

TRANSCRIPT

Season 1 Episode 5: Ghosting a Ghost King

Aiden and Katherine continue their investigation into the centuries old mystery of the death of the Red King. Despite Aiden's protests, Katherine goes to find the radio.

Content Warnings:

Depiction of isolation, altered mind-state, audio distortion.

Discussion of murder, death, body horror, blood and gore.

Mention of physical violence, auto-cannibalism, starvation, and police.

Cast:

Finn Cresswell as Aiden Summers and Distorted Voice

Alexandra M. Barrow as Katherine Moore

Freya Womersley as Reporter 3

Sophie Loveridge as French Girl

Written and produced by Finn Cresswell and Alexandra M. Barrow.

www.thewyrdside.com

Content warnings can be found in the episode description.

EXT. RUFUS STONE - NIGHT

Light breeze in trees (deciduous, oak). Crunch of feet on gravel.

KATHERINE: I'm out on the path. In the dark. Alone. I can't see the car's headlights anymore. Just a distant yellow glow from the far off empty road, and above me, the limitless void.

Soundscape fades into the soft silence of the Wyrd Side recording studio.

AIDEN: You join us in the middle of our investigation into a medieval murder mystery and potential haunting that stretches back almost a thousand years. My name is Aiden Summers.

KATHERINE: And I'm Katherine Moore. Welcome to The Wyrd Side.

THE WYRD SIDE MUSIC

THE WYRD SIDE RECORDING STUDIO

Soft silence of the Wyrld Side recording studio

KATHERINE: In the previous episode, we explored the story surrounding the Red King's death, and debated the cause. Was it an unfortunate accident, or was it a conspiracy to murder?

AIDEN: I think you're forgetting one option there Kitty.

KATHERINE: Oh right. Accident, murder, or *curse*?

AIDEN: I think the curse is the key to this whole case. Especially with what happened out there...

KATHERINE: Mhmm. It's a possibility. But, no matter how he died, we set out to uncover the truth behind the ghost stories surrounding the event. Unfortunately for us, we were off season for the blood-red Ocknell Pond and the appearance of Tyrell's Hound, a rather terrifying omen of death.

AIDEN: I was quite terrified enough, what with the appearance of the ghostly Red King.

KATHERINE: Hey, I was building up to that!

AIDEN: Sorry! Please go ahead.

KATHERINE: So, we set out to meet the Red King himself. Doomed to haunt the path between the Rufus Stone and the city of Winchester.

AIDEN: Treading the liminal path... ever consumed by the wild forest and his own malice...

KATHERINE: With the most promising chance for an encounter with the King a short section of the path near the Rufus Stone, we set out, with recorders ready to capture paranormal activity. You'll have already heard Aiden's experiences at the end of last week's episode.

AIDEN: And don't worry, we'll be getting to those soon!

KATHERINE: This week, we want to talk through what happened, discuss some audio issues and potential ghost interference. But before we get stuck into that discussion, I think it might be best if we play them my experiences on the path and then discuss the case as a whole.

AIDEN: Let's see what they make of it.

EXT. RUFUS STONE - NIGHT

Light breeze in trees (deciduous, oak). Crunch of feet on gravel, walking with purpose.

KATHERINE: The path stretches out in front of me into the night. There are no clouds, but still not enough moonlight with which to find my way. The entire world has been reduced down to the narrow beam of my torch and even the stars seem fainter and more distant. To either side, darkness.

Katherine continues to walk forward.

KATHERINE: Aiden reckons he was close to the rendezvous point when he dropped the radio, just past a copse of yew trees. With any luck, it should still be on, the screen will be lit and I won't miss it. Not that I need luck. *[confidently]* And don't worry future Aiden, who I know has just given future Kitty a look. I've got this.

INT. THE WYRD SIDE RECORDING STUDIO

Soft silence of the Wyrld Side recording studio

Click as Katherine pauses the playback.

KATHERINE: I was correct, he has just given me a look.

AIDEN: We really just went through everything last investigation with people disappearing off paths following light from screens, and there you were, all gung ho and ready to go chasing blue light again.

KATHERINE: I can explain.

AIDEN: *[disbelieving]* Really? After I came back in the state I was? Seeing what I did? I know you're confident Kitty, but that's straight up brash in my books!

KATHERINE: I... Look, let's finish the recording first and then discuss.

AIDEN: Hmmm.

Clicks as Katherine starts the recording again.

EXT. RUFUS STONE - NIGHT

Light breeze in trees (deciduous, oak). Crunch of feet on gravel, walking with purpose.

KATHERINE: *[cont'd]* It's a beautiful night and I've got this.

Katherine continues to walk.

KATHERINE: No sign of Aiden's apparition. How he saw anything in this darkness is beyond me. I can't see much beyond the path. Let alone grasping brambles and a dead king. *[pause]*

Soundscape fades briefly before fading back in. Hush of yew trees swaying in a slight breeze. Creak of old wood moving in the breeze as Katherine enters the yew grove.

KATHERINE: I've just entered a small wooded area. This must be the grove of yew trees Aiden mentioned. The trees that I can see are bulbous and twisted, they must be at least a few hundred years old judging by the size of their trunks. *[increasingly meditative]* Their gnarled branches scrape the ground either side and the paths narrowed to a winding trail, weaving in and out to avoid the larger branches overlapping the trail. It smells of... sap and loam, and dark, damp earth. *[slightly coming to senses as Katherine breathes in sharply]* Right. Onwards. Job to do.

Very faint static grows in volume as Katherine walks closer to the radio.

KATHERINE: *[insufferably overconfident]* Ah. That must be the radio. I was right. Good thing it's still on. No sign of brambles or thorns anywhere, just an abundance of bracken. I think it's just down... here.

Footsteps head decisively off the path, into the small dip where Aiden saw the apparition.

KATHERINE: When Aiden dropped the radio, it must have rolled into the bracken lining the dell. No sign of anyone else around, ghostly or otherwise.

Rustle as Katherine rummages around in the undergrowth.

KATHERINE: Yes! Gotcha.

Static grows louder and clearer as Katherine picks up the radio.

KATHERINE: That's quite enough of you thank you very much.

Katherine switches the radio off with a click. Silence is very loud and there is a faint baseline at the edge of hearing.

KATHERINE: Well. That's that. At least this thing isn't broken.

Radio switches back on. The radio cycles through the channels rapidly, not more than a second or two spent on each channel. Between each channel switch, a burst of static.

KATHERINE: *[surprised]* Jeez! I take it back. Maybe something has come loose.

As Katherine tries to switch the radio off (click as buttons are pressed, radio is shaken around, tapped), it jumps between channels:

REPORTER 3: An attack was reported on the East Side of Kingston Common earlier this week on October 13th. Walkers are asked to be highly vigilant -

KATHERINE: *[frustrated]* Seriously? Will you just...

FRENCH GIRL: *[female voice, young, French accent. Distorted]* Je n'ai jamais vu un monstre comme ça. Il avait les yeux rouges et son regard me fixait -

Click as Katherine tries to turn the radio off repeatedly. It won't go off.

KATHERINE: It won't... *[infuriated out of nowhere]* Come on!

Katherine bangs the radio against the palm of her hand in an attempt to get it working properly again.

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* Je suis irié...

KATHERINE: *[frustrated, slightly freaked]* Come on! Urgh come on, you stupid thing. I don't need this right now.

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* C'était une trahison...

KATHERINE: Okay then. That's it. Batteries are coming out.

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* Mes ronsses blechent...

Katherine turns the radio over and opens the back compartment, pulls out the batteries. Radio cuts out completely. Katherine taps the compartment back into place firmly.

KATHERINE: *[sigh of exasperated relief]* Finally. I couldn't hear myself think over that mess.

Katherine sticks the now loose batteries in her pocket and starts heading back towards the path. Footsteps on soft dirt/grass, occasional crunchy leaves. A few seconds pass without incident but as she moves back into the copse of yew trees there is a rustle of bracken.

KATHERINE: Hello? Is there anyone there?

Rustle stops. Water drips in the background. Slithering brambles underlie the louder, more obvious rustle of underbrush.

KATHERINE: Aiden, is that you?

The underbrush rustles again.

KATHERINE: Okay. Seriously. Stop.

The rustling continues, gets closer and something else enters the air, static, singing, soft words that can't be picked out behind the wind.

KATHERINE: *[angry]* Hey! I said stop! I warn you I have self-defence spray and I am not afraid to use it! Whoever's there can either come out or sod off.

The rustling reaches a crescendo, moving around Katherine faster than a human could run, like wind in the trees, or more than one person in the woods, then with one final whisper, it ends.

Katherine breathes out shakily.

INT. THE WYRD SIDE RECORDING STUDIO

Creak as Katherine readjusts herself on the chair.

KATHERINE: There you have it. It sounds less intense when you listen to it in daylight.

AIDEN: Firstly, thank you for sharing your experiences. And for not completely dismissing mine offhand. What did you make of being on the scene? I thought we agreed at the start of this whole thing that I'd do most of the spook duty.

KATHERINE: Hey that makes it sound like I just send you off into the night by yourself, while I sit in the car drinking coffee and offering snarky commentary.

AIDEN: *[teasing]* And is that so far from the truth?

KATHERINE: *[mock scoff]* Ha. It was... interesting. There's a unique feeling to being out alone in the dark, in the middle of nowhere. You feel so isolated, all your reference points disappear and even the most familiar environment looks alien. With the wind, the trees looked like they were reaching in closer, trying to grab at me. It's a strange experience when you live in a city most of the time.

AIDEN: It can't have been easy, going back there, I'd just come in screaming about ghosts and blood and brambles.

KATHERINE: That's the thing. I wasn't thinking straight. I don't know what it was. I was worried about you, obviously, but I couldn't bring myself to admit it out loud. Then... *[Katherine takes a moment to think, trying to rationalise her feelings]* It wasn't that I couldn't bear to leave the radio behind.

AIDEN: Yeah, sorry about that...

KATHERINE: No no, it's not your fault. Really, I'm the one who needs to apologise. I wouldn't normally leave you like that, all alone, after what you'd just experienced. I shouldn't have.

AIDEN: I mean, I did drop a fairly expensive piece of kit, running away from a ghost.

KATHERINE: Look, these things happen. What's that you like to say... Never split the party. You're worth more to me than the radio.

AIDEN: Thanks...I... *[clears his throat, trying to shift the tone]* I'm not sure you could get a replacement at a hardware store.

KATHERINE: You know what I mean. Equipment breaks, it gets lost. That's just a normal part of being out in the field. Like I said, it wasn't the leaving it behind that bothered me so much. It was more than that.

AIDEN: I did notice that you were unusually... verbose on the recording.

KATHERINE: Yes. Very... flowery. *[suddenly unsure]* I don't... Look. This is going to sound slightly odd... for me, so bear with.

AIDEN: Bearing with.

KATHERINE: From the moment I stepped out of the car at the rendez-vous point, I had this... uh... *[searching for the right words]* This...

AIDEN: *[quietly]* Feeling?

KATHERINE: Yes, this ball of emotion, like lead in my stomach. I could hardly sit still, or even focus. I can't explain it. And then, when I found the radio, out in the dell, the noise was maddening. Out of nowhere, this roiling tide of frustration, as if the radio static was on just the right frequency to push all my buttons, all at once. I like to think I'm normally level headed, but honestly, I probably would have smashed that radio had the noise continued for much longer.

AIDEN: Kitty...

KATHERINE: I.. Well it would be convenient to explain away my reactions via the paranormal.

AIDEN: I think I know what you mean.

KATHERINE: Did you also feel something?

AIDEN: Sort of. *[hesitant]* I wasn't sure whether I was going to mention it or not.

KATHERINE: Please.

AIDEN: I mean, I was scared the whole time I was out there, I'm not gonna lie and pretend otherwise. Especially once the radio started to act up. And I know what you think about my weird feelings.

KATHERINE: You mean I can be dismissive.

AIDEN: Well... Yes. But with good reason though, weird feelings are hard to quantify.

Aiden takes a moment to think.

KATHERINE: I won't say a thing if that helps?

AIDEN: My "feeling" also began as I stepped out of the car. I watched your tail lights disappear into the night, wink out of existence as you rounded a bend in the road. It started out small, to be honest. I just put it down to nervousness about being alone in the dark at first, making me feel a little unsettled. It all came to a head when I got back to camp. This... creeping paranoia. My inner voice was convinced that you wanted me to be alone in the darkness just to make me scared, even more so than I had been when I was first out there, when I had seen the figure . I just... couldn't make myself go with you. I really wanted to, but I couldn't move. I knew I should have gone, to check what it was, to do... anything. But the thought of turning back into that darkness and fear... I felt like I was abandoning you and being abandoned at the same time, this writhing pit of pain and fear in my stomach. And then, eventually, I got back into the car, and all the... doubt, the paranoia and dread, just seemed to melt away. And obviously I know you wouldn't ever do that to me, or to anyone. I knew you'd be back safely.

KATHERINE: We both realised that something was off when I got back to the car. We can't have said two words to each other on the drive home.

AIDEN: It was one of those conversations best kept for morning. I was also far too tired to put any of my thoughts into words.

KATHERINE: Now, as much as I'd like to explain away our reactions, this doesn't automatically lend the paranormal more credence. There's no way to measure, or quantify either of our

feelings. We'd both been to the area earlier that day, and there was nothing strange about those visits.

AIDEN: That was the peculiar thing. It was pleasant in the daylight. I had a great time out in the scrubby heathland exploring little copses and meandering streams.

KATHERINE: I definitely didn't encounter anything like what you experienced. I didn't feel any temperature changes, and I don't think I saw anyone, or anything out there. I didn't even see your pony, for that matter. So, for now, how about we put "weird feelings" and ghostly ponies to one side, and move on to more tangible evidence?

INT. THE WYRD SIDE RECORDING STUDIO

Soft sound of the The Wyrd Side recording studio

AIDEN: We've come a long way since the Marshall Street investigation.

KATHERINE: In some ways yes, in others, very much not.

AIDEN: Well, considering the fact that we went in armed with a torch, half a pot of table salt and our phone mics.

KATHERINE: I definitely remember packing biscuits.

AIDEN: I'm pretty sure you'd eaten most of them before we got into the house.

KATHERINE: It is essential to keep one's energy up when ghost hunting. Ghosts hide from me when I'm hangry.

AIDEN: *[laughs]* As I recall you weren't in a great mood anyways after-

KATHERINE: *[interrupting]* That was entirely on me. Turns out if you set up your sleeping bag underneath a leaky gutter in a thunderstorm, you get rained on.

AIDEN: Well, back to my original point, we've come a long way.

KATHERINE: For this adventure I'd brought all my waterproof layers. Not that it rained, typically.

AIDEN: I meant more in terms of our ghost hunting, but I'll count that as a win too.

KATHERINE: I'll take it. For this investigation, however, there are two potential ghost events that are worth looking into further: Aiden's apparition, and my radio strangeness.

AIDEN: The radio was acting up a storm when I was out there - jumping around channels like nothing I've ever heard. I have listened to the audio of my encounter over and over again. I can only hear undergrowth moving. But we've been able to isolate a possible occurrence of an electronic voice phenomenon, or EVP in Kitty's recording. More on that in a bit.

KATHERINE: So. Let's tackle the ghost in the room.

AIDEN: I know I don't have any irrefutable evidence to back me up, but I encountered something out there. I know it.

KATHERINE: Were there any associated physical sensations? I remember you saying something about the cold.

AIDEN: It was freezing. Colder than it should have been. I felt prickling and movements against my skin as if... hundreds of branches and pieces of heather and gorse were brushing against me. It was almost like they were... tasting me...

KATHERINE: Now I'll give you more credit than I would myself here. You're a pretty keen hiker, you've been camping a fair amount over the years that I've known you, I am sure you know what's normal and what's not. And I agree, what you're describing doesn't sound normal. But... *[sigh]* Look. Being outside, alone in an unfamiliar place, especially at night...

AIDEN: I may have been open to my own suggestion and the dark terrors of the night?

KATHERINE: Well... yes.

AIDEN: I'll accept that as a possible interpretation, but I can't begin to think that is the case.

KATHERINE: Then let's treat this like any other witness statement. You give the account of what you saw, and we can discuss it with any potential explanations.

AIDEN: Sure.

KATHERINE: When you're ready.

AIDEN: Thanks. *[Aiden takes a deep breath]* The forest at night is strange. You summed it up pretty well earlier. There is a sense that everything is mutable and things are moving, changing, shifting just outside the suddenly all to fragile beam of whatever light you have. The sense that just behind you something is reaching out, twigs become snatching fingers, roots are grasping hands, every noise you hear is magnified and somehow other. This is not to say there are not lovely woods to walk in at night, but alone? When your adrenaline is already pumping and your minds racing with the infinite cruel abundance of possibility? They can be a scary place.

Now. I will be the first to admit I was in a... susceptible mental state going into the investigation. Everything that had happened during the Colt Pixie case was right at the front of my mind. I'm quite surprised I didn't book it the minute the horse loomed out of the dark, but once I'd got over the initial surprise, there was something a little comforting about the sheer mundanity of a barrel bellied chestnut pony looking curiously at me as I blundered across glade and hill. That was honestly the safest I felt that entire night. I moved away, down into a little dell, right by a copse of yew trees. They were intense. More than anything I felt watched, you know? Almost... hunted... That prickle on the back of your neck from unseen eyes. I felt it from those trees. There was nothing there that I could see, at least not at first. My flashlight didn't pick up anything, no other animals, no peering eyes or startled birds. I got into the dell, partly to break off line of sight with the trees, partly because that's where the path was leading. It was freezing Kitty. Yes, it was an early October evening, but there was a bone deep chill, as if even the memory of heat, of fire, was being drawn from my body. Then I saw it.

KATHERINE: The Red King?

AIDEN: I... No. No, I don't think so. There was a figure, standing on the lip of the dell, it looked...

KATHERINE: You said a name when you first saw it. Dan?

AIDEN: I don't know what I said at that point. I ran towards it and fell, trying to keep my footing up the hillside but turned my ankle on a root and cut my hand open on something thorny in the underbrush.

KATHERINE: After you fell, you said you were sorry. What prompted you to say that?

AIDEN: It was just the first thing that came to mind to be honest. I couldn't see very well at first. As I got closer I realised that he wasn't who I thought he was. Wasn't the Red King, not entirely, I don't think. So I called out. I told him to show himself, summoned him to me. And he came. The first thing I properly heard was just a slew of movement. Shifting and slithering and creaking. Rising up out of the low lying bracken right by the edge of the trees. He was coming towards me. A figure, tall, but hunched over, his steps were jerky and irregular, almost as if his limbs were being pushed and pulled by unseen forces. And he was... changing. Right in front of my eyes brambles and briars ripped open skin the colour of spoiled milk, from his chest, his legs, his mouth, his eyes. They spilled out of his gaping wounds and wound across him, coating his red hair in blood and viscera and then they looped back, sewing wounds shut forcing his mouth closed as he opened it wide to say something, perhaps just to scream. I had just enough willpower and courage in me to try and take a photo, to prove what I saw with my own eyes and then... I ran. The sounds of brambles gouging into flesh followed me almost to the car.

KATHERINE: And that's where you found me.

AIDEN: And we both had our weird emotional moment. I saw something. I just can't prove to you yet that I did. At least not conclusively. And until then, despite my conviction, I accept you'll want to keep that on the supporting evidence list. Especially considering the photo I took of the ghost event was utterly mundane, just some of those same yew trees, lit up bone white by the flash.

KATHERINE: The whole experience sounds terrifying. I'm so sorry I left you alone.

AIDEN: Nothing to forgive.

KATHERINE: For the situation it's remarkable the photo was even in focus.

AIDEN: Ha. I'm not going to lie. I would have thought an apparition like that would have at least shown up on the photo in some way, a ghost orb, a shadow figure, anything?

KATHERINE: That's what all the other "experts" claim should happen. So, we have a really compelling first hand encounter, but without a photograph or anything more tangible, unfortunately there's not much that stands out from any of the other reports and eyewitness statements. Apart from your photo is in focus.

AIDEN: So for now, we will have to leave it up to the audience to make up their minds.

KATHERINE: Let's think about what else we've collected so far. There are audio distortions on the recording, along with what sounds at a stretch, foliage moving, although we can't tell for certain if it was caused by you moving around, or something else in the underbrush.

AIDEN: Or a ghost event.

KATHERINE: Or a ghost event. I think now's as good a time as any to address the reported attack.

AIDEN: The one that came up on your recording?

KATHERINE: That's the one. Some details have just been released to be public, albeit very quietly. On the East side of Kingston Common, not a ten minute drive from the Rufus Stone, there was violent attack just a few days ago.

AIDEN: Oh gods, how horrible.

KATHERINE: It goes without saying that had we known about this before, I would have never okayed us going out alone.

AIDEN: Are they okay?

KATHERINE: Yes, they're safe. But we don't know much about it at all, who might be responsible, how long they've been in the area.

AIDEN: Hm. I don't understand how what I saw can be construed in any way as an attack.

KATHERINE: We went out with the express purpose of finding a ghost. A cursed ghost who probably got murdered. That's not a reassuring scenario, even in the day. We likely framed anything we saw within the context of our paranormal search.

AIDEN: So the potential attacker is a person dressed up in brambles?

KATHERINE: Yes? Well, I don't know. They might have been waiting in the underbrush for someone to wander through, unaware and alone.

AIDEN: And the blood? The temperature. The... the everything?

KATHERINE: Could have been you trying to rationalise what you were seeing in the context of what you were expecting. A figure, covered in bracken and leaves, perhaps even paint and mud, could, in uncertain light, look like they were rising out of nothing.

AIDEN: I don't know. This seems like a reach.

KATHERINE: Less of a reach than a ghost. At least there's precedent for this. With hindsight, I think that someone was moving towards me through the trees when I came back through the dell. I originally thought it was the wind, moving the yew branches. It was dark, and that was the less frightening option. But now? I think someone was out there.

AIDEN: Or something.

KATHERINE: With the information we now have? Likely a person. In any case, if there was anything in the area, I yelled at them, and that scared them off.

AIDEN: I guess.

KATHERINE: I'm not saying that you didn't see anything out there, but look, there's an explanation right here. People will expect us to analyse this from every angle, and this just seems more likely at this point.

AIDEN: Mmmm, but if we abandon some of the best evidence of the supernatural we have to date, just because there might be other theories, we'll never get anywhere.

KATHERINE: I'm not suggesting we abandon it, but unfortunately the attack just complicated everything.

AIDEN: But it can't explain everything. What about the radio anomalies?

KATHERINE: You're right. Let's focus on them. For those of you familiar with the Colt Pixie investigation, you'll know that we listen back to our recordings with a critical ear.

AIDEN: We're looking out for anything that could be indicative of something, or someone else out there trying to communicate with us.

KATHERINE: That could be changes to the ambient noise, anything that we don't remember being audible, at best? Words, or phrases, or my personal least favourite evidence for an audio based medium, static distortion.

AIDEN: I've cleaned up the most promising section of the recording, to make any message come through as clear as possible. I promise I haven't added anything.

KATHERINE: We don't need to fabricate evidence, that would just cheapen the experience for everyone involved.

AIDEN: Exactly, when something truly paranormal does raise its head, we want the evidence to be irrefutable.

KATHERINE: Now, that's not to say that we don't take the utmost care to examine both the evidence and our reaction to the evidence.

AIDEN: So with that in mind, have a listen.

Click as Aiden switches on the playback.

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* Je suis irié...

KATHERINE: *[frustrated, slightly freaked]* Come on! Urgh come on, you stupid thing. I don't need this right now.

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* C'était une trahison...

KATHERINE: Okay then. That's it. Batteries are coming out.

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* Mes ronsses blechent...

Click as Aiden switches off the playback.

AIDEN: What did you hear in the static?

KATHERINE: Hmmmm... There could be a word... or even maybe a phrase in there? But I can't make out what they're saying... I need to hear it again.

Click as Aiden switches on the playback.

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* Je suis irié...

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* C'était une trahison...

DISTORTED VOICE: *[distorted]* Mes ronsses blechent...

Click as Aiden switches off the playback.

KATHERINE: That's not English.

AIDEN: It most certainly is not.

KATHERINE: Is it... French?

AIDEN: Not just any old French. Well actually, it is Old French.

KATHERINE: The precursor to Modern French?

AIDEN: Almost. The precursor to Middle French, which was the precursor to Modern French.

KATHERINE: Right, of course, silly of me to assume.

AIDEN: Old French was a mix of Romance dialects, spoken in the northern half of France until about the fourteenth century. I think I can only really pick out two words from the recording: "irié", from the latin Ira.

KATHERINE: Ummm. Anger?

AIDEN: Yes. And "une trahison" - a betrayal.

KATHERINE: That's something. At the end, that last word - what does that mean?

AIDEN: Good ear! I'm pretty sure that that last bit was "blechent", to hurt, to cut. And the word before that... I think it's "ronsses". Brambles.

KATHERINE: That matches your experience.

AIDEN: Indeed. And I think it only lends more weight to the fact that somewhere out there, The Red King was trying to communicate with us. Whether he was that thing in the yew trees or not.

KATHERINE: Right...

AIDEN: Well, think about it this way. When did our equipment start playing up?

KATHERINE: When you called out to the king?

AIDEN: That's not quite right. It started acting weird only after I called out to him in French.

KATHERINE: Okay. Go on.

AIDEN: Think about it. Why would a King whose court language was French, who detested the English, debase himself by answering an English peasant asking a question in English? If he even understands modern English. But the minute I spoke to him in French, called him by a French title, I got an answer.

KATHERINE: But I never asked him any questions. I didn't speak to him directly at all.

AIDEN: But you picked up the radio that I dropped. Maybe he started to speak to me and I ghosted him.

KATHERINE: Quite.

AIDEN: Maybe the channels of communication were still open when you turned up.

KATHERINE: Well, if you ghosted him then I hung up on him.

AIDEN: Oof. We really need to work on our supernatural etiquette. So, what's the verdict then?

KATHERINE: If we did pick up actual EVP on the radio, the three messages that we captured: "Anger", "Betrayal", "Brambles", could tempt me towards the curse, but I'm still definitely in the murder camp.

AIDEN: I... I am tempted to join you quite frankly.

KATHERINE: No, no, Rufus was the Frank.

AIDEN: Kitty...

KATHERINE: Oh come on, that was good.

AIDEN: Mhm. I think we need to go over the final piece of the puzzle. King Rufus' dream and how that could link in with the Blacksmith's Curse.

KATHERINE: Generally prophetic dreams aren't admissible evidence.

AIDEN: But they make for great stories.

KATHERINE: That they do. So, what happened?

Throughout the next paragraph, a slight baseline fades in.

AIDEN: On the eve of his final hunt, the king had a dream. Rufus dreamed of a great church, grand and high-towered, reaching up to the heavens like grasping fingers. When he pushed open the heavy dark oak doors he became seized with a terrible hunger, he was utterly ravenous. His stomach groaned and knotted as he doubled over in pain and in his deep desperation he considered eating his own hands...

The baseline stops.

KATHERINE: We've all been there.

AIDEN: Kitty...

KATHERINE: Sorry, please continue.

The baseline fades in again.

AIDEN: He was so famished, so desperate, that he was wrestling with his own will not to consume himself. It was then he saw the vast, golden altar at the head of the church. On its shining surface was a proud stag, recently killed. Its blood, running in rivulets down off the

altar, pooled on the floor. Now given other meat to gorge his endless hunger, the king reached out to satisfy his cravings. But just before seizing a handful of bloody flesh, he realised it had never been a stag, but a man, lying prone on an old, knotted tree stump, cloudy eyes raised to the heavens.

A heartbeat fades in.

Despite the horror and revulsion at his own actions, the King began to tear into the corpse. First the arm, muscle torn and shoulder popped out, devoured in a spray of blood and gore that stained the green moss crimson, then the feet, and legs, streaked with mud. But the more he ate, the more ravenous he became, until he had eaten his way through the man's body all the way to his face. He then saw it properly for the first time. It was a horrific sight, more so than the mangled and shredded flesh below. It was the face of death. Through it all, the eyes had been slowly turning away from the limitless dark sky to pierce the King's very soul and wrack him with a wave of guilt and fear. It was so all encompassing that he felt his very heart seize up and cease beating within his chest.

The baseline and heartbeat fade away.

KATHERINE: That's... not the most comforting dream I've ever heard.

AIDEN: Apparently, the priest in whom he confided begged him to not go hunting. He obviously didn't listen. Now, we can talk at length about the allegorical implications of the "ever hungry rapacious king devouring human flesh" linking Rufus' reign of terror to more spiritual, and implied physical, sins, but... Now that we know a bit more about the curse, and the vengeful forest spirit laying in wait to claim its pound of flesh, don't you think this fits?

KATHERINE: Mmm, hunger was a key component to the creature in the Blacksmith's curse, the idea that the deaths would "feed" the earth in some way and satisfy that hunger for revenge. But why would Sir Walter Tyrell do the deed then, instead of this... forest creature?

AIDEN: At this point, whatever the Blacksmith invoked with his curse is as allegorical as the Red King dream, or perhaps, as symbolic. The hate, revenge and pain of a people scorned and oppressed, of an ancient land scorched and disrespected, honed to an arrow's point. The arrow bounced off an ancient oak tree after all. Who's to say this dark creature was not with Sir Walter Tyrell, guided his arrow in that moment of betrayal and death in the dark of the New Forest. Who's to say the creature that the Blacksmith invoked isn't still out there, roaming the bramble-choked hollows and overgrown forests, taking revenge where it can?

KATHERINE: If Tyrrell shot the arrow that killed the King, then even if the arrow was guided by his betrayal, or the arrow was guided paranormally by the forest creature, then no matter who did the deed, that means that it must have been murder, right?

AIDEN: I guess?

KATHERINE: *[breath out]* Nice.

AIDEN: Riiight. Well, without going back, there isn't much more we can say about our Red King investigation. So, I know what I saw but it is up to you to decide what you believe.

KATHERINE: Unfortunately the complications from the recent attacks mean that much of the evidence that we gathered isn't clear cut enough to say that the Rufus Stone is definitively haunted, despite our strange experiences, Aiden's firsthand report, or the story of the Blacksmith's curse.

AIDEN: Right, I don't think there is anything more we can say on this, not without going back. With the photo a bust, and the fact we're definitely not going to go out roaming the forest alone at night again, we don't have too much more to say about the Red King. Unless we come back next year to see Ocknell's Pond? Though I certainly don't want to run into Tyrell's hound.

KATHERINE: Or an attacker.

AIDEN: The police should have solved the case by next August surely! That being said, we learned a lot from this.

KATHERINE: Agreed, from a technical perspective, we need better cameras. I know this is a podcast and we chose early on to be pretty much an audio only experience, but if we're to capture a range of good quality evidence, then cameras are a necessity. We also definitely need to practise our field recording, there are so many moments that could have been something, or, could have just been us fumbling with the recorder or radio.

AIDEN: I... I was going to say we learned a lot about possible ghost events and their potential strength when exposed to language from their own time. But cameras are a good shout, though it didn't help at all in my encounter.

KATHERINE: Mm. True.

AIDEN: *[increasingly excited]* Perhaps we could take period specific items back to known haunting locations, and test out if we get a response. Measure the intensity of the interaction when we expose the items and maybe speak to the spirits in ways they'd understand? And I wonder if... Huh.

KATHERINE: If...?

AIDEN: Look, I know you're firmly in the "we saw a person out there not ghosts" camp.

KATHERINE: I am.

AIDEN: And I'm not going to try and argue you out of your opinion. But... what if the Colt Pixie and the Red King were more closely linked than we had ever imagined?

KATHERINE: What do you mean?

AIDEN: Well, looking back over both our cases so far, they both involve some sort of spirit roaming the area, looking to either way-lay people, or take revenge.

KATHERINE: Yes, revenge on William the Conqueror, not on people out for a late night jog.

AIDEN: But it got me thinking. What if over time, almost like the story itself, the spirits have somehow been warped and twisted into something else? They changed. No one's seen who attacked them. The police don't even have any leads yet!

KATHERINE: That we know of.

AIDEN: Kitty, come on! There's something here. Okay, you know what this means?

KATHERINE: Not really.

AIDEN: I agree, it would be stupid to wander around alone again looking for the Red King. But that doesn't stop us from going back and looking for the Colt Pixie.

KATHERINE: No no no. We can't. We've had our shot with the Colt Pixie y'know, been there, done that, saved the child.

AIDEN: But we know so much more about how to deal with paranormal situations, how to communicate properly, we could actually engage with these entities on an equal footing! I'm sure we could get a better response if we just approached it differently! We can find out whether it is linked to the most recent attack, if we could figure out when the Colt Pixie first started to manifest, we could try speaking to it in the right language! There's so much more we could do. The Red King gave us some of our best evidence to date, and it doesn't even have the breadth of witnesses and other evidence that the Colt Pixie has! We picked up honest to goodness Old French on the radio.

KATHERINE: That's taking a lot on face value, and it's going against what we originally agreed to do. One chance per case. If we keep coming back to these cases, we'll eventually run into something unexplainable, regardless of whether it's actually supernatural or not.

AIDEN: I know, but look, we got so much out of what was supposed to be a shorter investigation; who's to say there not more just waiting out there for us to discover. We just need to pull on the thread and see where it leads us!

KATHERINE: It's barely a thread. We've got a schedule to keep to. We can't just throw it all away for this.

AIDEN: *[insistent]* There are people out there who need our help. What if this happens again? We're the only ones who are going to pursue this lead.

KATHERINE: I want to help as much as you do, why d'you think we're even having this conversation? It's just not the right way.

AIDEN: Hear me out. Let's just do a little more research, just one more day and see what turns up. We can go back over the recordings, do some desk research. No need to go back out into the field. See if we turn up anything new, if not, then it's over. It's done, I promise I will not bring it up ever again.

KATHERINE: Okay. Fine. I'll think about it. But if we do decide to go back, on your head be it. And we are not camping.

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