

ANIMAL TRACKS

Written by

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INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Begin MUSIC: 'Animal Tracks' by Mountain Man.

A schoolkid, FRANZ, 10, sits on his bed opposite a ginger cat, OFELIA. Franz is plump with a floppy bob of hair. Draped over the bed is a furry red body suit: a fox costume. Various images of Japan cover the wall behind him.

He holds a photo and examines it closely: We see a sunny beach with black sand; a pretty woman standing arm in arm with a handsome Japanese man, both about 30. They pose cheesily making 'Japanese-schoolgirl' peace signs. Around them are hoards of over-the-top looking Japanese girls - tonnes of makeup, fake eyelashes, heels, big hair - a weird miami-girls vibe. Below are the words

Enoshima Beach, Japan.

He turns it over. We see some handwriting scrawled.

LEA (V.O)

Darling Franz. Check out the skanky crowd! Never thought I'd see g-strings on a Japanese beach. Today me and Shinji met a man swimming in a full suit and a tie. And a guy from the US military who was double jointed everywhere and said his job was to fix planes and 'fuck shit up'. Oh dear! I miss you. Hope your Dad isn't being a food Nazi. Jeg Elsker Dig. Mum.

He hovers his finger gently over the image of his mother.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Simon sifts flour into a bowl. He's mid 40s, tall, with cyclist's legs and stubble - a bit of a silver fox.

FRANZ (O.S)
Hey Dad?

SIMON
Yes my boy.

FRANZ
Can we have pizza for dinner?

SIMON
(not really listening)
Uhhhm...
(registering the question)
No. It's the party tonight,
remember? Anyway we need to crack
down on this gluten thing.

FRANZ
But there are gluten free crusts.
At 'Crust'.
(points to menu on fridge)

SIMON
We're just going to eat at home,
allright?

FRANZ
Awww, don't be a blockhead.
(beat) Ya blockhead.

SIMON
There's leftover shepherd's pie.

FRANZ
I hate shepherd's pie. We're not
even shepherds.

SIMON
Oh come on Fran.

FRANZ
Don't call me Fran.

SIMON
You like Fran.

FRANZ
Only Mum calls me that.

SIMON
Well Mum's not here. And I like
Fran.

FRANZ
(getting riled up)
Just stop it..!

SIMON
Okay, Okay...

FRANZ
(aggressively)
Ya fruit nerd!

SIMON
Hey, I said okay, okay? Anyway
you're the one calling *me* names!

Simon cracks an egg into the bowl. Then another.

SIMON (CONT.)
There'll be none of that tonight
though. Right? We don't call our
guests blockheads or fruit nerds.
It's Elke's special night.

Franz says nothing. He tries to change the subject.

FRANZ
What are you making?

SIMON
King Cake. You remember King
Cake?

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

FLASHBACK - Franz' P.O.V. of his mother and father sitting across from him at the kitchen table, a giant cake in front of them, the words 'WE'LL MISS YOU MUM' written in icing. They look at him with wide eyes and brave faces. A younger Franz, white faced, stares at the cake, refusing to eat.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING (CONT.)

FRANZ
(smart arse-y)
I can't have that. It has *gluten*?

SIMON
I'm making it with Spelt. You can have spelt.

FRANZ
I *hate* Spelt.

SIMON
Well you're bloody well going to like it tonight.

FRANZ
Am not.

Simon mixes the wet and dry ingredients together.

SIMON
Elke's gonna love my King Cake. Can you believe we've been together for a year and I haven't made her King cake? Definitely about time for King Cake, don't ya think?

FRANZ
Stop saying King Cake.

SIMON
King Cake King Cake King Cake--

FRANZ
 (deadpan)
 I mean it. I will end you. And
 it'll look like a bloody
 accident.

SIMON
 (bemused)
 What the hell?!

FRANZ
 (eyes wild)
 I mean it! I will end you! And
 it'll look like a bloody rhi-no!

SIMON
 (Laughing)
 Where do get this stuff from?!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Franz stands in front of the mirror in the fox costume. Ofelia is at his feet, a cat-sized lion's mane sprouting from her neck. We hear laughter, music and general merry-making coming from the rest of the house.

Simon enters dressed as a seahorse, a beer in one hand.

SIMON
 You look foxy.

FRANZ
 I know.

SIMON
 Time to mingle with the rest of
 the party animals.

FRANZ
 Hey Dad?

SIMON
 Yeah.

FRANZ
What's a G-String?

Simon raises an eyebrow.

SIMON
Come on. Out of your room.

He puts out his hand. Franz pushes past him.

SIMON
Hey. Jeg Elsker Dig. [SUBTITLE: I
LOVE YOU]

Franz stops for a moment in the doorway, not looking back.

FRANZ
(pronouncing it wrong)
Elks Die.

SIMON
Jeg, Elsker, Dig. You've got to
start saying that properly! What
would your Danish ancestors say?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Franz surveys the party. The living room is a jungle, colourfully lit with paper lanterns, brimming with the drinking and mingling of about thirty guests, dressed elaborately in different animal costumes. Their faces look strange and distorted by masks, face paint and unfamiliarity. We follow Franz as he walks around the party.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CONT.)

A series of shots from Franz' POV:

LION MAN flirts with ANTELOPE GIRL.

PELICAN MAN struggles with his over-sized beak.

KANGAROO WOMAN rests a beer in her pouch.

Simon laughs on the couch with his girlfriend, ELKE, 30. She is stunning and dressed as an elk. They don't notice Franz.

GUY, 40, slaps Franz on the back. He wears a three piece suit, a white cat mask, and holds a walking stick for no particular reason. He's a little bit pissed.

GUY
Franz, ma man!

FRANZ
Hey...Guy.

GUY
Foxes are cool, man.

FRANZ
What are you supposed to be?

GUY
An Aristocat! Hello-o.

FRANZ
Oh.

GUY
So hey how's ya mum! Living it up
in Tokyo with that Japanese
artist? Whatsis name? Chin-Chin?

FRANZ glares at him.

FRANZ
She's not in Tokyo at the moment.
She's at a beach. Called Enoshima
beach. There's a lot of skanky
people there.

GUY
(nodding)
Sounds awesome. You're mum's
awesome.

Guy takes a swig of beer. Franz is not quite sure if he wants to continue talking to him.

GUY
How old are you now?

FRANZ
Ten.

GUY
(nostalgically)
Ohhh, man. Right on the cusp! You got that pre-adolescent glow about ya. Geez it's a good time. (beat)
A fucked time, but a good time.
Ah-lohhh-ta interrogations, my man!

Franz looks puzzled.

GUY
Ahh, good on ya.

Guy slaps him on the back again and turns to OWL MAN.

GUY
You know the ancient Celts observed every nuance of their animals for meaning?

Owl man looks unimpressed and walks away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CONT.)

Franz watches Elke talking to CHAMELEON MAN.

ELKE
...eating mostly vegetarian, organic foods gives you strength without stress. And avoiding sugar and artificial sweeteners totally. If you can.

CHAMELEON MAN
What about honey?

ELKE

Honey's ok, but make sure it's not the runny kind. The raw, hard stuff is best.

Chameleon Man looks slightly aroused by the way she says this.

ELKE

(continues)

Raw food diets are a good one to follow, actually. Do you get constipated?

Chameleon man chokes on his beer, mid-sip.

CHAMELEON MAN

So you're like, a naturopath?

ELKE

No. I'm just interested in health. We all should be.

CHAMELEON MAN

(wanting to impress her)

Totally. Getting back to nature. Raw.

ELKE

Exactly. Getting back to *ourselves*.

Elke notices Franz standing there.

ELKE

(too enthusiastically)

Heyyyyyy Franz!

FRANZ

(pointing at her)

What are you?

ELKE

(looking down at herself)

An elk! As in a deer.

FRANZ
I know what an elk is.

Elke smiles and nods, not sure what to say next. She peers around the room for Simon.

FRANZ
(under his breath)
Elks *die*.

ELKE
I'm sorry?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Franz looks at his reflection in the fridge door. He opens it, hesitates, then carefully carries the King Cake out and puts it on the kitchen bench. He looks around to see if anyone is watching. SLAP. He pounds the cake with his hand, over and over until it is flattened to a sticky mess. His hand is covered in thick cake mash. He licks it off aggressively. He has not thought this through.

He starts eating the cake. Half pleasure, half panic.

He scrapes the remains into Ofelia's food bowl. She attacks it ravenously.

SIMON (O.S)
I see you Franz.

Franz whips around to see his Dad standing there.

SIMON
I see you.

FRANZ
Offy's hungry.

SIMON
The eyesight of the seahorse is very sharp, you know. Each eye moves by itself.

FRANZ

I had to feed her. She's
starving! Look at her! (Ophelia
continues to enthusiastically
munch)

SIMON

When we are lost or confused, the
seahorse asks us to take a good
look around. Not just with our
physical eyes, but with our
spiritual eyes.

FRANZ

What the heck are you talking
about?

SIMON

(gentle but hurt)
You wrecked the cake, my boy.
That's so not cool. That's so not
cool.

FRANZ

It was an accident.

SIMON

Oh really...Was it a *bloody*
accident?

Ofelia stops eating and looks up at them both.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Franz, in pyjamas, arranges packets of gum into a pattern
on his bed. He tears open a yellow packet of PK, squeezes
four pieces into his hand and downs them like he's
popping pills. Simon enters.

SIMON

Can I've some?

FRANZ

Ok. Open your hand.

He squeezes two pellets into Simon's open hand.

SIMON

Your Mum always had the yellow one, like you. Never the blue one. I like the blue one.

FRANZ

The blue one's way too licouricey.

SIMON

And she'd eat all the pieces at once.

INT. CAR - DAY

FLASHBACK - Franz' P.O.V. of his mother sitting in the driver's seat of an old Torana wearing Audrey Hepburn-like sunglasses and a summer dress. She bites into the middle of a yellow PK packet, pulling it away from her face to scrape the pellets of gum into her mouth with her teeth, chewing wildly and laughing.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (CONT.)

Simon picks up the Enoshima Beach photo and looks at it.

SIMON

What animal do you think your Mum'd be if she were here tonight?

FRANZ

I dunno. Maybe...a fish?

SIMON

Mm. I reckon something a bit more adventurous. Something...flightier. A bird seems too obvious though.

FRANZ

I know: A flying fish!

SIMON

Yeah. Yeah that sounds about right. A flying fish and a seahorse. Who totally lucked out and gave birth to a fox.

Simon sticks the photo on the wall to join the others. They gaze up at the collage of images, chewing their gum.

MUSIC: 'Animal Tracks' again.