

MURDOCH MYSTERIES SPEC EPISODE "MEAN GIRLS"

Written by

Naomi Vondell

TEASER

EXT. HAVERGAL COLLEGE GARDEN - EVENING

SAMANTHA MONTROSE, an 18-year-old student, runs along the path screaming. She seems strangely euphoric.

SAMANTHA

(pants)

I'm the queen of the angels. I can do anything! I can do anything. I am the queen! Queen of the angels! I can fly! See me fly!

She stumbles and falls into a flower bed, out of breath. Close on her eyes: pinpoint pupils.

INT. STATION HOUSE - EVENING

BRACKENREID sits at his desk as JOHN enters.

JOHN

You asked to see me, sir?

BRACKENREID

Yes, son, come in. Sit down.

John does so nervously.

JOHN

Have I done something wrong?

BRACKENREID

No, no.

(offers him a glass)

Drink?

JOHN

Sir?

BRACKENREID

Would you like a drink, son?

JOHN

(taken aback)

No, thank you sir, not while I'm on duty.

BRACKENREID

You've been hanging around Murdoch too much.

(takes a swig)

(MORE)

BRACKENREID (CONT'D)

Son, you've done nothing wrong. On the contrary, I think you've been doing very well. For a young wet-behind-the-ears copper, anyway.

JOHN

Thank you, sir.

BRACKENREID

I think you're ready for more responsibility.

JOHN

More responsibility?

BRACKENREID

That's what I said.

JOHN

I -- I don't know what to say, sir.

BRACKENREID

Then keep your mouth shut, and listen to your father. I'm going to send you out on more cases. You'll be accompanying the detectives to crime scenes, interrogating suspects, and giving your opinion on cases from now on. You think you can handle it?

JOHN

I -- I hope so, sir.

BRACKENREID

Don't hope so, bug-a-lugs. Think so.

JOHN

I -- think so.

We see on his face that he doesn't.

BRACKENREID

Good.

JOHN

Well -- thank you sir. If that's all --

BRACKENREID

Yes, son, that's all.

John leaves. Brackenreid takes another swig.

INT. WINDSOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - EVENING

WILLIAM MURDOCH and JULIA OGDEN sit at a table, just having finished dinner. A WAITER approaches.

WAITER

Will you be having dessert?

MURDOCH

Yes, I would like the chocolate truffle cake, please.

WAITER

Very good. And for you, madam?

JULIA

None for me, thank you.

MURDOCH

Come now, my dear, you need to keep up your strength.

They smile at each other.

JULIA

No, thank you.

WAITER

As you wish.

The waiter leaves as GEORGE CRABTREE rushes in.

CRABTREE

Terribly sorry to disturb you at dinner, sir, Doctor Ogden, but there's been a suspicious death.

MURDOCH

A suspicious death, George? Where?

CRABTREE

That new school for girls, sir, Havergal College. They think one of their students has been murdered. They want you to come right away, sir. You too, doctor.

MURDOCH

Well, Julia, we shall finish our meal another time, then.

EXT. HAVERGAL COLLEGE GARDEN - EVENING

Julia examines Samantha's corpse. Murdoch stands behind her.

JULIA

Samantha Montrose. Eighteen years old, in her final year at Havergal. The groundskeeper discovered her this way.

MURDOCH

Had she been ill?

JULIA

Well, she is emaciated. I can see her cheekbones. I wonder if she was getting her proper meals?

MURDOCH

I assume all boarders here receive three square meals per day, but it would seem she hasn't been taking them. Is it possible she was ill and simply not telling anyone?

JULIA

I see no skin discoloration. I do need to bring her to the morgue to examine her further, but I think she may have been poisoned.

Murdoch crosses himself.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

MISS ELLEN KNOX (48), the principal of Havergal, sits behind a desk. Murdoch sits across from her.

MISS KNOX

(speaking in an upper-class English accent)

I assure you, Detective, nothing like this has ever happened before in the twelve years since this college was founded. I've been principal here since that time, and we've had nothing but the best, safest education for our girls.

MURDOCH

No one is questioning your integrity, Miss Knox, or that of Havergal College. I'm simply trying to determine what happened. What can you tell me about Miss Montrose?

MISS KNOX

She was an angel. A very popular young lady with many friends.

MURDOCH

Who were her friends?

MISS KNOX

There was a quartet of them who roomed together: Samantha, Harriet Strachan, Jane Kingsley, and Alice Hampton. Proper young ladies, all four. I never noticed anything amiss.

MURDOCH

Did Miss Montrose have any enemies?

MISS KNOX

I'm not sure. I believe you may want to speak with Gertrude Billings.

MURDOCH

Is she a student here as well?

MISS KNOX

Yes. An outspoken and troublesome one, I'm afraid. She has feminist leanings.

MURDOCH

I see.

MISS KNOX

She may have been on the outs with the girls.

MURDOCH

Do you believe she may have had reason to harm them?

MISS KNOX

I've no idea. I'm sure she wouldn't have had any wish to harm Samantha.

MURDOCH

Oh?

MISS KNOX

Samantha was a model student. Always neat and tidy. Excellent grades. So well liked. I can't imagine anyone would want to harm her.

MURDOCH

We noticed that she was unhealthily thin.

MISS KNOX

I noticed this too. I have wondered if Samantha were perhaps ill. She has been seen by the doctor, and as far as he could tell, she was in perfect health.

MURDOCH

Could she have been ill and hiding it for fear of expulsion? She clearly was not eating properly.

MISS KNOX

Our boarders are served three meals a day, but we cannot force them to eat.

MURDOCH

Miss Knox --

MISS KNOX

We are one of the best schools in the country, Detective.

MURDOCH

Miss Knox, I in no way wish to impugn you or your school. I simply wish --

There is a KNOCK at the door. Crabtree enters.

CRABTREE

We searched the dorm, sir, and we found this McCall's Magazine. I picked it up because the woman on the cover looks extremely thin. Other than this, we haven't found anything suspicious.

MURDOCH

Thank you, George. I'll be along directly.

CRABTREE

Yes, sir.

Crabtree leaves.

MURDOCH

Well, Miss Knox, thank you for your insights. I will want to speak to the girls directly.

MISS KNOX

They're all in class at the moment, but you may return this afternoon, of course.

MURDOCH

I shall.

MISS KNOX

Detective Murdoch, I -- I hope you will be discreet about this.

MURDOCH

Oh?

MISS KNOX

I wouldn't want word getting out at this point. We don't want to alarm any of the girls' parents.

MURDOCH

Ah. I see. You don't want them to withdraw their daughters. Your secret is safe with me, Miss Knox. Good day.

INT. HAVERGAL HALLWAY - MORNING

GERTRUDE BILLINGS (18), attractive but slightly overweight, walks with a pile of books. ALICE HAMPTON (18), JANE KINGSLEY (17), and HARRIET STRACHAN (18), all extremely thin, catch up to Gertrude. They move quickly and speak in agitated voices. Alice knocks Gertrude's books to the floor. Gertrude bends and picks some up. As she does --

JANE

It's a good thing you're bending over. It's obvious you need the exercise.

GERTRUDE

At least I don't look like a stiff breeze would snap me in two.

HARRIET

Why are you so fat?

GERTRUDE

Because I eat three solid meals a day and I enjoy it. What do you girls eat? Pigeon feathers?

ALICE

At least we know what boys like. You will never be anything more than a fat old maid.

All three thin girls giggle and throw triumphant smiles and flounce off, leaving Gertrude picking up the rest of her books.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Julia examines Samantha's body as Murdoch observes.

JULIA

No visible signs of trauma. I also examined her stomach contents.

MURDOCH

And?

JULIA  
There were none.

MURDOCH  
None?

JULIA  
There was nothing in her stomach.  
This young woman hadn't eaten for  
several days.

MURDOCH  
Well, that rules out poisoning. I  
wonder if some sort of drug was  
used.

JULIA  
There's no way to tell for sure. I  
do notice a flush to her skin.

MURDOCH  
Very unusual for a corpse.

JULIA  
Indeed.

MURDOCH  
I understand this young girl's  
parents have been notified. 'Death  
by misadventure'. I don't know that  
I'd believe that, if I were in  
their place.

JULIA  
No.

MURDOCH  
I need more answers. I'll have to  
go back to Havergal. You're  
beginning to exude a noticeable  
glow yourself.

JULIA  
Oh, I don't know about that.

MURDOCH  
Soon you'll be swelling with new  
life. Our new life.

He affectionately pats her abdomen, pinches her cheek, and  
leaves. Julia stands, a bit flustered.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Alice, Jane and Harriet giggle and drink tea and take turns flipping through a new McCall's magazine. Alice wears a VERY LARGE LOCKET.

JANE  
 (to Alice, fingering the  
 locket)  
 Where did you get this?

ALICE  
 Don't touch that. I got it in Peru  
 last summer. A gift from my father.

HARRIET  
 You're so lucky you got to go.

ALICE  
 I suppose I am.

HARRIET  
 I never get to go anywhere.

JANE  
 It's so pretty.

ALICE  
 Don't touch it. Just admire it,  
 girls.

As they stare at the locket, Murdoch enters.

MURDOCH  
 Good afternoon, ladies. May I ask  
 you a few questions?

ALICE  
 (smiles)  
 Of course! Would you like some tea?

MURDOCH  
 No, thank you. I'd like to ask you  
 about Miss Montrose.

A beat. The girls try their best to look somber, but then burst out giggling.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)  
 None of you seem distressed about  
 your friend's very recent demise.

ALICE  
 Oh we are, we are. It's just --

All three burst into loud laughter.

MURDOCH

I see I shall have to get right down to business. Did Miss Montrose have any enemies?

The girls fall silent. They exchange amused glances.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

I remind you that your friend may have been killed. This is very serious, girls. Do you know of anyone who may have wished to harm her?

Silence. Then --

ALICE

Samantha didn't really have any enemies except the fat girl.

MURDOCH

The 'fat girl'?

JANE

Gertrude.

MURDOCH

Miss Billings?

ALICE

She's always been jealous of Samantha.

HARRIET

She's always been jealous of all of us. I wouldn't put anything past her.

JANE

She has crazy notions.

ALICE

She never wants to get married or have any children.

HARRIET

She wants to become a doctor, of all things.

ALICE

Have you ever heard of anything so brazen?

MURDOCH  
(seething)  
My wife is a doctor.

All three girls fall silent and look down, cowed by his tone.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)  
I see I'm not going to get any  
further answers here. If anything  
else does spring to mind, you  
should come to the station and tell  
them what you know.

He leaves. The three girls look at each other, then burst out laughing.

INT. MURDOCH'S OFFICE - EVENING

Murdoch sits at his desk. Julia sits across from him.

MURDOCH  
What a strange encounter. Excitable  
-- much too excitable.

JULIA  
They're young girls, William.  
Excitability is to be expected.

MURDOCH  
Not to such an extreme. And they're  
all so thin -- so very thin. I  
could see their cheekbones.

JULIA  
That is odd.

MURDOCH  
And there was something not quite  
right about their eyes. They seemed  
-- too bright, somehow. Could it be  
some type of shared female illness?

JULIA  
I highly doubt it. But I do think  
it unusual that Miss Montrose's  
stomach was completely empty.

MURDOCH  
Yes, and you could see her  
cheekbones as well.

JULIA

When I was a psychiatrist, I remember reading of an obscure mental condition affecting the appetite of young girls. It was first named in 1873 by Sir William Gull.

MURDOCH

Wasn't he the personal physician to Queen Victoria?

JULIA

Yes. He called it 'anorexia nervosa' -- a nervous loss of appetite primarily affecting young girls. They think they're overweight when they are in fact much too thin.

MURDOCH

How does this condition manifest?

JULIA

Typically, the girl stops eating, and may refuse food altogether. There have been cases where girls have starved to death.

MURDOCH

Perhaps that's what killed Samantha. But that doesn't explain her reported agitation, the agitation of the girls, or the oddness about their eyes. I need more answers. I'll return to the college tomorrow. In the meantime, might we go to dinner?

JULIA

Absolutely.

They go out arm in arm.

INT. HAVERGAL HALLWAY - EVENING

Jane runs through the hallway screaming and laughing.

JANE

I can fly! I can fly!!

Jane suddenly collapses.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. STATION HOUSE - MORNING

Murdoch exits his office.

MURDOCH  
Good morning, George.

CRABTREE  
Oh, morning, sir.

MURDOCH  
Will you accompany me to Havergal  
College?

CRABTREE  
More trouble, sir?

MURDOCH  
No, George, we simply need more  
answers from those girls. Perhaps  
your presence will encourage them  
to speak up. I don't understand.  
Why would any healthy young woman  
willingly make herself ill in order  
to become unnaturally thin?

CRABTREE  
Well, actually, sir, the ideal of  
womanly thinness dates all the way  
back to ancient Egypt. In fact,  
Nefertiti --

MURDOCH  
Yes, George, thank you. We'd best  
be off.

As they're leaving, Brackenreid emerges from his office with  
John in tow.

BRACKENREID  
(to Crabtree)  
Oy! Bug-a-lugs! Stay where you are.

CRABTREE  
Inspector?

BRACKENREID  
Constable Brackenreid, you're going  
with the detective.

MURDOCH  
(raises an eyebrow)  
Really, sir? This soon?

BRACKENREID  
Yes, Murdoch, this soon. I think  
he's ready, and I want him to learn  
from the best.

CRABTREE  
Well, I'm a bit surprised, sir. I  
understand the boy needs to learn.

BRACKENREID  
And he's going to learn whether he  
likes it or not. Now shake a leg,  
son!

Brackenreid goes back into his office.

MURDOCH  
Shall we go?

JOHN  
Yes, sir.

Murdoch and John leave Crabtree puzzled. Crabtree shrugs and  
then goes about his business.

INT. HAVERGAL HALLWAY - MORNING

John and Murdoch walk while speaking.

JOHN  
Uh, sir?

MURDOCH  
Yes, John?

JOHN  
I'm not sure I'm ready for this.

They stop.

MURDOCH  
You've gone under cover at a boys'  
school. This is similar, only with  
girls.

JOHN  
But -- I'll have to question them.

MURDOCH

Let me do the talking this time.  
You're simply here to observe.

JOHN

But, sir --

MURDOCH

When your turn comes, treat them as  
sources of information, John. Try  
to rely on logic.

JOHN

All right.

MURDOCH

These are people. People who can  
help you solve a problem. That's  
how you have to look at them. With  
a dispassionate eye.

JOHN

Yes, sir.

MURDOCH

I'm sure you can handle that. For  
now, just observe.

JOHN

(somewhat reassured)

Yes, sir.

MURDOCH

Good. Shall we continue?

They resume walking. A STUDENT rushes by them looking  
distraught.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

I wonder what --

They reach the DORM ROOM DOOR, which is open, but we can't  
see into the room. Turmoil around them. People rushing to and  
fro.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

We'd better go in.

They go in.

INT. DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alice sits on a bed. Jane lies on another bed, staring fixedly straight ahead. Miss Knox feels Jane's forehead. Murdoch and John enter.

MURDOCH  
When did this begin?

ALICE  
(clearly upset)  
Last night.

MISS KNOX  
Alice came to my office this morning.

ALICE  
She's my friend. I don't know what to do!

Miss Knox goes over and comforts Alice.

MURDOCH  
(aside to John)  
Do you notice something odd about her eyes?

JOHN  
Yes, sir.

MURDOCH  
Something I've noticed before, and yet I can't quite pinpoint it --

JOHN  
Well, that's it, sir. Pinpoints. Her pupils look like pinpoints.

MURDOCH  
(coming forward)  
Did anything unusual take place last night?

ALICE  
Not last night, but yesterday morning Jane and Gertrude had some harsh words between them. Something about Gertrude's weight. I heard all of it.

MURDOCH  
Oh?

ALICE

Gertrude said Jane looked like a stiff breeze would snap her in two. Just like that. Out of nowhere.

MURDOCH

That's odd.

ALICE

I'm not sure Gertrude is of sound mind. I'm sure she's been up to something.

MURDOCH

Constable Brackenreid, please find Miss Billings. We'll be bringing her in for questioning.

ALICE

Her dorm room is just down the hall.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Gertrude sits across the table from Murdoch. John observes through the small window in the door. Gertrude looks down.

MURDOCH

How well did you know Miss Montrose?

No response from Gertrude.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

How well do you know Miss Kingsley?

Still no response.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

Miss Billings, I'm speaking to you. How well did you know them?

GERTRUDE

Not well. Privileged young ladies.

MURDOCH

Had there been any recent harsh words?

Silence.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

What were you doing yesterday?

GERTRUDE  
Class. Then studying in my room.

MURDOCH  
Can anyone confirm this?

GERTRUDE  
No.

MURDOCH  
Where were you on the night  
Samantha Montrose died?

Gertrude looks down and remains silent.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)  
Miss Billings, I would remind you  
that you are in a police station  
being interrogated for a possible  
crime. I advise you to answer me  
directly.

Still no response. Murdoch SIGHS.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)  
John!

John pokes his head in. Murdoch gets up and goes to him.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)  
(aside to John)  
I'd like you to get Miss Billings a  
cup of tea, please.

JOHN  
(unsure)  
Yes, sir.

MURDOCH  
Perhaps she'll be more forthcoming  
with someone closer to her in age.  
Don't worry, John. You'll do fine.  
Just remember what I told you.

JOHN  
(deep breath)  
Yes, sir.

Murdoch sits down again, across from Gertrude.

GERTRUDE  
Your lackey?

MURDOCH

Hardly.

GERTRUDE

What were you two whispering about?

MURDOCH

I thought you might like a cup of --

John comes in with the tea.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

-- Ah. Miss Billings, this is  
Constable Brackenreid.

GERTRUDE

(archly)

You're a little young to be a  
constable.

JOHN

I'm old enough.

GERTRUDE

How long have you served the  
patriarchy?

JOHN

The patriarchy?

GERTRUDE

It means the privileged male rulers  
of our society.

JOHN

(smiles)

About two years.

MURDOCH

It seems you're not so quiet after  
all.

GERTRUDE

Not when I'm speaking to someone  
who might listen.

Murdoch motions to John to keep talking to her.

JOHN

You don't trust people, do you?

GERTRUDE

I choose my confidants carefully.

They exchange a smile. A definite spark between these two. Murdoch motions to John to ask some questions.

JOHN  
 (clears his throat, a very formal tone)  
 Now then, Miss Billings, where were you the night of Miss Montrose's untimely demise?

GERTRUDE  
 Oh, for goodness' sake, call me Gertrude.

JOHN  
 Very well, Gertrude. Where were you?

GERTRUDE  
 I was studying in my room.

JOHN  
 What were you studying?

GERTRUDE  
 Mathematics.

JOHN  
 Do you find it interesting?  
 (off Murdoch's look)  
 Who saw you?

GERTRUDE  
 No one.

Long pause.

JOHN  
 May I confer with my colleague?

GERTRUDE  
 Of course.

John and Murdoch go out. Major eye contact between John and Gertrude.

INT. HAVERGAL HALLWAY - DAY

Alice and Harriet laugh and walk.

ALICE  
 I wonder how Jane is doing?

HARRIET  
It's been a whole day now.

ALICE  
Surely she must be recovering.

She runs ahead.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Harriet? Keep up!

Harriet stops and gasps for breath.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Harriet? Harriet! Help!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. STATION HOUSE - DAY

Murdoch and John come out of the interrogation room.

JOHN

Sir, I don't think she did it.

MURDOCH

You don't think she did it. Why not?

JOHN

Well -- she just doesn't seem like a girl who would commit murder.

MURDOCH

Ah. And your deduction is based on what?

JOHN

I don't know, sir, it's just a feeling.

MURDOCH

I see. Don't be taken in by your feeling, John. Use reason and logic, remember? Gertrude and the girls do not get along well. Therefore, Gertrude is the only one who is known to have had a motive. She has no alibi. This makes her our prime suspect.

JOHN

I suppose.

MURDOCH

We should at the very least question her further.

Crabtree approaches.

CRABTREE

Sir, there's been another collapse. I mean, another girl has fallen ill, sir. At Havergal.

MURDOCH

Three in as many days. Well, we know it's not poison.

(MORE)

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

I wonder if it's some sort of drug.  
Search the dorm again, George.

CRABTREE

Yes, sir.

He goes out.

JOHN

What kind of drug?

MURDOCH

I believe based on their behavior  
that it would be a stimulant.

JOHN

A -- stimulant, sir?

MURDOCH

Yes, John, it's -- a drug that  
makes a person agitated. It can  
affect appetite. It wouldn't take  
very long to have an effect, and as  
Miss Billings has been here the  
entire afternoon, we no longer have  
sufficient evidence to detain her.

JOHN

Shall I tell her she's free to go?

MURDOCH

(reluctantly)

Yes. Clearly, we have more work to  
do.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gertrude waits impatiently. John enters.

GERTRUDE

Are you going to arrest me or not?

JOHN

Miss Billings, you're free to go.

GERTRUDE

Good.

She gets up to leave, then --

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Why the sudden change?

JOHN

Another one of the girls has fallen ill.

GERTRUDE

I want to speak to that uptight detective before I go. The one who was here with you.

JOHN

Detective Murdoch? I'll fetch him.

GERTRUDE

And perhaps you will join me for tea tomorrow afternoon.

JOHN

You're rather bold, aren't you?

GERTRUDE

Yes, and quite proud of it.

John RAPS at the door. Murdoch comes in.

MURDOCH

What have you, John?

JOHN

Miss Bill --

(off Gertrude's look)

-- Gertrude would like to speak to you.

MURDOCH

Well, this is a happy change, Miss Billings. What have you to say?

GERTRUDE

A great deal, if you'll let me.

Murdoch stiffens. John suppresses a smile.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Those four girls -- Alice, Harriet, Jane and formerly Samantha -- are a little club. They call themselves the Angels. They're the ruling clique. They're trying to become thin, you know, like angels, and they look down their noses at the rest of us.

(MORE)

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

At anyone who doesn't share their misguided enthusiasm for the ideal McCall's magazine form. They've been bullying me for months now.

MURDOCH

Why didn't you come forward with this information earlier?

GERTRUDE

I was afraid they'd get even meaner. I have enough to worry about without my weight being one more thing.

JOHN

I think you look fine.

Gertrude smiles.

MURDOCH

You say they've been harassing you for months. Did you know them before that?

GERTRUDE

Not very well. We move in different circles. But at least they left me alone.

MURDOCH

Thank you, Miss Billings. We'll be in touch if we require further information from you.

GERTRUDE

Good day.

She leaves. Murdoch raises an eyebrow at John.

MURDOCH

She seems quite taken with you.

JOHN

I'm beginning to feel the same way. In fact, we're having tea tomorrow.

MURDOCH

Good. Perhaps she'll tell you more.

The two men share a smile as they leave.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Julia sits at Harriet's bedside. Miss Knox stands nearby.  
Alice sits quietly on her own bed.

JULIA  
Harriet? Can you hear me?

HARRIET  
Homework. I must do my homework.

JULIA  
You're sick, dear. Your homework  
can wait.

HARRIET  
My dog is a fish.

Harriet laughs. Julia gets up.

MISS KNOX  
She's been this way for hours.  
Nothing but nonsense. No one has  
been able to get anything sensible  
out of her.

ALICE  
We've tried. We've tried over and  
over.

JULIA  
Her eyes -- the pupils are the size  
of pinpoints. And her skin is  
flushed.

She gets up -- and stumbles from a dizzy spell. Miss Knox and  
Alice each grab an arm.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
I'm -- I'm all right. I'm sorry, I -  
- I seem to have lost my balance  
for a moment.

MISS KNOX  
That's quite all right, Doctor. I  
have school affairs to attend to,  
but I'm sure Alice can see you out.

ALICE  
I'd be happy to.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Julia and Alice walk side by side.

JULIA

So, Alice, how long have you and Harriet been friends?

ALICE

Since we were very small. Our families are neighbors, you see.

(beat)

Is this your first baby?

JULIA

(taken aback)

How did you know?

ALICE

My mother was the same way when she was expecting my younger sister.

(muses to herself)

She's been as fat as a house ever since. She's never been able to lose the weight no matter how hard she tries.

(looks at Julia)

Are you worried?

JULIA

No, everything seems to be going well.

ALICE

I mean are you worried about changing? You know, getting bigger.

JULIA

I'm not sure what you're getting at.

ALICE

I wouldn't be able to stand it -- getting bigger, I mean. I think I'd want to just curl up into a little ball until I got so small I disappeared. Maybe everybody feels that way sometimes. Don't you?

JULIA

Are you all right?

ALICE  
(suddenly perks up, little  
laugh)  
Perfectly fine. Perfectly.

INT. MURDOCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Murdoch stands at a blackboard, upon which are written the names of the girls in rows of a table. The tables columns are, "Means", "Motive", and "Opportunity". Various checks and X's are in the relevant squares in the grid. The girls who have collapsed have their names crossed out. Murdoch studies the blackboard with a puzzled expression as Julia sits in a chair.

JULIA  
Such a strange conversation.

MURDOCH  
Indeed.

JULIA  
Obviously she's a deeply troubled young woman. But in light of what Gertrude Billings has revealed about the Angels, Alice's behavior does make a kind of sense.

MURDOCH  
What makes no sense is why these girls become so agitated and then collapse.

JULIA  
And then there's that oddness about their eyes.

MURDOCH  
If someone is drugging these girls, then what is the drug they're using?

JULIA  
And where would they get it? The school doctor does visit them as needed.

MURDOCH  
Why can't I see the answer?  
(exasperated)  
Well, I'm getting nowhere here.  
I'll go back to Havergal and see if I can't get more answers.

He and Julia leave, but as she's leaving, Julia catches a reflection of herself in the window. She tugs at her skirt and adjusts it, an uneasy look on her face.

EXT. HAVERGAL COLLEGE - DAY

Murdoch bicycles to the college's entrance.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Murdoch sits across from Miss Knox.

MURDOCH

Who would have had access to drugs?

MISS KNOX

Well, the visiting physician, I suppose, but he hasn't prescribed anything for the girls as far as I know.

MURDOCH

Could any of the girls have stolen medicine from him?

MISS KNOX

No, he always keeps it close with him in his black bag, which he never leaves unattended.

MURDOCH

When was the last time he visited the College?

MISS KNOX

Several weeks ago.

MURDOCH

That rules him out as a suspect. Could anyone else have had access to --

Alice bursts into the room.

ALICE

You must come to the dorm at once!

MURDOCH

Calm down, young lady. What is the trouble?

ALICE

It's Jane. She's not breathing!

She runs out. Murdoch and Miss Knox follow quickly.

INT. DORM - MOMENTS LATER

Jane lies on the bed. Alice, Murdoch and Miss Knox rush in. Miss Knox takes Jane's hand and taps it.

MISS KNOX

Jane? Jane!

Miss Knox feels Jane's forehead. She looks up at Murdoch and shakes her head. Murdoch crosses himself.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. DORM ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

MISS KNOX

No.

MURDOCH

I'm sorry for --

MISS KNOX

This will be our ruin.

MURDOCH

Come again?

MISS KNOX

No one will enrol their daughters now. And we'll lose the students we have. Oh, this is the worst thing that could have happened to us!

MURDOCH

(tight-lipped)

Miss Knox, once again I assure you, we will get to the bottom of this.

MISS KNOX

Detective, once again I must ask, for the good of the school, may I be assured of your complete discretion?

MURDOCH

(sighs)

It seems, Miss Knox, that you are more concerned with the reputation of this school than you are about its actual students.

MISS KNOX

No!

MURDOCH

Once again, I assure you, whoever did this will be brought to justice. Now, if I may leave, I must go about my work.

MISS KNOX

Detective, I must insist --

MURDOCH

You must insist nothing, madam. I  
have work to do.

Murdoch leaves.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Murdoch walks through a sea of panicking girls rushing about. Total mayhem. A few passing comments: "Did you hear? Jane's been murdered!" "There's a killer on the loose!" "What are we to do?" Murdoch picks up his pace.

INT. TEA ROOM - DAY

Gertrude and John sit at a table with tea and cake.

GERTRUDE

And when I graduate, I hope to  
enter university and eventually  
medical school.

JOHN

Impressive.

GERTRUDE

It's my ambition to become one of  
the first female doctors in  
Toronto.

JOHN

You may want to speak to Dr. Ogden,  
then. She could be very helpful to  
you.

GERTRUDE

I'll keep that in mind. I know it's  
not a profession that women usually  
aspire to, but then I'm an unusual  
girl.

JOHN

Indeed.

GERTRUDE

One must pursue one's passion. I'm  
sure you agree. Aren't you doing  
something you love?

JOHN

Yes, but I'm not sure how ready I  
am for it.

GERTRUDE

I think you're doing a fine job so far.

JOHN

More cake?

GERTRUDE

Absolutely.

JOHN

I'm glad you're not one of the Angels. This wouldn't be nearly as enjoyable if you were.

GERTRUDE

Ugh. The Angels. Privileged, brainless young ladies who can't talk about anything but their family trips and their wealthy parents. Alice's family just returned from a trip to Peru. Harriet's father is a dentist. Never anything resembling a substantial thought.

JOHN

A dentist, you say?

GERTRUDE

Yes, he practices out of his home. These girls have never done an honest day's work in their little lives.

JOHN

(gets up)

Excuse me, I have to get back to the station. Will I see you again?

GERTRUDE

That's up to you.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Jane's body lies on a slab. Julia and Murdoch stand nearby.

JULIA

It must indeed be a drug, but I can find no evidence of a drug in her stomach contents, because there are none.

MURDOCH

At least we now know why.

JULIA

I can only make the assumption of a stimulant from her behavior before she collapsed. I've been doing some reading in the medical journals. I wonder if it's that new analgesic Dr. Freud is so taken with.

MURDOCH

Cocaine is a widely used painkiller, but where would the girls have gained access?

John walks in.

JOHN

Sir, I have new information.

MURDOCH

Let's hear it.

JOHN

I was just at tea with Gertrude -- I mean Miss Billings, and she told me Miss Hampton just returned from Peru with her family.

MURDOCH

The coca plant originated in Peru. But the dorm room was searched twice, John. Nothing was found.

JULIA

I would have found residue of the leaves in the victims' stomachs. No, the cocaine would have to have been taken in its powder form.

MURDOCH

But only doctors carry that.

JOHN

Miss Strachan's father is a dentist.

JULIA

Alice did say she and Harriet were neighbors.

MURDOCH

Perhaps I should pay Dr. Strachan a visit. John, please go and find me an address.

JOHN

Right away, sir.

John leaves.

MURDOCH

Meanwhile, Julia, it's been quite a long day. Perhaps you would like to join me for dinner.

JULIA

Oh, I don't know, William. I'm really not very hungry.

MURDOCH

You mustn't deprive yourself, my dear. After all, you are eating for two.

JULIA

You'd like that, wouldn't you?

Murdoch gives her a confused look as he departs.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Murdoch bicycles through an affluent neighborhood. He stops at the STRACHAN RESIDENCE.

INT. DR. STRACHAN'S HOUSE - DAY

DR. STRACHAN (40s) treats a young boy, JIMMY, while speaking with Murdoch.

DR. STRACHAN

Yes, I use cocaine to dull toothaches. Is that a crime?

MURDOCH

No, doctor, but poisoning is.

DR. STRACHAN

I use it only here, and only during treatments. Young Jimmy here wouldn't be this quiet without it. Eh, Jimmy?

JIMMY  
 (mumbling, mouth full of  
 dental equipment)  
 Oh, yeah.

MURDOCH  
 Do you provide dental services to  
 your own family?

DR. STRACHAN  
 Of course.

MURDOCH  
 And what about your daughter's  
 friends? Have any of them received  
 your treatment?

DR. STRACHAN  
 No.

MURDOCH  
 Then none of them would have had  
 access to your cocaine powder.

DR. STRACHAN  
 Not that I know of. The only one  
 who would have is Harriet herself.  
 But she's a good child. She'd never  
 think of such a thing.

MURDOCH  
 In any case, Harriet has now been  
 poisoned as well. It makes no  
 sense. Unless -- Dr. Strachan, I  
 understand that Alice Hampton's  
 family are your neighbors.

DR. STRACHAN  
 Yes, what of it?

MURDOCH  
 Have they been here recently?

DR. STRACHAN  
 As a matter of fact, they were our  
 guests for dinner three nights ago.  
 But I don't see how that's  
 relevant.

DISSOLVE TO:

MURDOCH'S VISION

- Dinner party with the Strachans and the Hamptons. Guests  
 making merry and clinking glasses.

- Murdoch stands to one side and observes, unseen by the others.
- Alice sneaks away from the dinner table, the adults oblivious to her disappearance.
- Alice enters the office. She finds a VIAL of cocaine.
- Murdoch observes her open the vial and empty a large amount of cocaine into her locket.
- In the dorm room, Murdoch observes the girls laughing and drinking tea.
- Murdoch watches as Alice surreptitiously puts cocaine in their tea.

END MURDOCH'S VISION

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Murdoch sits across the table from Alice. John and Crabtree stand near the exit.

MURDOCH

You had access, you had opportunity, and you had motive.

ALICE

But what motive could I possibly have?

MURDOCH

You want to be thin. As thin as possible.

ALICE

That's not a crime.

MURDOCH

And you want everyone in the world to be thin as well.

ALICE

What's wrong with wanting the best for your friends?

MURDOCH

Nothing, unless you get what you want by slipping cocaine into their tea.

ALICE

You searched our room. You found nothing. You have no proof.

MURDOCH

May I see your locket?

ALICE

Of course.

She demurely hands it over. Murdoch can't open it.

MURDOCH

(sigh)

The key, please, Miss Hampton.

Alice doesn't move.

MURDOCH (CONT'D)

I won't ask you again.

Slowly, Alice hands over the key. Murdoch opens the locket, and a large amount of WHITE POWDER spills out.

ALICE

They don't understand. Being thin and beautiful is the best a woman can be. The only thing a woman can be. They don't understand how crucially important that is. I see so many poor women who are fat and disgusting. They're miserable. They have no reason to live. That can never happen to me. Do you understand? A proper young woman should die before letting herself go like that. You understand, don't you? It is our God-given duty to be perfect.

Murdoch motions to John and Crabtree and they escort her out. As they do --

ALICE (CONT'D)

Perfect.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

INT. STATION HOUSE - DAY

John and Gertrude walk in. They've clearly been out for a walk together.

GERTRUDE

I knew something was going on, but  
I didn't know it was this bad.

JOHN

Well, Dr. Ogden has recommended one  
of the best asylums in Ontario.  
She'll be getting the help she  
needs.

GERTRUDE

I'm glad. I'm also glad we could  
take this walk together.

JOHN

Bold. Audaciously bold.

GERTRUDE

And proudly so.

JOHN

May I see you later this evening?

GERTRUDE

No, I'm afraid not. I have to visit  
a sick friend.

JOHN

Oh. I see.

GERTRUDE

But you may call on me tomorrow.

She gives him a quick, shy kiss. They look like two teenagers  
on their first date.

JOHN

Until tomorrow then.

GERTRUDE

Until tomorrow.

She leaves. Brackenreid approaches.

BRACKENREID  
Quite a girl.

JOHN  
Yes she is.

BRACKENREID  
Good job, son. We'll make a proper  
copper of you yet.

INT. DORM ROOM - EVENING

Harriet is conscious and sits up in bed. There is a KNOCK at the door.

HARRIET  
Come in.

Gertrude enters.

GERTRUDE  
I've brought sustenance.

She brings a CUP OF TEA and a COOKIE to Harriet, who reluctantly takes both.

HARRIET  
Why would you bring me food?

GERTRUDE  
I thought you might need it. Here.

Gertrude helps Harriet take a couple of weak sips of tea.

HARRIET  
No, I mean -- why are you being  
nice to me?

GERTRUDE  
It's what you do when someone needs  
you.

Harriet puts her lips on the cookie, but doesn't bite down. She falls back against her pillows.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
You should rest. I'll be back  
later.

Gertrude gets up to go. As she reaches the door --

HARRIET  
 (weakly)  
 Gertrude?

Gertrude turns around.

HARRIET (CONT'D)  
 Thank you.

Gertrude's lips curl into a slight smile. She nods and then leaves.

INT. WINDSOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - EVENING

Murdoch and Julia sit at a table, having just finished their dinner.

MURDOCH  
 Well, I'm sure Miss Hampton will be treated by the best doctors her family's considerable wealth can buy.

JULIA  
 I hope they're familiar with anorexia nervosa. I'd read about it, but I never understood how powerful the condition can be.

MURDOCH  
 I still can't fathom how so many young girls would want to become so thin. And so ill. It's as if they wanted to waste away.

JULIA  
 (almost to herself)  
 It's an insidious disease. It turns an otherwise healthy woman into a pale copy of herself.

MURDOCH  
 Julia?

JULIA  
 I'm just musing.

A waiter approaches their table.

WAITER  
 May I take these plates for you?

MURDOCH

Certainly.

WAITER

And would you like some dessert  
tonight, sir?

MURDOCH

I believe I'll have the banana  
cream pie.

WAITER

Very good. And for you, madam?  
Banana cream pie as well?

JULIA

Yes. Yes, I believe I will.

She smiles.

END OF SHOW