

The Mother enters. It is dark now. She moves to take refuge in a cave. She stops when she hears a low growl

Mother

Hello?

6th Midwife

The woods are dark during the day.

5th Midwife

But they are so much worse at night.

1st Midwife

Like an empty mansion.

2nd Midwife

Or the mouth of an animal.

Mother

Whose there?

3rd Midwife

Of course, that analogy doesn't account for what it really means to be in an animal's mouth.

4th Midwife

To feel hot breath all around you.

2nd Midwife

How can one know what it means to be eaten?

Wolf

You shouldn't have come here.

Mother

Who are you? Show yourself?

Wolf

You reek of human. Humans don't belong in the woods. That's why you built towns, isn't it?

Mother

I'm looking for something.

Wolf

You always are. Never enough where you are. But I suppose I'm not one to judge. I'm looking for something too.

Mother

What are you looking for?

Wolf

Food.

Wolf snaps at her. The Mother moves to start running, but stops. Wolf does not chase her.

Mother

You stopped.

Wolf

Run away. I won't stop a second time.

Mother

You did. Why did you stop?

Wolf

You should leave these woods. Run and don't come back.

Mother

I'm not finished yet. Come and get me if you want me gone.

Wolf

You are a fool.

Mother

And you are a wolf. A wolf that won't chase. Why?

Wolf

You ask too many questions.

Mother

What's wrong with you?

Wolf

LEAVE!

The Mother begins inspecting the ground. She finds fallen branches and begins to make a campfire.

Wolf

What... are you doing?

Mother

Its dark. I can't see. I'm making a fire for light.

Wolf

To see?

Mother

You're hurt. I can't see you, but I can tell that easily enough. Otherwise you would have eaten me by now.

Wolf

I can still eat you. I will.

Mother

No, you won't. Besides, it's night. I'd like to scare away any uninvited visitors. Although making camp in a wolf's den will likely take care of that.

Wolf

Make... No. Go away!

Mother

I don't think I will

Wolf

I will eat you! My teeth are sharp. They will sink into your soft flesh and tear your heart out your throat. You will feel hot drool and blood and know you are being eaten! You will cease to exist.

Mother

Maybe. Or maybe I'll let you burn in that cave. Fill it with wood and leave you to the smoke and flame.

Wolf

...

Mother

...

Wolf

Why don't you go away?

Mother

I already told you. Its late. I need to rest. Now if you promise not to eat me, I will promise not to burn you. And we will both live to see the sunrise. Agreed?

Wolf

...

Mother

...

Wolf

Stay the night. But leave at dawn.

Mother

Thank you.

The Mother has started a fire. It
illuminates the opening of the cave.
We can see the front half of the wolf

Mother

How did you get hurt?

Wolf

I thought you were going to sleep?

Mother

I'm not tired yet. I thought I would try to be neighborly.

Wolf

I wish you wouldn't

Mother

You dont get much say in the matter. You wont eat me. I dont see
bones by your cave. It seems to me you will starve to death very
soon.

Wolf

That's my problem. Not yours.

Mother

Id like to help. But you have to let me.

Wolf

Why should you want to help me? If the roles were flipped, Id have you in my belly by now.

Mother

But they aren't. I don't know. You're the first thing I've found to talk to. And I want to, I suppose.

Wolf

You know that if you do, I could eat you.

Mother

That's true. But if I don't, you'll die

Wolf

...

Mother

...

Wolf moves forward in her cave. There is a bear trap on her back leg. Blood stained and weak, but not broken.

Wolf

They found my cave. They took my babies. They left me a present. Wonderful guests.

Mother

Yes. I'm sorry

Wolf

A lot of good your sorry does me.

Mother

I could look at it if you liked. See if i can get it off

Wolf

You just stay where I can see you.

Mother

Alright. Its cruel what they did. People can be very cruel.

Wolf

I'm a wolf. They were humans. It's what we do to each other.

Mother

That doesn't matter. I also- lost my child. I don't know where he is.

Wolf

I'm sorry for your loss

Mother

I'm not. I'm going to find him

Wolf laughs at her

Mother

That's not funny

Wolf

Oh! Oh, of course it isn't, I apologize! Hah! Oh dear, I don't think you know what you're doing

Mother

I do. That's why I'm in these woods and not in the cozy human towns. You can find lots of things in the woods.

Wolf

You're right I suppose. What a quest! Where will you look for him? Do you know where he was-

Mother

You have it wrong. I wouldn't come here just to mourn. Im here to bring him back. Alive.

Wolf

I've lived in the woods a long time. I've had many pups, and lost nearly as many. You're on a fool's errand.

Mother

I'm not. I will find him.

The fire is very comfortable. The Mother has a modest pile of wood to feed it. She takes some of the stronger branches and begins to inspect them more closely.

Wolf

What are you doing?

Mother

Deciding what branch to use for your splint. You'll need it for your leg to heal more quickly. One you let me help you.

Wolf

Don't you think one impossible task is enough? You really need two fantasies to keep you going?

Mother

I think this one is best. Don't you?

Wolf

Don't touch me

Mother

I'm sorry. I'm sorry that the hunters took your cubs. I'm sorry they left you to die like this. I'm sorry the world has taught you that it can only be cruel and sharp.

Wolf

I'm not. The world has never lied to me about what it is. Who am I to say it should be otherwise?

Mother

Why shouldn't you? You had no choice as to whether or not you would live in the world. Why should you have to take its word for anything? We have the ability to choose. Why not choose to change things?

Wolf

You really are a strange one. A curiosity.

Mother

So I've been told.

Wolf

Do you really think that you have the power to make things different? You really believe it?

Mother

Why shouldn't I? The worst thing I can be is wrong.

Wolf

"The worst thing I can be is..."

Mother

...

Wolf

I think I will go to sleep now.

Mother

Well, good night.

Wolf

I should warn you though, I am a deep sleeper. I can't be expected to wake up for the world.

Wolf lays down, careful to position herself so that The Mother has access to her hurt leg

Wolf

Pressure. Pain. I could sleep through all sorts of things.

Mother

Well than, good... Ah. I see

Wolf

Good night.

Mother

Sweet dreams.

Wolf closes her eyes, pretends to sleep. The Mother carefully moves towards Wolf. she begins to work on the trap. Wolf is in obvious pain, but pretends to keep sleeping. Eventually the Mother gets the trap off. Wolf

yelps, but continues the act. The
Mother splints the leg. When she is
done, she returns to the fire to
sleep. Wolf wakes up and watches her.
The Mother shivers

1st Midwife

Humans are so fragile.

3rd Midwife

Sleep turns them all into babies

Wolf

Why?

4th Midwife

So they learned early on not to sleep on the ground. Not to sleep
alone

6th Midwife

Any little thing could kill them. A passing wolf. A falling
branch. Even a cold midnight wind could keep them from waking.

Wolf

Humans and wolves are cruel to one another. I should eat you just
to teach you a lesson.

2nd Midwife

So they invented blankets. And houses. And traps. Unsleeping,
unfeeling safeguards against the harms of the world

5th Midwife

But before they could, they watched. They learned that one human
awake was all that was needed to keep everyone safe

1st Midwife

Mostly safe

Wolf

And I'm hungry. You know I haven't eaten in days. I should do it.
It's what I am.

3rd Midwife

After all, the night's watch is only as good as the watcher. If
they're lazy, or careless, or cruel.

6th Midwife

Then you may as well let a wolf stand watch.

2nd Midwife

Trust is what separates us from the danger. Trust is what really
keeps us safe.

Wolf approaches the Mother's sleeping
body. She curls up next to her. The
Mother stops shivering.

Wolf

Sweet dreams.