

SCENE 1 - AMBER'S HOUSE / NON SPEC LOCATION

AMBER / NAN

SOUND: A PHONE RINGING...AND RINGING, ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE, AND BEEP.

1. AMBER:

Hi Nan, it's Amber. Hope you're enjoying your weekend away. So we just got this box delivered to us...well it's not actually addressed to us, it's addressed to Grandad, which is a bit weird. It's got tape on it, apparently from 1975 saying 'do not open' until today's date!

Do you have any idea what it is? Oh, hold on, and it's got a logo on the top of it of an octopus which says 'Project Blackfish' around it. Shall I open it? If it's something important I'm sure Grandad would've wanted us to have it. Anyway, just wanted to see what you think. I wasn't sure whether to open it or not, so yeah. Speak to you soon...

SOUND: BEEP. THEN ANOTHER PHONE RINGING.

2. NAN:

Amber? Hello? Oh, bloody voicemail...OK, I got your message about the box. Listen, I know it probably looks interesting because it's to do with your grandfather but just leave it love, I will deal with it when I get back, and I'll explain everything to you then. Alright? I love you, I'll be back later this evening. Honey, please, whatever you do, do *not* open that box.

SOUND: PHONE BEEP.

3. AMBER NARRATOR:

If only I'd got that voicemail in time...OK, I'll get straight to the point. There is a lie that has been hidden inside Manchester for decades. What I've found, I worry, is only scratching the surface on what could possibly be one of the biggest cover-ups in British history. What started off as a box of old documents has turned into a twisted web of lies and deceit.

If you were to ask me if I could go back in time and choose whether to open that box or not...I'm not sure what my answer would be...but here we are.

From underground bunkers to corporate corruption, this is the story they've tried to hide from you. This is the story of Project Blackfish.

- TONE BREAK -

4. AMBER NARRATOR:

My name is Amber. I live with my Nan in Manchester and I'm currently studying at the Uni here. I, er, don't really know what else to say about me really. I've never done a podcast before but anyway, so, what I want to talk about is this box that got delivered to our house. Straight away it got my attention because it was addressed to my Grandad, my Grandad who died almost 11 years ago. All the print on the box said it was from the 'University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology' otherwise known as UMIST. A University that doesn't exist anymore.

5. AMBER NARRATOR(CONT):

As you just heard; there was an unbroken seal around it, date stamped from 1972, and on the top there was a logo of an octopus with 'Project Blackfish' written around it.

I mean what would you do? A mysterious box wrapped in a date stamped seal arrives addressed to your dead grandfather. I *had* to open it.

So I did. It was full of old research papers, some of them barely legible, dating back to the 50s and 60s. If I'm being honest I was close to thinking it was all a mistake, but then I saw it. *My Grandad's name, and signature*. On pretty much all of the documents. But who had sent it? And did they even know my Grandad wasn't alive anymore?

The box was full of endless files and folders. At first glance it looked like a load of my Grandad's research which involved a series of medical trials. My Grandad was a scientist when he was younger so it made sense, but I never knew about any of this. I'm studying Physics at Uni so I found it fascinating. And loads of the documents had that slightly menacing looking octopus logo on them. I don't really know how an octopus even looks menacing, but it did. I wasn't quite sure what it all meant but it felt important. If this was just a bunch of files from some medical trials, then why was the box date sealed for 50 years?

I looked into a few things, I googled my granddad's name and the word blackfish, but nothing came up that seemed connected to the box I had in front of me. There was one thing that jumped out at me though. It was a headshot of a woman, one of the patients, I guess. She was called Martha Cayenne. And out of all the different files I had, hers was the only one I could find with a matching picture. Her file was dated for a year between 1962 and 63. I wondered; was she still alive? And if so, maybe she could tell me what this was all about.

I may have been getting a little ahead of myself, but I started trying to find Martha Cayenne. The only info I had on her was her name, date of birth, and an address in Macclesfield. So, like all the best stalkers of our generation I resorted to Facebook to do the hard work for me. And I got a hit. The only hit. It wasn't Martha, but a man named David. He had the same second name and it said he was from Macclesfield. I suppose Cayenne is a slightly uncommon surname - I was just hoping it wasn't a coincidence.

So, I got in touch with him. I had no idea what I was doing, and I knew I was clutching at straws, but I was just trying anything. I reached out to him and told him that I was doing a research project for my Uni course on family trees and I had some information about the Cayennes. And before I'd had chance to look into anything else, he'd already replied. I asked him if he was related to Martha Cayenne and he said yes, she was his grandmother! I couldn't believe it! I could possibly find an answer. I asked if I would be able to meet them both and he agreed to let me come to his house to 'interview' them. I didn't really know how much to ask over Messenger so I thought it would be better to meet up in person.

I'm still not sure why he let me, after all, my disguise was terrible and I've never been a very good liar, but, well he did. I know it all sounds a bit dodgy, meeting up with a random man on the internet. I've never really used dating sites or anything and my Nan has always told me off for being too impulsive.

She says I don't think things through properly, but I had to know more! He seemed pretty normal from his Facebook profile but, don't they all...oh god, Nan's going to kill me.

*CUT TO: SCENE 2
INT/EXT DAVID'S HOUSE*

SCENE 2 - INT/EXT DAVID'S HOUSE

AMBER / DAVID

SOUND: KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND OPENING.

1. AMBER:

Hi it's Amber from the Uni of Manchester, we spoke on Facebook?

2. DAVID:

Oh hi, er yeah, come in.

SOUND: AMBIENT NOISE OF THEM WALKING INTO THE LIVING ROOM AND CLOSING FRONT DOOR.

3. DAVID:

Drink?

4. AMBER:

Sorry?

5. DAVID:

Erm, would you like a drink? Tea...coffee?

6. AMBER:

A brew would be lovely.

7. DAVID:

Erm, OK, sure.

SOUND: DAVID GOING INTO THE KITCHEN AND BOILING THE KETTLE.

8. AMBER:

Hey, do you mind if I record all of this? For my coursework.

9. DAVID:

(SHOUTING FROM KITCHEN)

OK, ye-yeah.

10. AMBER NARRATOR:

He seemed nice...in a sort of nervous, geeky kind of way.

SOUND: KETTLE BOILING, DRINKS GOING DOWN ON THE TABLE.

11. DAVID:

Why are you recording on such an old dictaphone?

12. AMBER:

Oh, it was my Grandads. It was how he used to record all his notes. Plus, it's totally indestructible, and I break my phone all the time, I'm a bit of a klutz really.

13. DAVID:

Right...

14. AMBER:

Anyway, I just wanted to know a little more about your Grandma.

15. DAVID:

To be honest, I wanted to ask you the same thing.

16. AMBER:

Why do you say that?

17. DAVID:

I never knew my Grandma, she died before I was born.

18. AMBER:

Oh, right. Why didn't you tell me that before? I mean, no offence but it's kind of her I wanted to speak to.

19. DAVID:

It sounded like you knew something about her, so I was hoping you could tell me more.

SOUND: AMBER COUGHS AND SPITS OUT HER TEA.

20. AMBER:

Oh god.

21. DAVID:

Are...are you OK?

22. AMBER:

Sorry, I think your milk is off.

23. DAVID:

Oh, sorry, I don't drink much tea or coffee.

24. AMBER:

Why did you offer me one then?

25. DAVID:

Isn't that what people do?

26. AMBER:

Erm, well yeah.

27. DAVID:

I can get you some water? Or I've got energy drinks.

28. AMBER:

I'm OK, don't worry about it.

(BEAT AS SHE COMPOSES HERSELF)

SOUND: PHONE VIBRATING.

29. AMBER:

Oh hold on.

SOUND: AMBER GETTING HER PHONE OUT.

30. AMBER:

Oh, it's just my Nan. I'll call her back in a bit.

SOUND: AMBER PUTTING PHONE AWAY.

31. AMBER:

So, I came here to find out more about *your* nan, Martha. Do you know anything about her?

32. DAVID:

Not really. I have a few family pictures of her, but Grandma is sort of the mystery of my family that no-one ever talks about.

33. AMBER:

What?

34. DAVID:

She disappeared....in 1962...er sorry, I never really...(talk about this stuff)

35. AMBER:

Hey, it's OK. I understand. Don't worry if it's hard to talk about. I'm sorry.

36. DAVID:

Well what I'm trying to say is; my family never talked about it, but it felt like it was something that was constantly hanging over them. So I've always wondered; What happened to her? Where did she go? I think everyone presumed she'd run off with another man.

37. AMBER:

And you don't believe that?

38. DAVID:

No, I don't think so, no.

39. AMBER:

Why?

SOUND: DAVID GETS UP AND WALKS TO A SIDEBOARD, OPENS A DRAWER AND GRABS SOMETHING.

40. DAVID:

Because of this.

SOUND: DAVID PRESENTS A LETTER.

41. DAVID:

When my Grandad died we cleaned out his flat. In his belongings we found this letter addressed to my Grandma and I kept it.

SOUND: DAVID HANDS AMBER A LETTER.

42. DAVID:

Be careful with it, it's very old.

43. AMBER:

A letter?...

(NOTICES PRO BLACKFISK LOGO)

Oh my god.

44. AMBER NARRATOR:

And there it was!

45. DAVID:

What?

SOUND: AMBER ZIPS OPEN HER BAG AND FUMBLES WITH SOME FILES.

46. AMBER:

Look at the logo in the corner.

47. AMBER NARRATOR:

The octopus. The menacing looking octopus. That same design was on David's Grandma's letter. A letter which was inviting her to take part in a new medical trial. It all fit.

SOUND: SHE PULLS OUT THE FILES SHE HAS ON DAVID'S GRANDMA AND GIVES THEM TO HIM.

48. DAVID:

What is all this?

49. AMBER:

Before this turns out to be a bizarre coincidence, I'm just checking, is the lady in this picture your Grandma?

SOUND: *HANDING OVER THE RESEARCH FILE PICTURE OF MARTHA CAYENNE.*

50. DAVID:

Erm yes, I think so. It looks just like the pictures I have of her.

51. AMBER:

OK, now look at the logo on these medical records I have.

52. DAVID:

Oh wow, Project Blackfish.

53. AMBER:

So you know about it?

54. DAVID:

I have literally scoured the internet for years looking for information about this company. Well not literally I mean figuratively, but there is nothing. It's almost as if the whole thing didn't exist, and there's no one else talking about it anywhere. Where did you get all this?

55. AMBER:

Bit of a weird one, it all got delivered to my house, but your Grandma's picture is what led me to you.

56. DAVID:

Hold on, you're doing this for a University project?

57. AMBER:

Erm... well... I kinda lied about that, sorry. I didn't want you to think I was a random, crazy person.

58. DAVID:

I'm not sure you can use 'crazy' in that context anymore. Why would you lie?

59. AMBER:

I don't know....I guess I was maybe a little wary of talking about Project Blackfish in case I was barking up the wrong tree. I don't know for sure, but from what I've found so far it looks like these are records from some medical trials that were running in the 60s.

60. DAVID:

The same medical trial from my Grandma's-

61. AMBER:

Letter. Yeah, I think so. And somehow I think my Grandad was involved too. He was a scientist when he was younger, so it makes sense he was possibly running the trials for something.

62. DAVID:

Right...

63. AMBER:

He was a pretty amazing guy, my Grandad. I know that sounds obviously biased, but he was. He accomplished loads. You ever heard of the linear particle accelerator? He pretty much invented it!

64. DAVID:

Oh wow...that is pretty cool.

65. AMBER:

Yeah, he was great! Even though he was super busy, he'd always sit down with me every Saturday and spend hours doing puzzle books and stuff when I was a kid, we loved them.

(LAUGHS TO HERSELF THEN AN AWKWARD BEAT AS AMBER REALISES DAVID'S INTERACTION WITH HIS GRANDPARENTS WASN'T AS ROSY)

66. AMBER:

Err, so, yeah, if you look at the files you can see his signature on most of the footers. His name was Harold Sykes.

SOUND: AMBER PASSING SOME PAGES TO DAVID.

67. DAVID:

And who's is the other signature?

68. AMBER:

What?

69. DAVID:

The signature above your..above Harold's.

70. AMBER:

Oh I'm not sure. Let me see...

SOUND: DAVID HANDS THE FILE TO AMBER.

71. AMBER:

Hmm, I don't know. I can't even read what that says!

72. DAVID:

Did he ever speak about any of this to you?

73. AMBER:

No, then again I was only 9 when he died.

74. DAVID:

All this time I thought I'd made up Project Blackfish, like I'd just fabricated it in my head. I suppose it's one of the reasons I kept the letter, just to remind myself. And now, look at all the information here.

75. AMBER:

You definitely haven't made it up. And there's a full box of it at my house.

76. DAVID:

Really? What else is there?

77. AMBER:

I haven't had chance to look through it all properly yet, but there was some really cool stuff. I mean, I find it cool because-

78. DAVID:

No, I get it. It is really cool! Especially since there is no other information about it, like it's been kept secret all this time.

79. AMBER:

Well, yeah that's what I'm thinking, and I don't really understand why.

80. DAVID:

Hmm...

81. AMBER:

Hey, this might sound random but, I don't suppose you'd want to help look through everything with me...would you? The whole box, I mean. We could go to a coffee shop or something and just take a look at it all. Hopefully there'll be more stuff about your Grandma.

82. DAVID:

Erm, well-

83. AMBER:

You can say no by the way. I don't want to force you into it.

84. DAVID:

No I er.....ye..yes. That would be good.

85. AMBER:

Aw, OK brilliant. You mind if I use your loo?

86. DAVID:

Sure. It's upstairs, first door on the left..

SOUND: AMBER PULLING THE FOLDER OUT OF HER BAG AND PUTTING IT ON THE TABLE.

87. AMBER:

Thanks. Feel free to look through more of the files. I'm not sure if there is anything more on your Grandma but, well, two pairs of eyes are better than one right?

SOUND: AMBER LEAVING.

88. AMBER NARRATOR:

I know it seemed a bit impulsive; me just asking him if he wanted to help, but why not? Like he said, he'd been looking into it for years already, so he was definitely invested, even more so than me it seemed. Maybe the only other person in the world who may know about Project Blackfish and I was in his house. It seemed silly not to work together. I got a picture of David's Grandma's letter which I'll be posting alongside the podcast online. I made a website, which is projectblackfish.com, and to follow our socials it's @Blackfishpod.

SOUND: DAVID SYPHONING THROUGH PAGES.

89. DAVID:

(TO HIMSELF)

Wow, I can't believe it...this is...what's this?...Patient history...hold on.

90. AMBER NARRATOR:

I'd forgotten I'd just left the recording running during this. This is the sound of David finding something which I was really not prepared for.

SOUND: AMBER COMING BACK IN.

91. AMBER:

Found any of it useful?

92. DAVID:

Why didn't you tell me?

93. AMBER:

What?

94. DAVID:

That your Grandad murdered my Grandma!

95. AMBER:

Wha...hold on, what are you-

SOUND: DAVID PASSES A FILE TO AMBER.

96. DAVID:

Look at that, that is a list of patient history from these...

(WITH DISGUST)

Experiments.

97. AMBER:

OK, and?

98. DAVID:

Patient 8: What does it say?

99. AMBER:

(READING)

Deceased, stage 4 trials...

100. DAVID:

And guess which patient number my Grandma was?

101. AMBER:

Oh my god David, I'm so sorry.

102. DAVID:

And look whose signature is at the bottom of the page! Of every page!

103. AMBER NARRATOR:

My Grandad's.

104. AMBER:

I know this looks messed up, but my Grandad would never do something like that.

105. DAVID:

How can you say that!? It looks like he pretty much signed her death certificate! And you said yourself you barely knew him!

106. AMBER:

That's not true. I did know him, he was a good man, my family adored him.

107. DAVID:

A good man? He didn't even have the decency to tell my family what'd happened! My Grandfather never got over it.

(DAVID CATCHES HIMSELF. BEAT)

108. DAVID:

I think you should leave.

109. AMBER:

OK. I swear I didn't know about any of this.

110. DAVID:

I really don't care.

111. AMBER:

I only got the box of files two days ago!

112. DAVID:

It doesn't make a- (difference)

113. AMBER:

I'm sure if we had a proper look there'd be an (explanation)

114. DAVID:

Just GO!

115. AMBER:

OK. OK, you've got my number in case you want to get back in touch...

SOUND: AMBER GATHERING UP ALL THE FILES, ZIPPING UP HER BAG AND LEAVING.

116. AMBER:

Bye.

SOUND: DOOR SLAMS.

CUT TO: SCENE 3
INT AMBER'S HOUSE

SCENE 3 - INT AMBER'S HOUSE

AMBER / DAVID / NAN / SUIT

1. AMBER NARRATOR:

I couldn't believe it. My Grandad, a murderer? No way! I'm not sure what had happened to David's family, but it sounds like he was putting 2 and 2 together and getting -12. I get that he was upset about his Grandma, but to blame me! Maybe opening that box was a mistake. I didn't want my Grandad being branded a killer, but then again, if it was meant to stay a secret, who sent the box in the first place? I got on the bus and headed home, trying to calm myself down. And that's when I heard my Nan's voicemail:

2. NAN:

Honey, please, whatever you do, do *not* open that box.

3. AMBER NARRATOR:

Why was she so adamant that I didn't find out what was inside? I knew she'd be home by now and had probably seen that I had already opened it. I really wasn't in the mood for another argument. I thought I'd just leave it till I saw her in person to explain. But, as I got to my house, I had a whole different problem ahead of me.

SOUND: AMBER FUMBLING WITH SOUND RECORDER.

4. AMBER:

Oh my god...OK, someone's kicked in my front door. I don't really know why I'm recording this, but I don't know what to do. I'm scared. Something's not right...I have to check and see if my Nan's OK.

SOUND: AMBER PUSHING THE DOOR OPEN.

5. AMBER:

(HUSHED)

Nan? Nan? Oh shit, everything's completely trashed. Nan!

6. AMBER:

Nan! Are you OK? Hello! Can you hear me?

7. AMBER NARRATOR:

She was out cold, but she was breathing. I couldn't tell if she'd fallen or if someone had attacked her.

8. AMBER:

Hello! Nan! Please wake up.

SOUND: A LARGE BANG AND SOME FLOORBOARDS CRACKING FROM UPSTAIRS.

9. AMBER:

(WHISPERING TO HERSELF)

What was that?

SOUND: AMBER PANTING, TRYING TO KEEP SILENT, THEN SUDDENLY- HER PHONE STARTS VIBRATES IN HER POCKET.

10. AMBER:

Shit, shit!

SOUND: AMBER SCRAMBLING, TAKING THE PHONE OUT OF HER POCKET.

11. AMBER:

(ANSWERING PHONE, SV)

He-hello?

12. DAVID(V.O.):

Amber? Hi, it's David, you know from earlier? Listen I...I just wanted to...

SOUND: AMBER'S FRIGHTENED BREATHING.

13. DAVID(V.O.):

Are you...are you OK?

14. AMBER:

No, someone's broken into my house! They're upstairs!

SOUND: DIFFERENT FLOORBOARDS CREAKING FROM UPSTAIRS.

15. DAVID(V.O.):

Oh..er wow...

16. AMBER:

They've hurt my Nan!

17. DAVID(V.O.):

Er...do you want me to call the police?

18. AMBER:

Can you just stay on the phone to me please?

19. DAVID(V.O.):

Yes, of course.

SOUND: LOUD FOOTSTEPS COMING DOWN THE STAIRS.

20. AMBER:

Oh god!

21. DAVID(V.O.):

What?

22. AMBER:

They're coming down the stairs!

SOUND: *THE SLOW FOOTSTEPS OF TWO PEOPLE WALKING DOWN THE STAIRS AND THEN A BANG IN ANOTHER PART OF THE ROOM AND A DOOR CLOSING, THE INTRUDERS ARE NOW IN THE SAME ROOM. A MOMENT OF SILENCE, AMBER TRYING TO HOLD HER BREATH, UNTIL-*

23. SUIT:

We know you're there.

SOUND: *AMBER GETTING UP TO SEE THEM.*

24. AMBER:

Who are you? Get out of my house!

25. AMBER NARRATOR:

I stood up. It was two men, in suits. I was expecting the usual scallies you see at the precinct, not these guys! And in one of their hands, was Grandad's box.

26. AMBER:

Wha...What are you doing with that? That's mine.

27. SUIT:

This box doesn't belong to you, and it never did.

SOUND: *THE MEN START TO LEAVE.*

28. AMBER:

Hey, I've called the police, you're not going to get away with this-

SOUND: *A STRUGGLE, THINGS CRASHING TO THE FLOOR.*

29. AMBER:

Hey, let go of me!

SOUND: *A SCREAM FROM AMBER AND THEN THE RECORDER GOES DEAD.*

END OF EPISODE