

## Chapter Five

**[Sound fx: Click. Rattle.]**

**[Sound fx: background music]**

**[Sound fx: occasional glasses clinking]**

**ANNELIESE:** Okay, wait, wait. Bailey, can you start over?

**BAILEY:** Start over? Wait, are you recording me?

**ANNELIESE:** Umm. Yeah. Is that okay? Is that weird?

**BAILEY:** No...it's not...

**LEAH:** Yeah, it's weird, Anneliese.

**SCOTT:** I'm sorta with Leah on this one.

**ANNELIESE [embarrassed]:** Oh. Okay. I just thought it was a cool story. Sorry.

**BAILEY:** I don't care. You can record it if you want.

**BRI:** Whatever. Let's just hear the story.

**BAILEY:** Okay, okay. Here we go.

**ALEX:** Wait--let me go to the bathroom. Anybody want another drink? Anneliese?

**ANNELIESE:** No, I'm good. But thanks, Alex.

**BRI:** I'll take another beer.

**ALEX:** Okay, beer for Bri. Scott?

**SCOTT:** Uh, no, I'm fine.

**ALEX:** Okay, be right back.

**[Sound fx: Alex leaving the room.]**

**LEAH:** Oh god, lighten up, Scott.

**SCOTT:** I can get my own beer.

**ANNELIESE:** I'm sorry your girlfriend couldn't come, Bailey.

**BAILEY:** Yeah, it takes a lot to get her to leave the house once she gets home. Not a big deal. I'm having a great time anyway. Thanks for hosting us all, Anneliese.

**ANNELIESE:** It's all Leah. Thank you guys for coming over. It really makes it feel like my place, having everybody here.

**LEAH:** You deserve a party. The place really does look great, Anneliese.

**BRI:** Yeah--I was telling her earlier how cool it is to have somebody living downstairs again. It's creepy living above an empty floor.

**BAILEY:** How long have you lived here, Bri?

**BRI:** Two years. I moved in around the same time as Mr. Blackwood across the hall from me.

**LEAH:** And you never heard or saw anything strange?

**BRI:** Strange?

**LEAH:** Like the stuff Anneliese was telling us. Shadows in the mirrors. Ghost cats.

**ANNELIESE:** I didn't say ghost cats.

**LEAH:** Well--*something* jumping on your bed at night.

**ANNELIESE:** I'm beginning to wonder if I should have said anything at all.

**BRI:** I mean, it's an old house. It makes noises. But I've never been scared of anything.

**ANNELIESE:** I didn't say I was scared. I just said...

**BRI:** No, I know. I just meant. No. I've never felt like it was haunted or anything. It's just an old house.

**SCOTT:** *I* believe you, Anneliese.

**LEAH:** Well, thank god for that.

**SCOTT:** What's *that* supposed to mean?

**ANNELIESE, BAILEY, LEAH:** Lighten up, Scott!

**LEAH:** We're just teasing you, man. Nobody said they didn't believe her.

**BAILEY:** Why are you sitting way over there, anyway? Come join us.

**SCOTT:** There's no room.

**BAILEY:** I'll make room. Here. See? Squeeze in on the couch. Slide over that way, Leah.

**[Sound fx: movement]**

**BAILEY:** See? Cozy.

**[Sound fx: Alex comes back in]**

**ALEX:** Okay, I'm back. Your beer, madam.

**BRI:** Thank you, sir.

**BAILEY:** Alright. You guys still wanna hear this?

**LEAH:** Yeah--you just left us hanging.

**ALEX:** Go ahead Bailey.

**ANNELIESE:** Yeah, Bailey. Tell us a ghost story!

**[Theme music. Opening credits.]**

**BAILEY:** This was back when I was in college. I was in the theater program at Straub. My friends and I had a little acting troop that did sketch comedy. Like Monty Python-style stuff. We were pretty good. But there wasn't any place to rehearse. Actually there wasn't any theater space at all.

**LEAH:** Sounds like a great theater program.

**BAILEY:** It really was. No seriously, it was. But during my junior and senior year they were renovating the dorms on either side of the theater, so the theater was off limits. But we needed a place to rehearse, and we were a little pissed that the school wouldn't let us into what we considered *our* theater.

**BRI:** So you broke in.

**BAILEY:** So we broke in.

**SCOTT:** Of course you broke in.

**BAILEY:** We broke in three nights a week and rehearsed from, I don't know, midnight until two a.m. It was this really cool black box theater, and it was on a second floor mezzanine. The hallway in front of the theater doors was a balcony above the dining hall, and it ran in either direction into the dorms that were under construction. Does that make sense? Can you see that? Cause it matters to the story.

**ANNELIESE:** Yeah, that makes sense. So the dining hall sort of connected the two dorms?

**BAILEY:** Exactly! The dorms and the dining hall were technically three buildings, but they were all connected by the long hallway that ran through all three. That's where the theater was, in the middle. And the dorms were old--like it was way past time to update them. It was like living in the 1960s. But at the time of this story, they hadn't really started the renovations, they had just shut down everything, locked it up, and started ripping out the furniture and fixtures and stuff. That's what it was like one night when we broke in to rehearse. It was me, and my friends Peter, Jacqui, Paige, and Dean. We had finished running through our stuff, so it was like one-thirty or two in the morning. We had all stepped out onto the balcony and were waiting for Peter to lock the theater doors. And then a phone starts ringing down on eof the hallways off the balcony.

**LEAH:** Like in one of the dorm rooms?

**BAILEY:** Yeah, in one of the dorm rooms.

**LEAH:** But I thought they had shut off everything in the...

**BAILEY:** Just wait. Let me get there. This phone starts ringing, and I should tell you about the phones in those old dorms. They were these old-style black plastic rotary-dial phones. It was silly how ancient they were. They hung on the wall and had actual bells that rang with a, what do you call it, like a clapper.

**ALEX:** Did you go to school at Hogwarts?

**BAILEY:** Like I said, they needed renovations. But these phones were loud as hell. And it was definitely one of these phones ringing. We stood there on the balcony, listening to it ring, and somebody, I think it was Dean, said...

**BRI:** "Let's go answer it."

**LEAH:** Oh hell no.

**BAILEY:** "Let's go answer it." So we went to find it.

**SCOTT:** Oh my god.

**BRI:** I always thought it was crazy unrealistic in horror movies how people would go looking for the creepy thing. But here you are doing it.

**SCOTT:** So stupid. That's how they get you.

**BAILEY:** Yeah, well, Dean suggested it, and nobody wanted to say they were scared. I had a crush on Jacqui so I certainly wasn't going to be a chicken. Besides, there were five of us, and we had a flashlight. So we set off down the hall, looking for this ringing phone. And the hall is full of old mattresses and desks and all this shit that they've pulled out of the rooms but haven't gotten around to cleaning out yet. We're kicking up all this dust, and tripping over overturned chairs.

The phone is echoing and we can't tell which room it's coming from. We go into each one and check the phone. Slowly working our way down the hall.

**BRI:** And this phone is still ringing?

**BAILEY:** Right? It's rung like twenty-five times now. I think that's what's started finally freaking me out--that it kept ringing and ringing, in the middle of the night like that. So finally we find the room, it's the next to last one down on the left. We all file in and Paige shines the flashlight on the phone. It's hanging on the wall, still ringing. When it rings it shakes a little on the wall. We watch it for three more rings. It's rung like forty times by now. And then Peter just steps forward and picks up the receiver and puts it to his ear.

**LEAH:** And...? Who was it?

**BAILEY:** I don't know. We all just stand there, in like a semi-circle around Peter while he listens to whatever is on the phone. I've never...I've heard about the blood draining from someone's face before, but I don't think I'd ever seen it. Peter's face goes *white*. Like chalk. And he just holds the phone. Everything had gotten dead quiet once the phone stopped ringing, and we're starting to get creeped out.

**SCOTT:** Oh, really?

**BAILEY:** And Peter just standing there is making it worse. I say, "Jesus, Peter, what is it?" And he hands me the phone. I put the receiver to my ear and listen. And it's...nothing.

**BRI:** They hung up?

**BAILEY:** No. I don't know if y'all remember, because we don't do land lines much anymore. I know I haven't had one for years. But you know how you can tell when you're listening to a phone line that's just doesn't have a call connected vs. one that's not plugged in? This wasn't an

empty line, or a call that had hung up. And it wasn't someone holding the other line and just not talking. This was a dead line. Like no connection, no power, a dead line.

**LEAH:** But it had just rung a couple of dozen times.

**BAILEY:** At least. It was not cool. The line was dead, and the whole big, empty building was silent, and we had been, what, *lured* to this room by this dead phone. All I could think--and I know this is really melodramatic and stupid, but I actually thought it--is "it knows where we are." Everything felt wrong. Like wrong on a gut level--fight or flight get the fuck out of dodge wrong.

**ANNELIESE:** My god, Bailey. What did you do?

**BAILEY:** We got out. We ran, I guess. I'll be honest, I don't remember leaving. I remember hearing that horrible *nothing* on the other end of the phone line and then I remember us standing on the quad outside the dorm, scared out of our wits. The next day Dean called the maintenance department, and they said we were crazy, that the phone lines had been pulled months ago. No way anybody could call a phone in the old dorms.

**LEAH:** Holy shit. So what happened?

**BAILEY:** We found another place to rehearse.

**LEAH:** No what happened afterwards? Did you find out if something was haunting the dorm? Had there been other calls?

**BAILEY:** I don't know. I never went in there again, I'll tell you that. No way, Jose.

**LEAH:** Well that's no good! I want to know what it was.

**BRI:** Chill, Leah.

**LEAH:** But doesn't that drive you crazy? Not knowing what it was?

**ALEX:** There's a logical explanation, though.

**SCOTT:** And what is that, Mr. Know-it-all?

**ANNELIESE:** Jesus, chill out, Scott.

**ALEX:** I don't know what the explanation is, I just know there's no such thing as ghosts.

**BRI:** Oh, this is good. We've got us a skeptic.

**ALEX:** You can make fun of me. Y'all are the ones scared of a phone call.

**BAILEY:** Cause it was fucking scary!

**BRI:** I'm not making fun. I don't believe in ghosts.

**LEAH:** Then how do you explain it? You felt like it was something supernatural, right, Bailey?

**BAILEY:** I...I wouldn't go all the way and say that. Like I said, it felt *wrong*. I don't know *what* it was.

**ALEX:** It could have been electrical impulses in the wires. Maybe there was an electrical storm that triggered something. Maybe the maintenance department had it down that the phone lines had been disconnected but the worker who was supposed to do it blew off that day. And then you guys are there in the middle of the night, you've worked yourselves up, so it feels "wrong" or whatever. You never really investigated or anything. Over time it turns into a story that's bigger than it really is.

**BAILEY:** Maybe...

**SCOTT:** So what about the hundreds of stories about ghosts? Throughout history?

**ALEX:** Well what about the stories of gods driving fiery chariots across the sky? Disproved really quickly once we understood how the sun works.

**SCOTT:** So Bailey's phone call is just undiscovered science?



**ALEX:** No, I'm just saying that some things look weird if you don't know the answer. And sometimes people misremember, and sometimes people purposely lie, and sometimes people are mentally ill.

**LEAH:** Bailey's not lying, and she's not...

**BRI:** He's not saying that. He's just giving examples.

**BAILEY:** Yeah, it's cool. I know he's not saying I'm crazy.

**ANNELIESE:** So what about things that can't be explained by science or lying, or whatever?

**BRI:** Like what?

**ANNELIESE:** Like someone who sees or talks to someone they know is dead.

**SCOTT:** Like a quija board?

**BRI:** Or a seance?

**ALEX:** I don't think a quija board is good evidence for...

**ANNELIESE:** No, not like that. Not psychics or mediums or whatever. I mean people who see their dead relatives. People who, I don't know, have a conversation with their grandfather when they know he's dead.

**LEAH:** Yeah, you hear about that kind of thing all the time. Grandad shows up at the house and tells you he loves you, and then you find out he died two hundred miles away at that same moment.

**ALEX:** I think...I don't know. I'm not an expert.

**SCOTT:** Okay, now that's right. You're definitely not an expert.

**ALEX [talking over Scott]:** But if I had to guess, I'd say those people imagined it. After the fact. Grief can really fuck you up, and we can rewrite our memories sometimes, especially if we want something to be true. Or they're lying.

**SCOTT:** Why would someone lie about something like that?

**BRI:** For attention. Basic narcissism.

**SCOTT:** Anneliese isn't an attention hound.

**ALEX:** We're not talking about Anneliese. We're talking about somebody who sees their dead grandfather.

**SCOTT:** But you're saying that the stuff Anneliese is hearing is...

**ALEX:** I don't know what she's hearing, but I'm sure there's some sort of...

**SCOTT:** You think she's lying?

**ALEX:** No! Of course not, but I think maybe she's...

**ANNELIESE:** Sitting right here, guys. Actually in the room.

**LEAH:** Why don't we back off the pissing contest, boys.

**SCOTT:** He's the one that's pissing.

**ALEX:** What does that even mean?

**BRI:** Boys. Chill.

**ALEX and SCOTT:** Sorry.

**LEAH:** Jesus.

**ANNELIESE:** But, what if it's more than that?

**BRI:** More than what?

**ANNELIESE:** Like, not just one visit from grandad. What if grandad is always around, giving advice, hanging out, acting like he always did?

**[A brief silence]**

**BAILEY:** I've never heard of that kind of thing.

**ANNELIESE:** Yeah, but how would you explain it? That's way different than a weird phone call, right? That's not a "check the science" kind of thing. How would you explain something like that?

**ALEX:** I'm with Bailey, I've never heard of something like that. Outside of a horror movie.

**ANNELIESE:** So that person would just be lying?

**BRI:** No, that person would be crazy. Like batshit crazy.

**ALEX:** Yeah, that sounds like schizophrenia.

**LEAH:** So all ghost stories are just told by liars or nutjobs?

**ALEX:** No, probably most of them are people not understanding what they're seeing. Or hearing. Or whatever.

**[Sound fx: movement]**

**SCOTT:** Anneliese, are you okay?

**ANNELIESE:** I'm fine, I just need to get some air.

**LEAH:** Standing by the window won't get you air unless you, you know, open the window.

**ANNELIESE:** Oh, yeah. Duh.

**[Sound fx: window opening]**

**[LEAH moves to ANNELIESE. Low conversation continues in the background.]**

**LEAH:** Are we making you uncomfortable?

**ANNELIESE:** Not really. Scott's a little much. But it's not a big deal. Hey, thanks, for the party, Leah. This was really sweet.

**LEAH:** Sure thing, girl. You deserve some happy. After Rhys. [talking low] Alex is cute.

**ANNELIESE:** [also low]: Leah!

**LEAH:** Well, he is.

**ANNELIESE:** I'm not...okay, yeah. He is cute, isn't he?

**LEAH:** Yeah, he is. And I don't think he was saying you're crazy.

**ANNELIESE:** I know. Sometimes I just feel like maybe... [beat] Oh, my god.

**LEAH:** What? Something outside?

**ANNELIESE:** Okay, this is what I mean. I want to see if I'm just losing it. What do you see out there?

**LEAH:** Where?

**ANNELIESE:** In the yard. I don't want to jinx it by telling you. Do you see it?

**LEAH:** I can hardly see anything. It's so dark. [Looks. Pause.] All I can see is your reflection.

**ANNELIESE:** Here, I'll turn off the lamp.

**[Sound fx: lamp switching off]**

**BAILEY [from background]:** Ooo! Mood lighting!

**ANNELIESE:** There! Do you see it?

**LEAH:** I don't know. What am I supposed to be seeing?

**ANNELIESE:** I don't want to say. I want you to see it.

**LEAH:** At least tell me where I'm supposed to be looking.

**ANNELIESE:** Look at the tree.

**LEAH:** At the tree...okay...

**ANNELIESE:** Do you see it?

**LEAH:** Um...maybe? Right next to the big tree? On the right?

**ANNELIESE:** Yes! You do see it! You see...him.

**LEAH:** Him? I'm not sure that's what I...

**ANNELIESE:** But you see something?

**LEAH:** I *think* so? It's so dark. You see a person?

**ANNELIESE:** He's standing there looking at the house. Thomas.

**LEAH:** The neighbor kid?

**ANNELIESE:** I'm beginning to think...Leah I don't know if he's a neighbor. I think I may have seen him in the bathroom earlier, watching me.

**LEAH:** What? Holy shit, Anneliese!

**ANNELIESE:** I know.

**LEAH:** You've got to call the police!

**ANNELIESE:** No! No, I think he's... **[she knows this is going to sound nuts]** I think he's dead.

**LEAH:** You think he's...dead?

**ANNELIESE:** I shouldn't have said anything. You think I'm crazy.

**LEAH:** No, I don't think you're crazy. But you're telling me that this kid is spying on you in the bathroom? Isn't it more likely that instead of a ghost what you've got on your hands is a little pervert? You need to call the police.

**ANNELIESE:** Just forget it.

**LEAH:** Anneliese, this is creepy. If you think somebody is spying on you...

**ANNELIESE:** I said forget it.

**LEAH:** I'm worried about you.

**ANNELIESE:** Join the club. **[Realizes, softens]** Thanks, Leah. I really do appreciate it. But really, it's...

**LEAH [firmly]:** You should call the police.

**BRI [from away]:** Call the police about what?

**[Sound fx: Anneliese moving back in to the room]**

**ANNELIESE:** Nothing.

**LEAH [following her]:** She thinks she's got a peeping tom.

**SCOTT:** What?

**BRI:** Here?

**ANNELIESE:** No. Leah misunderstood.

**LEAH:** You think that neighbor kid's been spying on you in the bathroom, right? Isn't that what you said?

**BRI:** What neighbor kid is this?

**ALEX:** Are you serious?

**ANNELIESE:** No, I don't think it's actually...

**BRI:** This is that kid you were asking me about the other day? What was his name, Thomas?

**ANNELIESE:** Yes, Thomas, but I don't think...

**BAILEY:** So, is this just a naughty kid? Is he, like, dangerous?

**ANNELIESE:** He's like nine or ten. He's not dangerous. I'm not even sure I didn't imagine it. You guys are blowing this all out of proportion.

**SCOTT:** You want me to talk to him? Scare him a little?

**LEAH:** Jesus, Scott.

**ANNELIESE:** No, Scott, I don't want you to threaten a ten-year-old. Stop freaking out, everybody. I probably exaggerated what I said to you, Leah. I don't even know that it was Thomas. He's a great kid, really--I'm not worried about Thomas.

**BRI:** It's weird--I don't think I've ever seen this kid. He lives near here?

**ANNELIESE:** I suppose so. I don't know where he lives.

**BRI:** Huh.

**[Awkward silence]**

**ANNELIESE:** Seriously, guys. Calm down.

**[Awkward silence]**

**BAILEY:** We just love you, Anneliese.

**[Beat; this is a surreal thing for Anneliese to hear]**

**ANNELIESE:** I know. I love you too. Look, it's getting really late. Some of us have to be at the bakery tomorrow morning early.

**BAILEY:** Oh, god, you're right. It's after one. Grab your stuff, Scott.

**SCOTT [reluctantly]:** Okay. I thought maybe we'd pull an all-nighter.

**LEAH:** You're not having a sleepover with Anneliese, Scott.

**SCOTT:** Why not?

**BAILEY:** Because we're not third-graders. Now, if you're riding with me, get your shit.

**[Sound fx: general movement]**

**ANNELIESE:** Thanks again, guys. I appreciate you coming.

**BAILEY:** Thanks for having us! It's a great place, Anneliese.

**ANNELIESE:** It is, isn't it? It feels good having you guys here to christen it.

**SCOTT:** You sure you're okay?

**ANNELIESE:** I'm fine Scott.

**LEAH:** She's fine, Scott. Off with you. **[She lingers behind]** I'll call you tomorrow, okay?

**ANNELIESE:** Sounds good. Thanks again, Leah.

**LEAH:** Of course! Night, Alex! Great to meet you, Bri!

**BRI:** You too. [To ANNELIESE] I need to head upstairs to bed, too. Thanks for inviting me. You've got some cool friends. Scott was okay, too.

**ANNELIESE:** He's not so bad. He's just...zealous.

**BRI:** Ha! That's one way to pronounce "horny." Hey listen, I'm right upstairs. You call me, I'm here in like, a minute. Okay?

**ANNELIESE:** Thanks, Bri. I really appreciate that. I'm okay, I promise.

**BRI:** Even if you just get scared or whatever. I don't mind. Just call me. K?

**ANNELIESE:** Thank you. I'll call if I need you.

**[Sound fx: door closing]**

**ALEX:** I should probably be going, too.

**ANNELIESE:** If you need to.

**ALEX:** I thought you were going to bed.

**ANNELIESE:** I'll be up for a little while. I mean, I can have another glass of wine if you're up for it.

**ALEX:** I'm up for it.

**ANNELIESE:** I'd like you to stay. Sometimes I get a little overwhelmed by crowds.

**ALEX:** I get that.

**ANNELIESE:** Here, I'll pour. Sit down.

**ALEX:** Thanks.

**ANNELIESE:** They all mean well. I think.

**ALEX:** How long have you known them?

**ANNELIESE:** Those guys? Not long. I've worked at Spongecake for eight months or so.

**ALEX:** I know. I remember when you started.



**ANNELIESE:** Yeah. So, I didn't really know Bailey and Scott before that. And I just met Bri when I moved in.

**ALEX:** You've known Leah longer though, right? She seemed like she was, I don't know, more connected.

**ANNELIESE:** I went to school with Leah. But we weren't really close. She knew my roommate, and we hung out some. We got closer once I moved here a year or so ago.

**ALEX:** Oh, okay. I thought this was a gathering of close friends. So I didn't need to feel like an **outsider?**

**ANNELIESE:** I hope you didn't. I'm glad you came.

**ALEX:** So, no close friends in the city?

**ANNELIESE:** I just...I went through a breakup a little while ago and he kept most of the friends.

**ALEX:** That sucks. I'm sorry to hear that.

**ANNELIESE:** It was good. It is good. It needed to happen.

**ALEX:** Then I'm glad it did. So, what else should I know about you?

**ANNELIESE [a little uncomfortable]:** What do you mean?

**ALEX:** I mean, where are you from? What's your family like?

**ANNELIESE:** Um. Well, I'm from a little town about an hour away. My parents still live there.

**ALEX:** And what do they do?

**ANNELIESE:** My mom is a manager for a local hotel, and my father is retired from the Navy. They divorced right after I graduated high school, but they're both in the same town. My brother Jackson is in grad school there, he still lives with mom.

**ALEX:** No other siblings?

**ANNELIESE:** How come all this interrogation? Huh? How about you?

**ALEX:** Me? What do you want to know? I was born and bred in this here briar patch.

**ANNELIESE:** You're from here?

**ALEX:** Yep. My whole family still lives here. Mom, dad, two brothers. My sister Susan lives in Atlanta, but she comes back to visit a lot.

**ANNELIESE:** Close family?

**ALEX:** Pretty close. I mean, I don't hate anybody. My brother James voted for Jill Stein, but we don't talk about it.

**ANNELIESE:** That must be nice, to be right here together?

**ALEX:** Yeah. I never really thought about it. We're always just sort of here. I mean I moved away for a little while for college, but then it just made sense to...

**ANNELIESE:** I had a sister.

**ALEX [a little thrown by the shift in topic]:** Um...oh? Had?

**ANNELIESE:** Claire. She was two years older than me. She was...she was my best friend. She died.

**ALEX:** Oh my god, Anneliese. I'm so sorry? What happened?

**ANNELIESE:** My junior year of high school. We spent the whole year in the hospital, while she just, I don't know, faded away. By the time summer came around she was gone.

**ALEX:** That's horrible. Was it cancer? That's really young.

**ANNELIESE:** It was really young, yes. I didn't...I didn't handle it well. Jesus, I don't know why I'm getting so upset just telling you this. It was years ago.

**ALEX:** Of course you're upset. I can't imagine you ever completely get over something like that.

**ANNELIESE:** Right? Thank you. My parents felt like I overreacted.

**ALEX:** Overreacted? Because your sister died? That seems a little ridiculous.

**ANNELIESE:** Maybe overreacted isn't the word. But they felt like I carried on too long. Or something. It was hard on them too. They divorced afterwards.

**ALEX:** Becasue of it?

**ANNELIESE:** More because of the stress. They were too wrapped up in thier own pain to be there for each other. I'm sure my reaction didn't help.

**ALEX:** I can't imagine.

**ANNELIESE:** You think about a family tragedy, you know? Like the whole family is affected and they bond together as they face it? But it's more like each person is dealing with a private disaster. A private grief. Four separate catastrophes, parallel and simultaneous.

**ALEX:** I don't know what to say.

**ANNELIESE:** There's nothing to say that everybody hasn't already said. Repeatedly. [Beat]  
I don't know why I'm telling you all this.

**ALEX:** Because I'm a trustworthy guy?

**ANNELIESE:** Must be.

**ALEX:** Seriously, I'm happy to listen.

**ANNELIESE:** I haven't told many people here. In town I mean. Leah and Rhy--my ex-boyfriend--are the only people who know. It's kind of hard to bring up. People look at you differently.

**ALEX:** I'm not looking at you differently. I mean, I feel sad for your having gone through that.

**ANNELIESE:** Thank you. Really.

**ALEX:** She was eighteen?

**ANNELIESE:** I was two years younger. It was a crappy junior year.

**ALEX:** No joke.

**ANNELIESE [after a moment]:** I don't want you thinking I'm some fragile broken thing.

**ALEX:** Who said you were fragile?

**ANNELIESE:** My ex. He said. Well he said a lot. But he thought I was like, fundamentally damaged or something by Claire's death. That I needed protection.

**ALEX:** That's a shitty thing to say. Or to think. Everybody has stuff they've gone through. It usually makes us stronger, not the other way around. What's that Leonard Cohen line?  
"Everything is broken, that's how the light gets in?"

**ANNELIESE:** Yeah. [**That sinks in**] Yeah!

**ALEX:** So fuck that guy.

**ANNELIESE:** Yeah! Fuck that guy!

**ALEX:** But not literally.

**ANNELIESE:** No! Metaphorically fuck that guy!

**ALEX:** I'll drink to that!

**ANNELIESE:** Me, too!

**[Sound fx: glasses clinking]**

**ALEX:** You still think about it a lot?

**ANNELIESE:** About Claire? I mean. It's not my whole life or anything. That was ten years ago.

**ALEX:** Ten years...

**ANNELIESE:** Yeah. **[Beat]** So I'm twenty-six if you're trying to do the math.

**ALEX:** I was getting there!

**ANNELIESE:** How old are you?

**ALEX:** How old do I look?

**ANNELIESE:** I don't know? Thirty? Thirty-five?

**ALEX:** Ouch! I'm twenty-five.

**ANNELIESE:** Ha! And touchy, too!

**ALEX:** Just worried about my youthful charms.

**ANNELIESE:** Oh, they're safe.

**[Beat]**

**ALEX:** Why are you sitting over there?

**ANNELIESE:** I'm very comfy over here.

**ALEX:** It's...sort of far.

**ANNELIESE:** Well, if you're lonely, you could slide over here.

**ALEX:** Oh, could I?

**ANNELIESE:** I'd even encourage it. **[Sound fx: Alex slides over]** See? Isn't that better?

**ALEX:** Yeah, I think this is better.

**[Their voices are quieter now, closer]**

**ANNELIESE:** I'm glad you came.

**ALEX:** Really? I feel like Scott didn't feel the same way.

**ANNELIESE:** Oh, Scott. He's got a crush. It's sort of irritatingly middle school.

**ALEX:** Were you fighting off admirers in middle school?

**ANNELIESE [unsettled by the question]:** No. No, middle school wasn't very...I don't like to think about middle school.

**ALEX:** Yeah, that's the standard American experience.

**ANNELIESE:** Is it? I guess it is. Standard.

**ALEX:** Oh, you're anything but standard.

**ANNELIESE:** Really? Tell me about that.

**ALEX:** Well, I could *show* you.

**ANNELIESE:** I think I'd like that.

**ALEX:** Come here.

**[Sound fx: movement]**

**[Pause]**

**[Sound fx: Dog barking]**

**ANNELIESE:** What was that?

**ALEX:** Just a dog barking.

**ANNELIESE:** I hate that dog. Earlier today... **[trails off]**

**ALEX:** What?

**ANNELIESE:** Nothing. I'm sorry, I'm killing the mood.

**ALEX:** The mood isn't dead. Come here.

**[Pause]**

**[Sound fx: door closes]**

**ANNELIESE:** Shit!

**ALEX:** What?

**ANNELIESE:** I thought I heard somebody in the house.

**ALEX:** Umm...okay. You really are freaked out about that kid, huh?

**ANNELIESE:** No, I just thought I heard...

**ALEX:** Want me to check it out?

**ANNELIESE:** Would you?

**ALEX:** Sure. Be right back.

**[Sound fx: Alex leaves room]**

**[Beat]**

**[Sound fx: Dog barking]**

**ANNELIESE [under her breath]:** Damn dog.

**[Sound fx: Tapping at window]**

**ANNELIESE [whispering]:** Who's there?

**[Sound fx: Tapping at window]**

**ANNELIESE:** If you think I'm looking out this window, you're nuts.

**[Sound fx: Alex returns to room]**

**ALEX:** Who's nuts?

**ANNELIESE:** I...um...thought I heard something at the window.

**[Sound fx: Alex pulls the blinds]**

**ALEX:** Nope. Nothing there. The house is empty and secure, too.

**ANNELIESE:** Oh. Okay. Maybe I'm the one who's nuts.

**ALEX:** You're not nuts, Anneliese. But you are scared.

**ANNELIESE:** I'm as scared as anyone would be if...

**ALEX:** It's an old creepy house. You're not used to living alone. It doesn't help that your friends are telling all these ghost stories.

**ANNELIESE:** That was just tonight. And Bailey's story didn't scare me.

**ALEX:** But you *are* scared. You're seeing things that aren't there. You think some kid is spying on you.

**ANNELIESE:** I think I was wrong about that.

**ALEX:** Either way. You need to feel secure here. I hate to think about you being afraid to live in your own apartment.

**ANNELIESE:** So what do you suggest?

**ALEX:** You need a gun.

**[Long pause.]**

**ANNELIESE [she has gone quiet and still]:** What?

**ALEX:** Not to use, necessarily, but just to, you know, make you feel safe.

**ANNELIESE:** You think I need a...gun.

**ALEX:** There's a bunch at the pawn shop near the bakery. I was looking at them yesterday. Relatively inexpensive. A small handgun..

**ANNELIESE:** Why were you shopping for guns?

**ALEX:** Same as you, security. My place is in a shady part of town and...

**ANNELIESE:** You're not the same as me.

**ALEX:** What? Come on, I was just saying that maybe...

**ANNELIESE:** I think...I think you need to leave.

**ALEX:** What? Come on, Anneliese, I didn't mean to...

**ANNELIESE:** To what? You think a goddamn *gun* is going make anything better?



**ALEX:** I wasn't saying that.

**ANNELIESE [getting more strident]:** I think you need to leave.

**ALEX:** Come on! You're really overreacting. All I meant was...

**ANNELIESE [yelling]:** Get the *fuck* out of my apartment!

**ALEX:** Jesus! You need to calm down!

**ANNELIESE:** Don't tell me what I need! You think I need a fucking *gun*. You don't get to say what I need.

**ALEX:** Okay! Okay!

**ANNELIESE [screaming]:** Get out!

**ALEX:** Fine. Screw this. I'm leaving. **[Sound fx: Alex moving to door]** I was only trying to help.

**ANNELIESE [crying now]:** Just go. Just get out.

**[Sound fx: door slamming]**

**ANNELISE [sobbing]:** Oh my god. Oh my god. Claire! Oh, Claire. **[Pause]** Shit. The phone's still on. Have I been recording this whole fucking time? Beautiful. Did you hear that? Is that the kind of thing you were worried about? Are you happy now? Are you fucking happy?

**[Sound fx: Click. Rattle.]**

**[Closing theme. Credits.]**

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