

RYDER

(answering machine)

Hello this is Dr. Malcolm Ryder, parapsychologist. I'm currently not in the studio. Please leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

BEEP

MIKE

This is Mike. From Kansas. I like to go for night drives. Alone. Helps me clear my head, you know? I don't know, you live in the city, right? You probably don't know. Don't get it. But that's how I relax - just me, my truck on a back country road. Sometimes in silence - sometimes with the radio blasting. I think that's how I found your show - driving out alone one night. Good thing I did, I guess. Otherwise, I wouldn't know who to call about this.

A beat.

MIKE

I haven't gone out on a night drive in almost two weeks. I saw something then that... well... I'm hoping you can help me make sense of what happened.

A beat.

MIKE

So I was out driving. My girlfriend and I'd been arguin- about something stupid, no doubt. It was probably just after 9pm or so. Not too late. I just had to get out of the house. Like I said, going out alone, helps me clear my head. It was raining. I didn't have any music on. Just wanted to hear each water drop as it hit the roof of my truck. Or the ground. I had my lights on - so I saw her way before I got close. She's the reason why I'm callin'. There was this little girl in the middle of the road.

Her back to me. Her back to my truck. Facing away from the light.

A beat.

MIKE

I slowed as I approached her. Pulled off to the side. Didn't hesitate to get out. Maybe I should have just rolled down the window and yelled out to her. But I saw this girl, figured she was lost, scared, so I parked. Got out.

A beat.

MIKE

She had long black hair. She wore a dress that was clinging to her body from the rain. Had to be no more than eight years old.

A beat.

MIKE

As I got out of my truck, I called out to her. Asked if she was lost. If she was ok. If she needed help finding her parents. She didn't respond, didn't turn 'round. So I kept walking up to her.

A beat.

MIKE

Soon as I got close, she reached a hand behind her, like she was searching for me. I held my hand out and took hers. Wanted to let her know it was going to be all right. We'd get her home, find her parents. But soon as I touched her...

A beat.

MIKE

I felt a prick on my hand. It went cold. Not from the rain. Not from her skin being clammy. Nothing like that. I looked down at my hand. Holding onto me wasn't the hand of a little girl. No. It was several leaches or eels - I don't know what they were - all mangled together. They resembled a hand, that's for sure, but only in the most abstract way. They clamped onto me, sucking my blood. I pulled back. The girl turned - and I swear to you - for a moment - I saw the face of a young girl. Saw a young, scared girl in a dress with black hair staring back at me. But those... things... were still taking blood from my hand. And I looked again, and it wasn't a girl at all. Just hundreds, thousands?, of these... leach-things... interwoven together in a way to look like a girl. But now they had me. At least a few of them did. The rest didn't seem to care as much about keeping up the pretense of lookin' like a lost little girl anymore. They all fell apart and slithered toward me. I jumped back. Ran to my truck. Tried to yank the ones latched onto my hand off. They didn't want to let go.

A beat.

MIKE

I got back in my truck - with several of those things still on my hand. I shut the door, turned the ignition and drove. Probably drove over some of the leach-things. I keep a lighter in my truck. As I drove, the ones that were stuck to my hand. I burned them. Only way they'd come off.

A beat.

MIKE

I got away - obviously. But I think they took a quart or two of my blood - the ones that grabbed me. That I burned off. If the rest had latched on... I would have been dead in minutes. Seconds probably. Dr. Ryder, what the hell were they? I'm terrified. Terrified to go out driving again.

Terrified of the rain.

Terrified that because some of them got a taste of my blood... that, that somehow the others will want the rest of it. Will know how to find me - find my blood. Is that crazy? Please call me back.

A beat.

MIKE

Tell me I'm crazy.

Mike hangs up. Dial tone.