

Part II: The Guest Chapter 2

In the quiet early hours, Elise awakens to unsettling noises downstairs, suspecting an intruder in her home. Despite her initial fear, she cautiously descends the stairs armed with a nail file, only to find Sheba, her disoriented friend, sitting on the floor eating yogurt. Sheba's confused state, likely caused by Ambien, contrasts sharply with the tension Elise feels. As Elise tends to Sheba, guiding her back to bed and calming her, the two share a moment of vulnerable intimacy, highlighting the complexities of their friendship amid an atmosphere charged with uncertainty and unease.

The chapter then shifts to recount how Elise and Sheba first met on their college's opening day, bonding over Sheba's sweatshirt emblazoned with "Nantucket," Elise's hometown. This connection provided Elise a comforting link to home in an otherwise alien environment. Their friendship blossomed despite their starkly different backgrounds: Elise's small-town roots versus Sheba's affluent New York City upbringing, marked by wealth, privilege, and family tensions. Their shared curiosity and openness allowed them to bridge these differences and form a deep, if complicated, bond.

Sheba's backstory reveals a life shaped by her unique origins as a "test tube baby" and the complex dynamics of her family, including her two mothers and a feud with her grandfather that severed ties to Nantucket. This history underscores Sheba's own identity struggles and her longing for belonging, which she finds on the island more than in her native New York. The narrative emphasizes how their friendship is rooted in these contrasting yet complementary identities, with each woman providing the other a sense of grounding and understanding.

Ultimately, the chapter explores themes of home, identity, and friendship through the lens of Elise and Sheba's relationship. Their reunion in the middle of the night, fraught with confusion and care, mirrors the broader emotional landscape of their

connection—one marked by loyalty, vulnerability, and the challenge of reconciling disparate worlds. The chapter sets a tone of intimate tension, signaling deeper conflicts and emotional revelations to unfold as their story continues.