

"THE FIRE IN WHICH WE BURN"  
*The Sheridan Tapes - Season 02, Episode*  
*30 Recording Draft - January 8, 2021*

by

Trevor Van Winkle

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

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1. EXT. GAS STATION - US ROUTE 101 - OCTOBER 15, 2018 - NIGHT

Crickets chirp in the brisk Nevada night. A single car passes occasionally, noticeable only because it breaks the silence.

Clink. Clink. Someone slips two quarters into a payphone, then dials. The phone rings twice, then...

MARIA SOL  
(business voice)  
Hello, Maria Sol speaking.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(amused)  
Hey there, stranger.

MARIA SOL  
(surprised)  
Anna? What are -- where the hell  
are you calling from? I thought you  
were a client.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
Payphone -- I don't have any signal  
out here.  
(beat, tender)  
It's good to hear your voice again,  
Maria.

MARIA SOL  
(stumbles slightly,  
awkward)  
Ye-Yeah, same.  
(beat)  
How are you? Are you doing okay?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(a little stilted, unsure)  
I'm... Well, things are a bit -- a  
bit weird right now. Weirder than  
usual, I mean. I was just calling  
to ask if you wanted to... I mean,  
if you had some time and wanted to  
get out of L.A. for a bit, then...

MARIA SOL  
(slightly smug)  
You need my help again, don't you?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
It's...  
(SIGHS, finally admitting  
it)  
Yeah. I do.

MARIA SOL  
(clearly enjoying the  
reversal)  
You do, what?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(annoyed)  
Come on Maria, this is serious.

MARIA SOL  
I just want to hear you say it, for  
a change.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(IRRITATED SIGH)  
I need your help Maria. Look, it's  
getting really messy out here, and  
I'd really appreciate it if...

MARIA SOL  
(smugly casual)  
Sure. Where should I meet you?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
You're... Maria, I'm not joking.  
It's... It might be dangerous out  
here.

MARIA SOL  
(LAUGHS)  
When isn't it? I can handle myself.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
I didn't say you couldn't, it's  
just...

MARIA SOL  
(cutting her off,  
dismissive)  
Look, we can argue about it when I  
get there, alright?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(amused)  
Sure you're ready to lose again?

MARIA SOL  
(annoyed)  
Are you planning to tell me where I  
should meet you before or after you  
run out of quarters for the  
payphone?

Anna considers that for a moment, then decides.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
Oslo County. Nevada.

CLICK.

2. INT. ABANDONED CABIN - OCTOBER 22, 2019 - EARLY AFTERNOON

The inside of a small log cabin -- quiet, peaceful, and obviously isolated. The stillness broken only by SOMEONE TRYING TO CATCH THEIR BREATH.

SAM BAILEY

(breathless)

What the hell was that? There was a... I was just out hiking, and there was a... I don't even know what to call it, some kind of... Vision or apparition or hallucination or something -- I don't know if it was real or just...

(realizing he's rambling)

Sorry, I... I thought I was ready to start. I need to catch my breath before -- sorry, started rolling before I realized...

(DEEP BREATH, calm but a little shaky)

Okay. I think I'm okay now. Heart's slowing down a little bit, at least. Right. Okay. Let's do this properly. Detective Samuel Bailey, Os...

(catches himself, SIGHS)

Sam Bailey. Daily log, October 22nd, 2019 at 1:26pm. Day one hundred and seventy one.

Sam pauses, considering what to say.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(introspective)

I'm still lucky to be here. Guess I'll start with that. I'm glad I have somewhere to hide, and that Morrison doesn't know I'm out here... Even if I'm not sure where here is, exactly. Honestly, if I was looking for a vacation spot off the grid, I could certainly do worse than this place. This cabin is the only structure for at least ten miles in every direction...

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

And trust me, I've checked. No power lines or cell towers anywhere I've seen. There's an old rotary phone in the living room, but the cable's been sliced and the receiver's smashed to hell. It's got a well, a gas generator, and enough fresh firewood and canned food to last through two winters.

(beat, a little sarcastic)

In short, a prepper's paradise: a perfect little garden spot to wait out the end of the world. Funny how appropriate that felt when I first showed up here.

(beat, then SIGHS, annoyed at himself)

I shouldn't complain. At the very least, the peace and quiet are definitely needed. I'm finally starting to sleep better -- I don't think I've had the nightmares in at least a month. And I'm about as healthy as I've ever been with all the fresh air and sunshine I'm getting, exploring this place. I know it's not the best idea to go hiking when you're supposed to be in hiding, but -- well, you try staying in a one-room cabin alone for more than 10 days, and tell me how that goes.

(beat)

All in all... I guess life after death is all it's cracked up to be. Or at least, life after you're presumed dead. I'm guessing that's what Bill told Morrison, anyway. At the very least, he thinks I'm out of the way, and that's good enough for now. It'll have to be, until I figure something else out.

(beat, then slightly annoyed)

I know I keep going through this over and over again, but I kind of think I have to -- It's hard to keep track of things out here... To stay connected to everything that happened before. It all seems... I don't know, almost like I imagined it.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Bill tells me it's important not to bury those memories, which is half the reason he started bringing me tapes along with the food and medicine drops each month. I tried journalling, but... Well, Sheridan's the writer, not me. Even if I am taking a page out of her book recording like this, I guess.

(beat, then shaking his head)

I'm rambling. I need to talk about what just happened.

SAM TAKES A DEEP BREATH, then begins.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Like I said, I've been getting out and exploring the woods around the cabin as much as I can. I don't know where I am, but I think it's somewhere up in the Sierra. The air's thin and dry, and it took me nearly a month to acclimate. I wasn't able to hike for more than an hour before I did, but now I've explored at least ten miles in every direction and still haven't found any evidence of other people. Hell, I didn't find anything besides empty forest until -- until what happened this morning.

(beat)

I took off right after breakfast, as soon as there was enough light to go out into the woods. It was warmer than it's been the last couple mornings, so the smell of sage was almost as strong as back in July. I'd gone north and made it all the way to the foothills yesterday, so I decided to go south instead. I know that doesn't sound like much, but you'd be amazed what a difference that makes. The landscape is way more varied out here than I thought it would be, and even this late in Fall, there's still a lot of life out here. I saw at least half a dozen small creeks running through the forest, and a handful of little clearings full of mushrooms and wildflowers just a little past their prime.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

It's still beautiful up north, but it's more rocky -- I've even seen one or two little caves, through I haven't been bored enough to risk those yet. Beautiful as this place might be, there are still some areas I hesitate to go into, even in broad daylight.

(beat)

Anyway -- the ground was clear and level most of the way, so I was going at a good clip in about five minutes. I must have ended up hiking... What, five and a half miles? Maybe less. It's impossible to tell without a GPS, really, and it's way too easy to end up going in circles. I learned pretty quickly to use the sun to navigate and make sure I'm not.

(beat)

After about an hour and a half, I noticed a break in the trees up ahead. I thought that it might be another one of those clearings, so I went to investigate. But as I got closer, I realized the trees weren't spacing out gradually like they normally would... They just cut off at an arbitrary point in the middle of the forest. It was a road -- just a torn up one lane dirt road like the one that leads to the cabin, but... still. At first I thought I'd somehow managed to go in circles despite all my precautions, but then I checked the position of the sun and realized that this road ran mostly east to west. The road from the cabin runs straight south. There was a second road out here that I didn't know about... And it had to lead somewhere.

(beat)

I really wasn't sure if I should be excited or worried. It was kind of nice to have a reminder that other people still exist outside the cabin, but... Honestly, anyone who lives in a place this remote must have a reason, and probably wouldn't want me stumbling onto... Whatever they're doing out here.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Especially not with how shaggy I'm looking these days... I tried cutting my hair the first week I was here, but that -- yeah, I didn't try that again.

(beat)

Personally, I probably wouldn't mind someone else to talk to right now, but I doubt the previous tenants of the cabin felt the same way. I've tried to ask Bill what this place was before I got here, but he just gets nervous and changes the subject. I have my suspicions, though. It's been pretty thoroughly cleaned out, but there are some things in the attic that raise questions. Not to mention that cellar...

(SAM SHUDDERS)

Anyway -- even if I have neighbors, I probably don't want to run into them, if only to make sure nobody else knows that I'm here. If Morrison somehow catches wind of it... Well, I've tried not to think about what he'll do. And somehow, Bill still doesn't see why that's a problem.

(SIGHS)

Even so -- I decided to take a quick look. The sun was high, and I could duck back into the trees if I heard anyone coming. Plus... Well, curiosity always gets the better of me in situations like this. I figured that if I'd hiked an hour and a half to get here, I didn't want to waste the chance.

(beat)

I pulled out the bandana I brought from the cabin and wrapped it around one of the tree branches nearby, just to make sure I could find my way back. Then I started down the road. I stayed as close to one side as I could, which wasn't as easy as it sounds. The forest floor had a mostly even slope to it, but the tire tracks here cut through the bare mud and clay and left deep ruts that I had to avoid if I didn't want to twist my ankle... Which I didn't.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Still, I kept going, if not admiring the road at least appreciating the change of scenery. As I went, I began to notice an odd smell, too. I thought it might be smoke, maybe from a campfire or wood stove nearby. I stopped and listened for any sounds out in the trees that might indicate other people. All I could hear were birds chirping, a few insects still hanging around even with the cold weather, and the sound of the wind through the branches. There was no one else out there, so I just... Shrugged it off. The smell was faint, so I figured it was far enough away that I didn't have to worry about it.

(beat)

But... As I kept walking, and the road started to get more even, the smell grew stronger. To the point that it started making my eyes water. Allen and I rented a cabin out near Santa Lucia one Christmas, and it had a fireplace that neither of us really knew how to work. We got a fire going, but we didn't check the flue before we left the room. Neither of us noticed until the smell started to drift into our room.

(beat)

Weird as it is to say, that's what it reminded me of -- the smell of smoke going from something inviting and homely to something you don't want to breathe in for too long. And this smelled even worse. It was... Harder, if that makes sense. Almost caustic, like burning plastic, or... Maybe asbestos? Whatever it was, it started to burn my lungs pretty quickly, but I still kept going. I noticed the sky was starting to turn from blue to grey, and before I realized it had gone yellow. The sunlight began to dim slightly, and I wondered if there was a forest fire burning somewhere nearby. It's definitely dry enough -- it's only rained once in the six months I've been here.

(MORE)

## SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(beat)

As the smoke got worse, I slipped on the old pair of aviators Bill left at the cabin, which helped keep some of it out of my eyes. The sky looked even darker through them, and it slowly began to turn orange as the smoke completely blocked out the sun. It was starting to drift down through the trees and onto the road by then, first thin and branching and then thicker, pouring off the higher branches like fog. I started to cough a little as it settled in, but I could still see the road pretty well through it. I put one arm over my mouth and ducked lower, trying to keep from breathing it in. I thought about going back, but if the woods really were on fire, I was too far from the cabin to get there safely, and I had no way of leaving even if I did. My best chance of escape was finding whoever lived at the end of this road and convincing them to help me.

(beat)

After a while, I saw the road coming to what looked like some kind of turn off. I hurried towards it, only to find that it wasn't the entrance to a driveway or campsite, but a little overlook on the side of the main road. If not for the smoke, I thought that it would have had a commanding view of the little valley below the forest. I stopped and tried to get my bearings, looking up to see if I could still see the sun. By that point, the haze had become so thick that I couldn't even see a faint glow from where it should have been. The wind suddenly kicked up, blowing most of the smoke further down the road and clearing the air a little. I breathed a sigh of relief, but then... I saw the valley. Or at least... What was left of it.

(beat, trying to find words)

It was...

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Blackened and charred, covered with trees stripped of bark by the heat and looking pale and skeletal against the ash. Here and there, a few dense patches of sagebrush shimmered, still burning from the inside. I could see a few small ponds as well, cloudy and pale or almost black with ash. One of them even looked like it was a noxious green, and I saw a ragged looking deer approach it, bend down to drink, and then bolt away as if spooked.

(beat)

I don't know how I can remember all that -- I only looked at it for a moment before the mountain towering over it caught my eye. It was wreathed in flames, the trees nothing but faint dark shapes against a sheet of orange fire that covered the entire slope... No, the entire mountain range. Every peak was burning, sending huge plumes of smoke up towards the flat orange sky. It was even darker behind the mountains, and I could see another flickering red glow in the distance, shining up from another wildfire somewhere far away... Like the whole world was burning, just out of sight.

(beat)

I realized then that this couldn't be real. Even if a fire had started while I was walking, it couldn't have spread across the entire range in the last two hours. Even if it had, I would have noticed the smoke well before then. But even so, I remembered what Morrison said about things created by the, uh... Well, the kinds of things that created me. How they're just as dangerous as they look, even if they aren't entirely real. So I turned and ran... Or walked as quickly as I could on the uneven road I could barely see. The smoke came back as soon as I turned around, and after a while it started to remind me of the lake. And no, not in a good way.

(MORE)

## SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

No sense of up or down, and no air to breathe. I choked and coughed as I went, squinting just to see where I was going. There should have been no way to get lost... There were no turn offs on the road, and the bandana I'd left to mark my way should have stood out even in the yellow-grey haze.

(beat)

I didn't check my watch, but it felt like I'd been going way longer than I had on the way in. The road kept turning slowly to the right the whole time, banking slightly at a few points but not really changing direction. Finally, I noticed a slight turn up ahead, and I rushed over, hoping it might be a way out. Then I realized it was just the same turn out I'd started from. The road was a complete, perfect circle in the middle of the woods with no driveways, campsites, or houses anywhere along it -- and no sign of the way I came in.

(beat)

The smoke cleared a little, and I saw the burning valley again. The flames on the mountain seemed bigger and brighter than they were before, and even though I couldn't see much it almost looked like the rocks themselves were burning -- cracking like logs and spraying sparks into the air. The smoke rising from them was pitch black now, and as it billowed into the sky I saw lightning flash between them. There was a crack of thunder a moment later that startled a couple of crows down in the valley into flight. I got a good look at them before the smoke closed back in and hid them from view. They were almost completely stripped of feathers and coated in tarry, black soot.

SAM TAKES A DEEP, SHUDDERING BREATH, trying to stay calm.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

It wasn't real. It couldn't be. People don't build disconnected ring roads in the middle of the woods, and valleys don't turn into apocalyptic nightmares in half a morning. But that didn't mean it couldn't hurt me. I thought through all of Anna's tapes about things like this -- places that looped in on themselves, and the unnatural fire that burned down her cabin in Oregon and almost killed Bill in Oslow. I remembered that when Anna was trapped in the mines at Santa Lucia, she turned off her flashlight and was able to follow an instinct that led her out. I didn't know if that would work here, but I didn't have any better ideas. So I closed my already stinging eyes and just... Listened.

(pause)

It didn't come right away, but it was pretty obvious when it did. I didn't hear a voice or any kind of rational thought, but it was similar to what Anna described in Langlois. It was... An emotion. An impression. Kind of like... I could feel the way this other emotion would feel physically, but it wasn't actually my emotions causing it. You know how -- when you don't want to feel the way you're feeling, and you try and force those emotions down and think about something else? Like you've disconnected yourself from it, but it's still there, feeling rancid and sour in your gut? It was kind of like that, except I was still feeling my own fear and panic at the same time I was feeling these other emotions. My heart was racing and I was breathing shallow, but at the same time, I could feel a weight deep in my chest, like something was sitting on my heart. I knew what it was right away. It was... Disappointment.

(pause, then a little embarrassed)

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

I know that's not a great explanation, but it's the best I can do. Even though I didn't hear any words, I could feel so much... Nuance in the feeling. I thought Anna might have been reading too much into what she felt at the cabin, but she wasn't... She had a perfect frame of reference for what that emotion meant, because it was her emotion, just like this was mine. It's just that someone or -- something else was behind it. And it was disappointed in me.

(beat)

I was so surprised that I almost flinched and opened my eyes. But I knew I wouldn't be able to find a way out if I did, so instead, I let myself feel it -- and then I pushed back.

(moment of thought)

I've had a lot of time to think about what happened in Agate Shore... What I did when I went back into the water. I'm still connected to whatever's in the lake, and have been ever since I was a kid. And even as I pushed back on those alien emotions... I heard the sound of waves, lapping on the shoreline. So I... I don't know what the word for it is... Reached out? Let it in?

(beat)

Honestly, it was more like I just listened to it for once, rather than trying to push it away. I let the sound wash over me without fighting it, and the moment I did... The smell of smoke vanished. I opened my eyes before I realized what I was doing, and was nearly blinded by the sudden brightness, even with Bill's aviators on. As soon as I could see again, I looked down towards the valley. It was green and vibrant as the rest of the forest, and even though the trees on the mountain were thin and dry, they definitely weren't on fire.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

I could see for miles in the clear, crisp air, and the only smoke rose from somewhere near the horizon, thin and blue over a town that was too far away to even make out. Whatever I'd just experienced... It was over.

(beat)

I still bolted down the road as fast as I could. The bandana was exactly where it should have been, and I found my way back to the cabin as easily as I ever have. I didn't see any other signs of fire or smoke, and so far as I can tell, it only affected me, not the forest itself. I even startled a couple of very healthy looking deer and crows on the way back, but I was in too much of a hurry to really appreciate the fact that they were okay. I'd almost be tempted to say I imagined the whole thing, if not for the...

There's a knock on the door. Sam freezes, but then the knock turns into a clear pattern, signaling who it is. SAM SIGHS WITH RELIEF, then goes and opens the door.

3. INT. ABANDONED CABIN - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

SAM BAILEY

(surprised, but glad)

You're early.

BILL TYLER

Something came up back in Oslow. I needed to..

(SNIFFS, confused)

Why does it smell like smoke in here?

SAM BAILEY

Oh, that's, uh... That's just me.

Sam closes the door behind Bill as he raises an eyebrow.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(LAUGHS)

Not like that, Bill. Look, something happened this morning, but... It's dealt with, it's fine.

BILL TYLER  
 (slightly concerned)  
 What do you mean, something?

SAM BAILEY  
 (annoyed)  
 I went for a hike and I... I think  
 I slipped into some place...  
 Different. Another dimension, or  
 something? I really don't know.

BILL TYLER  
 (relieved, joking)  
 And it was on fire? Sounds nice.

SAM BAILEY  
 I think it might be linked to  
 whatever burned down Marvin's.

BILL TYLER  
 (suddenly nervous)  
 Oh. Right. Well, uh... Glad I  
 wasn't here, then.

Bill sets a heavy sounding box down on the table.

BILL TYLER (CONT'D)  
 (as he unpacks it)  
 I managed to get some actual  
 produce this time, but I'd  
 recommend using it while it's still  
 fresh. And some canned chicken, so  
 you don't overdose on tuna...

SAM BAILEY  
 (concerned)  
 It didn't set you back too much,  
 did it?

BILL TYLER  
 (trying to dismiss  
 worries)  
 It's fine -- it'll make the grocery  
 budget a little tight for me and  
 Rob, but he eats like a bird, and I  
 don't think we'll be going out half  
 as much now that he's quitting, so  
 that should balance...

SAM BAILEY  
 (surprised)  
 Rob quit?

Bill cuts off, realizing what he just said.

BILL TYLER

(hesitant)

Uh.. Yeah, he, um... He kept asking what happened to you, and I couldn't keep lying to him, so I just... Told him.

SAM BAILEY

(worried)

Shit. You didn't...

BILL TYLER

(trying to assuage him)

No, no, I didn't mention this place. I'm still the only one who knows. But I did tell him what happened. With Morrison.

SAM BAILEY

(approving)

And he quit? Smart man.

BILL TYLER

(tired)

Hey, don't give me that -- I've been getting enough of it from Rob.

SAM BAILEY

(a little smug)

Good to know there's at least one sensible person in your relationship.

BILL TYLER

(annoyed)

Look, knock it off. Morrison might be a prick, but he gets shit done. We're helping people.

SAM BAILEY

(SCOFFS)

Sure.

BILL TYLER

We are! You don't know what it's like in Oslo now. The kinds of... Things that have come out of the woodwork since the Echo died. We're keeping people safe, and maybe Morrison goes a little overboard sometimes, but he's the only person even vaguely prepared to deal with this stuff. End of story.

A moment of silence. Then...

SAM BAILEY

(frustrated)

Fine. So if you're not here for my advice... Then why are you here two weeks early?

BILL TYLER

(a little embarrassed)

Oh. Uh, well... I sort of figured I should come early in case it starts snowing and the roads get blocked, but... I actually did kind of come here for your advice... In a way.

(beat)

Kate Sheridan. What do you know about her?

SAM BAILEY

(confused)

Anna's sister?

(Bill nods, Sam thinks)

She's a... CPA somewhere out in the Midwest. Iowa or... Maybe it was Missouri? I can't remember. Had a husband and kid -- Andrew, I think his name was. Anna thought she was wound a little too tight, but... Honestly, she just seemed pretty normal to me.

BILL TYLER

Would you trust her?

SAM BAILEY

(confused)

With what?

BILL TYLER

(hesitant)

She -- called me out of the blue yesterday. Said Maria gave her my number. She's heading to Oslo to look into Anna's disappearance as we speak.

SAM BAILEY

(puzzled)

Huh. That doesn't sound like her at all.

(beat, reconsidering)

Then again, she did have a run in with the Echo about two years ago.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
That could definitely change a  
person.

BILL TYLER  
Do you think there's any chance she  
might be -- working with Morrison?  
Trying to... Test loyalties, or  
something like that?

SAM BAILEY  
(sarcastic)  
Why, is yours failing?

BILL TYLER  
That's not why I'm worried. If he  
figures out you're alive and I  
helped you, then...

Bill trails off, unwilling or unable to finish that sentence.  
After a moment of thought...

SAM BAILEY  
(SIGHS)  
Honest opinion? I don't know. Not  
for sure. I don't have any reason  
to think she's helping Morrison,  
but I can't say for sure either  
way. And right now, I don't think  
we can really afford to trust  
anyone. Not with the whole truth.  
(beat)  
On the other hand, I don't think we  
should turn away anyone who might  
be able to help us. And she might  
know more about what happened to  
Anna than we thought.

BILL TYLER  
(slightly sarcastic)  
So we should help her help us, in  
other words?

SAM BAILEY  
(SCOFFS)  
You sound like Maria.  
(beat, concerned)  
Did Kate say how she's doing, by  
the way?

BILL TYLER  
(worried)  
No. I think that call was the only  
time they talked.  
(MORE)

BILL TYLER (CONT'D)  
And I haven't heard anything from  
her in nearly four months. I'm  
starting to get worried about her.

SAM BAILEY  
(concerned)  
You and me both.

Sam pauses, then notices the recorder.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
Oh, shoot -- I didn't realize this  
was still record...

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME  
AND CREDITS