

Scene of the Crime

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The Crime: Tara Winters, a college student at the local university, was found murdered this morning around 10:00 a.m. The body was discovered by her friend Danielle Morgan, who stopped to check on her when she didn't show up for class.

The Scene: Tara was murdered in her apartment, a spacious two-bedroom in one of the nicer college complexes. As the investigators comb over the scene, they'll find:

① Tara is lying in the middle of the living room with cut wounds to her face, upper body, and throat and defensive wounds on her hands. The body is lying in a circle containing a strange symbol and there are a few candles around the edge of the circle. While it looks like this is roughly where Tara was killed, it's obvious that the body has been moved. Astute investigators will realize that the body was moved to draw the symbol. Tara's phone is in her pocket. The most recent call was to Matt Dixon. The most recent text was to someone named Drake Nightshade and read "Cum Ovr. Want 2 C U!"

② There's a CD in the stereo by a band called Exquisite Depression. It's terrible. The inside cover of the CD case (which is lying on top of the stereo) contains a symbol that is similar to the one around the body.

③ There's some mail and a couple of school books on the kitchen table. The only thing of interest is an unopened letter (a bill, if the investigators open it) from Tom Mitchell, a private detective.

④ There's cold pizza and beer in the fridge, and not much else. In one of the cabinet is an empty cereal box containing a manilla envelope. It contains photographs of a woman in her late 40s and what looks to be a much younger man (his face is not visible) having quite a good time in a hotel room. There's also a knife block with one of the larger knives missing on the counter.

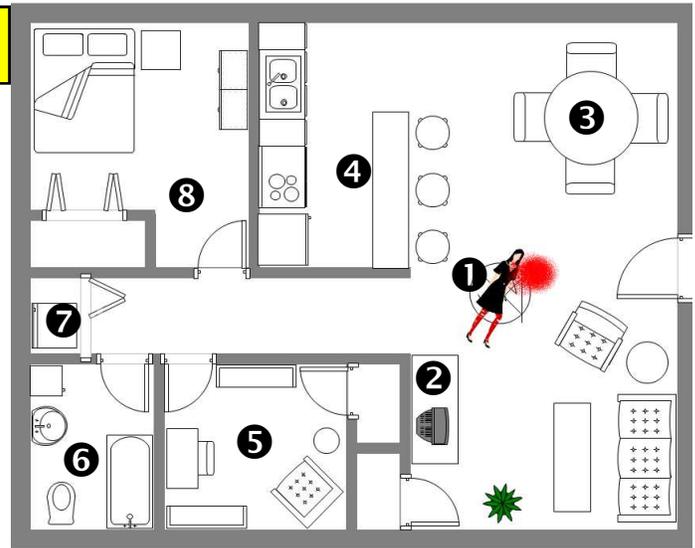
⑤ The bookshelves in the study are full of school books and Anne Rice novels. The computer is on and logged into a popular social networking site. Tara's page mostly consists of bad, gloomy poetry and links to Exquisite Depression videos. According to the site, she's in a relationship with Matt Dixon.

⑥ The bathroom contains nothing of interest, except perhaps to bacteriological scientists.

⑦ The utility closet contains a stack washer/dryer combo. There's an Exquisite Depression T-shirt in the dryer.

⑧ On the dresser, there's a picture of Tara with an older couple who appear to have just gotten married. The woman in the picture is the same woman in the incriminating photos in the kitchen. The back of the photo says "Me, Dad, and Babs at their wedding" and is dated a little over two years ago. Tara's smile in the photo is very forced.

Witnesses: The only neighbor who noticed anything unusual last night was Phil Newman, a stoner type who lives next door. He says that around 1:00 a.m. he heard Tara and "some dude" (he doesn't know who) yelling and then somebody turned Tara's stereo up really loud. He was going to go check it out, but then a totally freaky cartoon came on and he forgot all about it.



Possible Leads: Looking into Tara's background and questioning her friends will turn up the following potentially useful information:

- Tara's father, Henry, is a very wealthy investment banker in the city. He married his second wife, Babs, just over two years ago. While they seem happy enough together, Tara didn't like Babs and thought she was a gold digger.
- Tara was "like totally deep and tortured and stuff," according to her friends.
- Tara's favorite local band was Exquisite Depression, and she had a huge crush on the lead singer, Drake Nightshade.
- Tara and her boyfriend Matt fought often. Their most recent fight was after last week's Exquisite Depression concert at a local bar, when Matt thought she got a little too friendly with Drake Nightshade after the show.
- The missing knife can be found in a dumpster behind the gas station across the street. It contains enough blood traces to link it to the murder, but no evidence to identify the suspect.

Persons of Interest:

- Matt Dixon says he was at home studying for a big psychology test last night. His roommates were at a frat party, so there's nobody to back up his story.
- Drake Nightshade played a gig last night until around midnight, then left to pick his girlfriend up from work. The two of them made it back to the bar around 1:30 in the morning. Drake says he vaguely remembers Tara from last week's show, but doesn't remember giving her his phone number.
- Babs Winters and her husband were at home asleep last night.
- Tom Mitchell was hired by Tara to investigate her step-mother, who she believed (correctly) was having an affair. Her lover was, according to Mitchell, "some college kid." If asked for a more detailed description, Mitchell will describe someone who looks a lot like Matt Dixon (showing him a picture of Matt will confirm that he and Babs were having an affair).

The Whole Story: When Tara suspected her step-mother was having an affair, she hired Tom Mitchell to trail her and take pictures. When Tara got the pictures a couple of days ago, she recognized that Babs was fooling around with her boyfriend, Matt. Last night when Matt came over, Tara confronted him and they argued. Then he flew into a rage and killed her. Once he realized what he'd done, he tried to frame Drake Nightshade.