

Parricide Podcast ●
Bang, Pow, Boom Pt. 1
Tess Damm

Intro: 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. Today's episode is called Bang, Pow, Boom. It's the story of Tess Amanda Damm; who killed her mother, Linda Juergens Damm. If you like this episode, please follow us on your favorite podcast platform.

Sherry: And if we sound a little funny today, it's because everybody has colds. Anyway, let's begin.

Linda Juergens-Damm didn't have an easy childhood, and she didn't grow up to have a happy ending - like they tell you will happen in fairy tales and on TV. She was the child of an alcoholic mother who reportedly put her daughters through the paces growing up. As an adult, Linda was a very private person who was a bit of a loner. She'd been born in the State of Washington. She used to work at Rocky Flats (this manufacturing plant that used to produce plutonium pits for nuclear weapons) as a Waste Compliance Manager.

Marie: What is a plutonium pit? That sounds dangerous.

Sherry: It's easiest to think about the plutonium pits as radioactive bowling balls - made of approximately four to five kilograms of plutonium. Current pits are reported to contain three kgs. of plutonium. Plutonium is loaded into nuclear weapons to energize them. They use about 10 kgs. of plutonium per weapon.

Marie: Ah. What do you mean by energize?

Sherry: You know. Make the atomic bomb go boom - the second time. When the plutonium pit is uniformly compressed by explosives inside a warhead or a bomb, it creates a nuclear explosion.

Marie: Oh, okay. So, how a nuclear bomb has two explosions – first, is the plutonium explosion which then starts the nuclear chain reaction in the bomb?

Sherry: Exactly. Some people actually call the pit, the heart of the bomb or the trigger of the bomb.

Marie: Okay. And then that sets off the nuclear payload which is the second explosion.

Sherry: Exactly.

Marie: I didn't realize that plutonium was molded into a pit. I don't think I would have wanted Linda's job. What, exactly, is plutonium?

Sherry: Well, plutonium doesn't generally come from nature; although trace elements of it can be found in uranium. Scientists use a nuclear reactor and fission to create it from uranium. It's a bright silvery gray metal that looks a lot like nickel, but it oxidizes to look really similar to oxidized copper.

Marie: Oh, that's so interesting! I've never thought of what it actually looks like.

Sherry: It's kind of funny, isn't it. It's number 94 on the Periodic Table, so a lot of people don't really even think about that. But it's heavy - like metal - and has a candy-like, sweetly sour taste (don't eat it).

Marie: I can't believe someone did! (laughter)

Sherry: If you inhale it, it's so poisonous it would kill you or give you cancer. If you're touching it or around it much, its toxicity is similar to lead. But its action is different from lead. If you hold a piece of it in your hand (don't do it) it feels warm. You can literally feel its energy as it's creating alpha decay.

Marie: Hmm.

Sherry: Plutonium emits Alpha radiation - as opposed to Beta or Gamma - which is a highly ionizing form of radiation. In very small doses, it can give you radiation poisoning, cancer, or it can just outright kill you.

Marie: Yeah. Decades ago, a lot of people died or got sick from plutonium exposure - mostly because people didn't understand its destructive power. And some people thought it might be a kind of, a health benefit to be around it.

Sherry: Yeah, isn't that crazy?

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: Yeah. It's got a destructive power that is equal to its creative power. It does a lot of good. For example, as per NASA those nuclear warheads used to kill people are an integral part of our National Security. Because we have nuclear capability, other countries are pretty reluctant to attack us or go to war against us. So, it can be deemed as good - or not so good - depending on who you're talking to. But it's a great source of energy. Plutonium-238, which is reactor grade - not weapons grade - is still used in batteries to keep pacemakers going and it's also used to keep NASA probes operating in deep space.

Marie: Spacecraft have, what, like huge nuclear batteries running them?

Sherry: Uh-huh! And plutonium's used in nuclear power plants in some countries to produce significant amounts of energy - and the primary fuel used in Fast Neutron reactors.

Marie: That's interesting. I've heard of those, but I've also heard of the melting down.

Sherry: Um-hmm. Which is not so good.

Marie: I didn't know that there was plutonium in pacemakers. That sounds really scary.

Sherry: Because it isn't weapons grade, it's not as reactive. So, I don't think anyone with a pacemaker needs to be worried. It's just something that can be used in a long-acting battery.

Marie: That's cool.

Sherry: Yeah.

Marie: So, Linda worked for the company that manufactured the pits for warheads?

Sherry: Yes. There were several facilities that manufactured them, and she worked in the one that made the bulk of them - in Arvada, Colorado - which is close to Boulder, Colorado. They manufactured

between 1,000 – 2,000 pits each year. They worked in secret; telling everyone in the community that the plant was manufacturing cleaning supplies, like Scrubbing Bubbles.

Think about this. The employees would put their hands into lead-lined gloves which were attached to a box. And they would work with the plutonium inside the box - shaping and drilling - until they'd created the plutonium pit. The shaping, itself, created a lot of dust and shavings and that sort of thing. So, that's always a problem, but none of the line workers realized what kind of a problem it was - because they were always told it was totally safe.

Marie: That's horrible.

Sherry: Yeah.

Marie: That sounds a lot like what happened in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Sherry: Yeah. It does. Was that town that they created for the reactor; to create the plutonium?

Marie: Yeah. Everyone always is told it's safe, even though the people building it know it's not that safe.

Sherry: Right. That's exactly what it's like.

Anyway, the Rocky Flats plant was raided by the FBI and the EPA in 1988 among allegations of violations to environmental safety. Specifically, the administration was completely mismanaging the plutonium supply. Employees were told to put their radiation badges in their pocket; so that they could work overtime without getting reported for being overexposed. And they were burning unused plutonium waste at night - in the open air.

Marie: That's horrible! Isn't a radiation badge kind of important? Because how do you know if you've been overexposed if you don't have it out?

Sherry: Yeah. Umm. Oakridge used these, too. So, these radiation badges - you're supposed to wear it on yourself at all times and it will warn you when you have too high an amount of radiation. Which is terrifying – now. I don't think people thought about it back then.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: Anyway, the plant was formally shut down in 1992; largely ending the production of these pits. There were about 3,000 pounds of plutonium that was completely unaccounted for. But the worst news is they found 62 pounds of it.

Marie: But that sounds like good news. Why are you saying it's bad news?

Sherry: They found it in the vents and the piping of the plant's building.

Marie: Oh! That's horrible! So, it was in their air and water.

Sherry: Um-hmm. Every day when they went to work, they were completely overexposed to radiation.

Marie: That's horrible!

Sherry: I think so, too.

Marie: So, what happened to Rocky Flats?

Sherry: Well, a deal was cut that allowed the secrets of Rocky Flats to remain just that - a secret. No responsibility for what they'd done and no transparency for the employees or the community. According to NPR, the Department of Energy estimated it would take 70 years and \$30 billion to clean up the pollution at the site. But the agency accelerated those plans, and the cleanup was finished in less than 10 years - and they very efficiently spent only \$7 billion of the funds allocated to the Superfund cleanup.

Marie: That's a little bit of a concern. And it makes you wonder how well it got cleaned up. And what about the people who had worked there? Were they okay? Because I'm betting the answer is no.

Sherry: And you'd win that bet! They had a difficult time getting the government to compensate them for destroying their lives. On May 3, 2007, an article in the Fort Collins Coloradoan ran a small article about how the police were demanding handwriting samples from the boy and girl - used in a case where this boy had killed his girlfriend's mother. Dwarfing this article, was a huge headline decrying, "Ex-Workers at Rocky Flats Want Benefits Sped Up." The government officials had been stonewalling them and dragging their heels in compensating all of the people who were literally dying of cancer.

Marie: That's truly horrible.

Sherry: It is. It mentions the Congressional Act setting up payments to former nuclear workers who developed cancer - capping off maximum payments at \$250,000. But they usually only paid around \$50,000 per claim. And they denied a lot of the claims. It was pretty much the norm. If you want to read the article, we'll post it in our Patreon Page.

Marie: That is so sad! It seems horrible and I don't understand how \$50,000 would cover even their medical bills.

Sherry: Um-mm. It doesn't seem like compensation for a life that's been taken.

Marie: Yeah. And this is very reminiscent of Oak Ridge. It's scary how they had all these secret facilities everywhere.

Sherry: I know! It makes you wonder where the rest of them were, right?

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: And it also makes you wonder which of those secret facilities were running rife with safety violations like this one. It seems, like, if the government allows people to break rules, they start to break more rules.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: Anyway. All of the manufacturing facilities for weapons-grade plutonium were eventually shut down - about 30 years ago. Except for the one in Los Alamos; which is allowed to make a limited production for research purposes. Plutonium is kind of cool and complex. It ages from the inside out and from the outside in. It doesn't only irradiate things external to it - it's constantly irradiating itself. Which means it starts to become extremely unstable as it ages. With care, it can last around 30 to 40 years (some people say) if you maintain it in a carefully controlled environment. You have to keep the air dry. You have to keep the atmospheric pressure stable. There's some other thing that I really can't remember - I'm not a scientist. But scientists are currently working hard to find a way to extend its shelf life from 30 years or so to a century. We don't seem to be there yet, but some people claim we are.

Marie: Oh. Wow! That is a much longer time.

Sherry: That's more than tripling its life. It seems like that would be a bit of a challenge.

Marie: Yeah, it does! [slight pause] So, if we manufactured the last plutonium pits about 30 years ago - and plutonium is only storable for about 30 years - isn't that a little problematic for us? Or have we outsourced creating it?

Sherry: No. We haven't outsourced it. NASA is actually trying to restart a couple of the manufacturing facilities as we speak. The one in Los Alamos, New Mexico and then another one on the Savannah River - near Aiken, South Carolina.

The Aiken site was ironically built in 2007 to dispose of 34 tons of weapons-grade plutonium, as per an agreement struck with Russia.

Marie: Hmm.

Sherry: That agreement fell apart in 2016 - when Russia terminated the contract. And they quit efforts to get the site built in 2019; with only 70 percent of the facility complete. They're proposing a limited production schedule; where 30 plutonium pits per year will be manufactured in Los Alamos - starting in 2026. And then 50 plutonium pits per year would start being manufactured at the Savannah River Site starting in 2030. So, NASA would have about 80 plutonium pits available each year to keep our nuclear weapons charged and ready.

Marie: Do you think that their proposal is a good idea or a bad one?

Sherry: I have no idea. But I know some institutes are opposing the claim; saying the pits should remain stable for a hundred years, easy - and we don't need manufacturing plants at all. But, given everything that's transpired here with the secrecy and how both Rocky Flats and Oakridge were operated, I think we should look into it a little more and become engaged in the process of learning more about it. And, as far as Linda's concerned, there's a lot of evidence that suggests she - like everyone else who worked in that plant - may have suffered from neurological problems related to her old job. But anyway...

Marie: Yeah. Back to Tess.

Sherry: Okay!

Tess's parents - Linda Juergens and Michael Damm - were married for four years. But they were only really together for two. The marriage failed when Tess was two years old. The dad - Michael - moved to Wisconsin and she never really saw her dad after that. Linda who had been married once before was pretty much finished with marriage, so she decided to raise her daughter alone and worked really hard to try to do right by her daughter.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: She was described by Rocky Flats co-workers as private, pleasant, and hard-working. She loved motorcycles - Harley in particular - but when she learned she was pregnant with Tess she'd sold her motorcycle. She planned on being around for her daughter, so she started working on changing her lifestyle. It looks like Linda worked at Rocky Flats throughout that Super Fund Cleanup that we talked about, and she retired in 2005 after working there for 24 years. When Tess was young, she and her

mother seemed to enjoy a very close relationship. Her mom had signed her up to play basketball with the local City Rec Center, called Project Yes, when she was 13 years old - and her coach recalls how Tess would leave the basketball court to give her mom (who was always at her games and always at her practices) a big hug.

Marie: Oh, that's nice.

Sherry: Yeah. A few short years later, that relationship had soured. Tess and her mother began to fight more and more. The neighbors would say they could hear Tess screaming at her mother from inside their well-kept white cottage that sported a pale blue door and shutters. They didn't know Linda well. She was pretty busy with work, her own fun, and raising her daughter. She pretty much kept to herself within the neighborhood, but her neighbors all liked her as a neighbor -and they were friendly with her. They could see that she was really trying with her daughter - and that Tess wasn't having it. Tess was fairly rebellious and continuously sluffing school. Linda was giving this her best effort.

At the end of August 2006, Linda was extremely concerned about what to do with her. Given that school was about to start - and hating the high conflict in their home - Linda arranged to send Tess to live with her Aunt - Linda's sister. But Tess was bounced back home by the end of September.

Marie: Oh! That's very fast.

Sherry: Um-hmm. Very fast. She did write about this on her MySpace wall – saying, “My Aunt found out about my mom's alcoholism. We talked about it, and we figured that moving out there to California to go to school for a year was my best bet. We were wrong. It was terrible! My Aunt is a bitch - all the time! She yells every second, and it just wasn't what I expected it to be.”

Marie: I just don't think that if her Aunt found out that her Mom's an alcoholic - and is worried enough that she has the girl come out for a school year - that she would send her back in a month. That sounds more like Tess was too difficult for her Aunt to handle, and she didn't want to be responsible for her anymore.

Sherry: It does! And I'm sure the mom drank - family says that the mom drank. But the woman was keeping a neat and tidy house, taking care of a daughter, working full-time...so, I'm not sure about this alcoholic thing. I know a lot of kids claim their parents are alcoholic. I don't know. And it didn't really come out - one way or the other - in all of the research material.

Marie: Yeah. And alcoholism is a tricky thing because a lot of people drink. Some people even binge drink - but are not alcoholics. And you kind of veer off into alcoholism territory, usually, when you see people neglecting their children, neglecting their home, or neglecting their work.

Sherry: Um-hm. I agree with you! But Tess was saying she was an alcoholic. And Tess was getting picked up by the local police for violating curfews. And one night when they were taking her home, an Officer says that he noticed Linda was in bad condition. She appeared to be so drunk, she could barely walk. Curiously, they reported this after the fact. But they left Tess there and went back to work. They claim they faxed a referral over to the County's Child and Family Services - to have them check on these two. But Child and Family Services say that never happened. They never received a referral.

Marie: If fax is anything like email - then it probably wasn't sent. But I think we also have to consider that, uh, someone could have many reasons for not being able to walk properly.

Sherry: What do you mean?

Marie: Well, Linda had worked at Rocky Flats - with plutonium. What are the symptoms of radiation poisoning?

Sherry: That's a really good question. So, current research on low-dose radiation exposure says that people exposed to low-dose radiation over time experience neurological problems; up to and including the possibility of having Parkinson's disease. And research also shows that ¼ of those with Parkinson's disease have been mistaken for being – drunk.

Marie: Yeah. I mean, you have to assume she has some effects on her health from working in the plutonium plant. Especially when - where there was plutonium in the air vents. And - given that her house was reported to be clean and tidy (both inside and out) and her neighbors don't think she's an alcoholic, there's a possibility that this 'barely able to walk' incident is more appropriately attributed to low-dose radiation poisoning. And that, because she was private, and no one was aware of what was going on - since the plutonium pit making plants were secretive and Linda herself didn't seem to be one to talk about her health problems.

Sherry: Yeah. I think it's really interesting - and something that people should think about. I think that people are often too excited to label somebody with alcoholism with very limited information, and they take what the kids are saying on their Myspace page like it's truth. There are no Fact Checkers on MySpace.

Marie: (laughter) This is so true.

Sherry: And the kids there like to sound edgy - and like to sound abused or angry - and sometimes they're not.

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: It's just – them.

Marie: Yeah. And you have to consider people like to use MySpace and refer to it as if it has the validity of a diary. But a diary is private; and therefore, it's not been written with the intention of influencing their peers. Or trying to make them look a certain way. Where – MySpace - I don't see it as any more valid than a complaint in the girl's bathroom.

Sherry: Exactly. Exactly. It's just kids being kids, sometimes.

Anyway, the research suggests that low-dose radiation exposure to the women working at that plant - because it *was* mostly women - would not create a ton of cognitive dysfunction and would definitely result in neurological damage and probably increased anger issues. Linda's siblings had made a public statement saying she was an alcoholic. But they all lived somewhere else. They weren't a close family.

Marie: Yeah. I was going to say how could they know for sure when they live in California?

Sherry: Tess told them.

Marie: Well.

Sherry: They had a mother who was an alcoholic.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: She probably did drink - she may have been a heavy drinker. But by the definition of alcoholic - she was functioning. Like I said, she was succeeding in all areas of life - which is not what alcoholism looks like. So, I think there's just a lot more at play here than people want to admit.

Marie: Yeah. Possibly, they didn't know.

Sherry: Um-hmm.

Marie: I'm sure she wasn't talking about being exposed to plutonium at, you know, family barbecues.

Sherry: Right. Since they probably didn't have any family barbecues. They seemed like they were a close *enough* family - but they weren't a close family.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: So, according to the Casper Star Tribune, Tess emotionally bled all over MySpace all the time; saying her life was completely falling apart. She claimed her mom was a raging "functional alcoholic" and, at the same time, Linda was telling the neighbors how frustrated she was with her disrespectful, out-of-control daughter. And the neighbors all say they were inclined to believe Linda. The people who lived there said they could see how hard she was trying to reign in this incorrigible daughter.

Marie: Well, okay. So, we've talked a lot about Linda. But was Tess getting a bad rap here? I mean, it would be difficult to think you had an alcoholic mother - or even if she didn't think that - to know you had a mom who acted drunk (she'd have slurred speech and trouble walking). Was she just being a typical rebellious kid - but Linda was struggling because of her own health issues, either way?

Sherry: Tess didn't seem like your typical rebellious 14-year-old child; based on the choices she was making for her life. As per her MySpace wall. It appears she was - now remember she's 14 - and it appears she was drinking a lot, doing drugs, sluffing school, and had already been quite involved with boys - who inevitably disappointed her.

Marie: Okay. That's a lot for 14.

Sherry: It is. She was a self-proclaimed Juggalette - a follower of the Dark Carnival. She loved listening to Insane Clown Posse, smoking pot, whining on MySpace about her terrible life - and she proclaimed that she'd been diagnosed as having ADHD but that she refused to accept the diagnosis. And she claimed she was Christian, but would add, "sometimes you can't tell."

Marie: Okay. That's interesting.

Sherry: Um-hmm.

Marie: You're going to have to tell me, exactly, what a Juggalette is. (giggles)

Sherry: There is a lot to unpack in this, isn't there.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: Okay. So, a Juggalo - the female version being Juggalette - is a person who loves the Horror Core band, Insane Clown Posse (or ICP). But any information after this - about this controversial band and its followers - will differ wildly based on what makes them go, 'Whoop Whoop!'

Some kids listen to this music; that I can only describe as straight-up nightmares set to catchy tunes - and decide to be a follower because they can relate deeply to the violence, blood, and gore. And they've acted accordingly - and been in the news several times for their marauding and their violent acting out (often with machetes).

Other followers go a bit deeper. They relate to the deeper message in these songs and see the Juggalo Posse as more of a land for societal misfits. Everyone is welcome. You don't have to worry about fitting into this space. You simply belong. This set of people literally think of Juggalos as a fun-spirited group of misfits who have banded together behind the scenes to support each other. Need a place to stay? Check with a Juggalo friend. Want some food? Same. A safe place to hang out where no one's going to hurt you or make fun of you? You're already there. Whoop! Whoop!

Plus, they like the music and the hatchet wielding images because it all makes them feel edgy, and powerful, and fun. The only things these two groups of fans seem to have in common is their love for the music, their penchant to drink sugarless Faygo soda (which was adopted as the Official Drink of Juggalos and manufactured in Ohio. They use sugarless because sugar eats away at all of the foam rubber the ICP uses on their set), and their desire to attend the annual Gathering.

Marie: What is a Gathering?

Sherry: You can think of the Gathering as a Woodstock or a Coachella for Juggalos. Unlike Coachella, they won't be gouging you in the ticket line. The most paid for this five-day event was advertised at \$220 per person.

Marie: Oh!

Sherry: But. You have to like this specific type of Horror Core music to enjoy attending. The 2022 Gathering just happened this past August, and is most likely the last one ever - as Violent J (one of the two leads) has developed health problems and has decided to retire.

This band was detested by everyone from parents to the FBI. We could do an entire 4-Part podcast on these guys; they are so complex and so interesting. But I'll stop there.

Marie: Okay. Sounds like it's a very controversial group, in any case.

Sherry: Anyway. Tess met Brian K. Grove at Project Yes - that same Rec Center where she used to play basketball - when they were both doing Court Mandated Community Service for Juvenile Offenses. It wasn't love at first sight. But on October 21st, Tess wrote on her Myspace wall about her most recent breakup - and how she was tired of finding boys who didn't care about her or really even see her. They just wanted sex. And she felt she was ready for a real boyfriend. And Brian responded. And this is what he said, "I don't know you that well, but I can tell you're a really cool girl and that you are worth more than just your looks and your body. You're worth every moment of a guy's time."

Marie: That's nice.

Sherry: Yeah. Ten days later, they hooked up at a Halloween dance at the Rec Center, and they were a couple from then on. But the fighting was intense between them. And they were constantly posting intense love notes to each other on that very public MySpace.

Marie: Okay. So, tell me a little bit more about Brian.

Sherry: Okay. Brian was 16 years old, and he'd also grown up in the Colorado area. But he started life out in India - in an orphanage. He was adopted by an American family and relocated to their home in Colorado. He was said to have graduated early from a local Charter School, the Boulder Preparatory High School. And he'd been in a band, himself. His high school band - where he played the euphonium.

Marie: What is a euphonium?

Sherry: It looks like a tiny, baby tuba.

Marie: Okay. He sounds pretty clean-cut so far.

Sherry: Yeah. He sounds like a nice kid.

Marie: Uh-huh.

Sherry: But he also loved the Insane Clown Posse and was known to try his hand at penning Horror Core poetry; trying to be more like them.

Marie: Hmm.

Sherry: A classmate he seemed to be good friends with, described him as a very social guy and as having "...a unique and highly individual personality. It was difficult to get him to see others' points of view. He was a kid who rarely changed his mind."

Marie: Hmm.

Sherry: So..

Marie: ...a mixed bag maybe.

Sherry: Some problems here. Yeah. Brian had told his friends that he'd met his birth mother about a year prior to meeting Tess. But this isn't confirmed anywhere.

Marie: Oh! What did he say about that?

Sherry: Well, he told them that he was part Indian and part black. And he claimed that he was told that he was a product of a rape.

Marie: Oh, that's sad.

Sherry: Yeah. But it's also not confirmed. And if you think about this kid - and the life he was trying to project; who knows if he met her. I don't know. Um, we have to keep in mind that kids say some pretty weird things - trying to create this persona for themselves when they're teenagers.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: And, because it's kind of life Interrupted, you'll...people will have to decide for themselves what they want to believe about these claims. He worked at a local fast-food restaurant, and he moved into a condo with his friend, Bert Crain, after he got kicked out of his house on August 31st. Apparently, after the police had been called - at least once - to break it up when Brian got physically violent with his mother. The mother who had adopted him as an infant.

Marie: Oh. That's sad.

Sherry: Yeah. There's also news that he tried to kill himself about a year before the murder - by taking a bunch of pills after a fight with his dad.

Marie: So, he had a lot of problems with his parents.

Sherry: He did. And Brian also told his friends that he'd experienced some childhood trauma that had left him with - and here we go again - an alternate personality; a dark, angry, well-dressed guy called Darius.

Darius would get beyond angry with his friends when they called him Brian. This stumped them for a while and then they got used to it. They figured it out. If he was looking preppy - and was well dressed - they called him Darius. And they expected him to be kind of a cruel guy. When he was just looking normal, they called him Brian. No big deal. And he never did tell anyone what that trauma was supposed to be about.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: Brian had a couple of friends: his buddy, Jared, and his other buddy, Jared. Jared Guy was his best friend. They'd both been brought to America - and Colorado - under similar circumstances. They met in elementary school, and they had been tight ever since they met because they had a lot in common. The other Jared, Jared Smith, was a noisy guy and a football player at Centurion High. He seemed like a fairly normal teen. His MySpace page had a few satanic references on his home page. But again, probably just a normal kid saying weird things to impress his friends. He decided he really liked Brian and by just constantly - and I mean just constantly - showing up, became his friend.

Marie: Oh!

Sherry: He was always part of the picture, but rarely part of the scene.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: So, no one really got the sense that Brian and Jared were very close at all. So, it was kind of an odd relationship.

Marie: Okay. So, Brian looks like he has a small friend group, um, and some very strange behavior. What else do we know about him?

Sherry: Well, according to the Denver Post, Brian was known by his friends for a couple of things. He was a big video gamer. He had a hot temper, but usually nothing came of it. And because he identified as a Juggalo, he felt entitled to go into a kill mode when he got mad - heading home to find a butcher knife to go solve his problem; but cooling down before he actually did anything about it. Bert, his roommate, said this is exactly what happened one month prior to the actual murder. He said what Brian

liked best was chilling with Tess - but that Jared was always there and sometimes they would all just tell Jared to go away.

Marie: (sympathetically) Ohhh.

Sherry: Yeah. Tess would stay overnight with Brian at his condo every once in a while, and her mother - frustrated by it all - called the police and reported her as a runaway - on February 11th and May 16th of 2006.

Marie: Okay. I mean, with your 14-year-old, what are you going to do? Eventually you have to try and get some help.

Sherry: Yes. But, again, it's an indicator that the mom was trying to be responsible and be an adult - and raise her child. And she had a child who was doing whatever she pleased. On May 29th of that year, there's a record of a family-related crime (which means a domestic squabble) where the police were called. And a curfew violation on July 4th.

Marie: That's interesting. Can you imagine a curfew violation on the 4th of July?

Sherry: I know! I think she must have done something fairly serious; but they let her off the hook with a curfew violation.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: Anyway, on July 15th Tess was issued an underage drinking ticket, and had been reported again as a runaway. Now this is all before she met Brian.

Marie: Oh. Wow!

Sherry: Yeah. So, twice the police reports described Tess as out of control and her mother as inebriated at the time of the visit.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: But their concerns never rose to the level of their filing a complaint with Child Protective Services. So, how drunk was she? We don't know.

Marie: We're not even sure she was drunk.

Sherry: Right. I just think that that's not as clear as people try to make it.

Marie: Um-hmm.

Sherry: It looks like Tess figured things out after July of that year, because the police stopped hearing from the family after she'd been sent to her Aunt's house for a month in September.

Marie: Yeah. So, Tess must have met Brian after she got back from California - when she tried to stay with her Aunt, but it didn't work out?

Sherry: Right. So, all of the police report information that I just gave you happened before she met Brian. Okay? After she met Brian, the problems were different.

Marie: Hmm.

Sherry: So, from October on, her mom was threatening to report her as a runaway because she kept spending the night at Brian's house.

Marie: Oh.

Sherry: But she wasn't reporting her. She knew where she was.

Marie: Ohh-kay.

Sherry: Um, and that problem went away pretty quickly. Because soon after they met, Brian told Tess he needed a place to live.

Marie: Oh! Were things not working with his roommate?

Sherry: I guess not. Tess asked her mom if Brian could move in with them - and I have no idea why - but she said yes. So, Brian moved in with Tess and Linda - where the kids figured they could play video games and hang out all day and go to IHOP and hang out all night. They could listen to the Insane Clown Posse and their other favorite tunes. They could write obsessively on MySpace and smoke pot. You know, just kick it with each other all day and all night. But Tess's mom had other ideas. She expected him and Tess to actually help around the house, and to keep the rules of the house - like most moms.

Brian was immediately resentful; forgetting that it was a big favor for him to be even living there. He didn't like being that loser who lives with his girlfriend at her mother's house. He quickly started hating on Linda and being disrespectful - and generally ungrateful - for what she had done for him. Tess suggested they would do better if they could just move out and live with each other - despite the fact that they were both lacking in two key areas: neither of them had jobs. Well, I guess he did - at Cinnabon - and neither of them had money. But Tess thought that would be cool. Tess, much like Tyler Witt in Episode 20, started dreaming about home ownership and adulting like a Hollywood Diva, despite her young age and lack of funding. So, they went house shopping. And Tess and Brian found the house of their dreams. Remember, this is in 2007 - before housing prices went sky high in these last few years. They found a very nice home - in the \$490,000 price range, and decided they had to have it. They would do anything to get it.

Marie: That is ridiculous! What are they going to do with a house like that?

Sherry: I don't know! But they also knew that they couldn't pull this off by themselves, so they started asking around to see if any of their friends would be willing to do them a solid.

Marie: They had friends who could loan them money? That's lucky!

Sherry: Uhm, no. You misunderstood me. They were looking for friends who were interested in committing murder.

Marie: How would murder get them their dream house?

Sherry: Well, Tess knew her mother would leave *her* house to Tess when she died. So, Tess convinced Brian that they could murder her mother, sell her mother's house, and use the proceeds as a down payment toward their dream home. But she didn't think they could pull this off by themselves, so she convinced Brian he would need to get a few of his friends on board. Tess was nothing if she was not a planner.

Marie: Oh! I think she may be a Booty Bumper.

Sherry: You think?

Marie: Yeah. I'm pretty sure. (laughter) But if you want to learn more about what a Booty Bumper is, you can go check out Episode 9, Love Letters From Hell. There are a lot of similarities in this case.

Sherry: Exactly. And, well, we'll see if Tess was really a planner because on February 3, 2007, Tess and Brian were hanging out at the local IHOP with the other buddy Jared - Jared Smith - dreaming about their fabulous new home as they planned the nuts and bolts of the murder.

Brian, true to his Juggalo aesthetic, thought a great big butcher knife would do the trick. But Tess said that would be too messy. She was thinking they should maybe lace her mother's alcohol with medicine so it would look like an overdose. Which is, again, Tyler Witt completely!

Marie: Uh-huh.

Sherry: The other Jared didn't really participate in this conversation. but he didn't leave. And he pretty much hung around and helped with the planning.

Marie: Oh.

Sherry: This planning had gone on for a few weeks, and their friends just listened to it and figured it was all talk. But on this night - it got late. It went past midnight - so now we're on February 4, 2007 - and finally the kids decided it was time to head home. It was approximately 2:30 a.m. when Tess's mom called Tess for the millionth time. Tess, Brian, and Jared had already gotten in the car to head home, but her mom was completely unhappy that her now 15-year-old daughter wasn't coming home and wasn't answering the phone.

Marie: I'd be mad! So, wait a minute this happened in February of 2007?

Sherry: Yes. So, she and Brian got together in 2006 - in October. Like, the last day in October. So, they were together for all of November, all of December, all of January. But they killed her the beginning of February. So, they were together three months before they murdered her mother.

Marie: That's terrible.

Sherry: Um-hmm. I think it's really terrible. Anyway Tess, Brian, and Jared were already in the car and headed home and complaining because Linda was so unhappy about her 15-year-old daughter still being out. According to the Denver Post, Tess and Linda got into a bit of a shouting match on the phone. Linda shouted that Brian was out of there; this wasn't working, and he needed to move out. And Tess hung up on her.

Marie: Oh, that's gonna make her mad.

Sherry: Right. Very mad. According to Girls Kill - Teen Girls Commit Murder, it isn't clear who brought up the notion of just getting it over with and murdering Linda that night as the teens drove home.

Marie: To Linda's house - that she let Brian live in.

Sherry: In the car that Linda owned - and let Brian and Tess drive.

Marie: Yeah.

Sherry: But it wasn't really a huge surprise that tonight might be the night, because Tess had already written some weird, macabre goodbye letter to her; that was already in the house. As Tess, Brian, and the other buddy, Jared, pulled into the driveway, Brian said, "You want I should take care of your mother?" Knowing that Linda would be taken care of in a way that she wouldn't be taken care of at all. Tess said yes. But Tess didn't want to be there for the murder.

Marie: Plausible deniability?

Sherry: That's most likely. But Brian gave her a kiss and headed up the driveway, and Tess and Jared turned up their tunes and went for a drive while Brian went into the house to kill her mother.

[Interlude Music]

Sherry: It's not clear what excuse he made for Tess's absence, but Brian does say he asked Linda to get her remote control out of her bedroom. Linda entered the bedroom and Brian followed close behind; closing and locking the door. Tess's mother predictably panicked, but it was too late for her.

Marie: Oh, it's sad.

Sherry: It's very sad. But Brian wasn't very good at much - and that included murder. He later confessed he tried to strangle her, but he couldn't quite make her dead. So, he took a knife and tried to slit her throat, but the knife got stuck. Somewhere around this time, Tess called him from the car; asking him what was taking so long. So, he went and got another knife and finally succeeded in killing her - by stabbing her in the neck.

When confessing, Brian claimed he and Tess's mother had gotten into it - because he was trying to establish an alibi - and he said, actually, why he had killed her was because Linda had said she'd wished Tess had never been born because she wouldn't have to deal with some black boyfriend hanging around the house.

Marie: Well, that makes no sense. First of all, she invited him to move in. But, also, Brian had agreed to murder Linda before he left Tess in the car. Like, he said, 'do you want me to kill her?' Walked in the house and killed her.

Sherry: Right. Right. He wasn't any better at lying than he was at killing people. But Tess and Brian were now faced with a dilemma. They had planned and planned and planned regarding this murder and their future together, but they all seemed to have forgotten that there would be a body to contend with after everything was said and done. What to do with the body? They weren't sure.

But we're out of time for today. We'll be back next week with Part 2 of Bang! Pow! Boom! When we'll tell you about the harrowing travels of Linda.

Marie: What? She's not dead?

Sherry: Oh, she's dead. You'll just have to wait. And, we'll tell you about everything that happened after the murder - up until where everyone is today; including the dogs.

Marie: Wait! The dogs? What dogs?

Sherry: Oh, Linda had three dogs. They stayed with Tess in the house after the murders. But that didn't last for long. We'll talk about it next week.

Marie: Okay.

Sherry: And we would be remiss if we didn't thank the Casper Star Tribune, Times Record News, The Denver Post, MySpace.com, the postchronicle.com, lacp.org, the Boulder Daily Camera, NASA, NPR, the article by Siegfried Hecker and Joseph C. Martz called Aging of Plutonium and its Alloys, lifescience.com, the Insane Clown Posse, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the World Nuclear Association. If you want to read a good book about the decades-long environmental scandal involving nuclear contamination in and around Rocky Flats, we've got you. Find the book, Full Body Burden: Growing Up In the Nuclear Shadow of Rocky Flats by Kristen Iverson. We'd also like to thank the mayoclinic.org, Kylie's True Crime, the Fort Collins Coloradoan, Time, the Billings Gazette, the Daily News, and rockandrollglobe.com. And, of course, we'd like to thank Jade Brown for our music. If you're interested in learning more about the history of plutonium production, check out the book, The Atomic City Girls, by Janet Beard - that is an amazing book.

Marie: Isn't that the one about Oak Ridge, the secret city the government built in Tennessee to produce plutonium?

Sherry: Yes, it is. And we know that times are tough - with inflation and such - but if you're able and would like to help support our research, please support us through a pledge on our Patreon page - Patreon.com/Parricidepodcast. Your tax-deductible donations go directly toward research to prevent future parricides. We'd like to thank our two most recent Patreon patrons: Mick and Brandon. We are over-the-moon grateful for your support!

And we'll see you in, probably, two weeks. This has been the Parricide Podcast. And remember...

Marie: Always sleep with one eye open.

Outro: Ashes, ashes; We all fall down.