

Death By Gaslight
Chandler (Chaz) Halderson

Marie: You can see him in a recent photo; machete in hand, halfway up a tree, one arm holding a lower branch, with his feet planted firmly against the trunk. It's obvious he was goofing off and very comfortable in this place. It was his favorite swimming spot. He would bring his friends here often for good times and happy memories. His friends thought of him as a happy-go-lucky and highly successful guy. They weren't aware that he was a gaslighter. They just thought he was an intern with American Family Insurance - consulting online with people regarding where to place their solar panels. They didn't know how he was always covering up his lies by telling other lies. And they certainly didn't know that his dad was on to him. His dad was conducting a sort of internal audit on his own son in an effort to uncover the truth. And his friends didn't know that Chaz Halderson would bring his mother here one day - to his favorite swimming spot - as part of his efforts to cover up his ultimate lie. Well, he would only bring a part of her - and this is what led to his downfall.

(Theme music: Ring around the rosie; A pocket full of posies; Ashes, ashes; We all fall down.

Sherry: Welcome to the Parricide Podcast. I'm Sherry...

Marie: ...and I'm Marie. And in this episode, Death By Gaslight, We'll cover the murders of Bart and Krista Halderson by their son, Chandler - or Chaz – Halderson.

If you like our podcast, please be generous with your time and leave us a review. It helps people find our podcast and gives us warm feelings of deep appreciation. As always, this podcast contains adult language and adult themes - it's not for kids. I would like to add that this podcast is perhaps more graphic than some of our other podcasts just because of the nature of the murder. So, please take that into account when you're deciding to listen.

(musical interlude)

Sherry: Most parricides happen to the most ordinary people you will ever meet. They are people who love their kids, want them to grow up and have good lives, and would never dream that their own child would murder them. Take for example the Haldersons.

Bart Halderson grew up in DeForest, Wisconsin. He graduated from the local high school and went on to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This is an upper-tier college that only takes high-achieving students with GPAs of 3.8 and above. He became a CPA and worked in tax management. Before becoming a CPA, he met a woman named Krista Ray Frater.

Krista had grown up in Madison, Wisconsin and attended East High School where she made friends like Jane Hilgendorf - who remained one of her best friends for her entire life. Krista attended the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire - another top-rated college - until her father fell ill. At that point, she returned to Madison and completed her degree in Art History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She found a job at The Boston Store in the local mall. She was the Manager. Bart was also working there as a clerk.

Marie: Oh!

Sherry: Their love story began when Bart fell for his Manager.

Marie: That's a role reversal - from what we've seen before.

Sherry: And very cute.

They married on July 31, 1994. A couple of years later, they had Mitchell and then Chandler - whom they called Chaz - and settled in DeForest, Wisconsin; eventually moving to Plymouth. They were a very traditional family in that Bart earned the money and Krista stayed home to care for their children. Krista is described by everyone as a patient, doting mother who carefully tended to her children's needs. After the boys had graduated from high school, the family was happy to be able to, once again, move to the Windsor/DeForest area. And Krista started working for the local import car dealership. Mitchell moved to his own home to start his life while Chaz – mostly - lived with his parents. They weren't rich, but they were very comfortable. Everyone described Bart and Krista as a kind, gentle, caring couple - and the nicest people you would ever meet.

Marie: They sound like a very wholesome family, don't they?

Sherry: I think, by all appearances, they were a very wholesome family. But they had had a spot of bad luck lately. In June of 2021, Mitchell had been hospitalized with Type 1 Diabetes and Chaz had taken a tumble down some stairs that left him in serious trouble both health-wise and life-wise. Chaz, now in a neck brace and facing possible surgery related to his fall, was a bit of a phenom. At the age of 23, he'd been offered a job at SpaceX.

Marie: That company Elon Musk started; to take people on private trips to space?

Sherry: Yep. That's the one.

Marie: That's pretty impressive for a 23-year-old.

Sherry: Especially because Chaz had gone to the Madison Area Technical College.

Marie: Wow! He'd gone to the Madison Area Technical College and still managed to catch the eye of Elon Musk?

Sherry: Yes.

Marie: Chaz must have really been something! He's set for life now! He'll be dealing with cutting-edge technology throughout his career, and SpaceX is supposed to be ahead of the curve when it comes to the design, manufacturing, and launching of rockets and spacecraft.

Sherry: He is a total surprise! He was practically graduated with his Associate Degree in I.T. and he'd already earned a Renewable Energy Certification.

Marie: Wow! It's almost unbelievable.

Sherry: Yeah. Just wait.

The 4th of July was coming soon, but Krista had told her colleagues that this would be a quiet one for her and her family. Chaz would be moving to Florida soon, so they really just wanted some quiet family time. They were going to hang out at home - maybe catch some fireworks - that was it. So, everyone at her work was very concerned when Krista didn't show up to work on July 2nd. Kristin wasn't the type to

not call if she couldn't make it into work; and phone calls made to her were left unanswered. No one could seem to get in touch with her.

Marie: That must have been scary for someone who was so reliable.

Sherry: I know I'd be really worried about my friends if they weren't calling into work or answering my phone calls.

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: Her friend from work, Dan, was so concerned, he went over to the house early in the evening on the 2nd of July - because she hadn't touched bases to say she was actually okay. He went to the front door and rang the bell. As he waited, he peeked through the front door and noticed an overturned coffee table.

Marie: That's suspicious.

Sherry: And now he was even more concerned. He went to the garage to see if the cars were there, but Chaz suddenly showed up at the side-door of the garage, saying he'd just gotten out of the shower. He had a gauze bandage on his foot and he kind of scoffed at the colleague's voiced concerns, and told him that an unnamed couple had picked his parents up to head to their cabin in White Lake at 5 a.m. that morning - to take care of some needed emergency repairs.

Marie: Well, that's kind of strange. I mean, what kind of repair is such an emergency you don't call into work? And how far away is White Lake, anyway?

Sherry: Well, White Lake is about three hours to the north of their home - they call it going up north.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: And the repairs - it sounds like they had some water problems. So...it's believable.

Marie: I mean, but you still call.

Sherry: Right; you do still call. But Chaz was saying that he wasn't getting calls from his mother, either. That they were having some problems, he suspected, with reception in the area. Because it's a wooded area.

Marie: Oh. I guess that happens in cabins.

Sherry: Yeah. That's what he was saying.

Marie: What was going on with his foot? Why was it wrapped in gauze?

Sherry: Well, that's a good question. He said he'd broken the glass doors to the fireplace while throwing a ball for his dogs. He'd cut his foot trying to clean up the broken glass.

Marie: That's just a really weird story.

Sherry: It gets even more interesting.

Chaz had plans of his own for the 4th of July. As usual, his plan started with Catherine - everyone calls her Kat - his girlfriend of two years. But on the afternoon of June 30th, he sent her a text message saying

she couldn't come over because he was still grounded. He hadn't been allowed to see her or hang out for about two weeks.

Marie: Wait a second, how old were they? I thought he was 23.

Sherry: He was 23.

Marie: He's getting grounded; like he's a toddler? Wait. So, how old was Kat? Neither of them thinks it's odd that he's being grounded like a child?

Sherry: Um. Kat was 18 or 19 years old. I'm not sure - I couldn't verify her date of birth.

Marie: Okay. But younger.

Sherry: Um-hmm. So, she may not have questioned it, but it's really weird. Right?

Marie: It is weird. Two weeks? What did he do; did he not mow the lawn? (chuckles)

Sherry: Um. I'm not sure what he did, but the punishment was he had to be kept away from Kat. So, probably - maybe something they did together.

Marie: Oh, okay.

Sherry: Kat wasn't really believing him, either. And, in a text, she said "To be honest, it's getting to the point where I want to talk to your mom directly."

And Chaz responded, "It's fine. That'll only piss them off more." But he moves forward saying, "This weekend will be great!"

Marie: Oh. Okay. He's grounded for two weeks, but now he's going to spend the weekend with her?

Sherry: Um-hmm. I thought that was a little confusing, too. I think that they had big plans for the weekend and I'm not sure how they thought they were going to pull them off.

Marie: Oh, okay. So, maybe he just didn't plan to obey the grounding.

Sherry: That's really possible. It's really not clear. After whatever happened resulted in Chaz being grounded from seeing Kat she texted, "We're not going to the cabin, right?" And Chaz had replied, "No."

Marie: This was still the 29th, right?

Sherry: Um-hmm. It was. At that point, Kat suggests they spend the 4th at the wildflower farm with her mom; saying, "That way we can say my mom can care for you since they have a lot of stuff there that they use for Mike and Papa."

Marie: Who's Mike and Papa?

Sherry: Oh! Well, Mike and Papa are related to Crescent. And Crescent is Kat's mother's girlfriend.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: Okay? And, so Kat had an apartment of her own, and she would often spend time with her mother (Dolce) at her mother's home. But her mother's girlfriend - and later fiancé - owned a wildflower

farm with her father (who was Papa) who was over 90 years old. And her brother, Mike, was wheelchair bound and also lived on the property - and she cared for him.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: Yeah. So, the wildflower farm was about 40-45 acres - mostly wooded area - with room to grow wildflowers.

Marie: So, but what kind of stuff did Mike and Papa have that this boy would need?

Sherry: Oh, because they were older - they had walkers and elevated toilet seats and things like that. That she thought would convince Chaz's mom to let him come and stay.

Marie: Why would Chaz's mom want him to have those things?

Sherry: Oh! Because when he fell down the stairs - after he came out of the Emergency Room, he said that he was having a lot of different problems. We'll get into the details later; but he was having numbness in his legs, dizziness, confusion. Um. He said he had a brain bleed and headaches.

Marie: Mom was just worried about him and didn't want him to overexert himself and all that.

Sherry: Right. So, now we're to July 1st...

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: ...and Kat sent Chaz a text at 1:00 in the afternoon telling him that her mother had okayed Chaz coming to hang out with them all weekend. She was super excited, and she wanted Chaz to convince his parents to let him go. It was at this point, at 1:04 p.m., that Chaz first mentioned his parents were thinking about going up north to their cabin for the 4th of July - not with them but with another couple. And this is the first evidence that Chaz had set off his plan to murder his parents.

So, he did this at 1:04 p.m. and they were both dead by 5:30 that evening.

Marie: Oh, that's terrible.

Sherry: Later that evening - at around 6:00 - Kat snapped a photo of him as he Facetimed her while he was showering.

Marie: That's kind of racy.

Sherry: It wasn't a racy picture at all. It was kind of sweet. Um. One thing that you'll learn about Kat is she is the Queen of the Screenshots.

Marie: Oh. Okay.

Sherry: Yeah. And that really helps the Prosecutors later on.

Marie: Yeah. She's their dream witness.

Sherry: Um-hmm. Anyway, Chaz told Kat that he was going to make some dinner. And when she asked where his parents were, he said that they were out doing a grocery pick up. In truth, he wasn't making dinner at all. He was working on destroying evidence.

Marie: That's horrible.

Sherry: Um-hmm. On July 2nd - which was Friday - Chaz texted Kat at around 9:30 in the morning; complaining that his parents had left him tons of chores to do while they were at the cabin. As they discussed their dinner plans, she was very disappointed when he texted saying she was going to be going home after dinner - but she could stay over the next night, Saturday. She'd assumed that with his parents gone, they would spend the entire weekend together. Disappointed and confused, she asked why. And he said he needed to get chores done.

Marie: AKA: destroying the evidence of a murder.

Sherry: Um-hmm. And at trial, the District Attorney does ask her if she knew what he meant when he was saying 'getting chores done' and Kat paused - for a full 10 seconds - and then said, "I don't recall."

Marie: It's a weird answer.

Sherry: It is a weird answer.

Marie: Do you think she just wasn't sure what to say?

Sherry: A lot of people make a great big deal about that - which is why we're mentioning it - but neither the Prosecution nor the Defense thought that Kat was involved in this murder. They felt she was an unwitting accomplice, so to speak. You know, she was very young, she was not experienced in the courtroom, she was embarrassed - they were talking about like her personal life (and reading personal texts) and I think she was probably just having a slower time processing things.

Marie: Yeah. It's hard to be on the spot like that: with everything you've ever done on your cell phone.

Sherry: Oh, precisely. But Chaz did do something a bit odd. He insisted that Kat bring him some hydrogen peroxide and a Swiffer.

Marie: That should have been the first red flag. How many men do you know that know what hydrogen peroxide even is?

Sherry: One - maybe...maybe two. Well, no. One. Maybe one. But he did have that cut on his foot so maybe she thought it was for that.

Marie: Maybe. But, usually, they use rubbing alcohol or Neosporin.

Sherry: Yeah. That's true.

Anyway, he also asked her to bring some ice. Which is odd because he had just been caught on that surveillance camera picking up ice the night before - 20 pounds worth.

Marie: That's a lot of ice.

Sherry: It's a whole lot of ice.

Marie: Is that what he did with the bodies?

Sherry: Yes.

So, after the third reminder, she does bring him hydrogen peroxide and a Swiffer. But when she arrives at the home, she's alarmed. The place smells terrible - and smoky! And Chaz explained that he'd been throwing a ball around the house for his dog when it hit and shattered the glass door on the fireplace. His dad had been really mad at him about the fireplace - and they'd both received cuts while cleaning up all of the glass in an emotionally charged state. He'd probably stirred up the ashes while trying to clean everything up; and that's what she must have been smelling.

Marie: That's the second red flag. Well, I guess it's a series of red flags. First - that wouldn't make a horrible smell. Secondly - what kind of ball is he throwing; that it can shatter tempered glass?

Sherry: I know! His story changes a little - and he says that the dog kind of pushes his shoulder up against the fireplace glass as it catches the ball, and that's what shattered it. But that's tempered glass!

Marie: Yeah. That seems really unlikely.

Sherry: It's very suss. (giggles)

Marie: Okay. But, again, you know - she's pretty young she's just believing her boyfriend, right?

Sherry: Um-hmm. I think that she didn't have any reason to not believe him at that point.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: So, she doesn't really give that another thought, either. (Until she's being questioned by the police a few days later.) But Kat does get her way that night. She's allowed to stay the night in a bed-fort that Chaz has set up by the fireplace. She left early - about 7:00 a.m. on July 3rd.

Marie: What is a bed-fort?

Sherry: Do you remember when you were a little kid? Did you ever take blankets and furniture and cushions and create, like, a little fort to sleep in?

Marie: (slight pause) I certainly never slept there.

Sherry: Well, he created that bed-fort and then they slept there. It was down by the fireplace.

Marie: Wow! I guess you don't have to do much to have a girlfriend these days.

Sherry: Well, I mean...maybe somebody would think that was romantic.

Marie: Maybe.

Sherry: Yeah. So anyway, Chaz leaves 45 minutes after Kat did. So, he leaves at about 7:45; on the 3rd. Okay?

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: So, Chaz tells her that he was trying to take a load to the dump, but it was closed. He then appears to have gone radio silent on Kat for at least an hour.

But Kat had her handy dandy tracker.

Marie: What?

Sherry: Well, a lot of people in relationships use trackers with each other - so they can see the location of each other - and it makes them feel (I don't know) maybe closer? As they're chatting? It's a...it's something that you can use from Snapchat.

Marie: Huh. Okay. Well, I don't use Snapchat; so maybe that's why I think it's weird.

Sherry: Perhaps. Anyway, they were using that location-sharing with each other - and when she looked at her tracker, she noticed he was nowhere near the house doing chores. He was somewhere...weird and unexpected. On the banks of the Wisconsin River near Sauk City - at their favorite swimming spot. The one we talked about.

Marie: He went swimming without her?

Sherry: Exactly. And she thought it was really weird - and she was pretty upset about it. So, she took a screenshot of it, and then she called him; wanting to know what the heck he was up to. And he told her he'd gone down there to pick up some painkiller.

Marie: Painkillers? That didn't seem odd to her? I

Sherry: I think the location seemed a bit odd; because it's kind of weird...it's kind of difficult to get legal painkillers...um...

Marie: At a swimming hole.

Sherry: Exactly. And...so, that wasn't really setting very well with her. But remember when I said that he'd had that accident falling down the stairs - and he had problems with his spine and with his legs and everything...he also was wearing a neck brace. And saying that he was having problems, and needed to wear that neck brace 24-7.

Marie: Oh. Okay.

Sherry: So, he was wandering around wearing a neck brace.

Marie: So, she thought he was in pretty bad shape.

Sherry: Yeah! I mean, she was literally helping him up and down stairs, encouraging him to take walks. She was really trying to take care of him; given the injury he claimed to have.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: Okay. So, she was kind of bothered by it - but she didn't even really give that another thought.

Marie: So, what was he actually doing there?

Sherry: Ummm.

Marie: Do we know? we do he was dropping off?

Sherry: He was (pause) dropping off his mother's legs. Which are the only parts of her remains that would be recovered.

Marie: Ugh. That's awful.

Sherry: Yeah. (sigh) Anyway, Chaz and Kat met up for a late lunch with her family that day, but that evening he tells her to go ahead and go to fireworks without him. He had to go home to the dogs so the fireworks wouldn't upset them. Plus, he said he had more chores to do.

Marie: That's a lot of chores.

Sherry: His parents must have really piled it on, right?

A disappointed Kat goes to see the fireworks with her brother, wondering what Chaz is actually up to. And he was definitely up to something. Surveillance shows that he was, again, out and about at 10:30. He's along the Wisconsin River, once more, by the town of Portage. He's there for about half an hour and then heads back home for the evening. It's about a half hour away from his home.

Marie: Okay. So, I guess the dogs were just left to fend for themselves.

Sherry: Right. Which is not surprising because on the 4th of July they actually attend fireworks together at Dan's house.

(musical interlude)

Sherry: According to the Wisconsin State Journal, Chaz and Kat got together on the 4th of July - which is Saturday. They visited with her family, they had barbecue, they went swimming...um. At about 11 a.m. his mother had allegedly texted him and this is what she said, "Made it safely, can't get anything through, and yes it's packed. Going to white lake today for the parade and will be home Monday night/Tuesday early. Love you lots!!" So, Chaz contacts Dan and says, "Hey, I got something from my mom. She's fine. She'll be home probably Tuesday." And asks if he and Kat can come up for fireworks that evening.

Marie: Well, that's: A) creepy - because this is her co-worker and B) what about those dogs? No one has to stay home with them on the literal 4th of July?

Sherry: Well - and I think if you look at it from Kat's point of view; he's where he's not supposed to be - at a swimming hole where he took her for romance; where he took his friends to entertain and impress them; he is telling her she can't stay overnight some of the nights when his parents aren't home; and now he's telling her he can't go to the fireworks on the 3rd, but he can on the 4th. If you were an 18-year-old girl, what would you be thinking?

Marie: It sounds like he's cheating on her. I mean swimming hole in the middle of the day always sounds like he's cheating on you. especially if he says that he is doing chores.

Sherry: Especially if he says he is doing chores.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: So, I'm sure that Kat was starting to have some suspicions - but not about murder.

Marie: Yeah. I don't think that's the first thing people think of, usually.

Sherry: Right. But before they get to the fireworks at Dan's, they're still at the farm with Kat's family. And Chaz takes Crescent aside and asks if it would be okay if he uses their pool once in a while. He'd been having problems with getting adequate physical therapy after that tumble down the stairs; and he was

hoping he could use their pool now and then to get some water therapy. She agreed that he could and gave him her phone numbers so that he could call to make arrangements. He and Kat – again - watched the fireworks together that night and then she spent the night with him. But that night Kat insisted they abandon the fort-bed for a real bed.

Marie: Good for her.

Sherry: Um-hmm. But it was really weird. Chaz was up all night trying to take care of the dogs; up and down the stairs and not really staying put.

Marie: That's weird. But I guess it makes sense. He had to do some things without her being able to see them.

Sherry: Well, and the truth of the matter comes out at the trial. The bed-fort was created by Chaz to control Kat and keep an eye on her. He had a basement full of dead bodies.

Marie: Why did he let her stay over in the first place?

Sherry: Because she was really upset, because he had told her no and she was saying, “Hey this is our weekend together.” And he didn't want her thinking there was another love interest. So, this was his compromise. He needed to put her somewhere where he could watch her at all times and make sure she didn't get out of bed and, like, wander out to get some ice cream and happen upon the bodies.

Marie: Oh.

Sherry: So, kind of a gruesome bed-fort, right?

Marie: Right.

Sherry: Yeah. So, the 4th of July is now over. July 5th is here, and Chaz tells Kat that he has a very busy day. So, Kat gets up - offers to take him to his doctor's appointment which is what is going to make his day so busy - and he declines. So, at 7:00 a.m. she, again, goes to work and he can be seen taking his garbage can out early that morning. He had a lot to do.

Kat takes a screenshot of the medical clinic that he needs to go to - and the address - and is talking to him and says, “Call me when you get there.” She's very concerned, because he's saying he has some brain function problems, right?

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: She goes to work, he goes to the medical clinic, he lets her know that he is there. But he says, ‘You know, they're having some problems with their wi-fi, so I might not be able to talk to you and tell you what's happening while I'm here.’ And she says, ‘Oh. Just snapchat me. That's fine. You can Snapchat me.’ And he says, ‘Oh, it doesn't appear to be working.’

Marie: Hmm. That's weird. Because it's Snapchat that lets her see his location, right?

Sherry: Um-hmm. He'd learned his lesson. He'd learned when he was at the swimming hole; that if he Snapchatted her, she could see his location. So, he was not about to Snapchat her; because he was not at the medical clinic - he was home.

Marie: Oh.

Sherry: So, Kat kept insisting that he Snapchat her, and he kept giving her a million different excuses as to why it wasn't working. And Kat knew that each of those excuses was a lie. So, again, I think she was pretty sure she was getting lied to and - like most teenage girls - she wasn't thinking, 'Oh, has he killed his parents?' She was thinking, 'I think he's cheating on me.'

Marie: Yeah. That makes sense.

Sherry: Um-hmm. And in truth, Chaz did not leave his house that day until he headed out; back to Crescent's farm.

Marie: Oh. Okay. Well, so it sounds like she tries to be a really supportive girlfriend - and he's kind of evasive and sketchy.

Sherry: Oh, exactly! In fact, she was so supportive that she'd been looking for ways to get him to Florida so he could begin his make-believe job with SpaceX. So, while he's refusing to Snap with her, she's busy looking at bus schedules and trying to find ways to help him succeed. And he was all of a sudden starting to think that his parents were being replaced with her. He started acting like she was relentlessly pushing him - because she was trying to help him succeed at what he said he had wanted.

Chaz had to get her to back down or she would untangle his lies and leave him. So, he revised his plans that day while he was not sitting at the medical clinic, and he headed to Crescent's house after this make-believe doctor's appointment.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: According to WKOW-TV, Chaz had shown up on Crescent's doorstep in the late afternoon of July 5th. He had called first, but no one had picked up. And he didn't have permission to come over for a swim - but he somehow believed just the act of calling gave him the right to come and use the pool.

He told Crescent and Dulce (who had rushed over when she heard he'd just, kind of, shown up out of the blue) that he had some very sad news. He then told them the fake doctor had fake-told him that he would have lifelong leg numbness; but that his headaches would stop once the brain bleed that he didn't have stopped.

Marie: That's a lot of faking. It seems kind of odd that if he had a brain bleed, the doctor is just letting him run around town and do whatever he wants.

Sherry: It's not seeming very realistic, is it?

Marie: No.

Sherry: But he also shared that he had, sadly, lost his job opportunity with SpaceX because he was under doctor's orders not to fly - and while he was training, he'd made a few errors. He wondered again if he could use the pool. Crescent had graciously said, "Of course. Go ahead." But she was a little bugged. It was a hot day, and she had been planning to use that pool herself. Crescent and Dulce had a brief conversation about Chaz when he went off to swim in the pool. They felt something was off in everything that was happening; but they weren't sure what that was about. After about an hour had passed, they went to check to see if Chaz had finished swimming. She really wanted a turn in her pool.

But Chaz hadn't even started swimming! The cover was actually still on the pool, and he was nowhere to be seen. He hadn't stopped by the house to say thank you, or goodbye, or anything.

Aggravated the two women looked around and noticed Chaz 's car backed up through the weeds near her tobacco shed at the edge of the woods. His hatchback was open. He had no reason to be there. At a loss for what Miss Manners would say you should do in a case like this, she and Dulce decided, 'Whatever.' They were done waiting, and it was their turn to go swimming.

Marie: Yeah. What a rude kid!

Sherry: Yeah! Very, very inconsiderate. So they hopped into the pool, and a short while later Chaz came walking up from the direction in which Crescent had seen his car. He was shirtless and he asked if he could swim with them. They told him no; because Crescent was swimming topless - and didn't want him there anymore. Ignoring them, he hopped into the pool and appeared to give himself a quick pool bath before getting out and leaving. Crescent just filed the information under Interesting Weirdo Stuff in her brain and moved on. Kids can be weirdos. Sometimes it means nothing and sometimes it means something. Either way, Chaz was no longer welcome to borrow their pool.

Chaz headed to Kat's house, where he shared the bad news from his fake doctor's visit with Kat. And then he told her that SpaceX had let him go.

Marie: Okay. Very disappointing.

Sherry: Yeah.

Marie: So, if anyone is confused at this point, it's because you have not yet realized that anything that comes out of Chaz's mouth is a lie. He never actually had a job offer from SpaceX. He wasn't actually in school. He did not have a job with American Family. His parents never left to go up north. And there was no mystery couple they were vacationing with. There was never even a fall down the stairs - he'd thrown himself down some stairs to fake an accident so he would have an excuse to not head to Florida for the SpaceX job that he'd lied about. No doctor told him that he had injuries from the fall - even that's a lie. Now Chaz had undertaken the daunting task of dismembering his parents' bodies to hide his crime after he had murdered them to hide his lies.

Chaz is an inveterate liar - and men who lie like this are often accused of committing Red Collar crimes; because they murder someone to cover the crimes they commit in the workplace. There's not really a name for someone like Chaz, because he never entered the workplace. He couldn't embezzle anything. So, his lies were never in the Public Realm - only the Private Realm - with his family. And his lies were meant to keep him home doing whatever he pleased, with his parents picking up the tab and cleaning up his messes - despite their efforts to get him educated and employed.

Sherry: That's right. So, back to the story.

Neighborhood videos reveal that Chaz was up during the early morning hours the night of the 6th. Between 1 and 4 a.m. the garage light turns on seven different times, for an average of six minutes each time. Then at 4:30, he left the home and drove around the city of Madison for about an hour. Then he went home and slept until it was time to spend more time with Kat that evening.

The morning of the 7th would find Chaz up again and moving again during the early morning hours. He drives back to Crescent's farm somewhere around 10:00 a.m. when no one is there, and he discards more items; leaving a bag of bloody rags by Kat's family's garbage can. Incidentally, that was a Target bag with a Target order on it - so the bag of bloody rags literally had Kat's name on the bag.

Marie: Wow! So, he doesn't care if she's implicated.

Sherry: Not at all. With his goals met and his cleanup finished, Chaz showed up at the police station at 11:30 a.m. to report his parents missing. So, remember, this is the 7th. Okay?

Marie: Okay. So, this is quite a while after the murder.

Sherry: Um-hmm. Six days. If he can pull this gaslighting project off, he is home free. He told them his parents, Bart and Krista Halderson, had left home with another couple (he wasn't sure who) - at 6:00 a.m. on July 2nd - to go to their cabin for the holiday. They had taken \$4,000 in cash and large amounts of alcohol with them. He lived with his parents, and his mom had left him a note that said, "Good morning, Chaz. Hope your day goes really well." And they left him a phone number for their neighbor followed by "just in case." He told the police his mother had texted him to let him know they'd arrived at the cabin safely; but had subsequently fallen radio silent. When the time of their planned return passed with no further messages, Chaz became concerned. But not completely worried. He told the police - and this is a quote - "They may be at a casino - or their phones are off, no reception. Maybe they're on a boat having some fun with their friends." The police immediately reached out to the police in White Lake to go check on that cabin.

Of course, the police asked Chaz if he minded them doing a search of the house - just to get the ball rolling. "Of course." He'd agreed. But he did caution them that he had recently broken the glass doors of the fireplace when he was throwing a ball around. There had been a little bit of blood spilled when he and his dad had cleaned up the mess. But the police didn't really find anything amiss in the house; no visual signs of blood by the fireplace or anywhere else.

Chaz also texted his brother, Mitchell, that day telling him he was worried for his parents - who had gone up north to the cabin with friends. Mitchell said his parents were great parents who cared deeply for both him and his brother. He didn't know what to do to help but he went up to the cabin to check out what was going on. He is the one who gave the police access to their White Lake cabin for that initial search. And guess what they found?

Marie: Bodies?

Sherry: Nope.

Marie: Blood? What?

Sherry: Nothing. Nothing at all. No evidence that anyone at all had been staying in that cabin. No evidence of foul play. Nothing.

Marie: Kind of weird.

Sherry: It is. The police issued a missing persons be on the lookout and took this case seriously right from the start. They were intent on finding this couple. They started scouring the route the Haldersons would have taken to get to that cabin - checking every casino, boat, and hotel along the way. Chaz had

given them a lot of ideas regarding where his parents might pop up, but the Haldersons were nowhere to be found. One thing they did learn along the way - White Lake didn't have a parade on the 4th of July. It had been held on the 3rd. Chaz had lied to that co-worker.

Marie: Poor Dan. He was just trying to find his friend.

Sherry: Um-hmm. Make sure she was okay.

Interviews with other family and friends indicated that, as a CPA with a reputation as a cheapskate, Bart was highly unlikely to have traveled with \$4,000 in cash intending to gamble. He and his wife were definitely not the type of people who gambled - or even traveled with large amounts of cash. Plus, they were very light drinkers. Taking lots of cash and alcohol on a trip to a cabin made no sense at all. They all had no idea why Chaz would say this.

Marie: Probably he drank that alcohol and spent that cash.

Sherry: That's very possible; or it never existed to start. I mean, we really don't know.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: Anyway, interviews with neighbors became increasingly worrisome to the police. The neighbors noted a lot of activity between the 1st and the 8th. Chaz had been in and out of the house several times and at all hours of the day. He'd had a fire going - for some unfathomable reason - on the 1st. Remember, this is July. It's hot! The garage windows were propped open - they'd never been propped open before. And an exhaust vent had been taped over in the past few days.

Also, the neighbors had been a bit disconcerted when Chaz showed up on their doorsteps after reporting his parents missing. He was asking them to give him their video surveillance of the street for the first night in July - saying he wanted to see if he could watch his parents driving away.

Marie: That's weird.

Sherry: Indeed. 'Wasn't this what the police should be asking for?' they said. They weren't about to hand over any video footage to the Haldersons' son. They knew about chain of custody and evidence, and they couldn't figure out what he thought he was doing. But one neighbor was alert enough to covertly tape the conversation.

The police were very concerned. More and more it was looking as if they'd been gaslighted. Chaz hadn't really been a suspect earlier in the day but each fact - once looked into - seemed to be more a bag of air than a fact. By the end of the day, the police were falling back on an old adage: the prime suspect is usually the last person who saw the victim alive.

Marie: Well, I love that adage because they kind of have to be, right?

Sherry: Right. The last person to see you alive is probably the person who killed you.

So, I've never understood that, but...but that's what they say.

Marie: Oh, you know.

Sherry: I know. And you could argue, and say, 'Well, you know, if the person survives - they're going to go to the hospital before they die and caretakers will see them. Well, go ahead and argue that. That just seems like a weird saying to me. (laughter) Anyway.

Marie: Well, what day was this?

Sherry: This was the night of the seventh.

Marie: Wow! The police didn't waste any time on this.

Sherry: No, they didn't waste any time at all! So, they were - of course - deciding that Chaz was now their prime suspect.

Unfortunately, I think that's where we need to end for now.

Marie: Okay. Well, to our listeners, thank you for your patience and your kind words. We want to reward you for your patience; so we will be releasing Part 2 of this episode in just a few days - this coming Tuesday! We will finish up this case and give you some solid details on how Chaz was gaslighting his parents and his girlfriend. We'll also go over the evidence in detail and get you ready for the sentencing date on this case - which is next Thursday, March 17th. In the meantime, please share this podcast with two of your favorite people and like our show - and then do the same for another of your favorite podcasts. You will never know how ecstatic we are when we find new friends. We'll see you on Tuesday! It's time to thank some people.

Sherry: Okay. So, we'd like to thank the Law and Crime Network, heavy.com, WKOW-TV, Wisconsin State Journal, NBC-15, News 3 Now, and Channel 3000 for much of the materials and photos we used to bring you this case. If you would like to contribute to our show you can find us on Patreon. Tax deductible donations begin as low as \$10 a month and we will shower you with gratitude and stickers should you choose to lend us your support as such we'd like to thank Belinda for becoming our most recent Patreon supporter. If you would prefer to make a one-time donation, please visit our website at parricide.org.

This has been the Parricide Podcast. And remember...

Marie: ...always sleep with one eye open.

(musical outro: Ashes, ashes; we all fall down)