

INTRO

Dark ambient drone.

RYDER

You're alone in an elevator at work. It comes to a sudden, unexpected stop. The lights flicker off. When they come back on, you are surrounded by tall, strange beings.

A beat.

RYDER

You need my help.

Intro music fades in.

RYDER

This is A Voice From Darkness.

ACT I

Intro music fades out.

RYDER

Hello, as always this is Dr. Malcolm Ryder, parapsychologist. I apologize for the long break after our last episode - right after coming back from a hiatus no less. But our studio has received calls, emails, and tweets asking for me to respond to wild theories regarding my involvement in two long missing persons - siblings Julian and Miranda Holloway.

A beat.

RYDER

I will not dignify these rumors on this show. Later we will be taking calls, however we will be screening them first to make sure no one is simply trying to get on air to shout-out their internet conspiracy theories about myself.

A beat.

RYDER

First - it's time for National Alerts.

National Alerts music plays.

RYDER

National Alerts. A dangerous text-adventure computer game from the 80s has found it's way onto the internet. Titled "The Decadence of Farboshia" - Do not download the game. Do not play it. Every copy should have been destroyed in 1985 when dozens of players disappeared. It's unclear how it got online, but it's there. At the Ravenswood library there was an incomplete walkthrough of the game. I don't recall many details - but the player begins the game as a pauper traveling across the ruined kingdom of Farboshia - collecting objects of the aristocracy so that they will grant you access into their hidden sanctum while the rest of the kingdom falls apart. The players who disappeared in '85 are believed to have finished the game - as all their computer screens showed the same final screen - pixel art of a luxurious room in a state of decay. Misshapen creatures in golden masks surround the player's character who appears frightened by these figures. I repeat: Do not search for or play The Decadence of Farboshia. That is the only National Alert we have this week.

National Alerts music ends.

RYDER

Do you have a supernatural question but don't want to call into the show? Maybe you're merely curious about a matter - like a small, intense red light that manifests above your bed as you try to fall asleep... No, actually that's dangerous. That's a bad example.

If you're ever experiencing that - please do call into the show right away. But - if you have a question you're merely curious about and would prefer to write into the show feel free to email us at avoicefromdarkness@gmail.com or tweet us @vfdarkness. On that note, from Twitter, Phil asked us - "Dr. Ryder, what was your first supernatural encounter?" Well that's kind of you to ask, Phil. The Ryder family has been adjacent to the supernatural for several generations. My grandfather, Duncan Ryder, like my sister now, was a professor of occult studies. I suppose many grandparents like to perform magic tricks for their grandchildren - pull coins from behind their ears and other simple sleights. My grandfather perhaps took it a bit too far. One night when I was seven years old, he led me to his study to show me a black-bladed knife. At that point in my life I'd been told about the supernatural but was never a witness to it. He turned on a bright desk lamp that cast his shadow across the floor and against the wall. With black blade in hand, and without warning, he bent down and severed his shadow from his body. His dark silhouette then moved about the room on its own - threw books from shelves, knocked over furniture, all the while my grandfather and I laughed.

A beat.

RYDER

Then, without warning, his shadow drifted towards me with its hands outstretched. My grandfather stopped laughing. I backed away -frightened. My grandfather whispered something under his breath and reached out a hand towards his shadow - but his shadow ignored him. As I crept back, its fingers grew longer and sharper till they took up a large portion of the room. I found myself trapped in a corner. The shadow now hardly resembled the man it'd been cast from. It was thin and long with talons. I looked towards my grandfather for help. "That's enough

now," he threatened. But the shadow continued on its course. The dark mockery of my grandfather raised its talons into the air... to strike me... My grandfather lunged at his desk lamp... he missed the pull-chain but knocked the lamp off his desk. The light bulb bursts and the room fell into darkness.

A beat.

RYDER

I woke up in the guest room late the next afternoon. I asked my grandfather about his shadow, about the black blade... but he feigned ignorance. His body cast a shadow. A normal one that resembled him and only moved when he did. He suggested I must have dreamed the whole incident. Only... later that day I snuck into his study. The books were all back where they'd been before the shadow'd thrown them. The furniture too. No broken lightbulb shards were scattered across the floor. But... the lightbulb in the desk lamp was different - a different size and wattage - than it had been. It'd been replaced.

A beat.

RYDER

Years later I again asked my grandfather about the black-bladed knife. He did not deny the reality of the incident. He apologized for what had happened years before and for lying. I asked him what happened to the knife. He refused to tell me. When he died, he made no mention of it in his will.

It was possibly one of the more dangerous talismans in his collection, and there's no accounting for it. Well, Phil, that was my first encounter with the supernatural. I hope that satisfied your curiosity.

A beat.

RYDER

Our next question comes to us from Eli. They write, "Dr. Ryder, I keep having intense dreams of a tower rising through mist in the northeast. As it rises an island in a lake disappears. And then everything - everywhere - goes dark... I think I'm dreaming of the end of the world. Am I?" Well, Eli, I've met dozens of people over my career who've claimed to predict the future from their dreams. I believe dreams are powerful - we'll see an example of that shortly in Today In Odd America - but I've yet to see a demonstrable case where a dreamer predicted a specific future event. I wouldn't let your dreams worry you too much. That's all the questions we had this week. Onward to Today in Odd America.

TODAY IN ODD AMERICA

TIOA music fades in.

RYDER

Today in Odd America we find ourselves onboard the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt - or 'the Swanky Franky' as some sailors called her. The ship's location - "Yankee Station" - off the coast of Vietnam. The year - 1967.

A beat.

RYDER

Our story involves two sailors who worked the night watch. A second class culinary specialist by the name of Rodgers.

And a third class hospital corpsman named Quincy. Rodgers ran the aft mess deck from the late dinner to breakfast. Quincy stood watch in Medical over night. But both would take a smoke break around 0200. The smoke deck could be a lonely place at that hour. Frequently it was only Rodgers and Quincy out there at that time. Over weeks and then months of meeting they became friends. As they'd smoke they'd talk - about what they missed back home. Girls mostly. Complain about their chains of command. They had these conversations nearly every watch. But one night, Quincy met Rodgers and something was wrong. His eyes searched out into the water. He was quiet and didn't respond to anything Rodgers said. Rodgers dismissed it - Probably didn't sleep well, that's all - Rodgers thought. Quincy was no better the night after. If anything - worse. Rodgers asked him what was wrong. "A dream I had," Quincy said. He wouldn't elaborate further.

A beat.

RYDER

The next night, Quincy met Rodgers on the smoke deck in his dress blues. There was no reason to wear that uniform out to sea unless you're going to captain's mast. Rodgers asked Quincy if he was in trouble. "None at all," he said. His eyes were glazed over. His voice monotone. "In fact tonight is a night to celebrate," Rodgers asked him what for. "For the past few nights, I've talked to this woman," Quincy said. "She's beautiful. The most beautiful woman I've ever met. And she loves me. And I love her." "We're out to sea," Rodgers said. "There's no women within miles of the ship."

"You're wrong," Quincy said. "She follows us, beneath the water. She has the most beautiful yellow eyes - almost luminescent"

"Quincy, you're sounding crazy," Rodgers said. "She's perfect, Rodgers. In every way. She said she heard me when I dreamed. Heard my thoughts. Heard my memories. Everything about me. And she loves me. Everything about me, Rodgers. In my dreams - I've spent years with her already. It's time. It's time I go to her." He walked closer to the side of the ship. "Don't go doing what you're thinking of doing," Rodgers said and crept behind his friend - afraid to make a sudden move.

“Come with me,” Quincy said and offered his hand. “I’m sure there are others like her beneath the water. One of them will hear your thoughts and dreams and think you’re perfect too. Wouldn’t that be so much better than all this?”

Rodgers clutched Quincy’s hand and pulled him away from the side of the ship. Tried to put him in a bear hug. He screamed, “HELP ON THE SMOKE DECK. I NEED HELP ON THE SMOKE DECK.” But while some of Rodgers’s focus was on getting help, Quincy’s sole effort was to escape Rodger’s grip. And he succeeded.

A beat.

He jumped.

A beat.

RYDER

Rodgers called man overboard.

But before he did... he looked out into the water. For a moment -just a moment - he thought he saw shining yellow eyes in the water. Staring up at him. But they disappeared. A search and rescue operation launched. Quincy’s body was not recovered. Rodgers told his chain of command what Quincy had said - told anyone who'd listen.

Rodgers was flown off the ship and sent to shore-side medical. Ship doctor's dismissed his rantings of a yellow eyes in the water and Quincy's story as grief or perhaps a psychotic break.

A beat.

RYDER

But after Rodgers left the Roosevelt, eight more sailors leapt overboard - their bodies never to be found. Files on the overboard deaths the Roosevelt experienced remain classified to this day.

A beat.

TIOA music cuts out.

RYDER

And now back to our main show.

ACT II

RYDER

All right, we’re back and we have a caller on the line. Why don't you tell us your name and what supernatural problem you're facing.

DANIELLE

I'm Danielle ... and... my wallpaper.... there's something off about it.

RYDER

Danielle, I believe you've called into the wrong show-

DANIELLE

(interrupts)

No. No - I haven't. Sorry. Let me explain: I buy and flip houses. No, I mean, that's not true. I'm an accountant. I don't make that much money. Maybe I'm not a very good accountant? But I watch a lot of HGTV. Shows where people buy and flip houses, and I thought, "Hey, I could do that.

That looks exciting and fun and profitable." So I bought a fixer-upper sight unseen. And then I went to it... and now I've seen it. There's this *intense* wallpaper pattern that's in every room.

RYDER

(interrupts)

You still haven't convinced me you meant to call into my show.

DANIEL

(blurts out)

There's a man in the wallpaper.

A beat.

DANIELLE

In the paisley pattern. The wallpaper in every room is paisley.

RYDER

(curious)

Go on.

DANIELLE

I got the keys to the house a few days ago and have been coming by after work. The first night, a lot of the lights were broken and I couldn't see the interior all that well. The next night, I came with new light bulbs. That's when I found out there's paisley wallpaper everywhere. Someone must've really loved that pattern. That second night, after I put a bulb in the master bedroom, there was something different about the paisley design in the room. Underneath the... teardrop? - the main part of the pattern, whatever it is...

RYDER

A cypress tree.

DANIELLE

I'm sorry?

RYDER

The primary recurring image in paisley is a cypress tree.

DANIELLE

(joking)

I thought you said I called into the wrong show?

RYDER

Paisley has occult connotations. Not unlike the pyramid with the eye on the back of one dollar bills. But please, go on with your story.

DANIELLE

Oh... Well... In the master bedroom's wallpaper pattern, there was a man next to all the cypress trees that repeated throughout the room. I'd never seen that design before. Not that I've ever really taken the time to examine paisley patterns... but something about it wasn't right. The man... I guess he was leaning against the cypress tree.

RYDER

The man who stands in the shade of the cypress tree.

DANIELLE

That's what people call him? The man in my wallpaper?

RYDER

He has different names in different cultures, but that's the most common. Continue.

DANIELLE

The man - he was just simple lines. Not a lot of detail - like the rest of the pattern in that room. The man's face. It moved so slowly... I thought I was imagining it. A visual trick of some kind. But his face turned toward me. And he blinked. The light bulb broke, and the room went dark. I put a new bulb in, but after I did the pattern had changed. There was no longer a man standing next to the cypress tree. I ran out the room. Ran out of th house. I've been afraid to go back since.

A beat.

RYDER

Well I'd be frightened to if that happened to me.

DANIELLE

What is he? The man who stands in the shade of the cypress tree? Is he a demon or spirit or something?

RYDER

Do you know where the paisley design comes from?

DANIELLE

(uncertain)

Jane Austen times? It feels like a pattern Mr. Darcy would have in Pemberley.

RYDER

Far older. And Persian. The cypress tree design comes from the Zoroastrians. The origin of the man who stands in shade is less clear. Strangely despite the Zoroastrian roots of the cypress tree, the Abrahamic faiths offer the most popular explanation for the man in the shade. Apocryphal Gnostic texts claim a son of Cain snuck back into the garden of Eden to eat from the tree of life which granted immortality. For attempting this, God cursed Cain's son to forever stand beneath the tree - a cypress tree. And so to this day he remains.

DANIELLE

Even if that were true, why would he be in my wallpaper?

RYDER

Mystics, warlocks, magicians of all types have used the paisley pattern as part of rituals to channel him. Mostly in attempts to gain everlasting life. I imagine the previous owner of your house was doing such. Do you know what happened to them?

DANIELLE

No. No, they disappeared and the house was foreclosed. The ritual they had to do to summon the man in the shade... is it hard?

RYDER

Extraordinarily so.

DANIELLE

So that means my wallpaper is... valuable?

RYDER

That's not a question that is even relevant. We need to destroy all the paisley in your house to unlink the man in the shade from there. Now, I know a-

DANIELLE

(interrupts)

No. I'm not letting you help me.

RYDER

You called into this show looking for my help.

DANIELLE

No. I mean. Not that kind of help. I don't want you sending creepy spiders to me or whatever you did to the last person who called into the show.

RYDER

That was a special circumstance. And in this case nothing like that is even-

DANIELLE

(interrupts)

No. I don't trust you. I don't want you coming to my house. Or sending anything to me that might hurt me. And besides... maybe I should get a second opinion. See if some other supernatural person thinks maybe the wallpaper might be worth something. I mean, I bought this place to make money.

RYDER

Danielle, you cannot-

Hangs up.

A beat.

RYDER

Danielle, if you're still listening, I'd advise against doing whatever you're thinking of doing. If you put out an ad on craigslist or anything on the internet claiming you have a connection to the man who stands in the shade - you will bring the wrong sort of person to your door. Those who seek immortality are willing to sacrifice anything - and anyone - to get it. Feel free to call me back if you want the situation handled properly. I promise you'll come to no harm.

A beat.

RYDER

And that is all the time we have for our show this evening. Feel free to reach out to us on twitter @vfdarkness with any otherworldly questions you have or call in next time on A Voice From Darkness.

Outro Music.

