

Untold Virginia
Episode Five Transcript
“Reunited and It Feels So...Weird.”

Elizabeth: Hey, everyone. This is Elizabeth Miller and you're listening to Untold Virginia. If you're listening to this, then you probably heard our last episode. I wanted to take a moment to talk about Ruth and how she's doing.

After what happened during our last recording session, which was terrifying, Ruth is doing well, or as well as to be expected. It's hard to explain, but we brought Ruth into Frank's office and she essentially calmed down and got better, I guess. Frank didn't let me into his office, but I was close to the door so I could hear most of what was going on. I kept trying to get Frank to let us take Ruth to the hospital or call an ambulance or something, but Frank said no, but I guess it didn't really matter because Frank just gave her some tea and she rested and then she was totally fine.

So now, Ruth is at home resting. She didn't and doesn't want to go to the doctor despite strong suggestions that she should, so there's no clear diagnosis. There's no doctor telling her what she has exactly and how to cure it. Again, I'm not a medical expert, but this drama just literally fell into my lap, so I can't not pursue it, right? Even though I'm hosting right now, Ruth feels such a presence in this podcast and even if she doesn't want to be on mic right now, we should still talk about her story. What if it's something serious and whatever is happening happens again? But she's fine, she's fine now. I'm sure she's fine, but it feels like we should check just in case. And I think that's a pretty solid plan. Since we have some episode time to kill, I also wanted to make one sort of investigative-ish call, but I'll do that after our opening theme song, which I will play now. Welcome back to Untold Virginia.

Dierdra: Hello?

Elizabeth: Hi! This is Elizabeth Miller.

Dierdra: Oh, Elizabeth. I didn't expect your phone call. If I had known, I would've prepared something.

Elizabeth: That's all right. I wanted this to be a little more candid. Just reach out to you and say hi. You know what I mean?

Dierdra: I just don't have any instructions or anything to go through with you.

Elizabeth: I don't think you need instructions. I just wanted to chat, ask a few lingering questions. Is that okay?

Dierdra: Well, it is, but does Frank know you're calling?

Elizabeth: I don't typically run everything by him before I do it. Again, this was really spur of the moment.

Dierdra: Lizzie, I don't think this is a good idea.

Elizabeth: Why?

Dierdra: I just don't have... There's nothing I can do for you at this point. I've done everything I was asked.

Elizabeth: Do you just... Can I ask you a few questions? They're super small, really tiny, it would be amazingly helpful. It's just that talking to you earlier was so helpful and you were so amazing on mic, the best guest we've had so far.

Dierdra: Really?

Elizabeth: Oh my God, absolutely. You have such a natural podcast voice. I would kill to have your voice. It is so amazing.

Dierdra: Well, I do perform regularly.

Elizabeth: I know. I'm going to need tips from you sometime.

Dierdra: I can probably get away with answering a few teensy questions for you. What do you need?

Elizabeth: Dierdra, you're the best, truly the best. Thank you so much. Did Frank tell you about what happened to Ruth?

Dierdra: Yes, he did and she's such a lucky girl.

Elizabeth: Huh, that's a positive way to look at it.

Dierdra: And she's doing phenomenally, I heard.

Elizabeth: Phenomenal isn't the word I would... Sorry, what has Frank been saying?

Dierdra: Oh, just... What were the questions you wanted to ask me?

Elizabeth: Wait, sorry. I'm actually really curious. What has Frank been telling you?

Dierdra: Didn't you have specific questions about your story that you wanted to ask? I'm happy to help, Lizzie, but I only have so much time today.

Elizabeth: Okay. You're right, story first. I wanted to talk about the area behind Jamestown that you showed us.

Dierdra: That I...

Elizabeth: Or rather that you pointed out as we walked by and that you didn't show us.

Dierdra: That's better.

Elizabeth: Why is that area blocked off?

Dierdra: Well, those structures are incredibly delicate. We do our best to restore and maintain as much as we possibly can, but sometimes certain areas aren't ready for the public.

Elizabeth: It's interesting. I tried to look online for any information about that specific area. I tried Google Maps, the Williamsburg Regional Library site, Nexus. I couldn't find anything.

Dierdra: What were you looking for?

Elizabeth: Just like anything that seems like something I should know about that area, a unique history, unique vegetation. Oh, there was actually, there was this weird tree that seemed like it could be the basis of some sort of Powhatan structure, but I double tracked and it's not.

Dierdra: Well, traditionally, Powhatan houses are rounded without an internal structure.

Elizabeth: I know, but I was thinking that maybe it was linked to were-winds or shamans or something.

Dierdra: That's a little out of my area of expertise, I'm afraid.

Elizabeth: Oh, no. That's all right. Again, I'm calling you on a lark and I'm just curious if you're able to help or not.

Dierdra: To be honest, Lizzie-

Elizabeth: Liz is fine.

Dierdra: I wouldn't worry too much about that area.

Elizabeth: I'm not worried about it. I'm just curious if maybe us being there had something to do with Ruth getting sick.

Dierdra: Why would you say that?

Elizabeth: It's just a guess. I was just going over Ruth's day to day over the past few weeks, like new foods, new environments, that sort of thing.

Dierdra: That area, which I want to remind you, is blocked off and you should not have been near, has nothing to do with Ruth.

Elizabeth: Why are you getting-

Dierdra: I would hate for somebody on my staff to find out you abused your privileges as a park visitor and for them to have to take some sort of disciplinary actions.

Elizabeth: Disciplinary? Dierdra, I'm just asking questions.

Dierdra: And I'm only trying to-

Elizabeth: And you basically were like, "Wink, wink, don't go behind the tape."

Dierdra: That is a gross mischaracterization.

Elizabeth: I have the tape.

Dierdra: Oh, you have a wink on tape. Lizzie, I'm running late for an appointment, so I'm going to hop off the line. However, if you have any additional questions that you think I can answer, I'm more than happy to try to help, but I really think you should check with Frank first before calling me. Am I being clear?

Elizabeth: Yes, but-

Dierdra: I'm so glad we're on the same page, Lizzie. And I'm glad to know that you and Ruth are doing well. I know I won't see you girls at Jamestown anytime soon, but do keep in touch.

Elizabeth: I know I won't see you at Jamestown. Give me...

[Sound transitions to outdoors]

Elizabeth: Hey, listeners. I'm back! The one time I actually make a good pop culture reference and nobody is here to appreciate it. Listener, please appreciate me. That might've sounded a little desperate more than I intended it to, but you know what I mean, I hope.

Anyways, you may have already guessed, we are outside again. I'm not going to tell you exactly where I am for reasons, but let's just say it's a place that I've been before, a place that you heard me at before, and maybe it's a place that I was just fighting about with Dierdra.

Maybe it's just me, but Dierdra was kind of weird, right? I don't need permission from Frank to interview guests and I know that she doesn't know how podcasts work, but come on. It's my show. I'm the host. I get to tell the story I want and I get to ask whatever questions I want. She flipped out for no reason, but just to be clear, I didn't come back here despite her or anything. I mean, not that I'm saying I'm back in Jamestown after hours in the middle of the night, but if I wanted to be, I would.

Anyhow, you're probably wondering what I'm doing outside in the middle of the night. First of all, the full moon is gorgeous right now, so I'm sorry that you'll be listening to this when the moon is waning. That's just me getting lucky being outside when the moon is full. This is more of a research trip. Last time I was here, I didn't take any pictures or anything, but now that this is an investigation of what's going on with Ruth, I feel like I'm playing catch up. I have not gathered any evidence at all. Oops, basically, I just want to check out the place and take some photos and samples and things like that.

[Sound transitions to cave audio]

For example, this weird tree thing, it's definitely not a house. I went back and looked at the architectural styles of the native American tribes that lived in this area, Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, I looked all over Virginia and it just didn't fit. And now that I'm close to it again, I wonder. It's a little more cage-like than I remember. It's definitely not a house, but maybe they kept animals or something in here, I don't know. Parts of the trunk and the branches look like they've been gnawed, so I feel like an animal fits.

I'm trying to make a legitimate hypothesis here, but you know... It's funny, now I'm thinking about the squirrel story Ruth wanted to talk about on air and I'm like, maybe it would have been helpful. Oh, Ruth is doing good by the way. We totally had a long conversation and she's doing really good, getting tons of rest, tons of rest.

I don't think I said this before, but I brought a little explorer's kit with me, just so I'm more prepared than I was last time. I have a backpack and inside, I have my phone, my recorder, a water bottle, some granola bars, a note pad, Band-Aids and then some random tools and papers and stuff. Oh, I also brought a flashlight just in case, but I don't know if I have enough hands to use it. Oh, but I just realized that my phone has a flashlight on it, but I guess a spare never hurts. And now, I have a big surprise for you and by you, I mean, you listening to this. You probably knew that.

Voicemail: Hello. No one is available to take your call. Please leave a message-

Elizabeth: Oh, come on.

Ruth: What?

Elizabeth: How about hello? And thank you so much for checking in on me.

Ruth: I was really clear that I needed a break from hanging out with people.

Elizabeth: I Know, but I'm helping.

Ruth: Liz, are you recording this right now?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Ruth: You know that's illegal, right?

Elizabeth: In Virginia, only one party has to consent to a conversation being recorded for it to be illegal, but of course, you should always try to get everyone to consent.

Ruth: Yeah. What if I don't consent?

Elizabeth: I mean, you haven't hung up.

Ruth: God forbid you respect my boundaries.

Elizabeth: This will be super, super quick. I promise.

Ruth: Hi, everyone!

Elizabeth: Hi, Ruth!

Ruth: I'm still not feeling well, but I'll stay on as long as I can.

Elizabeth: I know. This really won't take long, Ruth. I'm just going back into the cave.

Ruth: You're doing what?

Elizabeth: Going back into the cave and I wanted to have you on the phone for as long as I can.

Ruth: Why are you going back in there?

Elizabeth: I just want to see if there's anything we missed.

Ruth: I get that you're trying to do a nice thing, but really, I'm fine.

Elizabeth: Except you have no idea what's wrong with you.

Ruth: I don't need a specific answer. I just need to feel better.

Elizabeth: I disagree.

Ruth: That's good, because it's you who's sick.

Elizabeth: Well, I'm involved in it, so I kind of am.

Ruth: I don't understand why you won't leave this alone.

Elizabeth: Ruth, you're sick.

Ruth: I'm getting better.

Elizabeth: You're still sick.

Ruth: We are fine. I am fine. I'm fine, Liz.

Elizabeth: I know, but I just want to be sure.

Ruth: You're going to get Dierdra in trouble.

Elizabeth: No, I'm not. I talked with her earlier today and everything is fine.

Ruth: How's she doing?

Elizabeth: She's good. Totally normal. Have you talked to Deirdre about how you're doing?

Ruth: Nope.

Elizabeth: Okay.

Ruth: Why?

Elizabeth: She just seemed to know a lot about how you were doing.

Ruth: I mean, Frank probably told her.

Elizabeth: Yeah. Oh, hey, did your parents decide if they're coming to visit by the way?

Ruth: I already told you they're not. We spoke on the phone so that was nice.

Elizabeth: Wow. That makes it what, two times they'll call you this year?

Ruth: Dude, not cool.

Elizabeth: Your parents know that their only daughter got violently ill and instead of coming to see her, they give her a quick phone call from Europe or wherever they're on vacation.

Ruth: They travel for work.

Elizabeth: That doesn't help.

Ruth: But it's our normal, so I'm fine with it. And besides, they have been talking to Frank a lot, I think. I mean, he's come by a few times. I told him he didn't need to, but he wanted to check out on me, which was nice and he brought me some of that tea he makes.

Elizabeth: Oh, how is that?

Ruth: It's fine.

Elizabeth: Convincing.

Ruth: Well, it's a weird flavor once you're used to it.

Elizabeth: Are you eating real food?

Ruth: Yeah. I can't keep everything down, but yeah. I'm eating.

Elizabeth: What foods?

Ruth: It's like keto-ish.

Elizabeth: Oh, I've been wanting to try that. I want to start cooking more and I feel like the meal prep could be helpful. It would be really good at keeping me honest with eating healthier for the holidays. Wait a second, the markings on the wall were just past that pointy rock, right?

Ruth: I honestly don't remember.

Elizabeth: I'm pretty sure the drawings started over there, but they're gone.

Ruth: Are you sure you're looking in the right place?

Elizabeth: Yeah. There's the puddle here that I stepped in when I was wearing my Chelsea boots and I was super mad about it. Seriously, the markings aren't here.

Ruth: They can't just move though.

Elizabeth: Maybe somebody snuck in and drew them like we just got punked or something.

Ruth: Who puts fake markings in a cave?

Elizabeth: I don't know, the teens.

Ruth: Are you 80? Who says the teens?

Elizabeth: I don't know what teenagers do nowadays. It could be anything.

Ruth: I don't think doodling in caves is a Gen Z thing. Those VSCO girls who carry around their Hydro Flasks, they're not using them to go on hikes.

Elizabeth: Okay, fine. But the cave isn't out in the open, it's blocked off. I feel like nobody would have been here but us or maybe not.

Ruth: Why do you say that?

Elizabeth: I just stepped on a knife.

Ruth: A knife? Are you okay?

Elizabeth: A piece of knife. It looks like a broken knife shard or something. I can't really tell without light.

Ruth: Did we maybe leave it when we were there?

Elizabeth: I didn't bring a knife.

Ruth: I can't understand you.

Elizabeth: I didn't bring a knife and why would you have brought a knife?

Ruth: Fair point.

Elizabeth: It's like a knife piece, not a whole knife, like a piece of a blade. I don't think it's from us.

Ruth: Weird.

Elizabeth: Let me find where these markings are.

Ruth: They didn't go anywhere.

Elizabeth: You don't know that.

Ruth: You're overthinking it.

Elizabeth: You say that, but yep, here they are.

Ruth: It sounds like you took two steps.

Elizabeth: No, like seven. I wish we took pictures of this last time. It seems different.

Ruth: It's a dark cave.

Elizabeth: Still. And I still don't know what this material is.

Elizabeth: Did you schedule a doctor's appointment yet?

Ruth: I already told you, I'm not going to the doctor.

Elizabeth: I'm taking a sample of the rock in the cave now, so I'll bring it to your place so you can bring it to the appointment.

Ruth: Please do not do that.

Elizabeth: I think it will help. What? What happened?

Ruth: Just some stomach pain. I'm fine.

Elizabeth: You don't sound fine.

Ruth: Every time you say that, it makes me think you want me to be sick.

Elizabeth: Of course not. I'm here for you. What other reason do I have for being in a cave in the middle of the night? Ruth?

Ruth: What? It's fine.

Elizabeth: I'm going to try something.

[Scraping against rock]

What the hell?

Ruth: I think I'm going to vomit.

Elizabeth: Can you tell when I'm touching the wall?

Ruth: No.

Elizabeth: Every time I touch the wall, you shout. That's weird, Ruth.

Ruth: I'm not shouting. I'm just in pain.

Elizabeth: Ruth, I'm going to let you get some rest, okay? I'll call you later and maybe I'll come over tomorrow.

Ruth: I'll let you know.

Elizabeth: Take care of yourself, okay? Love you.

Ruth: Bye.

[Phone clicks]

Elizabeth: This is going to seem really mean, but it's for Ruth. It's to help her get better. I'm so sorry. Well, that takes care of that. Okay. So now I'm going to go a little further into the cave. I didn't get to go that far last time because Ruth fell. I want to check that area out and take some photos there and I'll describe everything that I see, of course so it's like you're right here with me.

Elizabeth: Okay. Now I'm at the fork. Last time I went to the left. The left one. Ruth went to the right I'm walking down the path. I'm trying not to use the flashlight because I want to see what Ruth saw, really step into her shoes you know? I don't know if she had a light on or not, but she fell so I'm assuming not. It's weird. The longer I'm here for, the more this place kind of messes with me. I can't really tell what's just a shadow or a rock or some combination of both.

Just a rat, just a rat, just a rat. Look, I'll be honest with you. I didn't realize how much talking I would have to do by myself. You know when you have a roommate and then they leave or study abroad and you find yourself talking to your cat way more than you need to, and not that you need to talk to your cat, but you know what I mean?

[Chanting voices swell]

Do you hear that? There are people here. I'm going to try to get closer. Crap. What the... Where...

[Voices stop and a a rush of wind moves through the cave]

That was something. I don't know what that was. I hope I got good tape, but first, water. Hey, there's a tear on my bag. This was still... This was brand new, perfect condition, literally perfect. It's like three tears actually. Maybe I got it caught on something in the cave, but I feel like I would have felt that.

Where is... There's stuff missing. How did... Stuff I grabbed, the stuff from the wall that I scraped off and put into the Altoids container, it's gone. There's some other stuff missing like my lip gloss or whatever, but I don't understand. What the hell just happened?