

HI NAY - Episode 15:

``Sagot (Answer)``

[00:00 - 00:35 "Ili-Ili Tulog Anay" instrumental plays]

[Atmospheric music]

Motzie: You're listening to Hi Nay, by Motzie Dapul. Episode 15: "Sagot".

SCENE 1

[Recording clicks on]

[Audio cuts in of Cafe]

MURPHY: ...One coffee. Black, French style, no sugar or milk.

CJ: Ah, merci.

[Sound of CJ sipping the coffee, sounding satisfied, otherwise silence and atmosphere]

CJ: Delicious. So few places can make this right. There was a cafe in Paris in the sixties, but I don't know that it's still there.

[Pause]

CJ: Isn't that the television guru? Never seen him without the false beard, he's quite handsome. Never would have guessed his magic was real.

LAURA: *[Muttered]* You're not the only one.

DONNER: So you can just... sense that?

CJ: He's not exactly hiding it. Not like Mari, or myself.

MARI: *[Blandly]* Hmm. We have so much in common. So... are you actually gonna tell us anything or are we just keeping up the small talk?

CJ: One thing before we begin.

MURPHY: *[Warily]* What's that?

CJ: A handshake.

DONNER: *[Skeptically]* Really?

CJ: Really. Just to get things started.

MARI: Fine.

[Sound of Mari rising, light clap of them clasping hands]

[The faint sound of both their magic activating, challenging each other, like electricity crackling]

DONNER: *[Whispered]* Mari! Is this really the best place to be doing...

MURPHY: A magical dick-measuring contest?

[CJ makes a subtle, slightly pained hiss]

[Sound of the two women letting go, the magic fading]

CJ: Ah damn. For a moment I thought I saw the shape of you, but...

LAURA: But... what?

CJ: It's like... when a small woman casts a large shadow at twilight.

MARI: Ready to tell us anything or not?

CJ: Fine. Fine.

[Sound of everyone sitting, settling]

CJ: First, I must know what you know. You know of the Foci, and The Benefactor, and even our unfortunate George.

MARI: And your Order. George told us a bit. How you all decided to come together to learn magic, and then went on to dabble in things you hardly understood.

CJ: *[Lightly]* True. Though honestly I wasn't one to dabble. I was just there because my family was very old and very rich, and I was bored. It's amazing how much your life can change because of seemingly infinitesimal, insignificant decisions.

MARI: *[Sarcastic]* Great attitude to have to magic. Real responsible.

CJ: *[Chuckling]* No, you're right. Responsibility was not our strong suit. But our leader... well. He was truly one of the most charismatic men I've ever met, and he kept us all in line. He was also one of the most powerful, when we all learned our own magic. Sauvard, was his name. We who were there simply for our own interests benefited from the few in his inner circle who knew the magic best. I remember, he had a right hand man... but I don't remember his name. I remember his initials, though. R.H. He wore cufflinks with them. If he's still rattling around. A Robert, or Richard, or something.

DONNER: You don't remember? Is it a spell, or-

CJ: Oh, no. I know what a spell feels like. I simply forgot. He was always such a quiet presence. If it wasn't for his proximity to Sauvard, I'd not have remembered him at all. One thing they don't tell you about immortality is that your mind is just as any human's, and it simply cannot remember a lifetime of memories without forgetting a few things.

DONNER: You said if he's still rattling around. You don't know?

CJ: Non. I broke away from the Order decades ago, when... well. Soon after the Foci were developed, and we all achieved our conditional immortality. I know of a handful who are still active, if only because they get in touch with me every few decades. But I don't get involved. Not anymore.

MARI: Convenient. Not getting involved until you do, with us.

CJ: I told you why.

MARI: You told us your reasons are your own. Not what those reasons are. I know you're not going to kill us, but that doesn't preclude you talking a friend's ear off about us, who will.

CJ: Paranoid little... Alright. The truth is that the only reason I'm telling you all this is because you, Mari, remind me of Mary-Anne. What you said last night, when I was leaving... I don't remember as much as I want to from my past, but I remember her saying nearly the same thing, once. So there. I came because I'm sentimental. Is that what you wanted to hear?

[Sound of Mari settling back in her seat]

MARI: I... appreciate the honesty.

LAURA: You said Mary-Anne owned this necklace, right?

CJ: Indeed.

LAURA: And the woman I saw was Mary-Anne. This necklace... we guessed it was one of her Foci, but Mari said it felt like the opposite of the others. A... Good Focus? Is that possible? And if it is, is she still around? Can she teach us to-

CJ: No. She's dead. She has been for a long time.

[Silence]

MURPHY: You two must have been close.

CJ: *[Sighing, tired]* Is it that obvious?

MURPHY: Let's just say I know what it sounds like when someone's... in love.

DONNER: Or lost someone they loved.

[Silence]

CJ: *[Quietly]* I didn't even know she was doing this. Putting pieces of herself into trinkets. Saving whoever she could. I'd never known her to be such a fool.

MARI: It sounds like she knew something you didn't.

CJ: *[Sorrowful]* Ha. That is perhaps the cruellest thing you've said to me so far.

MARI: I'm not trying to be cruel. I just think she had a good idea of what mattered in the end, if she did what we think she did.

CJ: Her heart was strong as she was selfless. But not even the strongest, or most selfless, could cut themselves into enough pieces to save the world the way she wished to. I suppose she learned that the hard way.

LAURA: But if you help us find what she created, maybe her sacrifice won't have been in vain.

CJ: That's very hopeful of you, my dear. She was never one for flights of fancy, always pragmatic. I was always the more hopeful of us two, at least... when she was with me.

DONNER: *[Slowly, thoughtfully]* But wouldn't you consider trying to save everyone a flight of fancy all on its own?

CJ: *[Somewhat surprised]* I... suppose that's true.

[Thoughtful silence]

CJ: Even if she had indeed made Good Foci – perhaps dozens, given her power – then that doesn't solve the problem of the Benefactor and his allies. The men and women I once knew from our Order, whatever's left of it.

MARI: Maybe not, but it's a first step. And we faced down George. Whatever gives us an edge against the rest of you...

CJ: Last I heard, they had begun calling themselves "Elders". Tacky a name as any, but I guess I count among their ranks, if only for living this long.

MARI: Elders, then.

LAURA: Even if we don't end up finding as many as we want to, isn't it worth saving a handful of lives?

CJ: Perhaps. *[Wistful]* We used to think a handful of lives were worth sacrificing for a greater cause. How the tables have turned.

MARI: You're learning.

[CJ laughs softly, gets up]

CJ: I'll do my best, then. Find what I can. I work at a museum, after all. I know a few places to search for my Mary-Anne's good work. But I must warn you, I cannot meet too often if you wish me to act on your behalf. Even the walls have eyes, at times.

DONNER: So shall we consider you an ally?

CJ: I expect you not to shout it from the rooftops, but... for Mary-Anne's sake? Yes. For now. I'll help find the objects holding her power, though I'll warn you, I'm out of practice.

LAURA: Wasn't there one at U of T one time? The time we met Evelyn? When they took it away, a Focus activated...

DONNER: Yeah. A painting, I think. I've got the records on me, I can send them over.

CJ: Thank you, then. *[Pause]* One more thing, if I may ask, Mari.

MARI: What is it?

CJ: If my power – if the power of us Elders – is so rancid to you... how did you know that Mary-Anne's magic was good?

MARI: Her magic wasn't like yours or theirs. It was... good. Warm. Loving, is the best I can describe it.

CJ: *[Gently]* I see. Thank you, for telling me.

MARI: ... Thank you for helping us.

CJ: *[Lightly]* If I may leverage one more favour for the aid...

LAURA: Uhhh... what is it?

CJ: Dinner. If you're amenable. Mari.

LAURA: Oh?

MARI: Oh!

DONNER: What happened to "the walls have eyes?"

CJ: *[Amused, warm]* Oh well, I imagine having dinner with a beautiful woman for no other reason than leisure would make things less suspicious in the long run. What do you say?

MARI: I never could have guessed where this conversation was going to end up, but... sure. Why not?

CJ: *[Chuckling]* Excellent. Good day to you all, then.

[CJ walks away, leaving the group in the cafe]

MURPHY: Calling that an emotional roller coaster would be an understatement. Damn.

[Ashvin's phone rings, startling him awake]

ASHVIN: *[Groggy]* Sorry, sorry. I'll take this outside.

MURPHY: Need some backup there babe?

ASHVIN: *[Yawning]* I'm good. Ooh, definitely gonna have some of that tea when I get back though.

[Ashvin walks to the outside of the cafe]

LAURA: Wild.

MARI: *[Sighing]* Sorry the hot lady we thought was hitting on you turned out to be a weird immortal ex-cultist.

LAURA: Like that doesn't make her hotter?

MARI: *[Amused, scandalised]* Laura!

LAURA: Joking! Well, kind of. But don't worry about me. You're the one having dinner with her. And apparently reminding her of an ex.

MARI: I still don't trust her, but she's given us good info. Figure we might as well take advantage of her good graces while we can.

LAURA: *[Thoughtful]* I mean yeah, I guess. But if someone like Mary-Anne loved her... with what she told us, but more so what you said about Mary-Anne's magic... could she really be so bad?

MARI: Maybe not. But it isn't that rare for good people to love monsters. But... I do appreciate optimism.

LAURA: If I wasn't this optimistic, I wouldn't have gotten past our first meeting, so...

MARI: Cheers to that.

[Their cups clink together]

[Door opens, Ashvin returns]

MURPHY: So what was that all about?

[Silence]

MURPHY: Babe? Ashvin? *[Pause, assessing]* You're shaking.

ASHVIN: *[Nervous laugh]* Guess who that call was from.

DONNER: Who?

MURPHY: Come sit down, come on.

[Sound of Ashvin settling]

ASHVIN: It was... ah... Vanessa Bartaloti. At whose extremely fancy shed we incinerated a multitude of zombie clones.

DONNER: What did she say? Moreover... what did she see?

ASHVIN: I don't know. She asked me for a reading. One of my specialties as a guru, to guide their spirits to enlightenment and all that crap. Usually it's just therapy for rich people to make them feel like they have a place in the universe.

DONNER: Do you think she knows?

ASHVIN: I know she knows. I know when people are trying - and failing - to lie to me. And the way she talked about my impressive background, my magical ability... I don't doubt she saw something yesterday. Or at least knew somehow. But... it was like I couldn't refuse her. Don't know if it was magic, or just... fear. Apprehension. I'm wide awake now.

[Ashvin takes a sip of his tea]

MURPHY: Sounds like a trap if I've ever heard one.

DONNER: He doesn't have to go alone.

ASHVIN: Yes, because she won't question the presence of a police detective or two hanging around a "spiritual guide" with a stick-on beard.

DONNER: We'll figure it out. When's the meeting?

ASHVIN: End of the week.

DONNER: Mari, what do you think?

MARI: I don't think backup's a bad idea. We can all go, but leave us in a car. Close enough to help but far enough in case... something happens. I can prep you with a bit more protection, or teach you to make your own.

ASHVIN: Yes, please. If she's anything like... George...

MURPHY: I mean... We don't know that, right? We don't know if she's an immortal magic murderer or if she's just working for immortal magic murderers and... yeah no that's worse, I know, you don't have to give me that look.

DONNER: *[Smug]* Thank you. Don't worry, magic man. We've got your back.

ASHVIN: How eager would you be to throw me to the wolves if I wasn't dating your partner?

[Donner chuckles]

ASHVIN: Did you just wink at me? Am I seeing things? Must be the sleep deprivation, because that can't possibly have been a sense of humour.

MARI: Don't worry, Ashvin. Donner's not the type to let someone die through negligence. If he wanted you dead I'd imagine he wouldn't be so passive.

MURPHY: Ha, nice. You do know him.

[High five sound]

MARI: I guess... we've got this team?

LAURA: I feel like at this point it's weird for us to not have a team name.

DONNER: No.

MARI: Team Spooky? The Boo Bunch?

MURPHY: The Ghoul Gang.

LAURA: The Ghost Punchers Association

MARI: How about an acronym? MAGIC. Mages and Guns Investigating Crimes.

LAURA: Yeah!

ASHVIN: Team How Are We All Still Alive?

LAURA: Especially appropriate for us two.

DONNER: *[Sigh]* Just drink your damn tea.

[Recording ends]

SCENE 2

[Recording cuts in]

[Quiet, evening outdoor atmosphere, grassy footsteps]

[Loud crack of a stick breaking]

ABE: *[Loud whisper]* Oh damn! Okay. Alright. So I'm here at the site of the last supernatural occurrence. Overheard on police channels that they found a corpse in Bridle Path matching the description of the corpse I saw months ago. Maybe the same person, maybe someone entirely different. But I'm definitely not gonna let that find slide.

[More sounds of rustling]

There's a lot of disturbance, a lot of recent tracks around here. Now I don't think these rich guys living up in these sprawling mansions do a lot of lawn and forest work, but maybe they've got groundskeepers that keep things up around here.

I imagine groundskeepers aren't this... messy, though. Lots of broken twigs, grass trampled. Do you think going into someone's shed counts as a home invasion? It can't be, right?

[Sound of door opening]

Oh, it's unlocked. Well... I mean if they're gonna keep it unlocked I doubt they're keeping anything valuable in here right? Right.

[Sound of him walking around in silence] [His foot hits something]

What... the... God, what is that smell?

[Sound of strange magic activating]

What is... oh go-

[Abe's voice is cut off, and his recording device crashes to the ground]

SCENE 3

[Recording turns on]

[Silence except for the tape running]

[Slow fade in of old, old jazz music]

[Mari gently hums to the tune]

[Slow fade in of the gentle buzz of a crowd]

[Tapping of feet, as though dancing]

[Sound of someone stumbling in, interrupting the scene]

[People start to chatter, disturbed]

MARI: Whoa, hey! Who the hell are you? What are you doing here at my party?

ABE: *[Distorted, radio static voice]* Oh god. Oh god. Help me! Please, help me!

MARI: What- no, you're not real...

ABE: *[Distorted]* Please, I don't know where I am! I don't know how you're seeing me. But please help me!

MARI: Where are you?

ABE: I'm in... I mean I was in... I was in a shed... up in Bridle Path... But now I don't know, I can't see - I don't know what's happening... please... help me!

MARI: What's your name?

ABE: Abe. My name's Abe.

MARI: Take this. Don't let it go.

[Sound of magic activating]

MARI: *[Deep breath]* I know where you are. Oh god no...

ABE: Please...

MARI: I'm coming for you Abe. You hear me? I'm com-

[Dream ends]

[Mari wakes up gasping]

END

["Ili-Ili Tulog Anay" outro instrumental plays]

Motzie: You're listening to Hi Nay, by Motzie Dapul.