly what I want. Tell me about...him. You don't gotta be like...tightassed about it. I just wanna know. I'm not gonna tell Rocco, or nothin'. I'm just curious.

SHE

What do you want to know?

BETH

Everything. Like, what's he smell like, even? Like a, like a dog, or like a guy?

SHE

Sort of like both. Musty like a dog, but clean like a guy.

BETH

He doesn't wear cologne, does he? Or like that body spray they got?

SHE

No. The smell's all him.

BETH
Can he talk?

SHE
Of course.

BETH
No shit.

SHE
Yeah.

BETH
Not just like...howling, or nothing.

SHE
No, not at all. That's not him.

BETH
What do you guys talk about?

SHE
All sorts of stuff.

BETH
Yeah? Like?

SHE
You know. How the wind feels when it blows through your hair on the boardwalk. All the colors you can see as the sun sets. What it's like to be alive.

BETH
You really talk about shit like that?

SHE
Why are you grilling me like this?

BETH
No, it's just...

SHE
Just what?

BETH
So, it's like, it's like, a little weird, right? You and him? This guy? I mean, I'm happy for you, cuz, y'know, we're friends. And I can see that you're happy.

SHE
I am happy.

BETH

I can tell. I really can. You know, I heard that he was from like down south, like Mexican border. And my friend's got a cousin in Santa Fe and she said that he said they had a guy just like that down there, like a...wolf, or whatever. That things were weird for a little and then he just up and left one day. I was just wondering, like, if it was the same guy, or what, or like his brother or something? I'm just...I never heard of nothing like that before.

SHE

Neither had I.

BETH

But, like I said, y'know. He's your man. That's all that matters.

SHE

You better believe it.

They fold for a while.

BETH

Okay I got another question.

SHE

Of course you do.

Beth leans in close.

BETH

What's the sex like?

Drew comes in stage right.

DREW

Hi, girls.

BETH

Hey Drew. We were just folding.

DREW

Alright. Less talking, more folding, then.

SHE

Sir, yes, sir.

DREW

How you doing?

SHE

I'm good. How are you?

DREW

Same old, same old. Another long summer, hopefully. I like this top on you. It's a good look.

SHE

Maybe you should get something like it for Denise.

DREW

Maybe I should. That'd be a nice gift.

SHE

It would be.

DREW

People always tell me I'm great at giving gifts.

SHE

I bet.

DREW

Anything I could get for you?

SHE

I've got just about everything I could want.

BETH

She's got a new man.

DREW

I've heard.

SHE

It's true.

DREW

I also heard he's kind of weird.

SHE

That's true, too.

DREW

Makes sense. Rocco was kinda weird.

SHE

I guess I just like weird.

DREW

You know, some people say that I'm pretty weird.

SHE

I don't doubt that.

DREW

I could show you why, sometime.

SHE

I don't know. I could just ask Denise why if I wanted to know. She still at home with the twins?

DREW

Alright. Let's get back to work.

He leaves.

BETH

What a prick. That's why I'm done with men. For good. I'll just be alone forever and that's fine.

SHE

You'll find someone.

BETH

Maybe.

SHE

You will. I did.

BETH

You never answered me.

The lights go down.

SCENE 7

Viola sits on his back. He walks around the room.

She walks onstage, from stage left.

SHE

Viola.

VIOLA

Look, mommy.

HE

It's okay. I've got her.

VIOLA

Look, mommy. I'm a princess.

SHE

You are, darling.

VIOLA

His fur is so soft.

SHE

It is.

VIOLA
I like to rub my face against it.

SHE
So do I.

VIOLA
I like him, mommy.

SHE
So do I.

HE
I have to go to work.

SHE
Let go of him, honey.

VIOLA
I don't want him to go, mommy.

SHE
No?

VIOLA
I love him, mommy.

SHE
Do you want to go with him, honey?

HE
I can't take her to work with me.

SHE
You can walk with her. You can drop her off at my mother's.
I'll pick her up when my shift's over.

HE
No, I can't.

SHE
She's not home yet. I'll give you the key.

HE
And leave her there alone?

SHE
She's been there alone before. She'll be fine and my mother
will be home soon.

VIOLA
I'm big.

HE
What if people see me?

SHE
What if people see you?

HE
If they see me with Viola?

SHE
Then they see you with Viola.

VIOLA
Mommy, I want him to take me to grandma's.

SHE
Will you?

HE
Yes.

SHE
Go with him, honey.

She kisses Viola on the forehead. She kisses him on the mouth. He leaves with Viola.

She sits down on the bed and lights a cigarette.

There's a knocking. She looks up at the sky and composes herself. Rocco comes in.

SHE (CONT'D)
What are you doing? You can't just come in here.

ROCCO
Then why do you leave the door unlocked?

SHE
I didn't. I just didn't lock it yet.

ROCCO
Well, you don't have to. Here. I'll get it.

He locks the door.

ROCCO (CONT'D)
You gotta be careful. You never know who could just come in.

SHE
I need you to leave.

ROCCO
Just listen to me.

SHE

No, Rocco. I've got to go to work, I gotta--

ROCCO

Just listen to me, okay baby? Just listen to what I've got to say.

SHE

I don't want to listen. I told you, I don't want you here. I don't know how many times I have to tell you that.

ROCCO

Don't talk like that. I don't like it when you talk like that.

SHE

I don't like you, Rocco. I told you that.

ROCCO

You're not being nice to me.

SHE

No, I'm not.

ROCCO

How many times do I have to say it?

SHE

Say what?

ROCCO

That I'm sorry, huh?

SHE

At least a million more.

ROCCO

I can do that. I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm--

SHE

Stop that.

ROCCO

I can do a million. You want me to? I can, really. I promise.

SHE

I don't want you to. I didn't really mean that.

ROCCO

If I got to do a million for you to take me back, I'll do a million. I'm sorry I'm--

SHE

I don't want you back. Don't you get that?

ROCCO

You're just saying that now. You're just saying that now because we're going through a rough patch.

SHE

I don't want you!

ROCCO

How can you say that? How can you just...throw me away like that? I'm Viola's father, you know that.

SHE

I know that.

ROCCO

A kid can't grow up without a father. It's not right. You're not doing right by Viola.

SHE

I can't do this, Rocco. I can't.

ROCCO

C'mon. I'm begging you.

SHE

No.

ROCCO

You know what? You wanna go somewhere with me?

SHE

No. I've got work.

ROCCO

Work? Fuck work. Since when do you care about work.

SHE

I'm different than I used to be when we were together.

ROCCO

No you're not. C'mon, let's go. It'll be just like old times. You remember how it used to be? You and me, down on the boardwalk, a case of Millers? Huh? Let's do it like that again. You remember how we used to do, when we'd skip school and go out there and watch the waves? Don't try to tell me you don't remember. I know you do.

SHE

Of course I do.

ROCCO

Don't try to tell me you hated that, or that you don't want that. 'Cuz I know you do. You loved that. And you love me. I love you, baby. Come here.

He kisses her.

She pushes him away.

SHE

No, no, we can't do this anymore.

ROCCO

Baby, c'mon. I'll go buy a case of beer right now. Right now we'll--

SHE

I said no, alright? We're through. We've been through. You can't come here anymore. And you can't kiss me anymore.

ROCCO

Why, you got a man?

SHE

That doesn't matter.

ROCCO

I was asking Sal if you did. He says you don't go in there anymore. You don't go to Sally's no more? He's practically your father.

SHE

Viola doesn't like his meatballs anymore.

ROCCO

That's a load. You got a man or what?

SHE

That doesn't matter.

ROCCO

I'm your man. That's me. I mean, we've got a baby together. A child.

SHE

She's my baby. You didn't want anything to do with her.

ROCCO

Of course I do.

SHE

You told me you didn't.

ROCCO

Look. That was stupid of me. I was an idiot, okay? I was... I regret that. And I'll probably regret that as long as I live. But I've changed. You've changed too: you care about work now and shit? I've changed. I promise. C'mon, baby, kiss me again. I'm begging you. Just make me feel right again.

SHE

No, Rocco. I'm sorry. I can't.

ROCCO

What's that smell?

SHE

What smell?

ROCCO

You got Viola a dog, or something?

SHE

No.

ROCCO

Can I... can I see her? I want to see her. She's my daughter too, you know.

SHE

She's out.

ROCCO

She's at your mom's?

SHE

You know, she goes back to school soon.

ROCCO

I guess that's right. Summer's going by fast, huh?

SHE

Sure. She needs new clothes before then. Money for pens and books.

ROCCO

Ah, sure.

SHE

You got that money, Rocco?

ROCCO

For Viola? Sure, I got it. Yeah, I do.

SHE

Yeah? Where do you keep it?

ROCCO

Aw, don't start with that. You know that if you need money I'm good for it. You know if it's for Viola, I've got it.

SHE

Do you?

ROCCO

Listen, baby.

SHE

If you don't have money for us, I don't know how this would work.

ROCCO

I'll come back, alright? I'll come back with some cash. We can go on a shopping spree. All three of us. Like a family. You can buy her a new knapsack and pens and all that. And something nice for yourself.

SHE

I don't want anything.

ROCCO

But I want to get you something. I want to prove myself.

SHE

Prove yourself by acting like a father.

ROCCO

I'm out there proving that. I'm out there working at the foundry. Double, sometimes triple shifts. Trying to make some money for her.

SHE

Why aren't you at work today? It's not some holiday I don't know about?

ROCCO

No, it's just--

SHE

Maybe in Roccoland.

ROCCO

My eye's still all sorts of messed up.

SHE

Your eye was never messed up.

ROCCO

It is, and getting worse. It's not working right, I can barely see out of it.

SHE

Seemed fine when you were out shooting cans with your boys.

ROCCO

Look, the union's jerking me around with my insurance.

SHE

That's an excuse Rocco. And you know it is. You worry about your eye, then you worry about paying for Viola's shit. Don't stop to worry about me.

ROCCO

I can't help it.

SHE

Worry about what you're gonna get her for her birthday.

ROCCO

Ah, shit.

SHE

Don't tell me you forgot.

ROCCO

I didn't. No, of course I didn't.

SHE

She's expecting a real gift from you this year.

ROCCO

Alright. Alright, I'm going shopping. I'm gonna get her something great.

SHE

I'll believe it when I see it.

ROCCO

I'm dead serious. You don't think I am?

SHE

Make her proud, Rocco.

ROCCO

I'm going to. Watch. She's gonna beg you to let me come home.

SHE

Sure.

ROCCO

She will. She's gonna want her mama and daddy back together. You watch and see. She needs me. You do, too.

SHE

Didn't you say you were going?

ROCCO
Did I?

SHE
You said you were going shopping.

ROCCO
Oh, I didn't mean now.

SHE
Get out of here and go be a man.

ROCCO
You know what? Alright. I'll show you. Hey. How 'bout a kiss
goodbye, huh? Just one.

SHE
No.

ROCCO
C'mon. For old time's sakes.

SHE
Get out of here, Rocco. Go get something for your daughter.

*He kisses her quickly and then darts out. She wipes
her mouth.*

She throws a pillow across the room.

*He comes home from work. He kisses her hard. She
notices there's a little blood over his eye.*

SHE (CONT'D)
What happened?

HE
It's nothing.

SHE
What happened?

HE
Don't worry about it.

SHE
Did you hurt yourself?

HE
Yeah.

SHE
You bump into something?

HE
Sure.

SHE
C'mon.

HE
Sure, I bumped into something. I wasn't watching where I was going.

SHE
Did someone do this to you?

HE
No. They wouldn't...no.

SHE
Who did this to you?

HE
No one, just drop it.

SHE
Baby.

HE
I'm tired. Let me go to sleep.

SHE
Did they do this at the foundry?

He kisses her.

SHE (CONT'D)
Why did they hurt you?

He kisses her again.

SHE (CONT'D)
Talk to me.

HE
They don't like me.

SHE
I like you.

HE
I know.

SHE
I like you a lot.

HE

They pay me shit but I keep my head down and do my job. I don't talk to anybody and nobody talks to me. And that's fine. It works fine. I don't want to talk to anybody. I want them all to leave me alone, they don't want me to bother them, it works. Until they start talking to me. They've always got shit to say.

SHE

But you're strong and you're smart and you work as hard as you can.

HE

Yeah.

SHE

I know, baby.

HE

That's why they keep me there even though the other workers don't like looking at me. Even though they hate my fucking guts. I don't know how long I can last.

SHE

Let them hate, baby. Pour your sadness into me.

She washes his face and kisses his wound and she rubs his stomach as he curls up into a ball. She pets him until he falls asleep. She stays awake.

A picture of a man is projected. He's dressed for work at a foundry, with a shovel over his shoulder. He's smiling.

SHE (CONT'D)

My man has a photograph of himself that he keeps in his wallet. I've only seen it by accident. It's him pink and fleshy, no fur whatsoever, and it does nothing for me. It's just another man, just like Rocco, just like my dad, just like everyone else in this town who works metal down at the foundry. It's not my man. Not at all. I've seen him looking at it late at night when he thinks I'm asleep. I've seen him running his finger over it. I thought I heard him crying, moaning low in the dark. I bet he wishes he looked like that again, but he doesn't know. He doesn't know that the wolf is the way I love him.

The lights go down.

SCENE 8

She and Viola face the audience, looking at a mirror out there. She's putting on makeup and Viola's miming doing the same thing.

VIOLA

Mommy, can you put some on me for real?

SHE

No, baby. When you're older.

VIOLA

Why not now?

SHE

You're pretty enough as you are now. When you get to be Mommy's age, then you'll need it.

VIOLA

Mommy's so old. That'll take forever.

SHE

That's a good thing, baby. That's a good thing.

He walks in.

HE

Hello.

Viola runs over and hugs him.

SHE

Hello. Are you ready?

HE

I don't want to do this.

SHE

Please. For me.

VIOLA

We're going to grandma's house.

HE

I know.

VIOLA

Why don't you want to go to grandma's house?

SHE

He's scared.

HE

I am not.

VIOLA

You're so big. How could you be scared of anything?

HE

I'm not scared.

SHE

Prove it.

Pause.

HE

Alright. Let's go.

SHE

Thank you.

*He stands waiting with Viola while she finishes her makeup.**When she's done, they all take hands and walk together to her mom's. People stare at them.**She knocks on her mother's door. Her mother shouts from offstage.*

MOM

Is that my Viola?

SHE

Say "yes it is," Viola.

VIOLA

Yes, it is Viola.

MOM

I'm coming, I'm coming.

She opens the door.

MOM (CONT'D)

Oh.

VIOLA

Hi grandma. I brought my Barbies.

SHE

Hey, Ma.

MOM

What's going on?

SHE
Mother.

MOM
Who is this?

SHE
Mother, this is my new man.

MOM
This. This is your...new man.

SHE
Yes.

MOM
He's not... He's a--

HE
I'm going to leave.

SHE
Stay here.

HE
Really. I should--

VIOLA
Come.

Viola takes his hand.

MOM
Viola!

VIOLA
I'm gonna show him where we wash our hands before dinner.

MOM
Viola.

VIOLA
Don't worry. I'll show him. Come. You have to wash if you want dessert.

He follows Viola into the house.

SHE
Do you have something to say?

MOM
I didn't think it was true.

SHE
You didn't think what was true?

MOM
Him.

SHE
What did you hear?

MOM
I didn't think that...

SHE
He's true.

MOM
I... I can't believe it.

SHE
You can't believe what?

MOM
That you would let... I mean, Viola's a child!

SHE
So what?

MOM
So how could you just let her get so close to him?

SHE
So close? He's harmless.

MOM
Look at him!

SHE
I have! I do!

MOM
Oh, come on.

SHE
Every day. I look at him. In his eyes.

MOM
And can't you see what he is?

SHE
Can't you?

MOM
Of course I can. Everybody else can.

SHE

Who's everybody else?

MOM

I just can't believe you'd actually be so stupid. To bring him here. Into this house.

SHE

Mother.

MOM

How could you bring a man like that into our house?

SHE

It was as easy as a little girl bringing him right through the door. Who's everybody else?

MOM

If your father was alive right now--

SHE

If the little girl's not scared of him, why are you? Why are you scared of what "everybody else" thinks?

MOM

What would he say? God rest his soul, the man is rolling in his grave right now, knowing that...*that* is in his house.

SHE

What would he say? He would say "come in," he would say "sit down," he would say "eat with us." He would wait until after dinner to judge him, not before saying five words to the guy.

MOM

The guy.

SHE

The guy. The man.

MOM

He's barely a man.

SHE

He is, mother. He's my man.

MOM

What about Rocco? Whatever happened to Rocco?

SHE

Fuck Rocco, okay?

MOM

Rocco was good to you, at least for a little while! He was...he was -- he wasn't this! He was normal!

SHE
This isn't about fucking Rocco!

MOM
Then what's it about? What is it about?

SHE
How about me finally being happy again?

MOM
It's not about that. You've been happy before.

SHE
When is the last time you remember me happy?

MOM
You're being ridiculous.

SHE
I don't think I am.

MOM
You were happy the other day, the last time I saw you! You're always happy, always smiling.

SHE
On the outside.

MOM
So you're telling me you're faking a smile? All the time?

SHE
When's the last time you saw me really happy? Happy through my smile?

MOM
I don't know. You tell me.

SHE
I don't know either.

MOM
You were happy when you were a little girl. I've got pictures of you smiling all over the place.

SHE
I know. I've seen 'em.

MOM
You were happy then.

SHE
And now I'm happy again. Happy because of him.

MOM

Why can't you be happy with normal?

SHE

I've tried normal. And I can't fucking stand it.

MOM

But don't you understand what people think? What they're saying?

SHE

I don't give a shit! Do you love me?

MOM

What?

SHE

It's a question, a real question.

MOM

Of course I love you.

SHE

Even though I'm fucked up.

MOM

You're not fucked up.

SHE

Come on. Look at me. Look at my life, the way I live, it's fucked up. I'm a fuck up.

MOM

You're not.

SHE

And you love me anyway. No matter what.

MOM

Yes.

SHE

Well, it's the same thing. I know what he looks like. I know how it all looks. And I hear what they say about him. And I love him even though he's fucked up.

MOM

Baby...

SHE

Ma, that little girl in those pictures... I would look at those pictures and I didn't know how she could possibly be me. I didn't remember what her smile felt like. But now I remember. I'm smiling again on the inside, ma, all inside me.

Like bright lights from my toes to my tip. That's what he does to me. That's how much I love him. This man. And he is a man. He's a man, he's my man, and he makes me smile again. He makes me happy again. Isn't that enough? Isn't it enough that I love him and he loves me, even though we're both fucked up?

Pause.

MOM

Okay.

SHE

Isn't it enough?

MOM

Let's go eat dinner.

SHE

No, I want you to answer me. Isn't it enough?

MOM

It's enough. If it's enough for you, it's enough for me. I just hope he doesn't hurt you. I hope you're smiling for a long time.

Mom goes inside.

She steps forward, toward the center, into a spotlight while the rest of the stage goes dark.

SHE

When my mother asks him to say grace, he looks confused. I lean over to him and whisper in his ear, "don't worry about it, baby, you're full of grace." And you should see the way his eyes light up then. You should hear what he says about me and Vi. His words are gentler than I've ever heard words be before. And I look over at my mom and I can see that there's something different about her. His words are softening her, they're turning her cold face into a smile. And it's a smile just like I've got on, stretched from ear to ear. I can see it in her eyes and I can feel it in mine and Viola asks me why I'm crying. I tell her I'm not and I muss up her hair but my mom and my man see it and they both know. When we leave, she lets him hug her. I watch it and then after I'm out the door my mom grabs me by my arm and says to me that she was wrong. And that night everyone is happy, happy like the stars in the sky.

SCENE 9

She's walking on the boardwalk with him and Viola, him on her right and her on her left. The sounds of the carnival overwhelm them.

*Lights from the rides and stands shine all around.
Viola tugs on her mother's sleeve.*

VIOLA
Mommy, mommy, take me on the tilt-a-whirl.

SHE
Later, baby.

VIOLA
Mommy, I want a stuffed animal. I want a puppy.

SHE
We'll get you one, babe.

HE
I'll win you one.

VIOLA
Mommy?

SHE
You don't have to.

HE
I will.

SHE
Say thank you, baby.

VIOLA
Thank you, thank you, thank you.

She hugs him.

Sal is further up on the boardwalk.

SAL
Hey! Viola, how are you?

SHE
Say you're good, honey.

VIOLA
I'm good.

SAL
You wanna go play with Timmy and AJ?

VIOLA
Are they scared, mommy?

SHE
Why don't you take him over there? Show them there's nothing
to be afraid of.

VIOLA
Come.

*Viola leads him off stage left. The sounds of children
come from there, first fearful, then joyful.*

SAL
So.

SHE
So.

SAL
It's different.

SHE
Yes. Very.

SAL
What does your mom think?

SHE
She's coming around.

SAL
She always comes around slow.

SHE
She'll come around for me.

SAL
Are you happy?

SHE
Yes. Very.

SAL
Then I'm all for it.

*He takes her hands for a moment and holds them tight,
smiling.*

Viola and he come back onstage.

VIOLA
They're not scared anymore, mommy.

SHE
That's good, baby.

SAL
Hey, how's your grandma doing, Viola?

SHE
Tell Sal how grandma is, okay?

VIOLA
She's good.

SAL
Hi there. I'm Sal.

Sal extends his hand. He shakes it.

HE
Hey.

SAL
These ladies mean a lot to me.

HE
They mean a lot to me, too.

SAL
Good. You take care of them now, alright? You promise me that.

HE
I promise.

SAL
You guys have fun tonight, okay?

SHE
We will, Sal. See you around.

SAL
Wait up, boys. Grandpa's coming.

He goes off stage left.

They keep on walking down the boardwalk, past the games and towards the smell of fried food.

Lights have come up on a stall -- a pyramid of glass bottles. The barker sits on the counter, tossing a ball and catching it, looking for his next mark.

BARKER
Knock over the bottles, win a prize! You get three chances for five dollars, three chances for five dollars. Now that's a bargain, that's a steal. Hey, lady! Yes, you!

She turns around to see him.

BARKER (CONT'D)

Knock over the bottles, win a prize! Yeah, I'm talking to you! With the pet dog!

He stops walking. She rubs his arm.

BARKER (CONT'D)

Why don't you win something for the little lady, huh? You want one of these, little girl?

SHE

You don't have to. Let's go.

BARKER

C'mon, lady, she wants a toy, let him win one!

VIOLA

Please mommy, please!

She looks at him. He walks over to the stall and pulls a couple of crumpled bills out of his pocket. He hands one to the barker.

BARKER

Alright, alright, that's what I like to see. It's three for five, three for five. There we go, Fido. Now, all you've got to do is hit a bottle with one of these balls. You've got three chances, alright, three chances to knock em down.

The barker puts three balls down on the counter.

He picks one up, winds up, and throws, but the ball ends up nowhere near the glass bottles. There are some boys from the foundry hanging around and they come closer to watch what's going on. The girls on their arms chuckle when he misses.

BARKER (CONT'D)

Not quite.

He throws his second ball and it clips the side of a bottle. It wobbles a little, but stays in place. The men laugh again.

He tries again, but fails.

BARKER (CONT'D)

Ooh, no dice, no go. Third time's not the charm. Five more bucks, three more goes. You up for it? Huh? C'mon, who's a good boy?

VIOLA

You missed them all!

SHE
Alright, let's keep going.

VIOLA
I want it!

He gives the barker another bill. He gets three more balls. Three more misses.

GUY 1
Nice fuckin' job!

GUY 2
What a chump.

GUY 3
Look at this shit!

Viola's smiling up at him, beaming. She's laughing with the crowd, who're howling like hyenas.

SHE
We can go on the tilt-a-whirl now, Viola.

VIOLA
I want it!

SHE
Come, baby, let's--

HE
No!

He takes another bill from his pocket and slams it on the counter. He tries three more times. Finally one connects and a bottle goes clattering to the floor.

BARKER
There we go. Pick your prize, young lady.

He looks up and points at a stuffed wolf.

HE
That one.

The barker brings it down and gives it to him. He hands it to Viola, who hugs it tight to her, eyes closed.

The crowd starts to whisper again.

JIM
Ha ha ha, of fucking course. Of fucking course he takes the wolf toy!

CHICK

It reminds him of his ma!

JIM

Hey! Hey, you!

GUY 1

Ah shit, Jim, you're crazy.

JIM

Hey!

She tugs on his shoulder.

SHE

Let's keep walking.

She pulls him away, pushing Viola in front of her.

Jim picks up a ball and throws it at him. It hits him square in the shoulder blade, hard. He gasps with pain and jerks out of her grip, turning to face Jim. Viola hides behind her.

JIM

Where's my toy, huh? I want a toy, too. Why don't you win me a toy, mutt?

Jim grabs another ball and throws it as hard as he can. He catches it and let it drop.

SHE

That's enough.

JIM

Oh, look at that. It's Rocco's bitch. What, Rocco's not good enough for you anymore? Men aren't good enough anymore? I guess you ran out of men in this town, huh, you fucked 'em all?

SHE

Go fuck yourself.

CHICK

That's cold, Jimmy.

She takes Viola's hand and starts to walk away, but he's still staring Jim down.

SHE

Hey! Please. Let's go!

JIM

Your bitch is calling you. Now, you didn't give her fleas, did you? 'Cuz that'd be a shame. I don't want to get fleas when I fuck her.

He jumps at Jim and tackles him to the floor. His big heavy fists slam into Jim's face. The other men from the foundry don't know what to do. She grabs his shoulders and pulls him off of Jim. His mouth is open, strings of saliva between his teeth. His eyes are wide and full of fury.

SHE

Stop! Stop!

He turns to her and doesn't recognize her, can't see her through the blood that's boiling in his brain. He howls at her. Viola screams.

He takes off running, left.

People who have rushed to help Jim, who is moaning on the wooden planks. She picks up Viola who sobs into her chest.

Fireworks shoot up into the sky and paint the night.

ACT II

SCENE 10

She's on the raised platform again, casting her shadow on the face of that big, bright moon.

She's waiting. He climbs up from the darkness below her and holds her. They separate and her shadow tries to touch his shadow's face. He runs away.

SHE

That night on the boardwalk I saw something horrible. I could feel my blood beating in my head like a bass drum, feel Vi's hand clutching my hand until they were both white, feel myself drowning in the sea of all those people there, but all I could see was eyes. All around me there were eyes, wide and staring, little white moons in the night. And the smell of the popcorn burning, the sound of that stupid carnival music too loud and out of tune, and I could see eyes. His eyes. My man's eyes. Except that they were dark, dark like I'd never seen them before. Dark like two black holes in space, sucking me into them, tearing off my skin, no more muscles. Breaking my bones, pulling my breath from my body in a long awful scream. And I can hear Viola screaming, too. I can hear our screams together, powerless against his eyes. Because that's where his howl lived: the howl he tried to hide from me, the howl he never wanted me to see--in the blackness in his eyes, in the blackness that I can't help but start to wonder about. I start to wonder if it's always been there, if it's always been hiding behind his eyes whenever I've looked into them for moments that felt like centuries, whenever I looked into them hoping to see myself. And when I looked into them on the boardwalk, I just kept asking myself over and over: whose eyes were these? These horrible black eyes, the most terrible eyes I've ever seen? Could they really be his? Could my man really have eyes like these?

The lights smash to black. We can hear her gently crying, trying to keep the tears back.

The lights come up on her holding the sleeping Viola. She wipes the corners of her eyes.

She knocks on her mother's door. Mom's in her bathrobe and slippers. She pushes up her round glasses. She takes Viola from her arms and rocks her, heading to her bedroom.

While her mom does that, she goes to the kitchen and makes herself something to drink and sits down on the couch.

Mom comes back without Viola.

MOM
Do you want something to eat?

SHE
I'm not hungry.

MOM
Okay.

Pause.

MOM (CONT'D)
Are you gonna tell me what happened?

SHE
I'm sick to my stomach.

MOM
I'm sorry.

Pause.

MOM (CONT'D)
Were you down at the boardwalk?

SHE
Yeah.

MOM
He with you?

SHE
Yeah.

MOM
What happened?

SHE
I can't.

MOM
He didn't hurt you.

SHE
No. Not me.

MOM
Oh jeez.

SHE
He's just...I don't know.

MOM
Is someone hurt?

SHE
Something broke in him.

MOM
Is someone hurt?

SHE
Something just snapped. They wouldn't leave him alone.

MOM
Is it... Did he hurt them bad?

SHE
He didn't mean to. He didn't. He wouldn't. They were hurting him.

She collapses into her mother's arms and cries.

MOM
Oh, honey. Shh. It's okay. Mama's got you. It's okay. I knew this would happen. I knew it. Oh, baby, I got you. Hush now. Mama's got you. You're gonna stay here tonight, I'll make up a bed for you, okay? I'll take care of you.

SHE
No.

MOM
Honey--

SHE
No, I need to go back home.

MOM
Just stay with me here. Please.

SHE
I need to be at the room when he comes back.

MOM
Why?

SHE
He needs me.

MOM
Honey.

SHE
He needs me.

MOM
But what about Viola?

SHE
Viola's got you.

MOM
She needs her mother.

SHE
He needs me more right now. He needs me and I need him.

MOM
Nothing I say is going to stop you, huh?

SHE
Tell Viola that everything's fine. Hold her tight. Let her know it's alright.

MOM
She's already asleep: one of her Barbies under one arm. A little stuffed wolf in the other.

SHE
Tell her I love her.

MOM
I love you, honey. Please. Be careful.

She leaves the house. Mom walks off stage left.

She goes back to her motel room. Her hands are shaking as she fishes the keys out of her pocket, but the door's already unlocked.

Rocco's in there, sitting on the bed, watching TV and eating a bag of chips.

SHE
What are you doing here?

ROCCO
Hey, baby.

SHE
What are you doing here?

ROCCO
I heard about what happened down at the boardwalk. I was worried about you.

SHE
How'd you get in here? I locked the door, I--

ROCCO

I talked to Ronnie. I told him what happened, he broke the lock for me. I was worried about you.

SHE

At my mother's.

ROCCO

Where's Viola?

SHE

At my mother's.

ROCCO

Where's the wolf?

She goes into the bathroom and spends a long time in there taking her makeup off.

Huh? Where is he?

SHE

I want you gone by the time I get out of here, Rocco.

ROCCO

Look. I'm just trying to help you, okay? I care about you.

SHE

Stop it.

ROCCO

Listen to me, baby. I said I'm sorry. I said it a million times. Just like you told me to. You know that's what I do? I wake up in the morning and I get on my knees and I just say "I'm sorry" over and over again. It's like my morning prayer. No bullshit. It really is. And it's true. I mean it. I mean it with everything I've got. I'm sorry. I was a piece of shit to you. A low down, dirty piece of shit. I know. I want to make it up to you.

Hey. Come on out of there, I'm talking to you. Let's make up, huh? I want to make it all up to you. I want to help you. And I want you to come back home with me. We'll get you and Viola out of this piece of shit motel. We'll get rid of this good for nothing wolf.

She comes out of the bathroom.

SHE

I told you to leave.

He gets up and comes over to her, trying to kiss her. She doesn't let him.

ROCCO

You don't even know this guy.

SHE
Get the fuck out of here.

ROCCO
You never even--

SHE
Leave!

ROCCO
You know me. I'm your husband, for Chrissakes.

SHE
No, Rocco. No you're not. That's over. That ended.

ROCCO
No it hasn't. No. Not in my heart. I'm still here for you.
You're still my wife.

SHE
I don't need you. I don't want you. Don't you get that?
You're not my man anymore. You're not anything! I've got a
new man, okay?!

ROCCO
A new man.

SHE
Yes. And I don't need you.

ROCCO
You don't need me.

SHE
I don't want you. Get out!

ROCCO
Oh, you need me, alright. You do. Because who's gonna save
you but me? From your "new man?" Who's gonna save you from
the wolf?

Rocco doesn't move. He puts a hand on her cheek.

A howling comes from outside.

SHE
You'd better go.

Rocco kisses her hard.

ROCCO
I'm gonna save you, baby. I will. I'm gonna save you.

He leaves.

She goes to the bathroom and washes her mouth, brushes her teeth, does anything she can to get the taste of him out.

She sits on the edge of the bed and waits.

He stumbles in. He's drunk and crying.

SHE

Baby.

She gets up and goes to him, holding him. She seems bigger than he is.

SHE (CONT'D)

Hey. I've got you. Don't worry. I've got you.

HE

I'm sorry.

SHE

For what?

HE

I'm--

SHE

You don't have to apologize for anything.

HE

I'm sorry.

SHE

Look, I've heard a lifetime of sorries, I don't need any from you.

HE

I'm sorry I'm like this. I'm sorry I am what I am.

SHE

Shh. No. I'm not sorry you are who you are. You just hold me. You hold me like this. I'll hold you here, I'll keep you here. I'll keep you safe. I love you. I love you, you know that?

HE

This is where it ends, most times.

SHE

It's not gonna end, baby. I won't let it.

HE

This is the part when I skip town, when I move on. Because this is the part right before I hurt you.

SHE

So hurt me.

HE

No.

SHE

Hurt me if you have to. I can take it.

HE

You've got to let me go.

He tries to break free from her grip, tries to wipe the tears from his eyes. She won't let him go.

SHE

I can't.

HE

Listen, I've been through too many towns just like this. I've worked too many jobs just like this, got beaten up too many times. It's always just like this. I know how this works. I know myself. I can only take so much. I'm only so strong.

SHE

I'll be strong for you. I'm your strength.

HE

Let me go, let me go, let me go! Don't you understand? I don't belong here! I don't belong with people.

SHE

You belong with me. We belong together, you got that? I love you. I love you. I love you. You belong with me.

She takes him into the bathtub and washes him.

The lights go down.

SCENE 11

The sun comes up on them in bed. She wakes up before him and sits up, delicately running her fingers along his body.

SHE

My man's stronger than he thinks he is. His heart's bigger than he thinks it is. When I put my hands on his chest, through the fur, through the skin and the muscle and the bone, I can feel his heart. And it's beating like crazy. I can feel it pounding against my hands, even when he's asleep. Even when I'm half asleep. It's too big for his chest, I think, too big for this whole town.

I think about what it would be like to slice him open right from his collarbone down to his belly button and let his heart out.

I picture myself lifting it right out of him, still beating like a bird, and just holding it tight to me like Viola holding one of her Barbies. Holding it right up against my chest, right up against my own naked heart. Nothing between our souls. No fur. No teeth. No me, no him, just our two hearts beating against each other. They beat at two different speeds, like watching the lights flash on the car in front of you, but sometimes they catch together, for a half a second or so, beating in time. And that's what I dream about. Our hearts beating in time.

In his nightmares he sometimes grabs his throat. He sometimes feels his wrists. I trace my finger over the scars there. I can feel the blood flowing under his skin. I can feel his heart fighting him in every part of his body. I want to fight for him, but I don't know how I can. I don't know if I can. I don't know if my heart's as big as his.

He wakes up.

SHE (CONT'D)

Good morning. You're still alive. I've still got you.

He sits up and kisses her, grabbing her face and pulling her back down to him.

The lights go down.

SCENE 12

She and Beth are folding clothes at the 99 cent store again. Neither of them talk to each other. She's trying to make herself as small as possible.

Beth is keeping her distance, but can't help looking over.

She catches Beth staring at her. There's a moment where they just look at each other.

SHE

What?

BETH

I--

SHE

You're staring at me, you keep staring. What do you want?

BETH

Nothing.

SHE
Then don't fuckin' look at me, okay?

BETH
Sorry.

SHE
Okay?

BETH
Okay!

Pause.

SHE
So go back to folding.

BETH
You know what?

SHE
Are you gonna tell me?

BETH
I think you already know.

SHE
I don't know anything.

BETH
You already know that your fucked up boyfriend is some sort of monster and nobody in this town wants him around.

SHE
Yeah, that I knew.

BETH
I'm just saying.

SHE
You better stop saying.

BETH
Look, I'm sorry, but he just doesn't belong here. Not with people. He's not a person. Not like you or me.

SHE
You don't even know him, you bitch.

BETH
I know him well enough to know he's just a dirty fucking dog.

She squares up to Beth, about to hit her.

Drew walks in.

DREW

Ladies.

They both stop and turn to him.

DREW (CONT'D)

Beth, go take a walk.

BETH

Drew, she--

DREW

Go take a walk.

Beth exits, looking back at her.

DREW (CONT'D)

Did I see what I think I saw?

SHE

I don't know what you think you saw.

DREW

It looked to me like you were going to hit Beth.

SHE

Maybe.

DREW

Where'd you learn something like that? You think it's okay to just wail on someone?

SHE

No.

DREW

You know who does that?

Pause.

DREW (CONT'D)

Animals do that.

SHE

Don't you dare.

DREW

Listen.

He puts his hand on her arm.

SHE

Don't touch me.

DREW

Look. I know it's tough out there. If you ever need anything, you can come to me.

SHE

I'll keep that in mind for next time I need someone like you.

DREW

Someone like me?

SHE

A snake.

DREW

Okay. I tried. This is... You can't work here anymore.

SHE

What?

DREW

I'm sorry. It's just...people are already going crazy. Y'know? And he wants to go back to the foundry? It's just...it's not going to work. Nothing is going to work, as long as... People are going to lose it. And I don't want any of that here.

SHE

It's already here.

She leaves. Drew sighs.

SCENE 13

There's a banner reading "Happy Birthday Viola" hanging across the motel room. A few balloons loiter close to the ground. Viola dashes and darts about, wearing a frilly pink dress. She rearranges the balloons, the pillows, the bedsheets, placing her Barbies at prime vantage points throughout the room.

Her mother comes on with a box of cake and knocks on the door.

VIOLA

Wait!

She makes a final adjustment.

VIOLA (CONT'D)

Okay, come in.

*Her mother comes in, kicks a balloon out of the way,
and puts the box down on the bed.*

VIOLA (CONT'D)

What's that?

SHE

Where is he?

VIOLA

Is it a chocolate cake?

SHE

You're not alone here, are you?

VIOLA

Mommy, can I have a piece now?

SHE

No, honey. Where is he?

VIOLA

I don't know.

*He comes in through the unlocked door with a bouquet
of freshly picked flowers, delicate bursts of red,
yellow, and blue.*

SHE

Hello.

HE

Happy birthday, Vi.

VIOLA

Thank you!

*Viola runs over to hug him, clutching at his leg. He
hands her the flowers and she grabs them, holding them
tight to her chest.*

SHE

Should we put them in something, baby?

VIOLA

Yes.

*She finds a vase and takes the flowers from Viola to
put them in.*

SHE

Aren't they beautiful?

VIOLA

Yes.

SHE

Did you pick them for her?

HE

I did.

SHE

You left her here with a broken lock.

HE

I was right outside. Out back.

SHE

You had me worried.

HE

I'm sorry.

SHE

You know that--

HE

I was careful. I didn't... Nobody saw me.

SHE

Good.

HE

And I'm not scared.

SHE

Don't be. They're scared of you.

VIOLA

Mama, can we do the cake now?

SHE

You wanna help me cut it?

*There's a knock on the door.**She looks at him. He looks at her.*

SHE (CONT'D)

Who's there?

SAL

I hear there's a birthday girl in there, is that true?

VIOLA

Sal!

SHE
Should we open the door for him?

VIOLA
Yes, yes!

He nods.

She goes to the door and opens it for Sal, who comes in and hugs her.

SAL
Happy birthday, Viola!

VIOLA
Thank you, Sal!

Viola hugs him. Sal gives Viola the wrapped package he's holding.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
Can I open it now?

Sal has noticed him standing there.

SAL
Hello.

SHE
Thanks for stopping by, Sal. You didn't have to get her anything.

VIOLA
Can I open it?

SAL
I heard about what happened. Down at the boardwalk.

SHE
Sure, baby, go ahead and open it. Come over here, let's see if we can do it without tearing the paper.

VIOLA
Why can't I tear it?

SHE
Look what nice paper Sal wrapped it in. We don't want to ruin it.

SAL
I heard about what you did to Jim.

HE
I didn't mean to--

SAL
Look. I know what kind of person Jim Delaney is.

SHE
Sal, please.

SAL
I've been dealing with guys like him my whole life. But what you did--

SHE
Sal, it's--

SAL
Look.

SHE
It's not necessary.

SAL
I've got to say my piece. I've got to say it.

SHE
He wasn't--

HE
Let him say what he needs to say.

SAL
I just... She's like a daughter to me. That's all I've got to say. Just like my own daughter. And Viola, I love her with all my heart. Like my own grandkids. Y'know, I was there when that kid was born. I was the only man there at the hospital. And I'm just...I'm worried.

SHE
You don't have to be worried, Sal.

SAL
I can't help it. Look, I... I saw Jim's face.

Viola's finished unwrapping the present.

VIOLA
It's a book!

SHE
Oh yeah? What book did Sal get you?

VIOLA
Which is it?

SHE
Little Red Riding Hood.

SAL

You know I used to read that to your mommy when she was your age.

SHE

Please. He made a mistake.

SAL

Maybe. I dunno. Maybe he made a mistake with Jim. But... He can't make a mistake with you. I won't allow that. I love you too damn much, kiddo. Please listen to me when I say this: Don't take that risk. Look, I'm sorry. There it is. I said what I had to say.

Sal makes for the door.

VIOLA

We're going to have chocolate cake!

SAL

Oh, that sounds real great, Vi. I can't eat anymore, though. I just had ten meatballs. Can you show me ten?

Viola holds up ten fingers.

SAL (CONT'D)

Exactly. And no more room for cake.

SHE

Viola, say thank you to Sal for the book.

VIOLA

Thank you.

SAL

My pleasure, kiddo. Ask your mama to read it to you. I love you. I love you both. Happy birthday, Vi.

Sal leaves.

Pause.

SHE

I'm sorry.

HE

It's okay.

SHE

I'm sorry. He--

HE

Let's cut the cake.

VIOLA

The cake, the cake!

SHE

Let me find a knife.

She looks around for something to cut the cake with. He sits down and opens the box to show Viola what's waiting for her inside. Viola takes a seat on his knee.

Rocco walks in the slightly open door.

ROCCO

Sorry I'm late. I hope you haven't started cake without me.

Pause.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

Happy birthday, Viola. Aren't you gonna say hello to your daddy?

VIOLA

Hello, daddy.

SHE

Rocco, what the fuck?

ROCCO

Whoa, let's not use that kind of language in front of the birthday girl.

SHE

Come here, Viola. Come here.

Viola goes to her mother and holds her.

SHE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

ROCCO

It's my daughter's birthday.

SHE

Get the fuck out of here.

ROCCO

What? Look, you were the one making such a big stink about Viola's birthday. Well here I am. I didn't forget. Daddy's here, baby.

Pause.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

So you're the big man.

SHE

Rocco--

ROCCO

But you're not such a big guy, are you. Smaller than I expected. And less hairy, too. Not at all like Jim described you. You know, the way he was talking, I thought you were ten feet tall. Fifteen feet tall. I'm surprised he couldn't take you. Him and all them boys.

VIOLA

Mama, are we gonna eat the cake?

ROCCO

Do you know who I am, wolfman?

HE

I know who you are.

ROCCO

I'm her husband. I'm Viola's dad.

HE

I know.

SHE

No, he's not. He's not my husband.

ROCCO

She and I got married. You can ask anyone. Ask her mom. She's got albums fulla pictures.

SHE

I burnt 'em all.

ROCCO

No you didn't. C'mon. Your mom wouldn't let you. Now look, I've been wondering. Here's a question. You got any pictures of you two together? The lady and the wolf. If you do, I'd love a copy. That's something I'd like to see.

VIOLA

Mama--

ROCCO

Viola! Aren't you happy daddy's home for your birthday party?

SHE

Don't come near her.

ROCCO

Let me hug my daughter.

Rocco steps closer, but his path is blocked.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

Oh. Big man. I'm just tryna give my daughter a happy birthday hug.

HE

She said not to go near her.

ROCCO

Listen, my friend. This is a familial dispute. It's not something you should involve yourself in. It's between me and my--

HE

Leave.

ROCCO

What?

HE

I said leave.

ROCCO

Or what? What are you gonna do?

Pause.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

You try something, it's over for you. Got that? You touch me, it's all over. You do anything wrong, step out of line in any way, and it's over. It's only a matter of time, anyway. You don't belong here. She does, Viola does. But you? You don't belong in this picture. You don't belong in the world we got here. And there's a lot of people aching to show you the way out. So don't even think about touching me.

Pause.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

Now. I just want to give her a birthday hug, and then I'll go.

SHE

Where's her gift?

ROCCO

Oh.

Rocco darts out.

He and she share a look, but Rocco is quickly back inside, holding a pink backpack.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

Here you go, Vi. That's for you. Happy birthday. Your mom was talking about school starting soon, so...you can keep your Barbies in that on the way to school.

VIOLA

Thank you.

ROCCO

You're welcome. Come here, baby. Give your daddy a hug.

VIOLA

Mama?

SHE

You can give him a hug.

Viola tepidly hugs her father. Rocco holds her tight.

ROCCO

I love you, baby. Happy birthday.

VIOLA

I want cake now.

She squirms her way out of his arms.

ROCCO

You let me know how that backpack is, okay? I'll see you around.

Rocco leaves.

There's a silence in the room until she can't take it anymore.

SHE

Let's go.

She starts flying around, looking for bags and throwing her things into them, frantically packing.

SHE (CONT'D)

I can't take it here anymore. I can't deal with this fucking town. All these hicks and and and...I need to get out. Let's get out of here. Come on, let's pack up and go.

HE

No.

SHE

Let's run away. Let's get so far away we forget we were ever here. Come on. We don't need this. We don't need to be here. We can move somewhere. We can get a house somewhere. And Viola can start at a new school. And we'll send my mom postcards, she can come visit us. We can have a new life somewhere.

HE

We can't.

SHE

We can. We can, we can just pack it all up and be somewhere new. And we could be someone else. You and me and Vi. Wouldn't that be great, Viola? We could be different people in a new place.

HE

No we can't.

SHE

Of course we can! Of course we can. They do it in movies all the time. They just pick up and go. They do it. They, they--

HE

No. It doesn't work like that. You can move anywhere you want and it'll still be the same. You can't be a different person.

SHE

Yes, you can!

HE

Not when you look like me. Not when you look like this, no. I am tired of running away. I am tired of new starts, new beginnings. I am tired of trying to be a different person because...because I keep realizing that no matter where I go nothing changes. I'm still the same me. There's nothing that can change that.

SHE

Baby--

HE

I am not running away. I am not afraid of them, I'm not afraid of any of them. Let them call me names, let them taunt me, let them beat me, let them break my back, do whatever they want but I am going to show them that I am just as good as any of them. That I am just like them. That I am a person just like they are. So no. No! We are staying here! You and me and Viola, we are all staying here. We're not going anywhere. We're going to make our lives here. And they're going to accept it. They will. Your mom, Sal, even Rocco. They'll see. They'll see and they'll know. They will! I am not running away. I am not an animal. I'm not. I am a man.

She holds him.

SHE

I love you.

HE

I love you, too. Come, Viola.

Viola joins the hug.

HE (CONT'D)

Let's cut the cake, huh?

They break the hug. She gives him a kiss. They head to the cake and start to cut it, singing to Viola, as the lights go down.

SCENE 14

She goes to her mother's house. Mom opens the door and lets her in.

MOM

I hope you don't mind, I got Viola some clothes for her birthday. The church was having a tag sale. I got a bunch of stuff for cheap.

SHE

No, I don't mind. Thank you.

MOM

She says school's starting soon. I know it is, summer's nearly over. I figured she could use some new stuff.

SHE

Thanks, mom.

MOM

She says her dad was at her birthday party.

SHE

He was. He just shows up.

MOM

I saw him hanging around the motel when we drove past it.

SHE

He can do what he wants. I'm not afraid of him.

MOM

Everything okay?

SHE
Yeah, everything's okay.

MOM
You're good?

SHE
Yes. All good.

MOM
You-know-who come home?

SHE
Yeah. He went back to work.

MOM
Back to the foundry?

SHE
Yeah.

MOM
I'm surprised they let him work there.

SHE
Mom.

MOM
I'm just saying. I'm surprised they let him work there,
especially after everything.

SHE
He's a good worker. He's smart, he's strong. They need him.

MOM
I'm not debating it with you.

SHE
Thank you. Where is she?

MOM
Viola! You sure you're happy, baby? You sure you don't want
to stay here?

SHE
Yes, mom.

*Viola comes running onstage, Barbies and wolf in
hands. She runs up and hugs her mother, who kisses the
top of her head. Viola squirms.*

SHE (CONT'D)
Say bye bye to grandma.

VIOLA

Bye, grandma.

MOM

Listen, baby, I'm serious.

SHE

I'll see you tomorrow, ma.

She leaves with Viola. The lights go out on mom.

She and Viola walk through the park.

It's lush and beautiful. The leaves are turning. Old ladies feeding the birds look at them as they walk by.

She sits on a bench and Viola sits at her feet.

SHE (CONT'D)

Look at those leaves, honey.

Viola doesn't look. She's playing with her toys.

On the other side of the stage, the lights come up.

He's stepped outside for air. He takes off his goggles and his gloves, drops them all to the floor, looks up and breathes in deeply. He doesn't see Jim and the guys come from behind him.

Jim's face is all bruised and stitched up. He's got a shovel in his hands and so does another guy.

JIM

Hey. Hey!

He doesn't turn around.

JIM (CONT'D)

You look at me when I'm speaking to you, you fucking mutt!

GUY 1

You tell him, Jim!

JIM

I said you look at me, you dog.

He turns around.

JIM (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's right. I got a bone to pick with you.

GUY 2

You're not getting away this time.

GUY 3

Not a shot.

JIM

I'm very angry with you. I want you to know that.

HE

Listen--

Jim swings the shovel and hits him in the side of the head. He falls to the ground and clutches where he was hurt.

JIM

I didn't say I wanted to hear you talk! Bad dog!

GUY 1

Heh, bad dog! Stay!

GUY 3

Play dead, dog!

JIM

So you shut up!

Jim puts the blade of the shovel to his throat. The lights on Viola and her mother have gone down by now.

JIM (CONT'D)

You are a danger to this town, you hear me? You are a fucking...a cancer, alright? You don't belong here. I don't know why you don't understand. I don't know why it wasn't obvious from the second you fucking got here. That you don't belong. You don't belong anywhere. You're a freak! Got that? A freak. A rabid dog. You know what we do to rabid dogs? Huh? We put 'em down, okay?

He grabs the blade of the shovel and forces it upward, clocking Jim under the chin. He leaps up suddenly and grabs Jim, throwing him to the ground. He jumps on top of him and tears him up with his hands and teeth.

He stands up, jaws dripping with blood. The other guy with the shovel hits him from behind, hard, knocking him back down.

All three guys start kicking him, punching him. He whimpers like a hurt dog.

He grabs one of them by the legs, pulling him down hard. The guy hits his head and is knocked out cold.

He makes it to his knee and the guy with the shovel tries to hit him again, but he catches it midswing and stands up, forcing the guy down and bending the metal. He twists the shovel from the guy's hands and slams it across his face.

He turns to the last man standing. He drops the shovel and advances toward him. He howls.

Blackout.

SCENE 15

Viola and her mother are home, showered and in their pajamas on the bed.

VIOLA

And the wolf protected the three Barbies from the spiders. Then the one spider, the one blue spider, he got a power to have, uh, to fly. And so he flied over the fence that the wolf built and he tried to attack mommy but then Viola and the wolf they both came and they beat up the spider.

SHE

What happened to the red spider?

VIOLA

Mom had made a trap for him and he fell right in.

SHE

Mommy's not that smart.

VIOLA

Mommy's the smartest person in the whole world.

SHE

Yeah?

VIOLA

Yeah. I love her.

SHE

I love you, too, baby. That doesn't make me smart.

VIOLA

What makes you smart?

SHE

I don't know.

VIOLA

Just tell me one thing.

SHE

I don't--I don't know. Knowing what you're up against.

VIOLA

What are we up against?

SHE

The world, little one. It's you and me against the world.

She grabs Viola and brings her in tight.

There's a sound at the door.

He bursts through hunched over, clutching his stomach, fur matted with blood, growling, covered all over with gashes. She steps back with her hand over her mouth. He crawls over the threshold.

VIOLA

Mommy!

He turns his face up to her. She puts her hand on his cheek and he snarls at her.

She backs away from him and he tries to stand up. he comes towards her and she trips over a shoe and falls to the ground.

SHE

Stop.

He won't stop. He's in her face with his teeth bared, saliva and blood dripping from them.

VIOLA

Mommy!

SHE

Stop!

She gets up and he pushes her. She falls back down again, landing hard on her ass. He howls.

SHE (CONT'D)

Stop, God, stop, please!

Viola's sobbing and screaming.

She kicks him in the face. He straddles her and slams her into the ground.

Rocco hits him with a baseball bat and pulls him off of her.

Rocco hits him again and he wheels on Rocco, ripping the bat out of his hand and breaking it, throwing the pieces. He throws Rocco, too.

He looks back at her, at Viola, and bounds out of the room, out into the dark night he came from.

She's on her knees pulling at Rocco's pant legs and he's running his hand through her hair.

SHE (CONT'D)

Help me, Rocco, please.

ROCCO

I got him.

SHE

I'm scared, I'm scared.

ROCCO

I heard Viola screaming, I knew it was that fucking wolf.

SHE

He's not, he's not...I saw into his eyes and they were like at the boardwalk, but worse. It's fear. It's fear, he's afraid. He's scared, Rocco, that's all.

ROCCO

He better be fucking scared, he better be.

SHE

I'm scared.

Rocco takes her to the bed kisses her and she lets him and her eyes are shut tight and they're wet with tears. He brings Viola close into them and holds all three of them together. He dries her tears.

ROCCO

I promised you I'd be here for you.

SHE

Please, Rocco. Don't hurt him. That wasn't him. That wasn't my man. That was a wolf.

ROCCO

I'm going to kill this fucking son of a bitch, this fucking mutt.

Rocco kisses her again and leaves her crying there. Viola holds her mother tight.

Rocco goes to the junkyard, stage left, where some guys are talking shit and drinking beers.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

Let's go, boys.

GUY 1

What's goin' on, Roc?

GUY 2

What's goin' on?

ROCCO

We're going hunting, that's what's going on! Grab your fuckin' guns and let's go! There's a wolf on the loose!

They start shouting and whooping, grabbing their hats and their guns. They run off stage left.

SHE

I only hear about what happens next.

A spotlight on her on the bed, with Viola's head in her lap, asleep.

The full moon's projected in the back again.

He runs onstage, frightened, scared. He's on the raised platform, dead center, only a silhouette.

SHE (CONT'D)

I only hear that they chase my man down to the boardwalk in the dead of night and corner him there.

Rocco and the guys run onto the platform from both sides, guns drawn.

SHE (CONT'D)

They surround him and have him pinned to the railing by gunpoint. All the boys from the foundry are there. All the men who messed with him his whole life.

Rocco's got his shotgun aimed at my man. I don't know if he hesitates. I don't know if he takes his time. I don't know if he looks him in the eyes. All I know is he fires into his chest before my man can explain himself and the force sends his broken body into the water.

This happens: Rocco fires and he is hit in the chest, violently. He falls back off the platform.

He screams as he falls: horribly, violently, so loud and awful that it stops the blood.

SHE (CONT'D)

And he screams--but not like a wolf. Like a man. This I know because I can hear it from my room, where I sit clutching Viola close to my body.

The lights go down upstage, leaving only the moon and her and Viola illuminated in the bed.

SHE (CONT'D)

Summer ends. The leaves start falling and I stop leaving my motel room. Viola starts her first day of school, leaving her Barbies at home but taking her stuffed wolf with her.

Viola has woken up and she takes the wolf and the backpack Rocco got her, leaving the three Barbies on the pillow.

She slowly gets up and goes to the dresser.

SHE (CONT'D)

When she's gone, I reach into the bottom of the drawer, underneath all the socks and underwear and spare change, and pull out the photograph of my man. There he is like I never knew him. He's smiling at the camera, caught in the middle of a laugh, maybe. And I realize that there is something in him that reminds me of my man, something I never noticed before. It's his eyes. He's got lover's eyes.

She runs her fingers over the photo and howls at the moon.