

THE CALL OF THE VOID - 102

"WHY TOPHER NEEDS NEW SHOES"

Written by

Michael Alan Herman
& Josie Eli Herman

EPISODE TWO - WHY TOPHER NEEDS NEW SHOES

SCENE ONE

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

SFX: Passengers chatter on a bus. The bus door opens.

BUS DRIVER

Kentwood. Five minutes to smoke.

MARCUS

Five minutes?

BUS DRIVER

That's what I said.

MARCUS

We're 45 minutes behind. Have you made this trip before?

BUS DRIVER

I make it a couple times a week.

MARCUS

Does the traffic change that much from week to week?

BUS DRIVER

I'm getting off the bus to smoke.

MARCUS

What time do you think we'll be getting back?

BUS DRIVER

When we get back.

SFX: People step out of the bus, continuing to talk. Night sounds. We hear Marcus step into a puddle of mud.

MARCUS

Did we need to pick a bus stop with so much mud?

SFX: We hear whispers as the sound of the Void draws near.

MARCUS
Hello? Who's there?

SFX: A rustle of wind. The Void moves around him.

MARCUS
You picking the wrong night, man. I can hear you...

THE VOID
Close your eyes...

TITLE SEQUENCE

SCENE TWO
INT. KENTUCKY HOSPITAL - DAY

SFX: Hospital sounds, people murmuring.

NURSE ABIGAIL
Topher? Simone? Hi.

TOPHER
Abigail, right?

NURSE ABIGAIL
That's right. I want to be the first one to say that I am very sorry for what your father is experiencing. We're working as hard as we can to figure out what's affected him.

TOPHER
We appreciate that.

NURSE ABIGAIL
So, your father was found a few miles outside of Crofton, surrounded by the symbols in the woods...

SFX: Nurse Abigail flips through papers.

TOPHER
Symbols in the woods?

NURSE ABIGAIL
They didn't tell you?

SIMONE

I don't think so.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Oh. Okay. Well, the area they found him in...the trees were scratched into. Like, there were symbols scratched into the bark, a language maybe? Did your father know Arabic, we think it looked something like that.

TOPHER

You couldn't read it?

NURSE ABIGAIL

They were very strange looking.

SIMONE

But you think he carved them?

NURSE ABIGAIL

His fingers were torn and bleeding when we found him. It matched the blood found on the symbols. (Beat) You said your father wasn't always visually handicapped?

TOPHER

He wore glasses, but he wasn't blind.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Has his eye-sight been growing worse lately?

TOPHER

(Beat) Not... abnormally, no.

SFX: Nurse Abigail takes a note of this.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Does your family have any history of mental illness?

TOPHER

Not that we're aware of.

SIMONE

No.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Has your father ever shown any signs of anxiety or depression? Excessive worrying? Restlessness? Fatigue? Difficulty concentrating? Tense muscles? Avoiding social situations? Irrational fears like fear of animals or public spaces?

SIMONE

I don't... Maybe. He's an academic.

TOPHER

He's pretty quiet. He likes to read.

SIMONE

He doesn't always love socializing, but...yeah.

SFX: Nurse Abigail takes another note of this.

NURSE ABIGAIL

And was he under any unusual stress over the last few days? Maybe teaching more classes than usual? He works at NOLA university, right?

SIMONE

He's a professor of physics. But he's been there for years.

NURSE ABIGAIL

How many classes was he teaching this semester?

SIMONE

Four.

NURSE ABIGAIL

That's a pretty full load.

SIMONE

It's not unusual for him. He likes work.

NURSE ABIGAIL

How many students does he have in each class?

TOPHER

Sorry, what does this have to do with the situation?

NURSE ABIGAIL

I realize this is tedious, but gathering information can help us make smarter choices. How many students does he have?

TOPHER

Twenty or so. Sometimes more.

NURSE ABIGAIL

And you don't know why your father would make a trip up to Kentucky?

TOPHER

We were hoping you would tell us.

NURSE ABIGAIL

There's no family in the area or anything?

TOPHER

Not that we know of.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Is he married, divorced?

TOPHER

Our mom died when we were kids.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Did he think about that a lot?

SIMONE

It was thirteen years ago.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Is it possible he was thinking about it more than usual before this?

TOPHER

I don't know. He didn't talk about it much.

SFX: Nurse Abigail notes this.

NURSE ABIGAIL

Alright. Well... nine times out of ten, a mental breakdown is caused by stress or mental illness. We're going to make sure that's what's going on, of course. But it's important to let our medical staff do their work here. In the meantime, try to keep him calm when you're with him. No bright lights. No fast movements. Just... calm things.

TOPHER

Our dad isn't crazy.

NURSE ABIGAIL

People react differently to stress.

SIMONE

And that's what you think this is. Stress? You said his heart rate was normal. That's not a symptom.

NURSE ABIGAIL

You should both get some rest too. When you feel up for it, we'll want to discuss the next steps for your father.

SCENE THREE

INT. KENTUCKY HOSPITAL - DAY

SFX: Hospital sounds. Victor breathes calmly in the hospital bed.

TOPHER

How are you feeling, dad? (Beat) Can he hear us?

VICTOR

Roughly four thirty-seven and...I am approximately two miles west of...

TOPHER

We don't know what that means.

VICTOR

Roughly four thirty-seven.

SIMONE

Do you remember what happened, dad? They said you were in Crofton.

VICTOR

Crofton. Croft. In Crofton.

SIMONE

Do you remember why you were there?

VICTOR

It was roughly four thirty-seven. Thirty.

TOPHER

Thirty?

VICTOR

Thirty, thirty.

TOPHER

We got your glasses, dad. (Beat) They look good on you.

SIMONE

They do.

VICTOR

When it's... It's when it's... When it's Crofton. Croft. It's Croft.

SIMONE

It's okay, dad. Let's just rest.

TOPHER

(Beat) We love you.

SCENE FOUR

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

SFX: Door opens and closes.

TOPHER

Are you hungry? There's gumbo.

SIMONE

I'm fine.

SIMONE

Do you think he was exposed to something?

TOPHER

To like, something toxic?

SIMONE

People like dad don't just do that. They don't just snap. We've never even been to Kentucky.

TOPHER

We drove through it once for a family vacation, but we definitely didn't go to Crofton.

SIMONE

It seemed small.

TOPHER

Yeah.

SFX: Typing on phone

SIMONE

Their 2010 census shows 749.

TOPHER

Thousand?

SIMONE

Total people. It's not even considered a city. They have a few churches, mostly baptist. A diner, a hair salon, and...that's about it. There's some forests nearby, but it's pretty flat. It's normal.

TOPHER

Everything is normal. The eye doctor. The last dinner that you had with him. But it's not. Something happened.

SIMONE

What are you thinking? You're thinking something.

TOPHER

Do you think he meant to go to Kentucky?

SIMONE

What does that mean?

TOPHER

He might have had an accident or something. Or he was escaping from something or...I don't know. But he left us something in those woods.

SIMONE

(Beat) You're going to look at the symbols.

TOPHER

It's the last thing he gave us. It might be a message.

SIMONE

That would be weird.

TOPHER

Maybe not.

SIMONE

What if whatever happened to him was in those woods. You're just going to walk into that?

TOPHER

If it helps us figure this out.

SIMONE

The last thing we need to do is pay for two rooms at a psych ward.

TOPHER

At least we'd know where it was coming from then.

SIMONE

Not funny. (Beat) You're going to go.

TOPHER

Yeah.

SIMONE

You're going in the daylight. And you're calling me.

TOPHER

I can do that.

SIMONE

This is how people die, Topher.

TOPHER

According to Wikipedia?

SIMONE

No, according to life.

TOPHER

I'll be fine.

SCENE FIVE

EXT. OHIO FOREST - DAY

SFX: Sounds of a forest. Footsteps on leaves as Topher walks through the woods. Twigs crunch in the distance.

TOPHER

Hello? Is there someone there? I can hear you. Who's there?

HOGAN

Are you bird watching, or what?

TOPHER

What?

HOGAN

I own this property.

TOPHER

I'm sorry. I didn't see any signs.

HOGAN

I don't need signs for my own property. We don't let people bird watch around here.

TOPHER

I wasn't bird watching.

HOGAN

I don't care what you were doing, I don't want you here.

TOPHER

I'm looking into a man that was found around here. From New Orleans. They say he went crazy in these woods.

HOGAN

Everybody's crazy in New Orleans.

TOPHER

You've heard about him?

HOGAN

It's a small town. You're what, a new cop?

TOPHER

(Beat) I am.

HOGAN

Don't recognize you.

TOPHER

I'm new.

HOGAN

Uh-huh. They sent a cop out here the other day.

TOPHER

I'm just here to follow up. You said you knew of him? The gentleman from New Orleans?

HOGAN

Sure. He wasn't on my property. They found him just beyond the edge, down by Tradewater.

TOPHER

Were you the one that found him?

HOGAN

That was another local. Martin McCarthy. You talk to him yet?

TOPHER

Not yet.

HOGAN

He works over at the General Store off Madisonville. Bit of a prick.

TOPHER

How did Martin find him?

HOGAN

As the rumor goes...Martin was going out to hunt. Saw a car parked near Tradewater and decided to go in to see what was going on. It wasn't hard.

TOPHER

What wasn't hard?

HOGAN

It wasn't hard to find the guy. He was screaming things. Very loud screaming.

TOPHER

Do you know what he was saying?

HOGAN

Bunch of bullshit. Something about looking for something. Not finding something. Martin knows better than I do.

TOPHER

Huh. You said they found him on the edge of your property?

HOGAN

Just off the edge of my property. You need to write that sort of stuff down. I don't need suits around here. I already told the other cop.

TOPHER

Sure. Can you take me there?

HOGAN

You're going to ruin your shoes.

SFX: Footsteps through mud.

TOPHER

How long have you lived in the area?

HOGAN

My whole life.

TOPHER

What do you do, um...

HOGAN

Hogan?

TOPHER

What do you do, Hogan?

HOGAN

I have a little tax office in town. Small claims, that sort of thing. It was my father's business.

TOPHER

Sounds interesting.

HOGAN

It's a way to make a living.

TOPHER

Did you happen to know the... The New Orleans guy?

HOGAN

No. I don't like people from out of town.

TOPHER

Why's that?

HOGAN

Just don't think the same.

HOGAN

This is the spot. They found him right over there.

TOPHER

I see.

HOGAN

And those are the markings. Weird stuff, huh?

SFX: Mysterious music plays.

TOPHER

He did these with his nails?

HOGAN

That's the going theory. Quite the...spectacle around town. Keep getting kids up here, checking 'em out. Some saying they're part of some Voodoo thing. Others saying it's a map to something. I don't know about any of that. People are good at bullshit.

TOPHER

Any idea why these scratches over here look more wild?

HOGAN

I wasn't there. (Beat) He did some on the ground here too.

TOPHER

I see them. Its hard to describe them. Maybe tribal looking.

HOGAN

Kind of frantic.

TOPHER

Yeah.

HOGAN

People don't make markings like that if they're not...you know.

TOPHER

I don't.

HOGAN

Possessed.

TOPHER

Oh. I don't think so.

HOGAN

We all have theories. (Beat) How many more cops are they gonna send this way?

TOPHER

I should be the last.

HOGAN

You better be.

SCENE SIX

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

SFX: Phone rings and goes to Voicemail.

SIMONE

(On Phone) Hey Topher. So, I found a place for dad. I checked him in today, but we'll visit when you get back tomorrow. Just...get back, okay? Okay. I'm going to hang up now

SCENE SEVEN

INT. SOMMERS HOUSE - DAY

SFX: A tea kettle whistles.

SIMONE

How was Kentucky?

TOPHER

I took pictures on my phone.

SIMONE

Of the symbols?

TOPHER

Yeah.

SIMONE

What happened to your shoes?

TOPHER

Oh. It was a swamp.

SIMONE

What am I looking at?

TOPHER

Those are the marks on the side of the tree. Three different trees. They start to get more desperate here. And then they're just scratches here. At least, that's what the locals said.

SIMONE

And the red is...

TOPHER

Right. I don't know where else it would come from. He was pretty desperate to carve these.

SIMONE

Three trees.

TOPHER

In that area. Dad ran about a mile away from his car before he started carving. He might have done a few more along the way. I looked for a while with the local.

SIMONE

Did he know anything else?

TOPHER

Not really. I talked with the local that found him too. But it was just more of the same. Seems like, dad was driving, he pulled over. He abandoned his car, then he ran through the woods and started scratching circles into trees.

SIMONE

While he went blind.

TOPHER

That's the story.

SIMONE

Sure. None of that makes sense, but...sure.

TOPHER

Are we ready to go in to...a psych ward? For dad?

SIMONE

Yeah. He should be out of his assessment now.

SCENE EIGHT

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

SFX: Echoey footsteps down a hallway.

TOPHER

How much does this place cost?

SIMONE

It's on the lower end. But it's a lot. \$871.

TOPHER

A month? (Beat) A week?

SIMONE

That's how much treatment costs by the day.

TOPHER

That's the low end?

SIMONE

They have a good cure rate.

TOPHER

I hope it's a 100% cure rate.

SIMONE

They can't guarantee that.

SFX: Footsteps.

TOPHER

Hi. This is the East Wing?

NURSE JOHNSON

That's what the sign says.

TOPHER

We're here to visit our dad.

SIMONE

I'm Simone. And this is my brother Topher. We're the children of Victor Sommers.

NURSE JOHNSON

Simone?

SIMONE

Yes.

NURSE JOHNSON

You're not Simone Sommers.

SIMONE

I...am.

NURSE JOHNSON

I'm... confused. Simone was here last night. I was on staff.

SIMONE

I wasn't here last night, but I checked him in yesterday morning.

TOPHER

She's my sister.

SIMONE

This is my driver's license.

NURSE JOHNSON

Huh.

SIMONE

Someone else was here yesterday?

NURSE JOHNSON

I believe she had an I.D. with your name on it.

TOPHER

Did you let her see my dad?

NURSE JOHNSON

I think I was just confused. You can see him if you want. This way.

SIMONE

What did she look like?

TOPHER

What did she say?

NURSE JOHNSON

Nothing, really... was normal.

SIMONE

She just walked in here and you let her talk with my dad?

NURSE JOHNSON

She knew about your dad. She knew your home address.

SIMONE

You talked about our home address?

NURSE JOHNSON

I wanted to make sure she was family. She came in here, she told me about your family, and then I took her to see your dad. She actually already knew where your dad was.

TOPHER

How?

NURSE JOHNSON

She said she was psychic. I thought she was joking.

TOPHER

Psychic.

SIMONE

Why, what does psychic mean?

SCENE NINE
EXT. NOLA CAFE - DAY

SFX: Street Jazz plays distantly.

SIMONE

What does psychic mean, Topher?

TOPHER

I'm not sure, yet.

SIMONE

But we're in a cafe now?

TOPHER

We are.

SIMONE

Do we have a reason for that?

TOPHER

I'm watching Zola's across the street. The voodoo place.

SIMONE

I can see that. (Beat) Do you think it was the Voodoo girl?

TOPHER

I think she's one of the only psychics we know.

SIMONE

So now we're stalking her?

TOPHER

We're collecting information.

SIMONE

So, what? You're going to follow her home or something? (Beat) Topher?

TOPHER

I don't know yet.

SIMONE

That might be illegal.

TOPHER

So is forging an I.D.... Dad was planning to meet with her, and I'm going to find out why.

SIMONE

You're going to follow her?

TOPHER
She's leaving her shop.

SIMONE
Definitely illegal.

TOPHER
I'll be back later.

SIMONE
Topher!

SCENE TEN
EXT. BOURBON STREET - MOMENTS LATER

SFX: Distant street jazz.

TOPHER
Etsy!

ETSY
Oh. You remembered my name this time.

TOPHER
You're working?

ETSY
Just doing cards today. Do you want a reading?

TOPHER
Do you know my dad?

ETSY
What are you talking about?

TOPHER
My dad. Do you know him? (Beat) I'm trying to figure out what happened to him. And I don't know how much time I have, so if you know anything...now is the time to talk about it.

ETSY
I don't know what you're talking about.

TOPHER

You visited him at the psych ward.

ETSY

What psych ward?

TOPHER

You forged an I.D.

TOPHER

Did you do something to my dad?

ETSY

What, you think I made him go crazy? That's a new one.

TOPHER

I think you know a lot more than you're telling me.

ETSY

Never had anyone accuse me of *making someone else* crazy.

TOPHER

What do you have to do with my dad?

ETSY

There's potential customers out here.

TOPHER

So.

ETSY

So at least *look* like you're interested in a tarot reading. Listen. You came into the shop, I read your palm, I heard about your dad, and I went to the hospital to see him.

TOPHER

Why would you do that?

ETSY

Some people care about humanity and want to help people in difficult situations.

TOPHER

(Beat) How did you know who my dad was?

ETSY

I mean, I am psychic.

TOPHER

Bullshit.

ETSY

I saw him on the news. You pretended to be him, I mean, I knew it was your dad.

TOPHER

You were that interested in a random client.

ETSY

Technically, he never was my client.

TOPHER

I could go to the police.

ETSY

Why?

TOPHER

Because you did something! And you pretended to be my sister.

ETSY

(Beat) Look, what's going on here... It's more than just your dad. And if the police knew anything about...what's really going on...

TOPHER

I'm in.

ETSY

(Beat) I'm sorry?

TOPHER

If whatever you're doing has anything to do with my dad, I want to help. I have to make him better.

ETSY

This isn't an invitation to be partners.

TOPHER

We're both looking into it anyway. (Beat) I'm really good at puzzles.

ETSY

This is dangerous.

TOPHER

I...

ETSY
Like really dangerous, Topher. If you say you're in...

TOPHER
I'm in.

ETSY
I can't promise anything.

TOPHER
I'm in, Etsy.

ETSY
Alright.

TOPHER
Where do we start?

CREDIT SEQUENCE