

Road Memoir : libretto

EPISODE #11 : "Beach Dreams"

The Woman (sung) :

Strange, the melancholy
Sweetness forgetful dreams
That come sometimes
On peaceful nights
Beneath consoling stars.

Does the old world turn still
In memory and in
Some other reality
Are we still all together
Down by the river
Drinking cheap wine,
And laughing
And dancing
And loving...?

His touch wakes me
Gently,
And in the dark
His breath
Draws my lips to his.
We are living,
Here beneath the stars,
We are so, so alive.
We melt into one another
As if we would forge
A new world with the
Glow from our hearts.

Oh, the sweetness
Of those dreams
That come on peaceful nights
Beneath consoling stars
And oh, the hollow
Tragedies of the dawn.

The Investigator (spoken) :

I got an email yesterday - DNA identity results on the bodies from the mass grave on this beach - and our man, the guy with the phone... he was a doctor. A celebrated doctor actually. Something of a hero in parts of his home land, a land from which he'd been driven, a land from which he had become a refugee. He applied for asylum here. Would have got it too at just about any other point in history. But at the moment he arrived this country chose to see him as the cause of our problems

and so he was turned away. More than that, he was arrested, charged with insurgency. An injustice from which he escaped a few weeks before he, and her, arrived here on this beach.

I'm gonna have to go soon. Gonna have to hang up. Go back. Keep moving on. I'm not sure. Everything I've done wrong, I've done for the right reasons, I hope. And I hope you forgive me for my mistakes. Your forgiveness, Dad, is all that matters to me.

Keep this recording safe. It's my testimony. My truth. And in this world, the truth needs protecting.

I could sit here forever, staring at the sea through the windscreen. Wondering what became of her. The truth is, I'm scared of what I might find down there. Or scared that I'll find nothing. But I'm here now, so I'd better get on with it.

The Woman (sung) :

Before dawn.
Before waking.
Shouting erupts
Further down the beach.
We see before we hear -
Words, information,
Something important,
Approaching,
Propelled
Along the beach
Toward us, on voices
That trill with
Fear and desperation.
A wave of terror
That breaks upon us.

The Investigator (spoken) :

Down here between the trees and the sea, there's nothing but dunes and shingle and salt air. Nothing to stop a bullet. Nothing to take cover behind.

The official report states that the people on this beach were armed rebels. A fighting force, which broke out, attacking army units positioned in the trees, who fired only to defend themselves. But surely no fighter would base himself here, out in the open, with his back to the sea. They'd have been sitting ducks...

The Woman (sung) :

We're surrounded.
There are soldiers

Hemming us in
Between them
And the sea.
We're surrounded.

What? What's this?
Two boats?
Two boats landing
On the shore.
Quick.

The Investigator (spoken) :

There's a small fishing harbour a mile to the East. The Coast Guard reported two boats stolen in the early hours of that night. Two small boats, not designed for the ocean...

The Woman (sung) :

Get in.
Get in the boat.
Please.
This is not your fight.
Let's go.
Get in the boat.
You're a victim here.
You don't have to stay.
No, not without you.
Please.

The Investigator (spoken) :

I walk out across the dunes, toward the trees, over the ground on which the rebels attacked the army that morning - if you believe the report. The trees are dense - a conifer plantation - good cover - these trees would absorb bullets all day long, except... these trees are un-marked, no damage at all. If the people on the beach had been armed, if they'd attacked this wood, these trees would be splintered and bullet-holed... but there's not a thing. No sign of the battle that supposedly raged right here...

The Woman (sung) :

You shouldn't have
To fight to save
This country.
This country's broken.
Save yourself.
Save me.
No, come with me.

No!

The Investigator (spoken) :

She escaped. She got on a boat and escaped. Driven to the edge. Driven into the sea. She took the only way left to her. But he wouldn't go. Why wouldn't he go? With the soldiers closing in he chose to stay. He chose to stand his ground. He must have known what was coming across the dunes for him. He'd treated the victims of war all his short career. He knew what to expect - the blood, the pain, the death. And yet he stayed. As the others ran he turned to face it head on. He saved her once, on the bus, and he saved her again, right here in the surf.

The Woman (sung) :

Here.
Take this.
Batteries almost dead...
But I'll call it.
When I get somewhere.
Come and find me.
Look after it,
My story is in there
So...
In case I don't make it...
Keep it safe.
Keep yourself...
I love you.

The Investigator (spoken) :

There was only one army unit capable of murdering 42 defenceless people, and only one unit commander sufficiently devious and well-connected to have hidden that truth so completely. General Gow. I sense him in this place - his killing ground - even now.

He hounded these people from their homes, pursued them mile after mile, to the very edge of this country, and as they finally stood, their feet in the sea, unable to go a single step further, he crushed them without mercy. It'll take more than these recordings to nail General Gow but I know now, with all the certainty I have, that he was here, he was responsible for this. The sea can wash the blood from these stones just as he has re-written history but he can't hide the truth forever.

She led me here, without knowing it, she laid the trail to this place and here I am, answering her call. I've been searching for my role in all of this, for a way to make a difference, and this is it. It's just the beginning but I will find the truth. For her sake. For him. For all of them...