

CCO2: Grove Night

WIND, BIRDSONG

FOOTSTEPS

3 KNOCKS

DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES

FOOTSTEPS ON CREAKY FLOORBOARDS

TAPE IS INSERTED INTO A PLAYER, BEGINS TO PLAY

MISS TENOR: They say that Arborwood Grove is haunted. And hey, most people have been here. They ought to know. One of the unofficial but most important requirements for graduating Arborwood High is taking part in the ever-infamous Grove Night. One night in Arborwood Grove.

Everyone has their turn. They say that in the fall, there's one every single night. Teenagers entering high school are dragged up to the Grove by their older siblings, their friends, their neighbours. But they say that there's something else, too. Underneath the peer pressure and time-honoured tradition. There is a pull. A constant tugging in the adolescent souls of this town, drawing them nearer, drawing them in.

Some kids go up there for nearly every Grove Night. Some only go once and never again. Some go on their tenth birthday, their thirteenth. Sixteenth. Some don't plan for it at all. They just look around one day and find themselves staring at the cellar doors. But they all go eventually. They all do their time.

They say if you walk down the halls of Arborwood High, it's easy to tell who's been to the Grove. Not through any hierarchy or behavioural quirks. They say you just know. They

say there's something in their eyes, their auras. They say that those who have been to a Grove Night have something fundamentally different in their souls than those who haven't. They say that there's something lost, something gained, something taken by the ghost of Arborwood Grove and replaced with something new. They say that a piece of every teenage soul from the last half century still lingers within those walls. They say that a piece of Arborwood Grove lingers inside every adult who was once a teenager. They say that's why this house lingers so constantly in our memories, our conversations, our everyday thoughts and feelings. They say we're all just as trapped by it as the ghost is. Sometimes they say there isn't even a ghost at all. They say we are the ghost. Every one of us. They say we haunt Arborwood Grove. They say a lot of things.

THEME MUSIC PLAYS

CREDITS: File CC, track two. Grove Night.

BELLS CHIME

WIND, BIRDSONG, MUSIC FADES IN

CAROLINE: The yellow buses are going by outside. I'm too far back from the road to see the people in the buses, but I've learned enough about the living world to know that they're children, on their way to school. Later, they will be children on their way home from school. I try to count the mornings when the buses go by. It helps me figure out when it's the weekend.

That seems silly, now that I say it out loud, but I don't really have any other way to know. It's difficult in the summer to know what day it is. But when school is in, I can count five days of buses and then two days of no buses. Sometimes it changes, and there's only four bus days, or three no-bus days, but I've learned how to account for that.

I'm not sure why I care so much what day it is. I didn't at first, but after a while, after everyone was gone... It's all I can do, sometimes. Watch the weather, count the days, reflect on my life, relive it in memory. But memory goes so much faster.

I make up this game sometimes. How slowly can I remember every memory I have? How long does it take for me to go from my earliest thought, through to the end of my life and beyond, into the present? And there are pieces missing, I know. I couldn't possibly remember everything that's ever happened to me. What I do remember, I've memorized. I could list every event off by heart.

And sometimes, if I go slowly, dredging up every detail I can, something new pops up. Something I'd forgotten, like what I got for my seventh birthday, or that Grove Night when a boy tried to convince his friends there were possessed gophers living in the cellar. Little things like that, they... they come and go. But in general, I think I'm building a better story in my head.

And now that I have your recorder, maybe less things will be forgotten. Maybe it'll be easier for me to hold on.

Memory is a strange thing. It warps time. I can run the entire history of my existence through my head in the time it takes for a car to pass by on the street. Or, if I stretch it, it can take from one sunrise to the next. That's as long as it's ever taken me. So you see why I can't just spend every moment doing that. I have to find something else to do, even if it's just... counting. Watching the cars go by. Checking the weather every time I pass a window. And now, talking to you.

MUSIC ENDS

CAROLINE: It's not like that's all I do. I get plenty of visitors. Most of them around my age. Well, not the actual age I am now, but... Uh.

I like it when they come here. That's why I'm so excited about the buses. It's nice to know what day it is, yes, but it's nicer to know that I'll have more frequent visitors again. People like to come in the autumn. But you know that, though. You live out there. Even you came here once. A long time ago. I remember it. Some things fade away, but I do remember you.

FOOTSTEPS

CAROLINE: I remember-

MUFFLED, OVERLAPPING VOICES IN THE DISTANCE

MUSIC FADES IN

CAROLINE: Oh! I think someone is here! Yes, yes, there they are. It's dark, but I can see them out the window. There are three of them, I think. There they go, around the back of the house. Through the cellar doors, and up the stairs.

They always come in through the cellar. I wonder if they know.

INTERLUDE MUSIC

DOOR SLAMS OPEN, MUSIC CUTS OUT

FOOTSTEPS

LANA: Come on, guys. I had to bribe Rachel Kimonoff with a twenty-dollar Tim's card to make sure we'd have the place to ourselves, so don't waste my time.

ROBBIE: Yeah, she tootally let you in here because you bribed her with donuts. More like- Wait. No, shit, that doesn't work.

LANA: Shut up, Robbie.

NOAH: If it was that much trouble to get a spot, We could've just

waited for a night when nobody else was coming.

LANA: Are you kidding? We're not giving a bunch of grade tens priority over you. First weekend of October's the best night for a Grove Night, and you deserve the best.

NOAH: It's not that big of a deal.

ROBBIE: Yeah, it kind of is.

MUSIC FADES IN

CAROLINE: Oh! Oh, that's Robbie! He usually doesn't come to these. The girl does, though. That's... um... Lana? I think. This must be the other one's Grove Night. The tall one.

NOAH: What is it with this house anyway?

CAROLINE: That one.

ROBBIE: I don't know. It's just a thing, okay? You have to do a Grove Night by the time you graduate.

NOAH: So I've been told.

LANA: And seeing as we are a hell of a lot closer to graduation than any of those kidlets, we get first dibs.

ROBBIE: Just so long as you give Rachel twenty bucks to Tim's.

LANA: Exactly. Ugh...

NOAH: What are we even doing here?

ROBBIE: Good question. Lana?

LANA: Right.

BAG RUSTLES

LANA: Ta-da!

ROBBIE: Woah, woah, woah.

CAROLINE: Oh, no.

ROBBIE: A Ouija board? Are you serious?

LANA: Dead serious.

NOAH: Are you sure you want to mess with that?

LANA: It's a piece of wood, Noah.

NOAH: Look, I'm chill to hang out in a haunted house all night-

LANA: This place is not haunted.

CAROLINE: It's not?

NOAH: It's... not?

LANA: Of course not. Everyone in town's been here, and I've never heard of anyone who actually saw a ghost. When you think about it-

ROBBIE: Okay, no. You are not converting anybody to Zellism right now.

NOAH: Zellism?

ROBBIE: Noah, you've lived here for, like, a week. You're gonna want to wait a little longer before getting into that.

LANA: You say it like it's some kind of cult.

ROBBIE: Because it is.

LANA: You'd understand if you'd seen what I've seen.

ROBBIE: Oh yeah, I'm sure I would.

NOAH: Okay, guys, either tell me what you're talking about, or stop talking about it.

PAUSE

ROBBIE: Lana, there is no way in hell that I'm gonna touch that thing.

LANA: Robbie, you know the rules. If they turn down the Grove Night, they have to walk ninth instead.

ROBBIE: Let 'em.

NOAH: Let me do what?

LANA: And you have to go with them to make sure they do it right.

ROBBIE: Why do I have to do it?

NOAH: Do what?

LANA: I can't do it, I'm a Zealot!

ROBBIE: What does that have to do with it?

LANA: It's a thing, okay? I can supervise Grove Nights, but I can't walk ninth.

NOAH: Guys. What the hell is walking ninth?

LANA: You walk down ninth avenue and stand at the east end all night.

NOAH: That... doesn't sound so bad.

ROBBIE: Oh, it is.

NOAH: Why? Is ninth avenue haunted too or something?

LANA: Well, technically-

ROBBIE: Lana, don't. We're just here for a Grove Night.

NOAH: I thought you didn't want to use the Ouija board.

ROBBIE: It's less risky than walking ninth. Trust me on that one.

NOAH: Jesus. Okay then, let's just get this over with.

LONG PAUSE

NOAH: What?

LANA: You have to say the thing.

NOAH: Seriously?

(Sighs)

Fine. I, Noah Antoni Paolini, accept the Grove Night offered to me by Lana... Dolores? Yeah. Lana Dolores Sheeler. I swear not to step foot outside of this house or make any outside contact until seven a.m., first light, or Lana says so. Whichever comes first.

Does contacting the other side via Ouija board count as outside contact?

LANA: Doubt it. Here, take this and go find somewhere to set up. Noah's choice. I'm gonna go put the marker up by the cellar doors just in case somebody makes the mistake of not listening to Rachel.

FOOTSTEPS RECEDING

ROBBIE: Okay. Where do you wanna go to get dragged into the nether realm?

NOAH: I don't know. What's the creepiest room?

ROBBIE: Uh, all of them?

(Sighs)

Come on, I'll give you a tour. Let me know if anything jumps out at you.

FOOTSTEPS BEGIN

NOAH: Literally or metaphorically?

ROBBIE: The only thing that might literally jump out at you is Lana.

NOAH: Would she do that?

ROBBIE: Oh, yeah.

NOAH: Great. So, what did you do for your Grove Night?

FLOORBOARDS CREAK

ROBBIE: Didn't have one. Not like this, anyway.

NOAH: Why not?

ROBBIE: I... I'm not really supposed to tell you.

NOAH: Seriously? Is there anything I'm allowed to know?

ROBBIE: I mean, long story short, I have all-night movie marathons here with my moms. But it's kind of... you know, a family thing. I'm not supposed to give anyone else any big ideas.

NOAH: ...Okay.

FOOTSTEPS

INTERLUDE MUSIC

MUSIC ENDS

DOOR CREAKS OPEN

NOAH: Ooh, we should do the Ouija board thing in here.

ROBBIE: Seriously?

NOAH: What?

ROBBIE: Come on, dude. The creepy-ass bedroom? Complete with creepy-ass old fashioned stuffed animal?

NOAH: What, did I pick the ghost's room or something?

CAROLINE: No. Ugh...

WIND BEGINS

ROBBIE: Nah. Even if there was a real ghost, nobody's sure who it's supposed to be. I say it's probably the guy who built the house, but other people think it might be his wife, or one of his daughters, or a servant... A couple years ago, this thing went around where people were claiming the ghost was, like, a cat or something. I think Mr. Newman started it, because he was telling us in chem how he'd once spent an entire Grove Night trying to sell the idea of possessed gophers to his cousins.

NOAH: I've got Mr. Newman for bio next semester. Is he okay?

ROBBIE: Oh yeah, he's great. Just remember to read the textbook outside of class if you actually want to learn anything.

NOAH: Noted.

ROBBIE: You know, your parents are kind of assholes for making you move to a new town right before grade twelve.

NOAH: Actually, I live with my grandpa. My dad's still up in Saskatoon.

ROBBIE: ...Oh.

NOAH: Yeah.

ROBBIE: Sorry.

NOAH: No, it's fine. I guess we've both got weird secret family things, right?

ROBBIE: Yeah.

LONG PAUSE

ROBBIE: What's taking Lana so long? Lana? We're in the haunted bedroom!

LANA: Yup!

FOOTSTEPS APPROACH

NOAH: What happened to "there's no real ghost here?"

LANA: There isn't. But out of all the bedrooms, this one feels the... the haunted-est.

ROBBIE: I think that's "most haunted".

LANA: Potato, tomato.

ROBBIE: Also wrong.

LANA: Whatever. Let's just get started, okay? Robbie, you're the medium.

ROBBIE: Why?

LANA: Come on, man. You gotta know how to use this thing. Your mom's all spiritual and shit. How's she doing, by the way?

ROBBIE: She'd kill me if she knew I was here.

NOAH: Why?

ROBBIE: She hates these things. Puts them right up there with fake horoscopes and people who scam you into thinking they can read minds.

LANA: I still can't believe that your mom, Sadie Anderson, doesn't believe in Ouija boards.

ROBBIE: Oh no, she believes in them. That's the whole problem. She hates that they got turned into parlor tricks or whatever. Like, people used to go have seance parties for fun. And you know her whole thing about-

LANA: The other side deserves respect!

ROBBIE: Shut. up.

LANA: That's exactly what she sounds like and you know it.

NOAH: Robbie, I don't want to get you in trouble-

ROBBIE: Nah, it's fine. Apparently, I have to stick around to make sure you two don't get dragged into the nether realm by Ouija-summoned demons. Are we doing this or what?

LANA: Unless you two wanna go walk ninth.

ROBBIE: No.

NOAH: ...No?

ROBBIE: Did you honestly plan out Noah's entire Grove Night around me knowing how to use a Ouija board?

LANA: Kinda. I figured you'd know!

ROBBIE: Lana-

NOAH: I can do it.

LANA: You can?

NOAH: It's not that hard. Just be polite, avoid negative energy, and say goodbye when you're done. Basically, just don't do anything that would piss off a ghost.

CAROLINE: I like you.

LANA: This house isn't haunted.

NOAH: See, that's an example of something that would piss off a ghost.

CAROLINE: I really like you.

ROBBIE: Those can't be the only rules.

NOAH: Well, no, but I only did this once. And it was a while ago.

LANA: Did you connect with anything?

NOAH: I don't know. Maybe? I'm pretty sure my one friend was forcing the planchette.

LANA: But it moved?

NOAH: Yeah.

LANA: What did it say?

NOAH: I don't know. Stuff. Like I said, I'm pretty sure my friend was forcing it. Now sit down.

And we put the board on our knees, and our fingers on the little planchette... Okay. Try to say as little as possible. Ready?

LANA: Yes.

ROBBIE: ...Yeah.

NOAH: Then here it goes.

Everyone, visualise a light surrounding us, like a bubble. See it as a shield, protecting us from negative energy and dangerous spirits.

Good. Now, are there any spirits in the room that would like to speak with us? If there are, please communicate using only the board. Reach out when you're ready.

MUSIC FADES IN

LANA: Nothing's happening.

NOAH: It can take a while for something to connect. We'll wait for half an hour, and then I'll close the session. And remember, impatience is negative energy.

INTERLUDE MUSIC

CAROLINE: They've been there for a while now. Kneeling on the floor of my sister's bedroom, waiting for a message that will never come.

They're not the first, you know. I've had more than my fair share of experiences with this kind of board. It's a common Grove Night activity. It never works. How could it? I can't touch the board, much less move the handpiece. The living

have told stories, though, about times when it did work for them. And I can't help but wonder, sometimes, if I should be able to communicate. If this board is intended to open a door between worlds, why does it not reach me? Why does it not bring someone else back from the beyond? Someone who might be able to communicate with me. For me.

I think I'm just going to leave them to it. There's something about this whole process that just makes me feel... Uncomfortable.

For now, I think I'm just going to go think in my head. Stand by the window, and wait to watch the sun come up. I've always liked that. Greeting tomorrow. Saying farewell to the night.

So, Miss Tenor... farewell. For now.

MUSIC GROWS

CREDITS:

They Say a Lot of Things is written by Shannon Smyth and produced by Vienna Munck. Original music by Nathanael Kumar. This episode featured Max Kittleson as Caroline and Meaghan Cassidy as Miss Tenor, as well as Noah Letscher as Robbie, Molly Rae as Noah, and Luna Sinclair as Lana. For more information on the show, as well as transcripts and full credits, visit our website or check us out on tumblr. Links are in the description. If you're enjoying the show, please rate and review us on your favourite podcast provider, and tell your friends about us, so they can enjoy the show too. But before you do that, think about the last thing you read. A book, an instruction manual, the transcript to this episode. How long ago was it? Did it make you want to read more? Read less? Let us know. Thanks for listening, and until next time, happy haunting.

MUSIC FADES OUT