

Season 2: Episode 2

“What Cheer?”

Written by Stephanie Resendes & Micah Rodriguez

Transcript by Evelyn Archer

how it ends



NETWORK INTRO
Rusty Quill Presents...

[INTRO MUSIC FADE IN]

MICAH [Season 2 Intro]

For as long as I can remember, I've suffered from unnerving recurring dreams and night terrors. A year ago, I started the How it Ends podcast to try to uncover the meaning of my dreams and finally get some sleep. It was supposed to be a fun thing to do with my friends. But then someone broke into my house and left me a message: "You've been warned." That's when I realized this was about more than just my nightmares.

Are my dreams trying to tell me something? Is there a connection between my father's death and a day from my childhood that I can't quite remember? Someone doesn't want me to know the truth. And maybe some things are better left alone. But not for me. I have to know. We're 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]

[PHONE RINGING - OUTGOING]

AIMEE
Hello?

ELIA
Aimee. It's Elia.

AIMEE
Hey... yeah, I'm not sure if you heard me tell Micah, but I really prefer--

ELIA

--Aimee I was thinking, we didn't get a chance to talk last time you were down here. You know what, with the fact that you showed up unexpected and unannounced after 20-something years just to, you know, drop a bombshell. So um...

AIMEE

[Clears throat] Is there something I can do for you, Elia?

ELIA

Yeah, actually, I just think you and I need to get to know each other better. And so we're going to meet for drinks.

AIMEE

And if I already have plans?

ELIA

Do you?

AIMEE

[Sighs] Okay, well, you want to meet up somewhere halfway in between or...?

ELIA

We both know there's nothing good in between Boston and Providence. So just come down here. Because you already know the way.

AIMEE

I think I'm good, actually. I don't feel like fighting traffic on 93 just to sit around and get the cold shoulder.

ELIA

Yeah... no. You don't get to do that. You barged into our lives and mixed shit up just when it was going back to normal. And the last person who did that and just disappeared, basically poofed himself off the planet for all we know... you know him better than any of us. So you and I are gonna get together, get to know each other a little, and you're gonna tell me about Luke.

AIMEE

That's what this is about? You want to know about Luke? I told you all that I haven't seen him since high school. I don't know what you want--

ELIA

--Listen. Don't worry about it. We'll talk about it over drinks at What Cheer Tavern at nine o'clock. I'm texting you the address.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[BACKGROUND: INDISTINCT TALKING/CARS PASSING/GENERAL BAR PATIO SOUNDS]

AIMEE

Hey, uh, cool place.

ELIA

You can sit.

[Sing-song] So how was the drive down from Boston?

AIMEE

Cute. Traffic wasn't bad, actually. It's nice that this place is close to the highway.

ELIA

Perfect. So it worked out.

AIMEE

[Dryly] Totally. So do I need to go to the bar or...?

ELIA

No, someone will come around.

AIMEE

Okay, cool. Cool.

ELIA

This isn't like, a job interview, Aimee. You can relax a little bit. We're just getting to know each other, right?

AIMEE

Maybe drop the mobster act and then I can relax.

ELIA

[Bad Don Corleone impression] Forgive, forget. Life is full of misfortunes.

AIMEE

What?

ELIA

Uh... The Godfather?

AIMEE

Never seen it.

ELIA

You've never seen the Godfather? What kind of life do you live?

AIMEE

I don't really get you.

ELIA

Get me?

AIMEE

You're an odd person.

ELIA

I'm just trying to break the ice, Aimee.

AIMEE

Well, I don't want to be driving back to Boston after midnight. So can we just get to it?

ELIA

All right, get to it.

AIMEE

I don't really know where you want me to start?

ELIA

I don't know, wherever you want. Luke. Start there.

AIMEE

Okay, well, like I told you, Luke and I stopped dating my first year of high school. I know he told Micah it was because the guys at my new school must have been so much cooler than him, but that's just his ego talking, I think.

ELIA

Ew. Why are men?

AIMEE

I know, right? I didn't have any other boyfriends in high school. I had soccer and my teammates. And that basically took up all my time. I just wasn't interested in anything else. Our relationship just fizzled. But Luke and I stayed friendly. It's a small area. We run into each other from time to time at the mall and stuff. And he asked me to senior prom, we went to that as friends. But after I graduated and went off to Penn State, I never saw him again. That's really it.

ELIA

[Under her breath] Hmm, it's true then.

AIMEE

Sorry?

ELIA

No, Luke told Micah you guys went to prom together and I thought it was all bullshit. Because the way he told the story just seemed so odd.

AIMEE

[Laughs] Yeah, I heard that. He was always a bit socially awkward and stumble-y with his words. He made that weird joke about "it was either her or my cousin?" Jesus Christ.

ELIA

Right. What was that about?

AIMEE

He doesn't even have any cousins!

ELIA

Oh, my God.

AIMEE

Yeah, he's a unique guy for sure. But quirky or not, he's not bad. I don't know. I know a person can change completely in nearly 20 years, but I just don't get how or why the Luke I knew could swoop into Micah's life just to shake things up, and then ghost like that.

ELIA

Right. Yeah. Oh, the server's coming over here. What do you want?

AIMEE

What do you have?

ELIA

It's one of the 'Gansett Del's Watermelon Shandies.

AIMEE

What's a Del's?

ELIA

[Scoffs] I'm sorry, what? Okay, yeah, we're getting you one of these.

BARTENDER

How we doing here?

ELIA

Hi, we will both take one of these

BARTENDER

Anything else?

[Crosstalk]

AIMEE

That's all thanks...

ELIA

A basket of French fries.

[Both laugh]

BARTENDER

Okay. Be right back.

AIMEE

[Sighs] You know, of the short time Luke and I were together, what I think about the most is the day that I ditched Micah for him. I mean, I know we were just kids, but I don't know if I'll ever forgive myself for that. If I hadn't left her there, maybe she wouldn't have gotten hurt. Maybe she wouldn't be having these nightmares. Maybe we wouldn't have stopped being friends.

ELIA

I mean, you can't blame yourself for that. You couldn't have known.

AIMEE

Yeah, I guess.

ELIA

So you two were like, really close, huh?

AIMEE

Yeah, like sisters. Our houses were catty-corner from each other. So after school, she was always at my house or I was at hers. You know, the kind of friendship where you call each other's parents by their first names, grab whatever you want out of the fridge, and walk in the side door without knocking? Like on TV?

ELIA

Right like, Kimmy Gibbler. Except, you know, her parents probably actually liked you.

AIMEE

[Laughs] Yeah. Sometimes I'd even go over there to hang out with her. And she'd be out somewhere and I'd just sit and watch TV in the living room until she got back, you know?

ELIA

Uh, yeah, no, I'm not familiar with that situation, because my parents are Portuguese, so... we don't really do that. [Laughs]

AIMEE

Fair enough. But yeah, it was nice. Our moms were really close, too so we'd do cookouts and stuff in the summer, pizza and game nights on Fridays. We'd get together as a group and then Micah and I would split off to go ride bikes or hole up in a bedroom trying to choreograph dance moves. Really, really poor dance moves. Micah has zero rhythm.

ELIA

[Laughing] Yeah, and it pisses Ava off real bad.

AIMEE

[Laughs] I'm sure. I'm pretty athletic, but I have the grace of a rhinoceros, so the whole thing was a mess. Our moms would drink wine and trade work stories. Ava always had the funniest hospital stories. And my mom worked for the town, so she knew everything about everyone. Our dads would go out and either check out what Nolan was working on in this shed, or my dad would show him his latest woodworking project, whatever he had going on in the basement.

ELIA

So your dads were good friends too?

AIMEE

Mm, I wouldn't say that. You know, my mom and Ava? For sure. They chatted on the phone, went to lunch together, stuff like that. Our dads just generally enjoyed each other's company. I don't think they would have ever hung out if it wasn't for our family get-togethers.

ELIA

Right. Gotcha. And Micah said you have a brother too?

AIMEE

Yeah, I did. Uh... I do. I do.

ELIA

Where did he fall into all that?

[Pause]

[AIMEE sighs]

ELIA

Is everything okay?

AIMEE

Yeah, uh... I'm okay. Um... Brendan, is - that's my brother. I don't know how much Micah told you about him. But it's been a long time since I've actually talked to him.

ELIA

She didn't really tell me anything beyond that you had a brother, but um... I'm sorry to hear that.

AIMEE

Yeah. He was a really great brother growing up. He was always looking out for me, but like, not in that dumb way were some big brothers try to be intimidating. You know, they're like, [Lowers voice] "Treat my sister wrong, and I'll beat your ass."

ELIA

Ha, right.

AIMEE

Yeah, no, he- he let me live my life. Learn my lessons. But um, he was always there when I needed him.

ELIA

So what happened?

[Silence]

I'm sorry. No. I shouldn't have asked that, that was really rude.

AIMEE

No, no. It's totally fine. I just... no one's really ever asked me that outside of my therapist's office. So it's hard to say, really. Brendan was this amazing football player. He was offered a full ride from a few different schools, and he chose Rutgers. But then he quit his sophomore year, and our parents just flipped out.

You know, it wasn't about the scholarship money. They could afford it. I mean, they covered half my tuition at Penn State. But he was just so dedicated to football for so long. And he just quit one day without a reason. And they just wanted to know why. Then he started acting weird toward our parents.

ELIA

Like, weird how?

AIMEE

He lived in an apartment off campus. But he'd come home, like almost every weekend. And...

ELIA

Aimee, you really don't have to tell me this, if it's... if it's too hard, you know?

AIMEE

Do you have siblings, Elia?

ELIA

Yeah, three. I'm- I'm the oldest.

AIMEE

Hm. Brendon and I told each other everything. But after he quit school, he also started dropping out of my life. His calls and emails became fewer and farther. He wasn't brash with me like he was with our parents. He'd say he was sorry, he'd make it up to me, and not to worry about him.

ELIA

Worry about what?

AIMEE

I don't know. One day I tried to call him and his phone had been disconnected. I sent an email and it bounced back.

ELIA

I'm really sorry, Aimee. I don't...

AIMEE

I felt like I would never see or talk to my brother again. Technically, I haven't. But one day, a few months after I realized his phone was shut off, I got an envelope in the mail. It was just a picture of him in front of an old VW bus in the desert or something. On the back in his handwriting said, "I'm okay. I'm sorry. I love you."

ELIA

And so that's the last you heard of him. Like, when was that?

AIMEE

No, actually, he sends me postcards from time to time. Sometimes I'll get three in a week. And then other times it's radio silence for like, eight months. It's been going on for nearly 20 years. Grand Canyon, Sequoia, Route 66, a bunch of no-name places that I'm surprised they even have postcards for. All over. I guess he's traveling the country in that bus searching for something. I just wish I knew what, and that he felt like he could talk to me about it.

ELIA

I don't even know what to say. I don't know what I would do if like, if any of my siblings just dropped off like that.

AIMEE

You figure it out. You deal. Some days are easier than others.

ELIA

Yeah, I guess.

AIMEE

Tell me about your family.

ELIA

Uh... Are you sure?

AIMEE

Absolutely. We're supposed to be getting to know each other. Right?

ELIA

Ha. Yeah, right. Well, like I said, there's four of us, me, and then Jessica is 30. And Andrew and Ashley are twins. And they're... 27 now.

AIMEE

Must have been fun growing up with a big family.

ELIA

Yeah, I mean, it had its moments. We outnumbered my parents, so that was useful. Well, it still can be useful. [Both laugh] You know, I don't resent anything at all because I love my family. But being the oldest of a gaggle of kids kind of turns you into a pseudo-parent, at some point.

You know, my parents worked their asses off to give us a good life, so as soon as I was old enough not to need my own babysitter, they saw an opportunity to kind of, you know, save some money. So kind of starting around age 12, I would come home from school and you know, I was the babysitter. And then again on weekends, if my parents both happened to pick up extra shifts at the same time.

Um, but now that I'm saying this out loud, I'm actually realizing that cooking for a big group of people every night and never having a weekend to myself is probably the reason why I'm like, a really good chef.

AIMEE

[Laughs]

ELIA

No, I'm very good, actually. It's not a joke.

[Both laugh]

But yeah, and none of them can cook for shit. So yeah, makes sense.

AIMEE

So what are your siblings like?

ELIA

Well, Jess is an amazing musician. She can play like seven different instruments and her voice is incredible. You'd probably like Ashley, she's a really great athlete. She played volleyball. She was on the swim team. And Andrew is just... wildly smart. It's actually kind of annoying. Um, he's an engineer, and that's basically all I know. So don't ask me what he actually does, because I have not a fucking clue.

[Both laugh]

AIMEE

And you said your parents are, um, Portuguese?

ELIA

Yeah. They came here in the early '70s. And, you know, my mom still has family back there. My dad's siblings and everything are in southern Mass. They're mostly all here.

AIMEE

That's really cool.

ELIA

Yeah.

AIMEE

So did you get everything you wanted to out of this visit? I don't really feel like we talked about Luke that much.

ELIA

[Fake whispers] I'm not gonna lie to you, Aimee. I mean, yeah, I wanted to know about Luke, but I mostly was trying to scope you out to see if you were legit or not.

AIMEE

Well, I'm not gonna lie either, Elia. [Fake whispers] I knew that.

ELIA

Oh, shit. Busted.

[Both laugh]

ELIA

Um, so are you- are you hungry? Are you in a rush to get back? We can go get dinner somewhere. It's gonna start getting crowded in here pretty soon.

AIMEE

You just ate a whole basket of French fries.

ELIA

I mean, we both did. They were table French fries...

AIMEE

But I didn't have any

ELIA

Okay, well, French fries are just a snack. So do you want to get dinner or not?

AIMEE

[Laughs] Sure, sure. Lead the way, you're the expert. What's good?

[VOLUME BEGINS TO FADE OUT]

ELIA

Okay, well, one question before we can actually be friends. Do you like oysters?

AIMEE

Yeah. Duh.

ELIA

Okay, yeah. Then we're gonna go to the Providence Oyster Bar.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

ELIA

Hi. Hey, people listening out there... eventually... because it's not live... I don't know what the fuck I'm doing. This feels really ridiculous. Um. I'm in my empty apartment talking to the void because this is what Micah does after her podcast episodes. So let's go...

I don't know if I got enough out of Aimee to make an episode, but what the hell? We'll figure it out, I guess. But the reason I recorded my meet up with her is because I wanted to get some info out of her and kind of scope out her intentions at the same time. And I thought maybe she would reveal something that, you know... I'd have proof to back up my suspicions.

The whole scenario of her swooping into town at like, just the perfect moment and having a little nugget of information for Micah to grab hold of, and then plus the whole "Oh, yes, I've lived just a hop, skip, and a jump away this whole entire time." It was just way too fucking similar to how Luke appeared in our lives.

And I couldn't ignore that, you know? I ignored that feeling as much as I could when Luke made his way into the picture. I mean, not completely. I was def salty to him from the very beginning. But um, I don't know when he and Micah got all chummy... and I was salty with her too, I guess. But I didn't come between them or try to tell her what to do.

Or maybe I did tell her not to see him once? But whatever. She didn't listen, and I didn't push too hard. And I'm angry at myself because if I did let more of my big-sister-mama-bear side lash out, he wouldn't have stirred up all this shit. And I

really was all amped up to break Aimee and interrogate her, get her to confess, run her out of town... out of New England even. But she's just too goddamn charming.

I don't think it's an act either, which is kind of infuriating. We actually had a pretty good time at dinner, after the bar. I'm not like 100% on board with the Aimee train, but I'm like 97% on it, I guess.

That whole story with her brother, man... oof. Like I said to her, I have no idea what I would do if one of my siblings or any of my family members, or Micah or Devon just, you know, disappeared, essentially. And I can't stop thinking about it, honestly. It's just really strange.

And it makes sense that Aimee would want Micah to continue on this journey of finding out what happened to her as a kid, and what's going on with that detective guy and all his lies. Poor Aimee's probably been wracking her brain since her brother went away, trying to make connections and solve this sort of, I don't know... mystery about him.

But if she can't do that, then helping Micah solve *her* mystery is probably the next best thing. I don't know, maybe- maybe I'm reaching here. All I know is I'm still not fully comfortable with Micah going down another rabbit hole. But at least this time, I don't feel so weirded out by the person who's guiding her there.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[OUTRO MUSIC]

Transcribed by [Evelyn Archer](#)

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