

INTRO

Dark ambient drone.

RYDER

You're alone in a laundromat. A loud pounding comes from inside a washing machine. The washer's door explodes open and dark water pours onto the floor. A hand rises from the water and beckons you.

A beat.

RYDER

You need my help.

DARK AMBIENT DRONE CHANGES TO:

INTRO MUSIC

RYDER

This is A Voice From Darkness.

Intro music continues, but gradually fades out.

ACT I

RYDER

Hello, this is Dr. Malcolm Ryder, parapsychologist - back from a bit of a break. I had to look into a few matters in person - sometimes the problems you call in with require more than on-air help. Later in the show we'll have Mike from Kansas call-in. Mike and I've been playing phone-tag for months now regarding strange leeches he encountered in his area. More on that later. But first, I'd like to introduce two new segments to our show. First off - National Alerts - where I'll let you know of ongoing supernatural issues occurring across the country - possibly in your area. National Alerts music plays, fades out.

RYDER

If you're in Milwaukee, Wisconsin be on the lookout for an elderly man with white hair in a tattered reddish-brown trench coat. He shivers and holds himself as he walks. Stay a safe distance away if you spot him - as he reaches out to anyone who gets near. He's grabbed hands and arms - any exposed skin. Afterwards, victims of his touch have reported a loss of warmth. More than that, the part of the body he touches experiences rapid frostbite. Several victims have been hospitalized. Four have frozen to death, despite being kept in warm rooms. Again, I repeat, if you are in Milwaukee, be on the lookout for a warmthless elderly man.

A beat.

RYDER

Our next alert is for Oregon - it's advised you avoid hiking near the Three Sisters. All trailheads are currently closed. Hikers over the past few days have reported time lapses, missing memories when they've returned from their hikes - in some cases spanning days. In all cases, the last memory they have is seeing a bighorn ram with grey twisted horns. Until more can be determined, and the ram possibly stopped, avoid the Three Sisters in Oregon.

A beat.

RYDER

And that is all this week for national alerts. Let's go to our next segment - Quick Questions. Every week I receive voicemails. Emails. Tweets - asking for advice on various paranormal matters. Most shows, I'm only able to get to one or two callers. For this next segment, I'll answer questions you send in.

If you have a question, feel free to write to avoicefromdarkness@gmail.com or tweet your questions to [@vfdarkness](https://twitter.com/vfdarkness).

A beat.

RYDER

Our first question comes to us via email from Sam in South Dakota. "Dr. Ryder," they write. "I live out in the middle of nowhere. There are three windows facing west in my dining room. At twilight there's a man who stands at the edge of my property. He wears a black duster, wide-brimmed hat. I suppose he's like something out of an old western film. If that wasn't weird enough, I can only see him in one of the windows. The other two - he's not present. Every night, starting at twilight... he's there. He gets a little closer each night. What do I do?"

Ryder thinks.

RYDER

Sam, you've no doubt heard me speak of the Unwelcome Riders on this show before - creatures that appear across our country on various roadways and abduct travelers - taking them to unknown realms. A lesser-known cousin to those awful beings are the Unbidden Homesteaders. The creature, if not stopped, will claim your home, your land, and you. There are thousands - tens of thousands - of small spots across this country where homes used to be. Families used to live - where there's only emptiness now. When you step foot on these spots of land, you feel something off. An absence. In these places, an Unbidden Homesteader has taken whatever was once there. To prevent this happening to yourself, and your home, you need to salt the earth.

Leave a trail of salt, from the window you see the Unbidden Homesteader to the edge of your property. The creature will not walk on salted earth nor will he want to claim the land as his own.

A beat.

All right, next question comes from Chelsea in Rhode Island. "Dr. Ryder, over the past few days I've lost 30 pounds, my skin has cleared, and my eyes have this brightness to them that they didn't before. Men pay attention to me in a way that I haven't experienced. But... I can't digest solid food anymore. And I'm craving blood. Am I turning into a vampire?"

A beat.

RYDER

Short answer - Yes. Long answer - there's over a dozen different causes of what we commonly call vampirism - from genetic diseases, to parasites, to the more overtly supernatural. Without knowing more, it's hard to say what specifically you're experiencing. What you can do - take two large spoonfuls of minced garlic, mix into a glass of distilled water, and drink. If this makes you violently ill, the cause of your vampirism is natural, and curable. If you have no reaction, then the cause is supernatural. If that's the case, there is no cure. You're no longer human. I'm sorry.

A beat.

RYDER

All right, time for Today In Odd America, and then we'll hear from Mike from Kansas.

TODAY IN ODD AMERICA

TIOA music fades in.

RYDER

Today in Odd America we find ourselves in small Arizona town of Pulta. The year - 1985. One morning, before dawn, a truck driver making a delivery from Phoenix stopped at a gas station just outside of town. The station was empty. Lights were on, the doors opened for him, and there was a car off to the side, but no one present. He called the police - thinking a robbery might have occurred. The police did not answer.

RYDER

He put a message out on his CB. He received no reply.

RYDER

The truck driver, a man by the name of Earl Wick, thought maybe he should leave the town - call authorities elsewhere. But instead he continued his drive to the Pulta's grocery store to deliver several pallets.

RYDER

Normally a grocer would meet him at the loading bay. But no one was there.

RYDER

As Earl wondered what he should do, the sun rose. The grocery store stood atop a small hill that looked across the desert. In the distance, miles outside of town, there was a pyramid.

RYDER

Something was strange about its texture - its silhouette - but Earl couldn't tell what from a distance.

He had no memory of such a structure existing before.

So he drove to it - to see if that's where all the missing people of Pulta went.

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RYDER

He stopped his truck hundreds of feet from the pyramid at first - terrified to go further - as the pyramid was not made of stone... but flesh.

Thousands of naked bodies stood atop each other forming the pyramid. Bodies melded together - as if they were one singular entity. Arms and legs fused into torsos. The heads of some disappeared into the bodies of others. Many of the heads faced outward - gazing across the desert.

RYDER

Earl recognized some of the faces - the grocer who normally worked the night shift and helped him unload the pallets, the gas station clerk. All stared out dumbly into the desert, muttering, chattering nonsense. Earl vomited in the cab of his truck. He screamed into his CB until he got a reply.

RYDER

Military barriers were placed around Pulta. Nine days later they were removed. The pyramid gone.

RYDER

The military offered no explanation of what they'd done to handle the situation - did they destroy the pyramid? And thereby murder thousands of Americans? Did they move it to an undisclosed base? Are the people of the pyramid kept alive to this day somehow?

RYDER

The origin of the Pulta Pyramid and an explanation of what happened to it remain a mystery to the general public.

And now back to our main show.

TIOA music fades out.

ACT II

RYDER

And we're back. As I said before, while the show was on hiatus, I traveled across the country helping many of you in person with your paranormal problems. On the line now is Mike from Kansas. Mike first left a voicemail months ago. On a rainy night this past autumn he ran across a young girl in the middle of the road. When he approached her, she reached out a hand to him. Only when he offered his own hand in return he realized it wasn't a girl at all, but thousands of small leeches. They'd woven themselves together to have the appearance of a helpless child. Is that correct, Mike?

MIKE

Yeah, that's all how it started. Several of the leeches latched onto me, drank my blood. I thought I burned them all off with a lighter I keep in my truck. But I think at least one of them got away - because not long after - the little girl came to my house. And she brought others - other broods of leeches that looked like people - a fat man and an elderly woman.

RYDER

Yes, the *Speculum Sanguisugae* - more commonly: mirror leeches - have certain abilities - they'll work collectively to mimic the appearance of the last creature they've devoured. Once one of the leeches in the brood has tasted your blood, they'll have some of your memories. They use those to hunt you, devour you, and then take on your appearance to lure their next prey. I'm sorry I didn't stay in Kansas for long - I had a few other trips to make, people to help. Did what I give you solve your leech problem?

A beat.

MIKE

You mean the spiders? I really wish you'd told me more before you left. Clued me in on what the spiders were going to do exactly.

RYDER

If I'd done that, I doubt you would have gone through what you needed to do to get rid of the mirror leeches.

MIKE

No. No, I probably wouldn't have. Because it almost killed me. You almost killed me.

RYDER

Mike, the leeches were hunting you. Eventually they'd find you, devour you, and move on to kill someone else - using your face. If I hadn't-

(interrupts self)

RYDER

Why don't you state what happened. And after, I'll explain why it was necessary. For context, I dropped off a large terrarium containing hundreds of spiders. A certain species that have evolved to feed on the mirror leeches.

MIKE

But that's not all they do.

RYDER

No, it's not.

MIKE

After you left... I opened the terrarium. You said to do it in a dark place, like a closet or basement. You also told me to drink a glass of water beforehand... I thought that was weird. But I trusted you. Those were the only instructions you gave. You said the spiders would handle the rest - that they'd hunt the leeches.

RYDER

I didn't say the word "hunt". That would imply that they'd leave your home - search out the leeches.

MIKE

No, you're right. You probably said something else - like they'd kill them or something. I don't remember your exact words. I opened the terrarium in my bedroom. It's pretty dark in there.

Soon as it opened...

A beat.

MIKE

Soon as it opened, the spiders jumped on me. Crawled over my body. Bit me. Before I could react, I was paralyzed.

RYDER

I'm sorry, Mike, but that's what was supposed to happen. NEEDED to happen.

MIKE

Well I didn't know that at the time. I thought for sure something had gone wrong. That you were wrong, gave me the wrong terrarium or something. Miscalculated. The spiders - they wove web all over my bedroom. They put me at the center - facing the door. Their web was sharp - like wire - they laid me into it. Strands cut into my skin. My blood dripped out, spilled over the web. Blood Droplets hanging on web all over my room. Drops of my own blood. Occasionally, a few of the spiders would move from whatever corner of the room they were in - stop weaving - and bite me again. Paralyzing me further.

RYDER

They needed you for their trap.

MIKE

I was like that for that night. The next day. I thought for sure I was going to die. All because I went for a night drive. Because I got into a fight with my girlfriend. Because I called you.

A beat.

MIKE

Then... sometime after midnight the next night my front door opened. You said to leave it unlocked. Make it easy for the leeches to enter. Moonlight came in from the window and hit parts of the web. The spiders all hid in shadows. Down the hall, the leech-people shambled through my house. They knocked over furniture, opened every door searching for me. When they came to my bedroom door - they knew I was there. They opened the door. The little girl, fat man, and elderly woman were framed by my doorway like a disgusting family portrait. The little girl came forward first. The light from the hallway backlit her as she tripped into the web. She fell apart into thousands of leeches - like glass shattering. Her "face" looked at me as it broke apart. I know she wasn't a real girl - an actual person - but it was devastating to watch.

A beat.

MIKE

The web must have had some chemical in it or something that made it so the leech-broods couldn't stay together in their fake human form.

RYDER

The shatter speculum arachnides - glass shatter spiders - have evolved to almost exclusively hunt and kill mirror leeches. There's no chemical poison you can spray or trap you can put out. The mirror leeches are hunters and require a predatory to take them out.

MIKE

Every leech caught in the web, caused my whole room to vibrate like a bad carnival ride. Hundreds of the spiders jumped forward. They wasted no time- they devoured the leeches, wrapped others in webbing. The elderly woman stepped forward to see what happened to the girl. She too tripped into the blood-drenched web. Soon as she touched it, all the leeches she was made of fell apart. The fat man stepped back. Moved away from the door, and shambled back down the hall. I didn't see what happened, but hundreds of spiders chased after him. I passed out sometime after that. The spider venom, dehydration... some combination. My last thoughts were - the leeches were gone, but I was dead anyway.

A beat.

RYDER

Mike, I'm sorry you had to go through all that - truly I am. But it was necessary. The spiders are most effective when they have a creature in their trap - a creature the leeches are hunting.

MIKE

(offended)

A creature? I'm not even a person to you. Just something to put in a trap so one monster can kill another monster.

RYDER

I don't blame you for thinking that way, Mike. And maybe you won't appreciate this now, but think objectively: a terrifying hunter has come into your community. Become part of your environment. That hunter was after you in particular. One option would have been to let it simply kill you and then move onto another and kill them.

The other option was to "use" you so to speak to lure the hunter in, and neutralize it. We were successful. And you survived.

MIKE

No thanks to you.

RYDER

All thanks to me. Four days afterwards you woke up in a hospital - did you not? After being put into a medically-induced coma until the spider venom was neutralized. I'd instructed Cryptozoologist Dr. Sonja Patel to go to your home 48 hours after I left you. She had an anti-venom for the spiders. At your age, weight, and overall health, we calculated there was less than a 7% chance you'd die from this encounter - all while saving your community from a predatory species that might destroy it. You called me looking for my help and I gave it to. You're welcome.

A beat.

MIKE

While I was in the hospital - recovering - I had a lot of time to kill. I'd heard of your show before calling in. But I didn't know much about you. Not really. There's a lot of conspiracy theories about you.

RYDER

(impatient)

Mike, I'm not going to waste air time discussing inter-[cut off]

MIKE

(interrupts)

What happened to Julian and Miranda Holloway? What did you do to them?

Ryder hangs up on Mike.

A beat.

RYDER

Mike is no longer on the line. I'm happy he's alive, that he and his community are free of a terrible creature that was doing them harm. But I won't allow this show to devolve into strange conspiracies about myself and people I might have associated with in the past.

A beat.

RYDER

That's all for tonight. Thank you and if you're having problems that are supernatural, paranormal, otherworldly in anyway - please feel free to call-in next time on A Voice From Darkness.

Outro Music.