

Season 1: Episode 7

“Beyond the Wall of Sleep”

Written by Stephanie Resendes & Micah Rodriguez

Transcript by Evelyn Archer

how it ends



NETWORK INTRO
Rusty Quill Presents...

[INTRO MUSIC FADE IN]

MICAH [Season 1 Intro]

For as long as I can remember, I've suffered from unnerving, recurring dreams and night terrors. The How it Ends podcast is an exploration of daily life, and the imprint it leaves on our memory and consciousness. This podcast is made by me, Micah Jones with some help from my two closest friends, Elia Cabral and Devon Williams, I'm not sure where this journey will take me. So follow along as I try to uncover the meaning of my dreams, and finally get some sleep. I'm releasing this in real-time. So if you're just joining, please start from the beginning. And thank you for listening.

[INTRO MUSIC FADE OUT]

[SCENE TRANSITION]

MICAH

Hey, everyone. So a while ago, I asked people to write and call in and tell me their scary stories. If you remember, specifically stories about being spooked in the woods. I got some legit scary stories that were a hundred percent unnerving, but none of them connected closely enough to my dream. Either way, thank you to those people for sending them in just the same. I also got some prank calls. And to those people I say, "It is past your bedtime. Bye-bye now."

But getting down to the nitty gritty of it, there was one email that I got that was... interesting. So I'm going to read it to you.

Hi Micah. My name is Ben. A friend of mine showed me your podcast and I just heard the part where you asked people to email or call if they had a story to tell. I've got one.

I was driving home from work and passing by this short trail that I like to walk on whenever I can. It's been a stressful

week, so I just wanted to clear my head before going home to my family. I have a daughter and our time together is really important to me because I work a lot, so I don't like to be in a bad mood when I get home. I guess I misjudged the time, and when I was about halfway through the walk it was dark.

I thought I heard a voice call out from what seemed to be close by but I couldn't make out what was said. I jogged to my truck and left. It didn't seem like a big deal. But after that, I kept having nightmares about being in the woods alone. I'd always waking up thinking I was there.

I haven't thought about this in a long time. Anyway, not sure if that's the kind of story you're looking for, but there it is. At least part of it. If you're interested in hearing the rest of it, just email me back.

Ben.

Of course I responded to that email. And it turns out, um... he's from Pennsylvania near Philly, which is actually not that far from where I grew up. And we emailed back and forth a couple times, and have actually decided to meet up for coffee. Funny enough, he was actually coming up this way to Connecticut for work. And we are going to meet at this little coffee shop I found in Mystic later today. He seems pretty nice, but I'm going to bring Luke with me, just in case.

In any event, it finally feels like I might be getting somewhere because his story is the closest thing that I've heard to mine since Luke.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[shop BELL tinkles]

[coffee shop background chatter]

LUKE

So have you talked to Elia since you guys were in New Jersey?

MICAH

No. But, I'm just trying to give her some space and let her cool off.

LUKE

I don't know. I think she's overreacting a little bit. Things have been really hard for--

MICAH

Yeah. You know. I... I don't know. Her and I will figure it out. I don't want to talk about, though.

BEN

Hey! Micah?

MICAH

Hi. Are you Ben?

BEN

Yeah. Hi. How's it going?

MICAH

Uh...how did... Wait. How did you know it was me?

BEN

It was a lucky guess. I saw the camera, you know. I have an old vintage Nikon, myself.

MICAH

Cool. Um. My camera's my dad's. Uh... but. Sorry. I'm being rude. Ben? Luke. Luke? Ben.

LUKE

Hey, man. Nice to meet you.

BEN

Yeah. So. Micah, what do you want to know?

MICAH

Oh. Um... Okay. We're gonna... we're gonna... jump right into this. Well, before we start, you said in your email that there was more to the story, which is why we're here. But out of curiosity, why couldn't you tell me the whole story in the email? Why meet up instead?

BEN

Well... you said you're going to read these on your podcast and... to be fair, this is kind of a personal story to me. Well, some parts of it, anyway. I think I just needed to tell it myself, you know? Say it out loud?

MICAH

Yeah. Umm... Yeah. No, that makes sense. I can understand that. Um... cool. I mean, thank you for coming to meet us. Coming all this way.

BEN

Yeah. Yeah. Of course.

MICAH

Cool. Um... all right. Well. You know. Go... Let's do it. Go ahead.

BEN

Yeah. Um... well it's like I told you in the email, a friend of mine showed me your podcast and I started to realize that a real story was coming out of this. Is that what you were trying to do? Some... some investigative thing?

MICAH

No, not at all. Um... This all started because my friends just wanted to help me with what has been a lifelong struggle with sleep. Or lack thereof. And... in doing so, all of this information just started to present itself and now... Now I'm just pretty... I'm just... I'm just running with it, really.

BEN

You... think this all has something to do with your dad?

MICAH

I, um... I don't... I don't know. Maybe? So my dad wrote this cryptic message in the book, and then that message in the book was the same thing that he was yelling at my mom the night he died. And then when I met his friend recently, he said that he was working on something before he passed away. And... it's all confusing. But it... feels like it's leading somewhere. And I have to know. I have to figure it out.

BEN

And do you have any new leads?

MICAH

[chuckles] I guess, just you.

MICAH and BEN

[chuckles]

MICAH

But...

BEN

Ah... no pressure on me, though, right?

MICAH

Yeah. No. No. No, definitely not.

LUKE

So what happened to you?

MICAH

Luke, um... We can take a minute--

BEN

No, no, no, no. It's fine. Eh. That's what we all came here for, right. You?

MICAH

Okay. Um... so.

BEN

[clears throat]

MICAH

Thanks. Go ahead.

BEN

Um. Well. Again, like in my email, when I was on my walk it got dark a lot quicker than I expected. Um... at one point, I thought I heard a voice in the woods, but I blew it off. I... I even used, you know, those little... those little keyring flashlights?

MICAH

Mm-hmm (affirmative)

BEN

So... Well, anyway. Um... I was almost back to my truck and I heard something... rustling in the trees behind me. I shined that flashlight on the spot. I wasn't spooked or anything, but... it just... I had this really weird feeling when I was leaving. But then that night... that night the nightmares started. I'd be in the woods alone. I'd just be completely terrified. And one night my wife found me sleepwalking in our backyard.

MICAH

Wait. Have... Have you ever sleepwalked before?

BEN

No. No. That was the first and only time.

MICAH

Oh, God.

BEN

She said I was just standing behind our house staring into the darkness just mumbling.

MICAH

Do... Do you remember what you were... what you were saying?

BEN

She said it didn't... didn't make sense. It was just random words. Give. Of. See. Return. Kill.

LUKE

Wait. What? The hell does that mean?

BEN

Hell if I know. I was having a nightmare. A couple months later, I was driving the same route and I almost crashed my truck because I saw something standing in the road. I blew out a fucking tire. When I was looking for my jack, I heard a voice off in the trees. I went closer and I tried to hear it. Something slammed into the back of my head.

LUKE

What the fuck.

BEN

My wife was beside herself because I hadn't come home that night. I didn't tell her about being knocked out, for obvious reasons. I haven't driven down that road since and I... I probably never will.

I'm sorry, Micah. Was this too much?

MICAH

No. It's... It's um... It's not you. It's just um...

LUKE

Um. Um. It's just that... her dad died in a car crash a little like that. And I think it just hits a little close to home.

BEN

I'm sorry.

MICAH

No. Anyway. Uh... When... When did this happen to you?

BEN

It was... just a little over 10 years ago.

LUKE

Seriously? Sounds like it happened yesterday.

BEN

Would you forget?

LUKE

Nah.

MICAH

Right. Right. So. Ben, thank... thanks again. I know I said it a bunch of times, for driving here to meet us. Uh... remind me. You said that you live in Philly, right?

BEN

Yeah. I've um... I've lived there my whole life.

LUKE

And what are you out here for?

BEN

Work. I'm an engineer. But I've been doing a lot of consulting lately.

MICAH

That's cool. Um... I actually grew up about 40 minutes from Buck's County. It's not too far from Philadelphia. I used to love going to New Hope as a kid, especially around Christmas. It's really pretty.

BEN

Oh, yeah. For sure. When I was younger, we'd go there a lot in the summer. I haven't been there in ages, though. How does it look now?

MICAH

Um... It's been a few years since I've been back, but it's pretty much still the same tourist town. There's that brewery. Some restaurants. The playhouse... the Buck's County Playhouse.

BEN

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I uh... I love that place. We'd go there for a long weekend every spring. You know, the Shad Festival. Sometimes see a show.

LUKE

Yeah. I used to go there a lot, too.

BEN

That's... cool.

MICAH

Okay, uh... So I think I've said it a bunch of times, but you know. Thanks again.

BEN

Hmmm. I mean, not a problem. I... I just hope I helped you move your story forward.

MICAH

Yeah. It's a lot to process, for sure, but...

BEN

So. Do you guys know anything about Mystic before you go? I'm gonna be here a couple days. Good places to eat? Bars? Anything like that?

LUKE

This is my first time here.

MICAH

Yeah. I can help. My friend Elia and I have been here a couple of times, so before we head out, I'll look some stuff up and...

[AUDIO FADE BEGINS]

BEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MICAH

... make some recommendations.

BEN

Whatever you can recommend that isn't the hotel bar. That works for me.

MICAH

For sure. It's the...

[AUDIO FADEOUT COMPLETE]

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[FOOTSTEPS]

[CAR DOORS OPEN]

[CAR DOORS CLOSE]

LUKE

Holy shit.

[SEATBELT SIGNAL CHIMES]

What the hell even was that?

MICAH

What was what?

LUKE

Ben.

[SEATBELT SIGNAL STOPS]

That story. What the hell was that?

MICAH

What do you mean, what was that? Came here to listen to the rest of his story and he told us. We already knew the details. So, he just told us the rest of it.

LUKE

Yeah. I know. It's just a little wild, right? It just sounds like he's telling you what you want to hear. It sounds a lot like your story.

MICAH

It sounds a lot like my dream. I don't really know what happened to me, other than what you've said. It does sound a lot like your story.

LUKE

I mean... a little bit, maybe. But the whole thing about dreams. And the nightmares? I didn't have nightmares.

MICAH

I did. I do. It's why we're here, isn't it?

LUKE

Look. Don't you think it's a little convenient that he said he had nightmares? What about the sleepwalking? Murmuring stuff in his sleep? It's all too... What's the word I want to use? Neat. It's all too neat.

MICAH

Well, I guess I could say the same thing about you. It's a little neat that you showed up right after I started this podcast and then dropped some info on me, but I believed you.

LUKE

I just didn't show up. I've been living here for months before I ran into you.

MICAH

Wait. Months?

LUKE

Years. Sorry. You knew what I meant. Micah. I'm not saying I don't believe the guy. He seemed... nice enough. I'm just saying... I don't know what I'm saying. I think I'm just scared because now, it's not just us. And if he's telling the truth? Someone hurt him, Micah. What if there are other people out there that have a story like ours? Like his?

MICAH

Isn't that what we've been trying to figure out? I mean, I asked people to call and email me. I want to know.

LUKE

[sigh] I know. I do, too. Like I said, I think Ben just threw me for a loop.

MICAH

Yeah. So I've been... I've been thinking about trying to get in touch with Aimee.

LUKE

Why?

MICAH

Wait. What do you mean, why? She was there that day at your house. She heard me say, "It saw me." I want to know why she didn't tell me. I've been thinking about it a lot. Plus she was my best friend for a really long time, and was there for me during the hardest parts of my life. Her brother was like my brother. Their family was my second family. She should have told me.

LUKE

Yeah, I mean, I agree. But hasn't it been, like, 20-plus years? That's what you said, right?

MICAH

Yeah. I mean, we saw each other around the neighborhood, but... I feel like we might even still be on... Like, friends on Facebook or something? But either way, I don't think it's gonna be too hard to find her.

LUKE

I haven't seen or talked to her in a long time, too. My mom probably has the photo from when I took her to Senior Prom. Man, I thought I was cool.

MICAH

Wait. Senior Prom? I thought you guys broke up when she was a freshman.

LUKE

Well... yeah, but. We kind of kept in touch. And she just agreed to come with me to prom because I didn't have anyone else to go with. She knew all my friends, so it made sense. We went as a group.

MICAH

So you guys broke up, and then three years later you just called her up and asked her to prom?

LUKE

Well... Hey. I wasn't exactly... you know, Mr. Popular. You know? And... I wanted to go. And it was kind of like... Her or my cousin kind of deal. So, you know... it was a lot less embarrassing to bring her, right?

MICAH

Right. Yeah. I must have um... I must just misunderstood the timing, sorry.

LUKE

Did you still want to stop and get the film developed?

MICAH

Sure. Um... but can we get some food first? I just think I need to eat something.

LUKE

Want to stop at Iggy's for some clam cakes?

MICAH

That's fine.

LUKE

Wait. Are they open in the winter?

MICAH

Uh... They have indoor seating, so maybe. But you know, I'll look it up.

[AUDIO STARTS TO FADE]

You can just drive there. I'll put it in the GPS.

LUKE

All right. I'll...

[AUDIO FADEOUT COMPLETE]

[SCENE TRANSITION]

MICAH

So I'm back home now. Um... and yeah, before I jump into it, I gotta rewind a little bit. So after I talked to John Buckley when I was in New Jersey the last time, I did what I said I was going to do. I looked through my dad's shed again, and I ended up finding a whole box of stuff that I somehow missed. Um... and in it there were some really awesome life drawings that he did. And uh... I ended up finding the journal and the camera that John mentioned while we were talking.

I actually had that camera with me today, which is, you know, what Ben spotted and was able to recognize me. But, you know, a few days ago I was playing around with it, and I actually realized that there's still film in it. Which is wild. And you know, we... Luke and I meant to stop and get it developed today. But you know, after lunch we just forgot about it, which... So I have to do that soon.

But yeah, looking at the journal. John really wasn't kidding when he said that there would be really no rhyme or reason to the way my dad used this thing. Um, but I guess if you knew my dad, it all makes sense to you. So I thought that maybe I would go through it a little bit tonight. And in the little amount of time that I spent looking at it, I realized that my dad and I journal the same way. I mean I tend to do things on sequential pages, but, you know, the way we scribble notes and... and the... the way we think... you know. Yeah.

Anyway there are a lot sketches and I think I'll snap some photos for Instagram. And I've been thinking about updating the blog part on my podcast website with anything that I find in here. And then also some of the stuff that's...um... already happened. So maybe it'll help sort of connect the dots for me and... and... and anyone who's listening.

But yeah. Here we go. So there's an inscription in the front page from me and my mom.

"Dear Nolan. Happy Father's Day. Here is another journal for your collection to keep all your brilliant ideas. Never forget.

'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.'

Love, Ava and Micah."

And in parenthesis, my little kid handwriting, it just says, "Kit." June 21st, 1992.

1992. That was a year... or so before he died.

[pages turning]

Here's another little scribble. "Took Kit to Colonial Park today. She had so much fun playing out in the exercise pit stops." There's a little asterisk here, and it says, "Maybe make something similar for the backyard. Monkey bars? Ask Ava first." [chuckles] Yeah. I bet he did. There are little arrows all around the part where he wrote, "Ask Ava first" because we know who ran our house, for sure.

Oh... kay. Some more... some sketches of trees.

[pages turning]

And um... here's another longer one. Longer passage. "Been having trouble sleeping. Waking up a few times a week, really disoriented. Ava's worried. She never misses anything, that woman. Other than that, things are good." That's a little weird. But... hmmm.

Goes on to say, "Kit and Aimee are in the backyard. Aimee is trying to teach Kit to play soccer." Oh, God. "Not going well. My girl is amazing, but not at sports. That reminds me: saw her eyeing my guitar the other day. Should teach her to play."

Okay. So that's cool. Uh... I just read a note in here where my dad dunked on my sports prowess as a child in his journal. And uh... yeah. Okay. I'm terrible at sports. Yes. That's a fact. Um... but he did teach me to play guitar. I started that summer. You know, I still play here and there. You know, actually I've been working on learning the chords that are in the song that he wrote. That I heard... um...

[MULDER meows]

[MULDER meows louder]

Hey there, little dude.

[MULDER meowing intensifies]

You a hungry-boy? What time is it? Oh shit, it's late. I haven't realized, man. I'm sorry.

[hinge squeaks.]

MICAH [from another room]

Let me feed you.

[BANGING]

[BANGING intensifies]

[SECURITY ALARM whines]

MICAH

Who's there?! Who is that?

[BANGING like the house is coming down. SECURITY ALARM continues to whine.]

[BANGING abruptly stops]

[SECURITY ALARM continues]

[SECURITY ALARM stops]

DEVON

Hey. Is everything all right?

MICAH

Devon? Is that you?

DEVON

Yeah. Micah. It was bunch of kids, they were outside they were banging on the windows and shit. Are you okay?

MICAH

Uh-uh... I don't... I don't... What?

DEVON

I tried to catch them but they got away. A bunch of kids. They had black spray paint and...

MICAH

I don't... I don't understand. I don't...

DEVON

The people banging on the window. It looked like they were trying to break in. They had black spray paint. I bet it was... stupid kids that tried to break in the last time.

MICAH

But... But. But the door opened. Like my door. My door opened.

DEVON

Wait. Wait. Did you see them?

MICAH

The front door opened.

DEVON

Yeah. Did you see them? Did any... Did anyone try to come in?

MICAH

No. No. No.

DEVON

I... What do you...?

MICAH

The... the door was starting to open. It started to swing open and then it slammed. And then you walked in.

DEVON

Yeah. Yeah. I came in and shut off the alarm. You saw--

MICAH

No. No. The banging... They were... There was banging and then the alarm went off, and the door... the door opened when it was all happening. And then it stopped and you walked in.

DEVON

Okay, Micah. Okay. What... What are you trying to say?

MICAH

I'm saying that my door opened on its own. I watched it. And then it slammed. And then you walked in. And then it stopped.

DEVON

Wait. So... So you think I did this?

MICAH

I don't know. Did you?

DEVON

Why the hell would I?

MICAH

You tell me.

DEVON

You can't be serious right now.

MICAH

I... Listen, everybody wants me to stop doing this podcast, right? Everybody wants me to stop looking. Maybe this is the way to get me to do it? Just scare the shit out of me. It's... it's...

DEVON

Are you really accusing me right now? Are you really accusing me of this?

MICAH

No, I don't... I don't know. I don't know. I don't know what I'm trying to say.

DEVON

Well. Whatever it is. I'm done, Micah. [sighs] Lock your door. Reset the code.

MICAH

[shaky breath]

[DOOR CLOSES]

[FOOTSTEPS]

[Alarm Pad BEEPS as code is entered]

MICAH

Ah, fuck. It... It was locked.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[OUTRO MUSIC BEGINS]

Transcription by [Evelyn Archer](#).

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