

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Hey Prime members, you can listen to Morbid early and add free on Amazon music down at the app today.

Hey weirdos, I'm Elena and I'm Ash and this is Morbid

It's Morbid

Hey guys. Hey, what's up? What's up fellas? What's up fellas and fellers? Flora's faunas and boxes

Oh, okay getting getting cute with the spring equinox. I see the spring of it all. Um, what is it?

Ostara?

I just learned something like that. Yeah, it's something like that. It's witchy. Yeah, it's kind of like welcoming spring

Yeah, and I feel like we're all kind of feeling this way. Usually I'm I never want to hang on to winter, but I'm never

Super eager to get out of it. I'm usually just like okay spring is coming like cool. That's how I feel

But this year I was like get me the fuck out of winter. This has been a fucking terrible winter

It's well, we had a lot of family stuff going on. We had which sicknesses

Sicknesses. Yeah, like it's just been a shit winter too much going on. Yeah, I'm lost

Lots of loss up in the air miss. Yeah, just it's it's been shit a lot of stress so much stress

Like you guys were all feeling it in our voices. I think because we got so many which like we can't say it enough like

We really appreciate that you guys give a shit because the amount of messages we've gotten that are like you guys, okay

Well, it's crazy like clearly we've been going at this for a while with you guys because like you you know

You can hear the change in our voice. I know even when we don't think we're showing it

We think we're putting on the show like right show must go on. Yep. Get rid of whatever's going on behind the scenes

I feel that sentiment so hard. The show must go on. It's true because it has to and you never want to like

We never want to let you down when shit happens like we we are here to entertain you

You know, I mean to yeah to inform you of things, you know

So it's like we're very much in that mindset of the show must go on but to know that like you said you guys

Always know. Yeah, even when we think we're hiding it like that tells us like how close we are to this community

And it's and we just appreciate you. This is like it's like really nice. It's nice

But I also it was like a slap because I was like, oh shit, so it's leaking out a little bit

I know I know the good news is like where spring is here. Yeah, we're feeling a lot more

We feel like we are in a good place like schedule wise like, you know how we went we kind of changed it to the og way of things

It's feeling good. Well and astrologically things are changing a bit right now and like planets are moving into different

Signs and houses that like things are a little more stable. That's what we need

Except I think Aquarius is moving into Pluto next week and that's gonna bring like some kind of major transformation

The last time that Aquarius was I think it's Aquarius entering Pluto is what it is and the last time it

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

happened was in the 1700s

Oh damn, isn't that nuts and it's a time of like

Um, what's the word the war that have a revolution of the war. It's the time of like revolution. Oh, wow

Yeah, crazy. So that could be like great or really bad. Well, I think like revolution like revolution or it can be really bad

It's gonna probably coincide with like all the alien shit happening right now. I'm not even joking your butt

I mean, I'm not even joking your butt. I'm not even I'm not even shitting you dick. No way. You're not I can tell

Yeah, but you know what? We're in a good place. It's spring. Aliens aside. Happy spring. I'm feeling good

I got some good cases coming up that I'm feeling excited to tell you guys about just because like, you know, I love an old-timey

Like his weird history case. You do?

I got it. I got a good one here that I'm really excited about and it just perped a little. I'm sorry

That's okay happened, you know, sometimes you just you can't you can't make a stop. It's just a rough can't stop

We'll stop, you know

But I'm gonna be doing Birkin hair today and it's gonna be a two-parter

So it's gonna be this week. I'm gonna be doing Birkin hair damn girl. You're on a two-parter like yeah, you know

I love a multi-part. Yeah, I'm gonna know I like when you do that

I love some really really intense long cases when it gives me a little more time to wrap my

There you go, so it works out and I just think it's good, you know, you get a whole week of one really intense long case

I like it. I'm excited about it. This one's a wild one and it also takes place in Edinburgh for at least part of it. Oh

and

This is a wild one because we're gonna do I'm gonna do this case and then we're gonna talk about Maybe next week or whenever we're gonna talk about those these little mini coffins that were found.

Okay

Way later, and we're gonna get into detail. Don't worry, but they there's a theory that it's connected to this case

Oh, which is a nice like continuation. Okay, so you have to look forward to a lot of Birkin hair in the recent in the coming days

Okey-dokey, so

Throughout the first three decades of the 19th century doctors and med schools all across Europe They really struggled to find enough bodies that they could use because this is the time when they were using

Bodies like corpses for anatomical teaching in medical surprising that they were having a hard time finding bodies

Back in that time because they didn't want to get like plague bodies or anything like that, you know

Like you didn't you wanted like fresh. Yeah fresh bodies that were not sick

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Presumably, you know, if you could get them where it's and there's no trauma and stuff
It would be helpful because you're really trying to do like I mean those would be good too for certain things, but yeah
now
They basically this demand for fresh bodies and how it was becoming so hard to find them this led to the rise of what was called
Resurrection men. Oh, which that doesn't sound good cool band name
This is kind of a tongue-in-cheek name that was given to grave robbers
Yeah, who medical students turn to a lot for fresh corpses
Isn't that crazy thinking of like just like like hoity-toity people in the medical field like ma-ha-ha
Yeah, well, it is because they're looking they're basically overlooking the crime of great brahman and the ethics surrounding that right for the
Pursuit of medical advancement. That's like really I guess but you kind of have to you know
Well, you don't you don't have to put the time. That's what was going on
It was very frequent resurrection men were a real thing. Oh, it wasn't like a weird thing and in Edinburgh, Scotland
Dr. Robert Knox was a very highly respected surgeon and he found what he believed to be a Very reliable pipeline of fresh bodies. Okay, and he found cuz it was really hard to find that you'd find this resurrection
Man, maybe you could get a couple out of them, but you were gonna have to look around for it. It was not easy
This guy, however, was like I found a good
Steady stream of bodies to use see that makes me feel like he's working alongside a serial killer
Well, he was working alongside William Burke and William Hare the two Williams Burke and here.
Oh, it's like Tom and Tom
Yeah, exactly. That's not good. Did anyone see that midseason trailer the midseason trailer though in case you don't know what we're talking
Oh my god, the end of it. I when he says what can I do for you? What is it?
Can I get you anything? I think or no, she says do you want anything do you want anything and she says?
I want you to die. She says for you to die like whoa. Yeah, but that's that's for another day
But once we get to the just wait once we get to those reunions and those episodes come and we'll talk more about it for real
But yeah, so this Dr. Robert Knox
He was absolutely comfortable with the fact that William Burke and William Hare were providing him a steady stream of bodies to use in
His medical teachings and throughout 1828 Burke and Hare supplied Knox with nearly 20
Corpses, uh-huh
They got a very decent profit out of that. I bet they did but
We're we're Burke and Hare just resurrection men. No, I don't think so. They just really good at their jobs
No, always finding fresh bodies. Nothing is like ever like if it's too good to be true. It's not true exactly
So during the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Western world kind of strayed away from

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

The original thinking that you know a dead body was the most
It's hard to explain like you know how in the beginning in Victorian times and whatnot
Death and bodies were treated a certain way. There was a lot of respect
It was a big to-do. It was a big to-do like a lot of ethics surrounding a dead body a lot of
Rituals importance placed on the body a lot. The body itself was a real like beacon of ethics and all
that kind of stuff sure
This you know in the late 18th early 19th century
That's when they began to stray away from that a bit and it was more like a body's a body
It kind of did it was like a more enlightened era where
Advances in medical science were kind of reshaping this thought process a lot because people didn't
think that anybody was still lurking around in their body
Right, it became more of a clinical situation. You know like medical theaters became more of a thing
people were watching these dissections
It was just it really flipped the whole thing on its ear and in the early 19th century England
Trainee doctors so medical students and those hoping to become surgeons were required
To dissect at least three corpses before moving forward in their training. That's which now that's a
similar thing
You're required to do gross anatomy. You're required to do that. So it stuck around
And as these trainees needed more and more hands-on experience the availability of bodies for
dissection
kind of became
Entangled a bit with the with the medical school's student fees, okay
So to put it simply the more bodies a school had access to the more hands-on training
They could offer and the more hands-on training they could offer the more they could charge in
student fees make sense
So this what once was like we need to do this training. That's important. So they can become good
doctors
Suddenly became entangled with money and then it becomes something totally different money is
the root of all
So of course for the purposes of training exercises
Like we were saying only recently deceased bodies would really suffice here. Mm-hmm. That's where
that issue came from that we were just talking about
So this created a demand that was far outweighing the supply at the time
And the only legal supply of bodies for the purpose of dissection were those who had actually been
executed at the gallows
Oh, okay. Yeah, which that makes sense which at the time was only about 50 people per year
Okay, well, so that's good. That's good. It's not for this. It's not giving you a great supply of people
but like the
Like at the time executions themselves were heavily attended by spectators the dissections were
also heavily attended social events
They often took on kind of like a like a carnival
Atmosphere. Yeah, there was a lot of showmanship involved a lot of theater. It's like the I think you
did a whole episode on that
Way early on in the podcast. It's like we were talking about how like the

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Uh, how executions executions. Yeah. Yeah, and that's definitely what happened with like dissections in medical theaters

When it was like a new

A new carnival to go to is probably how they saw it a new macabre thing

That was happening before you were very eyes

And at the royal college of surgeons in london, for example, um early 19th century instructor professor professor

Giovanni Aldini

He was known to perform tricks in the form of like

Basically macabre experiments on corpses don't love. Uh, he would make disembodied heads open their eyes

With like electrical shock. Oh, no. Uh, he would have like a a dead hand clutch

Things he's having a little too much fun with it. Yeah, he would use galvanic experimentation

And this involves using electrical sparks like static electricity

To demonstrate that it could cause different muscles to twitch and even move a dissected specimen

Wow, it's yeah, it's interesting and it's fascinating that you can do that. It's just a matter of should you do that

Exactly, that's the thing you can do that. Yes, which should you also you saying galvanic took me to a place of failing every science course

I've ever taken there you go

Well, and this made me look into galvanism a little bit because I was like I'd never heard of that

So I I'd heard like a little bit about making things move with electricity

Yeah, but a little side note about galvanism. It's really fascinating in

1751 England passed the murder act

And this act allowed the bodies of recently executed murderers to be used for medical experimentation

So that's how they were able to get the bodies from the gallows

This way the demand for corpses for medical colleges would be aided and also the murderer

In their eyes was suggested to also

Subjected excuse me to having his body dissected which at that time was still considered a desecration

And just another form of posthumous punishment. Oh, whatever they had done. Okay, so this is important in a second

So just remember that putting it in my pocket

But in 1780 and that Italian professor

Luigi Galvani was the one who suddenly found or excuse me. It wasn't that professor. It was a relation to that other sure

Um, he was the one who suddenly found that he could use jolts of electricity to make the muscles of deceased

And dissected frogs at the time

Twitch around and look like they were alive

I love frogs once he discovered this others quickly started using this method of experimentation on other animals as well dead animals

Yes, um Galvani's nephew a physicist named

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Giovanni Aldini who we just talked about
Actually used the body of an ox to do this
Wow, he cut the ox's head off and used electricity to make its tongue move around
I just like don't think you have to I just like don't want to I don't want to go to that show
Yeah, I'm I'm also a little weird
But yeah, it's a little weird and once word got out about this though people began to attend the
Demonstrations where people where they would like electrify cows pigs other animal heads as like a
show the human species
Species human species
Um, so in november 1818 a scottish chemist andrew yuri, I believe it is took shit to another level
Oh, no, he had not only conducted these experiments, but he did so on recently executed murders
because of the murder act
Um, and he did it for the reason of believing he could use electricity not just to reanimate particular
muscles in a corpse
He believed that he could bring an entire corpse back to life. Well, dr. Frankenstein here we go
On this november evening in 1818 yuri did a truly theatrical demonstration in front of a theater of
onlookers
On a 35 year old murderer named Matthew Clydesdale
He had murdered his fellow coal miner who was an 80 year old man. Jesus christ. Yeah that guy and
he had used a pickaxe
Oh my god monster. So you're gonna try to bring this man back to life
That's the thing
So he was in an anatomical theater full of people watching and he managed for over an hour to use
electrical current
Directed through rods at different nerve points to make it look like the dead murderer was breathing
Like his chest went up and down and they made his hand point at people in the crowd. Wow
They needed a hobby a different topic. Yeah, I was gonna say this was their hobby unfortunately
bravo. They needed bravo
Not that long ago every meal or snack felt like I was settling for something that I didn't really want
to eat
I would hit a drive-through where I'd grab takeout and I was really racking up those takeout bills
But thankfully now daily harvest keeps me well fed with easy to prep options
So I never have to settle daily harvest delivers delicious smoothies flatbread soups harvest bowls
bites and more
All built on organic fruits and vegetables
They have it all and it's all delivered right to my door with nourishing options for any time of day
daily harvest keeps
My freezer stocked with good food. That's always ready when I am and the best part no shopping
No chopping and no heavy lifting ever. I also love how my freezer looks all lined up with daily
harvest stuff
I'm like a little tick-tock early and I specifically lately have been really jamming with the strawberry
and peach smoothie
I don't know what it is. It's just so good
Feels like a little tropical treat for me and by working directly with farmers daily harvest can source

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

the best ingredients

They freeze them at peak ripeness to lock in that flavor that nutrients and they never ever ever use artificial

Preservatives or ingredients blah daily harvest is committed to human and planetary health

Which means they do their absolute best to ensure transparency and integrity when it comes to their ingredients by supporting farmers who invest

In practices that increase biodiversity and improve the health of our soil

And by delivering food and recyclable and compostable packaging where possible daily harvest does the work

So all I have to do is eat and enjoy their latest drop is a collection of grains

That's been actually helping me get dinner on the table in minutes

Not only are they perfectly balanced with whole grains veggies and legumes like wild rice

Squash and cauliflower, but they pair perfectly with every meal that I make stop settling with your next meal and try daily harvest

Go to daily harvest comm slash morbid to get up to 65 dollars off your first box

That's daily harvest comm slash morbid for up to 65 dollars off your first box daily harvest comm slash morbid

Most of you have probably heard me sing the praises of pros like I love pros

It's the world's most personalized hair care

Switching to a custom routine from pros was easily one of the best things that I have ever done for my hair

And the results that i'm seeing just keep getting better and better and baby i'm a licensed stylist So you know i'm telling you the truth pros

is Thebomb.com if you know me, you know that I dye my hair literally probably as frequently as I change my underwear

Not actually but a little but I dye my hair a lot

So that means that it gets like you know a little demodged in the process

So I told pros that I said hey, you know, this is what happens when I took my little quiz We'll get there

But I told them and they sent me products that are specifically formulated for that and my hair has literally never felt stronger

When i'm brushing it

I'm noticing that less is breaking off and I am just

Slipping over that because pros knows that there's more to you than just your hair type

So pros has given over one million consultations with their in-depth hair quiz like I was just talking about

That's exactly how I got started

They ask you questions about your zip code your eating habits your damage level all of that stuff and I said wow

I'm super damaged. Here's where I live here are my eating habits and then by analyzing over 85

Personal factors pros handpicks clean ingredients that get you closer to your hair goals with every Every single wash and that's true. The more and more you use it the more you're going to notice a

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

change in your hair

My favorite feature though happens to be pros's review and refine tool

It lets me tweak my formula for any reason in case I change up my address my hair color or even my diet

And you know I've used that because I just said I change up my hair color all the time when I am a little more bleach

Blonde I need a little extra help when I'm a little less blonde. I don't need as much help

Now as a carbon neutral certified b-corp pros is an industry leader in clean and responsible beauty

All their ingredients are sustainably sourced ethically gathered and cruelty free

They're also the first custom beauty brand to go carbon neutral

If you're not 100 positive that pros is the best hair care you've had they will take the products back

No questions asked pros is the healthy hair regimen with your name all over it

Take your free in-depth hair consultation and get 15% off your first order today. Go to pros.com slash morbid

That's p-r-o-s-e.com slash morbid for your free in-depth hair consultation and 15% off

Uh, so he actually wrote about these experiments and the demonstration and some of the entries that were found in his like journals

And on atlas obscura

I found some of those entries and one of them says every muscle in his countenance was

Simultaneously thrown into fearful action rage horror despair anguish and ghastly smiles

United their hideous expression in the murderer's face

surpassing far the wildest representations of a fucelli or a keen an actor and a painter

At this period several of the spectators were forced to leave the apartment from terror or sickness

And one gentleman fainted same and he said he thought the experiment was important

But not really fruitful because even if he had managed to revive this man from the dead

He was bringing back a murderer exactly and that's not awesome

So either way interesting and since this was something happening at the time and in medical colleges

It seemed like an interesting side quest for me to take. I just had to so

So back to the resurrection man of this time in the early 19th century skilled trades people could kind of they could expect to

Make in their trades like regular trades

They could make between five and ten shillings for 72 hour grueling work week. Yay

By contrast

Selling a fresh cadaver could net you as many as 20 guinea guineas, which is around

420 shillings. Oh, shit. That's from the medical training schools

Under the circumstances the imbalance between supply and demand

created an economic opportunity that

While it's pretty

ghoulish

And a little hideous

It would be hard for a lot of people of the time to pass up. Yeah, because remember like this is these are people

Hard up. Mm-hmm in really bad situations. They're a little desperate at this point makes sense

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

So that's at least what you have to think of when you think of the perspective at the time. I'm not saying I would do it
I'm just saying I'm not in those dire straits that they were in right now
Also in England the penalty for unlawful disinterment
Was a small fine or up to six months in jail. Wow
so
Certainly horrified the public grave robbing
But grave robbing in general wasn't really taken that seriously by the authorities either because that's not that big of a
Penalty penalty at all. Yeah, so in fact while procuring fresh bodies was typically left to grave robbers and resurrection men
In sometimes to a lesser extent students would actually go out and find them themselves
It was like a like a hazing ritual. Yeah, literally
It was not entirely unheard of for a professor
To help in the process getting desperate especially if they hope to obtain a special prize
So
There's that now. It was the promise of good money that caused normal people to head out to cemeteries and collect these bodies
They would use grappling hooks and wood spades
Um, because these were less noisy than like metal tools that would get them caught in the act and these resurrection men
Um, they would also be called ex ex ex zoomators. I believe it's how you say that makes or lifters
That's also what they're called
They could put in like very little effort with the right tools and they earned
You know more than they would earn in a weeks time in one night. Damn. Yeah
Now in Edinburgh several safeguards were actually installed in cemeteries across the city to make sure this wasn't happening because it was such a big problem
Yeah, these included watchtowers. They had mort safes, which were large. You can look them up online. They're large iron cages
That sat over a grave site to prevent body snatch. Oh, I might have seen photos of at the obituary show
They yes, they showed a mort safe
So if you haven't gotten your tickets to the obituary, uh, us tour you should do that because it's fucking hilarious and you learn a lot
Yeah, uh, but these protective measures
They definitely limited more the procurement of cadavers, which was making things harder and making
medical the medical colleges in Edinburgh
Get cadavers from london, liverpool or ireland
And they were costing more money in that situation and probably the reward went up because it was a harder thing to do
Exactly. So the more the harder it is to procure something
People find nefarious ways to get it. I love the way that you just said nefarious
I know, I don't know why I said it like that. You were in scotland in that moment

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

But I don't know why I was like nefarious nefarious. Um, oh, what was I gonna say?
I don't know and that's where the problem lies. It's like if something's harder to get people are
gonna find nefarious ways to get it
Oh, that's what I was gonna say. Yeah, it's it's not the catch. It's the chase. Exactly
so with the dissection of dead human bodies serving both a scientific and
entertainment
function at the time and the value of the recently dead now
Shooting up there at a premium. It was only a matter of time before the criminal and pretty
unscrupulous
people turned to not only
Digging these bodies up. Oh god, but turned to other ways
Murder to get bodies. That's exactly we're gonna turn to murder to meet demand. Oh, no, and at the
time none
We're going to be as prolific or
Dare I say efficient at doing this than Edinburgh's Burke and Hare. Oh, no
So let's talk about Burke and Hare. Both Burke and Hare had a tendency to um
Um, exaggerate their lives. Okay, both of them their origin stories their achievements
It's giving Henry Lee Lucas and
An oddest tool. Yeah
so at this point, it's difficult to really discern back from fiction and
You know, there's some things frustrating. I know because they're just liars. They lie out of their face
into your face
So it's just not good
But there are definitely some facts that we know are true. Okay
So William Burke was born in Liam de Berca in 1792 in County Tyrone Ireland
He was the son of Neil Burke who was a laborer
And while many in late 18th century Ireland were very poor and made a meager living performing
manual labor
William Burke's upbringing seems to be a little more fortunate than those around him. Huh?
He received a fair education. It's described as okay. He can read and write, you know
And he found work as a servant to a Presbyterian minister
But it didn't take long for him to get a little tired of that work and he moved on
So from there, he tried his hand at being a weaver, a baker, a shoemaker, a candlestick maker
I was waiting for that and then he turned to the Donagull militia in 1809
Where he served as a personal attendant to one of the senior officers
I was gonna say that sounds intense
It is and it was during this time that the militia with the militia that William Burke married Margaret
Coleman
Who was a young woman from the town of Bolina? Well, that's a pretty town name. Right? Bolina
He that's actually uh, it's like the chicken's name in return to Oz
Bolina, I believe it's Bolina. Look at you. Yeah. Look at you quoting horror films. Go watch return to
us
I love that. That's a horror film. I love it. It is it really is
Uh, but he went to live with Margaret Coleman after um, after the militia was disbanded in 1816

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

And he found employment with a quote country gentleman
And continued living with his wife and her family. Okay
Uh, that was an until that they lived together with the family until an ongoing argument with her
father
Made it a little unlivable. That'll do it. The main point of their contention was Burke's
Obsession with leasing his father-in-law's land
But his father-in-law refused to transfer the lease of his land into Burke's name
So Burke was just pissed and just straight up abandoned the family in 1817
Because he couldn't have leased land from his land. That wasn't even his yeah
He was like fuck you guys and he just went to scotland
He never returned to ireland and he never saw his wife again. Holy. I was gonna say they were
married, right?
Oh my god, I'm out. What did well that goes to show you exactly who this man is exactly
We're working with his father-in-law wouldn't transfer the lease of his land into his name and he was
like well
I'm out. He's like, I don't know her. I don't know her no way rolls up the window
So while there are some surviving documents to verify William Burke's origins
We can't say the same for William Harris
Uh-oh his life before and after this whole story is a little mysterious, but
Some of it's questionable. We can find bits and pieces of it
But by most accounts he was born in ireland in the early 1790s
According to George McGregor who is the author of a history surrounding this case and the
resurrectionist times and movement
Okay, hair was quote brought up without any education or proper moral training and rapidly slipped
into a vagabonding kind of life
His temper was brutal and ferocious and when he was in liquor. He was perfectly unbearable. Oh, no
Like his later pal Burke William Hare left ireland for scotland in late 1817 or maybe early 1818
And he found work as a lumper at the docks in hopetown. What's that?
Uh, basically lumpers unloaded the shipments. They were just called lumpers, which is hilarious
But in the it was 1818 during his early days of working at the canal that William Burke met Helen
McDougal
She was a widower at a very young age
And McDougal had two children to support
So she took up with Burke in madison and the couple lived for all intents and purposes as a married
couple
I was going to say they just couldn't get married because he already had a wife back home
Married although they would remain together for the decade leading up to Burke's eventual death
It seems they never really had a uh loving or nice relationship
They both were heavy drinkers. They fought constantly
Their arrangement seemed like it was
Tolerable and acceptable to both of them, but it wasn't like a lovely situation out of convenience.
Yeah
Which is unfortunate for everybody, especially the kids. Yeah, and due to economic instability Burke
and McDougal

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Dougal moved around a lot and eventually made their way to Edinburgh in 1827
There they took up residence in a boarding house in Portsburgh
Portsburgh, excuse me where Burke had planned to set up a cobbler shop
The home was actually owned by
Ding ding ding
William Hare I knew it and Margaret Laird
So I wish it was Lair Laird Laird and Hare Laird and Hare
Burke had actually William Burke had met Margaret Laird a few months before actually
So he knew her that's how they got the room at the boarding house
And Laird had convinced Burke and McDougal to move into the boarding house
She had inherited from her previous husband who had died. I think two years earlier everybody
dying
It's that time, you know, yeah
Like many accommodations in Edinburgh's west port at the time
The boarding house was not great. Yeah, it was known as Tanner's Close
Um, it catered to poor immigrants who'd come to the city looking for work
So they didn't they were not treated well, you know, so this house was not well maintained
It was what historians have since described as dirty low and wretched awesome
The rooms of these boarding houses were filled with a ton of beds as many beds as you could get
But windows were at street level so they looked directly in so there was no privacy
Um, but there was one smaller room at the back of this boarding house that had only one window
Looking out over a pigsty
Nice, so you know an actual moving on up
And this is actually the particular setting where a lot of the crimes of Burke and Hare would
eventually unfold
Okay, looking out over a pigsty. Oh god, that's awful. Yeah, it's giving Willie picked in. Yeah, it's not
great
so it would be easy and
Probably reasonable to assume that body snatching for profit was the work of lazy men
Hoping to get rich on a very short night of work. Yeah
But like we said before that's not necessarily true
In the case of Burke and Hare both were very hard workers
Like that is one thing you can say about them
That's what it sounds like. They actually continued to work their respective trades
Burke was a cobbler and Hare was a boatman or a salesman and to keep up with the parents
Even after they were selling bodies
And in fact looking at the year where their spree began
Author of Burke and Hare uh Burke and Hare the book. Oh and Dudley Edwards describes them as
quote excellent examples of immigrant enterprise
Whose ultimate business diligently answered the needs of the host culture
Basically despite the horrific acts and very ghoulish
Nature of the business that they were entering Burke and Hare saw a need for cadavers and were
able to meet the need through hard work
and ingenuity making them a good

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

representation of

work ethic at first

Key words at first at first

But then because remember we are talking about a time where people are desperate

We're talking about a time where people are living in fucking terrible conditions, especially immigrants

We are talking about people just desperate to get enough food on the table for their family or feed their you know

Feed their kids keep a roof over the kids house

Those are the people that would turn to this for quick money. Yeah

Burke and Hare in the beginning were doing just that. Yeah

But then they turned to murder and that's not okay

I'm not saying the grave robbing is okay. I'm saying that desperation

Is a part of this story totally in the beginning right in the this is where it ends. This is where the Desperation meager working, you know living conditions all this stuff. That's where we there's always a line

We're drawing a line right here

So nobody say that i'm saying that it's fine that you murder people for medical schools. I'm saying that right now

No, don't say that this is where it ends not okay

Okay, so

Again, this is before shit got really real

So Burke Hare and their women lared in mcdougal were all trying to make at least a slightly honest living

Again, they were working at Burke was a cobbler. Hare was a boatman

Lared was a landlady and mcdougal was selling Burke shoes. Okay, so they were all working together

They were all working in honest living, but around november 29th 1827 things turned nefarious

And then imagine saying that you had a pair of Burke shoes

Yeah, I bet sales went down that'd be wild

Now this evening one of lared's tenants who was an aged pensioner. That's how he's described named donald

He died in the house. Sure and he died of natural causes. Oh, okay. He actually did. Okay. This is one where he actually did

Um, some sources say he died of dropsy, which is edema

Um, and that was honestly so this was often the case for pensioners and transients at the time

Donald was live was on living credit

Which means he had an arrangement with lared that he would pay for his

Living the roof over his head when his pension came. Okay, he would receive that quarterly but unfortunately donald had died before receiving his next pension so

Lared and hare had also loaned him money at one point

So they're like the the runners of this boarding house, obviously

They'd loaned him money. They were letting him live on this like you pay me when your pension comes

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

So now he's gone. They're not getting the pension. They're not getting their money back
So he actually owed them a fairly large sum of money, which is not like a bad thing. They they
loaned him the money
Everything was fine. It was on the app
They were now expected to forfeit that but in his confession later given after his arrest
Burke explained that hare had informed the authorities of the man's death as you should
And he was hoping that if nothing else they would just take the body out and the parish parish would
pay for the burial
Because he was like not only am I not getting
Paid for the living expenses. I'm not getting the money back that we loaned him and now I'm
expected to bury this guy
Oh, like he would have been expected to pay for the burial
So he was like, I'm not doing that. So he called the authorities being like you just got to take him out
of here
Yeah, and again the parish would hopefully pay for it. Okay
This show is brought to you by better help
Getting to know yourself can be a lifelong process, especially because we are always growing and
changing
We've got new life events coming up all the time the older we get we lose more people, you know
It's tough and that's why we need therapy because therapy is all about deepening your self-
awareness and your understanding
Because sometimes we don't know what we want or why we react the way we do until we talk
through these things
I know through therapy that I'm a very reactive person
So that's something that I work on in therapy all the time to like not be so reactive, you know
I think everybody should go to therapy because I think there are so many things to learn about
yourself
Because we are changing and growing all the time and if you're thinking of starting therapy
I suggest giving better help a try. It's entirely online
It's designed to be convenient flexible and suited to your schedule
Just fill out a brief questionnaire to get matched with a licensed therapist and switch therapist
anytime for no additional charge
Discover your potential with better help visit [betterhelp.com](https://www.betterhelp.com) slash morbid today to get 10% off your
first month
That's better help [hlp.com](https://www.betterhelp.com) slash morbid
It's the fall of 2017 in Rancho Tejama, California
A man and his wife are driving to a doctor's appointment when another car crashes into them
sending them flying off the road
Disoriented they stumble out of the car only to hear dozens of gunshots whizzing past them
This is just one chapter of a much larger nightmare unraveling in their small town
This is actually happening presents a special limited series called point blank
Shedding a light on the forgotten spree killings of Rancho Tejama where a lone gunman
Devastated a small town attacking eight different locations in the span of only 25 minutes
The series follows five stories of people connected to the incident from a father that drew the

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

gunman away from a local school

To the sister of the shooter these are riveting stories that will stick with you long after you listen

Follow this is actually happening wherever you listen to podcasts

You can listen ad-free on the amazon music or wandering app

So they waited because they were like sure we'll come pick them up

And they waited for the coffin to come and hair continued to be really pissed and bummed about the lost income

And expenses that he wasn't going to get back. And this is when Burke suggested

Why don't we just sell the body to the surgeon for the purposes of dissection?

Because he's got no one around. He's got no family. Well, that's really we can't pay for him. He owes us money anyways

Again, I'm not saying this me. I'm saying this is what they were thinking. Right. Right. So they're thinking, you know

And although the practice was illegal and very seriously discouraged from social speaking a lot of people were doing it

Burke had extensive experience with medical practitioners from his days in the militia

And he knew that they were often willing to pay a pretty good sum for recently deceased body that didn't have signs of trauma

So he's looking to get his money back

So they talked a little bit about it and it was decided that they were going to sell Donald's body and recoup hair's losses

But they are how he saw it. Didn't they already call the people to come pick him up?

Well, so this is what ended up happening because when I read that too, I was like, what did you tell those people that came?

Yeah, exactly. They were just coming to drop off the coffin

They hadn't even arranged yet for the parish to bury him. Okay, these authorities were coming to bring the coffin

Gotcha. Gotcha. So they figured they could recoup hair's losses

Get this whole thing taken care of get them out of the house

Get a new person in there

There you go

And they said Burke was the one that was going to do the negotiating for the price and two days later when the coffin was delivered

Burke and Hare stood by they watched as the deliveryman loaded the body into the coffin nailed it shut

Then they left and it was going to be picked up by whoever was going to transfer it to the cemetery

But as soon as those people were out of sight

Burke and Hare pried open the lid removed Donald's body. They hid it in a nearby bed and

They stuffed things in the casket

That would make it heavier mimic the weight of a human being. Oh my god

Exactly. I think they used Tanner's bark that they collected from the backyard

Then they resealed it and then they had it picked up to be interred at the west church yard

Shit. So it was a filled casket of something else that was interred. Oh my god

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

So with the first part of the plan
Success in their eyes Burke and Hare next set about finding a buyer for Donald's body
So they first stopped at the surgical college and they asked a student where they could find Dr.
Monroe
Who they assumed they would want to see for selling a body. He was like the head guy, right?
Right. So the student gave them directions to Monroe's home
But through a series of like weird really weird mistakes and coincidences
They instead found themselves at another doctor's home. It was an intentional. Okay. This doctor
was Dr. Robert Knox
Who was I don't know if you remember him from the beginning. Yeah, we talked about right
I thought you said his name. He was from the top of the episode
He was a private anatomy teacher who had the most students and they used the most bodies in the
city
Okay, so they just happened to come across this guy when they were looking for another doctor
Right, and they've come across the doctor who needs the most bodies that they can get. I see so
whether or not
Things would have been different if they had come to Monroe's door
Or some other teacher that had some more
squirrels
We don't know right maybe honestly
I think most doctors at the time would have taken this body. They were desperate just because of the
way shit was
But who knows things could have been different
We'll never know if they were turned away and they couldn't find anything. They didn't get paid for
it
I think they would have ended up murdering people
For some other reason right later down the line because I don't think these are good men
So I think it would have gone down that road differently, but I think it could have been a different
story. Okay, but
Whatever Knox was desperate for bodies. So he was thrilled by this offer. Yeah, so he gave the men
10 shillings for Donald's corpse
This one transaction was the thing that's set into motion
The awful chain of events that was going to happen after this the deaths of at least 16 people
16 in one of the worst crime sprees in Scottish history
Wow
So until this point Birkenhair's only crime and this is what I was talking about before if they
committed one at all
In the eyes of the time was unlawful
Disinterment
Okay, because they had they hadn't killed him right they hadn't done any that's all they had died.
Yeah
However, they hadn't actually exhumed the man's body. They only sold his corpse
So it's unclear whether there was even a crime here at all
Because they didn't just technically nobody had really done this. He was never buried. Yeah

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Unlawful disinterment was digging up a body grave robbing
Right man was never about buried because nobody thought they would have to make another law of
like hey if you know
Yeah, like so there's like a loopy hole here that I think they were banking on
But technically I wonder if they could have been charged with disinterment because he was in the
coffin
And they took him out of his coffin. That's what I wondered. Yeah, I wondered if maybe who knows I
couldn't I didn't find
What the specific language of the um crime would be sure
But I wonder if that's a that's a very good point because I wonder if them prying open that coffin
would have counted
Even though he was only in there for a moment
You're disintering him and you are yeah, you know like technically so I I guess that would be like
how a jury would see it
Yeah, so it's like you can't you can look at this as like
All right, they haven't murdered anyone yet, but then you also look at it and go well, maybe you did
commit a crime here
Yeah, you disturbed about definitely committed an ethical crime, but like a technical crime like a
crime perhaps. Yeah, but either way
the
What would be looked at at the time
As a pretty petty crime that they had just committed like somebody died naturally in their home
They owed these people a debt that they didn't pay
They were put in a coffin these people just took them out of the coffin and sold them for that debt
Yeah at the time that would be like wow that was fucked up, but like that's really all that would
happen
So that being such in the in the eyes of the time a petty crime
Makes it really surprising how brutal and quick they escalated from that
So they probably like you were just saying like you were like oh, I think they would have done it
anyway
I think you're right because it's like
You don't just go from that to this what they end up doing. Oh, no
It's just it's one thing to sell the body of a man who dies by natural causes again
Fucked up with the death and saddling you with getting rid of the body at the time
It's quite another thing to
Systematically seek out a particular type of victim and murder them purely to be paid, right?
That is a very different series of crime
Yeah, that's your so it's a little bit like a hitman and I think that point
Yeah, and I think that's why it's so shocking the crimes of brick and hair because it is such a
a
Like they went so quickly and just really brutality
um
And to sell a body outside of proper channels well in poor taste is
Again entirely understandable given the impoverished circumstances of scotland's immigrant

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

working class at the time

but

That next step would never be murder for most of these people like most of these people that would be the end of it

It would be tough

You're gonna have trouble sleeping at night with what you did, but you didn't murder anybody

Yeah, but that's why that's why this also doesn't make sense

I'm like there's got to be more in here that we don't know about

And people do think there are more murders that we don't know about from them

Really that maybe aren't even tied to this medical industry that like because it really there's not a lot of sense here for this jump

Well, and I wonder too if there's murders that they couldn't have used the bodies because they had to be more pristine

Exactly, I wonder there's got to be more in right now when it comes to identifying the first victim of berkin hair

There is a little bit of a discrepancy with their confessions

But you just work with what you have because this was a long time ago

According to berk the first victim of their scheme was abigail simpson. She was a minor hawker

Which is like a like they would hawk things, you know what I mean like selling. Oh, oh, oh, I see

Like did you say throw? Yeah, like hawk a loogie. Just hawk and things

Um, but she was a minor hawker from the nearby village of gilmerton who stopped at the boarding house for an evening

In hair's confession. He identifies the first victim as a man named joseph

So joseph was a miller who was also staying at the boarding house at the time and was very ill with a fever

It's

So they both died

So it's like whether they were first or not. Well, they probably killed so many people that that that's why there's a discrepancy

And we kind of go with hair's confession here because hair's confession was the most consistent and unchanging

Berks would kind of jump around a little bit

It's generally generally believed that hair's version of events is probably the most accurate

It also makes more sense that they went from the first

crime of somebody dying naturally and them just selling the body

To maybe killing someone who was ill already and dying. Yeah, it does make more sense

If we want to make any sense out of it, but either way it's fucked

But i'm just trying to make some sense of the escalation here. Yeah

Now it was in late january or early february 1828 just a month or two after having sold the body of pensioner donald's

That joseph the miller became very ill with a fever that i think made him stay in bed. He couldn't get out of bed

He was unable to speak. He was like delusional

Oh god

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

And fearful of having a man so very close to death in their home
Laird, so um the the other owner of the boarding house
She was eager to get rid of this man as soon as possible
Yeah, and she had no idea how to go about doing it. She she wasn't saying and like let's kill him
She was just like we gotta get him out of here because I don't want him to die in my boarding house
Which is god. That is the like mentality and brutality and callousness of the time. No, it's true. It's
get it
I keep saying it's giving it reminds me a lot of the jack the ripper when you hear like you can't die in
my boarding house
You know like it wasn't even it's foreign to us
But at the time that was it was desperation. There was such a lack of empathy
There was and it was it was a lack of empathy that was beaten into people
Like this it wasn't a lack of empathy that there was a bunch of you know, like yeah, exactly
It was like no, this was like
beaten into people who just were treated like
Bucking scum twas as harry would say a sign of the times. It truly was a sign of the times, but
Sensing so this so this was happening. Laird is a little like what do we do here?
Yeah, sensing another opportunity to make a quick buck
Buck burkin hair began discussing the best ways to get rid of this man. Woof
Ultimately, they decided they should suffocate him. Oh
Yes, scottish historians or walter scott suggested that
rather than
a giant like
Crazy olympic leap from opportunistic body snatcher to cold's blooded killer
This killing
Might be that like I said that like line in between. Yep the gray area sent them into that
whole thing like the really dark area
Because they would frame it as a mercy killing right and an act to protect the
The reputation of hare and lairds boarding house because you know on people dying in your
boarding house
Right people are gonna hear about it, right?
That's how they framed it and that's how they were kind of taking it as that like little transition
period between
Being a totally just shitty grave robber and being a fucking blooded killer
cold-blooded killer
So whatever the case it was here that berks preferred method of killing was established
He placed his hand over joseph's mouth and nose and he instructed hare to lay across
The man's chest to prevent flailing and to make it harder for him to breathe wow and that's how they
would do it
Like hand over mouth and nose the other one would lay on the chest
So it was a very brutal way of killing someone very scary and terrifying and awful for the person that
was being killed
Yeah
Now before the evolution of modern forensics

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

This murder method which would become known later as birking. Oh, I don't like that at all
Yeah, it was very ideal for what they needed to do because it wasn't leaving anything right and there
was an again without the
Modern forensics we have that somebody could tell when somebody is suffocated right right you
couldn't tell back then
One hand over the nose and mouth or sometimes they would force the jaw shut
It was very difficult if not impossible for the victim to draw any breath that way
And then the weight of the second man on the victim's chest
Prevented the diaphragm and lungs from expanding
Um, so it was very fast
It was effective for what they were trying to do and there were no visible signs of trauma
That would affect the price that Nox was going to offer
Is there particular hemorrhaging when you get suffocated? Yeah, but they just didn't know what that
was
They didn't know what that was that was not a very common thing that they would be like. Oh, you
suffocated this person
Um, this technique was used in the murder of Abigail Simpson very shortly after this or what we
believe was shortly after this
According to Burke's confession Abigail Simpson had arrived at the boarding house on February
11th and
Quote was decoyed in by hair and his wife
The three spent the evening drinking and after several drinks
Um, uh, Simpson began talking about how difficult it had been to support her daughter as a single
mother. Oh god
That's what makes this even worse to me is like she literally brought that force to you
Well in like you spent hours drinking with her and got to know her
Yeah, like then did whatever you did and got to know that she was talking about how hard her life
was how she had a child
That's she was raising that child by herself. Like you're an asshole. No, you're just gonna like orphan
a baby
Yeah, so at some point hair told Abigail that he was a single man
And suggested that he would marry her and provide financial support. Yeah, right
Which convinced her to stay the night at least
The next day Abigail was violently ill and was vomiting from drinking the night before
So hair gave her quote some porter and whiskey
Which caused her to become so intoxicated that she passed out in the bed in the back room
Do you think that they were doing anything to her drinks beforehand? I could see that for sure
But there's no indication of it. Like no likes, you know
Official indication, but I could see that happening for sure. Yeah
Um, but she passed out on that bed in the back room the one that overlooks the pigs die
And once she'd passed out Burke entered the room and then he laid across her legs and feet
While hair covered her nose and mouth with his hand until she suffocated
It was so scary when the sun had gone down and it was darker outside
They carried her body to Nox's dissecting room where he paid them 10 ceilings for the body

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

And remember Nox isn't asking where they're getting these bodies from see that's the problem because it's you're turning a blind eye
Yeah, like sure are the blindest of us and there's a point which I believe we're probably gonna get to in part two
Where there's one that you're like you turned a real blind eye on that one. Oh, yeah
Yeah, so the pair's third victim, uh, which Burke mentioned in his confession
He called him simply an Englishman, a nadir of Cheshire
Uh, he so not even a name
Just an Englishman. Yeah, he was killed under circumstances that were pretty similar to Joseph the Miller
So the man was described as being 40 years old
Um, and he used to sell spunks in Edinburgh. He's got spunk
What we could see is that spunks are like some kind of like a woody tinder. Okay
I don't know why it's called spunks, but at the time that he met Burke and Hare. He was unemployed
And he'd come to the boarding house
And when he had come to the boarding house, he appeared to be ill. He was suffering from jaundice.
They believe
Um, just like the others the man was taken to the private back room near the pig's die
He was smothered and then the body was removed once it got dark that night taken to Nox
He paid him out 10 shillings. It didn't ask any questions
Now if there was any kind of emotional conflict over the murders of these three
The first three victims neither Burke nor Hare seems to have indicated any kind of like
You know emotional turmoil, guilt
Any kind of remorse so they probably would have murdered even if it weren't for the money
They seemed like they were totally they just went about their lives. So nothing was affecting them
They didn't seem off to people around them. Like, you know, how you'll hear that sometimes like, I don't know. We seemed off
Yeah, you know, he didn't none of them seemed off and the people that were around these schemes meaning the two women in the boarding house specifically layered
They didn't seem like they were really
Asking questions either. Oh, I don't like that at all. Yeah
And what would happen was Burke would explain to Dr. Knox that the men had come across these bodies
either through a relative or some kind of close, you know
Relative a personal friend or some kind of acquaintance. There's always
Close to them, but not close to them far enough away where it wasn't weird
Yeah, it was always like that arms length like I know this person who knows this person
And but and obviously that's a very flimsy explanation. Like he like Knox is like, oh, yeah, you got another one and they're like, oh, yeah
Like my cousin's brother's friend, you know, he died and then why not? He said it was fine
And Knox is just like, okay
Like I don't need to ask anything else. That's like maybe ask like two questions at least and then

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

wildly

In at least one of the murders Abigail Simpson

Margaret Laird is implicated in that crime. She was drinking with them. She knew what was going on

She was in the house when it happened like

She was at the very least to an active participant in luring Abigail into the house

That's what I was going to ask. I had a feeling at some point. She was going to be involved in this all and

um author of the anatomy murders the book another book about this case, which will like um, we'll put them in the sources

Lisa Rosner, she said the earnings for each body were split three ways

Um with hair getting six Burke getting four and Laird getting one

So she was an active participant

weird

and and active in the sense like she got one

shilling because

She was luring or getting them drunk and turning a blind eye not actively like physically murdering someone

But she was an accessory. Yeah

Scammers are best known for living the high life

Globetrotting on private jets dining at five-star restaurants and driving six figure sports cars

That is until their house of cards collapses and they're forced to trade it all in for handcuffs and an orange jumpsuit

Scamfluencers is a podcast from Wondery hosted by Sarah Hagi and Sachi Cole that tells the

Unbelievable true stories behind some of the world's most infamous scams swindlers and con artists

Scamfluencers has covered jaw-dropping scandals from Ponzi schemes to a fake Saudi prince

To a sexual predator masquerading as a wholesome yoga guru

These scammers cost their victims hundreds of millions of dollars and immeasurable emotional anguish

So how does our culture allow them to thrive?

Each story on scamfluencers will take you along the twists and turns the impact on victims

And what's left when the facade falls away? Follow scamfluencers wherever you get your podcasts

You can listen ad-free on the amazon music or Wondery app

So Burke and mcdougal who is Burke's lady yep, she's the other piece of this four person puzzle

Mm-hmm Burke maintained until his death that mcdougal knew nothing of these murders

Well, you don't really hear much about her other than nope

He married her and that's why she was never really

And she wasn't included in the split either

Like that was split three ways. It wasn't split four and she would have been in it if she was part of it

And she wasn't so interesting. That's interesting or

Did hair get more because and like

Like like she she was cut into his like his six he got the most were part of her earnings earnings

It absolutely could have been the case because it's like how because hair is coming home with all this money

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

And you're not wondering where it's coming from. Well, that's the thing. I don't think she had a physical part in it
I don't even think she had really the physical part that laird did
But she had to know something was a rye like he's getting money somewhere like you said exactly
She's got to be asking where's this coming from right and who knows maybe he again these people are good liars
Like he could have said anything. Oh, I did so extra work at the boarding house
These guys are shit bags. So it's like, you know, you're with a shit bag. You know, he's not getting money
via
Wholesome means like come on like you gotta know I'm sure you don't know that this is what's going on
But then at the same time you're in the boarding house
True. You're not seeing anything. I don't know. Yeah, maybe she just kept quiet
But he maintained Burke was very clear till his death said she knew nothing about it
Did not participate in it had nothing to do with it jam or hair, right?
Yeah, sorry. Yeah
But for the most part Burke and hair chose their victims
Like most serial killers choose their victims. They were typically transients
So it was like one of those things and and honestly marginalized people they would pick
So it was like the less dead
Fewer social connect connections people that weren't going to be in their opinion missed, right?
Um, there are however a few exceptions to this
method that they went with
Their fourth victim Mary Patterson
Was definitely going to be missed. She was known by a lot of people in town by face and name
According to her landlady Mary quote much
Was quote much given to drink and had even been jailed
For at least 10 days the previous year for being drunk disorderly and creating a crowd
Oh, which meant she was also known to police which is another reason to not
Pick this person see it now
This is where I wonder if they were escalating and they wanted some more excitement out of it
That's the thing like this wasn't just financially profitable, but they wanted a little more right now on
the evening of April 8th
So Mary went out to a public house with her friend and roommate Janet Brown
The two of them ran into William Burke
So he was apparently liking the two ladies and he ordered a bottle of whiskey and invited them to
join him at his table
Because he's really good guys. Yeah, totally during the trial Janet Brown the friend said that Burke's
advances made her uncomfortable
And she was actually very reluctant to join him
But Mary was quote always a forward fearless disposition and had no reservations
So they stayed there. They drank with him all night. The following morning Burke took both women
to the nearby home of his brother

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Constantine. Mm-hmm. There they had a big breakfast. They drank two more bottles of whiskey
Shit
And after that Mary passed out and she was moved to a small bed while Burke and hair went out to
get more food and more alcohol
Okay
Several hours later the scene was discovered by Helen McDougal
Mm-hmm. She was
Pissed to find Burke hanging out with two women who he was clearly like
Wooing. Yeah, and so they began arguing the couple. Okay
And during this it got violent and during this whole thing Burke hit her hard enough to open a huge
gash on her forehead
Oh my god
Yeah, like pieces of absolute shit
And Janet Brown the friend of Mary would later tell the court that she was quote much alarmed by
their proceedings
And tried to wake her friend Mary so they could get the hell out of there. Yeah
But Burke ushered her out the door before she could wake up her friend. What the fuck?
So even though he wouldn't let her go wake her friend
She was like, okay. Well, I'm gonna come back and I'm gonna get her later. Yeah
I'm gonna get her and he said returned within a half an hour to get her
Now brown is gone. Janet Brown. She's out of the house and McDougal is sitting in the adjacent
room
Um, remember McDougal supposedly
Doesn't know anything about this. She's turning a blind eye. Okay, and Burke and Herr decided to
employ their usual method of suffocation
And they killed Mary Patterson
So when Janet Brown came back a half an hour later to remember this isn't even the boarding house.
This is Constantine's house
This is the brother
They she comes back a little while later and she's told that Mary had gone out to town with Burke
and it was unknown when they would return
Okay, so she was like, um, I don't know about that. So she came back to the house again several
hours later
But this time she was told that Mary and Burke had never returned
What okay
So Janet Brown was like, um, I'm gonna come back again
So she returned back later and even reported Mary's disappearance to the police
But because of their low social status and having a reputation of being heavy drinkers and you know
other
unsavory in the time behaviors
The report wasn't taken seriously at all and it was never investigated
Good, so they just didn't investigate it. We're like, well, that's probably fun
That's really shitty. Now four or five hours after killing Mary Patterson
The two men loaded her body into a large tea crate and they carried it over to Knox's dissection

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

room

When they got there with the body one of Knox's assistants

recognized Mary from town

And asked about how they'd come into possession of her body, right?

To which Burke replied that he'd purchased it from an old woman at the back of cannon gate

So the student at Dr. Knox's school were like

What the fuck but they were also so taken with Mary's beauty

They said that she was quote so handsome a figure and well-shaped in body and limbs

That the professor called in a local painter to create a portrait of her

Instead of inquiring further

As to how this man

These two men are saying they bought

This woman's body from a woman behind somewhere. They're like

Yeah, yeah, that probably checks out. She's so hot though

We should get a painter in here and we should get a fucking portrait taken of her like wow

Uh, what oh and what's crazy is before he painted her the painter asked Burke to cut off the woman's hair

To like cut off some of the hair gave him a pair of scissors to do it

And before leaving Knox gave Burke eight shillings and allowed him to keep the two and a half shillings that were found

Clutched in Mary's hand when she arrived. I have to go at this point in time. Yep. I actually have to leave. Yep

So the murder of Mary Patterson was definitely a large departure from Burke and Hare's pattern. Yeah

Not only was the woman known to tons of people in town and they actually she was recognized immediately

But other unlike other victims he'd been seen socializing with her at a public house for hours

Yeah, like even gone so far as to seduce her and go back to his brother's house with her

Like that's a lot of like brazen. Yeah, a lot of a lot of eyes on you and the surprisingly

Limited details of the murder that basically were only provided by Burke's confession

Um, they it suggests that Burke kind of felt

differently about this killing than he did to others because the way he described this one was different

The amount of time he spent with the victim was different people are like what the fuck happened there like it's a that's a weird departure

And the you know the weird intimacy that were shared was shared between Burke and Patterson put the scheme and

Both of their freedom at risk to be honest like Burke really put them

In big time really bad position here one might call it a pickle a very big pickle

They again, they had been seen multiple places by multiple people countless people

And the last well known she was well known people know her by name and face and the last place she was seen alive

Is at Constantine Burke's home?

right

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

Like Burke's own brother that how that doesn't
The fact that they weren't arrested
really can only be explained by really bad policing and
A complete disinterest in the safety and welfare of the lower social classes here
Totally because even her friend knows the last two people she was seen with them. They're like, yes,
and we're telling the authorities
Sorry, yes, they were just like, yeah, I don't know. She's gone like that sucks to suck. I guess like
what the fuck
So given the inconsistencies in their confessions and the namelessness of most of their victims
It's pretty impossible to create like a really accurate chronology chronological chronological order
Of the murders committed between april and october 1828
Instead you can you can like group them together to kind of form a an approximate picture
I would say of when the really big things happened
Burke's friendliness with mary paterson had caused a number of
Minor problems for the pair who whether they knew it or not made the decision to return to the
more
Convenient and less familiar victims. I don't know if that was a conscious effort
Like they were like, we can't do that again or they just did it because they were like, well, that was a
headache
Right and just like didn't think about it
But either way they went back to the beginning where it was like people they didn't think we're
gonna be missed very well
Now the first of these victims, unfortunately was elizabeth haldane
Who showed up at hair's boarding house sometime in early spring of 1828?
Uh, he knew nothing more about her than her name, but he described her as quote a stout old
woman
She had but one tooth in her mouth and that was a very large one in the front. Oh, that's how he
described her
That's fucked now berk found the woman sleeping off drink in a pile of straw in the stable
That's so sad and retrieved more alcohol to give to her
Once she was sufficiently drunk and very unstable and able to take care of herself
They suffocated her with the usual manner and left her in the barn until the following day
And that's when they took her body to nox
A few months later elizabeth haldane's daughter
Margaret was also murdered by berk
What and was murdered by berk alone and did they did he know that there was a connection there?
So that's the thing. We're not really sure so she was
Briefly staying at the boarding house
And this murder is one that you can read a lot about and it gets distorted a lot through a lot of
fictional accounts for the murder
um
A lot of them portray her as like this daughter searching for her mother
And then the woman's killers get the jump on her before she can find them out like this really like
Intensified, you know detective noir kind of thing. Yes

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

In reality berk described marbet as someone quote of idle habits and much given to drinking
And it's really likely that they met at a public house or just somewhere else. Okay
He enticed her back to the boarding house with drink. So just a terrible one. She passed out laid
berk laid her face down on the bed and pressed her face until the bed until she suffocated
Jesus
And it really does seem like purely coincidence that she had been killed by the same killers who
killed her mother. That is
So beyond bizarre. It really is and tragic
It's so sad
Now around the same time of margaret haldane's murder berk had gone into town looking for
another victim
And that's there that he made friends with a frail elderly man who he believed was the perfect fit for
the next victim
But just as berk was about to invite the man back to the boarding house
He spotted what he would describe to police as quote an old woman and a dumb boy her grandson
from glasgow
Oh
Through conversation he learned that the woman and child were irish and had walked from glasgow
to ademberra
They were looking for shelter along the road like um during the night
Yeah, and the woman was not from or this area and was completely unfamiliar with edinburgh. She's
lost
And so this made them ideal victims to him because no one edinburgh doesn't know her either
Exactly
So the elderly man with who berk was talking
He just kind of abandoned that whole thing. He was like well, you were gonna be next which i can't
imagine. Wow that man
Someone was with him. Yeah, but he invited the woman and boy back to the lodging house
Oh
Now by most accounts the woman had been traveling to edinburgh to visit friends
And was told by berk that her friends resided at the boarding house of his friend william berk
Um, or excuse me. Uh, william here once they'd reached the boarding house and they settled in berk
brought out the bottle of liquor
which
Immediately they got drunk the woman retired to bed for the evening and according to george
mcgregor the author the two killers
Snuck into the room quote at the dead hour of the night and she was murdered by the human ghouls
While berk and hair were murdering the old woman
Her grandson was in an adjoining room with laird and mcdougal who were attempting to soothe his
agitation
over his grandmother's absence
mcdougal was there uh-huh
Unsure of what to do the men decided they needed to get rid of him as well
So they suffocated him as well and loaded both bodies into an old herring barrel and then berk was

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

quick to note

That the bar that the barrel was quote perfectly dry. There was no brine in it

Oh, just in case you were worried about that

So that was a briny barrel. I would have been pissed. I mean i'm pissed either way like hollow but

So that implicates mcdougal now too

So goodbye. Goodbye. He later is sitting there going she has nothing to do with it. She didn't know anything

So what did she never she never said like hey, what happened to that little boy that I was fucking calming down while you murdered his grandma in the next room?

Exactly, like this is just her. Yep. That's how I feel

Now later that morning the two men tried to transport the barrel to noxus dissection room by horse and cart

But after a few miles the horse refused to go any further because the horse was like you guys are assholes and i'm not doing this

Yeah, the horse was like i'm not being implicated in this

So I guess they got a porter's cart from a nearby shop and pushed it the rest of the way

They got to noxus berk carried the barrel the remaining distance to the dissection room

The students struggled to get the bodies out of the barrel because they were so stiff and cold

And as a result nox paid them a slightly reduced rate. Nice of 16 shillings

Now according to berk the pair shot the horse on their return to the boarding house because it wouldn't walk any further

I did not need to know that so they're

Like the worst kind of people soulless women children elderly

They don't give a fuck. There's no there's no line with them

And shortly after the murder of this woman and her grandson berk and hare murdered a cindergatherer that berk thought

Maybe went by the name effie. Maybe possibly who knows

During the spring and summer months most laborers left the city to work

In the farms and fields that surround the city and this kind of limited berk and hares victim pool during that time because laborers are gone

So according to lisa rosner the author effie was a hawker who would occasionally sell odds and ends door to door

And she was actually known to berk

Like berk knew her

And because she had sold like bits of leather to him

I think for you says like um in his cobbling business

That's crazy and despite being known to both the killers and many people in town as well

The pair enticed effie into the barn with alcohol

And they said you can rest in the barn as well

And once she had fallen asleep they quote laid a cloth over her

And suffocated her as they did the others and then they transported her to noxus dissection room where they were paid 10 shillings for the body

Oh my god, and that is where we're going to end for part one of berk and hare

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 447: Burke & Hare Part 1

uh
Good when we return
We are going to talk about the final
Murders things are going to go awry for the two of them
We're going to talk about how they were caught and we're going to talk about what happened to
them
I'm excited
Yeah, it's I'm excited to talk about what happens to them like and when they get caught in sentenced
to prison
Because I'm like you need to be caught at this point and again like thinking about like, um at the
very least two
people but most likely a group of people that are
willing to do this kind of shit and to the most vulnerable people to the most vulnerable
people and like two
Just yucky scary terrible couples. Oh, it always freaks me out when couples. Yeah, I don't like it.
Yeah, so this is
This is quite a tale. Oh, yoy yoy and a real sign of the times for real
But that is part one of berk and hare
Well, thanks for listening to that guys. Yeah, hope you keep listening and we hope you keep it
Weird but not this weird because that's too weird. No, it's not that time anymore guys. Don't go gray
robin. It's not that time
You
Hey prime members, you can listen to morbid early and ad free on amazon music
Download the amazon music app today
Or you can listen ad free with wondery plus an apple podcast before you go
Tell us about yourself by completing a short survey at wondery.com/survey