

A VOICE FROM DARKNESS S1E1
The Black Door

written by

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INTRO

Dark ambient drone.

RYDER

You find yourself alone in an abandoned manor. The furniture moves of its own accord, whispers resonate from empty rooms. The dead are unquiet all around you.

A beat.

RYDER (CONT'D)

You need my help.

Dark ambient drone changes to:

INTRO MUSIC

RYDER (CONT'D)

This is A Voice From Darkness.

Intro music continues, but gradually fades out.

ACT 1

RYDER

Hello. As always this is Dr. Malcolm Ryder, parapsychologist. You're listening to A Voice From Darkness. If you're having any problems that are paranormal, supernatural, unexplainable in any way please call in.

A beat.

RYDER (CONT'D)

I'm here to help. Oh, and my producer is letting me know we have a call on the line. Tell us your name, caller.

All of Amanda's dialogue has the SFX as coming through a telephone.

AMANDA

Hello, Dr. Ryder, my name's Amanda Ful-

She cuts herself off.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Just Amanda.

RYDER

That's all right, Amanda - we don't need to know your last name. But we do need to know what you're calling about. What unnerving situation have you found yourself in?

AMANDA

Can I ask you a question first? Is that all right?

RYDER

Of course, please - ask away.

AMANDA

To be completely honest - and I'm sorry - but I've never listened to your show before. I've heard of it - obviously - otherwise I wouldn't be calling. But... do most people call in about vampires, zombies, werewolves? Those sorts of things?

RYDER

If I understand your question, what you're asking is: do most of our calls involve familiar paradigms of the supernatural? Is that correct?

AMANDA

Yes. I guess that's what I was getting at.

RYDER

Believe it or not - no. Most calls are... stranger. Outliers. Every conversation on this show, at its root, features an occurrence that the caller cannot explain by simply invoking the natural world. Vampires, werewolves, demons - perhaps sometimes people interpret the raw sensory data they take in as such creatures. But that does not mean they exist. At the very least not in ways we've traditionally conceived them. Does that make sense? Did I answer your question?

AMANDA

No. No - that answered my question. Thank you. It makes me feel better too. What I'm calling about - it's not like a ghost or demon. I don't think? I don't know what's happening, really.

RYDER

And what is that you've called about, Amanda?

A beat.

AMANDA

(uncertain)

A black door?

RYDER

A black door? Have you walked through this door and something happened? Did you witness a terrible being emerge from the door?

AMANDA

No. I haven't gone through - or any of that. I... I... I'm sorry I should have thought about what I wanted to say before calling. It's - it's complicated.

RYDER

For complicated things - I think it's best if we start at the beginning. When did you first notice the door?

AMANDA

The first time. Right, I probably should start with that. The first time was at a charity event at an art museum. I was there on a date - our second - the guy and me. The first didn't go great - but it wasn't terrible either - so I figured I'd invite him along with me. Only it was awful. Soon as we got there he ran up to the hor d'oeuvres and stuffed his face. Having a guy ignore you to graze on cocktail shrimp is... it's not attractive. Everyone was in the Impressionist wing.

(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

That's where the event was. So I slid myself under a velvet rope and took a stroll over to the Postmodern Contemporary Sculpture wing. It's my least favorite kind of art. I figured, "*Why would anyone come here when they can spend the evening looking at real art?*"

RYDER

I think you're being a little unfair. There's a few contemporary pieces I've seen that-
(interrupts self)
But you didn't call to talk art. Not the point of this call or show. Please - continue.

AMANDA

Right - so between this "sculpture" of a trashcan with the American flag in it and a robot standing in front of a tombstone that reads: RIP The Working Class - there's this black door. The Black Door.

RYDER

It's an art piece? Part of an exhibit?

AMANDA

That's what I thought - at first. The black door was the only thing in the room that didn't wear its subtext on its sleeve, so I went up to it. I wanted to figure out what the artist was communicating. I got close-
(interrupted)

RYDER

What about the door suggested the supernatural to you?

AMANDA

It just... drew me in. It felt like only a few seconds had passed - but this security guard shook me by the shoulder. Asked what I was doing there. I told him I was at the charity thing. He told me that ended hours ago. It was past two in the morning.

(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

My bad date and I, we'd gotten there - I don't know - around seven? I'd been staring at this black door for several hours.

RYDER

You experienced unexplained and mysterious passage of time? That's fantastic. It's common across a multitude of sub-fields within the paranormal - from hauntings to alien abductions. So many possibilities...

AMANDA

Is it ever associated with black doors?

RYDER

I'm not sure. What did the guard say about the door?

AMANDA

The guard. I asked him about the artist responsible - who made the door - I thought it was a hypnotic sculpture or something? But he had no idea what I was talking about. He said he didn't see a door. Had never seen one there.

RYDER

It was invisible to him?

AMANDA

No. It vanished. I turned my attention away - to the guard - and when I looked back... it was gone. Disappeared.

A beat.

RYDER

A door that causes time lapses and can disappear? I can't explain it right now, but I'd be happy to research and get back to you on another night, Amanda. Would that be all right?

AMANDA

Doctor, I'm not done. That was just my first encounter. The black door - it's... following me.

A beat.

RYDER

Following you? How? Wait - hold that thought, Amanda. My producer is telling me we need to cut to our pre-recorded segment. I'm sorry, please stay on the line.

PRE-RECORDED SEGMENT: THIS DAY IN ODD AMERICA

Eerie music plays in the background.

RYDER

On this day in Odd America we find ourselves in Moline, Illinois - the year 1938. After attending a community meeting at the First Methodist Church, the Dhondt family were never seen again. Husband and father Bryan spoke at that night's meeting. His wife Claire accompanied him, as did their only child - seven year old Sarah. Reports at the time stated the family walked home as they lived close to the church. Evidence suggests they arrived safely as daughter Sarah made a diary entry that very night - which noted nothing out of the ordinary. Sarah had played with her friends while her parents attended the meeting. They all went home in high spirits.

A beat.

RYDER (CONT'D)

But the next morning, Bryan did not report to work at the John Deere factory. Claire missed her weekly Bible study. Sarah did not show up to school. Friends and family went to their home to learn the cause for their absences. Upon arrival, they found jack-o-lanterns in the bedrooms - two larger for the parents. One smaller for the daughter. Each carved face made to resemble one of the Dhondts - Bryan, Claire, and Sarah. All contained burnt-out, melted candles.

A beat.

RYDER (CONT'D)

The disappearance of the Dhondts is the first recorded case of the Jack-O-Lantern Murders - they're called murders - though this is a misnomer as no bodies have ever been recovered - only pumpkins carved to resemble the missing. Several cases every year have been reported across America since the Dhondts's disappearance. Who's committing these terrifying acts? Is it a singular entity or a coterie that's passed down this dark tradition over the years? And what's become of all the bodies? This is a wide and lonely country. They could be anywhere. And so - it remains a mystery.

A beat.

RYDER (CONT'D)

This has been today in Odd America. Now back to our main show.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

ACT II

RYDER

All right, Amanda, we're back. Now, you were saying, the black door is following you?

AMANDA

I see it everywhere. Most places I go - the same door is... there.

RYDER

How do you know it's the same door? What does it look like? I mean, other than being black.

AMANDA

The doorknob's a dull, unassuming brass, I guess? The rest... The door itself it isn't wood or metal painted black. I don't know what it is, but it's darker. Like...

A beat.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Like the center of a black hole.
Like the color of absence. It hurts
to stare at. I could feel a strain
in my eyes... and my chest at the
museum... Not just then - every
time I look at it, really.

RYDER

The color of absence? That reminds
me of the Nietzsche quote,
paraphrasing but, "Fight not with
monsters lest you become one. And
gaze not into the abyss, for when
you do the abyss gazes into you."

Amanda shudders.

AMANDA

That's exactly how it feels - when
you stare at it - this black void
is staring right back into you.
Feeling your insides.

RYDER

And this door, that's the color of
absence, is following you?

AMANDA

The black door's everywhere. My
apartment building, work, the
grocery store. Everywhere. But
never in the same spot. One day
it'll be next to the copy machine
at work, then down the hall of my
apartment building. The door's
always moving. But always near me.
Like a shark circling its next
victim.

A beat.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I've asked others if they see the
door - most the time it disappears
after I ask... but sometimes...
Sometimes a co-worker or someone -
I'll ask them - and they will see
it. They'll stop and stare at it -
into it. I'll have to shake them -
Force them to look away. Then...
I'll ask about the door again.

(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

And they all say me the same thing:
Open the door.

A beat.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Everyone who's seen the door tells me I need to open it. After they say that - the door disappears, and they forget. The worst time... The worst time my best friend at work. We were in the break room, alone, during our lunch and it appeared. Unannounced. Unwelcome - like always. I pointed to it - hoping it'd just disappear and we could keep talking about whatever Netflix show she'd watched last night. I think that's what we were talking about. Only...

A beat.

Before I could lower my hand, she dug her nails into my wrist. Her eyes were locked on the door. Her nails pierced so far into me - I bled. Not a little either. Before I knew it, there was red everywhere. The table. The floor. Her. I couldn't get her nails out of me - or get her to look away. She's one of my closest friends - I was a bridesmaid at her wedding, and... I had to throw her against the ground. To get her to stop. To get her to look away and let go. After I did... she gently released me, put her bloody hands on my face, and told me to open the door.

RYDER

(empathetic)

That's terrible. I'm sure it was traumatic to go through.

(back to business)

You haven't opened the door though, right?

AMANDA

No. No. I haven't.

A beat.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Not yet, anyway. I guess that's why I really called. What would happen if I did open it? What's behind it? At the very least, if I opened it, even just a crack, would - would it stop following me? Do you know, Doctor?

RYDER

Amanda, under no condition should you open the door. I'll be honest - I have no idea what's on the other side. I've never heard of anything like this before. But from everything you've said - I can't imagine it's anything good. You agree with that, right?

Dead air.

RYDER (CONT'D)

Amanda?

AMANDA

(disappointed)

Yes - I mean, I guess I do.

A beat.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I was really hoping you could help me, Doctor.

RYDER

Amanda, I can help. But you need to give me time to research. Promise me you won't open the door - won't touch it - won't go near it. We need to figure out what it is.

AMANDA

Yes. Yes I promise not to open the black door.

A beat.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

For now.

Her phone disconnects.

RYDER

Amanda?

A beat.

RYDER (CONT'D)

I believe she hung up. Well if
you're still listening, Amanda.
Stay strong. I'll get back to you
as soon as I can. But that's all
the time we have for now. Remember
- if you are bothered by anything
supernatural or unexplainable -
please give me a call - next time
on A Voice From Darkness.

OUTRO MUSIC