

# 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

Darkness. In a pool of light, **GEORGE ROIZMAN** -- fiftyish, going gray, a bit sloppy -- exhales smoke, taps the ash off his cigarette and switches on his HOME PODCASTING SETUP. Grave, quiet, intent, like an old FM radio midnight-shift DJ:

GEORGE

I was nine years old in August, 1978, when Murray Simpson -- a florist, in Perkins, Tennessee -- came home from work and made himself a sandwich.

(beat)

The Chemistry Set Killer had broken in days or maybe even weeks before, and laced a jar of mustard in Simpson's kitchen with a unique mixture of plant toxins.

(beat)

The killer would use it again on ten more victims. In different states. Different ages, races, economic and social groups.

(beat)

The poison itself was the only thing the murders had in common. His "signature".

He takes another drag and exhales as he glances at his notes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It was all over the news. People were panicked. Everyone was suddenly afraid of their own pantries and refrigerators.

(beat)

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

(beat)

The C.S.K. killed 11 people -- and then just stopped, vanished...in 1985.

(beat)

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 new evidence,

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
 identifying the Chemistry Set  
 Killer.  
 (beat)  
 Spread the word. Tell your  
 friends. We're gonna get him.

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

Then he goes to press a switch on the wall.

With a GRINDING noise, a garage-door-opener LIFTS one entire  
 wall...REVEALING that the studio is in fact George's SHABBY  
 TWO-CAR GARAGE.

Light floods in, exposing unfinished walls and rafters.  
 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  
 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.

He gets an odd expression. His tongue 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.

***We slowly move in on his laptop: crime crackers?***

INT. MADELYN'S OFFICE - 5 O'CLOCK PM

A clean, sparse corporate workplace. A handful of desks in a bland, safe, well-lit "open plan."

**MADELYN MORRISON**, a Supervising Data Analyst in her early 50s, shuts down for the day. It's rather marvelous to watch: she's got it down to a few quick, simple gestures. She has been doing this for a long time.

The FOUR OTHER DATA ANALYSTS -- all younger, sloppier and nerdier -- glance up from their work:

DATA ANALYST

Is it five?

DATA ANALYST 2

There she goes.

She's already heading for the door.

MADELYN

See you tomorrow, kids.

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'm not  
supposed to tell you --  
(can't resist:)  
You're getting a promotion!  
Director Of Analyst Services! Four-  
percent raise, plus your own  
office! With a door. That you can  
close.

DING! The elevator doors OPEN, revealing the LOBBY.

MADELYN  
I'm sorry?

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Brenda steers Madelyn out of the flow of departing corporate  
drones heading for the revolving doors, so she can share:

BRENDA  
I'm sorry, I couldn't help it! I  
just love it when a promotion is...  
righteous. 24 years. Worked your  
way up. First woman in your  
department. First female  
supervisor. You go, girl!

Madelyn tries to process all this. 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

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

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

BRENDA  
No.

MADELYN  
Nah. I'm good.  
(beat)  
I like the work. I like my team.  
I like my desk. Thank you, though.  
(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?  
(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
 (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 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...

(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)

(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.

(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.

SHRIMPSON

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.

SHRIMPTON

Gotta say: I'm with Norman on this.

ZENA

I think we're facing a generational issue here.

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.

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)  
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)

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

(MORE)

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
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  
Whhhoooooo -- 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. TRAIN - MORNING

McLean, in a window seat, talks on his phone via earbuds:

MCLEAN

...throwing up all night. Yep.  
Praying to the porcelain god. Come  
on -- you know me: I work hung-over  
all the time. This is different.  
I think it was the octopus. Have  
ever eaten octopus? Don't eat  
octopus.

During this, **BILLY** -- late 20's, gorgeous, wearing shorts and  
a beat-up hoodie -- comes past and gestures: *is this seat*  
(opposite McLean) *taken?* It's no meaningless move, there's a  
definite romantic edge.

McLean eagerly gestures: *all yours!* While, into earbuds:

MCLEAN (CONT'D)

Yep: tomorrow. If I'm not dead.

Billy meets McLean's eyes, eavesdropping, amused. McLean  
grins, shrugs.

MCLEAN (CONT'D)

I'm turning off my phone and going  
back to sleep.

McLean WINCES at a loud CHIME from the train's PA speakers -- hastily trying to mute his earbuds during:

CONDUCTOR (ON PA)  
All aboard. Penn Station to  
Pittsburgh, Youngstown and  
Columbus, doors will be closing.

Billy grins and McLean rolls his eyes as unmutes for:

MCLEAN (INTO PHONE)  
That? A movie. Tell Bryan to  
cover the WindWest short sale.

McLean disconnects and takes the earbuds out.

MCLEAN (CONT'D)  
I'm feeling better already.

BILLY  
You look fine.

McLean meets Billy's gaze, appreciating the boldness. 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 sweatshirt --

-- Billy looks down: his sweatshirt has a small DePaul University logo. McLean shrugs.

MCLEAN (CONT'D)  
It's like a habit. Detecting, kind  
of.

Billy forces a smile as he gets up.



BILLY

I just remembered, I don't like  
sitting backwards.

Watching him walk away -- regretful:

MCLEAN

You rode a bike to the train. And  
you don't wear a helmet, because  
you're vain about your hair. Which  
is...really nice.

(beat)

But you should wear 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.

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - THE SAME TIME

Dundoski's van is parked down the block, a discreet distance from George's house.

He climbs out, stretching and squinting in the morning sun. Slowly raises one foot, hands floating in front of him. A yoga pose. Breathing in through his nose, exhaling slowly through his mouth. Peaceful. Until:

TED'S RV drives past -- wobbly, noisy and spewing gray exhaust. The outside is as shambolic and whacky as the interior: covered in bumper stickers, collaged super-market - tabloid front pages, and messages from Ted that look like graffiti.

It parks across from George's house.

Dundoski tries to maintain his beatific calm, walking over.

TED  
Hey! What's the rumpus?

DUNDOSKI  
Are you for-real with this?

TED  
What.

DUNDOSKI  
You just parked a conspiracy-nut billboard outside their house.

TED  
It's my home. And my beliefs.  
First amendment.

DUNDOSKI  
Take your amendment around the corner, now.

Ted is about to get into a spirited intellectual debate -- but then he looks in Dundoski's eyes and just starts the RV.

Dundoski watches Ted's beliefs drive out of sight, then returns to his van.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - THE SAME TIME

Cameron, in a top hat and brightly-colored tuxedo, stands singing to Zena's Mom & Dad. A WAITER -- reluctantly, they have an actual job to do -- holds Cameron's phone, face-timing the scene to Zena.

It's an original anniversary song by Cameron. She writes in a trippy-psychedelic style, so Zena's Mom & Dad are forcing their smiles...baffled.

EXT. AIRPORT - THE SAME TIME

Zena holds her phone, absently watching the performance as she loads her luggage into a taxi one-handed, and --

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

-- gets in the back. Slamming the door, to the DRIVER:

ZENA  
You know a town called  
(**Shadyville**)?

DRIVER

Yeah -- that's gonna cost you a fortune.

Cameron's song ends, scattered applause from other tables:

ZENA

I have a fortune. Go.  
 (into phone)  
 HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! I love you guys!

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MIDDAY

Norman wakes, alone, in a dead stranger's bedroom. Daylight coming around the window blinds.

Checks under the sheets: he is naked. Looking around -- 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.

(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)

(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.

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  
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 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. MCLEAN'S RENTAL CAR - THE SAME TIME

McLean, driving a fabulous rented sports car, approaches George's street. He sees Ted's Conspiracy-Mobile RV parked at the corner --

-- and jauntily honks his horn in greeting as he drives past.

INT. TED'S RV - CONTINUOUS

Startled, Ted takes a second to realize he knows the driver of the bright-red Corvette -- then he hastily starts his engine and pulls out to follow.

INT. DUNDOSKI'S PICKUP - SOON AFTER

Dundoski sighs, exasperated as he watches the Corvette slowing as it cruises past George's house, scouting it. The RV, revving to catch up -- suddenly CLANKS and SPUTTERS --

-- and DIES, rolling to a stop in front of George's house.

DUNDOSKI  
 Oh fer f\*ck's sake.

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dundoski gets out of his pickup and storms toward the stranded RV, as McLean parks and joins them.

DUNDOSKI  
Is this what you knuckleheads call  
low-profile?!

MCLEAN  
I didn't know our profile mattered.

DUNDOSKI  
Zena is in there, right now,  
getting the evidence!

MCLEAN  
Excellent!

Dundoski points at Ted and his dead Conspiracy-Mobile:

DUNDOSKI  
NOT excellent!

Ted tries to restart it -- McLean's phone rings. He checks it, and answers a videocall -- CAMERON's on the other end:

MCLEAN  
Hey, the gang's all here!

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

INT. CAMERON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CAMERON  
Do you have Zena? She was  
livestreaming from in the house!

MCLEAN  
Not at the moment. You want me to  
go ring the bell?

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

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

DUNDOSKI  
You touch that bell, we got a  
problem.

Freezing, starting back to the RV:

MCLEAN  
 Maybe we'll just wait on that.

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - SOON AFTER

Madelyn, Norman and Zena sit around the formica-topped table. A bottle of bourbon and three glasses are set out.

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  
 (MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)  
 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.

Madelyn points to the front door. Zena, aghast, turns to Norman, who shrugs.

Zena grabs up her stuff and HURRIES OUT, fighting tears.

Madelyn takes a deep, slightly-guilty, resolved breath. Norman nods, privately uncertain but committed to her: *you did the right thing.*

They listen to the front door SLAM.

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

Zena paces George's front yard, furious. She has gathered the Crime Crackers into an emergency call. (*We INTERCUT FREELY between the Crackers in their homes and workplaces, Zena at George's and the Zoom Window itself.*)

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

CAMERON  
Yeah, but -- it is her house. Now.

ZENA  
I just need to know if you're all  
still in. Am I insane? Should I  
try to do this?

MCLEAN

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

DUNDOSKI

Hell yes!

ZENA

(tearing up a bit)  
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. That all goes to you?

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.

SHRIMPTON

I guess you can afford your feelings, Carl.

ZENA

Okay, now the question is, how do I get access to --

MADELYN (O.S.)

Really?! You're doing this here?!

Zena FREEZES, turns -- busted: Madelyn and Norman watch from the open doorway to the house.

A SHOWDOWN. Eyes locked on each other.

ZENA  
I really don't want this to get  
ugly.

The landline phone, inside, BEGINS TO RING.

MADELYN  
No, you don't.

Norman winces. Trying to de-escalate:

NORMAN  
None of us do.

Madelyn never takes her eyes off Zena. To Norman:

MADELYN  
Would you get the phone?

As Norman reluctantly goes back inside, Madelyn talks loudly -  
- not just to Zena, but to everyone on her Zoom:

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
I want you all to listen to me.  
Because this is very important.  
Murder is not fun. It is not a  
game. You should not be messing  
with serial killers. I am taking  
what we found to the police.

ZENA  
What I found.

MADELYN  
Get off my lawn.

When Zena starts to argue, Madelyn fake-lunges at her:

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
SCOOT!

Zena backs up, startled -- as is Norman, in the doorway with  
the landline hand-set:

NORMAN  
Mad?  
(when she turns)  
It's for you.

Madelyn () takes the phone.

MADELYN

Hello?

INTERCUT:

EXT. SMALL TOWN FISHING PIER - THE SAME TIME

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

He is in a picturesque, even cliché, New England town: fishing boats at a dock, a row of local shops and restaurants.

DEAKINS

Is this...George Roizman's widow?

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MADELYN

Yes. Ex-widow.

Madelyn goes inside, to focus; Norman and Zena follow.

DEAKINS

I'm sorry. For your loss.

MADELYN

Thank you. Who is this?

DEAKINS

I just wanted to say I didn't do it.

Madelyn's eyes widen, looking at Norman and Zena.

MADELYN

You didn't do...what?

DEAKINS

I didn't kill him.

Madelyn -- in shock -- trying to keep her voice steady:

MADELYN

Are you saying -- this is the...Chemistry Set Killer?

Norman and Zena's jaws drop. Zena steps 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!

SHRIMPSON  
What is he saying?!

MCLEAN  
I have questions.

DUNDOSKI  
Trace it! Trace the call!

Hastily MUTING them so she can EDGE closer to Madelyn --

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- who paces away from Zena, focusing on Deakins:

DEAKINS  
I never liked that name.

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 you  
didn't kill him?

DEAKINS  
Look: I just heard about this, on  
the news. And...this is insane.  
Someone is taking my private --  
issues -- and using them. I don't  
even know why.

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

(beat)  
I stopped. A long time ago. I  
(MORE)

DEAKINS (CONT'D)  
haven't -- done anything -- in a  
long time.

Madelyn is riveted. The man seems sincere.

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

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

MADELYN  
You should tell the police.

DEAKINS  
I can't do that.

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

MADELYN  
You can if you're really innocent.

Madelyn WHIRLS, startled. But he has no idea he's now  
broadcasting:

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. Close to disconnecting.

DEAKINS  
Who is that?

Madelyn glares at Norman, who shrugs -- only semi-apologetic.

MADELYN  
It's some -- people --

NORMAN  
I'm a journali--

ZENA  
(over him)  
My name is Zena Morano. I'm  
leading a group of web detectives  
(MORE)

ZENA (CONT'D)  
to solve the murder of George  
Roizman.

Madelyn and Norman look at Zena, appalled. She meets their gaze, scared she's gone too far. Until:

DEAKINS  
"...web detectives"?

ZENA  
We hunt serial killers. From home.  
And...office.  
(beat)  
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 it's just...a form of  
entertainment? For a bunch of  
bored, lonely people?

ZENA  
We're a community. Crowdsourcing.  
When the authorities give up, we  
don't. We solve cold cases. All  
that stuff you got away with  
because no one was looking... now  
we're looking. And 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.

On the Zoom, this bold posturing gets thumbs-ups and floating hearts. But the silence that follows is unnerving.

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?

Chilling pause as the threat sinks in. Zena, for the very first time, is speechless. Norman sees it...and:



NORMAN

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

DEAKINS

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

NORMAN

Maybe you want attention.

DEAKINS

From a bunch of internet "sleuths"?

NORMAN

You didn't know who would pick up  
the phone.

ZENA

Tell us something only the killer  
would know. Like: from a crime  
scene. That the police didn't make  
public.

DEAKINS

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

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

DEAKINS (CONT'D)

Everyone thinks I stalked my  
victims. That I took months to  
learn everything about them. But  
the truth is, I would just do  
something like watch a bus stop and  
whoever got off, it was them.  
Follow them home, break in, poison  
their food and get out.

ZENA

But -- all the profiles said:  
getting so close was the kick.

DEAKINS

No. I was very strict with myself:  
no reasoning. Just chance. They  
didn't matter. I didn't want to  
know them. Or care.

(beat)

It was just me against the  
universe. That was the point. To

(MORE)

DEAKINS (CONT'D)  
 make things happen. Because I  
 couldn't stand to live in this  
 meaningless abyss without --  
 fighting back.

Everyone is kind of stunned. Gently:

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, Zena and Madelyn look at each other.

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

DEAKINS  
 Please don't.

MADELYN  
 Why not?

NORMAN  
 Because they'll want to know how we  
 know.

DEAKINS  
 Yes. Exactly.

NORMAN  
 But if we don't, they'll waste time  
 looking for you.

MADELYN  
 (to Norman)  
 But then: do I tell them George  
 didn't have secret evidence?

DEAKINS  
 I'm sorry: what?

MADELYN  
 Oh, lord, right: I'm so sorry. He  
 made it all up. He didn't have new  
 evidence. He was just trying to  
 bait you, lure you out of hiding.  
 (MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Kind of a silver lining, I guess,  
for you.

DEAKINS

Wow. That's -- a lot to process.

Deakins just looks down, thoughtful. In the silence:

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. I have so  
many questions.

NORMAN

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

ZENA

Well, hang on: is it okay if I  
record this part of our conver--

DEAKINS

No. It's not okay.

ZENA

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

Awkward silence.

NORMAN

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

ZENA

Whoa. Right.

DEAKINS

Yeah. I was wondering that.

NORMAN

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

ZENA  
You should team up with us.

DEAKINS  
To...catch me?

ZENA  
No! To clear your name.

DEAKINS  
I don't think so.

ZENA  
Then people are going to think  
you're a killer.

Awkward beat.

DEAKINS  
I just wanted Mrs. Roizman to know.

MADELYN  
I understand. And I appreciate it.  
Thank you.

DEAKINS  
*(you guys go your way and I go mine  
- please don't help me*  
(beat)  
Take care.

Deakins disconnects.

EXT. SMALL TOWN FISHING PIER - CONTINUOUS

Deakins removes the battery and drops the phone into the  
water.

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

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

INT. FULL SCREEN: ZOOM MEETING - CONTINUOUS

CAMERON  
Did that really just happen?!

ZENA  
Yes it did. And it changes  
everything.

SHRIMPSON

Wait: are we seriously not going to tell the police?

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn grimaces. Torn.

NORMAN

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

MADELYN

Retired serial killer.

NORMAN

Is there such a thing?

MADELYN

I do believe that he stopped.

DUNDOSKI

Doesn't he still have to pay for what he did?

EXT. SOAP SHOP - THE SAME TIME

Deakins walks along a street of tourist-y old clapboard and brick-fronted shops.

He unlocks The Soap Shoppe ("*artisinal soaps, handcrafted scents*") which jingles with authentic bells as he goes in.

INT. SOAP SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Antique racks, shelves richly-colored soaps in baskets.

Deakins turns off the alarm, turns on the lights and the folk Americana music. But he is distracted.

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

ZENA

What do you even mean by "evidence"?

NORMAN

The call is evidence.

MCLEAN

It is. They can track where it came from. Open up new leads.

ZENA

No: we're websleuths. We put it together. We solve it. Ourselves. And then we give it to the police.

MADELYN

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

DUNDOSKI

We should.

ZENA

And we can.

MCLEAN

And he knows that.

Beat.

ZENA

Wait: what?

INT. SOAP SHOP - THE SAME TIME

Deakins stops writing on a "Specials Of The Day" chalkboard in impeccable calligraphy -- halfway through the word "**lavender**"...

...realizing.

MCLEAN (V.O.)

He's going to realize that call was a mistake.

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

MCLEAN

It gave us more reason to hunt him. And new ways to do it. And he's not an idiot.

NORMAN

So he's going to want to...erase that mistake.

SHRIMPTON

Oh...holy hell.

Madelyn looks at them, uneasy. Like she's standing in a river that is suddenly rushing faster -- pulling her in.

MADELYN

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

TED

That was then, this is now. Also, human beings suck.

MADELYN

What if we just -- walk away?

ZENA

We can't. No way. George wouldn't want us to --

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.

MADELYN

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

NORMAN

How?

MADELYN

...in the podcast?

ZENA

Yes. Yes!

Tears well in Zena's eyes as she meet's Madelyn's deer-in-headlights stare.

**(GENERAL PLOT NOTE: are they debating TELLING THE POLICE? Or DOING THE PODCAST? Or HUNTING THE KILLER? I think the plan becomes: they DO the podcast AND they tell the police - but because they are targets, they ALSO HAVE TO HUNT. (Which makes the police mad...)**

NORMAN

There's one other thing we have to figure out.

(beat)

Who did kill George. And why.

Zena goes to Madelyn, takes her hands -- reassuring and condescending. Madelyn makes a big effort not to pull 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, over Zena's shoulder, MEETS Norman's eyes. He SHRUGS.

END OF EPISODE 1