

UNITITLED PODCAST-KILLER PROJECT

Written by

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

**(It's a MESS! The point is to  
Show you the MESSY progress of creative work.)**

Address  
Phone Number

INT. GEORGE'S STUDIO - DAY

Darkness. **GEORGE ROIZMAN**, 49 years old, sits at a podcasting workstation. He's going gray, overweight and ought to shave more often. He's got large professional headphones on, thick-lensed glasses.

**(Possibly: George smokes)**

George is illuminated by the glow of a monitor and the colored LEDs of digital recording equipment.

GEORGE

His first victim was a florist in  
Petukaville, Tennessee. Murray  
Simpson, age 37.

***THIS SHOULD NOT BE ABOUT THE FIRST VICTIM (dummy!) It should be about the LAST!!***

***(He may even have sety up a COUNTDOWN - three more episodes until I reveal the new evidence!)***

George speaks quietly, intently, dramatically into his big old microphone - like an old FM Radio Late Night DJ:

GEORGE (CONT'D)

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.

George clicks through images on his monitor as he speaks - OLD PHOTOS and yellowed NEWS CLIPPINGS as he speaks - ABSORBED in the history, the images:

Xeroxed old snapshots of Murray - alive, and then crime-scene photos of his body.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It was the sandwich that killed him. The pickled peppers, in fact. The jar of peppers in his refrigerator has been laced with a unique, never-before-seen...poison.

The toxicology analysis explains that this poison is mixture of nightshade and smadomog - The victim first feels a buzzing, thickening numbness of the tongue and throat. It is like an anaphylactic allergic reaction. The breathing speeds up as the body frantically attempts to get oxygen. They feel dizzy, frightened, lightheaded. The room seems to spin. They can't focus their eyes or feel with their hands. They go numb. They lose the ability to walk, and fall to the ground, helpless - fully aware they are being killed by something sinister, insidious, invasive - creeping through their bloodstream into their nerve endings and their brain. They stop breathing. They die.

George is reading from a hand-written script.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Murray had been murdered. The killer had broken into his home days or maybe even weeks before, and poisoned the peppers. The poison was distinctive - close to several naturally-occurring plant toxins...and yet, chemically-created in a unique way. The killer had manufactured this poison, and would use it again on other victims - over the course of 5 years.

(beat)

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

George lets that hang ominously for a second - then hits STOP on his recording.

He takes a deep, satisfied breath - and opens a bottle of water. He drinks a big swig, thinks - and then sets it down and starts RECORDING AGAIN:

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's a cold case. Ice cold. No one cares, because this guy vanished in 1985.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

He killed 11 people.  
The victims were in different states, all ages, a wide variety of ages, races, economic and social groups.  
The poison was in their food/drink at home - which means he had the ability to break & enter without a trace.  
The CSK was smart: he knew how the FBI Profilers worked - he understood the principles of evidence and so he didn't leave any. Profilers look for similarities in the victims - but he chose his targets totally at random.

(beat)

But he did sign his work. The poison itself was his "signature": he created it, designed it. He worked in a lab, he was a knowledgeable chemist. This killer wants to get away with it - but wants to make sure they KNOW he's getting away with it. He wants attention.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was eleven years old when I first heard about The Chemistry Set Killer. My first serial killer.

***There was a report in the local paper? A magazine article, with pictures? Or I heard people talking about it - because they were afraid of getting posioned by things in their own homes.***

It was the first time I became aware of human evil. Some person out there was killing other people...apparently for the fun of it. The sport. To get attention.

It changed everything. Knowing this could happen. Someone could do that.

And he could be anyone. He could strike anywhere.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Is that when I became obsessed?  
No. It was buried for a long time,  
a dim memory.

No one is listening to this  
podcast. I know that. I have 14  
subscribers. And according to my  
latest analytics, only 3 of them  
have downloaded any episodes.

But it is out there. I am speaking  
the truth. I am calling out.  
That's what citizen journalism is  
all about. Speaking out.  
Testifying. And then maybe  
something will happen. Maybe  
someone else knows something they  
haven't told anyone. And hearing  
my journey will provoke them to  
break their silence.

No one is listening...but I am on a  
mission. I am going to identify  
the Chemistry Set Killer. People  
like are all over. We're getting  
connected now, on websites and  
bulletin boards and chat rooms.  
The power and wisdom of the crowd  
is being summoned to hunt down  
these cold, calculating monsters.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Is there a difference between  
someone hiding and someone that no  
one listens to?

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But I have a secret weapon. And  
I'm going to use this podcast to  
broadcast it: I have found new,  
critical decisive evidence on the  
identity of the Chemistry Set  
Killer. Evidence that was out  
there, in plain sight. But no one  
was looking. The case was cold.  
New atrocities had caught the  
attention of the public. There  
were more popular killers. So no  
one noticed.

But I did. And I will reveal this  
evidence, on this podcast.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Stay tuned.

True crime podcast.

I'm an outsider. Quirky, stubborn, obsessive. Maybe obsession is not such a bad thing.

I don't like to let go of things.

I don't let go easily.

I worked in radio long after radio died. And now I'm a podcaster.

George switches off the recorder. He takes a deep breath.

The studio is dim and silent around him. He gets up and walks to one side of the room - and presses a switch on the wall.

With a humming, grinding noise, the garage-door-opener in the rafters pulls the shabby wooden garage door open. Light floods in from outside -

- washing the "studio" in late-afternoon light and exposing for what it is: George's shabby rickety two-car garage.

Unfinished wooden walls, rafters. Industrial shelving jammed with cardboard file-boxes, papers, and ?? junk. While most of this space is set up as a working podcast studio - there are also pantry items (canned goods, bottled water, etc) and other household supplies on some of the more dusty and shadowed shelves.

George's black t-shirt is revealed to be an old Richard Hell and the Voidoids shirt, worn backwards.

EXT. GEORGE'S STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

George walks across his shabby backyard toward his run-down house.

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

INT. GEORGE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

George lets himself in. The door from the yard to the kitchen is swollen a bit and he has a hard time getting it to close.

As he goes to (do something) - he gets a funny expression on his face. He slows, sticking his tongue out a bit. It feels fuzzy, thick.

His throat is closing up. He's getting dizzy;

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

GEORGE

Oh no.

He staggers a bit for the wall-mounted land-line telephone. But his already-somewhat-paralyzed fingertips cannot grip the sleek Princess Phone and it falls to the linoleum floor.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

No no no.

But it sounds more like "Nuh nuh nuh" because he's already paralyzed in the mouth and throat.

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

George dies, lying on the kitchen floor, staring up at us.

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

A very clean, sparse workplace. Very corporate, very laminate-and-glass-and-metal. Bland safe light.

**MADELYN MORRISON** - almost 50. Supervising Data Analyst. Wearing a subtly-stylish business suit. A tiny bit 20th century: skirt, stockings.

She's in a room with FOUR OTHER DATA ANALYSTS all a bit younger, sloppier and nerdier than she is.

Madelyn shuts down her workspace calmly and efficiently. She's got it worked down to a few quick, simple gestures. A cover goes over her keyboard. It's rather marvelous to watch: an expert, a master at the game. The least expenditure of energy for the mosgt effect. Smart.

DATA ANALYST

Is it five?

DATA ANALYST 2

There she goes.

MADELYN  
See you tomorrow, chickadees.  
Tomorrow, kids.

She's already heading for the door.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - ELEVATORS - SOON AFTER

The doors open to reveal **BRENDA** - Human Resources - already in.

BRENDA  
We have a meeting tomorrow.

MADELYN  
(startled)  
Human Resources?

BRENDA  
I like to think so.  
(holds out her hand)  
I'm Brenda McNeill -

MADELYN  
(shaking her hand)  
Madelyn. Morrison.  
(beat)  
You know that. Obviously.

They ride down in silence for a moment.

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
Am I in trouble over something?

BRENDA  
God, no.

Slight beat.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Why? Is there something we should know about?

MADELYN  
No! Of course not.  
(beat)  
I mean: I know, if there was - I would say that - but - seriously: no.

Before Brenda can reassure her - the elevator doors OPEN, revealing the LOBBY. Brenda - polite - waits; Madelyn slightly self-conscious, exits the elevator first.



INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn heads for the revolving doors -

- Brenda catches up with her to say, struggling with her desire to give good news against the rules:

BRENDA

I'm not supposed to say this until tomorrow.

Madelyn waits, not sure how to react - but Brenda's attitude is so friendly and repressing-a-smile that she is no longer scared.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

You're getting a promotion! So sorry - Spoiler alert!

Tomorrow. That's what the meeting is for.

(beat)

Director Of Analyst Services.

(beat)

A four-percent bump annually - and your own office. With a door. You can close.

MADELYN

Wow.

She is suddenly horrified at herself for breaking protocol this way.

BRENDA

I'm sorry - I couldn't help it. I just - like it when someone who deserves a promotion gets a promotion.

(beat)

Go team!

I mean: you've worked here for 14 years. Worked your way up. The first woman in your department. The first female supervisor. And you don't have a single complaint against you.

Madelyn takes this all in. She takes a deep breath.

MADELYN

Do I have to take it?

BRENDA  
What do you mean?

MADELYN  
Could I say no?

BRENDA  
Why would you want to say no?

MADELYN  
I like where I am. I like my job.

BRENDA  
But -  
(baffled)  
Director...of...

MADELYN  
I don't know. More meetings,  
right? More pressure? Less  
actually doing the thing.

BRENDA  
But - Director...

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

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

Brenda looks like she might cry, like she has been slapped in the face.

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
Are you all right?

BRENDA  
Yeah - I'm -  
(beat)  
You sure?!  
(beat)  
It's more money. It's more power.

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 analyzing stuff. I like my team. I like working with them all day. I like my desk.

BRENDA

(processing)

Okay.

MADELYN

Is that okay?

BRENDA

Of course! No one is going to force you to take a promotion.

MADELYN

Okay then. Thank you, though. Really.

Madelyn nods and heads for the doors. But then she stops:

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Should I still come to the meeting tomorrow?

Before Brenda can figure out the answer to that - Madelyn's phone rings. (Distinctive ringtone?)

Brenda watches Madelyn check the Caller ID and FROWN.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I have to take this - it's the police -

BRENDA

Police?!

Madelyn nods, distracted - reading the Caller ID to Brenda as she takes the call:

MADELYN

"Kirbysville Police" -  
(into phone)  
Hello -  
(listens)  
yes it is.

As she listens further, Madelyn is SHOCKED, STUNNED by what she hears.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Oh my God - when? um - how - ?

Brenda watches, CONCERNED. Madelyn turns away from Brenda slightly, wrapped up the terrible news she is getting -

MADELYN (CONT'D)

No - we - I didn't even know he -

(listens)

Yes - of course - I will -

( )

I'm sorry, where is Kirbysville, exactly?

She's nodding.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Yes. I'll be there tomorrow.

She disconnects and remembers Brenda is watching. Not sure exactly how to say this, she just plunges in honestly:

MADELYN (CONT'D)

My husband is dead. He was murdered.

BRENDA

You're not married.

Madelyn nods at Brenda - shaken, baffled:

MADELYN

Its - thirty years ago.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY

Madelyn's taxi pulls up outside and she gets out, with her carry-on luggage.

She is dressed as if for work, in a nice blue suit, with shoes that were not made for the muddy curb she's standing on. Her lovely silk print scarf feels particularly foolish, fluttering a bit in the chilly wind.

There is a POLICE CAR parked outside, and CRIME SCENE TAPE fluttering around the entrance to the house and the open garage door.

She stands for a moment, taking in George's home: it's crappy. It's in disrepair, and it's isolated and it's not at all what she would have wished for him.

She steels herself to go in.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The big double-door is open, so Madelyn can see the entire shabby crime scene as she walks up, her wheeled suitcase bumping along the little weed-strewn driveway.

There is a CRIME SCENE TECH working on the scene.

**DET. LEWIS ELMES** watches Madelyn approach. Her suitcase hits a bump and twists, so she is dragging it instead of wheeling it. She is having a hard time walking in the rutted dirt.

ELMES

You all right there?

ELMES (CONT'D)

Mrs. Roizman?

Madelyn speaks absently --

MADELYN

Not even a little bit.

-- her eyes traveling the jammed-up hoarder-like shelves, the files and papers, the signs of George's life at the end.

ELMES

Beg your pardon?

MADELYN

I haven't seen George in thirty years. My name is Morrison.

ELMES

Well - his will says you're his next of kin.

MADELYN

Yeah, I know.

(sighs)

George.

She turns and looks at Elmes:

MADELYN (CONT'D)

No friends? No one here who...

ELMES

No, George was busy, and well-liked. He was a bartender at the Round Table Bar. Everybody liked George. He was between girlfriends, but it's not like he didn't have anyone to talk to.

(MORE)

ELMES (CONT'D)  
 (Maybe George was even remarried)  
 (beat)  
 But you're the name on the  
 paperwork.

**(FIGURE OUT THE LEGAL ISSUES)**

ELMES (CONT'D)  
 You haven't talked to him in thirty  
 years?

MADELYN  
 The last time I saw him I was 19  
 years old. New York. The East  
 Village. We were outside of CBGB -  
 had our last fight there. We had a  
 gig. I was a singer. He was on  
 keyboards. Our band was called the  
 Utter Destruction Of Everything.  
 We had a screaming fight on stage  
 and I walked off and everything  
 else was handled by lawyers through  
 the mail.

ELMES  
 So you don't know where he put the  
 evidence.

MADELYN  
 Evidence of what?

ELMES  
 The Chemistry Set Killer.

Madelyn sighs, shaking her head, looking at the podcast  
 studio.

MADELYN  
 Jesus, George.

Madelyn's phone rings. She's startled and embarrassed -  
 checking the caller ID: **ZENA** She doesn't know that name so  
 she declines the call, mutes the phone and puts it away.

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
 You ever deal with a serial killer  
 before?

ELMES  
 I'm not dealing with it now. If it  
 is the Chemistry Killer - the FBI  
 will want to take over the case.

MADELYN

"If" it is? I thought: he was poisoned. Like this guy always does. This Chemistry - Set..

ELMES

The Chemistry Set Killer has been cold for thirty years. It might be a copycat.  
Your husband was kind of asking for it. Begging for it. Waving a red flag in front of it.

MADELYN

Ex. Husband

ELMES

He was putting out on the internet that he had special new evidence that was going to identify a serial killer.

ELMES (CONT'D)

He made a podcast, and he said he was going to out the killer.  
(to himself)  
Dumb shit.

MADELYN

George? George was the dumb shit?

ELMES

I'm sorry - forgive me. But instead of going to the police, he went on the internet and put himself in danger. He was obstructivng justice. If he wasn't dead, I would probably arrest him.

ELMES (CONT'D)

(with distaste)  
A "web sleuth."

MADELYN

(winces)  
Yeah...that just sounds bad.

ELMES

I just want to make a proper "pile of evidence" (police phrase) case file - to turn over when the FBI comes in.

MADELYN

What if they don't come in?

ELMES

Then I'm gonna try and prove you did it.

She looks pale.

ELMES (CONT'D)

Just kidding.

(beat)

I'm looking into everyone he knows, and I'm checking his bank records and phone records and all that stuff.

(grim)

Trying to find out if somebody was mad at him, if he cheated someone or slept with someone's wife - 'cause it could be, you know, that this had nothing to do with the podcast - and they just used this way of killing George to make it look like it was this geriatric serial killer.

MADELYN

Geriatric?

ELMES

Well, if he was grown up enough to be murdering people in the 1970s, the guy's likely to be around 70 80 years old now. If he's alive at all.

Madelyn's phone vibrates, and she glances down at the caller ID - frowning this time. **ZENA** again.

The voicemails are piling up.

MADELYN

Did I do something to make you mad?

ELMES

I was kind of hoping you'd be more helpful.

MADELYN

Oh. Sorry.



ELMES

Your husband went and got himself killed.

MADELYN

You know, I'm kind of pissed at him about that myself!

MADELYN (CONT'D)

I don't need to be here, you know. I don't have to take on -- all this -- I don't know this man - anymore - - I didn't ask for this - I can't help you --

(beat)

I am not good at crime scenes. This is a lot for me. I'm trying to deal with the fact that a man I haven't seen in thirty years has made me responsible for all of his shit - including his murder.

(beat)

I'm not used to murder. I can't believe I'm saying the word murder and I'm in the house of a person who was murdered - and that person was - my --

She stops, upset. Elmes sighs.

ELMES

Yeah. All right.

(beat)

ELMES (CONT'D)

Will you be here for a few days?

MADELYN

(gleefully)

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

She looks around, upset.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

I have to deal with - all this.

(beat)

George is dead. George is murdered.

(beat)

I don't know - this place. I don't know what to do.

(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)

(beat)

I don't know what's going on. I'm  
pissed, I'm confused. I'm shaken  
up.

Elmes starts for the door but then stops. Turns back to her.

ELMES

You were divorced in 1990.

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

ELMES (CONT'D)

But he didn't make you his next of  
kin until 1992.

Madelyn looks at Elmes, now -- startled.

MADELYN

I just figured he...never got  
around to changing it.

ELMES

No. He went out of his way to do  
it. Went to a lawyer.

(beat)

Two years after the last time he  
saw you.

MADELYN

(thinking back)

He called me. Maybe then. I don't  
know. We caught up.

(beat)

He was kind of a mess. I think he  
wanted to get back together. But I  
was in college by then. No more  
music. Working, too. Data entry.  
Nights and weekends, at Fisher  
Parnell.

ELMES

That's where you work now.

MADELYN

Thirty years.

ELMES

You had changed. So he let you go.  
And made you his executor. Because  
he knew you'd be - stable.  
Reliable. Trustworthy.

Madelyn looks at him, shrugs. Elmes nods, kindly. It's a compliment. He starts out again.

MADELYN  
 (to his back)  
 You ought to be a detective or something.

Elmes goes out, and Madelyn is left alone in George's home.

Madelyn's phone vibrates again - she checks the caller ID - **Zena** again - and sighs, exasperated:

MADELYN (CONT'D)  
 (to the phone)  
 Jesus Christ Zena - can't you take a hint?!

She declines the call again and takes a deep slow breath - trying to let out all of her pent-up feelings and calm down.

INT. ZENA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We meet **ZENA MORANO** - 23 years old, on a sofa in the living room of her large, airy, luxurious house in Southern California. Well: not her house. The house she grew up in. The house she has not yet managed to move out of. Partly because...damn, it's nice! A big swimming pool beyond the giant sliding glass doors. This place looks like a reality show should take place here. And Zena would be the star: a wanna-be influencer.

She's staring at her phone as if it has insulted her.

ZENA  
 No. No you did not. Bitch.

She thinks. Working the problem.

**ZENA'S MOM** comes through the living room - as made-over as her daughter.

ZENA'S MOM  
 Zena - what do you think about fish for dinner?

ZENA  
 (working her phone)  
 I won't be here.

ZENA'S MOM  
 Where're you gonna be?

ZENA  
Pennsylvania.

ZENA'S MOM  
Pennsylvania Pennsylvania?

ZENA  
A friend of mine just died.

ZENA'S MOM  
Oh my God! Who?!

Zena's not listening - because her phone is ringing and she's picking up, breathless, excited:

ZENA  
(into phone)  
Madelyn!!

