

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:09,000

Tonight, a missing person's case that nearly derailed a presidential campaign.

2

00:00:09,000 --> 00:00:15,000

Imagine the repercussions it might bring down the Democrats and FDR with them.

3

00:00:15,000 --> 00:00:19,000

It dominates mainstream media for over five decades.

4

00:00:19,000 --> 00:00:23,000

The keys to the lab are pulling a judge crater on us.

5

00:00:23,000 --> 00:00:27,000

Probably the equivalent of a Jimmy Hoffa or even Amelia Earhart.

6

00:00:27,000 --> 00:00:33,000

Now we examine the top theories behind the so-called missingist man in America.

7

00:00:33,000 --> 00:00:37,000

Crater knows where all the bodies are buried. Sometimes you just know too much.

8

00:00:37,000 --> 00:00:43,000

He's never tried to shake down a heartless thug like Legs Diamond. He's in over his head.

9

00:00:43,000 --> 00:00:47,000

And Tammany Hall Big Wigs silenced him so he cannot testify.

10

00:00:47,000 --> 00:00:50,000

Will a deathbed confession finally solve the mystery?

11

00:00:50,000 --> 00:00:55,000

When I opened the box, it was in a sealed envelope and said it in reference to Judge Crater's disappearance.

12

00:00:55,000 --> 00:01:01,000

What really happened to New York City's notorious Judge Joseph Crater?

13

00:01:32,000 --> 00:01:36,000

He's been dining with a couple of friends and says that he's running late to a Broadway show.

14

00:01:36,000 --> 00:01:40,000

So he leaves the restaurant, hops into a cab, heads west.

15

00:01:40,000 --> 00:01:44,000

From that moment, he's never seen or heard from again.

16

00:01:44,000 --> 00:01:50,000

Now, people go missing all the time, but when it's Judge Crater, it's a big deal.

17

00:01:50,000 --> 00:01:54,000

Because at this point, Joe Crater has just hit the political prime time as it were.

18

00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:59,000

He's a big up and comer who was recently appointed to the New York State Supreme Court

19

00:01:59,000 --> 00:02:03,000

by then Governor of New York State, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

20

00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:08,000

That appointment is only for the rest of a vacated term, and by the time of his disappearance,

21

00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:11,000

Crater is actually gearing up for an election of his own.

22

00:02:11,000 --> 00:02:14,000

If he wins reelection in November, the sky's the limit.

23

00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:19,000

It's an election that's crucial for Judge Crater and for FDR.

24

00:02:19,000 --> 00:02:26,000

And this is great because the opportunity to ride the coattails of FDR meant that you would have unlimited potential.

25

00:02:26,000 --> 00:02:31,000

A lot of people believe that once FDR's president, Crater will be a nominee to the United States Supreme Court.

26

00:02:31,000 --> 00:02:35,000

He's kind of a man about town in New York. He knows all the cops, he knows all the politicians,

27

00:02:35,000 --> 00:02:38,000

he knows the Broadway producers, the dancers.

28

00:02:38,000 --> 00:02:45,000

He is a widely known celebrity in the city, and at the time, if you're a New York celebrity, you're a nationwide celebrity.

29

00:02:45,000 --> 00:02:51,000

The disappearance of Crater is huge. It's probably the equivalent of a Jimmy Hoffa or even Amelia Earhart.

30

00:02:51,000 --> 00:02:58,000

Now, Crater's wife, Stella, is going through his Rolodex and calling up every political bigwig that she can get her hands on

31

00:02:58,000 --> 00:03:01,000

to find out if any of them know what happened to him.

32

00:03:01,000 --> 00:03:04,000

It's even possible that FDR might have gotten a call.

33

00:03:04,000 --> 00:03:08,000

But Stella's pleas aren't taken seriously at first.

34

00:03:08,000 --> 00:03:15,000

Crater is kind of a ladies' man, and it's not uncommon for him to sometimes be gone for several days at a time with other women.

35

00:03:15,000 --> 00:03:24,000

He's nicknamed Good Time Joe. He's gone off on vendors and disappeared for a while in the past where they've had to cover for him before.

36

00:03:24,000 --> 00:03:27,000

It was an open secret that he had a few women on the side.

37

00:03:27,000 --> 00:03:31,000

So one of the first things that people think seems to be the most obvious one.

38

00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:35,000

Maybe he just took off with one of his mistresses.

39

00:03:35,000 --> 00:03:47,000

Leading up to the disappearance, on August 2nd, Crater and his wife, Stella, go to their vacation home in Maine to stay there until the 25th until court comes back in session.

40

00:03:47,000 --> 00:03:56,000

But a day later, on August 3rd, Crater receives a phone call and then tells his wife, Stella, that he has to head back to, quote, straighten some fellows out.

41

00:03:56,000 --> 00:04:03,000

Now, she assumes it's just some business or a legal issue, but he promises to be backed by her birthday on August 9th.

42

00:04:03,000 --> 00:04:11,000

Stella's birthday comes and goes on the 9th and Crater's a no-show. He's nowhere to be found, and she's a little worried because she's not used to her husband breaking personal promises to her.

43

00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:20,000

And Stella's calling around to all these powerful men to try to figure out what happened to her husband, and powerful men will do what powerful men normally do.

44

00:04:20,000 --> 00:04:22,000

They're going to cover up for their friends.

45

00:04:22,000 --> 00:04:24,000

Now, his friends tell her, don't worry about him.

46

00:04:24,000 --> 00:04:28,000

I'm sure he's fine. He's probably just super busy with work or some other commitments.

47

00:04:28,000 --> 00:04:33,000

They honestly don't really know where he is, but they're just assuming that he's off with one of his girlfriends.

48

00:04:33,000 --> 00:04:40,000

And they would gladly cover for him because they would assume that he would do the same for them when they're cheating on their wives.

49

00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:43,000

The upcoming election is also a factor.

50

00:04:43,000 --> 00:04:54,000

Now, Crater's friends are all involved in politics in one way or another, so they're either working

on their own campaigns or they're hoping that Crater wins his election in three months' time so that they can just ride his coattails.

51

00:04:54,000 --> 00:05:01,000

Crater's a key part of the ticket that the Democrats hope will get FDR reelected as governor, as long as there are no scandals.

52

00:05:01,000 --> 00:05:06,000

And it's apparent if he wins there, he will be a shoe in for the nomination for the presidency of the United States.

53

00:05:06,000 --> 00:05:12,000

In 1932, any Democrats could have beat Herbert Hoover, but this Crater business could sink the whole thing.

54

00:05:12,000 --> 00:05:17,000

So better to keep it quiet. They hope Joe will turn up soon enough.

55

00:05:17,000 --> 00:05:22,000

But Stella's not convinced and starts investigating on her own.

56

00:05:22,000 --> 00:05:28,000

Mrs. Crater sends her chauffeur, Fred Kaler, back to New York to look for the judge.

57

00:05:28,000 --> 00:05:33,000

What he finds is an open mail and he can't get into the apartment.

58

00:05:33,000 --> 00:05:39,000

Furthermore, he tries to talk to a bunch of Crater's colleagues, but they discourage him from looking too hard.

59

00:05:39,000 --> 00:05:46,000

And this information drives Stella crazy. Why does no one want to find where her husband is? What is going on?

60

00:05:46,000 --> 00:05:58,000

When Judge Crater doesn't show up for work on August 25th, an astonishing 19 days after he was last seen in public, it's clear something is wrong.

61

00:05:58,000 --> 00:06:05,000

At this point, even Joe's buddies have to accept that he's missing. It's been 19 days. Crater was obsessed with the law. He loved it.

62

00:06:05,000 --> 00:06:09,000

So if he didn't show up on August the 25th, there's got to be a very good reason.

63

00:06:09,000 --> 00:06:18,000

Now a real investigation begins. But because we're dealing with a lot of high profile politicians, the NYPD wants to keep this investigation a bit more on the hush-hush side.

64

00:06:18,000 --> 00:06:21,000

So they quietly start interviewing witnesses.

65

00:06:21,000 --> 00:06:26,000

The police speak to William Klein, who dined with Crater the night he went missing.

66

00:06:26,000 --> 00:06:33,000

William Klein is an attorney for the Schubert family, the most powerful theater empire in the entire country at the time.

67

00:06:33,000 --> 00:06:41,000

And Klein connects important people like Crater to Schubert's slate of showgirls in exchange for professional favors.

68

00:06:41,000 --> 00:06:47,000

They actually ask Klein if he thinks that Crater may have disappeared with one of his girlfriends. And Klein says, actually, yeah.

69

00:06:47,000 --> 00:06:54,000

According to Klein, Crater is taken with one dancer in particular, Elaine Dawn.

70

00:06:54,000 --> 00:06:58,000

He'd been out with Elaine as many times as he could in those few weeks before his disappearance.

71

00:06:58,000 --> 00:07:04,000

She's described as an attractive blonde with a southern accent, and he bought her lots of gifts and jewelry.

72

00:07:04,000 --> 00:07:11,000

William Klein has watched Joe Crater go out with several showgirls, but Elaine is clearly special to him.

73

00:07:11,000 --> 00:07:18,000

She's got a power over him, and it may be that she may have seduced him into leaving his entire life behind for her.

74

00:07:18,000 --> 00:07:25,000

Detectives try to track down Elaine Dawn, but when they arrive at her apartment, she's nowhere to be found.

75

00:07:25,000 --> 00:07:29,000

So now Crater's gone and his main squeeze is gone. Something is really wrong here.

76

00:07:29,000 --> 00:07:37,000

In the meantime, the Crater family hires a private investigator, and he speaks to Crater's assistant, Joseph Mara.

77

00:07:37,000 --> 00:07:44,000

Mara was at work with Crater the day before he disappeared, and Mara stated that it was a very strange and unusual day.

78

00:07:44,000 --> 00:07:51,000

Crater is in his chamber all morning, rifling through files, putting documents in boxes, and even destroying some documents.

79

00:07:51,000 --> 00:08:01,000

He has Mara cash two personal checks for him, totaling over \$5,000, which is about \$90,000 in today's money, which Crater just casually puts in his coat pocket.

80

00:08:01,000 --> 00:08:09,000

Then he and Mara haul about eight boxes and briefcases and put them into a taxi cab to take them to Crater's New York City apartment.

81

00:08:09,000 --> 00:08:17,000

According to Mara, it's really clear that his boss is preparing something big. So Mara's looking at Crater like, what's going on with this guy? Something is clearly wrong here.

82

00:08:17,000 --> 00:08:26,000

Within a few days, an anonymous source leaks Crater's story to the press, and the philandering judge becomes front page news nationwide.

83

00:08:26,000 --> 00:08:35,000

You know how a scandalous story like the OJ Simpson trial or Jeffrey Epstein gets so big that it touches almost every aspect of pop culture?

84

00:08:35,000 --> 00:08:38,000

This is the same thing that happens with Judge Crater.

85

00:08:38,000 --> 00:08:48,000

Even in 1930, the top comedians at the time are dropping jokes about Crater in their acts. Radio hosts are making fun of him. Groucho Marx famously quipped, Judge Crater, call your office.

86

00:08:48,000 --> 00:08:49,000

Oh, hi, Mel.

87

00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:50,000

Tell me.

88

00:08:50,000 --> 00:08:52,000

Wow, Judge Crater returns.

89

00:08:53,000 --> 00:08:58,000

The phrase pulling at Crater became synonymous with anyone who runs off and disappears.

90

00:08:58,000 --> 00:09:11,000

This is a nightmare for anyone that's in Crater's orbit, but the media is loving this, okay? You've got a sex-obsessed judge. You've got the city's top showgirls. You've got some of the top politicians all entangled in this.

91

00:09:11,000 --> 00:09:20,000

Imagine the repercussions if this thing scandalizes FDR. So it's up to the police to kind of quell this media firestorm.

92

00:09:21,000 --> 00:09:26,000

On September 4th, Police Commissioner Edward Mulroney holds a press conference.

93

00:09:26,000 --> 00:09:36,000

Commissioner Mulroney comes out and says, look, clearly the guy planned this, okay? Look, he's taken files, right? He's cashed checks. He decided to voluntarily leave on his own, okay?

94

00:09:36,000 --> 00:09:44,000

This is not a police matter because there's no crime here other than dereliction of duty. It's clear that he just ran off with a showgirl.

95

00:09:44,000 --> 00:09:50,000

There's nothing to be terribly seriously investigated. Everyone can move along. Nothing to see here.

96

00:09:50,000 --> 00:09:54,000

But before long, Mulroney's theory falls apart.

97

00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:59,000

It turns out Judge Crater doesn't run off with Elaine Don at all. She's actually found at a local hospital.

98

00:09:59,000 --> 00:10:03,000

She has an illness described as rheumatism brought on by an acute case of gonorrhoea.

99

00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:15,000

Now, she does confirm that she and Crater had seen each other, but she insists that it was only casual, and the last time she had seen him was on August 4th, two days before his disappearance at a place called Club Abbey.

100

00:10:15,000 --> 00:10:22,000

So now investigators are almost back at square one in their hunt to determine where Judge Crater is and who he might have run off with.

101

00:10:22,000 --> 00:10:28,000

But I say almost because they're not quite done with Elaine Don just yet.

102

00:10:45,000 --> 00:10:47,000

Broadway dancer Elaine Don.

103

00:10:47,000 --> 00:10:51,000

Good time Joe has run off with women before, but that's not the case this time.

104

00:10:51,000 --> 00:10:59,000

Now Elaine is still in New York, hospitalized with an illness, but police suspect that she still might know more than she's actually letting on.

105

00:10:59,000 --> 00:11:05,000

At the time Crater disappears, some of the showgirls in New York and Elaine may be one are at the whim of the men in their lives.

106

00:11:05,000 --> 00:11:08,000

They're passed around among the city's political and business elite.

107

00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:15,000

Apart from Judge Crater, Elaine Don has what she describes as a boyfriend, some would say pimp.

108

00:11:15,000 --> 00:11:20,000

While Elaine's in the hospital, this guy's threatening producers of the show claiming lack of income while she's sick.

109

00:11:20,000 --> 00:11:24,000

The police entertain the idea that he and Elaine are extortionists.

110

00:11:24,000 --> 00:11:28,000

Detectives dig deeper into Elaine and her boyfriend.

111

00:11:28,000 --> 00:11:30,000

They ask around on the nightclubs they frequent.

112

00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:38,000

They ask around to the Broadway circle that Elaine is a part of and everybody says that Elaine and her boyfriend are completely harmless.

113

00:11:38,000 --> 00:11:44,000

She may have dated Crater a few times, but it's highly unlikely that she's involved in any sort of rackets or schemes.

114

00:11:44,000 --> 00:11:47,000

But the work by police isn't entirely wasted.

115

00:11:47,000 --> 00:11:51,000

While they're digging around in these nightclubs, they actually hear about another person of interest.

116

00:11:51,000 --> 00:11:55,000

The barflies tell police that there's another dancer in Crater's life.

117

00:11:55,000 --> 00:12:00,000

And around the same time, they receive an anonymous letter directing them to the home of June Bryce.

118

00:12:00,000 --> 00:12:05,000

The letter states that Bryce is an intimate friend of Judge Crater's.

119

00:12:05,000 --> 00:12:09,000

She may also have been one of the last people to see him alive.

120

00:12:09,000 --> 00:12:15,000

Several folks claim that June has plans with Crater after his dinner at the chop house.

121

00:12:15,000 --> 00:12:21,000

According to them, despite making up a story about heading to a Broadway show, Crater's actually heading to June's midtown apartment the night he disappears.

122

00:12:21,000 --> 00:12:28,000

Based on information from Crater's assistant, detectives think this visit may be more than personal.

123

00:12:28,000 --> 00:12:34,000

Remember, Joseph Mora says that Crater was cashing checks that's equivalent to about \$90,000 on the day of his disappearance.

124

00:12:34,000 --> 00:12:45,000

Mora also tells detectives that when he and Crater finish packing up the boxes, he has Mora take the boxes down to a taxi while Crater is waiting at the top of a stairwell hiding behind some columns.

125

00:12:45,000 --> 00:12:53,000

When Mora signals that the taxi is ready, Crater runs down the stairs, glances around fearfully to see if anybody's watching him, and then immediately jumps into the cab.

126

00:12:53,000 --> 00:13:01,000

Crater's known as kind of a happy guy. He's charming, he's witty, he's upbeat. But on this date, he's very sullen, he's very quiet, he's very pensive.

127

00:13:01,000 --> 00:13:06,000

This is not really the behavior of a man who's ready to escape into his dream life.

128

00:13:06,000 --> 00:13:17,000

Detectives know that Crater is preparing for something on the day that he disappears, but if the money isn't for him and for his lover to enjoy on vacation, what is it for?

129

00:13:17,000 --> 00:13:29,000

Maybe Crater isn't running away with a woman, but from one. He definitely has a lot to lose, and he definitely has his fair share of scandals that somebody could blackmail him about.

130

00:13:30,000 --> 00:13:39,000

Police suspect that June Bryce may be involved in an extortion plot against Judge Crater, but they're unable to locate her.

131

00:13:39,000 --> 00:13:53,000

Bryce is nowhere to be found, which is suspicious in and of itself, but an investigator does find a woman who was June's roommate in August of 1930 and corroborates the story that Crater did indeed go to June's apartment that night.

132

00:13:53,000 --> 00:13:58,000

The roommate says that June's been carrying a dreadful secret about Crater and her life's actually been threatened over him.

133

00:13:58,000 --> 00:14:08,000

According to the roommate, like many of these showgirls, Bryce has a boyfriend who's kind of a

scary guy, and he also visits the apartment the night that Crater is there.

134

00:14:08,000 --> 00:14:14,000

She states that June's boyfriend threatened Crater with exposure of their relationship unless he paid them \$5,000.

135

00:14:14,000 --> 00:14:20,000

On August 6, Crater arrived with the money, but the boyfriend upped it to \$50,000.

136

00:14:20,000 --> 00:14:24,000

Crater bulks, and the boyfriend works him over before ultimately killing him.

137

00:14:24,000 --> 00:14:28,000

Now here's the thing, the roommate didn't actually see this happen.

138

00:14:28,000 --> 00:14:34,000

She heard some of it before leaving the apartment that night and was later told by June the rest of the story.

139

00:14:34,000 --> 00:14:36,000

So it's hearsay for now.

140

00:14:36,000 --> 00:14:40,000

Bryce's mother also provides some second-hand details.

141

00:14:40,000 --> 00:14:50,000

In a newspaper article, June's mother stated that Crater and June were acquainted, and that Crater assisted June in getting parts in Broadway plays.

142

00:14:50,000 --> 00:14:56,000

June also told her mother that a man she was, quote, supposed to marry was killed in an accident.

143

00:14:56,000 --> 00:15:01,000

Could this have been Crater? And if so, where's the body?

144

00:15:01,000 --> 00:15:10,000

Thanks to this fresh evidence, June Bryce is called by the Manhattan District Attorney to testify at a grand jury hearing in late 1930.

145

00:15:10,000 --> 00:15:14,000

From the fall of 1930, the DA keeps an open grand jury on the Crater disappearance.

146

00:15:14,000 --> 00:15:19,000

Any and all witnesses are subpoenaed to testify as they attempt to build a case for what happened.

147

00:15:19,000 --> 00:15:24,000

Various people associated with Crater have already appeared, but at the time authorities still have no idea what happened.

148

00:15:24,000 --> 00:15:28,000

So June Bryce is their first chance to potentially crack the case.

149

00:15:28,000 --> 00:15:32,000

They feel strongly about this robbery homicide angle and are eager to prove it.

150

00:15:32,000 --> 00:15:38,000

But June's gone. She has fled her apartment with an unknown man.

151

00:15:38,000 --> 00:15:42,000

June bounces from hotel to hotel for weeks, constantly changing her name.

152

00:15:42,000 --> 00:15:47,000

By the end of September, she's admitted to a neurological hospital with a nervous breakdown.

153

00:15:47,000 --> 00:15:51,000

But to be clear, nobody knows this at the time, so to the authorities, she's just missing.

154

00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:57,000

It takes the Crater family's private investigator several years to finally find her in the mental hospital.

155

00:15:57,000 --> 00:16:01,000

By this time, Bryce is in no condition to testify.

156

00:16:01,000 --> 00:16:05,000

The PI states that she's barely coherent and really can't provide any details.

157

00:16:05,000 --> 00:16:11,000

When asked about Crater, she responds, we must not remember the things that make us mad.

158

00:16:11,000 --> 00:16:18,000

The problem is that June herself lacks the mental capacity to verify any of this information or fill in the blanks.

159

00:16:18,000 --> 00:16:23,000

Investigators have hearsay, they have speculation, but that's it.

160

00:16:23,000 --> 00:16:28,000

Based on her mental illness, police declined to investigate June Bryce any further.

161

00:16:28,000 --> 00:16:32,000

June Bryce's testimony probably never would have held up in court.

162

00:16:32,000 --> 00:16:36,000

But the extortion theory is the one that seems to be the most accepted today.

163

00:16:36,000 --> 00:16:40,000

It certainly fits with his demeanor and his actions on August 6th.

164

00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:44,000

He knows he's in trouble, he's preparing for it, but he's unable to escape it.

165

00:16:44,000 --> 00:16:48,000

The problem with this theory is that the famous Judge Crater has a ton of people in his orbit.

166

00:16:48,000 --> 00:16:53,000

If he's going to get killed, is it really going to be the June Bryce or Elaine Donne types that mastermind it?

167

00:16:53,000 --> 00:17:01,000

When you start to uncover the other folks he's hanging out with, you soon realize several of them are much more likely to commit a murder.

168

00:17:01,000 --> 00:17:03,000

And one already has.

169

00:17:06,000 --> 00:17:16,000

In early 1930, Judge Joseph Crater is well respected nationwide as a New Deal progressive with strong ties to Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

170

00:17:16,000 --> 00:17:23,000

But after his disappearance on August 6th, a seedy dark side of his life is revealed.

171

00:17:23,000 --> 00:17:30,000

Crater cheats on his wife with multiple showgirls and he has an active social life in New York's speakeasy nightclubs.

172

00:17:30,000 --> 00:17:39,000

Keep in mind this is during the height of prohibition, but the city's elite have no problem finding alcohol in vibs in many of the city's illegal bars.

173

00:17:39,000 --> 00:17:42,000

And Crater's favorite is a place called Club Abbey.

174

00:17:42,000 --> 00:17:46,000

Club Abbey is a Jazz Age or less club that's new on the New York scene.

175

00:17:46,000 --> 00:17:53,000

Abbey features a drag queen MC named Jean Mallon, comedians like Jimmy Durante, and in between there's plenty of dancing by Broadway showgirls.

176

00:17:53,000 --> 00:17:57,000

It's a brand new place on 54th Street and it's where everybody wants to be.

177

00:17:57,000 --> 00:18:05,000

Club Abbey gets its alcohol from one of New York's most notorious prohibition era gangsters, Jack Leggs Diamond.

178

00:18:05,000 --> 00:18:10,000

Leggs Diamond starts his life as a gangster when he becomes a bodyguard for Arnold Rothstein.

179

00:18:10,000 --> 00:18:21,000

Now in case you don't know, Rothstein is most famous for fixing the 1919 World Series and when he's killed in 1928, Leggs Diamond takes over most of his bootlegging operations in Manhattan.

180

00:18:21,000 --> 00:18:30,000

His nickname Leggs has two meanings. One is that he's a good dancer. It's also a play on words and the amount of times he's been able to outrun the police or his enemies.

181

00:18:30,000 --> 00:18:37,000

He's already survived two attempts on his life and in 1929 he shoots and kills two men in his club but isn't charged.

182

00:18:37,000 --> 00:18:43,000

Leggs operates out of a few speakeasies but by the summer of 1930 he's spending almost every night

at Club Abbey.

183

00:18:43,000 --> 00:18:51,000

And he's running a pretty nasty scheme on the side there. A scheme that may have ensnared Judge Crater and gotten him killed.

184

00:18:52,000 --> 00:19:01,000

At Club Abbey, Leggs Diamond has a cohort named Vivian Gordon and she used to be a showgirl and now she's turned into a professional prostitute.

185

00:19:01,000 --> 00:19:07,000

Vivian Gordon is a swindler who gets even more aggressive after two years in prison.

186

00:19:07,000 --> 00:19:18,000

She's known to be hell-bent on revenge against cops and judges. The men who she feels took everything from her and at Club Abbey with the help of Leggs Diamond she can get that revenge.

187

00:19:18,000 --> 00:19:23,000

Vivian and Leggs set up a routine where she meets clients at the Abbey and then brings them back to her house where Leggs is waiting.

188

00:19:23,000 --> 00:19:30,000

Together they shake their victims down for everything they can get. They run the scheme all the time and Judge Joe Crater is right in their wheelhouse.

189

00:19:30,000 --> 00:19:36,000

Crater's fellow Supreme Court Justice, Louis Valenti, looks further into this.

190

00:19:36,000 --> 00:19:43,000

Judge Valenti hires investigators to track Crater's movements on August the 6th. His investigators find evidence that Crater was at Club Abbey that night.

191

00:19:43,000 --> 00:19:47,000

Valenti believes that this is critical evidence and he takes it to the press to run with it.

192

00:19:47,000 --> 00:19:53,000

According to this theory, Judge Crater first meets Vivian Gordon at the Abbey on the night of August 4th.

193

00:19:53,000 --> 00:20:00,000

They head back to her place for a night of pleasure and afterwards Leggs Diamond shows up to squeeze Crater for some extra cash.

194

00:20:00,000 --> 00:20:06,000

But it's not just cash that he's after. Crater's famous and everybody knows who he is, including Leggs Diamond.

195

00:20:06,000 --> 00:20:11,000

There's a case coming up on the docket that Leggs needs to have dismissed in order to protect his business interests.

196

00:20:11,000 --> 00:20:13,000

So he threatens Crater's career if he doesn't cooperate.

197

00:20:13,000 --> 00:20:20,000

Crater promises to look into the case so the next day on August 5th Crater has lunch with another judge from the Supreme Court.

198

00:20:20,000 --> 00:20:26,000

He's trying to feel out the odds of getting rid of the case without attracting attention but the odds are not good.

199

00:20:26,000 --> 00:20:30,000

Crater realizes that he can't deliver what Diamond is asking for.

200

00:20:30,000 --> 00:20:34,000

Now he has to figure out how he's going to break the news to him and it's not a very easy task.

201

00:20:34,000 --> 00:20:38,000

At this point Leggs Diamond has killed at least two people that we know of.

202

00:20:38,000 --> 00:20:43,000

According to Crater's assistant, the judge collected more than money on August 6th.

203

00:20:43,000 --> 00:20:47,000

He also took several case files home from his office.

204

00:20:47,000 --> 00:20:54,000

These files may pertain to Diamond's case. He knows he can't get the case tossed because of all the poking around being done by investigators.

205

00:20:54,000 --> 00:21:00,000

So he brings these papers home as a sort of insurance policy. He knows he might need it.

206

00:21:00,000 --> 00:21:05,000

That night Crater returns to Club Abbey and he tells Leggs and Vivian that there's no way he can get this case dismissed.

207

00:21:05,000 --> 00:21:10,000

There's just too much of a spotlight on it. But as a consolation prize, here's \$5,000 to smooth things over.

208

00:21:10,000 --> 00:21:20,000

Leggs won't take no for an answer, okay? He demands Crater to try again but Crater himself is a big shot with a big ego and he fights back.

209

00:21:20,000 --> 00:21:25,000

Crater tells Diamond he has all these files that ties Diamond to criminal behavior.

210

00:21:25,000 --> 00:21:32,000

He has these documents at a secure location and if he doesn't take this payoff, he's going to make these documents public.

211

00:21:32,000 --> 00:21:40,000

Judge Crater's worked in politics for many years at this point but he's only ever really worked with other politicians or small-time crooks.

212

00:21:40,000 --> 00:21:45,000

He's never tried to shake down a heartless thug like Leggs Diamond. He's in over his head.

213

00:21:45,000 --> 00:21:53,000

The New York press runs with this theory suggesting that both Leggs and Vivian murder the judge and make sure that the body is never found.

214

00:21:53,000 --> 00:21:59,000

Despite the tabloids' enthusiasm, it's a good story but there's not a lot of proof to it.

215

00:21:59,000 --> 00:22:06,000

That is until February of 1931 when Vivian Gordon is found dead in a Bronx Park.

216

00:22:06,000 --> 00:22:11,000

Vivian's murdered the day after she offers to testify against the corrupt officials that have ruined her life.

217

00:22:11,000 --> 00:22:18,000

She's willing to risk her life to bring them down. When she's found dead, an anti-corruption sentiment rises to a boiling point in New York City.

218

00:22:18,000 --> 00:22:22,000

Her murder is the biggest story since Crater disappeared.

219

00:22:22,000 --> 00:22:27,000

Governor Roosevelt requests the records himself and demands a thorough police investigation.

220

00:22:27,000 --> 00:22:36,000

When police search Gordon's apartment, they find a treasure trove of diaries and documents connecting her to the city's most powerful figures.

221

00:22:36,000 --> 00:22:47,000

Vivian kept lists of her blackmail schemes with Diamond and there on paper, clear as day, Judge Crater is written down as one of her clients.

222

00:22:47,000 --> 00:22:51,000

The diaries don't say anything about his death, but the press doesn't care.

223

00:22:51,000 --> 00:22:55,000

The press is eager to make connections between the two most famous news stories of the time.

224

00:22:55,000 --> 00:23:00,000

When Crater's name is found in Vivian's diary, the press explodes with all kinds of speculation.

225

00:23:00,000 --> 00:23:04,000

The press also loves a good mafia story. I mean, who doesn't, right?

226

00:23:04,000 --> 00:23:09,000

And there are so many legends surrounding Leg's Diamond, it's very hard to tell fact from fiction.

227

00:23:09,000 --> 00:23:15,000

But it turns out there was no evidence that he's involved in any cases to be heard by the Supreme Court.

228

00:23:15,000 --> 00:23:20,000

In fact, when he disappears, Crater only has one trivial case pending on his document.

229

00:23:20,000 --> 00:23:26,000

Crater's name is in Vivian's diary. She made very well a blackmail. She was extorting a lot of people.

230

00:23:26,000 --> 00:23:29,000

But just because she's extorting somebody doesn't mean she murdered.

231

00:23:32,000 --> 00:23:42,000

When Judge Joseph Crater disappears in August 1930, New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt is in the thick of campaigning for reelection.

232

00:23:42,000 --> 00:23:47,000

As November approaches, a rival politician makes a shocking accusation.

233

00:23:47,000 --> 00:23:52,000

If true, it sheds a whole new light on what happened to the missing judge.

234

00:23:53,000 --> 00:24:00,000

During Judge Crater's time in New York politics, the Democrats work closely with an organization that's known as Tammany Hall.

235

00:24:00,000 --> 00:24:06,000

Tammany Hall dominates both New York City and state politics for more than a century.

236

00:24:06,000 --> 00:24:10,000

Its name becomes synonymous with corruption under infamous leaders like Boss Tweed.

237

00:24:11,000 --> 00:24:17,000

They do plenty of good things for the people of New York, but ultimately they're a corrupt organization.

238

00:24:17,000 --> 00:24:21,000

But if you're a Democrat, working with Tammany is how you win elections.

239

00:24:21,000 --> 00:24:28,000

By the late 1920s, Tammany has woven its way into every level of New York politics.

240

00:24:28,000 --> 00:24:35,000

And in 1929, Judge Crater becomes president of a key Tammany branch, the Cayuga Club.

241

00:24:35,000 --> 00:24:41,000

A lot of New York voters are tired of the blatant corruption, so the 1930 elections are a pivotal point.

242

00:24:41,000 --> 00:24:49,000

For once, the Republicans have a good shot of winning a number of top seats from the Democrats, especially the one for Governor.

243

00:24:49,000 --> 00:24:54,000

FDR's main rival is Republican prosecutor Charles Tuttle.

244

00:24:54,000 --> 00:24:58,000

Tuttle is on a crusade to expose judicial corruption.

245

00:24:58,000 --> 00:25:06,000

Prior to Crater's disappearance, his whole office of attorneys and investigators are looking into evidence of judicial corruption,

246

00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:10,000

rumored to be running rampant among Tammany Hall's main players.

247

00:25:10,000 --> 00:25:15,000

And if Tuttle can make the case, it might bring down the Democrats and FDR with them.

248

00:25:15,000 --> 00:25:19,000

Judge Crater is potentially a key witness.

249

00:25:19,000 --> 00:25:24,000

When Tuttle looks into the Cayuga Club, he learns something interesting.

250

00:25:24,000 --> 00:25:29,000

Tuttle finds evidence that the Cayuga Club is actually selling government jobs.

251

00:25:29,000 --> 00:25:35,000

If you're connected to Tammany Hall, they can help you get appointed or elected to a political position.

252

00:25:35,000 --> 00:25:38,000

In return, you pay them one year's salary.

253

00:25:38,000 --> 00:25:50,000

Tuttle has proof of one of these payments, a \$10,000 bribe that was paid to Tammany Hall boss Martin Healy by Attorney George Yould for his position as his city magistrate.

254

00:25:50,000 --> 00:25:53,000

Tuttle's evidence certainly implicates Judge Crater too.

255

00:25:53,000 --> 00:25:57,000

As president of the Cayuga Club, Crater has to be aware of what's going on.

256

00:25:57,000 --> 00:26:02,000

I mean, he even serves as master of ceremonies at George Yould's celebration dinner when he becomes magistrate.

257

00:26:02,000 --> 00:26:05,000

The corruption might go even further.

258

00:26:05,000 --> 00:26:10,000

There is also circumstantial evidence that Judge Crater may have purchased his own position.

259

00:26:10,000 --> 00:26:15,000

When Crater is appointed to the New York Supreme Court, it is one of the highest paid positions in the state.

260

00:26:15,000 --> 00:26:21,000

He has paid a salary of \$22,000. It's the same as the governor's and a lot less work.

261

00:26:21,000 --> 00:26:30,000

It's the most coveted seat in New York politics and it speaks to the ability of Joe Crater to manipulate and maneuver himself into that position.

262

00:26:30,000 --> 00:26:33,000

Tuttle wants to know how he got this job.

263

00:26:33,000 --> 00:26:41,000

One month after his appointment in May of 1930, Crater withdraws \$22,000 from various bank accounts.

264

00:26:41,000 --> 00:26:45,000

Which is exactly one year's salary.

265

00:26:45,000 --> 00:26:51,000

Tuttle has no direct proof that this money went to pay Tammany Hall, but while he's out publicly campaigning against the Democrats,

266

00:26:51,000 --> 00:26:58,000

he strongly suggests that it did and this scandal could have even gotten Judge Crater killed.

267

00:26:58,000 --> 00:27:02,000

Tuttle's belief is that Crater is at the heart of the Tammany Hall kickback scheme.

268

00:27:02,000 --> 00:27:08,000

And when Tuttle's investigation closes in on Crater and they're going to call Crater as a witness,

269

00:27:08,000 --> 00:27:13,000

Tammany Hall bigwigs silence him so he cannot testify.

270

00:27:13,000 --> 00:27:18,000

How high does this go? Is FDR aware? Is FDR involved?

271

00:27:18,000 --> 00:27:24,000

Obviously this could go very bad for the Democrats if some massive trial of the century is opened.

272

00:27:24,000 --> 00:27:32,000

Although Crater's disappearance is a thorny issue for Tammany Hall, it's far better that he goes this way than testifies against them.

273

00:27:32,000 --> 00:27:38,000

Tuttle can't prove this theory, but Crater's own wife offers some support.

274

00:27:38,000 --> 00:27:45,000

There's a big mystery about who calls Crater on August 3rd, which causes him to travel back to New York City.

275

00:27:45,000 --> 00:27:49,000

At the time, his wife Stella does not reveal anything useful.

276

00:27:49,000 --> 00:27:58,000

But in 1937, Stella tells a magazine his purpose of the visit was to advise Tammany boss Martin Healy about the Tuttle investigation.

277

00:27:58,000 --> 00:28:04,000

Stella is sure that the Tammany case is behind her husband's disappearance.

278

00:28:04,000 --> 00:28:13,000

She's not the only one. In 1954, an acquaintance of Crater's, Henry Krause, makes an extraordinary claim.

279

00:28:13,000 --> 00:28:19,000

Krause calls an old detective friend of his and says that he has something he wants to get off his chest before he dies.

280

00:28:19,000 --> 00:28:22,000

He thinks he knows what happened to Judge Krause.

281

00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:28,000

Back in the 30s, Krause had a vacation home which he frequently let Krause use for parties.

282

00:28:28,000 --> 00:28:32,000

Many of those parties were co-hosted by Martin Healy.

283

00:28:32,000 --> 00:28:37,000

Krause claimed that in early 1930, the two men buried \$90,000 in the backyard.

284

00:28:37,000 --> 00:28:45,000

But in mid-August, after Krause's disappearance, Krause visits his vacation home to find the place in shambles.

285

00:28:45,000 --> 00:28:51,000

There are broken glasses strewn about, there are liquor bottles everywhere, and when he walks into the kitchen, he says, quote,

286

00:28:51,000 --> 00:28:57,000

there's nothing there but blood. And the box in the backyard has been dug up and taken.

287

00:28:57,000 --> 00:29:02,000

A week later, Martin Healy sets up a meeting with Krause.

288

00:29:02,000 --> 00:29:06,000

Healy warns him that there might be some trouble coming.

289

00:29:06,000 --> 00:29:13,000

He tells Krause that he needs to deny knowing Krause and that he shouldn't deny that they were ever at his house.

290

00:29:13,000 --> 00:29:20,000

Krause goes along with his demands, and when the detective starts peppering him with questions, Krause just keeps repeating that Krause is dead

291

00:29:20,000 --> 00:29:22,000

and he thinks that he is buried at the house.

292

00:29:22,000 --> 00:29:25,000

The police were able to verify part of Krause's story.

293

00:29:25,000 --> 00:29:29,000

Their investigation showed that Krause had written at least two checks to Krause.

294

00:29:29,000 --> 00:29:33,000

And Krause did indeed have a Westchester home.

295

00:29:33,000 --> 00:29:38,000

Krause's 1954 revelations revived public interest in the case.

296

00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:42,000

Life magazine funds an excavation of the home's backyard.

297

00:29:42,000 --> 00:29:48,000

Unfortunately, they don't find Craitor's remains. And that's about as far as authorities can take things.

298

00:29:48,000 --> 00:29:55,000

Some evidence may still bear out that this theory is correct, but until that evidence surfaces, it's impossible to prove.

299

00:29:59,000 --> 00:30:06,000

When Stella Craitor loses her husband, Judge Joseph Craitor, on August 6th, 1930,

300

00:30:06,000 --> 00:30:10,000

she frantically calls his colleagues looking for him.

301

00:30:10,000 --> 00:30:15,000

But what she neglects to do raises some eyebrows.

302

00:30:15,000 --> 00:30:21,000

Stella Craitor doesn't officially report her husband missing to the police for four weeks.

303

00:30:21,000 --> 00:30:27,000

And you can maybe chalk that up to everyone hoping that he's just out having an affair.

304

00:30:27,000 --> 00:30:30,000

But four weeks is a pretty long time.

305

00:30:30,000 --> 00:30:36,000

And after she does finally file a report and police start investigating, she doesn't seem too keen

in helping them.

306

00:30:36,000 --> 00:30:42,000

And this, combined with some other suspicious behavior, has many theorists wondering,

307

00:30:42,000 --> 00:30:47,000

what if Stella is involved in her husband's disappearance?

308

00:30:47,000 --> 00:30:52,000

This is basic police work 101. When someone goes missing, you look at the spouse.

309

00:30:52,000 --> 00:30:56,000

Stella is doing nothing to help avoid any kind of suspicion.

310

00:30:56,000 --> 00:30:59,000

The early part of the investigation, Stella remains up in Maine,

311

00:30:59,000 --> 00:31:02,000

but the DA vows to bring her down to testify in front of the grand jury.

312

00:31:02,000 --> 00:31:09,000

Mrs. Craitor refuses quite steadfastly to cooperate with the investigation at all.

313

00:31:09,000 --> 00:31:12,000

The DA sends her a list of questions instead.

314

00:31:12,000 --> 00:31:17,000

The way she answers the questions are vague, ambiguous, and maybe in some ways, a lie.

315

00:31:17,000 --> 00:31:21,000

For instance, she stated that she didn't know her husband was missing until August 25th.

316

00:31:21,000 --> 00:31:28,000

But there's evidence showing that, for weeks prior, that she was calling many people wanting to learn of his whereabouts.

317

00:31:28,000 --> 00:31:32,000

At first, Stella is not a suspect. They just think she might have more information.

318

00:31:32,000 --> 00:31:37,000

But after she lies to the DA, all bets are off. That puts her right in the investigators' crosshairs.

319

00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:42,000

Police already have one motive in mind, and that's Craitor's many affairs.

320

00:31:42,000 --> 00:31:46,000

Most people assume that Stella must have had some idea that Craitor wasn't faithful.

321

00:31:46,000 --> 00:31:50,000

But neighbors report a screaming match between the couple a few days before he disappears.

322

00:31:50,000 --> 00:31:55,000

Maybe there was finally some last straw that Stella couldn't handle.

323

00:31:55,000 --> 00:31:59,000

Suspicious, police continue to track Stella's whereabouts.

324

00:31:59,000 --> 00:32:03,000

Stella stays in Maine for months specifically to avoid having to testify in front of the grand jury.

325

00:32:03,000 --> 00:32:10,000

After hearing from nearly 100 witnesses, the grand jury releases a thousand-page report that essentially says they have no idea what happened.

326

00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:19,000

A week after the grand jury is dismissed, on January 18th, 1931, Stella finally returns to the city.

327

00:32:19,000 --> 00:32:23,000

And announces that she's made an incredible discovery.

328

00:32:23,000 --> 00:32:30,000

Stella states that she opened a drawer in her bedroom and found four Manila envelopes left for her by her husband.

329

00:32:30,000 --> 00:32:39,000

There's \$6,690 in cash, there's Craitor's will leaving everything to Stella, and four life insurance policies.

330

00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:44,000

There's a handwritten list of people who owe Craitor money and how to collect that money.

331

00:32:44,000 --> 00:32:47,000

And one of the debts is \$2.3 million.

332

00:32:47,000 --> 00:32:53,000

The envelopes also contain a supposed letter from Craitor to his wife.

333

00:32:53,000 --> 00:32:59,000

The handwriting is hasty, it's messy, you know, like he's moving quickly and he's under a lot of stress.

334

00:32:59,000 --> 00:33:05,000

He writes a few times that all of this is confidential and she's not to tell anyone about these envelopes.

335

00:33:05,000 --> 00:33:07,000

It's signed Love Joe.

336

00:33:07,000 --> 00:33:10,000

Then right below that is a little note.

337

00:33:10,000 --> 00:33:23,000

Now the words aren't completely clear, they either say, I'm very weary or I'm very sorry, but either way, it seems Craitor is saying goodbye and is apologizing for what he's about to do.

338

00:33:23,000 --> 00:33:26,000

This all paints a very convenient picture for Stella.

339

00:33:26,000 --> 00:33:31,000

It looks like Craitor is trying to take care of his wife before either disappearing or maybe committing suicide.

340

00:33:31,000 --> 00:33:34,000

Stella's discovery is met with skepticism.

341

00:33:34,000 --> 00:33:43,000

There had been at this point no fewer than four different searches of the apartment by police officers and no one had found any of these things.

342

00:33:43,000 --> 00:33:48,000

There's no way the police missed those envelopes, but Stella wants them to believe that they did.

343

00:33:48,000 --> 00:33:51,000

She makes excuses why the police may have missed it.

344

00:33:51,000 --> 00:33:55,000

She stated that the drawer was sticky or maybe the key was stuck in the lock.

345

00:33:55,000 --> 00:34:00,000

Meanwhile, a detective recites from memory all the contents that was in that dresser.

346

00:34:00,000 --> 00:34:04,000

He gets every single item right except for those envelopes.

347

00:34:04,000 --> 00:34:11,000

In 1931, police look into the phone records from Craitor's New York apartment and after his disappearance, there shouldn't be any.

348

00:34:11,000 --> 00:34:14,000

I mean, Stella's been up in Maine the whole time, right?

349

00:34:14,000 --> 00:34:15,000

Wrong.

350

00:34:15,000 --> 00:34:18,000

She made a one-day trip on August 25th.

351

00:34:18,000 --> 00:34:20,000

She didn't notify the police.

352

00:34:20,000 --> 00:34:24,000

Could this have been when she was planting special evidence?

353

00:34:24,000 --> 00:34:28,000

There are two very classic motives for murder.

354

00:34:28,000 --> 00:34:30,000

Love, money.

355

00:34:30,000 --> 00:34:34,000

And it seems that Stella had both going on for her at the same time.

356

00:34:34,000 --> 00:34:41,000

But if she killed her husband or more than likely had someone else do it for a share of the money, it seems that she got away with it.

357

00:34:41,000 --> 00:34:46,000

Police have a lot of suspicion, but their evidence is circumstantial. It's pretty tenuous.

358

00:34:46,000 --> 00:34:50,000

For years, Stella refuses to speak to reporters or detectives.

359

00:34:50,000 --> 00:34:59,000

She lays low until 1939 when she sues to have her husband declared legally dead in order to collect his life insurance.

360

00:34:59,000 --> 00:35:04,000

Stella hires a private investigator to prove that Craitor has been murdered.

361

00:35:04,000 --> 00:35:10,000

She tries to collect on a double indemnity policy that would be payable if he'd been murdered.

362

00:35:10,000 --> 00:35:12,000

She's half successful and half not.

363

00:35:12,000 --> 00:35:16,000

She is appointed, executor, he is declared dead.

364

00:35:16,000 --> 00:35:19,000

The double indemnity claim is denied.

365

00:35:19,000 --> 00:35:23,000

She settles with the insurance company and she gets about two thirds of the value of the policy.

366

00:35:23,000 --> 00:35:25,000

She also finally consents to an interview with the press.

367

00:35:25,000 --> 00:35:34,000

She makes it clear that she believes Craitor was murdered by Tamini Hall because of his involvement in the George Hewold Kickback Scheme.

368

00:35:34,000 --> 00:35:36,000

I mean, what'd you expect?

369

00:35:36,000 --> 00:35:38,000

A confession?

370

00:35:38,000 --> 00:35:48,000

In 1979, after nearly five decades of active pursuit, the NYPD finally closes the infamous Judge Craitor case.

371

00:35:48,000 --> 00:35:55,000

The case still warrants the occasional late night joke on television or a 60th or 70th anniversary retrospective in the papers.

372

00:35:55,000 --> 00:36:01,000

But largely, this most famous of missing persons cases falls out of the public eye.

373

00:36:01,000 --> 00:36:07,000

That is, until 2005, when it comes roaring back.

374

00:36:08,000 --> 00:36:22,000

In April 2005, a Queens New York woman named Barbara O'Brien discovers a letter among the possessions of her recently deceased grandmother.

375

00:36:22,000 --> 00:36:28,000

A letter which may close the case on a 75-year-old mystery.

376

00:36:28,000 --> 00:36:32,000

My grandmother unfortunately passed away and I was the executor of her will.

377

00:36:32,000 --> 00:36:39,000

And I went into her papers to get her will out and I came across a metal box and I opened the box.

378

00:36:39,000 --> 00:36:45,000

And that's when I found the letter in a sealed envelope and in the front of the envelope it said, in reference to Judge Craitor's disappearance.

379

00:36:45,000 --> 00:36:52,000

In the letter, she said that her husband, which was my grandfather Robert Goode, told her about the missing judge.

380

00:36:52,000 --> 00:36:57,000

According to the letter, Judge Craitor was murdered by a police officer.

381

00:36:57,000 --> 00:37:03,000

Robert had a lot of connections. He knew cops, he knew crooks, a lot of them hung out in his backyard and went drinking with him.

382

00:37:03,000 --> 00:37:08,000

He was neighbors with the Burns brothers. These guys all have kind of a little relationship.

383

00:37:08,000 --> 00:37:15,000

Growing up, I do remember the Burns living behind us. Frank was a taxi cab driver and his brother Charles Burns, who was police officer.

384

00:37:15,000 --> 00:37:22,000

And they used to come over a lot. One night, Frank comes over, he tells my grandfather what happened on August 6, 1930.

385

00:37:22,000 --> 00:37:28,000

He told my grandfather that he picks up the judge at the steakhouse and he drives him to Coney Island when we met up with his brother.

386

00:37:28,000 --> 00:37:35,000

The judge gets out of the car and they wound up killing him and burying him underneath the Bordelot pylons at West State Street.

387

00:37:35,000 --> 00:37:41,000

I mean, wow, right? It's been a lifetime of no answers in this case.

388

00:37:41,000 --> 00:37:46,000

And now, here's a direct confession to Craitor's murder. It even mentions the location of a body.

389

00:37:47,000 --> 00:37:56,000

Unfortunately, when the letter is revealed to detectives in 2005, the potential burial sits directly under the New York Aquarium.

390

00:37:56,000 --> 00:38:01,000

Apparently, when they build the aquarium in 1956, there are reports of some bodies being found during construction.

391

00:38:01,000 --> 00:38:10,000

It is New York, after all. But those bodies are reburied in unmarked graves. And we don't know where they are. Could Craitor be one of them?

392

00:38:10,000 --> 00:38:18,000

If we can't find the body, let's try to corroborate the story. Do the Burns Brothers really exist and are they connected to Craitor?

393

00:38:18,000 --> 00:38:27,000

It turns out that Charles Burns is a real New York City cop. And on August 6, 1930, he is assigned to the Coney Island precinct.

394

00:38:27,000 --> 00:38:32,000

There's also records of a 32-year-old Frank Burns who drives a cab at that time.

395

00:38:32,000 --> 00:38:37,000

At least the characters check out. But why would these two guys want to kill Craitor?

396

00:38:37,000 --> 00:38:41,000

Barbara O'Brien believes she knows the answer.

397

00:38:41,000 --> 00:38:51,000

I think that it was mob-related and went all the way back to Legs Diamond because she had mentioned in her letter, Legs Diamond put the hit out on Judge Craitor.

398

00:38:51,000 --> 00:38:58,000

She believes that Legs Diamond tried to bribe Craitor to have a case tossed, but Diamond was unsuccessful.

399

00:38:58,000 --> 00:39:06,000

After that, Legs knows that if Craitor lives, he may be sent to prison. So he hires Charles Burns to take care of Craitor.

400

00:39:06,000 --> 00:39:13,000

There's a lot of speculation that Charles Burns was on the mob's payroll. In addition to this case, he's conspicuously on the scene of another mob hit.

401

00:39:13,000 --> 00:39:22,000

On November 12, 1941, a mafia hitman turned informant named Abe Relis is under police protection at the Half Moon Hotel in Coney Island.

402

00:39:22,000 --> 00:39:26,000

That day, he's supposed to testify at a high-profile trial against the mob.

403

00:39:26,000 --> 00:39:34,000

He does not testify because even though he was in police protective custody, he flies out of a window and dies.

404

00:39:34,000 --> 00:39:41,000

According to reports that came out in 2005, one of Relis's police bodyguards is Charles Burns.

405

00:39:41,000 --> 00:39:51,000

Charles Burns was actually the one guarding his room the night that he supposedly jumped to his death, where other theories think that he was pushed to his death.

406

00:39:51,000 --> 00:39:58,000

Back then, there was a lot of corruption. Whether it was with the police, with the mob, there was just a lot of corruption going on back then.

407

00:39:58,000 --> 00:40:07,000

This might also explain the kind of lackluster investigation into Craitor's disappearance overall, because the police may have known that their own men were involved.

408

00:40:07,000 --> 00:40:15,000

There was a ton of collusion between cops and the mob in New York in 1930, so it's not outside the realm of possibility.

409

00:40:15,000 --> 00:40:23,000

One thing that one needs to remember in this entire investigation is that the police are more part

of the problem than they are part of the solution.

410

00:40:23,000 --> 00:40:31,000

So taking the police investigation as having been conducted in good faith, I think misreads the historical record.

411

00:40:31,000 --> 00:40:36,000

Everyone thinks they have a theory on what happened. Everybody thinks they have the real story.

412

00:40:36,000 --> 00:40:43,000

With her grandmother's letter serving as new evidence, Barbara hopes to finally resolve the Craitor case.

413

00:40:43,000 --> 00:40:49,000

I'm hoping that they reopen this case. My grandmother passed away and she left that envelope.

414

00:40:49,000 --> 00:40:55,000

Of course, that was her way of telling me she wanted something done with it. She didn't want to take it to her grave with her.

415

00:40:55,000 --> 00:40:59,000

So I would just like to try and follow through with it, and that's what I've been doing.

416

00:40:59,000 --> 00:41:04,000

I'm hoping to continue doing it until at least we have a little bit more answers.

417

00:41:06,000 --> 00:41:11,000

Barbara O'Brien plans to keep digging into Judge Joseph Craitor's disappearance.

418

00:41:11,000 --> 00:41:17,000

But without a body or any other physical evidence of a crime, the case remains unsolved.

419

00:41:17,000 --> 00:41:23,000

I'm Lawrence Fishburne. Thank you for watching History's Greatest Mysteries.