

Season 3: Episode 8

“Time Out of Mind”

Written by Stephanie Resendes & Micah Rodriguez

Transcript by Evelyn Archer

**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 March 1- March 8 2020.

**[SCENE TRANSITION]**

AIMEE

(VO)

*Hi, you've reached Amelia Perry at Quintessential Orthopedics, Beacon Hill office. I'm unavailable to take your call right now, but please leave your name and number and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.*

MICAH

Hey, Aimee. So, uh... I know your plan is to go through the case file today and I know you said you'd take this on to give me a break but maybe we can do a video chat or phone call? It feels weird not being there. I don't know. Give me a call back. I'm around.

**[PHONE HANGS UP]**

MICAH

Fuck. Why didn't I go up there? I've been looking for answers for who knows how long now. And I might actually get some and I chicken out? I guess I could drive up there and be like, "Surprise. Here I am." But... that's my own personal hell. I will not be doing that.

What day is it? I feel like I've been in a haze since the night Elia poured those shots.

[pause]

How is it Sunday already? Has it really only been a week? No. Thursday. Friday. Saturday. Okay. It's been about two weeks, but still. It's all a blur. I guess now is as good a time as any for a solo recording session.

So, taking those shots unlocked a memory, and in my experience they tend to do the exact opposite. But I guess since my brain is a repressed memory warehouse, I'm just lucky. Right?

That's all I can think about. My dream was real. I actually did hear someone behind me, and I felt someone watching me. And now I know... what? That someone knocked me out?

Like I said the other night, I- I heard something and I figured it was Aimee catching up to me. And I remember whipping around to say something snarky, but then everything goes dark.

I've been running it over in my mind. There- there just has to be more.

And then there's the package that the mystery person sent to me. You know, the one with all of our stolen and, like, quote/unquote, "lost items" in it.

And then the symbol on the masks. I can- I can see them there, standing over me with their faces half obscured. Were they wearing anything else? Come on, Micah. Think.

I may- I may have said this before, but I think... I think I was on the ground or in a chair. And I think my hands and feet were tied? I- I think it was a chair because when the person in the middle approached me, my eye line was about waist high, maybe. I can't get how tall they were out of my head. But then again, I was also- That could also be because I was young, small.

And- and I'm trying to picture where I was. It feels like I was outside. But not. And that liqueur, like, it made me of earth. Like a warm, earthy smell. Like dirt. I- It- For sure, it... I wasn't in someone's home. It- It felt more like a big shed, or a root cellar. And I can smell that fucking drink from the shot right now if I think hard enough about it.

You know, I didn't even taste it with everyone the other night. I smelled it, and I just dropped the glass. But... Elia doesn't know this, but I swiped one of the bottles from her bag before we left Aimee's the next morning. I don't know why I did it. I had already grabbed one and stashed it before I could stop myself. Maybe for evidence? Or proof? I don't know. I felt like I should just keep some.

The fact that I'm sitting here thinking about actually drinking it is probably why my subconscious told me to take it. I don't know. If the smell brought back a memory, maybe I should drink it.

[Pause]

Bottoms up.

**[SOUND OF DRINKING]**

**[SCENE TRANSITION]**

MICAH

[Frenetic]

Ah. Okay. So I'm in the car right now. And it- it's... um... It's only about thirty minutes or so after I tried the drink, and it just hit me that I should probably document this, for- for better or for worse.

So... so I took the shot of the liqueur and- and, yeah. At- at first, I sat there marveling at how gross it tasted. And then... And then I got this flash of an image in my mind. I don't know how else to explain it. It was like a snapshot of a moment.

I'm sitting in a large room that has dirt walls so I think I had that part right. And- and there are three people wearing masks standing in front of me. In like, a triangular formation. One is closer to me, in the middle. And then the two other ones are standing a bit behind them. And the two in the back were more obscured because it was- it was dark in the room.

But the person in the middle, that tall figure looming over me, had a mask with the symbol that I remembered. That warped "smile" shape. I can't make them out. Their face, even with the mask, is blurry in my head. But I was in a chair and my hands and my ankles are tied to it. And there's a cloth in my mouth and tied- that's tied behind my head.

And I think- I think there's a fire burning in a stone hearth to the right of me. That person is just leaning over me.

And that's it. After a moment of saying "what the fuck" to myself repeatedly, I grabbed my keys and jumped in the car.

[MICAH takes a ragged breath]

MICAH

I'm not really sure what I'm going to do when I get there. Uh, sorry. Uh, "there" is New Jersey. I'm driving to New Jersey.

Maybe I will go back to Duke Island Park and walk that trail? Or... I don't know. Visit with my mom and finally talk to her? I've been icing her out for a while. I mean, we've spoken but I've refused to talk to her about anything that's been going on. I don't think she'd understand what I'm doing, what we're doing, by digging all of this back up. I can't go to her until I have some concrete evidence.

So, yeah. I don't really have a plan but I have three or so hours in the car to figure something out.

[pause]

MICAH

I think I want to go through my dad's stuff again. This time I'll really look at everything. You know, there were more boxes in the shed when I was there, but it was too painful at the time. And I thought... You know, maybe... I went back once and I thought that I got everything. But maybe there's more. And the stuff that I brought back to Providence with me... I- I don't know. Maybe I missed something. But my mom is going to want to know why I'm doing that.

[pause]

MICAH

Fuck. What else can I do while I'm there? I could drive to River Road...

[pause]

MICAH

I... I don't- I don't know. Maybe the... I'm not... Maybe that... That's... Maybe I'm not ready for that.

It's probably not the best idea to do something like that alone.

Fuck. What am I going to do?

[pause]

MICAH

I could call... I mean... Okay. Uh... Hey Bluetooth? Call John Buckley.

**[BLUETOOTH DIALS]**

**[OUTGOING PHONE RINGS]**

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Hello?

MICAH

Hi, John. It's Micah Jones. Nolan's daughter? I don't expect that you have my number saved, so thanks for picking up.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Oh hi, Micah. How's... How's it going? Yeah, I didn't recognize the number, but I do try to pick up any time I get a call. You never know when there's going to be an emergency, right?

MICAH

Yeah. Yeah. Totally.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

What can I do for you today?

MICAH

Uh... I- I guess I wanted to talk to you about my dad again? And... um... about- about the night that he died. I hope that's okay.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

No. No, it's fine. I guess I just feel like I've been talking about Nolan a lot lately.

MICAH

Yeah? To who?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Uh, just some folks around the Ranger Station. Nothing specific. He, uh... comes up now and then.

MICAH

Right. Um... Maybe I should stop by there one of these days?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Mostly all new people now. But there are a few folks who've stuck around since the old days. They all know your dad. I'm sure they'd be happy to see you and chat about him.

MICAH

Uh... Def- Definitely. Um. You know, funny. I'm actually kind of on my way to New Jersey right now. So you know, maybe I'll swing by sooner than later?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Is that why you called? To let me know?

MICAH

No. Uh... Like I said, I--

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Right. You want to talk about that night. Micah, can I ask why? I... I don't... I want to be helpful, but I also don't want to upset you or your mother.

MICAH

You won't upset me. Or my mom, you know? She knows that we've spoken before. She's completely fine with it.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Are you sure? After your dad died, Ava sort of... withdrew. Abby and I tried reaching out, more than a few times. We invited her, and you, of course, over for dinner, or to a movie. Ava always declined. Abby never took it personally, though. Like, I can only imagine what she was going through.



We were all hurting after Nolan... Um... We tried to stay in touch, but a couple of years after that Abby and I separated and then... We all just drifted apart, I suppose.

MICAH

Oh. Um.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I'm sorry. I just... I want to make sure I'm not opening old wounds.

MICAH

I'm ready to know more. You know, whatever you can tell me. And then I'll sit with it. For a while. And then I'll think about how to approach the subject with my mom.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Ah. Sure. I'll do what I can.

MICAH

Okay. John, I know that I was in the truck when he crashed. I found out a while ago.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I see.

MICAH

Y- Yes. I know. What I want now is for you to tell me if you saw me that night with him. With my dad.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Micah, I...

MICAH

I meant what I said, John. I want to know. Please don't lie to me.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yes. I did. When he stopped into the bar for my birthday, you were with him. It was the reason he couldn't stay long. He needed to get you home.

MICAH

Why didn't you tell me that the first time we met?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

To be honest? I didn't say anything because you didn't bring it up. I do remember saying near the end of our chat that I was under the impression that you were familiar with the bar we were...

MICAH

Yeah. No. That completely blindsided me.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I realize that now.

MICAH

Why did you bring me there? We could have met anywhere to talk. Why did you bring me to that bar?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

It didn't occur to me until you walked through the door that it was probably not my best idea. I'm a regular there. I have been since... yeah, I picked a spot that would feel comfortable to me. I thought that would help my nerves leading up to our conversation.

MICAH

You were nervous?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Anxious, yeah.

MICAH

Why?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Because of who you are.

MICAH

What is that supposed to mean?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Between our first conversation and now, I got the feeling that you don't remember how much I was a part of your life before Nolan passed away. And that's okay. I'm not saying that to make you feel any specific way.

It's just that... So, I know I've said that Nolan and I were best friends. But that title doesn't quite explain it. We were more like brothers, like family. We worked together. We spent a lot of time together outside of work. And my wife and I spent most of our time with you three because we didn't have a lot of close family nearby.

So we had backyard barbecues, beach days, went to the Memorial Day bike races together every year. I was even there when Nolan taught you how to ride a bike. We went to the Cruise Night the first year it started.

MICAH

Is that the car show on Main Street? With like, the vintage cars, hot rods?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah. It is. We'd always go get pizza at--

MICAH

Central.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah. Do you remember?

MICAH

It's hard to say for sure. Um... Most of my memories before my dad died are patchy. I'm not sure if that's the right word. It's more like they're wispy or... uh... you know, they're ethereal in some way. It's like watching a flashback in a movie when... where all the edges are- are soft and cloudy? And you know, other times, things are crystal clear. But that- that's not really typical for me.

It- It's almost like everything before he died has this dreamlike quality to it. And... everything that came after is more crystalline. You know, sharp. Clear. Except... for...

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Except for what?

MICAH  
Uh... Sorry. Nothing. Uh... nothing. It doesn't matter. Um... Really, you know... But I vaguely remember the car show. And I do remember going to the bike races every year. I just... I just don't remember you being there.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Okay. I can work with that. Let me see.

[Pause]

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
We brought Abby's nephew to your house to play a few times. Do you remember that?

MICAH  
No. Definitely not.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Yeah. Abby's sister, Katie, lived a couple towns over. She was really the only relative that lived nearby. She and Abby had a strained relationship, so we didn't see them often. But Abby loved her nephew more than anything.

Katie worked weekends sometimes and her husband was a police officer, so when they got into a scheduling snag we'd babysit. Really, we were a last resort type of situation because of all the tension between Abby and Katie. Outside of us watching her nephew a few times, they didn't really speak to each other.

Since we didn't have any kids that lived on our street we usually brought him over to hang out with you.

MICAH

I truly do not remember that at all.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Ah well, that isn't a big deal. It was only a handful of times, and you were both pretty young. You and Teddy didn't have a lot of the same interests but you got along well enough.

He was definitely more into sports, and that... wasn't really your thing.

MICAH

[chuckles]

No. It wasn't. I'm- I'm not very coordinated.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I know.

MICAH

[laughs]

Okay. That stings a little, but you know, I'm not going to deny it.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

My point, really, is to say that I was around often. And you and your mom were important to me, too.

So to bring things back around, that's really why I was anxious about meeting with you. And probably why I just picked a place that falls under home field advantage. Not... Not that I was trying to--

MICAH

No. I--

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I mean.

MICAH

I think I understand. You know, you knew the conversation was going to be difficult, so... you were just, you know, trying to make parts of it a little bit easier on yourself.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah. Sorry. Sometimes I don't have a great way with words.

MICAH

You're- You're fine.

[Pause]

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Talking about that night in particular is a bit more difficult than telling you amusing stories about Nolan, though.

MICAH

I would imagine so.

[Pause]

JOHN (VO, on phone)

What do you want to ask me about that night, Micah?

MICAH

I want you to tell me everything you remember. Everything from the plan for your birthday to the time he left MUGS.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

How is this going to help--

MICAH

It just will.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Oh. Okay. Okay.

[pause]

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Our office was big on Friday night happy hours and celebrating team birthdays. I guess because we all truly enjoyed each other's company. So when my birthday rolled around, it was a no-brainer that we'd get together in some way.

[pause]

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Since Nolan and I worked the early shift, we typically finished working a few hours before the rest of our coworkers. Our general plan was to head to MUGS to grab beers with just the two of us before everyone else showed up.

Nolan told me that he wanted to check in on some project he was working on right after our shift ended but that it wouldn't take long, so he'd meet me over at MUGS. But as the saying goes, best laid plans...

So we had a couple things that held us up. We didn't finish working until close to 5:30. Just as we were headed back to the office, we got a call on the radio letting us know that Ava was called into work last minute and she needed Nolan to pick you up from--

MICAH

Guitar lessons.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah. You'd started taking lessons after school on Fridays.

MICAH

Where were the lessons? Do you know?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Connie's Music? Uh... on Davenport Street.

MICAH

Somerville.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Yeah. It's still there.

MICAH  
Do you remember what time he picked me up, by any chance?

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
I do, actually. Your lessons ended around 6:00.

MICAH  
So, if that's the case then that must have impacted your plans to go out for your birthday?

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Yeah, but it wasn't a big deal to me. We hung out all the time. I told him, you just go get you and head home. There'd be other times to celebrate. But he brushed me off.

He said he'd run to get you from lessons and then bring you over to MUGS for a quick hello and to buy me a beer. He wouldn't stay long. I tried to talk him out of it, but you know how he was. When he made a commitment he--

MICAH  
Yeah. He stuck to it. He doesn't like to break promises. Didn't like... Yeah.

Didn't you say he said he had something to do before going to the bar?

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Yeah. I actually reminded him about it and offered to help him out. But he said he had it covered.

MICAH  
Okay, so... He leaves work. And then picks me up in Somerville. And then comes back to MUGS with me in tow, right?



JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah, by the time he showed up it was probably just before 6:30. Everyone was there by then. You came in. and he ordered a beer for me, a half-pint for him, and a Shirley Temple for you.

MICAH

I loved those.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I know. You would get them every time we went out for dinner. You loved the little maraschino cherries.

MICAH

I did.

[pause]

MICAH

So. Anyway. How long were we at the bar?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

You really don't remember any of this?

MICAH

No. I don't.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Are you absolutely sure--

MICAH

John.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Oh. Right. I'm sorry. I...

You weren't there long. The two of you got a table near the bar, but it was pretty busy, so I came over to you guys. Nolan and I chatted for a bit. But then he said he still had to go check on his project and get you home. He had promised you pizza and television that night.

MICAH

Yeah. We used to watch the TGIF sitcoms.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Ah, right. Yeah. Yep, I remember that.

MICAH

Did anything seem off to you about him? Like the way he was acting?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

At MUGS? No, I don't think so.

MICAH

Not just at MUGS. But, you know, there or... during the day. Anything. Nothing at all?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Really. I- I don't think so. He- He seemed fine. Happy. His usual self.

MICAH

Yeah, I just... I figured I'd ask. You seem to remember a lot.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah. I can't help it really. It was--

MICAH

So... okay. So we left the bar. When?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I mean, I can't give you an exact time. But it was probably a little bit after 7:00.

MICAH

And you... You didn't know where the project was that he said he had to go check on?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

No, I- I don't even know what it was.

MICAH

Well, okay. So, that part I think I might know. Or at least I have a good guess. You know, I found... He left some, like, you know, voice notes on cassette tapes. And you know, on those, he said he found a fox den somewhere. And he was trying to get a- a good photograph of a kit for me, for my birthday that was coming up.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Oh.

MICAH

What?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I think I remember.

MICAH

Tell me. Anything.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Just that I think he had that little cassette recorder with him that day. Sometimes he'd bring it along when he was out and about. He also put Velcro on the back of it--

MICAH

He stuck it to the dashboard of his truck, in case he had an idea. Shit. I... I... Wow. I remember that now.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah. It was surrounded by all the stickers you put up.

MICAH

Yeah. It was.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

So when I heard what happened, I was confused but... as to why you were over there, but... That makes sense. That said, he took you on rides over there all the time. You called them "cruises." He usually kept those to the day, though.

MICAH

Yeah. I- I- I think I remember, but... Wait. Um. It's been a really long time since I've been over that way. Is there like a narrow bridge that connects to River Road?

JOHN (VO, on phone)

Yeah. Well- Well, there used to be. It's a walking bridge now. They built one that was safer, for two-lane traffic a while back. But around that time, if you were to cross River Road, you'd have to cross the Nevius Street Bridge to get back to Raritan.

MICAH

The witch's castle.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I'm sorry?

MICAH

The witch's castle. There was this... you know, weird stone building that looked like a castle that was right near there. And I used to pretend it belonged to a witch that guarded the bridge.

JOHN (VO, on phone)

I think I know the building you mean. The water pumping station. You're right. It does look like a castle.

MICAH

Yeah. I- I used to pretend that if we drove by it the wrong way, the witch would trap us on the other side of the bridge. So, you know, whenever we would go on those drives, I would make him take a route that let us pass it only as we were heading home. So--

JOHN (VO, on phone)

That's... That's--

MICAH

It was on the left. Yeah. So I guess I'm the reason why we were on that road. I must have asked to go on a Cruise.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Micah. Micah, don't say that.

MICAH  
Is there anything else that you can remember? Anything at all?

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Is this just because you're trying to fill a gap in your memory? Because if I'm being straight with you, I have a feeling there's more to it than that.

MICAH  
I just... I just need to know. I was there, John. Like, you know that I was there. I was in the truck when we got into that accident, and I have no memory of it. I woke up the next day with no idea that anything happened. And my mom took that and she ran with it. She even explained away the cuts and bruises that I had. She- she told me that I was at home waiting for him to come watch TV with us. That's what I've believed for most of my life. You have no idea how it felt to find out that that was a lie.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
I'm sure she thought it was for the--

MICAH  
Respectfully, please. You know, spare me her defense. I appreciate it. But I will deal with that conversation when I'm ready. I called you because you saw us that night. And you can help me understand what the hell happened.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Understand what, though? Micah, you were in a car accident. Forgive me if I don't grasp what's unclear about that.

MICAH  
I think--

**[TIRES SQUEAL]**

MICAH  
Fuck!

[HORN HONKS]

[TIRES OVER RUMBLE STRIP]

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Micah? Are you okay?

MICAH  
Yeah. Yeah. I'm here. Sorry. Someone- Someone just drove me off-  
almost- God. Someone just nearly drove me off the highway. Fuck.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Are you sure you're okay?

MICAH  
Yeah. I'm- I'm all right. I- It's... You know what? It's probably  
a good sign to hang up. We've been on the phone for a while. I  
should really concentrate on the road.

Um. I'll let you go. But if... You know, if I do end up in town,  
is it all right if I give you a call again?

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Sure.

MICAH  
Thank you. I really do appreciate it. I... Thank you for all your  
help, John. You know, maybe someday I'll be able to explain.

JOHN (VO, on phone)  
Yeah. Yeah. Call anytime. Take care, Micah.

**[SCENE TRANSITION]**

MICAH

My hands are still shaking a bit from that asshole that cut me off. Or, maybe because now I know more about the timeline of that night.

Aimee- Aimee- Aimee was right. You know, the black case in the truck has to have been my guitar case. But John told me more than I- than he realized, I think.

I completely forgot that my dad used to keep that tape recorder on the dashboard until he reminded me of it. And I didn't notice it in the pictures that we looked at, but then again, I wasn't looking for it and I was having a hard time focusing.

It's a little odd that Aimee hasn't called me back yet. I guess that makes sense because it's the first time she and Elia are going to be alone since...

[laughs slightly]

MICAH

Well. I'm shutting up now. I'm going to stop talking about stuff that's none of my business. Aimee? Elia? If you're listening to this... I ship you. And something good should come from this hell. Devon, feel free to edit this out.

[laughs slightly to herself]

[pause]

MICAH

Yeah. But John was more helpful than he could possibly ever know... but something is still bothering me and I can't pinpoint what it is.

What do I know? I know more of what actually happened that night. I know how I ended up in the truck with my dad. I know why I was with him. I know that I wasn't at home waiting for him, like my mom said.

But what's missing?

And then what about all my other shit? Like, you know, nightmares that might actually be memories, but they're, like, locked in a vault that I can only open with some gross liqueur?

And remember the time I scared the shit out of everyone by sleepwalking in the middle of the night and just started mumbling gibberish about trees? You know, something about being in the trees.

[long pause]

MICAH

Fuck.

Didn't that guy Ben say that he sleepwalked? I swear that he did. Something about feeling like he was being watched, or maybe he was hiking...

Shit. What was it? He said he started getting terrible nightmares and then his wife-Yes! His- His wife found him in their backyard whispering something that she didn't understand. Do I still have his number?

Yes. I do. Okay. So since this is the... you know, apparently, the Car Ride of Awkward Conversations, I'm just going to call him. Because, you know, why not? Who- Who cares that it's been forever. Sure. Um.

Hey, Bluetooth. Call Ben Keller.

**[BLUETOOTH DIALS]**

**[OUTGOING PHONE RINGS]**

BEN

Ben Keller.



MICAH

Ben. Hi. Uh... It- It's Micah Jones?

BEN

Oh. Uh... Micah. Where are you... Where are you calling from?

MICAH

Oh. Uh... Um. Well. We spoke a long while back. Um. Actually... Okay. I have a podcast, and your friend put you on to it, and you responded to a call that I put out asking for like--

BEN

Micah. Right. Um.

MICAH

Oh, thank God.

BEN

Sorry. I... uh- uh... I- I remember now. Yes. We... uh... we met at that coffee shop in Mystic. You have, actually, impeccable timing.

MICAH

I do? Why is that?

BEN

I'm actually in the area again for work. Um... March and April are New England focused months for me, so...

MICAH

Has it really been a year already?

BEN

Seems that it has. Yeah. So, uh... to what do I owe the pleasure?

MICAH

Well. Uh... First let me... You know, um... Let me say, like I'm sorry to call you just, like, out of the blue. I probably could have emailed instead, but since... I'm actually in the car so it was a little easier to call. Uh... I also imagine that I'm- I'm uh... catching you in the middle of your work day. I- I didn't even look at the time.

BEN

It's... it's not a problem. I'm actually in the car, myself. I'm headed to a meeting with a client right now.

MICAH

Oh. Um... I see. Uh... I was actually hoping that we'd be able to chat a bit more about the story that you told me when we met the last time. Um... There've been some... There've been some new developments since then. And I- I actually have some follow-up questions that I'd... I'd really love to ask.

BEN

Yeah. I... So... As I said, I have a client meeting right now. Um... I just literally pulled into a parking spot. However, I- I- I should be done with my day in about an hour, hour and a half. I'm free afterwards. I could call you then.

MICAH

Sure. Uh... Or, well... Um... I'm actually not too far from the Mystic area right now. Are you near there? Or are you in a different part of Connecticut this time?

BEN

My client is in Colchester, so... not too far away. Um... Why? Did- Did you want to meet up instead?

MICAH

Yeah. That would be great, if you're... If you're up for it, that is.

BEN

Yeah. Um... Okay. It's about 3:00 now. Let's say we meet around 5:00/5:30? We could go back to the same coffee shop, or... or to a bar nearby if you'd like to get drinks instead?

MICAH

A cocktail sounds great, actually. Um... I know of a bar in the New London area. I... You know... Um... I'll circle back that way now, and I'll- I'll... I'll shoot you a text with the address.

BEN

Awesome. Um... See you there.

**[SCENE TRANSITION]**

**[INTERIOR BAR SOUNDS]**

MICAH

So, just checking. Are you still fine with me recording this?

BEN

I... I guess that answers my first question. So uh, you're still making the podcast, then?

MICAH

Oh. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I am. Um... Did you... Did you quit listening?

BEN

I- I got to admit, I fell off right before you said our conversation was about to air. I realized I didn't want to listen to myself talk.

MICAH

Oh, that's fair. It takes some getting used to when I first started, too. But you know, now I just... I barely notice.

BEN

[laughs]

Better you than me, I suppose.

MICAH

Well. Um... Before we get into it, let me say, uh... Thanks, again, for agreeing to meet up. A phone call would have been more than enough, so that... this is really kind of you.

BEN

It's no problem. Um... Mostly worked out because I'm up around this way again. I... I needed dinner. You're close by. Two birds, one stone.

MICAH

Right. Yeah. Um... Totally.

BEN

So. What... What is it that you wanted to talk about?

MICAH

So, um... when we met up... uh... back then you told me that you, you know, you had that experience on the trail near your home. And- and you went on a short hike or something after work to clear your head. You thought you heard something...

BEN

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. And then started having strange nightmares...

MICAH

Yeah. And- and after the nightmares, your wife found you sleepwalking in your backyard. You said you mumbled something.

BEN

Yeah. She... She told me it was more pieces of a phrase, or as if I was only saying a few words. But... not- not complete sentences.

MICAH

Yeah. That part. How much... Or, really, how clearly do you remember the sleepwalking? Or the time leading up to or after it? Um... I think you said it only happened once?

BEN

Yeah. Um... Just the one time, thankfully. My wife was, uh... She was really worried.

MICAH

Yeah. Uh. Of- of course she was.

BEN

Yeah. As- As far as how much I actually remember? My nightmares were probably the worst they'd ever been in the weeks before that happened. Um... graphic flashes of strange people. No one I could make out, really.

MICAH

Strange people?

BEN

Yeah. You're standard-issue dream monster people. Creepy shadows, blurred faces, etc.

MICAH

I see.

BEN

I... I- I don't remember too much about the night it happened. Um... My wife told me that I came home from work exhausted, so I turned in early. And she woke up in the middle of the night and found me gone. She went looking and saw me, um... standing at the edge of our yard facing the woods behind our house and mumbling.. mumbling nonsense.

MICAH

You were facing trees?

BEN

Yeah. Yeah. Um...

MICAH

Did you tell me that before? I feel like you didn't.

BEN

I... I don't remember. But you- you have it recorded. You could always go back and listen.

MICAH

Yeah. I... You're right. I could.

BEN

Why do you... Why do you ask? Are the trees significant to you?

MICAH

Oh. Uh. Yeah. Um. Kind of... sort of... I just don't--

BEN

You don't have to tell me. It's- It's fine. Um...

MICAH

No. I- I... Okay. Um. It happened to me, too. Pretty recently.

BEN

What... What happened to you? The sleepwalking?

MICAH

Yeah. Uh... My friends and I rented an Airbnb for a weekend trip. You know, nothing out of the ordinary. But one night, my friend--

BEN

Luke?

MICAH

Um. No. Um. Not Luke. My friend, Elia.

BEN

Gotcha. I- I have to admit I was surprised not to see him with you.

MICAH

Oh. Um. Yeah. Uh... He's away.

BEN

Nice to know you don't need, like... Like you don't need a bodyguard this time around.

MICAH

Um. No. Uh... It wasn't like that, by the way, even then. You know? He just sort of had a similar story, like us. So, you know, he wanted to come along.

BEN

Oh, I get it. It's no worries.

[pause]

MICAH

Anyway. Like I was saying, my friend Elia woke up because the house was cold. And she got up to see why and saw that the back door was standing open. And she went to wake everybody up, but I was gone. I wasn't in my bed. And she- she found me in the backyard, facing trees, muttering to myself.

BEN

Interesting. Yeah. That's... That's actually... That's, like, spot-on to what I went through. Um...

MICAH

Well, yeah. That's- That's sort of why I wanted to talk to you, you know? You- You also mentioned that, like, the next time you went hiking, someone hit you from behind in the head. They, like, totally knocked you out.

BEN

No. I mean, it's not exactly like that, but almost. Um...

MICAH

Well, can you... Can you tell me about that again? Like, I- I- Maybe I'm mixing it up with something else? Or...

BEN

It's... Okay. I mean. Um... I don't remember exactly what I told you. It's been a while. But um... I was driving home, and I thought I saw something in the road. And uh... I swerved. Um... but I- I must have hit something sharp, or maybe my tire was on its last legs because it- it blew out. I... I managed to pull over and got out to change it. And as I'm getting out to check what happened something, or... or someone hit me from behind. Yeah, I don't... I don't. You know the rest.

MICAH

Right. Yeah. I- I guess. Um... I... I think I'm just, like, more interested in- in what happened, like, after--

BEN

After I... After I got knocked out?

MICAH

Uh... Yeah. Yeah.

BEN

Micah, I- I don't know. I- I... I don't know why someone would do this. I was checking a tire, and someone got the jump on me. They didn't take anything. Not that there was really anything to take in the car anyway. Um... honestly? I was... I was more worried about what I was going to tell my wife. How to explain to her why I was gone all night, no phone call.

MICAH

Yeah. Of course. Um. I'm sorry. I- I should be more sensitive. Okay. I- I mean I guess what I'm... You know, what I'm getting at is- is that I... I guess... Um. I want... I want to hear what happened, you know, after. If there were more nightmares, or... or sleepwalking.

BEN

Why?

MICAH

And what... Sorry?

BEN

Why do you want to know? I just don't understand how this relates to anything.

MICAH

I don't... I- I guess I don't either. I- I just... feel like I've started making... I just started piecing things together and I feel like I'm so close. And you know, we've-we've just had similar things happen to us. And maybe... I mean... I- I don't know. I'm just grasping--

BEN

Micah. Seriously. Has it occurred to you that the story you should be focusing on is your own?



[long pause]

BEN

I'm going to go to the bathroom. I'll be back.

**[CHAIR PULLS OUT]**

**[FOOTSTEPS WALK AWAY]**

**[BAR NOISES]**

MICAH

He just turned the corner towards the bathrooms. I don't know. Something's weird. I'm- I'm going to get the fuck out of here.

**[SCENE TRANSITION]**

MICAH

This has been a day. I feel so stupid for calling Ben, never mind meeting with him. It's clear that he started to feel some type of way about the conversation near the end of it. And... I don't know. There was something about his tone.

When he went to the bathroom, I just left. I left cash on the table. Didn't tell him I was going. And... you know? He didn't call or text to ask me why, so... Maybe it was for the better.

Anyway. I actually made it to New Jersey. I- I'm at my mom's house right now. I- I almost turned back and ran home after leaving the bar, but... you know, I figured I should just get what I came for.

And... I was kind of hoping that my mom was going to be at work when I got to her house, but of course, she was home. She was obviously surprised to see me, so she hit me with a million questions at the door. And... I just froze. I had to tell her something.

[pause]

I told her just enough to explain that I have questions about the night my dad died. And you know, we talked. And... it was okay, you know? She knows that I know. And that's what matters. And she apologized for keeping it from me. It's obviously going to take time for us to work through... all of it. But, you know, she's my mom. What else am I supposed to do?

I told her I spoke with John, and what he told me. And she added some details, too. And- and you know, filled in some of the gaps. She said that, you know, my memories of the crash and that night, basically, black out starting from the time I left school that day. And that after the accident, you know, I woke up the next morning, and I asked where my dad was. And... she was confused. And so once she got me talking, I... She realized that I had no recollection of the rest of the night. She thought it was better that way. She didn't want to re-traumatize me by telling me everything that happened, or that I was there.

So she decided to tell me exactly what she had to, to get me to believe it. She said the cuts and scratches that I had, came from a slip down some steps at school. And she sort of explained it away by saying, you know, "Maybe it wasn't right. But I wanted to protect you. And if that horrible memory erased itself from your brain, why would I want to put it back?"

How can I stay mad at that? Billie was right. They told me a long time ago. My mom lost someone, too. I don't know why, right now is just when I'm realizing that.

So I went through the shed. And this time I was going to make sure that there was nothing left behind. I- I... I really thought that the last time I was here that I'd found everything, but, um... I actually... I somehow missed the- a few more boxes. But they were buried under like random stuff of my mom's, so I can kind of see how I looked over them.

Uh... all of them are- are... have the- have "NJ's Office" written on the side. It's a little weird that they were in a different place, like, than everything else my mom saved, but who knows? I loaded them into my car already, and I plan to look through them when I get home.

There is one thing that I found that kind of surprised me, though. So remember when Aimee told me the story of us stopping at the corner store? The day that we went to Duke Island we went to D'Alessio's with the 100-year-old lady, ha-ha-ha. I joked about being her boyfriend. She mentioned that I was wearing a hat that I wore all the time that belonged to my dad. And I was wearing it when we were at the store, and you know, when she left me. But when I showed up at Luke's, I didn't have it.

I think I... I think I found it? I mean... My dad had a lot of hats that looked alike. But I'm almost positive that this is the one she was talking about. It was... It was just on top of one of the boxes.

I don't... I don't know how it could have gotten back here. And it looks... It looks like it has blood on it, maybe?

**[CELL PHONE BUZZES]**

MICAH

Hello? El? Why are you calling me so late--

ELIA

Where the fuck have you been? I've called you eight times already? Why didn't you pick up?

MICAH

I... I had my phone off. I- I'm actually at my mom's in Somerville.

ELIA

Wh- Where... Wh- What? I... You didn't say- Never mind. Uh. Listen. Can you just come home, please?

MICAH

Now? It- It's past midnight. I'm wiped. I had a crazy--

ELIA

Micah, my fucking apartment exploded. Like. You know? Boom, pow, fire and brimstone? Like everything's just burnt to a crisp?

MICAH

What? There was a fire? Are you okay? Are you hurt?

ELIA

No. I'm fine. I wasn't there. I was at Aimee's, remember?

MICAH

Fuck. Right. Thank God.

ELIA

Yeah, but everything's gone. You know, my entire apartment. All my clothes, my- my landlord doesn't even know how it happened. Maybe a gas leak.

MICAH

Well, I'm just glad you're all right. Where are you now?

ELIA

I'm at Devon's. I've been calling you all fucking night. This happened and then you were, like, MIA. I've been losing my goddamn mind, Micah.

MICAH

I'm- I'm sorry. Really. I- I drove down here on a whim, and then I- I talked to- Never mind. I... It's just that when I got here, I had, like, a long talk with my mom and I turned my phone off so I wouldn't get distracted. I'm so sorry.

ELIA

Okay. So you can't drive back tonight?

MICAH

It- It's less "can't" and more "shouldn't." I'd be nervous to drive this tired. But I will leave first thing in the morning. I can be home by 9:00 if I leave at 5:00.

ELIA

Okay. You're right. It's late. I'm sorry. I'm just panicking. And... Can you just come home when you can? I just... I just want you here.

MICAH

Oh- Okay. Of course. Listen. Devon has a key to my apartment. Sleep downstairs in my bed instead of on his pullout couch. It's way more comfortable. Aimee, too. If she's with you. You know. Plus, Mulder would love the company.

ELIA

Is this really the time?

MICAH

No, I'm not making a joke. Like, both of you just get some rest. And like, you know, cuddle cats. I'll be home as soon as I can.

ELIA

(sighs)

Okay. All right. Thanks. Love you.

MICAH

All right. Love you, too. I- I'll see you soon.

[SCENE TRANSITION]

[OUTRO MUSIC]

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Transcribed by [Evelyn Archer](#)