

ACT I: WOLF OUT THE DOOR

Characters

PETAL, an early modern woman
FURRY WOLF, her mate
HOWLING TEMPEST, their clan chief
SHIMMY, the chief's mate

Costumes

All wear fur clothing, with Tempest's and Shimmy's notably more flattering. Tempest also sports a web of tattoos, as befits his higher stature.

Time

100,000 years ago, give or take.

Setting

Bare rock walls forming a rough cave. A small fire in a circle of rocks. A rough table formed by a round slab of rock balanced on a rock base. Loose rocks lying around. Rocks.

PETAL sits, watching the fire, enthralled. FURRY WOLF enters, a leather bag in hand.

PETAL

Wolf! Ahoy! I've been waiting for you!

WOLF pulls a handful of acorns from the bag and offers them.

WOLF

For gods' sake, Petal, I picked as fast as I could. Since when are you so keen on acorns?

PETAL

I'm not. They're way too hard to open.

WOLF

Then what's your hurry--?

WOLF stops, sniffing warily while PETAL hops excitedly.

PETAL

Well? What do you think?

WOLF

What's that smell?

PETAL
A surprise! Look!

WOLF's eyes widen in alarm at the sight of the fire. He drops his bag and pushes PETAL behind him protectively.

WOLF
What menace is this?

PETAL
It's ok, relax.

WOLF
Has it hurt you?

PETAL
No, it's harmless.

WOLF
I'll be the judge of that.

PETAL pries the rock from WOLF's hand, tossing it aside.

PETAL
You are such an idiot sometimes. Listen to me.

WOLF
Petal, that, that, thing might not have harmed you, but it's dangerous, an omen. Like the story the old ones tell about the virgins glowing in the night sky!

PETAL
It's not what you think, Wolf.

WOLF
Oh, yeah? Tell that to the sky hunter who is condemned to chase maidens among the winter stars, forever.

PETAL
You're the only one who's afraid of virgins, Wolf. Forget that old story.

WOLF
You're crazy. When the gods are pissed, they're really pissed. This cavern isn't safe until we dislodge the intruder.

PETAL
No, just listen, damn it. This isn't an omen--or a menace. It's a... companion. It belongs here now. It's ours.

WOLF

How did this creature come to be here?

PETAL

How do you think?

WOLF edges closer to the fire.

PETAL (CONT'D)

(Proudly.)

I brought it in.

WOLF

You? How?

PETAL

While you were collecting acorns, I went to fetch water. By the time I reached the lake the sky had become dark and angry. Suddenly there was a flash of light, then an overpowering roar from above that threw me to the ground.

WOLF

A-hoy. Like I said: The gods. Certainly you recognize the grand belch of their divine commands.

*WOLF peers into the fire as
PETAL acts out her tale.*

PETAL

OK, sure, but when I opened my eyes, this being was peering at me from the blasted remains of a nearby tree. I wanted to flee but it was so beautiful, so eager for attention. The way it waved its tiny limbs at me and winked, I couldn't resist. So I picked up the branch to which it clung and carried it home to live with us.

(Beat, awestruck.)

It looks like a gorgeous flower, don't you agree? Or some phantasmagorical bird.

(Beat.)

Go ahead, Wolf. Pet it. I know you want to.

*WOLF does, then jumps back,
clutching his burned fingers.*

WOLF

Damn! Fuck! What the fucking hell?

PETAL

(Delighted.)

I know, I know. It bit me too! Isn't that great?

WOLF

Damn it! Why didn't you warn me?

PETAL

I wanted to share it with you.

WOLF

Well, that's enough with the sharing. Get rid of it.

PETAL

No. I won't.

WOLF

You certainly can't keep it here.

PETAL

Why not? All it eats are sticks and bark. And, accidentally, your socks.

PETAL shows a charred sock.

WOLF

With those teeth, it's a great hazard, Petal.

PETAL

Not if you're careful. I think it can help us. I think it should be called... Consumer.

WOLF

What good is it?

PETAL

See the way it waves to you, Wolf. Hear the pitter patter of its little paws. Wouldn't you like to have it welcome you home at the end of day?

WOLF

It looks like it's giving me the finger.

WOLF brandishes both of his middle fingers at the fire.

WOLF (CONT'D)

You little shit!

PETAL

That's insulting, Wolf. Knock it off.

WOLF

I don't trust it.

PETAL

That's because you have no imagination.

WOLF

Is that all it does, just sit there, eating?

PETAL
Hardly. It's a guest bearing gifts.

WOLF
Gifts--like what?

PETAL
Warmth. And the power to transform mere sustenance into fine cuisine.

Grinning, PETAL pulls a fur bundle from under the table and unwraps it. The sight and scent of a charred hunk of meat both repel and attract WOLF. He approaches, sniffing cautiously.

WOLF
What's this?

PETAL
I call it *Châteaubriand*, which means "it's what's for dinner".

WOLF
You expect me to eat that?

PETAL
I already have.

WOLF
Are you insane? It's... it's... is that meat?

PETAL
Uh-huh. Beef. The very same thunderbolt that knocked me down also stunned a bison, which I finished off with a rock and butchered.

WOLF
You. You did all that?

PETAL
Is it so hard to believe? Now shut up and have a taste.

PETAL offers him a piece, but he only peers at it.

WOLF
What happened to it?

PETAL
This is another thing that is so cool: I set the beef down next to Consumer while I went out for water. And when I returned, the meat was making a buzzing sound and smelled so wonderful that I licked it. Here, you try.