The Attic Monologues - Episode 48 Transcript

CONTENT WARNINGS:
Discussion of needles and fear of needles, child labour, totalitarian government and control of information, hallucinations
Description of sensory deprivation, PTSD, fear of the dark, war
References to death and dead bodies, unreality, blood, destruction of property, fire, riots, sickness

[THEME TUNE FADES IN.]

MORGAN
Planar Prod presents: The Attic Monologues. Episode Forty-Eight - Both Alike in Dignity.

[THEME TUNE FADES OUT.]

[RUSHING.]

[PAGES RUSTLE.]

[OMINOUS HUMMING.]

[PEN SCRATCHING.]

AUTHOR
You have wondered about those who came before you, of course. Their happily ever after, which seems such a simple thing. Working a quiet job in a cafe, or a, uh- ooh, a library, afraid to step outside. Still living in fear of the monster that first hunted them.

Did they have aspirations, once? Did they dream of greatness, as you do? Are you fated, even if you survive this, to jump at shadows for the rest of your life?

Usually, this would be the part in which the narrator says- “Well, my dear, that is up to you to decide.” And you would feel rallied and comforted, that you would learn from past mistakes.

I fear this is not that kind of tale.

It pays, to live in the walls of eternity for so many years. To read, and tell stories, and see the patterns that weave them together. To see visitors from a hundred other worlds, and recognise how little changes from one to the next.

The only thing that truly changes is the rules. One man’s denouement is another man’s inciting incident. Isn’t that how the idiom goes? In one narrative, the protagonist is punished for following in the footsteps of their predecessors. In another, rewarded for treading the familiar path, for recognising their place in the weave.

In one, the gods are distant things. In another, they have their hands in the guts of the tapestry, rearranging its entrails like string.

Sometimes, these things even occur in the same story.

[UNIVERSE FADES OUT.]

[UNIVERSE FADES IN.]

[BATHROOM FAN WHIRS.]

NYX
Come on. It’s just a needle. You have tattoos. You have piercings. You’ve had vaccines. You can handle one little needle.

[NYX BREATHES.]

NYX
Bella? Can you come in here for a sec?

[THUMP.]

BELLA
Yes? What's wrong?

NYX
Nothing- nothing's wrong. I just. Could you? Could you do it for me?

BELLA
I- um. Of course.

[DOOR CLOSES.]

BELLA Cont.
Are you sure? This is- big. Huge.

NYX
There's no one I'd rather have do it for me. Also, my hands are shaking like crazy. I'd probably stab, like, my femoral artery or something. That's the one in your leg, right?

BELLA
Yes. Please don't stab yourself in the artery.

[RUSTLING.]

NYX
Thanks.

BELLA
Do you- uh, want a countdown? Or a surprise?

NYX
Um. Countdown, maybe?

BELLA
Okay, okay. Just breathe. Three, two…

[PRICK.]

NYX
Ow!

BELLA
Are you okay? Did I hit something?

NYX
No, no, I just- I'm so bad with needles. How am I gonna do this every three weeks?

BELLA
I- I could keep doing it. I- may have read up. Um. A lot. About it?

NYX
Really? That's so- cute. You're so cute.

BELLA
Well, I, I just- I wanted to be helpful. And understand. Y'know?

NYX
Is it- um. Is it weird to say I love you? I know we've, y'know. We've been saying it for years, obviously, but now- I know it's different to say it now. That it might, mean- something different. If it's too early, if you think we shouldn't then I, don't worry about it-

BELLA
I love you too.

NYX
I love you so much. You're gonna make me cry.

[LAUGHTER.]

BELLA
Sometimes… sometimes I forget that this is real.

NYX

What do you mean?

BELLA

I just… I, uh, I wanted you for so long. And then we dreamed a life where we'd had each other for years. And sometimes- I know we weren't in the forest for very long, but I remember- I *remember* it like it all happened. That alternate history. Only in snatches but… [SIGH.] sometimes I remember what your blood feels like on my hands. What if feels like to share a life with you in Trinovantum. And so, when I wake up, and we're back here… it feels like everything was a dream, even these last few weeks.

NYX

I'm the same. Like we've been together for years but also only weeks. Like we're married, but also we're not?

BELLA

[LAUGH] I think Lola might kill you if you propose to me without warning her.

NYX

Oh? So it's my job to propose?

BELLA

Um, aren't you the guy in this relationship? Or was all that testosterone I just injected into you for show?

NYX

Well, that's not very feminist of you, Bella Blackwell.

[LAUGHTER.]

BELLA

Say it again?

NYX

Bella. Blackwell. Light of my life. You're *such* a-

[A PORTAL OPENS IN THE WALL, DISGORGING ATHRIE.]

[NYX AND BELLA YELL IN VARIOUS STATES OF SURPRISE.]

BELLA
Athrie!

NYX
What the hell! You can't just- I'm half naked, you can't just walk into our bathroom. What if I was in the bath?? Or on the loo?

ATHRIE
Protagonist. I need you to find the Author.

NYX
What?

ATHRIE
The Author. Find him. *Now*.

NYX
Um. Okay. First off, it doesn't work like that, I can't just 'find' an omnipotent god who doesn't *want* to be found. You're literally the one who told me that. Second, hi?! How are you? I haven't seen you since, oh, I don't know, you lied to my face, helped imprison my girlfriend in a monologue, betrayed all of us to sell out to aforementioned omnipotent god. So third, why the fuck should I help you? And actually, fourth, what makes you think I haven't been doing that this entire goddamn time? *You're* the one working for him, can't you just ask him where he is?

ATHRIE
Not anymore.

NYX
Finally realised you're on the wrong side?

ATHRIE

There are no such things as sides, Ryland. There are those that pull the strings, and those that dance at the ends of them. I thought if I- if I helped- if I did what he asked- then Ambrose- he would-

BELLA
He found out, didn't he? Or you told him? And now you think can fix things by finding the Author. Right?

ATHRIE
[LAUGH] Not even close.

NYX
Speaking from personal experience, that is *not* gonna help. Like, at all. You'd be better off making him breakfast, telling him the *whole* truth, and grovelling at his feet for at least a month.

BELLA
Um, that didn't work when I tried it?

NYX
You didn't make me breakfast.

BELLA
So the way to your heart all this time was a cup of coffee and some pancakes.

NYX
Always has been, babe.

ATHRIE
I *can't* do that, alright?

NYX
Um, why not?

ATHRIE
Because he's *GONE*. [BREATH] He's gone.

BELLA
W-What do you mean, gone?

ATHRIE
I mean *gone*, Crow, what do you think I mean? I went home after we-talked. I decided to tell him everything, to let him make his own decisions. I returned to find this on the bed.

[PAPER RUSTLING.]

BELLA
"Consequences, Librarian Dane."

[PAPER RUSTLING.]

NYX
I recognise this handwriting. You don't think-?

ATHRIE
The Author has taken him. Trapped him. In a monologue. I am certain of it.

BELLA
How long? W-When did this happen?

ATHRIE
I left for my shift, and when I returned, he was gone. No more than an hour can have passed in this world.

NYX
What did you do? Finally piss off the Author enough he decided to punish you? Doesn't feel great, right? When your significant other gets imprisoned in a monologue-

BELLA
Nyx. Don't.

NYX
I- sorry. I'm sorry.

ATHRIE
He is… not like you, Bella. He will not survive well in a monologue, nor recover from it. He doesn't do well in memory or confined spaces. Or the dark.

BELLA
I… Nyx is right, Athrie. It's not as simple as just- finding him. I mean, they've been trying for months.

NYX
Let me- get dressed, okay? Let me get dressed and stable and *then*. Then we talk. Then you tell us *everything*. Leave nothing out. If we're going to find him, we need to know- everything. Your deal. Ambrose's narrative. The whole truth.

ATHRIE
Fine.

BELLA
I can make tea. Athrie? Come with?

[UNIVERSE FADES OUT.]

[UNIVERSE FADES IN.]

[BACKGROUND HUM OF THE ROAD OUTSIDE.]

NYX
Right. Now I'm, like, actually decent. Talk.

BELLA
Don't leave anything out. Even if it might seem bad.

ATHRIE
You think I care what you think of me?

BELLA

I think you care what we think of Ambrose. And that he's not perfect. Even if he is to you.

ATHRIE
What do you want to know?

NYX
How did you meet? How did your Narrative go? How did you figure out you were in one? How did you find the Author, the first time? Literally anything and everything.

ATHRIE
Very well. [BREATH.]
We were young, when we met. Ambrose was working as a barista. His parents are record keepers in Trinovantum- they work with the Crow, among other things. He did not want to follow in their footsteps. He was- curious of the outside world. He wanted to meet new people, learn new things. He wanted to see the stars, and the sun, not that- cloudy excuse for a sky.

He was a barista, and I was a spy.

NYX
You were a *spy*?

ATHRIE
Are you going to listen, or are you going to interrupt?

NYX
Sorry.

ATHRIE
The library has not always been the way you see it now. It was more-military. Knowledge was kept prisoner. Very few were allowed entry.

There was a turning point. A few of the worlds wanted to take control, to steal the knowledge for themselves, or for the masses.

This world was one of them. A late player in the game, hoping to take advantage of the carnage and chaos to disseminate texts to those in need.

I was born when the war was already old. Time is malleable in the library, so we measured it in bodies. Hundreds, then thousands.

To be born to the Library was to be born in its service. We never left the Shelves, we never saw other skies. We only read about them. A contract signed before we could string together words.

NYX
That’s literally child labour.

ATHRIE
And I literally told you to stop talking.

BELLA
Um, how did you escape?

ATHRIE
I did not escape. The contracts became mostly obsolete after the war ended, but… I decided to stay.

NYX
Then how did you even meet?

ATHRIE
I was recruited to the war effort. I was sent beyond the walls, to spy on a world that was beginning to make noise. I was told to find the magical community, infiltrate, and report back. Eventually, I was told to deal with the people inciting rebellion.

NYX
And Ambrose was…?

ATHRIE

Ambrose was. His parents are record keepers. He knew the value of information, and how it is hoarded and controlled. He knew that the Library should not continue hoarding its access.

We were both using each other. Until suddenly, we were not. We were protecting each other, and coming clean, and then- [SIGH.] that is when I felt the weight of a Narrative descending upon us.

NYX

I feel like you just skipped over, like, the entire plot.

ATHRIE

What more is there to discuss? I discovered him stealing texts, scrolls theorising the effects of long-term exposure to the void, how it might be making people sick. He hoped to present them to his parents, to convince them that Trinovantum was no longer safe to reside in.

I could have turned him in. I considered it. But I had never known community the way that Ambrose conceptualised it. I knew there must be a reason for him to betray me, because he- was good. Fundamentally good. If he was on the other side, then I was likely on the wrong one.

I let him and his friends go.

NYX

Just like that?

ATHRIE

We talked, later. Ambrose's points made sense to me, and the Library, for all its faults, taught me to value the logical argument above all others. So when logic dictated my home was incorrect, I followed the truth to its conclusion. I helped Ambrose, and discovered other librarians of the same mind as me. We dismantled it from the inside, and… after the war was ended, Aliyah, a librarian from an era far before mine, became the new Head. The doors were opened less discerningly. Ambrose and I were left to our own devices.

NYX

Okay but how did you meet the Author? Why did he agree to leave you alone? Who else was involved in your Narrative?

BELLA

Athrie, why is Ambrose afraid of the dark?

ATHRIE

[SIGH.] That… is my fault. I thought he would be safe, while I went in search of the Author. I thought we had kept his thefts from the Library a secret. But I should have known there were eyes in the walls.

NYX

Literally or figuratively? Okay, sorry, I'll stop interrupting. Keep going.

ATHRIE

I left him for– a day, at most. I returned to find the cafe ablaze. It was the summer of the London riots, so no one noticed its significance. But I knew. The magic on the air, it had a- distinct taste.

I gathered his allies, and we stormed the Library. Many died. [BREATH] Judging by the fire damage, it could not have been more than an hour or two in the outside world since they had taken him. For Ambrose… he believes it to have been around two years.

[NYX AND BELLA GASP.]

ATHRIE Cont.

They kept him in darkness. For so long, he began to see things, to hear things. He did not know what was real. He did not believe I was real.

BELLA

Athrie, I-

ATHRIE

I met the Author the next day. I read every book on his shelf in the Library, and believed it led me to him. In truth, he simply recognised that I was interested in making a deal, desperate enough to do anything, and

positioned himself where I thought he should be. He was… curious. Looking for novelty. The proposition intrigued him.

He let me speak. I knew what a person like him desired: knowledge. Access. A god would have no want for money or leverage. He agreed. Ambrose's Narrative would end, quietly, and he would find his stories elsewhere. In exchange, he would receive unfettered access to the Library and its doors.

[SIGH.] I will not apologise for what I have done. You would do the same.

NYX

I really don't think I would.

ATHRIE

I was not talking to you.
That is the thing about an Innocent. They must always fall to corruption, eventually.

BELLA

Me? I was- Ambrose's Innocent?

ATHRIE

Who else?

NYX

Okay, so. You found the Author because he wanted you to find him. The same way he wanted Bella to find him, the same way he literally showed up to the Caramel & Clove and introduced himself to me for the hell of it, only for me to never be able to find him again. What exactly am I supposed to do here?

ATHRIE

You have power over him, somehow. You have genuinely unsettled him. I have never seen it before. You could find him.

NYX

I've been *trying*, Athrie. Whatever you think I can do, it's not something I know *how* to do. There's no road map. If I could find him myself, I would

have. For now… I don't- I don't think there's anything I can do. Until the Author comes to us- I mean, you know him better than anyone else, *you* were our last hope- if he's gone quiet, he's not going to… I'm sorry.

ATHRIE
Useless. If it was Bella, would you say the same?

NYX
Athrie, I'm really-

ATHRIE
No. I should have known. You're just- *children*. I do not know why I thought you might be useful. You have found what you *believe* to be a happily ever after, and so you walk away from those who once aided you. I understand. I will see myself out.

[CHAIR SCRAPING.]

NYX
Athrie, wait-

BELLA
Please, Athrie-

ATHRIE
Goodbye.

[LIBRARY PORTAL OPENS AND CLOSES.]

[UNIVERSE FADES OUT.]

[THEME TUNE FADES IN.]

MORGAN
Thank you so much for listening to The Attic Monologues. If you're enjoying our show, please consider supporting us through our Patreon or Ko-fi, to help us compensate the hard work our team puts into every episode. You can find links in the shownotes below. Alternately, you can

leave us a review, whisper to the wind, or tell enemies and love interests and friends alike to listen.

This episode was written by Morgan Greensmith and produced by Morgan Greensmith and LM Clohessy. It was directed and script edited by LM Clohessy. The sound design is by Isaac Thompson. The theme tune was composed by Wilkie Morrison.

In this episode you heard the voices of:

KAZ
Kaz Gidman as Athrie Dane.

ATLAS
Atlas Morgan as Nyx Ryland.

BONNIE
Bonnie Calderwood Aspinwall as Bella Blackwell.

ALASDAIR
Alasdair Stuart as The Author.

MORGAN
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The hint for Episode 49 is "Í Vadis Et Vesall". See you then!

[THEME TUNE FADES OUT.]

[UNIVERSE FADES IN.]

[AMBIENT FLAT NOISES.]

SAM

No, but then, *then*, this person, right? They walked through the wall. Like the actual wall of the flat. One moment it's a flat, completely normal wall, except for the hole where the mice used to get in, the next there's a *door*. Magic. Door. And they just walked through it! And the door disappeared! And Nyx and Bella acted like it was totally normal!

[MUMBLED REPLY THROUGH THE PHONE.]

SAM Cont.
No, I didn't go out and ask them what was going on, are you crazy? They're *weird*, Iman. I don't know what kind of shit they're involved in but I want to be on the other side of earth from whatever it is. I didn't see Bella for three months and now they're dating and we have an extra flatmate who I *swear* talks to ghosts. Or something.

[MUMBLED REPLY THROUGH THE PHONE.]

SAM Cont.
Well obviously, no, I haven't seen the ghosts. But she talks to herself! And waits for replies!

[MUMBLED REPLY THROUGH THE PHONE.]

SAM Cont.
I really think you're missing the fact that there was a magic door in my living room half an hour ago-

[UNIVERSE FADES OUT.]

[END OF EPISODE 48]