

ZOINKS!
Part 1. Teen Sleuth, Girl Detective

CASPER

Zoinks! contains mature language and themes of addiction and neglect and is intended for adults... and teens who are punk as fuck.

NOLAN

I'm a 14-year-old teen detective.

CASPER

And I'm a semi-intelligent dog with a limited vocabulary.

NOLAN

... We're not sure which is the biggest stretch.

[or]

And like... an audio-only medium, you totally buy that, right?

CASPER

<<Hey, aren't you that teen sleuth girl detective?>>

<<Harold quick, get your camera – it's that teen sleuth girl detective!>>

NOLAN

When people first discover that I solve crimes, they're never sure what to be more surprised by - my age or that I'm a girl.

Nolan Blackwell: Teen Sleuth, Girl Detective.

I started saying it as a joke, but the reporters ran with it and the title just kinda stuck.

CASPER

<<And I would have gotten away with it too, if it wasn't for this meddling teen sleuth, girl detective... >>

NOLAN

and her dog.

CASPER

Rolf! [panting.]

NOLAN

Good boy.

CASPER

There are three things that no one understands about teen detectives.

NOLAN

Number 1:

CASPER

Where the fuck are your parents? It is 2 AM and you're at an abandoned carnival. An Abandoned Carnival!

NOLAN

It is true that, as a teen detective, the curtains of night are your ally.

Wasn't that dramatic?

CASPER

It contained both terror and whimsy, yes.

NOLAN

Ghosts and monsters and thugs and con men all thrive at night. If you want to catch them, you don't do it by getting a full eight hours.

If you want to be a teen detective, you better come prepared. You will have to enter the woods at sundown. It will be midnight when you find the trapdoor that leads down to the catacombs. At 2 AM you will break into the library for further research and as dawn approaches you will still be staking out the empty shipping yards.

And all of this points to a serious lack of supervision:

CASPER

Nancy Drew, dead mom.

Jonny Quest, dead mom.

Tom Swift, dead mom.

The Boxcar Children, two dead parents, homeless.

The Scooby-doo gang, perhaps the most criminally-negligent parents in history.

NOLAN

So yeah, *where the fuck are your parents?* It's not a bad question, but it masks a far darker revelation.

Derelict mansions, demon bridges, ghostly lights and sounds.

NOLAN (cont.)

What is so fucked up at home that you'd rather be here?

CASPER

Question #2:

NOLAN

Where the fuck are all these monsters coming from?

CASPER

There can't be that many swamp demons and desert creatures, people! There can't be that many forged deeds and lost wills. How much buried treasure can one town hold?

And how does one girl keep stumbling onto all of it?

An occurrence the police couldn't be bothered with...

NOLAN

The Case of the Glowing Tacklebox

CASPER

Or a decades-old conundrum.

NOLAN

The Case of the Forgotten Grotto

CASPER

Who are all these people who are like:

<< There's an eerie light coming from the window in that top-most tower... I'd better find a teenager to alert. >>

If you're looking to abduct a child, forget about unmarked vans and candy... just tell them you're hearing strange sounds from the old silver mine and wait.

As long as there are adults who tuck their parents away into nursing homes, there will always be spooky, abandoned houses.

As long as there are favorite nephews and second-favorite nephews, there will always be plots to steal an inheritance.

So, how is it possible for one teenager to solve all these mysteries?

NOLAN

Emptiness.

CASPER

Because some of us recognize what deep troubles look like.

NOLAN

Because catching a liar makes you a little less angry about being lied to.

CASPER

Because stopping a grifter makes you feel a little less gullible.

NOLAN

Because unmasking a monster heals a little piece of your core.

CASPER

The world is full of dark secrets – and desperate people – and teenagers and their dogs who aren't deterred by:

BOTH

“Do Not Enter” – “Warning Keep Out” – “Trespassers Will Be Shot.”

NOLAN

Beware of dog? Beware of Teen Detective and her Dog.

CASPER

Question #3:

NOLAN

So... the talking dog, can you understand him, or not?

This is *Zoinks!*

An unsigned love letter slipped inside your locker for teen detectives and their dogs.

(THEME SONG)

NOLAN

Over the small town of Mars Majestic a heavy, and sinister, presence looms. It affects someone in every family, leaves devastation in its wake, isn't prejudiced in who it targets. And yet, it largely goes unspoken.

CASPER

If you're a local, you know it as that ghost story children tell one another huddled under street lights or strung around a bonfire - that urban legend their older siblings scoff at - that interesting nugget of lore that the Mars Majestic Sentinel recounts once every few years.

If you're a local, it's pretty good odds you're damn certain that ain't a lick of truth to any of it.

NOLAN

But, if you're one of the unlucky few who has sought it out, heard its bargain, accepted its terms, you know this presence as a weight you can't unburden.

And it's all because no one will bulldoze that goddam house at the top of Bobbsey Twin Road.

CASPER

It's the kind of abandoned house that should inspire ghost stories, the kind of abandoned house that should disrupt radio frequencies as your car passes by -

NOLAN

The kind of abandoned house that should set your pets to whimpering on evening walks, the kind of abandoned house that should entice neighborhood kids into daring one another to sneak up and touch its doorknob.

CASPER

It's the kind of abandoned house that is... fuck'n... just creepy as shit.

NOLAN

And prominently set in the facade, facing the street and the town below, is a big bay window.

Somehow, still perfectly intact, despite its age, despite the decaying of the house. Somehow, it has managed to stay perfectly clean. How else could it hold the town's reflection in such a soft glow.

If you were to stand inside the house, gaze thru this bay window, peer down Bobbsey Twin Road, the town of Mars Majestic would seem small enough to hold in your hand, brittle enough to wrap your fingers around, as you counted down the moments until it was time to snap your fist shut.

It is, if you're just starting to put 2 and 2 together, the perfect vantage point to brood and plot.

CASPER

Even now, in the peaceful lull of early morning, as the August heat begins to dial back in - a hunger grows. Sitting in a bay window, a heavy, and sinister, presence watches and waits.

It spells trouble for the little town.

NOLAN

But Mars Majestic is getting a new resident today.

And she's trouble too. Well... they both are.

CASPER

If you knew to be looking, you'd be able to see them, the lone SUV on the small two-lane road, coming up on the river, approaching the old, rusted-out truss bridge, crossing over the county line in 3... 2...

NOLAN

Now.

(The Inside of an SUV driving across a bridge.)

(A powered-window rolls down. Wind.)

(A moment, then it rolls up.)

(A moment and it rolls back down.)

CASPER

<< Nolan, leave your window up. >>

(The window rolls up.)

(... and back down.)

NOLAN

It feels good outside.

(Up.)

CASPER

<< You're letting all the AC out. >>

(Down.)

NOLAN

Casper likes it when the window's down.

CASPER

<< Casper does not need the window down. >>

NOLAN

He doesn't like being in the crate.

CASPER

<< Well, when you pay to have the seats detailed. >>

(Up.)

<< Leave it alone. >>

(Click. Click-click.)

NOLAN

It's cheating to turn on the child lock.

CASPER

<< Uh-huh. >>

(The SUV drives on.)

NOLAN

Aunt Liz?

CASPER

<< hmm? >>

NOLAN

Are we almost there?

CASPER

<< 'Nother few minutes. >>

NOLAN

You know... if we were to crash into the river, having the window down might save your life. You can't open the door until the water pressure is the same on both sides.

CASPER

<< Good thing I don't plan on going over the side. >>

NOLAN

You might not be able to help it. Oncoming car, heart attack. Lots of reasons.

CASPER

<< Well, keep your finger on the button. If we crash thru the guardrail, you can push it. >>

(The SUV reaches the other side of the bridge safely.)

(Someone farts.)

CASPER (cont.)

<< Nolan, was that you? >>

NOLAN

I think that was Casper.

(All four powered windows roll down. Wind.)

[whispered:] Thanks, pal.

(CASPER pants approvingly.)

CASPER

Nolan Blackwell turns around in her seat, reaches over the back and funnels in hand into one of the breathing holes, fingers wiggling just enough to scratch a snout, but not enough to really get at any itch.

(CASPER whines as NOLAN scratches.)

Rose and mint. The smell, familiar and comforting, is enough to make this car ride almost bearable.

(CASPER starts gyrating in his crate.)

<< Nolan. Quit agitating that dog. Put your seatbelt on. >>

NOLAN

I'm not agitating him. He's just trying to wag his tail. You can't turn your back on a dog with a wagging tail.

CASPER

<< On your butt, please. >>

(NOLAN sits back down, popping in her seatbelt.)

Smells tell us pretty much everything we need to know about a situation. And you can only get so much thru a car vent, that's why we need the window down.

It gives us vital information. Should I be on alert? Should I investigate further? Can I trust you? Should I put this in my mouth?

CASPER (cont.)

If you can't sniff out a situation - how are you supposed to know if you're in danger?

How are you supposed to find your way back home?

We move a lot. And the scents are always different. To start out, Nolan always smells like where we just been. But then, slowly, like the new place too - a little at a time, her hair, her clothes. It's like a disguise - blending into your surroundings, acting like you belong there - like you've always been there.

But I can always pick her back out. You see, there are two scents that never change - that always make Nolan Blackwell smell like home to me.

(NOLAN digs thru her satchel bag.)

She keeps one in that little green satchel she takes everywhere she goes.

(NOLAN pops the top on a tin container.)

Lip balm, which is like candy that you wear so others can lick it off. Rose and Mint.

The second smell is even nicer.

It's mold.

(NOLAN flips open a worn book.)

NOLAN

The price printed on the top right corner of the book is 95 cents, but the pencil markings on the first page reads four dollars.

(NOLAN takes a large whiff of the book.)

There's nothing that compares to rotting pulp. It's hard to find copies of Enid Blyton in good condition.

I was ecstatic when I unearthed this in the tiny used book store next to Aunt Liz's dry cleaners.

The Famous Five, book four: Five Go to Smuggler's Top.

I started it last night, after Aunt Liz and I were done packing my laundry. But now I can't focus, reading the same paragraph over and over again.

NOLAN (cont.)

“The boys looked - and Julian gave an exclamation. Someone was signaling from the tower! A light there flashed every now and again. In and out - pause - flash, flash, in and out - pause. The light went regularly on and off in a certain rhythm.

“Now - who’s doing that’ whispered Sooty.”

(The SUV swerves and NOLAN is pulled back out. NOLAN snaps the book shut.)

I guess my mind’s just other places.

CASPER

Nolan shoves the book back into the small, green satchel and pulls out a stack of brightly-colored envelopes.

She spreads them out across her lap. So many envelopes. All written to the same person.

Never the same address.

(Music.)

<< Hi Nolan. Don’t bother shaking, there’s no money, only lots of love from someone who misses you! I’m doing really well right now and hope that you are too. Maybe we can get together sometime this fall. That would be nice. >>

NOLAN

There are more ways to stay in touch than ever before. The world beeps and dings and whirs. And yet, there is still no better feeling than receiving a letter in the mail. Especially when you’re young.

CASPER

<< The leaves have started changing here. Is the lake still warm? You look like you’ve gotten taller in your photos. What size shoe are you now? I found some new sneakers. They’re in a box on your bed. Or I can mail them to you. The school sent me a copy of your grades. So proud. >>

NOLAN

Your phone buzzes in your pocket. The notification tells you the first few words and you know the rest of it. You’ll swipe and scroll and read it anyway, but it won’t tell you anything new.

CASPER

<< First snow! The hilltop is crawling with kids and sleds, like when you were little. I did a deep clean of your room yesterday. New sheets too! Hopefully you’ll come for a long weekend soon. Did you get my care package? I never heard back. >>

NOLAN

But anything good can be co-opted. Brightly colored envelopes become beacons. Finding a letter in the mailbox can be like smoke on the next hill. Like hearing an ambulance and knowing it's coming your way.

CASPER

<< Dear Nolan, I'm sorry, but I have to cancel again. I know we've had these plans for a while but now just isn't a good time for you to come home. I'm sure Aunt Liz told you that you'll be staying with Grandma Julie til the end of summer. Don't worry. I survived my whole childhood in Mars Majestic, you can hold out three weeks. Let's try again this Fall. >>

NOLAN

They become clues in an ongoing investigation.

CASPER

<< I love you. MOM >>

NOLAN

They become evidence.

(Shift.)

Aunt Liz's SUV turns onto a narrow, hardloved road and then pulls up in front of a small brick house with a wooden wraparound deck.

(The SUV stops. Doors open. Feet on pavement. The rear opens and then a kennel.)

Come on, boy.

CASPER

Nolan Blackwell lingered in the street, staring at the house.

NOLAN

Fuck this place

CASPER

She thought to herself, maybe even whispered a little bit. She felt like running, like flipping off the nearest thing and opening up the throttle.

It's not that the home wasn't inviting. It was just someone else's. Nolan Blackwell had trained herself to keep that idea in the forefront of her mind.

NOLAN

[to herself:] You can do anything for three weeks.

CASPER

Pretty shitty as far mantras go, but oh well.

Nolan lumbers forward, dragging her overstuffed suitcase.

Grandma Julie stands in her covered carport. The easiest way to sum up Grandma Julie is long and gray.

A long gray dressing gown, with long gray hair, long gray fingernails, and – most impressive of all, a long gray pillar of ash that clings to the end of her Virginia Slim cigarette.

She speaks in a voice that is dark and husky.

<< Y'all made it just in time! Breakfast is ready. >>

NOLAN

The little white dog with the limp follows close to the girl. In truth, they're never more than a few feet from each other. It makes it hard for overtaxed family members to find shit for the girl to do.

CASPER

<< Now Nolan, I don't let dogs in the house. >>

NOLAN

That's alright Grandma Julie – Casper knows to stay off the furniture and doesn't scratch or chew.

CASPER

<< I don't let dogs in the house. >>

NOLAN

He can stay in my room. He doesn't bark. And he doesn't beg at the table or have fleas.

CASPER

<< Honey, I don't let dogs in the house. >>

NOLAN

You won't even know he's here. He'll stay with me the whole time.

CASPER

<< I don't let dogs in the house. >>

NOLAN

It's just that... I wouldn't feel good chaining him up in the yard. Or making him sleep outside.

This whole summer he's kinda been... with me. No matter where I've been, he's come.

Okay. I guess I'll take him for a walk then.

CASPER

<< Nolan, do not walk away. >>

NOLAN

Aunt Liz said.

CASPER

<< It's alright, let her go. >>

<< Now you make sure you know how to find your way back! My Doctor says I'm not supposed to be driving on this medicine. >>

<< Elizabeth, grab that suitcase. Scrambled eggs aren't good but just a minute.>>

NOLAN

Casper follows close behind me. By the end of the second block I can feel the summer heat start to tick up. I realize now that I actually am kinda hungry. I consider turning back. We could always sit in the shade of the carport. I can read anywhere.

But something... I don't know. I can feel something pulling me along. Tugging at me.

Casper trots ahead and I follow, reaching the end of the street and turning right.

Onto Bobbsey Twin Road.

(end of episode.)

CREDITS

Zoinks!

Written by Trey Tatum

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Starring Jordan Trovillion as Nolan Blackwell and Trey Tatum as Casper

Part one: Teen Sleuth, Girl Detective was recorded by Grayson Halonen

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Zoinks! is produced by Queen City Flash out of Cincinnati, Ohio. More information, including transcripts, can be found at QueenCityFlash.com