

"MEMORY'S MYSTIC BAND"
The Sheridan Tapes, Season 3, Episode 56
Recording Draft - April 29, 2021

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

1. INT. SHERIDAN HOME - ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT - 11/04/1989

A quiet suburban home on a quiet suburban street. There's a gentle knock on the bedroom door before it creaks open slightly.

ANDREW SHERIDAN
(soft, low)
Anna? Not asleep yet, are you?

Anna (age 5) shakes her head no.

ANDREW SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(relieved)
I was hoping not. You know I've been promising to start *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*... should we do it?

Anna wiggles back and forth in her sheets, sitting up excitedly.

ANDREW SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(CHUCKLES)
Alright... the little caterpillar wants a story.

Andrew takes a seat in the old rattan armchair next to Anna's bed, cracking the old paperback open as he CLEARS HIS THROAT.

ANDREW SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(reading)
"Chapter 1: Down the Rabbit-Hole."
(beat)
Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"
(beat)
So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid) whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

(MORE)

ANDREW SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

(beat)

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again. The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.

(beat)

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well...

Andrew slows, noting that Anna's breathing has become slow and steady -- she's fast asleep. HE LAUGHS SOFTLY, then closes the book and backs out of the room.

As he gently closes the door, he whispers...

ANDREW SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(full of love)
Sleep tight, little caterpillar.

CLICK.

2. INT. MERIWETHER FACILITY - SAM'S QUARTERS - DAY -
11/21/1019

Sam starts his recorder on a quiet morning -- the distant sounds of machinery hum in the background.

SAM BAILEY
(recovered and crisp)
Samuel Isaac Bailey, recording for
ISPHA internal records -- daily
log, November 21st, 2019 at 9:05am
Mountain Standard Time. It's been
about a week since we returned from
Pennsylvania and our encounter with
the Oraculites. It's been nice to
take a break and settle in,
especially now that the rest of us
are here. Bill's got Rob, Kate's
got Peter and Andrew, and
Maria's... well, I guess Maria's
technically still on her own, but
she and Ren are still friendly
enough that I don't think she feels
too lonely. I've been spending a
bit of time with Jerry and Russel,
but... honestly, I think I just
needed some time alone after being
hunted and stuck in a tree with the
four of them. And Jerry seems to be
busy most of the time, though god
knows what he's doing. I doubt
ISPHA's letting him run the impound
lot from here, but... I don't know.

(beat)

Honestly, begin stuck in this
facility isn't as bad as I thought
it would be. I could use a bit more
fresh air and sunlight, but the
atrium helps alleviate that. It's
just down the hall from the dorm
area, and it's got a huge skylight
that filters down from the surface,
with a couple rocks and benches and
a small tree growing in the
middle... some kind of ash, I
think.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

It's a good place to go if you need to feel a little more normal. It's hard to have the place to yourself, but... I mean, that's to be expected. I don't know what other experiments are running here, but the facility seems like it's packed. And all the tech here is top-of-the-line, from what I've seen... someone's clearly putting a lot of money into this place. Well - - minus the intercoms. Those only seem to work when they want to.

(beat, refocusing)

Oh, right -- investigation update. Over the past week, I've done the mind-numbing and emotionally exhausting task of double checking all of the tapes from my previous investigation at OCPD, just be extra thorough now that they're back in my custody. It's taken a while, but I've finally placed them all in a constructed timeline that seems to match up with what I know of her life. Now all I have left are the tapes that I originally discounted as gibberish, paranoia, or...

(SIGHS)

Drug-induced fabrication. Along with the tapes she made while working with ISPHA. When Ren first handed those over, I was eager to dive in and listen, but I've found myself... hesitating. I ended up reviewing the familiar tapes before delving into the unfamiliar, but still... something makes me uncertain about starting.

(beat, then dismissing fears)

I guess I'll start with one I've at least partially listened to. At the time, I thought it was just a draft of a story Anna was writing, a kind of... allegory or fairytale that didn't have any bearing on her disappearance. I turned it off halfway, but... I think there might be more to it than I thought.

(beat)

Here goes nothing.

Sam presses play on a second cassette player.

CLICK.

3. INT. ANNA SHERIDAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - 10/31/15

A quiet, rainy night -- the kind of night where introspection and paranoia can equally take hold.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(making truth with
fiction)

Deep in the forests of Northern California, on a backwoods road off a backwoods highway, there is a place few eyes have seen: Elysium Circle. A hundred acres of pristine campgrounds, respectful amenities, and winding gravel roads belie a curious truth: that there is nothing safe in the purpose of those unhallowed grounds.

(beat)

Elysium was the pleasure-filled resting place of the ancient Greek heroes. It's a revealing namesake for this secret place. If the men who named it truly know what they conjured in their rituals, through their songs, and in their actions... they would have given it a different name. In their pride, their world-swallowing hubris, they laid claim to a fantastical vision of perfection, security, and endless, self-serving decadence. This, in truth, was the only god they served.

(beat)

But their story is one too dangerous to tell in bare truths, even in the quiet of a rainy night far from any listening ears. Other tellers have found themselves diagnosed with a nervous breakdown, sent off to an exclusive rehab center, or lost to a sudden suicide under suspicious circumstances. So instead -- I'm telling you the story of Athene, and her home... the Elysian Glen.

(beat, out of storytelling
mode slightly)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

If you are listening to this, then for legal purposes, I will reiterate that the story I'm about to tell is a work of fiction, and any similarity to any persons living or dead is purely coincidental. Of course.

(beat, into story)

Once upon a time, there was a flighty woodland sprite named Athene. She lived in the beautiful forest of the Elysian Glen with her father, a woods fairy who seemed older than time itself in her eyes, and just as solid. Her father cared for their land as if he were its father too, and the creatures and people in it regarded him as such. Athene and her father loved their home -- the bubbling creeks so full of life and noisy joy; the soft carpet of leaves that covered the forest floor when autumn came; the gentle calls of the birds and beasts that filled the air with music; and the strong, arching crowns of the tallest trees, where they sat and shivered at the vast sea of starlight above them. Their home protected them, and they protected their home. Protected it, that is, until the day when the great kings first visited the glen.

(beat)

Of course, there was nothing remarkable about that first visit. Creatures and nobility from every land had sought out the Elysian Glen, seeking rest, inspiration, or shelter from their persecutors. And so, to Athene and her father, the presence of these kings was an exciting development. Athene, after all, had only ever known friends beneath the canopy of her home... why should this be any different?

(beat)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The great kings, understandably, desired quiet in the woods, and so each creature did their best to give them the privacy they sought (at least, that's what they told each other -- the woods were full of over-curious eavesdroppers, like every wild and quiet place). One night, after a day of gathering roots and nuts in the forest, Athene's father returned with strange news. The kings had made a proclamation (though to whom, he wasn't certain): every year, a fortnight after midsummer, the great kings would return to the Elysian Glen to share in the bounty of the forest, to rest and encourage one another, and to create a great treaty of peace between their kingdoms. And it would all be due to the magic of the Elysian Glen, a place they so admired for its beauty and goodness. As part of this treaty, however, they would build a fortress to house their yearly feasts -- a structure which, according to their proclamation, would remain modest and unobtrusive, so as not to take away from the natural beauty of their retreat.

(beat)

The years went by, and the great kings did according to their word. In fact, so secret and unobtrusive was their fortress that in the third year, Athene's curiosity drew her to their camp. She had tried to keep her distance, but she eventually her need to know exactly what they did each year overpowered her sense of courtesy and fear.

(beat)

In the years prior, she'd only ever seen a distant glow against the treetops on their final night in the forest -- always in the same place, always the same light, as if it was a hulking figure lit by firelight. No sound ever made its way to her treetop hollow, nor did she ever see anything else.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

But in this third year, as she crept closer to the secret camp of the kings, she saw that her eyes had not deceived her. It was a hulking figure that stood at the center of their camp. And Athene recognized her.

(beat)

Themis, the goddess of justice, stood blindfolded and frozen into stone in the midst of the kings, lit by orange-red light as the bonfires roared ever higher. She was five times taller than any of the kings who gathered around her, covered in furs and animal skins that obscured their identities. They sang and changed in turn: hymns to Themis for her wise justice, hymn to Hermes, hymns to the great waters above and below and the rulers of each, and some songs that were too strange and alien for Athene to understand. She heard only snippets of their conversations, as the kings called one another's names above the cacophony Eilis... Claudio... Morpheus. As Athene watched, she found herself growing tired -- the night had been long, though these kings had not lost any of their fervor. As their songs reached a crescendo, two of the kings -- the ones she thought were named Morpheus and Eilis -- ran up the hill that stood at Themis' back. The arch of the mound led them up to her head, and once the two kings had leaned forward and covered the statue's ears, the kings below shouted with one voice: "In the shadow, we make silence."

(beat)

With a new, strange feeling settling in her belly, Athene escaped back to her home without being seen. But despite her best efforts to forget, her memory of that eerie night stayed with her.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

She tried to live with this small disturbance year by year, and as time went on she noted that, with the protective wards the traveling kings had placed about the forest, peace reigned in the Elysian Glen more than it ever had. Every year, Athene's father came back with yet another reassuring tale of the beautification of the forest, the ways in which the comfortable kings were slowly changing the forest to suit their presence, and their endeavors to preserve and protect their home. It was important, after all, to keep the glen truly untouched by the outside world, to keep out the darkness and devastation that had taken root everywhere else beyond the borders of the wood. Athene's unease was a small price to pay for such a gift.

(beat)

But in the tenth year of the great king's retreat, shortly before they were due to arrive, Athene's father -- brave, wise, and ancient as he was -- died. The Glen had lost its father, and so had Athene. And so the task of caring for the needs of her home fell to her, and as she tried to keep the cupboard stocked and the pantry full, she realized with growing alarm that it was becoming harder and harder to find food beneath the trees. Where there had once been berry patches bursting with plenty, rich veins of wild onions and tubers growing amongst the roots of the trees, and orchards of crooked nut trees, the kings had leveled and razed the earth to expand their ever-growing fortress, now more palatial than their promises had ever indicated. Athene was forced to venture further and further into the Glen, sometimes even to the very boundary of other lands filled with darkness, just to fill her aching belly. And as her desperation grew beyond her fear -- she stepped beyond that boundary.

(beat)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

What she found there shocked her, though not for the reasons she expected. With her slight frame and nimble wings, she was able to slip into the shadows of these lands unseen -- places of heavy rain and broad leaves, places of mountains and spiny, grasping undergrowth, even places of snow and ice that left her shivering each night. And in each place, she recognized a different voice from that night in the Glen -- the voices of the great kings, finally matched to stern, determined faces. She saw them beating the creatures and peoples of their lands, forcing them to mine and grow and raze and re-shape their lands until not even a single wild rose could bloom upon it. They dragged those who disobeyed into caves and cities underground from which only screaming could be heard, burning their homes and forcing them to accept the dictates of their new and brutal leaders: to build out farther and destroy any living thing that grew in their way. And any good and perfect thing that the people managed to find for themselves, the kings found, and took, and transported to the Elysian Glen.

(beat)

Horrified, Athene followed these roving companies of enforcers and bailiffs, traveling so far from her home that she was sure she'd never make it back. And in each and every place, she saw the same thing. In every land beyond the borders of her home, the kings used pain to turn the innocent to utter destruction and servitude. In every shadow, they sought to make perfect silence. At last Athene, fearing for her own life, fled in the direction of the setting sun, only to find herself upon the shore of a storm-tossed sea. The sight of the ocean, only a legend in the land-locked forest of her youth, terrified her.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

But upon the misty shoreline, she saw a tall, abandoned tower standing alone, and she fled into it. There, with her spirit weakened by the greed, the violence, and the lies of those great kings, she decided that she would no longer continue. She stopped eating. She curled up in a corner of the tower's uppermost room, and there attempted to sleep though her death.

(beat)

But on the night she was sure would be her last -- her father appeared to her in a dream. His face was anguished, and he cried to his daughter to return to their home and set things to right. Through tears, he told her to make her way into the great fortress of the kings, to their most holy meeting place, and remove the blindfold from the effigy of Themis. He explained that the kings, drunk on power and perverting justice at all turns, held Themis not as a god, but as a prisoner. So long as they kept her blindfolded, they could continue to hoard the treasures of the world for themselves without fear of retribution. Once she removed the blindfold... she need only stand out of Themis' way. He begged her to return, and promised that if she did this, she would not be alone -- that the downtrodden creatures of the world and the Elysian Glen would aid her in her quest.

(beat)

Her father stopped for a breath as Athene took this all in, and then said, low and hushed, that if she did this, then his soul would finally be able to escape its torment. He had failed to act -- to protect the Glen, protect Athene, protect the other lands now suffering at the hands of the now-fearless kings. His face twisted, and he seemed to hold back something great and terrible within himself...

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

something he dared not say, even in death.

(beat)

Reaching into his bag, he produced two things: first, a pair of sharp knitting needles to undo the great knot at the back of Themis' blindfold, and second -- a small evil eye token, the bright blue of its iris shining like a searchlight into the oppressive night. This, he said, would offer her stealth and protection on her journey to the fortress.

(beat)

Athene's knees shook as she looked at the gifts in her father's hands. She was uncertain, but she didn't have time to second-guess. As he spoke, monstrous waves rose up behind her father, only moments from sweeping him away. Even as they did, she snatched the gifts from his grasp with trembling hands.

(beat)

She awoke to find a meal of nuts and berries piled beside her head, and she devoured it before she noticed her father's gifts lying on the windowsill beside a small, curious songbird. With a whistle, it flew away from the tower, gliding down through the calm morning air of the seaside.

(beat)

As her father had promised, the people and creatures of the lands she passed through seemed to find her as she made her weary way back towards Elysian Glen. They offered her food and shelter, and some even joined her on her journey to ensure she made it home safely. In a time that felt far shorter than her journey out, she found herself steps away from the border of the Glen. She rubbed her evil eye token for luck, as she had so many times before, and flitted into the familiar shadows of her home.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

She felt the eyes of the king's protective wards turn towards her, but the pendant gave her protection from their full effect. Further and further she journeyed into the forest, but as she neared the fortress at its heart, her pendant grew heavier around her neck.

(beat)

On the final morning, Athene woke with the realization that she would not have the strength to both carry the pendant and undo the great blindfold around Themis' eyes. She went as far as she could that day, but only a few hundred paces from the walls of the fortress, she stopped. She could go no further like this. And so, with all the strength she could muster, she cast the pendant aside, and took off at full speed towards the sleeping goddess. The creatures who'd followed her attempted to shield Athene from the attacks of the kings' guard, but they could do little but stand in the way of their blades. Athene felt their sacrifices, but couldn't risk stopping to help them. She was so very, very close to freeing her father. To saving her home. And she had to keep going.

(beat)

She was only steps away now, all the strength of her legs and wings behind her as she sprinted up the hill behind Themis' head, when suddenly... King Morpheus dropped from a branch above, blocking Athene's path. With a wicked smile, he noted the weariness on her face, the dirt caked on her clothes, the knitting needles gripped in her shaking hands, as if they could protect her from a warrior like him.

(beat)

And then... he surprised her. He agreed to let her remove Themis' blindfold, promising that he would not try to stop her if she did. But he also warned her that if she did so, she would pay a terrible price.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Athene's belly went cold as he said that as she worked the knot, Themis would awaken just enough to begin telling her truths about her father... things she did not know, and things that would most certainly make her lose her mind for grief and shame. Even if she lasted long enough to remove the blindfold fully and unleash Themis' wrath upon the evil kings, she would be too far gone to see justice restored to the land.

(beat)

The dark king finished his warning, stepping aside to let Athene pass. To her eyes, he seemed to stand upon a mountain of certainty. There was no lie in his voice. The way was clear. She had only to take three steps forward and undo the knot, and her work would be complete. Yet her feet were frozen to the earth beneath her as Morpheus' words ran through her mind. Could she risk her sanity for the chance to restore justice? What if she was unable to complete her task, losing her mind for nothing? And what good would it do to save her home, if her mind could no longer see it for what it was?

(longer pause, quieter)

As the animals of the Glen tell it... Athene did undo the knot. The goddess Themis did tell her terrible truths -- that Athene's own father was the one who sold the Glen for pennies, a land he'd only gained through treachery and betrayal. He gave up to these traveling, pillaging kings, and he was too cowardly to deny them everything they asked, even though he knew everything that was about to happen.

(beat)

Even so... Athene succeeded. As Themis ended her tale, the creatures of the forest gathered from miles around to tell Themis of their woes, of the kings' oppression and greed.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The tales of loss, grief, and pain resonated through the forest, and as they spoke, the wrath of Themis filled her with strength. So she seized the first of the evil kings she could see -- Morpheus, frozen in terror on the hill behind her -- and with a single movement, swallowed him whole.

(longer pause,
considering)

The tale of Themis -- of what happened next, and how the world was healed and set to right -- that is still unwritten. But the goddess is moving. And the kings will not outrun her. As for Athene...

(long pause, considering;
her voice cracks
slightly)

She was never seen again.

CLACK.

4. INT. MERIWETHER FACILITY - SAM'S QUARTERS - DAY

Sam sits in silence for a long moment, considering what he just heard.

SAM BAILEY

(staggered, conviction
building)

How could I have been so blind? I flat-out refused to listen to what I thought were just fairytales and ramblings... just Anna composing another story. But this... she outright admits she knew she was going to disappear. That has to be what this is -- Athene is clearly a stand in for herself. Athene; Anna Sheridan. Morpheus; Morrison, there in her final moments. But if she knew -- what was in that bunker that she needed so badly that she'd risk her life to face him? What did she think would happen? Morrison survived, so if this is all some kind of... allegory for her visions, then it didn't work. Themis didn't eat the evil king. But why? And when did she first see this?

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)
Why the *hell* couldn't she have
dated this tape for fucking once!

Sam lashes out, almost knocking the recorder off the table,
but he manages to catch it before it falls. BREATHING
HEAVILY, he recovers and moves the recorder back into place.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)
(static rising, distorted)
I need to... Calm. Stay. Calm.

Sam pauses, considering.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)
(curious)
Huh. Never tried that on myself
before. Not sure if it did
anything, but...
(beat, refocusing)
So what does Themis represent? The
goddess of justice... Anna clearly
felt she was on a quest to expose
something. Something that risked
her own sanity, her own safety. She
felt like she needed to... right
some great wrong. Some great wrong
caused by her father, working with
Morrison?
(beat)
It could all just be metaphor,
motives included. Or... maybe I'm
just reading too much into this. I
don't really see what this has to
do with Ren, or ISPHA, or the end
of the world. Unless she thought
that truth was somehow related? How
would that even work?

SAM SIGHS, sounding very much like he did at the start of
this investigation.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)
Down the rabbit-hole I go.

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS.