

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 441: The Burger Chef Murders Part 1

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Hey, weirdos!

It's me.

It's Elena.

What's going on?

How's your day?

I hope it's awesome.

That's all I wanted to say.

No, I'm just kidding.

This is a message because I think a couple of episodes ago, we talked about how we are going back to the OG way of doing things.

We're doing two episodes a week to big old honking, delicious, juicy episodes with one listener tale a month, just as a little cherry, little glitter on top of a crazy month.

And we're going to keep doing that, but I think we were also debating what days would be best for this new two episode a week cadence because we figured from Wednesday to Monday is a long wait for us and for you too much.

We'd all be sad.

We don't want that.

So we finally came up with a good cadence.

We're going to drop episodes on Monday and Thursday from here on out.

So Mondays, Thursdays.

That's when they'll come out on Wondery Plus.

Then a week later, you will get them Monday and Thursday for everybody else.

So that's what we're going to do.

You deserve consistency.

We want to give it to you.

I know we didn't do that in the first like three years.

We were like, willy-nilly, whatever you get episodes, here it is.

But you know, we're on that consistency train and we want to stay on that.

And yeah, I think this is going to work for everybody.

It just feels better.

We don't want that big chunk of time between episodes.

You don't need there.

So yeah, that's what we're going to do Mondays, Thursdays, new episodes.

We're excited about it.

It lets us really put more time and effort into these episodes, which is what they deserve and what you deserve.

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And we fucking love you.
And I can't wait to see you every Monday and Thursday.
I know I won't see you.
I realize that I won't even hear you, but it feels like I will and you will hear me.
So we're all in this together.
We're best friends.
Thanks, guys.
Mondays, Thursdays.
Whoop, whoop.
Hey, weirdos.
I'm Ash.
And I'm Elena.
And this is...
This is our bed.
I thought we were doing a thing there.
I'm sorry.
I'm so sorry.
Sorry.
I'm sorry, friend.
I'm sorry, mate.
I hope you're happy.
Because I'm called mom.
I hope you're happy, Rachel.
I'm telling you, if you haven't seen that video, just type in like Rachel stole my iPad.
I love it a lot.
I do.
Okay.
It's old.
I've loved it for a long time.
My friend Marissa just like randomly was like, watch this video.
I hope you're happy.
I hope you're happy.
So I hope you're happy.
I hope you're happy.
I hope you're happy because of my June episode.
I have made June.
You know what?
I feel like it's been feeling good lately.
I feel like...
I just...
Well, everything.
I feel like we've just entered into...
We've come out of that...
We were in like kind of a little like, ooh.

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Yeah.

It's like we came out...

Yeah, it's like we came out...

Just a murky-merk a little bit.

It's like we came out like on top of it.

We came out on top.

Like we...

You know, like winners.

It's like that song where it's like, come on in.

Ha!

You know, the tick-tock sound.

It's exactly like that.

I don't actually.

I don't think I've ever gotten that one.

Come on in.

I'm not doing a good job.

I don't think I've gotten that one.

That's shocking.

It's always funny when I see like...

Like I think my tick-tock is like the only tick-tock.

So when things trickle in from other people's that I'm like, I don't know what that is.

I'm like, what?

There's a whole world of tick-tock I don't know about.

Oh, absolutely.

There's...

There's galaxies of tick-tock that you don't know about.

Galaxies.

Galaxies.

Galaxies.

Oh, and I have another tick-tock recommendation.

Girl.

Girl.

You're just like blowing up tick-tockers left, right, center.

I hope that becomes my legacy.

I hope that is what you can...

I think it already is.

I hope it is because it's really fun and these people deserve it and they're wonderful creators.

Remember my name.

Hold on.

I'm going to bring this up because...

You're going to see me hanging in the hall of fame.

You're rocking me into that one.

All right.

So this one that I want you to follow guys is called Spooky New England.

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Oh, that's fun.
So go find it.
She is awesome.
Her name's Amanda and she is like really into the Lizzie Borden case.
She's definitely a Lizzie is innocent and she will make you believe it to be honest.
The more and more that I look into that case and the older I get...
Makes you question.
I don't stand firmly on one side or the other, but I do think I might be teetering.
She gives you a lot to think about and she also does a ton of paranormal investigations at all these cool, really spooky places.
Love that.
She's really...
Like she's just cool.
Like when you watch her, you're just like, I want to hang out with you.
You're just cool.
In fact, I think I've written on some of her things like, can we just like hang out and do spooky things together?
And she said yes.
And I said yes.
And then I didn't make it happen, but I want to make it happen.
You do know how I feel about you making friends.
So don't do that.
All right.
I'll stop.
I don't like it when my friends make friends with other people that aren't me.
It's a very healthy trait.
It's healthy and it's normal and it's not anything that you should question.
Well, you need to come too.
We'll all be together.
Spooky New England.
And that's her like at Spooky New England.
I feel like an afterthought.
She's a really good follow.
She's a good follow because I think you guys, I just saw that my girl horror chronicles, she heard her shout out and was really excited.
It made me feel happy.
I love that.
And I think she got some follows from it.
So it made me feel like hell yeah.
You get like the creepy side of TikTok.
I get like tarot card readers.
I love that.
And whimsical bitches.
I love that.

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And just pure debauchery.

Debauchery.

Debauchery.

Debauchery.

Just pure debauchery over here.

Oh, I really did think it was debauchery.

I saw a comment the other day by accident, but it made me laugh.

It was a mean comment, but it made me laugh.

It was like, why can't Ash pronounce anything right?

And you know what?

I don't know.

I wish I could tell you front.

You know what?

I don't know.

That's the best response to that ever.

I don't know.

You know what my guy?

I don't fucking know.

I'm like, can you pronounce everything?

I don't fucking know.

I don't know.

But you know what?

I hope you're happy.

I hope you're happy.

I hope you're happy because I've told mum.

I've told mum.

Anyways, all right.

Let's get into this debauchery.

Let's get into this debauchery over here.

We're going to be talking about a case today that is going to be split into two parts because it is a pretty big case, a lot happening, a lot of moving parts.

You guys will most likely know or at least have heard of this case.

It is the burger chef murders in Indiana.

Oh, yep.

I have heard about it.

It is really sad.

Really sad.

And still unsolved, right?

Yeah.

Oh.

Yeah.

See, I know the basics of this case, but I actually don't think I've ever watched a show or a documentary

or listened to a podcast that explored the whole thing in depth.

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And they'll see some of the updates or anything like that.

Yeah, no.

So I'm excited.

Well, excited is not the right word.

But you're excited to hear more about it.

Yes.

I feel you.

Yeah.

This is a really sad one.

It's a really senseless one.

It's still, I think the thing that bothers everyone the most is no one can understand why.

Of course, as we'll see, there's robbery involved and all that, but why did it end the way it ended?

Because there's robbery, but then there's money left behind, right?

Well, that's not even the issue.

It's more just four people lost their lives here.

And it's like, why?

Usually when a store gets stood up or something like that, they take the money and run.

They run in with a ski mask over their face and they just demand the money and then they're out of there.

It's pretty rare that these people are taken out of the store too and then taken somewhere else for something to happen.

It's just a very rare and really tragic and gruesome case.

Yeah.

So buckle up.

I'm buckled.

All right.

So this is going back to November 18th, 1978.

Oh, I didn't realize that this was in the 70s.

Yeah.

I know.

It feels closer?

Yeah.

It does.

I think I thought it was like the 80s.

Yeah.

See, I even, when I first went into this, I thought it was the 90s.

Wow.

Yeah.

Look at us just being wrong.

I know.

And now actually just to give you like a quick little, like make you feel old moment.

If you're like an older millennial, especially.

A geriatric millennial.

See, I can't even talk anymore.

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That's how old I am.

I can't even see Nile.

I guess American girl is doing like a historical collection of 90s dolls.

Historical collection of 90s dolls.

And did you see the twins?

No.

Oh, you didn't even see the best part.

No.

There's twins that are very clearly supposed to be like Mary Kate and Ashley.

And I think they're named like Nikki and something else.

Wow.

And they're dressed like how Mary Kate and Ashley did.

A lot of them are dressed like the clueless style kind of thing.

That's not vintage yet.

But, oh no, not vintage.

Historical.

Yeah.

Like I just like, Mikey's face just said it all.

He just looked over and was like, hmm.

He was like, no.

Historical.

So I just like, you know what American girl?

I hope you're happy.

I hope you're happy.

Because you made me cry.

All right.

So back to the story.

Okay.

November 18th, 1978.

Yes.

Again, wild.

Brian Kring stopped by the burger chef in Speedway, Indiana.

He was an employee there and he was stopping by after closing time to visit his coworkers.

Because of course this is after closing time.

You're doing those like, you know, when the store is locked and you get to turn on music or something and do your closed down routine.

You're dancing around with the broom.

You know, anyone who's worked retail or anything like that knows this like, it's a great time.

And that's usually when your friends can stop by and just watch you clean.

Now he was surprised though, when he went around back and he found the back door unlocked.

And then he went further in and he found the restaurant was empty.

Again, all lights around.

His coworkers purses, their coats were there.

It was like they had left in a hurry.

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And he found the coats in person, like the back room, but no people in sight.
He looks further and he sees that the cash register had been emptied of that day's earnings.
Yikes.
Now at first, local police didn't take this situation seriously at all.
Oh, good.
They just assumed it was petty theft.
Why do we give a shit?
Like, but why though?
Yeah.
Like why?
And at first they actually thought that this was just the kids had stolen the cash and ran out of there.
And then they just left their purses.
And then they just left everything.
And that's the other thing.
So if you look at those purses and think maybe we should look a little further into this.
Right.
And also if you looked at all into who these kids were, you would know that is not, that's just not a notion you should have had.
Oh, the 70s.
Yeah.
But that notion would change shortly thereafter when the crime turned from disappearance and theft to kidnapping and multiple homicide.
Now, unfortunately, by the time they actually got to this conclusion, which anybody else probably would have come to pretty quickly considering all the things that were left at the motherfucker scene.
The entire scene had been cleaned by burger chef employees the next morning.
No.
And when I tell you what, like how detrimental this was, it's gonna grind your gears.
I'm already grinding.
Yeah.
My gears are ground to dust.
Mummy dust.
The failure of the authorities to take this disappearance, the disappearance of the burger chef employees seriously from the very beginning from the outset.
It was only the first of many mistakes they are going to take in this case.
And it ended up being Indiana's most high profile unsolved crime.
Wow.
This show is sponsored by BetterHelp.
Getting to know yourself can be a lifelong process, especially because we are always growing and changing.
I know that because I'm currently in my Paris Hilton era.
I've realized, you know what, Curly?
Stop lying to yourself.
You love pink.

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And I kind of figured that out through therapy because I was talking to my therapist and I was like, I just feel like I'm not living like my actual true life.

No, this is serious though.

Like I would be at the salon all the time and then I fell out of that and it's like, oh my God, who am I? But you know what?

I figured it out through therapy and I finally got to like kind of my true version of me.

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Again, that's 50% off your first care of order by going to takecareof.com and enter code Morbid 50.

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Now, while investigators are now pretty certain, fairly certain that they know who is responsible for this for the four murders, the evidence they need to actually prove that now, it was wiped clean. Now, I am never one. And I think it's Sarah Turni always says this, like there's always hope. Like never say that something is hopeless because we've seen time and time again that it is not hopeless. There's always a way. And you know who says that also? Heidi. You know our girl, Heidi Jones. Heidi Jones. And we listen to Heidi Jones. I love Heidi. I love her so much. You just made me think of her and I was like, oh, is she just like the nicest person on the planet? She truly is. I just love her. I'm happy every day. I think she is. I think she is too. Legitimately. Die mad, Tom. But die mad, Tom. So unfortunately, the loss of this evidence and the fact that they, that although I believe that it can be conclusively linked to these people, it's going to, it made it a lot harder. Yeah. It's a lot harder now to link these two things because of investigatory negligence, to be quite honest. And that's the thing that sucks. It's like, you just like, you can't blame anyone else. That's the thing. It's like investigators. This was your job. Right. You're supposed to secure the crime scene. And you're supposed to walk into a crime scene. We've said this before and let it speak to you. You don't go in there and speak for that crime scene. Unbiased. That's not how it works. You don't go in there and go, well, I think it's this way. So I'm just going to investigate it like that. It's like, no, no, no. You can't.

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You go in there and wiped clean and you go in there and say, talk to me.
I was just watching, oh my God, so good.
Have you watched the Playboy murders yet?
No, I haven't.
But I keep seeing Holly post about it and I really want to watch it.
I watched the entire series so far.
I'm going to sit down and watch it.
So good.
But one of the cases that they covered, the Jasmine Fior case.
Oh, yes.
They had their suspect and they were like, yeah, this is definitely the guy.
But then another suspect pops up and as I was watching it, I was like, okay, I'm impressed because they actually went down that avenue too instead of just like blindly chasing one suspect.
And that's good police work.
That's good investigatory work because like you have to let it take you where it wants to go.
Right.
This, not so much.
But let's go back to that night.
Let's go to the night in question, November 18th, 1978.
That's when 17 year old Brian Kring was on his way home a little after midnight.
He passed by the Burger Chef restaurant on Crawfordsville Road.
He worked part time there because again, he's 17.
The restaurant closed at 11 p.m.
This is a little after midnight, but the lights were still on.
So he was like, oh, they're still closing down.
I'm just going to drop in and say hi.
Yeah.
Like cute small town shit.
That's horrible.
These, the workers that were there were the 20 year old assistant manager, Jane Freet, 16 year old Mark Flemons, 16 year old Daniel Davis and 17 year old Ruth Shelton.
Now Kring, Brian Kring went up, went around the back because he figured the front was going to be locked.
They'd obviously locked up.
He was confused though because when he went back there, he saw that the door was not only unlocked, but slightly open.
Huh.
And he was like, why would they do that?
So he just goes in.
And again, he's closed before.
He knows this is not like, why would you leave the back door open?
Yeah, he knows protocol.
Yeah.
And when he went in, he called out to them, just like, who's here?

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Silence.

Oh.

And that must have been the heaviest silence because you're like, what the fuck is going on?

That would be so terrifying.

Because it's like they're not just leaving the lights on and the doors unlocked and piecing out for the night.

Like, you know something's wrong here if they're not bustling around cleaning.

So he goes in there.

He's not seeing anyone, not hearing anything.

And then he sees that the cash registers drawers had been pulled out and thrown on the floor and they are all empty.

Oh no.

Obviously a robbery seemed likely.

So he ran into the manager's office hoping to find all of them in there because he figured, you know, if this was a robbery, maybe they huddled everybody into the back room, maybe locked the door, robbed the place, got out, they left them in there, just thinking somebody won't find them till morning.

Right.

And he's like, okay, I'm going to go back there.

They're all going to be okay.

We're going to figure this out.

So he goes in there, empty.

My God.

But it had been ransacked.

He must have been so scared because then in my mind, I'd be like, is this person gone?

Yeah.

Who did this?

That's the thing.

Like he was probably like, holy hell right now.

He's been watching the store right now.

Like terrifying.

And then he notices in the manager's office a jacket that was Ruth Shelton's on the floor.

This is the middle of November.

She was not leaving without that jacket willingly.

And then like to find that and still know that the cops were like, no, they just ran away without their jacket.

She ran away.

And it's like, you really couldn't entertain any other possibility.

It had to be what you were thinking.

I'm finding this the way they did.

Like it doesn't make any sense.

Well, Brian called 911 and told them what he discovered.

When the police arrived at the burger chef, Brian told them the story and he told the same story he had told the 911 dispatcher.

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And the officers just kind of did like just a quick little search of the restaurant in the manager's office.

They found two empty money bags that had been emptied out and an empty roll of adhesive tape behind the side, the safe.

Okay.

But otherwise there was really no clues to be found.

Now you would look at the empty roll of adhesive tape and go, okay, where are they bound with that?

Yeah.

And was this left behind?

They did nothing about it.

They didn't collect it.

They didn't photograph it.

Just left it there.

Did nothing to it.

Good.

Yeah.

Now the store manager, Robert Gilead, he arrived shortly after the police had come and he reviewed the register tape from the night sales.

And he said by his estimation, there was about \$600 missing.

Okay.

So the officers on the scene, they were like, you know what, this is robbery.

You know what?

Probably an inside job, probably these kids or someone else.

And it was assumed that they just kind of went on their closing shift, stole the money, and all four of them just divvied it up to each other and walked out into the night without their purse, without their jackets, leaving the whole place on.

That's a lot to just take from looking around for a minute.

But Robert, you know, he, the store manager.

He was like, um, no, I know my employees and he was like, I know these four and there's, you know, we trust them to close the store down.

Like we wouldn't put them on this if we didn't.

And he said, nope, they are very responsible, very trustworthy kids.

It's the assistant manager.

They would not rob us.

They wouldn't even leave without turning off a light.

Like I'm shocked, I would be shocked if they left without turning all the lights off.

Like it doesn't make any sense.

This doesn't add up at all.

And unfortunately this didn't get a lot of priority from the investigators, but it also didn't get priority for them in the media at the time, because a little over two months earlier, Speedway, which was a very small community, was terrorized by bombings around town.

Oh man.

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And police thought that these bombings were actually intended to distract from the investigation of a local woman's murder.

And there does end up being a connection later to that.

But the bombings were really eating up all the attention, and it was really eating up all the resources that this tiny little town's police force had, because they were not ready for any of that.

And this is why all police forces need to be ready for anything, because how many times have we heard, and this police force just wasn't ready for this, you've got to be ready for anything.

Now, interestingly on September 6th of that year, so the month earlier, or two months early, excuse me, Ruth Shelton, one of the victims, had actually called police to report a car speeding through the Burger Chef parking lot after one of the bombings.

No one interviewed her about it.

What the fuck?

They just took the call.

They said they didn't think it was pertinent.

And then it ended up being pertinent, but they never interviewed her.

Maybe they should stop making hasty judgments.

Yeah, it looks like that seems to be a running theme.

Now meanwhile, on November 18th, the day that the Burger Chef employees disappeared, reports began coming in from a place called Guyana.

This was the day where Congressman Leo Ryan was shot by members of the People's Temple at Jonestown.

Holy shit, there's a lot going on during this time.

So by the end of the day, the news media was fully dominated by that, which I guess we can understand, but there are four missing kids.

Can we also think about this?

There are four local missing kids.

Yeah, do we have the capacity to maybe compartmentalize here?

That's the thing.

But it was, obviously, that was a huge story.

But guys, so there was just very little room for four local teenagers disappearing into thin air.

That's so fucked up.

Now, the next morning, the four Burger Chef employees still had not returned.

And Speedway police lieutenant William Crafton was beginning to think that the store manager, Robert Gilliet, was possibly right that this wasn't a teenage prank.

It wasn't this thing where they decided to just rob the store one night randomly and just walk off into the night after months or years of working there.

Yeah.

And they had talked to the kids' parents.

They all said they hadn't seen or heard from their children since the night before.

And so Crafton issued a statewide alert and put reserve and active police from Speedway in to start a search.

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So they were actually assisted by the Indiana State Police and the local office of the FBI as well.

So now, too late, we are taking this seriously.

Now in the beginning, it looked as if they were going to be searching for missing people.

That's what they were going with.

Because again, there is no evidence of a homicide at this point.

It's not a recovery mission.

This is supposed to be a search and rescue.

But things started to look a little different and a little more dire because soon officers found Jane Freet's 1974 Chevrolet Vega a few blocks away from the police station and it was abandoned.

And it's like, how many of you guys drove past that on your way to work?

Exactly.

Like dudes.

Yeah.

And it was partially locked, which is interesting because according to Jane's mother, she said Jane kept the driver's side door locked at all times, even when she was driving, which investigators took to mean that she was behind the wheel when it was abandoned.

But for some reason, she had been forced to exit out of the passenger's side.

Not great.

So law enforcement were combing the town.

They're searching everywhere.

Employees at the Burger Chef are now arriving for their morning shift.

And remember, they have not done anything to cordon off the scene.

The scene is not secured.

It is a restaurant to be opened and to serve people now.

Well, they started their process of opening the restaurant, which included cleaning it from top to bottom.

Also, I want to remind you and also inform you that no crime scene technicians were ever brought to that restaurant.

They were never called to that scene.

No crime scene technicians.

That means it was never photographed.

It was never dusted for prints.

It was never combed for any little thing.

Nothing.

Holy.

Nothing was done.

They didn't even take a fucking picture.

They didn't even take a photo of it.

Oh my God.

There's no photo of that night.

Oh my God.

And no fingerprint dusting?

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Nothing?

Wow.

They can't even tell if someone was hurt there because they didn't do any kind of testing for it.

Like nothing.

Nothing at all.

Nothing even.

The fact that they didn't take pictures to reference later is mind boggling.

Was there, did they face like any kind of trouble from this at all at any point?

Well, we'll definitely get to that in part two, but it's just really wild.

Now later, when they realized what they had done, the investigators returned to the scene, but there was nothing to collect.

No.

Nothing.

Now it was the lunch rush when they got there.

So it was just a bustling restaurant.

And at that point, it's like, why are you even here at this point?

Now by the morning of the 19th, which was the next morning, the local press had begun reporting on what Speedway police were calling a, quote, serious subduction.

But nothing made sense.

Like, why would they come in to rob the place and take four teens with them?

Yeah, that doesn't make any sense.

So everybody's like, what the hell?

And Jane's mother, Carolyn, said to reporters, quote, it just doesn't make any sense.

They got their money and they made their escape.

Now why the devil don't they give us our back, our children?

Yeah.

Which like heartbreaking.

Seriously.

Like give me back my child.

Like you can keep whatever you want to keep, just give me her back.

But by this point, the police had really given the families very little information because they didn't really have any information.

And they actually told the families not to share photographs of their children with the press, which was strange.

That's really weird.

So now they're dedicating resources to finding these, these four victims and other officers are being sent to canvas for anyone who might have seen anything in or around the Burger Chef restaurant that night.

So now they're talking to people finally.

Okay.

Now a couple who had been sitting behind the Burger Chef at around 11, 15 PM when they came forward and said, at around 11, 15 PM, they were sitting back there.

Who knows what they were doing?

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But they were parked.

They were parked, they were neck and they were approached by, quote, two shabbily attired white men in their thirties.

Oh, we love that.

We love to hear that.

Shabbily attired white man in his thirties.

And they came up and they asked the couple for identification and then told them they should leave the area.

And they were like, what?

And they told them that, quote, a lot of vandalism has been going, had been going around this area.

Okay.

In the description of these men, they said that one had a full beard and a mustache and the other, the one who really did most of the talking, he was kind of covering his face with a handkerchief.

I bet he was.

And they said, as if to wipe his nose.

So it's like he was holding it up like he was wiping his nose, but it was likely to cover his face.

I wonder if he had some kind of like, distinguishing mark or something.

Or he was just doing it because he was the one without a beard.

So he figured he needed a little extra covering.

But as they, as the couple left the parking lot, they said they did see Jane's white Chevy Vega was still parked in the lot.

So at 1115, it was still in that lot.

Okay.

Now, this is great, but like, there's still very little evidence here.

And the police were really not able to come up with a lead at this point.

Like what are they going to do here?

I'm like, can we call in some big guns?

And well, not only can they not come up with a lead, they're having trouble even theorizing what could be happening here because they got nothing.

Yeah.

It's just now all we know is two guys in their thirties said there's a lot of vandalism back here.

You should leave.

And that's it.

And that's it.

And that her, then that Jane's car was abandoned on the side of the road near the police station.

But it was still there at 1115.

Like, like, where do you go from there?

That's the thing.

It's not like they can sit there and go, okay, well, this, this piece tells me this.

It's like, all you had was robbery.

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I mean, you've got to add a lot more pieces into this.

Maybe if you had dusted for some goddamn prince or took a fucking picture or something.

That's what I'm saying.

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Now Brian, the friend who had come in that night, he told them that he found trash barrels next to the back door like whole propping the door open.

And so the investigators thought someone had to unlock the back door to take the trash out a little after 11 p.m., which makes sense, and as whoever did said this, one or more people caught them by surprise, forced them back into the restaurant.

Once they'd taken the money from the safe, they then forced all foreign to Jane's car with probably one of the robbers while one or more accomplices just followed behind in a separate vehicle because you're not going to stuff everybody in one car.

They said they probably drove for three blocks before they were forced out of the car.

They abandoned the car where it was found near the police station and then whatever happened after that, no idea.

Okay.

So it does make sense.

That theory, it's not like a huge theory, but it's just like, here's what I think happened.

It does make sense that somebody was probably taking out the trash and they opened that back door because that back door would have been locked.

If you're closing up everywhere I've ever worked, while you're closing up, the doors are locked.

Oh, 100%.

Yeah.

They would come in and rob you, that's the whole point.

So it's like, that was definitely a locked door.

I'm sure one of them opened the door to take the trash out back and was surprised by these people.

They forced them inside.

It does make sense.

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That makes sense for sure.

But what we're not getting is like, who the fuck are these people and what the fuck did they want besides money?

And then what happened to them once they were dropped off past that point?

Exactly.

Now, interestingly, June 16th, 1978, there was a similarly tragic case to this at another fast food restaurant.

It was called the Sirloin Stockade and it was in Oklahoma City.

And I didn't know about this.

I hadn't heard of this either.

I'm going to look further into this.

Maybe I'll have it for part two, but I happened to come across it when I was rereading and I was like, ooh, mention that.

Six people were killed in a robbery there.

Holy shit.

And later we will see that one of the suspects in that case could be placed in Speedway, Indiana at the time of the Burger Chef murders.

So it is an interesting little connection.

So Sunday, November 19th, like I said, day after the disappearances, the search came to a screeching halt.

And not because they gave up, but because the bodies of Ruth Shelton, Daniel Davis, Mark Flemons, and Jane Freight were all found in a remote area of Johnson County.

A man named Fred Hager had found them while walking his property with his wife.

Oh my God.

So they were on his property.

Jesus Christ.

Now, and this is just really sad because they're so young.

They are.

So fucking senseless.

And they were just like out there like after school job.

That's the thing.

And when you find out there was a couple of like incidences where like one of them wasn't supposed to be working that night.

Yeah.

I remember hearing that.

Now, Ruth and Daniel were found lying face down in the dirt.

All of them were still dressed in their Burger Chef uniforms, which somehow makes it even more chilling.

It does.

Jane and Mark were found a few yards away.

They all four were taken for autopsies at Johnson County Memorial Hospital.

Now, unfortunately, exactly like the scene at the Burger Chef, the scene at the Hager's property really didn't give a lot of evidence to work with.

Technicians were called to this because there is an actual multiple homicide here.

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Technicians did make a cast of a tire track that was found like in the gravel driveway leading away from the property.

But otherwise there was really nothing about the scene that they were like, oh, this is going to be very useful to us.

Now, because the victims had been transported across county lines, the case was also taken over by Indiana State Police.

Which that's good, I feel.

It's good.

But this is also very much to the chagrin of the Speedway Police and Johnson County Sheriff's Department who, and we all know, egos always come into play here.

And the Speedway Police and the Johnson County Sheriff's Department were actually kept away from the scene while it was secured by state troopers.

And Sheriff Thomas Prichard told reporters, quote, I'm very, very upset about this. I don't know why the state police can't cooperate, which it's true.

Everyone should be cooperating in situations like this.

The more the fucking merrier.

Everybody get on the same page, make sure you're sharing information and make sure everybody is being a good little boy and a good little girl and everyone talk to each other and work together.

I don't understand why it's like, this is ours now.

It's like, no, no, no.

You can all help each other.

Because everybody wants to be the star of the show.

And you're all going to get the same thing at the end, the satisfaction of solving a motherfucking case.

Like, you're not going to get a trophy at the end.

Well, it's more than that, though.

I feel like they do think they get a trophy sometimes.

And it's like, you don't.

None of you are getting a trophy.

So why don't you all just work together?

If anything, you're all working together to get a family answer.

That's the thing.

That's your trophy.

And you can all share it if you all work together.

But the interdepartmental bitterness did nothing but further hamper this investigation, which was already so bad from the beginning.

I was going to say this investigation.

When I said from the outset, flaw, flaw, flaw, flaw, flaw, flaw, flaw, negligent, negligent, negligent.

Yeah.

All right.

That is all this is.

This is like if a flaw had flaws.

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It truly.

And to think that they started off so badly and they started off so negligent with investigating this at all.

And then it went further to have the state police, which I understand they were probably looking over and being like, well, you guys did not do a good job at this, but on the same token, it's like, guys, this is already fucked up.

Just work together.

Just work together.

Sit down in a room and figure out what your different tasks are and work together.

But it's like, we can't even do that as adults.

It's so wild to me.

It's so simple a concept that it's almost too simple.

Yeah.

Because we've all seen it in our own lives on like very smaller scales is like getting a bunch of people to work together is a very difficult task.

And it's like, I don't know why we are all so.

That's why there's always a force to it.

It's so weird.

But either way, the sheriff, Sheriff Pritchard had requested, had done what I'm basically saying.

He's saying, let's combine forces.

Let's do this together.

They rejected it.

Of course they did.

What the fuck?

Because they wanted the, they wanted to be like, we did it and then they didn't even do it.

That's the thing.

And immediately this makes more bitterness just seep in and Sheriff Pritchard was quoted as saying, quote, other than lab equipment, I felt our department is just as capable.

If they're going to treat us this way, we're not going to bend over backwards to help them.

Which guys, you are just compounding and compounding and compounding issues here.

Oh, we're not going to, it's like, okay, let's work together.

No, I don't want to work with you.

Okay, then we're not going to share information.

Okay, then we're not going to tell, and it's like, these four kids that were murdered are over there being like, hello, excuse me, hi, can you maybe get justice for us?

That would, that would be sick if you guys would go ahead and just get some fucking justice for us instead of like, swinging your dicks around at each other.

Honestly.

It's so frustrating to see this shit.

I hate when this enters a case where it's like, because we've seen certain ones where like departments work together and it goes well and it always turns out right.

It's when, and sometimes they work together and they don't work together well, and it

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goes wrong.

Yep.

But like, you got to try, you got to try because it's not about you.

Yeah, it's not.

So the turf wars and the ego stuff became a problem for years to come in this case, and it caused major breakdowns in communication on any number of occasions for this. And at this point, motive was still very cloudy as well, because the missing \$600 from this restaurant safe made them think robbery was probably part of the motive at least, but investigators also found cash in Jane Freed's front pocket, and one of the others was wearing an expensive watch.

Yeah.

And why abandon Jane's car a few blocks later?

I guess the car I can understand because that's so easily traceable, but like-

Why abandon it where you rob them?

Yeah, where you left them.

But the money in her front pocket, just leaving that there, robbery was the motive, and then the expensive watch, it's like that doesn't check.

No, in the car, why would you not drive that far away?

You drove it right where they could find them, like that doesn't make any sense.

And then how did they get to the wooded area where the bodies were found?

They must have had another car, right?

It's so, I have no idea.

So Dr. Harley Palmer was the one who did the autopsy is a few days after they were found, and the results didn't really clear a whole lot more up.

It really just gave us more questions and also just made it even sadder.

Oh no.

What was happening?

So both Ruth Shelton and Daniel Davis had been shot in the head, neck, and shoulders multiple times.

Wow.

Which Palmer, Dr. Palmer thought occurred while they were lying on the ground next to each other.

So it was like execution style.

Jesus, but like so overkill.

Well, and this is the theory.

So because that was happening and they believe there was probably at least two killers, each one is doing that.

And the theory is that once that began, Jane and Mark ran, they were probably all four lying on the ground and they were just going to do it in a row.

But Jane and Mark jumped up and tried to escape and were caught and killed.

Jane Freet had been stabbed at least twice in the chest with a five inch hunting knife.

Holy shit.

And it was so violent that the blade broke off and was still stuck in her chest when she was discovered.

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Oh my God.

The handle was taken with the killers.

Oh my God.

So I don't even know if the killer one knew that it broke off, but two, you can't get that out of there.

No.

It broke off, so they just ran off with the handle, but left the blade.

Wow.

And that's violent.

That's brutal.

Mark Fleming's death was even more confusing because his cause of death was blunt force trauma to the head.

But Dr. Palmer couldn't be certain what was used to inflict the blow or how it happened.

The autopsy showed that Mark had actually sustained an internal injury before he died and that he had actually choked on his blood prior to his death.

That was actually, it was blunt force trauma, but I think the choking on the blood asphyxiation was technically the other cause of death.

Now several weeks later, based on this autopsy report, investigators floated a theory that Mark Fleming's had panicked, run away like Jane, and that it was dark in the woods.

So he ran head on into a tree.

And then they think, and I looked at this website uncovered who goes into the backstories of these people.

It's like a really good website to look at.

They think that he was likely knocked out or incapacitated by this and could have been beaten to death in the head or face with a chain-like object afterwards.

Oh my God.

Yeah.

Much more brutal than I knew it was.

Now Dr. Palmer confirmed that none of the body showed any signs of having been bound or restrained.

And he placed the time of death somewhere between two and three in the morning on the 18th or technically the 19th.

Hmm.

The area in which the bodies were discovered was a 40-minute drive from the burger chef at Speedway.

So Palmer's estimated time of death suggests that all four were killed not long after arriving on that property.

So it wasn't like they held them there for a while.

But also there was at least two, possibly three weapons used in these killings.

That's what I was just kind of confused about even.

Which makes it very clear that there's more than one killer.

Do you think there's more than two?

I think there could, there at least has to be two.

I would say at least two to subdue four people and to be able to chase them each down in

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the woods.

There had to have been at least two.

But I think there maybe could have been more.

And again, the motive still elusive at this point because what the hell, that's brutal.

And for \$600, like what?

So now that we've gone over this whole crime, let's talk about these four victims.

So 20 year old Jane Freet was born May 5th, 1958.

She began working at the Burger Chef Company three years before her death.

She was still a student at Avon High School and she quickly established herself as a very reliable, very responsible, good and well liked employee.

She had transferred to the Crawfordsville Road location in the spring of 1978.

So she had just transferred that year and was promoted to assistant manager only three months in.

And she was probably so like proud and excited about that.

Oh yeah.

And you want to know what her nickname was by her like fellow co-workers?

Sweet Jane.

Sweet Jane.

That's what they call their Sweet Jane.

And while she was in school, Jane was involved in tons of clubs and activities, yearbook, you know, concert band, choir.

She eventually became a teacher's aide.

I think she was like a library assistant at one point.

And a friend from high school told reporters quote, she had a zany smile that always reminded me of Lily Tomlin because when she smiled, her eyes would crinkle up into crescent moon shapes.

Oh.

And when you look at her, it's true.

And Jane was actually, this destroys me, Jane was actually in line for a promotion that was going to be happening at the beginning of the new year.

Everyone was confident she was going to be running the store.

Wow.

Like in no time.

Like full-blown manager.

And what's worse, she had no idea that this promotion was coming her way at the time of her murder.

No.

So there was this big exciting secret that she never knew, that she was in line to like really take it to the next level.

That's so messed up.

Now 17-year-old Ruth Ellen Shelton was born December 19th, 1960.

Like Jane, she was super popular at work and at school.

She had begun working at the Burger Chef on Crawfordsville Road a few months before the murders and was described by her manager, Robert Gilliot, as one of the, quote, model

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employees.

She was an honor student.

At the time of her death, she was in her junior year at Northwest High School.

She really pushed herself academically and she was very interested in math and science, which at the time it was kind of discouraged for young women to be into that.

And she had her parents and family said she was brilliant and incredibly inspirational.

Like her drive was like nothing you've ever seen, they were like we were constantly in awe of her.

Hell yeah.

And she had dreams of becoming a computer scientist.

Holy shit.

And her parents encouraged her in everything.

Her mom actually later joked, quote, I told her she couldn't be the best at everything, but she was the kind of person who would always try.

And she was taking classes at the time of her death at University of Indianapolis for early credits.

Good for her.

Like, insane.

Like that's so cool.

Right.

And she really determined women.

Yeah.

Like really cool women that were like doing the damn thing.

And she had recently joined the school choir and her classmates said that she was, quote, shy, but very nice and a very good worker.

Now outside of school, she also loved art.

She was very active in activities outside of school.

Like she was in the youth fellowship group at Westside Church of the Nazarene.

So they were both doing a shit ton with their lives and would continue to, given the opportunity.

Now, Daniel Davis was born on September 6th.

He was only 16 years old.

I know.

He had also recently begun working at the burger chef as a cook a few months earlier and had not even had his first paycheck yet.

Wow.

Yeah.

Wow.

He was very well liked, but he was quiet and shy.

And if you look at him, he's just like the most adorable thing.

My God, I know his cheeks.

Just these cheeks that you just want to squeeze.

And he was in his junior year at Decatur Central High School, I hope I'm saying that right, and had been planning to actually enter the Air Force when he graduated.

Wow.

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He had a very big interest in aviation, so he just wanted to pursue that.

So like the most determined kids ever.

Yeah, they all had dreams.

Yeah.

Like actual dreams.

That they were really going after too.

Yeah, they were not even just like talking about.

He also loved photography and he had made his own DIY dark room in his house at home.

How cool is that?

He developed his photographs there.

Damn.

His best friend Bruce described him as, quote, a happy guy laughing and telling jokes most of the time.

Oh, that like hurts my heart.

Now 16-year-old Mark Sylvester Flemons was born on December 31st, 1961, and he was also one of the newer employees at the Burger Chef.

He actually wasn't even supposed to be working that night, but had agreed to switch with another employee a few days earlier.

I knew there was one of them that had switched.

Yeah.

It was easier, the person he switched with was a girl who was also an employee that Brian Kring was taking out on a date lap that night.

Oh my God.

So he had switched shifts so that Mark would work while this girl went on the date with Brian.

So Brian must have like dropped that girl off and then was on his way home from that.

That's exactly what happened.

In fact, the two of them drove by and since they both worked there, they noticed the lights on and she was like, I got to get back for curfew.

So he just drove her home and then on his way back, he was like, oh, I'm going to stop in there.

Oh my God.

Yeah.

Now, yeah, it drives me crazy.

And I might have said Mark, I meant Brian.

I don't know if from Brian is who I'm talking about with the date.

But Mark was a sophomore at Speedway High School.

He really loved being in the school band and was really good at it.

He was one of seven children.

Wow.

Mark was raised as a Jehovah's Witness and he was known to be very friendly and cheerful.

Like you were in a bad mood.

Mark was the one that was going to make you laugh and make you feel better.

And in the 1978 Speedway High School yearbook, classmates remembered, quote, his smiling face

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and laughing eyes.

And they said that they always remember the jokes that he told because he would cheer everyone up.

This is so sad.

Yeah.

It breaks my heart.

Now, with no record of the initial crime scene ever being photographed or anything.

That is going to blow my mind for years to come.

I never knew that.

All the evidence washed away.

Investigators hoped that the Hager's property was going to be the one that gave them something.

Please.

Something.

But unfortunately, nothing.

And the autopsies only gave them more questions.

Like I said, it's like, you're not getting a ton out of this.

They're just like, what the fuck?

Now the investigation was also hitting walls because of the lack of information that was being communicated to both the media, the public and within law enforcement agencies.

Like this miscommunication was everywhere.

And they were holding all this shit way too close.

Like sometimes it makes sense.

Yeah.

But they weren't giving anything.

Well, even just like, I thought it was so weird that they told the family not to share pictures of their kids.

And they didn't share a lot of information with the families.

That's not cool.

Yeah.

In the days after the bodies were discovered, investigators literally gave the victims' families as little information as they could.

And according to Ruth Shelton's mother, Rachel, once detectives got information they wanted from the family, she said, quote, they no longer called or bothered to update us on the investigation.

How fucked up is that?

What the fuck is going on?

Yeah.

Like who are these officers?

Like how do you put your head on the pillow at night?

Not telling a family what is going on in the investigation of their kids murder.

Exactly.

But it was also happening within the departments too.

Officers were complaining about Lieutenant Kraft in silence saying it was going to make them impossible to investigate this case.

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We're not getting any information.

We're not getting any info.

We're not getting any info over here.

So this lack of information became a serious point of contention with the press almost immediately.

Of course.

They're like, please tell us what's happening.

The Hoosier State Press Association, HSPA, they were arguing that investigators were asking help from the public, but then were unwilling to share any information.

And they were like, this is a very unfair situation.

It's very one-sided.

And it's really limiting cooperation.

Yeah.

You're not going to get a lot from people if you're not willing to give.

Because they're not going to trust you.

No.

And Johnson County District Attorney D. Charles Gantz agreed with that sentiment.

And he told law enforcement that they had to be more forthcoming.

But nope, they were not going to.

This is a wild guess.

Some of the information about the autopsies were made public.

But the only thing that the investigators really gave the public was that they had developed quote, incomplete composite drawings of the two men in the parking lot that had come up to the couple.

Girl.

Bye.

But yeah.

But then even that though, the investigators said that they were quote, not certain the men were involved in the abduction.

But they may have some information about the robbery.

What are you certain about?

It's like what?

That's not helpful.

It might be easier if you tell us what you are certain about.

Now one thing they shared was that on the day of the disappearances, officers had discovered a 38 caliber pistol, quote, along the route believed driven by the intruders.

The gun showed real, it really didn't have like rust on it or age.

And it had been exposed to the elements at this point.

So they were like, okay, well, it obviously wasn't out there for too long.

So that could be the gun that was used in the killings because it could have been only out here for a couple of days.

But then they retrieved the slugs used in the murders of Ruth Shelton and Daniel Davis and it was no match for this pistol.

And I was going to ask you if there was like any anything behind like bullet casings or

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stuff like that.

Yeah, like they were able to get the slugs, but without anything to compare it to.

You're fucked.

Yeah.

Now, even though the police were pretty unwilling to share even the slightest bit of information, the press and public did what they could to help the investigation.

On November 20th, the Burgershaft Corporation announced a \$25,000 reward for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of the killers.

And another local restaurant, Steak and Shake, which I like Steak and Shake.

I've had that.

Oh, you have?

In Florida.

Yeah.

Oh, shit.

They have, I think it must be like in the South or...

I thought you were just saying like, I like that name.

Yeah, I like that.

No, I actually have had Steak and Shake.

It's good.

They added another \$1,000 to that sum, which is really cool of them to do.

Yeah.

Like another restaurant.

Stand Together.

Stand Together.

More than apparently the police department.

Literally.

The Burgershaft also set up memorial funds for the victim's families.

It sounds like a great company.

I was like, wow, Burgershaft.

And then a bunch of other local organizations stepped up.

The Indiana Restaurant Association actually established a reward fund, quote, to be used in violent crimes committed at any member's restaurant.

So they were like banding together and forming a little like, you know, collective of people.

Good for them.

And they're also urging their own members to donate to the victim's memorial fund that the Burgershaft Corporation had set up.

Nice.

So like, come together right now, you know, Beatles.

But of course, news of a reward is, it's great, but it can have its drawbacks because immediately you're going to get people calling in, trying to get that reward with no fucking information.

Yeah, like the, or like just fake information.

Exactly.

And of course, a flood of phone calls, a bunch of tips came in from the public that more than 100 calls were received on the first day.

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Of course.

None produced a credible lead.

Thanks guys.

Most were clearly false.

Thanks for calling assholes.

Yeah.

Now the papers were really feeling the full force of law enforcement, forcements like,

I'm going to tell you this, but I'm not going to tell you this.

You're not going to hear about this, but I want you to tell me this kind of thing.

On the Tuesday after the murders, the Indianapolis news had a headline that said, quote, four held 24 hours before slaying.

So they're saying that they, the four people were held 24 hours before they were killed, which is not the truth.

On the same day, the Indianapolis Star reported, police suspect the four young persons were slain shortly after they were abducted.

Yikes.

Not great.

So two different newspapers on the same day are saying held 24 hours.

Police think they were killed right away.

Yikes.

Yeah.

Not great.

Meanwhile, general counsel for the HSPA, Richard Cardwell, said in an interview with the Indianapolis

Star, when investigators do not cooperate with the news media, there is a suspicion that they are trying to cover up their own incompetence.

The silence also really made the public apprehensive about trusting the investigation and law enforcement.

Because remember, that series of bombings had just ended as well.

So they're, and it's, and at this point, they are unsolved as well.

So they're like, yeah, we don't know what you guys are doing, but it's not solving cases.

That's for sure.

You don't want to live here.

Yeah.

So actually a neighbor of the Hagers, which is where the bodies were found, they said we're very scared to come all the way from speedway to here.

They would have had to known something about the area, which is not, not wrong.

And one burger chef regular actually said to reporters, I was shocked.

It was like a personal loss.

Like part of myself had been taken away, which was like, oh my God.

Now by the end of the week, investigators had seemingly exhausted what very, I can't even say few leads, what no leads they had.

Anything they tried to chase down was just nothing.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 441: The Burger Chef Murders Part 1

And state police said publicly, quote, in this case, we've got to hope that the killer or killers may have told someone who has a conscience who will come forward. They're like, yeah, we're throwing in the towel basically. And that is not what you want to hear. You don't want to hear them go at this point. We just hope they're stupid enough to tell someone and that person has a fucking conscience and wants to tell on them. Like hopefully they told someone. That's what you want me to pin my hope on? Hopefully they told someone because we sure don't know. It's like, no, my hope was pinned on the fact that we have an entire department of people that are supposed to be investigating this. We have multiple departments. How are you sitting here as the sole entity that's supposed to be fixing this? Like, I don't know. I don't know. I hope some people are stupid and that they just come forward and just spill the beans. Clearly they didn't. Yeah. We all hope that every fucking criminal will come forward and be like, well, shit, I grew a conscience. Here's what it did. But nine times out of 10, that doesn't happen, my friends. Yeah. Like nine and a half. And at this point, everyone's terrified. All over Speedway, parents were like waiting at their kids' jobs and picking them up and like walking them out, walking them in. They were terrified. I don't blame them. And also at the Burger Chef on Crawford'sville Road, the lights of the restaurant, there's this like happy face in the lights. They actually turned it off as like a morning, the last kind of thing. And I think that's real. I'm like, Burger Chef doing it. For real. Like Burger Chef is doing the most here. And I appreciate it. And at this point, the investigation is at a complete standstill. We heard that they have partial composite images that they haven't even released yet. Like a whole bunch of bullshit. Truly at this point, the public and the media are about to give up hope that they are going to be able to get any answers here. And then, and then we go to part two.

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What?

God damn you.

I thought you were going to say, and then this happened, but we'll explore that in part two.

We're going to end in part two.

Oh my God.

It's this case is infuriating and it's so tragic.

I mean, these kids were babies and they were just at their part-time job literally just like, they went to school and then they went to their job, everything, whatever job they had, and not once, I'm sure, did they ever in a billion years think that would be their last shift?

That's awful.

And it's like they're all in their uniforms.

It just kills me.

I'm like, who are these fucking monsters who did this?

The fact that they just didn't check the restaurant at all for anything.

Yeah.

Didn't do anything.

Didn't take pictures.

Nothing.

Like what did you think was going to happen here?

You really thought you were going to solve this?

And it's like, we say it all the time, just overdo it, man.

Yeah.

Overdo, then underdo.

Do too much.

No one's going to fault you for doing too much.

Cool.

You spent entire, you know, all your resources of your fucking photographer that night.

Whatever.

Where else was your photographer?

Whatever.

Where else was your crime scene technicians?

Like, get them out of bed, get them in here, make them snap some photos.

If you never use them again, you never use them again.

But at least you got them.

Dust a little bit of fingerprints on some things.

That's the thing.

Had they dusted, I guarantee you this case would be solved right now.

Because in photographs, like you can see the minutia, you can see little inconsistencies, you can start to piece things together.

I've been hearing the word minutia a lot lately, and I don't know what it means.

Like the little things, like the details.

Little details.

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Like the minut.

The minutia.

The minutia.

I like it.

Thank you.

Like when somebody, like when somebody's getting too far into like the d, you're like, don't get into the minutia.

That just.

I like it.

Yeah.

Thanks.

You're welcome.

Yeah.

I was just saying, I feel like they would have, if they had dusted and gotten a fingerprint, this would be solved.

Because I feel like this doesn't feel like a first time crime.

No, it doesn't.

Like at all.

This feels very like, especially the fact that, you know, they made them all lie face down in a row and they were just going to execute them.

That's, you've done that before.

That's what I would think.

But then again, on the same token, two of them we think ran away.

Right.

That's pretty unheard of.

And to think you're going to corral for humans with no mishaps is like, that's pretty bold.

So that to me says confidence and it says, I've done this before.

That's what, that's how I feel.

But.

But I guess we'll explore more in part two.

We sure will.

Dude.

But in the meantime, we hope you keep listening.

And we hope you.

Keep it.

Weird.

But not so weird that you're one of an investigator when you're investigating a crime scene.

You don't even take pictures of anything.

You don't do that.

Yay.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Hey, Prime members.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 441: The Burger Chef Murders Part 1

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