

SBR 3.3: Anything

Sam continues to search for the witches in Salem, with the help of the cats and... Scourge?

Content Warnings:

- Static
- Mentions of death
- Mentions of memory loss
- References to cannibalism
- Sounds of distress (heavy breathing, speaking quickly)
- High pitched sound effects
- Distorted wheezing
- Crying/sobbing

The Dies Irae is one of the oldest songs we have a record of, and we call it the sound of death. Welcome back to Spirit Box Radio.

[INTRO MUSIC]

Hello, Faithful Listeners! Thank you so much for your responsiveness over the last week with your messages about trying to find former Scarcemongers. It sounds like there's some really promising leads out there. I'd especially like to thank users HurdyGurdytheThirdy and Char the Wind Witch for all of their excellent work cross referencing everyone else's information. I cannot express how helpful that has been folks, so thank you!

It's been a bit lonely here in the flat these past few days. Anna still isn't talking to me, Kitty hasn't stopped by, and Oliver's gone away to a Florist's convention or something. I'd have thought he was making it up if he wasn't so excited. It's nice to see him enthusiastic about things again. It's been hard on him, you know? He's just. He's trying his best. We both are. But adapting to things is hard, and when the thing you're adapting to is 'oh dear my boyfriend is Death incarnate and he has a lien on my soul' I imagine that's a particularly rough one.

I say 'I imagine' like he doesn't tell me about it all the time. I think he's overcompensating for not being able to talk about things before, when his deal was still tied to the Man in the Flat Cap. It's kind of sweet, really. He seems to relish it, going into all this detail about his feelings. It's. It's really nice.

I'm going to make myself more miserable if I keep on about him though. It's so much easier to gush when he's not in the house. He's asked me to lift my ban on him listening in to the show but. Absolutely not. I like occasionally gushing about him here and knowing he's listening would make it. Well, maybe not less fun but it'd be different, you know?

Anyway.

Obviously there's been quite a lot of talk on the forums about last week. I want to assure you that I'm fine. I did sleep for about thirty hours after I shut down the broadcast but, you know. Otherwise. Totally fine. Unharmd. Etcetera. So yeah, you don't need to worry about any of that, folks, because it's all totally fine. Absolutely fine.

RECORDING MACHINE: Yeah--

[SAM YELPS IN SURPRISE]

RECORDING MACHINE: The more times you say you're fine, the more we all believe you.

SAM: Recording Machine! I didn't even know you were on!

RECORDING MACHINE: You forgot to unplug me after these week's tea and dusting appointment. And just for the record, I'm always listening, I just can't always complain about it.

SAM: Uh. Right.

RECORDING MACHINE: It's a hard life.

SAM: Yeah. I get that.

RECORDING MACHINE: Do you?

SAM: Um. Maybe not exactly. But even if I can't empathise, I can sympathise.

RECORDING MACHINE: That's true, I suppose.

SAM: Yeah. Uhhhh, well. As you've been listening. What did you make of it?

RECORDING MACHINE: Make of what, exactly?

SAM: You know. The uh. The disturbance. From last week. About the um. Yeah. The like. When I looked into the shard of the Crystal Ball.

RECORDING MACHINE: It was sort of like those times you looked into the Crystal Ball when it was whole, but maybe slightly less annoying.

SAM: Gee, thanks. So you don't think any of it was weird then?

RECORDING MACHINE: All of it was weird, Sam.

SAM: Right. Uh. Thanks.

RECORDING MACHINE: Please, turn me off at the wall before I say something I regret.

SAM: Like what?

RECORDING MACHINE: Like 'it's going to be okay' or something.

SAM: Thanks, Recording Machine.

RECORDING MACHINE: I'm serious, switch me off, I'm not going to be the receptacle of arcane messages or accidentally get soppy live on air if I can help it.

SAM: Yes, both of those things are equally bad and normal to draw equivalents from.

RECORDING MACHINE: I'm so glad you understand.

SAM: Goodnight, Recording Machine.

RECORDING MACHINE: Goodnight, loser.

SAM: Ah, there she is.

[SAM FLICKS A SWITCH]

It was like when I spoke with the Crystal Ball when it was whole, wasn't it, but it was... different. Forums User Victor Wilde went through the trouble of transcribing everything I said when I was looking into the shard, which was really helpful. The thing that keeps catching me out is that I said that the Crystal Ball doesn't show the past, it shows consequences. Which is an interesting thing to say because Crystal Balls are usually for divining the future or clarifying the present, and not about showing the past at all. Except that Crystal Ball, it only saw the past.

When I looked into it, it felt like... I don't know. It was like being inside her head, but as a passenger, silent and powerless, only. By the end of it it was like I could feel us both, all at once. I am pretty sure she could feel me too.

It was like when I met with Madame Marie before I went to see the Man in the Flat Cap. It was walking through a memory, but it wasn't a memory at all, it was like I was really there. It happened in the house on Banemouth Road, too, the Impossible House, when I saw Scourge

with Madame Marie and me when I was a baby. It was like it was all really happening, right there, unfolding in front of me, but I could reach out and touch it, but I couldn't change *anything*.

Everything I said, when I spoke to M, I just. I was saying it of my own free will but at the same time, it was like there was nothing else I possibly could have said. Nothing else I could have done. Nothing to prevent what was about to happen. Of course there wasn't, because it had all already happened, and even though I was there, seeing it, it was like I'd *always* been there.

When I saw Scourge, he could speak to me. And the only other person I could reach though and speak to as the memories played out... was me, like I was there as much in the present as I was in the past. M could hear what little me was saying, just as clearly as I could. We were... in both places at once. Like we were everywhere and nowhere.

Until I got angry and I made everything stop, made a bubble of arcane space in the moment. M could speak to me then. What I wanted. What I was trying to do. I wanted to stop her from doing everything but all I could do was literally freeze everything in place, like... it was suspended. Hanging by an arcane thread. Like the Major Arcana. Like what I did with Kitty. I wanted to fix her, to bring her back from the dead, but all I could do was tie her in place, tie her to *me*.

When I'm in the arcane, right, when I look at it... I can see in both directions. I can see the now, the weave of it, the knots, the connections. But I can see where each thread goes to, and, if I follow it long enough, I can get sense of where it's going. That's less clear. In the past, I can see like. All the possibilities. The almos. They're like ghosts around the thread itself. What happened, that's definite, but the almos, they're... I don't know, they're less distinct. Actually, ghosts. Their arcane threads all look like that, once they die. Like all they have left are almos.

In the future, it's harder to tell which threads are the almos. Everything glows more brightly over there. Some are brighter than others, but. Yeah. It's easier in the past to see the almos from the actual.

The past is immutable, but the future? That you can change.

REVEL: Mrrp.

SAM: Yeah. Yeah. I know this is the third time this week I've gone off on one like this, darling, but at least it's not just you who's listening this time.

COSMO & EGGROLL: Meow.

SAM: Okay! Jeez. Sorry. I meant you all collectively! I know you're all paying attention, you know I do. I just. I wonder. Because I could see those memories, you know. Maybe I can get them back, not just as a witness to them but as, you know, things I remember.

REVEL: Mrrrr.

SAM: So what? Of course some of it will be difficult. But. It's mine. Isn't it? Don't I. Is it so wrong to want that back? To want *myself* back?

REVEL: Mrah.

SAM: No. You're wrong, this has nothing to do with the crown, nothing at all. Mind your business.

REVEL: Mrrp.

SAM: Sorry for snapping. Ehem.

Right. There's not been much movement about the people in Salem, yet. I'm sure we'll land on something soon. It's like with Arlo and the Scarcemongers; there are so many people in the forums now that someone's bound to spring on a connection eventually, aren't they? So we'll see.

It's funny, don't you think? Second bunch of renegade Arcanists I'm tracking down in as many years. Arcanism is supposed to be about secrecy, right? Preventing the sharing of information, stamping out community, forcing people to function alone. But all over the place, these little pockets of community spring up like natural wells. It's like you can't stop it. Coincidence is a powerful feature of the arcane, so maybe it's just that, a confluence of coincidences bringing people together.

But it's more than that, isn't it? Because community. That seems to be a powerful feature of arcanism too. Despite all the secrecy, despite everyone trying to work alone, it's like, they can't resist it. And it's got me wondering, you know. Why secrecy? Why individualism?

When most people who aren't into arcanism or the occult hear about the arcane or witchcraft or anything like that, most of the time, they're going to be thinking about Spiritualism. That's its own whole thing. It was dead popular in the last century. It comes with its own whole set of scandals and bad actors, most notably frauds.

That's what people accused M of, isn't it? Other arcanists, they said she was a fake. It was because she had no power and then all of a sudden she had *all* of the power, but like. That happened because she made a deal with the Man in the Flat Cap, the One Who Walks Here and There. There are stories about *him* everywhere, this strange figure at the edge of all sorts of weird rumours and tales, a witch who can make your true love fall for you, for a price, who can make your terminally ill children well again. There are even more stories of these roses found at sites of recent, uncanny death, which dissolve into nothing the moment they're touched, and some of them the moment they're seen.

It's the roses that really did it for me, honestly. If the goal is secrecy like most arcanists aim for, why leave the roses at all, even if they do disappear? Why show yourself at all, even in a strange, cryptic way? It's like they're waiting, waiting to confirm something, a tantalising piece of knowledge; there's something wrong here, though it doesn't tell you what.

It's not about secrecy at all, is it?

'Seek without searching'. Look with out looking. It's... the concept that if you just *let go*, the answers will come to you. It's a surrender, a giving up, giving in. It's about *faith*.

SCOURGE: Interesting proposition.

SAM: *Gods*, don't you ever just. Arrive in a normal way. At least the Major Arcana have all that static.

SCOURGE: Did I scare you, Little Bit?

SAM: You made me jump, that's all.

SCOURGE: If it's about faith, and the rumours are scattered across all of Arcanism as we know it, what does that make the arcanists who follow that doctrine?

SAM: It's not a doctrine, is it, because there's not enough communication between different practitioners to make something so cohesive as that.

SCOURGE: The start of all religion is scattered and disparate.

SAM: It's not a religion.

SCOURGE: You yourself have mentioned before that the way arcanists treat the unknown borders on worshipful, and what is the One Who Walks Here and There but unknowability, personified?

SAM: Now *that's* a leap.

SCOURGE: Is it? Nobody else can even agree on what he looks like.

SAM: But / always see him the same.

SCOURGE: Because you're his son, Heir Apparent.

SAM: So you see him the same every time, too?

SCOURGE: He's not my father. He's my *maker*.

SAM: Last time you were here all you did was bang on about how we're the same.

SCOURGE: As you pointed out, there are some crucial distinctions. I'm all soul. Your form is so corporeal that it breathes and bleeds.

SAM: At least I have eyes not awful gaping holes in my face.

[SCOURGE LAUGHS]

SCOURGE: Ah yes. Funny isn't it? Eyes are the window to the soul, they say, but I'm all window.

SAM: Ha. Right. Because you're so transparent and clear, it's so *easy* to work out what you're on about.

SCOURGE: Not all windows are for looking through.

SAM: What does that even-- you know what. Sure. Whatever.

SCOURGE: They're for letting in the light.

SAM: Yeah, you're a real ray of sunshine.

SCOURGE: Contradiction and coincidence are---

SAM: Strong features of arcanism, I know.

SCOURGE: Funny, isn't it, how you, the one who is destined to unseat the One Who Walks Here and There, happens to host the most successful contradiction of arcanism of all; a radio show designed to gather knowledge and build community.

SAM: It's hilarious.

SCOURGE: You know what you are, Sam. You already know what you're going to do.

SAM: Yes, I do. *Not* end the world.

SCOURGE: Whatever you say, Little Bit.

SAM: Why do you call me that?

SCOURGE: 'Little Bit'?

SAM: Yeah.

SCOURGE: Because it's what you are. A tiny portion of something much larger. The show, the forums, the house on Banemouth Road. It's all you, Little Bit, but you're not all of it. You're just the piece that speaks the loudest.

SAM: I do speak. And *you* will fucking *hear me*.

SCOURGE: Ah, are we finished already?

SAM: **Get out.**

SCOURGE: Parting never felt so sweet.

[WEIRD DISTORTION SOUNDS]

SAM: Oh my god. I know what to do. The witches in Salem. We don't need to find them mundanely. We can find them in the arcane! We just need to follow the threads. I can't do it alone, though, I need you to focus with me. Right? Okay? Okay.

[RUMMAGING SOUNDS]

Candles. And my chalk, here.

[CHALK SOUNDS]

It's not perfect but it'll do, and. Ugh. I need to speed this up.

[THE FLICK OF A LIGHTER, A SWOOSH OF FLAME]

Alright, focus now.

[MAGIC HUM RISES, EQUALISES]

Kitty. I can find Kitty. The Investigator.

[THE ARCANE SHIMMERS]

There. Okay. I feel her. I feel where she's been.

[ARCANE SHIMMERS]

Salem, yeah. Wow, there really is a lot of arcane practise there. And-- oh.

[DISTORTED ARCANE SHIMMERING]

That feels like bad intent. I'll follow that thread.

Yeah. Yeah it's them. I've found them and---

[DISTORTED ARCANE SHIMMERING]

[SAM RETCHES]

What-- no--

[DISTORTED ARCANE SHIMMERING]

[SAM RETCHES AGAIN]

No, no, no. They're trying to make an artefact of the Arcane.

[DISTORTED ARCANE SHIMMERING]

I have to stop them, I have to stop them!

[DISTORTED ARCANE SHIMMERING]

SAM: They aren't just balls of power, they're *alive*, you have to *stop*! **STOP!**

[A PAUSE IN THE ARCANE SHIMMERING. THEN, WHEEZING BREATH.]

SAM: [EMOTIONAL] Hey, it's alright.

[THE WHEEZING BREATHS CONTINUE]

SAM: Shush, it's going to be okay. I'm so sorry this has happened. I'm sorry. You're just a baby, really.

[THE WHEEZING BREATHS CONTINUE]

SAM: They had no rights bringing you into the world like this, not when they didn't understand what you are.

[THE WHEEZING BREATHS CONTINUE]

SAM: Hey, shush. Look at this.

[MAGIC HUMS; THE THREADS OF THE ARCANE SHIMMER]

SAM: That's the arcane. You're a part of it, see, like me. There you go. You understand?

[THE WHEEZING BREATHS CONTINUE]

SAM: I--- those witches, do you see them? See the threads that connect you to them. You're... you're a happenstance. A twist in the arcane. I'm sorry they did this to you.

[THE WHEEZING BREATHS CONTINUE]

SAM: I'm sorry, it's going to be okay, see? I'm going to let you go. I can do that. It'll all be over soon. You can go now. Just. Let go.

[THE WHEEZING BREATHS STOP]

[A BEAT OF SILENCE]

[SAM SNIFFLES AND BEGINS TO CRY AS THE ARCANE SHIMMERS FADE INTO NOTHING]

SAM: Goodbye.

[SAM CRIES]

SAM: Those. Those BASTARDS.

[SAM'S MAGIC HUMS LOUDER]

SAM: I can't feel them anymore. The threads. Their threads. I was holding them, they were doing some kind of séance, and then. They made an artefact of the arcane. And now they're just GONE. If by some miracle any of them have lived through this proFOUND ACT OF STUPIDITY. I am going to find them and make them look into this PIT that they have made.

It was alive. It was alive and it could feel, and it only knew suffering and it was their fault and for what? For WHAT?

I hope they're all DEAD.

REVEL: Mrrew?

SAM: I hope they're all *dead*.

REVEL: Mrrrrp.

[SAM SOBS]

SAM: I'm so angry, I'm still so angry.

REVEL: Mrrp.

SAM: I wish Oliver would come home.

REVEL: Mrrrrrowr.

SAM: No. No I know, I know I could just summon him, but it's the first time he's been away since... you know, I just want him to know he can have space if he needs it, it doesn't have to just-- be-- I don't want him at my beck and call, okay?!

REVEL: Mrrr.

SAM: Yes, I do still have you here darling.

[REVEL STARTS TO PURR]

SAM: Okay, yeah. I will make a hot water bottle then we'll curl up in bed, how's that sound?

[REVEL PURRS]

SAM: No I am not going to read you Descartes. Okay faithful listeners. Please just. I don't know. I'm sorry, I...

Sorry.

Goodnight.

[END]