

HAVANA SYNDROME - EPISODE SEVEN: THE BORDER

FADE IN:

- The 'cicada-like' Havana Syndrome sound clip

CUT TO: INTRO MUSIC

HAVANA SYNDROME. EPISODE SEVEN: THE BORDER

CUT TO:

Notification ringing, and two pings as two phones join the video chat.

NAT

Hey. You all set up over there?

LUPE

More or less. The van has left.
Probably sometime last night.
Haven't got much sleep, so we
figured that much was worth
keeping an eye on. Do you think
they know?

NAT

Hell if I know. You should
probably just keep talking with me
in your basement though.

DEE

So...you got a ticket, too?

NAT

Yep. And I've got four hours to
decide whether or not I'm heading
to Logan this afternoon. I mean, I
would have preferred a ticket to
Cancun, but I've never been to
Mexico—so who can complain? I just
need to make sure my passport is
still valid...

DEE

Wait, you're not actually planning
on going, are you?

LUPE sighs. They have already had this argument.

NAT

Uh. Duh. What else does 'free international ticket to dig into cool spy shit' mean to you?

LUPE

Dee thinks we shouldn't go.

NAT

What?!

DEE

This has gotten really out of hand really quickly. It's one thing that we're following the digital trail, but does Juni actually expect us to go hopping onto airplanes and crossing borders for this?

LUPE

I'm sorry...what happened to Mr. Three Thousand miles?

DEE

This is not the same! I knew I was going to see you. We don't know if this is a prompt to get us to some random cafe, or...or meet up with an international spy, or arms dealer or something!

LUPE

We know that Juni wants us in Mexico City. I'm sure there's more clues once we get there.

DEE

We don't know what Juniper was up to in Mexico City! We don't know what we're flying into! And besides, what happened to Mrs. "leave it to the professionals"?

LUPE

Are you really concerned about flying internationally? It's Mexico. That's less than a day's travel. And I got points to put us up at a hotel. It'll be fine.

DEE

We don't know how long we're even going to be there. It's a one way ticket.

LUPE

We'll head right back when we check out this Quentin cafe. We won't talk to anyone else. We wait for something that has Juniper written all over it, and nothing else.

DEE

Well, it's one thing for us to go, it's a whole other thing to ask Natalie to come with too.

NAT

Hold on. You guys aren't going without me. Juniper...or whoever sent us these tickets, sent one to me for a reason. And last minute tickets from Boston to Mexico? Those are nearly a thousand dollars! Besides, someone needs to keep the Menendez siblings in check.

DEE

I have plants to take care of back home.

LUPE

You were getting your roommates to take care of them, weren't you? They'll live for a couple more days, I'm sure.

DEE

You really want to go, don't you?

LUPE

Juniper wouldn't let me go to Cuba with her and I didn't press the issue. Now she practically gifts a trip to Mexico to me? I'm taking it.

DEE

What about Mark?

LUPE

Oh he'll be fine. He's got the lawyer on speed-dial if anything were to hold us up.

NAT

Oh yeah, I forgot about that. Won't the government know you're, like, crossing the border? Won't they get suspicious about what you're doing?

LUPE

I mean, Dee got here without anyone harassing him about it. And we got to go ahead for traveling home. The feds didn't tell us we couldn't leave the country at all, or come back into the U.S. Mark goes into Seattle for work all the time, anyway. It would have been really obvious if they put some kind of flag on any of us.

DEE

It's still a risk.

LUPE

Do you want to find Juni or not? Because this is apparently the next step.

DEE

The next step to what, though?

Silence as LUPE stares him down.

Okay! Okay, Jesus, you don't need to look at me like that.

LUPE

Okay. So I guess we're all taking our scheduled vacation to the illustrious Mexico City. Nat, do you need anything from us? I can send you the hotel information once I get it booked. Do you need us to wait for you at the airport?

NAT

I may not be as well traveled as you two, but I know my way around an airport. And I have Google

Translate. I'll be fine. And we have SIGINT. Just keep in touch. Every few hours? When does your flight land?

LUPE

Seven in the evening, local time. We have a direct flight.

NAT

Alright, I'll be getting in just before you. Five. And I have a super early connecting flight, but I'll let you both know if there's any problem.

DEE

And what if we have a problem?

NAT

Play dumb. Don't talk to the cops. Wait for your lawyer. Easy.

DEE

Yeah, unless the Men in Black show up.

LUPE

We need to pack. Let us know if you get anything else on your end, Nat.

NAT

You got it. Talk soon.

LUPE

Bye!

Notification as the two videos close down.

FADE IN: LUPE'S GUEST ROOM

Transition from the video call to being in the room with Lupe and Dee.

DEE

I have a bad feeling about this.

LUPE

I don't know why you're so anxious. It's a nonstop flight!

DEE

That's not what I mean. We're going into this off of a roughly translated coded message. I don't think it's good enough for us to go off into a foreign country where—may I remind you—none of us speak the language. Shouldn't we get a little more information, wait for Nat to find some of the other audio files, get some more clues before playing spy?

LUPE

You were so amped to play spy before. What, now that it becomes reality, where you know, you have to actually go where the spies go, you're getting scared?

DEE

We are still being watched! This is serious, Lupe. We can play off of this idea that *'oh, this is nothing suspicious, I'm just visiting my sister during a difficult time'* in front of the cops...but going to Mexico is a giant red flag! We don't know what's waiting for us there. What if there's like, assassins that she's pissed off or something?

LUPE

Juniper would not send us into danger. Even if she wasn't sure about the risk, we know what it is like to be dropped into the middle of foreign countries and figure out how to navigate them with little to no previous information.

DEE

Yeah, but then we had mom and dad to tell us where to go. We had our parents to protect and watch out for us.

LUPE

And they've trained us pretty well, haven't they? We can look out for each other now.

I think you're worrying about nothing. We're adults, Dee. Isn't this what you wanted? To be treated like an adult? Well, here you go. You're not being dragged to Mexico because dad was assigned some new station. You get a choice. And I'm choosing to go.

I'm going to tell Mark what the plan is and get packed. Let me know if you're coming with...or if you want me to get you a ticket back to Orlando instead.

LUPE leaves, going up the basement stairs to the upper floor. The door opens and closes behind her. DEE sighs.

After a moment, he pulls out his phone.

DEE

Hey Siri. Send voice note to Juni.

SIRI

GO AHEAD.

DEE

Hey Juni. Did you know Lupe would get like this? Go from moping and angry and not wanting anything to do with you, but as soon as you give her a chance to hop a plane she's all gung ho and asking me what I'm so worried about?

Sometimes I feel, despite how much we know way too much about each other—I also know nothing. Maybe it's because Lupe and I...we haven't been all that close the last few years. I don't know.

And now, here we go. Another family travel adventure.

Maybe I was naive. I thought this would be more like what Nat was doing—digging around the internet for clues. Now I have to crunch myself into an airplane seat again.

I hope you're in Mexico City,
Juni. Otherwise...

I don't know. I don't know where
we'd go from here.

SIRI
ARE YOU READY TO SEND IT TO JUNI?

DEE inhales, as if to say yes, then pauses.

DEE
No.

SIRI
OKAY.

DEE
Hey Siri? Send a voice note to
Lupe.

SIRI
GO AHEAD.

DEE
Okay. I'm packing now. Juni better
not've gotten me a middle seat.

SIRI
ARE YOU READY TO SEND IT TO LUPE?

DEE
Yes.

SIRI
VOICE note SENT.

FADE IN: Vancouver International Airport

EXT. YVR AIRPORT - DEPARTURES, AFTERNOON.

A car pulls up to the curb of the airport, at departures.
LUPE, MARK, and DEE open the car doors and exit, pulling
out their luggage. They are early, and only have carry-on
baggage and their passports under their clothes. They have,
in fact, been trained well.

MARK
Got everything?

LUPE

Yep. Thankfully the temps in Mexico City right now makes it good for packing light.

MARK

You're missing the snow, so you shouldn't be delayed.

DEE

At least not by the *weather*.

MARK

I'll circle around until you let me know you're through security. You know what to do otherwise.

LUPE

Nat got through security without any issues, so we're probably not being tracked anymore. We'll be fine.

MARK

Of course.

MARK pulls LUPE into a hug and kisses her.

Safe, pleasant, uneventful travels. Both of you.

LUPE

Let me know if anything comes up over here. I know that van left, but—

MARK

I've got it under control. And if anything goes haywire, we've always got that favor with the PM you've always wanted to pull.

LUPE

[delighted, but not wanting the secret out] Mark!

DEE

What? The prime minister? Like, of Canada? You didn't tell me this—

LUPE

Later. We need to get through security. Love you, babe. I'll let

you know if this gets to
Defcon-Maple Syrup Heist.

MARK
You bet. I love you, too.

DEE
Maple syrup heist...wait, that was
actually a thing?

LUPE
Get a move on, Dee-Dee!

LUPE rolls her luggage into DEE, who yelps.

DEE
HEY!

LUPE is undeterred, and they start walking towards the
entrance.

MARK
[calling after them] Don't kill
each other!

DEE
No promises!

LUPE and DEE cross through the sliding doors and into the
terminal.

Ow, Lupe. That really hurt!

LUPE
Maybe you just need to be a little
quicker. Constant vigilance,
remember?

DEE
Yeah, for, like people following
us or pickpockets. Not an evil
sister who attacks my ankles with
her roll-on like some deranged
chihuahua.

LUPE
Just keeping you sharp.

DEE
Whatever.

LUPE and DEE make their way into a line of people at the check in counter. A few languages are heard—Farsi, English, French, and Korean.

DEE

We should check in at the counter. Nat said she wasn't able to check in via the app. And I'd rather some flight attendants flag us than TSA.

LUPE

It's not TSA here. And Canadians are nicer. But you're right. We might also be able to ask who bought our tickets.

DEE

And check to see if Juni put me in a middle seat.

LUPE

[rolling her eyes] And check to see if they gave you a middle seat.

Thankfully the line isn't too long.

A short pause as they wait to be called up. There is someone who is berating one of the CANADIAN FLIGHT ATTENDANTS behind the counter while LUPE and DEE approach. LUPE types something into her phone.

DEE

Wouldn't it be weird if we ask who bought our tickets?

LUPE

Hand me your passport. [grins, speaks quietly] You don't just have one sister who can act. Watch this.

ENRAGED CUSTOMER

This is completely ridiculous, can anyone here actually do their jobs?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm sorry sir, but we can only check you in for an international

flight up to 45 minutes prior to departure. I can find another flight for you.

ENRAGED CUSTOMER

You just want more of my money. Are you a moron? I only have one checked bag, and the flight doesn't leave for another fifteen minutes. Just ask someone to escort me through security and I'll make it just fine.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We cannot escort customers through security without checking them in. I'm sorry, but this is not just our airline's policy, it is the airport's.

ENRAGED CUSTOMER

You just want more of my money. Hell if I'm going to let you. You should refund me for forcing me to come up to a counter and deal with idiots like you.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Next please.

ENRAGED CUSTOMER

Fucking morons. Wasting my fucking time!

The man storms off. LUPE approaches the counter.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

IDs please.

LUPE

[hands over the passports] Here you go.

I'm sorry about that guy. You're just doing your job.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

It's alright. Happens all the time.

LUPE

It shouldn't...Erica, right?
Traveling is stressful, but it
doesn't hurt to have basic human
decency. We can only get where
we're going if we're all on the
same page, right? I'm sure the
holiday travel stuff always makes
your job rougher, too.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
[allowing a relief at being seen]
Oh yeah.

LUPE
I hope that's the worst you have
to deal with today.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
I appreciate that, ma'am, really.
Where is your final destination
today?

LUPE
Mexico City.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT types into the computer.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Are you checking any luggage?

LUPE
Nope. Just a quick family trip.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT types into the computer.

By the way, we got our tickets as
gifts. My mom said she bought them
for us, but my sister has been
trying to make up for not coming
to Thanksgiving. I have a
suspicion this was a guilt
present, you know what I mean? Can
you find out who actually bought
them? It would either be under
Juniper or...or Judy.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Ah, yeah. I get you. My ex-husband
would pass off his gifts as
something he bought—but I knew for
damn sure it was his mama making

him feel guilty for forgetting our anniversary.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT types into the computer, and the tickets are printed. She hands them to LUPE.

These two tickets were paid for by points, and by a Judy Carpenter. That your sister?

LUPE

Sure is. I guess she's going to hear a little less of an earful. This time.

Well, is that all you need from us?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yep, you're all set. Thank you for flying with us. And your kind words. Have a pleasant trip.

LUPE

Thank you, Erica! Take care!

DEE and LUPE walk away from the counter and towards security.

DEE

A little over the top, to be honest.

LUPE

Somebody's always gotta be a critic. I got our information, didn't I? Juni bought our tickets, and they haven't flagged us.

DEE

Pretty sure she would have looked it up anyway.

LUPE

But now she's focused less on the question, and more that I was nice to her.

DEE

Guess you're right. Never hurts to suck up to someone who's always getting torn down, either.

LUPE

Exactly.

DEE and LUPE walk away from the counter and towards security. Airport chatter continues as they work their way around the line. LUPE pauses, and we hear her suitcase stop and then roll back away.

LUPE

Oh, crap. I forgot to ask about your seat.

DEE

It's fine. We're already in line for security.

LUPE

You hate middle seats, and it's a five hour flight.

DEE

I'll deal. I don't think Juni would be that mean to me, anyway.

LUPE

She might not have realized.
[sighs] Okay, listen. If I have an aisle or window, I'll give it to you if it bothers you so much. If I end up with a middle seat, too, we both suffer together. Deal?

DEE

[suspicious] You're being super nice.

LUPE

What? I'm in a good mood. On a free flight to Mexico! An adventure with my baby bro!

DEE

Sure.

LUPE

Oh, come on Dee-Dee. Can't you feel it?

DEE

Feel what? The growing dread of
being on a flying cramped metal
tube for five hours?

LUPE

You were fine flying that long to
get here from Florida.

DEE

I mean, I did have a layover in
Dallas. It broke it up.

LUPE

You are really not feeling excited
for what we might find in Mexico?

DEE

I don't know...

Notification sound on both of their phones. It is a VOICE
note from their MOM.

LUPE

It's a voice note from Mom. I got
it.

LUPE plays the voice note on speaker.

MOM

Why is it that I see *both* of you
on my map at the Vancouver
airport? Dee, are you coming back
to Florida?

DEE

Oh. Crap. I forgot she can do
that.

LUPE

You and me both. Kinda funny that
the government needs a warrant to
track our phones, but Mom doesn't.

DEE

She totally knows what we're
doing. She has to. What do we tell
her?

LUPE

That I am dropping you off?

DEE

She'll figure out it's a lie in
about six hours when our little
icons appear in Mexico.

LUPE

Then we disable the feature. Tell
Mom the phones are on the fritz.

They've approached the front of the line.

DEE

I guess spycraft really does run
in the family.

LUPE

[hissed] Be *quiet*!

CATSA OFFICER 1

Next. ID please.

DEE

Good afternoon. Here you go.

DEE hands over his passport. The ticket is scanned. There
is a brief pause, then a positive DING.

CATSA OFFICER 1

Have a safe flight. Next. ID
please.

LUPE

Hi.

LUPE hands over her passport. The ticket is scanned. There
is a brief pause, then a positive DING.

CATSA OFFICER 1

Have a safe flight. Next. ID
please.

LUPE and DEE place their luggage on the conveyor belt and
get in line for the scanner.

DEE

If we tell mom what's going on,
she and dad will be able to take
care of things if anything goes
wrong.

LUPE

Let's talk after we get through
this line, huh?

LUPE and DEE step through the scanner.

CATSA OFFICER 1
Step through. Step through. Step
through.

CATSA OFFICER 2
Whose bag is this?

LUPE
Mine.

CATSA OFFICER 1
[quietly into a radio] Bag check
line 4. Assistance request.

CATSA OFFICER 3 walks up.

CATSA OFFICER 3
Heard. Is this the one?

CATSA OFFICER 1
Yeah. We got something on the
imager there.

CATSA OFFICER 2
Ma'am, please follow these two. Is
he traveling with you?

LUPE
Um...Yes. Is something wrong?

CATSA OFFICER 2
Just proceed to the desk, ma'am.

LUPE and DEE follow CATSA 1 and 3.

CATSA OFFICER 1
Do you have any liquids or
aerosols with you?

LUPE
Nope, not that I know of.

DEE
[laughs nervously] You've
certainly done it enough times.
Remember Paris? How much was that
perfume again?

LUPE

I learned my lesson, thank you
very much.

CATSA OFFICER 3 places the bag on the counter.

CATSA OFFICER 3
Hold out your hands, I need to do
a swab. Both of you, please.

DEE
What's the swab for?

CATSA OFFICER 3
Just routine before we check your
bag. Where are you traveling to?

DEE
Mexico City.

CATSA OFFICER 3
Work or vacation?

DEE
Um...

LUPE
Vacation! My brother and I never
been, got a great deal for a last
minute flight. Escaping the cold,
you know?

CATSA OFFICER 3
Right...

Machine BEEPS as the CATSA OFFICER 3 feeds
it the swabs.

CATSA OFFICER 3
They're clear. You got the bag?

CATSA OFFICER 1
Yep. Check on the image for me.

CATSA OFFICER 1 begins rifling through the bag as CATSA 3
checks the screen, clicking.

CATSA OFFICER 3
A little further down, side inner
pocket...not sure what that is.

CATSA OFFICER 1

Let me...huh. Ma'am, are you
carrying any weapons on you?

LUPE
Weapons? No, definitely not.

Tense silence as CATSA OFFICER 3 unzips a pocket. There's a
hiss as CATSA OFFICER 2 turns on his radio.

CATSA OFFICER 2
[quietly into radio] Standby for
possible advanced search.

CATSA 3 pulls something metallic out.

CATSA OFFICER 3
Ahhh. [chuckles] Next time, place
these into a clear bag outside of
your luggage, please. They look
like knives in the scanner.

DEE
Are those...knitting needles?

LUPE
[weakly] Crochet hooks.

CATSA OFFICER 3
They are approved to fly, but you
might want to get plastic ones.
Less likely to set off our sensors
than the metal ones. Here you go.
Sorry for the inconvenience. Have
a good flight.

The CATSA OFFICER 3 zips the bag closed and hands it back
to LUPE. DEE and LUPE head out towards their gate.

LUPE
What?

DEE
Nothing. Just never pegged you as
a granny.

LUPE
Rude. I picked it up over the
pandemic. It's soothing,
especially while flying.

DEE
I thought you loved flying.

LUPE

I like *landing*. I could do without the in-between. It's boring. It's better than watching three movies back to back. Well, I'll do that, too. Just while making a scarf.

DEE

Huh.

LUPE

We contain multitudes, Dee-Dee. Don't be so surprised. C'mon. Our gate is near the end of this terminal. I want to grab a pre-flight coffee before we board.

FADE IN: THE MENENDEZ HOUSEHOLD, AFTERNOON.

We enter the Menendez household in Miami, where CLAIRE and PETER MENENDEZ are trying to get a hold of their own situation.

PETER has recently been released after being held for further questioning by the government. CLAIRE has a suspicion that he hasn't kept his promise about how to handle JUNI's disappearance. On top of everything else, she also has to worry about DEE, who has decided to drop everything and go bully his older sister in Canada. CLAIRE has been so busy worrying about what PETER has been doing, however, she has prioritized getting him back home before tracking down her children.

PETER, on the other hand, has had a one-track-mind this entire time: find his daughter ala Liam Neeson. Unfortunately, it seems like his initial plan is less likely now that the government already is apprised of his military and intelligence contacts.

PETER is currently in the kitchen, stress-constructing a cabinet. He is currently hammering something, dropping pieces of wood to the ground.

CLAIRE

Hey.

PETER does not respond.

CLAIRE

Dear husband of mine.

PETER does not respond, another CLUNK of the wood as it drops.

CLAIRE

Any chance I can get you to stop
your new kitchen renovation to
talk to you about something a
little more important?

PETER does not respond, another CLUNK of the wood as it drops.

CLAIRE

Peter. Please. I know you're
stressed. So am I. But destroying
our cabinetry will only make this
mess worse, don't you think?

PETER

Yeah, well, it was either taking a
hammer to the cabinet or to the
next smug pencil pusher who wants
to tell me to stop digging.

CLAIRE

You do need to stop digging.

PETER does not respond, another CLUNK of the wood as it drops.

PETER

Our daughter is still unreachable.
The people tracking her down right
now are getting more and more
upset by that fact. That does not
bode well for her when they
actually find her.

CLAIRE

This isn't something you can just
pull some strings and drag in your
search and rescue buddies.
Clearly!

PETER

Just because Marco was a snitch
doesn't mean there isn't anyone
else who would help. Whatever
happened to brotherhood? Having
each other's backs? I was the one
who pulled his ass out of Kherson,
and this is how he thanks me?

'Sorry, Menendez, but you can't be on mission for your own fucking daughter.'

PETER smashes the hammer into some wood for emphasis.

Goddamn. PJs.

CLAIRE

He had his own mission, Pete. He obviously knows something we don't. Something that would jeopardize our daughter if you keep digging. And you're right, he does owe you. He is probably trying to help by not making it worse for you or for Juniper. In his own way, he is trying to protect you and the rest of our family.

PETER stops hammering and sighs.

CLAIRE

There's something else. Have you been tracking our remaining children?

PETER

God, don't say it like that, Claire.

CLAIRE

Sorry, but...I noticed that they aren't on the map on my phone anymore.

PETER

What?

CLAIRE

They're responding just fine, sending voice notes. But...well, listen to this.

CLAIRE plays a voice note from LUPE.

AMERICAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

[faintly overlapping] This is flight 996, nonstop to Mexico

City. We will be boarding shortly,
please proceed to Gate 15.

LUPE

Hey mom. Yeah, I just dropped Dee
off at the airport. He should be
back later tonight. [yawns...not
very convincingly]

AMERICAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

[faintly overlapping] Will
Guadalupe Menendez please come to
the desk at gate 15 for a seat
change request? Guadalupe
Menendez, please come to the front
desk at gate 15. Thank you.

LUPE

I have an early meeting tomorrow,
so I'm heading to bed early. Love
you!

The voice note ends.

CLAIRE

You heard that, right?

PETER

Yeah. I did. They must have
figured out something about
Juniper's station out there.

CLAIRE

She was just an intern, though...oh.
Oh, you think that she had already
been recruited when she was in
Mexico?

PETER

She must have, if there's a trail
to find.

CLAIRE

What kind of trail?

PETER

One that might lead to Cuba.

CLAIRE

No. No, they can't be getting
involved in this. What the hell
are they thinking?! We need to

talk to their lawyers. And
Mark...Mark has to know what's going
on.

The hammer clatters to the ground.

PETER

No! No, if they are trying to
dig...if the government had them
flagged, they would have been
detained at the airport. I think...I
think they aren't being tracked
like we are. We can't act like we
know what they are doing, or else
we might raise suspicion on them,
too.

CLAIRE

Jesus...What the hell are our kids
up to?

PETER

I think they are trying to do what
we can't. They're picking up
breadcrumbs to find Juni. And for
whatever reason...they are being
allowed to do so.

CLAIRE sighs.

CLAIRE

Siri. Send a voice note to the
family chat.

SIRI

GO AHEAD.

CLAIRE

Okay, Lupe. Sleep well, good luck
on your meeting. Dee, have a safe
flight, let me know when you land.
I love you both.

SIRI

READY TO SEND?

CLAIRE

Yes.

SIRI

OKAY. SENT.

CLAIRE

[quietly] Be safe, my babies. I wish you more luck in finding your sister than we had.

CUT TO: AGENT CELIA'S VOICE NOTES

CLICK as the voice notes begin. AGENT CELIA is no longer inside the RCMP van.

CELIA

Personal case notes. Finally had a break. Haven't told Foreman yet, that I've abandoned my post. Temporarily. I mean, I'm only across the border. I can be back quickly enough, it's just that...I think the focus on the siblings was a distraction. The real question, the question that continues to plague this case, has gotten lost in this goose chase.

Why did Juniper Menendez disappear to Cuba?

It's all there in her heavily redacted station files, if you are willing to read between the lines. We don't know exactly what she was doing in Mexico, or Cambodia, or Cuba, or...here. In Seattle. But I'm going to try to find out.

It's obvious that whatever Juniper was working on, she did not abandon it at her first post in Mexico. She brought it with her. Or maybe she followed it? It is not clear, and I'm not really ready to ask with her former supervisor about it.

Personal note, but that guy gives me the creeps. I wouldn't be

surprised if he ends up being the reason she bailed.

But that's not the point, there's something Juniper was trailing. The common denominator in all of this, and it's across the border from the last place anyone we know saw her. A tech company. A *Chinese* tech company with offices in every one of Juniper's posts. I was able to confirm Juniper's presence at a public conference hosted by the U.S. embassy in Phnom Penh, that this company also attended last year. I was able to find a photo from the event. It was a side profile, but an analyst was able to confirm it was her.

What motivated me to take this little field trip, though, was much more interesting. The company, apparently, mysteriously dissolved all of its North American offices in a matter of months last year, including the one in Mexico City. It wasn't a mystery to some of the Chinese expats here, though. Gossip is universal, I suppose. And this time, the running rumor was that the closed offices were linked to a murder.

Two years ago, overlapping Juniper's stint at her cover's office here, a Russian oligarch disappeared. Petr Usmanov, a Russian citizen of Tajik origin, passed under the radar for a lot longer than most with similar rank. He had regular business dealings in Asia, particularly in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. Investments in Alibaba, Xiaomi,

mostly tech. A few think it was some kind of financially-fueled competition. He wasn't exactly beloved by the Kremlin, so no one has kicked up a fuss.

But to me? Not a coincidence.

I'm meeting my chamber of commerce contact tomorrow. I'm not entirely sure what I am hoping to find. I hope this thread is *something* I can tug on, that will help unravel this...this ridiculous convoluted thing.

It's one thing to follow a thread of disappearing messages and spy thriller nonsense and family drama.

It's another when the thread might be dipped in blood.

But I need to work this one knot at a time. Just like...undoing a row of crochet.

FADE IN:

- End with the 'cicada-like' Havana Syndrome sound clip

FADE OUT: Outro

Welcome back to HAVANA SYNDROME, everyone. I know it arrived a little late, but sometimes things get held up at the border, you know? We will be back next week with a regular weekly release schedule. You might want to get over to whoisjudycarpenter.com for some new surprises over the next few weeks.

I am going to take this time to spare a few words for those affected by the LA fires, which includes quite a few people personally in my audio drama and voice actor circles. If you have resources to spare, please consider supporting mutual aid, evacuation, and recovery efforts in whatever way makes sense to you.

Dimitri (Dee) Menendez: Ralph Ruiz
Guadalupe Menendez: Adriene Arce

Natalie Johnson: Natalie Campos
Claire Menendez: Emily Buza
Peter Menendez: Andrew Dos Santos
Mark Williams: Nic Folson
Special Agent Celia Whittiker: Whitney Johnson
Enraged Customer: Dane Peterson
American Flight Attendant: Lydia Winebrenner
Canadian Flight Attendant: Bonnie Bogovich
CATSA 1: Graham Rowat
CATSA 2: Keilien King
CATSA 3: Alex Darling

Havana Syndrome is written by Lisette Alvarez.
A Stormfire Productions podcast.