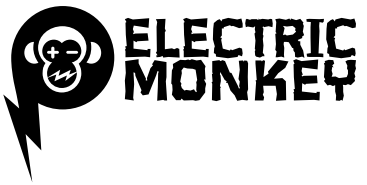
Good Girl, Bad Blood

HOLLY JACKSON





First published in Great Britain in 2020
by Electric Monkey, part of Egmont Books

An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

Text copyright © 2020 Holly Jackson

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

Illustration p24 © Priscilla Coleman

ISBN 978 1 4052 9775 2

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

70719/006

egmontbooks.co.uk

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group

Typeset by Avon DataSet Ltd, Alcester, Warwickshire

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher and copyright owner.

Stay safe online. Any website addresses listed in this book are correct at the time of going to print. However, Egmont is not responsible for content hosted by third parties. Please be aware that online content can be subject to change and websites can contain content that is unsuitable for children. We advise that all children are supervised when using the internet.



MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC™ C007454

This book is produced from independently certified FSC™ paper
to ensure responsible forest management.

For more information visit: www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

For Ben,

and for every
version of you these
last ten years.


Blackfield Lane
Sycamore Road
Old Farm Road
Wyvil Road
Wyvil Road
Romer Close
Lodge Wood
Tudor Lane
West Way
Beacon Close
Martinsend Way
Acres End
Barrows Wood
Grove Place
Kilton Grammar Drive
Gravelly Way
Common Road
Little Kilton Common
Cross Lane


River Kilbourne
A413
High Street
Beechwood Bottom
Ellwood Place
Hogg Hill
Cedar Way
Little Kilton
High Street
Church Street
A413
Ten Wood
Chalk Road
Highmoor

After and Before

You think you'd know what a killer sounds like.

That their lies would have a different texture; some barely perceptible shift. A voice that thickens, grows sharp and uneven as the truth slips beneath the jagged edges. You'd think that, wouldn't you? Everyone thinks they'd know, if it came down to it. But Pip hadn't.

'*It's such a tragedy what happened in the end.*'

Sitting across from him, looking into his kind, crinkled eyes, her phone between them recording every sound and sniff and throat-clearing huff. She'd believed it all, every word.

Pip traced her fingers across the mousepad, skipping the audio file back again.

'*It's such a tragedy what happened in the end.*'

Elliot Ward's voice rang out from the speakers once more, filling her darkened bedroom. Filling her head.

Stop. Click. Repeat.

'*It's such a tragedy what happened in the end.*'

She'd listened to it maybe a hundred times. Maybe even a thousand. And there was nothing, no giveaway, no change as he slipped between lies and half-truths. The man she'd once looked to as an almost-father. But then, Pip had lied too,

hadn't she? And she could tell herself she'd done it to protect the people she loved, but wasn't that the exact same reason Elliot gave? Pip ignored that voice in her head; the truth was out, most of it, and that's the thing she clung to.

She kept going, on to the other part that made her hairs stand on end.

'*And do you think Sal killed Andie*?' asked Pip's voice from the past.

'*. . . he was such a lovely kid. But, considering the evidence, I don't see how he couldn't have done it. So, as wrong as it feels, I guess I think he must have. There's no other explanation* –'

Pip's door pushed inward with a slap.

'What are you doing?' interrupted a voice from right now, one that lifted with a smirk because he knew damn well what she was doing.

'You scared me, Ravi,' she said, annoyed, darting forward to pause the audio. Ravi didn't need to hear Elliot Ward's voice, not ever again.

'You're sitting here in the dark listening to that, but *I'm* the scary one?' Ravi said, flicking on the light switch, the yellow glow reflecting off the dark hair swept across his forehead. He pulled that face, the one that always got her, and Pip smiled because it was impossible not to.

She wheeled back from her desk. 'How did you get in anyway?'

'Your parents and Josh were on their way out, with a very

impressive looking lemon tart.'

'Oh yes,' she said. 'They're on neighbourly welcome duties. A young couple have just moved into the Chens' house down the street. Mum did the deal. The Greens . . . or maybe the Browns, can't remember.'

It was strange, thinking of another family living in that house, new lives reshaping to fill its old spaces. Pip's friend Zach Chen had always lived there, four doors down, ever since Pip had moved here aged five. It wasn't a real goodbye; she still saw Zach at school every day, but his parents had decided they could no longer live in this town, not after *all that trouble*. Pip was certain they considered her a large part of *all that trouble*.

'Dinner's seven thirty by the way,' Ravi said, his voice suddenly skipping clumsily over the words. Pip looked at him; he was wearing his nicest shirt tucked in at the front, and . . . were those new shoes? She could smell aftershave too, as he stepped towards her, but he stopped short, didn't kiss her on the forehead nor run a hand through her hair. Instead he went to sit on her bed, fiddling with his hands.

'Meaning you're almost two hours early,' Pip smiled.

'Y-yeah.' He coughed.

Why was he being awkward? It was Valentine's Day, their first since knowing each other, and Ravi had booked them a table at The Siren, out of town. Pip's best friend Cara was convinced Ravi was going to ask Pip to be his girlfriend tonight. She said she'd put money on it. The thought made

something in Pip's stomach swell, spilling its heat up into her chest. But it might not be that: Valentine's Day was also Sal's birthday. Ravi's older brother would have turned twenty-four today, if he'd made it past eighteen.

'How far have you got?' Ravi asked, nodding at her laptop, the audio editing software Audacity filling her screen with spiky blue lines. The whole story was there, contained within those blue lines. From the start of her project to the very end; every lie, every secret. Even some of her own.

'It's done,' Pip said, dropping her eyes to the new USB microphone plugged into her computer. 'I've finished. Six episodes. I had to use a noise reduction effect on some of the phone interviews for quality, but it's done.'

And in a green plastic file, beside the microphone, were the release forms she'd sent out to everyone. Signed and returned, granting her permission to publish their interviews in a podcast. Even Elliot Ward had signed one, from his prison cell. Two people had refused: Stanley Forbes from the town newspaper and, of course, Max Hastings. But Pip didn't need their voices to tell the story; she'd filled in the gaps with her production log entries, now recorded as monologues.

'You've finished already?' Ravi said, though he couldn't really be surprised. He knew her, maybe better than anyone else.

It had been just a couple of weeks since she'd stood up in the school hall and told everyone what really happened. But the media still weren't telling the story right; even now they

clung to their own angles because they were cleaner, neater. Yet the Andie Bell case had been anything but neat.

'If you want something done right, you have to do it yourself,' Pip said, her gaze climbing the spiking audio clips. Right then, she couldn't decide whether this felt like something beginning or something ending. But she knew which she wanted it to be.

'So, what's next?' asked Ravi.

'I export the episode files, upload them to Soundcloud on schedule, once a week, and then copy the RSS feed to podcast directories like iTunes and Stitcher. But I'm not quite finished,' she said. 'I need to record the intro, over this theme song I found on Audio Jungle. But to record an intro, you need a title.'

'Ah,' Ravi said, stretching back, 'we're still title-less are we, Lady Fitz-Amobi?'

'We are,' she said. 'I've narrowed it down to three options.'

'Hit me,' he said.

'No, you'll be mean about them.'

'No, I won't,' he said earnestly, with the smallest of smiles.

'OK.' She looked down at her notes. 'Option A is: *An Examination into a Miscarriage of Justice*. Wha— Ravi, I can see you laughing.'

'That was a yawn, I swear.'

'Well, you won't like option B either because that's *A Study into a Closed Case: The Andie Bell* – Ravi, stop!'

'Wha— I'm sorry, I can't help it,' he said, laughing until his

eyes lined with tears. 'It's just . . . of all your many qualities, Pip, there's one thing you lack –'

'Lack?' She spun her chair to face him. 'I *lack* something?'

'Yes,' he said, meeting her attempt at stony eyes. 'Pizazz. You are almost entirely pizazzless, Pip.'

'I am not pizazzless.'

'You need to draw people in, intrigue them. Have a word like "kill" or "dead" in there.'

'But that's sensationalism.'

'And that's exactly what you want, for people to actually listen,' he said.

'But all of my options are accurate and –'

'Boring?'

Pip threw a yellow highlighter at him.

'You need something that rhymes, or alliteration. Something with . . .'

'Pizazz?' she said in her Ravi voice. 'You think of one then.'

'*Crime Time*,' he said. 'No, oh Little Kilton . . . maybe *Little Kill Town*.'

'Ew, no,' said Pip.

'You're right.' Ravi got up, started to pace. 'Your unique selling point is, really, you. A seventeen-year-old who solved a case the police had long considered closed. And what are you?' he looked at her, squinting his eyes.

'Lacking, clearly,' she said with mock irritation.

'A student,' Ravi thought aloud. 'A girl. Project. Oh, how about *Project Murder and Me*?'

'Nah.'

'OK . . .' He chewed his lip and it made Pip's stomach tighten. 'So, something murder, or kill or dead. And you are Pip, who's a student and a girl who's good at . . . oh shit,' he said suddenly, eyes widening. 'I've got it!'

'What?' she said.

'I've literally got it,' he said, far too pleased with himself.

'What is it?'

'*A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*.'

'Noooo.' Pip shook her head. 'That's bad, way too try-hard.'

'What are you talking about? It's perfect.'

'Good girl?' she said, dubiously. 'I turn eighteen in two weeks; I won't contribute to my own infantilization.'

'*A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*,' Ravi said in his deep, movie-trailer voice, pulling Pip up from her chair and spinning her towards him.

'No,' she said.

'Yes,' he retorted, placing one hand on her waist, his warm fingers dancing up her ribs.

'Absolutely not.'

UK NEWSDAY

UK > Culture > TV & Radio > Reviews

A Good Girl's Guide to Murder Review: *The latest true crime podcast obsession ends with a chilling finale*

BENJAMIN COLLIS MARCH 28



If you haven't yet listened to episode 6 of *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*, look away now. Serious spoilers below.

Of course, many of us knew how this mystery ended, from when it exploded on to the news cycles last November, but the whodunnit wasn't the whole story here. The real story of *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* has been the journey, from a 17-year-old sleuth's hunch about a closed case – the murder of teenager Andie Bell, allegedly by her boyfriend Sal Singh – to the spiralling web of dark secrets she uncovers in her small town. The ever-shifting suspects, the lies and the twists.

The final episode certainly isn't lacking in twists as it brings us the truth, starting with Pip's shocking revelation that Elliot Ward, her best friend's father, wrote the threatening notes Pip received during her investigation. Irrefutable proof of his involvement and truly a 'loss of innocence'

moment for Pip. She and Ravi Singh – Sal's younger brother and co-detective on this case – believed that Andie Bell might still be alive and Elliot had been keeping her the whole time. Pip confronted Elliot Ward alone and, recounting Ward's words, the whole story unravels. An illicit relationship between student and teacher, allegedly initiated by Andie. "If true," Pip theorizes, "I think Andie wanted an escape from Little Kilton, particularly from her father who allegedly, according to a source, was controlling and emotionally abusive. Perhaps Andie believed Mr Ward could get her a place at Oxford, like Sal, so she could get far away from home."

The night of her disappearance, Andie went to Elliot Ward's house. An argument ensued. Andie tripped, hitting her head against his desk. But as Ward rushed to get a first aid kit, Andie disappeared into the night. In the following days as Andie was officially declared missing, Elliot Ward panicked, believing Andie must have died from her head injury and when police eventually found her body, there might be evidence that would lead back to him. His only chance was to give them a more convincing suspect. "He cried as he told me," Pip says, "how he killed Sal Singh." Ward made it look like suicide and planted evidence so police would think Sal killed his girlfriend and then himself.

But, months later, Ward was shocked to see Andie walking on the side of the road, thin and dishevelled. She hadn't died after all. Ward couldn't allow her to return to Little Kilton, and that's how she ended up his prisoner for five

years. However, in a twist truly stranger than fiction: the person in Ward's loft wasn't Andie Bell. "She looked so much like her," Pip claims, "she even told me she *was* Andie." But she was actually Isla Jordan, a vulnerable young woman with an intellectual disability. All this time, Elliot had convinced himself – and Isla – that she *was* Andie Bell.

This left the final question of what happened to the *real* Andie Bell? Our young detective beat the police to that too. "It was Becca Bell, Andie's little sister." Pip worked out that Becca had been sexually assaulted at a house party (nicknamed calamity parties), and that Andie had sold drugs at these parties, including Rohypnol which Becca suspected played a part in her assault. When Andie was out *that night* with Ward, Becca allegedly found proof in her sister's room that Max Hastings had bought Rohypnol from Andie and was likely Becca's attacker (Max will soon face trial for several rape and sexual assault charges). But when Andie returned, she didn't react in the way Becca hoped; Andie forbade her little sister from going to the police because it would get her in trouble. They started arguing, pushing, until Andie ended up on the floor, unconscious and vomiting. Andie's post-mortem – completed last November when her body was finally recovered – showed that "Andie's brain swelling from a head trauma was not fatal. Though it, no doubt, caused Andie's loss of consciousness and vomiting, Andie Bell died from asphyxiation, choking on her own vomit." Becca froze, allegedly watching Andie die, too shocked, too angry to

save her sister's life. Hiding her body because she was scared no one would believe it was an accident.

And there it is, our ending. "No angles or filters, just the sad truth of how Andie Bell died, how Sal was murdered and set up as her killer and everyone believed it." In Pip's scathing conclusion, she picks out everyone she finds at fault for the deaths of these two teenagers, naming and blaming: Elliot Ward, Max Hastings, Jason Bell (Andie's father), Becca Bell, Howard Bowers (Andie's drug dealer), and Andie Bell herself.

A Good Girl's Guide to Murder stormed to the top of the iTunes chart with its first episode six weeks ago and it looks set to stay there for some time. With the final episode released last night, listeners are already clamouring for a season two of the hit podcast. But in a statement posted to her website, Pip said: "I'm afraid my detective days are over and there will not be a second season of *AGGGTM*. This case almost consumed me; I could only see that once I was out the other side. It became an unhealthy obsession, putting me and those around me in considerable danger. But I will finish *this* story, recording updates on the trials and verdicts of all those involved. I promise I will be here until the very last word."