

[Transcript] The Coldest Case In Laramie / Episode 2

Previously, on the coldest case in Laramie.

I just, I feel like that there could be something there, especially given like the bread lamb was a cop.

Oh, there is something there, I'm sure.

I remember Michelle smacking me and telling me, look at those weirdos, there's my neighbors, he's a weirdo.

Then I got really quiet and it was like he was whispering in the phone and he said, you need to purse through this, don't stop.

There's homework here.

If you guys could get me, like, if you could talk to Michelle and see if she'd talk to me and.

I'm sure Michelle will talk to you.

All right.

Can you hear me now?

Oh my gosh, it's actually working.

I just heard you.

All right.

Laurie and Brandi made good on their homework.

Within a day of our first conversation, Laurie connected me with Shelly's old roommate, Michelle.

Michelle is a striking woman, big eyes, bigger smile, we met over Zoom.

She prepared for the interview in a way I didn't.

I wore a baseball cap and soft pandemic clothes.

Michelle dressed for this meeting like an important job interview in full makeup and blown out hair.

She was eager to talk.

How did you meet Shelly?

At the restaurant, we were waitresses there.

We kind of looked a little bit alike and had a lot of the same same goals.

You know, we were both pretty good students and just, we just, we hit it off.

She was a sweet, sweet, sweet person.

We were just, it was like we were a married couple, but, you know, we're obviously two females, but she, we remember, I remember I bought a wash and dry or she bought a stereo.

We had a, we had milk crates for furniture.

You know, we had our stuff sitting on milk crates and we just thought we were so cool.

We were so poor, but we just, we just felt like we had it all.

She was, she was, we say a couple of years older than you then, if you were 19.

And had you waited tables before or how did you end up at fosters?

They just were hiring and I went down there and thought I better find a job.

It's funny because I didn't, I come from a big Spanish family, five kids, nobody's ever left home.

And then I told my parents, I'm going to go away to college and they're like, yeah, sure you are.

And I, and you know, they're, you know, a poor family and they couldn't afford to put me through college.

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I said, well, I'm going to move there.
I'm going to get a job.
And they were like, okay, good luck with that.
And then come June 4th, I was, I was packed my bags, but I didn't have bags.
I didn't have bags.
I packed my boxes, full of my clothes.
And I said, I'm leaving tomorrow.
My brother was like, oh my God, she's really leaving.
So my dad had him drive with me and, and move there.
We drove into Laramie June 4th and it snowed and he was like, I won't tease you if you come back home.
I won't say a word.
And I was like, no, I'm, I'm staying.
So I applied for a job at fosters and got hired and worked there full time.
Weird thing.
And I said, I'm going to get big Pete from big Pete's welding said, why did you move here?
And I said, I came to go to college.
He said, you're going to get an education, but it's not going to be at school.
And I thought, what does he mean by that?
Well, he wasn't kidding.
That, that town gave me an education.
I remember it so well.
I remember it like, like it was yesterday.
I stayed with my, at my boyfriend's house and we got in a huge fight because I wanted to go home and he, and I said, I want to go home.
I don't feel right.
Something felt weird and I remember it was either two or three in the morning.
And he said, you can't go home now.
It's middle of the night.
Nothing's going to change between now and then.
And I just said something's wrong.
I don't feel.
I cannot describe it and I can't tell you why.
And then that morning early, I went home and it was like five or six or something.
And that's how I saw the flames and I saw the apartment still burning.
And when I pulled up, that's when the officer said, who are you?
And I said, I live here and, and then they said, where's Shelly?
And I thought, what do you mean, where's Shelly?
She's in the house.
It's hysterical, just going crazy.
I just could never forget those words.
They said, do you know where Shelly is?
And I was just like, dumbfounded.

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So what do you mean?

Do you want to know where she is?

She's in the house.

And I just went crazy.

Just went nuts.

I can't imagine.

No.

So shortly after Shelly was killed, I met my husband who I'm divorced with and married him quickly.

10 years older than I was, he was a high school teacher and I was scared out of my mind.

It was a scary time and I was just searching for comfort and that was, you know, he was, he was 30, I was 20 and he was a high school teacher and I thought he's not going to hurt me.

It's terrible.

And do you think that Shelly's death, I mean, I would imagine it had everything to do with that.

Oh, guarantee.

That's right after, so when Shelly was killed, I was, I was still in shock.

I was so young and I was just, I didn't even call my parents when it happened until probably, you know, the next day.

And I think one of the detectives said, we got to call your parents.

And then my dad wanted me to move back home because he was scared and I wouldn't.

And then somebody sent me, I started, I rented an apartment, a basement apartment.

Others gave me like \$600 because I didn't have any clothes on my clothes were burnt.

And I didn't even have a coat, I don't even think.

And so they gave me \$600 so I could rent an apartment.

And then somebody mailed me a card with a hundred dollar bill in it and said, if you're smart, you'd leave town.

So the detectives got the card, I called them right away because I was so scared.

I thought somebody's going to come for me next, which nobody knew that I lived.

I mean, I hadn't been there for more than maybe a week.

And so I did leave and I stayed home for a month.

And then I was just, I felt like I was running away.

I thought I'll never be able to face my fears and face what happened.

And I just wanted to go back to Laramie.

Yeah, but that was all just so, so surreal that whole, you know, somebody sent me now.

They think it was probably Fred that did that, you know, the detectives.

Back then they didn't know, they just kind of, I don't know, you know, all the things that he did to us while we were in that apartment.

It was constant, you know, and back then it was just so, it was so strange because Lori and I laughed, laughed, but we were talking about how I used to work graveyards.

And so one time I woke up in the middle of the day and there was a mouse inside my shirt on my belly.

And how does that get there?

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You know, and my screens would come off of my windows all the time.
And then he would say, and then I was screaming because that mouse was on my belly.
I was freaking out.
And he all of a sudden was at the door and was like, what's wrong?
What's wrong?
Do you need help?
I mean, how does he know, you know, that I think he put the mouse on, I don't know.
I guess I don't know that for sure.
But I know for sure that he would take the screens off, ask me for help, and then say,
can I come in and help you put your screens on?
So the screens would come off, you obviously probably wouldn't see him take the screens
off, but he was always there saying, hey, do you need help with that?
Yes.
Yeah.
Hey, I noticed your screens are off.
Can I help you put your screens back on and stuff?
So yeah.
In hindsight now, there is, I would say I am 99.9 percent sure, Redland murdered Shelley.
I think, you know what my gut tells me is she smoked, he smoked.
I think she went out probably when she got home, she didn't smoke in the house.
She went outside to smoke because I brought her, I went to Florida with my parents that
June and I brought her an ashtray from Florida and that was outside all broken.
And I think she was outside smoking.
He prayed, came outside, he probably hid on her.
She told him to go pound sand and I bet you he tried to rape her and that's my thought.
I don't know, truthfully, what, how that all happened, but I think she was outside smoking
when he started talking to her.
I think she probably didn't give him the time of day.
He just probably was drunk and lost it, I don't know.
So stuff about Lamb being a former cop and a former deputy, you know, it creates some
complications, I would think, with the investigation.
Was there some, were they just like, well, that guy's good because he's one of us.
Yes, yes, yep.
And nobody questioned the fact that at 5 a.m. he's fully dressed and that's, he's not even
at his house.
That's not his house.
He's at somebody else's house, he's a married man there and that his truck was parked in
the parking lot away, running, there's a match book by his, by his truck, you know, nobody
questioned any of those things.
Nobody did.
And then let's him leave town.
What was the match book?
I hadn't heard about the match book.
There was a thumbprint, like a bloody thumbprint on a match book and they found that, but

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they didn't investigate him, take his prints or do anything at that time.

They just had that match book and there was a bloody thumbprint on it.

They tested Lori, they tested me, they took hair samples from me, from my pubic hair, from Lori, but they didn't test Fred and then they let him leave the very next day with all of his clothes and all of his boots and everything that was there.

I just knew that they weren't looking in the right direction and they didn't have a freaking clue who did that because if they're sitting there doing all of this to us, they didn't know what they were doing, they had no idea.

The crazy thing, the craziest thing of all, so I worked at the orthopedic center of the Rockies in Fort Collins for 17 years now.

There's a guy that works there, that's a maintenance guy, he's worked there for 30 years. We've known each other for 17 years and when the first thing came out about Fred, he had the article on his desk and I thought, well, that's weird, why would this guy have this article on his desk?

Well, it turns out that he was the guy that found the apartment on fire, that found Shelly, that actually knocked on Fred Lam's door and caught Fred fully clothed at 5 a.m. and Fred wouldn't let him in his house, Fred wouldn't told him, you can't help her, I'm a police officer, you need to just leave everything alone, wait for the fire department to come. Basically, I was trying to stop him, but how crazy that, and I've always wondered, who was that man that helped us that day and tried to help Shelly?

And I worked with him for 17 years and never even knew it, it's the strangest thing.

Are you okay if I record this phone call?

Yeah, I guess so.

I'm Margaret Lyons, I'm a TV critic for The New York Times and a writer for The Times Newsletter called Watching.

To create this newsletter, my colleagues and I step through hundreds of movies and shows so we can help you find something you'll love.

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Pat Colini, the maintenance guy, was a little more reluctant to talk than Michelle was.

He felt to me like a speak only when you've got something to say kind of guy.

I haven't lived in the mountain west for decades, but I'm familiar with the type.

Yet when it came down to the morning Shelly was killed, Pat was full of details.

Well, so a man and a buddy got up early in the morning to go elk hunting and he was running late so I took off to run down to the fly store and drove right by the house and didn't see anything, went into the fly store for just a couple minutes and picked up some stuff for lunch and turned around and was on my way back when I went drove by the house and flames were shooting out the door and so I flung around and pulled up in front and jumped out and went running up to the house and right away saw Shelly in on the floor and yelled at her and she didn't move so I tried to get in and I just stuck my head in the door and my hair started stinging just barely even getting my head in the door.

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I just knew there was no way I was going to get all the way in so I went running to the neighbors and started pounding on the door and a guy comes to the door and I tell him that the apartment's on fire and I needed for him to get me some towels and wet them so I can try to get in and get the girl out.

He kind of, he would not move, he wouldn't do anything and I think I actually just pushed him out of the way and ran in his house and grabbed some towels and came back and by the time I got back over the apartment my buddy had showed up and when he showed up he tried to do the same thing and it was just way too hot first to get in but so anyhow the neighbor which I'm sure you've heard who that is, right, help me out here, I forgot his name, Fred Lamb.

Yeah, Fred Lamb and he was just out of it and obviously my adrenaline was pumping like crazy and he wasn't moving and helping me and I was going crazy to try to get in there and you could literally see the flames coming out of the door, the door was open, the window was busted out from the window so flames were coming out and I don't even remember him sticking his head out the door to look over which was just driving me crazy and I remember standing at his door and we could see where someone was hitting the door with a bloody hand and then there was a big pool of blood and then you could see where obviously she had hit the ground and then was dragged back over to her apartment and we were so blown away by the blood on the sidewalk but you know we thought it was just an innocent accident that her place got on fire and that she had gotten smoke inhalation and passed out or something you know that's kind of where we were at until we saw that blood and then we were like holy shit what the hell is going on here

the fire department showed us up and they took the statement and got her names and everything and said that they would be in touch so we went hunting and then came back later and they called us and asked us to come in so we went in and one of the first things I told them was the neighbor I go you got to check this guy out he is he just seemed just guilty as hell he knew something and would not help and the detective was like you don't worry about him he's a police officer and you don't need to worry about him and when they told me that I just came on the loose I was like what the hell are you talking about that makes it even worse that he never even stepped out of his apartment that he couldn't come over and help me if you tell him he's a cop so I was just livid and they calm me down and so we talked about everything and that's when they told me that she was already dead when I saw her which me and my buddy both didn't have a clue of that we thought she might be still alive and we couldn't get in and get her so it was just killing us all day long but anyhow that's I mean I don't know if you guys pretty much all I know but well let me I'm letting you just talk let me ask you a few follow-up questions you remember talking about the guy you remember having that conversation like what a what a strange encounter yeah that I mean that was the first place I was going with those when the detectives were talking to me that night so and did you hear anything from them after that I don't think we did I don't remember them contacting us until holy cow what was it 20 some years later when Terry opened it back up again what do you think about that well actually now that you ask it it seems awfully strange I just I mean I always thought that was always just so weird although you know they they came out in the papers and they I remember them saying you know they they thought it was a truck driver and this and that and we always

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would talk and wonder who the heck it could have been and just figured it was like the police were saying that they thought it was a passerby you know someone traveling through and they were gone but I still you know I I never did get any answers so yeah and here we are you know and that that was just absolutely so madding for you know Michelle and I that you know detective Terry told us a lot of this stuff that he had and it's like holy cow man this almost seems like an open and closed case and and then the paper even put in his his statement that yeah yeah I did do you remember how that he worded that it was like yeah yeah I did saying that I did this wouldn't like yeah what was it exactly let me yeah yeah I did this something like that yeah his lawyer argued that he was a browbeaten he was what browbeaten because he like that he was you know an old man who was diabetic was hungry and didn't under you know was talked to for seven hours and so you know basically all this stuff was taken out of context so yeah so I didn't hear any of that yeah okay this is what it says in the story from the the boomerang according to the documents during a police interview lamb initially denied the homicide allegation but later said quote Fred lamb did it dot dot dot I'm not denying that I did it unquote unquote and quote bottom line is I killed a girl unquote the document state lamb consistently denied remembering the crime itself wow yes that's why that's why you know this came out just a while after we had met with Terry and we were all like yes this is going to be over in no time and in nothing yeah there wasn't a whole lot more reporting I could do for my apartment in Brooklyn police reports court filings none of that was online neither were the news reports from back in the day but lucky for me it was March 2021 and the vaccines were rolling out in New York the country was starting to open up again so first stop is um vaccine and then Larry me right directly directly I had a little vacation time two parents who lived across the country who I hadn't seen in more than a year I figured I'd pack up my dog Lucy grab my friend Jasmine and go on a road trip make a pit stop and Larry me poke around a little see what I could see Lucy what do you think it's one very concerned time