

**409: Daybreak**

**[Click; rattle]**

**[Ash is in the attic still. The storm is over.]**

**Ash:** The world looks so beautiful through the stained glass up here. I can't believe the storm is finally over. It feels like I've spent my whole life in this house, or lost in the yard, surrounded by a blizzard. But now it's all peaceful—a fresh blanket of snow, free of dirt or footprints, just unbroken white covering the ground. A blank canvas, erasing everything underneath. A fresh start.

**[She moves away from the window]**

I can probably make it through the snow to a neighbor's now. It feels like maybe everything is over? Like when I made it up here, that was what he wanted. Or what the house wanted. I don't know why.

I have no idea what time it is. I should go down and see what it's like. I know it's still cold, but without the wind I should be fine. It looks the same out the other window, minus the colors. There's my truck, on its four slashed tires. I don't see anybody out on the roads. No plows or anything. Maybe it's still early. I can still...

Wait. Why are there...? This doesn't make any sense. I'm looking at the gravel parking area beside the house. My truck is there, where I left it Saturday morning. But next to it is Tony's little Nissan truck. And next to that is Geri's Honda. And Jack's dumb little sports car over on the corner. They couldn't have come back, not in that storm. But they haven't been there the

whole time. I would have noticed it before now. Wouldn't I?

Are they in the house somewhere? I just searched the whole thing. I would have seen them. Wouldn't I?

What the hell is going on?

**[Theme music; credits]**

**[Click; rattle]**

**[She is outside. A cold winter's day. Her boots crunch in the snow]**

**Ash:** These are definitely the crew's cars. Jack's car being here makes sense, I guess, though I don't know why I didn't notice it when I got here. But Geri and Tony left for the weekend. I know they did. I walked with them out here as they were packing up.

**[She moves between the cars, investigating]**

Geri's door is open.

**[We hear her lean in to look further]**

All their stuff is here. Tools, sunglasses, notebook. What the hell? Their keys are still in the ignition. Where are they?

**[Louder]** Geri! Are you here?

**[To herself again]** No tracks in the snow. They couldn't have pulled up this morning. And... Shit, that's blood. All over the inside of the door. **[Feels further]** and on the seat too. Sticky. Congealed. But blood. What the fuck is going on?

**[She closes the car door. We hear the morning cold and empty around her.]**

I'm going back inside.

[Click; rattle]

[Click; rattle]

**[Ash is in the living room. The clock is audible. She is restless, pacing]**

Everything is quiet now. I don't trust it at all. I haven't seen the man in the black suit since he led me to the attic, but I don't think for a minute he's not here somewhere. Waiting. The house is watching me, wondering what I'm going to do next.

And I'll be honest, I'm wondering the same thing. I'm not even scared. I'm just tried and strung out and restless and...and...

I know what I should be doing. I should be walking through the snow to a neighbor's house—not some fairy lights in the woods, a *real* neighbor's house—somewhere I could get help. At the very least I need to find out what day it is.

I need to tell somebody about Jack.

But I don't know why all the cars are there. I guess that's another reason to leave—find a phone and call Tony or Geri. But that blood in Geri's car...

Somehow, now that the storm is over I feel more trapped than ever. I feel like I'm missing something. Like I can almost remember something...

**[We hear her digging through her bag]**

No more Jack Daniels No more coke. Just the photo album and this creepy-ass book.

**[She drops the bag and walks into the foyer]**

The clock is working again. It says 8:35, but I have no idea if that means anything. It could be early Sunday morning? I'm nearly certain all of Saturday happened. But it could be Monday, I guess. Still no one on the streets.

I searched most of the house earlier, before he talked to me on the stairs. Before I went in

the attic and found the trunks. But I didn't see everything. I didn't check closets, I didn't...I didn't go in the basement. So maybe I should check all that out first, before I call anybody. If I call somebody, the police will come, and the house will be full of people. I don't know if I want that. I don't know if I want them finding things I haven't. Or things I have.

**[A long beat.]**

I can't remember Friday night. I think I remember Saturday, all the work I did alone. I feel like the attic is important. But I can't focus, I can't think. I can't...remember.

**[Slow realization dawning]**

I don't think I need to search anywhere. I think I need to open those trunks. I can call for help after that. Yes. But I need to know for certain first. So. Back upstairs.

**[Click; rattle]**

**[Click; rattle]**

It just occurred to me—when I looked through my bag just then, there weren't any extra batteries in there. So that means I must have replaced the batteries at some point last night. I wonder if the whole back yard thing was even real? How much time have I lost?

It's so bright up here now. The light off the snow. Glinting off the big gilt-framed mirror in the corner. And sort of spot-lighting the trunks.

Now that I'm up here, I'm not sure if opening those trunks is what I want to do. The locks are broken. Can see that now. Busted off, probably with that hammer lying by them. And I can see where they've been dragged through the dust from the wall.

**[Whispers behind. Ash doesn't seem to notice]**

Damn, the light off that mirror is bright. I'll move it, and then open the trunks.

**[We hear her move to do so]**

Wait. What the hell?

**[She drops the mirror, which shatters]**

I'm...I'm covered in blood. Jesus, it's all over me!

**[She vomits]**

**[Click; rattle]**

**[Click; rattle]**

**[Ash is still in the attic. She is calmer, but it's a tense, crazy calm.]**

Matt slipped. The inquest found that he slipped. And it doesn't matter if I thought he deserved it. It doesn't matter if the world is better off without him in it. It doesn't even matter that I was covered in blood when the police arrived. I had tried to help, tried to pull him away. Hell, I even gave him CPR.

Inquests are official and that's the official verdict.

I've already said this. Again and again. To the judge. In therapy. In rehab. To the clients who dropped me. I told it all to a one-night stand last year, and man, he left like he found out he was in bed with a rattlesnake.

And then I got through it. I got a clean bill of health and a new business loan, and Tony and Geri still stuck with me, and I started over. It was in the past.

But fine. Whatever. House, man in the black suit, whatever the fuck you are. You want to put zombie Matt in the woods and have him chase me, fine. It's not like everyone in my whole fucking life wasn't already thinking it was my fault. I'll always live with that. Nothing new. Nothing original.

Why put the others there? Not just Jack, but my whole crew? Why were Tony and Geri in that clearing? Are you trying to make me paranoid?

Bitch-ass house.

**[Click; rattle]**

**[Click; rattle]**

The roads have been plowed, finally. I don't know how long it's been. I'm still in the attic. But I can see the turn of the road from here.

A few minutes ago a cop car drove by, really slowly. They didn't pull in. But they were definitely looking. They'll knock next time. They'll come in. I'm glad I closed the door to Geri's car.

What will I say? "Yes, officer, I know there's a baggie with traces of white powder in it next to an empty bottle of whiskey. I know I'm covered in blood. But hey, I look better than the poor asshole under the stairs!"

I don't think we're going to make our deadline in this job. I'm glad I made the deposit nonrefundable.

**[She walks away from the window]**

Now that I've seen myself, all I can feel is the blood. It's in my hair. It's gummed in my eyelashes. It's on my hands. I guess I couldn't see it in the dark.

There's so much that I should have seen before, even in the dark. The cars. All my tools are here too—the hammer, a boxcutter, the sledge, the hacksaw. They're all covered in blood. The blade on the hacksaw is chipped and twisted, like it's been used on something a lot harder than wood.

**[A long beat. She is looking at the trunks]**

There's blood here too. A lot of blood. Pooled around these trunks. I suppose there isn't any reason to put this off.

I want it on record that whatever my grandfather did, he wasn't in his right mind. He was under the influence of whatever's in this house. The man in the black suit, whoever he was. This house is cursed, and my grandfather was a good man. No one in this place can be expected to...

Let's do it.

**[She takes a breath and kneels, opening first one trunk, then the other. She is horrified by what she finds, broken. But not surprised]**

Geri. Tony. I'm so sorry. Oh my god. I'm so sorry!

**[A noise from behind her. Someone has entered the attic]**

Is that you, you black-suited fucker?

**[She stands, turns]**

Oh. Ginny. It's you.

**[Theme music; credits]**