

1

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

A pair of gravestones linked by a tale of passion and murder.

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

The story was biblical in proportion.

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00:00:08,000 --> 00:00:12,000

A giant statue that conceals an even bigger mystery.

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

The photo went on to be literally world famous.

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

And a town clock whose hands are frozen in time.

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

This clock stood witness to one of the most devastating events in the history of Hilo Avenue.

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

Sometimes the greatest secrets lie in plain sight.

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

These are monumental mysteries.

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00:00:40,000 --> 00:00:42,000

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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00:00:42,000 --> 00:00:45,000

With over 700 outdoor sculptures,

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

the city of brotherly love has more public art than anywhere else in the country.

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00:00:51,000 --> 00:00:54,000

And as journalist Michael Kassel can attest,

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00:00:54,000 --> 00:00:57,000

at the bottom of the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art,

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

stands one of the city's most popular attractions.

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00:01:04,000 --> 00:01:10,000

More tourists come to see this statue every year than any other monument in the city of Philadelphia.

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

This eight foot tall bronze figure depicts a character from a classic film

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00:01:15,000 --> 00:01:19,000

about an underdog who gets the opportunity of a lifetime.

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00:01:19,000 --> 00:01:21,000

Rocky.

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00:01:22,000 --> 00:01:26,000

But few know the origins of this fictional character.

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00:01:28,000 --> 00:01:31,000

The statue represents so much,

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00:01:31,000 --> 00:01:38,000

but there's actually a real story of a real man with an even more incredible story.

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00:01:38,000 --> 00:01:45,000

What real life boxer helped inspire the epic movie series so many know and love today?

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00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:49,000

1975.

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00:01:49,000 --> 00:01:51,000

Bayonne, New Jersey.

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:55,000

In this industrial city just 10 miles from Manhattan,

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00:01:55,000 --> 00:02:00,000

36 year old Chuck Wepner is barely scraping by as a liquor store clerk.

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

But night after night, he pursues his true passion, boxing.

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00:02:07,000 --> 00:02:12,000

Chuck Wepner was what they call unboxing a hamhonegger.

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00:02:12,000 --> 00:02:14,000

He was a working class fighter.

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00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:17,000

He had raw natural power.

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00:02:17,000 --> 00:02:21,000

And while the six foot five inch fighter isn't professionally trained,

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00:02:21,000 --> 00:02:26,000

what he lacks in technique he more than makes up for with physical strength.

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00:02:26,000 --> 00:02:29,000

He was a very, very hard puncher and he's big.

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00:02:30,000 --> 00:02:34,000

After more than 10 years on the circuit as a professional boxer,

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00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:37,000

Wepner has earned a degree of local acclaim.

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00:02:37,000 --> 00:02:42,000

In New Jersey he was very famous because he had won the New Jersey State title.

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00:02:42,000 --> 00:02:46,000

But throughout the world, throughout the country, nobody knew who Chuck Wepner was.

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00:02:48,000 --> 00:02:54,000

But in the winter of 1975, Wepner receives some life changing news

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00:02:54,000 --> 00:02:57,000

that will cement his legacy forever.

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00:02:57,000 --> 00:02:59,000

His mother called him up on the phone and said,

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

Chuck, did you see the paper?

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

He says that you're going to be fighting for the title.

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00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:11,000

And incredibly, Wepner's next opponent is none other than the reigning world heavyweight champion

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00:03:11,000 --> 00:03:15,000

and the most famous boxer of the day, Muhammad Ali.

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00:03:16,000 --> 00:03:20,000

Having heard about Wepner's exploits on the New Jersey circuit,

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00:03:20,000 --> 00:03:25,000

boxing promoter Don King has chosen Wepner as Ali's next challenger.

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00:03:26,000 --> 00:03:30,000

The choice keeps up a time-honored tradition of generating publicity

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00:03:30,000 --> 00:03:35,000

by mixing in a seemingly easy win before moving on to more serious contenders.

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00:03:36,000 --> 00:03:41,000

No one thinks that the underdog stands a chance against the champ.

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00:03:41,000 --> 00:03:45,000

The national press looked at Chuck as a joke. They made fun of him.

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00:03:46,000 --> 00:03:49,000

March 24th, the big night arrives.

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00:03:49,000 --> 00:03:55,000

At Richfield Coliseum near Cleveland, Chuck Wepner comes face-to-face with Muhammad Ali.

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00:03:55,000 --> 00:03:59,000

The odds are stacked 30-to-1 in favor of the champ.

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00:04:03,000 --> 00:04:09,000

The press ringside, they thought it was only a matter of time before Muhammad Ali was going to knock him out.

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00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:17,000

But to everyone's surprise, after eight rounds, Wepner is still standing.

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00:04:21,000 --> 00:04:25,000

Ali's dropping the kitchen sink on him, but he's not going anywhere.

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00:04:26,000 --> 00:04:29,000

Then in round nine, the unthinkable happens.

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00:04:30,000 --> 00:04:35,000

Wepner delivers a powerful punch that sends Ali to the mat.

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00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:39,000

Muhammad went down. He went down hard.

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00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:44,000

Everybody was thinking for a second, maybe this guy, he was a 30-to-100 dog,

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00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:47,000

could knock out the champion of the world.

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00:04:48,000 --> 00:04:50,000

But Ali doesn't stay down for long.

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00:04:51,000 --> 00:04:55,000

Ali, when he got up off the canvas, was extremely angry.

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00:04:57,000 --> 00:05:01,000

From that point on, it was a bloodbath for Chuck Wepner.

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

Ali turned it up all the way.

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00:05:04,000 --> 00:05:09,000

But Ali's so-called easy opponent refuses to surrender.

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00:05:10,000 --> 00:05:15,000

Is there a chance that Chuck Wepner could land one more punch like he did before and maybe be world champion?

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00:05:17,000 --> 00:05:21,000

Finally, in round 15, with only nine seconds left before the bell,

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00:05:21,000 --> 00:05:26,000

Ali lands a blow to Wepner's face that sends the challenger into the ropes.

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00:05:27,000 --> 00:05:38,000

Ali is declared the victor, but Chuck Wepner, who went 15 rounds against the greatest fighter of all time, still emerges a hero.

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00:05:39,000 --> 00:05:42,000

He became mythical. He became a legend.

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00:05:43,000 --> 00:05:49,000

Wepner enjoys a brief moment in the spotlight and soon returns to New Jersey where his career began.

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00:05:52,000 --> 00:05:55,000

But his story is destined to live on.

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00:05:55,000 --> 00:06:00,000

Thanks to an up-and-coming Hollywood writer and actor named Sylvester Stallone.

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00:06:01,000 --> 00:06:14,000

Stallone, who had watched the fight, uses Wepner's tale as inspiration to write, direct, and star in a 1976 film about an underdog who's plucked from obscurity to fight a champion.

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00:06:14,000 --> 00:06:15,000

Rocky.

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00:06:18,000 --> 00:06:23,000

It's for every underdog, for every underachiever that has that one great opportunity.

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00:06:24,000 --> 00:06:29,000

The film goes on to win multiple awards and spawned five sequels.

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00:06:30,000 --> 00:06:39,000

This statue of Rocky Balboa in his iconic pose was donated by the producers to the city of Philadelphia following the release of Rocky III.

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00:06:41,000 --> 00:06:48,000

Today, the monument also serves as a reminder of the real-life hero who inspired a now classic film.

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00:06:54,000 --> 00:07:00,000

The picturesque heights of Brooklyn, New York offer sweeping views of Manhattan's famous skyline.

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

But this bustling borough of 2.5 million has a few landmarks of its own.

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00:07:08,000 --> 00:07:12,000

And one of them is a verdant expanse of gravestones and memorials.

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00:07:12,000 --> 00:07:22,000

It is 478 acres of gravesites of Civil War generals, sports heroes, actors, musicians, politicians.

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00:07:22,000 --> 00:07:25,000

This is Greenwood Cemetery.

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00:07:27,000 --> 00:07:35,000

Amidst these venerable structures are two gray granite tombstones that are inextricably linked for all eternity.

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00:07:35,000 --> 00:07:42,000

One is etched with a weeping willow and the other bears a disturbing inscription.

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00:07:42,000 --> 00:07:45,000

May God rest her troubled soul.

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00:07:46,000 --> 00:07:58,000

For author and historian Benjamin Feldman, these headstones mark the graves of a couple who were embroiled in a scintillating tale of unbridled passion and murder.

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00:07:59,000 --> 00:08:10,000

The story was biblical in proportion. It had every ingredient that any newspaper man could desire. Lust, betrayal, violence, greed.

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00:08:11,000 --> 00:08:17,000

So what was this scandalous crime that gripped Victorian age America?

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00:08:19,000 --> 00:08:23,000

January 31st, 1857, Manhattan.

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00:08:23,000 --> 00:08:33,000

A young man working at a dental practice at 31 Bond Street arrives for work and notices that the keys to the operating room have been left in the lock.

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00:08:33,000 --> 00:08:38,000

When he pushes the door open, he makes a startling discovery.

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00:08:39,000 --> 00:08:47,000

There, lying in the perfect pool of gore was the cold corpse of Dr. Harvey Burdell, his torso riddled with stab wounds.

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00:08:48,000 --> 00:08:54,000

Dr. Burdell, a wealthy and well-respected man, was the proprietor of the dental practice.

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00:08:55,000 --> 00:09:00,000

Initially, the police theorized that the dentist was the victim of a robbery gone bad.

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

But when nothing is found missing, the idea is dismissed.

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

So who could have killed Dr. Harvey Burdell? And why?

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00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:14,000

An examination of the doctor's body yields a solitary clue.

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00:09:15,000 --> 00:09:24,000

After the coroner's physicians examined Burdell's corpse, they noticed that the stab wounds in his body had been made by someone who was left-handed.

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00:09:26,000 --> 00:09:31,000

But with little else to go on, it seems as if the crime may remain unsolved.

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00:09:32,000 --> 00:09:37,000

But then, a woman steps forward with an unusual claim.

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00:09:37,000 --> 00:09:43,000

Her name is Emma Cunningham, and she is the manager of the building in which the dental practice is located.

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00:09:44,000 --> 00:09:49,000

The rooms were hers to use and to rent out as she could see fit to make herself a little money.

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00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:55,000

But Emma, it seems, was no ordinary employee.

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00:09:55,000 --> 00:10:01,000

She pulled out a marriage certificate of Harvey Burdell and Emma Hemsdett Cunningham.

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

Emma says she is Dr. Burdell's grieving widow and therefore the heir to his estate.

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00:10:09,000 --> 00:10:13,000

But investigators sense that something's not quite right.

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00:10:15,000 --> 00:10:23,000

After talking to residents of 31 Bond Street, police discover that Emma and Harvey's relationship had been fraught with tension.

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00:10:24,000 --> 00:10:28,000

It was known that she and Harvey Burdell had been acrimonious.

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00:10:28,000 --> 00:10:32,000

Everybody's instantly suspected Emma of having committed this murder.

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00:10:34,000 --> 00:10:38,000

And when police discover that Emma is left-handed, just like the killer,

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00:10:39,000 --> 00:10:45,000

they begin to suspect that she might have murdered the dentist in order to get her hands on his vast fortune.

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00:10:46,000 --> 00:10:54,000

When Emma is arrested and charged with murder, she swears she is simply a grief-stricken widow who has been falsely accused.

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00:10:55,000 --> 00:11:00,000

Emma screamed out, why would I have killed him? I was his wife.

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00:11:02,000 --> 00:11:06,000

In May 1857, the sensational trial begins.

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00:11:06,000 --> 00:11:13,000

And prosecutors open with an extraordinary piece of evidence that casts doubt on Emma's story.

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00:11:14,000 --> 00:11:21,000

Burdell's acquaintances and relatives testified at the inquest that he was out of town in late October of 1856,

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00:11:21,000 --> 00:11:26,000

the date of this marriage certificate. So he couldn't possibly have married Emma.

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00:11:27,000 --> 00:11:33,000

Evidence was presented that Emma had gotten her boyfriend to get his hair dyed and put on false whiskers

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00:11:33,000 --> 00:11:36,000

and show up claiming to be Harvey Burdell.

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00:11:37,000 --> 00:11:45,000

Prosecutors allege that Emma faked her wedding to Dr. Burdell and then murdered him to lay claim to his estate.

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00:11:46,000 --> 00:11:51,000

It seems that Emma is all but certain to hang for this devious plot.

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

But what happens next defies all expectations.

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00:11:59,000 --> 00:12:01,000

It's 1857 in New York.

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00:12:01,000 --> 00:12:09,000

Emma Cunningham is on trial for the murder of Dr. Harvey Burdell, whom prosecutors allege she

killed for his vast fortune.

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00:12:09,000 --> 00:12:17,000

It seems she's destined to hang for the crime. But this Victorian era saga has a shocking twist.

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00:12:19,000 --> 00:12:24,000

Emma's defense lawyer appeals to the all-male jury's chivalrous sensibilities.

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00:12:24,000 --> 00:12:37,000

Her defense attorney reminded the 12 men sitting in the jury box that their responsibility as gentlemen was to give Emma Cunningham the benefit of the doubt.

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00:12:37,000 --> 00:12:44,000

And even though the faked marriage certificate points to her guilt, Emma is acquitted on all charges.

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00:12:47,000 --> 00:12:50,000

But the scandalous tale isn't over yet.

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00:12:51,000 --> 00:12:56,000

Soon after the trial, a rumor spreads that Emma is pregnant.

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00:12:57,000 --> 00:13:05,000

If she were carrying Burdell's unborn child and gave birth to such a babe, she would gain control of Harvey Burdell's estate.

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

The only way she will be able to access Burdell's assets is to present an actual child to the court.

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00:13:14,000 --> 00:13:24,000

But investigators believe Emma is faking her pregnancy. And as her supposed due date approaches, they hatch a daring plot to entrap her.

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00:13:28,000 --> 00:13:35,000

Posing as underworld baby traffickers, detectives tell Emma that an unwanted child is available for purchase.

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00:13:36,000 --> 00:13:40,000

Emma was tipped off to come downtown to pick up a newborn infant.

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00:13:41,000 --> 00:13:46,000

Emma takes the bait and is caught red-handed and promptly arrested.

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00:13:47,000 --> 00:13:57,000

She is convicted of fraud, sent to jail for a month, and so loses any hope of claiming the doctor's estate as her reputation is forever tainted.

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00:13:57,000 --> 00:14:09,000

Thirty years later in 1887, Emma Cunningham dies at the age of 69 and is laid to rest in Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery.

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00:14:10,000 --> 00:14:16,000

And in a final twist of fate, she is buried only a few hundred yards from Dr. Harvey Burdell.

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00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:20,000

But their story lives on.

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00:14:20,000 --> 00:14:30,000

Today, tour guides at the Greenwood Cemetery regale visitors with this sordid tale of lust, greed and murder in the Victorian era.

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

San Diego is home to one-third of the US Navy's Pacific fleet.

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00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:49,000

And here, next to the mammoth USS Midway aircraft carrier, visitors will find another towering landmark.

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00:14:51,000 --> 00:14:59,000

It's 25 feet tall, it's painted in vivid colors, and it portrays a moment in American history that's well-known and well-chronical.

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

Depicting a sailor and a woman dressed in white entwined in a fleeting embrace, this giant sculpture is titled Unconditional Surrender.

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00:15:11,000 --> 00:15:14,000

And it mimics an iconic moment that captivated a nation.

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

Everyone recognizes a statue, but few people know the true story behind what led up to that moment.

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00:15:22,000 --> 00:15:28,000

How did this famous public display of affection lead to one of the most captivating mysteries of the 20th century?

152

00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:35,000

August 14th, 1945.

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00:15:36,000 --> 00:15:43,000

At 7 p.m., United States President Harry S. Truman announces the news the nation had long hoped for.

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00:15:45,000 --> 00:15:49,000

Japan has surrendered. World War II is finally at an end.

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00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:56,000

People didn't know how to react except utter bash joy, relief that the war was over.

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00:15:58,000 --> 00:16:02,000

Nowhere is the exuberance higher than in New York City's Times Square.

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00:16:03,000 --> 00:16:10,000

And it's here that Life magazine photographer Alfred Eisenstadt captures a defining image in the victory celebrations.

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00:16:11,000 --> 00:16:21,000

And out of the corner of his eye he saw a sailor barreling towards a nurse and as they started to embrace he aimed his camera at them and clicked four times.

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00:16:22,000 --> 00:16:29,000

And when the photograph of this passionate pose is published, it becomes an instant icon.

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00:16:30,000 --> 00:16:32,000

The photo went on to be literally world-famous.

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00:16:33,000 --> 00:16:39,000

As the picture's status grows, so too does the public's curiosity.

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00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:47,000

People began to wonder who these people were. Alfred Eisenstadt never got the people's name so there was no way to follow up.

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00:16:48,000 --> 00:16:56,000

And even though they become an enduring symbol of VJ Day, the couple's identity remains a mystery for over three decades.

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00:16:57,000 --> 00:17:05,000

But in 1979, a series of events is put in motion that will change the way this photo is seen forever.

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00:17:06,000 --> 00:17:10,000

Alfred Eisenstadt received a letter and he couldn't believe what he read.

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00:17:11,000 --> 00:17:15,000

Dear Mr. Eisenstadt, I can now come forward and say that I'm the nurse in your famous picture.

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

Identifying herself as one Edith Shane, she says she had kept silent all these years for a very simple reason.

168

00:17:24,000 --> 00:17:26,000

Modesty.

169

00:17:27,000 --> 00:17:32,000

Proper women don't let themselves be kissed by sailors and I'm a very proper woman, but times have changed.

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00:17:35,000 --> 00:17:42,000

And after Eisenstadt meets Edith in person, he's convinced that she is indeed the nurse in his photograph.

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00:17:44,000 --> 00:17:47,000

But who was her impromptu paramour?

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00:17:47,000 --> 00:17:54,000

Edith had no idea who the sailor in the picture was because people were kissing other people, no one stopped to exchange names.

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00:17:56,000 --> 00:18:04,000

So in 1980, Life magazine launches a campaign to find the anonymous sailor, appealing to readers across the country for help.

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00:18:06,000 --> 00:18:08,000

They were literally inundated.

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00:18:08,000 --> 00:18:16,000

One of the most convincing claimants is Carl Muscarello, whose recollection of VJ Day is apparently impeccable.

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

He remembered the events vividly and being very well spoken, very effervescent. It was easy to believe that he was the sailor.

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00:18:24,000 --> 00:18:32,000

Edith agrees to meet with Carl and poses him a trick question, one that she had previously used to rule out other candidates.

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00:18:33,000 --> 00:18:39,000

Edith Shane asked Carl Muscarello why he didn't call her after she gave him her phone number.

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00:18:39,000 --> 00:18:45,000

Carl Muscarello didn't fall for that ruse and he said, you never gave me a phone number and that's why I didn't call you.

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00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:54,000

This matches Edith's experience and it's enough for Life magazine to declare Carl to be the long lost kissing sailor.

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00:18:56,000 --> 00:19:05,000

But a few years later, another gentleman steps forward and files a lawsuit against Life magazine, swearing that he is the man in the photo.

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00:19:06,000 --> 00:19:09,000

His name is George Mendonza.

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00:19:10,000 --> 00:19:16,000

So which of these two men, Muscarello or Mendonza, is the real kissing sailor?

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

And what surprising twist will be revealed?

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00:19:23,000 --> 00:19:28,000

In August 1945, as the nation celebrated the end of World War II,

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00:19:28,000 --> 00:19:35,000

news photographer Alfred Eisenstadt took this iconic photograph of a sailor kissing a nurse in Times Square,

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00:19:35,000 --> 00:19:39,000

which years later is made into a towering statue in San Diego.

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00:19:39,000 --> 00:19:43,000

For decades, the identity of this couple remained a mystery.

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00:19:43,000 --> 00:19:48,000

But in 1979, a woman named Edith Shane claimed she was the nurse in the picture.

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00:19:48,000 --> 00:19:50,000

But who was her paramour?

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00:19:50,000 --> 00:19:56,000

The quest narrowed down to two men, Carl Muscarello and George Mendonza.

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00:19:56,000 --> 00:19:59,000

So who was the real kissing sailor?

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

In 2005, a team of experts using the latest in photo-analytic technology

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

looked for matches between the young sailor and the now elderly men.

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

Their results turned the story on its head.

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00:20:17,000 --> 00:20:22,000

Every feature from his hairline to his nose to the shape of his ears

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00:20:22,000 --> 00:20:26,000

all pointed very conclusively to George Mendonza being the sailor.

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00:20:27,000 --> 00:20:33,000

One compelling piece of evidence is that an unusually shaped bump on George's left arm

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00:20:33,000 --> 00:20:37,000

is an exact match to the one clearly depicted in the photograph.

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00:20:37,000 --> 00:20:43,000

But the most conclusive proof comes from a very unlikely source, George's wife.

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00:20:43,000 --> 00:20:49,000

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence we have is that one of the people in the photo

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00:20:49,000 --> 00:20:52,000

seen over George's right shoulder is his wife, Rita.

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00:20:53,000 --> 00:20:56,000

As it turns out, George was on a date with Rita

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00:20:56,000 --> 00:21:00,000

when the two ran into Times Square to celebrate with everyone else.

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00:21:00,000 --> 00:21:08,000

George Mendonza remembered incidents in the war where Navy nurses were tending to sick and dying sailors

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00:21:08,000 --> 00:21:13,000

and he just wanted to embrace the first Navy nurse that he could find.

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00:21:13,000 --> 00:21:18,000

And when George saw the young woman shining like a beacon in white,

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

his emotions cut the best of it.

209

00:21:23,000 --> 00:21:26,000

But the story has one final surprise.

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00:21:26,000 --> 00:21:31,000

Experts determine that the nurse is not Edith Shane.

211

00:21:34,000 --> 00:21:39,000

Analysis of the photograph shows that if the woman and the sailor were standing straight up,

212

00:21:39,000 --> 00:21:41,000

they'd be approximately the same height.

213

00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:48,000

But in reality, the 4'10' Shane would have been dwarfed by the 6'2' Mendonza.

214

00:21:48,000 --> 00:21:52,000

Edith Shane was much too short to be there.

215

00:21:54,000 --> 00:21:59,000

Edith had genuinely believed that she was the woman in the famous photograph

216

00:21:59,000 --> 00:22:03,000

and she may well have been kissed by a sailor in Times Square that day.

217

00:22:03,000 --> 00:22:06,000

It just wasn't the one in the picture.

218

00:22:06,000 --> 00:22:13,000

With the mystery opened anew, a woman who had long claimed to the nurse to friends and family steps forward.

219

00:22:13,000 --> 00:22:17,000

Her name? Greta Zimmer Friedman.

220

00:22:17,000 --> 00:22:21,000

And further analysis of the photo confirms she's a match.

221

00:22:21,000 --> 00:22:25,000

Her hairstyle was just the same as the one in the picture.

222

00:22:25,000 --> 00:22:27,000

Her body composition was the same.

223

00:22:29,000 --> 00:22:36,000

Correctly identified after over 60 years, George and Greta celebrate their newfound fame.

224

00:22:38,000 --> 00:22:43,000

And today, this towering statue named Unconditional Surrender

225

00:22:43,000 --> 00:22:50,000

stands in San Diego as a larger than life representation of an affectionate moment at the end of a war.

226

00:22:56,000 --> 00:23:02,000

Just north of the crowded city of Los Angeles is a quiet oasis of dense mountain woodlands.

227

00:23:02,000 --> 00:23:07,000

A 1,000 square mile stretch of pristine nature.

228

00:23:07,000 --> 00:23:10,000

It's an amazing place that you would not believe.

229

00:23:10,000 --> 00:23:13,000

Mountains, lakes, it's beautiful.

230

00:23:14,000 --> 00:23:22,000

This splendid swath of protected wilderness is the Angeles National Forest, home to the legendary Elizabeth Lake.

231

00:23:22,000 --> 00:23:28,000

The misty basin sits atop the notoriously unstable San Andreas Fault.

232

00:23:28,000 --> 00:23:35,000

But according to author Joshua Hawley, it's also feared for another more sinister reason.

233

00:23:36,000 --> 00:23:42,000

But what a lot of people don't realize, there's a deep dark secret in that location.

234

00:23:42,000 --> 00:23:46,000

It's rumored that a giant, otherworldly creature lived there.

235

00:23:47,000 --> 00:23:53,000

What is this frightful beast that some believe terrorized this peaceful forest?

236

00:23:55,000 --> 00:23:59,000

1883, Elizabeth Lake, California.

237

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

Cattleman Don Chico Lopez settles in an abandoned asienda on the banks of this picturesque lake.

238

00:24:06,000 --> 00:24:11,000

He thinks he has found an ideal place to set up his ranch.

239

00:24:14,000 --> 00:24:19,000

But one day, a terrified ranch hand approaches Lopez in a panic.

240

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

He claims to have heard beastly noises and summons Lopez down to the lake to investigate.

241

00:24:26,000 --> 00:24:33,000

As the story goes, the men notice something rustling in the weeds and are startled by a horrible screech.

242

00:24:36,000 --> 00:24:42,000

It's a loud shriek. Loud scream that nobody's ever heard before.

243

00:24:43,000 --> 00:24:50,000

And they see this huge massive creature rise up in the air with a wingspan that could block out the sun.

244

00:24:51,000 --> 00:24:55,000

But this isn't the first time such a sighting has been reported.

245

00:24:56,000 --> 00:24:59,000

Tales of a behemoth that lives in the lake.

246

00:24:59,000 --> 00:25:08,000

A ferocious beast said to be over 90 feet long with an 8-foot beak and strong sharp teeth have been passed down for centuries.

247

00:25:09,000 --> 00:25:18,000

It's a creature so terrifying that the settlers in the region have given its home a fittingly frightful nickname that signifies the spawn of Satan.

248

00:25:19,000 --> 00:25:20,000

Devil's Lake.

249

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

A legend claims that there's a pet of the devil in the lake.

250

00:25:25,000 --> 00:25:31,000

Some say the devil himself chose this body of water as a home for his monstrous pet.

251

00:25:32,000 --> 00:25:39,000

And that at the deepest point of the lake, perhaps along the San Andreas Fault Line, there is a direct passage to the underworld.

252

00:25:40,000 --> 00:25:47,000

Alarmed, Lopez and his ranch hand flee the area and abandon the ranch for good.

253

00:25:50,000 --> 00:25:55,000

In the years that follow, the legend of the winged demon of Devil's Lake grows.

254

00:25:58,000 --> 00:26:07,000

The enormous monster continues to plague ranchers in the area and is speculated to feed on livestock, leaving carnage in its wake.

255

00:26:09,000 --> 00:26:12,000

Bounties are offered and hunting parties are dispatched.

256

00:26:13,000 --> 00:26:17,000

But the beast eludes all attempts to be killed or captured.

257

00:26:18,000 --> 00:26:23,000

What is this diabolical creature and will it ever be caught?

258

00:26:29,000 --> 00:26:31,000

Southern California, the 1880s.

259

00:26:32,000 --> 00:26:41,000

A giant flying feed has been spotted terrorizing local ranchers along the shores of Elizabeth Lake in what is now Angeles National Forest.

260

00:26:42,000 --> 00:26:47,000

What exactly is this demonic creature and will its reign of terror end?

261

00:26:51,000 --> 00:27:00,000

In 1890, a few years after it was last seen flying eastward, the beast rears its ugly head again in a remote desert hundreds of miles away.

262

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

It's there, near Tombstone, Arizona, that two ranchers are said to have stumbled upon a horrific sight.

263

00:27:09,000 --> 00:27:12,000

They see this huge massive creature fly overhead.

264

00:27:14,000 --> 00:27:18,000

First thing they thought in their minds, let's kill it, you're cowboys.

265

00:27:19,000 --> 00:27:26,000

The armed ranchers claim to have chased the creature for several miles before finally drawing close enough to fire the fatal shot.

266

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

The men move in to examine the monster they've just slain.

267

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

They later describe it as a winged monster with an elongated tail and an immense pair of wings.

268

00:27:40,000 --> 00:27:44,000

They were so mystified by it, they kind of figured they had a carnival attraction on their hands.

269

00:27:46,000 --> 00:27:52,000

The beast is too heavy for the ranchers to move, so they clip a piece of the giant wing and rush back into town.

270

00:27:53,000 --> 00:27:59,000

Newspapers seize upon the story of the strange winged animal, dubbing it the Thunderbird.

271

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

And soon everyone is demanding a glimpse of the beast.

272

00:28:06,000 --> 00:28:13,000

So supposedly these men went back to get the creature, but when they got there, it wasn't there.

273

00:28:14,000 --> 00:28:20,000

Without solid proof of its existence, the Thunderbird is relegated to the ranks of mythic creature.

274

00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:26,000

So were the sightings of the winged beast simply tall tails?

275

00:28:27,000 --> 00:28:31,000

Some believe the creature was actually some type of giant predatory bird.

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

But even the largest species don't measure up to the Thunderbird's monstrous dimensions.

277

00:28:40,000 --> 00:28:46,000

According to another theory, the Thunderbird is actually the ancestor of an ancient animal, like a pterodactyl,

278

00:28:47,000 --> 00:28:51,000

which somehow escaped extinction during the age of dinosaurs.

279

00:28:53,000 --> 00:28:59,000

But since no skeletal remains have been found, this theory cannot be proven.

280

00:29:02,000 --> 00:29:11,000

And while countless faked or doctored photographs have surfaced that purport to depict the scale of this enormous beast, none have been authenticated.

281

00:29:14,000 --> 00:29:18,000

The US is filled with Thunderbird stories and there's more coming out all the time.

282

00:29:18,000 --> 00:29:23,000

For now, the legend of this beast lives on in the Angeles National Forest,

283

00:29:24,000 --> 00:29:30,000

which stands as a lasting reminder of the mysterious Thunderbird and its infamous reign of terror.

284

00:29:36,000 --> 00:29:40,000

Hawaii's Big Island is home to the largest volcano on Earth.

285

00:29:41,000 --> 00:29:45,000

Rising more than 13,000 feet above sea level is Montelone.

286

00:29:46,000 --> 00:29:53,000

But 30 miles away from this towering monolith in the coastal town of Hilo stands a far less conspicuous landmark.

287

00:29:54,000 --> 00:29:59,000

It's about 12 feet high. It's green metal and it's been weathered by the years.

288

00:30:00,000 --> 00:30:05,000

But there's something special about it and it's not there to tell time.

289

00:30:07,000 --> 00:30:09,000

This is the Hilo Town Clock.

290

00:30:10,000 --> 00:30:14,000

Once an active time period, the Hilo Town Clock is the first to be discovered.

291

00:30:15,000 --> 00:30:20,000

In the early days of the 19th century, the hands are now permanently frozen at 1.04 a.m.

292

00:30:21,000 --> 00:30:24,000

The exact time that this town's fate was sealed forever.

293

00:30:25,000 --> 00:30:30,000

This clock stood witness to one of the most tragic and devastating events in the history of Hilo.

294

00:30:31,000 --> 00:30:35,000

What catastrophic incident stopped the motion of this clock?

295

00:30:38,000 --> 00:30:40,000

May 22, 1960.

296

00:30:40,000 --> 00:30:49,000

Hilo, Hawaii is a growing commercial center thanks to the powerful sugar industry with cane fields stretching out for miles from town.

297

00:30:50,000 --> 00:30:54,000

But life in paradise is about to come to a terrifying halt.

298

00:30:56,000 --> 00:31:01,000

At 1.04 a.m., sleeping residents are awoken to a loud rumbling sound.

299

00:31:02,000 --> 00:31:06,000

And upon looking outside, they are greeted with a horrifying sight.

300

00:31:06,000 --> 00:31:14,000

They saw a 20-foot vertical front of this enormous wall of water that would ultimately rise to 35 feet.

301

00:31:15,000 --> 00:31:22,000

A giant tsunami is rapidly approaching, one that is so big and powerful that it will swallow Hilo

whole.

302

00:31:24,000 --> 00:31:30,000

The next morning, the extent of the devastation that the tsunami has left in its wake becomes clear.

303

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

Parking meters are bent parallel to the ground. Homes and buildings completely smashed.

304

00:31:38,000 --> 00:31:40,000

Whole city blocks level.

305

00:31:41,000 --> 00:31:43,000

At least 500 homes and businesses were destroyed.

306

00:31:44,000 --> 00:31:49,000

It did \$50 million worth of damage. Most tragically, it killed 61 people.

307

00:31:50,000 --> 00:31:56,000

But for all of its catastrophic effects, the tsunami's arrival did not come as a complete surprise.

308

00:31:57,000 --> 00:32:05,000

In fact, alarms sounded a full four hours before the waves hit, alerting residents of the imminent danger.

309

00:32:06,000 --> 00:32:10,000

The sirens went off at 8 o'clock and they continued to sound at intervals after that.

310

00:32:11,000 --> 00:32:13,000

So there was ample time for people to evacuate.

311

00:32:14,000 --> 00:32:17,000

But most people chose to ignore the warnings.

312

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

So why did the residents of Hilo not flee the impending disaster?

313

00:32:27,000 --> 00:32:30,000

It's May 1960.

314

00:32:31,000 --> 00:32:38,000

A devastating tsunami has struck the coastal city of Hilo, Hawaii, leaving 61 people dead in its wake.

315

00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:46,000

But hours before the waves actually hit, tsunami alarms sounded, warning residents to flee the area.

316

00:32:47,000 --> 00:32:49,000

So why didn't the town evacuate?

317

00:32:49,000 --> 00:32:56,000

The catalyst for the tsunami occurred almost 15 hours before it struck Hilo.

318

00:32:59,000 --> 00:33:04,000

When an earthquake off the coast of Chile, with a magnitude of 9.5 on the Richter scale,

319

00:33:05,000 --> 00:33:12,000

triggered a series of seismic sea waves through the Pacific Ocean that grew as they headed the 6000 miles towards Hawaii.

320

00:33:13,000 --> 00:33:18,000

At 8.30 p.m., coastal sirens in Hilo began to sound.

321

00:33:19,000 --> 00:33:23,000

That was still four hours, plenty of advance warning to evacuate in time.

322

00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:26,000

So why didn't people leave?

323

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

The answer harkens back to a similar event that occurred in the mid 1940s.

324

00:33:34,000 --> 00:33:39,000

After an even deadlier tsunami swept through Hilo in 1946,

325

00:33:40,000 --> 00:33:44,000

an official alert system had been put in place by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

326

00:33:45,000 --> 00:33:48,000

But despite the many alarms in the years that followed,

327

00:33:49,000 --> 00:33:53,000

most of the resulting tsunamis were either minor or did not hit the area directly.

328

00:33:54,000 --> 00:33:56,000

There had been very little damage and no loss of life.

329

00:33:57,000 --> 00:34:02,000

So that when this warning came, people didn't really understand the magnitude of what was about to happen.

330

00:34:05,000 --> 00:34:10,000

So on May 22nd, 1960, with citizens lulled into a false sense of security,

331

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

the majority opted to stay put as the sirens blared.

332

00:34:16,000 --> 00:34:22,000

One of those Hilo residents that chose not to evacuate was 23-year-old nurse Janet Fujimoto.

333

00:34:22,000 --> 00:34:27,000

Those who grew up in that area felt that, well, it's just another false alarm.

334

00:34:29,000 --> 00:34:31,000

We always had false alarms.

335

00:34:32,000 --> 00:34:37,000

By the time it became clear that the danger was all too real, it was too late to leave.

336

00:34:38,000 --> 00:34:41,000

Janet and her family only survived thanks to a miracle.

337

00:34:43,000 --> 00:34:47,000

As soon as the wave hit, it crashed and then our house started tilting.

338

00:34:47,000 --> 00:34:51,000

We were spinning around two or three times until we anchored on something.

339

00:34:54,000 --> 00:34:58,000

After the 1960 disaster, tsunami evacuations were made mandatory.

340

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

And to commemorate the events of that tragic day,

341

00:35:04,000 --> 00:35:08,000

the Hilo town clock, which was recovered from the rubble, was erected once again.

342

00:35:09,000 --> 00:35:12,000

Its hands frozen at 1.04 am.

343

00:35:12,000 --> 00:35:15,000

The exact moment of the tsunami's impact.

344

00:35:16,000 --> 00:35:20,000

It was saved as a memorial so that no one will ever forget what happened there.

345

00:35:21,000 --> 00:35:27,000

And today, it stands as a stoic reminder to heed warnings in times of danger.

346

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

On the banks of the mighty Mississippi River in St. Louis, Missouri,

347

00:35:36,000 --> 00:35:41,000

stands the nation's second largest river, the St. Louis River.

348

00:35:42,000 --> 00:35:45,000

It's the soaring symbol of westward expansion.

349

00:35:46,000 --> 00:35:50,000

It's 630 feet tall. It has about 900 tons of stainless steel.

350

00:35:51,000 --> 00:35:55,000

Known as the gateway to the west, this is the St. Louis Arch.

351

00:35:56,000 --> 00:36:00,000

And at the base of the arch is the captain's return statue

352

00:36:01,000 --> 00:36:06,000

that commemorates the two legendary explorers who led the most famous expedition in U.S. history.

353

00:36:07,000 --> 00:36:10,000

Maryweather Lewis and William Clark.

354

00:36:11,000 --> 00:36:14,000

Many are familiar with the story of Sacajawea,

355

00:36:15,000 --> 00:36:19,000

the Native American guide who ushered Lewis and Clark's crew through uncharted territory.

356

00:36:20,000 --> 00:36:24,000

But this is the tale of a very different, long forgotten heroine.

357

00:36:25,000 --> 00:36:29,000

If not for her actions, Lewis and Clark's mission would have been doomed.

358

00:36:30,000 --> 00:36:33,000

The expedition may have been stopped in their tracks right there,

359

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

and that would have been the end of it. We never would have heard of them again.

360

00:36:37,000 --> 00:36:40,000

So who was this remarkable savior?

361

00:36:41,000 --> 00:36:45,000

And how did she rescue one of the greatest pioneering journeys in American history?

362

00:36:47,000 --> 00:36:49,000

Northeastern Montana, 1803.

363

00:36:51,000 --> 00:36:54,000

Army Captain Maryweather Lewis and Captain William Clark

364

00:36:55,000 --> 00:36:58,000

have staked their lives on an unprecedented expedition

365

00:36:59,000 --> 00:37:05,000

to become the first white explorers to make the cross-continental trek to the Pacific Ocean.

366

00:37:06,000 --> 00:37:10,000

After more than a year of arduous travel up the Missouri River,

367

00:37:11,000 --> 00:37:14,000

they come face to face with their biggest obstacle.

368

00:37:16,000 --> 00:37:21,000

All they could see were mountains, mountain on mountain on mountain,

369

00:37:22,000 --> 00:37:26,000

and range on range, and they were completely lost.

370

00:37:27,000 --> 00:37:32,000

To guide them through the treacherous terrain that is known today as the Rocky Mountains,

371

00:37:32,000 --> 00:37:36,000

they recruit a Shoshone Indian woman named Sakhajaya.

372

00:37:38,000 --> 00:37:42,000

Going through the Rocky Mountains presented real hardships for the Lewis and Clark Party.

373

00:37:43,000 --> 00:37:48,000

With snow blanketing their path through steep mountain passes, their horses weaken,

374

00:37:49,000 --> 00:37:51,000

and many fall through crevices to their death.

375

00:37:52,000 --> 00:37:58,000

Worst of all, the bitterly cold explorers run out of food and are on the brink of starvation.

376

00:37:58,000 --> 00:38:04,000

Things got very, very bad. They had nothing else left to eat, and there was just no hope.

377

00:38:07,000 --> 00:38:12,000

After trekking for more than a month, the weary explorers stumble upon a tribal encampment

378

00:38:13,000 --> 00:38:17,000

of startled Nez Perce Indians, who had never seen white people before.

379

00:38:18,000 --> 00:38:22,000

What happens next is a little-known but extraordinary story,

380

00:38:23,000 --> 00:38:27,000

passed down through generations to Nez Perce historian Otis Halfmoon.

381

00:38:28,000 --> 00:38:32,000

The Nez Perce really wanted to kill them because they had weapons,

382

00:38:33,000 --> 00:38:37,000

they had black powder, they had all these material things that they found so interesting.

383

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

So who will save Lewis and Clark from this new and unexpected threat?

384

00:38:48,000 --> 00:38:51,000

September, 1805, the Pacific Northwest.

385

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

16 months into their transcontinental quest, Lewis and Clark and their crew are starving on the verge of death.

386

00:38:59,000 --> 00:39:04,000

After an exhausting trek through the Rocky Mountains, they stumble upon an encampment of Nez Perce Indians,

387

00:39:05,000 --> 00:39:08,000

who contemplate killing the explorers for their weapons and supplies.

388

00:39:09,000 --> 00:39:15,000

With their lives hanging in the balance, what unlikely ally will intervene to save Lewis and Clark?

389

00:39:16,000 --> 00:39:23,000

The warriors, they really want to kill them because they had weapons, they had knives, they had metal.

390

00:39:24,000 --> 00:39:27,000

These things here could really make life a lot more easier.

391

00:39:28,000 --> 00:39:34,000

Such a cache of weapons would make the Nez Perce the richest and strongest tribe west of the Rockies.

392

00:39:36,000 --> 00:39:44,000

But at that moment, a very old Nez Perce woman, lying on her deathbed, steps up determined to speak her mind.

393

00:39:46,000 --> 00:39:48,000

Her name is Wat Kuiess.

394

00:39:49,000 --> 00:39:58,000

And as the Wrapped Tribe listens, she recounts an incredible story that will seal the fate of Lewis and Clark and their men.

395

00:39:59,000 --> 00:40:05,000

Years earlier, when she was a young girl, she was stolen and carried far away by an enemy tribe.

396

00:40:06,000 --> 00:40:11,000

She escaped and made an epic and dangerous journey home, walking hundreds of miles,

397

00:40:12,000 --> 00:40:19,000

and was only able to survive thanks to white settlers she met along the way, who fed her and supplied her with vital provisions.

398

00:40:20,000 --> 00:40:23,000

They treated her so good, and they cared for her.

399

00:40:24,000 --> 00:40:28,000

She missed home so much, and they worked to get her back home.

400

00:40:29,000 --> 00:40:36,000

When she finally arrived home, the Nez Perce changed her name to reflect her journey,

401

00:40:37,000 --> 00:40:41,000

calling her Wat Kuiess, or returned from a far away land.

402

00:40:42,000 --> 00:40:50,000

And Wat Kuiess now sees this as her opportunity to repay the kindness of the white man by saving Lewis and Clark and their men.

403

00:40:51,000 --> 00:40:56,000

She spoke to her own people, her own leadership about these people, do them no harm.

404

00:40:57,000 --> 00:41:02,000

On her word, the Chief and the Council decide to spare the lives of the explorers.

405

00:41:03,000 --> 00:41:09,000

Once it is clear that Lewis and Clark would be safe, according to legend, Wat Kuiess passes away.

406

00:41:12,000 --> 00:41:17,000

But the Nez Perce make good on their promise to help usher the party to safety,

407

00:41:18,000 --> 00:41:25,000

providing them with horses and drawing vital maps that allow Lewis and Clark to successfully navigate the final part of their journey

408

00:41:26,000 --> 00:41:27,000

to the west coast.

409

00:41:28,000 --> 00:41:36,000

On November 15, 1805, Lewis and Clark finally set their eyes on their destination, the Pacific Ocean.

410

00:41:40,000 --> 00:41:46,000

To commemorate America's historic expansion west, the St. Louis Arch is built in 1965,

411

00:41:47,000 --> 00:41:52,000

and some 40 years later, the Captain's Return Statue is dedicated to Lewis and Clark.

412

00:41:53,000 --> 00:41:57,000

But none of this would have been possible if not for an unsung hero.

413

00:41:58,000 --> 00:42:02,000

Without Wat Kueiss, that would have been the end of the expedition. Nobody would have heard of Lewis and Clark.

414

00:42:03,000 --> 00:42:12,000

But for all who come here to marvel at this national landmark, few realize that American history may have run a very different course.

415

00:42:13,000 --> 00:42:19,000

From an iconic kiss to a stopped clock, a bronze boxer to a demon from the deep.

416

00:42:20,000 --> 00:42:24,000

I'm Don Wildman and these are Monumental Mysteries.