

Halfmoon Chronicles Season 1 Episode 2 “Missing Persons”

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]

[SFX: CAR STARTING]

[SFX: SOUNDS OF TRAFFIC]

CAM

[SIGHS]

[UNDER THEIR BREATH]

Where is she?

[SFX: CAR PASSING BY]

CAM

Tabby! Over here!

TABBY

[FROM AFAR, MOVING CLOSER]

Nothing. They wouldn't even talk to me—why are you recording?

CAM

B-roll. You know, extra audio and stuff for the episode if we need it.

TABBY

Oh, that's actually smart. Maybe we should keep this thing running more often than not?

We have plenty of backup tapes. I think Gray was talking about digitizing some of them too, for storage?

CAM

[SCOFFS]

Did he bring a computer with him?

TABBY

No, but there's an Internet Cafe called Chester's around the corner.

CAM

Hm. *Okay*. I don't know if I trust digital stuff, but if he can keep it safe after Y2K...

TABBY

I think he knows what he's doing.

CAM

Sure. Anyway, how'd it go?

TABBY

Bad. They wouldn't let me see *anything*.

CAM

Did you tell them it was for a documentary?

TABBY

You know, weirdly, that made them less inclined to help out. I tried to hit them with the Freedom of Information Act, but they hit right back with things like “exemptions” and “interference with enforcement proceedings.”

CAM

Ugh. That sucks.

TABBY

Yeah. You think it wouldn't take so much effort to sneak a peek at some cold missing person reports.

CAM

I guess so. I mean *I* get it, they probably don't want strangers asking about their friends' and families' personal tragedies.

....

What's that look for?

TABBY

Whose side are you on?

CAM

There are... sides?

TABBY

Yeah. The cops, or *us*: honest hardworking journalists.

CAM

Us... I suppose?

TABBY

Okay, then. I think we're gonna have to go for plan B.

CAM

What's that?

TABBY

I asked Gray and Ash to dig around in the Chronicle's archives to find news stories about missing people. I'd *really* like to get the official police reports, though.

CAM

Maybe we can find a way later. And besides, I bet there's nothing in those reports we'll find that we won't also get from the Chronicle.

TABBY

I guess so. Let's go meet up with the others at the library.

CAM

Yeah, let's.

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS AGAIN]

[SFX: MUFFLED NOISES FROM INSIDE A LIBRARY]

TABBY

Were you able to find anything useful?

GRAY

Some stuff. This town has a lot of missing person reports. Actually, far more than I'd expect.

TABBY

That's... concerning.

ASH

I know, it's terrifying right? Definitely something paranormal here.

GRAY

[SIGHS]

Or just a creepy small town.

ASH

You're a creepy small town.

TABBY

Hey. Focus. What did you find?

GRAY

Tab, why are you recording?

CAM & TABBY

[SIMULTANEOUSLY]

B-roll.

GRAY

Oh... *kay*. Anyway, we found a lot of missing person reports. Absolutely above the average for a town of this size. I had to look that up on my own. No one writing for the Chronicle apparently thought to comment on that. Except, well...

TABBY

Except for Evelyn?

GRAY

Kind of. She tends to start her articles about missing people with the phrase "in yet another mysterious disappearance," which is something none of the other writers have done.

ASH

It's like she's trying to hint at something.

GRAY

Or she's just noticed that there's a lot of missing person cases for a town of this size.

TABBY

Okay. Anything connecting all of them?

GRAY

That's the thing. There's just so many. It's impossible to connect the dots from a huge random sample of the cases the Chronicle happened to report on.

TABBY

Ugh. That's beyond frustrating. Were there any, like, really weird cases?

ASH

You mean... all of them?

TABBY

What do you mean?

GRAY

What she means is—

ASH

What I *mean* is that a lot—most of them even—are listed as *missing* after making a new *'friend.'*

TABBY

A new... *friend*?

GRAY

Yeah. It seems more than half of the cases mention the missing person recently formed a close personal relationship with a new person.

ASH

That's suspicious as hell.

GRAY

Not really. Most kidnappings—and murders, and assaults, really most crimes in general—are perpetrated by a personal acquaintance of the victim.

ASH

Yeah, *but* almost all of these people made a new ‘friend.’ All with different names and descriptions.

CAM

How is that noteworthy?

ASH

Well... in almost every case, this "new person" didn't exist.

TABBY

“Didn't exist?”

GRAY

The name and description didn't match anyone living in town at the time of their disappearance.

ASH

Which *probably* means we're dealing with a changeling here.

GRAY

Or we're dealing with a string of out-of-towners who kidnapped a bunch of Halfmooners.

CAM

Is that where we landed on what to call the townies?

TABBY

Cam, shut it. Ash, why do you think this is a changeling?

ASH

Oh it one-hundred percent is. All the stories follow the same pattern. The victim meets someone new, they get close, start blowing off their other friends, and then suddenly, one

day—wham—they're gone. No body. No evidence of the "friend." They just vanish.

Sounds to me like a changeling having intermittent feasts.

TABBY

Oh that's a good angle.

ASH

And that's not even the *best* part. Most of the victims are nobodies. People without friends, family, what have you. Most of the reports were filed by their places of work. A lot of them were *total* loners. *But* there's one person who disappeared five-ish years ago who has a sister.

TABBY

That's perfect! Can we talk to her?

GRAY

Unlikely. For one, she doesn't live in Halfmoon anymore. I tried looking up her address and number in the yellow pages and the line was disconnected. It had to have been recent, though, because the yellow pages was published just this year.

TABBY

What's her name?

GRAY

Edna Waters.

TABBY

Edna? How old is she?

GRAY

She must be something like, sixty-five?... no. She was about sixty when her brother went missing.

TABBY

See if you can find where she moved to. What was her brother's name?

ASH

Albert. He went by Al, apparently. He was almost a decade younger than her.

TABBY

Okay, good. This gives us something. I wish the damn cops would've let me get a missing person report.

ASH

You need someone to talk to the cops?

TABBY

It's no use. They wouldn't give me the time of day.

ASH

I can do it.

TABBY

What are you gonna do?

ASH

Get Al Waters's missing person report. Trust me, I've been around cops. I speak their language.

CAM

Yikes.

ASH

Hey, do you want my help or not?

TABBY

Yes, we do. You go to the station, see if you can't convince them to let you see the report.

Take the camera, and take pictures if you can't get a copy.

ASH

On it!

[SFX: CHAIR SCRAPPING]

TABBY

Gray, try to find out more about Al or the rest of the Waters family. I'm gonna ask around and try to nab any locals who might know something.

CAM

Where do you want me?

TABBY

You should stick around the police station. Just in case Ash gets into any... just in case...

CAM

You don't need to explain—I got it.

TABBY

Great. We'll all meet back at the Econoline by sunset?

CAM

Sure.

GRAY

You bet.

TABBY

Awesome. Let's go.

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS AGAIN]

TABBY

It's Friday, November fifth, 1999. It's evening, the air is cold, and a storm is building on the horizon. As has become my new normal, I am sitting alone inside our Ford Econoline, poring over notes from our latest mystery. This time, it's a string of missing person cases. No one seems to have pieced the connections together—until now. Halfmoon is a hotspot for unusual criminal activity, though most cases go unsolved. To the untrained eye, this may seem to be simple police incompetence—or perhaps, unwillingness to pursue the truth—but to us, this has the telltale signs of a haunting all over it. From available records between 1900 and the present, there have been nearly a hundred unsolved missing person cases in Halfmoon alone, and many of those are cold cases. This is far above what one would expect of such a small town. The Halfmoon police department seems less than willing to assist us in our investigation, leaving us to rely largely on old newspaper

entries. So, most of the information I am about to present does not come from official police records, but from reports from the Halfmoon Chronicle *and* firsthand accounts from citizens.

The first case in what we suspect may be related hauntings comes from the forgotten past of the turn of the century, when Eustace van Jaap went missing. His story introduced a disturbing trend. He was a lonely man with few friends to speak of and nothing but a dead-end job in the service industry to call his own. Every missing person in this string of cases matched this profile, and the same series of events always occurred.

One day, the person would meet someone new. A true friend: someone who really seemed to understand them. By then, it was always too late. Within the month, he would disappear without a trace.

Mr. van Jaap reportedly met such a friend. A Mr. Robert Donahugh. The Chronicle article that ran alongside the announcement of van Jaap's disappearance mentions that none can recall any Robert Donahugh living in or around Halfmoon. In fact, his existence seems to have both started and ended with van Jaap. His coworkers went on record saying that he seemed a rather lonely fellow, someone who was hard to talk to. It wasn't easy to break through his protective outer shell. But he changed *entirely* when he met Donahugh. They went fishing together often. van Jaap talked about him constantly . He even missed work at the library on several occasions to spend time with his new friend.

On the day he officially disappeared, the library assumed he'd skipped out to go fishing with his friend again. A few days later, he still hadn't shown up, so one of his fellow librarians went out to check on him. When they got to his house, he was nowhere to be found. The unnamed Samaritan stated,

"His door was unlocked and open. His house looked lived-in, very untidy. There was a note on the countertop in his characteristically neat penmanship. It read: 'Gone fishing with Robert. Don't wait up.'"

By all accounts, van Jaap lived alone, which begs the question: who was he writing to? This wasn't even the strangest part. The most baffling aspect of this story, and all the others like it, is that no one has ever met his friend, or even seen Donahugh around, with van Jaap or otherwise. As soon as van Jaap vanished, so did Donahugh. A missing person report was filed shortly after this discovery. A citywide hunt was issued for Robert Donahugh, but nothing was ever discovered, and eventually, the case went cold.

There are *dozens* of cases like this one in the books in Halfmoon. All with the same story—*all* with the same ending. The most recent such case was that of Mr. Albert Waters, five years ago. He was alone; wanting for friendship, when a man named Andrew Lee entered his life. They became close. Waters began missing shifts at the hotel where he worked. One day, both he and Mr. Lee vanished without a trace. Of course, follow-up

investigations found no evidence of an Albert Lee ever having existed in Halfmoon or the surrounding towns, and the description of him given by Waters to his sister and coworkers didn't match those of the mysterious friends the other victims met.

This is where the story encounters its first real lead. Edna Waters, Al Waters's sister, is still alive, though after her brother's disappearance, she left town and currently resides in Boston. Attempts to reach her were... unsuccessful, but my team was able to get in touch with one of her old friends. Ms. Waters's friend asked not to be named and we will respect her wishes here.

She confirmed much of what was already assumed about Mr. Waters. Edna filed a missing person report after it became clear he was gone. The investigation turned dry. To this day, Mr. Waters has not yet been found. Which makes you wonder—

[SFX: KNOCKING ON DOOR]

TABBY

Who is it?

ASH

[MUFFLED]

Ash and Cam, open up!

[SFX: DOOR SLIDING OPEN]

TABBY

Did you get the report?

ASH

Yup!

TABBY

How??

CAM

By almost getting arrested herself.

TABBY

What did you—

ASH

Nothing! Do you want the report or not? I think you'll *like* it.

TABBY

Hand it over.

[SFX: PAPERS RUSTLING]

TABBY

So it's not a cold case anymore?

ASH

Nope.

TABBY

Why would this be closed out? It doesn't say he was found.

CAM

That happens sometimes when the primary contact moves. But according to the report, his sister called in and requested the case be closed.

TABBY

Huh. This is... what's this?

ASH

It's a statement provided by Edna Waters.

[SFX: PAPERS FLIPPING]

TABBY

Okay, everyone get out. I need to record this.

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS AGAIN]

TABBY

After a significant amount of digging, my team was finally able to get ahold of the missing person report for Al Waters. Much of it is standard fare. Description of the missing person. Last known location, frequented spots, and so on. Six months ago, the case was marked as closed—not because Waters was found, but because his sister, who filed the report, asked that it be closed. Attempts to reach out to Ms. Waters have gone unanswered. One discovery we made upon acquiring this report, though, was that Edna Waters left a statement. I have here the typewritten transcript of the statement, which I will read in its entirety.

[CLEARS THROAT]

“My brother, Albert Winters, went missing sometime last week. It's not unusual for us to miss each other for a few days, even weeks at a time, but last Tuesday was my birthday. I turned sixty-two. He was supposed to come over and celebrate, have some pie. Normal birthday shenanigans. But he never showed.

“This was becoming increasingly common ever since he met Andrew Lee. I never heard of a Mr. Lee or anyone in Halfmoon with the name Lee. In a town like this, you get to learn everyone's business, and I would have remembered a Lee. He just showed up out of nowhere. One day, Al calls me up and says, ‘I met someone.’ You'd think he was talking about a lover, but he was very clear that he was just a friend. They both, in fact, were recently made widowers. Both had an affinity for bug collecting, both had few friends, if

any. I can't right say that Al had any friends outside myself, and the relationship felt obligatory to a point. It's ironic, actually. We talked more in the month leading up to this than we had in the last... ten years, it felt.

“But every conversation was about this ‘Andrew Lee.’ Lee was from Chattanaw, just north of here. If you're wondering, don't even *bother* looking there. I looked around as soon as I thought something was wrong. There's no Andrew Lee that even slightly matches this man. And boy, did I have a description of this man. He was the same height as Al—five foot ten. Almost the same weight too, about two hundred ten pounds. Similar haircut. Both wore glasses—same *prescription*, if you can believe that. I swear, it was like he was built for my brother.

“Every time I tried to get ahold of him, he and Andrew were about to go out hunting for beetles, or bugs, or whatever it was they collected. Butterflies, probably, considering the season.

[SFX: PAPER FLIPPING]

“I went over to Al's about a week before he vanished. I asked to see his collection—if he was going out with Andrew every day, I figured he should have an impressive collection by now—but he got very quiet. He said Andrew wouldn't want him to show off their collection. That struck me as odd, that he didn't want to show off perhaps his greatest

passion on this earth, but, well, you know now why he didn't want to show me. Oh if it's important to state again here: he didn't have any insects. He had his paltry collection of bugs from the last few years, but nothing new. In fact, it was strange... I think he had fewer insects than he did before. But it was clear whatever he and *Andrew* were up to, it wasn't insect collecting.

“I don't know if I should be admitting this here, surrounded by basically all of the police in Halfmoon, but I got suspicious of Al and his new friend. I started following Al, hoping to see what he was doing with Andrew and to get a good look at him, so I could see for myself what kind of person he was. I spent the better part of two days following Al. I called out from work at the diner.

“But I didn't see Andrew anywhere. Al didn't so much as reach for a phone. I didn't see him talk to anyone outside of the grocery store clerk or the postman. By the end of the second day, I was getting frustrated, so I called Al while he was at home. Thankfully, he lived downtown, so I could call from a pay phone just outside his building and watch the front door. I asked if he wanted to come over for dinner, and sure enough, he said no, that Andrew was coming over and they were going to look for nocturnal insects.

“Now, the pay phone outside his building has more or less a direct line of sight into his living room. He was sitting in his armchair, reading, when I called. He picked up the phone, said what he said, put it down and then... well, I don't know what else to say. He

just sat still, looking right ahead. Certainly wasn't looking in the direction of his television set, nothing like *that*. He stayed that way for what must have been thirty minutes, unmoving. Needless to say, I was worried. I almost went up there to check on him, but decided first I'd call again. I didn't want to risk scaring away this mysterious *Mr. Lee*.

“So I called, the phone rang, and he didn't move. He must have heard it. Hell, *I* heard it from the street outside, but he just sat there. I'm not even sure he *blinked*. As soon as his messaging machine took over, I hung up and intended to march straight up there and demand to know what was happening. I had begun to suspect that there *was* no Andrew Lee and he was just avoiding me. Lord knows I didn't see him much since Andrew came into his life.

“But as soon as I stepped away from the pay phone, he stood up and made for his door. I hid and watched him leave the building, get in his car, and drive off. Naturally, I followed. He drove out of town, past the park entrance, into the forest. He kept driving deeper and deeper into the woods until, eventually, he turned off a dirt path. I tried to go after him, but he sped up and, I don't know how it happened exactly, considering the road was a single lane, but I lost him. I have no earthly idea where he went. I drove farther, and the tire tracks just stopped.

“I turned around and camped out in front of his building again. It must have been a few hours, but he did come back. His car was perfectly clean, no sign that he’d driven through the dirt like I had. He got out, went upstairs, and at no point did I see any bugs on him. No bags or cages, no *anything* to suggest he had a successful hunt, if that's what he was doing.

[SFX: PAGE FLIPPING]

“He went back and sat in that chair. I expected him to pick up a book, but he simply didn't. He just sat there.

“So I call again. From the same pay phone. And it rings, I hear it from the street, too, and he doesn't answer, like last time. It was around two A.M., and I was determined to sit there as long as possible... But... I fell asleep. When I woke up, he wasn't there. It was around six A.M.—a normal time for me to wake up, though I was exhausted. I figured I'd try to call him again.

“I did so, from the *same pay phone*, and he answered. I asked him what he did last night, and he told me all about how he and *Andrew* met up and found so many bugs, even a few rare varieties he never would have thought to find in eastern Massachusetts. I asked if I could see and he said maybe another time. He would have to prepare and catalogue them before he could let anyone see. But, of course, he vanished before that happened.

“There were never any insects in that apartment. I don't know where you intend to start your investigation, but I'd say you're wasting your time going through his place. I'd start at the dirt path off Crescent Creek Road. I tried going down there when I first thought Al was gone, but I couldn't find the path again. Maybe you all will have better luck. I don't have anything more to add. Al's stories never lined up with what I saw and he wouldn't explain. He just kept insisting that he was spending time with *Andrew*. If you can believe that.”

[SFX: PAPERS CRINKLING]

TABBY

And that's all she had to say. Until about six months ago, when she called the police station. As of November 1999, Al's apartment is still vacant, and Edna's home still has a for-sale sign in front of it. There's a handwritten addition to the case, marking it as closed—and resolved. The note reads as follows: Call received from Edna Waters, sister of Albert Waters, who filed the original report. She called from a pay phone in Chattanaw, saying that she no longer needs police assistance on the case. That Albert Waters is no longer a "missing person," that she found him, and she's going to bring him home. She also indicated that she finally found Andrew Lee and she was going to, as it says here, underlined, "Teach that bastard a lesson. Don't expect to hear back from me."

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]