

‘Hugo.’ Pap perched at the edge of the table. ‘How is that a good suggestion? Don’t you want more room for the work you do here?’ His voice got louder. ‘Wouldn’t that be better than a statue?’ He shouted, ‘Or a plaque!?’ He threw down his papers.

Jane tugged at Pap’s arm to calm him. It worked.

Mrs K stood up. She reminisced. ‘You know – this place was wonderful when it open. Beautiful.’ People in the group murmured in agreement. ‘I remember I came here with Mr K. We didn’t live here then – was a dream. We went to the chip shop, and then Third Avenue to look over and throw chips at the tiny ant people below. And now, The Tri is falling apart...’

Pap jumped in. ‘See! See! Thank you Mrs K! I knew you would understand.’ He turned to look at Hugo. ‘And you want a statue?’

‘I’m not finished!’ Mrs K continued sternly. ‘So I think something that brings back the love and glamour would be great. I like the statue. It’s positive.’

Pap looked confused and exasperated. Mrs K laughed to herself.

Barry stood up. ‘I hear you, Joe. Bermuda’s could do with some work. We get it all on this estate. Noise, pollution, burnt-out cars, people peeing in the stairwells. We need more cameras,’ Pap nodded vigorously. ‘But five grand is not going to fix that. Plus, the council should be doing that anyway!’

Hugo nodded vigorously.

Pap caught his eye. His anger rose.

‘Alright, Hugo Two-surnames. Since you’re apparently so rich, pay for it yourself!’

The crowd gasped.

Hugo replied slowly, ‘Look, I don’t know why you think I’ve got money – don’t let my name fool you, Joe. I just think it’s important that we celebrate people and places where we can. With the Tri’s imminent anniversary, we should celebrate her, all her corners; her beauty, the best times, the tumultuous times. Let’s, erm, ‘shout out’ Silvertöe.’

He coughed loudly. Serena leaned into him. He continued. ‘We get a statue, lovingly crafted by

someone like Lavenderstick or Clockenstein. It will draw people from outside the estate; they will take note of the conditions – and the community spirit – and we'll unlock more money. It's like my antiques. You have to spend money to make money. So, let's keep on trying for The Tri.'

The crowd murmured their approval.

'You're bloody trying, Hugo – trying my patience.' Pap slammed his fist on the table.

I looked away from the video and over at Norva who had pursed her lips and shut her eyes. She shook her head to dismiss what she was hearing.

Pap looked angry.

Really angry.

'OK, everyone! I think we've heard all sides,' said Charity Jane, nervously, trying to break the tension. 'Let's get this one to a vote. Exciting!'

'We have two options. Those in favour of investing in Joseph's upkeep plan, raise your hands.'

The camera whipped around the room. Approximately 43% of people had their hand up.

'Now, those who support Hugo's Silvertöe statue, raise your hands.' Jane looked nervous.

George made an awkward face to camera. He whipped his phone around the room. 51% of hands. I

couldn't account for the other 6%. It was close, certainly, but not that close. Hugo had it.

The Hub was uncomfortably silent. Someone at the back cut through it.

'He has a point, Joseph. There's not enough money at play to make a difference, so let's take a punt on this. This is his world – he gets this stuff.'

Pap exploded. 'So what – that's it? I'm not a good enough caretaker for you now? Why don't you just let Hugo run this place. Yeah, that's a good plan, let him do it. I've been here for 25 years, I grew up here. Tri through and through! I did my best for you – all of you. This guy only moved here for jokes. For fun. *For the experience*. Oh, you didn't know that!? Well you do now. Our lives are a tourist attraction for him! A human zoo! This is your king?' he spat at the room.

George loved that last line, and mimicked it perfectly.

Pap was foaming at the mouth.

The camera moved back to Hugo. He looked weak and shivered in his seat.

'Hugo looks mash up, right?' said George. 'I reckon he was on his special water, sozzled probs.'

'It looks like heat stroke to me,' I said.

I looked at the other people in the room. Everyone who could look red, looked very red indeed. Everyone fanned themselves in the heat.

‘Joseph, yes, you know I was inspired to move here for the architecture,’ Hugo started cautiously. ‘But I absolutely love it here – I’m a true resident, I contribute...’

Pap snorted. ‘Oh, you contribute do you?’ He shot a look at Jane, who started to interject but decided to look silently at the floor.

‘I love the community,’ Hugo continued. ‘I want the best for it – I’m just trying to think long-term here.’

Pap was furious. ‘So I’m short-sighted now? I’m a blind man? Well I see you Hugo! I see you clearly! You’ve all gone mad! Hugo – you better watch yourself, mate. I mean that. So help me – stay out of my way.’

Pap slammed his fist on the table, and stormed out of The Hub. Charity Jane looked around the room and quickly followed him.

The video moved over to Serena and Hugo talking to Mrs K.

'Absolute madness,' said George to the camera, before sticking his tongue out.

The video ended abruptly.

I felt sick.

Pap was implicated. Without a doubt. The motive seemed clear. My hands shook. I looked over at Norva in the dark. She was chewing at the end of her braid. Nerves.

'What time did the meeting end, George?' I asked.

‘Ten-thirty ish?’

I double-checked our notes. Corroborated.

‘George, where did you go after the meeting?’

Time to rule out some suspects.

George looked at the floor. ‘OK, you need to swear you won’t tell my mum about this, yeah?’

‘Yes,’ I said confidently.

Norva narrowed her eyes. ‘What did you do?’ she asked suspiciously.

‘So listen, yeah, don’t be mad Norv, but I blagged my way into TrojKat’s gig and I flipping went backstage. Backstage! She remembered me from back in the day. Gave her my SoundCloud – of course – and she’s gonna check it out. Said she’s thinking about coming back to The Tri to do her next video. Oh my god, it was beyond lit, girl! It was a raging inferno.’

Norva’s mouth fell open. ‘You went to see TrojKat. Without me. You went backstage. And you didn’t tell me. Have I got that right?’

‘I took my chance, Norva, I just had to do it,’ George pleaded. ‘Don’t hate. It was a once in a lifetime flex.’

TrojKat, also known as Katarzyna Clarke, was a singer who used to live in Corner Two. Norva often told me that 'TrojKat was blowing up right now', which I assumed meant she was popular. Popular with Norva and George anyway.

Norva shook with rage. 'You're dead to me, George, deader than Hugo.'

George and I leaned away from Norva, shocked.

'Girl, that's way too strong,' he said.

'Yeah, well, strong is bailing on me and keeping this quiet,' she said. 'Anyway, you might be lying, where's the receipts?'

George pulled out his phone. 'I have a till roll of them, sis.'

He flicked through his photos. 'Look, here I am outside the GoTo.' A selfie outside the venue.

'Here's me inside.' George sticking out his tongue next to the bar.

'There's our girl, killing it on stage.' A blurred shot of TrojKat.

'Here's me chilling out back with the legend herself.' A close up of George and TrojKat hugging.

Norva snatched George's phone. 'Let me see! She zoomed into the photos, checked the times and the locations.'

'He's telling the truth – he was there. He is a traitor.' She tossed his phone back at him – he caught it. Just.

'Easy, Norv, I don't have the coins for insurance.'

'But George, how long were you there. Where was your mum?' I asked.

'Ah yeah, that bit's not so fire,' he said. 'My aunt, Geeta, is going through it with her man right now. Real dark times. Friday night, she gets home, he's just up and bounced. No trace.'

'For real?' said Norva, sympathy seeping back. 'I knew it was bad, but not that bad.'

'Yeah,' said George, 'after the meeting, Mum went over to stay the night. I was going too. I walked Mum to the Tube, saw the poster for the gig and was like, you know what this is my moment.'

'So much for 'family first,' snorted Norva.

'What did you do?' I asked, moving the conversation along.

'Well, I'm not proud of this,' sighed George, 'but I said "Ma, I left my mic back at The Tri, let me catch you up".'

Norva shook her head, 'You shouldn't lie to Nina, she's too pure.'

‘Yeah I know, I don’t feel good about it,’ said George. ‘Anyway, after the gig, I headed there. They were drinking wine and weeping, didn’t notice me. Next morning, we came home, like lunchtime.’

He swiped through his phone.

‘Here look, here a pic of all of us the next day.’ He pushed the phone in our faces. ‘Call Aunty G if you want, but don’t ask her the details – she’s keeping her ghosting on the down low.’

‘OK, the Khans are officially ruled out,’ sighed Norva. She looked at me, and I nodded in the affirmative.

George laughed. ‘LOOOL.’

He actually said ‘lol’.

‘As if The Khans were really in the mix!? You’re too much, NSquared, but I’ll allow. I only murder bass and merc the internet.’

‘We have to be thorough,’ I said, quietly.

Norva laughed. ‘I’m still mad with you, though.’

‘Never that,’ said George. ‘Next time, you can be my plus one.’ He punched her playfully on her arm.

I rolled my eyes.

Taking the hint, possibly, George said, ‘Listen, sisters, I have to bounce. My midnight adventures have drawn to a close. Today has been a ride, thanks to you. I need to finish up my tune

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in the morning, so I need to be fresh and on point for the lyrics to flow. Come up and see Serena tomorrow and knock for me after – although I'll probably hear you. Those walls are thin. I heard her crying earlier.'

I shook my head. 'Poor Serena, it's awful for *me*, let alone for *her*. His sister.'

'Totally,' said George, 'and in other Serena-related news, we have some of that Vitonica in the fridge, Nik. I hear it's your jam. Baby needs her bottle waaaaah!' George said, and wailed like a baby. He shook his fist near his eyes.

Norva stifled a laugh and looked at the floor. I made a face and stuck out my tongue.

I regretted that instantly. Not my style.

We walked in circles around The Hub once George left. I shone my phone's torch around the walls. Hugo's desk caught the light.

'He didn't die in here,' Norva said. 'Too clean, too tidy and as I said, the cops aren't sniffing around yet, so nope. Supports my "died in murderer's flat theory". You'll see I'm right.'

I ran my fingers across Hugo's desk, while Norva sat in his chair. She did an impression of him. 'We all wear masks in public, metaphorically speaking. It's seminal.'

It was spot on. I had to laugh. I knelt down beside her. A drawer. I pulled at it two times, but it was locked.

Norva pushed the chair away from the desk.

'My department. Move.' She yanked at the drawer.
Hard.

It moved the desk, but the drawer remained
locked.

Attempt two. Same result.

'Can't believe that didn't work,' Norva said,
sitting back on her knees. 'This might though.' She stuck
her hands in her pockets, pulling them outside of dress.

Now on the floor:

- dusty crumbs from stale biscuits
- three chocolate wrappers
- a crumpled tissue

Norva knelt down to look through the debris.
'Ah, there it is.'

- a small black hair pin

'Norva,' I could feel my eyes rolling, 'that's not a
thing that works in real life.'

'No smoke without fire,' she said.

'That doesn't even make sense,' I said, confused.

'Shuush, just direct the light!'

Norva stuck the pin in the lock. Twisted it slowly

left, twisted it slowly right. Nothing. Seemingly defeated, she twisted it back left and right vigorously.

There was a satisfying clunk as the lock released itself. We looked at each other, amazed.

‘Yo, I cannot believe that actually worked...’ she whispered to herself, looking down at her hands, turning them over. ‘My gosh, I guess I was an Avenger this whole time, and now I’m just finding my powers!’ She laughed.

The drawer was a mess, surprisingly. I assumed Hugo was neat.

- Two unopened letters – HMRC
- 17 receipts
- One lip balm – Lychee Lemonade
- 12 half chewed pens
- Three folded newspapers (one dated December 1981)
- Five fast food wrappers
- Eight dirty, but dry, paint brushes
- One signed photo of someone called David Dickinson, whoever that was

I reached to the back of the drawer. Underneath a fraying mouse mat was a small

trinket. A stone-coloured, pyramid-shaped ornament, with many multi-coloured scratches etched on it. Five centimetres square. I shone my light at my hand. It fitted perfectly in my palm.

‘What’s that then?’ asked Norva, peering into my hand.

‘Ah, one of Hugo’s bits of junk, I think,’ I replied.

It wasn’t a bit of junk. I knew what it was. It was the lid to one of Hugo’s vases. A tall, slim vase in the same stone, with the same coloured scratches.

It was always on his desk. I asked him about it once. ‘It’s rare, darling Anika. A vase with a lid, in this style? Absolutely unique. Seminal,’ he said, running his many-ringed fingers around it.

‘This is dry. I’m checking out the rest of this place,’ said Norva, turning on her own light, skipping off.

I ran my fingers over the lid. Instant comfort. I looked up over the desk and saw Norva poking around in a waste bin. That’s when I decided to break a rule. Keeping my eyes on Norva, I stuffed the lid in the right pocket of my shorts. And stole it.

It was official – another criminal was at large on The Tri.

I stood up and felt my new unlucky charm in my pocket. It felt uncomfortably good and brought back memories of better times.

No regrets.

‘Time to bounce, I reckon,’ said Norva from across the room, breaking my thoughts.

I joined her to peruse the bin.

- Three empty bottles of Vitonica
- Five fermenting pierogis
- Two chocolate wrappers
- Ants everywhere
- Flies: five dead, three alive

Positively hygienic, compared to the bin she looked through earlier today.

‘Yes, we’re done here,’ I agreed. ‘We know the meeting was about money.’

Motive: Money?

‘Yeah, and how to spend it,’ Norva said. ‘I’m firmly on Team Pap. Repairs for the win.’

‘Hugo had a point, though,’ I said. ‘Good will and publicity could attract even more money.’

She shot me a confused, angry look. 'Whose side you're on, Sis?'

'I don't think it's a good idea to talk about 'sides', when referring to Pap and Hugo, Norva, not today.'

'Yeah, you're 'right,' she said.

To-do: Find out about the meeting

We walked to the lobby. I yawned.

'Yeah, I'm knackered too,' Norva said. Right. The plan is this. Bed. Brief sleep. Tomorrow – the market, talk to suspects, hunt motives.' She leaned against the lift.

To-do: Whitford Market

'You know who looks like they have a motive?' I began. 'A really big one?'

'Don't say it,' Norva said quietly. 'I know.'

'He's the clear suspect, Norva – and I'm terrified! We need to get to him before DCI Sharp does. We need to know where he was, and how he got that limp...'

'But, you know he didn't do it, right?' Norva said, jumping in. 'Where's your family values? Your loyalty?'

'It's not about loyalty, Norva,' I said quietly. 'It's about how it looks. And right now, it looks really bad.'

We gently put the key into the front door, and closed it silently behind us.

‘...and the girls, my daughters – Anika and Norva – you may have seen them...’

‘I have indeed,’ replied DCI Sharp.

I gasped. A breath caught in my throat. Norva grabbed my hand and we pushed ourselves against the wall outside our room.

‘...they came running in, ‘Hugo’s in the bin! Hugo’s in the bin!’” Pap choked up. ‘Nik really liked him.’ His voice broke. ‘For her to see him like that, it breaks my heart. It hurts, you know?’

‘I understand,’ she said. ‘You want the very best for them.’

‘If I can’t even protect them where they live,

how can I protect them out in the world?' He sniffed. Momentary silence. 'So, yeah, sorry about that.' He coughed. 'That's pretty much it. I hope that helps.'

'Very much,' she said. 'If there's anything else you remember, here's my card. Just let me know. Anything, anything at all.'

'Will do.'

'Thanks for all your help today, and for use of your office. It's just a temporary measure.'

'Sure, sure.'

DCI Sharp stood up to leave. We quickly darted into our room. Pap walked her to the door and went to bed.

Victim: Hugo Knightley-Webb

Body location: Corner One Refuse Area

Date and Time of discovery: 23/07 14:27

Time of death: Between Fri 20/07 22:30 and
Sat 06:30

Weapon: Paint can

Motive: Money?

Hypothesis: Murdered in Corner One flat, either
floor 21 or 22, with paint can, placed in chute

~~To-do: Find out about the meeting~~

To-do: Find out where the suspects went after
the meeting

To-do: Ask Pap about his conversation and
limp

~~To-do: Test The Hugo/Chute hypothesis~~

To-do: Ask Pap about the paint/bags

To-do: Close the time of death window

To-do: Go to Whitford Market

	221 Pap Nik Neerav Ringe	222 Mrs Kowalski	223 Mark Walker Myether Walker	211 George Shah Nina Shah	212 Hugo KW Serena KW	213 Charity Jane
Suspect's alibi during TOD window	Out until 01:27	Working on a project with 'a friend'.		GS: Backstage with TrojKat NS: With Aunt Geeta		
Corroborated?						
Motivation?	Argument at Friday's meeting over money.			Y - photographic evidence for both suspects.		
Questions?						How did you get into our flat?