

*Wico Lye*  
*A Radio Play*

CHARACTERS

JOEY: Male. Lakota Native American. 17.

ADAM: Male. White. 18.

GENEVIEVE: Female. Korean. 17.

ALICE HEADLEY: Female. White. 44. A scientist at the Sanford Laboratory in Lead, SD.

MR. PARKS: Male. White. 52. ADAM's father.

MS. APPLETON: Female. White. 34. The school guidance counselor.

UNCI: Female. Lakota Native American. 74. JOEY's grandmother.

WHISPER: a voice.

SETTING

The Black Hills of South Dakota.

August 2016-January 2017.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

- This script is ideally meant for performance in an audio recording format, but could also be a staged reading.
- Possible sound effects are provided in the script, but are not mandatory for the performance. They may be changed, taken out, or added to, according to the director's discretion.

*SOUND: Silence. A recording starts.*

JOEY

Hello. It's January 5, 2017. 9:42pm. I'm Joey... sorry. This isn't a good introduction, but Adam said...

These are recordings made by myself and my two best friends, Adam and Genevieve, the night they... that we... um.

These events happened in August of 2016. These recordings are real. I promise. Everything you hear is true. Just... wait until the end before you make any decisions about it. About us. Okay?

Cause... it's a lot.

*SOUND: the click of a button. Static. A tape recorder crackles to life. Someone is fiddling with it.*

ADAM

Hey, it works!

GENEVIEVE

Oh boy.

JOEY

That's surprising, I was sure the thrift shop guy had scammed you.

ADAM

You doubted my haggling prowess?

GENEVIEVE

Oh, absolutely.

ADAM

Hmmpph. Anyway. It's August 4, 7:49pm.

JOEY

What are you doing?

ADAM

Just trying it out. Check. Check. One, two. Over.

GENEVIEVE

It works, okay? Now get over here and help me figure out how to work this lantern.

JOEY

Oh, it's super easy, here, let me.

GENEVIEVE

Thanks.

ADAM

Come on, guys, aren't you excited? We're going on an adventure! Camping! The Black Hills! Fun and excitement!

JOEY

Are you kidding? Nothing exciting ever happens out here. I'd be shocked if we found anything cool.

ADAM

Oh, ye of little faith. Don't worry, Joey. It'll be great.

*SOUND: the recorder shuts off.*

*SOUND: Static. The tape recorder is switched on. The sound of crickets, wind blowing in the trees, and the occasional rumble of motorcycles is heard in the background.*

ADAM

August 7, 2016. 11:53 pm. Please state your names for the record.

JOEY

Seriously?

GENEVIEVE

Genevieve.

JOEY

Joey.

ADAM

Adam. Our location: the outer rim of the Homestake Gold Mine—

JOEY

Are you really doing this?

ADAM

What?

JOEY

Going all Ghostbusters on us.

ADAM

It's important that we keep a record of our experience.

GENEVIEVE

Leave him alone, Joey.

JOEY

I'm not saying it's bad, but if I have to detail everything I do "for the record", I'm throwing myself over the edge.

GENEVIEVE

That's not funny.

JOEY

Sorry, Ginny.

GENEVIEVE

Don't call me Ginny.

ADAM

Guys! Back to business. Location: the outer rim of the Homestake Gold Mine. We have one tent, three sleeping bags, one large lantern, a coil of rope, a lighter, a portable phone charging block, three flashlights, two extra sets of batteries, a box of Cliff bars, seven bottles of water, this tape recorder, and Joey's pocket knife.

GENEVIEVE

And our backpacks.

ADAM

Of course. And our backpacks, each of which are packed according to the prospective needs of each participant.

JOEY

I brought peanut M&Ms.

GENEVIEVE

And clothes, right?

JOEY

No. What for? We're only going to be out here for one night.

GENEVIEVE

You're disgusting. You're gonna smell.

JOEY

But I'll be full of peanut M&Ms.

ADAM

Guys, can we please try to be professional? I wanna put this on Ghostcast.

JOEY

What's that?

ADAM

... the podcast I just came up with.

JOEY

Dude, you nerd!

ADAM

Ghost hunting programs are very popular right now!

GENEVIEVE

I'm gonna punch you both in a minute. Joey, stop being mean to Adam. Adam, stop being such a nerd.

ADAM

Yes, ma'am. Genevieve, you want to go over the case?

JOEY

For the record.

ADAM

Yes, for the record. Our very *professional* record.

GENEVIEVE

Okay. On June seventh, five guys from the class of 2017—our classmates—went on a camping trip in Bobtail Gulch. On Night Three of their trip, they decided to go on a hike into the bowl of the Homestake Mine, which has technically been closed since 2002. One of the five, Peter Simmons, had gotten poison ivy on

an earlier excursion, and stayed behind at their campsite. The others—Alex Johns, Stephen “Smokey” Little Hawk, Mason DeChamp, and Orson Smith—drove to Homestake, parked in the parking lot, and hopped the fence into the bowl.

*SOUND: Night sounds stop abruptly. Another track is spliced in, this one much smoother than the first, as it was made digitally, rather than with the tape recorder.*

JOEY

I don't want to talk about history. I want to get back to the story. But Adam said history is important, and that people need to understand the background to appreciate the present. I'll try to stick to the interesting parts, but there are some things you need to know before you can understand what's going on. So here's some facts I got off of Wikipedia.

The Homestake Gold Mine is in Lead, South Dakota. It was discovered in 1876, leading to the start of the Black Hills Gold Rush. Until it closed in 2002, it was the largest and deepest gold mine in the United States, as well as the longest operating mine. In the 1960s, it was the site of Raymond Davis Jr.'s “Homestake Experiment”, which developed the theory of solar neutrino oscillation, and in 2007, it was selected as the site of the Deep Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory, which is the deepest underground science laboratory in the world. They do a lot of research about dark matter and neutrinos and stuff.

I don't know why Orson and his friends jumped the fence that night. You can pay admission and go down and visit the lab yourself—it's open to the public. And before you ask me why a government research facility wasn't able to keep four stupid high-school football players out of their mine pit, I don't know. I mean, three months later, we did it too.

Anyway. Back to Ginny.

*SOUND: Night sounds fade back in, right where the recording left off.*

ADAM

So we've got Orson, Alex, Smokey, and Mason in the Homestake basin.

GENEVIEVE

Right. Four boys went in, right at midnight, but exactly fifty-two minutes later, only three came out. The state troopers were called by a motorcyclist who had seen lights waving wildly inside the pit, and they arrived just in time to find Mason and Smokey trying to boost Alex over the fence, as he was sporting a broken leg. Mason had a concussion. Orson was nowhere to be found.

ADAM

The police scoured the area for hours, and right at dawn, Orson was located fifteen miles out of town in the lower branches of a ponderosa pine. He'd been blinded. He couldn't tell anyone how he got in that tree, or what had happened in the five hours and thirty-two minutes between midnight and sunrise.

JOEY

You both are such cheeseballs.

ADAM

So we're here to do what the police couldn't; find out what's down there!

GENEVIEVE

And to figure out if Joey's secret crush is crazy or not.

JOEY

Genevieve!

ADAM

Well, it's true.

JOEY

I didn't want that memorialized on record!

GENEVIEVE

Oops.

ADAM

I can edit it out.

GENEVIEVE

You said it was the only reason you came.

JOEY



I mean, Orson... he's our classmate! I just want to know that he's... you know? Like, I know his eyesight came back, but still.

GENEVIEVE

Yeah, okay.

ADAM

It's almost midnight. Are we all ready?

JOEY

I don't think jumping the fence is entirely a good idea.

GENEVIEVE

Chickening out?

JOEY

No, but I would prefer not to get arrested before my senior year of high school.

GENEVIEVE

They stopped patrolling this area two weeks ago, we'll be fine.

ADAM

Wow, Ginny, I never knew you were such a rebel.

GENEVIEVE

I'm not. I just want some excitement before we have to become adults.

JOEY

Seniors in high school aren't exactly adults.

ADAM

Guys, stop debating technicalities. Let's go! Listeners, this is Adam, signing off for now. We'll bring you back in once we're over the fence.

*SOUND: Scuffling with the tape recorder.*

How do you pause this thing? Oh wait, I got it.

*SOUND: The tape recorder shuts off. A beat, and another recording starts. Someone shuffles paper on a desk. A chair squeaks.*

JOEY

Do you mind if I record this? Just so I don't forget any of the details.

HEADLEY

Go ahead.

JOEY

Thank you. I'm speaking to Alice Headley, executive director of the Sanford Underground Research Laboratory, located in the basin of the Homestake Gold Mine. First of all, Ms. Headley, thank you for allowing me to interview you today.

HEADLEY

No problem, kid. I'm just glad that the schools are taking interest in what we're doing here. You'd think they'd bring more field trips down, but I guess solar neutrinos aren't cool enough.

JOEY

Well, I think that neutrinos are... um... fascinating. Can you tell me a little bit more about that, what you do here?

HEADLEY

Sure. We're fortunate enough to be hosting the largest particle physics experiment in the United States. How much do you know about nuclear fusion?

JOEY

Um... not much.

HEADLEY

That's fine. Basically, the Sun produces nuclear fusion on a proton-proton chain reaction, which converts four protons into alpha particles, neutrinos, positrons, and energy, but we're focusing on the neutrinos. Neutrinos are neutrally-charged particles that have nearly no rest mass, and so they were long thought to have no charge, and hardly any energy bearing at all. There are three flavors of neutrinos: electron neutrinos, muon neutrinos, and tau neutrinos. Anyway, the Sun releases these little guys in energy and gamma radiation, and they travel from

the Sun's core to Earth without being absorbed by the Sun's outer layers. You with me so far?

JOEY

Yes, ma'am.

HEADLEY

Well, in the 1960s, Raymond Davis and John H. Bahcall observed a deficit in the predicted output of neutrinos from the Sun. They only got about one-third of the number of neutrinos they were expecting. And this wasn't just a one-off occurrence; the phenomenon had been tested around the globe, and was tested multiple times by Davis and Bahcall.

JOEY

So what do they think happened to them? The neutrinos, I mean?

HEADLEY

The current theory is that neutrinos can oscillate, which means they can change in specific circumstances. The Sun is supposed to only produce electron neutrinos, but since we can't find as many as the numbers dictate, our best guess is that the electron neutrinos are turning into something else on their way to Earth, and then passing through our detectors invisibly.

JOEY

And what does this have to do with Homestake?

HEADLEY

Well, in order to get enough evidence to prove this theory, we have to get more neutrinos, and create a greater distance for them to travel, in order to have more time for measurements. Which is where we come in. We've set up the lab a mile underground, so that there is a greater distance for measurements, and to keep the equipment shaded from cosmic rays, which could mess up our results.

JOEY

That's amazing.

HEADLEY

Glad you think so.

JOEY

So... have you found anything unusual? Anything out of the ordinary?

HEADLEY

(laughs)

Kid, we're working on theoretical particle physics. Nothing here is going to be ordinary.

JOEY

Right. Sorry. Um... what's it like, having a research facility in the middle of a town? Do you get a lot of flak from the public?

HEADLEY

Nah, the locals mostly stay out of our way. We've boosted the economy, revitalized the area, mostly. After the mine closed in 2002, it put a lot of folks out of work. We've brought back construction jobs, security, all sorts of things. And we're open to the public, there's no reason for anyone to be suspicious of what we do here.

JOEY

I took a tour of the facility myself, before I came up here. There didn't seem to be a lot going on.

HEADLEY

... well, you know. December. It's cloudier, there's more snow. Not as much sun radiation gets through, so there's less work during the winter months.

JOEY

A lot of things were closed off.

HEADLEY

We can't have everything open to the public. What did you say this was for, again?

JOEY

School project.

HEADLEY

Is there anything else you'd like to know about—

JOEY

What about what's down there?

HEADLEY

Excuse me?

JOEY

What changed? What did those kids find down there? The ones who jumped in and destroyed the mine shaft, back in June. How could you have let that happen?

HEADLEY

How do you know all this?

JOEY

And what about the voice? People keep reporting that they hear someone down in the Mine at night, and you haven't said anything about that.

HEADLEY

You aren't actually here about particle physics, are you?

JOEY

Did you know? Did you know what was down there?

HEADLEY

Hey, look. Calm down. There's nothing down there. Nothing suspicious anyway. And we released an official statement. Those kids shouldn't have been climbing around down there. That area was off-limits.

JOEY

You weren't trying to keep anything out.

HEADLEY

What are you—

JOEY

You were trying to keep something *in*.

*SOUND: silence.*

HEADLEY

What did you say your name was?

JOEY

Thanks for your time, Ms. Headley.

*SOUND: the track cuts out, and another digital track splices back in.*

JOEY

It's all about the *neutrinos*. Yeah, okay. Whatever you say, Alice.

I did tell her the truth. Mostly. I went and poked around on the tour, and a lot of stuff was blocked off. There was still yellow police tape outside, where...

After the football players went down there, some people wanted to shut the place down. Said it was too dangerous for the community, if kids were able to get in there. Someone could get killed, they said. The lab did release a statement, but only one. Ms. Headley read it on the news. I have it... here. Okay.

"The Sanford Underground Research Laboratory would like to extend our reassurances to the Lead-Deadwood community. This was just a misunderstanding, and we would like to make it clear that we have a no-trespassing policy on our grounds. Anyone caught on any off-limits areas of the Homestake Mine will be prosecuted accordingly."

Like, what kind of crap is that? They didn't say anything about what they really have going on. And I was there. I know.

*SOUND: The tape recorder shuts off. A beat, and it switches back on. There is a rustling in the background, footsteps crunching on dirt and gravel.*

ADAM

We're back, everyone! We climbed over the fence, and we're now making our way into the basin. This is the perfect night for it; we're five nights out from the New Moon, so it's pretty dark out, we're in the hottest days of the year, and therefore no need for unnecessary layers, and it's the first night of Rally, which means the police are going to be busy keeping drunks from getting on their motorcycles. Plus, the sound can cover up Genevieve's screaming.

GENEVIEVE

I'm braver than both of you put together. If anyone's screaming, it's not gonna be me.

JOEY

(a little distant)

Adam, watch where you're going—

*SOUND: The tape recorder tumbles to the ground, rocks scratching at the microphone.*

ADAM  
(distant)

Shit.

*SOUND: The recorder is picked up, fingers tapping the microphone with dull thunks.*

Did I break it? No, it's fine.

JOEY  
Maybe I should carry it.

ADAM  
Yeah, that might be a good idea.

*SOUND: the recorder changes hands, and the fabric of JOEY's sweatshirt rustles against the microphone as he hangs it at his side.*

GENEVIEVE  
I'm so glad I have these intrepid explorers with me.

JOEY  
Shut up, Ginny.

ADAM  
Stay professional!

JOEY and GENEVIEVE  
No.

*SOUND: a high five.*

ADAM  
It's all downhill, so we should be nearing the bottom of the mine pretty soon. It's only about a mile.

GENEVIEVE  
Wait, do you guys see that?

ADAM

A GHOST?!

GENEVIEVE

No, you idiot. Is that a space in the rock, or just shadows?

JOEY

It's night, Gin. Everything is shadows.

GENEVIEVE

I can't believe you shortened my name into something even shorter.

JOEY

I'm very talented.

ADAM

(muffled)

No, guys, it's an opening! See, I can stick my whole hand in, I can—AAAGGH!

*SOUND: rocks falling, along with ADAM.*

JOEY and GENEVIEVE

Adam!

JOEY

Dude, are you okay?

*SOUND: a silence.*

GENEVIEVE

Adam?

ADAM

(very distant)

I... I think I'm okay, but... holy shit guys, there's like a cave in here!

GENEVIEVE

Are you sure it's a cave, and not a mine shaft?

ADAM

(very distant)

Oh yeah, I guess it could be that too.

JOEY

Should we go after him?



ADAM  
(very distant)

Yes!

GENEVIEVE  
Do we have any other choice?

*SOUND: rocks being moved  
aside, scraping against the  
side of a cliff, the whoosh  
of wind, and, abruptly,  
static, and then nothing.*

*SOUND: a switch to another  
digitally recorded track.*

*SOUND: Dishes being washed.*

JOEY  
Thank you for dinner, Mr. Parks.

MR. PARKS  
I'm a restaurateur. What good am I if I don't feed people?

JOEY  
You do plenty of that. The Sugar Shack is always the most  
popular restaurant in the summer.

MR. PARKS  
Well, after your idiot classmates jumped into Homestake, it has  
changed the traffic around here. Not that we've gotten less  
popular. Just different. It's usually locals that drive up after  
church, you know, but now we've got people from all over.

JOEY  
Especially this time of year. I'm surprised that you aren't  
packed right now, what with Rally being on. I was worried I  
wouldn't be able to get a seat.

MR. PARKS  
Any friend of Adam's is welcome here. Speaking of which, where  
are you dragging my kid off to this time?

JOEY  
School project. This summer homework is killer, y'know?

MR. PARKS

Yeah, sure. I'll believe it when I see it.

JOEY

What do you mean?

MR. PARKS

I never did any schoolwork my senior year if I could help it.

JOEY

Oh. Heh.

ADAM

(distantly)

Hey, dad, have you seen my tape recorder?

MR. PARKS

You left it on the bar.

ADAM

Oh, sweet, thanks. Ready to go, Joey?

JOEY

Yeah. We picking up Ginny?

ADAM

No, she's gonna meet us there. Um. At the library, I mean.

MR. PARKS

I don't even want to know. You kids just stay out of trouble, alright?

ADAM

No promises. C'mon, Joey.

JOEY

Bye, Mr. Parks.

MR. PARKS

Bring my dishwasher back in time for the lunch rush tomorrow!

JOEY

Sure thing!

ADAM

Oh man, was this thing recording the whole time?

*SOUND: the recording stops,  
and then switches.*

JOEY

Hi, Ms. Appleton.

MS. APPLETON

Hello, Joey. It's so good to see you. We haven't spoken since last year.

JOEY

Yeah, it's... been awhile. Do you mind if I record this session?

MS. APPLETON

Would that help you?

JOEY

Yeah? I think so... like if I could go over what we talked about. Later. That might be good.

MS. APPLETON

Then of course that's something we could try. I'm here to help you work through things, so anything that you think would be beneficial, I'm in complete support of.

JOEY

Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

MS. APPLETON

What did you want to talk to me about?

JOEY

I don't know. Senior year?. Everyone in our class has to do a session, right? So. I guess whatever you talk about when you're a senior in high school.

MS. APPLETON

Of course. Why don't you tell me what you've been doing, these past few months?

JOEY

Just school. Homework. Stuff like that.

MS. APPLETON

Any new extracurriculars?

JOEY

No. And debate club hasn't been the same, so I kinda stopped doing that.

MS. APPLETON

Do you think you'll go back?

JOEY

I don't know. Probably not. They're too focused on debate now.

MS. APPLETON

That is why it's called debate club.

JOEY

I like the oral interpretation events more, though. Especially storytelling. I always wanted to be a better storyteller.

MS. APPLETON

Why is that important to you?

JOEY

I don't know. It just seems like something I should be good at.

MS. APPLETON

Mm. What else have you been doing?

JOEY

Volunteer work? Out on the reservation. My uncle goes there every weekend, and I've been tagging along. We rebuild houses, fix up the school, stuff like that. Sometimes I play with the kids there, that's nice.

MS. APPLETON

It must feel good, to be helping out. It's a good way to connect with your culture.

JOEY

I guess I never really thought about it... I got lucky, being able to live off the reservation. My parents worked really hard for me. I don't feel a huge connection to my heritage, besides my *unci's* stories, but I think that I want to learn more. I think it might... help me.

MS. APPLETON

That's wonderful! Do you think it's helping you prepare for college?

JOEY

Um. I don't know? I mean, volunteer work always looks good on applications. At least, that's what you're always telling us.

MS. APPLETON

I do have a point.

JOEY

But I'm not doing it for my college applications. I'm doing it because I want to.

MS. APPLETON

There's nothing wrong with getting something back, though.

JOEY

I guess not.

MS. APPLETON

It's important that you focus a little bit on the future as well as the present. How's your college search going?

JOEY

I haven't exactly started that yet.

MS. APPLETON

Why not?

JOEY

It just... it doesn't seem like. Pertinent, I guess? I mean... something big happened to me over the summer. Something really big. And I guess it kind of gave me a new perspective on things. Like about what's important to me? And when big things happen to you, it seems like the everyday life stuff can wait, you know? There's so much out there in the world that I never knew about, and now I've seen some of it, and I just can't think about the world the same way.

MS. APPLETON

Well, I'm glad that you're able to have some valuable experiences, even in our small town. But you're still thinking of the future? About college?

JOEY

It's just... is that all there is out there? Is that all I should be looking at?

MS. APPLETON

Of course it isn't, but it is something that you should be strongly considering. A lot of people like you would be very grateful to get the opportunity to go to college. It's not a chance that you should throw away because you're distracted with something else.

JOEY

Yeah. No. I know that.

MS. APPLETON

Not that I'm saying anything about... I just want to make sure you're making good decisions. For your future.

JOEY

My future. Right.

*SOUND: Silence. The recording stops.*

*SOUND: Static. Someone hitting the tape recorder, causing it to crackle to life.*

JOEY

Oh thank god, it didn't break.

ADAM

I can't believe you fell on my tape recorder.

JOEY

Maybe you should've warned us that it was so far down.

GENEVIEVE

I landed on my feet.

JOEY

Yes, well, you're just very special, aren't you, Ginny?

ADAM

Just be careful with it.

JOEY

I'm always careful.

*SOUND: GENEVIEVE snorts.*

I am!

ADAM

Stop fighting! This is so exciting! We fell into an abandoned mine shaft! Look at this thing!

*SOUND: silence.*

JOEY

It's not very big, but it looks like it goes... really deep. Into the mountain.

GENEVIEVE

Do you think it ends somewhere?

ADAM

I don't know... should we find out?

GENEVIEVE

Yes!

JOEY

No!

GENEVIEVE

Joey, can you be a man already?

JOEY

We don't even know that Orson and those guys came in here. We should go to the bottom of the basin and look for clues there. If we're still trying to solve that mystery. Which is what we came here to do.

ADAM

But... abandoned mine shaft.

GENEVIEVE

Come on, Joey, it'll be fun! Plus, it'll eventually lead us to the bottom. Probably.

JOEY

I really don't think that's a good idea.

ADAM

(slowly getting distant; he's walking away)

Oh no, I'm falling again. I'm going down the mine shaft. There's literally nothing I can do. Will my best friend Joey come and save me?

JOEY

Adam, stop messing around.

GENEVIEVE

(following Adam's lead)

I've fallen too. Joey, you have to follow us! We'll never survive without you!

JOEY

Ugh. Fine, I'm coming.

*SOUND: footsteps on stone as JOEY follows his friends. Then:*

*SOUND: a whisper.*

*SOUND: footsteps pause. JOEY breathes into the darkness. He hears nothing. He continues onward.*

*SOUND: a new digital track. A squeaky rocking chair.*

JOEY

Unci, will you tell me a story?

UNCI

I am not a library. Go read a book.

JOEY

They're better when you tell them.

UNCI

You could tell me a story for a change.

JOEY

I'm not that good at storytelling. Besides, I miss your stories.

UNCI

That's a new one.

JOEY

I'm full of surprises. (A beat.) Please?



UNCI

Fine. I will tell you a story if you promise to listen. Why is that phone out? You're going to rot your brain if you keep playing with that device all the time.

JOEY

Yes, *unci*. Don't worry, I promise I'll listen.

UNCI

Good. Now. Somewhere, perhaps nearby, there is a cave. It has been hidden from the world for a long time. No one has found it, though we are able to travel the land swiftly, and many people come here. No one has found the cave.

Inside of the cave lives a woman who is as shriveled up as a walnut because of how many winters she has seen. Her face has turned inward, and her clothes are like those our people wore before the white man came to our land. She sits in her cave next to a large clay pot of *wojapi*, which cooks over a large fire. She lit the fire when she first came to the cave, thousands of years ago. The fire is always burning, and will keep burning as long as she is there to tend it.

JOEY

Where does she get the *wojapi*?

UNCI

What do you mean?

JOEY

If she's been there for so long, she must get hungry. And then she would eat the *wojapi*, so where would she get more?

UNCI

The purpose of the *wojapi* is not for eating. Not for her. Her purpose is to make her blanket strip, in order to keep her warm if the fire goes out.

JOEY

You said the fire would never go out.

UNCI

If you keep interrupting me, it will take so long to finish the story that by then the fire will have gone out

JOEY

Sorry.

UNCI

She makes her blanket strip out of porcupine quills. But beside her lies the huge black dog, *Shunka Sapa*. He is always watching as she works. But every so often she has to pause to stir the berry soup as it boils. And when she lays down her work, *Shunka Sapa* comes and pulls the porcupine quills out of it, so that she will never finish her work. She always has to start again, in her little cave, with her raging fire.

JOEY

That's kind of sad.

UNCI

Why is it sad?

JOEY

Because she can't leave the cave until her blanket strip is done, but if the dog keeps tearing it apart, she won't ever finish it.

UNCI

But that is good for us. Because if this woman ever finishes her blanket, then, as the very last quill is threaded into place, the world will come to an end.

JOEY

So *Shunka Sapa* is protecting us.

UNCI

Yes.

JOEY

And?

UNCI

And that's the end.

JOEY

That's not a good ending.

UNCI

Maybe you should come up with a better one, then. You've got a brain in your head. You do not need me to tell you stories. Why are you so interested in the end of the world?

JOEY

I just want to be closer.

UNCI

To what?

JOEY

To the truth.

*SOUND: silence.*

*SOUND: the tape recorder.  
Footsteps. Other than that,  
oppressive silence.*

JOEY

(whispering)

Genevieve? Adam? Where'd you guys go?

*SOUND: a plastic flashlight  
hitting a palm.*

Why won't my stupid flashlight work?

ADAM

We're right here.

JOEY

Gah! Don't sneak up on me like that!

GENEVIEVE

We didn't sneak up on you, it's just so dark down here.

JOEY

Your flashlights went out too?

ADAM

Yeah. Do you have the extra batteries?

JOEY

Yeah.

*SOUND: a backpack unzipping. Someone fumbling through its contents. Something falls on the ground.*

ADAM

Shit, what was that?

JOEY

I don't know, keep looking for the batteries.

ADAM

Found them.

*SOUND: ADAM struggles to get the batteries into the flashlight. He finally manages it, and switches it on.*

ADAM

There, that's... oh.

GENEVIEVE

It just went out again!

JOEY

Do you think there's something wrong with the bulb?

ADAM

No, this is a military-grade flashlight.

GENEVIEVE

Yeah, but did you fall on it?

ADAM

Oh, right. Maybe.

GENEVIEVE

Here, I'll try my phone.

*SOUND: a brief silence.*

It's dead.

ADAM

Well, that's not necessarily suspicious.

GENEVIEVE

We all made sure our phones were at a hundred percent before we left our cars, remember? My phone wouldn't die in two hours. It's like something down here is interfering with the power.

JOEY

But they have a whole-ass science lab down here. Wouldn't that be affected if there was some sort of electrical interference?

GENEVIEVE

Maybe we're farther away from the lab than we thought.

JOEY

I think we should head back.

ADAM

Is the tape recorder is still working?

JOEY

... yeah.

GENEVIEVE

Then it's not all electronics. It's just... things that create light.

JOEY

... okay, that's weird.

ADAM

Weird enough to be a ghost?

GENEVIEVE

I think ghosts may be the least of our worries. How are we going to find our way out of here if we can't see?

WHISPER

*you... can't...*

ADAM

You can't seriously be giving up!

GENEVIEVE

Don't you remember Orson? He ended up in a *tree*, Adam! I'm not risking getting covered in sap and stabbed in the ass by pine needles just so you can make a stupid podcast.

JOEY

I'm with Ginny on this one. I think we should go, before we put ourselves in danger.

WHISPER

*danger... danger...*

JOEY

Did you hear something?

ADAM

Guys, come on!

GENEVIEVE

It's not a ghost, Adam. It's probably some sort of scientific anomaly. We need to leave. We aren't even supposed to be here.

ADAM

We're trying to solve the mystery!

GENEVIEVE

Maybe there isn't any mystery! Maybe Orson and those guys were just messing around, and something weird happened to them, and the explanation is that they were breaking the rules. Not everything is some great supernatural quest, Adam. So, please, let's just go.

ADAM

But—

GENEVIEVE

*Please.*

ADAM

... Fine.

WHISPER

*yes... that's right... leave my cave... leave me to my work...*

JOEY

Cave?

ADAM

Huh?

GENEVIEVE

Joey, it's a mine shaft, remember? Not a cave.

JOEY

Yeah.

WHISPER

*why do you stall?*

JOEY

Okay, this was good, guys. Good job. Really funny. Ha ha. You can stop now.

ADAM

What are you talking about?

JOEY

Creepy whispering voice? Yeah, really original. Ginny, is that you?

GENEVIEVE

I'm not whispering anything.

ADAM

Okay... I think you're right, Ginny. Maybe there's hallucinogenic gas pockets down here or something, cause Joey's going a little bit nuts.

JOEY

I'm not, I promise. There's... someone else is down here.

GENEVIEVE

Now you're starting to creep me out. Just stop, Joey. Figure out how to climb out of here in the dark.

*SOUND: a dog howls.*

ADAM

Shit, what was that?

JOEY

A dog...?

GENEVIEVE

What would a dog be doing in a mine shaft?

ADAM

Maybe he fell. Like us.

*SOUND: tense silence.*

GENEVIEVE

Okay, that's it. We're leaving. With or without light.

ADAM

Yeah, I'm with Ginny.

JOEY

No, no, we should go further.

GENEVIEVE

Joey—

WHISPER

Joey—

ADAM

Joey, man, come on.

WHISPER

*that's right... come...*

JOEY

It'll be fine. Look, I think I see light up ahead.

GENEVIEVE

There's nothing there, it's pitch black down here.

JOEY

There's a light. I can see it. It looks warm. I'm going to go check it out.

ADAM

Joey, seriously, stop messing around.

JOEY

You guys go ahead. I'll catch up.

GENEVIEVE

No, we can't split up!

JOEY



It'll be fine.

ADAM

Joey!

*SOUND: a rush of wind.  
GENEVIEVE and ADAM's voices  
are cut off.*

*SOUND: a fire crackles.*

JOEY

H-hello? God, it's bright in here. Um... where am I?

WHISPER

*so you found me. very good.*

JOEY

Who's there?

WHISPER

*there is no need to be afraid. I shall not harm you.*

JOEY

I can't see you.

WHISPER

*of course you cannot. this is not my time to be seen.*

JOEY

Okay... um. Who are you?

WHISPER

*I am she who sits at the end of the earth.*

*SOUND: a dog growls.*

JOEY

What does that mean?

WHISPER

*are you afraid?*

JOEY

I... no. I'm not. Where are my friends?

WHISPER

*good. there is nothing that you must fear from me. not yet.*

JOEY

"Yet?" Are you going to do something?

WHISPER

*not yet... for now, I simply sit here. I stir my wojapi. I pet the dog.*

JOEY

I don't see a dog.

WHISPER

*mm. yes. no one ever sees the dog.*

*SOUND: the dog barks.*

WHISPER (continued)

*shh. you'll frighten our guest.*

JOEY

I think I'd like to leave now.

WHISPER

*so soon?*

JOEY

Yeah, um. Sorry. It's just... it's really bright in here. It's kind of... it hurts my eyes. Sorry.

WHISPER

*you like it? my fire? I tend to it very carefully. just as you tend to your family and your friends and your people. they don't tend to us as gently, do they? the men who cut into our earth? they don't treat it very carefully at all, do they?*

JOEY

You mean the scientists? The lab?

*SOUND: the dog growls.*

WHISPER

*yes. the lab men. they are not careful. not at all. they cut into my cave and struck it with sunlight. it is not how these things are supposed to go.*

JOEY

Are... are you an alien?

WHISPER

*No, child. I am the furthest from being alien.*

...

*Are you leaving so soon?*

JOEY

Yeah. Yes. I need to go find my friends.

WHISPER

*mm. yes. I should get back to work. I have already been diverted too long.*

*SOUND: the dog whines.*

WHISPER (continued)

*but will you take something with you?*

JOEY

I... I guess. God. I can't see anything, there's too much light.

WHISPER

*tell those men out there... the ones who broke into my cave? who have delighted in carving our land into pieces? tell them that I have almost finished with my work. and tell them that when that is done, then I shall leave my cave. and then I will come for them.*

JOEY

Wait, you're-

*SOUND: the fire roars. The sound of light fills the space for a moment. There is silence for a brief moment. Then, running footsteps, heavy breathing, the sound of distant engines.*

GENEVIEVE  
(distantly)

Joey! Oh my god.

ADAM

(distantly)

Dude, holy shit. Joey!

*SOUND: GENEVIEVE and ADAM  
run up to JOEY.*

GENEVIEVE

Oh my god, Joey, are you alright?

ADAM

You've been gone for hours, we've been searching all over for you—

GENEVIEVE

You disappeared, and our flashlights began working again, but we couldn't find you anywhere, we went like, so much further down, but there had been a cave-in, and the mine shaft was blocked—

ADAM

You still have the tape recorder? No way!

GENEVIEVE

And we really didn't know what to do, we were about to call the police—

ADAM

Where did you go? Oh! What day is it?

JOEY

Uh... it's August 7<sup>th</sup>? No, wait, it would be the 8<sup>th</sup> now.

ADAM

Well, at least he's not concussed.

GENEVIEVE

You shouldn't have done that, we were worried out of our minds—

ADAM

Ginny was. I knew you would be okay.

GENEVIEVE

He's lying, Adam was totally freaking out.

ADAM

No, I wasn't!

JOEY

Guys—

GENEVIEVE

You absolutely were! You were all like, "Oh no, what if we never find him? What if he died in the creepy mine? Aaahhh we should call the CIA."

ADAM

I was *not*!

JOEY

Guys!  
Are you okay?

ADAM

Yeah, of course.

GENEVIEVE

Are you?

JOEY

I think so. That was just... that was really weird.

ADAM

Yeah.  
But we're all in agreement? That it was totally ghosts?

GENEVIEVE

Oh my god, shut up.

*SOUND: they laugh.*

*SOUND: the tape recorder crackles and fades out.*

*SOUND: another digital track is spliced in.*

JOEY

So that's that. We went in, we came out, I had some blurry vision for a couple days, but overall, nothing bad happened to us. At least, I don't think. I'm still not entirely sure that I didn't have some sort of weird vision, but it turned out fine, I guess.

I keep thinking about it, though. Sometimes I just take our recording and listen back through it. Sometimes I can hear her voice. Sometimes it's just static for hours on end.

I don't know which one is real. And I think that's what scares me the most.

Uh. Anyway. That's all I have. Maybe someone will listen to this and have some answers. So. Yeah.

This was Joey.

*SOUND: shuffling at a desk,  
a chair being pushed back.  
The recording stops.*

*SOUND: silence*

*SOUND: the tape recorder  
turns on.*

WHISPER

*tell them... tell them that I am coming.*

*SOUND: a dog howls. The  
tape continues rolling. It  
records only silence.*

**END OF PLAY**