

## 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 - At Work Turning Down A Promotion**

establishing her job and life and personality

make clear: she has not been UNHAPPY in her safe chosen life!

she's getting a promotion

a moment when we would hear about her qualities

she's turning down a promotion

Because she likes her life and doesn't want more trouble

meet Madelyn IN HER LIFE  
- to see what is getting DISRUPTED:  
how she is content, optimistic, safe  
**she is competent, unflappable,**  
**TELLS someone how to stay sane and safe**  
**and then see her living alone and HAPPY**  
**and then she GETS THE CALL...**

### **Madelyn arrives and meets 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.

*(And is it even legally possible to make someone the executor of your estate without their knowledge or consent?)*

**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

*(Possibly she forgot she had signed those papers...or possibly he did it without her knowing...)*

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

She is living in her parents home - which is big, luxurious and bourgeois

We want to see that she is VERY COMFORTABLE here: see her moving from room to room and doing life-stuff (eating, laundry, whatever)

she has been calling and texting Madelyn to try to get permission to visit

How did she get Mad's number??! Or even know Mad exists. Zena must have wormed her way into George's life enough to know Mad was his next-of-kin/executor so she'd be the way to get the files "Oh yes, George told me about you."

WE also SEE HER PARENTS HERE!

we also see her family's EMPLOYEES (housekeeper or cook or whatever)  
(she treats them like appliances)

Zena was George's online friend/confidante

(Zena SNOOPS on line into the lives of everyone she meets or works with)

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**

Zena is still operating from home

she is LEVELLING more (not entirely though) to WIN THE TEAM OVER TO HER PLAN

**BREAK THIS UP: a series of beats**  
*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:*

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?

Zena on Norman: she is dismissive of him - he is OLD, and has old values and she can't GET much from him

*- 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.

Zena on Dundoski - she is very flattering to Dundoski because she thinks he is an idiot - but also he is scary

*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!**

*Dundoski 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!

ideally let a TINY CLUE of Zena's murderousness show here!

: coldness MEANNESS (kind of like an algorithm REROUTING the GPS)

she's like HAL in 2001 BUT THIS IS BURIED - it is her DEEP DARK SECRET SELF

she does not do violence out of ANGER or emotion - it's a calculated career movie. (Sociopath much?) So when things go wrong she is NOT violent

### **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)

### **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 that's how he transitioned into podcasting!

***he had OTHER obsessions (NAME THEM!)***

***the start of the internet***

***or Y2K***

**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

### Zena SHOWS UP

Upset about Norman interfering -  
- tries to talk to Norman PRIVATELY FIRST.

### Madelyn lets Zena Look At The Files

How does Zena get this permission?

By disarming them by being PERSONAL - in fact, Mad partly does it just to get Zena OFF the personal stuff...

ZENA IS WORKING THEM - her chipper manipulative likeable self

**HER MAIN ACTION is to GET INVOLVED IN THE LOVE STORY! This is where she “reads the room” and realizes that there is a romance blossoming between these two OBSTACLES to her mission - so she ASSUMES THE ROLE of “RomCom Friend” and confidante!**

### Zena discovers George’s Plan: LURE Killer with Fake claims

There IS NO NEW Evidence: George just figured he would PROVOKE the killer

*Problem: time...how is this info 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

## 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 artisinal-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.

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

On the call in George's house are Mad, Norman and Zena.

*Who exactly is skeptical? Norman? Zena?*

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. 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 (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.

that leads directly to them HELPING HIM BY:

### **They tell him the truth: there IS no evidence**

they tell him George was just baiting him -

### **AFTER: everyone is relieved - but then they realize THIS CALL is evidence...**

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

### **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 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 CONVINCe 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)