

Voices echoing and speaking. Rattling that grows louder.

JON

Shut up... Shut up... Shut up!
Jon puts headphones on and starts playing music. He is breathing deeply to himself. Keys faintly jingling And footsteps in the distance, muffled speech.

DEPUTY

Are you the new doctor here?
(Pause) helloooo?

JON

Hmm? Oh, hi. What did you say?

DEPUTY

I asked if you were the new doctor here.

JON

Y-yeah. I am. I'm Jon Spacer. Are you Sheriff Crowley?

DEPUTY

No.

JON

It's just, I've been waiting here for almost an hour. On the phone they said get here ASAP, so I figured-

DEPUTY

Next time, we'll tell the victim to die faster, so you don't have to wait as long.

JON

I-I didn't mean it like that. I meant-

DEPUTY

I'm just here to let you in the pathology lab.

JON

Sorry...
Footstep stops. Keys jingle and door opens.

DEPUTY

Go ahead in. Sheriff will be bringing in the body soon.
Lights flick on; buzzing.

Footsteps and jon walks in.

DEPUTY (cont'd)
The hospital cafeteria is 24/7, if
you need a cup of coffee.

JON
Do they have tea? I don't drink
coffee.

DEPUTY
Dunno. I drink coffee.
Door closes.

JON (SIGHING)
Off to a great start on your first
day...
Jon walks around.

JON
Phew... This is Pretty big morgue
for a small town. That's two whole
walls of cold drawers. Sink over
there... Two large operating tables
in the center here...
Jon sighs and puts the recorder on the table.

JON (cont'd)
Shit. You can do this. You can do
this...
Door opens and wheels in

SHERIFF
Doctor Spacer?

JON
Y-yes? I'm here.

SHERIFF
Hey there, Doc. I've got a present
for you.
Wheeling stops.

JON
Whose the victim?

SHERIFF (CLOSER TO MIC)
Nice to meet you, too - I'm Fran
Crowley.

JON
Oh. You're the sheriff?

SHERIFF (MOCKINGLY)

Oh. Aren't you a little young to be a coroner?

JON

Oh - I wasn't trying to. I'm a forensic pathologist, actually...

SHERIFF

Look - it's late. I'm sure you're tired. I know I am. So let's say we just disregard the sexism for a minute and move on. I'd rather enjoy the short time we have together.

JON

What? What's that supposed to mean?

SHERIFF

Ahaha, don't worry! I didn't mean you'll end up like her here. I just mean you'll cycle out eventually. Nobody sticks around long in this job.

JON

You said her. The victim's a woman? Do you have a case file?

SHERIFF

Bare minimum. We just found her.
Files shuffle

JON

It's essentially blank. Female, age 31. No name? Did we have a wallet or personal affects?

SHERIFF

Got her purse, but we don't need it. That's Maggie Lane.

JON

You know her personally?

SHERIFF

Because we're both women?
Purse is placed on a table nearby

JON

What? No, I -

SHERIFF

Relax, doc. I'm just messing with you.

JON

Odd time to joke...

SHERIFF

Yeah, well, after how tense tonight's been, I needed a laugh.
(Pause)

JON

What... happened to her?

SHERIFF

Dunno. We've got a missing husband and child - Someone called this in from their house phone, but by the time we arrived, all we found was Maggie.

JON

How strange...

SHERIFF

My deputies are looking for the husband now. My bet is, he poisoned her, took the kid and fled. But that's what you're here to confirm, Mr. Coroner.

JON

Forensic pathologist...

SHERIFF

Sure, sure. Just confirm for me what I already know.

Ethereal sound effect. Things start to shake

MAGGIE (ECHO)

Hello? Hello?

JON

Um... Do you hear that?

SHERIFF

Hear what?

JON

Uhh. Nothing. I'm just ready to get to work.

SHERIFF

Whatever, doc. Don't go loopy on us already. Took us long enough to replace the last one.

JON

I've really got to scrub up...

SHERIFF

I'm leaving; I'm leaving. Let's see what you can do.

Walks away. Door opens and closes. Jon sighs again. And washes his hands vigorously.

JON

Let's see what I can do...

More shaking and muffled speaking

MAGGIE

What is happening?! Where am I?

JON

Almost time.

Mic muffle

JON (cont'd)

Wednesday morning. Four...twenty four am. Doctor Jonathan Spacer conducting post mortem analysis. Case number...1328. 31 year old female. One hundred and seventeen pounds. Five foot three inches tall.

MAGGIE

Hey you! I have a name you know.

JON

Pronounced dead at the scene approximately three a.m. after a 911 call. Cause of death, unknown. First responders noted no signs of pulse or breathing, and some marks on the neck.

MAGGIE

Is this... Heaven?

JON

Examining the body for any other notable external markings before beginning surgery.

Ruffling and movement

MAGGIE

Am I... Am I dead?

JON

Yes. You're a ghost. Welcome to the afterlife.

MAGGIE

Wow... Well if I would've known, I never... Wait. You're alive, but you can hear me. How?

JON

Is that important right now?

MAGGIE

I guess not... So this is what it's like to die... This is not the escape I was promised.

JON

Technically this is what it's like *after* you die.

MAGGIE

Who are you? Where is everyone else?

JON

I'm a doctor. It's just us in this lab. And it's my job to determine how and why you were killed so that we can put whoever did this behind bars.

MAGGIE

Hmph. It's a little late for that. It doesn't really matter who killed us now, does it... Have you done this before? You don't seem freaked out to see me.

JON

This is a pretty standard post mortem examination. I've done dozens of them on cadavers, but...

MAGGIE

But what? You've never done it on a real case? Holy shit.

JON

Calm down. You're not the first ghost I've ever seen, if that's what you're wondering. And I've done autopsys with ghosts around before, just... Never on my own. So I'm kind of figuring out what I need to say to you as we go.

MAGGIE

You don't *need* to say anything to me. Just write down that my husband, Mark Lane, poisoned me and Danny.

JON

I need some hard evidence.

MAGGIE

We're dead. There's your evidence.

JON

We? Is Danny your daughter?

MAGGIE

Damnit. You don't know anything. Sheriff Fran should've just done this without you.

JON (IN MIC)

Note: Victim does not appear to have any physical markings on her body other than her neck. I'm going to check for signs of sexual assault.

MAGGIE

You're going to what? Just get someone else in here to do this, kid.

JON

Look. You're dead. I know it's probably hard to take, but you need to get over it real quickly, or figure out how to deal with it yourself.

MAGGIE

You're an insensitive ass, you know that?

JON

I'm trying to help you. So I suggest you let me do my job before your husband gets away with murder.

MAGGIE

Gets away with murder?

JON

For the record - there's no signs of sexual assault.

MAGGIE

You said Mark was going to get away with murder. What does that mean?

JON

Mmm. Looking at the victim's wrist, I've noted a slight shadow or an indentation. Did you wear a bracelet here?

Sound effects behind

MAGGIE

I used to. It was a gift from my mother... And old family heirloom.

JON

That must have been a large bracelet to make that kind of outline... Note: Return to this later. If the wrist still has an indent from the bracelet, it could be signs of a skin or bruising problem.

MAGGIE

You think the fact that I've got an indent on my wrist is important?

JON

I think every detail could be important.

MAGGIE

And NOW what are you doing?

JON

I'm drawing blood for a toxicology report.

MAGGIE

Why are you wasting time? My husband killed us all. That's the important detail.

JON

Well. As soon as this report is done, we'll find out what type of poison it was...

MAGGIE

That's not what I meant...

JON

Another note: There are small tracings of red marks on the upper torso, leading up to the victim's neck. No signs of a struggle.

MAGGIE

Maggie. My name is Maggie.

JON

There seems to be no damage to the epidermis around the neck. These red bumps are consistent with allergic reaction rashes. I'll need to check the victim's throat.

MAGGIE

You're treating me like I don't even exist. What I have to say could HELP you...

JON

You're right. I apologize. (Pause) Did you know Sheriff Crowley well?

MAGGIE

What?

JON

You called her Fran. And you got mad at me when I didn't know who Danny is. I'm assuming you saw her in here a few minutes ago. You two were on a first name basis?

MAGGIE

Yeah... Danny went to kindergarten with Fran's son, Josh, years ago, before...

JON
Before what?

MAGGIE
It's not my place.

JON
I'm going to have to cut open your
throat to examine the inside. You
may want to look away.

MAGGIE
Fine. Fine... Ugh. Talk to me then.

JON
What is Danny like?

MAGGIE
She was a wonderful little kid.
Always so happy about everything.
She loved pigs and cows. I'd always
catch her at the neighbor's pens
after school. She said she wanted
to be a farmer when she grew up.
And now...

JON
You'll miss her, I'm sure.

MAGGIE
Of course I'll miss her. Your kids
are the light of your life. You'd
do anything to keep them safe.

JON
You think you weren't able to keep
Danny safe?

MAGGIE
No one could have... This world...
It's no place to raise kids. She
was being bullied in school and
there wasn't a damn thing I could
do about it. Mark lost his job and
we were going to lose our home,
too... We had no options.

JON
So you don't blame Mark?

MAGGIE
Of course I do. Mark was a bastard!
We had Danny right out of high

(MORE)

MAGGIE (cont'd)
school, and he was cruel from the moment I got pregnant. He took out all his frustrations on me. He beat me and drank all day and night. I tried to keep Danny away from it, but I couldn't. I couldn't let her go on in this terrible world. To grow up and be abused by HER husband. Have the world shit on HER. It's a fucking unavoidable cycle that's not worth living through. Death is the only thing that breaks the cycle.

JON
I didn't notice any bruising or indications of past beatings during my initial exam...

MAGGIE
Are you saying I'm lying? Screw you.

JON
No - But I wasn't looking for the signs. I might have missed something. Can you tell me what happened tonight? Before you ended up here.

MAGGIE
You care what I have to say now?

JON
It's either that or we sit in silence as I operate.

MAGGIE (HESITANT)
Fine (pause) I uhh... I came home ... and Mark had made dinner for us, which was surprising.

JON
You don't seem so sure...

MAGGIE
Maybe the details are just fuzzy because I'm DEAD. Did you ever think of that?

JON
Maybe... Continue.

MAGGIE
Hmph.

JON
Please continue.

MAGGIE
(Pause) I came home and Mark had dinner on the table. I didn't know at the time what it was, but... We ate. And we talked like a real family for once. He seemed happy. I was happy. And then I started to have trouble breathing.

JON
An allergic reaction?

MAGGIE
That's what it felt like. It was just itchy at first. Then it felt like someone was putting their hands around my neck... Slowly choking me of air... And I panicked. I hit the ground hard. And...

JON
I'm seeing red rashes, tightened muscles and a closed airway on he inside of your throat. It's definitely consistent with anaphylaxis.

MAGGIE
I will never forget that feeling... Of just sitting at the table across from him. I was so happy to look at him and watch him eat. And I squeezed Danny's hand as she ate dinner, too. And then I saw it... The look of fear in her face. My little baby saw me hit the floor, and I tried to just hold on to her as it happened. It had to happen that way... And then I was at peace, finally.

JON

Damn. I'm sure they'll catch Mark and find Danny safe.

MAGGIE

What...?

JON

The police haven't been able to locate them yet.

MAGGIE

What do you mean...? They were in the room with me.

JON

When you died?

MAGGIE

Yes... We're all deathly allergic to shellfish, and they ate the food just like I did. Maybe more.

JON

You could taste shellfish in the dish?

MAGGIE

What? No. I'm just assuming that's what it was. You're telling me that Danny... And *Mark* are still alive?

JON

Actually, I don't know that for sure. Sheriff Crowley said there was a 911 call placed from your home. Your husband's car was missing from the driveway. The police were assuming they were on the run.

Ding sound in the background

JON (cont'd)

Hold on a moment.

MAGGIE

They're alive... That isn't possible. I- where are you going?

JON

I'm done with the surgery. I think I've found all of the information I

(MORE)

JON (cont'd)

can glean from your body, other than a stomach pump. But you just told me what I'll find - Shellfish, or at least something cooked with it that wouldn't be detectable. And that sound was the toxicology report finishing up....

MAGGIE

This was supposed to be our escape...

JON

According to this, you've got a TON of Codine painkiller in your system. And trace amounts of clozapine, haloperidol, lurasidone... Those are medications for antipsychotics. But the amounts show inconsistent or not recent usage. Why do you have that much painkiller in your system, unless...

MAGGIE

That's not possible. They shouldn't be alive. (continued murmuring in the background) I saw their faces. Danny was so afraid. She couldn't breath either... And Mark I KNOW is allergic to shellfish... They shouldn't be alive and I shouldn't be the only one dead.

Jon on phone

JON

Hi, I'm trying to reach Sheriff Fran Crowley. This is Jon Spacer - I'm the new forensic pathologist... Yes. The new coroner. If you could ask her to - Oh? She's at the hospital? Could you radio for her to come down to the pathology lab? Yes. As soon as possible. Thank you.

Jon walks back

JON (cont'd)

Sheriff Crowley is on her way down here.

MAGGIE (PANICKED)

Please tell her that Mark poisoned us. And if they DO find him, he did it.

JON

I will, if that's what happened.

MAGGIE

Of course it's what happened. Why wouldn't it be?

JON

What did you have for dinner?

MAGGIE

What? Why?

JON

The devil is in the details. And right now, there are a few that aren't adding up.

MAGGIE

Screw you. You don't know anything.

JON

You thought they were both dead

MAGGIE (YELLING)

Screw you! Screw you!

JON

You also immediately went to shellfish as the ingredient. How did you know?

MAGGIE

They shouldn't be... I shouldn't be dead.

JON

That indent on your wrist was from wearing a medical alert bracelet for years, wasn't it? Why did you take it off?

Door opens

SHERIFF

What did you find, doc? I need answers NOW. There's a shit storm upstairs.

JON
Sheriff - Here. Come see.

MAGGIE
Fran! Mark killed me. He tried to
kill all of us, but-

SHERIFF
What... Why are you making me look
at this?

MAGGIE
She can't hear me... Can she? Fran?
Fran!

JON
I assumed you'd want to know what I
found...

SHERIFF
Not like that - jesus christ. Just
tell me.

JON
She died due to lack of oxygen from
anaphylaxis after ingesting
something she was allergic to.

SHERIFF
Shellfish.

MAGGIE
What!?

JON
That was my guess... How did
you...?

SHERIFF
That's all you have for me? I found
that out already.

MAGGIE
No... No!
Sheriff walks to door.

JON
Wait, how?

SHERIFF
We found Maggie's husband and her
daughter. They're upstairs in the
ER right now.

MAGGIE
You found them?

JON
You found Danny?

SHERIFF
Yeah... I was hoping you had more answers for me. It's not looking good.

JON
What happened?

MAGGIE
They ARE going to die...

SHERIFF
Danny pulled up to the ER entrance with her dad in the passenger seat before we even arrived.

JON
She drove here?

SHERIFF
Yeah. At 11 years old - can you believe it? Apparently she knew her parents were having a reaction and tried to find their epipens. When she couldn't, Mark hobbled out to his car with her. Maggie was already unresponsive. She told the intake nurse her dad was having an attack, they gave him steroids and he's doing fine.

MAGGIE
This was our chance...

JON
Holy crap...

SHERIFF (SIGHING)
Yeah... Problem is, a couple of minutes later, Danny collapsed.

JON
She was having a reaction too?

SHERIFF
I don't know. Neither do the doctors up there. I was just with
(MORE)

SHERIFF (cont'd)
her, and she's not responding to
steroids.

MAGGIE
It's too late.

JON
If she's not responding to steroids
that means... Wait.
Jon walks away from the mic

SHERIFF
What?

JON
If I'm remembering biology
correctly, allergies aren't always
passed down genetically.

MAGGIE
Danny never ate fish before...

SHERIFF
So?

JON
So, Maggie has a massive amount of
codine in her system. If she was
the one who tried to kill the
family, maybe she gave Danny codine
as well.

SHERIFF
You're thinking Maggie did it?
Jon picks up phone

JON
What in the hell is the extension
for the ER? ...AH. Hey! This is
doctor Spacer in the pathology lab.
You have a patient - a young girl
named Danny Lane who isn't
responding to treatment, right? I'm
fairly certain she's suffering from
some overdose of codine and
antipsychotic medication. Run a
urine or blood test to confirm, but
she's going to need her stomach
pumped. Yeah. Actually send the
test down and I can run it. Thanks.

MAGGIE

She wasn't supposed to suffer...
Neither of us were. But, Mark...

SHERIFF

How can you prove any of this?

JON

I... I can't, really.

SHERIFF

Then how do you know? And how did
you know their daughter's name was
Danny earlier?

JON

Oh. I... Uh. Just things I've heard
around town. You said it yourself,
this isn't the big city. I guess
word travels fast.

SHERIFF

Rumors aren't going to cut it here.
I'm going back upstairs to see if
we can question Mark. He's
conscious, but at this point, it's
his word against... A dead woman.

MAGGIE

I hope he does get blamed for it.
He took this away from all of us!

JON

That's it. Sheriff, w-wait!

SHERIFF

What now?

JON

The purse. Over there. Where did
you say you found it?
Jon rummages through the purse

SHERIFF

I didn't say. But we found it in
Maggie's car, still parked at the
house. Why?

JON

It wasn't inside?

SHERIFF

No.

MAGGIE

We were all supposed to be at
peace...

JON

Look!

SHERIFF

Are those...?

JON

Epipens. Three of them. And I bet
they're labeled for perscription,
too. ...yup. Mark Lane. Danny Lane.
And Maggie... And a bottle of
antipsychotics also prescribed to
Maggie.

SHERIFF

Circumstantial evidence. How do we
know she didn't just leave them in
there normally?

JON

You... It sounds like you don't
want her to be guilty.

SHERIFF

Guilty? Calm it down, new kid.
Guilty or innocent isn't for either
of us to decide. All I want is
enough evidence for a judge

MAGGIE

It doesn't matter any more...

JON

Damn...

SHERIFF

Don't worry, doc. You might've just
saved a little girl tonight. And
all before sun up. That's a pretty
good first day, ha!

Sheriff starts to walk away.

JON

Hey, Sheriff Crowley... Is... Are
they all going to be like this?

SHERIFF

Like what?

JON

This ambiguous. Where we can't be sure if we did the right thing?

SHERIFF

Kid, I'm not your shrink. I'm not your mentor either. Figure that shit out on your own. (Pause) but, you shouldn't be surprised around here.

JON

And why not?

SHERIFF

They really didn't tell you when accepted the job, huh?

JON

Tell me what?

SHERIFF

We've got the nation's highest rate of unsolved deaths. And not for a lack of trying. It seems everyone here seems to die in a strange way. And that starts to get to people.

JON

And that's why no one wanted this job...

SHERIFF

Welcome to Springfield, doc. Enjoy your stay while it lasts.

Footsteps away. Door closes.

MAGGIE

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

JON

Why did you do it?

Jon opens a cabinet and searches around. He finds what he was looking for and closes it.

MAGGIE

We were promised salvation. I was lied to.

JON
You lied to me, too.

MAGGIE
You tricked me.

JON
The worst part of all of this is that you'll never actually be proven guilty. All of this just to solve an attempted murder by a woman who can't stand trial. How is that fair? Does it even matter what the judge rules, if you and I know the truth...?

MAGGIE
What are you doing?

JON
When I was looking through your purse... I saw your license.

MAGGIE
What is that box for?

JON
You had a heart on the back. Which meant that you're an organ donor.

MAGGIE
Stay away from my body!

JON
If all that codine damaged Danny's heart or liver, she'll need a new one. Maybe something positive can come from your death, after all.

MAGGIE
Don't touch me!
Saw whirrs

JON
Victim, Maggie Lane, shows undeniable evidence to the cause of death being suffocation and anaphylactic shock due to an allergic reaction.

WOMAN
You get away.

SAW WHIRRING COMING CLOSER

JON

Thankfully, we'll be able to harvest some useable organs for potential transplant. She may save her own daughter's life.

MAGGIE

I'll haunt you, I swear!
(Screaming)

JON

I can do this... I can do this.
SAW whirring and bone cutting. Squishing sounds.
Echo of the saw into silence. Delay, then credits music.