

Hi, crime junkies, Ashley here, and I want to share with you some very exciting news. Britt and I are teaming up with Mariette Bonvoy to bring some lucky crime junkies the ultimate behind-the-scenes crime junkie experience.

I mean, do you want a chance to sit down with us and talk about all things true crime, your countless theories, and get a first-hand look at how we obsessively deep-dive into cases?

Well, then this moment was made for you.

You can get all of the details on our exclusive Mariette Bonvoy moment's crime junkie experience and how to score a spot by visiting our website crimejunkiepodcast.com or our Instagram at [crimejunkiepodcast](https://www.instagram.com/crimejunkiepodcast) for more information.

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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 jaw dropper.

It's about how just a few days in August of 2007 turned a family completely upside down and it has left one Illinois mother searching and waiting for answers for 16 years.

But she's tired of waiting.

So our team dug deep into a case you've probably never heard of in hope of finding the truth.

This is the story of Jade Winston.

It's a quiet summer night in the small town of Carrier Mills, Illinois, Friday, August 17, 2007.

And a guy named Van is having just this relaxing evening after a long week.

He's just finished soaking in the bath and he's headed to his living room to shut off the stereo.

But his sense of calm is shattered by a loud bang.

And then suddenly a bullet comes flying through his kitchen wall, bouncing around the room, narrowly missing him.

Van immediately calls 911 in a panic and he tells dispatchers that the bullet came from the neighboring apartment in his ranch style duplex.

Now luckily a local officer is handling a traffic stop nearby and four minutes later at 10.58pm he is in Van's living room.

He's at Van's place.

My first stop would be the other apartment.

Mine too.

I think they have to check on the person who actually made the complaint first.

Make sure it's legit.

Make sure he's okay.

You know.

Got it.

But when the guy shows up, he recounts his evening, which he said was uneventful until the bullet came flying through his wall.

And he's like, you know, I don't remember anything out of the ordinary happening at my neighbor's apartment.

He tells him three young women live there.

And all he heard earlier in the evening was maybe some walking around, then like heavier stomping footsteps.

Maybe a few maybe loud bumps.

Once he said he heard a loud female voice, but not arguing or yelling.

Nothing alarming.

Yeah.

Just like regular people are living here sounds exactly.

He also says he didn't hear anything after the shot was fired.

No doors slamming or footsteps leaving, although remember his stereo was still on. So the officer heads back outside just as deputies from the Celine County Sheriff's office arrive.

Obviously, their next step is to go to that apartment to see if everyone inside is okay. They notice that the lights are on inside, but when they knock on the door, no one answers. One of the deputies like squints through the front window blinds to see if there's any movement and he sees the lower part of someone's legs motionless on the floor. So there's no more waiting around.

The doors unlock so they make their way inside and right away they see a teenage girl lying on her back on the living room floor with her arms and legs spread out and almost like a starfish position in front of an entertainment center.

There's a big pool of blood soaking the carpet to the right of her head and a smaller puddle on her left side and it's obvious right away what happened to her.

A gunshot wound in her temple.

Police can tell that she was shot at point blank range in the right side of her head and there's a nine millimeter handgun under the bend of her left knee.

But what's weird is the clip of the gun is actually resting in her left hand.

So just looking at this, literally three minutes after walking in the door, the police radio dispatchers and the Saline County Chief Deputy Major Todd Fort that the victim's gunshot wound was apparently self-inflicted.

I mean, even if it looks self-inflicted, it seems way too quick to make that call.

Can guns even fire without clips?

Well, some can and it's worth noting that they don't see any signs of a struggle or a forced entry.

But still, you're right.

I mean, it is too early to make a definitive call.

And honestly, just as fast as they say that out loud, things take a turn.

Because when Chief Deputy Major Todd Fort arrives and he checks out the scene, he just gets this gut feeling that something is off.

He thinks that it looks staged.

I think this is kind of bizarre though, since when do Chief Deputy Majors even attend crime scenes?

Well, this is a really small department.

There aren't even many investigators, so for this area, it's not that unusual.

And honestly, it's a good thing he's there, because there's something that catches his eye that no one else seemed to pay attention to before.

And that's the big pool of blood on the floor.

That big pool, that one should be under and right next to this girl's head.

But it's actually a few inches away.

And even though she's flat on her back, the blood from the entry wound on her temple has flowed upward to her face, like around her nose and across her lips.

And it should be flowing back towards her hair, right?

If she shot herself and fell.

Right.

So she went maybe face first to the floor, and maybe that's the one pool of blood?

Right, and then almost like she was flipped over.

Right, which could explain the two pools of blood and the fact that one of them is further away from her head.

Right?

Yeah, but who would have moved her?

Because police didn't, I know that.

But you know, the question is, is there even a who?

I know other people have stayed conscious after a shot to the head.

Maybe she moved herself.

Who knows?

Todd told our reporter Nina that he wasn't ready to jump to any conclusions at that point, although at the time he did quickly tell Dispatch that it looks like they're investigating a homicide.

Which to be fair, that's how they should start all investigations, because that way nothing's missed.

You can't go back and redo the first time you see a crime scene.

Right.

You only get one chance.

Right.

Now police end up determining that there are three young women who live in this apartment.

In that 17-year-old Jory Crawford, her friend, 21-year-old Janna Mitchell, and Janna's sister, 18-year-old Jade Winston.

Okay, so we have Jory, Janna, and Jade?

Uh-huh.

That's a lot of J names.

Honestly, this isn't even all of them.

I'm going to do my best to keep things as clear as I can for everyone.

Just a heads up now, there are going to be times when you need to pay attention, even more than usual.

And we'll even have a diagram on the blog post and in the app just to help keep everyone straight if you need it.

But anyways, detectives assume that one of these women, Janna, Jade, or Jory, must be the victim.

And as all of this is unfolding, some young women actually pull up to this duplex.

One of them hops out of the car and runs up to the door, clearly really distressed to find police swarming around.

And investigators learn that that woman is Janna, and the other girl, who is circling nearby or has parked the car, is Jory.

So Janna and Jory are accounted for.

That means that Jade is inside.

Yes, that ends up being what police start speculating pretty quickly.

And what happens next is a little confusing.

Everyone Nina interviewed has kind of a different recollection of how things went down.

But basically, when the girls first rolled up, Janna had this rush of panic go through her, not because she thought something had happened to her sister, but because her boyfriend had actually gotten arrested a few months ago.

He was in jail at the time with his trial about to start.

So she thinks that maybe this has something to do with that.

So she calls her mom, Mary, to come over.

And around this same time, Jory is getting a phone call from a friend.

And what she hears is shocking.

The caller says that Jory's ex-boyfriend, this guy that we're going to call Peter, is telling people that Jade is dead and that Jory is the one who killed her.

Wait, is this how they're finding out that she's dead?

Yes, nobody knows she is dead at this point, except for police.

Then how does Jory's ex know?

And how is he already making accusations about who killed her?

It doesn't make sense, right?

Sure, a word spreads fast in small towns, but not that fast.

Right.

It makes me think that, I mean, does Peter have some connection with the police department or something?

No, I don't think so.

He's not exactly the law-abiding type.

And he's known at least to Jory for causing trouble, especially for her.

When they were together, he did this all the time, and even after they split.

So just like a lot of drama.

Yeah, but the thing is, this is extreme.

He never did anything like this before, accusing her of murder, saying that her roommate's dead, like this is above and beyond for even him.

So anyways, Jory tells Jana about the call, and soon after, investigators actually confirm the devastating news that Jade is in fact dead from a gunshot wound.

Right about that time is when Jana and Jade's mom, Mary, shows up.

Now, she didn't know what was going on.

She wasn't even worried about Jade because she assumed that she was working or with her boyfriend, but then Jana has to deliver the worst news to her that a parent can hear.

Now all of this commotion around the apartment is drawing a crowd.

You can see the police activity down the block, and people start flocking to the scene to see what's happening, including Peter, who lives just a few blocks away.

When Jana and Jade's brother, Jerome Mitchell, shows up, Peter is actually the first to greet him, because the two of them are actually really good friends.

And Jana watches as the two men hug, and then the next thing she knows, her brother is running toward her, demanding to know where Jory is because it seems like Peter has already told him the same story about Jory killing Jade.

Jana quickly tells her brother, though, that the Jory thing isn't true.

Jory didn't do anything.

But even as she's telling him this, she doesn't really even have the chance to fully consider

the implications of Peter's rumor yet.

Honestly, Peter's practically forgotten in the chaos.

And it is chaos.

Jerome is trying to get into the apartment, he ends up tussling with police, people are yelling and arguing, everyone is devastated.

Again, just chaos.

Now before I dive in even more, I just want to give a little disclaimer.

We got a bunch of records from the sheriff's office through the FOIA.

But it's clear that a lot of information is still missing, so between that and people remembering things differently, it's impossible to I think ever know this full story.

But it looks like detectives hit the ground running early that Saturday morning.

A crime scene investigator examines the apartment that Jade was found in, and he notes blood on Jade's clothes and small stains on the coffee table and the wall nearby.

He finds a spent shell casing on the floor by the entertainment center and spots a bullet hole in the wall, perfectly aligned with the one in the neighbor's kitchen, about 20 inches off the ground.

The gun itself was collected and found to have had an empty chamber and three live rounds in the detached magazine.

Where that gun came from, though, that's not so cut and dry.

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Janna and Jory tell police that they found the gun last month after a party they threw.

Janna had wrapped it in a white hoodie and stashed it in the entertainment center.

But Janna and Jory told us that that actually wasn't true.

The gun had belonged to Janna's boyfriend, who, by the way, also Jory's brother.

But remember, he'd been in a bunch of legal trouble.

He's in prison.

He's not supposed to even have a gun, so they were kind of like covering for him with this lie.

They didn't want him to get in more trouble.

Now at the same time that the apartment is being examined, there are other officers fielding incoming leads, a couple about suspicious dark colored cars in the area around the time of the shooting, and they're also interviewing everyone there at the scene, especially Jades in her circle.

They find out that Friday was a pretty typical day for her.

She went to school and then to volleyball practice and then had to catch a ride from a friend to take her to work at Arby's because Janna was using the car that the sisters shared. Which this apparently like grinded her some.

Like I shared a car with my sister for a little bit.

It's definitely annoying.

But Jade's time card shows that she clocked in at 5.37pm and her coworkers tell police that on this day she was uncharacteristically gloomy, like a far cry from her usual bubbly goofy self.

She had even asked for a smoke break, even though she doesn't smoke.

Which I've totally done before.

Did she say what was bothering her?

Yeah, so she told them it was her quote unquote cheating boyfriend.

Let's call him Nick.

I guess a week before she had gotten into it with one of her so-called friends because rumor had it that Nick had gotten this friend pregnant and she had apparently been harassing Jade with these nasty threatening phone calls.

And if that's not enough for anyone to be down in the dumps, apparently a different girl had come into Arby's on that very Friday and started some shit with Jade over Nick.

This Nick dude sounds like way more troubled than he's worth.

I know.

Whenever I hear about situations like this, I just want to pick up these young women and be like, you are worth so much more than anyone who puts you in situations like this, who makes you feel this way.

You're not kidding.

My crime-drunk-y life role, this should be everyone's life role, is like a relationship is supposed to make you feel better, not worse.

1000%.

And like someone cheating is not you not being worth enough or not giving them what they need.

That's them being a terrible person and you got to find someone who values you.

Yeah.

It seems like she had a good coworker friend because that person was trying to really lift her up.

They're like, you know what, let's make plans.

Let's go out after the shift.

Let's like try and cheer you up.

So Jade clocked out at 9.44 and she walked to the nearby Walmart because that's where her sister works and she wanted to get the car keys.

Jana tells investigators that when Jade came by, she was agitated, but that wasn't really surprising.

Jana figured that she was still just annoyed about having to share the car and not getting it earlier.

And does Jana know about all the Nick stuff too?

She does.

Yeah.

And you know, probably all the more reason she understands her mood.

So Jade grabs the keys and she told Jana she was going to go home, shower, then drop the car back at Walmart for Jana to use and then she was going to go out with her coworker.

But police learn that she didn't head straight home.

Instead, she drove about 12 minutes northeast to where Nick was living, to confront him.

She searched for him at his friend's place and when she couldn't find him, she called him at around 10.06 p.m.

Nick tells detectives that they did speak and she accused him of cheating and was just really upset, but they didn't actually like meet up afterwards.

She went home and she was there when her uncle briefly stopped by at around 10.30, 10.40 to exchange some DVDs with her.

And at some point she must have changed her mind because she ignored a text from her coworker and decided to like settle in to watch one of the high school musical movies and work on a dance routine for a kid's team that she helped out with.

Was anyone else there with her?

Jory.

Jory was home, but not for long because she actually had plans to go out with Jana.

And since Jade wasn't going to be meeting her friend after all, I guess they decided that Jory would just like take the car and then she would pick up Jana from work and so Jade didn't have to leave at all.

So according to Jory, she leaves at like 10.45 and when she left, Jade was on the couch watching her movie.

Now nine minutes after Jory left, the neighbor had that bullet fly through his wall.

Nine minutes.

So if she was murdered, the perp would have to come inside, find the gun in the entertainment center and then fire a clean contact shot at Jade's temple in less than 10 minutes.

Right.

Which to make it believable, you almost have to like presume that the killer would know where the gun is because that finding it part to me is like the big one.

Right.

It's a question mark.

But there's also the chance she really did die by suicide.

There is still that chance.

But what kind of throws a wrench in this?

The question I haven't been able to answer is whether or not Jade actually knew the gun was even in the house, let alone its location.

Well maybe she didn't know, but I mean, she exchanged these DVDs with her uncle.

She would have been in the entertainment center.

Maybe she stumbled across it.

It's possible, but everyone tells police that Jade was like terrified of guns.

Plus, that high school musical DVD was still playing when police arrived and Jade was dressed in a sweatsuit seemingly ready to dance.

So it's like odd timing, right?

Like she's about to dance.

Then what?

She finds the gun and thinks, never mind, I'll just take my own life instead.

And listen, I know this stuff is complicated and if you're struggling, that can really happen in an instant.

It's just worth noting because this early on, like you said, every option should be on the table.

What about an accident if we're talking about all the options?

If she didn't like guns, she's not familiar with them.

Maybe she does stumble across this one randomly and she's holding it.

She's not familiar with it.

She's uncomfortable with it.

It just goes off while she's handling it.

So I know all the options are on the table, but actually that's the one that police feel like they can rule out.

Because in their minds, that just doesn't work because of the point blank range.

Like again, the gun was held up to her temple.

Right.

I see what you're saying.

Like she finds it.

She doesn't know what to do with it.

And like it goes off, but you wouldn't have that contact wound that she did.

Now as the medical examiner and the detectives discussed the case during Jade's autopsy later that Saturday, they're just as stumped as we are because obviously determining her cause of death is easy.

That's a gunshot wound.

But the manner not so clear cut.

Like take the blood flowing up her face.

The only explanation that the ME can think of is that Jade was in a face down position after the shooting.

Right.

That's how gravity works.

Exactly.

But he doesn't believe that she could have moved on her own after the shot was fired.

He also doesn't think that her position matches up with the blood splatter or the bullet trajectory.

He says that for her body to be positioned to match up with the bullet hole in the wall, the bullet would have needed to travel at like a 90 degree angle after it exited her body, which just isn't how physics works.

So the only way it makes sense is if her body was moved.
So what does he think actually happened?
He has no clue.
He again doesn't make any ruling on her manner of death.
So everyone agrees that there's some strange stuff going on, but there's more work to be done to figure out what it all means.
And listen, usually as investigators learn more, the picture becomes more clear.
But every new detail in this case seems to just muddy the waters even further.
And meanwhile, the community is just as confused as everyone else is.
So gossip is just filling the information void.
And the rumor mill is churning.
Some people are saying that Jade died by suicide.
Some are saying Jory killed her.
Some say the bullet was meant for Jory or even Janna and that Jade, who was only home because of a last minute change of plans, was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.
Well, and it actually should have been Jory home, right?
Because in the original plan, Jade was supposed to take the car back to Janna.
Janna was going to come back, get Jory, and then they were going to go out.
So it would have been Jory home alone at that time.
That's right.
But again, I go back to it was such a small window of time that the only way that even works, at least to me or what everyone's speculating, is that the killer would have had to have been outside watching the house.
And if that actually happened, you would think that they would have seen Jory leave.
So to me, like, mistaking it, that doesn't make sense either.
No.
So maybe they were waiting for Jory to leave and it was about Jade after all.
I mean, there are rumors that maybe Nick or the girl he was cheating with killed Jade because Jade was pregnant, which spoiler alert, she wasn't.
Then there are rumors that this other girl may have had problems with Jade and did it, but like, nothing really concrete there either.
And in so many of the rumors, even when they make it to police, they're like fifth hand.
My friend of a friend told me type thing, right.
Trying to read these police reports, they don't read like he said this, she said that.
It's more like he said that she said that someone else mentioned that a different person told them that this thing happened.
And I overheard it when I was talking to so-and-so.
Right.
So it's hard to put much stock in those stories.
But in all of these stories, there are some common themes that are starting to emerge.
And one name keeps popping up over and over again.
And that's Peter, Jory's ex.
I want to spend a second talking about Peter because as investigators learn, dude is not a great guy.

He's 22 and he has a bad reputation.

When he was 16, he was charged with attempted murder and aggravated battery.

Now, since he was a juvenile, we couldn't get those court records, so I don't know exactly what happened.

But I know that he pled guilty to battery and got two years probation.

Now, at the time of Jade's death, there isn't much on his adult record, but he is known to be violent to his girlfriends.

Jory told us that she caught him smoking crack before, which led to a huge fight.

And that he had locked her in his room a couple of times.

Oh my God.

Yeah, she'd lived with him at his parents' place when they were together.

And after they split, that's when she moved in with Jana and she says that Peter moved in with his uncle, but it was just down the street from them.

So she and Jana would see him like standing in front of his uncle's house, seemingly monitoring their comings and goings.

And when he wasn't physically watching them, he'd be making threatening phone calls to her.

Was he making these calls or lurking around the day that Jade was killed?

Well, Jory says she didn't hear from him that day.

She didn't even see him.

She didn't see any other suspicious happenings.

But even she is starting to wonder if that bullet was really meant for her.

Maybe Peter went there to harass her and ended up fighting with Jade instead.

And would he have known where the gun was?

That's right.

That's the thing.

I don't think so.

Jana and Jory said that he had never come into the apartment, at least not that they know of.

But again, it's not super clear who knew that the gun was there.

And just to show you how confusing this is, literally Jana at the beginning didn't even think Jory knew about the gun being there, but it turns out that Jory did.

Which means that maybe Jade did too.

Right.

But we may never know for sure.

But let's say she did know that it was there.

And then what if there's a world where Peter or someone else showed up?

Her family has this theory that maybe she went for the gun to protect herself.

Again, if she knew it was there.

And then the other person managed to grab it and shoot her or something.

Point blank in the temple though?

I don't know.

I mean, that's the problem with this case.

You start down a path thinking maybe it's all going to click and then boom, you just

hit this brick wall.

But the thing that her family keeps coming back to is the fact that Peter seemed to know Jade was dead before they even knew what had happened in the apartment.

So how did he know that?

And that fact is especially upsetting to Jade and Jana's brother Jerome.

Because remember, I mean, he and Peter are friends.

They go way back.

So as Jade's loved ones hunkered down at her mom, Mary's house on Saturday, Jerome's stewing.

The more he agonizes over it and the more he drinks, the more he wants to confront Peter now, not tomorrow, not next week, now.

But Jerome's fiancée is determined to not let that happen because she and Jade were super close.

She wants answers just like everyone else does.

But she's also five months pregnant with her and Jerome's second child.

So she doesn't want him driving around in the condition he's in.

So she and his friends actually move his car somewhere else and hide his car keys.

But what she doesn't realize is that he has a spare set.

So late that night, or maybe sometime early Sunday morning, Jerome tells her that he's going to go to the bathroom.

But instead he sneaks out of his mom's house, finds his car keys and leaves.

His fiancée panics when she realizes he's gone.

People keep trying to reassure her that he probably just needed some time to process everything.

Maybe he's just parked somewhere thinking everything over.

Either way, they keep saying he's going to be back soon.

He always is.

Everything's going to be fine.

And Mary, trapped in just a haze of grief over Jade, assumes Jerome is hanging out in her yard with his friends.

So she falls asleep and eventually Jerome's fiancée lays down on the couch for a nap, too.

Until a knock at the door at around 2.30 Sunday morning wakes everyone up.

It's the police, but they're not here about Jade's case.

They tell Mary that Jerome had been in a bad accident.

They're sorry to tell her this, but he didn't survive.

The death of a child is grief like no other, but losing two children within 27 hours.

For Mary, the devastation is almost unfathomable.

I can't even wrap my head around that.

You're not the only one.

When Mary frantically calls family to share the news, they genuinely think she's lost dead.

No, no, no, Mary, it's not Jerome who's dead, it's Jade.

But obviously she's not mistaken.

The absurdity is just too much, though, which is why over the next few days, everyone starts

to wonder if maybe there's more to this than just a tragic drunk driving accident. Because while Jerome was intoxicated, the circumstances of the crash are bizarre. You guys, Jo 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. Download the Pampers Club app today and earn Pampers Cash. Redeem your Pampers Cash for exclusive Pampers coupon savings and rewards. Be redeemable via Pampers Club. Redeem Pampers Cash, no cash value. For trusted protection, trust Pampers, the number one pediatrician-recommended brand. So here's the timeline that the family and investigators put together around this crash. Around 1 or 1.30 Sunday morning, Jerome showed up to Peter's uncle's house where Peter was staying, totally wrecked. The uncle tells police that Jerome tried to, like, fight Peter and they had some kind of confrontation and Jerome might have taken a swing at Peter, but it's not clear how bad they got into it. And at the end of whatever happened, the uncle says that he offered to drive Jerome home, but Jerome just gave him a hug and told him that he was gonna...this is where it gets all fuzzy. He said he was gonna, like, shoot up a place or die or something. A what? I know, it doesn't make a lot of sense, but that's what the uncle said he said. Anyways, then Jerome left, but he didn't go back to his mom's. He went to his cousin's house and knocked on the door, but by the time someone made it to the door, Jerome was already leaving so they didn't actually have an interaction with him. And then he must have peeled out of there because he crashed just about 800 feet away going 90 miles an hour and, miraculously, there was a witness to the crash? It was the same sheriff's deputy who first discovered Jade's body. No f**king way. Yeah, he saw Jerome zooming up the street near a curve and told us that he remembers thinking like that car is flying before it veered off the road and rolled over multiple

times.

But here is where it gets weird.

When it rolls over, two people are ejected from the car.

Jerome and another man named Chris.

Chris, who the f*** is Chris?

Exactly.

No one seems to know because to add to the mystery, it doesn't appear that Jerome and Chris actually knew each other.

Then why was he in Jerome's car?

Well, Chris survived somehow, though he doesn't remember much about that night.

He just says that he thinks he was walking along the road and Jerome pulled over to give him a ride.

None of this makes any sense.

I know, and I'm not even done.

So are you ready for the next weird thing that I can't explain?

Like it's my full-time job.

Good because it is.

True.

But riddle me this.

Why are there some handwritten notes in the case files that refer to Peter and his uncle being at the crash scene?

Excuse me?

Yeah.

But there is no context.

And these aren't like official reports, so I don't know if police were just jotting down rumors that people were telling them later or what this is, but they're definitely there in like handwriting scribbled down.

But do they ever admit to being there?

Not that I know of.

But Jade and Jerome's family has a theory.

They suspect that Peter was chasing Jerome or ran him off the road, mostly because there are rumors that Peter followed him after he left his uncles that night.

Okay, but that doesn't really add up to me.

I mean, followed him to do what?

He like stopped and picked up a dude walking, went to his cousin's house.

It doesn't really sound like he's being chased.

No, except for like the dramatic speed.

But that also could just be because he was intoxicated.

Like it doesn't add up unless Peter didn't catch up to him until after he left his cousins or something.

Okay, but like how would he know he was going to his cousins and not back to his mom's house?

And I mean, didn't the cop actually witness the crash?

He would have seen if someone was chasing Jerome.

I actually wondered the same thing.

So I had Nina go back and talk to that officer just to understand.
And I guess because of the layout of the road, the way it bends or something that you wouldn't necessarily see a second vehicle behind Jerome's if he was being chased.
Wait, so Nina actually talked to this guy?
Oh, yeah.
Yeah, she didn't interview with him.
Well, why not just ask him if Peter was there or not?
So she did, but he said that he doesn't remember if him and his uncle showed up at any point.
And to be fair, like he didn't handle Jerome's case.
He just witnessed it and called it in.
There was like a whole different police agency that actually investigated it.
And that agency, once they realized that Jerome was drinking and speeding, I don't think they really did a deep dive into what led up to it.
So that's kind of it.
It's written off as just a horrible accident.
And the siblings are laid to rest side by side Thursday, August 23.
Now, even at this point, investigators still don't know if Jade's death was a homicide or a suicide or what.
But as the dust clears from some of the more outlandish theories, they focus on a few people who always seem to be somewhere in the mix, starting with Peter.
Now, his aunt and uncle say that on the night of the shooting, they had some friends over to play poker.
Peter was there at times, but I don't know who had eyes on him when, because there were people kind of coming and going the whole time.
And it wouldn't have been all that hard for Peter to slip out and go to the apartment since they live down the street from each other.
Exactly, which I think is totally possible.
Now, what's super interesting is that Peter's aunt and his uncle tell two completely different stories about the night. Peter's uncle implies that they were home all night.
He says he even remembers hearing the initial dispatch on their police scanner when Jade's neighbor called 911.
And everyone's just sitting around listening to a police scanner?
Yeah, it seems like something that they like did, like they always had this on.
Oh, wait, so that could be how Peter knew about Jade, right?
I doubt it because, again, even men detectives didn't know who Jade was for a while.
So even if you want to say there's been a homicide, why does he know it's Jade in the apartment?
Maybe he knew. He said he was known for looking around.
He knew the address, just heard something happen on the scanner and knew it had to be her.
Well, Peter's uncle offers an explanation for how they learned about Jade's death, and it doesn't involve the scanner.
He tells police that two different women who called his wife that night are the ones who initially told them that Jory killed Jade.
But this is where things differ because his wife tells detectives that after her husband lost at poker, they went for a drive from like 8 to 1130, 1145 at night.

And she says, yes, she did talk to two women on the phone, but they didn't say that Jory was the shooter. In fact, one of them told her it was Jory who got shot. You know, I kind of want to chalk all this up to just a bad game of telephone. But when you have completely different stories of where you were that night, like from the start, it's kind of hard to write off. Right. And it's not just like, oh, our poker game ended at this time, but we were all in the house. Like you're saying you're driving around a car. You're saying you're all like sitting in your house playing cards. Two very different starting points. Now, as for Peter, he tells investigators that he ran a couple of errands, but was there playing poker during this crucial window of 1030 to 11 when Jade was shot? And he says he knows everyone's pointing the finger at him. He just has no clue why because he said he didn't even know Jade like that. I mean, she was his best friend's sister. So yeah, he's seen her around, but he says like they've never even had a conversation or anything. Now, when they ask him about the gun, he says he doesn't have any connection to it, but he said he wasn't surprised to learn that there was a gun in the apartment knowing Jory's brother, who remember, again, everyone's connected. Jory's brother is also Jana's boyfriend, but he tells them that the rumor about Jory being the killer came from one of those women who called that night, not him. What are the women who called and maybe didn't say that? This is a mess. It's about to get even messier because detectives go and talk to those two callers, but they don't get any clarity there either. Just a couple more stories. And remember that friend who called Jory that first night and told her that Peter was accusing her of murder? Yeah. Well, she gives a different account of that call. She confirms that Peter had contacted her and another friend and told them something happened to Jade, but she apparently doesn't say he mentioned Jory at all. What a mess. Who is telling the truth? No one knows. Maybe they're all telling their own versions of it. You know what I mean? Like maybe no one's outright lying, but everyone's memories are muddy. Ultimately, I'm not sure if detectives confirm Peter's alibi or how they would even do that since Jade's apartment is like a two minute jog from his uncles. But Peter is hardly the only person under suspicion because there's also Jade's boyfriend, Nick. Detectives learned that they had been dating for about five months and everyone knows that they were having problems. He had brought a ton of drama into her life by cheating on her with her friend. Plus, he admitted that they argued that night. So some wonder if he followed her back to her apartment and then waited for Jory to leave

and shot her.

But he tells police that he was with a big group of friends all night.

He says that after Jade called him, which again was like 1006, they didn't speak again.

And then a few hours later, people started calling him saying that Jade had either been shot or died by suicide.

He says that at first he didn't even believe it, but then her family started calling and he says that the calls turned threatening.

So he went to the station himself before police could even go looking for him.

Now with him, investigators are able to confirm his alibi with cell tower records and witnesses.

But there's still a question of whether someone connected to him maybe did something like that girl he was cheating with.

And then there's Jory.

Todd, that chief deputy major told us that he remembers catching her in lies.

For instance, when he first spoke with her by phone the night of the shooting, she apparently told him that she was a few towns away, but she was really like right outside.

And police consider her to be the last known person to see Jade alive, given that small window of time between when she says she left and when the gun was fired.

And while Todd doesn't seem to think that she pulled the trigger, he's wondering if maybe she was there when the trigger was pulled.

And what time did she pick up Janna from Walmart?

So that's the thing.

We know that the shot was fired right before the neighbor called 911.

That's at 10.54 when he makes that call.

Janna's shift ended at 11 and they both say that Jory was there waiting for her.

And the Walmart is like a 13 minute drive from their apartment.

So it's tight, but that should clear her of at least being there.

And I think investigators pull the Walmart surveillance footage to verify her story, but I don't know what exactly they find.

I do know that Todd remains suspicious that she might have information she's not sharing, especially after police hear about a previous incident at the apartment.

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They find out Jory recently had an argument with her cousin's boyfriend at the apartment,

and during it, she pulled out the same gun used in Jade's shooting. She tells police that it happened after a fight between the cousin and the boyfriend got physical, like he wouldn't leave, so she got the gun out from the entertainment center. But then a couple other guys took it from her, the fight stopped, and she says that was it. Then she got the gun back and put it back in the entertainment center. But that's a very, like, different and specific situation. I mean, it sounds like she might have felt threatened. Yes, but as detectives learn, there are also conflicting accounts about her and Jade's relationship because some people, including a couple of Jade's close friends, say that they didn't really like each other. But Jory and Janna insist that that's not true. Like, Jory said her and Jade were like sisters, and Janna says they never even argued. But she does think that Jade might have been maybe a little jealous of their friendship, and Jade didn't like when Janna let Jory use the car. Okay, but all that sounds a little bit more like typical, like, roommate or sibling arguing, though, not a recipe for murder. Yeah, and Janna's opinion is basically that the suspicion that fell on Jory after Jade's death impacted people's memories of how they really were. You know what I mean? Like the opposite of rose-colored glasses. Yeah, but it's worth noting that when police give a round of polygraphs, they give them to Jory, Janna, Nick, and Peter. Jory is the only one who doesn't pass. Her results for one of the questions, whether she was withholding information about Jade's death, that was the question that is inconclusive. But that might not be a huge deal for a couple of reasons. One, because polygraphs in general. In general, right. But two, we know that at the time she's taking this polygraph, she had been lying about how the gun ended up in the apartment. Remember, she's covering for her brother. Right, right. So yes, she's withholding information. It just might not be anything nefarious. Yeah, and actually speaking of Jory's brother, who we're going to call Isaac, police are eyeballing him too. He's not really a person of interest per se because he was in jail. But investigators wonder if maybe his lifestyle led to this. I mean, he was selling drugs at times from Janna's apartment. Maybe he screwed someone over and they wanted to send a message so they killed Jade. Just to be sure, detectives interview him in jail, but he refuses to even admit that the gun is his. And he doesn't say that anyone's out to get him or anything like that.

Well, and why would Isaac's enemies go after Jade?
Well, I don't know if they were hoping to get his sister or his girlfriend.
He could play into that wrong place, wrong time scenario.
And again, you see Jory leaving.
You don't know it's Jory.
I don't know.
But here's my issue with this like someone trying to send him a message thing.
What the fuck's the message?
They did a piss poor job relaying it because no one knows what the message is.
If this is a message at all.
That's a good point.
This is like, what?
Yeah, nobody, right.
We're all still like arguing this.
And if someone was trying to send a message,
again, unless the message was only to Isaac,
they're trying to send a message to everyone, I don't know.
And listen, there's so many theories going around.
Todd told us that even the sheriff's office is divided.
But to Jade's mom, Mary, it seems like investigators are convinced
that Jade took her own life.
Like that's the impression she's getting.
She remembers them questioning her about Jade's moods,
which she told them were almost always happy.
I mean, she just started her senior year of high school.
She had tons of friends.
She had this big loving family.
And she was looking forward to going off to college soon
because she had a volleyball scholarship.
But there are a couple of people that detectives speak with
who remember times when Jade was depressed.
For instance, the father of a friend tells them
that Jade once said something like,
maybe the world would be better off without me.
And we know she was definitely upset about the trouble with her boyfriend.
But you could go back and forth with this.
I mean, depression can be so incredibly nuanced.
Yeah. And also being a teenager is hard.
I know it was a long time ago for us, but like,
I had a thought like that, like, should I even be here?
And not that I was like actually contemplating doing anything,
but I was dramatic as hell.
And just to be clear, again, that's why we're like,
let's not take our journals.

Do you remember my journal?

Good Lord, Britt.

Like, yes, you read it to me a couple of years ago,
and I almost died laughing.

There's literally my favorite one that we were on the plane dying laughing
is like, I write about hell, which I love my life,
and then you turn the page, and the only thing on the page says,
I, without reservation, wish I was dead.

With no context, nothing.

I have no idea.

Like sharpies.

Yeah. I have no idea what I'm doing.

And of course, the next page is like perfectly fine too.

Doesn't bring up anything.

It just goes on with your life.

Yeah. And again, I just want to reiterate that for Jade,
most everyone says that she was a cheerful, happy person.

And so, like I said, it seems like some people were split.

By mid-September, Todd firmly believes Jade was murdered,
and he told us about half the department,
along with the medical examiner, agrees with him.

Over the next few months, as police get lab test results back,
they confirmed that the gun at the scene was used in the shooting,
and that it actually can be fired without a clip,
and that the magazine chamber lock is defective.

In fact, the clip fell partially out of the gun while they were testing it.

Oh, wow.

The only DNA found on the gun is Jade's blood,
and there are no usable prints.

Not so much as a fingertip on the trigger.

But the absence of evidence can be evidence too,
and Todd thinks that it was wiped clean.

Oh.

Yet he figures if she was gripping the clip tight enough for it to stay in her hand
after she fell, he's thinking there should be something left behind,
like oil or skin.

Meanwhile, gunshot residue test kits that they submitted for Jade
and Nick come back positive, which according to the lab suggests
that they might have fired a gun or touched something related to a fired gun,
or had their right hands close to a fired gun in a recent-ish time.

And it's worth mentioning that Jade was right-handed.

And what does Nick have to say about all this?

Nothing helpful.

He tells police that he hasn't fired a gun in years,

which is worth letting you know that GSR testing is pretty unreliable.
I don't think investigators really dwell on the results.
Like, it's, you know, it's polygraph-ish.
It's a thing, right?
Yeah, let's see if it helps us go in one direction or another,
but it's not the end all be all.
And I guess they knew that he was working on a car earlier that day,
which I guess can give false positives.
And I assume they tested everyone else and they were negative.
Actually, I don't know.
Because remember, we're missing a lot of reports.
So the only ones that I have seen are for Jade and Nick.
Now, as the new year rolls around,
authorities are no closer to making any official determination
about what happened in that apartment.
So finally, the coroner decides to do something unusual,
at least for Selene County.
He holds an inquest, which is basically a court hearing
where a jury hears about the case from investigators and witnesses
and then issues a verdict on the manner of death.
So on Thursday, January 31st, 2008,
the coroner tells the jury that Jade's case
has been among the most difficult he has ever worked on.
There's been a ton of hearsay,
but no concrete evidence to back anything up.
Police have chased a lot of plausible theories,
but there was always something that didn't fit with each one.
The jury hears testimony about the case,
about the lab results, about the polygraphs,
the ME even testifies that usually with time,
cases become understandable or clear,
but in the months since Jade died,
he still cannot make sense of the situation.
And the crime scene investigator tells the jury
that the positioning of Jade's body
just doesn't seem right to him.
Even Todd testifies that all things considered,
he thinks there is more pointing to homicide
than suicide or accident.
And at the end of the hearing,
the jury rules that Jade's death was a homicide.
Watching from the galley, Mary bursts into tears
because she has been waiting for this validation
ever since she saw the suspicious looking blood

on her daughter's face.
She tells reporter John D. Homan of the Southern Illinois
and that she is convinced her daughter's death
is connected to her son Jerome's.
And to her, maybe this is the start of finding out
what happened to them both
or at least getting justice for Jade.
But then after this,
nothing really significant happens for months,
not until September of 2008.
That's when a new lead shakes things up.
Investigators get a tip that Janna's boyfriend
slash Jory's brother Isaac, the one in prison,
might have information about Jade's death after all.
And he's willing to give it in exchange for a reduced sentence.
You're listening to Crime Junkie from Audio Check.
So they go see him in prison to see what he's got.
And he says that before he went to jail
back in the spring of 2007,
he and a friend met up with three men from Kentucky.
They had come into town to buy drugs from him,
but they started acting sketchy,
like they were going to rob him.
So Isaac zapped one of them with a stun gun,
took their money,
which was between like 10 and 20 K and fled.
That would definitely piss him off.
Uh-huh.
He says that he heard that they were threatening to kill him
and driving around looking for him.
In fact, he claims that one of the men
had been to Janna's apartment before the robbery,
and he was pretty sure that that guy knew
where the gun was in the house.
Although it's worth noting here,
like Isaac is still saying that the gun wasn't his.
But even if he came to the house before,
how would that random guy know the guns
in the entertainment center?
I mean, I don't think he would.
But what if it played out like that previous story,
like where some random dude shows up,
you get the gun to protect yourself,
and then they use it on you kind of thing?

Okay, but that doesn't work.
There was no disarray.
There was no forced entry.
And yeah, because Jade wouldn't have known these guys.
Yeah.
Right.
You'd see some disturbance.
And was the door locked when investigators showed up?
When they showed up, it was unlocked.
Okay.
And actually, there are two doors.
So there's a front door and then a side door.
Because remember, this isn't like a big apartment complex.
It's a small duplex.
But both the front and the side were unlocked,
which is how the police got in
after they saw Jade through the window.
But to your point, I mean, there's things about this
that are already not 100% lined up.
But it is still worth getting the information,
checking these guys out.
The problem is, Isaac says that he doesn't know their names,
although he is able to describe them and their cars.
So investigators contact Kentucky law enforcement,
who, surprise, actually seem to know exactly
who they're talking about.
A detective there tells them that two of the men,
brothers, have family living up that way, just outside of town.
And the third guy that they're talking about
has a past conviction for attempted murder.
And even the cars match the descriptions
of suspicious ones spotted near the apartment that night.
Which, like, all this is well and good,
but it doesn't really come to a conclusion or a story
or a how for this case.
You're right.
It is another brick wall.
And Mary thinks that it's not even true.
Like, she thinks Isaac was just looking to cut a deal.
And for whatever reason, maybe for all the reasons
you just mentioned, the lead seems to fizzle out.
At least, we don't have any other reports on it.
So the next thing that happens isn't until March of 2010.
That's when Todd asks a former FBI agent

who runs a forensic consulting firm
to evaluate Jade's case based on the crime scene.
In May, the consultant issues his report.
And it says, in his opinion, Jade took her own life.
He thinks that Jade held the gun with her right hand,
her dominant hand, supported by her left.
Which, along with the defective magazine lock,
could explain why the clip was found in that hand.
Now, in crime scene photos, there are blood drops
on her inner left arm that suggest it was bent.
While a blood drop on the inner arc of her sock
indicates to him that she was sitting cross-legged on the floor.
Which might actually also account for the trajectory of the bullet.
And all of that cast-off blood spatter on the coffee table and wall.
So he's taking all of this, combined with the positive gunshot residue test,
and he thinks it all adds up to suicide.
Okay, but I'm gonna keep coming back to this.
What about the blood flow on her face?
He doesn't even mention that in his report.
I have no idea.
The blood?
Yeah, I don't know why, because you can see it clearly in the photos.
And when you think about, like, if she was sitting upright
when she started bleeding, I mean, maybe that could explain
why the blood dripped on her nose and mouth.
And I'm gonna try and, like, work through different scenarios
of how we could get the pattern that it ends up being.
But just to kind of explain it to you guys,
the blood runs across her right cheekbone to her upper lip.
Then the line of blood splits in two,
and one line goes over her upper lip and stops abruptly
in, like, this little round spot on the left side of her upper lip.
And the other line that split off goes around the bottom of her nose,
then kind of curves around to the left side of her nose,
and then, again, stops in, like, a little round dot.
So at first, I was just theorizing how the blood dripped down her face,
and I was like, okay, maybe she was sitting and say she is.
Say her head falls forward before she ultimately falls back.
You would think that the droplets would have just gone straight down.
I mean, not necessarily.
Imagine there are big droplets you're facing down,
and then when you fall back, what's left of the droplets
kind of drip back down your face a little.
It actually kind of makes sense to me.

Maybe.

But, like, I would expect more paths.

I don't...

Well, I guess the problem I have with it is how long would she have been upright for?

In my mind, it's, like, a half a second or less.

I feel like we need an expert to actually, like, weigh in on this, because I'm only going off of guessing.

Poor...

Almost like a...

What is it?

Like, jury experiments like you're not supposed to do.

But, like, if you think about it, if you're sitting on a cross-legged, you have pretty good balance.

So maybe her head falls before she falls to one side.

The problem I have with that is if that's the way she was sitting, tell me how she ends up sprawled out in that starfish position.

Right.

Because I know it was at the top of the episode, like, an hour ago, but literally her arms and legs are both, like, sprawled out.

So I don't understand how you go from that to that.

Well, and none of this explains why there's a blood pool that's inches away from her head. I know.

I don't understand this at all.

I'm just...

Again, I've gone through every possible angle scenario in my head, and I'm sure every crime junkie is as well.

But also, keep in mind, the consultant's evaluation is based solely on the physical evidence collected at the scene that night.

So everything outside of that, from witness statements to the coroner's inquest transcript, does not count towards this.

Plus, he's not an expert in bloodstained pattern analysis.

So he suggests that the sheriff's office contact two independent consultants that he knows of for just even a second opinion.

But that doesn't happen because Todd says that the sheriff's office didn't want to spend the money. You're kidding me.

I wish I was.

Does Todd still think it's a homicide?

Oh, yeah.

But I don't know if his opinion ends up mattering because in July of that year, Todd actually gets arrested.

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So Todd, Deputy Chief Major Todd gets arrested?

Yeah, he is arrested after he's charged with sexual assault and official misconduct involving a 16 or 17-year-old intern at the sheriff's office.

Yet he's later hit with more charges involving the same victim.

And in September of 2011, when he's 44, he pleads guilty to one count of aggravated criminal sexual abuse. In exchange, the state drops nearly 20 other charges, which by then also include theft of governmental property for allegedly billing the sheriff's office for services related to his private business.

According to Scott Fitzgerald's reporting for the Southern Illinoisan, he gets a three-year prison sentence followed by two years of parole and he had to register as a sex offender for life.

I did not think that's where the story was headed.

You're not alone. And I am not trying to gloss over what Todd did, because all of that obviously brings his credibility into question.

Yeah.

And it also makes me wonder if he continues to disagree with his former institution about this case simply because he's got an axe to grind.

But he is not the only one who thought that Jade was murdered.

And I also want to keep our focus on where it should be for this particular case, and that is Jade. The reason I even brought this up is because Todd's crimes and later conviction had a devastating impact on her investigation, which just ends up stopping.

The consultants report is the last thing in the case file, and the media seems to forget her case too.

There wasn't even a single news article that we could find about Jade from 2011 on, at least until last year when her family had a peaceful protest hoping to reignite efforts. Why isn't anyone doing anything?

The current Todd Brass, including Sheriff Whipper Johnson, thinks that Jade's gunshot wound was self-inflicted.

So I think maybe that's why, though, they're quick to point out that that's just their personal opinions, which they claim has no impact on the case because the coroner's jury ruled it a homicide. So they say they have to treat it like one. But the sheriff also said that the jurors only hear quote-unquote

one side of the story at an inquest. So essentially, what he's saying is that they can be manipulated to get a particular ruling, which is what he thinks happened in Jade's case. Still, they told us that they do want to solve it no matter what, and that they're perfectly capable of putting their personal feelings aside and conducting an unbiased investigation. They're just saying they don't have any leads to investigate. But I have a hard time believing nothing can be done.

I mean, they admitted to Nina that they don't really know anything about the case all these years on. And the sheriff himself said that he hasn't even read any of the files. So how would they know that there are no leads? You know what I mean? I'd like to pause and note that Nina has gone through files that this sheriff has not. And he is confident she died by suicide. If he hasn't looked into it, how does he even know? Well, so this is the thing. He says that his opinion is based on a conversation he had years ago with a now retired state police investigator who thought it was suicide. And he just like, I guess must trust the guy.

So his analysis of this case is as good as some of the leads they've gotten in this case, essentially. I heard from a guy.

Yeah, but well, and here's what's wild too, is that he even told us, like according to Sheriff Johnson, the guy that he's taking this opinion from, he was only at the scene for no more than like 90 minutes and barely worked the case at all. So I don't even know if that guy knew the ins and outs the way that what now our listeners do. Yeah. What's weird though is Todd told us, and you know, with all his demons, it might change how seriously you take info from him. But Todd said that that same state investigator, the one that the sheriff is pointing back to, he says that guy actually thought it was a homicide and that the scene was staged. And obviously, like, let's talk to that guy. Let's see what the truth is. And Nina tried to contact him, but we still haven't heard back. It's so hard for me to buy this line that, you know, our personal opinions aren't going to affect this case. If they personally believe she died by suicide, they're just not going to make it a priority end of story. I mean, in fairness, when a family member gave them a lead to follow up on this past summer, they did reach out to the person. And at our nudging, they finally did contact a blood spatter expert who said that he wasn't willing to take on new cases and actually recommend they get another crime scene expert. But I don't know if that's happened because last we talked to them, they said that they were just going to look into it. Cool. But I think there is something they can do in the meantime if they're really serious about finding leads. There's someone with a lot of information who told us that she's never actually been formally interviewed. And that is Jerome's fiancée. Remember Jerome is Jana and Jade's brother. When we talked to her, she dropped a straight up bombshell. I know we're coming to the end of the episode, but like, get ready. So if you remember going back to Peter here for a second, Peter told detectives that he only knew who Jade was because of his connection to Jerome, but they had never like spoken, had no relationship or whatever. Well, Jerome's fiancée says not only did Peter and Jade know each other, they were romantically involved. What? Yeah. She says it wasn't like a serious relationship or anything. They were just briefly quote unquote talking as the kids say. I'm sorry, we said that as kids, which makes me think that that's not what the kids say now, but continue. Fair, but this talking or whatever it was was apparently just a few months before she died.

So did it overlap with Peter and Jory's relationship?

Probably. But apparently it wasn't Jory who Jade was concerned about hurting or even pissing off. Like the whole time she was concerned about Jerome. So I guess this is how Jerome's fiance found out. Like Jade had gone to her and told her she was worried her brother was going to find out because she knew he'd never approved since he and Peter were friends. Not to mention Peter was older and he had this like rough reputation. Right. So Jerome's fiance says that that conversation was the only time Jade ever mentioned Peter, although I don't know if it's part of that conversation or something else, but she does think that they might have hung out once. How does she know Jade didn't get more serious with Peter? Like maybe Jade just really kept it a secret after all that. I mean, she can't be certain, right? Like there's a lot of question marks around this. But as far as she knows, she said that Jade's focus shifted back to Nick soon after. And she thinks that Jade would have said something to her if things had heated up again with Peter. But what's wild is that hardly anyone was aware of this. Not even Jana or Jory or Mary. The only people we talked to who knew were Jerome's fiance and then one other close friend. And it's not even mentioned in the police reports, which wait, what if Jory did know though? What if that's the thing she was holding back could be as much motive as Nick and the other friend had? I mean, I guess it's possible. But I mean, in a town where everyone knows everyone's business, this seemed to be one of the more well kept secrets. And Nina says that when she talked to Jory, she was pretty convinced that she didn't know that there was anything happening. Literally, Nina played me the audio of her interview when she was talking to everyone. And when they all kind of find out together, there's literally like a gasp in the room. Oh yeah, yeah, it's not just they them saying that they didn't know. Everyone's like, wait, what? Nina was the one to tell them. Well, Nina was there when they all found out. Like I think Jerome's fiance said it. And everyone's like, wait, hold up, what? Oh my God. But like I said, at least I don't think the sheriff's office knows about this or has really dug in because again, as of the time that we interviewed Jerome's fiance, they had not. And that kind of brings me to another issue. I think the records we have are incomplete. The sheriff's office says that we have everything they have, which if true means that they're missing records. And we kept hearing about significant details that we can't verify because of that. And I don't know if it was never documented or if they were documented and were not just given access or if they don't exist and people are mistaken or making things up. One of the big things to me is Mary and Jerome's fiance remember seeing a footprint on Jade's front door like someone tried to kick it in. But Todd says there was no footprint and there's no mention or picture of a footprint in the files. And I actually do have some photographs of the apartment like when they were documenting the crime scene, but they're all black and white photocopies and there's no close-ups of the door. So I can't even weigh in on that piece. The one thing Todd did tell us though is he says that there was a bloody looking fingerprint on the outside of the front door, which the crime scene investigators forgot to lift. But when we asked the deputy who was the first in the door that night, who is now a major, he says he doesn't remember seeing that. Todd also says that the ME determined there was an impression of Jade's ear in that big pool of blood by her head, which indicated that she was also on her side at some point. But again, like there's not any record of that. That's not documented. That's not something we have a picture of. This is so frustrating. It is. And unsurprisingly, it's led to tension in the community. And even though a suspect has never been named, many locals have their minds

made up already. Jory says that the rumors of her involvement broke her heart and that to this day there are still people who believe them. She insists that she had nothing to do with this. She thinks that Peter killed Jade, but that the bullet was really meant for her. Also in the Peter Did It camp are Jade's family and other friends that we spoke to. They have various theories on motive or whether he had help and how it all unfolded. Todd meanwhile is split 50-50. He thinks it was either Peter or someone related to Isaac's drug activities. Maybe even those guys from Kentucky. Peter declined our interview request except to say that he had nothing to do with Jade's death. But he ran into more legal trouble over the years. Court records show at least four different women filed for orders of protection against him. He was even charged in an unrelated murder, but through a plea deal, he was only convicted of obstruction. Meanwhile, Sheriff Johnson says his office is willing to formally request assistance from other agencies, although he doesn't think any will want to help. But I hope they keep checking because I think that's what this case needs, help from another agency. And honestly, turning it over completely if possible would be a big step in the right direction because what this case needs more than anything is just a fresh set of neutral eyes and investigators who are willing to dig deep and try their best to get to the bottom of this once and for all. Jade deserves that and so does her family along with everyone under suspicion and even the whole community. There are two options you can take if you want to help push Jade's case forward. A civil rights attorney recommended to us that people write directly to the Illinois Attorney General asking their office to get involved. If you need help figuring out how to get that started, we actually have a letter form on our blog post for this episode that can help jumpstart you. But you guys can also reach out to the Sheriff directly because the Attorney General is more likely to step in if the Sheriff himself asked the state for help. So you can ask him to do that and also ask them to really deep dive into Jade's case since it was ruled a homicide no matter what they think happened. We'll have all the contact information for that in the show notes. You can find all the source material for this episode on our website crimejunkiepodcast.com and be sure to follow us on Instagram at [crimejunkiepodcast](https://www.instagram.com/crimejunkiepodcast). We'll be back next week with a brand new episode.

Okay, count me in because I am in the market for a new series right now.

Good, okay, so it's about this woman named Gabby Mosley. She was kidnapped as a child, escaped, and now she leads a team dedicated to finding missing people who no one else is looking for because she knows what it's like to be forgotten. But Gabby has a secret of her own. She is keeping her childhood kidnapper locked up in her basement. Oh, plot twist. I know, and actually I have a sneak peek of the first few episodes. So let's see what you think. I won't let what you did to me be for nothing, whatever it takes. I tell you what to help with and you help with quite the partnership. We're not partners, you're a monster. You think you're not like me? The ones that no one else seems to be looking for. I find them and I return them safely. You are so self-righteous. You kidnapped a child and you kidnapped a man. Build a profile and retrace her steps. We need to move fast. Your clients would never be found if it weren't for me. Tell me that you need me. You think you're in control, but you're not. Tell me that I'm your partner. You want to be here, don't you? Remove the chain and find out. That was intense. So her kidnapper helps her solve cases? By giving her an inside look into the mind of a kidnapper, exactly.

I gotta see where this goes.

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