

"BITTER RUE"
The Sheridan Tapes - Season 02, Episode 39
Recording Draft - February 25, 2021

by

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Based on story and characters from
"Homestead on the Corner"
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1. INT. LAX ARRIVALS TERMINAL - DAY - DECEMBER 3, 2012

A busy afternoon early in the holiday season -- the bustle of hurried travelers, intermittent messages on the intercom, and sliding doors opening and closing constantly.

Maria sits idly by, fidgeting every so often in her seat, MAKING IMPATIENT NOISES and tapping on her armrest. After a moment, she pulls out her phone.

MARIA SOL
(muttering, frustrated)
Where the hell are you Anna? Your
plane landed half an hour ago.

She taps the screen a few more times, switching apps.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(muttering, growing more
angry)
Only two bars? Geez, I can't even
check tumblr with that.

Maria angrily turns it off and pockets her phone, drumming slightly on the armrest. After a few moments...

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
Screw this. I'm gonna go get
coffee.

Maria stands, walking through the crowd. The scene grows louder as she goes, pushing past a few people.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(unconscious, not really
meaning it)
Sorry -- Excuse me, I just need to -
- Sorry -- Thanks.
(muttering to herself)
This would be so much easier if
Anna was here.

The crowd thins a little, and Maria starts walking faster.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(scanning the storefronts)
How come the only time you can't
find a coffee shop is when you
actually want one? My kingdom, my
kingdom for a freaking Star -- Oh,
there it is!

Maria turns towards it, when suddenly --

Silence. The sound of the crowd evaporates with a faint whoosh, like air filling the space left by the vanished travelers.

Maria freezes, looking around.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(unnerved)
What the hell?

Whoosh. The sound of the crowd returns just as suddenly as it vanished, and someone bumps into Maria with a slight OOMF.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(more confused than
apologetic)
Sorry! I didn't see you there.

THEY SCOFF IN RESPONSE, then walk off. Maria glances around at the crowd as an intercom begins to drone overhead.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(thinking this through)
Okay... So either I'm going crazy,
or something really weird is going
on here. What the hell could make
an entire airport just --?

Whoosh. The crowd vanishes again. The message on the intercom echoes for a long time, bouncing through the now-empty terminal.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(fear, a bit of wonder)
Holy Shit...

Maria pulls out her phone and begins to record as she walks back into the empty hall.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(narrating)
I don't know how well you can see
this, but -- I'm in the middle of
LAX right now. It was full of
people a second ago, but now --
It's completely empty. I saw it
happen. The people just --
Vanished. No flash or smoke or
anything, just -- one second there,
the next --

Whoosh. The crowd reappears in front of Maria... Along with a baggage cart that slams into her a half-second later.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (pained, surprised)
 Oooof!

Maria's phone drops, clattering on the floor as she topples.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (pained groan)
 Ow...

Maria stands, turning and picking up her phone before limping away.

PASSENGER
 (obviously flustered, not
 sure what to say)
 Oh god, I'm so sorry, I didn't see
 you, I was... Miss? Miss?

Maria pointedly ignores them, limping as fast as she can towards the lobby.

MARIA SOL
 (pained determination)
 I just need to get to the baggage
 claim -- Anna will be there, I just
 need to --

Whoosh. The crowd evaporates. Nothing but the sound of the empty baggage carousel, still turning.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (PANTING SLIGHTLY)
 Shit.
 (beat, then curious)
 Huh... Well that's interesting.
 People's luggage disappeared at the
 same time they did. Good to know.
 That probably means I'm not in the
 real LAX, just a... A copy of it.
 Thousands of people aren't being
 pulled out of the real world --
 it's just me.

Maria falls silent, waiting for the world to snap back to normal. When it doesn't...

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (loudly addressing the
 "airport")
 Oh, come on, don't tell me you're
 going to stay like this now? After
 you hit me with a baggage cart back
 there?

Silence. Nothing but the echoing of her voice in the empty terminal -- and then thunder. A low, booming rumble from somewhere outside that sounds ordinary at first, but then grows louder and louder rather than fading out.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (dawning apprehension)
 What the fuck is that...

The windows in the terminal begin to shake, the sound itself rattling the world.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (terrified, lost)
 Where are you, Anna?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (cheerful)
 Right here!

MARIA SOL
 (alarmed)
 AH!

Maria spins around, and the world snaps back to normal. The rumbling vanishes, replaced by the familiar sounds of LAX.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (LAUGHING)
 Whoah! It's just me, Maria! I know I look different with a tan, but can't you --
 (sees the look in her eyes, worried)
 Jesus Maria, are you okay?

MARIA SOL
 (breathless)
 I'm... I'm fine, it's just --

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (crisis mode)
 What happened? Do you need to get some air?

MARIA SOL
 (hesitant)
 I...

She cuts off, wrapping Anna in a bear hug.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (a little awkward)
 He-ey, hey, it's alright, you're
 okay now. You're safe.

MARIA SOL
 (whispered, almost crying)
 Please don't go away again. Please.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (reassuring tenderness)
 I won't. I'm right here. We're
 okay.

After a moment, Maria unwraps her arms from around Anna,
 stepping back slightly.

MARIA SOL
 (SNIFFS, a little
 embarrassed)
 Sorry.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 It's okay, Maria... I missed you
 too.

MARIA SOL
 (struggling to explain)
 No, it's not that, it's -- I mean
 it is, but... Not just that.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (growing concern)
 What do you mean?

MARIA SOL
 (hesitant)
 I just... I think I just had
 another encounter.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (SCOFFS, disbelieving)
 What, here?

MARIA SOL
 (annoyed)
 Yes, here. Look, I got a video of
 it when I --

She pulls out her phone, then freezes.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (irritated)
 Son of a bitch...

ANNA SHERIDAN
Did you drop it somewhere?

MARIA SOL
(bitter)
No, I hit it with a hammer when it
didn't update fast enough. Of
course I dropped it!

ANNA SHERIDAN
(backing down slightly)
Sorry -- Still, it probably
wouldn't have worked anyways.
Digital cameras --

MARIA SOL
(cooling off slightly)
-- Yeah, yeah, I know: they don't
do well with paradoxes. Still
wanted to show you, though.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(gentle encouragement)
Well, whatever it was... I think
you handled it pretty well without
me.

MARIA SOL
(BITTER LAUGH)
No, I didn't. And I really don't
want to do it again.

CLICK.

2. INT. ANNA SHERIDAN'S VAN - MORNING - SEPTEMBER 19, 2011

The familiar crackle of static as one of Anna's tapes begins
to play, fading into the sounds of waves crashing far below
and a light coastal wind.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(admiring the vista)
I've always thought of the Oregon
coast as a special place -- one of
those rare and precious places
where the noise and hurry of modern
life falls away, and the veil
between worlds is thin more often
than not. A timeless place, where
the past and present blur together
and the shadows are rarely as empty
as they seem.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

And while there are still dozens of places like that in the untouched corners of this planet, few, for my money, compare to Heceta Head.

(beat)

Perhaps it's the stark contrasts that make it so: the sharp spurs of solid earth jutting up from the crashing waves like rocky fangs, the lighthouse towering higher still above them. The long, arcing bridge looming over the waves like an ancient aqueduct, linking this isolated place to the other pockets of civilization that cling to life on the edge of the sea. Even the light itself, shining out into the utter dark of the wild Pacific night like a lance of fire, cutting through the heavy fog all the way to the horizon, before disappearing behind the curve of the Earth itself.

(beat, then with a bit of humor)

Or maybe it's just that it makes me want to wax poetic every time I see it. Whenever I find myself out here, I'm usually driving south on Highway 101 to somewhere else on the coast, and the hills and thick forests surrounding the lighthouse keep it out of sight until I've already missed the turn-off. Every time I spot it in the rearview mirror, I kick myself for passing it by again and swear I'll visit next time. And then next time, I do the exact same thing. And the time after that. And the time after that.

(beat)

It might have always been a "next time" destination if I didn't take a moment to actually research the place after my last near-miss. I always thought it was dramatic enough to warrant a visit even without any supernatural phenomena. Imagine my delight when I learned that it's also deeply, deeply haunted.

(beat)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

In 1888, soon after the land around the head was claimed by people who really had no right to claim it at all, this rocky spur was chosen as the site of a new, powerful lighthouse to keep ships off the treacherous cliffs surrounding it. Work didn't really begin until 1892, however, and the construction process was notoriously slow, dangerous, and difficult. Heceta Head was and is right on the edge of a series of steep coastal hills, miles from the nearest town and all but swallowed up by the ancient forests that surround it. Supplies that came by boat had to contend with dangerous tides and waves, and bringing materials by wagon took nearly five hours of riding over muddy, axel-breaking terrain. Yet even with all that, the entire project only took a year to complete. When the light first shone out into the dark on March 30th, 1894, I'm sure that all assembled could agree that their efforts had been more than worth the result.

(beat)

Soon after, keepers moved in, assigned to watch over the kerosene lamp and keep it shining against the infinite dark. This, it turned out, was not as easy as they assumed. At least three sets of light keepers came and went within 8 years, along with their families; driven off by the harsh weather, dangerous, unpleasant work, and above all, the isolation that wrapped itself around the lighthouse like a shroud. Only after Olaf Hansen took over did the constant turnover end, and he spent years turning this isolated spit of land into a place where people could actually live and thrive. He built a schoolhouse, a garden, and even a post office, all in an effort to make sure that whoever came after him wouldn't feel nearly as isolated from the outside world as he and his predecessors had.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Across the years, people like Olaf worked tirelessly to ensure the light kept shining, to keep sailors safe in the dangerous waters below, and to maintain a small foothold of civilization far from the eyes of other human beings. And, like in so many other places where humanity lingered for too long alone in the dark -- doors were opened.

Something was drawn here: something that took up residence in the shadows of the trees, beneath the waves, and beyond the reach of the ever-burning lamp.

(beat)

Of course, civilization eventually caught up with the rugged fantasy of this place. Less than 40 years after the light first started shining, Highway 101 and the Cape Creek bridge permanently and irreversibly tied this part of the world to the rest of modern society, and the light was electrified soon afterwards. It passed into the care of the US Coast Guard by the end of the 30's, and they decided to sell off the head keeper's house for lumber. By 1963, the lighthouse was fully automated, and the last of the lighthouse keepers left their posts for good.

(beat)

It was only at this point, however, when the ghosts truly began to come out of the woodwork. While the head keeper's house was long gone, the assistant keeper's house still stood, as it does to this day. Throughout the mid-90's, it was leased out to Lane Community College by the US Forest Service. One dark and stormy night, a group of students -- probably driven by the same mix of isolation and boredom that made the lighthouse so difficult to staff in the first place -- decided to break out a Ouija board and attempt to communicate with any spirits still lingering on the grounds.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

After the mood had been appropriately set, the students asked for a name. The planchette began to move across the board, and ever-so-slowly, it spelled out a three letter word: "R-U-E." Hence, when a worker came face to face with a grey lady in a Victorian dress while cleaning the attic, she quickly became known as Rue.

(beat)

For the most part, Rue seemed to be harmless -- even friendly, if a little mischievous. After that same worker accidentally broke an attic window while cleaning the outside of the house, he refused to go back inside and pick up the glass, patching it up from the outside instead. Later that night, the caretakers heard a faint scraping sound through their ceiling, and when they checked the next morning, they found the broken glass swept up into a neat little pile on the floor. Years later, when the house had been converted into a Bed and Breakfast, guests began to describe feeling a comforting presence in their rooms when they were alone, and a few even said that someone had sat down on the bed next to them while they slept. But even with all of these encounters, it seems no one has ever been actively harmed by Rue -- just occasionally spooked. And as a result, the time that would have otherwise been spent being afraid of her was dedicated to solving the mystery of who she really was.

(beat)

By and large, it's been worked out backwards, stitched together from rumor, hearsay, and speculation. You might think it would be relatively easy to figure out if anyone named Rue ever lived in the assistant keeper's house -- but you'd be wrong.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The 19th century's misogyny extended even to the paperwork of the Lighthouse Service, and only the names of the exclusively male keepers were recorded. Their wives and families were seen as extra cargo they brought along with them. But even without any solid records, theories abound. The most widely accepted tale is that Rue was the wife of one of the earliest keepers at Heceta Head. Whether by accident or through some horrifying act of malice, her daughter drowned, either in the estuary below the lighthouse or in the cistern, and was buried somewhere on the property. There's supposedly a small, child-sized grave marker somewhere in the woods behind the lighthouse, though it's notoriously difficult to find and I haven't been able to locate any photos of it online. What happened afterwards, however, isn't often discussed, and it isn't clear whether the keeper's wife also died on the property, or if she died elsewhere, only to return and haunt the site of her daughter's passing. There's even a theory that there are two ghosts: the child, who spelled out "Rue" on the Ouija board, and her mother, who the worker saw in the attic. But no one really knows for sure. I don't think anyone really can.

(beat)

Of course, I have my own theory, as usual. I see no reason to throw out most of the speculation -- someone probably did die out here at some point, and drowning is the most likely cause. Whether a mother or a child, it doesn't really matter: there's no way to tell without finding the grave and exhuming the body... And despite what some people might think of me, I draw the line well above grave robbing. But the evidence we do have is enough, I think.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Whatever or whoever haunts this place has taken the form of a grey lady: a common type of ghost somewhere between a non-corporeal apparition and a poltergeist. They're able to influence the physical world in small ways, but aren't possessed by a sense of anger or malice towards it. The grey lady here seems kind, almost caring -- though I know there's a serious danger in assigning human motives to someone who isn't human... At least, not entirely. After all, I think that's what those students with the Ouija board got wrong in the first place. When the ghost answered the question "what is your name" with "R-U-E," they simply assumed she was giving them the name she had in life. But I don't think that's what really happened. Rue isn't a terribly common name... Not rare by any stretch of the imagination, but not common. But Rue has another meaning, and one I think the students missed. Regret. Dismay. A bitter longing to have done something different in a moment of crisis that can never be undone.

(beat)

In my experience, strong emotions are what bind a soul to a place, even after death. Usually it's anger or fear, but that kind of grief -- the kind of grief that demands some impossible action -- can be just as strong of an anchor. More so, sometimes. And when the ghost spelled "Rue" out on the board, she wasn't giving them her name -- she was telling them her nature, her purpose, and her story all in one.

(CHUCKLES)

Not bad for three letters. Maybe I could learn a thing or two about writing from her.

(beat)

Of course, I can't prove any of that. Especially not with the lighthouse closed and swarming with workers right now.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

These kinds of ghosts tend to be very shy, and they don't like to show themselves when more than one person can see them. Plus, I can't even get up past the lighthouse to look for the gravesite -- not without getting myself arrested in this state a second time. The keeper's house is still open and I considered staying the night, but... Honestly, I don't think there would be any use in trying right now. So once again, I'll just have to say -- Next time. Next time, I'll finally get some answers.

CLICK.

3. INT. HECETA HEAD B&B - NIGHT - NOVEMBER 2, 2019

A few miles and 8 years from where Anna recorded that tape, Maria sits in a cozy room in the B&B -- a small fire crackles, wind whistles quietly, and waves break against the rocks in the far distance.

MARIA SOL

(slightly maudlin)

I must have listened to this thing... What, three times tonight? Four? And god knows how many more on the drive up here. I was hoping I might be able to find some clue about this place that I'd missed -- some way to draw Rue out or figure out who she was, but... There's nothing. Except for that she sounds kind of similar to the ghosts Anna saw in Kingstown and Tahoe -- the ones connected to the voice Sam heard in Agate Shore. But even if she is, that's not a lead. It's barely a hunch, and honestly, I only say that because people assume she drowned here. I don't even know that for sure. I'm hoping I can find something more substantial out in the woods tomorrow. I have to -- this trip has used up all of my rainy day money, and I could only afford to stay here for three nights. I'm not really sure if it's going to be worth it.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

So far I haven't seen or felt anything strange... Though maybe I'm still just tired from the drive. Or -- just tired, period.

(beat, a little vulnerable)

To be honest, I stopped listening to the tape for details a long time ago. I don't know how long ago, but probably before I started driving here. There isn't much to it, not compared to some of Anna's other tapes, but... Maybe that's why I was listening to it. I just wanted to hear her tell me a story one more time. To hear her voice again and... Uh...

Maria cuts off, then MAKES A SMALL, ANGRY NOISE -- almost like an audible frown at how sad that sounds.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(frustrated)

I need to get out of here -- get some fresh air. It's getting way too depressing in this room.

CLICK.

4. EXT. HECETA HEAD LIGHT - LATER

The crashing of the waves is still distant, but less muffled. The wind is louder as it hurries through the leafy canopy, and every few seconds, a low, deep whoosh indicates the light sweeping past.

Maria walks slowly across a field of low grass and wet leaves.

MARIA SOL

(trying to distract herself with investigation)

Alright -- just made it up the hill to the lighthouse. I almost didn't get out of that house -- you'd think the caretaker was going to have a fit when she saw me going outside without a jacket. She thinks it's going to rain, apparently. I just kind of ignored her and ducked out before she could stop me.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(beat)

I didn't think I would go this far. I only brought my recorder and flashlight so I wouldn't have to carry too much stuff, but I probably didn't need that last one: with all this fog, the beacon is lighting up the entire hill, even if it does get dark when it's not shining this way. And it'll probably get darker once I'm into the trees, but I figured now is as good a time as any to look for Rue's grave. If there is anything genuinely supernatural out here -- well, this is my best chance of finding it. Or of it finding me, I guess. Either way works for me.

Maria stops suddenly, considering that.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(slightly detached,
intellectual realization)

No... It shouldn't work for me. I should be scared. I should be terrified, honestly. Going out in the woods behind a lighthouse on a foggy night? If nothing else I should be scared of falling off the cliffs in the dark, but -- I'm not. I don't feel -- anything. Not afraid, not worried, not even all that curious about whether or not there's actually a grave out there. Honestly, it just feels like -- I don't know, going to the store. Like it's another boring, ordinary thing I have to do.

(beat, still unconcerned)

Huh. I think there might be something wrong with me.

She pulls out her flashlight, switches it on, and begins to walk into the woods.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

I don't feel any presence out here, but that doesn't really mean anything: I haven't felt anything around the other entities I've encountered this year.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

Not in the mirror house, not in Shasta, and definitely not in Big Sur with Alice. I didn't really feel anything the whole time I was in Oslow, either. I was angry when I saw the Echo and scared for Alice, but -- I didn't really feel it, you know? It was more like I knew I should feel that way, so I -- I kind of forced myself to. And between those moments? The times when I should have been scared or sad or even worried for Sam... There was nothing. I didn't feel anything -- not the way I should have. And it's only gotten worse since then.

(beat)

I've done all these things to try and make it up to Anna, to finish what she started, and -- what? Make her proud of me? Even though I know that's impossible. It's more like... I don't know. Like she was a part of me, and I don't know how to feel about anything without her. Ever since we met, I kind of just -- followed her lead. It was always hard when she was gone, even if it was just for a little bit. Even if I was the one who told her to go. Even when we weren't together, half the work I did came from her. I know I technically worked for Poultrice Press, but it was always kind of... Awkward. We had a hard time feeling that out before either of us felt like we could make a move. And even then... Well, it's a real mood killer to have your girlfriend remind you of a deadline in the middle of a date.

Maria stops walking, deeper in thought.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(regretful)

And now she's gone. I tried to keep working, but without Poultrice I just couldn't pay my part of the rent. Not for very long, at least. Thankfully Alice didn't want to stay in the apartment after what happened with the Echo either.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

She let me keep the safety deposit since she still had her job and didn't need it. I've been able to keep going on that and my savings for a while now, but...

(beat, realization)

What the hell am I doing out here?

A moment's silence, before a faint static rises on the tape.

MARIA SOL (RECORDED) (CONT'D)

(faint and distant)

Please don't go away again. Please.

ANNA SHERIDAN (RECORDED)

(faint and distant)

I won't. I'm right here. We're okay.

MARIA SOL

(SCOFFS BITTERLY)

And now I'm hearing things. Great.

Maria takes a few steps, then stops again.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(happy to have something else to focus on)

Oh. There it is. Uh, I guess this is Rue's grave. That was easier than I thought it would be.

Maria walks towards the marker, examining it in the glow of the flashlight.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(detached observations)

It's about -- Eighteen inches tall and eight wide. Unmarked as far as I can tell, and standing mostly upright over a small mound that looks --

Whoosh. The light washes over the grave, and Maria freezes. SHE STAMMERS, words catching in her throat.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(deeply unnerved)

It's... No. It can't be, it has to be a trick of the light. It's blank -- I can see it's blank when I --

Whoosh. The light washes over it again, and a faint, almost inaudible voice whispers: *MARIA...*

The light fades again. Maria stands stock-still, frozen.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (disbelieving, rising
 fear)
 It's -- It's my name. The grave has
 my name on it. How is that
 possible?

ANNA SHERIDAN (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 There's more on the line here than
 you know. Maybe even than I know.
 And I'm sorry, but... It's better
 this way.

MARIA SOL (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 Better for who?

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (growing anger)
 No, no, no -- you don't get to take
 that night! You don't get to go
 there!

Whoosh. The light washes over Maria again.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (faint and distant)
 (angry, demanding)
 Maria, come back here!

MARIA SOL
 (faint and distant)
 (angry)
 If you're not going to tell me why
 we're here, then you can deal with
 whatever's in there on your own for
 all I care!

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (sudden despair)
 No, please not then... Don't...

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (faint and distant)
 (calling after her)
 Maria, stop pouting for once and
 help me! Maria? Maria!

MARIA SOL
 (faint and distant)
 (yelling back)
 (MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 I'm done with you treating me like
 this! Tell me the truth, or fuck
 off!

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (unable to listen any
 longer)
 No!

Maria turns and bolts into the trees. The light washes over
 her, seeming to accelerate. Each new whoosh brings another
 image.

MARIA SOL (RECORDED) (CONT'D)
 (faint and distant)
 What then?

ANNA SHERIDAN (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 Ethos Anthropos Daimon.

MARIA SOL (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 Um... Gesundheit?

ANNA SHERIDAN (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 It's greek. Heraclitus, actually.

MARIA SOL (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 And it means...?

ANNA SHERIDAN (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 "Character is fate."

MARIA SOL (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 But she just hugged me, right there
 in the middle of the edit bays, and
 whispered "thank you" in my ear.
 When she stepped back she seemed to
 be close to tears.

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

MARIA SOL (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 You do, what?

ANNA SHERIDAN (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 Come on Maria, this is serious.

MARIA SOL (RECORDED)
 (faint and distant)
 I just want to hear you say it, for
 a change.

MARIA SOL (RECORDED) (CONT'D)
 (faint and distant)
 Ha! Well, sorry if I'm not weeping
 openly over my dearly departed
 love. Don't mistake this with being
 okay.

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

MARIA SOL
 (half-screaming)
 Shut UP!

Maria breaks through the tree line, the sound of waves louder
 and closer and the whoosh of the light clearer. A light
 drizzle has begun to fall.

The voices are gone, and Maria is left with the stark
 emptiness of the coastal night. SHE PANTS SLIGHTLY, then
 falls to her knees, CRYING SOFTLY.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (heartbroken, finally
 admitting the truth to
 herself)
 I can't do this, Anna. I can't. I
 miss you, and I can't do this
 alone.

Silence -- and then slowly, another voice appears, clear and
 undistorted, and the ambient sounds of the world fade away.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(reassuring, but firm)

Yes, you can. I know you can. And so do you. But you don't have to be alone.

MARIA SOL

(SNIFFS, bitter humor)

I'm not alone. I haven't let you go. And I don't think I can.

ANNA SHERIDAN

You don't have to. Not completely. But you have to stop trying to live my life for me. You need to start living yours.

MARIA SOL

(SCOFFS, empty)

I don't even know what that means anymore.

ANNA SHERIDAN

Then maybe it's time you found out.

MARIA SOL

(guilty)

How can I move on after what I --

ANNA SHERIDAN

(urgent, not to be questioned)

It wasn't your fault.

MARIA SOL

But if I just --

ANNA SHERIDAN

(almost angry)

It *wasn't* your fault. I chose to go in there. That was *my* choice. You couldn't have stopped me, even if you'd tried. Stop killing yourself over something you can't possibly change, and *live*.

Maria doesn't have an answer to that. She hesitates a moment, before...

MARIA SOL

(tender)

I'll still miss you.

ANNA SHERIDAN
I know. That's okay.

MARIA SOL
(finally saying goodbye)
I love you.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(CHUCKLES, smirking but
still full of love)
You'd better.

The voice fades away, and the world slowly returns to normal. The lighthouse whooshes twice. MARIA SNIFFS BACK THE LAST OF HER TEARS, then slowly stands and begins to make her way back down the hill.

CLICK.

5. INT. HECETA HEAD B&B - LATER

Back in her room, Maria is packing her suitcase as she records.

MARIA SOL
(still emotionally tender,
but okay)
Okay, I guess it's been about -- an hour since I stopped recording. I'm doing a little better now -- enough that I can talk for more than a few minutes without bursting into tears, at least. I spoke with the caretaker when I got back and said I needed to leave early. I guess she thought I saw something in the woods that scared me off. And I guess that's kind of true, so I didn't bother correcting her.

She zips up her bag, then stands up.

MARIA SOL
(CHUCKLES QUIETLY)
You know the strangest thing? I actually think I can feel a presence in here now. I don't know if it's Rue or someone else or -- maybe Anna. I don't see how I could have actually been talking to her back there but... it felt like her. It's... Comforting, in a way.
(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

Honestly, I could probably stay for a few more days, but -- I think it's high time I go home. I need to call Alice and -- Well, first I need to apologize, and then ask her if I can stay at her new place for a few days. Or at least park my van outside while I figure out --

BUZZ. BUZZ. Maria's phone starts to vibrate on the nightstand.

MARIA SOL

(confused)

Who's calling me now? It's got to be midnight by --

(sees number)

759? That's an Oslo number. Who's --
--?

(answers the phone,
nervous)

Um... Hello?

BILL TYLER

(urgent, slightly
breathless)

Maria? Is that you?

MARIA SOL

(worried)

Bill? Why are you calling me on your cell, I thought you said --

BILL TYLER

I know, I know it's a risk, but --
I didn't know who else to call.

MARIA SOL

(trying to be careful)

What's going on? Is it -- uh, you know who?

BILL TYLER

What? Oh, no, he's fine, but it's... Well, I don't know. He's okay -- but I don't know. He might not be for much longer.

CLACK. The tape ends.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS