

"SOUL"  
*The Sheridan Tapes - B-Side 02*  
*Recording Draft - November 26, 2020*

Written by

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

CLICK

A quiet office, late at night. Faint, muffled voices in the background, the occasional sound of cars passing outside, and the hum of A/C. Otherwise -- silent and still.

KATE SHERIDAN

Hi Anna. I know, I know, it's been a while since we talked. I know that's probably for the best, too... Our relationship has always worked best in small doses. Or -- I guess, only really worked that way. If it actually worked. And I know you'll just say, 'It's fine Kate, I don't mind,' but I know you're just trying to smooth things over for my sake. Not that you can actually... You know, say anything. Or actually hear me. But still... I just needed someone to talk to. And strange as it sounds, you're still the only person I really trust with things like this. Questions that -- push boundaries. Make people uncomfortable. Make *me* uncomfortable.

(beat)

It's strange. I don't know why I hung onto this recorder after that last camping trip with Peter, but after we got back I just couldn't bear to put it back in the attic. It's like... Look, I know you can't actually hear me through this thing. I know that wherever you are, whatever's happened to you... You can't hear what I'm saying on this tape. No one can. I'm alone in my office, and it's nearly three in the morning. What I say right now is between me and the recorder and... Well, God, I guess. Or 'the universe,' as you'd call him. Or -- I don't know. But even with all that... I feel like you're here with me whenever I'm talking to this thing. I didn't get to see you much those last few years, but every time you did show up, you were always carrying your recorder around with you like it was a... Another part of you. Like it was a third ear, or an extra hand. Ha.

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I know you still had trouble writing and typing because of the accident, so I guess that last one's actually pretty accurate. Still, every time I look at this old, worn down hunk of plastic -- I see a bit of you in it. And a little bit of dad, too... He used to record everything as well. Maybe that makes it easier to talk than it would be otherwise. It was always easier to be honest when it was just the three of us.

(beat)

I keep thinking back to that camping trip -- that first night, when Andrew refused to go to sleep and I ended up staying in the tent just to get some peace and quiet. God, but I needed it. I don't remember when the last time I had a real moment to myself was... Maybe the drive out to West Virginia, that time you were trying to deal with the Echo? Although I was too worried about you to actually enjoy it. Not that I got much peace this year's camping trip either. Not with your voice coming out of the aether like some kind of... Well. You know.

(beat)

But it got me thinking about... Well, a lot of things, to be honest. I still don't think you're dead. I can't believe anyone or... Anything could have killed you as easily as that. If they tried, I have a feeling you'd put up so much of a fight the whole world would know by now. It would have been Biblical. Apocalyptic. "And there was war in heaven..."

(beat)

Sorry... I know you hate it when I start referencing Bible verses, even as a joke. And I get it, pastor Seeger was a total creep, and he shouldn't have told Dad what you told him, but... I really don't think it should have turned you off God completely? I mean, just because one person hurt you doesn't mean that....

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(realizes she's trying to  
convince herself)

What am I even saying? It's not like I could convince you of anything, even if you were somehow listening. God, I don't even know what you believe in anymore. I lost track a while ago. Who knows: maybe you came back around to it, even after everything you've been through. All the... Monsters you've faced.

(beat)

That's... That's what I'm really having trouble with. Squaring God with the world you lived in. The one that scares the bejeezus out of me, even if I've only had a glimpse of.

(beat, SIGHS)

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." And I can already hear you jumping down my throat, so yes, of course he didn't just make them male and female. I'm not a complete idiot. You might think I am, but Des Moines is not the backwater you seem to think it is. That's not the point. "God created man in his own image..." That's the point. I don't claim to understand half of what that means, but what I can't ignore is how some kind of... Whatever the Echo was, how it could steal that part of you. That image, that reflection of the divine. For a while, I thought that it might have been some kind of demon, but that doesn't really seem to describe it. It was hellish, sure, but it seemed -- rational. Kind. And when we prayed over dinner, she was right there. I think she even said grace once or twice. That doesn't seem like something a demon could do, but I don't know what else to call it. I don't know where it's supposed to -- fit in.

(beat)

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

"There shall not be found among you an enchanter, or a witch or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits." But you did that all the time. You chased ghosts. You consulted with them... At least, I think that what you did. You tried to figure them out, at least... to understand them. People probably would have called you a witch back in the day. Heck, some people still do. But... You do good. You help people. You saved Andrew from that -- that thing wearing your face, and god knows what else you've done for other people. Even if you don't believe in it, you do what the Bible says. I mean... "What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

(beat)

Well. Maybe not that last one. You could be a proud little brat when you wanted to be.

(beat, then more somber)

And then... The other thing. The thing you told Pastor Seeger about, and the one Pastor Seeger told dad. I know I shouldn't have, but I eavesdropped on their conversation. If you could call it that. It was... Bad. For dad, I mean. Seeger was almost screaming at him by the end of it, lecturing him about the sin of letting his daughter fall from grace, fall into temptation, allowing her to engage in "unnatural relations."

(SHUDDERS at his wording)

I think he all but literally beat Dad over the head with his Bible. He told him that he'd failed as a father, as a man of God, as a member of *his* congregation. I think Dad only got in about two or three words the whole time. But once Seeger wore himself out, Dad just said, in that quiet little way he had, that he'd talk to you about it. That was all Seeger could get out of him.

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

When Dad finally escaped his office, his face looked calm, but I could see in his eyes that he was furious... Not with you, but with Seeger. I don't know what he said to you after we got home from church that day, but I'm guessing he told you not to tell Pastor things like that anymore.

(beat)

It was only after that morning that I begin to notice how often and how... Hatefully he preached against -- well, everyone who didn't look and think like him. I don't know if that's because he only started preaching like after you spoke to him, or if he'd always been that way, and I'd just let it wash into the background before. To be honest, it made me want to crawl out of my skin every time he stood up at the pulpit. I started volunteering with the hospitality staff just so I had an excuse to get out of there and help make coffee before he started preaching. I helped collect the offering and delivered it to the main office, staying with Martha to help her count it before it went into the lockbox. Anything, just so I wouldn't have to sit next to you while Seeger screamed down fire and brimstone on people who just -- loved who they loved.

(beat)

Of course, you didn't bother playing the same games I did. You just faced him head on, glaring daggers at him from the front row like you could strike him dead if you just staring at him long enough. I half believed you could at that point. And honestly, I half hoped you would.

(beat)

Things got better after he was fired. I can't believe that Martha never told me what he was doing. That she didn't report him right away, or at least quit and try to find a new job at a different church.

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(pause, then thoughtful)

Actually, I guess I can believe it. When you think your boss has at least a part of your eternal salvation in their hands, you probably wouldn't want to get on their bad side. Heck, that's probably why dad never made a fuss about him. Seeger probably would've gotten away with it scott-free if Martha didn't... If she didn't figure out he was also embezzling on top of everything else. I always thought his car was a little too nice for a pastor's salary. I just wish I could have seen the look on his face when he was arrested.

(beat)

Things were better after Pastor Marlon took over... Not perfect, but better. If he hated people the same way Seeger did, he kept it to himself. And honestly, I don't think he was capable of that kind of hate. He was kind, and his sermons were actually about loving your neighbor, helping the poor, and being a better person instead of condemning the people you disagree with. It was... Love. And I don't think anyone who preached the way he did could actually hate another person just because a handful of Bible verses and an bitter, angry ex-pastor told him to.

(beat)

But I know all too well that he could have. That it could have all been a show, as convincing to me as Pastor Seeger's was to everyone else. I think -- I *believe* that God is good, and he loves us, and that he came so that we wouldn't have to stand before Seeger's fire and brimstone judgement. But the fact that there's that fire and brimstone at all makes me hesitate. The idea that good people who just can't square the circle of a loving god and a hateful, intolerant church are supposed to burn in Hell for all eternity doesn't sit right with me.

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Nor does the knowledge that a gospel of grace and love has so often depended on fear, or the fact that no matter how good a friend, wife, and mother I am, there will always be people who take one look at me and say I'm an unrepentant sinner for not being subject to my husband, for speaking up in church, for having a single goddamn opinion of my own, for looking at other women sometimes and even wondering if maybe I...

Kate breaks off, realizing she's getting worked up. SHE TAKES A DEEP BREATH and restarts.

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

And I have to wonder, if I wasn't raised in the church, would I ever chose it for myself? Would I buy into it now if I wasn't... Raised to believe it? If I hadn't had Sunday school teachers pounding Bible verses into my head my entire childhood, or parents who dragged me to church every single week for eighteen years?

(pause, then SIGHS)

Probably not. Maybe before, but... Not after what I've seen with you, Anna. Not with what I know is out there.

(beat)

But I do. I *still* do. Maybe some of that is because I'm scared to leave, scared to lose the people who helped Peter and I get through those first few years with Andrew, scared to lose that common ground with mom, but... That's not all of it. For all the reasons I have to let go and leave, I still have to believe there's something bigger than the ghosts and monsters and... Infinite darkneses you told me about. Bigger than my doubts. Bigger than the church that tries to preach about it, and the books that try to constrain and quantify it. Bigger than those who try to use it for their own self-interest.

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

And if there is such a place as hell, I can only imagine that it's reserved for those who used the fear of it for their own gain.

(beat)

"Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as you have done to the least of these my brothers, you've done unto me." And if you tell a teenage girl she's going to burn in hell for having a stupid, high school crush on another girl before turning around and groping your own secretary when you think no one's looking, your own hypocrisy screams louder than any sermon you could ever give. And love -- genuine love, the kind I hope you found, Anna -- is so much stronger than the hate that tries to crush it.

(beat)

Wherever you really are, whatever actually happened to you... I hope you know that. And I hope you know that your sister still loves you, and always will.

(beat, SMALL CHUCKLE)

Even if I can't stand you sometimes.

She pauses, thoughtful, then begins to sing quietly.

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(softly, full of faint and tenuous hope)

There are loved ones in the glory

Whose dear forms you often miss.

When you close your earthly story,

Will you join them in their bliss?

Will the circle be unbroken

By and by, by and by?

Is a better home awaiting

In the sky, in the sky?

CLICK.

ROLL END THEME  
AND CREDITS