

Season 1 Episode 7: Kitty on the Case

As new information comes to light about the recently discovered bog body and the recent attacks near Burley, a disturbing pattern emerges from the murky depths of the New Forest...

Content Warnings:

Depiction of the disappearance of a loved one, police, and physical violence.

Discussion of blood and gore, abduction, murder, ritual murder, death, dead bodies.

Cast:

Alexandra M. Barrow as Katherine Moore

Simeon Joyce as Police Officer

Eddie Chapman as Brian

Robin Denis as Mark, The Librarian

Kate Wilmot as Zahra

Finn Cresswell as Aiden Summers

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

www.thewyrdside.com

Content warnings can be found in the episode description.

INT. BNB - EVENING

Katherine fidgeting. A pause, almost like she's waiting for Aiden to start speaking, then remembering that it's only her in the room.

KATHERINE: Oh right. *[clears her throat]* Welcome back to The Wyrd Side. To start with, thank you for the messages of support you've sent in. It means so much to know that there are people out there who care, and who want to help find Aiden as much as I do. The situation has developed over the last few days. We might actually be close to finding Aiden, and at this point that's all that matters. So, join me as I continue the investigation.

THE WYRD SIDE MUSIC

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Katherine is standing outside a police station. In the background, a quiet town street, with cars passing by occasionally.

KATHERINE: *[annoyed]* They won't tell me anything. I can't get any information on the police investigation into Aiden's disappearance. It's been four days since I reported him missing and I don't think that they give a damn about how long it's been. In between searching the local area and going back to talk to everyone we've spoken to over the last few weeks, I've been coming by the station to get updates and offer my help. But no. Apparently, it's not appropriate for me to assist on the case. They asked me to stop recording inside the station, to not interview anyone in the village, and to go home and wait for them to get in touch.

POLICE OFFICER: Ma'am.

KATHERINE: I can't just stand around and do nothing.

POLICE OFFICER: And you can't just stand outside the station and record.

KATHERINE: Fine. I was just leaving.

POLICE OFFICER: We're doing everything we can Ms Moore, I promise.

KATHERINE: *[sarcastically]* Of course you are.

POLICE OFFICER: We'll be in touch if we have any updates.

KATHERINE: I'll be waiting.

Katherine strides away.

K:*[determined]* I've made a list. It includes everywhere that we've visited over our last two investigations, everyone we've interacted with in the area, and any missing belongings.

From our joint equipment, we're only missing a single recorder. It's the recorder that Aiden was carrying that day. We both carry one, as we've got into the habit of recording most things. Aside from the recorder, he must have had his wallet and phone on him, as well as his room key. He didn't go back to his room at the BnB. His bed was made and the owner of The Sleeping Dragon hadn't seen anyone but me head up that evening.

What can we infer from this? Aiden went missing somewhere between leaving the restaurant at quarter past ten, and the next morning at nine thirty, when I went to his room to apologise. At the time, I was surprised I was the one to make the first move. Aiden isn't one to hold a grudge. There are two potential scenarios. Well three potential scenarios.

Scenario one. Aiden was so angry after our disagreement; he's just up and gone. Left all his belongings behind, and abandoned the chance of obtaining promising evidence of the

paranormal, and his friends and family. Unlikely. He hasn't been back to his place in London, and David, his housemate, hasn't seen or heard from him.

Scenario two. Aiden stormed out that evening, went for a walk to clear his head, and got injured, unable to call for help. This, this is more likely, but I've been scouring every inch of the surrounding countryside and I've found nothing. I've contacted all the local hospitals and emergency departments. No one fitting his description's been admitted.

Scenario three. Aiden stormed out and got attacked. It's difficult to admit but this is the likely scenario based on recent events. *[pause]* I should have gone after him. I knew these things were happening and I just let him walk out into the night alone. Again. Right now, I don't know who could have done this. But there has to be a motive. Who could benefit from this, and why would they take such a risky move in the first place?

INT. BNB - EVENING

KATHERINE: When Aiden left, he said that he was headed to the pub. So I spoke to Brian a few days ago, here's what he had to say for himself:

INT. GREEN PUB - DAY

Katherine steps inside the green pub. It's quiet, only a few patrons around. Clink of glasses and occasional murmur of conversation.

KATHERINE: *[under her breath]* Okaaaay.

KATHERINE: Hi.

BRIAN: You again.

KATHERINE: Me again. It's... Brian, right?

Brian grunts yes.

KATHERINE: Did you see Aiden last night?

BRIAN: Who?

KATHERINE: My friend, he would have been wearing a green raincoat, grey walking shorts and an orange beanie. He may have seemed a little upset.

BRIAN: I don't remember. Lots of folk come in and out of here, difficult to remember one in particular.

KATHERINE: You managed to pick us out of the crowd last time we were in here together.

BRIAN: I remember lots of questions and two grockles disturbing the peace.

KATHERINE: Look. The quicker you answer my question the quicker I'll be gone. Aiden. Did he come in here last night or not?

BRIAN: Didn't see him.

KATHERINE: Are you sure? It would have been about half ten. He may have been quieter than normal. Or more chatty.

BRIAN:*[curtly]* I said what I said.

KATHERINE: Ok. I got it. This is my number if you see him.

INT. BNB - EVENING

KATHERINE: *[hopeful for progress]* This is progress. If Aiden didn't make it to the pub, then that places his estimated time of disappearance between quarter past ten and... let's round up, half past ten. Fifteen minutes is a generous estimate for the walk between BnB and the green pub. Okay. There's something here.

Recorder clicks off. And on.

KATHERINE: *[downhearted and tired]* I've spent the last few days searching the local area in a thirty-minute radius around the BnB and the green pub. No sign of Aiden, just rubbish and signs of dog walkers all over the place. Last night was the first night that temperatures dipped below freezing, there was a heavy frost in the morning. If Aiden was out there... Brian offered to help with the search this afternoon. I must have looked *[said with venom]* pathetic, but in the end it was good to have him there - we covered a lot more ground than I would've alone. He made the good point that there are only so many places to look, and if I hadn't found him by now, he probably wasn't there. We stopped, and I've come back to the BnB to rethink. Brian said he'd keep an ear out with his patrons, just in case. For all our differences, I misjudged him, he's a good sort.

But that got me thinking. I've been approaching this backwards. I should be thinking about what would Aiden would do. He'd say: "What about Albert? What about the attacks and the missing persons cases? What about the Colt Pixie? It's all connected Kitty, the sinews of this

story run deep!" I've been so focused on finding him my way, I've been ignoring all other possible evidence that could mean that this is bigger than just one disappearance.

Katherine lies back on the bed. She lets out a long sigh.

KATHERINE: In any case, that's tomorrow's job.

INT. BOURNEMOUTH LIBRARY - DAY

Quiet hum of a quiet library.

KATHERINE: I'm back at the library in a private study room to go over the evidence. The librarian gave me access to their newspaper archives, I think he should be coming back soon with some more documents. I really need to ask his name. I'm looking for anything that could match with our experiences with the phone or the figure near the Rufus Stone, or anything related to the recent attacks.

Two main events link the cases, a phone ringing prior to the attack, and feeling of being chased. I've reread the reports and it's classic deflecting, no important details: no perpetrators have been caught, we're doing all we can, ha, sure. Then we have the body. Killed in a brutal ritualistic way. Could be a recent victim, could be ancient.

Katherine shuffles some papers.

KATHERINE: I've dug out the reports for our three original missing persons. Felicity Dalton, Mathew Cho, Joanna Perry. Nothing jumps out to connect them... Yet.

A door opens, and the librarian approaches tentatively.

MARK: Any luck so far? Oh sorry, are you recording?

KATHERINE: Yes. Do you mind? Oh, sorry what was your name?

MARK: Mark. Go ahead. Feel feel to record.

KATHERINE: Good. I haven't found much so far. What's your take on attacks on Kingston Common?

MARK: It's horrible. Just horrible. You were also interested in the ongoing missing persons cases, right? Have you found anything helpful in the archives?

KATHERINE: Nothing yet, but there is still a lot to get through.

MARK: Would you like any help? I've got some spare time before the after-school rush.

KATHERINE: *[motioning the three missing persons reports]* Great. Thanks.

MARK pulls a chair up and sits down.

KATHERINE: Do you know where I might find more information on disappearances in the 1980's?

MARK: What sort of information are you looking for?

KATHERINE: There was a mention of a spate of unsolved missing persons cases at the end of one of the reports, but I've been back through the archives and can't find anything.

MARK: And you checked the New Forest Times?

KATHERINE: Yes, that was my first port of call. No luck.

MARK: Yeah, I guess that makes sense. Those cases were kept pretty quiet at the time.

KATHERINE: Why?

MARK: Didn't want to cause a general panic. I should say I only really know about them because my father worked at the Lyndhurst police station back in the day.

KATHERINE: And he dealt with the disappearances?

MARK: Yeah.

KATHERINE: Can you tell me anything about them?

MARK: Gosh, it was so long ago... I can't remember any names of the victims or anything like that, I was just a kid at the time, but if I recall correctly, three or four people went missing up in the west of the New Forest. All in the space of a few weeks that summer.

KATHERINE: 1980?

MARK: Yeah.

Kitty shuffles through some articles.

KATHERINE: Where was this reported? I haven't found anything on them.

MARK: That's not surprising. It took a while to notice anyone was missing. They were all tourists, I think. Or just passing through. All travelling alone.

KATHERINE: Sounds familiar...

MARK: There's a reason I'm not leaving the house past dark at the moment. Though, what most people won't know, because it was kept extremely quiet, is that there was more to it than just simple disappearances.

KATHERINE: What else happened?

MARK: One evening, my father came through the door. Pale as a sheet. I'd never seen him like that before. He dealt with all sorts of horrible things in his time, he was in the forces and grew up in London, East End way, in with a rough crowd.

KATHERINE: Why was he so shaken?

MARK: They did their best - the police - but they only had limited resources.

KATHERINE: I don't doubt his competence.

MARK: It was the only time I've ever heard him talk about his work sober. He was in the kitchen with my mother. I'd been sent up to bed early but I was so curious, I'd crept back down. And I overheard them talking, whispering.

KATHERINE: About?

MARK: He'd found a body. Well not a body. Where the body had been.

KATHERINE: I'm not following. Where the body *had* been?

MARK: Where they'd most likely been killed.

KATHERINE: Hmm.

MARK: But his description? I've never heard of anything quite like it.

KATHERINE: What do you remember?

MARK: It wasn't like anything my father had ever seen before, even in the dodgiest parts of town. The squad'd been investigating the report of one of the missing people just near Burley. No, that's not right. Burley Beacon. A hill near the town. They weren't found, but walking back to his car, one of the dogs caught a scent. Went crazy. Pulled them down towards a forest

clearing, not fifty yards from the road. And... He said that there was a big circle ploughed in the ground, with a series of... marks and lines drawn all through it. In the centre of it, standing in a patch of boggy ground was a big stone splattered with blood.

KATHERINE: *[to herself]* Like the body...

MARK: Hmm?

KATHERINE: Sorry. Lost in thought. Was there anything else at the scene, like rope, or... a blunt weapon?

MARK: Sorry, that's all I know. He clammed up after that.

KATHERINE: And the bodies weren't there?

MARK: No... They never found them. Brought in plenty of suspects, but no one was ever charged.

KATHERINE: And the whole ritual circle sacrifice didn't make the news?

MARK: All I know is no one ever really talked about it. But the circles kept popping up. One after another. Two weeks after a person was reported missing - another slaughter. I remember this tension in the house, this feeling of impending doom. Inevitability. Like we were tied down on a track and could see the train thundering towards us.

KATHERINE: Two weeks?

MARK: On the dot. My father was home for the last call. He'd been practically living in the station but had popped in to get a set of new clothes. I could see it in his eyes. He knew the call was coming. He just didn't know when. Or where they'd be called out to.

KATHERINE: How awful.

MARK: Scary times. Only one person got away -

KATHERINE: There were other attacks? Asides from the first four?

MARK: Just the one. An attempted kidnap, but it's all really foggy now...

KATHERINE: Anything you have, location, who was involved?

MARK: Uh... Whoever they were, they'd been walking around across near Burley Beacon when they heard a cry for help. They went to see what was happening, but someone grabbed them from behind and tried to drag them backwards down the path.

KATHERINE: There must have been multiple people working together. One to shout, another to grab?

MARK: That's what my father said. At least one decoy, calling for help, and one or two ambushers, to jump the person. When this came in, he thought they'd have their break, crack the case... but they never found the people who did it.

KATHERINE: If the police never found them, why did the investigation close?

MARK: I guess they ran out of leads. It was just that spate, and then nothing. They never found the bodies either. Just those gruesome murder sites.

KATHERINE: Where were they?

MARK: I think the first one was just below Burley Beacon. Then I'm sure another was found at the Knightwood Oak.

KATHERINE: The Knightwood Oak?

MARK: Yeah the ancient oak tree. Halfway between Lyndhurst and Burley.

KATHERINE: [*triumphantly*] Yes. I knew I'd read that before. That's where Felicity was reported missing. Felicity Dalton. Could I speak to your father about the cases?

MARK: He passed away about ten years ago.

KATHERINE: Damn.

MARK: You wouldn't have had any luck there anyway. He kept tight-lipped about his work at the best of times, I only ever heard him talk about these cases when he was really drunk. He was so frustrated by the lack of progress. I can only imagine the police are having the same frustrations what with these recent disappearances.

KATHERINE: You don't think this all sounds eerily familiar?

MARK: I mean... [*gesturing at the missing persons cases*] All your missing persons cases date from a while ago. They haven't found any sites like those in the 80s. Would be much harder to stop those images turning up on the internet.

KATHERINE: A lot harder, but not impossible. And these are only the disappearances that we know about.

MARK: You think there are others?

KATHERINE: Maybe. They occurred at seemingly random intervals, some much closer together than the others. Timewise, it's almost impossible to draw a line between any of them, apart from the fact that four people disappear in 1980, with one escapee, and then all of a sudden, half a century later, another two attacks, two... disappearances, and a body found in the space of a few weeks. With its throat cut. In a way that would spray blood all over the place.

MARK: What body?

KATHERINE: The one they found up near Burley.

MARK: Oh. But I thought that was really old? You think it's the same people?

KATHERINE: Could be.

MARK: I mean if they are the same, they've picked up the pace. And they'd also be older than me.

KATHERINE: The police never found the perpetrators back in the day, right?

MARK: No, they didn't.

KATHERINE: Hmm. If this is the same group, or a copycat, then I've only got... six [*Katherine breathes out, shakily*] I've only got six days...

MARK: To do what?

KATHERINE: To hunt them down.

MARK: Where are you going to start looking?

KATHERINE: I'm working on it. Could you pass me the map? Over there. It's just under those folders.

Mark fishes out the map from underneath a stack of papers.

MARK: I don't think the sites will be marked on an ordnance survey map.

KATHERINE: No, but I need to see it all laid out.

MARK: But they were random locations. In and around the New Forest. Wouldn't this be the first thing the police did?

KATHERINE: If you're not going to help then you can leave.

MARK: *[taken aback]* I work he... Alright. Here it is.

A cup is moved, paper is shoved to the side. Katherine lays out the map being laid out on a table.

MARK: What are you doing?

KATHERINE: Something I should have done a long time ago. I'll read off the locations of the disappearances, you mark them down on the map?

MARK: Alright.

KATHERINE: Victim 1, attacked, East Kingston Common; Victim 2, attacked, Central Kingston Common; Albert, disappeared, last known whereabouts, Burley; Aiden, disappeared, last known whereabouts, Burley - got that so far?

MARK: All good so far.

KATHERINE: Joanna Perry, disappeared, last seen, Bolton's Bench, Lyndhurst; Mathew Cho, disappeared, last seen, Sandford; Felicity Dalton, disappeared, last seen at the Knightwood Oak.

MARK: Here you go.

KATHERINE: Oh! And don't forget the body. Just there. Up a bit.

MARK: Here?

KATHERINE: That's it.

Pause for a few seconds as they both consider the map.

KATHERINE: Huh.

A pause as they both examine the map

KATHERINE: *[starting to pull on an imaginary red thread]* Look at the locations of each of the events: Burley Beacon, Lyndhurst, Boltons bench, Bisterne manor.

MARK: Yep. Middle-west New Forest.

KATHERINE: Well yes. But look. They all occur in a straight line. Burley Beacon to Bolton Bench. *[nonplussed]* That's...That's the dragon.

MARK: The dragon?

KATHERINE: The Bisterne Dragon. But what does that mean?

MARK: Do you want me to contact anyone? The police? The council, though I'm not sure what good they'd do, cost cutting and...

KATHERINE: *[abruptly]* I'm sorry, I've got to go. *[starts chucking things in her bag]* Where do I return these...?

MARK: Oh don't worry about them, I can put them back.

KATHERINE: Thank you. This has been... very useful.

Katherine stands up in a hurry, grabs the recorder and runs out of the room.

MARK: *[calling after Katherine]* Hey did you want the map?

INT. BNB - DAY

Phone ringing. Zahra is on the other end of the call.

ZAHRA: Hey Kat.

KATHERINE: Hey Zahra, how are you?

ZAHRA: Oh, busy busy! You know me, I've always had trouble saying no to new projects. I'm so sorry for not getting back to you sooner, it's just been so hectic over the last week.

KATHERINE: Are we on for tomorrow? I hadn't heard anything from you so... I assume we're still on?

ZAHRA: Oh, Kat is that tomorrow? I meant to call - The conference is right around the corner and they've just bumped me up to a talk.

KATHERINE: Seriously?

ZAHRA: I'm so sorry. Really.

KATHERINE: Is there no way I could pop in? Even for 5 minutes? I wouldn't ask unless I really needed to talk.

ZAHRA: *[sigh]* I don't think there'll be anyone around to answer your questions, I completely forgot to get in touch. But look, I have a second now. Is something going on? You sound off.

KATHERINE: Has any new information come up about the body since we last spoke?

ZAHRA: Seeing as I'm not in the Archaeology department I've only got second hand information.

KATHERINE: Second hands fine right now.

ZAHRA: Okay. Well as far as I know the body's been officially transferred to the University.

KATHERINE: So the police aren't involved any more?

ZAHRA: Nope. The dates have come back. They don't think it's anything to do with the recent attacks. Fifteenth century. Which is weird, right?

KATHERINE: Fifteenth century. Right. So weird.

ZAHRA: You sound disappointed.

KATHERINE: I just thought it would be... something.

ZAHRA: How d'you mean?

KATHERINE: It's not important. So it's strange because of when and where it was buried?

ZAHRA: Yeah, they've never found a bog body there before. The whole department is going ballistic.

KATHERINE: Oh, how accurate's the dating technique?

ZAHRA: Um, I'm pretty sure they all have margins of error. Maybe a hundred years or so?

KATHERINE: So there's no way that it could be from the last few years?

ZAHRA: Definitely not.

KATHERINE: Damn.

ZAHRA: It's still a pretty incredible find. But seriously, Kat, what's up with these questions? Are you okay?

KATHERINE: I'm fine. What's your take on the more... paranormal *[cuts herself off]*... superstitious side of things? The New Forest is a peat bog, so why haven't bog bodies been found there before? Did people have different beliefs, or did they bury their dead differently there?

ZAHRA: I honestly couldn't answer that without doing a lot more research. The implications of the date alone are making several of us rewrite a lot of our papers.

KATHERINE: Damn it.

ZAHRA: Why don't you ask Aiden?

KATHERINE: *[pause]* I can't right now.

ZAHRA: Are you guys ok?

KATHERINE: Do you know anyone who would know more?

ZAHRA: Sure. My supervisor's in the process of publishing a series of papers on changes in ritual and burial practices across the UK.

KATHERINE: Can I speak to her?

ZAHRA: I wish I could speak to her! But she's working on it with a guy called John Martin.

KATHERINE: Anything you have. Please Zahra, this is really important.

ZAHRA: Alright, so he apparently teaches at a super exclusive private school somewhere in the South West, nearish Bristol. Hindhallow Hall I think?

KATHERINE: Never heard of it.

ZAHRA: Neither had I. If you know, you know apparently.

KATHERINE: Fair enough. Why's your supervisor working with a school teacher?

ZAHRA: He's one of the lesser known, but better respected experts in the field of the occult. Super knowledgeable. I think he used to be an academic? They probably pay him better at the school now.

KATHERINE: Do you have his contact details?

ZAHRA: Not on hand, um, I know he has some sort of shop or... business? Or something like that based in Bristol. Mysterious Martins or... Magic Martins? Apparently it's the hot spot in the area to get anything obscure or esoteric, I think he even has an original John Dee vessel. I've been meaning to have a look.

KATHERINE: *[less than convinced]* Hm.

ZAHRA: You might have some luck finding him at his shop, I can text you the address? I really hope that helps. Look, Kat, please talk to me. Let me know you're okay?

KATHERINE: Thanks Zahra. The address would be great. Look I know you're busy, we can chat later.

EXT. BRISTOL - DAY

KATHERINE: This is a terrible plan. I've only got five days left before... No. No proof it's the same people. It's probably nothing. I've got time. *[quick breath out, regain control]* I've driven to Bristol, to meet with John Martin. Zahra right, he's supposedly the expert in all things esoteric, he specialises in myths, legends, and ritual practises amongst other things. He may have some insights. The bog body's a dead end, the police won't tell me anything and I don't know what else to do. I should be back in the New Forest, but I'm here, in Bristol. And I can't find the right damn street. This might be what Aiden would do, but it's going against my every instinct.

Knock on the window. Katherine exclaims in surprise

JOHN MARTIN: *[indistinct sentence, muffled by the closed window, roughly translating to]* You can't park here.

The window slides down about an inch and a half.

KATHERINE: Can I help you?

J. M.: You do know you can't park here.

KATHERINE: Oh, I didn't notice.

J. M.: It's a double yellow line. You're going to get a fine if you're here too long.

KATHERINE: Sorry, who are you? Are you... a parking warden?

J. M.: No, I'm not. I'm just trying to help. Kindness begets kindness and all that.

KATHERINE: Thank you?

J. M.: You look a little lost. Can I help you find your way?

KATHERINE: *[lying]* No. I know exactly where I'm going, just had to stop to... get my bearings.

J. M.: You certainly sound sure of yourself. I guess I'll be on my way then. I wouldn't take too long here. The parking wardens are like bloodhounds, they can sniff an offence out a mile off.

KATHERINE: Right. *[pause]* Well. I'd better get a move on. I'm going to be late.

EXT. BRISTOL - DAY

KATHERINE: I've been looking for this house for half an hour. Once I got to the right street, it was obvious which house it was. It's gothic. It's got a double front door, painted deep red, with a brass doorknob, and a door knocker in the shape of a crow? Maybe a raven. Certainly in character for an occult specialist. *[to herself]* No use hanging about, just go up and knock.

Pause and then Katherine reluctantly steps up the stone steps to knock on the front door. The knock echoes in a cavernous house. After a few seconds, movement can be heard within and before long footsteps come to the door. Heavy door opens.

JOHN MARTIN: Hello.

KATHERINE: *[surprised]* You.

JOHN MARTIN: John Martin, at your service. You're quite late for our meeting.

KATHERINE: Yes, I had trouble finding... Hang on. Did you know who I was earlier?

JOHN MARTIN: Yes.

KATHERINE: Huh. Why didn't you just say who you were and save me the trouble of driving around in circles for half an hour?

JOHN MARTIN: You didn't seem remotely ready to accept my help at that point in time.

KATHERINE: Uh huh.

JOHN MARTIN: Did you want to come in, or were you going to stand out there all day? You can take the recorder out of your pocket as well.

KATHERINE: How did you know I- How did you know it was me?

INT. JOHN MARTIN'S HOUSE - DAY

JOHN MARTIN: Just, come in, come in. Just through here, we can have a talk in my library.

KATHERINE: Your library.

JOHN MARTIN: Please, after you.

KATHERINE: Figures.

JOHN MARTIN: Have a seat, armchair of your choice. Can I get you a drink of anything?

KATHERINE: Yes, if I'd had a spare half hour. *[lying]* But, it's quite a drive back, and I promised I'd meet a friend this evening.

JOHN MARTIN: Don't mind if I do?

KATHERINE: Sure.

JOHN MARTIN: Well down to business then. When you first reached out you said that you had questions regarding certain legends and beliefs in the area surrounding the New Forest?

KATHERINE: Yes, I do. This is going to sound strange, but I think that certain New Forest legends may be linked to the recent disappearances in the area.

JOHN MARTIN: And your first port of call wasn't the police?

KATHERINE: Of course it was. I laid out my suspicions, but they said that I was clutching at straws, to leave them to their *[said with venom]* evidence based investigations, and to go home.

JOHN MARTIN: Understood. So, what use could I be then?

KATHERINE: I was hoping you could help with some of the more... Folkloric parts?

JOHN MARTIN: *[being deliberately obtuse]* Folkloric parts? Pray tell.

KATHERINE: I was told that you're an expert in the esoteric... Well, the paranor-... Well... Myths and legends. *[John Martin chuckles]* My current expert is missing. *[The chuckling stops]*

JOHN MARTIN: Ah. Well, I can do my best to provide some insight. What do you want to know?

KATHERINE: Please bear with me. I know how insane this sounds. In the New Forest, there are a series of attacks and missing persons cases stretching back to the 1980s. They all happened on the line between Bolton's Bench and Burley Beacon.

JOHN MARTIN: Two locations that are intimately linked with...

KATHERINE: *[interrupts]* The Bisterne Dragon, yes.

JOHN MARTIN: Ah, you're familiar with the tale?

KATHERINE: Yes. Partly. My friend mentioned it a couple of times as a potential story to investigate. But I'm no good with stories. I couldn't tell one to save a life.

JOHN MARTIN: Is that not what you are doing now?

KATHERINE: *[frustrated]* I'm not trying to weave a yarn, I'm trying to find my friend.

JOHN MARTIN: Right in that case, allow me to weave one. For you, as much as your listeners. The Bisterne Dragon is the tale of a creature, supposedly a dragon in the 15th century, that flew every morning to Bisterne to terrorise the town.

KATHERINE: Wait. Fifteenth century?

JOHN MARTIN: Yes. Normally it is polite to save questions until the end you know.

KATHERINE: Right.

JOHN MARTIN: The dragon would attack the town, menace the townsfolk, burn churches and so on, until it was supplied with, depending on the version of the story, milk, mutton or a

maiden. The terrified people called upon a brave knight, Sir Maurice de Berkeley, to slay the dragon on their behalf. Now, the story does vary...

KATHERINE: *[vocal eye-roll]* Don't they all.

JOHN MARTIN: Stories are as varied as the many coloured autumn leaves, but they all come from the same tree.

KATHERINE: Huh.

JOHN MARTIN: Are you okay?

KATHERINE: I... That just reminds me of something Ai... My friend said.

JOHN MARTIN: He sounds like a wise individual.

KATHERINE: He is. I think you'd get along. So. You were saying?

JOHN MARTIN: The valiant knight fails in his first two attempts to slay the dragon, only succeeding on his third when he uses a hide, sometimes embellished with reflective glass and mirrors, and a loyal pair of mastiff hounds named Grim and Holdfast. The final battle between the dragon and Sir Maurice rages all around the forest, until the fearsome dragon is slain. That area is now called Bolton's Bench, just outside of the small town of... uh... Lyndhurst. Now, notably, the story doesn't end here, with the knight, either physically or mentally wounded in the battle, unable to sleep or eat for thirty days and thirty nights, eventually made his way back to Bolton's bench where he had buried his dogs, who had perished in the fight, where he then died. From that spot, a small copse of yew trees grew, which can still be seen today.

KATHERINE: Is there anything in the story that could link back to modern beliefs?

JOHN MARTIN: Now that is a good question. If you're trying to link it to modern Wicca and such like, you're barking up the wrong tree. However, it could have contributed to modern or early modern folk tales and superstition. Realistically it's likely that Sir Maurice may have actually been in pursuit of a boar, who's strange cries and imposing presence could have been translated into the myth as a dragon.

KATHERINE: Boar to dragon, that's quite a jump to make.

JOHN MARTIN: You can't have ever seen a wild boar.

KATHERINE: Can't say that I have...

JOHN MARTIN: Time, it's also has a tendency to reshape fact.

KATHERINE: Right. Back to the fifteenth century...

JOHN MARTIN: I wouldn't advise it. They would be mighty superstitious of a woman with your level of education.

KATHERINE: [*a bit more forcefully*] Back to the fifteenth century, what would the sacrifices to the dragon have looked like?

JOHN MARTIN: How so?

KATHERINE: You mentioned milk, mutton or maidens.

JOHN MARTIN: Archetypal draconic demands, yes.

KATHERINE: If people were living in fear of what they thought was a dragon or some terrifying beast, what lengths would they have gone to to seek protection?

JOHN MARTIN: Keep going. What are you implying?

KATHERINE: Well if they were desperate enough, could they have... Gone to extremes? Sacrificed the one to save the many?

JOHN MARTIN: Humans always have the capacity to go to extremes. We have seen that throughout our history. Especially where belief is concerned. This is about that recent bog body, yes?

KATHERINE: Yes. From what I've heard, bog bodies aren't found in the New Forest.

JOHN MARTIN: Until now.

KATHERINE: Right. But it's a fifteenth century body. Surely it can't have anything to do with the recent attacks? With Aiden going missing?

JOHN MARTIN: People can believe in some strange things. And that can make them dangerous.

KATHERINE: Dangerous enough to sacrifice people? In any case, that was six hundred years ago.

JOHN MARTIN: Very true. Some places have long memories, Katherine.

KATHERINE: Long enough to what? Kidnap and sacrifice people throughout centuries of modernisation and urbanisation? Centuries of scientific advancement and enlightenment?

JOHN MARTIN: These things can happen when and where you least expect them. If a story becomes so entrenched in a family, in a community, how could they not believe it?

KATHERINE: But there's no dragon flying around the New Forest. For one, Aiden most definitely would have mentioned it.

JOHN MARTIN: And there most likely was never a dragon in the New Forest. But that doesn't stop the story Katherine. That doesn't stop those who have heard it from believing it to be true. Those that would do anything to stop their own dragon.

EXT. BURLEY BEACON - DAY

KATHERINE: I've tried to let the police know. I've really, really tried. If I'm following this thread to the end, then... Then Aiden was taken by someone involved with this Dragon of Bisterne. He has to be. It's the only logical explanation *[small incredulous laugh]* Logical. If only he could see me now. I'm buying into this conspiracy, hook line and sinker. *[trying to convince herself]* But, but once is happenstance, twice is coincidence, three times is a pattern. And as far as I can see, this has to be a pattern.

So, for lack of police support or belief, I'm out here again, retracing the steps of a New Forest legend. Looking for anything that could be suspicious. I started at Bolton's bench this morning. Right outside Lyndhurst and I've been driving my way down stupid country lanes since. It's now, two in the afternoon. It took me an hour to hike from the road to where I am now at the top of Burley Beacon. I've visited the estimated site of each event. I've traced every attack. I've traced every disappearance, everything. With no luck. I'm running out of time. I can't think... No, this can't have all been for nothing.

Footsteps approach from down the trail.

LOU: Lovely day, isn't it?

KATHERINE: I suppose.

LOU: Bright, and sunny. Have you come far?

KATHERINE: Not too far, I started up at Bolton's Bench this morning.

LOU: Gosh, a real adventure then.

KATHERINE: If you say so. I'm sorry I should be going.

LOU: Why the rush? The Beacon and the day aren't going anywhere. *[under her breath]* At least not just yet.

KATHERINE: I don't have time to chat. I'm looking for someone.

LOU: And you think they're here?

KATHERINE: I... I don't know. I'm following some old story, hoping that it will lead me to a friend. It's... mad. So no, I guess I don't really think he's here. He's probably long gone. But... But I can't just do nothing. I can't.

LOU: Hey, I'm sure he wants to be found, if you're looking so hard for him.

KATHERINE: I'm sorry. Here I am, offloading everything onto a total stranger. I don't know what I'm doing here.

LOU: You're trying to help.

KATHERINE: Fat lot of good I'm doing. The police probably think I'm just trying to interfere, heaven knows what his family thinks. I can't face them. Not until I know what happened.

LOU: I know what it's like to have found family. I would hate it if anyone ever took them away from me. I'd tear the world apart for them.

KATHERINE: It's harder than you'd think. *[Lou hands her a tissue]* Thank you. *[Katherine blows her nose]* Are you local to the area? I'm sorry, I should have asked. What was your name?

LOU: *[evasively]* I'm... Jane.

KATHERINE: So, are you local? I'd love to know more about the area. Are those farmhouses in use?

LOU: Which ones?

KATHERINE: Those, barely visible through the trees. Blink and you'd miss them. I wouldn't have noticed them if I hadn't come up here.

LOU: *[uneasily]* Oh...

KATHERINE: Everything ok?

LOU: *[very evasively]* I am local, yeah, but no one lives up in those farmhouses. They're completely abandoned. Or maybe Ministry of Defence? Best, best not to check.

KATHERINE: Okay. Good to know.

LOU: Yes. I actually live nearby with my family, I know better places to walk. I could show you?

KATHERINE: Wait. The man I'm looking for. He's about my height, or maybe a tiny bit taller. He was wearing a green raincoat, grey walking shorts and an orange beanie last I saw him about two weeks ago. Have you seen him? He might have looked lost? Oh. His name's Aiden.

Pause.

LOU: You're Kitty.

KATHERINE: *[confused]* Sorry?

LOU: Aiden doesn't need you.

KATHERINE: You've seen Aiden?

LOU: He doesn't need your interference.

KATHERINE: What the hell are you saying?

LOU: He is so close to doing something wonderful.

KATHERINE: Where is he?

LOU: You are only a reminder of his old life.

KATHERINE: What have you done with him?

LOU: He will be saved.

KATHERINE: Will be? Who are you?

Lou moves towards Katherine threateningly.

LOU: He will be saved once you are dealt with.

KATHERINE: Back off. I'm warning you.

LOU: If you come willingly it'll take less time. But you will come anyway.

Lou throws herself at Katherine, who drops the recorder. The two hit the ground, rolling and snarling as Lou tries to subdue Katherine.

KATHERINE: Get the hell off me!

A few punches are thrown, and Lou gets her hands around Katherine's neck. Katherine gasps for breath, scrabbling as she tries to throw Lou off.

LOU: *[panting, sing-song tone]* Just give up. You can rest now, knowing you died for something truly special.

Kitty manages to throw Lou off her, lashing out and hitting flesh. Lou screams in pain as Kitty breaks her collarbone and rolls away.

KATHERINE: *[incensed, scratchy voice]* I said... get... off. *[coughs for air]*

LOU: *[sobbing in pain]* You have doomed everything you stupid, callous bitch!

Lou starts to run off down the hill, staggering away.

KATHERINE: *[furious]* I'm not finished with you yet! *[Kitty tries to catch her breath, pushing herself up]* Damn she's gone. Is that? Why did that... Why did she have that?

Katherine moves over to something laying on the trail.

KATHERINE: *[hoarse voice]* A recorder. That's the brand we use. Wait. Fingerprints. Initials? A. S. Aiden? She wasn't lying. What the hell... Please say it isn't broken. Please have something useful on you.

The click as a recorder begins to play.

AIDEN: Oh damn am I glad to see you, little black box. Alright, where to begin. Hi, hello, I hope it doesn't come to this but, to anyone who finds this, I'm Aiden Summers.

The recorder clicks off, faintly.

KATHERINE: *[verge of tears, hoarse voice]* Aiden. *[pulls herself back together]* Okay Kitty. It's him. Police first. They can't possibly muck this up now.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

POLICE OFFICER: Back. Again. I take it you've been crawling through more gorse by the looks of those scratches.

KATHERINE: I was searching the area below Burley Beacon...

POLICE OFFICER: Looking for Puff the magic dragon?

KATHERINE: No, I was...

POLICE OFFICER: Come in, through here please.

A door opens and shuts as they enter a side room. Empty silence of a police interview room.

POLICE OFFICER: Take a seat. You think you may have a piece of information on the whereabouts of your friend, Aiden Summers?

KATHERINE: I have a piece of relevant information. I was out searching the area below Burley Beacon-

POLICE OFFICER: I hope that you are not wasting more police time with fanciful fairy tales Miss Moore.

KATHERINE: *[scattered]* I was looking for Aiden. And this woman, well, girl, came up to me right at the crest of the hill. I assumed that she was just another hiker. She was about my height, dirty blond hair, wearing... grey shirt, dark jeans. They were torn. We exchanged a few words, the weather, and I mentioned that I was looking for Aiden. She seemed... nice?

POLICE OFFICER: Miss Moore, let me be frank with you. I have better things to do than to listen to how on-going investigations are linked to ancient stories of dragons and your hikers.

KATHERINE: I-

POLICE OFFICER: It's a waste of police time and might I remind you that impeding an investigation is a criminal offence? I would have thought that someone of your background would be aware of proper procedure.

KATHERINE: What's that supposed to mean?

POLICE OFFICER: This means that we are aware of your record, Miss Moore.

KATHERINE: Ms, not miss. And I don't see why that's relevant. This is all about finding Aiden.

POLICE OFFICER: Then let us do our job. And you do your job. Which, let me remind you, is telling spooky stories, not solving police cases.

KATHERINE: I can still help. The girl. She attacked me. Tried to... said I needed to be dealt with before... That Aiden would be saved? She dropped this.

Clonk as Kitty puts the recorder on the table.

POLICE OFFICER: And what might that be? Assault is a serious allegation.

KATHERINE: It's Aiden's recorder. It fell out of the girl's pocket during the scuffle. I tried not to touch it too much so you could fingerprint it, but I was in a bit of a hurry to get back here.

POLICE OFFICER: To confirm, this is your colleague Aiden Summers' recorder?

KATHERINE: Yes. It's the one missing from the equipment list that I sent over. His initials are on it. Here. *[she points them out]* And when you play it, you'll hear his voice.

POLICE OFFICER: Have you listened to it all yet?

KATHERINE: No, I came here as soon as I could. But the girl. She had his recorder. She attacked me after I told her that I was looking for Aiden. She has to know something. She knows where he is.

POLICE OFFICER: We will need to investigate both the area and this recorder. If you could give us your exact location on the map -

KATHERINE: She ran away down towards a small group of houses in a valley to the south of Burley Beacon. He might be there.

POLICE OFFICER: We'll send out some officers to investigate this location, and keep an eye out for this girl you mentioned.

KATHERINE: Her name was Jane.

P.O: Last name?

KATHERINE: She didn't say.

P.O: Right. Anyone else she mentioned?

KATHERINE: Something about her family and that they live locally to where I was attacked. She was really evasive about those farmhouses.

P.O: Can you point them out on a map?

KATHERINE: Yes.

P.O: Good. Ms Moore, I'm going to need you to stop recording whilst you give us the rest of the information.

Click as the recorder switches off.

THE WYRD SIDE MUSIC

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