

Liars & Leeches

Episode 5- "Promise Me You'll Be OK"

Created by Hemlock Creek Productions

Story by Marisa Ewing

Written by KJ Scott

THEME MUSIC BEGINS

NARRATOR

Liars & Leeches: Episode 5-
"Promise Me You'll Be OK"

THEME MUSIC CONTINUES

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

"Liars & Leeches" is a horror audio drama intended for mature audiences only. It contains sensitive topics including discussions of gun violence, as well as depictions of domestic violence, stalking, and murder. More specific details about each episode are listed in the show notes. Listener discretion is advised.

THEME MUSIC ENDS

S1- INT. TONYA'S HOUSE

SFX: papers rustling, keyboard clacking

NARRATOR

The inside of Tami and Jim's home was a disaster, something Tonya knew would upset her ever tidy sister if she'd been able to see it. There were papers on every available surface, and even a few taped to one of the walls. To an outsider, it would look like someone had ransacked the house. Tonya was aware that it looked borderline unhealthy, but she was also at a point where she didn't care. It had been a week since she'd gone to the courthouse and ever since then, she'd been researching The Man.

SFX: Reflective drone

NATALIE

So walk me through this again.

TONYA

Alright. Victoria Parks. She used to live in Cedar Grove too. She led a completely quiet life.

(MORE)

TONYA (CONT'D)

No police record, no court appearances... I don't even think she ever got a parking ticket. There was no history of violence or mental illness in her family either. And then, one day, her husband is brutally stabbed to death. Everyone thinks Victoria did it, because there were no fingerprints besides hers, and no sign of forced entry either. But Victoria swears she saw her husband murdered by a tall Man wearing a trench coat with the hood up.

SFX: Ominous drone

NATALIE

Just like you've been seeing.

TONYA

Just like I've been seeing. And if you look at the police sketch -

NATALIE

Mhmm.

TONYA

This is the same Man that I've been seeing. The same coat and everything.

NATALIE

But...this case is 30 years old.

TONYA

Right.

NATALIE

So the guy would be... what, 60 or 70? Why would some random old man want to follow you of all people?

TONYA

That's what I'm trying to figure out, Nat. There has to be some connection we're not seeing.

NATALIE

(beat)

Have you stopped to think that maybe there is no connection? It says in the report they'd been having an argument.

(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Maybe Mrs. Parks was cheating or something, and when her husband found out she stabbed him - either because he found out or in self defense - and then tried to blame it on some random creep. People lie, Tonya. Stranger things have happened.

TONYA

But what she said lines up with what's happened to me! All of it, it's the same story. So it has to be the same guy. I know it.

NATALIE

Tonya -

SFX: knock on the door. Both women gasp. Ominous drone

NATALIE (CONT'D)

(scared)

I hope you were expecting company.

SFX: Knocking again

HANDYMAN

(through the door)

Hello?

TONYA

(audibly relaxing)

Shit, I'd almost forgotten!

NATALIE

Who is it?

SFX: footsteps, door opening.

TONYA

Hello?

HANDYMAN

Hi. I'm here to install the security system you requested. Looks like we're doing cameras, motion detectors, and an alarm today?

TONYA

Yes, thank you! Sorry, I totally forgot you were coming today.

SFX: door shutting

TONYA (CONT'D)

Sorry about the mess. We're working on a project.

HANDYMAN

(vaguely interested)

Uh-huh. Looks like quite the project.

TONYA

If you can give me a moment, I'll uh, I'll show you around.

(after she's walked to Natalie)

I'm sorry, I really did forget.

NATALIE

(whispered)

Are you serious? Cameras? Alarms? How much does this cost?

TONYA

(whispered)

What else am I supposed to do? Wait until he breaks in here? At least this way, I'm ready.

NATALIE

(whispered)

Listen, I didn't want to say this but have you stopped to consider -

TONYA

(whispered)

Don't.

NATALIE

(whispered)

- to consider that maybe this is a reaction to Tami and Jim's death? I mean, I know if I lost someone the way you did that I'd -

TONYA

(interrupting, whispered)

No. You don't know, 'cause you can't know until it happens to you. (sighs) I know you think - and everyone thinks - that I'm just paranoid. And why wouldn't I be? My sister and her husband went to pick up a new shirt and never came home. (beat) But I know what's real, and this guy? He's real.

NATALIE

(whispered, starting to
get worked up)

I'm not saying he isn't! But I am
saying that thinking he's the same
guy from a thirty year old case is
a little out there. There's no
connection between you and
Victoria.

TONYA

(whispered)

Yes there is, and until I can prove
it to everyone, I'm going to make
sure he doesn't hurt me.

(a tense beat)

Look, just let me show this guy
around and then we can talk more.

NATALIE

(whispered)

Fine.

TONYA

(turning to face the
handyman, putting on a
smile)

Sorry about that! Let me just show
you where I want these.

HANDYMAN

Lead the way.

SFX: Footsteps, door closing

TONYA

(fading as she walks out
of the living room)

So basically I want to cover the
entire house. Both floors, all
entrances... the works. How do we
set it up so that I can monitor the
cameras - is it an app, or is it
something else...

NARRATOR

Natalie waited until Tonya was out
of the room before she sank down to
the couch, huffing in frustration.
Her therapist would've told her
this was a good moment to count
backwards from ten to get her head
on straight and calm down, but she
ignored that thought.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Instead, Natalie stared at the wall of papers Tonya had pinned up, chewing on her lip and trying to make sense of what Tonya had seen that she hadn't.

NATALIE

(to herself)

Victoria Parks...

NARRATOR

Natalie grabbed her phone and did another Google search. The only articles that appeared were ones she had read already - all about the court case and Victoria's claims of a stalker. Still, Natalie scrolled through a couple, trying to see if there was something new that caught her eye.

NATALIE

(to herself)

Just like I said. Nothing.

NARRATOR

No matter what Tonya tried to say, Natalie still couldn't believe the two cases were connected. She believed someone was following Tonya, but it couldn't be the same guy. Why would he have switched from stalking Victoria to Tonya now, 30 years after his crime? What connection could there be, other than Victoria living in the same town but decades apart? Natalie had researched it and it wasn't like Tonya was living in the same house Victoria and her husband had lived in. There was no similar connection, beyond the description of the Man, and even then, it wasn't as though a trench coat with a hood was a particularly unique item of clothing. It could just be a coincidence.

Music: Reflective piano music

Still, Natalie didn't want to lash out at her friend. Tonya was right- Natalie didn't know what she was going through.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She'd read up on trauma responses of victim's families after mass shootings to better help her take care of her friend. Natalie was no therapist, and she knew she tended to be more blunt than most people liked, but she loved Tonya dearly. She wanted to support her, but just not by helping her scare herself more. Natalie wanted to focus on the here and now, and the reality of the situation, and how best to help Tonya face her fears. If she played into this idea that a 30 year old case was connected, she feared she'd be doing more harm than good.

SFX: Door opening, footsteps

TONYA

He's got everything he needs. You good?

NATALIE

Yeah.

NARRATOR

An idea occurred to Natalie. Maybe, if Tonya spoke to Victoria, then they could clear this whole thing up. It might take that to break through Tonya's certainty, and if that is what it took, then Natalie was willing to help.

NATALIE

Hey, have you thought about talking to Victoria? She's not that far away from here - the prison is actually just about two hours out.

TONYA

I noticed that.

NATALIE

Yeah, maybe we should go and talk to her. You know, get some clues, figure some things out... it could be the key we need.

TONYA
(suddenly hesitant)
Uh, I mean, yeah. It's a good idea.
But...

SFX: Sounds of the Handyman working in the background

NATALIE
But what?

TONYA
I don't know... I just don't want
to leave the house.

NATALIE
You don't want to leave?

TONYA
Yeah. I mean, what if The Man shows
up? At least here, I know where
things are, I'll have the security
systems in place, and I have the
home turf advantage. Out there, I'm
vulnerable.

NATALIE
Tonya, you can't stay cooped up
here forever.

TONYA
Not forever. Just until this is
done, ok?

NATALIE
So what, we should scrap the
interview idea then? You just said
it was a good idea.

TONYA
(a little awkwardly)
Um. Maybe you could go interview
her? Instead of me?

NATALIE
...I wouldn't even know what to
ask. You're the one who thinks
these cases are connected.

TONYA
I'd write you some questions. Nat,
please, I really don't want to
leave. Not now. I don't feel safe.

NATALIE

(sighing)

Okay. Just... just tell me what to ask, and I'll drive up tomorrow.

(beat)

You owe me.

TONYA

I mean, it's just a favor. But sure, I owe you.

Music: Reflective piano music

NARRATOR

Tonya didn't care for the tension that had settled over her and Natalie. She couldn't understand why her friend wasn't seeing what she saw. It was a clear connection between Victoria's case and hers, and that's why they had to figure out who The Man was. If he had followed multiple women in this area, who's to say there weren't other stories that needed to be brought to light?

(beat)

Tonya knew Natalie was supportive and that she loved her, but in this moment, she felt as though her friend didn't believe her. She felt as though Nat just saw her as some sort of paranoid shut-in.

(beat)

They worked in silence for a few hours, until the handyman came back into the living room.

HANDYMAN

You're all set. Want me to walk you through it?

TONYA

Please.

HANDYMAN

So you've got all your cameras placed outside, and the feeds go straight to this app you have on your phone; you can put it on a tablet too. Just put in your passcode and you can pull up the feeds.

(MORE)

HANDYMAN (CONT'D)

The motion sensors are on your doors and windows, and if any of them open, you'll get a notification. There's also this control panel by your door. It'll let you know when you activate your alarms, and if any of your doors or windows open. With the alarms, you can enable or disable them in the app as well, again with a passcode. Try to make it something that a burglar wouldn't guess.

NATALIE

(under her breath
sarcastically)

Great advice. Never would've thought of that.

SFX: Security system beeps

TONYA

(trying to cover up
Natalie's comment)

Thank you so much. This feels so much more secure.

HANDYMAN

Yeah, the way you've got things set up, no one's getting in here.

TONYA

That's the plan. Let me show you out.

SFX: Footsteps, door opening

ALARM

Motion detected- Front Door

Music: Somber drone

SFX: beeps of Tonya's phone

NARRATOR

Tonya did find herself sleeping better that night, lulled to sleep as she checked the security cameras over and over to show that no one was there. She could tell Natalie was frustrated by her actions, though she tried to hide it. Still, it wasn't like Natalie truly understood what Tonya was feeling.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And for now, she felt safer than she had in weeks.

SFX: Birdsong

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The next morning, Natalie stayed long enough for breakfast before leaving for the prison. The tension was still there, but Tonya still hugged her before Natalie got into her rental car. As Natalie drove away, Tonya felt a familiar sense of unease settle over her. She shivered despite the warm air of the summer morning and hurried back inside.

SFX: Ominous drone

TONYA

(as she's inputting the security code)

2-3-4-2.

SFX: Alarm setting

ALARM

(automated voice)

Alarm activated.

NARRATOR

For the next thirty minutes, Tonya found herself repeating the same motions. She would check the alarm by the front door, and then the locks. She would repeat this by the back door, before pausing in the kitchen to scroll through the camera feeds on her tablet. Then she would go back to the front door to start the pattern over again. Finally satisfied, she settled down on the couch to try and relax. She was safe here. She had to be.

SFX: Phone notification

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

After a few hours, Tonya's phone beeped at her. It was a text from Natalie."

TONYA

(reading)

"Just arrived. Can't take my phone inside so radio silence for a bit. I'll let you know if I find out anything interesting."

ALARM

Motion detected. Front yard.

SFX: heartbeats, ominous drone

NARRATOR

The next notification she got was of motion in her front yard. Tonya sat up, fear suddenly coursing through her. This was it. This was The Man, already here to do her harm. She quickly pulled up her security app and scrolled through the feed; when she saw who was in her yard, she relaxed.

ALARM

Motion detected. Front door.

SFX: Footsteps, door opening

TONYA

(surprised)

Dad!

FRANK

Hey baby girl!

SFX: They hug

TONYA

What brings you out here?

FRANK

I thought I'd stop by, check in to see how you're feeling after you got sick.

TONYA

(feeling a little guilty)

Oh. Yeah, I'm fine now.

FRANK

We all missed you at the barbecue. The Watsons send their love, and Mrs. Briggs wanted me to pass along her thoughts as well.

TONYA
Everyone was there, huh?

FRANK
Just about.

TONYA
(sighing)
...I'm sorry I couldn't make it.

FRANK
I understand. It's been hard, for all of us. No one blames you for needing to take a day for yourself.

TONYA
Here, come in. You don't need to just stand out there in the heat.

FRANK
Thanks.
(pause)
This place looks kinda messy.

TONYA
Oh uh, it's for a work project Natalie and I are doing.

FRANK
A work project, huh?

TONYA
You know us. Never stop hustling.

FRANK
What is it this time? Taking down a state senator? Investigating a corrupt politician?

TONYA
We, um, we can't talk about it yet. You'll get the full story in print.

SFX: Footsteps

FRANK
You've still got a lot of Tami and Jim's stuff in here.

TONYA
Yeah, I haven't had a chance to redecorate yet. Besides, it feels weird. Taking their stuff down.

FRANK

Besides, it looks good. You know the two of them. Could've had a whole damn TV show where Jim did renovations and Tami decorated the house.

TONYA

(laughing)

God, yeah. She always had that creative eye.

FRANK

She got that from your Mom.

TONYA

Meanwhile you and I... let's just say we didn't get that gene.

FRANK

(pretending to be
offended)

You saying your old man isn't creative?

TONYA

I'm saying you're a socks and sandals guy. Tami always gave you a tough time about that.

FRANK

(laughing)

Yeah, she did.

(pausing)

I'm glad it's yours now. Better than that cramped apartment back in New York that you used to call home. Here you've got space.

TONYA

Good memories too.

(beat)

Here, sit down. I can get you some tea if you'd like. Or a coffee.

Music: Reflective music

FRANK

I'm fine sweetheart.

(he sits)

You know, Tami's birthday is in a couple months. I keep thinking how we'd always do these big shindigs for you girls on your birthdays.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

And now it's like, what do we do?
Do we ignore it?

TONYA

Maybe we should.

FRANK

See, I don't think so. I think we owe her something. But god damn if it isn't the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life. You're not supposed to bury your kids. You have them and you know there's a chance something might happen but you think "worst thing is I'll have to go, and I won't get to see them live out the rest of their lives." But then you get a phone call, and suddenly you've seen all of your child's life and you're still here. You have to keep going through all your birthdays and holidays knowing they've lived all of theirs. I'm not supposed to have out-lived either of you girls. Jim either. I wasn't supposed to have to plan funeral arrangements or deal with the casseroles and flowers and I...I...damn it.(he sniffles)

TONYA

(also in tears)

I'm so sorry, Daddy.

FRANK

Just promise me you'll be safe, okay? I can't lose you too. My heart won't be able to take it.

TONYA

I won't. Honestly, I can barely leave the house any more. I feel like there's... There's something bad around every corner. That every crowd is just hiding someone.

FRANK

No no, you can't live like that either. That's not what they would want.

TONYA

(borderline yelling)

See, I can't ask them that, because they're dead! Some asshole with a gun decided his anger meant more than their lives and now we have to pick up the pieces and... I'm angry, and I'm sad, and nothing will ever get better! It feels like this pain is going to eat me alive.

FRANK

It's okay to be angry. Hell, I've been angry too. But we can't just... can't just let it win. Each day it gets a little more manageable. And one day we're gonna wake up and it's going to be business as usual and it won't hurt quite so much. Least, that's what I've got to believe.

TONYA

I don't want to forget them.

FRANK

It's not forgetting. We'll still love and miss them. It's just accepting that grief becomes part of life.

TONYA

(crying)

I'm so angry...

FRANK

I know, I know.

NARRATOR

Tonya and her dad talked for a couple hours. They hugged each other and cried, and at the end of it all Tonya felt better. The sun was coming in golden through the windows when her dad finally cleared his throat awkwardly.

Music: Reflective music

FRANK

I should probably get going.

TONYA

Do you want to stay the night? The guest room's not nearly as messy as it is in here.

FRANK

Nah, I've got an 8:00am AP class to teach tomorrow, and these students have got it in their heads that if I'm late at all they can leave. Don't know why they do, but I'm never late.

(beat)

It was good seeing you, sweetheart. I've missed my baby girl.

TONYA

I'll come visit you soon. I promise. Give mom a hug from me.

FRANK

Of course.

SFX: They hug. Thunder in the distance.

NARRATOR

Tonya waited by the front door, waving as she watched her dad's car drive off into the distance. Tonya checked her phone as she walked back to the house. There was a new text from Natalie. As she opened it, her good mood evaporated.

TONYA

(reading)

"Hey, you need to call me. You'll never believe what Victoria said."

SFX: Ominous drone

OUTRO MUSIC PLAYS

NARRATOR

Liars & Leeches: Episode 5-
"Promise Me You'll Be OK"- starring
Ryan Reid as The Narrator, Kendell
Byrd as Tonya, Newton "Newt"
Schottelkotte as Natalie, Gerald
Hill as Frank, Alex Bui as the
Handyman, and Olivia Steele as the
Alarm.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

"Liars & Leeches" was produced by Hemlock Creek Productions. The story was created by Marisa Ewing and the script written by KJ Scott, with script editing provided by Meg Williams. Dialogue editing, mixing, and mastering was done by Marisa Ewing, sound design by Melissa Pons, and music written by Nico Vettese of "We Talk of Dreams." Additional recording assistance provided by Jordan Alexander and Trey Baker of Music City Studios. To learn more about the show, cast, and crew, visit www.hemlockcreekprod.com. That's Hemlock Creek P-R-O-D .com.

Thank you for listening. We will return next week.