

RECAP
An Unlikely Escape
Book #2: The Unlikely Murder Club Series

SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS!

Agatha Shadewell, using the prison-issued alias Sarah Connor, is living in Unlikely, New York, within the constrained perimeter of her ankle monitor. While driving home from Grimthorpe Groceries, she hears a radio promotion for a new true crime book about the “Swamp Siren,” a name that immediately concerns her. Upon arriving at her house, she finds the notorious serial killer, Phyllis LaGrande (aka Big Phyllis), in her kitchen, chopping beets with a knife. Phyllis is accompanied by Chuck Mate, the former prison bookkeeper, who helped orchestrate her escape. They seek Agatha’s help to clear Phyllis’s name.

Martin Kopp, a retired FBI agent and Agatha’s custodian, arrives and immediately recognizes Phyllis from a sensational newspaper headline about the “Swamp Siren” escaping prison. Despite his initial surprise, Martin agrees to help investigate Phyllis’s claim of innocence. Chuck provides Martin with a thick case file on Phyllis’s murders.

Agatha announces that, to avoid recognition, Phyllis must change her appearance. Phyllis dyes her hair bright red (using a chaotic eggbeater mixing process that splatters the bathroom) and adopts the alias “Diana Prince”.

Martin and Agatha spend the night reviewing Phyllis’s file. They find discrepancies, including an alibi for the first murder, which supports the possibility of reasonable doubt. They conclude that the actual killer is highly susceptible to Phyllis’s charisma and is actively trying to kill her (four attempts were made in prison). Martin and Agatha wonder how a jury could have convicted Phyllis if her charisma is so intoxicating. It appears Phyllis had been taking prescribed CBD oil for anxiety during the trial, which not just negated her charisma, but actually turned it toxic.

But Martin and Agatha do start to believe Phyllis might be innocent. And that the killer will come after Phyllis and Chuck. To draw out the killer, Agatha devises a plan that involves Phyllis making a public appearance. The newly christened “Diana Prince,” Agatha, and Martin meet Detective Cecil Kopp (Martin’s son) at the local diner. Cecil is instantly captivated by Phyllis. A gossip columnist photographs the pair, capturing Phyllis’s distinctive neck tattoo. Agatha encourages the photo’s publication, hoping the unique tattoo will lure the killer who knew Phyllis in high school. They drew this conclusion since the first murder happened when Phyllis was in high school in Georgia.

Agatha and Martin stop at the pharmacy to pick up a prescription for CBD oil for Martin’s hip pain, intending to test its effect on Phyllis’s charisma.

Upon returning to Agatha’s house, they find the bathroom spattered with blood. A blood-stained Polaroid picture of Chuck, lying in a pool of blood, is left near the puddle, indicating the killer has struck. Martin realizes Chuck’s death, which occurred while Phyllis was with them at the diner, serves as evidence of Phyllis’s innocence in this and possibly previous murders. Martin and Agatha conclude the killer will probably go after Cecil, now that his photo with Phyllis and her recognizable tattoo has been published.

Cecil, who has been informed by Martin of the murder and Phyllis's true identity, takes Phyllis into custody at the local precinct for her protection. Warden Ezra Wallis, who runs the prison Phyllis escaped from, arrives in town, saying he cut his vacation short to recover her and investigate his employee, Chuck's, death. Wallis volunteers to guard Phyllis at the jail so that law enforcement can continue searching for the murderer.

Agatha and Martin use Echo (Martin's granddaughter), who has created a detailed "murder book", to narrow the suspect profile. They note that the antique fair where Warden Wallis and Frank Winston Jr. (a friend of Agatha's who now manages the fair) are located was hastily moved to the area after a fire. They do not suspect Warden Wallis, as he grew up in the UK and the murders all took place in the US.

Later, an alarm on Martin's phone indicates Phyllis's ankle monitor has been removed. Agatha reveals she removed her own ankle monitor using a key bought from the dark web, hiding it in Phyllis's travel bag. Martin and Wallis drive toward Agatha's house in the woods, the location signaled by the tracker.

At the house, they find Phyllis and a live but injured Chuck. Chuck explains he was attacked by the killer. Wallis, suddenly active despite his claimed concussion, grabs Martin's dropped gun and reveals himself as the obsessed serial killer, professing his love for Phyllis and claiming he's been protecting her from other men since high school.

Echo texts Agatha, saying she recognized Wallis by his distinctive birthmark, as the lovesick teenager staring at Phyllis in a high school photo alongside the first victim. Wallis had altered his records to show he hadn't immigrated to the US until adulthood, when he'd actually arrived for high school. Phyllis uses Martin's CBD oil to temporarily negate her charisma, causing Wallis to recoil in disgust and confusion. Chuck tackles Wallis, and Agatha secures the gun just as Cecil and Jada arrive. Chuck and Phyllis escape.

Martin sustains a hip injury when he falls. Later, while recovering from his injuries, they learn Wallis was killed in his cell while awaiting trial, allegedly by true crime writer JJ Urquhart. Chuck and Phyllis are reported safe via a postcard sent under a pseudonym, postmarked from outside the country. Agatha, who now has an expanded parole radius, contemplates her uncertain future.