

BACKWATER BAY

Episode 3:

"Fortress Main Street Meets the House of Hair"

Producer's Note: This transcript is taken from the podcast script. There may be some minor differences in the transcript and the final podcast due to cast improvisation and sound design editing. This episode focuses on something we can't see, but begin to imagine through words and sounds. Bette "Cupcake" Crawford's hair is fearful and menacingly wondrous, but it holds terrible things, filled with danger and dread.

CAST

Buster Lawrence, the announcer

Bette "Cupcake" Crawford, the host

Civil Defense Public Service announcer

Tempus and Fugit, Backwater Bay's time-telling geese

CIVIL DEFENSE ANNOUNCER SPEAKS:

How much time do we have? Minutes? Days? Months? Years? We don't know. But this we do know. Fortress Main Street must be on the alert day and night.

MUSIC BED:

Music evocative of a spaghetti western movie

BUSTER LAWRENCE SPEAKS:

"Fortress Main Street." That was the name of a government public service announcement broadcast in the 1960s. Decades ago, it meant that the nation should be prepared for nuclear war. But in US society, it has larger psychological meaning. To live on Fortress Main Street means to live in a constant state of siege, preparing for violent showdowns with enemies. Fortress Main Street is

the whitewashed, mythic tale of the Old West. It's Clint Eastwood as Dirty Harry. Today it means a vicious border patrol and sending children to their underfunded public schools wearing bulletproof backpacks.

AN OMINOUS SOUND, WITH POLICE RADIOS AND RADIO STATIC

BACKWATER BAY MUSIC JINGLE:

Upbeat radio jingle music. The lyrics are:
Backwater Bay! Where speech is free, so
are we, and we never shut up! Good morning!

BUSTER SPEAKS

This is Backwater Bay, an uncharted way station in the shifting public imagination.

I'm Buster Lawrence, an affable and warmhearted figment of your imagination. Today I'm standing outside Louise's House of Hair, located at the intersection of Main and Harrow Streets, waiting for the unofficial town crier, Bette "Cupcake" Crawford. Together, we're going to explore the life-threatening metaphysical geography of Fortress Main Street in order to—

AN ALARM SOUNDS REPEATEDLY, INTERRUPTING BUSTER.

BUSTER SPEAKS. HE IS PANICKED.

Omigod! Bette! Your hair! What happened?!

BETTE "CUPCAKE" CRAWFORD SPEAKS:

Louise styled it. That's what happened.

BUSTER SPEAKS. HE IS SHOCKED AND FEARFUL.

But. . .but. . .it's huge! It's chaotic! Lemme just... damn! I've never seen anything quite-

SOUNDS ARE HEARD: ELECTRICAL ARCS AND SPARKING

BETTE SPEAKS:

Get back, Buster! Get back!

THE SOUND OF ELECTRICAL SPARKS IS MORE PRONOUNCED.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

Hold still! Something's moving around inside there. . .oh, good lord, there's smoke? And terrible little sparks-

BETTE SPEAKS:

I'm warning you!

THE SOUND OF SUDDEN, VIOLENT ELECTRICAL JOLTS, SPARKS, AND HISSES

BUSTER SHRIEKS:

Damn!!!

BETTE SCREAMS:

Don't touch it!

THE ELECTRICAL SOUNDS CEASE. A LOW, OMINOUS SOUND CONTINUES IN THE BACKGROUND.

BUSTER SPEAKS, GRIMLY:

It's OK. My hand's just singed. I'll go to urgent care later. This isn't like you, Bette! What's in that hair?!

BETTE SPEAKS:

Louise gave me The Zeitgeist Special. Hidden mushroom cloud included. . .Buster, I told you, get back!

THE OMINOUS DRONING SOUND IN THE BACKGROUND IS A LITTLE LOUDER.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

But you're in danger—

FROM BETTE'S HAIR, WE HEAR THE BLOODTHIRSTY SNARL AND SNAP OF TEETH OF WILD ANIMALS.

BUSTER SCREAMS IN AGONY:

Aggggghhhhhh! It has teeth! I'm bleeding!

THE SNARLING WILD ANIMALS CONTINUE, BUT THE SOUND IS FADING.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Oh, moth to the flame, Buster. I warned you. Louise isn't just a hair stylist. She conjures things!

Hey, you need a tourniquet for that?

BUSTER SPEAKS IN A TONE AT ONCE PAINED AND MOROSE.

Don't mind the bloody stump where my thumb used to be. I have another one.

BETTE SPEAKS:

A word to the wise, Buster. Don't touch anybody's hair. Ever. Unless they specifically and voluntarily invite you to. Especially don't touch Black people's hair. Don't even ask.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

OK, OK.

What do you mean, Louise "conjures" things?

AN OMINOUS DRONE IS HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND, PUNCTUATED PERIODICALLY BY FRIGHTENING POUNDING SOUNDS. AS BETTE AND BUSTER SPEAK, THE SOUND GRADUALLY EVOKES A QUIET BUT PROUD MARTIAL ATMOSPHERE.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Look, we all have stuff inside us we don't usually admit to or want to really talk about. Feelings. Memories. Fears. Louise's nimble fingers and psychic sense call forth what's already there, hidden deep within.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

So you also have razor wire and machine gun nests hidden deep within?

BETTE SPEAKS:

Well, when I'm in the grip of the Fortress Main Street zeitgeist, yes.

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BUSTER SPEAKS:

That's terrifying.

THE OMINOUS DRONING SOUND RETURNS, WITH THE SPORADIC POUNDING NOISE.

BETTE:

And it's meant to be! Fortress Main Street is a psycho-political-cultural vortex of fear, rage, and destruction. And it's animated by gigantic, whirling spirals of

white supremacy, xenophobia, misogyny, and transphobia!

BUSTER SPEAKS:

Well, dammit, I don't want to be so on edge and anxious all the time.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Me, either.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

You're anxious, too?

BETTE SPEAKS:

Oh, at this moment, my hair is wild with doom and wrath, Buster! Right now, it explodes with angst. But that's the whole point!

BUSTER SPEAKS:

To explode?

BETTE SPEAKS:

To keep us off kilter, defensive, and ready to lash out like rabid wolverines.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

But isn't it worse to be NOT armored up against every terrible thing that could hurt us?

IN THE BACKGROUND, THE QUIET MARITAL MUSIC IS HEARD.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Well, that's the essence of Fortress Main Street, Buster. See? It's right there in what's left of your hair, too...

BUSTER WARNS BETTE:

Don't touch my hair, Bette.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Sorry.

Look, none of us is immune to the feelings of mistrust and fear and despair that Fortress Main Street summons up. Or the desire to utterly pulverize even imaginary enemies. We end up having no psychic energy left to think about anything else.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

I didn't think anything could scare you, Bette.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Well, it can. That's why Backwater Bay exists. To challenge and dismantle. Fortress Main Street. And to do that, we have to be thinking and organizing in new ways about the world we really want and need.

Uh-oh! Get back, Buster! Get back! My hair needs space!

THE SOUND OF AN ATOMIC BOMB EXPLOSION IS HEARD.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

Oh, my God. Louise actually conjure a mushroom cloud! But that's my whole point, Bette! what if there really isn't any time left?

BETTE SPEAKS:

But what if there is? We don't really know. But I'm not a quitter, Buster, and neither are you. Fortress Main Street doesn't want us to think beyond the worst that could happen. We need to know its deadly little tricks and gambits, and we can't pretend we're not affected. Oh, but this story's not over. Not by a long shot.

BUSTER SPEAKS:

I sure hope not.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Yeah, well just use your remaining middle finger to tell Fortress Main Street to go take a flying---

BEFORE SHE FINISHES, TEMPUS AND FUGIT ENTER THE ROOM, HONKING LOUDLY AND DROWNING HER OUT.

BETTE SPEAKS: Whoops. That's Tempus and Fugit, our time-telling geese saying it's time to go. Anyway, in the coming weeks and months, we're going to be talking with visionary scholars, organizers, and artists. We'll be finding ways to nourish our psyches and imaginations while we dig in for deep societal transformation.

BACKGROUND MUSIC RISES, IMPARTING A QUIET BUT STIRRING SENSE OF PRIDE.

BETTE SPEAKS:

Oh, sure, sometimes we're all afraid. But as Louise at the House of Hair has shown me,

there's a lot more than fear and anxiety to be called forth. I also have beautiful dreams in this hair. I have majestic symphonies and magical ecosystems in this hair. I have astonishing things in here.

And you know what? We all do. But it takes compassionate community, good organizing, steely determination, and strong social movements to actually transform Fortress Main Street. Visit us at [backwater bay.com](http://backwaterbay.com) to learn more.

From all of us here, this is Bette "Cupcake" Crawford wishing you radical imagination, sweet schemes, and bold dreams.

MUSIC (OUTRO) :

Short jingle, featuring the words "Backwater Bay."

BUSTER SPEAKS:

Backwater Bay is the brainchild of Kay Whitlock. This podcast produced by Cole Grant and Kay Whitlock' and Cole Grant, with special creative contributions by Guy Palmzer.

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A BRIEF ANIMAL SNARL IS HEARD.