

THE COUPLE ACROSS THE STREET

written by

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Revision Eight

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BLACK SCREEN

The sound of a shovel being thrust into fresh soil can be heard.

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

The shoveling sound continues as we see a street of upper middle class houses, with perfectly manicured lawns. It's clearly garbage night, as every house has a garbage can or two sitting at the end of each driveway. Some have several garbage bags beside the cans. All of the houses are dark, as their occupants are asleep.

EXT. STEVENSON RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

A beautiful home that fits in with the others on the block. Two cars sit in the driveway, and the house is completely dark. Like the others, there is a garbage can at the end of the driveway, off to one side.

INT. STEVENSON BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

GORDON and LILLY STEVENSON (30s), dressed in night clothes, lie asleep in bed together. Their bedroom faces the street, and they've left their bedroom window open. The faint sound of the shovel being driven into the dirt can be heard.

Lilly stirs at the sound and opens her eyes. She checks the clock on her nightstand.

INSERT - ALARM CLOCK

The clock reads 2:37 am.

BACK TO SCENE

Lilly sits up in bed.

LILLY
(whispering)
Gordie...Gordie do you hear that?

Gordon softly snores in reply. Lilly, now exasperated gets out of bed, and walks over to their bedroom window. She looks out the window and sees...

EXT. BAKER RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

PAUL BAKER (35), Lilly's neighbor across the street is half hidden behind the back of his house. He is seen thrusting what we can only assume is a shovel into fresh dirt. The blade of the shovel remains unseen.

Paul's car is backed up into the driveway, and sits near to where he is digging the hole, with the trunk lid open. Paul stops digging the hole, walks over to his car, and takes two trash bags out of the trunk, which appear to be very heavy. He then disappears behind his house.

A few moments later, he returns to the trunk of his car, grabbing two more trash bags from the trunk. Paul shuts the trunk lid and then disappears behind the house again.

INT. STEVENSON RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Lilly squints, not sure of what she's seeing. She then sighs and shakes her head, more annoyed by the disturbance than anything else. She shuts her bedroom window and returns to bed, as Gordon continues to snore lightly next to her.

EXT. STEVENSON RESIDENCE - THE NEXT DAY

Only one car is in the driveway now, and Lilly, now dressed for the day comes out of the house to retrieve the garbage can left out the night before.

Lilly sees KRISTIN BAKER (33), Paul's wife taking their garbage can around to the side of their house.

LILLY

Good morning!

KRISTIN

Oh, hey! Good morning! How are you doing?

LILLY

Good! How are you?

KRISTIN

Oh we're good, keeping busy.

LILLY

Seems like it! I saw Paul out late last night. Kind of an odd hour to be doing composting.

KRISTIN

(confused)

Composting?

LILLY

Yeah, it was like, 2:30 in the morning. I heard him digging a hole, and saw him taking some trash bags from his trunk and burying them in the back yard.

(a beat)

I figured since it was garbage night, and he wasn't taking the bags to the curb, he was probably composting. My dad used to do that all the time.

(a beat)

I take it you guys untie the garbage bags and dump the food waste right into the soil?

Kristin now knows what Lilly is referencing, but decides to cover that up. She ignores Lilly's question.

KRISTIN

Oh, yes, that. Sorry, he's always working long hours, and consequently doing chores at odd hours of the night.

LILLY

I can relate to that.

KRISTIN

(trying to change the subject)

Gordon works long hours, too?

Lilly places the garbage can in its place at the side of the house, and walks across the street to Kristin.

LILLY

All the time. He's barely ever home before 8 pm, and that's an early night.

EXT. BAKER RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

KRISTIN

Well, didn't you tell me once that he was an attorney?

LILLY

Yes, he's a partner in the firm too, but he wants his name on the door.

KRISTIN

No rest for the weary. You want to come inside and have a cup of coffee?

LILLY

That'd be wonderful, thank you.

Kristin and Lilly enter the Bakers' residence. A JOGGER in his early thirties sees Lilly and Kristin enter the house, and waves. Kristin quickly waves back and shuts the door.

INT. BAKER RESIDENCE DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kristin sits in the dining room in her sleepwear, clearly waiting for Paul to get home.

She is sipping a glass of wine when Paul comes through the door.

PAUL

(happily surprised)
You're up late, what's the occasion?

Kristin stares daggers into her husband.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Uh oh, what happened?

KRISTIN

You got sloppy.

Paul places his work bag on the ground, and sits at the table across from Kristin.

PAUL

What do you mean, I got sloppy?

KRISTIN

It seems Lilly Stevenson saw you last night.

PAUL

Wait. When I was...

Kristin nods slowly.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Shit.

KRISTIN

Uh huh.

PAUL

Honey, this is a problem--

KRISTIN

Don't lecture me about "problems," okay? I've been telling you that burying the bodies in our backyard was trouble the minute you started doing it.

PAUL

But that's why I got the privacy fencing--

Kristin looks out the window at the house across the street, and realizing that her house is not soundproof...

KRISTIN

(in a hushed tone,
through gritted
teeth)

She saw you take the body out of the trunk!

A beat. Paul realizes that this could be the biggest problem they've ever faced.

PAUL

Okay, let's think through this. The bodies were cut up and placed in trash bags. So all she saw was me taking the trash bags out of the trunk, that's not so bad--

KRISTIN

At 2:30 in the morning! That's suspicious, Paul. You're lucky Lilly's dad used to use their food waste as compost. She assumed that was what you were doing, but what if someone else sees you?! We cannot afford for you to fuck this up, Paul. Working for the Sarantinos is what provides for this house, our lifestyle, everything. If you get caught, then everyone will know our life is a lie--

PAUL

If I get caught we have a lot bigger problems than that lie coming out, you don't have to chide me like I'm some dumb kid--

KRISTIN

Allowing yourself to be seen is what a dumb kid would have done.

A beat. Now Paul's look is one that could kill. He takes a moment to collect himself, and takes a deep breath.

PAUL

So what are we going to do about this?

KRISTIN

I've already handled it.

PAUL

How?

KRISTIN

Lilly and I had coffee this morning. I slipped a vile of Necromyocin in her coffee.

(a beat)

She went home, and in a few days she'll have what appears to be a sudden, massive heart attack.

Paul's eyes go wide.

PAUL

Jesus, Kristin she didn't even see anything. You didn't have to do--

KRISTIN

Remember what you told me Dom always says?

(a beat)

If you think something is a loose end, it's a loose end. Lilly became a loose end last night.

(a beat)

No one can know what you really do.

PAUL

No one knows what I do, Kristin! And that family is my employer, not yours. I never wanted you to get involved in any of this.

KRISTIN

We're married, Paul! Of course I'm involved.

PAUL

You and I both know that a prosecutor can't make you testify against me in court.

(a beat)

When it comes to my job, the most I ever wanted you to be was a confidant.

A beat. Paul rubs his forehead as if he has a headache coming on.

PAUL (CONT'D)

How much of the vile did you use?

KRISTIN

The whole thing, why--

PAUL

Shit, you shouldn't have done that.

KRISTIN

What are you talking about?

PAUL

I've only ever used a few drops.
That's what causes the delay in
the drug's effects.

(a beat)

You use a few drops, and then a
few days later the heart attack
occurs. There's no way to link us
to the causation of the victim's
death.

(a beat)

This is bad. Lilly's going to die
tonight. I'm surprised she hasn't
already.

KRISTIN

(completely calm)

Relax.

(a beat)

Lilly came over this morning for
a cup of coffee. If she has a
heart attack tonight, it's a
sudden unfortunate coincidence.
No one is going to be able to
trace it back to us. Even if they
do an autopsy, that drug won't
even show up in her system.

(a beat)

I know how to play a grieving
neighbor. I suggest you learn how
to do the same.

PAUL

Jesus, I need a drink.

KRISTIN

Well, I'm going to bed.

Kristin stands up, downs the rest of her wine in one gulp,
and sets her wine glass down as she walks past Paul on her
way up the stairs.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Lay low for a few days. If you
have to take a job, find another
way to get rid of the body.

PAUL

I will, as long as you don't go rogue like this again. If you think we have a loose end, you tell me, and I'll handle it.

(a beat)

People who do the kind of work I do...they don't retire. It almost never ends well. They either die at the hands of a family member, or they rot in prison.

(a beat)

If and when it's my time to go, I want you to be out. Completely. If I die or get arrested, take the money, the I.D's, the passports in the safe, go somewhere and start a new life--

KRISTIN

Alright, I get it. I won't do it again.

Kristin exits up the stairs. Paul sighs heavily, rubbing the back of his neck to relieve tension before exiting to the kitchen to make himself a drink.

FADE TO:

INT. BAKER RESIDENCE - THE NEXT MORNING

The front door is shown as a man can be heard approaching from the other side. One of them rings the doorbell, with no immediate response.

A few seconds later, the man pounds loudly on the front door.

MAN

(from the other side
of the door)

Mount Sinai PD! Anyone home?

Kristin enters the foyer, and opens the door to find two DETECTIVES, one MAN and one WOMAN standing at her door.

KRISTIN

Hi there, can I help you, sir?

MAN

Good morning, ma'am, and I'm sorry to interrupt. I'm Detective John Reynolds with the Mount Sinai, PD. This is my partner, Detective Susan Hicks.

KRISTIN

I'm sorry. I'm afraid I don't understand--

JOHN

We're investigating the death of one of your neighbors, a Lilly Stevenson--

KRISTIN

Oh my God, no!

Kristin covers her mouth, and gives an expression as if she is on the edge of tears.

John takes out a small notebook and pen.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Ma'am. I know this might come as a shock.

(a beat)

Were the two of your close?

KRISTIN

(sobbing now)

I mean, she was a neighbor, sure, but we were closer than that.

(a beat)

She was a good friend.

JOHN

I see. What's your name?

KRISTIN

I'm sorry, Kristin Baker.

JOHN

(jotting this in his notebook)

Thank you, and when did you last see her?

KRISTIN

(a beat, thinking)

Oh, God, it must have been yesterday morning. Yes. I saw her put her trash cans away.

(a beat)

What happened to her?

SUSAN

We can't really disclose that at this time, ma'am, as we haven't had an autopsy yet, but at this early stage, we suspect foul play.

KRISTIN

What do you mean?

JOHN

Do you know anyone who might want to harm Ms. Stevenson?

KRISTIN

Harm her? I don't...what are you saying?

JOHN

Had she been having any issues in her marriage, anything like that?

Kristin looks incredulous as she searches her memory for anything to come up with.

KRISTIN

Well, she did mention that her husband works long hours. They don't see very much of each other.

SUSAN

When was this?

KRISTIN

It must have been a few days ago.

(a beat)

Of course I don't want to speculate, they could have had a very happy marriage, but you know, sometimes couples grow apart if work gets in the way.

John nods, seeming to agree.

JOHN

So you didn't see her after yesterday morning, with the trashcans?

KRISTIN

Yes, that was the last time I saw her.

Tears come to Kristin's eyes again.

JOHN

Thank you, Mrs. Baker. If you don't mind...

John and Susan each take out a business card and hand them to Kristin.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Please call either one of us if you think of anything that might help the investigation.

KRISTIN

I will. Thank you.

Kristin shuts the door. She then presses her back against her front door, and gives a wide-eyed "I just dodged a bullet" expression.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - MOMENTS LATER

John and Susan get in, each buckling their seat belts.

JOHN

What did you think?

SUSAN

She can summon tears on demand, that's for sure.

JOHN

You got that vibe from her, too?

SUSAN

Oh yeah, there's something she's not telling us.

JOHN

Maybe one of the other neighbors saw something.

SUSAN

Possibly, but we should
definitely come back.

JOHN

I agree.

FADE OUT.

THE END