

**CW: this episode contains themes of fantasy violence, death, audio distortion**

## Episode 3: Cherry Tobacco

*Intro:*

The following audio recording is classified documentation for case (static) with The Enclosure, unauthorized access to this information will lead to immediate intervention. Progress further if proper clearance has been given.

(Music)

*Jared:*

I really need to get into the habit of doing this more often. Dr. Daman keeps asking how this is going but I rarely have anything to tell her that she seems to want to hear. She really wants me to do this regularly, but sitting at my desk with a sore back didn't sound so appealing...  
Especially if I didn't *have* to...

Even though my back is feeling a bit better after the incident at the Snipe Hunt tournament incident, I'm actually recording this from a bed and breakfast. And I'm *tired*.

Not even a vacation, it's more of a work trip. Not terribly much has happened since my last update.

Darius' birthday was recently. He had a little get-together with some friends and he even invited *me* along, which was really nice... I made sure to get there a little early, especially since it was a day off of work for me. We met up at WayTooth, a restaurant that his dads and him frequent often. I got there and just sat outside for a bit, fiddling on my phone, then Darius showed up. He was so excited for the party, I could tell. He smiled the second we made eye contact.

He jogged over to me and we talked for a bit, the weather is still pretty nice. It's finally starting to get chillier which is actually nicer, I prefer the layers. So we sat outside and enjoyed the weather as we talked until his other friends showed up. They were all nice, but I kinda stuck by Darius most of the day since he was the only one I really knew. After lunch we all went out to a drive-in theater that they got set up, which is mostly just a projector and a large painted brick wall, but it was still a nice time. His friends all sat in different cars as we watched the movie, but Darius and I sat in the bed of his truck and ate snacks that he had packed up. Darius is a *really* good cook, he's learning lots of cool stuff from that class he's taking.

I gave him a lil gift, of course. Well, two things. I got him a new wrench set since he'd been saying that he needed a new one. His old one's been a bit worn-down for a while now. A gift to give him in front of his friends since he really plays up the 'inheriting the family farm' schtick around them. But when we were in his truck, just the two of us, I gave him his second gift. He

said he had really gotten into cross-stitching recently and he'd seemed a little embarrassed about it. But I wanted him to know that I thought that was interesting, so I got him a little pack of stitching patterns and some thread organizers. I wasn't sure what kinda patterns he'd like, so I got him a couple of different kinds.

He was quiet for a few moments after he opened that gift and I kind of panicked for a moment, honestly, but he gave me a really big smile and put his hand on my shoulder. He gave me a really soft thank you, and I told him it was my pleasure... as long as he made me something. It was an obvious joke, at least I hoped it was obvious, but he asked what I'd want.

I told him I like birds. Birds have so much freedom to just fly around and always sing such pretty songs. Besides geese. I don't like geese. He asked me if I had any favorites, I said I like blue jays. Major assholes, but beautiful. He laughed and said he'd give it his best shot... but I told him that I'd hang up anything he made me.

That was about it. We barely watched the movie, we spent most of the time quietly talking, actually.

(pause)

What else have I done?

Well, Dr. Castillo and I went and investigated the energy signatures from the cornfields after Todd told us to do so and you know what we found?

*Corn.* That's it. Oh, and *more* corn.. No energy spikes, no signs of tomfoolery of the natural or supernatural kind: nothing. It was almost strange how *untouched* by supernatural energies it seemed... We investigated during the day and at night, no changes. So, we've been keeping tabs on the fields, but nothing that's been too notable when we're out there.

We've been passing a lot of our time in the lab reorganizing files, going over the energy spikes that *have* been recorded, and theorizing what we could possibly be dealing with there. But, until we can further examine it, there's not much that we can do. Ever since they replaced my old lab partner, my workload has been much lighter. I actually prefer to be busy than bored, and I think Dr. Castillo isn't used to having idle hands either... They only ever give me small menial tasks and it's becoming more annoying than anything else.

But I did recently see my old lab partner, Dr. Lomax, in the hall this morning. I've seen them in passing a few times, but we haven't been able to catch up much since the sudden change. Dr. Lomax also has no idea why they got suddenly switched to a different lab. Seems none of us know why the change was made, all Todd said was 'just had to rearrange some staff, don't worry about it!'

Speaking of, before I left work today, I got another email from Todd. Typically his emails are him asking us to do something and then him talking himself up for multiple paragraphs and making it seem like it should be a privilege to do what he's asking you to do. But, this email was him actually giving me lodging information for the local inn and explaining that I had to pack up a bag and go. They apparently planned two renovations on my house or something due to a concern of faulty plumbing? I'd mentioned to Dr. Daman about the less-than-stellar heating system when I wanted to take a bath or do dishes, but I didn't expect one to do actually anything about it.

But a night without weird tapping on my door sounded nice though, and even though I replied to the email basically saying "oh, you really don't have to. I can live with it", Todd *insisted*.

I could just see his smug smile on the other side of the screen. He'll subtly hold it over my head for later, but the rule of 'one denial for good 'polite' measure then acceptance of an offer' had been met, and I was off home to pack a bag.

And here I am now.

The Chronicle Inn Bed & Breakfast is run by a married couple, Ester and Laura. I'd met them a few times before my stay there, but I hadn't spent much time with them. This place is mostly a restaurant and home-made goods store rather than an inn, considering we don't get many outsiders who stay here any longer than to grab a bite to eat and get gas. But, for times like these, it's nice to have an inn available. Even if it only has a few rooms, it's much better than staying at the facilities The Enclosure has on site.

Work would have likely put me into a temporary on-site lodging space if the inn wasn't available. To be honest, I'm surprised they actually put me in the inn instead of just tossing me up into some temp lodging room for a night. Maybe they remembered how much I hate that place.

It's nearly impossible to sleep with the buzzing lights and the beds really aren't made for comfort and the bathrooms are all so claustrophobic. I swear they make the place as uncomfortable as possible so people *want* to leave. That or they just skimmed on the prices for a comfortable setup to focus the money elsewhere at The Enclosure... I'd believe that.

Though, maybe they booked me at this place to have me investigate something while I'm here. Can't even actually enjoy this nice little one night getaway, huh? They expect me to work. Do they plan to pay me for looking into things over tonight? Prob'ly not. Not like they ever pay me for the full work I do, anyways.

(sigh)

The room I'm in is kinda known for weird happenings... the whole town knows, but there's not a huge fuss over it. No one's *died* from it, so why be too concerned?

Ester warned me about these 'weird happenings' while I was checking in. There's word of a spirit that haunts the upper floor of the building, been here for as long as anyone can recall. She explained it all with a smile and a jovial tone, so she doesn't seem *concerned*. After the literal run-in with the deer a few weeks ago, I really just wanted some *rest*.

Her wife Laura told me that they serve breakfast at 7am, but they'll be at the desk to take my key as early as 6. Thankfully tomorrow my shift starts at 8 instead of the usual 6, so I might be able to actually get some *real* food in me before work.

Didn't take me too long to get up here and get settled in. I decided to just relax today instead of going out into town, so I did some reading in bed. Not that I could really focus much. The bed here is nice and cozy, but there's definitely a *vibe* about it? The room, not the *bed*. The rest of the inn is very homey, lived in but in a good way, but the second I got to the top of the stairs it was like the air got barely but still noticeably cooler.

When I came into the room, I saw a little baggy of homemade beef jerky that Ester made and gave me. She's known 'round town for her jerkies and woodwork. She's always so hands-on with everything she makes, whether it's snacks or a new set of chairs. She may have actually made the chair I'm sitting in right now, actually.

I sat outside for a bit, there's a nice balcony that looks over some gardens and in the far distance I could see the vast fields. The evening felt so nice and I could see the little lightning bugs flying around as it got darker. I've always liked watching their dances. I often watch kids running around catching them in jars and then letting them all go just minutes later, but I prefer to watch them do their own thing in nature.

I watched the stars and the flickering lights of the lightning bugs for a bit, sipped on some sweet iced tea that Laura had brewed and offered me, ate some of the jerky that Ester made, and *relaxed*. I let my mind wander to wherever it went off to, which, as usual, was all over the place.

But no tapping on the doors, no weird deer staring at me... It was nice.

But I keep feeling like something, or someone, is watching me. I feel that pretty often, but this is different. It feels... *closer*? If that makes sense?

Like right *now* I'm sitting in a plush chair by the window in the room, looking over the nice herb garden out back... the stars are still twinkling, the wind is just slightly blowing, and I've been able to crack the window open for some breeze- but I feel like something is watching me from the doorway.

(groan)

I swear to gods, if I turn around and someone is standing there-

(chair creak then pause)

Nope. *Nothing*.

(sigh)

When Ester was telling me about what I could possibly expect, she said that a spirit had been wandering around the room I'm staying in. Sometimes the spirit watches people, sometimes the spirit just walks around and ignores the tenants. Must depend on her mood. But apparently something about the blue lamp by the bedside table really draws her out.

Considering my line of work and that my *boss* sent me here, I'm obviously *going* to turn on the light. Even if she's not rumored to be particularly dangerous, if they're just wanting to keep me busy then I could see Todd throwing me here to look into it a bit more.

Okay, hold on, gimme a sec. Lemme see what happens-

*(gets up, walks over, click of a light, then comes back to his seat)*

It's a pretty light, I don't think I've seen a light this shade of blue outside of some of the lights they put up around town in the winter. It's... nice.

(audio fizzes a bit)

Ope... Uh. Hello?

(pause)

I don't know if she can hear me, but I do see someone standing by the door on the other side of the room... (sniffing) tobacco?

*Blue Lady:*

I can hear you just fine.

*Jared:*

Ah. Sorry about that.

(pause)

*Jared:*

... how are you?

*Blue Lady:*

Why do you ask?

*Jared:*

Manners, I guess. Should I ask *who* are you?

*Blue Lady:*

I don't think it really matters now. Besides, it's better I ask who *you* are.

*Jared:*

Oh, uh- Dr. Jared Hel. I'm a scientist with The Enclosure on the edge of town, I-

*Blue Lady:*

*Who* are you, not *what* are you. I know *what* you are.

*Jared:*

... what I am is a person who would like to get some rest.

*Blue Lady:*

No, what you are is *different*. At least different from what I remember.

*Jared:*

From what you remember? Have we met before?

*Blue Lady:*

Not exactly. *Met* isn't the word I would use. But we've *interacted*.

*Jared:*

... how so?

*Blue Lady:*

I've watched you from afar, I've seen what you do. I guess our paths have more *indirectly* crossed.

*Jared:*

I've never studied you before. You're not exactly the kind of thing that The Enclosure typically sends *me* to study.

*Blue Lady:*

Then why are you here?

*Jared:*

Well, work decided to fix the plumbing in my house, so they put me up here. To get some *rest*.

*Blue Lady:*

And yet you're not here to study me?

*Jared:*

... well, that's actually unclear, I guess. I mean, if they're going to book me in the most haunted room in an inn, I guess they're having me investigate- or Todd's just messing with me. That seems like something he'd pull.

*Blue Lady:*

Messing with you? When did you start putting up with the antics of *people* like that?

*Jared:*

(pause) Okay. I'm gonna be upfront: if we met more than two years ago, I have zero memory of any of that time. So this vague, cryptic talk is going to get you nowhere.

*Blue Lady:*

(brief pause) what are you doing with that thing?

*Jared:*

This? (shuffle the mic) It's an audio journal. It takes less focus and energy than writing.

(pause)

*Jared:*

Are you just going to keep staring at me? Or...?

*Blue Lady:*

People don't usually understand me this well for full conversations, so it has been quite a while. It isn't as if Ester and Laura can clearly understand me- even if they have tried.

*Jared:*

... how long have you been here?

*Blue Lady:*

Longer than I can remember. The rumors are that ever since the establishment of this town, whenever that may have been.

*Jared:*

And when did we meet? ... I mean, *interact*... indirectly?

*Blue Lady:*

For the first time? It was many, *many* years ago. But again, you've certainly changed.

*Jared:*

But, again. I don't remember. You keep saying that and-

(vague ringing sound)

*Jared:*  
(winces)  
God my head.

*Blue Lady:*  
We won't be getting very far right now...

*Jared:*  
Wait, no, no, hold on-! .... And... she's gone. *Dammit.* (slam hands on desk) Why won't anyone just tell me *anything* outright?!

Ugh, my head... it's always like this. They disappear for a while then come back so suddenly.  
(Groan) I hate this flesh prison...

I'm done recording for now. I need to try and nurse this headache now and recover from whatever the he-... oh. It seems she left a little gift? Some... blue ribbon? It's maybe four or five inches long, a little frayed at the ends... it's the same color as the lamp.

(pause)

There's something written on it. The handwriting is a bit hard to read, but it looks like...

*Jared, but with a distorted voice:*  
You need to remember.

*Jared:*  
Remember *what*?! How am I supposed to remember if no one ever tells me anything?! Everyone always pushes me to try and remember, but there's nothing to remember if they're making me grasp at thin air! They say they support me, that say they want to help, but what do they *do* to help, huh?

All of this performative support is getting me nowhere...

(shout away from the mic, aimed at the door where Blue Lady was) How is this *ribbon* supposed to help?! You couldn't have given me something a little less vague?!

(loud groan)

Why is everyone always so damn *vague*? Are they scared to say something concrete? Why can't anyone ever give me a straight answer?



No. It's *fine*. It's fine. I'm going to go to bed. I'm going to get some sleep. No tapping, no knocking. Just sleep. I'm going to go turn off the lamp and get some rest. Right. Whatever. This is Dr. Jared Hel, signing off, I guess.

### *Credits:*

"Jar of Rebuke" is written and produced by Casper Oliver, who is also the voice of Dr. Jared Hel.  
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The Blue Lady is voiced by Misha Bakshi.  
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The intro is read by Nessa R, and credits are read by Ashlee Craft who has created the podcast's official graphics.  
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Music was created by TheMenniss (spelled M-E-N-N-I-S-S), who you can find and support on Bandcamp, Spotify, and Twitch.  
<https://themenniss.bandcamp.com/>

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