

Ugly Surprises Peter Zimmer

(musical interlude) Ring around the rosies; A pocket full of posies; Ashes, ashes; we all fall down.

Marie: Linda gave birth to a baby boy on July 7, 1968 and decided (or most likely was coerced) to put him up for adoption. She was unwed and living in a Catholic home for pregnant girls when she gave birth. Adoption is not always easy, and it broke this young girl's heart to let her child go. It always haunted her.

Linda wasn't a girl suited to the conventional life. She spent the next two decades marrying a few times, having another child, and realizing that being an adult wasn't really all that great. In 1990 she went to a plastic surgeon for a little work and was married to him by 1995. She was happy, her life was stable, and she increasingly wondered about Paul - that's what she called the son she'd been compelled to give up. Illinois had recently changed their adoption laws and she was hopeful that this would work in her favor. She wanted to do this right. She'd grown into a very careful woman. Her husband was also a careful man. He warned her she may not like what she found if she went looking for her son, but she really wanted to do this, so he supported her. And Linda went looking for Paul. And her wildest dreams came true.

One day a woman named Leah called and said she thought her husband was Linda's son. She'd found him! She wrote to her son for the first time: "Bear with me. I am trying to breathe while I cry and type at the same time. For the past 37 years, I have never allowed myself to fantasize about meeting you."

Linda's husband suggested they go a little slow - ask for a DNA test to confirm this was her son. The test came back declaring Linda had found her Paul. They first met in the Summer of 2005 and they all began the work of becoming a family after all those years of separation. But Linda's husband had this gut feeling that something was off. This man's story just never quite passed muster. After some serious consideration they hired a private investigator to look into Joe's background. Who was this man whom they had so easily accepted into their inner circle based solely on a DNA test? They were cautious people - it wouldn't hurt to check, right?

(introductory music)

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

Marie: ...and I'm Marie. And today we're going to talk about the murderer of Hans, Sally, and Perry Zimmer.

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Sherry: A quick heads up. Today's episode contains instances of lying, stalking, family annihilation, and relationship betrayal.

Marie: You met an important person in our introduction; but there are a couple of other people who are integral to the story. So, let's start with Candy Williams.

Sherry: Candy Williams headed to the beach in 2005, hoping to get a bit of sunshine and - as usual - wondering if she might find the man of her dreams as a happy surprise. This teacher had just moved to St. Petersburg, Florida and said she was looking for someone with whom she could share her life. And, this time she did! She met this sweet looking man named Jovan Collier - he went by Joe and was 37 years old. And she fell head-over-heels in love with him. That first day they opened up to each other; talking about the many losses they had experienced in their lives.

He shared that his parents had died in a car accident. Their car had been hit by a drunk driver and he had been left devastated and alone in the world. She was happy to find a man who wasn't afraid of building emotional intimacy. They shared so many things that day - and they really connected as they shared their painful stories of family loss and lives rebuilt. He told her he felt like he just didn't fit in anywhere and her heart broke for him. She said, "We hit it off that day. It was really quick. He was very charming - a smooth talker. Sweet, you know, funny."

She felt like they really knew each other already. He was so open and honest.

Marie: That's really fast.

Sherry: It is fast and it is also a sign that you might be - being taken for a ride in the relationship.

Marie: Yeah. It's never a great sign if someone is immediately ready to open their deepest wounds.

Sherry: That's very true.

Marie: Usually you have to build some trust first.

Sherry: I think that's really true - and the foundation of a good relationship. But, anyway, she wanted him to be happy, and she knew there was room in her life to help him feel the belongingness he longed for. So, not only did she feel that love, but she also felt like she needed to be a caretaker for him. The dream continued, and they were engaged and living together three months later. She felt like she'd known him her whole life. What a pleasant surprise life had given her.

Candy probably should have slowed the relationship down a bit; given it time to mellow. Because she was in for some ugly surprises. Joe had been far from open and honest with her.

Marie: Oh! What was the truth?

Sherry: She discovered he had been married before - twice. And he had two children from two different women. She found these out on two separate occasions - and I'm not sure Candy ever knew about his third child.

Marie: Those are some pretty big surprises.

Sherry: They're some horrible surprises, don't you think?

Marie: Yeah, and not really very pleasant surprises; given that he said he was alone in the world.

Sherry: That he hadn't bothered sharing this with her, in and of itself, was very concerning to her - but not a deal breaker. Candy felt they could work through it. He had a 21-year-old daughter - from whom he was estranged - and Candy wanted to help him see where he fit in in this world, so she encouraged him to reconnect with his daughter in an effort to heal his past. And he did.

Marie: Well, that's nice.

Sherry: Yeah. I think so, too. She also learned that he was taking trips up to Indiana to have Parent Time with his son, Ayden. But then Candy found out that that visitation was actually a package deal. He was hanging out - and sleeping with - his wife.

Marie: Oh, his ex-wife?

Sherry: No. His wife, Leah. He hadn't quite finished divorcing her; and, yes, he'd failed to mention her existence in the beginning - when they were being open and honest and getting engaged.

Marie: That's a lot to discover.

Sherry: It's kind of a mess already. Right?

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: Leah didn't know about Candy - and Candy didn't know about Leah. Well, Candy broke off her relationship with him the minute she realized what was going on; but that didn't last. Joe soon found his way back into her heart and her life - and this time he was a divorced man.

Marie: She must be very forgiving. That's a lot of nasty surprises.

Sherry: And very filled with hope that this could be a good relationship and a happy future. Candy liked surprises (speaking of surprises). She'd take flowers, gifts, and funny jokes any day of the week. And Joe was nothing, if not full of surprises. But the ugly surprises he served up were unsettling and exhausting.

After they had reunited, Candy found out that Joe still had a relationship with his mother.

Marie: His dead mother?

Sherry: Um, no. Actually, he had been adopted, and his adopted parents are the ones he said had died. Which he'd failed to mention. Then he started a relationship with his biological mother - that was Linda, remember her?

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: She had actually looked him up and Leah - his wife that was soon to be his ex-wife - is the one who contacted Linda.

Marie: Oh, okay.

Sherry: So, he'd been in touch with Linda since about the same time he'd met Candy. And they had a relatively close relationship already.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: This also took Candy by surprise. But family is family - and this was just much more complicated than she thought that day at the beach when they'd opened up to each other.

Marie: He left a few things out.

Sherry: Uh yes - one or two things. Joe became a very dutiful son - going off to spend time getting to know his mother in Georgia with great regularity. What Candy didn't find out until later was that Joe wasn't going to see his mom at all. He actually initiated yet another relationship with yet another woman in Georgia. Candy just didn't know about that, yet.

Marie: So, he sounds like he, kind of, is a serial cheater. He cheated on her in the beginning of the relationship - with his wife (or was it with her)? And now he's cheating on her with a woman in Georgia.

Sherry: I think you would need a chart to figure out who was being cheated on; at what time. He is all over the place. He's chaos.

Marie: Um-hmm. It sounds really stressful.

Sherry: I think so, too. But anyway, Candy was glad that Joe had found his biological mother. Candy really liked his mom and was slowly realizing that Joe had had a place in this world already. Just like you said - he had his mother, his children, is newly ex-wife. Yeah.

Marie: Yeah, he really wasn't this lonely orphan at all.

Sherry: No. He wasn't. His mom was a Realtor and her husband was a plastic surgeon - and they lived in Atlanta. Which was nice because Candy and Joe had their own lives - but they could make a quick trip to Atlanta for holidays and for visits. And life did seem good. When Joe found a good job in Atlanta, he even moved in with them for a few months; seeing Candy on the weekends.

But in the Summer of 2008 – so, three years after the day on the beach - Joe abruptly moved back to Candy's in Florida and had cut off all contact with his parents.

Marie: Wow! That's sudden. So, only three years of knowing them?

Sherry: Um-hmm and when Candy asked what had happened, Joe angrily relayed this story about how his mom had been badmouthing Candy behind her back and encouraging him to end things with her. When he confronted Linda (his mom) they broke off all contact. No one was allowed to speak badly about his beloved fiancé.

Candy was sad about the loss of the relationship, but it felt nice having a man who would champion and defend her to others. But she was about due for another ugly surprise.

Marie: Seems like she's had enough already.

Sherry: Indeed! Now that he was back home, Joe seemed to be spending inordinate amounts of time on the computer. This was before cell phones were used as prodigiously by cheaters as they are now I'm not sure how she found this, but in 2009 Candy located Joe's profile on a couple of hookup-type dating sites. And that was it for her. She was done with the ugly surprises of his that up-ended her life. In May of 2009, she broke up with him and kicked him out of the house.

And this is when the stalking commenced.

Marie: Oh, no. That's an even uglier surprise.

Sherry: Yes. Initially, Joe harassed Candy electronically; sending her hundreds of emails, texts, and Facebook messages. And, at first, they were hopeful - and cloyingly loving. Then they turned into

gaslighting events; where he tried to get her to accept his lies about what had happened in the past -and even about those two naughty websites he'd been on. Then they slowly devolved into threats and ill wishes. Candy was annoyed at first, but that turned into fear as he started inundating her with other ugly surprises.

She went for a walk along the beach one morning; until she realized it was flooded.

Marie: Joe was powerful enough to flood a beach?

Sherry: Yes! With nude pictures he'd taken of her in the past - as part of their sexy time.

Marie: Ugh!

Sherry: He'd created a flyer featuring Candy, posing in the nude.

Marie: Ugh! That's awful!

Sherry: The flyer was offering sex with her - and directed the holder of the flyer to her home address.

Marie: That's actually really dangerous!

Sherry: It's extremely dangerous - and really awful!

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: She was hit with a deluge of email and Facebook messages from purported friends of Joe who wanted to convince her to get back with him - but they were all fakes - and eventually they were traced back to him. He added her name and address to online kinky sex sites - like Adult Friend Finder and Online Booty Call - and then he would impersonate her in the chat rooms, and encourage these shady men and women to show up at her door expecting sex.

Marie: That sounds terrifying!

Sherry: It was very terrifying for her! And she would get yelled at by these people who felt they'd been duped.

Marie: Well, they had been; just not by her.

Sherry: Right! According to the Daily News, Joe also vandalized her home several times. In addition, he mailed her a dead piglet and a variety of sex toys via snail mail.

Marie: That's disgusting - on both counts!

Sherry: Yeah. I think so. So, pigs were her favorite animal, and she thinks that's why it was a piglet that was mailed to her.

Marie: That's so mean!

Sherry: One night, she went out on the town with some friends, and he showed up and pulled a knife on her.

Marie: That's...this just keeps getting worse!

Sherry: It does. Terrified of this man, and what he was showing himself to be capable of, she finally took out a Protective Order against him. And he was charged with Misdemeanor Stalking. Candy knew that the Protective Order was just a piece of paper - and that the cops are usually too late if the Order is breached - but she felt a little bit better. And she also started carrying a gun. She was still awake most of the night worrying about him showing up - but at least she had created a formal record of his misdeeds. Which seems to be imperative if you want the police to back you up when things become dangerous.

Because Joe wasn't finished.

You know, one thing I don't understand...is I don't understand why she didn't try to get him charged with Felony stalking - instead of Misdemeanor Stalking. Do you understand the difference - because it seemed pretty bad.

Marie: I kind of don't get it, either. Because Misdemeanor Stalking is supposed to be when you're stalking a person, but you don't pose a credible threat to the victim or to her family. And then Felony Stalking is when you cross the line and pose a credible threat. But, like, here's the problem. What is a credible threat? Not this dead piglet? Not damage to your property? Not having your home address published on these sex pages? I mean, she could have easily been sexually assaulted.

Sherry: Right. And she was also confronted with a knife in a public place. Where is the Felony?

Marie: Yeah, I don't understand how this didn't rise to a credible threat. This sounds pretty terrifying.

Sherry: I think so, too. And she'd called the police ten times over the past three months for instances of stalking.

Marie: Yeah. This is persistent and violent.

Sherry: Yeah. I don't understand how the Attorney General makes that call - but it was Misdemeanor that he was charged with at that point. And he was arrested on June 7, 2009, and released after paying \$1,000 bail.

Marie: That's just not enough.

Sherry: No. It's not. He jumped bail and he went radio silent.

Marie: Of course.

Sherry: And Candy met with the AG's office. After she learned more of this story - and when she talked to him about these further details - that's when the AG upped the charges to Criminal Stalking.

Marie: That's probably smart.

Sherry: Yes. The police said they wanted to arrest Joe again. But now they couldn't find him. The good news was that he wasn't talking to Candy.

Marie: But sometimes silence is terrifying.

Sherry: You're right. In cases like these, silence is rarely golden.

(interlude music)

Sherry: After a few days of silence, Candy got another email - and it was a shocker. It was from a person claiming to be Joe's friend. They were writing to inform her that Joe had hanged himself in an Orlando hotel and was now dead!

Marie: That's awful! You can just hear the, 'I hope you're happy' in that message.

Sherry: Absolutely! She also received an email containing a photo containing what looked like a man who had been hung - and she was stunned, shaken, and feeling terrible! And then a little bit of doubt crept in. He'd already shown himself to be a big liar about a million times.

Marie: It's true.

Sherry: Did he really commit suicide? She knew just what she needed to do. She needed to call Linda.

She could confirm that he was dead and - once that matter was resolved - she could express her condolences to his mother and stepdad. I mean, Linda had said some awful things about her, but Candy felt she needed to contact her to get some closure at his passing. And that is when she found yet another ugly surprise awaiting her.

(interlude music)

Sherry: Joe's stepdad picked up this call. And during the course of the conversation – no, they hadn't heard that Joe was dead (and they doubted it was true). His stepdad said they hadn't talked to Joe since they'd confronted him about the murders.

Marie: What murders?

Sherry: Oh - that's exactly what she said! And he asked, "Well, you know about the murders, don't you?"

Marie: No? (giggles)

Sherry: And Candy was - at that point - finally through the labyrinth of ugly surprises as she listened to the tale Joe's stepdad had to tell her. And it dawned on Candy - Linda had never said mean things about her. She'd never been defended by Joe. Linda had discovered Joe's lies, and it cut him out of her life/

It was Rob, Linda's husband, who figured it all out. When they were first getting to know Joe, he told them how fortuitous it all was - he and his family were in the process of changing jobs and moving out to Florida. But then he showed up alone - with a U-Haul filled with stuff. It was fairly clear his wife and child had been left behind. Joe said he'd been both in the Navy and the Marines.

Marie: That's an impressive career.

Sherry: Exactly. But not true. Neither of them were true. He'd actually spent about 9 months in the Air Force Reserves. He had no childhood photos. He said his storage company had mixed up some records and sold his stuff before they got it straightened out.

He bragged about his great job and his new love, Candy, who lived in Florida. But he never had any money. He temporarily moved in with them when he took this job in Georgia - but then he never moved out. And he was always cheating on Candy.

Marie: That is not impressive. I would be so disappointed if that was my long-lost son.

Sherry: I would be, too. These are the reasons they decided to hire an investigator. And when Rob shared what the investigator had given him with Linda - he had to hand her one document that he dreaded. It was a Wisconsin official; warning that the boy's birth mother ought to fear for her life.

Marie: That's awful! Can you imagine how seeing that and having to give it to your wife?

Sherry: No. And I think that would make me very afraid! He was living with them at that point.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: But Rob and Linda were done. And afraid. And they started locking their bedroom door and sleeping with guns. But they tried not to let on to Joe that the game was up. They were hoping to stay safe and get him out of their lives.

Marie: At least out of their house.

Sherry: Yes. Joe started talking, again, about getting a place of his own. He'd done this before, and it always fell through. So, they knew it was probably just a ploy. But Linda really wanted him out of the house without a confrontation. He'd said he would be moving on Monday, so on Sunday - she made a plan. She loaded all of his belongings into her car and met him at his place of work for lunch. After lunch, she helpfully loaded his belongings into his car.

Marie: That does sound very helpful, doesn't it?

Sherry: Absolutely! It was tense, but she was pretty sure he knew - and he still didn't say anything.

And then he was gone.

Marie: What a relief!

Sherry: It was. And it was intense. The police offered protection, and Linda had some very deep grieving to do. She said she cried as she loaded his belongings into the car.

Marie: That sounds horrible! She'd longed for him his whole life; and then she finds him - and this is who he is.

Sherry: Right. But after he was gone, he stayed gone. And he'd gone home to Florida and filled Candy with lies about it all.

(musical interlude)

Sherry: I'm not sure who contacted whom, but Joe was furious when he realized everyone knew his little murder secret. His focus on stalking his love interest suddenly became a story of hate. But Candy was still the target of his crazy. (sigh)

Marie: Poor Candy.

Sherry: He, again, wrote to her. This time from a hotel in Georgia - where he was staying with yet another girlfriend (who had no idea what he'd been up to).

Oh. That girlfriend - in the future - helpfully gives the police a gun that Joe had been hauling around when the Marshals subsequently arrest him. Well, it turns out that it was stolen from a friend who had tried to lend him a hand - despite what the media was saying about him. I'm getting a little bit ahead in the story - but the thing is, everybody in Joe's wake gets a boatload of ugly surprises. No one is immune.

Marie: That's so true.

Sherry: Anyway, this is what he said to her; "What comes around goes around, so just remember that. You took my life from me, and I am very lost and angry at you for that. I'm here in Saint Pete and I hope to Hell I run into you. You messed me over, and I will pay you back - your job, your rep, all of it."

Marie: That's horrible he's running around with a gun; sending these kinds of letters?

Sherry: Yeah. And he was right about one thing - what goes around *does* come around.

Marie: Good.

Sherry: Like I was saying, on October 21st the Federal Marshals came around and roused him out of that motel room and sent him back to Florida for his hearing on Federal Stalking Charges.

Marie: Good.

Sherry: And Joe's life came full circle. At age 14, he had served approximately three and a half years in Detention for murdering his family - after pleading No Contest. And at age 41, he found himself serving approximately three and a half years in prison. This time it was for Aggravated Stalking and Breaching a Protective Order - after he'd pled guilty. And - again - his sentence was not long enough. When Joe was released from prison, he told the authorities he was headed out to California to start a new life. Candy was able to breathe a cautious sigh of relief for the first time in a long time - and move on with her life. She'd had enough ugly surprises to last her lifetime.

(interlude music)

Marie: So, we know how his biological mom and Candy fit into the picture. We should probably talk about Joe and his family next.

Sherry: We can't.

Marie: Why not?

Sherry: Um. Joe didn't start out his life with a family.

Marie: Well, yeah, that's true. He was adopted. But let's talk about Joe's adopted family.

Sherry: Can't!

Marie: Why?

Sherry: Joe Collier was given life in the imagination of a boy - named Peter Zimmer. Peter Zimmer did have a family.

Marie: Ah! I was wondering why we kept talking about Joe if it was the Zimmer family that died. You've got to stop teasing me - and just tell me the story already.

Sherry: Okay, I will do that! Liars make for great stories, but they aren't any fun to live with.

Marie: It's so true!

Sherry: So, Hans Zimmer and Sally Jo Soka met, fell in love, and married in Chicago, Illinois. In the Summer of 1968, they adopted a newborn baby boy. They were delighted to have him join their family! They named him Peter Zimmer - after Hans' father and (as most families did back then) they kept his adoption a secret until they felt he was old enough to understand. Four years later, they adopted another baby boy - Perry. And they spent the boys' growing-up years doing all of the normal things normal families do - while continuing to live in Wakanda, Illinois.

Hans was an airplane mechanic. He made really good money. And this let Hans take his little family to Germany a few times so they could learn about their family heritage and meet a lot of their family. See, he was a German immigrant.

Marie: Well, that's nice that they could go back. That sounds like a pretty good childhood.

Sherry: Yes. And Hans really wanted his children to understand where he came from - and who he was. So, Hans and Sally - like I said - didn't tell Peter he was adopted until he was 12 years old.

Marie: That had to be a bit of a shock.

Sherry: Um. I think that it was. That's kind of how it used to happen back in the day. They used to not tell the children; hoping the children would come along, feel a part of the family, feel loved, and then when they got old enough, they would say - and usually it was around early teens - they would tell the child they were adopted.

Marie: Hmm. I wonder how he took that?

Sherry: Well, not a lot is publicly known about Peter's childhood. I did hear that they only told him when he was 12 because an Aunt slipped - and then he followed up with his parents and they told him the truth.

But he did do an interview with a Journal Sentinel reporter after one of his stalking charges - so this is about three decades later. They asked him about his childhood - but we aren't covering it here because, well, Peter's a notorious liar.

Marie: Yeah. I don't think we want to be reporting someone's words who's a known unreliable source.

Sherry: And, as we get further into this, you'll see that unreliable is an understatement. We don't feel it's important to hang on to the words of an inveterate liar as he talks about the people who gave him their lives so he could have family when, in fact, he took all of their lives.

What we do know is that their lives in Illinois were disrupted when Hans lost his job at Transworld Airlines. Hans and Sally were pleased when Sally's brother - who owned a business that made crystals for radios in Mineral Springs, Wisconsin - offered Hans employment. But Peter was mad at the prospect of being uprooted from the only home he'd ever known. And he didn't want to go. He was a high school Freshman. He'd been attending private school (the Holy Name Seminary) at the beginning of the year, but he hadn't been doing well. He transferred to the public school, Wakanda High School, about 10 weeks into the school year. Teachers and administrators said Peter had not done very well in public

school. They described him as an unenthusiastic student. But Peter really liked his life in Wakanda, and you can imagine the conversations in this family as Hans and Sally prepared to make this move. I'm sure they reassured him that he would thrive in Wisconsin. That it would be good for him to get better acquainted with his mom's side of the family. That they needed to move if they wanted to continue paying their bills. And that he would be fine. But ultimately, they had to tell Peter that what he wanted didn't really matter. He was moving with the family, and he was going to be fine.

The family climbed into the car and drove to their new home in April of 1983. And Peter's resentment of his family continued to grow.

Marie: That's so sad! So many kids react so badly when their parents are moving because they have to.

Sherry: Right. This family wasn't making the move lightly - and it sounds like they were very concerned about his well-being in the move.

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: They knew he wasn't stable in school; they knew he had friends there. That would be a very difficult decision.

Marie: But if you lose your job, you have to go where you have work.

Sherry: That's very true. Anyway, the move to Mineral Point seemed to work out for Peter that first month and a half. He'd only been in his new high school for seven weeks, but he appeared to be doing great! He was cute and fun, and he was really good at track. He fit in well with his new school and everyone was reported to have liked him and his family.

He missed his old buddies up in Wakanda, Illinois and he spent a lot of his free time talking to them. According to the Des Moines Register, on Monday, May 23rd, Peter called his friend and mentioned that his parents were out of town - and he'd snuck some of his dad's credit cards.

Marie: Oh, okay. So, he's letting his friend know that he's up to no good.

Sherry: Mm-hmm. I think he was trying to talk his friend into going with him.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: But on Tuesday, Peter called him back and mentioned he was planning to kill his whole family.

Marie: That's awful! Can you imagine being the kid who gets a call from your friend who's like, 'Oh, yeah. I'm just gonna murder my mom and my dad and my brother.'

Sherry: 'Now come go travel with me.'

Marie: Yeah. What would you do?

Sherry: Probably what he did.

Peter had said he was headed for the West Coast, and he asked this friend if he wanted to come along - and his friend was concerned about this. So, he sought some adult insight into the situation and that adult contacted the local police. And they immediately paid a visit to the Zimmer home. But it was too late. The Deputies found the entire family murdered.

Marie: That would be so awful.

Sherry: Um-hmm. It is a very sad story.

Marie: It is.

Sherry: Peter appeared to have murdered his mother first; stabbing her 15 times. She had been carried into the shed behind the house and a rosary had been placed on her body. Eleven-year-old Perry had been stabbed more than 25 times. He had many defensive wounds on his little body. It appeared he fought valiantly for his life. His body was dragged upstairs to his bedroom. It appears Hans had been ambushed. His body was found on the back porch. He had been shot five times.

Marie: That's awful. And so...so violent with the knife. I don't understand why he would stab his mother and brother - and then shoot his dad.

Sherry: A lot of times there's kind of a physical power dynamic - and they will stab someone if they think they can get away with it and shoot them if they see them as more powerful than they are.

Marie: Oh, okay.

Sherry: And there's also been intimated some kind of a sexual connection with knives used in murders - especially if they're stabbed a lot. I don't know if that has anything to do with this case in particular. But - and this just occurred to me - he might have stabbed his mom and his brother because he knew that the cache of guns were upstairs in the attic. His dad had served in the military, and he had some American-issued guns up in the attic that Peter ended up loading into the car and taking with him.

Marie: Okay. So, he had to get those two out of the way before he could get to the attic?

Sherry: That's another possibility.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: So, the Investigators quickly suspected Peter - as he'd left his bloody clothes in the bathroom and tried to wash off all of the blood in the shower. Blood doesn't come off all that easy, and he left a mess. He'd taken the family car and fled after the murders heading for his old home with six pistols in the back seat and his father's credit cards in his pocket.

Marie: So, he wasn't headed straight for California. He really was going home to get his friend.

Sherry: Yeah. And I'm sure his friend was scared to death.

Marie: Yeah. I wouldn't want to go on that trip.

Sherry: Umm-umm. Peter picked up an 18-year-old hitchhiker along the way - and generously offered to share his hotel room when it got late.

Marie: I would not go to that hotel.

Sherry: Could you imagine being an 18-year-old hitchhiker, and you get into the car that is going to give you a ride - and there sits a 14-year-old.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: With six guns in the back seat?

Marie: Wait. How is he driving if he's 14?

Sherry: (laughs) I know.

Marie: Yeah. That's just...that would be a terrible ride to take. I would have waited.

Sherry: I would have, too. Anyway, when they tried to check into the hotel room for the evening in Kansas City, Missouri the Desk Clerk called the police. The Desk Clerk had expressed concern about Peter having permission to use Hans' credit card - and Peter had tried to convince him that he was hitchhiking across the country and has his dad's permission to use the card. Now, remember, this boy is 14 years old. Think of how smooth he is at lying.

Marie: Yeah. That's a pretty creative lie for such a young kid.

Sherry: And he may have gotten away with it, but the hitchhiker piped up and said, "That's not true. You stopped and picked me up outside of St. Louis in the car - which is outside - with all the guns in it.

Marie: Okay. So, maybe this hitchhiker was ready to be done with the ride. (laughter)

Sherry: I think so. The Clerk called the police, and Peter and the hitchhiker were both arrested without incident. That evening the hitchhiker was eventually released from custody - hopefully understanding why every mother used to tell her children not to hitchhike: because they could get picked up by a murderer.

(musical interlude)

Sherry: Okay. Well, that's it for today. We'd like to thank the Portage Daily Register, Murderpedia, the Tampa Bay Times, the folks at the Dreamin' Demon, the Daily Mail, the New York Daily News, the Milwaukee Journal of Sentinel the AP News, Jojo's stories, Adam Quick, Criminally Listed, Bruce Velmetti of the Journal Sentinel, the Des Moines Register, the Waco Tribune, the Wisconsin State Journal, the Capitol Times, and the Galveston County Daily News for the information and pictures that we used in the story today. We'd also like to thank Jade Brown for the music.

Marie: If you are able, please help support our show with a pledge through patreon.com/ParricidePodcast. Your tax-deductible donations go directly toward research to prevent future parricides. Thank you for your support, and we'll see you next week for Part 2 of this episode.

Sherry: Bye for now!

Marie: Goodbye!

(outro music) Ashes, ashes; we all fall down.