

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Episode 1.02

"The Ant Farm"

Written by

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11.

NARRATOR

Enter this sad little home where two sad, sad children mourn their dear parents. That is, at least, one child mourns. He makes an attempt to plan the final send-off. Why care about lives so temporary? Doesn't seem that Mackenna understands either.

THOMAS

What about Clair de Lune?

MACKENNA

I've told you at least six times, Thomas, I don't care who's invited.

THOMAS

The song, Mackenna. Debussy?

MACKENNA

We're picking songs for a funeral?

THOMAS

They danced to it at their wedding, I think. Or something like that. I don't know, there was some story about the song. For whatever reason, they cared about it.

MACKENNA

You know they died, right?

THOMAS

It's a matter of respect.

MACKENNA

I don't believe in funerals.

THOMAS

Mackenna...

MACKENNA

I'm not trying to be contrary.

THOMAS

There's a reason these rituals exist.

MACKENNA

We don't need some ritual to mourn.

THOMAS

For the rest of our family, though.

(beat)

And for me.

MACKENNA

Does it smell weird in here to you?

THOMAS

Look, the funeral has to happen. I want to support you in whatever helps you grieve best, but--

MACKENNA

It smells like flowers.

THOMAS

What?

MACKENNA

But like...sour?

FOOTSTEPS. Mackenna GATHERS her things.

THOMAS

What are you doing?

MACKENNA

I told Alfie and Nissa I'd meet up with them.

THOMAS

(beat)

Okay...

MACKENNA

I don't mean to abandon you or whatever, but they're worried.

THOMAS

How long do you think you'll be?

MACKENNA

I don't know. But go ahead and make whatever decisions you want. I'm not good at details, so...

THOMAS

Sure, yeah. Okay. I'll see you, then.

MACKENNA

See ya.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

12. Phone DIALING.

SAM

Hi, this is Detective Sam Mulligan from Conley. I'm calling for...yes, hi.

(beat)

Well, I appreciate your time, sir, certainly.

(beat)

That's right. Looking to see if any of the neighboring precincts have had similar crimes involving animals.

(beat)

You don't say. But that was over, what, fifty years ago? And that's the most recent animal attack similar to mine?

(beat)

That's true. An entire family killed by large animals is very similar.

(beat)

Well, I wouldn't say that, exactly, but--

(beat)

Yes, I'll look into it. Thanks for your help. Uh-huh. Bye.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

13. In a busy CAFÉ. Café MUSIC.

NARRATOR

You can just picture it, can't you? The three hapless fools, cuddling up in a small town café. Continue zooming out,

like the end of a tragic film, finding some resolve in the power of friendship after disaster strikes. Except this is not the end. And disaster still looms.

MACKENNA

I probably shouldn't be out. If Thomas were capable of getting mad at me, he'd be pissed.

NISSA

I think you needed to get away from the insanity for a night.

MACKENNA

I don't know. I should go.

ALFIE

Just stay for a little while. You need the distraction. You don't even have to have fun.

MACKENNA

Well, as long as there's no fun involved.

NISSA

I think that's your drink. I'll grab it.

Chair SCOOTs out.

ALFIE

So, how's the ant farm?

MACKENNA

Queen's working on a new nest.

ALFIE

Ew?

MACKENNA

You asked.

ALFIE

A humble effort to show interest in
your hobbies.

NISSA

One chai tea. Extra hot. Sans fun.

ALFIE

Was mine ready?

BARISTA

(distantly)

Kids hot chocolate!

ALFIE

Oh, sweet!

Chair SCREECHES.

NISSA

And a water with extra water for the broke
store manager. How is it that you both
have more cash to spend on beverages
than me? I want tasty beverages, too.

MACKENNA

It might have something to do with all
of those computer gadgets you're
always buying.

NISSA

So much better than tasty beverages,
honestly.

MACKENNA

Yeah. I gotta pee.

NISSA

And, she's off.

Chair SCOOTs back in.

ALFIE

Where's Mack going?

NISSA

Bathroom.

Alfie SIPS his drink.

ALFIE
It's watered down.

NISSA
I'm sorry.

ALFIE
It's fine. So, uh, this is weird.

NISSA
What's weird?

ALFIE
What do we even talk about?

NISSA
Just try to act normal.

ALFIE
I feel like acting normal right now is
also insensitive.

NISSA
I don't know, Alfie. I don't know
what's best.

1-2 seconds of silence (just café noise). Door OPENS.

MACKENNA
Oh my god, I'm so sorry.

Door SLAMS.

SHAYLEE
(through the door, laughing)
Don't worry about it!

Door OPENS.

SHAYLEE (CONT'D)
Absolutely my fault for forgetting to
lock. Don't worry, I was just fixing
my hair.

MACKENNA

I'm so sorry. These stupid single-person bathrooms.

SHAYLEE

Totally. But I'm a fan of "pick a bathroom, not a gender."

MACKENNA

Yeah. Uh, I'll pee now. So sorry to bother you.

1-2 seconds of silence (just café noise).

ALFIE

No, see, it depends on the genre of the story.

NISSA

Of what story?

ALFIE

Of our story. Well, Mack's story. If it's action, then Mack will have to go on the run from the killer. Involving at least one lengthy car chase.

NISSA

Mack doesn't drive.

ALFIE

But if it's horror, then the killer is some supernatural entity who can't be stopped by conventional means. Probably with a dark past tied to Mack's family history.

NISSA

Why do I listen to this?

ALFIE

Of course, if it's a psychological thriller, then Mack is the murderer.

NISSA

That isn't funny, Alfie.

ALFIE

I don't make the rules of generic thrillers, Nissa.

(beat)

M. Night Shyamalan does.

NISSA

Oh for fuck's sake--

SHAYLEE

Excuse me, it looks like you dropped this.

NISSA

Oh no, you can't lose your Pokemon hat!

ALFIE

It is not a Pokemon hat.

NISSA

It's Pikachu yellow.

ALFIE

It's yellow.

NISSA

What he means is: "thank you."

SHAYLEE

No problem. Also, you've got some... yeah, it's whipped cream. No, there, on your nose... There, you got it.

NISSA

That is embarrassing. I am embarrassed for you.

MACKENNA

Oh, hey.

SHAYLEE

It's bathroom girl!

MACKENNA

I beg of you to not make that my nickname.

ALFIE

Changing your contact in my phone.

NISSA

Nicknames? You two know each other?

SHAYLEE

As of four minutes ago when she walked in on me in the bathroom, yes.

NISSA

Mackenna!

MACKENNA

Oh, like you actually believe I did it on purpose.

SHAYLEE

Nice to meet you formally, Mackenna.

MACKENNA

Uh, Mack is fine, actually.

NISSA

Mack-n-Cheese if you really want to annoy her.

MACKENNA

Which you don't. That's Nissa, that's Alfie.

SHAYLEE

Shaylee.

NISSA

Are you staying for the show, Shaylee?

SHAYLEE

I've actually just been coming here to read lately. I've never seen it get this busy.

ALFIE

You must be more of a Tuesday afternoon reader. Place is packed on the weekends.

NISSA

Do you want to sit?

SHAYLEE

Uh, yeah. Sure! If I'm not intruding on anything.

NISSA

Maybe just a few more of Alfie's bad jokes.

NARRATOR

And so, the introductions begin. As you've gathered, that's Shaylee. This story perhaps is not about her either, though she may be an important pawn in the game. It all depends, I suppose, on how this interaction goes. No pressure, dear Mackenna. I'm sure it will take at least a few minutes before your anti-social attitude and inability to make many genuine relationships scares her off. Though she seems so intrigued by you. Perhaps, as long as she doesn't ask any questions, doesn't dig too deep.

(beat)

Then again...one does not have to dig very deep to uncover Mackenna Thorne's skeletons.

NISSA

Why'd you move here, of all places?

ALFIE

Nissa loves to hate on Conley.

NISSA

Look around. Mediocre musicians are the closest we come to culture.

ALFIE

I like this place.

NISSA

Your hot chocolate is watered down.

ALFIE

Touché.

NISSA

Are you going to Clements?

SHAYLEE

What's Clements?

NISSA

The community college.

SHAYLEE

Ah. No, I'm not. I moved for work.

ALFIE

Good. We aren't much for studying.

MACKENNA

Says the Magic nerd to the hacktivist.

ALFIE

Shhh, Mackenna. We're making friends. Watch the bonds form. Shaylee, do you have family here?

SHAYLEE

Nope. Just me.

ALFIE

We're all stuck here. We are the ones that never got away. Well, maybe not stuck, that sounds negative, but we're still living here because our families still live here.

NISSA

Alfie--

ALFIE

What?

MACKENNA

He's fine, Nissa. It's okay.

ALFIE

Shit. Someone change the subject. I beg of you.

SHAYLEE

What's your shtick, Mack?

MACKENNA

My what?

SHAYLEE

You know, your hobby, passion, what have you?

MACKENNA

Oh, um...well, I have an ant farm.

NISSA

It's very odd.

ALFIE

We don't talk about it.

MACKENNA

Whoa, what's with the ganging up?

ALFIE

I ask myself this question daily.

NARRATOR

And the conversation continues. Nothing meaningful. All pointless small talk. But perhaps that, itself, is meaningful. Two hours of wasted time. Wasted connection. Getting to know each other by sharing nothing of significance. iFriends in the iWorld.

Café MUSIC switches songs to show time change.

SHAYLEE

This was the most fun I've had since I got here. Hopefully I'll run into you all again.

NISSA

We are very rarely out doing anything cool, so the probability is high.

ALFIE

Hey, I think this is cool.

SHAYLEE

I did, too. Even if my privacy was violated trying to use the bathroom.

MACKENNA

Okay, you were fixing your hair and didn't lock the door. Can we let that die?

SHAYLEE

You've been quiet.

ALFIE

That's Mack for ya.

SHAYLEE

Mysterious. Brooding. Aloof.

MACKENNA

Annoyed.

NISSA

Except you're like, almost smiling. We should keep Shaylee on the friend list.

ALFIE

And by that you mean we should start a friend list.

SHAYLEE

I would be honored to grace your list.

MACKENNA

We should probably head home. This place is clearing out.

NISSA

Shaylee, did you walk? Which way are you headed?

MUSICAL TRANSITION

14.

SHAYLEE

Are you sure this is the right way?
None of this looks familiar.

NISSA

It's a short cut. Your place isn't very far from mine. Probably less than a mile past it. After we drop you off, I'll get my car to drive Mack and Alfie home.

SHAYLEE

Still, I'm sorry you're wasting your entire night walking me home. Feel free to go on your way. I don't want to hold you up.

MACKENNA

If you haven't learned from the last few hours, we don't always have a lot to do.

ALFIE

Yeah, the 18 others friends we have just waiting to hang out with us aren't going anywhere.

NISSA

He's kidding. Just in case you couldn't tell that was a joke since it wasn't funny.

ALFIE

Hey Nissa, a funny joke would be shut up.

NISSA

Yes. Yes, that would be funny. Please be funny and shut up, Alfie.

SHAYLEE

Do you ever get a word in edgewise with these two?

MACKENNA

At least they fill the silence. It's nice on the days where I don't feel talking.

NISSA

Typically the days ending in Y.

MACKENNA

At other times, though, it can be quite irritating.

SHAYLEE

(laughs)

Um, Nissa, you're really sure this is the way? These buildings don't look like mine.

ALFIE

That's cuz you live in the nice part of town.

SHAYLEE

I thought we were close.

MACKENNA

Oh, we are. The nice part of town is just after the bad part of town.

NISSA

This is not the bad part of town. I live in this part of town. It's the less-uppity part of town.

ALFIE

AKA the bad part.

NISSA

Try being funny, Alfie. I beg of you.

MACKENNA

What did you say you do to afford such a nice place, Shaylee?

SHAYLEE

I don't really have one job, I guess. I moved to take a couple of gigs doing some freelance, odd jobs, whatever you want to call it. I mostly live off an inheritance.

ALFIE

That sounds awesome.

NISSA

It means someone close to her died, dumbass. Sorry for your loss, Shaylee.

SHAYLEE

It's fine. My parents passed away, but it was years ago.

MACKENNA

That does suck. Sorry, Shaylee.

ALFIE

Geez, I'm really sorry. I didn't mean--

SHAYLEE

It's really fine.

MACKENNA

You don't have to excuse Alfie because you just met him. He's usually pretty inexcus--

Church BELL.

MACKENNA (CONT'D)
(cries in pain)

SHAYLEE
(gasps)

ALFIE

What's wrong?

Church BELL.

MACKENNA

That church bell.

SHAYLEE

It's really loud.

NISSA
It's really not.

Church BELL; continues to RING at regular intervals through scene, each more distant.

MACKENNA
Come on, let's hurry past it.

ALFIE
It doesn't bother me at all.

NISSA
I live a minute away. I barely notice it.

MACKENNA
It feels like it's vibrating my bones.

SHAYLEE
It's fairly agonizing.

NISSA
Well, it isn't much farther, and it's almost done ringing.

SHAYLEE
Y'know, I recognize this street. I think I can make it back on my own from here.

MACKENNA
Are you sure? We could--

SHAYLEE
No, I'm sure. Thank you for the company.

NISSA
It was really nice to meet you, Shaylee.

SHAYLEE
Likewise. I'll see you again, I'm sure. You have my number.

ALFIE
Coolio. Bye, Shaylee.

SHAYLEE
Bye guys. Bye Mackenna.

MACKENNA
See you around.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

15. In a lightly crowded BAR. Bar MUSIC.

NARRATOR
One suburban bar. Two old friends. At least three ulterior motives. Everything in life is manipulation. Deception. The world you know is a lie, as is everything in it. Pull back the curtain and what will you see? Another curtain.

SAM
Thomas, over here!

THOMAS
(beat)
Hey, Sam. Thanks for meeting me.

SAM
How you holding up?

THOMAS
I'm holding.

SAM
I got you a Dos Equis. I wasn't sure what you like. Last time we hung out, you preferred Dr. Pepper.

THOMAS
This is perfect. Thanks. How are you?

SAM
Busy.

THOMAS

Any...updates? On the case?

SAM

Probably best we don't get into that now.

THOMAS

Yeah. You're right.

SAM

Have you been here before?

THOMAS

My mom and dad would come for trivia. But no...I haven't myself.

SAM

They were good people.

THOMAS

They were.

1-2 seconds of silence (just bar noise).

SAM

I remember...there was that time I went on a date with Jacob Hornsby. From the soccer team. I, uh, I called you from the bathroom because I wanted out.

THOMAS

Mmm, what year was that again?

SAM

Junior.

THOMAS

Right. I think I just had my wisdom teeth out.

SAM

Yep, exactly. You couldn't drive. Your dad came and picked me up. He drove that old minivan, the green one.

THOMAS

Yeti.

SAM

You named it Yeti?

THOMAS

Dad did--thought it was "abominable."

SAM

That sounds like something he'd say.
Anyway, uh, he gave me dating advice.

THOMAS

Oh god. What did he say?

SAM

He said, "The one thing you need to
know is: all men are trash."

THOMAS

He did not.

SAM

He did.

THOMAS

And he didn't add an exception for me?

SAM

Actually, he added "especially Thomas."
He was very wise.

THOMAS

See, now I know you're lying. He always
thought I should ask you out.

SAM

Like I said: very wise.

THOMAS

You're not wrong.

(beat)

This is the first time we've really
talked since high school.

SAM

You moved.

THOMAS

Only a town over.

SAM

Well. I never heard from you, so...

THOMAS

I know. I regret it. I've been so busy.

SAM

We don't have to get into it.

THOMAS

It's my fault. I was dating someone for a bit, and she would visit with me. I didn't want it to be weird.

SAM

We're friends. We always have been.

THOMAS

Right. Well, to friends.

Glasses CLINK.

16. Switch away from bar to Nissa's car. Engine CUTS.

NISSA

Thanks for coming out with us, Mack.

MACKENNA

Do you guys...want to come in for a bit?

ALFIE

Sure!

NISSA

I know you weren't close with your parents, but you're still allowed to be upset. You can do the crying thing if you need to.

MACKENNA

Thanks, Niss... Crying doesn't help me much.

17. Switch back to bar.

THOMAS

I'm worried about Mack.

SAM

Why's that?

THOMAS

It's hard to tell how this is affecting her.

SAM

She did seem very tense at the station yesterday. But I would say that's probably normal. Everyone reacts differently.

THOMAS

Is it normal? You think?

SAM

Do you have a reason to think it isn't?

THOMAS

She can just be so... cold sometimes. But she's very independent, so it's understandable.

SAM

Does she open up to her friends?

THOMAS

I have no idea. Since I moved for school, and we both officially became "adults," or whatever, I rarely see her.

18. Switch away from bar to Mackenna's basement.

MACKENNA

I'm just going to lay down.

NISSA

Of course. We'll do the supporting and the friending.

(beat)

Alfie: supporting and friending.

ALFIE

Uhh, right. Do you need water or something?

MACKENNA

I'm fine.

NISSA

Okay, scoot over.

MACKENNA

What?

NISSA

If we're going to do the friend thing, you have to scoot over.

Mattress SQUEAKS/GROANS.

ALFIE

Shaylee was cool.

NISSA

She seemed nice. What did you think, Mack?

MACKENNA

Yeah, she was...I liked her.

ALFIE

Whoa.

NISSA

High praise from you.

ALFIE

I'm pretty sure Mack still doesn't like me.

MACKENNA

Oh, stop. She was just...it felt like we had a lot in common.

NISSA

Really?

MACKENNA

What?

NISSA

She was just so...I dunno.

ALFIE

Cool. She was absurdly cool.

MACKENNA

And I'm not?

ALFIE

Oh my god, she was so much cooler than all of us.

NISSA

Except her jacket. Did either of you notice it was--

MACKENNA

--inside out?

ALFIE

I thought I was the only one who noticed.

NISSA

Everyone noticed. How could you not?

ALFIE

Maybe she just didn't realize.

MACKENNA

It looked like her sweater was, too, but I couldn't tell for sure.

NISSA

There you go. Found a flaw.

(beat)

God, Alfie, please stop playing footsie with me.

ALFIE

What? I'm not doing anything!

MACKENNA

(light laugh)

Sorry, friend.

MACKENNA / NISSA / ALFIE

(laugh)

ALFIE

We're here for you, Mack. This whole thing sucks ass. But we're here for you.

MACKENNA

Have I ever told you guys I appreciate you?

NISSA

Exactly never.

MACKENNA

Remind me to do that sometime.

19. Switch back to bar.

THOMAS

How'd you get into this work, anyway? It's pretty amazing that you're a detective so young.

SAM

Less amazing when you take into account the size of this town.

THOMAS

Still.

SAM

I fast-tracked a criminal justice degree straight out of high school.

THOMAS

Clements?

SAM

Yeah. It was cheaper than state school. Then at 21, I took my police exams.

THOMAS

And you swooped right in to take over?

SAM

Not even close. I went to work in the city for a couple years.

THOMAS

Wow. How was that?

SAM

It was...important, I think.

THOMAS

Why'd you move back?

SAM

That's uh, a story for another time, maybe.

THOMAS

Are you happy?

SAM

(laughs)

Happy, Thomas? You've always been an idealist.

THOMAS

I just meant--

SAM

I'm glad I'm here. Yes.

THOMAS

(beat)

I know I can't stop talking
about it but-

SAM

Absolutely valid.

THOMAS

Right. But, I just don't understand.
They are good people. Were. They
didn't have any enemies.

SAM

Maybe it wasn't an enemy. Maybe they
were closer than that.

THOMAS

They didn't have a lot of friends.

SAM

Well, they had you, right?

THOMAS

Of course.

SAM

When did you have dinner together?

THOMAS

Usually every other Tuesday. Except dad
had to work late last Tuesday, so I
wasn't able to go.

SAM

I'm sorry. That's hard. Was it mostly
casual?

THOMAS

What do you mean?

SAM

Your conversations.

THOMAS

Yeah, I guess. Just family
conversations.

SAM

Right. Just clarifying. Did you ever have to tackle any hard conversations? Maybe about money?

THOMAS

No.

(beat)

Why are you asking me this?

SAM

I'm just curious if there was anything in your relationship that could have made it tense.

THOMAS

(sarcastic)

Right, because then I would be a suspect.

(beat)

Hold up.

SAM

That is not at all what I'm saying.

THOMAS

You're questioning me.

SAM

Of course I'm not.

THOMAS

I think...

(beat)

I should go.

SAM

No, wait. You're misinterpreting--

THOMAS

It's fine. I'm just feeling a little... disappointed, I guess. I'm sure you're just trying to help. It's just...it's late. I'm tired. All of this is very...

(beat)

I should go. I'll call you,

20. Switch back to Mackenna's basement.

MACKENNA

As much as I appreciate your silent support in this rom-com post-breakup looking scene, you guys should probably go. Alfie's going to start snoring soon, and I don't want to be here for his morning breath.

ALFIE

(yawning)

How do you know I have morning breath?

MACKENNA

We work mornings together at least twice a week.

ALFIE

Yeah, but I hygienate.

NISSA

Not a word.

ALFIE

You're not a word. You driving me home?

NISSA

As always. Please don't call shotgun again. You're the only other person in the car.

ALFIE

You suck the fun out of everything.

MACKENNA

Thanks again, guys.

NISSA

Always and forever, Mack-aroni.

MACKENNA

I've been softened from grief and ignoring the awful nicknames, but by tomorrow, they must stop.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

21.

SAM

Detective Mulligan. Audio log. I may have overstepped talking to Thomas, but I need to ensure that all close relatives are not suspect. I hope I didn't upset him too much.

(beat)

I need to bring the Thorne siblings and the friends in tomorrow. I need to find out more about the Thornes. Why would someone want to kill them? Could it be revenge? To cover up a secret? Pure hatred?

NARRATOR

Is that what they're calling it nowadays? That blasé, jaded attitude. The constant leaving the room. The spinning in circles. The excuses. Is that what possesses Mackenna Thorne? Pure hatred?

MUSICAL TRANSITION

22. Late night, outdoor city SOUNDS.

NARRATOR

In the city, not far from the little suburb where parents are slaughtered, the lights are still on late into the night. Likely not the best people stalking the streets at such an hour. Some are hardened. Some are fools. And when the hardened and the fools meet...

Group of men WALKING on pavement.

BRO

Admit it, brah. You struck out.

Group of men LAUGH.

BRO (CONT'D)

(to friends)

Hey, check it. I'm gonna stream this.

(calling out)

Hey, little mama.

Group of men WALK faster.

BRO (CONT'D)
We're talking to you.
(beat)
Dayum, you are fine. Why are you all
alone? You know it's dangerous to be
all alone.

Group of men ENCOURAGE.

WOMAN
Leave us.

BRO
Us? Hey guys, I think she wants a
little private time with me.

Group of men LAUGH.

WOMAN
Avoid calling attention to yourself.

BRO
Huh?

WOMAN
Avoid making a scene.

BRO
This bitch is crazy.

WOMAN
Do not kill unnecessarily.

BRO
Let's go.
(beat)
They oughta lock you up. Something's
seriously wrong with--

WOMAN
No!

Metal SLASHING.

BRO
(bloody gurgles)

Group of men SCREAM. Group of men RUN. Body FALLS.
Continued STABBING through next line, slowing as the woman
calms.

WOMAN
(crazed, calming slowly)
I will not be imprisoned further! Not
by you! You will not. You cannot. This
ends.
(beat, calming)
If you must kill, hide for a time.
Reduce suspicion.
(beat, dead calm)
They will still be there when you are
ready for them.

THE END