

INT. LARA'S INBOX

Internal sound of a phone ringing.

Voicemail from DOCTOR PENELOPE SIMMONS (63). She is serious, clipped, no-nonsense.

The message is heavily distorted, with lots of electrical interference.

DOCTOR SIMMONS

Hello, this message is for Lara Campbell. This is Doctor Penelope Simmons, General Practitioner in the town of Charity, Oregon. I don't know your plans here in Charity, Ms. Campbell, but I must ask you not to go inside the Boone home. There appears to be some kind of contaminant related to --

(static; the message
breaks in and out)

Symptoms including respiratory depression -- cinations, periods of catatonia --

(more static)

Again, I must advise you to avoid the area as a matter of public health. Please contact me with any...

The message glitches out.

TITLES

NARRATOR

Believer. Episode 2. Dead Zone.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE / LARA'S COTTAGE - DAY

It's morning. A calm day -- **wind** moves gently in the trees, birds **chirp**. SODAPOP sniffs around merrily.

LARA and JAKE stand over a set of large footprints.

LARA

I don't think it's a footprint.

JAKE

Aw, come on. You've got the impression of a heel here, a slight incline where the arch would be -- that's a Sasquatch track.

LARA

It's an...impression. In the dirt.

JAKE

When this plaster cast comes up, you'll see. What do you say, 18, 18 and three-quarter inches? That's a full-grown one, right there. Probably an adult male. And what with the wood-knocking last night --

LARA

Whoa, whoa, wood-knocking?

JAKE

Sasquatch knock pieces of wood together to warn off outsiders and communicate with their clans. It's very well-documented. That is what you heard, right? Knocking?

*FLASHBACK: The sound of **knocking, thumping,** and the wet **squishy** sound...*

It breaks off, back to the present.

LARA

It was a dream.

JAKE

I guess we'll see. Ready to Squatch Walk?

LARA

Terrible name, by the way.

JAKE

But it pairs with my podcast, Squatch Talk.

LARA

Of course you have a podcast.

JAKE

Every Tuesday and Thursday! Well, that's the plan anyway.

Just gotta find some guests. Okay, is the dog going to be alright, or..?

Sodapop whines.

LARA

He's fine. He hikes off-leash all the time. Pops -- Sodapop! Let's go, bud.

Sodapop runs around happily and pants.

JAKE

Well, keep an eye on him. Animals sometimes get spooked in Sasquatch territory.

LARA

Noted.

They walk into the **grass** and **brush**.

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

They trudge along through the back country.

JAKE

Trail seems to lead this way. Which makes sense, because that's where I heard my first 'squatch. Now, if you look off this way, see those look like natural rock formations, but no no, see...

His voice fades out as they walk. Lara's voiceover takes over -- played from a recording device.

LARA (V.O.)

Knocking. Thumps in the night. It's so classic I'm surprised I even fell for it.

JAKE

Now, I want you to pay attention to these tree limbs, okay? Broken limbs represent a boundary, a kind of message to the others in the clan.

LARA

Uh-huh.

LARA (V.O.)

In 1848, a family in Rochester, New York began to hear a mysterious "rapping" noise in the night. Bumps on the floor, knocks on the walls, without cause or explanation. The sounds were random at first, but two of the younger girls, Kate and Maggie, devised a way to communicate. Kate would snap her fingers, and the knocking sounds would reply.

Jake stops them.

JAKE

Wait. Shh. You hear that?

It's all just regular forest noises.

LARA

What am I hearing?

JAKE

Nah. False alarm. They're mostly nocturnal, but you never know.

They continue walking.

LARA (V.O.)

Now the girls claimed that the knockings came from a spirit called Mr. Splitfoot -- which is a nickname for the Devil, naturally. But this ability caused a giant sensation. People came from miles around, and the girls demonstrated their abilities in homes and concert halls all across the northeastern United States. They gave guidance on investing, love affairs, even criminal investigations. When the sisters communed with Mr. Splitfoot, people said they felt hands on their shoulders, spirits walking among them. They saw flashes, they felt a presence.

Jake approaches a tree.

JAKE

Here, here -- you see this?

A bug flies around.

JAKE

Look -- this tree. You see the way the limbs are all broken on just this side. And that one up there. That one too. See?

LARA

Uh-huh.

JAKE

Wayfinding. They use it to communicate with the rest of the clan.

LARA

They travel in clans.

JAKE

Oh, sure. They're social, just like other hominids.

LARA (V.O.)

The Fox Sisters later confessed that this knocking sound? They were just popping their joints. Toes, mostly, but ankles and knees too. These girls could pop their toes so loud that entire auditoriums of people heard it. And when the people heard the popping, they imagined spirits touching them.

JAKE

There. See the bent branches over there? He went this way.

They continue through the forest.

LARA

What do you think it sounds like when Bigfoot pops his toes?

JAKE

What?

LARA

He's got big feet, right? Probably some big toe knuckles on there.

JAKE

You think a Sasquatch was popping its knuckles last night?

LARA
Well, it's possible, right?

JAKE
Well, yeah...I guess...

LARA (V.O.)
It didn't matter that it was fake, though. It started a movement. Spiritualism. Ouija boards? Seances? Most of what I do? It all goes back to a couple of girls with really creaky toes. And if you know all that history, right, it's foundational to what you do and why you do it, what do you think your nightmares will be about? Of course, it was gonna be knocking.

Jake **stops** suddenly.

Beside them, Sodapop **stops** too. He seems deeply interested in something.

LARA
Jake? What is it?

JAKE
I, um...I don't think we should go this way.

LARA
Okay, well, I think I see some more bent branches up that way. To be honest, I see them everywhere. It's almost like they're naturally occurring.

Distant droning and creepy sounds move in.

JAKE
Go back.

LARA
What?

JAKE
You need to go.

LARA
Jake, I'm sorry if I seemed --

JAKE
No. Let's go.

LARA
Okay, uh, Pops --

Sodapop suddenly **growls** and **crashes** off into the bushes, chasing something.

LARA
Pops? Sodapop! Get back here!

She steps after him. Jake stops her.

JAKE
Lara, don't.

LARA
Come on, I just --

JAKE
It's a bad place, Lara.

Rustling sound.

LARA
Jake, I'm gonna need you to let go of me.

(beat)
Thank you. Now I'm going to get my dog.

JAKE
I wouldn't.

LARA
So don't.

Lara **crashes** into the bushes and trees.

EXT. DEAD ZONE - CONTINUOUS

She stops. Everything has gone **silent**. No trees. No birds. Nothing. Just a distant drone to tell us this is creepy.

Lara takes a **step** forward.

LARA
What the...?

She looks around. It's eerily quiet.

LARA
Soda? Sodapop?

Lara takes a few nervous steps forward over the sandy ground.

LARA
Where you at, buddy? You checking out those deer...carcasses...? Jesus, that's a lot of dead deer.

She pivots, looks around.

LARA
And trees.

LARA (V.O.)
*A neat circle of dead...things.
Trees, bushes, animals. Birds looked like they'd fallen out of the sky.
Even the dirt felt dry and lifeless.*

Lara pulls out her phone. **Shutter sounds** as she takes photos.

LARA
What could do this? I mean, elk don't do graveyards, they're not elephants, it's...

LARA (V.O.)
The weird thing -- and I didn't really think about this until later -- but there weren't even any bugs. No flies, no worms, nothing. But the deer were still decayed like normal? I don't know. You expect flies, you know? It just made the whole thing seem really, really quiet.

LARA
Pops? Sodapop! Oh, thank god.

Sodapop whines.

LARA
What'd you find, buddy?

She reaches toward him. Sodapop **growls**.

LARA
 Hey, hey, it's just a...sweater...let
 me see that, bud.

She takes the sweater. Sodapop **whines** and jumps for it -- he
 wants it back.

LARA (V.O.)
*Strawberry University. A dumb joke
 sweater I got for Rose in Portland
 one time. She said she threw it out
 before we even broke up.*

LARA
 Is this why you ran off, Pops? You
 could...smell her?

LARA (V.O.)
*She said it in one of those dumb
 fights. The bad ones, toward the end.
 I guess she just wanted to hurt me.*

She calls back to Jake.

LARA
 Jake? Jake! I found something!

LARA (V.O.)
*She kept it, though. So that's
 something.*

She waits. No answer.

LARA
 What do you think, Bud? Is there a
 trail? Do that, you know, tracking
 thing.

Sodapop **whines** and **scratches**.

LARA
 Well, I'm not staying here with all
 the bad meat. Come on, buddy, let's
 head back and regroup.

Sodapop whines.

LARA
 No, you can have the sweater when we
 get home.

She walks away. Sound of **heavy footsteps**. She turns, gasps.

LARA
Someone there?

The sound stops. Sodapop keeps whining.

LARA
I'm really starting to hate this
place.

She walks off.

INT. LARA'S INBOX

COMPUTER VOICE
First unheard message.

A young man, probably stoned.

PETER
Hey, uh, is this Lara Campbell? I
can't find my keys, and like, I don't
know if you do any work with
poltergeists, but there is this...Oh.
Hang on, they were just in my jeans.
Never mind.

BEEP.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE / LARA'S COTTAGE - DAY

Lara and Sodapop crash out of the bushes.

LARA
Finally! Jesus.

She stops to catch her breath.

Sodapop groans.

LARA
(calls out)
Jake?
(beat)
Jake? Are you here? It was great
finding a way back without you, by
the way.

She walks up to his house. The door opens with a **creak**.

LARA
Jake?

She waits a second, then sighs and **shuts the door**.

LARA
Come on, buddy, let's get back to the
cottage. I'll make some calls or
something.

Sodapop gives an inquiring **whine**.

LARA
Yes, you can have the sweater.

They walk across the **gravel** toward the cabin.

INT. LOFTY DINER - LATER

There's a low hum of **conversation** from other patrons.
Silverware moves against **plates**, etc.

The bell over the door **dings** as Lara enters. CAMILLE (late
20s) approaches, cheerful.

CAMILLE
Welcome to the Lofty Diner. You want
a booth or a table?

LARA
I'm actually just looking for Sheriff
Tate. Dispatch said he was here?

CAMILLE
Oh, he is, but he's actually in a
meeting with --

LARA
(bright, fake)
Mayor Terri Boone? Is that you?

TERRI sits at a table with SHERIFF TATE (65), a jovial man
with a folksy, avuncular approach to justice.

TERRI
Lara? What are you doing here?

LARA
I should've known I'd see you here.
Among all your constituents.

Terri pauses. She makes a quick calculation. And she also
switches to a bright, cheery tone...with an edge beneath it.

TERRI

You know me. Just chatting with the Sheriff, here.

SHERIFF TATE

Howdy. Sheriff Tate.

TERRI

Camille, why don't you see if you can find Lara a nice seat at the counter?

LARA

Oh, I actually have business with the two of you, if you don't mind.

CAMILLE

Is that alright with you, Mayor Boone?

TERRI

Honey, I keep telling you to call me Terri.

CAMILLE

Right, sorry.

SHERIFF TATE

Of course, we'll just pull up another chair for you here. I'm always happy to hear a citizen's report.

The chair **scrapes** as Camille pulls it across the floor.

CAMILLE

Okay, well, I'll just come back for the, um -- I'll check in on you.

LARA

Thanks.

She retreats.

SHERIFF TATE

Now, what can I help you with?

TERRI

I'm surprised to see you out and about, dear. I thought I was clear.

SHERIFF TATE

What's that now? Everything okay?

LARA

I just have a little history with Mayor Terri's daughter, Rose.

SHERIFF TATE

Oh...oh, you're Lara Campbell.

LARA

Have you been talking about me Mayor Boone? How flattering.

SHERIFF TATE

Well, she just mentioned a few things.

TERRI

Yes, so I wouldn't say there's much the two of you need to talk about. If you could just --

LARA

I found Rose's sweater.

This brings both of them to a stop. Silence for a short beat.

LARA

In the woods above Jake Talbott's house. I can take you right to it. Well, not right to it, but you know, I can find it again.

Another beat.

LARA

Come on. She must've passed through there on her way to -- wherever she went. It's a lead. She's a missing person, right? So if we just head back up there...

SHERIFF TATE

Rose Boone is not a missing person, Miss Campbell.

LARA

She's been gone for two weeks.

TERRI

She's fine.

SHERIFF TATE

And her mother says she's camping. Listen, Miss Campbell, I don't know when you were last in contact with Rose, but...this isn't so unusual with her.

LARA

Clearly it is, or else why would Mitchell --

TERRI

Mitchell suffers from a severe respiratory disorder. I don't see how he could've called you, Lara.

LARA

Do you want to hear the message? I've been having some issues with my voicemail, but I'm sure it's in there.

SHERIFF TATE

Miss Campbell. Believe it or not, we actually have things under control here in Wasco County. And we don't need people like you --

(off her reaction)

N-no, no, no, not -- my niece is a lesbian, so I don't have a problem with that -- I just mean with your history of, of misrepresenting yourself, maybe you're not the right person to go around telling us what to do.

LARA

Misrepresenting myself? Why, Mayor Boone, what have you been saying about me?

TERRI

Nothing that isn't true.

SHERIFF TATE

The fake psychic business.

LARA

Fake?! You don't believe I'm really psychic?

Terri scoffs.

LARA

Oh...hold on...I'm feeling something.

TERRI

Lara.

Lara stands and addresses the room.

LARA

Someone here has unresolved business with someone on the other side. You've been thinking of them lately, unexpectedly. I'm getting maybe an... M? Or a D.

SHERIFF TATE

My great-aunt! Her name was Mary Dawson.

LARA

That's it! Oh, she has a message for you.

TERRI

Enough!

Terri **slams the table**. A collective awkward silence.

LARA

Hm. Nope. It's gone. Sorry, everyone.

Her chair **slides** as she sits again.

TERRI

What do you want?

LARA

I want you to investigate this. To care. Something.

SHERIFF TATE

Were there any signs of struggle around this sweatshirt you found?

LARA

Well, no, but there were a bunch of dead deer...

TERRI

That sounds like an issue for the Game Warden, wouldn't you say, Sheriff Tate?

SHERIFF TATE

Sure.

LARA

Come on, Sheriff --

SHERIFF TATE

Mayor Terri's got a point, Miss Campbell. From where I'm sitting, this doesn't seem to be a criminal matter at all.

LARA

But --

TERRI

Well, there you have it. And I think it's about time we both got back to work, wouldn't you say, Sheriff? I'll just go see the girl about the bill.

She stands.

TERRI

Camille, honey?

CAMILLE

Yes, Mayor Boone?

She walks off.

Sheriff Tate leans in confidentially.

SHERIFF TATE

Listen, about my aunt -- did she say anything in particular? Because there's a family rumor about some gold.

TERRI

Come on, Sheriff!

SHERIFF TATE

Well, we'll talk another time.

LARA

We definitely will.

Sheriff Tate gets up to leave.

EXT. LOFTY DINER - MOMENTS LATER

A quiet **street**. A few cars, some birds, etc.

The doorbell **rings** again as Lara marches out of the Diner. She takes a few steps down the sidewalk.

The door **rings** again and Camille races after her.

CAMILLE

Wait -- wait, don't go. It's Lara, right?

LARA

Love how everyone here already knows my name.

CAMILLE

Listen, I heard what you said in there. Not that I was eavesdropping, I just --

LARA

Okay, I don't think the spirits are going to give me any more information right now, so --

CAMILLE

No, I mean...are you really looking for Rose?

LARA

Oh. Yes.

CAMILLE

Oh, thank god. Look, I feel like I've been going insane. Everybody's acting like there's no big deal, and if you bring up Rose it's like...

LARA

Like what?

CAMILLE

Just -- come over here, will you? I don't want to be too close to the diner.

LARA

Fine.

They step aside, where sounds are more muted.

CAMILLE

When you mention Rose to any of those people, it's like, either they act like they can't hear you or they just kind of pat you on the head and tell you to calm down. It's bizarre.

LARA

Are they usually like that about, you know, town secrets?

CAMILLE

Up until now I didn't think we had any town secrets.

LARA

Hm.

CAMILLE

But if you're looking for Rose...
(glances around)
I want to help you.

LARA

That's great. Where do you think she is?

CAMILLE

Well...okay, so like a few weeks ago or, or maybe like a month, something happened.

LARA

What?

CAMILLE

Well I wasn't there, but some of the guys went to the woods to watch this meteor shower.

LARA

Okay...

CAMILLE

I guess Rose was there? Or, well, I'm not sure. I don't really know her. But the guys said...they said the sky fell down.

LARA

The sky fell down.

CAMILLE

I know, it's...and they seemed pretty freaked out, but they wouldn't say much about it. And then they got sick. Like, really sick.

LARA

Huh.

CAMILLE

And since then things are just...off. It's like whatever happened that night spooked the whole town.

LARA

And Rose has been missing since then?

CAMILLE

Not long after.

LARA

Listen was this -- you said this happened in the woods?

CAMILLE

Yeah.

LARA

Have you heard anything about a kind of a "dead zone" in the woods above Jake's place?

CAMILLE

Jake Talbott?

LARA

Yeah.

CAMILLE

A dead zone?

LARA

I found this area with no vegetation. No leaves, grass, anything. And dead animals, too. Birds. A bunch of deer.

CAMILLE

Gross.

LARA

Yeah.

CAMILLE

I mean, I haven't been out there for a while. Jake doesn't really like people messing with his Bigfoot stuff.

LARA

But that's the way they went for the meteor shower? Out past Jake's place?

CAMILLE

Probably. They would've wanted to get up that hill.

LARA

Do you know when exactly this was? Who was there? Anything?

CAMILLE

I think I can look it up for you. And I can give you the guys' phone numbers, but I don't know how much it'll help you.

LARA

Why not?

CAMILLE

Well, like I said, they're sick. Like they're in the hospital sick. All of them. Tim's mom says he opens his eyes sometimes, but they can't speak. Everyone who was there that night except Rose.

LARA

Rose didn't get sick.

CAMILLE

No, apparently she was fine.

LARA

That's...weird.

CAMILLE

Right?!

LARA

Hm.

CAMILLE

Yeah. Listen, I've gotta get back to work, but, you know, see if you can find Rose's phone. She does these little Insta videos all the time? Maybe there's something from that night.

LARA

Yeah, actually, I found it at her house.

CAMILLE

What? She's always on her phone. She wouldn't leave it.

LARA

Yeah.

CAMILLE

God, this whole thing is just awful.
(beat)
But you know she's okay? Like, can you sense her or...?

LARA

Hm? Yeah. She's out there. She's got to be.

CAMILLE

Because you're -- you're psychic, right? Have you tried, like, connecting with the spirits, or...?

LARA

I'm doing everything I can, Camille.

CAMILLE

Good. Okay, yeah, I really need to get back in there. You tell me if you need anything, okay?

LARA

Yeah, here. Take my card. If you think of anything at all, call me. And if you don't get through, just try again or text or something, okay? I haven't been getting my voicemails lately.

CAMILLE

Okay. Thanks, Lara. I'm just -- I'm so glad someone believes me.

LARA
We'll find her.

CAMILLE
I know we will.

INT. LARA'S INBOX

BEEP.

COMPUTER VOICE
First skipped message.

ROSE
Lara...Laaaaaraaaa...it's so
beautiful...the face of God...

More static. A distant, high-pitched cry.

BEEP.

INT. LARA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Door **creaks** open and closed. Lara **jiggles the handle**.

LARA
Sodapop? Hey, Buddy. You feeling
okay? You seem kind of...

Sodapop gives a low **growl**.

LARA
It's okay, I won't take your sweater.
Her sweater. Your mom's -- you know.

She **walks** over to the desk and rummages through her things.

LARA
Still no Jake, huh? Well, let's see
if I can find anything about elk
graveyards online.

She **types**.

Wind blows. More **knocking**. Lara pauses, hearing it. She
waits, but the sound stops.

LARA
Jake, is that you?

She **types** again. It **knocks** again. She stops. It stops.

LARA
Okay, what is going on?

No response. Thunder in the distance.

LARA
I must be exhausted. I'm hearing things...

She yawns.

LARA
Actually I'm really, really tired.

Thunder.

LARA
I think I'll just...shut my eyes for a...

She slumps onto the floor, asleep.

The knocking moves across the field of sound.

Sodapop **whines** softly.

ROSE
(whisper)
It's okay. I'll see you soon.

Sodapop yawns.

FADE OUT.

OUTRO

"All More," by Lax Superlative fades in...

Thank you for listening to Believer. This week, let's raise some engagement. Leave us a review or a comment wherever you're listening right now. It's a little thing, but it really helps the show.

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