Wolves

A Predatory Fairy Tale

Steve Yockey

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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WOLVES opened as part of a rolling world premiere with support from the National New Play Network's Continued Life of New Plays Fund on November10, 2012 at the King Plow Arts Center in Atlanta, GA. The play was produced by Actor's Express Theatre Company with Artistic Director Freddie Ashley and Managing Director Nan Barnett. The Director was Melissa Foulger with scenic design by Seamus M. Bourne, lighting design by Benn Tilley, sound design by Dan Bauman, costume design by Jonida Beqo, and prop design by Lindsay Moore. The cast was as follows:

BEN . . . . . Clifton Guterman
JACK . . . . . Brian E. Crawford
WOLF . . . . . Joe Sykes
NARRATOR . . . . . Kate Donadio

WOLVES opened as part of a rolling world premiere with support from the National New Play Network's Continued Life of New Plays Fund on November 15, 2012 at the Den of Muses in New Orleans, LA. The play was produced by Southern Rep with Producing Artistic Director Aimee Hayes. The Director was Aimee Hayes with scenic and prop design by Elizabeth Harwood, lighting design by Amanda Woods, and sound design by Mike Harkins. the cast was as follows:

BEN . . . . . Andrew Farrier
JACK . . . . . Taylor McLellan
WOLF . . . . . Benjamin Carbo
NARRATOR . . . . . Kerry J. Cahill

WOLVES opened as part of a rolling world premiere with support from the National New Play Network's Continued Life of New Plays Fund on November 30, 2012 at the Tempe Canter for the Performing Arts in Tempe, AZ. The play was produced by Stray Cat Theatre Company with Artistic Director Ron May. The Director was Ron May with scenic design by Eric Beeck, lighting by Ellen Bone, sound design by Joey Trahan, costume design Danny Chihuahua, and prop design by Kelly Coughlin-Celaya. The cast was as follows:

BEN . . . . . Tyler Eglen
JACK . . . . . Samuel E. Wilkes
WOLF . . . . . Adam Pinti
NARRATOR . . . . . Yolanda London

WOLVES opened as part of a rolling world premiere with support from the National New Play Network's Continued Life of New Plays Fund on March 8, 2012 at Celebration Theatre in Los Angeles, CA with Artistic Directors Michael Matthews & Michael A. Shepperd and Executive Director Michael Kricfalusi. The Director was Michael Matthews with scenic design by Kaitlyn Pietras, lighting design by Timothy Swiss, sound design by Cricket Myers, and costume and prop design by Michael O'Hara. The cast was as follows:

BEN . . . . . Nathan Mohebbi
JACK . . . . . Matthew Magnusson
WOLF . . . . . Andrew Crabtree
NARRATOR . . . . . Katherine Skelton

CHARACTERS

NARRATOR – A woman with a warm, soothing voice and a quirky sense of humor; she's definitely your friend. At least she wants you to believe that. Strong and put together, she's also clearly in charge here. In a form fitting skirt and blouse, her hair up, high heels.

BEN – A young man, managing to look innocent and pretty together in spite of deep delusional psychosis and a crippling unrequited love. He covers well until he can't. Barefoot, bed-head, in jeans and a v-neck white t-shirt.

JACK – A young man, pretty, cocky, thinks he knows better, but out of place and a little too willing to believe; thus, starting to see things. But fighting it. In a fitted dark polo shirt & tight jeans, dressed for a date.

WOLF – A man, muscular, physical, a but scruffy, a guy's guy. Casual, amiable, charm with hint of sorrow. But it's more in what he says not how he says it. In a tight, graphic print t-shirt & Levis sporting a dark blue bandana in his back left pocket.

NOTES ON STAGING

[ ] indicate overlapping dialogue.

The visible floor plan of the apartment (including the entrance hall, living room, a small bathroom and Ben's bedroom) is taped out on the floor of the space with white tape. There are no walls, but the tape is recognized as such.

An idea of the floor plan is included at the back of the book – something of a jumping off point.

The items specified in each area should be the only items on stage.

The lighting, while lower on the whole, moves from something warm to something colder and harsher as the play progresses.

I. Safe & Sound

(The **NARRATOR** *sits on her stool off to one side of the stage. An inconspicuous tin bucket is near one of the stool legs but out of the way.* **BEN** *sits at the* **NARRATOR***'s feet with a guitar. They are warmly illuminated.)*

(As the audience enters, **BEN** *plays the guitar and sings with the* **NARRATOR** *– a gentle, harmonized and private thing. It has the feel of a casual jam session and they enjoy each other's company. Stripped down versions of songs* [*] *like: "Unravel" by Bjork; "Change of Heart" by El Perro Del Mar; "Hysteric" by Yeah Yeah Yeahs; "A&E" by Goldfrapp; "Peach, Plum, Pear" by Joanna Newsom; "My Body is a Cage" by Arcade Fire; and "Crystalize" by The XX.)*

(Once the houselights go down, the music continues. Eventually, the **NARRATOR** *stops singing, but* **BEN** *continues on with the guitar, singing softly to himself now. He keeps plucking at the guitar and looks up to her.)*

BEN. I'm listening to music right now.

NARRATOR. Yes.

BEN. I'm listening to music in my room.

NARRATOR. Yes, that's right.

BEN. But I'm singing with you.

NARRATOR. Oh, I so love when we sing together.

BEN. Me too, I do too.

NARRATOR. It just works, doesn't it?

BEN. And it takes my mind off things.

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*Please see Music Use Note on page 3.

NARRATOR. That's so true.

BEN. I can always count on you.

NARRATOR. No matter how bad things get.

BEN. Oh… Okay.

NARRATOR. But they're not that bad.

BEN. Right.

NARRATOR. In here at least.

BEN. Okay, yes. In here. Just don't…

(He stops playing the guitar.)

Don't tell me anything bad, okay?

NARRATOR. Ben, I only tell you the things you need to know.

BEN. Sometimes it's scary, it scares me.

NARRATOR. Sometimes it should, but…you're safe right now.

BEN. Yes.

NARRATOR. In here.

BEN. Because this is a safe place.

NARRATOR. Yes.

BEN. Good.

NARRATOR. Until you start to think it's not.

BEN. See, that's what I'm, that's kind of ominous.

NARRATOR. It's not ominous, Ben. It's foreboding.

BEN. What does [that mean?]

NARRATOR. [Shhhh.] Safe and sound.

(He looks at her. She smiles.)

BEN. Okay. Okay, safe and sound.

*(***BEN** *begins to play again, singing softly to himself. The* **NARRATOR** *smiles at him, hops off her stool and takes in the audience. She gives them a nod of acknowledgment. She then turns and presents the space.)*

(As she does, the lights rise on the rest of the stage. It is relatively bare. But the outline of the front half of

a two-bedroom apartment is marked out on the floor in white tape. A hallway comes from the back of the space with a full sized bedroom stage right and a small bathroom stage left. The hallway then opens into a main living room.)

(Downstage of the bedroom is a small entry way and the front door. Just down stage and outside of the front door is the **NARRATOR***'s stool. In the living room there is a couch with a small stack of books next to it. In the kitchen there is cart or shelf with several bottles of alcohol and some tumblers.)*

(Next to the front door is a chair with a red hoodie thrown over the back of it. An axe leans against the chair with a small pile of firewood sitting next to it.)

(The bathroom is empty.)

(In **BEN***'s bedroom, there is a small bed, a stereo system with a pair of oversized headphones attached via a ridiculously long chord. Next to the stereo is a churning lava lamp. This is on for the entire opening sequence and is lit for the entirety of the play, even during blackouts.)*

(After a moment, the **NARRATOR** *turns to the audience again.)*

II. Dark Falls Outside

NARRATOR. Once upon a time, hmmm, you know, I should say up front: this isn't a pretty story or anything. It's a lot of things, but it gets a little messy and I want to be really direct about that, all right? Good. Now, once upon a time…

(She stops and looks at **BEN**. *He is still playing, singing quietly. She signals for the audience to give her a moment, kneels down and whispers something in* **BEN***'s ear. She blocks her mouth and his ear with her hand, something even more private.)*

*(***BEN** *stops playing. His eyes go wide with wonder, then fear, as if he can see something horrible coming. He shakes it off and scrambles down the taped out hallway and into his room. Once there, he sets his guitar on the floor, sits down next to an old stereo system and puts on an oversized pair of headphones. He holds them to his ears and listens.)*

(The **NARRATOR** *turns back to the audience.)*

Okay. Once upon a time, there was an intrepid young man. Named Ben.

(She indicates **BEN**.*)*

He moved from a very small town where he didn't fit very well to a very large city where he didn't fit very well. And he didn't know how to handle very well what it means to move from a very small town to a very large city. Some people don't know how to be alone. Ah, and some people don't know that they don't know how to be alone until they're suddenly. All. Alone. And Ben was one of those people. So the city became more menacing day by day. Became more crowded, more isolating, as it does for some people sometimes. But for Ben, specifically, the city grew into an entirely different kind of place. A place that filled his eyes and made his heart race with fear, a place full of the darkest nights,

a creeping pitch black filled with dangerous animals, hidden threats, a place that spilled out of his head and anxiously became the world around him. It was a horrible way to exist. All. Alone.

But fortunately for Ben, he stumbled upon an ally of sorts. So he was lucky. Maybe. And he learned how to be alone with someone else. Which sounds worse than it is. But that's what he did; he fell in love with Jack.

*(***JACK** *carefully, quietly makes his way down the hall, hugging the wall across from* **BEN***'s room. He darts past* **BEN***'s door and makes his way to his shoes, sitting just inside the front door.* **BEN** *takes off the headphones.)*

But the sad fact is that kind of love isn't really love, it's just need, so the two young men soon fell out of love. Or out of the idea of love and into something else. But because that need between them was so strong, the young men tried to still be something to each other, as happens for some people sometimes.

(As **JACK** *is putting on his shoes, The* **NARRATOR** *casually knocks a book or two off the pile and onto the floor.* **JACK** *flinches and hurries to get his shoes on.* **BEN** *hears the books fall, gets up in his room, sets down the headphones and makes his way into the hall.)*

And that thing, as mentioned, was being alone, together, in a very small apartment in a very large city.

*(***BEN** *sees* **JACK***, stops, heads through the living room and begins looking through the stack of books.)*

BEN. Hey Jack.

*(***JACK** *is startled.)*

JACK. I thought you were listening to music.

BEN. Uh huh.

JACK. Something depressing probably.

BEN. Have you seen that stack of menus? I was thinking we could order some Chinese food tonight, if they're still delivering.

JACK. Ugh, I don't think eating that Orange Chicken every night really counts as eating Chinese food.

BEN. Why not?

JACK. Because it's a made up thing. It's marketing, Ben, all right? They didn't use to have Orange Chicken. No Chinese peasant ever made Orange Chicken and now it's everywhere.

BEN. You used to love that place.

JACK. Whatever.

BEN. And it tastes good.

JACK. Blah.

BEN. So I don't care if it's pretend. Plus, it makes me feel all Zen-like when I crack open my little fortune cookie. Last time my fortune thing said: "An empty bird cage means freedom."

JACK. Unless they use the bird to make Orange Chicken.

BEN. I guess it's a "glass half full" kinda' thing.

JACK. Well, I'm done with that place. The rice is always over-cooked.

BEN. You're finicky, that's your [problem.]

JACK. [Oh, and my] last fortune cookie said something like, "The world does not change, you do." That's not a fortune, that's some bullshit truism with lottery numbers printed on the back.

(He finds the menus.)

BEN. Better luck tonight maybe.

JACK. Don't want any, thanks.

BEN. Well, then we can order from somewhere else, you pick.

*(***JACK** *finishes putting on his shoes.)*

JACK. Not really hungry.

BEN. Okay, then did you want to watch a movie or something? I can break open my Kubrick box set, I don't know though, that might be kind of serious.

JACK. Nah.

BEN. Well, I'm running out of ideas, what do you want to do?

JACK. I'm going out.

(The **NARRATOR** *claps once, interrupting and freezing the scene in tableau.)*

NARRATOR. It's also not a regular, lesson-learned kind of story. That just occurred to me to share, just now. As we move along, you probably shouldn't go looking for a moral. You'd be hard pressed to reconcile a moral with this story. Keep that in mind. And listen, if you do happen to stumble across a moral, well then this story is probably closer to you than you'd think and I'm not sure you'll like that very much in the end.

(She laughs.)

Okay? Good. So just then, right then, as the words left Jack's lips, Ben's heart stopped in his chest. Really, it did. And Jack knew that it would, but he just couldn't get out of the apartment fast enough. He's terrible at getting away with things and excellent at getting caught.

(Everything begins moving again.)

BEN. What?

JACK. You heard me, I'm going out.

BEN. It's too late; it's too dark.

(Grabbing the red hoodie off the chair and putting it on.)

JACK. I'm a big boy.

BEN. You're not going [out, okay?]

JACK. [Does this have] to be a thing every single time?

BEN. Uh, don't be stupid.

JACK. Don't call me stupid.

BEN. I'm calling you stupid because that's what people call other people when they're being stupid.

JACK. Very nice.

BEN. No, it's not nice. And I'm not gonna try to call it some nicer thing for you, okay, like naïve? Because you're not naïve, we both know how dangerous it is out there, especially at night, so that just makes you stupid.

JACK. I'm only going to a bar around the corner.

BEN. Why?

JACK. Are you okay?

BEN. I'm fine.

JACK. Don't freak out.

BEN. I'm fine.

JACK. You've kind of got that "freak out" look.

BEN. What does that even, no I don't.

JACK. Like when you attacked the landlord with a screwdriver [and tried to…]

BEN. [Whoa, whoa,] whoa, I did not attack the landlord with a screwdriver. I had a screwdriver in my hand and I may have inadvertently "threatened" the landlord with it.

JACK. Listen, I thought it was funny, but if I hadn't walked in when [I did…]

BEN. [Come on, it's] not like I would have stabbed him.

(The **NARRATOR** *claps once, interrupting and freezing the scene in tableau.)*

NARRATOR. Just want to quickly interject here. He would have. Let me be absolutely clear on this: Ben would have stabbed the landlord with a screwdriver.

(Everything begins moving again.)

JACK. You absolutely would have stabbed him.

BEN. What kind of person stabs someone with a screwdriver?

JACK. You.

BEN. Is that what we're doing? Bringing up potential mistakes from our pasts? Because I don't think you'd like that game.

JACK. I would like it fine, and that's not nice by the way, but we're not bringing up potential mistakes from our

past. We're talking about how you tend to freak out and I'm being generous by calling [it that.]

BEN. [He scared] me. He has to tell us before he just comes in here. Anyone would have reacted that way, so that doesn't count.

*(***JACK** *chuckles.)*

JACK. It's lucky we're still allowed to live here.

BEN. You're luck we're still allowed to live here.

JACK. Fine, we're both lucky. And we've now established you did not and will not go gung ho with a screwdriver on anyone? Great. So then you're fine and I'll see you later.

BEN. Okay. Fine, but [remember…]

JACK. [Oh my god.]

BEN. You know when it gets dark, some people will, not even people, animals, there are animals [that will…]

JACK. [Animals?]

BEN. What?

JACK. You're doing it again.

BEN. No.

JACK. Good. See you later.

BEN. You're going alone?

JACK. You see anyone else?

BEN. That is so incredibly…

(He launches to the front door, but stops himself, centers and recalibrates.)

That doesn't sound like the best plan.

JACK. Ben, move.

BEN. No.

JACK. Okay, if you're gonna', let me frame this for you so you can relax and enjoy your night in without worrying. Why don't you just…just think of it as hunting.

*(***JACK** *smiles at him, proud.)*

BEN. What?

JACK. I'm going hunting.

BEN. That's not funny.

JACK. It's not supposed to be funny; I'm not trying to be funny. Hunters don't have to be afraid of "animals." So you don't have to worry.

BEN. Well that's just genius. Where's your gun?

JACK. Ben.

BEN. Hunter's don't have to be afraid because they [have guns.]

JACK. [Just because] you say it's scary in the dark, just because you say it over and over again, ad nauseum, doesn't mean I [have to…]

BEN. ["Ad nauseum?"] Where'd you pick [that up?]

JACK. [Doesn't mean] I have to listen to you and stop trying to [pick a fight]

BEN. [You have no idea] what you're inviting in here when you go out there looking for trouble.

JACK. Into the city.

BEN. The forest.

JACK. The big, dark forest.

BEN. Yes.

JACK. I'm not worried.

*(***JACK** *steps into him. Very close. He knows what he's doing.)*

You'll keep me safe, right?

(pause)

BEN. Yes.

JACK. Yes?

BEN. You know I will.

JACK. So…

BEN. Don't do that.

*(***JACK** *breaks away with a smile, zipping up the hoodie.)*

JACK. So then everything's fine.

BEN. We, we don't have to watch Kubrik, we don't have to order Chinese food, we don't have to do anything, okay? As long as we don't do that anything in here.

JACK. That sounds like an amazing evening.

BEN. I can protect you here, but if you're out there by yourself, [at night…]

JACK. [With a] screwdriver?

BEN. I told you, that was [an isolated…]

JACK. [Ben, I don't] actually need you to protect me, physically, it's [not like….]

BEN. [You just] got done [saying that…]

JACK. [You're] getting pretty worked up.

BEN. No.

JACK. I'm not trying to, look… I appreciate you giving me a place to live and [all, but…]

BEN. [This doesn't] have anything to do with that.

JACK. You said you were okay with living together.

BEN. What? I am.

JACK. If you can't handle this, if it's like a jealousy thing, I mean, if it's making you start to go crazy again, [if it's…]

BEN. [Can we] not call it that? You know I don't, it wasn't crazy, it wasn't freaking out, it was just a "rough time" and I'm fine.

JACK. "Animals." You said that.

BEN. "Hunting." You said that.

JACK. Sometimes it's just easier to go along with your, whatever it is, than try to navigate my way back out of it.

BEN. That sounds slippery.

JACK. Tell me about it.

BEN. I didn't mean slippery, I meant dishonest.

JACK. Tell me bout it.

BEN. And you don't have to navigate anything.

JACK. I'm doing it right now, it's happening right now.

BEN. Okay, just stop thinking that I'm jealous or that I'm trying to keep you away from, look, we've done this already, okay? It didn't work out between us, or whatever, but that's how things happen and it's better this way and I get that, I totally get that, this doesn't have anything to do with you living here. I'd rather you live here than be out on the street somewhere.

JACK. I wouldn't be on the street.

BEN. Huh, no, right, I know where you'd be.

JACK. Now what does that mean?

BEN. Nothing.

JACK. Good.

BEN. Just…you never had a hard time finding a bed.

JACK. So I have to kind of pretend that you're not calling me a whore so I don't just punch you in the face. Most nights I'm here, almost every night. Not that it's any [of your…]

BEN. [I don't think] that [about you.]

JACK. [And it's a] little confusing to me when you say you care so much and want me to be okay, everything's great, and then you just start shredding away at me whenever I don't want go along [with…]

BEN. [I'm] sorry.

JACK. I just want to go out for a little bit.

BEN. Maybe, and I'm saying maybe, maybe I get a little jealous still, which I'm handling. Sorry. But I'm not wrong about going out at night. And I'm not crazy.

JACK. I didn't mean "crazy," okay.

BEN. Thank you. And we both know the forest is too dangerous at [night.]

JACK. [But then] you say something crazy.

BEN. I know you see it too, the forest, the way it's not a city, the way it's [full of…]

JACK. [Sometimes.]

BEN. You say you do, you said you do.