

TALK THE NIGHT

by

Matthew S. Hinton

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TALK THE NIGHT**Copyright© 2022 Matthew S. Hinton****CAST OF CHARACTERS**

DRAKE, *teenager, time traveler, host* of paranormal pirate radio show: “Talk the Night”*
CAPTAIN, *Drake’s grandfather & his station engineer; performs all the voice-overs for commercials and intro/outro of the show; former WWII pilot; happens to be a ghost*
RICH, *Drake’s father, Captain’s son*
CALLER, *a caller to the show*

*Note on DRAKE’s *style* as a host: There is a certain talk radio patter that is difficult to describe, but can be identified when one hears it done well. This style of radio show and hosting is a dying breed, replaced with far too many political talking heads. The author recommends listening to talk radio hosts who came to fame during the turn of the 21st century. Their rolling monologue (regardless of subject, but save yourself some sanity and avoid political pundits) serves as a good guide for the actor portraying DRAKE.

**Note on CAPTAIN’s commercials: A few commercial breaks are built into the radio show. These can be found in an appendix, and their order may be adapted for the needs and personality of any performance.

SETTING

The attic. Exposed beams upstage make for a splintery slanted roofline, with a single window that has seen better days. Assorted boxes in various sizes, stacks, and levels of moisture can be moved around, or removed entirely. Two or three chairs, orphaned from entirely different wooden families, have made their home here. An ancient chest gathers dust in the corner. The only entrance is to one side: a set of stairs that disappear down and off into the home below.

Enter DRAKE in near total darkness. It is early morning – pre-dawn. Bed music plays as he settles into his work station: a card table with black metal box, two microphones, and two chairs. From the back of the black box a wire leads to the outside via the window. The box is outfitted with a red light bulb atop it – the ON-AIR light. A Ouija board hangs behind him. He dons a pair of headphones as he sits. Opposite DRAKE sits CAPTAIN, wearing WWII-era aircraft headset, and a flight jacket. The music lowers and a VO can be heard introducing “Talk the Night”, DRAKE’s overnight pirate radio talk show.

CAPTAIN: IT’S TIME ONCE AGAIN TO PICTURE PEOPLE YOU CANNOT SEE, TO IMAGINE PLACES YOU CANNOT YET VISIT, TO OPEN YOUR MIND AND YOUR MOUTH ON THE SHOW THAT’S

SWEEPING THE MULTIVERSE AND THE GREAT BEYOND. IT'S *TALK THE NIGHT* ON W-E-E-G, WEEGEE RADIO. AND NOW, HERE AGAIN IS YOUR HOST, DRAKE DIRKSON.

(The *ON-AIR light* comes on, and both DRAKE and the CAPTAIN can be made out clearly.)

DRAKE: We are back ... be with me here and speak to me through this medium. You, loyal listeners. You are my spirit guides and just as you call upon me every late night, every early morning by way of radio dial, I call upon you. It feels like a one way medium, doesn't it? It feels as though there is only my voice on the line, humming and buzzing through the early AM fog in the valleys, bouncing off your cars and windows at home, riding the moonlight into the sky and getting what the ham operators down at the Lizard stop call "good skip" – sometimes that feels like a one-way street. I know, because I used to be on your end of the line. I used to feel as though the cold nights and colder mornings were only for the lonely guy with the microphone. And then they took that away. Not the microphone, but the man. Most of the disc-jockeys, the advice-givers, were stripped out of their office, their rank. Replaced by automated jukeboxes or digital line outputs with an ipod set to shuffle. Or worse, an ipod mini. But some of us managed to slip through the cracks of this modern era. To wrestle from the grasp of the corporate greedheads and the clock watchers and call our voices out past the edge of what they know. *They* think it's a one-way medium. They think it's about getting their signal out above the noise. But I hear you out there. I hear you out there, even as the question echoes in my headphones. In the business we call them 'cans'. Just like the childhood toy. *This signal is two-way*. My voice travels from my microphone to a wire and up and out. To you. A gossamer thread connects us, our thoughts ... Tonight we've been talking about *lost time*. Missing time. Call up the US Naval Observatory Master Clock and you can hear the time counted off in five second increments. Fred Covington, a terrific actor and friend of *Talk the Night*, recorded the voice for their call-in line – they still use his voice today. Fred Covington is the *Voice of Time*, because his voice is *timeless*. Their computers are accurate down to the microsecond, and they are responsible for the correct reporting of time to all the satellites in orbit. Think of the precision that takes. Think about what a loss of time would mean on that grand scale. One satellite off by one mere second means miles away from position in orbit, means our gossamer thread is cut ... Carol Mallory from Catawissa called in before the break and told us how extra-terrestrials abducted her from the edge of her property – she was missing for three days, seven hours, and thirty-three and a third minutes – she knows because her watch had stopped at the precise moment the beam of light lifted her by the chest into an alien craft of unknown origin, make, or model. When she regained consciousness, she was in the exact spot on her lawn where she reports being taken, in the same clothing, in the same condition. Witnesses on the scene investigating Carol's disappearance reported that she wasn't there one moment, but then suddenly appeared, as if out of thin air; as if the world blinked around her. Perhaps if her kidnappers had called the Naval Observatory they wouldn't have made such an error. Perhaps it wasn't an error at all. Even you, gentle listener, have gone adrift on the drive home, trancelike, only to come-to idling in your driveway, wondering how you got there ... Lost to time and your thoughts. But "thoughts, the slaves of life; and life, Time's fool; and Time, that takes survey of all the world,

must have a stop.” (Beat.) Joining us tonight has been a very special guest. He’s a man whose thoughts, life, and time have stopped, but thanks to the powers that be at WEEGEE radio he joins us nightly. The skip is strong with this one. You know him as my trusted engineer, the Captain. Welcome, sir.

CAPTAIN: Thank you for having me.

DRAKE: Oh, well, thank you for being had.

CAPTAIN: Heheh.

DRAKE: Now we’ve talked about all manner of phenomena, haven’t we, Captain?

CAPTAIN: I suppose so. Crystals -

DRAKE: Universal Color Symbolism –

CAPTAIN: Demon Babies –

DRAKE: Government Microchips -

CAPTAIN: The ever-growing werewolf population.

DRAKE: Yes, the Werewolf Procreation Council is a longtime sponsor of *Talk the Night*. How often have we talked, Cap’n?

CAPTAIN: I can’t quite recall how many times I’ve been on the show.

DRAKE: 83 times.

CAPTAIN: 83?

DRAKE: Times.

CAPTAIN: Is that so? Might as well be my show at this point.

DRAKE: Someday, Captain, someday. We need a filler for some earlier slots, I’ll tell the producers here to put you on the clipboard.

CAPTAIN: I only work the night shift.

(They chuckle)

DRAKE: Now as you've no doubt heard, tonight we're discussing time.

CAPTAIN: Time?

DRAKE: Time ... Time in all its forms, but especially loss of time. At the top of the hour, I shared the tragic tale of my many years lost to the fridge. But losses come with the risks of exploration. Find a sandwich and San Francisco Bay, and you lose a few spins of the hour hand in the process. Have you had a similar experience?

CAPTAIN: Oh, yes. I used to fly over the hump during the big war.

DRAKE: They're all big wars.

CAPTAIN: Are they?

DRAKE: They are nowadays.

CAPTAIN: Where does the time go?

DRAKE: Exactly.

CAPTAIN: Back in those days the C-47 Skytrain was my aircraft of choice. Big planes we took over India – “the hump” was what we called Himalaya back then. Burma campaign – equipment, people, we moved everything on those ferries. Once you got over the hump, you knew you were in the clear. Well, one night I was taking a load a' troops to Calcutta, and just as we hit the Gulf of Bengal we got lit up from the water.

DRAKE: You mean you took fire?

CAPTAIN: I mean we got lit up – light, white and blue light, washed over us, filled the cockpit. I felt both engines kick the bucket. Couldn't hear them anymore. I couldn't see the instrument panel before my face, couldn't see my own hands, couldn't even hear Buck, my co-, in my headset.

DRAKE: What did you do, Captain?

CAPTAIN: Well, they say that there are no atheists in foxholes, but they never tell you that the air is for the prepared. I started counting how many chutes I thought we had. And just as I got to the number zero, the light clicked off. As if by a switch. Buck and I were fine and full of fuel and landed in Calcutta with a scared sounding controller in our ears. The boys we'd been hauling all said they saw the light and all had watches with pictures of their sweethearts pasted to the lids – all synchronized to the same wrong time.

DRAKE: How much time did you lose?

CAPTAIN: Four days.

DRAKE: Remarkable tale. Let's go back to the phone for your stories. East of the sun and west of the moon, it's time to 'Talk the Night'.

RICH (V.O.): Yeah, Hi. Longtime caller, first time listener. I mean – ah. I'm a caller. And I'm also a listener. I mean I'm a good listener. I mean I'm Rich – Richard. I love the show.

DRAKE: Relax, Rich - Richard, take your time.

RICH (V.O.): Thanks. Thanks for taking my call. You both have very comfortable voices. Comforting. Voices. Something familiar about them. You both sound like people I know, I guess.

DRAKE: Well, here at *WEEGEE* we're one big, happy radio family. Do you have a tale of crypto-chronology for us tonight, Rich, or are you just spreading the love?

RICH (V.O.): I'm calling on accounta I suffer a loss a time damn near each night.

DRAKE: Go on.

RICH (V.O.): See, what I do is find myself in the bathroom most nights – odd hours mostly – and time just seems to fall off the clock in there.

DRAKE: Well, Rich, time flies when you're having fun.

CAPTAIN: Hah!

RICH (V.O.): That's just it. I don't exactly remember what kinda fun I'm having in there, or if I'm even having fun to begin with. I sometimes just black out. Wake up on the floor, sometimes I've finished the sandwich I brought in there – I eat sandwiches on the commode sometimes, it relaxes me – but sometimes I don't even finish it. It's in pieces all over the bathroom floor, in the tub drain, under the sink, little bits ground into the bathmat. I wake up with toilet paper wrapped around me, and toothpaste on the floor, the tube squeezed empty. We go through hundreds a shower curtains 'cause they're just ripped to shreds. We buy stock in tartar-control.

DRAKE: My own father suffers from the same affliction. Do you go anywhere? Remember anything from the blackouts?

RICH (V.O.): I blink out, is all. One moment, I'm there. Then the next, I'm still there, but everything's just color and destruction.

DRAKE: Sounds like you need to call us back during Werewolf Week, Rich.

RICH (V.O.): No wait. Don't hang up on me please.

DRAKE: I wouldn't dream of it. So how much time loss are we talking about here? Days? Weeks? Years?

RICH (V.O.): An hour.

DRAKE: Sounds familiar.

RICH (V.O.): How do you mean? Do you know what this is?

DRAKE: Eating in the bathroom. Color spotting. Destruction of toiletries. Ring any bells, Captain?

CAPTAIN: I had a son who went through this. Started in his teen years. For all I know, he never stopped.

RICH (V.O.): Wait a minute. Dad?

CAPTAIN: Son?

DRAKE: Dad?

RICH (V.O.): Son?! Drake? Drake, is that you?!

(DRAKE presses some button somewhere – RICH's voice is gone.)

DRAKE: Whoops, it looks like we've lost Rich and his bathroom. We'll try to get him back.

(Bed music plays)

In the meantime, this is the voice of Drake Dirkson with the Captain; and if you're just tuning into Talk the Night, the topic is time loss. Now don't you get lost while we break for a moment from our sponsor.

(ON-AIR light turns off; CAPTAIN's commercial talk takes up the background.)

RICH (*offstage*): DRAAAAKE!

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