

SALIVA

OVER BLACK

BILLY (V.O.)
Come back, boy. I'm not gonna hurt
you.

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - DAY

BILLY, eight, unkempt, in need of a good wash, crouches
beside a small log pile.

An empty metal dog bowl, glimmers in the midday sun, between
him and the treeline.

BILLY
What's this?

Billy pulls a stick of jerky from his jacket and throws it a
few feet in front of him.

A skittish, unhealthily thin, STRAY DOG emerges from the
dense surrounding woodland.

BILLY
That's it.

The Dog hesitates, edges towards the jerky, and devours it
whole.

BILLY
Good boy.

Billy pulls another stick from his pocket and throws it a
little closer. The Dog approaches with slightly more
confidence and again, devours it.

Billy pulls one last stick from his pocket, but this time
holds it out.

The Dog stares at him, considers it, and carefully advances.

BILLY
(softly)
Come on, boy. Almost there.

A loud gunshot echo's through the woods.

The sound of birds, fleeing for safety, fills the air, as a
bullet rips through the Dog's torso.

Billy drops the stick of jerky and watches in shock as the
Dog takes its last breath.

He turns towards a weathered, SHACK-LIKE HOUSE, at the far
end of the clearing.

EXT. SHACK-LIKE HOUSE - DAY

ED, forties, well built, stern-faced, stands on the porch, a scoped hunting rifle in hand.

ED
(shouting)
Now, son. Don't get upset.

EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - DAY

Billy turns his focus back to the Dog. His eyes begin to well to the sound of thunder and torrential downpour.

EXT. LOLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain hammers against a conservatory roof. A flash of lightning fills the sky.

INT. LOLA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A cup of hot chocolate rotates in a microwave.

LOLA, late twenties, a natural beauty, enters carrying a large cardboard box.

An adorable AKITA PUPPY shadows her every move.

She places the box on the kitchen side, rips it open and pulls out a toaster. The microwave pings.

Lola stares at the toaster a moment, lets out an exhausted sigh and shoves it back inside the box.

INT. LOLA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lola makes her way upstairs but stops midway. She places the cup of hot chocolate on a step, walks back down and checks the front door. It's locked.

She turns back and carries on up the stairs.

INT. LOLA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lola lays in bed with the Akita Puppy at her feet.

She takes a sip of hot chocolate and flicks through channels on a TV. She settles for a news broadcast and puts the remote down.

A WEATHER WOMEN finishes a forecast.

WEATHER WOMEN

And towards the end of the week,
although slightly milder, expect
more strong winds and heavy rain.

The programme cuts to a studio where a NEWS REPORTER talks to the screen.

NEWS REPORTER

Still to come. Tributes paid to a
former school teacher who died
trying to save three of her ex
pupils.

Lola's phone on the bedside cabinet lights up with an irritating tone. It reads 'Darren would like Facetime...'

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

Should the penalty be increased for
people caught smoking in public
places?

Lola glances at the phone, smiles instinctively.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

And further updates on the series
of gruesome break-ins that have
left residents...

Lola mutes the TV, fixes her hair and adjusts her position. She picks up the phone, holds it at arms length and presses 'Accept'.

A boyishly handsome head pops up, belonging to DARREN, early twenties, brimming with confidence.

DARREN

I was getting a bit worried, then.
Thought you wasn't gonna answer.

LOLA

I wasn't. Must have pressed the
wrong button.

DARREN

Funny. How was the move, then?

LOLA

Stressful.

DARREN

I did offer to help.

LOLA

I know.

DARREN

Your new bed looks cosy.

LOLA

You can tell that just by looking at the pillow, can you?

DARREN

It's one of my many talents. You wanna know how it would look even cosier?

LOLA

Let me guess. If you was in it, too?

Darren smirks.

LOLA

I told you that was a one time thing.

DARREN

I know. But I stopped believing you after the second time. I could come over now if you want? Keep you company on your first night.

LOLA

That's awfully generous of you, but I think I'll pass. Besides, I've got someone else to keep me warm tonight.

DARREN

Who?

Lola leans forward, picks up the Akita Puppy, lies back down and cuddles it.

DARREN

Ahh. You finally got one, then? What's her name?

The Puppy rolls onto it's back as Lola tickles its belly.

DARREN

Sorry. His.

LOLA

Not sure, yet. I'm torn between Keith and Hershel.

The Puppy dives onto the floor and under the bed, as a loud boom of thunder filters through the walls from outside.

DARREN

Take it he's not a fan of loud noises?

LOLA

No.

DARREN

You might have to leave him
downstairs the next time I come
'round, then.

A long vicious growl followed by a brief yelp comes from under the bed. Lola screws her face, concerned.

DARREN

I was only joking.

Lola drops the phone onto the bed, puts one hand on the ground and leans over to investigate.

She stops, as a quiet slurping sound breaks the silence.

DARREN (O.S.)

Lola?

She sits up, grabs the phone with one hand and lets the other dangle over the side of the bed.

DARREN

Everything alright?

LOLA

Yep. I thought the thunder might
have scared him to death, then.
Literally.

DARREN

I could come 'round and help
comfort him. I'm good with dogs.

LOLA

Trust me, he's fine. Give him your
hand to lick and he's happy for
hours.

Darren laughs.

DARREN

I wanna meet him even more now I
know we've got something in common.

Lola stares at him, blankly.

DARREN

We both enjoy getting you wet.

Lola smiles.

LOLA

Good night, Darren.

DARREN
 (desperate)
 No, come on, I was only jo...

Lola presses 'End', places the phone on the bedside cabinet and drinks the rest of her hot chocolate.

She turns the off TV and snuggles into her pillow.

LOLA
 Good night, mate.

Lola reaches out and switches off the bedside lamp.

INT. LOLA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Lola's eyes are forced open to the sound of the bedroom door being slammed. She glances towards it, but it's too dark to make out.

She reaches for the bedside lamp. But something isn't right.

She shuffles out of bed at record speed and after a brief struggle, finds the light switch and flicks it on.

She gasps. Backs up against the door.

A look of horror kidnaps her face as she sees the Akita Puppy's head, mounted on the bedside lamp, where a lamp shade once was.

On the wall behind it, a blood written note reads 'Humans Have Tongues Too'.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. SHACK-LIKE HOUSE - DAY

Ed leans his rifle against the porch and makes his way towards Billy.

EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - DAY

Tears stream down Billy's face as he stares at the bloody, lifeless corpse of the Stray Dog.

ED (O.S.)
 (shouting)
 I told you, son. You can't let 'em get too close. One of 'em bites ya, an' that could be it. We've been through this.

Billy's expression transitions from grief to anger.

He stands, reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls out a small hunting knife and turns to face Ed.

ED
(shouting)
Billy. Stay calm.

Billy charges towards him.

EXT. SHACK-LIKE HOUSE - DAY

Ed slides a ring off his finger and slips it into his pocket.

Billy thrusts the knife towards him. But Ed dodges it with ease and backhands Billy, hard, across the face.

Billy face-plants the dirt. The knife falls to the ground, inches away from him.

He reaches for it, but Ed swiftly scoops him up and carries him, kicking and screaming towards the house.

BILLY
It was mine! You said I could have
the next one! You promised!

ED
Got too close. I know you wanna try
out your new knife, but I've told
you before, you gotta put 'em down
first.

Ed carries Billy around the side of the house to a paint-peeled cellar door. He opens it and takes Billy inside.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

The room is bare. Its only feature is a length of metal chain attached to a shackle, bolted to the back wall.

Billy lets out a harrowing scream as Ed grabs the shackle and snaps it around his ankle.

Ed hastily makes his way back outside.

Billy lets out a final scream and slumps to the floor. He crosses his legs, bows his head and sits unnervingly still.

He looks up, eagerly, as Ed throws the Stray Dog down the stairs. Billy shuffles towards it with a faint smile.

His smile grows wider as the small hunting knife lands at his feet. The cellar door slams shut.

FADE OUT.