

NIGHTMARES UNLEASHED

Season 1, Episode 1

“Again”

(Spooky intro music plays)

TED

Welcome to Nightmares Unleashed. Produced by Ted Heavner and Delaney Sutton. This is episode 1: “Again”. This episode contains depictions of stabbing, murder, gaslighting, and victim-blaming. And now, enjoy the nightmare.

(Intro music cuts off)

(The sound of a ticking clock echoes)

BRYN

Right, so. Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today, Mx. Duncan.

JESSE

Please just call me Jesse.

BRYN

Of course. Now Jesse, I'd like to get right down to business. Do you know why I invited you here today?

JESSE

Well I assume it wasn't to interview me about my latest book.

(Stiff laugh that trails off when Brynn doesn't join)

No, I'm not sure why I'm here. But, if I had to guess, I'd say that Alex's family hired you?

BRYN

I'm not at liberty to discuss who my clients might be. We're here to talk.

JESSE

(With steadily growing anger:) Right. They think I did it. They've said it to my face that they don't care what the verdict was. They've gotten it into their heads that I killed the woman I loved most in the world. And *they're wrong*. The courts already proved my innocence. Accusing me and making me relive the death of my spouse is just cruel and demented.

BRYN

(Calmly:) I understand your frustration, Jesse, but from the perspective of the Whitlock family there wasn't any resolution that actually came from the trial. A murderer was never found, but from the look of the crime scene, the murderer had a vendetta against Alex. Her family is grieving as well, and I know it's unfair to be putting you through this line of questioning again, but it might bring them some closure.

JESSE

I don't- I don't know what more I can tell them, I-I gave my alibi in court. I wasn't even home when- I wasn't even home when Alex...when she...

BRYN

I can only imagine how hard this is for you. To have this brought up again and again. Please, trust me when I say that I just want to get to the bottom of this so that Alex can rest in peace. Maybe something you tell me can lead me to the person who actually took her life.

JESSE

Fine...ask your questions. If only that it might bring that monster who killed her to justice.

ALEX

(Whisper:) Monster.

BRYN

Thank you for your cooperation. *(Pause)* Right. To start, Alex Duncan was found at the bottom of a stairwell in your shared home. From what could be gathered she had been shoved down the stairwell. Her skull was fractured upon impact, and her body was lacerated almost beyond recognition with what appeared to be a letter opener that belonged to you. Can you confirm this?

JESSE

Yes.

BRYN

It seems that whoever killed your spouse wanted to make sure that she was dead. Did Alex have any enemies you were aware of?

JESSE

No.

BRYN

Well, I'm sure she had to have some. She was a fairly well known actress. Quite well loved in fact. That does draw in some rather...problematic people. People who don't understand boundaries. People like James Miller, perhaps? In the court transcript, I noticed you mentioned him quite a few times.

JESSE

(Abruptly:) That man was a monster. He had been stalking Alex for months. He had been an extra on some show they had been doing, and he got obsessed with her. He would follow us when we went out to dinners together. Showing up at our house at all hours, saying he was just there to go over work things with Alex. We tried getting him arrested but he hadn't actually done anything life threatening, so the cops didn't do anything to help us. If anyone would have done this to her it would have been him!

ALEX

(Venomously:) Liar.

JESSE

What did you call me?

BRYN

I hadn't said anything?

JESSE

(Clearly rattled:) I...I'm sorry. I think the situation is just getting to me. Alex was my whole world and it's been a living nightmare since she's passed.

BRYN

Of course, losing someone you've been with for so long is a tragedy. Do you think you'll be alright to continue?

JESSE

Yes, I-I need to see this through so that her family can finally see it wasn't me.

BRYN

Of course. Despite your claims about Mr. Miller, many of the former cast and crew that had worked with both Mr. Miller and Alex said that the two had gotten along well.

JESSE

That...that was just Alex being kind. She always did have such a kind heart. Hell, she never knew how to tell someone to back off, or that she was uncomfortable. It was something we had been working on together.

BRYN

I see, moving forward. Now from your account, on the night that Alex was murdered you had been out of town working on your new book. About 240 miles out of town to be exact, fairly deep in the woods too.

JESSE

That's correct. I was...I was struggling with writer's block and when I get stuck like that, I like to get out of the city. Being isolated in nature tends to help with my creativity. Alex...Alex understood that, but she hated that kind of isolation. Said it gave her the creeps not being able to hear anything in the dead of night. It's why she was at home alone.

BRYN

So even though you believed James Miller to be a threat to your wife's safety, you still left town? Even with her aversion to the countryside, you would think if she feared for her life she would have wanted to stay with you. Or better yet, that you wouldn't have wanted to leave her alone.

JESSE

I-I did invite her, practically begged her, but...she didn't want to come with me. She said she didn't want to hold me back, and that she still wanted me to go. And I believe her, though...I think it was something else. She had...been distancing herself from me for a while. It was...it was killing me that she didn't feel comfortable enough to confide in me, but I wasn't going to force her. That would have only pushed her further away and at the time I thought that was the worst thing that could happen. I was so wrong, living without her is so much worse.

ALEX

(Angry:) Are you even hearing yourself? Lying bastard.

JESSE

(Startled:) Did you hear that?

BRYN

Hear what?

JESSE

That voice! It sounded like...I mean it couldn't have been but it- *(Jesse clears their throat)* I-I'm sorry, I think I just need a minute to myself. This...this situation is...a lot for me.

BRYN

(Suspicious:) Of course. I'll step out for a bit to give you some time to breathe. Would you like a glass of water?

JESSE

Um, yeah, that would be nice.

BRYN

Hm. Just a minute.

(Footsteps and the sound of a door closing as Bryn leaves)

JESSE

God, I really must be losing it if I'm hearing her. Get it together Jesse, she's gone. Dead. never coming back.

ALEX

(Teasingly:) Oh, don't you wish that was true.

(Sound of a chair scraping against the ground)

(Jesse babbles in disbelief)

(Alex mocks the sounds)

ALEX

(Sarcastic:) Surprised to see me, *sweetheart?* I know the vows were "til death do you part" but I just couldn't leave behind the love of my life.

JESSE

You're dead. There's no way you survived those wounds...God your face...

ALEX

Admiring the work? You really went all out didn't you. You weren't gonna let me just bleed to death, you had to mutilate me...didn't you?

JESSE

Shut up, you're not real. You're not here.

ALEX

You even went so far to use one of our wedding gifts to finish me off. I think my mom was the one who got it for us, custom made with our initials on the hilt. And you used it to kill me. Honestly, you even seemed like you were enjoying yourself. Maybe you got off on killing me, using my death as the inspiration for your next book.

JESSE

Fuck...fuck I'm just gonna close my eyes and you'll disappear.

ALEX

(Voice distorting:) Look at me Jesse. Look at what you did to me.

(Silence)

ALEX

You're a coward.

JESSE

(Through gritted teeth:) I'm not. I'm not a coward, you know I hate when people call me a fucking coward.

ALEX

But you are. You're scared of what's gonna happen when people find out what you did. When they find out you tried to frame James. I mean, come on, I knew you were jealous that he and I were friends, but lying and saying he was stalking me? Trying to frame him for my death, which you did a terrible job of by the way. You weren't even creative about how you tried framing him, maybe that lack of creativity is why your books were failing.

JESSE

They-they were not! I had a plan! Fuck I had a plan and everything would have worked out if you hadn't ran! You should have just-no...no get it together Jesse. I just need to get out of here and get some fresh air. That's it, yeah.

(Footsteps, doorknob rattles)

JESSE

Fuck, why won't it open?

(More rattling, hitting on the door)

JESSE

Hey! Let me out of here!

ALEX

Scream all you want, they can't hear you. *(Fake cheerful:)* Oh doesn't that bring back memories! That's what you told me when you were stabbing me in the stomach...and the neck...oh and don't forget my heart. And I guess my back too but that was more figurative than anything. *(Pause)* You're not listening to me, Jesse.

ALEX

You don't get to ignore me now, not after what you did.

JESSE

(Sobbing:) I didn't do anything, I'm innocent. I-I didn't do it, I didn't!

ALEX

Oh...you're innocent are you? Why don't you feel what I felt and then you can say that again

(Heavy breathing and quick footsteps)

(Sound of a body being slammed against a wall, Alex yelps)

JESSE

I told you to stop running.

ALEX

Jess, baby, Jesse please just talk to me.

JESSE

I'm done talking! I tried talking and you didn't listen. I tried reaching out to you when I was hurting and all I got was "Can't talk now babe, I've got a read through" or "Sweetheart you just need to relax". You never actually cared about me, that's why you're always with Miller. Isn't it? You were going to leave me!

ALEX

(Desperate:) No! No, I swear I wasn't! I did love you, God I do love you! Sweetheart please, please just listen.

JESSE

Liar. You never wanted me around, so you know what. I'm done. I'm done begging for even a second of your time while I'm struggling to keep going. You're just like all the others.

ALEX

N-no, no please we can work through this. Sweetheart please.

JESSE

Shut up!

(Alex gasps and lets out noises of pain as they're thrown down the stairs)

(Loud crack as Alex hits the bottom)

(Alex lets out noises of pain, mindlessly pleading to Jesse)

(Footsteps as Jesse walks down the stairs)

(Jesse laughs maniacally and makes noises of exertion as they stab Alex over and over again)

JESSE

I'm done taking second place. Done with always having my success compared with yours. Done with dealing with your crazy mother who always hated me. You hear me? I'm done Alex. You don't get to be better than me anymore! You don't get to abandon me! It's not fair! I'm important too!

JESSE

(Intense sobbing and babbling:) I-I didn't- I'm innocent.

ALEX

Are you still going to play innocent? After all of that? Why don't we try it again then.

JESSE

No! Please-

(Jesse gasps and screams in agony)

ALEX

Again.

(More screams)

ALEX

Again.

(Door opening)

JESSE

(Completely broken:) I did it! I killed her! I murdered her! I stabbed her and I shoved her and I wanted her dead! She took away the best years of my life! She was better than me and I hated her! God- I hated her so much! I wanted her dead for years and I did it!

ALEX

(Voice distorting:) See, now was that so hard? And would you look at that, we have an audience.

BRYN

(At a loss for words:) Jesse...I really hoped that I had been wrong.

JESSE

(Sobbing and whimpering:) I killed her...I lied and I killed her, and I wanted her dead.

(Clock ticking sounds fade out)

NARRATOR

This episode of Nightmares Unleashed was produced by Delaney Sutton and Ted Heavner. It was written and directed by Eilidh Nicholson. It featured the voices of Janet G as Bryn Laurier, Delaney Sutton as Jesse Duncan, Charlie Jurta as Alex Duncan, and was edited by Delaney Sutton. Transcript by August C and cover art by Delaney Sutton. Thanks for listening!