

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

Tonight on DaveLine.
Run! Run!
It's post-pounding footage.
Do that! Move!
It's a train. You can't stop it.
You're being railroaded. You're like, how do I stop this?
Someone with a finger in my face going, you killed your wife.
These women had located a body.
The woods is very thick and almost impassable.
I kept pushing these vines.
That's when I saw Emily.
There's some sort of cord wrapped around her neck.
The question is simple. Is this homicide or suicide?
It didn't look like a suicide.
I think this is a murder case.
You f***ing killed her.
Oh, I didn't, sir.
They did this thing to try to rattle me.
You killed her. She's dead.
They searched the house, the attic, the car.
They find nothing.
Why have the cops fixed on him?
It's an easy fix and an obvious one.
The first suspect is always the spouse, right?
We don't know her journey. We don't know those last minutes.
Did you do that, Matt? Did you kill your wife?
What are you saying?
I want to hear you say it.
Why do you feel the need for me to say that?
I'm Lester Holt and this is Dateline.
Here's Dennis Murphy with The Clearing.
She absolutely loved the woods.
That's something everyone can agree on.
Deep in the forest, Emily nourished her soul in the joyous quiet.
It's where she found peace and even food for her table.
Did she also go there to escape?
People here in Westerville, Ohio still wonder about that.
It is a big mystery.
I would just love to know the details, what happened,
what really happened that night.
Take a look. What do you see?
For most of us, it's just a snarl of bushes and brambles.
Emily Noble saw that and something else.
Maybe a salad and a soup for dinner and herbal tea.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

She was obsessed with foraging the art of discovering food in nature.
She shared her passion with friends like Celeste Gron.
She had a book that was like four inches, maybe even thicker,
and it had every single plant in it and she could identify what they were.
She'd like to go out and forage around her neighborhood,
which I think is really cool.
Emily's friend, Crystal Williams, bartends at Dick's Den,
a music venue in nearby Columbus, one of Emily's favorite hangouts.
She was way into live music and she used to love to come here.
I've cut a rug with her on the dance floor many times.
I would say Emily was very much a free spirit.
She just was this little fairy. She just had so much light and energy in her.
People were drawn to her neo hippie, tiny dancer spirit.
Friends like Wendy Carney Hatch.
Just really cute, really adorable with dark curly hair and bright eyes
and beautiful teeth, great smile.
And when she walked, there was a little rhythm to her step.
It may have seemed that Emily was dancing through life, but it hadn't been easy.
She'd survived a lot of crushing sadness over the years.
And in 2020, as the pandemic took hold, life got particularly hard.
Like so many of us, Emily and her husband Matt were in lockdown.
But on Sunday, May 24th, Emily and Matt wanted to get out and celebrate.
It was Emily's 52nd birthday. It was also Memorial Day weekend.
So they dipped their toes back into the local nightlife scene with a trip to some bars.
It was right after the bars reopened from COVID.
And they were the only people I had for the time that they were there.
They were there for about 45 minutes.
Jessica Selfridge was tending bar that night.
She had time to observe her only customers.
We talked a little bit about like COVID things.
Like I had to wear a mask, for instance.
And they told me that since it was her birthday,
they were going to continue to kind of bar hop a little bit.
Emily and Matt got home around 7.
Night turned into morning into afternoon.
At 2.47 p.m. on May 25th,
Emily's friend Celeste Grone got a call from Emily's phone.
So I picked up and I said, hi, Emily.
And it was Matt.
And he said, is Emily over there?
And I said, no.
And he said that they were supposed to go to a party in the afternoon.
And he hadn't seen her.
And she hadn't returned from a walk in the morning.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

And he was assuming it was a walk.
And I said, well, is this normal?
And he said, no, it's not normal.
And I said, call the police.
Celeste jumped in her car.
Matt got back on the phone.
My wife has been missing all day.
Her purse is here with her IP.
Her car is here with her car keys.
And her phone is here.
With his body cam rolling,
Officer Rob Hollis of the Westerville, Ohio Police Department
arrived at Emily and Matt's home.
There was some momentary confusion after Matt came to the door
because Celeste was just arriving too.
And Matt did a double take.
He's like, oh, there she is.
You, he's looking at you.
Thinking I'm Emily.
You look just like her for like a second.
Oh my God, there she is.
OK.
Matt Moore.
Officer Hollis.
Hello.
Hi.
Celeste.
In a matter of minutes, Officer Hollis got most of the story.
What's going on?
He heard how Matt and Emily had gone out the night before,
how they came home around 7 and went to bed early.
Matt said he woke up after midnight.
I get up in the middle of the night sometimes to go to the bathroom.
And I don't go back into the bed because I don't want to wake her up.
So I end up in this bedroom on a second bed.
He told the officer he was noodling around on his phone till the wee hours.
Not falling asleep again until around 6 and not out of bed until after 10 a.m.
That's when he says he first noticed Emily was gone.
He didn't go out to look for her, but said he waited.
Waited for hours.
I was just waiting for her to tell me when we should go.
I texted her twice and said we wanted to party.
She didn't give back to me.
He used the phone finder app and learned her phone was still in the condo.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

He thought maybe she went to the woods nearby.
She forages, she goes for walks and she picks wild edibles.
That's kind of our hobby.
She goes around here.
It's a real short walk.
It's 15 minutes the most.
A lot of the time I was like, well maybe she's just out doing that.
The officer's quick check of the condo revealed nothing in disarray.
No surprises.
Emily, it turned out, was a housekeeper extraordinaire.
That garage was immaculate, the house was immaculate.
Yeah, Emily was very neat.
She's really meticulous.
This is uncharacteristic.
She would never go somewhere and not tell you where she was from.
So I see that the bed was made.
Did you do that or she did that?
I just noticed that.
You're right, I didn't make the bed she did.
That bed was made when I got up to that.
So she was, I'm guessing, here this morning.
The officer took off for a few minutes to speak with colleagues outside,
then returned with some news.
Your neighbor saw her in the garage about between 9 and 10 a.m. this morning.
He said she was just standing in the garage.
Awesome.
She was leaving.
He saw her.
She was just standing there.
He said hello.
She said hello.
So we know she's somewhere around.
Okay.
That seemed reassuring.
Maybe the case of the missing Emily Noble would be one big false alarm.
She'd come walking through that door any minute.
Wouldn't she?
The town of Westerville, Ohio was waking up to a brand new day.
And Emily Noble was still missing.
Her husband Matt hadn't seen her for more than 24 hours.
And now Westerville PD detective Steve Grubbs was reading the responding officer
to report about the visit with Emily's husband Matt Moore.
On my own, we proactively pulled up that report and read the narrative to it.
And something about it just didn't sit with me.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

What made you know his twitch about it, if that's the right word?

Yeah.

That inner gut feeling.

It just felt like something was off.

Turns out the neighbor's account of seeing Emily that Memorial Day morning had gotten fuzzy.

Now he wasn't so sure when he'd seen her last.

Detective Grubbs figured this missing woman's story needed a deeper dive.

He asked to be assigned to the case and then headed to the condo with some other officers.

She'd never been gone this long before.

She's not at all like this.

So our next step was this bloodhound to see if we could get a track someplace.

By noon, a bloodhound was tracking Emily's scent.

The dog led investigators to a gravel drive between two houses just a few blocks away.

They knocked on the doors. No one answered.

Detectives asked Matt Moore to take them to the nearby woods where Emily liked to walk.

Matt actually showed Detective Peachy and I that the area that they would go and forage.

Grubbs and two other detectives returned to the spot a little later.

Looked around, didn't see anything interesting.

As police got to know Matt, they also learned more about Emily.

Tell me about Emily Noble. Who is she turning out to be?

She seemed to be a hard-working woman, worked for the state of Ohio.

She worked at the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

She and Matt had been married for two years.

Matt had worked the tables in a Las Vegas casino before he left that job and moved to Ohio.

Matt did not work, is that correct?

He did not work. His mother had passed away and left him a sizable sum of money so he didn't really need to work.

The routine. He cooked, she took care of the house.

They hung out, drank a bit, sometimes a lot.

And when the COVID lockdown took hold, Emily started working from home.

But life was rarely easy for Matt and Emily.

He died a lot of death in her life.

Yes, yes she had.

She had a husband, right?

She had a previous marriage and ultimately Mark committed suicide.

By gun?

Yes, sir.

Wendy remembers how much Emily loved her first husband.

How awful it was when he died in 2011.

After Mark passed away there was, there was a couple years that were pretty dark.

She would get just really sad, you know.

Emily's parents died a few years later in sudden accidental deaths.

Those who knew her say Emily turned to nature to heal herself.

Chris Barton, a lifelong friend, said Emily put aside her own sadness by looking out for the people

she loved.

Thinking about them instead of thinking about what was going on with her, I think a lot of the time.

Gave her something to concentrate on if it wasn't, that it wasn't herself.

She kept a photo collection of the edible plant she grew and collected.

A visual progress report of her devotion to foraging.

She often foraged in this woodland park.

We took a lot of pictures with our phones.

And it was just a place you could sit and just let nature be around you.

She was a very good photographer.

She really liked sunrise and sunset.

She loved fog and water, nature, obviously.

She took a lot of selfies, so many selfies.

Four years after her first husband died she met Matt and now he was part of the picture.

Matt took this one showing him and Emily and his son Joey.

This was their family unit because when Matt moved in with Emily, his teenage son did too.

Police noticed that Joey was a painful subject for Matt Moore.

The morning he reported Emily missing, he mentioned Joey right away.

I have a gut feeling right here when my son died.

That was a terrible story.

By the time Matt and Emily got married, Joey was suffering full-blown schizophrenia.

Emily and Matt were doing their best with him, but nearly a year into the marriage, Joey died by suicide.

Just 17 years old.

He was found hanging in a nature preserve in Westerville.

This was the second child Matt lost.

The first son was only a toddler when he died of a sudden illness.

I can't even imagine.

Matt's friend, Arturo Ruggioli.

Tell me about losing Joey and what that meant for him.

It was oblivion.

There was nothing left of the person who he was for a while.

Emily was also devastated by Joey's death.

And now she was missing.

Talented, complicated, beloved Emily.

Westerville police are searching for a woman who has been missing since Memorial Day.

Calls poured into the police tip line.

Emily seemed to be everywhere.

She's at the grocery store, she's at a homeless shelter, she's sleeping under a bridge, she's sleeping in a doorway.

The Westerville PD chased down those tips, but nothing led to Emily.

They headed to the bar where Matt and Emily were seen the night of her birthday.

When I talked to the detective, he told me that she had gone missing and asked me how they were behaving that night and everything like that.

They had the kind of banter that was like, they were very lovey-dovey one minute,

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

and then they would be more so like, there was tension the next minute.

There wasn't much more to tell.

But police did have one solid clue from those bloodhounds.

Remember, they tracked Emily's scent to that driveway a few hundred yards away.

Was that telling police something?

Did she voluntarily get into a car in that driveway and take off?

Was she dragged there and, you know, kidnapped?

All good questions.

Maybe police were looking at a stranger abduction.

Or maybe the disappearance of Emily Noble had nothing to do with any stranger.

Guys, I did not hurt my wife. I did not hurt my wife. I loved her.

The Westerville PD was working the case of the missing Emily Noble, tracking down tips following leads.

That driveway where bloodhounds lost Emily's scent,

detectives went back to the two houses there and interviewed a homeowner.

The people that resided there had no interaction with Emily, had not seen or heard anything, and they were ultimately cleared altogether.

Dead end.

I feel like we were trying to catch a ghost at that point because we didn't know what we were dealing with.

You know, is she suicidal? Was she kidnapped? Did she run away with a boyfriend?

All viable threats, theoretically.

At that point, absolutely.

Another viable threat, of course, was Matt.

Investigators keyed in on the fact that he didn't even go out looking for Emily before he reported her missing.

He didn't leave the house, didn't do any sort of searching on his own, just kind of hung out at the house.

Police started hearing troubling things from her friends about her marriage to Matt.

What is he doing during the day?

Drinking.

Really?

Oh, Emily would get so mad if he was drinking during the day.

She said, do you need to wait till I get home from work?

Wait till the bell hits five o'clock.

All right.

Emily's friend Wendy detected unhappiness in one of those photos from the night before Emily disappeared.

She's looking at the camera, kind of steely eyed, and he looks like he's crying.

And I just think that picture is worth a thousand words.

Others called the detectives with speculation about darker things.

They felt that he was almost controlling.

They felt that when Matt was in the picture, Emily was not her normal self anymore.

There was never anything specific that Emily said that Matt has done this to me,

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

but it just seemed to be a lot of speculation from the friends that something isn't right with Matt. Two days after Matt reported Emily missing, the husband agreed to sit down with detectives at the police department.

This is a voluntary interview.

Okay?

Obviously, we need to do the best we can to get the full story.

Anything you say can be done.

Detective Grubbs read him his rights, began probing about events before and after Emily's disappearance,

and broke the news that John Cramer, the neighbor who said he'd seen Emily the morning she disappeared,

now couldn't be sure of the timing.

John, this one's backtracked.

Okay.

Yeah, that's kind of up in the air.

And he really said, like, eight to nine, and then he's now saying, I can't.

He's saying, I can't.

He swear to it.

And he's saying, eight to nine, could it be Sunday?

So that makes it look bad for me.

They turned to Matt's relationship.

He'd handed over Emily's phone, and they'd been going through it.

They asked Matt to rate his marriage.

So the scale of one to ten relationship with her, ten being bliss every day, honeymoon, like a honeymoon,

and one being you can't stand each other.

I'm just asking, what would you rate it?

It would fluctuate, like a sine wave.

But we were on since six months, it was an eight.

Class six months?

Absolutely.

And eight out of ten.

But then detective shared a text they'd found from Emily to a friend.

This was a month ago, okay?

This is heavy.

Matt picked a fight with me yesterday and said some awful things.

I'm not wearing my wedding ring.

That doesn't sound like somebody who's in a happy relationship.

I thought my wife texted that to somebody a month ago.

I get it.

I'm not going to say that those things, of course, there was a roller coaster in the relationship, but it wasn't like anything that you would think that someone would hurt someone over.

It's not as heavy as you think it is.

She would be like that at times because of her anger issues.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

It always swung back.

What about some of the things they'd heard from Emily's friends that maybe there was more going on than a burnt-out romance?

One even suggested Matt had hurt Emily.

There was a time within the last year where she had bruises on her.

This friend of Paula.

Don't I roll yet?

I know.

Let me get it out.

Where the friend was concerned that you were being physically abusive towards her.

It never happened.

I don't know where you're going with this.

Again and again, Matt insisted he would not harm Emily.

Guys, I did not hurt my wife.

I did not hurt my wife.

I loved her.

He took off his shirt when they asked and showed them he had no scratches, no bruises.

And at the detective's suggestion, he agreed to take a voice stress analysis test, a type of lie detector.

The tension in this tiny room was about to explode.

You f*****g killed her.

No, I didn't, sir.

F*****g I didn't.

I didn't kill her.

You killed her.

After an hour and a half in a cramped interview room, the detectives prepared to give Matt a kind of lie detector test called a voice stress analysis test.

I want you as relaxed as possible.

What the micro?

What's up?

Detective Grubbs told Matt a computer would measure the stress in his voice when he answered questions.

Some random, some not.

Do you know where Emily is?

No.

Is this the month of May?

Yes.

Did you kill Emily?

No.

Voice stress analysis tests are considered unreliable by many experts.

Still, the police told Matt the results of his test indicated deception.

I don't know what happened to Emily.

I don't know what happened to her.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

I failed this test, I failed it.

The detectives kept returning to the question at hand.

What do you think happened to Emily?

I would be guessing, but I think she heard something.

How do you think she heard something?

She would say that she was going to do it, she would hang herself.

Emily had been surrounded by suicides.

So Matt was guessing that's what might have happened.

She would do it or she would be easily found.

They kept pressing him, prodding, until the pot boiled over.

You f***ing killed her.

No, I didn't sir.

F***ing didn't.

I didn't kill her.

You killed her and it was an accident and we need to get this resolved today.

It didn't happen, it didn't happen.

It did happen, she's dead.

Where is she?

That's why we have people here who are saying they've seen her.

At that point, Emily was still a missing person, gone only two days.

Was it too soon to hit him with the big stuff?

I don't think so.

You didn't have evidence that she was even dead, not to mention murdered.

That's correct, but we also don't know what we're dealing with

and if Emily is alive and needs help, time is of the essence

and we are trying to recover her as quick as we can.

But there'd be no more talking to Matt Moore.

He refused to communicate directly with the police after that interview.

Instead, he called his friend Arturo.

When he spoke to me, he told me he went and did an interview

and by the end of the interview, they had accused him of murdering his wife.

They were right in his teeth, weren't they?

The way he made it sound was very much of a panic, of a fear of

I'm looking for help from these people.

They're accusing me of murder.

Now I don't know what to do.

I need help.

Help did come pouring in, but not for Matt.

We're going to focus on the Allam Creek area today.

As May 2020 ended and June began,

the country was still in the grip of the first wave of COVID
with millions in lockdown.

But in Westerville, scores of people took part

in a socially distanced activity that might do some good.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

Searches organized by the Facebook group Finding M Noble started by her friend Wendy.

A lot of us became really obsessed with the whole thing.

I had a lot of time on my hands.

So I would go to searches and do whatever I could to try to get Emily home because she would do that for anyone.

We will continue this until we get some kind of closure.

Lisa Gordish, one of Emily's acquaintances from high school, signed up to search early on.

They had a public search that met at the high school where we had graduated from.

And I showed up and went on that search.

It was exhausting work, but Lisa did it again and again, even organizing her own searches.

Her sister, Sherri Reynolds, joined her.

It was just this thing that kind of grabs a hold of you and you can't let go.

It's sort of like what you did in the summer of 2020.

Yes, yes.

We'd have probably five, six, seven people on most searches with us.

But you know who was not out there on those public searches?

Matt.

The cops thought that was odd.

Celeste, often out searching herself, asked Matt directly, where was he?

And he said, oh no, those people hate me.

He wasn't entirely wrong at that point, was he, Celeste?

No.

No surprise, social media had picked up the story.

And many posts were negative about Matt, even cruel.

Comments like this.

Can we all just agree the husband is guilty as F and hoped the police act?

And this, and his 17 year old son hung himself almost a year ago.

My daughter was close friends with him and said Matt was an awful father.

Cameron Kissel, Joey's good friend, had stayed in touch with Matt after Joey's death.

He says Matt was far from an awful father and had tried everything to help his son.

And in the months after Emily disappeared,

Cameron says Matt was searching in his own way.

Every Monday I would get off of work

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

and we would go out searching for Emily,
hanging flyers, passing out these business cards
he had made brainstorming where she could have been,
what could have happened.

Matt's brother traveled to Westerville to help out,
so did Arturo.

We held out hope all the way through
that this was some kind of mental break, perhaps,
that she needed some time away and she's going to turn up.
The drumbeat of negative comments in town continued.

There was even a rumor going around which police heard
that Arturo and Matt's brother had come to Westerville
not to help find Emily,
but to help Matt cover up some nefarious deed.

This is episode 246 of The Vanished.

After his police interview,
Matt was getting legal advice to stop talking.
But he did speak to The Vanished,
a true crime podcast about missing people.
Even then, he didn't say much.
I feel horrible because I can't help.

I can't help by my wife.

It's this thing I want and they told me to shut up and I can't.
I can't shut up because I'm just trying to find her.
If he'd been trying to help his case, it didn't work.

A podcast producer spoke to Detective Grubbs
after she interviewed Matt.

She told the detective she believed Matt killed his wife.
The dark cloud that had settled on Matt would not budge.
And Emily's whereabouts were still unknown.
But that was about to change.

It was a long, hot summer of fruitless searching.

Detective Grubbs kept a progress report
that reads like a litany of dead ends.

1120 a.m. Searched the area underneath the bridge
on Polaris, just west of Cleveland Avenue.

I traveled to the UDF to follow up on a previous tip line call.
I checked Confluence Park for Noble.

As the summer waned, the tips did too.

The big searches weren't so frequent.

But sisters Lisa and Sherry were still out there searching every week.

We grew up with a family of puzzle solvers.

And so once that puzzle was there,
it became very difficult to stop.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

Over that summer, the sisters picked up another teammate, Sue Sexton. Sue was happy to search anywhere and motivated for a particular reason. 22, 23 years ago this year, a neighbor of mine named Patty went missing. And to this day, she hasn't been found. It's not resolved, huh? Never resolved. This time she hoped it would be different. On a late summer day, they came across something that looked like evidence. It was a ceramic Christmas ornament. Was it connected to Emily? They sent pictures to Emily's family, but no one recognized it. The family and friends of missing Westerville woman Emily Noble continued their search for answers. In September, local media covered another big community search for Emily. Another exercise in frustration. But with fall coming, Lisa, Sue and Sherry believed time was running out. I was afraid when the leaves started to fall that that evidence would be covered up. So I felt this urgency, you know, we have to go now. We have to go now. We can't wait. So one day in mid-September, they decided to go back to where they'd spotted that ornament. Maybe it meant something. And we had talked to Detective Grubbs the week before that. And he said to us specifically, don't be afraid to go someplace we've already gone. They showed me around the spot they were intent on researching. The first thing we did was look for the ornament. After all this time, they thought it might still be there. Lisa, you find it? Remarkably, it was. Here's the little ceramic angel that we found. I'll be. You found that very piece here. It was right here on the ground. But on that day back in mid-September 2020, they wanted to push past the spot. It was getting close to dark. It's September. It's getting chillier. My feet were soaking wet. We were tired. And I said to Sue, when we were here before,

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

there's an area that goes down over that way
that we haven't done yet.
And before it got dark, I just needed to go that way.
They split up.
Sherry peeled off to check one area.
Sue headed to the creek.
And Lisa headed to a spot she'd noticed before.
It looked all but impassable.
Even with a bustling four-lane highway just yards away,
right over there.
This particular section of woods was thick with branches and vines.
Clearly no one thought to wade in.
But on that early evening, September 16th, 2020,
Lisa Gordish did.
So you're walking and pushing.
Until I come to this clearing and stopped and turned
and jumped because there was what I thought was a little girl
sitting on her knees facing away from me.
And I said, hi there.
Because I just was startled that there was another person
here with me.
And then it started to sink in?
Yeah, that something's wrong.
Like, this isn't what I think it is.
The small figure was clothed upright with long dark hair
and terribly still.
In one of those split-second moments that seemed to take forever,
the truth dawned on Lisa.
It had to be Emily Noble, the little that remained of her anyway.
I made my way back to behind that log
to have a sense of protection.
Protection?
My first feeling was really fear.
She called out to Sue and Sherry.
I could tell by the pitch of her voice that it was getting higher
and higher, and that alarmed me.
And I knew something was wrong.
And it took me a minute to figure out what I was looking at.
And I realized that my brain was telling me it was a small,
skeletal thing, but I still couldn't completely wrap my eyes around it.
So I pushed through just a little bit further.
That's when I could put it together that I was seeing smaller skeletal remains.
Tess would later confirm what the searchers knew to be true.
This was Emily Noble.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

She wasn't going to let us leave without her, Emily.
You thought there was a spiritual dynamic here, huh?
I think there had to be.
Yeah.
Emily wanted to be found.
911, what's your emergency?
Hi.
We are searching for Emily Noble.
We are in Wooded Areas.
There's a person here.
I don't know if it's her or a dead body.
It is a dead body?
It is.
Do we need guns or not?
The sun was setting when the police pulled up.
Bodycams rolling.
Shock all across the county.
All this time.
Law enforcement hasn't found her, the dogs haven't found her.
You guys, searching on a Wednesday have found missing Emily Noble.
We were there quite a long time.
Yeah, gave our statements.
I'm going to need information from you guys.
Absolutely.
What were you guys doing back here?
Looking for Emily.
Okay.
What do we got?
It's missing.
The image of Emily's remains is blurred in this police video.
With more officers arriving, the police took stock of the awful scene.
Detective Grubbs arrived about an hour later.
I would say let's keep this dark for right now, since we're so close.
At that point, are you starting to worry about blowback?
My goodness, she's been here for almost four months and we missed her.
Absolutely.
It was, blowback is a good word for it, but it was almost, it was embarrassing.
Because now he knew what Lisa, Sherry Sue, and everyone else knew.
After that long summer of searches big and small from downtown Columbus to rural areas miles away,
Emily never got very far.
Those houses, that's right where she lived.
And that's where Matt Moore was that very night when he got the news.
Next, he tells us his story.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

My sister called me and she's like, they found a body by your house.

And I was just like, what?

What, where?

Yeah, lock this woods down for now, make it as big as we can.

After Emily Noble's remains were discovered and a tiny clearing in the woods,

Westerville police officers and emergency responders worked into the night, processing the scene.

That's a, like a computer core.

That's a USB.

Yep.

Emily's skeletal remains were found in a kneeling position.

A USB cord suspended from a branch was looped around her neck bones.

And a water bottle containing alcohol was lying nearby.

Emily, it seemed, had hanged herself.

Can you imagine her finding her way down to that clearing in the woods in that dense brush and doing what she did?

A brave person.

Brave, extremely brave.

It was just, she had enough.

Matt Moore wanted to share his side of the story.

To tell us of the grief and guilt and terrible sadness,

he says he felt when Emily's body was discovered.

Another apparent suicide.

Emily's first husband, Matt's son, and then Emily herself.

I've never been more in love with a person in my entire life.

It's awful that I didn't spend more time thinking about how she felt that she would do something like this.

But she wasn't sick like Joey.

It was Emily.

From the moment Emily disappeared, Matt was well aware that he was the subject of intense scrutiny.

That he was seen as a killer.

He wanted to tell us he's not the bad guy he was made out to be.

And he wanted to talk about the good times with Emily, starting with their love story.

Emily and Matt were together for the better part of five years.

They met online.

It was 2015.

He called her, but he says she picked him.

Tell me first impressions about you.

She's an online name to you, huh?

She was, yeah, this mysterious...

Just click right, click left kind of thing?

Dark-eyed, small petite, kind of, who's that?

And we met and we just read immediately.

She picked me.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

You know how girls, they pick you.

I got picked.

So I became Emily's boyfriend.

Two years into the relationship, Matt moved back to Las Vegas, the romance apparently over.

Matt says he was focused on Joey, struggling with his signs of serious mental illness.

He went from being an amazing guitar player to not being able to play anymore.

And then he would all of a sudden get better again.

It's, it's a weird, it's just, it's horrible.

Hearing voices, that kind of thing?

Yeah, by then he was in the hospital.

When you got someone that's sick, like that, I needed help.

And she just, there she was one night.

She?

Emily.

She's on the phone or you're messaging me?

She just, hey, what's going on?

I'm just like, hey, I need help.

You want to get married?

She's like, yeah.

Really?

Just as simple as that?

Yeah.

It was like magic.

It literally was like magic.

She knew that offer was sort of you get Joey too, right?

Yes.

She knew I was, I needed help with Joey.

She knew.

That's when Matt and Joey packed up the car and drove east to Emily's tidy little condo in Ohio.

As Matt tells it, the three of them made it work.

She taught us so much.

This is the way I want things done here.

And we did it.

It sounds like she's Charles in charge here.

She is, she ran the show every aspect of it.

Emily has rules and they will be followed.

They will.

And it was a good, they were good rules.

We needed it.

They were structured.

It was folding laundry, loading the dishwasher.

That was one of his jobs.

Everything.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

Then after the dreadful event, Joey hanging himself, Matt and Emily struggled.
Both grieving, Matt drank heavily.
Emily saw a therapist fighting anxiety and depression.
I knew she had serious problems, but it was just, I didn't have the bandwidth in my head to deal with her.
She was suicidal.
She made it apparent.
She said she would say it.
I'm going to kill myself if you leave me.
That was conversations spoken out.
I don't know, like three times she'd said it.
She would just come into the room.
Which triggered that thing?
Because I just wasn't paying attention to her, I think.
This is after Joey.
She would say thing, yeah, and just like, you know what?
Just, yeah, leave me be.
Had you ever said I'm out of here?
No, absolutely not.
I was never going to go anywhere.
I was so in love with her and I was just, I couldn't have made it without her.
No, I needed her.
Did you also love her?
To death.
Different things, needing and loving.
To death.
She was perfect.
That's how Matt says he saw the relationship.
But what about Emily?
Matt said some awful things.
Remember that text police confronted him with?
The one Emily sent a friend saying she wasn't wearing her wedding ring.
In fact, when her body was found, her wedding ring was nearby.
As Matt recalled, it was just part of the back and forth of life with Emily.
Emily would go from this extreme, I'm taking my wedding ring off.
And then the next day would be right back to everything was fine.
Fine and even fun.
Like the day Matt flew a drone inside the condo just two weeks before Emily disappeared.
That's Emily laughing in the background.
And then she was gone.
And the police refused to believe that he wasn't involved.
You killed her and it was an accident.
They did this thing to try to rattle me, but there was nothing to rattle because I didn't do anything.
He says at first he did want to help police find his wife.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

I took a lie detector test.

Why'd you agree to that?

Why'd you agree to a lie detector?

Why would you be afraid of a lie detector test if you don't have anything to lie about?

I didn't think anything of it.

I didn't know.

While the police in much of the town had branded him a killer,

he says he was clinging to hope that Emily had decided to take off on her own.

He even gave \$10,000 to crime stoppers so they could offer a reward for information.

The dogs took them to this guy's driveway and lost her sitting in the middle of the road like she had gotten in a car.

I'm hopeful that's what happened.

Were you a little hesitant to go over to the parking lot at the church and join all the searchers?

The police, yeah.

You don't join police on searches after you've been accused of murder.

Was this the case that law enforcement had left the station and could not be slowed down?

Yeah, it's like a train comes pulling out of there.

Is that what you were feeling?

Yeah, it's on a train track.

It's a train.

You can't stop it.

You're being railroaded.

You're like, how do I stop this?

Well, they found her.

Maybe that would stop it.

Emily found and it looked like she died by suicide, not murder.

Those cruel accusations from the police and the court of public opinion were all behind him, right?

Remember, you're watching Dateline.

There's more to come for Matt right around the corner.

The question, what had happened to Emily Noble, had been answered, at least as far as Matt Moore and his friends were concerned.

I remember the day they found her body, that's when things, like, you know, definitely changed because now we knew what happened.

He was lying on the couch with his hands over his eyes, hands over his head because he couldn't believe it.

He didn't want to believe it.

What details of the discovery stuck with you?

That she had hung herself.

That it was somewhere she was familiar with.

That USB cord, the kneeling position,

Matt Moore says the awful truth was clear to him anyway.

She put the thing around her neck and she just leaned into it.

It's a partially suspended hanging.

Looking back on her last day before their birthday night out,

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

he wonders if he missed the signs.

They had taken a drive out to the country.

We collect the spring water on the way back, halfway through,

we stop, it's gorgeous, sun shining, it's just a beautiful day.

She was a little quiet.

And when using that word quiet, what was different, what were you thinking?

I would say things, because I'm a clown, to try to make her laugh

and she didn't laugh at all.

She just looked out the window.

And now, maybe Matt thought that discovery in the woods

would put an end to all the questions.

But police were not ready to declare this case closed.

Just seeing her finding the remains, did it explain what had happened here?

Did it tell its story?

At that point, no.

It still didn't seem right.

It's that inner gut feeling that you have.

It seemed like there was more to the story

than what we were seeing at this point.

She took off her clothes.

She went into the woods and she hung herself.

That's one theory, absolutely.

And another theory is that this was staged to look like a suicide.

The question quickly took shape.

Was it suicide or homicide?

The only way that we're going to be able to get a better feel for that

is through Emily's body itself.

She'd been out in the elements all summer.

That's correct.

Her remains were mostly bones by then.

There's no going back.

But if you had found her two days in, it would have been a different story.

Absolutely.

You could have had visible bruising.

You could have had marks around the neck, any defensive wounds.

Any other evidence that could have been there

was just gone due to the passage of time.

Emily's friends, the ones we spoke to,

didn't need an autopsy to confirm what they already believed.

Despite what Matt had said about Emily,

they were convinced she would never, ever end her own life.

It's just not in her nature to me, you know?

I just don't.

Of all the things that she's been through,

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

I can't think of anything that would bring her to do that.

You know?

Or anybody could drive her over the edge like that, you know?

And remember, Emily's last night was her birthday.

Friends say she wouldn't harm herself on that day of all days.

Her sister's birthday is the day after hers.

So they always talked on the 25th

because they were the same age for a day.

And she promised her sister she would not kill herself.

So I know she didn't kill herself.

Despite her past troubles,

many friends say she loved her life too much to end it.

She was always full of life and love and bubbly

and just so much fun.

Detective Grubbs was listening to Emily's loved ones

and their concerns were mirroring his own.

He knew Emily had been ripped up by Joey's death,

but his takeaway, Emily was dealing with it.

Matt was not.

She had been seeing a counselor

and the most striking thing with that is that

she was concerned about Matt's mental health

after Joey's suicide.

And she was trying to figure out the best way possible

to help Matt through all this.

She's telling the therapist,

I'm worried about my guy here.

Yes.

Delaware County Assistant Prosecutor Mark Sleeper

was looking hard at the Emily Noble case

and noticing even little details.

Remember how the bed was made

the morning Emily was reported missing?

So I see that the bed was made.

Did you do that or she did that?

That seemed to be a clue for investigators.

They suspected Emily never actually got to bed that night

because she was already dead.

I find it ultimately very ridiculous to think that

Emily woke up that morning after having a nice evening out

decided to make her bed before she wanted

off into the woods to hang herself.

On the other hand, she is a neatnik.

There's a house that you could literally eat off the floor.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

I don't think that's totally inconsistent.
I find it in light of all the other evidence
to be an absurd version of events.
So if not suicide, just because it couldn't be,
it had to be homicide.
That notion started percolating through social media
and took hold.
And all of a sudden, the Facebook page that read
Finding Emily Noble changed to Justice for Emily Noble.
Matt felt law enforcement was bearing down on him.
His friends did too.
The police started following him around everywhere.
You'd see him on his security cameras.
They would just pull up and wait right outside of his house
at weird hours in the morning and at night.
He became very paranoid of going anywhere
because he was afraid something was going to happen to him.
Matt Moore had every reason to worry.
Put your hands on your eyes!
Hands on your face now!
Do not f***ing move!
Put your hands back on your head!
A takedown in Sleepy Westerville.
The Westerville Police Department,
in a suburban village with tidy houses and manicured lawns,
takes pride in its community relations and crime prevention.
Steve Grubbs had been a full-time detective
about two and a half years
when he asked for the Emily Noble case.
He said,
This was his first time leading a homicide investigation.
Police had already searched Matt and Emily's neighborhood,
their cars, their home,
all just a short distance from the woods where she was found.
Was there any reason to believe that she had been killed somewhere
and then brought to that place?
No, we didn't.
It strung up.
We, you know, the condo, obviously,
was the only place where she was found.
She had been killed somewhere and then brought to that place.
No, we didn't.
You know, the condo, obviously,
had been thoroughly searched at that point.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

With no trace of a crime anywhere else,
Detective Grubbs operated on the theory
that Emily was killed in the woods
and that Matt was clearly the killer.
Even Celeste, who Matt considered a friend,
had come around to the police point of view.
Did you believe at that point, Celeste,
that she was, in fact, murdered
and had not committed suicide
and that Matt had something to do with it?
Maybe the person who killed her.

Yes.

I have a friend who is a former homicide detective
and she went through the fact that
usually when a person disappears,
the killer is the spouse or someone very close to them.
Put together your theory in one place of what happened to them,
safe in the time they returned from their evening
of birthday celebration in the drinks.

I would suspect that Emily might have got a little snippy
because sometimes she does.

We're all human and it probably just kind of backfired.
Court of public opinion calls these things pretty quickly.
We don't need to go to trial. We've got it figured out.

You've done enough of these shows.

The spouse is always a suspect, right?

That's the bias out there, right?

Yeah, for sure.

Does it bleed into official investigations, I wonder?

I don't think so.

I think that law enforcement knows
that that's a person that they have to look at
and either clear or figure out
that they've got a real suspect there.

But I don't think that had any impact in this particular case.

For now, public opinion had to wait in the wings.

The mechanics of strangulation were about to take center stage.

I think it's a story going to be told by bones.

This is going to be an expert and expert's duel.

Yeah, I think that's fair.

Once the remains were found,
they ultimately ended up with Ohio State.

Emily's remains were so dried out and decomposed,
the coroner decided they needed a special kind of examination.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

So he called on some experts at the Ohio State University to analyze Emily's bones.

They issued this report,

which concluded that Emily suffered fractures in her neck and her face. Some old, some from around the time of death.

It's called perimortum trauma.

A fracture along the nasal bones,

and the second is the perimortum fracture in the neck.

No surprise, perhaps, that the bones in her neck were fractured, but a new nasal fracture, that was interesting.

Could it have been an old ski accident or car accident or something, and it just healed itself?

No, according to the doctors, it happened around the time of her death.

So, something she's been beaten about the face?

That's correct.

Prosecutors sent the report to an emergency physician with special training in forensic medicine.

His name is Bill Smock.

He produced his own report with an illustration, concluding that Emily Noble was murdered.

This, he said, was a staged suicide.

After Dr. Smock's report came back,

I think it confirmed what I believe,

that we had a homicide and it was worth prosecuting.

Is Smock the most important development in your case?

He's very important, for sure.

The Westerville police also knew this.

Matt's first wife had accused him of domestic violence two decades earlier in Las Vegas.

She told police he choked her.

It was wrong, I shouldn't have put my hands on her, but, you know, it was a long time ago.

It was what it was.

They came and arrested me.

They let me go.

I went home.

No charges?

No.

No, they dropped her.

And there wasn't any problem after that.

We had Joey.

There wasn't any violence after that.

But that old story looked bad 20 years later.

Now, armed with those forensic reports,

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

the Westerville police and prosecutors figured they had what they needed. I think that there were no other suspects in this universe that could have committed this crime on that timeline. On June 17, 2021, law enforcement descended on Matt Moore, like SEAL Team 6. The police video looked like an action movie takedown on a suburban street. Put your hands up your eyes. Do not move. Use your left hand and unlock the door. Put your hands back on your head. Do not move. They were ready for me. Perfect. It's post-pounding footage. It's pouring for the blue line crowd. It got over half a million views, just that alone on YouTube. All right. Step on down, man. I mean, here are these guys. They're body armor, tactical weapons. These guys could have just called me. I had such a kind of a joke, right? I was like, what are you doing? What's with all this? You know, literally, you could have just called me. And then you were charged with first-degree murder. Two counts of murder and one count of felonious assault. With that, Matt Moore was issued a jail jumpsuit and waited for trial. More than one year later, his fate would hang on the opinion of forensic experts. One in particular was prepared to tell the jury that Emily's bones proved she was murdered. This death is a homicidal death based upon the nature of the fractures in Emily's neck. On August 17th, 2022, the courthouse in Delaware County, Ohio was abuzz as TV cameras began covering the trial of Matthew Moore. This is a staged suicide scene. I watched as much of the trials I could stay into when I wasn't there. It was just a sad story. It was really sad to see it unfold. It had been more than two years since Emily Noble's disappearance, and the case against her husband, according to the prosecution, was clear. Emily's bones showed she was murdered and Matt Moore's behavior gave him away. I was dispatched to an address on a report of a missing person.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

Sergeant Robert Hollis, the responding officer with a body cam, testified the first day.

Hey, how you doing?

He told the jury about his conversation with Matt Moore,

how Matt actually described the spot where Emily would eventually be found.

We're on that bridge.

There's where she likes to go, where a lot of the edibles are.

So literally, that's her for a walk.

Did you go there today looking for her?

No, I didn't.

If your wife is missing and you think you know where she is, why not just go walk that path?

Emily's loved ones testified, of course.

I was called to the stand.

Tell me about that moment.

You're here, he's there, he's looking in his eye.

What's going on?

Do you see him in the courtroom today?

I had to look around.

He was all shaven and his hair short and dressed nicely.

Yes.

It wasn't Wild Mountain Matt?

No, it wasn't.

No.

I love Celeste.

She was Emily's best friend, absolutely.

It broke my heart when I finally came to realize that she thought I did something to her.

Celeste told the jury that Emily seemed just fine a couple of days before she disappeared, certainly not depressed.

And what was Emily's demeanor while you guys were together?

She was very happy while we were together.

Another friend, Suzanne Kavanaugh, testified that if Emily had a problem, it was Matt.

She said he drank to excess and seemed possessive of Emily.

What's more, the last time she saw Emily, there were bruises on her arms.

Did you ask Emily about it?

I did.

And could you describe for the jury for emotional state based on what you asked her about the bruises?

Very defensive.

Our conversation became very heated.

The prosecution continued to build its backdrop story of a marriage in trouble.

They used texts between Emily and Matt to bolster their theory.

This is one of the exchanges Detective Stephen Grubbs read to the jury, starting with a text from Emily.

It's difficult to impossible to talk with you when you have vodka brain.

And what was the defense response to that?

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

Matthew Moore says, that is an excuse.

You are afraid to be confronted with things you don't agree with.

Your intellect is shallow.

Prosecutors showed the interrogation, not the part where police accused Matt of murder, but this part where Matt early on seemed to bring suspicion upon himself.

I want to get this going because I didn't do it and I want you to find whatever it all happened to her. I want it to happen.

Detective, as you began that discussion with Mr. Moore, anything stand out to you about your initial interaction with him?

Yes, he stated he didn't do it.

Did you accuse him of doing anything in particular at that time?

No, sir.

The jury heard that Matt stopped talking directly to police and didn't participate in the public searches.

And remember the public speculation that Matt's friend and brother helped him in some mysterious, possibly nefarious way?

The prosecutor didn't get specific, but he did tell the jury that Matt wrote each man a check for \$5,000.

This is another copy of a check that was filled out and signed by Matthew Moore.

And who was that check written to?

Arturo Rogaroli.

On day five of the trial, the prosecution got down to the all-important science.

The state's expert, Amanda Agnew, director of the Skeletal Biology Research Lab at the Ohio State University,

issued the report that jump-started the case against Matt Moore.

She concluded there were four fractures in Emily's neck bones.

The hyoid bone, which is very high in the neck, sort of underneath your jaw, as well as the laryngeal cartilages that surround your voice box, essentially.

She also testified, see those red arrows, that Emily's nasal bones were fractured around the time of death.

There was some perimortem trauma on the nasal bones and around the nasal aperture where the nose is on the face.

Say they called the next witness.

And then came the prosecution's star witness, Dr. Bill Smock, who serves as medical director for the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention.

He told the jury Emily suffered what he called an acute fracture to her face.

Does Emily know about the same significant blunt force trauma to her face?

If there is enough force to create a fracture, even a small fracture, that says there is significant blunt force trauma to the nose.

And you see that?

Yes.

His point, Emily was punched in the face when she died.

That certainly not consistent with suicide.

But the overriding question was, did Emily kill herself with that USB cord?

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

Dr. Smock's answer was, no way.

He used that illustration from his report along with a model to demonstrate the location of those fractured bones.

They are too far apart, he said, to have been broken by one thin cord.

So you've got a significant distance between these four and or two on either side, anatomical structure here and here.

Smock testified someone's hands broke those bones in Emily's neck, not a ligature.

Then he added some details that didn't appear in his original report.

Now in your training and experience, have you ever seen the same fracture pattern to a woman weighing less than 110 pounds?

No, ma'am.

I've never seen it personally and it's not in medical literature.

Nowhere in the history of forensic medicine are there fractures like Emily had in her neck associated with an incomplete hanging.

For somebody that's her weight, never been reported.

Where is this database? Where do you go to?

You go to the forensic medical literature.

Do you trust that database, doctor?

I do. It's the only database that we have.

Ultimately, as we say here today, I still believe the strongest piece of evidence is Dr. Smock saying that those quadruple fractures could not have been caused by that ligature.

This was making sense to friends like Wendy.

She didn't weigh enough to break her own hyoid bones by hanging from a little bush on her knees.

So at this point, you may be wondering, experts, okay, but where's the good stuff that all juries want to hear?

The DNA, the blood evidence, crime scene analysis, maybe a witness or a surveillance camera shot? Nope, they had none of that.

And if you're going into trial with a physical evidence-like case, as this was, you certainly don't want to be opposed by this lawyer.

She has a fearsome success record in lost-caused cases.

Up next, Diane Menachie for the defense.

This is Texas, how are you?

Matt Moore's defense attorney got straight to the point in her opening statement.

The evidence will show that the state's theory is based on speculation and imprints.

Diane Menachie said prosecutors didn't have any evidence that Matt Moore killed his wife.

And simply members of the jury, their theory doesn't make sense.

Even so, Matt Moore became the only suspect within days of Emily's disappearance.

Why have the cops fixed on him? What's happened?

Well, because it's an easy fix. You know, it's an easy fix and an obvious one.

And I think that you can't just focus on one person, right? You need to exhaust all possible avenues and suspects.

And they just didn't do that.

Detective, how are you?

I'm okay, ma'am, how are you?

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

So when it came time to cross-examine lead investigator Steve Grubbs, the defense attorney zeroed in on basic things she said the police failed to do. And the shirt that is pictured here was found in the hamper.

Yes, ma'am.

In other words, the very shirt Matt was wearing on his last night with Emily.

That shirt, was that submitted for testing?

I don't think it was, no.

Investigators never found anything to connect Matt to the crime.

No blood, no tissue, no fibers.

And remember the dogs that tracked Emily sent here?

Did the investigators drop the ball when it came to following up?

I just want to make sure the jurors know that you never conducted any surveillance with respect to that house that's located where the bloodhounds tracked on two different occasions.

Is that correct?

That's correct.

I didn't see in your police report either that you ever requested any CCHs or criminal histories on anyone that lived in that house or in and around that area.

Would you agree with me on that?

That's correct.

And what about those text messages that Emily and Matt sent one another?

Prosecutors presented them as proof of a failed marriage, evidence of a motive for murder, on cross the defense lawyer dug in.

Let me be very clear.

Messages from Matt Moore's phone do not include the following words.

Let's go through this.

I hate you, correct?

That's correct.

I want you dead, correct?

Correct.

That is never in there.

I am going to kill you, correct?

Correct.

I am going to divorce you, not in there, correct?

No.

In fact, the one message you did read was where he said, if you want to divorce me, let me know.

Isn't that correct?

That's correct.

As for the very first lead police had, the across the street neighbor who said he saw Emily on Memorial Day morning. Your neighbor saw her in the garage about between 9 and 10 a.m. this morning. Police said the neighbor, John Kramer, later changed his story. But when defense attorney Manashi sent her own investigator to talk to him, the investigator reported that Kramer just wasn't 100% certain he saw Emily that morning.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

John Kramer, for the record, did not retract his testimony or his statement to police. What he said is he can't be positive. He's not positive now that he saw her on the morning of the 25th. That's what he said. When she wasn't going after testimony, Manashi was picking away at the prosecutor's actions, saying they put up evidence without explanation. What about those checks? What about those checks? Like those \$5,000 checks Matt wrote to his brother and his friend Arturo. It's like that expression that we all know when you just throw things up and you see what'll stick. And the rumor mill had it here, the guy from Vegas coming in, aiding and abetting, maybe helping him clean up and move things around. You know, a good fella coming out there and money transacting over a missing person. Something weird must have happened. But if I was that guy, would I have accepted a check? In the end, Arturo says Matt was just helping him with his expenses during a tough time. One by one, the defense attorney went after the prosecutor's witnesses. When she crossed Emily's friend Sue Kavanaugh, who testified she'd seen bruises on Emily's arm, Manashi made the point the two women were no longer close. February of 2019 is the last time you see Emily in person. Is that right? Yes. You're aware that she went missing at May 25th of 2020? Correct. As his attorney chipped away at the state's case, Matt started to feel that maybe, just maybe, this would all be behind him soon. As you watched her work the case, work the room, what was he saying? She knows things, I can't be real specific about it, but there was things that she would figure out on the fly. They would do what they were doing and she would get up there and be like, wow, there's things that I need to tell her so that she can get up there and argue that point that they just make and she would get up there and she knew exactly what to say. I'm like, how would she know that? That said, the defense faced a huge challenge taking on the renowned expert who insisted that Emily Noble died by manual strangulation after a punch in the face. But what if that wasn't what really happened? I did not see any skeletal evidence that she was punched in the face. Emily Noble had a lot of friends and almost everyone we spoke to was rooting for the state. I was hopeful there would be a conviction. I thought he killed her. I thought he was guilty and I thought there was enough evidence to convict him.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

They heard the forensic evidence that Emily was punched in the face and strangled by someone's hands, presumably Matt Moore's.

You can't punch yourself in the face.

And then they watched as Diane Monashi attempted to take apart the prosecution's forensic evidence bit by bit.

You're only as good as the information you get.

In court, she suggested that the first scientist to handle Emily's delicate remains may have damaged them.

The bones were soaked in bleach and we know that bleach weakens and whitens bones.

We also know that the bones were removed everywhere.

They were removed to the morgue, to a cooler, to the slab, to a cooler, to OSU.

If you get the bones that haven't been properly handled and preserved and are more brittle than they should be, right, you're getting garbage.

It's an expression Diane Monashi likes.

Garbage in, garbage out.

Meaning when you put bad data in the pipeline, you get bad results.

So when she got a crack at the prosecution's star witness, Dr. Smog.

Have you ever heard the expression garbage in, garbage out?

Yes, ma'am.

She suggested all his damning conclusions were based on faulty and certainly not firsthand information.

You were not at the scene to see how the literature was around her neck, correct?

That is correct.

There is no one that saw that, right?

Well, the pictures we don't have any.

And you were not there.

That is correct. I was not there.

You also were not there and do not know if over the course of four months the ligature began in one place and ended up in the other as the corpse went from a 90-pound woman

to being 18 pounds of skeleton.

You do not know that either because you were not there.

That is correct.

Once the defense was through with the prosecution witnesses, she got started on her own.

There were only two and this was the one who counted.

I'm Dr. Heather Garvin.

And where do you work?

I am a full professor of anatomy at Des Moines University.

Dr. Heather Garvin is also a board-certified forensic anthropologist, someone who analyzes skeletal remains to help solve criminal cases.

She examined hundreds of photos of Emily Noble's remains and came to at least one surprising case-altering conclusion.

Emily wasn't punched in the face when she died.

She saw old fractures from a broken nose that had healed years before

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

but found no evidence of perimortem time of death fractures in her face.
No evidence of perimortem fractures to the cranial facial region.
I did not see any skeletal evidence that she was punched in the face.
If you could take out the blow to the face, right?
That was just one more thing to take out of the theory.
And remember how Dr. Smock demonstrated that a USB cord, the ligature,
could not break those bones in Emily's neck?
Well, the defense argued he's getting his anatomy all wrong.
Starting with a drawing he used in his report.
So it was in response to this drawing that you included these images in your report?
Yes, because I felt there was misleading.
Misleading, she says, because the bones that were broken in Emily's neck
look far apart in this picture and in Dr. Smock's model.
Dr. Garvin pointed out that's not what the human neck looks like.
She showed us a 3D printout, a model, of the throat structure that's very close to real-life scale.
These bones are close together and connected with the membrane.
Dr. Garvin says given the right circumstances, those bones could break with a USB cord.
If the ligature is going around the neck and puts pressure right here on either side,
you're going to get bending of the bone and a fracture of the hyoid bone here
and a fracture of the thyroid cartilage there.
Dr. Garvin says no one can say for sure how Emily's neck bones were fractured.
No matter what Dr. Smock says about the medical literature.
I'm trained at looking at skeleton material and determining what kind of mechanism would cause
those fracture patterns.
In Emily Noble's case, the two fractures on either side appear to occur from some source of
compression,
but you're going to get that same compression, whether there's a ligature there or manual
strangulation.
You can't differentiate between them.
Nothing further.
Watching in court, Matt Moore says he was still wondering when the proverbial other shoe would
drop.
I didn't know. There had to have been something. I'm arrested for murder.
There must be evidence. There must be something that's there.
If he was waiting for a moment of truth, it happened, sort of, at the prosecution's closing argument.
Only then did assistant prosecutor Mark Sleeper offer the state's theory of when and where Matt
Moore killed Emily Noble.
Emily Noble comes home and goes on a walk while the defendant's on a long phone call and playing
around on his phone.
After he gets off that, there's a 40-minute gap of time where there's no activity on his phone,
between 8.42 p.m. and 9.23 p.m., a 40-minute gap.
The defendant knows the place where Emily goes to forage, knows where he could find her.
Ladies and gentlemen, I'd submit to you that's an opportunity at that time for him to go leave the
house

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

and to go confront her in the woods.

Where the physical evidence shows she was struck in the face, causing fractures to her nose, and she was manually strangled, causing four fractures to her neck.

The prosecution offered no new physical evidence as it laid out its theory of a murder in the woods.

I heard, no, no, you heard for the first time that the state thinks Emily was killed in the woods.

If the state doesn't know until the end of their case in closing where they believe this alleged murder happened,

I mean, if that isn't reasonable, doubt what is.

Our justice system has to be better than this.

Was it coming out of the blue late?

No, I think the point taken, let me just explain it this way.

So is it possible that the homicide or murder would have occurred inside the condo?

Yes.

Is it possible the murderer had occurred in the woods?

Yes.

We didn't have any evidence that said definitively which one of those two places.

If I had to bet, I would bet it happened in the woods.

I think that makes the most sense given the other evidence.

So I'm going to say this, 24 years over 150 jury trials, I've never had a harder closing argument than this.

Because honestly and most, I've got evidence to attack.

This case is totally speculation.

Manashi said police and prosecutors were laser focused on anything that made Matt Moore look guilty

and they ignored behavior that suggested he was innocent.

Not only did he tell police where Emily liked a forage,

he also brought them right to the edge of the woods where her remains were later found.

If he had killed her, why would he have directed police to the evidence?

He takes them to the exact area and says this is where she forages

and then even the state of Ohio and their closing argument just now had to concede that you know what he says, you might want to go in.

Oh, that's a bad fact, right?

And you know why he wouldn't want to go in?

Is it because he doesn't want to find her?

Actually, I agree with that.

You know why he doesn't want to find her?

Because 10 months earlier, his son was hanging from a tree in the woods.

I wouldn't want to go in a wooded area either.

Once the closing arguments ended, Matt Moore's fate was in the hands of the jury.

Matt Moore, guilty of homicide or no.

He'd sat in jail for 14 months thinking about how he got to this point, the case against him.

And that question, everyone was asking.

They say you punched her in the face and then put your hands on her throat and manually choked the life out of her and then strung her up in this.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

And then dried her in the woods, 60 feet in the dark and found a branch and did all this weird.

Did you do that, Matt? Did you kill your wife?

What do you think?

I want to hear you say it.

Why? Why do you feel the need for me to say that?

Well, did you do it?

No, I mean, no, there would be evidence of it, no?

What do you think?

So the case is all made up?

It's not made up.

Please do what they do.

They're like any other business.

They look for a crime and it was an opportunity for them to spend money.

It's the only way I can put it in an easy way.

I mean, you'd have to talk to them, but as far as me killing them, no.

I loved her.

Why would I do that?

After seven days of testimony, the jury faced the same question, guilty or not?

Oh my gosh, I was so eager to hear what the other jurors were thinking because...

We spoke with three jurors from left to right, Connie, Carol and Jan.

They told us that more than half the jury came to deliberations thinking Matt was innocent.

The rest thought he might have killed Emily.

I thought she was a homicide victim.

He did.

To me, it did look staged.

Matt Moore, guilty of homicide or no?

Absolutely not.

Carol and Matt Moore, did he kill his wife or not?

If he did, he is a mastermind and I just don't think...

I think he's an average Joe.

But on this they agreed, the prosecution's case had problems.

It was all little pieces and trying to knit them together into a particular view.

And I just felt that it was just too incoherent.

They had particular problems with the prosecution's star witness.

It was a stretch for him.

He was more concerned with giving his resume than trying to...

We're talking about smocking him.

Than to help with the case.

I felt like he was stretching quite a bit to make some of these assumptions.

Jura's deliberated for a short time on day one, then returned the next day.

You come back that next morning and you do have what I call a straw boat.

You go around the table.

Were you surprised at the result?

I think I was a little bit surprised.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

They had a verdict.

As they filed back into court, Matt Moore took one look at them and feared the worst.

It's like they're not looking at you.

It was too quick.

It's like they need time to think this through.

They didn't spend a lot of time doing that.

So I was just ready to go.

You thought that was it?

It was it. I was done.

Verdict on count one.

We the jury being duly in panels for and find a defendant, Matthew L. Moore, not guilty of murder as he stands charged.

Not guilty on all three counts, murder and felonious assault.

After more than a year in jail, Matt Moore was a free man.

I didn't want to cry in public.

You did. You were holding your head and your hands weeping.

Yeah, but I caught myself and I gathered myself up and I was just okay. Great. Let's get out of here.

I was just very, very happy for Matt.

And so for me also, it was just such a joyous moment.

At the other table, a bitter defeat.

I think it was very difficult.

He was certain he'd killed his wife.

Yeah, still am, frankly.

As for Emily's friends, Celeste didn't see it coming.

Um, dumbfounded.

Dumbfounded, like, how did this happen?

Wendy kind of did.

I just had a feeling of dread that it wouldn't end in a conviction.

Maybe Krista spoke for many.

Based on the evidence presented, I wasn't surprised that he wasn't found guilty, even though in my, in my heart, I think he's guilty.

And it's not just because I'm malicious or anything, but I 100% don't believe she would ever take her own life, ever.

With the verdict rendered, the judge addressed Matt directly.

Mr. Moore.

I think from day one, everyone's wanted justice for your wife, Emily.

But I think the jury has also said, uh, justice for Emily is not injustice for you.

Despite the jury's verdict, Emily's death certificate still reads homicide.

Do you think there's a chance that Emily Noble was murdered?

I do.

I do.

Not by Matt.

Not by your guy?

No.

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / The Clearing

But I, it's, it's, and I think this goes back to all things are possible.

And the only thing that, that isn't possible and wasn't shown beyond a reasonable doubt is that Matt did it.

Matt knows he'll live with some level of whispers and suspicions for the rest of his life.

The people who out there think you got away with murder and some of those include the old friends.

Sure, and probably some family.

What do they not get?

What do they not understand?

Well, they, I mean, they've known me for so long.

It's just hard for me to believe I'm not a violent person.

I'm not, I don't get upset.

I'm like really laid back.

But if they think, what they think is because of what the media and police, what they're capable of, they've manipulated you.

Freedom gave Matt a chance to live his life again, but also the space he says to grieve for Emily.

I didn't have any time to think about her because I had all this police pressure and community pressure and all this, just this weird thing.

And when he said not guilty, and it's just like, though, all of a sudden Emily just, I could deal with it.

I could, okay, no, it's time for Emily, you know.

His old life is gone.

He's broke, trying to scrape together a new life.

And he's angry, mostly at the police.

He's written an e-book called Emily, A Stage Suicide in Ohio.

I needed to write my story, for me, more than anything, because I wanted people to know what happened.

He's back in the Las Vegas area now, far from Westerville, Ohio, where most of Emily's friends still live and still think about her.

I miss her laugh and her smile.

She was just fun to be around.

Everybody was her friend, and all of her friends were her best friend.

I miss her being here.

I miss her laugh, for sure.

I turn her head back and just, yeah.

She left behind images for her loved ones to ponder.

Exquisite skies, her collections of edible plants, the wood she loved.

And her own face, gazing back into the camera.

What was she thinking in the days and weeks before her death?

Years after she went into the woods, it's the biggest mystery of all.

That's all for this edition of Dateline.

We'll see you again Thursday at 10, 9 central.

And of course, I'll see you each weeknight for NBC Nightly News.

I'm Lester Holt for all of us at NBC News.

Good night.