

LYSH Podcast Episode 7

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Theme music

Persigo Press presents The Henry Rios Mysteries Podcast.

Hello, this is Michael Nava, author of a series of crime novels, featuring Henry Rios, a gay, Mexican-American criminal defense lawyer, and the producer of this podcast.

Today, we continue our presentation of *Lay Your Sleeping Head*, the first novel in the Rios series.

NARRATOR'S MUSIC

Lay Your Sleeping opens in the summer of 1982, in the fictional town of Linden, California, thirty miles south of San Francisco. Linden is the home of the prestigious university of the same name, founded in the nineteenth century by railroad tycoon, Grover Linden.

Henry Rios is a Public Defender, born and raised in a small town in California's central valley and from a working class, Mexican-American family. He is a graduate of Linden University and its top-ranked law school.

In 1982, there is no Internet, [beat] people smoke in bars and airplanes [beat] most gay men are closeted and no one has heard of AIDS [beat]. It's an America where 83 percent of the people identify as white, 85 percent as Christian and 83 percent say that homosexuality is morally wrong. [Beat] Ronald Wilson Reagan, who once declared that trees cause

more pollution than automobiles, is the president of the United States.

In this episode, Rios leaves his lover, Hugh Paris, in San Francisco and returns home to Linden where Hugh promises to join him that night.

THEME MUSIC

RIOS

I have to get back to Linden.

PARIS

Why?

RIOS

I haven't been home in a week. [Beat] Why don't you pack a bag and come with me.

PARIS

I can't. I'm meeting Grant Hancock for dinner.

RIOS

Grant? The other boy in the photograph?

PARIS

He's not a boy anymore. He's a lawyer, like you. I arranged this a couple of weeks ago and I can't cancel. It's important that I talk to him.

RIOS

About what?

PARIS

I told you I owed him an apology. And before you ask, it's about something I did to him when we were in school.

[Beat] I haven't seen him since but it's been on my conscience.

RIOS

[Joking] What did you do, cheat off his exam?

PARIS

What I did to him was no joke, Henry. [Beat] I'll tell you all about it . . . after I talk to him. [Beat] I'll come to your place after dinner. [Beat] Henry, I promise.

RIOS

Okay. [Beat] Do you know about when?

PARIS

I'm meeting him at eight. I can be in Linden by ten-thirty, eleven. [Beat] Here, take this. It's a key to my house.

RIOS

Thanks. We can get you a key to my place tomorrow. [Beat] I guess I'll be off then.

PARIS

Henry . . . don't worry. I'm okay now. I'll see you tonight.

RIOS

I'll be waiting for you.

PARIS

Henry . . .

RIOS

Yeah?

PARIS

I love you.

RIOS

Come here, baby. [Beat] I love you, too.

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC

RIOS

When I got home I pulled *The Leaves of Grass* off the book shelf. I flipped through the pages until I found the poem I wanted to show to Hugh.

We two boys together clinging,

One the other never leaving,

Up and down the roads going—North and South excursions making,

Power enjoying—elbows stretching—fingers clutching,

Arm'd and fearless—eating, drinking, sleeping, loving

No law less than ourselves owning

KNOCK AT DOOR. DOOR OPENS.

RIOS

Aaron? What are you doing here?

GOLD

[Angry, anxious] You've been with that guy again, haven't you? Hugh Paris?

RIOS

[Defensive] How is that any of your business?

GOLD

Let me in. Give me a drink.

RIOS

Yeah, sure. [Sfx: ice, glass, pouring.] Okay, here's your drink.
Now what crawled up your shorts and died?

GOLD

Did Hugh Paris tell you who his grandfather is?

RIOS

Not his name.

GOLD

He's Robert Paris, a retired federal judge.

RIOS

So?

GOLD

Do you know who his great-great-grandfather is?

RIOS

Stop playing games. We didn't discuss Hugh's family tree.

GOLD

Grover Linden. Nineteenth century railroad tycoon and
founder of Linden University.

RIOS

Seriously? Hugh is descended from Grover Linden?

GOLD

That's right, chum. Your boyfriend is related to the guy
whose name is on our law school diplomas and practically
everything else in this town.

RIOS

Wow. [Beat] Okay, that's a surprise. [Beat] Wait, how do you know this?

GOLD

Do you know what the Linden University Trust is?

RIOS

I know it paid for my undergrad education.

GOLD

That's right, you were a Linden Scholar. Yeah, it provides those scholarships but more important it's the university's main endowment fund.

RIOS

Okay, so?

GOLD

We represent the trust. Judge Paris is not only a trustee, he's also a personal client of the firm. When you told me Hugh's last name was Paris – well, it's not a common name, so I looked into it and discovered the family connection.

RIOS

How long have you known?

GOLD

A while. I didn't say anything to you before because you told me this thing with him was a one-night stand. But if it's something more serious, I need to warn you.

RIOS

Warn me about what?

GOLD

That you're shacking up with a mentally deranged drug addict.

RIOS

Watch yourself, Gold.

GOLD

Did he tell you his father's been in a private nuthouse up in Napa for the last fifteen years?

RIOS

I know about his dad, but Hugh's not crazy.

GOLD

He's been in and out of rehabs and mental institutions since he was eighteen. He's a manic-depressive heroin addict.

RIOS

[Shocked, incredulous] Where do you get all this?

GOLD

We've been keeping tabs on him.

RIOS

So, Hugh's right. He is being followed.

GOLD

We need to protect the judge from him.

RIOS

Protect the judge from what?

GOLD

Read these.

RIOS

What are they?

GOLD

Copies of letters your boyfriend's been writing to his grandfather. After his last rehab failed, he tried to blackmail Judge Paris with insane threats and accusations. When the judge refused to pay up, he threatened to go public. The guy is seriously fucked up, Henry, a timebomb. I don't want you to be around him when he blows up.

RIOS

Do you know what his grandfather did to him when he was a little boy?

GOLD

[Dismissive] I know what he claims the judge did to him.

RIOS

You think he's lying.

GOLD

I think he's crazy.

RIOS

I believe him.

GOLD

Damnit, Henry, trying thinking with your head instead of your dick.

RIOS

Is that what you think this is about? Sex?

GOLD

Isn't that what it's always about with you guys?

RIOS

You guys?

GOLD

You gay guys. [Beat] What? you gonna give me that song and dance about wanting to take him to the junior prom? That might be what you have to tell yourself to be okay with being – you know – what you are, but this is real life, not some adolescent fantasy. And this guy, Henry, is big trouble.

RIOS

You don't know anything about him. Or me.

GOLD

Listen to me! I'm trying to help you.

RIOS

I don't know what you're trying to do, but you need to leave. Now.

GOLD

Henry –

RIOS

Now, Aaron!

GOLD

Fine, I'm leaving, but do yourself a favor. Read the fucking letters! You'll see who your boyfriend is.

SFX DOOR SLAMS

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC

RIOS

I poured myself a stiff drink and glanced at the letters, but decided not to read them until I could talk to Hugh and give him a chance to explain himself. In the meantime, I shoved them into a kitchen drawer.

SFX: CLOCK TICKING

Eleven. Midnight. One.a.m. I threw the empty whiskey bottle against the wall. I was drunk but not drunk enough because I was still awake, muttering, “Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you,” to no one in particular. Had there even been a dinner with Grant Hancock or was that an excuse for him to score? My guts were sour and twisted up. I was crawling out of my skin with anger. I remembered that somewhere in the apartment there was a bottle of Valium left over from a root canal. I found the bottle, took two pills and crawled into bed. I dreamed I was in Hugh cottage and there was a hole in the floor. When I looked down, I couldn’t see the bottom.

LOUD POUNDING AT THE DOOR

MALE COP

Police! Is anyone home?

SFX: FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENS

RIOS

[Bleary, hungover.] What do you want?

COP

Are you Henry Rios?”

RIOS

What if I am?

COP

Sir, have you been drinking?

RIOS

Yeah, and I'd like to get back to it if you don't mind.

COP

I need you to come with me.

RIOS

Come with you where?

COP

To the morgue, to see if you can identify a body.

RIOS

[Beat] What body?

COP

The university police found a dead man in a car on campus this morning. No wallet, no ID. Your card was in the glove compartment.

RIOS

[Beginning to understand the situation] What did he look like?

COP

Young white male, about five-seven, blond. [Beat] Sound familiar?

RIOS

Oh, fuck. Hugh!

COP

You know him?

RIOS

I'll get dressed.

SCENE MUSIC ENDS IN FOOTSTEPS DOWN A LONG HALL THAT COME TO AN ABRUPT STOP

CORONER

You're here to identify the body that came in from the University this morning?

RIOS

Yes. My name is Rios. [Beat] Before we go in, what can you tell me what happened to him?

CORONER

The university police found him in his car around six. Needle in his arm. Old and new track marks. We sent out a blood sample for toxicology but it looks like a heroin overdose.

RIOS

They found him on campus?

CORONER

In the woods, by the Linden crypt. [Beat] Are you ready?

SUSPENSE MUSIC

RIOS

Yeah.

CORONER

I'm going to uncover his face now. [Beat] Do you know this man?

RIOS

[Yelps in pain]

CORONER

Mr. Rios . . . ?

RIOS

[Sobbing]

CORONER

Mr. Rios, I'm sorry, but can you tell me this young man's name?

RIOS

[Gasping] Hugh . . . Hugh Paris.

**SCENE TRANSITION MUSIC ENDS WITH POUNDING
AT DOOR**

GOLD

Henry! It's Aaron. Open the door! Dammit, Henry, open –

SFX: door opening

RIOS

[Badly hung-over] What the fuck do you want?

GOLD

I heard about Hugh Paris. [Beat] Come on, let me in.

RIOS

Suit yourself.

GOLD

[Quietly] You look like shit. And your place . . . [Beat] When was the last time you were out of the apartment?

RIOS

Four . . . no, five days ago. Made a liquor run. Did you know that if you keep drinking for two days solid you stop having feelings? [Beat] But then the fuckers come back and you have to drink more. Eventually, even that stops working and you can't even get drunk. [Beat] Lucky for me I still had some pills –

GOLD

[Panicked] What kind of pills? How many did you take?

RIOS

Calm down, Gold. A couple of Valium, so I could sleep.

GOLD

Why don't you take a shower and put on some clothes? I'll make some coffee.

RIOS

Whatever.

**SCENE TRANSITION MUSIC ENDS WITH WATER
RUNNING IN A SINK.**

RIOS

What are you doing?

GOLD

Washing dishes. This place is a pig sty.

RIOS

Leave it. What do you want?

GOLD

I been calling you for days. I got worried.

RIOS

I've been busy.

GOLD

Drinking?

RIOS:

Mourning. Or is that too hard for you to understand?

GOLD

Henry, I'm –

RIOS

Because according to you, Hugh was just a fuck.

GOLD

I'm sorry. That was a shitty thing to say.

RIOS

At least you were being honest. I prefer that to this fake concern.

GOLD

It's not fake. I was an asshole and I'm sorry, but you're still my best friend.

RIOS

Lucky me.

GOLD

You're pissed off at me. Fine. I deserve it. But I'm here for you. What can I do?

RIOS

Pour me a drink.

GOLD:

I think you've had enough.

RIOS

Yeah, you're probably right. You said something about coffee.

SCENE TRANSITION MUSIC

RIOS

Did you dump the entire bowl of sugar into my coffee?

GOLD:

You need the calories. [Beat] So? Wanna talk about it?

RIOS

Do you really want to hear about it?

GOLD:

Yes.

MUSIC COMES UP BENEATH THIS DIALOGUE

RIOS

Most people probably think like you do. One guy can't love another the way a man loves a woman. That gay guys are

sex fiends or emotionally defective. That's bullshit Gold. It's no different for us than for you. We're all people and people fall in love. Men with women, women with women, men with men. [Beat] Why is that so hard to believe?

GOLD

It's not what we're taught.

RIOS

[Scornfully] Taught? What do you know about men like me except a bunch of fag jokes and locker room stereotypes? [Beat] And you of all people, Gold.

GOLD

What is that supposed to mean?

RIOS

"If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die?"

GOLD

What is that?

RIOS

Shylock's speech from Merchant of Venice. I memorized it in college because he was talking about me. About being gay.

GOLD

Shylock . . . the Jew. I have to be honest here. That comparison's a little hard for me to take. But I'm really trying, Henry. I'm trying. [Beat] You . . . loved him?

RIOS

Yes.

GOLD

Okay, but the things I told you about him were true. He had . . . problems.

RIOS

So, I'm better off without him?

GOLD

That's not what I said but . . . maybe this . . .is. . . for the best.

RIOS

I'm pretty sure Hugh would disagree.

GOLD

[Gently] Henry, he killed himself.

END MUSIC

RIOS

It doesn't make sense. If he wanted to get high, he would have stayed in the city, not come here, not knowing how I felt about drugs.

GOLD

My cousin's a coke addict. Drug addicts use drugs. They can't help it.

RIOS

I'm telling you he wouldn't have shown up here strung out. Something's not right.

GOLD

I know it's hard to accept, but there's nothing you can do for him now.

RIOS

I'm still a lawyer. I know how to ask questions.

GOLD

Whatever you find out about how he died will only make it worse for you.

RIOS

It can't be any worse than what I've been imagining. [Beat]
At least, maybe I'll be able to sleep without having to knock myself out with booze and pills.

GOLD

Here's some unsolicited advice from an old friend. Grieve and move on. Don't wallow in this.

RIOS

You really don't understand. One minute I'm holding him in my arms and the next minute the coroner's pulling back the sheet on his body. He was twenty-six years old. Grieve? No, I'm fucking furious. I want to know how and why he died.

GOLD

I'm begging you. Leave it.

RIOS

[Suspicious] Why? Is there something you're not telling me?

GOLD

I took a big risk getting you those letters. I can't tell you anything else without violating the privilege, but I will say this. Hugh created a very messy situation with some important people. You don't want to get dragged into it.

RIOS

By asking questions about how he died?

GOLD

That's not what I meant.

RIOS

What did you mean, Aaron?

GOLD

Forget it. I know you. You're going to do what you're going to do. Just . . . be careful what you ask . . . and who you ask.

THEME MUSIC

You've been listening to *Lay Your Sleeping Head*, a Henry Rios mystery.

If you enjoyed this episode, please spread the word on social media and support us by going to The Henry Rios Mysteries Podcast page at GoFundMe.com and becoming a sponsor. We depend upon your support to keep this podcast going.

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This is an abridged version of the novel *Lay Your Sleeping Head*. You can buy the complete novel at Amazon.

OUTRO MUSIC OVER CREDITS

For this episode our cast was Armando Rey as Henry Rios, Cameron LaBrie as Hugh Paris, Dene Larson as Aaron Gold, Sean Gerbo as the police officer and James Warren Boyd as

the coroner. Our director is Russell Kaltschmidt. Our sound engineer is Dave Peck. Music and sound effects were composed by Josh DeRosa. The episode was written and produced by Michael Nava. Thank you for listening.