

"SHADOW AND SUNLIGHT"  
*The Sheridan Tapes - Season 02, Episode 31*  
*Recording Draft - January 30, 2021*

by

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By Trevor Van Winkle

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1. EXT. MOUNT SHASTA CAMPGROUND - EVENING - MAY 7, 2014

A cassette recorder comes to life, static spiking and then fading into the background. A campfire crackles nearby, and an owl hoots.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(quoting "Brahma" by Ralph  
Waldo Emerson from  
memory)

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
I am the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;  
But thou, meek lover of the good!  
Find me, and turn thy back on  
heaven.

CLICK.

2. INT. MARIA SOL'S VAN - MORNING - OCTOBER 25, 2019

A cassette recorder is started and set aside as Maria slams the van's door and starts the engine and heater, SHIVERING AND RUBBING HER HANDS TOGETHER.

MARIA SOL  
(shivering)

God, my kingdom for a pair of  
gloves... This is Maria Sol,  
recording on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at  
about 9:30 am. This is day two at  
Mount Shasta, and my first real day  
out on the mountain -- I got to my  
cabin yesterday afternoon, right as  
the first snow of the season got  
started. Unfortunately, that  
completely ruined my plan for  
today.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

I wanted to explore the places Anna didn't have a chance to when she was here, spend more time on the mountain itself, but now hiking is completely out of the question... Not unless I feel like spending an arm and a leg to buy new gear. Which leaves me with the areas below the snow line... All of which Anna already explored. Even with that, I'm not even sure I have enough time for that... I could only afford two nights here, and...

(beat, restarts)

Anyway -- I'm staying near this place called Ascension Rock, which is supposedly a hotbed of all kinds of new age-y supernatural occurrences and whatnot. Anna came here years ago, and I've been listening to that tape over and over again on my way here. She always said she wanted to come back to the mountain, keep investigating. And now I'm...

(beat, SIGHS)

Well, I'm just hoping I can find something. There are still so many tapes to go through and I... I don't want to leave loose ends if I can help it. Even if it is freezing out here.

(beat)

So. What's the deal with Shasta? Well, for starters -- there isn't one single story about it. There are almost too many stories to count. It's like... Uh...

(beat)

You know what -- Anna tells it better.

Maria picks up a tape and inserts it into the car's dash, then presses play.

3. EXT. MOUNT SHASTA CAMPGROUND - EVENING - MAY 7, 2014

A hiss of static, then the same campfire and owl from the cold open.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(storytelling)

If there's one thing that I know for certain about Shasta, it's this: there's something undeniably special about this mountain. From a purely aesthetic perspective, it's one of the most striking peaks in North America, rising 10,000 feet above the wide valley floor around it. Imagine being a prospector during the Gold Rush, risking your life to cross mountains, rivers, and forests for months before seeing this titan appear over the horizon from over a hundred miles away. Its rise is so sudden and steep that it affects local weather patterns around it, gathering layers of eerie, disc-shaped clouds around its peak. It almost looks like something out of a sci-fi movie. Or Greek mythology. Yeah... I think you can see why it captured so many people's imaginations.

(beat)

Shasta's history goes back much further than the Gold Rush, of course... Long before it and the peoples associated with it were misnamed "Shasta." The Kahosadi, as they called themselves, along with the Wintu, Achumawi, Atsugewi, and Modoc peoples, lived within sight of this mountain for nearly seven millennia before then. In the Karuk language, it was called Úytaahkoo, or "White Mountain," but its other names have been lost, along with the languages of the tribes who lived near it -- obliterated under the boot heel of "manifest destiny." But in all the long centuries before that catastrophe, they revered and cared for the mountain, performing sacred ceremonies and sharing their stories and legends about it. They did that for for so long that it's difficult to say which came first: was the mountain imbued with power from the start, or was it special because those peoples lived here, and loved it, for so long?

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

No matter which is the case, it seems like every culture that touches Shasta comes away with a different meaning for it. For dramatic effect, I'm listing them all together. It is, in no particular order: the dwelling place of Skell, spirit chief of the Above-World -- the entrance to a series of underground tunnels that supposedly link the entire west coast together -- a popular stopping point for those who somehow still believe in the myth of the old west -- the site of a hidden city of ancient, technologically advanced aliens -- a place where people come to make vows to the ascended masters, connect with their "I AM" presence, and even enter the otherworld -- and if nothing else, a place where hikers, skiers, and climbers have reported seeing all kinds of mysterious creatures. Bigfoot sightings, mysterious, not-quite human figures, floating lights, malevolent animal spirits -- all things that have been reported in this area. If you stay here for more than an hour, you'll likely hear at least one of these disparate stories told around a campfire or over a drink.

(beat)

One legend that I was already familiar with, however, was that the mountain is the Root Chakra, the first source of life and grounding in the world. If you haven't been paying attention, my religious interests do tend to skew a little... Mystical, and I've been known to indulge in a bit of plant medicine from time to time. Some people see the mountain as one of the most powerful energy vortexes in the world, ranking it alongside other sacred peaks, hidden temples, and major holy sites around the globe. Maybe that's why there's no single story about this place. But I have to start somewhere, so...

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(beat, then begins story)

One legend in particular stuck with me more than others -- the idea that the mountain is an entrance to the underworld. And once again, it involved a cave, which of course comes with its own baggage for me. But even so... I had to see for myself. Pluto's Cave, just a little ways north of the mountain, is the location of this supposed entrance to hell. At first, I figured that people's stories of feeling unsettled there were mostly due to infrasound: tones that are just below the range of human hearing and create an inescapable sense of paranoia and dread. But even if that was the case, the cave is infamous as a place to meet spiritual beings -- or aliens. Depends on the source. Most of it sounds like urban legends to me, but nonetheless, I was determined to spend all night there.

(beat, embarrassed)

In the end, I barely lasted an hour.

(beat, continuing)

The trail starts off fairly close to the surface, where the ground above the cave has fallen through at various points and left big holes in the roof, so it's pretty easy going at first. The trail is actually an ancient lava tube that runs all the way to the heart of the mountain, though it becomes impassible long before you reach that point.

(beat)

The ground around the trail was dotted with clumps of gnarled bushes up until the point they abruptly stopped at the mouth of the first big cavern. I hesitated at that point for a little while, staring into the dark before taking a deep breath and going in.

(beat)

By the time I reached the bottom of the cavern floor, my eyes had slightly adjusted, so I could see where I was going -- more or less.

(MORE)

## ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The floor was rocky and uneven, and the path seemed to disappear every now and then. Even so, I was able to follow it pretty well as it snaked further into the depths of the earth. The lava tube contracted and expanded at several points as it shrunk down and then opened back up into another chamber. After about 40 minutes of walking, I finally ran into what seemed like a complete dead end. I knew that was too soon, though... The cave was supposed to go on for much longer than I'd been hiking, though I wasn't sure how far. With no better idea, I stopped... And then I turned off my flashlight.

(beat)

I felt the usual flash of terror that total darkness brings. That wasn't my first time, but it's always a shock to find yourself floating in the inky blackness, unable to see your own hand right in front of your face. But it abated quickly into relative calm, and I felt for any kind of movement or disturbance in the air around me. At first there was nothing, but after a moment, I heard something in the dark. It was slight, but it was definitely there. I stepped forward, reaching out with one hand before I eventually felt it: a slight, sluggish movement in the air around me. I turned on my flashlight, and there it was -- the way forward.

(beat)

As soon as I saw it, I realized why I didn't notice it at first: it was just wide enough for me to turn sideways and shimmy through, and the passage beyond was darker than any of the other chambers before it. I tried to shine my flashlight through and see what was on the other side, but the beam disappeared after a couple of feet. Given my aforementioned... Baggage around caves, I hesitated to go in there.

(MORE)

## ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I could all too easily see that passage slamming shut behind me and closing me into some deep, dark grave far underground... But I had no reason to think there was anything supernatural going on yet. Beside my own paranoia and unease, I didn't feel any sense of wrongness or any other presence in the cave with me. Just to make sure, I pulled out my scanner and switched it on -- and the moment I did, I was nearly deafened by a massive roar from the chamber on the other side of the wall. Or maybe it was a... A keening. There was rage, but there was also grieving. And as the sound echoed and became louder and louder as it rebounded off the walls, it kept getting lower and lower in pitch until it dropped into the most intense blast of infrasound I've ever experienced. It was all I could do to keep myself from screaming out loud, too.

(beat)

Obviously, this is where the grand adventure into the cave broke down. I scrambled out of there as quickly as I could, trying not to hurt myself on the way. There were a few points where I thought I'd gotten lost, but I knew that wasn't likely. There's only one path into the cave, and no turn offs. Even so, it felt like it took longer to get out than it took going in.

(beat)

When I finally saw moonlight reflecting off the rocks at the mouth of the cave ahead of me, I rushed towards it as quickly as I could, through the collapsed lava tube and back onto the surface. I didn't stop until I was back in my van, and even once I was locked safely inside with the heater running, I didn't even dare to look back at the trailhead.

(beat)

That was a few days ago.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I've kept exploring the hills and rock formations around Shasta since then, but I haven't been sticking my head into any more dark voids. I haven't seen much... Once or twice I caught a glimpse of some dark figure in the distance, but never for very long and nowhere near where I was hiking. And I wasn't about to go and get a closer look either, not after what happened in the cave. Much as I hate to admit it, I've wasted most of the trip being too scared to actually look for what I came here to find. I may try to come back at some point in the future, if I can bring a little bit of backup. Maybe if I pitch it to Maria as another backpacking trip? Hmm. I'll definitely need to leave out the alien lore if I do, that's for sure.

(pause, thoughtful)

One thing that I keep coming back to is the idea of rooting. Grounding. If Shasta is, indeed, the Root Chakra of the world, then does that mean that I should feel more grounded here than anywhere else? To be honest -- with the exception of what happened in the cave -- I kind of do. When I'm here, wandering the woods, climbing over rocks, dipping my feet into the icy creeks running off the side of the mountain... I feel secure. I feel ready to face the challenges I know are coming when I move on. Even if I don't quite know what those challenges will be, yet.

CLICK.

4. INT. MARIA SOL'S VAN - MORNING - OCTOBER 25, 2019

The tape stops and ejects. MARIA SITS BACK AND SIGHS.

MARIA SOL

Well... There you have it. Anna was here for... Well, she didn't say exactly, but I'd guess about -- a week?

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

I don't know quite what to make off everything that happened and everything she theorized about, but... I do know that she had a bad time in Pluto's Cave, which I was really hoping to avoid before the snow came in and made everything else inaccessible. So, I guess that's where I'm heading now. Despite what I've learned about the aliens-slash-ancient celestial beings that she didn't want me to know about.

(SCOFFS)

She thought mentioning them would turn me off this place. Well... She might have been right about that. Back then, at least.

Maria pulls the parking brake and puts the van in gear, pulling away from the trailhead.

CLICK.

5. EXT. PLUTO'S CAVE TRAIL - LATE MORNING - LATER

The sound of Maria's footsteps on the rocky trail. Quiet but for a faint wind and the occasional bird in the distance.

MARIA SOL

Alright, I'm on the Pluto's Cave Trail now. Took about an hour to drive in -- maybe 45 minutes or so. The area around the trailhead is all like Anna described, so... I'll skip over that. She was the writer, after all.

(beat)

I'm in the part of the cave where the roof has fallen through, so it's really not that bad. Still plenty of light, and...

(cuts off, then quieter)

Sorry, there's this -- couple hiking ahead of me. They left a few minutes before I did and they're moving faster than I am, but they can definitely still hear me. One of them just looked back at me... Not like they were glaring, but they definitely think I'm being too noisy.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

Either that or they were wondering why I'm talking to myself on the way into a cave alone, so... Ugh.

(beat, THEN CHUCKLES)

You know what, I don't know why I thought of this, but... My dad would hate it if he knew I was doing this. Following up on Anna's old tapes by myself, I mean. He'd definitely think it was too risky, that I wasn't prepared enough. This from a man who single-handedly designed and ran a "anti-kidnapper training" bootcamp in our backyard. Yes, you heard that right. Well, if any spirits show up in an unmarked white van and try to tie me up, they'll have another thing coming, let me tell you.

(LAUGHS, beat)

He would always tell me... "Behave well," when I left the house. Then he'd pause, because I'm sure he could hear my hackles rising at that. Then he'd say: "Be careful." And then he'd wait again, before ending with: "And if you can't be careful, don't get caught."

(reconsiders)

Well, maybe he wouldn't hate this so much after all. I'm doing pretty well so --

Maria's footsteps crunch slightly in a bit of snow before she freezes, DRAWING IN A SHARP BREATH OF FEAR.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(EXHALES, calming slightly)

God -- ugh. I saw a flash of red around the corner up ahead, but it's only a bird. Of course it is. I mean, I know it's stupid to think it's the other thing, but honestly, I--

(beat, annoyed)

Fine. Alright. Time to talk about...

(GROANS SLIGHTLY)

The aliens. Or... Maybe not aliens. I don't know. It's hard to say either way. Honestly, it's all so stupid that I shouldn't even worry about it, but...

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(SIGHS)

Well. I've got nothing better to do. So let's talk about Lemuria.

(beat)

Back in the day, some paleontologist came up with the idea of a missing, ancient continent that used to exist in the Indian Ocean as a way of explaining -- of all things -- how lemurs migrated from Madagascar to India. And like most academics, he was terrible at naming things, so we ended up with... *Lemur-ia*. Long after the idea had been completely dismissed by most serious scientists, occultists took the name and rebranded it as the dwelling place of an ancient civilization descended from Atlantis -- because why have only one missing, technologically-advanced continent when you can have two? And of course, they thought that both the Atlantians and Lemurians traveled to Earth from another planet. As one does. So now you might be asking yourself, what does Mount Shasta have to do with an ancient race of aliens from a lost continent in the Indian Ocean? Well, brace yourself, because the story gets even weirder.

(beat)

According to those who believe it actually existed, Lemuria was destroyed in the great flood. You know the one: it's in the Bible, the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Hindu scriptures, Zoroastrian mythology, etcetera etcetera. So after this literally *biblical* flood wiped out their home, the Lemurians -- who somehow survived, unlike literally everyone else -- needed a new one. So they picked Shasta. Like, inside the mountain. In a massive network of caves and tunnels. And somewhere in the middle of all that is their new capital city of Telos, studded with magic crystals and full of all kinds of ancient secrets.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

The reason the bird freaked me out earlier is... Lemurians are supposed to be tall and red-headed. And while they're not necessarily malevolent in the stories... I wouldn't count on them being too friendly, either.

She passes into an open area again, footsteps crunching on snow.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

In any case, Lemuria and Telos fit right into the beliefs of a lot of the New Age people who live near Shasta -- and a whole lot of people who visit here, too. There are whole retreats that are designed around getting people to meditate their way into communication with these Lemurians, even astrally project themselves into Telos if they can.

(beat, then embarrassed)

What I hate so much about this... And again, it feels like such a stupid thing to talk about, but...

Maria stops walking, gathering her thoughts. She starts off again as she begins speaking.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(almost to herself)

My mother. Gabriela Londoño Rodriguez. Tough, resourceful, quick-witted, and adventurous woman that she is. Came to the US from Colombia with my dad in the 80's, raised me in Phoenix, learned English, and trained herself up to be a Pediatric Oncology Nurse. But even with all that intelligence and tenacity and pragmatism, even with all that...

(clearer, slower)

(MORE)

## MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

...Every time the news would start talking about a UFO sighting, or a friend would make some casual reference to extraterrestrials, or even when a movie or TV show had aliens in it, she would cross herself, take a deep breath, and start warning anyone who was in the room that if aliens really were real, then they were just angels or demons in disguise, and that we needed to "test the spirits" to stay safe. I wouldn't have minded half so much if she'd actually paused the movie before she started in on us. And no matter how many times she said those words, it was pretty obvious that she thought actually making contact with said creatures in order to "test the spirits" would have been a grave mistake. Though I wasn't half as scared of what would happen if I did run into some demons disguised as aliens as I was of her finding out about it. It was more like she was saying "If the aliens don't get you, then I will."

(beat)

And, as things tend to do when they're repeated over and over again by a woman you respect, fear, love, and admire... It sunk in. Deep. I didn't realize quite how deep until I started at UCLA and tried to go back and watch the sci-fi movies I missed out on as a kid. I just... Couldn't do it. Even when I had to do it for class, not just for fun. I had to spend a week working up my nerve before a *Star Wars* marathon, for godssake. And yes, this is still a sore spot for me. I tried to downplay it, tried to tell myself they're just movies, but... I could barely get through them without hearing my mom in the back of my head and feeling that old, familiar sense of dread. The only other time I remember feeling like that is...

(beat, reconsiders)

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

...Well, not just one time, but during homily, whenever we went to Mass. That was only twice a year, but still... Well, you go to Mass, you want something that makes you feel uplifted, makes you feel encouraged to do good things. I didn't expect the scoldings. The look on the Priest's face, like he'd just stepped in something rotten. I didn't expect the dread.

(beat)

I don't feel it now, though... Not really, not even with all this talk about aliens. To be honest, I haven't been feeling much of anything lately. Probably just all the traveling, not getting enough sleep. It has to be, because otherwise I wouldn't be nearly this eager to go anywhere near what *might* be the site of alien activity.

(beat)

It is starting to slip in though -- which is really shitty, because I can't deal with that right now. Especially not with -- yeah, I can see the entrance to the first big cave up ahead now. That couple is arguing about whether or not to go further. Looks like I might be going in there alone after all. Good.

(beat)

I'm going to turn this off for now. Don't want to run out of tape.

CLICK.

6. EXT. PLUTO'S CAVE TRAIL - LATER

A quiet, echoing silence with the faint sound of a low wind behind it. After a moment...

MARIA SOL

(impressed)

Wow. Well, it's... Much bigger than I thought it would be in here.

(beat, joke)

"Bigger on the inside!"

(beat, then slightly more serious)

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

I can't hear that couple anymore,  
so they probably turned back. I  
can't see them behind me, but I'm  
not -- I'm just not sure whether  
I'm alone or not.

Maria moves forward slowly, sweeping her flashlight around  
the cave.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(shaking off worry)

At the very least, I know this is  
the big cave Anna talked about on  
her tape. It's going to take me at  
least five minutes to cross it, and  
then it looks like the lava tube  
continues back... That way? Or is  
it down there? Lucky I put fresh  
batteries in this flashlight before  
I left. I haven't seen anything so  
far, but according to Anna, she was  
a lot further in before things  
got...

Suddenly, a low hum rises on the tape, and Maria freezes.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(nervous)

H--hello?

(long pause, half  
whispered)

I just realized that this  
stalagmite in front of me is --  
well, it's shaped like a person. A  
tall, thin person wearing a white  
robe. And...

Maria creeps closer, the static rising on the tape before it  
suddenly cuts out, replaced by a low "thump thump" like a  
terrified heartbeat.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(terrified whisper)

Long, red hair. Shit.

Maria starts to walk backwards, keeping her eyes fixed on the  
figure. SHE TRIES TO HOLD HER BREATH, BUT TAKES SHORT,  
TERRIFIED GASPS OF AIR.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(terrified whisper,  
mantra)

Behave well. Be careful. Don't get  
caught. Behave well. Be careful.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 Don't get caught. Behave well. Be careful. Don't get...

Maria turns around, shooting glances behind her between each repetition before she freezes WITH A FAINT GASP, AND THEN A SOFT, PAINED CRY as she sees something else ahead of her.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 (pained)  
 Not now. Please, god... Not now.

She carefully, slowly begins walking forward again.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 There's another one. Another stalagmite up ahead. And it... It looks like Anna. Like she's just standing there, turned away from me.

Maria stops a few feet away from it. After a moment...

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 (hesitant)  
 Anna?

A low hum, sounding more like a human voice, begins to resound in the cave. Maria whips around, pointing her flashlight back at the mysterious being.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 (muttering, fearful, angry)  
 Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee, Stay the fuck behind me Satan, I'm still watching you goddammit.

Maria turns back to "Anna."

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 If I can just get a good look at the front of it, then...

Maria tries to walk around it, when suddenly a smooth, whooshing sound, like a faint wind, appears and vanishes into the distance, along with "Anna."

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 (breathless)  
 Oh my god. It just... Floated away into the dark. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, what the hell is happening?

The low, human-like hum starts to become rhythmic, almost syllabic. Maria turns back to the other figure.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)  
 (louder, to herself)  
 Behave well, be careful, don't get  
 fucking caught! Behave well, be  
 careful, don't get...

The hum slowly turns, fading into words in a language that sounds ancient, advanced, and otherworldly. MARIA IS BREATHING HARD NOW, as she scrambles backwards towards the exit.

MYSTERIOUS BEING  
 (repeated)  
 ...l'a shing ca dwesti alla yah,  
 moleni ouro dwyna mrah... l'a shing  
 ca dwesti alla yah, moleni ouro  
 dwyna mrah...

MARIA SOL  
 I'm almost out... The exit's just  
 up ahead...

ANNA SHERIDAN  
 (whistling on the wind,  
 PRE-RECORDED)  
 Maria...

MARIA SOL  
 Anna? Where are --

MYSTERIOUS BEING  
 (booming, cutting off the  
 repetition)  
 NO! Do not look back.

MARIA SOL  
 (frozen, panicked whisper)  
 Anna, if you're there, please just  
 say something -- I can't see you in  
 the dark...

MYSTERIOUS BEING  
 (a level threat)  
 Leave. Do not turn around. Do not  
 look back.

Maria finally bolts, racing up and out of the passage.

CLICK.

## 7. INT. CABIN NEAR MOUNT SHASTA - NIGHT - LATER

Maria re-starts the recorder. A quiet fire burns in the stove, and the wind whistles lightly outside.

MARIA SOL

(slightly irritated)

Well, so much for not leaving loose ends.

(beat, SIGH)

I'm back in my cabin now. Safe and sound away from whatever's going on in Pluto's Cave. I thought I could handle it, but -- I wasn't prepared for that. I lost my nerve at the last second, and I didn't know what else to do but run. I tried to convince myself to go back in, but every time I got back out of my van I felt that same sense of dread. So I lost the entire rest of the afternoon. I didn't even think to start the recorder again.

(beat)

I decided to just drive back to the cabin. It was almost sunset then, so I pulled over at Ascension Rock on the way. It's an area that's known for more positive, helpful apparitions, so I figured it would balance me back out a little or... Something. At the very least, I thought seeing the sunset would help cheer me up after how shitty the day was.

(beat)

When I reached the lookout, I saw a white-haired woman sitting on one of the rocks, so I found a spot a little ways off and sat down to watch. She eventually looked up from meditating or... Whatever she was doing, and noticed me there. She asked what brought me to Shasta. I almost wanted to tell her that it was none of her business, but...

(LAUGHS RUEFULLY)

Instead, I told her that someone I loved always wanted to come back here, but didn't get the chance. That she wanted to figure this place out before she died, and I was trying to do the same thing.

(MORE)

## MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

And that I failed.

(beat)

I don't know why I was so honest with her, it's not like I knew who she was or if I could trust her, but she just... Laughed. She said that Shasta is too big to figure out in a day or two -- that some people spend their entire lives here just trying to get answers to their own questions, and most of them don't find anything.

(beat)

I didn't know what to say to that, so we just sat there in silence for a bit longer before she asked if it would be alright if she started drumming. I had no reason to say no, so she began playing and chanting as the sun went down. It was one hell of a sunset: pink and orange streaks that lit up the sky and the snow around us. I knew I should feel at peace here, so I tried to. Believe me, I really did.

(beat)

But then these little orbs of light began to flicker and buzz around the rocks, just as it started to get dark. I stared at them, not quite sure if I could believe what I was seeing. I know I've seen stranger things out here, but it was almost dreamlike, the way they just appeared like that. Or -- I guess, kind of like watching someone else's dream. The woman just kept smiling when she saw them, chanting and drumming like it was perfectly normal. The orbs disappeared after a few minutes like they were never really there, and the sun went down a moment later.

(beat)

It took me a while to speak again, but when I did I asked the woman where she thought all of these different visions and creatures around Shasta came from -- what they all meant. And she just said... "Ethos Anthropos Daimon. Be careful what stories you let into your head."

(MORE)

## MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(beat)

I might have stayed longer, but it was getting cold and I needed to get back here and record while this was still fresh. I thought that phrase sounded familiar though, so I looked it up before I started. It took about ten minutes to load with the shitty cell service in my cabin, but when it did, I found definitions like: "You create the reality you know," and "Your thinking is your destiny," and... "Character is fate." Huh. You know, I think Anna said that once, when we were moving her into her house in Lake Isabella.

(beat)

Maybe the old lady was saying that the apparitions have something to do with what you expect to see, subconsciously. Like -- both Anna and I went into that cave and found whatever we were most afraid of finding. And then, when I was at Ascension Rock, I was expecting to see something safe, something comforting, and... I basically got disembodied fireflies. I used to see them all the time when I was a kid, and they... I don't know. I still remember trying to catch them with dad, though. He always made sure to put holes in the top of the jar so they could breath. I was always in too much of a rush to do that.

(beat, thoughtful)

I saw what I expected to see... Whether or not I actually know I wanted to see it. It... Returned my own subconscious thoughts to me. Grounded me, just like Anna thought.

(beat)

But that would mean this place has some kind of... Psychic influence acting over the entire region. All of Shasta, above and below the ground. God, what could possibly do all of that *and* avoid detection for so long?

Maria thinks it over for a moment, then GIVES A DRY LAUGH.

MARIA SOL

(slightly bitter)

That's a bigger question than I can answer, that's for sure. Although I guess my parents really did prepare me pretty well for this, even if they didn't realize it. Test the spirits... And don't get caught.

(beat, curious)

I wonder how much Anna knew about this place that she didn't tell me. Or about other places like this -- places of power, like Agate Shore or... Maybe even Oslow. The more time I spend with these tapes, the more I realize just how little I actually knew about her.

Maria sits with that for a moment, considering.

MARIA SOL

(darkly)

You know, sometimes, I really wonder what I'll do once I'm done with these tapes.

A long moment of thoughtful, brooding silence.

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME  
AND CREDITS