

CHAPTER 29 (Early Draft) - Rosie's House

Erin and Rosie

"There's something wrong with my life when even my parents are going to a fun costume party and I'm not." I sat next to Rosie on our couch. The room smelled of popcorn and chocolate from sundaes. We were watching Rosie's Twilight Zone DVDs. Every five minutes the doorbell would ring and we'd jump up and toss candy at people.

"We could have gone to the rec center," Rosie said.

"I said a *fun* costume party." I reached for a handful of popcorn.

"My name is Talky Tina," Rosie said in a high, robotic voice. "And there is definitely something wrong with you."

I laughed. We'd just watched an episode called, "Living Doll," about a doll that came to life and basically caused the mean stepdad in the show to die. "Yeah, well, my name isn't Talky Tina and there's something wrong with you, too."

As time passed, the time between doorbell rings got longer and longer. When it rang in the middle of a tense Twilight Zone scene, both of us jumped.

"Geez that scared me," Rosie said, brushing popcorn off her shirt.

I glanced at the clock. It was almost 9:30. "It's got to be older kids," I said. "Come with me."

We got up and I squinted through the peephole. I couldn't see anyone. Maybe they were playing Doorbell Ditch.

"Just open it," Rosie said, standing so she'd be hidden behind the door when it opened.

"Trick or treat," Reede said when I opened the door. She was clutching a pillow case but didn't have it open for treats. "Got any beer?" She was dressed like a gypsy--a gypsy who

thought she was in Hawaii, not Denver, Colorado in October, where it was about thirty degrees with flakes of snow sifting down from the sky.

“No,” I said automatically.

“Gee, you're no fun, Erin Swift.” She pouted and her lipstick seemed even redder. She balanced on the doorstep and peered behind. “Chris isn't home, is he?”

I heard Rosie snort behind the door. “No,” I said. “He's at a party *with his girlfriend.*” Did she really think Chris would be here and if he was, that he'd hang out with her or something?

“Um. Do you want to come in?”

“I guess.”

I opened the door wider and she stepped inside.

“God, it feels good in here.” She walked to the kitchen and dropped the pillowcase next to the island. “The party I was at was a bust. You know. A bunch of babies.” She picked up an apple from our fruit bowl and took a bite. A bright red lipstick ring surrounded the white apple flesh.

Rosie walked up beside here.

“Whoa. Where'd you come from?”

“Behind the door,” Rosie said, looking Reede up and down. “So you came here to see Chris? Isn't he a little old for you?”

Reede stopped in mid crunch. “What's your last name?”

“Velarde.”

“Okay, Velarde,” Reede said, “props for telling it like it is. No, I didn't just come over to see Chris, though that would have been a nice bonus. I also like to hang with Swift.”

I couldn't help feeling pleased, even if I wasn't totally convinced she was telling the truth.

“And no, he isn't too old for me,” Reede continued. “I'm mature for my age. Or so my shrink tells me.”

Rosie raised her eyebrows. “Just because you're mature for your age, doesn't mean you should be going out with a junior in high school.”

“But don't you think the guys at Molly Brown are immature?” Reede said, leaning against the counter. “All they care about is shoving each other in the hall and seeing who can spit the farthest across the cafeteria. God.”

“They're not all like that,” Rosie said.

Reede rolled her eyes. “Whatever you say.”

“I wish it was whatever I said.”

Reede laughed. “I hear that.”

“How'd you get here?” Rosie asked.

Reede shrugged. “Walked. The party wasn't far from here.” She finished the apple and tossed it into the sink. “So, what were you doing for fun before I showed up?”

“Watching Twilight Zone,” I said.

“You like the Zone?” Rosie asked.

“It's okay,” Reede said. “But why don't we watch something else? You got digital cable or satellite?”

We spent the next hour flipping around to stupid channels I would never watch. Rosie got picked up at 10:00 and then it was just Reede and me.

“Where's Chris's room?”

I wrinkled my nose. “Why?”

“Just wondered.” She grinned suddenly, flashing white teeth. The lipstick was almost completely off her lips now and her makeup was smeared. Suddenly she looked like a little kid.

“Wouldn't it be funny if I was in his room when he got home?”

“No,” I said. “Especially if Lisa is with him.” Or my parents came home first, I thought, but didn't say.

“The girlfriend,” Reede said.

I nodded. “So, do you want to call your parents to come get you?” I started for the portable phone.

“Nah. I'm getting a ride from the party.” She glanced up at the clock. “I guess I'd better get back.”

I walked her to the front door. “Well, thanks for stopping by.”

“Yep.” She waved a hand as she stepped out into the cold.

“You want to borrow a jacket?”

“Nah,” she said. “Ruins the effect.”

I watched her huddle against the cold, walking down the sidewalk with her arms clutched to her chest.

It wasn't until I closed the door and went back to the kitchen that I saw she'd left her pillowcase. I grabbed it and ran outside, looking both ways down the street.

She was gone.

As I trudged back onto the porch, I lifted the bag under the porch light. It was kind of heavy; she must have gotten a ton of candy. I opened it up.

Inside were a pair of basic jeans, a plain pink sweatshirt, and a bra.