

CRIME CRACKERS

(Original Title:
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Written by

Glenn Gers

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**FOR
EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY!**

Valuable Illusions, Inc
Writingforscreens@gmail.com

INT. GEORGE'S STUDIO - DAY

Darkness. In a pool of light: **GEORGE ROIZMAN** -- 50, gray-haired, ragged black *Voidoids* t-shirt, many fading tattoos.

He sifts HANDWRITTEN PAGES on his disaster-area of a work-table. Over-stuffed folders, aged news clippings, worn TRUE-CRIME PAPERBACKS bristling with Post-its, a half-eaten bowl of TABOULEH SALAD, a bag of FLAMING-HOT CHIPS.

He switches on his PODCASTING SOFTWARE, adjusts the swivel-arm microphone, and begins to read -- intent, like an old FM radio midnight-shift DJ:

GEORGE

Good evening, and welcome to
"Catching The Chemistry Set Killer"
-- Episode 5. Our halfway mark.

He thoughtfully sets the paper aside and recites from memory:

GEORGE

"In the middle of the journey of
this life, I found myself in a dark
wood, where the path was lost."

(beat)

Look it up.

(beat)

No one is listening. I know that.
I have 14 subscribers, and ten of
them are my friends. Shout-out to
all you Crime Crackers.

(beat)

No one else cares. But in five
weeks, that's going to change.
Five more episodes. And then I
will reveal new evidence,
identifying the Chemistry Set
Killer.

(beat)

Spread the word, kids. Tell your
friends. We're gonna get him.

He SWIGS some COFFEE, goes back to READING:

GEORGE

I was nine years old in 1981, when
C.S.K. was national news.

(beat)

My first serial killer. The first
time I became aware of human evil.
People were panicked. Everyone
suddenly afraid of their own
pantries and refrigerators.

He frowns. He's dizzy. George SHAKES IT OFF, pushing on:

GEORGE

Ten victims in two years. In
different states, different ages,
races, socio-economic groups.

His tongue feels fuzzy, thick. Slurring:

GEORGE

Socio-economic.

(beat)

The poison itself -- the only thing
in common. A unique mixture of
plant toxins. C.S.K.'s "signature."

(beat)

And then he just...stopped.
Vanished.

He frowns, scrunches up his face because it's going numb.
Touches it...but his fingers cannot feel.

GEORGE

Oh no.

George STARES at his COFFEE MUG, his BOWL OF SALAD -- aware
that something insidious is creeping into his nerve endings.

GEORGE

No no no.

But it sounds like "nuh nuh nuh" because his throat is
closing up. He's wheezing. Gasping. The room spins.

George LUNGES out of his chair, knocking over his coffee --
FUMBLING with a switch on the wall.

With a GRINDING noise, a garage-door-opener LIFTS one wall of
the "studio"...REVEALING it is just George's GARAGE. Light
floods in, exposing unfinished walls and rafters, metal
shelving jammed with file-boxes, canned goods, bottled water.

GEORGE

Hep! Eph!

George STUMBLES out to his weed-strewn BACKYARD, takes a few
convulsive steps along the driveway -- trying to get to his
run-down clap-board house...and SPRAWLS face-down in the
dirt.

He TWITCHES and DIES, helpless, alone.

Coffee drips off his table. On the laptop screen, the
website: **CRIME CRACKERS.**

INT. MADELYN'S OFFICE - 5 O'CLOCK PM

A clean, sparse corporate workplace. A handful of desks in a bland, safe, well-lit "open plan."

MADELYN MORRISON, a Supervising Data Analyst in her early 50s, shuts down for the day. It's rather marvelous to watch: she's got it down to a few quick, simple gestures. She has been doing this for a long time.

The FOUR OTHER DATA ANALYSTS -- all younger, sloppier and nerdier -- glance up from their work:

DATA ANALYST

Is it five?

DATA ANALYST 2

There she goes.

She's already heading for the door.

MADELYN

See you tomorrow, kids. Good work today.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - ELEVATORS - SOON AFTER

BRENDA is already going down when Madelyn gets in. Both face forward, but Brenda wrestles in the silence -- until:

BRENDA

We have a meeting tomorrow.

MADELYNS

(startled)

Human Resources?

BRENDA

Yes! I'm not supposed to tell you yet -- but:

(can't resist:)

You're getting a promotion!
Director Of Analyst Services! Four-
percent raise, plus your own
office! With a door. That you can
close.

DING! The elevator doors OPEN, revealing the LOBBY.

MADELYN

I'm sorry?

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Brenda steers Madelyn out of the flow of departing corporate drones heading for the revolving doors, so she can share:

BRENDA

I'm sorry, I couldn't help it! I just love it when a promotion is... righteous. 24 years. Worked your way up. First woman in your department. First female supervisor. You go, girl!

Madelyn tries to process all this.

MADELYN

Do I have to?

BRENDA

What do you mean?

MADELYN

Could I say no?

BRENDA

Why would you say no?

MADELYN

I don't know: more meetings, right? More pressure? Less actually doing the thing.

Other WORKERS hurry past. This has suddenly become awkward.

BRENDA

But -- Director. With a door.

MADELYN

Can I get the money and the door without changing what I do all day?

BRENDA

No.

MADELYN

Then no. I'm good. I like the work. I like my team. I like my desk.

(beat)

Are you all right?

Brenda looks like she might cry. As she tries to pull it together, MADELYN'S PHONE RINGS. Mad frowns, checking it:

MADELYN

I'm sorry: I have to -- it's the police.

BRENDA

Police?!

Madelyn nods, distracted -- as she takes the call:

MADELYN

Hello? Yes it is. Yes. That was a long --

(listens)

Oh my God -- when? How?

Brenda watches, concerned. Madelyn turns away slightly, wrapped up in terrible news.

MADELYN

No -- we -- I didn't even know where he...

(listens)

Yes -- of course I can. I'm sorry: where is this, exactly?

(nodding)

Yes. I'll be there tomorrow.

She disconnects. Stunned:

MADELYN

My husband is dead. He was murdered.

BRENDA

Oh my God, I'm so sorry.

(beat)

You're not married.

Madelyn looks at Brenda -- shaken, baffled:

MADELYN

I was. For six months. Thirty years ago.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - GARAGE - THE NEXT DAY

DETECTIVE LEWIS ELMES -- a tough, stocky, middle-aged white guy in UNIFORM -- sits at George's desk, listening to:

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)

The first thing Murray Simpson felt on August 9th, 1981, when the poison entered his bloodstream was

(MORE)

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)
*his tongue thickening, his throat
going numb. There was a buzzing in
his ears, pins and needles on his
skin. The room began to spin.*

The garage door is up, so Elmes can WATCH MADELYN ducking the CRIME SCENE tape and dragging her wheeled carry-on past a CSI wagon and a LOCAL NEWS van.

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)
*He was frightened -- fully aware
something insidious was creeping
into his nerve endings... but
unable to move or speak. His
paralyzed lungs no longer getting
oxygen to his brain.*

Madelyn's suitcase SNAGS on the cracked driveway -- she looks down to free it, sees the CHALK OUTLINE -- FLINCHES with a GASP and BACKS AWAY, dropping the case.

ELMES
You doin' okay there?

She turns, struggling to see him in the dim garage.

MADELYN
Not even a little bit.

ELMES
You're Morrison? The ex?

Elmes waits for her to walk, uncertainly, in.

ELMES
Elmes. I'm sorry: the paperwork in
his desk didn't give us any living
relatives -- so you were it.

Madelyn nods, looking around, eyes adjusting:

MADELYN
He had paperwork in his desk:
George grew up.

ELMES
When was the last time you spoke to
Mr. Roizman?

Madelyn takes a beat to consider Elmes' blunt, insensitive manner. Decides to be blunt, right back:

MADELYN

1992. Outside CBGB's, in New York. We had a gig -- George played keyboards, I was the singer. We were called The Utter Destruction Of Everything. We had a screaming fight on stage and I walked off and everything else was handled by lawyers through the mail.

Elmes nods, disappointed but not surprised.

ELMES

So then I guess you don't know where he put the evidence.

MADELYN

Evidence of what?

Elmes grimly indicates George's conspiracy-theory-corkboard, the messy stacks of file-boxes:

ELMES

Mr. Roizman was podcasting that he had new evidence, identifying The Chemistry Set Killer -- a serial killer from the 1980s.

(sighs)

Dumb shit.

MADELYN

George...was the dumb shit?

ELMES

Instead of going to the police, he made himself a target on the internet -- so he could be a "Crime Cracker."

MADELYN

A what?

Madelyn's phone rings: caller ID -- **ZENA MORANO**. Not a name she knows, so she turns the phone off during:

ELMES

Crime Crackers: it's a website about unsolved cases. People in chat rooms with nothing better to do, so they do my job -- badly.

(with distaste)

"Web sleuths."

MADELYN

Okay, yeah...that just sounds bad.

ELMES

We're going through his computer,
but -- "evidence." We don't even
know what we're looking for.

He looks around the jammed, messy garage -- pessimistic.

MADELYN

Maybe he took it: the killer. If
it was about him.

ELMES

CSK's been cold for forty years.
If he's even alive, he's old. I
think your husband was stirring the
pot and he stirred-up a copycat.

(beat)

But I hope it is CSK, because then
the FBI'll take this mess off my
hands.

MADELYN

And if it's not?

Elmes sighs, shrugs.

ELMES

Everybody liked George. He tended
bar at the Kaleidoscope for fifteen
years. But maybe he owed somebody
money, or slept with somebody's
wife -- nothing to do with the
podcast, perp just wanted to make
it look like a geriatric serial
killer.

(beat)

But it's usually the spouse.

Awkward beat.

MADELYN

Are you joking?

ELMES

(apologetic)

Yeah.

It's her turn to look around at the shabby garage-studio.
Sighs, shaking her head.

MADELYN

I'm sorry: this is a lot for me. A man I haven't seen in thirty years has made me responsible for all of his crap -- including his murder.

(beat)

I don't know this guy. I didn't ask for this. And I can't help you.

(beat)

Dumb shit.

Elmes uncomfortably hands her his business card.

ELMES

Yeah. All right -- be here a few days?

MADELYN

No, I need to go home tomorrow. I'll be at the Ramada in Hillsville tonight.

She watches Elmes nod and walk away.

Left alone, she checks her phone: 12 NOTIFICATIONS.

MADELYN

Who the hell is Zena Morano?

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

ZENA MORANO: failed influencer, early-20s, trapped within her many filters. Staring at her phone, sprawled and moping in Southern California luxury.

ZENA

Answer your damn messages, bitch.

She makes a DECISION, gets up and STORMS through the living room -- passing **LORINDA MORANO**, her equally-made-over mom:

LORINDA

Z, fish for dinner?

ZENA

Goin' out. Back in a few days.

LORINDA

A few days?!

ZENA

Guy I know died.

LORINDA

Oh my God! Who?!

But Zena's phone rings -- and she's hyped by the Caller ID:

ZENA

Nobody, shut up --

(into phone, joyous:)

Madelyn!! I am SO sorry for your loss. I can't imagine what you're feeling. He was such a beautiful soul. What are the police doing?

INTERCUT:

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn, startled, hesitates.

MADELYN

Who are you?

ZENA

Zena Morano. I was friends with George.

MADELYN

And how do you know...my number?

ZENA

I knew your name. Of course. From George. So I searched for all the Madelyn Morrisons, and I broke that down by age -- so then there really weren't that many -- and then I started to look for images, because he has that picture of you on his bookshelf --

Madelyn looks around: there IS a framed photo of George and Madelyn in New York, back in 1992.

ZENA

-- and there's a software that can age or de-age photos, they use it for victim-profiling and missing persons -- so I ran the different Madelyn Morrisons -- there were seven possible -- and one was you! At a company fundraising picnic.

(beat)

It is you, right? You're George's wife?

MADELYN

Ex.

ZENA

How are you? Are you okay?

MADELYN

I don't know.

ZENA

We are all here for you. The whole
Corkboard crew.

MADELYN

...on the cardboard ship?

ZENA

"Corkboard, Yarn and Pins" -- it's
a community of home-based
detectives. We meet online in the
Crime Cracker forums to solve cold
cases. That's where I met George.

MADELYN

Ah. Crime Crackers.

ZENA

I loved George, he was a doll.

(hastily)

But we just worked together. On
cases.

(beat)

And now -- he's a case.

(beat)

He would have loved that. If it
wasn't him.

Awkward silence. Madelyn suddenly feels very alone.

MADELYN

Do you think he did it? This
killer, the one George was hunting
in his podcast?

ZENA

I do. One hundred percent. George
was gonna get him. That's why we
need to pick up where he left off.
Have the police -- found anything?
Like, evidence?

MADELYN

No. Do you know where it is?

ZENA

You poor thing. Are you all alone?
Who's doing crime-scene cleanup? I
can be there tomorrow.

MADELYN

Don't you have, like: work? Or
school?

ZENA

No, I'm an Influencer. I can tell
you all about it when I see you.

MADELYN

No. Thank you, that's very kind --
but no.

ZENA

What if I just showed up? No
pressure, no obligations.

MADELYN

That would be creepy.

Zena grimaces, punches a sofa pillow, then throws it -
SMASHING a shelf of expensive bric-a-brac.

ZENA

Okay. But I'm here for you.

LINDA, a middle-aged housekeeper, rushes in, concerned -- but
backs out hastily when Zena GLARES.

ZENA

I am speaking for a whole community
who knew George and loved him and
want to help. Call or text any
time, okay? I feel like we have a
special connection.

(beat)

It's gonna hit you, when you hang
up. The loss. And when that
happens: I'm here for you.

(beat)

Will you call me tomorrow?

Madelyn has absolutely no intention of calling Zena.

MADELYN

Yes. Sure.

ZENA

Love you.

Madelyn hangs up and looks around.

Zena was right. It hits her. The loss.

INT. THE SPACEBAR CAFE - AKRON, OH - LATE AFTERNOON

A hipster-ish cafe which also services obsolete technology: vinyl record-players, 8-track decks, analog clocks.

NORMAN MURCH, nearing 60, watches a bearded-and-monocled **REPAIRISTA** inspecting his battered IBM SELECTRIC typewriter.

Norman is, alas, a cliché: a newspaper journalist, fighting to make sense of a world that's left him behind.

REPAIRISTA

Gonna take three weeks. And cost you more than just buying a laptop.

NORMAN

I have a laptop. I'm only using this for my book.

(getting out his phone)

It's about the death-spiral of civilization in the 21st Century. So it feels right to bang it out on a machine I bought when I worked for The Post. You take Apple Pay?

REPAIRISTA

Cash only.

As the Repairista starts to write out a receipt, Norman notices the shop's many CLOCKS -- all broken, stopped at different times -- and then checks his phone:

NORMAN

Wait: is it three?!

REPAIRISTA

Dunno.

NORMAN

Crap -- I've got a thing. Can we...?

...hurry? The Repairista is using a pencil and an ancient order-pad that requires the slow careful fitting of a carbon-paper slip between sheets.

Frustrated, Norman fumbles an earbud into one ear as he turns away and opens Zoom on his phone --

INTERCUT:

INT. FULL SCREEN: ZOOM MEETING - CONTINUOUS

Norman's hand-held window joins an ARRAY OF FACES -- the CORKBOARD, YARN & PINS CRIME-CRACKER GROUP:

CARL DUNDOSKI, mid-30s, full-on-biker-style METH DEALER, speaking from a decrepit riverfront warehouse.

ARVIN MCLEAN, early-20s, a first-year Wall Street trader, at his desk in a row of desks, walled-in by multiple MONITORS.

CAROL DICKERSON, 40s, a NURSE, still in her scrubs but at home with her feet up.

TED, a full-time conspiracy theorist in his 40s, glitchy unsteady signal from his cluttered RV parked under a freeway.

CAMERON, a non-binary suburban High School senior who idolizes Zena, from her darkened bedroom.

And ZENA at home, perfectly-filtered, HOSTING.

(DURING ZOOMS we intercut these windows with the characters live LOCATIONS -- so we are also WITH THEM in their LIVES:)

ZENA

-- tried to convince her to let me help, but she was NOT having it.

DICKERSON

Well, the woman is bereaved.

ZENA

She didn't care about George! She hadn't seen him in thirty years. She doesn't care about this case. This is ours. We need to take over George's podcast and finish it, the way he wanted to.

MCLEAN

Then why didn't you just ask her to give you the drive?

ZENA

If I tell her George left a secret file identifying CSK in his attic, and she doesn't want to help us --

(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)

which she clearly does NOT: then she'll tell the police, and game over!

TED

The cops would bury it.

DICKERSON

Why would they bury it?!

TED

Somebody let this guy get away forty years ago.

NORMAN

What are we talking about?

DUNDOSKI

George is dead.

NORMAN

George?!

DICKERSON

Poisoned.

TED

Maloxidine: CSK's toxin-of-choice!

CAMERON

George was getting too close. He had new evidence.

DUNDOSKI

And now it's in his attic. But this bitch won't let Zena get it.

NORMAN

What "bitch," exactly?

ZENA

George's ex. "Madelyn Morrison", this office-manager from New Jersey with a stick up her butt.

DUNDOSKI

This her?

Dundoski screen-shares a "Madelyn Morrison" image-search: an etching of a 15th-century Nun, a 1930s wedding photo...and the MADELYN we know, a photo on her company's website.

INTERCUT:

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman is getting into his car, magnet-ing his phone into a hands-free dashboard rig -- troubled by:

ZENA

Yeah -- what do you think: should I call her again? Just offer to buy it? I don't want make a thing out of it: right now she's clueless. But she could just - throw it away. I'm going insane.

DUNDOSKI

I'll go get the drive.

NORMAN

I don't think that's a good idea.

TED

What makes you think she'd give it to you?!

DUNDOSKI

I didn't say she'd give it. I said I would get it.

Terrible silence.

MCLEAN

Whoa.

NORMAN

Okay: nobody is "getting anything" from this woman --

ZENA

Well, wait -- I don't know. Let's not get trapped in old perceptions.
(tentatively)
Carl...how do you want to get it?

DUNDOSKI

I could -- I don't know, convince her.

ZENA

I'm not comfortable with that.

DUNDOSKI

No worries, then. I'll break in.

Dundoski starts to load stuff into a small duffle:

ZENA
When she's not there.

DUNDOSKI
Well -- duh. No witnesses.

ZENA
Please don't say it like that.

DUNDOSKI
She's at George's house?

Norman grimaces, distracted, driving badly --

NORMAN
Nope! Nope! You cannot let him go
to that house!

ZENA
You know what, I hear you all -- I
really do. But I think we can set
up some guidelines for Carl.

NORMAN
Carl is a meth dealer!

DUNDOSKI
Just because somebody makes their
living outside the traditional
economy doesn't mean I can't have a
desire for justice.

MCLEAN
Got a point.

ZENA
Carl has been a really-involved
member of our community.

NORMAN
He's a meth dealer.

DICKERSON
I'm with Norman. This is not okay.

ZENA
I think we're facing a generational
issue here.

DICKERSON
I'm sorry, no: this is not okay. I
like to pretend we're detectives
and all, but now we're messing with
people's lives. I'm out.

MCLEAN
Hold on, Carol --

DICKERSON
No, we can't do this.

Dickerson DISCONNECTS.

NORMAN
Seriously, you cannot allow --

Zena MUTES Norman.

ZENA
Hey guys, I don't think it's
productive to have everybody
talking at once. Carl: will you
promise not to harm George's ex-
wife while you're getting the
evidence?

As he checks an ammo clip and snaps it decisively into a
large pistol:

DUNDOSKI
Absolutely.

Zena forces a big encouraging smile and ENDS THE MEETING.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman sits back and sighs, frustrated.

A CAR HORN blares behind him: he's blocking a turning lane.

Reluctantly, he starts up the car.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski emerges, carrying his duffle-bag -- and FLIPS OUT,
shouting back into the warehouse:

DUNDOSKI
Holy fucking shit Marcus, HOW MANY
times do I have to tell you not to
block me in?!

-- drawing his gun and FIRING REPEATEDLY into Marcus' Range
Rover, which is parked blocking Dundoski's Corvette.

Beat. Dundoski grimaces, upset at himself.

DUNDOSKI

Damn it.

He turns and heads for a beat-up CARGO VAN, shouting:

DUNDOSKI

I'm taking the van.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman drives, fretting. Impulsively:

NORMAN

Hey, Siri: Call George Roizman.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn sits alone. Daylight fading out the windows, but she hasn't turned on the lights.

George's phone RINGS. She glances at it. It's not her phone. Lets it go to voicemail.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

NORMAN

(into phone)

Um, hi -- you don't know me, my name is Norman Murch, and -- it's about George -- and his stuff.

(winces)

Please call me.

Norman disconnects. Sighs.

NORMAN

Siri: rewind time two minutes and erase.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SOON AFTER

Madelyn gets up, goes to turn on the lights.

Her eye is snagged by a REEL-TO-REEL TAPE PLAYER, part of George's elaborate SOUND SYSTEM. Next to it, a SHELF OF OLD AUDIOTAPES in hand-labelled boxes from studio recording sessions: **The Utter Destruction Of Everything.**

Nearby, amid a clutter of FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS from different eras of George's life (quite a few from his job as bartender

at "The Kaleidoscope Bar" in town)...one of MADELYN & GEORGE on a New York street in 1991.

She stares -- then turns away, venturing further into the house.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn walks from room to room, turning on lights.

She comes upon George's DESK. Flips through the clutter of bills and papers -- turns away, keeps exploring.

INT. NORMAN'S APT. - LATER

A one-bedroom apartment in a boring, boxy building. Well-organized books on shelves up to the ceiling, file cabinets by a sturdy wooden desk where the Selectric should be.

It's dark out. Norman perches on the worn sofa, laptop open on the coffee table, looking at the photo of Madelyn that Dundoski image-searched.

He swigs a bourbon on the rocks -- not his first -- and redials a number on speaker. Also not his first. Voicemail picks up:

GEORGE (ON TAPE)
You've reached the home of George
Roizman and "Catching The Chemistry
Set Killer." Leave a mess--

Norman disconnects. Finishes his bourbon.

NORMAN
Hell.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - SOON AFTER

DRIVING up a ramp onto a highway, into the night. His phone, on the dashboard mount, recites directions:

SIRI (ON PHONE)
Take Exit 41-B to I-76 East. Your
estimated travel time to 5801
Grimley Road in Sparksville,
Pennsylvania is 2 hours 11 minutes.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SOON AFTER

Madelyn opens a closet and takes in George's CLOTHING.

She suddenly YELLS at them:

MADELYN

Screw you, George! I'm not staying here to clean up. I have a life! What were you thinking, calling out a serial killer?! Your whole damn life was stupid gestures! Didn't you get tired of --

(beat)

Oh no. Was THAT what it? A way out -- with a bang?

(beat)

Please tell me you didn't want this.

The DOORBELL rings.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - SOON AFTER

Madelyn opens it, revealing: DUNDOSKI. Big, intimidating, hairy...and polite. Plastic zip-tie cuffs sticking out of his back pocket, but Madelyn can't see that.

DUNDOSKI

Hey. I know this is a little weird, but -- I grew up in this house. Back when. I was up in the attic. With my brother Theo. He's a radiologist now. Our sister got the bedroom. Now she's a nun. Anyway: I was on my way through town, and I thought -- maybe I could just come in and walk around a little. You know: memory lane.

Madelyn takes him in. Doesn't even really try to make sense of it.

MADELYN

I'm sorry, it's not a great time.

Dundoski considers this. Long enough that it's awkward.

DUNDOSKI

No worries. You have a blessed day.

He backs off. Madelyn shuts the door, filing the weirdness away with the rest of the past 24 hours.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - OTHER ROOM - SOON AFTER

She's got her earbuds in, sorting through George's desk as she talks to her office:

MADELYN

No, I'm back tomorrow. I can't let this take over my life. It's a whole -- house. I'm just gonna have people come box it all up. Did you submit the Garrison formulations to Legal?

The DOORBELL RINGS.

MADELYN

Oh, hey: my dinner's here.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - SOON AFTER

She opens the front door, revealing **KYLE**: late teens, wearing a local shop's logo-printed apron, holding a plastic bag with a TAKE-OUT DINNER.

KYLE

Ziggy's Sandwiches.

MADELYN

Yes -- thank you! Cash all right?

KYLE

Cash works. Nineteen-oh-five.

As Madelyn takes the money from her wallet, Kyle checks the place out. She catches him snooping. He shrugs, busted:

KYLE

This is where that guy got serial-killed.

Madelyn controls the urge to correct him. Or hit him.

MADELYN

Yeah.

KYLE

Poisoned, right?

Madelyn nods, trading the bag for the cash. Can't blame the kid.

MADELYN
Thus: take-out.

Now it's a bit awkward, because: he could leave.

KYLE
Are you his...mom?

MADELYN
Ex-wife.

KYLE
Oh -- wow. You must be --

MADELYN
I'm not.

KYLE
...pissed.

MADELYN
Oh. Maybe. No.
(beat)
I don't know what I am.

KYLE
Sucks.

MADELYN
It's what he was like. Chaos.
Chaos in cheap sneakers.

Kyle can't quite manage to leave yet.

KYLE
Drugs?

MADELYN
(sighs)
Yeah. I mean: I don't know. When
we were together, yes.

Slight beat.

KYLE
I meant do you want some?

MADELYN
Oh!

KYLE

I sell some stuff that's not on the menu. If you know what I mean.

MADELYN

I do. Understand that.

KYLE

I just thought: you know -- take the edge off.

MADELYN

What makes you think there's an edge?

Kyle doesn't even bother to answer. She sighs: *yeah*.

KYLE

Edibles? Xanax? X?

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

MUSIC BLASTING on the excellent sound system: MADELYN & GEORGE and their punk/grunge band. Hand-scrawled on the reel-to-reel tape's box: **THE DEATH OF MUSIC AS WE KNOW IT.**

Lit only by a LAVA LAMP, Madelyn -- seriously stoned -- SINGS AS LOUD AS SHE CAN along with her 20-year-old self.

INT. DUNDOSKI'S VAN - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski, parked across the street in the dark, watches the house. He frowns, rolls down his window:

The blasting music drifts in.

DUNDOSKI

...the hell?

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski gets out of his van, wary. Walking closer, trying to glimpse the party in this house of grief.

He doesn't notice HEADLIGHTS slowly approaching down the street. They stop a block away, and GO OUT.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman studies the lit-up house and the BIG LURKING FIGURE. It moves into the dark, heading to the back of the house.

NORMAN

...uh-oh.

He dials 9-1-1 on speaker.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The SCREAMING-LOUD SONG ends. In the sudden silence, Madelyn takes a sweaty, happy bow to an imaginary audience.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski FREEZES, hand on the doorknob. LISTENING. Steps back.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

911 (ON PHONE)

...please choose from the following options: for fire, press 2. For medical emergency, press 3. For police, press 4 --

Norman hastily presses 4, eyes on the house.

911 (ON PHONE)

Thank you for calling Sparksville County Sheriff Services. Please listen carefully, because our menu has changed --

NORMAN

AAARGH!

He hangs up and GETS OUT of the car.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn finishes THREADING A NEW TAPE into the machine and flips a CLUNKY OLD LEVER. Tape hiss.

Behind her, outside the dark window: Dundoski PEERS IN.

ENGINEER (ON TAPE)
*Utter Destruction, "American
Excess," take 4.*

MUSIC BANGS OUT of the speakers.

Dundoski backs away.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN DOOR - CONTINUOUS

He moves swiftly to the kitchen door. Produces a MASSIVE HUNTING KNIFE and easily POPS the LOCK.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn THRASHES and DANCES as she SINGS into an imaginary MICROPHONE -- facing an imaginary dark, crowded club full of sweaty GRUNGE-PUNK NEW YORKERS.

Behind her, Dundoski appears in the KITCHEN DOORWAY.

Staying still.

He SEES, PAST her: a TRAP DOOR in the hallway ceiling. The way up to the ATTIC, where George's evidence waits. His OBJECTIVE.

Madelyn has no idea he's there, gone full-Joplin.

Dundoski grimaces and edges back into the kitchen.

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He opens drawers -- considers a ball of KITCHEN TWINE, keeps looking. Turns to open the GLASS-FRONT CABINETS --

-- as, behind him, NORMAN PUSHES OPEN the KITCHEN DOOR.

Norman FREEZES, seeing Dundoski. Paralyzed with fear. Trying to think.

MUSIC BLASTING.

Dundoski CLOSES the CABINET and SEES NORMAN reflected in its glass.

Norman TURNS to FLEE --

-- Dundoski LUNGES, pushing the door SHUT as Norman tries to open it, SLAMMING Norman into it.

NORMAN

Ooof!!

Dundoski SWINGS HIM AROUND, by the collar --

-- Norman GRABBING a CAN OF COFFEE from the counter as he SWOOSHES past it --

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn, lost in her performance, WANDERS the room -- TURNING AWAY just as --

-- behind her: Dundoski staggers backward, the coffee can clattering off his forehead, choking on a cloud of GROUND COFFEE.

Norman RUSHES PAST him, into the living room --

-- SCARING the hell out of Madelyn, who SHRIEKS as he lunges for the shelves, FRANTICALLY looking for a weapon or a phone or --

-- Dundoski stomps in, COMING AFTER HIM --

-- Norman GRABS the LAVA LAMP, HOT orange blobs in a glowing-yellow liquid -- and WHIRLS, swinging it as hard as he can.

It meets Dundoski's head with a LOUD, HOLLOW CLONK. The lamp GOES OUT -- its GLASS-CONE CORE flying out of its metal shell and bouncing off a wall.

Dundoski DOUBLES OVER, turning away, clutching his head.

MADELYN

What the--?!

Norman can't explain, eyes on Dundoski, wary -- no sound in the DARKENED ROOM except everyone's HEAVY BREATHING -- and the LAVA LAMP, ROLLING UNSTEADILY across the wooden floor.

Dundoski draws the HUGE HUNTING KNIFE.

NORMAN

Oh, crap.

MADELYN

NO!

Lost in rage, Dundoski STARTS toward Norman --

DUNDOSKI

Mother fucker!

-- who BACKS UP against the shelves, DEER-IN-HEADLIGHTS --
-- until Dundoski STEPS ON THE LAVA LAMP and FLIPS like a rag doll, LEGS FLYING UP, ARMS FLAILING -- HEAD hitting the wood floor with a frightening THUD.

Norman stares.

Madelyn STEPS on Dundoski's wrist and takes his knife away.

She backs off, holding it, STARING over the moaning meth dealer at Norman.

MADELYN

Who ARE you?! What is HAPPENING?!
What the fuck?!

Norman doesn't have time to answer: Dundoski GROANS, GETTING to his HANDS and KNEES.

NORMAN

PHONE?!

Madelyn POINTS to the LAND-LINE, and Norman snatches it up, dialing 9-1-1 --

Madelyn anxiously HOLDS the knife READY --

-- as Dundoski GETS TO HIS FEET.

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)

9-1-1 Operator, what is your emergency?

Dundoski considers them. There is no question he could disarm and dismember them both in moments.

He sighs. Shakes his head, and walks out the front door.

Closing it gently behind him.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski walks to his van, rubbing the back of his head and dialing his phone. Into it:

DUNDOSKI

Yeah. We got a problem.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn, still holding the knife ready, SHUTS OFF THE MUSIC.
Wary, confused and stoned (but trying to conceal that.)

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
Do you need assistance?

Norman DISCONNECTS, eyes on Madelyn. Holding one hand to his
eye; the brow is bleeding.

NORMAN
I'm sorry: do you want me to call
them back?

MADELYN
I don't know.

NORMAN
You've got the knife.

MADELYN
You afraid of me?

NORMAN
Kinda.

MADELYN
Good.

NORMAN
Sorry -- you mind if I just...?

He points at the kitchen and starts cautiously backing toward
it, bloody hands raised. Madelyn follows, knife still ready.

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Norman takes a bag of frozen vegetables from the freezer and
presses it to his eye.

MADELYN
Here, wait a second.

She goes to the sink, unsteadily.

NORMAN
You okay?

MADELYN
I'm helping you. You need to
disinfect that.

He shuts up while she squirts dish soap on a washcloth and applies it clumsily to his cut.

NORMAN
Ow! Stings.

MADELYN
That means it's working.

Sudsy water runs down his face and over his clothes. He is trying to be polite, letting her "help." They are intimately close now.

NORMAN
Wow. Your pupils are HUGE.

MADELYN
I'm stoned out of my mind.

NORMAN
Good to know.

She stands pressing the dripping soapy cloth to his face. Staring at each other:

NORMAN
My name is Norman Murch. I'm sorry I'm here like this. I just didn't want Mr. Dundoski to hurt you.

MADELYN
And...who is Mr. Dundoski, exactly?

NORMAN
He's a meth dealer.

MADELYN
Right. And you know him -- how?

NORMAN
I'm in a...group with him. Online. Crime-solving.

MADELYN
The meth dealer is a Crime Cracker?

NORMAN
He has a very deep sense of justice.

Silence. Standing so close.

Madelyn steps back.

MADELYN

And what are you? In all this.

NORMAN

A journalist. I'm writing a book about online culture. That's why I'm in the group.

MADELYN

So you're like: spying on them?

She sits at the kitchen table, the drugs and stress overtaking her. Closes her eyes, breathes deeply.

NORMAN

I'm "embedded." Because my book is about the death-spiral of civilization in the 21st Century. Which is happening, live, on the internet. Something monstrous has happened to our world and we don't even see it. Digital culture and tech philosophy took over everything, because it's making money -- and no one is questioning whether it's a good philosophy. Crowd-sourcing. The abdication of responsibility. The destruction of society as an accidental consequence of making everything easy and fun for everybody.

Madelyn SNORES. Norman sighs. He goes to gently shake her.

NORMAN

Hey. Let's get you into bed.

Draping her arm around his shoulder and putting his arm around her waist, he helps her to her feet.

MADELYN

Are you driving?

NORMAN

"Driving"?

MADELYN

My bed is in New Jersey.

Holding her up as he walks her out of the kitchen:

NORMAN

No, I'm not driving.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SOON AFTER

Norman struggles to get them both through the doorway.

MADELYN

I'm not usually like this.

Distracted, trying to figure out how to turn her so she doesn't just flop down on the bed face-first:

NORMAN

What are you usually like?

MADELYN

I'm dishwasher safe.

NORMAN

Uh-huh.

(turning with her)

All right -- just let's get you turned --

MADELYN

Whhhooooo -- dangerous maneuver.

He's backing her up to the bed --

NORMAN

And yet: you can say the word "maneuver."

-- they sit, clumsily. He's still got one arm around her waist, the other hand gripping her wrist, which is around his shoulders.

NORMAN

I'm going to let go of you now.

MADELYN

Are you out of your freaking mind?!

NORMAN

You're safe. Dishwashe--

MADELYN

NO. If you let go, I will instantly whirl off into outer space.

NORMAN

I swear that you won't.

MADELYN
Really?! Has ANY part of today
been what you thought would
happen?!

Bested logically, Norman tries to figure out his next
maneuver.

NORMAN
Okay, *skootch*. Back, like this --

She wriggles back, making the "truck backing up" sound.

NORMAN
Please don't.

And then they're tipping back onto the pillows, Norman's arm
still around her.

NORMAN
Okay, good. Nice.

It is. He takes a moment, then starts to extricate himself --
she SNORES again. Out. Dead weight on his arm.

NORMAN
Oh, no. No. Seriously.

He tries to move -- she SNORTS and clutches his wrist.
Norman stares at her. Appalled. Amused. Kind of okay.

He gives up. Staring at the dark ceiling.

Madelyn breathes deeply. Safe.

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zena hurries out to a waiting Uber, pulling her matching
suitcase and carry-on, talking into her earpods:

ZENA
I'm taking the red-eye back East.
Norman showed up at George's and
hit Dundoski with a lava lamp.

INTERCUT:

INT. CAMERON'S ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Cameron is doing homework, sprawled on their bed:

CAMERON
What is a "lava lamp"?!

ZENA
Focus: I need you to do something.

CAMERON
Oh: okay -- great, sure!

ZENA
Tomorrow is my parents' thirtieth anniversary. I need you to go and tell them I can't make it, and you're there instead.

CAMERON
Are they going to be okay with that?

ZENA
What are they going to do, fire me?

CAMERON
Do they have a problem with gender fluidity?

ZENA
I wouldn't bring it up.

CAMERON
Roger that.

ZENA
One other thing: you need to sing a song.

CAMERON
No way, I'm sorry. You know I'm here for you -- but no.

ZENA
You want to be a singer, right?

CAMERON
I'm working on being a si--

ZENA
Exactly! And this is the work.

CAMERON
I can't.

ZENA

You have to. Look how genius this is: it's my gift to them -- and my gift to you. You can do this. You're great. Give the waiter your phone and have them Facetime me in.

Silence. Agonized and excited:

CAMERON

What kind of song?

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NEAR DAWN

Night begins to retreat as sunrise paints the front of George's shabby house orange and pink.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Norman and Madelyn sleep. She still nestles against his chest, his arm is still around her shoulders.

She opens one eye. Her mouth feels like carpeting...and what exactly is she lying on? She rises up slightly to look at:

Norman -- startled awake by the move.

They stare at each other in the dim, pastel-colored light.

Madelyn's eyes widen as it all -- well, some -- comes flooding back.

Norman watches her: caring, concerned, slightly afraid.

Madelyn checks how dressed she is, trying to calculate her proportions of amusement, shame, gratitude and uncertainty.

NORMAN

(hesitantly)

Nothing hap--

She looks up, putting one finger to his lips.

MADELYN

Shhh.

Norman stops talking.

She slowly withdraws the finger...and moves to replace it with her mouth. A kiss.

Norman is frozen, wide-eyed, ecstatic -- but then:

NORMAN
No -- wait -- hold on --

MADELYN
Oh: my breath?

NORMAN
What? No! I just --

MADELYN
You don't want to.

NORMAN
Oh no -- I do! I just need...
consent.

Madelyn stares at him.

MADELYN
Do you want me to have my lawyers
draw something up?

NORMAN
No -- I just -- are you...still
high?

MADELYN
I am not. I am doing this because
I want to. Although, if we keep
discussing it, that will end.

Norman smiles. Leans in to kiss her, trying to rise up on
one elbow -- but failing, because it is dead asleep. She
frowns, starts to massage it:

MADELYN
Oh, man, I'm sorry! It was under
me all night, wasn't it?

NORMAN
Thank you, OW! Pins and needles.

Madelyn stops. They look at each other, uncertain. And then
they slowly, gently kiss.

And as she climbs on top of him, we...

FADE OUT.

INT. TRAIN - PENN STATION, NYC - MORNING

McLean, in a window seat, talks on his phone via earbuds:

MCLEAN

...throwing up all night, praying to the porcelain god. I think it was the octopus. Ever eaten octopus? Don't eat octopus. Anyway, I'm taking a sick day.

During this, **BILLY** -- late 20's, gorgeous, wearing shorts and a beat-up hoodie -- comes past and gestures: *is this seat* (opposite McLean) *taken?* It's no meaningless move, there's a definite romantic edge.

McLean eagerly gestures: *all yours!* While, into earbuds:

MCLEAN

Tell Bryan to cover the Windsor short-sale. I'll check it tomorrow if I'm not dead.

Billy meets McLean's eyes, eavesdropping, amused. McLean grins, shrugs.

MCLEAN

No, I'm turning off my phone and starting a Gatorade IV.

He WINCES at a CHIME from the PA system --

MCLEAN

Okay bye --

-- hastily disconnecting as:

CONDUCTOR (ON PA)

All aboard! Penn Station to Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Columbus, doors will be closing.

Billy grins as McLean takes the earbuds out.

BILLY

Is it -- contagious?

MCLEAN

What, lying to your boss?

McLean meets Billy's gaze, trying to think of a good way to turn the conversation around and keep it going.

MCLEAN

So: was the accident before or after you left Chicago?

Billy's smile falters. McLean realizes he's freaked out.
Apologetic:

MCLEAN

Your knee! The scar --
orthoscopic? Maybe ten years ago?

BILLY

Are you a doctor?

MCLEAN

No, I'm a hedge fund drone. I just
notice things. And put them
together. Like your sweatshirt:
DePaul, Chicago --

-- Billy looks down: his sweatshirt has a small DePaul
University logo. McLean shrugs.

MCLEAN

It's just a habit: "detecting,"
kind of. Like: observations --

Billy forces a smile as he gets up.

BILLY

I just remembered, I don't like
sitting backwards.

Watching him walk away -- regretful:

MCLEAN

You rode a bike to the train. And
you don't wear a helmet, because
you're vain about your hair. Which
is...really nice.
(beat)
But you should wear a helmet.

As he puts his earbuds back in...

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

A Chemotherapy Treatment Room. NURSE DICKERSON, kind and
efficient, attends to a handful of PATIENTS in recliner
chairs, plugged into IV drips.

As she checks MRS. WEITZMAN, an elderly woman in a wig:

DICKERSON

How are we today, Mrs. Weitzman?

WEITZMAN

We feel crappy. Take my mind off:
what's with your detective thing?
Catch anybody?

DICKERSON

Um: no, I'm taking a break from all
that right now.

WEITZMAN

Oh, why?! You liked it so much!
That was all I knew about you:
Shirley Holmes, Nurse Detective!

Dickerson winces a bit, keeping busy with her work.

DICKERSON

Some people get too involved.

WEITZMAN

Oooh. Drama?

DICKERSON

Kind of.

WEITZMAN

Well: you're better off.

DICKERSON

I think so.

WEITZMAN

All that looking-up serial killers.
That's not nice. What kind of
people do that? You should get a
nice hobby.

Dickerson is taken aback. Puts on a smile.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSE'S STATION - MORNING

Dickerson sits at her desk, put-out. Tries to shake off the
conversation, ready to start her new sleuth-less life.

Wrestling with it. Looks around for something to do. A BOX
of MAGAZINES for patients: a CROSSWORD PUZZLE book.

She opens it, gets a pen, and tries to focus.

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - THE SAME TIME

Dundoski's van is parked a discreet distance from George's house.

He climbs out, stretching and squinting in the morning sun. Slowly raises one foot, hands floating in front of him. A yoga pose. Breathing in through his nose, exhaling slowly through his mouth. Peaceful.

TED'S RV drives past -- wobbly, noisy, spewing exhaust. Covered in bumper stickers, collaged super-market-tabloid front pages and graffiti slogans.

It parks across from George's.

EXT. TED'S RV - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski tries to maintain his beatific calm, walking over.

TED

Hey! The gang's all here!

DUNDOSKI

Are you for-real with this?

TED

What.

DUNDOSKI

You just parked a conspiracy-nut billboard outside their house.

TED

It's my home. And my beliefs.
First amendment.

DUNDOSKI

Take your amendment around the corner, now.

Ted is about to get into a spirited intellectual debate -- but then he looks in Dundoski's eyes and just starts the RV.

Dundoski watches Ted's beliefs drive out of sight.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - THE SAME TIME

Cameron, in a TOP HAT and BRIGHTLY-COLORED TUXEDO, SINGS to Zena's Mom & Dad. A WAITER holds Cameron's phone, face-timing the scene to Zena.

It's an original anniversary song by Cameron. She writes in a trippy-psychedelic style, so Zena's Mom & Dad are forcing their smiles...baffled.

EXT. AIRPORT - THE SAME TIME

Zena is absently watching the performance as she loads her LUGGAGE into a TAXI one-handed, and --

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

-- gets in the back. Slamming the door, to the DRIVER:

ZENA

You know a town called Sparksville?

DRIVER

Yeah -- that's gonna cost you a fortune.

On the phone: Cameron's song ends, scattered applause.

ZENA

I have a fortune. Go.

(into phone)

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! I love you guys!

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MIDDAY

Norman wakes, alone, in a dead stranger's bedroom. Daylight coming around the window blinds.

Checks under the sheets: he is naked. Looking around.

His clothes are gone.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SOON AFTER

Madelyn, dressed and presentable, sips coffee while she sorts through the papers in George's desk. Looks up at:

Norman, in the doorway, holding a PILLOW over his privates.

MADELYN

Oh, hey! Hi.

NORMAN

Hi.

MADELYN
You probably want your clothes.

NORMAN
I'm old-fashioned.

MADELYN
I threw 'em in the washer. Should
be done now --
(indicates)
Down the hall.

Norman nods and BACKS OUT. Madelyn watches him go...amused.

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - SOON AFTER

Norman, buttoning his shirt, steps in to find Madelyn
SEARCHING the unfamiliar kitchen.

MADELYN
Breakfast?

NORMAN
I don't want to put you out.

MADELYN
I'm already out. Might as well
eat. You like eggs?

NORMAN
I shouldn't, but I do.

MADELYN
Good. Because I'm making eggs.
He's got to have a frying pan,
right?

Norman thinks, pulls open the oven: the frying pan is there.
As she gets it out and begins to make eggs:

MADELYN
Well done.

NORMAN
Is this weird for you?

MADELYN
In every possible way.

NORMAN
I thought maybe it was just me.

MADELYN
I don't -- do this kind of thing.

NORMAN
Cook?

MADELYN
Making -- love! With strangers.

Awkward silence. Trying to make her feel better:

NORMAN
I do. If it...works out. That way.

MADELYN
Really. That makes me feel...icky.

NORMAN
No: I was just trying to -- tell you -- it wasn't -- like...

MADELYN
Please don't finish that sentence.

NORMAN
What? No -- it was great! I meant: it wasn't so terrible. That you did it. It happens.

MADELYN
In my dead ex-husband's crime scene house.

Awkward silence.

NORMAN
We both needed to...connect.

Madelyn sighs. Nods.

MADELYN
Well, we did.

They both kind of smile. She begins to cook again. Not looking at him.

MADELYN
So you do this a lot.

NORMAN
Eh: less, lately. I think I have PTSD. It always seems so magical until it blows up in my face.

MADELYN
Maybe slow down.

NORMAN
Nah. I just gave up a long time ago on the idea that a relationship could not blow up. So I figured: stop worrying about it. Plunge in, hang on, and try to enjoy the parts that feel like a romantic comedy before you get to the inevitable horror movie.

Madelyn sets a plate of eggs on the table.

MADELYN
So: this is the funny part?

He takes the question seriously. As he sits:

NORMAN
You're different.

She smiles slightly -- then as he lifts a forkful of eggs to his lips she SCREAMS, LUNGING AT HIM --

MADELYN
NAAAAHHH!

-- grabbing the fork and throwing it across the kitchen.

Norman handles it pretty well.

NORMAN
There we go. Right on time.

MADELYN
He put the poison in George's food.
The serial killer.
(beat)
That was George's food.

They both take a deep breath.

NORMAN
Wanna maybe go out?

INT. DINER - LATER

They're in a booth, finishing brunches. It's kind of a date.

NORMAN

Possessive. Promiscuous.
Dishonest. Kleptomaniac.
Hypochondriac. Neo-fascist.

Norman, defending his theory that all relationships go bad, is recounting his recent affairs. Madelyn grins.

MADELYN

God: I'm sorry I'm so -- boring.

NORMAN

I don't think you can say last night was boring.

MADELYN

(with a shy smile)
Or this morning.

He smiles, too. Especially at her shyness. He frowns:

NORMAN

Are you okay? I mean: you're -- grieving.

MADELYN

No. I'm not. In shock, maybe.
But George was -- a long time ago.
(beat)
I did love him, back then. We were good, it was intense. It was everything I ever wanted.

NORMAN

So then...why did you leave?

MADELYN

Because I was nineteen years old, and everything I wanted was crazy. And if I stayed with him I was going to die.

NORMAN

Drugs?

She shakes her head, struggling to capture it:

MADELYN

I mean, yeah -- but: no. George was the drug. He was just fearless. Musically. Emotionally. All in. All or nothing. He would jump off the stage, he would jump off the roof. It's like he was
(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)
missing a part of his brain.
(beat)
Which was incredibly appealing.
(beat)
Until you had to take him to the
emergency room.

NORMAN
Or make his funeral arrangements.

Madelyn looks at Norman, startled by the empathy.

Suddenly, decisively, she opens her purse, sets some cash on
top of the check and gets up.

EXT. DINER - SOON AFTER

Madelyn hurries out. Norman follows, respectfully watching
her thousand-yard-stare at the town's drab "miracle mile."

NORMAN
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset
you.

MADELYN
I'm not upset.

NORMAN
You seem upset.

She walks away -- upset. Suddenly turns:

MADELYN
I don't want to hunt serial
killers!

NORMAN
(startled)
You...don't have to.

Despite the noise and traffic, it's an intimate moment.

MADELYN
I feel like my life was an
airplane, and I was fine -- didn't
even have the "seatbelts" sign on --
and all of a sudden, BOOM: the door
blows off and I'm...falling.

NORMAN
Maybe you should just get back in,
then. To your life. It's still
there, right?

MADELYN

It just seems like -- I won't
believe in it, any more.

(beat)

Like if I went back to work now, I
might just start...screaming.

He knows better than to try to "solve" this. They stand
there by the highway, looking at each other.

NORMAN

What are you gonna do?

MADELYN

I don't know!

(beat)

You want to...hang out some more?

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME (INSTAGRAM STORY)

Zena, SELFIE-CASTING as she pulls her suitcase to the door:

ZENA

*George told me privately that, if
anything ever happened to him: he
left everything we'd need to know
hidden in the attic. He said it's
in the birdcage.*

She rings the bell. Rings again.

*TIME CUT - NEW STORY: Zena selfies walking around the house
(checking the crime-scene-taped garage), peering in windows.*

ZENA (V.O.)

No one's home. I'm going in.

She pulls the SCREEN off an UNLOCKED window and OPENS it.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - SOON AFTER (INSTAGRAM STORY)

Zena selfies sneaking through the house...

ZENA (V.O.)

*...either there's like a door to a
staircase or -- wait! Yes:*

Turns the lens: the TRAP DOOR in the ceiling.

*TIME CUT - NEW STORY: She has dragged a chair from the living
room, and stands on it to PULL DOWN THE TRAP DOOR. SPRINGS*

CREAK. Zena turns to us, eyes wide -- then stares up at the NARROW STAIR-LADDER leading into DARKNESS.

INT. GEORGE'S ATTIC - SOON AFTER (INSTAGRAM STORY)

Zena's phone-flashlight roves the DARK DUSTY CLUTTER:

ZENA (V.O.)
There's no damn birdcage. He said
it was in the bir...oh my God:

The light STOPS on shelves JAMMED with BOOKS and VHS TAPES.
MOVING IN ON: **THE BIRDCAGE**, a 1996 comedy movie.

Zena PULLS IT off the shelf and OPENS the clunky plastic VHS CASE. It's EMPTY -- except for a FLASH DRIVE.

Zena TURNS THE LENS to look right in our eyes, AWESTRUCK.

INT. GEORGE'S ATTIC - DAY (INSTAGRAM STORY)

Zena has set the phone on a tripod, lit by a portable ring-light, so she can broadcast herself REACTING LIVE.

ZENA
So excited. Unearthing this LIVE.
George's secret files -- evidence
identifying the Chemistry Set
Killer...

INTERCUT:

What she's watching: ON ZENA'S LAPTOP - A VIDEO CLIP. George speaks to the camera -- simple, unscripted, confessional.

GEORGE
I can't break through. It's going
nowhere. But I know this case can
be cracked. It's just a matter of
going all-in.
(beat)
So I'm going to use myself as bait.
Announce I have new evidence, even
though I don't. Really hype it up -
- and get the Killer to come after
me. If I can scare him, or make
him angry...maybe he'll come out of
hiding.

ZENA
No. No, NO!

GEORGE

So I kind of hope someone is watching this. Even though that means I'm dead. Because it also means I did it. I got him.

ZENA

Seriously?!

Zena SCREAMS in frustration --

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - THE SAME TIME

-- Madelyn, letting Norman in the front door, FREEZES.

They stare at each other.

MADELYN

911.

But as Norman reaches for his phone --

ZENA (O.S.)

YOU STUPID FAT OLD BOOMER MORON!

INT. GEORGE'S SECRET BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Zena KICKS a random box, papers go FLYING.

ZENA

I'm fucked. I'm so fucked.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn and Norman EDGE into the living room and see the ATTIC STAIRS are down. Madelyn holds the FIREPLACE POKER.

NORMAN

Zena?!

ZENA (O.S.)

Norman?

Zena appears at the top of the stairs.

INT. MCLEAN'S RENTAL CAR - THE SAME TIME

McLean, driving a rented bright-red Corvette, approaches George's street. Sees TED'S CONSPIRACY-MOBILE RV parked at the corner --

-- and jauntily HONKS HIS HORN as he drives past.

INT. TED'S RV - CONTINUOUS

Startled, Ted takes a moment to recognize McLean -- then hastily starts his engine and pulls out to follow.

INT. DUNDOSKI'S VAN - SOON AFTER

Dundoski sighs, exasperated, as he watches the Corvette slowing as it cruises past George's, scouting it. The RV, revving to catch up, suddenly CLANKS, SPUTTERS --

-- and DIES, rolling to a stop. In front of George's house.

DUNDOSKI
Oh fer fuck's sake.

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski gets out of his VAN and storms toward the stranded RV, as McLean parks and joins them.

DUNDOSKI
Is this what you knuckleheads call
low-profile?!

MCLEAN
I didn't know our profile mattered.

DUNDOSKI
Zena is in there, right now,
getting the evidence!

MCLEAN
Excellent!

Dundoski points at Ted and his dead Conspiracy-Mobile:

DUNDOSKI
NOT excellent!

Ted tries to restart it. McLean's phone rings. He ANSWERS A VIDEO-CALL: CAMERON's on the other end.

MCLEAN
Hey, look who's here:

He turns his lens to show Dundoski lifting the RV's engine-panel -- but Cameron's distracted:

INT. CAMERON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CAMERON

Do you have Zena?! She was
livestreaming inside the house and
then she went dead!

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

He starts for the house --

MCLEAN

You want me to go ring the bell?

DUNDOSKI

Touch that bell, we got a problem.

U-turning back to the RV:

MCLEAN

Maybe we'll just wait on that.

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - SOON AFTER

Madelyn, Norman and Zena sit around the formica-topped table.
A bottle of bourbon and three glasses are set out, beside the
open VHS case with the FLASH DRIVE in it.

MADELYN

We should tell the police.

ZENA

No! I mean: why?

NORMAN

It's -- evidence?

ZENA

It's evidence that he didn't have
any evidence!

MADELYN

That seems like something they
should know.

ZENA

How does it help? Except for
making George seem like even more
of a crackpot. So they're really
gonna work on that case.

MADELYN

It just -- feels wrong.

ZENA

If you care about George: you want his plan to work. He proved the killer is still out there. Now we have to get him.

NORMAN

That seems like exactly where the police come in.

ZENA

You think the police are going to let us keep provoking the killer, drawing him out, saying we have the evidence, getting him to make a mistake?! They can't -- they have play by the "rules."

MADELYN

You are really scary.

ZENA

Yes I am.

Madelyn and Norman exchange looks, trying to decide whether to go along with Zena's plan.

Zena catches their eye contact -- her eyes widen.

ZENA

Oh my gahd. No freakin' way. Get OUT!

MADELYN

What?

ZENA

Seriously?! You hooked up?!

Madelyn and Norman kind of panic -- busted:

NORMAN

No!

MADELYN

That's -- none of your --

ZENA

You did. Ohmigod -- I love it.

NORMAN

We did not -- hook --

ZENA

I can tell! And it was good!

Madelyn blushes. Zena holds out her fist. Madelyn can't help but bump it.

ZENA

This is so great. This explains everything. I am SO happy for you two. Wait! We have to celebrate.

She pulls out her phone to pose them for a GROUP SELFIE. Madelyn hastily stands up to stay out of the image.

MADELYN

Nope!

ZENA

Okay -- all right: but you know you can't keep this secret, right?

NORMAN

We can if you don't tell.

ZENA

Are you kidding?! You're glowing.

MADELYN

(sits again, amused)

Well, let's let everyone see for themselves, then. Yes?

(kindly)

And as for George's plan: it's too dangerous.

Madelyn TAKES the FLASH DRIVE from the VHS CASE and puts it into her purse. Uncomfortable silence.

ZENA

That's it? You're just saying no?

MADELYN

I'm sorry.

ZENA

All right -- well, I can still say whatever I want in my podcast.

MADELYN

(to Norman)

She can. It's really horrible.

NORMAN

You don't have a podcast.

ZENA

I'm taking over George's. I'm not going to let his death be for nothing.

MADELYN

It was for nothing.

ZENA

You can't stop me from doing this!

MADELYN

No. But I can stop you from being in this house.

ZENA

What?

MADELYN

Get out.

ZENA

But --

MADELYN

No, seriously: get out. You want to be the next victim -- great. But not here.

ZENA

I need his materi--

MADELYN

I don't care. Out. Scram. I am not enabling another murder.

Madelyn points to the door. Zena, aghast, turns to Norman, who shrugs.

Zena grabs up her stuff and HURRIES OUT, fighting tears.

They listen to the front door SLAM.

Madelyn takes a deep, guilty, resolved breath. Norman nods, uncertain but committed to her: *you did the right thing.*

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - SOON AFTER

Dundoski, Ted and McLean (with Cameron on Facetime) are GATHERED AROUND ZENA in George's front yard -- STUNNED:

CAMERON (ON PHONE)

There's no evidence? At all?!

MCLEAN

So then: what do we care if she won't let us use George's stuff?

TED

Yeah: it was all bullshit.

ZENA

Convincing bullshit! It worked: it triggered C.S.K! How are we going to keep doing that without his -- bullshit stuff?! George got us so close! We have to keep doing his plan. I need to know if you're with me. Am I insane? Should I do this?

MCLEAN

Well: those are actually two separate questions. But the answer to both is yes.

DUNDOSKI

Hell yes!

TED

It's a heist within a scam about a secret. How can we not?

ZENA

Okay, then: she's got all of George's material in there, all of his tapes and his files --

MADELYN (O.S.)

Really?! You're doing this here?!

Zena FREEZES -- turns: Madelyn and Norman watch from the doorway to the house.

A SHOWDOWN. Eyes locked on each other:

ZENA

I really don't want this to get ugly.

MADELYN

No, you don't.

Norman winces. Trying to de-escalate:

NORMAN

None of us do.

In the house, the landline phone BEGINS TO RING. Eyes on Zena, to Norman:

MADELYN
Would you get that?

As Norman reluctantly goes inside:

MADELYN
I want you all to listen to me.
Because this is very important.
Murder is not fun. It is not a
game. You should not be messing
with serial killers. I am taking
what we found to the police.

ZENA
What I found.

MADELYN
Get off my lawn.

Zena starts to argue, Madelyn FAKE-LUNGES at her:

MADELYN
SCOOT!

Zena backs up, as Norman reappears with the phone handset:

NORMAN
It's -- for you.

Madelyn reluctantly turns -- and takes it, wary: *a call for her on George's phone?*

MADELYN
Hello?

INTERCUT:

EXT. SMALL TOWN FISHING PIER - THE SAME TIME

A picturesque, even cliché, New England town: fishing boats at a dock, a row of local shops and restaurants.

ELMORE DEAKINS is on a cheap pre-paid cell. In his 70s, weathered, white hair, in plain neat clothes: denim, cotton.

DEAKINS
Is this...George Roizman's widow?

MADELYN
Ex...widow.

DEAKINS

I'm sorry. For your loss.

MADELYN

Thank you. Who is this?

DEAKINS

I just wanted to say I didn't do it.

Madelyn's eyes widen, looking at Norman and Zena.

MADELYN

You didn't do...what?

DEAKINS

I didn't kill him.

Madelyn -- in shock -- trying to keep her voice steady:

MADELYN

Are you saying -- this is the...Chemistry Set Killer?

Norman and Zena's jaws drop. EVERYONE MOVES in closer --

CAMERON (ON PHONE)

What is it? What did she say?

DUNDOSKI

(whispering)

Trace it! Trace the call!

Madelyn TURNS AWAY -- focusing on Deakins --

DEAKINS

I never liked that name. I didn't choose it.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

-- walking into the living room to get some privacy, but Norman and the Crime Crackers FOLLOW, LISTENING, intent:

MADELYN

But you are the one that...George was podcasting about.

DEAKINS

Yes.

Madelyn turns, amazed, to Norman and Zena: *he just said yes!*

MADELYN

And you're calling...to tell me you didn't kill him?

DEAKINS

Look: I just heard about this on the news. This is insane. Someone is taking my private -- life -- and using it. I don't know who, I don't know why. I just want you to know: I had nothing to do with this.

(beat)

I stopped. Forty years ago. I haven't -- done anything -- since then. This is a nightmare.

Madelyn is riveted, the man seems sincere. Zena WHISPERS:

ZENA

Can I talk to him?!

Madelyn walks away from her, trying to connect with Deakins:

MADELYN

You should tell the police.

DEAKINS

I can't do that.

MADELYN

You can if you're really innocent.

Zena, frustrated -- goes to the landline-base and PUTS THE CALL ON SPEAKER:

DEAKINS

Innocent of this. That may not be the end of it for the police.

Madelyn WHIRLS, startled. She doesn't answer Deakins -- uncomfortable that he doesn't know he's "broadcasting."

To fill the awkward silence:

NORMAN

How do we even know you're the real Chemistry Set Killer?

Deakins FREEZES. Close to disconnecting.

DEAKINS

Who is that?

Madelyn glares at Norman, who shrugs -- only semi-apologetic.

MADELYN

It's some -- people --

NORMAN

I'm a journali--

ZENA

(over him)

My name is Zena Morano. I'm leading a group of web detectives to solve the murder of George Roizman.

Madelyn and Norman look at Zena, appalled. She meets their gaze, a little scared she's gone too far.

DEAKINS

"...web detectives"?

ZENA

We hunt serial killers. From home. And...office. I mean: "hunt" is kind of just a -- way of putting it.

(beat)

We also want to hear your side of it. Of course.

DEAKINS

This is...fun for you? Entertainment?

ZENA

We're a community. Crowdsourcing when the authorities give up. We don't. We solve cold cases. All that stuff you got away with because no one was looking... now we're looking. And if anything happens to one of us -- like it did to George: all of us will know. And we'll all come after you.

This bold posturing gets thumbs-ups and nods from THE OTHERS.

DEAKINS

Have you ever caught one? A serial killer?

ZENA

Not so far. No.

DEAKINS

Have you thought about what might happen if you did?

As the threat sinks in, Zena is -- for the very first time -- speechless. Norman sees it...and steps up:

NORMAN

You didn't answer the question:
How do we know you are who you say?

DEAKINS

Why on earth would I call a dead man's house and pretend to be a serial killer?

NORMAN

Maybe you want attention.

DEAKINS

From a bunch of "web-sleuths"?

NORMAN

You didn't know who would pick up the phone.

ZENA

Tell us something only the killer would know. Like: from a crime scene. That the police didn't make public.

Silence. EVERYONE on EDGE.

DEAKINS

Carlene Williams had a violin in her closet. In the back. Like she never played it.

(beat)

What good does that do you? You don't know if it's true.

Shaken silence. All of them seeing it on each other's faces: he is...convincing.

NORMAN

Then -- can I ask: why did you stop?

Deakins hesitates. But it's kind of good to share:

DEAKINS

I fell in love.

Madelyn looks at the Crime Crackers. Realizing:

MADELYN
(to Deakins)
I believe you.
(beat)
We should tell the police.

DEAKINS
Please don't.

MADELYN
Why not?! If you didn't do it --

NORMAN
Because: how do we know that.

DEAKINS
Yes. Exactly.

Tense silence.

ZENA
We're like: the only ones who
really understand you. I have so
many questions.

NORMAN
I have one. But it's a big--

ZENA
Well, hang on: is it okay if I
record this part of our conver--

DEAKINS
No. It's not okay.

ZENA
How about this: shoot me your
contact info, so I can keep you in
the loop as we work on it.

Painfully awkward silence.

ZENA
Or...

NORMAN
If you didn't kill George: who did?

MADELYN
Whoa. Right.

DEAKINS

Yeah. I was wondering that.

NORMAN

Somebody pointed the cops right at you. Who did that, and why?

ZENA

You should team up with us.

DEAKINS

To...catch me?

ZENA

No! To clear your name.

DEAKINS

I don't think so.

ZENA

Then people are going to think you're a killer.

Awkward beat.

DEAKINS

I just wanted Mrs. Roizman to know.

MADELYN

I understand. And I appreciate it. Thank you.

DEAKINS

Take care.

He DISCONNECTS.

EXT. SMALL TOWN FISHING PIER - CONTINUOUS

Deakins removes the battery and DROPS the phone INTO THE WATER. Seagulls cry. Waves wash past the pier's barnacle-and-salt-crust-ed pillars. It is a beautiful day.

He looks down at his hands. They are TREMBLING slightly.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CAMERON (ON PHONE)

Did that really just happen?!

ZENA
Yes it did. And it changes
everything. Because --

NORMAN
Who killed George?

ZENA
Yes!

TED
We're back to square one.

MCLEAN
No: at square one -- we had a prime
suspect. Now it could be anyone.
Which means we need to look for
motives --

ZENA
Exactly: it's more episodes, it's
new characters -- red herrings --

NORMAN
Also: are we seriously not going to
tell the police we just talked to a
serial killer?

EXT. SOAP SHOP - THE SAME TIME

Deakins walks along a street of tourist-y old clapboard and
brick-fronted shops.

He unlocks THE SOAP SHOPPE ("*artisinal soaps, handcrafted
scents*") which jingles with authentic bells as he goes in.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn grimaces. Torn.

MADELYN
Retired serial killer.

NORMAN
Is there such a thing?

MADELYN
He stopped. A long time ago.

DUNDOSKI
Doesn't he still have to pay for
what he did?

INT. SOAP SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Antique racks and shelves of richly-colored soaps in baskets.

Deakins turns off the alarm, switches on the lights and the folk Americana music. But he is DISTRACTED.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THE SAME TIME

ZENA

Yes. So we're going to catch him.
And we're gonna find out who killed
George. That's our podcast: two
cases. Which we give to the police
when they're all wrapped up and
ready. We put it together. We
solve it. By ourselves. Because
we can! We can do this.

TED

And he knows that.

ZENA

Damn right he -- wait: what?

INT. SOAP SHOP - THE SAME TIME

Deakins STOPS WRITING on a "Daily Specials" chalkboard --
halfway through the impeccably-calligraphed word **lavender...**

TED (V.O.)

He's going to realize that call was
a mistake. It proves he's still
out there. And they can track
where it came from -- at least to
the cell-towers. That opens up new
leads.

(beat)

And he's not stupid.

...REALIZING.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THE SAME TIME

NORMAN

So he's going to want to...correct
that mistake.

CAMERON

Oh...crap.

Madelyn looks at Norman, uneasy. Like she's standing in a river that is suddenly rushing faster -- pulling her in.

MADELYN

What if we just...walk away?

ZENA

George wouldn't want us to --

MADELYN

George is DEAD! And he GOT that way by messing around with serial killers and cold cases! Did you NOT get the lesson here?! You have to STOP. Let the police catch the killers! You are NOT detectives!

Long awkward silence.

MCLEAN

Fair enough. Except for one thing.
(beat)
If we don't get him...he's probably gonna get us.

DUNDOSKI

He knows we know.

ZENA

That's right. He knows we know.

MADELYN

What if we tell him we won't come after him?!

NORMAN

How?

MADELYN

...in the podcast?

ZENA

Yes. Yes!

Zena goes to take Madelyn's hands, meeting the deer-in-headlights stare with condescending gentleness. Madelyn makes a big effort not to hit her.

ZENA

I know you didn't want to be in this. I know you don't respect us. You think we're all losers and fools. And maybe we are.

(beat)

(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)

But if we don't work together, he
can pick us off one-by-one. And no
one will know, and no one will
care. Unless we're a team.

(beat)

We're all Crime Crackers now.

Zena HUGS Madelyn. Madelyn, over Zena's shoulder, MEETS
Norman's eyes. He SHRUGS.

END OF EPISODE 1