

408: Snowblind (ii)

[The storm is full force, but we can hear the sound of a shovel cutting through the wind]

Ash: [Whispers] It's him. The man in the black suit. He's got his back to me, and he's digging. He has a shovel and he's digging in the ground just behind the house. There's something on the ground beside him. It's covered with snow, but I know what it is. He's burying her.

But worse than that. I haven't made it out at all. This is where I started.

I'm back at Hawthorne House. And the storm is still going strong. Did I dream everything that just happened? Am I delusional?

I don't think he's seen me. He's still digging. There are two shapes on the ground beside him—one is surely a body, and the other is small, like a bundle of clothes, or like...

I don't think he's seen me yet. I don't know what to do, except go back in the house. It's too cold to stay out here. Maybe I can...

Oh shit. He saw me. He's looking back over his shoulder, still digging, but he's looking right at me. Fuck this, I'm going back over the fence.

[She runs back toward the fence; we hear her breathing heavily, her feet in the snow, and then a low, feral growling]

Jesus! It's those—corpses. Matt and the rest of them—they're climbing over the fence! I can't...

[She backs away, heading back toward the house]

[Growling/groaning increases as she runs]

[Theme music; credits]

[Click; rattle]

[Ash is back in the house; the storm can be heard outside. She has lit a fire, and we can hear it crackle occasionally]

I'm back in the house. The storm is still going strong. I don't know if the dead made it over the fence or not; I ran for the house. The man in the black suit was gone—there were no bodies or anything by the back garden, that I could see, anyway I just ran past, and back inside through the front door.

I've gathered some scrap lumber from the front bedroom across the hall and built a fire. I did a thorough search of the chimney first, in case there was more booze or ancient reading material hidden up there. But it's all clear, and now I've got some heat and a little light, anyway.

I've got two Lucky Strikes left. It also finally occurred to me to check the grandfather clock in the foyer, but even though the pendulum is still swinging the hands have stopped. Which reinforces my snow globe theory—that I'm in some kind of bubble outside of time? That sounds crazy now that I've said it out loud. But no crazier than seeing Matt and Jack trying to climb over that fence when I know they're both...

I have no idea whether the things I saw in the back yard were real or not. If they were just there to scare me or if they were, I don't know, memories. Like a living photo album? Except nothing I saw was living, not anymore. Especially Ginny.

[A beat]

I've been looking back through this book I found in the chimney. None of it makes any sense—I think it might be written in code? There are several repeated sets of letters and

numbers. But I've never been good at that kind of thing. I can convert measurements all day long, but I'm no good at anything more abstract. The illustrations are more than a little disturbing—all kinds of beasts and demonic-looking goats and shit. And, now that I really take the time to look through it, repeated pictures of a tall man in a black coat.

In this book he's drawn very old-fashioned, like a long civil war coat with a vest and a top hat, as opposed to just slightly old-fashioned 1930s preacher, but it's him. Whatever's happening, the man in the black suit is at the center of it all. He's in all the photos, too, the ones hidden away here. Even the Junior Satan Club pictures, he's there, standing in the shadows. I hope whoever those teenagers are, they're okay. I hope they got out.

Everything is quiet in here. No sounds from the kitchen, no footsteps overhead. But it doesn't feel like it's over, whatever "it" is. It feels more like the house is waiting. Holding its breath. Like it's my turn. My move.

So I'll make a move.

I might be trapped, but I'm not powerless. I'm not a helpless girl in a horror movie. I'll be damned if I'm going to sit here and wait for whatever he has in store for me next.

So. What do I know? I know that a girl named Ginny lived here in the 30s, and that she died. Everything he's shown me says that she was murdered, and—I have to say it out loud—that my Grandpa Bob killed her with a butcher knife. And that she was pregnant. Also that she's still wandering around the house, being creepy to the hired help.

So is that why I'm here? Huh? **[Louder, to the house]** Is that why I'm here? What Ginny said: "debts have to be paid?" Are you punishing me for what my grandfather did? Because that wasn't my fault. I wasn't around. Hell, my mother hadn't even been conceived. So fuck your "sins of the fathers" bullshit.

[To herself again] And, anyway, I don't buy it. Why should I believe anything they show me? My grandfather was a kind and good man. He wouldn't hurt anyone. And if he did, he must have been under the influence of something else.

This goddamn house. There've got to be answers here somewhere. So that's my move. I'm going to find answers.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

[Storm still audible; Ash is in the back bedroom, holding a torch, which we can hear crackling]

I've actually made a torch. It's a broken table leg with a torn sheet wrapped around it, soaked in what's left of the Jack Daniels. I know it isn't the safest thing I could be doing in an old wooden house, but it can't be worse than what's already in here. I think there's a flashlight in the truck, but I'm not going back outside. And anyway, I feel a little like Indiana Jones. And it could be a good weapon. I have no idea if ghosts burn.

I'm in the back bedroom. I want to see what's behind that wardrobe. The lights cut off at rather suspiciously just as I tried to look before, and then things got a little out of control. Here goes my second try.

I was only able to move it six or eight inches out from the wall. It's going to be tricky getting the torchlight in there without burning the whole thing down. I'm putting the recorder on top of the wardrobe while I try.

[She does so. The next speech is at a small distance from the recorder. Ash takes a breath, preparing]

Okay. **[A beat]** I don't know why, after everything I've seen, I'm so freaked out about

looking behind here. Okay. Let's see.

[She works the torch in to the opening]

Oh wow. It goes back a ways. What the fuck? The house *ends* here. It can't... This is definitely where the extra nineteen and a half inches is. Although it's more than that, since the room itself was too long compared to the outside. And it looks like it's not empty. It's hard to see—the light doesn't quite reach.

[She shifts to look deeper in; we hear the patter and fall of dust and small debris]

It's a body. Of course it's a body. But this one's old—just bones and scraps of cloth. Black cloth. And the ragged remains of what looks like a hat? All in a hole behind a wall that doesn't exist in the real world. Or at least that you can't see.

[She backs out of the hole, picks up the recorder again]

I could just throw this torch in there, and burn the whole thing down.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

[Ash is in the foyer; the storm is unabated. The clock is audible.]

I've pretty much done the downstairs. Nothing in the kitchen. The front bedroom has a series of stains on the floor, but nothing else. Which makes sense given that we cleared out the downstairs last week.

Jesus, it's cold. My breath is clouding out before it melts against the torchlight. I don't know why I haven't just frozen to death already.

More stains here in the foyer, of course—the big stain that was under the spongy rug, and the little footprint looking ones heading off toward the living room. Nothing else here but the stairs and the grandfather clock.

I wonder if something could be hidden in the clock itself?

[She considers the clock for a beat. Throughout the next section, the clock's pendulum beings to slow. Ash does not notice this at first]

I know that people hide things in clocks. At least I've read stories where secrets were hidden in clocks. Maybe those were just stories? I can't see where or how. I can open the casing, but it's just an empty space. Nothing behind the pendulum. The hands still aren't moving, so something could be in amongst the gears, I guess. But I suspect that's less mechanical and more, I don't know, spiritual? Demonic?

Wait. Is the pendulum slowing down?

[Listener, it is]

Is it getting even colder? Damn, the torch has gone out.

[The pendulum slows, slows, slow, and then stops]

[Whispers] He's here. On the stairs. **[Louder]** Are you going to show yourself? What do you want from me, you fucking coward?

[Static]

I...don't know.

[Static]

Of course I am! Where am I supposed to go? Even when I leave you bring me back here.

[Static]

What does that have to do with me? My grandpa's been dead for years.

[Static]

What does that mean? What baby? Ginny's baby?

[Static]

Then you made him that way.

[Static]

[Quieter] That's a lie.

[Static]

Because I know! My grandpa would never have done that if he hadn't got caught in this goddamn house. Not the owner's daughter. He was a good...

[Static]

[Confused] What? What blood?

[Static]

You're trying to confuse me. There's no blood. You're a liar.

[Static]

Jack was dead when I found him. You killed him. This house killed him.

[Static]

There's no one here but me. Stop lying!

[Static]

I'm not listening to you anymore.

[A beat]

Wait! Where are you going? **[To herself]** Oh hell no, you're not. You're not getting away from me.

[She goes upstairs; we hear the door of the bedroom open]

He's not here. Damn it! I know he came in here. **[A beat while she looks around the room]** This is where those pictures were taken. This must have been Ginny's bedroom—she had her dressmaker's dummy and the bed was all frills and pillows. This is where she died, laying

here with her stomach torn open. Her...where the baby was. I don't know if there are stains here or not. The Junior Satan Club built fires in the middle of the floor and it's charred and blackened. We still haven't cleared it out.

[A beat, and then quieter] The attic door is open. Maybe that's where he is. I'm going up.

[We hear her go up, climbing the stairs and then the ladder, finally opening the trapdoor and clambering into the attic]

It's cold up here. But it's lighter at least. The stained glass window lets in a lot of light. Does that mean it's finally morning?

He's not here either. I mean, of course he's not here. He's not a...not a physical thing. The physical part of him is behind that wardrobe in the downstairs bedroom. He can go where he wants. But I think that cuts both ways. I don't think he can actually touch me. He can't lift a knife or a hammer, can't physically hurt me.

Things haven't changed up here. There's a bunch of junk along the walls, and three trunks in the middle of the space, but off to one side. Just like I left it.

Wait. No, the trunks aren't where I left them. I know all three were closer to the eaves opposite the stained glass, but now two of them are further out, nearer the center of the room.

[She walks toward the trunks]

Just old steamer trunks. Black wood bound with brass. But...

[She stops]

It looks like there are some darker places on the floor next to these two, like...like blood?

[She kneels]

Definitely blood, and definitely fresh. Who's been up here? The lock on this one is

hanging loose.

[We hear her lift the lock, and then drop it again]

But I feel like I remember...did I come up here Saturday morning? That seems so long ago. Were these like this then?

I'm not ready to open these yet.

And anyway. The light is getting stronger. And the wind is dying.

[She walks to the window] I think I made it. The storm is over.

[Theme music; credits]

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