

"VOX AETERNUM"
The Sheridan Tapes - Season 03, Episode 51
Recording Draft - March 15, 2022

by

Trevor Van Winkle

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

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1. INT. MKCTS FACILITY - EARLY MORNING - 11/9/2019

Ruin. Decay. Disaster.

Those are the words that best describe what's left of the tunnels. Broken electronics spark, small fires crackle, and shattered glass crunches underfoot as someone stumbles into the central chamber.

They're in a bad way -- stumbling slightly, COUGHING AND OCCASIONALLY SPITTING UP WHAT MIGHT ALMOST BE MISTAKEN FOR BLOOD, if not for the fact that it's clearly NED LEROUX.

If he's surprised by the mess, he doesn't show it -- he's too pissed to care. He glances around briefly, then calls out.

NED LEROUX
(irritated shout)
Morrison! You still down here?

Silence, broken only by the echo of his voice. NED SCOFFS, kicking at a shattered monitor nearby.

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
(annoyed mutter)
Figures. Asshole probably ran the moment things went south. Should've done the same, honestl--

EDGAR MORRISON
(slightly shaky, quiet)
Ned.

NED LEROUX
(startled)
AH!

Ned jumps away, disturbing more broken glass and detritus in the process -- then sees who it is.

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
Goddammit, don't sneak up on me like that Morrison.

EDGAR MORRISON
(confused, still a little weak)
I wasn't... I wasn't trying to scare you.

NED LEROUX
 (petulant)
 Well, you did. Lucky I didn't hit
 you.

Morrison doesn't seem to have an answer, and as the silence
 lingers, Ned's suspicions begin to rise.

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
 (suspicious, concerned)
 What are you still doing down here?
 What happened?

EDGAR MORRISON
 (sounding slightly out of
 it, a little unsure)
 I was... Running. Sheridan let the
 monsters out, and I --

NED LEROUX
 (suddenly nervous)
 Shit, they're not still down here,
 are they?

EDGAR MORRISON
 (shaking his head)
 No, no -- they're all gone. Back
 into the world.

NED LEROUX
 (growing unease)
 Shouldn't we -- I don't know, set
 up a perimeter? They could be
 halfway to Arrowhead by now.

EDGAR MORRISON
 (LOW CHUCKLE, voice
 growing fainter as he
 speaks)
 Oh, they've gone much further than
 that... Much further... I was a
 fool to think I could keep them
 here, and now the door is open...

Morrison trails off, and an uncomfortable silence settles
 over the facility.

NED LEROUX
 (worried for his mental
 state)
 Morrison, are you -- is everything
 alright?

Another silence... And then Morrison turns, walking off through one of the doors into the tunnels.

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
 (growing worry)
 Morrison? Morrison, we need to--

The door closes, and all is silent ruin again. Ned shrinks back slightly, looking around at the mess surrounding him as if for the first time.

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
 (annoyed, confused, and
 angry)
 What the hell do I do now?

CLICK.

2. INT. THE ISPHA BUILDING - VENTURA, CA - DAY - 1/14/2018

A quiet conference room: the hum of A/C, the buzz of a projector bulb, and occasional shuffling in chairs.

DR. REN PARK
 (slightly awkward, trying
 to M.C. this little
 gathering)
 Alright -- tape is running. Could
 everyone state their names and
 occupations, for the record? Anna?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (clearly distracted, not
 expecting to be called)
 What? Oh right -- Anna Sheridan,
 writer and... uh--

DR. REN PARK
 (trying to move this
 along)
 Writer is fine for now. Dr.
 Caldwell?

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL
 (crisp, professional, and
 a little impatient)
 Doctor Daniella Caldwell, head of
 experimental research, ISPHA
 Laboratories.

DAVID ROBINSON
 (rushed, badly hiding
 impatience)
 (MORE)

DAVID ROBINSON (CONT'D)
David Robinson, research assistant,
experimental projects, ISPHA.

DR. REN PARK
Mister, uh -- "Dum-well?"

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
(heavy scots accent,
irritable)
"Don-ell." Craig's fine, if ye
insist on putting my name on yer
tapes, though I cannae say I'm all
in favor of it.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(trying to smooth things
over)
Craig, just --

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
(reassuring Anna)
Nae, I'll go along wi it. I dinnae
choose to be here for yer fancy
words -- I came for Anna's sake,
and no wan else.

DR. REN PARK
(trying to maintain
decorum)
Duly noted, Mr. Domhnwell. And what
is your occupation?

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
(frustrated)
Writer, same as Anna. Researcher
into the wee folk and their
histories.

A FAINT SNICKER ESCAPES FROM DAVID, and Craig turns to glare
at him.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL (CONT'D)
(irritated)
Did I say somethin' funny, Mr.
Robinson?

DAVID ROBINSON
(smug skepticism)
A little bit, yeah --

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(cutting him off)

Cause if I'm no mistaken, we're all here on account o Anna, and even if ye use different words fur it, what she studies is no less strange than the faeries I write aboot.

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL

(warning to David)

No one's saying it's not, Mr. Domhnwell. My colleague spoke out of turn.

DAVID ROBINSON

(muttering beneath breath)

The hell I did...

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL

(ignoring him)

Please continue, Dr. Park.

DR. REN PARK

(a little off balance)

Right, uh -- My name is Dr. Ren Park of the Institute for Stellar Propulsion, Heuristics, and --

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL

(warning -- he likes to hear his own title)

Ren.

DR. REN PARK

(beat, simplified)

Lead researcher, Experimental Projects division. I oversee some of ISPHA's more... Unconventional lines of inquiry.

DAVID ROBINSON

(muttered)

You can say that again.

DR. REN PARK

(glaring at Robinson)

While I'm aware that some of you may be skeptical about Ms. Sheridan and Mr. Dohmnwell's fields of study, let me assure you that they've both furnished empirical evidence of their claims to this institute on several occasions.

(MORE)

DR. REN PARK (CONT'D)
 If *anyone* wishes to question their
 place on this team, I suggest you
 take it up with myself -- or Dr.
 Caldwell -- before we go further.

The whole room falls silent, and David squirms uncomfortably
 in his chair.

DAVID ROBINSON
 (unhappy, but letting it
 drop)
 No, I'm -- I'm fine.

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL
 (faintest edge of sarcasm)
 I'm sure you are. Ren?

DR. REN PARK
 (stepping aside)
 All yours, Dr. Caldwell.

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL
 (standing)
 Thank you.
 (beat, to rest of room)
 I know some of you have doubts
 about this project, but let me
 assure you: if what we're searching
 for is even remotely possible, then
 this investigation may change not
 only our understanding of physics,
 but the future prospects of
 humanity as a species. Each member
 of this team has been carefully
 selected for their specific set of
 skills, along with their
 perspective on both the scientific
 and the supernatural. If you feel
 skeptical about your place here...
 that is intentional. Whether you
 believe it or not, your role on
 this expedition will be vital to
 its success.

CLICK.

3. INT. MERIWETHER FACILITY - REN'S OFFICE - 11/11/2019

Ren stops the tape, turning in his chair. Sam, Kate, Maria,
 and Bill sit opposite, a small clock ticking on the wall.

DR. REN PARK
(presenting the facts of
an experiment)

This was the first meeting of the team ISPHA assembled to investigate Anna's predictive abilities, taking place in Ventura, California on January 14th, 2018. The team consisted of two ISPHA staff members -- Dr. Daniella Caldwell and Mr. Robinson -- and two private contractors selected by Anna -- herself and Mr. Craig Domhnwell, a nonfiction author and expert in folklore and mythology. This meeting occurred shortly after we determined that Anna was able to make meaningful predictions of the future, and following our --

KATE SHERIDAN
(confused, rattled)
Wait, just... Slow down a second.

DR. REN PARK
(thrown off a little)
Do you have a question, Kate?

MARIA SOL
(SCOFFS)
More like a hundred.

DR. REN PARK
(trying to defer
questions)
I understand there might be some confusion. Several recordings were lost during the expedition, but I'll do my best to fill in any gaps in the record as we go.

KATE SHERIDAN
But -- how did Anna predict the future? How do you even test something like that?

DR. REN PARK
(clearly a bit off-script)
Well... during the years preceding her disappearance, Anna began to suspect that some of her more disturbing dreams were more than just nightmares.

(MORE)

DR. REN PARK (CONT'D)

She mentioned this to me at several points, and eventually, I proposed that we put her theory to the test. We conducted a number of sleep studies, cognitive tests, and attempts to initiate lucid dreaming in one of the medical labs here at Meriwether. At the end of these, we had a prediction that could be objectively and definitively tested. I passed this information along to Dr. Caldwell, and once it was confirmed, she --

SAM BAILEY

Wait -- what did she predict?

DR. REN PARK

(getting audibly excited)
A supernova. The explosion of a neutron star nearly a billion lightyears from earth. Impossible to guess, impossible to predict ahead of time -- and yet she did, right down to the day.

(beat)

This told us two things: One, Anna was able to make tangible, provable, and accurate predictions about future event -- and two, that she was right to be worried about what she saw.

BILL TYLER

(slightly distant,
worried)

The end of the world.

DR. REN PARK

(nodding)

The end of the world. An apocalypse triggered by some kind of supernatural disruption affecting the entire planet. That was the one constant, going back to her earliest nightmares.

(beat)

Dr. Caldwell was skeptical at first, but she'd never been afraid to push past her own doubts. Still, she felt we needed more evidence to confirm Anna's ability.

(MORE)

DR. REN PARK (CONT'D)

So she proposed an arrangement -- we would test one of Anna's earlier visions in the field to make sure the supernova wasn't a coincidence. This next tape is taken from that expedition, soon after the team arrived at basecamp near the Babia Góra massif, on the Slovakia/Poland border.

CLICK.

4. INT. BASECAMP - ANNA'S TENT - EVENING - 1/20/18

Canvas flaps in the wind and a small heater buzzes while the quiet stillness of a snowy mountainside fills all else.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(uncharacteristically
stiff and formal)

Anna Sheridan, recording for ISPHA
internal records - daily log,
January 20th, 2018, 1724 CET.

(beat)

We landed KRK earlier today after an unexpected layover in Heathrow... apparently it's a bit of a gamble to fly into central Europe in the middle of winter. We picked up our supplies in Kraków and made it to basecamp before it really started getting dark, and the local guides had already set up the tents when we arrived. It's still tenting on the side of a mountain in January, but it won't be nearly as bad as some of the backpacking trips I've done: the canvas and plywood flooring do a remarkable job of keeping the cold out, and once we got the heaters going they warmed up nicely. We don't have the fuel to keep them on all the time, and the weather will make the solar generators nearly useless, but we're sure as hell going to make the best of them when we can. The cots are a pretty nice upgrade too, though I doubt I'll be sleeping much, even with the jet lag. I've been having --

Anna is cut off by the tent flap zipping open, letting in the cold wind as someone steps inside, turns, and zips it shut.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(slightly aggressive
invitation)

Are ye gonna jine us anytime soon,
Anna? I cannae keep David aff the
rest ae that bottle a' night.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(slightly amused)

I think you can manage until I'm
done with this.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(looking over her
shoulder)

Taping yerself again?

ANNA SHERIDAN

Need to keep a record of the
expedition -- Ren insisted.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(SCOFFS)

I hardly think they needed tae.

ANNA SHERIDAN

You should be recording too, if you
have the time. I'll try to be
thorough, but I might miss a few
things you--

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(dismissive, already
leaving)

Aye, aye... If ye say so. I'll try
an save ye a drink if I can.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(CHUCKLES)

Don't bother. You know I can't
stand vodka.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(on his way out)

I told ye, it's not vodka -- it
just smells like it is all...

Craig opens the tent flap and steps out before Anna can
reply. SHE CHUCKLES, then turns her attention back to the
recorder.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(a little more herself)

Honestly, I'm glad Craig's here -- between the four of us, he's the most well-balanced. Caldwell's nothing if not professional, but I know obsession when I see it. And Robinson's... Well, he doesn't really care what we find, so long as we find it quickly. But Craig believes it -- at least, he believes that I believe it, and that's enough.

(beat, more open)

Truth be told, though... I'm really not sure if I do. Not completely. But I need someone in my corner, at least for now.

(beat, more professional)

That being said, I don't know exactly what we're looking for -- my dreams are always a little sparse when it comes to specifics. All I know is that whatever it is, it's here on Babia Góra -- "the old witches' mountain," literally translated -- and it has something to do with "corrosion" and "evolution..." or maybe "transformation," I'm not sure. The rest of the dream was just a mess of dark shapes and bad vibes, but it was the only one where I was able to pick out an actual location.

(beat)

It definitely seems like the right kind of place -- Craig was very keen to point out that a lot of the local folklore points to this mountain as the location of the "witches' sabbath." I don't know about witches, but it does feel a lot like some of the other mountains I've had encounters on. Like it's the opposite of a holy mountain -- a place where the barriers between worlds are thin, but what's on the other side is a little less than friendly.

(beat, growing unease)

Even so... I'm not convinced we're looking in the right place.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

There must be something to my dreams, so... there must be something here. But if there is... if we find what we're looking for up the mountain tomorrow... then I don't know what that means for me. For all of us.

(beat, worried dread)

I still haven't told them everything -- not Ren, not Caldwell or Robinson... and definitely not Craig. I can't tell him. I want to be honest with him, but... I don't know if it would help right now. It's certainly not helping me.

(longer beat, tired)

God, I need that drink.

CLICK.

5. EXT. BABIA GÓRA - NORTHERN SLOPE - AFTERNOON - 1/24/2018

A snowstorm whips around the rocks and ice as the team slowly makes their way back down the mountain, crampons and snow poles crunching and clinking.

DAVID ROBINSON

(yelling over the wind,
annoyed)

--[Four] days! Four days on this goddamn mountain, and what do we have to show for it, besides bruises and a risk of frostbite?

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(dismissive, yelling back)

Ye think four days on this mountain is lang enough to keek anythin'? We've hardly started lookin'!

DAVID ROBINSON

(yelling, irritable)

Yeah, well some of us have more important work we'd like to get back to!

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(yelling, understated
threat)

And whit do ye mean by thae, Mister Robinson?

DAVID ROBINSON

(yelling, shrinking back
slightly)

All I'm saying is that Dr. Caldwell
and I don't spend months on top of
a mountain looking for ghosts or
goblins or whatever the hell you
two claim to see out here! We're
scientists, for christ's sake!

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(yelling)

Och, is that sae? I've seen things
that would scare the skeptic right
oota ye. Believe ye me, ye'll ken
how deep the dark goes afore we're
done here.

DAVID ROBINSON

(rolling eyes, yelling
back at Caldwell)

Dr. Caldwell, could you please give
me some backup here?

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL

(yelling from further down
the path)

Not right now I can't. I'm a little
busy trying not to get blown off
this mountain.

DAVID ROBINSON

(yelling back)

Could you at least tell me you
don't believe in ghosts or monsters
or... whatever we're supposed to be
looking for out here?

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL

(annoyed, yelling)

No. I don't believe in ghosts--

DAVID ROBINSON

(thankful, smug)

Thank you!

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL

(cutting him off, yelling)

--But Anna did make a prediction
that is scientifically impossible.
Either she's incredibly lucky, or
there's something beyond our
understanding going on here.

(MORE)

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL (CONT'D)
 I intend to figure out what it is
before we leave this mountain.
 Understood?

DAVID ROBINSON
 (frustrated, tired
 muttering)
 Yes, Doctor Caldwell.

The team hikes in silence for a moment. The wind picks up,
 and ANNA SHIVERS, pulling her coat a little tighter.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (calling forward,
 concerned)
 Ye a'right Anna?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (distracted, as if shaken
 awake)
 What?

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (calling forward,
 concerned)
 Are ye okay? Yer bein' awful quiet
 up there.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (trying to convince him,
 then herself)
 Yeah, I'm... I'm fine. Just
 distracted.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (calling forward, worried)
 Hae ye been sleepin' ony better
 since we got here?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (SCOFFS, bitter)
 No, I haven't.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (calling forward,
 question)
 Bad dreams?

Anna hesitates, though she continues hiking through the snow.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL (CONT'D)
 (growing worry, quieter)
 Anna?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (finally noticing her
 recorder running, quiet)
 Oh shit, I must have bumped the --

CLICK.

6. INT. BASECAMP - MAIN TENT - EVENING - 1/31/18

A larger, busier tent, with a muffled argument in the background. The wind whistles as the canvas strains.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (tired, trying to get away
 from everyone else)
 Anna Sheridan, daily log, January
 31st, 2018, recorded at 1832 CET.
 We've been on the mountain for 16
 days now -- far longer than we
 anticipated, but still within the
 acceptable range. We're supplied
 for at least a month -- longer if
 we decide to start rationing -- and
 while the roads to Babia Góra are
 closed, we can still be resupplied
 by snowmobile if needed. I'm not
 worried about the supplies though,
 and neither is Dr. Caldwell. What
 I'm more worried about is the
 weather. Most of the northern slope
 is completely exposed to the
 elements, and conditions can change
 extremely quickly. I'm starting to
 see why people call this place "the
 mother of bad weather." But I'm
 honestly more concerned that--

DAVID ROBINSON
 (yelling across the tent)
 Sheridan! Sheridan, I want a word
 with you.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (under her breath, sick of
 this guy)
 Of course you fucking do...
 (to David, slightly more
 professional)
 What is it?

DAVID ROBINSON
 (pushy, exhausted)
 I want to see your journal, now.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (moving so she's between
 him and it)
 Absolutely not.

DAVID ROBINSON
 (exhausted frustration)
 We've been stuck on this mountain
 for half a month because of your
 dreams. The least you could do is
 let us know what we're supposed to
 be looking for/before--

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (putting her foot down
 harder)
 What part of "absolutely not" did
 you miss? No, you can't look at my
 journal. It's private.

DAVID ROBINSON
 If it concerns the team, it
 shouldn't be.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (refusing to budge)
 Well it is. Look, if you're so
 skeptical about my dreams, why do
 you want to know about them?

DAVID ROBINSON
 (irritated)
 I don't. But if I know what we're
 supposed to be looking for, we can
 get off this mountain faster.
 That's all I care about.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (exasperated)
 Do you really think I'd keep that
 to myself if I knew?

DAVID ROBINSON
 (challenging her)
 You're holding something back.
 Whether it's about your dreams or
 something else --

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (low threat)
 Robinson, I suggest ye take a step
 back before I find somethin' heavy
 in here an' make ye.

DAVID ROBINSON

(SCOFFS)

Are you threatening me now,
Domhnwell? We both know you
wouldn't hurt a fly.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(level tone)

I think ye'd best consider the
difference between someane
threatenin' me, an' someane
threatenin' a frein ae mine.

DAVID ROBINSON

(rolling his eyes)

I'm not threatening anyone,
I'm/just --

DR. DANIELLA CALDWELL

(entering the tent,
displeased)

David! A word, if you please.

David falls silent, then shuffles off obediently. The flap of
the tent zips open, then closed.

As soon as they're gone, ANNA LETS OUT A LONG, DEFEATED
BREATH, slumping in her chair and rubbing her face.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(concerned)

Shit... Anna? What's wrong?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(drained)

Nothing, Craig, I just... I don't
want to talk about it.

Craig hesitates, then grabs a chair from the small table and
drags it over, sitting down.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(weak anger)

I said --

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

Aye, I heard ye. I'm jist gonna sit
here, is all. If ye dinnae want tae
talk, that's fine.

Anna and Craig sit there in silence for a long moment -- then
Anna give a QUIET, PAINED SCOFF.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(deep doubt)

What the hell am I doing out here?

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(trying to comfort a
younger friend)

The same thing yer always doin' --
looking fur answers tae questions
maist people dinnae think tae ask,
and like as no findin' them.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(realization)

I don't know if I want answers this
time. Not to these questions.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(trying to untie this
knot)

What, are ye that afraid yer dreams
are portents? I cannae think ae any
prophet who was happy tae --

ANNA SHERIDAN

(untangling her own fears
at the same time)

No, Craig, that's -- that's not
what I'm scared of.

(beat)

If I'm wrong -- if my dreams don't
mean anything, and I've sent us all
up here for nothing -- then I'm
just... delusional. People have
called me that all my life: I can
live it.

(beat, worry)

But if it's true -- If I really can
predict the future...

Anna trails off. Craig waits for a moment to let her finish,
then speaks up.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL

(caring, soft)

Are ye sae afraid ae yer nightmares
ye'd let them stop ye from livin'?
That doesn't sound like the Anna
Sheridan I kent.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(slightly defensive,
hesitant)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 No, it's -- It's not those dreams
 I'm worried about, Craig.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (confused, slightly
 worried)
 Then what is it?

Anna hesitates -- then leans over, shutting off the recorder.

CLICK.

7. INT. MERIWETHER FACILITY - REN'S OFFICE - 11/11/2019

Back in the present -- Ren sits back slightly in his chair
 after stopping the tape.

DR. REN PARK
 Whatever Anna said to Mr. Domhnwell
 after that point is lost, as we've
 found no records of that
 conversation in either Anna's notes
 or the recordings kept by Mr.
 Domhnwell. At this point, Dr.
 Caldwell was aware that the team
 was growing dangerously unstable,
 and they would need to conclude
 their mission one way or another
 before interpersonal tensions
 boiled over. As such, she ordered
 an expanded search pattern the next
 day, pushing further up the
 northern slope and spreading the
 party members out along a wider
 stretch. They were instructed to
 remain within visual range of one
 another at all times, but that
 proved impossible when an
 unexpected snowstorm arrived and
 reduced visibility to less than ten
 feet.

(beat, slightly less
 stiff)

This tape is vital to a complete
 understanding of the events on
 Babia Góra, but I know you've all
 just endured a very traumatic
 experience. If any of you would
 like to leave the room for the next
 few minutes, I would advise you to
 do so.

There's a long moment of silence.

SAM BAILEY

(uncertain, worried)

What do you think? Bill... you've probably had the hardest time out of all of us, are you sure you want to --

BILL TYLER

(TIRED CHUCKLE, defense mechanism)

"I ain't afraid of no ghost," Sam. I can handle it.

KATE SHERIDAN

(slightly frustrated)

It's not about being scared -- whatever's on that tape/might--

BILL TYLER

(weak excuse, clearly protecting his ego)

Look, I'm *fine*.

(to Ren)

Just play the tape already.

DR. REN PARK

(worried, cautious)

Would anyone else prefer not to listen?

The room stays silent.

DR. REN PARK (CONT'D)

(nodding to himself)

Alright. This tape comes from later in the day, after weather conditions had worsened dramatically and Dr. Caldwell ordered an early return to basecamp. While there are a number of written field notes from both Dr. Caldwell and Mr. Robinson, this is the final relevant audio recording from the expedition.

CLICK.

8. INT. BABIA GÓRA - CAVERN - EVENING - 2/1/2018

A long, narrow cave: the faint dripping of melting ice, rumbling wind, and echoing footsteps.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(hushed, unnerved)

Anna Sheridan, project update.
Recorded in the field, February
1st, 2018 at 1400 CET... Or at
least, that was the time when my
watch stopped working.

(shakes wrist, seeing if
it's still working)

I must have hit it on a rock at
some point... I got separated from
the rest of the team earlier. I was
trying to reconnect with them when
I felt the ground shake. I don't
know if it was an earthquake or a
lightning strike, but I looked up
and saw a wall of snow barreling
down on me. I just managed to duck
inside a nearby cave entrance, but
the avalanche completely buried it
before I could get out. I tried
chipping at the snow with my ice
axe, but there was just too much
for me to dig out on my own.
Thankfully I still had a headlamp,
so I've been looking for another
way out ever since. The cave is
fairly extensive -- and I'm pretty
sure it's not supposed to be here.
The entrance wasn't on any of the
maps I saw, at least. And I'm
pretty sure I've --

Anna cuts off. In the near distance, FAINT, UNINTELLIGIBLE
WHISPERS echo through the cave. They grow slightly louder,
then vanish before they can be made out clearly.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(fully whispering)

That's the third time I've heard
that voice down here. I mostly
started recording to see if it's
picked up by the tape or not. If
so, then I finally have proof of
what's going on down here and can
shut David up a bit... If I ever
make it out of here, that is.

(growing more serious)

And if he didn't get caught in the
avalanche too. Dr. Caldwell did say
there was a risk going up the
mountain in this weather. I just
hope they're all okay.

(beat, determined)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

But right now, I need to focus on getting out. The air smells fresh and doesn't seem to be thinning out, so there must be another exit somewhere. I've been marking my path with grease pencil so I should be able to find my way back if I get turned around. Speaking of which...

Anna pauses, apparently to mark one of the nearby rocks.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I can't let myself get too distracted recording this. So far there's only been one or two turn offs, but I've been trying to find one that leads back up towards the surface of the mountain.... trying and failing. They all seem to curve back in on themselves, and the further I go the more they seem to slope down. I would be more worried about getting further underground if this all didn't feel so... oddly familiar. I think I might have seen this place before. Thinking back on it, it might have been a --

Anna cuts off -- the whispering has returned, louder and clearer. She stays silent for a long moment, then begins to walk forward slowly.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(extremely quiet, nervous
whisper)

I... I think whatever's whispering is through here. There's a thin gap in the wall of the cave, and...

Anna trails off, then reaches up, turning off her headlamp.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(whispered, slightly
stunned)

There's a light on the other side. Not sunlight, but a... a faint blue. Some kind of bioluminescence, maybe?

(beat, then slightly less
excited)

Or I might be about to crawl into another supernatural hotspot.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 Why did I have to lose the skeptic
 squad before I found this?

ANNA GRUNTS SLIGHTLY as she squeezes herself into the narrow
 chasm, pushing herself forward.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (faint, struggling to
 breath)
 Okay... It's a tight squeeze, but
 I've made it through worse. Just...
 Keep... Pushing, and... There!

Anna pops out of the wall and TAKES A DEEP BREATH, LAUGHING
 QUIETLY as she recovers.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (slightly breathless,
 still whispering)
 Made it... Made it. For someone who
 hates caves as much as I do, I seem
 to spend an ungodly amount of time
 in...

Anna falls silent. The dripping water is louder, and an
 underwater river snakes through the cavern into a small pond.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (awed whisper)
 Holy shit. Okay, this was
 definitely not on the map -- I
 don't think it's on any map. It's a
 large grotto with a deep central
 pool, fed by an underground stream
 that seems to originate from one of
 the tunnels leading off of the
 chamber. The ceiling is about eight
 or nine feet high with a number of
 large stalactites, but...
 (slightly at a loss for
 words)
 Well, the reason I can see all that
 is because there are large patches
 of glowing mushrooms growing around
 the pool and along the cavern wall.
 There must be some geothermal
 activity in this cave too, since
 there's no sunlight to--

Anna cuts off WITH A FAINT GASP, freezing. The whispering has
 returned, and now it's obvious who's speaking.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (low, monotone
 drone/chant in
 background)
 Eve, when she saw the fruit
 good to eat, And Adam,
 standing nearby, Could not
 bear the sting of
 separateness more, Unity,
 lest they die. Tie, bind,
 joining yet still, Adam and
 Eve in their mirth, Knew the
 mind of God, the Father of
 God
 The Prophet of the Earth.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (low whisper, slightly
 worried)
 Craig? Craig, what are you
 doing down here?
 (beat)
 Is there another way down?
 Did you find some other way
 into the cave when the
 avalanche --

ANNA GASPS. Craig turned to look at her with a horrible sound
 of cracking bone and twisting organic matter.

Static rises on the tape, and a faint clicking sound escapes
 Craig's mouth as he continues to chant, standing up and
 moving towards Anna with slow, unhurried steps.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (continued monotone)
 When the Word is spoken to
 you, little children,
 Remember well these words:
 That the Prophet will make a
 new home once more -- The
 Promise of New Birth. Stand
 not against the roots of
 heaven, Resist not the union
 of bliss, Be at One all the
 same and remember the name Of
 Time and Creation's Kiss.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (horrified whisper,
 guilt and terror mixing)
 No, no, no -- Please Craig,
 please fight this, please
 don't be...
 (beat)
 Craig, listen: it's me. It's
 Anna. You can come back. You
 don't have to give in to this
 thing. You can beat it, I
 know you can. You're stronger
 than this, and we can figure
 out --

The recorder jostles as Anna backs into the opposite wall,
 cutting her short. Craig continues to intone as she shrinks
 against the stone in despair.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (apologizing to whatever's
 left of her friend)
 I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

CRAIG DOMHNWELL
 (growing louder at the
 crescendo as he prepares
 to strike)
 (MORE)

CRAIG DOMHNWELL (CONT'D)

The Source of All that Was and Was
Not and Will Be Again is Within Me
and Without Me and Beyond Me and
Below Me and Before --

A sudden BANG, followed by the THUNK of a fleshy impact and a HISS of burning chemicals, skin, and fungus. Craig falls, already dead as the flare continues to burn.

After a long moment, Anna turns to see David standing across the room, PANTING SLIGHTLY as he lowers the flare gun.

DAVID ROBINSON

(clearly shaken)

Are you... Are you alright?

CLICK.

9. INT. MERIWETHER FACILITY - REN'S OFFICE - 11/11/2019

Ren stops the tape player, turning back to the team with an unreadable expression.

DR. REN PARK

(solemn)

While Anna didn't stop recording at any point during this confrontation, her recorder ran out of tape at that moment. She did not make another recording until she returned to the United States several months later. While the death of a Scottish national during an American expedition on the border of two European nations had the potential to become an international incident, the autopsy conducted by the ECDC determined the cause of death to be infection by the unknown fungus within the cave, as it caused significant nerve damage and possibly brain death several hours before the flare gun fired by Mr. Robinson burnt out a large portion of Mr. Domhnwell's cranium. The team was allowed to return to the states once they had undergone an extensive quarantine and decontamination process, and all relevant authorities chose to keep the incident quiet.

(beat)

(MORE)

DR. REN PARK (CONT'D)

Despite some initial reservations, both Dr. Caldwell and I agreed that the discovery of the previously unknown cave system and the samples of *foribus oraculi* collected within confirmed Anna's abilities beyond a reasonable doubt. As such, ISPHA began a series of research initiatives into the apocalyptic events she foresaw -- one of which involved surveillance of a group of individuals referred to by Anna as "the searchers..." Hence, your presence in this room.

(beat)

And that brings us up to date, I believe. Any questions?

BILL TYLER

(quiet, stunned)

Robinson.

DR. REN PARK

(confused)

What was that, Bill?

BILL TYLER

David Robinson. Your researcher. David *Nathan* Robinson, right?

DR. REN PARK

(slightly irked he made the connection)

Ah... Yes. Though you might know him better as *Heridium*. Soon after returning to the U.S., he disappeared into the *Templi Prophetam* compound and quickly took over as the primary religious figurehead of the cult. The timeline is still a little unclear, but we believe he collected an undocumented sample of *foribus oraculi* before leaving the cave and smuggled it back into the U.S. once he'd cleared quarantine. We're unsure what his exact motivations were, but some variant of that fungus soon became the focal point of worship within the cult, leading to its eventual collapse and Mr. Robinson's death and... Transformation.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (confused, slightly
 challenging Ren)
 Why didn't you stop him?

DR. REN PARK
 (struggling to stay
 professional)
 We considered it, but once he'd
 integrated himself into the power
 structure of the cult, we couldn't
 remove him without alerting local
 authorities. We couldn't tip our
 hand to Morrison like that -- not
 yet. Confronting Robinson was out
 of the question.

SAM BAILEY
 (skeptical)
 You didn't seem to have any problem
 "confronting" Ned--

DR. REN PARK
 (trying not to snap)
 And we still might pay for that.
 We're a research institute... A
 well-funded, private institute with
 a great deal of operational
 autonomy, but we're not some kind
 of hit-squad. We research. We
 investigate. We contain threats
 where possible and necessary, but
 intervention is always a last
 resort.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (exasperated, tired)
 That's still no excuse to let all
 those people get hurt.

DR. REN PARK
 (beat, slightly guilty)
 It... It wasn't my call.

The team falls silent, trying to process everything they've
 just heard. After a long moment...

MARIA SOL
 (clearly struggling)
 What did Anna tell Craig? That
 night before he died?

DR. REN PARK
 (slightly hesitant,
 knowing their connection)
 We're not entirely sure. Like I
 said, there are no records of that
 night, and she didn't tell me.

BILL TYLER
 (sensing her distress)
 Did you know him?

MARIA SOL
 (trying not to fall apart)
 Yeah. Not very well, but... he was
 nice. Funny. Just really, really
 friendly. I met him a few times on
 Anna's trips to Europe, but -- I
 didn't know what happened to him.

SAM BAILEY
 (confronting Ren)
 What do you think she told him,
 then? You clearly have some idea.

DR. REN PARK
 (uncomfortable)
 Unfortunately... I do. It's clear
 that she blamed herself for Craig's
 death -- not just for the fact that
 he was up the mountain in the first
 place, but that she felt directly
 responsible for the events leading
 up to his death.

KATE SHERIDAN
 She wasn't though, right? I mean,
 she couldn't know what was going to
 happen in that cave...

Kate trails off slightly.

DR. REN PARK
 (treading lightly)
 She might not have remembered her
 dreams clearly, but there was some
 element of them that disturbed her -
 - particularly when it came to
 Craig's involvement.
 (beat, regretful)
 I believe she dreamed about Craig's
 death. And that she told him.

SAM BAILEY
 (slowly piecing it
 together)
 So she thought...

DR. REN PARK
 She *theorized* that her prophesies
 were not predictions of fixed
 events. They could be unreliable at
 times -- at least, in terms of
 small details. But after what
 happened in Poland, she began to
 suspect her prophecies might be
 self-fulfilling: that conscious
 knowledge of the future only makes
 that future inevitable, and
 whatever actions people take to
 prevent it only bring it about
 faster.

BILL TYLER
 (struggling to fit this
 all together)
 But... If that's the case, then why
 are you trying to prevent this...
 apocalypse she saw? Is that even
 possible?

DR. REN PARK
 (slightly defensive,
 clarifying)
 I said *she* believed it. I don't.
 While it's true that observation
 can change the state of particles
 in a quantum system, cause and
 effect are far too complicated for
 that to hold in the macroscopic
 world. I have to believe she was
 wrong. I have to believe we can
 change that future.

MARIA SOL
 (getting to his point
 before he does)
 And you want our help.

DR. REN PARK
 (laying out the choice)
 Yes. Doctor Caldwell has requested
 that I offer everyone in this room
 a full contract of employment as an
 independent research consultant for
 ISPHA, effective immediately upon
 your decision.

(MORE)

DR. REN PARK (CONT'D)

You'll all be required to sign a blanket NDA of course, but trust me: it's a good deal. You'll be provided with room and board both here at Meriwether and in the field, along with a regular salary equal to or greater than your current income and a stipend to cover any incidental expenses. More importantly, we'll keep you off Morrison's radar and protected from any reprisals he might attempt. The same offer will of course be extended to Robert and Jerry as soon as they arrive -- though they will not be expected to participate in your investigations unless they chose to.

(beat)

I'm sorry to spring this all on you so suddenly, but we need your decision fairly quickly. There's a team leaving this facility in less than 24 hours to investigate a potential haunting in Allegheny National Forest, Pennsylvania, and we'd like you to join them. Your flights to and from Pittsburg will be covered as well: private charter, well off Morrison's radar. You'll be there and back in less than a week.

KATE SHERIDAN

(hearing a conspicuous absence)

What about my family?

REN PARK

(confused)

What about them?

KATE SHERIDAN

(growing worry)

They're driving to Nevada... they're supposed to meet me in Oslow.

REN PARK

(wasn't expecting that)

I... suggest you tell them to go home.

KATE SHERIDAN
(seeing the gap in his
logic)
And they'll be safe there?

REN PARK
(confused)
As safe as they can be, I assume.
Why?

KATE SHERIDAN
(quoting Morrison)
"I'm going to kill you all the next
time I see you." That's what
Morrison said. If I wouldn't be
safe in my own home -- then why
would my family?

REN PARK
(uncertain, hesitant)
I... see your point.
(beat, realizing he has to
cut a deal)
If we offered Peter the same
arrangement... do you think he'd
accept it?

KATE SHERIDAN
He would if I asked him to... and
if Andrew can stay here as well.

BILL TYLER
(confused, worried)
Are you sure you want to bring a
kid into all this? This place is
kind/of--

KATE SHERIDAN
(cutting him off, decision
made)
It might be the only place where
we're safe from Morrison. I want my
family here, where I know they're
protected.

REN PARK
(seeing the wind shifting)
What about the rest of you? Bill,
Sam, Maria -- I know your financial
situation is a little... unstable
at the moment.

BILL TYLER
(TIRED SCOFF)
Tell me about it...

REN PARK
(final pitch)
And I'm sure this isn't how you saw
this year going -- but we need your
help. If we're going to find the
trigger for Anna's apocalypse and
prevent it, then we need outside
perspectives on the supernatural --
people who know the world Anna
operated in. And if Anna is still
out there somewhere, then I suspect
the best way to look for her is to
follow in her footsteps... see what
breadcrumbs she left for us to
find.

SAM BAILEY
(slightly hesitant)
Can we have some time to think
about this?

REN PARK
(concerned)
Is there something missing from our
offer?

SAM BAILEY
(trying not to rock the
boat)
No, it's all... It's very generous,
but this is all just... really
sudden.

DR. REN PARK
(reluctant, slightly
sarcastic)
Sure. Take as much time as you
need. I mean... It's not the end of
the world, or anything.

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS