

Season 3: Episode 2

“Hear No Evil”

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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]

[Voiceover]

The events that are about to unfold occurred in January, 2020.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[CAR INTERIOR SOUNDS]

UNKNOWN MAN

We should have known this was going to be a wash. Tahoe is tourist central, like year round.

LUKE

Eh. You lucked out with those guys in Idaho.

UNKNOWN MAN

Right. "Lucked out," being the operative phrase, there.

LUKE

What can we do so this isn't a wasted trip? Do we stay another day or two? Keep poking around? There's got to be an area where locals hang out. These can't all be tourists.

UNKNOWN MAN

The only problem with that is we're technically tourists, too.

LUKE

Are we? Or are we more like... investigators? Sounds much cooler.

UNKNOWN MAN

Sure. We're regular Winchesters.

LUKE

Ooh! We could watch a few more episodes if we really have nothing else to do tonight.

UNKNOWN MAN

Hm. We'll see. Find some place to pick up food before we head back to the campground.

LUKE

On it.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[NIGHT TIME OUTDOOR SOUNDS]

LUKE

Maybe if we can't get a hold of any locals to talk to us, maybe we could try a police station. Or like, you know. Just chat up a cop on patrol somewhere. They might know something.

UNKNOWN MAN

Nope. I'm good with cops.

LUKE

Right.

[Pause]

Kind of crazy, what happened to Mark, huh?

UNKNOWN MAN

Yeah, I guess.

LUKE

Even if it was just an accident or whatever, it's pretty sad.

UNKNOWN MAN

I mean. The guy was sketchy, at best. I'm not saying he should have died, but... He definitely wasn't a good person.

LUKE

That was someone's dad, man. Like, I get he's the reason we're both in this situation, but like... I've known him my whole life. He was always good to me. I should really call Tim. He probably doesn't even know that I know.

Listen. I know that Mark wasn't great, I just feel bad for my friend. His mom passed a while ago. Now his dad's gone. Doesn't even have any siblings. Neither do I. I spent a lot of time at the Schrade house as a kid, especially when things weren't going great at mine. So, yeah. Sorry I got defensive. But parents are complicated. Even if they're not the best, or not even good...

They're still your parents.

Look at you. Your parents are still alive and you act like they don't even exist. You never talk about them.

UNKNOWN MAN

We're not going there. All I'm saying is, I wouldn't be surprised if I heard that Mark's death wasn't an accident.

LUKE

I'm not really interested in speculating.

UNKNOWN MAN

Okay. While we're on the subject, there is something I've been wanting to ask you for a while.

LUKE

Sure.

[Pause]

UNKNOWN MAN

Didn't it feel fucked up, hanging out with her? I mean you were basically living some kind of double life for a minute, there. You got one tiny bit of information, and rearranged your whole life to chase it. That seems a little bit over the top.

LUKE

Glass houses, dude.

UNKNOWN MAN

Nah. Seriously. I want to know.

LUKE

[Sighs]

Course I felt fucked up. I mean, at first it didn't feel like that big of a deal because I truly didn't think I'd stay in contact with her.

UNKNOWN MAN

But you did. And from what you've said, it took a lot of effort to make that happen. So, clearly, you got committed to the idea at some point.

LUKE

Yes. Initially, I was just hanging around to get information. I thought after a little while, I'd get it and then be done. The more time I spent hanging out with her, though, I realized I actually did want to be her friend.

UNKNOWN MAN

Was everything you told her true?

LUKE

Yes. I didn't lie to her about that. Only circumstantial stuff.

UNKNOWN MAN

Like where you lived.

LUKE

Sure. The point is, I didn't want to hurt her or friends. And I didn't truly realize I didn't even know until later. Mark was keeping things from me, too.

As far as I can see, it's bigger than all of us now. So that's why I'm here. Trying to help keep everyone safe, even Elia and she hates me.

UNKNOWN MAN

Yeah, from what you said, she's likely gonna be the one you'll need to convince.

LUKE

You have your work cut out for you, too. So, again. Glass houses, dude.

[Pause]

[SOUND OF PAGES FLIPPING]

UNKNOWN MAN

What are you doing?

LUKE

I don't know. Just flipping through some notes I've taken, seeing if there's anything worth looking at again.

UNKNOWN MAN

I'm gonna get a beer.

LUKE

Yeah, get me one, too.

[SOUND OF FRIDGE DOOR OPENING]

Huh. I forgot I wrote down John's number.

[BEER BOTTLES OPENING]

UNKNOWN MAN

Who's John again?

LUKE

That guy Nolan was friends with, you know? The one Micah went to see in New Jersey, a while back?

UNKNOWN MAN

How'd you get his number?

LUKE

Micah had it and I--

UNKNOWN MAN

--Did something shady to get a hold of it?

LUKE

Anyway, I could call him.

UNKNOWN MAN

Do you think he'd talk to you?

LUKE

Possibly. Maybe if I said I was a friend of Micah's. But I don't love lying about that.

UNKNOWN MAN

You've been doing it this long.

LUKE

Okay.

[PHONE DIALING]

[PHONE RINGS]

AUTOMATED VOICE

Your call has been forwarded to an automatic voice message system.

[VOICE MAIL TONE]

AUTOMATED VOICE

...is not available. At the tone, please record your message. When you have finished recording, you may hang up, or press one for more options.

[VOICE MAIL TONE]

LUKE

Hi. I'm looking to speak with John Buckley. My name is Luke James. I'm a friend of Micah Jones. I was hoping to talk to you about her dad, Nolan. She said it was cool if I gave you a call. Whenever you get this, please give me a call back at..

[BLEEP CENSOR TONE]

LUKE

Thanks.

UNKNOWN MAN

She said it was cool, huh? And if she talks to him?

LUKE

I'll have to risk it.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

LUKE

Can you top off my coffee for me?

[SOUND OF COFFEE POURING]

UNKNOWN MAN

What are you planning on doing today?

LUKE

Well, since this place is a no-go, I'm gonna take the day to make some money, and finish up a job. What about you?

UNKNOWN MAN

Yeah, I mean maybe I'll look for some work, too. I don't have anything in progress right now. Or maybe I'll just go explore Tahoe. I mean, we're here. I can rent a snowboard or something.

LUKE

Ah, yeah. That actually sounds better than working. Maybe I'll join you, if that's okay.

UNKNOWN MAN

Whatever you want.

LUKE

All right. Yeah. Well, let me finish my coffee. I'll take a shower and see how I feel.

[CELL PHONE RINGS]

UNKNOWN MAN

Is that...?

LUKE

I think so.

Hello? Yes, this is Luke. Hey, John. Thanks for calling me.

UNKNOWN MAN

[Whispers]

Put it on speaker.

JOHN

[Voiceover, on phone]

So, Micah told you to call me? Is there something specific I can help you with?

LUKE

No, not exactly. I mean, no she didn't ask me to call you. I'm... putting together a collection of memories from people who knew Nolan and Micah.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Oh, for like a birthday present or something?

LUKE

Yeah. Something like that. For Ava's birthday. So... yeah. How long did you know Nolan? Do you have any nice memories of him you'd like to share?

[Pause.]

I'm sorry. I feel like I'm putting you on the spot, here.

JOHN

[V.O.]

No worries. I'm always up for a chat, especially about better days.

I knew Nolan for about ten years. We both started at the Parks Department around the same time. He was just out of college, and came back to Somerville with a wife and little kid. I was kind of bouncing from job to job. Hadn't really landed on what I wanted to do, really. I'm a couple years older than Nolan is, so I was already trying my hand at being an adult and failing miserably. You know how that goes.

LUKE

[Chuckles]

Yeah. Yeah. I guess.

JOHN

[V.O.]

We became friends almost immediately. Once I met Abby - that's my wife - the four of us got pretty close. Ava and Nolan didn't have many relatives in the area, and neither did we. So it was natural to spend a lot of time together, I guess.

LUKE

Right. Yeah. My- My parents have friends like that.

UNKNOWN MAN

[Whispers]

Oh, yeah?

LUKE

[Whispers]

Stop.

JOHN

[V.O.]

I'm sorry?

LUKE

Sorry, not you. My cat was climbing all over me.

Continue. I didn't mean to interrupt.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Not a problem. I have a cat, too. They get into everything.

LUKE

[Chuckles]

Right.

JOHN

[V.O.]

What was I saying?

LUKE

That you and your wife were close with the Joneses.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Right. Yeah. We would go out to dinner often, that sort of thing. Sometimes when we went out, Micah would come with us. Or sometimes she'd stay at a friend's house up the road. We'd do a couples night.

LUKE

Cool. So do you have any memories from those times? Anything that really stands out?

JOHN

[V.O.]

Oh, lots of things. It's funny, you know. Micah asked me a similar question when she came to see me a while back. But all the memories that came to mind... Well... I don't know. I didn't want to tell her about all the dumb shit we did in our twenties. Although, I have to tell you, I was older, but he was definitely more mature than me. So it was really me getting him into trouble. We just were idiots sometimes. But in the most harmless way.

LUKE

[Chuckles]

Like what?

JOHN

[V.O.]

Okay, so... One year on New Year's Eve... I'm not totally sure which year, but we were friends for a while. Abby and Ava wanted to stay in and have a quiet night with Micah. Drink wine, eat fancy little appetizers, and watch Dick Clark on TV. Nolan and I got restless, so they kicked us out.

We wanted to go drink and be merry, I guess? So. Yeah. So we went to this bar, The News Room in Downtown Somerville. Nolan drove us. It was crowded like you wouldn't believe. Music's playing. People are excited. We saw some other co-workers there, and some folks Nolan knew. He knew just about everyone in town.

Anyway, we lost track of time and of our drinks. We were in no condition to drive home. And Ava and Abby asked us to be back before midnight to watch the ball drop.

LUKE

So, how'd you get back?

JOHN

[V.O.]

[Chuckles]

So Nolan looks at me at one point. It's getting close to midnight, and we've got a good 30 minute walk to get back to the house. He says to me, "Hey. Let's get outta here." Now I took the tone to mean, "Hey, we're doing this." Let's... What do they call it? Dine and dash?

LUKE

[Chuckles]

No way.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Yeah, we did. But that- that's not what he meant. He wanted to make it back to Ava so he... forgot about paying. I completely misread his tone, and I said, "Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Let's do this."

The bar was so jammed packed, so no one even noticed us leave.

So anyway, we're about a quarter mile down the road, and I say to him, "Nolan Jones. You're a lot of things, but a rebel? Never would have guessed." And he had no idea what I'm talking about. So I go, "Your idea? Just leave without paying?"

And when I tell you, his whole face dropped. So I'm laughing my ass off, and Nolan's trying to figure out what to do. Should we go back and be late for getting home? Who's going to be more mad at us? Our wives? Or this bar?

So we're practically yelling, not realizing how loud we're being. Next thing we know, a cop pulls us over. We're walking and he actually pulled us over. Lights and sirens and all. He tells us he's taking us in to spend the night and sober up. We spent fucking New Year's Eve in the drunk tank for drunk walking! We tried to bargain with him, but he wasn't buying it.

So we were booked. Called Abby and Ava at the house so they didn't worry. But man. They were pissed. Next morning, Nolan was adamant to go back to the bar and pay our tab. So we did. We picked up his car. We stuffed an envelope of cash under their door with a note saying "Sorry."

It was probably my favorite New Year's Eve, ever.

LUKE

[Chuckles]

That's a... That's a great story. But I don't know if I can include it in the project.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Yeah. Actually, Ava would probably love it. She wasn't too happy the night of. But after some time passed, it ended up being a good story to tell at parties.

LUKE

Then I'll definitely include it. Maybe you have some photos from around that time that you can send me? Or... I'm sure if you want to keep them... Maybe have them scanned? And you can email me the copies? I can cover the cost of getting them scanned. Venmo you some money, or something.

JOHN

[V.O.]

No. Don't worry about the money. It's fine. Yeah, I'll- I'll have to dig around and see what I have.

LUKE

Cool. That should be enough for the project. So I don't know... Maybe some more off-the-record stuff? I've heard a little bit

about Nolan from Micah. But the better sense I have of him while I work on this, the better it'll come out. At least, I think so, anyway.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Other than the occasionally dumb moments, like I just told you about, the best times I had with Nolan were always when we were doing stuff outside. Even working was fun.

Come to think of it, it's probably why I stayed in the job. Went to school for accounting, because that's what my folks wanted me to do. But after I graduated, I couldn't see myself sitting behind a desk for the rest of my life. That's how I landed in Parks and Recreation. But yes, I suppose we can start there.

LUKE

All right. That sounds good.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Other than maintaining a number of public spaces, we did a bunch of "guy's weekends." Camping, fishing, hiking, mountain biking. Mostly went to the Pine Barrens for overnight camping trips. Are you familiar with the area? Have you ever been to New Jersey?

LUKE

Um. Yeah...um. Yep. I've been.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Yeah, so we tried new places every now and then, but the Pine Barrens was really our go-to spot. Did you know that it encompasses somewhere around 20% of all of New Jersey's land mass?

LUKE

I didn't. But that's cool.

JOHN

[V.O.]

So we'd always set up camp in a different location. There are a few campgrounds there. Sometimes we'd stay more in the woods, or closer to water. It all depended on what we wanted to do on that trip. Whatever we--

LUKE

--You know? I camp a lot, myself.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Oh, yeah?

LUKE

Yeah, but. You know... always somewhere with a bathroom and showers and a guest center. In RVs and campers, mostly.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Right. So. Um...

LUKE

I guess what I'm saying is... I think I'd be nervous to just head out into the wilderness and set up camp. So I'm just wondering like... Have you ever seen anything strange out there?

JOHN

[V.O.]

Strange?

LUKE

I don't know. I guess because the Pine Barrens have a bit of a reputation for being creepy? And anytime I think of a dense forest like that, I immediately think about... You know, the creep factor.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Hm. Um.

LUKE

Yeah. You just said that you went there a lot. And I figured maybe... It's an odds game.

UNKNOWN MAN

[Whispers]

Real subtle.

LUKE

[Whispers]

I don't... I just... I'm trying...

JOHN

[V.O.]

Did you say something? I think you might be cutting out. I can't really hear what you're saying.

LUKE

Oh, sorry. I must have moved my mouth away from the phone. Can you hear me now?

JOHN

[V.O.]

Yeah, I can.

LUKE

So, yeah. Anyway.

JOHN

[V.O.]

You know... What you- What you just said about the Pine Barrens kind of triggered a bit of a memory.

LUKE

Oh, yeah?

JOHN

[V.O.]

Yeah, yeah. I've got to run a few errands right now, but can I sit on it for a little bit and give you a call back later?

LUKE

Absolutely. Are you on a phone with caller ID?

JOHN

[V.O.]

Funny. Yeah, I'm old, but I'm not that old. I'll call you back at this number. And if I have some time, I'll look for some old pictures for you, too. Take them to Kinko's this week to get them scanned. Want to give me your email?

LUKE

Yeah. It's-

[BLEEP CENSOR TONE]

JOHN

[V.O.]

Great. Nice talking to you, Luke.

LUKE

Same, John. Thanks a lot.

UNKNOWN MAN

The hell were you doing? Jumping from memories to scary stories just so quickly like that?

LUKE

Listen. I was trying my best. What do you want me to do?

UNKNOWN MAN

Better.

LUKE

Whatever. Maybe his story will be something we can use.

UNKNOWN MAN

Sure, if he ever calls you back.

LUKE

He will.

Are you hungry? I'm hungry.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

JOHN

[Voiceover, on voice mail]

Hey, Luke. It's John. Finally came to me, so I'm calling back to finish my last thought from our conversation earlier.

As I mentioned, we camped in the Pine Barrens quite a bit. Usually, we'd hit the sack early because we would start fishing around dawn. But this one night, we decided to just stay up late, shoot the shit, drink beer. Around one or two in the morning, we hear a noise in the woods. I remember I made jokes about it being the Jersey Devil coming to get us. Stood up, flapped my arms out like a monster.

And the sound stopped, so we sort of forgot about it. Then it started back up again. It was almost like... a humming.

You know, this is weird, leaving this story on the voice mail. Why don't you just give me a call when you can?

[PHONE DIALING]

[PHONE RINGS]

JOHN

[Voiceover, on phone]

Hey, Luke.

LUKE

Hey, John. I got your voicemail. You want to pick up where you left off?

JOHN

[V.O.]

Sure. It's a long story, I didn't want to be talking to your machine forever. Remind me, what's the last thing I said?

LUKE

Um... You and Nolan were around the campfire one night, when you heard a loud humming sound coming from the woods. You guys were making Jersey Devil jokes and singing.

JOHN

[V.O.]

Right. Right. So... I started singing along to the humming sound, just being goofy. I think I said that we were being serenaded by the monsters of the swamp.

Nolan laughed, but he seemed agitated with me. He said that the humming was getting in his ear and driving him mad. I didn't really think it was that bad, though. I told him maybe it was someone's generator in one of the RVs nearby. We were pretty tucked away, and it was late October, which is basically the end of the season. But we saw a couple of RVs on the way in, so it made sense to me.

Nolan wouldn't let this go. He wanted to go find the source of the noise. We got up and started walking into the woods. I knew it was a bad idea, you know? Just in general. Going out in the woods in the middle of the night, especially alone. I get up and follow him, and I'm just trying to keep it light.

You know how some people crack jokes when they're scared or nervous? That's me. I'm trying to ease the tension... I think this is why I think the memory came back to me, why I remember it so clearly.

I was trying to supply some comic relief. Nolan snapped at me. Basically yelled at me, "Shut the fuck up!" He'd never done that before, ever. It's wildly out of character for him. I don't think I'd ever even heard him raise his voice. It was so serious. So I shut up and kept following directly behind him.

LUKE

[Whispers]

What the hell...?

UNKNOWN MAN

[Whispers]

Ssh.

JOHN

(V.O.)

We walked for about... maybe another half mile. I was getting nervous because we were far from the site and we just left the fire unattended. As we kept going, the sound got louder.

And that's when I realized it wasn't humming. It was people talking, but almost... rhythmically? And then we saw this group of people standing around another campfire. It was dark. We could only see flashes of them in the fire. We couldn't make out their faces. We watched them for a few minutes and nothing happened.

I went to tell Nolan we should get out of there, but he was just... transfixed. I don't know how else to put it.

It freaked me out. Before I could say anything, he took a step closer. Something crunched under his foot. The voices stopped. And I just fucking grabbed him and ran.

I was shocked we made it back to the campsite, and by the time that we did I was giggling like an idiot. Like I said, I laugh when I'm nervous.

LUKE

Yeah. Me, too.

JOHN

[V.O.]

I couldn't help it. It was like... a rush of relief to be back at our site. Nolan wasn't as punchy as I was, but after a minute, sort of joined in on my jokes. Things went back to normal. And then we went to sleep.

When we woke up in the morning, we had a good laugh about it. Figured it was probably high school kids, being weird and shit. It was around Halloween, after all.

I blew it off, but I realize now that the next time we went camping - it was the spring of the following year - he wanted to go back to the same site. We went back a few times that year.

Nothing similar ever happened again. All the more reason to think we happened upon some Halloween party in the middle of the night. There really isn't shit to do around that area if you're a kid.

Another less amusing note is... this was the last place we camped at together, the year before he died.

[Pause.]

Anyway, that's my weird little story for you. Pine Barrens is definitely known for its urban legends, but really I think it's two idiots ran into kids and scared themselves silly.

LUKE

Wow. That's still quite the story, though. Even if it was just kids. Thanks for sharing with me. I... um... probably won't include that in the project, but it's still an interesting story, just the same.

JOHN

[V.O.]

I'm happy to help. Grateful for the memory jog, even if it did turn out something a little bizarre.

Anyway. Give me a call anytime, if you need more for that project. Or, just want to chat about Nolan. I'm around.

LUKE

I will. Thanks, John. Take care.

JOHN

[V.O.]

See ya.

LUKE

So... Is the Pine Barrens on our list?

UNKNOWN MAN

Nope. But it probably should be.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[OUTRO MUSIC]

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