

THE DOCTOR IS DEAD

by é boylan

Episode Seven--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 7: leaving

VII. leaving

*moments later
in the same room
in darkness*

SWALLOW

Now.

ROOK

What do you want to hear?

SWALLOW

An explanation. You paused the record.

NIGHTINGALE

Sure, but

SWALLOW

I'll admit, I was distracted today, I had to play catchup after some onboarding paperwork. But then I caught up. The last transmission from this project was recorded two hours ago. Explain.

ROOK

Maybe we lost power.

SWALLOW

Is that why you're sitting in the dark?

ROOK

Well, we

SWALLOW

No.

The Retrievers checked our generator at my request. You still have power, you still have light.

Swallow turns on the overheads

NIGHTINGALE

Agh, please,
Director Swallow, we
We we
We just needed some time
in the dark to

ROOK

The lights!
Please turn off the lights!

SWALLOW

You need what I give you.
Your needs belong to the Society.

NIGHTINGALE

Respectfully, that's not your decision.

We're the ones uncovering the narrative.

SWALLOW

And yet you refuse to take responsibility for its ending. Rook, you're meant to deliver. To end things.

ROOK

I'm trying

SWALLOW

The lights stay on. The record listens. It doesn't matter if you try.

ROOK

I'm trying but you Swallow me in your expectations of what I should provide you when I don't even know where we are? Swallow, where are we?

SWALLOW

This isn't about me, let's not confuse things.

SWALLOW

You'll address me as Director.

NIGHTINGALE

We used to call you: Sister.

ROOK

Where are we?

SWALLOW

Underground. You know this.

ROOK

But I see Moonlight. If you turned the lights back off...that's real Moonlight isn't it? I remember it now. I remember Moonlight.

NIGHTINGALE

We had to get close to the Surface, didn't we? This is where Eden left her home the first time. This basement is the place she crossed to find you.

SWALLOW

And now it's underground. Abandoned. Like everything else we left behind.

NIGHTINGALE

But she came back here. Why?

SWALLOW

I couldn't possibly know.

ROOK

Is the sky above us-was it Eden's sky? Did she go back?

SWALLOW

It was your job to find out.

NIGHTINGALE

But you never told us to look for her. You never shared this with me, with Rook, with anyone.

SWALLOW

It wasn't my story to tell.

ROOK

Whose story/was it?

SWALLOW

SHE should have told you! She should have told you herself! But she didn't, she left, without record of her reason. Eden worked in mysterious ways, but she wouldn't have gone back above to live in the shadow of her father.

ROOK

The Doctor...

NIGHTINGALE

She left the title behind.

SWALLOW

Did she?

NIGHTINGALE

She left Main Town.

SWALLOW

You heard that song, Nightingale, you heard the voices she was meant to serve. All clamoring for answers where there were none, demanding God appear to them through fog. Ungrateful. The Doctor made them weak and small-minded. You heard it. And Eden couldn't change that. So what did she do? What did she do, Nightingale?

NIGHTINGALE

I don't know.

You heard her
SWALLOW

I didn't
NIGHTINGALE

You heard her narrative
SWALLOW

Memories!
NIGHTINGALE

What is our memory but the narrative?
SWALLOW

It's the way we choose to begin.
the lights flicker and expire
NIGHTINGALE

The overheads
ROOK

What is this? Turn the lights back on.
SWALLOW

I
NIGHTINGALE

Turn the lights back on
SWALLOW

I
NIGHTINGALE

Now.
SWALLOW

The only light switch is behind you. We must have lost power.
ROOK

Impossible.
SWALLOW

The Retrievers checked, I made them check. Give me the record transmitter.

ROOK

Swallow.

SWALLOW

That's an order, Songbird.

NIGHTINGALE

...here. Take it.

SWALLOW

activates record

Mark: Director Swallow on record. The time is 8:42 PM. Project underway stalled by a lack of clarity. This is your last chance, Nightingale. What did you hear?

NIGHTINGALE

She planted her memories here. Inside the coffin, she gave us a map to—

SWALLOW

Of course. Good.

Mark: I have recovered your narrative, the instruction you meant to leave me. Regrettably, my songbirds have rejected the record, the one thing you taught us never to abandon. I won't forget that. I won't forget what you taught us. And I will find you, alone if I must.

NIGHTINGALE

Alone?

SWALLOW

Mark: Songbirds Nightingale and Rook to be removed immediately from the project. They return to Eden at once.

ROOK

Swallow.

SWALLOW

Your *Director* has given you an order. On the record.

Mark: If they will not listen, I will make your narrative be heard. You have given us an ending and I will sing it. You have given us a map and I will follow it. I will bring you back here.

NIGHTINGALE

We're not abandoning the project.

SWALLOW

You have already abandoned your faith in me.

NIGHTINGALE

My faith! My faith is in what I remember. I remember you listening with me.

SWALLOW

Mark: Swallow approaching the coffin.

NIGHTINGALE

But I don't have faith that we can begin if we don't listen

SWALLOW

I open the coffin.

NIGHTINGALE

I don't have faith that our story can continue--and it can't!
Not here, not in this basement,

SWALLOW

Now

NIGHTINGALE

but under sky

(Music: #12 THE WAY YOU LEAVE)

MEMORY

SING TO REMEMBER SKY

NIGHTINGALE

or in water

MEMORY

SING TO REMEMBER THE WATER

NIGHTINGALE

or in care of land

MEMORY

SING TO REMEMBER LAND

NIGHTINGALE

We built Eden. We couldn't build a/sky

MEMORY

I AM NOT A PLACE YOU BUILT, I AM NOT THIS BASEMENT

I AM NOT WHAT YOU UNDERSTAND, OR WHAT YOU DON'T AS
I AM BETWEEN THEM, I AM BETWEEN THEM,
I AM NOT EDEN, I AM NOT THE ROOM YOU'RE LEAVING

SWALLOW

So now you want to leave? I don't understand.

NIGHTINGALE

Then maybe you should stop trying.

SWALLOW

This coffin is empty. No map.

NIGHTINGALE

Listen.

The voice you hear, that sings with me
It is the map of memory, the sound of what begins when you can

SWALLOW

I don't hear a voice.

NIGHTINGALE

So listen.

HERE, IN THE DARK, I LISTEN
HERE, IN THE DARK I HEAR A VOICE JUST LIKE EDEN
IT SINGS TO ME HER MEMORY THROUGH THE ROOTS OF LEAVING
SHE LEFT BELIEVING WE COULD LISTEN

SWALLOW

Do you hear her now? Eden, is that you? Eden, I don't hear you!

MEMORY

I'M NOT EDEN
I'M THE MAP SHE LEFT WHILE LEAVING
I'M HER BELIEVING
I'M THE

MEMORY, ROOK, NIGHTINGALE

LIGHT SHE BROUGHT

NIGHTINGALE

BUT THE DOCTOR, HER FATHER, THOUGHT
SHE COULD KEEP THE FOG SO HIGH NO ONE WOULD REMEMBER SKY

ROOK

SING TO REMEMBER SKY

SING SO THE FOG REMAINS WATER
SING TO RECALL OUR LIE (THAT WE SEE GOD, BUT)
GOD IS NOT THE HOSPITAL, GOD IS NOT THE CHURCH
GOD IS A SONG WE SING AND I REMEMBER SINGING

SWALLOW

EDEN, I CAN SWALLOW ALL MY FEELING,
BUT THE MAP YOU'VE LEFT BY LEAVING DOESN'T GIVE ME ANSWERS

ECHO

NO ANSWERS NO ANSWERS

NIGHTINGALE

SO THE DAUGHTER OF THE DOCTOR THOUGHT
IF SHE LEFT OUR EDEN
WE COULD FIND OUR OWN REASON

MEMORY

I'M NO REASON
I'M NO ANSWER FOR HER LEAVING
I'M NO END AND
I'M NO

ALL (BUT ROOK)

SKY OR
GOD

ROOK

GOD ISN'T EDEN, GOD'S NO REASON

ALL

SING THE REASON WHY YOU'RE SINGING

NIGHTINGALE

EDEN WAS OUR REASON

ALL

WHY!

SWALLOW

Eden, you were my reason,
but now fog has become my reason.
Hiding from the sky is why I/ listen.

MEMORY

LISTEN, SONGBIRD, WILL YOU SING FOR ME?
SING SO YOU MIGHT OPEN ME.
WILL YOU OPEN UP THE COFFIN OF HER MEMORY?

OPEN ME, OPEN A TREE.
SHE GREW ME.
AS I'M THE ROOT SHE LEFT BEHIND
SO THAT YOU COULD SEE
I'M THE WAY YOU LEAVE.

the coffin suddenly opens

ROOK

Listen

NIGHTINGALE

What

ROOK

You hear what I can see.
The coffin open, a route inside a root that's growing

NIGHTINGALE

Is it, uh
is it an invitation?

ROOK

to begin there.
Not on the Surface, not going back to what we left,
but somewhere new, further, deeper...
That's where Eden is
That's where she's becoming.

NIGHTINGALE

Before, you saw an imprint of us
You saw us leaving

ROOK

Yeah

NIGHTINGALE

I think I see that too. For myself, at least, I.
Rook,
I know it's a lot to ask, but

ROOK

Yes.

NIGHTINGALE

Uh.

ROOK

Yes. I'll come with you.

NIGHTINGALE

Ha, okay!

ROOK

I want to finish the record with you.

NIGHTINGALE

Maybe we can. But
Eden didn't leave us an answer. It's hard to finish without

SWALLOW

No more answers. That's why she left.

NIGHTINGALE

Swallow.

SWALLOW

I do not know what I do not know. Your job was to show me, but.
Things change. Everything...just...

...

Things can change.

NIGHTINGALE

Swallow,
if you like, we could

SWALLOW

Your job, here, is to stay. You cannot stay. Your purpose, then, is to leave. But I can't leave yet. I
can't leave until the record changes.

ROOK

It will.

SWALLOW

And you're the reason why.
So now, I'll stay here
and listen

...

in the dark

they listen

ROOK

It sounds like

SWALLOW

Yes

ROOK

It sounds like us

NIGHTINGALE

But also a beginning

*the sound of whispers crescendo to LATER:
in the below
the tape activates*

NIGHTINGALE

I don't know how to end things.

Day Forty, Nightingale on record. The time is around 4:00 PM and I continue the record from below. Rook is currently scouting ahead. We learned yesterday to mark our turns as the route forks in the roots' divisions...it can be helpful to know what's coming next. What we're open to exploring.

No sign of Eden yet. I'm not sure she wants to be found. But I know she left so we might leave, a gift she gave us. A beginning in the object of an ending.

whispers begin

I don't know how to end things.

So I won't end things.

Let this record be the way they continue.

It is. It's a beginning. Our beginning. I know you hear it, even back home, even off the record. I hope you can listen. The other songbirds, they, all of them have good ideas. Things will be better when you can hear them, not just Eden or how you thought she wanted the Society to be.

I don't know how to end things, but

for now, Swallow, I listen with you. My sister, not by blood, but by the sound we share. It is the way we leave or stay or change or don't. Here, there is nothing but the sound of us. And we go on.

(Music: #13 I'LL BE YOUR ENDING)

When we first met, Rook thought she saw an Ending in me. But I listen without ending.

a chord

Listen.

another chord

Listen

another

I hear you

Listen

another

Listen

another

Remember

Another

I am

Another

I am not ending

but I'll sing an end for you

I AM I AM NOT ENDING

I AM I AM NOT ENDING

BUT IF YOU NEED AN ENDING TAKE THIS SONG TO BE YOUR ENDING

IF YOU NEED A NARRATIVE,

I GIVE YOU A VERSE AND CHORUS

TAKE THIS SONG FROM ME

AND I'LL BE

YOUR ENDING

I AM I AM I AM NOT ENDING,

BUT I'LL BE I'LL BE I'LL BE I'LL BE YOUR ENDING

SO TAKE ME TAKE ME TAKE ME AS YOUR ENDING

NIGHTINGALE

ECHO

I AM I AM I AM

AND I REMEMBER

JUST LISTEN

ALL

I WILL BE YOUR ENDING IF YOU

NIGHTINGALE

Listen

ECHO

REMEMBER

NIGHTINGALE

Listen

ECHO

REMEMBER EVERY COFFIN IS A TREE

NIGHTINGALE

Listen

ECHO
REMEMBER EVERY ENDING WILL/BE

NIGHTINGALE

Begin.

Like this...

...

Remember this.

*the tape stops, rewinds,
plays back in a granular quality,
the familiar sounds of our recent past:*

ROOK

It sounds like

SWALLOW

Yes

ROOK

It sounds like us

NIGHTINGALE

But also a beginning

...

...

.....

The beginning sounds like

*they wait
and listen*

and things move on

...

*the world changes, silently
as we continue...*

But, for now, the record stops.

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, Joshua 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.

This week: marks the final installment of *The Doctor is Dead*. If you liked what you heard, please support us by telling your friends and by leaving a rating or review. For more on this project and its contributing artists, go to tdidpodcast.com or follow @tdidpodcast on Instagram, where we might just post some updates on future renderings of this world and its music. Until then, thank you for listening.

Additional Development Support from:

Eugene O'Neill Theater Center
Johnny Mercer Foundation Songwriters Project
Musical Theater Factory Salon, Hosted by Troy Anthony
Prospect Theater Company Musical Theater Lab

Special Thanks to:

Niki Afsar
Dev Bondarin
Ty Defoe
Kathel Griffin
Emma Lea Hasselbach
Stephanie Litchfield
Anessa Marie
Jules Peiperl
Miles Purinton
Taylor Aksel Arthur Rasmussen
Han Van Sciver
Mei Ann Teo
Denali Thomas
Zo Tipp
Elise Grifka Wander
Misha Grifka Wander
Zap