

ZOINKS!
Chapter 8. Meddling

NOLAN

Zoinks! contains mature language and themes of addiction and neglect, and is intended for every goddam last one of us, because growing up requires faith and grace and humor and fearlessness - and none of us make it out unscathed.

(The dead of night, ominously...)

In the town of Mars Majestic there is a house that stands apart from the rest: abandoned and spooky, slowly rotting on top of a large hill. In it, there is this big, bay window - a window that will let you peer in at secrets you thought long buried - a window that will let you peer out towards endless possibilities, if only you can afford them.

In the town of Mars Majestic there is a girl that stands apart from the rest: an afterthought, a lost cause. It'll be a miracle if we can get her thru high school, they think. It'll be a wonder if she doesn't turn out like her mother.

It is 2am in the town of Mars Majestic and a young girl and her dog stare up at a pane of glass, humming in a warm, orange glow.

It is true that the curtains of night are your ally. Wasn't that dramatic?

CASPER

It contained both terror and whimsy, yes.

NOLAN

Haunted Houses and Teen Detectives both thrive at night. But the sun, ambivalent, is racing towards the town of Mars Majestic and by morning, only one of us will still be standing.

This is *Zoinks!*, that one time an adult you trusted said a kind thing to you when it really mattered, for teen detectives and their dogs.

(THEME SONG.)

(SPLIT: NOLAN and CASPER, entering the house from different entrances.)

I make my way, thru the storm doors, down into the basement.

CASPER

Up the stairs, thru the large front door.

NOLAN

Past the long line of... Jesus Christ, are those mummies? ... That is so fucking cool.

CASPER

Into the parlor: large curtains against one wall, and I pee on it.

NOLAN

I start looking around. There has to be something I can use.

CASPER

And then I go into the dining room – this old hutch... I pee on it.

NOLAN

Working fast with anything I can find. String, an old hula hoop. What else?

CASPER

And then I work my way over to the living room. To this large bay window. And... I don't really have to pee anymore. But I pee anyway.

NOLAN

Yeah, I think that can work... The old woman really did have everything.

(NOLAN runs off.)

CASPER

And I hear these boots coming up behind me.

(CASPER turns.)

Ballcap pulled low. A shovel in his hands.

(CASPER growls.)

He lunges and I run, cutting thru to a reading room with a large fireplace.

<< Come here, you son of a bitch! >>

The shovel connects with the marble mantelpiece above my head. It shatters, rocks and pebbles raining down, skittering across the wood floor.

<< Stand still, goddammit! >>

I scurry around a wing back chair and dash across a hallway. There's a swinging door there, the servant's entrance into the kitchen.

(Hard steps on tile.)

CASPER (cont.)

He swings at everything he can find, cups and saucers, bowls and platters, all erupting into shards of glass and porcelain.

The floor is covered now in glinting slivers.

<< Now 'the fuck you gon' do? >>

I leap up onto a table and charge.

He raises the shovel and brings it down, but I've closed the gap and his timing is off. It connects with the table and I can feel a quick, cool breeze flutter up to my asshole.

I know it's graphic, but that's what happened!

I leap off the table, clearing the last yard of broken glass and find myself back out in the hallway. I feel that twinge again as I land on my front paws. I keep moving.

He's fast behind me. It's dark in this hallway, except for the rectangle of light coming in thru the open front door. I can see him, silhouetted against the night, his chest heaving, his ball cap askew.

He adjusts the brim and resets his grip on the shovel. I back down the hallway, my gaze fixed as he takes slow, even steps towards me.

<< You gon' get what you've been asking for, you piece of shit. >>

I back into a wall. The Grave Digger has me cornered at the far end of the hallway. I pull back my ears, tuck my tail. There's nowhere left to go...

Except down these creepy steps to the motherfucking basement...

I take 'em two at a time, leap over a section of the basement floor. My leg finally gives out and I fall snout first onto the concrete.

(CASPER whines, exhausted)

NOLAN

I can see Casper, lying in a heap, struggling to stand. I stay in my hiding spot.

(Slow footsteps on wooden steps. The Grave Digger enters the basement.)

NOLAN (cont.)

And now I can see the Grave Digger standing at the bottom of the steps, lifting up his shovel, inching towards Casper and towards ... a low-lying trip wire.

He hits it and *SNAP!*

(The GRAVE DIGGER clips the tripwire. There is an unholy commotion as springs and pulleys and metal bits in need of WD-40 groan and twist. The Grave Digger screams as a wild contraption ensnares him. NOLAN reemerges.)

CASPER

<< What the Hell is going on here? >>

NOLAN

It was comical - the tangled limbs getting more and more constricted as he struggled in the netting. Part of me wondered if, like in the cartoons, an improvised trap would hold him, but the rest of me knew that caution - in this case - would be a lot more satisfying.

(The shovel gives a wild *SCRAPE!* as NOLAN lifts it off the concrete.)

CASPER

<< You better run, as soon as I'm out of this, you'll wish you were still buried - >>

(*THWACK!*)

NOLAN

Casper, you ok?

(CASPER barks.)

Come on, boy - we're almost done.

CASPER

Nolan ran to the staircase and sprinted back up into the house. I followed behind her and -

NOLAN

Casper, look out!

(The player piano is barrelling down the hallway.)

CASPER

The old player piano was rocketing down the hallway towards the basement door. I pulled back just in time to see it barrel past, connecting with a far wall, collapsing in like an accordion as plaster rained down.

CASPER (cont.)

Nolan charged ahead into the living room, clutching the shovel with a newfound purpose and a kickass stride, making her way towards the big –

(KA-BLAM! An earth-shattering commotion as the house rocks, defending itself.)

NOLAN

The house was fighting back. Paintings flying off of walls, vases leaping off of tables. A big Moroccan rug pulled itself out from underneath me.

(NOLAN hits the ground with a THUD and a pained shout.)

CASPER

The window glowing in wild anger.

It wasn't begging. It was bartering for its existence. It had gone to war.

Mounted weapons flew off of one wall and sailed towards us.

(They dodge. SCHWING!)

A tapestry rose up, like a cresting rogue wave.

But still, Nolan fought her way across the room.

NOLAN

The window flashed alive and I could see her. The reflected image of my mother, standing before me, begging me to reconsider.

I can see myself going up to her.

I see this all the time.

Puzzle pieces, waiting to be busted up.

CASPER

Nolan Blackwell widened her stance, choked up on the shovel. She bared her teeth and reared back.

NOLAN

<< NO! >>

(An unknown figure runs into the room, grabbing the shovel.)

CASPER

From the next room, a shadowy figure rushed in and grabbed the wooden handle.

NOLAN

Eddie the Goddam Pawn Broker.

(NOLAN and EDDIE struggle with the shovel, each trying to loosen it from the other's grip.)

CASPER

Nolan and the Pawn Broker twisted and yanked, trying to wrench the shovel from the other's grip. But the window wasn't taking any precautions.

NOLAN!

NOLAN

Casper rushed up and dove into me, his battering ram of a noggin connecting with my stomach and sending me sprawling.

Eddie stood over us now, gripping the shovel.

He never saw it coming.

The painted portrait of the Widow Stratemeyer, leaping off the wall, flying down the staircase. It connected with the Pawn Broker, knocking him off balance, tipping him towards the bay window.

He stumbled backwards into the glass. Thru the glass. And into the night.

(The Shattering of a mammoth piece of glass. The closing of a doorway. The destruction of a dark power.)

CASPER

Nolan brought herself back up to standing, turned to face where the window had been and froze.

NOLAN

It was my reflection, still hanging in the empty window frame, glowing softly. For a moment we just stared at each other and then, a draft blew thru the old house and the reflection busted up, broke apart into shards of glass that scattered over the yard - little orange lights winking like fireflies.

CASPER

Am I the only one seeing this shit?

NOLAN

And then ... Just like the books. Just like the movies. We could hear the wailing of approaching police sirens.

(You heard the lady ... approaching police sirens.)

The grave digger started confessing. And wouldn't stop.

CASPER

<<And I would have gotten away with too! >>

<< If it weren't for this meddling teen sleuth girl detective. >>

<< And her dog. >>

<< And this net. >>

<< Hula Hoop. >>

<< Ironing board. >>

<< And these roller skates. >>

<< I know it seems unlikely. >>

<< You're just gonna have to trust me. >>

NOLAN

It was an elaborate operation: A pawn broker, taking in stolen items in exchange for pills.

Prescription drugs obtained by the grave digger from the bereaved: raiding medicine cabinets after the deaths of their parents and grandparents.

Storing their goods, making secret payouts in an old abandoned house.

There never was any mention of magical windows, of ill-gotten wealth or baleful wishes.

Oh well... Mystery solved, with mystery to spare.

Aunt Liz's over-stuffed SUV pulled up behind the gathering tide of police cars and she and Grandma Julie climbed out.

They had been looking for me all night and Ms. Blakenship had promised to stay up and listen to her police scanner. You have to hand it to the Widow Wire - nosey as shit, but they get results.

CASPER

Grandma Julie stared at Nolan and then up at the house, at the missing bay window. Aunt Liz joined them. An acknowledgement, a silent understanding seemed to pass between the three women. And what had been anger at a runaway, or fear of what could have happened changed into something that looked a little like relief.

By the time morning arrived, they were still standing there, waiting for the police to let them leave.

NOLAN

Casper and I were sitting off on a curb while Grandma Julie read different officers the riot act.

CASPER

<< Bout ready to go home? >>

NOLAN

Yeah.

The officer looked older than a lot of the other patrolmen who had been working the overnight shift.

CASPER

<< Said you were just walking by, huh? >>

NOLAN

Uh. Yeah. Walking my dog. Just passing by and heard the argument taking place in the house.

CASPER

<< Didn't go in? >>

NOLAN

No. I already told this to the other -

CASPER

<< Smart. Staying out of it. Snooping around is the easiest way to get in over your head. >>

NOLAN

Ok.

CASPER

<< Catch the fella going thru the window? >>

NOLAN

Looked like maybe one of them pushed the other.

CASPER

<< Yeah. Could be. >>

(They stand a moment.)

<< Damnedest thing tho. He was laying face up in the yard. Not a far fall, figured maybe he landed on some glass shards or something. But then we turned him over. His whole backside was charred, burned like he was... Hell I don't know, like he was electrocuted or something. >>

NOLAN

That sounds awful.

CASPER

<< And then this fucking coffin is laying out like somebody just crawled out of it. I guess you don't know anything about that. >>

NOLAN

Can't see that far back from the sidewalk.

CASPER

<< Good. I wouldn't want my daughter to see something like that. >>

NOLAN

... Think you'll figure out what happened here?

CASPER

<< Well. There's a lot to look into. Whole house is covered in muddy footprints. Pawprints. >>

<< 'Course half the town has been in that house at one time or another - scavengers, kids daring one another - probably no real way of knowing what really happened. >>

<< Maybe we should just be thankful this little enterprise is over and call it a day. >>

<< Make sure you go to bed when you get home. None of kids are getting enough sleep. >>

NOLAN

Uh, yeah. I will.

(The OFFICER starts to leave. Turning back:)

CASPER

<< You ever heard of Bucky Silverton? >>

NOLAN

What?

CASPER

<<Don't know what made me think of that. Seems like something you might be interested in. >>

NOLAN

Bucky Silverton?

CASPER

<< Bucky Silverton. >>

NOLAN

And then he just sorta sauntered away.

CASPER

<< Looks like you got some fans, kid. >>

NOLAN

Across the street, a crowd had been gathering. Early morning joggers at first and then groggy dog walkers. But now there were dozens of them, in PJs and robes, like they had been called from bed to come and see. Old people and young. All staring up at the house, pointing up at the missing bay window, and then down at Casper and Me.

CASPER

<< Goddammit Danny, my doctor says I'm not supposed to be up late on this medication. You trying to make my heart stop? >>

NOLAN

<< We're almost done here! >>

CASPER

<< You the same obnoxious, disrespectful boy you've been your whole life. Don't think I don't remember you TP'ing my house after homecoming.

NOLAN

<< Jesus Julie, that was during the Clinton Administration. >>

They let us go home. Casper and I curled up in the back of Aunt Liz's SUV.

Ms. Blankenship and Ms. Barrington were standing on their porches when we arrived, holding the line, keeping watch over the neighborhood.

NOLAN (cont.)

Grandma Julie went in and started breakfast. Aunt Liz put on a pot of coffee. Casper and I sat for a minute on Grandma Julie's old metal glider.

Up up.

(CASPER jumps up.)

Oh... Such a good boy. Come here. [coughing:] Oh, you're such a leaner.

CASPER

Hey. Aren't you that teen sleuth girl detective?

NOLAN

Hey. Aren't you that semi-intelligent dog?

(They nuzzle out on the porch.)

The rest of summer passed with an average amount of drama and yelling and disappointment. When Fall arrived, Cousin Craig went off to college and Uncle Terry offered to let me come and stay with him, but Grandma Julie wouldn't hear of it, which is nice...

Because I hear there have been sightings of a Lizard Creature down by the old, overgrown railway tunnels.

... Jinkies.

(endit.)

CREDITS

Zoinks! season one

Written by Trey Tatum

Directed by Bridget Leak

Starring Jordan Trovillion as Nolan Blackwell and Trey Tatum as Casper

Part eight: Meddling was recorded by Grayson Halonen

Zoinks! is produced by Queen City Flash out of Cincinnati, Ohio.

More information, including transcripts, can be found at QueenCityFlash.com

Zoinks! will return with new episodes in early 2024.

Until then, keep snooping.