

Meet George, Working on a Podcast

Rural Ohio/Pennsylvania. Low mountains, run-down small town.

George is almost 50 years old.

The Process: stop-and-start, he's not doing a live show, so we see his life while he is rewriting, thinking, recording.

He broadcasts out of a detached two-car garage.

A very UNSUCCESSFUL true-crime podcaster. Basically: no one is listening. (He should TALK ABOUT THAT) (*No one is listening - but I am on a mission*)

(Then - How does he make a living??)

He is a an OUTSIDER from "the norm" - quirky, stubborn person - **obsessive. (NOT OCD!)**

He REPORTS on his obsessiveness in the podcast. It's a source of pride - and a proof (for him) that he's right.

We also see it in the hoarder-density of his work space, a mess of file cabinets, shelves crammed with file boxes, etc.

He tells us HOW he got into it:

"My First Serial Killer" - the criminal that made him, as a child, first aware of evil.

remembers childhood FEAR of this killer, who was "popular" then: mid 1980s, When George was 11 or 12. (serial killers and "profiling" were becoming popular then.)

(George was born in 1972.)

What Brought This memory back to trigger the hunt?

Something CHANCE and TRIVIAL!

WOVEN-INTO this "meet George" scene:

Meet The Chemistry Set Killer - CSK - In The Podcast

George's SUMMARY of the case: A serial poisoner.

A COLD CASE.

Nicknamed by the FBI.

Killed 11 people from 1980-1985.

Victims were in different states, all ages, a wide variety of ages (but no kids), races, economic & social groups.

The poison was in their food/drink at home - which means he had the ability to break & enter without a trace.

Couldn't be caught because he (apparently) picked victims **TOTALLY AT RANDOM**. Smart like the Unabomber: didn't leave ANY clues, except his signature - THE POISON ITSELF: he created/designed it.

he wants to GET AWAY WITH IT - but make sure they KNOW he's getting away with it. He wants attention.

symptoms of the poison must be DISTINCTIVE and LISTED

George Promises Reveal - then Dies - POISONED!

George summarizes his investigation of the cold case - and then talks about:

HIS DISCOVERY OF NEW EVIDENCE - promises to REVEAL IT in an upcoming episode of the podcast.

He can't be JUST NOW announcing it - it has to be part 2 at least -- the idea of him having evidence has to have BEEN BROADCAST to provoke CSK and Zena...

Numbness - difficulty speaking, paralysis - then pain

Meet Madelyn working with Det. Elmes At Crime Scene

The POINT: Mad's been THROWN IN THE DEEP END

Meet Mad ARRIVING at the house - from the airport

She is planning to stay in a nearby hotel. Not intending to be here long - this is just a quick trip, small suitcase.

end of the same day the body was found: she's not that far away. Cops called to ask her about George, because he left papers saying she was next of kin.

East coast-ish. maybe NYC? Jersey?

Elmes is driving the scene - Mad is on the defensive

George's ex-wife - has never been in this house, has not been in contact: 30 years since they divorced - was 19 then/49 now

IN SHOCK at murder AND at finding out he made her responsible/executor

Crime Scene Unit working in the packed hoarder-garage/office - so they only have to seal that

How was the body found?

Meet DET ELMES - LOCAL COP

Elmes is PISSED: **BLAMES** George

it looks like the Serial Killer Killed George

George ATTRACTED the killer by making the podcast

(Instead of going to the police, he went on the internet and put himself in danger) He was essentially OBSTRUCTING JUSTICE

Elmes hates amateur sleuths

is HOSTILE to Madelyn because he assumes she is like her Ex

This is Elmes only scene in this episode

Elmes does not WANT a serial killer case, is not thinking it's a big break for him: he is confident it will be taken over by the FBI, so he's just trying to do proper work

Zena is calling, texting, during this - and she is NOT answering.

Scene ends with defining moment for Mad: **she stands up for herself - is unexpectedly tough and smart.**

Says she's pissed at George too - calls out Elmes as a small-town jerk - **and threatens to leave.**

After Police Leave: Madelyn Starts to COPE WITH George's Death -

Zena calls back - asking to come visit - Mad says NO

MEET Zena - Intercut from her home on the west coast

Zena was George's online friend/confidante

Zena always plays the **CONFIDANTE**: hapless, foolish, vulnerable, naive, idealistic - thinks in social media terms, throwing around buzzwords and big plans

(Madelyn would WANT to talk with Zena, because ZENA KNEW GEORGE)

Zena is ONLY asking to come visit the house. WANTS TO HELP MAD with the house/mess.

(LATER with the group she will explain Unspoken plan/goal: She knows George has HIDDEN basement storage under a trap door... but if she tells Madelyn that - Madelyn might tell the cops. so she wants to meet Mad personally, privately, see if she can win her over - and if not, to plan a theft...)

THAT EVENING: CrimeCrowd Zoom: Zena Proposes Taking Over Podcast & Finding CSK

BREAK THIS UP: a series of beats

MAYBE NO ZOOM - just give each player someone to talk to??!

INFORMAL GROUP who have gotten to know each other through CrimeCrowd site

and have regular Zoom meetings.

They have a Group NAME: The Serial Eaters?

Zena has called special meeting reporting George's Death

an unscheduled emergency meeting = cut to & see the interruption of everyone's everyday life?

they believe **it WAS the serial killer**, (the idea of a copycat does NOT enter their minds at this time!)

Meet Norman Murch

A pissed-off journalist in his mid-50s.

Lives in Akron, Ohio (site of his last job)

Lives in a one-bedroom apartment: sleeps in the living room (fold-out sofa), uses the bedroom as an office

He IS writing a LOT on his book

Scene at a repair shop

full technological BUT still types on a Selectric:

it broke & he's trying to get it repaired?

- broke? What does he do for money? Severance? Unemployment?

Does he drink a lot? Cliche of newspaper reporter - which might be attractive to him. Functional but drunk?

Meet Carl Dundoski - the meth dealer

run-down but a small city. Waterfront warehouse.

a meth dealer (and addict) with a personal desire to bring killers to justice, a feeling for victims and the underdog. "Why can't a meth dealer have a sense of justice?"

Meet Arvin McLean - wall st conspiracy nut

a genuine conspiracy nut

hyped and busy - needs group to help with the stress of high-demand (low in company) financial-industry job

Meet Nurse Shrimpton: she's out

drops out when Zena pushes her plan: only in this to relax and forget her troubles

Zena reports fail with Madelyn, Dundoski VOLUNTEERS to steal files

Zena strategizing what to do since Madelyn refused to give over George's "case files"

Dundoski is NOT near (Norman's the closest!) but is happy to drive all night - and jumps in, eager, aggressive and deranged

Norman tries to convince Zena NOT to rob Madelyn

Private talk AFTER meeting

He is NOBODY to her, she is VERY WRAPPED UP in her grand scheme

He fails.

Norman heads out to intercept - to PROTECT her

He feels PROTECTIVE and MOVED - the trigger is the crazed nature of Dundoski

BUT during Zena's report on her refusal to turn over files - he sees Madelyn ?, recorded Skypes?

Madelyn, mourning alone, gets drunk/stoned

THE NEXT DAY

Dundoski Tries To Get The Files - STEP I: Reconnaissance.

Dundoski rings the doorbell and tries to talk with Mad - to SNOOP out the sitch.

I lost my dog

I'm thinking of buying this house

I grew up in this house

Has she found Jesus?

When he rings the bell - she's DRUNK/HIGH

Dundoski waits outside. She doesn't leave. He goes in.

(she's smashed and in for the night.)

Norman interrupts D's Breakin - Fight!

Dundosky breaks in

Norman SEES that - so NORMAN Breaks in/Barges in -

- and tries to get D out -

- so they *FIGHT*
and Mad *HELPS NORMAN*

Zena & Co react to Norman interfering

Dundoski would REPORT IN! (He CALLS an emergency Zoom meeting)
IT IS the MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!

Zena heads out to George's home

Zena lives with her well-off california coastal parents (Orange Country)
She has to explain to them where she's going and we get a bit of insight into her

Norman Ends Up Staying The Night - In Bed Together - CHASTE

Norman sees there's only one bedroom and bed - and he makes the "executive decision" to let her rest there
(They lie ON TOP of the covers)

ROMAN HOLIDAY

Morning - they wake and make love

He (**very self-consciously**) asks if she is able to consent

AFTER: - Mismatched Strangers With A Lot to Talk about

Madelyn Tells Norman about Marriage To George

She was young and free-spirited. 18 when she married

what world is she from?

Their marriage was a frightening disaster.

Why?

It scared her straight: she became REALLY CONVENTIONAL.

How?

Had NO contact with George - didn't even know he had become a podcaster.

Now: George's death and this whole plunge into his unstable world is making her REFLECT on her life.

Making her want to be free-spirited and brave again.

Has just decided (or is just deciding) to change her life and study to be an EMT or a THERAPIST

The USE of George is to tell us about MADELYN!

He is what she SHUT DOWN in herself.

He was a musician when she met him: punk and grunge. Romantically, attractively “all or nothing” - which seemed very “rock and roll”

“He puts it all on the line” - DEVOTION, DETERMINATION - NOT CARING WHAT ANYONE THINKS

those are things she loved and admired - then got scared off of

but what he REALLY was was addictive, obsessive -

- and as a teen, he just happened to lock into music.

(Figure out the full story of his obsessive nature by telling his life AFTER the divorce TO Madelyn)

George’s STORY: after his rock and roll 20s -

He went from musician to DJ - late night DJ, one of those who talked all night at an FM college station - and thats how he transitioned into podcasting!

he had OTHER obsessions (NAME THEM!)

the start of the internet

orY2K

Madelyn left him TO SAVE HERSELF

Norman Explains About His Book (& Life)

Now that she’s able to hear it - we finally get the backstory on Norman in the group

For Norman, this community is just a single chapter in his major book surveying how wrong all of the 21st century is - how crowdsourcing ruins everything.

What are other chapters??

(Models for the book: Evil Geniuses, Anti-Social)

He has something of a “pitch” that he falls into when he talks about the book

We will NOT get WHOLE norman story (or whole Madelyn) here - it’s just the FIRST STEP

Norman’s Romantic (& Journalistic) Past

Norman has NEVER HAD a GOOD relationship.
feels WRONGED in his work AND relationships
Has many stories of EPICALLY bad relationships
BECAUSE he CHOOSES women who are CLEARLY DISASTERS
because he has GIVEN UP on the IDEA of a good relationship
because He is DEFENSIVE - AFRAID OF BEING HURT

- Over-critical
- over-analytical
- too idealistic Unable to compromise
- Lacks faith (operates from buried Fear)

He does NOT admit this is his fault

Why Madelyn likes Norman

Because SHE SEES THROUGH HIM

now doesn't EVERYBODY?

No...he actually must be GOOD at his analytical stuff

Madelyn points out GIVING UP is the CAUSE of his problems (not the effect): HE GAVE UP SO EARLY (Defensively) HE DOOMED HIMSELF

(therapist in training! a natural)

realistically...this would be obvious

if he had friends

BUT HE DOESN'T

SO FAR, SO GOOD

FIGURE OUT A DAMN TITLE!

Zena SHOWS UP

Upset about Norman interfering -

The Triangle begins with misunderstandings:

He feels he's "caught" them - this EXPOSES Norman

Madelyn lets Zena Look At The Files

Zena discovers George's Plan: LURE Killer with Fake claims

This is a MAJOR TURNING POINT

There IS NO NEW Evidence

George just figured he would PROVOKE the killer

story is a cascade of FUMBLES

Problem: time...George was a nutsy hoarder type, how is it that this bit of info is quickly available to Zena?

HOW does she discover this? Did he write it down? Podcast-record it?

How does everyone react to this news about George?

Mad is pretty pissed at him - the cop was right: George GOT HIMSELF MURDERED

Some of the Sleuths might rather ADMIRE this move. He risked his life to lure the killer - and it worked! So to them: bravo George you are a hero.

Norman is INTENDING TO LEAVE when the killer calls

Much as he likes Madelyn - he can't just STAY here and get into this craziness

Deakins calls Madelyn to say I DIDN'T DO IT

calls to say: I did NOT kill George.

That's the most important message - the ACTION of this contact.

NO THREAT YET - he is only ASKING them to be KIND

asks: Let sleeping dogs lie

INSOMNIA: calm conversation, deep menace

We MEET Elmore Deakins (The Serial Killer)

INTERCUTTING -

in theory he would call on a burner cell, in a public place NOT near his home (so he can't be tracked; they can locate cell towers where calls came from)...BUT then we don't get to see his life yet...

Something gentle, sweet. NOT "making up for what he did" - just **RETIRED**.

He is an artisanal-soap maker

(possibly uses fat from victims for soap...

possibly names his soaps things like "innocence")

In his 70s, wrinkled, weathered, white-haired. Wears simple workmanlike but artsy clothes - denim, cotton. Listens to "Americana" and folk music.

Sam Elliott

He says he STOPPED: (a lie, he's still doing it just not with poison) tells some story that makes him seem noble, changed, sympathetic.

what is this story?

He is a MONSTER

kills to FEEL POWER

BUT WE DON'T GET THAT HERE! Here we get the "retired killer"

TWIST: Killer Is ON THEIR TEAM - trying to find out who killed George

Deakins Has To Prove He is Real

Sleuths are SKEPTICAL: demand that the killer PROVE he IS THE KILLER to make his denial believable

Who exactly is skeptical? WHO IS ON THE CALL?

in order to convince them of innocence re-George, the killer has to PROVE he IS the killer.

He's startled: He did not PREPARE proof.

WHAT IS THE PROOF that he is the killer?

Theoretically "things only the killer would know"

But then how could they know if it was TRUE?!

That's a great beat - when they realize/say that.

He has to get unexpectedly HONEST and VULNERABLE

MAYBE HE REVEALS THAT he is PART OF THEIR GROUP all along (under a screen name, anonymous)

We need to unexpectedly feel: *gosh, this intelligent, reasonable retired killer has been unfairly dragged back into the spotlight by George's murderer*

They Believe Him

He has alibi - but telling them what it is would expose his new life...

Maybe he says: listen, it looks bad for me!

He knows about the Evidence Claim (but not what the evidence is...) and so -

he KNOWS A LOT ABOUT GEORGE. He WAS defensively researching. And now that George is dead, that research looks like murder-prep.

(He KNOWS A LOT ABOUT THEM ALL - so they are vulnerable -- but THEY WERE HUNTING HIM and he is reasonable and apologetic

Please help me, trust me.

But HOW can they help him? GET RID OF THE EVIDENCE GEORGE HAD?

Tell him what it was, at least - because so far there is NO CLUE pointing to him

Yes that's good because it leads directly to:

They tell him the truth: there IS no evidence

they tell him George was just baiting him -

everyone is relieved and then they realize THIS CALL is evidence...

This is going to be a SERIES of STEPS/REALIZATIONS -

a SET PIECE - one long call (on speaker for them) - or maybe it's actually a series of calls

He HAS to come after us now...and therefore WE HAVE TO go after him

He doesn't say he's got to kill them: **THEY** say it to each other

**"we are already IN OVER OUR HEADS -
the only way OUT now is catch this killer...AND whoever killed George**

Madelynn Norman & Zena Realize They're All In This Together Now...

BECAUSE they are ALL THREATENED

They can't CONVINCED the murderer they will keep his secret - he is after all, despite his apparent reason & humanity in the calls...a serial murderer, a monster.

they ALL need to be in danger from the killer
the end of the pilot

*now we need to get to - the end of episode:
they have agreed not to hunt/expose the killer
and the killer has agreed not to kill them
...and BOTH SIDES privately realize they can't TRUST the other keep their word*

SPARE PARTS

Killer lets loose: what is wrong with you people? Who made YOU the sword of justice?! SELF APPOINTED AMATEURS?! (Norman's point)

Zena's view: go public, because then the killer has no reason to kill them (i.e. killing them won't keep the secret if they put it in a podcast.) Transparency & publicity are their insurance

But of course the killer might not be so logical - at that point he might just be out for revenge, or hoping to intimidate others from hunting