

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: [DELIGHTFUL] Miss Durfee! How unfortunate we keep playing phone tag! I should think we’re breaking some kind of record, the number of calls we keep missing from one another. But, yes! I am available to speak as to our... *shared interest* in person. Your choice of location is very intriguing, I must say. But looking online at pictures of these grottos I should be delighted to peruse the grounds together as we talk.

Thank you, again, for humoring an old man like me. I so look forward to meeting you.

[BEEP]

LIVVY: Hey, Carn. I know you of all people aren’t going to forget, but I figured I’d remind you anyways. I don’t think Mom can bring herself to come this year, but *I’ll* be at the cemetery on the 3rd. It’s been... It’s been too long since I’ve visited. The flowers we left last year are probably long dead by now... anyways, I thought I’d let you know so you’re not surprised when you visit too.

[BEEP]

CHRISTINE: [SHORTLY] Hi. It’s Chris. *Christine*, not... Anyways, I thought I’d update you since you’re as clueless as I am. They found [HER VOICE WAVERS HERE] *scraps* of his clothes near some cabin on the outskirts of some back water bumfuck town named *Reagan*. Who the FUCK names their town after Ronald Reagan? They’re saying it looks like he broke into the place and I’d say that wasn’t like him, but... Well, *you knew him*. Christopher was— *is IS* a troublemaker.

Honestly it feels like such a nothing lead. They didn't even find blood. Which, if it was a bear or something they *definitely* would have, right? AND! And the place was all dusty and old so it's not like someone could have killed him and cleaned the evidence.

Anyways, that's all I've got right now. I'll be staying at The Lexington if you wanna talk? Or we can just keep texting. That's— *fine*.

[BEEP]

AISHA: [RUSHED] It's me. I've got a line out the door and my manager is breathing down my neck but I forgot to ask you last night: My mom's doing a little dinner tonight with me and my brothers and it's not like... a *big-big* deal. But I think she likes you and she hasn't really liked any of the other girls I've dated and I'd really appreciate it if you could come? Anyways that's it. Text, don't call. I'm gonna be *swamped*.

[BEEP]

RECEPTIONIST: Hi, Miss Whitlock? This is the office of Doctor Summers. I see you put in a request for your prescription to be refilled at Meyers Pharmacy? Unfortunately, you're out of refills until you come back in for an appointment. There's just some blood work we have to do to make sure everything's ship-shape! You can schedule an appointment through the same online portal you used to request a refill or call us back any time before 5. Thank you.

[BEEP]

PROFESSOR COLLINS: Miss Durfee? I must say I'm surprised if this is going through considering the reception out here. I'm at the site. I must say this Black Madonna shrine is beautiful. I don't think I've ever seen stone work like this. But you must be familiar, since you sent me here. And I have confidence that you've done so in good faith. Our shared interest might care little for the sacred, but you wouldn't risk some poor pilgrim stumbling upon my remains, would you? I have faith in you yet, Miss Durfee. What a fitting place to have faith in someone...

[BEEP]

CHRISTINE: [FOOTSTEPS CRUNCHING ON GRAVEL] Holy *fuck* do I have an update for you! So, I was looking into the history of the place they found his clothes at and like 15 years ago some *guy* got attacked by bear at that exact

location! Anyways, he fucking died and now the place is abandoned but, *get this*, the property's owned by his *daughter*! How much do you wanna bet she's got something to do with this?

[FOOTSTEPS CRUNCHING ON GRAVEL STOPS AS CHRISTINE ENTERS BUILDING]

Anyways, I gotta give a statement to the cops. They're opening an investigation which is... *good*, I guess? I really don't like cops but any port in a storm, right?

[BEEP]

LIVVY: Hey, um... I'm not trying to judge or like attack you or anything but I called the cemetery today to see if I could get some flowers delivered so we wouldn't have to drive with them in the car— *I know you hate that smell*, and the groundskeeper mentioned the grave not needing any because '*she always brings fresh ones when she visits*'...

Carn, have you been visiting Dad's grave alone?

[RUSHED] And like that's totally fine! I'm not judging. I just— [A LONG SIGH] I worry about you, is all. I worry that you're there. Stuck in that moment all alone again forever and I'm not even noticing.

If it makes you feel any better, I think I'm stuck there too. I don't know why that'd make you feel better, but misery loves company right?

[AWKWARD PAUSE]

Right?

[STATIC]

[BEEP]

DETECTIVE ROBERTS: Hello. Um, this message is for an Amber? My apologies, I wasn't given a last name. [A PAUSE] I'm so sorry to bother you. My name is Alan Roberts. I'm a detective with Reagan PD? Honestly I don't even want to bother you with this. I'm working on a missing person's case and it looks

like you were one of the last people Christopher Marks was in contact with before his disappearance? If you don't mind, we'd appreciate you coming down to the station to give a statement. You're not being investigated, it's just easier for everyone involved if you cooperate. Feel free to call me back with any questions. I'll be on duty till 6, and Dispatch has been instructed to forward any calls to my cell if you call after then.

[BEEP]

THE UNKNOWN CALLER: [EVEN, WARM TONE AT FIRST] It's... almost time, isn't it? How the years flow by. Bleeding into each other like so much gore in the sopping mud of spring.

[A SHORT CHUCKLE, BUT NOT TOO SINISTER]

I forget, how young you are. A year still means something to you, doesn't it? But a blink of a moment to me. If I were the kind of creature that required air, I'd say I anticipate our next meeting with bated breath. Regardless, I think you understand my sentiment. I think you understand me quite well.

More than you'll admit. Even to yourself. *Especially* to yourself.

[BEEP]

AISHA: Hey! Look, totally not trying to micromanage, *and I know you're getting the wine so that's probably taking a while*, but we are supposed to start in like 15 minutes and it— it just *looks bad* if you're late, is all. I know you struggle with time, so just think of this as a reminder call.

No pressure!

[BEEP]

PROFESSOR COLLINS: Miss Durfee! I quite enjoyed our talk. Thank you for humoring me, I really do appreciate it. It was a beautiful day to take such a nice, long walk. I should hope we do so again someday soon. Though, you *must* let me choose the location. There are such beauties in this world I could show you. And knowing even a few of your experiences with that... *thing*, I think you could really use the break.

[A SMALL, THOUGH AWKWARD, PAUSE]

[WARM, FATHERLY] It's not your fault, you know that? The thing that happened? The accident? The one you couldn't find it in yourself to say? I know none of the details but that it involved our mutual interest. And, knowing him, I can safely reassure you that whatever happened.

It wasn't your fault.

[BEEP]

[SILENT/DEAD AIR FILLS THE CALL FOR AN AWKWARD AMOUNT OF TIME. THE STATIC BUILDS AND RUMBLES UNTIL—]

CHRISTINE: I think I know who it was. That *bitch* that took him. Took Christopher. I went to city hall. Acted like I was a realtor looking to buy property. They gave me the name and number of the woman that owns that cabin. She's a Whitlock. What kind of fucking name is *Whitlock*? I tried calling her, but nothing. Just a message that her stupid fucking voicemail box was full. I guess a tramp like that would be pretty busy, huh? But I'm gonna find her. I'm gonna find her and *make* her tell me where he is. I don't care what I have to do. She's got something to do with all of this— *I know it*. Her, or her family.

And who names their kid Olivia anyways?

[BEEP]

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