

**Mini-Episode 13:  
The Lighthouse**

**By: Alex Brown**

**NOTE: This takes place before the events of *The Bridge*. This is *The First Folklore-Filled Broadcast!!!* While there's a lightness to her voice, there's also something lingering behind every word. Perhaps a little bittersweet. Definitely something missing.**

ETTA:

Okay, so... I have no idea how any of this works. But here we go. This is kind of exciting, right? And a little against the rules, but rules wouldn't exist if someone wasn't supposed to break them.

Or that's what I think, anyway. The vibe I'm getting from my supervisor? Not so much. Seems like a rules guy through and through which, ugh, that's so boring.

But what he doesn't know won't kill him, right? This can be our little secret.

*[Some light typing before the music starts up]*

This story starts where many others do...on a sharp cliff that overlooks a harsh sea.

At the top of a hill covered in jagged rocks, right before the edge drops into the hungry water below, sat a lighthouse. On a clear, cloudless night, it stood proudly at the precipice, sending a friendly reminder to nearby sailors that someone was watching out for them. Someone knew where they were. Marked their journey, just like they'd marked so many others before.

Someone cared.

But on stormy, cloud-filled nights where it was hard to see the tip of your nose, let alone a helpful beam of light, the lighthouse was something else entirely. It was a warning. A scream that could break through the fog, loud and clear and pleading.

*Whatever you do, don't come any closer.*

And, for a long time, it worked. Generations upon generations of ships and sailors were saved, warned away from the rocks and the waves and the cliff that, at any given moment, would spell their doom.

The light stayed on, never wavering in its mission. The light keepers who lived there made sure of it.

Until one day, when they didn't.

No one knows where they went. Or how. When. Why. But, one day, they were simply gone.

And then, the very next day, a storm came.

You can guess what happened next.

There's not an exact count of how many sailors died in that shipwreck. Just like there's not an exact account of where the lighthouse keepers vanished to.

But what we do know is this: after that fateful day, the lighthouse was never staffed again.

Because it didn't need to be.

After that fateful day, the light turned back on, as if by sheer will of force. Maybe it was out of mourning, or shame. Horror at the tragedy that it allowed to happen. But *something* brought that light back to life.

And it hasn't gone out since.

There are rumors, of course, about what could be behind it. There are always rumors when these kinds of things happen. Unexplainable events that make us hastily fill the uneasy hollowness in our chest with logic. Because there *has* to be a logic involved.

Otherwise, what are we left with?

[beat]

So, sure, we whisper possibilities to ourselves in the darkness. Talk each other into thinking that the unknown is just one step away from being unmasked. That all we have to do is pull back the curtain to see that there really was nothing to fear all along. Everything is more digestible that way.

Easier.

And, if we follow that line of thinking, there are lots of reasonable, solid explanations for what happened after the shipwreck.

Maybe community members banded together to keep the light going. Or new lighthouse keepers were hired, a new system was worked out, and there was so much order and logic that the strange and unusual things were chased away.

I'd almost believe them, if not for one small detail: After the two lighthouse keepers vanished, the doors were boarded up.

No living person ever stepped foot inside of the lighthouse again.

And this is where the logic starts to fall apart. This is where the lies we tell ourselves stop being convincing. Where we discover that we can't explain away the things we're most afraid of.

What do we do when everything we thought we knew stops making sense?

Unfortunately, I don't have the answer to that question. Not right now, anyway.

But I'd like to try to find it.

There are lots of other things like the lighthouse out there. Disappearances that destroyed lives. Disasters that changed how we saw the world. And our place in it.

These mysteries are all around us. Whispers about a town somewhere in the desert called Lotus Valley, where a siren lures you in, forcing you to face your fate. Rumors of crossroads where you can make a deal with a demon to change your life...sometimes for the better.

And, of course, everything that happened on the Transcontinental Bridge.

I don't know how often I'll be able to broadcast these stories about the places we abandoned and the mysteries we can't find the answers to--or for how long--but, hey, it's something to do to pass the time out here.

Oh, and one last note about that lighthouse. Although its exact location is impossible to find, I spent some time researching it before I became an official part of Watchtower 10's crew.

Well, crew is a very loose concept right now, since it's only me and my supervisor, but you get what I mean.

But anyway, I found a lighthouse on top of a cliff. The light coming from the top of the tower broke through the night, shining out onto the ocean as the waves crashed against the weathered, exposed rocks under my feet.

I walked up to the door.

It was boarded up.

There were scratches in the wood. Long, sharp, curved, frantic gashes that slid from the barrier and cut jagged lines into the lighthouse's stone facade.

I took a step back, tracing the scratch marks as they trailed all the way up the side of the lighthouse. They were all over.

Whatever made those marks wasn't just trying to get in. They  
wanted to rip the whole place apart.

I didn't notice the scratch marks as I was walking up. But maybe  
that's because I didn't know to look for them.

The farther away I got, the more it became clear: a word was  
scratched into the lighthouse's stony exterior.

*Run.*

[beat]

So, I did.

[beat as that sets in]

There are questions out there demanding answers.

Let's find them.

Together.

## CREDITS:

Thank you so much for listening to *The Bridge*! This mini-episode was written, edited, and mixed by Alex Brown. This episode features Alex Brown as the voice of ETTA. We'd like to thank Sara Fairchild for providing the music for this mini-episode and being so talented that it defies logic.

We'd also like to congratulate the one, the only, Rebecca Mahoney on the release of her stunning YA debut, *THE VALLEY AND THE FLOOD*. The three most notable things about Lotus Valley, Nevada are as follows. The yearly quilting competition. The blueberry mint pie. And the massive flood that will wipe it clean off the map... in three days' time.

*THE VALLEY AND THE FLOOD* is out today, February 23, 2021, in a bookstore near you, and has received a Kirkus Star, a Booklist Star, a Booklist Spotlight, and is a Winter 2020-2021 Indie Next Best List Winner. If you love *The Bridge*, I know you're going to love Rebecca's book! So... what are you waiting for? Go pick up your copy of *THE VALLEY AND THE FLOOD* today!

CONGRATULATIONS REBECCA!!! We're all so proud of you!!!

Links to purchase *THE VALLEY AND THE FLOOD* can be found in this episode description, as well as on our website, [thebridgepod.com](http://thebridgepod.com), and through our social media accounts.

And, finally, thank you for sticking with us during our extended hiatus. Other projects and lots of life changes have prolonged our return, but let's just say that 2021 might finally be the year we come back to you. We all love this show so much, and we're determined to see it through, no matter how long it takes.

We're so happy that you're on this journey with us. We'll get through it. Together.