

BELLE: The Maudlin Anthology Presents: The Voicemail Box Is Full. Written by Belle “Toast” Stanfield.

[MAUDLIN ANTHOLOGY THEME]

[PHONE DIALING TONE]

CARN: Hey! This must be important if you’re calling. And you must be important to me if you have my real number. So [A PAUSE] leave a message at the beep!

[BEEP]

PROFESSOR COLLINS: My dear friend, hello! Please excuse my coming tardiness I should be but a few minutes out. How the burls of my chest churn in excitement to see you!

[BEEP]

LIVVY: Hey! I know you’re busy basically all of today. Got your message and everything and— by the way the way I *really* appreciate you communicating that with me so I don’t just assume you’re in trouble or icing me out or... Anyways, besides the point, I know you’re busy but I would really, *really* like to talk to you at some point today. [SOMETHING HALFWAY BETWEEN A CHUCKLE AND A COUGH] I don’t want to worry you, but it is kind of important. Okay. Love you. Bye

[BEEP]

CHRISTINE: Hi. Sorry for missing your call but I’m following up on something. Got a lead. Someone saying they saw or heard Chris in the woods by some church? No... no, not a church. Like a shrine, I guess? I don’t know. It’s all the way out in the sticks and I’ll barely have enough service to use my GPS but anyways yeah. Talk to you later.

[BEEP]

LIVVY: Hey! Got your text... *Thank you* for offering to text about it— *I know I'm being cryptic*, and again I really do appreciate the offer. I know your time is valuable and you're busy. [BRIEF PAUSE] But it's *really* important to me that we get to talk. I... I miss you and I keep thinking about that day when Dad— [LONG PAUSE] Please just talk to me.

[BEEP]

DETECTIVE ROBERTS: Hello, Miss McLaughlin. This is Detective Roberts with Reagan PD. It's been a while, I know. I usually try not to bother people, but... We made some progress on the Christopher Marks case and have been entirely unable to track down his sister. I'm afraid I can't share the details with anyone that isn't family, but we're worried about Christine's recent radio silence. She hasn't returned to her home in days and... Well, to be perfectly honest Miss McLaughlin grieving people can do crazy things. Please call me if you have any pertinent information.

[BEEP]

CHRISTINE: [EXCITED] [BREAKING UP FROM POOR SERVICE] Hey, made it to the place and the guy they've got looking after everything says he thinks he might know something. I'm gonna take a look around and ask some questions but... this could be it.

[BEEP]

MOTHER WHITLOCK: [DEAD SILENCE FOR A FEW MOMENTS UNTIL] [TIRED, UNAMUSED] Hey, kid. It's getting close to that time of year, isn't it? Isn't that a kick in the teeth? It gets warmer. The world finally comes to life and all we can think of is—[SHE TAKES A DEEP BREATH]. Yeah, well... We're all grown up now, aren't we? I suppose this is somewhat of a wasted call, but... I feel

as though I should ask how you're doing? Not that anyone asks how I am. Well, anyone but your sister. But you know how she is. It hardly counts. But what all am I ranting about? You don't listen to *my* messages anyway.

[BEEP]

LIVVY: [MID PANIC ATTACK] Carn can you pick, please? Can you please pick up? I know you're busy but I need you. I need someone. No one will answer... There's no one to answer anymore.

[BEEP]

CHRISTINE: Talked to the guy at this shrine... Went to show him a picture of Chris and he didn't recognize him, [BITTER, DARK] but he recognized *you*. [LONG PAUSE] Said he saw you and some guy here before. I didn't think much of it. I don't know much about you. You might be religious. I didn't want to judge. Then he said the guy called you "Carn" and I thought *Man, I really don't know much about you*. Weird name. It's not common, is it? So I start asking around and some of the locals say you've got a sister. Goes by Livvie. Olivia Whitlock. [SHE TRAILS OFF, THERE'S SOMETHING DARK IN THE STATIC SILENCE] Look, you've been real helpful. Maybe too helpful. [ANGRY, BITTER] You should call me back.

[BEEP]

LIVVY: [SOBBING] Are you mad at me? I don't understand. *I don't understand*. I try— [HICCUP] I try and I don't understand and—

[BEEP]

Christine: Got your text... Guess it makes sense we should do this here. [TENSE SILENCE] I don't hate you, if you're worried about that. [SHE PULLS THE PHONE AWAY FROM HER MOUTH AND SHOUTS] I don't hate you! [SHE BRINGS THE PHONE BACK TO HER MOUTH AND CONTINUES

NORMALLY] I know it was you, you know? I know you lured him here. To your sister's cabin. I know you fed him to that *thing*. But I also know it's all more complicated than that. I cannot believe that you would befriend me so callously if it was. To what end? How could our friendship help you? [SNIFF] I thought maybe you had hoped to derail me. Keep me from discovering the truth. But, honestly... I've found more with your help than I would have alone and you've watched my back with that stupid fucking cop and— *I'm sure there's an explanation for this*. I mean, I know there is. I just think there has to be some explanation that doesn't involve you as some secret, evil mastermind. I have to hope there is. That maybe it was inevitable. Maybe that thing was hunting him and you just took him here so it wouldn't get anyone else. So it wouldn't get me. That maybe you tried to stop it and couldn't and you just haven't had the heart to tell me. That maybe you're g— [SHE CRIES SOFTLY] So I'll make you a deal, Amber. You come out now and we'll do this together. We'll go to the cops and explain everything and maybe they'll think we're crazy, but we'll be free of it. We'll be honest. You'll be honest with me, won't you? You'll help me? I don't want you to go to prison, I just want answers. That's all I want. Amber, ple—

[LEAVES CRUNCHING]

Amber?

[BRANCHES SNAPPING VIOLENTLY]

CHRIS: [BROKEN, DISTORTED] [CHOKED] G-GO! [A HORRIBLE CHITTERING] R-R-R-RUN!

CHRISTINE: [IN TERROR] *It's here.*

[THE PHONE HITS THE GROUND]

No.

[CHRISTINE'S POUNDING FOOTSTEPS AS SHE BOLTS THROUGH THE GRAVEL CREATE AN ASYNCHRONOUS RHYTHM TO THE CHASE.]

[HAUNTED] *Nooooo*

[WINDS HOWL VIOLENTLY.] [THE UNKNOWN CALLER MAKES CHASE]

[CHRISTINE IS SOBBING AND OUT OF BREATH ALL AT ONCE]

[THE STEPS GETS FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY, AND THEN NEARER AND NEARER AS THOUGH SHE'S RUNNING IN CIRCLES]

[SOMETHING SNAPS HORRIBLY. *HER ANKLE*. SHE SLAMS AGAINST THE GRAVEL AS SHE FALLS— COINCIDENTALLY NEAR HER DROPPED PHONE, THOUGH SHE DOESN'T REACH FOR IT]

[SOMETHING BETWEEN A SCREAM AND A MOAN IS RIPPED FROM HER LUNGS. IT TAKES HER FULL CHEST AND THROAT TO MAKE THE AWFUL NOISE. THE BOTTOM OF HER THROAT.]

[THE UNKNOWN CALLER'S THEME DRUMS UNSYMPATHETICALLY IN THE BACKGROUND]

CHRIS: [PLAYFULLY] *Excuse you!* In what world am I supposed to be the 'good twin'

CHRISTINE: *nonononono noooooooooo*

CHRIS: [TEASING, CHEESY] I'm not the one who's afraid of driving!

[THE UNKNOWN CALLER GRASPS HER, SQUEEZING AT THE BROKEN ANKLE. CHRISTINE CRIES OUT IN PAIN]

CHRIS AND THE UNKNOWN CALLER: [CHRIS' VOICE IS BROKEN, AS THOUGH POORLY REMIXED FROM PREVIOUS LINES, THE UNKNOWN CALLER ECHOES FROM BENEATH] I'm not the *good twin*.

CHRISTINE: *waitwaitwaitwaitwait*

CHRIS AND THE UNKNOWN CALLER: [CHRIS' VOICE IS BROKEN, AS THOUGH POORLY REMIXED FROM PREVIOUS LINES, THE UNKNOWN CALLER ECHOES FROM BENEATH] In what world am I *good*?

[CHRISTINE RESISTS AS VIOLENTLY AS SHE CAN. SHE AND THE UNKNOWN CALLER WRESTLE AROUND IN THE GRAVEL FOR A FEW BRIEF MOMENTS BEFORE HE— *IT*, SUBDUES HER ONCE MORE.]

CHRIS, ALONE: [BROKEN, AS THOUGH POORLY REMIXED FROM PREVIOUS LINES] Be *afraid*.

CHRISTINE: *stop!*

[THE UNKNOWN CALLER BEGINS TO DEVOUR HER. SEEMINGLY AVOIDING HER MOUTH AND THROAT AS HER SCREAMS AND PROTESTS CONTINUE THROUGHOUT THE GORY PROCESS]

THE UNKNOWN CALLER: Be very afraid *Christine Marks*.

CHRISTINE: *stopstopstopstopstop*

[THE UNKNOWN CALLER EMITS A DEEP, GUTTERAL CHITTER]

[VARIOUS HORRIFIC, DEEP, THROATY SCREAMS ARE DRAWN FROM CHRISTINE AS SHE IS SLOWLY DEVoured.]

CHRISTINE: [SOBBING] *Stop! Please, just stop!*

[BONES SNAP, FLESH TEARS]

CHRISTINE: *Please, just make it stop!* [VOICE SMALL AND ALMOST CHILD-LIKE] *justmakeitstop*

[THE HORROR PAUSES. THE UNKNOWN CALLER STOPS DEVOURING HER FOR A MOMENT. CHRISTINE, EVEN IN HER STATE, SEEMS TO CALM A BIT. CATCH HER BREATH.]

THE UNKNOWN CALLER: [SMUG, PATERNALISTIC. COLD, YET SOMEHOW, KIND?] *Very well.*

[THE CRUNCH OF CHRISTINE'S SKULL SEEMS TO ECHO THROUGH THE FOREST. HER SCREAMS DO NOT CONTINUE, BUT WE SIT AND WAIT AS THE UNKNOWN CALLER FINISHES HIS MEAL.]

[WE SIT WITH THE GORE AND VISCERA]

[WE SIT WITH THE SILENCE. JUST SPRINGTIME CRICKETS. MAYBE AN OWL. EVEN THE UNKNOWN CALLER IS QUIET NOW. EVEN HIS THEME HAS STOPPED. WE SIT WITH THIS.]

[BEEP]

PROFESSOR COLLINS: I take it since you're not answering my calls you've heard the news, then? I understand your anger. Believe me, Carn, I really do. You would not believe how alike you are to the man I was in my younger days. Anger is the providence of youth, in many ways. But what you learn as you age— as you grow, is that there are some things in this world more important than any one person. [AN AWKWARD PAUSE] Sometimes in our field of study sacrifices *must* be made to preserve the greater good. I hope you'll be mature enough to realize that. And to call me back once you've calmed down a bit. I should hate for our friendship to end on such horrid terms.

[BEEP]

LIVVIE: [SNIFFLES] I'm done. I'm DONE! I am done chasing after you. I am done babysitting you— I have been babysitting you your entire selfish little life. *MY* entire insignificant, little life. But I am done. It gets me nothing. I cannot afford nothing. And that is what *this* all is for me. Chasing and chasing after you as you blow up, not just your life, but mine too. Did you know that Mom doesn't even call me unless it's about you? Ohhhhhh she'll bitch and moan when your number isn't active. When you're screening her calls—and I don't blame you for screening her calls, but at a certain point you start to wonder what you did wrong that you're mother is obsessed with the family fuck up and won't even ask you how your day is. And I know you were close to Dad. I know you loved him more than any of the rest of us. I know he understood you— understood how to deal with you, better than anyone. I know it's hard to lose someone like that because he was that for me too. But you have to get over. I'm sorry he's dead. I'm sorry he hung himself—and he did hang himself. I know you found the body. And I'm sure it was bloated and ugly and maybe even picked at by vultures or bears or whatever. But that **thing** you saw wasn't— [A LONG PAUSE AS SHE COLLECTS HERSELF] I'm tired of telling you it wasn't your fault. *Isn't* your fault. It's been— *God, how long?* It

doesn't even matter whose fault it was at this point. It doesn't excuse anything. It doesn't excuse *you*. I'm sure whatever evil, ugly little thing that made him do that is in you too. And I'm sorry. I'm sorry you got it and I didn't. But Dad managed. Dad was kind and consistent and he *cared* and he made sure people knew he cared. He made sure people knew they were loved. That *I* was loved. And there hasn't been a person since he's died that's *ever* done that for me. Not Mom... [HISSING] Sure as hell not you.

So, yeah, I'm done.

LIVVIE'S ROOMMATE: [PLAYFULLY SOUTHERN] Liv, I'm heading out but you've got a [SINGING] caller!

[SOUNDS OF SCUFFLING AND FOOTSTEPS AS LIVVIE MAKES HER WAY TO THE DOOR.]

[THE UNKNOWN CALLER'S THEME DRUMS SOFTLY IN THE BACKGROUND]

LIVVIE: [DISBELIEVING] *Dad?*

[BEEP]

ROBOTIC VOICE: The voice mailbox is full. Please try again. Goodbye.