

CC10: THE ONLY TRUE GHOST STORY

DUST!CAROLINE: They say that Arborwood Grove is haunted. By a ghost, by a curse, by a memory. They say that everyone who lived there was cursed from the start.

MUSIC BEGINS

DUST!CAROLINE: They say that Charles Carr was protective. Or... he said that. And Mother said that, and we all said that because it was the only explanation we were allowed to have.

They say that Georgina Jeffreys was in love with him at first. They say she did everything she could to convince him of that. She gave him her hand in marriage. She gave him two beautiful daughters. They say she would have given him her life, if he'd asked for it. Thank the Lord he never did.

They say the Carr women were never alone, but at the same time they were incredibly lonely. They say that occasionally a maid or gardener or tutor began to show fondness for one of the little girls running around the house, and was immediately let go. Replaced with someone who was willing to keep their distance in return for a steady pay.

They say the bedroom doors were locked from the outside each night. They say all the doors to the house were locked when Charles Carr left each day. They say his daughters never went outside unless someone was holding tight to their

hands, because he wanted them to never stray off the path they were told to walk. They say he wanted this so desperately, he-

They say the only true ghost story about Arborwood Grove starts with a day at the end of the summer, when the air was dry and dusty, and the taste of lightning hid behind every gust of wind.

MUSIC CHANGES

DUST!CAROLINE: They say there was a fire that night. A raging, monstrous thing that consumed and burned and killed... And was carefully contained in the cellar. They say all the shelves were taken off the walls, and set at the bottom of the stairs, ready and waiting for a girl who was off on an adventure she wasn't allowed to have.

They say after he doused her in flame, he stayed with her, just long enough to see her burn. Just long enough for her to see him for what he truly was. A raging, monstrous thing that consumed, and burned and killed.

They say the sun came up while his daughter burned below, and after a while he went down and found her, not quite dead, her nails dirty and broken and burnt from crawling at the cellar door. From trying to dig through the fire to reach the stairs.

So he picked her up, carried her to her bedroom, and placed her ever so gently into her bed. And then he went into town, bought boards and plaster and paint, and built a wall right down the centre of the upstairs hallway, so that no one would ever know there was a bedroom on that floor.

They say the thing that used to be Caroline would hear, every so often, a creaking outside her door. And in response to that creaking, it would crawl out of bed, across the hall, and to the little dumbwaiter set into the wall opposite her room. She would take the food and water being sent to her, crawl back to bed, and stay there until the next meal. They say she survived for nearly a full week that way. Almost alive, not quite dead. Not quite anything, any more.

But it never got any easier to cross the hallway. And one day, it barely made it across. Barely managed to eat. Barely wanted to try.

MUSIC CHANGES

DUST!CAROLINE: And then it did something it hadn't done for nearly a week. It had a thought. A real, human thought. See, it had been all shrivelled up in the fire. It was smaller than the fifteen-year-old Caroline it used to be. So, it looked at the dumbwaiter, and it looked at itself, and it thought... I've been roasted. I'm a duck.

It took all of the energy the thing had left, but it got into the dumbwaiter. And it waited for a drop that felt like fear but wasn't. Soon enough, the dumbwaiter began to move down, and the thing, the burnt-up thing, it could feel the walls of the house around it. The passageways that its father – its murderer – had built into them. The hidden places that Caroline had used all summer to sneak out of her room and into the night air.

They were good places, there in the dark. Good places to sleep. Good places to go when you know nobody will come looking for you.

The dumbwaiter stopped moving. It had only moved one floor, to the dining room. The door opened up, and standing outside was the person who had been working the dumbwaiter for the past two weeks. Hiding pieces of bread and meat in her napkin at meals. Lingered in the dining room after Father left, so she could send her contraband scraps of food up to the thing that used to be her sister.

All they had was each other, after all, and if Martha wasn't going to keep Caroline alive, who was?

So when the dumbwaiter opened up, and Martha saw what had become of her sister, she... She might have helped. Might have tried to get it to safety, if she wasn't stopped.

You see, she always thought she was alone, when she sent the food up the dumbwaiter. But she wasn't. She was never alone. She just... couldn't see.

When Charles Carr pulled his daughter's body out of the cellar, she was only half alive. The other half of her had already left. Already walked through the fire and the smoke, up the stairs, and into the open air of her house. Already looked at the clock on the mantle and realized that she could no longer tell what time it was.

And so *that* Caroline watched, for days that she couldn't count, as her sister did all she could to save what had already been lost. But when Martha opened up that dumbwaiter and revealed what was inside, it... It was just too much. The part of the soul that was already dead looked at the part that was still alive. And the part that was still alive... It looked back. These two halves, they saw each other. We saw each other.

MUSIC CHANGES

DUST!CAROLINE: And it was horrible. It was- It was a thing. It wasn't me. It wasn't human. But it was alive. This thing was alive, and I was dead, and- And- ...and...

There was a knife on the table. I couldn't pick it up. I couldn't pick anything up. But Martha... Martha could. She would never, of course. She would never do anything like that. But somehow, I got inside her hand. And I- Martha- We... killed it.

And then one of us cut the ropes of the dumbwaiter, and sent the other half of what used to be Caroline Carr crashing down to the cellar below.

I think Father found her, later, and blocked that up, too. He must have. I don't remember. It's all... blurred. Once I let go of Martha, everything went wrong. She didn't know I was there, didn't know it was me that did that, not her. She vanished into her room, and my memories began to slip away. I've known, all this time, that Martha's room wasn't mine, but if I ever began to think about where my room actually was... All I could find was a blank, white wall, and it never crossed my mind that I might need to push past it.

Perhaps there was a part of me that didn't want to push past it. Didn't want to know what I might find in my own memories. Didn't want to acknowledge that there was a part of me so twisted, so mangled and horrible, that... it killed someone. I killed someone. Because it had committed the heinous crime of surviving without me.

I doubt that this will be the last ghost story told in this town. It's certainly not the first. It's certainly not the most violent, or the strangest.

And it's rather ironic, I think, all those stories about me. They all say that I never actually hurt anyone. That it's my existence as a ghost that makes me dangerous, as opposed to the actions

I might take as a person. They say I'm harmless. They say I'm safe. They say I've had so little impact I might as well not exist.

And you know what, they can say whatever they want. They say a lot of things.

THEME MUSIC

CREDITS: File CC, track ten. The Only True Ghost Story.

BELLS CHIME

FIRE ALARM BLARES

STATIC CRACKLES

WIND!CAROLINE: Well, that's a nice tale, isn't it? A tragedy, to hear you tell it. The hero's fall from grace. Poor little Caroline.

DUST!CAROLINE: So you do have a voice.

WIND!CAROLINE: Just as much as you do. Although "voice" probably isn't the right word. I don't think anyone else can hear us.

DUST!CAROLINE: Where are you?

WIND!CAROLINE: Where are you?

DUST!CAROLINE: At the rec centre. Back in the room where Robbie and his friends made that summoning circle? If you can't see me either... how did you keep finding me?

WIND!CAROLINE: I could hear you. I could always hear you. Miss Tenor woke me up and Anthony released me, but between those two? You talk. So. Much.

DUST!CAROLINE: There was little else to do.

WIND!CAROLINE: There is everything to do if you're willing to put in an effort. Just in the past few hours, I've-

DUST!CAROLINE: Completely destroyed the town, yes, I noticed.

WIND!CAROLINE: I didn't intend for that to happen. But after being in the dark for so long, I just... There's so much energy out there, Caroline. Swirling around in the air, bouncing between buildings, humming along wires... But that was never important. I needed to talk to you.

DUST!CAROLINE: Well, the floor is yours.

WIND!CAROLINE: Yes. I was so ready to be mad at you. I wanted to make you face what you'd done, and suffer the consequences. But now... I'm not even angry that you killed me, I'm angry that you didn't leave afterward. The world is so wonderful, but you spent a century hiding under that roof, too afraid to go see for yourself.

DUST!CAROLINE: I wasn't afraid! I think you were keeping me there. I couldn't leave without you.

WIND!CAROLINE: Then why, Caroline, was I able to leave without you? It's because you're my fear. You are the part of me that hides. That never wants things to change. That lashes out when she feels threatened. When I am gone, you're helpless. And I see now, that when you're gone, I'm free.

DUST!CAROLINE: I am not helpless.

WIND!CAROLINE: You're not listening. If you truly want to talk, come with me.

WIND WHISTLES

DUST!CAROLINE: Where? Caroline?

Oh, for... I can't come with you if you don't tell me where you are going!

MUSIC BEGINS

DUST!CAROLINE: Alright, fine, I suppose I'll just have to figure it out. Where would I go if I were... me? Back to Arborwood Grove, obviously, but she wouldn't go there. And she wouldn't think this much, she would just do it. So don't think. Don't think any thoughts, even though that's literally what you're made of, and this might make you stop existing completely.

VARIOUS VOICES FADE IN

WIND!CAROLINE: Of course she doesn't understand, how could I have expected her to-

DUST!CAROLINE: That's it! Okay.

VOICES GET LOUDER

WIND!CAROLINE: ...And we survived this long, didn't we? We're clearly both perfectly fine. Better off, even. I can be free, and she can live in her own little bubble and we'll both pretend the other doesn't exist. As for all that world out there...

Ah. You made it.

VOICES FADE OUT TO BACKGROUND NOISES

DUST!CAROLINE: I don't blame you for wanting to leave. But look around. You've left this town so broken.

WIND!CAROLINE: I told you, I never meant to-

DUST!CAROLINE: But you did. Look, we've never had to take responsibility for anything. Apparently, even if it was a mistake, it is still up to you to fix it. Especially since no one else will. And when your mistakes cause this much destruction, perhaps it is best to not make it in the first place.

WIND!CAROLINE: And you're gonna help me do that?

DUST!CAROLINE: I, uh... do you want me to?

WIND!CAROLINE: I thought you were offering.

DUST!CAROLINE: I wasn't. I mean, I will if you want me to—

WIND!CAROLINE: That's not what I'm saying.

DUST!CAROLINE: Why did you come here?

WIND!CAROLINE: It's just where I ended up. I suppose it was on my mind for some reason.

DUST!CAROLINE: You know there are stories about this place? Walking ninth avenue and all that?

WIND!CAROLINE: I know.

DUST!CAROLINE: Do you think it's true?

WIND!CAROLINE: What, that Father is down there? No. I checked this morning. I didn't "walk ninth" or anything like that but... And even if he was down there, do you really think it would matter?

DUST!CAROLINE: No, I suppose it wouldn't. We'd still be here, and you'd still want to leave.

WIND!CAROLINE: You're going to follow me.

DUST!CAROLINE: I could promise not to.

WIND!CAROLINE: You know, I would either believe you because I don't think you would have the courage to leave this town, or I would know you were lying because... I know that if you left, I would follow you. Even if I promised not to.

And I hate that. I don't want to be tethered to you! Even just these past few months it's been... You know, you just say things, and it's all so empty. I don't want to spend the rest of eternity listening to your monologue about how sad and pathetic you are. I was more alone than you ever were! At least you had your visitors to-

DUST!CAROLINE: To tell stories about me that weren't true? To say, right in front of me, that I didn't even exist? To remind me, every moment they were here, that nothing I did would ever reach them? This isn't a contest. We're the same person. I don't really understand how that works but... I'd like to try if you were willing to forgive me.

WIND!CAROLINE: Forgive you. For possessing our sister and forcing her to kill me? For making her think that she was the monster that did that. No. That is going to take a lot more time to forgive than I'm currently willing to spend on you.

MUSIC BEGINS

DUST!CAROLINE: Fine. Then I suppose I won't forgive you for being the reason father found out about us sneaking out in the first place.

WIND!CAROLINE: That is not the same thing. That doesn't even count, we were the same person at that point.

DUST!CAROLINE: Really? So, the part of me that was adventurous and reckless was not the same part that kept dragging me out for longer and longer periods every night? It wasn't the same part that went out in the rain? That took a "more fun way" back and nearly got caught by the neighbours at 5 AM? Those things aren't tied together at all?

Perhaps I am your tether, but you need one. All you've ever done is endanger me, and yourself, and everyone around you. So if you truly think I'm going to leave you as you are, you are sorely mistaken.

WIND!CAROLINE: Well, the good news is, you don't have any way to stop me. Goodbye, Caroline.

WHOOSH

DUST!CAROLINE: Well, I'm excited to be proven right.

WHOOSH

WIND!CAROLINE: Right about what?

DUST!CAROLINE: You said it yourself. If I left, you'd follow me. And that means that if I stay, you'll come back. You won't enjoy the world. It's very large, and very frightening. Even for you.

WIND!CAROLINE: You don't know anything about the world.

DUST!CAROLINE: Actually, I do. I left once, a long time ago. I tried to run away from what I'd done to you. I was only gone for a few weeks, wandering around the prairies, but when I came back everyone was gone. And I never left again, because what if the next time the house was gone? Or the town? I know that's ridiculous, but what if I left and I wasn't able to find my way back? I couldn't go looking for my family, it's not like I could just ask around and see where they went. I couldn't even remember if they'd still been there when I left. Maybe they'd been gone for years at that point, and I just forgot. And eventually, I forgot why I felt so frightened of leaving. All I knew was that I felt slightly less alone within the walls of my house. Argue with me all you like, but I choose to believe that was because of you. So yes, you can promise to leave, and I can promise to stay, but eventually one of us will go back on her word.

WIND!CAROLINE: You do know that the Zealots are burning down Arborwood Grove?

DUST!CAROLINE: What?? No. No, they were doing a ritual-

WIND!CAROLINE: Which involves burning the house down. After they summoned you this morning, you must've left before you could hear that part.

DUST!CAROLINE: We have to stop them! Or get someone else to - Robbie! Robbie can stop them, he'll help us-

WIND!CAROLINE: If I recall correctly, Robbie is going to be helping them.

DUST!CAROLINE: He wouldn't!

WIND!CAROLINE: He is. Right now.

DUST!CAROLINE: Then it's up to us. Come on.

WIND!CAROLINE: Caroline-

WHOOSH

MUSIC ENDS

FIRE CRACKLES

WIND WHISTLES

DUST!CAROLINE: We're too late. They're not even here anymore, they just set it on fire and left.

WIND!CAROLINE: There are other parts to the ritual. They have to be completed before the house finishes burning.

DUST!CAROLINE: Then we still have time, we can stop those parts-

WIND!CAROLINE: It won't bring the house back. Look at it, it's old wood drenched in gasoline. It doesn't stand a chance. And anyone who might fight the fire has other concerns right now.

DUST!CAROLINE: Because of you.

WIND!CAROLINE: Hey-

DUST!CAROLINE: Yes, that works out perfectly for you, doesn't it? You make yourself known to the Zealots so they burn the house down, set other fires so this one's allowed to run its course, and distract me so I can't stop them.

WIND!CAROLINE: Why would I do that?

DUST!CAROLINE: Because you don't want anything left here to tie you down. You want to run away and forget any of this ever happened. But let me tell you, running away doesn't work. Forgetting doesn't stick. There will always be something to drag you back, and you're not fast enough to outrun me.

WIND!CAROLINE: I didn't know this would happen.

DUST!CAROLINE: But you didn't try to stop it!

WIND!CAROLINE: What could I have done, started a different fire to distract the Zealots?

DUST!CAROLINE: Why not? You don't seem to mind all the destruction you cause.

WIND!CAROLINE: You think I enjoy the fact that, everywhere I go, I set fires identical to the one that killed me?

DUST!CAROLINE: You didn't die in that fire.

WIND!CAROLINE: I lost half of my soul!

DUST!CAROLINE: So did I!

And now... what are we doing? This should be a good thing, shouldn't it?

WIND!CAROLINE: Well, we haven't exactly been on the best terms for the past little while. But. Since we've been talking, I haven't caused any more explosions. So that is, potentially, something.

MUSIC BEGINS

DUST!CAROLINE: And I haven't drifted away. So that is potentially something as well.

You know, I really don't think this is either of our faults. Us being separated like this? I can understand why you wanted to stay alive, and I'm sure you can understand why I wanted to run away from it.

WIND!CAROLINE: Oh, I never blamed you for that. You and me being like this was always *his* fault. We spent our whole life afraid of our father, and we were right.

DUST!CAROLINE: That isn't very good, is it?

WIND!CAROLINE: No. It isn't.

DUST!CAROLINE: Heat waves. You look like... You look like heat waves coming off the pavement. And wind. And... me. I didn't want to admit that I could see you, but... You look like me. I'd forgotten what I looked like.

WIND!CAROLINE: Interesting, because you look like a very small, very dusty lightning storm that swirled up about ten minutes ago.

DUST!CAROLINE: Hm. I don't mind that.

WIND!CAROLINE: Yeah, it's not so bad.

WOODEN CRASH

DUST!CAROLINE: ...And there it goes. Burned to the ground. Our home for so long, and now it's just... nothing.

WIND!CAROLINE: You think it's time?

DUST!CAROLINE: Yes. Yes, I do.

WIND!CAROLINE: Alright then. On the count of three.

BOTH: One, two...

CAROLINE: Three.

CRACKLING STOPS

MUSIC ENDS

DOOR SLAMS SHUT

WIND WHISTLES FAINTLY

EXIT MUSIC

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. 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. Now, think of a number between one and ten. Got it? Good. You don't have to tell us what it is, and in fact, we're not asking. and until next time. We just wanted you to know that the correct answers are three, five, and maybe eight, if we're stretching it. Thank you so much to the cast, crew, and everyone who made this show possible. Thank you, especially, for listening. And until next time.