

the Magical History of Knox County

“Anamalie” theme plays, cuts off abruptly

NED: Sorry, sorry! My hand slipped...still not used to being in the booth, but...I'll get there. Ladies and gentlemen, tonight on the Magical History of Knox County, we...save the world. Take a listen.

Tape clicks on. Weird a capella version of “The Kokosing Farewell” plays.

MORDECAI (ON SITE): Mordecai's log, day three. What you're listening to what I believe is an a capella cover of the Kokosing Farewell. Now, you might be wondering, 'Why is Mordecai playing this? I thought this was the Magical History of Knox County? I thought we were in the middle of an apocalypse last week?' All good questions. We are still in the midst of an apocalypse, it's just...really strange. Here's the thing - that song is being sung by a group of twelve catfish. Which sounds kind of cute, except they're all beached and dying. It's actually pretty upsetting and it's a pretty good summation of how the past few days have gone. Things here in Knox County have always been strange, but recently they've...gotten even stranger. This morning it rained crickets outside the station for twenty minutes. Yesterday an earthquake knocked a shelf in my apartment off the wall, but all my books stayed right where they were six feet above the ground.

Thundering sound.

And, now the trees are dancing, I guess. No, wait - scratch that. Not all the trees are dancing, it's just the deciduous ones. (*Beat, thundering noise is louder*). Now it's all the trees!

Beat

I haven't been out of the station in a few days. After Ned left last week, things just kept getting weirder. I'm a little in over my head. I haven't gotten a lot of sleep lately, what

with the earthquakes and the cricket rain and everything, so I'm sorry if I don't have the same determination I did last week. I'm honestly just not sure where to go anymore. I'm down to my last few ideas. I got a call from Ned yesterday, actually. Apparently, she met up with Lumily and Divodit at the auxiliary Bestiarium somewhere in Western Kentucky. She tried to talk me into heading down there, most of the county's already evacuated, but I don't wanna leave until I know what's happening here. It just doesn't make sense that this place is suddenly falling apart. Abraham seemed to know something bad was about to happen. And I've noticed some patterns - for example, weird things are much more likely to happen right after an earthquake, which seems to imply that the earthquakes are triggering whatever's happening. I found a map in the station of seismic hazard risk levels for the entire planet, which told me two things. First, Knox County is in the lowest possible risk category. Whatever these things are, they can't be actual earthquakes. They're something new. Second, someone at some point thought it was important for our station to have a global seismic hazard map, which implies that either this has happened before, or that Abigail knew it would happen eventually. Either one is concerning, but at the moment they might be good news.

Rumbling

Ok, there's an earthquake - let's see if something weird happens.

Insects buzzing - a lot of insects buzzing.

WOAH Giant dragonflies! That's kind of cool -

Sound of flames crackling

Aaaand they breathe fire WOAH!

Buzzing and fire intensifies

Okay, easy there buddy, I'm not here to hurt you - there's no reason for you to hurt me...

Sound of dragonfly breathing fire

WOOOAAAAH okay okay okay, listeners, I'm going to run, I'll be right back.

Sound of footsteps, running. Dragonfly breathes fire again. Mordecai screams. Click of tape being shut off. Click of tape being turned on.

MORDECAI (ON SITE): Alright, we're out of the woods, literally and figuratively. Looks like I'm near Amish country? Oh, hey! I'm exactly where I wanna be. Dragonfly horde wasn't so bad after all. Like I was saying earlier, Abraham knew what was going on, so there must have been something in his library that let him figure that out. The Flock destroyed the house pretty thoroughly, but maybe there's something left behind.

Footsteps.

I've been low on options since Karl's place went up in smoke. Granted, this place isn't much better, it's pretty much just a pile of rubble. It seems like almost everything organic is gone. Fabric, the pages of books, even most of the wood. Anything the birds could eat, I guess. All that's left is drywall, metal and stone.

Beat

Everything that's left is still operational, though. The remains of the shelves are still spinning just like they were before the house collapsed, let me take a look.

Shuffling, Mordecai sighs.

Yea, it looks like the books are pretty shredded. Nothing readable.

Beat

Looks like I found a desk, antique maybe, a few sigils carved into the surface - but there's not much left to look at. The Flock tore it up pretty bad - looks like there's something inside, hold on.

Shuffling. Recorded voice on damaged tape.

It's a tape recorder.

Voice gets louder - the tape is very choppy.

Abigail! This is Abigail's last tape!

ABIGAIL (ON TAPE): Earthquakes aren't normal, but Abraham won't even talk about them...seems like a pretty clear indication...

Mordecai struggles with the tape

MORDECAI: Come on....

Tape becomes inaudible. Staticy sound of damaged tape.

Sounds like Abigail had the same thought I did. So, I was right. There's nothing left in this house to help me, but if there's anybody who can help me figure this out, it's Abraham. The only question is - how do I find him? Last week, I told him to stay out of my way - I think that was a bad idea.

Buzzing

Sh - dragonflies are back, gotta run!

Buzzing continues. Running footsteps.

You may be wondering why I walked here instead of driving. Well, that's a great question. You see, the station's parking lot isn't paved, and it's a little overgrown. I parked there yesterday and around three o'clock there was an earthquake. When I came outside, the weeds had grown about ten feet. My car is currently stuck on top of a very large dandelion. If Ned were here, I'm sure she would find that hilarious.

Running noises continue.

Alright, how do I find Abraham? Who do I have on speed dial? Can't ask Ned, can't ask Karl, can't ask Riddle Toad, can't ask my grandma -

Phone rings. Mordecai yells, startled. It beeps as he answers.

LUMILY (ON PHONE): Mordecai?

Divodit (ON PHONE): Good to hear from you, lad!

LUMILY: Is everything alright?

MORDECAI: Uh, yea, more or less.

Buzzing continues

Divodit: Is that a lesser wyvern in the background?

MORDECAI: It's a giant dragonfly, they've been following me around for a while.

Divodit: Same thing. Put me on speaker, we'll take care of it. Lumily! Turn on the wyvern repeller for a moment!

LUMILY: Hold on a second!

High pitched, warbling sound - it's kind of like tweeting birds sining at twenty times the regular speed. Buzzing stops.

MORDECAI: That took care of it. Thanks, guys.

Divodit: Glad to hear you're safe, lad.

MORDECAI: You, too. Listen, I think that Abraham might still be in the county. If that's true, can you think of any way that I might be able to find him?

Divodit: Mm-hmm! The phenomenometer!

MORDECAI: The what now?

LUMILY: Phenomenometer. Divodit named it.

Divodit: Indeed, I did! Abraham helped build the darn thing. It measures something called 'unreality currents.' You can use it to get a sort of heat map of magical activity.

LUMILY: Normally, it wouldn't be able to pick up something as small as sigil magic, but just about everyone doing that kind of work has left the county. If Abraham's still around, he might have a pretty distinctive look on the map.

MORDECAI: Perfect! I'll let you know when I get there.

Tape clicks off. Click as new tape is turned on.

MORDECAI: Okay, I've arrived. The Bestiarium is looking pretty precarious at the moment. It's stood through the earthquakes so far, but the whole structure is audibly creaking in the wind. It's leaning toward the left pretty significantly -

Crashing sound

MORDECAI: Oh, one of the shutters just fell off the house. If I'm going in at all, now's probably the best time.

Phone rings and beeps as it's answered.

Divodit (ON PHONE): You there already, lad?

MORDECAI: Just got here.

LUMILY (ON PHONE): How's the place look?

MORDECAI: It's held together. Where exactly is the Phenomenometron?

LUMILY: Phenomenometer?

MORDECAI: Right. Phenomerameter. What'd I say?

Divodit: No no no. Phenomenometer.

MORDECAI: Phenomenom -

LUMILY: It's really not that important. If you just walk in, it should be down the hall, third door on your left.

MORDECAI: In this closet?

LUMILY: Yup.

Door creaks as it opens.

Divodit: Never got much use out of the thing. Always preferred the direct approach, myself.

MORDECAI: Okay, what I'm looking at looks like an arcade cabinet with some exposed wire on the top and some sigils on the sides. That's it?

LUMILY: Yup. You'll need to finish assembling it. There should be an antenna array in the box beside it. Go ahead and plug that in, then turn the whole thing on.

MORDECAI: Alright, uh....there.

Clicking sound as he switches it on. Arcade music plays. "Vwooop" sound of a game being ready to start. Clicking of a film reel or old screen.

MORDECAI: Okay, it looks like it's working. I've got a really pixelated map of the county. Now what?

Divodit: Anywhere on the map that's black has negligible traces of magical activity. Blue is a bit of magic, green is a little more, and so on. You get the idea.

LUMILY: Sigil magic usually involves making some kind of sacrifice in order to create magical energy.

MORDECAI: Got it. Okay, most of the area's green right now. I think there's a lot more magic around than usual. Honey Run's kinda blue-ish...what does a big red splotch mean?

Divodit: Red?

MORDECAI: Yea, looks like it's a couple hundred feet across? It's moving toward the Beastarium, should I be concerned?

LUMILY: Red would have to be a pretty massive magical source

Divodit: A creature of magic.

LUMILY: How fast is it moving?

MORDECAI: Hold on, uh...maybe 25, 30 miles an hour? It's changing shape, too.

Divodit: It's the Flock.

LUMILY: It's the Flock!

Birds calling and wings flapping

Divodit: Mordecai, RUN!

MORDECAI: On it!

Birds cawing and wings flapping get louder. Sound of building being destroyed - windows breaking, wood snapping, crashing sounds. Tape clicks off.

NED (IN STUDIO): So, apparently at that point, the Flock destroyed Mordecai's phone, along with most of the Beastarium. Don't worry! He does get out of this situation just fine, but Lumily, Divodit and I didn't know that. So, off in the Beastarium 2.0, here's what we were hearing.

Birds cawing and wings flapping. Squeaking sound, clattering.

LUMILY (ON SITE): Did - did he just?

Divodit: I'm not sure.

NED: No way. No way that can't b - *(breathing heavily)* There's no way -

LUMILY: Hold on, I'm calling the Beastarium phone.

Beat

NED: And?!

LUMILY: The line's dead.

Divodit: I'm sure he'll be fine. Mordecai's lived through an encounter with the Flock before, has he not?

NED: The Flock *killed* him once before. We've gotta get up there.

LUMILY: Agreed. I'll get the van.

Divodit: I'll feed the fire lemur.

Tape clicks off and back on again.

MORDECAI (ON TAPE): Sorry about the gap in recording. My cell phone got busted, I had to turn my recorder off for a while and keep it safe. But I'm still here! The Flock didn't really seem interested in eating me, weirdly. It just tore the place apart and left. Took a lot of the wood with them, weird, but, you know, not the weirdest thing that's happened today. I tried to follow them, since they were probably my best lead to Abraham, but I definitely can't run as fast as the Flock can fly. If Abraham sent in the Flock to stop me from using the Phenomenometer, he must know I'm looking for him. And he's hiding. If he's hiding, I need to find him, but with my phone and the Beastarium both destroyed I have to do that completely on my own.

Beat.

So here's my thought. A couple weeks after I started working here, I did a story on a tree. Some locals call it the Romance Tree. Supposedly, two people carve their names into it and they'll be together no matter what. But I thought, hey, if the tree binds people together, then what if I carved my name into it with Abraham's? I'd have to find him eventually, right? *(He sounds like he's struggling with something)*. I'm hoping the answer is yes, because I'm doing it now. I'm not really looking forward to spending the rest of my life with Abraham following me around, so hopefully once we make it out of this we can figure out a way to reverse it. There, done.

Sound of wind and birds cawing. Birds get louder and closer.

That's Not a good sound. NO WAY. *(Birds get even louder)*. NO WAY! Okay, gotta run.

Footsteps running. Birds get louder. Mordecai screams. Running and birds both continue. Tape clicks.

ABRAHAM (ON TAPE): Wake up.

MORDECAI:...ow.

ABRAHAM: Mordecai, did you carve my name into this tree?

MORDECAI: What?

ABRAHAM: Whatever, just wake up, we're low on time. Here's your field recorder, I thought you'd want this on tape.

MORDECAI: Abraham?

ABRAHAM: There are two people in the county, Mordecai, who else would it be? *(beat)*
Can you stand?

MORDECAI: I...I think so.

ABRAHAM: Good, I wasn't looking forward to dragging you. Follow me.

Footsteps on outdoor trail

MORDECAI: So the tree worked?

ABRAHAM: Maybe. It's hard to say for sure with magic. I was already looking for you, but once you add magic into the equation, you can pretty much throw causality out the window.

MORDECAI: You were looking for me?

ABRAHAM: Most of the day so far. I stopped by the station - thought I'd find you there. I got your car down from that dandelion, by the way.

MORDECAI: Why are you helping me?

ABRAHAM: How do you not get this? All I do, all day, every day, is help people, and occasionally you show up, ask a few questions, run away with half the story, and call yourself a hero.

MORDECAI: I don't call myself a hero.

ABRAHAM: Some people do. Riddle did, you know that? He told me I was going about this all wrong, that I wasn't helping anyone. That's why I was looking for you, actually. When all this is over, you'll be broadcasting again. I want you to have this story. I want you to tell people what I did and why.

MORDECAI: You nearly killed me twice today!

ABRAHAM: I only count once, and I wasn't even aiming for you. What was the second?

MORDEAI: I was trying to use Lumily and Divodit's Phenomenometer. What do you mean you weren't aiming for me?

ABRAHAM: The Phenomenometer still works? Lumily and I built that in a weekend out of spare parts and a Pole Position machine we found in Wendell's basement.

MORDECAI: It doesn't work anymore, the Flock destroyed it. Isn't that why you sent them?

ABRAHAM: Oh...uh, no. I didn't mean to put you in harm's way. I just needed the Beastiarium itself. Lumily and Divodit have lived there for years now, there's a lot of magic in the walls. I know you spend the majority of your time investigating my every move, but the fascination isn't mutual. I don't really have time to focus on you anymore.

Flock approaches. There's a thudding sound as things are dropped.

Don't worry. They're just dropping off the next shipment. Pieces of my old home.

MORDECAI: What's all this for?

ABRAHAM: I'm going to burn them. I'm not happy about it, but I'm running out of options. I need the power.

MORDECAI: Abigail seemed to think differently.

ABRAHAM: Pardon?

MORDECAI: I found her last tape. I drew a lot of the same conclusions myself. You've been pulling power from somewhere. Abigail thought it was related to the earthquakes. You knew something about them when I visited your house. And now you and I are the only people left in the county. Why?

ABRAHAM: Are you familiar with the name "Oonglok?"

MORDECAI: The giant under the county.

ABRAHAM: Right. Sounds a little absurd, doesn't it? I thought it was a myth, for a long time, until I did some research of my own. It was real. Giant might be the wrong word. He was closer to a god. He sculpted the land, carved the rivers. The world was shaped by his footprints. But he was struck down. Killed by his brother. Now he's rotting beneath our feet.

Rumble. Creaking and growling from the forest.

MORDECAI: The trees are walking away. That seems like a bad sign.

ABRAHAM: We're almost there. I didn't take you for the fearful type.

MORDECAI: We're heading towards Crows Notch?

ABRAHAM: Yep. Right where you messed up my last plan. I've come up with a new way to fix this.

MORDECAI: You don't have a great track record for fixing things.

ABRAHAM: I do, actually. If I weren't working on this, thousands of people would have died already. I've brought that number down significantly. I planned for you to die that afternoon in my house, and if you had, this wouldn't be happening. Lessons learned, I suppose. I should've stuck around to finish what I started. At least you're here now.

Earthquake. Thunder. Wind picks up. Rain.

MORDECAI: Is it raining blood?

ABRAHAM: Yeah. Not human, though. I think frog. Definitely amphibian.

MORDECAI: How can you tell?

ABRAHAM: Smells awful. I spend a lot of time around blood. We're definitely running out of time. A rain of blood means we have maybe five hours at the most. Minutes at the least. We need to move quickly. Take this.

MORDECAI (STUDIO): Abraham pulled a few yellowed pages from his pocket. They'd been torn from an old book, and showed a sigil of some kind. He'd made a few edits

and corrections in red pen. A revised version was drawn on the back of the page. The paper barely held together in the roaring wind.

ABRAHAM: That's a binding sigil. We need to draw this around the pit. I've got it committed to memory. Take my notes and work on finishing the left side.

MORDECAI: This is what the sacrifices have been for? To keep Oonglok down?

ABRAHAM: No. There was a giant beneath the county. A long, long time ago. It's part of why magical activity is so concentrated in this area.

MORDECAI: He was a creature of magic.

ABRAHAM: He was the creature of magic. With the exception of his brother, I'm not sure much else comes close. Do you know what happens when a creature of magic dies, Mordecai?

MORDECAI: It decomposes. Like anything else. Right?

ABRAHAM: Right. More or less. You saw that dragon decompose. What happened, inside its rib cage?

MORDECAI: It radiated magic. Everything inside it was warped.

ABRAHAM: Exactly. They dissolve, really. It releases an astonishing amount of magical energy. I'd seen that before, in the aftermath of a number of similar creatures. Dragons, Leviathans, that Behemoth in Silas's place. It gave me an idea. There's so much I can do with sigil magic, but I couldn't escape its fundamental constraint: there's a give and a take. I have to offer something up to get something back. It didn't make any sense. If there was so much magic beneath our feet, why should we need to make sacrifices? Why should I have to give, when there's so much there to take?

MORDECAI: You wanted to channel the magical energy up from beneath the ground.

ABRAHAM: Exactly. I needed sigils to get it started, but once I'd started siphoning, it was easy to keep leaching power. I couldn't go through it fast enough. At first, that seemed great. Better than I could've hoped. But it turns out there are some problems. Magic keeps flowing, and it has nowhere to go, so it soaks into anything it encounters. When that happens, things become a bit chaotic.

MORDECAI: I saw that, in the dragon's ribcage. It warped everything down there.

ABRAHAM: Exactly. This place isn't exactly habitable, at the moment. And it seems like we've hardly made a dent in what's down there. So, I need to hold that power down.

MORDECAI: That's why you killed Abigail. To power a sigil.

ABRAHAM: To keep reality from falling apart. Like I said, I'm in the business of saving people.

MORDECAI: From a crisis you created.

ABRAHAM: I couldn't have known, Mordecai. No one could have. The place is just over this ridge. Tell your listeners what you see. I'll get started.

Swirling, confused noises

MORDECAI: What I--? Oh. Wow. Crow's Notch is...it's hollow. I'm at the top of the hill, and somehow, someone's carved out the entire interior. This hole must be fifty feet deep. There's a narrow walkway around the outside. At the bottom there's a cloud of...whoa. I don't feel so good.

Rumble. Roaring/Groaning noise.

ABRAHAM: Don't look straight at it. It's concentrated unreality. Not a good thing to focus on. I had the Flock dig the hole. They really are amazing, aren't they?

MORDECAI: Why?

ABRAHAM: We need a direct conduit to bind this thing. We could wait for an earthquake and try to catch somewhere where the magic is venting, but that's optimistic, and potentially very dangerous. Better to go to the source.

MORDECAI: Which seems totally safe. What are these carvings in the wall for?

ABRAHAM: Those aren't mine. They're mole tracks. The colony's been circling the area for a while. They're very excited. Keep telling me the "Lowest is Rising."

MORDECAI: That...explains a lot, actually.

ABRAHAM: We don't get along so well. Anyway, the sigil down there is mine. The big one is the binding spell, and the smaller ones are what I'm using to control the Flock.

Rumble. More roaring. Fire noises.

MORDECAI: Whoa!

ABRAHAM: Be careful. It tends to vent power. Fire's not so bad. This morning it sprouted tentacles for a few minutes. A few of my birds were eaten by a giant venus fly trap. I'll confess I did enjoy the half hour it spent quoting Cheers.

MORDECAI: The sitcom?

ABRAHAM: Yeah. It was profoundly odd.

MORDECAI: That means a lot, coming from yoWHOA!

Rumble. Roaring, Fire. Shifter speak. Cracking.

ABRAHAM: Careful! If you fall in, I honestly have no idea what would happen, but I'm almost positive it wouldn't be good. I've started the sigil down here. Take the page I gave you and complete it. I'm heading up to finish connecting the tree and the Beastarium. Yell when you finish the sigil down here, and I'll burn them.

Rumble. A few echoing and distorted lines from The Brain That Wouldn't Die. Various noises of increasing loudness occur throughout this segment.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D): That can't be a good sign. Hurry!

MORDECAI: Okay, listeners, I guess this is the moment of truth. Abraham has about half the sigil done. I'm climbing down to do the rest. Okay, we're at the bottom of the hole. Ugh. Abraham's right, I feel sick looking at this thing.

Rumble. Wax cylinder recordings layered over number station chatter and roaring/groaning. Splashing.

MORDECAI (CONT'D): Whoa. I think the giant just puked. No. Wait. This is saltwater. Okay. It's fine. Totally fine.

Sounds of birds.

ABRAHAM: Mordecai, what's happening down there?

MORDECAI: It vented power. Spat up some salt water. I'm still working on the sigil.

Sound of wind and water swirling and splashing

ABRAHAM: I've got the Beastarium and the tree linked in. I'll have my house done in a few moments. Hang in there!

MORDECAI: Shoot. The water's washing away what I've done so far. Abraham! No answer. Birds get louder.

MORDECAI: (CONT'D) Abraham, can you hear me?

ABRAHAM: The house is linked in. I'm burning it now. Finish the sigil!

MORDECAI: I can't! It's underwater!

ABRAHAM: What?

MORDECAI: The salt water washed what I did away. Give me a minute.

ABRAHAM: What about the Flock sigils?

MORDECAI: The Flock sigils...? Oh. They're gone too!

ABRAHAM: Fix them!

MORDECAI: I don't know how!

ABRAHAM: The fire's already started! We don't have time for this! I'm coming down there.

MORDECAI: What can we do? There's no time.

ABRAHAM: Run. I'm going to finish this. Don't drop your recorder.

MORDECAI: But--

ABRAHAM: Listen, Mordecai, do you hear them? They're maybe a few hundred yards away. If you don't run now, you won't have another chance.

MORDECAI: You're willing to die for this?

ABRAHAM: No, which is good, since I won't be dying. Now get out of here and let me fix this.

MORDECAI: Okay. Okay.

Flock descends, rumbling. He runs. In the distance, Abe screams. Running. Earthquake. Tape stops.

NED (STUDIO): Mordecai doesn't talk much on the tape after that. We can hear the Flock descend. Mordecai stays in the area long enough for the recorder to hear them eat Abraham. I'm not gonna play that on air. Then they turn towards Mordecai, and he bolts before they can really pick up his trail. Then we get twenty three minutes of Mordecai running through the woods. He gets in a bit of a fight with a pack of hoop snakes about halfway through, but makes it out pretty much okay. Anyway, towards the end of the tape, this happens.

Tape starts. Amid the loud noise, we hear an engine grinding and treads moving over the fallen trees. It grows louder, and finally keeps pace with Mordecai. The door opens.

DIVODIT: Are you alright, lad?!

MORDECAI: Uh, I'm okay.

NED: Mordecai, get in the van!

MORDECAI: Give me a hand?

Both "oof" as Ned pulls Mordecai into the van. It's much quieter inside.

DIVODIT: Sorry we're late. 229 is a mobius strip.

LUMILY: Are you okay? Anything that needs to be treated, I mean. This blood isn't yours, is it?

MORDECAI: Uh, no, I'm good. Abraham said it was frog blood.

DIVODIT: Smells like it.

MORDECAI: Of course.

NED: Where is Abraham?

MORDECAI: He's gone.

LUMILY: Where?

MORDECAI: The Flock, uh....he lost control. They ate him.

DIVODIT: Oh.

LUMILY: That's....

DIVODIT: Terrible.

MORDECAI: He said he caused all of this. He had a sigil that he said could fix it all, but it was destroyed.

NED: Do you know the sigil? Could you do it?

MORDECAI: I don't know. He burned the Beastarium, and his house, they're gone now. If he needed that much power, I don't know what else we could use.

LUMILY: What about the Phenomenometer? It could find anything we could use.

MORDECAI: The Flock destroyed it.

DIVODIT: Lumily built a portable model.

LUMILY: Here.

MORDECAI: Is this a Tamagotchi?

LUMILY: It used to be.

MORDECAI: Right. So, what's the plan?

NED: You've got the sigil, right? So we just need to use it. Why were you on Crow's Notch?

MORDECAI: Abraham said he needed to be somewhere with a direct conduit down to Oonglok.

NED: Wait, the giant myth thing?

MORDECAI: Uhhh....

Tape stops.

NED (STUDIO): Okay, you guys have heard all this before. Mordecai explained it all to us. He did an okay job. I'm gonna skip over it. Just trust me on this one.

Tape starts.

NED (ON SITE): Okay, we can handle this. We just need to find something to use. Lumily, do you have more than one of these things?

LUMILY: Yeah, I built one into a graphing calculator a while ago.

Rustling.

DIVODIT: Got it.

MORDECAI: Great. Should we split up and look for something we can use?

DIVODIT: You look like you've had quite a day. Nadezhda, why don't you take the wheel. You and Mordecai can scan from here. Lumily and I will suit up and search on foot.

NED: On it.

LUMILY: How much time do we have?

MORDECAI: Abraham said five hours at the most. As little as a few minutes. We might already be too late.

DIVODIT: Well, then we'd best be going.

MORDECAI: Be careful. It's kind of weird out there.

DIVODIT: Ah, nothing we can't handle.

LUMILY: We'll be careful.

NED: If we find anything, I'll call you guys.

LUMILY: And vice versa.

DIVODIT: Alright then.

Door to the van slides open.

NED: Wait, are you about to jump out? Let me slow down first!

DIVODIT: Bombs away!

NED: Are they okay?

MORDECAI: They look fine.

NED: Of course they are. I'm gonna drive back to the station?

MORDECAI: Sounds great. Hey, Ned, thanks for coming back, you know?

NED: You should've come with me in the first place. But of course I came back. I'm not gonna leave you out here alone.

MORDECAI: Thanks. IF you weren't driving, I'd hug you.

NED: Good thing I'm driving.

Thunk, tires screeching. They've hit something.

NED: What was that?

MORDECAI: I think we hit a lesser wyvern.

NED: Right. Let's go through the archives. See if there's anything around that might be big enough to stop this thing.

Tape clicks off.

NED (IN STUDIO): That's what we did. We looked through every letter Abigail and Mordecai had ever received, every call in to the station, all the books and maps we had piled on the station's shelves. Even a few things on Laserdisc. Bit by bit, Mordecai and I made a checklist of everything in the county that might work, provided that it was still there. The Kraken in the Kokosing, the mole colony, and a lot more. Abigail's field recorder. A sentient boulder off route three. Wendell's cabinet. Everything we could find. We divided it into two lists, and gave one to Lumily and Divodit over the phone. Phenomenometers in hand, we split up to search the county. Lumily still had a field recorder Abigail had given her.

Tape clicks. Splashing.

DIVODIT: Alright, Divodit here, testing item one on our list: the Kraken. Easy there, easy. We come in peace.

Splash, chitter.

LUMILY: You okay?

DIVODIT: Hold on!

Splashing CHITTER splash thunk

A faint beeping.

DIVODIT: Whoo. We're alright then. Easy there friend. Hm. The Phenomenometer's reading a bit slower than I'd like...

LUMILY: How would we even get a Kraken to Crow's Notch?

DIVODIT: That's...an excellent point. At least it was quick. Next stop.

Tape change.

BOULDER: You need me for what now?

NED: Potentially to stop an elder god's rotting corpse from rising and destroying us all.

MORDECAI: Hoop snakes are on our tail, Ned.

NED: I'm aware. Thanks for the update. Hold still, buddy.

BOULDER: Always do.

Very slow beeping.

MORDECAI: Alright, looks like the boulder's a no. We're out another thirty minutes.

NED: Two hours left.

Tape change.

LUMILY: Hey there! Listen, I need to scan you real quick. It's important.

MOLE: I need to get back to the festival of entropy.

DIVODIT: Of course. We won't be holding you up much longer.

Slow beep.

DIVODIT: Not even close.

LUMILY:How much longer is the list?

DIVODIT: Uh....I'm sure we'll think of something.

Tape change.

NED: We're testing the station tower.

Slow beep.

NED: More than I expected.

MORDECAI: Still not good.

NED: What else do we have left to check?

MORDECAI: Lumily and Divodit haven't checked the Beastiarium yet.

NED: Okay, what else?

MORDECAI: That's it.

NED: That's it? We've been out here for two hours, we've got no results, and no more ideas. We might be out of time. Any earthquake could be the last one.

Rumble.

MORDECAI: At least that wasn't it?

Tape change.

LUMILY: We're where the old Beastiarium was. It's pretty thoroughly trashed.

Beeping louder.

DIVODIT: Ah! Improvement. That's quite bright.

LUMILY: Definitely not enough, though. Nowhere near it.

DIVODIT: That's the end of the list.

LUMILY: There's gotta be something else we can do.

DIVODIT: Can you call Nadezhda?

LUMILY: Right.

Tape clicks. Phone ringing and a beep as it's answered.

NED: Hello?

LUMILY: Ned?

NED: Hey Lumily. We just finished our list. No dice.

LUMILY: That's not what we were hoping to hear.

NED: No luck there, either?

LUMILY: The Beastarium is giving off a bit of a signal, but not nearly enough. Maybe if we had the whole thing, we could do something, but apparently it's up in smoke. Don't mention that around Divodit, by the way. He's pretty torn up, even if he won't show it.

NED: Wait, do we know that it's up in smoke?

LUMILY: Sorry?

NED: Mordecai, you said it was raining frog blood, right?

MORDECAI: Yeah, it was.

NED: So maybe that put out the fires. There might still be pieces there that we could use.

LUMILY: It's possible.

Rumble.

NED: We've got twenty minutes at the most. Meet us at Crow's Notch.

Tape stops. Tape starts. Rain, wind, groaning.

MORDECAI: Ned, you were right, they're still here.

NED: Where's the Phenomenometer?

MORDECAI: Hold on.

Beeping. A little quick.

MORDECAI: That's better than what we've seen so far.

Beeping speeds up.

NED: Why did it do that?

MORDECAI: I'm not sure.

NED: You moved it towards your pocket.

MORDECAI: Oh. It's Abigail's field recorder.

NED: What?

MORDECAI: I found it this morning.

NED: Oh my god.

Van drives up

LUMILY: You were right!

DIVODIT: Everything's still here! A little charred and bloodsoaked, but that's par for the course. Look! It's the back panel of the old Phenomenometer!

Rumble rumble groan roar classical music shifter speak animal sounds

NED: Okay, we're living on borrowed time here. Mordecai, do you have the sigil he showed you?

MORDECAI: Yeah. Looks like the water dried up. I'm heading down to finish it. The links are already there. I'll tell you when to start the fire.

Rumble smash zombie sounds monkey squelch

NED: Good luck.

MORDECAI: I'll need it.

Mordecai starts climbing down the hole. The vague gurgle and hum of the miasma get louder as he approaches.

Okay, easy does it, one step at a--

Rumble.

Time. One. step. at. a. time...Most of it's still here. I just need to fill in a few blank areas, and....there.

Fire noises. Scream. Cracking.

MORDECAI: For those of you listening at home, don't worry. That wasn't me, it was Oonglok. I'm still doing okay, aside from a major headache.

NED: Mordecai, can you give us an update?

MORDECAI: I'm done! On my way up now! Get started!

Fire noises. A roar and rumble in response.

DIVODIT: Well, it certainly sounds like it's working.

LUMILY: Let's hope.

Fire. Roaring. Lion noises. Fire.

NED: Mordecai, don't burn to death! Grab my hand.

She lifts him up out of the hole with considerable effort.

Ugh! I swear to god, if we drove all the way out here to save you from the Flock and you died because you tripped and burned to death, I'd bring you back to life again just to yell at you.

MORDECAI: Aww, Ned. You really do care.

LUMILY: Hey, guys? It looks like the cloud's getting bigger.

DIVODIT: Rising, you might say.

NED: What?

MORDECAI: Oh no.

NED: We don't have enough power. What about Abigail's recorder? Her last tape?

MORDECAI: We can try it. Here..

NED: Here goes nothing.

She throws it into the pile. More groaning in response.

LUMILY: It's still going.

DIVODIT: Are we too late?

NED: No. No way. We can fix this. We're standing right here. We have to be able to fix this.

MORDECAI: Where can we get more power?

LUMILY: We found lots of small things along the way. Maybe if we combined them?

NED: There's no time to get them.

MORDECAI: Abraham said live sacrifices did better than objects.

NED: So?

MORDECAI: That's probably our best bet. He said something that could feel fear was the best sacrifice you could make.

NED:What are you trying to say, Mordecai?

DIVODIT: That cloud is getting rather tall, isn't it?

LUMILY: It looks like a person.

DIVODIT: I'm not sure we're standing in the best place, lads.

NED: Mordecai, what are you saying?

MORDECAI: I dunno. I'm really afraid to die.

NED: You think--

MORDECAI: I'd be a good sacrifice, yeah.

NED: No. No way. Unacceptable. No.

LUMILY: He might have a point.

DIVODIT: Is it worth it?

MORDECAI: We don't have a lot of time to decide.

LUMILY: It's definitely person shaped now.

MORDECAI: That seems like a problem.

DIVODIT: Oh my. Is it trying to walk?

NED: Mordecai, no. You can't. I won't let you. Let's just get back in the van and drive off. We can regroup and figure out something else later.

MORDECAI: Ned, this thing is going to destroy everything it touches. It's going to tear reality apart. We can't run away. There won't be anywhere to run to.

LUMILY: I think he's right, Ned.

DIVODIT: First footstep coming down, brace yourselves!

THUD. RUMBLE.

NED: What the hell is wrong with you!?

MORDECAI: I'm sorry. I think this is our last shot at this. Thanks for everything, you guys.

DIVODIT: Lad, think this through.

MORDECAI: I don't think we have time. You guys have saved my life before. I'm just, y'know, returning the favor.

NED: I hate you.

MORDECAI: I know. Take this.

Tape stops.

NED (STUDIO): So. Mordecai handed me his field recorder. Looked towards Oonglok. He took a deep breath, ran towards the top of the hill, and jumped. For a second, not much seemed to happen. Everything just kind of sat still. I held my breath. The wind stopped. We all waited. Then the cloud just collapsed. No fanfare, no loud noise, no sign that said we'd done something right. It just fell back into the earth, and it took Mordecai with it. I spent the last few days getting this edited together. It was slow going. Kind of tough listening through all this at the moment, you know? But, uh, there you go. That's how Mordecai saved us from an elder god. And Abigail did too, I guess. And Riddle Toad. And Lumily and Divodit. And a lot of people. We've got a lot of people to thank. As far as the Magical History of Knox County goes, I guess this is a pretty important entry. Anyway, thanks for listening. Hopefully we'll be back on the air soon.

Tape clicks off.

NED: Good evening Knox County. This is Ned Jones filling in temporarily until we can find a new host. A few updates: Silas Winter's trial was today. He was acquitted on all counts. Again. Lumily and Divodit have largely rebuilt the Beastiarium, and are now

once again able to house any magical creatures you may encounter. Feel free to give them a call.

Tape clicks off.

NED: Hey there, listeners. Ned Jones here. Still. We're having a little trouble finding someone to fill Mordecai's shoes, so no full show this week. Just a quick note, though: if any of you have seen a moose with three antlers, Wendell requests that you contact the Sleeping Giant as soon as possible. It escaped the cabinet earlier this week. Wendell says to tell listeners to be careful, because it can be very persuasive.

Tape clicks off.

NED: Hey guys. Still no luck finding a new host. I hate to say this, but it might be time to shut the show down. We had a good run. Ish.

Tape clicks off.

NED: Alright. Time to bite the bullet. We were very, very lucky to have Abigail to run this show, and just as lucky to have Mordecai pick up where she left off. I don't think we're gonna find anyone else like that. Keeping the show going is, uh....well, you can figure it out. So, basically, this is our last broadcast. This is Ned Jones, signing off.

The phone rings.

Or not. Hello?

WENDELL (ON PHONE): Ned! This is Wendell. Listen, there's someone here who wants to talk to you.

NED: Okay, Wendell, I've spoken with the moose. I'm really profoundly uninterested.

WENDELL: Oh, hush, Sylvester ain't even here.

NED: You named it?

WENDELL: He chose his own name. That's not the point. Here, you talk to her.

MORDECAI (ON PHONE): Ned?

NED: Mordecai? You're alive!

MORDECAI: Uh, yeah? I guess Oonglok's chest dumps out into Wendell's cabinet. Who knew? How long was I away?

NED: Three months.

MORDECAI: What!?

NED: Yeah. It sucked. Get back to the station.

MORDECAI: I'm on my way. Wendell, can you give me a lift?

WENDELL: Sylvester'll take ya.

MORDECAI: Ned, I might be a while.

NED: Oh my--I'm on my way. Uh, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks for listening. We'll be back next week with the Magical History of Knox County.

Theme plays.