

A Perfect Murder

by
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INT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A "cozy" living space, everything too close together and too cluttered to be comfortable.

LIZ (30s, trousers, low-cut blouse) types on a laptop at the coffee table. Next to her, STEVE (30s, tattooed arms, cargo shorts, heavy metal t-shirt) scribbles furiously on a note pad, brow furrowed in concentration.

A PODCAST plays over the laptop speakers.

PODCAST (OVER SPEAKERS)
And so ends The Case of the
Missing Mutt, proving that a pet
can always "sniff" out the truth.
This is Samantha Turner, and with
my researcher and editor Julia
Paige we are the Paige Turner
Mysteries Podcast.

Liz finishes typing as the outro music plays. She leans back with glee while Steve continues scribbling notes.

LIZ
Oh, I'm good.

STEVE
Hang on, almost done...

Liz drums her fingers impatiently.

STEVE
Okay. You want to go first?

LIZ
One word: Vicodin.

Steve looks dumbstruck as Liz grins in triumph.

STEVE
(reading from pad)
Vicodin, vodka in freezer,
increased exercise because of new
dog, "accidental" death.

Liz snatches it in disbelief.

LIZ
You're shitting me.

STEVE
We both came up with the same
better murder. How do we score it?

LIZ

You know what we should do?
(off his lusty look)
Besides that. We should plan a
perfect murder.

STEVE

You aren't secretly a serial
killer, are you? Not saying that's
a deal breaker, but I should warn
you I'm squeamish.

LIZ

Come on, we're good at this. It
would be fun.

STEVE

If I say yes, can we move on to
the sex part of the evening?

LIZ

If you say yes, I'll let you do
that thing you've been wanting to.

STEVE

Yes. Hell yes. A thousand yesses.

Liz bites her lip and smiles devilishly.

INT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT - KITCHENETTE - MORNING

Steve stands next to a small espresso machine scrolling
on his phone as he sips a latté. Liz bustles in with the
laptop, setting it down on the small table.

LIZ

Here's a list of targets.

STEVE

Good morning to you too. Coffee?

LIZ

I've had three already. Look.

Steve peers at the screen and raises an eyebrow.

STEVE

My mother?

LIZ

It would be SO easy.

STEVE

Exactly. My uncle, my sister, her husband...I'm seeing a pattern.

LIZ

Okay, fine. Scroll down a bit.

Steve scrolls and his face lights up.

STEVE

Our landlord? Interesting. Familiarity with no real ties, proximity but limited access to make it challenging.

LIZ

So, want to kill our landlord?

Steve shrugs and nods in agreement. Liz beams.

LIZ

We need to learn his routine.

INT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Liz clicks through screens of social media posts on the laptop about TRENT (late 20s, severe, perpetually dour) mostly spouting right-wing political views. Pages of notes and diagrams clutter the coffee table.

Steve scrolls on his phone beside her.

LIZ

Jesus. Somebody really should kill this guy.

STEVE

Got something. He's been posting to an AA support group.

LIZ

(typing)
How do you know it's him?

STEVE

He uses the same handle as his X account. Maybe he doesn't get the whole "anonymous" part of AA.

LIZ

There are three AA meeting places nearby. I'll find out if he attends one regularly.

STEVE

What do I do?

Liz hands him a pair of thin latex gloves.

LIZ

You get to go dumpster diving.

Steve looks at the gloves dubiously.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A) TRENT pulls his front door closed and strolls out of the apartment building into afternoon light. Liz's head pops around a corner and she creeps comically after him.

B) Steve, wearing the gloves and a medical mask, stares at a pile of trash bags in an alley dumpster. He pulls on one and it rips, spilling its putrid contents. He gags and turns to vomit, barely getting the mask up in time.

C) Liz and Steve sift through trash spread out on the kitchen floor with heavy rubber gloves. Steve holds up a prescription bottle like a trophy, and then gags.

D) Trent jogs along a busy park path. Far behind, Liz struggles to keep him in sight, wheezing and gasping.

E) Liz and Steve sit in a car outside the apartment building. They scoot down as Trent emerges and begins jogging. Liz starts the car and follows.

F) Trent casually shops in a grocery store. Liz pretends to look for ripe fruit and Steve pretends to read a tabloid as they steal glances at Trent.

END MONTAGE

INT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A whiteboard now stands behind the coffee table filled with maps and diagrams of Trent's life along with surveillance photos.

LIZ

AA Tuesdays at 5pm at the church, shopping Sunday and Wednesday afternoons, he takes out the trash Thursday and Saturday, and we have three jogging routes.

STEVE

The guy's healthy, not even allergies. Boring prescriptions, no lethal interactions. He jogs in public, lives alone, and isn't dating. It isn't much to go on.

They study the whiteboard.

LIZ

Episode 39.

STEVE

"Robbery Gone Right For Murder?"
Yeah, that could work.

LIZ

We need to get into his place.

STEVE

Uh, no we don't.

Liz looks at him haughtily.

STEVE

You're right. My mother would have been so much easier.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Trent, in jogging clothes, pulls his door closed and exits the building. Liz's head pops around the corner.

LIZ

Clear.

Steve follows her quietly to Trent's door.

LIZ

You sure you can get us in?

Steve smiles smugly and gives the door a light shove. It swings open. Liz's jaw drops.

LIZ

How did you do that?

Steve points to the door jamb. A wad of tinfoil fills the space where the self-locking mechanism would catch.

STEVE

It's garbage day. I offered to hold his door open for him.

LIZ
(breathy)
I've never wanted you more.

Steve grins. Her lustful look lingers.

STEVE
Oh, you're serious. Shouldn't we
look around first?

Liz concedes the point and they enter--

INT. TRENT'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Identical to their living room, but it's an OCD dream. Every surface empty or tidy, edges aligned, not a thing out of place. Even the couch cushions are perfect.

LIZ
Whoa. I hate this guy.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A) Liz opens a drawer and finds various charge cords neatly bound and take-out menus neatly stacked.

B) Steve opens the closet. Everything is pressed and hung with care. He closes it with disgust.

C) In the kitchenette, Liz slowly opens a drawer filled with a liner and cut outs for each cooking utensil. She slams the drawer with disgust.

D) Steve opens a nightstand drawer and his jaw drops.

END MONTAGE

INT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

They close the door and lean against it, sighing in relief. Steve tosses the wad of tinfoil in the air and catches it, pleased with himself.

LIZ
Tell me you found something.

Steve nods but doesn't say. Liz attacks with tickles.

LIZ
Tell me!

STEVE
(laughing)
All right, all right!

He takes out his cell phone and shows her a picture. Her eyes widen in surprise.

LATER

On the whiteboard, Steve hangs a picture of a GUN in a drawer beneath the heading "MAKE IT LOOK LIKE SUICIDE."

Liz squeals with delight.

LIZ
Late one night Mr. OCD is feeling particularly sad and lonely, so he puts on some Sarah McLachlan, scrolls through posts of his high school sweetheart, and puts that gun in his mouth.

Steve writes on the whiteboard as she talks. "Hide in closet. Sarah McLachlan. Ex's feed."

STEVE
Under his chin.

LIZ
Why not in his mouth?

STEVE
He'd be asleep. If we had to pry it open we'd wake him.

LIZ
Okay, fine. So all we'd have to do is get inside again, hide until he falls asleep, blow his brains out, and then set the stage.

STEVE
What about a suicide note?

LIZ
Who's he leaving it for? Remember to use a pillow as a suppressor.

Steve writes that. Liz slips her arm into his and they stand back to admire their handiwork.

LIZ
We did it. A perfect murder.

SMASH! The front door splinters open and POLICE OFFICERS rush inside screaming commands at them, guns and flashlights in their faces.

Startled, Steve and Liz quickly comply, kneeling with their hands behind their heads.

STEVE

We didn't do anything!

Trent peeks through the doorway with a satisfied look.

TRENT

My alarm system notified me the second you stepped foot inside my place. It's all on camera.

LIZ

(to Steve)

We missed a security system?

Trent's eyes go wide when he sees the whiteboard. He strides to it despite Police protests.

TRENT

What the fuck is this? You were planning to *murder* me?

LIZ

No, no, it's not what it looks like! It just a game!

POLICE OFFICER

Tell that to the judge, ma'am.
You're both under arrest.

Cuffs are slapped around the wrists of Liz and Steve and they're hauled to their feet.

TRENT

Your stupid plan wouldn't have worked anyway. There aren't any bullets in the gun, it's for show.

Stunned and dejected, Liz and Steve are escorted out by Police. Trent looks over the whiteboard once more.

TRENT

They should have done Episode 39.