

CRIME CRACKERS

(formerly the
UNITITLED PODCAST-KILLER PROJECT)

Written by

Glenn Gers

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**THIS IS A ROUGH DRAFT, OFFERED FOR
EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY!**

**(It's a MESS! To demonstrate the MESSY
progress of creative work.)**

INT. GEORGE'S STUDIO - DAY

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

He sifts HANDWRITTEN PAGES on his disaster-area of a work-table. Over-stuffed folders, aged xeroxed 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 impulsively 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 to this
podcast. I know that. I have 14
subscribers, and ten of them are
from the cold-case web-sleuth
forums. Shout-out to all you Crime
Crackers.

(beat)

No one else cares. But in five
weeks, that's all 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.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

People were panicked. Everyone suddenly afraid of their own pantries and refrigerators.

He frowns. He's dizzy. Tingling, breathless. 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

Vann...ishh...td.

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

GEORGE

Oh no. 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 George's SHABBY TWO-CAR 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 into his weed-strewn BACKYARD -- takes a few convulsive steps along the cracked, weed-strewn driveway - - trying to get to his run-down clap-board house...and then SPRAWLS face-down in the dirt.

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

George TWITCHES and DIES, helpless, alone.

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!

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
 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.

BRENDA
 But -- Director. With a door.

Other WORKERS hurry past. This has suddenly become awkward.

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 -- okay?

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)

What?! 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. Thirty years ago.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

DET. LEWIS ELMES -- a tough, chunky, middle-aged white guy in UNIFORM -- sits at George's desk, listening:

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)

The first thing Murray Simpson felt on August 9th, 1981, when the poison entered his bloodstream was 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, weed-strewn driveway -- she looks down to free it, sees the CHALK OUTLINE -- FLINCHES with a GASP and BACKS AWAY, dropping the case.

ELMES

You all right?

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

MADELYN

Not even a little bit.

ELMES

You're Morrison? The ex?

Elmes stays where he is. Holding up his badge, he waits for her to walk, uneasily, into the garage.

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 -- sad:

MADELYN

He had paperwork in his desk: George grew up.

ELMES

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

Madelyn takes Elmes in.

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. Bulletin

(MORE)

ELMES (CONT'D)

boards, chat rooms. People with nothing to do, so they do my job -- badly.

(with distaste)

"Web sleuths."

MADELYN

Okay, yeah...that just sounds bad.

ELMES

We've turned this place upside down. And the house.

MADELYN

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

Elmes shakes his head, frustrated:

ELMES

CSK's been cold for forty years. If he's even alive, he's like seventy. 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 will take this mess off my hands.

MADELYN

And if it's not?

Elmes sighs. This whole case is already a mess and a pain.

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.

MADELYN

Ex. Spouse.

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

MADELYN

Dumb shit.

(beat)

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.

Elmes sighs, hands her his business card.

ELMES

Yeah. All right.

(beat)

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, looking at her dead ex-husband's house...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!!

INTERCUT:

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

ZENA
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?

Madelyn, startled by Zena's gushing friendliness, 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
(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)

Madelyn Morrisons -- there were seven possible -- and one was you! At a company fundraising picnic.

(beat)

It is you, right? You are 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

(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)

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. It's about the death-spiral of civilization in the 21st Century.

(getting out his phone)

So it feels right to bang it out on a machine I bought when I worked in D.C...at 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.

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

TED, a full-time conspiracy theorist in his 30s, 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 the meeting.

(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.

SHRIMPTON

Well, the woman is bereaved.

ZENA

She didn't care about George! She hadn't seen him in thirty years.

MCLEAN

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

ZENA

If I tell her George left a secret tape 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.

SHRIMPTON

Why would they bury it?!

TED

Somebody let this guy get away thirty years ago.

NORMAN

What are we talking about?

DUNDOSKI

George is dead.

NORMAN

George?!

SHRIMPTON

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.

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, 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:

NORMAN

Why not just ask her to give it to the police?

ZENA

No! We're not giving it to anyone! This is a unicorn. This is ours. We need to take over George's podcast and finish this, the way he wanted to.

DUNDOSKI

I'll go get the tape.

SHRIMPTON

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

DUNDOSKI

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

Terrible silence.

MCLEAN

Whoa.

NORMAN

Wait a second, 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.

Carl starts to grab equipment and put them into a saddle-bag:

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.

SHRIMPSON
Gotta say: I'm with Norman on this.

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

SHRIMPSON
I'm sorry, no: I like to pretend we're detectives and all, but I can't be involved in this. This is effed-up. I'm out.

Shrimpton 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 very 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 steps out, carrying his saddle-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.

Dundoski grimaces, annoyed 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.**

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

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn walks from room to room, turning on lights.

She comes upon George's DESK. Hesitantly examines the cluttered 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-(**whatever number**) to **Pennsylvania.** (OR Calculating route to)

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SOON AFTER

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

That hits her hard. She suddenly YELLS at them:

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

MADELYN (CONT'D)

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:

Carl Dundoski, biker/meth dealer. 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. My
sister the sister. 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'll be back tomorrow. I can't
let this take over my life. It's a
(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)
 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. I'm not.
(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 PICKUP - 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 truck, 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 Oakdale
 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.

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 truck, 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, keeping Norman back -- SHUTS OFF THE MUSIC. She is wary, confused and stoned (but trying to conceal that.)

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)

Do you need assistance?

Norman DISCONNECTS, eyes on Madelyn. He's leaning in pain and 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
Shut up, 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, face to face.

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

No: I'm "embedded." Because I think 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 equal.

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

Whhhoooooo -- 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, no -- 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 the 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:

INTERCUT:

INT. CAMERON'S ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Cameron is doing homework, sprawled on their bed:

ZENA
I have to get out to George's.
Taking the red-eye. Norman showed
up and hit Dundoski with a lava
lamp.

CAMERON
Are you serious? Why?!

ZENA
Focus: I need you to do something.

CAMERON
Okay I'm here -- what can I do?

ZENA
Tomorrow is my parents' thirtieth
anniversary. I need you to go to
that for me. 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

Gotcha.

ZENA

One other thing: you need to sing a song.

CAMERON

No way. Sorry.

ZENA

You want to be a singer, right?

CAMERON

I'm working on that --

ZENA

Into the deep end! Boom! A star is born.

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 video for me.

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
Nope. 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 -- 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. Come on --
you know me: I work hung-over all
the time. This is different. I
think it was the octopus. Ever
eaten octopus? Don't eat octopus.

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 sixpack of Gatorade.

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! You have a 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.

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 SHRIMPSON, 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:

SHRIMPSON

How are we today, Mrs. Weitzman?

WEITZMAN

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

SHRIMPSON

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!

Shrimpton winces a bit, keeping busy with her work.

SHRIMPSON
Some people get too involved.

WEITZMAN
Oooh. Drama?

SHRIMPSON
Kind of.

WEITZMAN
Well: you're better off.

SHRIMPSON
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.

Shrimpton is taken aback. Puts on a smile.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSE'S STATION - MORNING

Shrimpton 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 Ricksville?

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 groin.

MADELYN

Oh, hey! Hi.

NORMAN

Hi.

MADELYN

You probably want your clothes.

NORMAN

I kind of do.

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.

(beat)

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 -- in mourning.

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

NORMAN
 So why...did you?

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
 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 rolls 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:

ZENA (V.O.)

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

It's EMPTY -- except for a FLASH DRIVE. Zena TURNS THE LENS to look right in our eyes, AWESTRUCK.

INT. GEORGE'S STUDIO - DAY (VIDEO CLIP)

Zena has set the phone on a tripod, so she can broadcast herself REACTING LIVE.

ZENA

Okay George. Talk to us:

ON ZENA'S LAPTOP: 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!

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

No evidence?! Seriously?!

Scrubs the video back a bit, plays it again:

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)
 -- use myself as bait. Announce I
 have new evidence, even though I
 don't. Really hype it up --

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 grabs 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 fabulous 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 he hastily starts his engine and pulls out to follow.

INT. DUNDOSKI'S PICKUP - 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 f*ck's sake.

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski gets out of his pickup 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 checks it, and ANSWERS A VIDEO-CALL: CAMERON's on the other end.

MCLEAN
Hey, the gang's all here!

He turns his phone to show Cameron Dundoski lifting the RV's engine-panel.

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

MCLEAN

You want me to go ring the bell?

McLean, focused on his phone, starts for the house --

DUNDOSKI

You touch that bell, we got a
problem.

Freezing, coming 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!

(beat)

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 even more like a
(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)
 crackpot. 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 the
 police's job.

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 this.

Zena catches that eye-contact -- and her own eyes widen.

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

MADELYN
 What?

ZENA
 You two?! Seriously?! Did you
hook 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, and smile.

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?! It's visible. You're glowing.

Madelyn sits, amused.

MADELYN
Well, let's let everyone see for themselves, then. Yes?
(kindly)
And as for George's plan: it's too dangerous.

Madelyn CLOSES the VHS CASE with the FLASH DRIVE inside, and puts it into her purse. Uncomfortable silence.

ZENA
Fine. But I can say whatever I want in my podcast.

MADELYN
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 front 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, slightly-guilty, resolved breath. Norman nods, privately 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?! George got us close.
I'm not giving up now. I just need
to know if you're still with me.
Am I insane? Should I try to 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, all of his tapes
and his files in there --

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.

The landline phone, inside, BEGINS TO RING. Madelyn never takes her eyes off 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

Mad?

(when she turns)

It's for you.

Madelyn it, wary: *why 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.

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

So you do this...for fun?

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 you: 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.

MADELYN
We should tell the police it wasn't
him.

DEAKINS
Please don't.

MADELYN
Why not?!

NORMAN
Because: how do we know that.

DEAKINS
Yes. Exactly.

Uncertain silence. Now what?

ZENA
Is this as weird for you as it is
for us?

DEAKINS
Far more weird, I think.

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.

MCLEAN
It's like a whole new mystery.

ZENA
Yes!

MCLEAN
We need a list of suspects. 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 said it: he stopped.

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

MCLEAN

That call is new evidence. It
proves he's really still out there.
And they can track where it came
from. At least to the cell-towers.
Open up new leads.

ZENA

No: this is our case! Our show.
We give it to the police when it's
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. 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

(eagerly)

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)

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