

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 451: The Legend of Lavinia Fisher with RedHanded

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This is Justin from The Generation Y, and we're doing a four-part series unraveling the story of Khalif Browder, a young boy falsely accused of stealing a backpack and held at Rikers Island for three years without trial.

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Hey, this was a really exciting episode, and I think you guys are really gonna dig it.

We just wanted to put something out really quick.

At the end of the episode, we say that you should head over to Redhanded's Feed to hear an episode with us joining them for an amazing, witchy, awesome British story.

And you should.

You still should do that.

But just know that their part of the episode is going to come out next week.

So if you're looking for it right away, it won't be there, but it's going to be there next week.

So if you just don't want anyone being confused, go check it out when it's up there.

And we hope you dig this episode.

We love Redhanded.

Hey, weirdos, I'm Ash.

And I'm Alaina.

And I'm Saruti.

And I'm Hanna.

And this is Morbid, but it's super duper special because we have our friends from Redhanded here today.

We're so excited.

We're so excited.

We're in, well, obviously Boston, but we're on tour at the moment and the amount of times I've like gone out on stage and how I'll start the shows, but like in Cirta City, what's happening?

Sometimes I'm like, is it Dallas or is it Houston?

Honestly, this morning, I feel like we're here.

Yeah.

We only have one show left.

We've got New York tomorrow.

And then we're done.

Yeah.

Come on.

We're done.

I would do this for the rest of my life like so happily.

Yeah.

I love the road.

Saru, not so much.

No.

No, no, no.

No.

Getting my comfy pants.

No.

I'm like, look, we've been on the road for 27 days and I'm like, that's great.

Love meeting everybody, excellent cities, having the best time.

But I'm also like, I'd quite like to go back to my bed, to my shower and cook myself a meal in my own kitchen.

Oh yeah.

I'd like to give it to me in some sort of plastic carton in my bedroom.

I'm such a homebody.

I was going to say, we both are.

Oh my God, do you want to hear the biggest tragedy in the world?

So before the show yesterday, I ordered myself a very delicious sandwich and it was so delicious that I was like, I'm actually too stressed to enjoy this right now.

So I only ate a bit of it and I was like, I'm going to take it back to the hotel and

I'm going to eat it later.

You forgot it.

You forgot it.

I left it at the onion.

No.

No.

So I'm running on cheez-its right now.

Oh no.

That's terrible.

Well, Mikey's on his way with a delicious spread.

Okay.

So once you're done with this recording, we can take a break and we'll have a little spread.

I cannot wait.

I'm so pumped.

I have had this morning four pieces of yoghurt covered raisins.

Oh no.

Four individual yoghurt covered raisins.

No.

I had like three bites of my kid's leftover like waffle that she had already taken like a hundred bites of, but I just quickly was like rump rump rump before I left, so that's what I'm running on.

I'm not going to tell you guys what I had for breakfast because I had an awesome breakfast.

So we're like, we're goblins right now and I was just like, I don't know.

I had a full on fed network process here.

I literally did.

You did.

You really did.

She had avocado toast with a lot of garlic and onion on it and I'm going to throw you under the bus.

And I made a little fruit salad.

Yeah.

Yoghurt covered raisins.

Anyone?

I have a thought.

So if you guys hear a strange grumble in the middle of this, it is one of any of our stomachs.

Collectively all of them, maybe, truly.

But we are actually, we're doing a really fun collab because I think we're like playing on the fact that I don't know if you guys noticed, but they're not from here.

It's really hard to tell.

They have awesome access that I could listen to literally all day.

That's why I love your podcast for everything, but your voices are so soothing.

Oh, thank you.

No one back home cares because they all sound like them.

So it's always fun to come here.

See, and we always get the like you have Boston accents, which are not like the, they're not good accents.

They're not beautiful.

So like even people are like, you have some of the worst accents in this country.

I don't think that's true.

I like the Boston accent.

Yesterday we were at the venue and the lovely old security guard, he like walked me back to the hotel.

Oh yeah.

Yeah.

They walked us in.

I was like, that's so sweet.

And he had like a proper like, I am from Boston.

And I'm not going to try to do it because I'm terrible at accents.

That's like my dad's accent.

Oh yeah.

Oh, I love it.

I just wanted to give him a hug.

That's everyone's dad.

Yeah, that's what everybody's Boston dad or grandpa here is a full Boston experience.

I loved it.

I loved it.

Oh yeah.

Everyone knows a sully.

Yeah.

It's true.

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It's all true.

It's all true.

We are a stereotype.

It's 100 percent.

Yeah.

But we figure what we would do is we're kind of, we're going to do like a case.

I've picked a really old case because it's always the most fun I feel like.

I do.

We're excited.

You can get fun with these.

And this is a super like, it has a lot of American.

Yeah.

Nonsense to it.

Okay.

Perfect.

I love American nonsense.

Just nonsense.

And the thing in itself, so we're going to be talking about LaVenia Fisher in the six mile house.

We've never heard of it.

Oh good.

We've never been there before this.

I do.

And this, the cool thing about this is it's got, it's very American in and of itself because it's kind of exaggerated to the point of shenanigans.

I do.

Which I feel like is solidly American in and of itself, just exaggerated to shenanigans.

Sure is.

So the actual, so she's known as America's first serial killer or first female serial killer.

Oh, okay.

But she's not at all.

Oh.

Not even a little.

Spoiler.

Not even be a murderer.

Plot twist.

He's a my favorite type of cases.

Right.

Right.

So this is like, it has urban legend in it and has a lot of like the, the south like before civil war south in it, which is like, so there's that and they, it's got highwaymen in it.

Oh, cool.

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Highway robbery.

I feel like it really fits the bill here.

So this takes place in Charleston, South Carolina, which now is like beautiful and is on Southern charm.

Hell yeah.

I want to go there so badly.

Right.

I want to go there for my batch.

Real great.

But it's a complicated tale and this definitely begs the question, is this really the story of America's first female serial killer?

No.

Or is this a semi-true series of events exaggerated over time into a living urban legend of some story?

Yes.

My idea of it is, is probably exaggerated over time, but certain aspects are true and they're interesting because she was a criminal.

There was that.

So the story of LaVenia Fisher unfolds against the backdrop of the pre-civil war era.

So it's 1815 to 1861-ish.

Long ago.

So like a little bit ago.

Again, in Charleston, South Carolina, it was during a time of huge economic and social upheaval at this moment.

LaVenia was among the wealthiest cities of the British colonies and was a hub of imports and exports and especially in the wake of the American Revolution.

So because of this, it became one of the main entry points for several different trades, but also for enslaved people being forcibly brought into our country.

And because it was close to the ocean, it became a base of operations for merchants in tobacco industries, cotton industry, all the huge industries at the time.

So now at this time, and this is all to tell you why this all occurred.

By the 1810s, the prosperity of Charleston was not as solid as it once was.

It had happened to the other cities around, too, that the Revolution and the War of 1812 had taken a serious financial toll on them.

I don't know why, Siri is deciding to take me.

Hold on.

Siri just popped up and she was like, I don't know what to tell you.

I didn't get that, could you please tell me, how do I get Siri to stop?

It's scary.

Even that?

Oh, okay.

That works.

Sorry.

Sorry, just took this one.

All right.

So this happened in Charleston and the city's leaders worried about a total economic collapse that it was going to be imminent at this time.

Because of this, they feared the city would be, quote, reduced to a city of beggars, vagrants, thieves, and cutthroats.

Wow.

Right?

So Paris.

Yeah, right.

Right.

And they were thinking pirates, pirates are just going to infiltrate into these ports.

And pirates were still a thing, but they weren't the pirates that we're probably picturing, like all high seas adventures and like rum jokes, like that's what I picture as a pirate.

Jack Sparrow.

They were like, scary as fuck.

Like, they were like real.

Like Captain Phillips.

Yeah.

Like scary.

And in the early 19th century, merchant ships definitely still were fearing attacks from pirates who now were not sailing under the Jolly Roger skull and bones flag.

They were sailing under flags of other countries to try to get through.

To make matters worse, in 1819 Charleston was experiencing a big outbreak of yellow fever.

Oh, shit.

And that was requiring every ship that was coming into the city to be quarantined and inspected before even being allowed to dock at the port.

So this was causing tons of delays, tons of complications for merchants, people being sent away, and with the city's port dealing with all of these crazy challenges and delays and the merchants getting angry, the wagon trade remained the most viable way of getting goods anywhere you needed to go in the south.

The good old Oregon Trail.

The Oregon Trail, which the actual game of the Oregon Trail, I don't know if you guys know it.

I've heard of it.

It's where everyone dies of dysentery.

Yes, exactly.

And you can buy oxen and forge a river.

So it's some sort of really old and timey, Wild West Monopoly.

Yeah, pretty much.

It's the computer game, and it was the earliest of all computer games, so it's like that game.

So it's not a board game.

It's kind of screen.

And we used to play it when we were little, and I'm not really sure why.
We thought it was such a cool game to be like, wow, we're on the frontier, we're all dying of dysentery.
If it makes you feel better, guys, when I was a child, instead of playing the Oregon Trail, I was playing Planetary Taxi.
What is that?
Which is an excellent game, I think is what it is.
It was like one of those really old school PC games, probably a bit similar to what you're describing, but you were a taxi driver in space.
Oh, that's epic.
That's way better than Oregon Trail.
And it gets better.
So if you were going to get in to the bank, your potential customers, then they would be like, oh, I always get beaten by Farmer John in the Fattest Pig of the Year contest.
Take me to the planet where my pig will weigh the most, and then you had to figure out which planet had the greatest gravitational pull, and then take him there, and if you got it right, he tipped you.
See, you were learning things.
You were literally just dying from diarrhea.
What is more American than not dying of diarrhea?
Like, wow.
You were traveling space and looking for a planet with the greatest gravitational pull like that.
They were trying to keep that pioneering American spirit alive and well in the next generation.
That is true.
I get it.
You had to fix wagon wheels and shit.
Yeah, you went to a general store.
You were like, I would like some grain.
See?
Yeah.
You can't let those old traditions die out.
We want that to die.
That pioneer spirit.
Yeah, you know?
Let it die of dysentery.
And that was always the thing.
If you didn't die of dysentery, then you would go to the river, and you were like, well, let's all take our lives in our hands, and every once in a while, you'd get across the river, and you were like, Oregon.
Oregon.
Excuse me, they'll yell at us.
Yeah, we got yelled at by the actual game.
Oh my God, do you guys get yelled at for mispronouncing places?

Can you imagine that?

I mean, no, I did not imagine that.

So what is it?

Oregon.

It's Oregon?

Oregon.

But I grew up calling it Oregon Trail.

And I did, too.

And we were referring to Oregon as Oregon when we were little.

I think it's a regional dialect, because it's just like, this is something I think about all the time.

I'm like, there's a difference between mispronouncing and regional dialect.

And saying something in your own accent.

Exactly.

So like, Americans were called Hannah, right?

Like, that's not my name.

My name's Hannah.

I'm not going to correct you.

Oh my God.

I did exactly the same thing, though.

I'm like, is it Hannah?

How is it meant to be said in the Middle Eastern pronunciation, like, Hannah?

Hannah.

Hannah.

Hannah.

Hannah.

Hannah.

Short A.

Hannah.

Guys, we also found out we're having breakdowns, can't we?

But this is the point.

Like, I don't get it.

Like, just say it.

Just have an accent.

That's fine.

At this point, I've just changed my name to Susie Q. Anon, which is my American alias, by the way.

Love, love, love, love.

Susie Q. Anon.

Anon.

But when she gets randomly selected in every airport.

Oh no.

I love it.

Well, that's like, Massachusetts specifically has the most gnarly names for places.

Oh yeah.

Which we grew up just thinking that was normal, but when people try to say the names, they're like, what is that?

Like, Gloucester.

Like, I can't say the name of this state.

It is one of the ongoing jokes on Red Hand.

We can hear you say it.

Massachusetts.

Yeah, that sounds good.

There you go.

There you go.

There we go.

I think I can now see it phonetically as it was spelled out by all of our listeners, and I can visually see it, so I say it that way.

You're like hitting each point.

I love it.

But that's the problem with most of the cities around here.

It's like, phonetically, they make literally no sense.

Like Worcester.

It looks like Worcester.

That's very English, though.

We have a Worcester.

We've got a Gloucester.

We've got a Leicester.

Yes, we do.

We have a Leicester.

We have a Peabody.

Brilliant.

My favorite tweet will always be, what's the hardest thing you've ever had to tell anybody?

And people were like, oh, you know, and I had to call my sister and tell her that our father had passed away.

And somebody just wrote, Worcestershire sauce.

Yup, yup, yup.

Yup, that's been a hot debate on our show, Worcestershire sauce.

Yeah, Worcestershire sauce.

Yeah.

Because that's how you say it.

That's how you say it.

How else would one say it?

Worcester.

Worcestershire.

Worcester.

Prison.

Prison.

Yeah, truly.

That's another very American thing.

We just yell at each other about saying things for no reason.

We just can't let each other say things.

We've been on the receiving end of that time.

Yeah, all right.

That's definitely a thing.

Anytime you put your voice anywhere, people are bound to just scream at you.

You know?

It's all good.

Let's do some more of it.

Yeah, let's keep going.

Let's go.

Yeah, you know?

So let's go back to the 1800s, which was such a fun time in America.

Let's get disinterred.

Yeah, get robbed by a highway man or woman.

Meet a pirate.

Yeah, meet up.

That sounds kind of cool.

Yeah, you know?

If you make it out to tell the tale.

You could like, you could yo-ho, yo-ho with them.

Absolutely.

Yeah.

Absolutely.

That's just why you do.

And I do have a Robin Coke.

You do.

A pirate's life for you.

There you go.

Oh, boy.

Stick a lime in it.

Nice guy.

There you go.

We're all.

So, you know, here we go.

So we're, we're in on the wagon trade now because that's the only way that we can get anywhere.

Otherwise, everything sucks.

You're going to get robbed by a pirate.

You're going to get delayed at port.

You know, everything's going to suck.

But even though it was now keeping Charleston's economy afloat, it wasn't nearly as efficient as ships were.

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For one, horses, they get tired and they need to sleep.

They get disinterred.

They need to eat.

They get disinterred.

They get drowned in a river if you try to forge it too early, I guess.

I don't even know what the reasoning for drowning in the river in the Oregon Trail was.

It was just like.

I think just because.

It was just a crapshoot.

You don't know how to swim.

Yeah.

Yeah, right.

I'm like, who's getting swimming lessons on the Oregon Trail?

Exactly.

You know?

Oh, if you were in the river, you were gone.

Yeah, you're fine.

That was it.

Like no one swam.

There was rapids.

Whoops.

Yeah.

All the wheels went out and you were like, oh, well, there that goes.

But yeah, that's what happened.

So, so horses need to rest.

They need to eat.

And while some traveling merchants had no problems sleeping in their wagon, and they could do that without getting robbed or murdered, the journey was often hundreds of miles and the driver, not to mention any occupants that they had with them, would need to find some kind of shelter at various points along the route, especially for storms, weather, all that good stuff.

This gave rise to quote, stage taverns or inns known just as houses.

Oh, like a public house.

Exactly.

Exactly.

Along the outskirts of major cities where travelers could stop for a night, rest, water their horses, water themselves, you know, a shower.

There you go.

But like the shipping industry, the wagon and stage trade came with a ton of fears.

Not about pirates anymore, but now about being robbed or having an entire wagon or coach be stolen right out from under you.

So in the early decades of the 19th century, Charleston, South Carolina was not so different from the other colonies around.

It was always walking a line between the pre-revolution wilderness of the past and the industrial

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socially complicated society that was going to be on its way in the latter half of the 19th century, but it was ruled by economic opportunity mixed with intense fear of any kind of change.

Sure.

Sure.

So things work great.

It was very unstable at that moment.

So let's get to the legend or urban legend of Lavinia Fisher.

So Lavinia and John Fisher, they were married and had lived much of their lives in or around Charleston.

When they were in their mid to late twenties, the couple operated an inn that was referred to as the Six Mile House, along with what was known, it was on Meeting House Road.

So the name Six Mile House was basically the mile marker that it was on.

Clever.

They would indicate to travelers how far you were from the city.

So other inns had names like five mile house, four mile house.

Imagine that.

You can see where that's going.

Half mile house.

I would want to be like one mile house.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Like we're number one.

That's what I would want to do.

Six is like a.

But these houses offered travelers and merchants a place to stop and rest, get food, water and overnight stay.

And as they traveled in Charleston to sell their goods or as they traveled out, that's where they would stop along this way.

So travelers leaving the city would be as John Ralphio and Parks and Recreation would say.

Flash with cash.

And this made them pretty easy prey.

I had to.

You can never.

You can't let them get around to it.

You don't know.

But this made them very easy prey for highwaymen or in this case, highwaywomen.

So the legend has it that Lavinia would lure and guess with her seductive wiles.

I mean, her name's Lavinia.

She must be kind of hot.

It is a hot girl name.

Right.

Lavinia.

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I'm like, you have to be good looking.

You do.

I feel like she was.

Yeah.

Hopefully.

Not only would she lure them in with her womanly wiles, but then she would double down and cook them a home-cooked meal.

And so would any man's heart, you know.

And then she would sedate them with warm tea.

Oh my God.

I mean, I kind of fancy a man.

But unfortunately that warm tea was poisoned.

There's always a catch.

Yeah.

No one's a 10 out of 10.

Yeah.

You can't do this with both hands.

It's just something's going to happen.

We'll knock off like two points.

Yeah.

She's an 8.

She still sounds great, to be honest.

She's a 10, but she won't poison you.

Take it or leave it, boys.

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Now, some say once their victim was unconscious or asleep, John would sneak into the room, he would rob them, and he would murder them.

But then it's said that he, quote, butchered them and disposed of their bodies in their cellar.

Oh, very bloody benders, thank you, I bring them up actually, in the next paragraph.

But there are some variations in this story, though, another slight variation is that once they were definitely unconscious, LaVinia would open a trap door beneath the victim, and they would drop into the basement, which I like better.

Very sweet talk, yes, exactly.

And that's where they would be ultimately murdered.

And in some versions, they even say that beneath that trap door, LaVinia herself, which I am like, whoa, LaVinia, had positioned spikes at the bottom of a pit, which impaled the victims as they landed.

Now, she should have missed truncheon.

Damn.

I'm saying, that's like the ultimate chokey, don't I?

And they're already dead when they get spiked, so it's just for the fun of it.

Just for the fun of it.

Which is very bloody benders, because we're going to get into them, and they did do that

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shit just for the fun of it.

I wonder if that got tainted, like a little bit of bloody benders got mixed in with this story.

I mean, we do that a lot.

But John and LaVinia were said to have, quote, a great number of skeletons found in the cellar of Six Mile House.

Later it was said that they had a cellar full of human bones.

So it's getting bigger and bigger as we go.

It's like maybe one, and then it's like a whole ass cellar.

I love it.

It starts with a ache, just gets bigger.

It's like, maybe she just, like, dropped people, and it's like, no, she was impaling them on spice under her kitchen.

It's like, duh.

It's just someone telling a story in one of those houses, and they're like, I'm not getting the reaction I need.

Nobody cares.

There was spikes.

Listen up.

It impales right under our feet.

Like that.

I would have done that.

And she was a stone cold hotty.

I mean, her name's LaVinia.

She's going to make a tea.

She's going to cook you dinner, so you choose whether you're coming in.

But like we just mentioned a bunch of times, it is very reminiscent of the bloody benders.

They were, we actually covered the bloody benders a long time.

I'm actually going to redo that one.

Yeah.

That's one of those that I remember doing in our living room, so that was an early one.

We have a few of those.

Yeah.

We know the feeling well.

Yeah.

I just end up being like, whoop.

Going to take that one back and redo that better, because I'm pretty, it's a gnarly story, and I think we could definitely, I think it was only like an hour long episode, maybe, that we did on it.

Yeah, if that.

And I think this could be like several episodes of the bloody benders now, I'm like, what was I doing?

Bloody benders take two.

Yeah, they were an American family of murderers, like an actual family of just straight up

serial killers, like kids and all.

And it's real.

And it's real.

In Kansas.

I've heard of this, but we've never covered it, but it kind of reminds me of like, there's lots of fake stories like that in the UK.

There's the Sawni Bean clan.

Oh, I kind of like that.

That sounds familiar, yeah.

It's Scotland.

They were kind of the inspiration for like, the Hills Have Eyes, all this stuff, so they were like meant to be in Scotland, this family of like cannibalistic, incestuous people living in these caves, like attacking people that walk past them and cannibalising them.

The kids were there, all sorts of grizzly stuff.

If you look it up, it is dark.

And then you realise, actually, it was just anti-Scottish English propaganda.

Yeah.

Are you serious?

Oh no!

It's just these Scottish people living in caves, like they're disgusting over there.

They're like, they are having sex with each other and they will eat you.

It is absolutely true.

Don't look further into it, just listen to what I'm saying.

Avoid the caves.

No, we definitely have a few of those, like, that you know are fake, that are like this whole family of cannibals and you're like, no, but the bloody benders, they were real.

They really did it, and it was in the early 1870s, and they had, it was in Kansas, and they had, which like, it kind of fits, like at that time in Kansas, like at that time like frontier family of just like, we're going to murder people, like everyone was probably mad there in 1870.

But they had like a bed and breakfast, they were quotations, that they would lure people into and then brutally murder them.

And they had a trap door that led into their cellar, and they would position the victims sitting over the trap door, and then I think it was like, it really is reminiscent of it, because the wife would like kind of distract whoever the victim was.

And then the husband, or one of the sons, would come up behind them, slit their throat, or hit them on the head with a hammer, and then boom, they would go under her into the trap door.

Oh, wow.

Wild.

And often they would be robbed of whatever they had on them, that was usually, because they would lure like wealthy people in that were like traveling through.

But sometimes they would just do it for the thrill of it.

Wow.

Like they would not get a wealthy person, and they were like, well, we're just going to get a wealthy person.
Oh look, which is bored.
Yeah.
What else is there to do in Kansas in the 1870s?
Exactly.
Yeah.
It's dusty.
I was literally thinking that.
And that there's tornadoes?
Yeah.
There was a dust bowl?
Yeah.
Was that the dust bowl?
Sure.
Totally.
Dust bowl.
We're educated.
It's a bowl of dust.
I know it.
We know it happened.
But they were real.
They were able to confirm all the deaths.
They were able, like people who did escape the bloody vendors with their lives were able to be like, oh yeah, they tried to hit me in the head with a hammer, and I saw a trap door.
Like they were able to be like, yeah, that's literally how nice.
So this definitely has a little bit of that infused in it, and since it's around the 1800s, it's like, I think maybe it kind of layered on top of each other.
And because Lavinia is a woman, and there was a woman in the bloody vendors, I think they were like, let's have another one of those.
Redo.
We can't just have one.
But in early tellings of this story, John and Lavinia Fisher are described as, quote, pleasing in appearance.
Okay.
He's got a baby.
He's got a baby.
You know John and Lavinia?
Yeah.
They were like, they were in it couple.
For sure.
Yeah.
They are.

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And they knew how to give the weary traveler such a welcome as made him feel the inn was more like a home than a public resort.

Was it the trap door that made it feel homey?

I think it was the spikes that you let go of.

It feels like home except the ambiance of all.

It was the lovely rug over the trap door and the spikes.

But the fishers weren't only praised for their resort, their loveliness, but also for their food, which was apparently described as excellent fare for man and beast.

Wow.

So that's all friendly.

Give it to your dog.

I always want to hear about my cooking whenever my husband's like, this is delicious.

I'm like, what a beast.

Can we get a beast in here?

This isn't enough.

But later, however, the entire area around Six Mile House is described as a haven for, quote, gangs of white desperados.

Who occupied certain houses and infested the roads leading to the city.

White desperado.

I'm just picturing that.

I know.

But it is said that travelers passed these houses with fear and trembling.

Oh no.

Because it was just bad guys.

I hate that.

And the more dreaded than any of the other of these haunts was known as Six Mile House, occupied by John Fisher and LaVinia.

So the legend tells listeners that the robberies and missing travelers went on for more than a year until finally the bandits were located in the neighborhood of Five and Six Mile Houses, then traced to the houses themselves and the situation came to head when a young man, hatless and coatless.

Oh no.

Excuse me.

How are you meant to tell if he's a good guy or a bad guy, doesn't matter how on.

If you are hatless and coatless.

And coatless.

Exactly.

It's quite hot in Charleston though, isn't it?

I know.

It is.

It is.

It's almost as hot as in this room.

So you have changed.

I can feel it.

But that's, and it's like if I saw him hatless and coatless, I'd just be like, well, it's warm.

Yeah, right.

And they were like, you are either a victim of a crime or you are a desperado.

I don't know.

There's nothing in between.

And he was riding into town hatless and coatless.

How dare he?

How dare he?

Right?

How dare he?

And he was frantically seeking the sheriff.

So the man told authorities that he had been attacked.

Oh no.

And that those who had set upon him, he said, were no less persons than the man and woman who kept Six Mile House.

I don't know if you remember, but that is John and Levin.

I know that.

A likely story.

I feel like this is just a cover up because he's turned up drastically underdressed to this town.

Exactly.

And he's like, oh, I was robbed.

I have to explain this.

So the man says he claims that he had seen the fishers on the previous night going through his belongings and he had heard them make mention of having to attend to him the following morning.

So he got out of there, which I think was a little hasty because they do run a bed of breakfast.

So if they were like, we should attend to our guests tomorrow.

He's like, they're going to murder me.

He caught a vibe.

But it's either a really good thing or a really bad thing.

I know.

Maybe he just has a better intuition than I do.

I know.

Trust you got.

They're going to give me a continental breakfast.

It's nice of them.

I know, if there's the promise of breakfast, you're going to stick around.

Yeah, I'm not leaving.

So I'm going to fight through it if there's breakfast involved.

We spent all day yesterday telling people to trust their gut on the episode today.

You're like, I don't know about that, but today I'm like, except if there's breakfast.

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Not continental, though.
That's not good enough.
It's really not.
Cooked breakfast.
Homemade, exactly.
If I can have it like in bed.
Sure, sure, sure.
On a nice tray.
On a tray.
With a trap door under it.
With a trap door.
And you have so spikes as long as I can have like butter, buttermilk pancakes.
Delightful.
Sitting in bed.
Yeah.
Right before you die.
Yeah.
That's all I need.
Yeeted into the trap door.
That's all that I need.
So the sheriff went to Six Mile House that day and he drove the band of robbers out, including John and Lavinia Fisher.
And he left a man on site to ensure that these bandits did not return.
So he was just like, get out of your own house.
And this guy's going to stay and make sure that you don't.
And when they did, the man went for the law again because they came back.
They were like, we're not, you have, you left one guy.
I'm Lavinia and John Fisher.
You left one guy.
We're coming back in.
So he went back to the sheriff again, who at this time finally apprehended the entire gang and confiscated 10 muskets, some pistols, knives, and a large canister of powder from the house.
A large canister of powder.
Was it powdered sugar for pancakes?
No.
That's the question.
I don't think so.
They don't specify.
That was going in the tea.
That was good.
That was going in the tea.
So the fishers were found guilty of highway robbery and they were sentenced to hang.
This escalated so quickly.

It did.

I feel like there was a lot of buildup to this that the sheriff wasn't taking any notice of anything that was going on at Six Mile House and then suddenly they're like, we need to hang them.

Yeah.

Suddenly that's another part of this that is very, especially old timey American, which was just like, hello.

You should die.

Even just being a hangman, a highwayman was a hangable weapon.

In where I went to school, there's like a little, like a tiny little pyramid in the middle of a field and it marks the last highwayman to ever be hanged.

Really?

Oh, that's so interesting.

Listen, how mine stood.

That's so wild.

That's crazy.

The only reason to go down was to smash that, where it was voted Britain's ugliest town.

But there is a very good water park where I splash.

So let's go, guys.

Let's go and see the historical of it all and then go for the aqua.

I just want to see that little pyramid.

It's like this big and it's just in the middle of a field.

Oh my God.

That is so wild.

That is cool.

Those kind of things are always crazy to me.

Like in Salem, we have all those little memorials and they're always like these small little things that are like, this gnarly thing happened here.

Yeah.

And that's all you have?

What?

No, it's true, but we're full of them as you guys must be in Boston because we've been going around and we're like, it's like the first place that feels like really, really historic.

Oh, Boston's historical as fuck.

And I used to work where I used to work in London.

It was like in a really boring part, I used to work near St. Catherine's Dock, but I'd get off the tube and walk to my office and it was passed like, was it Tower of London?

And there's just a sign on my way to work there to be like, this is where Amberlynn was beheaded.

Stop.

And then all these tourists just take the pictures of it and I'm like, I'm just trying to get past with my friends and I'm like, excuse me, but this is where Amberlynn was beheaded.

That is wild.

They also have, I don't know how familiar you are with the cinematic masterpiece, Pocahontas 2.

Actually, you're weirdly pretty familiar.

Her kids love that movie.

So, you know, like when they go to town, they go through Tracers Gate and they're on the little boat.

Tracers Gate is still there, so you just, yeah, so you just walk right past it and it's just the gate on the Thames and it's just a Tracers Gate above it.

Oh my God.

That is wild.

That is wild.

That is wild.

I think you guys should come to London.

I'm not so old.

We'll just take you on a walking tour.

And so on the bucket list, I'm dying.

Come.

We will do this in a hot studio there as well and we'll take you on a walking tour.

Oh, come on.

Let's do it.

We did a five-parter on Jack the Ripper and I was like entrenched in it and I was like,

I have to go.

Come on.

She's dying to go on my travel.

We're both East Londoners as well.

Oh, yes, God, we got to come.

Okay, we'll talk about this.

We got to come.

We're going to do it.

We're going to do it.

I'm solving that case.

Let's go.

I'm telling you, that's my lifelong ambition.

It's one of the royals, right?

It's one of the most mean to bias from ghosts are going to solve it.

It is hot in here.

Oh, God, what have I done?

So yeah, the fishers were found guilty of highway robbery.

They were sentenced to hang.

They sat in their cells for nearly a year, waiting on a pardon for their execution.

And apparently when John was visited by a local priest, he was very contrite.

He wanted his soul to be saved.

But LaVenias, she had no interest in salvation.

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She really only cared about being pardoned.

It never came.

Oh, no.

When the day finally came, John begged his wife to make peace with her God, but she absolutely refused to not one word of religious instruction would she listen.

That's like kind of badass.

Not going to lie.

Especially back then.

I feel like especially back then that was like, yeah, yeah.

Straight up rebellion.

Yeah.

Now, when their execution finally arrived, apparently LaVenía had to be dragged from her cell while she shrieked and raved like, quote, one insane, which I'm like, was she insane or was she just about to be hanged in front of a crowd?

You decide.

I don't know.

I might shriek as well.

Yeah, maybe.

I don't think a lot of us could be like stoic in that moment.

When some say LaVenía and her husband were dressed in white outfits as they made their way to the gallows, like matching white outfits, while other variations insist that LaVenía was wearing her wedding dress.

Oh, no.

No, she wasn't.

No, she was not.

And when she finally reached the gallows, LaVenía blurted out profanities from the gallows, which I think is pretty badass.

And before famously shouting, if you have a message you want to send to hell, give it to me.

Oh, LaVenía.

Which is bad, bitch.

You just want like a guitar riff.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I was like, holy shit.

For real.

She's going on tour after this.

She is.

But some say LaVenía even cheated the hangman at one moment by jumping from the platform before being wrestled back into position just above her own trapdoor and then hanged with John.

So to this day, it's said that LaVenía's ghost taunts the grounds that once held the old city jail where she was held for nearly a year before her execution.

Others say she haunts Charleston's Unitarian Cemetery.

And whatever the case, her spirit is believed to still quote, Rome and haunt the last area

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she knew and where she felt most unsettled in her life.

So that's the story.

But here's the real story of what happened.

She was a nice lady.

LaVenia was a school teacher.

Well, she retired at the age of 30.

At the age of 30?

Yeah, back then, she was like, oh yeah, that's true, that's true.

So not a lot is really known about the Fishers before their arrest in actuality.

But for all intents and purposes, their story begins in the winter of 1819.

In response to the rise in highwaymen robbing, people, you know, that was happening all the damn time, there were lynch mobs that were formed and they were basically the one bringing justice outside of the law to these random highwaymen.

Of course, we know this was often a legit act of terrorism masked as justice.

So frustrated by the ongoing attacks on travelers and merchants on Meeting House Road, on February

16, 1819, a heavily armed mob assembled and rode from Charleston in the direction of Five Mile House.

Oh damn.

They had received word that a gang of thieves who was responsible for a string of highway robberies near Ashley Ferry had holed up at one of the houses and they were determined to smoke them out and bring them to justice.

According to author Bruce Orr, which we will make sure we will reference in the show notes for his book, the mob allegedly had permission from the owners of several small houses in the area to proceed as they saw fit.

Which I don't know if I believe that, I was going to say I doubt that.

They said it was fine if we murdered these people, okay?

They said to do whatever we wanted while we were here.

That house said it was fine if we lit this one on fire, so talk to someone else.

I don't know.

Now among the many obvious problems with mob justice is that lynch mobs tend to lack information and objectivity.

This is a really reasonable lynch mob, actually, and we have really thought out opinions.

We have cited sources of what happened.

Instead, they really only operate on reactionary emotions and just collective outrage.

That will do it.

That's usually the case.

No one's taking a step back and really thinking in these cases.

So in the case of the attacks along Meeting House Road, none of the victims who reported being attacked or robbed could actually identify any of their attackers.

So when the mob arrived at Five Mile House, they had no idea who they were looking for.

They were just going in there being like, I guess we just take everyone in the house.

Good to get swept up before you know what's happening.

It's always good to act first and then go, oops, later.

You don't want to be the last person joining the mob.

Yeah, exactly.

It just looks like you jumped on the bandwagon.

Precisely.

They're working off, though, like mantra of like, you ask for forgiveness, not permission.

They're like, well, just later we'll deal with it.

It's fine.

My favorite kind of people.

Yeah, I'm not asking.

So nevertheless, when they entered the inn, the mob found a small group of individuals assembled inside.

And regardless of whether they were the actual aggressors or robbers, the group was instructed to grab whatever personal belongings they had near them and get the hell out of the house immediately.

Likely pretty confused, startled by the appearance of a giant, violent mob at their house.

The group of Five Mile House protested a little bit and they resisted a little bit because they were like, what the fuck is happening right now?

So the mob was like, OK, and they just lit the building on fire.

Oh, shit.

They were like, we gave you a chance.

Burn to the ground in a very small period of time.

People got out, but they burnt it to the ground with people in it.

Is this one Lavinia's house?

No, this is next to Lavinia's house.

Oh, OK.

Five Mile.

This is down the way.

Oh, wow.

This is Five Mile.

I feel like there's just so much going on in the world right now.

Lots of diet trends are happening, like intermittent fasting, low fat everything.

I'm like, what the heck do I even need anymore?

I don't know.

But guess what?

I do know what to eat because I'm not following along with any of those things.

I'm following along with noom because trends come and go, especially when it comes to health and wellness, but noom is not a fad.

They use psychology, not trends, to help you make intentional and sustainable choices that are aligned with your values and your weight loss goals.

As you know, I'm getting married.

I feel like I want to lose a little weight just to feel better, look better, fit into my genes better.

And I've been using noom for that.

And I've used plenty of things in my life, like plenty of different apps to lose weight.

Noom is actually one that I really trust and believe in because of the psychology of it all.

I've heard so much about myself, the way that I eat, the things that I eat.

And one of those things is that I'm a very restrictive person and I am letting go of that.

Noom is teaching me how to let go of that because they believe, and now I'm actually believing it too.

I'm like, oh my God, it works.

That no food is a bad food.

It's just little portions, you know?

So first time, numbers lose an average of 15 pounds after being active in the program for 16 weeks and 95% of customers say that noom is a good long-term solution.

Noom's approach is grounded in science.

They published 50 peer-reviewed scientific articles describing their methods and effectiveness.

I've read some of those and I'm like, yeah, girl, I get it.

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And check out Noom's first ever book, The Noom Mindset, a deep dive into the psychology of behavior change, available to buy now wherever books are sold.

Hey, weirdos, it's me, Ash, and I want to tell you about a special four-part series from the Generation Y podcast, one of my personal favorites.

Okay, picture this.

It's a cold night in 2010 and a boy is stopped by the police while walking home from a party in the Bronx.

He's only 16.

He's been stopped by the police before, but this time is different.

This is the story of Khalif Browder, a young boy who was falsely accused of stealing a backpack and held without bail at Rikers Island for three years.

He endured regular abuse by prison staff and inmates and was held in solitary confinement for more than 700 consecutive days.

And remember, he was only 16 years old.

It's crazy.

We say innocent until proven guilty, but where do we draw the line between due process and just cruelty?

To hear this four-part series on Khalif's story, check out Generation Y, wherever you get your podcasts.

You can listen ad-free on the Amazon Music or Wondery app.

So the mob was like, well, that worked really well because now the house is gone.

Everybody got a hope about my house right down.

So they were like, all right, so they moved a little further up the road, hoping to dole out some justice to Six Mile House as well.

Here we go.

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So the proprietors of Six Mile House and the visitors of Six Mile House, actually, they actually listened and complied.
You would.
I'm wondering if they saw, like, I don't know, the smoke rising from Five Mile House. Maybe smelled a little something.
Or maybe it was the actual lynch mob that was at their door that they were like, we should leave.
Who can say?
Let's just leave.
Combination platter.
We'll figure.
Yeah, you know.
There you go.
This is smart.
They took context clues.
They put problem solving and they were like, this is going to end badly for us.
We should leave.
Yeah.
So they got out.
Either way, they left.
And to make sure they didn't return, they did that old standby where they just leave one guy standing at the door to keep the entire house out.
The entire lynch mob, too.
Yeah, exactly.
It worked well in the past.
It has, obviously.
So they, and it works for Six Mile House.
So they left a guy named David Ross at Six Mile House and they said, don't let them back in.
I don't know if I trust him.
I don't know about David Ross.
No.
I feel bad for David Ross.
I don't know if I would pick, like, David.
No, I feel like I could overpower David Ross.
I don't know what name I would choose.
I've been thinking about names a lot while we've been talking about this.
I feel like there are hot guy names, hot guy names.
There are, like, strong names.
Yep.
So what's the hottest hot guy name, if it's not John?
I was going to say, because I'm partial to John, because my husband's name, yeah.
So you've got to set this one out.
Andrew, personally.

Andrew's a great name.
You know, I'm a little biased.
I don't even know what drew it all.
I don't know.
I don't know.
I don't know.
I don't know.
I don't know.
Never that.
But I would say hot guy names.
Hot guy names.
I don't know.
Most guys are not that hot.
No.
I don't know.
I don't know.
I've always thought maybe it's because of the little mermaid.
Is his name Eric?
Eric?
Are you kidding?
Eric.
I know.
He's such a prick.
In hindsight.
He's such a prick.
No.
What was...
I work hontuses.
Oh, John.
John.
John.
And then John Roth.
There you go.
She...
I'm a princess and the frog.
Girlie and Naveen.
Naveen.
Naveen is out.
Naveen is out.
Yeah.
Yeah.
You can have that.
I'm going to be General Shang.
Oh, yes.

Oh.

There we go.

It is the conversation.

It is the conversation.

Hottest hot boy named Shang.

Shang.

We've figured it out.

We've cracked the code.

We do.

And actually while we're on tour, people ask us, you know, what are your pre-show rituals?

Our only pre-show ritual, apart from watching 90 Day Fiancé in our dressing rooms, is listening to Mulan, our make-a-man out of you, before we go on stage.

Oh my god.

Red up all hell, yes.

You guys can have it.

That's it.

Yes.

Wow.

Because that'll get you fired up.

Oh, yeah.

We save it for occasions where we need to get especially hyped.

Oh, yeah.

There you go.

Yeah.

That's genius.

My kids love, one of my kids especially, one of my twins is obsessed with Mulan.

Thanks to me.

It is.

Thanks, Naveen.

It's the best one.

It's my favorite movie.

It is so beautiful.

It's my favorite Disney movie.

Loves that song.

And when she was like two, she used to be like, let's get down to business.

Hell yeah.

Let's go.

Let's go.

You get him.

Yeah.

Then it gets like super, like not feminist at all.

I'm like singing it to them.

I'm like, we'll make a man out of you.

Then I'm like, women.

Did they give us daughters?
And like, yeah, they did.
They did give you daughters.
Who gives a fuck what you asked for.
You know how long did she do that while you sing it?
She's fighting it.
She's fighting it.
Tell her how she is.
That's why we love Frances and the Frog in our house too, because it's like, she's the best.
I was like, open another restaurant.
Fuck all of y'all.
I was like, yes.
Hell yeah.
Can you hear anyone?
So yeah, so David Ross.
David is not to me the guy I would leave.
I don't know why.
I know what you mean.
I know what you mean.
Right.
If there was a John around, I'd be like, John, stay over there.
So it's like, are there any doctors here?
Are there any Johns here?
Exactly.
We need a John.
I feel like it's like a, to solid name.
Little solid?
Not Phil, but Phillip.
Phillip.
William.
William.
I would trust a William.
I would trust a little.
Harry.
Harry old timey.
Never trust a Harry.
Never trust a Harry.
We don't trust a Harry anymore.
Okay.
We don't trust a Harry.
We don't trust a Harry.
Except Harry Styles.
Except, oh, always Harry Styles.

Or even him.

Oh no.

No.

I was like, do we trust Harry Styles?

I feel like that's a story for a later time.

After Don't Worry, Darling, I don't know.

What was the name of that?

Jack.

Jack.

So kind of John.

Yeah, don't trust him.

Yeah.

So there's that.

Well, those are names.

Well, they should have left Shang.

Instead, they left David.

And they told him, you let us know if anyone returns.

Which, this was kind of my favorite thing.

Cause it's like, instruct us, like alert us if somebody returns.

And it's like, but they didn't have like a cell phone or a walkie-talkie.

So it's like, jump on your horse and ride like miles into town to be like, hey, they're there.

They came back.

I don't think that's going to help.

But sometime later, David Ross returned to Charleston pretty frantically because he was like, shit, I have to alert you.

He was asking for the sheriff and in his sworn testimony later, Ross said, he was the one that was hatless and coatless.

Not him.

Immediate red flag.

I'm saying he said that shortly after 9pm, a man named William Hayward, one of the men who'd been forced out of six mile house by the mob, he had returned to the inn and he had, quote, cursed him, collared him violently and pushed him out.

How dare he?

So William, but like, how dare he?

Because William's like, this is my fucking house.

Like, get out.

Oh, so dare he?

So he came in and he collared that guy out and he was like, David, get out of here.

I'm coming back in my house.

So he did.

And then he slammed the door in his face.

He was very careful to say that.

That's his door.

He slammed the door in his face.

Yeah.

And David Ross went back into the house, and I love this because he's like, David goes into the house that doesn't belong to him, that he was just thrown out of.

He goes back in and he asks Hayward, Hey, can I get a couple of my things that I had here?

No.

No.

Before I leave, Hayward apparently put his hands into his bosom and said, you damned infernal rascal.

If you let your hand on anything, I will blow your brains out.

I am only going to call people damned infernal rascal.

Rascal.

But you have to touch their bosom as you say it.

No, I don't know about that.

I mean, that's right.

It's the rules.

You have to put your hand into his bosom.

I don't know about all that.

Not just on.

Into.

Into the bosom.

Like how do you become one with someone's bosom in that bosom?

Full send.

I mean, we'll find out when you eventually do it.

I'll let you guys go because you are going to do it.

But after being rebuffed by Hayward a second time, Ross was surprised to find that more of the people from Six Mile House were now returning and were like, we're just going to come back into our house.

Specifically, John and LaVenia Fisher, as well as two other men that Ross didn't recognize. So Ross claimed that at that point, LaVenia Fisher, quote, LaVenia herself, laid violent hands upon him.

She's going to catch these hands.

They're coming for your bosom.

She came for his bosom.

She choked him and then pushed his head through a glass window.

Shit.

LaVenia?

She's got no chill.

That's not fuck around.

She has no chill.

But that's what happens.

Who dare you?

What's that horribly offensive chart that people post on Twitter where they're like, how hot

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she is versus how crazy she is?

LaVenian's a 10.

She's 10 on both.

10, 10.

It's true.

She's going to throw your head through a glass window.

This six mile house gang continued beating Ross with their fists and with loaded whips, which I had no idea what a loaded whip was because a whip, I'm like, what?

I looked it up and apparently loaded whips were shot loaded and it would make them heavier and more dangerous.

So one end of the whip was, it was essentially like putting rocks in a sock and beating someone with it, but with a whip.

Oh my God.

I see.

So it would cause a lot of damage.

I was trying to think of some sort of joke like with loaded potato skins.

But then I just got hungry because I've only had three raisins today.

Oh no.

You said potato skins.

I'm like, should we?

Yeah.

Mediterranean plato.

We want potato skins.

Yeah.

No, I want potato skins.

I do too.

I'm not going to lie.

I'm going to link those later.

Oh, now I'm thinking of food.

I just thought of Taco Bell real quick.

Okay, I'm moving on.

I'm moving on.

Thought about it.

Passing spot.

It was only after they had beaten the crap out of David Ross with their hands and with loaded whips and that Lavinia had choked him and thrown him through a glass window.

It was only after this that he was able to get through that window and just take a run into the woods.

That man was running for his life.

He fucked around and he found out.

But he wasn't even done being fucked around with because he ran into the woods.

He reached the cover of the tree line and they started firing guns at him on the tree line.

And this is the real story.

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Like the other one was like the urban line, this is the real thing.
So he managed to make it back to a main road and was crossing Frighteous Bridge.
I don't know what that is, but I keep thinking of like righteous.
Yeah.
Righteous Bridge.
Apparently it was just outside of proper Charleston.
And that's when he spotted the entire gang pursuing him still.
And Lavinia shouted, you damned infernal rascal, if ever I catch you, I will give you a hundred lashes.
I love her a lot.
Which also makes me think.
I'm like, was Lavinia the one with the loaded whip?
Yes.
It sounds like it.
Yeah.
I mean, maybe Six Mile House is some sort of BDSM dungeon.
What's going on in there?
Not to think Shane's wild.
Right.
That's what the spikes are for.
Yeah.
But just consent involved.
Yeah.
But maybe it is.
Maybe this is all just some really elaborate role play situation between Lavinia and our, what's his name?
The Running Away Man.
Disha.
David.
Disha.
Sorry.
And somebody just saw it all happening.
Yeah.
And it was a really loaded piece about how she was some sort of highway woman, but actually she was just running some sort of innocent BDSM dungeon from Six Mile House.
Instead she was just like a really professional dominatrix.
And she stopped to the plot line.
Hell yeah.
She was like, you didn't say a safe word.
We're going with this.
And he's running away because he wants it to end, but he can't remember the safe word.
The safe word is Shang.
Full circle.
It was a hard one to remember.

You know.

She's just trying to make a man out of him.

I haven't seen that movie.

She's trying to make a man out of him.

Damn it.

So yeah, she also used the damned infernal rascal, which I'm sure is like the asshole of that day.

Yeah.

Like, you know, like everyone was just like, oh, you're such a damned infernal rascal, which doesn't have the same feel of like you're an asshole.

Doesn't pack the same punch.

Yeah.

But yeah, she's going to give him 100 lashes if he doesn't, or if she catches him.

But the group must have kind of given up the chase at some point.

She didn't catch him because Ross managed to make it safely back into Charleston that evening to cry in front of the sheriff and be like, why did you leave me in front of that house?

What a baby.

Meanwhile, it was David.

You left David.

I was like, that was your own doing.

You know, David.

You know, David.

So meanwhile, a merchant by the name of John Peoples, which I love that name, Peoples, he was headed out of the city.

If my thing just went into black, okay, towards Meeting House Road.

And when he reached Six Mile House, John Peoples stopped at the inn.

This was after all of this.

It was around 11 p.m. and he was just going to rest and water his horse.

So you know, as one does.

So once he stopped at the end, he alleged that he and his young companion, who was a young boy, I don't know if it was a son or what they don't say.

They were attacked and robbed by multiple people at Six Mile House.

In his official affidavit, he claims that as he was arguing with his companion over who would get the water bucket for the horses, nine or 10 persons, among them, a tall, stout woman, came out of the same house, armed with clubs, guns, and pistols, and immediately made a violent assault on them.

So according to Peoples, the woman among them was the most vicious of all of them.

That's limiting.

It was active in beating him, cutting him over the head and eyes with a stick.

It's a calm, down-living.

Well, Vidya is...

She needs to talk to someone.

She's like, this is what you paid for.

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She's like, yeah, no, she's like, what?

It's part of the whole thing.

It's a safe word.

But nobody can remember Shang.

But John Peoples and his companion were eventually able to escape the gang and made their way back to the road.

I love that they were just attacked while they were watering their horse and they're like, ah!

And they just, like, run away.

Life was hard back then.

We think we have it back now.

It was tough.

Trying to water your horse these days.

Just stopping at an inn.

But although he wasn't aware of it in that moment, John Peoples was pursued by two of the men in the gang to the road.

He just didn't know it.

And these two men rode up on him and the boy who was with him, and they brandished pistols and demanded that they hand over any money or valuables that they had.

After searching the man and the boy, the bandits took his pocketbook and it contained roughly \$40, which is a pretty good haul back then, and turned back in the direction of Six Mile House.

So meanwhile, John Peoples and this boy raced back to Charleston and immediately reported the attack to authorities.

Although he couldn't positively identify each member of the gang right then and there, John Peoples, quote, had just caused to believe that among them was William Hayward, John Fisher and his wife, LaVinia Fisher, another man named Joseph Roberts and another man named John Andrews.

Lots of Johns, lots of Josephs.

That's what we like to hear.

So author Bruce Orr points out that among the more interesting aspects of the John Peoples affidavit is that the document looks like it was written in the handwriting of a lot of different people.

So that's weird.

That is.

And at various different points in the affidavit, his name is spelled Peoples like P-E-O-P-L-E-S and Peoples P-E-E-P-L-E-S.

I wonder why.

So people think this means one, at least another person, was involved in writing that description of events, but they're not sure why.

But it's also possible when you really think of history and reality in that time, he might have not had an ability to read and write, so they might have had to have somebody documenting his report.

True.

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It's still interesting.

He also notes that the list appears to have been added to Peoples affidavit likely after it had been filed.

And it's a list of the people they think were in Six Mile House.

And that was John Fisher, LaVinia Fisher, William Hayward, Joseph Roberts, William Andrews, Seth Young, which I didn't see a Seth in there.

No, I never saw a Seth coming.

You never saw that coming.

No, it's like when you watch Game of Thrones and you're just like, why is he called Jamie?

Thank you.

You're like, why is he called Rob?

Rob.

It's Rob.

Tyrion.

And Rob.

Tyrion.

Rob.

Cersei.

And Jamie.

Daenerys.

And it's like, no.

Just Rob.

I do love Rob, though.

Yeah.

He's my favorite.

Yeah.

Actually, you know what?

Fuck John.

Fuck John.

Thank you.

I agree.

I don't get enough of that.

I'm a Rob girl.

Yeah.

I mean, little hot-headed.

I can't think about it.

Think about it.

Think about what you're doing, Rob.

We only loved it.

I don't know why.

Such a Rob.

Such a Rob.

Rob being Rob.

The red wedding was like a real dark moment.

It was a dark moment.
You're right.
Let's not upset ourselves again.
Yeah, let's not go there.
That was rough.
When he says mother, oh.
No, no.
Don't go there.
Don't go there.
I just saw it in my head.
And it's the way he says it.
Don't go there.
He's complaining about spoilers.
That shows like 10 years old.
Yeah.
Stop it.
Stop it.
And all I said was he said mother.
Okay.
He did love his mom.
So we got a Seth.
Which is a trick.
Because we got like John, William, Joseph, William, James, John, James.
James, John.
Seth.
Okay.
There he is.
I don't think.
Seth does not show up again.
I don't think.
Poor one out for Seth.
Poor one out for him.
So with sworn affidavits from two victims and witnesses, Sheriff Cleary.
Quickly assembled a huge posse of police officers and vigilantes on February 19th, 1819.
That's when the group headed out to Six Mile House.
And when they arrived at the end, they surrounded the place, demanded everyone surrender immediately.
And that's when they basically were able to search Six Mile House and they found that large storage of weapons and powder.
So that was all true.
So the gang definitely had the means to resist them.
But I don't know why they decided not to.
I don't know if it was they decided it was too big of a posse to overwhelm.
Or John Fisher, there is one set of tails.

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And I kind of believe it because I feel like John Fisher was like a good husband.

Yeah, he's a John.

He's a John.

He's a John.

You know, we love a John.

We do.

And John Fisher apparently said that he opted to surrender rather than risk injury or death to his wife.

Oh, I believe that.

So he did that for Levinia.

Which in the power couple that is John and Levinia, it feels that is right.

It's believable.

Whatever their reason was, they were arrested without a fight and the sheriff successfully did get John and Levinia.

They also got James McElroy.

They did get Seth Young, but I don't know if he ever comes up again and they got somebody James Howard.

So evidence taken from the home and this does come back.

So don't worry.

I'm not just randomly saying it was a large cow hide, but they didn't own any cows.

So they were like, where the hell is this cow?

Yeah, it was like a recent cow hide.

And they were like, what's this about?

So by the time the gang members were being loaded into the wagon, the scene had attracted a big crowd, obviously, because I always love that in these old timey cases where it's like this huge crime scene and all these people are just walking through it.

They're like, whoa, look at that blood.

It's like, ooh, that's nuts.

Wow.

I wish you had just seen Alina act that out.

They're all just taking pieces of skull fragments off the floor and being like, wow, this was great.

Happy Sunday.

Thanks for having us.

Yeah, just walking through it.

So a man named Stephen Lacoste, who was a neighbor of Six Mile House, went in there and he saw this cow hide and he said, motherfuckers, that's my cow.

Oh, no.

And my cow had gone missing.

Oh, no.

This man's stolen this man's cow.

It hasn't killed it.

It hasn't killed it.

It's not shitty.

I was like, damn.
Stealing a cow.
Just for Stephen.
It's not a big business.
That is.
I'm saying.
Justice for Stephen.
Not cool.
It was at the horse's name.
Stephen.
So rather than leaving the scene as it was or coming back later to search it more, they just set it on fire.
Easy.
What else are you going to do?
Well, they'll seem to be working well for them.
So it was burned to the ground in a few days after their arrest or a somewhat more thorough search of the grounds around the area was made, which I love that they burned the place down and they were like, we should go back there and see if there's any evidence.
It's really, it's really cleared out all the clots of it.
We made it easier.
Made it sanitary.
And at least two bodies were indeed found buried near the house, like right on the property. One was the body of a male who'd been shot and the other was the skeletal remains of a woman who'd been buried in an unmarked grave at least two years earlier.
Don't love that.
Neither of them were ever identified.
Oh, wow.
Oh, good.
There was at least two there.
And the members of the six mile house gang were taken to the city jail, which was apparently only a small step up from like medieval dungeons.
There was no running water.
There was no bed or toilet.
Instead, there was a pile of wood chips where they were like, that's your bed and your toilet.
Oh, wow.
So I had fun with that.
And apparently if you were a violent offender, you were just shackled to a steel ring that was in the middle of the floor.
And if you stepped out of line, you got the shit kicked out of you.
So that's fun.
And they said that it was also not unusual for a corpse to reach an advanced state of decomposition before being removed from a cell.
So you don't want to do any sooner.

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You don't want to go to the city jail.

So at the time of John and Levinia's arrest, South Carolina still operated under a colonial justice system.

So this system was based on a mix of biblical edicts and laws imposed by the British crown.

No, thanks.

Thanks a lot.

So as such, the crimes of which the gang were accused, highway robbery, were considered a capital offense, and that made all members eligible for the death penalty.

So by February 22, the sheriff had also arrested gang member James Sterrett, which would bring the total arrested to seven.

Some more arrests would come later.

By the end of the week, I think there was about nine people that were arrested from that house that were in the gang.

And once they'd all been rounded up, they were all brought before John Peoples, and he identified them all as the ones who violently attacked them and robbed them.

Imagine that.

So looking at their previous crimes that they've been punished for, both John and Levinia had previously been arrested for theft, which at least for John, he had received 30 lashes for it.

James Sterrett had also been convicted of theft on one occasion, and he had been branded as his punishment.

Oh, wow.

And Joseph Roberts had had a piece of his ear chopped off for theft as well.

I'm still not totally convinced these people weren't just taking part in some elaborate BDSM situation, as they all loved it.

It sounded more and more like it really is.

To be quite honest, on March 23, 1819, John and Levinia, as well as William Hayward and Joseph Roberts were brought before Judge Hall Bay, and they were going to determine whether there was enough evidence to convict them, at least of assaulting David Ross, because remember David?

Porchang.

The judge said there was enough evidence, and he set bond for all the individual members, but only Hayward and Roberts managed to post bail.

So Roberts got out, but he didn't do well with his immediate freedom, because two days later he was again arrested for threatening the life of a local butcher.

The same butcher that the gang sold the meat that belonged to the cow found in the outbuilding at Six Mile House that belonged to his neighbor that they had the cow hide for.

All freaking circle.

That's so satisfying.

I'm so impressed with how you did that all in a row.

I was just really intense on that subject.

I was like, that's really mean that you stole his cow, and then you killed it, you sold its meat, and you kept its hide.

That's not cool.

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So the trial began on May 10, 1819, and that's where John, Levinia, William, Joseph, and James were all indicted for assault with intent to murder David Ross.

The attorney general's documents said the gang, quote, were said to have wielded, pointed, and fired a loaded weapon at David Ross with the intent to kill him.

I agree.

By the time the hearing concluded on the 27th, through various methods, a lot of the gang either skipped town, were either to escape, or somehow got off the indictment.

I'm not really sure how.

It left really only John and Levinia on the hook for the whole crime.

Excellent.

So the trial was drawing huge crowds, and the couple was found guilty on both assaults with intent to murder and common assaults on David Ross.

Damn.

On June 2, they were brought before Judge Charles Jones Culcock for sentencing.

Pause for reaction.

However, the sentencing part then got moved to the constitutional court at the last second. This is so complicated.

It is.

So now it was going to be held, and it wasn't going to be held until the conclusion of the trial.

And unfortunately for John and Levinia, the constitutional court wouldn't be back in session until January, and it was shuned.

So the couple was going to be held at the city jail, where you pee, where you sleep, and you might die and rot in there.

And this had been going on like almost a year at this point.

And in the meantime, William Hayward had been recaptured in South Carolina, and because he was tried and convicted in absentia, so while he wasn't there, he was returned to Charleston to await with the fissures.

So the gangs all getting back together, you know, which is nice.

Be united.

And as a husband and wife, John and Levinia were held in the same cell, so that's sweet, very precious.

But they were on the ground floor initially, and that was like the really bad floor to be on.

Is everything dripping?

Yeah.

It's all dripping.

There's no ventilation.

It's just not good.

So Levinia used her wiles to get them moved to the debtors section of the prison, which was on a higher floor.

The cells were much bigger, not a lot of infectious diseases floating around.

So they were allowed to do that.

And weirdly, the debtors section was also where Joseph Roberts, another member of the

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gang, was serving his sentence for threatening the butcher, so they were all reunited again in the cell.

It was nice.

So on the evening of September 13, John and Joseph actually managed to dig a hole under the wall of one of the cell windows, large enough for them to fit through, and using a rope made of blankets they tied together, they climbed down the wall.

Damn.

So when Robert's went out and then he got there, John was going down and the blanket rope snapped, so he fell 20 feet to the ground below, and now Levinia couldn't escape.

Good.

So she's just sitting there with a giant hole in the wall.

She's like, awesome.

So I actually don't know anything about this.

She's like, you didn't want to go with the ladies first.

So they were like, oh, no, that sucks.

And then they just ran away.

No one noticed until the next morning.

That's when the governor issued a proclamation offering a \$500 reward for their recapture.

The sheriff didn't have to look very far.

They weren't really smart.

I don't think this was really going a hole.

And again, this is another case of John being a really good husband.

Even because-

Nobody left Levinia.

Well, don't you worry though, because their original plan was to escape and travel by boat to Cuba, obviously, but John refused to leave Levinia behind.

So he and Roberts had stayed close to the jail to try to come up with a plan for how to get Levinia out.

Okay, fine.

Love.

So he got himself caught that way.

A few days after their escape, they were visiting a local grocer, which I'm also like, guys, what are you doing?

Hungry.

Like, your wanted convicts.

The local grocer was like, hi, John and Rob.

How are you supposed to be in jail?

And he immediately called Sheriff Cleary and was like, hi, I have them here.

Wow, what a wrap.

Yeah.

So we had the thing of September 16th.

The sheriff found them hiding under an overturned boat, which is similar to how they found the Boston bomber.

I was gonna say.

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That was my immediate thought.

They found him in a boat, but they just shot at a bunch of times.

Can we say full circle?

We haven't rolled them up yet, but we're in Boston.

And they were both returned to the city jail.

They were going to have to wait for that constitutional court in January.

So on January 17th, 1820, John and Lavinia appeared before the constitutional court.

They figured they were going to be sentenced for those assaults and that's it.

But as they got there, the prosecutor was like, hey, you're also going to be sentenced for highway robbery.

And they were like, wait, though, that's a capital offense and we will die.

And they were like, that sucks.

Don't know what to tell you.

And it was on John Peoples.

That's what they were.

They were now bringing that in at like the ninth hour.

So they ended up being sentenced to hang on February 4th, 1820.

In the week following their sentence, John and Lavinia had petitioned several clergymen and notable Charlestinians just asking to intervene on their behalf because they were being sentenced for something they were not tried and convicted of.

Yeah.

If they did it, they didn't have a fair trial.

So they claim they wanted an opportunity for repentance and for time to prepare to meet their God and so they wanted a reprieve at least.

The governor granted the reprieve, but the order only pushed the date back to like February 18th.

Oh, shit.

It was like a few days.

Now, while John and Lavinia waited for execution, they spent a lot of time preparing for death and what comes next with various clergymen.

John, like the original story, apparently welcomed us.

He was like very intensely praying.

But Lavinia definitely legitimately was not interested in this.

She was more worried about just saving herself.

She was like, I would really like just to live through this and not prepare for what comes next.

So they said when she engaged in prayer, Lavinia would jump at any moment or noise by her captors.

She was convinced they were coming to her with a pardon.

So she was totally convinced she was getting pardoned out of this.

And she was very confident that they would not, one, execute her for a crime she had never been convicted of and two, execute a woman.

Unfortunately, she was wrong because, yeah.

But at the time, I will say contrary to what like legends will tell you, many residents

of Charleston really believed Lavinia was innocent of at least that crime.
And they were actually advocating for her release, which is wild.
But this got more intense when a local man was arrested for an unrelated crime and allegedly confessed to the highway robbery of John Peoples, which is okay.
But he's, I don't know if that was a reaction to, but I'm like, didn't John Peoples say there was like a whole gang of people who came out of this guy's like, I did it though.
Apparently, the man was able to identify the exact amount of money that had been stolen by from John Peoples and was also being able to say other elements of the crime that he probably wouldn't know if he wasn't there.
So maybe he was part of the mob, at least.
Regardless of the confession though, the governor refused to extend the reprieve.
And in fact, he left the city just to avoid any negative press.
He was like, I know this guy says that he didn't.
We never actually tried you or convicted you for this, but I'm going to go on vacation
Godspeed.
Honestly, how on the nose is that though?
He's like, I'm out.
He was like, I'm going to go on vacation with my family.
Yeah.
That's like in the Jack the Ripper case when he was just like, well, I'm out.
I'm going to go to Sweden.
See you guys later.
I hope you guys catch up.
See you.
Good luck.
I mean, there's one way to deal with all of your problems.
Just leave.
Just leave.
Just leave.
So now they were going to be killed for crimes that they were very sketchily associated with and they weren't even tried for, but there were bodies found on their property.
So like, this is kind of mayhem.
Yeah.
Like in all ways, you're like, they didn't do some bad stuff.
They stole a cow.
They stole and killed a cow.
Yeah.
So fuck them.
Yeah.
And then they did.
Two people died on their property at the very least.
And one of them was shot.
So like,
One of them was shot.

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Yeah.

Just saying.

So in February 18th arrived, caskets for the fishers were selected.

So beautiful.

And the hangman was measuring the length of rope when John and Lavinia were led from the city jail to the gallows.

And apparently it is true that when Lavinia saw the hangman measuring the rope that was going to be used to hang her with, she shrieked in terror, her cry chilling every heart with horror, which yeah.

Yeah.

That'll do it.

They were presented in the town square before they went to the gallows and they were covered in loose white garments together.

Apparently it's like a smock thing.

I don't know why they would do it, but they were given one final opportunity to say goodbye.

And at this moment, they fell into each other's arms.

Ruined me.

I know.

Like, wow.

They begged the hangman to spare their lives, but the hangman was indifferent to their suffering.

And he was apparently very aggressive and like manhandled the most hangman.

Yeah.

You know, that's you have to be to have that job.

But once John and Lavinia had gone on the Lavinia, excuse me, had gone on the wagon, they made their way to the gallows, huge crowds are following them.

It's like a parade.

And when they arrived, John climbed the scaffold without incident, but Lavinia refused to move from her spot at the bottom of the stairs.

She had to be carried up on the platform.

Once there, she called out to the crowd, apparently with her arms outstretched, asking them to save her.

Wow.

They all literally were like, nah, it was like that like blink, blink, just crickets.

So then she began cursing them and blaspheming, apparently.

Blaspheme them, girl.

Yeah.

They're not helping you.

Yeah.

So finally, the Reverend asked John whether he had any final words and John decided to address the crowd, and he begged forgiveness for those he had ever offended.

And he also claimed his and Lavinia's innocence.

They both embraced one final time.

The sacks went over their heads, signal from the sheriff, down they go.

The press reports that Lavinia, quote, died without a struggle or a groan, and that John

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unfortunately wasn't so lucky, and it was some minutes before he expired and ceased to struggle.

Ouch.

Yeah.

So at 2 p.m. on February 18th, 1820, John and Lavinia Fisher were pronounced dead.

He was only 29.

Oh my God.

And she was 28.

Oh my God.

I was picturing like people who were like 50.

Me too.

Me too.

For real.

They were young.

So John and Lavinia Fisher were members of a gang of thieves.

That much is true.

Lavinia Fisher was definitely not America's first serial, female serial killer.

By any means.

It's possible she never killed anyone.

It's possible she did kill someone.

In truth, the only crime they really acknowledged committing was robbing and beating David Ross.

And David had it coming.

No.

He's not Shang.

The legend grew nonetheless, and in the years following their execution, John and Lavinia Fisher's story became a media tale of just murder and mayhem.

It was huge in the Penny Dreadful publications and pamphlets.

They really took it and ran with it.

In 1830, a man named Peter Nielsen published a book where he claimed to have been in Charleston at the time of the arrest.

And he said the Fishers had been robbing and killing for years.

And according to Bruce Orr, Nielsen claimed, quote, on digging around this den of iniquity, a great number of skeletons were found.

No doubt the remains of unfortunate travelers.

So people still claimed that there was tons of skeletons in that house.

Oddie, oddie, oddies.

Yeah.

Everywhere.

Exactly.

And actually in the latter part of the 19th century, Lavinia's skeleton was exhumed from her coffin in a potter's field and put on display at the Charleston Museum.

So everyone could see the remains of the only woman to have been hanged in South Carolina.

They were occasionally, I loved this because when I read it, I was like, what does that mean?

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Because they were occasionally removed from their display for being out of order.
Like the video was out of order.
Out of order.
I was like, did she need a tune up?
Like what does that mean?
Yeah.
I don't know about all that.
They were.
Oh.
But as of, as late as 1922, they were still on display.
Oh, shit.
Yeah.
And they were, at that point, they were definitely not just like a band of gang, of like bandits.
They were, she was the first female serial killer at that point.
I see.
That's what they were touting her as.
Wow.
Who had like hundreds of bones in her cellar.
You've got to get those punters in.
Right.
You've got to.
And I think part of this story is definitely she was a woman.
So it's exaggerated because female criminals of her caliber were definitely not common.
Even of her real caliber were not common.
Her rest in story definitely became a huge interest of the time and even now.
And at the, in the 19th century, many of, if not most people believed that women were incapable of violence of any kind, nevermind murder.
So LaVinia was just something like new and fascinating, I think.
And so she just, the legend just got a life of its own.
But there is always moral lessons and like social lessons in urban legends.
Don't steal someone's cow.
That's what I took from this.
But this story, people like to say is that this is telling you what is and is unacceptable of a woman at the time.
It's very clear that they were trying to be like, look at the consequences for stepping out of your normal, like you should be at home popping out babies and like cooking dinner.
You're going to get hanged.
Like that's essentially what it was.
And finally, there is the convenient fact that the legendary account of LaVina Fisher's monstrous killing spree and being the serial killer.
It justifies a lot of problematic elements of the real story.
The legend kind of makes law enforcement and the justice system at the time like they swept in and they just took care of like heinous crimes and we took these people off the streets.
So they were painting them as these vicious violent killers.

So it kind of also justifies this execution that was probably not justified at the time because they were not tried for this crime and who even knows if they committed it. But according to Bruce or the government had actually been hoping to secure the land that five mile house and six mile house sat on. So we know exactly what happened. And it was going to build a new naval base. No wonder they were burning all that shit. Exactly. That was actually the government. So the execution of the fishers and William Hayward who owned five mile house by the way that would have cleared the property for the state to do whatever the hell they wanted to do with it without having to jump through any hoops. That's a rough option. And that is the story of LaVina Fisher. That's bonkers. Six mile house. Well done. Thank you. That was outstanding. It's like a twisty tourney like what really happened. And I love that we started with some sort of highwayman robber situation then we transmitted into some sort of BDSM dungeon. And then we ended up with government corruption. That's what I always like to travel through. Via the Chinese empire. Which you saw that coming. You got bingo. It's a weird tale. That's crazy. That was amazing. I can't believe I'd never heard of that. And I'm going to go look into this. And the bloody vendors. The bloody vendors. I love that note. Super interesting. We're definitely. And you guys should look into Sauny Bean. It's not real but it is quite fun. It is interesting. It is interesting. Absolutely. And then we have to just get you to come to London. Yes.

So we can show all the grizzly sides.
Yes please.
Yeah we can take you to the Glink.
Yes.
Please.
We need all of it.
We're filled with ship.
We're filled with ship.
There's a bar in Shorttitch that used to be a prison.
And I probably can't go because my ex-boyfriend works there but we'll send you there.
and it's all of the little booths downstairs are old cells.
Oh, that is so fucking cool.
I love that.
It is very cool.
That's so cool.
We'll put you in the sky so you can come with us.
There you go.
I love that.
Well, that was amazing.
Thank you so much for having us.
Thank you for being here.
Listen to this great story.
This is so fun.
That was great.
And now we get to do another one with you.
Yeah.
Exactly, so we're going to do one now.
And ours is witchy.
Ooh, hell yeah.
It is very English.
Ooh, love.
Like the most.
Extra, rural, rural, rural, rural.
Rural jurors.
Very similar time period.
We're going for 1875.
Oh my gosh, perfect.
I love an 1800s.
Very, very, very perfectly matched.
Hell yeah.
Over on the red-handed feet now, we will take you.
Witchy, old and timey, 1875 story.
I can't promise we go to the Chinese empire,
but we do all sorts of things.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 451: The Legend of Lavinia Fisher with RedHanded

Once we get our work together.

Yeah.

Shang will work his way in there.

And guys, go head over there.

Let's go.

We'll get you there.

Pull your car over.

Switch feeds.

Yeah, let's go.

Let's go.

And yeah, come hang out with us at Red-Handed.

Yes.

Hell yeah.

We're going to be there, guys.

So check us out there.

And we hope you keep listening.

And we hope you keep it weird.

But that's where they steal somebody's cow,

because I just don't really like that.

Yeah, that was really the cutest part of the story.

Yeah, I'm really fixated on that.

Bye.

Bye.

Thank you.

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