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Voices

by

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5 April 2005
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Voices

1. INT. THE PRESENT. A RECORDING LAB'. NIGHT. 1

It is dark; we don't see clearly. The room is filled with modern sound recording equipment, smoke-filled and dark, apart from the many active indicator lights from the equipment. A shaded lamp lights a desktop and microphone.

JOSEPH HARBOUR, 30 or 35. He is a paranormal researcher, normally laid back, casual, calm, collected. Tonight, something has changed. He sits in dishevelled clothes, looking tired, drawn. A tape recorder is running. He chain smokes while speaking into the microphone; a cigarette never leaves his right hand. He holds his left hand under the desk. It stays there, out of sight.

JOSEPH

(to the microphone)

They were strange days. It was summer, hot and dry, the way summers used to be. Three long months in which we undertook to conduct a series of experiments that were destined to change our lives. For that moment, though, we had become explorers. Journeymen on the road less travelled - from séances and Tarot, to mystic readings and healings. Interesting all, but nothing that gave us that definitive proof, that knock-out punch we were looking for - the answer that said, 'Yes, it's out there, and all of it is true. . .'

Joseph looks up suddenly, as though he hears something, then looks back down at the microphone.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

There was another investigation we undertook that summer. One which endured. A small fork in our journey's road. There was something about this one that made it special, though, that most attracted us:

the fact that, unlike so much else in the field, one could experiment with something tangible; one could, given one was successful, in the end produce something real, something solid; an artefact that could be taken away and examined; a proof we so longed to have.

It was our encounter with the Tonbandstimmenforschung, voix électroniques, voci elettroniche.

The voices.

Joseph sighs, draws on his cigarette, the end GLOWING, then continues.

We planned our experiments with a great deal of care. Researching several potential sites, we finally selected one we thought would be the best, the place where we would eventually set up our tape recorders and wait for the voices to begin.

He sighs again - recalling.

Equipped with our electronics and a healthy armour of scepticism, our target was a place that would, we thought, yield the most promising results.

Little did we know where it would eventually take us.

AIDEN HARBOR is 25. Joseph's brother, he is young-looking, thin, gaunt, wired and excitable. The archetypical tense young geek, serious and highly intelligent, but always worried. We hear him over an intercom and speaker by Joseph's right hand, the voice calm, level, but distorted by the poor speaker. Joseph is startled.

AIDEN (O/S)

Joseph. I'm back.

Joseph hesitates - switches off the recorder. He turns to the intercom.

JOSEPH

You were away a long time.
Where have you been?

AIDEN (O/S)

The same place. They're still waiting for me now. Listen, Jo'. I can't stay for long. We've talked about this before. I want you to stop now. I want you to come with me this time.

Aiden's voice pauses a beat.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Have you finished yet?

JOSEPH

I need - just a little more time. I'll be ready soon.

Aiden doesn't reply. Joseph turns back to the microphone and switches the recorder back on.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(quietly, to the
microphone)
Little did we know.

Looking suddenly bone weary, he smooths his brow as he starts to remember.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Because that's when we started getting our answers. That's when it all really began.

2. INT. PAST. ANOTHER RECORDING LAB'. EARLY EVENING. 2

Older looking sound recording equipment fills a smaller, different room, most of the gear lining one wall. Joseph and Aiden are in the middle of an experiment. Joseph is sitting at a sound desk, smoking nervously. His brother Aiden is pacing fast behind him. Joseph is smiling, delighted. Aiden looks frightened. They've been listening to something - first results.

AIDEN

(to himself as much as Joseph)

Try Loop Recorder. Then I can watch the waveform. You used the high bias tapes or the metal? The high bias - it was the high bias, wasn't it - I remember now. Once we've isolated it, we can try reversing the clips. Sometimes the messages are backwards, other times forwards. Sometimes they say one thing forward and another thing backwards. Sometimes they. . . Jesus Christ.

He stops suddenly and holds out his hand, looks at it. It is visibly shaking. He clenches it hard, puts it out of sight and starts to pace again.

JOSEPH

(watching Aiden's display)

I know, I know. But it's okay, little brother. We've heard them like this before.

AIDEN

(almost muttering)

Have we? Yes - we've heard them before - we've heard what they say.

Aiden stops pacing again, turns to Joseph.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

But we've never heard anything like this before, Jo'. Never heard them SAY anything like this before.

JOSEPH

(frowning)

What are you talking about?

AIDEN

(suddenly intense now)

What have we heard, Jo'? What are they really saying to us, do you think? What is it dead people say when you decide to give them a voice?

He walks over to one of the recorders against the wall.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Let's review it, shall we? Because I'm damned if I'm going on with it - not after this.

Aiden glares at Joseph, then CLOSES the play switch.

Sounds start BLARING from the speakers. . .individual recording clips, almost merging into one. . .nightmarish voices. . .chaotic. . .male and female. . .distorted. . .some evil sounding. . .some guttural. . .some whimpering, afraid. . .GET OUT. . .I AM HERE. . .HELP ME - PLEEEASE HELP ME. . .THAT ONE CANNOT SAVE YOU. . .I AM NOT ALONE HERE. . .GET OUT - GET OUT. . .PLEASE - SAVE ME. . .RUN FROM THIS - RUN. . .an awful, plaintive, trembling moan. . .SOON - IT'S TOO SOOOOON FOR ME. . .

He switches it off. The lab' falls SILENT.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

(calmer this time)

I've heard enough, Jo'. I just don't think I want to listen to them anymore.

JOSEPH

(smiling)

You make too much of it. You always do. You know it. We started this for a reason, Aiden. And that right there is your reason.

Joseph nods at and then points at the speakers.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

That right there is our answer.

He lights another cigarette, blows the smoke at his brother.

AIDEN

(quietly)

We started because we wanted answers? Because we wanted to know? Well now we know. All I'm getting now, Jo', all they're giving me now, are nightmares.

Joseph leans forward, gives Aiden a strange smile.

JOSEPH

But they weren't speaking to you, Aiden.

AIDEN

(angry again, frightened)

No - they weren't. And that's what I meant. I've never heard that before. I've never heard them actually talk to US before.

JOSEPH

But don't you think that means we're getting somewhere? That we're close to a breakthrough?

AIDEN

Jesus Christ, did you listen to that? Can't you hear them? The sound of their voices? They're terrified, Jo'. Wherever they are, it's no place I'd call heaven.

JOSEPH

(getting up)

And that's the entire point! That's why we're here! And you're right. Wherever those ones are, it's no happy place, that's for sure. But that's what I want to find out. It's what I want to know. It's what we all want to know.

Joseph grips Aiden's shoulders.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Where are they, Aid'? Where are the voices now?

AIDEN
(quietly, to himself)
We can't know. We're not
allowed to know.

JOSEPH
You don't know that.

AIDEN
(looking into Joseph's
eyes - after a beat)
I know enough to stop.

JOSEPH
Well I don't.

Joseph lets Aiden go, walks back to the desk and sits
down.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
It's time to hear them out,
Aiden. Time to get our answers.

Joseph switches on the recorder.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
I need you on the booth again.

Reluctantly, Aiden goes back to the bank of recorders
against the wall. He starts fiddling with the controls.
Sounds start coming from the speakers. Strange,
unintelligible, they start becoming clearer as he works.

THE VOICE is ageless at first. Male, it is badly
distorted, dark, evil. It suddenly booms from the
speakers.

THE VOICE (O/S)
We are here.

Joseph punches his leg with excitement, frightened at the
same time.

JOSEPH
Goddamn, it's still here! I
knew it! Quick now, while we've
still got it.

AIDEN
(clearly frightened)

I don't like this one, Jo'. You know what it's like. This one's bad.

JOSEPH

Don't be ridiculous. Give it a little longer. If it gets too hard to listen, then we stop.

Without waiting, Joseph switches on the recorder himself.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Can you hear me?

Aiden rewinds, plays back the recorded response.

THE VOICE (O/S)

We hear you.

Joseph punches the air with excitement, signals to Aiden to go again.

Aiden rewinds, signals the recorder is running.

JOSEPH

Who are you?

Aiden rewinds, plays it back. A furious, guttural roaring noise comes from the speakers.

AIDEN

(terrified)
Dear God.

JOSEPH

(urgently to Aiden)
Go again.

Aiden rewinds, records.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(to the Voice)
Do you have a name?

Aiden rewinds, plays back.

THE VOICE (O/S)

Many names.

Aiden rewinds, records.

JOSEPH
Can you tell us one?

Aiden rewinds, plays it back. The furious, guttural roaring returns.

AIDEN
(terrified by the sound)
Christ in heaven.

JOSEPH
(to Aiden)
Go again.

Aiden rewinds, records.

JOSEPH
(to the Voice)
Where are you now? Can you tell
us where you are?

Aiden rewinds, plays back.

THE VOICE (O/S)
With you.

AIDEN
(terrified by the
response)
Stop this, Jo'!

JOSEPH
(urgently to Aiden again)
Not now! Go again!

Aiden rewinds, records.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(to the voice)
Why are you here?

Aiden rewinds, plays back.

THE VOICE (O/S)
To watch.

Aiden rewinds, records.

JOSEPH
(to the voice)

Watch what?

Aiden rewinds, plays back.

The roaring sound returns - dark, throaty.

THE VOICE (O/S)

A dying.

AIDEN

(absolutely terrified)

Oh God. I knew it, Jo'. I knew it would do this. Will you STOP this now?

JOSEPH

(to Aiden)

Are you joking? This is the closest we've ever come to a dialogue. We'd be fools to stop now.

AIDEN

(angrily)

We'd be fools to go on!

AIDEN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

You don't understand, do you. You just don't get it. But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe you do understand. Maybe the problem is you're just so blind you refuse to see.

JOSEPH

What are you talking about?

AIDEN

The 'dying', Jo'? The 'dying'?

AIDEN (CONT'D)

(after a beat)

Dear God - they're talking to you, Jo'. They're talking about you.

Joseph pauses, thinking about it.

JOSEPH

(after a beat)
Okay. Good. Let's find out,
shall we?

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
Let's ask them.

AIDEN
Jo', for pity's sake. . .

JOSEPH
(angrily to Aiden)
Go again!

Aiden closes his eyes, does nothing.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Go again!

Aiden opens his eyes again, rewinds, records.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(to the voice)
Who is going to die?

Aiden rewinds, plays back.

The roaring sound again.

THE VOICE (O/S)
You are.

Aiden whimpers, hesitates, rewinds, records.

JOSEPH
(to the voice)
How am I going to die?

Aiden rewinds, plays back.

THE VOICE (O/S)
By your own hand.

AIDEN
No more! God, no more!

JOSEPH
(to Aiden, pointing at
him, SHOUTING)
Hold it together! Go again!

Aiden rewinds, records.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(calmer now, to the voice)
When am I going to die?

Aiden rewinds, plays back.

The roaring sound again, louder this time, longer, more evil.

THE VOICE (O/S)
Now.

Aiden flies away from the recorders, eyes like saucers.

AIDEN
Okay. That's it. No more.

JOSEPH
(to Aiden)
Get back to the recorder!

AIDEN
No, Joseph! I'm not doing it!
Not after that!

Joseph gives him a strange look. He suddenly realises his brother is seriously disturbed. He tries to make light of it, to jolly him along.

JOSEPH
This is crazy, Aid'. You don't believe them, do you? You don't actually believe I'm going to kill myself - right here - right now?

AIDEN
I don't know, Joseph. Are you?

JOSEPH
Of course I'm not. You're taking this too seriously.

He pauses a beat.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
You know what they're like. You know what they say. We've both

heard it a thousand times.
They're liars, Aid'. They lie
all the time.

AIDEN
(to himself)
Not all the time. Not all the
time.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
Then what do you think they're
talking about, Jo'? Who do you
think they were talking to?

JOSEPH
(mock angrily)
Well I'm never going to find
out now, am I!

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
Maybe they weren't talking to
me at all.

Aiden looks startled. Then frightened again.

AIDEN
What are you saying?

He takes a step toward Joseph.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
Are you saying it's me? Are you
saying they were talking about
me?

JOSEPH
(only semi-seriously)
Well there's no one else here,
is there?

Aiden starts pacing again, extremely
agitated now, almost manic.

AIDEN
(to himself quickly)
Me? Could it be me? Could I be
the one? But why me? Why would

I die? Why would I want to? Why would I kill myself?

AIDEN (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
Why would they want me to?

JOSEPH
(quietly - realising his mistake)
Aiden - stop it.

AIDEN
(to himself)
How would I die? How would I even do it. Would it be me that did it? Could it be them? Could they do it? Could they make me do it?

JOSEPH
(louder now)
Aiden - stop it!

AIDEN
(to himself)
Have I thought about dying? I've thought about dying. I think about dying all the time.

JOSEPH
(SHOUTING)
Stop it!

Aiden suddenly stops pacing.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Don't do this. You start actually listening to the voices, you don't stop. You don't ever stop. The voices - they never give you enough. Not enough to know. But that's what the voices are, Aid'. They're a lie. And they play with us.

Play with our minds. Don't start listening to them now.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
We've talked about what can happen if you do.

AIDEN
You go mad?

Aiden crosses to Joseph, stares down at him.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
You think I'm going mad, Joseph?

JOSEPH
No, Aiden. I think you're scared out of your wits. You shouldn't be. Like you said, we started this so we wouldn't have to be scared anymore. That's why anyone begins.

Aiden starts pacing again.

AIDEN
In the beginning, Jo'. In the beginning. But then you realise. Then you finally work it out. After you hear the voices, really listen to them, the fear - you know these ones, the ones we listen to - they're as afraid as we are.

JOSEPH
What can the dead have to be afraid of?

Aiden stops abruptly.

AIDEN
(suddenly inspired)
What are they afraid of? Eternity. They're afraid of eternity, Jo'.

He takes a step toward Joseph - menacing. Something has changed in him.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Alone - in the dark - forever.
Who wouldn't be afraid of that?

Joseph watches his brother for a moment. He's clearly worried about him now, worried by what he is saying.

JOSEPH

You think that's what dying means, Aiden? You think that's all there is?

AIDEN

After everything we've heard - don't you?

JOSEPH

No - I don't.

Aiden starts pacing again, slowly this time.

AIDEN

Then why do you think they talk to us, Jo'? What is it, do you think, that makes them come? Why do you think they leave their voices here for us to find?

Aiden stops again, faces his brother.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

(after a beat)
Has it ever occurred to you that maybe - just maybe - it's because we're all they've got.

Joseph sits back suddenly. He is clearly stunned by what his brother has just said. It's never occurred to him before. It disturbs him.

JOSEPH

(quietly)
I don't believe that.

AIDEN

You don't believe it? Or is it that you can't face it?

AIDEN (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
But there's no point going on
with this anymore, Jo'.

JOSEPH
(frightened himself now)
What the hell are you talking
about?

AIDEN (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
Don't you see it's too late.

Aiden rounds on his brother.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
Do you think they can't touch
us, Jo'? Do you think they
can't reach out when they want
to?

JOSEPH
I KNOW they can't! They're
voices!

Joseph gets up suddenly.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
They're just voices!

AIDEN
You're wrong.

From the other side of the room, a lamp's globe suddenly flickers, then burns out with a FLASH. Both men stare at it, terrified. From the wall, the tape decks start up. A low howl comes from the speakers and then stops.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
(his terror building)
We've opened a door, Joseph.
We've opened a door and we
can't close it again.

JOSEPH
There's no door! My God,
they're recordings. A bunch of
goddamn electrons set down on

tape. Just so much USELESS
magnetic tape.

Joseph takes a step toward his brother.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
There's no door, Aiden! There's
only us!

Aiden hesitates, cocks his head to one side, as though he
has just heard or felt something.

AIDEN
(whispering)
Not anymore.

THE VOICE (O/S)
(from the speakers, dark,
horrifyingly loud)

Not anymore.

Both men cringe, eyes wide, terrified by what appears to
be happening.

AIDEN
(absolutely terrified,
clearly losing it now)
They want us to die too, Jo'.
Don't you realise? They're not
here to help us. They're not
here to help anyone! They're
desperate, Jo'. They don't want
to be alone anymore. They're
afraid! They're terrified!

He backs away to the door, completely unhinged by fear
now.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
And now they've seen us, they
won't ever let us go!

Aiden runs from the room in a panic.

JOSEPH
(follows, stands at the
door, SCREAMING)
Aiden! Aiden! Aiden!

The original sound recording lab' again.

JOSEPH
(speaking into the microphone)

But that all happened a very long time ago.

It's like we looked into a void that night - a place you should only ever see once, when you're at the end, when it's all over. And the void looked back at us. Problem is, the void isn't empty. And like my brother Aiden said, once you're there, once it sees you, it doesn't ever let you go.

It's been years now. Years of work, of perfecting what Aiden and I started. Years of listening to them. Aiden was wrong about one thing. They can't touch you - can't reach out. I listen to them all the time now, though - and after he suicided, I hear my dead brother all the time too. You see, he was right about that part - no matter how hard I try, I can't close that door again. Now, like my brother, I just don't want to listen to them anymore.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(to the microphone, after a beat)
Our answer?

Joseph closes his eyes.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
The voices - those dark voices you sometimes think you hear - the lonely, the pleading, the terrified. Those dead voices - they aren't always inside your head.

Joseph opens his eyes again.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Okay - I'm done.

Joseph turns off the recorder, then turns to the 'intercom' speaker at his right hand.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(to the 'intercom')
I can come now, Aiden.

He finally takes his left hand out from under the desk. He's holding a pistol. He has been the entire time. He looks at it for a moment, then puts it down on the desk. He takes a final drag from his cigarette, and slowly, carefully, puts it out.

The pistol suddenly levitates, freezes in mid air, pointing at the side of his head. He does not appear startled - but not because he expects it - because he doesn't really register what's happening.

He turns his head - looks at it - his eyes WIDEN at the last moment.

4. EXT. A HOUSE. A WINDOW. NIGHT.

4

There is a flash from the window. A muffled GUNSHOT rings out.

THE END.