

Season 3: Episode 11

"Stories from Before, Part 2"

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how it ends



NETWORK INTRO

Rusty Quill Presents...

STEPHANIE [Voiceover]

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[INTRO MUSIC FADE IN]

MICAH [Voiceover]

That feeling when you hear someone call your name and you turn, but no one's there, and shiver runs down your spine. When something moves just out of vision and it sets in. The sense that someone, or something is watching you. Do you know that feeling? Good. It means you're paying attention.

I'm Micah Jones. My friends and I started this podcast to explore my dreams and nightmares and to help me finally deal with my dad's death, even after all this time. Instead, we stumbled onto something much darker, something we were never meant to find out. My dreams aren't just dreams. They're memories. Warnings. I should have paid closer attention. And my dad? He's at the center of it all.

The How it Ends Podcast is no longer releasing in real time. We can't. It isn't safe. But if you're just finding us, start at the beginning. Thank you for listening.

[INTRO MUSIC FADE OUT]

INTRO

The events that are about to unfold occurred between March 20 and March 23, 2020.

[SCENE TRANSITION]
[INTERIOR CAR MOTOR]

MICAH

Hey, Aimee. Uh... You've been quiet for a while. Kind of a long while. You okay? I know that was...

ELIA

I don't even know what the fuck that was.

MICAH

Yeah.

ELIA

I... I don't know. I- I... We just- We just had to get out of there.

MICAH

We've kind of been driving for a long time, El. Where are we even going?

ELIA

I don't know. I just... drove north. Does it matter?

MICAH

No. Not really. I'm just mostly curious. Aimee?

AIMEE

Yeah.

MICAH

Are you all right?

AIMEE

[laughs darkly]

I mean...

MICAH

Yeah, I know. A dumb question.

AIMEE

No. No. It's not. I'm just... I mean... Well, I wanted an explanation, and I guess I got it. At least some of it. I don't know. I just can't process it. It really doesn't seem real. I mean, should I believe him? He's my brother, but he's also kind of a stranger.

ELIA

No, that was a fucking lot and you should absolutely be questioning it, you know? It's borderline unbelievable. I mean, obviously something like that could happen, but wh- what are the odds, really? It- It seems like one of those elaborate stories that people make up just to get out of, you know, owning up to doing something really shitty.

MICAH

I don't know. I don't think it's so far outside the realm of possibility.

ELIA

He laid out a story about a secret society with rituals and shit. You- You don't think that's outside the realm of possibility?

MICAH

Well, I think when broken down like that, yeah, I agree it sounds insane. But I'm just trying to take in everything, you know? Everything. What does Brendan stand to gain from lying? And lying this big? There were so many details in that story. Usually that would be a red flag, right? You know, the more details in a story the more far-fetched it probably is, but... But this? Were you watching him as he was telling us? Because I was. I- I just... I watched his hands, you know? His knuckles were white. And he kept squeezing his hands into fists. And- and whenever he would release his grip, they would just shake.

I don't know. I haven't seen Brendan in a long time, even longer than you, Aimee. But everything I remember about him is how comfortable he is in his own skin, you know? Stands tall. Straight. Always meets your eyes. He's just very... very present. And when he was telling that story, every trace of that Brendan vanished. I mean, he looked like a little kid. A terrified little kid.

And then there's what he said, you know? Uh... The story is intense and the implications of it, if it's true... You know, what that would mean for him and what it says about your parents. All those people that were there with them. But most of all, what it means for you, Aimee. I- I just can't see a world where Brendan, even though he's been absent all this time, would come back and tell you a story like that, that could be devastating just for the- the hell of it.

[pause]

So, you know, we left in a hurry. Uh... which means we didn't really... talk... I think we need to talk about the last thing he said.

ELIA

Micah, I don't think-

MICAH

Elia, I- I respect that you want to be protective right now, but it- it's up to Aimee.

AIMEE

Um. What did he say last? Everything is blurring together.

MICAH

He said that he thought you were made to forget. I think that he was saying-

AIMEE

Yeah. I know what he meant.

MICAH

Well, okay. Can we talk about that?

AIMEE

Yeah. Okay.

MICAH

You don't remember the party, for the most part, right?

AIMEE

Yeah. Like I said when we were all talking, some parts I vaguely remember. Some I didn't have any memory of until Brendan mentioned them. Most of it? Nothing. Like, he was telling me it happened, and I was there. But... It's just blank.

MICAH

Right. And he said when they took him his legs felt like lead and it was hard for him to move his arms.

AIMEE

Yeah. He said he hit his head.

MICAH

Yeah. He did. I'm just not sure that hitting your head has those exact side effects.

AIMEE

What are you trying to say, Micah?

MICAH

I'm not trying to say anything. I just think that there are a lot of similarities here.

AIMEE

Similarities to what?

MICAH

To me. We are both missing time under very strange circumstances.

AIMEE

No. Wait. What? No, the story was about Brendan. Not me. I- I was just also there. It was his birthday. He got kidnapped and taken to a weird basement where my parents supposedly forced him into some ritual. So, what? No. That makes no sense, Micah.

MICAH

Well, it didn't make sense to me that I was gone for hours that day in the park.

AIMEE

Okay.

MICAH

Aimee. You can't remember most of an entire day.

AIMEE

So? There are lots of days I don't remember. You can't sit there and tell me you have a perfect recollection of every day you've ever lived.

MICAH

That isn't what I'm saying.

AIMEE

Then what is it? Please, just- just spit it out.

MICAH

I think you were drugged.

[pause]

Brendan said when you got home from that awkward dinner, your mom wanted the both of you to have tea with her before going to bed. Do you remember doing that?

AIMEE

No. I- I- I don't think so.

MICAH

And that night you slept through several people coming into your- your house, going into Brendan's room, which is right next to yours, and dragging him out of bed. He said he slammed his head on the floor when they pulled him by his legs.

ELIA

She was asleep, okay? After a really long, exhausting, weird day. And- and- Yeah, okay. It was the next room over, but didn't you have, like, a really big house?

MICAH

Yeah. Sort of. And it would be a great explanation for why she didn't wake up, if we didn't know that the walls in Aimee's house are incredibly thin.

Aimee, we had so many sleepovers at your place when we were kids. Remember how we used to stay up as late as we could sometimes to see if Brendan would sneak out with his friends? You know, we could always hear him moving around in his room and we would count the number of footsteps it took for him to get out of bed and walk to the hallway. I don't know why, but I still remember that it took him 18 steps to get to the top of the stairs. And sometimes when we were a little bit older, he would ask us to cover for him, remember? So we would listen to see if your parents were awake and moving around. And if they were, one of us would tiptoe into his room and lay in his bed and... just to make it look like someone was in there, in case your dad ever came to check.

AIMEE

Micah, I- I can't...

MICAH

I know. Trust me. I get it. But I- I think we just... We have to face this, you know? Say what it is. We can go slow. I don't want to push you into something you're not ready for, so obviously, it's at your pace. But when we do, we have to look at the information we're being given.

Isn't that what you said to me? I mean, what you all said to me? I don't feel great about this idea that something like this happened to me either. But if we're going to piece together what's going on, we have to at least consider every option.

[pause]

I don't think Brendan would say that to you if it wasn't true.

ELIA

All right. But if they both drank tea with their mom, why is Aimee the only one who can't remember anything? You know, Brendan's mind is clear.

AIMEE

I think it was already poured.

ELIA

But you said you didn't remember having the tea with her.

AIMEE

I think I might. I think I remember walking into the kitchen and seeing cups at the counter. And- and Brendan was already there, drinking from his.

ELIA

Okay, still. Why does he have memories from that night and you don't?

MICAH

They needed him to be able to wake up. To participate.

AIMEE

And I was never supposed to know.

[pause]

ELIA

[sighs]

Okay. So I really don't know where I'm going anymore and I think we just passed a sign that said, "Amherst." So... I'm going to turn around and start heading back.

AIMEE

I don't think I'm really ready to go back yet.

ELIA

Yeah. I figured. Um... what if we just stopped to get a quick bite to eat? You know, get a drink? I'm driving, so if you want to catch a buzz, blow off some steam...

AIMEE

Honestly, I'm feeling pretty sick to my stomach.

MICAH

That's because you only had coffee today. Your stomach's probably churning. Uh... You know what? Getting something to eat isn't a really a bad idea.

ELIA

Okay. Cool. Um... I'll just get us back into Providence and we can find somewhere to go from there. And then whenever you're ready, Aimee, that's when we'll go back to the apartment.

MICAH

Does that sound okay?

AIMEE

Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

[INTERIOR SOUND OF TURN SIGNAL]

[pause]

MICAH

Okay. I'm going to say something and it's probably going to piss you off, but you need to hear me out, okay?

AIMEE

What now?

ELIA
Micah, can this wait?

MICAH
It can't.

ELIA
But...

MICAH
Elia, please. Um... I think Brendan may have had a good reason to leave and to stay away for so long.

AIMEE
Are you fucking serious right now?

ELIA
Micah, what the hell?

MICAH
Aimee. I think he was protecting you.

AIMEE
How? From what? Our parents? If they actually did this to him, then how could leaving me alone with them make me safer?

MICAH
He said that they told him not to tell anyone, right? Not even you? "Especially not you," those were his exact words.

AIMEE
And?

MICAH
I guess what I mean is, Brendan was always your protector. He arguably maybe even raised you better than Gail and Simon, you know? He wouldn't have left you there if he thought the alternative was worse.

AIMEE

How could taking me with him have been worse?

MICAH

That's a question for him. I don't know. Maybe they threatened him, or someone was after him. Or they would send someone after him if he took you. We don't know. You know, he's only gotten part of his story out. Also he was a 20-year-old guy trying to escape a very weird and scary situation, and you were still in high school. What was he supposed to do?

AIMEE

Okay. Fine. But why this long? I'm not a kid anymore and neither is he.

MICAH

You're right. And again, that's another question only he can answer. I'm not trying to convince you to forgive him or forget what he did. Definitely not. I'm- I'm trying to, you know, piece all this together. And I can- I can only do that by seeing his perspective and yours.

Like I said, I've been watching him since he showed up. You know, all through that conversation, there's a real pain there, Aimee. I can see it when he looks at you. At the very least, I can tell that it hurts him to know how much he hurt you. And while it doesn't answer any of our questions, nor does it excuse choices that he made, it's clear that he came back for the same reasons that he left. To keep you safe.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[FOOTSTEPS]

MICAH

Listen. All we can do is take the information people give us and try to make sense of it. At some point, we have to decide who we can trust.

ELIA

Um... What are you...? Are- are you still talking about Brendan, or...?

MICAH

Uh... I- I think Luke may not be telling us everything he knows.

AIMEE

What do you mean?

MICAH

Well... You know, I- I told you guys how I called John Buckley on my way to New Jersey?

AIMEE and ELIA

Yeah. Yeah.

MICAH

Well, he called me back not too long ago. I didn't hear my phone, so I- I didn't talk to him, but he left a voicemail.

ELIA

Well, what did he say?

MICAH

And... Well... John said he thinks that I'm searching for something. He actually suspects that we're looking into my dad's accident, and he wants to help. You know, he started the- the voice mail by telling me a story about something strange that happened to my dad before he died. And... I don't know, something that my dad made him promise to keep it secret.

AIMEE

What was it?

MICAH

Um... Well, he said that my dad, like, took a walk or a hike and when he got back to his truck, his tires were all slashed and when he went to go look at them--

ELIA

Okay, but Luke. What did he have to say about Luke?

MICAH

I was getting to it, but all right. Uh. Well. So, he tells me this story and then he went to hang up and then, like, almost as an afterthought he said that Luke called him.

AIMEE

What?

ELIA

And how did he even get his number?

MICAH

I... I don't... Actually, I- I have no idea. Um... John said that Luke was asking questions about my dad, that he told him he was working on a project for my mom's birthday. And, I guess, they talked for a little while, but then after John and I spoke on the phone, he sort of figured out... Or he assumed that Luke was full of shit.

AIMEE

Did you ever call John back?

MICAH

So I haven't actually gotten the nerve to do it yet. Um. I don't really know how to tell him what- what we're doing. Like, where would I even start? And- And, you know, now that Luke is here, you know, maybe I won't have to confront him. Maybe he'll... I don't know, maybe he'll say something.

ELIA

Yeah. He's got a lot of stuff he needs to say.

[pause]

AIMEE

Is this where we're going?

ELIA

Oh, yeah. After you.

[DOORS OPEN]

[DOORS CLOSE]

[INTERIOR BAR SOUNDS]

AIMEE

This place is cool. Where's the host?

ELIA

Oh, no. It's all seat yourself. You know, German beer garden style? So, all the tables are communal. We can do bar or- or one of the tables.

AIMEE

Let's get a table.

ELIA

All right. There's an empty one in that far corner over there. Let's go snatch it so we don't have to sit with anyone.

[SOUNDS OF SEATING]

AIMEE

So what's good here?

ELIA

Well, the menu changes semi-regularly. It... I don't think I've had any of this. You pretty much can't go wrong, though. The mussels sound good.

MICAH

Maybe we should just get a few things to share. It might save some time.

AIMEE

Works for me. Is that the drink menu?

ELIA

Yeah. And, uh... the draft beers are up on that board over there. Actually, you know what? What do you two want to drink? I'll just go up, order some food, if- if you're both cool with that?

AIMEE

Yeah. Sounds good.

MICAH

Uh. Yeah. I- I can't even focus right now. Um... What's up there? Yeah. I'll just- I'll get my regular pale.

AIMEE

I'll take the sour.

ELIA

All right. Got it. I'll be back.

[ELIA'S FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY]

AIMEE

So are you going to ask Luke about John when we get back?

MICAH

Uh. Yeah. I think so. Um... But I- I think I want to let him do some talking first, you know? Before I kind of offer up any information, you know? Maybe he'll just tell me on his own.

AIMEE

Right. Yeah. Give him less of a chance to make something up.

MICAH

Mm-hmm (affirmative) But uh... What do you think you're going to do... uh, when you get back? It seemed like Brendan had a little bit more-

RINA

Hi. Um. Sorry. Is it cool if we sit at your table? Everything else is full.

AIMEE

Oh, yeah. Of course.

MICAH

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AIMEE

Let me move my bag.

RINA

Thanks. Once again, so sorry to intrude.

MICAH

No, no. You're fine. It's community seating.

RINA

I'm Rina. This is my partner, Vallon.

VALLON

Hey. What's good, y'all?

MICAH

I'm Micah. That's Aimee. And our friend Elia is... She's coming.
She went to order--

ELIA

No. This place is so nice and the food is so good but every time
I come here, I feel like I'm at the freaking Olive Garden
because of these buzzers.

VALLON

You know what they say? When you're here, you're family, right

ALL

[laugh]

ELIA

Exactly. Yeah. Hi.

VALLON

Hey.

MICAH

Elia, this is Vallon and Rina.

VALLON

For real, though. I thought the same thing when we ordered. This is our first time here.

ELIA

Yeah, that's cool. It's a great place.

AIMEE

The sour's really good. How's yours, Micah?

MICAH

I get the same thing most of the time, so I don't have to be disappointed. So, I kind of like it.

ELIA

Yeah, that's just Micah's way of saying she's boring when it comes to--

MICAH

You know what? I would like for you to be nice, please.

ELIA

Okay.

AIMEE

Ignore them. Are you both new to Providence? Or are you just trying out a new spot?

RINA

Uh, a little of both, actually. Uh... we moved here in the middle of December last year. We've tried a few places, but we haven't had much time to explore yet. But are you all from here?

AIMEE

Well, technically, I don't live here--

ELIA

Yet. She doesn't live here yet.

AIMEE

[laughs]

Yet. I'm thinking of moving to Providence soon. I'm here a lot because of these two.

MICAH

Uh, yeah. I'm a transplant, too. But I've been here since college, so practically forever.

ELIA

And I'm Rhode Island born, Rhode Island bred. And when I die, I'll be Rhode Island dead.

ALL

[laugh]

MICAH

Yeah. Elia's a lifer. But Providence is a little like Hotel California, if you know what I mean? I didn't expect to be here this long, and here I am, so..

ELIA

Well, it's the best. Why would you want to go anywhere else?

VALLON

I got offered a job here, and you know, so far it's been pretty good. I guess we'll see about it.

RINA

I like it here so far. We didn't live together before, and now we do. That's... that's good enough for me.

ELIA

Okay, well that's adorable.

ALL

[laugh]

RINA

Living together is a big deal. We've only been dating for a year or so.

ELIA

Eh... I mean... I've got a few friends who moved in after a few months, so I don't...

MICAH

Yeah. Friends. It's her. You don't have to cover it up, Elia. You like to move fast.

ELIA

Shut up.

VALLON

[laughs]

Listen, I get it. My job change made the decision for us, but I'm not complaining.

AIMEE

How did you two meet?

[BUZZER SOUNDS]

RINA

[stutters]

Oh. Um. We were sort of-

VALLON

Our food is up. Be right back.

RINA

Great. Thanks.

[BUZZER SOUNDS]

ELIA

Oh. Ours, too. I ordered a lot. I'm definitely going to need a hand.

MICAH

Of course you did. All right. I'll go.

AIMEE

I'll help. Elia, sit. We can get it.

ELIA

Cool with me.

[FOOTSTEPS]

RINA

Okay. My curiosity's getting the better of me. What is that thing?

ELIA

What's what...? Oh. Shit. Um. At the expense of sounding like a real creep, it's uh... a voice recorder?

RINA

Oh. Uh... For?

ELIA

[sigh]

So... Micah has a podcast. Well, we all have a podcast. But it's mostly Micah. We help, though, you know? Me and Aimee and our friend, Devon, too. Uh. He's- He's not here right now.

RINA

I see that. Yeah. So what's it about?

ELIA

It's... kind of a long story. And we're actually... You know what? We don't need to be recording right now. We were having a discussion in the car and it carried over to here, but I'll stop and I'll erase everything. You know, I... I don't want you to be uncomfortable. And... uh. We weren't talking about anything important anyway, so it's fine.

RINA

No, no. Don't be sorry. I was just curious. I know you said it was a long story, but could you tell me the name? I'll give it a shot. I- I listen to podcasts all the time.

ELIA

Uh. Yeah. So it's called How It Ends, but... It's- It's sort of-

MICAH

Oh, shit. We were recording. I'm so sorry. I forgot. We should have shut it off when you sat down, but we-

RINA

No. No. Elia already explained. It's fine as long as Vallon's cool with it.

VALLON

What's going on now?

RINA

They have a podcast and they were recording before we got here. I told Elia I'm okay with it as long as you are.

VALLON

Mm... Fine by me.

MICAH

No. No, we're not going to record ourselves eating. That would be gross. And I'll- I'll shut it off.

AIMEE

El, can you pass me a napkin?

ELIA

Uh... We got- We got- We got to go.

MICAH

What? Why? We just- We just sat down.

VALLON

Listen, we don't care about the recording. It isn't like you're going to use this for your show anyway.

RINA

Seriously, it's okay.

ELIA

No. No. No. We... We have to go. I'm sorry. I don't mean to be rude, but... Aimee, Micah. I think Kieran is here and I... I'm pretty sure I just saw him walk toward the counter. I really don't want to run into him, so we got to go.

AIMEE

Oh, fuck. Okay. Yeah, um. I'll get to-go boxes. He doesn't know me. You just go to the car.

ELIA

Okay. Um. Sorry. Again, I know this makes me look like such a fucking weirdo, but there's some guy here I'm really not comfortable running into. And again, don't mean to be rude. Super nice meeting both of you.

VALLON

No, it's all good. We get it.

RINA

Yeah. It was- It was nice meeting you, too.

ELIA

Again. Yeah. Okay, thanks. Sorry. Um, we're... Micah, are you coming?

MICAH

Well, Kieran doesn't know me, either. I could probably stay and help Aimee carry these to the car.

AIMEE

No, I'll just ask for a bag. Both of you go. I got it.

MICAH

Are you sure?

AIMEE

Yeah. I'll be right there.

MICAH

Uh... Okay. Um. Rina, give me your number. I- I've been new here before, and it can be kind of hard at first. So, uh... maybe I can be some sort of welcome wagon for the both of you one of these days? You know, when we're not running from some creep that Elia knows?

RINA

Oh, sure. It's 609-[redacted]. I'll have to check out your podcast.

MICAH

Uh... Got it. Um. I- I'll text you. Awe- Awesome meeting you both. Welcome to Providence. It's... weird.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

LUKE

Did they text you back?

DEVON

I just tried Elia. Nothing yet.

LUKE

Where could they have gone?

DEVON

Your guess is as good as mine, man.

BRENDAN

Well, if you've got stuff to do, you know, Luke and I can...

DEVON

It's... probably in your best interest to wait it out. If they get back here and you've already bounced, it's... It's not going to be a good look.

LUKE

Listen, Devon. I feel like I need to speak my piece. I been holding in a lot for so long, and not because I wanted—

DEVON

I'm going to stop you right there. You've waited this long, and you've got one shot. Don't fuck it up. Wait until they get back, that's what you said, right? You wanted us all to be here?

LUKE

Right.

[pause]

I do apologize, though. I'll say this same to them when they get back. But since we might all be here for a while, the three of us, I just want to say that at least. I'm sorry. I really did just want to help.

DEVON

Okay. Yeah. Maybe I will have one of those beers. Actually? I'm getting hungry.

BRENDAN

Yeah, I could eat.

LUKE

Yeah. Same.

DEVON

Let's take a walk and grab something to eat. Maybe they'll be back by the time we're done.

BRENDAN

We can go somewhere else if you don't want to—

DEVON

Like I said. I think it's a bad idea for you to split off, right now.

BRENDAN

This is awkward as hell, though. What are we going to do? Just stare at each other?

DEVON

I do not care what you do. We can eat in silence, or talk about the fucking weather like this situation isn't happening. Either way, you're not going anywhere.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

MULDER

[meows]

DEVON

Hey, buddy. You know I have a friend for you to meet. Once he gets settled in a little bit more upstairs, you know... we'll, uh... set up a meet and greet for you.

MULDER

[intense purring]

BRENDAN

So, uh... How long have you been friends with Micah and Elia?

LUKE

Yeah, I know how you guys met. It was when you moved in.

DEVON

Yeah. Heard that on the podcast, did you? I seem to remember us talking about that and airing it.

LUKE

No. Well, yes. But, no. I mean... Yes. I know you did put that out there, but Micah actually told me when we were hanging out a lot.

DEVON

When you were sneaking around and shit, right?

LUKE

Again. Yes and no.

DEVON

Hmm. Anyway. It's been a long while, about six years or so.
Feels like longer.

BRENDAN

From the sound of the podcast, at least what I've heard of it,
y'all are as thick as thieves.

DEVON

We are. They're like family. That is to say, I don't
particularly like it when...

BRENDAN

When people fuck with them, right? I get it. Goose is my sister.
There's no one in the world I care about more than her. Trust
me.

DEVON

You know, I actually believe you. But I'm not the one you'll
need to convince. Why don't you tell me a little bit about
yourselves? I mean, it's true, we don't know how long we're
going to be sitting here. So we might as well, you know, get to
know each other a bit.

BRENDAN

Okay. What do you want to know?

DEVON

Hmm. Yeah. With you, all this stuff we need to talk about is
wrapped up in your family. You were a sports star, weren't you?
Both you and Aimee?

BRENDAN

Yeah. Our dad made us sign up for basically everything until he
could suss out what we were good at. He was... Is controlling like

that. I tried Little League, Rec Basketball, Soccer. You name it, I played it. The only thing that really stuck was football. I started as a peewee in Pop Warner and just kind of kept it going through high school and even into college.

DEVON

Aimee was a soccer star, right? That's what Micah said.

BRENDAN

Yeah, she was. She was fucking amazing to watch. She went to a different high school than I did because she was good enough to play for their team. That school didn't have a football program, anyways.

LUKE

But you were still really close, right?

DEVON

I know Elia called this out earlier, but for two people who spent a lot of time on the road together, y'all really don't seem to know much about each other.

BRENDAN

That's mostly on me.

LUKE

Sure is.

BRENDAN

What do you want from me?

LUKE

I don't know, man. Like, some honesty? When I showed up, I put it all out there and you... You just didn't.

BRENDAN

Listen, I-

DEVON

Well, here's your chance, Brendan. I'll say it: You're a fucking cagey dude. And really, I don't love it. Clearly, Luke doesn't

either. Seems to me it's gone on long enough. And it's not going to get you anywhere with anyone, especially not Aimee.

BRENDAN

I suppose you're right.

DEVON

On with it, then.

BRENDAN

Okay. Yeah, Aimee and I were always close, right from the beginning. It surprised no one more than me, to be honest. I remember finding out that I was going to have a baby sister. And yeah, I was a boy so I was bummed out. I wanted a brother. I wanted someone to knock around and mess with. I thought that because I got a sister I would just instantly hate her.

LUKE

[laughs]

BRENDAN

I was four. My logic wasn't exactly sound.

But I don't know, as she got older she was just... cool. I really liked hanging out with her. Shit, she became someone who would knock me around. We just had a lot of fun.

Micah and I were close, too. We lived down the street from the Jones' and I feel like the two of them just, like, started hanging out pretty early on. She was good at shit. Just not a sports kid. Seriously, don't make Micah do any sports things. It's not safe.

DEVON

[laughs]

Yes. Of that, I am aware.

BRENDAN

They were inseparable for a long time. Then I was sort of left to look after them because my parents were off doing fucking God

knows what... And uh, yeah. I was their de-facto babysitter. Not that they ever really needed it, though.

LUKE

So you were around when Nolan died.

BRENDAN

Yeah, I remember some of that. Mostly that Micah spent a lot of time at our house after the accident. Ava was on her own in more ways than one.

LUKE

What do you remember from back then?

DEVON

Hey, Luke. I said we're not going to get into any of this, right now. The three of them need to be here. They need to hear it.

LUKE

Right. Sorry. Really. I was just following the conversation.

BRENDAN

I could say this: I remember knowing very clearly that his death left a mark on the town.

DEVON

You know, Aimee said something to that effect before. That Nolan was well known, well liked.

BRENDAN

Yeah, but it was more than that. He was like the unofficial Mayor. Nolan grew up in Somerville, went off to college and then came back. But not in that TV show-sad way. Like, the guy who peaked in high school, you know what I mean?

DEVON

Yeah.

BRENDAN

In retrospect, it feels very... local boy made good. Like he came back to his home town because he loved it so much and just...

wanted to do something good for it. I don't know, I feel like I'm waxing philosophical about someone I didn't know all that well. But that's the effect he had on people. He was impossible to dislike. And people didn't just like him, they loved him. And I was old enough to notice how much his death wrecked Micah.

DEVON

I've heard Micah, Aimee, and now you say that. Everyone loved Nolan. And in no way would I ever suggest that he was unworthy of the praise, but I've always wondered... Was it something he did? I mean... he died really young. He was 33. In some ways, that's hardly enough time to leave a legacy as large as the one he seems to have left.

BRENDAN

Hey. I'm not really the authority on him, or anything. I've heard stories. I was around him a lot.

DEVON

What do you mean by "stories"?

LUKE

I could probably jump in here. Eh... I mean, Micah opened up to me a bit. She told me about him.

BRENDAN

I thought you didn't know much about Nolan. That's what you said to John when you called him.

DEVON

Wait. Wait a fucking second. Which John? John Buckley? Nolan's friend?

LUKE

Yeah.

DEVON

You called John?

LUKE

I did. And I'll 'fess up to that, too. But we're waiting on that stuff, remember?

DEVON

Right.

LUKE

Okay. Micah talked about Nolan when we hung out. She told me a lot about him.

DEVON

I find that really hard to believe. She's been one of my best friends for years, and even I don't know that much. She's always avoided the subject. Why would she suddenly talk to you about it and not me or Elia?

LUKE

I don't know. Maybe it was the timing. She was pretty convinced that what we were looking into was connected to Nolan. Maybe it was just... Maybe it just opened the floodgates, so to speak. I don't think it was anything about me. I think she would have told you, too.

DEVON

Sure.

[pause]

LUKE

Anyway. She mostly told me things other people had told her about him. She said that he helped anyone and everyone. He volunteered at local events and organizations. That he was a good steward and a good athlete. But also really involved in clubs in high school. She told me one time somebody stopped her and Ava on the street and went on and on about Nolan. Ava had never seen this person before and had no idea who he was, or how Nolan knew him. Micah said that the man kept saying what a loss it was, how Nolan could have had so much influence if he just accepted—

DEVON

That's fucking weird.

LUKE

Yeah. And Micah said that Ava was not having it, and the guy was sort of fumbling over his words after she called him out on it. He said he was just sad to see the wasted potential. That he should have run for office, and lamented a political career that Nolan never had.

BRENDAN

That's tacky.

DEVON

Yeah. It is. Huh. People say the strangest shit when someone dies. But Micah never told any of this to us. I mean, I wonder what Elia knows. She was in contact with Ava for a long while.

LUKE

Yeah. I remember. That didn't go over very well.

BRENDAN

Is that the day of the argument in the coffee shop?

DEVON

Yes.

BRENDAN

The day you "threatened" Elia?

LUKE

I didn't threaten her, I told you.

DEVON

Going to stop you again.

LUKE

Wasn't even me this time.

DEVON

I know. I'm just saying.

LUKE

Yeah. I mean, the sense I got was that Nolan was generally a great guy, and since Somerville was a small town, it was easy to discover that fact.

DEVON

Yeah. We're sort of off topic. Uh, Brendan, we were talking about you.

BRENDAN

Hey, I'm good with being out of the hot seat. Let Luke take a turn. Or you can.

DEVON

That so?

BRENDAN

Only a suggestion.

DEVON

Hmm.

LUKE

It's fine. What do you want to know?

DEVON

Well, you disappeared before any of us got the chance to know much of anything. I only know that you ran into us in Salem. You occupied a lot of Micah's time. The coffee shop happened. And then you bounced. So the world is your oyster, man.

LUKE

Um... Well. You know I dated Aimee—

DEVON

And that you're friends with Mark's son, Tim.

LUKE

Uh, yeah. I heard Aimee tell you that.

DEVON

That's right.

LUKE

I mean, I could talk about that a bit. But doesn't that cross over into "we need to wait" conversation?

DEVON

Some of it does, and you're smart enough to know what parts of it to avoid. Just getting a little tired of doing this dance. Like I said, man. I know fuck all about you. You've been spending an exceeding amount of time around or involved in the lives of people I care about, in a less than straight up manner. Throw me a bone, here. Give me the rundown.

LUKE

All right. Um. I grew up in Bradley Gardens. It's part of the greater Bridgewater/Raritan area. Nothing wrong with it really. But, you know, the families around where I lived weren't friendly with each other. Nothing like you had Brendan. Um...

DEVON

Going to need more than that.

LUKE

All right. Just give me a minute, okay? I'm thinking, here.

Uh, I guess kind of did similar stuff, like sports. I played baseball growing up. Other than that I mostly kept to myself. I was a bookworm kind of kid. I was on my own a lot.

DEVON

You an only child?

LUKE

Uh—

BRENDAN

How long did you play baseball?

LUKE

Um. I started pretty young. Played through sophomore year of high school. Uh... That's actually where I met Tim. We played Little League together, and then later ended up on the same AAU team. We were teammates in high school, too.

BRENDAN

Dang, you must have been pretty good if you ended up on an AAU team.

LUKE

Yeah, I guess. When I started I was super into it. I used to collect baseball cards, follow games on TV with my dad. He used to play when he was younger, so it was, you know... It was our thing. But then things kind of took a turn, and um... It just became something to do, something that kept me out of the house. Plus, you know, I didn't need a lot of expensive equipment. You know, I could just... You know, a bat and a glove. And I got most of that stuff at Play It Again Sports.

BRENDAN

Oh, shit. The one by ShopRite?

LUKE

Yep. Total lifesaver.

BRENDAN

Yeah, I remember it. I didn't shop there, but I think my parents sold my old gear to them.

LUKE

Yeah. For kids like me to scoop up.

BRENDAN

Shit. That came out wrong. That's not what I meant.

LUKE

No. I know. I didn't, you know, take any offense.

BRENDAN

Uh... so you said that's how you knew Tim Schrade?

LUKE

Yeah. You know, we got to be really good friends after a few years on the same team. After a while, I was just a regular at his family's house. He was really close with his dad, and they always included me in stuff they did together, like going to the cabin for fishing trips. Mark took us to the shooting range once, somewhere in South Jersey. It was fine, but Tim and I kind of hated it. I didn't mind it, though because, you know, they really never asked why I never wanted to be at home.

BRENDAN

Okay.

LUKE

Sorry. Really, I was just saying that to demonstrate that they, you know... They brought me everywhere. I even spent the holidays with them sometimes.

That lasted until I quit the team my sophomore year. I started spending less time there, but we were still close. I just didn't have as much free time.

BRENDAN

Why did you quit?

LUKE

Stuff at home wasn't great. And, you know, my mom needed a lot of help.

BRENDAN

Help, how?

LUKE

Well, my parents didn't really get along for most of my childhood. There was a lot of fighting. My dad was leaving, coming back. Hence, all the book reading and, you know, wanting to be... wanting to be anywhere else.

BRENDAN

Hmm. Okay.

LUKE

That lasted all the way through middle school. Until finally, my mom had enough and they separated my sophomore year. It was finalized a year later.

DEVON

I'm sorry.

LUKE

It's fine. I'm sure I sound awkward, but it's not because it's hard to talk about. It just never comes up. No one's really ever asked me about it, so I've never, you know, had to explain it. Well, Tim did ask once. But... That might be it.

My parents didn't really come to my games. The one time they did show up together, you know, I was surprised but kind of excited. I thought they're... Things would be different and that they were getting back together and smoothing things over. But having them there just made me nervous and I started to make stupid mistakes. My dad started yelling at me from the stands, and my mom shouted at him to stop. It was a whole scene. At one point, the ump stopped the game, walked over, asked them to calm down. My dad just lost it and started screaming. A few of the other dads had to drag him away. I just kept my head down, but you know, I could feel my teammates looking at me. Tim told them fuck off and pay attention to the game.

We were packing up and Tim asked if it was always like that. And I kind of just shrugged and said, "Yeah." After that, he invited me to pretty much everything at his house. You know, even more so than usual. Um...When I quit the team in high school, he tried talking me out of it. He didn't push too hard, but- but he tried.

He knew it was because I needed to get a part-time job to help with my mom. Pay some bills after dad leaving.

DEVON

You still talk with your dad?

LUKE

No.

[pause]

DEVON

So. You and Mark were close, then?

LUKE

Yeah. In a way.

BRENDAN

What do you mean?

LUKE

Well, it wasn't like I told him my hopes and dreams, but... He was good when he was around. And he never made me feel like I was some random kid. Like I was a freeloader, you know? He just assumed I was going to be there and made space for me.

DEVON

Hmm.

BRENDAN

You haven't said much about Tim's mom.

LUKE

Uh... Yeah. No, I guess I haven't. She was busy a lot so I didn't really see her too often. But when I did she was always nice to me.

DEVON

And we haven't really discussed how you fell in with Mark. Um... I heard the recording of your argument with him and... I could tell—

BRENDAN

I thought we weren't talking about this stuff until Micah, Elia and Aimee got back.

DEVON

We aren't. You know, I'm just asking about—

LUKE

Yeah. I know what you're asking about. I...

DEVON

Yeah. Yeah.

[pause]

BRENDAN

So did you go to college?

LUKE

No. I couldn't afford it. Didn't want to deal with the loans. Got a part time job at this mom and pop computer repair shop. The owner was crazy smart. You know, taught me a bunch of stuff. Plus, access to the internet helped me learn. Eventually I taught myself to code, mostly via trial and error and been doing that ever since. It's worked out pretty well. It's flexible. Money's good. You know, and I can still help out my... help out with mom when I can.

BRENDAN

Yeah, I kind of ended up in a similar spot. With work, I mean.

LUKE

Yeah, it's funny how that happens. We arrived at the same spot, but... you know, just took different roads to get there.

BRENDAN

When we were in Tahoe, you said you didn't think Tim knew you'd heard about Mark. Are you still friends?

LUKE

Yeah, I'd say we are. But not as close. Not because anything in particular happened, but I graduated a year before he did and then went to school somewhere in Pennsylvania. It's like, you know. Life. We saw each other in passing not too long ago, but it just wasn't a good time.

BRENDAN

Was that when—

LUKE

—What about you, Devon? You got some weird family stuff to share? Or...?

DEVON

Uh... Weird? Huh. No. Not really.

LUKE

Well, I mean it doesn't have to be weird. I was just trying to open up the floor to someone else. Sort of ready for a break from talking about myself.

DEVON

Hmm. Yeah. Sure. Sure. Um... Hmm. Well, I uh... grew up in Providence on the Cranston line, close to Roger Williams Park. I'm an only child, but, uh... I have lots of cousins. There are a few who live in town, actually. But the majority of them live elsewhere, you know? Mostly in the Midwest. You know, around Detroit.

LUKE

Ah, that's cool. I think Micah said you were a local, too.

DEVON

Yeah. My dad is a civil engineer. He, uh... He works in Boston. My mom is an Art History professor over at RISD.

LUKE

Yeah, Micah told me that, too. I remember her saying that you're the smartest person she knows. Now I get why, not that I doubted it.

DEVON

Ah... no. She was probably just being nice.

I can say that they're probably both the reason I'm introverted because they both are. Don't get me wrong though, when family gets together it's a good time. My mom is one of four sisters

and my dad has two brothers and a sister. All of them have kids, and even some of their kids have kids of their own. Most of them live in Michigan or near Illinois, but... So, I mean... we don't see each other that often but on occasions when we can get together, you know... It's a lot of fun. It gets a little crazy, you know. But in the best way.

LUKE

Sounds nice. I always wanted a big family.

DEVON

Yeah. It is. But I grew up here, so I was on my own a bit, too. There was other stuff I had to deal with.

LUKE

Yeah?

DEVON

Yeah, I mean... in a way, I was always... Well. I always felt like I was between worlds, I guess.

LUKE

What do you mean?

DEVON

Well, there weren't a lot of kids on my street back then, so... You know, I kind of end up being a bookworm and video game nerd. Anytime I wasn't doing that, I was hanging out with my cousins who lived on the other side of town, went to a different school than I did. I always felt like I didn't fit in fully, you know? Either at school or even with my cousins. You know, none of them did anything specifically that, you know, would make me feel that way.

LUKE

What was it, then?

DEVON

What was what? The reason I felt like that?

LUKE
Yeah.

DEVON

Yeah. Well, I guess... Subconsciously, they kind of held me at a distance. You know, everyone in the family talked about me like I was special.

My aunt used to say, you know, "That one? He's been here before." Like I'm an old soul, you know? They tried to shield me from hard stuff, but it didn't really work.

I guess now I know it's probably because I seemed a little bougie to them, you know, because of my mom and dad, what they did for work, but... Wasn't malicious. Just an unspoken thing. But even with that, I was able to clock that early on. So I found myself doing stuff to try to make that feeling go away, to... You know, to fit in.

I got good at reading people, figuring out what they wanted, what their needs were. Doing what I could to kind of attend to that. Like, yeah, getting my aunt to take me and my cousins to a movie, or let us stay out later at the park, you know? If I was going to be getting that kind of reverence, you know, I wanted to make sure my cousins felt that... a bit of that shine, too.

LUKE
Tim was kind of like that.

DEVON

Hmm. Yeah. You know, but... even with cousins, I still wished I had siblings. I always wanted someone I could just hang out with and I could know they would be there, you know?

[sigh]

But I got used to being on my own.

LUKE
Did you play any sports in school?

DEVON

[chuckles]

No, not in school. I was never good enough for that. But, um... I do love basketball. I try to catch games when I can, and uh... I still play most weeks over at the JCC with some buddies.

BRENDAN

I heard on the podcast that you're also an artist?

DEVON

Yeah. Mostly printmaking, you know. Graphic design. I paint sometimes, but uh... I haven't done that for a while. Actually been getting into fabrication a bit. You know, there's an arts organization downtown that has a FabLab. Luke, I think you'd dig it. In fact, they had a Fab Academy program that I, uh... learned a lot from a while back. There's some really cool stuff.

LUKE

Sounds really cool

DEVON

Yeah. Yeah, it was. Unfortunately, I don't think they do the program anymore, but... Glad I got it in when I did.

LUKE

That's why I sent those packages to you.

DEVON

I'm sorry. What was that?

LUKE

That's why the packages were sent to you. Um... Between what little I knew of you and what Micah said, I figured you were the person who'd be able to piece things together.

DEVON

Yeah. I guess. You know, I went to Wyoming because of you, right?

LUKE

Uh, yeah. Sorry.

DEVON

It's fine. Water under the bridge.

[pause]

Well, I realize we skipped right over your whole deal, Brendan.
You mostly talked about Aimee.

[CAR PULLS IN, SHUTS OFF]

BRENDAN

Sounds like they're back.

LUKE

Yeah.

BRENDAN

You're up.

LUKE

I guess I am.

[CAR DOORS OPEN AND SHUT]

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[OUTRO MUSIC]

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Transcribed by [Evelyn Archer](#)