

"THIS DARK SOJOURN"  
*The Sheridan Tapes - Season 01, Episode 12*  
*Recording Draft - June 30, 2020*

Written by

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Based on story and characters from  
"Homestead on the Corner"  
By Trevor Van Winkle

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A quiet ward late in the evening. AC, a few muffled, hushed voices, and the beep of a heart rate monitor. After a moment, someone shifts in their chair.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE

It's remarkably lucky that you're alive right now. I do hope you know that, in whatever way you can. That you know just how fortunate it is that you survived your little... Encounter. For both of us.

(pause)

I do wonder how much of it you'll remember, though. *Really* remember, that is. Experiences like this... They tend to recede into the realm of the half-remembered. Of dreams and nightmares. And if the doctors are right about the extent of your injuries... Then it might be gone completely.

(beat)

I do hope it's only the memory that's lost. We need the rest of you here: your abilities, your obsession, your drive. If any of this is going to work, then we need all that you have to offer us.

(beat, then CHUCKLES)

I suppose we'll just have to wait and see, won't we. Yes... Wait and see what comes out of all this.

(beat, then leans in)

Make it a good one, yes? For your sake, if no one else's.

CLICK. The recording cuts off.

BEEP.

A late evening in the OCPD. Sam's office. After a moment, a piece of paper shuffles.

SAM BAILEY

I've been staring at this thing for hours now, trying to make sense of it. "The Last Will and Testament of Anna Sheridan." Found, supposedly, in the glovebox of her camper van, just outside Oslow. And it just says one word: "Listen."

After a moment, he picks up a cassette from the pile.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm being too literal, but...  
She says listen, and that's all I  
can really do. At least until I get  
more information on De Witt. *If*  
that ever happens.

(beat)

Okay. Detective Samuel Bailey,  
Oslo County Police Department  
Homicide division, recording tape  
number 1-7-1-2-8 on April  
sixteenth, 2019 at 9:01pm.

CLICK.

Two sets of boots crunching along a rocky trail.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(self-narrating)

Alright... Today is May 25th, 2016.  
PCT Through Hike, Day 75. It's been  
tough going the last few days, but  
thankfully Maria was kind enough to  
allow me a very self-indulgent  
turnoff down the Granite Lake  
trail. Granted, we just passed the  
lake, but she hasn't asked where  
we're going yet, so I figured now  
would be as good a time as any  
to...

MARIA SOL

(slightly out of breath)

Hey, are you recording?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(playful)

That I am.

MARIA SOL

(curious)

What for?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(showy)

Because... We're here.

Anna's footsteps stop, and Maria's get closer until she's  
next to Anna.

MARIA SOL  
 (impressed by the sight)  
 Whoah.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 How's that for a view?

MARIA SOL  
 (joking)  
 Eh... I've seen better.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (smirking)  
 Where?

MARIA SOL  
 (trying to come up with a  
 comeback)  
 Um... Hold on, give me a second to  
 think of one.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 Well in the meantime, don't say I  
 never take you anywhere nice.

MARIA SOL  
 Besides the crumbling ruins and  
 haunted houses, you mean? Yeah --  
 this is a nice change of pace.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 Don't be so sure.  
 (points)  
 Check it out.

MARIA SOL  
 (squinting, trying to see)  
 Where?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 Down there in the inlet. That,  
 Maria Sol, is Emerald Bay, and that  
 little rock in the middle of it is  
 Fannette Island.

MARIA SOL  
 (slightly annoyed)  
 Please tell me that's not what I  
 think it is.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 That it is. You're looking at the  
 mortal remains of Lora Josephine  
 Knight's tea house.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 She had it built about the same  
 time as her summer home... Right  
 over there, on the opposite shore.

MARIA SOL  
 (disbelieving)  
 Jeez, that's a summer home?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (almost like a tour guide)  
*Vikingsholm*. Built 1929. 38 Rooms,  
 Scandinavian construction, American  
 Craftsman style.

MARIA SOL  
 (a little reluctant)  
 Haunted?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (disappointed)  
 Unfortunately not. At least not  
 that I can tell.

MARIA SOL  
 (slightly sarcastic)  
 Darn, that's a shame. Guess we'd  
 better get going back, then...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 The island's haunted, though.

MARIA SOL  
 (surprised)  
 What?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (trying to sell it now)  
 Or maybe the whole bay, come to  
 think of it. Harried by the soul of  
 one Captain Dick Barter.

MARIA SOL  
 (pause, then incredulous)  
 Okay, are you pulling my leg now,  
 or...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (CHUCKLING)  
 Hand on my heart, that's his real  
 name. Also known as "them's my  
 toes" Barter.

MARIA SOL  
 ("this is getting  
 ridiculous")  
 Come on Anna, I'm not an idiot...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (storytelling)  
 He was an undertaker for the  
 Overland Stage Company in the mid-  
 19th century. Lived on the bay from  
 about, oh... 1860 to 1870, I think.  
 He owned a little sailing boat  
 called the *Nancy*, which he sailed  
 up and down the lake to visit bars,  
 drink everyone under the table, and  
 tell stories... Mostly about  
 himself. One night, he got caught  
 in a bad storm, and the ship  
 capsized in the lake. He managed to  
 float back to Emerald Bay, crawl  
 into his little boat house, and  
 then pass out for several days.  
 When he woke up, two of his toes  
 had gone gangrenous, so he had to  
 cut them off himself to stop the  
 infection from killing him.

MARIA SOL  
 That's... A bit extreme.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (shrugs)  
 Who am I to judge? Of course, it  
 did nothing to make him any more  
 bearable... If anything, it seems  
 like it made him worse. Whenever he  
 had guests over, he'd tell the  
 story, go into the other room, and  
 come back with an old cigar box.  
 He'd hold it up to their faces,  
 open it, and proudly say: "them's  
 my toes!"

MARIA SOL  
 Jesus Anna, there's no way that's  
 true.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (mischievously)  
 All true. Except for the cigar  
 box... I have no idea what *kind* of  
 box he kept them in.

MARIA SOL

(doubtful)

Yeah. Sure.

(beat)

So... Haunted?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(getting excited now)

Oh yes. Barter, for all his... Eccentricities, was an undertaker by trade. He knew just how much preparation it took to ensure a proper burial this far out into the wild. So after his -- toe-cutting incident, he built his own crypt on the summit of Fannette Island and told everyone at the bars and saloons that if he died, they should bury him there. Earned it the nickname "Dead Man's Island" for a while.

MARIA SOL

(trying to get back to the trail)

So, what, he's buried down there? Not worth the hike down, I think.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(mischievously)

Not quite.

MARIA SOL

(exasperated)

What? Well where's he buried, then?

ANNA SHERIDAN

He isn't.

MARIA SOL

(pause)

What's that supposed to mean?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(final bit of the sell)

About three years later, he was caught in another storm, and this time, he wasn't so lucky. His ship ran into the rocks and disintegrated on impact. As far as anyone can tell, he was pulled below water and drowned... But they never found his body. Only a bit of wreckage, and one of the oars.

MARIA SOL  
 (genuinely curious now)  
 What happened to the other one?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 They found it four months later,  
 floating in the middle of the lake,  
 completely undamaged. Stories began  
 to spread after that, of course.  
 That Barter had carried it with him  
 into the depths, and only let go of  
 it months later. That he was still  
 alive at the bottom of the lake,  
 somehow. That on evenings when the  
 air is cold and sun is down, he  
 rises out of the fog and climbs to  
 the summit of the island, trying to  
 return to his tomb and find peace.

After a moment's silence -- A slow clap from Maria.

MARIA SOL  
 (sarcastic)  
 Bravo, Anna. You've creeped me out  
 yet again.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (fake modesty)  
 I do my best.  
 (beat)  
 Want to see it?

MARIA SOL  
 (tired)  
 Do we have to hike down?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (reluctantly)  
 Unfortunately yes.

MARIA SOL  
 (SIGHS)  
 Alright. But it better be worth it.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (smiling)  
 Trust me: it will be.

CLICK.

A few hours later. The sun has set, and waves lap gently on  
 the rocks. Anna sits beside a small bonfire.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(settling in)

Alright, all set up for the night, so I can finally record again. It took a while to get out here to the island -- the owner of the marina didn't want to rent us a boat after hours, but I talked her 'round. Had to pay for two full days to do it, but still, we made it here before dark. Unfortunately we're not allowed to camp out here, but we can stay for a few hours after sundown and see what we can see. I found a couple of dry branches on the way up to the crest, and managed to get the fire going pretty quickly. We're definitely going to need it. It's already dropped below 40, and it's just going to keep getting colder. A freezing, foggy night -- just what I need.

Booted feet clamber back over the ridge, and Maria drops a heavy bunch of branches on the ground.

MARIA SOL

(PANTING SLIGHTLY)

Next time -- You get the wood, and I'll start the fire.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(amused)

No way. I've seen you try to light one. Not a pretty picture.

MARIA SOL

(annoyed)

Well maybe if you'd share the lighter fluid, I'd have better luck.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(sarcastic)

Nope. Sheridan family recipe. Can't share it with a living soul.

MARIA SOL

(rolling her eyes)

Oh come on, I can literally see that bottle, it's just...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (insistent)  
 Ah-ah-ah -- Trade secret.

MARIA SOL  
 (giving up)  
 Fine. Keep your secrets, and I'll  
 keep mine.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (CHUCKLING)  
 What secrets? I think you've  
 blogged them all away at this  
 point.

MARIA SOL  
 (disheartened)  
 Oh. Right.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 Pro-tip, Maria... Always have a few  
 secrets in reserve. That way  
 conversations never get boring.

MARIA SOL  
 (sarcastic)  
 Well then how do you keep from  
 running out, huh?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (smiling)  
 Simple. Keep making up new ones.

MARIA breaks, CHUCKLING. After a moment, ANNA JOINS HER.  
 After a momentary silence...

MARIA SOL  
 Looks like the sun's down now. How  
 long do you think it'll take your  
 ghost captain to turn up?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 The fog's already getting pretty  
 thick down there. Shouldn't be more  
 than an hour or so now, I guess.

MARIA SOL  
 Good. You have the scanner ready?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (concerned)  
 No -- I thought you had it.

MARIA SOL  
 (confused)  
 What? No I don't.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (insistent)  
 Yes, you do. It was in your  
 backpack when we left.

MARIA SOL  
 (explaining)  
 I gave it back to you to charge,  
 remember? You told me you'd plug it  
 into the solar panels this morning.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (remembering, annoyed at  
 herself)  
 Shit.

Anna unzips her pack pulls out the device, and flicks it on.  
 It gives one pitiful beep -- then dies.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 (sarcastic)  
 Oh -- wonderful.

MARIA SOL  
 (nervous)  
 So -- how screwed are we?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 Submarine without a sonar screwed.  
 (beat, then decision)  
 We need to get back to the boat.

MARIA SOL  
 (not wanting to waste the  
 trip)  
 Can't we stay for just a little  
 while? See if he even turns up?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (reluctant)  
 Well... Maybe, but...  
 (beat)  
 No, we have no idea what we're  
 really dealing with out here, and  
 I'd prefer not to have some  
 eldritch monstrosity come  
 slithering out of the dark without  
 any warning. You?

MARIA SOL  
(slightly confused)  
No, I'm with you on that, it's  
just...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(insistent)  
I can't risk both of us on a hunch.  
Douse the fire, we've got to go.

Shuffling clothes, Maria kicking dirt over the fire.

Footsteps rushing down the side of the island.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
Watch that drop ...

MARIA SOL  
I see it, I see it... Where's the  
boat?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
Over there, just past the trees.

MARIA SOL  
You sure?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
Yes, just go!

They crash through the trees. The sound of waves gets louder.

ANNA GRUNTS as she pushes the boat into the water, then  
struggles in.

A pair of oars rise and fall, rise and fall in the water.  
After a moment...

MARIA SOL  
(breathless)  
Figure that's far enough?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(breathless)  
That should be fine -- the stories  
are all about the island, so we  
should be safe out on the water.  
Hopefully.

MARIA SOL  
(sarcastic)  
That's reassuring.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(mischievous)

I'd think you'd be used to should  
be's and possibly's by now.  
Certainty's the price of admission  
out here.

MARIA SOL

(pause)

Are you still recording?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(CHUCKLES)

Always.

MARIA SOL

Why?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(taken slightly aback)

What?

MARIA SOL

(hesitant, but still  
curious)

Well, I meant to ask you on the  
trail... I mean, you pull that  
thing out at the drop of a hat...  
Sometimes even when you're not  
talking to it. I was just wondering  
why.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(taken aback a little)

Well -- To keep track of things,  
for one. That's probably the main  
reason. Getting a firsthand account  
of what I see and hear. These  
things tend to blur together a bit  
if you let them... I think it's the  
brain's way of protecting itself  
from impossibilities when it can't  
just forget them.

(beat)

Seeing what kinds of distortions  
show up on the tape helps me  
classify them too. That was an  
unexpected bonus when I stopped  
using digital recordings. And,  
well...

(pause)

...Maybe it's... That I'm afraid.

MARIA SOL  
(SCOFFS)  
You? Afraid? Of what?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(trying to be dismissive)  
I don't know... Being forgotten, I  
guess? Lost without a trace?  
(beat)  
No, that's not it. I guess it's  
being... Misremembered.

MARIA SOL  
(incredulous)  
So you put everything on tape...  
What, so that people know that you  
really were the crazy ghost hunter  
everyone already thinks you are?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(frustrated)  
No, that's not...  
(beat, notices something)  
Look!

MARIA SOL  
(excited)  
What? Where?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(pointing)  
On the island, down by the  
shoreline. Can you see him?

MARIA SOL  
(annoyed)  
I can't see anything with this fog.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(thrill of the chase)  
It's him, I know it's him. He's at  
the water's edge... He just walked  
right out of the lake!

MARIA SOL  
(dismissive)  
I don't see anything... Are you  
pulling my leg again, or are you...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(noticing the boat  
rocking)  
Whoah, watch the boat, you're going  
to tip us over...

MARIA SOL  
No I'm not...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(falling into the water)  
Maria, stop, I -- Ah!

SPLASH. Faint swimming noises and Maria's voice above the waves.

MARIA SOL  
(urgent)  
Anna! Come on, grab my hand, I'll  
pull you back in..

Anna surfaces, COUGHING UP WATER.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
(desperate)  
Come on Anna, grab hold...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(terrified)  
I can't, something's got me...

There's a loud splash as Anna goes under.

MARIA SOL  
(terrified)  
Anna!

Shuffling as Maria pulls off her coat and dives in after Anna. The boat rocks, knocking over the recorder and...

CLICK.

A few hours later, back on shore. Another campfire is burning, and Anna shivers slightly as she speaks.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(tired, shivering)  
Okay -- I can finally move my  
fingers enough to start the  
recorder... Thankfully I dropped it  
in the boat right before I went in.  
Doubt it would survive the swim any  
better than I did...

Maria's footsteps approach from nearby, and Anna cuts off.

MARIA SOL  
 (worried and slightly  
 apologetic)  
 Here: these are all the blankets  
 they had at the marina. And a hot  
 water bottle too, but I had to buy  
 it from the store and pay for...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (CHUCKLING THROUGH  
 SHIVERS)  
 I'm fine, Maria. Sit down, take a  
 load off. It's been a long night,  
 for both of us.

MARIA SOL  
 (defensive)  
 I'm not tired, I just...  
 (beat, realizes how  
 obvious the lie is)  
 Okay. Yes I am.

Maria drops the pile of blankets, then sits down next to Anna  
 by the fire.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (comforting)  
 Don't feel bad about this. Trust  
 me, it could have ended much worse.

MARIA SOL  
 (guilty)  
 I still wish I'd been faster.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (trying to encourage her)  
 You saved my life, Maria. Don't  
 forget that.

They both sit in contented silence next to the fire for a  
 moment.

MARIA SOL  
 (worried edge)  
 You still haven't told me what  
 actually happened.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (slightly sarcastic,  
 masking)  
 What's there to talk about? I fell  
 in, you jumped in after me, and  
 then you rowed my half-frozen  
 carcass back to shore.

MARIA SOL

No, I mean...

(beat as she figures out  
how to put this)

When you came out of the water, you  
had a... A weird look on your face.  
I mean, you almost looked...

ANNA SHERIDAN

Looked what?

MARIA SOL

(reluctant)

...Haunted. Like you saw something  
down there.

Anna pauses. A knot pops in the fire.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(finally deciding to tell  
her)

No.

MARIA SOL

No?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(reluctant)

I didn't see anything down there.  
I... I *heard* something. Something  
in the water.

MARIA SOL

What was it?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(annoyed)

I don't know... It sounded like a  
human voice, but you know how much  
that's worth with these things.

MARIA SOL

Well... What did it say, then?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(long pause)

It asked me something. I couldn't  
hear it very clearly -- you were  
already hauling me out of the water  
by then. But I think it was  
something like...

(beat)

"What would you do to save  
yourself?"

They both sit with that for a moment.

MARIA SOL  
(worried)  
Did you... Say anything back?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(dismissive)  
Of course I didn't. The boat was  
right there. I didn't need any  
supernatural help to get out of the  
water -- just you.

MARIA SOL  
(nervous)  
And... If I hadn't been there?

Anna mulls that over, then turns to Maria.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(finally opening up)  
You asked me why I record  
everything. What I'm afraid of.

MARIA SOL  
(sarcastic)  
Yeah, and you didn't really answer.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(snapping back a little)  
That's because I didn't know. Not  
really. But I think I figured it  
out.

MARIA SOL  
So...?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(explaining)  
You remember what I told you about  
the captain? How he knew that death  
would come for him sooner or later,  
so he made preparations for it?

MARIA SOL  
(slightly sarcastic)  
Dug his own grave, you mean?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(serious)  
Told people what to do with his  
body. Turned it into a story. Made  
it memorable, unmistakable...

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 So powerful we're still talking  
 about it, almost a century and a  
 half later.

MARIA SOL  
 (uncertain)  
 So you think he did all that --  
 what, to make sure he had a legacy?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (deadly serious)  
 Neither of us are going to be here  
 forever, Maria. And I've spent  
 enough time dealing with ghosts to  
 know that the marks of our passage  
 last far longer than we do. I just  
 want to make sure that I leave a  
 good one.

CLACK.

The tape ends. Sam sits for a moment.

SAM BAILEY  
 Marks of our passage... Huh. Well,  
 I've got yours here, Sheridan: a  
 hundred cassette tapes and one  
 sheet of paper, telling me to  
 listen. What story are you trying  
 to tell me here, huh?  
 (beat, then CHUCKLE)  
 "It is a tale told by an idiot,  
 full of sound and fury,  
 signifying..."

Sam pauses, thinking.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
 (putting some pieces  
 together)  
 No... wait. There is something  
 here. It's frail, but... There are  
 connections. That phrase, that...  
 Question she heard in the water. I  
 know I've heard it somewhere. She's  
 talked about water before too -- on  
 the Donner Pass tape, and the one  
 about the well, and...  
 (pause)  
 There's somewhere else, but... I  
 can't remember right now. Maybe...  
 (beat)  
 Maria Sol.  
 (MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

She's on two of those tapes, at least. And it seems like she knew Anna better than I thought. I don't think anyone on the original investigation team interviewed her, but... Maybe she has some answers for me.

After a moment, Sam reaches over and picks up the phone, dialing. BEEP. The recording ends.

END THEME AND  
CREDITS