

"IN DEEP SHADOW"

*The Sheridan Tapes - Season 01, Episode 19*  
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Based on story and characters from  
"Homestead on the Corner"  
By Trevor Van Winkle

INT. ARROWHEAD, NV - FRAN'S DINER - DAY

The dining room of a small, family-owned diner during the lunch rush -- muted conversations, the sound of traffic through the window, clattering dishes and silverware.

Fade in to a slightly quieter corner booth. Someone nervously taps and drums their fingers on the table, then pulls out a phone, sending off a hurried text.

WAITRESS

(slight southern drawl)  
Sure you don't want me to get  
something started for you, hun?

REN PARK

(nervous, hiding  
something)  
No, I'm fine, just -- still waiting  
for someone.

WAITRESS

(cheerful as ever)  
Well, let me know if you change  
your mind, okay?

REN PARK

(trying to get rid of her)  
Of course. Thank you.

The waitress retreats. Ren continues drumming on the table, almost as if he's keeping time. Then he pauses. The door chimes ring as someone enters.

REN PARK (CONT'D)

(waving to her, almost a  
stage whisper)  
Anna!

Anna sees him and crosses to the table, sitting down opposite.

REN PARK (CONT'D)

(urgent)  
What took you so long?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(slightly sarcastic)  
Good to see you too, Ren.

REN PARK

(realizing he's being  
rude)  
(MORE)

REN PARK (CONT'D)

Yes, of course. Sorry. I was  
just... Worried something happened.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(reassuring him)

I'm fine. Just got a little  
sidetracked on the way here.

REN PARK

(curious)

With what?

ANNA SHERIDAN

Picked up another signal, just off  
the highway. Thought I'd better  
check it out.

REN PARK

(conspiratory whisper)

Was it... You know, the...

ANNA SHERIDAN

(slightly disappointed)

No. Different signature. But it was  
strong. There's definitely  
something here.

REN PARK

(confused)

Here in Arrowhead?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(shaking her head no)

Here in Oslow County. All of it.

Anna pulls out a few sheets of paper and lays them on the  
table. Ren picks up one, then another, then another, each one  
quicker.

REN PARK

(fascinated and slightly  
terrified)

Are these readings accurate?

ANNA SHERIDAN

As far as I can tell, they are.

REN PARK

(not sure if he believes  
this)

But... That means...

WAITRESS  
(coming in out of the  
blue)  
Ah good, your friend's here!  
What'll it be, then?

REN PARK  
(alarmed)  
What are you doing...!

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(covering for him)  
Uh, Turkey club on rye. We'll split  
it.

WAITRESS  
Fries or salad?

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(without hesitation)  
Both.

WAITRESS  
(cheerful)  
Alrighty then, should have that out  
to you in no time!

The waitress retreats towards the kitchen.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(slightly annoyed)  
What the hell was that?

REN PARK  
(more annoyed)  
I could ask you the same question.  
I hate rye.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
Why are you so jumpy?

REN PARK  
Why aren't you? That waitress has  
been over here at least ten times  
since I got here. She knows  
something's up.

ANNA SHERIDAN  
(SCOFFS, sarcastic)  
What, do you think the wait staff  
is spying on you now?

REN PARK

(dead serious)

Someone is. Security caught someone trying to break into the Merriweather Facility last night. And project files keep going missing off the server. IT keeps telling me it's just a glitch, but...

ANNA SHERIDAN

(confused, concerned)

Who would be trying to spy on us? Who would even know about this?

REN PARK

I was hoping you could tell me.

(glances at papers)

You don't think... Whatever's causing these readings might have something to do with it?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(uncertain)

I don't know. Maybe? But there's just too much on the scanner to make out any clear patterns... Too many different signals, all interfering with one another. It's almost like...

Anna trails off.

REN PARK

(concerned)

Almost like what?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(hesitant)

Everywhere else I've found these things, it's like they've... slipped through the cracks in a wall one by one, bit by bit. Here... Here, it almost seems like someone's opened the floodgates for them.

CLICK

Sam, alone in the morgue after the end of the last episode. The dull hum of florescent lights and refrigerators.

SAM BAILEY  
(beating himself up)  
Okay Sam... Breathe. Breathe.  
(long beat)  
God, why the hell did I mention  
Agate Shore? What did you think she  
was going to do, *not* mention that  
it's... That it was...

Sam take A DEEP, SHUDDERING BREATH, then looks around at  
where he is.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
(continues to beat himself  
up)  
Huh. It must really say something  
about me that the only place I can  
really calm down and think is the  
morgue... even if I don't know  
what. I mean, it is quieter than  
the station, and no one wants to  
strike up a conversation around a  
bunch of dead bodies, so... Guess  
it's got that going for it.

Sam pauses, looking closer at something on the wall.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
Ah. So that's where you ended up.  
"John Doe... Alias, De Witt." Huh.  
Guess I found your namesake today,  
didn't I?

Sam grabs the handle and pulls open the refrigeration drawer.  
He looks down at the body for a moment, then...

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
(regretful)  
God, what a mess this is. You  
knew... I mean, you must have known  
about Sheridan. Maybe about... All  
the rest of it too. God, the things  
you could have told me if you'd  
just...

Sam pauses, then looks closer.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
(confused)  
Huh... That's odd. There seems to  
be... Finger-shaped indentations on  
the throat. Not bruises, there's no  
discoloration but, it...  
(MORE)

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
almost like the skin's been warped  
or pushed in by...

Sam touches the skin, and it makes a disturbing squelching noise.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
(jumping back, alarmed)  
Ah!  
(beat, then looking  
closer, disturbed)  
That's... uh, the, uh, the skin has  
an -- an unusual texture and  
consistency. Almost like... Well,  
almost like moulding clay,  
actually. It still has quite a bit  
of give, even with the freezing  
temperatures and the...

Suddenly, DE WITT GASPS FOR AIR, turning and grabbing Sam by the jacket.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
(horrified)  
AH!

DE WITT  
(voice slightly distorted  
and strained)  
Bailey.

SAM BAILEY  
You... You're... How are you alive?

DE WITT  
(whispered, harsh)  
Get. Me. Out of here.

SAM BAILEY  
(stammering)  
I... I can't... You...

Across the room a door creaks open, and sharp footsteps echo in the bare space.

SAM BAILEY (CONT'D)  
(panicked)  
Shit... Get your head down.

DE WITT  
(confused, then realizing)  
What are you... Oh, no no no no  
no...

Sam pushes the drawer closed just as whoever it is rounds the corner.

CHIEF

(from across the room,  
surprised to see him)  
Bailey? What are you doing down  
here?

SAM BAILEY

(stammering slightly)  
Chief! Just, um... Clearing my  
head. Getting some peace and quiet.

CHIEF

(mild concern)  
Are you alright? You look a little  
worse for wear.

SAM BAILEY

(spinning his wheels)  
I'm... I'm fine. It's just... The  
fire. It's just kind of... Rattled  
me more than I expected.

CHIEF

(nodding)  
That's understandable. Maybe you  
should go home and get some rest. I  
can put some more time off in for  
you if you need it...

SAM BAILEY

(trying to be gracious)  
No. Thank you, but... No. I'd  
rather be working right now.

CHIEF

(audible shrug)  
Suit yourself.

SAM BAILEY

(awkwardly)  
What are... Uh, what are you doing  
down here?

CHIEF

(slightly amused)  
The same thing as you, I suppose.  
Guess we both figured out this is  
the one place in the station where  
people will leave you well enough  
alone.

(beat, then reconsidering)  
(MORE)



CHIEF (CONT'D)

Unless of course, we both end up  
down here at the same time. Then it  
kind of falls apart, doesn't it?

SAM BAILEY

(uneasy)

I, uh, I guess it does.

CHIEF

(wrapping this up)

Well, I'd better leave you to  
your... Brooding, I suppose. But  
please tell me if work gets to be  
too much *before* I have to take you  
off active duty, because I will.  
Understood?

SAM BAILEY

(nervously)

Yes, sir. Of course, sir.

CHIEF

And try to get some sleep tonight,  
alright?

SAM BAILEY

(just trying to get rid of  
him)

I'll try, sir.

The chief turns and walks (a little too slowly) out of the  
morgue. After an agonizingly long time, the door swings shut  
behind him.

SAM SIGHS IN RELIEF, then turns, hesitates, and finally opens  
the refrigeration door again. DE WITT COUGHS VIOLENTLY.

DE WITT

(through gasps)

Well, thanks for that you son of  
a...

SAM BAILEY

(darkly)

Would you rather he saw you moving  
around on the slab, huh? How do you  
think that would have ended?

DE WITT

(angrily, then realizing)

He'd... Ah, shit.

SAM BAILEY

Exactly. So shut up or I'll put you back in that freezer until you decide to cool off.

DE WITT

(nervous edge)

That's won't be necessary detective... Trust me.

SAM BAILEY

(SCOFFS)

Oh, the last thing I'm going to do is trust you.

DE WITT

(sarcastic)

Then why let me out?

SAM BAILEY

(trying to intimidate)

Because I still think you know something about Sheridan. So, you're going to tell me what I need to know right now, and then I'll decide whether to tell the chief about this or not.

DE WITT

(grumbling)

Hell of a choice.

(glancing around the morgue)

Fine. We going to do this in here?

SAM BAILEY

(annoyed)

You have a better idea?

DE WITT

(trying to sound indifferent)

Not really, just... I don't want to go back in the freezer if your boss comes back 'round to check on you.

SAM BAILEY

(suddenly nervous)

That's... That's actually a good point.

(pause as he thinks)

Here: We can sneak out the back. I know a place.

De Witt stands up off the slab, and, with a bit of a limp, follows Sam out.

CLICK

A few minutes later, just outside town. The faint sound of freeway traffic is heard a long ways off, along with louder crickets at the edge of the desert.

Sam opens the door of his car, walks around to the trunk, and pops it open. DE WITT GROANS, more annoyed than anything.

DE WITT  
(sarcastically)  
Thanks for the ride Bailey...  
Really appreciate it...

Sam cocks his gun, and De Witt freezes. After a long, tense silence...

DE WITT (CONT'D)  
(cautious)  
So. You bring me out here to shoot me, detective? Seems a good spot for it... Doubt anyone could find a body out here. Huh. Wonder if I'm the first...

SAM BAILEY  
(dark)  
Just a precaution. One that I will use if you try to get inside my head again.

DE WITT  
(as he climbs out of the trunk)  
Don't worry... I've learned my lesson. Two weeks on ice has left me plenty of time to reflect on my mistakes, after all.

SAM BAILEY  
(driving straight to the point)  
How the hell are you even alive? They tagged you with a .308 Round. I saw you go down. The EMT's...

DE WITT

(SCOFFS)

Saw exactly what they wanted to see... Or rather, what they were supposed to see.

SAM BAILEY

What the hell are you, anyway? I know you're not... Well, not human, at any rate, but...

DE WITT

(CHUCKLES)

Really took you this long to figure that out? Oh, detective, detective... You really need to wake up and smell the petrol. Seems your whole world's about to go up in smoke.

SAM BAILEY

(adamant)

What are you?

DE WITT

(TUTTING)

You want a simple answer, Bailey? Because I don't have one to give.

SAM BAILEY

(increasingly irritated)

I don't need a simple answer -- I just need the truth.

DE WITT

(LAUGHS)

Oh, the truth. The truth. Such a simple thing to ask for, isn't it? Such a difficult thing to know, in the end. I'd tell you, sure, but you must understand, detective: the truth is never as singular as you want it to be.

(beat)

No: I can't give you *the* truth. I can't even give you *a* truth. All I can give you is a story. That's all anyone can give, when you get right down to it. Whether it's true or not...

SAM BAILEY

(annoyed)

Look, just quit rambling and tell me what you know. And drop that ridiculous accent.

DE WITT

(FULL AMERICAN DRAWL)

What, would you prefer this? 'cause honestly, that's how all you gun-lovin', potato-munchin' hicks 'round these parts sound to me.

SAM BAILEY

Actually, I wouldn't...

DE WITT

(HEAVY, AGGRESSIVE  
RUSSIAN)

Would you rather I went in the opposite direction? I was able to use this voice for quite a long time, you know...

SAM BAILEY

Look, just... What's your real voice?

DE WITT

(CARTOONISH FRENCH ACCENT)

What an interesting question that is... Hmm... I wonder if ever I had a real voice? After all, I only learned your languages by imitation.

(SHIFTS DOWN INTO LOW  
REGISTER MUMBLE)

I suppose this would be the closest thing I have to a "real voice"... But even this one is stolen for someone, even if I don't remember who.

SAM BAILEY

(with growing unease)

Please, just... Use whichever one you want.

DE WITT

(RETURNS TO AUSTRALIAN  
ACCENT)

Sounds good to me. So... Where do you want me to start?

SAM BAILEY

(nervous)

Well... Who you are, first of all... And what you know about Sheridan.

DE WITT

(CHUCKLES)

You mean that thing pretending to be Sheridan, don't you? I mean, you must have figured it out by now, otherwise you wouldn't be taking so much of this in stride.

SAM BAILEY

(hesitant)

I... Have some ideas. But I don't know anything yet.

DE WITT

(beginning his story)

Or you don't want to know anything yet. But... That's none of my business, I suppose. So... Who am I. Well... That one might take a bit to answer, but I suppose we've got time. Long and short of it is... I'm no one. At least, that's how it was at the start. Don't remember much of it. Lights in a lightless place. Dark otherwise, and I knew it, even if I didn't have eyes to see. Voices, though how I heard them, I can't say. I don't even know how long I was there. I don't even know if it's right to say I *was* there, or that any time *really* passed: it was barely like consciousness at all, that state of unbeing. But then, there was a feeling like... Unfolding. Unfurling. Like a caterpillar coming out of its cocoon, but painful -- most painful thing I've ever felt. The most... Anything, I've ever felt, to be honest. And then... A blinding light. I rose out of a bubbling tar pit to see a hateful ball of fire hanging in a naked sky without the decency to even wear a cloud. And the heat... A heat I couldn't comprehend, because I didn't even know I was cold before.

(MORE)

## DE WITT (CONT'D)

Heat from above, and below, and around, radiating from the sun, the blasted desert, and the tar surrounding me... Or rather, the tar within me. As I moved, it moved with me, shifting and oozing into a form I didn't recognize: two arms, two legs, five fingers to a hand, and a head almost too heavy to hold up on my own. It was an... Unnerving sensation, to say the least. To suddenly awake from nothingness into a body made of hot, oozing asphalt, clay, and mud, full of feelings I didn't even know how to quantify? How can I possibly describe that to you in a way you'd understand? No... You don't know the half of the fear I felt that day.

(beat)

There was a single moment of silence -- a merciful quiet to mark my first moments in this new world, with only the wind and the rake of sand blown over loose stone to disturb it. And then that silence was shattered by a scream: a high pitched, irritating noise that filled my head in a way I never knew a sound could. I turned to look at where it came from, and saw a young woman, backing away from the edge of the tar pit. There was a small wooden boat near the edge of it, just large enough for one person and partially sealed with still-wet tar from the pit. She must have been finishing the craft when I emerged and startled her away. Of course, I didn't realize any of that until years later... I just saw a creature that looked vaguely like my own unfamiliar form, getting smaller and smaller in the distance as they ran.

(beat)

It took me nearly an hour to struggle out of the pit under my own strength. My limbs were still wet and unformed, and moving them only served to tear large chunks of asphalt from them. It wasn't painful...

(MORE)

DE WITT (CONT'D)

That's something you need to understand about it. I didn't feel pain, as such: it was uncomfortable as all hell, but it didn't hurt. Nothing "hurts" me, the way you think of it. I was aware I was losing bits of myself, but I was also aware that I could replace them just as easily if I needed to. By the time I was on the shore, I was a good deal smaller than I'd been at the start... No bigger than a child, and no wiser. As I blinked eyes I didn't even know I had, I took in the wide desert around me, mottled with dry shrub and pale rocks, and wondered what hellish place I'd found myself in. And as I wondered at that, I felt an arrow cut into my side.

De Witt pauses, then CHUCKLES.

DE WITT (CONT'D)

Of course it didn't hurt -- but that doesn't mean it was a pleasant feeling, either. I grabbed at it with one half-formed hand, but it more or less just melted and sloshed around the arrow without getting a grip. I looked up to see another person approaching: older this time, and holding a bow that looked about as ancient as him. It shook a little in his hands as he raised it, another arrow already on the string. I realized what was about to happen, and without thinking, I made my body pull the arrow *into* my chest. The whole thing just vanished into my side in an instant, and I felt it there: the sharp edges of the arrowhead, the rough wood of the shaft, and the soft feathers of the fetching. I regretted it later: I was vomiting splinters for the next few hours as I more or less digested it. But even so, it was worth it. Because when I drew that arrow into myself, I *understood*.



SAM BAILEY

(reeling a little bit from  
info-dump)

Understood... What?

DE WITT

The kind of world I was in. It was solid and real... Or at least, *they* thought it was. Maybe it was really as unformed and chaotic as the place I came from, but it was fashioned by these people into what they needed: an arrow, a half-finished boat, a way of perceived the landscape around them in a way that made sense. The world I came from was a world of unbeing: of unknowables and unrealities. This... This was a world of makers. Crafters. People who took one look at the chaos around them and decided it had meaning, that it had a purpose... Even if that purpose was to kill. And believe me, I felt that purpose when I absorbed the arrow. When the hunter loosed it, he meant to remove me from this world, permanently. Even though I didn't really understand what it meant to die, in that moment I understood just what it meant to kill.

(beat)

And so... that's what I did. Before the old hunter could lose a second arrow, I was on top of him, bashing his head against the rocks until he stopped moving. I don't know how I moved so fast -- my legs were still unformed lumps of tar and wet mud. But I felt fear: my first *real* fear. The fear that this creature would kill me unless I killed them first. I know better now: they couldn't have killed me even if they'd used every arrow in their quiver. But hidden in that intent to kill was the fear of death that created it.

(beat)

As soon as the hunter stopped moving, I fell to the ground, what little strength I had gone.

(MORE)

## DE WITT (CONT'D)

The sun was low in the sky by then, and the world was growing dark already. I was thankful for that much... I could already tell my eyes were meant for the night, not the blinding light of day. I didn't think anyone would come for the hunter: he'd been summoned here by the young woman, and he wasn't going anywhere. So I sat there, staring at his corpse as the dark gathered around us. Out of curiosity, I compared our hands, our limbs, our heights. I could see I was much smaller than him, and my arms and legs were lopsided and misshapen. I crawled closer, and, almost without realizing what I was doing, I placed my hand over his and did the same thing I did to the arrow: I pulled it into myself. Before I even realized what was happening, the form I had before melted, covering the hunter's body from head to toe. I felt it all then: everywhere that body had been, everything that mind knew, everything this person had learned and done and forgotten in their entire life. I flowed over and through them like water, and when I passed through on the other side, I was whole again... Whole, tall, and strong as the old hunter, while his body had been stripped of flesh and muscle all the way to the bone. I knew what I'd done then: I'd killed someone, and those who knew and cherished him would soon come and try to kill me. So I did the only thing I could think of: I dumped the bones into the tar pit, and fled in the opposite direction to the one the hunter came from.

(beat)

Turns out, that direction was north. I don't remember much of that first journey... even with all I'd gained from the hunter, I didn't know how far or how long I'd have to run before I was safe, and I always felt like I was in danger, even if I never was.

(MORE)

DE WITT (CONT'D)

I stopped and hunted when I grew hungry, slept when I grew tired, and searched for shelter when the sun grew too hot for me to endure. And yet, I didn't have to do any of it. All I knew about life in this world came from a person made of flesh and bone who needed to eat, sleep, and shelter from the sun. I'd learned those weaknesses, and even if I didn't really share them, I felt like I did. I only began to really notice the differences between myself and the hunter when the sun began to vanish behind the clouds more often than not, and the air grew colder and sharper as winter rolled in. I knew the cold was a danger to humans, but as my legs began to turn solid and icy below me, I realized for the first time just how different I was from the creature I'd killed. I might look like them, feel like them, and even share their hunger and fear for a time... But I was not one of them, and never would be.

(beat)

I arrived on the shore of an inland sea as one especially cold night closed in, and I saw snow for the first time. Unable to go any further, I drifted off into what I thought of as sleep, and when the sun rose the next morning, I found my whole body solidified into one solid, unmoving mass.

De Witt pauses, remembering that time with disgust.

DE WITT (CONT'D)

(bitterly)

I wish I could say I spent that first winter in a kind of... Hibernation. That I slept through the frozen months, unaware of what was happening to me. But no... This new world was not so kind. I pretended to sleep when I could, though I didn't really rest... I didn't need to. So I shut my eyes and pretended I couldn't feel my whole body wanting to move, but being unable to.

(MORE)

## DE WITT (CONT'D)

I saw the clay of my bare arms and legs frost over and crack in a way no human skin would, and I knew, long before the winter ended, what I was. Death couldn't touch me. Cold could harm and immobilize me, but no touch of mortality would ever slow me down.

(long pause)

When the winter ended and I slowly thawed out, I meant to go south again, but I was spotted by another group of hunters wearing bright, fur lined clothing, and I was caught before I had strength enough to run. They brought me back to their longboats for reasons I couldn't understand... I'd learned one language from the hunter, but it had almost nothing in common with the tongue of these pale strangers. They tried to return me to yet another unfamiliar group of humans, but when they didn't recognize me, they brought me back and bundled me into one of their boats for the trip home. I suppose they thought I wouldn't survive on my own and took pity on me, for some reason. Though I never really found out why: after they'd rowed back to their home across the ocean and given me clothing better suited for the cold, I escaped and fled in the direction I still knew was south. They hunted me, of course, and almost caught me in a small farming village outside what I now know was Kiev. I was hiding in the loft of a small barn when the owner wandered in, completely unaware of my presence. Killing him was easy -- easier than it had been with the hunter, even though I knew he meant me no harm. By the time the hunters found me, I'd learned enough from the farmer's corpse to convince them this was my barn, my home. I gave them a few wheels of cheese I knew were still fresh and sent them on their merry way.

(beat)

I settled down for a while in that village.

(MORE)

## DE WITT (CONT'D)

The farmer was a widower with no children and no living relatives, so it was easy enough to be left alone. Not needing to eat, I made quite a bit of money off the crop of the land and the animals in the barn. A few people noticed that I wasn't quite the same as the old farmer... I still wasn't quite used to faces and voices yet, so my attempts to match them were far from perfect. Still, this was medieval Europe, and making a few people disappear or fall prey to unfortunate accidents wasn't too difficult. In fact, one might almost say it was too easy, and sooner than I would have liked the other villagers realized those deaths and disappearances were all clustered around the rich farmer who hadn't aged a day in nearly fifty years. They thought I was drinking their blood for eternal youth, of course, but I didn't feel like sticking around to correct them. I fled south just before they stormed the farm and burned it to the ground.

(beat)

I wandered for a while after that, looking for a new place to settle down, before I ran across a procession of troops just outside Constantinople. I'd heard rumors of a crusade, and though I didn't know anything about war, that killing instinct I'd first learned from the hunter was still deep in my bones... Or, the bits of me that looked like bones, at least. The other gaps in my knowledge weren't too hard to fix... I ate my fill of warriors of every nation and creed at the siege of Nicaea, and no one noticed their absence in the aftermath. By the time we reached the holy land, I wore the face and armor of a crusading lord, and I relished in it. That wasn't my first taste of violence, not by a long shot...

(MORE)

DE WITT (CONT'D)

But it was my first real taste of the power that comes with it. It was a lesson I'd never forget.

De Witt pauses. Somewhere in the distance, a train whistle blows.

DE WITT (CONT'D)

But all wars end, and even though there were many more crusades, I'd had my fill. I returned to France and took the lands and titles of the lord I'd replaced, living once again in wealth and comfort, but this time with power and privilege over those around me. And I now knew well enough to add the marks of age to my face as the years went by. A few people still had to disappear in the intervening years of course... unlucky servants and courtesans who stumbled in on me while I was adjusting my face or repairing some accidental injury. But sooner or later, I knew I'd have to abandon that comfortable seat of power and at least pretend to die. So, on the fourth of April, 1151, I died quietly in my bed and was buried in the estate's mausoleum. Escaping was easy enough, and I slipped away into the countryside one foggy night nearly a week later.

(beat)

I spent my next life as a gamekeeper on an estate in England after the old one suffered a particularly well-timed accident. It was a good enough life, though it did me little good to kill things that weren't really afraid of me. Sure, I saw terror in their eyes just before they went dark, but they didn't really respect me until I put an arrow in their flanks. I ended that life prematurely, in much the same way I ended the old gamekeeper's.

(MORE)

## DE WITT (CONT'D)

Getting out of a commoner's grave was slightly more difficult, of course, but once I got through the lid of the coffin and clawed my way up through the loose dirt, I knew I wouldn't be doing that again... Not if I could help it.

(beat)

For the most part, I could: I cheated, killed, and stole my way into positions of power all across Europe. I've been a duke, a duchess, a priest, a landlord, a bailiff... at one point I was even a prince, but an unfortunate accident at Easter mass put an end to that before I could inherit the throne. The years passed, and I really just took each life as it came. It was... Odd at first, to see the people I knew -- and in some cases, cared for -- age and die, but by that point my life ran on a completely different tempo to theirs. I missed some of them, sure, but eventually, death became just as inevitable as the cold of winter to me: I didn't enjoy it, but it didn't really harm me either. The world moved on, and I moved on with it.

(beat, then CHUCKLE)

It moved on a bit too much, too quickly, in fact. One moment, it seemed, a new continent was found across the sea, the next there were colonies all across it, and the next those colonies were in open rebellion and then free. I didn't see the shape of what was coming until it was far too late. By that point, I was living as a noblewoman in Paris, wed to a member of the Estates General. I could have done better -- I was doing better -- but I fell out of favor at Versailles when the royal family began to suspect my involvement with an assassination attempt. I married mostly to avoid having to fake my death again, but he was a kind man, and he left me with money and freedom enough to hold some measure of power.

(MORE)

## DE WITT (CONT'D)

It wasn't enough for me, and I'd already planned to end it before its time when he came home one night enraged, saying that the commoners in the third estate had broken off and formed their own legislation. I realized then what was coming. I made a show of consoling and comforting him and got him to bed early. As soon as he was fast asleep, I took his head in both hands and twisted until I heard his neck snap. I've never been the strongest creature, so it took a bit of doing... Creating muscles that move naturally is difficult enough without trying to make them powerful. But I managed it in the end, and he never woke. I emptied the house of valuables, stashed them where I knew I could find them again, and took the face of one of my more charismatic victims from the old crusading party. I quickly found my place and power with the revolutionaries, and let me tell you, the reign of terror was the most fun I'd had in centuries. Of course, it all fell apart after a while, and I ended up under the guillotine by the end. That was a bit harder to recover from, but once I found my head and reattached it, I left France for good and never looked back.

(beat)

I could go on, I guess -- but the intervening centuries haven't been much different. It took me a while to sort out who had power in this brave new world, but I always seemed to find it in the end. The plantations of the American South. The British Raj. The Bolshevik Revolution. And Australia, of course... A penal colony needs overseers, after all. But one by one, those all went away... People were freed or freed themselves, the revolutions ended, and I found myself back at the bottom of the ladder every time.

(MORE)



DE WITT (CONT'D)

I came back to American to join in on the Red Scare, but by the time I got anywhere McCarthy was disgraced and I was back to the drawing board. It was on one particularly hot afternoon in Los Angeles, just a few miles from the tar pits where I suspected I'd been born, that I had my epiphany. Of course, it had to come in the form of a particularly nasty police officer who told me I couldn't loiter on the park bench. I was living on the streets at the time and not paying much attention to my appearance, so I was looking rather scruffy. When I asked him why I couldn't, he answered me with a baton across the head. I was knocked down, so I pretended to be stunned... I even put on a bit of blood for show. That didn't stop him though: he hit me again and again while the good, respectable citizens all around us just... Watched. Too scared, or maybe too brainwashed, to do anything about it. I could barely keep myself from grinning... I knew I'd found my answer then. I'd been thinking about it all wrong. Money, position, breeding... Those were what gave me power before, and they were getting harder and harder to come by. But a uniform? An idea of power? One small change to my appearance, and I could do whatever I wanted.

(beat)

I was shoved into the back of a police cruiser by him and his partner, but that car never made it back to the station. They found it two weeks later in Red Rock Canyon, burnt out with two blackened skeletons in the front seat.

De Witt falls silent. SAM STAMMERS SLIGHTLY, unsure what to make of this story.

DE WITT (CONT'D)

(mocking)

So what do you think of my story, detective? *My truth?*

SAM BAILEY  
(disbelieving)  
How... How old are you?

DE WITT  
(CHUCKLES, sarcastic)  
Old enough to know better. Younger  
than the mountains, older than the  
trees.

SAM BAILEY  
(growing more doubtful)  
How much of that was... Actually  
true?

DE WITT  
(audible shrug)  
Most of it. Some of it. All of it.  
What does it matter? It's not like  
you can prove any of it true or  
false... Not in your pathetic  
lifespan, at least.

SAM BAILEY  
So why should I believe any of it?

DE WITT  
(dismissive)  
No reason at all. Believe it, doubt  
it, build a religion around it... I  
really don't care. Is it useful to  
believe it? Maybe. Does it get you  
closer to the truth about Sheridan?  
More than likely. But you'd better  
stop going back and forth on it,  
Bailey -- trust me, you don't have  
the time for that.

SAM BAILEY  
(getting worried)  
What do you mean, I don't have  
time?

DE WITT  
(a little disgusted)  
That thing pretending to be  
Sheridan... It's not like me. It's  
not content just to be itself. To  
be singular. It reflects. It  
expands. And it grows with every  
voice it steals, every body it  
duplicates. Sheridan is just the  
start... A voice people will listen  
to, a face they know and trust.  
(MORE)

DE WITT (CONT'D)

But it won't stop there. Trust me... It will never stop.

SAM BAILEY

You're... You're saying it's trying to... What, replace people?

DE WITT

(CHUCKLES DARKLY)

No no no, Detective... It's trying to replace humanity. Replace it with its own version of human kind. And trust me, neither of us want that to happen. I kind of like humans just the way they are: stupid, and easy to fool.

SAM BAILEY

(growing desperate)

So what do I do about it?

DE WITT

How the hell should I know? I'm not the one who needs to put a stop to it. But if you get nothing else from my story Bailey, get this... That things only work in your favor when you're willing to do whatever it takes to win. Speaking of which...

SAM GRUNTS IN PAIN as the butt of a pistol slams into the back of his head. He folds at the knee and collapses.

DE WITT (CONT'D)

(casually)

You really should've been paying more attention. It's remarkably easy to get inside your head.

De Witt grabs Sam's keys out of his pocket, turns, and gets into the car. The engine starts and it pulls away, leaving us alone with the wind, the crickets, and the night.

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME  
AND CREDITS