

[Transcript] Crime Junkie / MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF: Molly Young

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

And the story I have for you today is about a talented young woman whose tragic death has been shrouded in mystery and controversy for more than a decade.

This is the story of Molly Young.

It's around 9 a.m. on Saturday, March 24, 2012.

And the Dispatch Center for the Carbondale Police in Illinois doesn't quite have the coverage it's supposed to,

because one of their dispatchers, 23-year-old Richie Minton Jr., hasn't shown up yet.

His shift started an hour or two ago, but he never showed.

One of the other dispatchers, Amber, has been trying to reach him when suddenly she gets a call, like through the 911 system.

And it's from Richie.

Now, the 911 call recording has a lot of background noise and chatter, so I'm not going to play the whole thing,

but I will play a little snippet for you, a couple of places that you can actually hear him, because Richie is calling to report that he just found his girlfriend dead.

And I need you to hear it, because he's eerily calm.

Amber.

Yeah.

This is Richie, my girlfriend, just committed to this fight.

Can I go ahead and hang up?

Yeah, I'll go ahead and hang up. I'll go ahead and send an email in that way, though.

You're welcome.

The full context of the call is that there's someone else with Richie, his roommate, Wesley Romack. And Wes is the one who originally called for help, but he quickly passed the phone over to Richie, and Richie told 911 that his ex-girlfriend was dead.

He said that he woke up and she was covered in blood, that she had overdosed and bled out through her nose.

Then he says the part that you just heard when he tells Amber it's his girlfriend who died by suicide.

Now, the girlfriend slash ex-girlfriend that he's referring to is 21-year-old Molly Marie Young.

And he's saying that she died by an overdose and bled out through her nose?

Okay, so he was saying that, like on the first call, and they hang up, whatever, they're sending ambulances.

But then, just minutes later, at around 9.10, Richie calls again.

This time on a non-emergency line directly to Amber.

Hi, enough, please?

Hey, Amber?

Yeah?

Hey, um, you sent the sergeant, she didn't OD, I just sent my girl and laying underneath her.

Okay, is it Molly?

Yeah.

Okay, yeah, we've got the sergeant on the way there.

All right.

Thanks, Amber.

[Transcript] Crime Junkie / MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF: Molly Young

I'm sorry that I'm late.

No, don't worry about it, Richie.

It's not a problem.

All right, thank you.

All right, you're welcome.

They're on their way.

All right, goodbye.

Paramedics arrive at 9.13 and discover Molly's lifeless body in Richie's room.

She's face up on the floor of Richie's small bedroom on top of some poster board between his bed and the closet.

She's fully clothed and there's some dry blood around her nose and mouth and lots of blood by the gunshot wound,

which is about an inch and a half above her eyebrow on the left side of her forehead.

Richie's 45 handgun is kind of tucked under her left side and her cell phone and a bottle of the antibiotic amoxicillin are near her feet.

I guess I'm confused.

How did he not see the gunshot wound to her head the first time he called?

I don't know.

That's the first of many questions you're going to have.

Now, when police get to the apartment, he's in the living room.

He's wearing pajama pants and he doesn't have a shirt on.

According to police reports, he seems distraught as he starts telling a sergeant about how Molly came over because he had drank too much and threw up on himself the night before.

And then he says he passed out after that.

And when he woke up, he just found her on the floor.

So she shot herself in the bedroom where he was sleeping and he didn't wake up.

So I guess it was he saying that was because he was so drunk.

But you think a gunshot just a few feet away from you, that would wake you up.

Well, he says it didn't.

And again, he didn't notice the gaping wound in her head when he called the first time.

Honestly, I don't know when or if he ever says anything about recognizing that as a gunshot wound.

Like he never talks about the wound.

What his story is, is that basically after 911 was called the first time, he moved Molly around to try and give her CPR.

And that's when he spotted the gun.

And that's when he kind of put it all together.

Okay, is he still drunk?

I mean, none of this makes sense.

I know.

I don't know.

What about that West dude, the roommate?

What's he saying?

Well, not much yet, but police are planning to clear the scene and bring both of them to the station for questioning.

But get this, Richie wants to get dressed first.

And when he asks the sergeant, dude's basically like, yeah, go ahead.

So Richie just picks up some shorts from the kitchen floor, ducks into the bathroom, and changes. I mean, I have a question as to why the shorts are in the kitchen, but also, are we just saying fuck basic crime scene protocol now?

Right.

Like, I don't know why they're letting him change his clothes and go into a room.

Or like supervising him.

I know.

I mean, is it like a professional courtesy?

I mean, he does work, I guess, closely with the police department.

There is no explanation in any of the records that our reporter Nina got through FOIA, or even the one she got from Molly's dad, Larry Young, as to why they let him do this.

But you might be on to something with that because Carbondale PD realizes that there is a conflict of interest at some point, and that's going to be an issue.

So they call Illinois State Police to take over the case.

But for now, Carbondale PDs still got their hands in the pie, so to say.

They kind of have to babysit Richie until the state police investigators arrive and they can help out with some of their early tasks.

Right, everything's kind of just paused for now.

Right.

And they're letting him, like, in rooms by himself to do whatever and changes clothes.

Uh, yeah.

Now down at the station, an officer stays with Richie as he calls his dad and tells him what happened.

And for the most part, his story stays the same, but he does elaborate on something.

He says that at some point after he conked out last night, Molly must have taken his gun out of the safe that he keeps it in, which he says she has the combination to.

Then he asks his dad to contact their family attorney.

And according to an internal state police email that Molly's dad Larry got in a records request, this is an immediate red flag for law enforcement.

Rick, can you read this for us?

Sure.

So this was sent from a state police investigator to a bunch of others at 1016 a.m.

It says, quote, the victim is the girlfriend of a Carbondale PD dispatcher.

The death of the victim was initially believed to be a suicide.

However, when questioned, the dispatcher suspiciously lawyer it up.

The incident is being investigated as a homicide.

End quote.

Ashley of all the suspicious things you've mentioned so far.

Honestly, this isn't the one that stands out to me.

You mean him getting a lawyer?

Yeah.

Yeah, it's a crime junkie life rule.

Always seems a lawyer.

Yeah, he's being held by the police.

That's the next logical step.

But I that's probably not the only reason that they're questioning Richie's story.

So they're looking at the whole picture supposedly sleeping through the gunshot, loitering up right away.

I mean, again, I didn't send this email, but they're thinking something, right?

It's being investigated as a homicide is what they said.

Now, Richie does drop a few details while waiting for his parents and attorney.

He tells detectives that his and Molly's year long, on again, off again relationship had currently been off.

You see, earlier that month, Molly found out she was pregnant.

And according to Richie, she decided to end the pregnancy against his wishes.

So they broke up like a week ago.

But in true messy breakup fashion, they still had been seeing one another.

Seeing like hanging out or seeing each other like romantically.

I mean, there was definitely still an emotional component to their relationship.

I don't know if there was anything physical at the time, though.

But last night was one of those like emotional support nights or whatever.

Like that's why she came over.

And she did have to come over because they didn't start the night out together.

Richie went out with some friends, including a woman who we're going to call Crystal, whom Molly didn't particularly like.

And throughout the evening, Richie and Molly exchanged texts.

And she told him that she was having thoughts of suicide.

She mentioned that she had tried to overdose on Thursday, but said that she must have fallen asleep before anything could happen.

Had she ever expressed thoughts of suicide before?

Well, according to Richie, at least, yes, she had.

So they're going back and forth in these texts leading up to when Richie came home drunk and started calling her.

Once he started doing that, she ends up coming over and he passed out.

And when he woke up, I mean, you know where the story started.

But that's about all the information police get because Richie's lawyer and parent show up soon after he says all of this.

But investigators have better luck talking with his roommate, Wes, who gives them permission for everything.

Like search the apartment, check his phone, do a gunshot residue test, whatever.

And he also tells them a bit more about Richie and Molly.

He says that he and Richie are like brothers and have been friends for nearly a decade.

He only moved in with Richie just a few weeks ago and since then he and Molly had actually gotten closer too.

But he says that he'd been worried about them lately because over the past week they both talked about suicide.

Neither had been coping well after the abortion.

Richie recently told Wes that the only way he'd be able to get away from Molly was to kill himself.

And Wes says it's common knowledge that Molly had thoughts of suicide for a while.

In fact, he says she had just told him about what she referred to as a recent suicide attempt.

Did he hear anything that morning though?

Well, at the time police think Molly was shot, which is around 4 or 45 or so.

Wes actually wasn't there at the house.

He works over nights as a baker and he didn't get home until like 5.45 that morning.

And when he got there, he says he saw what he assumed were Molly's shoes and purse in the living room, but no Molly.

And even when he passed by Richie's open door and glanced in, he just saw Richie asleep in bed alone.

But she must have been there by then because he tells police that when he plugged in his phone, which had died during his shift,

he got a few texts from her like all at once.

He sees that the first one was sent at 3.54 a.m.

And Molly told Wes that she was at their apartment taking care of Richie because he called her for help.

A couple of minutes later, she said that Richie was so drunk he couldn't even walk.

And the last text was sent at 4.40.

And Molly said that she was upset because she had found out that Richie was texting Crystal asking her to sleep with him.

Wes tells police that Molly then apologized if he came home to anything dramatic.

So after Wes gets all these all at once and he like reads them, he replied to let Molly know that he was home, that Richie was sleeping.

But he says that she didn't reply after that.

And then he says he didn't hear anything strange, no arguing, certainly no gunshots.

He says he's asleep by 7.30 and he woke up to Richie panicking saying Molly was dead and he couldn't find his phone.

So that's why Wes called 9-1-1 and then he went into Richie's room where he found him shaking Molly, begging her to wake up.

And Wes says that he was so rattled he couldn't even remember their address, which you can hear on the call.

So that's when he passed the phone to Richie.

Afterwards, they waited in the living room for first responders.

And he says he tried to keep Richie out of his room mostly because Wes knew that he had a gun and he didn't want him to shoot himself.

But at some point, Richie did go in.

And when he came out, he said that Molly had shot herself.

So did Wes ever see her body or the gun?

Well, he did.

At some point, he followed Richie into the room, but he says that he didn't see the gun, right?

He just saw Molly.

And he said that was really dark and the only light in the room came from a string of Christmas

lights that was hanging on the wall.

So this is like the most information police have at this point.

They obviously want to check his story out or as much of it as they can.

So they start with those texts that he says he got when he plugged his phone in.

Wes gives them his passcode and tells them to just have at it.

But when they dive in, the investigation takes a whole new turn.

Britt, can you read the last text that Wes got from Molly's phone?

Yeah, it says, quote, he was texting Crystal saying he needed her and asking her to sleep with him.

I think I'm going to shoot myself in the head.

I'm really, really sorry if you come home to that end quote.

I feel like Wes kind of glossed over all that, right?

Yeah, he says he doesn't remember her saying that.

I mean, if you remember, he told police.

Like dramatic.

That he might come home to something really dramatic, something like that, right?

Which sounds kind of like if we're in a fight, I'm sorry if you're like walking into that.

I feel like this text would be super relevant to mention.

Especially knowing now how she died.

And I don't know, maybe when he like initially read it, it didn't really register.

I mean, if he's reading this while at the apartment, the apartment is quiet, roommates sleeping.

I mean, the last thing on your mind would be that that actually happened.

I guess. Do police have Richie's phone?

Well, they do.

But here's the weird part.

Kind of along the lines of like changing your clothes.

He had it with him at the station for at least a half hour before they took it from him.

Awesome.

And just to triangulate everybody, what about Molly's phone?

So that's still back at the apartment.

What's weird too is Richie actually called Amber that 911 dispatcher while he was at the station.

And he asked her to have someone get Molly's cell phone from his apartment,

presumably to bring it to him so that he could get her family's numbers he says and contact them.

Because at that point, they didn't know what had happened.

And Amber passed this message along to cops.

But thank God, the cops at the apartment were like, yeah, this is a crime scene.

So no.

So you're not getting the victim's cell phone prime person of interest?

Yeah.

Thanks for asking though.

Right.

Richie was right about one thing.

Molly's family doesn't know what has happened yet because police haven't notified them.

It's actually not until early afternoon that troopers go to her grandma's house where Molly had been living with her grandma and her mom.

That's when they break the news to them both.
But her mom, Kathy, had already been worried.
Molly was sick and throwing up last night.
She told her mom that she thought she had the stomach flu.
Kathy checked on her earlier this morning at around 5.30.
Molly was gone and she wasn't responding to her mom's texts, which was totally unlike her.
Kathy went out searching for her and even cruised by what she thought was Richie's apartment complex,
but she couldn't actually find his specific unit.
According to Crime Watch Daily, it's Kathy who has to break the news to the rest of the family, her ex-husband, Molly's dad, Larry, and Molly's two sisters.
So what are they thinking right away?
I mean, do they think suicide is possible?
I mean, they don't know what to think about anything yet.
They know she had some struggles.
Molly was artistic and creative and talented, but she had experienced bouts of depression since she was younger.
Her grandfather died by suicide back in 2006 after being diagnosed with terminal cancer, and then actually Molly had a cancer scare of her own in 2010.
She had this mass removed from her neck, which turned out to be benign, but the whole ordeal took a toll on her both physically and mentally.
And her loved ones don't think that Richie helped.
In fact, just the opposite.
They tell detectives that he was verbally and emotionally abusive.
He would insult her, isolate her from her friends, and often use threats of suicide to manipulate her.
Her sister says that he's got a nasty temper and Molly was flat out scared of him.
But they were stuck in this toxic cycle of breaking up and getting back together.
At least, maybe, until this most recent breakup, because to her family, it seemed like even though she was upset about the split, she might have been trying to break away from him for good.
And one of the things that doesn't really add up for them about this is that according to her family, Molly was terrified of guns.
They doubt that she'd ever even held one.
So the idea of her actually using one to them is pretty much out of the question.
So are investigators planning on doing any GSR testing?
I know it's not super reliable, but it's something.
Yeah, I mean, unreliable is like a key term here.
Gunshot residue testing isn't the be all end all.
A lot of agencies don't even bother with it anymore.
But this case, at least in this one, they try.
They test Molly, Richie, even Wes.
But there's a big problem when it comes to the GSR testing on Richie and Wes.
Because Richie admitted to crime scene text that he's already washed his hands

presumably while he was in the bathroom changing his clothes.

And we know at some point, Wes did too.

So surprise, surprise, they don't get any off Richie's hands or Wes's.

And like you said, they check Molly's, right?

They do.

An unreliable or not, this forensic scientist tells investigators that if Molly shot the gun,

there should be at least some residue on her hands.

But there's only residue on her right sweatshirt sleeve.

That's it? No residue on anything else?

Well, not on her hands, but it is like about everywhere else in the room.

Like they end up finding some residue on parts of Richie's pajama pants and the shorts and shirt that he wore to the police station too.

Just not his hands.

No, right.

But note, stuff his hands had touched, right?

Yes, right.

Like even the new shorts that he pulled from the kitchen and put on.

And let me tell you about when they collected those clothes to test because something interesting happened to them too.

So they take Richie to the locker room because he's got some spare stuff in there.

Because again, he works here.

And when he starts undressing, police spot this.

I want you to take a look.

Uh, those seem really fresh.

Right?

They're like long and right on his back.

Wait, okay, hang on.

So if you're in the app, you're seeing the picture.

But for those of the listeners who aren't in the Crime Junkie app.

Oh, yeah.

What is it you're looking at?

So I'm looking at these two long, again, super fresh looking scratches on Richie's back, kind of near his armpit.

Mm-hmm. Police determine they're like six inches long.

Holy cow.

And how the hell does he explain them?

Okay.

The explanation is so bizarre.

There isn't a world where you can actually guess it.

But I want you to try.

What do you think his explanation is for how he has these two fresh scratches on him at the police station after his girlfriend, ex-girlfriend has died in his bedroom?

Um, he like fell on a nightstand.

I don't know.

I honestly don't even know.

I have no idea where to start with this.

He says that he got these scratches while he was giving Molly CPR.

I'm sorry, what?

Mm-hmm.

How?

I, that doesn't make sense.

And by the time he wakes up, Molly is deceased.

Like, I just want to make that clear.

Right.

Again, like, I feel kind of vindicated in that the nightstand is the only thing that could have done it at this point.

You could say a lot of things that make a lot more sense than what he said.

But that was his excuse.

Now, I can't bring up Richie's scratches and not tell you that Wes had scratches too.

And here, I'll send you a picture of those.

These are weirdly kind of similar.

I know.

So it's like, again, two scratches, like side by side, kind of like similar size length.

But Wesses are in the middle of his back, more like in a diagonal direction, like than Richie's, which are, to me, like horizontal.

Mm-hmm.

And Wesses look older scratches, like they've kind of been healing a bit scabbed over.

Yeah.

Not like as pink and raw.

And when he gives an explanation, he says that his job as a baker is fairly physical.

So he thinks that he must have gotten his scratches somewhere at work.

Okay.

I don't work as a baker, but I do bake a lot.

Maybe I'm doing it wrong, calling all bakers.

We have some questions.

Yeah.

I don't know.

Like, you back up into something.

Truthfully, I've gotten scratches worse than both these guys, and I'm a podcaster.

Right.

I've nicked myself at work with my kid, getting too rowdy with Chuck.

Like, I'm no dainty lady.

So for me, at least, it's not the scratches in general.

It's the placement on the back and specifically the freshness of Richie's.

And his story, the unbelievable story that went with them to, like, try and explain them away.

Right.

There are too many things that are describing and connected to these scratches to make it

make sense.

Yeah.

And not to give this guy any ideas, but, I mean, dude, you were out last night, supposedly blackout drunk.

So saying, I don't know, I got them while I was drunk is actually a way more believable story than while you were giving your deceased ex-girlfriend CPR.

I mean, was he that drunk, though?

Is that something they ever even tested for while they had him in custody?

Fine.

We'll go back to the story and not talk about all these weird things.

So I could spiral for hours, but this is not what we're here for.

So they do kind of test his blood alcohol level, but in actuality, kind of not.

Basically, one of the paramedics told investigators that she didn't smell any alcohol on Richie.

But by the time paramedics were at their house, that was hours after he'd stopped drinking.

And then by the time they were legally able to check his blood alcohol content, it was Saturday night.

So yes, they checked it, but the results were totally useless.

It's not going to tell them if he was actually drunk.

Right.

Blackout drunk when Molly was there.

After the GSR testing and finding the scratches, police start working on getting warrants, which means that they aren't fully processing the scene until after four o'clock that afternoon.

So Molly's body has been there all day.

Now when we talk about the scene itself, the place is messy, but there are no signs of a struggle.

From the looks of the blood near her body, investigators think that her head hit the closet door or fell really close to it when she was first shot.

And there's a trail of blood leading to where she is now.

So she was moved?

Yes, by Richie.

He admitted to moving her when he said he was doing CPR.

Besides that, though, there's not much blood in the room, just a little on the comforter and the muzzle of the gun.

And there's a casing by the bedroom door.

Now Richie's gun safe is still there in the room too.

It's on a table shelf beside his bed with the key right outside on the table.

But there's something about the way that the books and papers and stuff are stacked on and around it that makes investigators doubt that the gun was actually in the safe before the shooting.

So there's stuff that would have needed to be moved for the safe to open and it's all still there.

Yeah, we actually have, again, if you're in the app, you can see the picture right now.

Otherwise, you can go to our blog post.

We have a picture of this, and there is.

There's stuff all over it that you wouldn't imagine you would take it out and then reposition everything.

Right, right.

So something's off by not really off enough for the police to be like, yes, this is exactly what happened.

Exactly.

And unfortunately, when they do an autopsy on Molly, it's kind of the same thing.

The pathologist determines that her injury is a contact wound, which is kind of expected.

But there's no blood on her hands, which I guess usually you see that when a gunshot is fired at close range, especially a self-inflicted one.

There's usually some blood spatter on the person's hand from the recoil.

And even stranger is the fact that the pathologist determines the bullet entered two inches above her ear, angling slightly downward.

And this is strange because statistically self-inflicted gunshot wounds are more likely to have a side-to-side trajectory.

Plus, Molly was right-handed and her injury was on the left side.

So, I mean, again, probably statistically, it's less likely that she would hold the gun in her non-dominant hand.

Not impossible, but just not the most expected thing.

Well, and it doesn't make sense that she'd be holding it in her right hand across her body, over her head.

Right.

Does that make sense?

Yeah, it does.

And I mean, again, not impossible, probably, but against statistically doesn't seem likely. Right.

And either way, there's no residue, right, or cast off or whatever of the blood spatter we expect to see on either hand.

But despite all the lingering questions, the pathologist summarizes his findings like this.

Quote, the investigation conducted by the agencies involved indicated self-inflicted wound.

The manner of death is classifiable as suicide.

Wow.

End quote.

I was at least expecting, like, an undetermined.

I kind of was, too.

But I guess something had changed for investigators when they searched Molly's room the day before this autopsy.

One thing they point to as evidence of a suicide was a note written in Molly's handwriting.

According to Crime Watch Daily, it says stuff to Richie about wanting to be with him and apologizing for trouble they had.

She tells her parents that she loves them and it's not their fault.

Police also have Molly's journal, which goes back several years and is filled with entries

about wanting to end her life.

And I guess they even have digital evidence by this point.

Investigators discover more than a dozen suicide-themed searches on her laptop from Friday, March 23,

which is the day before she died.

And that same day, she chatted with an ex-boyfriend on Facebook Messenger, this guy named Brayton,

and she told him that she had been feeling suicidal for weeks.

The last post on her Tumblr page from 10.30 Friday night says, quote,

I never want to take another pill again.

Time for a new method as soon as I'm done throwing up.

End quote.

And her texts match up with Richie and Wes's stories too.

So that note you mentioned, was that written the night before her death too?

Well, so this is the thing that doesn't totally work.

Like the note wasn't laid out for her family to find.

It was under a jumble of stuff and there's no date on it.

Her dad eventually hears from one of her friends that he'd seen that very note months ago.

So her family kind of wonders if that wasn't like this goodbye note

because she planned to do something that night.

Maybe she wrote it back when she had that cancer scare.

As for the journal, even the newest entries are from months back.

And even though her toxicology test reveals a low level of the anti-anxiety medication that she was prescribed and some benadryl,

the pathologist didn't find any evidence of recently digested capsules or pills of any other kind.

So despite what she might have told Richie and Wes,

there's no apparent physical evidence, at least in her digestive system,

that she actually ingested anything to induce some kind of overdose.

But regardless, it appears like the findings in her room played into the manner of death ruling, although investigators deny that they pushed a suicide narrative when they spoke with the pathologist.

In fact, there is an investigation still underway.

And detectives want to nail down Richie's alcohol intake during the hours leading up to the incident because if he really did drink a lot, it could lend credence to his claim that he passed out and slept through an actual gunshot.

So detectives interview Richie's friends.

They try and reconstruct the hours leading up to the shooting.

And they learn that he spent a few hours at a local bar with a group of people, including that girl, Crystal.

Accounts vary on how much he drank, so investigators try to get the bar's security footage, but the surveillance system wasn't working.

But they actually have a legit reason.

So I guess you'll never believe this.

This was struck by lightning and wasn't operable anymore.

Truly, what are the odds?

Struck by lightning. I am so serious.

So they have to piece the night together as best they can without that.

They learn that once the bar closed at around 2 on Saturday morning,

Richie and his friends all went back to a friend's place,

and Richie actually drove there.

But once he was inside, it became clear that he was pretty intoxicated.

Crystal says that he was trying to get her to sleep at his place,

he even texted her about it while they were both still at the friend's house.

But even though they used to have a physical-sexual relationship years ago, she said that now was not the night.

She could tell that Richie was upset about Molly,

he was upset about the recent abortion.

So she just wanted to be there for him as a friend,

so she told him that she couldn't stay overnight.

She did drive him home though after seeing him trip over a coffee table

and realizing that he definitely shouldn't be on the road.

Now, they get to his place at around 3, she doesn't go inside,

but another guy either walks Richie to his door

or even went in and used the bathroom, not totally clear which,

and then this guy and Crystal leave.

Crystal says that she thought Richie was just going to go to sleep,

but according to phone records, it was right around then

that he started contacting Molly, asking her to come over and help him.

So it does sound like he was pretty drunk.

Yeah.

I feel like the best indicator of this would be his text messages.

We know what he said, but like how did he text them?

What was the typing?

What do you mean?

You know, like you know you're getting a drunk message from someone.

Oh, like misspellings or like it doesn't even make sense when they're that drunk.

Yeah.

Just like hot mess texts.

Were his messages in drunk person type, I guess.

Well, so there's this one.

So 3 28 a.m.

He texts Molly quote H E space P, which is end quote.

So presumably that's help.

But into your point, maybe in like drunk person texts or honestly,

I love you so much.

Ashley texts.

That's a really easy.

Yeah.

Well, I am the exception.

Like all my texts are drunk people tech, but here's what's weird.

Okay.

So we have this one from 3 28, but actually I can't tell you a lot of his other ones.

Like if they were in drunk speak, Ashley speak, regular texts, whatever, because investigators can't see most of his text messages, but they have his phone.

Yeah.

Problem is when they go to look at it, virtually everything seems to have been deleted by him.

That's the assumption.

But since police don't get to interview him at all after that first day,

I don't know what his story is about why there's nothing on his phone.

Okay.

Is it like everything, everything, just everything about Molly with Molly or like all the stuff on his phone from what Larry Molly's dad told us.

Larry says all of it.

Everything's deleted off his phone.

If Molly generally sent that text, it has to mean that she saw the texts between Richie and Crystal on his phone and they were erased after that.

If she sent it, yes.

But here's kind of a theory that her loved ones have.

They don't think that she did send that text to them.

It all seems to on the nose that text to West saying, I saw this message.

I'm going to shoot myself in the head yet.

They don't think she sent that and that's actually something that Richie brings up sometimes when he talks to people about Molly's death.

While talking to her ex, that Brayton guy, Richie says how devastating the whole situation was, but he also tells him, you know,

if Molly hadn't sent that text about shooting herself in the head,

I'd be in jail right now.

And there's other stuff that he's doing or saying that her family doesn't like or finds suspicious, doesn't mean the right word.

It's just strange.

Questionable.

Yeah.

Like Larry checks Richie's Tumblr page and he sees that weeks before Molly's death, actually the day she found out she was pregnant,

Richie reposted a quote from the infamous son of Sam serial killer.

Brick, can you read that part I highlighted on the police report?

Yeah, it says, quote, and huge drops of lead poured down upon her head until she was dead, end quote.

What the fuck?

Yeah, I don't know why he was reposting that,

but it's chilling to Molly's family, especially considering how she died.

And the more time that passes, the more convinced Molly's family becomes

that Richie orchestrated the whole thing.
And they worry that investigators will either be swayed by his version or even protect him since Richie is one of them.
I mean, he may not be a cop himself, but he does work with them as a dispatcher and his father's in law enforcement too.
So what her family does is they actually organize a Facebook group called Justice for Molly.
Larry tells KFBS reporter Carly O'Keeffe that they want to raise awareness about Molly's death and hopefully bring in new tips.
It's actually a group, a Facebook group, that I know a lot of our crime junkies are in because you all referenced it a ton when submitting this case to us.
So fast forward to mid-September.
Police call Molly's family in to go over some lab results that have finally come back.
You see, up till now, the family's been kept pretty much in the dark, so a lot of the stuff I'm telling you they didn't even know about at the time.
So when they get called in, they're thinking that they're finally going to get some answers.
But Larry told us that the meeting went sideways when investigators started reading heartbreaking entries from Molly's journal instead of sharing any forensic findings.
And when Larry finally gets a look at those results after the emotional roller coaster of a meeting, he feels vindicated.
He finds out there's DNA from three different males under Molly's fingernails.
One of them was Richie, but it's not clear who the other two are.
It sounds like police only sent Richie's DNA in for comparison.
Do we know any of the specifics on the DNA?
Like, was it blood or just skin cells?
No, all I know is that her fingernails were, like, intact, so no visible injuries, no blood on her hands, stuff like that.
No sign of a fight or a struggle.
No, not on her hands.
I mean, there are other ways she could have gotten his DNA under her nails.
If scratching, fighting is, like, the key way to get DNA under nails.
Shouldn't they be trying to identify who the other two male samples are?
I mean, they probably should be.
I don't know if they are.
But to your point, yeah, I mean, there are tons of other ways his DNA or these other two men's DNA could have gotten under her nails.
And I don't even know how much DNA we're talking about.
Like, I've heard in so many different cases that, again, like, touching someone, like, even just transfer.
So to me, if they're not looking for those other two,

I almost think you have to say it doesn't matter, right?

But I don't know.

Now, this is when the family learns that there's a lack of gunshot residue on her hands.

Remember, it was just on one of her sleeves.

But then her family also learns that her fingerprints are nowhere to be found on the gun.

And actually, not just hers, investigators couldn't make out any prints.

But Larry says that police didn't send Richie's or Wes's in for elimination.

Another thing that they find out is that there was blood on the lower part of Richie's pajama pants, which if you recall, they found GSR on those pants.

Now, I guess they can't tell if the blood is spatter, which might indicate he fired the shot, or if it's transfer, which he easily could have gotten from moving her.

So when police are sharing all these results with the family, are they telling them that they're in line with the pathologist, or are they saying they don't know what's the tone here?

I'm not sure if they share any thoughts on homicide versus suicide,

but behind the scenes, the lead investigator on the case,

this state police special agent named Aaron Cooper,

he thinks that based on the bullet's trajectory,

Richie was either standing over Molly when she was shot or standing on his bed,

which to me implies that he thinks Richie fired the shot.

But 2012 still ends in a question mark.

No one's been charged.

They're still not sure if she was killed or took her own life.

So in January 2013, the coroner holds an inquest,

basically a court hearing where a jury can hear all the evidence and determine her manner of death.

Now, it's at this point that a lot of the details finally come to light,

but it's not what her family expected.

Agent Cooper reads a series of grim texts between Molly and Richie,

and her and Wes leading up to the last one sent from her phone.

Then he outlines the suicide related searches that they found on her computer.

Then he reads a bunch of her journal entries detailing a history of depression and thoughts of self-harm.

And then he goes over the undated letter that they found in her room,

the one that police have been calling her suicide note.

He tells the jury that the gunshot wound is consistent with suicide,

although ultimately they don't know who pulled the trigger.

He says they couldn't pull any fingerprints on the gun,

couldn't pull any fingerprints on the magazine or the rounds because fingerprinting guns can be pretty tricky.

And he even has an explanation for why Richie might have slept through the shooting.

He says that the sound of a contact gunshot wound can be muffled

because the body absorbs and obstructs some of the sound waves.

Plus, depending on how drunk Richie was, he might have heard the shot

but didn't even realize the gravity of the situation or what he was hearing.

Agent Cooper also points out that none of the residents in Richie's building that they spoke with heard a gunshot either.

So maybe it's not that weird that he didn't wake up.

Although, just a side note, Tim Corbett, a private investigator working pro bono with Molly's family, told us that the decibel level of a .45 caliber gunshot is literally louder than a jet engine taking off.

And that's happening in his bedroom while he's there.

So, going back to the inquest, after 45 minutes of deliberation, the jury makes its call.

Or should I say no call?

The manner of death is undetermined due to lack of evidence.

Now, considering the pathologist initially ruled this a suicide, the ruling is kind of a victory for Molly's family.

But they're still mad because they think that the hearing was totally slanted because for all the focus to be on the journal entries, there were a lot of things that weren't brought up at all.

For instance, there was no mention about the DNA found under Molly's nails or the scratches on Richie's back.

And even when they went over Molly's social media, they never mentioned any disturbing posts from Richie

until Molly's uncle asked about it.

So to them, it seems like police are more interested in investigating Molly than Richie.

Well, wasn't Agent Cooper the one who had the theory about Richie standing on the bed for the trajectory?

Yeah, so he was, but that doesn't come up at the inquest.

And the thing is, I don't even know if the family knew about his theory at the time because it's not until after this inquest, when they're feeling so frustrated, they feel like it was slanted,

that's when Larry does this big foyer request.

And everything he gets is heavily redacted, which I know our reporters can definitely sympathize with.

And this is when he's really starting to piece together all the stuff I've already told you about.

Like, this is when he gets the 911 call and finally gets to listen to it.

And it makes her whole family sick to hear Richie's flat tone as he's telling dispatchers that Molly is dead.

And speaking of dispatchers, remember Amber?

Yeah, she was the one who got the call, then Richie called her back directly with the update about the gun.

Yeah, right. So if you remember the call, Amber had tried to contact him that morning because he hadn't shown up for work, right? Like, before she knew anything happened.

Well, Larry gets his hands on a statement that she made to police later that same day explaining all of the calls and texts that were going back and forth.

But, and keep in mind, this is still the same day Molly died.

Amber told investigators she didn't know exactly what times she messaged Richie because she had already deleted the texts.

What? Why?

She says that she didn't know she would have to write a statement.

Okay, does she just delete all her texts every day or something?

I don't know, but Larry thinks it's strange.

Same.

In fact, he asked Jackson County State's attorney, Michael Carr, if it could be considered obstruction of justice.

But apparently that doesn't sit well with Carr because Larry says that he threatens to shut down the case if he keeps pushing.

That's on July 1st. And then a couple of weeks later in response to a new FOIA that Larry submitted, Larry gets a letter from state police saying exactly that.

Basically, it's being shut down. The case is closed.

But when media gets word of the situation and questions Carr about this, he insists that it was just an error. The case isn't actually closed.

I don't know what happened, whatever.

Sounds like backpedaling.

Okay.

But at the same time, he says that he's also not going to be filing any criminal charges, that he's thoroughly reviewed the case.

And even though there are lingering questions, there's just not enough pointing to homicide.

In fact, Carr thinks that there is compelling evidence suggesting it might have been self-inflicted after all.

And he reiterates all of the stuff that came out in that inquest.

But he has this caveat. He's like, you know, that's not necessarily conclusive either.

And basically, if something new comes along, he'll consider it.

I'm going to be honest. That sounds like a very long-winded political way to say,

I'm not having anyone work on it.

Which is like kind of closed a little bit, right?

Like, yeah, no, it's not closed, but like we're just sit back and wait.

He talked in a circle.

But they don't have to wait for long because actually a couple of weeks later, something new does come along when another tenant who lives in Richie's apartment complex throws a wrench into the timeline that they've been working with.

This anonymous woman tells Crystal Britt, who's a reporter with KFES-12's Heartland News Eye Team,

that on the morning of Molly's death, a female officer knocked on her door just after seven and told her that there had been a homicide.

Shut up.

I know.

But the 911 call didn't come in until a few minutes after nine.

I know.

And it's not just this one isolated account.

There's this other woman who apparently doesn't even know the first tenant.

She vouches for a similar timeline.

She tells Crystal Britt that she clearly remembers that same officer at her door

between seven and eight that morning.

And she's adamant about the timing because she says that she is always up early with her kids.

But the Carpenter Police Chief insists that no officers were at the complex for Molly's death before nine.

He says maybe there's a slim chance that someone was sent to check on Richie when he didn't show up for work?

But even if that's the case in no universe with that officer,

checking up on a potentially oversleeping dispatcher would then go canvas the neighborhood and tell people there was a homicide.

Right.

You don't jump to homicide unless you somehow were, like, in the place.

And if you were in the place, then we're not getting a call at nine.

Right.

But then it begs the question, like, where are these accounts coming from?

Why would someone even be there?

And if it was some kind of cover-up, like, oh, you know, he's got connections to police, someone's coming to, like, take care of things before police actually get there.

This isn't a cover-up.

Why would an officer go around announcing a homicide that you're trying to keep a secret?

This is giving me major Joanne Matuke flashbacks.

I mean, will both cases have connections to law enforcement?

So maybe that's not a coincidence?

I don't know.

But mystery officer announcing a homicide aside,

her family thinks it speaks to a bigger issue, which is the thoroughness of the investigation.

Larry says a lot of Richie's neighbors were never interviewed at all.

And he's frustrated because he feels like authorities are just waiting for evidence to fall into their laps.

At one point, Larry publicly calls for Michael Carr to recuse himself and turn the case over to a special prosecutor,

which after some back-and-forth Carr actually does.

Enter Ed Parkinson.

His marching orders are to leave no stone unturned, review all the evidence,

do more investigating the whole nine yards, and determine if there is enough to go for an indictment.

Which is something at least.

Yeah. To Molly's loved ones and the growing legion of supporters that have joined the Justice for Molly movement,

this feels like a flash of hope.

Maybe fresh eyes can reinvigorate this case.

According to Carbondale Times reporter Jeffrey Ritter,

a detective speaks with 10 other witnesses from nearby apartments,

tries to speak with one of the anonymous tenants who told the media police were on the scene prior to the 911 call,

but she apparently gave them the run around and then they didn't learn anything new from the other residents.

So she's scared or she was straight up lying?

It's one of the two, right?

So maybe we just have to, like, discount that.

Maybe there was never a mystery officer, like, focus on the people we actually know were there.

They interview Wes again, who this time mentions a totally new detail.

He now says, after he got home that morning, he found Richie's phone in the bathroom.

And he says that he started going through Richie's phone, like, through the text to see how his night went because he was worried about Richie.

But he also says he didn't erase or send any texts.

And he's just now remembering all this?

I guess. Again, it's like one of those, he already downplayed the text that he got, and then he just forgot to mention that, I don't know, it's weird, right?

But I don't know what it means.

Yeah, either he has been keeping it intentionally or he has no proper hierarchy of information.

Now, even during this reinvestigation, it's not like Larry and the detectives become buddies.

He often hears updates on his daughter's case from the media rather than police.

And there are endless FOIA fights.

But it finally all culminates to a wrongful death lawsuit in June of 2014 that Larry files against

Richie, hoping that this is going to compel people to release the information he's looking for.

In his complaint, he alleges that Richie lured Molly over to his apartment in order to do something bad or illegal.

Like what?

Let's just think it doesn't say, like the lawsuit doesn't mention what he thinks this bad or illegal thing is.

And did he tell Nina our reporter?

No, based on everything I learned, it sounds like he's accusing Richie of calling her over so she could be killed.

So like, I think he's saying that maybe the illegal activity is like murdering her.

It's very confusing to me.

Anyway, Larry alleges that while she was there, he caused her death, meaning Richie, either by shooting her or giving her the gun.

And afterward, he says Richie did everything he could to conceal the shooting, wiped his prints off the gun, waited hours to call for help, told 911 she overdosed.

He even suggests that Richie planted the pill bottle of antibiotics that was at her feet to push some kind of narrative and then refused to cooperate.

Now, when this gets filed in the courts, Richie asks the court to dismiss it because it's past the two-year statute of limitations.

And in November 2014, while their arguments are under review, Special Prosecutor Ed Parkinson finally releases a report on his investigation.

But it's not good news for Molly's loved ones.

Parkinson says there's not enough proof to charge anyone with murder.

And I'm not going to go over every detail because a lot of it has already come up and we'll have links

to his report along with the family's rebuttal in our show notes.

But to sum it up, Parkinson says that a lot of the evidence Molly's supporters see as indisputable proof that she was killed is actually open to interpretation.

Take the scratches on Richie's back.

Combined with his DNA under Molly's fingernails, that could mean that the two of them got into an altercation.

Sure, but there might also be an innocent explanation like if Molly accidentally scratched him while helping him to bed.

Or that his DNA under her nails didn't necessarily come from that at all.

Right, or they're two separate things.

Ultimately, the prosecutor thinks pretty much everything is inconclusive.

Although whatever happened, he doubts Richie deliberately lured Molly to his apartment to kill her.

And he says there's not a shred of proof to suggest Carbondale PD or state police ignored or manipulated evidence to protect Richie or his family.

But Larry pushes back and says that Parkinson's report is filled with omissions and half truths.

He told Crime Watch Daily that he definitely thinks it's possible that evidence was tampered with, specifically by Richie's father.

Okay.

And what he's basing it off of is back when they got Richie's phone and saw that all of that stuff was deleted.

I guess they tried to recover his data, but for some reason his phone wouldn't connect to the extraction tool.

And listen, there are a lot of good reasons why that could actually happen.

But there are also nefarious reasons.

We don't know what the reason was in this specific instance.

But what Larry finds interesting is that at the time of Molly's death, Richie's dad was a detective supervisor in a nearby county sheriff's office, and he specialized in digital forensics and cybercrime.

Oh.

Yeah, according to his own LinkedIn page, he has testified in court as an expert witness in digital examinations,

and he knows how to use the exact data extraction system that failed to connect with Richie's phone.

So have his parents ever been connected to any of this in any way?

I feel like this is the first time you've even really mentioned them.

No.

Investigators have asked them about whether they, you know, even went to help him or help tamper with electronics or whatever,

and his mom and dad both deny it.

So they have never been officially connected.

And again, there's no link here.

It's just like he had experience with this connection device the end, right?

Like it's not a hugely strong link.

Right, right.

At the end of the day, to Molly's family and supporters, their bottom line is this.

No matter how Molly felt emotionally, even if she said she wanted to take her own life, honestly, even if she did want to take her own life, they believe that the forensic evidence points to homicide.

But two different state's attorneys have said otherwise.

So where does this leave the case?

Well, according to an article in the Illinois Bar Journal by Matthew Hector, after Larry's wrongful death lawsuit was dismissed because of the statute of limitations, he advocated for legislation changes.

In 2016, Molly's law was passed to strengthen Illinois' foyer process and extend the time that people have to file wrongful death lawsuits in, like, certain cases.

But is Molly's case just closed?

I mean, it's actually never been closed.

In fact, it's finally active again.

A man named Joe Cervantes unseated Mike Carr for state's attorney in 2020.

And when he was running for office that year, Cervantes told Daily Egyptian reporter Geaton Yates that if he was at the helm when Molly was killed, based on what he knows of the case, he would have prosecuted Richie.

And this year, he filed a motion to basically unrecuse the Jackson County office from the case so the case is back under his jurisdiction.

When Nina spoke with him over the summer, he was trying to tie up some loose ends and run down some leads.

And he says that he knows that this would be a difficult case to prove.

The evidence is complex and there are questions that still need to be answered, but he believes that there are paths forward to at least explore.

Because he thinks that there was foul play involved in Molly's death.

And although he thinks the investigation could have gone better, he doesn't believe that there was any intentional misconduct on the part of law enforcement.

Now, we reached out to Richie for this episode, but never heard back.

As far as we can tell, the only public statement he made was in 2013, when his lawyer told reporter Crystal Britt, quote,

Sadly, nothing that Richie or I can say or do will change the feelings of those who refuse to accept the facts of this tragedy, that this lovely young lady took her own life.

So please do not mistake the lack of comment as evidence of wrongdoing, end quote.

He's not with the Carbondale Police Department anymore.

He's got two DUI convictions and at some point we know he moved to Missouri.

And he now works as a lead dispatcher for the St. Louis Fire Department.

Richie has never been charged with anything related to Molly's case.

Neither has Wes, who's never even been called a suspect.

But we couldn't get in touch with him either.

If you want to check out the Justice for Molly Facebook page, we will link out to that in our show notes.

If you're interested in learning more about the case and what's next.

And if you or someone you know is dealing with suicidal thoughts or is a victim of domestic violence, help is available.

[Transcript] Crime Junkie / MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF: Molly Young

We have contact information for the National Suicide Hotline and National Domestic Violence Hotlines in our blog post and show notes. 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. Let's get started. Crimejunkie is an audio chuck production. So, what do you think Chuck? Do you approve?