

# Punk Was Dead

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FADE IN:

INT. BLAKE'S ROOM IN HER APARTMENT — AFTER MIDNIGHT

BLAKE DEAN (23 years old, cynical journalist bent on finding truth over sensation, and facts over superstition) wakes up in her bed, a sleeping bag on an air mattress. The rest of the room is just as bare-bones, with a few scattered papers and books. There's screaming from the next room. She scrambles out of bed and barges into the other room.

CUT TO:

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM IN THE SAME APARTMENT — AFTER MIDNIGHT

At a card table used as a makeshift desk, wrapped in fuzzy blankets sits MELISSA DEAN (15 years old, typical chronically-online emo kid with big emotions; she works out by obsessing over her favorite bands, younger sister, and legal dependent of BLAKE). She sobs, scrolling on her rickety laptop through a series of headlines about musician Shawn Ellis dying of a heart attack at 43.

BLAKE

Missy? What's wrong? Are you okay?

MELISSA

(sobbing)

He's dead! Oh my god, he's dead!

BLAKE

Who? Who's dead?

MELISSA

Shawn Ellis!

BLAKE crouches next to MELISSA and rubs her back.

BLAKE

Jesus, is that someone at your school?

MELISSA

He's — he's the drummer from Good Horror!

BLAKE visibly relaxes and drops her hand.

BLAKE

God, not that stupid band again.

MELISSA

(angry)

It's not stupid!

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Good Horror was instrumental  
to the pop-punk and emo sound  
the early 2010s —

BLAKE

Yeah, yeah, to the pop-punk  
and emo sound of the early of  
2000s —

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Early 2010s, Blake.

BLAKE

Thanks, Wikipedia. Can you explain why you were screaming in the middle of  
the night over some celebrity?

MELISSA

Shawn's my favorite member of Good Horror, and I never got to meet him!

BLAKE

You don't even know him.

MELISSA

Shawn was born in the suburbs surrounding Chicago on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1979, which is  
also the name of his third favorite song. He has three kids, aged three, six, and  
eight. He's been married to Jeanne Ellis né Kennedy for the past ten years and —

BLAKE

Okay. Okay. Borderline stalking, but I get it.

MELISSA

You don't.

BLAKE reaches out to set her hand on MELISSA's shoulder.

BLAKE  
Listen, Missy—

MELISSA jerks away from BLAKE.

MELISSA  
Don't call me that.

BLAKE  
Melissa. I've been trying to make all this easier for you.

(MORE)

BLAKE (CONT'D)  
I know you didn't want to live with me, but it wasn't safe for you there. Mom —  
she's not right in the head.

MELISSA stares at her laptop, not scrolling or reading, just sitting.

BLAKE (CONT'D)  
I'm trying. But you have to try, too. You can't wake me up like this on a work  
night every time one of your middle-aged obsessions kicks it.

MELISSA  
You're such a bitch!

BLAKE  
Hey!

MELISSA  
How can you be so casual about it? Shawn is dead!

BLAKE  
(yelling)  
I don't have time to care about him!

MELISSA shrinks back. BLAKE collects herself.

BLAKE (CONT'D)  
You don't remember what it was like. You were Mom's favorite. I got the worst  
of her.

MELISSA  
Maybe you should have left me there!

BLAKE steps toward the door, hurt but trying to hide it.

BLAKE

Just keep the music down.

BLAKE shuts the door. MELISSA huffs, then turns up the volume on her laptop and clicks on an already-liked video of Good Horror concert footage.

CUT TO:

The credits — a montage of grainy live footage, professional quality music videos, and behind the scenes vlogs to upbeat rock music (something along the lines of “Bang Bang” by Green Day or “Boy Division” by My Chemical Romance).

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE DEAN APARTMENT — DAY

A few days later, BLAKE edits a news story on her laptop, sitting on a threadbare couch amid piles of papers. She pounds at the keys, frustrated. The apartment door slams, and she looks up.

MELISSA walks into the apartment, past BLAKE, and right into her room.

BLAKE

How was —

MELISSA

Leave me alone.

BLAKE sighs and goes back to typing. Her phone vibrates as a call from JEFF WORK (50s, newspaper manager) comes through. BLAKE answers the phone.

BLAKE

Hello?

JEFF (O.S.)

You got anything going on this afternoon?

BLAKE

I have to finish this piece on —

JEFF (O.S.)

There’s a big funeral. Local celeb, musician, probably coked out but they’re call-

ing it a heart attack. Can you go report on it?

BLAKE  
Who is it?

Papers rustle from over the phone.

JEFF (O.S.)  
Shawn Ellis, from that punk band.  
You know him?

BLAKE  
Not really. So what, a fluff piece?

JEFF (O.S.)  
Nope. He's famous. Funeral's gonna be ripe with fights and dirty laundry, gonna  
make for some great soundbites.

BLAKE frowns, setting aside her laptop.

BLAKE  
I'm not a tabloid writer, Jeff.

JEFF (O.S.)  
You're the best writer we have. You just need to write about something interest-  
ing, for once. God knows it would pay you better.

BLAKE  
I'm sorry, but scandalizing a dead man isn't that interesting to me.

JEFF (O.S.)  
Get that stick out of your ass, Dean. Four PM. I'll send a photographer.

BLAKE stares at MELISSA's door.

JEFF (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Alright?

BLAKE  
Four PM, okay.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE DEAN APARTMENT — AFTERNOON

BLAKE hops on one foot as she shoves on her shoes, now dressed in black formal wear.

BLAKE

Bye, Melissa. I'm going to a — uh — work thing. Won't be back until late. There's still some soup in the fridge, I think.

CUT TO:

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM — AFTERNOON

MELISSA is watching a Good Horror music video turned up to maximum volume. Still sobbing.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE DEAN APARTMENT — AFTERNOON

BLAKE

(sarcastically)

Love you, too.

CUT TO:

INT. ASTER'S CONVERTIBLE — AFTERNOON, SUNNY

TIN SUMMERS (short for Christian, 39, ex-lead guitarist of Good Horror, has clothes and a haircut like a suburban preacher and lives off past record sales) sits in the passenger seat of an open convertible, stuck in traffic. ASTER MCKEE (late 30s, ex-singer and rhythm guitarist of Good Horror, dressed formally for the funeral but clearly more of an unkempt guy with long hair, tattoos, and scruffy facial hair) sits in the driver's seat. TIN squints at the sunlight.

TIN

Got any sunglasses?

ASTER presses a button, opening a container inside the car.

TIN (CONT'D)

Thanks.

TIN looks at the pair of small, pink Hello Kitty sunglasses.

ASTER

They match your eyes.

TIN puts them on. Better than nothing.

TIN

How old are the girls now?

ASTER

Halo's three, and Dawn's coming up on five.

TIN

God, they grow up so fast.

ASTER

How about Abbie?

TIN

She's twelve. Goes by Abigail now.

ASTER

Oh, boy.

TIN

Yeah. She was too embarrassed to drive with me, went with Hunter and her kids instead.

ASTER

To be fair, Hunter's minivan runs, unlike your serial killer-ass truck.

TIN

It was working fine this morning! I don't know why it decided to break down at the funeral home.

ASTER

Maybe it wanted to get you and me in my car, alone.

TIN frowns at ASTER from behind the Hello Kitty sunglasses.

TIN

Where are your kids?

ASTER

Their mom's. She thought they were too young for a funeral.

TIN  
(surprised)  
You're separated?

ASTER  
Few months ago.

TIN  
Damn.

ASTER  
Yep.

ASTER drums on the steering wheel, clearly uncomfortable talking about it.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
Anyway, where's your chick? Haven't seen her in ages.

TIN  
Marla's dead.

Beat.

ASTER  
Oh, jeez.

TIN shrugs.

TIN  
Happens.

ASTER  
...How?

TIN  
Aneurysm. Three years ago. It was quick.

ASTER  
I'm sorry.

TIN  
Yeah.

They sit with that in silence for a second. It's awkward. ASTER opens his mouth



to speak, but is interrupted by a woman in the car in front of them: FANGIRL 1 (twenty-something, wearing Good Horror merch).

FANGIRL 1  
Holy shit — is that Aster McKee?

FANGIRL 2 (same age, same clothes) cranes her neck out the window.

FANGIRL 2  
What?! Where?

FANGIRL 1  
There — the car behind us!

TIN shrinks back in his seat.

TIN  
Shit. Not now.

ASTER eats up the attention, waving, blowing kisses, etc.

What? It's just fans.

TIN  
They hate me.

ASTER  
Come on. No one blames you for the breakup, anymore.

TIN  
You should see the blogs.

ASTER  
Why are you reading fan blogs?

TIN  
I get bored.

ASTER  
Well if you're bored right now, want to give them a show?

TIN  
Wh —

ASTER leans in and kisses him, quick. TIN pushes him away.

TIN (CONT'D)

What the hell?

ASTER

Not like we haven't done worse, in front of bigger audiences.

TIN

That's different. It was the 2010s. I'm not —

FANGIRL 1 jumps out of her car and approaches ASTER's side of the convertible.

TIN

(whispering) (CONT'D)

Oh god put the roof up Aster put it up put it up oh shit —

FANGIRL 1 and FANGIRL 2 reach the car. ASTER leans out of his window.

FANGIRL 2

Oh my god! Hi!

ASTER

Hey. How's it going?

FANGIRL 1

So, so good! I mean — obviously not, but — y'know?

TIN

You do realize you're standing in the middle of the road.

FANGIRL 1

Jeez, it's not like traffic is going anywhere.

TIN

Wonder whose fault that is?

ASTER

I think what our favorite guitarist is trying to say is that maybe right now isn't the best time. If you give me your emails, I'd be fine to talk with you later.

FANGIRL 1

Oh — sure. Here...

They type their emails into the phone ASTER hands them. TIN watches as long as he can, before snapping.

TIN

Our best friend just died. Just go.

FANGIRL 1 and FANGIRL 2 back away toward their car, a bit red in the face.

FANGIRL 2

He's just as much of a dick as they say.

TIN sighs. ASTER rolls up the roof.

ASTER

Sorry.

TIN

Not your fault. Unless you started that stupid rumor about the breakup.

ASTER

(under his breath)

Not much of a rumor.

TIN

What?

ASTER

Nothin'.

TIN

Look, I'm not arguing with you today. Shawn's dead. Let's just get this over with.

ASTER

So you can ignore me for another five years?

The car in front of them moves. ASTER shifts the car back into drive.

ASTER (CONT'D)

I'll be good if you are.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY — AFTERNOON

The casket is poised above the hole in the ground, covered in a variety of flowers. A PREACHER gives a speech in front a large tent. The seats under the tent are filled, the front row seating Shawn's WIFE, three KIDS, PARENTS, and sister HUNTER CARILLO (mid 30s, ex-bassist for Good Horror, adopted sister of Shawn, dressed in a sharp black suit and sunglasses, under which she's crying) and her husband and two kids, and Tin's daughter ABIGAIL (12 year old girl, old soul solemn expression). About a hundred other people stand nearby. Among them are BLAKE and GEORGIA (40s, photographer, bored expression) with SHAWN and ASTER.

GEORGIA yawns.

GEORGIA

So much for scandal and intrigue.

BLAKE

Shut up.

PREACHER

— and as Billy Joel said, “Only the good die young.” Looking at the life Shawn Ellis led, this is surely true.

TIN

(whispering)

Why'd he have to open his burial to the public?

ASTER

(whispering)

I think it's kinda sweet. It's just like him.

A nearby FAN shushes them. TIN frowns, but ASTER grabs his hand to stop his retaliation.

ASTER (CONT'D)

Ignore them. For Shawn.

TIN

(whispering)

I just wish —

A flash goes off. TIN and ASTER turn to look at GEORGIA, who still has her camera up. ASTER drops TIN's hand.

TIN (CONT'D)  
Are you kidding me?

ASTER  
Leave it.

PREACHER  
“Seasons don’t fear the reaper, nor do the wind, the sun — ”

TIN  
I can’t go to a goddamn funeral without ending up on the front page?

GEORGIA steps back, startled.

GEORGIA  
I — I’m sorry —

TIN  
Well, gosh, that makes it all better. I’m so sick of this. It’s like you think I signed my soul away. I’m still a goddamn human. I shouldn’t have to give up everything for people I don’t even know. I shouldn’t be afraid to go to a goddamn grocery store. I should be able to fucking mourn in peace because jesus christ, that’s my best friend in that box —

ASTER grabs TIN’s arm.

ASTER  
The kids.

TIN  
What — ?

ASTER  
You’re scaring the kids.

TIN stops to look at SHAWN’s and HUNTER’s kids, who are crying or close to it, then at his own kid. ABIGAIL shakes her head as if embarrassed and disappointed, then comforts the kid sitting beside her.

TIN  
I’m —

Everyone is staring at TIN. A few other photographers have their phones or cameras out. TIN turns on his heel and leaves. ASTER calls out after him.

ASTER

Running away. Just like always.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY — EVENING, AFTER THE FUNERAL

BLAKE corners GEORGIA outside the gates. GEORGIA smokes a cigarette, now unbothered.

BLAKE

Jesus, Georgia. Nice going out there.

GEORGIA

Not my fault that rich guy's an asshole.

BLAKE

The article doesn't need new photos. We still have some from past concerts and shit. This was completely avoidable —

GEORGIA

If you want another boring-ass article.

BLAKE

It's a funeral. It's not supposed to be a headline.

GEORGIA stomps out her cigarette, finally facing BLAKE.

GEORGIA

Listen, I know you've got some sort of complex or whatever.

BLAKE

B —

GEORGIA

That's for your therapist to figure out. Me, I have to get paid. And if I have to exaggerate some washed-up millionaire's gay affair to get rent money, I will.

BLAKE

It's not right. All people are entitled to privacy.

GEORGIA

Your sister — she'll be thinking about college in a few years, right? Might be nice to give her a chance at a degree.

BLAKE thinks it over, but stands firm.

BLAKE

I'm not using the picture in my article.

GEORGIA shrugs.

GEORGIA

Suit yourself. There are ten other writers in the office who will.

BLAKE sighs then walks to her car. A few yards away at the cemetery gate, ASTER watches with interest. He pulls out his phone and starts typing.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE DEAN APARTMENT — NIGHT

BLAKE kicks off her shoes, mood dampened as she looks around the bare apartment. Takeout bag in hand, she knocks on MELISSA's door. A sad Good Horror ballad plays inside.

BLAKE

I'm home. Brought some Thai, if you didn't want the soup.

MELISSA doesn't answer. The song ends, and BLAKE looks up hopefully, but moments later the same song starts playing again, louder.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Okay. Good night, love you.

CUT TO:

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM — NIGHT

MELISSA glares at the door, then turns back to her phone where the lyrics for the song are pulled up. She's not crying anymore, but her eyes are red as she traces each word as it plays on the screen with her chipped black fingernails. At a lyric about standing up for yourself/doing what you need to do despite the disapproval of others, her face hardens. She pulls up a blocked contact labeled MOTHER and unblocks it. The music swells as she starts tapping out a text.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE DEAN APARTMENT — NIGHT

Just as BLAKE settles down and starts eating her Thai food, her phone vibrates again, another call from JEFF WORK.

BLAKE  
Dammit.

She clicks the answer call button.

BLAKE (CONT'D)  
Hello?

JEFF  
I don't know what you did today, but —

BLAKE  
If this is about Georgia, she was totally in the wrong and —

JEFF  
You got a book deal.

BLAKE knocks over her takeout in surprise.

CUT TO:

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM — MORNING, A FEW DAYS LATER

Sun streams in through the window. The room is empty, the closet open with a few bare hangers on the ground. One of the larger posters is missing, evident by the tape left behind on the wall.

BLAKE (O.S.)  
Bye, Melissa. I've got a big, big work thing. I'll be back late. There's fifteen dollars on the counter, get yourself some pizza.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ASTER'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT — DAY

BLAKE stands in a well-lit hallway, one hand poised to knock, the other holding a worn briefcase. She's wearing very stiff, formal clothes, hair pulled back in a bun so tight it must hurt. Her hand shakes.

BLAKE  
Don't be a dumbass.



She knocks, sharp and loud.

ASTER (O.S.)

One sec, I'll be there in — ugh, sorry...

ASTER opens the door wearing pajama pants and a holey 90s rock band t-shirt, his hair a mess.

ASTER (CONT'D)

Hi, you're the writer, right?

BLAKE holds out her hand to shake.

BLAKE

Blake Dean. Nice to meet you, Mr. McKee.

ASTER

God, I haven't been called Mr. McKee since boarding school. Aster is fine.

ASTER shakes her hand and leads her inside.

CUT TO:

INT. ASTER'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT — DAY

The apartment is very lived in, cluttered with music paraphernalia and kid's toys. An orange couch in the living room sits two kids, HALO (3) and DAWN (5) watching a classic 80s slasher movie. The kids stare at BLAKE as she walks in. ASTER leads BLAKE to the dining room table in the next room, where a space has been cleared in the mess of papers (a mix of legal documents and lyrics).

ASTER

Sorry about having to change locations with short notice. I don't usually hand out my address to strangers, I promise, ha. My wife — ex-wife, crap — she won't babysit the kids until the divorce is finalized, and I didn't want to bring the kids to an office and this is all so sudden I didn't have time to find another babysitter who wouldn't be weird —

BLAKE

It's fine. I'm just stoked to be here.

ASTER

Oh, for sure, I expected you to be a fan of sorts —

BLAKE (CONT'D)

This is such a big job opportunity. I've never

BLAKE (CONT'D)  
Fan? Hell no, I hate Good Horror.

ASTER laughs.

BLAKE (CONT'D)  
Oh my god. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean—

ASTER  
No, that was my bad. I shouldn't have assumed.

BLAKE  
My little sister really likes your band, if that helps.

At the table, BLAKE sits and starts unpacking her briefcase, pulling out papers, pens, her laptop, and a tape recorder.

ASTER sits beside her.

ASTER  
I'm honestly relieved. Not being a fan makes you more objective.

BLAKE  
I guess, if that's what you want.

ASTER  
I wanted someone to write impartially. God, there's a hundred thousand people out there who would dig for scandal or push their own interpretations on me, but I want this to be on my terms, you know?

BLAKE nods.

BLAKE  
I get that.

ASTER  
So. How does this work?

BLAKE  
Well, what do you want the book to focus on? Past? Present? The band? Your life before the band? Your political views?

ASTER

Um...

BLAKE

Okay. We can figure the details out later. For now, how about you tell me how Good Horror started?

BLAKE turns on the tape recorder.

CUT TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK: INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MUSIC ROOM — NIGHT

A much younger ASTER, wearing a collared shirt and khakis with a neat, short haircut and tons of tattoos, walks up to a music practice room, guitar case in hand.

ASTER

Excuse me.

Leaning against the locked door is a much younger TIN, dressed like a raging punk with bright dyed orange hair and a dozen piercings. At his feet is another guitar case.

TIN

You're excused.

ASTER

This is my band's practice room, so could you leave?

TIN pushes off from the door and crosses his arms.

TIN

Well, buddy, you've got the wrong room, because my band is practicing here in five minutes.

ASTER checks the text on his flip phone, then looks at the room number.

ASTER

Nope, I was right. This is my room. I suggest you move.

TIN falls back against the door.

TIN

I'm not moving a goddamn inch.

ASTER

Move.

TIN

Make me.

SHAWN ELLIS (28 at the time, about to become the drummer for Good Horror, tall and strong, full of life, bright smiles, and whimsically curly hair) steps between them.

SHAWN

Hey guys! What's up?

TIN

Thank god, Shawn! Tell this twink it's our room next.

SHAWN's eyes pop out. ASTER turns to him.

ASTER

You know this asshole?!

SHAWN forces a smile, dropping one hand on both of their shoulders.

SHAWN

Aster, this is Christian, our boneheaded guitarist. Christian, this is Aster. The vocalist who's so kindly helping us out since Farrad left us for law school.

TIN's face drops.

TIN

Oh, shit.

ASTER

"Oh, shit," is right. And what kind of name is Christian? You play for a punk band, not an evangelical choir.

TIN

I didn't pick it. What the hell kind of name is Aster?

ASTER pushes his hair back, a practiced motion.

ASTER

It's short for Astrophel. Means star, like the one I was born to be.

TIN turns to SHAWN.

TIN

I have to work with him?

ASTER

You're no peach either, Tin.

TIN

Don't call me that.

HUNTER

You're so stuck with it, Tin.

HUNTER walks up to them, the most starkly different between now and then. Here, her hair is dyed purple and flat ironed into fringe, her clothes are striped and ripped, and she's smoking a joint.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

What'd I miss?

SHAWN

(to ASTER)

Hunter. Our bassist, my sister.

HUNTER takes a hit.

HUNTER

His parents kidnapped me as a child.

SHAWN takes the joint from her.

SHAWN

Adopted, Hunter.

HUNTER

Hey!

SHAWN

What did I say about smoking in the music room?

HUNTER  
Only during jazz?

SHAWN  
Exactly.

SHAWN puts out the joint.

HUNTER  
Jerk. So who's the twink?

ASTER  
I'm not a goddamn twink!

TIN and HUNTER laugh as ASTER fumes. SHAWN's smile strains.

SHAWN  
Great! You've all met each other now. And this is going to go great.

CUT TO:

INT. ASTER'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT — DAY

BLAKE clicks off the tape recorder.

BLAKE  
I think that's a good start for today. Take a break.

ASTER's crying a little. He didn't realize.

ASTER  
Shit.

He sniffs. Wipes his eyes.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
Sorry. Guess it's a little too soon.

BLAKE  
You're good. Just start thinking which anecdotes you'd like to focus on, what kind of story you want to tell. I'll type this out and do some research, and we can try again in a few days. Sound good?

ASTER

That sounds perfect.

BLAKE

Alright, email me a time and date when you're ready.

They head back towards the door. HALO and DAWN are asleep, and the movie's credits are playing.

ASTER

Thanks. For not being weird about any of this.

BLAKE (surprised)

Of course.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE DEAN APARTMENT — NIGHT

BLAKE takes off her shoes, exhausted but smiling. She goes to the worn couch and opens her laptop to start research right away, not noticing the fifteen dollars still on the counter, untouched.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE DEAN APARTMENT — MORNING, DAYS LATER

BLAKE knocks at MELISSA's door holding a plate of toaster waffles, half dressed for work, obviously mid-getting ready.

BLAKE

It's been a week since you've stepped out of that goddamn room. Seriously. You need to eat something. I don't care what celebrity died today.

She waits for a response. Nothing.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Come on. I have a work thing in half an hour. Big project. Gonna make us rich.

Still silent.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

I'm coming in.

She barges in.

CUT TO:

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM — MORNING

The room is just as empty as before, albeit a little more dusty. There's a note on her desk that says "Don't come after me." BLAKE drops the food on the desk and reads the note.

BLAKE

Oh my god. Oh my god.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM AT THE OFFICE — DAY

BLAKE's ears are buzzing. Whatever ASTER is saying is muffled. Her hair is a mess, and her shirt is buttoned up wrong.

BLAKE

Sorry, could you repeat that?

ASTER

I was just talking about that thing Tin does on sta— hey, are you okay?

BLAKE shakes herself. Focuses.

BLAKE

Yeah. I'm sorry.

ASTER waits for her to continue.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

It's just been a rough morning, my sister kind of ran away —

ASTER

What?! Why the hell are you at work?

BLAKE

I — we had an appointment?

ASTER stands.



ASTER

And we can obviously reschedule. Do you need a ride to the police station?

BLAKE

No.

ASTER

So you've already filed a missing person case?

BLAKE

No, I —

She looks around, but there's no one lingering near the conference room.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

I don't need Melissa to get in any more legal trouble. She's got suspended from school again last month, and she's a step away from getting expelled.

ASTER

Nobody's arresting a kid for running away.

BLAKE

I know, but I just became her legal guardian a year ago, and she hasn't taken the transition well. She's probably going back to Mom's place.

ASTER

Okay. That's, what, a few miles away?

BLAKE

Mom's in California.

ASTER

Ohhh...

BLAKE

So Melissa may not be following every law to get there. She doesn't exactly have a car, or bus money.

ASTER

Uh-huh. Got it.

BLAKE

And I really don't want this to go to court again, because I have no idea if she'd choose me again.

ASTER  
Okay. No cops, got it.

ASTER's phone rings.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
Shit. Is it okay if I — ?

BLAKE  
No, yeah. Go ahead.

ASTER stands and answers the phone. BLAKE turns to her laptop.

ASTER  
Hello?

He pauses.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
Chicago police?!

BLAKE and ASTER meet eyes.

BLAKE  
(whispering)  
Did you call — oh my god, please don't say anything —

ASTER  
(CONT'D, whispering)  
I swear I didn't call them! They called  
me! I'm not going to snitch, I promise—

ASTER cuts off, now serious.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
What do you mean, desecrated?

Pause.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
Huh. Okay. Let me know what you find out. Thanks. Bye.

BLAKE  
Everything okay?

ASTER sighs and sits down heavily.

ASTER  
Someone dug up Shawn's grave. Took his body.

BLAKE  
Oh shit.

ASTER  
Yeah.

BLAKE  
(realizing)  
Oh, shit.

ASTER  
What?

BLAKE  
Nothing. Just — did they say when it happened?

ASTER  
About a week ago.

BLAKE  
I haven't seen Melissa in a week.

ASTER pauses, laughs.

ASTER  
Sure. Grave robbing, the latest teen fad.

BLAKE  
She's obsessed with Good Horror. One time I cleaned her room and accidentally swept up a bit of confetti she'd bought off eBay that was allegedly from one of your shows, and she wouldn't talk to me for a month. And the reason I had to become her legal guardian was — our mom was into some messed up shit. So whatever morals Melissa managed to inherit are probably a bit twisted.

ASTER sits.

ASTER  
Oh my god. You're serious.

BLAKE  
I don't want to jump to conclusions, but the timing fits.

ASTER  
Let me help.

BLAKE  
What?

ASTER  
To find her. And maybe Shawn. Maybe me and Hunter and Tin can talk her down, band to fan. Plus, I can bribe the cops to keep her out of jail.

BLAKE  
No. I can handle this, it's just family drama. Last thing she needs is to learn acting out gets her what she wants.

ASTER  
From the way you talk, she sounds troubled —

BLAKE  
And I'm her guardian, so it's my job to help her.

ASTER  
(gently)  
I know. But I'm not asking. This involves me too, if she really did...

BLAKE sighs, dropping her head in her hands.

BLAKE  
Fine.

ASTER stands, gathering his things.

ASTER  
Got it. If you're free now, we can go grab Hunter. She needs to know — it's her brother.

*Title of piece*

BLAKE stands, too.

BLAKE  
Okay. And, thanks. For not being weird.

ASTER smiles.

ASTER  
Anytime.