

A R C A N U M

1x01- Welcome to Arcanum

by

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TEASER

OVER BLACK:

John Denver's "Thank God I'm A Country Boy."

FADE IN:

EXT. ARCANUM - VARIOUS SHOTS/LOCATIONS - DAY

It's a dreamy, late summer morning in the small farming community of ARCANUM, OHIO.

Downtown is a cobblestone, one-light main street lined with mom-and-pop shops, a pharmacy and the local tavern.

And look, there's the Korner Diner. A placard in the window boasts "Best darn burgers in the county, bar none!"

Down the street is Arcanum High. The reader board out front screams "GO TROJANS!"

Further out, beyond the high school football field, baseball diamond, the local pool (closed for the season) and working class suburbs, is checkerboard farmland framed by long stretches of road under crystal blue sky.

Arcanum is the kind of Rockwellian little town where life is simple, folks are folks, and nothing exciting ever happens.

Except, not.

EXT. HANLEY FARM - DAY (EST.)

A two story house, barn and silo on the edge of a sprawling cornfield. A COMBINE chews through the field.

INT. COMBINE - MOVING

On JAKE HANLEY (70s). A fishing hook on the bill of his John Deere cap, John Denver on his portable radio.

SOMETHING hits the ground just ahead. He cranes to look as he brings the combine to a stop.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Jake climbs out of the combine (it's an effort for his weary old bones) and wades through the stalks until he comes upon something that gives him stunned pause:

ON THE GROUND LIES A MAN'S CRUMPLED, NAKED BODY.

Jake tilts his cap back. What the heck?

ARCANUM

Ep. 101 - "WELCOME TO ARCANUM!"

Another BODY hits the ground nearby. Then another, and another, THUD! THUD! THUD!

Jake looks up to see THE SKY PEPPERED WITH FALLING CADAVERS!

Frozen in shock, he can only watch as a body plummets toward him at terminal velocity. On IMPACT:

SLAM TO:

TITLE CARD:

A R C A N U M

ACT ONE

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A late model SEDAN cruises past.

TACKER (VO)
"Arcanum, Ohio."

INT. SEDAN - DAY (MOVING)

Meet FBI Special Agents HOLLY MEADOWS (at the wheel) and JACK TACKER.

Meadows (35) is outwardly pleasant but could fill a journal with the number of asses she's kicked (and actually does). Her unflappability and chill demeanor are of immeasurable aid when dealing with her partner, because...

Tacker (40s) is a full-tilt asshole. Smug, irascible, and condescending. Smart and knows it. Doesn't care if you like him or not because he doesn't like you.

But despite their contrasting personalities, they make a good team. She respects him as an investigator; he respects her as the only person he's ever met who can handle his crazy. Even if sometimes only just.

(NOTE: Theirs has never been and never will be a romantic relationship. Not even if the ratings start to sag. Speaking of, we will also never bring in a cute kid to boost ratings. Well, maybe if it's an evil cute kid. We'll talk.)

Tacker reads from a tablet:

TACKER
"Located on the western border of
the state and officially classified
as a village"--
(dripping with disdain)
Hear that, Meadows? A village.
(back to reading)
"Arcanum is seated in southernmost
Darke County," spelled D-A-R-K-E.
Guess what it's known for?

MEADOWS
What?

TACKER
Corn, Meadows. It's known for corn.

He chucks the tablet into the back seat.

TACKER
I've had it with the Bureau dumping
us in these podunk towns. What did
I do to deserve this?

MEADOWS

You kneed Special Agent in Charge
Workman in the balls.

TACKER

I know what I did. I was being
rhetorical. But he had it coming.

MEADOWS

And pissing on his shoes?

TACKER

I suppose, to some, that could be
seen as crossing the line.

MEADOWS

You didn't cross the line, Tacker,
you peed on it. You're lucky the
Bureau didn't expel you altogether.

TACKER

You and I have radically differing
concepts of the word "lucky."
(sneers)
Corn.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONT.

The sedan passes a road sign: Arcanum, 2 mi.

INT. ARCANUM POLICE STATION - DAY

We hear the intermittent CLACKING of a typewriter as we PAN
ALONG a desktop lined with framed photos of famous bald men.
Telly Savales. Michael Chiklis. Bull from Night Court...

BETSY SIL VOUS PLAIT (60s), permed and perpetually bedecked
in pink, hunts and pecks on her dated typewriter.

The POLICE CHIEF arrives to greetings from his two-man,
one-woman police force (their names later).

The chief (60) is your quintessential small town law dog,
laconic and amiable. Not the sharpest bulb in the shed but
what he lacks in smarts he makes up for with...hard to say.

He spots Meadows and Tacker waiting in his office. As he
pours himself a cup of coffee:

POLICE CHIEF

Say, Betsy?

BETSY

Yes, Chief?

POLICE CHIEF

You wouldn't happen to know who
that is in my office, would ya?

BETSY

Feds.

POLICE CHIEF

Feds? What're they doin' here?

BETSY

Couldn't say.

POLICE CHIEF

'Cuz they didn't tell you or 'cuz
you didn't ask?

BETSY

Take your pick.

Police Chief takes a sip, sizing the agents up.

POLICE CHIEF

Well. Best go innerdoose myself.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

The Chief enters. The agents stand to meet him.

POLICE CHIEF

Mornin'! Chief Gil Human.

As CHIEF GIL HUMAN shakes their hands:

TACKER

Your name is "Human?"

CHIEF HUMAN

Don't wear it out, heh.

As they all sit:

TACKER

Well -- Chief Human -- I'm Special
Agent Jack Tacker, this is Special
Agent Holly Meadows, FBI.

CHIEF HUMAN

Ain't often we get the Feeb around
here. What office you out of?

TACKER

Cincinnati.

CHIEF HUMAN

Oh, yeah? You ever hear of that
amusement park, Kings Island?

TACKER

Kings Island is in Cincinnati,
so...

Chief Human waits for clarification. Tacker can't believe he has to spell it out.

TACKER

Yes, I've heard of King's Island.

CHIEF HUMAN

You ever ride that rollercoaster, The Beast? My first time, I dang near pooped myself--

TACKER

If it's all the same, Chief, I'd rather get right to business. We're here about the bodies.

Again, Chief Human waits for clarification. Again, Tacker can't believe he has to spell it out.

TACKER

That fell from the sky.

CHIEF HUMAN

Oh, right, right, right.

TACKER

Were there some other bodies to which you thought I was referring?

A suspicious beat.

CHIEF HUMAN

Nope.

Another suspicious beat.

TACKER

At any rate, we're here to help.

CHIEF HUMAN

Is that what you call rollin' in with your shiny badges and takin' over my investigation? "Help?"

TACKER

We don't do that.

MEADOWS

The FBI is at times called in to assist smaller agencies such as yours which may lack the resources to carry out a full and thorough investigation. But we don't have jurisdiction. It's still your case.

CHIEF HUMAN

Uh-huh. So who was it that called you in? It wasn't my department.

TACKER
Attorney General Tiller.

MEADOWS
(correcting)
Miller.

TACKER
Apparently he--

MEADOWS
She.

TACKER
-- has a nephew--

MEADOWS
Niece.

TACKER
-- who grew up next door to Joe
Headly--

MEADOWS
Jake Hanley.

TACKER
-- on whose farm the bodies fell.

CHIEF HUMAN
Piggie-Back!

TACKER
Excuse me?

CHIEF HUMAN
AG Miller's niece. First name's
Anita but folks 'round here call
her "piggie-back." Funny story--

TACKER
The point is, as your de facto
partners, we bring our A-game and
expect the same of you. And I feel
it only fair to warn you, Chief,
that as an agent and representative
of the federal government, I have
zero tolerance for bullshit.

Chief Human raises his hand.

TACKER
You don't have to raise your hand.

CHIEF HUMAN
Just want to say, you might wanna
watch the profanitizin'. Yours
wouldn't be the first mouth ol'
Betsy washed out with soap.

TACKER

Whatever. I'd like to start with--

Chief raises his hand again. Tacker's already starting to lose his patience.

TACKER

What?

CHIEF HUMAN

I was just wondering, y'all got a place to stay?

TACKER

Why?

CHIEF HUMAN

This thing with the bodies...I don't reckon it's the kind of strangeness y'all are used to dealin' with.

TACKER

Your point?

CHIEF HUMAN

See, Arcanum is...well, she's a humdinger. Lots of strange stuff goes on here. Unexplainable stuff. If you're set on seein' this thing through, chances are you're gonna be here a while, in which case you're gonna need a place to stay.

TACKER

The Bureau has made arrangements.

CHIEF HUMAN

Whereabouts?

MEADOWS

A B&B just outside of town.

CHIEF HUMAN

Mimsy's or The Rusty Spring?

MEADOWS

The Rusty Spring.

CHIEF HUMAN

Oh, you don't wanna stay there.

TACKER

Then we'll transfer to the other.

CHIEF HUMAN

You REALLY don't wanna stay THERE.

MEADOWS

Where would you suggest?

CHIEF HUMAN

Don't worry. I got a place.

TACKER

I really don't think it would be appropriate for us to stay at your home, Chief.

CHIEF HUMAN

Didn't say "my" place, said "a" place.

TACKER

What place is that?

CHIEF HUMAN

Jake Hanley's place.

TACKER

Jake Hanley -- the farmer who was flattened by a fallen corpse?

CHIEF HUMAN

Don't reckon he'll be needin' it anymore, wouldn'tcha say?

Meadows recognizes that Tacker is about to say something caustic and intervenes before he can:

MEADOWS

That sounds fine, chief. Thank you.

CHIEF HUMAN

Right-o. Now, what say we go look at some bodies?

The eager Chief slaps his desktop and hurries out.

TACKER

What kind of back-ass, shit-heel--

BETSY (OS)

Hey!

Betsy appears in the doorway brandishing a bar of soap.

BETSY

I'll use it.

She backs out, motioning, "I'm watching you."

EXT. ARCANUM POLICE STATION - DAY

The parking lot behind the building packed with gawkers and several dozen sheet-covered bodies.

Chief Human accompanies Meadows and the irritated Tacker.

TACKER

The parking lot? What the hell were you thinking?

CHIEF HUMAN

Nowhere else to put 'em. The county morgue ain't near big enough.

TACKER

You shouldn't have moved them at all, not until the scene had been cleared by forensics. There's no telling what evidence you may have contaminated or destroyed.

CHIEF HUMAN

Gee, I sure am sorry.

Tacker takes a calming breath.

TACKER

Let's just get started.

CHIEF HUMAN

You got it.

Chief Human whistles the rubberneckers over.

TACKER

What are you doing?

CHIEF HUMAN

Figured we could use a hand.

TACKER

You're inviting civilians to interact with evidence?

CHIEF HUMAN

Inviting? Who the heck do you think helped me bring 'em here?

TACKER

You let civilians move the bodies? Are you legitimately insane?

Chief Human hesitates.

TACKER

That's not a trick question, Chief!

MEADOWS

I'm sorry, Chief. I'm afraid we must insist that no civilians be allowed to interact with evidence. I'm sure you understand.

Chief Human tilts his hat back.

CHIEF HUMAN

Reckon you got a point. Wouldn't be appropriate. Jenny!

OFFICER JENNY WADE (20s) hurries over. Pixie-ish, constantly hitching her size 6 pants over her size 0 hips.

CHIEF HUMAN

Agents, Officer Jenny Wade. Jenny, agents Tacker and Meadows, FBI.

OFFICER WADE

Wow, real live FBI agents! Amy Bob ain't gonna believe this!

TACKER

"Amy Bob"?

OFFICER WADE

She's my-- well, he's my-- well--

TACKER

Y'know what? I don't need to know.

CHIEF HUMAN

Jenny, I'ma need you to run to my cruiser and fetch me...The Box.

OFFICER WADE

Yes, sir!

Officer Wade races off.

CHIEF HUMAN

So what are we lookin' for exactly?

TACKER

One thing we know for sure is that the bodies had to have fallen from some type of aerial transport.

CHIEF HUMAN

You mean, like, a plane?

TACKER

Well, they didn't fall off a boat. I'm thinking medical school, maybe military ballistic testing. Look for toe tags, some kind of labeling system. Anything that will give us an idea where these bodies came from or where they were going.

Officer Wade returns carrying a tin box.

OFFICER WADE

Here you go, Chief.

Chief Human again whistles the rubbernecks over.

TACKER

Now what are you doing?

CHIEF HUMAN

Like you said, it wouldn't be right lettin' civilians muck with the bodies, so...

The Chief opens The Box. It's filled with police badges.

CHIEF HUMAN

I'm swearin' 'em in.

TACKER

(growing panic)

Meadows. Meadows, Meadows, Meadows!

MEADOWS

(calmly to the rescue)

Attention, please, everyone. We appreciate your interest but we will not be swearing anyone in today. Please clear the area and let us work. Thank you.

(to Chief Human)

Dude.

LATER

The rubbernecks now stand a respectable distance away as the agents, the chief, and his officers inspect the bodies.

CHIEF HUMAN

So, Cincinnati. This your first time in our neck o' the woods?

MEADOWS

Had a case in Piqua last year.

CHIEF HUMAN

Lemme guess: Satanic death cult?

MEADOWS

How'd you know?

CHIEF HUMAN

Nothin' but weirdos in Piqua.

TACKER

Meadows. I've got something.

Tacker points to a small, charred hole just left-of-center on a corpse's chest.

TACKER

I saw one just like it on this one.

He lifts the sheet of the next corpse over to reveal a similar wound. Meadows checks the next body after that, and the next.

MEADOWS

These, too.

CHIEF HUMAN

Reckon it's safe to say they all got 'em.

TACKER

Any idea?

MEADOWS

Not sure but they look cauterized.

TACKER

Do we have an ETA on forensics?

MEADOWS

Ten minutes. Field morgue, techs, the works.

TACKER

Good. Let's get these covered back up. And for Christ's sake, get rid of the gawkers.

MEADOWS

On it.

Tacker goes to stand and wobbles, lightheaded.

CHIEF HUMAN

You okay there, agent?

TACKER

I'm fine, just hypoglycemic.

CHIEF HUMAN

You got a penis AND a vagina!?

CHIEF HUMAN

No, Jethro, it means I need food. Take me where I can grab a burger.

Tacker heads off. Chief lingers. Tacker snaps his fingers.

TACKER

Hey! Roscoe P. Coltrane! Let's go!

CHIEF HUMAN

Sorry!

Chief hurries to catch up.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. KORNER DINER - DAY (EST).

INT. KORNER DINER - DAY

Lunch crowd. Meadows nurses a milkshake. Chief Human hasn't touched his cheeseburger. Tacker is clearly enjoying his.

TACKER

My God. This is amazing.

CHIEF HUMAN

Best in the county, so they say. I wouldn't know. I don't eat meat.

MEADOWS

Then why did you order one?

CHIEF HUMAN

Cheeseburgers smell good.

TACKER

Alright, Chief. Level with me. What's the deal with this burg?

CHIEF HUMAN

What do you mean?

TACKER

I mean are falling cadavers a rarity here or is it just another Monday in Looney-ville?

CHIEF HUMAN

I can't speak to the place historically. I'm originally from the south. What I can say is that from the minute I stepped foot in Arcanum, ain't a day gone by somethin' strange didn't happen.

MEADOWS

Define "strange."

CHIEF HUMAN

Summer of '88. First day on the job. Got a call from Stump's Tavern sayin' a fella just stumbled in, arm hangin' off his shoulder by a threat. Said his dog attacked him.

MEADOWS

His dog bit his arm off?

CHIEF HUMAN

Didn't say "bit." Said "attacked." With a steak knife.

TACKER

A dog. Attacked its owner. With a
steak knife.

CHIEF HUMAN

In the dog's defense, he had just
swatted it with a paper.

Tacker blanks.

MEADOWS

What really happened?

CHIEF HUMAN

That is what really happened. We
found the knife later, chew marks
and slobber all over it.

TACKER

(oozing sarcasm)

Did the dog confess?

CHIEF HUMAN

Uh, hello? Dogs can't talk.

Chief looks to Meadows, "What's with this guy?"

TACKER

You expect us to believe this kind
of insanity is commonplace here?

CHIEF HUMAN

Believe what you want, but one
thing you'll come to realize about
Arcanum is that everyone here, and
I mean everyone, has a story. Fact
of the matter is, most of the cases
we investigate wind up unsolved.

TACKER

Because you're incompetent?

CHIEF HUMAN

Don't take my word for it. You ask
anybody, they'll tell ya: Arcanum
is where magic happens.

TACKER

I don't believe in magic.

CHIEF HUMAN

Just 'cuz you don't believe it
don't mean it ain't true.

TACKER

Did you just use a triple negative?

MEADOWS

You seem awfully laid back for the
Police Chief of Crazy-burg.

CHIEF HUMAN

Well, once you've seen one bicycle
ride itself down Main Street...

WOMAN (OS)

Darryl, you're hurting me!

All eyes turn to a booth where a REDNECK in a Kid Rock tee
forcefully grips his MOUSY WIFE's arm.

CHIEF HUMAN

Well. Duty calls.

Before Chief Human can get up:

MEADOWS

Keep smelling your burger, Chief.
I've got this.

Meadows leaves the booth.

CHIEF HUMAN

Think we oughtta help?

TACKER

Just enjoy the show.

Meadows arrives at the couple's table.

MEADOWS

Excuse me, sir?

REDNECK

What the hell do you want?

MEADOWS

I was just wondering, foot or fist?

REDNECK

What?

MEADOWS

I said, foot or fist?

Redneck stands. Big sumbitch, a head and a half taller than
Meadows easy.

REDNECK

Let me guess. You want me to pick
which one you hit me with?

MEADOWS

No, I want you to pick which one I
hit you with first.

He leans down, flashing an ugly, tobacco-stained grin, and pokes her chest.

HUSBAND

Surprise me.

Without missing a beat, Meadows snaps a jab to his throat and whips a kick to his gut that knocks him back into his wife's arms.

MEADOWS

Does he look surprised to you?

Mousy Wife checks her husband's comically shocked face, looks back to Meadows and nods. The other customers burst into applause. Meadows blushes like a little girl.

Chief Human gapes.

TACKER

(a la Hannibal Lecter)

She burst his liver with a reverse punch and a nice heel kick.

EXT. KORNER DINER - DAY

Tacker and Meadows watch on as Chief Human loads the handcuffed Redneck into the back of his cruiser.

CHIEF HUMAN

Nice moves, agent. Where'd you learn to fight like that?

MEADOWS

My dad signed me up for karate as a kid. Got my black belt at age ten.

CHIEF HUMAN

Ah.

MEADOWS

Then four years state teen champion through high school...

CHIEF HUMAN

Oh.

MEADOWS

Captain of the jiu jitsu team through college...

CHIEF HUMAN

Huh.

MEADOWS

Four years MMA pro, undefeated...

CHIEF HUMAN

Jeez.

MEADOWS

And three years hand-to-hand combat instructor for the Dayton PD.

CHIEF HUMAN

Phew. That's mighty impressive.

TACKER

If you think that's something, you should read her journal.

CHIEF HUMAN

Maybe later. Right now I'm gonna run this sorry sack of dung in for bookin'. Oh, and before I forget...

He takes a key from his pocket.

CHIEF HUMAN

The key to Jake Hanley's place.

MEADOWS

His next of kin don't mind us using it?

CHIEF HUMAN

Didn't have none. And his will leaves his property to the town--

TACKER

(sotto)

Village.

CHIEF HUMAN

--so may as well put it use.

MEADOWS

In that case, thank you.

CHIEF HUMAN

No problemo, li'l lady. Y'all get yourselves settled in and we'll pick 'er on back up tomorree.

Chief drives off.

TACKER

Yup, I reckon, a-hyuck!

Meadows elbows him, don't be a dick.

EXT. HANLEY FARMHOUSE - SUNDOWN (EST)

The agents' sedan turns onto the lengthy gravel driveway.

INT. HANLEY FARMHOUSE - CONT.

Meadows and Tacker enter carrying suitcases. Tacker flicks the light on, illuminating a living room crammed with oddities. It seems Jake Hanley was a bit of a pack rat.

TACKER

Why do I suddenly hear the theme
from Sanford and Son?

MEADOWS

It is a bit crowded.

TACKER

Wal-Mart on Black Friday is a bit
crowded. This place is a dump.

Tacker takes out his mobile.

MEADOWS

What are you doing?

TACKER

Calling the Rusty Spring to see if
we can get our rooms back.

MEADOWS

Stop. It's only temporary.

TACKER

So is an anal fissure but that
doesn't make it any less painful.

MEADOWS

Let's just get settled in. You can
gripe about it later.

She continues into the house.

TACKER

(to himself)

I could gripe about it now.

INT. HANLEY FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

We're skimming down a list in Meadows' journal. Dayton:
rapist, shattered pelvis. Huber Heights: purse snatcher,
dislocated shoulder. Lima: child abuser, fractured skull.

She finishes her latest entry: Arcanum, wife beater, broken
ribs.

A KNOCK at the open bedroom door. Tacker enters.

TACKER

Venae cavae.

MEADOWS

Bonjour!

TACKER

No, venae cavae, veins that carry deoxygenated blood to the heart. I just spoke with the pathologist, a Dr. Abjani. He said the bodies have all had their venae cavae severed.

MEADOWS

That explains the chest wounds. Does he know how they were severed?

TACKER

Not yet. I'm hitting the sack. Call the Chief and fill him in?

MEADOWS

Sure.

Before Tacker can leave:

MEADOWS

Wait. So what do you think?

TACKER

About what?

MEADOWS

Bodies falling from the sky. Dogs attacking their owners with steak knives. Crazy, right?

TACKER

Oh, is it? Because this whole time I've been operating under the assumption that meteoric corpses and aggravated canine assault are COMPLETELY NORMAL.

MEADOWS

Reel it in, Tacker. I'm as thrown by all of this as you are.

TACKER

No, you're more thrown. I'm smarter than you. If it's enough to merely puzzle me, you must be hopelessly dumbfounded. Can I go to bed now?

MEADOWS

Go on, then.

Tacker turns to leave. He pauses.

TACKER

How does a dog attack its owner with a steak knife?

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MEADOWS

Ruff-ly.

TACKER

Ugh.

He leaves.

EXT. ARCANUM POLICE STATION - DAY (EST)

CHIEF HUMAN (VO)

Tell you what I'm havin' a hard
time figurin' out.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - CONT.

CHIEF HUMAN

If you're right and the bodies were
bein' transported by plane, why
dump 'em here in Arcanum?

TACKER

Maybe they had to.

MEADOWS

Something goes wrong, they jettison
the bodies to lighten the load.

TACKER

No reports of wreckage in the area
so we can assume they landed safely
elsewhere.

CHIEF HUMAN

The closest airport is Dayton
International. That's Montgomery
County, right next door.

TACKER

Does this seem like something a
commercial airline would be party
to? I'm thinking military.

MEADOWS

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base,
also Montgomery County.

TACKER

And being an air force base, they
would have C-130s -- carrier planes
large enough to transport that many
bodies, and off the public books.

MEADOWS

A sound theory.

TACKER

Great. Chief, we recommend you set a meeting with the base commander at his earliest convenience.

CHIEF HUMAN

Uh. Yeah. That could be a problem. I have been what you call "banned in perpetuity" from Wright-Pat for what you call "attempting to break into Hangar 18" in an effort to what you call "acquire concrete proof of alien life on our planet."

A long beat. Tacker turns to Meadows.

TACKER

Okay, so I'm going to set us a meeting with the base commander at his earliest convenience.

MEADOWS

Aces!

SLAM TO:

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Chief Human snoozes at his desk. Tacker and Meadows enter.

TACKER

AHEM.

Chief startles awake.

TACKER

Nice to see the taxpayer dollars being put to good use.

CHIEF HUMAN

(composing himself)

So how'd it go at Wright-Pat? Any good news?

MEADOWS

The base commander allowed us access to the flight logs. They showed no activity around Arcanum at the time of the incident, so that rules out the military.

CHIEF HUMAN

Well, a plane still seems the most likely explanation. Supposing there was a collision and the bodies scattered on impact.

TACKER

And what did it collide with,
Chief? An invisible mountain?

Chief leans back, trying to wrap his head around it.

CHIEF HUMAN

I reckon that leaves just one
explanation, then.

TACKER

If you say "magic" I will empty my
Glock into your face.

CHIEF HUMAN

I was gonna say maybe something
went wrong so they jettisoned the
bodies to lighten the load.

TACKER

Does your brain work? That is
literally word for word what we
discussed yesterday.

CHIEF HUMAN

We did?

TACKER

Think hard, Chief.

Chief Human thinks hard.

TACKER

Wow, I can actually hear the
hamster wheel spinning in your head
right now.

MEADOWS

Tacker...

CHIEF HUMAN

Now you listen here. I've just
about had it with these little
wise-acre remarks of yours. We
ain't the most sophisticated police
department around, I know. But I am
the Chief of Police of the Arcanum
Police Department, and dadgummit,
you will show me respect.

TACKER

You know you just said the word
"police" like three times?

MEADOWS

Tacker.

TACKER

Does that mean I have to show you
three times the respect?

MEADOWS

Enough.

TACKER

Sorry, Meadows, I didn't catch
that. Could you repeat it three
times louder?

MEADOWS

Outside. Now.

Tacker grumbles and stomps out.

CHIEF HUMAN

He's a bit touched, ain't he?

MEADOWS

Don't get me started.

CHIEF HUMAN

On what?

Meadows double-takes. This guy really is an idiot.

EXT. ARCANUM PD STATION - DAY

Tacker sulks near the sedan. Meadows approaches.

MEADOWS

Do you want to tell me what that
was about?

TACKER

He started it.

MEADOWS

How did he start it?

TACKER

By being a moron.

MEADOWS

And you're being a jerk.

TACKER

Your face is being a jerk.

MEADOWS

What's gotten into you? You've been
even more irritable than usual from
the moment we arrived in this town.

TACKER

Ha! It's a village, stupid.

Meadows raises an eyebrow. The implication: watch it.

TACKER

Fine, I'm being a jerk. Happy?

MEADOWS

Yes. Now answer the question.

TACKER

I don't know. I can't put my finger on it, but something about this place rubs me the wrong way, and that dipshit law dog isn't helping.

MEADOWS

Then no better reason to focus on the case. The sooner we help him solve it, the sooner we can leave.

TACKER

That yokel has me too agitated to think straight. You got anything?

MEADOWS

Hey, I'm just the muscle. You're the brains of this operation.

TACKER

Still, it's not like I can just pluck theories out of thin--

He stops, struck with a sudden realization.

MEADOWS

What?

He leans into the sedan and grabs a bottled water.

TACKER

This is an airplane.

He unscrews the cap.

TACKER

This is an airplane in flight jettisoning its cargo.

Tacker pours as he moves the bottle horizontally.

MEADOWS

(catching on)

The cargo falls in a straight path. But that's not what happened here.

As they continue, Tacker is clearly leading her to conclusions he's already drawn. In time we'll come to realize that Meadows is the only person he has this kind of patience with.

TACKER

Exactly. These bodies fell en masse from a single point, like water from a showerhead. Which means...

MEADOWS

The aircraft had to have been stationary. A helicopter?

TACKER

We ruled out commercial and military aircraft.

MEADOWS

But not private.

TACKER

Even so, how could a helicopter carry all those bodies?

MEADOWS

How about a monsoon bucket, like they use on forest fires?

TACKER

Still, fifty one bodies. That's a lot of weight for one whirly bird. Remind me, what's the most common civilian helicopter?

MEADOWS

The Robinson R44. Lift capacity of 2400 pounds. Estimate 160 pounds for the average adult male, times fifty one bodies. That's no less than four helicopters.

TACKER

They'd be awful hard to miss, especially over open farmland.

MEADOWS

We canvas the area. See if anyone heard or saw a team of helicopters. Which itself begs the question, why was there a team of helicopters carrying bodies in monsoon buckets, and and why dump them in this town? Sorry, village?

TACKER

One thing at a time, Meadows. Right now we're going back to that diner.

MEADOWS

You think someone there may know something?

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TACKER

No. I'm dying for another burger.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. KORNER DINER - DAY

Tacker chews a mouthful of burger. Chief has yet another untouched cheeseburger.

MEADOWS

So, Tacker. Is there something you'd like to say to Chief Human?

TACKER

Nope.

MEADOWS

Are you sure you have nothing to say, like we discussed on the way here, and is why we invited the Chief to join us?

Tacker feigns deep thought.

TACKER

Nope.

MEADOWS

Then I guess I'll have to apologize for you, as usual. Chief, I'm sorry for my partner's behavior earlier.

CHIEF HUMAN

Water under the bridge. So long as it doesn't happen again.

MEADOWS

Yeah, I can't make that promise.

Tacker's mobile rings. He answers.

TACKER

Tacker. Oh? Right. Keep me posted.

He hangs up.

TACKER

That was Dr. Abjani. He says the chest wounds were likely performed by a laser drill.

MEADOWS

Wait, laser drill or laser scalpel?

TACKER

He said drill.

MEADOWS

That doesn't make any sense.

TACKER

Why not?

MEADOWS

The only medical laser drill in use currently is for dentistry.

TACKER

So?

MEADOWS

So, do you know anyone with teeth in their chest?

CHIEF HUMAN

Actually--

TACKER

(stopping him)

I swear to God.

(to Meadows)

So there's no way a dental laser drill could have severed the venae cavae?

MEADOWS

Beats me. I know what they're used for, not how they work.

TACKER

Partners for six years and still the random gaps in your knowledge base continue to astound me. How are you so smart about some things and so stupid about others?

Meadows shrugs.

CHIEF HUMAN

Y'know, I do believe our local dentist Doc Messers uses a laser drill. Maybe we could ask her?

TACKER

Finally, a good idea. Your stock is dropping, Meadows.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The FBI sedan cruises past.

INT. FBI SEDAN - DAY (MOVING)

Meadows at the wheel, Tacker riding shotgun, Chief Human in the back seat.

CHIEF HUMAN

So, partners for six years, eh?

TACKER

What's it to you?

CHIEF HUMAN

Just makin' conversation.

TACKER

Make it somewhere else.

MEADOWS

You'll have to excuse my partner,
Chief. You may have noticed he's
not exactly a social butterfly.

CHIEF HUMAN

Eh, it happens. This line of work,
sooner or later, some folks lose
their sense of humor.

TACKER

Excuse you, I have a wonderful
sense of humor.

MEADOWS

Since when?

TACKER

At the diner. I did a thing.

MEADOWS

The Hannibal Lecter thing?

TACKER

What? It's funny.

MEADOWS

The first time you did it. The
fifty times since then...

CHIEF HUMAN

Who's Hannibal Lecter?

TACKER

You know, Hannibal Lecter. The
Silence of the Lambs?

CHIEF HUMAN

What's that?

TACKER

Oh, just the greatest novel to film
adaption ever made.

CHIEF HUMAN

Never heard of it.

TACKER

It's been a pop culture staple for over thirty years. Do you live under a rock?

CHIEF HUMAN

I live in a single-story ranch--

TACKER

Not literally, you clown. Are you hearing this, Meadows? He's never heard of Silence of the Lambs.

MEADOWS

Stop the world.

CHIEF HUMAN

What's the big deal? It's just a movie, right?

TACKER

"Just" a movie? It's a work of cinematic genius. Would you call the Mona Lisa "just" a painting?

CHIEF HUMAN

What's the Mona Lisa?

Tacker whips around, staring daggers.

TACKER

You're taxing me, Chief. You are taxing me.

Off Chief Human, not sure how to react...

EXT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The trio exit the sedan.

CHIEF HUMAN

Agent Meadows, a minute?

They hang back as Tacker continues ahead.

CHIEF HUMAN

What exactly is his problem?

MEADOWS

You mean why is he smug, irascible, and condescending? He's a dick.

CHIEF HUMAN

Somebody oughtta tell him that.

MEADOWS

Oh, he knows.

CHIEF HUMAN

But he doesn't care.

MEADOWS

Not in the slightest.

CHIEF HUMAN

That doesn't bother you?

MEADOWS

Actually, I admire it. For better or worse, he's not afraid to speak his mind. You always know where you stand with him. I respect that, and in return he respects me.

TACKER

(calling back)

Hey, nimrods. While we're young?

CHIEF HUMAN

You call that respect?

MEADOWS

Good with the bad.

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - WAITING AREA - DAY

They arrive at the counter, where a perky RECEPTIONIST mans a computer.

CHIEF HUMAN

Afternoon, Shelly.

RECEPTIONIST

Hey, Chief. Time for your triannual cleaning?

CHIEF HUMAN

I'm here on business, actually. Is Doc Messers in?

RECEPTIONIST

I'll fetch her for you.

CHIEF HUMAN

'Preciate it.

Receptionist steps off.

TACKER

Tri-annual? At least you take your dental health seriously.

CHIEF HUMAN

Heck yeah. I never go more'n three years between cleanings.

Off Tacker, stymied...

INT. DOC MESSERS' OFFICE - DAY

DOC MESSERS (50s) inspects photos of the chest wounds.

DOC MESSERS

I would say, yes. These were definitely made by a laser drill.

TACKER

And are these drills typically used for anything besides dental work?

DOC MESSERS

Well, there's the possibility that they were made by some other type of laser drill.

TACKER

(to Meadows)

You said the only medical laser drill currently in use is for dentistry.

DOC MESSERS

She's right. But there are other industries besides medical which employ laser drills. Automotive, aerospace, engineering...

TACKER

So you can't say with certainty that those wounds were made by a dental laser drill specifically?

DOC MESSERS

I'm sorry, no.

TACKER

In that case, you've been no help whatsoever so I think you for absolutely nothing. Meadows?

Tacker leaves. Meadows offers the stung doctor a polite smile.

EXT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Meadows and Tacker exit, the miffed Chief on their tail.

CHIEF HUMAN

What's the big deal, talkin' to her like that? She was trying to help.

TACKER

No, she was failing to help.

CHIEF HUMAN

Even so, she's a friend of mine.

TACKER

Personal feelings have no place in an investigation. She's not your friend, she's a potential witness. And a useless one at that.

CHIEF HUMAN

Are you saying you treat all your interview subjects like that?

TACKER

Yeah, if they're useless.

Chief Human stops.

CHIEF HUMAN

Y'know what? I think my department can handle things from here. You can go on back to Cincinnati. We don't need your help.

TACKER

On the contrary. From what I've seen, your rinky dink police force needs all the help it can get.

CHIEF HUMAN

Don't go doin' us any favors.

TACKER

Tell that to AG Tiller.

MEADOWS

Miller.

TACKER

He's the one--

MEADOWS

She.

TACKER

--who called in a favor and had us sent to this piss hole.

CHIEF HUMAN

If you hate it that much, why don't ya just leave?

TACKER

Trust me, I would rather gargle the thong sweat of a syphilitic Tijuana stripper than spend one more second in this corn-encrusted toilet, but it's not up to me.

CHIEF HUMAN

That's some mouth you got on you.
Maybe it's time somebody shut it.

TACKER

Are you threatening me?

CHIEF HUMAN

What if I was?

TACKER

If you "were," I would warn you
that I've been tutored in the art
of self defense by my more than
capable partner here. Meadows, show
him what you taught me.

CHIEF HUMAN

Ooh, big man, hiding behind a tiny
little girl.

MEADOWS

Hey.

CHIEF HUMAN

Sorry.

MEADOWS

It's cool.

TACKER

I'm not hiding. I simply refuse to
debase myself by engaging in a fist
fight with a dumb gorilla like you.

CHIEF HUMAN

You uppity snob.

TACKER

You sister-banging hick.

CHIEF HUMAN

High-falutin' elitist!

TACKER

God, this place sucks.

CHIEF HUMAN

Hey, don't get personal!

MEADOWS

Enough, both of you.

TACKER

He started it--

CHIEF HUMAN

He's the one who--

Meadows snaps her fingers. Even admonishing them, she never
raises her voice:

MEADOWS

Stop talking. Chief, I know Agent Tacker can be a pill, but he gets results. Tacker, we get it. You don't like it here. But we have a job to do, so get over it. Now are you two going to start acting like adults or do I need to warm up my bitch-slapping hand?

They mumble in surrender.

MEADOWS

Now apologize to one another.

They mumble apologies.

MEADOWS

Now then. Chief, we think it would be a good idea to canvass the area around the Hanley farm. It's your call, so what do you say?

CHIEF HUMAN

Abso-tootly.

TACKER

Christ, even your slang is inbred.

Cue "Foolish Questions" by Johnny Cash and...

BEGIN MONTAGE - CANVASSING THE LOCALS

Tacker, Meadows, the Chief, and his officers knock on doors and question Jake Hanley's neighbors. They're met with head shakes, shrugs. Maybe we keep cutting back to an amorous older lady flirting with the unreceptive Tacker.

The sense we get is that this whole canvassing endeavor is a farcical waste of time.

END MONTAGE

INT. SEDAN - DAY (MOVING)

Meadows at the wheel. Tacker glowers in the passenger seat.

TACKER

It just doesn't make any sense.

MEADOWS

So no one saw or heard a team of helicopters. We adjust our focus and move on to the next theory.

TACKER

There is no next theory. The only logical explanation for the bodies falling en masse from a fixed location was a team of hovering helicopters, and we just ruled that out. It's as if these bodies just appeared out of thin air like mag--

He stops himself, Chief Human's earlier comment resonating.

MEADOWS

So what do we do now?

TACKER

Let's check with the pathologist. Lab reports should be back by now. Maybe they'll tell us something.

DR. ABJANI (VO)

I got nothing.

INT. FIELD MORGUE - DAY

Techs busy about. Tacker and Meadows meet with pathologist DR. DEVESH ABJANI (40s). Capable, but a bit odd. (NOTE: Yes, Dr. Abjani has an Indian accent, and yes, there will be a joke involving that accent later.)

DR. ABJANI

Ignoring damage sustained from the fall, we're unable to determine a cause of death. The bodies appear to have been exsanguinated, but we're not sure how.

TACKER

I thought you said the venae cavae had been severed?

DR. ABJANI

They had, and normally that would be an ideal location to drain from. But you'll recall, they were severed by a laser drill.

TACKER

So?

DR. ABJANI

The purpose of a laser drill is to minimize blood loss. It cauterizes as it cuts.

TACKER

And you can't drain blood through a cauterized hole.

Dr. Abjani clicks his tongue, bingo.

MEADOWS

They couldn't have been drained
from another artery?

DR. ABJANI

We didn't find any other incisions
or drillings.

TACKER

Then how were they exsanguinated?

DR. ABJANI

That's the question. You see, it's
impossible to completely drain a
body of blood. There would still be
at least a trace amount left. But
fifty one bodies and we didn't find
a single drop among them.

MEADOWS

The bodies couldn't have been
flushed out?

DR. ABJANI

Not through a cauterized incision.
And as I said--

MEADOWS

There were no other incisions or
drillings on the bodies.

TACKER

If it's not possible that they were
exsanguinated medically, how do you
explain the absence of blood?

DR. ABJANI

I can't. As strange as it may
sound, all indications point to
these bodies having never had a
blood supply to begin with.

MEADOWS

What about IDs?

DR. ABJANI

We ran dentals and DNA. Nothing.

TACKER

You didn't run fingerprints?

Dr. Abjani points their attention to a photo on his laptop
-- an ECU of a fingertip. Perfectly smooth.

DR. ABJANI

What fingerprints?

TACKER

Is that even possible?

DR. ABJANI

It's extremely rare.

TACKER

Define "extremely."

DR. ABJANI

As rare as winning the lottery and being struck by lightning at the same time. While on horseback. With Haley Atwell. Topless. Havana hair fluttering in the wind. Her arms wrapped tightly around your waist. Ample bosom pressed against your back. Her warm breath whispering into your ear. "Mi amor."

Dr. Abjani trails off, caught up in his erotic scenario. Tacker looks to Meadows, what the hell? She nods him on.

TACKER

So break this down for us.

DR. ABJANI

(snapping to)

Well, between no blood supply, no dental records, no DNA results, and no fingerprints, it's like a bunch of mannequins fell off an assembly line. If you'll allow the metaphor.

TACKER

That's a simile.

DR. ABJANI

What's the difference?

TACKER

Similes compare. Metaphors equate.

DR. ABJANI

Wait, what does an allegory do?

TACKER

Allegories symbolize.

DR. ABJANI

I thought that was an allusion?

TACKER

No, an allusion--

MEADOWS

If I may interrupt. Tacker, we need to update the Chief.

DR. ABJANI

Chief Human? You just missed him.

TACKER

He was here?

DR. ABJANI

Stopped by about an hour ago. Bit of a goober. Although he did have an rather interesting theory about what may be behind all of this.

TACKER

Really? What?

DR. ABJANI

("Ooooooh!")

Magic.

Amused OOHs and AAHs from the techs. Tacker fumes. Dr. Abjani teases him with the old "removable thumb" trick.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. HANLEY FARMHOUSE - DAY

The morning sun peeks over the horizon.

INT. HANLEY FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Meadows is woken by her vibrating alarm watch. She sits up, stretches. Her phone CHIMES on the bedside table. A text message. She checks it. Sinks. Bad news.

MEADOWS

Oh, shit.

TACKER (OS)

Meadows! You up?

MEADOWS

Be right there.

She takes a second to steel herself.

INT. HANLEY FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tacker, already dressed (minus his suit coat) butters toast at the counter. Meadows baby steps in, wary.

MEADOWS

(testing the waters)

Hey, partner. What'cha got there?
Toast?

TACKER

If by "toast" you mean sliced bread partially charred by radiant heat, then yes. I "got" toast.

MEADOWS

Cool. Toast. Tacker and his toast.
Butterin' up the toast.

TACKER

Are you repeating the word "toast" intentionally or are do I need to take you in for a PET scan?

MEADOWS

Naw, man. I'm cool. It's cool.
Everything's... So, have you gotten any bad texts recently, or...?

TACKER

As a matter of fact, I got one just a few minutes ago.

MEADOWS

Oh?

TACKER

ED pills. It's crazy. I must have blocked that number a dozen times but it keeps getting through. What would I even do with ED pills? I have a perfectly functional penis.

MEADOWS

Totally. Me, too. I'm gonna go get dressed now.

Meadows leaves. Tacker continues with his toast.

TACKER

Weirdo.

INT. FIELD MORGUE - DAY

Still early. No one here but the fifty one sheet-covered cadavers.

Dr. Abjani enters, satchel on his shoulder, bopping along to whatever music is playing over his ear buds.

He sets his satchel aside. Turns on a lap top. Readies a microscope. Goes to a refrigeration unit and retrieves a collection of vials.

He turns and stops cold. Stunned. He pulls out his ear buds. We faintly hear The Hunger's "Vanishing Cream" as we

CUT WIDE to reveal THE BODIES HAVE ALL VANISHED.

INT. ARCANUM POLICE STATION - DAY

On Meadows and Betsy at the coffee station.

MEADOWS

Could you pass the creamer?

Betsy does so with a pleasant smile.

MEADOWS

Thanks. We haven't officially met yet. I'm Agent Meadows. Holly.

BETSY

Betsy Sil Vous Plait.

MEADOWS

Oh, you speak French?

BETSY

No, why?

Before Meadows can respond, Chief Human squeezes between the ladies to pour himself a cup.

CHIEF HUMAN
Mornin' Betsy, agent.

MEADOWS
Chief.

CHIEF HUMAN
Say, what's he doin' in there?

Meadows looks to the Chief's office, where Tacker stands staring intently at the wall.

MEADOWS
Thinking.

CHIEF HUMAN
About what?

MEADOWS
If I know Tacker -- and I do,
sometimes more than I'd care to --
he's thinking about how we keep
hitting walls with this case.

CHIEF HUMAN
Starin' at a wall's gonna fix that?

MEADOWS
It's a visualization technique. The
wall is a blank canvas. Projecting
your thoughts onto it helps bring
them into focus.

CHIEF HUMAN
That works for him?

MEADOWS
He does have the highest clearance
rate of any agent in the state.

CHIEF HUMAN
Any idea how long he's gonna be?
I'd like my office back.

MEADOWS
No telling. I find it best not to
interrupt when he's visualizing. He
can get a little snippy.

CHIEF HUMAN
Surprise, surprise.

Betsy steps away. Seizing the opportunity for privacy, Meadows' demeanor turns all business.

MEADOWS

So. Why didn't you tell us you spoke to Dr. Abjani?

Chief Human fumbles, caught off guard.

CHIEF HUMAN

I don't know what you're talkin' about.

MEADOWS

Yes, you do. You spoke to him yesterday, about an hour before we did. Funny how you pretended the information was new to you when I called to "update" you last night.

CHIEF HUMAN

(defensive now)

Why should I have to tell you anything? You said yourself, it's still my investigation.

MEADOWS

An investigation for which the federal government is providing support and resources. Last chance to answer my question or I'm going to get nasty.

CHIEF HUMAN

Okay, okay, fine, I'll tell ya.

MEADOWS

I'm all ears.

CHIEF HUMAN

There ain't no nice way to say it, so I'll just say it. Your partner's a big old A-hole and I don't like workin' with him.

MEADOWS

I understand that. Believe me. But you need to understand that our participation isn't contingent upon your liking him. It's contingent upon your cooperation. I don't mind playing buffer between the two of you if need be. Wouldn't be my first time, certainly won't be my last. But there will be no more withholding information from us on this case. Is that clear?

To his credit, the Chief accepts that he's in the wrong. Plus Meadows made him pee himself a little just now.

CHIEF HUMAN

You have my word, Agent Meadows. It won't happen again.

MEADOWS

Thank you, I appreciate--

TACKER (OS)

Meadows!

MEADOWS

Oop, okay, he's done.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Meadows and Chief Human enter.

MEADOWS

You bellowed?

TACKER

Quiet. Sit down.

She and the Chief take seats.

TACKER

Sherlock Holmes tells us that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

CHIEF HUMAN

(proudly)

Hound of the Baskervilles.

TACKER

No. The Sign of Four. Stop interrupting.

Chief Human bites his lip.

TACKER

We find ourselves in the opposite situation. Having eliminated all probabilities, all that remains is an impossibility: that the bodies materialized out of thin air. We're now left with one course of action.

MEADOWS

Which is?

TACKER

Give up. I'll be in the car.

MEADOWS

Wait, what?

TACKER

Chief, I'd say it's been fun but
I'd be lying. Take care. Or don't.
I genuinely don't care.

MEADOWS

Tacker--

And out he goes. Meadows follows. The Chief's desk phone
rings. He answers.

CHIEF HUMAN

Chief Human. Ah, Dr. Abjani.
(beat)

What do you mean, "dizzy beard?"*

(*And there's the Indian accent joke).

EXT. ARCANUM PD STATION - DAY

Tacker exits, a spring in his step, whistling a happy tune,
Meadows on his heels.

MEADOWS

Tacker, what are you doing?

TACKER

Leaving, obviously.

MEADOWS

We can't just leave, we're in the
middle of a case.

TACKER

No, we're at the end of a case.
We've explored every possibility.
What else is there to do?

MEADOWS

I don't know, keep trying?

TACKER

Why? The chief told us himself that
most of the cases here end up
unsolved. What's one more?

MEADOWS

So you're just going to walk away?

TACKER

Yep. Now step to. If we leave now
we'll be back in Cincie by lunch.
Ooh! Skyline Chili, my treat.

MEADOWS

Wait. That's what this is about.
For some reason you hate this
perfectly pleasant little town--

TACKER

Village.

MEADOWS

--and you're using the fact that you're stumped on this case as an excuse to cut and run. I have to say, I am deeply disappointed.

TACKER

Deeply disappointed? Jeepers. Maybe I need to reconsider.

(beat)

Nah, I'm good.

MEADOWS

Tacker, we can't leave.

TACKER

Hide and watch me.

MEADOWS

No, listen to me.

They stop.

MEADOWS

We really can't leave.

TACKER

Why not?

Meadows hates it, but...

MEADOWS

SAC Workman texted me this morning.

She passes him her mobile. He reads:

TACKER

"Be advised I will be reassigning yourself and Agent Tacker...assist and advise...Arcanum PD...for the immediate future..."

MEADOWS

I'm sorry. I should have told you earlier. I was worried it would distract you from the case.

Tacker slow burns...

MEADOWS

Tacker?

...and burns...

MEADOWS

Are you okay?

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...and burns...

MEADOWS

Tacker?

...until finally:

TACKER

WORKMA-A-A-A-N!!!

CUE Chorus of "It's Raining Men" by The Weather Girls and...

SMASH TO CREDITS.

ARCANUM

Ep. 101 - "WELCOME TO ARCANUM!"

TAG

EXT. ARCANUM - MAIN STREET (NIGHT)

Vacant. Shops closed. The stoplight blinks yellow. We hear the approach of rhythmic, metallic SQUEAKING.

A RIDERLESS BICYCLE rolls past.

END OF EPISODE