

LAPIS-LAZULI

Written, directed, and produce by

Unknown

EXT. FOREST RANCH- SUNRISE

A tranquil, sunlit haven surrounded by dense woods and thriving with life. The animals, each with unique mystical traits, move freely around the ranch.

The air is calm, with only the occasional rustle of leaves and the distant sound of birdsong breaking the silence.

Eliot, dressed in casual clothes blending tomboyish comfort with hints of femininity, is crouched beside a small, winged fox with an injured leg. As they gently wrap the wound, familiar voice calls out from behind.

MARCUS

(Exaggerated enthusiasm)

Well, well, if it isn't my favorite rancher, hard at work as usual!

Eliot sighs, already bracing for trouble. They glance over their shoulder to see Marcus, black khaki pants, naive blue tank shirt, and black locs pushed back- strutting toward them, hands in his pockets, a grin plastered on his face.

ELIOT

(Dryly)

Didn't expect to see you back so soon. Thought you'd had your fill of rejection yesterday.

MARCUS

(Mocking hurt)

Ouch. That stings, Eliot. You know, we used to be great team. Remember those old days?

He stops a few feet away, giving the fox a curious look before returning his gaze to Eliot, his tone shifting to something softer.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Come on, don't you ever think about it? Leaving all this behind... Starting fresh somewhere else? You could have a real life-No more isolation, no more... Secrets.

ELIOT

(Standing, arms crossed)

I have a real life, Marcus. One that doesn't involve selling out to the highest bidder.

MARCUS

(Grins, voice turning
flirtatious)

Hey, who said anything about
selling out? I'm offering you a
chance to make something better of
yourself. Besides...

Leaning in slightly

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You've gotta admit, you'd miss me
if I stopped showing up to bug you.

Eliot raises an eyebrow, unimpressed but amused by Marcus' antics. There's a flicker of tension beneath the playful banter, a hint of something unresolved from their past friendship.

ELIOT

(Deadpan)

Miss you? Sure. Like I'd miss a
mosquito buzzing in my ear.

MARCUS

(Chuckling, steps back)

Okay, okay, fair. But seriously,
Eliot, think about it. I'm giving
you a real shot here.

The grin fades slightly as Marcus a more serious tone, though his posture remains casual.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Tough love time. You've been holed
up here long enough. You're good,
yeah, but you're not invincible.
Someone's gonna come along who
won't take no for an answer, and
what then? You think you can take
on the world alone?

ELIOT

(Calm but firm)

You might think you know me,
Marcus. But if you ever try to
strong-arm me again, you'll find
out just how 'invincible' I can be.
Got it?

Marcus opens his mouth to respond but hesitates, realizing he's outmatched-not physically, but by Eliot's sheer presence and unflinching resolve. He laughs nervously, taking a step back.

MARCUS

(Nervous, tries to play
it off)

Okay, okay. Message received, loud
and clear. No need to go full
Kitsune on me.

He winks, trying to mask his unease with humor, but Eliot's unwavering gaze keeps him off balance. For a moment, there's silence, thick with tension.

Marcus muttering as he turns toward his car.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Stubborn as ever... You haven't
changed one bit.

ELIOT

(Calling after him,
smirks)

Neither have you. Still all talk.

Marcus pauses, glancing back over his shoulder with a lopsided grin, but there's something in his eyes-frustration mixed with a hint of admiration.

Without another word, he climbs into his car and drives off, leaving Eliot standing alone, their expression thoughtful.

As the dust settles, the winged fox nudges. Eliot's leg, drawing them back to the present. Eliot kneels again, resuming their work with a quiet sigh.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

(To the fox softly)

Some people never learn.

The camera lingers on Eliot's face, a mixture of amusement and tension still evident, before we-

CUT TO:

INT. MARCUS HOME- DAY

The cabin is small but cozy, filled with handmade furniture an decorated with simple, natural elements- a place that feels both lived-in and isolated Dim lantern light casts flickering shadows across the wooden walls, enhancing the tense, quiet atmosphere.

Outside, the faint sounds of the forest-the rustles of leaves, distant animals calls-create an eerie serenity.

Eliot lies in bed, book in hand, reading a light novel. The weight of the days events lingers heavily on them. With a quiet sigh, they sit up, pulling a worn blanket off their shoulders. Their bare feet hit the cold wooden floor as they rise, their movements slow and deliberate.

They cross the room toward a small rug. Kneeling down, Eliot lifts the edge of the rug and carefully pries up a loose floorboard. Beneath it, hidden in a hollowed-out compartment, is a small, weathered box.

Eliot hesitates for a moment, their hand resting atop the lid as if considering whether to proceed.

Eliot gazes at the stone, their eyes, reflecting its otherworldly luminescence. For a brief moment, faint whispers emanate from the stone's surface-soft, haunting, and unintelligible, like distant voices carried on the wind.

Eliot's hypnotic eyes remain on the stone, the whispers fade after a beat, leaving only the steady glow of the stone. Eliot's expression is thoughtful, their brow furrowed with a mix of unease and resolve.

They close the box carefully, sealing the glow and plunging the room back into dim lantern light. Eliot replaces the floorboard and smooths the rug back into place, as if trying to hide not just the box but the emotions stirred by it.

crawling back in bed, Eliot stares out of a nearby window, their gaze distant, lost in thought. The faint rustling of leaves outside fills the silence. Along with the crackling fire in the fireplace.

With another quiet sigh, they lie back down, pulling the blanket over themselves, the winged fox we saw earlier slowly crawls beneath Eliot's blanket. It nuzzles close to Eliot, who notices it and flashes the young winged fox a charming smile.

And as Eliot's eyes flicker for a bit, then slowly close we-

FADE OUT.

EXT. LOCAL TOWN MARKET- MORNING

Stalls line the streets, selling fresh produce and handmade goods. Eliot moves through the light crowd of people, carrying a small basket of supplies. Despite the lively atmosphere, they remain on edge, sensing something off.

Over by a diner table, sits a young man, mid 20's, black hair that's covered by a grey skull cap, black tank shirt and rough black parachute pants.

He takes a sip from his tea-cup while scoping Eliot out, his brow rises with curiosity, Eliot, by a fruit stand, doesn't turn over his shoulder.

They pay for their fruit and leave. The mysterious young man follows as we-

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST TRAIL- CONTINUOUS

On Eliot, carrying their basket of supplies, they're walking through the forest path toward the ranch. They pause, their eyes narrow and ears twitch slightly, picking up faint footsteps trailing behind them.

They continue walking calmly, pretending not to notice.

Suddenly, with a swift motion, Eliot spins around and grabs the mystery young man's arm, they give it a light twist before tying behind the mystery young man's back, his chest press against the face of a nearby tree.

HAN

(Gasp, laughs)

Whoa, easy there, tiger. Just wanted to say hi.

ELIOT

(Coldly)

Funny way of saying hi, sneaking around like that.

Eliot spins forward, their forearm immediately press gently against Han's throat, he chuckles lightly while swallowing down a hard knob in his throat.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Who are you, and why are you following me?

HAN

(Wincing slightly)

Okay, okay, relax. Name's Han. I'm an animal breeder. I've heard stories about your ranch and its... Unique residents. Thought I'd check it out.

Eliot studies him closely, their grip still firm but not harsh. They can hear the steady, calm rhythm of Han's heartbeat-no sign of deceit or fear, only mild amusement.

ELIOT

(Suspicious)

And you just happened to wander all the way out here, hoping to what? Sneak a peek?

HAN

(Shrug, still grinning)

Something like that. You've got quite the reputation, you know. Kitsune parahuman, lives alone, runs a ranch full of creatures no one's ever seen before. How could I not be curious?

Eliot's eyes remain locked on his, searching for any hidden motives. After a tense moment, they slowly release him, though they remain wary.

ELIOT

Curiosity can get you killed around here.

HAN

(Rubs his neck)

Noted. But hey, I'm not looking for trouble. Just... Interested. Maybe I can help? I've got experience with all kinds of animals- nothing exotic as yours, but I'm a quick learner.

Eliot tilts their head, considering him for a moment. The animals on their ranch are sensitive to outsiders, but there's something about Han's demeanor-earnest and strangely genuine-that makes Eliot hesitate to dismiss him outright.

ELIOT

You expected me to trust you just like that? You could be anyone. How do I know you're not working for someone who wants my place gone?

HAN

Because I don't work for anyone. Look, I get it. You've got reasons to be cautious. But I'm here because I want to be, not because someone sent me.

Eliot listens again, focusing on the steady beat of his heart-still no sign of deception. After a long pause, they step back, giving him space.

ELIOT

Fine. But don't think this means I trust you completely. If you try anything, you'll regret it.

HAN

(Smirks again)

Got it. No funny business. So... Does this mean I get the grand tour?

Eliot roll their eyes.

ELIOT

Not a chance. But if you're serious about helping, there's an injured fox that could use some attention. Let's see what you can do.

Eliot turns and begins walking toward the ranch. Han hesitates for a moment, surprised by their sudden shift in attitude, before jogging to catch up.

HAN

(Teasing)

You're not as scary as people say, you know.

ELIOT

(Glance sideways)

Stick around, and you'll find out just how scary I can be.

Han chuckles but wisely chooses not to push further, he clears his throat and swallows hard once more, as the two approach the ranch we-

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST RANCH- LATE MORNING

The sun high, casting long shadows across the overgrown yard. Eliot and Han walk up the dirt path toward the cabin, Han helps Eliot with some of their food and fruit in their basket.

The atmosphere is calm until Eliot notices something ahead- Marcus, leaning casually against his sleek black car, flanked by two guards and Jade. He holds a folder in his hand, a smug smirk plastered across his face.

MARCUS
(Cheerfully)
Morning, well, good afternoon to be
more precise. Figured I'd drop by,
give you some... News.

Eliot halts, eyes narrowing dangerously. Han stops besides
them, sensing the tension.

ELIOT
(Voice low, threatening)
What the hell are you doing here,
Marcus?

MARCUS
(Holding up the folder)
Relax, I come bearing paperwork.
See, you dear ol' granddad-whatever
he may be- signed this ranch over
to me. Legal and binding.

ELIOT
(Flatly)
My grandfather would never sign
anything over to you.

Marcus shrugs, trying to maintain his cool, but a flicker of
unease shows in his eyes as Eliot's glare intensifies.

MARCUS
Hey, don't shoot the messenger. He
must've had his reasons.

Eliot's eyes begin to burn crimson, rage boiling to the
surface. They take a step forward, fists clenched.

HAN
(Whispering urgently)
Eliot-

Before Han can finish, Eliot lunges. Marcus yelps in panic,
scrambling to roll over the hood of his car in a clumsy,
comical manner.

MARCUS
Oh my goodness-mutha lover's gonna
kill me!

The two guards step forward, blocking Eliot's path. Jade
stands beside them, arms crossed, her expression hard and
unyielding. Eliot and Jade lock eyes, tension crackling
between them like lightning.

ELIOT

(Voice cold, deadly)
 You and these slouches you call
 goons can either move or be moved.
 Either way, I'll rip all three of
 you to pieces.

JADE

(Steps forward, sneer)
 Try it, bitch. And watch your face
 get planted into the dirt.

MARCUS

(Cowering, trying to
 sound firm)
 Hey, hey, Eliot. Chill, alright! I
 warned you earlier what could
 happened, and... Well, here we are.

He gestures toward the folder. One of the guards grabs it and hands it to Eliot, who snatches it away without hesitation. They open it, eyes scanning the documents quickly.

At the bottom of the page, their grandfather's signature is unmistakable. Eliot's expression softens briefly in bewilderment, but hardens again as they close the folder.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(Frantic, but forcing
 confident)
 You've got 24hrs to pack your
 stuff-whatever junk you have in
 there-and vacate my property.

Eliot steps forward again, but Jade blocks their path. Their eyes meet once more, a silent, intense standoff. Eliot fists clench so tightly their knuckles turn white.

Han, noticing Eliot's body tense, quickly steps in, placing a hand on their shoulder and pulling them back slightly.

Eliot's breathing is heavy, their crimson eyes flickering with emotion. Han steps in front of them fully, meeting their gaze. He speaks gently, trying to reassure them.

HAN

(Softly)
 Let them have this one... For now.

Eliot's eyes glisten with unshed tears, their expression a mix of anger, confusion, and pain. After a long, tense moment, they relax slightly, lowering their fists.

Marcus watches nervously from the driver's side of his car, still wary despite Han's intervention.

MARCUS
(Clears throat)
Smart choice.

Marcus gestures toward Jade, who gives Eliot one last glare before turning away. The guards follow suit, and the trio climb into the car. As the vehicle drives off, Jade shoots Eliot a final, lingering look from the passenger window.

The dust settles as the car disappears down the road. Eliot stands frozen, staring after them, the folder clutched tightly in their hand. Han remains beside them, his hand still resting lightly on their shoulder.

HAN
I'm pretty sure you'll figure
something out.

Eliot doesn't respond, their gaze distant. The weight of the situation hangs heavy in the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELIOT'S CABIN-CONTINUOUS

As they and Han silently walk back toward it, the folder still in hand.

CUT TO:

BLACK.

END EPISODE 1