

"THOU WINTER WIND"
The Sheridan Tapes - Season 03, Episode 62
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by

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"Homestead on the Corner"
By Trevor Van Winkle

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1. INT. ANNA SHERIDAN'S HOME - NIGHT - 12/25/2016

A small gas fire burns as a cold wind blow outside, rattling the windows slightly -- but inside, all is warm and bright.

On the couch opposite, Maria and Anna lie next to one another, with Anna's arm draped over Maria.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(almost whispering in
Maria's ear)
Hey.

MARIA SOL
(amused, but deeply in
love)
What?

ANNA SHERIDAN
(holding her a little
tighter)
Merry Christmas.

MARIA SOL
(SCOFFS SLIGHTLY)
That's all you've got to say?

ANNA SHERIDAN
(smiling softly)
No. But it's all I want to say.

MARIA SOL
(gently mocking)
Well that's certainly a change.

ANNA SHERIDAN
("keep talking")
Shut up.

MARIA SOL
(joking, but genuine)
We should do this more often.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(soft, starting to fall
asleep)
Anytime you want.

MARIA SOL
(smiling)
Well it kind of has to be Christmas
for this to work, you know. It's
not the same without the lights.
(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (beat, confused)
 Anna?

No reply -- ANNA'S BREATHING IS SOFT AND EVEN as dreams take her.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (quiet, not wanting to
 disturb her)
 Anna?

After a long moment, Maria carefully moves Anna's arm aside and gets up, padding across the carpet in her socks.

Opening a cabinet, she pulls out a small mug and begins to fill it from the sink. Outside, the wind picks up, knocking the old apple tree's branches against the window.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 (SHIVERING SLIGHTLY,
 quoting quietly)
 "Blow, blow, thou winter wind...
 Freeze, thou bitter sky."

Maria turns the faucet off AND TAKES A SIP... then stops. Across the room, ANNA MURMURS IN HER SLEEP.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (talking in sleep,
 slightly fearful)
 Dad, I can't... there's not enough
 water, it won't... catch it, catch
 it, it's falling...!

MARIA SOL
 (slightly worried, still
 trying not to wake her)
 Anna?

Setting her mug down, Maria slips back into the living room.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (talking in sleep, fear
 growing)
 Please stop... please stop... I
 can't help, it won't...
 (beat, more afraid)
 There's someone else... in the
 shadows... behind the dark...
 moving... look behind you, look
 behind you...!

There's a faint sound of movement as Maria glances back involuntarily. There's no one there.

MARIA SOL
 (trying to comfort her
 without waking her)
 Anna, you're just having a bad
 dream, I'm/still here--

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (crying out in sleep,
 terrified, breathing
 shallow)
 The shadow, cloven by branching
 light -- the void tearing open,
 fire over all lands and lives and
 peoples -- the end, the end, the
 end!!

MARIA SOL
 (urgent, shaking her
 awake)
 Wake up Anna, wake up!

ANNA GASPS, cutting off as Maria shakes her. HER BREATHING IS
 SHALLOW AND HARSH, like she's just run a marathon.

After a long moment, IT SLOWS, and she looks up at Maria.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (sounding slightly
 confused)
 Did I... did I fall asleep?

MARIA SOL
 (still worried, trying
 badly not to show it)
 Yeah... You did.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (SIGHS, guilty)
 I'm so sorry Maria... I was trying
 to listen.

MARIA SOL
 (trying to sound
 unconcerned and failing)
 No, it's fine, I just...
 (trails off, beat, more
 worried)
 What was that about?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (confusion)
 What was *what* about?

MARIA SOL
(worried)
You were talking in your sleep.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(genuinely surprised by
that)
I was? That's not--
(cuts off, concealing)
It was just a nightmare. Shouldn't
have had so much eggnog before bed.

MARIA SOL
(growing concern)
Are you sure? You sounded/pretty
scared--

ANNA SHERIDAN
(more aggressive than
needed)
I'm fine Maria, just... drop it.

Both of them go quiet. After a moment...

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(realizing she shouldn't
have snapped, SIGHS)
I'm sorry Maria, it's just... I
don't want to talk about it. Maybe
later.

MARIA SOL
(hesitant, but not wanting
to press)
Yeah... Okay. Sure.

Anna shifts back on the couch, and Maria lies down next to her. The fire flutters and the wind howls... But neither of them say a word.

CLICK.

MAIN THEME

2. INT. NOISY BAR, FRENCH QUARTER - NOLA - NIGHT - 12/20/2019

The TEAM CHEERS as Sam mounts the stage -- they've unexpectedly found an open mic night.

SAM CLEARS HIS THROAT INTO THE MIC.

SAM BAILEY

(across the bar, drunk
singing from memory)

In the merry month of May from me
home I started,
Left the girls of Tuam nearly
broken hearted,
Saluted Father dear,
Kissed me darling mother,
Drank a pint of beer, me grief and
tears to smother,
Then off to reap the corn, leave
where I was born,
Cut a stout blackthorn to banish
ghosts and goblins;
In a brand new pair of brogues to
rattle o'er the bogs
And frighten all the dogs on the
rocky road to Dublin,
One two three four five,
Hunt the Hare and turn her down the
rocky road
And all the way to Dublin, Whack
fol la de dah!

(beat)

In Mullingar that night I rested
limbs so weary
Started by daylight next morning
bright and early
Took a drop of the pure
to keep me heart from sinking--

CLICK.

3. INT. KARAOKE BAR - WEST TEXAS - NIGHT - 12/23/2019

The scene abruptly shifts to another noisy dive bar --
slightly muffled conversations and country music.

MARIA SOL

(a little tipsy, gloating
slightly)

Is this thing on? Helllloooo... Yep -
- there we go. Good evening, Doctor
Caldwell -- Ren. Hope you're both
doing well. It's the night before
Christmas Eve here... and where's
here, you might ask? Well if you
can't tell from the sound of people
enjoying themselves, it definitely
isn't Meriwether.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

I don't know if it actually has a name -- the sign on the road just had "BAR" spray painted on it, and I doubt there's more than one in this town. Not that the town has a name either, far as I can tell. Middle of nowhere, Texas. A decidedly unauthorized pit-stop in the lone star state. "But Maria," I hear you say: "Isn't that a massive security risk?" And I say -- so what if it is? If Morrison really wanted to catch us, he'd have done it already... and I doubt he'd try it here. Too many eyes, not enough backup. So we figured, screw it! We'll make it back in plenty of time for Christmas no matter what we do, so why not celebrate on the road before we get there? Anna did it plenty when she was out here, so...

Maria trails off slightly, the reminder of Anna cold and cutting.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

(trying to stay upbeat,
failing)

Sorry, I... I just realized this is the second Christmas since she disappeared. The first one was so close, I didn't even notice it. More than a year without her now... it just seems like --

4. CONTINUOUS

Across the bar, a round of applause and cheers rises as the Karaoke machine pops to life with a tinny rendition of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

BILL TYLER

(playful, bouncy)

God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay!
Remember Christ our savior
Was born on Christmas day!
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray!
Oh, tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy!
Oh, tidings of comfort and joy...

BILL CARRIES ON as Maria's footsteps carry her back to the bar, where Kate and Sam sit listening.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (faint concern, mostly casual)
 You alright?

MARIA SOL
 (pretending nothing's wrong)
 What?

KATE SHERIDAN
 (expected a stock response, more concerned)
 You were just... over there for a while. Were you making a phone call?

MARIA SOL
 (growing defensive)
 No, I was just...
 (trails off, shakes head)
 It's nothing.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (that only makes her more worried)
 You sure?

MARIA SOL
 (SCOFFS, turning this around)
 I should be the one asking you that.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (confused, off balance)
 Come again?

MARIA SOL
 (slightly playful)
 I mean... stopping here for the night? I know it was your idea, and I know Peter usually takes care of Santa duties, but--

KATE SHERIDAN
 (suddenly defensive)
 That's not fair. It's not my fault ISPHA sent us out this close to the holiday.

(MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

We needed a break, and I don't care what Ren says: I'm not driving through the night just to make sure we--

MARIA SOL

(surprised, a little worried)

Okay, okay... sorry.

KATE SHERIDAN

(pause, then FRUSTRATED
SIGH, deflated)

I'm sorry, Maria. It's just... we're all under so much pressure, and I'm just... not used to it.

MARIA SOL

(trying to sound playful, but being cautious)

Says the world-class CPA.

KATE SHERIDAN

(CHUCKLES, feeling better for the ego-boost)

Different kind of pressure. Tax work... I can leave it at the office -- I can get away from it. But this? Trying to save the world, to keep my family safe...

(long beat, more vulnerable)

Are we doing the right thing?

MARIA SOL

(last question she expected from Kate)

What, working for ISPHA?

KATE SHERIDAN

(hesitant, finally speaking her mind)

Working for ISPHA, chasing rumors, leaving my family in that...

(beat)

It all just feels so... pointless, sometimes. A lot of the time.

MARIA SOL

(thrown off, but trying to offer some comfort)

I mean... It's not though -- is it?

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)

I mean, we helped Philippe, and if Anna really saw the end of the/world--

KATE SHERIDAN

(voicing doubts she's had since the start)

If she actually saw it; If her visions were actually real; If that doesn't mean the future's inevitable...

(trails off, SIGHS, frustrated)

If we can actually stop it, then yes -- it's the right choice. The only choice. But... I mean, does it actually feel like we're getting any closer to an answer?

MARIA SOL

(surprised that Kate shares her concerns)

Not... not really, no.

KATE SHERIDAN

(shaking her head, frustrated)

Pennsylvania, Meriwether, White Sands -- the only time we actually saved anyone, it was when there was an honest-to-god human behind the problem. Everything else, it's just been... bandaids. Stopgaps. And I just can't stop thinking about what happened when ISPHA tried that the first time.

MARIA SOL

(seeing her point, realization)

Templi Prophetam.

KATE SHERIDAN

(nodding)

I keep thinking: what if it's all pointless? What if ISPHA's really is as clueless as we are, and they just have us chasing our own tails because they don't know what else to do?

MARIA SOL

(slightly playing devil's
advocate, not sure she
likes skeptical Kate)

I mean... Ren's pretty damn smart,
and Caldwell... well, I don't like
her, but she's/pretty sure she
knows--

KATE SHERIDAN

(shaking her head)

It's not about how smart they are.
Even the smartest people can make
stupid decisions when they get bad
ideas stuck in their heads. It's
about... us.

(DEEP BREATH, gathering
her thoughts)

If all we're turning up out here is
dead ends, false alarms, and
failures -- then all we're doing is
wasting what little time we have
left. Time we could be spending
with our families, with the people
we care about. And what about Anna?

MARIA SOL

(surprised)

What about her?

KATE SHERIDAN

When was the last time we had an
actual lead on finding her? When we
rescued Bill? Before that? When do
we get back to actually looking for
her again?

MARIA SOL

(struggling slightly)

We... we are still looking for her -
- Right? I mean, this is still our
best chance at--

5. CONTINUOUS

Almost unnoticed, Bill's song ended, and his footsteps
approach the bar with an unbothered bounce.

BILL TYLER

(chipper, slightly buzzed)

Alright, who's up next?

KATE SHERIDAN
 (trying to mask her
 thoughts)
 Shouldn't we let someone else go?
 Don't want to hog the machine.

BILL TYLER
 Are you kidding? We're the most
 exciting thing to happen to this
 bar in years! Most night's it's
 just the same three or four locals
 up there -- we're practically a
 special event!

MARIA SOL
 (returning to herself with
 Bill's presence)
 Well this "special event's"
 postponed indefinitely. No way
 you're getting me up on that stage.

BILL TYLER
 Oh come on Maria, it'll/be fun--

MARIA SOL
 (still playful, but not
 budging)
 Believe me, Tyler... you're never
 gonna hear me sing.

BILL TYLER
 (accepting she's not
 budging)
 Worth a shot, at least. Kate?

KATE SHERIDAN
 (SCOFFS, warming slightly)
 Oh, I need at least three more
 drinks before I try that again.

BILL TYLER
 (moving down the list, not
 terribly happy about it)
 How about you, Sam?

No answer.

MARIA SOL
 (note of concern)
 You okay, Sam?

SAM BAILEY
 (shaken from his thoughts)
 What?

MARIA SOL
 (growing concern)
 Are you okay? You're being even
 quieter than usual.

SAM BAILEY
 (distracted, clearly not
 wanting to talk)
 Oh... yeah, I'm fine, just... a lot
 on my mind.

BILL TYLER
 (CHUCKLES)
 Seriously? It's Christmas Eve,
 we're out for Karaoke, and
 everything's right in the world!
 What's there to worry about?

SAM BAILEY
 (growing awkward with all
 eyes on him)
 It's just, uh...
 (sees a way out)
 Oh, is the uh... is the Karaoke
 machine open now?

BILL TYLER
 (slightly concerned he
 didn't hear them)
 Yeah, I just finished. You can take
 your turn if--

SAM BAILEY
 (rushing away from the
 group)
 Okay, yeah -- I think I'll try
 that. Just need to see if there's
 anything I know on there.

A little too fast and clumsy, Sam leaves the bar and rushes
 across the room.

6. CONTINUOUS

Bill watches him go, THEN CLICKS HIS TONGUE in disapproval.

BILL TYLER
 (muttered, masking worry
 in a joke)
 The more things change...

KATE SHERIDAN
 (concerned)
 Something wrong, Bill?

BILL TYLER
 (shaking his head, trying
 not to sound worried)
 Nothing, it's just... last time I
 took Sam out to karaoke, he pulled
 the exact same trick to get out of
 talking to me. I just thought we
 were past that by now.

MARIA SOL
 (slightly confused)
 I thought you wanted him to sing?

BILL TYLER
 (SCOFFS)
 I'll admit, he surprised me in
 NOLA. Last time he sang, though...

MARIA SOL
 I really don't see what the problem
 is/here--

KATE SHERIDAN
 (piecing this together)
 No, I... I think I see what you're
 saying Bill.

BILL TYLER
 (not expecting that)
 You do?

MARIA SOL
 (slightly annoyed)
 Well can someone please explain it
 to me, 'cause I'm lost.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (trying to take this
 seriously)
 Have either of you seen Sam get any
 sleep when we're out on assignment?
 I mean besides those little "power
 naps" he takes when he thinks no
 one's looking.

MARIA SOL
 (realizing, running
 through last few weeks)
 That can't be right, he... I mean,
 at White Sands, he...

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 no, he said he wasn't... but in
 Pennsylvania, he...
 (running out of ideas)
 Shit, you're right.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (nodding)
 He spent months alone in the
 mountains with nothing to do but
 take care of himself. Now he has a
 problem to solve again, and he's
 barely sleeping. He works all hours
 of the day and night, and I don't
 know if you've noticed, but he's
 had that little cold of his since
 White Sands.

BILL TYLER
 (muttered realization)
 Deja vu all over again.

MARIA SOL
 I mean... is that really a bad
 thing though? I know it's not great
 for his health, but... that's just
 how he works, right?

BILL TYLER
 (more concerned than he
 lets on)
 I... I'm not sure. Maybe.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (getting to the heart of
 her concern)
 Maybe it wasn't a big deal before,
 but he didn't have his... abilities
 back then. At least he didn't know
 about them. The way he talks about
 it... I'm worried there might be
 more consequences to him burning
 out than we expect. For all of us.

MARIA SOL
 (growing worry)
 You're just... guessing all that,
 right?

KATE SHERIDAN
 (deflating slightly,
 tired)
 I don't know... maybe it's just the
 stress talking. It's been a long
 couple of months...
 (MORE)

KATE SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
I'm probably just looking for
somewhere to put it.

BILL TYLER
(quiet)
I don't think that's it.

KATE SHERIDAN
(concerned)
What do you mean?

BILL TYLER
(hesitant, halting)
I mean... maybe it's just stress
for me too, but ever since I got
out of the wheel, I've had this...
Weird feeling around Sam. Like
it's... ah, I don't know.

KATE SHERIDAN
(pulling it out of him)
Like it's what, Bill?

BILL TYLER
(hesitates, then honest)
I feel... uneasy around him. Like
there was something dangerous about
spending too much time with him.

MARIA SOL
(trying to lighten the
mood)
I feel that way about Sam most of
the time. Always a danger of being
bored to death.

BILL TYLER
(shaking his head,
serious)
It's not that... it was like how I
felt around Amanita -- like it was
something inside my own head. And
honestly... it feels like I'm
sitting next to a time bomb
sometimes.

They all go quiet at that. After a long moment...

KATE SHERIDAN
(creeping dread)
Does you feel that way now?

BILL TYLER
 (admitting his own doubts)
 I don't know... I think whatever
 link I had is mostly gone, and it
 was barely there to start with, but-

7. CONTINUOUS

Across the bar, the Karaoke machine crackles and pops as a
 spangly guitar begins to play "Home on the Range."

Everyone goes deadly quiet.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (hushed, horrified)
 Bill, tell me that's not --

NED LEROUX
 (singing, showboating
 slightly)
 "Oh, give me a home where the
 buffalo roam,
 Where the deer and the antelope
 play,
 Where seldom is heard a
 discouraging word
 And the skies are not cloudy all
 day."

NED CONTINUES SINGING. Bill, Kate, and Maria remain in
 stunned silence for a moment, then...

KATE SHERIDAN
 (immediately taking
 charge)
 Where's Sam?

BILL TYLER
 (suppressing panic)
 I don't know... last I saw him he
 was over there.

KATE SHERIDAN
 Do you think they got him?

BILL TYLER
 I didn't hear anything -- did you?

MARIA SOL
 (slightly confused, seeing
 their worry)
 Wait... who is that?

BILL TYLER
(urgent)
That's Ned, Maria.

MARIA SOL
(realizing)
Oh shit...

KATE SHERIDAN
Do you think he's here with
Morrison?

BILL TYLER
(glancing around bar)
I can't see him -- he might be
outside though.

MARIA SOL
(growing worry)
Might?

BILL TYLER
It's too dark to see anything out
there. I doubt he'd show up sirens
blazing.

KATE SHERIDAN
(running scenarios)
But it could just be Ned, right?

BILL TYLER
(needing to escape this
situation)
Could be isn't good enough... we
need to get out of her. The van's
out back -- if we create a
distraction, we should be able to
get out without him noticing.

KATE SHERIDAN
(repeated, urgent)
But where's Sam?

MARIA SOL
(exasperated)
Sam can take care of himself! It's
us I'm worried about.

KATE SHERIDAN
Not if he's already been caught...
or if we abandon him in the middle
of nowhere.

BILL TYLER
 (getting an idea)
 I'll try calling his cell--

KATE SHERIDAN
 What good will that do? There's no
 service out here.

MARIA SOL
 (urgent whisper)
 Can you two just do something
 already! He's already on the last
 verse.

KATE SHERIDAN
 We can't just leave Sam here!

BILL TYLER
 And we can't just sit here waiting
 for Morrison to catch us!

MARIA SOL
 Then what the hell are we going to--

8. CONTINUOUS

SAM BAILEY
 (concerned)
 Uh... What did I miss?

Everyone goes silent as NED REACHES THE LAST CHORUS, staring
 at Sam.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (anger born of worry)
 Where the hell where you?

SAM BAILEY
 (still a little off
 balance)
 The bathroom... I couldn't pick a
 song, and, uh...

KATE SHERIDAN
 (mounting frustration)
 You got stage fright and hid in the
 toilets? We all thought got/caught
 by Morrison--

MARIA SOL
 (urgent, hushed)
 Uh, Kate -- bigger problems.

They all fall silent as a set of booted footsteps approach.
Ned's not singing any longer.

NED LEROUX
(blithe, smiling)
Howdy, Partner.

Long, tense silence.

BILL TYLER
(restrained, nervous)
Ned.

NED LEROUX
(turning to Kate)
Kate, Sam -- always good to see ya.
And Maria, right? I don't think
we've met yet.
(holding out hand,
introduction)
Ned Leroux.

MARIA SOL
(nervous, knows the
stories)
I'd uh... rather not.

NED LEROUX
(LAUGHS, friendly)
Oh come on -- I don't bite. Right,
Bill?

BILL TYLER
(growing anger, still
suppressed)
I think you'd better back off, Ned.

NED LEROUX
(shrugs, trying to sound
unhurt)
Fine, fine... I get it. Nobody
wants to shake hands with the tar-
man. Fair enough.

KATE SHERIDAN
(exasperated)
You tortured Bill!

NED LEROUX
(defensive)
Morrison tortured Bill. I was tied
to a chair.

BILL TYLER
 (anger growing)
 That's not how it went, and we both
 know it.

NED LEROUX
 (shrugs)
 Do we?

KATE SHERIDAN
 (trying to take control)
 What are you doing here, Ned?

NED LEROUX
 (playing this as a joke)
 What, besides getting yelled at?

SAM BAILEY
 (low threat)
 You know damn well what she means.

NED LEROUX
 (CHUCKLES, matching Sam)
 You ready for round three already,
 Bailey?

SAM BAILEY
 (about to do something
 stupid)
 You want to take this outside?

NED LEROUX
 (grinning)
 I'm game if you are.

BILL TYLER
 (trying to keep this from
 exploding)
 Just answer the question, Ned. Why
 are you here?

NED LEROUX
 (turning back to Bill)
 Well since you asked so nicely... I
 heard y'all were in my old neck of
 the woods. Thought I'd swing by.

BILL TYLER
 (pushing for answers)
 Heard from who?

NED CHUCKLES, then saunters towards the door. He knows they
 can't resist the bait.

MARIA SOL
 (worried)
 Where's he going?

SAM BAILEY
 (already standing and
 following)
 Come on.

The group follows Ned out the door, leaving the noisy interior behind. Faint sounds of traffic and wind.

BILL TYLER
 (catching up with him)
 Ned, stop -- who did you hear from?

NED LEROUX
 (amused)
 Well... heard might be the wrong word. You might say I was... drawn here.

SAM BAILEY
 (concerned by implication)
 What do you mean, drawn?

NED LEROUX
 (SCOFFS)
 Exactly what I said.... or did y'all think it was a coincidence you keep running into the supernatural out there? I could find you anywhere on earth... so I figured it was time for a visit. It's been a while.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (trying to pull clues out of Ned)
 And by visit, you mean...?

NED LEROUX
 (LAUGHS, realizes what this is all about)
 For once, exactly what I said: a visit. A chat. Can't an old cowboy miss his friends every once in a while?

SAM BAILEY
 So you're not here with Morrison, then? This isn't some kind of trap?

NED LEROUX

(annoyed, exasperated)

No, Bailey: I'm not here with Morrison. Or haven't you been keeping up with what's going on in Oslow?

SAM BAILEY

(confused, realizing he hasn't)

What are you talking about?

NED LEROUX

(glad to know something he doesn't)

Morrison's on the way out. Commission Board put him under administrative leave last week, pending his termination.

BILL TYLER

(stunned, disbelieving)

They *what*?

KATE SHERIDAN

(getting to the heart of the matter)

What for?

NED LEROUX

Man's barely left the tunnels since your little jailbreak. I've gone down there a couple of times, but he's... not doing well. Think he finally might've snapped.

KATE SHERIDAN

(stunned)

Shit.

BILL TYLER

(skeptical)

So he's out, just like that? 20 years as chief, and he's gone that fast?

NED LEROUX

(defensive)

Hey, I didn't expect it to happen that quick either, but apparently one of the commissioners had a real bur in his saddle over him. I guess spending 20 million in tax revenue to hunt ghosts will do that.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (money brain shorts out
 slightly)
 20... Damn.

NED LEROUX
 (knows he's convinced
 them)
 Commission Board's looking to pick
 an interim before the next
 election, but they'll mostly be
 taking control of the PD
 themselves. It's a new day for
 Oslow.

SAM BAILEY
 (jumping to conclusion,
 confrontational)
 So that's your play, huh? You take
 Morrison's seat and run with it?

A moment's silence...tThen NED BURST OUT LAUGHING.

NED LEROUX
 (THROUGH LAUGHS)
 Bailey, Bailey, Bailey... how you
 ever made detective, I will never
 know.

BILL TYLER
 (confused)
 So that's... not your plan?

NED LEROUX
 (recovering slightly,
 still amused)
 Hell no... why would they pick me?
 The last thing I want is anyone
 looking closer at my CV... I only
 got in because Morrison fudged the
 details. Anyone else tries to call
 my references, and I'm out faster
 than he is.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (growing exasperation)
 Then why are you still there?

NED LEROUX
 (shrugs, noncommittal)
 It's comfortable. I'm still left
 pretty much alone to do my own
 thing, and people still listen to
 me... for now.

(MORE)

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
No point in leaving until the new
chief starts moving pieces around.

BILL TYLER
(slightly worried by the
sound of all this)
And then what?

NED LEROUX
(pretending not to care)
New name, new face -- start over
somewhere else, same as I always
have. I've been hanging round Oslo
too long anyway.

MARIA SOL
(finally speaking up,
genuine confusion)
So... Why are you here?

NED LEROUX
(surprised by the
question)
You mean Texas? This was the first
time you were all out in the open
without your, uh... chauffeur, and
I had some time off for the
holidays. Figured it was as good a
time as any to stop by.

MARIA SOL
(annoyed, refining
question)
No, I mean... why are you here?

Ned, surprised, falls silent at that. After a long moment...

NED LEROUX
(practiced liar)
I was hoping to trade notes on
ISPHA... I've done some research,
but I can't find much on what
you're all/doing out there--

SAM BAILEY
(intuition kicking in)
You missed Bill and Kate.

Ned stops -- then turns to Sam, irritated.

NED LEROUX

(annoyed, angered)

Look Bailey -- just because you can read me like that doesn't give you the right to tell everyone what's going through my head. Imagine how you'd feel if/I tried to pull the same shit--

KATE SHERIDAN

(slightly disturbed realization)

Oh god, it's true.

The wind goes out of Ned's sails a little, and he falls quiet. After a moment, he turns back to Kate and Bill.

NED LEROUX

(SIGHS, defeated honesty)

Look -- I don't know what to call... what we had. But yes, I do miss it sometimes. Is that wrong?

BILL TYLER

("yes it was")

You were lying to us the entire time.

NED LEROUX

(not quite shame, but regret)

I know. I know.

(beat, offering an olive branch)

Listen: I know y'all have no reason to trust me, but I'm telling the truth. Morrison's out. The department's in disarray. And nobody's looking for you anymore... any of you.

SAM BAILEY

(surprised to hear)

None of us?

NED LEROUX

(shrugs)

I closed your APB a few weeks ago, and no one's seemed to notice. There never were any formal charges against you, and Morrison closed the case back in June. Truth be told, there's nothing stopping any of you from going home.

SAM BAILEY
 (skeptical, bitter)
 Except losing my apartment, my
 possessions, and my job.

NED LEROUX
 (shrugs)
 Eh... one out of three ain't bad
 for a guess.

SAM BAILEY
 (confused)
 Sorry?

NED LEROUX
 Your apartment's still there.
 Someone's been paying your rent for
 the last eight months... I assumed
 it was ISPHA. Same with yours,
 Bill.

BILL TYLER
 (skeptical)
 Is he... is he telling the truth,
 Sam?

SAM BAILEY
 (BREATHING OUT,
 disbelieving)
 As far as I can tell.

NED LEROUX
 (putting Sam in his place
 a little)
 Which, just to remind you, doesn't
 mean shit.

SAM BAILEY
 (direct challenge)
 But are you?

NED LEROUX
 (SCOFFS, surprised by his
 own actions)
 Hell... I guess I am. Christ, that
 feels weird.
 (beat, shakes it off)
 Look, whatever these ISPHA folks
 have on you -- you don't need to
 stay with them. You can go back to
 your old lives any time you want.
 It's up to you.

All of them go quiet, considering that possibility for a long moment. Then...

BILL TYLER

(hesitant)

I... I don't think we're ready to leave ISPHA just yet.

NED LEROUX

(masking disappointment)

Mind if I ask why?

SAM BAILEY

(supremely confident)

We're trying to save the world, Ned.

A moment's silence -- THEN NED BURST OUT LAUGHING AGAIN.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(confused)

What did I say?

NED LEROUX

(THROUGH LAUGHTER, barely keeping it together)

Oh god, Bailey... we really need to do this more often. You're always good for a laugh.

SAM BAILEY

(irritated)

I'm serious... Anna was able to see the future, and she predicted/that there was going to be--

NED LEROUX

(just barely recovering)

You have any idea how many doomsday cults I've led in my time? How many times the world was *supposed* to end in the last thousand years alone?

SAM BAILEY

(defensive)

No, but it's not/like that--

NED LEROUX

It's a grift, Bailey. Always has been. No better way to get people on-side than convincing them everything they know's about to go up in hellfire. "

(MORE)

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
 Give ye up your earthly goods and
 join us to be spared!" It's never
 been true, but people just keep
 falling for it.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (defensive)
 That's not what they're doing/,
 they're actually trying--

NED LEROUX
 (enjoying this too much)
 Isn't it? How's the compound, by
 the way? Comfy?

SAM BAILEY
 (even threat)
 Knock it off, Ned.

NED LEROUX
 (SCOFFS)
 Or what? You really think you stand
 a chance/against--

BILL TYLER
 (tired, a little pleading)
 That's enough, Ned.

Ned goes quiet.

NED LEROUX
 (SIGHS, knowing he's
 beaten)
 Fine. Y'all enjoy your apocalypse.
 I'll be back in Oslow, if you need
 me.

Ned steps off the porch, crunching across the gravel parking
 lot -- then turns back.

NED LEROUX (CONT'D)
 (understated threat)
 And don't worry... if I need you,
 I'll know where to find you.

With that, Ned's footsteps retreat into the cold December
 night.

CLICK.

9. INT. ISPHA VAN - LATER

The faint sound of the engine running with the low noise of public radio in the background. Sam fidgets in his seat.

SAM BAILEY

(still shaken)

Samuel Isaac Bailey, recording for ISPHA internal records - daily log, December 23rd, 2019 at 11:23pm Central Standard Time. Following the conclusion of our assignment in NOLA, myself, Bill Tyler, Maria Sol, and Kate Sheridan decided to stop at a small dive bar in West Texas to celebrate Christmas Eve... Eve? The night was carrying on as expected, when --

MARIA SOL

(just barely managing to get a word in)

Sam -- Sam, hey.

SAM BAILEY

(train of thought derails)

Huh?

MARIA SOL

(trying to be gentle)

I, uh... I already recorded all of that. We've got it on tape.

SAM BAILEY

(concerned)

What, on this tape, or...

MARIA SOL

(refusing to answer)

Hey Kate? Can you turn up the radio, please?

KATE SHERIDAN

(tired)

Sure.

Kate turns up the volume just as a spangly Christmas song comes to an end.

SAM BAILEY

(back to recorder, annoyed)

So I guess you heard all of that already.

(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

Ned Leroux's back in our lives. Exactly what I wanted for Christmas. I don't think he was lying about Morrison or OCPD, but I can't be sure... there's always a background level of duplicity hanging around him that makes it impossible to tell if he's telling the truth. I want to believe it, but...

ADRIAN BRIGGS

You're listening to Adrian Briggs, live and alert with Morning Brew AM, round-the-clock! Bringing you the best and brightest tunes of the holiday season to put that pep in your step, and the news you need to know, all served with a piping hot blaze of energy you won't find anywhere else.

(beat)

It's Christmas Eve, and you know what that means -- having dinner with the in-laws, pretending everything's actually going well with your radio career, and trying to drink enough eggnog to drown out those feelings that the holiday will never have the same magic it did when you were younger. Still, could be worse -- at least the custody agreement still let's the kids stay over for the holiday! So Merry friggin' Christmas and a happy New Year, folks! I'll be playing all your favorite holiday classics morning, noon, and night all December until you're all stuck to death of them! But first... our sister station in Oslow, Nevada has requested that we repeat a special announcement. If anyone has any information regarding the whereabouts of Law Enforcement Officer Molly Davis of Santa Lucia State Park, please contact the Oslow County Police Department tip line at their website or by phone. Officer Davis failed to report in at the ranger station following her shift on November Fifth, and she hasn't been seen since.

(MORE)

ADRIAN BRIGGS (CONT'D)

If anyone has any information regarding her present whereabouts, please contact the Oslow County Police Department tip line at 555-9812, that's 555-9812. Thank you for your assistance. And now, The Twelve Days of Christmas!

MARIA SOL

(noticing Sam trail off,
slightly worried)
Everything okay, Sam?

SAM BAILEY

(shaking out of his
thoughts)
Yeah, just... a lot to think about.

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS