

Liars & Leeches

Episode 10- "It's Not Real"

Created by Hemlock Creek Productions

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THEME MUSIC BEGINS

NARRATOR

Liars & Leeches: Episode 10- "It's Not Real"

THEME MUSIC CONTINUES

NARRATOR

"Liars & Leeches" is a horror audio drama intended for mature audiences only. It contains sensitive topics including discussions of gun violence, stalking, and murder. More specific details about each episode are listed in the show notes. Listener discretion is advised.

THEME MUSIC ENDS

S1- INT. Grocery Store

SFX: crowds, supermarket noises

TONYA

NATALIE?? Hello?? Where are you?!

NARRATOR

Tonya stood in the middle of the crowded grocery store, trying to catch her breath. From all around her, people pressed against her as they moved past. There were more people in the store than could fit, but somehow they all seemed to be ignoring Tonya. No one reacted to her cries. No one looked at her. They simply surrounded her, trapping her in place.

TONYA

(to passerby)

Hello? Can you help me?!? Please!!

NARRATOR

No matter how loudly she screamed, Tonya didn't see a single person turn towards her. It was as if she didn't exist.

(beat)

Tonya was terrified of The Man, but as she stood in the crowd, a new fear began to creep towards her.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She'd avoided places that were this crowded for so long that her blood ran cold being surrounded by so many people. The press of bodies was overwhelming, a sea that threatened to pull Tonya under. There was no sign of a clear way to the exit either; if The Man attacked, Tonya would be trapped.

TONYA

(to herself)

Oh God... Natalie where are you?

NARRATOR

But Natalie did not materialize in front of her. Tonya pressed herself against a wall of shelves and sank down, curling into a ball and covering her ears. She closed her eyes to fight back her tears, hoping that this was all some horrible nightmare that she would wake up from soon.

SFX: intercom crackling

THE MAN

(over the intercom)

I can smell you.

NARRATOR

Tonya looked up, half expecting to see The Man towering over her. But he was nowhere to be seen amidst the crowd.

TONYA

Where are my friends?

THE MAN

They're here too. And they're fine. For now.

TONYA

You're sick. You know that, right? You're a monster.

THE MAN

(sing-song but injured)

Sticks and stones will break my bones...

NARRATOR

Tonya noted how, for all the Man's bravado, he still sounded like he was in pain. No matter what he was up to, they'd still managed to injure him badly. There was still hope.

TONYA

(trying to be cocky)
You don't sound so good. Maybe you should just give it up.

THE MAN

Oh, you'd like that, wouldn't you? I'm nowhere near done, Tonya. I'm always going to be here. But, you've put me in a (he winces) a forgiving mood.

TONYA

(to herself)
Does he actually think I'll believe that?

THE MAN

Your fear is so tasty. Your little friends and the traitor, they're just appetizers. But you... you're a steak dinner. You're the best meal I've had in years, and I wanted to finish it. I wanted to devour every last scrap of you.

TONYA

(defiantly)
I thought you said you were in a forgiving mood!

THE MAN

Ha! Temper, temper. I'm getting to that.

(he winces and breathes heavily)

If you leave now, I'll let you all go. You can run away, run as far as you like. Who knows, maybe someday you'll be too far for me to find you. But you'll never know for sure, will you?

(he chuckles then winces)

Or, you can stay here. Try to fight. Try to find me. That's when I'll pick you off, one by one.

(MORE)

THE MAN (CONT'D)

And I'll save YOU for last, because I want you to know exactly what it is your arrogance cost you.

TONYA

Leave my friends alone!

THE MAN

What are you going to do about it? You're a coward. Curled up on the floor like a frightened child. You can't stop me. None of you can. But you're especially pathetic, so- I'll give you a minute to think and when you've made your decision well, we'll see what happens next then. (he laughs) Because if you take too long, I might lose this particularly generous feeling.

SFX: intercom turning off

OMINOUS MUSIC

NARRATOR

For a moment, Tonya let herself panic. She was trapped in a store where no one saw her, far from her friends. There was only one option in her mind and that was to leave. To get out, and to run. To hope that somehow she'd be safe somewhere else.

(beat)

Safety, Tonya thought. Safety wasn't guaranteed anywhere. She thought of Tami and Jim, who'd been supposedly safe the day they died. There was no promised place where Tonya would be safe from all dangers, be they Leeches or crowds or anything else. She couldn't run from her fears, because if she did, she'd be running until she died. And she was tired of running and hiding. She wanted to take a stand.

TONYA

(softly but firmly)

No.

NARRATOR

She would finish this. She would finish this tonight.

SFX: Pulsating drone

NARRATOR

Tonya took a moment to focus, picking herself off the ground and glancing around her. That was when she realized the store was packed as though it was the busiest day of the season. But the store had been closed and locked when they'd passed it to get to The Man's lair. So either he'd had them trapped and unconscious for hours until he could sneak them into the store on a busy day - which made no sense, because surely he would've just killed them in that time - or this was a trick.

TONYA

(to herself)

It's not real. None of this is real.

SFX: Whooshing

NARRATOR

As she said this out loud, the person in front of her flickered and disappeared.

TONYA

(startled)

What the fuck?!

NARRATOR

After she caught her breath, Tonya realized the person had disappeared as soon as she'd focused on the market's inconsistencies. It was all in her head.

TONYA

Okay.

(breathes)

It's not real. It's not real.

SFX: Whooshing sound

NARRATOR

Another person flickered out nearby, disappearing as if a switch had been flipped.

TONYA
(elated)
Yes!

NARRATOR
Tonya focused next on Natalie. She thought of her friend's courage and loyalty, and how desperate she was to find her. She thought of Vix and Sean - of how they risked their lives to help her. She imagined all three of them standing in front of her, squeezing her eyes shut in concentration.

TONYA
(straining)
C'mon, c'mon.

NARRATOR
When Tonya opened her eyes, she saw three paths through the crowd. The people had either disappeared or had moved to the side. The shelves in the way had also disappeared, and the floor had transformed from tile to the cold, damp rock of the cave. Tonya pushed herself to her feet, looking from path to path. At the end of each, she could see -

TONYA
Natalie!

NATALIE
(distant)
Fuck, thank God!

NARRATOR
All three paths led directly to the corners of the store where Natalie, Vix, and Sean had been. Natalie ran towards Tonya, pulling her into a one armed hug when she reached her.

NATALIE
I heard that fucker on the intercom. We can't just run.

TONYA
I know.

NARRATOR

Vix and Sean were at Tonya's side now too. Vix was standing close to Sean, and he was looking at her for answers. Vix was smiling slightly, looking at Tonya with something close to pride.

NATALIE

(angry)

Does anyone want to tell me what's going on?

SEAN

Yeah, I'd like that too.

VIX

Tonya's fighting it.

NATALIE

What?

VIX

Her fear. The Man knows what she's scared of, so he created this to make her panic and throw her off her guard. It's a mirage of sorts.

SEAN

Then why isn't he just...I don't know, murdering us while we're trapped in Tonya's mind?

VIX

It takes a lot of power to make a mirage like this. He's focused on scaring Tonya so badly that she'll leave. And if that happens, I'm sure he'd heal and be after her again in no time. If Tonya's able to destroy the mirage, it means we can get to him again.

NATALIE

Are you sure you can do this, Tonya?

TONYA

Yeah. I can't run forever, right? It's never gonna be easy, but I have to stand up to it. It's the only way to make it a little better.

NATALIE
(emotional)
That's my girl.

VIX
You won't be alone in this. If we
all focus, we can put a stop to
this faster.

SEAN
But isn't it just Tonya's fear?

VIX
We're all stuck here, aren't we?
You're brave enough to do this
Sean, I know you are.

SEAN
I'll never know what you see in me.

VIX
(fondly)
I see my best friend.

NARRATOR
Vix took Sean's hand, and then
looked at Tonya.

VIX
Got any tips?

TONYA
Think about where we were. The
cave, and that Leech cowering in
the corner. We're only in this
store because he wants to use my
fear against us. But it won't work.
It's not real.
(she breathes, then
focuses)

SFX: Heartbeats

TONYA
It's not real, it's not real...

VIX
It's not real.

SEAN
It's not real.

TONYA
It's not real.
(she pauses)
Nat?

NATALIE
Here it goes.
(she inhales)
It's not real.

SFX: The four of them chanting "it's not real." The store fades, replaced with cave sounds.

NARRATOR
Tonya forced herself to focus, to push self-conscious thoughts and fears out of the way. The sounds of her friends around her, and their very presence, was comforting. Tonya's fear was still there but even so, it was lessened by the sheer fact she was not alone.

(beat)
The store began to fully disappear as the rest of the crowd vanished. The florescent lights gave way to darkness, the white walls to the stone of the cave, and finally they were back where they started.

NATALIE
Remind me never to do that again.

NARRATOR
The Man was slumped against the far wall, panting and staring at them with undisguised loathing.

THE MAN
(injured)
I told you to run. Now, I'll kill you all.

TONYA
You don't look like you can even get up.

THE MAN
(weakly)
Bitch!

VIX
Be careful. He's still dangerous.

TONYA

I know.

NARRATOR

Clutching her knife, Tonya walked over to the Man. She crouched down, just out of his reach; The Man weakly swiped at her but she easily avoided it.

VIX

Careful.

NATALIE

(proud)

She's got this.

NARRATOR

The Man hissed again, clearly knowing the battle was lost. His eyes flickered between the group, finally focusing on Tonya.

THE MAN

I've killed and fed on soldiers, kings, and gods, and this is how I die? Beaten by three pathetic humans and a traitor?

TONYA

Yeah. It must suck.

THE MAN

(weakly)

I can still smell your fear. You pretend to be brave but deep down, you're always going to be a scared little girl. And that's all you'll ever be.

NARRATOR

With those words, The Man lunged, claws extending to slice into Tonya's throat.

NATALIE

TONYA!

NARRATOR

But Tonya was ready. She swiftly ducked and brought her knife up, driving it into The Man's stomach.

SFX: Tonya stabbing out, The Man gasps

NARRATOR

The Man twisted and writhed as black blood poured out of the wound. He fell to the floor, twitching as he slowly began to still. He looked up at Tonya, and for a moment, he almost looked scared.

THE MAN

(gasping, weak)

You... you...

NARRATOR

Tonya crouched down to hear what he had to say, knife still at the ready.

THE MAN

(labored)

You won't be safe. There are other Leeches out there, and no matter what victory you think you have today, it doesn't matter.

NARRATOR

He exhaled, and fell still. As Tonya stood up, looking down at his corpse, The Man's human form began to fade away, leaving a puddle of black sludge.

TONYA

(disgusted)

Ew. Ugh.

VIX

What did he say?

TONYA

Nothing important. Let's go.

S2- Int. Tonya's home

SFX: Video call connecting

THERESA

(through the computer)

Hi. It's been a while.

TONYA

Yeah, it has.

THERESA

I was worried when we didn't hear from you.

TONYA

Yeah, I was working on some stuff. I had to do it alone.

THERESA

Mmm, I understand. So how are you, Tonya?

SFX: Calm music

TONYA

My friend Natalie said it would get easier. The grief. And I didn't think it ever could but she was right. It doesn't go away, but I've learned to live with it. Tami and Jim, they died and nothing will change that. But they wouldn't want me to give up my life. They'd want me to keep fighting and to never give up.

THERESA

I'm sure they would.

TONYA

I have to keep moving forward for them. It's the best way to honor their memory.

THERESA

Hmm. Well, last time we spoke, you mentioned being afraid -

TONYA

(chuckling)

I did.

THERESA

And how is that fear now?

TONYA

It's also something that got easier. I can't just let the fear control me. It only... attracts more fear, I guess. I can be scared, but I can stand up for myself.

THERESA

*I am so glad to hear that Tonya.
Are you going out more?*

TONYA

I am, actually.

S3- Ext. Tonya's parents' yard

SFX: grill sizzling, people talking and laughing.

NARRATOR

The barbecue at Tonya's parents' home was full of life and love. Tonya could tell Vix was enjoying it; she was basking in the sun, a huge grin on her face and an empty plate in front of her. At her side, Sean was nibbling on some food and eagerly chatting to Tonya's parents about taking photos for their upcoming wedding anniversary. Natalie was nearby, working on her third helping of ribs.

TONYA

How? How do you eat that much and not get sick?

NATALIE

It's a gift.

FRANK

Babygirl, come over here!

NARRATOR

Tonya's father waved both Tonya and Natalie over. He was beaming, one arm around Sean's shoulders in a fatherly gesture. Ever-nervous, Sean almost looked pleased with himself.

FRANK

I've gotta say Sean, Tonya always makes good friends. Even if your girlfriend won't eat anything.

VIX

(cheerfully)

I've eaten! I promise.

NARRATOR

She winked at Tonya, who smiled as she looked back at her dad.

FRANK

How'd you all even meet?

SEAN

Oh. Um...

VIX

Well, Sean and I met through our shared interest in the paranormal.

FRANK

(chuckling)

Like what? Werewolves? Mothman?

VIX

Exactly like Mothman.

FRANK

And how'd you meet my girl?

VIX

(caught off guard)

Uh, well....

TONYA

It was for a...

NATALIE

It was through me. I was working on a story out in Michigan, and I met these two. I knew we'd all get along super well so I was like "you gotta meet Tonya." First night we all hung out, we stayed up all night.

FRANK

Telling ghost stories?

NATALIE

Yeah. Totally like that.

NARRATOR

Frank clapped Sean on the shoulder and moved to talk to other guests. As he passed by Tonya, he stopped.

FRANK

(just to her)

I'm glad to see you here.

TONYA
(emotionally)
I'm glad to be here, Dad.

NARRATOR
As Frank walked away, Tonya turned
to her friends.

VIX
You're still thinking about him.
The Man.

TONYA
(sighing)
It's kind of hard not to.

NATALIE
You know what would fix that? More
food.

TONYA
I'm serious. I keep thinking about
what he said. That any victory was
just temporary.

SEAN
Me too, honestly. I just... I don't
know how I can go back and act like
everything's normal.

TONYA
I also keep thinking about
Victoria. She didn't do anything
wrong, and now she's going to spend
her life locked up. And there have
to be other people like her, like
me, out there. People who are
suffering and who don't have any
defense.

SEAN
So what do we do?

NATALIE
We could go public. Break the whole
story, draw attention to it. People
would know they're not alone.

VIX
(urgent)
No. We can't do that.

TONYA
Why not?

VIX

Would anyone believe you? Besides, if people did believe you, that public fear? That would draw more Leeches like him out to the now terrified public. It'd be an all you can eat buffet.

(beat)

Plus, I'd probably get found out and thrown into a lab to be studied. Call me selfish, but I really don't want that.

SEAN

Me neither.

TONYA

Then what do we do? We can't just pretend it isn't happening, and we can't just go off on our own trying to stop them.

NATALIE

...what if we did?

TONYA

What?

NATALIE

We could go off on our own. Form a little group determined to protect people from Leeches that want to hurt them.

TONYA

With what resources?

NATALIE

Well we have one on our side. And you and I are badass journalists who can do anything we set our minds to. And Sean...

SEAN

I can help!

NATALIE

Yeah you can!

VIX

It's not a bad idea. I mean, we'd be putting ourselves at risk and who knows what else is out there, but it's not a bad idea.

SEAN
You're onboard?

VIX
I love humanity. You're all so
cute, and you've got a goodness in
you. I'd like to keep you all safe.
(beat)
Besides, my favorite thing in the
world is a human.

SEAN
(as it hits him)
Oh. Oh, you mean...?

VIX
(fondly)
You're a dumbass.

NATALIE
(to Tonya)
What do you think?

NARRATOR
Tonya looked at her friends. Her
fear crept up once more, telling
her about all the dangers that
would be present if she tried to
fight against malevolent
supernatural creatures. She'd have
to risk her life, and the lives of
her friends. But Tonya had decided
to never let her fear dictate what
she could or couldn't do ever
again.

TONYA
I'm in. When do we start?

OUTRO MUSIC

NARRATOR
LLiars & Leeches: Episode 10- "It's
Not Real" starring Ryan Reid as The
Narrator, Kendell Byrd as Tonya,
Newton "Newt" Schottelkotte as
Natalie, Lindsay Wells as Vix,
Jason Lasky as Sean, Jamie Richard-
Stewart as The Man, Ja'Air Bush as
Theresa Keller, and Gerald Hill as
Frank.

OUTRO MUSIC CONTINUES

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

"Liars & Leeches" was produced by Hemlock Creek Productions. The story was created by Marisa Ewing and the script written by KJ Scott, with script editing provided by Meg Williams. Dialogue editing, mixing and mastering was done by Marisa Ewing, sound design by Melissa Pons, and music written by Nico Vettese of We Talk of Dreams. Additional recording assistance provided by Jordan Alexander and Trey Baker of Music City Studios. To learn more about the show, cast, and crew, visit www.hemlockcreekprod.com. That's Hemlock Creek P-R-O-D.com.

Thank you for listening. We will return next year for season 2.

END OF EPISODE