

HOMECOMING

EPISODE ONE

We hear the sound of fumbling as a recorder is started, catching Heidi in mid-sentence.

HEIDI: —es, hello, are you Walter?

WALTER: Yeah, hi, Heidi?

HEIDI: Yep, come in, lemme just... Is it okay if I record this? For my reference?

WALTER: Sure.

HEIDI: Okay, great. *(She fiddles with the recorder some more)* I got this new digital recorder, it's a little bit... bewildering.

A short lull, during which a bubbling sound is heard.

HEIDI: Hm. Seems to be working.

WALTER: Is that an aquarium?

Walter taps on the glass.

HEIDI: That? Yes.

WALTER: You like fish?

HEIDI: No, it was here. The guy I replaced, he liked fish, I think.

WALTER: Huh.

HEIDI: You see this hose that's pointed right at them? *(fiddles with aquarium tubes)* See how it's bubbling? I can't tell if they like it or if it's making them uncomfortable.

WALTER: Like, if they're enjoying it?

HEIDI: Yeah.

WALTER: I don't think fish... enjoy things.

HEIDI: Huh. Yeah. You're probably right.

They both watch the fish and listen to the sound of the aquarium for a moment.

HEIDI: They're like these... little pieces of pasta. Except they can see.

WALTER: Hm. Yeah. Noodlefish.

A small laugh from both.

HEIDI: *(Turning more professional)* Okay, why don't we sit down.

They sit down.

HEIDI: *(Speaking directly into the recorder)* Today is... April 10th, 2017, at 9:20 am. Speaking with Homecoming client Walter Cruz. This is week one, session one. I'm Heidi Bergman, EID 101078, and we are in my office, at the facility.

#

Sounds of a restaurant, a busy diner. A kitchen bell rings. Heidi calls out an order.

HEIDI: Order in! Spaghetti meatball, chop salad, chicken club.

A cook calls from the kitchen.

COOK: Spaghetti meatball, chop salad, chicken club, working.

DARA: Hey, Heidi?

HEIDI: What's up?

DARA: That guy in the booth asked for his check.

HEIDI: Okay, got it.

DARA: Oh, also — is there any way you could take my shift on Sunday? Kevin wants me to go to his church.

HEIDI: Sunday? Sure. You go to church?

DARA: I do now, apparently.

Moving through restaurant, sounds and conversations come and go. Heidi arrives at a booth; she writes out a check, tears it out of her pad, and sets it on the table.

HEIDI: How was everything here?

CARRASCO: Wonderful. Delicious.

HEIDI: All set with these?

CARRASCO: Uh huh, all finished.

HEIDI: Great.

Heidi collects the dishes, stacking plates, putting the silverware on top.

CARRASCO: Heidi? That's your name?

HEIDI: Yup, just like the name tag says.

CARRASCO: This place is retro, huh? All-American?

HEIDI: Yeah, or maybe just old.

CARRASCO: Very charming. You been working here long?

HEIDI: About four years, I guess. Is that long?

CARRASCO: And, sorry, are you Heidi *Bergman*? That's your last name, right?

HEIDI: Uh, yes. Do I—

CARRASCO: I'm Thomas Carrasco. I'm with the Department of Defense?

HEIDI: Are you asking me if you're with the Department of Defense?

CARRASCO: No, I am. You're Heidi Bergman? You worked at the Homecoming Initiative?

HEIDI: Well... Yes, years ago. What's this about?

CARRASCO: I just have a few questions for you.

HEIDI: Oh, I don't...

CARRASCO: How long did you—

HEIDI: Wait, can we— I get a break. Can we talk outside?

CARRASCO: Sure. Now?

HEIDI: Yes. Fine. Let me just—

CARRASCO: I'll meet you out there? Right outside?

HEIDI: Yes, I'll be right there.

#

Quick tapping on keyboard, bringing up Walter's file.

HEIDI: Okay. Walter Cruz. Twenty-six years old. Three tours. You got here, when? Tuesday?

WALTER: Yes, Tuesday.

HEIDI: Wonderful. Now, there's a sort of welcome that I'm supposed to read. I'm gonna warn you, it's very, very boring.

WALTER: Ha, okay.

Heidi reads quickly from a script.

HEIDI: Welcome, Walter Cruz. First, allow me to thank you, on behalf of the President and a grateful country, for your valuable service. We thank you for keeping us safe! *(Off-script for a moment)* It's kind of cheesy, I know.

WALTER: No, it's fine.

HEIDI: Okay, good. *(Back to script)* My name is Heidi Bergman, and I'm your caseworker, which means I'm at your disposal to assist however I can in the re-integration process. Our facility is a safe space for you to process your military experience and re-familiarize yourself with civilian life in a monitored environment. *(Off-script, more informally)* Which just means getting you situated now that you're back. Career-wise, health-wise. Basically, I work for you.

WALTER: Okay.

HEIDI: You all did really tough work, and you deserve a break to get your feet under you. The only... I don't wanna say mandatory, but...

WALTER: Mandatory?

HEIDI: Well, yeah, I guess so. The only mandatory elements are the group lunches in the cafeteria and these weekly meetings with me. Which hopefully won't be too painful!

WALTER: No, that sounds really good. I wanna be in compliance with all this. Or, I mean... I know why I'm here. I'm glad to be here. I've talked to other guys who came home, they got really amped, they dove into everything, and then they... They had some problems. I don't want to end up like them. *(pause)* But I'm eager.

HEIDI: Eager for what?

WALTER: Everything, I guess. Or just... just a life, really, you know? A clean, normal life. And I don't wanna, like, pollute things back here. With my stuff, my stress, or whatever. So I'm glad to be in the program, and I'm ready for whatever moves that process along.

HEIDI: I hear what you're saying. That's exactly what we're gonna do. Okay?

WALTER: Okay, great.

HEIDI: *(Returning to script)* And you acknowledge that your participation in the Homecoming Initiative is voluntary and un-coerced. *(Waits)* Sorry, I need you to verbally acknowledge that.

WALTER: Oh. Yes. I do.

HEIDI: Okay! That's done. So, how are things going?

#

In the parking lot of the diner, with the sound of cars whooshing by. The door chimes as Heidi exits the restaurant.

HEIDI: Okay, I've got five minutes.

CARRASCO: I appreciate your cooperation.

HEIDI: Can we step away from the door?

They walk a few steps, the sound from the road becoming louder.

HEIDI: (*To Carrasco*) So?

CARRASCO: Right, so. I'm Thomas Carrasco. I work for the Department of Defense.

HEIDI: You said that.

CARRASCO: And you're Heidi Bergman. You worked with the Homecoming Initiative? At their Tampa facility?

HEIDI: A long time ago, yes.

CARRASCO: When was that? Exactly?

HEIDI: I don't... I'd have to check. Before I moved here. Five years?

CARRASCO: Why did you leave that job?

HEIDI: I quit.

CARRASCO: Why?

HEIDI: My mother got hurt. I had to come home and take care of her.

CARRASCO: Okay, so, you quit your job to take care of your mom. And now you work here, at this restaurant?

HEIDI: Restaurant's a little generous, but yes. I work here.

CARRASCO: So you're not a counselor anymore. You're doing what? Menial work at a—

HEIDI: It's not— It's what I could get. I had to come home and—

CARRASCO: Because your mom got hurt.

HEIDI: Yes.

CARRASCO: It's not that you're hiding. Moving away, doing different work.

HEIDI: No. I—

CARRASCO: You don't want to talk inside, you want to talk out here.

HEIDI: What is this? Why are you—

CARRASCO: But you're not hiding.

HEIDI: It's a little—

The door opens, chimes.

DARA: Heidi? Everything alright?

HEIDI: *(Calling back)* Yeah, I'll be back in a second.

DARA: Okay.

The door closes.

HEIDI: *(More quietly)* It's a little embarrassing, okay? I had this whole career and now I'm back here. Doing this. ...Can we... I need to get back inside.

CARRASCO: What were your duties at the Initiative?

HEIDI: I was a caseworker.

CARRASCO: What did that involve?

HEIDI: I worked with soldiers. Their mental health.

CARRASCO: How?

HEIDI: How? What do you mean?

CARRASCO: What did you do, exactly, to help the men, the soldiers?

HEIDI: Therapy, counseling, I told you.

CARRASCO: Again, can you see how that might sound like you're hiding something? That vagueness? Do you see how someone might have that reaction?

HEIDI: No, I honestly don't remember much about it. It was... difficult work. It wasn't a good fit for me.

CARRASCO: Wasn't a good fit... Can you tell me the names and ranks of any of your individual clients?

A pause.

HEIDI: Do you have any identification?

CARRASCO: ID? Sure. Here.

He takes out his wallet, shows her.

CARRASCO: How's that?

HEIDI: Why are you here? What's going on?

CARRASCO: I'm asking you about your work, at the Homecoming Initiative, and apparently you're refusing to—

HEIDI: I'm not refusing, I don't remember. This was—

CARRASCO: What about the name Walter Cruz? Does that ring a bell?

A longer pause.

HEIDI: Not that I can recall, no.

#

Back in the office, the aquarium quietly bubbling.

WALTER: How are things going? You mean, like, with my room and stuff? Like, how am I “settling in”?

HEIDI: Sure.

WALTER: It’s good. Everything’s fine.

HEIDI: Any trouble sleeping?

WALTER: Yeah, a little. Nightmares, things like that.

HEIDI: That’s very normal. We can see if one of the guys wants a roommate for a few nights.

WALTER: Huh. Like... what do you mean?

HEIDI: Some guys, when they first get here, they find it difficult sleeping in a room alone, separate from their unit — just a little too quiet, you know? So I can ask around if anyone wants —

WALTER: Oh, okay. Yeah. That might be good, actually. Just not... Not if it’s Rainey, okay? He’s a good guy and all, just—

HEIDI: I heard there was a little bit of a—

WALTER: It really wasn’t such a big deal.

HEIDI: You want to tell me what happened?

WALTER: Uh, sure. Me and him and Shrier were on KP — or like, we were supposed to cook dinner for everyone, I guess?

HEIDI: A collaborative activity, right?

WALTER: Right. One of the activities. So we decided we were gonna make spaghetti and meatballs.

HEIDI: An excellent choice.

WALTER: Ha, thanks. So yeah, anyway, we turned in our list to the cafeteria staff and they gave us the stuff back, the ingredients, and we were like: Okay, Shrier, you make the salad, I'm gonna make the pasta and the sauce, and Rainey, you're gonna make the meatballs. So we divvy up all the ingredients and we're cooking.

At some point, though, he just walks off, he leaves the kitchen. And the meatball stuff is sitting there. And me and Shrier were just like, Okay, I guess we should just do the meatballs ourselves. But then after a while Rainey comes back and sees us doing the meatballs and he has this like tantrum — which, again, I'm not sure why because he had walked off and didn't come back for an hour and people were coming in to eat and we weren't gonna be ready.

HEIDI: Okay. And so then what happened?

WALTER: Nothing. We had some words about it and he left.

HEIDI: Did it get physical?

WALTER: You're asking did he hit me?

HEIDI: Yes.

WALTER: He did, yeah. But it wasn't anything like — I mean, I don't blame him, if he was dealing with some of his own shit and it came out sideways. It happens to all of us sometimes, me included.

HEIDI: How does it happen with you?

WALTER: Different ways.

HEIDI: Give me an example.

WALTER: It's mostly like— I'll get these flashes, of things I could do to myself. It's just tension.

HEIDI: For sure.

WALTER: I wouldn't really do it. But, okay, just as an example. There's a desk in my room. It's wooden, it's got these sharp corners. And, the day I got here, I don't know why, but I saw the desk and I imagined sitting down and leaning way back and like slamming my forehead into the corner. As hard as I could. Over and over.

HEIDI: Um hm.

WALTER: Or my eye. Driving the corner into my eye. But that was an extreme — it's not like that all the time.

HEIDI: Um hm. How often, would you say—

A very loud bird calls right outside Heidi's window.

HEIDI: I'm so sorry, there's this—

The bird calls again — an awkward, comical cry.

HEIDI: He'll stop in a second.

He calls again. Heidi and Walter both wait, but the bird seems to have stopped.

WALTER: That's incredible.

HEIDI: It's driving me crazy. He's some kind of protected species. We're not allowed to touch him.

WALTER: I could take care of him if you want.

HEIDI: Would you?

WALTER: No problem. Dead of night, full camo... He'd wake up in the Everglades. Everyone wins.

HEIDI: Oh, I'd love that. I'd be forever in your debt.

#

A slightly fuzzy cellphone connection.

ANTHONY: I let you talk, are you gonna let me talk?

HEIDI: I mean, I think I get the gist of what you're—

ANTHONY: Don't dismiss me like that. That's exactly what I'm talking about. That kind of thing.

HEIDI: Anthony, I'm sorry. I'm listening.

ANTHONY: When you moved to Tampa, we agreed that for this to work, we'd need to be very diligent about maintaining our—

HEIDI: Yes. But I'm busy here. We're getting new guys in all the time, they're in bad shape, they need help. And my boss is—

ANTHONY: I don't want to talk about all the *new guys* you're seeing, okay? And I don't wanna talk about your crazy boss.

HEIDI: I'm just trying to describe—

ANTHONY: The point is, I talk to your *mother* more than I talk to you. And that makes me feel

—

HEIDI: My mom? Why are you talking to my—

ANTHONY: She doesn't hear from you either — she asks me what's going on with you. What am I supposed to tell her?

HEIDI: Okay, listen, I'll talk to my mom. She shouldn't be calling you.

ANTHONY: She's not the problem. At least she's honest with me—

Heidi's call-waiting beeps.

HEIDI: Anthony? It's my boss.

ANTHONY: Are you serious?

HEIDI: I have to go. I'll call you back.

ANTHONY: Are you seriously doing this right now?

The call-waiting beeps again.

HEIDI: I'm sorry — I'll call right back, okay?

ANTHONY: Why? Just forget it. Don't call me.

HEIDI: Okay, fine.

ANTHONY: Fine?!

Heidi switches to the other call. Colin, Heidi's supervisor, picks up. The connection isn't great; it also sounds like he's walking very quickly as he speaks.

COLIN: Heidi?

HEIDI: Hi, Colin? Hello?

COLIN: Heidi? Your connection is *really* shoddy. Are you there?

HEIDI: I'm here, can you hear me?

COLIN: Okay, just barely. I've barely got you. Go ahead.

HEIDI: Go ahead?

COLIN: Yeah, go ahead with the update.

HEIDI: Oh, alright. We're all set with intake, we've got everyone in their rooms, everyone documented.

COLIN: Okay, great. Great. (*Distracted*) Where the hell is...?

HEIDI: Colin?

COLIN: I'm just — sorry, I'm in transit here. I'm switching at the airport in Detroit. They did a nice job, actually.

HEIDI: How did the presentation go?

COLIN: Oh, fantastic. They love the program, love the early indicators, love the broader applications.

HEIDI: Oh, that's great.

COLIN: No idea if that means we can re-budget around the numbers we were asking for, of course. It's all double-talk when it comes to the money. (*slightly away from phone*) Ah, shit, I'm sorry. I didn't see that.

HEIDI: What?

COLIN: I'm sorry for stepping on your backpack. (*returning to phone*) I just stepped on a little girl's backpack. It was in the middle of the walkway — (*a bit louder, slightly away*) This is a walkway. Goodbye.

HEIDI: Colin?

COLIN: Anyway, I told them we need to move on this. Fast, fast, fast. I was *very* insistent on that. The timeline. The urgency.

HEIDI: The early interviews are really promising, I think, really encouraging. These guys all seem committed to the process, and the surveys are already trending in a really great direction. This week, actually—

COLIN: Heidi? I don't—

HEIDI: Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

COLIN: I just don't have a lot of time. God, this terminal is *enormous*.

HEIDI: You need to run?

COLIN: I do, yeah, but I really want to impress on you the importance, in the files, the subject histories? Of collecting actual *data*, and then showing week-by-week progress. We need to be *surgically* precise in identifying their experiences — *exactly* what they remember.

HEIDI: Absolutely, yeah. I think, what we're seeing—

COLIN: Yeah, we need information that can really be quantified and *targeted*. That's your experimental baseline right there. We need to get really granular with *all* that.

HEIDI: Absolutely, absolutely. That kind of brings up an issue that I wanted to speak with you about—

COLIN: Okay, I have literally one more minute. B26. Where the fuck is B26? These are all A gates. The signage here needs a *lot* of work.

HEIDI: I was just working with a client today — Walter Cruz? And I was thinking, as far as being very deliberate and, as you said, granular — what if we took a, a more holistic approach to the initial stages of treatment?

COLIN: Holistic?

HEIDI: I mean, at this point, we're throwing them in the chair and starting the process without developing much of a dialogue, and we could get deeper, more individualized outcomes if we could just—

COLIN: Okay, Heidi? I'm gonna stop you there.

HEIDI: Okay.

COLIN: Heidi, I gotta say, I'm not loving some of these words I'm hearing. We aren't looking for individualized or holistic or whatever results *at all*. What we're seeking here is *information*, Heidi. Not relationships, not rapport. Your job is to conduct interviews and record facts — that's it. Whatever these men are holding onto, that's exactly what we need to know. So you need to 180 on this, right now, okay?

HEIDI: No, I get that. But the clients, the subjects—

COLIN: Based on what you just said, you don't. So you need to 180 on that, okay?

HEIDI: Okay, got it. It was just an idea. For the... to improve the data.

COLIN: Heidi. Heidi. (*slowly, firmly*) Again: Whatever these men are holding onto, that's exactly what we need to know. (*sighs*) Look, I'm literally flying to DC, as we speak, and the guys at DOD are going to ask me where we're at with this, and if I say "holistic" they're gonna... I don't even know what they'd do. So whatever the fuck you're saying to me right now, about slowing down, muddying up the process, that's exactly the opposite of what we need to be doing. Okay? We need real proof of concept, just a *house* of data to drop on the Appropriations people — so they

shut their mouths, and stop prevaricating, and open up the approval process. That's our goal. Okay, Heidi?

HEIDI: Okay. Yes.

COLIN: Understood?

HEIDI: Understood.

COLIN: Understood, good. Okay, I'm gonna run. Wish me luck.

HEIDI: Good luck, Colin!

COLIN: Oh! One last thing. Did we run the background check on the busboys?

HEIDI: Background check the what?

COLIN: The busboys! Did we background check the busboys? Who'll be working in the cafeteria?

HEIDI: Oh, I didn't realize that was part of my—

COLIN: Of course it's part— Heidi, we have to be *extremely* thorough with the food service. You're my point person there, right?

HEIDI: Yes, definitely.

COLIN: Great. So I need you to stop whatever it is you're doing right now and get into that — busboys, caterers, whatever. Background checks. Full workups. We've gotta be seamless about that.

HEIDI: All right, got it.

COLIN: Okay, great. Gotta go.