



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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### Mandy Matney 0:02

I don't know if Cory Fleming actually feels remorseful for what he did to the Satterfields and the Pinckneys. But on Tuesday, Fleming was sentenced to 46 months in federal prison, and he is still staring down 23 state charges. Despite several disturbing things that we saw in court this week, I am finally starting to feel a shift in the system. And to me, that little glimmer of hope we have for change is a big deal. My name is Mandy Matney. This is True Sunlight, a podcast exposing crime and corruption previously known as the Murdaugh Murders Podcast. True Sunlight is a Luna Shark Production and written with journalist Liz Farrell.

### Mandy Matney 1:12

So we shared some big news on this week's cup of justice. My first book titled *Blood on Their Hands: Murder, Corruption, and the Fall of the Murdaugh Dynasty* will be released this November and you can pre-order it today See the link in the description and go to [bloodontheirhandsbook.com](http://bloodontheirhandsbook.com) For more information, I wasn't prepared for it but Tuesday ended up being one of the most important days we have had in the last four and a half years since this investigation began. Finally, at last, in front of our own eyes, we saw a man who was held to account for his actions and defeated by his own doing in helping Alex Murdaugh. In federal court we saw the collapse of Cory Fleming. Finally, we saw someone in the middle of this mess actually admit to his wrongdoing. And that in itself is a big deal. We saw the moment when Cory Fleming was escorted off by US Marshals to serve his time in federal prison. But that moment wasn't as powerful as it should have been. Because the public really didn't get to witness it beyond the 100 or so of us who were able to fit into Judge Gergel's sweaty federal courtroom on Tuesday afternoon. Now, there's a lot to talk about today, including a short update at the end of this episode with reporter Beth Braden on the Grant Solomon case. But we need to start by talking about something that needs to change now in federal court, the lack of transparency in our federal courtrooms. Federal rule of Criminal Procedure 53, which was literally established one year after World War II ended in 1946 prohibits electronic media coverage of criminal proceedings, including taking photographs and broadcasting the proceedings. Now think about this. Think about how clunky and disruptive and different technology was in 1946, typewriters, box cameras, dictation machines the size of a toddler. It was a different world. The world has changed a lot since then, and so should our rules. Now in cases like Russell Laffitte's with the increased amount of media and public interest, some federal judges will set up a media room where the trial is streamed and reporters can use their cell phones and laptops to take notes and report play by plays straight to the public. Essentially, the maximum amount of transparency that is



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

---

allowed for. Judge Gergel apparently didn't anticipate high public interest in Cory's case, however, until we personally emailed his office on Tuesday morning, he apparently didn't think that a media room was necessary for Cory. He claimed that they tried to scramble after our Tuesday morning request but the two IT guys that they have in court happen to be out that day. And we were simply out of luck, forced to, quote "take notes the old fashioned way", with just a pen and paper and our memories. Now Liz and I are both extremely careful reporters. We move slower than a lot of journalists do because taking time to triple check things really matters to us. Our credibility matters to us. It feels absurd and unfair that we cannot triple check most of what went down in court on Tuesday without having to pay for an incredibly expensive transcript. But the thing is I don't believe that Judge Gergel was expecting low public interest inquiries because he received a whopping 62 letters in support of Cory in the days leading up to the hearing. Did he think that the worldwide interest in this case suddenly fizzled out in the last two weeks? Did he think that Cory described essentially as a super dad, a Beaufort YMCA king, a Habitat for Humanity hero and a former attorney whose career took a nosedive with the fall of the Murdaugh dynasty, did he not think that the public would want to hear what went on there? We saw a different Judge Gergel on Tuesday. He was overly friendly with the defense to the point where it was weird. The courtroom was packed with Cory fans and Gergel had the gall to joke about it. From the head of the courtroom field with clearly an influential and wealthy people of Beaufort, South Carolina, where Cory is from Gergel joked "Is there anyone left in Beaufort today?" at the beginning of the hearing. Now, this really bothered me for a few reasons. While admittedly, I've never had a friend do anything like Cory did to the Satterfields and the Pinckneys, I can't imagine a world where I would still support that friend after knowing what they did. To me, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how great a friend treats you, what matters is how they treat others, particularly how they treat vulnerable people like the Pinckneys and the Satterfield at a time when they were desperately in need of an attorney to protect them. All of these crimes continued as long as they did, because people allowed them to, people looked the other way. People chose to see the Murdaughs and their allies for how they treated them, not how they treated anyone, not how they treated everyone. And they stood by them for too long. So I don't think it's funny to point out that a man like Cory can still have so much support and even after he stole from the vulnerable, even after he enabled the monster of Alex Murdaugh, even after he betrayed the purest of souls when they needed him the most. The room full of Cory supporters never heard the full details about what Cory Fleming, Cory Fleming, the attorney, the law partner, the rich and powerful friend of Alex Murdaugh, what that guy actually did to the Pinckneys and the Satterfields. In



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

---

fact, Judge Gergel cut off Eric Bland when he was briefly reminding the court of just how horrible Cory's actions were. I say this because if there was a live video feed of the hearing, I think the public would have seen what I saw and I think Gergel would have gotten a lot of deserved scrutiny. I think the public would have been concerned to see a judge who was so friendly with a man who was such a disgrace to his own profession. Imagine how much we could learn about federal courts if there was a live feed of every courtroom, of course, with some exceptions. We could certainly have a better idea of how differently the powerful are treated in the federal system and how they benefit from the secrecy. Tuesday's hearing was absolutely a matter of public interest and it is absurd that we are still following rules from an old world designed by the good ol' boys. There is a bill in Congress to make federal courts more accessible and I urge you to support it. Because it is so essential to the work that we do here. Transparency and accountability are the only ways we can change our system for the better. But for this week, we will rely on our handwritten notes from court to tell you the story about what went down through our own eyes, and you all can decide if Cory's punishment fit his crime. Court this week really made me think about some of life's biggest questions. Like what makes a person good or bad? Is it ever okay to support someone after they did something so horrible? And what is the point of the criminal justice system? Are we trying to change people for the better? Are we trying to deter them from doing bad things? Or are we trying to punish them for what they did? Well, Russell Laffitte and Alex Murdaugh were offensive, narcissistic and disrespectful to the victims and the public throughout their trials. Cory was the opposite. There were several moments when I was really stunned by Cory. How could a man this smart, this capable of doing this much good, how could he take part in so much evil? Liz, I both said the same thing after court. There were actually moments when I really wanted to interview Cory. There were moments when I felt like maybe this was a man whose story we all could learn from, a man who was clearly much smarter than Alex and Russell. I want to know how he could do this and what does he know? It was really easy to get bamboozled by Cory and his team on Tuesday. I spoke with Justin Bamberg, who was also representing the Pinckney family, a lot about Cory. And what makes a good person on Wednesday evening.

### **Justin Bamberg** 10:44

I think the easiest way for anybody to process this, like if you're if you've really been following this whole saga for these years, and you're really trying to digest, no, I'm like a movie, you want to digest the different characters, right. And Alex is by far the easiest to digest at this point. Some of us digested who Alex was, long before he got



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

---

convicted of double homicide. Some people couldn't digest him until that happened, right, but you got him. Russell, you got just that you figured that out? And you're having trouble trying to really digest like, Who is this? Cory Fleming like, who is he? What type of person is he? And I think that with with this particular situation, you're never going to be able to fully comprehend who he is based on the actions or the inactions. And the best thing I could tell people. And what I have told people was like, stop thinking about that. Doesn't matter if he's a good person doesn't matter if he's lived a great life, if he lived a horrible life, none of that matters. You have to digest him in the small window of which we're dealing with, which is the window of crime. And in that window of crime, he wasn't a good person. Doesn't matter if he was a good person out of that window. Within that window, he did terrible things that hurt people, that left them, you know, Mandy, I think we've talked about this previously, the concept of people's ability to build wealth. You know, these are families who never had the opportunities to generate wealth in their family. They just wanted a little taste, now had to go through horrible, horrible stuff, to get access to the money to put them in that economic position. But they finally had the chance to have a little taste of the wealth and the benefits that that Cory had, because of who he was, who his family was, the fact he was tied to the Murdaughs, that the Alex and the Murdaugh name brought that Russell and the Laffitte name brought. And these people have the opportunity to build wealth in their family so that their kids and those coming after them could one day reap the benefits of that. And these guys helped kill that for them. And that's all I need to know, with the way I view economic opportunities and in the part of the state in which I live, and which Pamela Pinckney lives, and Gloria Satterfield lives, and all the others. If you're willing, even though you have the world, you're willing to take a small piece of somebody else's, for your own selfish benefit, not a good person in that moment. End of the discussion. So I gave up a long time ago to try and figure out if any of these guys were, were good or bad guys, they did bad things. And now they're being held accountable for it.

**Mandy Matney** 13:56

Tuesday's hearing was vastly different than all of Russell and Alex's court proceedings. It was respectful from both sides. It was empathetic from both sides. It was extremely efficient. It made Dick and Jim's trial shenanigans look like kangaroo court. It wasn't lost on me that both the defense and the prosecution teams were led by women. Again, I wish you all could have seen it.

**Liz Farrell** 14:30





## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

---

I want you to picture attending a wedding in which a 50 something year old millionaire has chosen to marry himself. The ceremony is obviously painful to watch because the man is gross for doing this in the first place. But also he's incredibly on self aware, like the kind of guy who would make a joke about marrying himself for his money. The reception is predictably even worse because first seven hours you have to listen to the man's friends and family who are equally clueless about how they sound give these long toasts to him while also having the audacity to mention that the gift we bought for him for marrying himself better be the one from his registry. All the while this man is throwing tantrums because no detail about this marriage to himself has been to his liking and also his wedding planner, Mark Moore, keeps finding reasons to interrupt the party, if you could call it that, with acapella versions of Cotton Eyed Joe. That was what Russell Laffitte's sentencing hearing was like, or at least that's what it was like now that we have something drastically different to compare it to. Cory's sentencing hearing was so the opposite of what we've become accustomed to in the Murdaugh cases over the past few years that we have spent much of the past few days dissecting everything we saw happen in federal court on Tuesday afternoon. And we keep marveling at it all because it was that artful which is a credit to Cory's attorney Debbie Barbier, the prosecutor Emily Limehouse and to Cory himself but we're going to talk more about this in a bit because there is a really, really fine line between admiring them for how the hearing went and being like, oh wait just a minute you three. In some ways it feels like we're celebrating street performers who entertained us by gently stealing the watches off our wrists. Put another way, we got Olivia Poped. Olivia Pope from the show Scandal is goals until you realize ultimately she's sometimes helping scoundrels do their scoundreling.

### **Mandy Matney** 16:48

Throughout Alex Murdaugh's murder trial, we and others were frequently criticized by a group of people who wanted to believe and wanted others to believe that our constant horror over Dick and Jim's strategies in and out of the courtroom was simply a function of us not understanding the justice system or how a defense is supposed to work or worse, that we don't think a person is entitled to a strong defense. Now we have a really good example to use when we talk about how we think this should look, at least in terms of the very basic idea that people should generally take responsibility for their actions. And that people definitely shouldn't subject everyone else to buffoonery, lies, threats, pageantry, and public relations warfare to escape legal accountability, especially when the accused is in a position of trust in the thing that they are accused of doing and the evidence shows that they did hurt others. Cory's sentencing has shown us how this is possible. However, we're



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

---

still grappling with that old issue of money granting some people special access to a better door in the courtroom to deals that simply do not exist for most other people, because that did seem to happen here. Leading up to Tuesday's hearing, we were curious about how long the hearing itself would end up being because Cory supporters had submitted those 62 letters asking the judge for leniency, which was sort of stunning, given that he was only pleading guilty to one charge, and that one charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud. Basically, the fun size version of the bank fraud charge he could have gotten according to Judge Gergel, which carries a penalty of up to 30 years. Well, this lesser charge is still a felony and Cory Fleming is now officially and rightfully a felon, we were also skeptical of what sentence he would receive. And we had pretty much prepared ourselves for a future that potentially included us having to alert All of you that Cory was essentially sentenced to a spa and given a \$4.50 cent fine. Remember in May when this deal was announced, this man was facing 23 state charges and a prison sentence of up to 275 years on that front. He still is. The single federal charge carried a sentence of up to 20 years and a fine of up to \$250,000. Cory's sentencing guidelines though were a minimum of 46 months just under four years to 67 months, which is just over five and a half years. Judge Gergel gave him the minimum in the guideline and only fined him \$20,000, less than 10% of the maximum fine.

**Liz Farrell** 20:04

For all intents and purposes, this federal plea deal is the gateway drug to getting out of those hefty state charges. If you don't believe us, just as Judge Gergel who several times during the hearing mentioned his "great concern," and that's a quote by friends. He used the word concern about the state still pursuing its own prosecution plan for Cory, about the idea of Cory being double punished, even likening it to being tarred and feathered for his crime. At least twice Judge Gergel acknowledged what's called dual sovereignty, which the US Supreme Court upheld in 2019. And he acknowledged that he has no control over what the state does, but nevertheless, he felt the need to bring up the idea that Cory's defense team should provide the state judge, who is Judge Clifton Newman, with his position on this matter. In a display of sympathy, Judge Gergel described Cory's future with the state prosecutors as being a challenge that lies ahead for Cory. Now dual sovereignty basically means that a violation of federal law gets prosecuted at the federal level and a violation of state law gets prosecuted at the state level, and both governments have a right to prosecute at their discretion even for the same crime. But the reality of this is that state and federal prosecutors will often work together to find a single punishment that accounts for the crime at both levels. Usually this comes in the form of the feds



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

---

pursuing the charges in US District Court and the state prosecutors dismissing their charges. And oftentimes there will be sentencing enhancements added to account for the state crime. This is usually an expediency thing, and it's meant to save taxpayers money, but it can also be a political thing too. And even when state prosecutors disagree with the feds taking over, there's usually very little meaningful pushback. As many of you know from the Jeffrey Epstein case, rich criminals like to use this cooperation to their advantage and are sometimes able to get a combo deal that takes the best of one and the best of the other to make their own little plea deal for what amounts to a jail hotel as it was in Epstein's case. And prosecutors on both the federal and state levels have been known to allow this kind of hot nonsense to happen, for certain people. Because again, even though prison is prison and a man's freedom is being taken away from him, federal prison is generally regarded as a much more tolerable place to be for guys who steal with the pen and not the sword. Oh, and this is where we should remind you that 14th Circuit Solicitor Duffy Stone employs an attorney who happens to be the daughter of PMPED partner, Danny Henderson to serve as a liaison between Duffy's office and the US Attorney's Office. We believe the 14th circuit, which by the way, is where Cory started out, to be the only solicitor's office that has such an arrangement and oh, look, here we are.

**Mandy Matney** 22:58

One last thing to mention that has gotten lost in this, throughout the Murdaugh murders case in all of the attached cases in the past two years, there was a behind the scenes fight happening between the State Attorney General's office in the US Attorney's Office. From our vantage point, it seemed like the feds were trying to wrestle the Murdaugh cases out of the AG's hands. There was also the very real thought that Alex's attorneys including state Senator Dick Harpootlian, a close friend of President Biden, and this is about power, not about politics, were doing their darndest to get the feds to step in. Independent sources have also told us that in October 2021, at least one PMPED attorney was trying to get the FBI to step in and after SLED surprised everyone, including Alex's attorneys, by arresting him in Florida. At any rate, some people see the dual sovereignty doctrine as conflicting with the double jeopardy clause which states that no person shall be tried twice on the same offense. Judge Gergel seems to be one of those people. But again, the US Supreme Court doesn't see it that way. And the fact that Cory still faces state charges really seems to bother Judge Gergel, which is yet another reason why there should have been cameras in the courtroom because the public needs to see things like this to really feel the audacity of it.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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**Liz Farrell** 24:35

With that said, even though we applaud Debbie Barbier for her emotional intelligence, her decorum and her quiet strategy in this case, we do not hold what seems to be Judge Gergel's opinion on this. In fact, we are to use Judge Gergel's term very concerned that Debbie might have just fairy godmothered to Cory out of the state charges and that our federal government has allowed her to do it for very little in return. And if that is the case, if Debbie is ultimately able to get the federal government to rob South Carolina Attorney General Allen Wilson of his ability to do his job and prosecute Cory for the 18 Satterfield charges and five Pinckney charges, and maybe she should run against Allen in the next election, whether that's for attorney general or for governor, because that's the white collar criminal dream, right? Get the feds to take over your case so you can politically and financially manage a softer landing for yourself, get a lower sentence, go to a less dangerous facility, expect to serve only 85% of your sentence and maybe indicate you have a drug problem so you can shave off up to 12 months of that time by completing a federal treatment program. Oh, yes, Judge Gergel approved both Cory and Russell for RDAP, the residential and drug abuse program for federal inmates. Do Cory and Russell have drug problems? Unclear, but no drug habit has ever been publicly disclosed, nor have we heard rumors of one for either of them. But see all of the federal plea deal magic only works when the people we put into these positions allow it to happen. Which is why it's important that the public continues to keep an eye on the US Attorney's Office in South Carolina to make sure that whatever apparently amazing information Cory gave the feds in exchange for this deal actually ends up resulting in some more bad guys being put in in handcuffs and better yet gets us answers as to the what of what all of this has been about. How did Alex get himself in this deep and what is it that he's in this deep with? We will only find out if the state continues pushing forward with these cases. And if the feds don't make themselves complicit by allowing the Murdaugh connected cases and investigations to go away. We can't lie, right now we do not like what we're seeing. Even though people behind the scenes keep trying to reassure us that Cory will not get away with just a light federal sentence. Another thing we were expecting going into this hearing was a repeat of the Russell reality show, meaning hours of earnest essays shared by people who believe the world begins and ends within their own social circles and that the thing that their guy has been accused of doing doesn't look good. Sure, but we like him and he likes us so come on Judge. There was a roomful of people at Cory's hearing who might have thought that way. But Debbie Barbier had the foresight and discipline to use them only as background actors, as extras if you





## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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will in what was a flawlessly directed to our independent film about a man named Cory the con-trite?

**Mandy Matney** 27:43

A few things to know about the hearing. One, it was packed, so packed that one of Cory's supporters who clearly did not want to sit next to us was forced to lower herself to do so. This was especially enjoyable because she is a former lawyer and co-worker of Cory's who was disbarred for her own egregious behavior, which makes you wonder what else goes on at that law firm? By the way? Well, this woman awaited the outcome of her ODC investigation our own solicitor Duffy Stone, who reminder inherited his job from Randolph Murdaugh and had to have the Murdaugh case wrestled out of his own hands apparently did the boys at Moss Kuhn and Fleming a solid by hiring her as a prosecutor for a few years. It's still one of the more sick and twisted things we have seen happen in the 14th circuit, and it is beyond foul that there have seemingly been no repercussions for that. Anyway, this woman cried a lot throughout the hearing. The second thing to know is how horrible it was to see up close the trauma experienced by Cory's family, they had a much more serious and heartbroken vibe going on than the Murdaughs did at their own family member's murder trial. In other words, the Fleming's did not at all treat that hearing like a cocktail hour meet and greet. Despite the room being filled with their friends. It was especially difficult to see this heartbreak in Cory's college age son Jack's eyes. Jack is tall with a full head of bright red hair. Before the hearing started and as he and his family were getting reseated behind the defense table to make room for more spectators, Jack looked around the room with an expression of fear and sadness on his face. Later, after Cory addressed the court, we saw him quickly get up to give Jack a hug from behind. It was a powerful moment that underscored what was at stake here. It became especially poignant after it was clear that Cory wasn't going home with his boy that afternoon. Now, though we have empathy for Cory, our sympathy for him is limited and close to zero, but we have to commend him for not having his wife and children speak on his behalf. Maybe this was Debbie's idea, whoever's idea it was it was a good one. Some attorneys we've spoken to including Eric, our Cup of Justice co-host, have a different opinion and noted that Eve, Jack, and Quinn not speaking at the hearing didn't look great for Cory. But we truly believe this was a selfless act on Cory's part, no matter. He had put his loved ones through enough, and even if conventional wisdom might dictate that having your family speak for you is important this was not their crime to deal with. They did not do this. No matter what we say about Cory, we give him credit for standing in front of the court and telling the judge that this is his shame to bear and his alone, and he will make no excuses



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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for it. Because finally, finally, unlike Cory's kids and Alex's son Buster, Cory's son and daughter saw their father admit guilt and accept responsibility in court. Cory's children did not get mixed messages about their father's wrongdoing. And I think that is so important when we talk about changing for the better from this.

**Liz Farrell** 31:34

The third thing to know about the hearing is how fundamentally different Debbie Barbier's style is to that of Russell Laffitte's attorney Mark Moore, who you'll remember made the argument that Russell didn't deserve to be penalized for targeting a vulnerable victim. Because Hakeem Pinckney was dead when Russell committed his crime against him and therefore could not be considered to be we guess a human being. Like Judge Gergel told him at the time it is the most offensive argument we've heard in all of this and there have been some doozies. If Mark Moore's demeanor in court can be compared to crayons on a wall and a series of vroom vroom noises, then Debbie Barbier's was calligraphy and a violin sonata. Instead of having everyone read their letters to the judge, Debbie had sAlexted a handful of people to speak. Each person represented a different element of Cory's life in the community. And every person who spoke for Cory had a purpose, a plot point to move forward. According to them, Cory is known as the guy in town who helps single mothers and we cannot control how that sounds. He takes part in a weekly Bible study. His large kitchen island is a gathering spot for everyone in the neighborhood. Instead of feeling sorry for himself after all of this came out, he enrolled in community college to learn carpentry, and he volunteers for Habitat for Humanity. He's a prominent member of the neighborhood YMCA and a member of the Rotary. He supports local businesses. He supports local charities. He runs in races and helps organize events. He puts a roof over the heads of homeless people by allowing them to lease his rental properties. He is a stable force for kids whose homes aren't so stable. He buys toys for children. He offers pro bono services outside of the required hours to people who can't afford a lawyer. He fixes frozen pipes on Christmas Day, which that one caught us off guard given our generally warm climate, but that's what the woman said. He helps troubled young men get on the right path. He uses his connections to get work for those in need of jobs. Like Russell, Cory is also apparently referred to as uncle by kids who aren't related to him. Debbie said to the judge, "I wonder how many people in this courtroom can have the same thing said about them. I submit to you not many, and I include myself in that." She also told the court that Cory never disclosed to her any of these great things about himself, that she had to learn about them through the letters which he refused to read because of how painful it would be for him.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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### **Mandy Matney** 34:13

Side note to that maybe the judge should have made him read those letters because you know what's also painful, Cory? Finding out your lawyer stole your money so he could take a future murderer to a baseball game on a private flight. Oh, even though millions of dollars were exchanged to compensate for the loss of your mother, you don't know about that money because the lawyer stole it. And meanwhile, you can't afford to keep a literal roof over your head. That is painful. There was also an irony to some of the statements that were made. One woman told the court she served as a Spanish interpreter for Cory's clients and she recounted the time she was able to get a woman from Mexico a five day visa back to re-entered the United States so that she could sign off on a wrongful death case he was representing her in and now he was kind enough to set up trust for the woman's children. I think you can understand why we're saying this, but we hope the government verified that this woman and her kids actually got their money. A few of the people who spoke about Cory use the words honest and trustworthy and a man of integrity to describe him, which felt particularly tone deaf, given the reasons we were all there. The final person to speak with a teacher from Beaufort Academy, a private school where Cory's daughter attended. This man didn't seem to recognize the oddity of the phrasing when he spoke about his friendship with Cory and how friends stay loyal and overlook each other's flaws. All of the evidence, he said, and all of the smart money advice says I should run as far away as possible. The man literally validated the idea that Cory is not to be trusted while pleading with the judge for leniency using the argument that Cory can be trusted. It was strange.

### **Liz Farrell** 36:10

Though, we have to note, despite these ironies and the moments of tone deafness, many if not all of those who spoke and who wrote letters recognize that Cory had done something wrong. They didn't seem to excuse it or try to minimize it. In Russell's sentencing hearing, his supporters barely acknowledged that there were victims. Another thing to note is the support Cory seemed to have among some attorneys in Beaufort County. We saw Beaufort attorney Jim Brown in the audience, as well as at least one 14th Circuit Solicitor's Office prosecutor in addition to the disbarred one. Also, there was Hilton Head attorney Sam Bauer, who did not speak but who submitted a letter to the judge. Here's David with some passages from that.

### **DAVID MOSES** 36:54



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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This is probably the hardest letter I have had to write in both my legal career and my personal life. How do I as an officer of the court stand as a character witness for someone who has admitted to a felony, I can't excuse the crime or even put it in an understandable context. I know that my friend Cory has to pay for his crime. I know that his actions have profound consequences. Cory is now a felon, he will carry that brand with him forever. I've talked with Cory and I know that he is not just remorseful because he got caught, Cory is genuinely ashamed of what he has done. He will continue to punish himself for this crime as long as he lives.

**Liz Farrell** 37:49

That's the interesting thing about all this. So many supporters acknowledge that Cory has to face the consequences while not quite accepting that this, that the sentence that was at issue here, is the consequence. At one point, Debbie Barbier tried to tell Judge Gergel that the extreme publicity of this case served as a consequence. Judge Gergel to his credit was quick with his reply, so is incarceration. One last thing about Cory's supporters, since the hearing we have spoken to a few people who knew Cory personally and who had admired him as an attorney, who really and truly liked him and who respected him. Two of the men we spoke to are former law enforcement officers who had worked on cases in which Cory was a defense attorney. One of the men said he learned how to be a better cop because of Cory. Neither man believed for one second that these two crimes, the one against Pamela Pinckney, and the one against the Satterfields were the full story when it comes to what Cory was up to. And one of them, the one who called Cory brother and who early on told us to stop picking on Cory, said he believes Cory's display of remorse wasn't about what he had done, but rather about what he had lost in his life and where he was going. Justin Bamberg put it perfectly. He believed that Cory was genuinely remorseful for what he had done to the people in court behind him, but not for what he had done to the Satterfields and to the Pinckneys.

**Justin Bamberg** 39:16

I think that a everything we saw from Cory in court was genuine in terms of the emotions that we saw, which is very different than what we've been exposed to, to date from other defendants. I think that his sorrow stems more so from the fact he knows he disappointed so many people because so many people held him in such high regard. And that's a sign of of good character, right? I would say you know, like if you if you have good character, then you you want to make people proud. You take pride in the fact that through your action's people respect you, and they care about you, and they love you, right? And they think so highly of you. And I think he knows





## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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that he blew that to hell with what he did to the Satterfields and the Pinckneys, I think all of that hitting that one time. So it's not so much that that emotion was in response to a sense of remorse for what he did to the Satterfields and the Pinckneys. That's just like a little side effect, like, I regret that I did it. But I'm really overflowing with emotion, because of the 100 other people that showed up, who loves me enough to come into court, and stand beside me even over this, and I let them down. And I think the telling sign of that, just studying people, you know, I, I did sociology and some psychology in college, is when I read his body language, what I see as somebody who was just overrun with guilt and disappointment to the point he couldn't even look at his own family. And they're, you know, and folks who came to support him he couldn't he couldn't look him in the eye. He held his head down most of the time. Um, you know, in it, it does. I mean, again, Mandy, the first time we see real emotion in court, from any defendant was from Cory. And that's one reason why I think so many people see it, and they have a hard time, like, processing this because it was real emotion. And we're not used to that in this case. You know, but, but I mean, you know, in Eric and I've talked and, you know, it's one of those things, and Eric went to point that out a bit in the sentence and and we saw what happened with him and him and Judge Gergel on that front. But Eric was, the point is very well, well taken by those of us who've been involved in this from the beginning is no one told Cory to make misrepresentations through his attorney, right? I don't no one blames the attorney for doing their job. Okay. The information that the attorneys recite, comes from the client. And he didn't, Cory didn't tell the truth to the Georgia Bar when he sent that response. Um, we don't know exactly what he sent to the South Carolina Bar, but Cory could have come clean.,right. he could have called the client he could have been straight up with the with ODC. Um, you know, I vividly recall before I just abandoned dealing with Cory to deal with PMPED, and Palmetto State Bank. I'm like, oh, no, no, go ahead and get an expert affidavit on legal malpractice so y'all can tell us what you think Cory did wrong. And I'm like, bro, we're not doing all that I'm not about to spin myths, especially now that I'm like, we know that there was money that was still missing. I'm not gonna go spend this lady's money to play legal games in the legal malpractice arena and and pay \$5-\$10 grand for some expert to, to piece together and say, this is where Cory breaches to standard of care as an attorney, when he already knew where he breached the standard of care as an attorney. It's that kind of stuff that makes me have very little pity for him. Because you shouldn't take the United States government come in, and again, knocking on your door for you to step up and just do the right thing, right. And again, it's just that's the coyote in the damn trap, you know.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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**Mandy Matney** 43:56

After Judge Gergel heard from Cory's supporters, Cory himself spoke, and herein was another difference between him and Russell. Whether or not Cory actually felt remorse for what he had done, it sure did seem like it. Cory spoke softly with his head hung, his voice cracked, and he cried several times throughout a statement.

**DAVID MOSES** 44:21

I have made some terrible decisions. Today I offer the court no excuses. I place the blame for my actions on my shoulder alone. I have a profound and deep disappointment in myself.

**Mandy Matney** 44:40

He addressed Gloria Satterfield's sons.

**DAVID MOSES** 44:43

You deserved a lawyer. You deserve someone who would be honest with you. Someone who would not betray your trust. I failed you.

**Mandy Matney** 44:57

He addressed Pamela Pinckney.

**DAVID MOSES** 45:00

I not only betrayed you as a client, I betrayed you as a friend. I cannot express to you how empty I feel when I think about what you must think of me.

**Mandy Matney** 45:15

To both the Satterfield and the Pinckney families, he said,

**DAVID MOSES** 45:20

I know an apology is inadequate. I have no right to expect your forgiveness.

**Justin Bamberg** 45:30

And what I saw from Cory was a lot of moments where he wasn't faking by any stretch of the imagination. Oh, man, I had a good seat, though. I was sitting up next to the law enforcement folks and the US Attorneys and in front, like actually in the courtroom, and there's no doubt in my mind that his tears, his shame. You know, I saw sadness. I saw regret. I saw shame. I saw disappointment in himself. I saw heartbreak. And I saw just a feeling of why did I allow myself to get in a situation and



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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I wish I had never done what I what I did. That is what I saw from Cory. Cory absolutely knows what he did was wrong, and he absolutely understands. And I think he 150% accepts that what he did was wrong. He's different than the other guys in that regard. You know, Alex only said that stuff because it was expected of him to say that, you know, and he was so disingenuous witness at his murder trial, he, he couldn't even remember everybody he's screwed over. He's leaving people's names out. Instead, these are my clients who died just like the Hannah Plyler, and Alaina's brother. He didn't remember remember him. You know, it's very fake. Cory gets it.

**Mandy Matney** 47:07

Cory, also apologized to his colleagues in the South Carolina Bar Association, saying he was deeply sorry that his actions have tarnished a profession that he loves so much.

**Liz Farrell** 47:20

Then in a sob, Cory apologized to his wife and children.

**DAVID MOSES** 47:26

I will spend the rest of my life regretting the shame I have brought on them. I promise you, I will try for the rest of my life to earn back your respect.

**Liz Farrell** 47:44

He thanked his friends for their support. He thanked the prosecution for treating him fairly and acknowledged the resources that had been expended on investigating his conduct.

**DAVID MOSES** 47:53

I have taken a very hard look in the mirror and have not liked some of the things I've seen looking back at me. I betrayed this system.

**Liz Farrell** 48:10

He called himself perhaps undeserving of mercy from the court. It was a very emotional and like we said seemingly genuine display of remorse. It affected the alchemy of the room, many of his supporters cried along with them. For one brief moment, it was easy to believe that this wasn't just a last ditch effort to save himself.

**Mandy Matney** 48:41



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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After Cory spoke we heard from the victims and their attorneys. Tony Satterfield told the court that he as a Christian had already forgiven Cory. Gloria's sister, Ginger Hadwin, told the court that she too had forgiven Cory, but she will never forget what Alex and Cory had done, quote, "that someone could steal and profit off of someone's death is unimaginable." She said if Alex and Cory had given their nephew's a small amount of money, they would have thought the world of those two men, quote "instead you chose to be greedy." She said, quote "Gloria didn't die in vain. Her death shined a light on the thievery that was going on." When Pamela Pinkney stood up to speak, she told the judge again how hard this has been for her having to relive her son's death. Then she turned to Cory, and humanize the man who had dehumanized others for financial gain. "Tto Mr. Cory, I'm going to look at you. I forgive you." It was an incredible act of kindness from the victims and so moving to see. Here's Justin.

**Justin Bamberg** 50:00

I know that Miss P has been, um, I think bringing her faith. She has been able to get to the point where she can bring her faith into the situation even more to help deal with the emotional strain of the situation. Um, she's just in a better place now than she's been. And she had a she had a different relationship with Cory too, remember Cory was her lawyer. Like in the actual tire tread wreck Cory represented her. You know, so she had communications with him and stuff like that. So I think it was just, it's just easier for her to process all this she's in a better place mentally. She's in a better place spiritually. You know, when we went outside and, you know, she was asked, like, you know, that moment where you said you were going to turn and look Cory in the eye and they looked each other in the eye. I was standing right there. That's the view y'all don't get. Miss P did looked him straight in the eyes and he looked her straight in the eyes. And then she said what she said and I think that cut through him like a freakin dagger for her to stare him in the face and say I forgive you. You know? I think that it he felt that. I mean, if he didn't recognize before, I think in that moment, with Tony Satterfield saying that to him, I think he realized the true good natured quality of the people that he hurt and it started to hit him.

**Liz Farrell** 51:34

Sadly, though, it felt at times like Judge Gergel did not want to hear from the victims, or at least the victims' attorneys. He gave them meaning the attorneys have sort of, yeah, I know all this already attitude. And though he's sometimes added comments to their statements that further highlighted what he called the amazingly egregious nature of Cory's actions, he seemed more open to hearing a narrative that supported Cory as a man in search of redemption. He seemed very much moved by Cory





## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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throwing himself on the mercy of the court. He seemed to think that in and of itself was enough. Perhaps that's fitting of a judge, but it was disturbing to witness. When Eric spoke, he acknowledged Cory's remorse and he validated it. Eric was incredibly respectful of the emotions that had overtaken the room. But he also told the judge that he felt it was important for Cory's acts to be put on the public record. He wasn't wrong. Though the people in the room knew Cory had done wrong, it's likely that not all of them knew specifically what he had done. And it's the specifics that showed just how much he disregarded his role as an officer of the court and a fiduciary, and just how little he thought of his clients. But after Eric started listing these bad acts, Judge Gergel shut him down telling him he had heard enough from him. And that's unfortunate because, like Eric and Justin have both said, Cory Fleming is a man who was out of options. Debbie told the court that Cory made the decision in March 2023 to admit to everything and take his punishment. Well, what changed in March? Oh, right. Alex did not get away with murder. For the first time in history, a Murdaugh had been punished for his bad acts by the very court that this family had long taken pride in controlling. Now we've talked about this a lot with each other and we can totally see why it would be good legal advice to wait and see what happens with Alex before making any decisions on your own linked criminal case. But we can't ignore the fact that this, Cory's waiting, was done in the hopes of seeing how much punishment he could escape. And that's hard to respect knowing what Cory had done. And now knowing the image Cory wants to project, that of a man who is deeply ashamed and who is ready to take his licks. Another important thing to note is that even though Cory was never on the floor, pounding his fists and kicking his legs like Russell has been at every turn, he did not take responsibility for this right away like his friends have told us he did. Yes, he was the first to pay back the money to the Satterfields and didn't fight it. Yes, he has, like Emily Limehouse noted to the court remained silent throughout the process. There was no Cory TV or outlandish statements made to the press from Debbie Barbier, but he didn't just commit a crime in 2019. His crime against Pamela Pinckney happened 10 years earlier than that, meaning there's a timeline to this and timelines need to be explored for patterns, right? Also, in a 50 page letter to the Georgia Bar Association in February 2022. Cory fought for his license by splitting every hair there was to split and by outright denying that he had any knowledge that Alex was going to steal the money or that he was participating in a theft. We now know that this was a lie. Debbie, and again this is why she's good, acknowledged this. She told the court took Cory while to face up to what he had done, to admit to himself that he had committed a crime. After the government spoke about Cory, Judge Gergel asked Debbie if she had anything she wanted to add. She said, I'm not going to belabor any of my points.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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Then she turned to the victims and seemed to get choked up. Thank you for forgiving Mr. Fleming. I've worked closely with him and I believe he is truly remorseful. I hope this will go a long way in helping Mr. Fleming forgive himself. There's just a few more things to note about this intense hearing. One is that Russell's name was mentioned more than a few times. The judge and government were not shy about holding up Cory and comparing him favorably to Russell. It happened over and over. "These two defendants could not be more differently situated," Emily told the judge, noting that Russell not only wouldn't admit to what he had done, he had committed new crimes to cover up his old crimes. She also reminded the judge that Russell was now appealing his sentence, you know, the one that came in two years less than the very bottom of his sentencing guidelines. He did this, Emily said, in an attempt to stay out on bond. Emily noted that Cory had saved the government valuable resources and that he had spent two days with investigators as part of his proffer. He gave the government new information that they did not previously know. And he identified others in these schemes. But she also said that the information Cory had given them did not amount to quote, "substantial assistance." And this is important. This is the loophole in our opinion, the one that could allow the federal government to stall on its Murdaugh related investigations. If Cory's assistance isn't considered substantial, then why did he get to plead to a lesser charge? Why did the Feds allow this obvious attempt to neuter the state? They could have waited, they could have allowed the state to go first. Cory's trial is scheduled for September 11. But no the feds squeeze this in for him. That is called a favor. Speaking of favors, there's another big one the federal government did. And that's for Palmetto State Bank and Peters Murdaugh Parker Eltzroth and Detrick, they labeled them victims. As we told you before Russell will be paying millions and restitution to PSB and PMPED. Cory will be paying just over \$100,000 in restitution for the money he had taken from Pamela Pinckney. Cory was only charged by the Feds for his crime against the Satterfield though. His crime against Pamela Pinckney was too long ago to prosecute federally but not in South Carolina. He faces five state charges for what he did to her. So why then why did the judge ordered him to pay restitution for a crime he was not charged with? Well, let's look at where the bulk of that Pinckney restitution will go. To PMPED. You heard that right. Well, Judge Gergel may be a widely respected jurist, we have to say he has let the public down here by allowing PMPED and PSB to be labeled victims. He has given both the firm and the bank a new way to claim Alex Murdaugh's estate, meaning they now have a better standing in taking money that should go to the people Alex hurt and the people he stole from. There are so many reasons why PMPED and PSB are not victims in this and we are not done getting to the bottom of those reasons.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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**Mandy Matney** 58:42

Now, I want to talk about one of the most powerful symbolic moments in court on Tuesday. After Miss Pinckney spoke, Justin spoke on behalf of his clients. At that point during the hearing, it felt like the whole room was crying for Cory, I almost felt like we were being hoodwinked again in this process, like somehow this man who chose to steal and lie, and enabled a monster to hurt so many people, a man who could have stopped all of this, how could he get that much sympathy from an entire group of people?

**Justin Bamberg** 59:21

It was like, I don't know. It was kind of like Cory was a shining star that happened to have a blemish or something like that and it was all like positive stuff with him and the whole time, you know, because we heard from the defense and all that first they didn't object anything so there was no fighting. So the whole first three fourths of the hearing was Cory the superstar and the Mr. Rogers version of Cory, right? And then me and Eric got to come in and be like, well, let's yank this thing back a bit from Cory so amazing and really put the attention on the victims here.

**Mandy Matney** 1:00:13

Justin was honest and said what those of us not on Cory side, we're thinking, that Cory's remorse was hard to accept considering the amount of things that had to happen to get Cory to fess up. Judge Gergel pushed back on this and made it a point to say that he believed that Cory was genuinely remorseful for what he did. So Justin, after essentially getting shut down by a federal judge, did what he does best. He explained it in his thick Bamberg, South Carolina accent through country wisdom.

**Justin Bamberg** 1:00:50

But, you know, again, Mandy, I feel super country every time I have to get up and talk in court because a you've got Eric who's like, got this Philly, like roughneck vibe, right? Real aggressive, and all that, real forceful. And then I'm very slow talking in the country drawl and all that. And then I use these random examples. So, you know, I had been thinking about, like, how can I tell the judge in an artful way why I don't believe that Cory is remorseful for what he did to these people? And, and so the coyote phrase, right. We're in rural South Carolina so whether it be Beaufort, Hampton, Colleton, Bamberg, Allendale, you know, we've got a lot of wild coyotes out here. Um, in fact, our state went so far as to they did a bounty on coyotes, right? You get paid for for killing coyotes and stuff because they've been tearing everything up.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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So I got some buddies that do coyote trapping on their properties. And if a coyote gets trapped, they'll still bite you, right? If you see them and you approach them, they're really aggressive. They snarl at you, and if you put your hand out there, they're gonna grab a hold of it. The only time the coyote calms down, is when it finally realizes I ain't getting out unless somebody else lets me out or it's about to die or to dead already, right? That's the only time that coyote chills out and when I see the distance a decade between Pinckney and Satterfield and then you think about when, when you first started digging, and you found this information about the Satterfield settlement, right? Anybody tied to the negative stuff that was going on, anybody that knew the dirt? And as a lawyer, you know, did I expect it from a banker? I don't. Lawyers have obligations and if I found out today that five years ago there was an accounting error, where maybe we wrote, we wrote a check to a client that was \$10 short, okay. I have an ongoing obligation. I don't represent the person anymore. I may not have spoken to him since we finished the case. I have on I have an obligation on going to find them and correct it and tell them hey, look, I owe you \$10, right? Cory could have done that, he could have called, doesn't require lawyers. This is before ODC, office of disciplinary council, is on him. Cory could have picked up the phone and call Miss P and said Miss P, I am so freaking sorry. I've got something I got to tell you. I did some stuff with your money that I shouldn't. And before anybody comes and I think is about to get bad, I need I need to see you because I need to give this to you. Or at a minimum I want to apologize for what I did, and I know I'm about to face some consequences for it, right? He could have done that. He could have called the Satterfield's and came clean to them. But that's not what happened, right? And the coyote in the trap that'll still bite is Cory up until the United States government came and knocked on the door like yo, we're here for you. And then that's all the cooperation talk, all the told us everything talk, that's because coyote realized there's only one way out of this and that's through the feds. So of course the coyote is gonna let the trap be open in that in that situation. And that's kind of my view on it um, you know. Real remorse who would have been waiting on the government come crackdown on you when when you as a lawyer, especially when you still had your license could have easily address this on your own.

**Mandy Matney** 1:04:56

And that right there is why it was essential that Cory got prison time on Tuesday. An attorney who used his position of power to steal, lie and cheat cannot just skate away because he woke up one day and realized that he is not invincible. Particularly he woke up on a day soon after his best friend and co-conspirator was convicted of





## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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murder. A guy like that can not just pay the right lawyer to make all of the right moves and carve out the easiest way possible to get out of this.

**Justin Bamberg** 1:05:30

Mandy, the craziest part, and I don't know why I decided to go down this rabbit hole in my mind, but I was like, what would have happened, right, when we try to gauge, right, so like you're you're thinking about Cory, and the real tears and the raw emotion, right. And then there's this inkling to have a degree of sympathy for him because he's so different than the other defendants in terms of the overall conduct, right? But then you think about, well, what if? What if Mallory Beach would have never died? What if there was never a boat crash? What if there was nothing that triggered? You know, you to go start digging in find this stuff on Gloria Satterfield? But what if none of that would have happened? It would be status quo, right? There were there would be no, I'm so sorry I stole client money. There would be no. I'm so remorseful for what I did to the Satterfields and the Pickneys. It would be business as usual. And everybody be going on with their life. Alex asked, probably still be out there stealing people's money. And when called upon, Cory would step in and work with Alex, on the old school, cook up method and be a little money skim to your or something. None, nothing would change, right. And that's the hard part of when you really, as I see it, you got to figure out, does somebody have true remorse? Can you have true remorse, without getting caught?

**Mandy Matney** 1:07:09

But ultimately, Cory's remorse doesn't matter all of that much. What matters is that the case shows him and other powerful attorneys that they cannot get away with this.

**Justin Bamberg** 1:07:25

You know, and, again, that's where I think some people are really people who watch, you know, people who haven't been really following or who wouldn't weren't at the sentencing or didn't hear everything. I've seen people saying, Oh, I can't believe that's all the time he got. Right, or things like that. Um, a, he got sentenced. I think that for somebody who ain't a demon, almost, what, three, three years in 10 months in federal prison day for day is a very, very, very long time. On top of what's coming from the state.

**Mandy Matney** 1:08:08

And what is coming with those state charges? I asked Justin about this.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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**Justin Bamberg** 1:08:12

By all accounts, the South Carolina AG has offices is not backing off. Um, you do have instances where on the state may charge somebody, and then the feds come in. Actually happened, a friend of mine, um, you get charged by the state. And then the feds come in and take over and they charge you federally and then usually the state just dumps their case, unless the Feds deal with you, and you go to federal prison. Okay, um, but I don't see that happening here. Um the AG's office and again, you know, when we talk about cooperation, coyote in the trap, okay, did the ' office get the same degree of cooperation that the feds got? Or did the AG's office get the type of cooperation that me and Eric Bland got, and Ronnie, right? Um, my understanding is they're not going to back off. We don't want them to back off. The federal government has its own independent interest in ensuring that federal laws are not broken. That has nothing to do with the state's laws. And at the end of the day, Cory was a lawyer in the state of South Carolina and Cory broke laws here, and we've got to see the process through and if that means that he goes ahead, I mean, I think at this point, he needs to just plead guilty and take whatever comes.

**Mandy Matney** 1:09:45

Again, as a reminder, Cory hasn't pleaded guilty to any of his state charges. That is another indication that he hasn't fully accepted responsibility for this. Judge Gergel made it a point to say that he believed that Cory would plead guilty to the state charges, which was an odd thing to say about a former lawyer whose past behavior has been entirely unpredictable. The state deserves the same cooperation from Cory as the feds got from him. Let's be clear here, Cory needs to come clean about the entire scheme. Cory needs to tell the state every person who committed crimes and allowed this to go on for as long as it did. If Cory truly regrets what he did, if Cory Fleming truly wants to right his wrongs and pay his debt to society, he needs to spill all of the tea with the state. It is our biggest hope and finding out what happened to the money and what exactly Alex was up to this entire time. It's also our biggest hope to really change things in South Carolina and across the United States. Cory has to help the state liked help the Feds. And the state needs to keep the pressure up so that Cory the Coyote finally stops biting and realized he's trapped by them. We could debate all day about whether or not Cory's federal sentence was fair. But it is impossible to determine that until we see the outcome of the state charges. As Justin reminded me, what happened on Tuesday is something that two years ago, few people could have ever imagined. We saw an invincible man finally be held to account for his actions. Even if he got an easy route in doing so.



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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**Justin Bamberg** 1:11:42

In the sentencing that we're seeing is reflecting that, you know, judges are lawyers, prosecutors are lawyers, the defense attorneys are lawyers, the defendants are lawyers, and they all go into prison, right? We ain't protecting them. Um, I'm I'm very proud of how the system has operated um, you know whether it took some pushing to get the ball rolling downhill aside. I think that the system has done his job in giving a voice to the victims. One of the one of the things I'm most excited about Mandy, and a lot of it has to do with the work that you did, and Liz and a lot of others, is this has not just been a story about the defendants. At the forefront of this, and it has been from the beginning, at the forefront are the faces of the stories of and the plights of the victims.

**Mandy Matney** 1:12:47

We have to see that as a win as Justin reminded me. We have to keep pushing because the work is too important. And there's too much on the line. Justin said it better than I did.

**Justin Bamberg** 1:13:01

What I will say is and it it's quote, "We must accept finite disappointment. But never lose infinite hope. We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." And that just means that these disappointments that we face when we push for transparency or True Sunlight, the rays don't quite punch through the wall. That's finite disappointment, its short term, it will pass. But if you keep pushing, infinite hope, never ending hope is how you expose the darkness and change the darkness and the work that y'all are doing, the work that Eric does, the work that I do, the work that other professionals or not even professionals, the average everyday person, your viewer, or your listener who goes through their life trying to be a good person they go above and beyond show the best of the world. We're the ones that dictate where this world ends up going. Not the other people. The other people only dictate it when we stopped doing our thing. And I just tell her to stay hopeful man, infinite hope, baby!

**Mandy Matney** 1:14:23

Exclusively for Luna Shark premium members: We have a quick update from reporter Beth Braden on the Grant Solomon case.

**Beth Braden** 1:14:32



## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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It is no secret that we're not the first journalists on the scene in the Grant Solomon case. And in addition to some updates, we have a great example of what it looks like when reporters collaborate for the greater good. Lauren Conlin is the podcaster behind Corruption: What Happened to Grant Solomon as well as Lauren Interviews, her pop culture and entertainment podcast. She's been amazingly gracious to us as we have also begun to look into the Solomon case after so many of our listeners and Angie Solomon herself reached out to us. I think there's naturally some nerves when you start a new story. We want to do what we can to bring light to a situation, but we don't want anybody to feel like we're encroaching on their beat. Mandy, Liz and I come from reporting backgrounds where it's just a really cutthroat business model and everybody, including your own co-workers, are your competition. So with all that in mind, it is just so refreshing to meet another journalist who would be a competitor in previous iterations of our careers, and instead of competing, she actually wants to help. Both of our podcasts have the same goal, finding the truth in this story and making sure there's justice for Grant and Gracie. It's like a post we saw on social media a few weeks ago that said simply those on top don't compete, they collaborate. Collaboration is exactly what happened when Lauren and I started texting with one another last Friday and she invited me to a meeting on Saturday in Franklin, Tennessee. Lauren, as well as two experts in investigations and security, were traveling in from around the country to meet, Angie and Gracie, Grant's mother and sister, and hear more about Grant's case. Grant Solomon, you may remember, is the 18 year old from Tennessee who died after he was allegedly struck and dragged by his own pickup truck in 2020 with his father, Aaron Solomon, is the only witness. There are just a few issues with that narrative, namely the fact that he had no road rash after allegedly being dragged across asphalt and into a rocky ditch. You can catch up on who Grant is and why this case matters in True Sunlight episodes 9 and 11. So on August 12, I met Lauren Conlin, Angie and Gracie Solomon, and a young man named George for lunch in Franklin, a suburb south of Nashville. Keep George's name in your mind because I think he is going to play a vital role in this saga as a Grace Christian Academy alum with his own heartbreaking story about what he says went on at the school, the church and other related organizations in Middle Tennessee. You guys, Gracie is so sweet. She was quiet but had a friendly smile. And I sensed hope coming from both her and Angie who sipped on a sweet tea and coffee at the same time. Gracie, who is just shy of 17 and her mom, Angie, genuinely appear at ease around one another. Throughout the day, Angie told Lauren and I repeatedly how thankful she was that we were there. After lunch, Lauren, George, and I sat in on a nearly three hour meeting between Angie and the two investigation experts who wanted to know more about the case. Then Angie took us to see Grant's truck which





## EPISODE 12: 'Coyote In A Trap': Did Cory Fleming Pull a Fast One?

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she has owned since 2021. Seeing the vehicle that Aaron Solomon reportedly drove for several months after it allegedly dragged his only son to death was surreal, but also shocking. I expected to see a smaller truck sitting closer to the ground. But no, that is a pretty big truck. I dropped to my knees to take a look underneath and see how much space there really was between the truck and the ground. And I am confident in saying the lowest hanging part underneath the truck is at least a foot off the ground. Grant was more than six feet tall and very slim. Being dragged seems to be an even more unlikely explanation after seeing his truck. Every time we try to answer a question about what happened to Grant, four more questions take its place. You can expect more updates on his case and future episodes of True Sunlight.

**Mandy Matney** 1:18:06

Stay tuned, stay pesky and stay in the sunlight. True Sunlight is created by me, Mandy Matney, co hosted by journalist Liz Farrell and produced by my husband David Moses. True Sunlight is a Luna Shark Production. Right, Luna?

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