

Halfmoon Chronicles Season 1 Episode 6 “In The Pipe”

[SFX: LIGHT CAFÉ BACKGROUND NOISE]

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]

CAM

Okay, we're recording.

TABBY

Good. I want to get the research part on record too.

CAM

Do you think it's gonna be useable?

TABBY

Maybe, maybe not. But I want to have it, just in case.

GRAY

Yeah. Besides, I don't think we'll use a lot of it.

CAM

We only have limited tape storage, so I just wanted us to be aware of that.

TABBY

Good point. But I'm willing to buy more.

GRAY

Or we can switch to a digital format.

CAM

No, not as our primary backup.

GRAY

Cam, we can store so much more on a cheaper format. All the computers here in Chester's have a disc burner attached. It really is a good idea.

CAM

Actually, Gray, it's not, and you know why? When the year 2000 rolls around, all these computers are going to stop working and all recorded media is going to be--

GRAY [OVERLAPPED]

I told you, Y2K is not going to impact modern--

TABBY

We are not having this discussion again. You two can talk about your tech problems off mic, okay?

CAM

Fine. We'll talk about it later, then.

TABBY

Good. Anyway. Unless there are any further issues or objections, can we start?

GRAY

Sure.

CAM

Yeah.

TABBY

Great. This recording was taken on November 17th in Chester's Internet Cafe here in Halfmoon. For this episode, we are going to look into drowning victims.

CAM

Just drowning victims?

TABBY

Yes. There's a surprising amount of them here.

GRAY

Didn't we already record one about the river?

TABBY

We did, but this is about the reservoir.

CAM

Halfmoon has a reservoir?

GRAY

Yeah, it's the muddy lake in Open Meadow Park. Where the drainage pipe lets out.

CAM

Oh, gross.

TABBY

It's treated water by the time it gets to the reservoir.

CAM

Doesn't make it much better. Is that what we've been drinking?

TABBY

I don't know.

GRAY

I think some of Halfmoon's drinking water comes from Open Meadow.

CAM

Can I opt out of drinking water?

TABBY

What else are you gonna drink?

CAM

Soda. I think Watkins' still has some Pepsi Crystal.

GRAY

That is going to give you cancer, you know that?

CAM

That's a risk I'm willing to take.

TABBY

You two. Focus.

GRAY

Right, sorry.

CAM

Sorry, Tabby.

TABBY

Back on topic. Ash is out trying to find anyone who's willing to be interviewed about the reservoir. Gray, I think you have a list of the victims.

GRAY

I have a list of the individuals who drowned in the reservoir, yes.

TABBY

Anything remarkable about them?

GRAY

Well. They all died.

TABBY

Any similarities between their deaths?

[SILENCE]

TABBY

What?

CAM

Don't you think we should talk about these... people with a little more care?

TABBY

What are you talking about?

GRAY

Tabby. They're real people who died. I know it's a show we're working on, but...

TABBY

But what?

GRAY

I don't know. Have some respect.

TABBY

What is there to be respectful about?

CAM

Tabby, they're human beings.

TABBY

....

You're right. I'm sorry.

GRAY

It's not a big deal. Let's just not get so lost in this project that we forget about the people whose lives and deaths we're documenting.

TABBY

I get it. Not to sound any less sensitive than I already did, but can we talk about the drownings?

GRAY

Sure.

TABBY

Did you notice any patterns, any potential spooky similarities?

GRAY

Nothing really substantial. All the deaths occurred at night. All occurred while the individual was alone. Each of them died and ended up inside the drain, which isn't weird by itself, because that's just kinda the way the current goes in the reservoir.

TABBY

Anyone you've identified we could interview?

GRAY

Not really. This isn't like the one we did with the disappearances and the Friend where none of them had any close contacts in town. For this case, they all had friends or family in town who reported them missing. Only remotely weird thing about any of them is that the "last known locations" for most of them was nowhere near Open Meadows.

TABBY

Huh. Did they all know how to swim?

GRAY

I'm not sure. It's hard to tell. Some of the obits mention that the deceased were strong swimmers, but none of them say specifically that they couldn't swim or anything about that.

CAM

Yeah, I looked over them with Gray earlier, and they were all very basic. "So-and-so is survived by their family" and so on.

TABBY

That's not a lot to go on.

CAM

Yeah, I know.

TABBY

What about the initial missing person reports?

CAM

No luck there. I tried to look into those while Gray was combing through the microfilms in the library. The police department does not seem to like us asking about those every few days.

TABBY

No surprise there.

CAM

Yeah. I think we're gonna need to stop relying on that as an easy resource.

GRAY

I'm sorry, the police are an easy resource?

CAM

You know what I mean.

TABBY

Maybe Ash will have something more substantial to go on later.

CAM

Tabby, not to be rude or question your methods or anything, but what exactly are we investigating now?

TABBY

I told you. The drownings. There's been more than a dozen in the last forty years and that's a lot more than should be expected at a town of this size.

CAM

I know, but what about these drownings? I mean, drowning isn't spooky. It just sounds like it sucks.

GRAY

Well, Tabs does have a point. It's unusual, and if we're going to do an episode on this, there's an angle we can spin.

CAM

I don't know. Seems like a stretch to me.

GRAY

I feel that way, too, but we have to trust Tabs and her storytelling instincts, even if it is fabricated.

TABBY

Thank you for trying, Gray, but this isn't fabricating. It's telling the story no one else wants or cares to tell. And there's something here.

CAM

How do you know?

TABBY

I don't know. Call it instinct. If there's nothing else to get on record, I'm going to track down Ash and see if she has something to go on. You two keep up what you're working on here.

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS AGAIN]

[SFX: SOUNDS OF TOWN LIFE AND NATURE]

TABBY

You're sure we couldn't record in the Econoline?

ASH

Positive. I need coffee.

TABBY

That you couldn't have taken to the Econoline?

ASH

Do you want the intel or not?

TABBY

Okay, sorry, I guess. What were you able to find?

ASH

Well...

[SFX: PAPERS RUSTLING]

TABBY

Whoa. Are these the missing person reports for the reservoir cases?

ASH

Yup.

TABBY

Wow...this is...incredible. How did you get these?

ASH

I just asked, basically.

TABBY

But Gray and Cam just asked and they got nothing.

ASH

They're not as charming as me.

TABBY

....

ASH

Fine, I just knew what to say.

TABBY

Do I want to know why you're so good at getting what you want out of cops?

ASH

It's not that salacious. It's just that, bouncing in and out of foster care, you end up learning a lot about how cops work and what they like to hear. Besides, they love the cute and innocent shtick. They practically eat it up.

TABBY

[SFX: PAPERS RUSTLING CONTINUES]

That explains why Cam and Gray got nowhere.

ASH

I'm just better than them.

TABBY

....

Did you have a chance to read through any of these?

ASH

A couple. Was there something you were looking for?

TABBY

Anything weird. Anything that marks this as paranormal.

ASH

This has paranormal written all over it.

TABBY

Sure, but do we have anything concrete? Any survivors or witnesses?

ASH

From what I can tell, just one survivor.

TABBY

Wait, what?

ASH

Yeah, there was one person who fell into the lake and got out. It's not in any of those reports.

TABBY

How did you find out about that?

ASH

One of the cops told me.

TABBY

Ash, you're amazing. Did they tell you anything else?

ASH

Just that the whole town thinks the lake is haunted. I personally don't think this is a haunting. Maybe some sort of aquatic cryptid? It's hard to know at this point. One of the cops did say—

TABBY

Don't tell me now. I want to save it for the actual recording.

ASH

All right, fine by me.

TABBY

What about this survivor? Do they still live in town?

ASH

She does. Technically. She's in Gracie.

TABBY

The psychiatric ward?

ASH

Yup. I don't think she's been released yet, at least. I can circle back around with Captain Ryan.

TABBY

You're on a first name basis with the chief of police?

ASH

Of course. You gotta get cozy with authority if you're gonna undermine them.

TABBY

Is he cute?

ASH

First of all: *barf*. Second, Chief Ryan is a *woman*. And yes, she's cute, but also still a cop, so, no.

TABBY

Oh, my bad.

ASH

Yes, your bad. To think I'd be attracted to a cop. You're disgusting.

TABBY

I *said* I was sorry.

ASH

It's fine. We can move on.

TABBY

Okay...I'm gonna try to dig up anything on this survivor. Do we have a name?

ASH

Yeah, Andrea Perkins.

TABBY

I'll have Gray look into it. Do you think you could ask around and see if anyone has stories about her? People around town seem to like you more than Gray.

ASH

[CHUCKLES]

It's true, people love me here. I'll see what I can find out.

TABBY

Great. We almost have enough to start recording for real.

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS AGAIN]

TABBY

In any town near a body of water, some people will drown. Oftentimes, drowning is an accident. A momentary misfortune that takes a life. But sometimes, when too many people drown all at the same spot, something more malicious may be at work.

Halfmoon, like most other small municipalities, has a reservoir that supplies the town's drinking water. The reservoir, simply called The Lake, is located just outside of town in Open Meadow Park. It's an unassuming, man-made body of water nestled between trees and a playground. To the casual observer, it's just another lovely spot in a lovely town. But its waters hide a dark past.

Before it was a lake, this land had a small pond and a property that belonged to a forgotten owner. The property's single tenant lived in a one-room, hand-built home in what is now the middle of the Lake. In the early 1900s, the owner died, though his body wasn't discovered for weeks after his passing. He was found in bed--apparently, he had passed in his sleep, despite being relatively young. He was fifty-four when he died. An autopsy was later done, and no one could ascertain a cause of death, though his body was healthy--no diseases nor drugs in his system. But one detail does stick out in the coroner's report: the unnamed tenant's lungs were filled with water. If you have been following our progress thus far you may note the similarity in the deaths of this forgotten soul and George Van Eisen whose mysterious death was also caused by a similar drowning on dry land.

[PAUSES]

Halfmoon quickly forgot about the unexplained man who drowned in his own bed, it seems, as the house was torn down, paved over, and ultimately turned into The Lake.

Over the following decades, the park around the reservoir grew and became Halfmoon's premier outdoor leisure location. Since investigating this story, I can personally attest that the park is beautiful. The crisp winter air feels fresher there than in other spots, and the soft dribble of the water into the Lake echoes through the trees, giving the whole park a serene, otherworldly feel.

[PAUSES]

And then. There's the lake itself. The drainage pipe in particular. The city has done what it can to beautify an ultimately utilitarian appliance. Reeds have been planted or otherwise taken root there. A number of shrubs and trees hide the unnatural bump in the landscape where the pipe recedes into the hill. Despite this natural beautification, the pipe retains one noticeable industrial feature: a thick metal grate affixed to the front. It was installed in the early 80s after a particularly gruesome summer, during which four separate bodies were found washed up inside the drain. Which is what brings us to our truly paranormal encounters.

[PAUSES AGAIN]

Since the pipe was installed, more than twenty people have drowned in the lake. Their bodies have all been found inside the pipe. The first such occurrence was just after the park opened. A teenager, Wallace George, went out for a late-night walk and never

returned home the next day. A citywide hunt ensued the next day, but they found no sign of George.

A week later, his body was finally discovered floating lifeless inside the drainage pipe. The town was baffled, not least of which because George was known to be a remarkably strong swimmer. But that wasn't the only shocking detail. According to multiple witnesses interviewed for the Chronicle, the drain had been searched multiple times during the weeklong search, and his body was not there until that final day.

What the coroner's report uncovered was unsurprising; the body was waterlogged, his lungs filled with water. It was clear he had been floating in the water for at least a week, but interestingly, the report notes that the wear on the body indicates he must have been there for much longer. The coroner wrote it off as an anomaly caused by the weather.

The next several decades would see numerous deaths just like this. A resident would go for a walk, usually late at night, and then they would never come back home. The city—or recently, just the police--searched for days, only to find them face down in the drainage pipe. This occurrence is so commonplace in Halfmoon that it has become a local joke to imply that someone you can't find is "in the pipe." Chester's Internet Cafe, a local establishment, even sells merchandise featuring the phrase "in the pipe."

As far as we can surmise, all of the victims were known to be at least adequate swimmers, and all were found days after their disappearance with indications that they had been in the water for far longer than they had been gone. One final commonality they all shared: none of the drownings had any witnesses.

This string of drownings has led the local police department to open investigations into the possibility of a serial killer, though there has been no evidence linking the deaths to any one individual. Inquiries have been launched by the mayor's office to explore potential safety hazards in the water. Swimming has been banned in the Lake since its creation, but the location has been deemed safe to swim in, with no toxic chemicals in the water, and the current flowing out through the drainage pipe is nowhere near strong enough to pose a threat to even the least experienced swimmers. The mystery of these drownings endured for decades with no clues, no leads. Just more victims. But all that changed in 1994 with Andrea Perkins.

Perkins was twenty-one when she disappeared. Her roommate knew she would be walking past Open Meadow, and she warned her against it, but Perkins went, anyway. When she didn't come home that night, the police, through habit at this point, investigated the area around the pond and found no evidence of her disappearance. A missing person report was filed, the search was underway, but the town knew what to expect. When someone goes missing near Open Meadow, there's only one way they're ever found.

Only this time, it was different. A week later, a couple walking their dog through the park at twilight heard splashing. They rushed to the scene and found Andrea Perkins thrashing in the water. They jumped in to rescue her and pulled her out, only to find her skin so waterlogged that it was covered in deep abrasions and sores.

When a living person spends a significant amount of time in water, their skin begins to crack and peel. It almost literally disintegrates. According to the reports taken at the time, Perkins's body looked as though it had been submerged in water for nearly two weeks.

She was rushed to a hospital, barely coherent, and was treated. By some miracle, Perkins survived. When she finally came to, the first thing she asked was, "Is he okay?" No one knew what she meant until she explained. To hear her tell it, she went out for her walk just like she said she would. She came across a man with long, wet hair, like he had just come out of the water.

All the wet man would do was point at the water and say,

[SFX: SOUND DISTORTION NOISES]

"Help. Drowning."

Attempts to clarify what he meant were useless.

[SFX: CONTINUED SOUND DISTORTION NOISES AND SOUNDS OF RUNNING WATER]

“Help. Drowning,” he just repeated.

Perkins ran to help, diving into the water without thinking, and then she lost herself.

There's no easy way to describe what happened to Perkins after she willingly dove into the Lake. According to her recollection, she was under the water for only a minute, and when she came up, she wasn't in Halfmoon anymore. She recalled seeing huge, dead trees reaching for a black, starless sky. She said the water, which was previously cool and refreshing, was dark and brackish. She heard horrible sounds coming from the woods all around, saw shadows move in the trees, and then, moments later, she was back in the Lake in enormous pain, desperate for help.

All in all, Perkins claims she was in the lake for about five minutes. Every reputable source says Perkins was missing for seven straight days. The deterioration on her skin suggests she was in the water for no less than two weeks.

Perkins was sent to Gracie, the psychiatric ward of Halfmoon General Hospital, where she remains to this day. Officially, the police closed the missing person case, stating that

Perkins had consumed narcotics, triggering a sudden, violent break from reality that caused her to hallucinate everything she described. Perkins, according to our confidential sources, still denies ever having taken hallucinogenic drugs. But the question remains: what happened to Andrea Perkins, where did she vanish to, and who was this drowned figure who beckoned her to the water? This story has more questions than answers, and—

[SFX: LOUD BANGING ON DOOR]

ASH

[MUFFLED YELLING]

Tabby! Open up!

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS AND DOOR SLIDING OPEN]

TABBY

What do you want? I was recording.

GRAY

Toss me Cam's bag.

TABBY

[SFX: RUSTLING NOISES]

Here. What's going on?

GRAY

It's Cam. They jumped in the reservoir.

TABBY

What? Why? It's like twenty degrees out!

ASH

Give me that!

[SFX: LOUD FOOTSEPS RECEDING]

GRAY

They said someone was drowning in the Lake. Did we bring any towels?

TABBY

Wait, who told them there was someone drowning?

GRAY

I don't know, I didn't see anyone else. They just said someone by the lake needed help.

Do we have towels or not?

TABBY

I—yes, we do.

GRAY

Okay, hand them over.

TABBY

Wait, I'm coming with you. I need to talk to Cam right now.

[SFX: RUSTLING NOISES]

[SFX: RECORDER CLICKS]