

Pack Leader

by

Etain

Erin the 'Pack Leader' forms an immediate understanding with the canines under her charge. Outwardly calm and confident, is she harbouring a darker secret?

(c) 2025

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FADE IN:

EXT. GARAGE EXTENSION - DAY

ERIN GRAYDOGGE 26, opens the thin dog leash she holds into a wide lasso. Her T-shirt features a magnificent gray wolf; her cap is branded, "Graydogge - Pack Leader."

Her client, faded rock chic SALLY 38, indicates the garage side door. She looks vaguely high and incredibly nervous.

SALLY
Etain was a double Platinum
present from my Manager.

ERIN
She's in there - by herself?

SALLY
She despises me. Hates everybody.

ERIN
When did you last walk her?

Sally breaks eye contact, hugs herself, looks down.

SALLY
She dragged me off my feet onto
my face! February, I think.

ERIN
You interact at all?

SALLY
I chuck food in. I hose out the
crate.

Erin opens the garage side door. A barrage of barks emerge from the dark, plus the sound of a large dog hurling itself against a metal crate. A rusting metal on concrete melee.

Erin slightly opens her mouth and gasps in gouts of air.

ERIN
Etain's very frightened. You've
betrayed her trust.

SALLY
My fingers will be hovering over
999. Got everything you need? Do
you have a taser? She's a bitch!

ERIN
Please stand back. I'm fine.

Erin enters. The barking/crate crashing reaches a crescendo transforming gradually into subsiding soft whines. Sally desperately wants to peer inside but doesn't.

Erin appears in the doorway with wolfdog ETAIN 3, on her leash.

ERIN
She needs a good wash. Can I use
your hose?

SALLY
Er, yes - please do.

Although Etain towers beside Erin (at probably twice her bodyweight) dog and handler have reached an understanding. Etain licks Erin's face as she stoops to bathe her.

EXT/INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

Erin nestles into the expensive chair which swamps her. DR SPOT (50's) perfectly posed beneath his wall of framed honours, consults his notes.

DR SPOT
How are you finding the
medication?

ERIN
I'm sleeping better.

DR SPOT
Still having bad dreams?

ERIN
It was my error. Something I
can't really forgive -

DR SPOT
- it was an accident, Erin.

ERIN
- that ruined my future.

Dr Spot sighs then regards her closely as Erin opens her mouth slightly and gulps in gouts of air.

EXT/INT. COVERED SPORTS STADIUM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The capacity crowd collectively hold their breath as Erin nears the crescendo of her performance on the balance beam.

A slender 16 feet 5 inches of aluminum covered with vinyl, topped by foam padding only 4 inches wide is 4 feet from the floor: -

Erin regards the chalked narrow runway - bursting forwards to run, jump and flip forwards (completely head over heels) land, then flip and twist backwards for the dismount.

Chalk puffs from her feet as the first part is executed smoothly but - the back flip is slightly off.

Erin's head cracks hard against the side of the beam -

End Flashback -

EXT. DOG SHELTER - DAY

PETER 29, greets Erin as she steps from her van featuring the gray wolf and branded "Graydogge - Pack Leader" logo.

PETER

Thanks for coming. No one else
can get near him.

ERIN

With an unbalanced dog it's all
about intent. No fear, no eye
contact, no noise or touch.

PETER

The Police wanted to shoot him.

ERIN

An unarmed dog's an easy target.
Where is he?

PETER

Follow me.

They enter the shelter.

EXT. FURTHEST DOG PEN - DAY

As other dogs whine and bark fearfully in the b.g. Erin walks towards the final enclosure.

Without looking directly at the massive bloodied dog glowering at the back, she turns and sits cross-legged two feet from the pen. The dog regards her back and growls. Erin is motionless, silent. The dog paces and salivates.

Sometime later:- the dog stops pacing. Erin throws a dog treat over her shoulder into the pen. The dog leaps at it but doesn't eat it. A few more paces. Shakes off. Stops.

Erin shuffles a little closer. The dog tenses to charge - Erin becomes still - the dog gives her a death look.

With her back to the pen, Erin holds out a treat, her arm extending backwards as -

The dog hurls itself at her. The bars clang with the impact but Erin doesn't flinch. The dog sniffs, whines.

Erin's hand goes further back - the dog's hot breath and spittle are on her fingers - just out of reach. She flicks the treat inside the pen. The dog sits, then eats it.

Erin calmly gets to her feet, steps inside the enclosure and sits side on to the dog. He moves slowly towards her as Erin gently slips the leash over his head. She doesn't draw it tight. She relaxes and is still, silent, unthreatening.

The dog lies next to her as its entire body violently shakes. Erin lightly touches the dog's ribs. Its chest and neck show bloodied old and fresh bite marks.

Much later:- Erin calmly leads her new charge from the pen to the vet's room. Peter watches from a distance, in awe.

ERIN

He's been mistreated by men then
further abused by dog baiters.
His back legs have been broken as
he was beaten into submission.
Give him some space and time to
heal and he'll be fine.

PETER

You know this how?

ERIN

We have an understanding.

Erin turns, exits. Peter scratches his head in disbelief.

EXT. THE JOLLY CORONER PUB - NIGHT

Erin and her girlfriend CLAUDIA 27, are seated drinking and chatting at a table in the pub's front garden.

CLAUDIA

Do you feel any better?

ERIN

It's hard to say. My mood swings
are less but something's not
right. Some nights are bad.

Erin smudges the condensation droplet meandering down the side of her glass of tomato juice.

CLAUDIA

How's the Doctor?

ERIN

Spot! He's an old dog. He smelt strongly of red wine and another woman's perfume.

CLAUDIA

Okay Miss Super-sniffer!

ERIN

Since my accident - I'm enhanced.

CLAUDIA

Sniff me. What secrets am I withholding?

Claudia takes a deep draft from the straw of her cocktail. Erin looks at her from the corners of her eyes.

ERIN

No thanks. You're ovulating!

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

Erin walks purposefully along the street. Her expression vacant, bustling commuters clear her path. Those not paying attention doom scrolling on their phones get barged aside.

Erin suddenly halts at a covered bus stop, sits, rests her head back. She looks unwell. Her eyes close. Surrounded by so many busy people she is a girl unseen.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Erin jolts awake. The full moon above is her spotlight. The street is empty. At first she can't get her bearings, then-

ERIN

Still sleepwalking.

Across the street, Dr Spot leaves his office, holding hands with a mystery BLONDE (30's). They kiss passionately before she gets into a waiting black cab. Spot looks up - as Erin looks away. She slumps back into the recess of the shelter.

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin is unable to sleep. Bright moonlight sneaks around her swaying curtains. Annoyed, Erin leaps from her single bed and throws the curtains wide.

ERIN

Okay. You win!

The full moon's intensity moves over her like quicksilver. We see half her room is set as an artist's studio. On an easel sits the Gray wolf picture (as seen on her van & T-shirt.)

Her neat dressing table shows photos of a younger Erin atop the beam in many gymnastics competitions.

With ferocity Erin snatches up oil paints and painting trowels to feverishly scrape and gouge marks into the wall, which she fills with paint. Her sweat slicked body strains with effort, her expression wide-eyed, unnatural, possessed.

INT. AUTOPSY ROOM - DAY

The body of Dr Spot lies covered on the metallic table. The pathologist GERRITSEN (60's) notices Detective Inspector DEE (40's) looking queasy as he flips open his note book.

D.I. DEE

When would you put the time of death?

GERRITSEN

Around one a.m. on the 31st.

D.I. DEE

Halloween.

GERRITSEN

Indeed. Glimpsed by a full moon.

D.I. DEE

Crazies?

Gerritsen whips back the white sheet covering Dr Spot's body with a flourish. Half his torso is missing.

GERRITSEN

The good Doctor's liver has been devoured - in situ.

D.I. DEE

By an animal?

Gerritsen indicates two small depressions on either side of the neck.

GERRITSEN

Look closely at these two small marks. They're right over the carotid arteries.

D.I. DEE

Some sort of tourniquet?

GERRITSEN

No - teeth marks.

D.I. DEE

He's been bitten!?

GERRITSEN

Not quite. I'd say held, pinned.
Stopping the blood flow to the
brain quickly produces
unconsciousness and then death.

D.I. DEE

What kind of animal does that?

GERRITSEN

It's how male lions kill each
other.

D.I. DEE

In London?! I'll check if any
have escaped from Harrods!

GERRITSEN

A bite radius that large - a full
moon - perhaps it's a werewolf.

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Erin lies grubby, naked and paint splattered amongst her disarray of empty oil paint tubes scattered across the wooden floor.

She jolts awake, her eyes fearful of the garish painted scene covering the entire wall, part of the ceiling and extending out to where she lies on the floor.

The mural is a wide and varied foreign landscape. Forests atop rocky mountains; nestling beside villages; flanking a Gothic castle; all feature black and gray emerging wolfpacks. Many wolves are devouring their human prey.

Some wolves fight over body parts and scraps. A small number of villagers have fiery torches held aloft. They don't realize they are helplessly outnumbered.

The gray wolf's eyes glower from his easel, almost signaling approval.

Erin studies her bloodied fingers, her nails as raw stubs, her black and blistered bare feet the same.

Erin creeks to her feet, studying the mural almost embossed into the wall plaster. In various places, the thick red oil paint is clumped with rough gray fur.

Erin draws gouts of noisy breath in through her slightly open mouth. She doubles over and powerfully vomits deep red slippery chunks.

Fighting for breath, a guttural cry rises from her throat - its ascending pitch almost a howl for mercy. The last of the pallid moonlight insinuates her indecency.

Bare forearms and hands splattered with gore, she pitches forwards; arms braced, head down, bare bottom up, her body racked with deep contortions as she vomits again.

FADE OUT.