

HAUNTED

"Dead Man's Pond"

PILOT EPISODE

by
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TEASER

EXT. MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

Fall leaves cover the cold, dead grass. The campus is dark and deserted with the late hour.

NARROW IN ON --

EXT. FOLKLORE BUILDING - NIGHT

The light from the lobby indicates life within: the one building still inhabited.

PATROL GUARD (PRELAP)
It's awfully late, son. Are you
sure you're supposed to be here?

INT. FOLKLORE BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Fresh-faced, clean cut grad student ROSS ADAMS speaks with a wary CAMPUS SECURITY PATROL GUARD.

ROSS
Yes sir. I was told to arrive at
midnight.

Off the guard's skeptical reaction --

ROSS (CONT'D)
... Not a minute before. I'm here
to see a professor.

PATROL GUARD
Everybody's gone home. Who are you
here for?

ROSS
Dr. Blackwood. I'm his new TA.

The guard reacts, slightly worried.

PATROL GUARD
Alright then. But you call me if
there's any trouble.

The patrol guard exits. As Ross makes his way to the stairs, he processes the guard's words...

... *trouble?*

INT. FOLKLORE BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A fluorescent light flickers and buzzes to life. Ross wanders down the empty hallway towards --

THE LAST DOOR

At the very end of the hall. Open just a sliver, a pale light emanates from behind it. Ross KNOCKS -- no answer.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ross slips in, and immediately takes in his surroundings. A desk lamp casts an eerie glow --

Ornate bookshelves dominate the office like walls of a maze. The titles are all ghosts, death, horror: the collected obsessions of either a dark and troubled mind, or a very devoted hobbyist. Maybe both.

ROSS
Doctor Blackwood...?

His worry turning into curiosity, Ross wanders in further.

Suddenly, the door SLAMS SHUT behind him -- Ross freezes, his heart POUNDING out of his chest.

There's no one else here.

Unnerved, Ross begins slowly making his way back out, but each bookshelf becomes a new corner, hiding something...

Nothing behind this one...

He creeps ahead, rounding another corner...

And this is where our hearts stop.

SHOCK REVEAL, directly in Ross's path, A WHITE FIGURE, writhing, features obscured, lumbering towards us --

Ross BOLTS from the room --

EXT. FOLKLORE BUILDING - NIGHT

The campus patrol guard stops, glances behind him, a faint, distant sound catching his attention. He turns to see --

Ross CRASHES through the doors, fleeing out into the night.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The white figure stops moving. Not so scary, now that we actually get a good look at it. And finally, it removes the sheer curtain it has draped over it, revealing --

DR. DAVID BLACKWOOD (35). Tall, dark, and handsome, smirking triumphantly to himself.

PHIL (PRELAP)
David, you can't keep scaring away
your TA's...

EXT. MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

David walks through the scenic grounds, his long black coat flowing behind him like the folded wings of a raven. His style is dressy, sophisticated, svelte, with a slight Victorian edge -- Hugo Boss Fall Collection, inspired by Jack the Ripper.

Walking with David is Department Head PHIL EMBERLY (40's).

DAVID
Give me one reason why not.

PHIL
Because that's six already, and you haven't even had your first class yet. And that last one was Ross Adams, MUNSU president. Who's now refusing to step foot back on campus.

DAVID
Oops.

PHIL
Don't get me wrong, the university is more than thrilled to have you here. But as a favor to me, can you try to be civil?

Passing students catch a glimpse of David, and start whispering, as if having just spotted a celebrity.

DAVID
No dice.

PHIL
Okay, one more thing then. Find yourself a new TA.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Unimpressed, David scans the packed house from his podium:

Bored and slouching, or nervous and chatting: First years, in their natural habitat.

But amongst them all, one student instantly sticks out --

SAMANTHA HOLLY (24).

Graceful, stylish, and striking, she looks more like the editor of a hip New York night life magazine than a grad student; only the extra large coffee thermos and the forty pounds of books she has with her give her away.

After a moment, David silences the room with a look. He's in his element here, a commanding presence.

DAVID

Why are you all here? Why ghosts?

No one takes the bait.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I know, I know. Folklore one thousand, ghost stories, easy elective. But why are people so fascinated with ghosts? Since man existed, all over the world, people have been wondering.

(beat)

But that's not what this class is about.

STUDENT ONE

Do you believe in ghosts?

DAVID

That's not what this class is about either.

SAM

But do you?

DAVID

(glib)

I don't know. I've never seen one. But, as the saying goes, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy."

Sam smiles. It's a cliché quote, but there's something cool about this guy. A student next to Sam whispers to his friend:

STUDENT ONE

Macbeth?

Sam overhears, helps them out.

SAM

Hamlet.

DAVID

"And the boundaries which divide life from death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends and the other begins?"

SAM

(quietly, to herself)
Edgar Allan Poe. Not bad.

Students next to her eye her -- bit of a know-it-all, this one. Noticing the interruption, David stops pacing, locks eyes on Sam.

DAVID

And finally, my personal favorite:
"Although life is a mystery, death is a secret. And as for what comes after that -- sometimes dead is better."

David keeps his gaze levelled on Sam, challenging her, the slightest twinkle of mischief in his eye. But she's stumped.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Pet Cemetery. Stephen King.

Score one, David. Sam watches him a bit more closely.

DAVID (CONT'D)

This class isn't about whether ghosts are real or not. And despite what your reading list might suggest, it's not about ghost stories, either. This class is about one very specific place, and one very specific question: why here? St. John's, Newfoundland, if the stories are true, is the most haunted city in North America.

The lecture continues in V.O over --

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

EXT. ST. JOHN'S - VARIOUS - DAY

THE BASILICA

Grand and majestic, towering over the skyline.

DAVID (V.O.)
What is it about this place?

THE COURT HOUSE

A relic of centuries past, surrounded by equally old buildings that have been converted into trendy boutiques.

DAVID (V.O.)
There's records of communities here long before anywhere else in North America.

ALLEYS OF DUCKWORTH STREET

Last night's cigarette butts and broken bottles litter the alley, giving it just that charming flair of seediness.

DAVID (V.O.)
They say that people tell scary stories so they can deal with the real horrors in their own lives. And this place has seen an awful lot of history, not much of it good.

SIGNAL HILL

Dark and imposing against the overcast skies, CABOT TOWER looms over the foggy harbour like a dormant beast.

DAVID (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But if you ask me, it's something more complex than that.

DEAD MAN'S POND

Nestled at the foot of Signal Hill, off the beaten path. We start to slowly creep forward, closer towards the pond --

DAVID (V.O.)
It's about the psyche. It's about
something hidden deep within the
cultural identity...

Now upon the still, murky surface of the pond, A DARK, CLOUDY
SHAPE, deep down, begins to rise, completely indiscernible,
gradually becoming clearer as it slowly rises --

DAVID (V.O.) (CONT'D)
... Something beneath the surface.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

The class is rapt. David smiles, breaking the tension.

DAVID
And whatever that is, that's what
we're going to find out.

EXT. CABOT TOWER - DAY

JILL PITTMAN (30's) exits the main door and locks it, a "gone
for lunch sign" hanging in the window. She's attractive in a
quiet way, warm and motherly.

INT./EXT. JILL'S CAR - SIGNAL HILL - DAY

As she eases down the winding road, she strains to see
through the fog.

Suddenly, she sees something in the corner of her eye and
stops the car. Something off in the distance, she can't
quite make out.

Jill climbs out of the car and moves to the side of the road,
peering off into the distance.

She walks towards

DEAD MAN'S POND

Trying to decipher whatever it is she thought she saw. Then,
she stops dead in her tracks, PETRIFIED, as her mouth freezes
in a silent scream --

END OF TEASER