

RED VALLEY

SEASON 1 EPISODE 1

'Tortoise'

by
Jonathan Williams

Written by Jonathan Williams
redvalleypod@gmail.com

Character List

Warren Godby	Jonathan Williams
Gordon Porlock	Alan Mandel
Karen Godby	May Cunningham
Doug Holder	John Cook Lynch
Switchboard Operator #1	Carol Pestridge
Switchboard Operator #2 (Tracy)	Chloe Gardiner
Switchboard Operator #3	Richard Campbell
Switchboard Operator #4	Lee Bowers
Jennifer	Carol Pestridge
Voicemail	Nima Cas Hunt

EPISODE 1

SCENE 1

**THE ABRUPT CLICK OF A TAPE
RECORDER BEING SWITCHED ON.**

MALE VOICE #1: (D) Was that it? Is it on?

MALE VOICE #2: Wait, hang on a second...(OFF) Wait. (CLOSE)
Yep, it's on.

MALE VOICE #1: (D) Okay.

MALE VOICE #2: Okay. Go ahead.

MALE VOICE #1: (D) Oh wait, shall we start this conversation again,
or what?

MALE VOICE #2: No, no. Let's just carry on.

MALE VOICE #1: (D) That doesn't sound very formal to me.

MALE VOICE #2: Well, it isn't... formal. It's private, I thought that
was the point.

MALE VOICE #1 SIGHS.

MALE VOICE #2: What?

MALE VOICE #1: (D) I want you to take this seriously, okay?

MALE VOICE #2: I do. I am.

MALE VOICE #1: (D) I need you to.

MALE VOICE #2: I promise you, I'm taking this seriously. Come on, you asked me to record it, I went and got your Dictaphone. Go ahead, please.

MALE VOICE #1: (D) How much do you know about cryonic preservation?

MALE VOICE #2: Cryonic...preservation?

MALE VOICE #1: (D) The preservation of human beings at extreme low temperature.

MALE VOICE #2: You mean like Walt Disn -

MALE VOICE #1: (D) I swear to God if you say anything about Walt Disney's frozen fucking head, I am hanging up this phone right now.

CUT.

SCENE 2

CAR INTERIOR. A PHONE CALL. HOLD
MUSIC PLAYS SOFTLY, AND THEN
ABRUPTLY CUTS AS A PHONE IS
PICKED UP.

FEMALE VOICE: Good afternoon, thanks for holding. You're through to Storage Solutions, how can I help?

WARREN: Oh, hi. I wonder if you can. I'm Warren Godby, I'm from Accounts.

FEMALE VOICE: Good afternoon Mr Godby, how can I help?

WARREN: Yes. I'm trying to find the department that looks after one of the company's facilities.

FEMALE VOICE: Which facility would that be?

WARREN: It's a seed vault.

FEMALE VOICE: A what, sorry?

WARREN: Yeah, it sounded weird to me too. A seed vault. I think it's a cold storage thing, for keeping emergency crop supplies.

FEMALE VOICE: That doesn't sound like anything we have here.

WARREN: Oh really, I thought Storage Solutions would be the right place -

FEMALE VOICE: No, try Agric Solutions.

WARREN: Agriculture. Good idea. Well tha -

FEMALE VOICE: Thank you Mr Godby have a great afternoon.
Goodbye.

WARREN: : Goodbye -

THE LINE GOES DEAD.

ANOTHER LINE IS RINGING. ANOTHER
FEMALE VOICE PICKS UP.

FEMALE VOICE #2: Hello Agric Solutions this is Tracy speaking, how
can I help?

WARREN: Hello, my name's Warren Godby. I'm from
Accounts. I'm looking into a facility we have on our
books and I can't actually find the department it
comes under.

TRACY: You can't find the department.

WARREN: No, it sounds daft doesn't it.

TRACY: What facility is it?

WARREN: It's a seed vault. For storing, uh, seeds. I was
pointed towards you guys.

TRACY: Never heard of it.

WARREN: Oh. That is a shame.

TRACY: Is there anything else I can help you with today?

WARREN: Uh...well I really wouldn't mind speaking to -

TRACY: Mr Jacobs is on annual leave till the 17th.

WARREN: Who's Mr Jac -

TRACY: Thank you for your call, goodbye.

WARREN: Hey, could I actually...-

THE LINE GOES DEAD.

ANOTHER CALL, ABRUPTLY:

VOICE: Sorry, what did you say it was?

WARREN: A seed vault.

VOICE: A what?

ANOTHER CALL.

WARREN: Is that Geographical Science?

VOICE: No, this is Bio Science.

WARREN: Sorry, do you have the extension for-

ANOTHER CALL. THE RUSTLE OF FOOD
WRAPPING.

KAREN: He wants to come in Wednesday.

WARREN: That's too long to not have a shower.

KAREN: That's all he can do. And he wants to do the cabinet doors.

WARREN: What's wrong with the cabinet doors?

KAREN: He wants to put those slow closing hinges on them. So, they don't slam.

WARREN: Why? Do we slam them too loudly?

KAREN: I don't know.

WARREN: Are people complaining that we slam our cabinets too loudly?

KAREN: Who cares, it's his money.

WARREN: We tell him the shower's broken, and he wants to change the hinges on the bloody cabinets.

KAREN: He said it'll extend their lifespan.

WARREN LAUGHS AND COUGHS ON
HIS SANDWICH. KAREN JOINS IN.

KAREN: You alright there?

WARREN: The lifespan!

KAREN: I know. He's such a dick.

WARREN: Sorry Mr Landlord, how many slams have these cabinet doors had? Two, three thousand?

KAREN: Ha!

WARREN: Sorry honey, we can't move in here. There's just been too many slams per cabinet. It's false economy.

KAREN: And there's no shower.

WARREN: And there's no shower.

KAREN: You took your pills this morning?

ANOTHER LINE IS RINGING. IT IS
PICKED UP.

WARREN: Doug. Hey!

DOUG: Warren! Just checking in.

WARREN: Yeah. It's good to hear from you.

DOUG: Are you having fun?

WARREN: Ha, I am, yeah. It is a goose chase alright.

DOUG: No one's biting?

WARREN: I've been bounced around all day. I've still got some more to follow up on.

DOUG: You're getting an idea of the size of the company now.

WARREN: It's...ridiculous.

DOUG LAUGHS.

WARREN: I'm sorry, it is!

DOUG: No, you're right. It is.

WARREN: I've never known anything like it.

DOUG: Welcome to Overhead. Keep digging.

CUT.

SCENE 3

AN OPEN OFFICE ENVIRONMENT - IN
THE DISTANCE THERE IS THE SOUND
OF COMPUTERS TAPPING, SOME ONE-
SIDED CONVERSATIONS FROM PHONE
CALLS. NOTHING CLOSE BY.
FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING.

FEMALE VOICE: Gordon, this is Mr Godby from Accounts. He's asked to see you.

GORDON: Oh. Hi. I didn't have an appointment booked in.

FEMALE VOICE: I've never booked an appointment in for you before.

GORDON: I - uh, yeah, okay. Thanks, Jenni - oh. She's gone.

WARREN: Yeah. I'm glad it's not just me.

GORDON: What's that?

WARREN: Just, it seems really hard to talk to anyone round here. Everyone's so...occupied.

GORDON: Well, don't take it personally. They're probably just worried you're here to 'streamline' their department, or close it down completely, something like that.

WARREN: Right. It's a shame there's such a reputation that goes with Accounts. I would like to change that if I could.

GORDON: Are you new?

WARREN: Yes. Three months in.

GORDON CONSIDERS THIS.

WARREN: Anyway, I really don't want to take up much of your time, so I'll just...anyway. I've been round the houses a bit looking for something. An account, obviously. I thought it was an ongoing project, but I can't find a trace of it anywhere, so I thought I'd try yourselves in Archives next. I know some departments get repurposed or maybe renamed, so...right. What it is...well, I think it's a seed bank, or a seed vault or something like that. Like they have one up in Svalbard, in Norway. Like an end of the world resource of all the essential crops and seeds and whatever. They call it a doomsday vault. I'm starting to feel like this is a practical joke.

GORDON: You're talking about the Red Valley Seed Vault.

WARREN: Sorry, the what?

GORDON: How long did you say you've been with the company?

WARREN: Um. Three months. Sorry, what's Red Valley? Is that a name or a place -

GORDON: Do you have a card I could take?

WARREN: Oh. Yeah, yeah I do!

WARREN DIGS AROUND A MOMENT
AND PRODUCES A LITTLE CASE OF
BUSINESS CARDS.

WARREN: You're actually the first person to ask for one of these. There you go, that's me. This is great, the Red Valley Seed Vault, right?

GORDON: You've definitely never heard of it?

WARREN: This is the first time I've heard anything about it. There's just the usual loose ends in the budget review and my line manager asked me to follow up on it.

GORDON: Your line manager?

WARREN: Doug Holder. Nice guy.

GORDON: Red Valley was a smallholding next to a very small mountain called Beinn Bagg. Affectionately known as Bean Bag. Only, no one's got any affection for it, so we just called it Ball Bag.

WARREN: Ball Bag?

GORDON: Yeah, indeed.

WARREN: You were there? You worked there yourself?

GORDON: No, I was just part of the redevelopment team. The land was snatched up by the government during the Cold War, and they built a small missile tracking base on it. Tiny unit, skeleton crew. People had been throwing around the idea of an emergency crop resource in the event of a nuclear incident, and as the site was already militarised, isolated, they started working on a vault. Then the Cold War ended.

WARREN: And then I guess the money stopped.

GORDON: It did. It stood empty until Overhead acquired the company that had built the vault for the government. They bought it out entirely, and that's when I was put on the team. To modernise the vault, to improve it to the highest standard.

WARREN: So why wasn't it finished?

GORDON: You tell me, Accounts swooped in and killed it before we ever got the plans approved.

WARREN: I'm sorry, I wish I had an answer for that.

GORDON: If, uh...If you want to see, I've still got the file for those plans, on my screen right here.

WARREN: Yeah, yeah, that would actually be...be great.

GORDON: Just...come round here then.

WARREN: Oh, um. Yeah. Right.

GORDON: Just scooch round here.

WARREN AWKWARDLY DRAGS HIS
CHAIR ROUND TO GORDON'S SIDE OF
THE DESK.

GORDON: Here we go.

WARREN: Um. This is just a bunch of adverts for tortoises.

GORDON: (CLOSE) I know. I'm buying a tortoise.

WARREN: (CLOSE) Why are you-

GORDON: (CLOSE) Swear to me you've never heard of the Red Valley Seed Vault until I just told you.

WARREN: (CLOSE) What? Why? -

GORDON: (CLOSE) Swear to me. Or we're going to have a problem.

WARREN: (CLOSE) I swear.

GORDON: (CLOSE) You'd never heard of it?

WARREN: (CLOSE) I'm learning a lot today.

GORDON: (CLOSE) You swear?

WARREN: (CLOSE) I swear.

GORDON: (CLOSE) You *swear*.

WARREN: (CLOSE) Could you take your hand off my knee?

GORDON: (CLOSE) Look Warren. If they're sending the butter-wouldn't-melt 'uh, um, uh' new boy looking for Red Valley, it'll be for a reason. Not a happy touchy-feely smiley reason, a creepy, suspicious, nasty one. Trust me.

WARREN: Look, Mr Porlock, you've been really helpful and I'm very grateful. I said I wouldn't take up much of your valuable time and neither of us have blinked for about 30 seconds so -

GORDON: (CLOSE) Keep your voice down. Are you recording this, Warren?

WARREN SIGHS.

WARREN: (CLOSE) Am I what?

GORDON: (CLOSE) Recording this. You should be. I am.

WARREN: (CLOSE) You're recording this conversation. Right now.

GORDON: (CLOSE) You bet I am.

GORDON TAPS A NEARBY
MICROPHONE, HIDDEN ON HIS DESK.

WARREN: Right, this... this is very funny, this is a very fine joke. I'm sorry if Accounts have treated you badly in the past -

GORDON: (CLOSE) I'm not making fun of you Warren. If I wanted to do that, I'd draw attention to your pubey beard and your little toddler hands.

WARREN: Nice, I feel so much better now.

GORDON: (CLOSE) Stationery is just down the corridor, there's Dictaphones in there, go in and help yourself. I want you to tape every conversation you have now Warren. You might need it.

WARREN: Righty ho. Will do.

WARREN GETS UP TO LEAVE.

GORDON: I know how many are in there. I'll count them once you're gone.

WARREN: It's been wonderful meeting you Mr Porlock.

GORDON: Call me Gordon.

WARREN: I sure will.

GORDON: Warren?

WARREN: Yes.

GORDON: Have you...streamlined any other department yet?

WARREN IS SURPRISED AT THE
QUESTION.

WARREN: Um... Yes, I did. A meat-printing project.

GORDON: Meat-printing?

WARREN: Yeah. Like organic 3D printing. It was a terrible project, we closed the whole department.

GORDON: And how did that feel?

PAUSE.

WARREN: It was awful.

AWKWARD SILENCE.

WARREN: Don't get a tortoise.

GORDON: Why not?

WARREN: They never love you back.

EXITS.

CUT.

SCENE 4

**WARREN'S CAR - VOICEMAIL
MESSAGES ARE PLAYING ON
SPEAKERPHONE.**

VOICEMAIL: (D) You have 3 new messages. First new message, received today at 15.34 hours.

GORDON: (D) Warren. I very much enjoyed our meeting this afternoon -

WARREN: Yeah, right.

GORDON: (D) - and I'd be happy to help. My mobile number is 07796 -

WARREN: Who *is* this guy?

GORDON: (D) -4316.

VOICEMAIL: (D) To listen aga -

KEYPAD TONE

VOICEMAIL: (D) Message deleted. Next new message received today at 16.15 hours.

GORDON: (D) Hi Warren. I'm sending you something. To your house. I hope you don't mind, I got your address from payroll. I just pretended to be you on the phone. It was funny actually.

VOICEMAIL: (D) To listen again, press 1. To save pre-

KEYPAD TONE

VOICEMAIL: (D) Message deleted. New message received today at 16.18 hours.

GORDON: (D) ...Playing this back in my mind, I'm probably really creeping you out, aren't I? I'm sorry. I don't get to talk about this stuff very much. I'm sorry I pretended to be you on the phone to payroll and shouted at them to give me your address -

INCOMING CALL TONE INTERRUPTS.

GORDON: - probably sounded weird when I just blurted that out in my last message -

PHONE RINGS AGAIN.

WARREN: Fuck.

GORDON: - anyway, call me when you get my package, I sent an Overhead courier actually so you should prob-

PHONE RINGS AGAIN. PICK UP.

WARREN: Hey.

KAREN: Hey, where are you?

WARREN: I got stuck on the M4, I'm sorry. I'm just past Newbury.

KAREN: You're going to miss tea.

WARREN: I know. I'm sorry.

KAREN: There's a package for you. Courier delivered it a little while ago.

WARREN: How the fuck did he do that?

KAREN: Who?

WARREN: Don't worry. I've got some calls to make babe, I'm really sorry.

KAREN: ...Okay. I'll see you when you're back.

HANGS UP.

SCENE 5

RINGTONE. PICK UP.

GORDON: (D) Warren Godby.

WARREN: Mr Porlock.

GORDON: (D) Gordon. Please.

WARREN: Right. Gordon it is.

GORDON: (D) Did you get my package?

WARREN: I did. You got that here really fast.

GORDON: (D) The item wasn't with me, it was at a storage locker in a facility we have near Chepstow. Nearer to you than it was to me. No one knows what it is, it's just another box with another barcode on it. You've opened it?

WARREN: Yes, I have. It's an old Dictaphone cassette.

GORDON: (D) You haven't listened to it yet.

WARREN: No. I wanted to speak to you first. You know the voicemails you left me earlier, the whole getting my address thing -

GORDON: (D) Yes yes yes. I'm sorry about that. I just wanted to move quickly, throw you right in so to speak.

WARREN: Throw me in to what?

GORDON: (D) Are you recording this conversation?

WARREN: No, I -

GORDON: (D) That is the one thing I asked you to do! If you're not being careful enough, even at this stage, I don't know if I want to take this any further -

WARREN: Look Gordon, the only purpose of my visit was to understand the use of our funds in and around a seed vault facility, Red Valley, whatever that is, to answer an inquiry from my line manager Doug. This is all really -

GORDON: (D) Please turn on your recorder. Hold it up to the phone and record it.

WARREN: Fine. Hang on.

PHONE IS PLACED DOWN. WARREN
RUMMAGING IN BAG.

GORDON: (D) You're alone I take it.

PHONE IS PICKED UP.

WARREN: Sorry, say that again?

GORDON: (D) You're alone.

WARREN: Yes, it's late, my wife's in bed already.

THE ABRUPT CLICK OF A TAPE
RECORDER BEING SWITCHED ON.

GORDON: (D) Was that it? Is it on?

WARREN: Wait, hang on a second...(OFF) Wait. (CLOSE)
Yep, it's on.

GORDON: (D) Okay.

WARREN: Okay. Go ahead.

GORDON: (D) Oh wait, shall we start this conversation again,
or what?

WARREN: No, no. Let's just carry on.

GORDON: (D) That doesn't sound very formal to me.

WARREN: Well it isn't formal. It's private, I thought that was
the point.

GORDON SIGHS.

WARREN: What?

GORDON: (D) I want you to take this seriously, okay?

WARREN: I do. I am.

GORDON: (D) I need you to.

WARREN: I promise you, I'm taking this seriously. Come on, you asked me to record it, I went and got your Dictaphone. Go ahead, please.

GORDON: (D) How much do you know about cryonic preservation?

WARREN: Cryonic...preservation? Um, I don't know...is that like cryogenics?

GORDON: (D) No. No, It's not like that at all. Everyone knows the word cryogenics, that's not what this is. I mean, that is part of it, maybe that's where it started, I don't know. There isn't a cryogenics division any more, I mean, that I know of. Who knows.

WARREN: Right.

GORDON: (D) But cryogenics is not the term I'm trying to explain. Cryogenics deals with the production of extreme low temperature, and the effects of those temperatures. I'm talking about cryonics. And that deals very specifically with one thing.

WARREN: Okay.

GORDON: (D) Human beings.

WARREN: Human beings.

GORDON: (D) The preservation of human beings at extreme low temperature.

WARREN: You mean like Walt Disn -

GORDON: (D) I swear to God if you say anything about Walt Disney's frozen fucking head, I am hanging up this phone right now.

WARREN: I don't know what you mean.

GORDON: (D) Don't fucking laugh at me.

WARREN: I'm not laughing at you. I just don't know what you're trying to tell me.

GORDON: (D) Fine. You want to save the backstory for later, we'll do it that way. Some people have their bodies frozen at the point of death in the hope that one day they can be brought back to life. A handful of very optimistic and very rich people. We, own one of the companies that do that.

WARREN: Okay.

GORDON: (D) Yes. Okay. That's all legal, that's all above board. People can spend their money on whatever they want. Liposuction, buy-to-rent housing, a National Trust membership, fine. You want all your blood drained out and exchanged for a cryoprotectant compound that'll preserve your organs and tissues in the chance you might be resuscitated one day and live in the future, be my guest. But no one wants to talk about how we get to that future, Warren.

WARREN: What are you talking about?

GORDON: (D) These people imagine it will be like the movies. They'll wake up like Sigourney Weaver in Alien peaceful in her little hypersleep pod, years from now looking fabulous. Some of them, they don't even want to wait till they die. That's much more grizzly and complicated. They'd like to be frozen right now while they're fit and healthy ready to see the future, but they're not interested in the cost. And I don't mean money, Warren, hard as that might be for someone like you to understand.

WARREN: Look Gordon -

GORDON: There's not a lot of seeds in the Red Valley Seed Vault, Warren. Listen to the tape. Don't tell Doug Holder. And record everything you do.

HANGS UP.

END.