

"THE ASPEN TREMBLES"
The Sheridan Tapes - Season 02, Episode 47
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by

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"Homestead on the Corner"
By Trevor Van Winkle

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Homestead on the Corner

1. INT. DINER - DAY - JULY 20, 1978

A diner in the late 70's -- scattered conversations, forks scraping plates, coffee pouring, and cash register chiming.

Footsteps approaches a table, where a young scientist folds a newspaper and sets it aside as EDGAR MORRISON, age 22, slides into the booth.

SCIENTIST

(trying to make small
talk)

You heard about Skylab 3? They're
ready for crewed missions again.

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(clearly a challenge)

Glad they didn't let one failure
set them back completely, huh?

SCIENTIST

(standing their ground)

Lucky they had the option.

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(SCOFFS)

Never thought you were such a
quitter. You saw the same things I
did in that lab. You're really just
going to leave it there? You're
really going to let that stand?

A waitress approaches, notepad in hand.

WAITRESS

(friendly, customer
service voice)

More coffee?

SCIENTIST

(tired, clearly needing
it)

Please.

WAITRESS

(as she pours it into the
waiting mug)

Anything for you, sir?

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(with a charming smile)

Just coffee, thank you.

The waitress retreats, leaving the two in a heavy silence.

SCIENTIST

(TIRED SIGH, resigned)

Well? You called me here with some grand notion of a plan. Care to tell me what it is?

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(disbelieving)

How can you just sit there, knowing what you do?

SCIENTIST

(calm, level)

And what -- exactly -- do I know?

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

Don't pretend like you've already forgotten. Like you're still sleeping sound at night.

SCIENTIST

(DEEP BREATH, leaning in, conspiratorial)

Edgar. Listen to me. Did you see anything unusual when you walked in here?

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(confused)

What do you mean?

SCIENTIST

Exactly my point. If you'd been paying attention, then you would have seen the Bagman sitting in the corner booth when you came in here.

Edgar turns to look, worried.

SCIENTIST (CONT'D)

(frustrated)

No, don't -- Don't turn around. Jesus, Edgar.

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(confused)

You knew this place was being watched? Then why did you want to meet me here?

SCIENTIST

(irritated, done)

I didn't.

(MORE)

SCIENTIST (CONT'D)

I already know what you're going to say, and I already know what my answer will be.

The waitress walks back and sets down a cup of coffee.

WAITRESS

(clearly sensing the tension, nervous)

You two... Need anything else?

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(short)

We're fine, thank you.

WAITRESS

(more on edge)

And, uh -- you, sir?

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(dangerous edge)

I said --

SCIENTIST

(cutting him off before he blows this up)

We're all set here. Thank you.

The waitress hesitates, then quickly retreats.

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(irritated)

Well if you're so keen to speak for me... What am I going to say?

SCIENTIST

Could be any number of things. But they'd all boil down to me staying and helping you go against orders, and that's not going to happen. They've shut us down, Edgar. That's the end of it.

A long pause passes between them. Finally...

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(nervous, dangerous energy, but quiet)

Alright. I think you've done enough talking.

(leaning in, almost whispering)

I have never seen anything like what happened in that lab.

(MORE)

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.) (CONT'D)

And it's messed me up. I can't sleep. I can't eat. I can't stop thinking about who we lost, and I need to find a way to make it right. I have to stay here. I need to make sure this never happens again, and if that means continuing the research --

SCIENTIST

(urgent)

Keep it down, Edgar -- you're getting worked up.

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(unhinged anger, quietly)

I damn sure hope I am. The fact you're not is what's wrong with this situation.

SCIENTIST

(SIGHS, set his coffee aside)

I'm moving on, Edgar. I suggest you do the same. Find a post somewhere quiet. Leave the army, if you have to. But forget this ever happened. Not just for your own safety -- think about your family, your friends. Hell, think about the ones who didn't make it if you have to. But don't let this eat you up. Please.

With that, the scientist pulls out his wallet, puts a few bills on the table, and stands up.

SCIENTIST (CONT'D)

Besides... That door will open again someday. I'm sure of that. And I don't think either of us want to be here when it does.

The scientist turns and starts to walk away.

EDGAR MORRISON (22 Y.O.)

(stunned whisper)

Where could you possibly go after what you've seen?

SCIENTIST

Iowa.

(puts a hand on Morrison's
shoulder)

You take care of yourself, Edgar.

He walks out, the bell on the front door ringing as he leaves.

CLICK.

2. INT. JERRY PRICE'S HOME - DAY - NOVEMBER 7, 2019

Maria starts a recording on her computer, tapping at the keys.

MARIA SOL

Check -- check -- 1 2, 1 2 3... And
you're still working. Wonderful...

Bill walks into the kitchen behind her.

BILL TYLER

(chipper)

You hungry, Maria?

Bill starts chopping something on the counter as Maria stands, walking over to him.

MARIA SOL

You really were serious about
cooking lunch for us, weren't you?

BILL TYLER

Nothing like making lunchtime an
occasion on your day off, right?

MARIA SOL

I guess. If you're actually
working, that is. Does hiding from
the cops count as job?

(FAUX GASP)

Wait! You're a cop! Oh, god -- our
cover is blown!

BILL TYLER

Ha-Ha.

MARIA SOL

(CHUCKLES)

What are you making over there?

BILL TYLER

Oh, this?
 (LAUGHS)
 One of my special recipes. Well...
 Only recipes. Rob's the cook, not
 me.

He lifts the lid of the pot.

BILL TYLER (CONT'D)

(pleased)
 Would you look at that?

MARIA SOL

(hint of condescension)
 White rice, huh?

BILL TYLER

(fake offense)
 I'll have you know there's some
 perfectly good broccoli and chicken
 thighs roasting in the oven, miss
 Maria Sol.

MARIA SOL

(messing with him)
 Ah -- that explains the smell. How
 much garlic did you use?

BILL TYLER

...I plead the fifth.

MARIA SOL

(LAUGHS, to herself)
 Oh, the bitter irony.
 (beat)
 So you're still planning to go back
 to work, huh?

BILL TYLER

(growing tense)
 Some of us still have bills to pay,
 Maria.

MARIA SOL

(SCOFFS)
 Really? That's what you're going
 for?

BILL TYLER

(setting his knife down a
 little too hard)
 Look, I can't just leave the
 department, okay?

MARIA SOL

Why not? Rob quit, and nothing happened. Why can't you do the same? Please tell me you've at least given it *some* thought?

BILL TYLER

(hesitates, HEAVY SIGH)

I have. It's not a simple decision.

MARIA SOL

It is if it puts other people at risk... If it puts your friend at --

BILL TYLER

(exasperated)

Okay! You've made your point.

Bill crosses the kitchen and noisily tosses his knife in the sink. Maria hesitates, then replies.

MARIA SOL

(a little more cautious)

Listen, Bill... you can't let Morrison get away with this just because you think you can change his mind. I know I can't. Anna might be gone, but I'm not letting anyone else get hurt.

Kate walks into the room.

KATE SHERIDAN

(whispered aside)

Anna's definitely alive, but...

(to Bill)

...You really should listen to her, Bill.

BILL TYLER

(exasperated)

Kate, you know better than anyone why I can't --

KATE SHERIDAN

(putting her hands up)

Hey, I'm not getting into this again -- I'm just here to back Maria up. I've already made my feelings about this abundantly clear.

BILL TYLER
 (SCOFFS)
 Don't remind me.

MARIA SOL
 Just look around, Bill -- we're all here because we need to hide from the people you're working with, and you're still siding with them?

BILL TYLER
 I'm not *siding* with anyone!

KATE SHERIDAN
 Then what the hell *are* you doing, *lieutenant*?

Sam walks in at the moment.

SAM BAILEY
 (awkward)
 Oh. Are we, uh... Is this a bad time?

MARIA SOL
 (irritated)
 Sam, please try to talk some sense into Bill -- nothing we say is getting through.

BILL TYLER
 Stop trying to rope him into this. He was a cop too -- he gets what I'm saying.

SAM BAILEY
 (hesitant)
 I wouldn't say I, uh... That I really get it.

BILL TYLER
 (irritated muttering)
 Oh for fuck's sake...

Bill turns back to chopping vegetables, pointedly ignoring everyone.

BILL TYLER (CONT'D)
 (irritated muttering)
 You go through the trouble of cooking everyone a nice lunch, and they decide it's time to --

KATE SHERIDAN
(rolling eyes)
Oh, so now he's upset.

MARIA SOL
A man finally criticized him, of
course he's --

BILL TYLER
(snapping)
HEY! That's enough, alright?

Everyone falls silent. After a moment...

SAM BAILEY
Bill... I think you and I need to
talk about this. Now.

BILL TYLER
(tired)
God, you're all acting like I'm
some kind of idiot. Of course I
know how serious this is. I just...
I just need a little more time.
Morrison is coming around, I know
he is. We can figure this out.

Sam doesn't reply to that.

MARIA SOL
(done with this)
Whatever. You two go ahead and try
to work this out -- I'm going to go
out back and listen to some of
Anna's tapes.

Maria walks out the door. After a moment, Sam steps further
into the room.

SAM BAILEY
I know you think there's a way to
change the department for the
better, but trust me: the more time
you spend there, the more you'll
start seeing things from Morrison's
point of view. And if you're never
really on his side... He'll figure
out eventually. I mean -- you're
already in danger, working with us.
It's only a matter of time before
Morrison or De Witt figure it out,
and then --

BILL TYLER

Look, I know, alright? But I know how Morrison runs surveillance better than anyone. He's not going to figure it out.

SAM BAILEY

(slightly defeated,
changing tactic)

Fine... You're right. But even if you do keep him in the dark -- you can't get him to stop his experiments without telling him you followed De Witt. And if we can't do that, then nothing else matters. I'm dead. Morrison's won. And if anything goes even slightly wrong when he does this, he could rip a hole in the universe and let things that would scare the Echo loose.

(beat)

Doesn't that mean anything to you?

Before Bill can answer, Jerry walks in.

JERRY PRICE

Everything alright in here?

KATE SHERIDAN

(frustrated)

Bill's going to go back to work.

JERRY PRICE

(SCOFFS, incredulous)

Excuse me?

BILL TYLER

They need me there... I'm the only one keeping Morrison even slightly -

-

KATE SHERIDAN

(frustrated)

Gah! This conversation is going in circles.

SAM BAILEY

She's right, Bill. You're just turning every reason you should leave into an excuse to stay... Can't you see that?

BILL TYLER

What's that supposed to mean?

JERRY PRICE

(a little desperate)

Bill, look. I know how hard it is to get out of that life once you're in it. Believe me, *I know*. But the more you try to convince yourself that --

BILL TYLER

(exploding)

Would you all just shut up for a second! You haven't been there for the last six months Sam, and none of you even know Morrison. I do. He's changing. I got him to back down from hurting someone just this week, and he admitted that the department needs to change. He's trying to be better, to make all of us better! And if I just stay for a little bit longer, I know I can convince him of the danger he's in, working with De Witt. When did just... Talking to people stop being an option for you?

SAM BAILEY

(exploding)

Gee, maybe sometime around when I last talked to Morrison and he decided to have me killed!

JERRY PRICE

(butting in)

Look Bill, Morrison's right at the top of the food chain. He doesn't have to listen to anyone, least of all you.

KATE SHERIDAN

(trying one more time)

And we all need to work together if we're going to have a chance at stopping him. This is hard for everyone, but you're the only one who's still not on board with --

BILL TYLER

(done with this)

Could you all just --

The back door suddenly flies open, and Maria rushes in.

MARIA SOL
 (excited, agitated)
 Everyone, shut up!

SAM BAILEY
 (suddenly worried)
 What's wrong?

Maria sets a tape player down on the table, fiddling with the volume dial.

MARIA SOL
 (slightly breathless)
 I found something on this tape. I must have missed it before -- there were about ten minutes of silence at the start, so I assumed it was blank. But it was really just --

BILL TYLER
 (suddenly tired)
 Do we really have to do this now --
 ?

MARIA SOL
 Bill, please. I think you all need to hear this.

Everyone goes silent -- then...

BILL TYLER
 (EXHAUSTED SIGH)
 Fine. Roll it.

Maria presses play.

3. INT. ANNA SHERIDAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - JANUARY 6, 2016

The familiar crackle of static fades, resolving into a quiet room -- the fireplace crackles across from Anna, and she takes a sip of tea from her old mug.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (slow, thoughtful, and a little distressed)
 I dreamt about dad again last night. I know, I know... It's totally normal to dream about your dead loved ones, but... I never dream about dad. Not since he passed. And I definitely don't do it three nights in a row.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I barely ever remember my dreams. I've started keeping this recorder next to my bed so I can keep some kind of journal, but most of the time I end up just falling back asleep. The ones I can remember are usually about some kind of entity chasing me -- or me chasing them. Or just... Me falling out of the sky. I've had that one more than a few times.

(beat)

But... These dreams are different. Or at least... They feel different. Last night, I was sitting on the tire swing that used to hang from the oak tree in our backyard, being pushed back and forth by my dad. I was three years old again, and wearing denim blue overalls and a yellow shirt -- the one with the little bow just below the neck. I giggled as he pushed me higher and higher. My dad called out for me to "Hold on, Anna" as he pushed, and I clung tighter to the rope, excited and terrified. I could feel the hot summer sun beating down on our backs, and it just felt -- perfect. Full of joy and love as the two of us shared that moment. There was no fear in that dream, just the feeling that I was safe and loved, unconditionally.

(beat)

And then I woke up, with a sense of dread settling into the pit of my stomach.

(beat, musing to avoid her
fear)

The debate about the nature and meaning of dreams is probably as old as consciousness itself. People have seen them as prophesies of the future, ill omens, glimpses into the spirit world, or even curses sent by demons or witches. Normally, I might be quicker to dismiss those ideas -- but even now, nobody's completely sure why we dream.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

We know *how* we dream: it's our brain trying to interpret random electrical impulses during REM sleep, pulling thoughts, emotions, and imagery from our memories to construct the dreamscape. But the reason *why* this happens -- why we evolved the ability to dream -- is still a mystery. Some scientists think it's meaningless -- something left over by evolution that doesn't benefit or harm our chances of survival. Freud thought that dreams offered a window into the subconscious, revealing hidden desires and emotions. And others theorize that dreams evolved as a coping mechanism -- a way for our brains to process and heal from anxiety, loss, and trauma.

(beat)

Personally, I've never given it much thought. My dreams have never meant much to me, and I'm more interested in finding ghosts when I'm awake than chasing them down in my sleep. But now, I'm left with no idea of why my subconscious is choosing this moment to focus on dad. Am I trying to rebuild that missing bond, somehow? Is it my father trying to reach through the veil and tell me something? Is it a trap, set by some power with influence over dreams? A trick?

(pause, then SIGHS)

I don't like to admit it, but I really don't think about dad very often. I guess you could say I'm not fond of dwelling on my past. As close as we were... There are a lot of painful memories tied up around him. A psychiatrist might go so far to say that I'm avoiding a place of unresolved grief... Which is why I avoid licensed psychiatrists as a rule. But I've been forced to give him a lot more thought, lately... To reconcile the good with the bad. The things I was there for and the... The moments I missed. The words I couldn't say.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(beat, then shaking
herself out of that
moment)

So if my dad is, somehow, trying to tell me something -- which I'm not saying he is -- what is it? Those who knew Andrew Sheridan always said he was a quiet man -- a man of few words, much to my mother's contempt. My father was what you might call a -- a solitary man. He wasn't a hermit or a recluse or anything like that... He couldn't be, not with his job. It's just that, for the most part, he really just preferred to be on his own. My mother would drag him around to block parties and church functions and family engagements, and he'd play whatever part he was supposed to dutifully... But at the end of the day, he was more at ease tooling around in the garage or the garden, or else reading on the back patio with a camel cigarette tucked under his lip.

(beat)

Maybe it was his upbringing that made him want to be alone. He was raised mostly by his father: Thomas, a farmhand from West Des Moines. His mother, Patricia, passed away when he was eleven from what he always suspected to be an autoimmune disease, though she was never diagnosed. He didn't talk about her much, but when he did -- his voice would grow soft as he talked about her "world famous" zucchini bread, and the way she used to read him short stories by the fireplace of their little ranch house on Patsy Lane. After Patricia died, my grandfather began to spend more and more time in the field, putting in long hours and longer days that left my dad to his own devices. And this is where we see just how far the apple fell from the tree -- instead of getting into trouble, my father spent that time studying and reading physics textbooks.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

His mother wanted him to get into a good college and escape the cycle of poverty she and Thomas had inherited, and so he did. He excelled, in fact... enough that his test scores for mathematics and his scientific ability landed him a full-ride scholarship to MIT. He graduated summa cum laude with a major in physics and a minor in astronomy, and would have gone on to earn his PHD if he wasn't approached by a government agency to work on some top-secret R&D project. I'm guessing it was the Department of Defense, but... Dad never said. But whoever he worked for, they moved him out to the Nevada desert right away, where he spent six years working on a project that's still top secret, as far as I can tell. Despite my repeated attempts to find more information, there seems to be no official record of Andrew Sheridan ever working for the government.

(beat)

Of course, I could have asked him for more details, but he almost never talked about his time in Nevada. I had to scrape together what little I do know over years of careful prying and seemingly innocent questions. All I really know about his work is that it was classified and cutting edge, though he would always say "that makes it sound more interesting than it was." Maybe that was true... But that doesn't explain why he chose to move back to Iowa after the project ended and spend the next twenty years of his life teaching physics to bored high school students. Nor does it explain why he chose to marry Deborah Fielding soon after he started teaching -- a somewhat more questionable decision, if you ask me.

(beat)

I'm kidding, of course... Sort of. I mean, my parents... They got along. Mostly.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

It just always seemed like there was something missing between them. Maybe it's the fact that they only exchanged about twelve words a day - - most of those coming from my mother. Or maybe that they didn't seem to have any common interests outside of raising Kate and I. Dad definitely preferred the company of classic novels and tobacco to mom's weekly programming of 'ladies bunko nights' and Gin Rickeys in front of the TV. If there was a spark, it was faint -- but he always made sure to buy her flowers on her birthday and their anniversary. Even after she doubled her nightly gin intake.

(beat, then more
reflective)

I loved my dad, despite his faults. And I do miss him, though it pains me to admit it. He was pretty much the only person in my family I could relate to, even if we were fundamentally different. I think he saw more of himself in me than he ever wanted to admit. Sometimes, when I was little, I would sneak out back and climb into his lap while he was reading and just stare up at the sky, trying to count the stars. He would take occasional breaks from his book and point out the constellations for me -- always just with the name, leaving me to figure their stories out myself. Those are some of my earliest memories -- and some of the happiest.

(beat)

I guess it's no surprise that I returned to one of those nights in my dreams, then. I was seven years old, or thereabout. My mother had just poured herself a cocktail and vanished further into the house. As soon as I saw her leave the kitchen, I slipped my jacket on over my grey flannel pajamas and crept out the back door. My dad was already out on the porch, reading a collection of poetry... Elliot or... Maybe Yeats?

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I can't remember the cover. I asked him to read me some, and he did -- but in the dream, his voice is muffled, like he's speaking from somewhere far away. After he finished a stanza, I asked him -- "Daddy, do you believe in ghosts?"

(beat)

He looked down at me and smiled. It was a thin, weak smile, but his eyes sparkled with kindness. Slowly, he picked me up out of his lap, stood, and pointed towards something behind me, at the corner of the house. His mouth was moving, but he wasn't making a sound.

(beat)

I looked to see where he was pointing, but all I could make out in the dark of the early evening was a vague, shadowy figure, drifting at the edge of my perception. I wasn't scared, and neither was he, but there was something else there... Something that didn't belong in that moment. And that's where the dream ended.

(beat)

My actual memory of that night isn't a whole lot clearer. Most of my childhood memories are pretty jumbled... Sometimes contradictory. But what I do remember is this: I asked him if he believed in ghosts. He looked down at me for a long moment, like he was considering how to answer that question -- and then he said no. I was disappointed, but then he added: "But that's never stopped the ghosts."

(beat)

That was about as close as he ever came to admitting an interest in the supernatural. He always denied it, even when I found an EMF scanner hidden in an old set of drawers during one of our summer garage sales, in a box labeled "Oslo Nevada Department of Justice." He reluctantly let me keep it, and I've been using it ever since. But even with all that denial, I could tell that the supernatural fascinated him.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

It would sneak through in the way he'd react to gothic poetry, and in the voices he'd use when he read *A Christmas Carol* to Kate and I, using the twinkling lights and shadows to full effect. I know my dad had a part of himself that he thought he had to hide. And I have a feeling that's why I felt so close to him, despite our differences.

(beat)

And then... There's the dream I had three nights ago. The one that started me thinking about him... And the one that disturbs me the most. It isn't a memory... I know that much. I'm standing out in the desert, watching my dad as he shovels dry sand into a set of moulded, plastic buckets. He's working frantically, trying to build a sandcastle as quickly as possible... But without any water, the walls just crumble away to nothing. I want to help, but I can't get any closer. When I try to move, I can feel my legs sinking deeper and deeper into the sand, like something's pulling me down. I struggle, watching as my dad's movements grow jerky and disjointed, until I slip below the ground and lose sight of him completely.

(beat)

That's all that happened in that dream. But now I can remember something else. In all three of those dreams, I saw that shadowy figure. It wasn't just waiting for me in the darkened corner of my childhood home... It was there in the desert, in the mirages dancing and shimmering behind my dad. It was there when my dad pushed me back and forth on the tire swing, only visible in the moments when I looked back at my father and saw it over his shoulder, watching us.

(beat, SHUDDER)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

If this is some kind of warning from beyond the grave -- which wouldn't be the strangest thing that's happened to me, I will admit -- then it might put some other things in perspective.

(beat)

The last time I drove through Nevada, I found a letter pinned under the windshield wiper of my van. It had no name or address on it. I have no way of knowing if it was actually meant for me, or if it was some kind of ill-conceived joke. But the message inside, printed in a non-descript sans serif font, was this: "The sins of the father are to be laid upon the children."

(beat)

I burned the letter the first chance I got.

(beat, hushed)

I think I'm being watched. I don't know who's doing it or why, but I can feel it everywhere I go. People who seem just a little too interested in what I'm doing, asking too many questions about where I'm going next. Strangers in cafes and restaurants who look away from me just as I glance up. It's gotten to the point that I can barely stand to be in the city any more... It feels like every security camera and cell phone is pointed at me -- following me. I thought this might happen at some point -- that I'd cross the wrong person or power and have to pay the piper -- but the fact that it seems to be connected to dad's work in Nevada is something I never expected. Something I wasn't prepared for. There's so much he didn't tell me, and now, whatever or whoever he worked for is coming after me. And with the questions Ren and I have been asking lately, it's... Well... I don't know. But it's getting serious.

(beat)

I need to go back to Nevada. Back to Oslow. Maybe not now, but...

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Soon. I've been chasing rumors of an abandoned, underground military base a few miles outside of town. I've tried looking for official records, and I've even torn through the few papers dad left behind, but... There's nothing. And the maps of that area are just a confusing jumble of service roads and minor geological formations... All profoundly unhelpful. I can't help but suspect that might be by design.

(beat, regretful)

I want to talk to Maria, but... I'm not ready to tell her about all this. I'm still worried this might just be paranoia, and I don't want to lose her because of it, but...

(beat, then sincerely)

Maria... If you're somehow listening to this... then I'm sorry. Because that means I'm dead, and I never got the chance to tell you the truth. And for that -- I'm sorry. Sorry beyond words.

(beat)

I hope I can figure this out. I hope I can tell you everything someday. And I hope we're still together at the end of it. We still have so many stories to tell.

CLICK.

4. INT. JERRY PRICE'S HOME - PRESENT

The tape ejects, clattering slightly on the table. Everyone stands in stunned silence.

MARIA SOL

(shocked, angry)

This... This is what it's been about this whole time?

SAM BAILEY

(nervous, worried for Maria)

Maria... How much of that was news to you?

MARIA SOL

(bitter)

Almost all of it.

(beat, DEEP BREATH, slowly
letting this out)

Anna called me out to Oslow soon after she left Agate Shore. She was desperate. She'd have to be, if she was asking for my help. We spent a few days in Oslow, looking into supernatural occurrences and haunted places. Honestly... It kind of felt like she was trying to avoid something else the whole time.

(beat)

And then, on the last night... We drove out into the desert. We spent hours just -- circling around, looking for something. I tried to ask her what it was, but she swore up and down that she couldn't tell me. And I kept getting more and more angry at her.

(beat)

We finally stopped somewhere. The middle of nowhere, really. She wanted me to go out with her, but she still refused to tell me what we were walking into. She said it was better if I didn't know. Like it would protect me from what was about to happen, somehow.

(beat)

I started yelling at her. I said I wouldn't help her unless she told me the truth. I told her... If she didn't tell me, then she could deal with whatever was out there on her own for all I cared.

(beat, to herself)

Why wouldn't she tell me?

(beat)

I wandered off. Just walked off into the desert at random, furious at her. By the time I cooled off and realized what I'd done, I must have been half a mile away. And then... I heard a gunshot from the direction of the van. I ran back, but the area around the van was empty. Then I saw a hatch in the ground, sitting open a few yards away.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

I ran over to it and was about to call down when I heard... Laughter. From down below. It was tense... rough. But definitely human. I heard static and a loud beep from some kind of radio. And then I heard someone say... "This is Greyhound. All clear."

BILL TYLER

(quiet, devastated realization)

No...

MARIA SOL

(guilty)

I didn't go down there. I didn't need to look to know that Anna was dead. So I ran. I took her van and fled back to Oslow, dumping it on the side of the road and wiping it down to make sure the police couldn't find my fingerprints. I hitchhiked back to the motel and left the next morning without checking out. I couldn't risk anyone knowing I'd been in Oslow when she vanished.

(beat)

But now... I guess you know. I hoped... I wanted to believe she was still out there. I wanted you to believe it too, for a while.

(beat)

But this tape confirms it. She was being watched. Being hunted. And whoever it was killed her when she got too close to the truth.

A heavy silence settles over the room. Finally...

SAM BAILEY

(deep in denial)

No... She can't... It can't be that simple. It can't --

BILL TYLER

(putting it together, growing anger)

You're sure he called himself "Greyhound?"

MARIA SOL

Yes.

SAM BAILEY
(realizing)
Are you sure?

MARIA SOL
(BITTER SCOFF)
I've heard it in my dreams every
night since then, Sam. That's what
he called himself.

KATE SHERIDAN
(growing worry)
Wait... What does that mean?

BILL TYLER
(in shock)
It means that Morrison killed Anna.
That he knew from the start.

MARIA SOL
(horrified)
What?

BILL TYLER
(increasing agitation)
He's been in Oslow for decades. He
used to work for the government, on
some secret project nobody's
willing to talk about. And then he
settled down here. Joined Oslow PD.
Climbed the ranks until he became
chief.
(beat)
And he's always used Greyhound as
his callsign.

KATE SHERIDAN
(stunned)
Oh my god...

BILL TYLER
(anger finally boiling
over, pacing back and
forth)
All this time, and he's been
carrying a... What, some kind of
decades-long grudge about Anna's
father? "The sins of the father are
to be laid upon the children?" That
had to be him, right? He knew all
this time, and he's just been using
the investigation as a way to cover
his tracks? To misdirect us while
he --

SAM BAILEY

Bill, I think you need to calm down
and --

BILL TYLER

(angry)

What, am I not allowed to pace,
now?

MARIA SOL

(quiet, worried)

Everyone please stop arguing.

They all go quiet, realizing that Maria is staring at Kate,
who has an expression of horror and shock on her face.

BILL TYLER

(worried)

Kate, are you alright?

KATE SHERIDAN

(not really there)

Oh, uh... Yeah, uh-huh.

JERRY PRICE

Do you need to lie down for a bit?
The guest room's --

KATE SHERIDAN

(rushed, awkwardly,
beginning to fall apart)

Yeah, I'm gonna go lie down, see
you all later.

Kate stands and walks out of the room. The rest of them are
silent for a moment, realizing what listening to that tape
must have been like for Kate.

MARIA SOL

(genuine pity)

Oh god... Kate.

A moment of silence. Then...

BILL TYLER

(in shock)

So this is how it goes, huh?

SAM BAILEY

(worried edge)

Bill...?

BILL TYLER

(shattered)

He can just kill whoever he likes. Just like that. And then he just lies about it to the entire department? Controls the investigation and makes sure nobody learns the truth? How many times has he done this? How many people has he killed?

JERRY PRICE

Tyler, I really hope you're not thinking of doing something stupid here.

BILL TYLER

(grasping at straws)

How is this stupid? We've got this tape, we've got Maria's testimony and mine, and the facility is right there! If we take this to the press, then --

JERRY PRICE

(laying this out for him)

What you have is a recording of a dead fiction writer nobody's going to believe, a grieving video editor who claims to have heard Morrison's voice, and a full confession that you trespassed on government property. You've got nothing.

BILL TYLER

So I'm just supposed to... What, ignore this?

JERRY PRICE

(DEEP, TIRED SIGH)

Look, Bill... This is way above any of our pay grades. Maybe if you get away from the force for a year or two, you'll understand the kind of game you've been playing. But you can't fix this. You need to drop it, now. Morrison will bury all of us if you give him half a chance. I'm guessing Anna understood that better than anyone. That's why she didn't tell Maria the truth. So she wouldn't try to stop him.

They all fall silent. After a moment, Bill rises, a little unsteady.

BILL TYLER

(quiet)

I've... I've got to go. I'll see you all later.

SAM BAILEY

(worried)

Bill, please tell me you're not going to see Morrison.

BILL TYLER

(irritated)

Of course not. I need to go home. To Rob. I've... I've been away too long. I'll be back... Sometime. I don't know.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Maria. Sam. Tell Kate I'm sorry, too. For everything.

Bill walks out the door, closing it behind it. Silence.

BEEP. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS