

WELCOME TO FOSTER'S

EPISODE 1

“Pets”

Written by Imogen Cassidy

[Title Music, with lyrics]

FEMME SINGER

**It's not the money or the time,
It's not my heart on the line,
It's not the spirits or the wine.**

MASC SINGER

It's that I know it's mine.

[Verse repeats once with both voices singing together under episode titles]

ANNOUNCER (NINA NIKOLIC)

**Rusty Quill presents: Welcome To
Foster's. Episode one, Pets.**

[Music continues]

CHORUS

**Time, time, time, it's time,
Time, time, time, it's time,**

MASC SINGER

It's not my heart on the line, not this time.

[Music ends]

1. EXTERIOR, EVENING, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Waves crash onto a beach, then fade into the distance. They are replaced by swirling winds, shimmering magic, and a voice chanting Latin.

BRIAN

**Surgite spiritus, redite ab ore tenebrarum
creaturarum, surgite spiritus, servite mihi
meisque, surgite spiritus. (repeats twice)**

As the chanting crescendos, there is the sound of splintering wood, moving dirt, and a zombie-like breathing and moans.

BRIAN (CONT.)

**A little messier than I would have hoped,
but I suppose it'll do.**

MOOK 1

It's bloody dead, what'd you expect?

BRIAN

Well, quite.

Sounds of multiple people shoving and moving a zombie somewhere it doesn't expect to go.

MOOK 1

(grunting with effort)

You could... give us a hand, mate?

BRIAN

You seem to have it well under control.

MOOK 1

**Yeah. Yeah. (to others) Get it in the first
truck. No Gaz, put the ramp down first.
Don't... Don't...**

The truck ramp slams to ground. The sound of mooks closing up the truck and preparing to leave continue underneath.

MOOK 1 (CONT.)

(heavy sigh)

You reckon the room'll hold it?

BRIAN

Luckily, we will be able to test it incrementally. I don't imagine there will be any problems, however.

Just as predicted they are hardly very useful in their present form.

MOOK 1

Stink like a dog's breakfast, though.

BRIAN

As you pointed out, they're dead.

Beat. MOOK 1 shuffles feet as the truck starts up.

MOOK 1

You coming, sir?

BRIAN

I'll be there in a few minutes.

MOOK 1 moves closer to BRIAN.

MOOK 1

It's a nice statue. She someone important?

BRIAN

Only insofar as she can help us.

MOOK 1

Help us do what?

BRIAN

Anything we want, my friend. Anything we want.

The truck drives away.

[Music transition — downbeat grungy guitar]

2. EXTERIOR, DAY, NORTH SHORE NATIONAL PARK

Two sets of feet hike slowly upwards, while around them are the calls of a variety of local Australian birds.

MARK

Puss puss puss puss puss puss puss
puss! Here kitty kitty kitty...kiii...

JILL

(slightly out of breath)

You've never actually owned a cat, have you.

MARK

What?

JILL

It's not gonna come if you just call it.

MARK

So says you.

Beat, walking continues.

MARK (CONT.)

Never was a fan of hiking.

JILL

You're a city boy.

MARK

And proud of it. What is even up here for a cat? Possums?

JILL

Oh at least to start with. Mrs West shouldn't have been letting it outside, this is a National Park.

MARK

Weird that she'd go to us first for a lost cat too. She the type that thinks fairies are to blame for everything? Conspiracy theorist?

JILL

(breathless chuckle)

Mrs West, despite her wilful ignorance when it comes to the rules regarding cats, knows what else is up here. Animal rescue wouldn't take this job.

MARK

Oh?

JILL

(another chuckle)

Notice how we're not on an official hiking trail? Those are all going in the opposite direction, even though we're heading up to what's a (breath) pretty good view of the city.

MARK

So?

JILL
(sighing)

Okay. Stop for a second and feel.

They stop walking. A warm magic hum begins.

JILL (CONT.)

**Remember your training about magical
ambience.**

**The magic builds and crackles until it whiplashes back with electric
twangs.**

MARK

Ooof!

Oohhh, yeah, that's, that's — that's a lot.

JILL

**Yeah! Some spirit made its lair here a
while back. Probably before they started
building houses.**

They begin walking again.

MARK

**Never could get my head around why the
spirits could get away with settling land
here. Didn't they come over with the
convicts? Surely the... uh... well.**

JILL

**Ha. Well. Unlike our colonialist ancestors,
Mark, the spirits actually treated with the
Aboriginal tribes. Helped them out a few
times as well.**

MARK

What about the... well the Aboriginal spirits?

JILL

Now I know they covered this in cert one.

MARK

I might have been sick that day.

JILL

Uh, fine. Well the spirit realms aren't the same, see? The fae... the European spirits occupy a plane of existence...

MARK

Oh. Oh yeah yeah now I remember. So we have all the different types of spirits from different cultures existing simultaneously but separately in their own realms, but...

JILL

But our realm — the physical realm — is constant. So the fae only really had to make deals with the people who were living here. Although, from what I understand there are agreements on the spiritual level as well, just, not ones that any of us were in on. The fae are very used to doing deals, as you well know, and, when you catch them on a good day? They're scrupulously fair about it.

MARK

(small snort)

Hasn't been my experience.

JILL

**You've been on the wrong side of a
summoning? (sniggers) What'd you do?**

MARK

(embarrassed)

Aaach... Usual stuff.

JILL

(chuckling)

**No, really, what did you do? Ask a pixie to
get booze for you? (short laugh)**

MARK

(defensive but good humoured)

I was sixteen!

Gah! Where is this cat then?

Puss... puss puss puss!

JILL

(exasperated noise)

MARK

Here, kitty kitty kitty...

JILL

(eyes rolling)

Really.

**There is a whoosh of air with a magic shimmer, and nearby trees
creak. A meow seems to come from somewhere further left, but
with an unnatural reverb to it.**

MARK

What the...!

JILL

Hmm, okay. Well then.... (clears throat)
kitty kitty kitty...

MARK

Puss puss puss puss puss puss puss...

JILL

Kitty kitty kitty...

MARK

Here, kitty kitty kitty kitty kitty...

Beat.

MARK

You've been here before right?

JILL

Ah—a couple of times. Not really by
choice. It's a hell of a hike and I'm not
getting any younger.

MARK

(small snort)

You could do with a bit more...

MARK chortles until he notices **JILL**'s glare.

MARK (CONT.)

Ah — it's healthy. Exercise is uh...

JILL stops short and produces her most withering look at **MARK**.
An uncomfortable pause.

MARK (CONT.)

What were you here for anyway?

They go back to walking.

JILL

First time? A dare.

MARK

A dare?

JILL

I was your age once!

MARK
(scoffs)

What was the dare?

JILL

To try to contact one of the old spirits.

MARK

Did it work?

JILL

Not once my uncle discovered what I was up to.

MARK

Oooh, sounds juicy.

JILL

That's all you're getting. We've got a job to do.

Beat.

MARK

What do the fae want with a cat anyway?

JILL

Oh, could be a lot of things.

Longer beat. It's now clear that the normal park sounds have become muted, and animal noises that don't seem quite natural are just audible. JILL and MARK both breathe heavily as they walk on.

To the right of JILL and MARK is another whoosh of air with a magic shimmer, followed by a long, angry feline growl with the same unnatural reverb.

JILL (CONT.)

(with some nervous energy)

**Doesn't much sound like Mrs West's
"poor 'ittle kitty" does it.**

MARK

Nooooo.

More walking. The park noises now sound more feral and foreboding. Something runs by to the right.

MARK

(worried)

What the...?

Continued walking. Ahead of them comes a chirruping growl that sounds like a much larger feline. Leaves rustle as something runs past.

MARK

Ah!

They keep walking with their breaths feeling close. The environment continues to grow more hostile sounding, and there is another eerie feline growl.

JILL

(trying to distract MARK)

You know, Tim used to say that no one studies history anymore. The Taronga incident should have warned Mrs West about this place.

MARK

Hang on. What? Taronga? Like — the Zoo?

JILL

Don't tell me you didn't study it — that's mandatory...!

MARK

I had a few days off here and there!

JILL

There's nothing worse than possessed wombats, let me tell you. People thought the emu war was bad.

There is a magic whoosh close by and the long growl of a something that may once have been a cat but is now much more cougar- or lion-like.

MARK

(scared)

What the... oh god.

JILL

Mark, stay very very still.

Other creatures skitter away and MARK moves in reaction. There is a prolonged hiss as the cat moves closer.

MARK

Jill. I can't.

Feline hiss.

MARK

I don't...

The cat produces a rolling angry yowl. MARK cries out then a magic shimmer builds as MARK attempts to protect himself.

MARK

(attempting Latin while scared)

Awubida a lo-de-da...! (gibbers)

The spell misfires and the cat growls angrily. MARK crashes through underbrush as he runs, followed by the growling cat.

JILL

No! Mark don't run! It's what it wants.

Argh you idiot!

JILL chases after MARK, branches breaking, the howls of the cat in pursuit, and MARK's blabbers of panic.

MARK

(from afar)

Jill where are you?!

Jill keeps running until with a leafy rustle she catches up to MARK and the transmogrified cat in a clearing. The cat lets out a very long, angry yowl while JILL drops her backpack to the ground, unzipping it.

JILL

Mark don't move.

MARK

(harsh whisper)

You think I'm gonna move?

JILL

I'm going to call for the spirit, Mark.

As the cat's yowl continues, JILL attempts to light a candle with a lighter that fails each time.

JILL

(tense)

Just.

Give me a minute.

MARK

(scared and frustrated)

Just. Use. A. Spell!

JILL

(very tense)

We're in a national park, Mark! There are fire restrictions.

MARK

It's been raining for six days straight!

JILL

Shut up!

The cat continues to growl and hiss. JILL continues to flick the lighter.

MARK

I think it's gonna eat me.

JILL

**It can't without permission. Just. Just.
Hang on.**

Blowing as JILL gets a candle finally lit.

**JILL (CONT.)
(chanting)**

**Prodeas habemus quaestiones et
pactiones et fortasse aliquid belle tibi, —**

A magic shimmer builds. The cat continues to growl cougar-like. As JILL continues the chant, the trees creak and rustle as if the world is twisting.

JILL (CONT.)

se recte cum eo etiam felem furatus es.

The space now has a large reverb effect, as if in a vast hall. The magic shimmer continues. Trees creak now and then.

The FOREST SPIRIT is before them.

MARK

Christ!

The cat yowls at MARK.

**FOREST SPIRIT
(femme voice)**

Your Latin is terrible.

The FOREST SPIRIT's voice seems to echo and reverb before and after they talk, as if time is less... sticky for them.

JILL

It is.

FOREST SPIRIT

**What brings you to my domain, Jill
Foster? What is it that you require?**

**As the cat growls, MARK moves cautiously while uttering some
nervous sounds.**

JILL

**I think it might be a little bit obvious what
I'd like right now, actually.**

FOREST SPIRIT

**What is obvious to you is not always
obvious to us.**

And vice versa, of course, Jill Foster.

JILL

**Sure. Sure. But, right now I'd like it if...
hang on.**

How do you know my name?

The cat emits a threatening yowl.

MARK

Is this really the time?

FOREST SPIRIT

(a small time-warped chuckle)

You are familiar to us.

MARK

That's not a good thing, right?

The cat yowls angrily and MARK gibbers a little.

MARK (CONT.)

All right! All right!

JILL

Exactly how am I...

MARK

Jill!

JILL

**Fine. Right now I need your friend to let
my friend go.**

The FOREST SPIRIT lets out an eerie laugh.

FOREST SPIRIT

**Ah. My trespasser.
(condescending) The tiny hunter.**

MARK

TINY?

JILL

We call them cats.

FOREST SPIRIT

A small word for something far larger.

JILL

**It's a pet. It belongs to a woman who
asked us to retrieve it for her.**

At the mention of “a woman” the cat begins growling again.

FOREST SPIRIT

(a long frightful laugh)

A pet?

JILL

**Yeah, you know. An animal you look after
in return for... comfort. Companionship.**

FOREST SPIRIT

An animal a human thinks to own.

JILL

(uncomfortable)

**Something like that. It belongs to
someone we're trying to help.**

The cat yowls aggressively.

MARK

(almost inaudible)

Oh God!

FOREST SPIRIT

**It does not belong to her any longer. He
has found a new place. He will not return.**

Beat. The cat utters an almost bark-like growl.

JILL

**Well then, I suppose there's nothing we
can do about that. But...?**

MARK

Yes. But...!

FOREST SPIRIT

You wish your companion to be spared.

JILL

Please.

FOREST SPIRIT

Are you willing to pay the price?

A large yowling from the cat.

JILL sighs. The zipper of JILL's backpack rustles as she pulls a knife out.

JILL
(pained noise)

The sound of blood as it drips onto the earth. The cat pads over and begins purring as it laps up the payment.

MARK
(nauseas)

Eerrghh... God...

JILL
(tired but calm)

Should be fine to move now, Mark.

MARK
Ugh. I think I'm gonna be sick.

JILL
Easiest payment.

MARK
Uh. Thanks.

The cat makes a happy but still large-cat sounding chirrup and pads away shortly after.

FOREST SPIRIT
(amused)

Humans give thanks so carelessly. The trespasser will not bother you again but I suggest you leave my domain.

JILL

No chance you'll let it go?

FOREST SPIRIT

It is not mine to release.

But I will not send you back empty handed.

A small magical poof, followed by a cat collar with bells landing on the ground.

FOREST SPIRIT

You might wish to tell the owner of that collar that any animal wandering into my domain gets a choice.

Her former...cat? Chose wisely. Most do not.

JILL

Understood.

JILL zips the backpack as she and MARK prepare to leave.

FOREST SPIRIT

Jill Foster?

JILL

(turning back)

Yeah?

FOREST SPIRIT

You have been respectful and paid the price for your intrusion. I feel that you deserve a warning.

JILL

Really? All I did was...

FOREST SPIRIT

The dead are restless, Jill Foster. The dead are uneasy in their slumber.

JILL

The dead, huh?

FOREST SPIRIT

It bodes none of us well to have them walk. You should be wary.

JILL

Um. Thanks.

The spirit chuckles. Trees creak and turn as the spirit — and its domain — disappear. The regular sound of native bush life comes flooding back.

JILL (CONT.)

Bugger. Shouldn't have thanked it.

MARK

That's the cat's collar.

JILL

Yep.

The bell jingles as she picks it up.

JILL (CONT.)

Mittens. No wonder it ran away.

A very faint yowl.

JILL (CONT.)

Yeah. Sure mate.

MARK

Can we leave now?

Footsteps as they walk away.

[Music transition — bass plucking part of the theme music]

3. EXTERIOR, DAY, AIRPORT TERMINAL

In the bustling noise of cars and people are two sets of footsteps and a wheeled suitcase.

MUM

That's all you brought? Ollie it gets cold down there you know that right?

OLIVER

Mum it's March.

MUM

I can send you down more once you're settled. You sure you don't want any money for your own place?

OLIVER

Dad says it's fine. Luni's in Samoa for at least a year, he's going to give me her room.

MICHELLE

If you need anything though...

OLIVER

I'm going to get a job mum, that's the whole point of this.

MICHELLE

Plenty of jobs here. I don't know why you need to...

OLIVER stops walking.

OLIVER

(firm but gentle interrupting)

Mum. We've been through this.

Awkward pause, then they begin walking again.

MICHELLE

**Tell your dad he should cook sometimes.
For you. And for Luni too.**

OLIVER

Luni says he cooks a lot.

Sliding doors open as they walk into the terminal.

MICHELLE

(grumbling)

Hmm, never did when we were married...

OLIVER

Mum.

MICHELLE

I know. I know.

I just don't know why we can't get you something...

OLIVER

Airlie's a tourist town. No one needs someone with my abilities... I'm not good at the jobs here.

MICHELLE

You could be.

A flight announcement for Sydney fills the terminal.

**TANNOY ANNOUNCEMENT
(in background)**

Attention passengers. Check-in service for Sydney flight AN5125 (crosstalk) will be closing in fifteen minutes. Please move to the priority queue, if you have not yet checked in.

OLIVER

I have to go. I'll call you when I get there, okay?

MICHELLE

I love you Ollie.

OLIVER

Love you too, mum.

MICHELLE

I'll miss you.

OLIVER

You could come down. For a visit?

MICHELLE

I could. I might even just do that. It's been a few years since I've seen Sydney. Just. Maybe I won't come to dinner with your dad, aye?

OLIVER

You know he wouldn't mind.

MICHELLE

I know. It's a pride thing. You'll understand when you're older.

[Music transition — strums of rhythm guitar from theme music]

4. INTERIOR, DAY, AIRPLANE

Passenger hubbub with the idling engine noise and a bing-bong from the speakers. **OLIVER** is about to put his luggage in an overhead locker.

OLIVER

Excuse. Sorry. Just gotta get my bag up... thanks.

Thanks.

He closes the locker door.

GENIAL PASSENGER

Holiday over then?

OLIVER

Sorry, what?

OLIVER takes his seat.

GENIAL PASSENGER

Your holiday. It's finished. Did you go out on the reef?

OLIVER

Oh. Um. No I wasn't on holiday. I... I lived here?

OLIVER repositions himself and straps the seatbelt.

GENIAL PASSENGER

**Ahh, so you're going on holiday then.
(chuckle) Funny isn't it, how everyone from down there comes up here and everyone from here goes down there. Like we swap or somethin'. No one wants to have a holiday at home do they? You gotta go somewhere new, somewhere different...**

OLIVER

Actually I'm moving. Um. Down to Sydney.

GENIAL PASSENGER

Oh? Ah don't blame you really. Nothing for young folks up here except surfing and drugs. Not that there's anything bad about surfing and drugs, mind you.

OLIVER

I don't surf.

GENIAL PASSENGER

(chuckles)

Probably good thing you're moving then.

OLIVER

Yeah.

GENIAL PASSENGER

More work down there, in Sydney. Is that why you're going? For work?

OLIVER

Oh. Yes. That, that's actually exactly it.

GENIAL PASSENGER

Course, if you surfed you could get a job up here as an instructor or something. All the jobs here are tourism, tourism, tourism!

OLIVER

Is that what you do?

GENIAL PASSENGER

Me? Nah. I'm retired. Used to be in beef.

OLIVER

In beef?

GENIAL PASSENGER

**Beef. You know?
(almost conspiratorially) The meat?**

OLIVER

Um... yes.

GENIAL PASSENGER

**Good people, in beef. Did a lot of travel.
Spent a lot of time in Japan.
So, you going to university then, or...?**

OLIVER

No. Um. I'm in... in magic.

As OLIVER says “magic”, there is a bing-bong from the speakers.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Cabin crew prepare for take-off.

Beat. The plane's engines begin to activate. A baby utters some cries.

GENIAL PASSENGER

So ah, what is it you said you did?

OLIVER

I didn't.

GENIAL PASSENGER

Ah.

The engine noise crescendos as it gets close to take off.

OLIVER

No. Um. I'm a wizard, actually.

GENIAL PASSENGER

What?

OLIVER

It's—ah, really, not important.

[Music transition — four percussive beats from the theme music]

5. EXTERIOR, DAY, SYDNEY SUBURBS

Suburban birds chirp nearby, and there is the faint sounds of traffic in the distance. Two sets of feet reach a doormat. MARK begins to vigorously wipe his feet. A doorbell rings out.

MARK

I've got mud up to my bloody knees.

JILL

I told you we'd be hiking today. You should have...

The door opens with a slight creak.

MRS WEST

Ah, Ms Foster. Is — is there news?

JILL

There is.

MRS WEST

Come in! Come on in. Um. Oh, just wipe your feet there if you could... take off your... mmm — yeah...

MARK and JILL remove shoes before moving further into a living area.

MRS WEST (CONT.)

Have you found him? Have you found Mittens?

They sit.

JILL

Mrs West, there's no easy way to tell you this.

The cat collar jingles as **JILL** takes it from a pocket to give to **MRS WEST**.

MRS WEST

(voice trembling)

Oh. Oh no.

JILL

**I'm so sorry. He went too far. Where he
shouldn't have gone.**

MRS WEST

Is he... he's dead then?

JILL

I'm afraid so.

MRS WEST starts to cry.

MRS WEST

Oh, my poor little boy.

MRS WEST sobs under JILL's words.

JILL

**Mrs West, I know you're familiar with the
regulations about cats near these
bushlands. I just want to make sure you...**

**The jingle of the cat bell punctuates MRS WEST's movements as
she responds.**

MRS WEST

**He was such an adventurous little soul.
Couldn't stop him from exploring. He
always wanted to get out and how can
you say no when they look at you with
those big eyes? My poor little boy.**

MRS WEST sobs under JILL's words.

JILL

You know it's just that it's — it's pretty clear in the council bylaws for this area that... you're not allowed to...

MRS WEST

(interrupting and appears not to be listening)

Last Christmas, he brought us a dead bat! It was such a sweet gesture. He really just wanted to be loved.

JILL

Mrs West...

MRS WEST

We used to dress him up for Halloween. A little pumpkin suit, it was utterly adorable! I think I have some photos if you want to...

MARK

Um...

JILL

Really Mrs West there's, there's no need to...

Everyone stands; MRS WEST heads to retrieve an album, while MARK and JILL retreat back towards the door.

MRS WEST

Yeah, umm (sniffs, then sobs again)

JILL

I'm very sorry for your loss, we'll send you a schedule of fees in—

MRS WEST

Nuh-uh-the the album's (sob) just here
you can see...

JILL

We'll be in touch!

JILL and MARK retreat from the house, shutting the front door
behind them.

MRS WEST

Here you can see...

Beat.

MRS WEST (CONT.)

Oh.

The scene transitions to **JILL and MARK** walking outside.

MARK

Crikey.

JILL

I'm amazed that cat stuck around as long
as it did.

MARK

Who keeps photo albums full of cat
pictures? Doesn't she have the internet?

JILL

It's a treasure trove of old memes. She
should start a blog. Er-or maybe not. Ah...
anyway hopefully she'll pay the bill
without quibbling. Hate to have done that
hike for nothing.

Beat as they continue walking to the car.

MARK

She's just gonna get another cat, isn't she.

JILL

Probably. And maybe the forest spirit will build an army of feral cats and let them descend on her for revenge.

MARK

(nervous laugh)

Not gonna send them against us instead?

JILL

Nah doubt it. We paid, remember?

MARK

You paid.

JILL

You can cut yourself next time if you want.

They stop walking.

JILL (CONT.)

Or, you know, not get to the point where you need to be rescued.

MARK

Can I drive?

JILL

Mark...!

MARK

Look, the only way I get better is if I practice.

JILL

Today? After all this I mean

They start walking to the car again. Their bickering and steps fade into the background as they go.

MARK

Oh my gosh today's as good a day as any.

JILL

I'm so exhausted, Mark, I just—

MARK

So you don't have to drive! Perfect!

JILL

(sighing)

Fine...!

MARK

I'm like your chauffer Jill, just with a few bumps and hits along the way.

JILL

Get in the car Mark!

[Music transition — five lead guitar notes from the theme music]

6. INTERIOR, DAY, JILL'S OFFICE

An office near a busy urban area. Despite this there is the odd chirp of birds from outdoors. Muted footsteps walk up an internal stairwell.

MARK
(behind door)

I mean I want to, yeah, it's been a right
farce here—

Keys turn and the office door opens. MARK enters talking on a
mobile phone to a FRIEND. He shuts the door behind him.

MARK (CONT.)
—to be honest. But if I leave without
notice surely there'll be...

FRIEND
(quiet, as coming through the phone earpiece)
What you reckon she's going to make it
hard for ya?

MARK
Well I don't know?

He places keys down. As he chats he strolls across to his desk.

FRIEND
What's she gonna do?

MARK
Wasn't her uncle some kind of big wig
with the council types? I heard that was
why she didn't get any consequences
after the Leichhardt thing. I don't want to
end up with no...

FRIEND
Look, if you're worried about coming up
short, I can get you in at Dempsey's no
problem.

MARK

(interested)

Oh really? What's the pay?

FRIEND

Second year adept rate.

MARK

(still interested)

Uh huh...

He sits in his padded office chair.

MARK (CONT.)

**Well yeah it's not much more and I've got
an interview at Price & Boone's in a
couple of days.**

He fidgeting through papers and letters, and turns on a computer.

FRIEND

**Price & Boone, you're dreaming mate!
Ain't going to take someone like you!**

MARK

(crosstalk) Hu-hah!

**Well if you don't apply th-they definitely
won't take you will they? It doesn't matter
if you don't meet all the requirements in
the job ad.**

The start-up beep from a computer.

FRIEND

**Yeah but, but then you're working for
Sylvia Price!**

MARK

Ah, sure, she's an unprincipled megalomaniac billionaire but we've all gotta work somewhere, right? Anyway, if that falls through you say that you can probably get something for me at Dempsey's...? or at least...?

MARK types, then begins to click around with the mouse.

FRIEND

Yeah well, no trouble mate, like seriously. He knows you, he trusts me, it'll be sweet!

MARK

(frustrated sigh)

The Internet doesn't even work properly here. It's primitive, I'm telling ya. But yeah, if that's... Obviously not today but we can...

Muted footsteps come from the stairwell.

MARK (CONT.)

eh, hang on, she's coming in. I'll call you back.

JILL opens the door and walks in, shutting the door behind her.

FRIEND

Yeah no worries man.

It's back to bickering for **JILL** and **MARK** — not yet verging into a true argument but with an annoyed energy.

JILL

Ohhh, I swear, you have no spatial orientation — at all.

A rolling metallic clang as JILL drops a hubcap on a desk.

JILL (CONT.)

This is like... when you tried to get a bigger desk, all over again.

MARK

(scoffs)

Driving is hard. Also dangerous! That's why there's a test for it.

JILL

You're twenty-five years old! You should know how to drive.

MARK

I never had to before now. Anyway, you knew I couldn't drive when you hired me.

JILL

I figured it was just because you'd never gotten around to it, not because you were actively awful at it.

JILL flicks the hubcap with a fingernail.

JILL (CONT.)

(almost to self)

I guess I'm gonna have to get the hubcap replaced.

MARK

What do hubcaps even do anyway?

JILL
(annoyed sigh)

Check the messages would you?

MARK lifts a landline handset and presses a button. The **ANSWER MACHINE** beeps and a recorded message starts playing.

JILL (CONT.)
(actively annoyed)
Not on speaker for goodness...

MARK
I like hands free!

ANSWER MACHINE
(crosstalk in background)
You have two new messages. Message one.

JILL
Grrr!

MARK
Blaah!

GLORIA
(coming from answer machine)
Hey Jill, you left your phone again I'll drop it round this afternoon on my way to work. Love you.

MARK
(crosstalk) **Mmmm...!**

JILL
(crosstalk) **Oh hush, you.**

ANSWER MACHINE
(crosstalk in background)

Message two.

At the sound of a potential client's voice, MARK grabs some paper.

GRAHAM
(stilted, coming from answer machine)
Oh. Uh. Hello. Uh. My name's Graham Edgers and I'm calling about... well it's my flat. It's. It's ah... haunted and I wanted to... well I needed some help with it if you could... I mean I'm free...?! Tomorrow morning. And it's... it's a little urgent and I-I could send you an email I suppose but you could also call me on 0491-576-801 that, that would be—

The ANSWER MACHINE cuts off the message with a beep. MARK is writing.

JILL
Did you get that number down?

MARK
(singsongy)
It's whatcha pay me for.

JILL
(obnoxiously)
Well I'm obviously not paying you to drive.

MARK
(dismissive noise) Umm... It's five o'clock.

JILL

I'm aware.

MARK

Did you need me to...

Beat.

JILL
(sighing)

Ah, go home.

MARK immediately gets up to leave, heading for the door.

JILL (CONT.)

**I'll call Mr Edgers. Can you be here by
eight thirty tomorrow though?**

MARK
(lacking enthusiasm)

Oh um... sure.

JILL
(minor pleading)

**Just, if we're going to a haunting we'll
need to...**

MARK
(on his way out the door)
Eight thirty. No problem. See you then.

The door shuts. JILL takes a big breath and sighs.

**[Music transition — chorus hum of several notes with heavy reverb.
The high, reverbed voice of MARIE saying “Jilly! Jilly!” blends and
fades in as the music fades away.]**

7. INTERIOR, JILL'S BRAIN

YOUNG JILL is walking in a room where **MARIE** plays with some figurines. The sounds of toys on the floor distort and are emphasised, while the words spoken between the two often have echoes before or after they're said.

YOUNG JILL

Ugh! Marie your toys are all over!

MARIE

**They're having a masquerade ball, Jilly.
Look Acturus and Helena are dancing—**

YOUNG JILL

**Why can't Helena dance with Octavia
instead?**

A low rumble sound begins.

MARIE

**Octavia is married to the Prince, I told you
that before.**

The rumble crescendos to a crunching sound.

YOUNG JILL

Shit, Marie, that hurt!

A flickering fire sound begins.

MARIE

**(gasps) You swore! And you stepped on
Acturus and Helena...**

**An explosive shimmering magic sound, then the unmistakable
sound of a large fire.**

JILL

Ah!... Oh god. Marie, get back!

MARIE

Jilly!

**8. INTERIOR, WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING, JILL AND
GLORIA'S HOME**

A quiet, compact suburban home, with just the gentle running of a distant kitchen appliance.

JILL

(gasping and waking up)

Marie...!!

The duvet rustles as JILL gets out and heads into the bathroom. She runs water, splashing some on her face, and takes a few deep breaths.

The front door opens. GLORIA is trying to sneak in quietly but immediately knocks an empty metal water bottle to the floor.

GLORIA

(whispering, afar)

Goddamnit.

JILL

(calling out)

It's okay hon, I'm awake.

The general sounds of GLORIA arriving home and JILL exiting the bathroom.

GLORIA

What are you doing up, it's 2am?

JILL

Busy tonight?

GLORIA

Couple of customers decided to stay past closing so I'm late but no.

JILL and GLORIA converge in the kitchen-dining space.

JILL

Tips?

GLORIA

Dismal.

They kiss.

GLORIA (CONT.)

Why are you up?

JILL

Needed to pee.

**GLORIA
(skeptical)**

Mmm hmmm.

**JILL
(slyly hopeful)**

Bring back anything?

GLORIA

Sometimes I think you only love me for my food.

GLORIA passes JILL a takeaway container, which she opens.

JILL
(enthusiastic gasp)
Cheesecake?!

JILL opens the kitchen drawers to grab some cutlery.

GLORIA
Hmm, snuck it aside after the second last piece went.

JILL
You're right, I only love you for your food.

JILL sits down on a couch and begins eating.

GLORIA
(snorts)
How was your day?

GLORIA begins taking off shoes.

JILL
(with some food in mouth)
Cat got possessed. Mark knocked the hubcap off the car.

GLORIA
Really?

JILL
Oh it's okay.

GLORIA
Not a crash are you...

JILL

No, he just took a turn to close to the curb. No big deal.

GLORIA

Our car though.

JILL

Mm, I mean, he's got a point. I don't even know what they're for.

GLORIA

They stop stuff from damaging the wheels.

JILL

Do they though? Because the number of nails and screws we get in the tires...

Long beat while JILL eats and GLORIA sits beside her.

GLORIA

Sure you just needed to pee?

Beat.

JILL

I'm okay, Gloria.

Beat. The share another kiss.

GLORIA

I'm working brunch tomorrow. Should be home for late dinner. Want to go out?

JILL

Definitely.

[Music transition — downbeat grungy guitar, with percussion]

9. INTERIOR, DAY, PRICE OFFICE LOBBY

A large corporate lobby echoes with the sounds of staff movement. SYLVIA walks through it with expensive heels clicking on the expensive polished floors. SYLVIA's speaking style is highly composed but with an underlying edge of disdain for those around her.

RECEPTIONIST
(deferential)

Good morning, Ms Price.

SYLVIA

Mmmm.

EMPLOYEE 1

Ms Price!

SYLVIA

Indeed.

SIMPSON
(from afar)

Ms Price! Ms Price, if I could have a moment, if you're available...

SYLVIA slows her walking as she reaches the lifts. SIMPSON approaches at speed.

RECEPTIONIST
(panicked)

You're not permitted here, sir, I'm going to have to ask you to—

The RECEPTIONIST attempts to intercept SIMPSON as all converge at the lifts.

SIMPSON

**Ms Price I'd like to get a statement about
your paper's article on the rising need for
social services in the Western Suburbs...**

The lift doors open.

SYLVIA

Hold the lift will you please?

SIMPSON

**Ms Price, the public deserves to be
informed not misled when it comes to—**

SYLVIA

(reading his press tag)

**Mr Simpson, is it? You're obviously not
an employee here so that means you're
trespassing. If you would be so kind as
to—**

Bootsteps approach.

TULELE

Ms Price, is this man...?

SYLVIA

**If you would escort him from the lobby
that would be most appreciated.**

RECEPTIONIST

I'm so sorry, Ms Price...

TULELE

(crosstalk) This way sir.

RECEPTIONIST

...he had a jacket over his... I didn't know
that he was... until you...

TULELE escorts SIMPSON away.

SIMPSON

(crosstalk) How any of you can work here
beggars belief after what she does.

SYLVIA

Indeed. Thank you for holding the lift.

TULELE

(from afar)

I got bills to pay, sir, you know how it is.

SIMPSON

(from afar)

But—

The lift doors close. SYLVIA is already making a call from her
mobile phone to a Price & Boone EMPLOYEE 2. During the call she
impatiently talks over the responses.

EMPLOYEE 2

(quiet, as coming through the phone earpiece)

Hi, how can I help?

SYLVIA

Yes, this is Sylvia Price.

EMPLOYEE 2

ahuhuh M-Ms Price!

SYLVIA

(crosstalk) Yes. Have security run a check on... Ashley Simpson, would you? Journalist, not sure where from. He was lurking around the lobby asking idiot questions.

EMPLOYEE 2

The lobby, but he shouldn't have been able to get in, we have security gu—

SYLVIA

(crosstalk) I'm desperately uninterested in excuses, I simply requested a check. Look into him, find out where he works, shut him down.

EMPLOYEE 2

(crosstalk) ah — Yes ma'am. I can do that, I'll, I'll get right on it.

SYLVIA

Indeed. I appreciate your understanding. Send the details to Brian, would you?

EMPLOYEE 2

(crosstalk) Ah yup I'll—

SYLVIA

And have lobby security briefed again on who is allowed access.

EMPLOYEE 2

Yes ma'am, have a go—

A phone beep as SYLVIA ends the call. The lift doors open and, matching her expectations, SYLVIA sees BRIAN waiting for her arrival.

SYLVIA

(almost with warmth)

Good morning, Brian.

She walks out the lift into a reception area in front of her office.

BRIAN

Good morning, Ms Price.

SYLVIA

Any messages?

BRIAN

Anderson from Logistics is having some difficulty with the... ah... storage facilities.

SYLVIA

Oh? (sighs) Walk with me.

The walk towards another lift with keycode access. SYLVIA enters a code as BRIAN speaks.

BRIAN

He says the doors are going to need reinforcing, especially if we're expecting more shipments.

The doors of the second lift open and they enter.

SYLVIA

Mmm. Did he seem overly interested in the...ah...?

The lift doors close and SYLVIA presses a button, activating the lift.

BRIAN

No, Ms Price. Better reinforcement would be an idea especially considering the next shipment is due tomorrow.

SYLVIA

We only need the facility for two more months...? But better to be safe than sorry. Arrange it.

BRIAN

As you wish, Ms Price.

SYLVIA

Any progress on finding us a suitable magical investigator for our... other problem?

As BRIAN talks, the lift doors open to a small space in an underground level of the building, with noisy air vents and hard concrete walls and floors. They exit and walk a short distance.

BRIAN

Oh! Y-Yes indeed, Ms Price. I think you'll be pleased with who we've decided on. A Jill Foster? She has an agency in Annandale. Quite the checkered history, but respected enough that our choice won't be questioned.

SYLVIA swipes a keycard and the reader beeps.

SYLVIA

Checkered?

The walk down a long concrete hallway with similarly noisy vents.

BRIAN

(small chuckle)

A few deaths. The council has her under close eye but, she's made a name for herself in the industry.

SYLVIA

Excellent. I knew I could trust you with this.

BRIAN

Should I engage her now?

Muffled bangs and growls become audible the further they walk.

SYLVIA

No, better to wait, I think. We wouldn't want her discovering too much too quickly, after all.

BRIAN

As you wish.

SYLVIA

Let me know if there are any developments, Brian.

They stop walking to observe milling and growling zombies. Every so often a zombie tries to breach the door, causing a muffled bang.

SYLVIA (CONT.)

They are a little cramped in there, aren't they. You're certain they can't reach the glass?

BRIAN

They haven't tried so far, no.

SYLVIA

That is reassuring. And, they do no damage to each other? Even when they attempt to get through the doors?

BRIAN

No. If we keep the temperature cold enough they're quite docile most of the time. Arthurs seems to think it has to do with the amount of ambient magic in the area.

SYLVIA

Would hopefully do something for the smell as well.

BRIAN

It's airtight, Ms Price, we made doubly certain of that.

SYLVIA

Excellent. Well, if everything is in order, I really do need to get some work done.

BRIAN

As you say, Ms Price.

As SYLVIA and BRIAN walk away, we transition to inside the zombie storage facility. A number mill about, bang, and cry out in distress. Fade to music.

[Music — End Credits, instrumental]

ANNOUNCER (NINA NIKOLIC)

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**This series is written and created by
Imogen Cassidy and directed by Chris
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Elizabeth Moffatt, Lowri Ann Davies, and
Meg McKellar, with title track and music
from Sam Jones, and additional music
from Nico Vettese.**

**The series features Nina Nikolic as Jill
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Keen as Mark Wilson, Sebrina Thornton-
Walker as Gloria Foster, Hannah Aroni as
Sylvia Price, Michael Bache as Brian
Hewlitt-Smith, Isabelle Houghton as
Young Jill, Alice Magilton as Marie, Zara
Moffatt as the Nixie, Shakira Searle as
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our respects to elders, past and present.**

**Neon Inkwell is produced by April Sumner
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