

AFTERMATH

A Radio Drama from Sketchbook

CHARACTERS

Francis/Narrator.
Tara.
Adam.
Jane.
Anna.
ANNOUNCER.

CAST

Jaykob Parsons
Kala Bhagat
Tucker O'Roark
Esther Gilliam
Sophia Dahm Wollan
Josiah Wollan

SFX: Music Cue: INTRO BED.

ANNOUNCER

Your best, sometimes, is not enough. When a life is lost, can you really forgive yourself?

Welcome to Aftermath, a radio drama from Bryce Crossman's Sketchbook.

Aftermath stars Jaykob Parsons as Francis, Sophia Wollan as Anna, Tucker O'Roark as Adam, Kala Bhagat as Tara, and Esther Gilliam as Jane.

Aftermath is produced by Bryce Crossman.

SFX: Music Cue: FLASHBACK Running in a forest, heavy breathing, and wind rushing by.

FRANCIS

WAIT!

SFX: A gun clicks. A gunshot.

ANNA

You could have done better, Francis.

SFX: MUSIC CUE: PRESENT DAY A book slams shut. A chair scrapes against the floor.

NARRATOR

In the summer of 1990, my friends and I found ourselves in the city library. They had just got the budget for a new computer in the ancestry room. Well, it was actually donated, with a photo of who the computer is in memorial for.

ADAM

That's it! Stop turning the page, Tara! That's the one ghost town she wanted to visit!

TARA

Ok, Adam. You don't need to yell in my ear about it.

JANE

Are you sure this is it?

ADAM

Yes, Jane. I am. Camp Shanks! That's the place. Francis, tell me I'm right in this.

FRANCIS

Ye-yea. I think so?

ADAM

Thank you!

JANE

Cut Francis some slack, Adam. That's not fair. Tara?

TARA

Yeah?

NARRATOR

Tara stood in the corner, arms folded and head up against the door frame. She seemed to be staring into space.

JANE

Do you think Camp Shanks is the place?

TARA

Yeah, sure.

SFX: TARA walks away.

JANE

What's going on with Tara?

ADAM

I don't know. Francis, has she said anything to you?

FRANCIS

No, not that I recall-

ANNA

Where were you? I needed help.

FRANCIS

I'll go see if she's upset.

ANNA

It's your fault, you could have tried harder.

SFX: Jane types on the computer, and Francis walks away.

FRANCIS

Hey, Tara?

SFX: MUSIC CUE: Flashback, people walk in the woods.

NARRATOR

In our spot in the western part of the state, a river runs through the woods. Well, it's more like a creek. Off the beaten path, you would eventually walk into a clearing. A fire pit in the center, the creek visible through the trees, and not another soul for miles. Peaceful. Quiet.

ANNA

Hey, thanks for everything, Francis. It's going to be hard to say goodbye to this place.

FRANCIS

I mean, college isn't that nearby.

ANNA

Yeah, college.

FRANCIS

Everything alright, Anna? You seem off?

ANNA

Off my rocker?

FRANCIS

No, I mean- sorry. Forget I said anything.

SFX: MUSIC CUE: PRESENT DAY: The following dialogue shall be edited as if it's being heard from inside a car, except for Anna.

ADAM

And here we are! Camp Shanks! One of the many POW camps in the USA.

TARA

There's not a lot here. I see one abandoned building. The rest is just a field.

JANE

Adam, are you sure we can set up camp here?

ANNA

You could have tried harder.

ADAM

If we get caught, we can just move. Plus, no one's gonna be here. It's a ghost town. Not a living town.

TARA

Wait, where's Francis?

ANNA

Where were you?

JANE

Is he still in the car?

JANE/ANNA

FRANCIS!

SFX CUE: Tapping on a window/GUNSHOT

FRANCIS

AUGH! Yeah? Sorry!

JANE

Get out of the car and help us, please!

SFX CUE: ADAM opens the trunk. FRANCIS climbs out of the car.

SFX: Setting up a tent and fire crackling. Appropriate SFX for the following:

NARRATOR

It didn't take long to set up camp. Security did swing by, but they left us alone after they took half the bag. The cost of freedom is truly a hefty one.

SFX: Lawn chair unfolding and placing it on the ground. Jane ruffles through the cooler.

JANE

Do we have any extra bratwurst?

ADAM

Yo, toss me a water while you're over there.

JANE

Okay.

TARA

Hey, Francis. You seem a bit off. Are you okay?

ANNA

You're a failure.

FRANCIS

Yeah, I'm fine.

TARA

Hey, Jane?

JANE

Yea?

TARA

I'm gonna go for a walk.

JANE

Are you okay?

TARA

Yeah, I just want to be alone for a bit.

ADAM

Understandable. I think I'll sit under the stars. I'm not interested in seeing any dead bodies.

JANE

I want to eat my food.

SFX: Finger snap

ADAM

Oh! That too.

TARA

Ok.

SFX: Tara walks away. MUSIC CUE: FLASHBACK: As the music starts, the footsteps transition from grass to concrete. RAIN.

NARRATOR

March 15. I walked home from school, after I had helped the theatre kids paint a set. I guess that's what I get for having my brother make promises involving other people.

My pants were stained, my mouth tasted like sawdust, I had no idea how, and my back and arms ached. And worst of all, I forgot my raincoat.

As I climbed up my porch steps, all I wanted was to get a shower and throw my clothes in the washer. But in the knocker on the front door, there was a folded piece of paper. I took the note, and noticed it was soaked from the rain. Carefully, I opened it.

SFX: MUSIC CUE: Present Day

Tara's been gone for a bit.

JANE

She did say she wanted to be alone.

ADAM

Are you guys not worried?

JANE

Not really.

ADAM

I'll go find her.

FRANCIS

Thank you, Francis.

JANE

SFX: Francis gets up.

I can't believe you didn't offer!

JANE

Why? Tara can take care of herself.

ADAM

That's not what I'm saying!

JANE

NARRATOR

I'm sure they continued to argue as I walked away. It was a peaceful night. Seeing the silhouettes of the abandoned buildings be illuminated by my flashlight was surreal. This place used to be a bustling area. Sure, it was used for war, but it was used.

SFX: Distant Gun click.

I turned my head quickly. What was that? I knew what it was, I guess I just didn't want to believe it.

FRANCIS

Tara?

ANNA
It's your fault.

SFX: Slow footsteps.

FRANCIS
TARA?!

ANNA
Where were you?

SFX: Wind rustling, talking heard in the distance.

FRANCIS
TARA!

ANNA
You're a failure!

FRANCIS
Stop it!

SFX: Running.

FRANCIS
TARA! Please, no, not again!

SFX: Funeral Music Cue: Crows and Bells

NARRATOR
It was a closed casket. I don't think Anna's parents could handle seeing their daughter (pause) like that.

I've been to plenty of funerals. Granted, they were for older family members I didn't have much emotional connection to. I was sad, felt sorry for my other family members, but Anna's was the first funeral where I felt a very intense sorrow and guilt.

SFX: PRESENT DAY: Running, sliding on mud.

FRANCIS
TARA! Oh my- What are you doing?!

NARRATOR
I found Tara, holding a gun to her head. The light from the flashlight reflecting brightly off the gun. Tara was crying, the arm holding the gun was shaky.

TARA
Francis, leave me alone.

FRANCIS
No. Tara, you don't want-

TARA
You don't get to tell me what I want!

NARRATOR

I froze. I didn't know what I was doing. Any wrong move-

TARA

Just leave me alone.

FRANCIS

Do you remember the day Anna left notes on each of our doors? The day before she-

TARA

She left notes on our doors?

FRANCIS

You didn't get one?

TARA

What? No! She left you a note?

NARRATOR

Tara lowered the gun and walked towards me. I stood where I was, too afraid to make any sudden movements.

FRANCIS

Yea-yeah, she did.

TARA

And you didn't tell us?! \

FRANCIS

It was a goodbye note! She wrote that she was going to kill herself!

TARA

And you didn't stop her?!

FRANCIS

I tried!

TARA

Not hard enough. She's gone because of you!

ANNA

She knows it's your fault.

FRANCIS

And what if you do the same?

TARA

You better watch your next words-

FRANCIS

You were about to put a bullet in your brain, just like Anna. She's gone and can't you see how much pain all of us are in? What if you did the same? Two friends gone in the span of a year-

TARA

This wasn't supposed to be about you guys.

FRANCIS

How could it not be? You would leave us without so much as a goodbye, hundreds of miles away from home?

TARA

I can't stand being in that town. Everywhere I turn, I'm reminded of Anna. I can't deal with this guilt anymore!

FRANCIS

What guilt?

TARA

She isolated herself; she had scars on her arms; she acted like there was no hope; and the day before she died, she was the happiest she had been in months. There were signs, and I didn't see them!

FRANCIS

Tara-

TARA

And you had a note, and you didn't do anything about it!

FRANCIS

That isn't fair-

TARA

It is! Anna would be here if it weren't for me, and especially if it wasn't for you!

SFX: Cued by what FRANCIS describes.

FRANCIS

I tried, Tara!

After finding her letter, I ran into the woods after her. When I got to our spot, I tripped on a log, hitting my head on the ground. When my vision focused, Ashley looked at the trees. She turned to me, despair in her eyes. I tried to get up...BANG. I heard something heavy fall to the ground, followed by a light, metallic thud. When I processed what happened, I saw Anna dead on the ground.

She was right there; I failed her—not just that afternoon but every day before and every day since. So don't tell me that I didn't try, that I didn't care, because I do.

Please, it not for my sake, but for your own, drop the gun.

TARA

You- you saw her-?

FRANCIS

Yeah-

TARA

I had no idea-

I didn't tell anyone.

FRANCIS

Why?

TARA

I'm already beating myself up. I didn't want you guys to add to that.

FRANCIS

I, I don't know what to say to that.

TARA

Can you please put the gun down?

FRANCIS

NARRATOR
Tara slowly placed the gun on the ground and left the enclosure. She wore a shocked and concerned expression. She turned to the fire in the distance.

Neither of them came over here.

TARA

They probably didn't know.

FRANCIS

I was about to do what Anna did...I am so sorry, Francis.

TARA

Hey, it's okay. We've been through a lot.

FRANCIS

NARRATOR
At that, we started walking back to the group.

I don't know what I was thinking.

TARA

You're okay.

FRANCIS

I brought a gun on our road trip.

TARA

You might not want to say that in front of Jane.

FRANCIS

SFX: Fire crackling, forest ambiance.

JANE
There you are! How was your walk?

TARA
It was- yea, it was good.

FRANCIS
She just got lost, that's all.

ADAM

We made some hotdogs while you were away. Want some?

NARRATOR

Tara nodded and took a hotdog from Adam. Jane went back to her seat, and I sat down in the grass, staring at the fire.

SFX: Tara sits down. MUSIC CUE: Ending.

ANNOUNCER

With Francis now at peace and one friend alive, Francis could enjoy the rest of the trip.

Thank you for joining us for Aftermath, from Sketchbook. This has been (ANNOUNCER'S NAME) signing off.

MUSIC CUE: Ending music that fades out.