

# CRIME CRACKERS

(formerly the  
UNITITLED PODCAST-KILLER PROJECT)

Written by

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*April 1, 2022*

**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

A pool of light in an endless darkness. **GEORGE ROIZMAN**, 49 -- going gray, a bit sloppy -- takes a drag on his cigarette, exhales curls of conspiratorial smoke and switches on his desktop podcasting setup. Grave, quiet, intent, like an old FM radio midnight-shift DJ:

GEORGE

The victim first feels a buzzing, thickening numbness of the tongue and throat. They feel frightened. The room seems to spin. They can't focus, they can't feel. They are fully aware that something insidious is creeping through their bloodstream, into their nerve endings and brain. But paralysis is already setting in. They are unable to move, or speak. Frantically trying to get oxygen. But they can't.

As he reads from a hand-written script, he looks at yellowed NEWS CLIPPINGS, OLD SNAPSHOTS AND CRIME SCENE PHOTOS.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

The killer had broken into Murray Simpson's home days or maybe even weeks before, and laced a jar of peppers with a unique mixture of plant toxins.

(beat)

He would use it again on ten more victims. In different states. Different ages, races, economic and social groups. A profiler's nightmare: random targets.

(beat)

But he did sign his work. The poison itself was his "signature": he created it -- to make sure they KNEW he was getting away with murder.

(beat)

The F.B.I. Serial Killer Task Force would name him "The Chemistry Set Killer."

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was eleven years old. And it was all over the news. People were panicked. Everyone was suddenly afraid of their own pantries and

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

refrigerators. My first serial killer. The first time I became aware of human evil.

(beat)

And then he just stopped. He killed 11 people and then vanished -  
- in 1985.

Now it's a cold case. No one cares. No one is listening to this podcast. I know that. I have 14 subscribers. And ten of them are people I know from the Crime Crackers web-sleuth community.

(beat)

But that's all going to change. In five more episodes. Five weeks. When I reveal the new evidence ...identifying the Chemistry Set Killer. For the first time.

And I will reveal this evidence, on this podcast. Stay tuned.

George shuts off the recorder. Takes a deep, satisfied breath. Stretches, twists his back.

Then he crosses the dark silent studio to press a switch on the wall.

With a GRINDING noise, a garage-door-opener LIFTS one entire wall of the studio. Light floods in -- exposing:

The unfinished walls and rafters of George's SHABBY TWO-CAR GARAGE. Metal shelving jammed with cardboard file-boxes and junk. Canned goods, bottled water, and other household supplies.

EXT. GEORGE'S STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

George walks across his weed-strewn backyard to his run-down house.

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

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

George lets himself in. He gets (a snack and a drink).

PLAYBACK:

GEORGE

Murray Simpson was a florist in Perkins, Tennessee. Age 37. He did a full day's work on August 15th, 1978, and then went roller-skating at Al's Roll-O-Rama, down on Carbon Street. When he got home, he took a shower, and then made himself a sandwich and a can of soup.

(beat)

It was the sandwich that killed him. The pickled peppers, in fact.

He gets an odd expression. Sticking his tongue. It feels fuzzy, thick. He's getting dizzy.

George recognizes what is happening. He was just talking about it. He is feeling the toxins within.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Oh no.

He staggers for the wall-mounted land-line telephone. But his paralyzed fingertips cannot grip and it falls to the linoleum floor.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

No no no.

But it sounds like "nuh nuh nuh" because his throat is closing up.

He's wheezing. Gasping. He staggers and falls to his knees - pulling down a (something).

George DIES, lying on the garage floor, staring up at us.

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."

**MADLYN 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.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - ELEVATORS - SOON AFTER

**BRENDA** (Human Resources) is already going down when Madelyn gets into the elevator. Both face forward, but Brenda glances and wrestles in the silence -- until:

BRENDA  
We have a meeting tomorrow.

MADELYN  
(startled)  
Human Resources?

BRENDA  
Yes! I'm so sorry -- I shouldn't --  
I'm not supposed to tell you --

DING! The elevator doors OPEN, revealing the LOBBY --

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  
You're getting a promotion!

MADELYN  
I'm sorry?

BRENDA  
Director Of Analyst Services! A four-percent raise, plus your own office! With a door. That you can close. I'm sorry, I couldn't help it! I just love it when a promotion is... righteous.  
(beat)  
24 years. Worked your way up. The first woman in your department. The first female supervisor. You go, girl!

Madelyn tries to process all this. Takes a deep breath.

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...

They stand in the lobby as other WORKERS walk past. This has suddenly become awkward. But Madelyn is calm, even kind:

MADELYN  
Nah.  
(beat)  
Thank you though. I'm good.

BRENDA  
It's -- more money. And a door.

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

BRENDA  
No.

MADELYN  
I like what I do all day. I like  
the work. I like my team. I like  
my desk.  
(beat)  
Are you okay?

Brenda looks like she might cry. Madelyn's phone rings. She frowns, checking it:

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry -- I have to take this:  
it's the police.

BRENDA  
Police?!

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

MADELYN  
Hello? Yes it is.  
(listens)  
Oh my God -- when? How?!

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

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
No -- we -- I didn't even know  
where he...  
(listens)  
Yes -- of course I can. I'm sorry:  
where is this, exactly?  
(nodding)  
I'll be there tomorrow.

She disconnects. Not sure exactly how to say this, she just plunges in honestly:

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
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** sits at George's desk, listening to George's voice. Elmes is a middle-aged pudgy white guy, but not soft.

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)  
...(podcast stuff)

The garage door is rolled-up, so he can see Madelyn ducking the CRIME SCENE tape and dragging her wheeled carry-on --

-- past a POLICE CAR, a CRIME SCENE van and a LOCAL NEWS van. She stumbles slightly on the cracked, weed-strewn driveway.

ELMES  
You all right, there?

MADELYN  
Not even a little bit.

ELMES  
You're Morrison, the ex?

Madelyn nods, distracted -- and distressed -- by the CHALK OUTLINE on the concrete garage floor.

ELMES (CONT'D)  
(showing his badge)  
Elmes. When was the last time you spoke to Mr. Roizman?

She makes a big effort to shake off the shock and match Elmes' practical matter-of-factness.

MADELYN  
It was outside CBGB's, in New York. We had a gig -- I was the singer, George was keyboards. 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. That was in 1992.

ELMES  
I'm sorry. The paperwork in his desk didn't give us any living relatives. So you were it.

MADELYN  
(sad, impressed)  
He had paperwork in his desk: George grew up.

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

MADELYN  
Evidence of what?

Elmes

ELMES  
(re: studio)  
George was podcasting that he had new evidence, identifying CSK: The Chemistry Set Killer.



Elmes sighs, taking in the conspiracy-theory-corkboard, the boxes of files, shaking his head:

ELMES (CONT'D)

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**. She frowns and declines it, turning the phone off and putting it away during:

ELMES

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

(with distaste)

"Web sleuths."

MADELYN

(winces)

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, looking at George's **studio** -- annoyed, frustrated:

ELMES

CSK has been cold for forty years. If he's 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

(MORE)

ELMES (CONT'D)

the FBI will take this mess off my hands.

MADELYN

And if it's not?

ELMES

George tended bar at the ().  
**Everybody liked George.** 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 Madelyn's turn to look around at the shabby garage-studio. Sighs, shaking her head.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

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 shit -- including his murder.

(beat)

I'm saying "murder." In a crime scene. Where my...

(beat)

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

Elmes sighs. He hands her his business card.

ELMES

Yeah. All right.

(beat)

You be here a few days?

MADELYN

No, I need to go home tomorrow.  
 I'm staying at the - (hotel)

Elmes walks out. She nods, absently -- looking around at all the stuff of George's life since then. Photos of him as a radio DJ, etc.

Madelyn is left alone in George's home. She takes a deep slow breath - trying to let out all of her pent-up feelings.

She turns her phone back on: TWELVE NOTIFICATIONS -- all missed calls from **ZENA MORANO**.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

I don't know who the hell you are.

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We meet **ZENA MORANO**: aspiring influencer, 23, in the living room of the luxurious Southern California house she grew up in. Out of which she has not yet managed to move. She's staring at her phone.

ZENA

No you did not. Bitch.

She makes a decision, starts to work her phone, making airline reservations -- as **ZENA'S MOM** comes through, as made-over as her daughter:

ZENA'S MOM

Z, fish for dinner?

ZENA

I won't be here. A friend of mine just died. I'm going.

ZENA'S MOM

Oh my God! Who?!

ZENA

You don't know him.

Zena's phone rings -- hyped, excited, she snaps at her mom:

ZENA (CONT'D)

Shut up.

(into phone, joyous:)  
Madelyn!!

INTERCUT:

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn is startled by Zena's gushing friendliness.

MADELYN

Hi?

ZENA

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

Small uncomfortable pause.

MADELYN

Who are you?

ZENA

Oh my God, I'm sorry -- of course: my name is Zena Morano. I was a friend of George's.

MADELYN

How do you know...my number?

ZENA

I knew your name. Of course. From George. So I searched for all the Madelyn Morrissions, 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 faded old framed photo of George and Madelyn in the East Village in New York, back in their musician days together.

ZENA (CONT'D)

-- and there's a software that can age or de-age photos, they use it for victim-profiling and missing persons -- so I ran some of the photos of different people named Madelyn Morrison -- there were about seven possible -- and then I found a shot of you on your corporate website because you were at a fundraising picnic...

(beat)

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

Awkward beat. Kindly:

MADELYN

Ex-wife.

ZENA

How are you? Are you okay?

MADELYN

I don't know.

(beat)

How did you know George?

ZENA

"Corkboard, Yarn and Pins."

MADELYN

I'm sorry, what?

ZENA

Oh! I thought maybe the police -- or something...

(catching her up)

"Corkboard, Yarn & Pins" is the name of a web-sleuthing group George and I were in. In the Crime Cracker Forums.

MADELYN

Oh...Crime Crackers.

ZENA

It's a community of home-based non-professional detectives who meet online to solve cold cases.

MADELYN

I think you might have known George better than I did, then.

ZENA

Oh, no -- that's crazy. I loved George, he was a doll, but we just worked together. On cases.

(beat)

And now -- he's a case.

(beat)

That would be like: so cool. If it wasn't so awful.

MADELYN

You think this killer did it: the one George was hunting in his podcast?

ZENA

I do. One hundred percent. George was gonna get him. That's why we need to pick up where he left off.

ZENA (CONT'D)

Have the police -- found anything?  
The evidence?

MADELYN

No. Do you know where it is?

ZENA

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

MADELYN

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

ZENA

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

MADELYN

No. No thank you -- that's very  
kind -- but no.

ZENA

I want to.

MADELYN

I may not even be here.

ZENA

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

MADELYN

That would be creepy.

Zena grimaces. She 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 (CONT'D)

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.

(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)

(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. TYPEWRITER REPAIR SHOP - AKRON, OH - LATE AFTERNOON

**(Funky hipster type place!)**

He is inspecting an IBM SELECTRIC typewriter.

**NORMAN MURCH**, 58 years old, watches apprehensively. He is a newspaper journalist, and something of a mess. But still trying, the world hasn't left him behind just yet.

The Repair guy looks up from the machine, wipes his hands on a rag.

REPAIR GUY

Gonna take about ten days. And cost you more than just buying a laptop.

NORMAN

I have a laptop. I just like using this for my book. I'm writing a book about the death-spiral of civilization in the 21st Century. So it seems...appropriate.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Nah. I've had it a long time. Since I worked in D.C. The Post.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

I like the noise it makes. The feel.

There's an ORNATE RINGTONE from within Norman's pocket - he pulls out his phone. As he checks it -

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Oh, crap -- Excuse me --

As he gets it out and shuts off the alert,  
-- he opens Zoom on his phone as:

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Do you need a credit card now?

The Repair Guy nods, and Norman PROPS his phone on the counter, facing himself so he can watch as he hands over the credit card --

-- we see the Zoom room on his phone and the FACES OF THE GROUP in their windows:

INT. FULL SCREEN: ZOOM MEETING - CONTINUOUS

Norman's window - wobbly and hand-held, in the shop - joins:

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

**ARVIN MCLEAN**, early-20s, a first-year trader on Wall Street, speaking from his desk, after hours.

McLean sits at his cramped workspace - one desk in long packed row of desks, walled-in by their multiple MONITORS. The factory of finance.

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

*(DURING ALL ZOOM CALLS: we often cut to the LIVE LOCATION of the people in the "windows" - so we don't only see them as part of the Zoom, we also are WITH THEM in their LIVES.)*

And Zena, at home - running the meeting:

ZENA  
...and I tried to convince her to let me go there, 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. I'm more bereaved than she is!

MCLEAN

Why didn't you just tell her you want to look at the files?!

ZENA

If I tell her there's a ( ) of George's secret files - and she doesn't want to help us - which she clearly does not - then she'll go tell the police about the files, and then game over!

NORMAN

What are we talking about?

DUNDOSKI

George is dead?

NORMAN

George?!

SHRIMPSON

Poisoned.

NORMAN

No way. Like - poisoned?

ZENA

He was clearly getting too close.

SHRIMPSON

He had the evidence. He told us he was gonna drop it.

ZENA

The Chemistry Set Killer is alive.

DUNDOSKI

And that evidence is sitting in a ( ).

NORMAN

Wait - what?!

ZENA

George told me he kept his important files in.

But the total bitch who's got

(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)

control of everything now won't let me in.

DUNDOSKI

This is why we need to go over there and take care of business.

NORMAN

A...police bitch?

ZENA

No. George's ex-wife. Madelyn Morrison. This office manager type from New Jersey with a stick up her butt.

DUNDOSKI

Is this her?

Dundoski screen-shares - Google-image-search photos: several "Madelyn Morrisons"- one is an etching of a 15th century Nun, another is a photo from the 1930s - but also one or two from corporate-communications of MADELYN.

EXT. TYPEWRITER REPAIR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Norman is walking out of the shop, eyes fixed on the phone - swerving to avoid PASSING PEOPLE on the sidewalk -

- slowing as he takes in MADELYN's PHOTO. Listening:

ZENA

Yes. I don't know, maybe I should just tell her. Get her on board. I mean this is once-in-a-lifetime moment. Look at all the groups on Dr. Sleuth, trying to solve crimes. How many of them ever actually get to do anything?! Zero. George is the only one.

(beat)

I bet she would want us to do that.

(beat)

We need to take over George's podcast. I want to finish this. I want to take down the Chemistry Set Killer, the way he wanted do -- the power of online crime-solving community. The power of nobodies.

SHRIMPSON

Or: just ask her to give them to the cops.

ZENA

Are you out of your mind?! This is ours.

CONSPIRACIST

And how do we know the cops won't bury it?

SHRIMPSON

Why would they bury it?!

CONSPIRACY

Maybe just to cover up their mistakes - or maybe there's more to it. Somebody let this guy get away thirty years ago. Why?

SHRIMPSON

It's not a conspiracy, Arvin --

DUNDOSKI

I'll go get it.

ZENA

She's not going to give it to us.

DUNDOSKI

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

INT. WALL STREET OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Terrible silence from everyone. Each conjuring up their own mental image of Dundoski "getting" anything from anyone.

MCLEAN

Whoa.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman is driving, the phone on a hands-free dashboard rig.

NORMAN

Wait a second, nobody is "getting anything" from this woman. You can't just -- get stuff --

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Zena is leaning in, literally. Seeing a new hope rise:

ZENA

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

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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 is already starting to grab equipment and put them into a leather motorcycle saddle-bag -- getting ready to go:

ZENA

When she's not there.

DUNDOSKI

Well -- duh. No witnesses.

ZENA

Please don't say it like that.

DUNDOSKI

Text me her address.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

NORMAN

Do NOT text him that --

INT. ZOOM GROUP (FULL SCREEN ZOOM MEETING) - CONTINUOUS

Zena mutes Norman. But:

SHRIMPSON

Maybe I'm not supposed to say this but -- isn't Carl a tweaker?

Zena mutes everyone.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman grimaces, pulling the car over, dangerously, horns blaring around him --

NORMAN

Oh for --

-- grabbing the phone and texting into the CHAT

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ZENA

Hey guys, I don't think it's productive to have everybody talking at once -- but I appreciate all of you so much, I really do --

Zena sees that Norman has scribbled **I NEED TO TALK TO YOU!** On an old-fashioned flip-top reporter's notepad and held it up to his camera, filling the screen.

Zena takes a breath, keeps composed, and unmutes him.

ZENA (CONT'D)

Norman: do you have a question?

NORMAN

You cannot let him go to that woman's house!

ZENA

We need that evidence.

NORMAN

Fine. Let's talk to her.

DUNDOSKI

I'll talk to her.

NORMAN

Nope! Nope!

ZENA

I think we can set up some guidelines for Carl --

NORMAN

Carl is a meth dealer!

DUNDOSKI

That doesn't negate my humanity, dude.

MCLEAN

That's fair.

DUNDOSKI

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

ZENA

I believe that. Carl has been a really involved member of our community.

SHRIMPTON

I gotta say: I'm with Norman on this.

ZENA

I think we're facing a generational issue here.

NORMAN

He's a METH DEALER.

ZENA

Okay: Carl will you promise not to harm George's ex-wife while you're getting the evidence?

DUNDOSKI

Except in self-defense.

SHRIMPTON

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 --

Shirmpston disconnects. Norman is TALKING heatedly in his window - MUTED. MCLEAN is laughing, muted, in his window.

ZENA

You know what, I hear you all -- I really do. But I think we need to do this. Carl: call in before you do anything, okay?

Carl is checking the magazine on a very large .45 pistol:

DUNDOSKI

Roger that.

He snaps the magazine into the grip and puts the gun in his waistband.

Zena forces a big encouraging smile.

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.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Carl leans over close to his laptop, where Zena is watching from the Zoom window -- calm, mature, a hero:

DUNDOSKI

Hey: I got this. I will not do anything to make you sorry you entrusted me with this mission.

He shuts the laptop and goes to the door -- and FLIPS OUT, reacting to something outside --

-- turning, pulling the gun out and FIRING IT into a nearby wall three times:

DUNDOSKI (CONT'D)

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

INT. NORMAN'S APT. - LATER

A one-bedroom in a boring, boxy apartment building. His taste runs to MidCentury Modern (i.e. 20th century and old).

Well-organized books on shelves going up to the ceiling, file cabinets along one wall. An sturdy wooden desk, where the Selectric Typewriter should be.

Norman lets himself in

He sits on worn sofa and opens his laptop. Types into search.

**MADELYN'S PHOTO**, from the Corporate Website.

He tries a (*reporter-friendly "yellow pages" finder site*) - find a number for Madelyn. Dials it.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

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

Maybe sad. Hard to say. Taking in George's home: in disrepair and isolated and not at all what she would have wished for him.

Her phone rings. She glances at the number, doesn't know it. Lets it go to voicemail.

INT. NORMAN'S APT. - CONTINUOUS

NORMAN

(into phone, voicemail)

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

(winces)

Please call me.

Norman disconnects. He sighs. That was lame.

**(He has her contact info and George's address from ZENA!)**

INT. NORMAN'S APT. - LATER

It's getting dark out. He has not found a way to reach her.

He pours a bourbon on the rocks. Drinks it.

NORMAN

Oh...hell.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - DUSK

Norman drives up a ramp onto a highway.

Passing a sign indicating he is heading to Pennsylvania.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn is walking through the house, turning on lights.



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

She stands by the floor-to-ceiling BOOKSHELVES, which are also crammed with FRAMED PHOTOS and TRINKETS.

*(sound system - LARGE speakers, reel-to-reel etc!)*

Picks one up: a TIN BIRD.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SOON AFTER

Madelyn slides open the closet door and takes in George's CLOTHING.

That hits her hard. He's not going to be wearing them any more. She suddenly YELLS at his clothes:

MADELYN

Screw you, George! I have a life!  
A life that makes sense! I'm not  
staying here to clean up your mess.  
What were you thinking -- calling  
out a serial killer?!

(beat)

Your whole damn life was gestures,  
George! Didn't you get tired?!

(beat)

Oh no. Was THAT what this was?

(beat)

A way to end it all?

(beat)

Please tell me you didn't want  
this, George.

The DOORBELL rings.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - SOON AFTER

Madelyn answers it, revealing:

Carl Dundoski, biker meth dealer. Big, intimidating,  
hairy...and polite. Trying to get a sense of Madelyn and the  
situation as he distractedly makes up random bullshit:

DUNDOSKI

Hey. I -- uh, grew up in this  
house. I was wondering if I could  
just come in and walk around a  
little.

MADELYN

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

Dundoski nods.

DUNDOSKI

No worries. You have a blessed day.

Madelyn shuts the door and shakes off the weirdness.

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

She's got her earbuds in, and is SORTING THROUGH George's personal papers as she talks to her office:

MADELYN

I don't know. I'll be back tomorrow. I'm leaving soon. I can't let this thing take over my life. This is going to take weeks. It's a whole house. A whole life.

I'm going to have people come and box it all up and take it away. Probate? I don't know.

I have to sell a house in a town I've never been to before.  
(re: work stuff)  
Have you submitted the (work stuff)

She finds an old program for a rock concert - with a grainy photo of George and Madelyn on stage, grungey, punky:

**SCREAMING HYSTERIA BAND**

The doorbell rings.

MADELYN

Oh, hey - my food is here, I've gotta go -

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - SOON AFTER

She opens the door, revealing **KYLE**: late teens, wearing a local sandwich shop's LOGO-printed APRON, carrying 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 collects her wallet, Kyle checks the place out. Madelyn returns with the cash and notes his gaze. He shrugs, busted:

KYLE (CONT'D)  
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, taking the bag and handing over the cash. She can't blame the kid.

MADELYN  
Thus: take-out.

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

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.  
 (beat)  
 Chaos in cheap sneakers.

Kyle doesn't quite manage to leave yet. She waits.

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.

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 realizes it. Sighs.

KYLE  
 Edibles? Xanax? X?

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

MUSIC BLASTING on George's excellent sound system: a reel-to-reel tape recorded back in the mid-90s, MADELYN & GEORGE with their punk/grunge band. Hand-scrawled on the tape's box:

**THE DEATH OF MUSIC AS WE KNOW IT**

Madelyn, stoned, SINGS as loud as she can with her 20-year-old self.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

The blasting music drifts out to him.

DUNDOSKI  
...the hell?

He 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 far down the street. They stop a block away, and go out.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman studies the lit-up house, the truck parked nearby, and Dundoski's big lurking figure.

It moves into the shadows, heading to the back of the house.

NORMAN  
...uh-oh.

He takes his phone from the magnetic dashboard grip, dials 9-1-1.

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

Norman listens to a recorded voice on speaker:

911 OPERATOR (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. An agonizingly-long series of clicks, and then another recorded voice:

911 OPERATOR (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)  
 Thank you for calling Oakdale  
 County Police Services. Please  
 listen carefully, because our menu  
 has changed --

NORMAN

*AAARGH!*

He grabs the phone and gets out of the car.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn finishes threading a new tape into the machine and turns a clunky old lever:

ENGINEER (ON TAPE)  
*Band name, song title, take number.*

She listens, sad and tender and back in time.

Behind her, through the dark window: DUNDOSKI PEERS IN.

Tape hiss, murmurs of the band counting down -- then MUSIC BANGS OUT of the speakers, rattling the windows.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski, hearing it, draws a MASSIVE HUNTING KNIFE from a sheath in his BOOT --

-- and easily POPS the kitchen door LOCK OPEN.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn THRASHES and DANCES as she SINGS into an unplugged MICROPHONE -- facing an imaginary dark, crowded nightclub full of sweaty GRUNGE-PUNK NEW YORKERS. Actually: the bookshelves. Lit mostly by a yellow-and-orange LAVA LAMP.

Behind her, Dundoski appears in the KITCHEN DOORWAY.

Watches Madelyn, staying still.

He pulls out a crumpled NOTE he scribbled earlier:

*(Zena's instructions for where to find the EVIDENCE)*

Grimaces...watching Madelyn thrashing and wailing, between him and his mission objective down the hall.

Dundoski turns away.

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He opens drawers, considers a ball of KITCHEN TWINE, keeps looking -- now trying the GLASS-FRONT CABINETS --

-- as, behind him, NORMAN PUSHES OPEN the KITCHEN DOOR. Didn't see Dundoski until it was too late.

MUSIC BLASTING.

Norman FREEZES. Paralyzed with fear. Trying to think.

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 the door.

Norman GRUNTS, stunned --

-- as Dundoski GRABS him by the collar and DRAGS him back into the kitchen.

As he is pulled BACKWARDS, Norman GRABS a CAN OF COFFEE from the counter --

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 PUSHING PAST him into the living room --

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

--Dudoski stomps in clumsily, 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 --

- hitting Dundoski's head with a LOUD, HOLLOW CLONK.

Madelyn SHRIEKS -- Dundoski GRUNTS as the lava 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.

Norman watches him, wary -- no sound in the DARKENED ROOM  
except everyone's HEAVY BREATHING -- and the LAVA LAMP,  
ROLLING UNSTEADILY across the wooden floor.

Then Dundoski and draws the HUGE GLEAMING COMBAT KNIFE from  
his boot-sheath.

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.  
Then 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 and  
rolls over, GETTING to his HANDS and KNEES.

Madelyn anxiously HOLDS the knife READY --

-- as Norman hastily DIALS 9-1-1 on George's LAND-LINE. 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 toward his truck, rubbing the back of his head. With his other hand, he dials his phone.

We don't hear Zena pick up at the other end, just:

DUNDOSKI

Yeah. We got a problem.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn and Norman face each other across the dark, trashed living room. He's bent slightly in pain and holding one hand to his eye; the brow is bleeding.

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)

Do you need assistance?

Norman disconnects. Looking at Madelyn, holding the big combat knife -- wary, confused and unsteady on her feet (but trying to conceal that.)

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.

Trying to de-escalate -- he points at the kitchen and holds out his bloody palm to indicate he needs first aid:

NORMAN

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

He starts backing into the kitchen, hands raised.

Madelyn follows, knife still ready.

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Norman goes for the freezer, taking out a bag of frozen vegetables and applying 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 then she goes to clumsily apply it to his cut.

NORMAN

Ow! Stings.

Sudsy water runs down his face and all over his clothes. He is trying to be polite, letting her "help."

MADELYN

That means it's working.

They are intimately close now, face to face. Uncomfortable beat.

NORMAN

Wow. Your pupils are HUGE.

MADELYN

I'm stoned out of my mind.

NORMAN

Good to know.

She stands there, pressing a dripping soapy cloth to his face. They are staring at each other.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
 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 winces, reluctantly admitting:

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

MADELYN  
 The meth dealer is crime-solving?

Norman shrugs, uncomfortably.

NORMAN  
 He has a very deep sense of  
 justice.

Silence. Standing so close, face to face.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
 My hand is getting really cold. Do  
 you mind if I -- ?

Madelyn steps back. Norman raises the bag of frozen  
 vegetables back to his eye. As she goes to squeeze out the  
 cloth in the sink:

MADELYN  
 And what are you? A hit man?

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 down at the little kitchen table, the drugs and  
 stress overtaking her. Closes her eyes, breathes deeply.

NORMAN

No. I'm embedded. In the culture. I'm in a lot of groups. Because I think something monstrous has happened to our world and we don't even see it because we're enjoying the rewards. Digital culture has changed everything.

**(more of a rant-y SPEECH)**

About the destruction of our culture by the internet. Crowd-sourcing. The abdication of responsibility.

(beat)

So I "embedded" myself in this group, and some others -- to understand the way these so-called "communities" operate.

Madelyn SNORES.

Norman sighs. Sets the vegetables aside and goes to gently shake her.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Hey. Hey -- let's get you into bed.

Putting an 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 face-first on to the bed:

NORMAN  
What are you usually like?

MADELYN  
I'm dishwasher safe.

NORMAN  
Uh-huh.  
(turning with her)  
All right -- just let's get you  
turned --

MADELYN  
Whhhooooo -- dangerous maneuver.

He's nodding, now backing her up to the bed --

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

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

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
I'm going to let go of you now.

MADELYN  
Are you out of your freaking mind?!

NORMAN  
You're safe.  
(beat)  
Dishwashe--

MADELYN  
No, no -- NO. If you let go, I  
will instantly go whirling 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 takes a breath and tries to figure out the next maneuver. Still holding her --

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

She wriggles back, holding his arm tight, making the "truck backing up" sound.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Please don't.

And then they're falling backward onto the pillows, Norman's arm still around her. A bit breathless:

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Okay, good. Nice.

He starts to try to extricate himself -- and she SNORES again. Eyes shut. Relaxed. Dead weight on his arm.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Oh, no. No. Seriously.

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

He sighs, and gives up. Staring at the dark ceiling.

Madelyn breathes deeply. Safe.

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

**Zena is leaving for the airport in a hurry - talking to Cameron**

**Zena was going to Attend her parent anniversary brunch, and is asking Cameron to go in her place. And sing a song, because she's a shy singer. It'll be good for her. (Zena can't appear clueless - not even ruthless - instead it's almost like she's TEAMING UP, becoming HELPING BUDDIES.)**

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NEAR DAWN

The night begins to retreat as sunrise warms the sky in the East and paints the front of George's shabby house.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pale light edges into the room through George's window shades.

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

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

Norman -- who is startled awake by the move.

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

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

Norman watches her: caring, concerned, slightly afraid.

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

Norman doesn't move. Eyes on her.

She shakes her head. Sighs. But kind of smiles, too.

But she won't look at him.

NORMAN  
(hesitantly)  
Nothing hap--

She looks up, reaching over and putting one finger to his lips.

MADELYN  
Nope. Shhh.

Norman stops talking. Eyes on hers. Her eyes on him.

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

Norman is frozen, wide-eyed, ecstatic.

They kiss.

Norman pulls back hastily:

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.  
(beat)  
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, taking her in. Leans in to kiss her, trying  
to rise up on one elbow --

-- but flops down clumsily, face-first on to her --

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
What the fuck?!

She's pushing him off --

NORMAN  
My arm! Fell asleep -- it's  
completely dead.

He shows her, lifting the limp arm with his other hand and  
waving it like it's Weekend At Bernie's --

MADELYN  
Oh, you poor thing! It was under  
me all night, wasn't it?

She tries to massage it --

NORMAN  
No -- thank you, ow! Agonizing  
pins and needles.

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



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

FADE OUT.

INT. WAREHOUSE - MORNING

A Meth Lab before it opens: beautifully quiet.

Dundoski's truck pulls up and he gets out, stretching - looking at the early morning sun and doing some improvisations on yoga poses.

Dundoski, one foot raised, hands floating in front of him...doesn't move for a long time. Breathing in deeply through his nose and exhaling slowly through his mouth.

Then he straightens up and squints at the sun:

INT. HIGH-END GYM - NEW YORK - MORNING

A sleek, elite place near Wall Street. McLean is working out, lost in thought, listening to a podcast -- until:

**BILLY**, late 20's and gorgeous, comes to use the next machine. It's no meaningless move: his eyes check McLean as he begins to work.

McLean does the same, glancing over. Billy's clothes, his body. His gym bag. Little glances.

Now and then they catch each other -- and it's all good.

McLean takes off his headphones, smiling. Billy smiles too, waiting to hear McLean's opening line, his move.

MCLEAN

Was the accident before or after  
you left Chicago?

Billy's smile falters, and he stops working out -- the machine's momentum slowing.

McLean realizes he's thrown Billy off. Apologetic:

MCLEAN (CONT'D)

Your knee! You have a scar --  
orthoscopic surgery. Looks like  
about ten years ago. That would  
put you in high school, right?

BILLY

Are you a -- doctor?

MCLEAN

No, a research assistant -- at Murgison. Investments? Upstairs.

Billy is looking more and more baffled.

MCLEAN (CONT'D)

I just -- notice things. And put them together. I saw you had a U of C sweatshirt --

Billy looks down. His sweatshirt is bundled-up in his open gym bag, with only a tiny section of the school logo visible.

Billy is looking at McLean like he's a freak, or a stalker, or both.

MCLEAN (CONT'D)

It's like a habit. Detecting, kind of.

Getting off his machine, Billy forces a smile as he grabs up his bag and walks away.

Watching him go -- regretful:

MCLEAN (CONT'D)

You ride a bicycle to work. And you don't like to wear a helmet, because you're vain about your hair. Which is...really nice.

(beat)

But you should wear your helmet.

EXT. WALL STREET - MORNING

FINANCIAL INDUSTRY WORKERS on the way in to work. The classic buzzing hive of lower Manhattan.

Lost in this crowd: McLean. Earbuds in, listening to THE CRIME-CATCHER podcast. Joining the SWARM of people passing through the revolving doors.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

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

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

SHRIMPTON

How are we today, Mrs. Weitzman?

WEITZMAN

We feel crappy. Take my mind off:  
how's your detective thing going?  
Catch anybody yet?

SHRIMPTON

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.

SHRIMPTON

Some people get too involved.

WEITZMAN

Ohhh. Drama?

SHRIMPTON

Kind of.

WEITZMAN

Well: you're better off.

SHRIMPTON

I think so.

WEITZMAN

All that looking up serial killers.  
That's not nice. What kind of  
people do that?

(beat)

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, slightly put-out. Tries to shake  
off the conversation.

She takes a deep breath, ready to start her new sleuth-less  
life...but then as she exhales, she picks up her phone and  
opens the **DR. SLEUTH** website.

Hesitates. Wrestling with it.

Shrimpton puts the phone in her purse. Puts the purse in a drawer, and shuts the drawer.

Turns and goes to a BOX of MAGAZINES and ACTIVITES for patients: takes out a CROSSWORD PUZZLE book.

She sits back at her desk, gets a pen, and tries to focus on...the clues.

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. Searching the room, from the bed -- looking around on the floor, the chair.

Scrambling out of bed (*discreetly blocked from our view*) and hastily checking under it.

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, edging in from the hallway, holding a PILLOW in front of his nakedness.

MADELYN  
Oh, hey! Hi.

NORMAN  
Hi.

MADELYN  
You probably want your clothes.

NORMAN  
I kinda 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 HOUSE - HALLWAY - SOON AFTER

Norman steps out of the laundry room, buttoning his shirt.

He follows the SOUND of DISHES clinking and CABINETS opening -

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

-- to find Madelyn cooking, exploring the unfamiliar kitchen.

NORMAN

Thank you!

MADELYN

Can I make you some breakfast?

NORMAN

Oh, no -- I don't want to put you out.

Madelyn sighs slightly:

MADELYN

I'm already out. I'm way out, here. Might as well eat.

Norman smiles, too. Watching her work.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

You like eggs?

NORMAN

I shouldn't, but I do.

MADELYN

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

Norman pulls down the oven door: the frying pan is in there.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Mystery solved.

NORMAN

Is this weird for you?

MADELYN

In every possible way.

NORMAN

I thought maybe it was just me.

MADELYN

Look: I don't -- do this kind of thing.

NORMAN

Breakfast?

MADELYN

Making love -- on the -- first...

Awkward sudden awareness of how (wild) it was. They are not sure how to talk about this.

NORMAN

I do. "Make love" -- right away.

(beat)

If -- it...works out. That way.

MADELYN

Really.

NORMAN

Yeah.

(shrugs)

I mean: I don't have to.

MADELYN

Wow. Now I feel...

(beat)

Icky.

NORMAN

Oh -- God -- no: it wasn't like --

(frustrated)

I was just trying to -- tell you -- it wasn't so...

MADELYN

Please don't finish that sentence.

NORMAN

No! No -- it was great.

(beat)

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 kind of smile. She begins to cook again.

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
So you do this a lot.

NORMAN  
I meant: when it does happen --  
which, full disclosure, is not that  
much any more. They tend to start  
fast and then...blow up.

MADELYN  
Maybe slow down, next time. Look  
for: lit fuses, ticking.

NORMAN  
Now you tell me.

She keeps cooking. Not looking at him. So he opens up.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
I think I just gave up a long time  
ago on the idea that a relationship  
could not blow up. Because they  
all have.

MADELYN  
All of them?

NORMAN  
Kinda...yeah. I don't know, every  
woman I meet turns out to be --  
possessive. Or promiscuous.  
Dishonest. Kleptomaniac.  
Hypochondriac. Neo-fascist.  
(beat)  
I just stopped worrying about it.  
Figured: 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: what am I?

Beat. As he sits:

NORMAN  
Different.

She smiles slightly. Then as he lifts a forkful of eggs to his lips -- she SCREAMS --

MADELYN  
NAAAAHHH!

- grabbing the fork, throwing it across the kitchen.

Norman stares at her.

NORMAN  
Okay: maybe not.

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

They both take a deep breath.

NORMAN  
Wanna maybe go out for brunch?

INT. DINER - LATER

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

***(Maybe a bit more about his horrible relationship history...end of a funny story?)***

MADELYN  
This was nice. Thank you. I kind of forgot about the serial killer. And everything.

NORMAN  
God. I'm sorry. You're -- in mourning, and I was just --

MADELYN  
No. I'm not. In shock, maybe. In denial.

He watches her wrestle with it.

NORMAN  
You still might have - feelings.



She startled -- and defensive:

MADELYN

I do have feelings. What do you mean? I have feelings.

NORMAN

I know that. Obviously.

She takes a moment, trying to let him in:

MADELYN

It was hard. Leaving him. We had a wild life. It was intense. It was everything I ever wanted.

NORMAN

So why did you leave?

MADELYN

Because I was nineteen years old. So everything I wanted was crazy. And foolish. And dangerous. And if I stayed with him I was going to die.

NORMAN

Drugs?

She shakes her head, dismissing that:

MADELYN

I mean, yeah -- but: everybody did drugs. George was a drug. He was like a fireworks display, 24-7. Inspirational, awesome...kind of a mistake to have in the house.

(struggling to capture it)

He was just fearless. Musically. Emotionally. All in. All or nothing. He would jump off the stage, he would jump off the roof, he would jump into a passion pit without a condom. 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.

She falls silent, lost in thought.

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, looking at her phone. Norman follows.

NORMAN

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

MADELYN

I'm not upset.

NORMAN

You seem upset.

She walks away -- upset. Stands watching the traffic on the town's "miracle mile." Suddenly turns and confronts Norman:

MADELYN

I don't want to hunt serial killers!

He's a bit taken aback.

NORMAN

You don't have to.

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

MADELYN

I feel like I've been pushed out of my own life. Like my life was an airplane, and I was doing fine -- they didn't even have the "seatbelts" sign on -- and all of a sudden, BOOM: I'm...falling.

NORMAN

Maybe you should just get back to it, then. Your life. It's still there, right?

MADELYN

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

(beat)

(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)

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

He takes this in. Studying her. She's watching the highway,  
but not really seeing it.

NORMAN

What are you gonna do?

MADELYN

I don't know.

She takes a last moment avoiding his gaze, then turns to him.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

You want to just...hang out some  
more?

INT. GEORGE'S ATTIC - LATER

She has a mini-studio in her bag: a collapsible tripod for  
her phone, a couple of small LED lights, a mic.

She's professional and quick at the work of creating online  
content: she knows how to pose, setting up small lights --  
unfolding a small reflector, to bounce light on her face.

Zena is POSTING videos of her search as STORIES.

ZENA

I'm in George's attic. He told me  
that everything I'd need to know  
was in the box marked (SOMETHING)

Stops every once in a while to selfie-herself "digging".

ZENA (CONT'D)

This is it: the inner sanctum.  
George's secret files. This is  
where he's got the identity of the  
Killer. So excited. Unearthing  
this LIVE. It's like he's talking  
to us from the grave. Crying out  
for justice.

Zena hunts through George's RESEARCH,

ZENA (CONT'D)

"Play this"? On what? What the  
hell, George. Okay Boomer.

marked: **IN CASE OF MY DEATH PLAY THIS.**

Zena's getting a little frazzled in the overheated, dusty attic. This is not going the way she wanted.

She finally finds the machine to play the MiniDV tape.

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)

*It's going nowhere. I can't break through. I've interviewed everyone I can find. Pulled every bit of existing research material.*

(beat)

*I know this case can be cracked. It's just a matter of going all-in. Going where no one has been willing to go.*

We see HEADLINES and PHOTOGRAPHS and DETAILS of the crimes, the victims, the investigation. *Build a sense of ominous evil, of the threat buried in this long-forgotten mystery.*

Zena is frustrated, sifting through them.

She stops recording and checks her look.

ZENA

Cut to the chase, George.

-- she sets the speed to "2x" so George speaks fast and high:

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)

*So there's only one thing I can think of. I'm going to use myself as bait. I'm going to announce I have new evidence. I'm going to really hype this whole "new evidence" thing for a couple of weeks or maybe a month --*

Zena hits STOP, staring at the machine. She runs it back, and plays it again at normal speed:

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)

*And get the Killer to come after me. If I can make him angry or fearful enough, maybe he'll come out of hiding.*

ZENA

No. No. NO NO NO NO NO!

She plays it again:

GEORGE (ON SPEAKER)  
*I'm going to use myself as bait.*  
*I'm going to announce that I have*  
*new evid--*

Zena SCREAMS -- loud and long --

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

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

They stare at each other.

MADELYN

911.

As Norman reaches for his phone --

INT. GEORGE'S SECRET BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

ZENA

I'm fucked. I'm so fucked.

Zena kicks a box -- papers go flying -- she WHIRLS on the machine playing George's voice:

ZENA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

YOU...DIPSHIT!

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn and Norman, TERRIFIED, EDGE into the living room and see the ATTIC STAIRS are pulled down.

ZENA (O.S.)

YOU STUPID FAT OLD BOOMER MORON!

Madelyn has picked up the FIREPLACE POKER and is ready to bash.

NORMAN

Zena?

After a second, Zena appears at the top of the stairs.

ZENA

Norman?

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...empty.

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 now they'll think George was just a crackpot. They're really gonna work on that case.

Beat.

MADELYN

It feels wrong.

ZENA

If you care about George: you want this plan to work.

NORMAN

Do we? It got him killed.

ZENA

Right! Which proves the killer is still out there. So now we have to get him.

MADELYN

Seems like exactly the police's job.

ZENA

You think the police are going to let us keep provoking the killer,  
(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)  
drawing him out, 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 watches that eye-contact -- and her own eyes widen.

ZENA (CONT'D)  
Oh my gahd. No freakin' way. Get  
OUT!

MADELYN  
What?

ZENA  
You two?! Seriously?! Did you  
hook up?!

Zena is grinning, and Madelyn and Norman suddenly get  
uncomfortable -- busted:

NORMAN  
No!

MADELYN  
That's -- none of your --

ZENA  
You did. Ohmigod -- I love it.

NORMAN  
We did not -- hook --

ZENA  
(to Madelyn)  
You did, didn't you? And it was  
good!

Madelyn kind of rolls her eyes and blushes and tries not to  
grin -- and Zena holds out her fist for a bump. Madelyn  
can't help but bump it, and truly grin.

ZENA (CONT'D)  
This is so great. This explains  
everything. I am SO happy for you  
two. Wait!

She's getting out her phone and pulling them closer for a  
group selfie:

ZENA (CONT'D)

We have to celebrate this.

Madelyn hastily stands up to stay out of the image.

MADELYN

Nope!

ZENA

Okay -- all right: but you know that everybody's gonna find out, right?

NORMAN

Not if you don't tell them.

ZENA

Are you kidding?! It's visible. You're glowing.

Madelyn sits, amused.

MADELYN

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

Madelyn considers Zena, kindly.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

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

ZENA

How are you going to stop me?

NORMAN

Tell the police?

ZENA

Last I looked, 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 a  
podcast!

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.

Zena, aghast, turns to Norman, who shrugs.

NORMAN  
Her house, her rules.

MADELYN  
Oh my God, you sound so old.

NORMAN  
I know.

Madelyn points to the front door. Norman shrugs: yep.

Zena grabs up her stuff and hurries out, fighting tears.

INT. ZOOM GROUP (FULL SCREEN ZOOM MEETING) - SOON AFTER

Zena is pacing in George's front yard, furious. She has  
gathered the Crime Crackers into an emergency call: we see  
DUNDOSKY, MCLEAN and SHRIMPTON.

*(We INTERCUT FREELY between the Crackers at home and Zena in the front yard and the Zoom Screen itself...)*

ZENA

I can't just walk away. George got us close. This can work.

DUNDOSKI

What can we do to help?

ZENA

I just need to know if you're still in. What do you think: Am I insane? Should I do this?

MCLEAN

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

DUNDOSKI

Hell yes!

Zena tears up a bit. And then:

ZENA

Carol?

SHRIMPTON

I'm in -- with one condition.  
(beat)  
In on the money, too.

ZENA

What money?

SHRIMPTON

You catch this fella: your podcast's gonna hit the big time. Book deal, HBO series, you're famous. And making money.

ZENA

Because...I risked my life?  
(beat)  
Okay: sure. You know what? If there's money, and we're not dead, you can have some. Okay?

SHRIMPTON

You all heard that.

DUNDOSKI

Now I feel dirty.

SHRIMPSON

I guess you can afford your feelings, Carl.

ZENA

Okay, now the question is --

Behind Zena: Madelyn steps out, pissed-off:

MADELYN

Really?! You're doing this here?!

Zena freezes, busted. In that awkward moment:

The landline phone, inside, BEGINS TO RING.

Zena looks at Madelyn, who looks at Norman.

NORMAN

I can get it.

It rings again. Madelyn sighs, shakes her head.

MADELYN

(to Zena)

You should go.

Madelyn goes inside, Zena looks at Norman.

ZENA

Well, I'm not gonna go now.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn finds the cordless handset. Picks it up, hesitant:

MADELYN

Hello?

EXT. SMALL TOWN FISHING PIER - THE SAME TIME

A picturesque, even cliché, New England coastal town. Fishing boats at a dock, a row of local shops and restaurants. An old buoy CLANGS now and then. SEAGULLS cry.

**ELMORE DEAKINS** is on a pre-paid ('burner') cell phone. He is in his 70s, wrinkled, weathered, white-haired. Wears workmanlike clothes: denim, cotton.

He doesn't speak yet. Uncertain.

INTERCUT:

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn frowns, listening. Norman and Zena, in the doorway, watch her.

MADELYN

I can hear...birds. Seagulls.  
(beat)  
So you're not a robo-call.

Deakins almost speaks. But he can't. Yet.

Madelyn is about to hang up. But she can't. Yet.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Are you trying to reach George  
Roizman?

Deakins grimaces slightly, then plunges in:

DEAKINS

No.  
(beat)  
Who am I speaking with?

MADELYN

This is George's...widow. 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, as:

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. As Norman moves closer --

DEAKINS  
I never liked that name.

-- Zena hangs back to whisper frantically to her Zoom call:

ZENA  
It's CSK! On the phone!

INT. ZOOM GROUP (FULL SCREEN ZOOM MEETING) - CONTINUOUS

CAMERON  
No freakin' way!

SHRIMPTON  
What is he saying?!

MCLEAN  
I have questions.

DUNDOSKI  
Trace it! Trace the call!

Hastily MUTING them so she can EDGE IN beside Norman --

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn paces away from Zena, focusing on Deakins:

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  
(into the phone)  
And you're calling...to tell me  
that you didn't do it?

DEAKINS  
Look: I just heard about this, on  
the news. And it...hurt. I don't  
know why. Because -- it just felt -  
- unfair. Someone is taking my  
private -- issues. And using them.

(beat)  
I just want you to know: I had  
nothing to do with this.

(beat)  
(MORE)

DEAKINS (CONT'D)

I stopped. A long time ago. I haven't -- done anything -- in a long time.

ZENA

(to Madelyn, whispered)  
Can I talk to him?

Madelyn paces away from Zena, trying to stay with Deakins.

MADELYN

You're talking to the wrong person.  
Tell the police.

DEAKINS

I can't talk to the police.

Zena, frustrated -- goes to the landline-base and puts the call on Speaker:

MADELYN

You can if you're innocent.

Madelyn WHIRLS, startled. Starts for the phone base, but --

DEAKINS

You must have a very...simple life.

He has no idea he's now broadcasting. So:

MADELYN

You said didn't do it.

DEAKINS

I didn't do this. That may not be the end of it, for the police.

Madelyn is uncertain, uncomfortable talking to him further with the whole Zoom Group listening. Awkward silence.

NORMAN

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

Deakins freezes.

DEAKINS

Who is that?

Madelyn glares at Norman, who shrugs: the journalist in him couldn't keep quiet.

MADELYN

It's some -- people --

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

Slight pause.

DEAKINS  
 "...web detectives"?

ZENA  
 We hunt serial killers. From home.  
 And...office.

Deakins listens, wary. Close to disconnecting.

ZENA (CONT'D)  
 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're -- internet detectives.  
***So: this is just...like a club. A  
 form of entertainment for a bunch  
 of people with nothing better to  
 do.***

ZENA  
 We're a community. We're  
 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 all  
 looking. And talking to each  
 other. And if anything happens to  
 one of us -- like it did to George:  
 then everyone will know. And we  
 all come after you.

Uneasy silence.

DEAKINS  
 Why?

ZENA  
 What?

DEAKINS

Why would you do that?

DUNDOSKI

Because it's -- right and wrong.  
Because we speak for the victims,  
and justice.

MCLEAN

And our lives are not very  
interesting.

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?

There is a chilling pause as the subtle threat sinks in.

NORMAN

You never answered the question:  
How do we know you are who you say  
you are?

DEAKINS

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

NORMAN

Maybe you just want attention.

DEAKINS

From a bunch of internet...sleuths?

NORMAN

You didn't know who would pick up  
the phone. Why should we believe  
you?

MCLEAN

Tell us something that only the  
killer would know.

ZENA

Like: something from a crime scene.



DUNDOSKI

That the police didn't make public.

DEAKINS

If I tell you something only the killer would know...how will you know if it's true?

Uncomfortable pause.

CONSPIRACY

Show us your trophies!

DEAKINS

I didn't keep trophies.

CONSPIRACY

Serial killers always keep trophies.

MCLEAN

Well -- that's not actually true.

Deakins sighs, struggling. Then, warily...but truthfully:

DEAKINS

I had no reason for choosing. No pattern. I would just say: I'm going to watch that bus and whoever gets off it, it's them. I was strict with myself: no reasoning. Just chance. Then I would follow them home and break in. Poison their food and get out.

ZENA

Wait a second: are telling us that you didn't stalk your victims?

DEAKINS

God no. I didn't want to know them. I didn't want to care. I just wanted to -- have some kind of power, in a meaningless universe. That was the point. We have no control. So I took control. I made things happen. Because I couldn't stand to live in this abyss without -- fighting back.

Everyone is kind of stunned.

MCLEAN

So everything that everyone thinks about you...is wrong?

ZENA

The FBI Profile says you took weeks and months to learn everything about them.

DEAKINS

How did you see an FBI Profile?

ZENA

Well -- there's like, books where people -- like, experts -- figured out what it must have said.

Deakins sighs.

NORMAN

Why did you stop?

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

DEAKINS

I fell in love.

(beat)

And then the universe was no longer meaningless.

Norman and Madelyn look at each other.

MADELYN

I think he's telling us the truth.

Norman nods.

SHRIMPSON

We should tell the police you didn't do it.

DEAKINS

No: please don't.

SHRIMPSON

Why on earth not?!

MADELYN

Because they'll want to know how we know.

DEAKINS

Yes. Exactly.

NORMAN

But if we don't tell the police,  
they're going to waste time looking  
for you.

MCLEAN

It looks like you killed George  
because he was going to reveal new  
evidence that identified you.

DEAKINS

I didn't even know he said he did.

MADELYN

Poor George. He couldn't even do  
that right.

NORMAN

It doesn't help you, anyway.  
Because the FBI would say you could  
have been lured out by fake  
evidence just as much as by real.

DEAKINS

What evidence?

MADELYN

Oh, lord - of course. I'm sorry:  
(beat)  
He didn't have any.

DEAKINS

What do you mean?

MADELYN

He made it up. He was just trying  
to bait you, provoke you -- lure  
you out in the open.

Deakins is silent.

ZENA

I have so many questions.

NORMAN

I have one. But it's a bi--

ZENA

Well, hang on: let me ask some of  
mine. I'm going to record this  
part of the --

DEAKINS

No, I don't think I want to --

ZENA

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

Awkward silence.

DEAKINS

I...don't think so.

ZENA

This is so freaking weird. Is this as weird for you as it is for us?

DEAKINS

I have never spoken about it to anyone.

ZENA

We're like: the only ones who really understand you.

If you didn't kill George... who did?

ZENA (CONT'D)

Whoa. Right.

DEAKINS

Yeah. I was wondering that.

NORMAN

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

DUNDOSKI

Yeah, seriously: can't imagine why somebody wouldn't like a serial killer.

ZENA

Carl.

ZENA (CONT'D)

You should team up with us.

DEAKINS

To catch me?

ZENA

No! To clear your name. If we find the real killer -- everyone will know you didn't do this. So you should help us.

DEAKINS

I just wanted you to know.

MADELYN

Thank you.

(beat)

Take care.

Deakins disconnects.

Zena hands the phone back to Madelyn.

DUNDOSKI

"Take care"? The man is a serial  
killer!

EXT. SMALL TOWN FISHING PIER - CONTINUOUS

Deakins closes the pre-paid flip phone and takes a deep,  
frightened breath.

He removes the battery and drops the dead device into the  
water.

Seagulls cry. Waves wash gently past the pier's barnacle-and-  
salt-crusted pillars. It is a beautiful day.

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

Putting them in his pockets, Deakins starts walking back into  
the quaint seaside New England town.

INT. FULL SCREEN: ZOOM MEETING - CONTINUOUS

MCLEAN

Did that really just happen?

ZENA

Yes. Yes it did. And it changes  
everything.

SHRIMPSON

We have to tell the police.

ZENA

Nope. Nope. No. We swore we  
wouldn't.

DUNDOSKI

No we didn't.

ZENA

We kind of did. I mean: it was implied.

(turns to Madelyn)

Right?

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MADELYN

I don't know.

(looks at Norman)

What are we going to do?

EXT. SOAP SHOP - THE SAME TIME

Deakins walks along a street of tourist-y old clapboard and brick-fronted shops. A denim-clad, white-moustached retiree.

He unlocks the door to The Soap Shoppe - "*artisinal soaps, handcrafted scents and other delights*" - which jingles with authentic bells as he goes inside.

INT. SOAP SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Marvelously home-y and full of richly-colored soaps in baskets. Old-time floral delicacy.

Deakins opens up his shop: turns off the alarm, turns on the lights and the cash register and the acoustic folk Americana music.

But he is distracted.

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

NORMAN

We have evidence that might help the police catch a serial killer.

MADELYN

Retired serial killer.

NORMAN

Is there such a thing?

DUNDOSKI

And even if there is: doesn't he have to pay for what he did?

ZENA

What do you even mean, "evidence"?  
Did he really give anything away in  
the call?

NORMAN

The call is evidence.  
(beat)  
And he confessed.

DUNDOSKI

But we don't know who he is. Or  
where he is.

MCLEAN

We can figure that out.

ZENA

Yeah we can! That's what we do.  
That's who we are. Websleuths.

MADELYN

Just because we can -- doesn't mean  
we should.

DUNDOSKI

We should.

ZENA

And we can.

MCLEAN

And he knows that.

Small silence.

ZENA

Wait: what?

INT. SOAP SHOP - THE SAME TIME

Deakins, writing the *Specials Of The Day* on a chalkboard in  
impeccable calligraphy --

-- stops halfway through the word "lavender"...

...realizing:

They are going to come after him.

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

***Madelyn looks at Norman, REALIZING they have somehow -- reluctantly, unintentionally -- got themselves into the hunt for a serial killer.***

MADELYN

I don't want to be a part of that.

NORMAN

It doesn't matter what we want.

(re: McLean)

He's right. The killer's going to realize he gave us a new reason to hunt him.

MCLEAN

And new clues to hunt him with.

SHRIMPTON

Oh...holy hell.

MADELYN

Maybe it's really just what he said. Maybe he was just reaching out, as a human being.

DUNDOSKI

If he was: big frickin' mistake.

MADELYN

What if we just -- walk away?

ZENA

We can't. No way.

(frantic, groping)

George's -- spirit -- cries out to us -- from beyond the grave.

MADELYN

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

Long awkward silence. Norman looks at Madelyn.

MCLEAN

Fair enough. Except for one thing.

(beat)

If we don't get him...he's gonna get us.



ZENA  
 (eagerly)  
 That's right.

DUNDOSKI  
 He knows we know. He can't let us  
 walk away.

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

ZENA  
 Would you believe that? If you  
 were him?

They look at each other, realizing that they are now a team.

NORMAN  
 There's one other thing we have to  
 figure out.  
 (beat)  
 Who did kill George.  
 (beat)  
 And why.

Zena goes to Madelyn, takes her hands -- reassuring, and yet  
 condescending. Madelyn has to make a big effort not to pull  
 her hands away.

ZENA  
 I know you didn't want to be in  
 this. I know you don't respect us.  
 I know 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 know one will  
 care.  
 We're a team.  
 (beat)  
 We're all Crime Crackers now.

Zena HUGS Madelyn.

Madelyn, looking over Zena's shoulder, meets Norman's eyes.

He shrugs.

END OF EPISODE 1

