

Believer: A Paranormal Mystery

"Oblivion"

Written by

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Production Draft

RADIO TRANSMISSION

A little radio JINGLE plays.

ABE

Welcome back to W-K-C-H, Charity's only public radio. This is Abe Ramirez, broadcasting live as strange phenomena appear in the forest around Charity. So far we've heard reports of inky darkness -- darker than a foggy night -- unexplained power failure, and strange sounds. Could this be extraterrestrial activity here in Wasco County?

JAKE (FROM AFAR)

It's not aliens!

ABE

(annoyed, trying to ignore him)

We're reaching out to paranormal experts as we speak.

JAKE

(a little closer, still not on mic)

It's never aliens, man.

ABE

(turns away from mic)

Jake, dude, I told you, if you're going to stay at my place, you have to stay out of the recording studio.

JAKE

(closer)

It's a wooden box in the middle of your living room, it's not like I can't hear what you're saying in there.

(grabs a mic)

Hello, Charity, it's Jake Talbott, host of Squatch Talk.

ABE

Hey! What are you doing?

JAKE

You need my expertise, man, just trust me on this.

ABE
Never record live, they told me. But
did I listen?

JAKE
Abe, please. Let's be professional.

ABE
(scoffs)
Uh -- !

JAKE
People need to know what's going on.
It's dangerous out there. They should
stay off the roads and out of the
woods.

ABE
Well, obviously nobody's going into
the woods right now.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Lara staggers through the underbrush. Sasquatch walks
HEAVILY in front of her.

LARA
Sodapop? Are you out here?

JAKE (V.O.)
*Be on the lookout for anything
unusual, especially a strong,
sulphur-like smell.*

Lara sniffs.

LARA
Ugh. Oh my god. I'm sorry, I'm sure
your smell is great for other --
whatever you are.

ABE (V.O.)
*Is this about Bigfoot again? I'm
telling you, man, it's not out there.
Not tonight.*

Sasquatch **grunts**.

LARA
I'm just really nauseous. Or is it
nauseated? I'm nauseated.

SASQUATCH

Grmph.

LARA

It's a concussion, right? It's gotta be. I don't supposed you can see my pupils.

Sasquatch suddenly stops, sniffs. It **roars** and runs ahead.

LARA

Right, you're busy.
(calls)
Sodapop? Sodapop!

FADE TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Sounds of sleeping. Abe and Jake sound shifts to a small radio in the room.

ABE (V.O.)

In any case, for your own safety, everyone should stay indoors.

The door to the basement OPENS. Rose walks in.

JAKE (V.O.)

And if you do see anything, give us a call! Our lines are open.

ABE (V.O.)

What? No, they're not. I've got all these experts (I'm just waiting on a call back from)

JAKE (V.O.)

*(overlapping)
Okay, then call me. It's Five-Oh-Three, Eight-Six --*

Radio clicks OFF.

Rose approaches a sleeping Camille.

ROSE

Camille.

Camille wakes with a start.

CAMILLE
What -- oh, Rose.

ROSE
It's time. Wake the others.

CAMILLE
It's time? Are you sure?

ROSE
Yes. Wake them up. We're going into
the forest. Now.

CAMILLE
Okay. Yeah. Let's go.

She gets up, quickly.

TITLES

NARRATOR
Believer. Episode Ten. Oblivion.

EXT. DEAD ZONE - NIGHT

Sasquatch sniffs, growls, shuffles its giant feet.

Lara crashes out of the underbrush, still unsteady on her
feet.

LARA
Sodapop? Sodapop! God, it's so dark
out here. My phone is totally dead.

Sasquatch growls a warning. Lara stops.

LARA
Wait, is this...the Dead Zone? From
before?

Sasquatch sniffs.

LARA
Oh my god.

VO LARA
*It was absolutely covered in
carcasses. Before there had been a
lot of dead animals, but this -- it
was like a carpet.*

LARA
Were these...squirrels?

Sasquatch grunts another warning.

LARA
I won't touch it.

SASQUATCH
Hmph.

LARA
What's growing out of them?

VO LARA
Sickly white mushrooms sprouted out of each of the dead animals. I don't even know if white is the right...it was like they were drained of color. Have you ever seen those flowers that grow inside of caves? There's a variety of orchid that never sees the sun. But it grows anyway. Those are beautiful, though. These were... wrong. At the base they were black, oily, like the ones I found in the water pipe. But as they grew, the color drained out. And the caps were...disturbing. Bloated, pulsing, pustules ready to burst.

LARA
They're flowering. Ready to release their spores.

SASQUATCH
(yep)
Humph.

LARA
Is this -- did you bring me here? To see this?

SASQUATCH
(yes)
Huh-whuff.

LARA
You want to help them...why can't you help them?

SASQUATCH
Hrmphf.

LARA
Is it because you're not real?

Sasquatch **growls**.

LARA
Ow! God, watch it. Chewbacca-looking
asshole.

Sasquatch growls, then stops, stiffens.

LARA
What...?

Footsteps approach. Voices humming. Sasquatch **squeaks** and
rushes into the trees in the opposite direction.

LARA
Wait, Sass -- Sasquatch. And he's
gone.
(beat)
How hard did I hit my head?

The CULT comes through the underbrush.

ROSE
We're here. Close the lanterns and
keep them out of sight.

CAMILLE
Of course.
(to others)
Let's go.

She rushes off with a few others. Rose takes a step forward.

ROSE
There. The flowers. Do you see? God's
fingers. They're even more beautiful
than I dreamed.

Cultists murmur to each other.

ROSE
Everyone, line up around...
(stops)
Lara?!

LARA
Um...hi.

ROSE
Are you kidding me? What are you
doing here?

LARA
So, long story -- there was a car
accident, and I actually think I have
a concussion.

ROSE
Where's Sodapop?

LARA
He ran off. I was actually trying to
find him, but, uh, I might just need
the hospital?

ROSE
He ran off? He's out here somewhere?

LARA
Well, I'm looking for him.

ROSE
You were supposed to keep him safe!

LARA
I'm trying! Sorry. Listen, Rose, I
don't know what's happening here, but
(you don't have to do this) --

ROSE
(overlapping)
No, you don't. You don't know what's
happening here. We're about to change
the world, Lara. Make it new.

LARA
With mushrooms?

ROSE
Stop making fun of me!

The cultists stop and turn, whispering.

LARA
I'm not...

A star STREAKS across the sky, a distant squealing scream.

LARA
What is that?

ROSE
 (relieved)
 The stars. It's time.
 (to Lara)
 You can't stop this, Lara. Do you
 understand? It's already begun.

LARA
 Rose...

ROSE
 Find Sodapop. Take him somewhere far
 from here.
 (to others)
 Everyone! Gather around. Just like we
 practiced.

LARA
 Rose -- wait. Whatever's supposed to
 happen here -- you know it's not
 right. You sent Sodapop away, right?
 It doesn't look like your mom is
 here. Some part of you wants to
 protect the people you love.

Rose scoffs ruefully.

ROSE
 (to herself)
 Not everyone I love.

LARA
 What?

CAMILLE
 Sister Rose? We're ready.

ROSE
 Good.
 (to Lara)
 It's too late, Lara. Join in or get
 out of the way.
 (to the others)
 Form a ring! Get close, close to the
 beautiful, blooming flowers.
 (they move)
 And now...it begins.

The cultists begin to chant.

CULT
 All is nothing, and we are all. All
 in nothing, and we are all...

The stars begin to scream overhead.

LARA
Rose --

ROSE
(louder)
All is nothing! We are all!

LARA
Rose!

CAMILLE
(ugh)
Marcus, can you...?

Marcus grunts and grabs Lara.

LARA
Ow! Hey.

An odd groaning sound as animals move. Chattering noises.

LARA
Wait...what's happening?

VO LARA
It's hard to describe what happened next. And not just because my head was swimming worse than ever.

Chanting, star sounds continue.

VO LARA
Shooting stars were streaking overhead, far too bright, far too close, and there was this odd sound -- it was like you could hear them breaking up against the atmosphere, squealing as the friction wore them down. But that wasn't the crazy part.

Animals begin to grunt and move.

VO LARA
Now listen, I know I was hallucinating at this point. I was definitely starting to see double, and that alone can...but that blanket of animal corpses? Those dead animals...started to move.

CULTIST CHILD

W-What is that?

CULTIST MOM

It's okay, honey. Say it with me:
"All is nothing..."

LARA

Holy shit. Shit.

ROSE

Don't stop! We're nearly there! Bring
the dead to life again!

VO LARA

*Except it wasn't like the animals had
come back to life. Their movements
were strange, disjointed, like
something else was controlling them.
Piloting them.*

ROSE

This is glory! This is beauty! This
is life from death!

VO LARA

*There's a type of parasite --
ophiocordyceps. You usually only see
it in bugs. Ants or caterpillars,
things like that. It takes over its
host's central nervous system.
They -- okay, I'm not talking about
zombies. I mean people use them in
zombie stories sometimes, but -- What
it actually does is force its host to
climb. The ant finds a tall tree and
just goes up and up and up. Then,
when the ant can't get any higher, it
sends its spores through the air.*

Grunting and chittering of reanimated animals.

VO LARA

*These animals weren't going up,
though. They were moving toward the
cult members.*

LARA

Oh god. She's planning to infect the
others. Can't you see? She's going to
turn you all into parasites.

Marcus grunts and drags her away.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The chaos quiets as Marcus drags her quickly through the underbrush.

LARA

No! Let me go! Please -- okay, I'm very dizzy, so if you can slow down -- ugh. Stop! Listen to me. There has to be some way to -- ow. Careful, there's a slope here and my vision is kind of -- ahhh!

Lara trips, slides, and rolls down a hill.

LARA

(groggy)

I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm...I'm...

Lara groans and BLACKS OUT.

MARCUS

Huh.

Marcus shrugs and walks away.

EXT. DEAD ZONE

Cultists are getting alarmed now. Weird, haunted cries and heavy steps as the zombie animals move.

ROSE

Don't move away! Let them come to you! As Revelations says:

(quotes scripture)

"Surrounding God's throne were living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back." It's just as the scriptures say! Please!

Animals cry. A cultist SCREAMS.

CAMILLE

Here, I'll...I'll do it. I'll show you guys.

Camille steps forward.

An elk lumbers toward her.

CAMILLE

This elk...has been touched by
Oblivion. I see it. Just like you
said, Rose. Pale, moonlit flowers.

The other cult members go silent, watching.

Camille breathes, frightened.

The elk grunts and shies.

Camille gasps.

ROSE

Don't move! It's okay. Just breathe.
Just...breathe.

CAMILLE

Okay.

(deep breaths)

All...is nothing...and we...are
all...

The elk squeals.

FWOOSH! The mushrooms BURST.

Everyone screams.

EXT. WOODS - NEARBY

Lara moans, trying to come to.

Two heavy FEET step up to her.

LARA

Where have you been?

She sniffs, then recoils.

LARA

Oh! God! It's so much worse at the
feet, I...

Sasquatch grumbles softly.

LARA

Sorry. I'm sure it's...ohhhh, god.

Lara starts to vomit, holds back, recovers.

Nearby, we hear SCREAMS.

LARA

Shit. Rose. The cult. Okay. Okay.

She staggers to her feet.

Sasquatch grunts.

LARA

Yeah, just...give me a minute. Okay. There's got to be some way to do something.

(aha!)

The lanterns! They had, um, kerosene lanterns. And-and she wanted them out of sight. The mushrooms only grew at night. Light and heat! That's gotta be it, right?

Sasquatch makes a noncommittal noise.

LARA

Okay. Okay. You should stay away from here. Actually -- can you find my dog? You don't eat dogs, do you?

Sasquatch growls.

LARA

Okay. Okay. Let's go. Ready, uh, break.

Lara runs off.

EXT. DEAD ZONE

It's chaos. Stars scream overhead. Cult members scream on the ground. Animals lunge and cry.

ROSE

Stop! Please -- you have to believe. This is joy, come into the world!

The cult members run into the woods.

ROSE

Please! Come back! No!

Camille suddenly gasps, coughs.

ROSE
See, everyone? Camille is...she's...
(to Camille)
Are you okay?

CAMILLE
I feel...amazing. Every piece of me
is so alive.

ROSE
See? The animals, the flowers -- it's
a blessing.

Camille coughs and chokes wildly.

ROSE
Camille?

CAMILLE
It's okay -- I just can't -- I can't
quite breathe --

An elk BELLOWS, along with a chorus of SQUIRRELS. The cult
members SCREAM.

ROSE
(nervous)
This isn't...this wasn't in my dream.
All this noise.

Lara steps out of the bushes.

LARA
Rose. You have to stop this. Please.

ROSE
Lara. What are you holding?

LARA
Propane lantern. Somebody's lighter.

ROSE
You can't bring that here.

LARA
Your people are all leaving.

ROSE
It's my father. He didn't teach them
what to expect. I didn't have enough
time...

LARA

We can end this now. You can try again later.

Camille gasps and struggles, desperate.

CAMILLE

No! Rose, please. You can't stop now.

ROSE

It's too late, anyway. They're already awake.

LARA

It's just a theory, but...look. If you bring the fire close to them...

A zombie animal SCREAMS. The mushrooms SIZZLE.

ROSE

Lara! Stop! You're killing them!

LARA

They're already dead!

CAMILLE

No. You're dead.

Camille lunges at Lara.

LARA

Agh! Don't -- please --

ROSE

Camille -- let her go.

CAMILLE

Rose! You can't let her do this. Oblivion is -- it's so --

She breaks off, coughing. Lara recoils.

LARA

Eugh. Cover your nose and mouth.

ROSE

Lara, don't.

CAMILLE

Rose. I saw it. The oldest ocean. Older than old. And reaching across the sky...a dark embrace...

ROSE
(a big moment)
You saw it.

CAMILLE
I saw...everything. And ever since I
breathed in God's love --

LARA
They're spores.

ROSE
Lara!

CAMILLE
Listen to me. It's more than just a
vision. I can feel everything. I'm
connected to it all.

ROSE
What do you mean?

CAMILLE
It's all one, Rose.

LARA
The mycorrhizal network.

CAMILLE
One being. One entity. But it needs
you.

ROSE
We need to get to the center.

LARA
Rose -- please --

ROSE
Lara. I know you don't understand
this. I don't expect you to follow
me. But you have to let me go.

VO LARA
*I can't describe what she looked like
there. Standing in the dirt, the
world ending all around her. And her
eyes...so bright, so sad.*

ROSE
I can't be alone anymore, Lara. I've
been alone in this for so long.

CAMILLE

I'm with you now, Rose.

ROSE

Thank you, Camille.

(to Lara)

Lara...please just...pretend you get it. Please?

Lara sets down the lantern and the lighter.

LARA

Wait.

ROSE

Listen --

LARA

I'll come with you. I'll leave the lantern here, and I'll...I'll come with you.

ROSE

(hesitates)

You can't save me from this.

LARA

Everything is spinning. My head hurts so bad...

ROSE

Lara?

LARA

I won't try to save you. Can I just sit with you? Until the end, or whatever?

ROSE

You won't try anything?

LARA

Rose, I don't have anything either.

ROSE

(hesitates)

Okay. Let's go.

CAMILLE

Are you sure?

ROSE

I'm sure. Let's go.

EXT. DEAD ZONE - CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

A group of possessed SQUIRRELS skitter by.

LARA
Gah! Demon squirrels.

ROSE
Here. This is it.

Drone. They approach a giant pile of goo. It PULSES softly.

CAMILLE
It's beautiful.

LARA
It's a weird pile of goo.

ROSE
The heart of oblivion.

LARA
Yeah, that sounds better.

ROSE
Come on. Move in close.

CAMILLE
Of course.

ROSE
Whatever happens, you'll have to
carry it with you. Without the
congregation -- we'll have to find
others. Quickly.

CAMILLE
We'll take God's love to the world.

LARA
Or we'll die.

Camille growls.

ROSE
Hush. She'll understand. If you want
to be here, Lara --

LARA
I want to be here.

ROSE
Then lean in close. And get ready to
breathe.

LARA
Okay.

ROSE
I'm glad you're here.

VO LARA
*She reached for my hand. But just
before our fingers touched...*

FWOOM! The mushroom BURSTS.

VO LARA
*Glittering spores filled the air. We
breathed in, and...*

LARA BREATHES IN. It merges with the sound of...

EXT. OCEAN - BEYOND TIME AND SPACE

THE LARGEST, OLDEST OCEAN laps against the shore.

LARA
What...? Where am I?

VO LARA
*I suddenly saw myself in this wide...
expanse. Silver sand dunes that
stretched beyond my imagination. I
stood at the top of one. The sky, the
ground -- it was so immense, so
massive, it was overwhelming. It felt
crushing.*

Far away, we hear Rose LAUGHING.

VO LARA
*At some point, the sand became water.
Like the ripples in a mirage. And the
water was a huge, dark ocean.*

*There was nothing there. Anywhere.
Nothing except...*

ROSE
(far away)
Lara! Laaaaraaaaa...!

LARA

Rose.

Lara runs.

Rose laughs.

VO LARA

*I ran. Forever. Like on the road
walking home that night, except,
instead of frightened I was...*

Lara laughs. She whoops.

VO LARA

Ecstatic.

Lara reaches Rose.

ROSE

You made it!

LARA

I made it.

ROSE

It's me.

LARA

It's you.

ROSE

It's us.

LARA

I'm so...

VO LARA

That's when I caught it.

LARA

Wait...

VO LARA

I was so...happy. Unbelievably happy.

LARA

This is wrong.

ROSE

No, Lara. It's finally right.

VO LARA

And people like me? We don't get to be happy.

LARA

I need to go back.

ROSE

Lara...there's nowhere to go.

VO LARA

She was right. I turned around and around. But everywhere, in every direction, everything was the same.

LARA

There's nowhere to go.

(beat)

I'm so...I'm so...tired...

Lara collapses.

VO LARA

I don't know if you've ever felt everything just kind of...drain out of you. It's a hard thing to imagine, if you haven't been through it.

I could feel myself shutting down. Piece by piece. All the sensation slid down my shoulders, through my arms, out my fingers, and then dissipated. I knew that somewhere there was a forest, and spores, and horror. But I didn't know what it meant anymore. It didn't seem important.

I just wanted to...I didn't even want to fall asleep. I was just...empty.

LARA

I think I'm going to die.

ROSE

(still overjoyed)

What?

LARA

(matter-of-fact)

I'm going to die.

VO LARA

But then...

A distant BARK.

VO LARA

Listen, I don't really go in for all that "we don't deserve dogs" stuff. We spent thousands of years specifically engineering dogs to be ideal human companions, and then act all shocked when they turn out to be, you know, excellent companions. It's silly.

More barking and whining.

VO LARA

But still...when I -- when I heard that dog...it's like I knew the way home.

EXT. DEAD ZONE - CENTER - AS BEFORE

The real world WHOOSHES back in - as SODAPOP RUNS IN, barking up a storm.

LARA

Sodapop!

Sodapop runs up and licks Lara's face. Lara laughs, weakly.

LARA

Hey, buddy, where've you been?

Sodapop licks her face and shakes himself off.

VO LARA

I guess it's just...What do you do when you have nothing left? You hold onto what you love, right? Even if you can't quite remember what loving something feels like.

Deep growls from the monsters around them.

Camille looms, ragged and monstrous.

LARA

Holy shit!

CAMILLE
I knew you would ruin this.

LARA
Camille -- please --

Sodapop GROWLS and BARKS. Rose rouses.

ROSE
Sodapop? What's wrong, baby-dog?

CAMILLE
God damn it!

Camille ATTACKS Lara. For real this time.

LARA
Don't -- aagh!

Camille tackles her to the ground.

CAMILLE
We're so close to Oblivion. Only
you -- only you are in the way.

Camille CHOKES Lara.

LARA
(choking)
Please -- Camille -- I can't
breathe --

ROSE
Camille! Stop!

Sodapop growls and LUNGES.

CAMILLE
Get off of me, you stupid dog!

Sodapop cries.

ROSE
No! Where's that -- lantern --

Rose SLAMS the lantern into Camille's head. Camille falls
with a THUD. Lara coughs and passes out.

CAMILLE
Rose...how could you...?

ROSE
Oblivion. Like a spider. Like a hole.
The mouth of nothing.

Rose flicks a LIGHTER.

CAMILLE
What are you doing...?

ROSE
I'm lighting the lantern. Lara. I see
it. I know what we need to do.
(stops)
Lara? Lara --

She runs to Lara.

ROSE
Lara, wake up!

She slaps at Lara's face gently. Impulsively, she kisses
her. Lara wakes, coughing.

LARA
Did you -- did you kiss me?

ROSE
You wouldn't wake up, so I...thought
I'd try it.

LARA
Like a fairy tale?

ROSE
Shut up. We don't have time.

LARA
Right. I think you need to burn it.

ROSE
(overlapping)
We have to burn it.

LARA
Yeah.

CAMILLE
No...no...

Something GROWLS in the woods. Sodapop barks and whines.

ROSE
It's okay, puppy. Lara, can you stand? We're going to have to run.

LARA
Yeah, I can, um. I'll just...yeah.

CAMILLE
Please -- you can't --

ROSE
I'm so sorry, Camille.

Rose throws the lantern onto the fungus. It SHATTERS. Fire EXPLODES.

CAMILLE
Noooo! No! It's spreading to all of them! Everything -- burning --

The cursed animals SCREAM and SHRIEK.

LARA
They're taking it through the network.

CAMILLE
It burns!

LARA
Nothing's touching you, Camille. But it will in a minute if we don't --

Camille growls and shrugs her off.

CAMILLE
Don't touch me!

ROSE
She's part of it now.

LARA
No, that's not a thing. Camille, come on. The fire's spreading.

CAMILLE
You ruined everything.

LARA
Look, we need to go now --

Camille growls again, vicious.

CAMILLE
I'll kill you!

She lunges. Lara staggers back.

ROSE
Lara, you can't help her.

LARA
But --

ROSE
Lara. Fire. Run!

LARA
Right! Come on, Sodapop.

They run off into the forest.

The fire WHOOSHES.

Camille COUGHS.

Two large FOOTSTEPS approach.

CAMILLE
(whines)
It's burning! It's...burning...
(sniffs)
What...
(it hits.)
You.

Sasquatch growls, deep and menacing.

CAMILLE
I know you.

SASQUATCH
Hrmph.

CAMILLE
You shouldn't be here.

SASQUATCH
(defiant)
Grrrmph.

CAMILLE
Alright, then. Let's do this.

Sasquatch growls. Camille steels herself.

Camille lets out a BATTLE CRY.

Sasquatch ROARS in return.

FADE TO:

INT. RADIO TRANSMISSION

The little jingle/music sting plays again.

ABE
Good morning and welcome back to W-K-
C-H. I'm Abe Ramirez.

JAKE
Ahem.

ABE
(grudgingly)
And this is my co-host, Jake Talbott.

JAKE
Co-host? Really? You mean it, buddy?

ABE
Yeah, why not.

JAKE
Yessss.

ABE
Okay, well, we're just catching
everyone up on the massive wildfire
that --

JAKE
(radio voice)
Chaos. Terror. Smoke blankets the
valley as a mysterious fire starts
deep in the Mt. Hood National Forest.

ABE
Dude!

JAKE
Firefighters were able to contain the
blaze, but questions remain.

ABE
In addition, citizens are encouraged
to check their homes for a virulent
strain of mold.

JAKE
(triumphant)
That's right! It is not just me.

ABE
But could the mold and fire be
related? Martha Arberg --

JAKE
Who, as we know, has her farm right
on the edge of the affected part of
the forest --

ABE
(with increasing
irritation)
Martha Arberg reports that the
lingering smoke isn't just the last
embers of a fire going out. That fire
is still burning.

JAKE
The Forest Service has locked down
the area, so nobody can get close to
investigate.

ABE
Could it be a controlled burn? Waste
disposal? We don't yet know how the
fire started, why it's still going,
and more importantly -- what's still
up there.

JAKE
Or inside your homes!

ABE (RADIO)
For the next three hours, we'll be
taking your calls. If you have any
information about what's happening up
there --

JAKE (RADIO)
I think it's aliens.

ABE (RADIO)
Dude, you have got to stop
interrupting me.
(beat)
Wait, what?

JAKE (RADIO)
Yeah, it's got to be aliens.

ABE (RADIO)
You don't think it's Sasquatch?

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Hospital sounds fade in.

The transmission continues over a speaker inside the room.

Terri paces back and forth.

JAKE (RADIO)
Are you kidding? No way Sasquatch
would be involved in something like
that.

ABE (RADIO)
But the protection of nature is like,
his whole thing.

JAKE (RADIO)
Man, you will never get it. It's like
this, alright? Sasquatch, yes, is
like the preserver. But at the same
time, he would never --

The radio clicks off.

TERRI
That's enough of that.

ROSE
Come on, Mom, it's the news.

TERRI
That is not news.

Rose chuckles.

Lara knocks softly on the door.

LARA
Hey. Can I...come in?

TERRI
(cold)
Lara.

LARA
Mayor Boone.

ROSE
Hey, Lara. Yeah, it's okay.

TERRI
(quietly)
Rose, honey...

ROSE
It's okay, Mom.

Terri hesitates.

TERRI
I'll be outside.

LARA
I heard the nurse's station has one
of those coffee pod machines. If you
ask nicely, I bet --

TERRI
Excuse me.

She walks out.

Lara steps into the room.

LARA
Well, she still hates me.

ROSE
She's been through a lot.

LARA
Yeah.

Lara grabs a chair and sits.

LARA
How are you feeling?

ROSE
I'm okay. They keep talking about
scans and keeping me for observation,
but I feel fine. How's your head?

LARA
Better. I'm over the worst of the
concussion, so they're discharging
me. No lingering effects from the --
from the forest.

ROSE
That's good.

Doctor Simmons knocks on the door.

SIMMONS
How's the patient?

LARA
Doctor Simmons?!

SIMMONS
(awkward)
Oh. Lara. Hello.

ROSE
It's okay. I'm feeling better.

LARA
You're not...seeing patients, are you?

SIMMONS
No. No, no. I'm on a bit of a sabbatical.

LARA
Oh.

SIMMONS
Yes. Seemed best. But I helped synthesize the treatment that Rose and a few of the others who inhaled the spores last night are getting.

LARA
(suspicious)
You did? Nobody told me about anything like that.

SIMMONS
Well, no. Your body seems to have cleared itself of them all on its own. I'd love to find out more about that, but --
(off Lara's look)
Ah, I suppose I should -- I'm going to go. The Sheriff is meeting me here. About Camille.

LARA
Have they found her?

SIMMONS

She survived the fire. That's all they know.

LARA

Oh.

ROSE

I'm so sorry, Doctor Simmons.

SIMMONS

It's not your fault. She...Camille does what she's going to do.

(sighs)

I'm assisting where I can, but... well, I suppose I should focus on my own recovery. It appears I had a bit of exposure. Might have been... affected.

LARA

Yeah.

SIMMONS

They're -- they're good at what they do. The search teams. And she...I'm sure she's fine. With treatment, we'll all be fine.

LARA

Yeah.

SIMMONS

You saw them, then. The spores?

ROSE

Yeah.

SIMMONS

Are any of them (still intact)?

LARA

(overlapping)

We burned them all.

SIMMONS

(surprised)

Oh. Well, I'm sure that's fine.

ROSE

What do you mean?

SIMMONS

Well, some species of fungi reproduce through forest fires. The flames actually release the spores from the soil, so they only fruit in burn zones.

(off their expressions)

But I'm sure it's fine. It's fine.

ROSE

Um...

SIMMONS

(clears throat)

Well, I was just stopping by to see how you were. I'll -- I'll go.

LARA

(to Rose)

She hasn't tried to examine you, has she?

ROSE

What? Why?

SIMMONS

(annoyed)

I'm not seeing patients.

(sighs)

I hope you continue to improve.

ROSE

Thanks.

She leaves.

ROSE

What was that about?

LARA

Long story.

Beat.

ROSE

You know, Lara, I...I'm glad you were there last night.

LARA

Me too.

ROSE
Did you really see it?

LARA
Hm?

ROSE
When we -- when the spores burst out.

LARA
Why don't you tell me what you saw?

ROSE
It was...the most beautiful thing
I've ever seen. The stars came down
to the earth, these beautiful balls
of dancing light. And they sang.
Like, really sang. I could see the
tendrils from the -- the mushrooms?
Reaching up. And when they met the
stars...it was like everything...it
was peace. Perfect peace.

LARA
Hm.

ROSE
You didn't see that?

LARA
I...had a dream. But it was
different.

ROSE
You didn't see the stars?

LARA
There was an ocean. I think. But no
stars. And definitely no song.

ROSE
(disappointed)
Oh.

LARA
I'm sorry, Rose. I wish I...I don't
know why you see dancing stars and I
just see...emptiness. Mold spores and
mushrooms.

ROSE

It went wrong, anyway. There was that one moment of bliss and then...you said something about dying, I think? And it fell apart. I had the most horrible feeling, like everything was just...falling out of me. It was like this tingling feeling, like every bit of me...my nerves were just...freezing fire. And the nothingness wasn't an embrace anymore. It was...

(shudders)

I'm glad. I'm glad we burned them all.

LARA

I'm sorry it didn't end the way you thought.

ROSE

Yeah. Me too.

(beat)

I can't believe you didn't see the stars. And you don't -- you didn't feel anything, either? That piece of something greater?

LARA

I think it's just who I am. It's why I can't...be the person for you.

ROSE

Lara...

LARA

It's okay.

A quiet moment.

ROSE

You know, my mom used to tell me this story, that her mom told to her. About the sun and the moon.

LARA

Yeah?

ROSE

Mm-hmm. She said in the beginning, the sun and the moon were strangers. The sun gave us light and heat, and the moon moved the tides and brought the rain.

And the sun watched over the day,
while the moon watched over the
night. But at sunrise and sunset,
they could see each other. Just for a
moment. Across the sky. And over the
years, they fell in love.

LARA

That's sweet.

ROSE

Yeah. They lived like that for a long
time, catching glimpses between day
and night, until one day...they tried
to be together. But when the sun and
moon came together, the earth lost
them both.

LARA

An eclipse.

ROSE

Everything went dark and cold. The
tides wouldn't move. And soon, the
plants and animals began to die.

LARA

Hm.

ROSE

So the sun and the moon agreed to
stay apart. They leave messages for
each other in the clouds, catch
glimpses when one rises or sets. And
once in a while, after years of
isolation, they come together. But
only ever for a moment.

LARA

That's...sad.

ROSE

The sun and the moon love each other.
But they love the rest of us more.
That's what my mom always said.

LARA

It's a good story.

ROSE

Yeah.

Little doggy claws tick-tack on the floor in the hall, and then SODAPOP bursts into the room.

ROSE
Sodapop!

LARA
Hey, buddy!

Terri follows on his heels.

TERRI
Look what I found.

Sodapop jumps up on the bed and crawls all over Rose.

ROSE
Oh, hi, baby. What a good boy. Oh, someone cut your hair!

TERRI
He was a mess after all that time in the woods. And your cousin's ex-girlfriend grooms dogs, so...

A NURSE pokes her head in.

NURSE
Ma'am, you can't have dogs in here.

TERRI
It's just for a moment.

LARA
Do you know who this is? She's the mayor of Charity.

NURSE
What?

LARA
Charity? It's, like, twenty minutes from here!

NURSE
(dubious)
Well, it's hospital policy.

TERRI
Alright. Give us just a minute.

NURSE
One minute.

The nurse leaves.

LARA
They don't mess around here.

Sodapop rushes over to her.

LARA
Oh! Hey, Sodapop. I'm so happy you
came back, bud. What a good boy.

Lara stands.

LARA
Well. I should probably get out of
your way.

TERRI
Thank you.

ROSE
Will you take care of him? Of
Sodapop?

LARA
Do you mean...?

ROSE
(surprise)
You'll take him home, won't you?

LARA
Are you sure? He -- you know, he was
always your dog.

ROSE
He's your dog, Lara.

LARA
I don't know about that. I mean, look
at him, he...
(realizes)
He's following me.

ROSE
See?

LARA
He doesn't do that.

TERRI
Apparently, he does.

LARA
Huh. Come on, buddy.

Sodapop makes happy dog noises.

Lara walks to the door. She pauses.

LARA
Goodbye, Rose.

ROSE
Goodbye, Lara.

Nurse returns.

NURSE
Ma'am? I really need you to remove
that dog.

LARA
I've got him.
(picks up Sodapop)
Come on, buddy, let's go.

Sodapop licks her face.

Lara walks out.

TERRI
(to Rose)
How are you feeling?

ROSE
(for the hundredth
time)
I'm fine, Mom.

TERRI
Good. Oh, did I tell you about
Sheriff Tate? Apparently when they
started on his mold abatement, they
found a bunch of gold.

ROSE
What?

TERRI
Yeah. In the walls, under the
floorboards. They were just sitting
on it the whole time. He is pretty
happy.

ROSE

I bet.

The scene fades out.

INT. LARA'S CAR

Lara gets into the driver seat. She shuts the car door behind her and buckles her seatbelt. Sodapop whines in the backseat.

LARA

Alright, buddy, you ready? We can go see Shayne. Run around on the farm. Sound good?

Sodapop whines.

LARA

Okay. Let me just plug in my phone...

The phone BEEPS.

PHONE

You have 216 new messages.

LARA

Great.

She sighs and puts the car into gear.

LARA

Just great.
(to phone)
Play messages.

PHONE

First message sent Wednesday...

FADE OUT

RECORDING

Recording clicks on, as with Lara's VO.

LARA

So that's...what happened. I think.

THERAPIST

Hmm. What do you think happened? I mean, really?

LARA

I think...you can love someone and just not be right for them, you know? The moon chases the sun. And as long as it never catches it, everything's okay. As long as it's just close enough to -- to reflect it, once in a while. So even if love Rose...maybe I'll always...

You know, in tarot the Moon represents illusion, deception, but also unconscious knowledge. Rose reads Tarot. I mean, I don't think that's what meant, but.

You can love the sun, and still recognize that it needs to stay... where it is.

(beat)

Or, sorry -- did you mean the Bigfoot stuff? Yeah, no, there's no Bigfoot. I had a concussion.

INT. MYSTERIOUS ROOM

High-tech machinery whirs. Recording continues from a small speaker.

VO LARA

There are species of fungus that can survive in space. Like, not just a vacuum, but actual space. So maybe when they had that meteor shower, a fragment came through with... something weird on it. Or maybe there was a weird strain there all along, down under the dirt. Rose got exposed, and with her existing issues...and you know, small towns can get this kind of mass hysteria. So I guess it was a combination of things. And I just...got in the middle somehow.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

Hm.

VO LARA

So anyway, yeah. That's my story. That's why I came to a psychotherapist.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

Mm-hmm.

(beat)

I think you should see me twice a week.

VO LARA

Yeah. That makes sense.

The recording clicks off.

The same voice as the therapist speaks, but very different now.

ASSISTANT

So what do you think?

A MAN, deep voice, aggressively cheerful, replies.

MAN

It's fascinating. She's coming here?

ASSISTANT

She's on her way.

MAN

And she doesn't know we're here?

ASSISTANT

She thinks she's visiting her mother.

MAN

Good. Good.

ASSISTANT

You seem pleased.

MAN

Well, I suppose there is a reason they call me The Grinning Man.

A VERY DRAMATIC MUSICAL STING plays.

END OF EPISODE

OUTRO

Music: "I Will Fool You," by Bothnia

Whaaaaat?!? Guys! I guess you'll have to come back for season two!

I just want to thank you for sticking around through the season one finale. It's been a wild time. Did I think it would take me TWO YEARS to release one season of this show? No, my friends, I did not. But life happens, and here we are.

Completing these last five episodes was only possible because of Patreon, Zencastr, the Saunders Family, and the ongoing support of all you lovely people.

A special thank you to our Patreon supporters, including new Patrons Timothy Diaz, Adam Alexander, Rafael Fuentes, and Debbie (who I'm pretty sure is my mom. Hi, Mom.) Patreon supporters get all episodes early, as well as access to behind-the-scenes information, updates, bonus content, and more. To find out more or join in yourself, go to Patreon.com/believerpodcast. That's P-A-T-R-E-O-N dot com, slash believerpodcast.

Remote recording during the pandemic has only been possible because of our sponsor, Zencastr. When we lost access to in-person recording, I really thought we were done-for. But Zencastr made the transition to remote recording really easy. It's browser-based, so everyone could log in from home, and it records high-quality audio on separate tracks, which is something you don't get from general internet-video-call services. To learn more and get 30% off a pro plan, use the referral link in the show notes or enter promo code "believer" at checkout.

This episode features the voice talents of Mara Hernandez, Sara Gorsky, Miles Langerman, Jason Markoff, Rosa Delgado, Samantha Ronceros, Jillian Cardillo, Kip Parshall, Duke Parshall, Seth Ellsworth, Julie Saunders, and Archie. The Grinning Man was played by Javier Ronceros (who killed it).

This episode was written and directed by Julie Saunders, with sound design by Ester Ellis. Additional sound design assistance by Andrew Wardlaw. Andrew runs the Lamplight Radio Play, which adapts original dark fiction stories into audio. If you want to hear an episode directed by me, check out episode 11, "The Elevator Girl." Ester Ellis is the creator of Station Blue, and provides sound design for Dungeons and Daddies, Hit the Bricks, Arden, and much more.

Season two will begin production later this year! In the meantime, if you experience an unexpected head injury -- or even, really, an expected head injury -- you should get that checked out. It's pretty serious, even if you don't see Bigfoot. (Although if you do see Bigfoot, will you tell him hi from me? He's not returning my calls.)

Bye now.