

**THE HIDDEN PEOPLE**

Episode 1.09

"Schrödinger's Murderer"

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96.

RON

Future Detective Sitwell. Audio log. It's been over two weeks since the Thorne double homicide. All of our leads have dried up. Nobody's talking. The streets have gone silent. Nobody trusts the badge these days. It's a cold, hard life, gum-shoeing through the days and nights. Pounding the pavement. Greasing palms and cracking skulls. But sooner or later, someone's going to talk. And then we'll get the perp. Unless it's Thomas. I'm pretty sure Sam has a crush on--

SAM

For Chrissakes, Ron. I'm standing right here.

RON

If she's compromised, I may need to go it alone. This audio log will be my only partner.

SAM

Your phone isn't even recording.

RON

Time to sign off.

(beat)

Hey, how do you usually sign off?

SAM

I usually just stop talking and turn off the recorder.

RON

That's dramatic but feels a little abrupt.

SAM

Can you do something productive?

RON

Sorry. I'm just occupying myself. I don't know what else to do. I wasn't kidding about the leads drying up.

SAM  
Go through them again.

RON  
Good idea. Retrace the steps. Hang on a  
sec.  
(beat)  
Okay.

Dramatic SOUND EFFECT.

RON (CONT'D)  
Robert and Paige Thorne were brutally  
murdered walking back to their car from  
a night out.

Dramatic SOUND EFFECT.

RON (CONT'D)  
The killer used attack dogs and a spear  
or halberd or something.

Dramatic SOUND EFFECT.

RON (CONT'D)  
We found a bloody--

SAM  
Please stop playing those sound  
effects.

RON  
Sorry.  
(beat)  
We found a bloody shoe print on the  
body. It's the same size as Mackenna  
Thorne--her shoe, not her entire body--  
but we couldn't find a shoe that  
matched the print in her house. Thomas  
Thorne was an hour away. Alfred O'Toole  
and Nissa Sifsdottir have solid alibis.  
Mackenna Thorne was alone at the time  
of the murders. No other enemies or  
suspects. Days later...  
(beat)  
Can I just--

SAM  
One more time.

Dramatic SOUND EFFECT.

RON  
Days later, Thomas Thorne was attacked by dogs and narrowly escaped. And all of that has led us here.

SAM  
Yes. Here. To nothing.

RON  
Nowheresville.

SAM  
Not a single suspect.

RON  
But a person of interest. Great interest.

SAM  
Mackenna?

RON  
Everything surrounding her is just too weird. Too many coincidences.

SAM  
I keep trying to rule her out. It should be easy if she's innocent. We have ruled out every other family member, friend, co-worker...

RON  
Maybe we should be trying to rule her in.

SAM  
That's not how this works, Ron. We can't work the evidence to fit her. Our job is to evaluate without bias.

RON  
But you are getting pretty cozy with--

SAM

Let it go. I can maintain my perspective.

RON

I'm not judging, Elsa.

SAM

I'm pretty sure that's exactly what you're doing.

RON

Okay, well, what can we do? Do we just keep waiting for more calls to the tip line?

SAM

If I have to investigate one more neighbor's scary-looking pit bull, I might disconnect the phone.

(beat)

But okay, no, I appreciate the initiative. We can't wallow. Check the email again, see if the DNA came back.

RON

Roger that.

NARRATOR

Can you hear the rift forming? The search for the truth will tear every relationship asunder. When the truth is too terrible to bear, the only choice is to turn on the liars. And this hapless duo have been kidding themselves long enough. Perhaps the simplest answer is the correct one. Perhaps everything points to Mackenna Thorne because...well, some of us already know the answer.

Keyboard TYPING. Mouse CLICKS.

RON

No...yes! It just refreshed. We have results.

SAM

And?

RON

Hang on.

(beat)

The only foreign material was a hair found on Mrs. Thorne. Holy shit.

SAM

Did they match it?

RON

It matches Mackenna Thorne.

SAM

Unbelievable.

RON

Does that even mean anything?

SAM

No. No it doesn't. Of course her hair could be on her mother's clothes. They live in the same house. Do their laundry in the same machines.

RON

But it doesn't rule her out.

SAM

Exactly. Just like every other piece of evidence.

RON

Hey, this is weird. It says the hair found was undyed. Doesn't Mackenna dye her hair?

SAM

She does. But even then, it could just be an old hair. Maybe stuck in the fibers of the jacket or shirt. Though you would think the hair wouldn't be old if they found DNA.

RON

So it still tells us nothing.

SAM

It tells us that everything points to Mackenna and nothing points away.

RON

Except the dogs. I mean, what the hell?

SAM

Fair point. This is still big news, even if we can explain it away. We're close. The district attorney will want more than we have now, but probably not much more.

RON

What are you thinking?

SAM

I think we go out. Canvassing the area. Talking to people.

RON

Pounding the pavement. Greasing palms and cracking skulls.

SAM

If leads won't come to us, we'll go to them. Sans bribery and skull cracking. Get your jacket. There must be something we can find.

#### **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

97.

NISSA

I think I found something, Alfie.

ALFIE

More dog trainers?

NISSA

Uh, no and never again.

ALFIE

I'm still not convinced this wasn't a werewolf attack.

NISSA

I found a police report of a weird stabbing downtown from a couple weeks ago.

ALFIE

I'm sure if it were related, the cops would have already investigated it.

NISSA

See, I doubt they did. It doesn't look related.

ALFIE

Then why do we care? We're supposed to be solving the murders and clearing Mack's name.

NISSA

It's just too...strange.

ALFIE

Like trained dogs murdering someone with a sword strange?

NISSA

Maybe. A woman stabbed a guy to death right in front of his friends. When the cops showed up, no woman, no body. Just a lot of blood.

ALFIE

I don't know. I'm still team Jacob.

NISSA

His friends said that he took a video of it on his phone, but the cops never found the phone. There's a good chance, though, that his phone automatically uploaded the video to his cloud at some point afterward, even if he were already dead. I think I know someone who can help me find it.

ALFIE

Okay, but if this goes nowhere, we find out where we can get some silver bullets.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

98.

NARRATOR

And the four resume their quests. Ron to blame Mackenna. Nissa and Alfie to vindicate her. And Sam. Poor, conflicted Sam. Claiming she just wants the truth but praying that the finger points anywhere other than Thomas's sister. That leaves Mackenna herself. While the others race to decide her fate, she has many important choices of her own to make.

Café with light ACTIVITY and MUSIC.

THOMAS

Mackenna, do you want whipped cream or no whipped cream?

MACKENNA

Do you know me at all?

THOMAS

She'll have whipped cream. Thanks.

(beat)

Here's your pre-dinner dessert.

MACKENNA

It's nice to know that you'll pick up the bad joke slack in Alfie's absence. How are you enjoying your sinless black coffee?

THOMAS

I'd prefer caffeine, but it's a little late in the day.

MACKENNA

Thomas, it's movie night.

THOMAS

Sure, but I want to go to sleep after the movie.

MACKENNA

Why are you being responsible? You don't even have a job right now.

THOMAS

I have a job. Trish said I could come back whenever I want.

MACKENNA

Well, you don't need to stay for me.

THOMAS

I'm not--

MACKENNA

I know you, Thomas. Just like you knew I wanted whipped cream.

THOMAS

This is a little different than whipped cream, Mackenna. It's really...hey, isn't that--

MACKENNA

Shaylee?

SHAYLEE

Mackenna!

(beat)

It's Thomas, right? I'm terrible with names.

THOMAS

Yep. Hi, Shaylee. Good to see you again.

MACKENNA

What are you doing here?

SHAYLEE

Shockingly, I come here even when I'm not meeting you. It is where we first met, you know.

MACKENNA

Sorry, I didn't mean it like...  
obviously you're allowed to come here.

THOMAS

What are you up to?

SHAYLEE

I thought about getting some work done,  
but then I thought: espresso.

MACKENNA

Don't let us stand in the way.

THOMAS

Y'know, we're heading home soon to make  
dinner and watch a movie. Can your work  
wait until tomorrow?

MACKENNA

Thomas, I'm sure that--

SHAYLEE

Sure! That actually sounds lovely.  
Thank you for inviting me, Thomas.

THOMAS

Mackenna's giving me the evil eye. She  
doesn't like her worlds colliding.

SHAYLEE

Colliding worlds is my specialty.

MACKENNA

I must have vanished from their sight.  
I bet they can't even hear me anymore.

THOMAS

Here she goes.

MACKENNA

Maybe I should test it by screaming  
really loud.

SHAYLEE

I don't have to come, Mack. Oh, look at all the work that just suddenly appeared.

MACKENNA

Oh, stop. You're coming to movie night.

THOMAS

There will be fun.

SHAYLEE

What's for dinner?

THOMAS

I was going to whip up a quiche. I'll meet you in the truck, Mackenna.

SHAYLEE

(whispering)

Whip up a quiche?

MACKENNA

(joking)

I fucking hate him. Could he suck at just one thing? Anything?

SHAYLEE

I see his perfection, and suddenly I understand you so much better.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

99. Outdoors. Cars occasionally DRIVE past.

RON

So what are we looking for?

SAM

The scene's been scoured, so I don't think we'll find anything physical. I'm more interested in the people around. I know we couldn't find any witnesses to the crime, but maybe we can find someone who knows...I don't know, something.

RON  
That is kinda vague.

SAM  
Maybe we're just not asking the right questions.

RON  
Is "do you know anything about the murders" a wrong question?

SAM  
No, but we've already asked it. Outside the box, Ron. You're not a detective. You're as outside as we get. What haven't we asked yet?

RON  
Well, we keep asking what people might have seen. What if we ask what they haven't seen?

SAM  
Yeah, that's...okay, that's maybe a little more outside than I thought you would go, but I like the idea. Let's build on that. You go east down the street, and I'll go west. Talk to pedestrians, workers, anybody you see. Meet back here in an hour.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

100. Country MUSIC in an uncrowded bar.

ALFIE  
This is the place?

NISSA  
It's where he wanted to meet.

ALFIE  
Are you going to tell me who we're meeting? Is he waiting in a shadowy booth? I should have worn a fedora.

NISSA

We're meeting someone who's going to help us find out what happened to the dead guy.

ALFIE

Is there a reason you won't tell me who we're meeting?

NISSA

Yes.

Nissa and Alfie WALK through the bar.

NISSA (CONT'D)

Over here.

Bench CREAKS as they sit.

TANGY MESQUITE

I'm not buying what you're selling.

NISSA

You can't trust Pringles.

TANGY MESQUITE

Nissa. Good to see you.

ALFIE

Holy shit.

TANGY MESQUITE

(concerned)

Who is this?

ALFIE

You're Tangy Mesquite!

TANGY MESQUITE

(annoyed)

Don't call me that. And keep your voice down.

NISSA

This is the reason I didn't tell you.

ALFIE

I'm a huge fan, Mr. Mesquite. Your exposé on essential oils was a revelation.

TANGY MESQUITE

Bed, Bath, and Body Works has something to hide. I'm certain of it.

NISSA

We need your help.

TANGY MESQUITE

That's what you said in your message.

ALFIE

Message? You know Tangy Mesquite? Why did you never tell me that you know Tangy Mesquite?

NISSA

You never asked.

ALFIE

Well I didn't ask if you knew Chris Pratt when we suffered through Jurassic World, either.

(beat)

Oh my god, you know Chris Pratt?

NISSA

I do not know Chris Pratt.

ALFIE

I'm so sorry for making that comment about Jurassic World. I have a Star Lord lunch box.

NISSA

I still don't know Chris Pratt. And I don't think he heard you.

TANGY MESQUITE

Nissa.

NISSA

Right. Sorry. I need to hack someone's cloud and pull a video off of it.

TANGY MESQUITE

You should only upload decoy files to a cloud. What kind of moron uploads something of value?

NISSA

A dead one. Phone was never recovered. Neither was his body, for that matter.

TANGY MESQUITE

You're talking about the murder downtown. Supposedly committed by a crazy woman walking alone.

NISSA

That's the one.

TANGY MESQUITE

My guess is a rogue succubus.

NISSA

Well, whoever killed him, he supposedly took video of her on his phone.

TANGY MESQUITE

And since the phone is missing, you need to get into his cloud to view the archived video.

NISSA

Exactly.

ALFIE

We are so in Ethan Hunt territory. Maybe even James Bond.

TANGY MESQUITE

I don't understand why you need me. This is easily something you could do. I'm not the hacker here.

NISSA

I'm not worried about getting in. I'm worried about getting out. I need an untraceable workstation. Something off the grid.

TANGY MESQUITE

Which is where I come in.

NISSA

I'm breaking into an account housed with a billion dollar company. I can't leave a trail back to my door.

TANGY MESQUITE

I have a location and a machine. How soon do you need access?

NISSA

Is now too soon?

TANGY MESQUITE

Now is best. This is almost as fascinating as smoky thai kettle chips. I don't want to wait.

ALFIE

Tangy Mesquite is going to take us to a secret facility so we can hack a major corporation to solve a murder. Is this real life?

NARRATOR

What is real, anyway? Right now, you can still look away. Mackenna could be innocent or guilty. Schrödinger's murderer. But once you open the box, you can't go back to your ignorant bliss.

### **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

101.

THOMAS

So then Mackenna--three years old!-- looks right at the woman and says "don't talk to me, you shtupid yady."

SHAYLEE

You did not!

MACKENNA

I have no recollection of this.

THOMAS

Mom was mortified. A stranger calls her daughter beautiful, and that's the response.

MACKENNA

To be fair, I still say something similar to guys who call me beautiful.

SHAYLEE

You were a spitfire.

MACKENNA / THOMAS

Were?

SHAYLEE

Well, you're always so reserved now. I can't imagine you would ever say something so brazen.

MACKENNA

Oh, I'm still that kid. Only difference is that now I just think terrible things about people and then smile.

THOMAS

I got her socks for her birthday last year that said "polite as fuck."

SHAYLEE

All these revelations. I feel like I'm learning so much more about you.

MACKENNA

See, this is the danger of worlds colliding.

SHAYLEE

I like getting to know you.

THOMAS

This is the classic Mackenna pattern. Everyone wants to be her friend. She doesn't want any of them around.

MACKENNA

Eh. Shaylee's all right, I guess.

SHAYLEE

That feels like high praise coming from you.

THOMAS

Oh, you have no idea. She has few friends, many followers.

MACKENNA

Followers? I don't run a cult, Thomas.

THOMAS

Maybe the wrong word. Hangers-on? Shaylee, Mackenna was one of the most popular people in high school.

SHAYLEE

I disbelieve.

MACKENNA

It's not like he makes it sound.

THOMAS

Well, that's the interesting part. She never did anything to warrant popularity. No sports, no clubs, barely spoke. Yet everyone wanted to hang out with her.

MACKENNA

That's an exaggeration.

THOMAS

She was invited to every party. Like all of them. And how many guys in school didn't ask you to prom?

SHAYLEE  
(mock intrigue)  
Really?

THOMAS  
Even a few girls.

MACKENNA  
That was during the goth phase. Guys  
just like corsets and eyeliner.

SHAYLEE  
You had a goth phase?!

THOMAS  
There are pictures.

SHAYLEE  
This is the best dinner ever.

MACKENNA  
I suddenly feel very tricked into this  
dinner and movie night.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

102. Outdoors. Cars occasionally DRIVE past.

RON  
Future Detective Sitwell. Audio log.  
I've been waiting on Sam at the  
rendezvous point for ten minutes. She's  
rarely late. I didn't find anything  
useful, unfortunately. I should also  
figure out how to operate the recording  
function on my phone.

SAM  
Ron!

RON  
Sam! Everything okay?

SAM  
Yes. I got held up talking to someone  
at the bar.

RON

The bar where the Thornes were before the murders?

SAM

The same. You're a genius, Ron.

RON

I, well, thank...is that sarcasm?

SAM

No. Seriously. I was striking out with everyone I spoke to, so I just decided to go with your way-outside-the-box question.

RON

"What haven't you seen?"

SAM

Yes. I asked the bartender. And you know what he told me? A homeless man comes by every night around close of business. The bartender gives him leftover food.

RON

This town has homeless people?

NARRATOR

So many people are hidden in plain sight, Ron.

SAM

Guess what the bartender said when I asked what he hasn't seen.

RON

Uh, the homeless guy?

SAM

Exactly. Last time he saw him was the night before the murders.

RON

Okay...so you think the perp got the homeless guy, too?

SAM

That's possible, but we never found a body or evidence of another crime. Why leave the Thornes laid out so publicly but hide the body of a homeless man?

RON

That's true. It would be weird. But this whole case is weird.

SAM

I think what's more likely is that the man witnessed the murders. He bolted, and he's too scared to return. Maybe the killer saw him, and now he's in hiding.

RON

If that's true...

SAM

We have a witness.

### **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

103. HUM of electronics in an enclosed space. Occasional TYPING.

ALFIE

I've never been in a bunker before.

TANGY MESQUITE

This isn't my bunker. It's just one of my listening posts.

NISSA

This computer is perfect. I'm nearly through.

ALFIE

I feel like the lame sidekick.

NISSA

You are the lame sidekick.

ALFIE

I need a superpower.

TANGY MESQUITE

The government closed down most of their superpower research in the 80s. You don't want to know what they did with the leftover subjects.

ALFIE

Or maybe some fancy tech, or a magic item. Like Iron Man or Green Lantern.

NISSA

Face it, Alfie. You're sidekick material.

ALFIE

Oh yeah? Well how much longer is this going to take Ms. Hacker Marvel?

NISSA

Not much. An hour, give or take.

1-2 seconds of silence. Just background noise.

ALFIE

So, Mr. Mesquite, how do you know Nissa?

TANGY MESQUITE

I recruited her to help with a software project a few years ago.

ALFIE

Ooo, a "software" project? Is that code, like "wetworks"?

TANGY MESQUITE

No. Software as in I needed her to develop an application to help me hijack...I don't think you need to know the details. You've only reached level 2 in Tangy Mesquite security clearance.

ALFIE

How can you afford all this stuff and still hire freelance superheroes like Nissa?

TANGY MESQUITE

It's mostly from an inheritance.

ALFIE

Oh my god. All the cool people are orphans. You, Mack, Shaylee, Spider-Man, Batman--

TANGY MESQUITE

I'm not an orphan. It was from another relative.

ALFIE

--Annie, Cinderella, Damien--

NISSA

Did you just include the Antichrist with Annie?

ALFIE

He is pretty cool in *Final Conflict*. If the world has to end, I would trust Dr. Grant to end it.

NISSA

There should be a rule like mixing metaphors but for pop culture references.

ALFIE

Are you almost done, Captain Critical?

NISSA

Getting there.

TANGY MESQUITE

Any expectations as to what you'll find on the video?

NISSA

I know what I don't want to find.

ALFIE

Nissa!

NISSA

Just sayin.

ALFIE

Don't even think it. That's not cool.

NISSA

Well, hopefully the dude was murdered by a woman in her late 20s who we don't know.

TANGY MESQUITE

Are you sure you actually want to see this video?

NISSA

Yes.

ALFIE

Not anymore.

#### **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

104.

MACKENNA

God, Thomas. You are never picking the movie again.

THOMAS

You say that every time, but your inability to make decisions always forces my hand.

SHAYLEE

I actually love *Oliver*.

THOMAS

You'd already seen it? You should have said something. I could have picked a different one.

SHAYLEE

No, I don't mind. It's one of my favorites. I could watch it every year.

THOMAS

My dad loved musicals. He took me to a local production of *Oliver* when I was younger.

MACKENNA

I don't remember that.

THOMAS

I seem to recall your seat being empty. Probably one of the many family functions you got out of.

MACKENNA

Yeah, okay, that sounds about right. At least you didn't put us through one of those awful rom coms.

SHAYLEE

You like rom coms?

THOMAS

*Casablanca, On the Waterfront...* these are not comedies.

MACKENNA

Cheesy romances.

THOMAS

Classic romances.

SHAYLEE

Sorry, Mackenna. I'm taking Thomas's side on this one.

MACKENNA

Love stories are so unrealistic.

THOMAS

I happen to be a sucker for a good romance.

MACKENNA

Thomas puts the hopeless in hopeless romantic.

SHAYLEE

No, it's sweet. What's wrong with a little romance?

MACKENNA

Gag.

THOMAS

I'm just an idealist, I guess.

SHAYLEE

Idealist or realist? You and Sam seemed pretty fond of each other at your birthday.

THOMAS

Me and Sam?

MACKENNA

Thou doth protest too much.

THOMAS

I doth protested one time.

SHAYLEE

Given the eyes you two were making at each other, one time is too much.

THOMAS

There were no eyes.

MACKENNA

She's had a thing for him since high school.

THOMAS

That is so not accurate.

SHAYLEE

My investigation says otherwise.

MACKENNA

Yeah, Thomas was telling you about me being popular in high school? Well, let me tell you about Mr. Quarterback Homecoming King.

THOMAS

Shaylee has no interest in those stories.

SHAYLEE

Uh-uh. If you dish it, sir, you must then take it.

MACKENNA  
And you dished.

SHAYLEE  
So much dishing.

THOMAS  
(sigh)  
You're right. I deserve this. Hit me.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

105. SAM  
Thanks, Geoff. We'll be right over.

Phone HANGS UP.

RON  
They found him?

SAM  
They did. He saw everything, Ron.

RON  
Including the killer?

SAM  
A woman. Blonde. Not too tall.

RON  
Mackenna's not blonde.

SAM  
Not at the time of the murders.

RON  
The hair on the body was blonde.

SAM  
She's been blonde before. She changes  
it up a lot.

RON  
I don't get it.

SAM

I don't know. Maybe it's not her. Lots of people have blonde hair. Coincidence?

RON

Is he looking at a lineup?

SAM

We don't have a good comparative mugshot of Mackenna. Geoff called in a forensic artist from downtown. She should be done by the time we get back.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

106. HUM of electronics in an enclosed space.

NISSA

I'm in. These are the photos and videos he's streamed.

ALFIE

Wow. Talk about a dude bro.

TANGY MESQUITE

That one's the most recent.

DOUBLE CLICK of a mouse.

Audio from 102 scene 22, FILTERED.

BRO

*(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 WOMAN calms.*

WOMAN

*(crazed, calming slowly)*

*I will not be imprisoned further! Not by you! You will--*

Audio cuts.

TANGY MESQUITE  
 Wow. That was incred--  
 (beat)  
 Are you okay?

NISSA  
 No.

ALFIE  
 So not okay.

TANGY MESQUITE  
 Do you know who she is?

NISSA  
 I thought we did.

NARRATOR  
 Did you ever really know her at all,  
 Nissa?

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

107. SAM  
 Is the sketch ready?  
 (beat)  
 Jesus.

RON  
 Let me see. Oh wow. We did it. This has  
 to be it, right? The smoking gun?

SAM  
 It's big, all right.

RON  
 Big?! Sam, it's huge! This looks just  
 like--

SAM  
 It looks just like Mackenna Thorne.

THE END