

# the Magical History of Knox County

## Episode Seven

**MORDECAI:** Good Evening, Everyone. My name is Mordecai Dogwood and (heh) welcome to the Magical History of Knox County. Well folks, I...I uh don't know how many people are listening to this but for those of you who can hear me...stay indoors. For those who missed it, the world is pretty much ending. Everyone left is working overtime to solve this but um pretty much everyone left is me. I...I guess I'll explain. As you are all aware, our previous show host Ms. Abigail Redwine disappeared two and half months ago. One week ago, we heard from the fugitive, Abraham Young, who confessed to murdering her. This morning, her friends gathered to remember her life.

*Tape starts. Outdoor ambience.*

**MORDECAI:** I'm at the memorial. We are having it on the side of the Kokosing and um there is only a few of us here. Me, Ned, Riddle Toad, Lumily, Divodit, Carl and Wendell. Someone decided that Riddle Toad should say something and he's been talking for.... quite a while now.

**NED:** Quiet, Mordecai!

**MORDECAI (V/O):** I looked over at Ned as tears trickled down her face. She had Snicker's collar twisted fiercely in her hands. Snickers, her pet who she sacrificed so I could live. After Riddle Toad's eulogy, Lumily and Divodit set an ever-blooming orchid on the river. We watched it float away, a fiery orange and purple spot on the water. We watched it until it went around a turn in the river. Then we trooped back up to the cars.

*Rumble.*

**MORDECAI:** I don't know if the field recorder picked that up but we've been getting a lot of earthquakes in the past few days. We don't know what's causing them. I guess it can't be good. Everyone's worried. The police are still at a loss about Abraham's location or why he-

*Someone grabs the recorder.*

**MORDECAI:** Hey! Give that back, Ned!

**NED:** How dare you. You record Abigail's eulogy, you criticize the ceremony and now we're walking away and you're already talking about how the world is ending. I DON'T NEED THIS.

*Ned throws the recorder to the ground and walks away.*

**MORDECAI:** Well...yeah. This still seems to be working. The earthquakes seem to be correlated in an increase in severe weather and magical creature attacks. I had also heard about two devastating tornadoes in the last week. Ten Flock attacks and patches of wood that were suddenly catching fire. Of course, I wasn't thinking about this while watching Ned walk away. I was thinking about how bad a friend I was. Someone put a hand on my shoulder.

**DIVODIT:** Don't feel too bad, Mordecai. It's not your fault.

**LUMILY:** We're all hurting.

**MORDECAI:** Yeah.

**LUMILY:** Have you found anything? About the earthquakes?

**MORDECAI:** Our investigation has hit a wall.

**DIVODIT:** Well, if you need a hand in finding anything out, let us know. We're worried.

**LUMILY:** He's worried, I'm not.

**DIVODIT:** Don't believe her. See you.

*Footsteps of Lumily and Divodit walking away.*

**WENDELL:** Excuse me, young man.

**MORDECAI:** Oh! Uh, hi Wendell.

**WENDELL:** Hello. Well, listen-could you swing by the Giant at some point today?

**MORDECAI:** Probably. What's up?

**WENDELL:** Oh, nothing much. It's' just my cabinet. It's gone funny.

**MORDECAI:** Really? How so?

**WENDELL:** Well, it's making noises. Getting louder and I'm seeing lights flickering out of it, but nothings come out for more than a week, which is unusual. I've locked it up, but I'd like some fresh eyes to take a look.

**MORDECAI:** Um...sure. I'll be over later.

**WENDELL:** Thank you.

*Mordecai walks away. A car door opens and closes.*

**MORDECAI:** Hey.

**NED:** Hey.

*A car engine starts up followed by the sound of a car driving away.*

**MORDECAI:** Ned-I...er...I really have to apologi-

**NED:** Shut up. (beat) It's just hard, y'know? I've been hoping for so long.

**MORDECAI:** Yeah.

**NED:** Abigail. Then Snickers. I thought, today--I thought that might be the end. That we'd move on.

**MORDECAI:** Yeah.

**NED:** But I guess moving on doesn't happen like that.

**MORDECAI:** Yeah. I know. We'll fix this, Ned.

**NED:** Right.

**MORDECAI:** No, I'm serious. We're reporters, things are going to pieces and we're going to find out why...AND how Abigail's connected. Whatever it takes. However-

*Cellphone ringing.*

**MORDECAI:** Sorry.

*A small pip as Mordecai pushes the answer button.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello?

**ABRAHAM:** That toad certainly can talk, can't he? Touching eulogy. And everyone looked sincere too. Even you, Mordecai, while you were trying to switch tapes. (beat) I was wondering if you realize how much people hate having to watch what they say around you because you are always recording-

**MORDECAI:** I have absolutely nothing to say to you.

**ABRAHAM:** Don't lie to me, Mordecai.

**MORDECAI:** What do you want?

**ABRAHAM:** I wanted to see if you had figured it out yet. The quakes are getting worse.

**MORDECAI:** This is all you, isn't it?

**ABRAHAM:** So, you haven't figured it out. Fine. In that case, here's a scoop for you. At five o'clock this evening, everyone will see what my work has been for. You can report on our salvation. As it happens. Watch closely.

**MORDECAI:** What are you trying to do? Tear the whole county apart?

**ABRAHAM:** When I'm done, Mordecai, you'll realize that what I'm doing is for you. For everyone. But for what comes next, I apologize.

*Dial tone.*

**NED:** What did he want?

**MORDECAI:** Floor it. We have eight hours to stop Abraham.

*Sound of car driving off. Cue Main Theme music. New tape.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello, to all listeners, Ned and I have been working overtime to try to work out what Abraham is planning. We started by exploring all the magical literature we had collected, but we found nothing that could cause county wide earthquakes. Or "Flock" attacks. The closest thing we could find was in a spell book belonging to Abraham himself. I confiscated it from the ruins of his house two weeks ago.

**NED:** He means he stole it.

**MORDECAI:** I did not! I borrowed it from his house after he tried to serial-kill me. Anyway, the Flock was mentioned in a mind control sigil. The note read: "Will allow, force or command a revelation of information in a ten to fifteen second burst. Will only work with strong wills. If you pass twenty seconds you will begin hemorrhaging out of your eyeballs. Never use on a hive mind (honeybees, the Flock or ants). They will consume you."

**NED:** Sooo basically he has no idea how Abraham can control the Flock.

**MORDECAI:** We'll find out.

**NED:** Maybe.

**MORDECAI:** Definitely.

*Radio station phone rings.*

**MORDECAI:** It's him. Don't pick up.

*Phone continues ringing and voice mail activates.*

**NED (Pre-Recorded Message):** This is the Magical History of Knox County. Speak. Maybe we'll respond. Someday.

*The machine beeps. A house collapses on the other end of the line. Dial tone.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello? Hello?! If you can hear me, hide under a table or something! Hello?!

*Mordecai puts the phone back. The radio station phone begins ringing again and Mordecai picks it up immediately.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello? If you can hear me, get under a table.

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I have no intention of hiding, Chronicler.

**MORDECAI:** Oh! It's you. Um someone else might be on the other line.

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I have no time for manners, Chronicler. As per our earlier agreement, I will be at the station in five minutes.

**MORDECAI:** Fine.

*Mordecai puts the station phone back.*

**NED:** You want to interview Riddle Toad?

**MORDECAI:** I talked to him before the ceremony this morning. I made him promise to do an interview. He knows Abraham, so I thought he might be able to explain a few things.

*Tape stops.*

**MORDECAI:** Five minutes later, Riddle Toad was taking up most of the coffee table. Watching me with those enormous eyes. But something about him was tired. As much as a toad can look tired.

*Tape starts.*

**MORDECAI:** Right. Hello to all listeners, uh continuing our investigations of Abraham we are talking to the one person who seems to know him: The Riddle Toad. He's joined us in the station today, so Riddle Toad, you've known Abraham for how long?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** A long time in the life of a human.

**MORDECAI:** And how did you meet?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I'd rather not say.

**MORDECAI:** Okay, then. Who is he?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** A virtuoso of magic. He invented half the spells in the book you stole. When I knew him, he solved people's problems.

**MORDECAI:** How so?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** He had quite a range. If one was say annoyed with one's neighbors he had a concealing spell to make the neighbors invisible from your front porch. Ulcers healed, poor crops fixed, free cable. Virtually unlimited power at your fingertips. He could do almost anything. As long as you were all right with the cost.

**MORDECAI:** He was expensive?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** No. The cost of the magic. It always has a price. But he was always willing to pay. Or make someone else pay. Until the end. The last time we spoke, he was in deep despair. Much has changed since.

**NED:** What do you think he's been doing?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I don't know.

**NED:** I don't believe that.

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I've been trying to stop him.

**MORDECAI:** What is he planning, Toad?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** All I can tell you is that at the very foundation of this county, in the deeps beneath the stone something is waking. I tried stopping Abraham a long time ago, before you arrived, Chronicler. We quarreled and some things were done that cannot be taken back. I made a mistake. He is searching for me and he is close. But I shall slip past him yet.

**NED:** So, you're afraid of him! Tell us what he is doing and we'll stop him.

**RIDDLE TOAD:** It is not that simple, station-lady-who-isn't-Abigail! When I learned the entirety of Abraham's purpose it forced me to question everything. I fear his failure almost as much as I fear his success.

**NED:** Why can't you just tell us plainly what's going on?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I'm a Riddle Toad. I don't do plain. All I can tell you is that as unspeakable as it is, his motives are good. I would advise you to cease chasing him. Let him continue, at least for today.

**MORDECAI:** You realize he will probably kill people if we do that.

**RIDDLE TOAD:** Yes.

**MORDECAI:** Then why-

**RIDDLE TOAD:** Don't ask me, Chronicler! There are some truths too dark for even public radio!

**NED:** I think you're working with him.

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I beg your pardon?

**NED:** I think you're working with Abraham!

**MORDECAI:** Ned-

**NED:** Shut up! You said some things were done that could not be taken back. You knew what Abraham was doing. You knew that Abigail was-oh my god, maybe you were there when it happened! Maybe you did it!

**RIDDLE TOAD:** I did not! Although I did make a terrible mistake that day. And now I must resume preparations for Ragnarok. But before I leave here is a final tidbit of advice: Converse with the worms.

**MORDECAI:** What???

**RIDDLE TOAD:** In the basement of the Sleeping Giant.

**MORDECAI:** Oh.

**NED:** Why? What do they know?

**RIDDLE TOAD:** They'll be able to tell you more. Now, if you excuse me I have an army to raise.

**NED:** We still have questions!

**RIDDLE TOAD:** And I have an apocalypse to prepare for. Until we meet again.

**NED:** You're not going anywhere!

**RIDDLE TOAD:** Incorrect, as usual.

*Riddle Toad croaks and bounces around the station, breaking glass.*

**MORDECAI:** WOAHH! Don't-Ow!

**NED:** The equipment box! Put him in!

*Breaking noises cease.*

**RIDDLE TOAD:** Let me out, you plodding uncultured bipeds!

**MORDECAI:** I can't believe this! You just attacked an interviewee!

**NED:** We just attacked an interviewee, Mordecai.

**MORDECAI:** Keep him in there until I get back.

**NED:** Where are you going?

**MORDECAI:** To interview some worms.

*Tape ends.*

**MORDECAI(V/O):** So, I drove to the Sleeping Giant to interview Carl and his library.

*Tape starts.*

**MORDECAI:** Ok. So, I've just arrived at the Sleeping Giant. It looks like it's holding up well. A few cracks in the wall, a broken window-

*Rumble. Glass breaks.*

**MORDECAI:** Two broken windows.

*Shop door opens. A bell rings.*

**MORDECAI:** I'm inside. Looks normal. Maybe a little more cluttered than I left it. But the mix of racks and Disney paraphernalia is still there, so I guess that the world's still standing. Oh! And a crate of hairy mugs in the shape of Bigfoot. They have the words "I'm a believer" stamped on them. I should get one for Ned on the way out. Oh, uh heading downstairs.

*Sounds of footsteps as Mordecai descends the stairs.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello? Helloooooo?

**CARL:** Hello.

**MORDECAI:** AH JEEZ!!!

**CARL:** Sorry I was just dusting the upper shelves. You know in this place most of the dust is made of books, little pieces of 'em. You're breathing a library. And worm feces. The stuff of life!

**MORDECAI:** Right. Uh great. Carl, I need your help.

**CARL:** What do ya need?

**MORDECAI:** Information.

**CARL:** If it's written down, the worms got it.

**MORDECAI:** Um, okay. I need to know what's causing Flock attacks and earthquakes. If it helps, I think it's being caused by Abraham Young.

**CARL:** Let's see if the worms agree. Write it down on a piece of paper and I'll shove it in that old encyclopedia there.

*The scratching of a pencil as Mordecai writes words down on paper.*

**MORDECAI:** For listeners who may not be familiar with the library, Carl keeps a giant collection of old texts down here, uh pretty much all magical. Every book is infested with bookworms, right?

**CARL:** Yeah, you got the gist. The worms work as a hive mind, processing and organizing the texts that they consume.

*Papers rustling and books being moved as the worms do their magic.*

**CARL:** And let's see what they want to show us.

*Pages being turned.*

**CARL:** "Magical Megafauna: Real and Imagined."

**MORDECAI:** Huh. The front page is a map of Knox County. I think someone's doodled someone lying on top of the county.

**CARL:** Or it could be underneath?

*Ringing background noises. Scuttling noises as the bookworms move around.*

**MORDECAI:** Okay, they want me to read from this page apparently. "And the great Farglinkle took yon abandoned sheep's jawbone and with majestic strength pummeled hell out of his unruly brother, who the sages named Oonglock. His bones made the ground...uh ground? Ok, I think I'm seeing a pattern.

*Ringing background noises. Scuttling noises as the bookworms move around.*

**MORDECAI:** Under "Magical Megafauna", "Elder Gods": a beast of untold power, whose wakefulness reaps utter destruction. Okay, so first giants and now elder gods. Buried beneath the county? There's an elder god buried beneath the county and its waking?

**CARL:** They don't do yes or no answers.

*Sound of pencil on paper.*

**MORDECAI (As he writes):** What...books....was...Abraham....looking...at...last...time..he ...was....here?

*Silence.*

**CARL:** That's strange. The worms know Abraham, he came in last year. The worms don't like him, they say he doesn't "belong" in this universe anymore.

*Weird magical noises. Creaking.*

**CARL:** What?

**MORDECAI:** What is it?

**CARL:** They're frightened. Why are they frightened? That's not them. The worms don't sound like that!

**MORDECAI:** What is it? Some sort of spell? A demon?

*Whooshing noise.*

**ABRAHAM (Magical Recording, Distorted):** Abigail, I know what you are looking for. Please, stop. I'm sorry. The library is closed.

**CARL:** Abraham, if you-urgh!

**Mordecai (V/O):** Books started raining from the shelves. Spell books opening to dark runes scrawled on the pages. Geographies containing maps of destroyed buildings made of skin. Books made of glass. They were glowing as they fell and when they hit the ground they ignited. In seconds, the library was burning. I looked up and another volume hit me in the face.

**MORDECAI:** Argh!

**CARL:** It's collapsing! No. NO!

**MORDECAI:** Out! Get out! Come on, Carl!

**CARL:** No!

**ABRAHAM (Magic Recording, Distorted):** I'm sorry.

*A variety of crashing sounds as the entire library collapses.*

**MORDECAI:** Carl?! Carl, are you, alright?

**CARL:** Oh my god! It caved in.

**MORDECAI:** What does that mean?

**CARL:** I can't...(sigh) The poor, poor things.

**MORDECAI:** Oh. Carl, I'm so sorry.

**CARL:** (sigh) That's all right. Every book dies...eventually. I hope you got what you wanted. No one will be asking the worms any questions for a long, long time.

**MORDECAI:** Abraham knew I would come. He set that curse for us.

**CARL:** Yeah.

**MORDECAI (V/O):** As I was walking out the front door, I remember the direction the worms had pointed me in. Towards the Rose Forest, near the Romance Tree. I figured that would be the best place to look for clues. On my way out, I spotted Wendell again. She was busy boarding up the magical cabinet that gave the Sleeping Giant its wares.

**WENDELL:** Oh! Young man, could I get ya to take a look at my cabinet? I think it's getting angry.

*Rymble. Various things in the shop break.*

**MORDECAI:** Hold on. Yeah, not surprising, just board it up. Anything with magical perception will know it's in trouble right now.

**WENDELL:** What does that mean?

**MORDECAI:** It means the world is ending.

**WENDELL:** Oh. ...What?

*A new tape starts.*

**NED:** Um, hi listeners. This is Ned Jones. I've just dug out one of Abigail's old recorders. Mordecai's still at the Giant. It's pretty quiet here. The toad quieted down....so yeah. I'm trying to find anything in Abigail's old notes about earthquakes. I found a couple of seismometer readings that she took in January. But I can't find the tape that corresponds with them.

*Station phone rings.*

**NED:** The phone's been ringing all morning. People are panicking. But there's nothing useful I can tell anyone, so I've made a new voicemail. I'm sure they'll sort it out. The city council called a few minutes ago to say that they were holding evacuations.

**NED (Voicemail):** Hello, you've reached the Magical History of Knox County. Basically, the world might be ending, so we suggest you get out. Live long and prosper...or something.

**LUMILY:** Ned, we know you're there. Pick up, now.

*Ned picks up.*

**NED:** What's up?

**LUMILY:** We called to check in. We're evacuating the Beastiarium and we're wondering what your plan is.

**NED:** You're leaving?

**LUMILY:** Temporarily. We have a backup site in Kentucky.

**DIVODIT (far from phone):** Explain that it's less vulnerable to earthquakes!

**LUMILY:** Are you guys packing?

**NED:** Not yet. Mordecai wants to figure this out.

**LUMILY:** Ok. If it gets too unsafe, pull him out.

**NED:** I'm not sure he'll listen.

**LUMILY:** He listens to you. If you need help, call us. We'll be in until later today.

*Sound of magical creature snarling.*

**DIVODIT:** That's one two-ton mass of angry beastie, I'm telling you. Sit!

*Creature roars and lunges.*

**LUMILY:** Talk soon!

*Call ends. Riddle Toad croaks.*

**NED:** Will you shut up? I'm trying to think!

*New tape begins.*

**MORDECAI (V/O):** As soon as I stepped out of the Sleeping Giant, I realized I would need help for the next part. Even if I didn't die, Ned would kill me if she found out I'd gone into the forest alone. So, I called in a different expert.

*Dialing. Ringing. Pick up.*

**KIP:** Hello, Scoop.

**MORDECAI:** Hey, Kip.

**MARIAN:** Hello, Mordecai.

**MORDECAI:** Umm. Hello, Marian.

**KIP:** I got this new speaker phone. Not sure how to use the normal phone part.

**MORDECAI:** Right. Okay, Kip. I need a favor.

**KIP:** What do ya need, Scoop?

**MORDECAI:** I need a guide. A bunch of worms told me to look for clues in the Rose Forest, near the Romance Tree.

**KIP:** Um, Scoop, I'm kinda busy dealing with evacuations and I don't-

**MORDECAI:** You know the earthquakes we're getting?

**KIP:** Um, well, yes.

**MORDECAI:** I know it sounds crazy, but I think the world might be ending in the next three hours.

**MARIAN:** Wow, you really are starting to sound like the host of this show.

**KIP:** Well....um...

**MARIAN:** It's all right, Kip. Go help Mordecai, it's way more important than the teen romance shelf anyway.

*Tape ends.*

**MORDECAI (V/O):** As I pulled up to the public library, I saw Kip and Marian outside. The library had a couple of holes in the roof and one of the walls looked distinctly saggy. Kip was directing a line of kids from the school onto one bus. Marian indexed books and gave one to each student

to carry. Despite everything, both of them looked very happy. Kip wasn't wearing his park ranger uniform but he'd put on his service belt and revolver. Normal clothes made him look even taller.

*Car door opens and closes.*

**KIP:** Ok, that's all. You, you and you go get the rest of the rare books and put them under the tarp, plastic bags, whatever you can find.

**MORDECAI:** Kip.

**MARIAN:** Hi, Mordecai.

**KIP:** One second, Scoop. (to walkie talkie) Okay, listen up everyone. The rest of the buses go to the center of town and get as many people as you can in the next twenty minutes. The priorities are the hospitals and the high schools. Get everyone out of there now. You got that? (to Mordecai and Marian) Okay, we're good.

**MARIAN:** Be safe.

**MORDECAI (V/O):** Kip gave her a kiss, stroked her cheek and stepped into my car. Marian waved and I saw an unusual flash of gold in her hand. I pointed at her new ring.

**MORDECAI:** Is that-?

**MARIAN:** Yeah, he asked me while we were hiding under the table. Said something about thinking we were gonna die and that he didn't want to forget-

**KIP:** We're thinking of having the ceremony sometime in August. Will ya come?

**MORDECAI:** Wow. Yeah, absolutely. Congratulations. Both of you.

*Kip and Mordecai get in a car.*

**MORDECAI:** Wow. Congratulations, Kip.

*Engine starts,*

**KIP:** Yeah. I was gonna ask her tonight, but you called and I panicked.

**MORDECAI:** Oh! Sorry.

**KIP:** No worries. It worked. So...why the Rhodes Forest?

**MORDECAI:** The worms told me to look in there for clues.

**KIP:** Anything more specific?

**MORDECAI:** Oh. Uh well it has something to do with the world ending and something about an elder god rising. We're looking for something called the Whispering Wood.

**KIP:** That sounds complicated. But if that name is anything like real life, I know where to go.

*Car drives off.*

**MORDECAI (V/O):** We drove to the forest in silence. On the way there I saw a cloud of dark birds swirling over a farm in the distance. The cloud descended and the farm disappeared. I hoped no one was home. The Flock was even bigger than I remembered, they blotted out the sun. Eventually we pulled up to the old parking lot. Kip and I stepped out. After walking a short distance, Kip turned right taking a different path than the one leading to the Romance Tree. I hurried to keep up.

*Mordecai's phone rings.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello?

**NED:** Where are you, Mordecai?

**MORDECAI:** Um, the Rhodes Forest.

**NED:** Why?

**MORDECAI:** Well the worms think there might be a clue here by the Romance Tree. Something to do with an elder god or something. But they couldn't give me the details.

**NED:** Ok. Mordecai, forget about it. Head back to the station.

**MORDECAI:** No. What? Why?

**NED:** We're getting news of massive earthquakes everywhere. Part of Mt. Vernon just collapsed and there's millions of more birds spreading into the county. This has got to be part of Abraham's plan.

**MORDECAI:** I dunno, Ned. That doesn't sound quite right. The Flock's a hive mind not an Elder god.

**NED:** That's a question of interpretation. Let's help with evacuation, grab what we can from the station and clear out, get somewhere safe.

**MORDECAI:** If Abraham wins, there won't be anyplace safe left! I need to know what's going on. I think we can still stop him.

**NED:** It's not our job to stop him.

**MORDECAI:** Right, but if we find out how, someone can.

**NED:** It's not going to be worth it if you're dead.

**MORDECAI:** I'll be fine. I'll see you soon, Ned.

*Beep.*

**MORDECAI:** Okay. So, Kip, where are we going?

**KIP:** Into the deepest part of this forest. We don't even let hikers go this way.

**MORDECAI:** Why not?

**KIP:** They never told me. (beat) But I do know the trees whisper and I figure if anyone knows what's going on in this county, it's the trees.

**MORDECAI:** So, we're going to the center of the forest?

**KIP:** Not quite. This trail does lead right through the center of this forest and on into the dark. But I reckon when we get to the willow clearing, that'll be far enough for today.

**MORDECAI:** The willow clearing?

**KIP:** Yep. It's a bunch of old weeping willows that the trail leads through. I came down this way once, when I was just a little kid. I never came back.

**MORDECAI:** Why not? (beat) Ohhhhh ok. We're in a large circle of weeping willows. Enormous weeping willows. The path passes right through the clearing and goes on into the forest. That path looks very dark. The sun is lighting up the clearing but doesn't seem to have any effect on the woods beyond. That path goes a short way into the forest, turns and then looks like it just goes black. Each of the trees in the clearing seem to have...well, they look like faces. Made by way of the bark folds. Those faces don't look happy.

**KIP:** Of course they aren't. Don't you see the vines? Bittersweet. Terrible for the trees.

**PHOOKA:** And so, the evil spreads, Darkness closing in on all sides. Twilight is upon us all.

**MORDECAI (V/O):** I looked up and saw a peculiar creature sitting in the branches. It had a face that was some hybrid of human and goat with a furry body. The fur seamlessly gave way to a series of branches and twigs. Arranged in a lattice to create a skeleton of arms and legs. It was like looking at a see through body where the muscles and tendons were visible. They twitched and bent as the creature moved.

**MORDECAI:** Um, hello? My name's Mordecai Dogwood and I'm with the Magical History-

**PHOOKA:** The wood knows this one, both of them.

**MORDECAI:** The Wood?

**PHOOKA:** In whose presence, you now stand.

**MORDECAI:** And you are?

**PHOOKA:** The interpreter. I am the voice in the wood, the sound of the night, the wind in the leaves, I am the shadows between moonbeams. I am....PHOOKA.

**MORDECAI:** Nice to meet you. Well, um, Ms. Phooka, I came here because the worms in the basement of the Sleeping Giant thought I might be able to find answers here. Um, maybe that sounds weird. You see, there's this shop in town and in its basement, is a magical library-

**PHOOKA:** This we know. You have come searching for the one consumed by the darkness and the reason for his despair.

**MORDECAI:** Abraham.

**PHOOKA:** Do not utter his name here. Yes, he is known to us. As is his purpose.

**MORDECAI:** Can you tell me what he's going to do?

**PHOOKA:** No.

**MORDECAI:** Why not?

**PHOOKA:** Everything has a price.

**MORDECAI:** Name it.

**PHOOKA:** If you would trade your firstborn-

**MORDECAI:** Nope. Nuh-uh. No way.

**PHOOKA:** Deep in the forest, there grows a rare-

**MORDECAI:** We don't have time! Look if Abraham wins, this forest will probably be destroyed. I'm doing this in everyone's interest. Please, help me.

**PHOOKA:** Mortals cannot simply walk in here, expecting information for free. The last one that came for such access-

*The trees whisper. "Abigail."*

**MORDECAI:** She died. Don't you want to bring her killer to justice?

**PHOOKA:** We do not deal in the balance of the world. She rests in a place so dark. So dark, so dark and we cannot help her, even if we wanted to.

**MORDECAI (V/O):** The Phooka pointed down the darkened path into the deep forest. The dark path looked even eerier if possible.

**PHOOKA:** She came to us for answers. She received them. Then she followed the lantern light into the heart of the wood and night.

*Mordecai's phone rings.*

**MORDECAI:** Mind if I get that?

**PHOOKA:** Not at all. How did you get service in here?

**MORDECAI:** Excuse us for a minute. Kip?

*Mordecai answers the phone.*

**NED:** Mordecai, help!

**MORDECAI:** Ned!? Where are you?

**NED:** I'm in the radio booth closet.

**MORDECAI:** And why are you in there?

**NED:** There's someone in the station with me, Mordecai. I heard them break in.

**MORDECAI:** Ok, Ned. Stay calm. I'll call the police.

**NED:** I already did it.

**MORDECAI:** Oh.

**NED:** Shut up. You're a terrible first responder.

**MORDECAI:** So, what do you want from me?

**NED:** I dunno. I figured you could talk me through-

*Sounds of objects breaking and being moved by the intruder.*

**NED:** He's here. I gotta go.

**MORDECAI:** Ned, wait!

*Ned ends the call.*

**MORDECAI:** Oh no...

*New tape.*

**NED:** This is Ned Jones. Um, I've just gotten off the phone with Mordecai. I'm in the radio station and there's an intruder in here. I'm hiding in a closet and I'm recording whatever comes next. Mordecai, if you're listening to this later...I-

*Footsteps outside the closet.*

**NED:** He's here!

**ABRAHAM:** Ned? Nadezhda? I know you're in here. I don't wanna hurt you. Can you just come out so we can talk? (beat) Fine. You can't hide forever. Let's see what's behind door number one.

*Footsteps. The closet door opens. A scuffle.*

**ABRAHAM:** Sit DOWN! Sit down. We're going to have a conversation, Ned. I'm not here to fight you. Is that a field recorder? Perfect. It's good that you're recording this. You're like a little Abigail.

**NED:** Don't say her name.

**ABRAHAM:** She was my best friend, Ned. I worked with her for years. I have every right to say her name.

**NED:** Shut up!

**ABRAHAM:** See, this is what I'm trying to explain to you. Mordecai doesn't get it. I don't he ever will. He's new here. He's an idealist. He's not someone who's going to make hard choices. He doesn't want to let me make them, either. I killed Abigail, but it wasn't murder. It was a sacrifice.

It was something I had to do for the greater good. I know you...cared for her. Very much. You and I are alike, in that respect.

**NED:** Don't you dare-

**ABRAHAM:** You can say that as much as you want. The point stands. I get the sense you and Mordecai keep fighting me every step of the way because you're scared. You're afraid that I'm right. You're afraid to admit that we live in an imperfect world, and that sometimes we must make sacrifices for the greater good. I think Abigail understood that, in the end. She was brilliant. I think she would have forgiven me.

**NED:** So says her murderer.

**ABRAHAM:** A week ago you killed your pet. It was a friend to you. It trusted you. It needed you to survive. And you killed it, because it was necessary. It was disgusting and repugnant and cruel, and it was the right thing to do. And don't think that's the only blood on your hands. I didn't want to hurt Abigail. I kept hoping something would stop me. I kept hoping that you would pull her off my path. I could've staved off the apocalypse for months, maybe years, killing animals, burning artifacts, sacrificing people no one would miss. But Abigail was smart. She'd find out what I was doing, and she would stop me. I hoped that you would stop her before it got to that point. You cared about her, Ned. I thought you would pull her away from danger. I waited for you to swoop in at the last minute and distract her, re-direct her, tell her anything that might help me shake her off, even for one more day. Even for a few hours. But you didn't. You just sat, and waited to be told what to do. After a week, I realized you couldn't save anyone. Except maybe yourself.

**NED:** One of the people in this room killed her and it wasn't me.

**ABRAHAM:** What if I told you, Ned, that she knew you had feelings for her? She thought you were sweet, and a little sad. And she laughed at you when I pointed it out to her. Maybe you let her die. Maybe the one thing you couldn't stand was her pity.

*Sounds of Ned and Abraham struggling.*

**NED:** She would never-

**ABRAHAM:** SIT DOWN!

*A loud thump as Ned hits the ground/a chair.*

**ABRAHAM:** I think we're done here. Oh, and you've locked Riddle Toad in a box. Thanks. That actually makes this a lot easier.

**NED:** What do you want with the Riddle Toad?

*Frog noises as Abraham pulls Riddle Toad out of the box.*

**ABRAHAM:** He's my backup plan, in case plan A fails. I don't think it will, but in my experience, safeguards tend to keep the world spinning.

**NED:** Let him go!!

*Riddle Toad gasping.*

**ABRAHAM:** Hey, Riddle.

**RIDDLE TOAD:** The Chronicler! I have to tell the Chronicler--

*Wet crunch. Riddle Toad gasping for air.*

**ABRAHAM:** No, you don't. I'm sorry. I know you hate me, Ned. I know you have no desire to help me. But I'm tired. I'm tired of making the hard choices alone. One more person needs to die today. Someone who will create ripples. I'm going to let you choose who it is. Our rising star, the heroic Mordecai, or the very last Riddle Toad. The loneliest creature in the world.

**NED:** I won't.

**ABRAHAM:** This isn't about what you won't do. Not anymore. I'm tired of making this decision and it's time you stepped up to the plate. How about this? If I hear you speak in the next ten seconds, the Toad will die. If you stay silent, I'll take Mordecai. Your call.

**NED (whispered):** Damn you.

**ABRAHAM:** Good choice. I'm going to need Mordecai later. I really hate to do this, Ned, but I can't risk you calling for help.

*Ned screams, then an impact. She goes silent.*

**ABRAHAM:** If you're listening to this tape, Mordecai, you must have made it back to the station. That means, one way or another, I saved your life today. You're welcome.

*New tape. Internal phone ring. Droning sound of the Whispering Wood.*

**MORDECAI:** Ned? Ned! C'mon, pick up your phone!

**KIP:** It's been too long, Morty. We should get back to-

*The call is answered.*

**ABRAHAM:** Hello, Mordecai.

**MORDECAI:** Abraham?! Why do you have Ned's phone?

**ABRAHAM:** Would you like three guesses or multiple choice?

**MORDECAI:** Shut up! Where's Ned?

**ABRAHAM:** She's not at all well, I'm afraid. She was a coward.

**MORDECAI:** No...

**ABRAHAM:** I'm calling because I need you, Mordecai. In a bit over an hour the whole story will be laid out in front of you and you'll understand.

**MORDECAI:** I won't let you finish this.

**ABRAHAM:** You don't have a choice, Mordecai.

**MORDECAI:** I do and I'm coming for you right now.

**ABRAHAM:** Please do. You know, when you get angry you sound like a petulant chi--

*Mordecai hangs up.*

**KIP:** You hung up?

**MORDECAI:** You're goddamn right I did. He's distracting us.

**KIP:** He could have dropped a clue.

**MORDECAI:** We have everything we need right here.

**KIP:** What do you mean?

**MORDECAI:** I brought Abraham's sigil book. I know the spell and I know what questions to ask.

**KIP:** Woah, dude. Don't do that. You know magic always has a price.

**MORDECAI:** I KNOW, Kip. But Abraham just...he needs to be stopped.

*Mordecai flips through the book.*

**MORDECAI:** For good. Before he can hurt anyone else.

**KIP:** Be really careful, Scoop.

**MORDECAI:** Hold this. Now, the Phooka is linked to the trees, so if I draw the sigil on any of the trees and charge it with a drop of blood, I should be able to make a mental command.

*Sounds of sigil being drawn.*

**KIP:** It says in this book that it will only work for ten seconds. Do you have a plan for the ten seconds after that?

**PHOOKA:** What are you two doing? Step away from that tree!

*Whooshing spirit noises.*

**KIP:** It says not to do this spell with a hive mind.

**MORDECAI:** A grove of trees isn't a hive, it's a grove.

**PHOOKA:** Get away from there!

*Groaning noises. Sounds of Kip gasping as he is pulled up by tree branches/vines.*

**MORDECAI:** Put my friend down!

**PHOOKA:** Insignificant fool!

*Sound of fire and of Mordecai activating the sigil.*

**MORDECAI (Booming, Distorted):** You will let him go.

*Sounds of trees releasing Kip, small gasps from Kip.*

**KIP:** Thanks, Scoop.

**MORDECAI (Booming, Distorted):** My pleasure.

**PHOOKA:** This is a violation. How dare you! Argh-

**MORDECAI (Booming, Distorted):** You will tell me what Abraham is planning and where he is.

**PHOOKA:** I will reveal nothing to you-I-argh

*Sounds of tree branches creaking.*

**KIP:** You're gonna break the trees!

**PHOOKA:** I will tell you nothing!

**MORDECAI (V/O):** For those few seconds, I could read the thoughts of the woods. I saw flashes of images like memories. I saw the past, present and, maybe, I think the future. A young couple: Abraham and Abigail, sitting together. Writing in a book. A thousand generations of deer, children running. Bees, birds. Leaves growing and withering. A woman in haggard clothing, wandering through the woods. She looked like an elderly Marian. And an older Abigail walking towards the heart of the forest. I felt the heartbeat of the Phooka:. I felt her knowledge. I felt her anger. At the vines, at the closing darkness, at the people. At Abraham, at Abigail. Abigail, who tricked her and I knew what the Phooka's pressure point was. I commanded the branches to snap.

*Sound of branches splintering and snapping.*

**MORDECAI (Booming, Distorted):** Where is he?!

*Phooka wincing in pain.*

**PHOOKA:** Crow Notch. He...wants to...expose...the giant.

**MORDECAI (Booming, Distorted):** Thank you.

*Sound of Mordecai releasing the sigil.*

**MORDECAI:** Kip, let's go.

**PHOOKA: (gasping):** You will be destroyed for this.

**MORDECAI:** I've seen your mind. You protect this grove but you can't attack.

**PHOOKA:** You look at these poor trees. The grove is destroyed!

**MORDECAI:** New trees will grow. Maybe the new ones will remind you that you used to help people. Instead of just sitting here and watching the time pass. I pity you.

**PHOOKA:** Fine! Go where you will, mortal. But take this with you. I did not reveal all, you could not make me and what you still don't know, will cost you dearly. You will know my wrath when you hear the widow crying.

**MORDECAI:** I'll be sure to make a note of it.

*Sounds of footsteps as Mordecai and Kip leave the grove.*

**KIP:** Scoop, you know I've got your back.

**MORDECAI:** Yeah.

**KIP:** But that was wrong...and reckless.

**MORDECAI:** I have to find him.

**KIP:** Why? Leave it to the police.

**MORDECAI:** They can't get him. I can.

**KIP:** It's not like I'm an expert but aren't you supposed to...not get involved. Report on stuff, not hurt people?

**MORDECAI:** Not anymore. You know the way to Crow Notch?

**KIP:** Yeah. It's only a few minutes away.

**MORDECAI:** Thank you, Kip. Let's stop a murderer. For Ned.

*Sound of the car engine revving up as Kip and Mordecai begin their journey to Crow's Notch.*

**MORDECAI (V/O):** As we drove, I flipped through Abraham's spell book again. Having successfully completed one sigil, the others look increasingly feasible. I could see why Abraham started doing what he did. To wield that kind of power was...shockingly easy. We pulled up to the side of the road, next to a log cabin. I checked my watch, it was 4:40. Twenty minutes until Abraham's deadline.

**KIP:** So...what are ya looking for?

**MORDECAI:** Well, anything unusual would probably be a good start.

*Rumble. Tires squeal.*

**MORDECAI:** That one was bigger. We're getting warm.

**KIP:** Ok. At times like these, I usually ask a local. There's a house right there.

**MORDECAI:** Alright.

*Sound of car engine being turned off and footsteps as Mordecai and Kip approach the cabin.*

**MORDECAI:** For all listeners, we are walking up to a log cabin. There's a ton of furs drying on the side. If anyone lives here, I'm guessing they're a-

*Sound of the cabin door opening.*

**SILAS:** Hello there, gentlemen.

**MORDECAI:** -trapper. Silas Winters. So, this is your hideout.

**SILAS:** Just laying low, my dear Mordecai. Just laying low. How can I help you gentlemen? I hope this doesn't have anything to do with our last little.... misunderstanding.

**MORDECAI:** Oh, you mean when you tried to kill me after I busted your illegal poaching operation AND cheated you out of millions of dollars' worth of stolen endangered species?

**KIP:** What?!?!

**MORDECAI:** Oh yeah, this is Kip. He's with the national park service.

**SILAS:** The exact details of our last encounter escape me.

**MORDECAI:** Smart. No, nothing about that. We're dealing with something else, something bigger.

**SILAS:** I'm trying my best not to be insulted.

**MORDECAI:** Stop trying, I'm past caring. Have you seen anything unusual recently?

**SILAS:** Why should I tell you anything?

**MORDECAI:** The county goes down in flames in let's see...in fifteen minutes if we don't stop it. There is something wrong in this forest. Also, if you tell me, I might give you a half hour before I call the police.

**SILAS:** There's been smoke coming from inside the forest all morning.

**KIP:** Okay, I see the plume. Medium sized brush fire, half a klick from here.

**MORDECAI:** Half a...Ok we'll check it out. Thank you, Mr. Winters.

**SILAS:** Always a pleasure. Best of luck.

*Sound of cabin door closing and footsteps as Mordecai and Kip walk away from the cabin. Phone dialing.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello, Police? This is Mordecai Dogwood, I've just encountered Silas Winters, the fugitive, at Crow's Notch. Could you send some officers over to arrest him? Thank you.

**KIP:** I thought you said you were giving him half an hour.

**MORDECAI:** I lied...What was that?

**KIP:** We're getting close. Stay behind me.

**MORDECAI (V/O):** As we got closer, I began to notice animals passing by me. Occasionally a squirrel or a deer would dart past us. Running flat out in the direction we had come. A minute later, the songbirds were quiet and started fluttering through the trees in the same direction.

**MORDECAI:** Um, for all listeners, it's just gotten very cold. Like really cold. Like everything just froze. All of the ponds, all of the streams. Everything in this forest is covered in ice.

**KIP:** Well, we're definitely getting close.

**MORDECAI:** Wow. Well, we've arrived at a sort of clearing. Its...I dunno? Three hundred feet across? Everything inside has been burnt and uh...the trees inside have been knocked over. The ice ends at the edge of the clearing. In the center, there is some kind of large sphere. Its pulsing with white light. Yeah, and Abraham's built a sigil around it. Let's see.

*Sound of pages of Abraham's book being flipped through.*

**MORDECAI:** Judging by the concentric circles, I'd say it's a focusing sigil. Focusing energy down, into the ground. I can't get a very good look from here, I'm gonna get closer-

**KIP:** Nuh-uh. No way. That thing could be very dangerous.

**MORDECAI:** Well then what are we supposed to do, Kip? Let it burn the forest down?

**KIP:** You're a reporter! Don't you have some experts or something who can tell you what we are looking at?

**MORDECAI:** ...Good point.

*New tape.*

**NED:** Hello, listeners. This is Ned Jones. Uh well, I'm not dead. Abraham hit me in the head and tied me up. Fortunately, I was born with really loose shoulders. Which really sucks most of the time but I guess when someone ties my hands behind my back I can get free. Abraham smashed my phone and kidnapped the Riddle Toad. So, I'm heading to the Sleeping Giant to contact Mordecai and figure out what the heck is going on.

*New tape. Internal phone ring as Mordecai calls someone.*

**KIP:** Put it on speaker phone.

*Someone answers. Loud animal growling on the other side of the call.*

**DIVODIT:** *Mordecai, we're a little busy at the moment.*

**MORDECAI:** Divodit...Ned's dead.

**DIVODIT:** No!

**LUMILY:** No! How?

**MORDECAI:** Abraham.

**DIVODIT:** No, no, no. That's impossible.

**MORDECAI:** I'm sorry, but listen I think I know what Abraham's planning. There's a giant buried beneath Knox County and he's trying to wake it. We found.... I think Abraham made some sort of focusing sigil around. I guess it's a glowing beach ball? You ever hear about anything like that?

**LUMILY:** No. Describe it.

**MORDECAI:** Uh...all the animals in the forest have run away and the forest has gotten really cold. Except for this burnt clearing, there's this sphere about the size of a beach ball, pulsing with really powerful white light and its radiating heat. We can't get much closer without getting scorched. The pulses are getting faster too.

**LUMILY:** Oh my god! Is that a phoenix?

**DIVODIT:** Yep. That's a phoenix. Mordecai, you need to get out of there, right now!

**KIP:** What is this thing?

**DIVODIT:** It's a phoenix, a phoenix egg to be precise. When it hatches, it explodes.

**KIP:** How big?

**LUMILY:** Think really big.

**KIP:** Yeah, but how REALLY big?

**DIVODIT:** No one who has seen it has ever survived, but the last one on record was in tuguscus, hypheria in the 1900's. It flattened hundreds of square miles of forest and left a crater that can still be seen today.

**KIP:** Oh.

**DIVODIT:** Tell us how fast the pulses are.

**MORDECAI:** What?

**DIVODIT:** We can predict how soon it's' going to blow up based on the number of pulses per minute.

**MORDECAI:** I dunno, maybe seven...eight pulses?

**DIVODIT:** What is that? Four minutes?

**LUMILY:** Three point five at best. Mordecai, you need to run!

**MORDECAI:** No! We can't get away from something this big in four minutes, that's insane!

**DIVODIT:** Ok. Well then, what can we do?

**MORDECAI:** Come pick us up after, I think I have an idea. Thank you, both of you.

*Call ends. Mordecai's phone rings.*

**MORDECAI:** What? Oh, it's Wendell. I'll call her back if we get out of this. Let's break up Abraham's sigil.

*He ignores the call.*

**KIP:** What? That's your plan?

**MORDECAI:** I think maybe we can re-use it in a sigil of our own. I think-yes! Shielding!

**KIP:** Oh, no! No way. I am not going to do that. Standing in a sigil can kill you.

**MORDECAI:** We're both dead anyway, please trust me.

**KIP:** All right.

*New tape. A door opens and a bell jingles.*

**NED:** Wendell?

**WENDELL:** Oh thank god! Mordecai sent ya back. The cabinets gotten way worse. I'm starting to get frightened.

**NED:** I need your phone.

**WENDELL:** I'm sorry?

**NED:** Right now.

**WENDELL:** Um, of course.

*Sound of old rotary phone being used. Phone ringing as it tries to connect. Dial tone after Mordecai ignores the call.*

**NED:** Come on, Mordecai.

*Dialing again. Ring. Someone answers.*

**DIVODIT:** Hello?

**NED:** Divodit? Where's Mordecai?

**DIVODIT:** Ned? But...but Mordecai told us you died!

**NED:** What? That's what he thinks? Where is he now?

*New tape. Loud droning and sounds of the phoenix getting louder.*

**MORDECAI:** Okay, put that bone there. I'll stand in this circle, you stand in that one. This had better work Abraham.

*Loud wind.*

**MORDECAI:** Kip, jump!

*An explosion blows out the recorder. Static. New tape.*

**NED:** What do you mean he didn't leave?!?!?

**DIVODIT:** He said-

*Same explosion knocks out the phone line.*

**NED:** Divodit? Lumily? Goddamnit!

**WENDELL:** Young lady!

**NED:** I don't have time for your goddamned cabinet, Wendell! Did you hear that? My friend is dead! I can't-I-oh no.

*New tape. Mordecai coughs and pushes debris off himself.*

**MORDECAI:** Kip? Please! (grunts) Okay. If anyone is listening to this, I'm still alive. Somehow. The blast swept everything away, I don't know if-I watched Kip. The blast hit him full on. I guess he just...faded into smoke. But it was like the blast parted around me. Then I got picked up and thrown, I...I should have died. I...I think the sigil must have been...it's my fault. I'm sorry.... I'm so sorry. The landscape. It's like nothing I've ever...it's a moonscape. The trees have all been flattened, pointed away from the blast like dominos. (coughing) And suddenly it looks like there's no cellphone reception. I guess...I guess the giant didn't rise. We did it. (coughing)

*New tape.*

**WENDELL:** There, there.

**NED:** Oh my god, it's' like I'm cursed, Wendell. Anyone I ever get to know.

**VOICE:** Nadezhda!

**NED:** What?

**WENDELL:** I didn't say-

**NED:** Not you. Did you hear that?

**VOICE:** Nadezhda!

**NED:** It's...it's Abigail. Her voice.

**WENDELL:** That's what I've been trying to tell you! I keep on hearing stuff from the cabinet. Very scary stuff like-

**NED:** Shhhh. Abigail, I hear you!

*Sound of footsteps and a small creak as Ned approaches the cabinet.*

**NED:** Oh my god. I've finally found her. She hid inside the cabinet.

**WENDELL:** No! I've been hearing horrible stuff coming out of it! Seeing lights, heat...fire between the cracks. She can't be in there!

**NED:** I have to see.

**WENDELL:** No! Don't!

*Sound of the cabinet door being opened. Drone.*

**NED:** Abigail? Abigail, can you hear me?

**WENDELL:** I just see darkness.

*Whoosh!*

**NED (Distant, Otherworldly):** I hate you!

**ABIGAIL (Distant, Otherworldly):** Ned! Please, help me!

**NED (Distant, Otherworldly):** No!!

*Sounds of whooshing and flames. Screaming as the door slams shut. A small lock clicks.*

**WENDELL:** That's an extremely good lock. I should buy more. Ned?

**NED:** I saw...I saw...I...I

**WENDELL:** It wasn't her, Ned. That's the kind of thing the cabinet's been showing now. It's dark and twisted. I think something's wrong

**NED:** Karl said that the shapeshifter was a bad omen. That everything was going to go wrong. He said the whole area was "negatively charged." I think we're doomed, Wendell.

**WENDELL:** Oh. Well, uh...would you still like to use the phone?

*New tape. Mordecai struggles through ruined forest.*

**MORDECAI:** Ok. Ok. Top of the hill. And...I can't see anything. Kip's service revolver. I don't know how it survived. I can't see much, there's too much smoke.

*Whoosh! Fire and wings beating!*

**MORDECAI:** I-UH-OH KAY, I see the phoenix!! It's gotta be a hundred feet long, it's got fire running along its feathers, billowing out in waves. It's just...sitting there. Like it's roosting-in a nest or something-

*Trees creak. Fire whooshes.*

**MORDECAI:** Ok, ok it's looking right at me. Um I'm just gonna get down from here.

*Fire roars*

**MORDECAI:** It's spreading its wings. Three hundred...four hundred feet across from wingtip to wingtip. I think it's' going to fly.

*The Phoenix shrieks as it takes flight, with heavy wingbeats that slowly fade away. Then a quiet but steady heartbeat begins.*

**MORDECAI:** Ok, it's' gone. As I looked around, I could see that nothing had escaped the fire. The trees had been felled by the blast for as far as I could see in any direction. Looking down at that abandoned nest, I saw something at the center. A small hole in the ground, where rocks had melted away.

*Sound of Mordecai moving through the underbrush.*

**MORDECAI:** Ok. The ground at the center of the nest is giving way. There's something moving beneath.

*Sounds of enormous groaning from the earthquake.*

**MORDECAI:** There's something beneath the nest all right. It looks like...a cloud. A black cloud, the size of-its huge! I-I have to get a better look. Hang on. Okay, I can see it better now. It's like a swirling cloud. I see little flickers of lightning in it. It's swirling around on itself. Like a hurricane. It looks...evil. I don't-this is-I have to get out of here.

**ABRAHAM:** **Genius, Mordecai.**

**MORDECAI:** YOU.

**ABRAHAM:** Absolute genius. Do you even understand what you've just done?

**MORDECAI:** Yeah - I've finally stopped you.

**ABRAHAM:** Stopped me from doing what, Mordecai? What exactly did you accomplish?

**MORDECAI:** Well...I'm not...I don't exactly know. But you're a serial killer! I know you're trying to hurt people.

**ABRAHAM:** YOU IDIOT! Look around you! Listen! Do you hear that heartbeat, Mordecai? It belongs to a creature called Oonglock. That creature is waking up. It could rise any second now, and when it does, it will kill everything it touches. More than kill. It will twist and warp them into something unrecognizable. There will be no bodies. There will be no bones. And I could have stopped it, Mordecai. This was our chance. When a phoenix is reborn, it releases monumental energy. Phoenixes are virtually extinct, but I found one. I brought it to this hillside. And I found a way to channel its energy into a sigil--one that would bind Armageddon beneath the earth. But you broke it. And now the whole world burns because of one stupid reporter messing around with things he was too stupid to understand.

**MORDECAI:** What? What do you mean you were trying to save people? You're a murderer! You killed Abigail!

**ABRAHAM:** Do you think I enjoyed it? Do you think it was fun? I did it because I had to. That's the nature of sacrifice.

**MORDECAI:** And you think you're justified -

*RUMBLE.*

**ABRAHAM:** Neither of us has time to argue ethics, Mordecai! People will die if we don't do something!

*A lock clicks, the box creaks open, and the Riddle Toad Croaks, muffled.*

**MORDECAI:** Riddle Toad?

**ABRAHAM:** You're going to kill him.

**MORDECAI:** What? No! I'm not a murderer.

**ABRAHAM:** It's not murder. It's sacrifice. His death will keep us all alive. Any of these earthquakes could be the last. Oonglok could rise any second, Mordecai. Will you let the world die to keep your conscience clean? You're already a killer. Why don't you at least make it count for something?

**MORDECAI:** I won't kill him. I won't kill people to save myself.

**ABRAHAM:** There's a grove of trees in Rhodes Forest that would disagree. You took control of the Phooka's power and destroyed her domain. We're standing in a wasteland that you created! You killed Kip to save yourself!

**MORDECAI:** What - The sigil killed him? But - how? Why would a shield sigil kill someone? It's a shield sigil!

**ABRAHAM:** LISTEN WHEN I TALK, MORDECAI. Sigils need power. Power has to come from somewhere. Sacrifices create that power. You sacrificed Kip to stay alive. He was your shield. That's how it works.

**MORDECAI:** I never meant to--you never wrote that down!

*RUMBLE.*

**ABRAHAM:** We're out of time. Riddle Toad is our last hope. If you can't kill him, then I will.

**MORDECAI:** No!

*He leaps towards Abraham to pull Riddle Toad away. Magic Whooshing. Mordecai chokes and gasps.*

**ABRAHAM:** Stay down!

**MORDECAI:** What did--what's happening?

**ABRAHAM:** What you're feeling now is something called a leashing sigil. Magic thickens around the limbs of the target. It becomes something almost physical. If you ever listened to me, you'd already know that. Now sit still, and watch. You made this happen, Mordecai.

*Tearing fabric.*

**RIDDLE TOAD:** Chronicler!

*Squelching and gasping as Abe chokes Riddle Toad.*

**ABRAHAM:** He can't help you. In fact, this is all his fault. I'm sorry, Riddle. I never wanted to--I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so--

*Snap.*

**ABRAHAM:** I'm sorry...It's done.

**MORDECAI:** You're sick.

**ABRAHAM:** I'm effective. You can tell me I'm evil, but can you tell me I'm wrong? In the end, someone has to make a choice. It's not ethical, no one has a right to make it, but we have to make it anyway. I'm tired, Mordecai. I'm tired of killing. I'm tired of death. I'm tired of this conversation. I'd hoped that you would understand me. If you can't, then I ask that you let me do what needs to be done. After all, look what happens when you try to intervene.

*Magic whoosh. Mordecai gasps.*

**MORDECAI:** He's gone. He just disappeared. There's a glowing circle where he was -- I'm guessing he built a transporting sigil as well.

*Mordecai's phone rings.*

**MORDECAI:** Hello?

**NED:** Mordecai!? Is that you?

**MORDECAI:** Ned?! You're alive!!

**NED:** Of course, I'm alive.

**MORDECAI:** Ned, I'm sorry. For everything.

**NED:** No, I'm sorry. I'm sorry...I'm...a coward.

**MORDECAI:** No, you're one of bravest persons I-

*Call drops.*

**MORDECAI:** Ned? Ned, please...

*Sound of a car driving toward Mordecai.*

**MORDECAI:** I see a car. Yep, it's Lumily and Divodit...and who's that in the back seat?

*Engine is turned off and car doors are opened.*

**DIVODIT:** Did you see that, Mordecai? A real live phoenix!

**MARIAN:** Mordecai!

**MORDECAI:** Oh no, please no.

**MARIAN:** Mordecai, where's Kip?

**MORDECAI:** Marian, I'm sorry.

**MARIAN:** No...no...no!

**MORDECAI:** Marian! Come back!

**MARIAN:** Kip! Kip?

**DIVODIT:** Was there anyone else? Any other survivors?

**MORDECAI:** No.

**LUMILY:** How did you survive?

**MORDECAI:** Kip.

**DIVODIT:** I'll give you a lift back into town. Look after her, I'll be back for you in fifteen minutes?

**LUMILY:** Sure.

**DIVODIT:** Get in the car, lad. You look awful.

*Sound of car doors opening and closing, engine revving up as the car drives away.*

**MORDECAI (V/O):** Back at the station, I found a tape lying on my desk. It was addressed to me in Ned's handwriting.

*Sound of tape being inserted into a player and starting.*

**NED:** Hi, Mordecai. I just-I need to tell you that I'm leaving. I can't stay here anymore...I've seen-I'm still seeing-um-well, I-I have to go. I can't be there when you die. I'm sorry.

**MORDECAI:** No...I'm sorry, Ned. Abraham lied, he wanted me to think you were dead. So...there it is, folks. This broadcast is in honor of Riddle Toad and Kip, who gave their lives today. My condolences are with Marian and Kip's family. There's nothing I can say that will ever being to-I failed you. All of you. Um, Kip I will never fail you again. Ever. Riddle Toad I know now how wise you were and Ned, I hope you can hear this. You were right all along. A reporter's job should be to report on the situation, never to influence unduly. I went too far today, but all I did was what I could do. A reporter influences the world, whether they mean to or not. I-I don't know what I should do anymore. But I know what I can do. I've collected all of the spells I've found, all of the research we have and I will find a way to save us. All of us. Abraham was right but he was wrong. We always have a choice, in this case I choose the moral route. I draw the line at killing people. Abraham, if you're listening to this stay the hell out of my way.

*Theme plays.*

