

Who When Wow, Season 2, Episode 8

The Lost Colony of Roanoke

Carly. It's me, Carly, the host of your favorite podcast. You know, the one you can't tell anyone about, the secret one where I investigate thrilling mysteries from the past and you come with me. And boy, do I have a great one for you today. It's an early American enigma full of coded messages, Spanish conquistadors and Carolina explorers. So keep on listening. I'm Carly Q, and this is Who, When, Wow! Mystery Edition.

(THEME SONG)

(Soundbite cheery chatter in the office)

Carly. The first thing I did when I got into work this morning? Hand out flyers for a certain stapler of mine that's gone missing.

Carly in background. Excuse me! Seen this stapler anywhere?

(Soundbite of murmured "No.")

Carly. And not just any stapler...my *favorite* stapler! Stapley.

Carly in background. It's just my absolute favorite stapler in the whole wide world, so...let me know if you see it?

Carly. (Continued) I'm sad to say that it's probably my own fault. A few nights ago my friend held a stapler party. We played fun games, like races to see who could staple fastest, and "staple the tail on the donkey." That one didn't actually go so well, I would not recommend stapling while blindfolded. Anyway, I of course brought Stapley from work, but of course now I can't find him!

Carly in background. Let me know if you find him! Just bring it to basement. Okay well just keep an eye out.

Carly. I thought I brought it back here the other day, but it's nowhere to be seen. And my friend said I didn't leave him at her house either. It's like it just vanished!

(Soundbite Carly goes down stairs to basement)

Carly in background. I really hope someone finds him.

Carly. Once I got down to my basement office, I enlisted some more help in my search. You might have heard that some secret agencies have a mole. Well, ours has a rat, literally. It's an actual rat, named Nibbles.

Carly. Morning Nibbles! I got a job for you. You know Stapley is apart of this family too and I would love it if you would participate in helping me find her.

Carly. Right away I put her on the case of the missing stapler, I had her search the whole basement for it. But she couldn't find it either.

(Soundbite Rat noises)

Carly in background. Nowhere? Nothing?? Ugh, Nibbles, I'm devastated!

Carly. (Continued) Suffice it to say, all morning I was feeling kind of low. But can you guess what perked me right back up? I bet you can, it was a brand new time-sealed mystery landing right on my desk!

(Soundbite A thumb drive drops down vacuum tube)

Carly in background. Ooo yes! A time sealed event.

Audio File. Event: August 1590 <<BLEEP>> The Coast of North Carolina
<<BLEEEP>> Lost colony.

Carly. Oooh, a *lost* colony? Did it sink into the ocean? Did they get some camouflage and blend in to the coastline? Did everyone just forget the address?

Carly. Before getting too far ahead of myself, I pulled out my AI device H-dad.

H-dad. H-DAD, ready for action!

Carly. And typed in the keywords to see if it had any more info. Lost Colony, North Carolina, 1590.

(Soundbite typing sound)

H-dad. Initial analysis...match found! This file most likely refers to the Lost Colony of Roanoke Island.

Carly. Hm I've maybe heard of that. Got anything else?

H-dad. For further information I will have to do some more...analyzing, analyzing. Analyzing.

Carly. Welp, you know what that means. Time to keep looking for the stapler!

(Soundbite rat squeaking)

Carly. The next few hours passed in a blur, as Nibbles and I checked every last nook and cranny of this place we could think of. Refrigerator drawers? Heating vent? Janitor's closet? And continued to have zero luck. And before I knew it -

P.A. Voice. Attention, Butthead employees: it is now the hour for digestion of midday foodstuffs, formerly known as "lunch time."

Carly. Ok, looks like we're going to have to pause the search for Stapley now. Let's go and investigate that lost colony! I grabbed H-DAD and Nibbles, and took off for the time-traveling elevator.

(Soundbite steps to elevator)

Carly. Greetings Odie!

Odie. Hello basement companion.

Carly. You haven't seen my stapler by any chance, have you?

Odie. Absolutely not. I never staple.

Carly. Never?

Odie. Never, too dangerous. Paper clips only. Period.

Carly. Well I can certainly appreciate a strong preference for particular office supplies.

Odie. You have another mystery today, or are you just here to debate paper attachments?

Carly. No, I mean yes, yes I do. The keywords were August 1590, and a lost colony on the North Carolina coast. H-DAD thinks it's the mystery of Roanoke! You know anything about it?

Odie. It's....possible I might recall a thing or two.

Carly. Care to share?

Odie. Our little secret, right?

Carly. Of course!

Odie. Roanoke Colony was one of the very first English settlements in North America. A few years after its founding, the governor of the colony, John White, left to get more supplies from England. But when he came back three years later, the colonists had disappeared.

Carly. Whoa! But, wait-- what was Governor White doing for three whole years?

Odie. Well the Spanish Armada had attacked England during that time, so he wasn't allowed to leave. And by the time he came back.

Carly. The colony was gone.

Odie. Indeed. Now, the time seal on the file covers those whole three years, so the earliest I can send you back to is the very day Governor White finally returned from England.

Carly. Then let the investigation begin!

Odie. Not so fast, first a reminder on the time-travel rules: no changing anything in the past, but ask all the questions you like. The elevator's time cloak function will make your clothing more appropriate for the time period. And remember too that you can always return to the elevator to fast-forward to another date on the file. Got it?

Carly. Got it!

Odie. Then I think you're ready. Remember though basement companion: Lost doesn't always mean gone.

(Soundbite of wind chimes)

Carly. Huh?

Odie. Okay here you go.

Carly. Wait what?

(Soundbite elevator ding and traveling noise)

Carly. I really wish I had Stapley for thiiiiis--

(Soundbite elevator lands and dings, waves and shore sounds)

Carly. We did it Nibbles, we're...here? I guess? We're on the shore of an island on a beautiful summer day. There's a sandy beach, and then grass up the way. Honestly it pretty much looks like every other beach I've ever seen before.

Nibbles. (sniffs) But it *smells* like the 16th century. I'd say late 1500's, pre-Magellan.

Carly. Your nose is astonishing.

Nibbles. I know.

Carly. Then I guess this must be Roanoke! Maybe the colony's further inland?

Nibbles. And just brimming with lunch spots, I'm sure.

Carly. Alright, let's go find that Governor guy Odie told us about, and see if we can figure out what happened to the missing colonists. Where should we start?

Nibbles. Maybe over there with all those sailors getting off their rowboats?

Carly. Sure enough, dozens of men were getting out boats on the shore. Well look at that! Out in the distance we could see the much larger ship they sailed in on. As they approached, I crouched down behind a tree to listen.

Ship Captain. But Governor, where are the colony's boats? They should be right here at the shore.

Governor John White. Indeed. Excellent point, Captain.

Carly. That must be Governor White!

Governor John White. And it's certainly odd that no one's here to greet us. Something is definitely not right. Everyone on high alert. To the colony!

Carly. I popped out from behind the tree, hoping no one would notice. But right away a sailor saw me.

Sailor #1. Oi, who are you? Wait, are you that cabin boy no one's seen in awhile?

Carly. Yes! Yes I am. Just a regular ol' cabin boy doing regular ol' cabin boys things. Like, tending to the cabins! And...being...a boy in the cabins.

Nibbles. (whisper) Stop talking.

Carly. I'm done! Cabin boy at your service.

Sailor #1. Alright, hurry up then, something's off here, we're going to need all the help we can get.

Carly. I nodded along, and we followed the crew up to the colony...or what was left of it.

Carly in background. Yikes Nibbles, look at this place!

Carly. There were remnants of wooden houses along a simple dirt path, but they all looked like they'd been partially taken down, like scrapped for parts. The whole place was deserted, and everyone seemed very upset. Finally Governor White addressed his men.

Governor John White. Clearly something has happened here. When we departed three years ago, we left behind friends and family, wives and children, my own daughter, and my granddaughter, the first English child born on this continent.

Nibbles. (whisper) Whoa! You hear that Carly?

Carly. (whisper) That's terrible.

Governor John White. Whatever happened here, we are going to find out what. And we are GOING to find them.

(Soundbite cheers from the men)

Carly. I followed closely as White and his men investigated the area. There were LOTS of clues.

Sailor #1. Sir, we found the word CRO carved into a tree.

Governor John White. Crow? Like the bird?

Sailor #1. No. C-R-O.

Nibbles. Carly, what could that mean?

Carly. Maybe it's short for crooks? Or crones? Or CROCS! Maybe there was a crocodile attack!

Nibbles. Or an attack of those shoes everybody wears. They attack my eyes every time I see them.

Carly. Honestly Nibs, confession? I love Crocs. And I am open to sponsorships on this podcast okay? We have millions of worldwide listeners. It could be a good opportunity for you.

Nibbles. I don't know if we're friends anymore.

Sailor #2. Governor, look here, the word "Croatoan" carved into one of the gate posts.

Governor John White. Thank heavens, finally some good news! This is a message, it means the colonists must have relocated to nearby Croatoan Island.

Nibbles. I'd relocate too if I was stuck in a place like this.

Carly. Uh, sorry, excuse me, Governor?

Governor John White. Who are you?

Carly. Uh...Cabin boy, first rank?

Governor John White. Right right right, of course.

Carly. Governor, how do you know what this message means? You seem so sure.

Governor John White. Before we left, I instructed the colonists to leave a message just like this if they had to move elsewhere.

Carly. But aren't you worried? If they had to leave here couldn't it mean something went wrong, or they were attacked?

Governor John White. No, because I also instructed them to include the sign of a cross in their message if they had been in any danger.

Carly. Ahh, smart! And since there's no cross on the message here, that means they weren't in danger.

Governor John White. Yes, exactl-- wait, why am I talking to a cabin boy?

Nibbles. Good question.

Governor John White. Who said that? Where's the Captain? Captain!

Ship Captain. Here, sir! We've just finished our search. We found no bodies or graves, and there's no indication anyone's been here recently.

Governor John White. Then I conclude our colonists must have left Roanoke and sailed to Croatoan Island. We must go look there. Everyone, back to the ship!

(Soundbite waves and footsteps back to ship)

Carly. I would have loved to go with them, but we couldn't go that far from the time-elevator. We can't get stuck here in the past, Nibbles.

Nibbles. Darn right, I've got a cushy life in the future! Except that whole not being to talk then.

Carly. So we hid behind a tree until the sailors had left, then came out to look for more clues. There's gotta be something else here, right? Unless, H-DAD, do you have anything else?

H-dad. Analyzing...analyzing...further information can be found in 1701. New Year's emoji, fast forward emoji!

Carly. Oooh great! Let's go check it out! We raced back to the elevator, put in the keycard, set the clock for one hundred years in the future.

(Soundbite of ding and travel noise)

Nibbles. Carly are you sure you know how to drive this thiiiiing?

(Soundbite of THUD as the elevator lands)

Carly. We finally stepped back out of the elevator, to find the island looking pretty much exactly the same.

Nibbles. Now it smells like the early 1700's. Revolution is in the air! Or maybe that's just swamp gas. Sometimes they smell alike.

Carly. So it's over a hundred years later and it's still just the same overgrown ruins here?

Nibbles. I guess it's still abandoned...

Carly. Ooh look though, there's people up at the ruins.

Nibbles. It seems like they're investigating too.

Carly. Come on. Let's go have a look! We walked back over to what was left of the colony. We tried to stay behind the trees so we could overhear the men without being seen, but before we could find a good hiding spot-

Sailor #1. Oi, who are you? Are you that missing cabin boy?

Carly. Yes! Yes I am. Still just a regular ol' cabin boy.

Sailor #1. John, look, it's that cabin boy who went missing last week.

John Lawson. There you are. Where have you been?

Carly. I, uh, hit my head down in the hold. Yeah, where are we, I don't even know how long I was out.

Nibbles. (whispers) Where you going with this girl?

Carly. I can't seem to remember very much, maybe you could...refresh my memory on who you are and why we're here?

Nibbles. Ah, clever Carly!

John Lawson. Why I'm John Lawson of course, the famed explorer! You've been with us this past year on our glorious explorations around North and South Carolina.

Carly. Right! Yes, of course, our glorious explorations. And you know what I'm remembering now too? That I am just fascinated by the mystery of what happened here to the Lost Colony of Roanoke.

John Lawson. We may have just resolved that. We've just come from nearby Hatteras Island and spoke with the native peoples there. They claimed that some of their ancestors had been white, and we noticed that they seemed to have some experience with English culture.

Sailor #1. Some of them also had gray eyes, which could certainly be explained by having white ancestors.

Carly. Hatteras Island, huh?

John Lawson. Yes, formerly known as Croatoan Island.

Carly. Whoa, wait! That's the name that was found carved on a post here. So the colonists really did just go to Croatoan Island, like their message said?

John Lawson. We do believe so.

Carly. Then why has there been so much mystery about it?

John Lawson. Why it's simple: nobody went and looked! It just so happens that *I* am the first person to investigate this area since Governor John White found the colony gone in 1590.

Carly. Right, I just talked to him.

John Lawson. Excuse me?

Carly. Uh, I mean...I *imagined* talking to him. When I was unconscious from hitting my head.

Sailor #1. Of course!

John Lawson. Yes that's makes total sense.

Carly. But I thought Governor White went to go check out Croatoan island right away after finding the message. Wasn't he looking for his family?

John Lawson. He tried to go find them, but he never made it. His ship got damaged and they had to return back to England.

Carly. And that's just it? *No one else* came looking?

John Lawson. A number of other expeditions did *intend* to investigate, but none of them made it either. The ships were either blown off course or damaged and had to return home.

Carly. I can't believe it! The colonists left a message about where they went, but no one went and actually looked for them?! That's wild!

John Lawson. "Wild" you say? You certainly have a strange way of speaking, cabin boy.

Carly. Uh, yeah, you know, probably just cause of that whole head knocking incident. You know what, I think I have to go use the bathroom!

John Lawson. The what?

Carly. I'll be right back! I raced into the woods, and it was just in time too, because the second we got out of earshot of Lawson and his men -

H-dad. Announcement emoji! Analysis complete!

Carly. Shh! H-DAD you almost blew our cover!

Nibbles. Pretty sure YOU almost blew our cover Carly.

Carly. Oh shush, I can talk my way out of anything, I'm cool as a cucumber!

Nibbles. Yeah, a cucumber that keeps getting itself into *pickles*.

Carly. Okay, calm down. H-DAD, what have you got?

H-dad. Many theories have been proposed regarding the missing colonists.

Carly. Such as?

H-dad. That they were attacked by Spanish conquistadors.

Nibbles. Whoa!

H-dad. Or that they tried to sail back to England themselves and got lost at sea.

Carly. Yikes!

H-dad. But most modern historians believe the colonists joined nearby Native American tribes.

Carly. Wow, really?

Nibbles. Why would they do that?

Carly. Maybe cause they were struggling to survive here on their own. Remember how the Governor had left for England to get more supplies? And he was gone for *three years...*

H-dad. Affirmative! This theory suggests the colonists assimilated into local tribes such as the Hatteras.

Nibbles. The Hatteras, that's who those explorers just talked to!

Carly. So it's the same theory John Lawson had! Then it sounds like he was right, huh H-DAD?

H-dad. Hedging...hedging...collective scholarly confidence levels are lower than ideal.

Nibbles. Uh,could you maybe translate that in a way a rat could understand?

H-dad. Nobody knows! Not for sure. Question mark emoji. Shrugging robot emoji!

Carly. Got it. I guess this is just another one of those mysteries that's *kinda* solved, but that's as close as anyone's gonna get.

Nibbles. Reminds me of a certain missing stapler.

Carly. That mystery's actually not solved at all. But yes, I do see some resemblance.

H-dad. Incoming message from Butthead-quarters.

P.A. Voice. Lunch time ends in 5 minutes. Eat now, or forever hold your tummy.

Carly. Alright, let's go.

Nibbles. Goodbye Roanoke! Goodbye abandoned village.

Carly. We raced back through the trees to the elevator, and moments later --Ugh now I'm hungry for cucumbers and pickles! Here we go!

(Soundbite elevator ding and travel noises)

Odie. Welcome back, basement companion.

Carly. Hi Odie.

Odie. Did you find the missing colonists?

Carly. Not exactly. It kinda boggles the mind actually, the colonists left a message saying where they went, but no ships were ever able to go check it out. So the colonists might not have "disappeared" so much as no one ever really went looking.

Odie. How unfortunate.

Carly. Yes, but the most likely theory for what happened is that the colonists may have been welcomed in by nearby Native American tribes.

Odie. So it's possible they survived?

Carly. Very possible! It actually reminds me of something you said.

Odie. Oh?

(Soundbite of wind chimes)

Odie. Lost doesn't always mean gone.

Carly. Yup! You meant that just because we can't find something, it doesn't actually mean that it's disappeared into thin air. Like even though the colonists were lost to history they still might have found community when the Native Americans took them in.

Odie. I'm glad you've learned to see it that way.

Carly. And curiously enough, I actually think this might apply to my stapler problem too.

Odie. Oh really.

Carly. I mean I'm still sad I lost Stapley, obviously. Very, very sad. (holds back tears)...I promised myself I wouldn't cry.. But maybe that stapler is now with someone else, providing them with the same joy it gave me.

Odie. Very hard for me to imagine a stapler providing *anyone* joy.

Carly. Maybe we just agree to disagree?

Odie. I suppose. In the meantime, need any paper clips?

Carly. No thanks, I've got plenty.

Odie. Suit yourself. Have an enjoyable rest of your day, stapling companion.

(Soundbite of Carly walking back to her desk.)

Carly in background. Goodbye Stapley! Thank you for your service.

Carly. Ahh, what a day. After all that, the mystery of Roanoke Island kinda sorta just boils down to, "Nobody went and looked for them." it makes sense though! I mean it was a *lot* harder to actually go back across an entire ocean back in the day. Anyway, I certainly know I tried my hardest to find the Stapley. Which is why I felt okay Googling "best stapler ever" and reading reviews all afternoon so I could buy a new one. I haven't found the right model yet, but I'm sure I will soon.

Carly in background. 500 Staple capacity? Woo

Carly. (Continued) And hopefully I'll have it in hand by the time my next time-sealed mystery comes along – and of course YOU will be coming along too. Until then, this is Carly Q, signing off. And remember: you never heard this!