

Episode 24: You  
Written by Jarod K. Anderson  
[www.cryptonaturalist.com](http://www.cryptonaturalist.com)

You have lived in this bog your entire life, but you've never seen anything like the creature that just stepped from the trees.

Welcome, to The CryptoNaturalist.

[Sound of the bog and the buzzing cicadas fades in]

Down here, at ground level, the peat is cool and damp beneath your webbed feet. Cool and damp and never still. You feel the creatures that crawl an inch below the surface, strong and blind and full of purpose. You feel the way the ground swells with the heat and tightens with the cold. You feel the plodding steps of a moose in a mire a mile off or the staccato dash of a squirrel traversing a distance too great for a leap between branches.

And now, more than anything, you feel the slow, booted feet of the creature that just stepped into view.

The man is bearded. Tall. You can't guess how old he is because you've never seen another such animal as he. He smiles and tips the brim of his hat toward you and, when he does so, you smell something like distant smoke and pine resin, but there's something floral underneath it. Lilac maybe. It isn't an unpleasant smell and you find that, without reason, you just can't bring yourself to fear this man.

This is unlike you. To stand in the open, seeing and being seen. Any other day, you would have dived into the earth and swam into the tangled forests of tree roots that you know as well as your own clever fingers.

Instead, you stand in the silver moonlight and gaze up at the giant. Something about him says that he isn't a predator, not here for violence or mischief. He moves like a sapling swaying in the breeze. Part of the landscape. Not swimming against the current of his surroundings.

The man opens his mouth and sound cascades out. You listen and the world pauses for a time.

"I think I'll read you a poem, if you don't mind. It's time for today's hidden lore segment. Today's hidden lore is a poem titled "The Glass Girl's Day Job" by Jarod Anderson."

### **Hidden Lore Segment**

The Glass Girl's Day Job

Tears condense in the crystal hollows of her eyes

When she talks about the sales staff.  
They don't respect her. Her expertise. Her professionalism.

She saves the tears for home  
Rain on the windowpanes of her cheeks.  
The marketing manager doesn't cry in the office.

Her lips, translucent and touched with a red glow,  
Remind me of freshly blown glass as she mouths the words in her sleep,  
Reliving the indignities, weathering their condescension.

She dreams of what she might have said to silence them.

I don't wake her,  
Even though it feels impolite to watch the images unfold as  
Smoky silhouettes beneath the fisheye lens of her forehead.

In the light from the bedside lamp  
Her hair iridesces like fiber optic filaments.  
I fight the urge to push a strand behind the ornate folds of her ear  
like a flower sculpted from ice.

She says their words make her feel like an imposter.  
Not because she is made of living glass and smoke,  
A universe of churning thought in a person-shaped bottle,

But because she thinks her voice sounds too young  
Or her choice of clothes invites their patronizing comments.  
Fragility in a neon script, humming and intrusive in the boardroom.

But she is not a child and she is not fragile.  
When the thrum of her anxiety reaches a certain pitch  
Cracks bloom along the curves of her shoulders like calligraphy,

But she never breaks.

I imagine that the cracks form words that I can almost read  
And when I tell her so, she smirks knowingly.

Once, half-drunk on a Saturday,  
I thought I could sound out the web of lines along her clavicle  
And the syllables that caught in my throat  
Vibrated with transcendence.

Her coworkers just aren't too bright.

They think strength should be an opaque thing  
Thick and unfeeling like a cinderblock.  
A blunt and cowardly image of power.

They point fleshy pink fingers at the  
Graceful etchings of her anxiety, her past traumas,  
A catalog of vulnerabilities naked to the world  
With edges too sharp for them to touch.

She is beyond their understanding of strength.

They patronize because she is a woman.  
They are cruel because vulnerability terrifies them.

The sincerity of glass makes them feel bare and small  
And if they admit she is strong and competent  
What would that mean for them?

As if respect or strength were a finite resource.

Monday morning,  
She drinks coffee by the kitchen window in just her sweatpants  
And the light shining through her litters the room with rainbows.

"I think I'm going to look for a new job," she says.

I watch the coffee swirling through her  
Shifting from tan to the pinks and purples of the sunrise.

"I support whatever you want to do," I say,  
But I want to say more, to say that I look up to her,  
To say that I would be proud to be made of glass like hers.

Instead, I sip my coffee and drink in her clarity,  
Feeling a kind of admiration that is almost pain  
Sharp and bright and sparkling in the sunlight.

You don't exactly understand these words, but you enjoy their cadence the way you enjoy the hissing rhythm of rain on stone.

He smiles down at you. You know what that means and you find yourself smiling in return. What an adventure it is to be alive and under the stars.

You decide to get a better look at this smiling wanderer in the dark, in your dark.

It's been a while. A long while. But, you send thoughts rippling along your back and find that your wings have not vanished from disuse. You've had no call for wings in this phase of your life, the time of swimming through the earth and mapping out the secret, singing blackness beneath the world.

Still, your wings hum to life. A sound from your youth an age and an age ago, but you have grown heavy and you do not spring into the air as before. Instead, you find that your wings have made you lighter on your feet and your fingers and toes itch to climb.

You lay your palms on the tree beside you, your webbed hands the rich brown of churning river water after a summer storm.

And... up you go. Your slender claws, sharp as a late frost, practically fly up the old bark, gray-green and lovingly dressed in lichens.

Up you zip and the feeling fills your heart with that tenderest of pains, nostalgia for youth not far gone and yet firmly beyond reach.

There's the branch you want, nearly at eye level with the smiling man. The man who has stayed politely still so that you can study what he might be at your leisure. You swing yourself onto the branch and crouch like a grasshopper on a cattail.

"My word, but you are absolutely wonderful," says the man.

You have no idea what these odd grunts might mean, but he has poured so much kindness into the sound that you suspect you understand well enough.

You'll never share the same language as this odd creature, but you do have a gift you can give him. It's a gift that your kind has sharpened for eons, sharpened on the stone of necessity for use in places without sight or sound. It's a way to hand experience to another as easily as dew drops from one green leaf to the next.

So, you step forward on your slender branch and touch the visitor's outstretched hand. You feel the life in that hand, warm and curious and marked with years of use. With that simple touch, you give the last few moments of memory over to the smiling man. You give him the time between seeing him stride from the blackberry thicket up until this moment, this moment when you want him to understand, more than anything else, that you are very pleased to make his acquaintance.

[Sound of the bog and the buzzing cicadas intensifies and then fades to silence]

My word.

What a gift you have given to me, friend. As a person driven on by curiosity, I have received few treasures that measure up to this. My thanks to you and all your folk.

...

Listeners, this is episode 24. That means we have reached a full year of The CryptoNaturalist. A year of strange and wonderful nature. A year of strange and wonderful comradery. I want to thank you for joining me on this adventure and for inviting me into your lives.

I'm looking forward to another year with you. Indeed, I'm working on a longer writing project that I think you're going to enjoy and I have no shortage of ideas for year two of The CryptoNaturalist.

If you enjoy this show and would like to help me find more time to create, please consider becoming a patron at [Patreon.com/CryptoNaturalist](https://Patreon.com/CryptoNaturalist). A dollar subscription means a lot to me and unlocks all sorts of bonus content. A five dollar subscription gets you an exclusive sticker and access to my CryptoNaturalist correspondence courses. I'm working on a batch of bonus content and thank you gifts in the next couple weeks, so this is a great time to show your support for the show.

Until next time, we're all strange animals. So, act like it.

**END**

### **Show Notes/Credits**

#### **Credits**

You can support the production of this show and find bonus content and exclusive episodes by becoming a patron at [Patreon.com/CryptoNaturalist](https://Patreon.com/CryptoNaturalist) OR by visiting the Merch and Support sections on [Cryptonaturalist.com](https://Cryptonaturalist.com) for t-shirts, stickers, and more. \$5 a month patrons now have access to monthly CryptoNaturalist correspondence courses, providing detailed lessons on what it takes to become a CryptoNaturalist. You'll find information about submitting your poetry or prose for our hidden lore segments in the about section of our website. To connect with other CryptoNaturalist fans and see all the strange nature the internet has to offer, search out The CryptoNaturalist Fan Group on Facebook. The CryptoNaturalist is written and read by Jarod Anderson. Our theme song is Banish Misfortune, played by Andrew Collins. Stay Curious. Stay Wild. Stay Weird.

**Show Notes: Episode 24: You (00:15:25)**

You are a cryptid worthy of study, a creature of the marshland night, a fascinating animal who is about to make a new friend.

Hidden Lore poetry by Jarod K. Anderson.

Please take a moment to leave a review for The CryptoNaturalist wherever you listen to this podcast.

Ambient wetland sound credit: <https://freesound.org/people/tonant/sounds/260760/>