

LISTEN

FOR

*"Laugh-out-loud
funny, thrilling
and twisty."
—Liane Moriarty*

*"Deliciously dark."
—Alice Feeney*

*"A world-class whodunit."
—Stephen King*

THE LIE

*"A delight."
—Alex Michaelides*

AMY

*"Explodes off the page."
—Chandler Baker*

A Novel

TINTERA

LISTEN
FOR THE
LIE

AMY TINTERA


CELADON
BOOKS
NEW YORK

[Begin Reading](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Copyright Page](#)



CELADON
BOOKS

CELADON BOOKS

Subscribe to receive a monthly newsletter that includes book sweepstakes, recommended reading lists, cover reveals, and other exclusives.

[CLICK TO SIGN UP](#)

Learn more
www.celadonbooks.com

[us.macmillanusa.com/piracy.](http://us.macmillanusa.com/piracy)

For Laura, Emma, and Daniel.

Thank you for having so many ideas.

CHAPTER ONE

LUCY

A podcaster has decided to ruin my life, so I'm buying a chicken.

I make plans for this chicken as I sit in my cubicle at Walter J. Brown Investment Services, waiting to be fired. I stopped pretending to work two hours ago. Now I'm just staring at recipes on my phone, dreaming about sticking lemons up a chicken's butt.

It's an apology chicken, for my boyfriend.

It's like that engagement chicken. The one women make to persuade their boyfriends to propose? Except this is a "sorry I didn't tell you I'm the prime suspect in my friend's murder" chicken.

Apology chicken, for short.

"Lucy?"

I look up from my phone to see my boss standing at the door of his office. He adjusts his tie and clears his throat.

"Could you come in for a minute?" he asks.

Finally. They clearly decided to fire me this morning. Glass office walls are a strange choice always, but especially when you have a meeting with three other managers, and none of them can stop glancing over at your assistant, whom they are clearly discussing, for the entire conversation.

"Sure." I slide my phone into my pocket and follow him into his immaculate office.

I'm struck by how pristine it is, even after nearly a year of working for him. There's nothing on the beige walls. No boxes piled in a corner. The desk is completely bare except for the monitor and the keyboard.

Every evening, when Jerry Howell walks out of his office, he leaves absolutely no evidence that he was ever there. He probably missed his calling as a serial killer.

Of course, he's only in his midforties. Plenty of time to take up a new hobby.

I sit down in the chair on the other side of his desk and try to put a pleasant expression on my face. One that doesn't betray the fact that I was calmly thinking about him murdering people.

(A side effect of being accused of murder is that you spend a lot of time thinking about it. You get used to it.)

Jerry reaches up to touch his hair, and then quickly folds his hands on top of his desk. He does that a lot. I think he used to play with his hair, but he's balding now, and it's cut very close to his scalp.

"I'm sorry, Lucy, but we have to let you go," he says, to the surprise of no one.

I nod.

"We're downsizing, unfortunately." He looks at a spot just past my shoulder instead of at my face. "Having assistants double up. Chelsea is going to assist both me and Raymond. I'm sorry."

Chelsea's really getting the short end of the stick here. Double the work, all because of a true crime podcast.

"I understand." I get to my feet. Jerry looks relieved that I'm not going to make a scene.

Through the ill-advised glass wall of the office, I can see a security guard already standing at my desk. It's standard procedure when someone is fired, but I can't help but notice that all three of the assistants who sit in my cubicle pod have fled.

I guess we're not getting "sorry you were fired for being a suspected murderer" drinks.

My desk is not as clean as Jerry's, and I have to take a minute to gather up my mug, water bottle, purse, and several tubes of lip balm. The security guard hovers the entire time.

He marches me through the now-silent office to the elevator while everyone either watches or pretends not to see. Chelsea looks pissed.

I step into the elevator. The door slides shut.

The security guard leans closer to me with a grin. One of his front teeth overlaps the other.

“So, did you do it? Did you kill her?”

I sigh. “I don’t know.”

“Seriously? That’s the truth?”

The elevator door opens again with a *ding*. I step out and look at him over my shoulder.

“The truth doesn’t matter.”

CHAPTER TWO

LUCY

It's probably unfair to say that a podcast ruined my life.

Technically, my life was destroyed the night Savvy was murdered.

And then it was destroyed again, the next day, when I decided to take an early-morning stroll with her blood drying on my dress.

And for a third time, when everyone in my hometown decided that *I* was the one who killed her.

But a podcaster dragging the case into the public eye, five years later, doesn't exactly *improve* my life.

I'm making the apology chicken, because my former coworkers aren't the only ones listening to Ben Owens's newest season of his true crime podcast. My boyfriend, Nathan, was weird when he came home from work last night. He was late, and smelled like beer, and he wouldn't look at me. Clearly, someone clued him in.

To be honest, I never had any intention of telling him. Nathan has almost no interest in anything besides himself. I didn't think it would come up.

I've known plenty of self-absorbed men, but Nathan takes the cake. It's my favorite thing about him. I can't even remember the last time he asked me a personal question. When I told him that I'd been married for two years, in my early twenties, he said, "No worries, want to go to a movie?"

I'm sure he must have googled me at some point early in our relationship, but the case didn't generate national media attention, and I was never actually arrested for the crime, so you have to do a tiny bit of digging to find me. That is way too much effort for Nathan.

But now, thanks to my least favorite podcaster, murder is the very first thing that pops up when you google "Lucy Chase." So I'm making apology

chicken and preparing to get dumped. Immediately after getting fired.

To be fair to Ben Dipshit Owens, Nathan and I probably wouldn't have made it more than another month or two, even without a surprise murder thrown into the relationship. We'd only been dating for three months when he offered to let me move in with him. My lease was up, and we were still in the sex-all-the-time phase of our relationship, so it seemed logical. I was there every night anyway.

Unfortunately, that phase ended about two weeks after I moved in. I'm pretty sure Nathan regretted his decision, but he's the kind of guy who avoids conflict at all costs. So, we've been awkwardly living together for two months now, even though I'm pretty sure neither of us is all that thrilled about it.

Let this be a lesson to all the men out there who can't handle conflict—man up and dump your girlfriend, or you might end up living with a suspected murderer indefinitely.

The front door opens, and Brewster runs over to greet Nathan, tail wagging.

I'd be lying if I said that Brewster's little furry yellow Lab face didn't factor into my decision to keep living with this man. He may be a deeply average dude, but he has great taste in dogs.

Also, decent taste in apartments. The recently renovated nine-hundred-square-foot one-bedroom with a dishwasher *and* an in-unit washer/dryer is more than I've ever been able to afford in Los Angeles. It has these gray hardwood floors and bright white marble countertops that aren't all that trendy anymore, but still clearly signal that you pay a monthly rent that would horrify people in most other parts of the country.

"Hi, boy." Nathan spends a long time petting his dog, trying to avoid looking at me. "Something smells good."

"I made chicken."

He stands, finally glancing my way. His attention turns to the chicken, cooling on the stove.

"Great." He loosens his tie and pulls it off, unbuttoning his collar.

I used to love watching him do that. He always stretches his neck to one side as he pulls free his top button, and there's something really sexy about

it. Every time he'd come home, I'd stop what I was doing and hop over to give him a kiss. I'd run my hands into his dark hair, perfectly combed to one side for work, and muss it up a bit, because I think it looks better that way.

He notices me staring at him and suddenly looks alarmed. "I, uh, I'm going to change." He rockets into the bedroom like I might chase him down for a kiss.

I pull out a carving fork and knife. The chicken now seems like a bad idea. Maybe I don't care enough to apologize.

Then again, I'm going to have to find a new place to live if Nathan kicks me out, and landlords tend to require pesky things, like proving you have an income.

I pierce the chicken just as Nathan walks back into the room. He swallows, his Adam's apple bobbing, and I briefly imagine stabbing the fork straight into his neck. It's two-pronged, so it would leave twin bloody little holes, like a vampire bite.

My other hand is holding the knife, and I stare at him as I double-fist my weapons, waiting. I want him to say it first. He's the one who clearly thinks I'm a murderer; he should have to say it first. I'm pretty sure those are the rules.

I stare. He stares.

Finally, he says, "How was work?"

"I was fired."

He edges around me and reaches into the counter next to the fridge. "Cool. You want some wine? I'm going to have some wine."

I wait for my words to sink in, but he just reaches for the bottle of wine, oblivious.

I stab the knife into the chicken, right between the breast and thigh. I may have used a bit more force than necessary.

Nathan jumps. I smile.

At this rate, he's going to end up married to a murderer.

ListenfortheLiePodcastwithBenOwens

EPISODEONE—“THESWEETESTGIRLYOUEVERMET”

MayaHarper: She got away with murder, and everyone knows it. Every single person in Plumpton knows that Lucy Chase killed my sister. It’s just that no one can prove it.

Maya Harper was eighteen years old when her older sister, Savannah, was murdered. She describes Savannah as fun and sweet, the kind of woman who could organize a party in less than an hour and make it look like she’d worked on it all month.

Maya: She was just so nice and welcoming to everyone. And she was the best sister. When she was in high school, she’d let me hang out with her and her friends sometimes. And we weren’t even close in age. She was six years older than me. I didn’t know anyone else who had a big sister who let a little ten-year-old tag along to football games.

Maya was happy to talk to me, but she was skeptical that I’d find anything new.

Maya: You know that my family has hired three different private investigators, right? Like, my parents did not give up. I don’t know if there’s anything left to find.

Ben: I’m aware, yeah.

Maya: I guess it couldn’t hurt, though. I mean, it’s been five years and it’s like no one even cares anymore that Savvy is dead. They’ve all given up.

A quick note here—you’ll often hear people who knew Savannah refer to her as “Savvy.” It was what most people called her.

Ben: So you haven’t heard any updates from the police or the DA or anyone?

Maya: Not in years. They all knew Lucy did it, they just couldn’t prove it, I guess.

Ben: There have never been any other suspects?

Maya: No. I mean, Lucy was covered in Savvy’s blood when they found her. She had Savvy’s skin underneath her fingernails, there were scratches on Savvy’s arm and bruises shaped like Lucy’s fingers. People saw them fighting at the wedding. Lucy killed her. She killed my sister and got away with it because the useless police department said there wasn’t enough evidence for an arrest.

Ben: Have you had any contact with Lucy recently?

Maya: No, not since she left Plumpton. She’s never come back, even though her parents still live here.

Ben: As far as you know, is she still claiming to have no memory of the night Savannah died?

Maya: Yeah, that was her story.

Ben: Do you believe her?

Maya: Of course I don’t believe her. No one believes her.

Is it true that no one believes Lucy Chase? Is she hiding something, or have the people of Plumpton accused an innocent woman of murder for five years?

Let's find out.

I'm Ben Owens, and this is the *ListenfortheLie* podcast, where we uncover all the lies people tell, and find the truth.

CHAPTER THREE

LUCY

Nathan, as it turns out, has no balls.

We ate chicken. We drank wine. I played with the giant carving knife just to watch him sweat. He rambled on about work.

He did not ask whether I'm a murderer.

At this point, I'm curious how long this can go on for. He's clearly wanted to break up for a while, and now he's worried I'm going to murder him. Surely he will locate his balls and actually say the words "Please move out of my apartment and never contact me again" soon?

On the plus side, I have more time to look for a new place while I wait for the inevitable. Just this morning I found a very promising one-bedroom with no income requirements. It looks like a dump in the pictures, and the landlord asked to see a picture of my feet when I emailed, but, hey. It's cheap.

Sometimes I think about the fact that the twenty-two-year-old version of me would be absolutely horrified by almost-thirty me. That shiny, smug newlywed with a four-bedroom house was so certain that she had life figured out and it was all going her way.

Guess what, asshole?

I also halfheartedly applied for a couple of new jobs over the weekend, and already got a rejection from one. I'm really killing it lately (pun intended).

But I don't actually want a new job, if I'm being honest. I've published three romance novels under a pen name, and the third one is actually selling some copies. It's an unexpected turn of events, considering how few people bought my first two books, but it means I've had to work overtime on the next one, so I don't lose momentum.

And maybe, with a little luck, they'll start selling enough copies so that I don't have to worry about finding another mind-numbingly boring day job.

Of course, now I have to worry about a podcaster shining a very bright light on my past, and possibly someone finding out that it's actually a suspected murderer writing their new favorite rom-com. No one except my agent, my publisher, and my grandma knows about my career as a romance author, but I'm a favorite subject for the amateur internet sleuth.

The thought nags at me all weekend. Monday morning, I run extra miles on the treadmill in the gym at Nathan's complex, and then head to the grocery store because I need to tell my feelings to chocolate. Lots of chocolate.

The grocery stores are never empty in L.A., even on a weekday, because no one here has a real job. I maneuver around a woman at the entrance who is talking on her phone and wearing leggings that probably cost more than my entire outfit. They make her butt look great, though.

I turn my cart into the produce section. Maybe I'll get something to chop into tiny pieces in front of Nathan.

(A nicer person would just say, "Hey, you heard about the podcast, didn't you?" and put him out of his misery. I should try to be less of an asshole. Tomorrow, maybe.)

A slim blond woman is tapping a butternut squash with one finger, and I try very hard not to imagine smashing the squash against her head.

I fail. Squash, as it turns out, is a weakness of mine.

I wonder whether it would even hold up after being smashed against a human head. It would probably explode and you'd just end up with a headache and squash all over your face.

The woman looks up and notices me staring at her. I smile like I wasn't just imagining bludgeoning her to death. She walks away, casting an alarmed glance over her shoulder at me.

I really should try to be less of an asshole.

I don't *want* to think about murder, but I can't seem to stop it. I don't do it with everyone, but I've imagined killing a whole lot of people.

It started not long after Savvy died. Everyone said I was a murderer, and I couldn't say for sure that I wasn't, so I started thinking of all the different ways I *could* have killed her. I thought that if I went through enough options, I might actually land on something that sparked a memory.

So far, no luck. But maybe one day I'll stumble on it. I'll imagine killing a waitress with my empty milkshake glass and it will all come rushing back. *Ah yes! That's right! Savvy and I fought over whether strawberry or chocolate milkshakes were best and I flew into a rage and murdered her with my glass. Take me away, Officer!*

I really wish the police had found the murder weapon. It would have spared me a lot of imaginary killings.

My phone buzzes. I glance down at the screen to see the word *Grandma*, which is unsurprising. Telemarketers and Grandma—the only people who use the phone in the way it was originally intended.

I accept the call and press the phone to my ear. “Hey, Grandma.”

The guy next to me gives me a small smile, like he approves of me talking to my grandma. I push my cart to the corner, in front of the cabbage.

“Lucy, honey! Hi. Are you busy? Am I interrupting?”

She always asks whether she's interrupting, like she thinks I have a packed social calendar. I don't even have any close friends. Just some work acquaintances who will definitely never speak to me again.

“Nope, just grocery shopping,” I say.

“How's Nathan?”

“He's ... you know. Nathan.”

“You always say that, and I don't know what you mean. I've never met the man.”

“He's fine.”

“I see.” She clears her throat. “Listen. I have a favor to ask.”

“What's that?”

“It's a small favor, really, and I'd like to remind you that I'm nearly dead.”

“You've been saying you're nearly dead for twenty years.”

“Well, then it stands to reason that I must really be getting close then!” She cackles.

“Are you drunk?”

“Lucy, it is two o’clock in the afternoon. Of course I’m not drunk.” She pauses. “I’m merely slightly tipsy.”

I bite back a laugh. “What’s the favor?”

“I’ve decided to have a birthday party. A big one. It’s the big eight-oh, you know.”

“I do know.”

I actually do. Grandma’s birthday is the only one I can remember without the calendar reminder.

“You’ll come, of course?” Her voice is hopeful.

Shit.

“I can’t have it without my favorite grandchild there.” She’s switched to guilt.

“You do know that it’s tacky to tell me I’m your favorite when you have three grandchildren?”

“We both know that Ashley and Brian are assholes.”

“I think we’re supposed to pretend to like them anyway.”

“Well. I can’t have a birthday party with only the assholes.”

I would laugh if it weren’t for the swiftly mounting dread.

“Do you think you could take some time off work?” she asks.

“I was fired.”

“Oh, perfect! I mean, I’m sorry,” she adds hurriedly.

“You know I didn’t like that job anyway.”

“I retract my apology. Congratulations on being fired.”

“Thanks.”

“Since you have so much free time, maybe a longer visit? A week? I’ve already talked to your mom, and she says you can stay with them as long as you want.”

“A week?” I shriek the words so loudly that a passing woman looks very startled.

“Well, this is all very last-minute, and your mom has that broken leg ... we would need some help getting everything together. I’d let you stay with me, but there’s no room, of course.”

The prospect of spending one day in my hometown is bad enough, but *an entire week?*

Seven days in the place where I'd once been successful, and married, and had lots of friends who were jealous of my (fake) happiness.

It would be the opposite of a triumphant return. Five years later, I stumble back in, an unemployed divorcée with no friends. I can't even tell people I've published three books. I shiver as the produce mister turns on, spraying my arm as well as the cabbage. I inch away from it.

"Unless you'd rather bring Nathan and stay in a hotel? I'm sure your mom would understand you staying in a hotel if you bring him."

I imagine, briefly, inviting Nathan to come to Plumpton, Texas, with me. I wonder whether that would be the thing that finally gets him to dump me. Visiting the scene of the crime is probably a bridge too far, even for him.

"You can say no." I hear a clinking sound on the other end, like ice cubes against glass. "I know you must be very busy..."

"You know I'm never busy."

"It's so weird how you always say that. People your age are usually so proud of being busy. One of the girls from church has told me at least a hundred times about how busy she is. I'm starting to wonder if it's a cry for help."

"You talked to Dad too? About me staying with them?"

"Of course not; I try to avoid having conversations with your father whenever possible. But Kathleen talked to him. We wouldn't just spring you on him."

"He never did like surprises."

"No. Does that mean you'll come?"

I stare at the butternut squash and consider smashing it against my own head.

"Lucy?"

I blink. "Sorry. Squash."

"Don't buy squash, you're coming to Texas!"

"Oh my god."

"Right?" She's hopeful again.

I sigh. I can't say no to the only family member I like. One of the only *people* I like. "Yes. I'm coming to Texas."

A soft voice, a voice I always try to ignore, whispers in my ear, "*Let's kill—*"

I grip the phone tighter and will the voice away.

"Oh, wonderful! Do you think Nathan will want to come?"

I take a shaky breath. The voice seems to be gone. "I don't think he can get off work."

"Oh, sure. Well, I'll just buy you a plane ticket then. You okay to leave this weekend?"

"You don't have to do that."

"Nonsense, I want to. I'll be dead soon anyway."

We might all be dead soon, but that seems like too much to hope for.

"Sure, this weekend." I reconsider her last statement. "Wait, are you sick?"

"Not that I know of, but my friends are dropping like flies, so really, it's only a matter of time."

"That's the spirit."

"Now, listen, I don't drive much anymore, but I can probably make it to Austin to pick you up. If my car starts. You never know these days."

"Don't worry about it. I'll rent a car. And I'm getting a hotel."

"Well, your mother won't like *that*."

I pinch the bridge of my nose with my fingers.

"And Lucy?"

"Yeah?"

"You heard about that podcast, right? The one about you?"