

A Haunting, Beloved Screener Transcript

[opening credits]

[00:01:33] **Esther:** We open in a carriage. As your body is listing back and forth in time with the movement of the wheels, you feel your new wife's hand pressing into your own, squeezing your hand in hers, as she has done so many times. You can make out up ahead of you, as dusk is falling, the lights of what appear to be a great mansion --many little glimmering points of light outlining an immense estate.

And your wife, the Lady Bluebeard, brings your hand up to her lips and presses a kiss to it, saying, "Welcome home, darling. I'm so excited to show you *all* that this estate has to offer."

The carriage will rattle on up to the great entrance to the house, and as your wife helps you alight the carriage, she looks to you. And she'll look to the Animus first, who has control of the ring right now -- though, as always, she speaks to all aspects of the Bride.

And she says, as she has offered so many times on so many other long staircases, "Darling, do you feel able to climb yourself, or would you like me to carry you up? It is, after all, traditional in some ways, on this, the after-days of our wedding."

[00:03:22] **Basil:** So the Animus is going to turn to their wife and say, "It's a generous offer, darling. You know, I love the way the estate looks as the, as the sun sets. We'll have such a grand time planning parties and just enjoying the night air. But you know, I'm actually having a rather good day. So I will just... I'll just take your arm." And she'll just reach out and kind of take Lady Bluebeard's arm.

"Why don't we enter together? You know, equals."

[00:03:54] **Esther:** "As equals." And she'll offer her arm and help you up the stairs. You'll enter the home together. It's *massive*. And as many homes of its day, there are ornate dark wood panels and gilt doorknobs and beautiful tiled floors; large crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceilings with rather dim lights, actually. And as she leads you down the main hallway of this house, she pauses

for a moment underneath the large portrait of a rather cruel-looking man with a long blue beard.

The portrait is clearly a couple of hundred years old at this point, and Lady Bluebeard bears a small resemblance to the man in the portrait. She just kind of pauses there for a moment, looking up at him and then back at you.

[00:04:53] **Basil:** The Animus is going to take sort of a slow look between the portrait and her wife, and just kind of tilt her head and go, "Hmm. Hmm. I'm not quite sure I see the resemblance," but in a tone that's clearly meant to be teasing.

[00:05:09] **Esther:** "Well, I should hope there isn't *too* much of one. He was, by all accounts, a terrible person. Very cruel man. But, uh, fortunately, that's long in the past and all behind us now. Come, come, dear! I, I must introduce the staff."

And she leads you further down this main hall to where a group of people are lined up, ready to receive and welcome you. And she'll take a moment to introduce first Noura, the groundskeeper, who is a middle-aged woman with long brown hair that is worn up high in a bun, and a tone that when she greets you, puts you just slightly ill at ease, saying "Hello and welcome to our humble home." There is Fernando, the butler, who is younger, has dark, close-cropped hair, and gloved hands, and speaks in a youthful, happy voice. Leila the chef: red hair, southern accent, seems extremely kind. And Theo, the newest member of the household staff, who is kind of generally responsible for the upkeep of many things, and looks young, and posh, and just a little bit arrogant.

But Lady Bluebeard will finish the introductions with all of the staff, and she's actually going to suggest that you take dinner in your own apartments this evening. That you retire after a long day and just have a nice slow dinner with each other, not in the dining room, but in the little parlor off of your bedchamber.

And once she leads you up there, you will see that your rooms in this house are very lush. They're hung in blue velvets and decor is silk and gilt pieces and very, very fine ornaments of all different kinds. She'll help you sink into plush dining chairs and there will be a veritable feast served in front of you.

And after you're done eating, she will once again kiss your hand, then look at you a little longingly and say, "Well, darling, I know that we have had a long day... and it is our -- well, our first night in the house together. Tell me, what do *you* feel up to this evening?"

[00:07:46] **Basil:** "I've given this a lot of thought. As you said, it's a special moment, it's a special night." You know, we might -- it might be a little harder to get out of bed in the morning. But, I'm game for some fun if you are, dear."

[00:08:00] **Esther:** And she will kiss your hand again, gently and lovingly, and look at you and say, "With you, darling? Always."

And we can leave you two there for the evening, to have the fun you will have, before you awake again in the morning, where she will gently help you out of bed into comfortable clothing, whatever it is you wish to do. And you'll again be served breakfast in this small parlor off your bedroom. And as your wife is gently making small talk with you, Theo hurries in and whispers something urgently in her ear before hurrying back out again.

Looking surprised, she takes a moment to breathe, and then says, "Goodness, I'm... I'm so sorry to have to say this, darling, but Theo has brought urgent word that, well, I'm -- I'm needed on business in the city. It's a very urgent matter, and I'm afraid I can't delay. And well, loath as I am to leave you on your first full day here, I am afraid I must.

But I will return as soon as I may. And in the meantime--" she fumbles in one of her pockets and brings out a large ring of many different keys of various makes and sizes, painted-- or perhaps not painted, but colored -- all different colors with strange patterns. She hands them to you and says, "These are the keys to every room in this estate, in the house and outside of it.

This is your home now, and I trust you to explore in the ways that suit you best. Seek out all the knowledge you wish to have about this house. And when I get back, we can have a talk about everything you've found here. Only--" and she points out one key, which is small and rather plain, except that it is a striking shade of blue.

"Don't go in the room that this key unlocks. It's in one of the topmost tiny alcoves on the top floor of the house. Plain wooden door, brass handle. You'll know it when you see it, but... don't go in there. Please. It's just... well, it's better if we go in there together one day, if we do it all. You don't, you don't need to see that room.

Do this for me. That's all I ask." And she leans in, and kind of like, actually pauses for a moment to see if you have anything to say in response.

[00:10:56] **Basil:** "Sweetheart, this is a lot of keys. Why are none of these labeled? And if there's an accident, you know, and we need to quickly unlock a door-- I just, you know, it's safety.

There has to be at least twenty, more than twenty, perhaps, on this ring."

[00:11:16] **Esther:** "Darling, you are sharp as ever. You know, I suppose living here my entire life, I, um... I simply hadn't thought of the need for a label. Growing up, knowing what keys go to what rooms... tell you what. If you have trouble, find Noura. She's been here forever, and she knows what keys unlock which rooms.

But maybe it can be a bit of fun for you, figuring out how to match them together."

[00:11:41] **Basil:** "Well, darling, if I'm the one matching them, then I will be putting labels on them when I'm done."

[00:11:47] **Esther:** "Be my guest. Be my guest. Change is a good thing, I think. Anyway, I, um -- I'm afraid I must be on my way. This is a matter of great haste."

And she's gonna lean in, give you one long kiss that's sweet, and chaste, but also full of desire at the same time. And then she sort of nods her head to you and sweeps out of the room, truly making haste to wherever it is she's off to, and leaves you alone in the house to do what you will.

[00:12:30] **Nala:** "Well, isn't this strange?"

[00:12:33] **Basil:** "Oh, absolutely. I mean, look at all of these!" And the Animus is gonna just jingle the keys again and just sort of loosely rifle through them, assessing them, just mostly just sort of displeased at the lack of organization. There's nothing more frustrating than an unlabeled key ring.

[00:12:53] **Candace:** "I think it's very romantic that that little blue key is a room that she wants to go in *together*. Isn't that lovely? So romantic. I wonder what's in there. Do you think it's... you think it's something a little bit, um, *spicy*? Perhaps she understands our delicate sensibilities and doesn't want us to get over- involved without her."

[00:13:20] **Basil:** "If that was the case, I feel like she should have taken that key with her. I mean, I suppose there's nothing stopping us from looking and then re-locking the door..."

[00:13:31] **Candace:** " I know, but the temptation is so fun, isn't it? It's romantic."

[00:13:36] **Keegan:** "But it's a bit plain!"

[00:13:37] **Candace:** "By the way, it's a good thing that you allowed her to take your arm. It would have been very nice to be carried over the threshold like a princess."

" We're more than capable of going up some stairs. We spent the whole ride in the carriage."

[00:13:53] **Candace:** "That's true. We are more than capable."

[00:13:58] **Button:** "

"Perhaps she can carry you up the stairs to the door with the little blue key."

[00:14:07] **Candace:** "Oh! [laughs] Witch, you know me. You read me like a book."

[00:14:13] **Keegan:** The Ingénue is sort of buzzing with that childlike excitement that has likely led her and the Animus into some hijinks, especially when they were younger, and goes, "Well, that's fun and all, but certainly there's something a lot more fun behind these doors with how interesting these keys look. Animus, why don't you choose something fun?"

[00:14:38] **Basil:** "You know, that is an excellent idea."

The Animus is just gonna put the key ring onto their wrist and just head out the room. They're gonna walk until they see like a door they don't recognize. And then just sort of, just start futzing with the keys until they find one that kind of seems like it might fit.

[00:15:12] **Button:** Linked arm in arm with Noura, the Witch will ask her:

"Of all the spaces in this vast estate, which one best embodies my wife?"

[00:15:34] **Esther:** Noura will spend a long moment in thought, and will then say: "Every room embodies your wife to some extent. But perhaps if I had to choose, it would be the Solarium, the sun room. I can lead you there if you would like."

[00:15:59] **Button:** "Lead the way." And the hand not holding Noura's, because the Witch's power is in hemolergy, is going to tuck behind their back and they are going to leave themselves a breadcrumb trail of blood, just in case.

[00:16:20] **Esther:** Ooh, I think I'm gonna ask you to mark one Trauma on your sheet.

[00:16:27] **Button:** [laughs gleefully] Okay.

[00:16:28] **Esther:** Yeah. As you leave this trail of droplets of blood on the tiles and the carpets, and Noura leads you, slowly but surely, up a couple staircases. There will be a room with a white door, a door that is not made out of wood, but a more organic material, and a key that matches it that is a bone-white skeleton key with a spinal cord as the shank and a smiling skull as the bow. And Noura will indicate to you that is the key to unlock this door. As you put the key in the lock and turn it, you can feel almost a vibration of energy before the door opens.

And you see another well-lit room open up before you. There are high windows all along the western wall. And because it's the afternoon now, the sun is gonna go down and its rays are coming in that side. So there's quite a lot of light in the room. There is the usual furniture for a Solarium: lounging chairs, a nice plush couch, and a couple of golden bird cages with a few singing birds, all in shades of blue -- from light, light bluebird blue to deep purple-blue. And there is a music box sitting on a low table in front of the sofa, and some ladies pamphlets scattered about that table.

There are several blankets neatly folded and thrown across the arms of the sofas and the plush chairs, and one small tray containing tiny glass bottles, and a container that looks like some sort of an ointment jar. And you notice as you enter this room, despite all the bright sunlight and the expectation that it would be a warm space, you don't feel warm.

This feels almost artificial somehow.

[00:18:44] **Button:** The Witch will approach the bird cages. As an auspex, they will try to read the patterns of flight as the birds are confined.

[00:19:11] **Esther:** And I think I may ask you to Investigate A Mysterious Object to do that, or to Take Stock. Your, your pick.

[00:19:19] **Button:** They will-- you know, actually, they will do something else, and they're going to take a Trauma doing it. They are going to use their Face move, The Medium. They can spill blood to commune with the horrors of the room.

So what they will do is pull out the poem that the Ingénue took. Did my wife, Bluebeard, sign her name here?

[00:19:50] **Esther:** Yes, she did.

[00:19:52] **Button:** The Witch will lick the word from the page, staining her tongue with ink and turning the text into nothing more than a blur. No suggestion of what remains. Knowing that it is one thing to invoke a true name, and it is vastly more powerful to consume a name entirely.

And as they do, they say, "By the pricking of my tongue, something wicked this way comes." And they'll give their tongue a paper cut.

What I get from this, besides Trauma, is to hear the whisperings about what happened here and two questions of my choice, which must be answered. Oh, and they get to ask me a question.

[00:20:38] **Esther:** So we'll start with the whisperings of what happened here. The first thing you notice is your own body. That after the Mother accepted a hard bargain, you are aching and feeling the effects of having spent so much energy in the last three rooms. And it's just a bit more difficult to navigate. You hear the strains of music as if they are coming from the closed music box.

And it's the same song that guided you around the ballroom in the arms of what appeared to be your wife. You hear the singing of these birds in the cages, and you hear them whisper that they have no shortage of food, they have no shortage of water, they have no shortage of ornaments to play with, but they long for the world outside their cages.

And they whisper to you that, though their feathers look bright and glorious, if you truly see them, they're molting. I think they ask you:

"Do you love us?" And by 'us,' you understand that they mean themselves, the house, your wife, all as one.

[00:22:10] **Button:** And before the Witch answers the birds, the Witch turns inward and asks, first the Ingénue: "Do you love us, Ingénue?"

[00:22:27] **Keegan:** "Why, of course, you're all I've ever known and had."

[00:22:31] **Button:** "What does one do with what one loves?"

[00:22:40] **Keegan:** "You

let them explore. You let them grow. You allow them to become the person that they wish to become and accept all the -- all the quirks that they bring, I suppose."

[00:22:58] **Button:** "Young but wise. Animus, do you love us?"

[00:23:10] **Basil:** " Well, I will say I don't love the fact that you've been bleeding all over the place after all that time I spent bandaging our hand.

That's how you get a staph infection. Hmm. But I do also recognize, uh, the merit of your power. And my disgruntlement aside, I do love you, Witch. You just frustrate me sometimes."

" I apologize most truly. Animus, what do you *do* with what you love?"

[00:23:46] **Basil:** " When you love something, you should let it grow. Let it, as the Ingénue said, let it explore. You should be happy with its decisions, whatever they choose to do; as long as they aren't, you know, trying to eat paper."

" Just a word! Just one word."

[00:24:09] **Basil:** " That's how it starts. Then you're eating whole newspapers."

[00:24:14] **Button:** "Mother, do you love us?"

[00:24:19] **Nala:** "Of course. Have I done anything to suggest otherwise?"

[00:24:25] **Button:** "Not once."

[00:24:29] **Nala:** "Then I think that matter is settled."

[00:24:31] **Button:** "And what do you do with what you love?"

[00:24:37] **Nala:** Mother pauses and looks away for a moment

and then looks back.

"To really love someone or something is to know someone or something. You know all of them. You see all of them. The highs and the lows. All of their faults, and their misery, and their sadness, and their anger, and their joy, and compassion. You see all of it, and you love all of it, unconditionally. For those you love, you wish the best. And even though they may not always love you back,

you must love that much more to fill in the gap when those who love you move away from you. Because if that love is reciprocated, they will always come back eventually.

[00:26:09] **Button:** They kiss the top of their own hand, and they say, "I see you."

[00:26:20] **Nala:** "And I you."

[00:26:21] **Button:** "And I love what I see.

Fatale, dearest, most loving Fatale: do you love us?"

[00:26:39] **Candace:** "With all my heart, sister."

[00:26:41] **Button:** "With all your heart.

And what do you do with what you love?"

[00:26:55] **Candace:** "You cherish it. You hold it close, but not so close that it feels suffocated. You reward it with gifts, from fancy things and expensive things, all the way to things you cannot do without, like truth and honesty.

You celebrate it."

[00:27:20] **Button:** "You celebrate it. You cherish it, but don't hold too tight. You know them. You see them. You let them grow. You let them become and you let them explore.

If you love it, set it free." And they go to the birdcage. "I love you." And they open the cage.

[00:27:55] **Esther:** And the birds fly out, eager, and begin circling about the room, flitting from perch to perch, taking in this sunlight, ecstatic.

[00:28:12] **Candace:** This isn't a tense situation, but I think that that physical representation of a love caged makes the Fatale feel tense. And I think she realizes that when the Witch asks her what they do with their love. So, if I may, I would like to ask a question: what traps have been laid here for the bride?

[00:28:40] **Esther:** Yes.

You are able to take in this room... the birds flitting about... and it strikes you that perhaps the sunlight itself is a sweet trap. This facade of a room that is made to comfort, that is made to lounge in. But this cold that grows moment by moment more bitter and more piercing. It springs to your mind that Noura said this room reminds her most of your wife; and suddenly you begin to shiver and see your own breath, as frost slowly creeps over the sofa and the chairs, and makes its way up the legs of the little tables, and creeps towards the birds.

And their song quickens, becoming almost frantic, though they don't appear touched by the frost themselves. They're clearly aware of and distressed by its presence. And you feel that this sense of coldness, this frost, both physical and metaphorical, is like a trap laid for you in what appears to be a warm place, yet underneath is made of ice.

[00:30:02] **Candace:** I think the Fatale, in barely a whisper says to no one in particular: "Love is passion. Passion burns hot. So what could this be?"

[00:30:18] **Button:** "That not every embrace is passion."

[00:30:31] **Candace:** "Shouldn't it be? When you're in love?"

[00:30:36] **Button:** "It should."

[00:30:40] **Candace:** "Even when you're angry, it should be full of something. This is more akin to nothing. This coldness, this darkness."

[00:30:56] **Nala:** "I agree.

Even in anger, when those you love are fighting with you, there is still passion behind that, I feel. If you do not feel passion, then you don't feel anything at all."

[00:31:14] **Keegan:** "And I guess if this room has taught us anything, some embraces are cages. I wonder if she wants to keep us like these birds here."

[00:31:27] **Button:** "We could be birds together, she and I, building our nest. Yet instead she offers the cold of a gilded cage and its bars.

We are treated like a weed when we are meant to be the apple of her eye."

[00:31:53] **Nala:** "Why is every room in this house cursed in some way? I think that alone is a warning, no?

It's cold and our bones ache."

[00:32:14] **Button:** "This curse has the power to be a blessing." And I think, having felt small embraces by the house despite the horrors, I'd like to propose a truth about the room.

This cold in this space doesn't emerge from the house, doesn't emerge from the mansion which has embraced us by small measures. Noura was right. The cold emanates from Lady Bluebeard. She's what turns the room, the walls blue with ice.

[00:33:11] **Esther:** And tell me, Witch, what token do you take from this room, and is it a token of Trust or Distrust?

[00:33:19] **Button:** Joyful Distrust.

[00:33:27] **Esther:** You make your way up many flights of stairs to this small alcove, bones aching, back hurting, feeling faint and dizzy and weighed down literally by a force that almost seems outside your body, but you climb. And perhaps out of breath, you reach this door. You hear this heartbeat; it's grown louder and louder as you've ascended all the stairs.

And you find yourself fingering that small, plain, blue key.

And Fatale, I think you will now share the Ring with all of your sisters, but it is your hands that hold this key and that put it in the lock. And tell me, is there anything you express, anything you do as you unlock this door? I

[00:34:42] **Candace:** I think I take a moment, and I kind of embrace the shared breath I imagine all of us taking together; putting one hand on the door, feeling for that kind of distinct coldness, or any other kind of outlying temperatures, just to prepare myself for what might be inside. Feeling my pulse quicken, hearing the pumping and beating of this heart within--

and then turn the lock and open.

[00:35:26] **Esther:** I should say first of all, the door was very plain itself. Cool, made of dark wood with a tarnished brass handle that as you turn it just out of the corner of your eye, you almost think it's in the shape of a skull. But it's not; it's just an ordinary handle. And inside, you open the door to find a room lit by three high, small windows, through which light is streaming down onto a very old stone floor.

There are stains on this floor, and they appear faintly red, though it's impossible to say exactly what made them. There are portraits hung on the walls of the room; several women and feminine-appearing people, in fashions that were popular around two hundred years ago, some from the last century, and some that seem far more recent.

And of the recent-looking portraits, one woman is seated in a wheelchair, one reclines on a daybed, covered in blankets, and one uses a hearing aid to listen to a songbird perched on her shoulder. And the floor of this room is bare, save for the one thing. In the middle of the room, lying on the cold flagstones, there is a bloodless, beating human heart.

At first, perhaps a disturbing object, but the more you look, there's something pitiful about it.

[00:36:52] **Candace:** "If this is where and how she keeps her own heart, what would she do with ours?"

[00:37:01] **Esther:** And I think at this exact moment, you hear footsteps on the stairs behind you quickly approaching. And you hear a gasp [gasps] as someone realizes this door is open. And then you hear the familiar voice of your wife saying: "What the hell are you doing in this room?"

I specifically told you not to use this key or to come into this room."

[00:37:37] **Button:** "You would withhold your heart from us, your Bride?"

[00:37:43] **Esther:** "That is not my heart."

[00:37:47] **Button:** "Hmm."

[00:37:52] **Nala:** "Whose is it then?"

[00:37:53] **Esther:** " I don't know. It's been here as long as I've been alive.

Sometimes I dreamed that it was my own heart. Sometimes my heart seemed to beat with it. But I have my own heart in here. And that-- that thing, that pitiful, terrible thing, it -- it's-- it's not. It's not me."

[00:38:24] **Nala:** I think Mother kind of -- it seems we've been slipping the ring to each other this whole time, but I will gently take it. And I will reach out with a hand for our wife's chest. I want to put a hand against her heart, and just feel with our sensitive fingertips, and I want to feel her heart, and compare it to the one that is on the floor, devoid of blood.

[00:39:02] **Esther:** What you feel is that her heart is in her chest, beating, full of life. That it is struggling to make its own rhythm, apart from this heart that's beating on the floor. That it's trying, it's there, there is fight left in it.

[00:39:30] **Nala:** And I think having this information, Mother takes a step back from the front and

I think it just inwardly thinks a warning to the two of us who

are gripping knives, metaphorically, or not. I think she just says, "Careful now."

[00:40:08] **Button:** "Beloved..." The Witch will slip on the ring momentarily and take a step closer.

"Why did you not trust us with this room?"

[00:40:32] **Esther:** "Because... would you have come here if I told you? This place-- this place is haunted.

When I trusted everyone else, it, it -- it drove them away. When the others looked in here, whether with me or against my request, it... it drove a knife through the heart of what we had."

[00:41:04] **Button:** "And how long did they live after they saw this room?"

" One of them, only a matter of months. The other two, I don't know exactly when they had looked. They confessed it to me before they died.

[00:41:25] **Esther:** I thought that -- I thought that maybe this time would be different. I thought -- I thought we could make something. That it could be normal."

[00:41:38] **Button:** "[scoffs] You crave normalcy in a haunted house!" And while I'm wearing the ring, I would like to Caress A Horror and caress the heart.

[00:41:47] **Esther:** I think that means you roll, if I'm remembering correctly.

Yeah.

[00:41:52] **Button:** And I add my blood, which I have! 7 plus 1 for 8.

[00:41:57] **Esther:** So that means it's going to shift its attention if you participate in some way. So I'm gonna ask all of you at this point to remind me who has received one of the little tokens. One, two, three.

If you would all like to spend your tokens on this, you may Caress this heart and have it respond to the beating of your heart, to the direction that you wish to take things. So, Animus, Ingenue, and Witch, do you choose to spend your tokens to do this?

[00:42:49] **Button:** I do.

[00:42:52] **Esther:** I do as well.

[00:42:55] **Keegan:** I do as well.

[00:42:57] **Esther:** And I think, Witch, as you Caress this heart you feel that there is possibility here. That there's a story in this room that has ended in horror and in tragedy many times before, but that you have the power within you to

effect a transformation. That as you have reached out to Noura and Leila, and perhaps even your wife in this moment, there is a possibility here

to have something new grow in the compost pile that is this house, if you want to stay and try.

[00:43:40] **Button:** The Witch remembers entering the Solarium and thinking that Lady Bluebeard meant to cage us. And the Witch realizes in this moment that they were wrong. They say aloud: "You see this house as a cage; but you could fly with me, and we could make it our nest."

[00:44:18] **Esther:** And slowly, she just reaches out her hand to you; perhaps letting you see her in vulnerability and uncertainty and this desire to actually transform something for the first time.