

## CC03: Fog

TAPE IS INSERTED INTO PLAYER AND BEGINS TO PLAY

MISS TENOR: They say that Arborwood Grove is haunted. From the road, it looks like an ordinary house. Well, ordinary for Arborwood. This town is filled with that kind of Neo-Gothic architecture. All the original buildings have it. The town hall, the theatre. That Whole Foods on sixteenth. I'm not sure what it was back in Carr's day, but now it's a Neo-Gothic Whole Foods. And, of course, Arborwood Grove. With its arches, and its carvings, and three stone spires reaching up out of its roof. Really, they're just fancy chimneys, but they're impressive nonetheless. They say that each of the spires was built for a member of Carr's family. Not the one he made here. The one he built the house for. They say the three spires were originally named after each of the three children he'd left behind in England, but nothing of the kind is on any of the town records. They say there was going to be a fourth spire, tallest of them all, dedicated to his wife. They say it was the last thing he added to the house, and it was just being started when Carr got the news that she'd- Well. Some say that she left him. Ran off to India with a merchant, or married rich into the low levels of the royal family. Some say she died. Some say she never existed at all.

Whatever the case, they say that Charles Carr stopped construction immediately, and had his builders take down the fourth spire. The one that was supposedly dedicated to his wife.

They say that the builders had a lot more difficulty tearing it down than they should've. First, there was a week of freezing rain, and they couldn't work. Then, one of them fell off the roof and nearly died, and Carr had to re-negotiate their entire contract before a single

worker would even step foot on the property. And then, they say, the spire wouldn't come down. No matter how hard it was hit, or how many men tried to pry it apart. The tools broke, the workers gave up, and Carr didn't have enough money to keep paying them for work that simply refused to get done. They say the house was cursed. Right from the start.

The fourth spire stayed. They say if you stand on the road and look up at the house from just the right angle, you can see it sticking up from behind the other three. Dwarfed by their size. They say that if you go in the early hours of the morning, when the air is blue and the fog hangs thick, you can see the spire more clearly. They say you can see it grow, building itself upward, grasping at the sky it was never allowed to reach. They say if you see the fourth spire grow, you should leave town immediately and never come back.

They say that if you see the fourth spire grow, you've stepped closer to the other side than any living person should step. They say that if you stay in town long enough, the other side will come for you. In the early hours of the morning. When the air is blue. When the fog hangs thick.

They say that spire was supposed to be the tallest of the four. But it only ever reached five and a half feet. Five feet, five and a half inches, to be precise. Five feet, five and a half inches. The exact height of Charles Carr's lost wife. Or so they say. But then again. They say a lot of things.

#### THEME MUSIC PLAYS

CREDITS: File CC, track three. Fog.

#### BELLS CHIME

## WIND WHISTLES

CAROLINE:

The air is thick right now. Thick and cold, and there's a blanket of fog settled low over the town. From where I stand, the street is just a row of hazy yellow orbs, floating gently fifteen feet in the air. The occasional flash of white, and then red, as a car goes past. Not often, but every now and then. The cars are moving more slowly than they usually do. On account of the fog, I suppose.

Everything is muffled when it's foggy like this. Light, sound, time. It's all just... softer. Further away. Blanketed by the cold, white mist. I might have once said it's like Heaven come down to Earth, but I've seen too many foggy mornings to believe that this is what Heaven is like.

I wish I knew where Heaven was. It's not in this house. I've checked. There are no angels here, or demons. I've checked for that, too. There's nobody here. People, sometimes. But they're just people. Living, breathing people. And then there's me. Not living. Not breathing. Still a person, I think.

Existence is... strange. For example, the road is only a few dozen feet from where I stand right now, but if it weren't for the cars and the streetlights, it might as well not exist at all. And maybe it doesn't. Logically, I know that the street is right there. It must be. Where would it have gone? But if we can't see things, if we can't hear them or touch them or sense them? How can we know for certain that they're really there? Is the conviction of logic within reality enough to retain an object's existence? Do things only exist because we believe that they do? That they should? That they might?

Sorry. It's that part of the night when morning feels like it's somewhere in the miles just beyond your fingertips.

It's a good part of the night for asking questions like that. Time is stretching. The world is far away. The people in their cars are here one moment and gone the next, so quickly and completely that it's impossible to say whether they were ever really here at all.

And perhaps they weren't. I can't see them. Can't hear them, can't feel them. The people in their cars are, at this moment, ghosts. Just as much as I am. Not for long, though. Their ghostliness will lift with the fog. Mine will not.

I'm trying not to think. You know how sometimes you try so hard to remember something, and the harder you try, the harder it is to remember? Yeah. It's-

There's something missing, and I don't know how to find it. If I look for it, I know it won't be there.

I need to think about something else. Something solid, that I know is real. Something from my life, that doesn't edge toward death. There isn't much. Frankly, the most pivotal moment of my childhood was...

Well, that's something.

For the most part, I was not a mischievous child. However, when I was small, I used to crawl into the dumbwaiter in the dining room and pretend I was a duck waiting to be taken out and eaten.

I'm not sure why a duck specifically. Or why I wanted to be eaten. I think it was something about adventure. I hadn't had much of it, and I suppose the idea of riding up a tiny dumbwaiter toward my death must have seemed exhilarating to my young self.

I remember, I was curled up in there, in the dark, thinking about being a duck, and all of a sudden there

was this lurching. A stomach-sinking motion. It felt like fear, but I wasn't afraid. I'd spent far too long being a duck to be afraid of what was waiting at the other end of the dumbwaiter. I wasn't afraid.

My mother, on the other hand, was terrified. I think I gave her the fright of her life. I can imagine her standing in the kitchen, expecting to open up an empty dumbwaiter, and instead finding a girl curled up in a tiny ball, squeezed into a space that she was, frankly, much too large to properly fit into. She screamed when she opened the door. And then she screamed some more. At me.

And by that point Martha was watching from the doorway. She was holding her giraffe. She waved at me, and laughed at me, and through my entire scolding that was all I could see.

And really, who could blame her? Usually, when I got into trouble, it was because of something she'd done. For once, I'd gotten into trouble all on my own.

But that kind of logic didn't occur to one when one is in the middle of being heavily scolded by a rather large, frightening woman. At some point, I think I told them I was pretending to be a duck, because to my childhood self that was a pretty reasonable explanation.

My mother didn't see it that way. She sent me to my room, and Martha laughed at me all the way up, and I just couldn't stand it. I could feel her laughter spreading out behind me as I went up the stairs, and there was just this rage that went with me, gathering behind me like a cloak that grew and grew and grew, and when I finally got up to my room it was draped all the way down the stairs.

## MUSIC BEGINS

I needed to cut it. I needed to get rid of that rage. Leave it behind, and let my laughing sister clean it up. So I grabbed the door, and before too much of my cloak could follow me into the room, I slammed the thing shut behind me.

And it was... amazing. The big, heavy door just flung away from my fingertips, and it made this crash that echoed in my chest long after the door was shut.

I remember how that felt. To have that energy shoot out of my hands and reverberate in my chest. It stayed with me for the rest of my life, and all the way through my death.

I stayed in my room all day, but when I came down for supper that evening I saw that my mother had gone out of her way to prepare a nice roast duck. All in good humour, I imagine. And she must have talked to Martha, because the incident was never brought up again.

*(Sighs)*

I never went back into the dumbwaiter. There's only so much adventure one can find in a dumbwaiter, after all, and I'd used up every last drop. No more Caroline the Duck on her way to her death. Just Caroline the Person. Still on her way to her death, but... much less aware of it.

If I'd been aware of it, I think I would've done some things differently. For starters, I would've slammed more doors. I only ever slammed the one. I suppose I was satisfied with the knowledge that I could slam a door if I wanted to. Or perhaps I was afraid, deep down, that it wouldn't be quite as I remembered it.

But most likely, it was simply that I'm not prone to that sort of outburst. It's odd. Since I died, it seems like there's more for me to be angry about. My family abandoned our home. People trespass here as if it weren't private property. Every person in this town either refuses to acknowledge their belief in me, or thinks I'm some kind of monster. I should be angry about that. I should be furios.

But I'm not. And I don't know why.

I remember, shortly after I died, there was a man. I don't remember his name, if I ever really learned it. He wore a beaver pelt hat, and he came to the house many times. Looking back on it, I can only assume he was the undertaker, but...

He didn't feel like he was here for business. Not that there was anything in his manner that gave it away. It was just a... sense, that I had, that he wasn't being entirely truthful.

He was always so calm. Even when Mother was in hysterics, and Father was throwing things out the window, and Martha locked herself in her room for... a long time. It seemed to me, watching, that this man was directing his anger into my family. That he was boiling and burning on the inside, but instead of taking on that burden himself he let them deal with it. With all the hatred, and rage, and, and frustration and... fire. He let them deal with the fire of rage, he let them cough out smoke for the rest of their lives. He let them burn, and he was calm. Cooled, I suppose, by expelling his own flames into others.

And then, as suddenly and mysteriously as he came, he was gone. I do not recall my parents ever speaking of him again. Father fired the last of the maids, and he

didn't bother hiring any new ones, because not long after that, the house was empty.

## MUSIC FADES

Or perhaps it was a long time after that. My timekeeping ability isn't exactly flawless. Neither is my memory, for that matter. All this effort, and I still can't think of whatever it was I was trying to remember. It was right there for a while, and then it was gone, and now it's... floating. Like a streetlight in the fog. Something that, logically, should be right in front of me, but instead exists only in the form of a hazy yellow glow.

Anything could be out there, in the fog. Anything at all. Heaven itself could be out there, and I still wouldn't be able to see it. Wouldn't be able to reach it.

What is out there? Perhaps it's the ocean. I've never been to the ocean, but I hear it's nice. Perhaps it's a jungle. Perhaps it's a great plain, filled with creatures like Martha's giraffe. Perhaps there's a pond with ducks in it. Not ducks for eating. Ducks for flying.

Or maybe it's just the town, sleeping under a cold, white blanket.

But you know what I think? I think, somewhere out there in the vast emptiness, there is a room. It's quiet. Peaceful. It's filled with doors, each one the entrance to a different version of Paradise, filled with the souls of every person who's ever passed through that room. Endless places to go, endless people to meet, to talk to...

*(Sighs)*

That room is out there. Somewhere in the miles just past my fingertips. It will vanish with the fog, so quickly and



completely that it will be impossible to tell whether it was really here at all. It's impossible now to tell.

But if the conviction of logic within reality is enough to maintain an object's existence, the conviction of a girl within a house must be enough to maintain Heaven.

Mustn't it?

I will make it to that room one day. I don't know how, but I will. And when I get there, I'm going to walk. Very slowly, along the row of doors. I am going to gather a cloak behind me, woven from the threads of my life and the whispers of my afterlife. I am going to pick a door, very, very carefully.

MUSIC ENDS

And I am going to slam it.

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MUSIC BEGINS

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. 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 first, take a moment, this moment, to think about what you're doing right now. Really focus on it. Take note of every action or inaction that you perform.

Okay, great. Tell us about it. Thanks for listening, and until next time, happy haunting.

MUSIC SWELLS AND FADES OUT