

EXT. DANEBORG SIRIUS PATROL HEADQUARTERS - DAY

In a snowy landscape, dozens of sled dogs sit outside their row of red dog houses. They are being inspected by officers and pulling at their tie-outs. KRAGEN, a large black dog, sits watching the door of a distant bright green building.

A white dog to his left, GHOST, and a brown and white pup to his right, ESKIL, stare at him, grinning.

Kragen narrows his eyes. Ghost and Eskil inch closer to him on either side. Eskil whispers in Kragen's pricked ear.

ESKIL  
Hey, hey Kragen.

KRAGEN  
Leave me alone, Eskil.

GHOST  
What'cha lookin' at, Kragen?

Ghost creeps closer until his nose is touching Kragen's ear.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Is Kragen waiting for his pwecious  
favowite widdle Wootenant Nikolaj?

KRAGEN  
I swear to all that is barbecue-  
flavored, Ghost, if you do not back  
away right now -

Eskil pounces on Kragen's back and rolls him over. Kragen growls, snaps and rights himself quickly. Eskil laughs and shakes the snow off his coat.

GHOST  
Good job, Eskil!

KRAGEN  
Don't get the new guy off on the  
wrong paw, Ghost. I'm the superior  
officer here.

ESKIL  
Aw, you're no fun, Kragen! We're  
not working yet! We can still have  
fun, right?

GHOST  
And besides, it's still early.  
There's still time.

Kragen's ears flatten momentarily as he watches the horizon.

KRAGEN

He might not come at all. He was really hurt.

ESKIL

He wouldn't have left without saying goodbye. Most people are nice, right? Most people have been nice to me. I think they like us.

Kragen's ears flatten again. His shoulders hunch, and he lays down in the snow with his chin resting on his forelegs. He keeps his eyes on the door.

KRAGEN

You have a lot to learn, Eskil. I've seen men come and go without so much as a morsel of gratitude for our service. We're just another piece of equipment. I thought Lieutenant Ibsen was different. How foolish I was.

Eskil and Ghost flatten their ears back and tuck their tails.

Ghost pricks up his ears and points to the headquarters.

GHOST

Kragen! Hey, Kragen!

Kragen rolls over on his side and closes his eyes.

KRAGEN

Please, Ghost, I'm not in the mood.

GHOST

I'm not joking, Kragen! It's him!

Kragen opens his eyes. His brow arches high. He gasps and scrambles to his feet. He pulls at his tie-out hard enough to lift his front paws off the ground.

KRAGEN

Lieutenant Ibsen! Lieutenant Ibsen!  
You're back!

From the white doors of the long, green research station, NIKOLAJ, a scruffy looking redheaded young man with an equally copper-colored beard slowly walks out. He is wearing dark military-issue winter gear including a zippered jacket with a fur-lined hood. The insignia of the Sirius patrol is embroidered at the shoulder. Kragen barks frantically.

Nikolaj reaches him, and kneels down to let Kragen lick his face. Ghost aggressively nuzzles his way under Nikolaj's arm.

NIKOLAJ

Hey Kragen! I missed you too.  
(He ruffles the tops of  
both their heads.)  
You too, Ghost. It's good to be  
back. Who's the new guy?

Nikolaj puts out a hand to Eskil. Eskil sniffs Nikolaj's palm. Nikolaj looks at the metal tag on Eskil's collar.

NIKOLAJ (CONT'D)

'Eskil', huh? Nice to meet you,  
Eskil. You being nice to him, guys?

Eskil grins at Kragen and does a cheerful 360-degree turn before sitting awkwardly near the senior dog.

ESKIL

You were right, Kragen, he's super  
nice! I don't know what the heck  
he's saying though. I only know a  
few people words and I think most  
of them have to do with food. Is he  
saying nice things? I think he's  
saying nice things!

Kragen nips at Eskil's neck.

KRAGEN

Settle down. That is behavior  
unbecoming a proper sled dog,  
Eskil. Don't embarrass yourself.

Nikolaj scratches Eskil behind the ears.

NIKOLAJ

Look at you! Kragen's gonna have  
his paws full with you, isn't he?

Booted footsteps approach and a long shadow is cast over Nikolaj and his dogs.

ADMIRAL LUND (O.S.)

He's not the only one, Ibsen.

Nikolaj bolts upright to salute his superior. ADMIRAL LUND, a tall man with chiseled features and gray hair, smiles.

ADMIRAL LUND (CONT'D)

At ease, Lieutenant. How's the  
ankle?

NIKOLAJ

Good as new, Sir. It's great to be back. Can't wait to get out there with my team again!

ADMIRAL LUND

Excellent. Eager to meet your junior partner?

NIKOLAJ

You bet I am! Is he here?

Admiral Lund steps aside to reveal HILDR standing at attention, a few wisps of blonde hair escaping from under her wool cap.

ADMIRAL LUND

... She is.

HILDR

Lieutenant Hildr Petersen. It's a pleasure to be working with you, Sir.

Nikolaj staggers backward and gawks.

NIKOLAJ

Sir, I didn't know we accepted ...

HILDR

I'm right here. I can hear you.

ADMIRAL LUND

Lieutenant, our division has been open to women for some time. Petersen just happens to be the first to be accepted.

HILDR

I was also the first to actually try. Sledding across the Polar Arctic with minimal provisions and only one other human being to keep you company for four months at a time isn't something that a lot of people spend their whole lives looking forward to, regardless of gender.

NIKOLAJ

(Quietly, to himself)  
Really? I looked forward to it my whole life ...