

Hello, my lovely Patrons. I just wanted to thank you all for sticking with us through this long hiatus. It's been a tough year for many of us out there, and your grace and support has meant the world. We went off-schedule for Halloween, but from now on release days will be Tuesday of each week. You'll get each of those one week in advance here on Patreon.

Now, please enjoy, Believer, Season One, Episode Six: The Rules.

LARA'S INBOX

VOICEMAIL

You have unheard messages. First message.

Rustling from the other end. Camille speaks to someone away from the phone.

CAMILLE

Nothing that time either? Well, then where is her phone? It wasn't on her. Maybe we should --

It cuts off.

BEEP.

VOICEMAIL

Next message.

COMPUTER VOICE

Lara Campbell. You are in danger.
Lara Campbell. You are in --

BEEP.

VOICEMAIL

End of messages.

TITLES

NARRATOR

Believer. Episode Six. The Rules.

INT. BASEMENT - HOLDING ROOM - DAY

A small, concrete room. Lara stirs on an air mattress on the floor.

CAMILLE
Good morning, Lara.

Lara jumps.

LARA
Gah! Ugh...

CAMILLE
(sympathetic)
How's your head?

LARA
Pounding.

CAMILLE
Yeah, you probably have a pretty bad hangover. There's water and pills by the bed if you want any. Yeah, there.

LARA
I'm not taking medicine from you.

CAMILLE
(rolling her eyes)
It's just aspirin, Lara.

LARA
Uh-huh.

CAMILLE
Do you want me to take it first?
Here.

She grabs the pill bottle, sticks some pills in her mouth.

CAMILLE
See?

LARA
Well, now it has your spit on it.

CAMILLE
Get more from the bottle.

She hands the bottle to Lara. Lara sets it down.

LARA
I'm good.

CAMILLE
At least drink some water. It's filtered.

LARA
I'm good.

Camille sighs.

CAMILLE
This isn't how I wanted to do this,
you know.

LARA
The kidnapping, you mean?

CAMILLE
It's not kidnapping.

LARA
You drugged me and took me to a...
(looks around)
Concrete room. Is this your basement?
Does your mom know about this?
(yells)
Hey! Doctor Simmons!

Camille rushes to shush her.

CAMILLE
Shhh!

LARA
Don't touch me!

CAMILLE
Lara, I'm a friend.

LARA
That's what I thought before the
kidnapping.

CAMILLE
I didn't mean to hurt you. I just had
to get you out of the Sanctum.

LARA
Reverend Boone's old church?

CAMILLE
It used to be a church. Now it's
something...more.

LARA
Oh, god.

CAMILLE

Only Reverend Boone and his daughter are allowed to go there. I've been asking, but -- it's very sacred. And dangerous. It takes weeks of study and meditation to be ready.

LARA

Because it's full of psychedelic substances, and if you don't brainwash yourself first you might have the wrong visions?

Camille is offended, cold.

CAMILLE

This was a mistake.

LARA

Like I was saying.

CAMILLE

(realization sets in)
You're not ready to be here.

(panic)
Oh, god. Oh no. What did I do?

LARA

Camille? Camille, it's okay. You can just let me go.

CAMILLE

No, no, no. I need to think.

LARA

Camille...

CAMILLE

Sit here. I'll be -- I'll be right back.

LARA

Camille, wait!

CAMILLE

Drink some water.

She hurries out the door, shuts it behind her. The CLICK of a lock.

LARA

Camille. Camille!

She tries the door, then pounds on it. No response.

LARA
Can someone at least check on my dog?

No response.

Lara sits down on the air mattress.

LARA
Maybe Jake will notice I'm gone.

She takes a breath.

LARA
(to herself)
Now, where am I?

LARA (V.O.)
I know, right? Actual cult kidnapping. It's like there was some kind of Creepy Small Town checklist this place was working from.

Lara walks around the room.

LARA (V.O.)
Small concrete room. Underground. It was probably supposed to be a storage closet. One window up high...

Lara jumps. Grunts. No dice.

LARA (V.O.)
Too high to reach, naturally. But the really interesting thing...

Lara stops. Touches the wall.

LARA
Wait. What's that?

LARA (V.O.)
All over the room -- the floor, the walls -- there were these scratch marks. Long, shallow grooves crossing every surface. At first it seemed random, but...

She moves the air mattress.

LARA
Wow.

LARA (V.O.)

It was a pattern. I think. The lines converged, or maybe began, in this... tangle in the middle of the room. The lines would loop out and away from each other, then converge again, so many layered at these convergence points that it almost became a circle, or a star. And then away again. The way that they split, and twisted, and grew, it made me think of...it's hard to explain, but it wasn't random. It seemed...organic. Like Rose's room, like the church, but so much more...deliberate.

Lara rubs and scratches the floor, examining it.

LARA (V.O.)

I mean, it was carved into the floor. Someone was determined. Someone...

Through the ceiling, a soft, rhythmic BEEPING sound.

LARA

What is that...beeping?

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

Suddenly, a KNOCK at the door.

LARA

Um. Hello?

No response.

Beep. Beep. KNOCK.

LARA

Who's doing that?

Beep. Beep. Knock-knock-knock.

LARA

You guys locked it from the outside, remember? I can't really --

A smattering of KNOCKS, from all directions this time. Something TAPS on the window.

LARA

Is someone out there? I could really use some...help...

She trails off as a CACOPHONY OF KNOCKS breaks out, coming from everywhere. Something THUMPS hard on the door, like a large, wet body throwing itself against it.

LARA

Oh, no. Not again. No, no, no.

Similar THUMPS against the window this time, like something trying to break through. Lara covers her ears.

The noise CRESCENDOS louder, the BEEPING getting loud, insistent. Lara moans, unable to block it out.

The sound rises and rises until --

THE DOOR OPENS.

CAMILLE

Lara?

All sounds stop.

Except the distant, muffled BEEP, BEEP, BEEP...

Camille takes a few steps into the room.

CAMILLE

Lara? Are you okay?

Lara flinches away.

LARA

I'm fine!

CAMILLE

Oh. Sorry. Well, I was just checking.

She turns to leave.

LARA

Camille. Wait.

Camille stops.

CAMILLE

What?

LARA

This is the Boone House, isn't it?

CAMILLE

How did you...?

LARA (V.O.)
The beeping. Reverend Boone's heart monitor.

LARA
I can...feel it.

CAMILLE
What do you feel, Lara?

LARA
These marks...did Rose make them?

CAMILLE
Yes. Rose was here when the visions overtook her. You can feel that?

LARA
Do you think I can't sense Rose's presence? There's so much of her here.

CAMILLE
She locked herself in here for three days, a few months ago. When she came out...that's when everything began.

LARA (V.O.)
Oh my god.

LARA
The lines. Reaching. In the dirt.

CAMILLE
I knew you could sense her. That's what I was trying to -- you were supposed to lead me to Rose and then just go home. I didn't realize that Oblivion would reach you, too.

LARA
Oblivion. Is that what you call it?

CAMILLE
Yes.

LARA (V.O.)
There was only one way out of there.

LARA
I see its signs everywhere. In my dreams, on the walls, in the Sanctum.

CAMILLE

In the Sanctum? You had a vision?
What did you see?

LARA

It was...indescribable. Camille. Help
me understand. What do you worship
here?

CAMILLE

The hand of God.

LARA

Yes. Of course.

CAMILLE

You can feel it, right? What do you
feel?

LARA

I...I guess I feel...

CAMILLE

Nothing.

LARA

What?

CAMILLE

The sweet release of nothingness.

LARA

Yes. I feel...nothing. Absolutely
nothing.

Camille sighs, happy, relieved.

CAMILLE

I think you should meet the others.

LARA

I'd love that.

CAMILLE

Come on.

Camille opens the door. They walk out.

INT. BASEMENT - MAIN ROOM - DAY

A cozy hangout room. A few STRANGERS sit around, talking
quietly. They go silent when Camille and Lara walk in.

CAMILLE
Everyone? This is Lara.

LARA
Hi.

Silence. They are not impressed.

LARA (V.O.)
It was a pretty typical basement hangout room. Couches, TV, stereo. Pretty popular when Rose was in high school, I bet. There were probably about a dozen people in there. All of them staring at me.

CAMILLE
Lara has seen the Nothingness.

Excited murmuring from the others.

CAMILLE
(to Lara)
Come on, let's sit over here.

LARA
Okay.

LARA (V.O.)
So I'm not a cult expert, but I know a few things. Rule One: never tell someone who's in a cult that they're in a cult. It'll just make them mad.

LARA
So your group seems...friendly.

CAMILLE
We try to be welcoming. It's hard because, you know, it's so easy to misunderstand.

LARA (V.O.)
Rule Two: Everyone outside the cult is bad. Not just confused, but actively evil. So try to be an insider.

LARA
It's so simple, though. They must not understand.

CAMILLE

You know, some people just have a really hard time with new ideas.

LARA

I've noticed that.

CAMILLE

You know, people think that these things -- suffering, division -- are just part of life.

LARA

So that's what the Nothingness is, then? The end of suffering?

CAMILLE

Kind of. But it's more than that. See, pain, loneliness, isolation -- those are symptoms. They mean that something's wrong. Oh, Reverend Boone explains it better than I can. But we're not trying to end the world. We just want it to work the way it's supposed to.

LARA

And this reaching...thing --

CAMILLE

The hand of God.

LARA

It can do that.

CAMILLE

That's all it wants.

A beat. They look around.

LARA

Okay, well, this has been amazing. But I really think I should go check on my dog.

CAMILLE

Wait -- Lara --

A door opens and closes across the room.

LARA

He knows Rose better than anyone, so
I'll just go him and come right back.
Now if you'll excuse me --

TERRI

I wouldn't recommend that.

Where did Mayor Terri come from? Well, she's here now.

LARA

Mayor Boone!

TERRI

They actually call me The Conductor
here.

LARA

Sure. Of course.

TERRI

Camille mentioned that we had a new
inductee who's already had her first
vision of the Hand of God. I figured
it was probably you.

LARA

Yep. That's me.

TERRI

(niceness laced with
malice)
Well, isn't that lovely.

LARA

Listen, um...

TERRI

The Reverend would like to greet you
personally.

The STRANGERS mumble, surprised excitement.

CAMILLE

The Reverend? Really? But I just
started teaching her the basics.

TERRI

It was his personal request.

CAMILLE

Of course. Lara, this is quite an
honor.

LARA
I -- yeah. I'm honored.

LARA (V.O.)
Rule three: Never question the leader. Ever.

TERRI
I'll take her upstairs, Camille. Why don't all of you here prepare for a vision ceremony? It's been a while, after all.

CAMILLE
Sure, Mayor -- um, Madam Conductor.

TERRI
Just Conductor is plenty, Camille.

CAMILLE
Yes, ma'am -- uh, Conductor.

Terri sighs.

TERRI
Come on.

INT. BOONE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

FADE IN on Mitchell Boone's various medical machinery.

Terri walks over to check on Mitchell.

TERRI
He's asleep. Good. I swear this is the only room in the house where those people can't overhear us.

LARA
Um, you can hear the beeping downstairs, actually.

TERRI
So talk more quietly than the beeping.

LARA
Right, um...sorry, what's going on?

TERRI

We are going to wait until the 'shrooms kick in downstairs, and then you are going to go very far away from here.

LARA

So all this -- Oblivion, the Hand of God, resetting the world -- you don't actually believe any of it.

TERRI

Here's what I know, Lara. You cannot find Rose.

On "Rose," Mitchell's heart monitor picks up.

LARA

What?

TERRI

Rose is gone. She needs to stay gone. And you need to get away from here.

LARA

I don't understand --

Mitchell GASPS, waking with a start.

MITCHELL

(rasps)

The Sacred Rose! My Rose -- my Rose in the scorched, packed earth.

He coughs.

TERRI

Mitchell -- Mitchell, stay calm. Please, honey, you're confused.

MITCHELL

You. You.

He grabs Lara's arm.

LARA

Hey, whoa!

MITCHELL

You will find my Rose. You will bring...the one...salvation...

TERRI
Mitchell, do you hear me? Honey, you
need to let go of Rose's friend.

MITCHELL
Fore...fore-runner...the herald...I
didn't see it, but...

He coughs.

TERRI
Shh, shh...

LARA
Sir, I think that you should rest.

MITCHELL
No. No! She is so close...you must...
please...

He groans, then falls asleep again.

TERRI
Mitchell. Mitchell?

His machines stabilize.

LARA
Is he okay?

TERRI
He's sleeping. He's not...he gets
confused, lately.

LARA
Terri...

TERRI
Time to go.

LARA
Oh. Okay.

TERRI
Down the hall, out the door. Run.
Now.

LARA
If you --

TERRI
Now!

LARA
Okay. Okay.

Lara runs out.

Terri strokes Mitchell's hair.

TERRI
Just a few more days, Mitchell.
You'll see.

EXT. BOONE HOUSE - EVENING

It's getting toward evening. Crickets have started to sing.

Lara slips out the front door.

She runs across the grass...then suddenly TRIPS and falls.

LARA
Ah!

And that's enough. The basement door swings open and Camille appears.

CAMILLE
Lara? The rest of the group's down here.

LARA
Oh, uh...

CAMILLE
You weren't leaving, were you? I thought you enjoyed it here.

LARA
I do! I just -- I got a feeling. A vision. So I need to go now.

CAMILLE
Is it Rose? I'll come with you!

LARA
No! Uhh...I need to go alone.

CAMILLE
(suddenly serious)
I should really come with you.

LARA
But if you meditate here...

CAMILLE
 No, Lara. I'm coming with you.
 Sorry -- we're coming with you.

Two other cult members, MARCUS and JUNIPER come up the basement stairs

MARCUS
 Hey.

JUNIPER
 Hi.

LARA
 Right.
 (to herself)
 Lot of strength training in this group, I guess.

CAMILLE
 What was that?

LARA
 Nothing. Let's, uh, let's go.

CAMILLE
 (brightly)
 Great! Come on, guys.

LARA (V.O.)
Cult rule four: getting out is a lot harder than getting in. They make sure of that.

Camille and the others catch up to Lara.

LARA
 I was just going into the woods.
 Right here.

CAMILLE
 Sounds good. Marcus and Juniper love hiking. They work out a lot.

LARA
 That's great.

They walk off into the woods.

LARA'S INBOX

VOICEMAIL

Next message.

BEEP.

SIMMONS

This is Doctor Penelope Simmons, General Practitioner, calling once again to try to make an appointment. Miss Campbell, there is a serious infection emerging in the town of Charity, Oregon. Source and progression of the disease remains unclear, but your resistance could be key to determining next steps. Please be on the lookout for symptoms such as visual or auditory hallucinations, difficulty breathing, or anything that...

(beat)

Is that...no. It can't be.

(shakes it off)

Um. As I was saying, I...

(beat)

Hello? I'm not currently seeing patients. If you don't have an appointment...Richard? Is that you? It can't be. You're dead.

(beat)

Richard, what are you -- Richard, don't touch that. No, it's not Richard. You're not Richard! It's nothing. Nothing.

(to the vision)

Go away! You hear me? You are nothing! Nothing! Nothing, nothing, noth --

BEEP.

VOICEMAIL

Message deleted.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Forest sounds. It's a quiet night. Rain falls softly on the fir trees.

Lara, Camille, Marcus, and Juniper walk through the brush.

CAMILLE
Are we getting close?

LARA
I think so.

LARA (V.O.)
I had this idea that once we got out into the woods, I could just lose them. It was getting dark, and the rain and fog had already moved in. I stepped off the path so there wasn't an obvious way to go. It should've been easy, right?

CAMILLE
Whoa, it is dark out here. I feel like I can barely see at all. Lara, I'm gonna hold onto your arm, okay?

LARA
Oh, um --

CAMILLE
Marcus, why don't you grab her other arm? Juniper, you stay close. It's slippery out here.

Marcus GRUNTS acknowledgment.

LARA
(to herself)
Damn it.

CAMILLE
What was that?

LARA
Almost there!

LARA (V.O.)
I forgot about Rule Five: don't assume cult members are stupid. Cults really like smart, well-educated people, actually. People don't join cults because they don't know better; they do it because the cult has something they need at that moment. I wonder what that first thing was for Camille.

CAMILLE

I guess when I heard Reverend Mitchell's message I was just, you know, I was really lost. Like, here I am back in my home town, this place I swore I'd get away from, I'm just getting away from this horrific relationship, and it just seemed like there was no purpose to any of it. I mean, this guy I was with at school was just...I mean, I won't get into it, but I was pretty broken.

LARA

Uh-huh.

CAMILLE

And it's like, how does a loving God create a person like that, and then not even warn me that I'm in his path? It just seemed senseless. But then...

Sound of a dog ID TAG AGAINST A COLLAR.

LARA

Shhh!

CAMILLE

What? Are we there?

LARA

Do you hear that?

Silence.

CAMILLE

Hear what?

A dog BARKS.

LARA

SodaPop!

Lara shakes off Marcus and breaks into a run.

CAMILLE

Lara -- wait!

The others chase after Lara.

LARA

SodaPop! Come here --

(she stops)
Buddy...

She trails off. Camille and the others catch up. They stop.
They gasp.

CAMILLE
It's her.

SodaPop whines happily.

Rose steps forward.

ROSE
Hello, Lara.

LARA
Hi...Rose.

BUMP BUMP BUHHHH.

END OF EPISODE

Thank you for listening to Believer. We're so excited to be back. Your support has meant the world over the last year, and I want to thank everyone who's sent messages or told friends about the show. I can't tell you how much it mattered during this difficult time away. If you want to get in touch, you can follow the show on Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook at Believerpod or send us an email at believerpod@gmail.com. For transcripts, cast and crew information, and to support the show, go to BelieverPodcast.com.

Episodes will release every other Tuesday until the end of the season. Patreon supporters receive each episode one week early, along with other extras and behind-the-scenes information. Find out more at Patreon.com/BelieverPodcast

This episode was written and directed by Julie Saunders and features the voice talents of Sara Gorsky, Rosa Delgado, David Pinion, Samantha Ronceros, Mara Hernandez, Seth Ellsworth, Julie Saunders, and Archie. Sound design by Julie Saunders and Chad Ellis.

Speaking of voice acting by Rosa Delgado, our pod-cousins at Elaine's Cooking For the Soul have just returned with season two! Rosa stars as the titular Elaine and even wrote one of the episodes this season, so you definitely want to check that out. Stick around for their trailer.

Until next time, if you see strange shapes from the corners of your eyes, or children with unnaturally dark eyes come knocking at your door...don't worry, it's probably just trick-or-treaters. It is Halloween, after all. (But still, don't invite them inside.)