

Lot 1

Draft 1: Cheryl Bellweather and the Gratuitous Occult Nazi Plot, 1986

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May 1, 2025



Preface

This is a first draft of Lot 1, the opening story in *Weird Tales from Waves End Retreat*, an anthology of strange stories set in a fictional version of the Outer Banks' iconic beachside trailer parks — the kind of place where generations of working- and middle-class families have spent their summers in single-wides, double-wides, and campers perched just above the high tide line.

These coastal enclaves have long been part of the American vacation dream — modest, communal, and deeply nostalgic. Their rise began in the mid-20th century, when the U.S. military, responding to post-WWII housing shortages, helped pioneer the mass production of mobile homes to accommodate returning veterans. Over time, these once-temporary structures evolved into second homes, retirement hideaways, and family gathering places — beloved not despite their tin-panel simplicity, but because of it.

Waves End Retreat imagines one such park as a place where history thins, where timelines knot, and where each trailer — each lot — holds its own strange story. The collection spans decades, genres, and realities, but all the stories begin here, with Lot 1.

This version of Lot 1 is a working draft. It will evolve in public, shaped by feedback, revision, and the unfolding rift at the heart of the anthology. You're invited to read it, respond to it, and watch it take shape.

Lot 1

Cheryl Bellweather and the Gratuitous Occult Nazi Plot, 1986

People always ask me why I stayed.

They drive in across the bridge for a long weekend or maybe a week in July, and by day three, they're already planning their exit. "It's cute here, Janine," they say, "but I don't know how y'all live with the sand and the storms and no Costco for forty-five miles."

Some folks imagine I ended up at Waves End Retreat because of the view, which is spectacular, by the way. Or because I inherited the place. Or because I'm stubborn. All those things are true. But none of them are keeping me here. The truth is, I tried to leave. I really did. But once this island gets into your blood, it's like sulfur in the waterpipes. There's no flushing it out. There's no filter that'll get out that funk.

The first time I came to the island, I was thirteen. It was the summer of 1986. My parents were "taking a break," which meant Mom needed time to figure out if she wanted to keep loving someone who loved beer with the boys more than her. Dad was off finding himself in the mountains (with the boys and some beer, no doubt). I got shipped to Grandpa Grover with a duffel bag and a Walkman that only played on one side. I wasn't happy about it.

Grover and I didn't know each other. He'd left Grandma Rose just after Mom was born and never had much to do with us. He was the kind of grandparent who sent \$5 checks at Christmas with the memo line blank. He didn't like talking on the phone. He didn't like company. And he definitely didn't like the idea of babysitting his granddaughter for an entire summer.

When Mom finally pulled our old green gremlin into the parking space by Grover's trailer, she was quiet in that way that made me feel like I'd already been forgotten. Grover stepped out onto his rickety porch in cutoff shorts and a stained tank top, spat sunflower seeds at the ground, and said, "She can't stay. Not this year. There's a Nazi in Lot 10. And there's the other thing."

He didn't elaborate, and to this day, I don't know if he said it to scare me or to warn her, but either way, she left, and I stayed.

And he was right.

There was a Nazi in Lot 10.

And there was another thing.

Fortunately, there was also a girl named Cheryl Bellweather, and she changed the plot entirely.



I met Cheryl three days after Mom split. She appeared outside Grover's screen door at exactly 9:21 a.m., barefoot, holding a Jolt cola and a pair of bolt cutters. She had bleached-white Billy Idol hair that looked like she'd cut it herself, maybe using the bolt cutters, and her hand-me-down *Sex Pistols* t-shirt was threadbare. A shark tooth necklace hung heavy on a leather cord around her neck, a string of savage ivory triangles that clicked together when she moved. The sound reminded me of dice in a gambler's cupped hands.

"You're Grover's granddaughter," she said, like I was some kind of dumb asshole. "I'm your orientation."

I blinked at her from behind my bowl of Lucky Charms. She didn't wait for an answer.

"There's a Nazi in Lot 10," she said, "but you already know that, yeah? His name's probably not Fritz even though he says it is, but he smells like cabbage and Aqua Velva, and he has a weird obsession with the Cosmic Caverns, y'know, the putt putt place? I work there, so I would know. Probably some kind of pedo, so watch your step."

She took a loud slurp from the red can.

"Also, your trailer's haunted. But the cool kind. Grover's ex-old lady Ms. Janowitz died in there in '79 during a Jeopardy rerun. She mostly keeps to herself. But don't be surprised if the volume goes up during Double Jeopardy. That's her thing."

She nodded at my bowl. "You done with that?"

I handed it over without thinking, and she tipped it up, glugged down the rest of the milk, and handed back the empty bowl, wiping the moustache on her skinny, brown forearm.

"C'mon. You need a tour."

I don't remember saying yes, but I found myself following her barefoot out of the trailer and across the prickly oyster shell path that passed for a street. Everything smelled like brackish water, citronella, and rank, set-in mildew that not even your great-aunt's vinegar trick can clear out. Cheryl narrated the entire walk, like some kind of tour guide, like she knew everything, even though she was only my age.

"That's Granny Jenks," she said as we passed Grover's neighbor out on her porch. She was a wiry old woman in a floral nightgown hunched over a soldering iron and what looked like half a toaster.

"Hey, Granny Jenks!"

The old woman flung up her arm dismissively in response.

“She makes moonshine and once took a baseball bat to a FEMA inspector, so don’t get on her bad side. She used to crack enemy codes for the Navy and now she mostly rewires kitchen appliances to pick up ghost frequencies or, like, alien transmissions or whatever.”

The next trailer had a clothesline strung with black jeans and spiked wristbands. “That’s Jake’s place. That’s where I stay. He was a mechanic in ‘Nam. He owns Snake & Jake’s, the garage you passed on your way in. At night, it’s a bar, so you better like loud music. His son Jimmy’s a giant and plays bass like it owes him money. He’s basically, like, my big brother, but he’s okay. He plays with the Dead Goblins. They’re a punk band, sort of. There’s Roger, and Perry plays drums and reads *real* books. He’s cool.”

Never letting up on her mobile monologue, Cheryl steered me along the looping trailer park trail that wove through live oaks and wax myrtles past manufactured homes that shared the same bones¹ but were gussied up with corny names like *Sea La Vie*, *Clam-A-Lot*, and *Drift Inn* and with scalloped awnings, pink flamingos, and wind chimes that tinkled or clanged with every breeze off the water.

She took a breather at a battered picnic table outside a trailer that looked like it had been patched with duct tape and leftover license plates. The windows were blocked with sun-bleached chintz curtains. A wooden post appointed the spot as Lot 10. Cheryl plopped down, pulled a steno pad out of her back pocket, and flipped it open. It was fat with handwritten notes and humidity.

“I keep records,” she said. “Sightings. Sounds. Anomalies. Way more than average here, so it’s a big job. You’re my first apprentice. It’s a good thing you came along when you did because some weird shit is going down. It could maybe be the end of the world, which I can’t deal with on my own, not when I also have to work part-time. So here’s what we do. We observe. We document. We interfere only when we’re bored or when something’s actually about to murder us.”

I stared at her, overwhelmed and slightly sticky with sweat and a growing nausea as I realized she, like Grandpa Grover, was completely batshit crazy. My mother had left me in an open air mental institute.

¹ Uniformity in trailer design during the mid-20th century is consistent with known military housing initiatives.

Following the Second World War, various U.S. defense agencies commissioned the production of prefabricated mobile dwellings to accommodate returning service members. At the time, such structures were associated with technological modernity rather than economic precarity. Several surviving examples retain features—modular storage, integrated ventilation systems—not commonly seen in civilian housing of the era. Waves End Retreat is believed to have originated as one such settlement, though official documentation remains limited. —Ed.

“You’re making that up,” I said.

She made a face like I’d farted during a funeral.

“If I were making this up,” she said, “it’d be way weirder.”

The trailer’s screen door creaked open, and a man stepped halfway out. He was old, maybe Grover’s age, with silver hair lacquered to his scalp. He wore slacks and a short-sleeved button-down, tucked in sharp like he was reporting for inspection. He didn’t speak right away. Just stared at us with the faint, strained smile of someone trying to remember if you were part of the plan.

Then, in a clipped, cold, foreign accent: “This is private property.”

I jumped up, ready to bolt, but Cheryl didn’t budge. “That’s bullshit. Her grandpa owns this place, so this is basically her property, and you’re the one that doesn’t belong.” Then, with a sniff and a sawed off squint, she added, “Y’know, her grandpa’s a WWII vet. He sunk a whole Nazi submarine and killed a whole bunch of Nazis right here in the good ol’ U S of A. Pretty rad, right?”

The man’s fixed smile didn’t waver. He stepped back inside like a mechanical glockenspiel and closed the squeaking door after him.



We “borrowed” a skateboard for me from Cheryl’s kind-of-brother Jimmy. He had a bunch of them leaned against the cinderblock wall of the garage, where he was elbow-deep in a carburetor and swearing at a gasket. Cheryl threw a black board with slimeball wheels on the sidewalk at my feet like a dare.

“He won’t care. Go ahead. You know how, right?” Again, like I was some dumb asshole.

Of course, I didn’t know how, but I couldn’t let her know, so I wobbled along behind her on her hot pink board for the first thirty feet until we hit a slight downhill stretch and picked up just enough speed for fear to begin to feel fun. Waves End proper unspooled around us, and even now, when I think back on it, I remember it like a grainy, too-bright home movie with a slightly drunk cinematographer holding the camera.

We passed The Sharpe Shop, the best place on the island to get beer, bait, and biscuits, according to the hand-painted sign. A red-headed woman stood behind the counter in mirrored sunglasses, pretending not to notice the display of Slim Jims slowly collapsing. The building leaned to the left as the result of several sound poundings by hurricanes over the decades.

“That’s Roger’s mom,” Cheryl called over her shoulder, throwing a peace sign at the woman, who looked the other way.

We rolled past a splintery marina where charter boats rocked in their slips and seagulls squawked overhead. An official-looking notice on one of the pilings read LICENSED CAPTAINS ONLY, but a beat-up skiff was tied up just underneath with a milk crate of snorkels and a soggy Walkman sitting in the bow.

“That’s Roger’s water taxi,” Cheryl shouted back at me, her voice carrying on the wind that buffeted me as I pushed the board onward. “He’s an entrepreneur.”

The town library was the size of a postage stamp. The slightly larger general store next door to it sold fishing tackle, rain ponchos, cap guns, postcards, and just about anything you might need in a town with fewer than 1,000 year-round residents. According to Cheryl, the store would also order things special for you, like nunchucks and cyanide, from Wilmington or Damascus or one of the other bigger cities on the coast.

Less modest than its neighbors, The Albatross Arms lorded over the street with its turrets and spindlework. A Queen Anne hotel turned rental relic, it was all faded gingerbread trim and seagull-streaked dormers. Cheryl skidded to a stop in the behemoth’s chilly shadow to inform me that Harry Houdini had attended a séance there in 1924. The Albatross sat right at the edge of the boardwalk, and fried dough and low tide mingled in the breeze along with the tune of a wheezy carousel and a ferris wheel that was groaning in protest with every revolution.

“Seven people have puked on that thing since Memorial Day. I was three of them,” Cheryl said and saluted it like an old enemy.

We rolled through The Triangle, a sliver of intersecting boardwalk where, at the time, two bars and a bong shop formed a Mexican standoff, their doors always open wide so that sand and surfers drifted endlessly in and out. Day-drunk tourists in sweat-soaked tank tops waved lazily as we rolled past. Someone’s boom box was blaring Rod Stewart. Cheryl booed.

Finally, we pulled up in front of the Day-Glo chaos of Cosmic Caverns, which Cheryl called the island’s “radioactive spleen, keeping the vibes clean.” The mini-golf course wrapped around a neon-painted geodesic dome that housed a video rental shop. The dome was topped with a flickering sign that once read COSMIC CAVERNS FAMILY FUN; now, only COSMIC FUN remained lit. A fiberglass sea serpent arched over the third hole, and the pirate ship on the back nine leaned hard to starboard. Cheryl said the course had “leyline geometry” and that the whole thing had been built to harness the area’s “natural harmonics.”

“It’s probably older than it looks,” she said, “like, way older. Like, Pyramid of Giza or Stonehenge old. The government tried to shut it down once, and they would’ve, but they couldn’t because Donna hexed ‘em. Trust me, you don’t want Donna to hex you, so be cool. ”

I figured that was just another Cherylism, but then Donna stepped out of the video store in her long black skirt and silver hoop earrings and bangles. I can remember it so clearly. She had on a tour tee for *Blue Öyster Cult*, and her dark eyes were lined with the bold, thick, black stroke of a woman with clear vision and a steady hand, which I still respect, to be honest.

“You planning a heist,” she said, her voice Jersey asphalt, “or just scaring off the tourists?”

Cheryl lit up. “Janine, this is Donna. Donna, this is the new girl.”

“You like weird movies, new girl?” she asked.

I nodded.

“You’ll love this place, then. Come on, I’ll show you the good stuff.”

Inside, the store was dark and cool, and it smelled like popcorn and VHS tape glue. Rows of horror movies lined the back wall, and a display of faded Alien figurines loomed beside a stack of *Dolphin Song* cassettes labeled DO NOT PLAY BACKWARDS.

Donna’s office was behind a beaded curtain strung with keys, crystals, and what I now know was a WWII radio tuner. She let Cheryl and me peek past into her inner sanctum, where film reels were stacked like cairns alongside half a dozen lava lamps. An open copy of *The Secret Life of Plants* was thrown onto a bean bag chair, and on Donna’s desk, a waveform monitor buzzed softly, its green line flickering in fits—rising, dipping, then flattening like it had momentarily lost interest. The reel-to-reel beside it wasn’t spinning, but the tape spooled loose, twitching now and then like it had a nervous tic.

“What’s it reading?” I asked.

“Nothing you can hear with your ears, little Betty. I chart invisible harmonics,” she said, as if it was a totally normal thing to say.

“From the golf course?” I asked.

“From everywhere,” she said. “But the caves really transmit. You stand in the right spot, and you can hear what’s trying hard not to be heard.”

I looked at Cheryl, who gave me a solemn nod. “Last week, the air in the asteroid crater buzzed out *Stairway to Heaven*. Backwards.”

Donna just nodded, grinned, and handed us putters, a couple of neon balls, and a scorecard and tiny pencil. We played one round of golf. By hole six, I could feel the air shift, subtle, like walking through

spiderwebs. By hole nine, Cheryl's necklace started to chatter. On hole twelve, I swear the fiberglass alien blinked at me.

Then I hit my ball into the cave.

It was manmade or looked that way to me: a dark tunnel carved through an artificial hill. The ceiling was painted with glow-in-the-dark constellations that didn't match any sky I recognized. I hesitated, one foot on the sunbaked concrete, one in the cool cave. It was silent inside. Still. My ball had rolled ahead and disappeared. I couldn't see it from where I stood, and my stomach sunk at the idea of walking through the shadows and stalacmites. As I gathered my courage there at the threshold, a sound like a whale call through a radio stuck between stations began to emanate from somewhere far in the back of the cave. Long. Distant. Familiar. Then, I felt some *thing* press against the edge of my thoughts. Some *thing*, big and old and on the move.

I turned around fast and found Cheryl staring at me with chameleon-green eyes. Hadn't they been brown?

"You heard it?" she asked.

I nodded.

She didn't say anything else but pulled me out of the cave. Then, she reached into her pocket and handed me a shark's tooth.

"Hold onto that," she said. "For protection. And watch where you step when you hear that sound, yeah?"



We were just leaving Cosmic Caverns when I saw the Nazi. And the thing. And it became instantly clear why Grover hadn't bothered to explain it to Mom.

Cheryl had ducked behind the dumpster to raid the snack machine, which was always on the fritz. It was a game to her, figuring out which loose wire or button combo would release a packet of stale pretzels like a magic trick. She said it was always different, so she could always learn something new.

I was standing by the side wall, where the course's wooden fence slouched under the weight of morning glory vines, when I noticed a change in the air. The color shifted first: not darkening, exactly, but thinning, like sunlight through water. The shadows went sharp and long, bending in the wrong direction, doubling up. I gripped the fence to steady myself. The piped in music of the course, the hum of the distant boardwalk vanished. Not faded, not turned down. Gone. No gulls. No surf. Not even the

low rumble of traffic from across the bridge. The only sound was my own breath, and it was loud in my ears. I thought I must be dying my heart beat so fast, like I had two hearts going at once.

That's when I saw the wasps, three of them, hovering mid-air in a crooked triangle, motionless. Wings still. Caught like ash in a sudden updraft. A slow vibration, subterranean thunder, worked up through the soles of my shoes. The ground stirred; I could feel massive gears grinding, tectonic plates shifting. Some gargantuan thing churned under my feet. The sign above Cosmic Caverns flickered once, twice, then spazzed out entirely, flipping through other names and all kinds of signs.

COSMIC CAVERNS
THE GREAT IN-BETWEEN
TREASURE ISLAND
JUNGLELAND
COSMIC CAVERNS

A hairline crack split the dome just below the sign, and small, jagged, wrong-colored sparks popped out. Then he appeared. The guy from Lot 10. I didn't see where from. Only that suddenly he was moving into the parking lot with precision, holding something in both hands. It looked like a forked tuning rod wired into a handheld receiver. He wasn't waving it around; he was listening with it, *tuning* something. With a slow arc of his arm, the device gave a sharp, metallic buzz.

Another jagged tremor rattled up through the concrete. It was too sharp to be a quake, too real to be nothing. A hairline fissure snaked across the asphalt toward the frozen wasps. They twitched once and dropped dead in unison, falling in dramatic symmetry.

Behind him, the air pulsed, shimmered, then fractured—just for a second. And on the other side of that shimmering fracture, I saw something pressing through, another man on the other side, another world, like this one, but not quite, another universe, cannibalizing wings, bones, rust, teeth, clouds, gravity, whatever it could grab ahold of to pull itself through into ours.

Then a blur streaked in from the side, low and fast—too fast to be anything but Cheryl on a skateboard and a couple of cans of Jolt cola. Or some thing like Cheryl.

She slammed into the man's knee with a crunch that made me wince. He crumpled, and the device hit the ground, sparking blue. The fissure sealed. The air went heavy. And she was gone. No pause. No smug look. Just gone.

I stood frozen, thinking I was turning nuts, too, thinking I must've imagined all of it, until I noticed the wasps. Dead. Three neat specks on the pavement, steaming in the evening heat. One of them was impaled on a tiny glass shard, humming faintly, remembering what it was like to be alive still.

"Wanna split the last Necco?"

I practically jumped out of my skin. Cheryl was right there beside me, holding a candy roll with the wax paper peeled back and wearing a *JERSEY DEVIL FAN CLUB* tank top.

"Did you see that?" I asked. My voice felt thin.

"See what?" she said, popping a pink disk into her mouth. "You're a real spazz sometimes."

She smiled. The same smile. Almost. Behind her, the sign flickered again.

COSMIC CAVERNS

THE OTHER SIDE

PIRATE BAY

COSMIC CAVERNS

I didn't answer Cheryl right away. My hands were sweating, and I couldn't stop staring at the sign, now blinking normally again—flicker-flicker-flicker COSMIC FUN like it always had. I told myself it was a weird coincidence. I told myself the wiring was old. I told myself I hadn't seen what I'd just seen. But something in my stomach turned over like a bad oyster, and I didn't feel real for the whole trip back to Waves End Retreat.



Snake & Jake's wasn't a bar so much as a glorified garage with a neon beer sign and fewer safety inspections. The "After Hours" part was a joke. It was *always* after hours, even at noon. The low structure was surrounded by rusted-out sedans and lawn chairs that must've been scavenged from a post-hurricane estate sale. Half a dozen feral cats and two surly hounds made the place home.

Cheryl pushed open the screen door and marched us in like she owned the place. Inside, the air was limp with the thick aroma of motor oil and low expectations. A fly was having it out with a string of Christmas lights, and the jukebox played a forgotten rockabilly track until Cheryl kicked it back into silence. The Dead Goblins were setting up in the corner: Roger tuning his guitar by ear, Perry flipping through a milk crate of cassettes, and Jimmy taping a towel around the mic stand for reasons only he understood.

Jake Jenkins, the owner of the place and Cheryl's long-gone mom's ex-boyfriend, was hunched over a stack of speakers by the dartboard, rewiring something with a pocketknife and a roll of electrical

tape balanced on his knee. He had a cigarette tucked behind one ear and a screwdriver clenched between his teeth. I couldn't tell if he was fixing the soundboard or building a bomb, but either way, he seemed perfectly content about it.

"Don't sit too close," she warned. "One time, Roger blew a fuse and half the town heard my fillings vibrate. Jake had to rebuild the reverb box out of a waffle iron."

Jake gave a two-finger salute without looking up.

We parked ourselves near the back on a couple of overturned paint buckets and watched the chaos unfold. The music was raw. Loud. Imperfect in a way that made it (and me) feel more real. Roger's voice cracked. Perry's drumming was half heartbeat, half gallop. And Cheryl knew every word. She mouthed them with her eyes half-closed. When Roger looked up between songs and caught her watching, he winked. She didn't smile. She nodded. Like a general approving a tactical maneuver.

We stayed for two full sets and left with our ears ringing and our skin rank with beer, smoke, and sweat. As we crossed the parking lot back to our trailers, Cheryl paused, cocked her head like she was tuning in a far-off station and said, "I've met a lotta Janine Washingtons. A lot of you are dumb assholes. Some cry all the time like little babies, total pain in my ass. One even tried to steal my board. Big mistake. But you?" She shrugged. "You're okay."

Then she turned and kept walking, her shark tooth necklace clicking softly in the dark. I didn't know exactly what she meant, but I felt relieved she didn't think I was a dumb asshole after all.



The smell of burnt bacon edges in a cast iron skillet woke me up, but barely. I padded into the kitchen barefoot and squinting. Grover stood at the stove, shirtless under his ratty flannel, tattoos fading into liver spots. He slid a chipped Ziggy mug toward me across the counter; the coffee inside looked like it had opinions.

I took it to the tiny table in the corner, cluttered with fishing magazines, a plastic snowman from some past winter celebration, and a stack of crossword puzzles that had been finished and refilled so many times they'd started contradicting themselves.

"I hear Cheryl gave you the tour."

"Yeah," I said. "It was a lot."

Grover snorted. "She's a lot."

"She thinks there's a Nazi in Lot 10, too."

He handed me a plate stacked with pancakes and thick, charred bacon.

“She’s no fool, even if she’s crazy as a box of bedbugs.”

I waited, hoping for more. He didn’t give it. I picked at a piece of bacon, flipping it over on the plate like answers might be tucked underneath.

“I saw something weird last night.”

Grover sat down across from me with a plate of his own. “Welcome to Waves End.”

“No, I mean, like, actually weird. Like physics shouldn’t work like that kind of weird.”

“That’s what I mean, too.”

I rolled my eyes, but not hard. “The guy in Lot 10. He was at Cosmic Caverns. He had this—I don’t know, a machine. And when he moved it, the sign changed. The *name* changed.”

Grover marked a square on the crossword puzzle next to his plate. “Six letters, bird known for pilfering and pastry wordplay.”

“Magpie.”

He filled it in. “Good. What else?”

“There were wasps. Hanging in mid-air. The shadows were off. And there were these, like, cracks. Like something was breaking into the world from somewhere else.”

That made him pause. “Did he see you?”

“No. I don’t think so.”

Grover nodded.

“Sometimes,” he said slowly, “reality won’t sit still. Not here. Waves End’s like a fault line—an active zone. You got layers of reality, like tectonic plates, and they don’t always slide past each other clean. Sometimes they *grind*. They bump. They shear.”

He reached for his coffee like it was going to help and took a sip that probably didn’t.

“Most folks don’t notice. They live their lives on one layer and never feel the shift. Maybe they get a little *déjà vu* now and then, maybe a strange dream, but that’s it. But here?” He tapped the table.

“Here, the plates move more. Sometimes they overlap. Sometimes they scrape.”

“What happens then?”

“Depends on where you’re standing,” he said. “Some folks, like Cheryl, they ride the shifts. She’s not in one place. She’s in all of ‘em. She’s not stuck. She moves between ‘em, and she remembers.”

“All of them?”

“Maybe. Or maybe they remember her. Either way, she’s learned to stay upright when the world tilts sideways. That’s rare.”

“What about other people?”

He looked at me, real serious now.

“Some get caught. The ones who try to punch through, or pull something back with them—they get *ground* between layers. Like meat in a cosmic sausage maker. And it’s exactly what’s going to happen to the guy in Lot 10 if he keeps poking around. You understand?”

“No.”

He looked at me, finally. “You ever seen a compass spin when there’s no metal nearby? You ever walk east and end up west without turning? You ever hear the wind say your name in your self-same voice?”

I swallowed. “No.”

“Good,” he said. “Let’s keep it that way.”

He stood and dumped the rest of his coffee in the sink, then rinsed out the mug.

“You kids leave that Nazi to me,” he said. “I’ve dealt with his kind before.”

I hesitated. “Cheryl said you killed a bunch of Nazis, like, you sank a whole Nazi submarine. Is that true?”

He looked back at me, unreadable. The same way he’d looked at the crossword puzzle.

“Depends on the dimension.”



“Come on,” Grover said after breakfast, slinging a battered tackle box into the back of his rust-chewed truck. “We’re going fishing.”

Instead of driving through town, we crossed over Beachcomber Lane, where the old cottages crouched under thick cedar branches, and ibis picked through the pennywort and Bermuda grass lawns. Past the cottages, the houses got taller, more obtuse, shinier. Beige vinyl siding. Three stories on stilts. Then, luxury condos. Then, *Coming Soon* signs promising *more* luxury condos *and* private pier access. Grover spat seeds out the window.

“Ticky tacky teeth,” he said. “Chewing up the landscape and swallowing the sand, but the sand always gets the last laugh.”

We drove on past the new developments, and then, the ticky tacky teeth gave way to scrub-dunes, and beyond the dunes, the ocean was dark indigo and infinite on one side and the sound was pale turquoise and infinite on the other. The truck bumped along the cracked concrete road that threaded these two expanses for a few miles before Grover pulled onto the shoulder and climbed out of

the cab. I trailed him through beach heather and bayberry to a hump of sea oat that hid a low, sand-blasted concrete structure.

“Used to be a lookout,” Grover said, jabbing a thumb toward the Atlantic. “Back when U-boats were trying to nose their way into our backyard. I was stationed here. Not much older than you, three, four years, I reckon. I was seventeen. Lied about my age to join up.”²

We stepped inside. The air was cool and, somehow, still steeped in sweat and gunpowder. A slanted window faced the sea. The rest of the bunker was shadow, concrete, and a soft thrum coming from a machine that sat in the corner. It didn’t look like any sonar rig I’d ever seen in movies or museums. It had dials with no numbers, and a screen that pulsed soft amber.

“What’s that?” I asked.

Grover stooped over it, adjusting a knob.

“It was here before the Army. Some local scientist, fella by the name of Arthur Langston,³ built it—way back, before either of the big wars. Said it picked up vibrations. Things in the deep.”

“You mean like whales?” I asked.

Grover didn’t answer right away. “That’s what people said. Easier to believe that than the alternative.”

He tapped the side, and the screen pulsed once, like it was listening.

“Other folks came to look at it. Tesla. Steinmetz. Real brainy types.”

He straightened up, gave the machine a look like it had spoken to him once and hadn’t said anything nice.

² During World War II, residents of North Carolina’s coastal communities—especially on the Outer Banks—played an active role in monitoring for German U-boat activity. Civilian volunteers worked alongside the U.S. Coast Guard and Navy as part of a coordinated shoreline watch, particularly after multiple sinkings occurred off Cape Hatteras in 1942. The area became known as “Torpedo Junction” due to the number of Allied vessels attacked offshore. Observation posts and rudimentary signal stations were installed along much of the coast, including areas now repurposed as public land or private development. Several wartime structures remain undocumented while others, such as the those found at the Fort Macon State Park, are part of the tourist attraction. —Ed.

³ Arthur Langston (fl. 1909–1936) was a coastal radio technician and amateur physicist active in the lower Banks region. His unpublished field journals—some recovered from the Seagraves dump inventory in 1982—describe an apparatus designed to detect “pressure phenomena between localized realspaces.” Langston’s terminology varied, but surviving entries include references to “harmonic thresholds,” “reality draft points,” and “acoustic tectonics.” Several fragments suggest he believed certain alignments could be mitigated through sound-based interference, though no surviving schematics have been found. —Ed.

“Truth is, I saw it in action once. When I was stationed here, years ago. Thing lit up like the Fourth of July. I thought it was a monster, back then—some deep-sea god clawing up through the sand. But now?” He paused. “Now I think it was something trying to push through. Not *from* the ocean. From somewhere else.”

Grover’s jaw worked side to side, like he was chewing a memory. “I come in here every now and then to make sure it’s still running. Figure if it ever *stops*, maybe that’s when we’ll have a problem.”

I stepped closer, peered into the monitor. It didn’t show radar or depth or anything I understood at the time. Just a slow-moving waveform, rolling like a whitecap across a flat sea. Then, something happened. First, there was a sound. Not quite a sound, a vibration I could feel in my feet up through my arms. I stepped back instinctively, and Grover followed suit.

From the dark ceiling, a single moth fluttered down, slow, like it had a purpose. It lit on the top edge of the screen and got still, opening its black wings so that the dim bunker light reflected off the moth’s false eyespots. It seemed to stare at us for a long moment.

Then it twitched. Became still. Twitched again. Became still.

Its wings folded inward, painfully, like origami being undone by invisible fingers. Color refracted sharply off the surface, abnormal iridescence. This was wrong, sunlight hitting shards of shattered glass submerged in viscous oil.

Its body followed. Legs snapped flat, thorax segmented, each part slicing inward, reduced, peeled back into earlier decisions. A prism of pieces fluttered in the air, momentarily suspended in a cloud of sharp shimmer. And then gone. No pile. No residue. No *thing* at all. The waveform on the screen spasmed. Not a spike. A hiccup. A burp.

Grover crouched next to where the moth had been, rubbing the back of his neck like he had a sudden headache. “They usually just drop dead,” he said.

“You’ve seen that before?”

“Dead ones, yeah. Fried or twisted ones, sure. But not that.”

My stomach turned. The universe had unmade the moth. Right in front of me. Could it unmake a person? What about *me*? I looked at the screen. The waveform had settled again. Smooth, like nothing had happened. But the air in the bunker had a weight to it now, the weight of new potentials and possibilities, not all of which were promising.⁴

⁴ *The subject’s terminology—“the moth collapsed”—is consistent with certain interpretations of wavefunction collapse in quantum mechanics, in which a system resolves from multiple potential states into a single measurable*

“You see something caught in the gears like that, you get out of there fast,” Grover said. “Sometimes reality tries to settle in two places at once. Works fine for light. Doesn’t go so well for soft things.”

“Like moths?”

He looked at me. Really looked at me. “Like people,” he said.

I was starting to feel cramped and clammy in the space and wanted to get back out to the wide, open sky. “You ever catch any fish in here?”

Grover grinned. “Out there,” he said, pointing to the inlet. “In here all I ever caught was a cold. Let’s go.”



I was still chewing on what Grover had said about soft things getting caught between the tectonic plates of reality the next day when I cut across the courtyard behind his trailer on my way back from the general store. That’s when I heard a low hum that made me stop, now more than a little paranoid about getting mauled by the machinery of reality. But the sound wasn’t mechanical. It was like someone thinking out loud through their teeth.

Granny Jenks was in her rocker, a pair of old aviator headphones clamped over her ears, a spiral notebook on her lap. Her soldering iron sat idle beside a jar of pickled okra and a mason jar of something clear enough to be dangerous.

She was tapping her foot to a rhythm I couldn’t hear.

“You listening to the Dead Goblins?” I asked, mostly joking.

She didn’t look up. “The Goblins don’t do sounds like this.”

“What does?”

She finally lifted her head, pulled off the headphones, and fixed me with a stare that made me start scanning the nearby forythia for switches in case she was the type that made you pick your own.

“Whatever he’s calling in,” she said. “The one in Lot Ten. He’s tuning something too big for this place. I can hear it sliding already.”

She tapped the notebook. It was filled with looping waveforms and what looked like algebra, which basically looked like nonsense to me at thirteen.

outcome. In cases involving entanglement, observer interference, or dimensional overlap, the collapse may occur unevenly or produce interference effects. Langston's notes reference similar destabilizations during what he termed "field overresonance events," particularly in the presence of biological matter. —Ed.

“My fillings have been screaming bad math since Tuesday,” she added. “And nothing flying’s come near my porch all day. Nary a wasp nor a fly nor even a damned gull. That’s never good.”

Then she stood, slow and deliberate, and shuffled inside, the screen door slamming behind her.



June blurred past. By day, I watched Lot 10 with Cheryl: sometimes from the roof of Jake’s trailer, sometimes hidden in the resurrection ferns and Spanish moss of an old oak. We could never catch the guy coming or going, but we saw plenty of other things. One morning the zinnias outside his trailer curled up like colorful fists and writhed and twisted in their dirt beds as if they wanted to pull their own roots out. Another day, two grackles flapping in a mid-air brawl halted and hung motionless for ten full minutes right in front of our eyes.

At night, we sat outside Snake & Jake’s, drinking cherry Slushies from The Sharpe Shop with just enough “borrowed” bootleg liquor in them to make Jimmy raise an eyebrow at his not-quite-but-might-as-well-be sister. Roger was perfecting the Goblins’ feedback loop, layering whale song, recordings from Cosmic Caverns, and mystery signals that Donna had collected into a sonic stew that made the Christmas lights shudder every time they practiced.

Cheryl was always there, but not always the same. The Cheryl I walked to town with in the morning maybe had a tiny scar above her eyebrow. Maybe her shirt said *I Survived the Lost Triangle*. The Cheryl I came home with maybe had a *PAC MAN* t-shirt and maybe a row of shark teeth in her mouth instead of around her neck.

I was starting to recognize the differences, though, even when they were small. The staticky shifts in her eyes, the way she held her hands, the rhythm of her sentences. Still, she was always Cheryl. She was somehow always constant. Different shirts, different scars, sometimes a different memory or turn of phrase. But always her. And the really weird part? She knew. She knew she was different, out of sync or something. She just didn’t seem to care.

“The hard thing,” she said once, “is remembering which place I’m in. They mostly all rhyme, y’know? Some worse. Some better. They all smell like fish and mildew, and they all have a girl named Janine, but in some of them, you’re a dumb asshole who doesn’t even know how to grind.”

When I’d told her about the moth, she said, “Yeah. If you’re in the wrong place at the wrong time, the universe will teach you all about the grind. But, like, you probably won’t remember. I guess that’s good for you, right?”

My stomach twisted like the moth's wings had. "How do *you* keep from getting caught up in the grind? How do *you* get through?"

She looked at me, visibly puzzled. "If reality wants to change, it's gotta go through me first."

I hadn't known what to say to that, but I believed her. Even if I couldn't tell which Cheryl I was hanging out with, I knew one thing for sure: if the guy from Lot 10 was trying to bring some creepy Nazi bullshit into this world, he was going to have to get past the weirdest girl at Waves End Retreat first.



By the end of June, Granny Jenks's porch looked like a secondhand Radio Shack had exploded across it. Tangled coils of copper wire sat next to mason jars filled with unidentified metal bits and labeled things like CHARGED AT MOONRISE and FOR HARBORMURMUR ONLY.

Donna sat beside her in a cracked lawn chair, a small black-and-white TV balanced on her knees, a waveform monitor glowing faintly beside it. A stack of VHS tapes was piled under her elbow—each one hand-labeled in Sharpie: ECHOES_3, SANDPILE LOOP, SOMETHING AT DUSK.

"Still picking up harmonics?" Granny asked, eyes narrowed at a dial she was pretending not to watch.

Donna adjusted a knob without looking up.

"Been climbing since last week. Caverns started bleeding static Thursday. The sign glitched through five names this morning. One of them was *PALINDROME*. Not a good omen."

Granny tapped the side of her porch radio, which was hissing low static. "I got two weather channels fighting over the same frequency. One says clear skies. One says flood warning. Guess we'll see who wins."

Donna rewound the tape in her deck. The screen flickered, then rolled, then stuttered into an image: *a kid on a skateboard—but upside down, and flickering like an old cartoon*. No sound. Just a faint, rhythmic clicking.

"That's not *from* the Caverns," Donna said. "That's *beneath* them."

Granny took a long, thoughtful sip of her jar.

"I say we warm up the signal scrambler."

Donna smiled. "I thought you'd never ask."

I watched from the edge of the treeline, holding my breath like a kid spying on witches in a storybook—and feeling just smart enough to know I didn't want to be the one getting hexed.

Whatever was coming, they weren't afraid of it. They were *ready*.

And they weren't the only ones.

Cheryl spent her afternoons sharpening a tire iron and singing off-key in Spanish to a goat skull, which she swore "disrupted the harmonics." She stole a handful of AAA batteries from Jake and said they were for "insurance."

The Dead Goblins kept rehearsing in the garage, layering whale song and cassette feedback into something that didn't sound like music but did make the neighbor's cat walk backwards. Roger claimed the audio files were starting to change *themselves*. I said I believed him. I'd try to change myself if I sounded like that, too.

Jake built something in the back of the garage with a leaf blower, two car speakers, and a pizza box covered in aluminum foil. He didn't say what it did. He just labeled it *PLAN B* and smiled like a man with a degree in contingency tactics.

Even Grover, who never liked fussing, was cleaning his old sidearm and muttering about "setting the damn Nazis straight once and for all."

And me? I wasn't doing anything special. Just *watching*. Listening. Trying to keep track of which Cheryl I was walking next to. Trying to hold my shape.

Trying not to get caught in the grinder.



It happened just after sunset, on the shoreline near the old WWII bunker.⁵

Cheryl said the air "smelled ripe for collapse." Granny Jenks said she could hear the whistle of bad math in her fillings. Grover just packed his revolver and a Thermos of terrible coffee and said, "Bring the Goblins."

When we got there, the guy from Lot 10 was standing at the center of a strange rig: tuning forks mounted in a half-circle, wires running to a large box humming low and wrong. The machine pulsed in rhythm with the bunker's concrete bones. Around him, the air shimmered, and the dune grass bent and writhed like antenna searching for a signal. A sound like whale song passed through a bad speaker filled the clearing.

⁵ See A. Langston, *Temporal Drift and the Elastic Shoreline: Field Notes, 1923–1925*. While the full manuscript has not been located, portions were cited in an unsigned memo preserved in the Seagraves shoreline anomaly folder (Box 14, Item 3C), which notes Langston's belief that "the shoreline does not represent a fixed boundary between land and sea, but rather a site of temporal elasticity—one that expands or contracts in response to unseen pressures." It is unclear whether Langston intended this description to apply strictly to geography. —Ed.

“He’s got it aligned,” Cheryl muttered. “It’s a clean overlap. He’s going to try and pull his shitty reality over this one like a cheap bed sheet. Like, whoever asked for more Nazis? Nobody. That’s who.”

Jake Jenkins, who’d come along with the Goblins, lit a cigarette with shaking hands. “We stopping him or what?”

Granny Jenks cracked her knuckles.

Grover marched forward, eyes locked, voice calm. “Hey Fritz,” he said. “You forgot something.”

The guy turned. Slowly. Almost smugly. His eyes glowed faintly. He had three shadows now.

“You forgot,” Grover said again, “that Nazis never win. It’s just not how this universe works.”

The Dead Goblins launched into a wall of sound. It wasn’t music. Not by any stretch, which was about on par for the Goblins. It was feedback and distortion and whale song cassettes fed through modified car speakers and a busted CB radio wired into a VCR. It was Roger beating on steel drums made from abandoned propane tanks and Cheryl slamming a crowbar against the Nazi’s harmonics device until sparks shot out like Fourth of July leftovers.

And then: the grinding began. A sound like metal gears grating against one another, fast, purposeful, painful. The air bent. The shadows wrenched backward. Reality screamed, high-pitched and metal-strained.

The guy from Lot 10 tried to run, but he only made it a single step before he crumpled. Some invisible thing caught his leg mid-stride. His body twisted—once, twice—and then he was pulled sideways. Not down. Not away. Sideways. His limbs folded like a bad lawn chair, and he screamed through a mouth melting into the air.

Then: nothing. Just a faint puff of waxy ash, and a single scorched shoe.

Cheryl took a swig of her Jolt cola, and said, and I’m not making this up, “Three things you can count on no matter where you turn up on the timeline: the Dead Goblins shred, the universes grind, and Nazis get what’s coming to them in all possible worlds.”

About the Anthology

Want to Write Your Own Lot?

Weird Tales from Waves End Retreat will begin accepting submissions July 1, 2025.

Each contributor claims a lot and explores its mysteries — through folk horror, science fiction, speculative memoir, ghost stories, surrealism, or whatever genre drifts their way.

While not every story submitted will appear in the first printed volume, many may find a home in future anthologies, zines, or digital showcases. Some stories may need more time, polish, or the right thematic fit. But every submission will be read with care, curiosity, and enthusiasm — and we will make our sincerest effort to provide personalized feedback in a timely manner.

We hope writers approach this project not just as a chance to be published, but as an opportunity to play, to experiment, and to create something beautifully strange.

This world is wide. There's room for your weirdness here.

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