

"THE VASTNESS OF THE SEA"  
*The Sheridan Tapes - Season 01, Episode 18*  
*Recording Draft - August 10, 2020*

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Based on story and characters from  
"Homestead on the Corner"  
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BEEP

The inside of Sam's office. The same night as the last episode, silent but for Sam moving in the office.

SAM BAILEY

(a little awkward)

Okay... We're recording again. Maria showed me that I had an issue with my ASIO driver -- whatever that means -- so hopefully the recorder should crash a little less often than it did before. She didn't know quite *how* the driver got that screwed up, but...

The door opens behind him.

MARIA SOL

(clearly making herself at home)

Here we go -- one horrible sludgy black coffee for you, and one slightly more palatable cup of sludge with cream for me.

SAM BAILEY

(flat)

Thanks.

(SIPS COFFEE)

Huh. Did you... Put something in this?

MARIA SOL

(sarcastic)

Huh? Oh yeah, you know -- bit of LSD, dash of cyanide, a little wolfsbane...

SAM BAILEY

(GROANS -- he's too tired for this)

Maria...

MARIA SOL

Oh, fine. I put a bit of cinnamon in it... It was all I could find in the break room. Why, do you not like it?

SAM BAILEY

(COUGHS slightly)

It's... Fine. Just...

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

I guess adding anything nice to station coffee just highlights how awful it really is.

MARIA SOL

(noticing the computer)

Is the recorder running any better now?

SAM BAILEY

(uncertain)

What? Oh, yeah, I think so.

MARIA SOL

Let's see.

(RIGHT INTO MIC)

Test test. Test Test. Sixteen sour salamanders scampering slowly sunward. Tip top Tara tearing towards Titania.

(turns away)

Yeah, looks good. And it's a pretty good acoustic space for recording, by the way.

SAM BAILEY

(not sure what to make of this)

Um... Thanks?

MARIA SOL

(down to business)

What's the next tape?

SAM BAILEY

(slightly unprepared)

Um... 1-6-10-3-10. Do you have...

MARIA SOL

(already opening book)

Yeah, I've got it... Let's see: Volume 1... Chapter 6... uh, 8, 9, 10, 1, 2, 3, and... 10. Keyword "Sea," October 24, 2012. Digitized on April 29, 2019 at 2231 Pacific Standard Time by Maria Sol and Sam Bailey. Marker.

Maria claps.

SAM BAILEY

(a little unsure what to do without his usual intro)

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Um... Right. Detective Samuel  
Bailey, Oslow County Police  
Department, Homicide Division.  
Tape... Begins?

He slips the tape into the player and...

CLICK

The familiar crackle of static. When it fades away, heavy  
winds and rain are heard.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(SPEAKING LOUDLY to be  
heard over storm)

If you can hear that, you can  
probably tell that I shouldn't be  
outside right now! Hurricane Sandy  
just made landfall here in  
Kingstown, and it's starting to get  
pretty hairy out here!  
Thankfully...

Anna steps back and closes a sliding door. The rain keeps  
pelting the glass.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(relieved)

Safety is only a sliding door away.  
Though I know a lot of people  
aren't so lucky. Still, it's only a  
category one, so for now I just can  
stay nice and dry in my hotel room  
until it blows over. Not much else  
I want to be doing outside anyway.  
My flight to Puerto Montt was  
canceled almost as soon as I  
touched down at KIN, and I don't  
know when anyone will start flying  
again. Still... Worse places to be  
stuck right now. Much worse. And  
the blob's already been washed  
ashore for nine years at this  
point... A few more weeks won't  
really make a difference.

Anna sits down, looking around the room.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Not that any of that makes it  
easier to wait. There isn't much to  
do in here besides just sit out the  
storm.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Maria couldn't come, of course... She had another job come up last minute, and apparently she had to take it to make rent this month. So it's just me this time. Probably for the best... She hates flying, and any boat bigger than a kayak freaks her out a little, so... Yeah. She probably would've skipped out on this trip even if she hadn't been booked.

SAM BAILEY

(turning to Maria)  
You're afraid of water?

MARIA SOL

(annoyed)  
I'm afraid of the *ocean*. There's a difference

SAM BAILEY

Why...

ANNA SHERIDAN

(SIGHS, bored)  
Well... Fun as it is to stare at the wall, I guess I might as well get started on my log for this trip. I meant to record it from the deck of the *Hortensia*, but... I think the middle of a hurricane is dramatic enough... Even for me.

Anna shifts in her seat to get more comfortable, then continues.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(storytelling mode)  
For as long as people have sailed the open ocean, there have been stories of sea monsters. Creatures of enormous strength and size summoned from the depths by humanity's trespass upon their territory. Once the hairless apes discovered how to build boats, we turned the ocean into our own personal million lane highway without a second thought.  
(MORE)

## ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Over the centuries, we've shipped spices, troops, slaves, oil, and weapons across thousands of leagues with little thought of whose oceans we were sailing. Most of the time we got away with it -- but occasionally, we didn't. There has never been any "independent" confirmation of these creatures' existence -- not if you discount the hundreds of eyewitness accounts, like most do. True, no one's ever found a living specimen of the fabled giant octopus. No one's ever dissected the Kraken, the Lusca, or the Akkorokamui... At least, not anyone we know of. But there are stories -- stories from all over the world -- that speak of the same thing: a cephalopod the size of a school bus, with tentacles hundreds of feet long and powerful enough to drag ships down to the bottom of the ocean.

(beat)

Even in the cryptid community, there's still no consensus on whether such a creature exists... or if it ever existed. The giant squid was given much the same treatment for centuries, and we only observed one in its natural habitat in 2004. And despite all that we've learned since then, we still don't know much about its normal lifecycle and behavior. They normally live between one and three thousand feet below sea level... just above the abyssal plain, the deepest part of the ocean. We only really see them when their disturbed and forced into shallower waters... Their territory is too deep and dark for us to observe directly. So what about the depths below that? After all, we know almost nothing about the abyssal plane, even though it covers nearly half of the planet's surface. All of the dry land on Earth only takes up about 30%, and if my work proves anything, it's that there are still plenty of unknowns in our own backyard.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Who's to say that these creatures --  
the sea monsters of myth and legend  
-- aren't still down there in the  
dark, just waiting to be found?

(pause, then a SMALL  
CHUCKLE)

"There are more things in heaven  
and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt  
of in your..."

POP. The lights in the room go out with a loud buzz as the  
breakers trip.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

Oh great. Storm must have knocked  
out the power. Just what I needed.

Anna stands up, crosses the room, and opens her bag, pulling  
out a small camping lantern.

She switches it on, and it hums to life.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

That's better. Not ideal, but...  
Enough light to see what I'm doing,  
at least. "Anna Sheridan -- Always  
prepared."

(beat)

No wait -- that's the boy scouts.

Anna re-crosses and sits back down with the lantern next to  
her.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(back into story)

Of course, if these monsters really  
exist, then we should have found  
some physical evidence after all  
this time. Ships these days are a  
bit harder to pull down to the  
depths, so if they're still around,  
they haven't attacked anyone in a  
long time... At least, not that I  
know of. Instead, we have  
globsters. Blobs. Masses of animal  
tissue washed ashore by the tide  
that can't be readily identified,  
even by trained biologists. There  
have been several notable blobs in  
the Americas over the years...  
Though probably the most famous is  
the Saint Augustine Monster.

(MORE)

## ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

It turned up in 1896, appearing one night without explanation on the beach it was later named after. It was first spotted by two kids riding their bikes by the waterfront. They thought it was a beached whale, so they went to the town's doctor, DeWitt Webb, with the news. He was also the founder of the local historical society and scientific institute... In other words, a proper scientist, not a sensationalist.

(beat)

He rolled up to the beach the next day to examine the creature. It was half buried in the sand by then, but he noted that it weighed somewhere in the neighborhood of about 5 tons, was almost 20 feet long, and seemed to have the stumps of at least 4 arms, with a possible fifth detached and buried nearby. He had a few photos taken, but they were over-exposed and thus, never published. Instead, when the local press got their hands on the story, they pretty much made up whatever they wanted, which resulted in descriptions and illustrations of a full-on sea monster, complete with tentacles-a-plenty and a sea-lion head, of all things. And it only got worse as the story spread out and got more and more exaggerated.

(beat)

After the blob was washed out to sea in a storm and then back in again, it was finally hauled a few miles inland to South Beach on Anastasia Island, where it became something of a tourist attraction for several years, until it somehow disappeared without a trace. And that might have been the end of the whole story, if a few samples of the blob hadn't been sent to the Smithsonian when it was found.

(beat)

In 1971, these samples were examined by a biologist at the university of Florida, who concluded that the sample most likely come from an octopus.

(MORE)

## ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Based on the size of the blob, he estimated that it must have been enormous -- with tentacles up to a hundred feet long and weighing in at several dozen tons when it was alive. It wouldn't be the biggest creature in the sea if that were true -- that honor would still be held by the frankly ludicrous blue whale. But it would be close -- horrifyingly so. I mean, just try to picture an octopus coming up out of the darkness with tentacles 9 stories tall to grab your boat and pull it down into the abyss, and you start to get an idea why sailors were so terrified to go past that line on the map marked "Here be monsters."

(beat)

Of course, as soon as someone in the scientific community admitted that there might be giant monsters in the ocean, someone had to come along and ruin it. Another analysis in 1986 agreed with the initial findings, but then two studies, one in 1995 and the other in 2004, used the latest and greatest in electron microscope technology to come to the utterly disappointing conclusion that the monster was actually... A lump of blubber, torn off the rotting corpse of a whale by the tide. The '04 study went even further and concluded that *all* of the globsters we have samples of were just big pieces of whale fat, and that we should all rest easy knowing that there are no Lovecraftian monsters waiting for us beneath the waves.

(beat)

I'm not saying those studies were wrong. Hell, maybe all the blobs we've ever found are really just bits of dead whale. I'm a fiction writer: I'm not really qualified to say one way or another.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

But it just doesn't seem right that this conclusion was just accepted without question, even when it disregards centuries of eyewitness testimony and shuts down any further investigation by labeling it as pseudoscience. And like I said, we know almost nothing about the real depths of the ocean -- but we're all afraid of it, at least a little bit. And I don't think it's a fear based only on the unknown.

(beat)

So here I am, on my way to Puerto Montt to get on a boat and sail along the Chilean coast to look for myself. Another globster washed ashore there in 2003... the most recent one on record, and one of the largest: 14 tons and nearly 40 feet across. Once again, the scientific consensus is that it's just whale blubber, but I intend to check for myself... and see if there might be anything else in the waters beyond, just waiting for...

FEMALE VOICE

(distorted, faint)

*...trust me Barrett -- God had little to do with what's happening here.*

ANNA SHERIDAN

(confused, calling out)

Hello? Is someone there?

There's no reply. After a moment, Anna shifts in her seat and continues.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(confused, a little concerned)

Sorry, I... I thought I heard someone out in the hall. Anyways, I managed to book passage on the *Hortensia*, a research vessel looking into the effects of climate change on deep sea mammals and other mega-fauna...

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Mostly giant squids and whale sharks, though they have run into some even stranger creatures in recent years: one or two giant oarfish, and even an unusually large anglerfish that definitely shouldn't have been that close to the surface. The captain, Marco Asturias, just happens to be one of the most dedicated cryptozoologists I've ever met, though he keeps that fact mostly to himself. It would be significantly harder for him to get funding if the wider scientific community knew he was also keeping an eye out for...

FEMALE VOICE

(distorted, slightly louder)

*...You think so small a thing as death could stop the pirate Anne Bonny?*

ANNA SHERIDAN

(annoyed)

Okay, who the hell is that?

Anna stands up, grabs the lantern and crosses the room. She throws the door open and steps out into the hall.

There's a leak somewhere, and water drips in the distance.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(yelling down the hall)

Hello? Is anyone there?

Again, no answer but the dripping water.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(annoyed at herself)

No one's there Sheridan. Of course there's no one.

Anna hesitates, then steps back inside, closing the door.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(rationalizing)

I don't know what's going on with that. Maybe someone's watching a movie downstairs... The sound does carry kind of weird in this building.

She begins crossing the room again, but suddenly, someone knocks on the door behind her.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 (confused)  
 What the hell?

Anna turns back around and opens the door a crack.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 (trepidatious)  
 Hello?

HOTEL PATRON  
 (a little embarrassed)  
 Sorry to bother you, but could you keep it down a bit? My wife, she's got a bit of a headache, and she's trying to sleep.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (wincing slightly)  
 Sorry, I just... Did you hear anyone in the hall earlier?

HOTEL PATRON  
 (confused)  
 Um... Yes, you.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (annoyed)  
 No, no, besides me. She sounded -- I don't know, English? Irish, maybe?

HOTEL PATRON  
 (a little nervous)  
 Um... No, I didn't hear anyone. Sorry.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (annoyed)  
 Damn.

HOTEL PATRON  
 (concerned)  
 Are... Are you feeling alright...?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (annoyed, cutting them off)  
 I'm fine, thank you.

Anna shuts the door, then SIGHS HEAVILY.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 (annoyed at herself)  
 Hearing things in the dark *again*,  
 Sheridan? Seriously, you have  
 enough ghosts in your life without  
 worrying about...

*CRASH!* A flying piece of debris suddenly smashes through the  
 sliding glass door out to the balcony.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 AH!

The wind whips into the room, and the heavy chunk of wood  
 slams into the wall. The curtains flap and rain begins to  
 pour in.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 (still rattled, but  
 recovered enough for  
 sarcasm)  
 Oh... Great. Just what I needed.

Anna crosses the room and grabs her bag, and pulls it away  
 from the window.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
 (annoyed)  
 And I was just getting settled in  
 here too...

FEMALE VOICE  
 (clearly, but still  
 distorted)  
*"And the sea gave up the dead which  
 were in it; and death and hell  
 delivered up the dead which were in  
 them."*

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (to unseen presence)  
 He--Hello? Who's there?

FEMALE VOICE  
*...I was dying, that's all I knew.  
 I was good as dead, and there was  
 no salvation waiting for me on the  
 other side. It made sure I knew  
 that. The voice I heard.*

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (to unseen presence)  
 Who are you?

FEMALE VOICE

*Not much. That verse. A few other words... and the question. That's all that really matters, I suppose.*

ANNA SHERIDAN

(to unseen presence, a little desperate)

Please, if you can hear me...

FEMALE VOICE

*What would you do, to save...*

ANNA SHERIDAN

Please...

Suddenly, a stronger gust of wind hits, drowning out the voice as the entire room shakes.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(annoyed, but realizing the danger)

Shit, I need to... I need to get out of...

Anna turns and runs towards the door before...

CLICK

A few weeks later, on the deck of a ship. The waves crash against the side, and seagulls circle overhead.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(a bit tired, at the end of a long day of travel)

Well, here we are at last: the deck of the *Hortensia*, five miles off the coast of Chile. We're heading out towards deeper water to begin the research trip now, but... I can't shake the feeling that it's already a bust.

(beat, SIGHS)

I hate to say that. Marco's just as committed as ever to proving the existence of *Octopus giganteus*, but after what I heard in that hotel room...

Anna pauses, trying to put it into words.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
(putting the pieces  
together)

I've listened back to that recording a dozen times now. It sounds very similar to a lot of the non-reactive ghosts I've encountered over the years. There's a theory about some hauntings -- a pretty old one, actually, dating back to spiritualism's heyday in the late 1800's. It's most commonly known as the "stone tape" theory, though that's a bit of a misnomer. Basically, it suggests that ghosts might not actually be the trapped spirits of the dead, but just a recording of their words and actions when they were alive, somehow captured and played back by the rocks, walls, trees, and -- in this case -- water that surrounded them. It's kind of like my tapes, playing over and over again for all eternity. Just an inanimate image of the person, reliving the same moments over and over again; never seeing or reacting to the world around them, completely unaware of the passage of time, drifting through walls and doors and buildings that didn't exist when they were alive. They're just... Memories. The way the world remembers them, long after anyone who knew them has disappeared for good.

Anna pauses, THEN CHUCKLES.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
(morbidly amused)  
I suppose I can't be too cynical about that. After all: that's basically what I'm doing, recording this now. Creating my own ghost for those who come after me.

CLACK

The tape ends.

MARIA SOL  
(disappointed)  
I don't think there's anything  
useful on there. Next tape...?

SAM BAILEY  
(curious)  
Hold on. Did she find anything?

MARIA SOL  
Excuse me?

SAM BAILEY  
Did she find what she was looking  
for? Once she got to Chile?

MARIA SOL  
(surprised)  
Oh. Well... No. At least, not that  
she told me.

SAM BAILEY  
(disappointed)  
Oh.

MARIA SOL  
(sarcastic)  
What, did you want her to find out  
that sea monsters are real? I think  
more people would know about that  
if she did.

SAM BAILEY  
(a little sarcastic)  
No, but... Still. Kind of a waste.  
To do all that and just find a run  
of the mill ghost in a hotel room.  
I'm sure she wasn't happy about  
that.

MARIA SOL  
(hesitant)  
It... Wasn't exactly run of the  
mill.

SAM BAILEY  
(confused)  
Sorry?

MARIA SOL  
Well -- It called itself "Anne  
Bonny" at one point in the  
recording.  
(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

That was the name of one of the most notorious pirates in the Caribbean during the golden age of piracy. The last time she shows up in history, she was being held in Kingstown, awaiting her own execution.

SAM BAILEY

(pause)

And... What happened to her?

MARIA SOL

(quoting from memory)

"...what is become of her since, we cannot tell; only this we know... that she was *not* executed." Charles Johnson, 1724. That's where the histories end. But there are stories, of course... There are always stories with someone like that.

SAM BAILEY

But you have a theory.

MARIA SOL

(a little hesitant)

Anna, had one, actually. It took her a while to share with me, but after she almost drowned in Emerald Bay, she told me that wasn't the first time she'd heard "the question." She thought that maybe there was something that lived in the water, or maybe was the water, and that it somehow... Preserved Anne Bonny. She believed that Bonny escaped and fled Kingstown, got caught in a storm or fell overboard, and encountered this entity just before she drowned. It offered her a chance to survive, and she took its offer. At first, Anna thought the voice might only exist in Jamaica, but after hearing it in Tahoe and finding evidence of the same question in Scotland, Guam, and Australia...

SAM BAILEY

And Agate Shore.

MARIA SOL

What?

SAM BAILEY

(hesitant)

She found it in Agate Shore as well, just before she disappeared. It was on one of her last tapes.

MARIA SOL

(dismissive)

Sure. In Agate Shore too... Or whatever's left of it, anyways. Still, she... Whoa! What's that look for?

Sam rises to his feet somewhat clumsily.

SAM BAILEY

(a little uneasy)

I... I need to get some fresh air. You'll be fine without me for a second?

MARIA SOL

Um... Yeah, sure.

Sam turns to leave, then... BEEP. The recording ends.

CLICK

A little while later, in the morgue.

SAM BAILEY

(beating himself up)

Okay Sam... Breathe. Breathe.

(long beat)

God, why the hell did I mention Agate Shore? What did you think she was going to do, *not* mention that it's... That it was...

Sam take A DEEP, SHUDDERING BREATH, then looks around at where he is.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(continues to beat himself up)

Huh. It must really say something about me that the only place I can really calm down and think is the morgue, even if I don't know what.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

I mean, it is quieter than the station, and no one wants to strike up a conversation around a bunch of dead bodies, so... Guess it's got that going for it.

Sam pauses, looking closer at something on the wall.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Ah. So that's where you ended up. "John Doe... Alias, De Witt." Huh. Guess I found your namesake today, didn't I?

Sam grabs the handle and pulls open the refrigeration drawer. He looks down at the body for a moment, then...

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(regretful)

God, what a mess this is. You knew... I mean, you must have known about Sheridan. Maybe about... All the rest of it too. God, the things you could have told me if you'd just...

Sam pauses, then looks closer.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(confused)

Huh... That's odd. There seems to be... Finger-shaped indentations on the throat. Not bruises, there's no discoloration but, it... almost like the skin's been warped or pushed in by...

Sam touches the skin, and it makes a disturbing squelching noise.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(jumping back, alarmed)

Ah!

(beat, then looking closer, disturbed)

That's... uh, the, uh, the skin has an -- an unusual texture and consistency. Almost like... Well, almost like moulding clay, actually. It still has quite a bit of give, even with the freezing temperatures and the...

Suddenly, DE WITT GASPS FOR AIR, turning and grabbing Sam by the jacket.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
(horrified)  
AH!

DE WITT  
(voice slightly distorted  
and strained)  
Bailey.

SAM BAILEY  
You... You're... How are you alive?

DE WITT  
(whispered, harsh)  
Get. Me. Out of here.

CLACK. The recording cuts off.

ROLL END THEME  
AND CREDITS