

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

By Martin

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CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

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CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

For the November 22, 2020 gang

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CSI Grandma's House was originally produced by Quarantine Players on Nov 22 2020 in a Zoom production, produced by A.J. Campbell and directed by Sophie Menconi, featuring the following cast:

Lori BrooksRed Rida

Scott Olson..... Albert Skillset

Edsal Romero.....Tony Pitchblende

Tamara Peters.....Karina Patrimoine

Leslie Ann Ross. Supervisor Judy Turenne

Mikayla Trimpey.....Natalie Would

Tori Clay.....Piotr Segeievich Koslov

Adam Venerick.....Raoul de Bunstrup

CAST 4 men, 4 women

Red Rida, Granddaughter of the murder victim Aurora Printemps

Albert Skillset, a gifted police detective whose trousers may conceal a tail

Tony Pitchblende, Albert's second in command and friendly rival

Karina Patrimoine, Tony Pitchblende's partner

Supervisor Judy Turenne, leading the investigation

Natalie Would, barmaid, acquainted with police and suspects alike

Piotr Sergeivitch Koslov, recently emigrated from Russia, Red Rida's husband

Raoul de Bunstrup, lover of record to Aurora Printemps at the time of her slaying

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ACT I
SCENE I

Stage in darkness. Cellphone rings. Spotlight up, Down Stage Left, on the face of a WOMAN with vivid red hair parted at the middle, falling to her shoulders like a hood. Spotlight broadens as she speaks into the phone.

RED RIDA. What? What? Sorry, you're breaking up. What? I'll be right there. Is she. . . ? Damn it, where are you phoning from, a well? (*Snaps phone shut. She is now visible crown to stiletto heels, in a red suit jacket and pencil skirt, midnight blue blouse with bright red tie, crimson shoes. Stage lights come up slowly, revealing a crime scene around an empty space where a body's lately been.*) I have to get right over there. From the sound of things it might already be too late, not that I didn't suspect that long ago. Home invasion, out there in that thicket of woods surrounding those houses, five in a row on the highway spaced over two miles, don't even know why they put up a sign and called it a town. I bet Albert was calling me from there! Haunted spooky trees if there ever were. Signals always breaking up, God knows even the neighbourhood wireless is spotty and unreliable. I wonder if Albert's the investigating detective, that would be a tragic irony, he was so fond of gran, more than any of us maybe. What do I mean tragic irony, I'm getting ahead of myself, it's probably just a minor home invasion, prank even, scare her into moving into the city once and for all maybe but nothing more. Feisty, I think you could safely call her that, strong for her age or any age really and all that martial arts training—I've always said it was bursting to come out sometime. I pity the home invader or prankster if anything, I still remember the red sting when I was very small,

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from even a friendly slap on the bum let alone an all-out spanking. (*Runs into the middle of the room dominated by grandma's blood stain and into the arms of a TRENCH-COATED INSPECTOR. Various plainclothes personnel collect data in the way you'd expect, all wearing latex gloves as is.*)

ALBERT SKILLSET. (*Holding Red tight*) You got here quickly. I wasn't sure I'd even got a message through.

Normally police cell is powerful enough, I've gotten perfectly clear signals in Snow Valley in December, bouncing somehow off the craggy cliff faces all round. (*Lets go of her reluctantly.*)

It was terrible, I'm glad you weren't here to see it. The aftermath I mean, I'd most likely have prevented the murder if I'd been here to see that.

RED RIDA. Pool of blood, caution tape, little trickles of blood on the caution tape even (I call that careless)—it's still pretty terrible and you know what I think happens with the signals? It's these woods, I suspect some of the trees are actively hostile to any communications passing through the air apart from their own.

ALBERT SKILLSET. The trees have communication signals?

RED RIDA. They certainly seem to if you're driving through late at night. We used to have the house next down the line on the highway—'til dad's suicide--and I'd sometimes walk here over crunchy winter snow under glimmer of stars in the black. I could hear them whispering but I didn't know the language. It was scary.

ALBERT SKILLSET. Arriving here was just as scary from what I remember you telling me in the old days.

RED RIDA. When you had a terrific crush on me?

ALBERT SKILLSET. Who says that ever changed?

RED RIDA. It wasn't her sudden rages that frightened me most—flares of temper I should say, mother didn't like me to call them purple-red-in-the-face rages even though that's just exactly what they were, she would quiver slightly when I talked about Grandma—sometimes more than slightly. It wasn't the

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way she whaled on me with those hands if she thought I'd been naughty, or pinned me with a fierce look out of those big angry eyes if she decided to punish me spiritually instead. It was her . . . vitality, I always had suspicions where it came from. She was older when I first became aware of her discrete existence than mom or dad ever got to be, and I had this feeling she stole their middle years and maybe other people's too still so youthful even—well I suppose she's as old now as she's ever going to be, but I bet she'll make a pretty corpse in the coffin. How did anyone get close enough to . . . ? How did she die anyway?

ALBERT SKILLSET. Blast of a shotgun. Not much a karate kick or even a swift tae kwan do move can do to defend against that.

RED RIDA. I'd look into the latest of her much younger lovers.

ALBERT SKILLSET. She had quite a string of them didn't she, in the years we were growing up to take our adult place in the world?

RED RIDA. I saw a period painting of Elizabeth Bathory once. . . what does that look mean? I'm not a suspect am I?

ALBERT SKILLSET. Not if you were as far away from the scene as GPS indicated on my cellphone. Not that I got any more precise information than I got a clear unbroken signal.

RED RIDA. What do you want to know, or what will some D.A.'s assistant want to badger me into admitting on the stand? I'm a big fan of those shows you know, I've even acted on a few. Did I love grandma? Did I hate her? Did I wish her dead sometimes? Yes, yes and yes if I'm testifying under oath, sometimes in such quick succession it made my head spin. I had a complicated relationship with Grandma, I'm sure just about everybody did.

ALBERT SKILLSET. Somebody will ask you the usual questions, but not me I think. Me, I also like Raoul her latest for this bit of mischief, especially since we hear he's fled the county and by this time probably the state.

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RED RIDA. Haven't you put out an APB?

ALBERT SKILLSET. I did it over the cellphone, I'm not sure my instructions got through. Tell you the truth, if we weren't short-staffed until the next graduating class, I'd prefer somebody else led this investigation, what with family history. . . I'm a little too close.

RED RIDA. What do you mean?! You weren't one of her. . .

ALBERT SKILLSET. What are you talking about, it's her granddaughter I always had a thing for and I don't mean your kid sister Rosie. What can I say, you're married now, I've resigned myself.

RED RIDA. I can remember when you didn't think that was an unsurmountable obstacle.

ALBERT SKILLSET. I don't think it's fair to throw *that* in my face. I was drunk, there was serious moonlight and I deeply, gravely, mournfully apologized with sincere regret.

RED RIDA. You weren't that drunk, it was barely a half moon and what pissed me off most was your apology. But who'd expect a man to understand that? Anyway, you aren't blind and even at the best of times you have a slippery eye for the ladies—you knew she was beautiful.

ALBERT SKILLSET. She was my grandaunt, a few times removed, true, my mother was a second cousin of your mom—not close enough that there'd be anything to worry about with the kids, God! I don't believe I just said that, chalk it up to serious sleep deprivation please please please

RED RIDA. What if I don't want to? What if I want to deprive you of a little more sleep? My God what am I saying? I'm jealous of my own grandmother, I'm competing with her as if she were alive and well. I think the news hasn't really sunk in yet.

ALBERT SKILLSET. I was never fascinated the way other young men were by her ageless beauty—I mean that in the strictest objective sense you understand. She was eighty-six on

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her birth certificate but I would've taken her for forty three if I weren't forty five and one of her godchildren.

RED RIDA. Raoul claimed to think she was twenty three, but that was sycopantic.

ALBERT SKILLSET. Sycophantic?

RED RIDA. Nah, sycopantic—sucking up because he wanted into her pants. I would've guessed thirty seven myself and I'm thirty nine.

VOICE. *(off right)* Detective Skillset, can you come here and look at this? *(Albert, nodding for excuse, turns and walks off wings right. Red Rida notices the long, flowing grey tail peeping out the back of his trousers.)*

RED RIDA. There's more to this than meets the eye. For his sake I hope he didn't register the shotgun. *(Slaps herself.)* What are you saying, girl?

ALBERT SKILLSET. *(off)* We've found the murder weapon.

VOICE. *(off)* We've found the murder weapon. All due respect, Inspector.

RED RIDA. You can't be thinking what you're thinking, girl. A vestigial tail wouldn't be admissible in a court of law as even circumstantial and it couldn't pull the trigger on a shotgun either, you need a finger for that. What motive could he have except mad unrequited love, raging passion, inflamed tenderness toward the first and deepest love of his life—yours truly in case you hadn't guessed—I could almost forgive him if it was that. I could. Deprive him of sleep a whole hot heavy hour and a half until he drifts off to blissful orgiastic slumber. I wonder if he still snores? I wonder if his ears still prick up as he pounds pounds pounds toward climax and droop down the side of his face at the moment he floods a girl's fount of desire? I hope I don't have to speak to him through bulletproof glass.

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SCENE 2

Red Rida walks back to basic interrogation set—one of many partials that will occupy the small area of the stage visible at any given time—rectangular metal table with two metal chairs on one side, one on the other. Sits on the single chair and waits.

RED RIDA. I wonder if tapes and cameras are on? Somebody behind the one way glass for sure. Do they expect people to get so bored (*drums fingers on table*) they confess? To the empty air? Can't see how it would be advisable. Might be sheer fantasy. Better not mention any details of the crime in case they wonder how I knew them. (*Door opens noisily in backdrop wall. TONY PITCHBLENDE enters followed by KARINA PATRIMOINE, detectives.*)

TONY PITCHBLENDE. That'd be a good place to start. Details of the murder known only to the perp. (*Sets down tape recorder, pushes button.*) Go

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Excellent way of proving your innocence if you try and get all the details wrong.

RED RIDA. I was at the scene. I was called there by Albert.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. You think this one couldn't come up with a false report on the spur of the moment just like (*snaps fingers loudly*)?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. My partner's excitable. We're eliminating suspects is all, however low their likelihood of involvement.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. When everyone's eliminated that can be, you better believe we'll have the guilty party by the short hairs. Care to go on with your confession?

RED RIDA. I wasn't—

KARINA PATRIMOINE. You're forgetting she has one of the stronger alibis overall? Not unimpeachable but still . . .

TONY PITCHBLENDE. When's the last time somebody was convicted who didn't have an alibi to mislead us at the start?

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So, Ms.Rida. (*Lays four photos out on the table.*) Not a pretty picture when we found her, though I'm told she was quite a looker while alive, even at her age. You can still see it in the figure since the damage was mostly to the head, shoulders and breast.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. No defensive wounds so the first blow must have killed her.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. The rest were struck—I'm taking a wild leap into the unknown here—in anger.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. The kind of intimate damage you'd expect from somebody involved with the victim.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Or well known to the vic and jealous over someone who *was* involved with him. Isn't it true you and our colleague Albert Skillset had a bit of a tangled history?

RED RIDA. Oh the tail I could tell you about that. (*Aside.*) Really I can't see how I could not have noticed sooner, unless it's retractable.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Do tell. Tape recorder's on, jealousy, mitigating circumstances—now's the time, plea bargain, good behaviour.

RED RIDA. *Or*—I somehow repressed all memory of it.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Also we're not entirely (*leans forward to whisper*) sure about Detective Skillset's whereabouts in the relevant hours? Before word came in, investigation commenced?

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Who are we interrogating here? Detective's not in the hot seat and won't be so long as I'm in this chair. Circumstantial at best and barely that.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Hair fibres, suggestive DNA. Hair gel, cologne, peculiar metal in the lipstick sample. . .

RED RIDA. Albert didn't wear lipstick.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. I wasn't speaking of Albert

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Don't look at me.

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RED RIDA. There'd be DNA and other personal indicators from Albert and I both, all over grandma's house. We were frequent visitors. Why aren't you tracking down Raoul? He's surely your chief suspect, fleeing with dubious intent.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. We've got him in our cross hairs.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. As a matter of fact he's just been apprehended and they're bring him in for questioning even as we speak.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. We'll need this room. Busy case load, you understand. (*Gathers up photos, switches off tape recorder.*) Free to go. (*Picks up tape recorder. Glares impatiently across table.*) This means you.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Take a few minutes to finish your coffee. (*Rises.*)

RED RIDA. I don't have any coffee.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. You're right. Sorry, I meant to bring you one. Well. (*Exits through door, followed by Tony Pitchblende. Door slams.*)

SCENE 3

Red Rida sits pondering a moment. Rises, crosses left to small section of bar with stools.

RED RIDA. Could use something stronger anyway. Bourbon rocks, Natalie.

NATALIE WOULD. Old Granddad as per usual?

Red Rida nods. Natalie turns to row of bottles and pours.

RED RIDA. Barely knew granddad—grandma's side, the other one I knew all too well—dull as dishwater. Eyes just like as a matter of fact, though more milky these days. (*Sips bourbon as Natalie retreats from view.*) Everyone said he was criminally handsome, and that's certainly how he comes across in surviving photos. Mom resembles him a bit and she's a

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knockout. The red hair I have from grandma—don't know what she does lately to preserve it. We all seem to have been blessed with gorgeous genes—not so lucky in the mate department, what with the industrial accident that ended my father's life when he was barely thirty and I was barely three. Ah well, my husband's still alive (*knocks bar rail wood*) he's almost thirty two.

NATALIE WOULD. (*wiping near*) Sorry for your loss.

RED RIDA. I appreciate that. At least one copper at police headquarters thinks I'm a person of interest in that fatal assault. What kind of wrist strength do they imagine a girl like me has anyway?

NATALIE WOULD. I wouldn't believe it if they found the bloody axe in your home or garage. (*Eyes shift, covers mouth.*)

RED RIDA. Axe?

NATALIE WOULD. Though I don't have to tell you—you're always a person of interest to me. Funny coincidence—she came into the bar two nights ago.

RED RIDA. This wouldn't normally be a spot she'd frequent—how did you recognize her?

NATALIE WOULD. She introduced herself. Anyway she's a dead ringer for you.

RED RIDA. Thanks a heap, she's more than twice my age. I prefer you in insincere flattery mode.

NATALIE WOULD. Anyway she seemed anxious about something—and not just the new stud muffin on her arm if you know what I mean. (*On a sudden inspiration Red digs into her purse for a wallet, takes out a photo and sets it on the table.*)

NATALIE WOULD. (*scrutinizing photo*) Yes. Um-hm. That's him. (*Eyes shift nervously again.*) He was. . . ?

RED RIDA. (*retrieving photo, nods*) Well! Raoul had reason to fear displacement it seems and what about me? This was a bar I always kept secret from him—

NATALIE WOULD. For obvious reasons.

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RED RIDA. Scoot girl, there are customers at the other end needing your services and I require time to think. (*Natalie retreats into shadow.*) Did Piotr find out about—well, who knows what all?—and decide to pay me back in the most intimate family way? It's lucky I didn't know about this before tonight, or they'd be painting a big bright target known as motive all over my back. Green eyed jealousy. Green eyed Red Rida, I don't deny it. I wonder what my husband's insurance is like? By past indicators he's headed for an early grave anyway. *Swallows the last of her drink and raises the glass—Natalie is already there to fill it.*

NATALIE WOULD. And what's your friend having?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. (*sitting at next stool*) The same. (*Natalie sets out a glass with ice and pours. Rida looks the new arrival up and down.*)

RED RIDA. She's not a—barely an acquaintance, we've never even been formally introduced. How long have you been sitting there?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Never mind, it's too noisy to overhear much and anyway I'm off duty.

NATALIE WOULD. In my experience are the fuzz ever really off duty?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Then again I have excellent ears—wouldn't you say? They don't go on as long as my legs but they hear better. I can hear through most noise and if I can't for a minute or two, I have a phonographic memory and some sort of mechanism in the head for filtering out distractions on the playback. It's been tested in court, but not to worry I'm on your side and anyway we have Raoul sweating up dangerous admissions in a box behind a one way mirror wishing he could sleep a little but first go to the bathroom even as we speak. Optimum conditions for detailed confession and not a peep out of him about a lawyer, last I heard. But even though I am the good cop on your file, a word of warning. I never distort or cover up evidence—sometimes a little for a colleague on the

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force but for a civilian, never. Don't look too closely into your husband's insurance until all this mess with grandma's thoroughly resolved. Enough. Shop talk, I hate it. *(Covers Red Rida's nearest hand with her own, which prompts a sudden startled smile.)*

RED RIDA. If this is a way of eliciting who knows what admission across two pillows—

KARINA PATRIMOINE. That's contraindicated in the rules of correct police procedure. Toss things like that all the time in a court of law. Anyway I told you I'm off duty. Can't a gal unwind a little with another gal?

NATALIE WOULD. Incoming.

RED RIDA. You look much smarter and more elegant out of work clothes.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. You have no idea how I look out of— *(to Natalie)* what did you say?

NATALIE WOULD. Husband approaching.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. *(letting go Red's hand)* Whose?

NATALIE WOULD. Like I know your husband from a hole in the ground. *(PIOTR slides in behind red. Hands on her shoulders, lightly massaging.)*

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Funny surprise seeing you here.

RED RIDA. *(pulling away)* You're hurting me!

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Sorry. Don't know my own strength sometimes.

RED RIDA. *(massaging shoulder)* And sometimes you do. It's not as if I have anything against a little rough trade in private.

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Who's the girlfriend then?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. I just showed up a minute ago. I'm investigating a murder but even a hardworking detective needs downtime to relax now and then.

RED RIDA. Pure coincidence that she turned up here.

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PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Pure coincidence that she turned up in a seedy bar with my wife.

NATALIE WOULD. I'll have you know I'm anything but a seedy barmaid and I think you owe me and the place both an apology.

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Basest apologies, humble even, fair purveyor of mind and memory altering potations, I may have misread the ambiance and the personnel both, particularly the latter. *(To Red.)* Well? I'll rub your back again if you don't answer.

RED RIDA. PDA, will you ever get the memo on that? We are slightly acquainted as it happens.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. In my professional capacity.

RED RIDA. She and her loud offensive partner—I wonder who he reminds me of?—were sweating me at the precinct house about grandma's murder.

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. *(stricken)* Murder? Grandma's. . . dead? You mean on your mother's side?.

RED RIDA. My grandma, not your grandma. I didn't even know you knew her.

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Marry a wife, marry a family grouping.

RED RIDA. Dad's mother doesn't even live on this continent. They'd never suspect me in her murder, God forbid.

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. But how can they suspect you in. . . ? *(Swallows Jameson neat. Natalie pours another.)*

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Who says we do suspect her? No more than anyone else and considerably less than several. *(Long look at Piotr.)*

RED RIDA. *(whispers to Natalie)* How did you know what he drinks? You said he never came in here.

NATALIE WOULD. He came here two nights ago I told you. When it comes to a patron's poison of choice I'm a quick study.

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Delighted to hear it. A pity if the wife of my bosom should involve her lovely self in

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so disreputable an action as murder. *(Wipes away a tear.)* Poor grandma!

NATALIE WOULD. I'm the type people spill their life stories to if you hadn't noticed. Plus I overhear.

RED RIDA. *(aside)* And yet he hadn't told her he was married to me.

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. Our city's finest are gorgeously represented on the feminine side.

RED RIDA. Well he *was* here with grandma after all, and I don't recall ever telling her I was married myself.

KATRINA PATRIMOINE. You were here I believe in search of your wife?

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. *(shakes head)* Already have one of those. Shall we go dear? *(Offers arm to Red.)*

RED RIDA. So soon? What can we do at home we can't do in a crowded noisy joint like this? *(Takes his arm.)*

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. I can massage you to within an inch of your life, from within, bounce rebound and jounce, slam like a rubber band off each wall etc. *(They exit Stage Left.)*

RED RIDA. *(off)* Within an inch of my life? Promise?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. So—just what have you overheard lately?

PIOTR SERGEIIVICH KOSLOV. *(off)* Maybe even that little extra inch.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Anything of interest to a flatfoot in off duty heels?

RED RIDA. *(off)* y mad fool!

Karina slides bill across table. Natalie scoops and secures it in her bra.

NATALIE WOULD. Well. . . between you and me and the bar rail.. *(Blackout.)*

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SCENE 4

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Any joy in the physical evidence?
(Lights up on Tony and a woman in a labcoat in front of a table heaped with baggies on one side and stacks of paper on the other.)

SUPERVISOR JUDY TURENNE. An overflowing cornucopia, way too much to sort at this point.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Patterns emerging? We have loads of viable suspects, what's helping us to narrow it down?

SUPERVISOR JUDY TURENNE. Nothing I can see. Forest for the trees. DNA and fingerprints from literally dozens of males—who knows how old the more smudged of them are, but the clear recent prints are of men in their twenties and early thirties.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. From what I hear the DNA—

SUPERVISOR JUDY TURENNE. From the crime scene or in and about the person of the vic? Either way a nightmare of branching trails. Hair fibers—every shade, some of them dyed. What's a man in his early thirties doing dyeing his hair?

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Vegetable dyes mostly from what I heard.

SUPERVISOR JUDY TURENNE. Most but not all. Raoul for example her main squeeze of the past three years. I think he was trying to hide the first appearance of grey. She didn't much tolerate signs of aging in a man from what I gather in the interview transcripts.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Haven't looked in on any of the interviews? Best entertainment outside a blockbuster movie—if only they didn't seem to lead us deeper and deeper into a labyrinth.

SUPERVISOR JUDY TURENNE. Forgotten to bring along your ball of string detective? Don't worry, it'll resolve itself eventually—I can see a few leading threads emerging already, they'll lead us out. Don't they always?

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TONY PITCHBLENDE. Says the lady in the department with the best all round overview? But what's our closure rate overall? A little over 37%?

SUPERVISOR JUDY TURENNE. *(taking Tony's hand)* This isn't. . . personal for you is it Tony? *(Blackout)*

SCENE 5

KARINA PATRIMOINE'S VOICE. I think it'll all resolve itself as if by magic. *(Spot up Down Stage Right on Karina.)* But I'm not feeling the granddaughter in this at all.

TONY PITCHBLENDE'S VOICE. I go where the evidence leads, but something's not right about Ms. Rida. If you want—next time we have her in the box, you can be bad cop, I'll be good cop—maybe that'll shift my perception a little.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Never works as smoothly with female as male perps. *(Beat.)* Suspects. Men feel like a fire's lit under their ass if a woman treats them as suspicious. I like the current boytoy Raoul—motive, opportunity, fled the scene, alibi thin as tissue after a good noseblow.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. *(entering spot)* I'd like him better if he were named in a will or an insurance policy.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Records ought to be on their way to us even as we speak—or by the time we next speak tomorrow at latest. Anyway the seven semen samples found in grandma have to be a motive—Raoul, like just about any man on this planet, *could* only have contributed one of them.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. *Could?!* You don't mean--?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Nothing that turns up in the swab, so he must not have made a contribution for some days at least—forensics is sure to have more exact parameters and specifics.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Motive there, but he's not the brightest bonfire in the Winter Carnival, is he? Would he even have suspected cuckolding?

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KARINA PATRIMOINE. How did she keep her skin so smooth and wrinkle free? There's no evidence of surgical procedure or injection. *Syringe* injection I mean.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Blood in the skin cells all over her body—not her blood, this was left as persistent residue after every trace of that was ingathered for evidence and the body cleansed. Minute cellular traces between the pores—some of it decades old. She's been a regular dealer on the black market in plasma, which is something of a relief, but I can still understand why Albert was harping on the name Elizabeth Bathory. You ever read the case file on her in the history books?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Our esteemed colleague Albert—bit of a surprise where his sample turned up.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. *(eyes shift slightly, then)*

Disappointing I'd go so far as to say. Could mean his badge even if he's not the one in the berserk jealous rage who did this appalling, messy thing.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. You don't really think he is?

TONY PITCHBLENDE. I just hope our visit to his digs doesn't turn up a weapon to implicate him.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Shh! Media might be listening.

SCENE 6

Spotlight has come up on Albert in suspects or 'helping with inquiries' chair at interrogation table.

ALBERT SKILLSET. Of course it was an axe, a woodsman's axe and you know exactly where you're likely to find it.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. We need probable cause.

ALBERT SKILLSET. Get it! Swab of DNA on a coffee cup you bring him during an informal chat, do I have to teach colleagues with almost as much seniority as I have the baby steps?

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

TONY PITCHBLENDE. (*whispers*) Do we have his DNA?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. (*nods, whispers*) He was one of grandma's intimate visitors that last crowded week of her life.

ALBERT SKILLSET. What was Red's husband doing in Russia before he came to this country and secured a visa through marriage damn him anyway? A woodsman! (*Snaps fingers.*) What's the term, a lot of trees, agent in the wild, he was a . . . forest ranger. Can't tell you what that is in Russian, but I bet grandma could. She knew seven languages if not more. Drove me nuts crying "More! More! Harder! Harder!" in jumbles of all of them.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. I'd be careful of that kind of talk without a lawyer present.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. You're not helping your case any, that's for sure. (*Whispers.*) All this on a judge's desk in an hour's time—we manage it you think?

ALBERT SKILLSET. Ah! I see how it is I'm a *suspect* here! Careful who you bang in the most innocent way possible, considerable mutual pleasure and all—don't know when she might turn up dead in circumstances suspicious and squalid. Still had a lot of her looks—a lot of Red's looks if you want to know the truth, anyone who didn't know the discrepancy in their ages would have taken them for twins. It was love at first sight with Red you know—not for her, she'd just been born and didn't have facial recognition yet, but that faint shock of red already, the bright round cheeks you could eat up gobble um yum yum yum—

TONY PITCHBLENDE. (*whispers*) He's got to go a great deal further he's hoping for an insanity plea.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. (*whispers*) We don't know he's done anything pleadable yet.

ALBERT SKILLSET. How could I resist when the twin of that lady now grown to high school years merely batted her blazing lashes at me?

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

KARINA PATRIMOINE. That's OCD—colouring your lashes as well as your hair.

ALBERT SKILLSET. She never needed dye anymore than botox or face lifts or laser surgery—I was fifteen the first time I plunged eagerly into her devious web with its savoury aroma. I don't know if she ever forgave me for crying out Red's name.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. We could book her for stat rape if she hadn't passed out of our jurisdiction. Then again the good Lord's a sterner judge than any of us.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Can't we just caution you again—a lawyer present so you don't simply spill every—

ALBERT SKILLSET. Think *I* need a lawyer? *I* didn't come into this country on a temporary visa and nefariously court the only woman I've ever loved, just when she was slowly coming round to my way of thinking about a church wedding and steal her right from under my nose. *I* didn't have the special axe I used for clearing deadwood in the great forest I surveyed, brought in by diplomatic pouch—you should check what Mr. Piotr Sergeiivich Koslov's links are to the higher ups, I bet he'd rig an election as soon as look at it.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. We do know it was an axe. Of foreign make, the striations match no domestic samples.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. I always got to wonder when we're being pushed in the direction of one suspect by—

ALBERT SKILLSET. Aha! The truth comes out *I am* a suspect! Do you worst, false friends, there could be a promotion in it.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Everyone's a suspect until patiently eliminated which I'm confident you will be.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Me too, ninety seven percent. But you really should lawyer up for the duration if I were you.

ALBERT SKILLSET. Can we continue this at a later point in time? Because unless I'm definitely under arrest I've got a shift to work and more than one urgent criminal to run to earth.

(Exits spot.)

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

SCENE 7

TONY PITCHBLENDE. I thought he was on administrative leave.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Certainly the impression I was under. Better make inquiries—if he's lying about that it might be just the break in the case we've been hoping for.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Hate to think it, but gosh, it just might be. You can go, detective—oh I see he already has. **BUT DON'T GO PLANNING ANY TRIPS OUT OF THE JURISDICTION!** *(A new suspect/witness slides into the chair. We know him from an earlier scene.)*

PIOTR SERGIEIVICH KOSLOV. Of course I own an axe, a valuable one, a prime sample of fine Eurasian craftsmanship I understand your Gestapo footsoldiers have impounded. I hope you plan to return it soon.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. At the moment it's material evidence in a murder investigation. You understand—all that blood on the blade and the haft, matching a certain very fresh vic. Fingerprints, DNA—a great many indicators point to recent use by you.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Now is the time to allege planting if that's what you suspect.

PIOTR SERGIEIVICH KOSLOV. There can't be blood on that fine heritage model hatchet! It could corrode the metal irreparably, do you understand what that means? This is a limited-edition axe, not a knock off by the thousands—every blade, every handle is one of a kind, inscribed by its creator, Pereshnikov in this case. I had dinner once at a table with just us and Vladimir.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Paints a pretty picture, contacts at the highest level in the administration. Not such a plus as it once was.

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

PIOTR SERGIEVICH KOSLOV. You wait 'til the Embassy hears of this! There'll be an international nest of fleas in your ear! (*Aside.*) If it weren't for that damn invasion!

TONY PITCHBLENDE. We'll take our chances. You were pretty anxious to attain landed status for a Russian higher up of such standing.

PIOTR SERGIEVICH KOSLOV. Things have been better than they are right now in my country.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Conscriptable age? My compliments on your taste in marriageable help on your citizenship.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Worth a dip or two for sure, independent of her usefulness.

PIOTR SERGIEVICH KOSLOV. My compliments on your cynicism. The people of the Steppes are uniquely qualified to appreciate cynicism, though we always mix it with deep soul, faith clear to the bottom of the ocean. You people lack that aspect of the complete man (*nods*) or woman I should say. My love is deep and unquestionable even if it served a useful purpose as well. (*Rises.*) Am I free to--?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. You can go.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Wish we had a cell free to hold you just the same. (*Piotr exits.*) But don't leave the city and especially not the country.

PIOTR SERGIEVICH KOSLOV. (*off*) My roots are in this country now. I flee no lawful obligation to my spouse or new found land, no matter at the risk of what persecution (*aside*) alternatives rationally considered.

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

SCENE 8

Karina and Tony are standing and holding the backs of interrogation chairs.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. More and more like the Russian for this. He'd be quite a customer in bed is my guess.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Staying power, I imagine, if you like that sort of thing. Want to be sure he didn't have his axe tucked away in the closet though.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. It's tucked away in our evidence room. Red's safe for now from matrimonial rage.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. We on the other hand are by no means done with her yet.

The man who's been sitting in the chair since 'staying power', visibly nervous, coughs for their attention.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. In spite of evidential distractions, it's the mysterious foreigner I like best for it.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. One person's guilt doesn't rule out every other suspicious party, or what's collusion for? How angry did it make you exactly to be excluded from her triangle of utmost familiarity?

RAOUL DEBUNSTRUP. You're speaking to me? I wasn't sure you were aware of my existence. Excluded is hardly a term I'd use, I had sole entry to that fairest of treasures for a little over the past six months. She said she wanted to grow old with me.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Play that up with passionate violins maybe? Anyway you might, she wouldn't, on past indices.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. The swabs sampled microscopically in our labs don't exactly sing a hymn of fidelity.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Seven distinct seminal visitors, not one of which had its origin in your member.

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

KARINA PATRIMOINE. How long had it been—a week, a month, longer still?—you'd been barred admission? You'd turn up in the samples if it were any more recent. *(Raoul begins to weep. The detectives vigorously high five.)*

KARINA PATRIMOINE. Cracked like an egg on a marble countertop.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Now we'll see what spills.

RAOUL DEBUNSTRUP. I loved her—from the first mad moment of capture, suspecting I was out of my league but who wouldn't? It was ecstasy! and so easy to ignore the tire tracks and footprints on the well strewn path leading to her door—like Christmas with all the evergreens bunched close about the slim dirt road approaching, fine trail of pine needles, some green, some brown. Why wasn't I enough for her? Why was I suddenly, after raptures I'd never dreamed of let alone experienced—shunned? Shunted off you could say.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. I could come up with as many as a thousand good reasons. Less certain why you were ever in the first place accepted.

RAOUL DEBUNSTRUP. I hated her! Who wouldn't after such passion? Never knowing where I stood until I stood suddenly, naked and shivering, outside the protective snaffling of her web. Headaches cannot be so perpetual! That time of month cannot drag on a full month or a doctor should be called if it does.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. When did you begin to plot her death?

RAOUL DEBUNSTRUP. I wished I was dead! She had wide ranging passions, I could live with that if I had to, but to be coldly tossed to the curb when I'd nested so happily and cuddly in such soft curled coverlets—it was more than a man or even I could bear. I have overrefined nerves, stretched far too taut for the coarse webwork of this world. I suppose that's why you took my shoelaces.

CSI GRANDMA'S HOUSE

TONY PITCHBLENDE. Suicide watch. What a waste of much-needed man hours.

KARINA PATRIMOINE. You've got a good line in haplessness, but how do you explain the murder weapon we found in a hollow cubbyhole at your apartment?

TONY PITCHBLENDE. The fat patches of clotted blood?

KARINA PATRIMOINE. The smeary, bloody fingerprints? I honestly doubt he has the musculature required for a mouse killing.

TONY PITCHBLENDE. We're following the evidence where it leads. Besides, have you seen his weekly gym bills? All is not exactly as it seems.

RAOUL DEBUNSTRUP. You found a shotgun at my apartment? I don't know about any cubbyholes, somebody must have planted it, maybe my landlord or somebody who knew him. That always happens in the early moments of a crime drama, you're in the business you should know that better than anyone else. I just have to wait patiently 'til the true culprit is nailed as you're wont to put it, don't like the cell much though. *(Hands on shoulders, Raoul is escorted out of spot. Red Rida takes his place. The detectives look at each other dumfounded.)*

RED RIDA. There was a shotgun found at my place? I don't see how that's possible. What do you mean I know a shotgun wasn't the murder weapon, I know it was! Heard it straight from the horse's mouth, Detective Skillset told me right at the scene. *(Blackout.)*

INTERMISSION

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