

CRIME CRACKERS

(formerly the
UNITITLED PODCAST-KILLER PROJECT)

Written by

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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

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 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 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. 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, 58 years old, 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 two weeks. And cost you more than just buying a laptop.

NORMAN

I have a laptop. I just like 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's checking the shop's many CLOCKS -- which are all broken, stopped at different times.

NORMAN

Wait: is it three?!

REPAIRISTA

Dunno.

NORMAN

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

But 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 opens Zoom on his phone --

INTERCUT:

INT. FULL SCREEN: ZOOM MEETING - CONTINUOUS

Norman's hand-held window, in the shop, joins an ARRAY OF FACES. DURING ZOOMS we intercut the LIVE LOCATION of the people in the "windows" -- so we are also WITH THEM in their LIVES:

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 conspiracy-theorist (NEED MORE GLENN!)

CAMERON, a non-binary suburban High School senior who idolizes Zena.

And ZENA, at home, running this meeting, ID'd in the Zoom window as the **CORKBOARD, YARN & PINS CRIME-CRACKER GROUP:**

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. I'm more bereaved than she is!

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

NORMAN

What are we talking about?

DUNDOSKI

George is dead?

NORMAN

George?!

SHRIMPTON

Poisoned.

ZENA

CSK-style.

CAMERON

He was getting too close. He had the evidence.

DUNDOSKI

And now it's in George's attic.

ZENA

But the bitch in control of everything won't let me in.

NORMAN

A...police bitch?

ZENA

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

DUNDOSKI

Is this her?

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

INTERCUT:

EXT. TYPEWRITER REPAIR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Norman leaves the shop and goes to his car, still on the Zoom
-- swerving to avoid PEOPLE on the sidewalk:

ZENA

Yeah. I don't know, maybe I should
just tell her. Get her on board.

SHRIMPTON

Or: just ask her to give it to the
police.

TED

The cops could bury it.

SHRIMPTON

Why would they bury it?!

TED

Somebody let this guy get away
thirty years ago. There are no
accidents.

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. I want to
take down the Chemistry Set Killer,
the way he wanted to.

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.

Terrible silence. 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 --

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Zena is leaning in, literally:

ZENA

Well, wait -- I don't know. 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 motorcycle 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 -- horns blaring around him --

NORMAN

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

ZENA

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

As he checks the magazine on a very large .45 pistol, and snaps it decisively into the gun:

DUNDOSKI

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

Zena forces a big encouraging smile. And ENDS THE ZOOM 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-bags -- 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 .45 and FIRING REPEATEDLY into Marcus' Range Rover, which is parked blocking Dundoski's Corvette.

Small FLAMES FLICKER UP from under the Rover's BULLET-POCKED HOOD. Dundoski grimaces, annoyed at himself.

DUNDOSKI (CONT'D)

Damn it.

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

DUNDOSKI (CONT'D)

I'm taking the van.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norman drives, fretting. Impulsively:

NORMAN

Hey, Siri: Call George Roizman...
(helpfully)

He's on the Corkboard Yarn & Pins --

George's phone is already ringing on speaker.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
 -- never mind.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn sits alone. Daylight fading out the windows, but she hasn't turned on the lights. Sad, of course. But also... processing.

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, voicemail)
 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 the call. Sighs.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
 Siri: rewind time two minutes and erase.

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

Madelyn takes a deep, decisive breath and stands 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 a studio recording session: **The Utter Destruction Of Everything.**

She stares at them -- then turns away, ventures into the rest of the house.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Madelyn is walking through the house, turning on lights.

She comes upon George's DESK: cluttered with papers. She sighs, sits, and begins to SIFT THROUGH IT.

INT. NORMAN'S APT. - LATER

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

It's getting dark out. Norman sits on worn sofa, with a bourbon on the rocks. Not his first.

His laptop is open on the cluttered coffee table, and he is looking at **MADELYN'S PHOTO**, from the Corporate Website.

He drinks. Re-dials a number on his phone, without bothering to pick it up. Also not his first. On speaker, the voicemail picks up:

GEORGE (ON TAPE)
This is George Roizman and (NAME OF
PODCAST). Leave a message.

Norman disconnects as it beeps. Finishes his bourbon.

NORMAN
Oh...hell.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - DUSK

Norman drives up a ramp onto a highway.

Through the windshield: a sign indicating he is heading to Pennsylvania.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SOON AFTER

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

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

MADELYN
Screw you, George! I have a life!
I'm not staying here to clean up
your mess. What were you thinking,
calling out a serial killer?! Your
whole damn life was gestures,
George! Didn't you get tired?!
(beat)
Oh no. Was THAT what this was?
(beat)
A way out -- with a bang?
(beat)
(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)

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. He's got 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. So my sisters could have the nice bedrooms. One of them became a nun. Anyway I was on my way through town, and I thought - maybe I could just come in and walk around a little. You know: memory lane.

Madelyn takes him in. The past 24 hours have been so weird, she doesn't even really try and make sense of this.

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 away. Madelyn shuts the door, shaking off the weirdness.

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

She's got her earbuds in, sorting through George's papers 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 whole -- house. I'm gonna have to get people to come box it all up.

(listens)

(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)
 I don't know, I don't even know
 what "probate" is. Have you
 submitted the **(work stuff)**?

The doorbell rings.

MADELYN (CONT'D)
 Oh, hey: my dinner's here, I've
 gotta go.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - SOON AFTER

She opens the front door, revealing **KYLE**: late teens, wearing
 a local 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 takes the money from her wallet, Kyle checks the
 place out. She 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, trading the bag for 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.
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 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) (CONT'D)
 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)
[Band name, song title, take number.]

Murmurs of the band counting down -- then 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.

Watches her, staying still.

Dundoski SEES -- past Madelyn: 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 retreats back into the kitchen.

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.

Norman FREEZES.

Paralyzed with fear. Trying to think. MUSIC BLASTING.

Dundoski CLOSES the CABINET...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 GRABS him by the collar and SWINGS HIM AROUND --

-- 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 --

-- hitting 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 and 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 to keep 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, looking at her -- 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. 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

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

MADELYN

The meth dealer is crime-solving?

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 is how we see now. Tech philosophy took over the world, 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 by the internet.

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

NORMAN (CONT'D)

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 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 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. 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 tries to figure out the next maneuver. Still holding her --

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

She wriggles back, 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 - NIGHT

Zena hurries out to a waiting Uber, pulling her matched suitcase and carry-on, talking on the phone (earpods) to:

INTERCUT:

INT. CAMERON'S ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Cameron is on their earpods as they pull on some shoes to also head out:

ZENA
I have to get out to George's. I'm taking the red-eye.

Norman showed up and hit Dundoski with a lava lamp.

CAMERON
Are you serious? Why?

ZENA
No time. I need you to do something.

CAMERON
I'm on it -- what is it?

ZENA

Tomorrow is my parents' thirtieth anniversary. I need you to go to that for me. Tell them I can't make it, you're there instead.

CAMERON

Are they going to be okay with that?

ZENA

What are they going to do, fire me?

CAMERON

It's fancy, right? 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. It's my gift, to them -- and my gift to you. You can do this. Give one of the waiters your phone and have them video. I want to see this.

Agonized and excited:

CAMERON

What kind of song?

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NEAR DAWN

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 through George's window shades. 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 sunrise.

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 -- which is dead asleep. She frowns, starts to
massage it:

MADELYN (CONT'D)

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. WAREHOUSE - MORNING

A Meth Lab before it opens: quiet, peaceful.

Except for the blackened, burned-out hulk of Marcus' Range
Rover.

Dundoski's van pulls up and he gets out, stretching and
squinting in the morning sun. Slowly raises one foot, hands
floating in front of him. Breathing in through his nose and
exhaling slowly through his mouth.

An ALERT on his phone makes him break the yoga pose:

(ZENA - TIKTOK? Instagram?)

ZENA

Because of his tragic and mysterious death, I will be taking over George Roizman's Podcast **(TITLE?)** - I am on my way right now to Pennsylvania, to obtain his work so far.

INT. HIGH-END GYM - NEW YORK - MORNING

Zena's **(tiktok? Insta story?)** plays on McLean's phone, propped on the Stairmaster as he works out.

ZENA

We're going to websleuth this sucker!

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.

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

MCLEAN

Was the accident before or after you left Chicago?

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

MCLEAN (CONT'D)

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. The U of C sweatshirt --

-- Billy looks down: his sweatshirt is in his open gym bag, only a tiny bit of the logo visible. McLean shrugs.

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.

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

SHRIMPSON

How are we today, Mrs. Weitzman?

WEITZMAN

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

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

Ohhh. 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, slightly put-out. Tries to shake
off the conversation, ready to start her new sleuth-less
life...but then she hears an ALERT on her phone

SEES THE ALERT FROM ZENA

Hesitates. Wrestling with it.

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

Goes to a BOX of MAGAZINES and ACTIVITIES for patients: takes
out a CROSSWORD PUZZLE book.

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

(NEED to add TED THE CONSPIRACY NUT -

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - THE SAME TIME

Cameron is singing to Zena's Mom & Dad.

**(OR do we show Zena watching a VIDEO of this, as she de-
planes?**

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 -- 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 trying to cook in the unfamiliar kitchen.

NORMAN
Thank you!

MADELYN
Can I make you some breakfast?

NORMAN

I don't want to put you out.

MADELYN

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

Norman smiles. Watching her looking around, uncertain.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

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.

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 silence. Not sure how to talk about this.

NORMAN

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

(beat)

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

MADELYN

Really.

NORMAN
I mean: I don't have to.

MADELYN
Wow. Now I feel...icky.

NORMAN
Oh -- God -- no: it wasn't --
(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.
(firmly)
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
Eh...kind of burned-out. Or blown-
up. They tend to start fast and
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.

(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: this is the funny part?

Beat. 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'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 brunches. It's kind of a date.

NORMAN

(thinking back)

Possessive. Promiscuous.

(MORE)

NORMAN (CONT'D)
 Dishonest. Kleptomaniac.
 Hypochondriac. Neo-fascist.

Madelyn grins, setting aside her silverware.

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. And then:

NORMAN
 God, I'm sorry! You're -- in
 mourning, and I was just --
 blathering about my --

MADELYN
 No. I'm not. In shock, maybe.
 But George was -- over.

He watches her wrestle with it. Respectful, listening.

MADELYN (CONT'D)
 It was hard. 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
 (MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)

off the roof, into a mosh pit.
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 "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 open 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-broadcasting from the sidewalk, the house (and
crime-scene-taped garage) behind her:*

ZENA

*George told me privately that, if
anything ever happened to him: he
left everything we'd need to know
in*

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

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

*TIME CUT - NEW STORY: Zena hand-held-selfies sneaking through
the house...*

ZENA

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

The TRAP DOOR in the ceiling.

*TIME CUT - NEW STORY- HAND-HELD: She has dragged an ottoman
in from the living room, and stands on it to PULL DOWN THE
DOOR. SPRINGS CREAK eerily. 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)

TIME CUT - NEW STORY - HAND-HELD: Zena searches the dark attic, beneath the crooked angles of the roof. The glare of her phone-flashlight roves over the dusty cobwebbed clutter --

-- moving in on: the (thing) marked (name).

ZENA (V.O.)

Oh my God: it's here. Like he said. Speaking to us from beyond the grave. Crying out for justice.

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

TIME CUT - NEW STORY: Zena has set the phone on a tripod, so she can do an "unboxing video." As she opens the **(thing)**:

ZENA

So excited. Unearthing this LIVE. George's secret files, where he kept the evidence identifying the Chemistry Set Killer...

It's EMPTY -- except for a FLASH DRIVE. Zena looks right at us, awestruck. Grabs her bag and pulls out her laptop.

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

ON ZENA'S LAPTOP: George speaks to the camera -- simple, unscripted, confessional.

GEORGE

I can't break through. It's going nowhere.

(beat)

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.

(beat)

So I kind of hope someone's

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)
*watching this. Because that means
 it worked.*

INT. GEORGE'S ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Zena hits the spacebar, staring at the screen.

ZENA
 No. No.

She has set up a portable mini-studio in the attic to capture her "investigation": a collapsible phone tripod, small LED lights, a mic. But she has forgotten about it, now:

ZENA (CONT'D)
 NO NO NO NO NO.

Scrubs back a bit in the video, 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
 I'm fucked. I'm so fucked.

Zena kicks a random box -- papers go flying.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

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

NORMAN

Zena?!

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.

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 his plan to work. He proved the killer is still out there. Now we have to get him.

NORMAN

That just seems like exactly the police's job.

ZENA

You think the police are going to let us keep provoking the killer, 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 catches 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 grins, 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

(to Madelyn)

You did, didn't you? And it was good!

Madelyn blushes and tries not to say -- but Zena holds out her fist. Madelyn can't help but bump it, and smile.

ZENA (CONT'D)

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

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.

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 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.

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.

SHRIMPTON

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

DEAKINS

No: please don't.

SHRIMPTON

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.

SHRIMPTON

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

