

# MARRIED

a crime-series  
by

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Vår 2022

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# Pitch

# MARRIED

A retired hitman is forced out of retirement to clean up the mess of his successor: what's supposed to be dead *wasn't* dead, and now they're being blackmailed. Despite their agreement of *just one job*, it becomes apparent that they'll never let him go until someone can take his place.

With her marriage on its last leg, June hesitantly accepts the offer of a drink from a charming former patient. The evening doesn't end exactly how she envisioned. Suddenly faced with a world more brutal than she ever knew, she'll do whatever it takes to get out alive.

Nathan's mode of operation was always brains over brawn. When a client's in-house scramble for power started reaching into Nathan's personal sphere, he retired for the sake of his family. But letting sleeping dragons lie is not always enough.

It was a clear-cut plan: meet, acquire the blackmail materials, dispose of the problem. When Nathan arrives, the *problem* is half-dead in a pool of his own blood, and his *date* is frantically trying to keep him alive.

He survived thirty years in the business by being discreet: one dead body in a quiet neighbourhood can be written off as an accident, but two is a stretch. Ultimately, the decision of whether June lives or dies, comes down to the revelation of that *another* someone who should be dead, was still very much alive. Incidentally recovering at the hospital where June works.

Navigating layers of bad intel and the incompetence of the person he's cleaning up after, Nathan has no choice but to make use of June to get the next job done. As the noose tightens around Nathan's neck, he tightens the noose around hers. The only way either of them stay alive is if they both do.

# About the Series

## What does it take for a good person to give up on doing good things?

*Marred* is a crime-drama comprising of five 45-minute episodes, following a perspective from the other side of the law. Written with Bergen in mind, it carries the culture and feel of coastal towns and living by the ocean with a mountain view. It's just big enough to disappear in, but small enough to feel peaceful. We join the characters through their effort in avoiding the law and fighting for their lives, and for money.

*Marred* deals issues of morality, loyalty, parenting, secrets, lies and promises made and broken as marriages fall apart, and maybe also heals.

Primarily aimed at crime loving audiences, *Marred* is a dark story with darker humour and quit-witted snark. Given the nature of the profession, further production can be set just about anywhere in the world: He is what is classified as a *Master* contract killer, of which a defining trait is that they do not commonly work locally and will travel extensively to whichever place they need to, to get the job done. Further season can branch into Nathan's expansive client network, and international law enforcement. While these five episodes can stand alone as a mini-series, they are intended to be the beginning of a longer tale of moral decline.

# Visual Profile

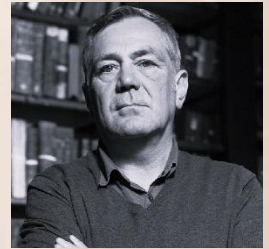
The visual profile of Marred is something I envision as deep tones with dramatic lighting to set the mood and create ambience



# The Makings of a Killer

**One question** that has popped up frequently in relation to *Marred* and its characters, is if there is a difference between a serial killer and a contract killer, aren't they both just **psychopaths**? From this we can pull out a few key questions which we will briefly look at, but one way or another they all fall under a subsection on the forever ongoing issue of *morality*. What is it? What does it mean to have it, or *not* have it?

There has been a multitude of studies done on serial killers, but not all that much on contract killers. I had modest expectations but was pleasantly surprised to find that there has been one large scale study which looks at larger sample sizes to identify common traits on the group as a whole, and not just an in-depth study of a certain individual. At the University of Birmingham. Professor David Wilson led the team of criminologists who conducted this extensive research.



Most known murder-for-money are usually gang-affiliated, or politically affiliated. Yes, they do it for money, but there is also a higher ideology and a bond that cements the profession beyond a pay-check. Contract killer may be hired by anyone, including gangs and organisations, but they are not themselves members, to utilize a term: they are freelancers. The motives for hiring are often painfully mundane, from petty business disputes to domestic rows. The average cost is about £15,180, ranging from £200 to £100,000, and the average age of a contract killer falls to 38, with the youngest being fifteen and the oldest 63.<sup>1</sup> Interesting also was that there were comparatively so few female contract killers, but Wilson acknowledges that their research is has some base flaws: "*this (...) is a sample based on failure; in other words, these are contract killers who have been captured.*"<sup>2</sup> From their research they separate contract killers into four categories based on their origin, and method: the Novice, the Dilletante, the Journeyman and the Master.

**The Novices** are as the word indicate, novices and typically very young. Often as young as children or teenagers and usually from a criminal background.

**The Dilettante** Often opportunistic, a situation born out of crisis- often financial, and would "*dip into the culture of contract killing but not necessarily with any enthusiasm or skill.*" Typically, with no criminal record, and while they'll take on jobs, they'll also frequently prove unable to go thought with it.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jan/25/hitmen-for-hire-secrets-contract-killers>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/crime-courts/not-movies-study-kills-myths-about-hit-men-n83126>

**The Journeymen** are considered the most active, but this acknowledged as an assumption based upon how many have been caught. A trait most of the share is that they are capable and experienced, and operate somewhat locally and therefore are usually caught by local forces.

**The Master.** They don't seem to operate in any local capacity, and most likely have some form of military training. *"they have access to weapons, are comfortable around them and they are able to dispose of any evidence linking them to the hit."*

As a part of Wilson's project, Professor Bon Scott has written on the topic of how serial killers and contract killers differ on a psychological level<sup>3</sup>. Scott acknowledges that there is some debate among criminologists about whether contract killers can also be considered serial killers, but he argues a distinction should be made based on motivation and emotional payoff to the act of murder.<sup>4</sup>



Serial killers select their victims based on personal criteria and are driven to murder by an inner urge- lust, excitement, or an enactment of fantasy. The gratification is in the act itself, and they experience a cooling down period, like an afterglow. They often have no understanding of their compulsion, only that when need starts to build and it becomes overwhelming, they kill again. The cycle restarts once more. Contract killers have no such cycle. They don't have an innate need to kill, and experience no afterglow, no cooling off period, because they get no emotional gratification from the act: their motives are purely financial. They also have no direct hand in selecting their targets beyond choosing to take on the job or not.

Dr. Mohammed Rahman contributed to Wilson's study on the topic of how contract killers deal with their



emotions while working.<sup>5</sup> Using Jimmy Moody as an example he describes: *"our study show us that when contract killers aren't as successful in switching off their emotions, their jobs tend not to go to plan (...) Moody reframed his victims as targets, seeing getting the job done as a normal business activity (...) the reframing shows their resourcefulness as individuals who want to minimise risk and effort in pursuit of maximising profit."* In other words, they don't see them as human. Rahman also gives examples of contract killers who lost their nerve after having interacted face-to-face with their target.

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<sup>3</sup> One notable exception to this is Richard Kulinski, who was a killer for hire by profession, and a serial killer in his spare time, but at current is considered an anomaly.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/wicked-deeds/201404/why-professional-assassins-are-not-serial-killers>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.psympost.org/2015/05/the-psychology-of-assassins-hitmen-bury-their-feelings-for-a-successful-kill-34402>



HBO's *Crazy, not Insane* featuring Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis explores the nature of violent individual. Amongst her patients were Ted Bundy. While the documentary is primarily about serial killers, a side quest brings them to the door of executioner Sam Jones, in an effort to investigate how murder affects an otherwise non-violent person. He claims to perform his job without regret, but he got into the habit of painting after each execution. The artwork could only really be described as disturbing. Whether he genuinely does his job without regret or dissociates the trauma in order to still function as a member of society was something they decided to not poke too much at.

Nuremberg executioner Albert Pierrepoint hanged over 400<sup>6</sup> people in his career.

While Jones sees his work as a service to society, Pierrepoint saw it as a higher calling. *"A condemned prisoner is entrusted to me, after decisions have been made which I cannot alter (...) The supreme mercy I can extend to them is to give them and sustain them their dignity in dying and death. The gentleness must remain."*



In 1833 Dr. James Prichard defined psychopathy as moral insanity. Such people *"-make bad moral judgments but had no defects in their intelligence or mental health."*

In the 70s, Robert Hare, expanded upon that with a more specific checklist that included dishonesty, superficial charm, antisocial behaviour, egocentricity and most importantly *lack of empathy*.<sup>8</sup>



Plato thought that evil acts were only committed out of ignorance, and therefore no person could be truly evil. Aristotle argued that the key to supreme good laid in rationality and consistency, and if not consistent, could they be considered good?<sup>9</sup> Hume defined right and wrong based on moral sentiment, and thus it could not be subject to rational reasoning. To Kant, morality was subject to categorical imperative.<sup>10,11</sup>

**Marred** in no way aims to answer grand existential questions that have baffled the brightest thinkers for millennia, but we throw our characters headfirst into a struggle to define themselves in the most basic of ways: *am I a good person?*

<sup>6</sup> Most sources revolve around the 400 number, but BBC puts it up towards 600.

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert\\_Pierrepoint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Pierrepoint)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/making-evil/201902/what-we-get-wrong-about-psychopaths>

<sup>9</sup> <https://graduateway.com/aristotles-moral-ethics/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-ancient>

<sup>11</sup> <https://icp.utm.edu/kantview/>



# Characters

## June

June's (32) life hit a standstill when her sister died seven years ago. Or at least it felt like it. Suddenly saddled with a traumatised child, newlywed, and newly graduated from med school, she took a year off before planning to return for her residency. But one year passed, and then another, and another. Working as a nurse's assistant is a far way off from where she wanted to be, but it's a stable job with a stable, if modest income.

Now, as her nephew is sixteen and is looking at schools, the regret at giving up her own chosen career flares up. Being in the hospital every day almost make it worse. She feels guilty for the resent she carries with her. Her relationship with her in-laws is also tense; she doesn't have a serious career, so why doesn't she quit and settle down? June is vexed because he should tell his parents that not having *more* children was a joint decision, largely based on that he didn't want *any*.

She wants better for herself. She wants to feel excitement, that happy burst of joy at having done something right. She'd do just about whatever to loosen the clay locked around her feet.

June is a character that we meet right at the beginning of her story arch: as someone who feels her potential was wasted due to circumstance.

From doing the wrong thing for the right reason, to having no choice due to blackmail, and the right thing making everything worse, she'll find herself capable of acts she didn't ever think she'd ever do.



## Peter

Peter (16) feels a little stretched thin. Between training with two football teams, keeping up with school and tensions running high at home, he is almost on board with the suggestion from his aunt's husband to send him to his old boarding school.

If only it wasn't so obvious that he just wanted him out of the house.

Frankly, he should mind his own business a bit more.

Something is going on with Aunt June and he's not sure if he thinks it's good or not. But whatever it is, he hopes it makes her happier than Dickwad McDouchebag does.

## Simon

When they met they seemed like a perfect match, but marriage hasn't been anything like what he'd hoped.

Simon (32) had a very specific idea of what he wanted his life to be, and he had been right on track. And he can get it back on track if June cooperates.

He earns plenty enough for June to quit her job and send Peter to school, but she doesn't want to do "nothing" and going back to school to finish her residency, only to get tied up in a job with longer hours than she had now... no. He's not lacking for options. He wishes that wasn't so easy for his wife to forget.





## Nathan

Nathan (57) is happily married, with one teen almost out of the house, the other in high school, and one little extra surprise that keeps them both young at heart. He wants to spend the last few years before they all fly from the nest being present and pay some attention to the wife. Nora never complained about his frequent travels, although he knows she's been fed up with it for a long time.

His profession has a mortality rate, and he felt the strain of the lifestyle long before it all went sideways. He's seen colleagues - the few he knew, rise and fall to vanity, living beyond the means they could justify having. Death and taxes. The only certainties in life. Managing to retire while still ahead - if only by a hair's breadth, is something he's thankful for.

There is one other thing in life he knows to be certain:  
nothing ever goes exactly to plan.

So, when his phone rings, he knows it's trouble.

While deeply reluctant, the assistant nurse turns out to be surprisingly competent, if a little high strung. He doesn't have the option to let her go. Nathan has never killed anyone off contract before and finds himself hesitating, despite knowing it's the only way he's free. But sending a bullet flying towards a mark isn't the same as snuffing out a soul he knows.

But she can't ever know that.



## Nora

As a professor in Classics and having raised three clones of this man, Nora (51) isn't stupid. How was she *not* supposed to find the crater of sim cards, *flip phones*, and firearms in the boathouse. Or the to-go bag with six passports in the garage with more money than anyone should leave around. She loves her husband, and he makes that easy. She's never had much to complain about - apart from that he can't cook to save *anyone's* life. Then again *saving* lives wasn't quite his jam anyhow, now was it?

As long as he didn't bring the mess home, all she had was a suspicion, an educated guess, and with three kids and a life of her own, she was content to turn a blind eye.

*Content*, not happy.

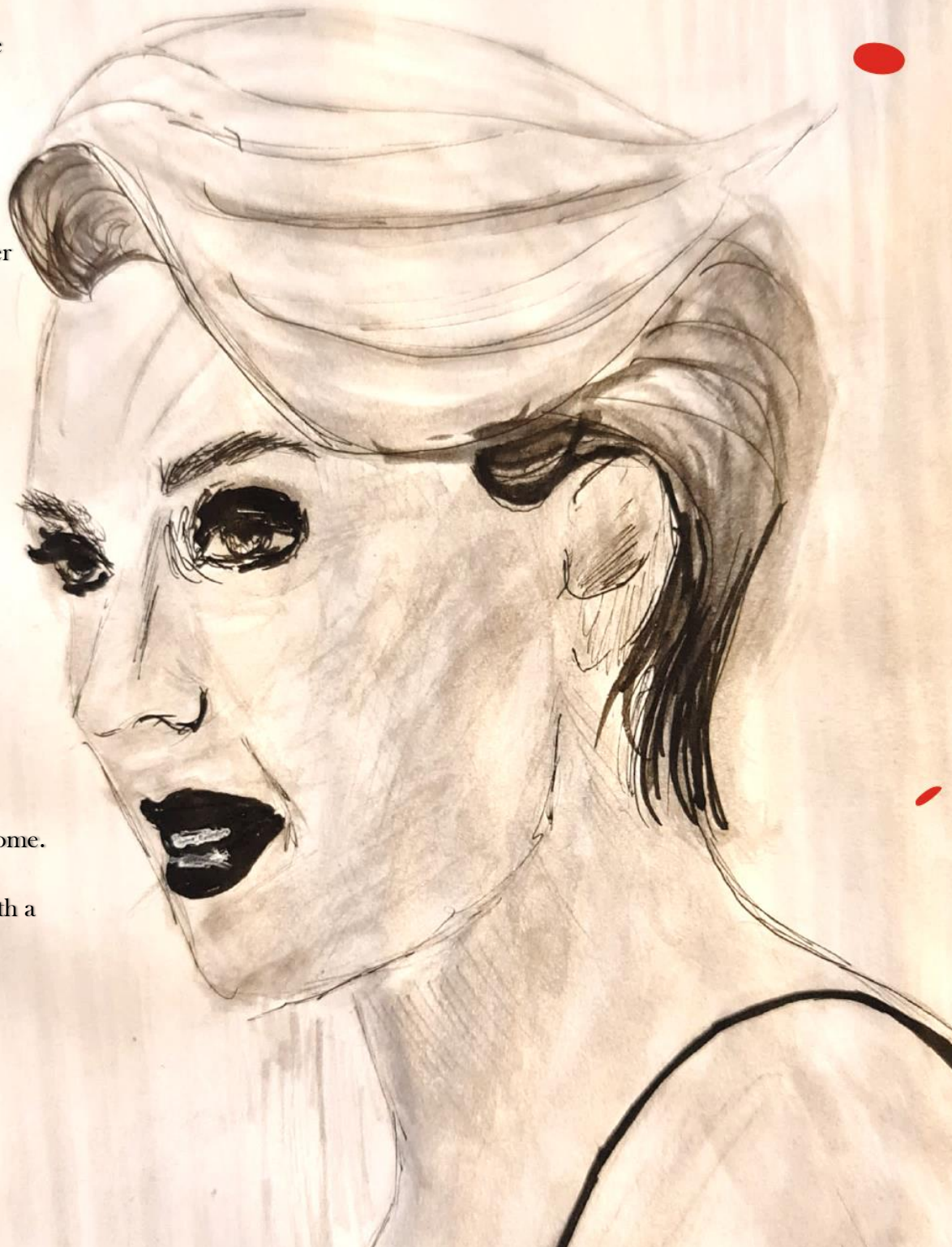
They lost their home.

He retired.

And then he didn't.

Then he brought the mess home.

Nora now has to contend with a confirmed reality.





## Eric

Eric (18) is the eldest son of Nora and Nathan. With everything going on lately he finds comfort in football and relishes the prospect of soon leaving home for university. He loves his parents and sisters, but losing his childhood home hit him hard, and he struggles to settle into another house that will just be a temporary stop before he's on his own the world. On top of it all, their coach decided the promised Captaincy was too much for him to handle right now. It's his last year in the club, so yet another loss, another deviation from normality is devastating.

## Emma

Emma (14) feels ignored. Between her all-star athletic brother and the baby of the family she feels no one really has time for her. Sailing all summer was the best time of her life and she's secretly not that sorry their house is gone.

Now her dad is retired and no longer travelling for weeks at a time. More than anything she loves reading, and while she misses her books, she has her new kindle which never leaves her hand.

## Elise

Eli (6) doesn't really understand what's going on. She's disappointed the new house doesn't look like the old one, but she has her own room now! But all her stuff is gone, and she's doesn't really have many clothes for school, which isn't fun when the other kids tease her for it. The new paints and crayons are cool though, and daddy promised to help paint her room and hang up all her drawings! But more than anything, she wants her mom to not be sad anymore.

## Mike

Mike (61) is rather far up in an organization he strictly speaking isn't even a part of.

Mike knows Nathan from their very early days in the business and since then he made a name for himself as an efficient but otherwise bland character with no aspirations for *acknowledgement*. Unfortunately, some still see him as a threat to their rise to power. His position is only as safe as he is useful, and the ace up his sleeve has always been Nathan.

## Andrew

Andrew (39) is a businessman working in construction. Deciding to cut corners on in production cost by buying cheaper material not up to code, he fell in bad company. Wracking up debts with all the wrong people, he threatens to expose their pipelines if they don't leave him alone. Of course, they don't.

## Isaak

Isaak (42) is Andrew's business partner, and until recently was ignorant to what his friend has been up to. While he's frustrated at the mess Andrew got them into, his priority is getting Andrew clear of the people trying to kill him. The car accident that landed them both in the hospital clearly wasn't any sort of accident, but as the police are slow to examine their claims, he takes matters into his own hands and arranges a hand-over of all the documents they have that can prove anything. While laid up in the hospital, he develops somewhat of a crush on the assistant nurse, and he doesn't care much that she's married. All is fair in love and war.





# Outlines

## Episode 1: *Footloose Man*

NATHAN (57) rushes up the stairs. His phone is vibrating in his hand as he holds it against his chest. He locks himself in his home office and answers. It's a previous employer wanting him out of retirement. Nathan is a retired contract killer. He doesn't want to, but they threaten his family. He retired because someone burned down their house. They've barely moved into the new one. But he doesn't have a choice. Nathan gets a profile on a man, the picture shows ISAAK.

Coming back downstairs, the kids, ERIC (18) and EMMA (14) are already on their way out, and the youngest, ELI is drawing at the table. His wife NORA (51) is not pleased with the development. Why does he need to travel so much to sell ships?

### Teaser

Nathan approaches the door to his mark. He rings the doorbell. A woman covered in blood opens.

### End teaser

JUNE (32) rushed through a hospital ward. She is late for work. A patient shouts for her, but she hurries along. Her supervisor is cross like always, but she gets on with it. A patient has a crush on her, and her friend SARAH in the kitchens teases her about it. But June is married.

ISAAK (42) sneaks out of his room to go to ANDREW (39). He has a broken arm, but Andrew is far worse off. Someone cut Andrew's brake lines, trying to kill him. Isaak has negotiated and anticipates the issue will be solved. They talk about a medication that gives Andrew annoying side effects.

Nathan gets up early and makes breakfast. They're at Eric's football match and Nathan chats with another dad.

June delivers breakfast to Isaak's room. He asks for her number. When he doesn't get it, he gives her his.

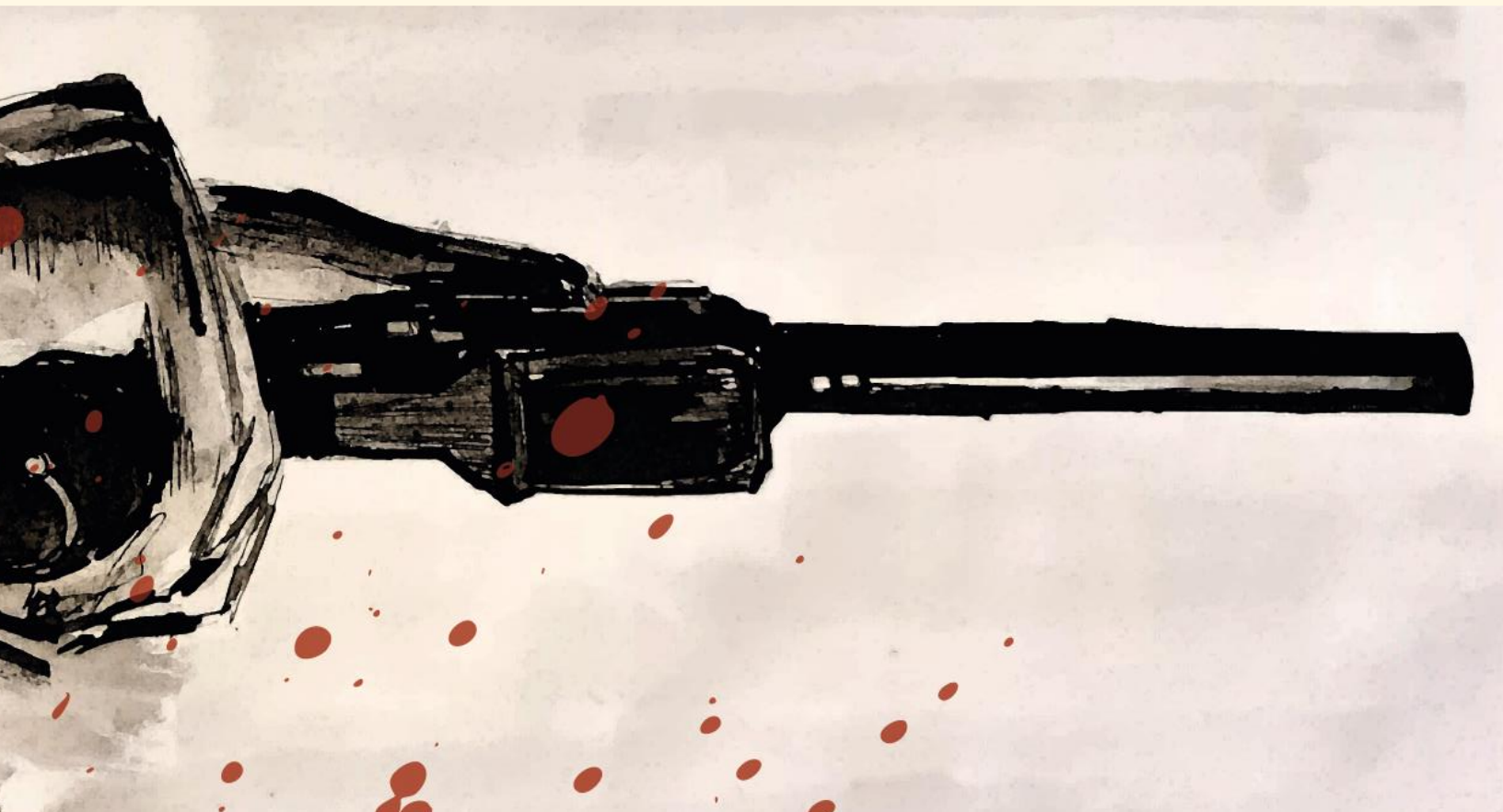
After the game, Nora is not happy to see him go, but Nathan has a feeling it's something else. He goes to the boathouse and takes the boat to the industrial harbour where he hitches a ride with an old tanker.

Sarah thinks June should go for it: only a drink to drag her out of her funk. Sarah texts Isaak for June, and sets up a date. She offers herself to be a get-out-of-jail- free card should it turn unpleasant. June is hesitant, but fine; she can go for a drink.

Peter, June's nephew is looking at schools. June's husband has suggested his own old school - a boarding school quite a bit away. June is not pleased. Peter is happy to see her go out and have fun.

Isaak is getting ready. Newly out of the hospital, he talks with Andrew on the phone, assuring him all will be well; he will meet and hand over the documents after the date. Meeting June, he convinces her to have dinner. Afterwards they go back to his apartment. Finishing up a shower, Isaak is anxious for his appointment to show up so he can hand over the documents. He offers June a coffee, trying to make her stay just a little longer. It's not him they're after, but not being alone he thinks will prevent it turning sour. June resists and accidentally pushes him. He braces himself with his broken arm and falls, splitting his head open on the tiles floor.

Nathan gets off the boat and arrives at the location. He rings the doorbell. A bloody woman (June) drags him in, begging for help. He is shocked to see his mark half-dead on the floor. Pretending to help he asks June to find a towel and some first aid. He smacks his target awake, asking about the documents he came for. When he has what he needs, he folds a towel over his face and suffocates him. June returns to the room just as Nathan removes the towel from his face.



## Episode 2: *Bloodstained Hands*

Nathan is on the ship, sweaty; he barely made it. He has the documents. And a trash bag full of evidence. He is beyond furious and allows himself to feel the rage before he calls Mike for post-hit rapport.

**Flashback:** June stares as Nathan makes a pretence of wiping Isaak's face. He lies and says he just passed out and died. June wants to call an ambulance, but Nathan can't have anyone know he's been in the city. He pulls a gun on her, convinces her that Isaak was a criminal who the world won't miss, but he'll help her get away with murder if she doesn't tell anyone he was there. June knows there is something going on she doesn't understand- people don't just *have* guns, but most of all, she needs to get out of this alive.

They clean up the apartment and June cleans the blood off herself. Nathan takes with him the dirty bedsheets, makes sure to get blood on them and tugs out some of her hair. June is terrified as he makes her put some clean sheets in the wash to arrange a reason for the bed being bare. Not until he goes through her phone and finds information on her husband and nephew does it dawn on her that this isn't going to end tonight. She tries to talk to him. She reveals that she's an assistant nurse and Isaak's friend is still in the hospital. Nathan had only needed her alive long enough to get away from this location, but now he realises he will need her alive to deal with Andrew.

End flashback

He has enough foresight to know Mike will, once again, make it his problem. Nathan is arguing with Mike. He explains why he did as he did. He needs June alive to access Andrew. He tells Mike off, he dragged him out of retirement to deal with his shit. So he will. As long as Mike deals with the idiot that screwed up this badly so his retirement will not be disturbed again.

June arrives home. Peter is sleeping on the couch. She sends him to bed. She goes to sleep crying.'

**Flashback:** Nathan stops her outside the apartment; grabs her arm so harshly she yelps. He tells her to do everything as normal. *Everything.* Leave down the south way.

End flashback

June wakes in the morning. She's exhausted but doesn't immediately recall last night's events. Her husband has already gotten up. It's 0630. She blinks. Remembers. Blinks. It's 0655. She rushes downstairs to the kitchen. There is no coffee, and her husband has the last cup. He doesn't look up from the news and

doesn't notice her red eyes, nor her upset. She asks him to wake Peter. SIMON (32) replies that Peter can wake himself. June is once again late.

Nathan drops by the boathouse and leaves the things. Finally home, exhausted, Nathan notices there is blood on his shirt. He tosses it in the trash, making sure to dig it down. He heads inside, showers and falls asleep on the couch. He is woken by an excited Eli. Mom promised they'd go sailing. He asks Nora if they weren't supposed to take the kids to her parents? Kids wants to go sailing. So tired his body burns, Nathan knows to pick his battles. After a substantial amount of coffee, Nathan drops by Eric's room to rally the troops, but his eldest is in a miserable mood. The team Captaincy was given to someone else whose father is on the club board. Eric feels his problem is petty compared to everything else but is relieved that his father agrees with him; it was unfair. Nathan goes out to the driveway as Nora is about to leave. Nora asks how work went. Nathan admits there were some complications, but he's waiting to see how it turns out. He doesn't understand Nora's reaction. She is nearly in tears. To earn some brownie points with the missus, he tells her to take her time, maybe get a haircut - not that she needs it of course, but just to feel better. And one of those water-face thingies. Hydro-facial. She's been dealing with all the insurance. She deserves a break. Nora asks if he spoke to Eric. Nathan promises he'll take care of it.

June completely out of it. A patient has died and she's pulling a sheet over the body. She checks her phone. A colleague comes in and chides her- the family is right outside. Seeing June is out of sorts, she asks if she is ok. June brushes her off. She finishes up quickly. As she leaves the room, two police officers in civilian clothing are wandering slowly down the ward. Their badges hang around their throat. Panicked, she escapes to a bathroom. Desperately she checks her phone again. Nothing. She washes her face to clear up the tears, pulls herself together and goes back to work.

Andrew is mad with worry. Isaak is not picking up the phone. He hasn't since last night. Strung up like he is there isn't much he can do. He's relieved when the police officers finally show up. The officers have a conservative reaction but takes Isaak's address and promises to check on him. On their way out, they ask a nurse who the assistant is, and if she's been in today. They point to June.

Striking up a *casual* conversation, they say it looks like she had a wild night. June brushes them off and said she fell asleep watching Netflix with her nephew and then overslept. They don't visibly react at the overflow of information, but as June rushes away, they exchange a glance. Well....

Nathan is still out with the kids when Nora gets home. She bought paint. It's pink – for Eli. She takes out the trash. Annoyed at the bulky disorder, she moves some trash to get it to squash down easier. She finds Nathan's black t-shirt. It's stiff with *something*, but she recons she can fix it. She soaks the shirt in the sink. She pauses as the water turns ruddy. She deflates. Yeah, that's a *complication*. She knows. Hearing the car, she unplugs the sink to let the water drain, and rushes to throw it in the washer. She washes her hands, quickly rinsing the sink. Eric comes in to wash up and asks why there is blood in the sink. Nathan comes in behind him. He freezes. He doesn't know that Nora knows. Nora says she's doing laundry. Girls' laundry. Eric escapes. Nathan is puzzled. Nora says she's not the only girl in the house. Nathan laments his girls are growing up to fast. Emma is curious why she suddenly has a fake period. Nora teaches her a life lesson by telling her to go ask her dad for a treat. Doubtful, Emma asks her dad for chocolate milk. To her surprise he immediately leaves to get her some. It's like discovering a new superpower.

Nathan had alternative motives to get out of the house; He needs to call June. He sends her a text and tells her to let him know if he can call. She does. She tells him about the police and says she lied. He instructs her to *fucking fix it* because too many people knew; they didn't ask her randomly. He tells her to call them and make an appointment; that's the best way to buy time. He'll call her back to.

The police officers arrive at Isaak's apartment.

At home, Nathan fondly watches Nora hang the laundry on the terrace. It's dreamy vision and nearing the end of this mess, he can't believe his luck: twenty years. Calmly, Nora hangs up *the shirt*.

Nathan's world crumbles.



## Episode 3: *Demonstration*

June is at family dinner with Simon's parents, his siblings and their children. It's her own personal hell. She is stuck in a constant loop of the sound of Isaak's skull cracking echoing inside her head. At the same time Simon is asking her if she'd like a serving of every plate of toppings that pass her. June's blood pressure rises each time he asks. Even Peter is getting annoyed. She already has potatoes and mushy pees she hasn't said yes to even just a single time in the decade they've been together. *You deserve someone who remembers how you take your coffee.* June excuses herself, needing some fresh air. On the terrace she pulls out her phone. She has a message from Sarah. She ignores it and looks up the number for the police station. She calls and makes an appointment. Oddly, she feels lighter. It gives her something to focus on.

Officer Jensen and Officer Paul are watching as the crime scene technicians are sweeping the scene. At first glance it looks like an accident. It looks like an accident, and they say so, but they also agree that there seemed to be a lot of *coincidences* happening for it to be likely. Maybe Andrew was right to be worried. Officer Jensen gets notified that the assistant nurse from the hospital had made an appointment to talk to them Monday afternoon. That's interesting. They knew she lied about something, but they're curious about what she'll say. A technician wanders past them with a frown on their face; the entire place is wiped down in disinfectant.

Nathan is reeling. He doesn't know what to do. Nora waits for him to say something. Eventually she says she is too tired to talk and walks away. She needs to sleep, clear her head. He doesn't know if he's welcomed in their bed. Eric is practicing dribbles in the garden.

For June, tension at family dinner has reached new heights. Nothing is off limits to her in-laws. Nothing. Their comments are underhanded and oblivious, but June refuses to believe that they aren't perfectly aware of how it makes her feel. But worse than that is that Simon doesn't tell them to knock it off. He didn't want any children at all, so why did he let them pester her about grandchildren, piling onto her the children of his brothers in an effort to *speed her up*.

On the way home, an argument breaks out in the car. Peter is glowering in the back seat. He occasionally chimes in, agreeing with June, but it ultimately only makes it worse. When they get home, Simon changes clothes and leaves. He doesn't come home until morning and passes out on the couch reeking of alcohol.

Nathan occupies himself with putting up bookshelves for Emma. A whole wall full, built-in style. He gets her started on priming the panels. He feels keenly that Nora is all but pretending he doesn't exist, so he takes

on the next project and occupies both himself and Eli with painting her room. He makes sure to cover the floor properly, because a six-year-old will make a mess. She does. The whole room is pink. It turns out perfect- with a few beauty-flaws she'll no doubt hate in a few years, but to him they're painfully charming-painful because he doesn't know how long he'll be allowed to be around to see it. Eli ends up sleeping with Nora while the room dries up. Nathan manages to sneak away to call June. She is in a hell of a mood. He manages to coach her on what to say; stay as close to the truth as possible. Most important this she has to remember is that as far as *she* knows the man is still alive.

On Monday June is cornered by Sarah. Sarah feels guilty for pushing. June decides to test out Nathan's story on Sarah. If she believes her, then the police officers will as well. Sarah is horrified and offers to go to the police station with her after work. June would very much like that. After work, they go. In the moment when she sits there explaining herself, it all becomes to real. As she stutters her way through the story, she wonders if she should tell the truth. She almost does. But then she thinks of Simon and the nightmare of a family dinner. Even if Nathan doesn't do as he promised and go after her family if she betrays him, what would happen to Peter if she went to prison? It would wreck her life. They ask her about her education. The familiar questions make her uncomfortable. They'd never let her be a doctor with any kind of murder on her record. Even if it was an accident, it was too late now.

So she lies. And she cries. She talks about her husband, their marital problems, about Peter, and since they asked, her career aspirations. Isaak made her feel like the centre of the universe, if only for a little while. It was just supposed to be a drink to remind her she deserved better. Then it became dinner. Then it became... it all went wrong. She leaves with Sarah. Somehow a smile reaches her face. She did it. When she calls Nathan later that night, he praises her. June is conflicted because the praise makes her feel good. That makes her feel sick. She throws up.



## Episode 4: *Connection*

Andrew is out of his mind with guilt. He knew it. He screwed up and now his friend is dead. The only consolation is that he now has a police officer at his door. Officer Jensen apologises to the department for the hassle, but given the situation, only one person could see to his medical care. June is relieved. It won't be her. It needs to be a nurse, not an assistant. She catches up to the officer outside the ward. She awkwardly asks if the police can keep her *thing* with Isaak to themselves and not tell her colleagues. She presses forth some tears; she doesn't want to constantly have to talk about it or answer questions at work.

At the station they receive the rapport from the crime scene: everything was wiped down. Even the broken cup on the floor didn't have any prints or DNA on it. Or even coffee, despite there being coffee all over the floor. The sheets in the washer were washed *folded*, and even the victims' phone was wiped clean. Every doorhandle, every light switch. It wasn't enough to *conclude* that it was murder, but it was sure as hell weird enough to keep looking into it. The man could have gone on a cleaning spree.... But that was unlikely.

The cold war in Nathan's house has been put temporarily on hold as Eric has a football tournament in the weekend. It's just him and Eric. The girls were staying home as it was a bit away and they'd decided to just stay the night. Nathan had plans.

Neither Simon nor Peter was pleased about Simon driving him to the tournament. June is working the first day of it. Nathan calls June as Eric is playing his first match. He asks her for Andrew's medical information, which ward he's in and while room he's in. She needs to get him access. Still nauseated by how she reacted to his praise, she refuses. Both because she doesn't want to- one thing is getting away with murder. Another is to *cause it on purpose*. But then she hears the background noise in the phone call. The tournament. No, no, she'll do anything.

Nathan is puzzled by June's sudden turnabout but doesn't have time to dwell on it. He starts a loud conversation with the coach of one of the top teams about Eric, loud enough for their coach to hear. How he's graduating and moving soon, so he's looking to switch clubs. He also takes the time to talk to some of the other parents, careful not to say another about the new Captain, Xander- he must have a strategic mind to have been picked, but expresses how disappointed Eric is. He's one of their best, after all, that's undeniable. Such a shame. Oh, but Xander's father must be proud of him. They're such a football passionate family: he's on the club board. He's a great guy dedicating so much time to his sons' team. It



has the intended effect. By the end of the day he's secured two standing offers from other teams for Eric to transfer. Back at the hotel, Eric and Nathan have a good laugh about it, but Eric is also glowing with contentment to have his father to go bat for him. He calls his mom, gushing about how the day has gone, and the goals he scored, despite not winning every match.

June is shaking with nerves as she drives to the tournament the next day. Simon is making an effort, but he feels so out of place at the sporting event, he doesn't know how to not be awkward. Eric and Peter play against each other. June spots Nathan. He hasn't seen her yet. Her hold world is turned upside down as she realises *this man* has a family. He's a *soccer dad*. He spots her and it's terrifying: the man who made everyone around him laugh suddenly became a blank slate. As the teams switch sides, they speak briefly. June gives him the info; tell about the police officer at his door. Now realising why June so suddenly changed her tune- also realising she now knows he had no intention of hurting her kid, he reinforces the importance of dealing with Andrew. He reveals that Isaak wasn't actually involved, Andrew just let his friend do the dirty work, because he knew karma was coming for him. June troubled with the new information. She'd pushed it all down thinking Isaak was a bad person. Now it all comes rushing back. Nathan offers a few comforting words, if for no other reason than to sooth her down from causing a scene around people that knows him and his kid. Simon injects himself to the conversation. Seeing his wife standing so close, talking in *intense* whispered huffs with the good looking (by his estimate) older man. As the man puts his hand on June's shoulder, his jealousy rages.

Nathan is pissed as June's husband comes over, forcing him to introduce himself. Eric comes over to get his pre-game encouragement. Nathan is only too aware that now it's painfully easy for June to find out everything there is to know about him. The team listings are public. That didn't fly by unnoticed for June either. June sends Simon off to get her a coffee. Nathan scornfully apologises for judging her for cheating: her husband is a prick. Feeling bolstered by the new information she learned, June tells him to fuck himself. But when Simon comes back with her coffee, he got creamer for himself but not for her. A decade...

At the police station they've gotten the autopsy rapport: there is cotton fibres in the victim's lungs. Given the head injury and general damage, lack of bruising, it not conclusive, but it's an indication that he was suffocated. By the lack of bruising, probably with some cotton fabric. Like a towel. The police captain is pissed because they messed up. If they'd moved faster, taken them seriously, this could have been avoided.

Nathan is driving home, Eric is, as per usual, passed out dead asleep in the seat next to him. He calls Mike.

He quickly says his kid is sleeping in the car. Mike takes the hint and keep their conversation neutral.

Nathan needs *that stuff, the usual stuff* delivered. Since he retired, he doesn't have it on hand. Mike says he'll fix it and will send someone with it. It good that Nathan acts so quickly, he says, because his intel says the situation is heating up.

## Episode 5: *Prescription Filled*

The polices tart to look into Andrew's claims, but he no longer has any proof. The tale he spins is fantastical, but the officers have no choice. They have to investigate, even if he sounds deranged. Because when all else fails, whatever is left, however improbably, but be the truth. And it's nuts. Officer Jensen takes a risk and contacts the organised crime unit. It's a risk to her, because he's so new to the job. But no one else was doing it. And what if Andrew wasn't paranoid?

Coming home from the tournament Eric is ecstatic. Nora is proud of him. With all the kids out of the house for school, Nora and Nathan finally talk. Despite having the house to themselves they stay in June's bare end empty office. Nathan is trying to sus out what she knows without giving too much away. Nora decides to lay her cards on the table: her suspicions. The things she ignored. Nathan is floored. Doesn't she hate him? She hates what he does. She can't reconcile it with the person that's at home with her, her husband. But he has to stop. For their family. She asks about the fire. Nathan tells her about the struggle in the organisation that he's *not* a part of, and how it ended with their house burning down. After that, how could he justify going back? Because of their family. Nora asks, saying she's not sure if she wants to know, but are his jobs... regular people? Nathan replies honestly; mostly theyre rivalling criminals, but sometimes... sometimes people get messed up with things they don't understand.

Nora needs time to think. She feels sick. Now *knowing* she realises she never wanted to know. Nathan promises again to retire. Forever. She's not sure if it's enough. For now, she needs a chair that doesn't kill her back. Nathan can do chairs. He knows more than he should about office chairs.

The police ask June in for a quick chat because she's the last person to see Isaak alive and they just need to go over the timeline. Pulling a dirty strategy, they show her the pictures of Isaak's body, just to see how she'll react. Now knowing he was innocent it hits her like a slap in the face. With steely resolve she keeps it down. They point out that most people are more upset when they see dead people. Not able to hold it

together, emotions cracking through, she counters that she sees dead people every day, and *this one* was a man that hurt her. To the officers it looks like her upset is at the accusation and reminder of her assault.

June is staring at the pc screen. Isaak's innocent hit home after seeing those pictures, and June is resentful for Nathan's manipulations. She found him. That's the guy. Ship Inspector- right - dad of three, married twenty years... wife is a professor. He's right *there*. His kids have Instagram. His daughter as a BookTok account, with good taste in books, she notes. *Daddy built me new bookshelves* is a caption. The man is covered in *pink* pain splatter. It's so bizarre. Their house is stunning. It looks like they recently moved. Simon looks over her shoulder. All hell breaks loose.

Nathan dread telling his wife he needs to go, knowing he is on dangerously thin ice. She just nods, accepting it as one of those things she cannot change. For the first time she knows what's on the line and she needs time to process. Arriving in the city's industrial harbour that evening, he meets with Mike's man. Mike's man is young and stupid: stupid enough to leave cigarettes on the ground as he tells him the case has been bumped up to the organised crime unit. He gets the pills. Two pills. Cyanide. He only needs one, but it's good to have a backup, or one for later. The kid quips, antagonising Nathan. Nathan is puzzled, wondering who the fuck he is to- and then he realises. The is the one. The Idiot. Quite likely the same idiot that set his house on fire on *someone's* orders. Nathan wasn't angry about being targeted: it was the nature of the business, but any professional should know better than involving an adversary's family and *fail* on top of it.

The Idiot pulls a gun on him, telling him to be grateful, it's better than burning to death. Nathan is blindsided. It makes no sense to make a play for Nathan's position when they have an angry talking witness, that is also out of reach for the Idiot to deal with. They grapple. Nathan's hand gives him trouble, and the Idiot is young and strong, but Nathan has experience on his side and *rage*. The gun goes off and Nathan lets out a choked scream as to his upper thigh, but he gets the gun. He's too blurry with pain to aim properly, so he misses, and the Idiot gets away.

June and Simon is having a full on domestic. Peter is sitting upstairs in the hallway listening. Simon accuses June of having an affair. Angrily he reveals that he has *had his fun* as well. He feels unappreciated, like she doesn't care about anything she does. His goals in life doesn't matter at all to her. June almost laughs. It's true. She doesn't care, mostly because Simon achieved every career milestone he ever set out to achieve. Simon shoots back, because of Peter, she didn't, and that's not his fault. Peter hears it. Doesn't she understand that his old school is best for Peter as well? The same old argument. June realises that as

much as she doesn't care about Simon's goals, he doesn't care about her either. Simon suggests they should divorce. He doesn't mean it but says it to antagonise. When she agrees, it leaves him shocked.

June gets a call. It's Nathan. He's been shot. The bullet is still in. In her anger, she seriously considers leaving him to it and let him bleed to death. He tells her Andrew's case is bumped up to a more serious law enforcement agency, and if not tonight, they're both fucked. June says she'll be at the hospital in twenty. Simon, hearing a man's voice, but not what he said, blows up and tells her then she can get the fuck out of his house if that's how little she respects him. June lies and says she's taking a night shift - because she will obviously need the money. As she leaves Simon breaks down in tears, realising his frustration-fuelled ultimatum just made her leave. He rushes after her and calls after her to come back, but the front door already slammed shut.

On the bus, June logs into the online work schedule system and takes a random night shift. Arriving, she fibs off and says she has to do some paperwork in her primary department. She'll be back in a bit. She grabs supplies and meets Nathan in a staff bathroom in the office section. There is no one there so late, and there are no cameras. As she tends to his wound, she gripes at him, in a foul mood. Nathan convinces her that she needs to give the poison to Andrew; he won't make it without attracting a lot of attention: all it takes is a glass of water to make both their problems go away.

She goes to fetch a paper cup so Nathan can take some pain killers. With the poison in her pocket, she considers giving it to Nathan. She really thinks about it. she fills a glass of water returns and gives him the painkillers. Nathan looks at the glass, realising he made a possibly fatal mistake. He takes it. He glances around the bathroom. If this is how he goes... looks her in the eye and takes the pills with a sip of water. As June leaves Nathan tells her that Isaak didn't just die; he needed a little nudging. June burns with anger. And Andrew? It's not just for them: he leaves destruction in his wake, and if not now, he'll just keep going. As a witness he'll get immunity while people while involving trusting people like Isaak and leaving them to die. It's bullshit, but Nathan needs his kids to never know. Leans his head back, eyes closed.

Reeling from what she just learned, June leaves for her ward, lip quivering, eyes glossy. She logs into the computer and fills in some vague details on an old rapport just to establish a paper trail. She calms herself. With two gloves on one hand, on she gets a glass of water and puts the poison in. She goes to Andrews room. There is a police officer sleeping in a chair by the door. She soundlessly glides past. Andrew is asleep. She pauses. Considers. She puts down the glass down, careful not to make noise, and leaves as the door slides shut behind her.



## Season 2 teaser: *50-Amp Fuse*

Nathan leaves the hospital in the morning rush, slowly following the crowd on their way out. At the bus stop just outside the hospital, he meets June once more. They don't talk. He gives her a dark look, not appreciating the scare she gave him, but he gets the message. He takes it in a stride. He did what he had to, and her response was a warning: she's not so frightened anymore.

She just nods at him: confirmation. They take the bus together to the town. The bus is full, so they stand squashed together with the crowd. Nathan angles away from the camera on the bus, Cap shielding in face casually from the lens and his body shield June. His left hand gripping the pole for balance spasms. June notices. it's not the first time. pained, both from his hand and His ass, he asks, "taking the long way home?"

June replies; "yeah...." She looks at him, conflicted and sad about so many things. They're almost there.

Finally, she asks, "What do you actually do... for a living?"

Nathan just gives her a long look. "I think you know."

June goes quiet, thinking hard. The bus stops. Some people get off. Doors close, they go again. "How much do you earn?"

The corner of his lip quirks. Not quite a smile. Just a flicker. He still needs her: the guy who shot him is still out there. Nathan leans over and says quietly. "I'll make you another deal."

They make eye contact. June is wary, unsure. Unsure about asking, unsure about her future, her finances, her marriage.

But she did ask.



# MARRIED

Episode 1

*Footloose Man*

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**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - HALLWAY - EARLY MORNING**

In a bathrobe, NATHAN (57) rushes up the stairs. Dark hair lightly peppered with grey, he stands slightly shorter than average, with an athletic frame. He hurries down a bare hallway with a vibrating phone held flat against his chest. He is quietly furious.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - OFFICE - EARLY MORNING**

Coming into his office, the room is bare, save for a modern looking desk, empty shelves, and some aged storage boxes. In the background you can hear a girl, Nathan's daughter EMMA (14) yelling.

EMMA (O.S.)

Get out of the bathroom!

Nathan cringes and closes the door as quietly as he can, and pointedly locks it. He answers the phone and viciously hisses-

NATHAN

You have the fucking nerve-

MIKE

Literally have a metaphorical gun to my head at the moment.

Nathan pinches his brow. Indistinct arguing from teenagers in the hallway.

NATHAN

Never contact me again.

Nathan hangs up and visibly resists the urge to launch the phone across the room. He is redfaced with anger. It rings again. Nathan picks up and is about to whisper-yell, but Mike speaks first.

NATHAN

How'd you even get this number?

MIKE

They sent some eager up-and-comer for what was supposed to be an easy thing. He bungled it.

NATHAN

Not my fucking problem.

MIKE

They can *make it* your problem.

Nathan stiffens at the threat.

MIKE (CONT'D)

They don't wanna leave anything to chance.

NATHAN

I'm not doing it.

MIKE

I've sent you a file. Check your private email.

NATHAN

Why the fuck would you-

MIKE

If you were still reachable via safer communications, I wouldn't have had to resort to this.

Nathan grudgingly accepts that as fair, but he stands firm.

NATHAN

I don't care what you sent. I'm done.

Mike remains quiet for a few seconds, before he talks.

MIKE

Nobody blames you for retiring. But  
we're in the shit now.

(beat)

MIKE

If you do this, you can retire in good  
standing. You'll be protected.

Any other time it would have been a good offer, but now it  
just pisses Nathan off more.

NATHAN

Where was this *protection* when my house  
was burning down?

Nathan is cold with rage and has to physically hold his hand  
over his mouth to hold back what he really wants to say.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Just hear me out. Don't say some fresh  
funds won't come handy after that swanky  
concrete box you just bought. We have  
too many friends in common for you to  
disappear.

Nathan's hand slips from his mouth as he realises he has no  
choice. Mike didn't say it outright, but he said it clear  
enough: *I still know where you live.*

NATHAN

I'll call you back.

He hangs up. Nathan rips a storage box open one too gently, pushes aside a decades old framed picture of himself in front of an industrial ship, rummages through it and fishes out a flip phone that has certainly seen better days. He reaches deeper into the box and grabs an old instant coffee tin. It's full of sim-cards. With practised ease he smacks it together and dials a number that he knows by heart. Mike immediately picks up and starts talking.

MIKE

The guy is laid up in the hospital.  
Likely will be out today. Today ish.

Nathan put in his ear buds and flips open a new laptop. The box is still on his desk. He opens his email and downloads the PDF.

NATHAN

Password?

MIKE

No password.

Nathan curses under his breath.

MIKE

Fuck you.

Nathan ignores him and kicks his feet up on his desk as he scrolls though the PDF. On the screen we see a picture of a smiling ISAAC (40s). Nathan's left thumb spasms unnaturally. He stops and stretches out the muscle, obviously pained - but more irritated than hurt.

NATHAN

I'm not very keen on this. It's a messy situation.

MIKE

The mess is why it needs to be you.

(beat)

MIKE (CONT'D)

This one is in the country. You'll be back home before bedtime. He's due to schedule a meet for a drop-off. Pretty much delivering himself.

Nathan frowns doubtfully.

NATHAN

He's... blackmailing your boss and delivering it *himself*?

How stupid was that?

MIKE

Do your thing and get those files.

Nathan scratches his head, anger making way for confusion over this clusterfuck. He reads the document, his eyes flittering over areas which read *no priors, unaffiliated*. The man is a glorified accountant.

NATHAN

This is not my kinda contract Mike.  
How'd he even get messed up with this?

Mike ignores the question.

MIKE

They're paying double for the urgency and a bonus for the inconvenience.

He gives his phone a narrowed eyed glare. But double? He looks around the bare unfurnished room. He considers it.

NATHAN

Double money is double trouble. And you didn't answer my question.

MIKE

He's making a nuisance of himself. That's all you need to know.

NATHAN

This is dirty.

MIKE

I can't get the file before you've said yes.

Nathan furrows his brow, frustrated with not getting all the information he needs.

NATHAN

How many?

Mike sighs heavily, hesitating to answer.

MIKE

I'm the one having face time with these people Nate. I'm not fucking with them.

NATHAN

How. Many.

MIKE

Fuck you.

NATHAN

Fuck you.

MIKE

His partner is the one we did business with. He's taken care of, but... This guy, we got nothing on him. He's got to go. Just one. If it's contained.

Nathan glares at the phone. If?

MIKE

It's a generous offer. I'm fucking sorry to do this-

NATHAN

Save it.

MIKE

-but you should really fucking think twice.

The implication is clear. Nathan taps his chin, reluctantly considering it more seriously. He doesn't really have a choice. He looks at the file. He scrolls down to check the location. He grumbles and finds himself convinced.

NATHAN

Then I'm done.

MIKE

Great. That's a fucking relief, you wouldn't believe-

He stops himself. Nathan hums but doesn't respond. They lapse into silence.

MIKE

Did you ever get that hand of yours  
checked out?

Nathan ignores the question and stays on task.

NATHAN

When is the meet scheduled?

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - HALLWAY/KITCHEN - MORNING**

Two teenagers, Nathan's son, ERIC (18) and his daughter,  
Emma rush past as Nathan comes down the stairs from his  
office.

EMMA

Bye daddy!

NATHAN

Bye sweetheart. Kiss!

His daughter smacks a kiss on his cheek and is out the door  
like greased lightning, while Eric struggles with his  
shoelaces.

ERIC

Dad, will you-

Nathan smiles, amused as he stops on the bottom step.

NATHAN

Eight, right? Same time, same place,  
same same same.

His son rolls his eyes at the dad-humour.

ERIC

Yes. Whatever.



He grabs a set of car keys from the hooks on the wall

ERIC (CONT'D)

Bye mom!

NATHAN

Hey kid!

He makes a stern *come here* wave. Eric makes a theatrical show of his mock-displeasure and give his dad a hug- but he smiles as he gets his paternal squeeze anyhow. He makes another noise of complaint as Nathan flicks his hair out of his eyes and lightly smacks his cheek. Then he tears the tag off his shirt. Eric makes a face.

NATHAN

Don't be late now. Traffic from Em's school will slow you down.

ERIC

I know, bye!

Eric high-tails it out the door and slams it shut. Nathan winces at the heavy thud. He enters the kitchen and kisses his wife NORA (51), good morning. ELISE (6) is working on her colouring book at the dining table. All the colouring pencils are new.

The kitchen is slightly less bare than the rest of the house, but it still doesn't look properly lived in. Everything is new and there are opened and unopened boxes for appliances. The only homey touches are Eli's drawing on the fridge.

NORA

You were on the phone a long time.

He missed breakfast with the kids. Even Eli is done eating. Nathan grabs his cup from where Nora left his half-eaten plate and cup on the dining table and pours himself a coffee. He is not immune to her pointed tone. He turns and leans awkwardly against the counter, hiding behind his cup.

The silence stretches. Nora ignores him as she puts away the breakfast and starts wiping down the already clean counters.

NATHAN

It's just one.

NORA

Eric will likely be moving out soon.

Nora keeps her tone light, mindful of not disturbing Eli, but after 20 years together, Nathan doesn't need tone.

NATHAN

College is not *leaving*. He might stay at home. Go local. Either way, he's coming back.

Nora tosses the cloth in the sink. Nathan raises a brow. Even the brand-new kitchen cloth is giving him attitude.

NORA

He's already looking.

NATHAN

Only two schools have applications due in October. If anything that's encouraging?

He trails off. Nora isn't really talking about college. She knows when the deadlines are. He puts the cup down and languidly sneaks up on her. He catches her easily, trapping her against the counter. He drops a kiss on her neck, hugging her tightly. Nora sighs and deflates.

NATHAN

I'm sorry.

NORA

I know.

NATHAN

No, I really am.

She turns in his arms and tucks close. She steals a kiss.

NATHAN

They're doubling my fee.

Nora nods, defeated. She knows it's not really a discussion; he's just letting her know. She looks around, takes in the view for a beat, the bare walls, the sparse furniture.

NORA

Will you be gone long?

NATHAN

Not even a sleep-over.

Nora chews on her lip, considering. Just a day and double?

NORA

Insurance is taking their good time,  
so...

Nathan takes it as approval- reluctant approval, but approval, nonetheless.

NORA (CONT'D)

I still don't know how you got us this place so fast...

Nathan hides his face in her hair, hiding his grim expression from his wife and daughter. He bucks up and quips:

NATHAN

Oddly enough, people have *feelings*. And I exploit them mercilessly.

Nora seemingly accepts the change and nudges for another kiss. She gets it. She frees herself from the embrace and snatches Nathan's coffee, much to her husband's dismay.

NORA

Did the doctor call back?

Nathan evades his wife seeing him lie through his teeth by making himself another coffee.

NATHAN

Uh, yeah. Just muscle spasm. Nothing serious. Need more iron. More Magnesium. Stop eating like I'm twenty. All that jazz.

Despite not seeing his face, Nora still thinks he's full of shit and her expression demonstrates that clearly. Nathan turns back to her, but avoids her gaze, trying to be casual.

NATHAN

I'd tell you if it was serious. It doesn't even bother me.

NORA

Right. When are you heading off?

NATHAN

Tomorrow. After spawn numero uno's game.

NORA

Never understood why you can't sell boats from an office.

NATHAN

Ships.

NORA

Boat's a boat.

NATHAN

Shipping a ship shipping ship is a serious situation.

Nora gives him an attempt at a deadpanned glare, but she's close to laughing.

NATHAN

I'll bring you a present.

Nora rolls her eyes. As if she can be bribed with presents. She totally can.

He perks up, winks at her and joins Eli at the table. He playfully snatches a sheet of paper and a pencil.

NATHAN

What are we drawing, sunshine?

**TEASER**

**EXT. OUTSIDE ISAAK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Nathan looks around, quietly appreciating the nice and sheltered neighbourhood. He notices an open window and a few apartments with the lights still on. It's all quite jam packed. Residents living wall to wall. It might look nice, but the noise carries.

He checks the time. He's early. Another window opens to air out. He can't loiter, early or not. He bounds up the stairs to the front door and rings the doorbell with his knuckle. Discreetly he checks his gun and flicks the strap off the holster.

He can hear hurried steps from the inside and frowns, but before he can react the door is torn open.

Shocked, Nathan suddenly stands face to face with a bloody and terrified woman- JUNE (32). There is blood on her hands and on her face. Looking down, there is blood on her knees.

JUNE

Please -

Before he can react, she grabs him and drags him inside. The door slams shut.

**END TEASER**

**FADE TO BLACK**

**OPENING TITLE**

**INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - MORNING**

June speed-walks through a department she doesn't work in to get to her own quicker. Bag flung over her shoulder and pony-tail half-way fallen to pieces, she hurriedly passes a patient room with the door open. The patient starts yelling for her.

PATIENT

Hey- hey you! Nurse, hey!

June briefly hesitates, but steels herself and hurries along. As he half-runs, she clips her work ID onto her chest. Its reads *Nurse's Assistant*.

PATIENT (CONT'D)

Nurse!

June waves at someone who works there and gestures down the hall.

JUNE

Patient.

DEP.STAFF.

Delirium.

June frowns at the dispassionate response but is already late for her shift. She exits the ward and breaks into a sprint. She kicks the door-opener and flies into the office. Before she even gets to put her bag down, the shift supervisor gives her a glare.

SUPERVISOR

You're late.

JUNE

Sorry-

But the Supervisor doesn't respond and walks tersely past to enter the pharmacy. As the door smacks shut and automatically lock, June sighs in relief.

JUNE

Anyone taken the breakfast orders to the kitchen? New dietary requirement?

AVA (20s), a nurse, hands her the breakfast orders.

AVA

Two with dietary needs.

June holds the paper in her mouth as she struggles to tie up her messy hair.

AVA

I logged you in.

June nods, thankful. They walk into the ward together.

AVA

No one is up yet, so get a coffee before you come back.

Ava winks at her.

JUNE

Oh god yes and thank you.

AVA

Don't thank me yet. We're understaffed. Again.

June lets a small bittersweet smile grace her face. Of course, they are. She looks down on the breakfast orders with a deeper disappointment. On her way out, other staff



greet her with tired smiles and grateful relief.

**INT. HOSPITAL - KITCHEN/CAFETERIA - MORNING**

The cook, SARAH greets June with a broad smile, despite sweating and lugging large tub of dough.

SARAH

Heyloo. Whatcha got for me?

June pours herself a coffee and grabs some milk.

JUNE

Full ward, one diabetic, one gluten free. Sorry they didn't get it in last night-

SARAH

It's not your fault the night shift doesn't have their shit together.

The Sarah slips two trays from another cart and put it in the one for June's department. June just fondly shakes her head.

SARAH (CONT'D)

They're always late. Besides, they've got... six patients. You've got thirty-ish? Unless someone died?

JUNE

Something like that. Not that I know of yet at least. We're understaffed.

June's cell phone beeps. It's a message from her husband that reads: *Don't forget about dinner this weekend.* June sighs heavily but doesn't text back.

SARAH

What?

JUNE

Just a dinner thing. In-laws.

Sarah makes a face of understanding. While on the topic of family, she points to June's hand.

SARAH

Ring.

June looks down and curses to herself. She takes it off and put it on a ring-holder pendant around her neck. Sarah hands her disinfectant.

JUNE

Thanks

SARAH

Taking Peter this time?

June shrugs, not really wanting to answer, nor think about it.

JUNE

He's getting old enough to decide himself.

Sarah makes a sound of agreement.

SARAH

How's that handsome one doing?

June points at the ring hanging around her neck.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Don't even.

June flushes and needlessly states:

JUNE

Still married.

SARAH

Yeah, I've had the displeasure.

JUNE

Still married.

SARAH

He asked about you. You're allowed to have friends. Just saying.

June laughs and throws away the paper cup as she's finished her coffee. She grabs the trolley and waves goodbye. Then Sarah calls after her.

SARAH

Let him down gently?

June half-jokingly flips her off as the door closes.

**INT. HOSPITAL - BEDPOST HALLWAY - MORNING**

ISAAK (42) quietly, on socked feet, makes his way from his own room to the one three doors down. He had a newspaper under his broken arm, encased in a thick cast. The hospital-issue pyjamas are too short in the leg and shoved up to the elbow on the arm that's not broken.

**INT. HOSPITAL - ANDREW'S ROOM - MORNING**

Entering, he sees ANDREW (39) is awake in his bed. He's little worse for wear with a broken leg and a supporting collar on his neck. He's injured enough to have a room to himself, which is why Isaak has hauled himself out of bed before the nurses are even making rounds with breakfast.

Isaak gingerly eases himself into a chair by Andrew's bedside. He's too tall for the furniture and a little too broad as well.

ANDREW

Talked to them?

ISAAK

Yeah. Setting a time and place later.  
They'll call.

Andrew looks miserable with guilt.

ANDREW

The police?

ISAAK

They'll look at the car... it's not going to help us much with the pace they're moving at.

ANDREW

We can't... just wait to hear from them?

Isaak scoffs, all bravado for his friend.

ISAAK

We need to end this one way or another.  
This is another.

Andrew rolls his eyes, gesturing to where they are.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

It's a good motivation to go electric.

ANDREW

Pretty sure they can still-

Isaak continues as if he didn't hear him.

ISAAK

Fully electric breaks. With actuators instead of hydraulics. Imagine that. No leaks, no break lines to cut, will never need a fluid change. Regenerative. Will go four times as many miles before they need changing.

Andrew smiles weakly.

ANDREW

Thought a lot about this, uh?

ISAAK

I figured if someone's gonna try to bump you off you again, they'll have to put some real effort into it. Cutting brake lines is such a pussy move. D minus.

Isaak gestures to his whole *alive* self. Andrew stares at Isaak in disbelief. He grimaces in pain, as he can't hold back a weak laughter. Isaak winces in sympathy, but chuckles as well. As the laughter dies down, Andrew grows serious.

ANDREW

I'm so fucking sorry for getting you-

Isaak shushes him, not interested. He's heard it before.

ISAAK

None of that now. We'll sort this out.  
Hand over the papers, just... get out of  
this sitch.

Andrew offers a small, pained smile. He *is* grateful, but he's also afraid. He gestures for Isaak to hand him the glass of water on the nightstand.

ANDREW

You think they'll go for it?

ISAAK

Meds still bothering you?

ANDREW

Yeah. Rinexin's supposed to fix this-

He gestures to his head. Isaak hands him the water.

ANREW (CONT'D)

But it makes me fucking thirsty.

ISAAK

You could always grovel and say you're  
sorry for screwing them over?

Andrew frowns. Indeed, what is the alternative? Isaak changes the subject, trying to lighten things up a bit.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

'Sides, something good came outta this.

Andrew shoots Isaak a look.

ANDREW

Whore.

Isaak grins and clutches his chest in mock-pain.

ISAAK

Her *name* is the month I was born. It's all I need. She's the one.

ANDREW

Her and half a million other women in the world... do you ever not think with your dick?

ISAAK

Better than whatever you've been using to think lately.

Andrew must concede that point.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - MORNING**

Nathan gets out of bed before anyone else in the house is awake. Nora sleeps. He quickly dresses in game-day appropriate athleisure- pretty much the only thing he has in the large empty closet; a stack of six identical black t-shirts, joggers, a pair of jeans, and few sweaters.

Heading down to the kitchen. He puts on half a pot of coffee and puts a pan of water to boil. He takes a moment to just breathe and collect himself before the entire day starts. An alarm clock goes off somewhere in the house. Nathan nods to himself and mentally resets. He drops a handful of eggs into the boiling water and starts to prepare breakfast. The noise of a waking family start to fill the house.

**EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NOON**

Eric scores.

He does a celebratory sprint across the field, getting swamped in hugs and pats from his teammates. Nora is cheering and Eli is jumping up and down, energetic, and excited.

Emma is sitting on the ground, reading a book, only occasionally glancing up. She claps for her brother, but her nose disappears back into her book rather quickly.

Nathan whistles sharply, clapping enthusiastically while trying not to drop snacks or spill the nasty but necessary thermos-origin filtered coffee in a paper cup. A fellow dad, TOM (50s) is also clapping loudly, holding his own cup between his teeth, bumping shoulders with Nathan.

TOM

That's our boys, eh?

Nathan grins, proud.

TOM (CONT'D)

I, Uh, it's impressive that he's so...  
focused, with everything. You look  
alright, despite- y'know?

Nathan shrugs, fielding the question with ease.

NATHAN

Kids are resilient that way. Just keep  
up with the normal stuff, right? Went  
sailing all summer, got some distance to  
it.

TOM

Brutal start to retirement though.



Nathan snorts.

NATHAN

Yeah, that didn't last long either.

TOM

No shit? New place yet?

NATHAN

Yeah. Right by the water. Walking distance to the boat. Could be worse.

TOM

So that's an upgrade then?

Tom tries to put a positive spin on it, and Nathan lets him. He grins.

NATHAN

Don't say that too loudly, but yeah.

Tom seems to realise what he said, with some awkwardness.

TOM

I didn't mean, I mean I can't-

NATHAN

It's all good. Kinda sucks about the baby teeth, but we still got the babies, y'know? Upside: totally avoided Marie-Kondoing the whole summer.

Nathan leans over and jokes quietly.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Now I just hope they don't start trauma-  
hoarding.

They both hide laughter behind their paper coffee cups. The other team scored. They both curse quietly, but clap politely.

TOM

Getting a new dog?

NATHAN

Shhhh!

He looks sharply down to Eli sitting at his feet, who thankfully doesn't *seem* to have heard the war-cry of all children: puppies.

**INT. HOSPITAL - ISAAK'S ROOM - MORNING**

Back in his own bed, Isaak is sharing a room with another man who is snoring loudly behind the flimsy curtain separation wall. He has a note pad in his lap and a pen in his hand, jotting down a time and a name. He holds the phone between his ear and shoulder, speaking quietly so he won't disturb his neighbour.

ISAAK

You're certain he'll show up?

Isaak listens, nods, looking worried.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

The papers are safe. I'll have them  
ready, but I need some assurances.

June comes into the room, carrying a tray of food. Isaak lights up and gives her a little silent wave. June smiles

back, a little embarrassed at his enthusiasm. She passes his bed to his neighbour and leaves the tray of food on the nightstand. She hears Isaak speak on the phone.

ISAAK

The specifics are not important. I just want it all over with.

June comes back around the curtain, and notices that Isaak is a little tense, even as he smiles to her once more. She pretends not to notice. It is not her business.

JUNE

Coffee as well?

Isaak nods, a smile on his lips, but tense lines around his eyes.

ISAAK

No, I'm sure. Yeah. Bye.

He hangs up and puts the phone under his pillow, easily within reach. When June comes back in, she is carrying a tray of food for him as well, along with a steaming coffee.

ISAAK

You are the highlight of my day.

JUNE

I'm the only one that doesn't stick you with needles.

ISAAK

You can find the biggest needle, and you'd still be my favourite.

JUNE

Maybe I should go to find one. You'd change your tune quickly. Anything else I can get you?

Isaak squints at a particularly loud snore. June bites back a laugh.

ISAAK

Maybe some ear buds? Or a headset?

June nods, trying hard not to laugh.

JUNE

I'll see what we have.

ISAAK

Maybe your number too?

June bites her lip. She wants to, but she can't.

JUNE

I'm married.

ISAAK

Is your husband so selfish he cannot share?

June doesn't answer.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

Let me take you out to dinner. As friends. You're allowed to have friends?

June raises a brow at him, unimpressed as she realises she is being ganged up on.

JUNE

Where have I heard that line before?

Isaak is unapologetic.

ISAAK

Wise men ask for advice when they need  
it.

JUNE

Wise men take no for an answer.

Isaak nods, seemingly defeated. He writes his number down on  
his notepad and tears it off.

ISAAK

Should you change your mind. About  
having a friend.

June takes it, if only to be polite.

ISAAK

I'm anticipating having my freedom by  
lunch time. Didn't want to take the  
chance I'd miss you on my way out.

JUNE

Proactive.

ISAAK

Determined.

He shrugs and eases up. June shakes her head with a smile  
and turns to leave.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

Friendship is not a consolation prize.

JUNE

You're a liar.

Isaak grins, very much busted and once more unapologetic.

ISAAK

Only a little.

June can't help but laugh at the audacity. Even so, she is flattered.

**INT. CAR - AFTERNOON**

Driving home, Emma, in the middle, is still engrossed in her book and Eric is so tired he nods off in the car. Nathan checks the mirror, seeing his son's sweaty cheek plastered against the window. He fondly looks over at his wife: Nora is also dead asleep. Eli is all but climbing out of her car seat to stick her head out the window. Nathan nudges the glass up, not keen on tempting fate.

NATHAN

Stay in your seat sunshine. Em, pay 5% attention so she doesn't get Pluto'ed.

All the acknowledgement he receives is Emma's hand reaching out and yanking her sister properly down in her seat, eyes not leaving the page. Nathan winces at the yowl of protest that followed, but at least they make it home not short one child. Arriving home, a sleep-dewy Nora herds them indoors. Nathan leans out his window to give her a kiss.

NORA

When will you be home?

NATHAN

Sometime in the ass end of the morning.

NORA

Okay, just be safe. Don't... fall in the water?

Nathan snorts.

NATHAN

Didn't pack a swimsuit.

NORA

Will you take the kids out on the boat when you come back? Being landlocked after a summer on the water makes them angsty.

Nathan's brow twitches. She said that as if she didn't know when he's returning.

NORA (CONT'D)

I need some time to... just shop.

Nathan hums.

NATHAN

How about we send them off to your parents? Then we can shop.

Nora nods and smiles stiffly, not entirely happy, but Nathan isn't sure why. She steps away from the car. Nathan pulls out of the driveway. Unhappy wife will have to be a problem for tomorrow.

Nora watches him drive off with a frown on her face. Dejected and looking worried, she turns and heads back inside.

**EXT. MARINA - AFTERNOON**

Nathan is let through an iron gate leading down to a marina and several boathouses. He parks by his boathouse, and heads inside.

**INT. MARINA - BOAT HOUSE - AFTERNOON**

Coming inside, it's a bit of a mess. There are two boats- a sailboat covered in swim gear and towels hanging off the rails, and a smaller motorboat. Jogging up the stairs to the loft, Nathan pulls down another ladder to a top level in the rafters. It's a storage area. A few of the boxes have heavy locks on them. He unlocks one.

He grabs a small bag and quickly fills it. A gun, silencer, bullets. He puts a few sim-cards in his pocket and various small items, pre-loaded syringe into the bag. The usual stuff. A roll of plastic sheets, knife, zip ties, a small spray bottle, and some rope. You never know when you might need some rope. And chocolate.

He tosses it over his shoulder and hurried downstairs. In the bottom of the motorboat, there is a false bottom. He pops it open and there is a small crater, a hidden compartment. He deposits the items and secures it closed.

**EXT. MARINA - AFTERNOON**

Nathan expertly steers the boat out of the marina.

**EXT. INDUSTRIAL HARBOUR - AFTERNOON**

Nathan lets the boat slide up to a smaller dock, farther down from the industrial ships. He ties up the boat, gets his bag. He is greeted by a man standing by a large old tanker that had definitely seen better days.



CAPTAIN

Just heading one way tonight. You'll be heading back with someone else.

Nathan is not particularly happy about that, but he nods tersely. It is what it is.

As the ship starts moving, Nathan finds a spot to kick his feet up. He puts his phone on flight mode and brings up Toon Blast. He's on level 5824.

**INT. HOSPITAL - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

June is sitting miserably on the counter while Sarah sorts the dishes to go in the industrial washer.

SARAH

I don't see why, y'know, why should continue to go when all they do is treat you like shit.

JUNE

They don't treat me like shit, they're just -

SARAH

Overly critical over every choice you've ever made?

JUNE

I didn't exactly end up where they- or I expected to...

SARAH

Yeah. Well. Maybe you'd manage a bit better if anyone helped you.

JUNE

Plenty of single parents do just fine.

Sarah huffs in irritation.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Kinda feels like an excuse at this point... and they helped a lot.

SARAH

No, they helped *him*. It's not the same thing as actually being supportive so you could do your residency.

JUNE

But-

SARAH

Being a single parent under normal circumstances isn't the same as having a traumatised child dropped on you.

Sarah resets the machine and changes the setting to a shorter program and turns to June and pointedly says-

SARAH (CONT'D)

You deserve better.

JUNE

I know what you think is better. He could be an axe murderer.

SARAH

Never married, no kids. Works something office-bound in construction.

June gives Sarah a shocked look.

JUNE

How do you even know that?

SARAH

While you're running around doing other people's work for them, I'm here all day talking to people.

JUNE

You're always busy.

SARAH

I'm always busy at *mealtimes*.

Sarah closes the lid to the washer, and it starts up automatically.

SARAH

You deserve someone who can remember how you take your coffee... which isn't all that much to ask.

JUNE

Everybody has their strengths...

To lighten the mood a bit from the serious conversation, Sarah winks playfully at June.

SARAH

And he's *sturdy*. Despite the compound fracture.

June snorts in laughter. Sarah continues like she didn't hear.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Jokes aside, you need to-

Sarah gestured to all of her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

-get yourself back to you. Ideally apply for a placement but going out for a drink is a good start for a mental reset.

June kinda had to concur with that one.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And alcohol is good for you.

JUNE

What would I tell Peter? That's not something I want to be teaching him. And-

June points sharply at Sarah.

JUNE (CONT'D)

What would I want with a guy who goes after married women to start with? Bad role model.

SARAH

And I suppose how Simon treats you is totally okay?

Sarah sighs heavily, saddened by her own harsh words. June knows she's right, but it's still upsetting to hear. The machine is finished. She lifts the lid and drags the basket out. While she starts on a new one, June, a bit down and jaw set, grabs a towel and starts drying the dishes and stacking

them on a trolley. Sarah snatches the towels from her.

JUNE

I just don't want to think about it.

SARAH

Sit down. Take some juice.

June does as she's told and hops back up on the counter and watches her friend while she works.

SARAH

Tell Peter you're grabbing a drink *with a friend*. Because that's what you'll be doing.

JUNE

Patients get crushes on hospital staff all the time.

SARAH

He's not a patient anymore. Just get out of the house for an evening. Give your kindle a break.

June is still unsure and a little anxious.

SARAH

Give me your phone. Nobody is gonna report you.

A little relieved, June hands it over. Sarah quickly finds Isaak's contact and writes up a text.

SARAH

Drink tonight? Sent. Let me know how it goes.

Immediately June's phone chimes again. It's a text response from Isaak.

ISAAK (Text)

Seven o'clock by the harbour?

June gives Sarah an anxious look. Sarah responds with a shrug.

SARAH

I'll be ready to grab a drink with you after, so you'll have an excuse to leave if he's too pushy. If you want.

Assured by a get-outta-jail card in case she gets cold feet, she takes a deep breath to fortify herself and quickly texts back a yes before she chickens out.

**INT. JUNE'S HOME - EARLY EVENING**

June comes home from work. She glances at the clock on the wall seeing it's nearly six o'clock. PETER (16) is sprawled out on the couch with his laptop on his chest, reading intently.

JUNE

Hey honey, what you reading?

PETER

Looking at schools.

June is surprised, but not displeased.

JUNE

That's a bit early. Applications aren't until April.

Peter sighs and gives her a moody look before his eye re-glue themselves to the screen. Uh-oh.

PETER

Simon said he'd talk to you.

JUNE

About?

PETER

He wants me to go to *his* school.

June stills.

JUNE

That's... far away.

PETER

Yeah...

Peter sounds both dejected and determined and June doesn't quite know how to interpret that.

JUNE

Don't you think it's a bit soon to be your own.

PETER

It's boarding. I wouldn't be living alone.

June doesn't reply. It's alone enough. She's angry but doesn't want to show it.

JUNE

When is the application due?

PETER

Whenever. But the sooner the better.

JUNE

Right. Where is he?

PETER

Said he'll work late.

June nods to herself, *not happy*.

JUNE

We'll have to talk about this later. I'm going out and I need to get ready.

A few steps up the stair she pauses. Peter frowns and sits up, looking after her, but she continues up the stairs.

**INT. JUNE'S HOME - BATHROOM - EARLY EVENING**

June is putting on a sheer red lipstick. Peter comes in and leans in the doorway, a thoughtful look on his face.

PETER

So I'll have the house to myself tonight?

June gives him a rueful look.

JUNE

Don't go crazy now. We have plans tomorrow.

Peter frowns and pouts. June ignores it and put in her earrings.



PETER

Shouldn't I be telling you that?

JUNE

It's just drinks with a friend.

The lie comes easily, but she holds her breath slightly, wondering if he'll notice. If he does, he ignores it.

JUNE (CONT'D)

There is food in the fridge. Don't go wild in the liquor cabinet. I won't be too late.

PETER

Please be. Get sloshed.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING**

Isaak is standing in front of a mirror, newly showered. He buttons up his shirt gingerly. His right arm is in a neater cast and his shirt is folded at his elbow, doing his best to make it look neat and tidy. Testing carefully, he stretches the arm out to see how much mobility he has. Satisfied with how it feels, he gives the sling a disdainful look and leaves it.

His phone beeps. It's a text that reads 11:43.

Nodding to himself, he scrolls through his contacts and makes a call.

ISAAK

It's happening. Tonight.

ANDREW

Are you sure about this?

ISAAK

It will be fine.

ANDREW

We could just give them what they're after? Without taking the money?

ISAAK

Already tried that and it didn't go to well now did it? This way they'll think it's a quid pro quo. Nothing but a business deal.

Andrew makes a discontent noise.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

I have to go. I'll call when it's done.

ANDREW

Where are you going?

ISAAK

Taking a lady to dinner.

A snort is heard through the line.

ANDREW

Seriously? You got out of the hospital today.

ISAAK

Not keeping a good thing waiting.

ANDREW

I don't think you should involve her...

ISAAK

I'm not *involving* her.

He lightens his tone and jokes.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

If I get lucky, she's a medical professional- in case they try to torture me for your whereabouts to try to kill you again?

ANDREW

You're nuts.

ISAAK

Ciao.

ANDREW

Whatever.

Isaak hangs up. He gives himself a short nod, but not entirely sure if he's psyching himself up for the date or the meeting.

ISAAK

You got this. It's gonna work out *just* fine.

**EXT. HAROUR - EVENING**

Isaak walks along the harbour and spots June. He smiles broadly and greets her. June blushes, a little unsure, but also excited.

ISAAK

I know we said drinks, but would you be up for sharing a mix plate?

JUNE

I could eat.

He points to a restaurant on the dock.

ISAAK

Seafood alright? I booked a table, just  
in case.

He winks at her, making her laugh.

JUNE

Bold.

ISAAK

Fortune favours the bold.

JUNE

Shouldn't you be wearing a sling for  
another week?

ISAAK

It didn't match my suit.

June shakes her head fondly but makes sure not to bump the injured arm when he holds open the door for her. They are seated quickly with a view of the water. Isaak starts ordering as they are seated, not even looking at the menu.

ISAAK

Beer, whatever goes well with the shared  
seafood platter for two. Ah- any  
allergies? Dislikes?

June is enamoured by his relaxed confidence.

JUNE

No allergies.

ISAAK

Wine or beer? Or soda?

June smiles mischievously.

JUNE

You pick. Choose carefully. I'll judge you.

Isaak's face lights up as she sasses him. He loves it!

ISAAK

How about a sweet white?

June purposefully doesn't react to his choice of a dessert wine, as Isaak sends the waiter on his way.

They enjoy their dinner, eating with their hands and making a playful mess of things. They share the rest of the bottle of white wine after their initial drinks- the same one June had for dinner. Despite the mismatch, it was a delicious choice.

**EXT. HARBOUR - LATE EVENING**

June and Isaak are walking arm in arm along the dock. She carefully balances her heels on the uneven ground. Isaak saunters slowly, happy to have her leaning against him.

ISAAK

I'm walking distance. If you'd like a night cap. Completely in the line of friendship, I promise.

JUNE

Friends. Totally.

June is only half joking. The smile slips from her face. The chain around her neck goes below the hemline, but they both know her wedding ring hangs there beneath the sheer fabric: between them as a stark reminder.

ISAAK

*I asked.*

He takes onto himself the responsibility for the situation. Attempting to give her a pass from feeling guilty.

JUNE

*Still...*

ISAAK

*I think... I've seen you smile more just tonight than I have in weeks. Freedom suits you.*

He trails off as June smiles shyly. He tips her chin up and leans down to kiss her, slow enough to give her ample time to pull away, but she doesn't. She presses close meets him halfway.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Isaak is stepping out of the shower, towel wrapped around him. June is in her underwear and drying off. She hasn't washed off her make-up off, but she did wash her hair. His arm is wrapped in cling film and sports tape. He's struggling with getting it off. June grins and snatches the top portion of the tape off. Isaak winces.

ISAAK

*Sadist.*

June just chuckles and nips at the tape around his wrist as well. Isaak makes a face as it tears the hair on his arm.

ISAAK

That's almost worse than the cast...

JUNE

How did you break your arm anyhow?

Isaak check his phone for the time. 11:30.

ISAAK

Just a tussle.

JUNE

Compound break kinda tussle?

Isaak ignores her question and steals a kiss.

ISAAK

Car accident. Me and Andrew. I'll make you a coffee.

June sighs, a tired smile on her face.

JUNE

Yeah, I should get going. Peter is probably waiting up.

Isaak slips on a t-shirt, partially to hide his reaction.

ISAAK

That the husband?

June pauses slightly at the tone but decides to pretend like she didn't hear it and heads back to the bedroom to track

down wherever she left her dress.

JUNE

My nephew. Left unsupervised he'll watch  
TV until morning. Teenagers...

He snorts, warm smile back on his face.

ISAAK

As boys do.

He checks his phone again. His brow twitches, not quite able  
to hide a frown.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

I'll get you that coffee.

June frowns as he passes her. She pulls her dress on sweeps  
back her still damp hair, pondering what caused the sudden  
change in mood. She peers out the window. It's fully dark  
outside, and only the door lamps from the other units light  
up the street. She puts her wedding ring back on.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Coming out into the kitchen, she takes her coat from the  
couch and pulls it on.

ISAAK

No need to rush.

He hands her a steaming cup of coffee. Phone still in hand.  
June sips the coffee and almost moans. It really is perfect.  
But it's a large cup and -



JUNE

I really should get going. Thank you for tonight.

Isaak put his phone down and pulls her in.

ISAAK

Finish your coffee at least.

JUNE

It is good...

ISAAK

I'll call you a taxi. You shouldn't be walking this late alone.

His grip around her waist is no different than earlier, but June is now wide awake and alert. Something is different, but she can't pin-point what it is that makes her uneasy.

JUNE

The taxi stand is just down the road-

ISAAK

And it can be right outside the door in ten minutes.

Not at all an unreasonable suggestion, but the underlying insistent timbre in his tone sets June on edge. Awkwardly, she manoeuvres to put the cup down on the counter, but he takes it from her hand and backs her against the counter. It digs uncomfortably into her back and while Isaak attempts to reclaim the earlier ease, June is no longer game, every instinct telling her something is *off*.

JUNE

Uh, I -

An alert goes off on Isaak's phone. June pushes him away with a little more alarm than she intended. Startled by the force of it, he attempts to brace himself with his broken arm. He curses in pain as his arm can't support him. He loses his balance, tips over, and his head strikes the edge of the kitchen counter. With a resounding crack, he hits his head again as he sprawls the floor, skull smacking backwards against the tiled kitchen floor.

June is stunned stock still.

Isaak is dazed, and scrabbles for grip to get up, uncoordinated and wheezing. Blood starts to pool under his head.

JUNE

Oh-

She knocks over the coffee cup as she scrambles over to support his head, getting blood on her knees and hands. The cup shatters, spattering hot coffee all over the floor and up the bottom cabinets.

The doorbell rings.

**EXT. HARBOUR - NIGHT**

Nathan gets off the boat, bag slung over his shoulder, the edge of his gun holster showing on his shoulder though his open jacket. He shakes hands with the captain. The captain hikes his thumb over his shoulder to a boat farther down the dock.

CAPTAIN

That one to your next stop. They leave  
in an hour.

NATHAN

An hour sharp?

CAPTAIN

If you want to gamble.

The captain walks off towards the admin building without another word. Nathan makes a face but doesn't comment and just gets on with it. He takes a printed out map out of his bag and studies it. There is an address written at the top and a circle on the location. It's close. Just about a fifteen-minute walk.

He pulls an old flip phone out and punches a number as he walks quickly. They pick up on the second ring.

NATHAN

Anything else I need to know?

MIKE

I got nothing. Just get the papers, do your thing however you fucking please.

NATHAN

What deal did you make?

MIKE

40k.

Nathan huffs.

NATHAN

Going through the trouble to blackmail, you'd think he'd at least get his money's worth.

Mike hangs up.

NATHAN

Well fuck you too.

**EXT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Nathan looks around, quietly appreciating the nice and sheltered neighbourhood. He notices an open window and a few apartments with the lights still on. It's all quite jam packed. Residents living wall to wall. It might look nice, but the noise carries.

He checks the time. He's early. Another window opens. He can't loiter, early or not. He bounds up the stairs to the front door and rings the doorbell with his knuckle. Discreetly he checks his gun and flicks the strap off the holster.

He can hear hurried steps from the inside and frowns, but before he can react the door is torn open.

Shocked, Nathan suddenly stands face to face with a bloody and terrified woman. There is blood on her hands and on her face. Looking down, there is blood on her knees.

JUNE

Please -

Before he can react, she grabs him and drags him inside. The door slams shut.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

JUNE

He fell- I didn't mean to -

For once in his life Nathan was stunned stupid. He follows

her inside. He looks down. Fuck, there is blood on his shirt. Coming into the open kitchen and living room space, Nathan can't help but gape. He *fell*?

NATHAN

Fuck me...

The woman is on her knees next to his mark, clapping his cheek, trying to wake him up. His mark was sprawled out in a pool of blood on the floor and - nope, did not seem *completely* dead. Well, he wasn't one to get lucky.

Before she turns back to him, Nathan gathers his acting-chops, and he rushes over and under the pretence of checking him over. He checks his pulse and leans down to see if he can hear him breathe. He claps his cheek. He makes a face at the pool of blood. He really hadn't wanted to get bloody today.

NATHAN

Can you get a towel or something? I can't see shit.

JUNE

I- I should call an ambulance-

Needing to distract her, Nathan shouts roughly.

NATHAN

Towel first!

Numbly, June obeys. The moment she turns around, Nathan slaps Isaak across the face.

Amazingly, Isaak comes to a little.

NATHAN

Hey- hey, the papers. Where are they?

Isaak just stares at him, completely out of it. Nathan smacks him again, gentler his time.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Papers! We're getting you some help,  
man, don't worry-

Isaak responds, his speech slurred and disjointed.

ISAAK

Sa-sa-ch-l

Nathan frowns and looks around. He spots a brown leather satchel by the couch.

June comes back in. She stops short, seeing Isaak conscious, then she rushes over, stepping right into the lake of coffee on the floor.

JUNE

Oh my- Isaak I'm so sorry-

She puts the folded towel under his head to put some pressure on it. Nathan waves her off to keep some distance.

NATHAN

Not helping with your hands shaking. Can  
you see if there is some first aid or  
something? Give me that-

He takes the towel from her.

JUNE

Keep the pressure!

NATHAN

Go!

June scrambles to her feet and runs to look for first aid. The moment she's out of the room, Nathan unfolds half the towel under Isaak's head, then he folds it over his face and places his hand over Isaak's mouth and pinches his nose shut.

He averts his gaze as Isaak struggles. The man is mostly out of it but offers some instinctual fight. Nothing Nathan can't overpower, although his hand cramps and he strains to manage. His mark goes lax and Nathan sits back, dragging the towel away just as-

JUNE

\*Indistinct noise\*

Well fuck.

END OF EPISODE 1





# MARRIED

Episode 2

*Bloodstained Hands*

Av

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**EXT. INDUSTRIAL SHIP - NIGHT**

Nathan is slick with sweat and breathing heavily. He leans over the railing of the ship to catch his breath as the ship pulls away from the harbour.

Isaak's satchel is flung over his shoulder and his own backpack on his back. His left hand it is trembling violently on the strap. He is furious.

He digs out his flip phone and finds Mike's contact. He presses the green button so hard his thumb fades a bloodless white.

MIKE

You alright? Everything go smoothly?

The unexpected question to his wellbeing has Nathan breaking out in a near hysterical laughter.

MIKE

Nate!

NATHAN

You don't- Oh my fucking god-

His laughter dies down and he wipes his face.

MIKE

What the fuck happened?

Nathan shakes his head, unsure of even where to start.

NATHAN

I have the papers. Guy is dead.

Mike exhales heavily in relief.

MIKE

Alright. Good. You had me worried-

Nathan snorts.

MIKE (CONT'D)

It sounded like you lost your mind.

Nathan makes a strangled noise.

NATHAN

Next time... you shouldn't be so fucking nice to people you want dead.

MIKE

Didn't want to spook him...

NATHAN

Yeah, well...

(beat)

NATHAN (CONT'D)

He brought a fucking date.

Nathan waits for a response, but it's quiet on the other end of the line. He sucks in his cheeks, perfectly aware of how absurd what he just said was. Mike struggles to articulate himself.

MIKE

Sorr- what? No? No.

NATHAN

Yes.

MIKE

No...

(beat)

MIKE

You're fucking with me.

(beat)

Nathan doesn't respond as he waits for Mike's brain to catch up to the situation. A series of expletives explode from the phone and Nathan yanks it away from his ear. He frowns in annoyance. If anyone has the right to be annoyed, it was not Mike. Yet.

MIKE

What did you do with the girl?

**FLASHBACK**

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Nathan makes a show of wiping the blood from Isaak's face.

JUNE

W-what happened? Did he just-

NATHAN

Yeah...

June rushes to her phone, but the click of the sliding rack has June frozen in place. Eyes wide, terrified she turns to look at the unassuming older man who now has a gun pointed at her.

NATHAN

Put it down dearie.

Shaking all over, she drops the phone immediately. Nathan winces as it hits the floor. He takes a moment to

recalibrate his mind and take stock of his options. Which are not many.

NATHAN

So this can go one out of two ways for you -

JUNE

No please-

NATHAN

No interruptions please. This idiot here-

He gestured down to Isaak.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

-was blackmailing my client, and I'm here to pick up some stuff and drop off some cash to make the situation go away. So this-

He gestures to all of the dead man on the floor.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Is a bad deal.

June doesn't really understand anything at all.

NATHAN

You can walk outta here. Hale and whole. On a few conditions.

JUNE

O-okay-

Nathan nods and points to her phone.

NATHAN

Kick that thing over.

June does.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Don't feel too bad. Guys like that usually  
end up dead anyhow.

He causally gestures to Isaak again, and June is shocked.

JUNE

Oh...

NATHAN

So?

JUNE

Uh?

NATHAN

Will you cooperate?

June squeezes her eyes shut.

NATHAN

This can be an unfortunate accident.  
Judging by that ring on your finger,  
that would work to your advantage as  
well, hm?

June resists looking, not stomaching seeing her bloody  
hands.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Or I could kill you. Which admittedly will be  
a lot more work, but... so what will it be?

JUNE

O-ok.

NATHAN

Ok?

June takes a shuddering breath and forces out the words.

JUNE

Don't kill m-me...

Nathan nods.

NATHAN

Good. Pass code.

JUNE

Don't have one.

Nathan grimaces and mutters.

NATHAN

What is it with people... Who knows  
you're here. Or meeting-

He gestures to Isaak's body, pointedly not looking at it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

-at all?

He scrolls through her messages and sees the most recent as  
*Mr. Better*. He raises a brow. Well wasn't that telling?  
June lies.

JUNE

No one knows, just that he asked me out.

Nathan's other brow joins the first one. Stupid. He scrolls down.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I can say he didn't show up?

Nathan reads through her messages with Isaak. One from a *Sarah* that read *good luck*. Lying to him was stupid. He checks her gallery. Husband and a kid. He takes a picture of the screen with his own phone, noting people, names and numbers.

NATHAN

I know your name, your family. I know your face, and your friends.

June shrinks. He installs *Dust* on her phone and tucks it in his pocket.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Now, which rooms have you been in? Chop chop, we don't have all night.

Nathan looks under the sink and finds a box of disposable gloves and antibac. He looks at the drain cleaner.

NATHAN

Did you shower?

JUNE

Y-yes.

NATHAN

Go wash the blood off yourself, then strip the bed and put it in here. Put some clean sheets in the machine and put it on. Max heat.



He hands her a large black garbage bag. She doesn't take it. Nathan shakes it, impatient. He checks the time. Thirty minutes.

June takes it and hurries to the bathroom. Nathan fills up and puts on the electric kettle.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

She avoids looking herself in the mirror as she scrubs the blood off her hands. The faucet is set to cold water: the blood comes off easier if it doesn't coagulate. She get's in the shower and hikes her dress up to wash the blood off her knees. She's crying.

NATHAN (O.S.)

Hurry up.

She hurries to dry off, and strips the bed.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Nathan hands her gloves, a cloth and antibac.

NATHAN

Double up the gloves. Fingerprints will show through just one layer. Disinfect *everything* you could possibly have touched. Start with the shower and bathroom.

Wordlessly and white in the face, she does as she's told.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM**

June soaks the shower in disinfectant. Soaks the sink, Soaks the toilet. She left the towel on the floor. She snatches it up and puts it in with the sheets.

Nathan comes in with the boiling kettle.

NATHAN

Done?

June nods and continues in the bedroom.

Nathan takes the hair out of the drain and put it in the garbage bag. He pours the drain cleaner in the sink and the shower, and pours boiling water in after it. The stench is horrendous. He makes a face of disgust and backs out of the room, closing the door.

June is just staring at him.

NATHAN

Get moving.

JUNE

I... I didn't put things in the wash.

Nathan shrugs.

NATHAN

Your nose. Don't inhale that shit.

**INT. ISAAK'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Nathan picks up the shards of the broken coffee cup and puts it in a bag. He grabs a clean cup with the same colour and smashes it on the floor.

June yelps at the sharp noise, but Nathan ignores her.

NATHAN

Living room, hallway? Doorhandles, light switches? Nightstand?

June musters up some bravery and speaks in a shaky voice.

JUNE

I got it all. I work in the hospital...  
I do this every day. I'm an assistant nurse.

Nathan makes a disinterested noise

JUNE (CONT'D)

It's how we met. He got in a car accident with his friend. He was on my ward.

Nathan perks up and pays mild attention. June takes that as encouragement and speaks a bit steadier.

JUNE (CONT'D)

His friend, Andrew was hurt worse and will be there a few more weeks, but Isaak got out today-

NATHAN

Andrew?

JUNE

His friend?

NATHAN

Was there anyone else in the accident?

June frowns, confused.

JUNE

He said it was just him and...

Nathan curses under his breath. Did it ever end?

**END FLASHBACK**

**EXT. INDUSTRIAL SHIP - NIGHT**

Picks up where the last scene left off. Nathan is still on the phone with Mike.

MIKE

So you left her alive?

NATHAN

I need her to access to the hospital.

A silence stretched out.

MIKE

How the-

NATHAN

The *how* is my job.

MIKE

You'll take care of it?

NATHAN

One more. Double my fee. I'll take care of it.

MIKE

I'll make it happen.

NATHAN

Take care of this asshole, Mike.

MIKE

Someone will.

NATHAN

No, take care of him.

MIKE

It's not that easy Nate. He's close with the boss' kid. You know how it is...

NATHAN

I do know how it is. I did you a solid by just retiring. I'm doing you a solid now. Deal with it.

**EXT. OUTSIDE JUNE'S HOME - NIGHT**

June's hands are shaking as she tries to get her key into the keyhole. She misses numerous times, but eventually manages.

**INT. JUNE'S HOME HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

All the lights are on.

She hangs her jacket up and anxiously checks herself over, making sure her clothes are clean. She walks farther into the house, finding Peter half dozing on the couch, Netflix asking if he is still watching. Glancing towards the stairs, she considers letting him sleep. No, he needs to sleep in his bed.

JUNE

Honey-

She stroked his hair, waking him properly.

JUNE

You can't sleep here love.

PETER

W's jus' waiting f'r you...

June smiles, eyes becoming glossy with tears, but thankfully not enough for them to fall. Peter pushes himself up, rubbing his eyes. Blinking up at his aunt, he takes her in. He looks at her wet hair and the nearly-gone stains of mascara under her eyes. He looks away, processing *something*, but his half-asleep head not quite connecting the dots just yet.

PETER

Did you have a nice time?

JUNE

Dinner was lovely.

June's voice glitches. Peter stares at her, gaze steady. Again, he looks at her wet hair. He swallows, hesitates, but finally speaks.

PETER

You should go out more.

June tries not to react and just paints on a weak smile. Peter misunderstands her strain as shame.

PETER

Did you go for drinks after? Or do something nice?

JUNE

We should go to sleep honey.

June gets up and walks out of Peter's line of vision. She covers her face to give herself a moment. Peter speaks quietly.

PETER

Simon goes out all the time.

It takes a moment before June understands what Peter is saying. When she doesn't reply, Peter becomes unsure.

JUNE

Let's just go to bed.

Peter looks to the clock on the wall. It's 2am.

**INT. JUNE'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

June sneaks quietly into the bedroom and slips into bed. Her husband is dead asleep. She lies curled on her side, trying to cry as quietly as she can.

**EXT. PRIVATE MARINA - BEFORE DAWN**

Nathan manoeuvres the boat neatly into boathouse.

**INT. BOATHOUSE - PRIVATE MARINA - BEFORE DAWN**

He secures the boat and lugs himself up to the loft. He puts the garbage bag in a crater and locks it. He tosses his bag in another and locks that too. He's too tired to deal with it.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - GARAGE - BEFORE DAWN**

Clambering out of his car, exhausted, Nathan looks down at his clothes and bites back a curse. His shoes were a write

off, trousers were alright, but his shirt was a complete mess. Not that is was very visible on the black cotton.

Nathan picked at the blood stains, unsticking it from his chest. Could he make more mistakes in a day? Inhaling deeply to calm his temper, he strips off the bloody shirt and shoves it down in the trash outside the garage, making sure to cover it with a few other things.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - BEFORE DAWN**

Sniffing himself, Nathan winces. But he's too tired. He drops down on the couch and falls into deep sleep.

**FLASHBACK**

**EXT. OUTSIDE ISAAK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Nathan grabs June's arm, yanking her back. She yelps in pain.

NATHAN

Go the other way.

JUNE

Why?

NATHAN

Just do as you're told. Tomorrow, do *everything* as normal Business as usual.

June gapes at him, anxious and frustrated.

JUNE

I- I'm supposed to just... go to work?

Nathan hisses.



NATHAN

Yes! And don't even think about messing up. I know where to find you... And your boy.

June is shaking like a leaf. Nathan gives her phone back.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I'll contact you. Check the app regularly.

He walks off, satchel and garbage bag in hand. June just stands there staring after him, paralysed, freezing. Numb.

**END FLASHBACK**

**INT. JUNE'S HOME - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING**

It looked out to be kind of a shitty day already from the moment June opened her eyes. The bed is empty next to her, and the bedroom window is open. The curtains are soaked through with rain. June sits up and glances over the edge of the bed, and sure enough, there was a puddle on the old hardwood floor.

She rubs sleep from her eyes, and achingly stiff from too little sleep, she gets up walks around the bed to her husband's side and closes the window. She eyes the puddle with disdain. She sighs heavily, too damned tired to get any sort of feelings about it right this moment. She'd get angry about it later. After coffee. But water damage is water damage, no matter whose fault it was. Dutifully she grabs a towel carelessly discarded on the chair in the corner and mops it up.

The alarm clock blink 06:30.

She blinks blearily at the digits, brain rebooting. The events of the previous evening comes crashing down on her. She blinks.

06:58

JUNE

Fuck....

She barely has the will to move, but she has to. Continue like normal, he'd said. Lethargically grabbing some joggers and a sweater discarded on the floor, she yanks them on and tries to hurry downstairs.

**INT. JUNE'S HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING**

Simon (32) is sipping his piping hot coffee by the breakfast table. He is scrolling on his tablet through the morning news. June gives him a look, noting that he is already neatly dressed in a suit, and all but ready to leave for the office.

The coffee pot is empty.

JUNE

I thought you didn't have to head out early today?

Simon's eyes don't lift from the tablet he's scrolling on, cup of steaming coffee still resting on his lip.

SIMON

I don't.

June stops and stared at him for a beat, trying to reconcile getting up several hours before he needed to while letting her oversleep, and viciously expunging the image of the

small lake in the bedroom from her mine. She grabs an apple and a banana from the fruit bowl.

JUNE

I'm late.

Simon salutes her with his cup.

SIMON

If you quit, you wouldn't have to hurry.

June doesn't dignify it with a response and heads towards the hallway.

JUNE

Wake up Peter for school?

SIMON

Peter can wake himself. I'm leaving in a moment.

June takes a breath to steady her temper and leaves the kitchen.

Simon raises his voice so she can hear him in the hallway.

SIMON

Remember dinner with my parents this evening.

**INT/EXT. JUNE'S HOME - HALLWAY/STREET - MORNING**

JUNE

Oh how could I ever?

She hurries past the nice car in the driveway and runs.

**INT. HOSPITAL BASEMENT - MORNING**

Arriving at the hospital, June is late and stressed. Trying to get her uniform at the machine, it closes for daily maintenance. She runs around the corner and knocks on the door.

No answer.

She knocks again. She *hammers*. A young guy with headphones opened the door. The machinery in the room is very noisy.

UNIFORM GUY

Yeah?

Frazzled, near tears, she stutters.

JUNE

Anything medium or large. Whichever you find first.

Giving her an odd look, he ducks in and appears a second later and hands her a pair of scrubs. June grabs them and runs.

UNIFORM GUY

Have a nice day!

June doesn't reply, she just runs.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - MORNING**

Nathan jolts awake as Eli climbs over his back.

ELI

Wake up, wake up!

Nathan bites back a line of decidedly non-PG expletives. Groaning, he turns over and his daughter drops down on his stomach, knocking the breath out of him just a little.

NATHAN

What's up sweetheart?

ELI

Mommy said we're going sailing!

Nathan withholds a pained sigh and plasters on a smile for his little girl.

NATHAN

I thought you were going to your grandparents.

ELI

Sailing!

Well, that decided that. His lip quirked fondly. He couldn't bring himself to be cranky as she clambered off excitedly.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - ERIC'S ROOM - EVENING**

Passing Eric's room, a newly showered Nathan stops short. He backs up and peers in the open door. His offspring looks miserable, which he finds odd. Sailing usually inspires manic joy in his kids.

NATHAN

Ok, I know why I'm in a shit mood, but why are you?

Eric gives his dad a sullen glare.

ERIC

It's stupid.

NATHAN

Not if it puts you in this mood.

Eric scowls and takes a moment before he voices his complaint.

ERIC

Xander was made Captain.

Nathan's brow furrows as he tries to remember which one that is. Eric sighs.

ERIC

Number nine.

Nathan's brows rise in realisation, but then promptly falls back down into a scowl.

NATHAN

*Why?* He's a turtle.

ERIC

Right!

He sits up, invigorated as his father validates the thoughts plaguing him.

ERIC (CONT'D)

It's not fair!

Nathan gives his boy a considering look as he decides how to answer. He enters Eric's bedroom and drops himself down in the chair by the desk, giving the half-completed homework a glance.

NATHAN

The job I was away for, someone else had already done it. Tried to. They fu -  
*messed* it up-

Eric grins and Nathan gives him a half-amused flat glare.  
Nathan continues pointedly.

NATHAN

Now they're paying me double to fix it.  
They gave me bad info, now they're  
paying me triple to tidy up their bad  
decisions *and* their shoddy work.

ERIC

I thought you said money didn't matter,  
that's why you retired early?

Nathan shrugs, not interested in continuing down that line  
of questioning, despite having started it.

NATHAN

Kinda matters when buying big stuff like  
*houses*.

Eric nods, fair enough.

NATHAN

Sometimes you've just got to have a  
little patience. Keep proving yourself,  
you'll get your due. There is a  
tournament soon, right? Make your mark.

ERIC

Not with Xander's dad on the club  
board...

Nathan perks up.

NATHAN

Now we're talking corruption, kiddo.  
That's a whole different ballgame.

He smiles gleefully with the prospect of taking his bad mood out on someone deserving.

**EXT. NATHAN'S HOME - DRIVEWAY - MORNING**

Nathan jogs up to Nora's car as she's getting ready to leave. She rolls down the window and gets ready to leave.

NORA

You were home late. Did everything go well?

Nathan shrugs, not wanting to get into it.

NATHAN

There were some complications, but I'm, holding off to see what comes of it.

Nora gets a wounded look on her face, which Nathan doesn't understand.

NATHAN

Hey- I'm gonna take the kids out on a long one. How about you take some extra time? Hair salon, not that you need it, but you'll feel better? The water-face thing-

Nora sniffs, but Nathan's silliness pulls a small smile from her.

NORA

Hydro facial.



NATHAN

Right. That.

Nora clears her throat and nods to herself.

NORA

I'll see what they have available.

Nathan grins.

NATHAN

That's my girl.

He leans in the window to steal a kiss. He peppers a few on her cheek to kiss away the stay tear that escaped.

NORA

Uh, did Eric tell you about-

NATHAN

Yup. I'll take care of it.

NORA

Okay, that's off my plate then.

NATHAN

Definitely. Entirely. Go off now before Eli decides she'd rather spend the day picking pain.

Nora snorts and back out of the driveway.

**INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - PATIENT ROOM - NOON**

June is absentmindedly caring for a dead patient.

Coiling up wires, cleaning blood stain. She removes tubes, collects trash and moves medical equipment into the corners of the room.

She pauses and checks her phone. Nothing.

AVA

Put that away. The family is right outside.

June looks up, a little dazed, circles under her eyes. Ava whisper-yells, worried.

AVA

Hey- what's up with you?

June brushes her off. It's not like she can tell her.

JUNE

Just a long night.

Ava doesn't look like she believes her.

AVA

If you say so...

She heads out in the hallways to the family.

June folds the sheets over the patients nearly, and folds their arms, making them look as sleeping as possible. She opens a window. Death as smell most people aren't used to.

**INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - HALLWAY - NOON**

As June comes out of the room, deftly dodging Ava and the family, she is faced with two police officers strolling slowly through the ward - a man and a woman in civilian clothing with their badges hanging around their neck.

June escapes into the toilet, quickly locking the door. She holds her hand over her mouth, desperately trying to be quiet as she overcomes the wave of panic.

**INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - ANDREW'S ROOM - NOON**

Andrew is stressed and in pain. His frustration grows as he calls Isaak. The call goes to voice mail. He tries to shift to get more comfortable, but his leg strung up doesn't help matters. He takes some water and drinks deeply as he scrolls through his messages, checking if Isaak has seen any of them.

ANDREW (TEXT)

How did it go?

ANDREW (TEXT)

Dude?

ANDREW (TEXT)

Are you ok?

ANDREW (TEXT)

?????

The nurse, Ava, comes in, brow furrowed in worry for her patient.

AVA

Andrew? There are two police officers here? They want to talk to you.

Andrew sits up, alert.

AVA (CONT'D)

Do you think you're well enough to see them?

ANDREW

Yeah, let them in. I've been waiting for them!

OFFICER CHRIS PAUL (30s) and OFFICER MAYA JENSEN (20s) enter.

**INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - BATHROOM - NOON**

June splashed water on her face. God, she looks beyond exhausted. She takes a breath and steels herself as she exits the bathroom.

**INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - HALLWAY - NOON**

With the officers heading her way, June looks like a deer in the headlights. Still, he takes a breath and greets them professionally.

JUNE

Can I help you?

OFFICER PAUL

No, we were on our way out. You look like you had a long night?

The tone is searching. June tries to act unbothered, but she scrambles to think of something. She flicks her hair away smiling as steadily as she can manage.

JUNE

Oh? I sat up all night watching Netflix with my nephew. Those Korean zombie shows are terrifying.

The officers exchange a look at the over-sharing, but leave it be.

OFFICER JENSEN

That they are. Take care.

JUNE

Take care...

She watches as they leave the ward, panic working its way back up her throat. The woman officer looks back at her as they leave. June feels exposed.

She check's her phone again. Nothing. But she doesn't get a chance to indulge in the rising anxiety as Ava calls for her.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON**

Tired, but satisfied Nora drops a load of shopping bags in the hallway. Her hair is a little shorter, a little neater. Amongst the shopping bags are two paint buckets of pink paint.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

Nora gets a glass of water and collects some wrapping paper on the counter and tosses it. The trash is full.

**EXT. NATHAN'S HOME - AFTERNOON**

Nora is taking out the trash. Lifting the lid, Annoyed at the bulky disorder, she moves some trash to get it to squash down easier. She's about to throw the trash in when she sees a familiar tag attached to fabric. Curious, she fishes it out. It's her husband's shirt. an expensive one. Frowning,

she turns it over. The black cotton hides the strain, but she can feel the gummy stiffness.

She tosses the trash and takes the shirt with her back inside.

**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - LAUNDRY ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Turning on the water in the sink, Nora tosses the shirt in to soak. As the sink fills she mills around the sparse room, finding the few other dark items that also needs ashing. Turning back to the sink she stops short. The water is turning increasingly ruddy brown.

She stares at it, expression frozen. Consequences. She deflates.

The sound of a car arriving and the front door slamming sounds as a dull thud, but it yanks Nora out of her stupor. Quickly she pulls the drain, wrings out the shirt and tosses it in the washing machine. She returns to the sink and scrubs her hands furiously as the red water drains. She rinses the sink, and pulls in a shaky breath.

She goes to fill the machine with other items, smacks the door shut and starts it. She exhales slowly, eyes closed. Eric enters, Nathan just behind.

Eric frowns at the sink.

ERIC

It that blood?

Nora's eyes snap open. Nathan stops short behind him. They briefly make eye-contact.

NORA

It's just laundry.

Eric frowns. Nathan does his best not to react at all. Nora gives them both a flat glare.

NORA (CONT'D)

*Girl's* laundry. Out.

Eric looks like a fish out of water before turn pink and decides to just do as he's told.

Nathan is left behind, dizzy with relief, but also-

NATHAN

You're not-

Nora lies smoothly.

NORA

Not the only girl in the house.

Nathan *glitches*.

NATHAN

What? No, she's not old enough-

NORA

Between ten and fifteen is perfectly average.

NATHAN

Should I-

NORA

No.

Discreetly grateful for the escape offered, Nathan turns on his heel.

NATHAN

Yes ma'm.

As he leaves, Nora sags in relief. But it doesn't last long. Emma stick her head in the door.

Emma frowns at her mom, one brow arched in suspicion.

EMMA

How did whatever you're doing translate to me having a fake period?

Nora runs her hands through her hair, tugging at the short strands at her neck.

NORA

If you want a man to leave you alone, say it's a lady issue.

Nora put on a smile for her daughter to hide her sudden tiredness. Emma is not falling for it.

NORA (CON'T)

Ask your dad to go to the store. Ask for anything.

EMMA

We literally just got back.

NORA

Try.

Emma gives her a sceptical look.



**INT. NATHAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Curious, Emma inches in on her dad who distractedly turning the pages of the newspaper, not really reading it.

EMMA

Daddy?

Nathan's head snaps up.

NATHAN

Yes dear?

EMMA

Can I have some chocolate milk?

Nathan pauses, thinking.

NATHAN

I don't think we have any, sweetheart.

EMMA

Oh...

NATHAN

But you know what, I'll go get some. I think we're missing some stuff for dinner. Anything else?

EMMA

No... thank you!

NATHAN

Don't think about it. Just... take a bath or something.

Nathan hurries out the door, and Emma is left in the kitchen, puzzled, but pleased. She whispers to herself-

EMMA

Neat.

**INT. CAR - DRIVING AFTERNOON**

Nathan sends a text and hooks his phone up to the bluetooth in the car. June replies.

He pulls out of the driveway and out on the road. He calls her. This time she does pick up. Her voice is hushed, quiet.

JUNE

Hello?

NATHAN

Can you talk?

JUNE

A bit. I'm waiting for my husband to come home, so I might have to hang up quickly.

NATHAN

That's fine. Just act normal. What are your plans this afternoon?

June let out a strangled laugh. Was he really asking about her day?

JUNE

Dinner with the in-laws.

Nathan whistles.

NATHAN

You say that like you're walking to  
your-

Ai ai ai, poor choice of words about to come out of his  
mouth.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

- highway to hell.

June doesn't reply.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Alright. Tell me about your day  
yesterday. Don't leave out anyth -

June cuts him off.

JUNE

The police came.

Nathan cursed.

NATHAN

For what?

JUNE

To talk to Andrew.

NATHAN

And? That's all you got for me?

JUNE

They asked me what I did last night. She  
said I looked like I had a long night.

Nathan mouthed a quiet *fuck*, but he didn't vocalise it.

NATHAN

And what did you say?

JUNE

That I was at home watching Netflix?

NATHAN

Specifically.

June takes a steadying breath.

JUNE

That I was at home watching Netflix with my nephew. Korean... zombie thing is so scary.

Nathan makes a face. That *sounded* like a lie even if he hadn't known it was.

NATHAN

Alright, gimme a minute...

He swings the car into a parking lot by the grocery store. He kills the engine and puts on his earbuds.

**INT. GROCERY STORE - AFTERNOON**

Nathan grabs a trolley. He might as well get some other things than chocolate milk while he's there.

JUNE

Where are you?

NATHAN

Grocery shopping.

June snorts.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Something funny about that?

JUNE

No... no.

NATHAN

So. Be honest this time. Who knew you were going out with him?

June hesitates to answer.

JUNE

Two people.

Nathan arched a brow. Fair enough.

NATHAN

And Andrew. And I'm guessing someone paid with card when you were out?

JUNE

Um.... I don't remember. I think so.

NATHAN

Righ. So you have to call those officers back. Make an appointment on Monday. That's gonna buy you the most time. Tell them you lied -

JUNE

No I can't-

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Because Andrew sure as shit knows, and they're gonna trace his credit cards once they figure out he's missing. Staff at the restaurant will probably remember you.

He pauses, realising he scared the shit outta her. He speaks quietly, making sure he's not attracting the attention of any of the other customer.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Calm now. We're gonna fix this. It might actually be a good thing. Gives credibility.

June's breathing eases and he starts up again.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Make an appointment. Keep it as close to the truth as you can. You had a good time, but he got aggressive and tried to force-

June makes a horrified noise. Another horrified noise comes from behind him. He turns.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Crime writer-

The other customer makes a face of understanding, but still scurries away. Nathan turns his attention back to June.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

You didn't want to tell because you're married... it all adds up. They'll believe you.

JUNE

I don't know if I can-

NATHAN

You already did the hardest part. This will be fine.

He saw a familiar face- Tom from the football match. He turned and walks the other way.

NATHAN

I have to go. We'll talk tomorrow. I'll call at midnight.

He hangs up. He squeezes his eyes shut, frustrated. Would she even last until Monday?

**EXT. OUTSIDE ISAAK'S APARTMENT**

The police officers knock on the door. There is no answer. Officer Jensen climbs up on her colleagues' shoulders to get a view in the bedroom window. The bed is stripped, but the room is empty. She slides down.

OFFICER JENSEN

Should I go get the-

OFFICER PAUL

It hasn't been twenty-four hours yet.

Officer Jensen makes a sceptical face.

OFFICER JENSEN

He was pretty adamant something was wrong. He sounded a bit paranoid, but... it's better to make sure and laugh at it later for indulging him. We're already here.

Paul exhales slowly. After considering, he nods.

OFFICER PAUL

I'll write it up as a judgement call. But if we find nothing-

OFFICER JENSEN

Captain will have our ass if the guy doesn't have insurance?

Paul snorts and nods. He jogs down to the car and gets a mini-battering ram. Coming back up, he prepares to use it, but Maya interjects.

OFFICER JENSEN

Let's just try-

She tries the door handle. The door slides open. They exchange a look. She calls inside.

OFFICER JENSEN

Hello? It's the police.

She wrinkles her nose. It smells a little. Like disinfectant and something gross. Slowly they walk in... and find Isaak's body.



**EXT. NATHAN'S HOME - TERRACE - AFTERNOON**

Nora is hanging up the clothes on the terrace. Nathan leans in the doorway, watching her, smiling. The view is amazing; the archipelago stretches out behind her, blue skies and mountains, his wife soaking up the last rays of the afternoon sun. How did he get so lucky?

It is paradise.

The world slows down.

His wife looks up, she holds his gaze steady as the shakes it loose and hangs it up neatly right alongside her own clothes. With Eric's jersey. With Emma's odd collection of colourful socks.

Next to Eli's pink jammies, hung the shirt he'd thrown away.

**END OF EPISODE 2**



# Reflecting Upon M A R R E D

## How the Idea Came to Be: The Makings of a Killer

Round about this time last year I was studiously ignoring the real world and efficient ploughing through *Killing Eve*, *How to Get Away with Murder* (for the second time), and *Ray Donovan*. These shows all have the reoccurring theme of copious amounts of murder – but specifically about people not getting caught for it. Being a curious soul, I went sniffing around the topic of murder in the US. What I find out was that if you do commit murder, you are on average 67% likely to get caught. But if you want to improve your odds, Illinois is the best place to do it. Their clearance is 36%. To summarise: that is half a million murders since 1980, and nearly 200 000 of them are unsolved. Thankfully, Norway is a bit less *eventful*.<sup>12</sup>

Stories about assassins, hit men, contract killers, whatever you chose to call them, are not exactly few and far between, but it got me once again curious about how it would actually work in real life. This time it was less of a *sniff* and more of a headfirst deep dive into the rabbit hole.

While rummaging around the rabbit hole, I fully expected to find a lot on the psychology of violence, on murderers, serial killers and that ilk than I expected to find on contract killer, and in that assumption I was correct. Even within the subject of contract killers, the majority of studies, interviews, documentaries books, or articles that do not originate from Dr. Wilsons research project, are about individual contract killers, not about the group as a whole. Still, HBO's *Crazy, Not Insane* featuring Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis was a great gateway into the subject of the violent individual. While most of it wasn't directly relevant to what I was searching for, it gave me a greater understanding than I had before. By no means *great* understanding, but it's been a learning experience. True crime documentaries haven't ever quite been my thing, but I find myself morbidly curious. *I'll be Gone in the Dark*, a book by Michelle McNamara-completed by her husband Oswald Patton after her death and made into a true crime series. It was riveting. Joseph DeAngelo, the Golden State Killer, committed 13 murders, over 50 rapes and countless burglaries from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties. And he was caught in 2018 while they were filming, *I'll be Gone in the Dark*.

One reason I find true crime a bit of an unpredictable genre when it comes to *enjoying* it, is because society really had a creepy obsession with serial killers. Rich coming from me, considering what I'm writing, and

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<sup>12</sup> <https://projectcoldcase.org/cold-case-homicide-stats/>

hilarious taking into account that one of my favourite shows of all time is Bryan Fuller's *Hannibal*. But what I mean is... it's hard to articulate, but everyone know who Ted Bundy is, but not a lot of people can name his victims. Sometimes it feels like a glorification of violence. One thing is fiction, but reality is something else. Why I liked *Crazy, Not Insane* is because it kept strong focus on the clinical work, the progress they made in understanding, what they can do further to prevent a person from reaching their *becoming*. *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* is amazing because it was so strict in keeping the story to be about Michelle McNamara's work, her colleagues that completed it after her death, her husband's drive to get it done, but most import of all: it was about the victim, the survivors and their families. Joseph DeAngelo was all but absent. His presence mostly consisted of how he affected the lives of the people he hurt, and the terror he spread. The man himself got very little attention. And that's how I think it should be. That he was caught the way he was, while they were filming, having gone free after doing these things since the 1970's was *cathartic*.

But it got me thinking. In particular it got me thinking about *Nathan* and it got me thinking about how contract killers function as people, both at work and in their daily lives. Whether or not *Nathan* genuinely feels no guilt, or if he disassociates is definitely something that will be repeatedly poked at. In real life, in the case of Sam Jones it was left alone because he was functional, and academic curiosity was not a justification for attempting to find out what was behind the concrete wall he built in his head when the possible consequence could be a destroyed life and a wrecked family. In a country with the death penalty, the ugly reality is that you have to make someone a killer to uphold the law. In *Marred* there are no such concerns to think about, so Nathan gets put through the wringer. But in that situation, watching g Sam Jones talk *in Crazy, Not Insane*, it the possible consequences of someone knocking down that wall in his head was so clear to me. What would happen if I did that to Nathan? What would happen if I did that to Nora? How does June build that wall?

## Pantsing vs. Planning

Planning certainly has its merits. But writing detailed outlines, that's like squeezing blood from a stone. I've never had an outline that I ended up following. I much prefer to have a few points of contact that I need to touch upon; goals to achieve, moments to pass, events to occur. There is so much of the writing process that happens in the moment, when you really get time to think about and think through how the characters are experiencing a situation, how they'd feel and how they react. Almost without exception I'll hit a point where I've worked something out perfectly; *this is how it needs to happen*, but then when it actually comes to the page, it dies. There is so much of the characters inner lives, motivations, thoughts and feelings that

doesn't come through in a script, and it is frustrating sometimes. I know there are times I've pushed it, but I'd rather put too much on the page than too little. At least then I've made myself understood, and the reader is not left confused.

The same thing happens with structure. I started out envisioning a *Breaking Bad* structure, with teasers, throw backs and such. But I get so caught up in the details, I can hardly see the forest for the trees. Lars Skorpen, my supervisor has been great at and not letting me get stuck in my own head. When we first met up, I told him that's my worst habit - that, and being a slow writer, but one is a consequence of the other. Kjersti once said in our first year that daydreaming is a great tool for writers, but I do have a tendency to take things to the extremes! Especially with things I like to do.

The hardest part of this has without a doubt been writing outlines. I know it's a tool that 's supposed to help, but - like I mentioned I don't follow them, but also, once I've written them, it feels like I've poured out my head on the page and there is nothing more to write. Writing something different from there on almost becomes a compulsion. I can't write it twice. The closest thing I've come to a solution to that eccentric problem is tossing it all out, starting over and write what I remember of it. I did that a few times.

It was noted to me that I have a habit of not describing the looks of characters particularly often. That's because very often the physicality of a character doesn't matter all that much. In the cases where I think it matters, I've added it. It matters that Nathan isn't a big guy; he's not supposed to come across as threatening. Isaak's sturdiness is more a comparative contrast towards Simon - that, and big people fall like brick walls. Naturally Peter and Eric would have to be fairly fit as they are both athletes. This also is one of the reasons I haven't used pictures, but concept art in this project file. I'll talk about that in a bit.

## Conflict and Tension: The One Change I Didn't Make

Some of the things I talked to my supervisor a lot about was the various ways in which to put a character under pressure in a believable way, but to also keep them human with human reactions and thought processes. While I'm happy to utilise tropes and stereotypes when suited, it's important to me that as little as possible falls into the trappings of becoming a caricature. The real challenge wasn't to make a character act violently under pressure. The challenge was to get them to a place where they would *want to* when the pressure wasn't all that heavy anymore. In that sense, Nathan wasn't hard to get a grip on: writing a character wanting to improve and do better is relatable. Writing a character in moral decline from the point of *normal to murder*, and from *murder to murder for money* is a bit more of a brain twister.

When it came to *Marred* in the character specific way, *Isaak* was the one that came to me first. An odd starting point, but I ran with it. While *Nathan* existed as a concept in my head, he hadn't really settled into any type of personhood until... pretty much last. Even his wife came before him. But *Isaak* is a linchpin character. He didn't start any of the trouble he is in, but it's his story that ties them all together in the beginning. He's a romantic at heart, but selfish enough to not care about potentially wrecking a marriage. He's a loyal friend, but reckless. He's smart, but also such a dumbass it's hard to phantom.

Of all of them, he wasn't easy to write. It was only too easy for him to come across as a callous cad. And maybe to some he still does. He hits on a married woman and involves her in a situation that could quickly go south and kill them both. That's not the makings of a sympathetic character. I'm not even sure I managed to nail him down entirely. I certainly didn't manage to crystalise the purpose of this character in the first draft.

The final scene between June and Isaak wasn't something that was clear cut how would go. There needed to be a degree of randomness to it; a genuine accident, but at the same time not come across as too comedic. I have noticed that my brand of snark has a tendency to make people laugh at dark scenes where I didn't actually intend it to be funny as a such, but an effort to portray the absurd and random things we as people have to deal with in real life. Those situations are not experiences as funny by the one going through it, but I have to admit that watching it unfold can inspire a startled laugh or amused snort. Like someone walking into a lamppost: it's quite a different experience to be the one doing it, and to be the one watching.

The most obvious indication that the Isaak in my head didn't match the one coming out on paper, was the suggestion that in order to increase the tension in his last interaction with June, sexual violence should be introduced as a stressor to force June to react violently.

It might not be appropriately academic, but in my opinion as an educated linguist and translator, *fuck* is a uniquely versatile term that in some instances cannot be adequately exchanged with alternate lexical choices as they are lacking in the appropriate emphasis and oomph. It's my favourite expletive - you could probably tell from the script.

**Jokes aside**, it was this very thing that made it clear to me that I wasn't communicating what was in my head to my supervisor effectively. *I don't fucking want to* might be a valid reason in and of itself because authors' prerogative, but it's not a *productive* stance to take when it comes to developing as a writer and developing characters. Of everything, it was probably the *best* suggestion I could have gotten, because it forced me to

think a lot harder on *Isaak* as a character than I had, on tone, dynamic, purpose and what *Marred* is about and how I want to tell it. Given the scene is a sexual situation followed by Isaak dying, it was a logical leap, it just wasn't the right one right for this scene.

What it came down to was that the initial draft of the character did not adequately demonstrate Isaak's function in the story, both on his own and in relation to other characters and how his actions affect them. The rest of the story-specific reasons for why this script does not contain sexual violence follows after a more general opinion upon how the topic is handled in film & tv as a background to expand upon my aversion to utilising it as a first-stop tool to light a fire under a character's ass.

This is a subject I could write a dissertation on all on its own, but the word limit was 5k, so I'll condense it: most of the time writers who chose to employ it as a tool to move the plot along (not to be confused with it being a subject matter), do so with an utter ignorance to the topic of sexual violence in itself. As a newbie writer, I've also done this and looking back on old stories I see myself also using it as a cop-out because I couldn't think of anything better in the moment: this is social conditioning. We regurgitate what we see and read without thinking all that much about it. Looking back on it, I could think of several ways to increase the tension without a sexual assault which I'd then proceeded to not adequately follow up on, and the incident was left as a loose thread, in the end a pointless event that could have been replaced with just about anything else. No ripples. No consequences. If I wrote it into *Marred*, I would have to follow up on it, and that's not what *Marred* is about.

I don't have a general aversion to the topic. It can be real powerful stuff. I have an aversion to it being done badly and where it doesn't really add anything of real value to the plot. I'm not shy to say I'm exhausted watching women assaulted, traumatized and mutilated on screen for no reason besides from shock value and gore- the excuse of *historical accuracy* is one that particularly drives me up the wall. With a Master's in history, I can list my complaints on *that one* chronologically, alphabetically and in order of annoyance.

You can tell whether a scene with sexualised violence (almost exclusively towards a female character) is there for the plot, with *purpose*, or just gore porn. Off the top of my head, I can count *I May Destroy You*, *Sopranos*, *Sons of Anarchy*, and *House of Cards* are shows that have taken this topic and *actually* explored the effects it has on a character's life, psyche, and relations. Further, it actually impacts the *story* and is not used a random act of violence to spice things up. The creators thought about it, made it pivotal and important.

*Sons of Anarchy* made me hide behind a pillow. It was horrifying. Outright grotesque. And it's one of my favourite shows. I've probably watched it from, beginning to end six or seven times. It's a show that explores rape as a weapon of war, sexual violence in the porn industry, and one of the few shows that did not shy away from male victims either. The reason I single out this show rather than one of the others, isn't just because it's my favourite. I'd say *I May Destroy You* clearly takes the lead in how the topic is handled. I use *Sons of Anarchy* as an example because it has a truly staggering amount of death, sex and violence. In show that doesn't have a lot of violence at all, *any* violence naturally stands out, but when violence is an inherent part of the characters' daily lives, it would be so easy for it all to bleed together to an indiscriminate pool of adrenaline fuelled brutality. But they manage to separate the different kinds of violence, not just in the act and their portrayal of it, but in the characters trauma processing and the reaction of the other characters. This is not just reserved for the core ensemble. Even if it's a minor character, they don't drop the ball on what happened to them. It continues to tie into their reactions to new events, and in their relations to other characters, even seasons later. All of it was awful, but none of it was *pointless*. It was carried through in each individual character development and in the plot

And that's the core of it: It changes the story, and it changes the characters. General violence and gender based sexual violence are not the same, nor are they even remotely interchangeable. A rape scene is not a plot equivalent of having your ass handed to you in a fight. There are more male characters being killed on tv, and they're usually killed by other male characters in violent and horrific ways, but if general violence and sexual violence were equal, more murder scenes would include the murderer taking a moment to cop a feel *just because*. But they don't because it *is* different, and we all know it. HBO's President of Programming Casey Bloys was pressed on this issue in Television Critics Association session in 2016, and his responses are very telling and go right to the core of the problem surrounding how sexualised violence towards female characters are handled in film and tv.<sup>13</sup>

Now, after all of this, the natural line of thinking would be "But then this could be your chance to do it right?"

Well... no. It wouldn't. Because the very first thing to consider would be whether or not the story actually gains anything from including sexual violence to begin with. When it comes to *Marred*, besides from that it's not something I particularly want to write, it makes a mess of the *story* and here is why:

Like I mentioned earlier, it comes back to characterisation of *Isaak* and how he affects the people around him. This character is a good guy in a bad situation not of his own making. He never deserved to die and

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<sup>13</sup> [HBO Programming Boss Pelted with Sexual Violence Questions Over 'GoT,' 'Night Of' \(thewrap.com\)](#)



did not lead an existence where *death by hitman* was in any way a reasonable conclusion to his life. He was friends with someone who made a bad decisions and did his best to find a solution that would keep them both alive. That he failed is not a reflection of the moral standing of his character. Making him a villain, or even just a non-villain rapey creeper, changes more than just *his* story. It changes Nathan's story, it changes June's story, and it changes *the* story.

Nathan is an in-between type of character that has his own moral system and values that doesn't really align with the proper form of accepted morality- i.e., murder is wrong. That he's never killed off-contract and his process of selecting his marks, which jobs he accepts, is important to how he views himself. *It's just a job*. Killing Isaak is something he does as a trade-off for his own family's safety. He considers it a let-down because he's always kept his nose clean- by his own standard that is, and his extensive list of hits are mostly some shade of *shady*. He doesn't have an issue with the prospect of killing Andrew: he made his bed. But Isaak doesn't fit the bill, and he knows it. He had to cover his face. We meet Nathan where circumstances have allowed him to make a real attempt to change, to retire, to stop killing, for his family. He's forced to not only continue his old profession, but to commit acts he considers worse than the baseline of what he previously considered necessary to so his job. It's a corruption of his own moral code.

Furthermore, he lies to June about Isaak's death in order to manipulate her. To most that's nothing next to any kind of murder, but to Nathan, it starts wearing down on the illusion he's made of himself, *for* himself. What drives him, is that June's life, no matter how guiltless she is in this scenario, means nothing to him when put up against the welfare of his own family. If Nathan had walked in on a post-rape scene, firstly he wouldn't have had any issue killing Isaak to start with; he would have neatly fit the profile of his usual marks, but he also could have stepped into a paternal saviour role for June, something that was never the intent. Ultimately, he's set her on a path where she finds herself taking back control of her life in an unexpected way, but he's not any kind of saviour. Nathan drags June into a moral decline.

For June, Isaak's death is something that stays with her. It's a festering wound. Despite being misled by Nathan to believe he was a criminal and that she was the one who killed him, Isaak was someone she, despite it all, *liked*. His odd behaviour in their last minutes she rationalises through her guilt and is confirmed by Nathan; if Isaak had not been alone, he would not have killed him; he would have had to find another way. So she concludes that if she had just calmed down and finished her coffee without *overreacting*, nothing of what followed would have happened.

Later in the series, when June and Nathan have established something of an accord, Nathan admits that Isaak actually didn't do anything wrong. June has never viewed Nathan as a safe person for obvious reasons, but not until that moment does she realise the extent of how he has manipulated her. This is a turning point in their relationship we'd lose if Isaak was a villain, and an important moment of development for June. Nathan's gaslighting and dismissal of her very basic instinct of *danger alert* is how he manages to keep her in check: she can't trust her own gut. The last time she did that a man died, so she has to trust his instincts over her own. She can't change what has already been done, but how does she move forward?

In its entirety I wanted to avoid having to write sexual trauma processing. I wanted to enjoy the process of writing this script, and sexual trauma processing is not enjoyable. Murder is a lot more fun! I did not want to deal with the issue of the female character that is only shows a penance for violence after they have been violated. If Isaak had attempted to, or actually raped her, it might *up the ante* of the inciting incident, but it changes the tone of the story and it changes June's story and development. Besides from also having no desire whatsoever to write any variation of the rape-victim-returns-as-a-villain trope, you'll be hard pressed to find a woman sorry to see her rapist die. It might be traumatizing in terms of seeing a *person* die, but the amount of regret or guilt you can milk from it is limited. It also makes it a legitimate act of self-defence, making June less likely to rely on Nathan once she's had a minute to let her mind clear. Also, as a note on suspension-of-disbelief, when having just been assaulted, no woman would put any sort of trust in the next man that shows up on the doorstep of the one that just hurt her and tried to prevent her from leaving. There is run of the mill stupid, and then there is having the survival instincts of a particularly easily startled kakapo.

June is a character who regains her drive through something of a villain arc. In the end, her choices are her own, and not a brain-fogged or revenge driven trauma-response. She wants to change but feels so paralysed she doesn't know how or where to begin. So, she starts with a drink. She wants to regain agency in her life, to live up to her potential, to have financial freedom: It just looks a lot different than what she imagined. Rather than becoming a doctor like she'd wanted and worked towards, through a series of unfortunate events and certain choices she made, in the end, she's shoved onto the opposite path and is dragged deeper into a much bigger and darker world, but in the end, she is the one who makes the choice to keep walking. Now, did she make that choice because *she* changed, or because her relationship and attachment to Nathan changed?

In the end, the suggestion did not go entirely to waste: it became a part of June's cover with the police for why she made her initial mistake of lying to the.

I gave a lot of thought to how and at which point to end the episodes. It came back to the goals I had set up for the characters. In the end none of them got what they wanted, although June and Nathan might get, at least partially, what they need. We can end the story with episode five: leave it unknown if June kills Nathan, as well as Andrew; a neat little miniseries where the hitman and the criminal both get their comeuppance at June's hands. Most of all I thought about how June has been battered back and forth in this, struggling to get agency and keep her head above water. I wanted to end it in a way that put some real power in her hands. It started with Nathan deciding whether she lived or died. I wanted to end it with June deciding whether he lived or died. In a moment, perhaps the first moment where she *truly* did have a choice, she made a one. She picked a path.

Looking into a possible Season Two: Nathan wanted to retire: if he continues to work with June, he won't achieve his goal, but he might just *get out of the field*, so to speak, and that's close enough. June wanted freedom and independence. She got it, in a way, but at a very steep price. All Nora wanted was her husband home and out of the business, again, not getting what she wanted, but close enough. The only characters that really get what they wanted to some degree are the kids!

## Visual Profile and Artwork

When I read, whatever I read, my head is full of pictures. Likewise, when I talk, listen, or watch tv, there is a secondary screen in my head, visualising everything as clearly as what I see right in front of me. That has cemented in me a deep preference for the visual image that is... imprecise. Slightly abstract, but still present with a focus. It leaves enough undone to activate the imagination to fill in the blanks.

This is why I've used no photographs to portray character or scenes. I wanted to leave behind the idea of who they are, not just a head shot of what they look like. This is why I made a page separate for the Visual Profile of the series; an idea of style, and uses of light and colour. By keeping the technical aspect as a separate issue, it gives the reader a chance to get an impression, and yes, fill in the blanks without their creative vision being too affected by whichever screengrab I managed to dig up that approximated what I'm aiming for, but didn't quite hit the mark; both too much and too little. All you've really seen of Nathan is his eyes. I doubt a headshot of Robert Downey



Jr would have had the same effect. Even the specific image in the same framing gives a whole different feeling of the person you're looking at.

By using old fashioned ink, at times layered with digital blood, it provides a feeling, an impression, but it's not so specific that it pulls the reader away from their own imagination. Working visually also helps me crystallise the character in a way no amount of writing or screenshot hunting can do for me. It's a part of my process that I forgot about a long time ago, but I've really enjoyed bringing back.

## Final Thoughts

Despite daydreaming being a lot more fun than writing, I have enjoyed this process immensely, and I have every intention of finishing this project. Although now that I am without deadlines I might take the time to write it out fully in prose before returning to the script format, as it does come more naturally to me. Writing a book would be awesome. The only gripe I would have about the year would be pandemic related. Coming towards the tail-end of it is a relief, but some of us have moved from Bergen and I myself hid out in the mountains in Voss for a while. But despite being very much of a homebody, I have missed talking to humans without a screen. The process of tossing scripts back and forth is an enjoyable one- once I get over the nerves. Agnar reached out to me, and we did that a few times this term. Getting feedback and a new perspective was valuable, also getting out of my own head and spending time on other people's projects gave my brain a chance to cool down and reset. If I was starting this term over, I would have liked to have a monthly meet-up with the class. I'm a touch too introverted to take the initiative to that myself, something I should probably work on, but the benefits of it is undeniable.

Now that I've written this rapport, I'll probably go back and agonize over every word and decision I made in this script. If anything, I'm more excited about it now than when I started. The prospect of getting to the last page and writing The End makes me giddy.

# References

Summary of links from footnotes

## *The Makings of a Killer*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jan/25/hitmen-for-hire-secrets-contract-killers>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/crime-courts/not-movies-study-kills-myths-about-hit-men-n83126>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/wicked-deeds/201404/why-professional-assassins-are-not-serial-killers>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.psypost.org/2015/05/the-psychology-of-assassins-hitmen-bury-their-feelings-for-a-successful-kill-34402>

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert\\_Pierrepoint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Pierrepoint)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/making-evil/201902/what-we-get-wrong-about-psychopaths>

<sup>9</sup> <https://graduateway.com/aristotles-moral-ethics/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-ancient>

<sup>11</sup> <https://iep.utm.edu/kantview/>

## *Reflecting upon*

<sup>12</sup> <https://projectcoldcase.org/cold-case-homicide-stats/>

<sup>13</sup> [HBO Programming Boss Pelted With Sexual Violence Questions Over ‘GoT,’ ‘Night Of’ \(thewrap.com\)](https://www.thewrap.com/hbo-programming-boss-pelted-with-sexual-violence-questions-over-go-t-night-of/)

Links all verified 29<sup>th</sup> May 2022

## TV-shows and films mentioned

*Killing Eve*, (2018-22) by Phoebe Waller-Bridge

*How to get Away with Murder*, (2014-20) by Peter Nowalk,

*Ray Donovan*, (2013-20) by Ann Biderman

*Crazy, Not Insane*, (2020) by Alex Gibney

*I'll Be Gone in the Dark*, (2020) by Patton Oswald, Paul Haynes, Amy Ryan

*Hannibal*, (2013) by Bryan Fuller

*Breaking Bad*, (2008-13) by Vince Gilligan

*I May Destroy You*, (2020) by Michaela Coel

*Sopranos*, (1999-07) by David Chase

*Sons of Anarchy*, (2008-14) by Kurt Sutter

*House of Cards*, (2013-18) by Beau Willimon

## Pictures from Visual Profile

*Killing Eve*, (2018-22) by Phoebe Waller-Bridge

*Skyfall*, (2012) directed by Sam Mendes

*Road to Perdition*, (2002) directed by Sam Mendes

*Prisoners*, (2013) directed by Denis Villeneuve

All artwork by Marie Therese Norekvål Hayes