

SBR 3.7: Eloquence

Sam confronts two things which have been causing him a lot of internal conflict. The resolutions they find may not be the ones they wanted.

Content Warnings:

- Grief and references to past trauma
- Distorted sound effects
- Stereo audio (audio which sounds different in each headphone)
- Thunder
- Mentions of violence
- Brief, non-detailed mention of dismemberment
- Threats of violence
- Implied nausea

TRANSCRIPT

Speak ill of the dead. Dying does not make you exempt from criticism. Welcome back to Spirit Box Radio.

[INTRO MUSIC]

Well, faithful listeners. We're on a little excursion tonight. I hope that's alright. Not that you have much choice in this, or any really. You listen, I speak and will be heard, that's how it goes.

[WAVES CRASH]

There's something incredible about the sea at night, don't you think?

[WAVES CRASH]

I'd like to spend some proper time at the beach in the day, sometime, I think. I'd like that. Maybe go somewhere warm. Kitty and Indi were in Tahiti, last time I heard. It's beautiful there, from the pictures she's shown me, though Indi sounds a bit miffed about the drizzle.

Oliver pointed out we could just go and visit them, but I'm trying not to overstep any boundaries. I do that a lot, I think, even though I try my best not to. I just. Yeah.

We could go anywhere we want, any time we want. Sometimes we'll do something wacky like go for lunch in Italy or for drinks in Argentina, but last time we tried that the restaurant Oliver wanted to go to turned out to have been shut for twenty five years. Honestly? Mostly we just stay home. Oliver goes to work, I read. Sometimes I go for walks.

I wonder sometimes about like. Maybe getting a real job or something? But. I never went to school, and even if I did I wouldn't remember most of it. I have no qualifications. I don't even know like. Maths. Which.

Ugh.

You'd think if Madame Marie was so bothered about me not getting into Arcanism she'd have set it up so I'd have at least one other thing I could do? But no. No. And you know what? Madame Marie was wrong about a lot of things, but maybe there was something she was right about, and I should have stayed away from this stuff at all costs.

But honestly what the hell else is there for me to do?

Ha. Maybe I could start a cat sanctuary.

Sorry for being so maudlin I just. It's been a *week*, you know? Actually I feel like I've been having a week for about two and a half years at this point. Since Madame Marie disappeared. Maybe since before that, only I never really thought about it. I just did as I was told and daydreamed, and wished and hoped. My world was so small, then. This show felt like the only thing in the universe, all I wanted was to be involved. I was so excited when M let me start doing the PO Box stuff. I was *happy* being the PO Box boy. But no, she had to go and die, like an *idiot*.

[WAVES CRASH]

And she just keeps being dead, you know?

Like Ingra, and Bliss. They keep being dead too.

I know it sounds daft, faithful listeners, but it doesn't seem like many people I know stay dead, or at least, not *that* dead. It's different with Ingra, I think. I can sort of feel the way the threads fray, the place I let them go. With Bliss it's more like this sudden strange jerk, I can't even see the end of it, it's just a sudden and awful lurch in the wrong direction.

Then there's M. There's a place she should be and it screams. It's not even because I miss her, it's just this void, this gaping absence that almost threatens to pull things in after it. Like a car's dashboard with the radio ripped out. Like a smashed mirror with fragments wedged into the edge of the frame. I can't look at it too long or it starts to feel like I'm going to jump in.

[WAVES CRASH]

Anyway we're not really here to reminisce. This isn't just any beach. It's Rhyl beach, in North Wales, less than ten miles from Dyserth and Banemouth Road, the place where I was born, the spot I keep returning to. We're here because of the library.

[SAM STARTS TO WALK]

See the thing is, I have to know. I have to understand what it is. I can't let it just be, you know.

Someone sent this message on the forums:

Hello everyone. I'm new here so forgive me if I use the wrong words for things. A friend of mine is really into witchcraft and stuff and has been listening on and off for a while, and she's the one that told me to come here. I used to work at Rhyl Library about five or six years ago, and it's pretty common knowledge in our friend group that I quit because some weird stuff went down.

Firstly I want to say that I really liked my job and the library and I think it's a super important place and I was really sad to go, but it was like once the first thing happened, it kept happening again and again, like the more worried I was that something strange was going to go down the more likely it was that it would. I'd got the job after I dropped out of uni, and I was really glad to have found something that at least tangentially lined up with my interests. It's not the best funded library in the world and because the council is always looking for ways to cut corners, it's become a hub for people looking for support from council services, which had upset a lot of the old guard staff and patrons as it significantly changed the library's vibes.

In my opinion, though, it's important that community spaces serve their community and even though Rhyl Library wasn't ideal and could've used a lot better funding to improve its facilities, it was at least very useful to people. Sure, sometimes patrons would kick off when they came in and stuff but really those people were in the minority and they were mostly just stressed and upset, so it's not really their fault.

I'd been working there for about nine months when stuff started getting strange for me. It was the night of the work Christmas party, actually. We'd all gone out to a restaurant a bit further down the coast and those of us that weren't totally sloshed by the end of that wandered into Rhyl proper to go to a few pubs before heading home. I lived just outside of Rhyl, and I was drunk enough at the end of the night that the fact it was only a couple degrees over freezing wasn't enough to deter me from saving the taxi fare and walking home.

Again, because I was kind of drunk, I decided that rather than walking the objectively faster route across town, I would walk along the promenade and look at the sea a bit on my way home. I had my headphones in, there was a whipping wind, but all in it was pretty nice. And then I passed the shopping centre that's right next to the little back road that the library stands on, and I saw the glow of lights coming from the library's small, glass panelled foyer.

I stopped at the end of the road thinking 'no, that can't be right'. We're always really careful to make sure everything is shut off and shut down before we go home, but I could see it, the bright light from the foyer. I didn't have the keys on me, and Jeff, who did have the keys, was going to need several hours in bed before he could even think about getting in the car to bring them to me based on the state at which he'd left the dinner table. He didn't even make it to the first pub. There was no way for me to fix the problem, so I'm not sure what I thought I was going to do by walking up to the doors. The last thing I thought would happen is that they'd slide open, like it was the middle of the day, not two in the morning. That I'd walk across the carpet and see a woman behind the front desk who I'd never seen before.

In the other letters I've seen here about the library, you've all said she was really old, and she was, but there was something... strange about it. She was frail and thin, and her skin was loose and wrinkled, yes, but it wasn't the way elderly people's skin usually wrinkles. There weren't laughter lines and creases around her eyes, there wasn't that sense of slow decline, a body well-used, moving through time. No. It was like her skin was trying to leave her. Like it didn't quite fit.

She pointed at the desk, at a pile of books, only they weren't anything like the books the library usually stocked. It was strictly popular new releases and classics, with only a few things in between, and nothing was kept on the shelf if the cover had gone past a certain point of scruffiness. There was the reference section upstairs which had a few older volumes, and in the little museum up there there were a few old local history books, but that was it.

The pile of books this old librarian was pointing at were not only old, but they looked expensive. The covers were bound in soft, well-treated leather. The spines were hand sewn. And none of them had titles. I opened one and found the texture of the pages strange. They were thick, grainy under my finger tips, but also faintly translucent. The typeface was small, cramped, uneven in the way that old presses sometimes made it.

I asked what they were but the librarian just shook her head and pointed across the room to the stairs up to the landing. She said 'put them in the Reading Room. I was really confused. We do not have a Reading Room upstairs at Rhyl Library. I didn't know what to do, so I just sort of... left.

I know that sounds absolutely mad, but I was still kind of drunk, and it just seemed like the best option, so I just turned around and walked right out.

When I showed up for work the next Monday, everything was completely fine and normal. I asked around, but nobody else had any idea what I was talking about, except one colleague who swears there was this old lady who used to work at the front desk who he sometimes sees come in and sit down like she still works there even though it's gotta be at least a decade since she did.

For a few weeks nothing untoward happened, it was just standard library stuff, and I almost completely forgot about it all.

Then one day, I nipped out to lunch, and when I came back, something felt... off. The whole place seemed kinda. I don't know how to explain it. It was like everything had been moved just a little, but enough to throw off my orientation. And there was this strange smell, mildewy, almost. I walked over to the front desk, and there it was; that same pile of strange books I'd seen the night after the Christmas party.

I walked out right away, and when I walked in the second time, it was all back to normal. It smelled its normal not-that-pleasant smell, the stack of books were gone, everything else seemed in its right place.

That same thing happened a few more times over the next few months, where I'd walk in and find everything had shifted, and every time I'd just leave the moment I walked through the doors and smelled it, and every time when I walked back inside everything would be fine again.

Then one day it happened and I heard someone scream.

It was an awful sound, almost inhuman, the desperate, gargling nature of it. I heard a scream, and then a wet, guttural THWACK. It came from upstairs. Before I knew what I was doing I was at the top of the stair case, facing down what should have been an empty wall, a wall that could not have a door in it because all there was on the other side was a twelve foot drop to the carpark. But there was a door. A red door. On it, on an iron placard, it said 'Reading Room'.

The door was standing ajar.

The floor was wet. I stepped closer. It was covered in water, water dappled with rapidly expanding droplets of red. The smell of meat was overwhelming. I stepped closer, to the side, so I could see further into the room, and hanging up from a hook sticking out from under a pile of books, was a piece of meat. The longer I looked, the more sure I was that it was human.

I turned on my heel and ran.

I handed in my notice the next day.

I've spent the last few years trying really hard to forget about it; I was half convinced I'd been having some kind of mental break, but then my friend who listens to the show mentioned the other day that someone had seen the same thing. She told me to come on here and tell you all it had happened to me, too. So there it is. I hope that helps.

So yeah. Here we are.

Rhyl Library.

*I don't know. It looks pretty normal to me from the outside, except that it's definitely open even though it's gone three in the morning so it definitely *shouldn't* be.*

There's not enough information in any of the accounts we have to draw any conclusions about what it is exactly that triggers the library to go into its alternative, arcane state, but it does figure that it would show itself to me, doesn't it?

STRIFE CHUCKLES

SAM: Scourge?

STRIFE: Guess again.

SAM: Oh, Strife. It's you. What do you want? I'm kind of busy right now.

STRIFE: I know. Come to look at an arcane library.

SAM: Why do you care?

STRIFE: Plenty of reasons for a thing such as myself to take an interest in the comings and goings of a thing such as you.

SAM: You're not really in the habit of dropping in, though.

STRIFE: No. But there's been a change in the arcane noise around you, hasn't there?

SAM: No.

STRIFE: No need to be modest. There's an abundance of strife surrounding you.

SAM: Ah. Right.

STRIFE: Are you going to go inside?

SAM: Yeah. I am. Are you coming?

STRIFE: Why not?

THE DOORS SLIDE OPEN, THEY WALK INSIDE.

SAM: There are more of them here than they said in the letters. They said there were one or two patrons, but there's like. At least fifty people.

STRIFE: Maybe they can't see the whole of it like you and I.

SAM: But--- *why* are they all here? Both people who wrote letters went inside and left just fine. So many people get out, so why are these ones stuck?

STRIFE: Because they have nowhere else to go. There's so much potential in a place like this, but all these people, they've fallen on hard times, and now this is the only place that they can be. They came looking for help and shelter, but now they're trapped.

SAM: And what about *her*?

STRIFE: The librarian? She's trapped, too.

SAM: You could sound a *little* less pleased.

STRIFE: It's a nebulous thing, the hate that trickles down into places like this. I normal taste things more violent and visceral. But it's here, and its old.

SAM: Is it an arcane artefact or not?!

STRIFE: Oh, it is. But they're more complex than you're giving them credit.

SAM: You're not helping.

STRIFE: I never claimed I would.

SAM: You're so annoying. You're just like Scourge.

STRIFE: Is that so?

SAM: Yes it is *so*.

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: To the Reading Room?

STRIFE: You understood it?

SAM: Yeah, it just told us to go upstairs to the reading room, weren't you listening?

STRIFE: Apparently not.

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: Okay.

STRIFE: You don't seem scared.

SAM: I'm Heir Apparent. Worst she could do is kill me, and that doesn't seem to stick.

STRIFE: Fair point.

SAM: It's here, like they all said. A red door, with the words in metal. I can smell it too. The meat smell.

DOOR CREAKS

FLIES BUZZ

Oh-- oh no. Oh no. It's. Oh. Their parts have been separated and then. *Shelved*. Alphabetically.

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: Yeah I understand I just don't *understand*.

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: They wanted to be read? I don't, I-- nobody wants this, who would want this?

STRIFE: You must admit there's an elegance to it. These people came here misunderstood. And now here they are, like open books.

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: You're pissing it off. Shut up.

There are other things in here, too. Books, actual books.

SOUND OF LIFTING A BOOK FROM A SHELF, OPENING IT

SAM: 'I met Donny Pitt at the edge of the river when all hope was lost...' Donny Pitt. That's one of the names people call the Man in the Flat Cap.

PAGES FLICK

SAM: 'I saw him in the morning when the sun had barely risen and I knew he'd come to claim me'. 'He followed us down the path the sea.' 'I met him in the dark if the city and it was like someone had turned the rest of the world off'. 'I found him in the corner of an old bookshop.' 'I met him in the library'. Oh my god. It's all encounters with the Man in the Flat Cap.

BOOK HITS THE FLOOR WITH A THUD

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: This one is the same.

BOOK HITS THE FLOOR WITH A THUD

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: That one too.

ARCANE SHIMMERS

SAM: It's all of them isn't it? Answer me!

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: What is this place?

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: Well obviously it's a library but what is it FOR?

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: It just is, what the hell is that supposed to mean?

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: If I could cross reference this with the stuff that investigator, Jay showed me last year, ask them what they think, but. [SAM LAUGHS] I can't do that because *you* killed them.

STRIFE: Not by myself. I had help.

ARCANE SHIMMERS

A DEEP, RESONANT HUM OF POWER

SAM: That's why you did it, isn't it? So I wouldn't be able to check!

STRIFE: To cause *strife*.

SAM: You're unbearable. Librarian, what else is here?

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: What the hell is that supposed to mean? A little bit of everything?

Wait.

A little bit.

ARCANE SHIMMERS

FOOTSTEPS

SAM PULLS A BOOK OFF THE SHELF

SAM: It's. An account of M's deal. It's an account of *me*. 'On the day the deal was made the name was chosen from the words of power known to the One Who Walks Here and There, and--' wait. Wait! What's happening? The words, they're bleeding! Stop this!

PAGES FLUTTER

A STRANGE WIND BLOWS

SAM: No, no!

OBJECTS SHAKE

SAM: It's you, isn't it?! STRIFE!

STRIFE: I don't know what you could possibly mean.

SAM: Stop this! STOP IT RIGHT NOW!

STRIFE: It's not me, *Little Bit*.

[IN THE WORDS 'LITTLE BIT', THE ECHO OF SCOURGE'S VOICE IS THERE]

SAM: Scourge?

STRIFE: Not today.

[RUMBLE, OBJECTS FALLING]

SAM: ENOUGH!

HISSING SOUND

STRIFE: What-- what did you just--

SAM: GET OUT!

STRIFE: Gladly!

FIZZ OF STATIC, A SHIMMER OF ARCANE

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: What, what is it?

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: You're-- you're stuck here?!

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: How, how can I help you? Just tell me how and I'll do it!

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: Like with the thing the witches in Salem made? But-- I can't! There's too much information here, I *can't*. But I also can't just leave you here, not if you're going to keep eating people like this. Not if I can stop it.

UGH.

PAGES FLUTTER

SAM: I see you! I see you! Okay! I hear you! I understand! I know what you are and know what you've done, it's not your fault, alright!? Just-- listen to me-- just.

SPLASHES

SAM: By the power vested in me as Heir Apparent I bind you to me! Do you accept!

[PAGES FLUTTER, OBJECTS RUMBLE]

[CLAP OF THUNDER]

SAM: DO YOU ACCEPT!?

PAGES FLUTTER

A WHISPER: Yes.

[LOUDER THUNDER]

[RAIN]

[SAM PANTS]

SAM: I-- I'm outside, by the door. The lights are off and. It's gone. It's gone! It's mm. Ugh. I feel it. I can *feel* it. Argh. Ugh.

Oh, uh.

Oh that does NOT feel pleasant.

I might be sick.

No, no. it's passing, it's passing. Ugh.

Gross.

Shit. I just like. Absorbed that. What. What the hell. Uh. What do I do? What do I *do*? Uh, um. Uh... OH! Julius? Julius!

[A STRANGE FIZZING SOUND]

JULIUS: When you said you'd call me, I thought you meant on the phone, not summoning me to manifest or whatever this is.

SAM: Sorry, I am, uh. I'm not really thinking clearly. Lot going on. Uh. Can you help me? Last time we spoke, I told you about the library I was pretty sure was an Arcane Artefact. The one that was eating people.

JULIUS: I remember.

SAM: Well. I've managed to get rid of it. Kind of. Maybe.

JULIUS: Oh. So you don't need my help, then?

SAM: Uh. No. I do, actually, because. Uh. Well. Do you know anything about-- um. How would you go about like. Assimilating a library into an existing arcane structure.

JULIUS: So. What is it you want, exactly?

SAM: Um. See. Imagine it was a whole distinct entity, and then it suddenly wasn't that anymore. It was accessible, all the stuff inside was still *inside* of it, only it's now attached to. Uh. Something else?

JULIUS: Ah. So you've suddenly acquired a huge amount of information that you need collating and filing?

SAM: Yes. Kind of?

JULIUS: Bad luck, then.

SAM: No I don't need---

JULIUS: I'm not a librarian.

SAM: Look. *Please*. I don't know who else to ask.

JULIUS: You've got a whole forum's worth of people.

SAM: But none of them know about the arcane the way you do, it's never been the focus of their study the way it's been the focus of yours.

JULIUS: So, what do you want me to do?

SAM: I don't know exactly. But I think there's a way you could go in and look, see what you can find.

JULIUS: Go *in*? I'm not sure what you mean.

SAM: Well. You're a ghost, right? So you can enter arcane spaces even when they're not even trying to by physical.

JULIUS: In theory, yes, but---

SAM: *Theoretically*. I could let you go into this library thing that's attached to this-- other arcane thing. And you could look around and try to find out what's inside of it.

[JULIUS LAUGHS]

JULIUS: Th- this is madness! A-- A thousand times more unhinged than anything Madame Marie ever suggested. Anything could happen in there! Arcane artefacts are unpredictable and changeable, there's no telling what could happen if you tried to interact with one, let alone if you went inside of one.

SAM: You're already dead. How much worse can it get?

JULIUS: Considering I was perfectly happy before you and your sister showed up and started pestering me, I know it's possible for it to be *better*. If it can be better, it can also be worse.

SAM: I'm not sure if that logic checks out. But I see where you're coming from, yeah.

JULIUS: Don't you have other ghosts that serve you?

SAM: Well. Yes. But--

JULIUS: But you're not willing to risk them by sending *them* into an unknown arcane library.

SAM: It's not *that*. They've been a part of the forums a long time, but they don't *understand* it. They're not arcanists, there are arcanists in there, sure, but they're not like. They don't study the craft. It's not their job. They can describe what they see but not much beyond that.

JULIUS: What gives you the impression that I would be any better?

SAM: Just. M. Madame Marie? When she was stuck and confused, it was you that she turned to.

JULIUS: Well, that's not strictly true.

SAM: But it is. She went to you to try and get you to share notes, didn't she?

JULIUS: Well yes. But as I've told you before, I never really gave her much. That's not what we do, as Arcanists.

SAM: Yeah, I know. Go. You can just. Go.

JULIUS: It's not a risk to anyone now, you've done an excellent job of containing it, and--

SAM: No, just go. Go!

JULIUS: Alright, alright!

[STATIC]

[THUNDER]

[SAM BREATHES HEAVILY]

SAM: *Ugh*. This feels. *Bad*. Um. I don't know. I could ask Oliver, but there's no way I'm letting him look in there. No way in any hell. And I can't ask Anna or Kitty. I don't know what to do, I don't know! M turned to Julius, but he's right, he didn't let her. So who else? Nagisa?

Mmmmf. This is. Truly an *experience*. Ugh. It's sort of. Bubbling. Mmmmmnnn. Ugh. Okay. I think I'm just gonna – *mmm* – go and shower and maybe some of this feeling will pass. Yeah. That's what I'm – *oh no thank you* – I'm gonna do that, that's what I'm going to do. Goodnight, faithful listeners.

[END]