

The Crime Readers

Three best friends obsessed with reading about true crime,
unexpectedly get involved in a real life true crime of their own.

Genres: Comedy, Drama, Thriller

EXT. RESTAURANT - EARLY EVENING

PATTY - 30s, book smart, high anxiety, constantly feeling the pressure of being an only child and being the sole person who can make her parents proud or completely disappointed, while also trying to be "a chill, fun girl" - sits at a table clearly made up for two.

She's got her nose in Ann Rule's *Heart Full of Lies*. Her bookmark is a "How to tell if its skin cancer" pamphlet from a dermatologist.

KYLE - her date - comes and sits down across from her.

She quickly puts her book in her overly stuffed backpack sitting at her feet, trying to hide that she was reading.

KYLE

Sorry about that.

PATTY

No problem, is everything okay?

KYLE

Yea, my buddy is just having a...thing.

PATTY

Oh...bummer.

They both stare in silence and take a sip of their drink.

KYLE

So, um, what were you telling me about?

PATTY

Oh! Uh, the difference between Heaven's Gate and Jonestown. Two cults I've been reading up on.

KYLE

Right. Uh, isn't one of those where people died?

PATTY

Both! They ended in mass suicides. Jonestown was bigger, but both really depressing.

Patty starts to get excited as she talks, Kyle looks extremely turned off by their conversation.

PATTY (CONT'D)

You know the saying "drink the kool aid"? Well, it comes from Jonestown. 900 people died. Most of them were actually kids. The parents had to give the drink to their children first and then take it themselves. So, they literally watched their children die and then killed themselves!

KYLE

Hm. You know, I think my sister listened to a podcast about that.

PATTY

Which one? There's 15.

KYLE

The main one?...So, you're into cults?

PATTY

Yes! I mean it's not my favorite part of true crime. I really like the serial killers.

Kyle gives her a concerned look.

PATTY (CONT'D)

I mean I don't like them, like them or anything, obviously. I just like learning about them. I mean the psychology behind why someone kills someone else is just fascinating.

KYLE

So, I assume you've been following this St. Pete guy?

PATTY

The St. Pete Pier Serial Killer, not the final name, yea. I'm pretty familiar.

KYLE

It's so crazy that's there's a serial killer in St. Pete. It creeps me out.

PATTY

Yea. I mean you don't have to worry.

(MORE)

PATTY (CONT'D)

He doesn't seem to be going after men. He's not John Wayne Gacy.

She chuckles like she made a funny joke.

KYLE

Right. I think I just mean it creeps me out that someone is shooting women.

PATTY

Slitting their throats actually.

KYLE

What?

PATTY

He, or she, but it's most likely a man if you abide to the studies of John Douglas and the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit, which says that most serial killers are men because women tend to take out their hardships on themselves or their children.

Patty is on a roll. Kyle looks extremely turned off.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Which is funny because then they end up creating more serial killers like Ed Kemper, who pretty much blames his mother for everything he did. Anyway, the killer is slitting the women's throats, not shooting them.

Beat.

KYLE

Got it.

Another beat of silence where they each take a sip of water, trying to think of other things to say.

KYLE (CONT'D)

So...you manage a restaurant, right?

PATTY

Oh, yes. The Meat O'Malley's on 38th.

KYLE

Oh! I love that place.
 (he proudly quotes the
 tagline)
 Meat O'Malleys where meat isn't the
 only thing you'll love because we
 also have chicken wings.

PATTY

That is our tagline.

KYLE

You guys have the best burgers.

PATTY

Yea. I don't really eat meat
 anymore. Ever since I read that
 Jeffrey Dahmer biography and saw
 all the crime scene photos. He was
 a cannibal. Big time. There's
 actually a lot of cannibals out
 there, you'd be surprised.

Kyle looks absolutely disgusted and very turned off.

PATTY (CONT'D)

I eat chicken though...sometimes.

Patty can tell this date is going poorly. She's hurt by it,
 but tries not to show it. She doesn't want to be the one
 left, as she usually is, so she quickly decides to end the
 date.

PATTY (CONT'D)

You know...I'm actually running
 late to pick up my friends.

Kyle seems a little surprised, but also relieved.

KYLE

Oh.

PATTY

Yea, we're members of Crime Readers
 and we have a meeting tonight.
 Sorry I forgot to mention.

KYLE

No worries. Uh, what is that?

PATTY

Oh, a true crime book club!

KYLE

So, you're like really into this stuff.

PATTY

...Yea, I guess you could say that. Anyway, the meeting starts in an hourish...So, I should probably go.

KYLE

Totally. Uh, do you want me to walk you to your car? You know just to be safe.

PATTY

I think I'll be okay. I don't actually match up with his victimology. I'm out of the age range and he seems to be going for blondes.

Kyle stares at Patty not knowing how to respond to her.

KYLE

Right. Well it was nice meeting you.

Patty gets up from her chair, somehow making even that awkward.

She grabs her gigantic backpack, which is extremely heavy, and pulls it over her shoulders. She sticks her hand out to shake Kyles.

PATTY

You too.

Kyle looks at her confused, but shakes her hand. They stare at each other for an awkward beat.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Well, bye!

Patty turns to leave, but as she does her backpack knocks over her glass and water is spilled all over Kyle, who jumps up.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Oh my God, I am so so sorry!

KYLE

(annoyed)

Don't worry about it, I've got it.

Kyle grabs a napkin and starts wiping himself off. Patty isn't sure what to do, so she also hands him her napkin.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Really, it's fine. Nice to meet you.

Patty smiles sightly and then turns again. This time her backpack hits him.

PATTY

Sorry! Sorry!

KYLE

It's fine! Just go.

PATTY

Right. Bye.

She turns again and Kyle jumps out of the way. Patty walks off.

PATTY (CONT'D)

(to self)

Damnit Patty! Dahmer?! Really? Might as well have brought up the BTK killer... Actually, maybe you should have he is back in pop culture, thanks Mindhunter...or maybe we should get a new hobby and stop making people think we're insane. Ugh dating sucks.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. PATTY'S CAR - EARLY EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Patty gets into her car, extremely discouraged. She takes her phone out of her purse and sees 30 missed calls and voicemails from both her MOTHER (ANN) and FATHER (PATRICK)

Patty plays a voicemail.

FIRST VOICEMAIL - ANN

Patty! Hello? It's me, your mother, you know the woman who birthed you and just asks you to call her twice a day-

Patty clicks the next one.

SECOND VOICEMAIL - PATRICK

Patty we just want to know you're okay. We know you're going on a date with Kyle. Who, by the way doesn't look promising. I looked him up on Facebook and the insta and I think he -

Patty clicks the next one.

THIRD VOICEMAIL - ANN

I will call the police.

Patty clicks the next one.

FOURTH VOICEMAIL - PATRICK

Your mother is calling the police.

Patty clicks the next one.

FIFTH VOICEMAIL - ANN

I'm not calling the police, but I will! Look, I love you, and there's a serial killer on the loose, why is it so bad if I want you to call me every -

Patty throws her phone down on the passenger seat.

She picks up her purse, opens it up, sticks her head in, and lets out a frustrated scream.

Suddenly, LAURA - 30s, calm, says everything that pops into her head, she's not great with social cues, always trying a new style because she loves experiencing new things, extremely optimistic - pops her head in the middle of the car.

LAURA

Bad date?

Patty screams again in fear.

PATTY

Jesus Laura! You scared the crap out of me! How did you get in here?

Laura is confused as to why she's scared.

LAURA

You told me to meet you outside the restaurant.

PATTY

Right! But how did you get into my car?!

Laura holds up a key.

LAURA

You gave me a key.

Patty has calmed down.

PATTY

Well, you know some warning would be nice.

LAURA

Sorry, I didn't want to interrupt...whatever that was.

PATTY

Just a bad date and overprotective parents. It's just the curse of being -

PATTY (CONT'D)

An only child.

LAURA

(says it just a second after Patty says it)
An only child. I knew you were going to say that.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Yea, I guess it's a tired excuse.

LAURA

Did you talk about the St. Pete Pier Serial Killer, not the final name, again?

PATTY

A little. But he technically brought it up.

LAURA

Did you mention Dahmer?

PATTY

Maybe.

LAURA

You should probably stop doing that. I mean I love it. But, Ann, Patrick, and I were talking and it's probably off-putting to the guys.

Patty puts her head on the steering wheel, exhausted by what she has to say next.

PATTY

Please stop calling my parents by their first names.

Laura looks at Patty knowingly.

LAURA

It's okay Patty. I know you're jealous of my relationship with your parents.

PATTY

What?!

LAURA

Look, it's not my fault Ann, Patrick, and I get along so well. I think we just connect on a bunch of different and specific levels.

Patty sinks in her seat. This is the 100th time Laura and she have had this conversation.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Patty, Patty, Patty.

Laura puts her arm around Patty, very uncomfortably.

LAURA (CONT'D)
 To accept love is hard. But you
 have to remember that to be loved
 is the greatest gift in the world.

Laura squeezes Patty. Patty winces.

PATTY
 Is that from a movie?

Laura settles back into her seat.

LAURA
 No, Ann and I went to yoga last
 week and that was the instructor's
 end message. Really brought us to
 tears. It was nice.

Patty rolls her eyes.

PATTY
 Cool. Shall we get Abby?

LAURA
 We shall! Also, let's call Ann and
 Patrick on the way, I want to hear
 about the mole they found on
 Patrick's back.

Patty starts the car and drives away. We hear Ann's voice

ANN (O.S.)
 Finally! Another girl's gone
 missing. I can't believe you made
 me think it was you! Thank God
 Laura texted me where you two are!

INT - "THE SUIT FOR YOU" SUIT STORE - CONTINUOUS

The Suit for You - is your classic suit store. It has rows of suits and racks of shirts. The ties are lined up beautifully and everything looks pristine.

At the front of the store is the register. In front of that are shelves with any accessory you could possibly think of for a suit.

Currently at the register is a MAN checking out. ABBY - 30s, sexy without trying, big flirt, extremely confident, all are impervious to her charms, goes with the flow, but is usually the one making the flow - is ringing him up.

They are, of course, flirting.

ABBY

Wow, look at this.

She holds up a tie that has stripes on it.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Wild.

MAN

You think? Ha! I try to have some personality in my ties.

ABBY

I can see that. You know what would look great with that?

She pulls a tie clip out from the shelves and smiles.

MAN

Oh, I don't know, I'm not really into tie clips.

ABBY

Well, that's because you've never had this one!

The man laughs. Abby comes out from behind the register and starts to pull the tie clip out of the box to put on the man's tie that he's currently wearing.

ABBY (CONT'D)

When I'm out and I see a man all suited up, dressed to the nines, but then I look down at his tie and I don't see a tie clip, I'm immediately turned off. You know why?

The man is hanging on every word.

MAN

Wh-why?

She's puts the tie clip on his tie.

ABBY

Because it means he's not put together and that means no matter how he looks or how much money he has, he won't be able to take care of me. And I want to be taken care of. Don't you want to look like you can take care of me?

He nods.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Well, you'd look the part with this
tie clip.

MAN
I'll-I'll uh take it.

ABBY
Great!

Abby immediately drops his tie and goes back behind the register.

ABBY (CONT'D)
That one is 150. Will you be paying
cash or card?

MAN
...Card.

She rings him up and the man leaves. Abby's boss - MARY - is slow clapping.

MARY
And I thought we'd never sell that
one.

ABBY
Well, I love a challenge. That's
still 30% commission right?

MARY
20.

ABBY
Right, so I'll take 30.

MARY
Abby.

ABBY
Mary.

MARY
I can't keep giving you 30% when
everyone else gets 20.

ABBY
Well, when they start selling like
I do they can have 30.

She smiles.

MARY

Fine. But, at least, stop telling them. You're making me look bad.

ABBY

Oops.

Abby starts to collect her things.

MARY

Where are you going? We're still open another hour.

ABBY

Right. Shoot. Well, Patty's on her way to get me, we have Crime Readers tonight. Look...

Abby gets closer to Mary.

ABBY (CONT'D)

...you know what? I'll come in early tomorrow and make up the time.

She kisses her on the cheek. Mary is a little shaken. Abby smiles at her and then waltzes away.

MARY

You will not.

ABBY

Well, I'll try!

MARY

Fine! Be careful though please! Don't get into cars with strangers.

Abby leaves.

MARY (CONT'D)

God, I hate how much I love her.

INT. PATTY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Abby gets into Patty's car. Patty still looks distraught.

ABBY

What's wrong with you?

PATTY

Date.

ABBY
Ah. Well, someday you'll have a
good one.

PATTY
When?

ABBY
At least you're putting yourself
out there.

PATTY
I guess.

ABBY
Where's Laura?

LAURA
I'm right here.

Laura is sitting in the backseat, both Abby and Patty scream.

ABBY
Jesus Laura!

LAURA
Sorry!

ABBY
Did you not know she was there?

PATTY
Unfortunately, I did.

ABBY
Ugh, that really gave me a heart
attack.

LAURA
Speaking of "heart" attacks. After
Crime Readers, we're still on for
our stakeout of the St. Pete Pier
serial killer, not the final
name's, crime scene right?

ABBY
They really need to come up with a
new name soon, that's such a tongue
twister.

PATTY
Yes, Laura, we are still on for it.
(as if she's asked this
question many times)
(MORE)

PATTY (CONT'D)

Now, what does that have to do with a heart attack?

LAURA

Well! I found a pattern for him, or her, most likely him though, as we all know.

The three nod.

ABBY

I still can't believe there's an active serial killer right in our own backyard. I mean it's crazy right?

Laura shushes Abby.

LAURA

My thing! Now, did you happen to see the placement of the fourth victim at the pier?

PATTY

Uh, I don't think so.

LAURA

Well!

Laura pulls out a hand drawn map of the pier. It is as ridiculous as it sounds. There is a poorly connected heart in the center.

LAURA (CONT'D)

It completes a heart! He made a heart.

Abby and Patty eye each other.

ABBY

I think it's a bit of stretch. Also, did you draw this?

LAURA

I'm learning cartography. Maps of the pier are like \$20 and I think this paints the picture just fine. It's in a half scale.

ABBY

A half scale?

LAURA

Not important. Listen, I think the killer is trying to tell us something about his heart. Like maybe he was heartbroken and that was his stressor? Or maybe he has something wrong with his heart, like a disorder? Or maybe...

ABBY

He hates his mother.

LAURA (CONT'D)

He hates his mother.

PATTY

He hates his mother.

LAURA

Have I told you this theory?

PATTY

Yes.

ABBY

Also, it's a pretty obvious guess.

LAURA

I just think if we find out his stressor we are one step closer to him. Did you hear another woman's gone missing?

Abby looks shocked.

ABBY

Really?

LAURA

Yea, Ann told us on the way here. She fits the victimology and everything.

ABBY

You have got to stop calling Patty's parents by their first names.

PATTY

Thank you!

LAURA

Why? We're friends. I call you by your first name.

ABBY

You know that's not the point.

PATTY

Anyway! I agree that knowing the stressor would help figure out who he is, but I don't think the police are releasing enough info about the case for us to figure it out.

ABBY

And they won't, because we're civilians and it's not our job.

LAURA

Excuse me! Michelle McNamara basically solved the Golden State Killer case and she was a civilian.

PATTY

Yea and there was only one of her.

ABBY

Patty, you can't seriously think we'll be the ones to solve it.

PATTY

I mean why not? We could at least help with the profile? I mean I've read enough John Douglas books to narrow down race, sex, age, maybe even home life?

ABBY

Look, I love doing the stakeouts and connecting all the pieces. I guess I'm just trying to be realistic.

Both Laura and Patty look a little disheartened. Patty glances down at her phone and sees the time.

PATTY

Shit! We need to go, we're going to be late!

ABBY

Cool kids are always late.

Patty starts the car.

PATTY

And what makes you think I'm a cool kid?

ABBY

Maybe the hair.

LAURA
Definitely not your shirt.

PATTY
You know I can't be late! I have to
speak at the beginning of the
meeting.

Abby and Laura groan in unison.

PATTY (CONT'D)
You're both just jealous.

ABBY
Of what?! You literally just get up
and tell us how long we've been a
chapter of Crime Readers. Something
that makes you way too nervous to
do by the way.

PATTY
I'm not nervous when I do it.

LAURA
You so are.

PATTY
Am not! Look acknowledging the
length of the group goes to
legitimacy. I mean remember when we
first joined. Tell me you didn't
want to know how long the group had
been around.

ABBY
Didn't cross my mind once.

LAURA
I'm truly checked out of this
conversation right now.

PATTY
Well, it matters to me. The St.
Pete chapter has been around for 5
years, during which it's had 62
meetings and has grown by 10
members. Which is a lot compared to
the Gulport chapter.

ABBY
They have less people in that town.

PATTY

Not the point. Look, I like announcing how long it's been around, it means something to me. Also, you know, someday I hope to be the president of the chapter. So, this is a good stepping stone for me.

Abby rolls her eyes. Laura is completely checked out in the backseat.

ABBY

Please tell me you didn't talk about how you want to be president of the St. Pete Chapter of Crime Readers on your date tonight.

LAURA

Nope. She talked about cannibalism.

ABBY

Patty.

PATTY

What? It was just for a second! Whatever, we have to go.

Abby eyes her. Laura pulls out a small police radio and puts it on the dashboard of the car.

ABBY

What the hell is that?

LAURA

A police radio. Cool right?

PATTY

Is this legal?

LAURA

I think?

ABBY

It's probably a grey area.

PATTY

Laura!

LAURA

It's fine! Look will you just drive, we're going to be late.

Patty huffs and puts the car in reverse.

The car drives off and we hear some static and voices coming from the police radio.

POLICE OFFICER(O.S)
I don't see anything. Going to walk
the perimeter.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. ST. PETERSBURG RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Rec center is a moderate size with a small stage at the front. There is a projection screen hanging down.

In front of the stage is a podium with a makeshift sign saying "ST. PETE CHAPTER OF CRIME READERS" taped to the front of it.

In the back of the Rec center are two tables. One has water bottles and wine on it. The other has a variety of cheeses. It's set up nicely.

There's about 20 people milling about. It's all women. The type of people vary. There are obvious bookworms, women who just want a social outing, and those who are obsessed with true crime.

The girls run in and breathe a sigh of relief.

PATTY

Good. It hasn't started yet!

SHERRY - 50s, a messily put together woman, bit of an odd duck - pops up behind the three suddenly.

Patty and Abby scream. Laura smiles wide.

LAURA

Hey Sherry!

SHERRY

Hi dolls. Didn't mean to scare you, just trying to make my way to the wine.

She moves past them towards the tables in the back.

LAURA

See you later Sherry!

Abby and Laura have collected themselves and are looking around for seats.

Abby spots CYNTHIA - 20s, beautiful, smart, confident, similar to Abby, but people would say she's more "buttoned up", more "put together", but only because she shops at Ann Taylor, Abby despises her - they both sneer at each other.

ABBY

God I hate her.

The three find seats.

LAURA
She's not that bad.

ABBY
Not that bad are you kidding me?
She's a know-it-all, who hasn't
even read as many books as Patty
over here.

PATTY
To be fair, I'm a very intense
reader.

ABBY
Not the point. She also lies,
constantly. You know she told
Sherry that her mother was best
friends with Ann Rule-

The three women bow their heads and speak in unison.

ABBY/PATTY/LAURA (CONT'D)
May she rest in peace, the greatest
true crime writer there ever was.

Abby picks back up as if it never happened.

ABBY (CONT'D)
-in high school, but then Sherry
met her mom and she didn't even
know who Ann Rule was!

PATTY
Okay, well that's putting a lot of
faith in Sherry.

Sherry, who's now made her way to the wine table is stuffing
bottles into her bag and having a conversation with herself.

ABBY
Well what about how she always
takes credit for when the police
solve murders?

PATTY
Her uncle is a police officer.
Maybe she helps him?

ABBY
He's a security guard! For Tyrone
mall! Not a police officer.

LAURA

Well, we don't know what crimes happen there. Maybe it's a breeding ground for murderers.

Abby is about to retort, but MELISSA - late 30s, very put together, always in a pant suit, the president and founder of the group and the self proclaimed best realtor in St. Pete, FL. - steps up to the podium.

She clears her throat and everyone quiets down and finds a seat. She has index cards she's reading from.

MELISSA

Good evening my fellow Crime Readers. Thank you so much for being here.

Everyone responds in unison.

EVERYONE

Good evening. Thank you for being here.

MELISSA

You're welcome. Now, I hope everyone is enjoying the refreshments. Claudia and Sarah, thank you again for providing us with the cheese and wine from your wine and cheese shop "Come for the wine, stay for the cheese" on 4th street between 9th and 10th avenue. Fun fact, it's right next to Lucy's house.

(She gestures to LUCY who is bright red and waves)
A house that, yours truly, just sold her. I got it under market price I might add. They don't call me Melissa, the Realist Real Estate Agent in St. Pete for nothing.

Everyone claps and cheers for Melissa.

Cynthia and Abby try to out clap each other.

CLAUDIA - 40s - and SARAH - 40s - look at each other annoyed that she took attention away from their shop.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Oh thank you, please. You're too much.

(MORE)

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Now, before we say the pledge,
Patty will you please join me up
here to tell us how long we've been
a chapter.

Patty looks terrified, even though she knew she would have to do this.

As she's getting up, she trips on her backpack and falls into Abby who's busy sneering at Cynthia.

The two fumble, but Patty collects herself and finds her balance.

PATTY

Sorry, sorry.

ABBY

It's fine, just get up there!

Patty shakily walks to the front. Melissa is still behind the podium, so Patty stands to her right.

PATTY

Um, hello everyone.

Everyone responds in unison.

EVERYONE

Hello Patty.

Again, Patty seems shaken, even though this is something she does every week.

PATTY

So, we've been a chapter for almost
six years now. Our 6th anniversary
is in two weeks. Um-

Everyone starts clapping about the 6 year anniversary, which of course throws Patty off.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Right. Yes, hear, hear!

Silence.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Anyway, this is our 62nd meeting.
And, uh, we're on our 21st true
crime book.

Patty is done, but doesn't know how to end. There is an awkward moment of silence and then Melissa jumps in.

MELISSA

Excellent. Well, thank you so much
Patty. Very exciting to hear that
our 6th anniversary is coming up. I
can't believe it.

Melissa smiles at Patty and motions for her to sit back down.
It takes Patty a second to realize what's happening. She
finally does and makes her way back to Abby and Laura.

ABBY

(mouths to Patty)
Very smooth.

PATTY

(mouths to Abby)
Shut up.

Patty sits.

MELISSA

Now, let us begin as we always do
by reciting the pledge....

Everyone stands up and raises three fingers.

EVERYONE

We love true crime. We love to
read. Thus we are Creaders. And
there's no place else we'd rather
be, but here, reading, true crime.

Everyone sits.

MELISSA

Before we get into this month's
book, Ann Rule's -

Everyone bows their head and says in unison.

EVERYONE

May she rest in peace, the greatest
true crime writer there ever was.

MELISSA

- *Heart Full of Lies*, there are
some things to discuss. As many of
you know we are lucky enough- sorry
excuse me, I mean unfortunately
there is an active serial killer
investigation happening right in
our backyard.

(MORE)

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Something some of us thought we'd never be lucky enou-excuse me, we'd never have to experience. Now, of course...

Melissa gets very serious.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

We are not detectives and no matter how much true crime we read or podcasts we listen to, we should not be interfering in any active investigations. As we all know, the killer is still on the loose. They actually think he's onto his 4th victim as a woman matching the others has gone missing.

Abby and Laura glance at each other, Patty is avoiding eye contact with them.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

We don't want that to be one of us. We could put the investigation in jeopardy and ourselves in danger. Neither being something we want to do.

She exhales, then smiles.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Now, that that is out of the way!
(giddy)
Cynthia is going to take us through the most recent murder of the St. Pete Pier Serial Killer, not the final name! Cynthia, please.

Melissa takes a seat next to the podium.

Cynthia comes up and opens her laptop on a table next to the podium. A slideshow presentation is projected on the screen.

The first slide says "ST. PETE PIER SERIAL KILLER, NOT THE FINAL NAME, STRIKES AGAIN. WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT DON'T WE KNOW? WHAT CAN WE DO? WHAT CAN'T WE DO? BY CYNTHIA RUHALL"

The writing is huge and takes up the whole slide. In the corners there are clipart images of knives.

Abby rolls her eyes, Patty leans in closer, and Laura is trying to reach a piece of cheese from the table without leaving her seat.

Cynthia stands proudly to the right of the podium with a huge smile. There's a clicker in her hand. This is her time to shine and she really goes hard in presenting.

CYNTHIA

Hello everyone! Thank you so much for letting me lead these briefings.

Abby loudly scoffs. Cynthia ignores her.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

As we know this UNSUB, unknown subject,
 (she chuckles and winks,
 then immediately looks serious)
 has now murdered 3 women.

Cynthia clicks and the next slide is a nice photo of each victim. Everyone shudders.

EVERYONE

Rest in peace.

Next slide: Clip art of a knife, a car, a bush, and a smiley face.

CYNTHIA

The MO or Modus Operandi
 (she chuckles and winks)
 seems to be abducting the women in a public place, slitting their throats, then dumping their bodies at the pier, usually in a bush with not a lot of coverage. The police believe part of the thrill is that the bodies will easily be discovered the next day by pedestrians. They also believe whoever is doing this is someone the women trust because there were no defensive wounds on any of the victims.

Abby's eyes are in the back of her head. Patty is listening intensely.

ABBY

(whispering)

I mean she's basically just reading from the true crime reddit thread. Something literally everyone in a true crime book club does.

Patty shushes her.

CYNTHIA

However, it's not someone they necessarily know, as they have found no connection between victims. Now this next piece of information has not been released to the press, so please don't share it.

Cynthia can not contain her smile while saying this. She loves knowing something others don't.

Abby rolls her eyes, but leans forward to hear more.

Cynthia clicks the slide to show a Smith & Wesson Assisted folding knife.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Forensics has determined that the knife is most likely an outdoor, tactical knife which is usually used by people who spend a lot of time outdoors. This should narrow down the type of person they're looking for, which is great news.

Abby leans into Patty and Laura.

ABBY

(whispering)

How can she possibly know this?
She's guessing.

Patty shushes her. Cynthia clicks another slide that has a clip art image of her smiling with a thumbs up.

ABBY (CONT'D)

(to self)

Kill me.

Cynthia makes the same face and thumbs up as the image.

CYNTHIA

Well, that's all I have Creaders. Remember to stay in groups and keep away from the pier late at night. It's very rare for a serial killer to have made it this far. I heard they're calling in the FBI.

ABBY

Yea, I read that in the Tampa
Tribune too.

Abby scoffs and Cynthia looks annoyed.

CYNTHIA

Oh, great! Didn't know you could
read!

ABBY

This is a book club.

Cynthia ignores Abby's response and smiles confidently.

CYNTHIA

Well, that's it from me. And
Melissa, I just want to again thank
you so much for bringing us all
together and making a space for us
to not only learn, but also protect
each other.

Everyone claps. Abby fake vomits. Melissa hugs Cynthia.

MELISSA

Thank you so much Cynthia, for
putting together such an excellent
exploration of what's going on. One
last piece of business before we
get started. Someone, or a few of
you, have been clogging the toilets
with your bowel movements.

Sherry, who has fallen asleep, looks up when this is said.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

I do not say this in judgement of
anyone's bowel movements, but if
you can please flush and not use as
much toilet paper that would be
excellent. The rec center is saying
it only happens between 8-10 on
Wednesday nights and we're the only
group here during that time. Now,
let's split into groups and talk
about *Heart Full of Lies*! We should
all have read up to chapter 24.

Everyone starts to get into groups to discuss the book.

Cynthia gets immediately surrounded by a ton of people and
turns to make sure Abby sees. She smiles and waves at her,
Abby smirks back.

Abby, Laura, and Patty end up in the circle they always do with Sherry, Claudia and Sarah.

Sherry is drinking from a bottle of wine in her purse. Claudia is snacking on a large block of cheese and Sarah is slowly sipping wine (tasting it like a sommelier).

SARAH

Did you try this pinot? It's from Oregon.

CLAUDIA

We know Sarah.

SARAH

Well, you know. They don't all know.

They stare at each other annoyed. Patty pulls out a notebook.

PATTY

Okay, I'll start. So, as you know, I listed out all the people who could come into play during the book, then marked if we've met them or not. I also summarized each chapter and the evidence so far. I thought we could maybe start by discussing Lyisa's journal writing. It's so interesting to me that -

SHERRY

I think she did it.

CLAUDIA

Of course you do. You always think they did it! Not everyone did it. I believe her.

SARAH

How can you believe her? She's an obvious liar.

CLAUDIA

Why do you always disagree with me?

SARAH

I do not!

ABBY

I think she just exaggerates. I mean it does say she is a writer.

Patty tries to jump in.

PATTY

Interesting point Abby. I read an article recently about Liysa and Ann Rule and did you know -

LAURA

Is this pinot? It tastes like a zin.

CLAUDIA

It does.

SARAH

It does not! You're just saying that to hurt me.

Everyone starts talking over one another. Patty sighs, she can't seem to get a word in.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT - LATER

Everyone is exiting the rec center. Patty, Abby, and Laura are heading to Patty's car.

Claudia and Sarah are still arguing. Sherry is standing, drinking from a new bottle waiting for an Uber.

ABBY

You know Sherry is super wealthy?

PATTY

Yea?

ABBY

Yea, apparently she's like some sort of genius who made a bunch a money off of an equation she made.

Sherry has spilled wine on herself and is wiping it off her shirt with a receipt.

PATTY

Well, that's awesome.

Cynthia strolls passed the three surrounded by women listening to her tell a story about how Ann Rule came to her birthday party.

CYNTHIA

I said, Aunty Ann! You did not have to give me this! You know what it was?

(MORE)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

An unpublished version of Heart Full of Lies, so I've actually already read the whole thing.

Abby is fuming.

PATTY

Leave it.

Abby slams the car door she was about to get into and walks over to Cynthia.

ABBY

So you've already read it huh?

CYNTHIA

Excuse me?

ABBY

The book? You've read it.

CYNTHIA

Yes.

ABBY

Interesting, you're in your 30s right, late 30s.

CYNTHIA

Ha! I'm 28.

ABBY

Ah! So this book was released in 2001. I like reading book jackets. And you said she gave you an unpublished copy so, probably like in 2000?

CYNTHIA

Yea, probably...so?

ABBY

So, Ann Rule-

Everyone bows there head and speaks in unison

EVERYONE

May she rest in peace, the greatest true crime writer there ever was.

Abby continues.

ABBY

...gave you this book, a book about a woman killing her husband, a book that talks about sex and drugs and alcoholism, when you were 8?

CYNTHIA

I was very mature for my age.

ABBY

Yea, I can tell by your face.

Before Cynthia can retort, Abby walks away and gets into Patty's car. Cynthia yells after her.

CYNTHIA

Well, your face says a lot too.

Abby pokes her head out the window.

ABBY

Thanks! So do my hands.

Abby flicks her off as they drive away.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. THE PIER - NIGHT - LATER

Abby, Patty and Laura sit on a bench at the St. Pete Pier. They're surrounded by grass and hidden a bit by a few trees. We can clearly see the water, which is out in front of them.

Laura is now wearing an F.B.I (Female Body Inspector) shirt and binoculars around her neck. Patty is wearing a bright yellow vest and a baseball cap that has bright yellow tape wrapped around the cap.

Abby hasn't changed.

The three are laughing, eating french fries, and drinking milkshakes.

LAURA

They couldn't find me for a week.
But then they opened up the attic
and there I was wrapped in
cellophane trying to get to space.

PATTY

My parents would have called in the
FBI.

LAURA

Well, you're an only child and I'm
one of 9.

PATTY

That's still crazy to me.

ABBY

I don't know. I think the fact that
you wear that at night because your
parents told you to is crazy.

PATTY

It's not crazy, it's safe! What if
the St. Pete Pier Serial Killer,
not the final name, really does
show up?

ABBY

(sarcastic)
Oh, you'll blind him with your
vest, of course.

Abby and Laura chuckle. Patty scoffs.

PATTY

Just because my parents told me to wear it doesn't mean I'm doing it for them! I actually...like..the color yellow.

LAURA

Then why don't you wear that yellow shirt I got you?

PATTY

It says "Hold my pussy while I punch you in the face."

LAURA

Yea I know.

PATTY

That doesn't make sense Laura!

LAURA

I knew you didn't get it.

Abby pulls out her phone.

ABBY

It's almost 1am, should we call it a night?

PATTY

It's 1am! Crap, I have to work in the morning.

ABBY

Patty, you're the manager. Can't you go in late?

Patty rolls her eyes and starts taking off her vest and hat and stuffing them into her oversized backpack.

PATTY

Being the boss means you can't be late. Also, I get to make breakfast for everyone and honestly that's the best part of my day.

Abby pats her on the shoulder.

ABBY

You're something else, aren't you?

Patty sticks out her tongue, Laura chuckles. This is obviously a line Abby says a lot to her.

LAURA
Who's throwing out the cups?

Abby and Laura quickly put their fingers on their noses.
Patty is too slow.

PATTY
Fine, I'll do it.

ABBY
I'll pull around the car.

Abby puts her hand out for the keys. Patty is reluctant.

PATTY
Don't hit any cars please.

ABBY
That was one time!

PATTY
A month ago!

ABBY
Six months!

Abby and Patty look at Laura for the tie breaker, she's smelling her binoculars, then realizes they are looking at her.

LAURA
Don't look at me, I thought it was last year.

ABBY
The point is it was awhile ago and it won't happen again.

PATTY
Swear?

ABBY
Duh!

She smiles wide and grabs the keys. Patty pulls on her huge backpack, while Abby and Laura start to walk off towards the car talking.

LAURA
Another stakeout in the books.

ABBY
Do you really think he'll just stroll up to us and say "it's me!"

LAURA

No, but maybe we'll see something
and you know, save a life.

ABBY

He brings them here dead.

LAURA

Why are you such a mood killer?

Patty grabs the trash and starts walking towards the trash cans.

They're a distance away from where they were sitting, right next to some bushes and the edge of the pier.

At about halfway there, Patty turns to look for Abby and Laura, but can't see them anymore.

She makes it to the trash cans and starts to separate the recycling from the regular trash.

Suddenly she hears some shuffling and rustling about 6 feet away from her. She, again, turns around to look for Abby and Patty, but they're nowhere in site.

Patty starts sorting the trash faster.

The rustling in the bushes starts again and this time heavy breathing and grunting can be heard.

Patty starts to panic and immediately pulls out her phone. As she does, she drops the trash still left in her hands. It's a plastic milkshake cup, the lid goes in one direction and the cup goes in another.

She grabs the lid first. As she turns to grab the cup, she accidentally steps on another piece of trash and it makes a loud cracking sound.

The rustling stops suddenly and a figure pops out from behind the bushes.

Patty immediately starts to back away, but the figure has seen her and starts to come towards her.

She turns away from him and starts walking quickly, but the figure is faster. He quickly catches up to her and grabs her arm that was holding her phone, the phone goes flying into a bush.

Patty turns and is eye to eye with OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL - 40s, in plain clothes. She's panicked and starts to struggle away from him, but he doesn't let go.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL
 Woah woah, relax. I'm Officer
 William Dawl.
 (he reaches for his badge
 and flashes it, while
 still maintaining his grip
 on Patty)
 I'm just making a routine walk
 around the pier. Can I ask what
 you're doing out here?

Patty relaxes a bit, but not all the way. William lets go of
 her arm.

PATTY
 I-I-I was just out with some
 friends.

William looks passed her, but doesn't see anyone, so he
 thinks she's alone.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL
 You know, it's not safe out here
 this time of night. You shouldn't
 be alone.

PATTY
 I-I'm not, I'm with some friends,
 they're just getting the car.

Officer William smiles.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL
 Well that's good. No need for me to
 worry then.

Neither move from their position.

Patty has a hard time making eye contact. She's still shaken
 up and at the same time feels like she's in trouble.

Officer Dawl is staring right at her face and looking over
 her body.

They finally catch each others eyes. Officer Dawl smiles
 kindly at her.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL (CONT'D)
 Beautiful night, isn't it?

Patty is confused, but trying to be friendly and polite. She
 keeps turning around to look for Abby and Laura.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL (CONT'D)

You know, I usually walk this beat alone. It's nice to see another person.

He chuckles. Patty smiles, uncomfortably.

Officer Dawl puts his hands in his pockets and casually walks over to the edge of the pier to look out at the water.

There are no guardrails on this side of the pier. Right below where they're standing are rocks.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL (CONT'D)

I love looking out here. It's my favorite place to bring my kids. The ocean is so beautiful, they just love it.

At the mention of kids, Patty relaxes even more. Officer Dawl turns towards her and gestures for her to come over.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL (CONT'D)

Come look. There's nothing like it.

Patty hesitates, but he doesn't seem to be threatening anymore, so she walks towards him and the edge of the pier.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL (CONT'D)

It's such a shame this area has become such a scary place. It's really the prettiest at night. I used to take my son night fishing, but it's just not safe anymore.

Patty lets the view wash over her and smiles, finally relaxing.

PATTY

It really is.

As they're both looking out, Officer Dawl starts to pull a knife, that looks exactly like the one in Cynthia's slideshow, out of his pocket.

He holds his hand still next to him.

OFFICER WILLIAM DAWL

You know, I actually was looking for a beagle who had gone missing. I almost had him in that bush over there. While you're waiting for your friends, would you want to help me -

Suddenly, Laura and Abby yell out for Patty.

Both Officer Dawl and Patty flip around, startled by the shout. As they're turning, Patty's backpack hits William square in the chest.

He stumbles backwards and trips over his own feet.

Patty hears his grunt and spins back around, hitting him again, this time pushing him off the edge, right into the rocks below them.

Patty screams. Abby and Laura come running.

ABBY

What is it?! What's wrong?

Patty points and we see William laying dead. His head smashed on the rocks.

LAURA

Oh my god.

ABBY

What happened?

PATTY

I don't know! I don't know! He was talking to me and then you yelled and I flipped around and I must have hit him with my backpack. I think I hit him.

LAURA

You hit him?

PATTY

I think? I don't know. It wasn't on purpose.

ABBY

It's fine. It's fine! We just need to call the police.

PATTY

What?! No! We can't!

LAURA

What? Why not?

PATTY

What if I get arrested?

ABBY

Patty, you didn't do anything wrong. He might not even be dead.

The three look down again and see blood start to seep out of his head.

LAURA

He's definitely dead.

PATTY

I hit him. Didn't I? Oh my god, oh my god.

Patty starts pacing. She's really starting to lose it.

ABBY

Look, Patty, just calm down okay? Let's just call 911 and report noises or something.

PATTY

Noises!! What if they show up, see him, see me, then arrest me! I won't make it in prison.

ABBY

Patty, no one is going to prison! We can't just flee though.

Patty has stopped pacing and stares at Abby. There are tears in her eyes. Patty really can't handle what's going on.

Abby and Laura look at each other. They love Patty very much and are themselves terrified of being in this situation.

Abby exhales and makes the decision for what they'll do.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Okay, let's drive to my place and call from there. We can say we heard something, but we're driving by and just wanted to call in case.

LAURA

That sounds good.

PATTY

Okay.

ABBY

Okay.

LAURA
Okay.

PATTY
Okay.

ABBY
Okay, let's stop saying okay and go.

The three hustle towards the car.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The three burst into Abby's door. Her roommate - IZAAK - oblivious to the point of concern- is playing video games.

IZAAK
Oh, hey -

ABBY
Not now Izaak!

IZAAK
I was just going to say -

ABBY
Not now! Also, we need the living room.

You think Izzak would get mad, but he's actually overly friendly and helpful, probably because he's always so oblivious.

IZAAK
Cool, no problem. Let me just -

ABBY
I'll do it!

IZAAK
I just need to save -

Abby turns off his game.

IZAAK (CONT'D)
You know I wasn't doing that well anyway. Alright, see ya later!

Izaak exits, whistling to himself.

LAURA
He is so nice.

ABBY

I know. It's infuriating.

Patty is curled up in a ball on the couch, crying. Abby and Laura exchange looks. They both sit on either side of her.

PATTY

We're going to prison.

LAURA

Yea, prob-

Abby stares at Laura, who swallows her words.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I mean, no we're not, of course
we're not.

Abby grabs her phone from her pocket.

ABBY

Okay, I'm going to call and just
say -

Patty starts to have a realization.

PATTY

He was so creepy.

LAURA

What?

PATTY

The cop. I mean maybe my backpack
just took over and knocked him
down.

LAURA

Well, backpacks are inanimate
objects. But I have heard that
inanimate objects could have
emotions.

PATTY

Really?

ABBY

Look, we don't know that your
backpack was what knocked him down.
He could have tripped. Besides,
let's just focus on making this ca-

Patty is staring off into space and realizes something else.

PATTY

The bushes.

ABBY

What?

PATTY

He was in the bushes. That's what got my attention. He was doing something in the bushes.

Patty has stood up and starts pacing, she's talking to herself.

LAURA

Well, maybe he was looking for cans? That could have been his side job?

Abby scoffs at Laura.

LAURA (CONT'D)

What? I mean it could be true.

Patty suddenly stops.

PATTY

Let's turn on the news.

ABBY

What? Why? Patty we need to call.

Patty kneels down in front of the tv, grabs the controller and starts flipping through the channels.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Patty, you should lie down. Or honestly probably call your parents? You haven't talked to them in an hour, they're probably freaking out.

Patty finally stops on a news report.

A REPORTER is at the pier, there is police tape everywhere. Patty sits back on the couch with the other two. Their mouths wide open.

REPORTER

Well, he has struck again. That's right. The St. Pete Pier Serial Killer, not the final name, has taken another victim. But this time, he's taken two.

The reporter walks towards a police officer standing in front of the crime scene tape.

His name is JACOB BUCKLEY - 30s, charming, but not in a sexual way, extremely smart, but not very well spoken, nervous and anxious in front of cameras and in large groups of people.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Officer. Can you tell us what we see here? And maybe even, what we don't see?

The reporter winks at the camera.

JACOB

Uh...well right now we can just see the tape because we're on this side and we're not supposed to show you the other side.

REPORTER

I just mean what's going on? Wasn't there two bodies found?

JACOB

Oh! Yes.

REPORTER

Anything else?

JACOB

One was male and one was female.

Patty, Abby, and Laura look at each other.

REPORTER

Well. That is, I guess, information and it is, of course, tragic. Do we think this is the work of the St. Pete Pier Serial Killer, not the final name?

JACOB

Um, well, I'm not allowed to say. So, I'll just...not say it...if that's okay?

REPORTER

Alright. Can you tell us anymore details? Or just details in general?

OFFICER JOHN DAWN

Uh, no. Sorry.

They stare at each other saying nothing. Finally, the reporter turns back to the camera.

REPORTER

Well, thank you.

OFFICER JOHN MATTHEWS - 40s, clean cut, but has a rough around the edges vibe - walks into frame.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Oh, sir! Sir! Could you give us some information on what is going on? Is it the St. Pete Pier Serial Killer, not the final name? Has he struck again?

The reporter puts the mic up to Officer John Matthews, who doesn't look happy to have a mic pushed into his face.

He looks at the reporter, then directly into the camera.

OFFICER JOHN MATTHEWS

I can't tell you that, but I will tell you this. The man who was killed tonight was my partner, Officer William Dawl. He was one of the greatest men I've ever met and I will not stop until his killer is brought to justice.

He's still staring directly into the camera. The reporter feels extremely intimidated.

REPORTER

Right...okay. Thank you sir.

Officer John Matthews finally breaks eye contact with the camera and looks at the reporter.

OFFICER JOHN MATTHEWS

You're welcome.

(he turns to Jacob)

Let's go. We need you over there.

Jacob and Officer John Matthews exit.

REPORTER

Well, what a night. You heard it here first folks. Something has happened. At the pier. What? Murder.

The reporter nods at the camera like he said something very profound.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
Back to you Susie.

Laura, Abby, and Patty are sitting on the couch in a terrified stupor.

ABBY
You said you saw him in the bushes?

PATTY
Yes.

LAURA
And that you felt weird around him?

PATTY
Yes.

ABBY
Do you think?

PATTY
Yes.

She finally looks at them.

PATTY (CONT'D)
I think he was the St. Pete Pier
Serial killer.

The three look in shock at the TV.

Suddenly a LOUD BANGING is heard. They look towards the kitchen. Izaak sticks his head out.

IZAAK
Sorry about that. I swear my hands
are like snakes. Always wiggling!

ABBY
It's fine, Izaak.

He goes back into the kitchen. The three sit silently. Suddenly Patty jumps up and is pacing again.

PATTY
Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god!

ABBY
What?! What is it!?

PATTY

My phone.

The doorbell RINGS.

END OF EPISODE