

Episode 9

(The radio studio again)

Eliza: We repeat, once again, if you can hear this...

Jacob: They've gotten the point, Eliza. No sense wasting your breath.

Eliza: We don't know if they've gotten the point or not, Jacob. Last time I checked that door's still shut tight.

Jacob: A lot of talking ain't gonna open it up.

Eliza: Well if anyone listening bothered to call the police, they certainly will. What's taking them so long?

Jacob: We first found the body about, what...five minutes ago?

Eliza: About five, right.

Jacob: So let's assume someone did phone the police station. How long do you think it would take them to respond to a situation like this?

Eliza: Well...if I had to guess...

Jacob: About five minutes?

Eliza: Damn it Jacob! I'm not gonna sit here and let you demoralize me like this. What do you suggest we do? You who always knows the best course of action.

Jacob: Easy! We find another way out.

Eliza: Like what? This place only has one door.

Jacob: There has to be another way out of here. There has to be a...a ventilation duct or a utility hatch somewhere in the back.

Eliza: And if there's not?

Jacob: Then we find something we can use to get through that door. A pipe, a rod, even one of our chairs if we have to break it down.

Eliza: We can try to pick the lock too.

Jacob: Yeah, we can try that. But whatever we do I think it's best we focus on what's here and what's now. If reaching out for help through the microphone hasn't gotten those doors open by now, I think it's safe to say that it won't.

Eliza: That's not true. The more we talk and the better we plead our case the better the chances of us getting someone out there to call for help. Someone should stay at the microphones at all times.

Jacob: We can worry about that later! What about the doors? Getting those things open isn't gonna be a one person job, ya know.

Eliza: (pauses, breathing frantically) You're right. But I should at least go over there every once in a while, make sure everyone's updated with what's going on.

Jacob: Whatever. Just help me now.

(Eliza and Jacob walk over to the back of the studio, and begin scouring for anything of use)

Eliza: Find anything?

Jacob: No...

Eliza: I don't understand. If they wanted to kill us, why not just kill us? Why go through with a broadcast like this?

Jacob: Because they want to do more than just kill us. There are men who play at higher games than you can imagine.

Eliza: Well, if this is a game, I'm set on winning it. I'm going to see if there's anything to try to pick the lock with. Let me know if you find any metal bars. (Eliza returns to the desks, where she begins going through drawers in search of tools. While by the desks, she grabs the microphone) My co-host and I are currently looking for tools in the studio, either to pick the lock or to break the door down. I repeat, as I've repeated before and before...our situation is urgent.

Jacob: Damn it Eliza! First things first. Worry about them later!

Eliza: We are trapped in a studio with a dead body, and are in imminent dangers ourselves. If you haven't called the police to break us free, do so now!

(Hissing radio static. Gradually, the static morphs into Prelude of An Afternoon of a Faun)

Announcer: (thick French accent) Another sunny day in the forest. Monsieur Hart and Mademoiselle Hind are out as usual, playing in the woods and enjoying the beautiful weather. But what's this? It seems as if something has caught Monsieur Hart's eye. Could it be the lovely Mademoiselle Hind? I do believe so. What? Pas possible. Go get her Monsieur Hart! What is the reason for this? What hind could possibly say no to you, Monsieur Hart? Ah, but of course. Monsieur Hart has not bathed with Colgate Ivory today. Only the finest ingredients are rendered into this soap of kings, guaranteed to turn the smelliest pig on the farm into a noble stag capable of winning any heart he desires. Take for example Monsieur Stag. She takes to him at once! Remember this sad tale of Hart and Hind, gentlemen. Next time you're at the store, be sure to buy Colgate Ivory luxury soap. She'll be able to tell the difference.

(The living room of Bertolio and Banquist. The radio is crackling. The same ad for 103 Windsong that played earlier. Bertolio turns the volume down)

Bertolio: Banquist! Miss Banquist!

(Brief pause)

Banquist: (excited) Are they here?

Bertolio: No. (snaps) Oh no, they're not. I'm sorry.

Banquist: Uh!

Bertolio: Hey, can you come in here for a minute? I just thought of something and I wanna bounce it off your head.

Banquist: Does this concern that stupid show?

Bertolio: Yes it does, but that doesn't mean it's not important. Please, Banquist. I'll make it quick.

(Banquist enters the room)

Banquist: (haggard and worn out) I'm listening.

Bertolio: All right. So I was just sitting here, listening, and I got started thinking. You know how this is supposed to be a goodbye special, right?

Banquist: Yeah.

Bertolio: Well, first of all, it's ridiculous that they wouldn't have advertised this beforehand. But whatever, maybe they were trying to keep it a surprise. But this is what really gets me: just because this is a going-away for Wolfwhistle doesn't mean it's a going-away for Grotius the Great too.

Banquist: Well of course! No one said it had to be. That show is always on after Wolfwhistle—as soon as they're done with this silly exercise they'll have all the other shows run as they're normally scheduled.

Bertolio: I'm not sure about that.

Banquist: Why wouldn't they?

Bertolio: I just went over to 103 Windsong—every night at 8:15 they have an ad for Grotius the Great, over on 104 WPR. They didn't have that ad tonight. Every night for years they've had an ad for that show at that exact time, but tonight they replaced it with some shit about deer and soap. Kind of weird, huh?

Banquist: My god, Bertolio, you seriously listen to that thing way too much. Are you suggesting that Grotius actually got killed tonight and this whole thing is real?

Bertolio: I never said that. I just said that it's weird. Don't you think?

Banquist: I think it's weird that my boss and his wife are forty five minutes late for dinner! If there's anyone you should worry about being actually dead tonight it's the Whitmores. (Pause) Are you even listening?

Bertolio: What? Sorry.

Banquist: My god, what does it matter...

Bertolio: I was paying attention to the show. What I'm saying that it doesn't add up. Don't you think there's something slightly amiss about all of this?

Banquist: (yawns) Sure I do, Bertolio. I'm real concerned. (Bitterly chuckles) I wish there was some heroic rescue in the works for me. I'll be in the other room, if you want me. (Leaves the room)

Bertolio: And that's not everything. It's just not that good of an idea for a show...two people, alone, in a room, waiting to die? Why would they choose that to be their last episode of one of their most acclaimed shows? There's so much more they could do with that. And wouldn't they reveal who's behind all of this, if this was a legitimate radio episode? Otherwise the whole thing wouldn't make sense. They didn't and it doesn't. None of this makes any sense...

(Suddenly the phone rings)

Banquist: Oh my god...ok, don't get your hopes up, don't get your hopes up, don't get your hopes up (walks into the other room and answers) Hello? (Trying not to scream with delight) Ohh, that's quite all right Mr. Whitmore! I understand completely. No worries, we're quite comfortable here. No rush at all. Yes, yes, thank you again, goodbye! (She hangs up, and runs into the room) Oh Mr. Bertolio! They're on their way! They're just running late, he's just speaking with a representative from another company and it ran late. Oh thank God, the night is saved!

Bertolio: I knew it! See, no chance they would stand up someone like you! But what nerve that guy has, keeping you waiting, making you miserable!

Banquist: It's not his fault. This company is very large and powerful...he could get quite a deal from them. I haven't heard of them before...apparently their symbol is an owl? That's what they put on their products I guess?

Bertolio: What?

Banquist: I'm going to check and make sure I look all right. You should look at yourself too! Comb your hair, maybe use some cologne...

Bertolio: In a moment....I'm going to keep listening.

Banquist: But they're on their way now! They could be here any minute.

Bertolio: I know...I just think the show's about to get really good....

(The radio studio again. Jacob is trying to pry the door with open with a metal rod)

Eliza: Is there another one of those?

Jacob: (grunting and exerting. Steps away from the door for a minute) I don't think so. You can check the utility closet but I don't think you'll find anything.

Eliza: Do you think a broom shaft might work? There's bound to be one of those.

Jacob: Not strong enough. You're gonna need something metal like this. Go check...they might have some spare rebar they didn't use. (Jacob resumes his attempts to pry the door open) Anything?

Eliza: Not looking like it.

Jacob: Goddamn it!

Eliza: Jesus Christ...why is that door so strong?

Jacob: I'm not sure. There's no way it would be this tough to get open under normal circumstances. They must've reinforced it.

Eliza: Do you want me to try and pick the lock? I could use my hairpin. If that broke I found a bunch of paper clips under the desk that we could straighten and use.

Jacob: Do you know how to pick a lock?

Eliza: How hard can it be? That should be just a simple lock. I can fool around with it as long as I need to.

Jacob: All right. Do what you have to do.

Eliza: (hunches down near the lock, retrieves a small pin from her hair, and begins to wiggle the pin into the lock)

Jacob: Any progress?

Eliza: I think so. If I turn one of the tumblers...(tugs and grunts) I can feel it...damn it! It's not working. Let me try again....(goes to pick the lock. A few more seconds of exertion, followed by a defeated gasp) It's not working...the pin can't move the tumblers. (sighs) I'm sorry.

Jacob: Hmmmm....(paces around)

Eliza: I don't know what else to do....Maybe if we can try to lift the desk and use it as a battering ram....(moves over to the desk. She starts laughing, in absurd disbelief) The desk....the desk...is welded to the floor! The metal legs welded to iron plates....they really thought of everything.

Jacob: (moves over to inspect. He too laughs when he sees the welding) That's poetic justice, isn't it? We always were bolted down to this show weren't we? (Him and Eliza both laugh)

Eliza: What are we going to do? They've thought of everything. Unless we keep speaking, to the radio...

Jacob: There is one other choice. One other party to appeal.

Eliza: (Shakily) What are you talking about?

Jacob: After Mura, when we were preparing the show for its virtuous new life...I met with a man who represents certain interests.

Eliza: What? Who? How did this come about?

Jacob: He sought me out. I'm not sure exactly...he has his identity to protect. But we spoke about the future of the show. The ramifications of the show.

Eliza: Jacob...don't tell me that you brought this about...

Jacob: I tried everything in my power to prevent something like this from happening! You thought we could preach the gospel and drag powerful names through the mud without a care in the world, but I knew better. So I did what was necessary. I met with him. I made a deal. To protect the show. To protect us...

Eliza: What kind of deal?

Jacob: I made some statements, some recordings. I promised that we would disavow any major statements made, that we would cloak ourselves as 'entertainment', so no one listening could really feel the edge of the blade. All of this...this might be him testing me. It's him we need to appeal to, not your listeners.

Eliza: You really think this person is worth trusting? After everything you've seen?

Jacob: It's a better idea than anything you've got. Here...(he walks to the microphone) Hello, sir. It's your loyal and understanding friend Jacob. What an evening of mystery and intrigue we have! But I must address you now directly. I honor the covenant we made, now and always. You can count on my faithful assistance, after the end of this show, after the end of all shows. If this was meant as a test, I can tell you, with fullest confidence, that I did not falter. (Sets the microphone down, breathing quickly) Now we wait. There should be a sign.

(After a few seconds, the door unbolts, and slowly cracks open)

Eliza: My god, the door! It's opening!

Jacob: I knew it. I never doubted him for a second! (The door slowly swings open. Jacob and Eliza creep towards the door. Heavy footsteps approach from outside)

Jacob: Is that you....do my eyes deceive me....?

Eliza: Hello? Who are you?

(A tense moment. Then, the figure slams the door shut again. driving the two hosts back with yelps of fear. The door loudly locks)

Eliza: What? Who was that?

Jacob: A guard.

Eliza: Of who?

Jacob: Of us.

Eliza: (leaps for the door, and begins pounding with both fists) PLEASE! LET US OUT! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!

Jacob: (in a voice of quiet disbelief) My god. After everything in my life...this was all just a jest, at my expense. We're never getting out of here.

Eliza: Don't say that. Don't ever say that. Who's doing this to us?

Jacob: I have no idea...now, would you please just be quiet? The noise isn't helping. Please....I just need a little quiet...

Eliza: We can't give up. We just can't. People listen to us, Jacob. They have before, and they will now. There are thousands of people out there who listen to and care about us and they will send for help as soon as they realize how dire our real situation is!

Jacob: Have we been failing in doing that so far?

Eliza: Yes, yes we have. They're not buying it...they must think it's an act or something. But we can break through and reach them. We have to have faith. We have to at least try. (Grabs the microphone) Hello? Hello to anyone listening? This is Eliza Astor of St. John, Kansas, a real woman in real trouble. I don't know what you've heard or what you believe, but everything I've said up to this point is utterly true. Please, whoever's listening! This isn't a play and this isn't a ploy. Call the police at once! If those doors aren't open in...thirty minutes we will certainly die. I beg of you! Help us!

(The living room of Bertolio and Banquist. Bertolio is pacing around anxiously, muttering to himself. Banquist is whistling off stage)

Bertolio: It's not a play...it's not a ploy...it's not a play...it's not a ploy...

Banquist: (to herself) 'Why yes, Miss Banquist, we'll have those forms right up...' 'Yes Miss Banquist, this corner office is all yours. Do you enjoy the view of Midtown, Miss Banquist? Of course we can change the curtains or decorations if you desire. Oh, I'm just an intern, Miss Banquist, I really appreciate you being so kind'. Ahh, what a life...what a life what a life what a life. Bertolio? I've decided very spontaneously to go with a different dress. The red one, do you remember it? I wore it when you first met my parents. I think it looks splendid.

Bertolio: Banquist, I don't want to alarm you...

Banquist: (nervous) What is it?

Bertolio: The show. I think we have something bigger on our hands.

Banquist: (relieved) Oh, the show. Don't worry, Mr. Bertolio, you will have plenty of time to talk about the show in the morning. Now you haven't even shaved yet! Please, you can't go to dinner looking like a bum!

Bertolio: Will you hear me out? I know this sounds crazy. But if I'm right, and I think there's a better than average chance of that being the case, then real people are in serious danger.

Banquist: (exasperated laugh) You are one of a kind. You should write for these programs. You'd actually be a very good fit for that. (Singing happily) It's just a show! It's just a show, it's just a show...

Bertolio: No, not tonight. I really don't think it is tonight. I really don't think I heard some cheap trick radio actress clamoring for attention, or some stupid publicity stunt put on for ratings. That distress in her voice was...genuine.

Banquist: And how do you know?

Bertolio: It's just a feeling! I've seen enough theatre and heard enough radio to know what's acting and what's not, and that, Miss Banquist, did not seem like acting! The best actress working off the best script in the world couldn't have sounded half as terrified as she did! There's something up at 104 WPR, and I think we should do something about it.

Banquist: And what's that? What are we supposed to do? Call the police? "Excuse me, officer, but I have a crime to report. I was listening to a radio show and was scared witless by how exciting it was! Can you send a squad car over to investigate? It was just so intense..." Why, that actually would be quite a gas, I must say. In all seriousness, Mr. Bertolio... If they really were in danger, their enemies would just kill them, they wouldn't make a broadcast out of it!

Bertolio: (pauses) That is a good point. Well, we don't want to get in the fuss of dealing with the cops quite yet. Hey, that restaurant we're going to, Maude's, that's near Houston Street, isn't it? Maybe we can just swing by, tell the Whitmores I left something there from a meeting with a client...

Banquist: NO! Absolutely out of the question. I'm fine with you being an airwave tea-head on your own time, but you are not going to ruin this meeting. You are going to make a good impression on the Whitmores, and we are not going to that radio station.

Bertolio: Well, no, I never said we should do that, just a suggestion!

Banquist: You know I'm right! Indecisive as...(collects herself) I'm sorry I must be such a demon about this. But I'm on a knife's edge right now. This job, this life....everyone said I'd never be able to do it. I need this to be about me, for once. I need you supporting me. So I'm sorry if it means turning the radio off, but I won't let tonight be ruined.

Bertolio: I'm not going to ruin anything. I just think we should give this some thought. Imagine! What if it was real?

Banquist: I can't indulge this any longer. I'll be in the other room. (The phone rings) Oh my...that must be them. If you don't shave in five minutes, I'm going to grab the razor and clean you up myself. (Leaves the room) Yes, hello?

Bertolio: (to himself) No, I'm not going to ruin anything. Of course I care about all of this! And that is a good point...why would they broadcast this if they could just kill them. But there was real truth and fear in Eliza's voice....people are in danger. But what if I'm just a mark? Maybe they are trying to play me for a rube. But so what if they are? If everyone else is just blowing this off, the responsibility might be all on me. I don't know...I just don't know....(Slowly, a dawning realization) What if that was you, Banquist? What would I do if you were in Eliza's position?