

ARLO

Written by

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**1 EXT. ARLO'S LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT 1**

There is no moon in the sky, so the ocean seems to swallow the horizon and everything beyond it. A grizzled man with sad eyes sits quietly atop a lighthouse, one hand keeping an open notebook on his lap and the other resting on an old Navy signal lamp. Despite being in his early 30's, he looks weary. He is ARLO.

Behind him, the beam of the lighthouse is bright and steady, but his eyes remain on the darkness before him. Suddenly there are signal flashes on the horizon.

**2 EXT. KU'S LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT 2**

Across the bay, atop his own lighthouse, KU deftly pulls the switches on the Navy lamp, finishing his message. He is younger than Arlo and gentle-looking, with bright eyes and a brighter smile.

KU  
(morse-code via Navy  
signal lamp; VO)  
The night reminds me of a poem by  
Dickinson.

**3 EXT. ARLO'S LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT 3**

Arlo now stands at his own signal lamp. He messages back.

ARLO  
(morse-code; VO)  
Never read her.

There are more flashing lights in response.

KU  
(morse-code; VO)  
What? You should! I'll message you  
the passage.  
And made as He would eat me up - As  
wholly as a Dew...

Ku's VO continues into the next scene.

**4 EXT. ARLO'S LIGHTHOUSE - DAY 4**

Arlo leans against the railing atop the lighthouse. Ku's VO fades into Arlo's voice, finishing the stanza.

ARLO

(quietly)  
 Upon a Dandelion's Sleeve -  
 And then - I started - too -

Wind blows the sounds of laughter and voices across the water. He watches the lively mainland for a moment; there, TOWNSPEOPLE can be seen setting up booths and decorations for some kind of event.

Arlo solemnly lowers his gaze to the crashing waves below. The RADIO breaks the quiet moment.

RADIO  
 (static VO)  
 Captain Robert Moore to Operator  
 Wriston, over.

Arlo does not move.

RADIO  
 (static VO)  
 Captain Robert Moore to Operator  
 Arlo Wriston, come in Wriston.

Arlo lifts his head and looks toward the radio, sighing. As he turns to reply, he casts one last glance at the mainland. He picks up the comm.

ARLO  
 I read you.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

-Arlo walks down an old, empty spiral staircase. Arlo is the only spirit that haunts this place.

-Outside, he tightens the rope holding down a small boat to the lonely dock. He checks it once, then anxiously checks it again.

-In his kitchen, Arlo tries to fix a window that won't quite shut. The space is very clean, but not cozy.

-Arlo cleans the grime from the lighthouse light as the sun begins to set.

-The lighthouse is gray in the twilight. Arlo stops as he walks past a record player in the hallway. He blows some dust off the top, then looks to some old family pictures. His father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather all stand with their families in front of the lighthouse. A pained expression on Arlo's face. Then back to the pictures.

END MONTAGE

## 5 INT. ARLO'S LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT

5

Arlo stares at his reflection in the dark window. He looks just like the other men in his family. As he goes to finish eating alone, he sees a flash from across the bay. Then another. Ku is signaling him.

Grabbing his notebook from the table, he leaves the room.

## 6 EXT. KU'S LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT

6

The shutters of Ku's lamp clack together and compliment the rhythmic roll of the sea. Ku smiles, excited.

KU  
(morse-code; VO)  
So, have you thought about it? Have you decided?

INTERCUT ARLO/KU

Arlo rubs the scruff on his face nervously.

ARLO  
(morse-code; VO)  
I don't know Ku. I haven't been to the Festival since I was a kid.

KU  
(morse-code; VO)  
What is it like? Is it as great as I've heard?

Arlo pauses and sighs.

ARLO  
(morse-code; VO)  
It's gorgeous. The lanterns reflect in the water like big stars, and you can hear the music from the lighthouse.

Ku smiles to himself, imagining it.

KU  
(morse-code; VO)  
I can't imagine a better place for a first date.

Arlo hesitates, conflicted. Then he smiles a small smile.

ARLO  
(morse-code; VO)

Then... we should go. Yes. We'll go.

Ku laughs happily.

ARLO (CONT'D)  
(morse-code; VO)  
Now... will you send me the second stanza?

**7 INT. ARLO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

**7**

Arlo sits on the bed, his face in his hands. The room is sparsely decorated with a small bookshelf and a desk.

Suddenly he sits up, breathing heavily. He picks up his notebook and flips it open. We can see he has been writing down and annotating the Dickinson poem in his notebook with small, scratchy print.

ON NOTEBOOK

And He - He followed - close behind  
I felt His Silver Heel  
Upon my Ankle - Then My Shoes  
Would overflow with Pearl -

As quickly as he opened the book he closes it and sets it back down. His breathing slowly returns to normal. He shuts his eyes tightly closed.

**8 EXT. ARLO'S LIGHTHOUSE - DAY**

**8**

Arlo stands in the gray morning, staring at the small, sturdy boat tied to the dock in front of him. He clutches his notebook to his side. He hesitantly goes to board the boat, then steps back onto the dock.

He rubs his brow with a large hand and breathes hard. His eyes wander to Ku's lighthouse across the bay and his expression softens a moment.

He boards the boat.

**9 EXT. TOWN - DAY**

**9**

From a distance, we see Arlo's boat arrive in the harbor. The town sits nestled between mountainous woodland and the sea; it almost shines as the sun warms the alleyways and lights the trees, burning off the morning fog.

A YOUNG COUPLE is enjoying the beauty. Before they can turn the corner, Arlo slips into a small bookshop to avoid them.

**10 INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY 10**

He steps in quietly. The shop is empty, and dust floats in the air. Before him is the CLASSICS section where, settled in the morning light, a pale blue copy of THE COMPLETE POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON sits.

As Arlo reaches out to touch it, the door opens behind him and the young couple walks in. Panicked, Arlo hurriedly leaves.

**11 EXT. WRISTON'S - DAY 11**

The town is beginning to wake, and TOWNSPEOPLE now walk the streets. Arlo keeps his head down as he walks.

He makes it to a bakery window filled with cakes, pastries, and other decadent sweets. The sign above the door reads WRISTON'S in a friendly font. Birds sing from the roof.

Arlo stops for a moment, then looks out to the TOWNSPEOPLE on the street fearfully, breathing heavily. He enters.

**12 INT. WRISTON'S - DAY 12**

Arlo opens the door and closes it quickly behind him, causing the small bell at the top to jingle wildly.

MR WRISTON, a quiet but kind, strong-looking man in his 60's, kneads a ball of dough on a back counter. Arlo's resemblance to him is clear. He glances at Arlo and does a double take.

MR WRISTON

Arlo?

Arlo looks out the window and flips an OPEN sign to CLOSED.

ARLO

Hi... dad.

Mr Wriston sets the dough in a bowl and brushes some of the flour from his hands.

MR WRISTON

It's been a while.

Arlo nods.

MR WRISTON (CONT'D)

Are you... coming to the Festival tomorrow?

Arlo nods again. Mr Wriston looks at him for a long time, a soft expression on his face. He clears his throat

MR WRISTON (CONT'D)

Do you... want to tell me something? I'm here to listen if you need to-

ARLO

I need to go. I'm sorry, I'll see you tomorrow.

Arlo rushes out the door. Mr Wriston gazes sadly after him.

**13 EXT. ARLO'S LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT**

**13**

Arlo sits atop the lighthouse. The night is clear and crisp, and the stars twinkle.

He laughs sadly to himself. His teary eyes shine in the dark. He looks down at the black, churning waves with an empty expression. They are beautiful, cold, and deadly. A flash lights them, and Arlo looks up.

KU

(morse-code; VO)

Did you know historians think Emily was gay? I had a hunch from her poems but isn't that great?

Arlo stares towards Ku's lighthouse. He wipes a tear resentfully from his face as he responds.

ARLO

(morse-code; VO)

We shouldn't treat it like a date. The Festival.

**14 EXT. KU'S LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT**

**14**

Ku leans back from the signal lamp, his brow furrowed with concern.

KU

(morse-code; VO)

What? Why?

INTERCUT KU/ARLO

More tears slip down Arlo's face.

ARLO  
(morse-code; VO)  
They can't know. They'll treat us  
differently.

KU  
(morse-code; VO)  
You said people already knew.

ARLO  
(morse-code; VO)  
That's different. People think,  
but-

Arlo doesn't finish his sentence for a bit.

ARLO (CONT'D)  
(morse-code; VO)  
We can meet in person and still  
keep it secret.

KU  
(morse-code; VO)  
No. I want to hold your hand. I  
want to buy you gifts. I want to  
kiss you under the lanterns. I  
should be allowed to love you.

Arlo closes his eyes. More quiet tears.

ARLO  
(morse-code; VO)  
Please Ku.

Ku fights back his own tears.

KU  
(morse-code; VO)  
Okay.

**15 EXT. BOOKSHOP - EVENING**

**15**

Arlo exits the bookshop with the pale blue book in hand, now decorated with a tied yellow ribbon. He looks out toward the setting sun and his brow furrows a bit at the clouds gathering on the horizon. Music begins to play; the Festival is starting. Arlo looks toward the sound and heads toward it.

**16 EXT. PUB - EVENING**

**16**



We see Arlo approaching the pub near the center of town. All around, lanterns are hung from poles and final decorations strung up. TOWNSPEOPLE talk cheerfully, pouring drinks and setting food out, gathering for the Festival.

Arlo waits in the mouth of an alleyway as people arrive. He glances up at them nervously, then checks his notebook.

ON NOTEBOOK

Meet at pub, 7:00. Ku will wear green raincoat.

Anxious, Arlo backs a little more ways into the alley. He does not see the three men smoking at the back.

GRANT, brutish and angry, grabs Arlo's shoulder and turns him around.

GRANT  
(through a cigarette)  
Just look who showed up at our  
spot, boys.

Arlo's face twists in terror. He tries to escape, but Grant tightens his grasp. MAN #1 and MAN #2 join Grant.

MAN #1  
(sarcastically)  
I'll be... our town's favorite fag?

Arlo shakes his head desperately.

ARLO  
We're not kids anymore, don't do  
this.

MAN #2  
Shut up!

The men descend on Arlo. He falls to the ground dropping his notebook and the pale blue book. The men begin to beat him.

GRANT  
I just don't understand why you  
even try to show up here.

From around the corner, Mr Wriston suddenly appears.

MR WRISTON  
(angrily)  
Arlo! Hey!

He rushes in to interfere. ANNA, a woman in her 50's carrying a pie, stands at the mouth of the alley where they'd been walking together. She rushes to the entrance of the pub and throws open the door.

ANNA  
Call the police!

Freed from the assault, Arlo scrambles to his feet and runs from the alley.

He keeps running, past the pub, past the townspeople, all the way to his docked boat.

**17 EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT**

**17**

He starts the engine and pauses a moment. He breathes harder and harder, until his breathing turns into sobbing. He is covered in bruises, and a gash on his forehead bleeds profusely. He can barely keep himself together as he steers the boat towards the lighthouse. Rain begins to pour.

**18 EXT. PUB - NIGHT**

**18**

We can see the townspeople desperately trying to save food and decorations from the rain, but the storm is ravaging the festival. The POLICE arrive.

**19 INT. ARLO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

**19**

Arlo shuts himself in his room and sinks to the floor. He touches his fresh bruises and cuts. He weeps while the storm rages outside.

**20 EXT. PUB - NIGHT**

**20**

The rain patters on Ku's green raincoat and he holds a bag close as he arrives at the pub. His bright smile fades as he sees the flashing police lights and townspeople crowding. He hurries to meet them.

KU  
What happened? Is everyone okay?

Anna, in the crowd, turns at the sound of his voice.

ANNA  
(distracted, a little  
panicked)

The lighthouse keeper - he was  
attacked by a group of men-

KU  
(very concerned)  
Arlo?

ANNA  
Yes, yes! But he ran off, we don't  
know where-

Shocked, Ku turns toward the docks before she finishes; he  
knows where Arlo is.

**21 EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT 21**

The storm is in full force, but Ku is too concerned to care.  
The only boat left at the docks is a small rowboat.  
Determined, he gets in, unties it, and battles the waves on  
his way to Arlo's lighthouse.

**22 EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT 22**

Arlo leans against the balcony railing, his head in his  
hands. Shakily, he grips the rail and stares down into the  
frothing waves. That empty expression is back.

A shout cuts through the storm. In the distance, Ku is losing  
his battle with the sea and his rowboat is about to tip.

Arlo snaps to attention. His eyes widen.

**23 INT. LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT 23**

Arlo rushes through the empty lighthouse. Lightning flashes  
and thunder booms.

**24 EXT/INT. SEA - NIGHT 24**

Ku is in the water, struggling to stay afloat and gasping for  
air. The waves pummel him again and again, forcing him under.

**25 EXT. BOAT - NIGHT 25**

With an unknown strength, Arlo suddenly pulls him from the  
water and to safety. They slump to the deck, breathing hard.  
Arlo fights the waves, steering his boat back to the town's  
dock.

**26 EXT. DOCK - NIGHT****26**

There is a break in the storm. The townspeople have gathered around the dock and outside the pub. They stand and stare as Ku and Arlo arrive in the boat. The festival decorations are in ruins.

But Arlo does not seem to see them. He grabs a heavy blanket from a compartment at the head of the boat and carefully wraps it around Ku. He wipes the water from Ku's eyes gently.

ARLO

I'm so sorry. Are you alright? Are you hurt?

Ku looks up at him. A playful smile spreads across his face.

KU

(teasing)

You're a lot stronger than I imagined you.

Arlo blinks at him. Shakes his head. Then grabs Ku's face and kisses him sweetly.

Mr Wriston, watching from the sidelines, begins clapping. Quickly, the townspeople join in, cheering and applauding.

Arlo jumps at the sound for a moment. Then he smiles. Ku grabs his hand.

Lightning strikes suddenly not too far away and the rain picks up. The townspeople collectively gasp, then laugh at themselves as everyone rushes to the safety of the pub.

**27 INT. PUB - NIGHT****27**

It is warm and lovely inside the pub. Shrugging to themselves and laughing, townspeople pin the sodden decorations to the walls and divvy out any rescued food.

Mr Wriston lovingly touches Arlo's shoulder and hands his books back to him. Arlo smiles at him.

A large, antique record player sits on a table in the corner. Ku looks to Arlo.

KU

(softly)

Until We met the Solid Town -  
No One He seemed to know -  
And bowing - with a Mighty look -  
At me - The Sea withdrew -

Ku smiles brightly. Arlo grabs his hand. Outside, the stars have grown bright and the sea has withdrawn.