

Hi, Crime Junkies. I'm your host, Ashley Flowers.
And I'm Britt.
And before we jump into today's episode,
Britt, I just want to acknowledge
that Audio Chuck recently passed
two billion downloads across our shows.
I know, and just to be clear, that's billion with a B.
I mean, that number is, like, hard for me
to even wrap my head around.
And as you guys know, I mean, so much good
has come from you just hitting play.
Yes, and we truly could not do it
without each and every one of you
tuning in every single week.
But just like us at Audio Chuck,
we know that you Crime Junkies
don't just stop after an episode.
So many of you look for more ways
to engage after you listen.
So if you're looking to connect with us
and to take your, you know, Crime Junkiness
to the next level,
you can follow Audio Chuck and our shows
on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.
We will link out to all of those in the show notes.
And trust me, you'll want to keep up
because we are not stopping anytime soon.
With that being said, the story I have for you today
is about a man who vanished without a trace
during what should have been
a fairly uneventful trip to his hometown.
Everyone who knew him
or who hears about this case suspects foul play.
But no one knows what could have happened to him.
This is the story of Brian Worley.
Anita Gay is surprised when she gets a call from a friend
who works at the courthouse.
It's the afternoon of Thursday, September 24th, 2009.
And her friend says that Anita's brother,
39-year-old Brian Worley,
didn't show up for court earlier that morning.
Now, he's not in trouble or anything.
It's like probate court.
And he was only supposed to be there

to just turn in some receipts and sign a document.
You see, their mom has Alzheimer's
and neurocognitive disorder.
And he is her power of attorney.
So Brian has to juggle a lot of complicated paperwork.
And sure, it's been a bit stressful,
but he's not the kind of guy to just skip
on something so important.
In fact, he came into town specifically for that hearing.
And he even drove through some of the worst flooding
that Georgia's ever seen to get there.
Like the drive from where he was living in Atlanta
to where his family lives in Carrollton
usually takes about an hour.
But because of everything that was going on
with all the traffic, with all the road closures,
it had taken him four hours
when he made the trip just two days before on the 22nd.
Oh, wow. Yeah.
So at first, Anita just calls his cell,
but he doesn't answer.
Then she starts reaching out to some of the people
that he's closest with to see if they've heard from him
like his longtime partner, Jeff,
who he lives with in Atlanta.
And her and Brian's niece, Amanda,
who she knows he talks to at least a few times a day.
But no one Anita calls has spoken to him since yesterday.
Amanda says that Brian called her
while he was getting talk about the day before.
It was like three o'clock in the afternoon.
He had just finished up some yard work at his parents' house,
which is where he stays when he's in town
because it's been empty since his mom moved
into an assisted living facility that past spring.
Now during their chat, he was so normal.
He like filled her in on his nightmare drive from Atlanta.
He says he was so frazzled that he just stopped somewhere
along the way to have a quick drink
and met some quote unquote interesting people there.
Interesting how?
I don't know.
He didn't really elaborate.
But interesting people aside,

he said that he didn't want a repeat of that trip.
But the problem is he can't stick around in Carrollton
until the road's clear
because he and Jeff are going to be going to Florida
this coming Saturday to visit another one of his sisters
and he has been really looking forward to a vacation.
So he told Amanda on this call
that he might try to get his hands on a topographic map.
Brian actually studied geology in college
and he worked for years as a land surveyor.
So he figured, you know,
he's probably going to be able to like use this map
which shows like that kind of like elevation in the area
to find an alternate route home where the roads aren't flooded.
Now after that call,
Anita knows where Brian was because it was her house.
He went over there for dinner with her and her family
and she's able to piece together
that Brian had called Jeff later that night
at around 8 30 just to catch up.
He also left Amanda a voicemail at some point,
but he didn't answer when she called him back.
Now the last person that he spoke with was his best friend
and Anita knows that they hung up at around 9 15.
Was he still at Anita's during those calls?
That depends on the source.
And listen, I'll warn you all,
like the fall line podcast first covered this
and they were actually the ones who suggested this story to us
because Brian's case wasn't just getting,
I mean, hardly any attention.
So they gave us copies of police reports
that they obtained through a records request
and there is so much stuff that just was never documented
by the original investigators
and the lead detective, Tony Johnson.
Like, I mean, we're talking there are entries with no dates
or times some of the details don't jive with things
that I've heard from Brian's niece or his sister
or even from current investigators
who are reporter, Anita interviewed.
And there's also like a ton of conflicting information
from the media.
So again, there's a lot of specifics

that we've tried to piece together with everything
that we know the best we can
but nailing down a consistent timeline is damn near impossible.
So with that in mind, police reports say that Brian left Anita's
at around eight on Wednesday night.
She only lives like 10 minutes from their parents house.
So if those reports are accurate
that he was probably back at his folks when he spoke to Jeff.
So that is where Anita goes to look for him on Thursday afternoon
but he's not there and neither is his car,
a light blue Buick that used to belong to their mother.
So she goes inside the house
and at first glance everything looks normal.
But then she notices that a corner of his bed covers
are turned back almost like he was getting ready to lie down
but then didn't for some reason.
And what's even more strange is that
all of Brian's stuff is still there.
And when I say all we're talking his cell phone
his overnight bag closed toiletries
and most alarming of all his medications.
And none of that is reassuring.
Are the medications essential?
Yes.
So you see Brian had some health issues.
He has a heart condition that requires him to use a pacemaker.
He has severe arthritis.
He's been diagnosed with narcolepsy and he also has insomnia.
So there is no way that this dude is leaving
with all of his medications left behind
unless he planned to come back.
Yeah.
And actually the one thing she can't find is Brian's wallet.
So maybe just maybe he ran out to get something.
But even then like it doesn't add up
because he wouldn't have missed court that morning.
So by this point everyone's getting really worried
when Amanda who by the way lives in Ohio
with her husband at the time
when she gets an update from Anita
she starts panicking immediately
and Jeff who's still in Atlanta is right there along with her.
He apparently contacts Carleton police that very night
but I bet you can guess what they tell him.

Oh my God you have to wait.
A whopping 72 hours.
I know we've mentioned this before.
I'm going to say it again loud and clear for the folks in the back
in case anyone listening ever finds himself in this situation.
Law enforcement agencies are not required to wait
to take a missing person's report
even if that person is an adult.
Totally.
File that report make them do it.
Yes. Absolutely.
And especially in this case
I mean you would think that Brian's medical conditions would
I don't know raise the level of concern enough
to get it filed right away
at least without any pushback.
That was kind of my thought too.
And again it's you can like it's one thing to say
you're not going to search like again
I still don't understand it
but take the freaking report like how much how much effort is at least get
something in paper get something started get the ball rolling.
Right. I don't.
So here's the thing with this one.
So they do eventually take a report
after Anita calls them on Friday.
But even though they took a report
they don't actually enter Brian's information
into the state and national databases yet.
Well so they just write this stuff on a post-it note.
Yeah I don't know.
Although according to Bennett Rowland's reporting
for the Times Georgian
they do put out a bolo for Brian's car.
Now by the time Saturday rolls around
and there is still no sign of Brian
Jeff makes his way to Carrollton himself
and he and Anita go to the station to speak with investigators in person.
And again they're pleading with them.
Like this is totally out of character for Brian to just go MIA like this.
And they're also trying to convince police like listen
we got to completely rule out like any kind of self harm.
This isn't that either.
So it's at this point that he is finally officially listed as a missing person.

But even though it is a victory
Jeff doesn't think detectives are all that interested in finding his partner.
For some reason
they seem to believe that Jeff and Brian
have gotten to a quote unquote lover spat
and that maybe Brian left without his cell phone on purpose
because he didn't want to be bothered
or maybe he's having an affair.
Either way the police think that he might not want to be found.
Did Jeff tell them they were having problems?
No ma'am.
Then where the heck is this coming from?
So again we know everything we have is a little bit spotty post-it notes right?
They're not actually post-it notes but to your point
and we have this one report where Anita told police
that apparently they had gotten into an argument.
Again I don't know how big the argument was
I don't even know how accurate that is
so I don't know if that's what they're going off of.
Okay but what part of being mad upset in an argument with your partner
is like results in not wanting to take your medication
or change your clothes.
None of that adds up.
Not to mention Jeff and Brian have been together for 13 years.
Like Jeff can't see Brian leaving him
or their two beloved dogs and like their whole life together
without a single word.
There's dogs involved?
Forget it.
Exactly.
And listen like anyone who's been together for 13 years
I'm sure they had some ups and downs.
I mean I do know that at one point Brian had to move back to his childhood home
to take care of his mom full time after his dad died.
That was back in July of 2007
and before his mom went into that assisted living place
and Jeff had to stay in Atlanta for his job and to help with his own mother.
So I mean there was a time where it had been really tough while they're living apart
plus Brian hadn't been working for a while
because of all of this caretaking that he was doing
and there was some tension I think there because Jeff wanted him to get a job.
But I don't think that that was any reason for him to go away
because that seemed to be all being resolved
because earlier that year Brian had told his siblings

that handling everything for their mom was really wearing him down.
So that's when they moved her into the assisted living facility
and Brian went back to Atlanta.
And granted he still visited Carleton a lot to see his family to run errands for his mom
but he and Jeff were finally starting to get their lives back.
So even if the stress was getting to him
why leave now when things are finally starting to turn a corner?
Well, and even if Brian wanted to break up with Jeff
why would he ditch his entire family too?
It doesn't make sense, yeah.
If anything it sounds like he would turn to them if he was leaving Jeff.
Exactly.
And he is tight with his family especially his nieces and nephews.
He's like that fun uncle who's never been too busy to play a game or give advice.
Bottom line is him abandoning everyone like you said
does not make any sense.
And again like say there is a world where he needed to get away for a minute
and something happened and he couldn't call or whatever whatever.
You'd take your medications with you bare minimum.
Yeah.
But for whatever reason
police are pretty confident in their own theory
especially when they get word that Brian might have been seen
after he was supposed to appear in court.
Police learn that Brian paid his mother's water bill on Thursday the 24th at City Hall.
And I don't know how this information comes to light because police reports say that Jeff
heard it from one of Brian's brothers which Amanda says isn't accurate
but however it happens when Detective Johnson goes to the water department
a receipt shows that the bill was paid by check that Thursday at 3.17 p.m.
But how do they know Brian's the one who made the payment?
Is there footage of him there?
No.
So Detective Johnson notes that City Hall doesn't have any security cameras
which I feel like is kind of bonkers.
Oh what?
I know I know like that's one place I thought would have them
and I guess the clerk who took the payment doesn't remember what the person who paid
looked like like it was probably one of many things that happened that day.
So I think they're just assuming it was him because he is the one who handles
his mom's finances but I'm not sure.
So of course this really throws his family for a loop.
City Hall is literally two minutes away from the probate court.
So why in the world would he skip that hearing in the morning?
A hearing he drove through a flood to attend then pay a bill in the afternoon

and then vanish.

Jeff thinks this whole thing is just too strange.

So he keeps following up with the water department

and sure enough his instincts are correct because within a couple of days

they learned that Brian actually paid the bill on Wednesday the 23rd at 426 p.m.

But the problem was he overpaid and the utility company issued an automatic refund on Thursday.

Hence the Thursday time stamp.

Mm-hmm.

You're kidding me.

I wish I was.

But thankfully at least according to Detective Johnson's reports

the search for him wasn't just totally abandoned because of this payment.

According to the notes Johnson had still been looking into Brian's whereabouts.

What we know is that at some point from Sunday the 27th through Monday September 28th

Detective Johnson goes to check out Brian's parents house.

He doesn't see any signs of a break in or foul play but something catches his attention like enough to include it in his reports which is no small thing with the sky.

There are eight empty bottles of Bud Light in the trash and to him they look fresh.

However before you go getting too excited it's another dead end.

Anita tells him that the bottles were from another one of their brothers who was there doing some yard work and just like cleaning up.

She's like Brian doesn't even drink beer.

Now the other thing that Detective Johnson does is he also speaks with the next door neighbor this guy named Jimmy who was a longtime family friend of the Worley's.

And Jimmy or his wife or possibly both of them depending on who you're talking to they remember seeing that the garage light was on at around 2 a.m.

on Thursday which would have been in like the early morning hours before the court appearance that he was supposed to be at.

And they say they also saw someone in the garage and although they couldn't make out their features they just I mean figured it was Brian because I mean they knew he was staying there his car was in the driveway and whatever he was doing like nothing was striking them as odd so they didn't pay much attention to him.

They said when they left for work later that day which would have been around 8 or 8 30 in the morning his car was gone.

Now this helps with the timeline and a potential sighting but I don't know that it like means anything because it actually wasn't super unusual for Brian to be up late because of his insomnia and Amanda knew that he had been searching for this specific receipt that he wanted to bring to court so it's possible he was in the garage just looking for that.

But overall everyone is pretty confident that it was Brian that the neighbors saw at around that 2 a.m. time.

So the question is what happened after that he's not in jail he's not in any hospital police have checked and a random act of violence at the Worley House seems really unlikely. I mean it is quite literally one of the safest neighborhoods in Carrollton so much so that

Amanda told us that her grandparents door was always unlocked which I never recommend no matter where you live don't do that.

But on top of that apparently it's like situated on a lake Cove at the end of a cul-de-sac so it's not even like an area that someone stumbles upon.

Right and I mean with his car gone it definitely seems more likely that he went somewhere could he have gone out to look for one of those maps.

Well actually that's something that his family is wondering because again we know he's got insomnia Amanda says it's not strange for him to like run an errand in the middle of the night or even to leave his cell phone at home if he thought he's going to be back really quickly.

So kind of with that idea in mind I know that they started to look at what would have been open locally at around 2am this time that they know he's like up in Adam.

But there's not much in the area they do find a Walmart nearby that's open 24 hours and since he mentioned wanting to get that topographic map it's worth checking out.

Well and Walmart would have surveillance cameras that the police can check.

Right they do have footage but for whatever reason investigators don't ask for it.

But they do have Walmart at least search their records for the map stock number to see if any were sold in the relevant like time window that they were looking at.

And they say that none were.

Could he have gone somewhere else to get it done.

Well according to Captain Shannon Cantrell and he's one of the investigators working the case now Brian could have bought a map at literally any convenience store although the captain told us that he's not aware of police checking any of those surveillance cameras either.

But what they do is they at least monitor Brian's bank accounts and his credit cards and Bennett Roland reported that there's no financial activity anywhere after Wednesday September 23rd.

OK so speaking of finances this might be totally irrelevant but was there any sibling infighting about Brian's mom's care or their parents assets or anything.

I mean I know you said that Brian was really close with his family but money can make things really messy.

Was there was there anyone who might have wanted him out of the picture.

Well the probate court judge actually told Detective Johnson that she wasn't aware of any issues.

But what I will say is that Anita's husband told the fall line that Brian's older brother this would have been Chris wasn't happy with how Brian was handling the probate paperwork. But that being said I'm not sure if this was a serious disagreement or if investigators were even aware of it.

I don't know if they even ever interviewed Chris and if they did there's no mention of it in any of the police reports.

In just FYI because this is I don't know if it matters to you but Chris is not the brother that Anita was talking about with the like Bud lights in the trash and the yard work.

There are nine worthy siblings altogether so it can get a little bit confusing.

I married into big family.

I totally get it.

You get it.

Yeah.

Anyway while police are trying to track down Brian's last movements his loved ones are doing everything they can to bring him home.

They're posting flyers throughout the area.

They create a Facebook page.

They're contacting friends and relatives.

They drive around Carrollton looking for him or you know any sign of his car.

They're even checking like properties that he like is known to like I guess Jeff and Brian owned like a little farmhouse a few hours away and so people who live by there even go check that property.

But there is no sign of him.

No one has seen him.

No one has heard from him.

It's like he vanished into thin air.

What about those flooded areas?

I mean is there a chance you could have gotten caught in one of those?

I think that's something that police consider but they conduct ground and aerial searches for the Buick and don't find anything and I don't even know that I would have expect them to like I don't think it makes sense for him to leave early without all of his stuff.

Yeah I keep coming back to the medication again like you just have to go to this one court thing that the whole reason you came into town it's that morning just like take all your stuff go to that thing and go this like this isn't right something here is very fishy by early October everyone feels like they've hit a wall but on the off chance the off off chance that Brian did leave on his own without his medication without his things there is one thing that could possibly make him come back his nephew's birthday because Brian adores his nephew.

He would never miss his birthday if he could help it so if he left willingly that'd be the day he returns.

The Worley family and Jeff celebrate the birthday at a restaurant and the whole time Jeff can't help but watch the door waiting for Brian to walk in but he doesn't show and that last sliver of hope that his absence was voluntary is dashed.

His loved ones try to start thinking of explanations possible scenarios that could help focus and direct their search efforts again they don't think he would harm himself but they do wonder if he fell victim to a hate crime.

Brian had come out as gay to his family years ago around the time that he had graduated high school and he was met with what the fall line refers to as quote varying levels of acceptance and quote and Carrollton Georgia is probably not the easiest place to do that.

I mean it is not a small town per se at the time there were like 24,000 residents but it can feel like a small town and it is an extremely conservative area and while Brian isn't the type of person to start a fight he'd stand up for himself if someone was messing with him or you know another theory is maybe he stopped to help someone who had

car trouble maybe he had car trouble and needed help.

Police do get a tip that a man who reportedly looks like Brian was broken down on the side of the road but they can't pinpoint a location.

What about those mysterious quote unquote interesting people Brian had told Amanda about?

It seems like it could be a good lead right especially since they have nothing else to go on right but I mean it's impossible to follow up on I mean he only mentioned them in passing and Amanda doesn't even know what town he was in when he met them let alone who these people are like there's just no way to even track that down but according to police reports investigators do go through his cell phone and look for unfamiliar numbers or anything suspicious in case he was in contact with someone but they don't find anything. Brian doesn't use social media and he didn't even bring his laptop from Atlanta because there's no internet access at his parents house.

Just to be on the safe side though Jeff takes the laptop to Carrollton PD for them to look through but again it was like a total bust and they got nothing from it.

I feel like that completely rules out police's early theory that Brian was having an affair since there's zero evidence that he was really talking to anyone else.

Right but here's the thing I should add that Amanda doubts that police thoroughly analyzed the electronics because weeks after Brian's disappearance she learned that detectives still haven't even checked his email so she decides to log into his account to just look for clues herself like I'm not gonna sit around and wait for you and I guess investigators had an alert set up because soon after Detective Johnson calls Anita about the login and she tells him that it's her niece not Brian who signed in and that's when the detective calls Amanda for the first time ever by the way and asks her for his passwords. Wait we are weeks into this investigation and police still haven't talked to one of the last people Brian spoke with?

Bingo.

I mean I can see why Amanda has some doubts yeah.

Yeah.

Now I don't know but I think we can safely say that by now 2023 anyway the phone has been analyzed.

One of the current investigators Sergeant Meredith Browning says that police have identified everyone in Brian's activity log from September 1st 2009 on and it doesn't seem like any of them aroused police suspicion.

It's also worth noting that there doesn't appear to be a working landline at his parents house either so it's not like he's making calls on a different phone because he's at the house like or anything like that like I don't think he was talking to anyone new.

Now in late October an unidentified man's body turns up in West Virginia and Detective Johnson's interest is peaked when he hears that the victim has an invalid Georgia ID but he quickly learns that this man is Hispanic with black hair and Brian was white with blonde hair so definitely not him.

By now it has been a month since anyone has seen or heard from Brian.

Police tell reporter Bennett Roland that they're following up on every lead they get but behind the scenes Amanda says that they still seem fixed on the idea that Brian left on his own maybe to pursue another relationship and get away from Jeff.

Okay but based on everything you just said there was no evidence of an affair.

Oh and I stand by that I'm not saying that what they're doing makes any sense whatsoever it's just what they were doing and this part will make even less sense to you because Amanda says that at the same time police are also suspicious that Jeff did something to Brian. What?

Even though no one in Brian's family thinks that like he's cooperative he lets police search their place in Atlanta their farmhouse he passes a voice stress test.

He brought the laptop in?

Yeah so with only these two theories police are going nowhere fast and the investigation stalls out until Wednesday December 2nd when a cop in Chattanooga Tennessee about 125 miles away from Carrollton notices a car parked on a residential street that matches the description of one involved in a robbery.

The officer runs the tag and he gets a shock.

The Tennessee tag that the cop just ran doesn't match the car that the plate is on now so when they dig a little more this officer gets an even bigger surprise because the car which must have had its original plates removed belongs to a man who's been reported missing. It's parked by a street light on Judson Lane near North Chamberlain Avenue next to a curb and some overhanging bushes with berries on them and when officers see leaves, berries and black mold on the car they speculate that it's been sitting there for a while so they obviously know it's Brian's car so Chattanooga PD notified the police in Georgia who in turn tell Brian's family about the development and they're baffled because he has no ties to this area whatsoever and neither does Jeff so how and why did his car end up there.

The Carrollton investigators head to Chattanooga to try and answer some of those questions and during their canvas of the neighborhood they do get lucky because a woman tells them that she saw the guy who left the car there.

She describes him as a young black man.

She says that he was driving really fast, had turned onto their road early one afternoon, parked, got out and just walked away.

Though she doesn't see where he went and she's like, I don't know the guy.

And the best description she could give was that he looked to be in his early to mid 20s. He's like 5'7" with short hair and she says he was wearing dark pants and a black short sleeve t-shirt.

What she and the other residents tell police is that that car has been there for weeks like since around Halloween, which is wild because the key was still in the ignition.

And none of them thought it was strange that the car was just sitting there for more than a month?

Well, apparently random people use this spot all the time and it seems like everyone just assumed it was there because of like one neighbor or another.

Like they were kind of assuming it was all each other.

Like there's this one witness for instance, she tells investigators that the man who lives across the street from her sells pit bulls and possibly drugs.

So he gets a lot of visitors.

But pit bull guy, meanwhile, says that he thought the Buick was there because of this older man who lives across the street from him and fixes cars up for people in the neighborhood.

So sometimes he parks cars that he's working on in that same spot that Brian's car was found in.

And of course, the neighborhood mechanic says that he has no idea who left the Buick there or why and I see where this is going, right?

And so on and so on.

When detectives get the car back to Carrollton, they contact the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and they send an agent over to help process its interior.

And based on what investigators hear from Brian's loved ones, the car looks just how he left it.

It hasn't been ransacked.

There's a Tupperware container filled with change on the front passenger seat next to a science fiction novel.

And under the book is a receipt from Taco Bell.

That meal that he was eating when he spoke with Amanda on September 23rd.

Okay, so there was probably no one in the passenger seat or they would have had to move that stuff to sit.

That's what police are thinking and it doesn't look like anyone was in the back seat either.

There's actually an important fact about the car.

It had been burglarized while Brian was in Atlanta and I mean, there was still broken glass from the rear window in the back seat that doesn't seem to have been disturbed.

So long story short, as police are processing this, they managed to pull a partial print from the car.

And according to Amanda, they get some fiber samples too.

The problem is the print isn't good enough quality to analyze on its own.

Like they would need a suspect to compare it to.

They can't just like put it into a fist.

So while investigators are doing what they can with the car, Brian's loved ones do what they can.

They visit the Chattanooga neighborhood where his car was found to hang up posters.

They offer a \$10,000 reward, even run a couple of TV ads, but months roll by with nothing.

And eventually the one year anniversary of his disappearance comes and goes.

Detective Johnson tells Times Georgian reporter Amanda Thomas that he thinks there are answers in Chattanooga because someone there knows something about the Buick.

He says Brian's disappearance is weighing heavily on him and that he works on the case every single day.

The amount of side I am giving this, Ashley.

Well, here's what I'll say.

According to his reports, he does take steps to move the investigation along.

Every day I can't speak to you because again, the timeline is very cloudy.

All you really see is like randomly he'll list a bunch of things that he does in just this like one big summary that has no date on it.

Like a few examples of stuff that like is on a list like this.

Like he gets search warrants for Brian and Jeff's AT&T account, including cell tower data and verifies that Jeff was in Atlanta and Brian was in Carrollton when they last

spoke on the phone.

It says that he checks with Greyhound and the company tells him that no bus tickets have been sold in Brian's name.

He also tries to determine if Brian has traveled anywhere by plane, but the airport in Atlanta informs him that apparently they can't search by name alone.

Like you actually have to have a flight number or airline.

Uh, no to self.

If I ever want to disappear, fly out of ATL.

And I don't know if this is like, I never heard this before.

I thought like anytime you flew, they know exactly who you are.

Like in a post nine, 11 era, this shocked me.

I just assume my name appears on a list when I walk into an airport, right?

Same, same.

So anyways, time continues to pass with no leads.

And by April 2012, Detective Johnson retires.

New investigators, including the two that I've mentioned so far,

Shannon Cantrell and Meredith Browning are asked to just take a fresh look at Brian's case.

So Cantrell, who is a sergeant at the time, brings Anita and her husband in for another interview.

And then afterward, they go to Brian's parents' house.

The family still owns it at this point, even though no one actually lives there.

They basically just use it for events like baby showers and get-togethers or whatever.

Now, when they're walking in the door, it has been two and a half years since Brian stepped foot in the house.

But what's so eerie is that the room he was staying in looks practically untouched.

The bed has been made, but the clothes on it are the ones that he was wearing while doing yard work the Wednesday before he disappeared.

Like, they're still covered in grass clippings and stains.

His personal belongings are all still there, like his overnight bag and toothbrush and paperwork.

So since all of this stuff is still there, Cantrell takes everything into evidence.

Hang on, I'm thrilled everything was still there, but I have to ask why?

Why didn't Detective Johnson collect it?

Why are they just taking this stuff now?

I have no idea.

Again, like, there are a lot of things that should have been done that were not.

But as the new investigators quickly realize, unfortunately, that wasn't the only oversight.

Like, for instance, remember those beer bottles that were in the trash?

Yeah.

The ones that Anita said were from their other brother?

Well, apparently those were never even taken into evidence either.

And then you've got the police reports that they're going off of two and a half years later, which again, leaves so much to be desired.

All of it is just so frustrating.

And one of Brian's friends, this guy named Robert, he actually told YouTuber Ben Jacob

that he has a theory as to why police just didn't take this case seriously to begin with. He thinks it's because Brian's gay.

Robert said, quote, Brian never made any bones about the fact that he was gay. My impression was that rubbed a lot of people wrong, and it may even have rubbed the police force in Carrollton wrong, end quote.

So basically, Robert thought that they weren't interested in pursuing the case until Brian was gone for like a while.

And even then, when they started to take it seriously, it was because his loved ones had to badger them into doing that.

And one of the things that Amanda points to, to kind of like back this up is she says that Detective Johnson even refers to Jeff as Brian's roommate in one of his initial reports.

So, I mean, we asked the current investigators if they thought homophobia could have played a role in how the case was handled during the first couple of years.

And they both acknowledged that there were a lot of things that should have been done that weren't and a lot of things that were done, which could have been done better.

But they told Nina that they don't think that there was a malicious reason for any of the flaws in the investigation.

So to get back to what Sergeant Cantrell starts doing at this two to a half year mark, he also goes to Atlanta for another interview with Jeff.

Brian's disappearance has genuinely shattered him.

And however the original investigators may have felt, the two on the case today say they are confident he did not harm Brian.

I mean, it sounds like there's some renewed dedication to the case at least.

It does.

And I think there is.

But despite that, a few more years still pass by without any real developments.

But then in 2015, Sergeant Browning meets a self-proclaimed psychic through this friend. The psychic mentions that she's worked with law enforcement before and the sergeant immediately thinks of Brian.

And listen, she knows it's a long shot.

But at this point, like, what do you got to lose?

Like anything's worth a shot.

Right.

So police have her come in for an initial reading.

And whatever she tells them, they're impressed enough that they bring her to the worldly home where she says she starts getting vibes or feelings from the backyard deck area.

So on Tuesday, April 21st, investigators called Tracy Sargent.

Tracy is one of the top canine handlers in the nation.

And she specializes in search, rescue and recovery missions.

She also just happens to live in Georgia about 45 minutes away from Carrollton.

So the very next morning, she and three of her dogs, two black German shepherds, because I know you're wondering, and one yellow lab, they all head to Brian's parents' house.

When they get there, Tracy starts her usual routine.

She gives the command and the three dogs are like trekking around the property just one

at a time.

You know, they don't want to, like, influence each other, but none of them have any kind of reaction, that is, until they get to the backyard.

More specifically, the Worley's Boat House, which is basically this, like, large shed thing perched on the lake that you can park a boat in.

And what happens is that right outside of that boat house, each dog alerts in the same exact spot.

After seeing the dog's response to this spot, Tracy brings the dogs into the boat house, and once again, they each alert in the same specific area.

This could be huge, but Tracy knows that, listen, even a consistent reaction like that doesn't necessarily mean that a dead body was there.

Her dogs are trained to smell human remains.

So you could be talking blood, tissue, cadaver, fluids, bones, teeth, and they give the same alert, whether they catch the scent of decaying flesh or like blood from a bloody nose.

Right.

And one of the things that Tracy notices is there are some, like, tools and boards in the boat house, so it's totally possible that someone at some point cut themselves during a project or something.

But you don't know that till you find that out, right?

Like, this is definitely worth taking a closer look at.

So police essentially pull up the boat house floor to see what's underneath, but they don't find anything.

So they decide to expand the search to the water.

And it does seem to be good timing because according to the fall line, the city had recently drained the lake for routine maintenance.

So it's way more shallow than usual.

And they actually use the dogs for this too.

Tracy and investigators take the dogs out on a boat ride one at a time to see if they can sniff out anything on the lake.

At the same time, the county fire department's dive team searched just like a little cove next to the boat house.

So, I mean, they are really going at this area.

Yeah.

But unfortunately, the dogs don't have any reaction once they're out on the water and the dive team doesn't find anything, which is a huge disappointment.

But as Tracy pointed out, the dogs aren't just there to determine where something is or might be.

They can also tell you where something is not.

And Tracy is confident that Brian's remains are not on his parents' property.

But if something did happen to Brian in the boat house and then his body was moved somewhere else, wouldn't that kind of point to him knowing his killer?

I mean, why would a stranger be at his parents' house?

Yeah.

I mean, it's a disturbing thought, but it does make sense.

And I mean, really, until we find out what happened, I think every scenario is on the table, although at least to me, some are much more likely than others, which actually brings us to July of 2018 when Sergeant Browning gets this idea.

Even though Brian's car was removed from police databases after it was located, there should still be an active alert on his license plate since that was never recovered.

Remember, because it got like switched or whatever.

But if the license info was accidentally removed from the system along with the car, then police wouldn't know if it was tied to a missing person, like if it ever came up anywhere else.

So she checks to see if any cops ever ran Brian's tags.

And when the results pop up, she's stunned.

It turns out the Sheriff's Department in nearby Coweta County, Georgia did come across the license plate, but it wasn't after the Buick was removed from the databases.

It was way back on October 17th, 2009.

And what, they just ignored the Bolo?

I mean, how are we just now finding out about this?

That is the million dollar question.

And the Bolo was definitely active.

Carrollton tested it a couple of days after it went into effect.

So Coweta officers would have immediately known that the tag was associated with the missing person, and they should have alerted Carrollton PD right away.

Why that didn't happen?

Anything in between?

I don't know.

All we know is that Brian's license plate was on a vehicle in Coweta County, which is like 45 minutes away from Carrollton.

And we know that it was there like three weeks after he disappeared.

We don't know if it was on Brian's car at that point, or if it was on a different car by that point.

And we also don't know why police ran the tag because Coweta County doesn't have those records anymore.

And when Sergeant Browning calls the now retired Detective Johnson, he says he doesn't remember ever being notified about it.

So all I can tell you is that if Carrollton PD was notified, there is no record of it.

Which as you can imagine for Brian's loved ones is more than frustrating.

It is heartbreaking, especially for Jeff, who diligently contacts police over the years and never stops looking for Brian.

In 2017, Jeff is hospitalized with appendicitis.

And while he's there, he actually has a heart attack.

He died never knowing what happened and still questioning to some extent, if the love of his life chose to walk out on him.

He didn't really think that though.

Did he after all that time?

I mean, in his heart of hearts, probably not.

At least I hope not.

But I mean, Amanda says that he couldn't help but wonder like if that early police theory about Brian leaving just to get away from him was true.

Which like, I mean, she points out it's easy for your insecurities to get the best of you when you have no answers.

Like when there's a void like that, sometimes that like horrible inner voice can just get so loud.

It does make it easier to seem like everything is possible.

Anything is possible.

For Brian's family, the lack of answers is just the worst part.

But there's another difficulty they faced that Amanda hopes we can help ease for others.

And that was not knowing what to do or how to even advocate for their person.

So in the blog post for this episode, we actually have a bunch of links to guides and tip sheets from organizations around the world that list concrete steps and actions that you can take if God forbid someone you love of any age goes missing or if they are already missing.

Amanda also recently started a GoFundMe to raise money for billboards.

And there is a link to it in our blog post and in the show notes.

If you want to help her meet her goal, she is hoping that the billboards will spur some new leads and help jumpstart the investigation again, because it has been at a standstill for a while now.

Police never found out who left the Buick in Chattanooga.

And that could be the key to cracking this case.

And I want to be clear.

They don't necessarily believe that the guy who left it there was involved in Brian's disappearance, because if the Buick was abandoned somewhere, it might have changed hands a couple of times before he even got it.

And they want that guy to know if he's out there, if he's listening, that they have zero interest in pursuing charges for car theft.

They just want to follow that trail back to Brian, whose family has been grieving for far too long.

So please, if you have any information about Brian's disappearance or the car or anything related to the case, contact the Carrollton Police Department at 770-834-4451.

Brian is white.

And at the time of his disappearance, he had blonde hair, blue eyes, and weighed about 140 pounds.

He's five seven.

And if he's alive today, he's 52 years old.

You can find all the source material for this episode on our website,
crimejunkiepodcast.com.

And you can follow us on Instagram at CrimeJunkiePodcast.

Don't forget to go check out all of those links so you know exactly what to do in
case of an emergency, if someone you love goes missing.

And we'll be back next week with another episode.

CrimeJunkie is an audio chuck production.

So what do you think, Chuck?

Do you approve?