

DEAD AIR

Written by

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LOGLINE: A radio DJ with a compulsive gambling problem faces a supernatural force that preys on his callers' vulnerabilities, forcing him to confront his darkest guilt.

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INT. RADIO BOOTH - NIGHT (1983)

A cramped booth. A turned off red "ON AIR" sign.

ROBBIE ROURKE (30s, charismatic) sips his coffee. CLANK! Mug down beside a pile of losing scratch tickets. SCRITCH SCRITCH! Fresh ticket. Another loss. Flicked away.

He exhales hard, runs a hand across his mouth. A beat. CREAK! The door opens. TODD (18, intern, timid) peeks in.

TODD

Um, Mr. Rourke? You're on in five-

ROBBIE

For the love of God, Todd, learn to fucking knock!

Todd stiffens, nods, slips out. Robbie sighs. Hits the ON AIR sign. Straightens. Smiles. Transforms.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Good evening, Las Vegas! This is Robbie Rourke here with *The Nightline Fix* - your late-night dose of heart, heartbreak, and heart-to-hearts.

A phone light blinks - a caller waiting. Robbie taps it.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You're on the air. Talk to me.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Hi, Robbie.

ROBBIE

What's your name?

HEATHER (O.S.)

Heather.

ROBBIE

What's going on tonight, Heather?

CUT BETWEEN: RADIO BOOTH / HEATHER'S BEDROOM

INT. - HEATHER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A dim pastel bedroom. A lava lamp glows in the corner. HEATHER (16, heartbroken) wipes her eyes.

HEATHER

My boyfriend broke up with me. He
said I was too much. Too emotional.
I don't feel like myself anymore.

The overhead light FLICKERS.

BACK TO RADIO BOOTH

ROBBIE

You're hurting. That's okay. It's
normal.

BACK TO HEATHER'S ROOM

A dark corner WATCHES her - a heavy SHADOW POV, low, lurking.
Heather squeezes her eyes shut.

HEATHER

I hate being alone with my own
thoughts. I think I'm-

Lights PULSE. The shadow slides closer. A static HUM rises -

BACK TO RADIO BOOTH

Her voice dissolves into STATIC. POP! THUD! Robbie stiffens.

ROBBIE

Hello? Heather?

STATIC.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Well, folks, I think we lost her.

A light blinks on the phone panel. Robbie taps the line.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You're live on *The Nightline Fix*.
Who am I speaking to?

CUT BETWEEN: RADIO BOOTH / DANIEL'S ROOM

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wind BILLOWS. DANIEL (22, cocky, insecure) sits at his desk.

DANIEL

I'm Daniel. Big fan, man. So...
uh... I screwed up. I was seeing
two girls at the same time. They
both found out. Shocker, right?

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I knew it would hurt them. I think
I just like the game, you know? The
adrenaline. Now they're both gone,
and I have no one.

His lamp flickers. The SHADOW POV lurks beyond the window.

BACK TO RADIO BOOTH

Robbie rubs the back of his neck, voice softer.

ROBBIE

Daniel, when you hide stuff...
it ruins things.

His eyes drift to a PHOTO taped to his console: him and
SHARON (30s, gentle). Smiling. Happy.

BACK TO DANIEL'S ROOM

DANIEL

Yeah, but they get so angry when
you tell them.

THUNK! Something SLAMS into the wall.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hello?

He grabs his door handle - it RATTLES, jammed.

ROBBIE (O.S.)

Everything okay, Daniel?

DANIEL

Rob- Robbie-!

He's YANKED backward.

BACK TO RADIO BOOTH

A heavy THUD. STATIC floods the speakers. Robbie sits frozen.

ROBBIE

Um- sorry about that, everyone.
Weird night for the phones. Must be
this crazy wind we're having!

Another blinking line. Robbie hits it.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You're on the air. What's going on?

CUT BETWEEN: RADIO BOOTH / KITCHEN

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

One humming bulb. PATRICIA (40s, tired) sits alone.

PATRICIA

Hi, Robbie. I'm Patricia. I- I
don't really know why I called.

BACK TO RADIO BOOTH

ROBBIE

It's okay. Talk to me.

BACK TO KITCHEN

She takes a long, shaky breath.

PATRICIA

This is a bit embarrassing to
admit. I've been married twenty
years. High school sweethearts.
But it's not the same as it used to
be. I'm never kissed. Never
touched...

A SHADOW crawls across the floor - fast. The overhead bulb
FLICKERS. Patricia doesn't notice.

BACK TO RADIO BOOTH.

Robbie looks at Sharon's photo. He blinks back tears.

ROBBIE

That sounds incredibly lonely.

BACK TO KITCHEN

PATRICIA

The numbness hurts worse than the
loneliness ever did.

(beat)

How can you be with someone your
whole life and still worry you'll
die alone?

STATIC swells. The SHADOW lifts - stretching tall. Silence.
Then the bulb BLASTS to full brightness - dies to BLACK. A
strangled gasp. A brutal THUD. The phone dangles. Swings.

BACK TO RADIO BOOTH

Static CRACKLES. Robbie flinches.

ROBBIE
Patricia-?

A faint sound beneath the static: BREATHING. A new line BLINKS. Robbie hesitates, then taps it.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
You're... you're on the air?

INT. DARK LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A TV hums with static. EARL (50s, numb, urgent) sits by it.

EARL
Robbie. Get out of the station.
You're not safe.

ROBBIE (O.S.)
What are you talking about?

EARL
No one is safe. It follows the
signal. It follows the pain. Are
you in pain, Robbie? I know I am.

The TV cuts out. A shadow rises behind him.

INT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

A SCREAM rips through the phone - then PURE STATIC.

ROBBIE
Sir? Sir-!?

Every line goes DARK. Every booth light CLICKS off. Silence. Then - BEEP... BEEP... BEEP. A line connects on its own. Robbie bolts for the door. Grabs the handle - LOCKED.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Todd? TODD?! Open the damn door!

A deep, distorted CHUCKLE leaks through the speakers.

MONSTER (O.S.)
Robbie... I'm on the air.

Robbie slowly turns, back pressed to the door.

ROBBIE
Todd...? You think you're funny,
don't you? Joke's over. Okay? Open
up.

The console lights flicker in uneven waves. A warped LAUGH slips from the speakers. Robbie freezes, unsettled.

MONSTER (O.S.)

Oh, Robbie... Todd's gone. Why don't you tell them the truth?

ROBBIE

What truth? I- I don't understand-

MONSTER (O.S.)

Go on. They're listening. Tell them who you are.

STATIC builds - soft, then swelling - like a swarm.

ROBBIE

(nervous laugh)

I'm Robbie Rourke. Las Vegas's favorite late-night radio host. I-

A STATIC SNAP. Then-

SHARON (O.S.)

...Hello?

Robbie freezes. Eyes lock on the photo.

ROBBIE

Sharon?

SHARON (O.S.)

Robbie? I'm- I'm confused. Why did you call me? What's happening?

(voice glitches)

Rob- rob - r-r-r-r-ROB--BIE--

He slams his hand on the console.

ROBBIE

DON'T YOU DARE HURT HER!

MONSTER (O.S.)

She's next, Robbie... unless you *tell them the truth*.

SHARON (O.S.)

Robbie? *Please...*

STATIC swallows her. Robbie grips the console, shaking.

ROBBIE

Sharon...

(voice breaking)

(MORE)

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I give people advice about love...
but I couldn't even save my own
marriage.

He stares at Sharon's photo, fighting back tears.

MONSTER (O.S.)

Good. What else?

ROBBIE

I blew our savings. Lied about it.
Then lied again. I keep lying.
Every paycheck I get? It goes
straight to the casino. Or scratch-
offs. I lost *everything* -

Everything goes BLACK. A BREATH - not his. The ON AIR sign
flicks back on, illuminating THE MONSTER: a towering shadow
with a weathered gray skull for a face. It reaches out a hand
- STATIC SURGES.

INT./EXT. - DEAD AIR - UNKNOWN

Silence. Darkness. Robbie gasps awake. No booth. No walls.
Just empty, weightless DARK.

ROBBIE

Hello? ...HELLO?

His voice echoes back, static, distorted. CLICK! A VINTAGE
80s TV flickers on in the void.

Onscreen: SHARON and ROBBIE in better times. She pulls him
close, kisses his cheek. He looks softer - hopeful. CLICK.
Sharon - later. Dim home. Eyes red, shoulders tense.

SHARON (ON TV)

What the hell are we going to do,
Robbie? You lost *everything*.
EVERYTHING. Our money, our *home*...

She breaks, sobbing.

ROBBIE (ON TV)

I'm sorry.

ROBBIE

I'm sorry...

The IMAGE DISTORTS. Flickers to ROBBIE'S FACE - which MELTS
and REFORMS as THE MONSTER. Its skull face expands off the
screen, fills the void. LAUGHS - low, broken, distorted.

Robbie stands frozen. Tears stream down his cheeks.

SMASH TO TITLE: DEAD AIR.