

Not Quite Dead

Episode 31

‘Cold Snap’

Show-wide Content Warnings

This show is a work of horror fiction frequently places characters in situations which jeopardise their psychological and physical health. In addition, listeners should be aware that this show contains the following throughout:

- profanity
- references to sex
- frequent violence
- traumatic injury
- death, including violent death
- references to medical procedures
- hospital settings

Episode Content Warnings

(text in white, highlight to view)

TRANSCRIPT

Episode Thirty-One - Cold Snap

Went into the city with Neige last night.

A FIRE IS CRACKLING

He said some stuff I want to remember, and I didn't have a phone on me, I wasn't recording him, so.

He mentioned that he is frustrated with me about the Casper thing partly because he's pretty sure Cas would not want this. Like. His implication was--

I don't know, he seemed to be suggesting that Casper wanted to die, that him going to Bonham wasn't just about trying to save me, it was also about ending his own life, which to me? That sounds insane, right? Like. He was a miserable bastard but did he actually have a death wish? Surely if he did, he... like, wouldn't he be dead? If he wanted to be dead? Like he's been knocking around for a couple of hundred years, that's a long time to not die if dying's what you really want?

This fire needs more wood.

SOUNDS OF WOOD BEING MOVED AROUND, THEN THROWN ONTO THE STILL-CRACKLING FIRE

There.

Not sure why I... it never occurs to me, you know, to be warm. But in the city last night, it was warm. I'd forgotten. I don't feel the cold now, not in a way I notice, but warmth is. It's. Nice. Everything in this house is cold. It's only October but. It feels like the dead of winter.

FIRE CRACKLES

I don't know, maybe I'm being dense about Casper. Maybe it's not that he was *suicidal* like that. Maybe it's more like. When people sign DNRs or have arrangements with their families about when to turn off life support. Maybe it's like that. Except he's not getting support and he's not alive and he's not *rotting* and he *should be*.

Or. I remember Cas saying to me once, vampires don't rot, not exactly, they just. Crumble. From what I'm reading about the way our bodies look? It sounds like we kind of. Dry out.

And yeah it's occurred to me that he could be mummified like that, somehow, that because of whatever happens to our tissues when we change, whatever makes them more fibrous or whatever, maybe I'm just not looking for the right signs, but. He's. Soft. His skin is soft. He feels like he's-- well. Like he's sleeping. But he just doesn't wake up.

There are PET scans there, in the notes, but I need to read the paperwork more closely, but one thing I'm pretty certain of is that you can kill a vampire two ways. You can drain them of all blood, which takes ages, and then they take ages to die, or you can destroy the brain stem, which is quicker. But. Something weird about all this paperwork is that it's missing some foundational stuff. There's a mention in a few places of something called 'infection cascade'. I thought at first they were talking about the cascade effect in immune responses, where your immune system gets engaged in a runaway effect when trying to respond to an illness, but the context seems to make that unlikely, especially when I consider all the times this term comes up. But it's just not described anywhere.

There's also not a proper description of the change into a vampire. Like they clearly know, and they keep making reference to scattered terms which I'm pretty sure relate to the process of

vampirification, but like. There's no explanation of them, and it's impossible to work out their definitions through context. It's a nightmare.

Maybe Bonham gave some kind of speech to everyone. Maybe I'm missing some kind of key text. I don't know, I just don't have a solid understand of the foundations for this stuff, and I only have so much medical training. I am a nurse; I am great at looking after people. I know a lot about dosage and monitoring conditions, I can dress wounds, I can suture, I can read x-rays and CTs and do ultrasounds. I only know the broader stuff through my own reading and that's been very focused around my personal interests, which hasn't really got anything to do with epidemiology or diagnostics or... genetics? Fuck knows what else I'd need to understand for all of this to just snap into place in my head. Like, if I could have five years to read, to practice, maybe I could get there. Actually, I'm certain I'd be able to. But I just. I don't have that time, do I? Bonham has been killing people. There are vampires out there, new and old, vulnerable--!

There just isn't time.

FIRE CRACKLES

And then there's Casper...

ALFIE SIGHS

If I could just look at his brain activity, maybe? Maybe that'd tell me. Maybe then I'd...

ALFIE SIGHS

At least there have been fewer half-mades since we destroyed the lab. But not zero. We've slowed him down but we've not stopped him. Somehow, I think the only way he can be stopped is to kill him.

But maybe I've been spending too much time with Neige. He's very. Yeah. A lot of stories he tells seem to end with him killing a vampire.

Maybe I should fear for my life.

THE FIRE CRACKLES

Needs more wood.

SOUNDS OF WOOD BEING MOVED AROUND, THEN THROWN ONTO THE STILL-CRACKLING FIRE

ALFIE SIGHS

It's really warming up in here.

Maybe I should call Neige. He's still in the house, I think. I'd have heard him leave. And I. You know. I feel it. In my gut. He's close. Near Casper, maybe? But. But Neige won't even look at him, really. Not for long, not whilst---

ALFIE SIGHS. THE FIRE CRACKLES.

I think he's angrier about Casper than he's letting on. I think he's angry Cas is dead, angry I'm trying to like. What am I trying to do? Save him, I think? He's not rotting. I can't put him in the ground if he's not decomposing, whatever you want to call it. Maybe Bonham's just stumbled on the world's best embalming method, I don't know, but. If there's a chance he's in there, I can't let him go. I just *can't*.

Casper saved me. He killed people to save me, even though he tried to never kill. He risked everything for me. He went to Bonham because of me. It's my fault this has happened to him, my fault he's stuck like this, so if there is any, even miniscule chance for me to fix it, it is my fucking obligation to find that chance and make it work.

I have to.

It was... odd. To hunt with Neige again. After everything that's happened, to be out in the world, side by side, it was strange. I was surprised to find that it didn't feel bad. I thought it would, you know, because he's-- well, he's a fucking liar, isn't he? How can I trust him? But I do, sorta. I trust him not to hurt me and not to let me go too far, and that reassurance is nice, you know?

I. I don't know. I feel weirdly ashamed. I feel like I shouldn't have had a good time. I feel like I should have hated it, hated him. But he just. He's Neige, you know? And it's been so --

Without him it's very.

And it was warm, at the hotel in the city. The water in the showers was hot. I love the smell of him when his skin is damp, no I don't love it. It's just nice. It's. Yeah.

A little more, I think.

SOUNDS OF WOOD BEING MOVED AROUND, THEN THROWN ONTO THE STILL-CRACKLING FIRE

It's just that.

I know he would have slept on the floor, if I'd asked. He'd have left. He'd be gone. Yeah, there's that pull, that tug towards each other we feel, but he never tasted my blood when I was human and I never drank his back then either so it'll fade, Neige says, if I let it. He says if I want it to be gone, it can be gone, if I can wait a few years, maybe a decade or two.

Neige says that. That bonds forged between humans and vampires last longer. The balled up strings inside of me, the thing that drew me to Casper, that horrible mess of knots and chains and invisible strings. That'll fade one day. If I live to be a hundred, it'll be gone, he thinks.

If.

ALFIE SIGHS

But it's not looking likely, not the way things are now, not with what I've decided. Because I have to stop Bonham, I have to make sure this never, ever happens again, and that means. It means impossible shit, stupid shit. It means telling people about vampires and according to Neige that means the vampires will come for me.

According to Neige.

Fuck Neige.

When I asked him to leave, after we brought Cas home. He didn't argue. He just. Went. He didn't say anything at all. I didn't have a number for him, I didn't have anything, he was just gone. Gone.

Well, it wasn't exactly nothing. I had that feeling in me. That sense I might be able to find him if I followed the unease in the pit of my stomach. That feeling of something, like a tether between us. So I knew he was alright, or at least broadly alright, and I guess he knew the same about me.

When he's close by, it's all just that little bit simpler, you know? Like that part of my head that's thinking about that feeling in me, that tug in my chest? It's quieter, when he's around.

Really, *this* is what gives me hope about Cas. Because it's not gone, that tie between us. And fucking hell I'm so terrified of it going. I'm so scared of that knot inside me that is my connection to him just being gone. I'm so scared that if-- if we burn him maybe. Maybe it will fade faster.

But I don't want it to fade at all. I want Casper to be *okay*. I *need* him to be okay. Otherwise what have I done. What am I doing? Did I want this life for me.

If I hadn't had a Casper to find, would I have let myself become this thing that I've become?

Did I even want this?

Did I?

NEIGE
(distantly)
Alfie. Get in here.

ALFIE
Neige? Is everything okay?

FOOTSTEPS

NEIGE
Just come here.

DOOR OPENS

ALFIE GASPS

ALFIE
Cas-- Casper, what— What did you do to him?!

CRASH

NEIGE
Alfie!

ALFIE
Shh, Casper darling...

NEIGE
Look at his mouth!

ALFIE GASPS

ALFIE
Blood. The sockets from his teeth. They're-- they're weeping blood.

NEIGE
What can I do?

ALFIE

Um, uh. Draw your own--

NEIGE

Oh, fuck that.

ALFIE

No don't just-- !

NEIGE

Come on, Casper! Drink, drink.

A MOMENT OF QUIET

NEIGE

(desperately)

Drink.

ALFIE

Nothing.

NEIGE

Poutain de merde.

ALFIE

I... fuck. Let's. Let's get him back on the table.

SOUNDS OF MOVEMENT AND EFFORT. THE GENTLE KNOCKS OF A BODY AGAINST METAL.

ALFIE

There you are, there you are. Beautiful boy.

NEIGE

Stop. Stop it.

ALFIE

What?

NEIGE

This is all too much, Alfie, I just--- I can't.

ALFIE

You can't what?

NEIGE

Please. Alfie. It's time.

ALFIE

(darkly)

What were you doing in here?

NEIGE

I did not touch him.

ALFIE

(furious)

Were you going to burn him!

NEIGE

Of course not!

ALFIE

If you lay a hand on him--

NEIGE

Then what, Alfie?! What is this? What are you going to do? Attack me, eh? You really think you could overpower me?

ALFIE

I did it last night.

NEIGE

Ha. No. You did not. You sprang on me without warning.

ALFIE

I could take you. I'm bigger than you.

NEIGE

Size isn't everything. I don't want to fight.

ALFIE

Maybe I do.

NEIGE

I have killed more vampires than you have ever even *seen*.

ALFIE

Are you threatening me?

NEIGE

I'm *warning* you.

ALFIE

Bite me.

NEIGE

No.

ALFIE LAUGHS SOURLY

NEIGE

Stop it. I'm sick of you being this way. Stop.

ALFIE

Maybe you should have just let me die.

SLAP

NEIGE

How dare you. How dare you!

ALFIE

I'm useless.

NEIGE

What is--- what in the name of any god inspired this nonsense?!

ALFIE

I can't— I can't fix him. I-- I can't fix him.

NEIGE

What?

ALFIE

I— I— I've been trying to fix him and it won't WORK, what is the point of me?

NEIGE

None! Nothing! Ce n'est pas! Le rien! Stop being this way!

ALFIE

What way?

NEIGE

Like him!

A HEAVY SILENCE

ALFIE

(quietly)

Maybe that's what I want to be.

NEIGE

Shut up. Stop. Enough.

ALFIE

You said I could take all the time I needed.

NEIGE

It has been months and you are still obsessed. You aren't *grieving*.

ALFIE

It looks different for everyone.

NEIGE

It does not look like *this*. Little love, you have his body on a table in the backroom.

ALFIE

What if he's still in there!

NEIGE

You would have reached him by now.

ALFIE

Don't say that! Don't ask me to stop.

NEIGE

I wouldn't. I'm not.

ALFIE SNIFFLESS

ALFIE

Why isn't he decaying, Neige?

NEIGE

I don't know.

ALFIE

Could you risk it?

NEIGE

I'll remind you that I loved him, too. It was different but it was still love.

ALFIE

I-- I know. I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

NEIGE

Elaborate. What didn't you mean?

ALFIE

You-- it's. There's times when you talk like *I'm* already dead. Like-- like you're always thinking about how things will look to you when they become the past, even when they're happening.

NEIGE

Oh.

ALFIE
Sorry.

NEIGE
No. No, perhaps you're right and I am guilty of this. Perhaps. Perhaps.

ALFIE
I'm sorry.

NEIGE
Please. Whatever this is, grief or not, I don't like what it is doing to you. I don't like how it's twisting you. You're becoming obsessed and I-- I can't carry on like this, in such proximity to you exhibiting this behaviour. The last time I saw you look alive was when we caught Sherman and that-- that does not feel right.

ALFIE
What do you mean?

NEIGE
At first it was good, non? You seemed to take a real interest. I can get on board for revenge, Alfie, but. I don't think that is what you want, is it?

ALFIE

I don't know what I want.

NEIGE

No. You don't. That's okay.

ALFIE

What do *you* want?

NEIGE

Me?

ALFIE

I'm not fucking talking to Casper, am I?

NEIGE

Not this time.

ALFIE

Neige. Come on.

NEIGE

Mostly I just want it to be alright. To live my life. To get on with it.

ALFIE

To get on with it?

NEIGE

Oui? What is wrong with that?

ALFIE

Just. You make it sound like you're gritting your teeth to get through the day, is that really how you live? How you have lived, for ten thousand fucking years?

NEIGE

I do not know! I do not know. Why are you asking me this, eh?!

ALFIE

Fucking hell, man, you were asking me!

NEIGE

It's a stupid fucking question.

ALFIE

It was your fucking question.

NEIGE

Then perhaps I am stupid.

ALFIE

You're not.

NEIGE

At times I have wondered if this is the secret to my longevity, non?

ALFIE

What is?

NEIGE

An absence of thinking.

ALFIE

Oh, fuck off. You think way hard about stuff. You're just. I don't know.

NEIGE

Non, continuer, what am I?

ALFIE

You're like. Straightforward about stuff.

NEIGE

Simple.

ALFIE

No. I mean you. Like. Fuck, this is too hard.

NEIGE

I am grateful that you try to save my self-esteem. You are kind. I respect this about you.

ALFIE

You're kind, too.

NEIGE

Am I? That is interesting. I do not think Casper would have agreed with you.

ALFIE

Well, maybe not. But. You know.

NEIGE

I do not know.

ALFIE

It's like you said. Casper was an idiot.

NEIGE

Ah.

ALFIE HUMS A NOTE OF LAUGHTER

NEIGE'S VOICE CATCHES IN HIS THROAT

ALFIE
Neige--

NEIGE
I didn't want it to be this way. I tried very-- I tried so hard to keep him safe.

ALFIE
I know you did.

NEIGE
No. You don't understand. You don't get it. You will never get it!

ALFIE
What won't I get! Talk about double fucking standards, Christ! Stop being such a fucking nob and just tell me!

NEIGE

Ugh.

ALFIE

You protected him from something. I-- I listened back to the tapes. When we first met, you told me you cleaned up his messes. What did you mean by that?

NEIGE

Ugh, Casper, he-- he had a way. He had a way of getting himself to these, uh, situations.

ALFIE

What do you mean?

NEIGE

I can't do this in here.

ALFIE

Yeah. Yeah, okay.

DOOR OPENS

FOOTSTEPS

ALFIE

Come in here. I started the fire.

NEIGE

Oh. Good. That's. Yes. Good.

ALFIE

Why are you looking at me like that?

NEIGE

I'm just-- you've done something which could be argued to be kind to yourself. This is a good thing.

ALFIE

Yeah well.

NEIGE
Well.

ALFIE
Come in, then.

FOOT STEPS

A FIRE CRACKLES SOFTLY

NEIGE
Ah. It's warm. It's nice that it's warm.

ALFIE
I suppose I just never think to. You know. Be warm. But it is nice, yeah.

MOVEMENT

ALFIE

Sit down. Tell me about Casper.

NEIGE

He has always had an habit of getting himself into these positions...

ALFIE

Mm. He was pretty flexible.

NEIGE

Oui, he was. And an excellent follow. But that is not what I meant.

ALFIE

He was a good follow, for you?

NEIGE

Sometimes.

ALFIE

Intriguing.

NEIGE

He was flexible, as you say. How was he with you?

ALFIE TAKES A BREATH

ALFIE

Um. Careful.

NEIGE

The marks on your neck tell otherwise.

ALFIE

Hah. No, they really don't. I'd be dead if he wasn't careful, wouldn't I?

NEIGE

Yes. I suppose you would.

ALFIE

I bet everyone's a follow for you.

NEIGE LAUGHS INDULGENTLY

NEIGE

And why is that?

ALFIE

Well. You're you, aren't you?

NEIGE

And what am I supposed conclude from that, hm?

ALFIE

You're just. You're very.

NEIGE

Not this again. Surely we have progressed beyond the size of my--

ALFIE

Neige. Firstly, it's unlikely *that* is something I'll ever forget about. And secondly that's not what I meant. And you know it. And you're *hiding*.

NEIGE

I am, aren't I? Funny how you see this. Funny.

ALFIE

Just learned how to look.

NEIGE

Yes. You have.

ALFIE

Why do you look worried?

NEIGE

You remember what I said? How it's nice you do not know? How I'm being selfish?

ALFIE

Yeah. I remember.

NEIGE

I am a selfish creature. Let me hide, please. Just for a little. Just whilst I can.

ALFIE

Okay.

NEIGE

Merci.

ALFIE

Mercy indeed.

NEIGE

This is not what you want to know about, is it? You wanted to know about Casper and his proclivity for situations.

ALFIE

I-- I don't know. *Do* I want to know about Casper's situations?

NEIGE

I cannot answer this for you, petit chou.

FIRE CRACKLES

ALFIE

Why did you go to him?

NEIGE

Ah. You won't let me hide twice, I suppose.

ALFIE

Nope. Sorry.

NEIGE

Lies, you are not remotely sorry.

ALFIE

You're right, I'm not. But I let you hide all the time. Way more than I try to chase you out.

THE FIRE CRACKLES

NEIGE

I thought you might-- I figured you might be grateful for some time with me out of earshot.

ALFIE

Hmm. Were you? Out of earshot?

NEIGE

Mostly.

ALFIE

God. Things are so fucking complicated.

NEIGE

Always. Always.

ALFIE

What messes did you have to clean up for Casper.

NEIGE

Well. What a question. Blood. Spit. Other bodily--

ALFIE

Neige!

NEIGE

My apologies. In defence, I am distracted.

ALFIE

By what?

NEIGE

You look rather delicious in the firelight. It brings this sort of-- there is a flush in your cheeks. I can smell yesterday's hunt on you.

ALFIE

You can?

NEIGE

Mmm. You've come a long way. You're getting good at it, the hunt. I would let you bite me in a second.

ALFIE

Yeah well. You've never been that difficult to convince of that, to be honest. I wonder how much of a vampire you really are.

NEIGE

I'm quite a lot of vampire. You say you will not forget this but you see?! I do have to remind you.

ALFIE GIGGLES

ALFIE

You're ridiculous.

NEIGE

And proud of it.

ALFIE

Hmm. It's quite a triumph.

NEIGE

What is?

ALFIE

The way you are. You're so... I don't. Know. What you want from me.

NEIGE

What would I want from you, Alfie?

ALFIE

That's what I mean, I just. I don't know.

NEIGE

I want exactly what you want to give me. I will take nothing more, and often less, if I think it will be safer.

ALFIE

Ha. Why do you get to be the one who decides what's too much?

NEIGE

Because I am so *very*, I suppose.

ALFIE

That you are, Neige.

FIRE CRACKLES

NEIGE

You feel lost and afraid of yourself, still. You are scared of what you could become if you were left to make all the choices. You fear that the space inside of you is so wide and so deep that you could drink the world dry and never be sated. I decide because you need a hand on the back of your neck, not to tell you when to stop, but to remind you that you can, and you will.

ALFIE

How do you know I will?

NEIGE

Because I will fucking tell you to if you don't. That is why.

FIRE CRACKLES

NEIGE

My my. Your eyes are red, Alfie. Are you going to hunt me?

ALFIE MAKES A FLUSTERED LITTLE GASP

NEIGE HUMS

NEIGE

Come, lie here with me.

ALFIE

But you-- last night. Afterwards. You said about me pushing for something you couldn't offer.

NEIGE

Do I look pushed to you?

THE FIRE CRACKLES.

NEIGE

Look at me, Alfie. Do I look pushed?

ALFIE

No.

NEIGE

So will you come to me?

ALFIE

Alright.

MOVEMENT. THE FIRE CRACKLES.

NEIGE

Salut.

ALFIE
Hi.

NEIGE
What is it you are thinking?

ALFIE
Um.

NEIGE
Don't edit, just answer.

ALFIE
We're close now.

NEIGE
We are.

ALFIE
Like last night.

NEIGE

Yes.

ALFIE

Exactly like last night?

NEIGE

Do you want it to be?

ALFIE

I don't. I don't know.

(pause)

Can I see the mark?

NEIGE

Yes.

SOUNDS OF MOVEMENT

NEIGE

Your handiwork. Does it meet your intentions?

ALFIE

I don't know what my intentions were, to be honest.

NEIGE

You wanted my attention. This certainly got it, unsubtle though your methods may have been.

ALFIE

It's redder than I thought it would be. And it's flat. I thought it would be raised.

NEIGE

Ah, no, you may not have tongued this bite mark shut, but the others you're looking at are... they were given to me in very specific circumstances.

ALFIE

You didn't want them?

NEIGE

No.

ALFIE

What if I bit every one and licked them shut?

NEIGE

You would do that?

ALFIE

If it helped.

NEIGE

Perhaps some time we can try, with one. To see if it will make the mark fade.

ALFIE

I'm sorry you got hurt like that.

NEIGE

Me too. I'm sorry you've been hurt in ways you didn't like, too.

ALFIE
Yeah.

NEIGE
Do you want to talk about it?

ALFIE
What?

NEIGE
Last night.

ALFIE
Fuck you, Neige.

NEIGE
You did, yes.

ALFIE
Neige!

NEIGE

That is my name, oui.

ALFIE

Fucking idiot.

NEIGE

Perhaps.

LONG MOMENT OF QUIET. THE FIRE CRACKLES.

ALFIE

Remember in the beginning. When you brought me here. When we slept on the floor together.

NEIGE

I do. I will remember that for as long as my mind will let me hold onto it.

ALFIE SIGHS

NEIGE

Quoi?

ALFIE

You're doing it again. You're. You're talking about the future like you know I won't be in it. You're not a prophet. Stop talking like we're in the past. We're not.

NEIGE

I know. I feel alarmingly present.

ALFIE

I'm still angry.

NEIGE

I know.

ALFIE

Are you dazzling me on purpose, now?

NEIGE

Am I dazzling you?

ALFIE

Come on, you must know it.

NEIGE

I do not. Pardonne-moi. Did I dazzle you last night?

ALFIE

No. Maybe. Yes. But, you're just so. So.

NEIGE

So what?

ALFIE

You're warm. It makes you smell like... I don't. Pine. Mint. How can you smell warm and cold at the same time? It's maddening.

NEIGE HUMS

ALFIE

Ah, stop looking so pleased with yourself. What about you? What are you thinking?

NEIGE

Bite your lip.

ALFIE

What? Neige--

NEIGE

Bite it.

ALFIE

Um. Okay?

NEIGE

Good. Harder.

ALFIE
Ow.

NEIGE
Very good. Look at that. Your blood smells different when you're warm, too.

ALFIE
What do I smell like?

NEIGE
Earth after rain. Fine brandy. A twist of winter chill, like frost clinging to the first peaches of spring, flesh so soft it bursts before you bite it and leaves sticky juice running all down your chin.

ALFIE
Oh.

NEIGE
You're going to turn off the recording now and lie here with me, like this.

ALFIE
Am I?

NEIGE

Only if you want to.

ALFIE

Okay.

NEIGE

Turn the recording off, because it is a thing we make for the future, and everything on it will be the past. I will show exactly what I want from you. Unsubtly.

[END]