

Road Memoir : libretto

EPISODE #3 : "South"

The Investigator (spoken) :

Fact is, modern phone batteries don't last long and in these emergency situations people are desperately calling and texting and searching for news and within a day or so the batteries are dead and if power is out or they don't have a charger then that's it - the phone's finished, no more photos, no more videos, no more evidence.

Every now and then though you get someone who thinks ahead, keeps the phone turned off, only uses it when they have to and they can make that battery last a lot longer. This was one of those phones. It was nursed through three weeks, some photos, a few texts, always in the evening around 6pm. The photos and texts didn't hold much though and I was about to give up on it when I searched the sound recorder - something most people don't use but I had to tick that box so I checked it and that's where I found the recordings.

The Woman (sung) :

There's no phone signal
This far south.
No way of calling.
I just have to have faith
That they'll be there.
Have to believe
Someone will be there.

I've been walking
For three days -
Led by rumours,
Driven by fear.
One step after
Another step
After another.

Becoming immune
To the monotonies -
Deserted houses
And burnt-out cars.
The bleak and
Haunted faces
Of the dispossessed.

Keeping my back
To the city.
Keeping my eyes
Into the sun.

Navigate by hunger.
Guided by fear.

One step after
Another step
After another.

One step after
Another step
After another.

South was the direction
Of happier days.

South, the Friday
Motorway escape.
The sanctuary,
The friends,
The family,
The laughter,
The love.
South, the refuge.
Close in the green
Embrace of it's hills.
South is safety.
South is home.

Don't trust cars.
Don't trust people.
Move by night.
Stay off the road.
Stay hidden.
Insignificant.
A shadow in the trees.
A ghost in the night.
Don't look.
Don't talk.
Don't run -
One step after
Another step
After another step
After another.

The Investigator (spoken) :

It's clever - recording sound. It uses a lot less battery than video. Files are smaller too - textable, even with poor coverage. Not that these files were shared. Not till now.

Photos and videos are usually organised on phones with the most recent file at the top, so as you look through them and scroll down you travel back through time, back through the owner's experiences - it's kind of weird going on that journey, watching people who've lived

through traumatic times, and come to horrible ends, walk backwards, picture-by-picture, into their old, everyday, happy lives.

But with these sound recordings, they were named and organised, given a number, so I automatically scrolled down, to number one, before clicking play. And I heard this voice and immediately I was... intrigued... Cos I've read the info on this phone, I know all the details - recovered from the personal possessions of a body buried in a mass grave, a circa 25-year-old male with bullet wounds - and I've jumped to the conclusion (along with everyone else, I imagine) that this phone belonged to this lad. But the voice on the recording is that of a young woman.

The Woman (sung) :

We were people once.
We are outcasts now.
Outcasts in our own country.
Adrift on a familiar sea.
Stealing food to survive.

One step after
Another step.
After another.

One step after
Another step.
After another.