

HIGHLIGHT TO SEE CONTENT WARNINGS:

NICHOLAS:

(as the intro plays) At the edge of Gilt City, the door to darkness reveals itself, and all await the arrival of the Night Post.

[BIRDSONG, TRAFFIC, PARK-GOERS, AND GRAVEL CRUNCHING UNDERFOOT.]

MILO:

I'm going, Val. I wasn't trying to recruit y'all to come with me or anything. I just wanted *someone* to know where I was, in case...

VAL:

In case it's a trap, right? Of *course* it's a trap. There's absolutely no reason to waste your time with the Birdwatchers. *(exhale)* Whatever they're going on about is just some sick mind game. Wherever Ashley is, we can't reach him and he can't reach us. Don't you think he would've found a way back if he could?

CLEMENTINE:

Val's right, Milo. We all want Ashley back... um, not as much as you though, I mean! It's just... he *did* let himself be taken, right? Back at Gilt Tower? He was trying to protect us somehow. I don't know him quite as well as I should have, but I trust his judgment, don't you?

MILO:

All three of us were stumbling around in the dark back then, delivering our damn mail and just trying to survive. But that's not who we are now! We're probably some of the only people in the whole city who have a clue what's actually going on. *(slight pause, then gently)* He doesn't have to protect me anymore. When they bring him back, we'll beat them at whatever game they're playing. And between the four of us, we'll figure out how to stop all this madness.

VAL:

There's no way in hell that after everything we've been through it would be that easy! And even if it were, the Birdwatchers don't have a reason to want to help us. We're not on their side, remember?

MILO:

Then whose side *are* we on?

CLEMENTINE:

I think that if this were all just as simple as one side "winning," none of us would be where we are. And I don't mean just *us*. We know there was a city *before* Gilt City. And likely one before

that too. Who can truly say how times history has repeated itself? There's a bigger picture here that everyone isn't seeing.

VAL:

You're right, Clem. Which means that aligning ourselves with any one group isn't going to get us any closer to the answers we need.

MILO:

I haven't said anything about "aligning" with anyone! But it can't hurt to go hear them out.

CLEMENTINE:

I imagine they'll want a lot more than to just "hear them out" *if* it's something they even have the capacity to do.

VAL:

Exactly. And we're already beholden to that asshole ghost cowboy, remember? He did technically give us the right information about Block, even if it was part of her grand but unsuccessful scheme. If we start swearing fealty to every backstabber that offers us crumbs, we'll be worse off than when we started.

MILO:

I know, guys! I know... but I'll do anything and everything I can to get him back.

CLEMENTINE:

We know you will.

VAL:

Which is why I *guess* I have to go with you for when it all goes sideways.

CLEMENTINE:

(chuckles) Because it will. It always does when we're involved.

MILO:

Y'all are probably right. If they *are* able to do what they say they can, it won't come for free. And if they can't... then I'm not putting either of you in danger because I walked right into their lair at their whim.

CLEMENTINE:

Well, that's too bad, because we discussed it on our way from Val's place. One of us needs to be there when the proverbial shit hits the proverbial fan.

VAL:

And Clem wasn't terribly keen on walking into the den of cultists and spirits and whatnot.

CLEMENTINE:

Oh, don't say it like that! I'm more than happy to come if you need me to!

MILO:

No, it's... it's alright, Clementine. I'd rather do this alone, but if someone is going to tag along, then we'll need someone here to let others know if we, well...

VAL:

Don't make it back.

CLEMENTINE:

Yes, but let's hope it doesn't come to that.

MILO:

But if it does?

CLEMENTINE:

If you two aren't back by dawn, I'll go to Nick.

MILO:

Wait, y'all told Nick about all this?

VAL:

Of course not. But despite him generally being an uncooperative pain in the ass, he is one of the few people not actively trying to make our lives harder. You didn't think we'd go to the police, did you?

MILO:

Well, no.

CLEMENTINE:

What role the postmasters play is still beyond us, but we have to trust he'll help. I don't think losing more pigeons is a scenario Nick wants to see play out.

MILO:

He let Ashley down once before.

VAL:

Bureaucracy let Ashley down. I mean, Nick is most definitely guilty of withholding crucial information...

CLEMENTINE:

And not wanting to rock the boat.

MILO:

And being an unhelpful, nose-in-the-air moron.

VAL:

Yeah, all that and more. But we don't have a better option, do we?

MILO:

You've really thought this through, huh?

VAL:

A lot more than you, apparently. Shit, what was your plan exactly? Walk into the lion's den and hope they didn't notice your supple and defenseless meat suit?

CLEMENTINE:

Ew.

MILO:

That's our thing, right? I mean, I'm not entirely defenseless, you know. I know my way around a pocket knife. And I could use... that.

CLEMENTINE:

Your *powers*, you mean? You don't even know how they work, Milo! None of us do. We cannot rely on that. And we can't rule out that it's connected to the Other.

VAL:

Of course it's connected. Everything is – Gilt City, the Post, us. If we're *finally* getting some sort of advantage in this whole power struggle, maybe we should use it.

MILO:

Agreed. I mean, you're right Clementine. I don't know how it works, but it's helped me out of a few nasty situations so far. We've had to put our faith in a lot less – this is really no different.

CLEMENTINE:

And what about Agatha? It didn't help her.

VAL:

Clem!

CLEMENTINE:

I-I'm sorry, Milo. I shouldn't have said that. It's just the thought of... it being in us, a part of us. The other Clementine was different; she was a reflection of me. But knowing that the Other is bonding with us somehow is unnerving.

MILO:

No, you don't have to apologize. (*deep breath*) Agi's death wasn't my fault. I have to believe that. And I don't think any one of us would choose to be in this position. We're still us, though. If we hold onto each other, we won't lose what makes us *us* – no matter how far this goes.

VAL:

Huh. That was surprisingly convincing. Let me guess, it's from a comic? No, a cereal box!

MILO:

A cereal bo...? C'mon guys, have a little bit more faith. That was from the heart! See if I'm ever vulnerable with y'all again.

CLEMENTINE:

(*laughs*) No, no, we believe you. This is all so overwhelming, is all. That's why I'm the backup this time around. It'll be an off night for us, but I'll make up some excuse for working at the station. If you two don't make it back by dawn, I'll be able to tell Nick immediately.

MILO:

And how do you know he'll be there?

VAL:

Now that's a dumb question. He's always there.

CLEMENTINE:

We don't know where exactly he lives anyway, so the office is our best bet.

VAL:

Huh, we don't know, do we? We'll have to fix that.

CLEMENTINE:

We are *not* stalking our boss.

VAL:

You don't have to. And who said anything about stalking? Can't be that difficult to track him down. We do work at the Post.

MILO:

Ahem.

VAL:

(*overlapping*) My bad.

CLEMENTINE:

(*overlapping*) Sorry.

MILO:

So... we're all good, then?

VAL:

I don't think we're known for making bulletproof plans, but sure. No qualms here. Oh, wait! Is there a weapon quota I should be aware of?

CLEMENTINE:

(exasperated) Come on, Val!

VAL:

I just want to make sure we're well equipped for the bullshit we're no doubt walking into!

MILO:

We aren't going to war. If they're really able to do what they say they can do... I don't want to fuck this up. Just bring whatever you want, but be smart about it. And it stays hidden! Running into this with knives and pitchforks isn't getting us anywhere.

VAL:

Aye, aye. Hear you loud and clear.

CLEMENTINE:

Be careful. Okay, Val? Don't come back with any more scars.

VAL:

I can't promise that. They just add so much to the mystique, ya know? *(brief pause)* Don't worry. I'll just be regular, suave me, and it'll go great.

CLEMENTINE:

You don't get it. *That's* what I'm worried about.

MILO:

Don't worry. I plan to make it back in one piece. I have way too much to lose to fuck this up.

CLEMENTINE:

We all do.

[CLEMENTINE REACHES FOR A BEAR HUG. ALL THREE GRUNT.]

CLEMENTINE:

Be safe... and bring Ashley home, okay?

MILO:

(grunting) That's the plan.

[ROCK INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC AND THE NOISE OF THE MAIL TRUCK ON ROUGH ROAD.]

VAL:

You're awfully quiet. *(pause)* Milo?

MILO:

Hm? What's wrong?

VAL:

That's what I was gonna ask you, but I guess it's obvious. You might wanna loosen the grip on the steering wheel. You can't afford to bend it all out of shape like that.

MILO:

Thanks. *(exhale)* I'm just... ya know.

VAL:

Yeah, I get it.

MILO:

What if they *are* lying? And I'm literally driving us to our death right now?

VAL:

I'll level with you: it's a possibility. But I still came with you, right?

MILO:

Right.

VAL:

Because that's what friends who've been forced into a seemingly unwinnable cosmic confrontation do for each other: they show up. *(pause)* And ya know what? It's kinda nice to have people I can do that for.

MILO:

It is nice.

VAL:

Alright, glad we got that out of our system. Did you bring the letter with you?

MILO:

The one from Serene? Yeah, check my bag. *(rustling of items in bag)* I wish we were dealing with anyone but her. *(imitating Serene)* Hey, y'all! I just, like, love that you could make it! We're gonna have a *great* time summoning your husband from the aether!

VAL:

Hmm. That's a bit more cowgirl than whatever she's got going on, but you nailed the annoying part!

MILO:

(laughs) And just when I thought you were making some progress on the whole "being nice" thing.

VAL:

Nah. But I *am* always getting funnier! So we're meeting them where?

MILO:

Right off Route 3. Should also be a scrap of a map in that envelope too – shows the turnoff we're supposed to take. Very clearly the middle of nowhere, not that I expected anything but.

VAL:

What do you think their hideout is like? Stained-glass windows, torches, the wails of prisoners ringing out into the night?

MILO:

I was thinking more of a shallow cave – hollowed out, well-incensed. But I'm sure they kept the bat colonies for ambiance.

VAL:

A bat-shit slathered floor *would* fit their vibe.

MILO:

They can have entrails flapping around like party streamers for all I care. Let's just try not to make this an extended visit.

VAL:

Agreed. But we also shouldn't pass up an opportunity to get more information from them. They *are* inviting us to their home. Would be kinda rude to demand an act of necromancy and then dash.

MILO:

Ashley isn't dead.

VAL:

Technically. *(pause)* Sorry. Bad joke.

MILO:

(sigh) It's fine. But once they've done what they said they're gonna do, we're out of there, okay? I'm not giving them a chance to think about it too much.

VAL:

Deal. Wonder what the “item of significant sentimental importance” is for?

MILO:

For the ritual or whatever they plan on doing, I assume. They were light on details, as usual.

VAL:

And what did you bring?

MILO:

It was kind of hard to decide, if I’m being honest. Ashley didn’t... *doesn’t* get attached to physical things like I do. I thought maybe his favorite baseball bat or book might work, then got the feeling that wasn’t really what they meant. His wedding ring was an obvious choice, but who knows if he still has it, or if it’s floating around in ghost space somewhere.

VAL:

So you decided on...?

MILO:

The first photo we took together. I put it in a dinky little frame for our first anniversary, and it’s been on his bedside table ever since. Offered to buy a nicer one for it a few times, but Ashley always said no, that a better frame couldn’t make it any more important to him.

VAL:

Y’all really do have something special, huh?

MILO:

Yeah, we do.

VAL:

Could be nice to have the same one day.

MILO:

(with a laugh) And what about Clementine, huh? You two have been spending *a lot* of time together out of the public eye.

VAL:

We’re just very good friends who have been through some shit, alright? I mean, hell, you’ve been with us half the time.

MILO:

Exactly. Don’t think I don’t see those quick glances filled with intense longing.

VAL:

There's your turn, dumbass.

MILO:

(screeching of brakes) Whoops, sorry. Less teasing, more driving.

VAL:

Smart idea.

MILO:

We should be coming up on... a dead end?

[THE RADIO IS TURNED DOWN AND THE SOUNDS OF INSECTS CAN BE HEARD.]

VAL:

Huh, sure is, isn't it? The map shows it cuts right through this patch of forest, see?

MILO:

No, I can't. Hand me the flashlight out of the glove compartment.

[THE COMPARTMENT OPENS WITH A CLUNK. A FLASHLIGHT CLICKS ON AND THE COMPARTMENT IS CLOSED.]

MILO:

Hmmm... look a little closer. Does the "missing" stretch of road look suspiciously like it's been drawn in with a pen to you?

VAL:

No, no way. Sorry, Milo, but I think we should just get out of here.

SERENE:

(muffled) Long time, no see!

VAL:

(overlapping) What the fuck!

MILO:

(overlapping) We're gonna die!

SERENE:

(muffled) Calm down, you two. It's only me!

MILO:

That's why we're screaming! Where did you come from?

SERENE:

(muffled) I've been hanging around for a— do you maybe want to roll down your window? This is feeling very impersonal.

VAL:

What's up with this map? You didn't have to waste our time making us drive out here just to off us! At least have the courtesy to do it while we're on the clock!

SERENE:

(muffled) Oh, sorry for the fib, but we can't bring you right to our doorstep, can we?

MILO:

And why can't you? We trusted you enough to come all the way out here—

VAL:

(interrupting) —in the middle of Skelter—

MILO:

Exactly! Why shouldn't we just go back to the city and find a way to get you goofballs out of our hair?

SERENE:

(muffled) Because we're prepared to hold up our end of the bargain.

VAL:

(to Milo) What do you think?

[KEYS JINGLE AS THE TRUCK DOOR SLIDES OPEN AND THEN CLOSED.]

MILO:

I think we don't have much of a choice. As usual.

SERENE:

Now, what's a gathering of friends without party hats?

VAL:

What the— we're not wearing hoods. Period.

SERENE:

Don't worry, we aren't going far. Just a short stroll from the woods, and we'll be there in no time!

MILO:

You heard them. We're cooperating, but we're not walking into this blindly. Literally.

SERENE:

But! (*huffs*) Fine, whatever. But just know that I'll get a severe talking to over this.

VAL:

I'm pretty sure we can live with that.

SERENE:

Of course. As blunt as ever. Alrighty, let's go!

[INSECTS AND FOOTSTEPS FADE OUT AND BACK IN AS THE SCENE CHANGES.]

SERENE:

And we're here!

MILO:

(*huffing*) Short walk, my ass!

VAL:

(*breathing heavily*) There was no point to those damn hoods. There's no way we'll figure out our way back.

[OLD WOOD CREAKS UNDER THEIR FEET.]

SERENE:

Oh, watch your step. It's quite hard to find good help these days, and this old place is quite literally falling apart.

VAL:

(*slowly catching her breath*) Right into the haunted mansion. Why am I such a good friend?
(*exhale*) Yo, Milo, c'mon.

MILO:

What if this doesn't work?

VAL:

Then we'll get him back another way... okay?

MILO:

Okay.

[AMBIENT SOUNDS ARE REPLACED WITH EERIE, REVERBERATING BELLS.]

SERENE:

(uncharacteristically stoic) They're performing the ceremony there, in the library. The Reverend doesn't speak, but he's watching and listening. *Don't* do anything rash. Yes, I'm looking at you, Valencia. If you give *anyone* a reason – any reason at all – to believe that you're pulling something, they'll deal with you... swiftly. Understand?

VAL:

(amused) Wow, I don't think we've ever seen you this high-strung before.

SERENE:

Because this is as important to me as it is to you. *(drawing a knife)* Neither of you will be the reason I remain unexalted.

VAL:

Hey! Watch it!

MILO:

If your *Reverend* can fulfill his promise, we won't cause a problem.

SERENE:

Perfect. Now, are you ready?

VAL:

Milo... bud?

MILO:

(shaky, deep breath) Yeah, I'm ready.

SERENE:

Good luck.

[HEAVY WOODEN DOORS CREAK AS THEY'RE PUSHED OPEN.]

MILO:

This is the library? Our whole townhouse could fit in here.

VAL:

And why all the spectators?

SERENE:

Do not speak unless spoken to. Understand?

VAL:

Watch the attitude–

MILO:

Yes, we understand.

SERENE:

Good. Reverend, may I present Valencia Torres and Milo Cylix-Wilder. Milo is the husband of the borrowed.

VAL:

(whispering) He looks like hell. I wonder how old he is.

MILO:

(whispering) Very.

SERENE:

Valencia, please step aside.

VAL:

But—

MILO:

It's okay, don't-don't worry.

VAL:

Be careful.

SERENE:

Please present your offering.

MILO:

(rummaging in bag) Here.

SERENE:

No, I can't take it. You must place it in the middle of the sigils. Walk *only* between the candles, or you'll disturb the preparations. When you've placed it, wait for further instructions. Understand?

MILO:

I do.

SERENE:

You may proceed. *(creaking of wood underfoot)*

VAL:

(whispering) So, what happens now?

SERENE:
(whispering) Shhh! *(pause)* I don't know.

VAL:
(whispering) What do you mean you don't know!?

SERENE:
(whispering) If you want to get out of here in one piece, please be quiet!

MILO:
Please come home, love. *(places photo on ground)* Serene! What are we waiting for?

SERENE:
I... I don't know. Reverend? *(slight gasp)* Oh...

MILO:
What's wrong?

SERENE:
It's a blood sacrifice. You're Ashley's physical tether. The Reverend said you can use the knife in your coat pocket.

MILO:
But how did you—

SERENE:
There is little the Reverend doesn't know. If you want to see your husband again, just do it.

MILO:
Fine! This will work, Milo. It will. Just do it!

[THE POCKET KNIFE FLICKS OPEN. MILO MAKES A SMALL SOUND OF PAIN, AND A FEW DROPS OF BLOOD FALL.]

[WIND KICKS UP WITHIN THE ROOM AND A DEEP, TONAL CHANTING BEGINS.]

MILO:
Ach! What's... happening? Who's there!?

VAL:
(over the wind) Milo! What's wrong?

MILO:
A voice! It... hurts!

SERENE:

Valencia! Don't! You can't disturb it, or Milo could get hurt. Badly. Focus on Ashley!

MILO:

Ashley, come back. Please! I can't... keep going without you!

[THE WIND DIES WITH A LARGE THUNDERCLAP AND THE CHANTING FADES OUT. AN EERIE, NOSTALGIC TUNE PLAYS.]

MILO:

(breathing heavily) I... what... did it...

ASHLEY:

M-Milo?

MILO:

Ashley? Are you... okay?

ASHLEY:

I... think so? How did you... *(grunts)*

MILO:

Ashley! Oh... I...

VAL:

Milo! Ashley! What the hell did he do?

SERENE:

What was promised.

MILO:

Ashley... you're home.

NICHOLAS:

(as the outro plays) Thank you for joining us on tonight's route. If you'd like to support Station 103, consider joining our Patreon for weekly bonus stories and early episode access. Or check out our Redbubble and Ko-Fi shops for Night Post merch and digital story collections. Send a letter to your dearly beloved, and tell them about The Night Post.