

CW: this episode contains themes of fantasy violence, death, audio distortion

Episode 5: Perfect Attendance

Intro:

The following audio recording is classified documentation for case (static) with The Enclosure, unauthorized access to this information will lead to immediate intervention. Progress further if proper clearance has been given.

(Music)

Dr. Todd Carmen: (via voicemail)

Hey Jared, it's Dr. Carmen. Listen, I know you asked to cash in on some of that paid time off you've got, but I wanted to let you know that I couldn't fulfill your request quite yet. There's one little thing I need you to look into for me first.

*There's some circulating rumors of a former teacher causing some trouble at the local school. I say **former** because she's been dead for about a hundred or so years. I don't know the exact details yet besides what Dr. Rahal heard. Footprints with no source, flying clocks, startled janitors: you know the drill. So, I need you to go and investigate. Since you're just *so good* with those lil' kiddos that come by your place at night, I figured you'd be even better with some *actual* kids. And since you've been doing a little personal community outreach, why not put that to use? Now go see what you can figure out and report back to me. Then we can discuss that vacation time of yours.*

Oh, also, you're welcome for the plumbing fixture, by the way. I know you've been too busy to stop by with a proper thanks, but I'm just glad we could get that all fixed up for you.

Whelp, I'll keep an eye out for your report by the end of the week. See ya 'round.

Jared:

*(in a mocking tone) 'you're welcome for the plumbing fixture by the way' - jeez **louise**. I literally never asked for them to fix my plumbing. I called it. Now he's gonna hold that over my head for gods know how long.*

*I know some folks say that being motivated by spite ain't the best way to live, but it's a real hell of a motivator. I don't plan to delete this voicemail 'til I get that chat about time off because if I get brushed off about that PTO *again* after everything then I'm going to remind him that he guaranteed me a *talk* about it.*

*I mean, they normally send me out over the *dangerous* stuff. But this was just *tedious*. More like Todd just wanted to send me out on an errand and just threw me out over the first thing that he*

could... I mean, considering that I *drowned* a few weeks ago, this was expected to just be a piece of cake. While it wasn't life threatening, it was *annoying*... and *draining*.

So, today I 'just so happened' to bump into the principal of the local school. I know that she goes to the Chronicle Inn's country store a lot, especially during her lunch breaks. So I went in the afternoon and spent some time there talking with Ester and Laura as I waited for her to arrive. Ester was wearing a really lovely dress and a floral apron, the pale pink accented her gray hair really nicely. Laura was already in her denim overalls and plaid flannel, apparently she was wanting to get some woodworking done in her workshop, but then she'd decided to stay in and help Ester out with managing the shop for the afternoon rush ya know, since all the folks started pouring in on their lunch breaks.

And that afternoon rush was what I'd waited for, because that's when Mrs. Anika Ralsh showed up. We haven't really ever talked much, just enough to know each other's names and general identities. So when she saw me, she greeted me with a small smile and a wave. She asked how I'd been doing, y'know what I'd been up to- the usual.

I had planned how I was going to broach the subject of the haunting in the school, considering that it's not exactly something that just... comes up naturally in conversation, I needed to find some inconspicuous way to shift focus to that topic in a way that wouldn't trigger too many suspicious flags. But then she dropped the bombshell on me.

She said that she'd spoken to Darius and that he mentioned I had some curiosity with the supernatural- which was weird because I remember mentioning that passively to him like... once when I panicked when he asked what I do for a living. That was a while ago. I'm shocked he remembered, so I basically told her what I'd told him.

Yeah, I'm a scientist who studies natural phenomena around here, but I also have an interest in supernatural phenomena- but that's more of a hobby... which is a bold-faced lie, but far more acceptable than the truth.

The script in my head of how the conversation would go was now entirely thrown off which did, in all honesty, throw me completely off my rhythm. But she actually got far more to the point than I would have planned to, so I guess it worked out for the best.

Anika said that she hadn't been sure who to reach out to about this, but when Darius had mentioned me she thought it'd be worth a shot to ask me to look into things. That there's the ghost of a deceased teacher that keeps stirring up trouble at the local school. It was a former teacher who taught 5th graders back in the 80's or something like that. She taught up until the day she died and she's rumored to still linger around- but she's been getting more disruptive than before and it's getting a bit out of hand.

So Anika asked if I knew any way to get this ghost to calm down. But to not get *rid* of her. Apparently this Mrs. Alice Caller has been a part of the school community for so long that even

if she scares or startles people sometimes, they don't really want her gone. She startles the staff more than anything, the teachers and all that, but the students seem to get a kick out of it.

*'Every building has their **character**, after all'* is what Anika said.

I guess you could consider a 'haunting' to be a splash of 'character'.

Anyways, so yeah, after chatting for a bit and pretending that I had my knowledge of ghosts and hauntings due to at-home research and not, my 9-to-5.... Even if it's more like a 6-to-5.

I told her I could investigate, but I'd probably wanna do it when there weren't, y'know, students in the halls. She asked if I was free literally that evening, and considering Todd was basically holding my paid time off as hostage, I said of course. I mean, the sooner I got it done, the sooner I could have some sort of vacation. As preemptive compensation she bought me lunch which was really nice, and told me to come by school after I finished eating. She took her food to-go, but I stayed and ate there at the Inn and chatted with Ester and Laura a bit more.

I also texted Darius and asked if he told Anika about my... 'supernatural interests'. He said yes and apologized if he shouldn't have told her, but I said that it was fine and that I was mostly just surprised that he'd remembered. I'd mentioned it a while back and we don't ever talk about it, so the fact he remembered, it was sweet. I mean, especially considering I let him do most of the talking in conversation. He has a nice voice and tells nice stories. I was flattered more than anything.

After I ate and played some mindless puzzle games on my phone, I headed out towards the school. If I'd really wanted to, I could have walked, but I'd driven to the Inn anyways and had no reason to just leave my car behind.

I got there a little before the last class ended and just went to the front office. After some light chitchat, I was given a tour. It was just one floor, maybe like... 13 classrooms in total? Not including the small computer lab, the gym, the restrooms or closets. I saw teachers wrapping up classes and students getting ready to head home. Nothing seemed off during the first walk-through. She asked me when I got into tracking the supernatural, and I told her about two years ago... not a lie, I guess. She asked what I did for The Enclosure.

'We really don't know what it is you all do, I guess we're just curious...' is what she'd said.

I felt like she was reading every movement and microexpression in response to whatever my answer would be. I kind of panicked.

I told her I just keep tabs on natural anomalies. Animal behavior, primarily. I told her I'm involved in monitoring wildlife just to make sure that the ecosystem is in balance and stuff like that. Then I quickly changed the topic because I know jack-diddly 'bout biology beyond the basics.

I got to talking with Anika about what's been happening... which was what Todd had said and then some. Flying clocks, foot-prints, and startled staff... but there were also a few other things as well.

Things apparently turn on and off by themselves, like the janitor's vacuums or the lights. One time the cleaning staff heard stuff moving around in an empty room and then when they investigated the room, apparently a bunch of desks got moved around and flipped over. Seems that this Mrs. Caller has also been knocking over projectors and has made things go missing, especially in the old classroom where she taught.

After Anika showed me around the whole school, greeting kids as classes let out- which, let me tell you, made me *incredibly* uncomfortable. Again. I'm *not* good with kids. So I just kind of gave awkward waves and half-smiles to them... anyways, after she showed me around and lead me back to Mrs. Caller's former classroom was, she asked if I needed anything before she'd go back to work and leave me to meander. Right before she walked away though, she asked if I had any tools for the 'ghost hunting'.

I hate calling it that. I'm not *hunting* the ghosts or whatever. I'm more just trying to communicate, check-in and see what's going on. They don't always wanna talk, and I definitely respect that. Heck, there's times I sure don't wanna talk with people.

I told her I mostly wanted to just check out the place first, I would bring my equipment in from my car once all the students were gone... she asked if I needed to wait til night-time and I told her that that's just a rumor. Paranormal investigations often happen at night because it's quieter from interruptions and easier to use the night-vision, but if the ghost has been haunting during the day then it would make sense to investigate during the day.

So we walked back to the front door, she went into what I guess is her office and I went and grabbed my kit that I keep in my trunk. It's got a EMF sensor, a voice recorder- which is basically just a fancier version of what I use for these journal entries- an infrared thermometer, a high-power camera, other nifty tools. Mostly the basics, they didn't give me the heavy-duty kit for this assignments like these. *Of course...*

I made my way back towards Mrs. Caller's former classroom and gave passing greetings to anyone I passed and made eye contact with. Just a little smile and a wave, asking "how are you?" as neither party planned for an extensive conversation.

I got over there and introduced myself as I set up the equipment. I definitely *felt* something. I wasn't sure if it was *her* or not, but with the way that it felt? Well *I* felt more comfortable- it was more *familiar*. So I told her my name, that I was there just to communicate and see if I could help calm her down at all, I explained what I was setting up and what it would do. I felt my muscles relax as I just felt far more comfortable in this situation than being surrounded by students talking to Anika.

Nothing against Anika, I felt quite comfortable talking to her back at the restaurant. I... think it was just the whole being 'surrounded by people' thing.

So, I got everything set up and started to poke around the classroom. I started asking general questions, ones that I'm encouraged to ask based on 'protocol'. "What do you want?" "How did you die?", "Why are you here?" and so on... but I hate those questions. What makes anyone think that the spirits would want to answer them anyway?

So, after I got very little response, I sat down on top of one of the desks, criss-cross applesauce, put the equipment down, and just... chatted.

I asked how she was feeling. I apologized if it was bothersome being pestered with questions- especially if she'd been primarily being ignored other than people prying. I asked why she lingered in her former classroom, like why *this* place... that was when a small frame holding what looked like an obituary caught my attention, hung above the door. So, I asked her about it.

I heard some beeps from my pile of tools, but I didn't need to pick it up. I knew that particular beeping. It wasn't an auditory reception, it was an energy spike. And I could *feel* the shift in the... atmosphere? The *mood* of the room? At first I'd just felt like I was being watched, but I then felt like it was more... that I was encroaching in someone else's living space, that I was somewhere that I shouldn't be, or just doing something I shouldn't be doing.

I slid myself off the desk and went to start gathering my supplies, but then the feeling went away.

Seems like she'd just been upset that I'd been sitting with my feet up on the desk like that.

So I muttered an apology and just made my way over towards the door to take a closer look at the obituary. It felt like something was practically breathing down the back of my neck- not *literally*, but... I don't know, I could just feel it there. I turned around slowly and saw, unsurprisingly, *nothing*. But I knew in my gut that she was right there.

Then what scared me more than anything was that the classroom door flew open behind me- not enough to slam on the wall or anything, but enough to make a sound. It was just some student who apparently left their notebook behind or something. She couldn't have been more than what, 13? She was sweet, asked what I was doing back there- I told her a half-truth, which is pretty much just my *life* at this point. I was there investigating on behalf of Mrs. Ralsh, which in my opinion is *not* a lie. Just... not the whole truth.

She then went on to tell me about an experience that her dad had last year. Apparently her dad's one of the school janitors that had an incident early one morning when he'd come in to clean the place during the weekend. He was helping wax the floor in the halls by the back door and at some point he turned to see footprints in the wax finishing on the tile. Her dad got pretty freaked out since he knew that he did not hear or see anyone walk by and the footprints were all

too small to be his. He followed the footprints to the back door. He tried the handle, but the door was locked- it was a door that needed a key to be unlocked so he used his key to open the door to discover footprints leading from the door in the direction of the town cemetery which wasn't too far away. The same cemetery that Mrs. Caller was buried in.

I asked her if her dad had experienced anything else since then with Mrs. Caller, and she said that he's seen loads of stuff, but normally he sees the aftermath... like, he has to clean up the messes that she makes if the teachers can't for whatever reason.

So I thanked her, she grabbed her things, then she wished me luck before she hurried out.

So once again I stood alone in the classroom. Well, alone besides the presence of Mrs. Caller- which was definitely still strong. Maybe it was a bit smarmy, but I asked her:

'Now why would the girl wish me luck?'

I was told that Mrs. Caller isn't aggressive towards people, but she definitely wants her presence to be known... and I guess she didn't like the idea of 'disrespect' in my tone in her own classroom. Suddenly there was a blur in front of me and the sound of shattering glass, the framed obituary that hung above the door had been knocked off the wall and landed practically at my feet which made me jump instinctively.

Thankfully my boots are sturdy enough that I didn't worry too much about getting hurt from the glass, but I noticed that there was something tucked behind the obituary in the frame. My hands are already fairly scarred up from work and I don't think the nerve-endings in my fingertips really work as well as they used to, so I kinda just reached down without thinking. I brushed away the glass and picked up the paper so that I could examine it. The obituary itself was hardly remarkable: exactly what I'd expect from a beloved school teacher who passed away many years ago. But what was *behind* it was odd.

An old... Enclosure business card. I still have it with me, it looks probably as old as the obituary if not older. It's the same general logo, but it doesn't look as modern as if they've updated it since then. The colors aren't as bright, aren't as jarring... but something about it made my stomach twist. It felt *wrong*? Not like the uncanny valley wrong, but just... I don't like looking at it.

(sigh)

I pocketed the business card and carefully put the obituary on the desk. I asked what Mrs. Caller was trying to tell me, but the energy felt... tired? Stained? A little concerned. I asked for literally any other message, any other sign, *anything* that could be helpful with whatever *this*-this business card was (flap the business card by the mic).

Then I saw chairs in the classroom start to move. Instead of them all being pushed into the desks, they all were shifted as if... whoever was seated in the chairs were all facing *me*. I was the focus at that point. It suddenly felt like I was being watched far more intensely than I've been in a haunting situation. It was like I was standing in front of a crowd who were all watching me with narrowed scrutinizing eyes.

At first I just gave a huff and said 'oh ha ha, very funny-' but then the smell of something *sweet*? It was a mild smell, not like anything else I've smelled before, but as soon as that the smell hit my senses my chest hurt and my stomach churned.

I looked back at the obituary on the desk and saw Mrs. Caller's smiling face, then looked up to see the words 'Do your homework' written on the whiteboard in neat handwriting and one of the markers uncapped on the little storage ledge thing.

So I told her... okay. I would. But I had to leave. I felt sick which has never happened in a situation like this before. I normally have a gut of steel, but something about that sweet smell just shook me to my core. I hurriedly capped the marker, wiped off the whiteboard, then rushed over to start powering down my equipment that I'd hardly even used.

I have been chased, drowned, attacked, and so many worse things than having empty chairs turned to face me. But my heart was thudding in my chest and my palms started to sweat. I needed to *leave*. The sweet smell still lingered and I couldn't *stand* it.

I packed up my equipment and just got out of there. As I made my way back towards the front door, I knew I couldn't be seen by anyone like that. I couldn't stand the idea of anyone's eyes on me at that point.

I ducked into the bathroom and tucked myself in a stall. I put my box down on the floor and just sat on the toilet before I just... stared at my own hands? My scarred, now nicked with glass fingers, the creases in my palms, the swirls of my fingertips- I just reminded myself that I was *there*. The sweet smell was replaced by the smell of cleaning supplies and other... musty smells. While it wouldn't normally be a pleasant smell, it was far better than whatever I'd smelled previously.

After a few deep breaths I finally stood up and started to prepare to leave. That was when my bathroom stall flew open to reveal... *nobody*. It was more like Mrs. Caller was telling me to skedaddle on home, get to working on my 'homework'. I don't know why I couldn't fully see her like the ghost at the Chronicle Inn, but I could surely *feel* her presence strongly enough.

I'll admit, I got a little huffy with her. I told her it was rude to barge into a stall like that and that I was getting ready. Considering I hadn't actually used the bathroom I just grabbed my stuff and headed out. Thankfully I made it to the front entrance without really catching anyone's attention. I was actually even able to just slip out the front door without anyone noticing me, or at least

they didn't call out to me. I felt a little bad about leaving without saying goodbye to Anika, especially after only being there for like an hour, but I just wanted to get home.

And... now I'm home. And what was my homework? Well, I decided to look more into this Alice Caller. She had a husband who passed away not long before she did, that husband worked in town and apparently had some ties with the Enclosure. Not an employee, they don't really hire townsfolk, but seemingly a friend of a former employee. I did hours of digging after I got home and found mention in a newspaper of him and a Dr. Severin Kelder-.. I don't know why that name stuck out to me, but it did. I don't know if I've seen it on a research file before or what, but I'm going to look more into it when I have my work computer at the lab tomorrow.

Maybe Mrs. Caller saw the Enclosure logo on my equipment or something? But why was that business card even there? This business card isn't even for a particular person- I mean it has a phone number on it, but no name. I don't recognize the number and when I looked through my roster of numbers, it didn't match anything. So perhaps it was an older, no longer used, number.

Also, Todd said that Mrs Caller died like a hundred years ago. Well, if this business card from The Enclosure was there, then that's impossible. The Enclosure settled here in like the 1930's. I think Todd was just exaggerating. Also, both Anika and the obituary said that she taught and died in the 80's. Sooo... whatever, not that that really matters.

I put the old Enclosure business card away in the back of one of my drawers, I don't wanna look at it any more than I have to. It reminds me of the sweet smell in the classroom and I hate it. I normally love sweets and sweet smelling things, but something about that particular smell. I don't know. It triggers flight-or-fight down to my very core even if I *know* logically that I'm safe.

Just thinking about is sittin' me on pins and needles.

... ooooh gods I didn't tell anyone about the broken glass. A janitor probably had to clean it up, I totally forgot. Now I feel like a *jerk*. Should I send an apology? Should I call in the morning?

(vague tapping in the background)

Ooooh I hear you! But you're not coming in. Not after last time. I *don't* wanna have to replace my couch again. I told you to just please... please leave me alone. Why do you even want in my place so bad? There's other houses for you to knock on!

(Deep inhale, shaky exhale)

(*to himself*) They're just kids, Jared. They're just... doing whatever it is that they do. There's no reason to shout at them. They don't know better. Sorry.

I'm going to stop the research for the night and get some rest. I've stayed up way too late and I think the black-eyed children are drawn to my house due to the fact that my lights are still on.

I'm gonna call Anika in the morning and see if I could come back Friday after school. Have the place relatively to myself, examine a bit further. It also gives me time between now and then to research. I know Todd wanted the files on his desk by the end of the week, but I could always go in Friday afternoon and drop off the files off Saturday. Hell, still 'by the end of the week', and he never specified what day.

So. Till next time, I guess.

This is Dr. Jared Hel, signing off.

Credits:

"Jar of Rebuke" is written and produced by Casper Oliver, who is also the voice of Dr. Jared Hel.
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Dr. Todd Carmen is voiced by Conrad Miszuk
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The intro is read by Nessa R, and credits are read by Ashlee Craft who has created the podcast's official graphics.
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Music was created by TheMenniss (spelled M-E-N-N-I-S-S), who you can find and support on Bandcamp, Spotify, and Twitch.
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Official transcripts edited by Tyler Hall (he/him)
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And now, if you've been enjoying "Jar of Rebuke", check out this other queer horror podcast:
"Dos After You"

(ad for "Dos: After You" plays here, then episode ends)