

The sequel to **a good girl's guide to murder**

GOOD
GIRL,
BAD

BLOOD

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author

HOLLY JACKSON

GOOD GIRL, BAD BLOOD

BY HOLLY JACKSON

A Good Girl's Guide to Murder
Good Girl, Bad Blood
As Good as Dead



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GIRL,
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BLOOD

THE SEQUEL TO
A GOOD GIRL'S GUIDE TO MURDER

HOLLY JACKSON



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*For Ben,
and for every version of you these last ten years*

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 trackpad, 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. As wrong as it feels, I guess I think he must have. There's no other explanation—"

Pip's door pushed inward with a smack.

"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, 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 giant Tupperware full of fresh-baked cookies."

"Oh yes," she said. "They're from Costco, don't let my dad fool you. They're on neighborly welcome duties. A young couple just moved into the Chens' house down the street. Mom 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 at age 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, and . . . were those new shoes? She could smell after-shave too, as he stepped toward her, but he stopped short, didn't kiss her on the forehead nor run a hand through her hair. Instead he sat 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 their first Valentine's Day, 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 Pip's laptop, the audio-editing software Audacity filling the screen with spiky blue lines. The whole story was there, contained within those blue lines. From the start of Pip's 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 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're finished already?" Ravi said, though he couldn't really be surprised. He knew her, maybe better than anyone else did.

It had been six weeks since Pip had stood at the front of the school assembly 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 those 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 AudioJungle. But to record an intro, you need a title."

"Ah," Ravi said, stretching out his back, "we're still titleless, 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 of a Closed Case: The Andie Bell*— Ravi, stop!”

“Wha— I’m sorry, I can’t help it,” he said, laughing until his eyes were 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 stony eyes. “Pizzazz. You are almost entirely pizzazz-less, Pip.”

“I am not pizzazz-less.”

“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,” Ravi 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—”

“Pizzazz?” she said in her Ravi voice. “You think of one, then.”

“*Crime Time*,” he said. “No, oh, Fairview . . . maybe *Un-Fairview*.”

“Ew, no,” said Pip.

“You’re right.” Ravi got up and 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.

“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 toward him.

“No,” she said.

“Yes,” he retorted, placing one hand on her waist, his warm fingers dancing up her ribs, making her glow.

“Absolutely not.”

NEWSDAY

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

BENJAMIN COLLIS | MARCH 27



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 know how this mystery ended from when it exploded on the news last November, but the whodunit isn't the whole story here. The real story of *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* has been the journey, from a seventeen-year-old sleuth's hunch about a closed case—the murder of teenager Andie Bell, allegedly by her boyfriend, Sal Singh—to the spiraling 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, in Ward's own 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 Fairview, particularly from her father, who allegedly, according to a source, was controlling and emotionally abusive. Perhaps Andie believed Mr. Ward could get her into Yale, 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 Ward’s 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, 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 to him. His only chance was to give the police 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 that police would think Sal had killed his girlfriend and then himself.

But, months later, Ward was shocked to see Andie walking on the side of the road, thin and disheveled. She hadn’t died after all. Ward couldn’t allow her to return to Fairview, 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.” 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 had happened to the *real* Andie Bell. Our young detective beat the police to that too. “It

was Becca Bell, Andie's little sister." Pip figured out that Becca had been sexually assaulted at a local house party (nicknamed calamity parties by attendees), and that Andie had sold drugs at these parties, including Rohypnol, which Becca suspected had 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 (Hastings will soon face trial for several rape and sexual assault charges). But when Andie returned home, she didn't react the way that Becca had hoped; Andie forbade her sister from going to the police because it would get Andie in trouble. They started arguing and pushing each other, until Andie ended up on the floor, unconscious and vomiting. Andie's postmortem—performed last November when her body was finally recovered—showed that “the brain swelling from a head trauma was not fatal. Though it no doubt caused loss of consciousness and vomiting, Andie Bell died from asphyxiation, choking on her own vomit.” Becca froze, allegedly watching Andie die, too shocked and too angry to save her sister's life. She hid Andie's body because she was scared no one would believe that her death had been 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 framed 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 clamoring for a season 2 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."

ONE MONTH LATER . . .
THURSDAY

ONE

It was still there, every time she opened the front door. It wasn't real, she knew that, just her mind filling in the absence, bridging the gap. She heard it: dog claws skittering, rushing to welcome her home. But it wasn't, it couldn't be. It was just a memory, the ghost of a sound that had always been there.

"Pip, is that you?" her mom called from the kitchen.

"Hey," Pip replied, dropping her bronze-colored backpack in the hall, textbooks thumping together inside.

Josh was in the living room, sitting on the floor two feet from the TV, fast-forwarding through the ads on the Disney Channel. "You'll get square eyes," Pip remarked as she walked by.

"You'll get a square butt," Josh snapped back with a snort. A terrible retort, objectively speaking, but he was quick for a ten-year-old.

"Hi, darling, how was school?" her mom asked, sipping from a flowery mug as Pip walked into the kitchen and settled on one of the stools at the counter.

"Fine. It was fine." School was always fine now. Not good, not bad. Just fine. She pulled off her shoes, the leather unsticking from her feet and smacking against the tiles.

"Ugh," her mom said. "Do you always have to leave your shoes in the kitchen?"

“Do you always have to catch me doing it?”

“Yes. I’m your mother,” she said, whacking Pip’s arm lightly with her new cookbook. “Oh, and, Pippa, I need to talk to you about something.”

The full name. So much meaning in that extra syllable.

“Am I in trouble?”

Her mom didn’t answer the question. “Flora Green called me today. You know she’s the new teaching assistant at Josh’s school?”

“Yes. . . .” Pip nodded for her mother to continue.

“Joshua got in trouble today, sent to the principal.” Her mom’s brow knitted. “Apparently Camilla Brown’s pencil sharpener went missing, and Josh decided to interrogate his classmates about it, finding evidence and drawing up a *persons of interest* list. He made four kids cry.”

“Oh,” Pip said, that pit opening up in her stomach again. Yes, she was in trouble. “OK, OK. Should I talk to him?”

“Yes, I think you should. Now,” her mom said, raising her mug and taking a noisy sip.

Pip slid off the stool with a gritted smile and padded back toward the living room.

“Josh,” she said lightly, sitting on the floor beside him. She muted the television.

“Hey!”

Pip ignored him. “So, I heard what happened at school today.”

“Oh yeah. There’s two main suspects.” He turned to her, his brown eyes lighting up. “Maybe you can help—”

“Josh, listen to me,” Pip said, tucking her dark hair behind her ears. “Being a detective is not all it’s cracked up to be. In fact . . . it’s a pretty bad thing to be.”

“But I—”

“Just listen, OK? Being a detective makes the people around you unhappy. Makes you unhappy . . . ,” she said, her voice withering away until she cleared her throat and pulled it back. “Remember Dad told you what happened to Barney, why he got hurt?”

Josh nodded, his eyes growing wide and sad.

“That’s what happens when you’re a detective. The people around you get hurt. And you hurt people, without meaning to. You have to keep secrets you’re not sure you should. That’s why I don’t do it anymore, and you shouldn’t either.” The words dropped right into that waiting pit in her gut, where they belonged. “Do you understand?”

“Yes . . .” He nodded, holding on to the s as it grew into the next word. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be silly.” She smiled, folding him into a quick hug. “You have nothing to be sorry for. So no more playing detective?”

“Nope, promise.”

Well, that had been easy.

“Done,” Pip said, back in the kitchen. “I guess the missing pencil sharpener will forever remain a mystery.”

“Ah, maybe not,” her mom said with a barely concealed smile. “I bet it was that Alex Davis, the little shit.”

Pip snorted.

Her mom kicked Pip’s shoes out of her way. “So, have you heard from Ravi yet?”

“Yeah.” Pip pulled out her phone. “He said they finished about fifteen minutes ago. He’ll be over to record soon.”

“OK. How was today?”

“He said it was rough. I wish I could be there.” Pip leaned against the counter, dropping her chin onto her knuckles.

“You know you can’t, you have school,” her mom said. It wasn’t

a discussion she was prepared to have again; Pip knew that. "And didn't you have enough after Tuesday? I know I did."

Tuesday, the first day of the trial at New Haven Superior Court, Pip had been called as a witness for the prosecution. Dressed in a new suit and a white shirt, trying to keep her hands from fidgeting so the jury wouldn't see. Sweat prickling down her back. And every second, she'd felt his eyes on her from the defendant's table, his gaze a physical thing, crawling over her exposed skin. Max Hastings.

The one time she glanced at him, she'd seen the smirk behind his eyes that no one else would see. Not behind those fake, clear-lens glasses, anyway. How dare he? How dare he stand up and plead not guilty when they both knew the truth? She had a recording, a phone conversation with Max admitting to drugging and raping Becca Bell. It was all right there. Max had confessed when Pip threatened to tell everyone his secrets: the hit-and-run and Sal's alibi. But it hadn't mattered anyway; the private recording was inadmissible in court. The prosecution had to settle for Pip's recounting of the conversation instead. Which she'd done, word for word . . . well, apart from the beginning, of course, and those same secrets she had to keep to protect Naomi Ward.

"Yeah, it was horrible," Pip said, "but I should still be there." She should; she'd promised to follow this story to all of its ends. But instead, Ravi would be there every day in the public gallery, taking notes for her. Because *school wasn't optional*: so said her mom and the new principal.

"Pip, please," her mom said in that warning voice. "This week is difficult enough as it is. And with the memorial tomorrow too. What a week."

"Yep," Pip agreed with a sigh.

"You OK?" Her mom paused, resting a hand on Pip's shoulder.

“Yeah. I’m always OK.”

Her mom didn’t quite believe her, she could tell. But it didn’t matter because a moment later, there was a knock on the front door: Ravi’s distinctive pattern. *Long-short-long*. And Pip’s heart picked up to match it, as it always did.

File Name:



**A Good Girl's Guide to Murder:
The Trial of Max Hastings (update 3).wav**



[Jingle plays]

PIP: Hello, Pip Fitz-Amobi here and welcome back to *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder: The Trial of Max Hastings*. This is the third update, so if you haven't yet heard the first two mini-episodes, please go back and listen to those first. We are going to cover what happened today, the third day of Max Hastings's trial, and joining me is Ravi Singh . . .

RAVI: Hello.

PIP: . . . who has been watching the trial unfold from the public gallery. Today started with the testimony from another of the victims, Natalie da Silva. You may well recognize the name; Nat was involved in my investigation into the Andie Bell case. I learned that Andie had bullied Nat at school, and had even sought and distributed indecent images of her on social media. I believed it could be a possible motive and, for a while, I considered Nat a person of interest. I was entirely wrong, of course. Today, Nat appeared in New Haven Superior Court to give evidence about how, on February 21, 2014, she was allegedly drugged and sexually assaulted by Max Hastings at a calamity party. But as I've explained before, due to Connecticut's ridiculous statute of limitations, Max cannot be charged for either rape or sexual assault because the alleged offenses happened more than five years ago in the cases

of both Nat da Silva and Becca Bell. For these two victims, Max is instead being charged with kidnapping in the first degree, as the state has no statute of limitations for that crime. In Connecticut, the definition of kidnapping includes restraining someone with intent to inflict physical injury or sexual abuse, and therefore the state attorney general recommended these charges instead. Of course, the whole thing is disgraceful, but I won't start on my feelings about the statute of limitations again. I think I've previously made those very clear. So, Ravi, can you take us through how Nat's testimony went?

RAVI: Yeah. So the prosecutor asked Nat to establish a timeline of that evening: when she arrived at the party, the last instance she looked at the time before she began to feel incapacitated, what time she woke up in the morning and left the house. Nat said she has only a few hazy snatches of memory: someone leading her into the back room, away from the party, and laying her down on a sofa; her feeling paralyzed, unable to move, and then of someone lying down beside her. Other than that, she described herself as being blacked out. And then, when she woke up the next morning, she felt awful and dizzy, like it was the worst hangover she'd ever had. Her clothes were in disarray and her underwear had been removed.

PIP: And, to revisit what the prosecution's expert witness said on Tuesday about the effects of benzodiazepines like Rohypnol, Nat's testimony is very much in line with what you'd expect. The drug acts like a sedative and can have a depressant effect on the body's central nervous system, which explains Nat's feeling of being paralyzed. It feels almost like you're separated from your own body, like it just won't listen to you, your limbs aren't connected anymore.