

"A MOMENTARY CRIMSON"
The Sheridan Tapes - Season 01, Episode 04
Recording Draft - May 3, 2020

Written by

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Based on story and characters from
"Homestead on the Corner"
By Trevor Van Winkle

INT. OSLOW COUNTY PD - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

BEEP. A small, quiet office. The hallway outside is empty and silent.

SAM BAILEY

Detective Samuel Bailey, Oslow
County Police Department --
Homicide Division. Recording on
April Eleventh, 2019 at 4:30 am.

(beat, then SIGHS)

I shouldn't be here. No one asked
me to come in this early, and if I
could sleep, then trust me, I
would. Something about Sheridan's
last tape just didn't sit right. I
don't know what it was -- the idea
of an invisible *something* hiding in
the dark, maybe? I didn't think
there was a ghost in my room or
anything like that -- I just kept
hearing noises whenever I was about
to fall asleep. Maybe there was
someone out on the stairs. Or maybe
I was just imagining things.

(beat)

Whatever it was, I couldn't get to
sleep. I figured I'd get a head
start today -- digitize a couple of
tapes before anyone else gets in.
Although maybe doing this while
it's still dark outside isn't the
best idea.

(beat)

Screw it.

Sam reaches forward, grabs a cassette loudly from the case,
and examines it.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

(SIGHS)

Early morning digitizing, thy
number is 2-6-193-1-2.

(beat)

I really should get some coffee
first.

Sam turns in his chair, stands up, and walks out the door,
leaving the recording running. After a moment, the door opens
again.

BILL TYLER

(brightly)

Hello? Sam? Are you...

(MORE)

BILL TYLER (CONT'D)
(notices recording, starts
whispering)
Oh, he's recording.
(beat)
Why isn't the tape running?

Bill crosses the room, slipping the cassette into the player
and pressing play.

CLICK. The recording scratches to life.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(asking someone)
You ever wonder where the line is?
You know, between human and not?

BILL TYLER
(responding)
Well, no, I can't say I have...

GILES FALLOW
(muffled, a little far
away)
I don't like to think about it.

BILL TYLER
(realizing)
Oh, she's talking to...

ANNA SHERIDAN
Not even here?

GILES FALLOW
(very firm)
Especially not here. I've been at
the Waxworks for ten years now.
That's long enough to know that the
ones who ask questions are the ones
who can't cut it.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(curious)
Why's that, do you think?

GILES FALLOW
(trying to put this into
words)
Well -- it's a tricky thing.
Waxworks. The more realistic you
make them, the more... *Unreal* they
start to look. I think it's
something about the eyes. They just
-- don't match the faces.
(beat)
(MORE)

GILES FALLOW (CONT'D)

The cheap ones aren't so bad,
except when they get damaged or
melted. It's painful to look at,
even when you know they aren't
real. And that's all fine during
the day, when you know what you're
looking at. But at night, well...
the shadows play tricks with your
eyes.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(knowingly)

I know how that goes.

GILES FALLOW

(carrying on)

It's not a problem for most people -
- they don't get in after dark. But
when you work nights here? The less
you really think about them, the
better.

ANNA SHERIDAN

I'll do my best. It's not really my
style, though.

GILES FALLOW

(growing nervous)

I wish you'd tell me what you're
doing here. I could lose my job if
anything gets broken -- or if you
end up getting hurt in there...

ANNA SHERIDAN

(reassuring)

It'll be fine, Giles. I won't touch
a thing, I promise.

GILES FALLOW

(nervous)

Okay. Just -- don't get me sacked,
alright? Can't exactly retire on
this salary.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(smiling)

I promise, I won't get you sacked.

(re: door)

Open her up.

GILES FALLOW

("you're going to need
it")

Good luck.

A metal door creaks open, and Anna walks forward. As she does, a distorted hiss begins to rise.

BILL TYLER
What's that noise...

SAM BAILEY
(as he rounds the corner)
What the hell are you doing?

BILL TYLER
(jumping in surprise)
Ah!

Sam marches over to the tape player and presses the stop button. The hiss cuts out.

SAM BAILEY
What are you doing in my office? At
4 goddamn 30 in the morning!?

BILL TYLER
(flustered)
I was -- I mean, I...
(CATCHES BREATH)
I'm working the graveyard shift. I
noticed the lights were on, and
then I saw you were recording, so I
thought I'd get the tape going. You
know, start digitizing while you
were...
(beat)
What were you doing?

SAM BAILEY
(through gritted teeth)
Coffee. I was making coffee.

BILL TYLER
Oh. Well, I know you don't like
listening to these things, so I
just wanted to help you out with...

SAM BAILEY
It doesn't help.

BILL TYLER
(confused)
What? Why not?

SAM BAILEY
(on the edge of exploding)
Because I'm actually trying to find
some answers here.
(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)

The tapes are mostly useless, but I need to listen to them. All of them. *Including* this one.

BILL TYLER

(trying to save his skin)

Oh. Well, you didn't miss much. Just some old guy talking about his job at a waxworks museum.

SAM BAILEY

Waxworks?

BILL TYLER

(seeing an opening and taking it)

Yeah, a security guard at some museum -- night watchman, I think. Anna asked him about the line between human and... I guess not human, and I think he was letting her into the museum after it had closed when...

SAM BAILEY

(cutting him off)

I think I get the picture.

BILL TYLER

(relieved)

Oh? Well -- great! Guess I'll... get out of your hair, then.

Bill turns and starts walking away.

SAM BAILEY

(confused)

Where are you going?

BILL TYLER

(confused)

Uh... Nowhere, really. Just going to finish out my shift. Unless you want me to stick around?

SAM BAILEY

(reluctantly)

If... If you wouldn't mind.

BILL TYLER

(flustered)

Oh. Yeah, of course!

Bill pulls up a chair.

SAM BAILEY

Ready?

BILL TYLER

(joking)

Are you?

SAM GRUMBLES SOMETHING, then presses play. The hiss of static continues.

SAM BAILEY

What's this?

BILL TYLER

I don't know, it started when the door opened. Sounds like the tape's damaged... Probably just some signal degradation.

SAM BAILEY

I thought cassettes were before your time.

BILL TYLER

(CHUCKLING)

Jesus Sam, I wasn't born yesterday...

The hiss begins to dissipate, and Sheridan's voice breaks through.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(slightly unnerved)

[the way the eyes seem to]...follow you around is definitely the worst part. Giles was right about the eyes not matching up... Especially with the ones in the loading bay. No wonder they're keeping them in storage. They'd give anyone nightmares. Although, the ones out here aren't much better -- especially not at night. Though it might be the building itself, more than the figures. This place is old -- the waxworks has only been around about ten years, but the building dates back to the revolutionary war. Records are spotty about what it used to be, though. I'm guessing the new owners are trying to make this place seem less creepy than it already is.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Found some original copies at the county library, though. It's called a butcher's shop in some places, but a mortuary in others. As much as I'd love to imply there was some Sweeney Todd style recycling going on here, I think the place has just been a lot of things over the years.

Anna begins to walk through the museum again. Bill leans over to Sam.

BILL TYLER
(admiringly)
I have to say, I like you Jane Doe.

SAM BAILEY
(muttering as he looks down)
Won't Robert get jealous?

BILL TYLER
(defensive)
I didn't say I was interested, I just said... Are you looking at your phone?

SAM BAILEY
(muttering)
Just trying to find out when the museum opened so I can backdate this tape.

BILL TYLER
Won't she say when she recorded it?

SAM BAILEY
(SCOFFS)
She most certainly will not.

Anna stops walking, examining something closer.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(musing to herself)
I always wondered how waxworks chose their subjects. I mean, most of them are obvious: Washington, Jefferson, Franklin -- the all-American standards. Some of them are actually pretty good -- less creepy than the ones at Disneyland, though that might just be because these don't move.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Some of the other ones, though... Well, lets just say you can see where the money went. I think they're all Maryland natives, but I don't even recognize the names on a few of these. Must be local celebrities or something.

(SCOFFS)

I wouldn't be surprised if a few of them were commissioned by the subject -- some kind of weird stab at immortality. Though obviously they didn't want to pay much for it.

(beat as she looks around)

It almost looks like the person who made them didn't quite understand human proportions. All the eye sockets look just... I don't know, just a little too big for the faces.

She turns and begins walking again.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

It seems to get worse the closer you get to the loading dock, too. The ones at the end of the hall look like they've got big, circular plates behind their eyes, pushing their eyebrows and nose back and away. Their eyes aren't any bigger than they should be -- there's just way too much space around them. Actually makes them look smaller. Beadier.

(beat)

That's the most common mistake, but definitely not the only one. Some of these look almost like caricatures, and pretty mean-spirited ones at that. There's a Spiro Agnew over here whose head looks just -- *painfully* swollen. Giles is right... It's kind of difficult to look at. Maybe it's better with the lights on, but in the dark it just looks like his head is floating away from the rest of his body.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Frank Zappa looks mostly normal, thank god -- and he's far enough from the loading bay that his eyes are mostly normal -- though that mustache is somehow even more ludicrous than his real one. His family did say he'd left for his final tour when he died -- I wonder if they ever expected him to get stuck in a place like this.

(beat)

I wish that I could say Hasselhoff fared as well. He looks more like a microwaved Schwarzenegger than anything else...

Anne stops. The tape has started to crackle again.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(nervous)

Huh. That's -- that's weird. I could've sworn there wasn't a sculpture back there before.

(beat)

It looks like one of the figures from the loading bay, but it's standing next to the door now. Like it moved by itself.

(beat, nervously)

I'm just going to cover that one up. No harm in keeping it out of sight for the moment.

Anna grabs a tarp off the floor and moves towards the figure. As she gets closer the distortion grows louder and louder until...

It cuts off. Anna adjusts the tarp, then steps back.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(relieved)

There. Much better. God, these things are creepy as hell. I just don't get the appeal, honestly. Then again, I don't get the appeal of meeting real celebrities either. It's just a cheap shock of recognition, and nothing more. But maybe I shouldn't throw stones -- I make a lot of my money off book signings. Besides, I wouldn't have met Giles without them. We met on the *Infinite Sky* tour back in '06, and got along like a house on fire.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

It's rare to find older people who like horror, but they tend to appreciate it more than people my age -- mostly because they have a half dozen stories more messed up than anything I could ever write. He actually told me once that my books were therapeutic for him. God knows why.

(beat)

He was working the night shift at a shopping mall in Middleford back then, but he decided to take an early shift that day just so he could meet me. When he walked in the door, he looked excruciatingly tired. Even so, he smiled as he came up to the table, offered me his hand, and said "Cracker of a book, young lady." Normally I'd be annoyed at someone calling me "young lady," but there was something so innocent and charming about the way he said it that I couldn't help liking him anyway.

(beat)

We talked for nearly an hour. The book signing was a bust -- only about a dozen people showed up all afternoon. But I didn't mind. As the store closed for the night, I offered to buy him a cup of coffee. He crinkled his nose at that, but I definitely needed one, and he eventually let me buy him a strong black tea instead. He poured about a gallon of creamer into it before we found a quiet corner of the mall and just -- chatted.

(beat)

I got most of his life story that evening. He was the son of a third-generation book-binder who grew up in London, so he was reading almost constantly. He could remember summers when it rained almost every afternoon, and he would spend the whole time in his favorite nook, lost in some fantasy or adventure book. Those were the happiest years of his life, he told me.

(beat)

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

His family was Jewish, and his father participated in the battle of Cable Street in 1936, soon after Giles was born. Between that and the blitz, his tolerance for London ran out soon after the war. He moved his entire family to Israel just as soon as the Palestine War ended and the country stabilized -- as much as it ever did. His mother began to work as an English teacher at a local school, while his father eventually found a position with the University library in Tel Aviv. He, being about 13 at the time, wasn't consulted about the move. It was soon after they left that he began to have trouble sleeping.

(beat)

As the son of two academics, his schooling was "expensive and unremarkable," as he put it. He went to the university, but doesn't remember much of the two years he spent there. The thing he remembered most was catching disapproving glances from his father every time he went to the library. He just wasn't a good student, despite his love of reading. He'd always loved fiction, and having to study textbooks and essays day in and day out took all of the joy out of reading for a long time.

(beat)

Then another war broke out in 1973, during Yom Kippur. By that point Giles had officially flunked out and was living at home, and so he was immediately drafted into the IDF -- the Israel Defense Force -- and sent off to fight.

Anna pauses.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The funny thing I've noticed, reading about war: no matter how terrible the fighting is, there always seems to be too much waiting. Too much quiet.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Too much sitting around, bored to tears between fits of chaos and violence -- lost in routine while waiting for the other shoe to drop. This war was no exception, at least according to Giles. He was a thin, timid, and nearsighted young man, so his recruiting officer took pity on him and managed to station him far away from the front line. It wasn't like he was completely out of harm's way. There was always a risk of surprise attack, so he had to take a lot of patrols around the perimeter of the camp to catch anything the watchtowers missed. Even with his bad eyes, that wasn't a problem for him: by that point, he was almost entirely nocturnal. This was one of the many things we bonded over: our shared love for the cool, quiet hours of the night.

(beat)

Sometimes, when his assigned partner was too sick or too exhausted to make the rounds, he went out by himself. It was completely against orders of course, but no one really noticed or cared that far from the front. It was on one such night about a week in when it happened -- his *messed up story*.

(beat)

He was on the far side of the camp, about fifty yards off to the east. It was a cool, dry night, and the sky was streaked with long, thin wisps of cloud. It had been another endless day of maintenance and readiness drills, and he just wanted to get as far from the camp as he could without actually going AWOL. As he wandered further and further from the lights of the camp, he found himself thinking about the parts of the Torah about Yom Kippur: the old sacrifices, and specifically the goat for Azazel.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I'm still not sure I understand the whole tradition, but the way he told it was that, back in the days of the first temple, the high priest would choose two unblemished, perfect goats. One was "for the Lord." The priest would lay his hands on it, confess the sins of the priesthood, and then slaughter it as an atonement for those sins. That's what Yom Kippur means: the "Day of Atonement" -- and the only way to atone is with blood. The other goat -- I don't know if you'd call it the lucky one -- was supposed to take on the sins of the people. The priest would lay hands on it, confess, and then lead it away into the wilderness forever... At least, that was the idea. Goats being goats, it would just come back the next day looking for food. So they took it to a nearby cliff and just threw it over the side instead.

(beat)

That idea always bothered him a little: the fact that this creature who'd never done anything wrong needed to be killed to make people right with God. He wondered if it was afraid, or if it even realized what was going to happen. After a bit of back and forth, he decided it probably didn't. Instead, it probably went along in blissful ignorance right until the moment the ground started rushing up to meet it. As Giles stood alone in the dark, looking back at the far away lights of the camp, he thought he could understand how it felt.

(beat)

It was then that he heard the footsteps. They were soft and wet, like someone was stepping in mud -- but the ground around the camp was hard, bone-dry clay for miles and miles.

(beat)

Giles turned, aiming the flashlight on his rifle towards the noise. All he could see were a few heaps of dark stone a few yards away.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

He almost dismissed it as a figment of his imagination. It had always been too active according to his father, and he knew it did have a tenancy to run away with him. But then the sound came again, louder and closer. *Thump. Thump. Thump.* They were slow and heavy, but too regular to be anything other than footsteps.

(beat)

With more bravado than he actually felt, he yelled "Tzahal" -- the Hebrew acronym for the IDF -- and demanded that they show themselves. The footsteps didn't stop, or even slow down. Whatever was out there, it either didn't hear him, didn't understand him -- or wasn't afraid of him. Maybe all three.

(beat)

Giles began to panic: whatever was coming out of the darkness, it was definitely heavier than a normal person should have been. He could feel the ground shaking under his feet with each footstep as the sound came closer and closer. He reached for his radio, about to call for backup -- when he saw what he'd taken for a boulder begin to move.

(beat)

It was a short, wide figure -- roughly the shape of a human being, but with a head that jutted out towards him and seemed to be attached to the middle of its chest. Its arms and legs were long, thick lumps of rock that both ended in identical, flat stumps where its fingers and toes should have been. It was hard to tell in the dark, but Giles thought that parts of it glistened like wet mud where its joints would be, while the rest of it was made of solid rock, as dry as bone.

(beat)

He knew what it was, of course: no child could grow up in a Jewish home surrounded by books and not read at least one story about Golems.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

But seeing one emerge from the darkness in a place about as far removed from the comfy nooks and rainy afternoons of his childhood as he could imagine -- well, the knowledge did little to hold back his panic.

(beat)

As it grew closer, the creature raised one arm, waving the end of it vaguely in his direction. Its wide, tongue-less mouth flapped open and shut, but it didn't make a sound. Giles knew why: the breath of life was nowhere to be found in the thing slowly advancing towards him. At that thought, a hatred he never thought he was capable of came over him: a deep-seated anger towards this mockery of life. His heart pounded and his hands shook as he raised his rifle, squared the iron-sights on its chest, and pulled the trigger. The rifle was louder than he'd expected out on the open plain, but he barely noticed the pain in his ears. His vision was red, and his thoughts were muddled by adrenaline and rage.

(beat)

The golem staggered back, bullets sparking off its rocky skin and splattering the thick mud around its joints on the dry earth. Giles emptied a full clip into the broad, slow moving target in an uncontrolled burst -- something he'd been trained never to do in combat. It made no difference. The creature staggered, caught its balance, and then began marching slowly towards him again -- still gesturing with its flat, fingerless hand and trying, uselessly, to speak.

(beat)

The sound of gunfire hadn't gone unnoticed. Giles could hear shouting from the camp, and a noisy engine roaring to life.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The spotlights on the watchtowers all turned in his direction, illuminating the unliving figure even more clearly. Giles knew he'd only have a few seconds before he'd have to stop and explain his actions to a superior officer, so he did the only thing that came to mind: he took a grenade from his belt, removed the pin, and threw it in a high arc towards the creature. The movement was smooth and almost automatic. He only really realized what he'd done when the grenade bounced and came to a stop at the golem's feet. For the briefest moment it stopped and looked down, then looked back up at Giles. In the glare of the spotlights, he saw the creature's eyes clearly for the first and only time. They were dark and sunken in the face of stone, but unmistakably human -- wet and full of tears that glistened and shone against its rocky skin. It mouthed something to him just before the grenade went off. Giles still isn't sure, but he thought it might have been "Thank You."

Anna falls silent for a long moment.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(wrapping up quickly now)

It was all over before the other soldiers arrived. The CO demanded an explanation, and Giles rattled off some half-baked excuse about enemy troops hiding in the rocks. A small unit went in to investigate, but all they found were some shattered ruins and small pools of wet, reddish mud that shouldn't have been possible that far out into the desert.

(beat)

Things might have ended there, if he hadn't told his bunkmate what he really saw. Giles was taken off duty and sent for psychiatric evaluation the next day.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The war ended about a week later anyway, and once he was cleared for duty he served his two years in relative quiet. Since then, he's bounced from odd job to odd job, moving to America in the late 80's and finally settling down here... At a waxworks museum, of all places. It's a strange choice, but then again, he's a strange man.

(beat)

Maybe he's trying to make amends. Keeping watch over these half-living things to make sure no harm comes to them. I wasn't with him that night, so of course I can't be sure, but... It seems like whatever he met out there in the desert was in pain, and begging him to kill it. I wonder if any of *these* feel the same way.

Anna pauses, then turns to look behind her.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(addressing the waxworks)

I don't know if you can hear me. I know you haven't moved since I covered you up, so -- I guess that's a bit of a relief. But I just want you to know that... I don't hate you. Whatever you really are -- You're safe here.

CLACK. The tape spits out of the player.

BILL TYLER

(wonder)

Wow. That was...

SAM BAILEY

(irritated growling)

Utterly pointless.

BILL TYLER

What do you mean, Pointless? That story was...

SAM BAILEY

Completely irrelevant to Sheridan's disappearance, besides giving me one more name I need to follow up on.

BILL TYLER

Oh come on Sam, you've got to admit...

SAM BAILEY

(flat)

I would like you to leave my office. And ask you not to tamper with evidence in the future. Understood?

BILL TYLER

(reluctantly)

I didn't...

(reconsiders)

Okay, fine -- point taken.

Bill walks out of the room, shutting the door firmly behind him.

SAM BAILEY

(SIGHING HEAVILY)

Pointless. Absolutely pointless.

BEEP. The recording cuts out.

END THEME AND
CREDITS