

Lauren Proves Magic is Real Episode Three: Then She Feeds

LAUREN:

Hey everybody, Lauren back here with another one of case file from the super secret supernatural government agent who's cat I am watching.

Before I start I have a couple more comments to respond to:

Victoryforelves wants to know how I hacked into a cloaked computer. Well, Victory, I didn't hack it I just turned it on and signed in. I'm not a hacker. I'm not even very good at math.

Darkworldoverlord writes,

(lauren changes to "lauren faking a fancy accent" accent)

"Greetings Lauren, I was wondering if you might help me with a matter of some urgency. I have been trapped in a nether region and I require just one signature written in human blood to escape and be reunited with all my earthly riches, which are substantial and include a dragon skin of gold dust and a ruby the size of a freshly slain troll's still beating heart. I am not a greedy being and would be happy to split these assets with you 50% 50% if you would be so kind as to, with your blood, scrawl a copy your signature on a piece of vellum then light an unholy fire...

(goes back to Lauren voice)

It goes on and on and there's diagrams and all this stuff that sounds like song lyrics to those bands my sister listens to. Blah blah blah

Hey Darkworldoverlord I graduated with a B+ from our online safety class. And I'm not sending anybody my personal information by magic or any other way. So there.

Now back to what you've all been waiting for. Another case file from
super Special Agent Keith Curry.

KEITH:

It's March 13th case number one thousand twenty three. I have just received a call from an extra-human informant about suspicious goings on at a Beach Market in St. Petersburg, Florida. The caller suggested that the disappearance of a family of farmers was supernatural in origin.

Initial research shows that this beach market is part flea market and part farmer's market with some carnival food vendors thrown in for good measure.

According to my boss the reason my department is involved is that the missing farmers did some provisioning for the extra-human community in the area but I think this is a straight up missing person's case that has been pawned off on us because they think that we don't have enough to do. I have seventeen inspections to carry out this month--

KEITH'S BOSS:

(from a distance)

For God's sake Curry, stop griping and get your ass to Florida.

KEITH:

Yes, ma'am

(end recording sound)

I am not a huge fan of farmer's markets—or farmers in general. In my experience, farmers are always up to some sort of shady hijinx. There's always a raw milk scheme, or pot grow-op or hidden vampire conspiracy.

Plus, farmers are insular, close-mouthed and really hate people who
work for the government.

So my plan with this one was to stop by my house loose my suit, put on
a pair of shorts and blend in with the tourists.

Now I am stepping out of the portal into the blindingly bright sun in St.
Pete's. It's hot and smells like empanadas. It's just past ten thirty and
the market seems like it's starting to get busy. Tables crammed with
produce formed a few rows. The rest of the place was taken up with
ready to eat food and your assorted arts, crafts and junk being sold as
antiques.

I'm heading toward the place where "Our Family Farm" produce stall
should be. There's nothing here. Just an empty stall, so I'm going to
trade my sunglasses for my spectral lenses, which should eliminate most
disguise and illusion spells. And there, right next door at a table selling
junk, I can see the ugliest, greasiest, grayest little shark-toothed
scuzzball I've ever seen. From his face I can tell he's a gnome. His paper
Burger King tells me he's probably royalty.

And now he sees me...and makes me as a NIAD agent right away so I'm
just going to head over.

GNOME KING:

(unnaturally pleasant and obsequious voice.)

What can I do for you officer?

KEITH:

I'm investigating the disappearance of . Know anything about it?

GNOME KING:

Oh, them. Yes, they threatened me to I had to act in self-defense.

KEITH:

Threatened you?

GNOME KING:

They started selling eggs, which you know are poisonous to we gnomes. One of them even rolled right over into my stall. I asked them politely to remove it, but they laughed at me LAUGHED! Nobody has any respect for royalty these days. So I put a safe distance between them and myself. Is that a crime?

KEITH:

It depends on how you did it. Where they?

GNOME KING:

Oh, they're still right here. I'm looking at one of them right now.

KEITH:

So you transformed them.

GNOME KING:

Perhaps.

KEITH:

I don't suppose I could convince you to turn them back?

GNOME KING:

What about this? I'll give you till the closing bell of the market to figure it out. If you can guess which three objects are those awful farmers I'll turn them back.

KEITH:

And if I can't?

GNOME KING:

Then you disappear.

(end recording sound)

KEITH:

Normal procedure here would be to call in one of the other departments of NIAD to secure the arrest and interrogation of the little creep. But that would take time and resources and the fact was, I had an ace in the hole.

Her name is Jumper.

She's what some call a boo hag—a life-form that feeds on nightmares.

Boo Hags have naturally bright red skin but have the ability to camouflage it—kind of like a cuttlefish. They can be any color—their faces any shape. Because their diet consists of the neural energy their regulation falls into my department's jurisdiction. They also suffer from a strange kind of OCD that compels them to count like objects. The good ones get really fast and can tell you if a tree has three fewer leaves than it did yesterday. If anyone could spot the difference, and find the missing farmers, it would be her.

I knew she'd been living in this area recently.

I found a spot to sit near the kettle corn looked up her info and phoned her. Recording follows:

KEITH:

Hello Miss Jumper, how you doing?

JUMPER:

Doing just fine, Agent Curry, thanks.

KEITH:

I need your help finding three missing people.

JUMPER:

The depth of my performance depends on the depth of your imagination.

KEITH:

And that means?

JUMPER:

I'm feeling hungry. You feeling sleepy?

KEITH:

If you come down to the Beach Market I could get that way.

JUMPER:

Meet me at the big jar of jelly beans at noon.

(End of recording sound)

KEITH:

I have just spent the last hour and a half walking around the beach market photographing objects and then searching online for other photographs that had been taken prior to the farmers' disappearance.

I know I have to deliver on the bad dreams so I did my best to ensure that I'll have nightmares ready when the time comes.

I ate six bean and cheese empanadas, skimmed the latest NIAD inter-office memos and read the news online.

Then to ratchet up my anxiety, I called my mother. We haven't spoken in about fifteen years. I asked her how she was doing and she hung up on me.

Now as I approach the big jar of jelly beans I can see, Jumper is wearing her usual dark brown skin, dreadlocks, a tank top and her favorite blue board shorts.

JUMPER:

Hello Keith, how are things?

KEITH:

Pretty good. Do you have a room or should we book a hotel?

JUMPER:

I've already taken care of it. A nice place you'll like it.

(end recording sound)

KEITH:

It's now 12:30 pm and I'm sitting in a room at the Dolphin Palms Beach resort, which is a mid-level motel. The air conditioning does not work and I'm drinking vodka straight out of the bottle.

Jumper has just finished swiping through all two hundred and seventeen "before" pics in about a minute and says she knows how to find the enchanted farmers are. We have shaken hands on the agreement and I'm laying here on the bed, trying to pass out.

But it's pretty hard when I know that as soon as I go to sleep she's going to crawl up on my chest and start to feed.

So I'm...just breathing...and trying...to relax...

(some sort of noise to denote the passage of time.)

JUMPER:

Keith you look so cute when you're asleep. Like a big drunk baby. That's what you are though aren't you? Some lady's baby—some lady who doesn't want to speak with you anymore.

She's pretty isn't she? And so soft. Look out for the wind, Keith. Whipping that weathervane around and around while you try to hang on. But that tornado pulls you right into Oz.

Keith! For shame. How can you do that with that man? That's not how you were raised. You need help from the wizard—waving his magic wand.

Not that kind of wand, Keith.

Such a dirty boy.

Is that how you try to make this a nice dream? Thinking about that? I don't hold it against you. But you gotta pay up. You gotta give me what you owe me.

See that weathervane's spinning again. Gonna tear you right out of that man's arms and put you someplace you don't want to be. Someplace cold. Some meat locker, leave you dangling an inch below the hook. Can you hear the goblins sharpening their knives? They're gonna eat you Keith, but me first.

KEITH:

(Inarticulate yell.)

JUMPER:

Shhhhhhh.....no waking up yet. I've got more to tell you.

And I'm still hungry.

You ever wonder what a pig feels like? I mean emotionally? There he is, like you, rooting around in the filth. Then he's picked up, put inside some dirty old room and slaughtered. Made into meat. Just like that. No hey, howdy or thank you. And everybody's happy cause they didn't liked him. They just wanted his body-- to eat. To make into a football.

And his mom watches those men kick that football around on Sunday afternoon but she never recognizes him. She just squeals when they put him through the goal post.

KEITH:

(more inarticulate moaning)

JUMPER:

You a Patriots fan? Seems like you would be working for the government and all.

There you go. Right back to the meat locker—and you brought the goblins back. Look at him dance. So excited . I see you watching the shadows their knives cast on the wall. Hey. Don't you know that one? Isn't that your boyfriend?

Mmmm. That is delicious, Keith. So tender, so juicy and sweet. You make a good pig, Keith. And I don't say that to just anybody. Alright then, I'll leave you be but one last thing: do you know how many jelly beans were in that jar we looked at earlier? I do.

Just one.

(end recording noise)

KEITH:

It's now four-thirty I'm still drunk but I've got to make it back to the Beach Market by five.

(end recording noise)

KEITH:

Made it.

GNOME KING:

Hello, Badge. You're looking ill. Are you ready for your three guesses?

KEITH:

Yeah, now I don't need them. The three farmers are the palm tree weathervane, the statue of the kid throwing the football and the and that big jar of jelly beans at the table across the way. It was pretty clever of you to hide one of them in someone else's stall.

GNOME KING:

Thank you, I do try.

KEITH:

But the larger question is—what other people are hidden in the rest of
this junk?

GNOME KING:

It's not—

KEITH:

No, no. Don't bother. I'm confiscating it all. And revoking your vendor's
license.

GNOME KING:

Dirty stinking badge! You have no respect. I'm lodging a complaint.

KEITH:

Do whatever you need to do. But we've made a deal so now you've got to
pay up.

(End recording noise)

KEITH:

Closing case notes: I gathered up the three objects and had the gnome return them to their rightful forms. They didn't remember anything, which was just as well.

I confiscated the rest of the merchandise and mages are currently working to determine which objects are transformed people.

LAUREN:

That was so scary you guys. What...who would want to eat a nightmare? Wouldn't you rather eat a good dream? I just don't get it.

I need to take a little break now and go and snuggle with a kitty. Come on, Cheeto.

(meow)

(Credits)

Episode Three: "Jellybean" was written by Nicole Kimberling, Tenea D. Johnson and Ginn Hale. Music and soundscape by Tommy Jordan except for "Jumper's Theme," composed and performed by Tenea D. Johnson

This week's episode features the voices of Ginn Hale, Tommy Jordan, Tenea D. Johnson and Ian EveryHope.

The Keith Curry Files was created by Nicole Kimberling and is a co-production of Shepherd Boy Records and Blind Eye Books.

