

[Transcript] Crime Junkie / MISSING: Jodi Huisentruit

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Hi crime junkies, I'm your host Ashley Flowers.

And I'm Britt.

And the story I have for you today is a big one.

It's about a news anchor whose sudden disappearance baffled her small town.

Foul play is suspected immediately,

but being a local celebrity proved to be almost a disadvantage to her case.

Because we're so often there are no suspects.

In this case, there are almost too many.

And 28 years later, her mysterious disappearance haunts the small town.

This is the story of Jody Hoosentruit.

On the morning of June 27th,

the city of Hoosentruit opened its doors to the city of Hoosentruit.

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On the morning of June 27th, 1995,

Amy Coons is deep in work mode,

kind of losing track of the world around her.

She's an assistant producer at KIMT-TV in Mason City, Iowa,

and it's her job to basically map out the morning broadcast.

In fact, she is so focused on her work that when she snaps out of it

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and looks at the clock, her stomach like flips,
because she realizes that it's already 4.10 in the morning,
and their morning news anchor Jody Hoosentruit
hasn't shown up for her shift yet.
Can I just say, I'm just never going to be a morning news anchor.
4 AM, are you kidding me?
It's early. I honestly think I could have thrived.
But 4 AM is actually late for Jody.
She's supposed to be there by 3,
and she's supposed to be going on air soon,
so Amy rushes to give her a call,
and after a few rings, a groggy Jody picks up the phone.
Oh, we've honestly done these so many times.
I thought for sure you were going to say that no one answers,
and that's how we find out that she's missing.
That's usually how it goes, right?
But Jody is alive and well when she gets this call,
albeit sleepy, and she explains she just overslept
as she's going to be in work like 10, 20 minutes tops.
And I'm sure you can imagine the 3 AM shift is a tough one to adjust to.
Like you said, you would not be able to do it.
And according to a reporting by Josh Benson
for the Fine Jody website,
Amy and Jody had actually done this whole dance before.
She was late on occasion,
but with a wake-up call,
she always made it into the studio in time to go on air.
And it helps that she lives literally like 5 minutes down the road,
so Amy's not super worried about her making it in on time.
Like I said, they've done this before.
Except this time, that 20 minutes comes and goes,
and Jody never shows up to work.
Amy has to go on air in her place,
but she just has this nagging feeling that something's not right.
Like she would never not show up,
especially after getting a call saying,
I'll be right there.
But even though more and more coworkers are becoming concerned,
they wait, they watch the clock,
hoping she'll come rushing in with an apology
that she maybe accidentally fell back asleep or something.
But no one's going to check on her?
Well, no.
But I mean, to be fair, they're all at work.

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And Amy herself is trying to cover Jody's workload.
So even though she calls again and gets no answer,
she literally does not have the time to physically
drive over to Jody's apartment and make sure she's okay.
But as soon as the next shift starts, they're done waiting.
A KIMT TV employee calls the Mason City police around 7am
and asks them to do a wellness check.
And within minutes, police arrive at the key apartments where Jody lives.
And listen, full transparency here,
there are a few different versions of the sequence of events.
Some of the source material says that they walk up to her front door first,
knock a few times, don't get an answer.
Others say that they walk over to her car first,
and that's a different story there.
Because whenever they get to her car,
what they see is that her red Mazda Miata is still parked in the parking lot,
and it's hard to miss.
But upon closer inspection, the scene around her car is textbook.
There was a struggle.
Like the contents of her purse are scattered on the ground,
along with her red high heel.
I've seen sources claim that both heels were found at the scene,
but what we know for sure is that at least one of her heels was photographed by police.
There's also a hairdryer, a bottle of hairspray,
and the mirror on her car is bent backward,
with the key to her car lying on the ground slightly bent as well.
So it's looking like she was probably attacked getting into her car.
Right, and to top it all off,
they also notice what they call drag marks leading away from the car.
Now there's not enough of them to indicate where exactly they go,
like if she was taken somewhere on foot,
or if she was maybe dragged into a vehicle.
And I'm not even sure total transparency that they can even tell,
because I saw one photo on CBS's website
where they point to what they're calling the drag mark,
and it actually is pretty small.
It's more just like an impression in a little bit of like soil or dirt, whatever.
So I don't think it's as overt as I know I was initially picturing when I heard drag marks.
But right off the bat, they are sure, looking at this scene,
that 27-year-old Jodi has been abducted.
Well, and they probably aren't that far behind whoever took her either.
I mean, it's only, what, a little after 7 a.m.?
Yeah, so three and a half to four hours behind,
but there's no time to lose,

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because they have already lost those couple of hours, so they hit the ground running. And first things first, they shut down the parking lot to process her car. Now, on the exterior, they find a palm print, although exactly where on the car they find it, I can't tell you. I'm not sure that's never been spelled out. And on the inside, they find some mystery fibers, maybe some hair stuff. Okay, but it seems like whatever happened to her happened before she even got into the car. So those fibers and hairs don't really seem related to me. I actually totally agree about the inside of the car, but they're doing it just to be thorough. And honestly, you could even say the same for the palm print. Like, there's no telling who's it is or when it got there or whether it's related to her disappearance at all. Okay, can you kind of lay out what this parking lot looks like? I'm having a hard time picturing it. Is it just like one big lot for all the apartments? And how many people even live there? Well, so there are three buildings in total and then two parking lots for the residents. So it's not like a massive complex, but it's not super small either. And I should note that there is a river that runs behind one of the buildings and a campground that's like caddy corner to that. So it's not this like teeny tiny apartment with like four residents, but it's not some massive complex like you would see in New York City or something like that. And we've got all of this like area around it. So if she was taken somewhere on foot, there are actually a lot of places that she could have been taken to. Are there any security cameras in the lot or on the buildings kind of keeping an eye on things? No, not from what I can tell, but we're also in June of 1995 here. So things like security cameras in residential areas just weren't as common as they are today. Now, even though it appears that whatever happened to Jodi happened by her car, they still get access to her apartment to see if there's anything in there that will tell them anything at all. According to an episode of 2020 titled Gone at Dawn, it's exactly what you might expect from a busy single woman living alone. A little cluttered, lots of clothes and work papers, that kind of thing. But unlike her car, there are no obvious signs of a struggle in here. Though the one thing that does stand out to investigators is that when they go in her bathroom, her toilet seat is up. And again, Jodi lives alone. So this indicates to them that likely a man was in there at some point, but not necessarily like that morning. And also, you could think of other reasons that your toilet seat is up.

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It's not like they actually, as far as they've ever reported, found urine or anything in it. You know what I mean?

But I kind of tend to think that there was someone in her apartment because they also found some used wine glasses on the counter. So it's possible that she may have had company the night before. Which could be why she overslept?

Maybe. I mean, I think that's totally possible. But it also could have been from two nights before or three nights before if she was busy and just didn't have time to clean up. So I mean, I think the only real takeaway from looking at her apartment is that she most likely was grabbed at her car and then her attacker didn't take her back into her apartment with them. I think that's the only thing we can really deduce from just looking at it. Now, one of the only other things that they find in her apartment of real value, and it's not even that valuable, but it's her diary and it's sitting on her nightstand. They're hoping that something in there will give them something to work with. Maybe she had a boyfriend or she was having trouble with someone at work or her personal life. But unfortunately, the contents don't drop any bombshells. She just kind of talked about her life, a recent waterski trip, wanting more from her career. But all in all, the tone is really positive. So with nothing in her apartment to give them a starting point, police begin to canvas her neighborhood and like the surrounding area. But there is nothing in the complex, nothing in the river, nothing at the campgrounds. I mean, truly, nothing that they come across that helps. They even bring in search dogs to try and catch her scent, but they don't hit on anything, which makes them think that Jodi was likely pulled into a vehicle of some kind. Now, when they did their canvassing, even talking to the neighbors didn't give them much to go on either. According to an article in the Star Tribune by the Associated Press, a couple of neighbors heard a woman scream. Some even thought that they heard someone say like, leave me alone. And that would have been right around the time that Jodi would have been heading to work. But no one seemed to have bothered to look out their window when they heard that because there are no eyewitnesses to the abduction. Okay, I get that it was like, what, 4 a.m. But I still think that someone would have at least taken a little peek if they heard someone screaming. I would have. But also, I think it's about like, what's normal in your neighborhood? If I heard that in my neighborhood at 4 a.m., totally out of the blue. Totally off. Right. But what they were finding when they were talking to people is I guess you could often hear like random people from the campground that I mentioned.

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And so the residents at Jodi's place just learned to like, tune things out or get used to the fact that there would be like, you know, a scream or this or whatever. And just be like, oh, those campers. At least noise coming out throughout the night. So the canvas is quickly becoming a bust until a man walks right up to police and tells them something kind of creepy. Now, exactly what he said has been quoted two ways. And I think they're varying levels of creepy. So it's reported that one way he said this is he walked up and said, quote, I was the last person to see Jodi. But other places insist that he said, quote, I was the last person to see Jodi alive, which has like a massively different connotation. You know? Uh, yeah. Who is this guy? So this guy is John Van Seis. He has been living in Mason City for a while. And what he tells police when he shows up is that him and Jodi are friends. And his story goes that just the night before sometime after 8pm, Jodi had actually come over to his place and they watched a home video of a surprise birthday party that he had thrown for her a few weeks earlier for her 27th birthday. So he's like, you know, we hung out and then she left for the night. And that's the last time I saw her. Now, the thing about John is when they start looking into him and asking around, some of Jodi's friends indicate to investigators that John wanted to be more than just friends with Jodi. They tell police that John is this like successful older guy and Jodi liked the attention she got from him. He did well for himself. He would treat her nicely. He had some nice things, but dude was like 49 and she again 27. So she didn't see anything romantic ever happening between the both of them and she being Jodi. And he was cool with just being friends. Well, I don't know deep down how he really felt. I see where your thought process is going though and police seem to have been right there with you. Especially because when police start to establish Jodi's movements in the days and even hours leading up to her disappearance, John's story is called into question. Are you ready for this year's cold and flu season? Whether you're looking for savings on your flu vaccine or advice on staying healthy. GoodRx is here to help. Best of all, GoodRx is completely free, easy to use and can help you save up to 80% on all of your prescriptions. All you need to do is search for your medication on the GoodRx app or website and show your

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What police pieced together is that the day before Jodi disappeared, she went to work and did the 6am news as usual.

Then when she got off, she participated in the Mason City Chamber of Commerce golf tournament.

Jodi was an avid golfer, so this outing was particularly up her alley.

So she spends like a few hours golfing and then she went home to change before this awards dinner at the country club that evening.

And by all accounts, Jodi had a great night.

She was in good spirits.

She left around 8pm-ish telling one of the golfers that she had to head out because she had an early morning.

Early morning is an understatement.

I know, I know, you're not getting up before I got it.

But honestly, I don't know that it was like Jodi's favorite thing either.

I think she's right there with you because, you know, she was passionate about her career.

She didn't love that she had to get up at 3, but she was always willing to do it.

Like it was no surprise to anyone when she said that she was going to head out to get some rest because they knew how serious she took her career.

She wanted to be the best.

She wanted to show up every day and like do her best work.

Now, the next thing that police know for sure is that Jodi placed a call from her apartment to her friend Kelly at 8.24pm.

And as it turns out, Kelly wasn't actually home, but her husband spoke to Jodi for several minutes and says that she didn't seem off.

She wasn't panicked.

Like everything was okay.

Just sounded like she was calling to chat with a friend.

Okay, so timeline-wise, if that call was made at 8.24pm and she was planning to head to bed early so she could make it to work on time the next morning,

then it doesn't really make sense that she would go to John's place,

especially if she was going just to watch a video of a party that they both were at.

It is strange, right?

To be fair, though, she didn't have social media.

We've all rewatched our stuff.

You know what I mean?

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Like right after it happened.

So like the video part to me isn't so weird, but there's something about the timeline that just doesn't seem solid.

And look, she's young.

She totally could have had like the work hard, play hard mentality.

But even there, again, the timing to me doesn't add up because John is saying she is at his place a little after 8.

Well, we know for a fact she is at her apartment making a phone call at 8.24pm.

But it's also not necessarily wrong, right?

Like say she left right after the call, then she's there by 8.30ish when friends are over at my house or coming over.

I'm not really like studying the clock.

Maybe a little after 8 was just his best guess.

So you're saying that she didn't go straight from the ceremony to John's and then home.

You're saying she might have gone home and then gone to John's?

Yeah, gone home, made this call and then swung by John's.

And he's just confused about like a little after 8, that's what you're saying.

Yeah, 8.30 is technically a little after 8, sure, I guess.

I don't know.

I totally understand what you're saying.

And I think you're right, of course, because they're not saying he's lying.

They're just saying that it's worth looking into because it just feels a little bit off, especially when they don't have much of anything else.

Right, it's the only thing they have.

Yeah.

So according to reporting by Josh Benson for the Fine Jodi website, they have John come in for a polygraph.

But Britt, regardless of the results of that,

there's a lot about John's relationship with Jodi that rubs investigators the wrong way.

Like the more they talk to her friends,

the more they get that sense that his infatuation with her was bordering on obsession.

Like he even named his boat after her.

I do not like that.

Not at all.

It's weird, right?

Yeah.

And when Jodi's family eventually gets into town, like after she's missing, they meet up with him.

And the way he describes his relationship with Jodi to them is like a father-daughter dynamic.

Like he was looking out for her.

But her family is kind of weirded out by him,

especially when he says that he liked watching her have fun.

Like my Josie is never going to need another older man who likes watching her have fun.

You know what I mean?

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Like she's got a dad.

We're good.

Thank you, John Van Seis.

The other thing that stands out is he was also really weird about her car.

Like she had bought it relatively recently and her friends say that she was super proud of it.

Like it was like, you know, 27.

I remember my first like big girl purchase, right?

Yeah.

But here's what's weird.

One of John's friends named LaDonna remembers him telling her specifically about Jodi's car and how it wasn't Jodi who had purchased it.

It was a boyfriend who had purchased it.

And she was planning on giving it back because she didn't want it.

But the problem with that whole story is that Jodi didn't have a boyfriend.

So I don't know where he's coming up with this, especially if they were so close like he's saying.

I don't know why he's telling this to people, why he's being so weird about the car.

But you know, as investigators are hearing this, it's just more and more stuff that's standing out.

Okay.

So does anybody really know who bought it or when it was purchased?

Short answer.

Yes.

It's complicated because the title actually wasn't in her name when she went missing.

But she was purchasing the car from a man through a mutual friend and the title was still in that person's name.

But she was still driving it.

There was no boyfriend involved.

So I don't know where that whole story came from.

Yeah.

So she purchased the car from a boy that a friend knew.

Essentially.

Is that how we're getting boyfriend?

Okay.

Maybe.

Maybe.

And unless you were jealous, that seems like a jealous thing to say, right?

Right.

It feels like a huge stretch to go from boy that a friend knew to boyfriend.

Yeah.

Now, when it comes to the morning that Jodie disappeared, right?

Like everyone's big question is like, well, where was John?

Well, he does have an alibi sort of.

So that same friend of his, LaDonna, the one he told about the car, well, she says that she and John had this routine of walking in the mornings

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and that morning wasn't any different.

So she says that John couldn't have abducted Jodie because of their walking routine.

Their walking routine at 4 a.m.?

Well, no.

So LaDonna says that she called his home at around 6 a.m. to confirm that they were going to walk together that morning.

And she said, when she called, he picked up, he agreed.

Like, yeah, let's still meet up.

And I think they're together by like 6 30.

So what she's saying by saying she says alibi is that in her mind, like he couldn't have done it because the timeline is so tight.

Like she doesn't think he could have abducted Jodie a little after 4 taking her somewhere and then made it back to his house by 6 for this phone call to come in.

Unless the somewhere he took her was his house.

Well, that's true.

But like I said, it's not like he says, oh, I can't walk this morning.

They do end up meeting up.

And then remember, he goes to like the scene of the abduction afterwards to like actually tell police he was the last one to see her.

So I mean, I think again, it's one of those things that it actually works in his favor,

I think, because if you did just abduct someone and you had this short window, are you going to go on a walk and act like everything's fine?

Because LaDonna says he wasn't acting any differently when they were together.

It was like any other day.

Okay.

I mean, the timeline is tight, but I guess it's not impossible.

I'm just very side eye about this John character.

I'm sorry.

You're right.

And you're especially right because I think it's also important to know the thing that I didn't mention is that he does only live like five minutes away.

Oh, so super close.

Yes.

And as a matter of fact, a deeper look into John's past reveals that he has had a few run-ins with the law, though nothing has been violent.

It's mostly just been arrests for drunk driving.

Like he even had to install a breathalyzer in his car.

But again, they don't have a whole lot else to go on.

This guy's just got some weird stuff.

And then he just makes things worse for himself when he starts doing these media interviews.

What?

Yeah.

Because even though he's at the center of all this speculation and he like knows it at the time, he's still willing to like get in front of any camera at every opportunity

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he's allowed, which means there are plenty of statements that he makes to analyze. And the one that sticks out to me, the one that sticks out, I think to everyone really, is that he sometimes refers to Jodi in the past tense.

Nope.

We're talking like even in the first few days of the investigation, he talks about how amazing she was, how much he cared for her.

I'm sorry.

That's it.

Major red flag.

I know.

But other than these weird statements, other than the kind of unusual relationship, there is not anything connecting John to Jodi's abduction or at least none that they found. And it's hard to look deeper because they don't even have enough to get a search warrant. So at this point, investigators are looking at him, but they're also trying to be really careful that they don't just get tunnel vision.

And they're starting to understand that they're in over their head.

So that's when the FBI comes in to assist with the case.

And with their help, police conduct a search up to two miles on either side of the apartment complex, searching for anything that might point them in the right direction.

But by the 30th, that's three days after Jodi disappeared, the search is called off.

Meanwhile, word of her disappearance spreads like wildfire.

In a twist of fate, the very station where she would regularly report the news was now breaking the disappearance of one of their own.

And this is a double edged sword because on the one hand, getting the news out quickly can be the difference between life and death.

But there's also the possibility that misinformation can be spread very quickly.

And that is exactly what happens.

Like for instance, there's a rumor spread almost instantly that there was a bloody handprint found at the scene, which is just straight up not true.

But somehow this gets reported over and over again.

And eventually it does get cleared up and thankfully doesn't do any catastrophic damage to the case.

But it's little details like that that can make a huge difference.

Yeah.

That being said, the media appeals do pay off because a guy named Randy Linderman contacts police and says that he saw the news and he remembers seeing something off in the parking lot of the key apartments on the morning Jodi disappeared.

He said that he was driving past to go to work himself and he noticed a white van just sitting in the parking lot.

And at the time, like that wasn't an immediate red flag on its own.

But now, you know, knowing what he knows, having seen the news, knowing that Jodi was abducted around that time, he knew it had to be connected and police agree.

So is there a van attached to John or are they thinking if this van thing is real, then it's a stranger abduction.

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I don't think they're connecting any big white vans to John, but who the driver is is totally up in the air.

And really, like this is what I was saying at the top of the episode.

It could be anyone because talking with her friends and family in the first days of the investigation, police learn that Jodi is extremely well liked in the community.

So many people knew her because they saw her on TV every single day.

She would hang out at the same places they did after work.

So to the people in Mason City, she was this like tangible local celebrity.

And you know, on the face of it, it sounds like she doesn't have any enemies.

But on the other hand, she had plenty of admirers and the attention was actually starting to worry her a little bit.

Apparently she had told friends that she planned to take self-defense class because I guess once she noticed a truck had been following her during a run.

And she even wanted to change her phone number because she was getting weird calls that scared her, which obviously a huge red flag considering she is missing now.

Yeah, I need more details on these calls.

Okay.

I have all the questions about the calls.

All I could find was from an article by Caroline Lowe from the Find Jodi website.

And according to that article, two of the people that she had golfed with the day before she was abducted had said that she-

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

The day before she went missing?

Yeah.

So like super important.

Yeah, so this thing about her wanting to change her phone number was said to somebody at the golf outing the day before she went missing.

It seems super relevant, right?

Yeah.

So this person told police that Jodi described the calls as just nasty and naughty.

And I think we can fill in the blanks from there.

But I think it's worth pointing out that apparently she also said she wasn't overly worried.

Like in her mind, this was just something that was part of being so well known in the community.

She didn't want to keep getting them, so she was just going to change her number.

But I don't know that the calls are related to what makes her want to take a self-defense class.

But it might have been all of it together.

I don't know.

Well, it should be easy to kind of narrow down who it could have been though.

Like who all had her number, right?

So that's the thing, Brett.

All of Mason City, Iowa had her number.

What?

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So Jennifer Austin for Care 11 News reported that her information, I mean phone number and address was just straight up in the phone book.

So anyone who was fixating on her could just call her up or worse show up at her place.

Listen, I get we have social media now and we put a lot of stuff out there, but I'm sorry, no thank you.

Not in the phone book.

The phone book was a little bit scary, right?

Yeah.

But for the mid 90s, it was completely normal to have all that information listed in a phone book directory, even if you were the local news woman.

But it would have made it super easy for someone to stalk her or wait for the right opportunity to take her.

So like I said, the publicity on Jodi's case was garnering plenty of tips, more than a thousand pour in over the next month, which keeps investigators busy just tracking down leads.

But for all the publicity, for all the tips, even the help from the FBI, the 800 people that are interviewed, none of it leads to any break in the case.

It's honestly hard for me to believe that with the number of tips and the number of people interviewed, they don't have any clear direction leading anywhere.

I know.

And this is where like when these cases can get so overwhelming, I always heard that in cold cases, usually you can find the perpetrator like right there in the first days of like the investigation, like their names somewhere in the case file, sometimes not always, especially when we're getting into genetic genealogy solves.

But this is like the downside to also getting a thousand tips.

The relevant stuff can sometimes get buried in the random stuff.

Everything gets bogged down.

Yeah, especially that random stuff seems more wild or sensational or whatever.

And listen, I think these people mean well, but the frenzy to find Jodi seems like it kind of takes on a life of its own.

So months start to pass and investigators don't make any real progress.

Jodi's mom and sister even hire private investigators, but their investigation only yields theories, no actual evidence.

In 1996, her case is featured on unsolved mysteries, but even the national attention yields next to nothing.

So suddenly what were weeks and months become years.

And even in years, lack of tips isn't an issue.

Tips come in all the time, but they're either dead ends or sometimes false leads all together.

So Jodi's case kind of stays in this limbo all the way until 1998.

That's when, according to Ed Hoskins reporting for the Globe Gazette, they finally get a lead that might actually go somewhere.

An inmate at a Minnesota jail becomes a prime suspect through the most unusual way.

A rap song.

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Police get a tip from a reporter who's looking into Jodi's abduction

who says that they should check out a man named Tony DeWon Jackson.

He had apparently confessed to a former jailmate that he had once abducted and killed an anchor woman.

I don't know if he said where it happened specifically

and I don't know if the former jailmate connected the dots right away.

But it was actually when Tony wrote a rap song

and some of the lyrics basically caught this guy's attention.

And so that's when he began to wonder if Tony actually had killed someone.

So when a reporter looks into this, they decide it's worth passing on to police.

And when police hear the lyrics to this rap, they definitely want to dig a bit deeper.

So Brett, I have a portion of that here. Can you read it for us?

Sure. It goes, quote,

Honestly, I was gonna, I want you to wrap it, please.

Okay, I'm just kidding.

No, thank you.

I am the first to tell you I am not an expert in rap by any means.

But I am not sure how this lyric refers to Jodi.

Right. It's a little, it is a little vague, right?

I mean, I think if he would have confessed to killing Jodi,

it would have gotten to the officers a lot sooner.

Yeah.

Again, I don't even think they necessarily sent this tip saying,

oh, this is about Jodi.

I think it made its way to police just being like, hey, he's talked about this.

He's made this rap song.

And then they were the ones to be like, oh, if he was talking about an anchor woman and then some of the words within this rap.

[Transcript] Crime Junkie / MISSING: Jodi Huisentruit

So apparently, Stiffen is a dead body and Tiffen refers to the city in Iowa of the same name. And that city happens to be just a few hours from Mason City. So again, nothing direct in this rap song, nothing direct alone in the confession. So I think it's a kind of the totality of the situation that they're like, you know, again, when you have nothing else worth talking to this guy. Plus, when they look at him, Tony's being held on the sexual assaults of four women, all of whom who share similar build and physical characteristics that match Jodi. Though that obviously doesn't mean anything if he wasn't in the area, right? Like this is the first thing that they're going to check. Well, when they do, they find out that Jackson was in the Mason City area around the time of Jodi's disappearance. More than even around, he was actually living like two blocks from the station that Jodi worked at. And to top it all off, they learned that this dude was actually interested in broadcasting. According to an episode of 48 hours, he'd been a part of a couple of talk shows while enrolled in community college. So this kind of theory starts to form that maybe he'd been watching the news and had become obsessed with Jodi. Maybe he'd been following her, learned her schedule where she lived and when she usually left for work in the morning. So investigators go to interview him, hoping that this is it. This is the break that they've been waiting for. And Tony Jackson admits that he was in the area, but he says it couldn't have been him because the day of Jodi's disappearance, apparently he had fallen down some stairs and spent several hours in a local hospital. So he said he couldn't have abducted her because he was on crutches. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. The day of her abduction or the day before? Because an injury the day of means nothing to me, my friend. I mean, she disappeared at 4 AM, 6 AM? No, you're right. So when he says the day of, like, so he says that this accident or whatever happened the night before she would have been abducted. Okay. And so he's saying that he was in the hospital that evening, whatever, and then would have been on crutches the morning when she's going missing. Okay. And I agree, like, you know, there's still some wiggle room here. So you would think that the specifics would be easy to corroborate and I feel like should have been corroborated, but I can't find anything in the source material that says police confirmed or denied this story. If he's at the hospital, like, there should have been records, right,

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that they send you home.

Someone would have seen him at the hospital where he got crutches. So they don't explicitly say that they contacted the hospital or whatever, but I tend to think that there might have been like a little bit of a hole in his story and it didn't fully check out or maybe they thought more people were connected or the injury wasn't bad enough.

I don't know.

All I know is that they don't just write off this lead there and then because in October of 1998, police locate this farm in Tiffin that they believe to be the same one mentioned in this wrap and they actually launch a full search of the property.

Now, during this search, they bring in cadaver dogs and two of the three dogs signal that they smell human remains in this abandoned silo,

but I'm not even going to keep you in suspense because just like literally everything in this case, when they search the silo, they come up with nothing and no human remains are ever found related to this case in Tiffin. Now, it is worth noting that the search did turn up some red cloth, but nothing that could be definitively tied to Jodi or even anyone else for that matter.

But even if like everything seems fuzzy around him, there actually is one thing that they have that could definitively rule him in or out, more than this like hospital crutches alibi and that is a hair found at the crime scene.

Wait, a hair?

You're just now bringing up that a hair was found that wasn't hers.

I know and I promise I waited till now for good reason and that is that this is the first time that police ever even admit to finding something at the scene and this is around February of 1996.

So they've said nothing.

We knew about a palm print, TBD, who's that is?

And then we hear about a hair in February of 1996, but then after February of 1996, they like seem to let it go.

And according to the Fine Jodi podcast, which was created by the Fine Jodi website team in connection with podcaster Scott Fuller, the location of the hair that was referenced in February of 1996 was never disclosed.

So I don't know whose hair it is.

I don't even know if it relates to the crime.

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Okay, but we know for sure that they have it, right?
It's not one of the things that also got misreported once
and just gets repeated over and over again like the bloody handprint.
It's not like that.

No.

Okay.

So Frank Santiago, he is the first to break this news
for his article in the Des Moines Register.

And then the Fine Jodi podcast actually confirms this hair
that it's legit, but it was only ever mentioned publicly once.

But when it was mentioned, it did come from investigators.

Great.

So does Tony have similar hair to the one found?

Boo, I have no idea.

Because again, they don't mention it after that.

They don't talk about how long it is, what color it is.

Like, can you tell the race of the person?

Nothing.

But I'm guessing that the hair is at least partially white.

By May of 1999, investigators have cleared Tony
as a suspect in Jodi's disappearance.

But I can't say for sure because I don't know enough about the hair.

After this, five years pass and police are still basically
where they were in June of 1995.

So whatever happened to John Vance Ice?

It seemed like things with him just kind of fizzled out.

Yeah.

I mean, he's always been on investigators' minds,
but there's just nothing that they have that they can use
to link him to Jodi's disappearance,
or at least not in like a concrete way.

But like, clearly they were trying

because I guess back in 1997,

they had even convened a grand jury

in the hope that they'd be able to indict him specifically.

But that grand jury confirmed that they did not have enough.

John's not the only person of interest, though.

According to an interview with investigator Frank Stearns
for the Globe Gazette, he says, quote,

I'm not saying he's out.

I'm not saying 35 or 40 others are out.

I'm not saying anything on him passing a polygraph.

Is he still being looked at?

Yeah.

And so are several other people, end quote.

The problem with Jodi's case isn't the lack of interest.

By the year 2000, people are still dedicated to bringing her home.

I think the problem here is that there are too many possible persons of interest.

I mean, I can't remember a case where five years later, people connected to it or whatever are saying that there's up to maybe what, 40 persons of interest?

Is that what Frank said?

Yeah, 35 to 40 others?

Yeah.

And it is kind of a double-edged sword because you don't want zero persons of interest.

But to have up to 40 and not have any standouts, anyone that you're like, yeah, there's 40, but these five, these three, this one guy that you can really hone in on, that's got to be tough.

Well, there actually are a couple of standouts among these 40, or at least they stand out to me because they're the only ones that have had some reporting around them.

Like for instance, there's a man who comes on police and the public's radar in the year 2000.

His name is Dustin Honkin.

He's from Mason City, and by 2000, he's serving a lengthy sentence for manufacturing and distributing methamphetamine and obstruction of justice. But he's also a suspect in five disappearances from back in 1993.

What?

Yeah, so it would have been his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend, a former colleague who had turned him in, and that colleague's girlfriend and her two kids.

Now, the difference between those disappearances in Jody's are that in 2000, all of those five bodies are discovered.

So in 2001, Dustin's charged with five murders.

But the reason he gets brought up in connection to Jody, honestly, to me, is a stretch to say the least.

So he was definitely in Mason City at the time of her disappearance, as was his girlfriend.

And this rumor, I guess, started going around that Jody somehow knew something.

Maybe she'd reported on the disappearances.

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Maybe she'd gotten into drugs herself.
That feels like a reach.
Yeah, her getting into drugs isn't a complete reach
because there is one interview I found from her co-worker Amy
who said that Jody had been really, quote,
up and down before she disappeared.
And she said that she wouldn't be surprised
if drugs were involved in Jody's, like,
mood changes or behavior or whatever.
But there also could be any number of reasons for mood changes
and none of her other friends have ever come forward
saying anything close to that.
And as far as I know, nothing related to drugs
in Jody has ever been proven.
But either way, whether she did or didn't use drugs,
the rumor basically was that Dustin's girlfriend
was supposedly working at the country club
where Jody's golf outing was the night before she died.
So really, everyone's thinking that maybe this girlfriend
heard Jody talk about something
that, like, she was, like, on to this guy for the disappearances.
But the problem with that theory or that rumor
is that Jody wasn't reporting on or investigating
the disappearances that happened in 1993.
She didn't do it at the 6 a.m. reporting,
not the noon reporting.
Those just weren't stories that she was covering.
And even if she did cover them, like,
no one had even known they'd been murdered by 1995.
Like, their bodies hadn't been discovered.
They were just disappearances.
Yeah, and it's never even been confirmed
that Dustin's girlfriend was working at the country club
the night that Jody was there,
can't confirm that she saw her, heard her say anything, whatever.
But rumor and speculation swirl,
especially in a small town.
And despite investigators ruling out any possible connection,
it takes a long time before the public catches up to that.
Now, another case that often gets connected to Jody's
is the 2001 abduction of a 17-year-old girl
named Ann Sludy,
mostly because there are a few similarities.
Like, for instance, Ann was attacked on her way to her car

and her personal items were discovered scattered near that very car.
But unlike in Jody's case, there were witnesses who saw a man approach Ann, strike her on the head, and drag her into a nearby minivan. And miraculously, five days after Ann's abduction, she was rescued.
And her abductor, Anthony Zappa, was arrested.
So, I mean, you can see at first, especially to the public, it seemed like there could be a connection here, even though they're in two different parts of the country with a 10-year age gap, the similarities regarding how they were abducted were striking to people, but not necessarily to investigators.
And I kind of get that.
Yeah, I mean, being abducted as you're getting into your car is like one of those crimes of opportunity, or it presents the opportunity for someone. It's not necessarily like a clear-defined MO.
Yeah, that's exactly what investigators are thinking, which is kind of why they downplay any of the similarities, and they kind of move on.
Now, the next few years are full of more of the same. More persons of interest come on investigators' radars, but one by one, they're all ruled out.
They also occasionally compare that palm print to their suspects, or persons of interest, or whoever, but it's not a match to anyone.
And it's not just investigators that are looking for answers, either.
Jody's case still grips the public attention, which is why, when a news director from Minnesota named Gary Peterson gets a letter from a psychic offering to do a reading on any case that he wants, he immediately thinks of Jody's case.
Now, listen, he's not even expecting the psychic to come back with anything substantial, and in true form, it doesn't seem like anything substantial does come, because although he gets a list of answers back, it doesn't seem like there's anything really reported on around it or anything came of it.

But because of this thing that Gary did,
the station that he works for actually runs a short piece
on Jody, which that garners a ton of interest,
so much so that Gary and another reporter named Josh Benson,
who I've mentioned a couple times,
end up producing a 13-part series on Jody's abduction,
and the amount of attention it gets
pushes Gary and Josh to dig even deeper.
Like, at some point, it becomes personal for them,
because they believe Jody's case is solvable.
In 2003, they established FindJody.com,
which they say is basically a nonprofit dedicated
to compiling research for Jody's case,
just in like one place and presenting it to the public.
So they're, you know, again, not just collecting things,
but doing their own original reporting,
and they publish all of that on the site, too.
So do they dig up anything new?
Well, the timeline around when they dig things up
is a little unclear,
but it seems like in 2003,
they're kind of getting off the ground.
But maybe put a pin in that for a minute,
because in 2004, investigators returned to another guy
that they think is worth taking a deeper look into.
You guys, Joe has been on the move
since she's been 10 months old.
I am talking nonstop moving from sun up to sun down.
That girl does not sit still,
and she doesn't quite tell me when she needs a diaper change, either,
so I need something that is going to hold up
even if she is hanging upside down.
Enter Pampers Cruisers 360.
Pampers Cruisers 360 aren't just for potty training.
You can start using them when baby is just one year old.
And not only do they absorb and hold everything in,
thanks to the unique 360-degree stretchy waistband,
it makes it easy to change your wiggling baby fast.
With Cruisers 360, your baby will feel dry and comfortable
while they walk or crawl or explore,
thanks to a gap-free fit and a blowout barrier.
I love that name because it is so honest.
That blowout barrier is at the back waist
to help prevent up to 100% of leaks, even the blowouts.

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This other guy is a known sex offender named Thomas Corscaden.
And, Brit, this guy is absolutely vile.
Without getting into too much detail,
he freely admits to multiple sexual assaults.
He was convicted of sexually assaulting a woman held at Knife Point.
He sexually abused his own daughter.
I mean, this dude is bad, bad news.
And he catches police's attention in 2004
because that's when they learn that he drove a van
that was similar to the one seen in the key apartment's parking lot
the morning Jody was abducted.
I gotta be honest, I had almost completely forgotten about that van.
I know, but it's been in the back of investigators' minds this whole time
because it's an important detail.
And that's not all.
According to David Unzi's reporting for the St. Cloud Times,
Thomas isn't an unknown name to investigators on Jody's case.
In fact, way back in the first months of the investigation,
they took a very close look at him.
Not only because of his violent sexual attacks,
but because in the months leading up to Jody's disappearance,
he was apparently trying to get tickets
to a live event that Jody would be at
and got angry when he wasn't able to get the tickets,
which could have been a coincidence, sure.
But he also made some pretty damning statements to a court back in the mid-90s.
Like during a conversation with Thomas,
a court official happened to mention Mason City while he was speaking to him.
And upon hearing Mason City, this dude smiled
and replied, quote, Jody who's intrude?
Oh my God, chills.
Why has he not been suspect number one all this time?
Isn't it wild? I mean, you can see why they looked at him early on.
Uh, yeah?
And that conversation got even worse
because when asked if he thought Jody was still alive,
he replied, quote, no, she's dead.
I'm sorry, again, why are we just now hearing about this guy now, almost a decade later?

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I know, it seems like these comments would shoot him to the top of their list, right? But yeah, these comments were coming amid a huge wave of tips that police were getting at the time.

It's like I said earlier, so I think that had something to do with it. And that's, again, not an excuse.

I mean, they should have looked into him, I think, more at the time, because would you have found out about the van sooner?

But he's in their sights now.

So they execute a search warrant where they get his print so they can compare them to that partial print found from Jody's car.

But according to reporting by John Skipper for the Globe Gazette, his print isn't a match to that partial palm print.

Wait, what did I miss with this palm print?

Last I heard, we didn't even know where exactly it was.

Are they not using it to rule people in or out?

You're getting the full, like, crime junkie experience

as, like, the public was finding out about this case,

because as I'm reading about this, I had the same reaction.

I'm like, wait, I thought we said we didn't know where this,

like, if it was hers, if it was even related to the case.

Yeah.

But by this point, investigators are thinking that this is the most solid thing they have to go on, or at least the most solid thing they're willing to publicly share,

because they're still not talking about the hair.

So it seems like they're pretty confident that this palm print they have was left by the abductor.

And again, I can't figure out any more detail about what changed.

Why are they thinking that now?

But this is their prevailing theory by this time when they're finally really diving into Thomas.

So as much as he seemed like the exact type of guy to commit this crime, and he said a bunch of weird stuff,

just like the other persons of interest we have in this case,

there is no evidence to connect him to Jodi, and police have to move on.

And on and on it goes.

The rumor mill churns out tips and theories, and investigators keep chasing them down, no matter how far-fetched they might seem.

Like this one that they get in 2006, where a woman claims that when she was 13, she was brought to a barn party, where she believes she witnessed Jodi's torture and eventual murder take place over 36 hours.

What? That came out of nowhere.

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I know, right?

This woman eventually even names names, but when all is said and done, her story changes, and then police actually end up charging her for providing false information.

I know I say this every time something like this happens, but I will never understand why people feel the need to insert themselves into investigations that they have zero relationship.

I know, and with cases like Jodi's that are super well known, I feel like you get more of that.

People feel drawn to the mystery, sometimes in a way that harms rather than actually helps.

And I think that's kind of the case in 2008.

That's when a local news outlet receives and publishes pages from Jodi's personal diary.

Like, these entries have absolutely no information that could help the public solve the case.

They're just published for what I would call clickbait.

Yeah, it's exploitation.

Yeah.

And to me, it's a major invasion of privacy.

This is something that Jodi probably never wanted someone else to read.

These are her private thoughts.

And at this point, this is where I feel like Jodi is being used.

And used by the same industry?

She was pretty much devoting her life to.

Uh-huh.

And get this, guess who leaked the journal to the press?

Well, I mean, it was collected as evidence,

so I'm going to take a shot in the dark

and guess someone in law enforcement.

It was the former police chief's wife.

What?

Isn't that wild?

How the actual f**k does she have access to evidence?

Even if she does, for some valid reason,

spoiler alert, there is none.

Why would she do that?

Yeah.

Why?

You're asking the same question as literally every single investigator who learns about this.

And what they end up piecing together is that when Jodi went missing, her diary was copied and the former police chief had his own copy. What, for fun? Uh, I don't know. No, like, I don't know if he had a copy of a lot of evidence or reports. I've seen this actually happen in a ton of cold cases where detectives would bring stuff home. But basically, when he resigned, this copy of her diary somehow made it home with him. And somehow his wife found it. And instead of, I don't know, turning it into police, making sure they have it, throwing it away, giving it even to Jodi's family, literally anything else, she mailed it to the f**king newspaper. And the f**king newspaper thought it was okay to publish it. Yeah. And this is where, like, I could go on a whole tangent about this. Like, I understand reporting uncomfortable things to help the case. This... This is not that. Yeah. I mean, I'm still back to, like, why would this woman do that? I mean, if she ever gives motive or reason, that has never been released to the public. So I have no idea what her motivation was behind doing this. What I do know is that the county attorney's office decides that apparently she didn't break any law by sending it in, and so nothing happens to her. Like, she's just like, okay, you mailed that in, like, ah, bad look, but you did nothing wrong. Thumbs up. So no one faces charges, not even the former police chief for having literal evidence just casually sitting around at his house?

Well, copy of evidence,
and maybe that's the key, whatever.
Fine.
It's not a crime,
and I truly have seen this happen before,
and I mean, I guess I want to state too,
I've seen this play out in a good way for people.
Like, there have been times where someone saving the file
saved it from a flood or a fire,
or who knows what.
Or the unsolved mystery people
who had all the case evidence.
Yeah.
I get it,
but this is the bad flip side of that.
Yes, and now you understand,
like, again, I love the officer
who has the box of case files
when I want to go talk to somebody.
That's great.
But now you understand when they're like,
no, you're not going home with that.
There's a duality to it.
Yeah, sure.
We trust you, but like,
if your wife wants to, like,
dig through your stuff and mail evidence
or copies of evidence to the newspaper,
like, get out of here.
Well, and honestly, like,
the case is probably lucky
that's all she did mail to them, you know?
Like, it's only the diary,
it's tragic, and it's not okay.
But thank God it wasn't like photos.
Right.
It's not as horrific
as it could have been.
Yeah.
And so this doesn't really lead
to anything big in the case, right?
This diary comes out.
I think people are upset by it.
Some people, it's sensational to them,

but the case doesn't move forward.
And that's kind of what it feels like.
It's like something happens,
everyone gets excited,
and every time it's a dead end.
But the thing about Jodi's case
is that every time there is a dead end,
there seems to be another lead
that pops up worth exploring.
And the next thing happens in 2009.
That's when a Mason City police officer
named Maria Old comes forward
to investigators with a pretty wild story.
She tells them that two years earlier,
she got a tip from her brother-in-law,
this guy Shane, who is a reverend at a church.
And Reverend Shane told her
that he had gotten a call from someone in Minnesota
who alleged that three members of law enforcement,
two officers on the Mason City force
and one DCI agent
were involved in Jodi's abduction.
That seems really out of left field.
I feel like that is the theme in this case.
When there isn't a whole lot in front of you,
everything's gonna come from out of nowhere.
So anyways, this woman says that
she didn't come forward right away
when she got this call two years before this
because she was worried about repercussions.
But she's coming forward now
because since then, she had overheard more people
talking about police being responsible
for Jodi's disappearance.
Basically, she says that she, Maria,
was investigating another case there in Mason City
when she overheard two people at an apartment complex
talking about how they knew police were involved.
Okay, wait, who are these people?
How did they know that?
I don't know.
Everything I could find is super vague.
Actually, Gary from FindJodi.com
tries to track down the informants,

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at least the two from the apartment complex
who Maria overheard,
but by the time he finds them,
both have died.
One from an alleged drug overdose,
and the other one was stabbed.
Wait, alleged drug overdose?
Yeah, you caught on to the right word
because according to what Gary was told,
no drugs were actually found in that person's system.
Hmm, that sounds like something worth looking into.
I know, I mean, when I heard it,
I immediately started spiraling on what that could mean,
but don't tell me there's no more information.
Yeah, I couldn't find anything else
about the investigation into their deaths
if there even was an investigation into their deaths.
I feel like the theme of this case is,
is this nothing? Is this everything?
Yeah. We don't know.
There's so much speculation,
and honestly, it's all over the map.
I know, this is one of the theories
that I just can't let go,
and I always laugh because me and Delia
every time we're covering a case,
like I'm the first one to jump to like conspiracy,
and she's like, no, no, no, it's most often
just like people who don't know what they're doing.
So if she was here right now, she'd be on that side.
And I think it's worth mentioning
that Jodi's own family has come out
and said that they trust investigators
and they trust the police department 100%.
So they don't agree with Maria
and the Reverend's allegations.
But those two weren't going to just back down.
They tell their stories to anyone
who will listen in the police department,
but they don't feel like they're getting very far.
In fact, they're essentially being brushed off.
So in August of 2011,
Maria is actually fired
due to allegations of mishandling information

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and possible evidence in Jodi's case.

So she appeals her termination,
and she ends up being upheld.

Was there ever even an investigation into the three officers?

There was, and they were all cleared.

Okay.

I know, I don't know what to think either
because I would love all the nitty-gritty details.

Yeah.

But the investigation has to move on.

And eventually, they circle back,
right to the beginning, back to our guy,
John Van Seis,

who at this point doesn't live in Mason City anymore
or even Iowa.

Now, I don't know why now,
but according to Josh Benson's reporting
for the Fine Jodi website,
in March 2017,

police execute a search warrant for GPS data
from two cars related to John.

There's a 1999 Honda Civic
and a 2013 GMC 1500.

Wait, I gotta be missing something.

A 1999 Civic and a 13 GMC.

Those cars not only wouldn't have been in production,
they weren't even like a twinkle in a manufacturer's eye
when Jodi went missing.

Why would they want information from those vehicles?

I wish I knew because I caught the same thing.

I'm like, they weren't even made.

Why are we looking at these cars?

Well, according to that same article,
police have sealed the search warrant
because they don't want to compromise their investigation.

I know, so we don't know why they were going after those two cars.

I can't be upset because they're protecting the investigation.

I know.

Like, quit doing your job.

I also very badly want to know.

I'm so very nosy.

Yeah, and whatever's in there,

I think has to be important and I think has to give away
some critical stuff that they have never released to the public

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because they make it a point every year
they refiled to keep that search warrant sealed.
And this happened in 2017.

Every year, there's an article saying they refiled.
It's resealed.

Wow.

But it hasn't stopped people from speculating
why they'd be looking at the vehicles.

And the general consensus is that investigators might suspect
that John was going back to Iowa at some point
and that when he was there, he might visit a burial site.

But I don't know what they found from the data.

Spoiler alert, they've never found a burial site.

So nothing concrete has ever been released to the public
about what came from obtaining that data.

And so as exciting as this was in 2017,
after a while, you just hear crickets again.

And the passing of time means that persons of interest
or potential witnesses are getting older.

They're forgetting things or dying.

John Van Seis has always been a person of interest,
but today he's in his 70s and he has Alzheimer's.

So even if police do think he's involved or has more to offer,
that ship honestly has pretty much sailed.

So for the next few years, it's slow moving.

But in 2020, though, there is a new bombshell
that no one saw coming.

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A private investigator who took an independent interest
in Jody's case some years earlier,

a guy named Steve Ridge, tells KWL News 7

that an unnamed person who was, quote,
extensively questioned by Mason City police
following whose intrudes disappearance, end quote,
confessed to him that they destroyed evidence in Jody's case.
Oh, wait, wait, wait.

They as in this guy who was questioned,
or they as in the police?

They as in the person who was questioned.

It's super vague, but basically what I gleaned from this
is that this person knew who abducted Jody
and what happened to her, and they were forced,
likely by the person who abducted Jody,
to destroy some of the evidence.

Only Steve Ridge and the police know what this evidence was
or who the person making this confession is.

And to be fair, Steve says that he and the police
want to keep this close to the vest,
so as not to compromise the ongoing investigation.

But the problem is that happened in 2020,
and like we've seen so many times before,
three years have now passed, no charges have been filed,
no more information has been released regarding this person
or even the destroyed evidence.

So I have to wonder, again, was it credible?

Do they need more?

Again, I want it for my own selfish reasons,
I want to know what happened,
but I actually appreciate that they're protecting
the integrity of the investigation,
and it gives me hope that if they've got this in 2020,
all those years later, this new stuff is coming,
I think this case will eventually be solved,
and that's what it's all about.

But until charges are filed or more information is released,
all we have is speculation,
and it's hard not to speculate,
since the list of theories and suspects is seemingly endless.

And there actually is like one other theory

I want to mention only,
so that if you guys go deep dive on this,
like I know so many of you do after episodes,
you know not to get lost down this rabbit hole.

So there's another theory that you'll often hear or read about,
saying that Jodi's death might be connected

to the mysterious death of one of her friends who died just a few months before she did. There was so much conspiracy around this, people tried to connect the cases for so long, but I want you to hear me, they are not connected. His death was found to be an accident, and his family has requested over and over again that the cases not be linked anymore. They're like that just, it hurts us over and over, and I say they're not connected, not because I've done some digging, it's like what officials have been really clear on what this man's family has been really clear on. So you'll see it like you can't scrub the internet of everything, but know that there is nothing there to like substantiate that connection. And listen, the theories I've even talked about are just some of them. I can't stress enough that this episode would turn into its own podcast series if I went down every rabbit hole in Jodi's case. And actually there is a whole podcast series out there. Like I said, it's by the Find Jodi team from FindJodi.com. Oh, we're back to them. Yeah, so I had told you to put a pen in it, let's loop back to them for a second. So around mid-2020 is the time that they start putting out episodes of their podcast. Which by the way, Scott Fuller has one of my favorite podcast voices ever. So not only is the information pretty compelling if you've gotten sucked into this case like I have been forever, but he is an easy listen. Now they kept putting out episodes until October 2022 and it was so helpful when putting together this episode, so I definitely recommend giving it a listen. But in the episodes, they go through a ton of information, some of which has been known to the public for years. And that's what I was saying, when they first started this adventure, they were like, let's just document what's out there, what we know. But then they started doing their own original reporting. And so you also get stuff on the site and on the podcast

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that has never been released.
And I'm not going to go over every single point they make.
Again, go listen yourself if you want all the nitty-gritty details.
But here are the things that really stuck out to me.
The first comes from when they interviewed a few people
who lived in the apartment complex Jodi did.
So a couple of people mentioned seeing beer cans
lined up in the complex parking lot.
And that might not seem like an important detail,
but based on where these cans were
and when they would find them,
it looked to them like someone had just been sitting in the parking lot
drinking beer all night,
because they would find them in the morning.
And was this around the time of Jodi's disappearance?
Yeah, it was just a little bit before,
but it's extra significant,
because if you sat or stood where the cans lined up,
you could actually see into Jodi's apartment.
Like someone could have been sitting there watching her.
Her, right?
They said it looked like they'd just been sitting there,
but what if they were looking at something specific?
What if it was Jodi?
And the most important thing about this tip to me
is that none of the witnesses remember seeing beer cans
after Jodi's abduction, only before.
Did police come and collect those cans?
I don't know.
I don't even know if this information was given to police at the time.
I know it was shared at some point,
but I don't know if it was during the initial investigation.
I also don't know if they were even still there,
like the cans on the morning of the abduction.
So investigators at the time very well may not have had them on their radar.
Again, I don't know if these people, when they canvassed,
gave them all of this.
I don't know if the beer cans are there.
Well, or even like if investigators did know if they took it seriously,
if they thought it was that big of a deal.
I mean, there's a lot of things that this might not have gone anywhere.
Yeah.
And those two witnesses weren't even the only ones who noticed
something strange going on at the key apartments when Jodi disappeared.

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Because another person who lived there tells the fine Jodi team that she remembers seeing what she describes as this creepy guy who was known to lurk around the area. And she says that he lived in the campgrounds behind the apartments. And a week before Jodi disappeared, she noticed him sitting in a gray car that was parked behind Jodi's apartment complex. So not the parking lot that she normally parked in. But she said this guy was just like sitting there, not really doing anything. And she wasn't about to stay and watch him. She kind of just clocked it that he was there and moved on. But then once Jodi went missing, she doesn't remember seeing this guy again, which I think is super strange, because he was clearly around enough for her to recognize this guy, even give her the creep. So why once Jodi vanishes is he suddenly gone too. And then there's another woman who lived at the apartments who remember seeing a green car that she didn't recognize sitting in the same parking lot before Jodi disappeared too. And I know that might seem like a detail that doesn't really matter. I mean, there are a million reasons someone could have been parked there. But I think in a case like Jodi's, every single detail counts. And I think it's worth noting that even though the colors of the car were different, both witnesses described them sitting in the same parking lot around the same time just before she went missing. Well, and Eyewitness testimony is notoriously unreliable. So it honestly could have been the same car. They're just remembering it as different colors. I mean, we saw that in the Darlene Hulse case. For sure. And I mean, like also the fact that this happened years ago, like 1995 and then we're getting this information on Fine Jodi podcast in 2020. So the chances of them misremembering something like the color, I think is just higher with all the time in between. And who knows what time of day it was. Like if it's nighttime, there's also a world where they saw the same car and someone is interpreting it as gray. Someone's interpreting it as green because there's like no light. You know what I mean? Right. And I know what you're going to ask.

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I don't know if either of them went to the police with their stories either. I'd imagine again, I know they canvassed. I imagine they would have tried to talk to them, but was this something that got lost in all of the other tips that were coming in? Now, before we totally wrap, I do want to go back to John Van Seis for just a minute because he has remained a person of interest and a lot of people still talk about him. Well, and I can't really blame them because police are conducting all of his vehicles within the last what, like six years? Plus, I keep coming back to whoever took Jodi knew her schedule. They knew she'd be going to her car at that time of the day, which is not like your typical 7.45 leave for work time. It's four o'clock in the morning. It isn't, but like they knew because they knew her or they knew because they were watching her or even just watching the news. Right. I think one is more likely than another. In fact, maybe I'm overthinking it here, but with the totality of everything, the calls, the truck following her, beer cans, car spotted. I know I'm the outlier, but I think if John were involved, we would have more answers. And maybe this is so hard to solve because the answers are with someone who we don't even know about yet. Well, and I also keep coming back to those mystery calls. Wouldn't they have been able to trace them or something? At the top of the episode, you said they knew that Jodi had made a call from her apartment the night before. So they got her phone records, right? Maybe, maybe not. I mean, it's very possible that friend's husband could have just said they were on the phone, but the reason I think it was some kind of record, the time is just so specific. Right, like 8.24. Yeah, but I assume if they could get those records, maybe they would have gotten the other ones, but I don't know. Maybe it's like outgoing versus incoming was different back then, or maybe the weird calls came from a pay phone so they don't actually know anything, or again, maybe they know and the stuff is sealed

that we can't see where the calls came from.

I don't know.

Oh, right.

Or maybe they found out who it was
and it didn't have anything to do with her abduction,
which I guess would bring us back to John.

I don't know.

And the truth of the matter is we just don't know.

But like you, everyone keeps coming back to John.

And I will tell you the one thing
that does give me full body chills about him.

Amy Coons, the assistant producer that called Jodi
the morning of her disappearance.

She was interviewed by the up and vanished team in 2020.

And according to that interview,

Amy all but says she knows in her heart
that John is guilty.

And she alleges that around 7 a.m.

the morning Jodi disappeared,

that she got a phone call at the station
and when she picked up, it was John Van Seis.

And she says he asked if Jodi was at work.

And when Amy said no, that she never made it in,
he pressed the issue asking,

is she sick?

Why isn't she there?

And Amy said that's weird

because he had never called the station before.

So why is he calling that morning of all days?

Now, she also had a story

that took place a couple of weeks after Jodi went missing.

She said that she saw John at a laundromat

and according to Amy,

he came in with two garbage bags full of laundry
and just like death stared her down.

And she says she believes it was his intention
to try and make her feel uncomfortable.

And she's like, it totally worked.

But that one, I think I can write off a little more
than the other stuff because I think that
people were already looking at him by that time
and she worked in media.

So I don't know what him staring at her
could mean or did mean.

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Now, Amy says she reported that incident to police and they sort of brushed her off. And I wish I had police corroborating this report or another side, but we just don't. We just have a guy who clearly had an infatuation with Jodi, a kind of alibi and some weird statements after the fact. And that is what makes Jodi's case so difficult to solve. It's that there are really only a few facts we know for sure. Like we know Jodi was alive around 4 a.m. on the 27th and abducted as she was getting into her car shortly after her call with Amy. We know there was a white van spotted in the parking lot of her apartment complex and that's literally it. Police have quite literally spoken to thousands of people chased down even more leads. That is still all the facts we have and it's infuriating. And yet this case hits home to so many people because they felt like they knew Jodi for a lot of people in the community. She was the first person to greet them in their living rooms each morning. So for her to go missing, it felt personal. And is there ever any word on whether investigators still have that hair from the crime scene? Nothing that I've seen. I mean, they can't even, if they wanted to reprocess the car. And to be fair, again, I don't know that the hair was even found in the car, but like so many years later, her car has different owners since 1995. So her family didn't keep it, right? No, no, they got it back shortly after Jodi's disappearance and they didn't hold on to it. Actually, the fine Jodi team tracked it down in 2022, but by this point, like I said, any evidence that may still have been there is contaminated or destroyed. Plus, I don't think anything happened in her car. I think she was quickly taken away. You know, Jodi dreamt of breaking into larger markets and there's no doubt that she would have moved on to bigger and better things given the chance. I mean, girl might have even been into podcasting one day. Until there is more proof about what happened, there will always be that wild grain of hope

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that maybe she is still alive.

She would be 55 today and there are so many people still looking for her.

So if you have any information about the disappearance of Jodi Hoosentruit, please come forward.

We've got all of the phone numbers and tip lines right in our show notes for you to make contact with police.

And we've also put the information for the fine Jodi team.

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

And you can follow us on Instagram at [crimejunkiepodcast](https://www.instagram.com/crimejunkiepodcast).

We'll be back next week with a brand new episode.

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