Halo

Grace
November 2026

A collection of voicemails

Hiya!

If you haven't listened to the tapes yet, then please do so before reading any of this. This spoils things.

Also, while I talk a lot about my thoughts while making this, I am keeping some things open to interpretation and some secrets of what I think is happening in the audios.

Some Background

In a Discord server I am in, we have a channel called `#awestruck`. It is hard to describe what exactly it is. Messages are generally non-sequiturs, stray thoughts, or something that lies between a shitpost and a short story. I catalogue some of them at little.words.gay so feel free to judge for yourself.

At some point, I had the idea of an awestruck in the form of a voicemail. Just something that was like "hey its me. something supernatural or inexplicable happened. please give me a call back thanks." It's a format that I think people would recognize and was the basis for a good idea. After thinking about it more, I realized that it could be interesting to have it be an actual audio file that people would need to listen to. If I were to do that I could also make it sound like a real cell phone call too.

The production of these was incredibly simple. I would just record using the voice memos app on my phone. From there I did very simple preparation of the file before I uploaded it to `#awestruck` as a standard voice message. The story told by these messages were paced as if it was happening in real time. Every timestamp that you see on these messages is when they were actually sent to the channel and my friends who listened to them as they had to wait between each one.

While this wasn't a technical project, I did end up doing some technical stuff for it because I apparently can't help myself. Skip this if you don't care, it really doesn't matter

The Technical Garbage

Phone calls have a very unique (and frankly terrible) sound to them. The protocols used to send voice over cell signals are very old so made a lot of compromises. The main one is that it has an effective band pass filter that gets rid of a lot of things that are outside of the range of spoken voices. It also compresses everything to hell and back. There are a lot of things that would go into replicating this sound from first principles. I, however, didn't need to do any of that!

The protocol that phones use (or at least used to use) is called AMR and ffmpeg supports it. This means that I could just reencode the audio as an AMR file then encode it to a file format that is actually real. However, I wanted to do a few other things with the audio. I wanted to add a *beeeeeep* to the begining of the call to make it sound like a voicemail and also later on I needed to be able to apply a 60Hz hum into the file. I also needed to apply some audio correction to prevent super loud noises from pops at the start and me being too close to the mic for some recordings. This resulted in me learning a lot about ffmpeg filtergraphs. It is actually pretty simple once you get used to how they work. I won't get too in depth here but a general idea is that there is a list of "filterchains" treat each have a set of inputs, filters separated by commas, then the output. You can use previous outputs as inputs in future chains and at the end you specify which output you are using.

While the first few were just me typing the commands, I quickly made it a shell script that I am actually very proud of. All but the last one was fully made with the shell script. I used Audacity only for the finale.

In order to upload it so that it looked just like a voice message, I used Vencord, a modded Discord client, to upload the audio file as a voice message. This is actually why it exports an ogg file as Discord on iOS does not support other file formats as voice memos.

November 4th, 2026

3:25 PM

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> I really like cursed items. Just having something that messes with your mind or your body, but for whatever reason, you can't give it up. Additionally, the imagery of angels is fascinating to me. The idea of such purity in a human form intrigues me. It also plays well with themes that often come up inside of `#awestruck`.
>
> This was originally going to be a one-off so I didn't write anything down. I did know what I wanted to say beforehand, but I still practiced a dozen or so times before I was able to get the final recording. Both in this first one and throughout, I tried to record in the environments that the yet unnamed character would have been in. Hopefully it sounds like they are making the phone call while they were on the walk. Those are real leaves being crunched.

November 4th, 2026

7:17 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

> This one is... fine. At this point I was still unsure where I wanted it to go. I did have a vision of what part of the ending could look like but at this point I think I thought it was going to be about 6 or so recordings. This is also the first recording where it was clear that this was going to be a series with more messages in the future.
>
> I think it served it's function as a hook, but I would change it. I bring up a bunch of stuff that I never took anywhere because there were basically no plans. Not terrible, but ultimately provided no substance to the overall story. meh...

November 5th, 2026

4:02 PM

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> Our friend has a name! There isn't really any special meaning behind the name, I just like it :3. This is also where I established that there was communication between Edith and the recipient.

November 6th, 2026

7:28 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

> Wow, some on the nose “writing”. I am not a wordsmith in the slightest.

November 7th, 2026

7:12 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

> The first audio with *The Hum* even if it is so quiet you can barely hear it. The sound of a 60Hz hum is such a powerful noise to me. The fact that we are able to hear the crazy amount of electricity flowing through our walls to power everything in our lives is incredible.
>
> Through braids of metal we are able to command invisible fields through the structures we build giving us the capability to use tools we built to generate light and heat and countless other abilities unimaginable to us even a few centuries ago.
>
> *The Hum* is a reminder that while man may have conquered nature, we are still bound by her rules.
>
> The energy flowing in every building creates a field that interacts interacts with anything magnetic making everything vibrate. The power in our modern world shakes what we build, producing a barely perceptible hum letting us know its there.

November 8th, 2026

10:35 AM

Listen on some.words.gay

> I did not realize I was in such an echo-ey room when I recorded it. That was not intentional but it was too late by the time I noticed as I had to be uploading these in real time.

November 8th, 2026

5:27 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

> This one doesn't add a bunch to the story. It is mostly there to have one voicemail where she is outside without *The Hum*. Maybe I would be less on the nose about the sickness thing in the future, it feels somewhat forced. On the other hand, I do like how it shows that Edith knows that having the halo is probably affecting her in some way. I feel like it really colors everything else differently, especially the decisions she makes later on.

November 9th, 2026

2:46 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

> Edith feeling bad about asking for help yet wanting nothing more than to be helped is modeled after myself. The constant flip flopping and going back on something you already did is behavior that I find myself doing. I feel that sometimes it can be hard to tell if the problem you are having is something that others can help with or something that can be managed internally. I wanted to have Edith be very far on the isolation side of that conflict while really just wanting a human connection more than almost anything.

November 11th, 2026

11:43 AM

Listen on some.words.gay

November 12th, 2026

10:57 AM

Listen on some.words.gay

> How do you depict a character that is loosing the fight between the desire for someone to see the pain you are in so they can help and the need to stay hidden away from others? I wouldn't be able to show the correct mix of guilt, shame, and conflict through my acting alone so I instead focused on the other aspects. Making these super short and spaced far apart compared to the pacing of the rest of them. Well that and *The Hum* of course.

> I started to have a bit of a crisis at this point. Well, not actually at this point. I had recorded logs 9-16 (the rest of the series) on November 10th. 9 and 10, the ones right before this, were good and I was happy with. But I started to get worried about the rest.
>
> I really wanted the ending to feel real and powerful. Something that would make people feel something. Something raw and powerful.
>
> Even the recording of these ones were rough. I am not an actor so to make it sound like I was crying, I basically tricked my mind and body into feeling like I was having a panic attack. The hyperventilating and shakiness are all real. My hands even started to go numb like they do when I have one. The only thing that I didn't have was tears. It was rough, but it is what I wanted.
>
> However, I started to feel anxious about them. When I went to go prepare them, listening back to them made me incredibly uncomfortable. It just felt so... raw, vulnerable. Like I was bearing my heart. Which, I mean, I am. It gave me second thoughts about publishing them.
>
> I did have an out. I had an idea for a quick 30 second thing that I could record. Edith admitting to putting on the halo, saying sorry, then hanging up. I think that could have even worked thematically too. It just felt sad doing that. I really wanted to show what Edith was going through.
>
> I talked to a few friends who were following them as I posted them in `#awestruck` and they helped me work through those emotions. I thought that good art made the viewer uncomfortable but I realized good art also makes the artist uncomfortable. Playing around with those feelings inside of me was good and helped me and being able to admit that helps me even more.
>
> Thanks for the help with that.

November 14th, 2026

6:37 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

November 15th, 2026

9:41 AM

Listen on some.words.gay

November 15th, 2026

3:57 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

November 15th, 2026

5:57 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

November 15th, 2026

7:31 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

November 15th, 2026

11:35 PM

Listen on some.words.gay

> This is the only one that was rerecorded. I wasn't happy with the original way I ended everything and because I was too close to the mic, it made the files hard to work with. I think I was able to tighten everything up and make the ending much better. If you want to hear the original audio you can listen to it here though it really nothing special. I did say I love you in it which was a crazy choice for me to make I think.
>
> Those church bells were actual church bells I recorded the other day. I felt like they made a lot of sense to put into the recording. Additionally the first pop when Edith uhhh... when *something* happens to Edith is actually me breaking a stick about 15 times all layered on top of each other. I think this is actually pretty clean.

Fin

I am pretty proud of this all things considered. On a conceptual level, this shit rules. This is the first thing that could be considered “creative writing” that I have shared and I don’t think it’s bad for that. The format is also super awesome. I love it when shows and movies are able to convey feelings through extended periods of silence and I was able to do the same thing but over multiple days of silence. Also having a captive audience for everything was great.

I am glad that I didn’t take the cowards way out and posted the last 6 mostly intact. It was a weirdly vulnerable experience to share that. I still find that odd but am glad that I did it. I remember being a kid and wanting to be able to make some sort of story that people could feel emotions about. I know its silly, but I did always consider that to be something that was impossible for me. It was only recently that I realized that doing something like this is something that I am allowed to do.

It’s not perfect. My writing is really bad still. I still get feelings of cringe when I share these sorts of things. I am not an expert with words and feel like I have a lot that I could do better of just better phrasing. Also, there are some major structural issues with the overall story. I had a ton of threads that I dropped at the beginning that I should have brought back.

I can forgive myself for these sins. I am mostly happy with how it turned out overall and it’s not like anything I have seen before. With time hopefully I will get better at these sorts of things. This should bring in more creative projects in the future. Personally, I think too many stories have happy endings with not enough suffering. I will work tirelessly to change this and bring more misery to the world.

Thank you to everyone who listened to this as I released it and listened to it now!