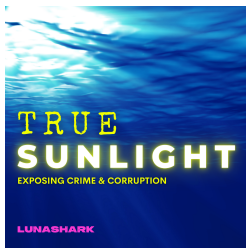


## EPISODE 15: Sunshine on “A Mountain Mystery” - What Happened to April Jones? Part One

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**Liz Farrell** 0:00

I don't know how many more times we're all going to have to suffer through Dick and Jim's theatrics and lies as they continue to trample over everything and everyone in their way, all in the name of overturning Alex Murdaugh's well deserved murder conviction. But I do know that we are not going to let their nonsense get in the way of us doing something new this week by featuring one of our amazing contributors, Eric Alan Daume, but we'll get to that in a second. Hello, everyone. As you can tell, this is Liz. If you listen to this week's Cup of Justice episode, you know that Mandy and David are in Italy so Eric Allen's episode allows them to enjoy some much deserved time away and it gives me a little much appreciated downtime as well. But first, we have to talk about the latest in the Murdaugh case. In a new motion filed Tuesday with the South Carolina Court of Appeals, Alex Murdaugh's attorneys, Jim Griffin and Dick Harpootlian, are now claiming they have proof of jury tampering. Griffin and Harpootlian are asking the appellate court to suspend their appeal so they can file a motion in circuit court for a new trial based on quote unquote, "after discovered evidence", which includes affidavits from two jurors, one of whom was dismissed for allegedly speaking out about the case during the trial. In a stunning move, Alec Murdaugh and his legal team are now pointing the finger at celebrated Colleton County Clerk of Court Becky Hill and asking for the US Attorney's Office to open an investigation into her actions during the trial. They are accusing Becky of trying to sway the outcome of the verdict in the pursuit of fame and money. They cite her new book, *Behind the Doors of Justice*, as evidence that she was looking to cash in on the trial, and they cite passages from the book as evidence that she was advocating for Alex to be found guilty. The South Carolina Attorney General's office said Tuesday that they are looking into these very serious allegations. They have 10 days to respond to Dick and Jim's motion. In our next episode of Cup of Justice, will talk more about this motion and about how all hell has basically broken loose as a result of it. For now, though, we want to do something a little different as Luna Shark Media expands its horizons. One of our goals all along has been to partner with independent journalists who believe in our mission of giving voice to victims and Eric Alan Daume has



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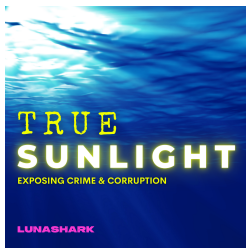
done just that. Eric Alan has been working with the Luna Shark team as our videographer for quite some time. You've seen him in the trial chats and on camera. He covered the Murdaugh trial and has covered other cases as well on his YouTube channel, which you can find the link to in our episode description. You might recognize some of his footage, which we use to make our own video versions of these episodes. Eric is an incredibly talented documentarian and we are proud to partner with him by sharing his talents with all of you, our amazing audience. This is a first in a series of video episodes that Eric Alan is publishing on his channel and has adapted for audio. There are so many similarities between this mountain mystery which we're about to share with you, the Murdaugh saga, and the Solomon case. They are all cases that need a whole lot more sunlight on them. Eric Alan has done some really great work here. So we want to thank him for allowing us to share it with you. And we want to thank you, our listeners, for helping us expand our mission. Mandy and I will be back next week. Until then, stay tuned, stay pesky and stay in the sunlight.

### **Hannah** 3:58

The marks on her and everything like she'd been drug. Autopsy said looked like she, she had rope burns on her wrists, her ankles, her neck. And they said like she had been tied in the downward doggy position for two hours. Did a rape kit came back clean, whatever. She had no panties, has no bra on, whatever. None of it made sense, so I think you know, she struggled to try and try and get away from whoever it was.

### **Eric Alan** 4:31

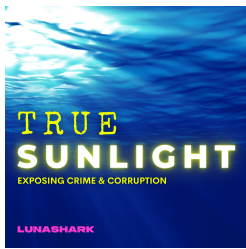
There's a small town on the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in South Carolina called Walhalla. In this town, there's a community of people with a problem. In the past few years there have been multiple deaths and disappearances in this group. I decided to try to get to the bottom of them. I was initially looking into two mysterious deaths and three disappearances. It was overwhelming. I spoke with the family of the victims, the investigators on the case and suspects. As I dove deeper, even more deaths and another



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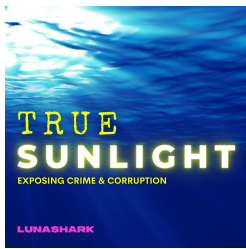
disappearance in this circle of people caught my attention. I had to pause and step back. I'm likely going to be doing two seasons to cover these, but for this first season, I'm going to cover two deaths and one disappearance. In January of 2019, 37 year old April Jones was found in a workshop on her property with bruises and scrapes covering her body. Her death was initially ruled a result of an accidental overdose and hypothermia. Though evidence has since come to light that shows that might not be the case. A hot shot is a shot of drugs concocted to intentionally cause someone to overdose and if you're looking to kill someone known to do drugs, this is the perfect way to do it. One week after April was found, 26 year old Faith Roach disappears. She was last seen about a mile from where April was found at a home April was at two days before her death. Faith Roach is missing to this day. Three months after Faith's disappearance. 32 year old Kevin Craig is found on a hot summer day dead. He was barricaded from the inside of a room in his trailer. There were syringes found next to him but no drugs found in his system. His death was ruled as a result of heat exposure and seizures. Similar to April's death, information has been brought to light that could change this and the sheriff's office even wrote up warrants to charge someone with Kevin Craig's murder. Investigators believe his death is related to Faith Roach's disappearance. So to recap, we'll be covering three cases, the death of April Jones, the disappearance of Faith Roach and the death of Kevin Craig. Before we dive into the details, let's lay some groundwork. Oconee County, South Carolina where Walhalla is located is in the northwestern part of the state bordering Georgia and North Carolina. The county from the south end to the north end is a gradient of foothills up to the Blue Ridge Mountains. The west border of the county runs along the Chattooga River with North Georgia on the other side. The east border runs along a series of connected lakes. The word oconee actually stems from a Cherokee word meaning "land beside the water." It's a truly beautiful area. My first trip to the area to film was as the weather was cooling down and the leaves were changing colors. Driving through the winding mountain roads lined with trees of vibrant greens, yellows and reds felt like an oddly calm contrast to the reason for me being there in the first place, to get to the bottom of these tragic mysteries. By the way, my name is



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Eric Alan. I've been in this area before. I live about four hours away on the coast in Beaufort, South Carolina. If you follow true crime, you'll know that's the area that the Murdaugh saga has been unfolding in and that's actually how I got my start in true crime. I was working in real estate photography and videography when the Murdaugh story began to unfold in my town. As a side project, I decided to make a short documentary on the first part of the story. Well, that video is currently sitting at over a million and a half views on YouTube. And as I continue to make these documentaries, people continue to watch them. But that's another story, back to Oconee County, South Carolina. Like I said, I've been in the area before. It's a great place to get away and camp. I've taken my dogs up there or gone up with friends and explored hiking trails, scenic mountain overlooks and the abundant river streams and waterfalls. I've even whitewater rafted that Chattooga River, which is the western border of Oconee County. Walhalla, South Carolina is a small town on the foothills. It calls itself the gateway to the Blue Ridge Mountains. Many of the people I spoke with in the area had lived there their whole lives and many of them, their families did as well for generations before them. And that was the case for 58 year old Andy Jones, the husband of April Jones. He grew up in Walhalla and later built his home on the same road he grew up on. I remember pulling into his gravel driveway. Going past the workshop that April was found in and making my way through the wooded area up the hill to a dark wooden home with a full length front porch. There was a front porch swing on the left side next to a few rocking chairs, where I would later sit down and speak with April's daughter Hannah. This house was different from many of the trailers that lined that same road. It wasn't fancy or anything but it was a cozy, well built wooden home that like I said I would later find out Andy built himself. The road that this home is on has some sketchier areas to it. One of the disappearances I'll be covering next season, a man named Josh, was last seen less than a quarter mile down the road. There's also a death I'm covering next season where the man was beaten with a bat before he was left inside his trailer that was subsequently lit on fire, burning to the ground with him inside. Again this occurred within about half a mile of April's home. As I hopped out of the car, I was a little nervous. Not that I felt in



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danger at Andy's or anything like that, just nervous about doing something new. It wasn't long ago, I was just taking pictures and making videos of homes for sale on Hilton Head Island. I'm not a seasoned investigative journalist, and as I opened my car door to get out, I found myself thinking, "how in the world did I get here, pulling up to a home to investigate a potential murder? I ended up speaking with Andy a bit as well as April's daughter, Hannah, and on multiple occasions April's mother, Debbie. April Jones was found lying in the back corner of the workshop on her and her husband's property. The workshop is located about 100 yards from the house down a hill and through some trees. You pass it as you go up the driveway from the road to the house. April had been on a multi day drug bender and the official ruling of April's death was overdose and hypothermia. The report says she had bruises consistent with a fall, but I've seen the crime scene photos. She was covered in bruises and wounds and markings on her wrist and neck make it look as if she may have even been tied up. Not trying to be too graphic, but I want you to understand the extent of bruises and marks on April. It does look like she took a fall but potentially tumbled down the side of a mountain. A larger percentage of her skin is discolored from wounds than not. Here's me looking at a few photos with April's family.

**Debbie** 11:35

I walked in and I looked at him and I said "that's not my kid." When you look at them, you'll know why. You tell me. Look at these. This was around her neck, okay. That was her feet. Look at this.

**Hannah** 11:54

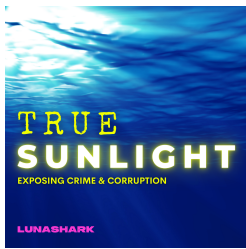
This is supposed to be consistent with a fall,

**Debbie** 11:57

This is her hands. She fell.

**Hannah** 11:59

She fell. I mean, what's she fall of, a cliff? I mean, really? Seriously?



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**Unknown Speaker** 12:06

It was dark, I don't know if you can still see it?

**Eric Alan** 12:09

Yeah. Yeah. It's like there's it's more discolored bruising than . . .

**Debbie** 12:09

Look at her face.

**Unknown Speaker** 12:15

That does not look . . .

**Debbie** 12:17

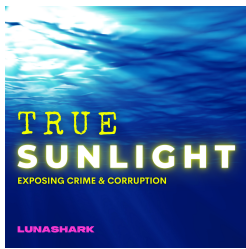
That's not my child.

**Eric Alan** 12:20

Her family does not believe she died from an overdose and hypothermia. We'll get into the details of her death later. But first, let's get to know April Jones. April Jones had grown up in Walhalla. She was 37 years old when she died and left behind her husband, three kids and numerous friends and loved ones. Here's her mother.

**Debbie** 12:40

April with my oldest daughter. She was rambunctious to say the least. Man, you know, she came into this world screaming and probably went out screaming, if I know her. She was a good kid. She had her problems. She got involved with the drugs. I don't deny that. The drugs took a hold of her. She would do great for a while and then it was just like, you know, back into it. You know, you can't blame the people around her. People try to do that. But you're not going to do what you don't want to do. She was the type of person, that child, she thought she could save everybody. It didn't matter if somebody



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come to her and they needed to place the stay, they were there. She tried to save everybody but herself. That's just the person she was.

**Eric Alan** 13:31

She had, she had a heart for others.

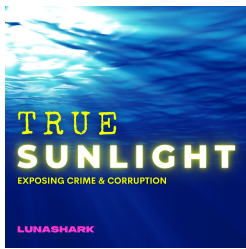
**Debbie** 13:32

Yes, she wanted to save everybody.

**Eric Alan** 13:44

April struggled on and off for years with drugs. As we dive deeper into these cases, you'll see that drugs play a huge part in this story. I also spoke with April's daughter Hannah. She's 20 years old but has lived more life than most. I had been in the area for a few days and had spoken with people I haven't yet introduced in this podcast by the time I spoke with Hannah. I had seen and heard time and time again about drugs destroying lives. As I spoke with Hannah, I wrestled with the idea of how unfair life is. I'm a big supporter of taking personal responsibility. Oftentimes, it's not your fault you're in a certain situation, but I believe it's always your responsibility to deal with it and handle it well. That said I couldn't help but wonder if I'd grown up in the same shoes as some of these people, if I'd be in the same place that they are now, addicted to drugs and always looking for the next high. It seems so hopeless for many of them who had been in the trenches of drug addiction for decades. But Hannah was different. She was only 20 years old. She didn't look at all the part of a seasoned drug addict like many of the people I had been in contact with. But knowing the area that she was in and the type of people she was likely spending time with, I knew the game was rigged against her in a way it wasn't for myself at her age. I feel it would have been inappropriate and maybe judgmental, but I wanted to tell her to just get out of Walhalla, leave this circle of druggies and started life somewhere else before it was too late. But I digress. Here's Hannah,

**Hannah** 15:24



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My mama, that woman I'm telling you right now, she was the she was the lot of this entire town. Like she, anybody that needed help, didn't have food, anything. She'd take canned foods to him, like, you know, she was she was on both sides of the town, you know, like she, she had that reputation of, you know, doing drugs or whatever. But then she also had, she had the other side where it was like, she was a damn good person. Everybody loved her. Every person, she came around like that smile ear to ear. She just had that, like you walked in the room. And it's like, you know, she brought, she brought sunshine with her. Everything was getting normal really sort of felt like, then everything just kind of got stripped away again. As soon as I started actually getting a relationship with my mom, for the first time in 14 years (unintelligible) take her away from me.

**Eric Alan** 16:21

April spent years in and out of jail before going to prison for two and a half years. When she got out she started getting her life back together. When I spoke with April's mother, April's best friend had tagged along as well.

**JJ** 16:33

Matter of fact, we went to the potter's house and she called me and she was crying. She's like, "JJ, I'm getting baptized Sunday, will you go to church with me?" I said I will be there with bells on. Seeing her take that step in life I was so, so happy for her. Because I've watched her over so much.

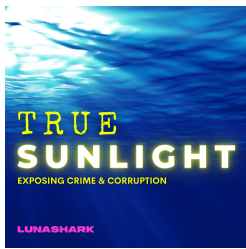
**Eric Alan** 16:54

But the drugs would end up getting ahold of her again. And drugs did change April in a massive way.

**Debbie** 17:01

They did change her, okay. They changed her into a, when she would come around me I would know right than. I mean she would be high strung and everything. I mean just wide open. Yeah, wide open. She was very a good person. No doubt, but drugs are the devil.





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**Eric Alan** 17:23

Sometimes you lose yourself and there's a lot of times, drugs that is who you are. There's a difference like I said, you know drugs that creates this alter ego of, it's kind of like a figment of the messed up, you know, it takes the ugly side of you. You know, every piece and every insecurity and it puts it all on one and it shows itself.

**Eric Alan** 17:43

And it like amplifying . . .

**Hannah** 17:44

It amplifies everywhere.

**Eric Alan** 17:45

Interesting.

**Hannah** 17:46

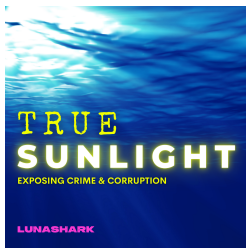
And like serious drugs I would say the least you know it was just so lifestyle. Yeah, it's it is a lifestyle. It becomes, it becomes something that is your understanding. You wake up the devil in you really that's all it is.

**Eric Alan** 18:04

A few days before her death, April gotten huge argument with her family. Her kids were staying at April's mother's house, but April was over there watching them while her mother was out. During this time, she had taken her daughter Hannah's car and returned it completely trashed

**Hannah** 18:19

Right before mom's death, you know, she was found dead, last time I seen her or you know, it was an argument because I woke up that morning, my car's gone. My Nana had been off, you know, doing whatever that night with a friend. And so my mom was watching us at my nanny's house, my car's gone.



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Us kids are there by ourselves. Where's my car? I was livid trying to figure out where my car was. Cussed Mama everything she was worth. I didn't control my reactions. I mean, I was really just kid. Yeah, being honest. And you know, ask asked me I'll do anything for you, just ask me. And she brings it back and she's got like baskets and baskets and glows and there's chocolate syrup on my book and seat. So I got in the car and I was taking her home. She was in my face screaming like on the way home. I slammed on the brakes. She went to the dash. Crazy shit. The last memory I have of my mom. Now just sitting around for four years. Still sit with it for the rest of my life. But . . .

**Eric Alan** 19:16

Before April left the house, she stole her mother's phone.

**Debbie** 19:20

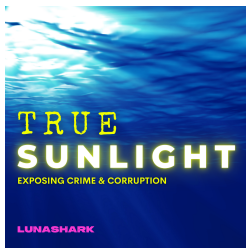
When she left my house, she hijacked my cell phone. We got into it. Hannah went to take, Hannah, which is the eldest daughter, went to take her home back to Andy's and she told me she said you'll need me before I need you. Last words. I never saw her again until under the truck.

**Eric Alan** 19:44

She then went on a drug bender and spent her last few days at a few homes near her house.

**Hannah** 19:51

And I feel like I failed her because like, you know before my mama died, was found dead. The neighbors, they came all the way up to my Nana's and that was like, you know, April, she's in the house like, she's little everywhere you know, you need to come get her. We've been dealing with her from his two weeks beforehand, like, went and got her went and got her. Andy was here or thought he was, you know, we're like just tell Andy to get her. He's right there, its his wife. And I know now that if we would have just gotten up and went and got her, she wouldn't be dead. She wouldn't. And for the nerve of



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everybody that told me, even the officials that said, if I would have gotten up and went and got her that day, she wouldn't be dead. You don't tell me that.

**Eric Alan** 20:49

After speaking with Hannah, Andy walked me down to the workshop on the property where he found April. This was a surreal moment for me. When you spend so much time researching, preparing and thinking about a case, then find yourself standing in the place where it actually occurred, there's a weight to it that I don't really know how else to explain.

**Eric Alan** 21:13

Did you build this too?

**Andy Jones** 21:16

Kids don't come down here anymore. And I do very. I found April laying about right there. When I came in, coming home from work, it was 1am, 1:20 something like that. I saw the lights on in here. You see under that door. When I turn in the driveway, you see the light was on? And at that time my son and I got son it's 23 now he has some of your friends would come here hang out and eat and drink beer, play ping pong and listen the radio that was your hangout spot. I just thought they had be here and left and forgot turned lights off. So I stopped gonna cut the lights off. I opened that door, when I pushed it back, I saw her laying in here.

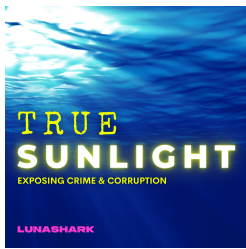
**Eric Alan** 22:04

He explained that his truck was backed into the workshop and April was found lying in the small space between the truck and the workshop wall.

**Andy Jones** 22:14

Came over, felt over, tried to feel a pulse and the instant I touched her I knew she was dead. Her skin felt different.

**Eric Alan** 22:25



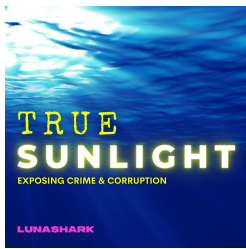
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Let me just, let me get a quick shot of this and we won't, we don't need to spend too much time in here.

**Eric Alan** 22:31

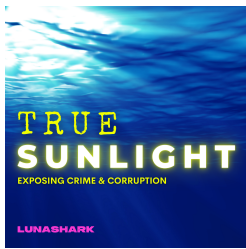
Andy had found April after getting off work late Monday night, technically early Tuesday morning at around 1am. Here's a few excerpts from the police report. I pulled bits and pieces from different officers that responded and investigated to create a simpler and clearer idea of what they found. They mentioned an address which is the next door neighbor's address. I redact the actual address and just say next door instead. If April was trying to get home from his place, she would have walked through the woods, past the workshop, then on to her home. Here's the report. "Andy stated today after getting off work he noticed the lights in the building on and figured April was there. After going to check the building and he noticed the door was locked and after checking the sliding door, he found that it was locked as well. Andy stated he grabbed a stick that was beside the door in the yard and tried to unlock the door from the outside but the stick kept breaking so he went to the house and got the fireplace poker and unlocked the door. Andy stated after the door was unlocked and he partially opened the door, he saw April lying on the ground beside the truck and she appeared to be asleep. And he stated at that time he walked over and shook April to try to wake her up when he felt that her skin was cold to the touch and she appeared to be deceased. I observed the victim lying under the driver's door of a white GMC pickup truck which was parked inside the building, backed in. The victim's head was close to the front driver's side tire and her feet were next to the wall adjacent to where the truck was parked. I walked over to the victim and immediately noticed some unusual red markings on her right wrist and hand area that looks like scratches as well as several other markings which did not appear to be scratches. I also observed what appeared to be bruises on her right forehead. I also noticed that the victim did not have any shoes on and only one sock which was on her left foot. But her big toe was exposed through what appeared to be some type of hole in the sock. The victim was lying on her back on the concrete floor of the building and was laying straight with



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only her head tilted to the left side of center. Her right arm was bent upward towards her chest and her left arm was lying on the floor on her left side. The coroner then advised that he was ruling this as a suspicious death at this time. At the address next door we met a Thomas Smith at the front door who had the odor of alcoholic beverage on his person. Thomas stated the victim was brought to his house by two males in a truck. He did not know them. He did state that the victim had been at his house on the past Saturday and it stayed through Sunday morning leaving around 9am. He indicated she crossed his side yard to return to her home. He stated that she was a known drug user and believed that she was high on her drug of choice, meth. Smith went on to say that the victim had done damage to his bathroom and had left several pieces of her clothing in his bedroom. He went on to report that she had left Sunday morning without additional issues and seemed to be in good health. Andy stated on Sunday morning, he received a phone call from his neighbor Bruce Smith, stating April was at his residence and he needed to come pick her up. And he stated after arriving at Bruce's home around 11am, he and April fussed again and she went to the neighbor's home across the road. And that's the last time he talked to her," end quote. There were two men mentioned at the house next door. This is Bruce Smith and his son, Tom Smith. April was hanging out with Tom the days leading up to her death. Bruce and Tom both declined to speak with me. For now I'll just refer to both of them as the next door neighbor. More on them later. So let's recap the last few days of April's life. She had stolen her mother's phone and went on a multi day drug binge. What actually happened on Sunday morning is a little unclear. One report states the next door neighbor claims she left his house around 9am in seemingly good health walking towards her home. Another report says Andy got a call from the neighbor wanting him to come over and get April. Andy went over around 11am and after arguing with April a bit, she walks to a different home across the street. I didn't see anything in the report addressing these inconsistencies. But to be honest, it wouldn't be surprising that there is some level of deviation between stories simply due to drug and alcohol use affecting memory. These are the last reports of anyone seeing April. I spoke with the owner of the house across the street where she was



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allegedly heading at one point and he claimed she never showed up. Andy was in the workshop on Sunday night with his daughter and April was not there. She is found late Monday night early Tuesday morning, locked in that workshop on her property with bruises scrapes and cuts all over her body. What April was doing between mid morning on Sunday when she was last seen and when she is found late Monday night early Tuesday morning is unknown. She wasn't in the workshop on Sunday night so she died sometime between Sunday night and late Monday night. The police end up ruling April's death a result of accidental overdose and hypothermia. It was January after all and the weather gets pretty cold in this area. The low of the night before and the night April was found was around 30 degrees Fahrenheit. This is plenty cold for hypothermia, especially if you're laying on something like cold concrete in a workshop that will quickly take the heat from your body. But why would April not just walked her home next to the workshop? The workshop was not heated and why would she locked herself in? And what about the condition of her body? None of this made any sense to April's family.

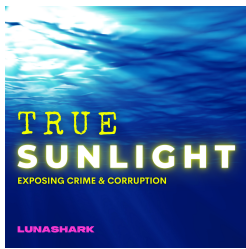
**Debbie** 28:02

I know as well as I'm sitting here that my daughter didn't kill herself. You know she didn't lay down under that truck and stop. I think she was already dead before she was put under the truck, my opinion. Because when I got to her, I mean it was like a perfectly placed. She was just lying under the truck or head upper body was up toward the wheelbase and on the front of the truck, arms down by her side, just laying. I mean, touching her I knew. Did I want to move her, yeah. I want you to grab her, that's my child, but I knewb you knowb not to.

**Eric Alan** 28:45

April's family knew there had to be more to this story. And there was.

**Person A** 28:50



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You had something to do with that shit, that happened April because you left here at 11:30. In fact, the timeframe, the way they was acting. Boston had three guns on him, okay, one in his bag, one is up front here and one in his back pocket. Barry had two guns on him. Why was they scared?

**Eric Alan** 29:07

April's family did not buy the idea that April simply died of an overdose and hypothermia. family says she was an experienced drug user. She knew how to come off of them safely. They also say she never went in the workshop when she wanted to go home, she went home. They recalled multiple times that she broke into her own house when she had lost her keys.

**April's Family** 29:28

I mean, she always went home. It didn't matter if she had to break in one of his windows, back the back window . . . and she would. She was going in and going to bed. In the little door where you could put the firewood she'd go through it. If that's what she had to do when it's time for her to go to bed. She's going to bed, She was going home in her bed.

**Eric Alan** 29:47

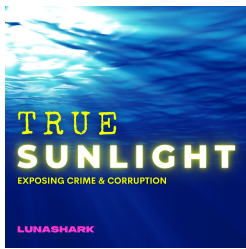
No matter what it's took.

**Eric Alan** 29:49

And what about how badly beaten up her body appeared?

**Hannah** 29:52

But I'm telling you right now my mama did not crawl up under that truck. And to be honest, I think she struggled with, struggled with somebody. With the marks that was on the autopsy, the knee, the black thing? That was like, it was like roadburn You know, I'm saying like we thought it was a hole or somebody just burned her. You know, we looked at it, we look at it. And it's like (unintelligible). My mama had one sock on one sock not on, her ankle was broke, like it got ran over. My mama was known, that bitch was crazy, she was



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known that if she didn't want to be in a vehicle, she tuck and rolled, she did out of that car.

**Eric Alan** 30:35

April seems like a wild woman, in a good way and in a bad way.

**Hannah** 30:40

Yeah (unintelligible).

**Eric Alan** 30:42

So, sorry to laugh. I think, I think laughing sometimes is good medicine.

**Hannah** 30:49

For sure.

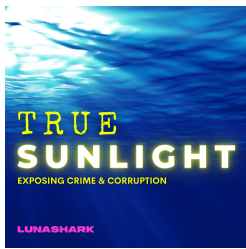
**Eric Alan** 30:50

Even in bad situations, but so you think she might have jumped out of a car trying to escape?

**Hannah** 30:54

See, listen, I think I think she tried to jump out of the car, she didn't clear it enough, ran over ankle. Right down there. I did my own investigating. Right before the mailbox, (unintelligible) it went off the road. You know, like little muddy part, if it was raining (unintelligible). Well, I went and it was a sock in there. There's her other sock. It looked like, you know, she just tried to get out. Well, it looked like she was drugged, with the marks on her and everything, was like she'd been drugged. Autopsy said said, like she had rope burns on her wrists, hurt ankles, her neck. And they said, like she had been tied and the downward dog position for two hours. Did a rape kit came back clean, whatever. She had no panties, no bra on, whatever. None of it made sense. So I think you know, she struggled to try and try and get away from whoever it was.





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**Eric Alan** 31:50

Quick sidenote here, you can hear a few sounds at the end of that clip. They almost sound like sound effects that I added in, but they were actually gunshots in the distance while I was speaking with Hannah. You will understand this more as you dive deeper into this podcast. But this place started feeling like the Wild West, like a lawless land. Remember, I initially was investigating five cases that occurred in this small mountain town and even more deaths, murders and disappearances in this town came to my attention while investigating. Maybe it was just in my head, but when you become hyper aware of the level of crime and evil deeds in such a small area, you begin to see everything there differently. Anyways, I think if we want to figure out what happened to April, we need to dive deeper into the days leading up to her death. After April got in an argument with her family and stole her mother's phone she was at home April's mother calls the White House. Faith who went missing a week after April died was also at the White House around this time. The White House is a mile and a half from April's home and it's a well known place in the area to get drugs. A man named Kevin Maler could often be found there.

**Debbie** 33:02

You know, people would tell me that she was at the end of my dirt road at the White House, meeting Kevin Maler out there getting drugs. I have been told that Faith was out there

**Eric Alan** 33:18

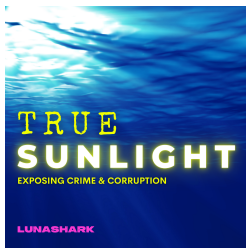
Really that those that same time with . . . can you say who told you that?

**Debbie** 33:24

No I'd rather not. It was a good, its a good source.

**Eric Alan** 33:28

Okay.



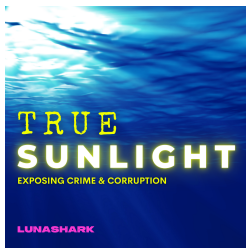
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### **Eric Alan** 33:28

Kevin Maler, who many in this area refer to as Boston, is 56 years old. Kevin Maler is a known drug dealer in the area, or at least he was. He has a long record of crime including charges of possession of meth, possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, driving under suspension, disorderly conduct, domestic violence, unlawful carrying of a pistol, sale of a stolen pistol, possession of a firearm by person convicted of a violent felony, possession of contraband in prison and more. Some of these charges I listed had multiple counts of that charge for separate occasions over the years. Before he moved to Wahalla, South Carolina in around 1996, he lived in Massachusetts where he was a suspect in the disappearance of a young woman named Jennifer Faye, who went missing in 1989. I won't be covering Jennifer Faye in this podcast. But there is a podcast by Barstool Sports called "The Case," who covered her as well as some of the people in this podcast. They did a ton of work and I'd encourage you to listen to it after this one for a different perspective. You'll hear me and others in this podcast refer to Kevin Maler, sometimes as Boston and sometimes as Kevin. So just keep in mind, that's the same person. Kevin has spent about eight of the past 10 years in prison. We're going to talk a lot about Kevin Maler in this podcast as his name has been brought up as a suspect in all three cases, and at one point had murder charges written up for the third case, Kevin Craig. Through my investigations, I came up with multiple scenarios as to what could have happened with each case, and there's one scenario that links Kevin Maler with them all. I apologize in advance for all the Kevin's in this next sentence. I'm trying to make it clear what's going on. When the murder charges were written up for Kevin Maler in regards to the third case, Kevin Craig, the Sheriff's office said that they believe Kevin Maler killed Kevin Craig, because Kevin Craig had information that can implicate Kevin Maler in the disappearance of Faith Roach, the second case that we're going to be looking at

### **Unknown Speaker** 35:38



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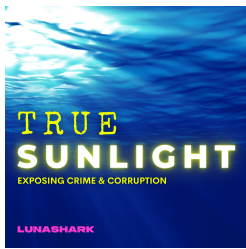
Kevin Wayne Mahler is being charged with murder and kidnapping in the death of Kevin Craig. It's our belief that Kevin Maler, is also known as Boston, is a murderer, and he needs to be held accountable for the death of Kevin Craig

### **Unknown Speaker** 35:55

Our investigators that determined Kevin Craig was murdered because of what he knew about the disappearance of one of our missing persons being Faith Roach.

### **Eric Alan** 36:06

Through my investigation, I found reason to believe that Faith may have disappeared because she had knowledge that could implicate Kevin Maler in the death of April Jones. So the theory is that Kevin Maler killed April Jones, and in order to cover his tracks, he had to get rid of Faith. Then in order to cover his tracks from getting rid of Faith, he had to get rid of Kevin Craig. But this was just my initial theory early on. Is there any truth to it? What evidence do we have for or against it? And what other theories are there for each case? There is a lot to cover in this podcast, and I want to encourage you to hold your opinions lightly, and be open to changing them as new information is provided. I'll also try to look for biases I might have in my research and creation of this podcast, as well as biases you as a listener might have and describe them as we go. The FS blog describes the complexity bias as quote, "a logical fallacy that leads us to give undue credence to complex concepts. Faced with two competing hypotheses, we are likely to choose the most complex one, that's usually the option with the most assumptions and regressions," end quote. This doesn't mean the complex hypothesis is the wrong one. Just that statistically it is the less likely one, even though we as humans have a tendency to see it as the more likely one. I think there's even more to it. When it comes to a podcast like this, I'm going to spend time covering the complex theories, so your mind will just be on them more often. And the more complex theories are simply more interesting, and for lack of a better word entertaining. Just remember, this doesn't make them more likely to be true. Back to the story. At the time of writing this Kevin Maler aka



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Boston is currently in prison for possession of meth with intent to distribute. But when I first went to Walhalla, I was able to speak with someone who was very close to Kevin Maler in the past. We'll call this person Person A. Person A, like so many people in this story, has battled with drug addiction much of their life. I spoke with them on multiple occasions and the first time I did they said they'd been clean for about six months. They remember the night April died. Well, I've changed Person A's voice for this podcast.

**Person A** 38:25

January 28. Is when April got killed and I say got killed because her mom showed me them pictures man and that girl, that's not no . . .

**Eric Alan** 38:33

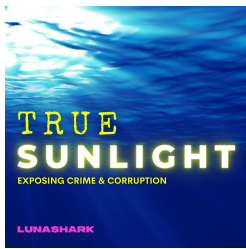
Here's Person A referring to Kevin Maler.

**Person A** 38:36

You had something to do with that shit that happened April because he left here live here at 11:30. And I'll never forget this, it was not raining when he left. But when he came back, it was, it was 2:30am and he was running and he ran in house, him and Barry both ran in the house and I was like why are y'all running? He said he was gonna jump on us and rob us. And I said, Who? He said fucking Bobby. And I'm like, where would you at? And he said it (unintelligible) junkyard, (unintelligible) junkyard at 2am. And the pictures look like she had been drugged behind a damn car.

**Eric Alan** 39:01

Person A mentions the name Barry. This is referring to Barry Neal, who was a good friend of Kevin Malers, as well as a driver when Boston was selling drugs. I did get to speak with Barry Neal and we'll talk about him more in future episodes. So let's take a look at this timeline. The neighbor says at some point April was brought to his home by two men he didn't know. I think it's possible these two men were Kevin Maler and Barry Neal. According to Person A, Monday night Kevin and Barry Neal leave the house at around 11:30pm. About



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an hour and a half later, around 1am, April is discovered by Andy in the workshop. Kevin and Barry returned home at 2am clearly in a panic about something. Person A asks what's going on and Kevin and Barry said that someone was after them. But Person A didn't buy it.

**Person A** 39:49

Like the timeframe, the way they was acting. Boston had three guns on him. Okay, one in his bag, one is up front here and one in his back pocket. Barry had two guns on him. Why was they scared?

**Eric Alan** 40:01

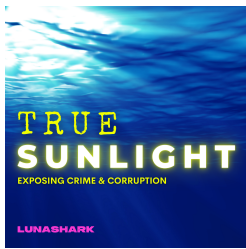
Then Person A saw the news of April's death.

**Person A** 40:04

They said a woman's body has been found on Rock Crusher. He didn't say her name at first, you know, and Boston and Barry still breathing heavy, Okay. Barry sit there I can see him out of the corner of my eye, I can see him going not looking at Boston in the corner of his eye just I guess I'm gonna see if he's looking at him. I don't know, I sat there watching them, you know? And I was like, Y'all need to change y'all's clothes or something. Your getting my damn bed wet. Boston said "Damn, all you ever do is fucking bitch." I said, "Look, you're gonna be gonna be like that, you leave. I'm not gonna do this with you. You know." I said, "Oh, by the way," I said, "if you're gonna leave, don't go that way. Because there's a dead girl down there." This motherfucker, swear to God, looks up like this goes, "She's got my phone," and runs out of the house, runs out. Him and Barry does not come back until 7am.

**Eric Alan** 40:43

So according to Person A they mentioned there was a dead woman found down the road. They tell Kevin Maler that if he's going to leave to not go that way through all the commotion. At this point, Person A doesn't know it's April, so Person A doesn't mention any name. But Kevin immediately looks up like he just remembered something and says "that girl's got my phone." Like he



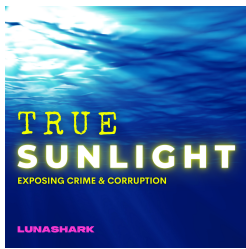
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already knew that the dead woman Person A was speaking of was April. Kevin and Barry leave again and return around 7am with a phone. As I was speaking with people for this case, the name Boston or Kevin Maler kept coming up. That's when a source sent me some information about Kevin Maler in April, that the police didn't even have yet.

**Eric Alan** 41:33

So what was this evidence a source sent me in regards to Kevin Maler and April Jones? It was a handwritten letter that an inmate in prison named John Evans had wrote to one of his family members. I have to stay pretty vague with this info as this evidence isn't public, and I don't want to do anything that could impede the investigation. But John Evans claims he was with Boston about a week before April died, and Boston told him he was going to kill April Jones by giving her a certain substance. John says he didn't take Boston seriously in the moment, but when he found out about April's alleged overdose, he immediately thought back to his conversation with Boston. John says as he's been sobering up in prison, his knowledge of this has started to weigh on him more heavily. And he felt compelled to come forward with this information. That's one thing I've been learning about when it comes to drugs. People are not themselves when they're using drugs, and typically when they sober up, they look back on their drug influenced actions with genuine shame. John also mentions that sometime after April's death, he got a hold of a phone from Boston. And this phone was April Jones's phone. If Kevin Maler ended up with April's phone after she died, that would be big news. I wanted to try to confirm all of this information as best I could. John Evans was still in prison. But I spoke with two other individuals mentioned in the letter. They confirmed that particular time that they were all hanging out but stated they were not with John and Kevin the entire time, and did not hear Kevin say anything about plans to kill April. One of them did confirm that they saw a phone that was full of pictures of April and her family. They said that John was pretty secretive, and they believe he knows more. I going to introduce him in the next episode, but I got to know a former Oconee County Sheriff's Office investigator. Here's us talking about John Evans and the letter.



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**Eric Alan** 43:30

Yeah, that letter was, was fascinating. You know, I wonder what prompted him to, to finally write it, if it was his conscious if there was something else if it was, you know, the fact that some of these stories are getting more attention, and it's just kind of being talked about more?

**Former Oconee County Sheriff's Office Investigator** 43:46

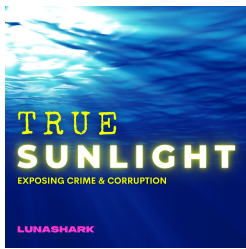
Well, in the letter, it says that he's clear eye'd since he's been away from drugs. So maybe so, but I know him, John Evans. I know his whole family, I've arrested him for burglary, breaking in houses. Maybe he's, I always tried to give people the benefit of the doubt. Maybe he's gonna have a turn around his life. I hope he does. He's got some really good people in his family. He wasn't raised that way. You've heard that saying before, he wasn't raised that way. He really wasn't raised that way. It just something happened. Drugs, I'm sure.

**Eric Alan** 44:18

Yeah, got it and got into the wrong circles.

**Eric Alan** 44:21

Before we talk more about John Evans and April Jones, I want us to get to know Kevin Maler, aka Boston a bit. I figured it might be a long shot, but I wanted to try and speak with Kevin in prison. It's really important to me that I'm as fair as possible with these episodes and genuinely wanted to hear his side of the story. I was able to send him a message and tell him who I was. He was hesitant to speak with me and said he wanted to speak with his daughter about it first. Luckily for me, I've been really careful about treating suspects fairly in my work and giving all possible perspectives in order to be as fair as possible. It also helped that his daughter actually knew who I was and had watched my YouTube videos on the Murdaughs. After messaging back and forth with Kevin Maher a bit . . .



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**Kevin Maler** 45:11

Eric, this is Kevin Melar.

**Eric Alan** 45:12

Hey, Kevin, how you doing, man?

**Kevin Maler** 45:18

I'm doing? How are you?

**Eric Alan** 45:18

Yeah, I'm okay. You know, man, I really appreciate you, you being willing to speak with me.

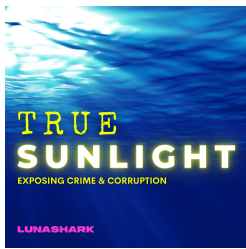
**Eric Alan** 45:27

I spoke with Kevin many times, but you're about to hear some clips from our very first phone call. Remember, I'm out and about in Walhalla investigating. Kevin isn't able to schedule his calls from prison. So I would randomly get calls from him and have to stop what I'm doing or pull over on the side of the road to speak with him. I was recording on my phone on speaker while sitting in a car next to traffic. So it's not the best audio quality, but I think it's important for you to hear from Kevin. I'll recap the conversation after these clips. We chat a bit and break the ice before I dive in and ask about April. I don't bring up the John Evans letter as few people know about it. And I don't know if he knows it was written.

**Kevin Maler** 46:10

I don't think my daughter really realizes how serious this is. Because she knows me, she knows, I mean, I was basically a stay at home dad, I basically raised her I went to all the school functions. You know, I taught every book in the Bible. She knew by the time she was four years old, you can say every book in the Bible. You know, I mean, all in all, the trouble I've been in for the past few years, is all because I got hooked on pills. And that was it for me. Just but I mean, you know, this is my fourth time in prison. I've never been written





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up. No one write up. You know, I mean, never been arrested for violent crime. So why am I gonna wait 50 some years to start killing people, that don't make no sense. And when I when I agreed to talk to you I'm talking to you 100%. So I'm in this. If I'm going to talk to you about one thing I'm going to, I'm opening up for everything.

**Eric Alan** 47:05

If we could start with April Jones, tell me about your relationship with April. Did you know her?

**Kevin Maler** 47:11

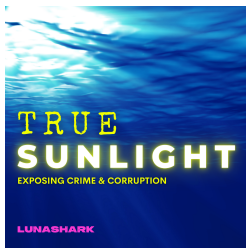
Yes, I know her for a long time. Oh, we were friends. We did drugs together. The last time I saw it was two days before they found a boy. Hey, there's a lot of things that weren't being told. She was having an affair with her next door neighbor. Because that's the last place I've seen her. What happened was they picked me up gave me a ride, her and the next door neighbor. I had left my phone in the truck, (unintelligible) my phone that night, I went to the neighbor's house. And she finally came out of the woods. She was scared to death. And it was first time. I mean, I told ya I'd known her 8, 10 years, it was first time I've ever seen her carrying a gun. She said she was hiding from her husband. There had been a lot of, a history of abuse between them too. I don't know if he knew about her and the neighbor. But it had been going for a long time. And I'm not saying nothing bad's about her because I'd like (unintelligible). I don't want I don't want anybody to think I'm saying anything bad about it. Because she really was a good girl. She just was an addict. Like the rest of us.

**Eric Alan** 48:17

Do you know where she got the gun?

**Kevin Maler** 48:19

No, I don't. And I tried to take it away from her because she was high, she didn't need to be carrying a gun. But she would not let me get it from her.



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**Eric Alan** 48:29

I gotcha. And did she explain why she had the gun?

**Kevin Maler** 48:33

No. All she did, she came, she came out of the woods. I talked to her for a few minutes. And then she went right back, right back into the woods. She was scared to death. She kept think she heard her husband start coming.

**Eric Alan** 48:45

And when you say into the woods, what area of the woods did she ...

**Kevin Maler** 48:50

In between the two houses.

**Eric Alan** 48:52

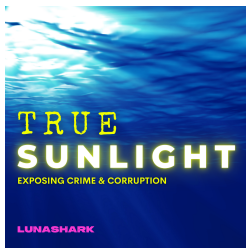
Okay, like in between the workshop and the neighbor's house?

**Kevin Maler** 48:56

Yep.

**Eric Alan** 48:59

So, Kevin says he was a good dad who lived a normal life before getting hooked on pills, which led him to the world of drugs. That yes, he's been in prison four times for drug charges but has never been written up while in prison. That he's not some violent serial killer like so many people have been making him out to be. He went on to explain he had known April around 10 years when she died, that they were friends and did drugs together on occasion. The last time he saw her was two days before they found her body. April and her neighbor Tom had picked Kevin up and when they did, he left his phone in their truck. He says later that day he got a ride over to Tom's to look for the phone and April came out of the woods holding a gun. It was the first time Kevin had ever seen her with one. He says she was terrified about



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something. He mentioned that she was having an affair with the neighbor Tom. He says the last thing he saw her do was walk into the woods between Tom's house and her workshop. I spoke with Kevin Maler many, many times, and we'll touch on those conversations in future episodes. But at this point, I was hearing a lot of things from a lot of people. There was one person I've really needed to speak with, though, John Evans. I thought to myself, maybe I could get a hold of John Evans in prison like I did, Kevin, and speak with him. Maybe John was the key to finally solving this case, and bringing April's family answers and closure. But then I got a phone call from a source that would leave me absolutely shocked.

**Person A** 50:36

I hope I'm not bothering you.

**Eric Alan** 50:38

No, you're good.

**Person A** 50:39

I just wanted to tell you, okay, so you remember you was asking about John Evans?

**Eric Alan** 50:44

Yeah.

**Person A** 50:46

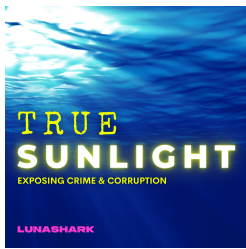
He's dead.

**Eric Alan** 50:52

Next on mountain mystery. I'd gotten to know the two lead investigators for the Oconee County Sheriff's Office.

**Eric Alan** 51:00

Hey, man, that's true?



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**Oconee County Sheriff Investigator** 51:02

Yes, drug overdose in prison.

**Eric Alan** 51:05

Do you think there's any chance it has anything to do with the letter?

**Oconee County Sheriff Investigator** 51:10

I think it's gotta be looked at. Coincidence, but yeah, everybody that's in this case is dying.

**JJ** 51:18

faith went to the bathroom, she heard two men beaten the snot out of a female in the back room. The next day, they found April Jones dead.

**Hannah** 51:33

After (unintelligible), everybody's took everything else from me. I had nothing and you still took everything from me.

**Eric Alan** 51:45

Eric here, I want to cap off every podcast reminding you not to form strong opinions. There is so much more in this story to be told. If you enjoyed this episode, there will be a condensed video version with interview footage, footage of Wahalla, the workshop, April in her family published on my YouTube channel, depending on when you're listening to this, it may be a few weeks before that is released. But in the meantime, I've got videos on other cases that I think you will really enjoy. I'd be honored if you checked it out. Simply go to [youtube.com/ericallanvideos](https://youtube.com/ericallanvideos) or search Eric Allen on YouTube and my channel will show up. That's E R I C A L A N. See y'all on the next one.