

THE DOCTOR IS DEAD

by é boylan

Episode Three--Transcript

INTRO

NARRATOR

Now.

a chord

Welcome, listener. Welcome to now. Now, you have chosen to hear *The Doctor is Dead*, a contemporary fantasy for queer imaginations.

a chord

Wherever “now” takes you, I invite you to stay, make yourself comfortable, and listen.

Chime begins

What you are about to hear is a story of entirely unfamiliar people who abandoned the familiar long ago. The story you are about to hear does not begin on the surface of our world, but far below, within the roots of our belonging. Here, the world is very much different, and yet painfully the same. But here, some extraordinary individuals have begun to Recall and Reveal a new beginning. It sounds like this.

Episode 3: the light.

III. the light

*nine days later
in the same room*

NIGHTINGALE

Listen.

Here, in the dark, there is nothing but the sound of us.

Listen.

(Music: #4 HERE, IN THE DARK)

HERE, IN THE DARK, I LISTEN
HERE, IN THE DARK, I HEAR YOUR VOICE AND I LISTEN
YOU SING TO ME
YOUR MEMORIES AS IF I SHOULD KNOW THEM
BUT I DON'T KNOW THEM
SO I LISTEN

IT'S HARD TO HOLD
WHAT ISN'T HERE
BUT WHAT I HEAR I HOLD CLOSE TO ME
YOUR SOUND IS WARM
AS IF YOU HOLD ME, I LISTEN CLOSELY

HOLD ME IN THE DARKNESS
HOLD ME LIKE IT HOLDS ME
TRUST ME WHEN I HEAR YOU CLOSE I'LL
HOLD YOU AND YOUR MEMORY

AND MEANWHILE

I will try to recover the narrative

AND MEANWHILE

There is quite a bit more work to do, I, uh, will continue to sort through
what's left behind

*minutes later
record activates*

SWALLOW

Please introduce yourself for the record.

NIGHTINGALE

Songbird name: Nightingale. I'm an archivist and Recaller. 2 years at Eden's central office, 3 years
now with the Songbird Society. I've published over two hundred records.

And, um,

my pronouns are they/them.

ROOK

That's so interesting—when you say Recaller/do you mean like

SWALLOW

Rook.

ROOK

Oh, right! Procedure- obviously. Hi!

I'm Rook, recent graduate of The Society's trainee program, recently transferred here from Eden. Really recently, actually. Like: I-just-unpacked-my-bags-recently!

SWALLOW

Functional introductions, please.

ROOK

Totally. I'm a Revealer, so, endings are my thing...1 year practicing interpersonal analysis, and for the past 6 months I've been learning to read the imprints of antique objects, or, Old Things. Still figuring all that out—I have so many questions to ask you—uh—what else?

Oh, my pronouns are she and they. I'm looking forward/to, you know, learning more from...

SWALLOW

Rook will be joining you for the remainder of this project. I trust the two of you will piece together an illuminating record.

NIGHTINGALE

I've already made a lot of progress by myself, actually.

The Revealer doesn't need to check my work.

SWALLOW

You've made a good start.

NIGHTINGALE

Thank you.

SWALLOW

But this project requires a team.

NIGHTINGALE

Sure...

SWALLOW

This might be a good opportunity for you, especially. Learn to cooperate. No beginning works alone. They like to find their endings.

NIGHTINGALE

uh
okay

SWALLOW

If there's nothing further, I'll leave you to begin your day.

NIGHTINGALE

...Nothing further, no.

ROOK

Thanks, Director Swallow!

SWALLOW

door opens

Yes.

Mark: Swallow leaving the record.

I'll check in on your progress later.

Good luck today.

All right.

and closes

ROOK

So when you say Recaller do you mean you're like me? Like me but in reverse? Because back at Eden we never talked about our gifts outside of training. I didn't even really know who else was in the program or what they were learning. Do you also see imprints?

NIGHTINGALE

I'm on a tight deadline, we should get started.

ROOK

Oh, yeah, of course!

But if we're going to work together/we should probably know

NIGHTINGALE

You're working with me.

This is my project.

ROOK

Okay.

Heard.

NIGHTINGALE

All of my notes are archived on record, you can listen to them via your Songbird registration code.

ROOK

Amazing. Thank you!

But actually—Director Swallow said I should ask you directly for my brief. My registration still hasn't processed completely and I know it's very VERY important that we/stay on schedule so

NIGHTINGALE

Right, okay. I, uh.

I mean I wasn't prepared to summarize all of this today, but- sure! It's not complicated, exactly.

I've been recording the imprints of Old Things listed here in containers One, Two, and Three. The exception being the Old Thing against that wall, there.

ROOK

Oh, is that the coffin?/
Director Swallow mentioned a coffin.
Can I turn on the overheads?
I can't actually see where you're pointing.

NIGHTINGALE

Yes.

NIGHTINGALE

I actually work better in the dark.

ROOK

Okay, totally, I respect that. It's just—I need light for my work. The Retrievers did set up electrical, right?

NIGHTINGALE

Right.

ROOK

So maybe we can turn on the overheads? Temporarily?

NIGHTINGALE

Not right now.

ROOK

I see a flashlight on this desk. Can I use that?

NIGHTINGALE

If you really need light, you can. You can use my workstation. I don't really like this lamp anyway.

ROOK

Are you sure?

NIGHTINGALE

Please.
Just take it.

ROOK

Okay.
as Nightingale begins to clear
Oh! I can help move the

NIGHTINGALE

No, no—I've got it./There's a, I've got a

ROOK

Okay. All right!

NIGHTINGALE

There's a system.

ROOK

Clearly!
I could never—I mean, you've really organized this place.

NIGHTINGALE

Yes.

ROOK

So, you were saying—you've been recording the...

NIGHTINGALE

Mark: primary workstation turned over to the Revealer.

ROOK

Oh, you can call me Rook!

NIGHTINGALE

Right. So, the coffin turned out to hold some pretty powerful imprints. Prime Memories, from the surface. I've been tracing through the memories of all the Old Things here and they all seem to share a single place of origin: Main Town, Connecticut.

ROOK

Is that a real place?

NIGHTINGALE

No. Not anymore at least. I think it used to be. I think it used to look a lot like Eden does now. Only, more sky.

ROOK

I've seen imprints of sky too! Some Endings I Revealed back at/Eden were...

NIGHTINGALE

I'm sure they were.
Now, the objects, some of them are personal possessions, some institutional artifacts—

ROOK

reading from the inventory
Oh, yeah: physician's tools from the Hospital, candlesticks from the local parish...?

NIGHTINGALE

Yes, you can read over that inventory if you like. It's still a working document—we weren't given a copy during load in, so I've been trying to, uh.
Mark: sharing project inventory with team member, Rook.

ROOK

The Things here belong to so many people, there must be imprints from a whole community.

NIGHTINGALE

Yes, but that's actually made this all very difficult. In my first contact, I received very specific descriptions of a doctor, his funeral, words spoken in his eulogy. I've drawn an entire map of his meaning, but I can't seem to find *him* anywhere.

ROOK

Contact...?

NIGHTINGALE

Yes.

...

Did Swallow explain anything, anything to you other than mention a coffin? Did she mention how much I dislike repeating every mundane detail on the record with no sleep, no time, no end to the project in sight? What did she tell you?

ROOK

She mentioned you might be a little tense.

oof

Sorry.

I'm really not trying to get in your way here.

NIGHTINGALE

Well you are in my way.

I mean, not you. Everyone.

It's like they don't trust me to figure this out. If I just had some time to myself...!

ROOK

More than a week? I thought you'd been working on this since Tuesday.

NIGHTINGALE

So she did mention some details.

ROOK

Listen,

I'm not used to relying on others either, but we're here together now and I'd like to be useful. I might not have your experience in the field, but I

I think I'm actually going to be really good at this. And the sooner you accept that, the sooner you won't have to deal with me anymore.

NIGHTINGALE

stops the record

Ten days.

ROOK

Ten...What?

NIGHTINGALE

It's been ten days already, more than a week. I never take this long.

ROOK

What's different this time?

NIGHTINGALE

Contact is. I just.
You asked if I'm like you. Well, I am
...
...
in a way.

ROOK

You see imprints.

NIGHTINGALE

No
well, I hear them. In my body. The vibrations that linger...they...
if I can hear them then usually that means

ROOK

touch

NIGHTINGALE

but now, with this, this Thing, I
I hear it all the time. Louder when, louder when my fingers touch the wood, but
also
all the time.
She thinks it might be the sound of the narrative ending.

ROOK

What do you think?

NIGHTINGALE

I think...
taken aback
I think what the record wants to hear is very different than what's inside that coffin.

ROOK

Is that why you

NIGHTINGALE

Sometimes
You'll learn that sometimes you need a break from the record. Just to think a little, or
clear your head.

ROOK

Yeah.

NIGHTINGALE

Although, I'd appreciate it if you didn't share that advice with Swallow. It's not exactly procedure to take breaks.

ROOK

Copy that.
But should we

NIGHTINGALE

Yes

ROOK

She'll be listening so

NIGHTINGALE

Yes, you're right.

activates record

Mark: please strike my previous...tense-ness...from the record. I appreciate the thorough questions from you, Rook, and am...optimistic about what we will find together.

ROOK

Same.

NIGHTINGALE

Yes, uh. Let's proceed.

So far I've been able to trace a map of Main Town by listening and by establishing light physical contact. It is as if the lid of the coffin were the land beneath the town, its blueprint engraved into the wood's surface through vibrations.

ROOK

Whoah.

NIGHTINGALE

I've mapped the doctor, too...what he meant to those around him, what was expected of his caregiving, the office he represented: A family office, traditionally passed down from father to son. Some towns are really so small, so old, and the people there all live so closely together

ROOK

Only one doctor gets to be *the* doctor.

NIGHTINGALE

sure, uh, but his own voice hasn't left an audible imprint. Not like the imprint of the town. The loudest song I hear, what the coffin sings to me...it sounds more like his office than his voice, than his desire or his identity. I can hear where he might have begun but not where he ended.

Anyway,

I was in the middle of trying something new...

ROOK

Oh, did I interrupt? You could try again now, if you want.

NIGHTINGALE

Maybe later. I was trying to sing back to the voice I heard and. I don't know. I'm tired.

ROOK

Hm.

Well I don't think it's a bad idea- not like the imprints can hear you, but maybe it would change what they sound like. You do look tired, like, you need a moment to recalibrate. And in the meantime, I might be able to find something new.

NIGHTINGALE

You're going to look for new imprints, you mean.

ROOK

It's a little different from how you work. The imprints I see aren't memories. Do you mind if I turn on a flashlight?

NIGHTINGALE

I do mind.

But,

I can. Just let me get my hoodie.

ROOK

All right, no rush.

NIGHTINGALE

I usually, uh. I usually wear my. It was just hot earlier so. Okay, nevermind. You can, if you want, whenever.

ROOK

Thank you.

activates flashlight

begins to approach coffin

Mark: I am approaching the coffin now. I see...very simple design, construction. The wood is finished, although it doesn't exactly look expensive. I know the record observes this object as an Old Thing but it doesn't look particularly aged, although I'm not...

I'm not seeing...

to Nightingale

What's inside?

NIGHTINGALE

What?

ROOK

What's inside the coffin? I didn't see that listed in your notes.

NIGHTINGALE

I haven't. Um. It's been so loud.
To touch the lid, I.
uh

ROOK

That's okay. I was just curious.
Do you mind if I open it now?

NIGHTINGALE

I mean.
I was hoping we wouldn't have to move it or disrupt whatever sound was

ROOK

Nightingale

NIGHTINGALE

What

ROOK

Trust me
a low hum

NIGHTINGALE

I

ROOK

You're going to breathe in this moment and you're going to trust me, okay?

NIGHTINGALE

I don't
Could you turn that flashlight away from me, I don't

ROOK

I can see

NIGHTINGALE

I don't know

ROOK

I can see you, Nightingale. I can see you in this moment and in the next

NIGHTINGALE

in the
in the next/I

ROOK

I can see you trusting me.
You've already begun to trust me.

NIGHTINGALE

That's not how things begin./I don't hear it.

ROOK

I'm the one who sees what's coming
and that means I have to look inside.

NIGHTINGALE

But, uh, but it might

ROOK

It might. And we won't be able change that.
But right now, I'd like to open this coffin.
May I?

NIGHTINGALE

Okay.

ROOK

Thank you, Nightingale.

NIGHTINGALE

okay

ROOK

This is where we begin together.
Mark: I am now touching the lid.
There is a clasp, I can't tell...looks like the lock has been removed by Retrievers.
Good.
Setting down my flashlight, the lid is heavy in my grip but, I (eurgh) am able to lift (oof) easily
enough.

NIGHTINGALE

Rook...!

ROOK

swings open lid
the hum is swallowed

The lid is open. Nightingale, I'm going to turn on my flashlight again—all right?
Now what's inside...

NIGHTINGALE

The sound.

ROOK

Mark: coffin appears empty. No remains or, I mean it looks spotless.

NIGHTINGALE

The sound is gone.

ROOK

What?

NIGHTINGALE

I can't hear it anymore!

ROOK

Hold on—Mark: Something has shifted. I can see an imprint appearing, the bottom of the coffin is, the grain of the wood is shifting.

NIGHTINGALE

I told you, I! I thought it might!

ROOK

Mark: I see it now. The wood shifting,/the body of a tree, or a root, the imprint is

NIGHTINGALE

Stop it! Stop looking at it, the sound is

ROOK

Mark: I see an ending. I see the ending of the Doctor.
His death, like fog. It covers everything, but I can see.

smugness intensifies

All we needed was a little light.

(Music: #5 WAS LIGHT)

MEMORY

ALL THAT WE NEEDED WAS LIGHT
ALL THAT WE NEEDED WAS LIGHT
ALL THAT WE NEEDED
ALL THAT WE NEEDED

ALL THAT WE NEEDED WAS LIGHT
ALL THAT WE NEEDED WAS LIGHT
ALL THAT WE NEEDED
ALL THAT WE NEEDED

YOU CAN'T HEAR WHAT I SING TO YOU
BUT, SONGBIRD, YOU HAVE LIGHT

MEMORY TRIES TO SING TO YOU
BUT THE ONLY SONG YOU HEAR IS ENDING

ALL THAT YOU NEEDED WAS LIGHT
ISN'T THAT RIGHT? ISN'T THAT RIGHT?

ALL THAT YOU NEEDED WAS LIGHT
ISN'T THAT RIGHT? ISN'T THAT RIGHT?

YOU NEVER NEEDED THE LIGHT, YOU NEVER NEEDED YOUR SIGHT,
HOLD ME IN THE DARKNESS AS YOU
HOLD YOUR LIGHT
AND HOLD YOUR SIGHT SO YOU MIGHT SEE
A MEMORY LIKE ME, NOT ENDING
THERE'S MORE TO SEE THAN FOG CAN HIDE.

ROOK

All we needed was a little light.
Let's finish now—there's nothing more in sight.

OUTRO

NARRATOR

A chord

The Doctor is Dead is written, composed, and directed by é boylan.

A chord

Sound mixing and editing is by Katherine Cartusciello and Jay Eigenmann, with sound design and engineering by Charlie Freedman.

A chime begins

The voices you hear belong to marcos rené ospina, Genesis Adelia Collado, Joshuah Dominique, é boylan, and myself, Chris Okawa. Music is directed and performed by Sofia Geck, along with Kasey Blezinger, Yuka Tadano, and Matt Wong. Production management and coordination is by Lauren Durán Grajewski and Dinah Rokhinson. This audio presentation is produced by Musical Theatre Factory and made possible, in part, by generous support from The National Endowment for the Arts, the Jerome Foundation, the Howard Gilman Foundation, Musical Theatre International, and listeners like you.

Next week: we'll return with another installment of *The Doctor is Dead*. If you liked what you heard, please support us by telling your friends and by leaving us a rating or review- and most importantly subscribe to hear what's coming next. Until then, thank you for listening.

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