



EPISODE 42: 46 Months In 'Club Fed' Unpacking Cory Flemings Sentence + A Big Announcement

[00:00:04] **Mandy Matney:** Hey y'all. It's currently Tuesday night in Charleston and wow, today was wild. Two big things I want to share with you before we get into it. One, Cory Fleming was sentenced to 46 months in federal prison today. He was taken into custody by US Marshals after voluntarily surrendering. I've been doing mental gymnastics all day trying to process what went down in court, but ultimately, right now, I'm going to rest easy tonight knowing that since this investigation began in 2019, three powerful men have been convicted of crimes, and that in itself is a big deal. Which brings me to my next announcement. Speaking of the past four years, I am so excited to finally announce that my first book titled *Blood on Their Hands: Murder, Corruption, and the Fall of the Murdaugh Dynasty* will be released this November. I wrote this book with the incredibly talented, hardworking and pesky journalist, Carolyn Murnick. *Blood on Their Hands* will take readers on the rollercoaster ride that led to the collapse of the Murdaugh dynasty. It's a memoir with an inside look at the Murdaugh saga and its sinister web of deceit, theft and murder. But all of that is expected since I was so close to the case, and y'all already know most of that story by listening to the podcast. But what's not in the podcast, I poured into this book, the stories I kept close because they were difficult to say out loud. I'll share more details about the book on social media and on this week's *True Sunlight*, but I just wanted to say thank you to our listeners and pesky LUNASHARK supporters who helped make this lifetime dream of mine of being a published author come to life. And thank you to Harper Collins for believing in me. You can preorder the book starting Wednesday, August 16th, or buy it from your favorite bookstore or online retailer when it releases November 14th. We also planned some amazing content for our LUNASHARK premium members that publishes November 14th to coincide with the book's release. Visit bloodontheirhandsbook.com to learn more. Now let's unpack everything that happened today.

[00:02:42] **Liz Farrell:** Cups up guys.

[00:02:42] **Eric Bland:** Cups up. From Charleston, South Carolina, here we are.

[00:02:48] **Liz Farrell:** Live from Charleston, right after the Cory Fleming hearing where he got taken away in cuffs at the end. That was very...

[00:02:55] **Eric Bland:** By his own volition.



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[00:02:57] **Liz Farrell:** That he wanted to.

[00:02:58] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, he wanted his sentence to start now.

[00:03:00] **Liz Farrell:** Before we started recording, you said, Eric, that that's how you would do it. Why is that?

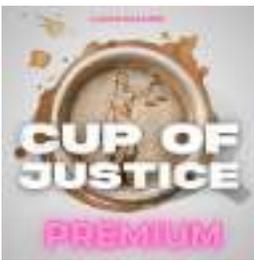
[00:03:04] **Eric Bland:** Because I just think if I know what my sentence is, I want to get started. You're not living, you're dying. If you're just living in limbo, waiting for the phone call to come from the Bureau of Prisons to say, "Okay, here's your report date and you report to Jessup or Gainesville, Florida." I just want to start getting that sentence behind me. My friend, who I told you is a felon, my best friend, he was the same way. He pled guilty and said, "I'm going away right now. I'm starting my sentence right now." He had a year and a day, and I just think that's the best way. Now the state, the way the state does it, where they take you away immediately seems so abrupt. You're not ready for it, but you know, Cory has had a couple months after he pled guilty to come to grips with the fact that he is probably going to be incarcerated. Now, there was a part of him today that he could have held out hope, "Is he gonna give me probation, no jail time?" But when Gergel said those words, "Look, when you're incarcerated..."

[00:04:07] **Liz Farrell:** He said it twice.

[00:04:08] **Eric Bland:** You know, "...you can begin to heal your family and do all this." I think that was a real stark, abrupt reality for Cory.

[00:04:16] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, I was very surprised the first time he said that, and then he said it again. One's like, "Okay, Cory is going to prison, he is. This is happening. This is what's going on. Wow." And I agree, I really respect him just surrendering.

[00:04:34] **Eric Bland:** I think I respect the whole presentation today from his lawyer. How they structured it, how they scripted it, how they spoke last, he spoke from the heart, it was broken man. That wasn't an act. Couldn't have been an act, and it was



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unusual that his family didn't speak. I'd like to hear your opinion on that but, were you okay with that? You think that was a smart move, Liz? Mandy?

[00:04:59] **Mandy Matney:** I think every move that Debbie Barbier made today was flawless. I think that it was completely planned out months in advance and strategized to the max. She never once repeated a point, I never got annoyed at like...

[00:05:18] **Eric Bland:** You know what I thought was great? There was a priest there, or a minister, but he didn't speak, and I thought that was brilliant because they always had somebody from the cloth speak in a sentence. And they had nobody speak from a religious standpoint, which I thought was unique.

[00:05:38] **Liz Farrell:** Basically, it sounded like she got a representative audience of his friends and family, and none of his family spoke, actually, not even his parents. So, he had 62 letters that were submitted prior to yesterday, and then she said, she got more, yeah more, before the hearing, which is sort of daunting when you know that Russell's took—his hearing took—seven hours. So you see 62 letters and you're like, "Holy God, how long are we going to be here?" So, that's why I think I appreciate that Debbie took the main points, and each person that came in to speak—you have an audience full of people, I mean, there were lawyers in there for him. There were people from what looked like the 14th Circuit Solicitor's Office in there supporting him. You had a broad swath of people—but every single person who went up there made a point like, "He's in Bible group with me once a week. He fixed my pipes."

[00:06:37] **Eric Bland:** He, I'm a client.

[00:06:38] **Liz Farrell:** Right.

[00:06:39] **Eric Bland:** Lot of landlord-tenant stuff. A lot of land, he must be a feudal landlord down there in Beaufort. He must own a lot of properties.

[00:06:46] **Liz Farrell:** Well, there's a lot of rumors going on. There are a lot of rumors out there in Beaufort County about the YMCA and what...

[00:06:53] **Eric Bland:** What kind of rumors?



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[00:06:54] **Liz Farrell:** Group of friends, it's like, I'm not (inaudible). Interesting rumors. Interesting ones.

[00:06:59] **Eric Bland:** It's a social gathering spot.

[00:07:00] **Liz Farrell:** It's a social gathering spot, women say. Yeah, but as far as the—yeah, I want to know how many—I didn't know he owned as many rental properties as apparently he does. I don't remember ever seeing that in his dossier.

[00:07:13] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, and I don't know about y'all, but I had a couple of moments of really sitting back today and questioning basic questions of life. One of which is what makes a good person and what is a proper punishment in a situation like this? Because it is extremely complicated, and I also started to think of what's worse? Somebody who shows their face to the world who doesn't volunteer, doesn't like, is kind of an asshole to people, and then steals from clients? And then so you, people would maybe know or have signs, or blindsided people?

[00:07:56] **Eric Bland:** I felt sometimes with Cory, and some lawyers like him, what they do can be transactional. It's designed to help them look a certain way, but it benefits them professionally. Is it really genuine? And I don't want to pass judgment on him that it wasn't genuine, but I thought what Justin said really was strong when he said, "Judge, let's look at this. This is eight years worth of criminality. This isn't just one time. This is eight year's worth." And I think that righted the ship, because not to say that Judge Gergel isn't perceptive, but he was sure buying a lot of dope that they were slinging from that side of the courtroom.

[00:08:40] **Liz Farrell:** Let's talk about Judge Gergel a little bit because...

[00:08:43] **Eric Bland:** Oh, I got pistol whipped by him today.

[00:08:45] **Liz Farrell:** A little bit, you did, yeah. You started strong, though, Eric. So going into this hearing today, we found out that we would not be allowed to bring our laptops and phones, which seems like a minor—yeah, kind of.



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[00:08:59] **Eric Bland:** Not only that, they didn't set up a media room for one of the most public legal matters our state is ever going to have.

[00:09:06] **Mandy Matney:** Right, and its two weeks after a very similar case took place.

[00:09:12] **Eric Bland:** He knew that there was going to be a big showing on both sides of the aisle.

[00:09:16] **Mandy Matney:** It was all the same media. I looked around and there was the same amount. It was all the same people that we saw two weeks ago, and it was just amazing that the federal government didn't anticipate that, apparently?

[00:09:28] **Liz Farrell:** Or they did and they didn't want to encourage Cory's people to go on all day. Because you know at the beginning when—Judge Gergel said it and both Russell's and Cory's—where he was like, "I'll let anyone who wants to speak speak." So he's giving him that benefit.

[00:09:44] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, but that doesn't answer the media question. Why didn't he have a room for you guys?

[00:09:47] **Mandy Matney:** I think it's because ultimately in federal court, transparency does not matter to them. And I don't think that the federal court is the people's court. I think it's basically a secret court right now.

[00:09:59] **Liz Farrell:** I don't think, yeah, we realize...

[00:10:00] **Eric Bland:** Not unreasonable. Not an unreasonable conclusion.

[00:10:03] **Mandy Matney:** I've really thought about this in the last few weeks, especially, there's just so many things that the American people could learn from being able to see what's going on in federal court, being able to hear what's going on in federal court, being able to hear the victims statements. They've missed out on that.



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[00:10:27] **Liz Farrell:** Eric, what did you think of the 46-month sentence in comparison to Russell's 84-month sentence?

[00:10:35] **Eric Bland:** It was more than I thought he would get to be honest.

[00:10:38] **Liz Farrell:** More than Cory would get?

[00:10:39] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, I thought he would get 36 months, and I thought that would have been just given the fact that he's staring down the barrel of the state court trial coming next month. And he's either going to plead or go to trial, and those charges, you know, as Judge Gergel said, they could be 30-year charges. They're for the bank fraud and all those things, and if he did not have the backstop of the state court charges, then I would have said the sentence was low. But 46 months, knowing that he's going to get out of federal prison and then go right over to state prison, is a pretty aggressive sentencing. Judge Gergel was more short tempered today, I thought, than he was in Russell Laffitte's sentence. I don't think he was receptive to what the victims were saying today as much as he was receptive to what the victims said during Russell Laffitte's. It's like he just totally, it was perfunctory. Okay, let the victim speak and then they go sit down. It wasn't resonating with him the way when Cory's people spoke on his behalf, judge was rapt attention, was listening, taking notes, you know, told Debbie Barbier, read 62 letters twice...

[00:11:54] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, that's a little excessive.

[00:11:57] **Eric Bland:** I felt that he didn't feel like we were victims, like he saw the same people in the courtroom again, and you've already spoken once, because we were the same people that spoke. At the Laffitte trial, it was the Plyler sisters, but Eric Bland, and then, you know, the Pickneys again and Justin Bamber. And I just didn't think he had the bandwidth for us today, at least for me. He clearly stood me down.

[00:12:20] **Liz Farrell:** He didn't. I really was not surprised, I guess my opinion of Judge Gergel continues to change, and I wonder if he's reacting a little bit too public opinion of him because he did get beaten up over the length of Russell's sentence. But I think...



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[00:12:34] **Eric Bland:** But he tried to justify it by saying that he thought that the guidelines, which we all thought were low, nine to 11, based on him being convicted of crimes that would have been in excess of 30 years, he comes out on the bench today and gratuitously adds an, "Oh, by the way, I thought the probation parole got it wrong. I thought those guidelines were too large."

[00:12:54] **Liz Farrell:** Which is ridiculous because then he used the example with Cory that he's already, in essence, gotten a downward variance because he pleaded guilty to a lesser charge with obviously a much less sentence, like much fewer months sentence. What am I trying to say?

[00:13:09] **Eric Bland:** It was 46 months to 58, or something like that.

[00:13:13] **Liz Farrell:** So today, the guidelines for Cory were 46 to 67 I believe.

[00:13:18] **Eric Bland:** Right.

[00:13:19] **Liz Farrell:** The issue was that the charge that he could have pleaded guilty to would have carried up to 30 with a bankroll, with a guideline of—I think it was 51 to something else. I can't remember what the higher number was, but—his point was that the government has already cut him a break by allowing that lesser charge to be pleaded to. And he mentioned Russell Laffitte's charges with these very serious sentences attached to them. Russell was found guilty by a jury of his peers. Why then is nine to 11 years not enough for him? If it's, that's a third of what the maximum was.

[00:13:58] **Eric Bland:** Nine to 11 years for a guy that didn't cooperate, didn't plead guilty, did Russell TV, which is thumbing their nose at the court system, didn't show contrition at trial, after the trial, fired his attorneys and blamed it on his attorneys, blamed it on the judge in one of his post trial motions and said, "Judge, you screwed it up when you discharged two jurors." I mean, what more could Russell Laffitte do but spit a loogie in Richard Gergel's face to get more of a sentence? I mean, I don't know what more you could do to get that fit within the guidelines.

[00:14:32] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, and Judge Gergel talked a lot about precedent today and about how important it is to deter other lawyers from doing the same thing, and



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to make a statement with Cory's sentence about other lawyers. You could tell that he took that personally, "I'm a lawyer, and you abused your power as a lawyer, and we need to make sure other lawyers don't do this." But on the flip side of that, what about bankers? And what about people that use conservatorships to take advantage of vulnerable people in the way that Russell Laffitte did?

[00:15:09] **Eric Bland:** Right.

[00:15:09] **Mandy Matney:** Why not set a precedent for that? Like, why not put your foot down for that, too? It's like he didn't care as much about that, and that does not make any sense to me because, I mean...

[00:15:09] **Eric Bland:** It wasn't as personal to him as Cory's crime was. Cory's crime was personal to him, just like you said, because he was a lawyer and he knows that one bad act like Cory that he did could kill it for a long time. Plays into the canards are lawyers, they're thieves and they double-deal on their clients. But he didn't seem to be so troubled by Russell, because you guys remember when I argued Russell, I said, "The integrity of the banking system is at play here, our entire banking system." And I don't think it really moved him.

[00:13:19] **Liz Farrell:** No, I have a lot of critiques about Judge Gergel actually. One is that I don't like how he sort of comes off as obnoxious—because he looks, he sounds so kind, he's got such a jovial little voice, right—but then he just, he seems to like to show the prosecutor, and you and the other attorneys speaking on behalf of the victims, that he knows the facts of the case. So he will throw in, you know, an enhancement to the fact that you've just thrown out, or he'll correct you on the fact just to show that he's read it. But then he does this thing, I mean, it's so stupid, but he blinks with his eyes too much where I'm just like, it's almost like an old lady at church telling you that, you know, you did something wrong. And she's just like, you know, fluttering your eyes. He flutters his eyes. And that just irritated me today, and I'll tell you why. One, when you brought up Cory's letter to the bar, Judge Gergel shut you down as in like, "Well, that's in Georgia." Well, the last time I checked, Georgia was one of the 50 United States of America, of which he is a federal judge. That's part of your jurisdiction.



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[00:17:03] **Mandy Matney:** He wasn't listening, yeah.

[00:17:04] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, like you, it's important.

[00:17:06] **Eric Bland:** It was an under oath statement.

[00:17:08] **Liz Farrell:** Right.

[00:17:09] **Eric Bland:** That Cory made where he said he was a victim like everybody else, he was not part of a conspiracy, even though he just pled guilty today to being part of a conspiracy, and he didn't admit in there that he was stealing money. He said, "It really was my money because I lowered my fee." So I classified his expenses and said, "I did nothing wrong with my trust account." Well, he parked money in his trust account, he took money out to belong to the client and gave it to Alex Murdaugh, and I wanted to go through the whole forge thing just so that there would be a record of it, and he shut me down.

[00:17:45] **Liz Farrell:** Well, he did.

[00:17:46] **Mandy Matney:** And what was also important about that, that I was upset that Russell, I was upset that Judge Gergel shut you down, was when he said like, when he stopped you. And I mean, we were surrounded by Cory fans.

[00:18:01] **Eric Bland:** Which side of the courtroom? Which side of the courtroom?

[00:18:03] **Mandy Matney:** We were on the same side, but there's people everywhere. The woman next to me was crying as Cory was talking, it was a whole thing. And I thought that it was really important, again, if we want to talk about making a statement, and if we want to talk about really setting things straight, it was important for every person in that courtroom who was there to support Cory to really understand what he did.

[00:18:30] **Eric Bland:** Right.



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[00:18:30] **Mandy Matney:** Because I think a lot of those people were ignoring the facts that you were saying.

[00:18:35] **Eric Bland:** That bar letter, just so everybody knows, no one knows about that bar letter. That's sent to the bar, and the only reason we found out about it is because I made the complaint and they wanted my input. If this was the South Carolina one, they can, you never see it. So you have no idea what somebody's writing to the bar, some self serving stuff, by the way. Remember, Cory's holding on by his fingernails to keep his career. He didn't want to get rid of his law license when that letter was written.

[00:19:05] **Liz Farrell:** Well, just like W. Barbier said, in March 2023, he made a decision to throw himself on the mercy of the court.

[00:19:11] **Eric Bland:** Right

[00:19:11] **Liz Farrell:** What happened in March 2023?

[00:19:13] **Eric Bland:** Somebody got convicted or murder.

[00:19:16] **Mandy Matney:** Exactly.

[00:19:17] **Liz Farrell:** We were talking about this before. It's interesting to us that it's almost like he wanted to push it and see like, well, maybe Alex will get away with this. Like maybe if, and, if then, so like the domino effect of Alex gets away with murder, literally. Domino. Next Domino, okay, Alex is going to be able to talk his way out of X, Y and Z. Maybe that includes the Satterfield case. Maybe then if Alex gets away with that, then Cory didn't anything.

[00:19:45] **Eric Bland:** Remember, he's sitting on Alex's statement that said, and the apology letter from Alex to Cory, "You've done nothing wrong. I'm so sorry that I put you into this. You're my friend, I should have never done it." And then the same BS that he said at his murder trial, "Russell Laffitte did nothing wrong. He did everything perfect. I did this to him." So maybe Cory was holding out hope that, you know, he



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was going to be exonerated because he did nothing wrong, because Alex said I did nothing wrong.

[00:20:15] **Liz Farrell:** Right, that's the other thing. So, it's interesting to me because you were having these big life sort of questions happening during the hearing. I was too, but in a different way. I was thinking, going back to this idea that you want, obviously, the best defense that you can afford. Now grant you, Cory's friends with Debbie, I don't know what she's charging him. It could be \$1. I have no idea.

[00:20:36] **Eric Bland:** How do you know they're friends?

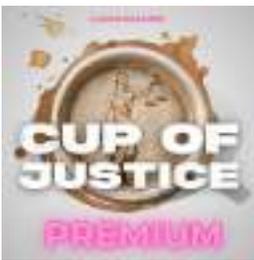
[00:20:37] **Liz Farrell:** They went to law school together. She was a KD, and he has a KA. ABC at USC. I don't know. I don't know what that all means, but I do know what it means. Anyway, she was I think, she was maybe older, maybe a little bit, maybe a year or two older, but I do know that she was a sorority sister of Maggie. That said, I think that when you look at the defense that Debbie provided in orchestrating sort of this perfect—I was joking earlier. She's like a wedding planner for the law. It was basically like cue, yes, cue this. We're going to do tiers, then that's going to disarm the victims when they come up, because now they're going to have to kick Cory in the face...

[00:21:25] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, (inaudible) turned around and said I forgive you. Yeah. Yeah, that was...

[00:21:29] **Liz Farrell:** What more can you say after that? I think we should tell people, when Cory got up there, and this is the vast difference, Russell did not come across as apologetic. He basically, it was his last ditch effort, and it was like one of those legal sorries, like, "To the extent that I can apologize..."

[00:20:36] **Eric Bland:** "Yeah, I really can't because I have other charges against me." Well, Cory had the same thing. Remember, Mark Moore said, Russell wanted to say more, but he can't because he's got these state court charges. Cory said it all. He said it was all me, I stole, I let them dance, on my shoulders.

[00:22:02] **Liz Farrell:** I make no excuses for this, to this court.



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[00:22:05] **Mandy Matney:** And that was really big of him, I will say that. And I feel like hopefully it'll make things smoother in the future and stake who I don't...

[00:22:15] **Liz Farrell:** Maybe.

[00:22:16] **Mandy Matney:** I'm really interested if he's going to plead guilty to that, like what? Because we just saw a totally different Cory today.

[00:22:22] **Eric Bland:** He's going to plead guilty, and I think they're gonna leave it up to the court. I don't think there's going to be a recommended sentence like you usually get, I think they're going to leave it up to Judge Newman and that could be risky. That could be risky.

[00:22:44] **Liz Farrell:** Well knowing, I mean, Judge Newman's sort of known for lesser sentences too, right? He's much more of a considerate...

[00:22:51] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, but he was a prosecutor for 17 years, too.

[00:22:54] **Liz Farrell:** And we should mention too, apropos of nothing, I guess, but Judge Gergel was a plaintiff's attorney.

[00:23:00] **Eric Bland:** Very much so.

[00:23:00] **Liz Farrell:** Right?

[00:23:01] **Eric Bland:** His whole entire career was medical malpractice.

[00:23:03] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, so this is sort of his guy. I just, I do want to keep going on the Judge Gergel thing because there was, there was a very tangible difference between—first of all, let me just say, the people that spoke for Cory had concrete things to say about him. They didn't just repeat that he helped at the concession stand. Every single person advanced a fact about him. Not only did he take it upon himself to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity instead of wallowing, he also went to community college to learn how to be Bob the Builder. These are all the things, like



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every single person said something that was similar, but like different—but it was something that you could, it wasn't just he's a family man. They did say that but...

[00:23:47] **Eric Bland:** Russell seems to be in disbelief that this is happening to him and that someday he's going to be a banker again. Cory recognized this is in the wind for me, as being a lawyer. I gotta be a carpenter, or I gotta start selling insurance, or whatever. He's moving on. He's a guy that says, "I'm going to start my sentence, and I got to start the rest of my life." Russell seems to be just in neutral thinking that all of this is a joke and he's going to get to become a banker again.

[00:24:16] **Mandy Matney:** Right.

[00:24:16] **Eric Bland:** Don't you get that feeling?

[00:24:17] **Mandy Matney:** Oh, totally. And again, that's what's so shocking in the difference in sentences and how Russell got away with a lot less than he deserved, in my opinion.

[00:24:30] **Eric Bland:** No question, no question.

[00:24:32] **Mandy Matney:** I just, I can't. Again, when we talk about precedent and we talk about making a statement, I'm surprised that Judge Gergel didn't come to think of like, "What about the privileged defendants out there? Do I want to send that message that you can all do exactly what Russell did and still get a very light sentence?" And that's what I don't understand.

[00:24:55] **Eric Bland:** His sentence was 12 months more than what they offered him by a plea.

[00:25:00] **Mandy Matney:** Right. And again, no remorse...

[00:25:04] **Eric Bland:** (Inaudible) he gets, he'll get down to five years.

[00:25:05] **Mandy Matney:** And if we want to correct people, if we want to really, like if the whole point of the justice system is to make people better and actually make



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them not repeat their mistakes again and make them be actually remorseful and make them better human beings, then the difference between Cory and Russell is just night. I do believe that Cory has realized that what he does, what he did, was wrong, and I'm with Judge Gergel that he will never do it again.

[00:25:35] **Eric Bland:** I believe there's a likability factor to Cory that doesn't exist in Russell. Russell is a fundamentally unlikable man.

[00:25:44] **Liz Farrell:** He is. You know who you're reminds me of is one of those like mid-2000s, sort of independent movies, where you have maybe a guy who's too old to be a grocery store cashier and an orange vest, but his dad owns the grocery store, and he's just sort of the derpy guy in town that, you know, isn't very nice to his wife. He just has that vibe to him where you just, you do not want to fight for this guy. He's had, you know, in the movie that I'm making up right now, he's having an affair with another cashier because he's using his tiny bit of power to like—that's the vibe of Russell. He's definitely that vibe for me.

[00:26:20] **Eric Bland:** I thought there were two things that were worthwhile to me today, which was worth me getting excoriated by the judge. One is, she said that he gave very good, Emily said, he gave very good information about others. The word "others" was very telling to me, and where's that gonna go? Then Judge Gergel asked the question, "Do you believe he's told you the truth?" And to hear a prosecutor who's always with (inaudible), she said he told us the absolute truth. So, "others" is what we're looking at for because we're getting tired of the Russell-Alex-Cory show. And that we don't believe, and no one believes, that it could only be them. There had to have been others. Is it other lawyers? Is it other law firms? Are there judges? Are there other business people? Are there tow truck operators? Whatever. Whose fire first responders? Are they clued into all this? You know, racket or whatever that seemed to have been going on down there in Hampton County. So the word "others" and Cory telling the truth really resonated with me today.

[00:27:30] **Liz Farrell:** Well, you know, going back to what you said, Mandy, I think that I do believe that Cory's emotions today were genuine, and he was the exact opposite. He was very quiet, soft spoken, just the picture of contrition. But regardless of whether it's genuine or not, I do think that he is the smartest one of all these guys.



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And people said that about him from the beginning that Cory is the guy who actually did study in law school, and I think we said that on *Murdaugh Murders* podcast, that you take Alex, because they do look similar, you take Alex and you give him a lot of vegetables and put him on a treadmill, that's Cory Fleming. It's almost like you know good-brother bad-brother in a way.

[00:28:12] **Mandy Matney:** Well, and that was something else that I was thinking as we were sitting there listening to person after person, a single mother say, "Cory helped me at my worst moment and..."

[00:28:24] **Eric Bland:** You've never heard that about Alex. So you're telling me they're brothers, correct? Cory lived a life so different than what Alex lives. There's never been a good story, guys. And you would have written a story about it.

[00:28:37] **Mandy Matney:** What I was thinking about is how did they, is how persuasive and evil is Alex, if he took a guy like Cory, who was a good person, and Liz and I were just talking about this before you got here...

[00:28:53] **Eric Bland:** Moved him like a pawn.

[00:28:54] **Mandy Matney:** Right, and do this for years. He had to go to bed for nine years knowing what he did to the Pinckney family, and then repeating it again to the Satterfield family.

[00:29:03] **Eric Bland:** But you assume that nothing else was done in that bookend of nine years. I believe that more was done.

[00:29:14] **Mandy Matney:** Absolutely, yeah.

[00:29:15] **Eric Bland:** You don't just do it in 2010, and then it's done, and then wake up in 2018 and say, "Let's start it all over again." I think it was a way of, this was a way of practicing law.

[00:29:27] **Liz Farrell:** It's just, again and again you're reminded that that boat crash in 2019 was everything. They were in the middle of the biggest heist of their lives, really



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truly. And this completely screwed it up. Rereading that bar letter, you see these moments, like it's not just that Cory swears under oath that he didn't do these things. I started to number in the margins every time he says that he isn't to blame and here's why. And I'm only like 20...

[00:29:58] **Eric Bland:** I tried to read that today Liz, and I was shutdown. Okay?

[00:30:01] **Liz Farrell:** I know you did. Well, not mine. You didn't try to read mine.

[00:30:04] **Eric Bland:** Well, yeah, I did, because you had given me the notes on that.

[00:30:06] **Liz Farrell:** I did? Oh, God. I sent you the first version. The second version has numbers in the margin, and then those numbers counts. I'm up to 50 and I'm only on page 23.

[00:30:17] **Eric Bland:** Technical violation. Maybe it was a slight violation, but it didn't rise to the level of negligence.

[00:30:25] **Liz Farrell:** I did this, I didn't do this in Georgia, was one of his defenses. So like, but you just go through and you're realizing that he didn't do, even it's so simple as making a phone call to Chad Westendorf to just let him know about the money and stuff like that. So you just like, it kind of hit home to me even more now. I think it's easy for us to lose sight of—and this is why it was important what you did—it's easy for us to lose sight hearing all these great things about Cory. Which by the way, did you guys notice it was like a laundry list of people? So, they talked about his housekeeper? She was one of the letters. One of them was a bailiff. State trooper. I put a big star next to that one, because a plaintiff's attorneys relationship with some of our state troopers here is dodgy. I'm just going to say that and put that on the record, that there are state troopers who have been complicit in helping plaintiff's attorneys, whether that's helping them change the story of who was at fault in the crash, or...

[00:31:26] **Eric Bland:** Or getting another case.



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[00:31:27] **Liz Farrell:** Exactly, getting them a case and getting a kickback for that. And I'd love to see the State Highway Patrol deny that, because good luck with that. What bothered me was that the state trooper, court employees, he—going back to what you said about transactional...

[00:31:45] **Eric Bland:** Played the system.

[00:31:46] **Liz Farrell:** Exactly. So yes, I believe that he is contrite right now and I believe everything that happened today was genuine, but at the same time, he and Debbie pulled off—I don't want to say heist, I don't want to say that—it was, their intelligence got rewarded today. That's what I'll say. He was very smart about everything that he did, including not having even the children speak today. That was a kindness, that was selfless, that was, you know, what you see as, "Wow, that's weird. The man's family didn't speak on his behalf," Mandy and I saw as a genuine kindness to your family not to humiliate them further and put them in this emotional and fear, stressful...

[00:32:30] **Eric Bland:** You're thinking like it is normal people. I'm trying to look at it as a lawyer.

[00:32:33] **Liz Farrell:** We're thinking of it like Debbie Barbier, because we're ladies and we get, we get it.

[00:32:37] **Mandy Matney:** I want to talk a lot more about that, but gotta take a quick break and we will be right back.

[00:32:53] **Mandy Matney:** I think the term that I would like to describe Debbie's performance today would be emotionally intelligent. It was extremely emotionally intelligent. From the beginning to the end, she thought everything through. And Liz and I were talking about today, which you thought differently, but Cory's family was all there and a decision was made at some point to not have any of them speak.

[00:33:25] **Eric Bland:** Not to humiliate them further.



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[00:33:27] **Mandy Matney:** Right, and he has kids, and he has kids around Russell's kids' age, and yeah, I really thought about that. I kind of thought it was weird at first, but then we were talking about it and it just kind of hit like that, that is a selfless act. And to not wrap your kids up, and to not force your kids to say something on the record about your criminal activity, like that was a really disgusting part about Russell's entire hearing and it still bothers me today. Which is, again, if we really want to make change, systemic change from all this, and if we really want to grow as better people who do not allow this type of corruption in our society, we need to teach children that what Russell did was not okay. He was not teaching his children to do that. Moreso, he was teaching his children that he was the victim and...

[00:34:29] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, Cory stood up and took the medicine. You've said it, exactly like he said, "This is on me, the buck stops with me. I gotta sing it, I gotta bring it in and I gotta go walk to prison on my own."

[00:34:41] **Liz Farrell:** And Debbie almost had a literary—I hate to fangirl so much here but like—there's almost like a literary aspect to this because she was foreshadowing, you know, that the letters to the judge, that the people that spoke today, got to speak about the deep shame that that Cory felt. So by the time Cory spoke, you understood him to be somebody that was already deeply conflicted about who he, you know, who was faced with, and had a reckoning with himself. So that, it all just came together so perfectly.

[00:35:15] **Eric Bland:** Well do you, are you saying that Cory, in a way, is happy this happened? That he's broke the yoke, got freedom away from Alex and this lifestyle? That maybe he didn't want to continue on with this lifestyle and this was an opportunity for him to break, to get this clean break that he couldn't get because he was stuck in Alex's vortex for seven years?

[00:35:37] **Liz Farrell:** I had a question about Russell, because I was reminded in that bar letter that Russell didn't, Russell turned down the Satterfield case and gave it to Chad Westendorf. So, who believes that Russell was too busy to take that? Not me. Absolutely not. What was he doing at the bank except greeting people? So I...

[00:36:00] **Eric Bland:** He had enough of the Alex show.



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[00:36:01] **Liz Farrell:** I think he had had enough of the Alex show and he's probably so angry that this has come back to haunt him. Whereas Cory has said, Cory's just faced reality regardless, and he's said to himself, "I've got to cut bait and cut my losses." And you know, whether or not he truly feels that shame, I really truly hope that he did tell the government the things that he knows because he is known Alex—we know things that he's done with Alex from college onward—let's hope he, you know, put that on the table for the government.

[00:36:32] **Eric Bland:** But it wasn't enough that they were willing to give him a downward departure. She said he got an accommodation but we're not, I don't, he didn't give us enough that he should go, that you should give him below the bottom end of the scale.

[00:36:48] **Liz Farrell:** Mandy, did you feel like Judge Gergel was sort of arguing with Emily Lime—I almost called her Limestone—Limehouse today, when she's trying to say the government recommends 46 months, and he kind of like got on her about the fact that they did allow him to plead to that lesser charge? And it took on a really weird dynamic, because it was almost like she was the defense attorney being like, "Well, no. This this is okay, because..."

[00:37:14] **Eric Bland:** It felt like that he treated Debbie like she was a prosecutor and treated family, and to me, like we're the defense attorneys coming in with a criminal.

[00:37:22] **Mandy Matney:** Right. He acted like the defense attorneys judge, not the state's judge, and that was really weird. And something I also have to say on the record that was just appalling to me is—again, somebody who just wants change out of this, and just wants people to have a reckoning, and just wants to take a look at it and say he messed up. How do we get better, and how do we move on from the mess, how do we not hurt people in the future from doing this—is at the beginning when Judge Gergel really chuckled about how many people were there to support Cory and he said, "Is there anybody left in Beaufort today?" And it's like, that shouldn't be funny. This is an attorney in Beaufort, who used to be well respected. And what does it mean about Beaufort if they filled the courtroom of supporters of him?



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[00:38:11] **Liz Farrell:** Sorry, these were all wealthy people. Yes, these are, we're talking about people—I don't know if you noticed this—but Beaufort Academy is the private school in Beaufort where Cory sent his kids, at least one of his kids. I can't remember if he sent his son there, but a lot of those people were Beaufort Academy parents and there was one teacher from Beaufort Academy. So we're not talking about, when Judge Gergel makes that “haha” joke about, “Is all of Beaufort here,” I assure you Beaufort looks different demographically than what you just saw. It is not that, what you saw was a tailgating party. =

[00:38:44] **Mandy Matney:** High society Beaufort. Old-school Beaufort of people who are born-and-raised and their grandparents are from Beaufort.

[00:38:51] **Liz Farrell:** And he's “Mr. Civil Rights,” by the way. Judge Gergel wrote the book, I mean, he is a judge who thinks about these things.

[00:38:59] **Eric Bland:** Oh yeah, he's a historian, and he writes books.

[00:39:00] **Liz Farrell:** Incredibly smart in that regard. So for him to just make, it just shows you how ingrained this sort of like—I don't want to put Cory on this level of redemption because I kept thinking to myself, would these people in this room give the same grace to somebody of color or, you know, a poor defendant who comes in and there was nobody in the courtroom for them, because they don't know that they can get this many letters...

[00:39:25] **Eric Bland:** You heard what I said, you know, it's much easier if the person in front of us is a criminal that we want to hate. It's easier if we dislike that person and they don't look like us, they don't talk like us, they're dangerous. It's easy to hate him. But here you have this guy in front of you that is likable, but you have to look past him and start looking at the crime that he committed. It's about the crime, it's not about the person. Although, Gergel made it about the person.

[00:39:54] **Mandy Matney:** And you consider the need of the crime, which I think about a lot, which is like, a lot of robberies are committed because people are in dire straits and they have no options to feed their children, to pay their bills.



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[00:40:06] **Eric Bland:** Cory didn't have any money.

[00:40:07] **Mandy Matney:** Right, and that's, that was another thing that as I was starting to feel bad for Cory and his family today, I kind of had to take a step back and be like, but he did this when he was so privileged and he had everything in the world going for him. And he still stole from these people, and he still enabled a monster, and he could have stood up to him and stopped it, and he didn't.

[00:40:28] **Liz Farrell:** I guarantee that there are people in the room today who look at Pamela Pinckney, and the Satterfield boys, and Ginger Hadwin as undeserving of the large settlements that they got. And I don't mean undeserving as in inherently they don't deserve it as people but like, "Well, that was a lot of money for them." I can see them justifying to some degree. Yeah, "They never would have seen that amount of money in any other way." Just because we've heard that ourselves over and over from people just like, right up until today honestly with people who are friends with Cory being like, "Well, you know, that was a crazy settlement for the Satterfields." What does that have to do with anything? Nothing. Congratulations. Remember at the beginning with Cory when they all said like, "You got to give them credit for getting that big settlement"?

[00:41:20] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, that's what, he said it in the letter to Georgia. If you read about that...

[00:41:23] **Liz Farrell:** At the same time, though, he's like, "I did nothing. Alex was the attorney really." So which is it buddy? Which is it?

[00:41:31] **Mandy Matney:** Right, and it just, again, it makes me really mad when it comes—when people say that about the Pinckneys and the Satterfields of like, "Oh, that was a big," they also don't understand that with people that aren't born into wealth, money goes a lot quicker, and it's a lot harder to, and that money also goes a lot further because they appreciate it more. And it's none of our business how much money they get. What they've been through, there's no, there is no dollar sign—I don't understand why people always, and again, like why do people look at the Pinckneys and think that they don't deserve that much money? And then, no offense, Eric, but lots of lawyers make millions of dollars and I'm not really sure what they do to



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deserve that sometimes. Especially in this case. So, I just think it's wrong, and again, I mean, this was another thing that I was realizing today that I think we need to come to reckoning with is this old-self mentality—I've been really doing some deep thinking recently. This is my head exploding—but I think that there's a basic human core that you understand basic right and wrong and not to hurt other people, and that slavery is an awful, awful thing. But I do think that an evil person, who has a completely skewed view of right and wrong or whatever, people like Alex Murdaugh, they have the ability to get everybody on board, and that's scary to me. That was a thing, not that this is the same thing as slavery or anything, but people that support Cory and people that continue to support Cory

[00:43:18] **Eric Bland:** They have a way of looking away from the wreck.

[00:43:21] **Mandy Matney:** Right, and not standing up to right, not standing up for right and wrong.

[00:43:25] **Eric Bland:** That's why I tried to get into that today—the details, the granular details—because you can't, you have to be educated. You have to, to have an opinion, you have to be educated with the right facts. And they're only armed with Cory's facts, whatever he wanted to dole out to them. Look, you know, it was Alex. You know that he told everybody he was duped by Alex. Today, when he came forward and said this is on me, that has not been his trope for the last two years, okay? It's a *Johnny Come Lately* trope.

[00:43:56] **Mandy Matney:** I really wanted somebody to say that, and I knew you were going to say that, but that was the one point that did not come across today in court, which was, he had a really long time to fess up and to tell the government what happened. And how much work did you have to do to uncover the whole thing? How much...

[00:44:16] **Eric Bland:** Remember, he didn't call the Satterfields. On September 3rd, he knew that Alex stole the money. He found out, and he even admits it. He never called the Satterfields to say, "I was your lawyer. I need to tell you, your money was stolen." He didn't call Mrs. Pinckney and say, "By the way, Alex stole your money 10 years ago." He never came forward.



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[00:44:38] **Liz Farrell:** Alex stole your money. It's like, I held the door open for him. Take the money. Right, yeah.

[00:44:46] **Mandy Matney:** It's like, I have a hard time accepting remorse when it is forced to that point.

[00:44:53] **Eric Bland:** That's what Justin was saying today, and Judge Gergel didn't have it, wouldn't have anything of it.

[00:44:58] **Liz Farrell:** He tried, but I like that Justin came back at him, because the coyote, the coyote is like, "If you're not gonna hear it this way, I'll tell you a different story"

[00:45:06] **Mandy Matney:** In country terms.

[00:45:07] **Eric Bland:** Coyote barks and barks until he realizes I need your help to get out of the trap.

[00:45:11] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, a coyote caught in a trap will bite you. But when it realizes it needs your help, that's when it will start to be nice.

[00:45:20] **Mandy Matney:** Right, because I was sitting there thinking, you know, what if the boat crash never happened? What if this? What if that?

[00:45:27] **Eric Bland:** If the boat crash never happened and there wasn't Mandy Matney who found the Satterfield article—you wouldn't have found the Satterfield article, but for the boat crash—but with neither one, they'd still be doing this. Alex would have found another (inaudible). If Cory had said enough, and Russell had said enough, he was already grooming Chad Westendorf. If Chad had said enough, he'd groom somebody else. It would have continued.

[00:45:52] **Liz Farrell:** Right. So going back to slavery just for a second here, so in order to be able to enslave people, people that you're going to own as human beings, you can't look at them as human beings. You have to look at them as livestock, as



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animals that are bought and sold on the steps of the custom house, right? They did the same thing here. Because in order to steal from these people, they had to look at them as instruments of that economy.

[00:46:18] **Eric Bland:** Right, not as people.

[00:46:19] **Liz Farrell:** They're not as people, and that was why he was able to. So you can hear, "Oh, he did these nice things for these single moms"--by the way, is there a single moms club in Beaufort that Cory went to their monthly meetings or something? It just seemed like a lot of single moms that he was getting help from--but he gets, he's helping these people, and I legitimately think he was. Because it goes back to what you're saying, it was transactional. Yeah.

[00:46:39] **Eric Bland:** I'm not saying it was. It's a question in my mind that I have.

[00:46:43] **Liz Farrell:** Regardless, and I do appreciate that. And again, going back to the mastery of Debbie Barbier, she's like, "I asked Cory to read these letters, and he didn't want to because it would be too painful. He didn't even tell me about these good acts that he did." She put every, she is literally like you could have a table full of swords lifting one up at a time and she's like, "No, not that sword. Not that sword either." She just completely disarmed every single little thing that could come his way to the point where she had Gergel, I think to a certain extent, mesmerized by it.

[00:47:14] **Eric Bland:** Not one objection from her today on the pre-sentence report. Not one objection on what anybody said in the courtroom. Not a smartass remark coming back, and then not even a response. Usually you get a reply, you know, the one side speaks then the other side speaks and then they come back to you and she says, "I got nothing to say."

[00:47:34] **Liz Farrell:** I just don't understand how she's friends with Mark Moore because it's like Princess Die being friends with Ronald McDonald. It doesn't...

[00:47:40] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, it's an unlikely match.



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[00:7:42] **Mandy Matney:** Well, and I have to say again, two women attorneys. I think that that's why things got done in a very efficient manner today.

[00:47:51] **Eric Bland:** You saw the best of the best of Emily Limehouse and called her "Emily Powerhouse," and Debbie Barbier, I told you, is a really great lawyer.

[00:48:01] **Mandy Matney:** It's like there was a perfect outline of today's hearing...

[00:48:04] **Eric Bland:** (Inaudible) Dick and Jim.

[00:48:05] **Mandy Matney:** Oh, or, yeah.

[00:48:09] **Eric Bland:** No seriously, and what you saw, the way they present themselves, how they present themselves to a judge, look how combative Dick Harpootlian is compared to how Debbie approaches it.

[00:48:20] **Mandy Matney:** And like, I have ADHD—no surprise to anybody—but I get very antsy and I get high anxiety when I'm in situations or sitting in court when the same things are repeated over and over. And lawyers just are talking for the sake of talking and I get really annoyed. That was the fastest two hours of my entire—it was fast, but so incredibly intense and so compact, and I was like I appreciate this. They're appreciating everybody's time and...

[00:48:51] **Liz Farrell:** It was like we'd left a movie, it was like leaving a movie theater. I was like, "Wait, what?"

[00:48:55] **Eric Bland:** Remember the murder trial. How many times did you hear Dick Harpootlian say, "Look, I'm sorry. It's my fault. Don't take it out on Alex. If I said something to offend you, I'm sorry." How many times did you hear Mark Moore during the sentencing of Russell Laffitte say, "Judge, it's my fault. Don't take this out on my client. You know, this is on me." Debbie never had to say that because she never said anything wrong.



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[00:49:17] **Mandy Matney:** Right, and maybe you don't say those things. Maybe you're representing your clients no matter what and you shouldn't be saying things that are embarrassing to them.

[00:49:34] **Liz Farrell:** I want to go back to what Gergel said though, because it bothered us in Russell's hearing when he said that—we were talking about deterrence for white collar criminals—he sort of, it sounded like he was saying that these sentences that I impose are deterrence for white collar criminals. That if they knew they could get in trouble for these things they wouldn't do it again, which we heard as hot nonsense during Russell's trial. We were like, “What’s wrong with Judge Gergel? Why would he say something like that?” But I read it differently today when he said it. It was, he said the same thing, basically, but what I noticed is he is the word “no.” If they knew they would be getting in trouble for it, if they knew. And it made me think about the ODC, it made me think about just the state, I guess, judicial system as well, if these men knew that they would get in trouble for this, they might not do it. And what I mean by that is that they haven't gotten in trouble for doing this stuff. People have looked the other way. They have minimized what they've done and they continue to do that today. I mean, even I think those people in the room have given themselves cognitive dissonance in terms of like, Cory is this person, not this other person. If they knew they could get in trouble, so it's up to Judge Gergel and Judge Newman, and all the other judges that might enter into this equation to show that white collar criminals are no—it's not okay just because it looks classier when you do it.

[00:50:55] **Mandy Matney:** But also, but that's another thing that keeps hitting me again, is these men who are dealing with absurd amounts of money. Money that it takes people in their entire families and entire lifetime to even think about coming near the number. It is so much money and they, the way that they handled it was just so cavalier. Cavalier and disrespectful man, like the way that they were like, “Oh, that was wrong.” Again, I just get really annoyed when these attorneys act like these massive amounts of money are just chump change, and no matter how much money I make throughout my entire life, my parents will be like \$20 is \$20 and you better appreciate that.



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[00:51:39] **Eric Bland:** You know what my mother says to me, "Are you saving your money?"

[00:51:42] **Mandy Matney:** But it's also just good as a constant reminder of like...

[00:51:46] **Eric Bland:** To be grounded.

[00:51:47] **Mandy Matney:** To be grounded and to just know that \$20 is a lot of money to a lot of people. \$100 is a lot of money to a lot of people. And I hated that attitude of just like, "Oh, there's just 100,000 there and dadada." Again, this was just a heat, this was a massive heist that would have been...

[00:52:05] **Eric Bland:** That's the best word I've heard you guys there all day. It's a heist. It was a heist. These clients were marks, end of story. But what are they doing on these financial crime cases? Why are they in so deep Mandy?

[00:52:17] **Mandy Matney:** I hope that the federal government is still digging into that. I hope that, there is just a fraction of what I believe is a network of crimes I feel like that have been uncovered and all of this, but we still don't know where all this money went. Hopefully investigators will step up. Hopefully prosecutors will get to the bottom of what happened to the money, because as journalists we've all tried, and there's only so much that we can do.

[00:52:50] **Mandy Matney:** We have a lot of just outrageous things that have happened recently across the country that have really concerned all of us as big advocates for the First Amendment, specifically what happened in Marion, Kansas last week with the raid of the Marion Record Newspaper. But unfortunately, we don't have any time to talk about that. We're already very late on this, so we have a lot coming up. So stay tuned and stay pecky, and we'll see you guys next week. Cups down everybody.

[00:53:24] **Eric Bland:** Cups down.

[00:53:25] **Liz Farrell:** Cups down.



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[00:53:26] **Mandy Matney:** Cups down.

[00:53:28] **Mandy Matney:** This *Cup of Justice* episode is created and hosted by me, Mandy Matney, with co-host Liz Farrell, our executive editor, and Eric Bland, Attorney at Law, aka “the jackhammer of justice.”

[00:53:41] **Eric Bland:** From LUNASHARK Productions.

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