

## **THE TALE OF SODAPOP - PART ONE - TRANSCRIPT**

### **INTRO**

Hi, it's Julie Saunders, creator of Believer and voice of Lara. I thought it'd be fun to surprise you all with a bonus episode today! But first, a few announcements.

This podcast now has merch! Head on over to Teepublic for print-on-demand tee shirts, stickers, mugs, and other items featuring a new Team Sodapop logo, an original tourism poster for the city of Charity, or two versions of our cover art.

And right now you can get 20% off all Believer merch...by joining our brand new PATREON! Monthly memberships start at just one dollar a month, and get you access to bonus material including annotated scripts, blooper and bonus episodes, and much more. Go to [patreon.com/believerpodcast](https://patreon.com/believerpodcast) for more details.

Production is about to restart on this show, starting with a full-cast prequel episode and then moving on to the rest of season one. Patreon supporters will get sneak peeks and behind-the-scene looks at that process, as well as early access to all new episodes.

This is an independent, low-budget show, so any support you can give will go a long way. I also want to thank everyone for continuing to rate, review, and recommend this show. It makes a huge difference.

Okay! Now to your bonus episode. This is a three-part short story about SodaPop, set after the events of episode 4. I'll be your narrator this time, as Lara doesn't appear in the story.

And now, please enjoy "The Tale of SodaPop - Part One: A Good Boy."

### **The Tale of SodaPop - Part One: A Good Boy**

SodaPop has been alone in the cabin for a very long time.

He can't say how long, exactly, but certainly longer than usual. Not that he's particularly worried — Lara always comes back, even on those occasions when she comes late. She's not perfect, not like his other human, but she's pretty good.

It's just that SodaPop really has to pee, and Good Boys don't pee inside of buildings, even ones that smell of dirt and pine and microwave meals like this one.

SodaPop is a little taller than a human's mid-calf when he's on all four paws. He's lanky and leggy, though, so if he gets up on his back paws and reaches with the front ones, he can almost reach a person's hip. Some people call him a little dog, but he's over twice the size of Lara's friend's Yorkie, and that's got to count for something. He has floppy, feathery ears and fluffy white fur that has to get brushed far too often for his taste. The nice lady thought he must be part poodle, but Lara never wanted to buy a test to find out.

Above all, though, SodaPop is a Good Boy. So that means he's got a bit of a dilemma. He paces in circles, but that just seems to make the feeling worse. He lies down, but that doesn't do much either. He'll simply have to escape.

First, he tries the door. He gets up on his hind legs and pushes as hard as he can. It doesn't budge. Scratching on it also does nothing, and the wooden floor is too thick to dig under. He pokes it with his nose. When all else fails, he barks.

[SFX: dog barking]

He barks a few times, then listens. But there doesn't seem to be anyone out there. When that man Jake is home, SodaPop can always hear his heavy boots. But now, there are no boots. There's nothing. Except the slightest little...wait. Is that a breeze? Inside the house? SodaPop raises his nose and sniffs. There is a new smell in here, fresh air mixing with the stagnant wood smell. If he can just track it to its source...

Sodapop circles the one-room cabin, sniffing the air as he goes. For a moment, he thinks maybe it's coming from behind the kitchenette, but then a crosswind hits, and then he's got it. The window over Lara's desk. Lara broke it

when she had a bad dream, but Jake came and covered it with a thick plastic sheet. Now the sheet has come away from the wall somewhere.

SodaPop wastes no time. He rushes over to Lara's chair, which twists awkwardly as he clammers over it and onto the desk. Lara's mug crashes to the floor, which startles SodaPop into a collision with her laptop.

[SFX: Ceramic mug breaks]

His paws slide across the keyboard, and he nearly trips over the cords that stick out of one side, but he manages to right himself. He sniffs at the window, trying to locate the open spot. This requires him to walk back and forth, which sends a few more things flying to the floor, but they don't seem like things he needs to worry about.

[SFX: Pens, papers, and equipment fall to the floor. Dog sniffing.]

Near the bottom-left corner, the plastic is loose. Sweet, wonderful outdoor air pours through. This is it. SodaPop pushes his nose against the loose plastic until he finds the gap between sheet and wall. He wedges his muzzle through it, then his head, and finally his paws and shoulders. After that it's just a wild, flailing leap, he's free.

[SFX/Ambient: Forest sounds. Dog shakes himself off.]

The sun hangs low in the sky, lighting up the clouds in a variety of colors that SodaPop can't really appreciate. It's a quiet evening. Expectant, almost. SodaPop sniffs the ground, a mixture of gravel and soft tree needles, until he finds a few spots that other animals have marked. He leaves his own mark on them. Thoroughly.

His business done, SodaPop gives himself a little shake and takes stock of his surroundings. There are no cars in front of the cabin. The forest is alive with animal smells. Lara's definitely missed Walk Time. But even a Good Boy can take himself for a walk once in a while, right?

Still, his first move is to look for a human. Lara may be late, but there's sure to be another human around somewhere. SodaPop likes humans, and he'd rather go exploring with one than without. Lara says it's because he's a

“companion breed.” He just knows that things are sort of boring without a human there to watch.

There are no humans outside at the moment, but he does find the back door to Jake’s house hanging slightly ajar. He paws it open and trots inside.

SodaPop doesn’t usually come into Jake’s house. It has a weird, musty smell that he doesn’t like. The humans never mention it, but he can tell there’s something slightly wrong. He thinks it’s in the walls, whatever it is. Something that shouldn’t be there. It’s there in the back entry, and it’s probably there in the kitchen. SodaPop can’t be sure because he can only smell the lunch meat that someone left on the counter.

Lunch meat! Out all on its own! SodaPop hurries over to it. He stands up as tall as he can on his back legs, but he can only get his nose to the edge of the counter. It’s there, though. He’s sure of it. It smells like bologna. It’s been sitting out for a while, so the scent is nice and settled. Delicious. He hops and scratches over the counter’s edge, but it’s not quite enough. Finally, he takes several steps back, then runs at it and leaps as high as he can. He slams shoulder-first into the counter and falls gracelessly to the floor. In the process, though, one of his front claws just snags the edge of a plastic package, and four whole slices of bologna scatter onto the floor. Jackpot.

He bolts down the bologna as fast as he can — practically inhales it — then licks his lips and searches for more. The musty smell is so strong it makes him sneeze, but he thinks that somewhere inside it there might be a discarded chicken nugget in the living room. That’s promising.

Jake’s house is small, though probably adequate for his needs. There’s the kitchen, a bedroom, an entry area, and a long, narrow living room. Soda sets off to inspect them all. In the living room, he finds a couch. The cabin doesn’t have a couch. He hops up on it, rubs his face along the cushions, rolls to scratch his back. It smells softly of cheesy chips, and now, so does SodaPop. He sniffs at an old mouse’s nest in one corner and finds the half-eaten chicken nugget under the coffee table. It’s been there for at least a few days. Delightfully aged, if you ask SodaPop.

He moves to explore Jake’s bedroom, but stops in the doorway. The musty smell is stronger than before. It’s sharp, here, and extremely unpleasant. There’s

a hint of pheromone smell to it, like some spiders emit to try to lure in prey. SodaPop can feel the hair on the back of his neck trying to puff up. He sniffs the air carefully and peeks around. The back wall of Jake's bedroom is streaked with long, black lines. They curve and bend in a sickening way as they move from floor to ceiling, occasionally branching out into horrible little blobs.

SodaPop sneezes. Then he shakes. Whatever this is, he can't be near it anymore. He growls softly and beats a hasty exit through the back door.

When he gets back outside, SodaPop feels a bit shaken. What was that thing? Nothing good, surely. In fact, the more he thinks about it — OH MY GOD, A SQUIRREL!

A REAL SQUIRREL

ON THE GROUND

LOOKING AT HIM.

It's just a few yards away, oddly dark in color with bright, glowing eyes. SodaPop lunges at it immediately. You can't delay with a squirrel. The squirrel turns and runs, and the chase is on.

Now, listen: all squirrels are bastards. But this one's in a league all its own. It zigs and zags through the underbrush, ducks under bushes and sails through ferns. SodaPop sprints after it, clumsy but determined. At one point, the squirrel disappears into a fallen log, and SodaPop barks incessantly until it darts back out. They run a slalom through the trees. He loses it near a little stream and looks around, desperately, until he spots it staring at him from some tall grass. It twitches its tail enticingly before it darts away again. If SodaPop could think, he might wonder why it stays on the ground instead of escaping up a tree. But he can't think. He can only chase.

It's impossible to say how long they run, first in the mossy low spots and then far up the hill. SodaPop's tongue hangs out of his mouth, sending flecks of foam flying back onto his cheeks and chest. And always the squirrel is just ahead of him, almost in his jaws, barely out of reach.

Then SodaPop leaps over a fallen branch and lands hard on his back leg. Pain shoots through his knee just as the squirrel finally, finally climbs up a tree trunk. He cries, a wail of pain and frustration. The squirrel just watches. It practically smiles. All squirrels are bad. But this is a very bad squirrel.

He kicks out his leg a few times, until the knee joint pops back into place. This happens sometimes when he overextends himself. A luxating patella, the vet called it. It's usually fine as long as he can set his own pace. He wonders if the squirrel knew somehow. It's hard for him to fathom trickery, but he'd put nothing past a squirrel. Yes, all squirrels are bastards. Every single one.

It stares down at him. It's all the wrong colors, he realizes. And worse, it has the same sharp smell he found in Jake's house. Now that he's got a moment to think, he realizes it's been in his nose for a while. Now it jabs at his sinuses, so wrong it's actually uncomfortable.

SodaPop doesn't really know what evil is. But this squirrel might be it.

SodaPop growls, low and menacing. He gathers his weight carefully. Maybe if he can jump high enough...

[Sound of CAT yowl and hiss.]

Something smacks him hard across his nose. SodaPop squeals and spins in a quick circle, ready to face his attacker.

It's a cat.

He stops, baffled. SodaPop has never had a problem with cats. Sure, he'll chase one if it's already running, or looks like it's about to run, and yes, sometimes that means running up to them to see if they might like to run. But it's not like he'd actually hurt one if he somehow caught it. Surely they know that.

This cat is hefty and muscular, shorter than he is but much heavier. Her dark gray fur is fluffy and long, making her appear even wider than she is. The corner of one ear has been clipped cleanly, some time long ago, and there's a faded scar above her left eye. She smells of straw and mouse blood. A barn cat.

The cat watches him, green-gold eyes expressionless. She holds one paw slightly aloft, claws retracted, like she's ready to smack him again if he makes a wrong move.

First, SodaPop checks the tree. The squirrel is gone. He whines and throws the cat an offended look. He almost had it. Cats know about squirrels. Why would she let it get away?

The cat just watches him. She is very still, and he is very tired, so he elects to sit. He wipes his paw across his muzzle. There's no blood, no injury. She lowers her own paw, confirming that the conflict between them is over. The swipe was a warning, not an attack. But it still wasn't very nice.

SodaPop sniffs the air. The sharp smell is gone, replaced by a tapestry of nature scents and sounds. Songbirds have mostly settled in for the night, and night birds have begun to stir. SodaPop can tell that a family of raccoons live nearby. A coyote's come through here in the last day or so. A few weeks before that, there was a bear. But he can't tell where home is. He can't even locate his own trail. And there are no humans here.

SodaPop looks over at the cat again and tilts his head. She flicks her tail slightly and takes a few steps toward a nearby fern. At the edge of it she pauses, thinks for a moment, then looks his way and lets out a soft, high-pitched trill. He hesitates, then follows her.

[SFX: Nighttime forest sounds.]

Above them, a crow calls out for its mate. Upwind, the raccoon counts her kits before she leads them out of the den. The shadows from the trees are so long they almost blend together. And a little dog follows a cat, who seems to know the way.

## **OUTRO**

Thank you for listening to the Tale of SodaPop, part one.

This episode was written, edited, and narrated by Julie Saunders. The role of SodaPop was played by Archie. The Barn Cat was played by Lulu. Music for this

episode was provided by Epidemic Sound -- please see the show notes for titles and composers.

If you want the rest of the story right now, it's available at [Patreon.com/believerpodcast](https://patreon.com/believerpodcast). Otherwise, part two will be out next Tuesday. Until then, please take care of yourself. You deserve to see what tomorrow's like.