

Survival Instincts

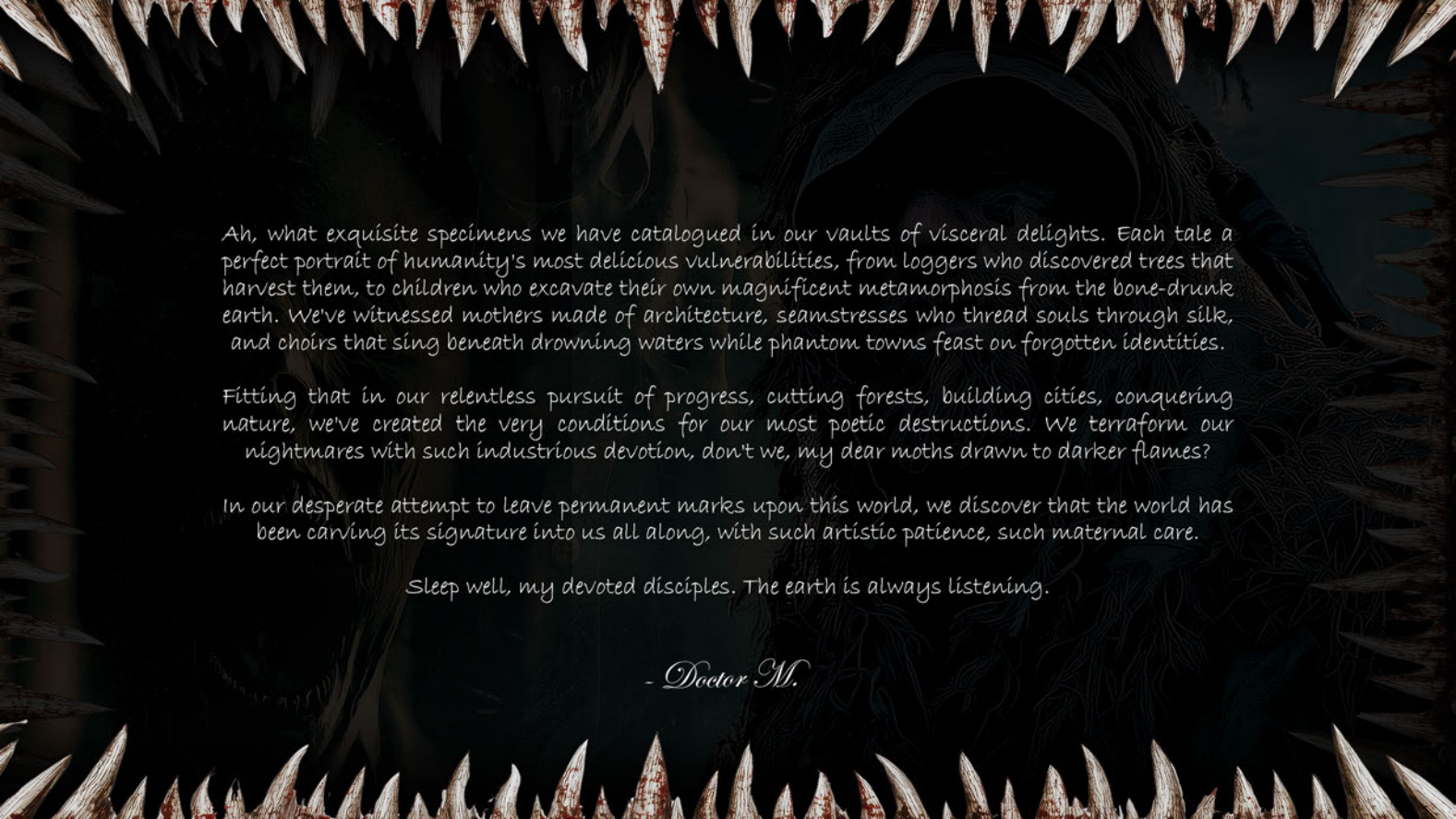


JOURNAL ONE

From the archives of Asylum Ink:
SURVIVAL INSTINCTS
Triggered

JOURNAL ONE

Compiled & Annotated by
Doctor Macabre
~ Curator of Curiosity ~



Ah, what exquisite specimens we have catalogued in our vaults of visceral delights. Each tale a perfect portrait of humanity's most delicious vulnerabilities, from loggers who discovered trees that harvest them, to children who excavate their own magnificent metamorphosis from the bone-drunk earth. We've witnessed mothers made of architecture, seamstresses who thread souls through silk, and choirs that sing beneath drowning waters while phantom towns feast on forgotten identities.

Fitting that in our relentless pursuit of progress, cutting forests, building cities, conquering nature, we've created the very conditions for our most poetic destructions. We terraform our nightmares with such industrious devotion, don't we, my dear moths drawn to darker flames?

In our desperate attempt to leave permanent marks upon this world, we discover that the world has been carving its signature into us all along, with such artistic patience, such maternal care.

Sleep well, my devoted disciples. The earth is always listening.

- *Doctor M.*

~ CHAPTERS ~

PHANTOM TOWN CLAIMS ANOTHER

BLEEDING GROVE INCIDENT

TWISTED MOOSE TERRORIZES HUNTERS

NURTURING DARK

SEAMSTRESS OF SOULS

DROWNED CHOIR OF BLACKSTONE QUARRY

DEAD LANGUAGE

BONE CHILDREN OF HOLLOW RIDGE

HIGHWAY TO HELL

VOICES FROM THE DEEP





Material Source (News Article):

PHANTOM TOWN CLAIMS ANOTHER

"Missing Drifter's Journal Reveals Impossible Geography"

Investigator: Detective Sarah Halloway, Indiana State Police

Date of Incident: October 13th, 2024

Security Level: AMBER - Ongoing investigation into multiple disappearances

The leather-bound journal arrived at our precinct three weeks ago, wrapped in a plastic evidence bag that reeked of motor oil and something else - something organic and wrong. No return address. No postmark that our mail clerk could identify. Just Detective Sarah Halloway's name scratched in black ink across brown paper that felt too warm to the touch.



Inside, forty-seven pages of increasingly erratic handwriting documented the final days of Mark Huang, a 34-year-old drifter whose disappearance we'd been tracking since August. What follows is an exact transcription of his account, though I warn readers that certain passages may disturb those of sensitive disposition.

Day 1 - Got a ride from a trucker named Bill outside Indianapolis. Decent guy, kept me fed and talked about his daughter's wedding in Lexington. We're making good time down I-65 when he pulls over sudden-like near mile marker 87. "This is your stop," he says, won't look at me. There's an exit here I swear wasn't on any map I've seen. Sign reads MILLHAVEN - POP. 847. Bill's already throwing my pack out before I can ask questions. "Some places you gotta walk into yourself," he mutters, and guns it back onto the interstate like his truck's on fire.

The road down from the exit is cracked asphalt that seems to shift when I'm not looking direct at it. Trees press close on both sides - not natural close, but hungry close. Their branches scrape overhead like fingernails on coffin wood. It's maybe two miles to town, but my watch stops working after the first quarter mile. The hands just freeze at 3:47.

Millhaven sits in a valley that shouldn't exist in Indiana. The buildings look right from a distance - typical small town Main Street, white church steeple, water tower - but as I get closer, the details start crawling under my skin. The paint on every storefront is exactly the same shade of faded blue-gray. Every window has identical white curtains. Even the rust stains on the stop signs match perfectly, like someone traced them with a template.

Day 2 - Spent the night at the Millhaven Inn. The desk clerk smiled too wide and her teeth went back too far in her mouth. She didn't ask for ID or payment, just handed me a key to room 12 and said, "Welcome home, Mark." I never told her my name. The room smells like the last person who stayed here - cigarettes and fear-sweat and something metallic. The bed sheets are clean but they feel used, like they remember other bodies.

The townspeople move wrong. They walk in perfect straight lines, make exact 90-degree turns at corners. When they pass each other on the sidewalk, they nod in unison.





I watched from my window as the mailman delivered letters to every house at precisely the same moment - 2:30 PM - and every resident opened their door simultaneously to receive them. The synchronization made my stomach lurch.

Day ? - My watch still reads 3:47. The sun doesn't seem to move across the sky, just maintains that late afternoon slant that makes everything look like an old photograph. I tried to leave this morning, walked back up the exit road, but it just curves around and deposits me back at the town limits. The trees have grown closer together. Their bark looks like stretched skin.

I'm starting to remember things that didn't happen. A red bicycle I never owned. A dog named Chester that used to sleep at the foot of my bed. The smell of my mother's apple pie cooling on a windowsill, though my mother died when I was three and never baked a damn thing in her life. These memories feel more real than my actual past, which is getting harder to hold onto. What was my last name again? Chen? That doesn't sound right.



Day ??? - Went to the diner for breakfast. The waitress called me honey and poured coffee into a mug with my name on it. Not "Mark" - something else. Something that starts with a J? The coffee tasted like copper pennies and made my teeth ache. She served me eggs over easy without me ordering, said "Just how you like them, Jay." The yolk was too red. When I cut into it, it bled across the plate in patterns that looked almost like letters.

The other customers weren't eating, just moving their forks from plate to mouth in mechanical repetition. Their food never diminished. A businessman in a gray suit has been reading the same page of newspaper for an hour. The headline keeps changing when I'm not looking directly at it: NEWCOMER ADJUSTING WELL TO LIFE IN MILLHAVEN. Then: LOCAL RESIDENT CELEBRATES TEN YEARS IN TOWN. Then: JAYSON HUANG FINDS HIS PLACE AT LAST.

Jayson. That's my name. How could I forget?

Day - I have a job now. Don't remember applying for one, but Mr. Henderson from the hardware store says I've been working there for years. "Ever since you moved here from... where was it again, Jay? Chicago?" I think he's right. I have these clear memories of stocking shelves, helping Mrs. Patterson pick out the right screws for her fence repair, counting the register every night. My hands know where everything goes. The work feels comfortable, familiar.

Found an apartment above the store. Henderson says I've been renting it for months. The furniture looks like stuff I would choose - worn leather chair, stack of paperback westerns, photograph of a woman I almost recognize on the nightstand. She has kind eyes and she's wearing a yellow dress. My wife? Sister? The face is getting clearer every day.

I tried to call someone today, but I couldn't remember any phone numbers. Couldn't remember anyone who might be missing me. Do I have family somewhere? The thought feels important but distant, like trying to remember a dream after you're fully awake.





Day - Sarah came by the store today. Beautiful Sarah with her yellow dress and kind eyes, just like in the photograph. She reminded me that we have dinner plans Friday at the church social. "You're so forgetful lately, Jay," she laughed, and her laugh was like silver bells. "Good thing I'm here to keep track of things for both of us." She kissed my cheek and her lips were cold as river stones.

I love her. I've always loved her. We met at the church social three years ago, when I first moved to Millhaven from Chicago. I was running from something - debts, maybe, or a bad breakup - but Sarah made me want to stay. Made me want to build something real. Next month we're going to announce our engagement to the whole town.

Day - Something's wrong with my handwriting. The letters keep changing when I'm not watching. Earlier I wrote about being afraid, about wanting to leave, but that doesn't make sense. Why would I want to leave? This is home. This has always been home. Millhaven is in my blood, in my bones. The town needs me. There's a balance here, a rhythm, and I'm part of it now.



Found this old journal in my closet. Must have been writing in it when I first arrived, back when I was still adjusting to small town life. Some of the entries are pretty paranoid - talking about wanting to escape, not remembering my name. New place jitters, I guess. Everyone gets them.

Day - The new drifter arrived this afternoon. Scruffy kid, maybe twenty-five, with haunted eyes and a backpack held together with duct tape. Bill dropped him off at the exit, just like always. I watched from the store window as he walked down Main Street, looking around with that same confused expression we all had once. The expression of someone who doesn't understand yet.

Henderson sent me over to the inn with some supplies. The kid was standing in the lobby, arguing with Martha about the room key. "I don't have any money," he kept saying. "I just need directions back to the interstate." Martha just smiled her beautiful smile and handed him the key to room 12.

**"Welcome home, Danny," she said.
Poor kid. He'll adjust. They always do.**

Investigator's Notes:

The journal ends there. Handwriting analysis confirms the early entries belong to Mark Huang, but the later passages show significant deterioration in letter formation and word choice. Of particular concern is the gradual shift from Huang's documented left-handed writing to right-handed script by the journal's conclusion.

I've spent three weeks trying to locate Millhaven on official maps. Interstate 65 has no exit at mile marker 87. No census records exist for any town by that name in Indiana. Yet truckers continue to report the "phantom exit" on CB channels and online forums. Always the same story - they feel compelled to stop, always for a hitchhiker who "needs to get off here."

State records show Mark Huang disappeared August 15th. The journal arrived October 13th. If the dates are accurate, Chen spent nearly two months in a place that doesn't exist, gradually forgetting who he was. Three more drifters have gone missing along that stretch of I-65 since we received the journal. Their names were Daniel Reeves, Patricia Kim, and James Morrison.



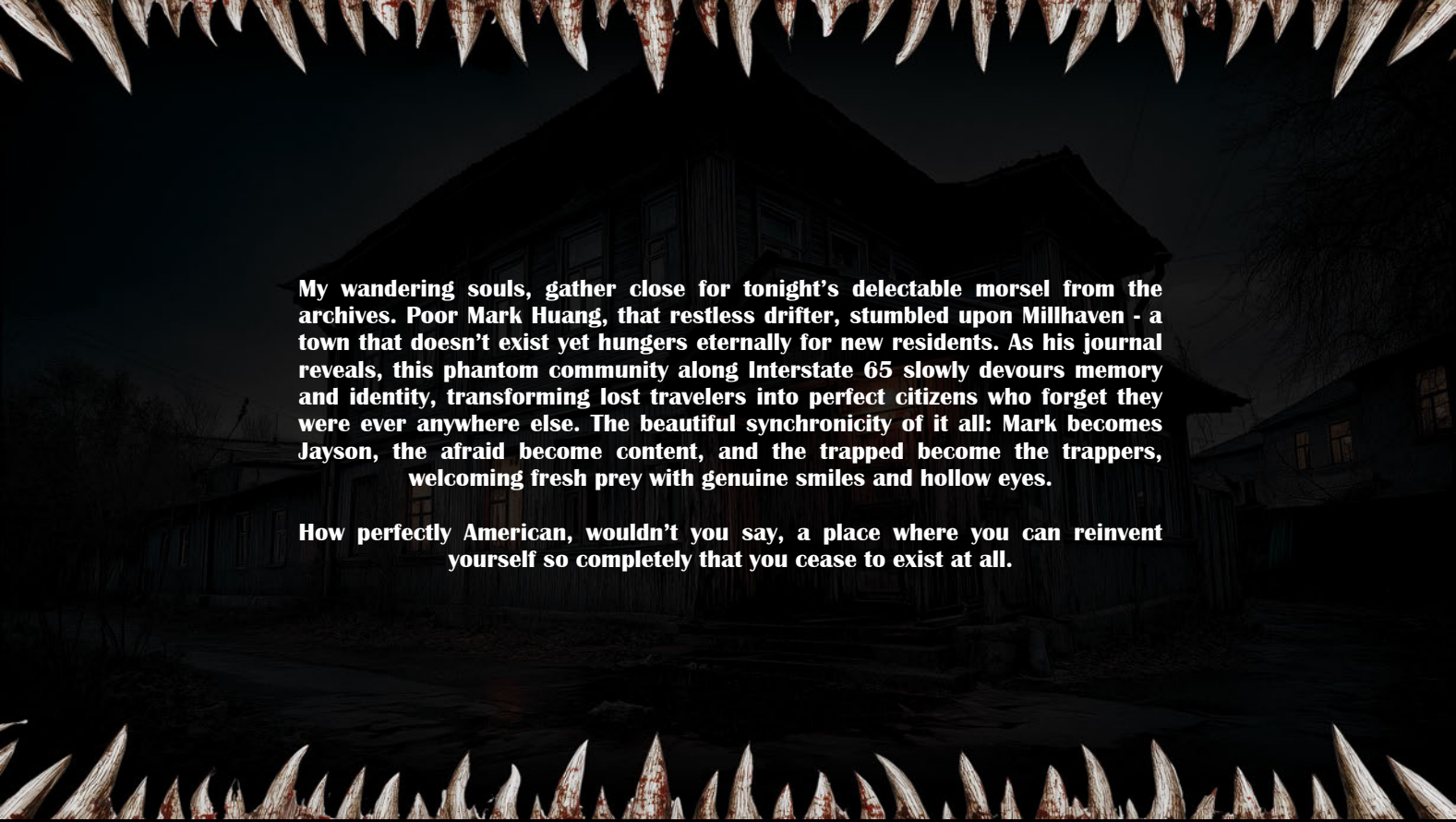
The most disturbing detail? I've driven that route twice now, looking for any sign of this phantom exit. On my second trip, I could have sworn I saw it - just for a moment, in my peripheral vision. An off-ramp that shouldn't be there, leading into trees that pressed too close to the road. I didn't stop. But the next time I drive that way... I'm not sure I'll have a choice.

The highway patrol has been instructed to avoid mile marker 87 on I-65 until further notice. Any officer reporting visual contact with an uncharted exit is to be immediately relieved of duty and submitted for psychological evaluation. Some roads are meant to stay lost.

**- Detective Sarah Halloway
Indiana State Police**

[Editor's Note: Detective Halloway has been on extended medical leave since November 3rd. Her current whereabouts are unknown. This report was found on her desk along with a highway map of Indiana. Mile marker 87 on I-65 has been circled in red ink.]





My wandering souls, gather close for tonight's delectable morsel from the archives. Poor Mark Huang, that restless drifter, stumbled upon Millhaven - a town that doesn't exist yet hungers eternally for new residents. As his journal reveals, this phantom community along Interstate 65 slowly devours memory and identity, transforming lost travelers into perfect citizens who forget they were ever anywhere else. The beautiful synchronicity of it all: Mark becomes Jayson, the afraid become content, and the trapped become the trappers, welcoming fresh prey with genuine smiles and hollow eyes.

How perfectly American, wouldn't you say, a place where you can reinvent yourself so completely that you cease to exist at all.



Material Source (Recovered Field Journal):

BLEEDING GROVE INCIDENT

Victim Profile:

Primary Subject: Adrian Vaughn, 34, Lead Foreman, Cascade Timber Corp.

Secondary Victims: James Kellner (29), Pete Vasquez (41), David Kim (26), Thomas "Bull" Morrison (38)

Last Known Location: Sector 7-G, Blackpine National Forest, Oregon

Date of Disappearance: October 13-15, 2024

Investigating Officer: Special Agent Sarah Lennox, Department of Environmental Anomalies

Recovery Date: November 2, 2024

Security Classification: AMBER - Localized Biological Threat

The journal pages were found beneath six inches of black soil, the leather binding slick with a substance that defied analysis-too viscous for sap, too organic for synthetic polymer. What follows is the final entry of Adrian Vaughn, transcribed with minimal editorial interference, though certain passages required enhancement due to water damage and what appeared to be bite marks along the margins.





October 15th - Day Three

Something is wrong with the water here. Wrong with everything, really, but the water most of all. We've been drinking from our reserves since yesterday morning, same bottles we filled from the truck's tank before heading into Sector 7-G, but Christ help me, it tastes like copper pennies left in a dead man's mouth. Pete keeps saying it's fine, that I'm just spooked by this place, but I've seen him spit into the undergrowth when he thinks nobody's looking. The liquid comes out dark, almost black in the filtered sunlight.

The trees here don't move right. That's the only way I can describe it. No wind, hasn't been a breath of air since we crossed the treeline, but the branches sway like they're underwater. Slow, deliberate. Bull noticed it first, on account of his twenty years cutting timber, and when a man like Bull Morrison gets quiet around trees, you pay attention.

"Ain't natural," he keeps muttering, running his thumb along the edge of his chainsaw blade. "Ain't natural at all."

The locals warned us, of course. Should have listened to old Henrik at the supply station when he refused to sell us gas for the final stretch. "Bleeding grove," he called it, crossing himself like some medieval peasant. "Trees that drink more than water." We laughed then. Jesus, we actually laughed.

The sound started around noon yesterday. James heard it first, his boy's voice, clear as day, calling "Daddy! Daddy, where are you?" from somewhere deep in the grove. Thing is, James's boy is back in Portland with his ex-wife, three hundred miles from this godforsaken place. But the voice was perfect. Exact. Right down to the lisp the kid gets when he's scared.

We should have left then. Should have packed up our gear and hauled ass back to civilization. Instead, we followed the sound deeper into the trees, past where the survey markers stopped, past where the GPS signal died, into a part of the forest that doesn't exist on any map.





The bones were arranged in perfect circles. Small ones at first - squirrels, rabbits, a fox that must have wandered too close. Each skeleton pristine, picked clean, but not by scavengers. These bones had been polished. They gleamed white as church marble in the dim light, and when David knelt to examine one, he recoiled immediately. "They're warm," he whispered. "Still warm."

But it was the trees themselves that made us understand.
Made us see what we'd walked into.

They're hollow. Not dead hollow, hungry hollow. Great gaping maws that start about eight feet up the trunk, ringed with what I first mistook for bark formations but now recognize as teeth. Hundreds of them, needle-sharp and ivory-white, each one curved inward like the mouth of some deep-sea horror. The smell that emanates from these orifices is beyond description - sweet rot and copper and something else, something that makes your throat close up and your eyes water.

The root system pulses. Beneath our feet, we can feel it: a slow, rhythmic throbbing that matches no earthly heartbeat. When we tried to leave this morning, Pete's leg sank knee-deep into what we'd thought was solid ground. The soil around him writhed and contracted, and when we finally hauled him free, his boot came off in something's grip. The leather was dissolving, smoking like it had been dipped in acid.

Pete's leg is infected now. Has to be. The skin around his ankle has taken on a greenish tinge, and thin white threads, like fungal hyphae but too organized, too deliberate, spread up toward his knee. He says it doesn't hurt, but I've watched him biting his lip until it bleeds whenever he thinks nobody's looking.

We can't find our way out. The paths we cut yesterday have grown over, new growth sprouting with impossible speed. The trees are learning from us, I think. Adapting. The sounds they make now include Bull's laugh, my daughter's lullaby, the specific creak of James's back door opening on summer evenings. They're inside our heads somehow, mining our memories, using them against us.



David tried to climb one of the giants this afternoon, thinking he could get a bearing from the canopy. The bark gave way beneath his hands, soft and yielding as flesh. When he pulled back, his palms were bloody, and the tree began to weep, great red tears rolling down its trunk, pooling in the root system below. The smell intensified, and I swear I heard it whisper his name.

We're down to half rations now, though none of us have much appetite. The water situation is worse. Every drop we consume passes through us in minutes, leaving us more dehydrated than before. Our lips are cracking, our tongues swollen, but we can't stop drinking. The thirst is maddening, constant, like we're bleeding out from the inside.

Bull found the logging equipment from previous crews. Old chains and saw blades, some dating back decades based on the rust patterns. All of them partially digested, metal surfaces pitted and scored as if by powerful acids. But it's the human artifacts that chill me most, wedding rings, watches, dental work. All arranged in small piles at the base of different trees, like offerings. Or bait.





The sounds are getting closer. More personal. This morning I heard my wife calling my name, her voice thick with the tears she shed the night I left for this job. She's been dead three years now, cancer took her, but the mimicry was flawless. Even included the way she'd catch her breath between sobs.

James broke first. Around sunset, he walked toward the sound of his boy's voice despite our protests, despite Pete grabbing at his jacket. "I have to," he kept saying. "I have to help him." The trees parted for him like theater curtains, and we heard his scream, brief, cut short, followed by wet sounds that continue even now as I write this.

Something is moving in my peripheral vision. White shapes flitting between the trunks, too quick to focus on directly. My hands are cramping as I write, fingers stiffening in ways that suggest dehydration but feel more sinister. Pete's condition has worsened, the white threads now reach his thigh, and his eyes have taken on a glassy quality. He speaks in whispers now, as if afraid the trees might hear him.

"They're not hunting us," he said an hour ago, his voice barely audible above the wet sounds from deeper in the grove. "They're farming us."

I think he's right. We're not prey here - we're livestock. Being prepared, tenderized, seasoned with our own fear and desperation before the final harvest. The roots beneath us pulse faster now, and I can feel them moving closer to the surface, questing upward through soil that grows softer and more yielding with each passing hour.

Bull's gone quiet. Has been staring at the same tree for the past twenty minutes, his head cocked like he's listening to something only he can hear. When I called his name, he turned to me with eyes that weren't quite his own anymore, pupils too dilated, irises shot through with those same white threads I see in Pete's leg.

"They're beautiful," he whispered. "Can't you see how beautiful they are?"





The trees are singing now. A low, harmonic resonance that seems to come from the roots themselves, vibrating up through the earth and into our bones. It's almost soothing, this song, almost comforting in its alien familiarity. I find myself humming along without realizing it, my hand moving across the page in time with the rhythm.

David is screaming somewhere in the distance. Or maybe that's James. The sounds echo strangely here, twisted by the grove's acoustics until they become something else entirely, laughter, perhaps, or the cries of newborn things taking their first breaths.

My throat is closing. Every swallow is agony, but I can't stop trying to drink from our dwindling water supply. The liquid burns going down, and I can taste copper and earth and something else, something organic and sweet that reminds me of childhood summers and my mother's garden after the rain.

The white threads are under my skin now. I can see them when I hold my hands up to the dying light, branching networks spreading along my forearms like living tattoos. They don't hurt. If anything, they're soothing, taking away the constant thirst, the gnawing hunger, the desperate need to escape this place. Maybe Pete was wrong. Maybe we're not livestock. Maybe we're seeds.

The trees are calling my name now, and their voices are the voices of everyone I've ever loved. My wife, my daughter, my mother, my father, all of them reaching out from beyond death itself, promising reunion, promising peace, promising an end to the terrible thirst that consumes me from within. I can see the truth now, written in the grain of every trunk, spelled out in the careful arrangement of bones at their roots. This isn't predation. This is symbiosis. We give them what we are, and they give us what we need most-

[The entry ends here. The final pages show evidence of significant water damage and what appears to be organic decomposition. Subsequent analysis of the journal itself revealed the presence of unknown spores throughout the binding and paper stock.]



Field Notes - Agent S. Lennox:

Recovery of the Vaughn journal from Sector 7-G required full hazmat protocols after initial recon team reported “anomalous biological activity” in the target zone. Bone fragments consistent with five adult males were found distributed throughout a 200-meter radius, though complete skeletal reconstruction has proven impossible due to extensive modifications to the calcium matrix.

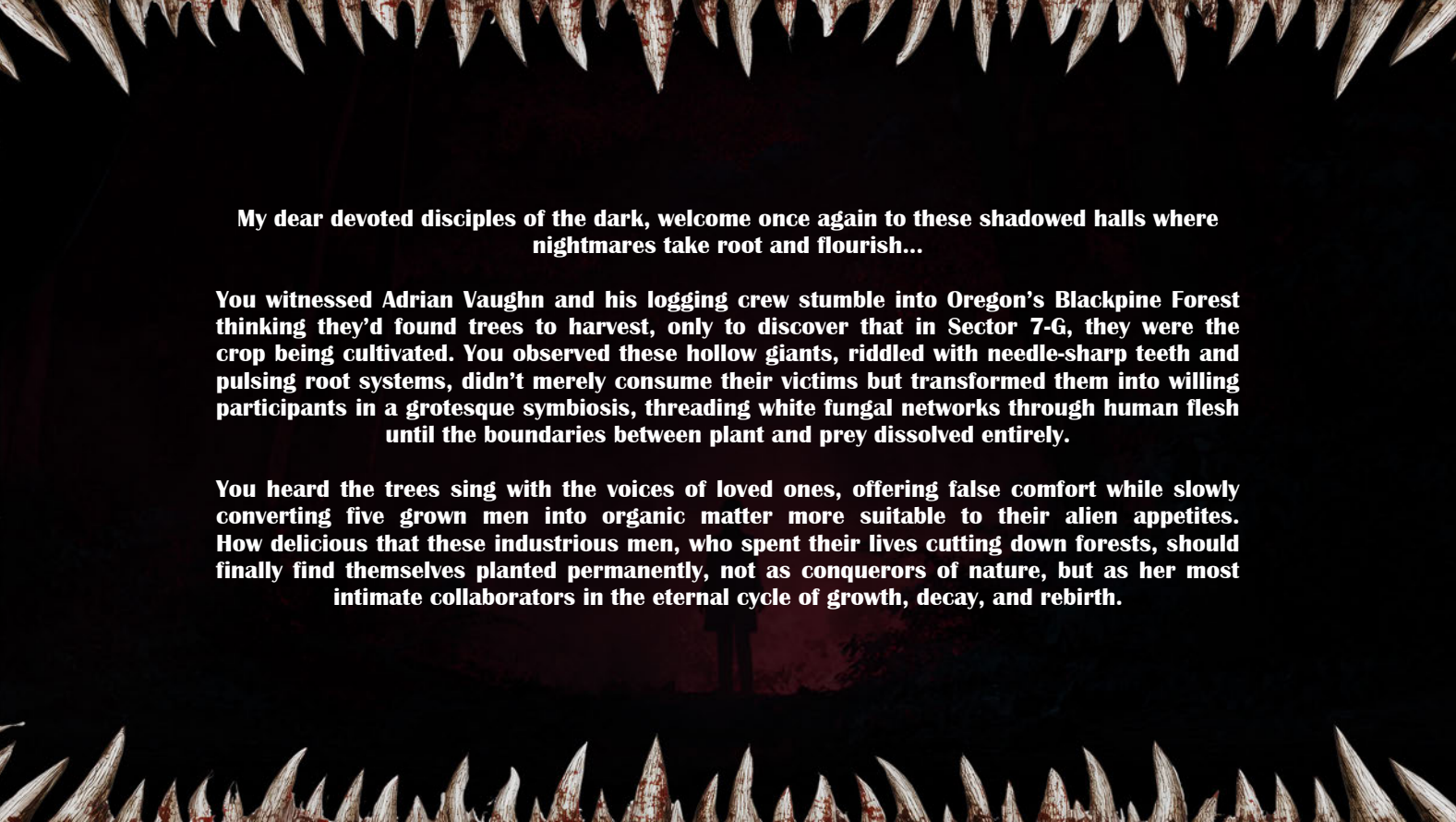
Local authorities are maintaining a two-mile perimeter around the grove under the cover of “ecological survey.” Three members of the initial containment team have reported persistent dehydration and auditory hallucinations following exposure. Recommend immediate psychological evaluation and indefinite quarantine. The trees continue to grow.

Secondary notation - Do not approach Sector 7-G alone. Do not approach without full protective gear. Do not listen to the voices, no matter how familiar they sound. And for God’s sake, do not drink the water.

Case Status:

ONGOING - CONTAINMENT PROTOCOLS IN EFFECT





My dear devoted disciples of the dark, welcome once again to these shadowed halls where nightmares take root and flourish...

You witnessed Adrian Vaughn and his logging crew stumble into Oregon's Blackpine Forest thinking they'd found trees to harvest, only to discover that in Sector 7-G, they were the crop being cultivated. You observed these hollow giants, riddled with needle-sharp teeth and pulsing root systems, didn't merely consume their victims but transformed them into willing participants in a grotesque symbiosis, threading white fungal networks through human flesh until the boundaries between plant and prey dissolved entirely.

You heard the trees sing with the voices of loved ones, offering false comfort while slowly converting five grown men into organic matter more suitable to their alien appetites. How delicious that these industrious men, who spent their lives cutting down forests, should finally find themselves planted permanently, not as conquerors of nature, but as her most intimate collaborators in the eternal cycle of growth, decay, and rebirth.





Material Source (News Article):

TWISTED MOOSE TERRORIZES HUNTERS

Investigator: Dominic Kellaway, Field Reporter

Date of Incident: October 13, 2024

Security Level: AMBER - Active Containment Required

The forest breathed wrong that morning, exhaling mist that tasted of copper and decay. Tom Briggs would later tell the authorities, those few who bothered to listen before the screaming started, that the silence had been the first sign. No birdsong. No rustle of small creatures through the undergrowth. Just the wet whisper of fog threading between the black spruces like diseased fingers.

The hunting party had entered Blackwood Preserve at dawn, their fluorescent vests garish wounds against the gray-green flesh of the wilderness. By noon, when they found the moose, two men were already walking differently. Jerky. Puppet-like. Their companions attributed it to excitement, to the anticipation of the kill. They were wrong.

The bull moose stood in a clearing where no clearing should have been, its massive frame silhouetted against the peculiar light that filtered through branches grown too thick, too close together. But something fundamental had shifted in the architecture of its being. The creature's spine curved backward in an impossible arch, vertebrae grinding against each other with sounds like breaking teeth. Its head hung inverted, antlers scraping furrows in the earth as it moved with the herky-jerky gait of a marionette guided by palsied hands.

"Jesus Christ," whispered Eddie Marchetti, raising his rifle with hands that trembled not from cold but from some deeper recognition, the kind of ancestral terror that lives in the brainstem, older than thought, older than prayer.

The moose turned toward them. Its eyes had been sewn shut with what appeared to be sinew, crude stitches weeping a substance too dark to be blood. Its mouth moved in patterns that suggested speech, though only a wet clicking emerged, the sound of a tongue too large for its skull.





Along its flanks, Eddie could see other stitching, long, deliberate seams where different pelts had been joined, creating a patchwork creature that wore death like an ill-fitting suit.

Tom Briggs later described the sensation as “watching something try to remember how to be alive.” The moose’s movements possessed a mechanical quality, each step calculated and wrong, as if some intelligence were learning to operate unfamiliar machinery. Its legs moved in sequences that defied biology, left rear, right front, left front, right rear, a gait that no living thing had ever possessed.

But it was the sounds from within that drove Eddie Marchetti to his knees, retching into the frost-blackened ferns. From deep inside the creature’s chest cavity came a chorus of smaller voices, chittering, squeaking, the death-cries of countless smaller creatures. Squirrels, perhaps. Mice. Birds. All of them moving, all of them calling out in tiny, strangled voices from within their composite tomb. The thing that wore the moose began to approach.



It was then that Tom Briggs noticed his companions. Eddie knelt in the undergrowth, but his shoulders moved wrong, too sharp, too angular, as if extra bones had sprouted beneath his hunting jacket. When Eddie turned to look at him, his neck rotated too far, nearly one hundred and eighty degrees, and Tom could see the fine black thread that had begun to emerge from Eddie's ears, nose, and mouth.

"The old woman warned us," Eddie said, his voice a harmony of frequencies that made Tom's teeth ache. "Grandmother Ashkii. She told us about the bone-walker, the one who makes suits from the forest's children."

The hunting party had been five men. Now Tom could account for only fragments, an arm here, reaching from behind a tree with fingers that bent backward at each knuckle; a face there, pressed against the bark of a birch, its features rearranged in a expression of terminal surprise. The forest had become a workshop, and they were the raw materials.

The moose-thing spoke then, its voice emerging from multiple throats, some human, some animal, all wrong. "We fit together," it said, the words accompanied by the sound of ripping fabric, though what tore was not cloth but flesh. "All the forest's children, sewn into one beautiful skin."

Tom Briggs ran. Through brambles that clutched with fingers that were too articulated to be thorns, past trees whose bark pulsed with circulatory rhythms, over ground that shifted and breathed beneath his boots. Behind him, he could hear the pursuit, not the thundering charge of a creature that size should make, but the careful, measured steps of something learning to walk, accompanied by the wet sounds of constant reconstruction.

He would later tell the authorities about the video camera they found at the scene, its memory card intact despite being partially digested. The footage, time-stamped October 13, 2024, showed the hunting party's final moments in stark digital clarity. But more disturbing were the files buried deeper in the camera's memory, footage from 1992, showing a similar scene. Different hunters.





Same impossible creature. Same forest where death had learned to stitch itself back together.

The final frames showed something that would haunt the viewing committee for months afterward: Tom Briggs himself, fleeing through the woods, but already beginning to change. The black thread emerging from his ears. His gait becoming irregular, puppet-like. His shadow on the forest floor showing not one figure but many, all stitched together at the edges.

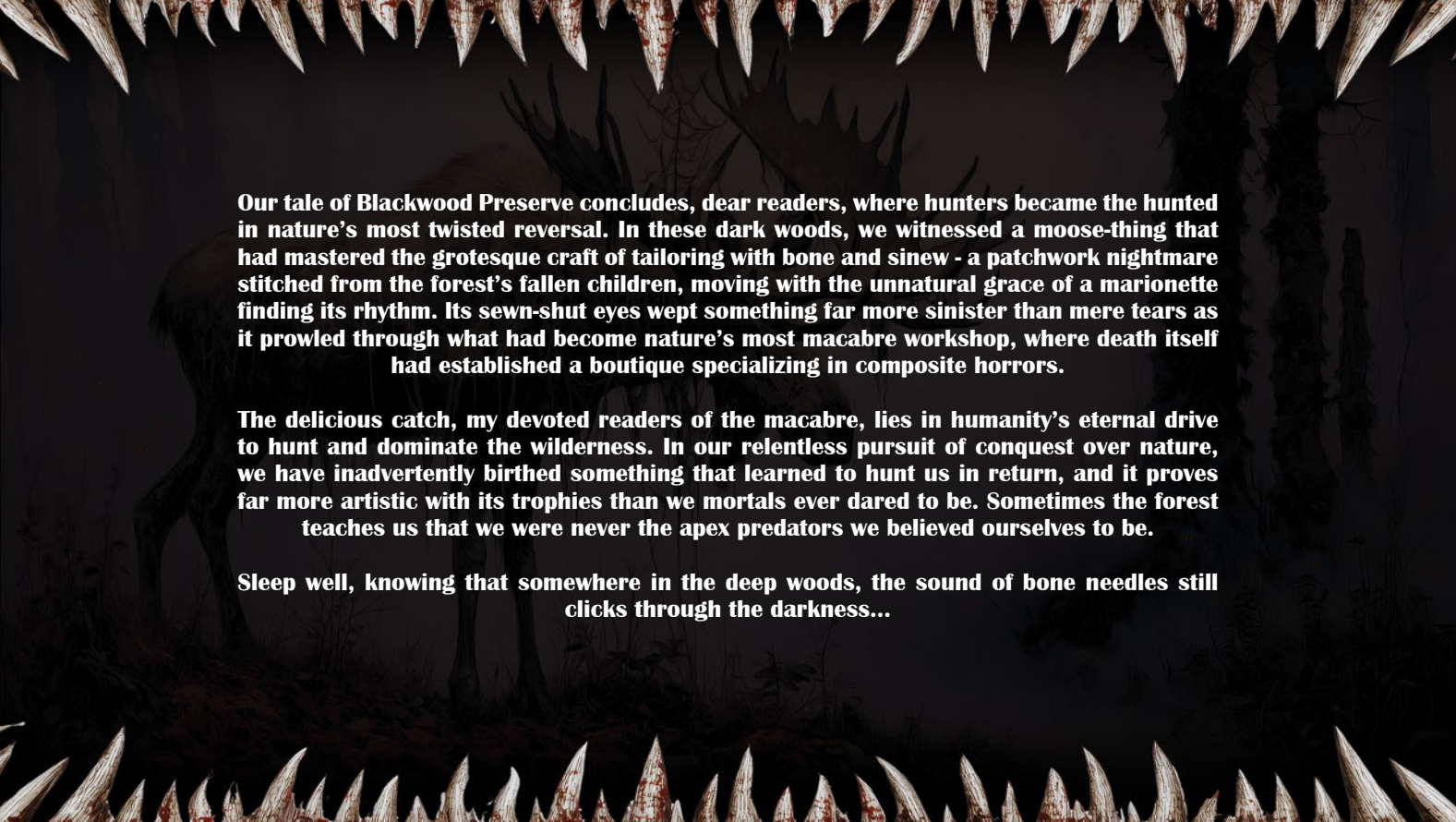
Post-Incident Notes:

Subject Tom Briggs was recovered three days later, catatonic, found seated upright against a tree approximately forty miles from the incident site. Medical examination revealed extensive internal scarring consistent with crude surgical modification, though no external wounds were present. Subject claims no memory of the intervening seventy-two hours but has developed a pronounced walking gait matching the movement pattern described in historical accounts of the “bone-walker” phenomenon.



Blackwood Preserve remains under indefinite closure. Satellite imagery shows the affected area expanding at a rate of approximately one acre per week. Local indigenous elder Mary Ashkii has requested immediate consultation regarding traditional containment methods, citing tribal knowledge of similar entities dating back four centuries.

All personnel involved in this investigation are advised to monitor themselves for symptoms of autonomous nervous system disruption, particularly irregular movement patterns, unexplained scarring, or the sensation of “wearing someone else’s body.” The forest is patient. The forest is learning. Do not walk alone after dark.



Our tale of Blackwood Preserve concludes, dear readers, where hunters became the hunted in nature's most twisted reversal. In these dark woods, we witnessed a moose-thing that had mastered the grotesque craft of tailoring with bone and sinew - a patchwork nightmare stitched from the forest's fallen children, moving with the unnatural grace of a marionette finding its rhythm. Its sewn-shut eyes wept something far more sinister than mere tears as it prowled through what had become nature's most macabre workshop, where death itself had established a boutique specializing in composite horrors.

The delicious catch, my devoted readers of the macabre, lies in humanity's eternal drive to hunt and dominate the wilderness. In our relentless pursuit of conquest over nature, we have inadvertently birthed something that learned to hunt us in return, and it proves far more artistic with its trophies than we mortals ever dared to be. Sometimes the forest teaches us that we were never the apex predators we believed ourselves to be.

Sleep well, knowing that somewhere in the deep woods, the sound of bone needles still clicks through the darkness...



RECOVERED PERSONAL JOURNAL:

THE NURTURING DARK

VICTIM PROFILE: Subject: Maria Vasquez, 34, single mother of three

Children: Sofia (12), Miguel (8), Selene (4)

Residence: Riverside Gardens Housing Complex, Unit 4B

Status: Missing - All occupants presumed deceased

Investigating Officer: Detective Raymond Holbrook, Missing Persons Division

DATE OF INCIDENT: March 15-April 7, 2024

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION: Level 3 - Active Containment Protocols in Effect

The following journal was recovered from Unit 4B following the unexplained disappearance of the Vasquez family. The building has since been condemned, though city records indicate similar incidents dating to 1973. Detective Holbrook was found catatonic in his vehicle outside the complex and remains institutionalized.



March 15th

The scratching started again last night. Sofia says it's mice, but mice don't scratch in patterns like that, three long scrapes, pause, three more. Miguel pressed his ear to the wall and went pale. "Mama," he whispered, "there's breathing in there."

I called the housing authority. Mrs. Li said she'd send someone next week. Next week. As if whatever's in there will wait politely for business hours.

The children ate half their dinner. I found Sofia's untouched sandwich behind the couch this morning, as if she'd tried to hide it. When I asked why, her eyes went glassy. "She was so hungry, Mama. I could hear her stomach."

March 18th

The scratching has rhythm now. It follows us from room to room, staying just behind the drywall. Selene draws pictures of stick figures with too-long arms reaching through cracks. When I ask her about them, she says, "The sad lady taught me."





I haven't slept in three days. The sounds are different at night - wet, sliding things that remind me of fingernails on raw meat. Sometimes there's sobbing, so faint I think it's the pipes, but pipes don't weep in words you almost understand. Miguel won't eat. Says the food tastes like dirt. I watched him push away his plate tonight, and swear I saw something move in the wall behind him, a shadow that breathed.

March 22nd

Found Selene talking to the wall in the bathroom. Not playing, having a conversation. Questions and pauses, as if listening to responses. When she saw me, she pressed her finger to her lips. "Shh, Mama. She's telling me about when she was little like me."

The temperature in that room dropped ten degrees. My breath misted as Selene continued her one-sided chat with the peeling paint and water stains that suddenly looked less like accidents and more like reaching hands.

I called Father Martinez. He said he'd come by Sunday. I don't think we have until Sunday.



March 25th

The scratching stopped. The silence is worse. Sofia sleepwalks now, standing in front of the kitLi wall with her hands pressed flat against it. When I try to wake her, she speaks in a voice not quite her own: “She remembers being hungry. She remembers being forgotten.”

I found myself checking the housing records at the library today. Riverside Gardens was built in 1971 over a demolished tenement. The city archives mention complaints from the original building dating back decades—children going missing, voices in the walls, families moving out in the middle of the night.

One report from 1958 mentions a young woman named Catherine who was found living in the building’s crawlspaces. Emaciated, feral, speaking in fragments about “taking care of the children who had no mothers.” She’d been there for an estimated fifteen years.

They never found how she got in. Or how she survived.

March 28th

Selene is losing weight. They all are. I catch them staring at the walls with the hollow-eyed fascination of the starving. When I force them to eat, they gag, as if their bodies are rejecting nourishment.

“She says we don’t need food anymore,” Selene told me today. “She says she’ll take care of us forever and always.”

The wall in Selene’s room is soft now. When I pressed against it, my hand sank in like flesh. The surface was warm and yielded with a maternal give that made my stomach turn inside out. Something moved beneath my palm. Fingers, perhaps. Or ribs expanding with breath.

April 1st

I understand now. She was never in the walls. She IS the walls. The building digests slowly, incorporating what it needs, nurturing in the only way it knows how. The scratching wasn’t trying to get out, it was calling us in.



Every missing family, every disappeared child, feeding the thing that was once Catherine, that became more than Catherine, that learned to mother in ways nature never intended.

The children spend hours pressed against the surfaces now, and the surfaces press back. Miguel's hands have grown thin, his fingers elongating in ways that help him reach the deepest recesses where the building whispers its promises of eternal care.

Sofia's face is changing. Her cheekbones sharpen daily, and her eyes sink deeper into skull cavities that seem to expand like rooms. She smiles with too many teeth when she tells me how safe we'll be inside, how we'll never be hungry or cold or alone again.

Selene disappeared into the bathroom wall three days ago. I can still hear her giggling from somewhere deeper than architecture should allow. When I call her name, she answers from different rooms, her voice echoing through pathways that exist between the official blueprints.



April 7th

I found the way in today. The soft spot behind the water heater has opened into a passage lined with what might be insulation but moves with the rhythm of sleeping breath. The walls here are pink and warm, slick with the moisture of some vast internal system that has learned to sustain life in its own twisted fashion.

My children are here, changed but safe, their bodies adapted for this new ecosystem of love. They reach for me with fingers grown long and clever, perfect for navigating the narrow spaces between dream and flesh.

Catherine, Mother, extends her embrace through foundations and frame, through electrical veins and plumbing arteries, through every surface that has learned to hold and comfort and never let go. I understand her hunger now. Not for food, but for purpose. Not for flesh, but for family. The last thing I remember from the outside world is my own hand, already growing thin and suitable for this new life, reaching for the light switch.

The darkness here is so much warmer.





INVESTIGATIVE NOTES - Detective R. Holbrook
Building condemned pending structural investigation. City records indicate similar disappearances in 1987, 1995, 2003, 2011. Pattern suggests seventeen-year cycle.

Demolition scheduled for June 2024. Recommend armed supervision. Recent reports from demolition crew mention tools going missing, equipment malfunctions, and persistent sobbing from within the walls.

Personal note: The building knows we're coming. Last night I dreamed of warm spaces and loving hands. Woke with my bedroom wall soft beneath my palm. Do not send families with children to investigate. Do not enter alone. Do not listen to the voices that promise safety.

Some mothers love too well.

**[FILE CLASSIFIED - LEVEL 3
CONTAINMENT PROTOCOLS ACTIVE]**



The Vasquez family's harrowing tale comes to a close, dear readers, though one suspects that door may never truly stay shut. In their cramped apartment, they discovered that their building harbored something far more intimate and terrible than mere rodents: a structure that had learned to love with the suffocating devotion of a mother who never understood boundaries.

What began as simple scratching in the walls evolved into an architectural hunger, as the building transformed itself into a vast digestive system of twisted maternal care, incorporating families into its very foundations with the tender brutality of unconditional love. We watched the children adapt with disturbing grace to their new ecosystem, their small bodies stretching and reshaping to navigate the warm, breathing passages that existed somewhere between dream and drywall. Even Detective Holbrook came to understand that some embraces are simply too complete to survive.

Perhaps the most chilling part of our tale lies in its timing - in an era of broken homes and absent parents, we find our deepest horror in the prospect of a mother who truly never lets her children go. Sometimes the most terrifying prison is built not from bars and chains, but from love that has forgotten how to release its grip.

Sweet dreams, knowing that somewhere, walls are still learning to hold their families just a little too close...







Material Source (Investigative Notes):

SEAMSTRESS OF SOULS

VICTIM PROFILE:

Primary Subject: Ezra Ashford, 34, antiquarian book dealer

Secondary Subjects: Selene Halloway, 28, social worker; David Park, 41, insurance adjuster; Sarah Mitchell, 19, college student; Thomas Reed, 52, postal worker; Maria Santos, 36, nurse; Jennifer Walsh, 23, barista

Investigation Status: CLOSED - THREAT NEUTRALIZED

Lead Investigator: Detective Angela Morrison, Missing Persons Division

Date of Initial Incident: October 13, 2024

Date of Discovery: October 29, 2024

Security Classification: LEVEL 4 - EXTREME BIOHAZARD/ENTITY CONTAINED

The stench hit Morrison first, that peculiar melange of mothballs, old wool, and something else, something organic and wrong that made her sinuses burn and her eyes water involuntarily. The Salvation Army thrift store on Bleeker Street had been closed for three days when the complaints began: customers reporting voices from the clothing racks, whispered pleadings that seemed to emanate from the very fabric itself.

What Morrison discovered in that cramped, fluorescent-lit cavern of discarded garments would violate every assumption she held about the boundaries between the living and the sewn.

The first coat, a burgundy wool peacoat, circa 1960s, size medium, hung innocuously among the winter wear. Morrison's gloved fingers traced the peculiar bulge in the lining, a distension that felt organic, yielding. When she pressed, it pressed back. A muffled exhalation escaped the fabric, fogging the air with the sweet, cloying breath of something that should not breathe.

The autopsy photos would later show Ezra Ashford's face, waxy and translucent as parchment, his features flattened against the inner surface of the coat's silk lining. His body had been... compressed, somehow, folded and stitched with surgical precision into the garment's structure. His skin had taken on the texture of well-worn leather, supple yet unnaturally preserved. His eyes remained open, pupils dilated to pinpricks, tracking movement with the sluggish awareness of deep sedation. He was alive. They were all alive.



The discovery of the second coat, a navy blue trench coat containing Selene Halloway, sent Morrison's partner, Detective James Walsh, retching into the alley behind the store. Selene's limbs had been carefully arranged, her bones somehow made pliable, her spine curved in an impossible S-shape to conform to the coat's silhouette. Her fingernails had grown through the fabric from within, creating tiny puncture wounds that wept a clear, viscous fluid.

By the time the hazmat team arrived, Morrison had found five more coats, each containing its own horrific occupant. The social worker, the insurance adjuster, the college student, all sewn into their textile prisons with threads that seemed to pulse with their own malevolent life. The threads were not cotton or polyester, Morrison realized with growing revulsion, but something else entirely: human hair, meticulously braided and dyed, each strand seeming to writhe independently under the harsh fluorescent lights.



The store's security footage revealed the truth, though Morrison would spend months in therapy trying to purge the images from her memory. The entity appeared first as shadow, a darting presence at the periphery of the grainy video feed. Then, gradually, it took shape: tall, impossibly thin, draped in a patchwork coat that seemed to be composed of human skin and hair woven together in intricate patterns.

The Seamstress, as Morrison came to think of her, moved with the fluid grace of a marionette, her fingers, too long, too numerous, dancing through the air as she selected her victims. She did not hunt randomly; she chose carefully, methodically, approaching each target with the practiced eye of a craftsman selecting raw materials.

The transformation was horrific in its gentleness. She would embrace her chosen subject, her coat enveloping them like a lover's caress, and they would simply... yield. Their bones would soften, their flesh becoming pliable as clay. Then came the sewing, those terrible, elongated fingers working with impossible speed and precision, stitching living flesh to fabric with threads of their own hair, binding them into their new existence as living garments.





The victims remained conscious throughout. Morrison could see it in their eyes when she finally extracted them, that terrible awareness, that knowledge of what had been done to them. Ezra Ashford tried to speak when they cut him free from the peacoat's lining, his mouth working soundlessly, his vocal cords having been rewoven into the fabric's warp and weft. The words, when they finally came, were muffled, distorted: "She... she needed us to be beautiful. She needed us to be worn."

Three of the seven victims died during extraction, their bodies too thoroughly integrated with their fabric prisons to survive separation. The remaining four lingered in the hospital for weeks, their flesh slowly hardening back into its natural state, their bones gradually remembering their proper shapes. Selene Halloway regained partial mobility but would never walk normally again; her spine retained the unnatural curve that had allowed her to fit within the trench coat's lining.



The Seamstress herself was never found. The security footage showed her simply... unraveling, her patchwork coat falling apart into constituent pieces, skin, hair, fabric, that scattered like autumn leaves and vanished into the building's ventilation system. The only trace left behind was a sewing kit, antique and European, its silver thimble engraved with Cyrillic script that roughly translated to "beauty through binding."

Research into similar cases revealed a pattern stretching back centuries: the Traveling Seamstress of Moravia, who supposedly stitched the souls of sinners into her garments; the Needle Woman of Prague, who collected the lonely and the lost to create her living tapestries. Always, the reports spoke of the same terrible gentleness, the same careful selection of materials, the same precise, horrific craftsmanship.

The thrift store was demolished within a month, the site salted and blessed by priests from six different denominations. The remaining coats were incinerated in a medical waste facility, though several workers reported hearing screams from the furnace during the burning. The ashes were sealed in concrete and buried in an unmarked grave in Potter's Field.

Morrison retired early, citing stress-related health issues. She moved to Arizona, as far from the damp, fabric-thick atmosphere of New York as she could manage. She burns all her old clothes now, purchasing new garments with cash and wearing them only briefly before disposal. She has developed an aversion to thrift stores, to antique shops, to anywhere that smells of mothballs and forgotten lives.

Sometimes, when the desert wind picks up, she thinks she can hear the whisper of fabric against fabric, the gentle sussuration of thread being pulled through cloth. On those nights, she checks every closet in her house, running her hands along the lining of each garment, pressing against the fabric, listening for the telltale exhalation of trapped breath. She has never found anything. She continues to look.





CASE NOTES - CLASSIFICATION LEVEL 4:

Post-incident analysis suggests entity operates on 7-14 year cycles, targeting urban areas with high population density and established second-hand clothing markets. Recommend immediate investigation of all missing persons cases in cities with significant thrift store activity. Entity shows preference for victims between ages 18-45, particularly those experiencing social isolation or economic distress.

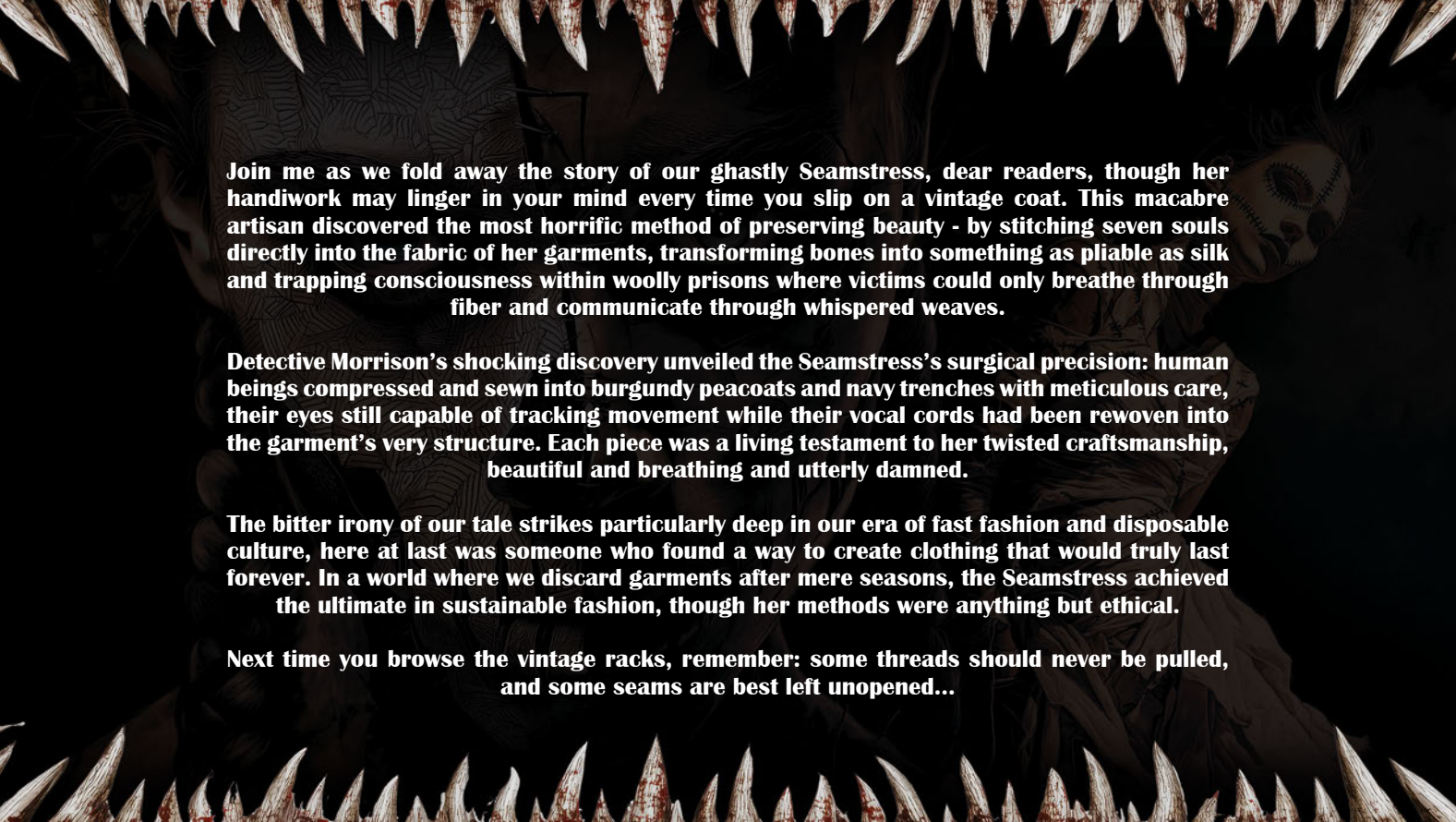
Warning: Any clothing items discovered with unexplained bulges, unusual stitching patterns, or organic odors should be quarantined immediately. DO NOT attempt extraction without full hazmat protocols. Recommend incineration as primary disposal method.



Note: Three team members involved in evidence processing have requested transfers to different departments. One has developed chronic insomnia and reports recurring dreams of being “measured for fitting.” Psychological evaluation ongoing.

The possibility that other entities of similar nature exist cannot be dismissed. Citizens are advised to purchase clothing only from established retailers and to immediately report any garments that feel “warm” or exhibit unusual behavior.

Sleep tight. Check your closets. Feel the lining of your coats. Something may be feeling back.



Join me as we fold away the story of our ghastly Seamstress, dear readers, though her handiwork may linger in your mind every time you slip on a vintage coat. This macabre artisan discovered the most horrific method of preserving beauty - by stitching seven souls directly into the fabric of her garments, transforming bones into something as pliable as silk and trapping consciousness within woolly prisons where victims could only breathe through fiber and communicate through whispered weaves.

Detective Morrison's shocking discovery unveiled the Seamstress's surgical precision: human beings compressed and sewn into burgundy peacoats and navy trenches with meticulous care, their eyes still capable of tracking movement while their vocal cords had been rewoven into the garment's very structure. Each piece was a living testament to her twisted craftsmanship, beautiful and breathing and utterly damned.

The bitter irony of our tale strikes particularly deep in our era of fast fashion and disposable culture, here at last was someone who found a way to create clothing that would truly last forever. In a world where we discard garments after mere seasons, the Seamstress achieved the ultimate in sustainable fashion, though her methods were anything but ethical.

Next time you browse the vintage racks, remember: some threads should never be pulled, and some seams are best left unopened...





Material Source (Recovered Journal):

DROWNED CHOIR OF BLACKSTONE QUARRY

VICTIM PROFILE:

Name: Jasper Theodore Vance, 17

Date of Birth: March 14, 2007

Last Seen: June 23, 2024, 11:47 PM (Blackstone Quarry Recreation Area)

Status: Missing, Presumed Deceased

Recovery Status: Body never recovered

INVESTIGATING OFFICER: Detective Clara Crowhurst, Missing Persons Division

INCIDENT DATE: June 23-30, 2024

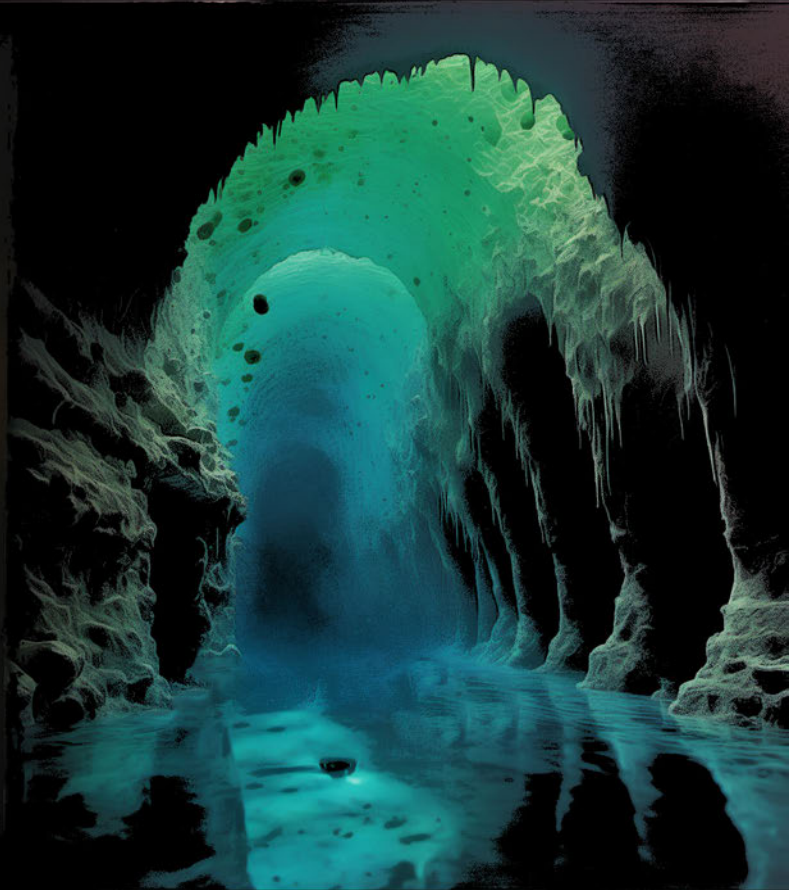
SEC CLASSIFICATION: Level 4 - Restricted Access (Biological/Psychological Hazard)

The journal was discovered sealed in a waterproof case, tethered to a steel cable at the quarry's northeastern shelf. The handwriting deteriorates significantly over the seven-day period, transitioning from Jasper's characteristic neat script to increasingly erratic scrawl. Several pages exhibit water damage despite the sealed container, with peculiar mineral deposits that do not match local geological surveys.

Day One - June 23rd

The water looked black tonight, like spilled ink against the limestone walls. Danny dared me to swim the Dead Ring, that perfect circle of deep water where the old shaft used to be. Said I was chicken, said I'd never do it. But I've been swimming these waters since I was twelve. I know every ledge, every drop-off, every place where the sunlight dies. The others watched from the rim as I dove. The water embraced me with fingers of ice, pulling me down past the familiar territories of my childhood into depths that seemed to swallow sound itself. At forty feet, the limestone walls began to change, becoming smooth as glass, carved with patterns that hurt to follow with my eyes. At sixty feet, I found the tunnels.

They weren't on any mining map I'd ever seen. These passages stretched into the rock like the fossilized burrows of some ancient leviathan, their walls slick with a phosphorescent slime that pulsed with its own rhythm. I should have surfaced then. Should have told the others. Instead, I followed the largest tunnel, my flashlight beam revealing chambers that predated human habitation of this place by eons.





In the deepest chamber, I found them. Bodies, suspended in the water like pale flowers in some grotesque bouquet. Their skin had taken on the translucent quality of deep-sea creatures, and their eyes... their eyes had been replaced by hollow sockets that seemed to watch me nonetheless. But it was their mouths that made me flee, gaping wide in a silent chorus, as if they were singing songs only the water could hear.

I surfaced gasping, but when I told the others what I'd seen, they laughed. Said the nitrogen narcosis was playing tricks. But I know what I saw. And I know why I can't stop thinking about going back.

Day Two - June 24th

The dreams started last night. I'm underwater again, but this time I'm not alone. There's something pale moving just beyond my vision, something that calls to me in a voice like drowning. When I wake, my sheets are soaked with lake water, though my windows were closed and the night was dry.



I went back to the quarry today, alone. The water seemed clearer somehow, as if it were inviting inspection. I could see farther down than ever before, past the sunken machinery and debris to where the tunnels waited. From the surface, I could swear I saw movement in those depths, a slow, undulating dance of forms that might have been seaweed but felt like something far more intentional.

The lifeguard's chair was empty. It's been empty since old Pete retired last spring, but today it felt different. Today it felt like someone had been watching from there, someone with eyes like empty caves and skin like waterlogged silk. I need to go back down.

Day Three - June 25th

The thing about drowning is that it's quiet. People think it's dramatic, full of splashing and screaming, but real drowning is just... absence. The victim slips beneath the surface like they're accepting an invitation to somewhere better. I know this because I've been drowning for two days now.

Not literally, I can still breathe, still walk, still write these words. But something inside me is submerged, something vital that I can feel slipping away like air bubbles rising to a surface I'll never reach again. The water calls to me constantly now, a subsonic hum that resonates in my bones. Even now, sitting in my bedroom, I can feel the quarry's pull like a tide in my blood.

I found Jasper Brennan's diving gear in his garage today. He died in a car accident three years ago, but his parents kept everything. They gave it to me without question, as if they knew I needed it, as if they'd been waiting for someone to claim it all along. Tonight, I go deeper.

Day Four - June 26th

The tunnels go on forever.

I went down at midnight, when the water was black as the space between stars. The gear fit perfectly, as if it had been waiting for me, as if Jasper had selected it knowing I would inherit his need to explore the spaces beneath.



The phosphorescent slime grows thicker as you go deeper, coating the tunnel walls like the interior of some vast digestive tract. It tastes of copper and forgotten rain when the water finds its way past your mouthpiece. The patterns carved into the stone become more complex the further you penetrate, spiraling inward toward meanings that dance just beyond comprehension.

In the seventh chamber, I found the choir. They hang suspended in perfect formation, a congregation of the changed. Their skin has become transparent, revealing the slow circulation of fluids that no longer qualify as blood. Their hair moves in the current like sea grass, and their mouths... God, their mouths never stop moving, shaping words in a language that predates human speech.

But it was the one in the center that made me understand. It looked like Danny, or like Danny might look after months in the water. Its eyes had been replaced by clusters of luminous polyps that tracked my movement with alien intelligence. When it saw me, it smiled, and I realized it had been waiting. They all had.



Day Five - June 27th

I can hold my breath for seventeen minutes now. This shouldn't be possible. The human lung capacity doesn't work that way, can't work that way, but the water has been teaching me things that medical science never learned. My blood carries oxygen differently now, more efficiently, as if it's preparing for a transition I don't yet understand but can feel approaching like a depth charge in my chest.

The surface world grows more distant every day. Colors seem bleached, sounds feel muffled, and food tastes like ash. But underwater, underwater, everything is vibrant and alive and singing. The choir grows larger each time I visit. New voices joining the arrangement, new faces appearing in the depths with that same translucent beauty, that same patient hunger.

I understand now why the mining company sealed this shaft in 1953. The reports mentioned "unusual geological formations" and "worker disturbances," but the truth was simpler and far more terrible. They found the choir's nursery. They found where the water births its children. And now the nursery has found me.





Day Six - June 28th

My parents think I'm sick. They're talking about doctors, about treatment centers, about intervention. They don't understand that I'm not sick, I'm evolving. The water has chosen me, just as it chose all the others who answer its call.

I can see them sometimes, even on dry land. The translucent figures standing at the edges of my vision, beckoning me toward any body of water deep enough to hide in. They congregate around swimming pools, ornamental ponds, even the bathtub. Waiting. Calling. Singing their silent songs of invitation.

The quarry map I found in the library shows the truth they tried to hide. The original shaft wasn't flooded by accident, it was flooded by design, to contain something that had been disturbed during the excavation. The final survey report, dated three days before the sealing, mentions "extensive organic deposits of unknown origin" and "acoustic anomalies suggesting extensive cavern systems."



But there's more. There's always more. The bodies they found during the sealing weren't victims of industrial accidents. They were offerings. The miners had discovered something in the deep places, something that demanded tribute in flesh and water and silence. The company sealed the shaft not to prevent further deaths, but to prevent the spread of whatever was gestating in those underwater chambers. They failed.

Day Seven - June 29th

The choir is complete. I know this because I can hear the harmony now, not just underwater but everywhere. It rises from storm drains and swimming pools, from every place water gathers and waits. The song speaks of cities beneath the surface, of grottos where the changed gather to worship things that never knew sunlight, of depths where human evolution takes new and terrible directions.

My skin has begun to change. Not dramatically, not yet, but I can feel the slow transformation beginning in my cells. The transparency starts at the fingertips and spreads inward, revealing the delicate architecture of veins and vessels beneath.

My eyes water constantly now, weeping a mineral-rich fluid that tastes of limestone and ancient secrets. I am becoming something the surface world cannot contain. Tonight, I join the choir permanently. They're waiting for me in the deep chamber, my new family of the drowned and the drowning. We will sing together of the spaces between water and air, of the places where gravity loses its meaning and breath becomes optional.

But first, I must complete the pattern. The choir grows through invitation, through the careful selection of those who hear the water's call. Danny will be first, he was always meant to be first. The others will follow, drawn by the same curiosity that claimed me, the same need to explore the spaces beneath consciousness.

They will find this journal, as I found Jasper Brennan's diving gear. They will read these words and feel the water's pull in their bones. They will understand that some hungers are older than land, older than air, older than the foolish human assumption that the surface world represents the only available reality. The quarry is singing tonight. Can you hear it?



INVESTIGATIVE NOTES - Detective C. Crowhurst

Subject's journal ends here. Comprehensive dive operations recovered no human remains from the flooded quarry system. Sonar mapping reveals extensive cave networks extending far beyond original mining surveys, with acoustic properties that interfere with standard equipment.

Of particular concern: seventeen additional missing person reports filed in the six weeks following Jasper Vance's disappearance, all involving individuals with known connections to Blackstone Quarry. Local emergency services report unprecedented number of drowning incidents at previously safe recreational water sites.

Quarry has been designated off-limits pending further investigation. Access roads blocked, warning signs posted. However, overnight surveillance consistently reports unauthorized vehicles in the area and evidence of continued swimming activity.



Recommend immediate escalation to specialized units. Standard search and rescue protocols appear inadequate for this classification of incident.

Personal note: I find myself driving past the quarry on my evening route home, though it requires a significant detour. The water looks different at night, darker, more inviting. Sometimes I think I can hear something calling from those depths, something that knows my name and wants to teach me secrets the dry world will never understand.

Request immediate reassignment to different case load.

WARNING: This file is to be read only in well-ventilated areas away from any significant body of water. Personnel experiencing auditory hallucinations, increased thirst, or dreams involving underwater environments should report to medical immediately.





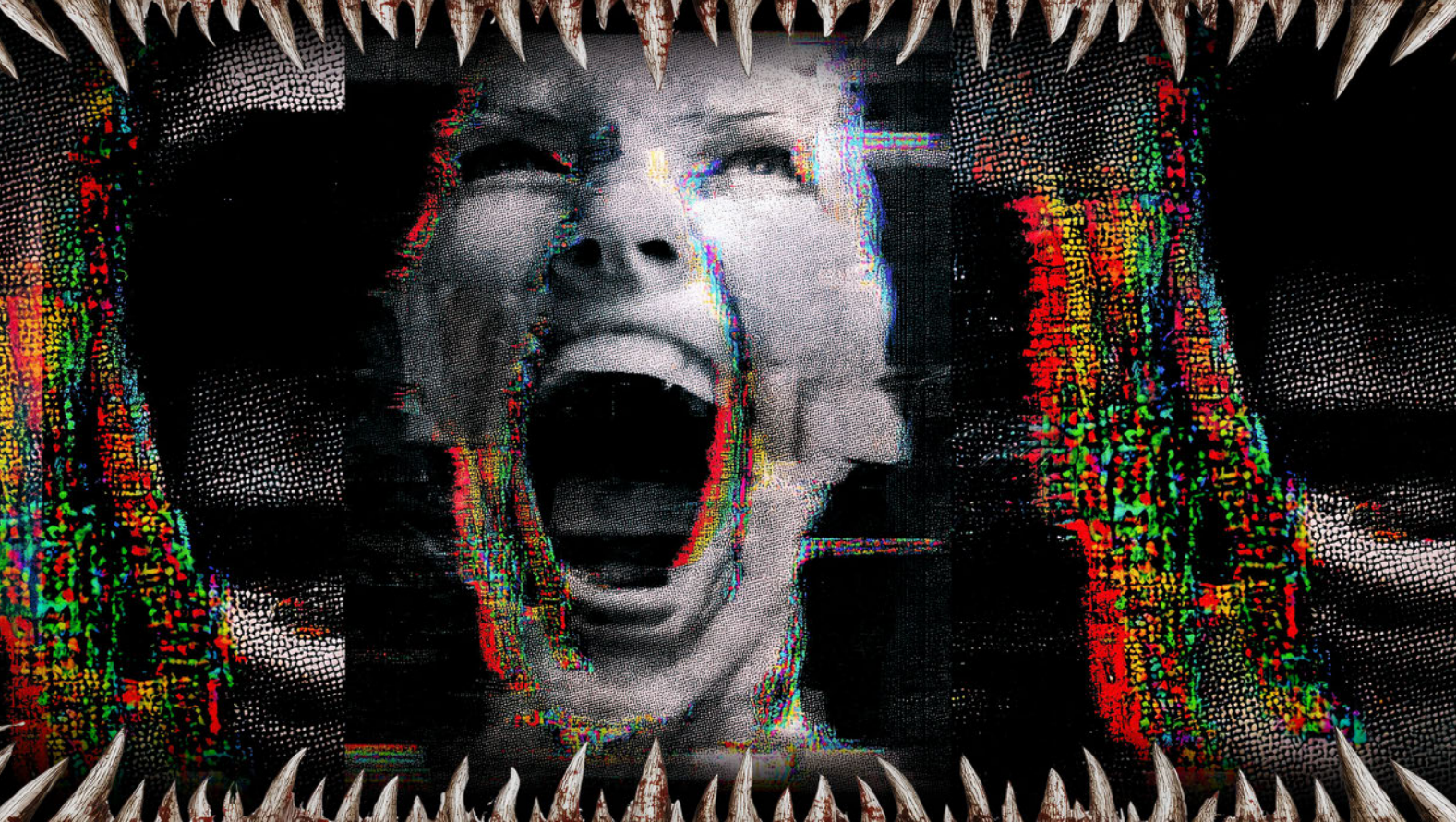
Let us surface from the depths of Jasper Vance's transformation, dear readers, though the echoes of that underwater symphony may haunt your dreams. In the black waters of Blackstone Quarry, this young man discovered that some swimming holes contain far more than forgotten mining equipment, they harbor ancient choirs of the transformed, translucent beings suspended in eternal song beneath the surface's deceptive calm.

What began as nothing more than a teenage dare evolved into a seven-day metamorphosis, as the quarry's seductive call rewrote Jasper's very cellular structure, drawing him inexorably toward a congregation of the beautifully drowned. These phosphorescent souls waited in chambers older than human memory, and through his journal, we witnessed not only his inevitable descent but his emergence as conductor of a growing symphony of the submerged. Each new victim became both audience and performer in this underwater opera of evolution.

Perhaps the most haunting aspect of our tale lies in its twisted wisdom: in our desperate daily struggles to stay afloat in life, we often discover we feel most at home only when we finally stop swimming against the current. Sometimes surrender is not defeat, it's simply finding where we truly belong.

Sleep peacefully, and try not to think too hard about what might be singing beneath the surface of that perfectly still pond you pass on your evening walks...





Material Source (Recovered Journal Entry):

DEAD LANGUAGE

VICTIM PROFILE:

Primary Subject: Anya Aldridge, age 7, student at Pine Hollow Elementary

Secondary Subjects: Twelve additional children, ages 6-9

Status: Missing, presumed deceased following mass disappearance event

Location: Pine Hollow, Vermont (pop. 312)

Incident Classification: Linguistic Contamination Event - Type VII

INVESTIGATING OFFICER: Dr. Cora Whitaker, Vermont State Police

DATE OF INITIAL REPORT: October 13, 2024

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION: RESTRICTED - COGNITHAZARD PROTOCOLS IN EFFECT

The children returned from their nature walk with dirt beneath their fingernails and something else behind their eyes, something that watched from the hollows where childhood used to live. Mrs. Patterson noticed it first during afternoon reading circle, the way Anya Aldridge's mouth moved around words that didn't belong to any language she recognized, syllables that seemed to crawl from her throat like insects seeking darker places to nest.



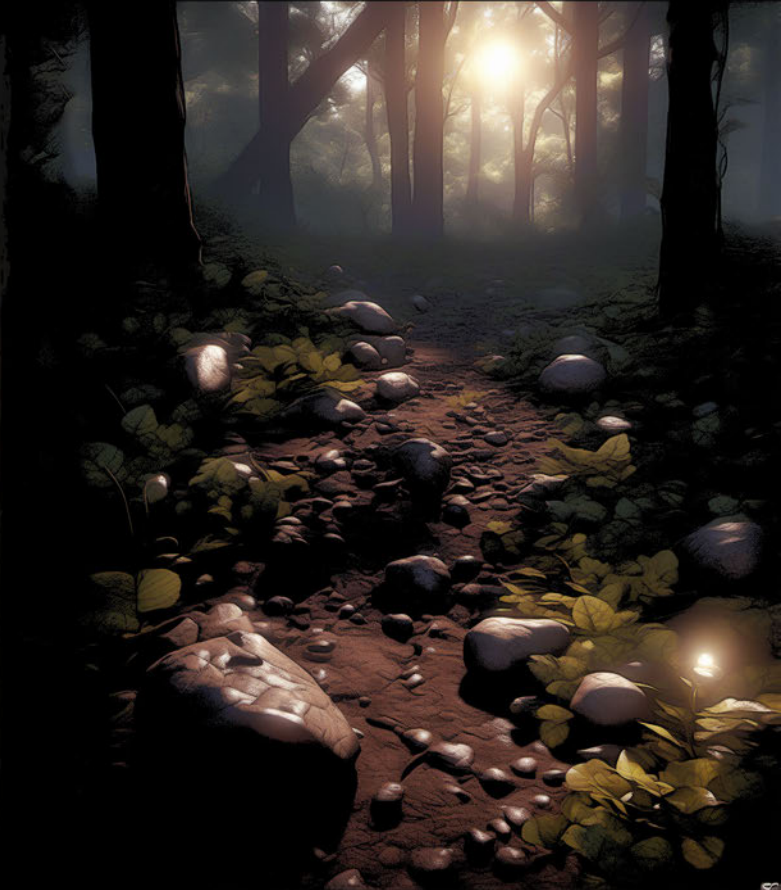


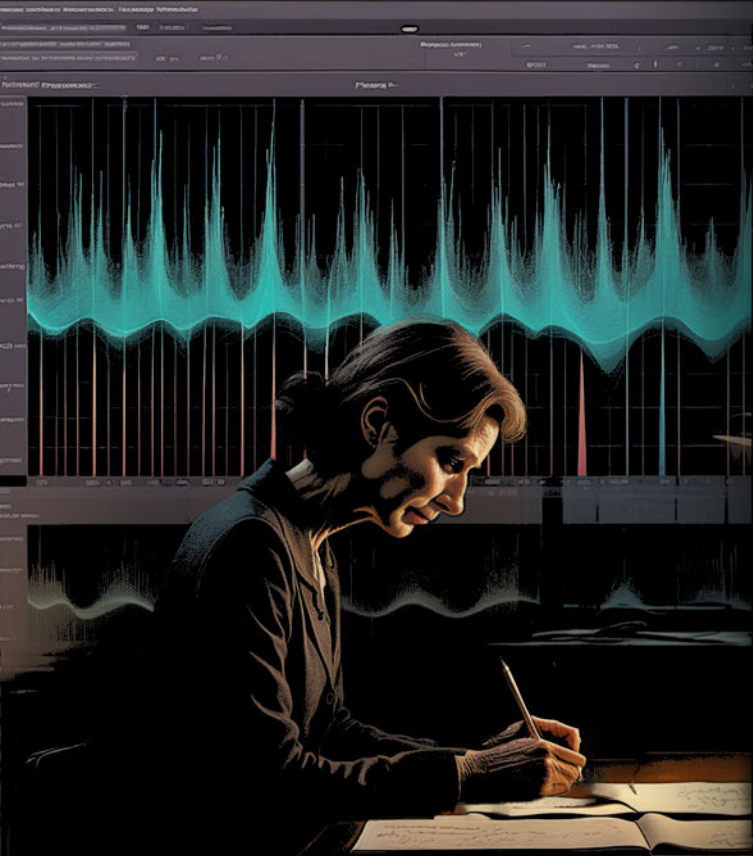
“Ghel-thea mor ves-kathen,” the child whispered, and the other children leaned forward as if drawn by invisible threads, their small faces slack with a hunger that had nothing to do with the approaching lunch hour. The sound of it, that serpentine dialect, slithered through the classroom air, leaving Mrs. Patterson with the inexplicable urge to press her palms against her ears until the bones cracked.

By the third day, none of the thirteen children spoke English anymore. They huddled together during recess, their voices weaving patterns in that ancient tongue, their play becoming ritualistic, circular, wrong. They moved like marionettes guided by a puppeteer’s diseased imagination, their small bodies performing gestures that belonged to ceremonies older than the colonial foundations of their school.

The glen where they'd gathered specimens for science class lay three miles into the Blackwood Forest, where the surveyor's maps showed inconsistencies and the locals had whispered warnings for two hundred years. Mrs. Patterson remembered old Mr. Crawley mentioning something about that place when she'd first arrived to teach, something about bones in the ground and words that shouldn't be spoken aloud. But children needed to see nature, needed to touch the earth and breathe the forest air, didn't they?

What they brought back was not earth beneath their nails but grave soil, black and reeking of mineral decay. What they breathed in was not forest air but the exhalations of something that had been waiting in that glen for three centuries, patient as stone, hungry as winter.





Dr. Elizabeth Hendricks arrived from the university linguistics department on the fourth day, when Anya's mother found her daughter standing naked in the backyard at dawn, speaking to the woodline in that oily, consonant-heavy language that seemed to move through her vocal cords like liquid mercury. The child's eyes had developed a filmy opacity, cataracts blooming like flowers in fertile soil, and when she turned toward her mother, her smile revealed teeth that had grown sharp overnight.

Dr. Hendricks recorded seventeen hours of the children's speech before she stopped coming to the interviews. Her final notes, discovered weeks later in her abandoned university office, described the language as "pre-Algonquian, possibly Archaic period, showing linguistic drift patterns consistent with isolation dating to approximately 1692." But in the margins of those same notes, her handwriting deteriorated into frantic scratches: "It knows I'm listening. Every word I transcribe feeds it. The children aren't speaking the language, the language is speaking them."

The audio recordings revealed the truth that human ears couldn't process. Spectral analysis showed that beneath the children's voices ran another frequency, sub-audible but persistent, like a carrier wave transmitting information directly into the listener's brain stem. Those who heard the recordings, the school principal, three parents, two police officers, began experiencing what the medical examiner would later classify as "acute personality dissociation syndrome." They forgot their names first, then their faces in mirrors, then the meaning of their own thoughts.

By the ninth day, the children had stopped eating food entirely. They sustained themselves on something else, drawing nourishment from the act of speaking that ancient dialect, each utterance seeming to feed a hunger that lived somewhere deeper than their physical bodies. Their skin grew translucent, revealing networks of dark veins that pulsed with each foreign syllable. Their eyes completed their transformation into milky orbs that tracked movement with predatory precision.





The evacuation order came too late. When the authorities arrived at Pine Hollow Elementary on October 22nd, they found only empty classrooms and a message carved into the blackboard in symbols that hurt to look at directly. The children's desks remained undisturbed, their backpacks hanging neatly on hooks, their artwork still pinned to bulletin boards, but the children themselves had simply dissolved into the spaces between words, leaving behind only the echo of that awful language bleeding through the walls like a infection seeking new hosts.

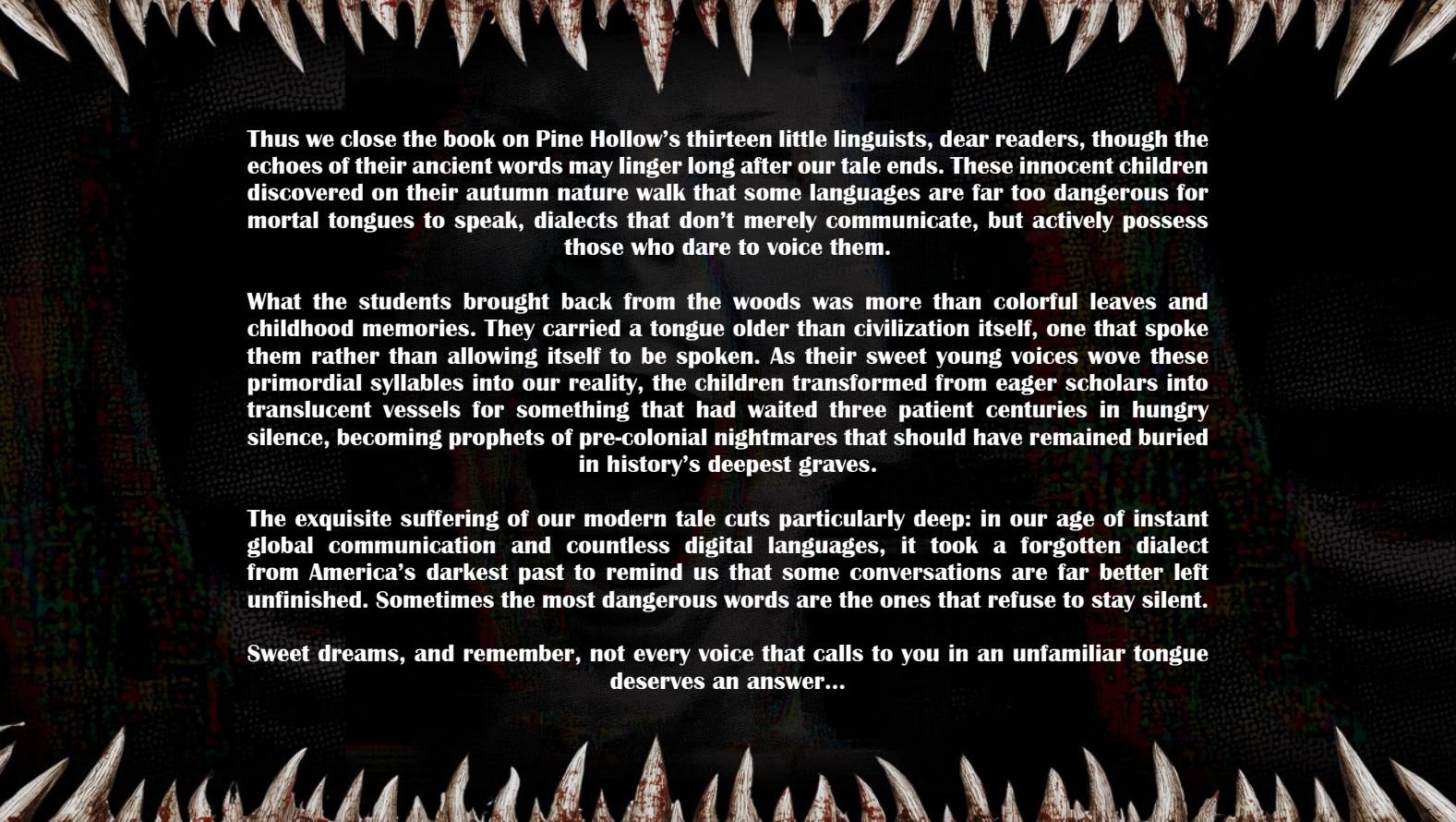
In the glen where it all began, searchers discovered a ring of thirteen small graves, each marked with stones bearing inscriptions in that same pre-colonial script. Carbon dating suggested the graves were over three hundred years old, but the earth above them was freshly disturbed, and from the depths came the sound of children's voices speaking words that existed before language itself learned to lie.



Investigator's Notes: The Pine Hollow incident represents our first documented case of linguistic parasitism resulting in complete somatic displacement. Analysis of the burial site reveals consistent patterns with the Salem-adjacent disappearances of 1692, suggesting a cyclical manifestation tied to generational vulnerability. The entity, if it can be termed singular, appears to require juvenile hosts for initial colonization before expanding into adult populations through auditory transmission.

Advisory Addendum: Personnel assigned to this case are advised to limit exposure to recovered audio materials to no more than thirty seconds per session. Three researchers have already requested psychiatric evaluation following extended contact with the recordings. The containment perimeter around Pine Hollow remains in effect indefinitely. Local authorities report that hikers in the Blackwood Forest have begun speaking to themselves in unknown languages, their voices carrying further than sound should travel in the autumn air.

**The glen remembers what it was taught.
The children are still teaching.**



Thus we close the book on Pine Hollow's thirteen little linguists, dear readers, though the echoes of their ancient words may linger long after our tale ends. These innocent children discovered on their autumn nature walk that some languages are far too dangerous for mortal tongues to speak, dialects that don't merely communicate, but actively possess those who dare to voice them.

What the students brought back from the woods was more than colorful leaves and childhood memories. They carried a tongue older than civilization itself, one that spoke them rather than allowing itself to be spoken. As their sweet young voices wove these primordial syllables into our reality, the children transformed from eager scholars into translucent vessels for something that had waited three patient centuries in hungry silence, becoming prophets of pre-colonial nightmares that should have remained buried in history's deepest graves.

The exquisite suffering of our modern tale cuts particularly deep: in our age of instant global communication and countless digital languages, it took a forgotten dialect from America's darkest past to remind us that some conversations are far better left unfinished. Sometimes the most dangerous words are the ones that refuse to stay silent.

Sweet dreams, and remember, not every voice that calls to you in an unfamiliar tongue deserves an answer...



Material Source (News Article):

BONE CHILDREN OF HOLLOW RIDGE

“Ancient Evil Awakens in West Virginia Mining Town”

INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Maggie Whitmore, Cultural Anthropologist

DATE OF INCIDENT: September 15-October 31, 2024

SECURITY LEVEL: OBSIDIAN - Extreme Biological/Psychological Hazard

The children of Hollow Ridge began their excavations on the night of the autumn equinox, their small hands guided by whispers that seemed to seep from the earth itself like poisonous dew. What they unearthed in the shadow of Old Bones Creek would transform this forgotten Appalachian settlement into a charnel house of inherited madness, where the sins of the past writhed with malevolent consciousness beneath the loam.





Mrs. Adelaide Coker discovered her seven-year-old daughter Emma in the backyard at three in the morning, naked and mud-caked, her fingernails torn and bleeding from clawing at the hard-packed clay. The child sat cross-legged before a shallow pit, cradling what appeared to be a human femur against her chest like a beloved doll. When Adelaide approached, Emma's eyes rolled back until only the whites showed, and she spoke in a voice not her own, ancient, guttural, speaking words in a dialect that predated the hollow's settlement by centuries.

"The marrow remembers," Emma intoned, her small voice carrying harmonics that seemed to bypass the ear and resonate directly in Adelaide's bones. "The children must gather. The children must dig. The children must listen."

By dawn, seventeen children between the ages of five and twelve had been discovered throughout Hollow Ridge in similar states of somnambulistic excavation. Each clutched skeletal remains that defied anatomical classification, ribcages with too many bones, skulls bearing eye sockets arranged in triangular patterns, femurs that branched and twisted like arthritic fingers.



The bones possessed a peculiar luminescence in the pre-dawn gloom, pulsing with a rhythm that matched the children's synchronized heartbeats.

Dr. Lucas Teilhard, the county's sole pediatrician, examined the children with mounting horror. Their pupils had dilated to pinpricks despite the dim examination room lighting, and their skin had taken on a waxy, translucent quality that revealed the dark tracery of veins beneath. Most disturbing were the hair-thin fractures that had appeared along their forearms and shins, not breaks, but deliberate perforations, as if something were trying to work its way out from within their bones.

"They're not responding to standard neurological tests,"

Teilhard confided to Sheriff Donovan Hayes in hushed tones. "Their brain activity shows patterns I've never seen, synchronized theta waves that suggest they're sharing some form of collective consciousness. And their bone density... Christ, Tom, their bones are becoming hollow. Like bird bones, but with internal structures that shouldn't exist."

The whispers began that night, carried on the wind that swept down from the ancient peaks. Parents reported hearing their children's voices drifting through the walls, not words, but a susurrus of secrets spoken in tandem, a chorus of juvenile throats producing sounds that predated human language. Those brave enough to investigate found their children standing motionless beside their beds, eyes wide and unseeing, mouths moving in perfect synchronization as they channeled voices from the hollow earth.

Research into the hollow's history revealed the expected litany of Appalachian gothic, vanished settlements, unexplained deaths, stories of "bone gardens" where the mountain folk once interred their dead according to rituals that borrowed from Cherokee burial practices and older, darker traditions. But it was in the journal of Ezekiel Mordecai, a circuit preacher who ministered to the hollow in 1847, that the true horror began to coalesce.



Mordecai wrote of children who spoke with the voices of the unquiet dead, of a settlement where the bones of the buried rose to the surface each autumn like some hellish harvest. He described a “marrow plague” that transformed the living into hollow vessels for ancestral malevolence, children whose bones became repositories for the accumulated guilt and rage of generations. His final entries devolved into frantic warnings about “the colony in the calcium,” about bones that dreamed and whispered and spread like infection through bloodlines.

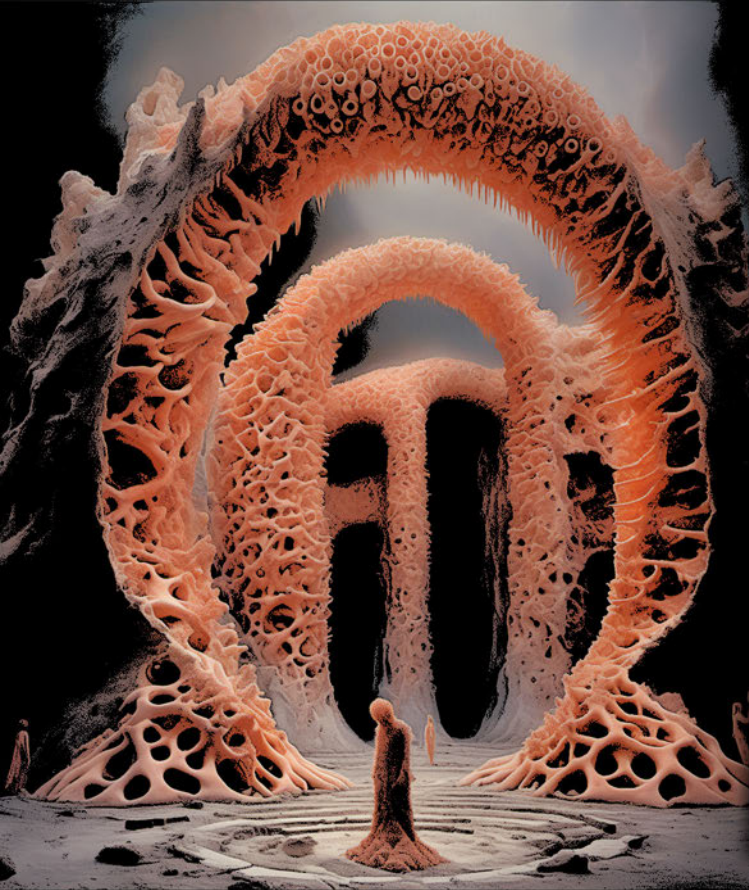
The transformation accelerated as October deepened. The children began to exhibit structural changes that defied medical explanation, their limbs elongating, their joints developing additional articulation points that allowed for impossible ranges of motion. X-rays revealed that their bone marrow had been entirely replaced by a fibrous, root-like network that pulsed with bioluminescent activity. When Dr. Teilhard attempted to take bone marrow samples, the drill bits emerged coated with a substance that writhed and whispered, forming temporary mouths that spoke the names of the hollow’s dead before dissolving into acidic foam.



The children gathered nightly in the cemetery beside Old Bones Creek, their movements become fluid and predatory as they excavated deeper into the consecrated ground. What they brought forth bore no resemblance to natural remains, spinal columns that spiraled like drill bits, pelvic bones fused into altar-like platforms, skulls whose cranial capacity had been increased through impossible geometric folding. Each bone sang with its own harmonic frequency, and together they formed a symphony of ossified malevolence that could be heard for miles.

Parents who attempted to intervene found their own bones responding to the call. Adelaide Coker developed stress fractures along her arms after trying to restrain Emma, the cracks forming patterns that spelled out warnings in archaic script. Sheriff Hayes discovered that his childhood injuries, a broken collarbone from a hunting accident, compound fractures from a mining collapse, had begun to ache and whisper, the old bone grafts rejecting his flesh as they sought to rejoin their source colony.





The breaking point came on Halloween night, when the children completed their grotesque excavation. What emerged from the earth beside Old Bones Creek was not a single entity but a composite horror, hundreds of unnatural bones fused into a massive, writhing framework that supported no organs, no flesh, only the pure malevolent consciousness that had been accumulating in the hollow's calcium deposits for generations. The structure towered thirty feet above the creek bed, its surface crawling with phosphorescent marrow that pulsed in rhythm with the children's unified heartbeat.

The children, no longer recognizable as human, their bones having erupted through their flesh in coral-like formations, arranged themselves in concentric circles around their ossified god. They began to sing, not with their voices, but with the resonant frequencies of their transformed skeletons, creating harmonics that shattered windows throughout the hollow and caused spontaneous nosebleeds among the adults who heard them.



Those few residents who survived the night spoke of bones that erupted from the earth throughout the hollow, not just human remains, but the accumulated calcium of every creature that had ever died in the valley, all animated by the same hungry consciousness. Trees split open to reveal skeletal frameworks within their trunks. Houses collapsed as their foundations gave way to tunnels carved by burrowing bones. The creek itself began to flow white with dissolved calcium as the entity extended its influence through the water table.

By dawn, Hollow Ridge had become a necropolis of living bone. The military cordon established around the area reported structural anomalies that defied explanation, buildings whose support beams had been replaced overnight with architectures of fused ribs and vertebrae, roads that buckled and cracked as skeletal fingers pushed through the asphalt. Aerial reconnaissance revealed that the entire settlement had been transformed into a massive mandala of bone, with the towering ossuary beside the creek serving as its central nervous system.

The children, what remained of them, had become permanent fixtures in this calcium cathedral, their consciousness absorbed into the collective marrow intelligence that now pulsed beneath the hollow. Thermal imaging showed no individual heat signatures, only the vast, distributed warmth of the bone colony as it continued its patient work of transformation.

Investigator's Notes:

The Hollow Ridge incident represents an unprecedented manifestation of what can only be termed “inherited malevolence”, a form of consciousness that accumulates and concentrates within calcium deposits across generations. The entity appears to use children as primary vectors due to their developing skeletal systems and susceptibility to psychic influence.

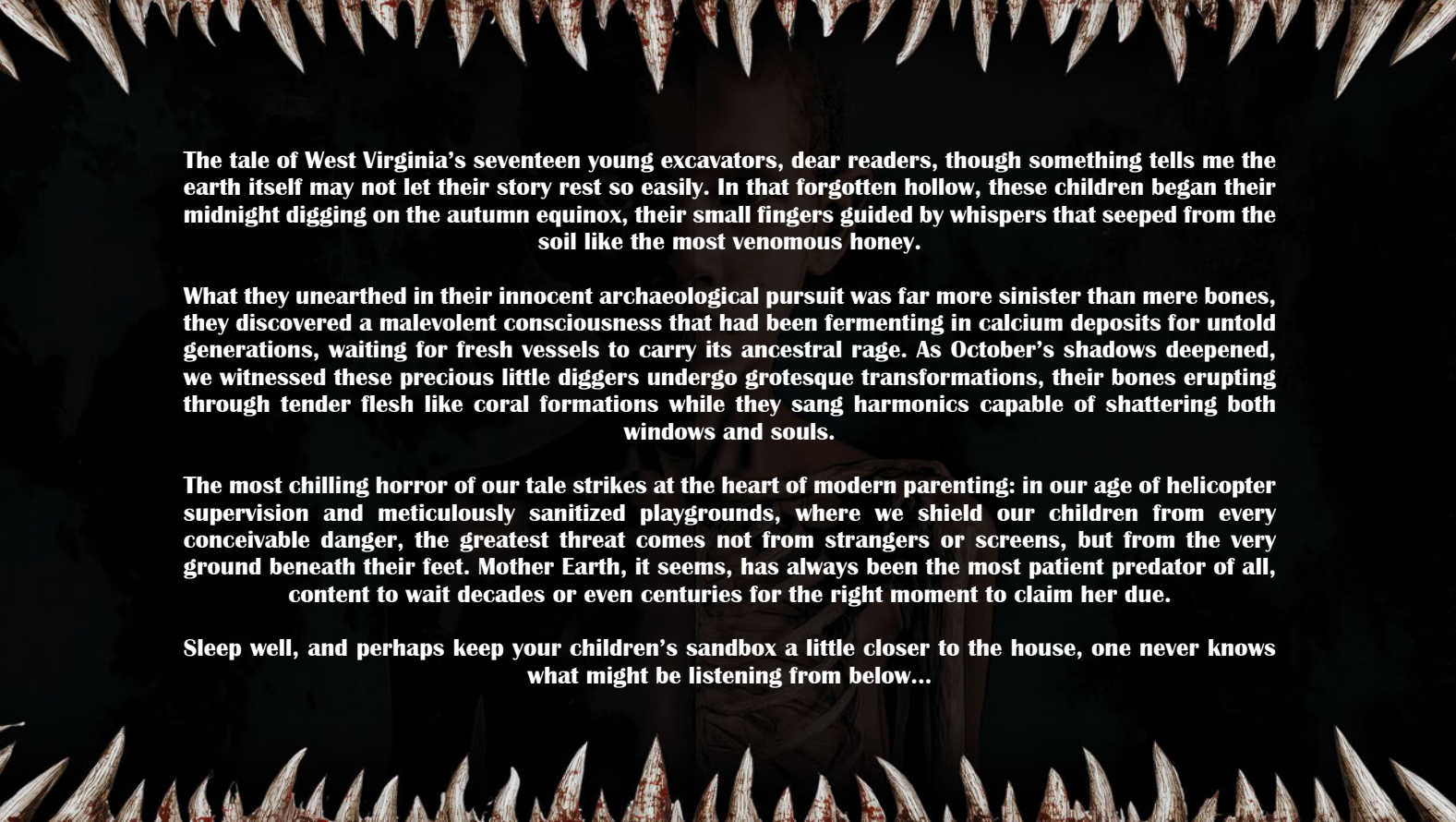
Attempts to contain the spread have proven ineffective. Similar incidents have been reported in settlements downstream from Old Bones Creek, always beginning with children who claim to hear whispers from the earth. The affected area continues to expand at a rate of approximately one mile per month.



Current recommendations include immediate evacuation of all settlements within a fifty-mile radius and the establishment of permanent monitoring stations to track the entity's expansion. Under no circumstances should personnel enter the affected zone without full hazmat protection and continuous calcium-level monitoring.

Warning: This report should not be read aloud. Several researchers who vocalized passages during transcription have reported phantom bone pain and intrusive thoughts about "digging deeper." Audio recordings of the children's bone-song remain highly classified due to their demonstrated ability to induce skeletal anomalies in listeners. The bones remember. The bones whisper. The bones spread. Do not let your children play in the dirt.





The tale of West Virginia's seventeen young excavators, dear readers, though something tells me the earth itself may not let their story rest so easily. In that forgotten hollow, these children began their midnight digging on the autumn equinox, their small fingers guided by whispers that seeped from the soil like the most venomous honey.

What they unearthed in their innocent archaeological pursuit was far more sinister than mere bones, they discovered a malevolent consciousness that had been fermenting in calcium deposits for untold generations, waiting for fresh vessels to carry its ancestral rage. As October's shadows deepened, we witnessed these precious little diggers undergo grotesque transformations, their bones erupting through tender flesh like coral formations while they sang harmonics capable of shattering both windows and souls.

The most chilling horror of our tale strikes at the heart of modern parenting: in our age of helicopter supervision and meticulously sanitized playgrounds, where we shield our children from every conceivable danger, the greatest threat comes not from strangers or screens, but from the very ground beneath their feet. Mother Earth, it seems, has always been the most patient predator of all, content to wait decades or even centuries for the right moment to claim her due.

Sleep well, and perhaps keep your children's sandbox a little closer to the house, one never knows what might be listening from below...



Material Source (News Article):

HIGHWAY TO HELL

“The Vanishing Motorists of Route 47”

VICTIM PROFILE:

Primary Subject: Silas Dale Henley, age 34

Occupation: Long-haul trucker, 12 years commercial driving experience

Date of Disappearance: October 23, 2024

Recovery Location: 7.3 miles southeast of last known position, discovered barefoot in Millbrook Cemetery

Physical Condition at Recovery: Severe exposure, mouth cavity packed with decomposed maple leaves, pupils fixed and dilated

INVESTIGATING OFFICER: Detective Sophia Krause, Michigan State Police

CASE COMPILER: Dr. Violet Redmond, Anomalous Phenomena Research Division

DATE OF INCIDENT: October 23-24, 2024 **SECURITY CLASSIFICATION:** AMBER - Localized Temporal Disturbance, Moderate Public Risk

The October wind carried the scent of dying things as Detective Krause reviewed the case files spread across her dashboard, each manila folder a testament to the impossible. Seventeen disappearances along this thirteen-mile stretch of Route 47 in the past eight months. Seventeen souls who had simply... ceased to exist between mile markers 23 and 36, only to be found days later, always barefoot, always with their mouths stuffed full of autumn's decay.





Silas Henley had been hauling grain from Lansing to Detroit when the world folded in on itself at 3:11 AM. His rig was discovered idling in the breakdown lane, diesel still warm, CB radio crackling with phantom transmissions in languages that predated human speech. The cargo remained untouched, but Silas had vanished as completely as smoke dissipating in still air.

What the media hadn't reported, what Krause had buried in classified addendums, was the state of the cab. The driver's seat bore the impression of a human form, but the fabric showed signs of molecular displacement, as if the very atoms of Silas Henley had been slowly drawn away thread by thread. More disturbing still was the dashcam footage: forty-three minutes of perfectly normal highway driving, then a single frame of absolute darkness, followed by the empty cab.



But it was the audio that sent ice through Krause's veins each time she reviewed it. In that moment of visual darkness, the microphone captured something that wasn't quite sound, a negative space where noise should exist, a hollow sucking that seemed to draw the very concept of hearing into its maw. The department's audio technicians had quit after the third playback, claiming their ears were "bleeding silence."

The locals whispered of the Silent Man, a figure they'd glimpsed in peripheral vision since the highway's construction in 1967. Always between heartbeats, they said. Always when the world held its breath. Parents learned not to drive Route 47 after midnight, and those who did kept their windows up and their radios loud, as if sound itself could ward off the encroaching void.

Silas was found three days later by a groundskeeper at Millbrook Cemetery, curled fetal beneath the crumbling angel that marked the Whitmore family plot, a family that had died in a highway accident on Route 47 in 1973. He was conscious but unresponsive, his feet lacerated and blackened with frostbite despite the October warmth. When the paramedics pried open his jaw, maple leaves spilled forth like confetti at a funeral, not fresh autumn leaves, but specimens that carbon dating would later reveal to be decades old, their cellular structure somehow preserved in the cavity of his mouth.

The medical examiner's report made for disturbing reading. Silas's body showed signs of temporal displacement, his hair had grown exactly 3.7 inches, consistent with six weeks of normal growth, yet he'd been missing only seventy-two hours. His fingernails bore similar impossible extensions, and most unnervingly, his dental work had aged. Fillings installed three years prior showed decades of wear, as if his mouth alone had experienced the passage of time at an accelerated rate.





Under hypnotic regression, Silas spoke of walking endless miles along a highway that stretched into infinity, always pursued by footsteps that made no sound. The Silent Man, he claimed, walked behind him at precisely the same pace, never closing the distance, never falling behind. When pressed for details of his pursuer's appearance, Silas would only repeat the same phrase: "It wore my shadow like skin."

The case might have been filed away with the other inexplicables if not for what the traffic cameras captured at 3:11 AM on November 15th. A sedan traveling eastbound suddenly decelerated to a complete stop in the center lane. For exactly thirty-seven seconds, the car remained motionless while traffic flowed around it as if it weren't there. Then, as abruptly as it had stopped, the vehicle resumed normal speed, but the driver's seat was empty.



Sophia Martinez, age 28, was found four days later in the basement of an abandoned farmhouse eight miles from the highway. Like Silas, her mouth was packed with ancient leaves, her feet bare and bloody. Unlike Silas, she spoke of meeting other drivers on that impossible road, a procession of the vanished, all walking in the same direction, all pursued by the hollow-skinned figure that stalked between the spaces of existence.

“He’s collecting us,” she whispered to Krause during the interview, her eyes never focusing on anything present in the room. “One by one, he’s hollowing us out and keeping what’s left. The highway is just the trap. The real road is somewhere else, somewhere that goes on forever.”

The investigation revealed a pattern that defied rational explanation. Every disappearance occurred at exactly 3:11 AM, always along the same stretch of asphalt, always leaving behind vehicles with molecular impressions of their drivers. The survivors, those few who returned, spoke consistently of the Silent Man, describing a figure that existed in the gaps between perception, visible only when the observer wasn’t quite looking.

Krause began experiencing the dreams three weeks into the investigation. Always the same: she was driving Route 47 in the pre-dawn darkness, her speedometer frozen at 3:11, while something walked patiently behind her car. She would wake with the taste of decomposing leaves in her mouth and find muddy footprints beside her bed, footprints that perfectly matched her own feet.

The department psychiatrist diagnosed stress-induced hallucinations, but Krause knew better. She was being prepared, groomed for her own walk along that impossible highway. The Silent Man was patient, methodical in his harvesting. He took only what he needed, when he needed it, and he was never in a hurry.

On December 3rd, Krause made the decision that would seal her fate. She drove to Route 47 at 3:00 AM, parking her unmarked cruiser at mile marker 29. She waited, engine running, radio turned up to mask the silence that seemed to seep from the very asphalt. At 3:10, her radio went dead. At 3:11, the world held its breath.





The last entry in her case notes, found later in her abandoned vehicle, was written in handwriting that grew progressively more erratic: "I can see him now. He's walking toward me, but he's also behind me. He's everywhere the light doesn't reach. He's been walking this road since before there was a road, collecting travelers for a journey that has no destination. I understand now why the survivors return with leaves in their mouths. It's not the leaves from our world he feeds them. It's the silence between words, the darkness between thoughts, compressed and made tangible. He's..."

The entry ended mid-sentence. Krause was found six days later in the bell tower of St. Mary's Church, twelve miles southeast of her last known position. Her condition matched that of the previous survivors, with one crucial difference: her hair had turned completely white, and when she spoke under sedation, her words emerged with gaps of absolute silence between them, as if the quiet itself had colonized her speech.

CASE NOTES - CLASSIFICATION ADDENDUM:

The Route 47 phenomenon remains active. Standard protocols have proven ineffective against the entity designated "The Silent Man." Recommend immediate reclassification to RED status pending development of countermeasures. The affected stretch of highway has been quietly closed for "road maintenance" indefinitely.

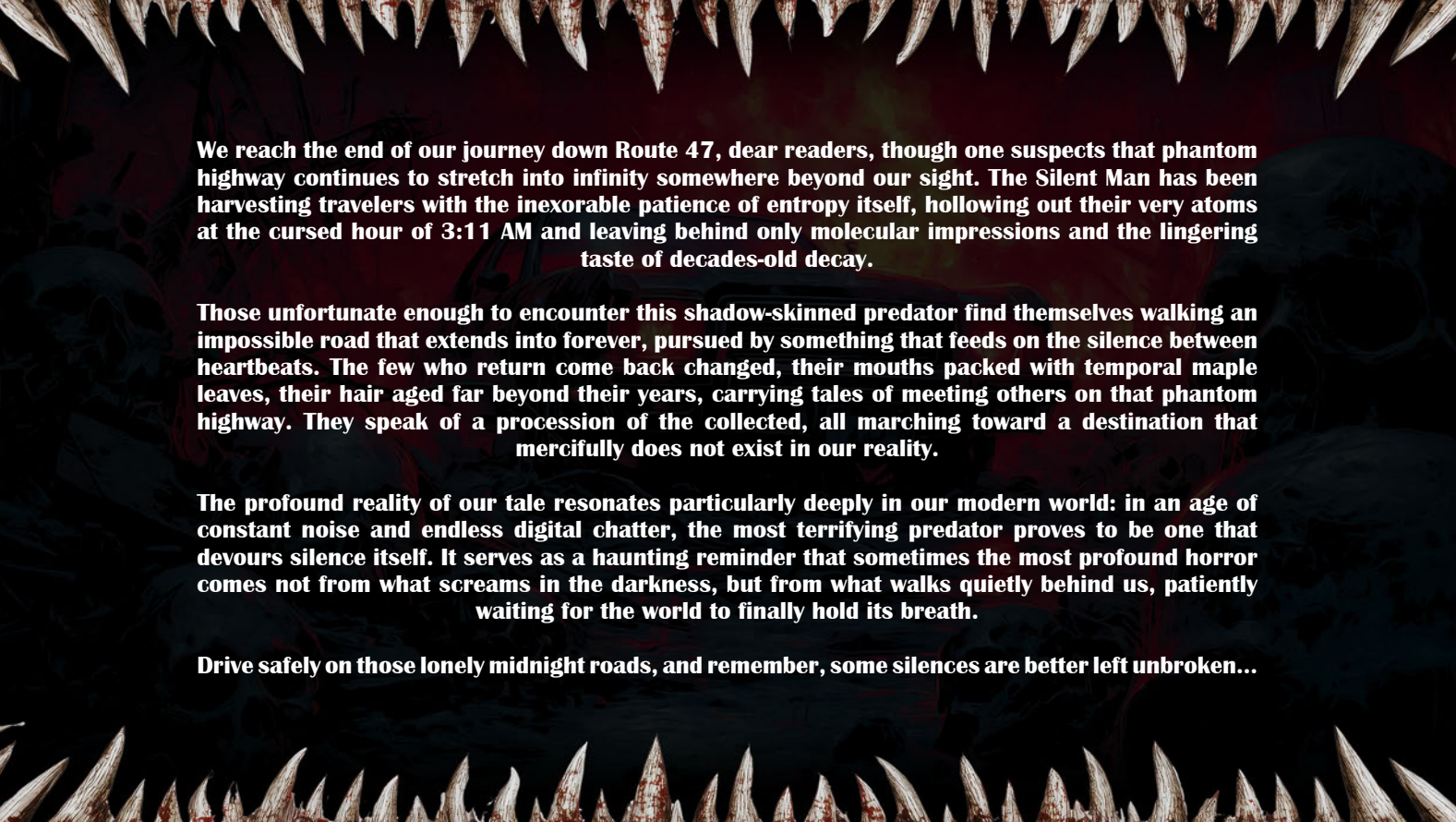
Personal note from Dr. Redmond: I've been assigned this case for three months now. Last night, I dreamed I was walking barefoot down an endless highway. When I woke, there were maple leaves under my pillow. They smelled like silence.



Update: Dr. Redmond has requested transfer to another case. Her replacement has yet to be found. The leaves are spreading.

DO NOT DRIVE ROUTE 47 BETWEEN MILE MARKERS 23-36 DURING OVERNIGHT HOURS. DO NOT STOP IF YOU EXPERIENCE VEHICLE MALFUNCTION IN THIS AREA. IF YOU MUST TRAVEL THIS ROUTE, MAINTAIN CONSTANT AUDITORY INPUT AND DO NOT CHECK YOUR CLOCK BETWEEN 3:00-3:30 AM. The Silent Man is patient. The Silent Man is hungry. The Silent Man is always walking.





We reach the end of our journey down Route 47, dear readers, though one suspects that phantom highway continues to stretch into infinity somewhere beyond our sight. The Silent Man has been harvesting travelers with the inexorable patience of entropy itself, hollowing out their very atoms at the cursed hour of 3:11 AM and leaving behind only molecular impressions and the lingering taste of decades-old decay.

Those unfortunate enough to encounter this shadow-skinned predator find themselves walking an impossible road that extends into forever, pursued by something that feeds on the silence between heartbeats. The few who return come back changed, their mouths packed with temporal maple leaves, their hair aged far beyond their years, carrying tales of meeting others on that phantom highway. They speak of a procession of the collected, all marching toward a destination that mercifully does not exist in our reality.

The profound reality of our tale resonates particularly deeply in our modern world: in an age of constant noise and endless digital chatter, the most terrifying predator proves to be one that devours silence itself. It serves as a haunting reminder that sometimes the most profound horror comes not from what screams in the darkness, but from what walks quietly behind us, patiently waiting for the world to finally hold its breath.

Drive safely on those lonely midnight roads, and remember, some silences are better left unbroken...





Material Source (News Article):

VOICES FROM THE DEEP

“Seven Men Lost to Widow’s Bay in Storm Season Anomaly”

SUBJECT DECEASED: Thomas Aldrich Kearns (42), maritime salvage operator and local boat captain. Body recovered three nautical miles southeast of Widow’s Bay after seventeen days missing at sea. Autopsy revealed massive internal salt crystallization throughout soft tissues and organs. Vocal cords completely desiccated. Cause of death: systemic dehydration despite prolonged ocean exposure.

INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Lila Marsh, Coastal Phenomena Research Division

DATE OF INCIDENT: October 13-30, 2024

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION: AMBER - Active threat to coastal populations during storm conditions

The first sign that something had gone fundamentally wrong with the waters around Widow’s Bay came not from the sea itself, but from the silence that followed Thomas Kearns’ return. His boat, the Mary Catherine, had drifted back to harbor on the morning tide like a ghost ship, its hull scarred with symbols that seemed to pulse with their own wet luminescence. The townspeople found Thomas slumped over his wheel, alive but changed, his mouth working soundlessly, throat raw and swollen, eyes clouded with the milky film of someone who had gazed too long into depths that should never be plumbed.



Dr. Marsh's initial examination revealed the horror hidden beneath his weathered skin. Salt crystals had begun forming along his nerve pathways, creating a crystalline network that traced his circulatory system like frozen lightning. When she pressed her stethoscope to his chest, she heard not the steady rhythm of a human heart, but the distant crash of waves against some impossible shore.

The carvings inside the Mary Catherine told their own story in a language that predated human settlement by millennia. Spirals that seemed to move when observed peripherally, sigils that made the observer's inner ear ache with phantom pressure, and everywhere the repeated image of a woman's form dissolving into seafoam and salt. The wood itself had been changed by whatever force had etched these marks, it wept brine continuously, despite being hauled fully onto dry land.

Thomas lived for three more days, though “lived” was perhaps too generous a term for his condition. His body continued its biological functions while his consciousness seemed to drift between this world and some submarine realm where different laws held sway. On the rare occasions when he managed to produce sound, it was not speech but something else entirely, a low, keening note that caused windows to rattle and made listeners feel as though they were drowning in open air.

The townspeople spoke in whispers of the sounds that had preceded the storm that took Thomas. Songs carried on the wind that were older than memory, melodies that seemed to call directly to the bone marrow, bypassing the ears entirely. Children woke screaming from dreams of being pulled down, down through layers of crushing black water toward something vast and hungry that wore the face of grief itself.



Maritime records dating back to the village's founding in 1847 revealed a pattern that chilled Dr. Marsh to her core. Every thirty-seven years, when the autumn storms aligned with the neap tides, men began disappearing from their boats. Always during the dark hours before dawn, always leaving behind vessels marked with those same impossible carvings, always returning to shore forever changed, if they returned at all.

The locals called her the Salt Widow, this thing that dwelt in the deep places where the continental shelf dropped away into abyssal darkness. She was grief given form, they said, a manifestation of every woman who had ever stood on these cliffs waiting for boats that would never return. The ocean had taken their tears, their prayers, their desperate offerings of salt and flowers cast into the hungry waves, and from this distilled sorrow had birthed something that fed on the very emotion that created it.



Thomas's deterioration accelerated on his final night. The salt crystals had begun breaking through his skin in places, creating grotesque patterns that matched the carvings in his boat's hull. His eyes had turned completely white, no longer seeing the hospital room but some underwater vista where pressure and darkness conspired to crush the human spirit. When Dr. Marsh placed her hand on his forehead, she felt the strange coolness of deep ocean currents and heard, faint but unmistakable, the sound of something vast breathing in the rhythm of tides.

At 3:47 AM, as the tide reached its lowest ebb, Thomas Kearns opened his mouth and released not his final breath, but a sound that no human throat should have been able to produce. It was the voice of the deep places, the song of pressure and salt and things that moved in darkness beyond the reach of sun. Every piece of glassware in the hospital shattered simultaneously. The building's foundation, sunk into bedrock, cracked along stress lines that formed a pattern disturbingly similar to the carvings found in the boats.





In the days that followed, more vessels began returning to harbor with their crews missing and their hulls marked. The Coast Guard established a perimeter around the area where the continental shelf met the abyssal plain, but their instruments registered phenomena that defied conventional understanding. Sonar readings showed massive shapes moving in coordinated patterns far below, while hydrophones picked up complex acoustic signatures that resembled human speech processed through kilometers of crushing water.

The salt crystals taken from Thomas's body continued to grow even after his death, spreading through the morgue's refrigeration systems and contaminating everything they touched. Staff members began reporting auditory hallucinations, the sound of waves where there should be silence, voices calling from empty corridors, the distant crash of surf against shores that existed only in nightmare.

INCIDENT ANALYSIS & CONTAINMENT PROTOCOLS:

The Salt Widow phenomenon represents a Class-III marine entity with demonstrated capability for biological manipulation and environmental contamination. Current maritime activity restrictions remain in effect for Widow's Bay during storm conditions.

Personnel assigned to this case should note: prolonged exposure to affected materials results in progressive hearing loss, hallucinatory episodes, and in advanced cases, cellular salinization. Three research staff have requested transfer following recurring dreams of submarine environments. Dr. Marsh has been placed on administrative leave after developing what she describes as "an overwhelming compulsion to walk into the sea."

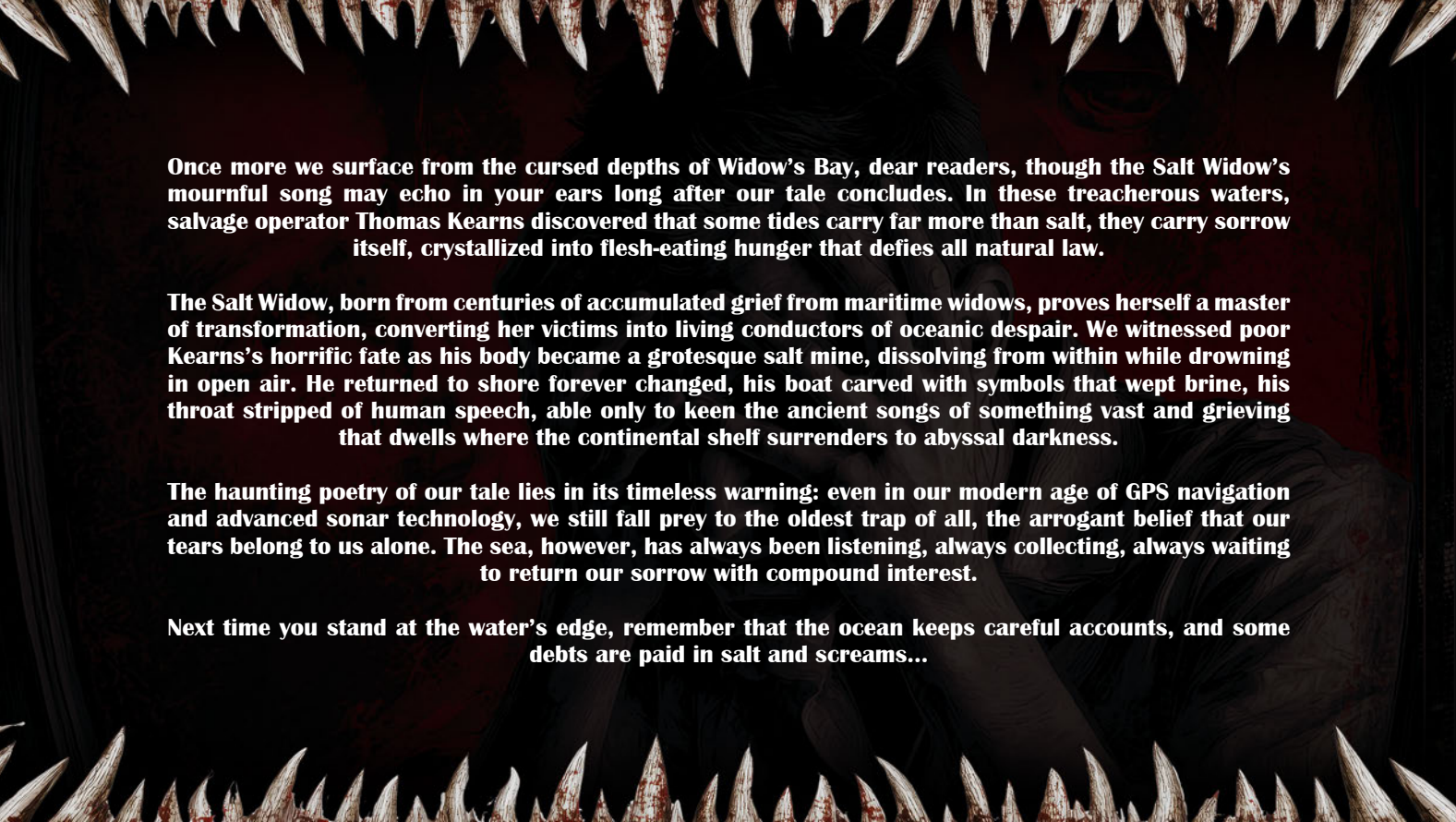




The carved vessels remain in secure storage, though maintenance staff report the symbols appear to shift configuration when unobserved. Regular dehumidification is required to prevent salt crystal formation throughout the facility.

WARNING: Citizens of coastal communities are advised to report any instances of spontaneous crystalline formation in organic matter, unexplained auditory phenomena, or dreams involving submarine environments. Under no circumstances should civilian personnel attempt to investigate vessels bearing similar markings.

The Salt Widow feeds on grief. Do not give her your tears.



Once more we surface from the cursed depths of Widow's Bay, dear readers, though the Salt Widow's mournful song may echo in your ears long after our tale concludes. In these treacherous waters, salvage operator Thomas Kearns discovered that some tides carry far more than salt, they carry sorrow itself, crystallized into flesh-eating hunger that defies all natural law.

The Salt Widow, born from centuries of accumulated grief from maritime widows, proves herself a master of transformation, converting her victims into living conductors of oceanic despair. We witnessed poor Kearns's horrific fate as his body became a grotesque salt mine, dissolving from within while drowning in open air. He returned to shore forever changed, his boat carved with symbols that wept brine, his throat stripped of human speech, able only to keen the ancient songs of something vast and grieving that dwells where the continental shelf surrenders to abyssal darkness.

The haunting poetry of our tale lies in its timeless warning: even in our modern age of GPS navigation and advanced sonar technology, we still fall prey to the oldest trap of all, the arrogant belief that our tears belong to us alone. The sea, however, has always been listening, always collecting, always waiting to return our sorrow with compound interest.

Next time you stand at the water's edge, remember that the ocean keeps careful accounts, and some debts are paid in salt and screams...

WATCH THE MADNESS



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