

406: Snowblind (i)

[Click; rattle]

[The storm still rages outside. Ash is in the living room. A beat before she begins.

She is quiet, tired, drained]

Ash: I don't know what time it is. It feels late. Actually it feels so late that it feels early. I can't believe it's not morning yet. The storm is still going strong, but I don't think it would keep it this dark if the sun was somewhere beyond those clouds.

I tried one more time to get to the truck, to get away from...from what I found. From what Ginny showed me. But I couldn't even get down the steps. The snow is blowing so hard I can't even see to the parking area, and there's ice mixed in. I could feel it slicing into the skin of my face as I tried to cross the porch.

The heaters are still working, thank you to whatever is out there in charge of such things. I'm out of food, and obviously out of coffee. The water works, so I won't dehydrate, anyway. It's a wall of black through the window, overlaid with the snow like a TV that's gone off the air for the night. If I squint just right I can see the streetlight at the corner of Jackson and Radcliffe, feebly trying to push through the static, but that's all. I guess that means the neighborhood still has power, so good for that, I suppose.

What matters is that I can't get out. I am truly trapped here until the storm lets up.
Trapped with a corpse.

I don't want to talk about it, because I don't want to think about it. Jack, stuffed into the tiny closet behind the stairs, his head bashed in by a hammer. That's not guesswork—there was a hammer lying next to him, its claw end caked with blood. Blood and something darker? Brains?

He was just *stuffed* in there. Like a rag doll, or an old pair of coveralls. His eyes were still open, like he was surprised, like he couldn't understand... **[she trails off, overwhelmed by the memory]**

I puked all over the floor. Didn't even scream, just fell to my knees and puked. When I looked up, the foyer was empty. Just me and what was left of Jack. No weird girl in a wedding dress or burial shroud or what-the-fuck-ever. Just me and a fresh, messy corpse.

Except I know that isn't true. If I ever doubted, I don't any more. The noises are getting louder and more constant, and I know it isn't just an old house settling. There's something in this house. Not Jack's body, thought that's bad enough. Something *else*. It might be a dead girl, or it might be a tall man in a black suit. Or it might be something else, something that can look like both those things.

But I am not alone. And I can't get out.

[Theme music; credits]

[The storm is still going]

The thought of Jack's body is almost more than I can handle. That it's here in the house with me. I can't see it—him—because I pushed him back in the closet and wedged the door shut. But it doesn't matter. The idea of it fills the whole space. It's in my head now, so I see it even when I close my eyes. His head cratered in above the right eyebrow, blood in a sheet down his face, staining his shirt. His legs already stiff. Those glassy eyes. I thought about dragging him onto the porch, just so I wouldn't be under the same roof. But eventually someone is going to come for me, if I don't trudge out myself, and the first thing they see shouldn't be a murder

victim. I don't want the police coming in with guns blazing. I suppose I could stash him out back, but that's a long way to drag him.

So I'm back in the living room, in the circle of heaters, pretending Jack isn't there. Ginny isn't here either and maybe she never was. But I know that wasn't a hallucination, because here's that bottle of Jack, still a third full, and there's the...the baggie. And those aren't mine.

I'm going to sit here. And I'm not going to move. And eventually, the storm will be over.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

The sounds have started again. I can hear footsteps overhead, and just now it sounded like someone was in the kitchen. I'm still in the living room, and I'm not leaving. Yet, anyway. To kill time I'm trying to see if the chimney can be salvaged. I had thought it was blocked up, but Ginny just stuck her arm up there to grab the whiskey, so it's open a little ways, anyhow.

[She reaches up into the chimney as she talks]

Cold air is pouring out of this thing. It must be at least partially open all the way up. Lots of little ledges and imperfections. Perfect place to stash your booze—good job Junior Satanists. Nothing much else though.

Except. Wait. What's that? I can just about...there!

[A patter of crumbling as she pulls it free]

Another book. What is it with hiding books in this house? This one's small, leatherbound, old and musty. Among other things, it's a good indicator that the fireplace hasn't been used in a long time.

[A distinctive sound of movement from away]

There! I hope that made it onto the tape. Someone's walking around up there.

[Louder] Hello? Is someone there? Ginny?

[To herself again] I know I'm going to have to go eventually. It's what they want me to do, I think. But I need more Jack Daniels first.

[Pours herself some]

I'm not losing my mind. I'm not losing my mind I'm not losing my mind.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

[Ash is crying]

Jack. Jack. Jack. Jack. Jack.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

This book is just gibberish, but it freaks me out all the same. It's all weird symbols and made-up words. Some drawings that look like they're out of the D&D Monster Manual. I'd say it was just a Junior Satan toy, some stupid prop they put together to play Evil Dead or whatever, except that it's clearly really old. And there's something else.

There are photographs stuffed in the back. Six or seven photos hidden inside the back cover, under a little flap like a secret stash. Three of them are Junior Satan pictures—Polaroids of kids in the house, drinking beer and flipping off the camera, all dressed like Siouxsie and the Banshees. The others though...

The other pictures are of the house in the 30s. But they're not the same as the ones in the photo album.

[She whispers the next part] Grandpa Bob is in all of them. So is Ginny. Ginny's in the other photo album, too, kneeling beside the dressmaker's dummy, I just didn't recognize her at

first. In one of these, she's knitting—it looks like baby clothes, like a little onesie. Grandpa Bob is standing behind her, holding what looks like...

And in the others she's not...she's....

In black and white photographs, blood looks like shadows.

I don't think I was supposed to see these.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

I can't sit here anymore. I keep hearing someone walking, and I keep thinking that Jack is moving around in the closet behind the stairs, though I know he can't move anymore. I feel like I've been sitting here for hours and hours, and there's nothing but snow and graffiti and empty Ziplocs and photographs and there's something at the window. The lights are on, but it's still so dark. I have to get out of this room.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

[Ash is calmer. Focused on the space she's in] I'm in the back bedroom, past the hallway with the shelves. I feel like if I can focus on something else, then maybe he'll stop distracting me.

I want to figure out why we can't get our measurements right. This side of the house is nineteen and a half inches longer than the outside. That doesn't make any kind of physical sense, but I think I'm moving past sense tonight. I can actually see out the front when we measure—it's all windows across the living room—but back here there aren't windows on the side wall, so there's no way to easily tell if the corner of the room lines up with the outside corner of the house, if that makes sense. Maybe this is where the extra foot and a half is hidden?

There's a heavy wardrobe in the corner that we haven't gotten moved out yet. Geri had to climb on top of it to measure in here. Now I'm wondering what's behind it. It ought to just be the corner—I can see the corners meeting neatly above it. But I don't think what I see is necessarily what is. I can't move it out of the way by myself, but I might can shift it a little.

[She puts her shoulder against the armoire and pushes]

Unh...unh...unh! That's moved it a couple of inches at least. Let me see what's back there.

[Loud sound of a mechanical *thunk*]

What the hell? The lights just went out. Goddamn it. Fucking unending storm.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

I don't know if the storm has put power out all over town or if we've just tripped a breaker here. The fuse box is in the basement, and no way I'm going down there in the dark. I'm back in the living room. There's a little more light because of the windows, but not much. I can't see the streetlight anymore, but I don't know if that means anything. The storm has gotten worse, if anything.

Those photographs of Grandpa Bob in that old book. It wasn't just him and Ginny. Not just Ginny, laying there. That's what draws the eye, the horror of her laying there, the look on Grandpa Bob's face. The smile. But behind him, in the doorway to the attic, you can just make out the third person in the room. The same smile as Grandpa Bob. The same black suit he's wearing tonight.

Because he's in here. The man in the black suit. I keep catching glimpses. He was looking in the window just now, stooping over to peer in from the porch. Earlier I saw him cross

the foyer and disappear into the kitchen. I've been sitting very still since the power went out.. He hasn't looked at me yet. But he will.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

[The storm is, if possible, louder. We hear banging and pounding from other parts of the house]

I can't do it! The house is trying to drive me crazy! The power's still out, and it's freezing. The sounds from upstairs are getting worse. It can't still be night—it's been hours and hours. I think I'm gonna make a run for it.

[She starts to walk as she talks]

I'm going to cross the foyer and go out the front door and walk away. I can get to the next house, I think. It's a quarter mile or so.

[She enters the foyer; all sounds from upstairs stop]

[Whispering] Why is it suddenly quiet? It's so dark in here. I can't tell if... I think there's someone on the stairs. Standing very still, a darker shadow.

[Deep breath]

Okay. 3...2...1...go!

[She runs to the front door and opens it. The storm screams.]

[Theme music; credits]

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