

CC08: HALF DEAD

MISS TENOR: They say that Arborwood Grove is haunted. They say the house itself, with its creaks and groans, surveys us from atop the small perch of land it's settled on. They say it's watched the town grow from a scattering of ramshackle sheds into the comparatively large town it is today. There are still echoes of those empty times, of course. In the dark corners, alleyways. The plots of land that were once filled with hope are now filled with waist-high dandelions and a scattering of cigarette butts. They say that as long as these places remain untouched they will carry with them the spirit of Arborwood all those years ago, when the Grove still had four spires and Ninth Avenue was the newest expansion of the downtown area.

They say that as much as the town grows and expands, it will always be an atom town. Full to bursting with empty space. They say that's a pessimistic way to look at the world, but I think it's just common sense, with a little Romanticism thrown in for good measure. In Arborwood, the optimism/pessimism test isn't the whole "glass half empty/glass half full" schtick. No, in Arborwood, they say an optimist is half alive, and a pessimist is half dead. They say it's because of Arborwood Grove. If you look up at that house, and feel nothing but dread in the pit of your stomach? They say that's the feeling of a full cup being slowly drained. And if a glimpse of the Grove makes you feel excited, or intrigued, or ready to face whatever ghosts life might throw your way? That means your cup is slowly being refilled with all the excess those other people were wasting. They say that Arborwood Grove knows exactly how much life is needed by each and every resident of the town. If you have too much, you will be drained. Too little, and you'll be filled. They say it's a curse. They say it's a blessing, they say it's just the way things are. They say a lot of things.

THEME MUSIC

CREDITS READER: File CC, track eight. Half Dead.

BELLS CHIME

MUSIC BEGINS

ROBBIE: The, uh, door was open. I thought maybe it was okay to come in that way.

So this is kind of weird. I'm not totally sold on this whole situation, but my mom said if I didn't come talk to you, she would. And she's doing great, but she still probably shouldn't be walking across town through a snowstorm during a crisis. So here I am! Talking to an empty house.

Or... not an empty house. I don't know. My mom says you're still in here, because whatever's out there can't possibly be our friend from the Grove. And I mean, I don't know, I guess I believe her?

Ugh. You spend your whole life trying to avoid saying that out loud, and then... Pfft.

But these past couple months have been... weird. That girl went missing, and the Zealots have gotten, like, twice as big, and now this. My mom said... something. About it. I don't understand all her paranormal shit most of the time. But I think the general idea is that there's been a... disturbance in the Force? You probably don't know what that means.

(sighs)

You know, if you're here, you could help me out a little.

CAROLINE: I think I'm done helping. I told the truth, and I thought that was enough, but... it wasn't the truth after all, was it? I thought it was. I thought I knew everything, even if some of the edges were fuzzy.

How many times have I re-lived my life? My death? I play that game every single day. Sometimes more than once. Thirty thousand rounds and counting, and I always skipped over this part. The part where there's something in the walls.

I used these passages so often, and then somehow I closed that door and forgot about them. But maybe that's for the best. Because when you know where a door is, you can open it. And if it's left open, it's possible to go in through both directions. So we've swapped now. I'm here, inside the walls, and it is somewhere else.

ROBBIE: Anybody? Shit, maybe upstairs...

CAROLINE: Don't bother.

ROBBIE: You know, I was talking to Lana a little while ago, and she said she thinks there's a connection between ghosts and technology. You know, the flickering lights, the phones cutting out, that kind of stuff. And normally I try not to listen to anything Lana says about ghosts, but that one kind of struck a chord, I guess. I asked my mom about it, and she said it wasn't totally nuts, which means she agrees but doesn't want to admit it because Lana's a Zealot.

So, I figure there might actually be something there. Like if anything can bridge the gap between life and death, it's probably gonna be electricity, right? Like Frankenstein. You... might actually get that reference. Do you watch the movies with us, or do you just, like, go hide somewhere and wait for us to leave?

I don't think that matters. Anyway, in Frankenstein, in the movie, he uses lightning to bring the monster to life. And I get that that's not real science or whatever, and it's not even what happens in the book, but it's become this super iconic thing. And it's the belief that matters, right? That's what my mom says, any... Way. Woah. What happened to the wall?

FOOTSTEPS

CAROLINE: Wait. Robbie, no.

ROBBIE: Is this a... No.

CAROLINE: Go away.

ROBBIE: No way! Is somebody in there? Are... you... in there?

Okay, I've seen enough movies to know that I really shouldn't go anywhere near a secret passage that just mysteriously opened up in a haunted house...

CAROLINE: Good. Don't.

FLOORBOARDS CREAKING

ROBBIE: But. Oh God, I'm really gonna do this.

CAROLINE: No!

ROBBIE: Okay.

CAROLINE: Robbie!

ROBBIE: Here go-

CAROLINE: Don't come in here!

ROBBIE: *(simultaneously)*
Don't come in here!

ROBBIE : And now I am back in the hallway. Okay, cool, that's cool. Don't remember coming out here. And I'm holding a voice recorder, that's-

CAROLINE: That's mine.

WHOOSH

ROBBIE: Oh, u, where'd it go? Okay. This is fine. I'm gonna go right ahead and assume that there's somebody else here?

Oh, now you can't communicate? I know you're here. You just, like, possessed me.

I'm not trying to bother you or anything? My mom just wanted me to try and get through to you, and honestly, I was kind of half-assing the whole thing, but now? Look, we gotta talk.

CAROLINE: No, I shouldn't have done this.

ROBBIE : This is gonna seem kinda weird, but bear with me, okay?

This is a Darth Vader mask. From Star Wars. Which I should probably stop referencing, because you haven't seen it, I don't think.

CAROLINE: I've heard of it.

ROBBIE: Anyway, it's supposed to work, like, you put it on and talk and it changes your voice? It was pretty neat when I got it, but now it's just, you know... Ugh. I can't believe I'm trying to look cool in front of a ghost. Listen. You put your face in and talk, and if I'm right about the whole technology thing, I should be able to hear you.

CAROLINE: You... No. You have to go.

ROBBIE: Do you even have a face? If you don't, you can just... Do whatever the equivalent of that is? And if it doesn't work, you can always just possess me again, right? I mean, I'd rather you didn't, but if you have to, that's... That's fine.

MUSIC ENDS

WIND BLOWS

CAROLINE: But perhaps if I told you...

ROBBIE: So, uh, anytime you're ready, you can just... go ahead. And say something.

Hello?

CAROLINE: Hello?

ROBBIE: Aah!

MASK CLATTERS TO THE FLOOR

ROBBIE: Shit! Sorry, dropped it, hang on. Okay. You still there?

CAROLINE : Yes. Robbie, you need to leave.

ROBBIE: Well, that's an ominous thing to say right off the bat. No introductions or anything?

CAROLINE: My name is Caroline. You still need to leave.

ROBBIE: Caroline. Caroline Carr? Like, Caroline Carr Caroline Carr?

CAROLINE: No, the... oh. That joke's no fun now.

ROBBIE: Hang on, if you're the Ghost of Arborwood Grove, that means the Zealots are just... completely wrong.

CAROLINE: About most things, yes. But listen-

ROBBIE: So you don't go walking around the streets of Arborwood?

CAROLINE: No.

ROBBIE: No, I guess that wouldn't make sense, all the Zealots say he's a grown man. And I can't even see you. Is it your dad?

CAROLINE: I'm not sure. I've never seen him.

ROBBIE: Huh. Maybe I've got the wrong ghost, then? Maybe it's him that started acting up last night.

CAROLINE: It's not.

ROBBIE: You know that for sure.

CAROLINE: Yes.

ROBBIE: Okay, then. Who is it?

Caroline?

CAROLINE: I've been sitting in these walls all night. Did the sun come up yet?

ROBBIE: Yeah. There's a window right over there, if you want to—

CAROLINE: And did it stop snowing?

ROBBIE: No, but it's settling down. Weather update over, can we go back to the—

MUSIC BEGINS

CAROLINE: When I was little, I used to go on walks with my mother and sister. Every day, even when it was freezing cold and the snow was up to my waist. And when we got home, Martha and I would burrow ourselves under the blankets while our mother built up the fire, and we'd spend the day trying to get warm again. And if I opened the blankets even a little bit, the cold air would get in, and then I would have to start all over. Do you understand what I'm saying?

ROBBIE: Not really.

CAROLINE: This house is the blanket. Now that it's been broken open, it's like I am right back at the beginning. Back before I hid things from myself.

ROBBIE: I'm... not following this.

CAROLINE: I forgot I could control people. Well, it's not control, exactly, more like... a push. Like grabbing the reins and giving one big tug, and then letting go again. I somehow forced myself to forget, because remembering would mean... Remembering.

ROBBIE: Yeah. That's generally how that works. Look, it's been kind of a long morning for me, so if you could maybe give a not-rambling answer, I'd appreciate that a lot.

CAROLINE: Right. You asked about... it.

ROBBIE: So it's an it. Not a who.

CAROLINE: Um...

ROBBIE: Oh, for... Listen. Do you know anything about what's going on out there? Yes or no?

CAROLINE: Yes.

ROBBIE: What do you know?

CAROLINE: I know something was trapped in the walls of this house for a hundred years, and last night it got out.

ROBBIE: What kind of something?

Dude, you gotta help me out here. This thing is kind of destroying the town.

CAROLINE: How so?

ROBBIE: How so? You wanna know how so? Fine. Why don't we start

with the blackouts? Not unusual in this kind of snowstorm, except it was pretty much the whole town, and in the places where there wasn't a blackout all the electricity started going haywire. There have been fires, explosions, stuff turning off and on again at random times. I almost got killed by a coffee maker this morning, and after I unplugged it, it didn't turn off.

Everything's in chaos, and the only people who have any kind of answer are the Zealots, because they think it's the final coming of Charles Carr or something, and they're planning some kind of ritual to... do whatever it is they're trying to do.

CAROLINE: They want to release his soul from the confines of Arborwood.

ROBBIE: Yeah, that. You sure he's not here?

CAROLINE: I don't know.

ROBBIE: You didn't check?

CAROLINE: No.

ROBBIE: You guys weren't close.

CAROLINE: No.

ROBBIE: So are you gonna tell me how to stop this thing or...?

CAROLINE: You can't stop it.

ROBBIE: What about trapping it, then? You kept it in your walls for a hundred years, why don't we just do that again?

CAROLINE: I don't even know how I did it the first time! I made myself forget about it, and that was the wrong thing to do because it meant I forgot about the passages, so I wasn't here to stop Miss Tenor, and even when I was here I couldn't stop Anthony, but I stopped you.

I finally did something good, Robbie. And all it took was releasing my biggest mistake into the world.

ROBBIE: Okay, there's a lot to unpack there. So let's start with what you know about Amanda Tenor?

MUSIC ENDS

CAROLINE: She fell through the floorboards and her soul was absorbed by the creature that's been sleeping there for a century.

ROBBIE: And this Anthony guy...

WIND BLOWS

CAROLINE: The same. And after that, it was strong enough to follow his friend Marcel out the front doors, which it shouldn't have been able to do, because I was never to go out there.

Or maybe I was, and I just... Did I ever try?

PHONE CHIMES

CAROLINE: That might be important.

ROBBIE: It's just a text, I'll get it later.

PHONE CHIMES THREE TIMES

CAROLINE: That sounds like three texts.

ROBBIE: I'm kind of weirded out by the fact that you know what a text is.

CAROLINE: I watched the entire technological revolution of the twentieth century through the eyes of hundreds of teenagers. There's quite a lot of it that I don't understand, but I know what a text is.

PHONE CHIMES

CAROLINE: Will you answer that?

ROBBIE: Yeah, I'm getting it!

PHONE CHIMES MANY TIMES RAPIDLY

ROBBIE: What the hell? It's, like, a hundred texts.

CAROLINE: I can hear that.

ROBBIE: Yeah, but they're all- It's just the same message coming in over and over. There's no number listed. I... I think they're from the thing.

CAROLINE: What do they say?

ROBBIE: Wait, there's one from Noah. Looks like they're getting this, too.

CAROLINE: Getting what?

ROBBIE: Everyone is.

CAROLINE: Robbie! Tell me what she's saying to you!

CRACKLE

ROBBIE: Agh!

PHONE DROPS TO THE FLOOR

PHONE STOPS CHIMING

MUSIC BEGINS

WIND BLOWS

ROBBIE: ..."She"?

CAROLINE: It. I meant "it", tell me what it is saying to you.

ROBBIE: But you said "she". Caroline, if you don't tell me anything, I can't help you.

CAROLINE: Why would I need your help?

ROBBIE: Because I'm not the only one who connected the dots between "mysterious supernatural shitshow" and "Arborwood Grove". The Zealots just take longer to mobilize, considering there are literally hundreds of them now. My friend Lana—

CAROLINE: I know Lana.

ROBBIE: Right. Well, her brother says he hasn't seen her all morning, and that the spare gas tank is missing from their garage. So whatever they're planning, however they think they're gonna free Charles Carr from the town... I don't think it's gonna turn out too well for your house. And I don't know if your soul is, like, linked to it or anything, but...

CAROLINE: Robbie? What do the texts say?

ROBBIE: "I remember you as well". Just... over and over again.

CAROLINE: Oh, Lord.

ROBBIE: Does that mean something to you?

CAROLINE: It means that it can think, and potentially speak. It means that it has emotions.

ROBBIE: Okay, great, it's sentient. Does that mean it's putting in a conscious effort to kill us all?

CAROLINE: Having the capability of thought doesn't mean that one always uses it. It may be lashing out in fear or anger. Most likely anger.

ROBBIE: Who's it mad at?

CAROLINE: Me.

ROBBIE: So what are you gonna do about it?

CAROLINE: What am I going to... do?

ROBBIE: Yeah, you... literally just said that this is all happening because of you? So... fix it? I guess? I mean, I'll help, if there's anything you think I can do, but this is on you, my dude.

MUSIC ENDS

WIND WHISTLES

CAROLINE: I don't think I can do that.

ROBBIE: You have to. What was your other plan? Just hide in here for the rest of time?

CAROLINE: Yes.

ROBBIE: Are you serious?

CAROLINE: Well, I don't know! I've never done anything else!

PHONE CHIMES

CAROLINE: What does it say?

ROBBIE: Come find me. Face me.

CAROLINE: I'd really rather not.

PHONE CHIMES

ROBBIE: Don't be a coward.

CAROLINE: Can you hear me??

ROBBIE: No response. I think this is the part where you say "I'm no coward!" and dramatically swoop off to go square up with her.

CAROLINE: What if I am a coward?

ROBBIE: That's even better. That means this is the part where you admit you're scared, suck it up, and go do the thing anyway.

CAROLINE: Well, I can certainly do the first part. I am very afraid.

ROBBIE: Of what?

CAROLINE: Changing. Admitting what I've done.

ROBBIE: You just described personal growth.

CAROLINE: I'm dead, Robbie. I'm never going to grow beyond fifteen.

ROBBIE: Not with that attitude. Now c'mon. What's one thing you can do, right now, that's a not-scary change?

MUSIC BEGINS

CAROLINE: There's no such thing. But...

MASK CLATTERS TO THE FLOOR

ROBBIE: Woah, where— shit. You better be going to go talk to her!

CAROLINE: I'm not. Not yet, at least. I'll have to build up to it, just... one step at a time. That's all it is, getting across the doorframe. One step, and I'm out. And then one step, and I'm across the

porch. And then one step, and I'm down the stairs. I can do that. Alright. And... one.

Well. That wasn't so ba- Aah!

ROBBIE: I'm leaving now, so if you're still here you should know I'm gonna go try and stop the-

PHONE CHIMES

ROBBIE: Shit. Caroline? Caroline! Where the hell did you go?

CREDITS READER: 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. For more information on the show, as well as transcripts and full credits, visit our website, Twitter, or 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, where is a place that you never, ever, want to go? Thanks for listening, and until next time, happy haunting.

MUSIC ENDS