

Channel 144, Part 2

[AGENT runs in from the intro, the sound of a mug of tea resting on the desk.]

AGENT: Listener, I'm sorry, I ended that last recording a bit quickly on accident. I'm glad you're tuning in. This is an emergency. Or, well, it's sort of a hunch. But it's a pretty solid guess. Ruby is going to die from a gas leak or from the explosion or something. And if not, they're dealing with a poltergeist that could do something like that down the line. Because the television is, get this, broadcasting the aftermath of the destruction of their house. Oh god. Oh god. Oh shit. Ruby is going to die in less than a week. The TV was warning them of a future event; it showed them their house missing on the street and is telling them to get out. Why didn't I catch this before? Fuck, I need to follow up now.

[There is the sound of a dial tone, and then frantic dialing.]

Listener, you've only heard me take calls before. Well, sometimes, I gotta call back.

[phone rings]

Thanks to what I figure is the anomalous time bullshit that occurs here in the PSST office, our call-backs happen kinda... right when they need to happen. It's fate or something, right?

[phone rings again]

Before I started sleuthing out what was happening here, I didn't really think about the time, and just went with the flow.

[phone continues to ring]

But the weird part is, "need to happen" is kind of a misnomer, because sometimes it can be hard to tell—

[phone rings. Come on, pick up!]

—hard to tell exactly when something needs to happen. So this could be like, right before the house's destruction, or maybe just like ten minutes after the previous call, so they have time to prepare.

[Phone keeps on ringing! Wtf]

But the thing is... they don't have to pick up. Oh! [the ringing stops]

RUBY: Hi there.

AGENT: Hi Ruby, this is Felicia from the PSST calling. I believe your life may be at risk and your television is showing a grim—

RUBY: You've reached Ruby. Leave a message. [A rustling, and silence.]

AGENT: Hi Ruby, I'm—

[There is a beep that AGENT isn't prepared for.]

AGENT: Hi Ruby, Felicia here from PS... SST—I have a fairly urgent update for your situation and I just wanted to let you know that you should call me back as soon as possible. Thank you, good bye!"

[Click.]

Ugh. And now we wait. Hm. If our outgoing calls arrive exactly when they're needed... what about our incoming calls? How do they get handled in the time... thing? Like, do they come in when *we're* ready, or randomly? Or... okay, well, listeners, if you can figure this one out, let me know.

But... great. GREAT. Of course it gets serious when I can't do anything. Watch this, watch this—Ruby's not going to call back until I get up and go to the water cooler to get a drink.

[Improvise Agent bullshitting for a solid 30-60 seconds.]

Yeah, I'm thirsty. They're not calling back. [Footsteps lead away, the phone rings, AGENT runs back and puts back on her headset. She does not have her water lol]

Mother FUCKER

[she picks up her phone UGH]

Thank you for calling the PSST Hotline, this is Felicia speaking. Hi Ruby, thank you so much—

RUBY: One second.

[Random house noises. Ruby is doing SOMETHING that's noisy, but it's hard to tell exactly what]

Yeah? Yeah? Who's this?

AGENT: This... this is Felicia, from the Paranatural Support Services Team.

RUBY: Why did you wait for two days to call me back?

AGENT: Well, I... I thought you were going to call me back. The, um, checking your neighbor's... listen, you know your television set? The one that was showing the future?

RUBY: The television...?

AGENT: Sorry. The... the CHANNEL. Channel 144. On your TV.

RUBY: Oh, that one.

AGENT: Is it still showing the future?

RUBY: Yes.

AGENT: Is it still showing a week ahead?

RUBY: No, it's been showing the same. Damn. Day's programs. And it's *not* happening to my neighbors. And I have NOTHING else to watch. The other channels aren't even coming in any more. So what the hell is happening?

AGENT: Well, okay, so, it's still showing the destruction? And it's stopping you from viewing any other broadcasts?

RUBY: Yes, the same day and the same shows and programs. Can you fix it? Because I don't want to call anyone else about this.

AGENT: Right, you've—

RUBY: If I have to get tossed around to any further agents, I'm going to call corporate.

AGENT: Uh, well, okay. You can definitely try that! But for now, I need you to listen. You are in danger. On the day of that broadcast, your house is going to explode. That's why it's not on the program. The channel is trying to warn you or taunt you by showing you the scene over and over again. It's hard to say exactly why, but it *sounds* like a poltergeist or haunting...

[there is an audible pause]

So... do you understand?

RUBY: But why doesn't my channel work?

AGENT: I'm... not sure about—

RUBY: This is fucking ridiculous. So you called me back for no reason?

AGENT: [pleading] No! NO! NO No no no no! I called you back to warn you!

RUBY: About my television?

AGENT: About your house! Don't you think it's funny how it's specifically a program broadcasting your future is giving you details about an upcoming *explosion on your street?*

RUBY: It's not funny.

AGENT: Well, okay, wrong choice of word. Strange? [a pause] Okay so, it's just broadcasting the future date, right? Sunday the 19th?

RUBY: [a pause] Yes. And today is Tuesday.

AGENT: Does the broadcast start right at the start of day and follow through the day?

RUBY: [another pause] Yes.

AGENT: Is there any mention of the time or day of the explosion?

RUBY: Can't you just turn on the channel and see?

AGENT: ...no, I can't. I don't have a television set here and it certainly wouldn't be able to see the—

RUBY: You don't have a television at the television station where you work?

AGENT: ...I work at the Office of Paranatural Services. Not the station.

RUBY: Well, the clock looks right. And it's time for Willy's news show.

AGENT: Okay. So. does Willy mention when the explosion was?

RUBY: I don't know.

AGENT: Do you remember—

RUBY: It was in the morning. I remember now.

AGENT: Oh. Do you remember when you last had any heating or anything repaired or worked on? Any issues with gas or—

RUBY: What does this have to do with my channel?

AGENT: Well, your television is uh, presumably warning you about what's going to happen. It's not a problem with your channel, it's a issue with your house or heating, or utilities. We just know that there's going to be an explosion on Sunday, and this is your chance to stop it.

RUBY: Will this fix my channel?

AGENT: I... don't think so? I think it's kind of a blessing in disguise, actually. Like, it's showing you something that you can avoid in the future.

RUBY: But the channel isn't fixed.

AGENT: Is... is that more important to you than your house exploding?

RUBY: I'm calling you to fix my channel, not my house, *which is fine*.

AGENT: Okay, but that's not the—

RUBY: [as if insulted] What?

AGENT: I think you're in danger! Like, honestly, I can't explain this in any more urgency! Everything lines up, and maybe all you have to do is call someone to prevent an issue!

RUBY: To fix my channel?

AGENT: [so so mad] No, to save your life!

RUBY: Sure, I'll call you when that's an issue. Let me know when you fixed my channel, asshole. [hang up, dial tone]

AGENT: Listen to me! I'm trying to— god damn it!!! Of all the people who have to have their fucking lives and homes on the line—

RAUN: TROUBLED, GARBLER?

[yeah raun's in this one! They pop up without a sound, and there is a SFX with a sudden drop and RAUN's theme]

AGENT: Holy shi—RAUN! When did you get here?

RAUN: YOUR REQUEST. TALKER WALKER.

AGENT: Oh! Well, I guess you got my e-mail. So yeah, I was thinking that it might be helpful to have something that gives me a chance to—

RAUN: [breathing]

AGENT: I'm... I'm sorry? I'm sorry for sending you the e-mail. Next time I can just speak to you in—

RAUN: FREE OF WIRES, FREE OF CAGE. DO YOU TRULY WANT WHAT LIES AHEAD?

AGENT: Raun, I really don't understand what in the world you mean.

RAUN: A PEARL EMERGES BUT THE BODY, SHATTERED.

AGENT: That's... Raun that's kinda fu—kinda messed up.

RAUN: [closer to the mic.] SHELTER, GARBLER.

AGENT: So that's a no to the wireless—

RAUN: [masque give me a really good shriek here. Like a really nasty one.]

[The agent scrambles. There is a slam and a crack, and the agent is thrown and hits the ground.

AGENT: [screams, fearful] Raun? Raun! Get away!

RAUN: [victory cry, a leap straight up??? And then crawling along the ceiling away quickly]

AGENT: FUCK. [sounds of an office chair being propped back up, and AGENT sitting back down. Audibly shaken.] Fuck, that's gonna bruise. What was that for?! Shit, did they damage anything? Guess that's what I get for sending them an e-mail. Most things look good, but there's a scuff in my desk now. And... the Script has a crack on it. Does it still work?

Okay, good. Whew.

So uh, great. It's one of *these* kind of calls. [Raun shuffling sounds from above]. [nervously] So Raun's up in the ceiling tiles again in one of their "moods"... , and Ruby's in mortal danger and won't even listen to me... god, I need a break. I'd say this is a pretty good example for you of just how everything can fall apart. I think I'm going to the water cooler and the bathroom for a minute to think, if Raun can let me. Just gotta time it and... hup! [gets up and runs, and raun screams]