

[SFX: Intro music begins. A slow melancholy piano tune, played on an out of tune piano. The sound seems like it's coming from far away.]

Narrator: Flickers is a thriller that deals with mature themes, and is intended for an older audience. Content warnings and audio transcripts are available in the show notes. For the best experience, listen chronologically, with headphones.

[SFX: Intro music ends.]

[SFX: Fade in. Wind whips around, muffled. Footsteps in snow approach from the left outside. A door opens, gusting wind and blowing wind-chimes are audible. The person takes two steps in, closing the door behind them, and stomps off heavy boots. As they walk, their gait is uneven, almost a limp. The character walks in from the left, and pulls out a chair, sitting down with a sigh. Fabric rustles as they pull a boot off. Then a metallic click and slide, and their other boot falls to the ground. They adjust the chair, getting comfortable before picking something up from the table, and winding a crank on it. A button clicks.]

?: Okay, so power's still definitely out. I tried to get a look from upstairs as well, I don't have a great vantage point but I can't see any other houses with lights on in the area. So... I mean unless someone else has a ham radio, and a working one at that, I think I'll be broadcasting into the void. Cool. Let's see if the void talks back. If you're just joining us, once again this is Alex Lavoie, over on Russet Lane. This is broadcast number three... Three? Three, I think. Broadcasting for... information? I guess, or just anything. A sign I didn't just miss the rapture would be nice. So, um,... please respond? Over.

[SFX: The radio clicks off. The chair creaks, Alex taps her fingers on the desk. A beat of silence, other than the gusting wind, audible outside. The radio clicks back on.]

Alex: Cool, okay, so that's a no, then. I'm just gonna keep talking for a bit. See if anyone tunes in, in the meantime. Feels like a long shot. Honestly I didn't even think this thing would work after all the phone's got knocked out. So, yea. Alex, 1863 Russet. It's... (laughs) I keep checking the clock

in here. It's been 11:56 for maybe... uh, four hours now, obviously that's a guess, but the sun's starting to get low so... I guess that's the more important thing. And I'm broadcasting for... yea, honestly a working phone would be great. I'd really like to call my dad so, if you're hearing this, and you have some Cherry Poppers that you want to set off to let me know that someone's listening, that'd be very cool. (pause)

Wait, actually, no, probably don't do that. But y'know. If you want to brave the storm to help a kid, it would be really appreciated.

(pause, then hurried)

For the record, my dad was supposed— I mean he is coming. He didn't just abandon me in the middle of a blizzard. His work called and he had to go help them with something but, he is coming, I just wanted to check in with him and make sure he's okay.

(pause)

Which obviously he is, I mean, psh, he's fine. He's probably just worried about me, is all. I'm not exactly great at navigating this sort of weather. Like I have my crutches but they're not exactly all-terrain. (laughs) I can just hear my dad cursing me for leaving my snow stuff at home. But, y'know. Lesson learned. I saw the forecast. I mean, I couldn't have foreseen literally every electronic exploding, leaving me stranded without a way to contact the outside world, but... I mean I did know it was snowing so, I guess that's on me. Next time I'll bring the snow tips. Anyway, Dad shovelled between here and the house before he left so I'm able to walk between the two without immediately eating it, but it is... definitely slow going. Not to mention I can't really walk and broadcast unless I have my leg on, which is annoying. And I think I'll probably have to shovel again in a bit, because God decided today was the day to take an entire white dump right onto the Greater Ottawa Region. But until then, I have lots to distract me in the meantime.

[SFX: The chair creaks. Something is dragged across the floor. Alex gives some effort as she lifts it from the floor to the table. It lands on the table with some weight.]

Alex: I mean, we were supposed to go through all of this stuff together but even if Dad's able to get up here, it's not exactly like this area is top priority for plowing so, we'll see. I mean, that's if the cars even still work! (pause) Maybe it's not as widespread as that. Maybe some idiot just decided to get

wild with a pocket EMP, I mean, this is the boonies. Is that what rednecks do? I have no idea. I mean, that's not how it sounded on the news but. Um, anyways. Dziadek*'s got an old truck that's currently getting absolutely buried in snow, but I'll try it tonight before things get too deep. Might have to crutch over to it.

[SFX: wooden chair creaks]

Alex: Ugh, scratch that, definitely will have to crutch to it. My leg's not really meant to be built to get baptized. Ugh, that's gonna be such a pain in the ass, god damn it.

On the bright side, I was pretty lucky that I found this... thing.

[SFX: Alex kicks a large metal object twice]

Alex: I don't know what to call it. Foot locker? It's this big old industrial thing. But the radio was in here, which I think is the only reason it didn't turn into a radio-shaped brick. I think it acted as sort of like a faraday cage, which I didn't even consider but if there is a chance of a second blast coming and I mean, I guess if I get enough of a—sorry. Not... relevant. Anyways, if anyone else found an ancient Polish radio in their grandfather's foot locker and we're broadcasting on the same frequency... Lemme know. Why does he even have this? (pause) *Why does he have this?*

[SFX: Radio clicks off. Alex rifles through the foot locker, searching its contents. A handful of photographs is pulled from the foot locker, rifled through, and tapped on the desk. Radio clicks back on. Alex pulls a photo from the stack.]

Alex: Oh, this must've been... (beat) Wow. So this is what the 80s looked like... (laughs) God people really did their hair like that on purpose, huh?

[SFX: a photo is placed on the table]

Alex: This looks like... Someone's birthday? That's 45 so maybe Babcia*'s? Or...hm. Maybe that's her sister?

[SFX: another photo is placed on the table]

Alex: And... Okay, and this one is definitely Easter.

[SFX: another photo is placed on the table]

Alex: And... Oh my God, Grandpa. Who is he?? Sir. Where did all that hair come from! The flow. Unreal. (laughs) And:

[SFX: another photo is placed on the table]

Alex: (quietly) Oh. (pause)

[SFX: the radio clicks off]

Alex: Hi, mom.

[SFX: Radio clicks on]

Alex: (clears her throat) So, it looks like this is just a bunch of stuff that Dziadek... and I guess Babcia brought over. And the radio was in here which means...

[SFX: Alex rifles through the box again]

Alex: Yep! A manual... (dejectedly) ...in Polish. (sarcastically) Very helpful... Unless they left a Polish-English dictionary in here, which... (aside) Did they leave a Polish-English dictionary in here?

[SFX: chair creaks, Alex briefly SHUFFLES some papers inside the foot locker.]

Alex: Alright, that seems to be a negative which means that this manual is gonna be... functionally useless.

[SFX: Alex flips through the pages]

Alex: It's got pictures, at least. Okay, what else we got? Lots of old photographs. And uh...

[SFX: Alex picks up something metallic. Small and delicate, it jingles as she lifts it.]

Alex: ... dog tags... which I guess, explains the box. I didn't... huh.

[SFX: Alex sets the dog tags on the table.]

Alex: Alright, I'm gonna give a minute of radio silence here and see if I can't maybe get a response. That is if this uh... Little Transmitter That Could is actually... transmitting. Again. My name's Alex, I'm transmitting from one of the farmhouses on Russet. If you're hearing this, especially if you have a phone that works, please respond. Um, and, in the meantime, I'm gonna be doing an ancestry.ca deep-dive.

[SFX: The chair creaks as Alex sets the radio down on the desk before sorting some more in the foot locker.]

Alex: What is—?

[SFX: She bumps a music box, before pausing and pulling it out. It's evident there are little treasures inside. She winds the box before setting it on the desk and opening it. A gear whirs as Shostakovich's 2nd Waltz begins playing. The melody is out of tune, and the rhythm is uneven. Alex dusts off the inside of the box as it plays.]

Alex: C'mon. Spin.

[SFX: Alex blows into the mechanism, before flicking the spring inside. When the song finishes, the box closes. A beat.]

Alex: (decisively) Tomorrow.

[SFX: Alex pushes the box away from her as she picks up the radio. She cranks it before clicking it on.]

Alex: Alright, I am happy to report that I have officially now gone through one box out of, conservatively: a hundred-million. Apparently Dziadek's mentality of (Polish accent) *Put it in garage, maybe we use later*, resulted

in, unsurprisingly, owning a lot of shit. So. I guess I'll just... label this one? I don't really know what Dad wants to keep or not. I mean like, photographs, sure but, I feel like old combat boots are something we can probably get rid of?

[SFX: Alex taps the combat boots]

Alex: Or...maybe not, I don't know. Honestly, it kind of feels wrong to put any of this up to be thrown out. Like, I feel like I should be asking Dziadek about it. (She laughs sombrely)

I keep forgetting and I just find myself wanting to go inside and ask him. (laughs) And every time he'd be blasting these soap operas so I'd have to yell over them and we'd get into this weird bilingual shouting match, but (sarcastically) no, he (Polish accent) *don't need hearing aid*. (laughs). Sure Dziadek, whatever you say. (laughs)

He'd say no anyways, to me throwing any of this out. Doesn't matter these combat boots have a hole the size of nickel in them.

[SFX: taps fingers on desk, outside, the wind picks up]

Alex: Okay, maybe I make a tentative garbage pile, and when Dad comes back, we can sort through that together so that Dziadek's ghost will haunt both of us.

[SFX: chair creaks]

Alex: Oh crap. Okay, it sounds like it's getting bad out there. I'm gonna get back inside and get the fireplace going before I lose the light completely. Um, I'm probably gonna cut broadcasts when I get inside. I'll try and keep it onto listen for anyone transmitting back but this battery is... I mean, at least forty years old and it's not like I can stay up all night cranking the damn th-

Wh?- Is that...?

[SFX: chair creaks]

Alex: Oh holy shit, was someone hearing this? If you're still listening you're heading in the right direction! I'm just in the... garage... Next to the house. Just, uh, just keep heading this...

[SFX: radio clicks off]

Alex: oh, what the fu—

[SFX: Alex scrambles, leaning back and falls out of her chair, landing hard on the ground. Metal creaks, and falls landing on Alex before clattering on the ground. She gasps in pain, before covering her mouth, muffling her groan.]

Alex: Fuck, get the leg on...

[SFX: Alex drags her prosthetic leg over, clicking once into place, before a series of clicks follow. Alex stomps twice.]

Alex: ... then deal with the monster.

[SFX: Alex paces quickly from side to side, her feet shuffling]

Alex: What do I...? (beat) The door. Block the door.

[SFX: Alex sprints to the door on the left.]

Alex: Okay, how do I...?

[SFX: Something metallic is pulled from the wall, and wedged against the door. Alex yanks on the door twice, it budes minimally.]

Alex: ... that's gonna have to do.

[SFX: Alex drags something, lifting it, and carrying it back over to the desk. As she sets it down it's obvious that it's a tool box. She opens it and rifles through, pulling out a crowbar before swinging it back and forth. She sets the crowbar on the table, picking up the radio.]

Alex: Okay.

[SFX: Alex winds the radio once, before cranking it as fast as she can.]

Alex: One of those things is here. From the news, it's here. I barred the door, but—

[SFX: Interference screeches from the radio, and Alex promptly drops it, and kicks it away to the right. Interferences continues to crackle from the but dies off quickly thereafter.]

Alex: God damn it!

[SFX: Alex takes two steps before pausing.]

Alex: Wait... what the—? It's...

[SFX: Alex heads over to grab the radio]

Alex: (whispered) I don't know if this thing still works. But, if you can hear me, it's... I think it's leaving? The front lights flashed and burst when the radio... and now I think it's going away.

[SFX: radio clicks off.]

Alex: I...I gotta get out of here. I gotta get out of here.

[SFX: Alex heads to the door, tugging but meeting resistance.]

Alex: Ugh! Fuck's sake!

[SFX: Alex unbars the door, dislodging a tool that was blocking the door and tossing it to the floor behind her. Alex opens the door. The wind continues to blow strongly outside and the wind-chimes are audible again. She walks out into the snow, her footsteps fading quickly.]

[SFX: A quick succession of crackling noises, like joints popping, followed by an animalistic hiss.]

[SFX: The wind and scene fades as the melancholy piano music begins again.]

Narrator: Thank you for listening. If you enjoyed this episode, please tell a friend, rate, and review. It makes a huge difference in bringing awareness to independent productions like this one. Episode two will be released December Twelfth. Until then, take care, and stay safe.

[SFX: Song ends.]

*Dziadek is pronounced “Jaah-deck” and Babcia is pronounced “Bab-chee-ah”