

CRAWLSPACEBLOG

by
Rebecca Kane

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Cast of Characters

CLAIRE: Woman, late 20s to mid 30s
JENNA: Woman, late 20s to late 30s
STOOPKID01: A voice, any gender
BRAD: Man, late 20s to late 40s

Setting:

Claire's house in the middle of some forest in Connecticut.

Time:

Modern day, autumn.

SYNOPSIS:

By day, Claire is the superhost of a hip Airbnb for budding writers in a beautiful forest. Then as you're getting ready for bed that night, she'll watch you in your most private, mundane moments, and she'll tell the world all about every little detail on her blog. Claire is content just creeping until she gets a special new guest whose unexpected bond with her may threaten more than just her livelihood and her weird little nighttime hobby.

CONTENT WARNING:

This play contains brief moments of blood, injury, and violence.

SCENE 1

[CLAIRE introduces her blog as old posts are spoken in recording. When she describes her guests, they move in shadow, and when they're not seen, instead of freezing, they sort of fade away.]

CLAIRE:

Before you read any more of this blog, I want you to keep something in mind. Above all, you and I, in the end, are not so different.

Have you ever been at a friend's house for a dinner party and took a quick peek in the medicine cabinet? Did you pretend you were getting a headache, then not bother to take one of the Advils?

CLAIRE [RECORDING]:

Jane Doe #1.

My renter this week is a woman I'd say is 45 or so. A novelist with an advance she won't shut up about. I was expecting her to be one of those women with a nightie and a robe, maybe a matching one. Instead it looks like one of those pajama sets from Target - the matching shorts and shirt that looks so cloyingly soft, I can practically feel it from here, from far up above her.

She put something on her face, probably some kind of anti-aging cream. Couldn't see the label from where I sat but it doesn't look too expensive. Guess the advance was only so big after all.

She answered some kind of phone call that was over before I could figure out what it was about. Lots of clipped answers, husband or agent or something.

After the call, she went to bed. She brought over a novel with a bunch of tabs in it. I'll give her this - she knew when she was ready for bed. She closed that book, turned out the light, and was snoring in three minutes.

It must be nice to be her.

CLAIRE:

Have you ever been waiting patiently in the restaurant while your date was in the bathroom, and when their phone glowed and vibrated the table, did you wonder in the back of your head if you had time to take a peek and see who was texting before she made it back to the table? When she got back, and you asked who had texted, did you wonder if she was lying, no matter what she said?

John Doe #3

This man failed to cover his surprise that I said I'd never heard of his bestselling debut, or the fellowships, plural, that came before it. I'd heard of them. I just wanted to see his reaction.

By the time I made my way upstairs to watch him go to bed, he was already naked in the room. He unpacked the rest of his stuff naked. He ran his fingers along the top of the dresser to check for dust, yes, still naked.

I don't understand people who sleep completely naked. What are you going to do in an emergency? What do you think is there to cover you up? Your fellowship?

I can practically hear you objecting, Well, some people sleep with their clothes right next to do the bed. If the fire alarm goes off, if a bomb hits nearby, if a tree falls in the room, will you remember your clothes are right there? Or will you run for cover first?

What am I supposed to do if we hide in the basement together, and I have to pretend to be surprised by your naked body?

CLAIRE:

At the doctor's office, ever wanted to take a quick look in the trash, that biohazard bin, even if it would put you at risk, just to see what had transpired that day? Who had a worse time than you?

CLAIRE [RECORDING]:

Jane Doe #7

There was almost nothing remarkable about this woman until the very end.

She seemed normal enough when we chatted in the kitchen; she's pleasant, I'd even say witty. A lot of questions about laundry. She's writing a screenplay, got some sort of grant.

It was so straightforward the way she went into her room, unpacked a few things, then went to the bathroom with her toothbrush, came back after a few minutes with her hair up and a glass of water, adjusted the curtains a bit, got a book out, and crawled into the bed. I was just about ready to call the night a wash - the first time I ever had that feeling.

Then she puts the book down after a few minutes, taps her phone a couple times, puts it down, and bursts into tears.

She's fully sobbing for at least two minute straight. Then this alarm on her phone goes off and she stops. Like someone slammed the brakes. She blows her nose in a tissue she had hiding somewhere, drinks some water, and opens her book again. Like nothing ever happened.

CLAIRE:

You're here because I do what you've always wanted to do. I find what you always dreamed of finding. I'm going to do more than open the medicine cabinet.

[Time passes. A post:]

[The sound of an email notification.

Claire, lit up by her phone, reads the notification. It says:]

What the fuck kind of freak bitch are you writing about people like this? They deserve privacy. Kill yourself.

SCENE 2

[Lights transition to a lovely house in the woods at night. Claire walks down a hallway, turning off lights behind her as she goes. She wears loungewear that's really just pajamas.]

She waits outside the guest room for a moment, staying silent, listening through the door. Nothing. So she heads toward her room, when JENNA suddenly opens the guest room door. Claire makes a startled noise. Jenna makes one in return, louder, only in sympathy, really.]

JENNA:

Oh my gosh Claire I'm SO sorry!

CLAIRE:

It's fine, I just thought—hi!

JENNA:

Hi, how's it going?

CLAIRE:

Oh, I'm great, how are you enjoying the room?

JENNA:

It's PERFECT it's everything I ever wanted. Seriously. Your house is so beautiful I can barely stand it.

CLAIRE:

Thank you?

JENNA:

But listen, I was wondering, do you have a towel I could use for my hair?

CLAIRE:

Sure. I should have gotten you one already. My bad.

JENNA:

You definitely did, I just like to use another one for my hair whenever possible. Help me, I'm needy! [*Claire finds one right away.*] Holy shit, you're the best, that took you like no time.

CLAIRE:

We have a lot of extras in that closet. If you need anything at all, please, help yourself. Especially the blankets—I gave you that wooly one but it we're hitting that time of year—it just gets cold out of nowhere.

JENNA:

Right, ohmygod, we're right in the middle of Libra season. Such a nice time of year. When's your birthday, Claire?

CLAIRE:

October 21st.

JENNA:

It's coming up! You're a Libra! I knew I liked you!

CLAIRE:

Thanks, that's, when's yours? When your birthday?

JENNA:

August 1st. I'm a Leo. Is it not obvious?

CLAIRE:

I don't like to assume things about people.

JENNA:

I love that. Ohmygod and the way you just SAY it. Like who even just comes out and says that stuff anymore?

CLAIRE:

What stuff?

JENNA:

You know, the truth.

CLAIRE:

Thank you again.

JENNA:

Anytime, girl, anytime. Hey, do you know anything about the hiking trails around here?

CLAIRE:

I don't take them myself - bad ankles - but I have some maps if you're interested and I've had quite a few renters who took to the trails and loved them. No problems yet.

JENNA:

God I'm pumped

CLAIRE:

I'll get those for you.

JENNA:

Oh, don't rush.

CLAIRE:

Anything else?

JENNA:

Nah. I'll just go down and get myself some tea in a sec.

CLAIRE:

Have a good night.

JENNA:

You bet I will!

[Claire leaves her alone. Both women's next sets of actions happen simultaneously.]

Jenna looks around the room, sighs in contentment, maybe pushes a couple things around to her liking or unpacks her suitcase a little. When it suits her, she gets up and goes down to the kitchen. We hear the sound of her making quick work of getting her tea and heading quickly back to the room.

Claire goes to her own room and settles it a bit - anything like pulling at the bedsheets, adjusting curtains, plugging her phone in to charge.

Every time she goes up to her crawlspace, here is the routine she must follow first:

She goes into her closet and gets out a ladder. She sets it up just under a piece of framed art, something incredibly generic, probably that Le Chat Noir poster. She takes it off and sets it on the ground, revealing a little door on the wall for a hole just about the size of her body. She pulls herself inside and crawls in a little tunnel-like attic area, until she is seated above the guest room Jenna is in, looking in through what looks like on the other side a heating or air vent.

When Claire speaks, she's in a blueish glow, as if sitting in front of her laptop. If she mentions a specific action, Jenna performs it in real time.]

CLAIRE:

April 28th, 2019. Jane Doe #12.

I realize now I know exactly how long it takes people like her to make a cup of tea. I'm all settled in just as she's putting it on her end table. She spills a little on her hand because I can see from here it's practically overflowing. I wait to see if she's going to get up and ask me for a band-aid. Nope. She just grabs a towel and blows on it. Can't be that bad. Barely stopped her for a minute. She's back into her little nighttime routine, with her little nighttime skincare gadgets, her little nighttime lingerie, and her little nighttime journal.

What do you think it's like, to be so sure of yourself that you just live your life this way? You wear matching bras and panties wherever you go. You have a schedule you follow each night, even in an unfamiliar place, before you fall asleep right away, to a white noise app you pay 3.99 a month for.

I wonder what someone like her writes about in that journal. Her follower count? Her monthly cycle? Or maybe something that I would never expect. Maybe she's writing the next Harry Potter series.

I'm not the biggest Harry Potter person myself. Probably comes as a bit of a shock to you. The girl in the attic feels no bond with the boy under the stairs.

If you were wondering what color they were, they're dark red. Almost like a maroon. I bet guys love to see it when they fuck her. They take off her clothes and there she is, practically in gift wrap. All that's missing is the bow.

I know her type. The influencer. I bet she has a vibrator in that suitcase somewhere. It was recommended by Cosmopolitan. She'll make a post about it that says "#ad" at the end. I bet it's also maroon. I'll keep you posted.

Don't forget, guys, if you comment hate, you'll just get deleted and blocked, so don't bother. If you don't like my blog, just keep it moving.

[By now, Jenna is asleep in bed and Claire has moved back down to her bedroom, with the silence and ease of someone very well-versed in creeping along these small spaces. By the end of her speech, Claire has been sitting on her bed, typing into her laptop. When she finishes the post, she starts watching a TV show on her computer. Probably The Office.

Her computer or phone make the noise of her getting some sort of message. She braces herself before pausing the show and opening the message.

We don't ever see who is sending these messages, but we hear the voice.]

MESSAGE FROM STOOPKID_01:

Hey. Longtime fan of the blog. Another great post tonight. I can see every little detail. I feel like I'm right there with you. It's crazy how strong of a writer you are, and you're spending your time entertaining us with these posts instead of writing the next great American novel. And no, I don't mean Harry Potter.

[She's so surprised she doesn't really know what to do, and is too drawn to the message to go back to her show. After some visible

waffling, she sends her own message, reading it to herself as she goes along.]

CLAIRE:

Wow, this is such a welcome change from the usual comments telling me I'm a creep who needs to get a life or kill myself. Or the guys offering cash for nude pics of my guests. I knew there were people like you reading this blog for real, or the hit count wouldn't climb every week. I wish they all had half the guts you did so I could interact with them. I'm really not so scary or weird once you get to know me.

[He messages back before she can even get back to her show.]

STOOPKID_01:

You're not scary at all. You're one of the coolest people I've talked to on Reddit. Sorry you get messages like that, you don't deserve it. Keep doing what you're doing. Don't listen to the hypocrites.

[She looks satisfied as she settles into bed, watching her show. She falls asleep.

Above her, the crawlspace seems to glow, a pale blue light, similar to her laptop.

After a while, a nightmare starts to take over. It's mostly made up of the shadowy figures from before - the Jane and John Does.

One of them gets too close. Still half in dream world, Claire whips something from her nightstand at the figure and turns the lights on. Nothing is there.

Sufficiently startled awake, she retreats back to her computer, her show, and the bluish light.]

SCENE 3

[Eventually, CLAIRE hears the sounds of JENNA in the kitchen making coffee. She gets up to join her with no enthusiasm.]

JENNA:

Do you want some coffee? I seriously shouldn't drink a whole pot.

CLAIRE:

Sure.

JENNA:

How do you like it?

CLAIRE:

I'll get it.

JENNA:

I wish I was one of those people who could drink it black. I bet it's better for you.

CLAIRE:

Hard on the stomach, I think.

JENNA:

Oh yeah. That's so true. Stomach acid, I like didn't even think of all that. Also I just put in like a splash of creamer. How bad can that be, really? I wonder how much I drink over a year. Like one or two full gallon's worth? Or however much is in one of those things?

CLAIRE:

A gallon a year doesn't sound too bad.

[Claire is clearly on her way out.]

JENNA *[quickly]*:

Hey how did you get this cool house out in the woods anyway?

[Claire does not want to stay and chat but senses that if she doesn't, Jenna might crack.]

CLAIRE:

I inherited it from my grandma. It was supposed to go to my parents, but they also passed.

JENNA:

Wow, holy shit, both of them? That's so terrible. How did it happen? Can I ask? If not that's cool with me

CLAIRE:

They just both got sick. Around the same time. Bad luck.

JENNA:

That sounds rough.

CLAIRE:

It was rough to watch.

JENNA:

When did that happen?

CLAIRE:

When I was in college.

JENNA:

Wow holy shit how incredibly stressful

CLAIRE:

It wasn't really the environment for me anyway. I don't know if it was going to work out anyway.

JENNA:

I get you. I went to this huge college, absolutely big, so bonkers, like sixty thousand people. I felt like I was meeting new people all the damn time and never even making a connection. I usually just hung out with whoever was in my theatre program. And now I barely talk to those people.

CLAIRE:

You seem like you'd make friends easily.

JENNA:

You'd think! I guess there's more to it than being an extrovert. Which is a bummer. If I could just extrovert my way through shit, I totally would. People always used to tell me like, just because I was friendly, they'd be like, "I see right through you, Jenna" or whatever, like I was putting on act. This isn't an act! This is how I am! But you know what I like about you?

CLAIRE:

What?

JENNA:

Is that no one would EVER be able to say that about you. I can tell. I wish I was like that. I wish I didn't dick around so much in my conversations. My plays too. I get that note all the time. No need for all this exposition, my agent says. Just write the damn play, Jenna.

[After a moment of thinking and coffee]

Just write the damn play, Jenna.

CLAIRE:

Why won't you just write the damn play, Jenna?

JENNA:

I did, actually. I started late last night. I woke up in the middle of the night and I got up a bit to write for about an hour and then went back to sleep. Got a little motivation, thank GOD, so it's back to the grind after this cup. Well. One more.

[She pours another cup]

So like, you just do this for a living? Run the Airbnb?

CLAIRE:

Pretty much.

JENNA:

And you always get writers? It's a writer's retreat?

CLAIRE:

It doesn't have to be but word spread in that community.

JENNA:

That's so awesome. What do you for like, fun?

CLAIRE:

I write too.

JENNA:

No WAY! What do you write?

CLAIRE:

Just personal essays. Stuff like that.

JENNA:

Ever been published?

CLAIRE:

Couple times. Just magazines.

JENNA:

You have to send me those so I can read them.

CLAIRE:

For sure. Send me some of your plays.

JENNA:

I wish I could just stay and talk to you. You are like the coolest fucking host ever.

CLAIRE:

You're a cool guest.

JENNA:

Liar. I wish. Alright. I can't lose this caffeine high. I need to go write. If you see me back out here in the next two hours, slap me silly.

CLAIRE:

I won't do that.

JENNA:

God you're hilarious

[And Jenna's gone.]

[The next conversation between Claire and Stoopkid is a recording until otherwise noted, as we see Jenna write for a bit on her computer, then do something like meditation or stretching or yoga poses, then go through her bedtime routine.

All the time, Claire watches her through the crawlspace.]

STOOPKID_01:

I want to know more about Jane Twelve. Are you going to post about her again or just wait until your next guest?

CLAIRE:

I'm going to make another post after I watch her tonight. She said she gets up in the middle of the night to write her plays. I need to see this. I need to see if she's actually writing or just pretending.

STOOPKID_01:

I wish I could see it too.

CLAIRE:

I'll get as many details as I can. Just for you!

STOOPKID_01:

Can't wait to hear more.

CLAIRE:

Don't get your hopes up.

STOOPKID_01:

What do you mean?

CLAIRE:

I know her. I already know her. I've only known her for a week but I know her type. Their bedtime ritual is so organized and visually appealing and unassuming in any way. It's like they're prepping for an audience. Which makes no sense. Because they don't even know I exist. So who are they making themselves so pretty and appealing at bedtime for?

[Claire watches, now in brief silence.]

STOOPKID_01:

So why did you start doing this blog?

CLAIRE:

I always was into observing people, and then it kind of ran away from me.

STOOPKID_01:

What do you mean by into observing people?

CLAIRE:

I was always kind of socially awkward. When I was a kid, my parents sent me to this therapist because I didn't really have any friends at school. I don't know if I minded much, it just never occurred to me to find someone to talk to during lunch. To me it was just time to eat lunch. But I didn't want to worry my parents. So the therapist suggested I try to see what other kids were doing to socialize, and then do what they do. It worked for a while. I think I started seeing the therapist in fifth grade, and then by the time I was in eighth grade, I had tons of friends. I went to lots of bat mitzvahs. Sometimes people would even be like, "Claire! We remember when you were so quiet, you didn't want to talk to anyone!" I never told them, I kind of still didn't want to. It was nerve-wracking to actually participate in conversations. I would have rather just listened to them talk. I loved bat mitzvahs. So much time for the girl at the center of it talking. Then the reception would start and I'd have to know what to do next. Or just what to say. I hated it. I wished I could just eat and dance and leave.

STOOPKID_01:

I think I get that.

CLAIRE:

Really?

STOOPKID_01:

Usually I'm always just listening to people talk to figure out when I can talk about myself. I think everyone does that but has a hard time admitting it. But now that I'm talking to you, I finally know what it's like to just want to hear someone else talk.

[She is blown away. She gets up from the laptop to do a lap around her room, looking for something to give her an indication of what to do or say next. When she finally comes back, she quickly types:]

CLAIRE:

I didn't tell you the weird part yet.

STOOPKID_01:

I'm all ears.

CLAIRE:

The therapist said that when I was first starting to try to talk to people, if I felt really lost, I could try writing down what other people did, and what I wanted to say to them back. To start with, just while I was getting used to it. But I never stopped. Even when I had all those friends, and it seemed like it was going well, I would write it down. Most of the time, it was just at home, in my diaries. I would get home from school and write down the best things people said that day, the funniest or the meanest or the smartest things, or sometimes just the most interesting. Sometimes they didn't say anything interesting. But then as I was writing it down, I thought that the action itself felt interesting.

[This is a new realization for her:]

Especially then.

STOOPKID_01:

That makes so much sense that you write this blog, then. This is just an extension of that.

[She's trying to think of a response. Before she can, he writes again.]

STOOPKID_01:

I can't wait to hear more.

[All she does is think about this, in the blue glow of the laptop and the crawlspace above her. Maybe she falls asleep, or maybe she stays wide awake, but either way, the

*nightmare shadows move around her again. She
doesn't mind so much.]*

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