

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

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This is the Valleyglen Retirement community. A few blocks of small houses filled with retired seniors.

Norma (72) and Frannie (73) sit on garden chairs outside of the greenhouse. It is a beautiful, warm spring day. A true crime podcast plays from an iPad sitting between them.

PODCASTER

Locals still believe that John Robinson got away with the crime. Despite rumors and community push the tollburg murders have yet to be solved 35 years later. (Outro music) CrimeGrime will return next week with a new gruesome episode.

FRANNIE

It's like they weren't even trying!

NORMA

Those poor people.

FRANNIE

The clues were practically being dangled in front of those putz investigators!

NORMA

They deserve answers!

FRANNIE

If we'd a been on the case it'd have been solved 35 years ago!

NORMA

We certainly would've tried harder!

They both sit in the silence as the outro music ends. JANETTE (75) comes rushing into their peaceful beat.

FRANNIE

Oh Janette, we just heard the end of the-

JANETTE

It happened again!

NORMA

What happened again?

FRANNIE

Did they cancel Swing Dancing tonight?

JANETTE
Someone stepped on Mr. Elkson's
petunias!

FRANNIE
Again??

NORMA
Again.

Janette eagerly shakes her head.

JANETTE
That means it wasn't an accident
last time.

FRANNIE/NORMA
It's a crime scene!

Their eyes light up. Janette begins to walk to the base of her backyard fence. Norma and Frannie slowly get up to follow her. From that vantage point they can see several houses in the complex, including Mr. Elkson's front yard.

His petunia's in a sad crushed state.

NORMA
Oh it's just gruesome!

JANETTE
A terrible tragedy.

FRANNIE
Unbelievably cruel. What are we
looking at?

JANETTE
Most of the scene is unhelpful, but
the perpetrator wasn't as careful
as they thought.

FRANNIE
Oh yeah?

JANETTE
One perfectly contained footprint.
Checked against mine it looks about
a size 10. Little x shaped
patterning.

FRANNIE
Oh, we've got you, you son of a
bitch.

NORMA

Who could've done such a thing?

Just as the other two take in this question. Lennard (75) walks by their backyard.

LENNARD

Hello Jannie.

JANETTE

Hi Lennard.

Janette seems distracted at first, barely paying him mind, then suddenly she turns to the others. They look at each other with understated glee.

JANETTE (CONT'D)

Oh Lennard dear! What shoe size do you wear?

LENNARD

Wouldn't you like to know.

JANETTE

Oh you dirty dog, I would!

LENNARD

Accompany me to game night, I might just tell ya.

JANETTE

Why, Lennard!

FRANNIE

Enough with the small talk, answer the question!

He gives her a look.

LENNARD

Last I checked size 9.

The woman exchange glances.

NORMA

Hm, and Lennard, what do you think about Mr. Elkson?

LENNARD

I didn't know I was stepping into the interrogation booth.

Frannie gives him a glare.

LENNARD (CONT'D)

Quiet, but a nice man. Always has a card under his sleeve.

JANETTE

Thanks, Lenny. You better be ready to play to win on game night!

He tips his hat to her and continues his walk.

JANETTE (CONT'D)

Well it wasn't him.

FRANNIE

What's the motive? There's got to be a motive.

NORMA

Oh there's always a motive! CrimeGrime taught us that.

JANETTE

Who would've had any ill will towards Mr. Elkson?

As the ladies talk they move back into their comfortable garden chairs, just a few feet from the fence. Janette opens the door to the greenhouse and goes in.

NORMA

I mean, this is a malicious crime. A serial petunia crusher!

JANETTE

If anyone can find them, it's us.

Janette exits the greenhouse with a large flip file. Inside are details on every member of the ValleyGlen community. She pulls out a list of everyone's names.

JANETTE (CONT'D)

Who strikes us as an enemy to Mr. Elkson, and plants everywhere?

Norma and Frannie look at the list intently. Frannie's eyes shoot up to a house across the street.

FRANNIE

Marie! Marie and Mr. Elkson have had a little fling going for a while.

NORMA

Yes! And he spends so much time
with those petunias-

FRANNIE

Time she wishes was spent with her.
It's always the jaded lover! Case
solved.

Frannie leans back with a smile. A beat.

JANETTE

Now wait a second. They planted
those together. It was their little
spring project.

NORMA

I do suppose Marie isn't a size 10.

FRANNIE

Darn. I might've gotten a little
too eager.

JANETTE

We got to think logically through
every possible suspect.

The three turn back to the list, and then at the
neighborhood.

NORMA

What about Franklin? His roses
always fall second to Mr. Elkson's
petunias in the spring gardening
contest.

FRANNIE

Yes! And being desperate to win he
sabotaged the competition.

Janette pulls out whatever info they have on Mr. Elkson.

JANETTE

Hm. I seem to remember him being on
a cruise with his children this
week.

She checks some sort of calendar.

JANETTE (CONT'D)

Right there. Yes indeed. He's out
of town. Couldn't have done it-

FRANNIE

Couldn't have. Damn it. That bastard. I'm lucky to see my kids once a year.

NORMA

Oh they care, they just get busy.

Frannie begins to awkwardly shuffle with the papers. Janette grabs her hand and squeezes it. The two smile at one another.

JANETTE

Besides, your Sally has been a little pain the ass since she was born!

NORMA

Janette!

Frannie laughs.

JANETTE

Who wants a cruise when we can solve a crime!

FRANNIE

The neighborhood wouldn't know what to do without us.

NORMA

They would just be lost!

JANETTE

This would've had to been done in the cover of night.

NORMA

Who's up late enough to do this?

Kathleen, walks by the backyard.

KATHLEEN

Morning ladies!

NORMA

Oh Kathleen! Where were you last night?

FRANNIE

The night of March 27th?

They turn to her with expecting grins.

KATHLEEN
What are you three up to?

JANETTE
Nothing really.

Kathleen gestures over to Mr. Elkson's yard.

KATHLEEN
Does this have to do with a certain
someone's flowers?

FRANNIE
Wouldn't you like to know.

KATHLEEN
Well if it did I might have a
little information for you.

FRANNIE
Oh yeah?

KATHLEEN
Who wants to know now?

Kathleen straightens and walks away with pride.

JANETTE
She would.

The three shake their heads, returning to the options.

NORMA
The cover of night...Oh, I know!
Harrison sleepwalks! Always has.
Maybe last night he was having one
of his dreams. Perhaps he thought
himself a king, defending his
castle. And the petunias were poor
townspeople. They rioted on castle
walls and were taken out by the
militia. Tragic.

Janette and Frannie stare at her in confusion.

NORMA (CONT'D)
What?

FRANNIE
Norma. Harrison died 3 months ago.

JANETTE
We were at the funeral. You made
the pasta salad.

NORMA

Oh. I suppose he did, didn't he.
Hm.

Norma pounds this.

JANETTE

Well maybe it was an accident?

NORMA

Someone doesn't just CRUSH petunias
like that by accident! Did you even
look the crime scene?!

JANETTE

I-You're right. My apologies.

Norma shakes her head. They sit in silence for a moment.
JERRY (85) walks by and stops at the gate.

JERRY

Good morning ladies.

FRANNIE/JANETTE/NORMA

Good Morning/Good Morning
Jerry/Hello

JERRY

It's a lovely morning for a walk,
isn't it?

FRANNIE/JANETTE/NORMA

Just perfect/Beautiful/Divine

JERRY

Would one of you happen to know
whose this is?

He holds up a small gold bracelet.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I found it on a table over by the
rec room.

FRANNIE

No, but we can certainly find who
it belongs to!

JERRY

Oh good. I knew I came to the right
bunch.

Jerry opens the gate and walks a few steps to where they are
seated. He hands Frannie the bracelet.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 You girls always know where to
 look.

He pats her on the back and heads out.

FRANNIE
 Bye Jerry.

Janette gestures for the bracelet. Frannie hands it to her.

JANETTE
 Now whose could this be?

Janette holds it up, and then drops it in the mud.

JANETTE (CONT'D)
 Darn it.

FRANNIE
 You know it looks awful gaudy.

NORMA
 Kathleen would wear something like
 that.

FRANNIE
 Oh Norma! You didn't! She would.

Janette reaches down for the bracelet while they speak. The bracelet fell in Jerry's footprint. A size 10 footprint with a little x shaped pattern.

She jumps up from her seat with more energy than expected and compares the print to her feet. The other two take note.

JANETTE
 It's a perfect match!

FRANNIE
 It was Jerry?

NORMA
 Jerry?

JANETTE
 Jerry!

NORMA
 But why?

JANETTE
 I didn't even know he and Mr.
 Elkson talked.

FRANNIE
I've only ever seen them play cards
together on Tuesdays.

NORMA
Cards?

JANETTE
That's it!

FRANNIE
What's it?

JANETTE
Mr. Elkson is known to cheat at
cards!

NORMA
I have heard the gentlemen
complaining. He always seems to
have the right card.

FRANNIE
So the bushes were some sort of
payback for cheating at cards?

JANETTE
Probably done in a fit of rage
after another night of losing.

Janette sits back down.

FRANNIE/JANETTE/NORMA
Huh?

FRANNIE
Well should we tell Mr. Elkson
who's at fault?

NORMA
Yeah?

JANETTE
I think crushed petunia's are a
just punishment for a dirty card
swindler.

NORMA
No one likes a cheater.

FRANNIE
Damn right!

JANETTE
Another case solved.

Janette closes the file with a sense of accomplishment.

A beat.

JANETTE (CONT'D)
How did the Tollburg murders turn
out? Who dunnit?

FRANNIE
They never solved it! After 35
years!

NORMA
Can you believe it?

JANETTE
We'd a had it solved in no time!

NORMA
They should've called us!

FRANNIE
You bet they should've.

FADE OUT.