



EPISODE 13: "I Don't Think He Cared": Cory Fleming Pleads Guilty To State Charges + Murdaugh's Enablers Get A Taste of Big Creighton Energy

Mandy Matney 0:04

I don't know how much time Cory Fleming deserves to spend in state prison for what he did to the Satterfield and Pinckney families. But after Fleming pleaded guilty to all 23 state charges this week, it is clear that the state is going to go where the feds wouldn't to hold Cory and Alex Murdaugh's co-conspirators accountable and that 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 written with journalist Liz Farrell.

Mandy Matney 1:06

This week a headline in the *Hampton County Guardian*, the local newspaper of Alex Murdaugh's hometown read, "one by one Alex Murdaugh's accomplices are falling like dominoes." My initial reaction was, are they? Because it doesn't feel like it. Then I thought about it more, and I got angrier. This isn't a game of dominoes with Alex Murdaugh's co-conspirators, it's whack a mole. Every single time one of his boys goes down, or we think they're down to more sprout up from the surface, showing their beady little eyes and empty souls. Then you focus on getting these guys down, and you put all of your time and energy into really making sure they don't get back up again. And just like that, that one mole that you thought was for sure defeated pops up again, showing his stupid little eyes. You can't win. Not unless you have a bunch of really pesky people whacking at the bad guys along with you and refusing to give up even when victory seems impossible. This is the game we have all been playing for the last two years. And by we, let's be honest here, I mean SLED, I mean the Feds, I mean the US Attorney's Office, I mean the State's Attorney General's office, I mean the public at large, who is tired of the system. And I mean, the journalists who are doing their best to expose these guys who made a joke out of the legal system. And the moles, I'm talking about Alex Murdaugh, his doofus defense team, Cory Fleming and Russell Laffitte. Also the lingering moles in the background who aren't making much noise, but they're definitely still up and about, Carmen



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Mullen. Dominoes don't get back up after they fall. If they were actually dominoes, if Alex Murdaugh's co-conspirators were actually dominoes, who accepted defeat and responsibility for their actions, then the last two years would have been much easier on a whole cluster of people. And because of that, we have to keep fighting. I've said this many times, but our team is definitely experiencing Murdaugh fatigue. But we've noticed that the second that we back off the story, even a little, shenanigans that need sunlight, start back up again, the bad guys want us to move on, which is why it's so important. We keep playing whack-a-mole. Even if we never win, we at least have to make it harder for them to get back up. This podcast alone is not going to change the South Carolina justice system. We need lawmakers, we need community leaders, lawyers, judges, law enforcement, solicitors and most importantly voters to do that. But what we can do is shine a harsh spotlight on South Carolina, we can expose the misdeeds we see in the justice system and we can keep making noise until something is done about it. We can keep shouting to the world about how we have two systems of justice here in South Carolina and in the United States. I know many of you have asked about the Solomon case and I assure you we are working really hard on future episodes and we have a lot to talk about there. But we realized this month that we just can't abandon this story. Because we are tired of the South Carolina good ol' boys in their endless audacity. There are too many loose ends that we have to see through including Stephen Smith, which we are patiently waiting for SLED to announce progress on. We have come so far, we have exposed so much. We can't just walk away because we are tired. And we hope you don't either. The work we are doing here and the work you are doing by listening is ultimately leading to accountability. And we have to focus on that. Sunlight is a key ingredient to accountability. It's the first step to ensuring justice. Journalists can't guarantee their work will lead to justice. There are too many things outside of our control. We have no say and how Cory will be sentenced at the state level. But we can make sure that lots of people know and understand exactly what he did. And when we do that, when Cory's egregious actions are aired out for the world to see, I like to think



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that it makes other Cory-like men out there who are thinking about using their positions of power to steal from the vulnerable, maybe they're thinking twice before they do bad things. I hope that people who thought that they were untouchable hear about Cory's story and think "hmm, and maybe I don't want my neighbors knowing how horrible I was and maybe I shouldn't do the bad thing. I should stop doing the bad thing. Or I should do the right thing and come clean." I thought about this a lot in the last week as all of my extra angry energy has been dedicated to watching the horrific story in Marion, Kansas unfold. As a journalist born and raised in Kansas, I couldn't look away. And I had to mention it in this episode because it strikes to the core of what we're doing here. Why sunlight and accountability matter and how off course our justice system is right now, well beyond South Carolina. In a nutshell, what happened was earlier this month, Marion Kansas police illegally raided the Marion County record newspapers office and the publisher's home where his 98 year old mother Joan Meyer lived I want to play this part of the video that captured the rate of Joan Meyer's home and was posted on the Marion County Record's YouTube page.

Joan Meyer 7:15

This is my house.

Unknown Speaker 7:16

Ma'am, please get (unintelligible).

Joan Meyer 7:21

You asshole.

Unknown Speaker 7:23

We'll be out of here pretty quick.

Joan Meyer 7:25



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Get them outta here! They're here. (unintelligible) your mother loves you? Do you love your mother? You're an asshole. (unintelligible) police chief. Oh god, get outta my house. (unintelligible) Stand outside.

Unknown Speaker 7:50

(unintelligible) Stand by the door (unintelligible)

Joan Meyer 7:53

I don't want you in my house.

Mandy Matney 7:50

Police took reporter's phones, computers, financial documents and even Miss Meyer's Amazon Alexa that she uses for emergency purposes. Less than 24 hours after that raid, Joan Meyer died of a heart attack. Her son said it absolutely was caused by the police raid. The stress of it was unbearable for Joan Meyer, who worked in newspapers for decades. There has been a lot of great reporting on this case from the Kansas Reflector, the Kansas City Star and KSHB to name a few. And here is what they found. Well, the police chief in charge of the investigation was being investigated by the newspaper for his checkered past at another department. Hmm. The judge who signed off on the absurd warrants had two previous DUI arrests that were not listed in her application. Hmm. The warrants, which have been withdrawn after police found no criminal evidence, were all based on an absurd allegation that the newspaper reporters had obtained a local business owner's driving record illegally. It was confirmed that they did not and the police chief needs a lesson on the First Amendment and public records. Bottom line, the allegations for which police attempted to justify the raid were much less concerning than the cops actions during the raid. They trampled over the rights that so many have fought for, and a woman died after the unlawful raid. There must be accountability. Every American citizen who doesn't want to live in a country where its people are not protected by the First Amendment and police who don't understand the Constitution have the power to intimidate and silence



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citizens through illegal raids. All of us need to be making noise about this. Here's the thing. I would be willing to bet that the Marion police never in a million years expected the media around the world to cover this story. I have written a lot of stories about men like Chief Cody, who used their positions of power to intimidate and control instead of serving and protecting. He probably didn't want dozens of newspapers looking into his record questioning why he suddenly left a much bigger police department several months ago in combing over his every move. And now that his headaches are multiplying, thanks to many Kansas journalists doing their job to fight an attack on journalism with good journalism. As someone on Twitter put, you have to wonder if he would do it all again. We hope the KBI, which is Kansas's SLED, holds the chief of police and the judge who signed off on these warrants accountable. We hope they send a message to the rest of the world that this totalitarian behavior by authorities will not be tolerated in the United States. But mostly, we hope the Kansas journalists shining sunlight on this town where officials broke the law stay on top of the story until we see accountability. This is how the fourth estate is supposed to work. That is how democracy is supposed to work. It's why journalism is more important now than it has ever been. This episode is dedicated to the pesky Joan Meyer, who lost her life fighting the good fight, standing up for herself and the First Amendment.

Liz Farrell 11:44

Let's give you a little background on how we got to Wednesday so you can understand where our heads were at right before Cory Fleming's hearing started. On Monday morning, in the middle of recording our latest cup of justice episode, we got word that a status conference in Cory's state case, which had been scheduled for Wednesday, was no longer going to be a status conference. Instead, we were told it would be a sentencing hearing. We were told Cory was likely going to plead guilty to all 23 charges and the sentencing would be left up to Judge Clifton Newman to decide. Naturally we were like "oh stop right there kid" because as you know, we've been



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side-eyeing Cory's single federal charge and his federal plea deal last week as nothing more than a hardcore press to escape the state charges. Since this was coming so quickly after his meager federal sentencing of 46 months and Judge Richard Gergel's repeated lament about the state's insistence on pursuing charges, it seemed like this could be the next step in Cory's master plan. If he could get to Judge Newman while Judge Gergel's words about not tarring and feathering him were still hot off the presses, maybe Judge Newman would take that sentiment to heart. Up until this past week, it had looked like the state attorney general's office was going to push for a hefty state sentence for Cory. Hefty as in 14 years, which 14 years in the South Carolina prison system is psychologically like, I don't know, 50 years in federal prison. And this might explain Cory's seeming nervousness at the defense table Wednesday. But we'll get into that. Obviously, if that 14 year offer was on the table, and we're hearing that it was somewhere around that number, it wasn't something Cory was ever going to accept ever. That's why we were fully prepared for this case to go to trial in September, we figured given how confident our sources have been about the state attorney general office's resolve not to back down, that this was Cory's best option. And in fact, we were hoping it would go to trial because ultimately it would end up putting more information on the record about what Alex and Cory had been up to, and how things worked in that world. We were also hoping it might lead to the identification of more co-conspirators. Some people's hopes, of course, are other people's deep worries. We have to imagine the idea of Cory going to trial might be nerve racking to the unidentified Murdaugh co-conspirators, so we had to wonder if that had anything to do with why Cory was willing to plead guilty and take his chances with the sentencing. In other words, is this not only Cory trying to minimize his own punishment? Is it Cory trying to protect whatever malevolent thing lies beneath all of this? Another thing we found out on Monday was that attorneys in Beaufort County were rallying for Cory. They were trying to get as many of their colleagues as possible to write letters in support of leniency and traveled to Williamsburg County on Wednesday for what they themselves were calling a sentencing hearing. Let's



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pause for a second here. You heard what I said right? Attorneys in Beaufort County were rallying for Cory. They were trying to get as many of his colleagues as possible to drive up to Williamsburg County to sit behind Cory in solidarity. This is one of the most gross things that has happened in all of this. To hear that attorneys, the very people who should be insulted and disgusted by what Cory did, we're trying to help minimize the sentence. It's yet another sign that nothing has changed here. Let's be super clear, even though Cory says he's ashamed and even though he seems to be remorseful, this wasn't a one time slip up. This was behavior that spanned at least 10 years and its behavior he denied up until recently, but okay, fine. His colleagues are minimizing the criminal element of this, they are attorneys. Many of them literally do that for a living. What about the professional conduct part? It seriously wouldn't surprise us to find out that these same attorneys are the ones who have been complaining about the backlash that they have been getting from their clients not trusting them the way they used to trust them because of hearing about everything that Alex had done to his clients and everything Cory had done to help him. And just to give context, this might be like Mandy and me standing in support of a journalist who made up sources or who plagiarize other people's writing or who straight up and knowingly wrote lies about people. We would never do that. There has to be a firm line in the sand between what is right and wrong when you're in a profession that values ethical behavior and largely operates on trust. At any rate, this was what was on our minds Tuesday, when we found out that Cory's status conference turned sentencing hearing was now going to be just a hearing in which Cory entered his plea. The sentencing we were told would be held at a later date. I know Cory's friends think we're beating a dead horse here. But let's look at where we're coming from. Cory pleaded not guilty in March 2022. When he was first arraigned, he wrote a 50 some odd page letter to the Georgia Bar denying every tiny aspect of this that made him look bad beyond a few innocent mistakes getting made, meaning he thought he would still be a lawyer after this. Cory wasn't sent to jail to await trial and wasn't required to wear an ankle monitor while out on bond. And when the AGs office filed more



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charges against him in May 2022 Cory didn't even have to appear in court again to enter his second not guilty plea. Cory did not come clean about his crimes until after it was clear that Alex wasn't going to get away with murder. He didn't actually cooperate with state investigators, and he didn't quote "substantially" assist the federal government. This guy was now pleading guilty to the state charges. And this guy's sentencing hearing was put off so that it could be scheduled for Beaufort County so that victims could attend, which obviously, that's a good thing if we're truly talking about making it easier on the victims. But it's really unusual to schedule a plea hearing and a sentencing hearing on two different days, at least in our experience. So we have to ask, was this for the victims or for the attorneys who were trying to rally up the troops and support Cory? It sure does make things more convenient for them and it gives them the benefit of more time. Since Judge Newman is presiding over the case, we're going to err on the side of this decision being for the victims. But here's the thing, having his lawyer friends, there might actually be really helpful to Cory, it would certainly send a message to Judge Newman that Cory's crimes were mere professional aberrations and that this really isn't who he is because would all these lawyers who should be mad at him be here otherwise? It'll be interesting to see who shows up now that the world has seen Cory Fleming in stripes. Seems like it could be a real "there but for the grace of God go I" situation for a few of them.

Mandy Matney 18:59

Okay, let's talk about what happened Wednesday. We've got to start by talking about those stripes. I cannot overemphasize how surreal this was seeing the mighty men in the Murdaugh world wearing literal stripes. Last week, Cory looked like a broken man as he left the courtroom flanked by US Marshals. This week, he looks like that same broken man had morphed into an Instagram post of a sad looking dog whose owner put a shame sign around his neck that said I had an accident in the house while the Roomba was running. From all outside appearances, Cory looked about as humbled as one could look in court. His family sat a few rows behind him. It was almost



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like he couldn't bring himself to look at them. Oddly, he was wearing his wedding ring, which please tell us the jail isn't allowing that. Also, that was all before Creighton Waters started to outline his crimes and how they were being carried out, how each crime required a decision on Cory's part, a fork in the road between doing what was right and what was illegal. Remember when Eric Bland tried to do this and federal court last week, when he told the court it was important for the people there supporting Cory understood what this was all about, and important that the public record reflect what he did. And then Judge Gergel smugly shut him down. Well, Creighton had EB's back on Wednesday and yes, he brought Big Creighton Energy. Actually, it was the biggest Big Creighton Energy we have seen to this date. Maybe we should start calling him BBCE. Because Creighton really seemed to rattle Cory and his attorneys, it seemed like something happened that they did not plan on happening. Some of our sources seem to think that they were not counting on Creighton reading all of the facts of the case. But why would they ever think that he wouldn't do that? We were wondering if it was a case that wasn't mentioned in the indictment, that case that we told you about already, and we'll get to that in a minute. Whatever the reason the rattle, it isn't a stretch to believe that what we've witnessed in Cory in real time realizing that he'd made a very risky gamble by pleading guilty to all of the charges, a strategy that has a lot of people scratching their heads right now. Creighton started by telling Judge Newman that he had been informed that Cory intended to plead to all 23 charges. Cory's attorney Debbie Barbier told the judge that this was in fact the case. I want to know there was someone at Cory's table this week. He was apparently at Cory's federal hearing last week, but we didn't see him. It was Nathan Williams, a federal defense attorney out of Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, who used to be the chief criminal prosecutor at the US Attorney's Office. In fact, he is one of the attorneys who prosecuted Dylann Roof after the Charleston church shootings in 2015. He has a lot of experience. Real quick here is what he says himself on his website. "Over the years I witnessed companies and individuals miss critical opportunities to get ahead of investigations in charges due to an attorney's



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lack of experience. As a result, the client suffered reputational harm, career damage, and sometimes prison time. I left my position as Criminal Chief at the US Attorney's Office in South Carolina to start a boutique firm because I felt these companies and individuals deserved better." Hmm, could this be why the Federal Government swooped in and offered Cory one charge? Huh? Whether it is or not, there was a point during the hearing when we started to notice just how rattled Cory and Debbie seemed, that Nathan took on the spirit of Cory Fleming in August 2021, when he sat next Alex Murdaugh and slits office and listened as agents laid out some of the evidence against him. At the start of the hearing, Judge Newman had Cory sworn in and asked him some big questions.

Judge Newman 23:30

Mr. Fleming, the Attorney General indicates that you're here to plead guilty to all of the pending indictments against you in Hampton County and Beaufort County, is that correct?

Cory Fleming 23:46

Yes, sir.

Judge Newman 23:47

And you've indicated you're indicated for a desire to plead guilty by signing the indictment indicated with pleaded guilty.

Cory Fleming 23:55

Yes, sir.

Judge Newman 23:55

Of course, we're in Williamsburg County, and typically, cases will be handled or heard in the county where they where the charges are brought, the way venue those cases in Hampton and Beaufort so that this matter can be heard today in Williamsburg.



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Cory Fleming 24:21

I do, sir

Judge Newman 24:25

And have you reviewed with your counsel all of the pending indictments that we're here today concerning?

Cory Fleming 24:32

Yes, sir.

Judge Newman 24:34

And Ms Barbier indicated that you're in total agreement with his decision to plead guilty.

Debbie Barbier 24:40

I am, Your Honor

Judge Newman 24:41

And (unintelligible) as you are well aware the Beaufort County indictments are scheduled for trial week of September the 11th in Beaufort County right?

Cory Fleming 24:56

Yes, sir.

Judge Newman 24:57

And if you were to have a trial, of course, as you know, the state of having a burden of proving each and every charge against you, each and every indictment against you, beyond a reasonable doubt to a jury

Cory Fleming 25:13

That's right.



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Judge Newman 25:14

You plead guilty, guilty to those important constitutional rights.

Cory Fleming 25:19

Yes, sir.

Judge Newman 25:20

And also you waive any defense that you might have to those charges?

Cory Fleming 25:26

Yes, sir.

Judge Newman 25:27

And knowing all of that, how you plead to these indictments and looking at the sheet here, a total of ...

Creighton Waters 25:39

23, Your Honor.

Judge Newman 25:42

23 counts?

Cory Fleming 25:43

Guilty

Judge Newman 25:43

And you are familiar with the punishment as to each charge?

Cory Fleming 25:47

Yes, sir.



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Mandy Matney 25:49

Creighton took the floor and beautifully summarized what this case is about taking advantage of the state's judicial system.

Creighton Waters 25:58

Your Honor, this case is an extremely important case. And the reason why it is extremely important, like everything that's been associated with this larger matter, is that today in state court is the first time that we're going to see accountability for abuse of the state court system. And it's a very complex way in which it was done but I have to remind the court that these were this is a state board where state law license to use that state law license in state court actions before state court judges with state court settlements, and state court things that happen within the state of South Carolina. That's how the system was abused. And that's why it demands a resolution. The state judicial system has to have accountability for someone who was abused that very system,

Mandy Matney 26:58

Creighton told Judge Newman that right after the AGs office got the case in the fall of 2021, the state grand jury immediately began looking into Alex Murdaugh's financial crimes. And immediately like us began seeing red flags with Cory Fleming.

Creighton Waters 27:17

And as we looked into that, one of the first things we heard from Mr. Fleming was that he had been hoodoo by Alex just like everyone else, that he had been tricked, that he had been one of the ones led down the path by the deceit of Alex Murdaugh. And that he had been most tricked in the case involving the Satterfields. And one of the first things that we uncovered was that Mr. Fleming had been stealing money out of Satterfield account, independent of anything to do with Alex Murdaugh. And as we continue to investigate, and look into another matter that came to our attention from payments that were made to fake Forge accounts, the Pinckney case came to



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our attention, Ms. Pamela Pinckney. And that was one of the big cases that Alex had was a huge recovery. But he had to bring Cory in to represent Pamela Pinckney because she had been a driver in that particular incident. And one of the things we saw and I'll go through this in greater detail in a moment was Cory Fleming authorizing money going from the trust account that should have gone to Pamela Pinckney and instead sending that to PMPED, which Alex Murdaugh didn't properly converted. And as we look further into that, we started looking at the expenditures. And one of the things that we saw over and over again, as we looked at this case, as we look at how the system is abused, is that when settlements were received, these attorneys would often retain in trust an amount sufficient to cover any medical liens that were on the case. And what they're supposed to do is, Your Honor as well aware of what they're supposed to do and when they opened it was negotiate with those medical providers for a lesser amount. So if it's \$200,000, hey, we'll pay you \$125,000. And then if the medical provider agrees, what they're supposed to do as a service to their clients, is the return that delta, returning that difference of \$75,000 to their clients, but instead, for Mr. Fleming that was an opportunity to steal.

Mandy Matney 29:43

Creighton then gave us some more insight about what went down in 2012 when Alex Murdaugh, Cory Fleming and Chris Wilson, who is still an attorney by the way, flew to Omaha, Nebraska on a private plane to see the University of South Carolina baseball team play in the College World Series.

Creighton Waters 30:03

Your Honor may recall that back in 2010 and 2011, the South Carolina Gamecocks won the College World Series back to back. Mr. Fleming is a huge Carolina fan, as was Alex Murdaugh, and they wanted to go to 2012, which was the third appearance. Gamecocks ended up losing that one, but it was the third appearance. And as we were looking at that delta, that difference between what Mr. Fleming had retained in his trust account with Pamela



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Pinckney's money and what he had actually settled lien for. We said, that's, we got to look at those expenses. That's where something's fishy. And one of the things that we saw in there was a reference for a medical expense to Crosswind, a medical expense to Crosswind. Well, something didn't seem right about that and state grand jury staff and SLED started looking around and instead of finding any medical entity called Crosswind, what we found, Your Honor, and you can see the invoice right here was a Crosswind Aviation, which provides private plane services. So SLED goes and interviews the pilot. He's like, "Yeah, I took Alex and Cory out to the college world series, they wanted a private plane to go out there and party and have a good time. There was no business to be discussed. Heck, they took me out for drinks, it was able to go to the college world series." This, Your Honor, was August 21 2012. And this represents counts five and six. indictment 2022 GS4702. One fake check paid out of a trust account belonging to Pamela Pinckney for the amount of \$6,490 to pay for a private plane so they could go party at the college world series. And number two would be a check for \$1,588.46. Back as far as 2012 the facts have shown Mr. Fleming has been stealing along with his buddy Alex Murdaugh. And so instantly we know that things were different, that this claim from Mr. Fleming that he had been hoodoo by Alex Murdaugh like everybody else was not true. And then as we go on deeper, we discovered that he was a willing co-conspirator for nearly a decade with this man.

Mandy Matney 30:04

Y'all SLED interviewed the pilot. It is such sweet justice. Notice how Creighton said Cory tried to mask the private flight as a medical expense? Independent sources have told us Cory isn't the only one who did that. We fully expect to learn more about how Alex and others used fraudulent expenses in his cases. And we hope that the South Carolina Office of Disciplinary Counsel has the fortitude to follow through on other fraudulent billing practices that might have been going on in Alex's heyday with others. One thing we really appreciate about Creighton was his analogy for the judge about what Cory was essentially going to do by pleading guilty.



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Creighton Waters 33:21

It's important to the state judicial system that the truth and the light be shown how it can be abused, and that there'll be accountability for that. But also I think that in the end, what we're going to see here is kind of like if this was traffic court, and I'm a trooper. And Mr. Fleming, and the speed limit is 55. And Mr. Fleming is going to stand up and admit, hey, I was doing 58. And if I'm a trooper, I'm saying No, Your Honor. We caught him doing 90 and he was weaving in and out of traffic like it was a video game. That's going to be the rub here. And the real rub is going to be what did Mr. Fleming know what's going to happen with those millions of dollars that he delivered to Alex Murdaugh that were supposed to go to the Satterfield's and never did. That's going to be the rub. Because he's gonna admit, I believe, that he stole money and that he openly conspired with the defendant. And that he, by doing so committed the crimes of breach of trust and money laundering and computer crime and the various ones that we've alleged, but he's got to say, I believe, that he didn't know when he delivered those checks to Alex Murdaugh that Alex was going to convert any of that money. And Your Honor, the facts that we're gonna go through here as quickly as I can we're gonna show otherwise.

Mandy Matney 34:40

Oh my gosh, did he show otherwise? Creighton then shocked the court, especially Cory's team by bringing up a case that wasn't mentioned in the indictments, a case that involves his own family in the crosshairs. A case that True Sunlight listeners should recognize.

Creighton Waters 35:01

And one thing I'll point out, and this is uncharged conduct, but in 2012 to 2014, after or around the same time that Mr. Fleming is stealing money to pay for his private plane trip out to see the college world series, he has a case where his family member is the defendant. And another family member is



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the plaintiff essentially. And what they do in that case is really what happens in Satterfield. Essentially, Mr. Fleming, who's effectively defendant is doing the work. And using Alex Murdaugh's name with his consent who's supposedly the plaintiff's lawyer. And then they put in an order that is signed by a judge that the plaintiff's lawyer, Mr. Murdaugh, supposedly is receiving \$48,000 in legal fees. But it doesn't go to Mr. Murdaugh, it goes in his pocket. It's the same thing just in reverse. The plaintiff's lawyer and the defense defendants essentially conspiring to put money that's supposed to be for the plaintiff, the defendant's pocket.

Mandy Matney 36:17

Sounds familiar. Remember when we said this in episode two of true sunlight?

Liz Farrell 36:25

For instance, is anyone looking into a 2012 civil lawsuit that involved course cousin, his son, his wife, and Alex Murdaugh?

Mandy Matney 36:34

In and of itself, this case isn't necessarily suspicious, but it does warrant some questions being asked to determine just how deep all of this goes. And is the federal government actually asking these questions? In this 2012 case we found Alex Murdaugh sued Cory Fleming's wife on behalf of Cory Fleming son who was injured in some type of automobile accident in 2010.

Mandy Matney 37:14

Yep, that is the gauntlet that BCE threw down in court on Wednesday. I went back and rewatch this moment when Creighton brought up this 2012 case involving his own family. I swore the room shook a little when he said that. This appeared to be the prosecution's ace in the hole judging purely from the body language shift on the defense team when Creighton told the court about how Cory sued his own wife with the help of Alex Murdaugh. I noticed



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that Cory and his two male attorneys all simultaneously whipped their heads to glare at Debbie Barbier. They had this look on their faces like "oh my god, he went there. I thought he wasn't going to go there, Debbie, what should we do now?" It was weird. And for the rest of the hearing, Team Cory seemed visibly frazzled for the first time like they were knocked off their feet and forced to shift to Plan B. This case that Creighton mentioned was not in the indictments. The only mention of this case publicly that we know of was from yours truly on True Sunlight. And I have to wonder could this be Creighton dropping breadcrumbs like Taylor Swift, giving us little hints of the hell that's going to come down on the good ol' boys if they don't start telling the state everything right there, everything they know. The case that was mentioned is particularly concerning for Cory because it involves his own family, whether his wife knew about it or not, I'm not sure what is worse. Cory's bad deeds with Alex Murdaugh extended to his own family. Is this Creighton thing we're going to keep going through every single one of your cases and tell you tell us everything about what went on in the criminal Murdaugh operation? Also, I have to point this out, Creighton mentioned the judge who signed off on it. Let me just play this part of true sunlight episode two real quick to remind y'all of this 2012 case.

Mandy Matney 39:23

And Alex got a whopping \$48,000 off of that settlement. That is for essentially telling an insurance company that a kid broke his arm and that the mom is at fault. And by the way, Eve Fleming. Cory's wife, is an attorney to and is still licensed to practice in South Carolina. And guess which judge approved this settlement. Carmen Mullen! So five years later, when Cory was suing Alex in Gloria Satterfield's death for a suspicious amount of insurance money shouldn't Carmen have said, "Wait a minute, y'all just sued each other a few years ago, and y'all are BFFs. What is going on here? exactly. And is this insurance fraud?" Yep. Judge Carmen Mullen. We hope that Creighton said that judge comment on purpose. We hope that the AGs office is asking those



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same questions that we asked Creighton continued on in court on Wednesday and shoved the knife deeper in with every word.

Creighton Waters 40:32

So when he tries to point to you later on, that when Satterfield happened when he was at his dirtiness, his motives were most pure. And he thought all that money was going to the boys even though he never contacted them. Never had any interaction with them. We know he knows how to do that, as he did that with Ms. Pinckney, but he never had any interaction with the Satterfield boys and his own staff testified that everything Mr. Fleming did in the Satterfield matter was different. It was totally different, it was not the way it was supposed to be. So think about that, Your Honor, I would ask in our respective submit, when you hear him trying to claim that even though he was stealing some money, he thought that he gave all that money to the defendants that the defendants actually can get every single balancing point because he did. The man he had been stealing with for decades.

Mandy Matney 41:21

Creighton told the court about what Cory did with Pamela Pinckney's money in 2017. A full six years after the first disbursement in her case, he sent an email to his staff and told them to cut some of the \$89,000 in checks from Pamela's account for money that was supposed to have been spent on Pamela's expenses or returned to her. Instead the money went Alex Murdaugh

Creighton Waters 41:51

You had a relationship with Ms. Pinckney for a long time. And over and over again we talked to staff and Your Honor knows this, there is no better for people doing this kind of work there's nothing better whether it's the attorney or the staff than calling up the client and saying "Guess what? I'm the best lawyer in the world. I got \$89,000 you didn't know you were getting. Come down get your check." I think it says a lot that he doesn't call Ms. Pinckney at



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all. He does not call her it all to say "Guess what, Ms. P.? I got \$89,000 for you. Bonus, Merry Christmas." Instead it gets converted.

Liz Farrell 42:41

So we're trying really hard not to bog you guys down with all the money that changed hands and how it went down. Creighton spent some time outlining each check, each transfer, each time money didn't go where it was supposed to go. But what he was really good at was showing the court how Cory, the guy who pleaded not guilty a year and a half ago, had tried to pretend he didn't know how structured settlements work. The important things to know here are number one, when settlement money gets structured the money is supposed to go straight from the insurance company to this structured account. Number two, the real Forge is run by Michael Gunn. You might remember him from Alex's murder trial. Remember when Forge said they were planning legal action against Alex hmm wonder where that stands. Michael gun is also who was texting Alex on the night of the murders these sexualized comments about a colleague of theirs. Number three, Forge is a company that makes these structured settlements happen. They basically broker the best annuity deal they can find for the plaintiffs. They do not handle money meaning that check Cory sent Alex made out to Forge for almost \$3 million, Cory had to have known it wasn't going to the actual Forge because number four, Creighton had receipts he had an email from Forge a Cory that essentially laid out how this arrangement works and how the money doesn't go to them. And number five, the money is supposed to go right into that annuity account because anything else such as the settlement being made out to Chad Westendorf means the plaintiff will be losing a huge chunk of change to the IRS. But no one has to worry about the IRS when the money was only meant to be stolen. Here's where Creighton drives at home for the judge.

Creighton Waters 44:20



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I think you're going to hear from the defense that Mr. Fleming, despite this being his business is going claim that he doesn't. So two things about that Your Honor. Number one is the cheque cannot be made out to the client or to the lawyer or to the conservator or the PR. It has to go direct. That's the first thing and the second thing is Forge doesn't take money. And the lawyers notice. Mr. Fleming is a lawyer.

Liz Farrell 44:51

Creighton was really good about pointing out all the places where Cory as a lawyer should have known better but also he gave us more insight into what the Satterfield heist looked like from the inside.

Creighton Waters 45:03

We're showing what's been marked as state's exhibit six. Your Honor, this was an email from a staff member November 13 2018. And attached to it was the letter from the defense attorney for the Lloyds of London and insurance company, pretty much saying we're gonna tender policy limits and what does Mr. Fleming say? He tells a staff member, we need to hold this until we can get the PR changed. We need to hold this until we get the PR changed. That's on November 28 2018, before disbursement. So he holds on to that settlement. He doesn't call the Satterfields and say great news. So when that money gets dispersed to Forge and handed to Alex Murdaugh, again, it's inconsistent with this idea that Mr. Fleming thought that that money was really where it was supposed to be. It doesn't make sense unless his defense is "I'm dumbest man alive." And we all know about Cory Fleming. He's been a lawyer for a long time. He's not the dumbest man alive.

Liz Farrell 46:07

Okay, is this the best line BCE has had in all of this because it cut to the bone. Cory Fleming in a striped jail jumpsuit in shower shoes, having his ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future there to haunt him had to sit and listen to the plain truth of his case. You knew what you were doing. And the only way



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you wouldn't have known what you were doing is if you were intellectually challenged and turns out you're not so hmmm. Creighton also gave the court more insight into how things went down when Cory was trying to claim those inflated fake expenses in the Satterfield case.

Creighton Waters 46:45

The disbursement statement that was signed by Mr. Westendorf was prepared by Mr. Fleming staff, but at his direction, she started to fill out the numbers not really understanding why, why is this different, why? Usually I have prosecution expenses and receipts, Mr. Fleming always provides me this information, I can calculate it. And she's like, I don't have the information. He's like, you just put these numbers down.

Liz Farrell 47:08

One of the things Creighton pointed out was that a nautilus insurance adjuster had kept asking Alex's attorney John Grantland, who was basically the insurance company's attorney in this and representing Alex on their behalf. For more information about the settlement and where the money was supposed to go, Grantland push those questions to Cory and Cory's answer showed that, guess what he knew the check wasn't going to a structured fund.

Creighton Waters 47:35

The evidence shows of course is that Mr. Fleming has had no conversations with real Forge during this time. He's not reached out to them. They don't have a case. He's had a few interactions with Mr. Fleming, seen him at the trial lawyers conference. Which of course, is where all of these kinds of issues are discussed. They're a huge presence there because of the services they provide to plaintiff's attorneys. Well, that doesn't answer the question. And so again, Mr. Grantland went on March 30. of 2019 is sending the letter from the adjuster saying please let me know what I need to tell her. And this is Mr. Fleming's response, Your Honor, this is state's 15 and this is very telling. He



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says standard check. Chad Westendorf as PR and Moss Kuhn and Fleming (unintelligible). Standard check, the question is structure or standard check and Mr. Fleming's answer is standard check. If there's any illusion whatsoever, well, whether or not he thought there was a real structure first of all, the way he's cutting the check doesn't work. And he answers the question right there Mr. Grantland, standard check.

Liz Farrell 48:49

Now one thing in all of this that we've all been wondering is why? Why did Alex steal? Why did Cory a successful and by all accounts smart attorney have to steal? Creighton shared his theory of Cory's motive?

Creighton Waters 49:03

Going back to that first check he had come January for \$8,000. When we look at his account, Your Honor, when he went down to a staff member and said I need you to cut me this check. His count was getting really low. And the second that money comes in, he pays his mortgage and a large credit card debt.

Judge Newman 49:23

Are you referring to?

Creighton Waters 49:24

to Mr. Fleming? Yes, when he steals that first \$8,000 we look at his account it's pretty low. And the second he gets that money he's making those two large payments that needed to be made. That tells you anything about the motives. It's right there. The second check one I just referred to from April 4 2019 for a \$8,500. He puts out his account and what we see is that immediately, he has to pay pretty much all of it to the IRS. And his account again was low. He needed that money to make that payment. He also spent some video games, iTunes, and mortgage as well. Again, the motive is clear from his bank account when he's stealing this money.



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Liz Farrell 50:21

Again, Creighton gives us insight into what went down when Cory received the \$3.8 million Nautilus settlement check

Creighton Waters 50:30

They have \$3.8 million now, what do they do with it? Well, Mr. Fleming, his staff member dutifully starts to try and put together a disbursement sheet as she normally would, where she's trying to identify expenses and liens, and hold that money figure it all out. And she prepares her best initial attempt, which is states 18 but Mr. Fleming stops it, says no, no, no, no. State's 19, you put these numbers down, you put these numbers down. And what he has on there is that he is getting \$168,333.33 in attorneys fees from the Lloyds settlement. And he is getting \$1,266,636.67 from the Nautilus settlement, which would be the standard percentage cut. That's very significant to when Mr. Fleming tries to claim as he does that he didn't know that Alex was going to take his half of the fees because what this the math works out to be, what the math works out to be is what's very common, which is exactly what Your Honor heard testimony about the trial of (unintelligible). The fee split with Chris Wilson. And when you look at the math, the math works out to be a fee split between Cory Fleming and Alex Murdaugh. That's how the case was conducted. And, again, if we go back, we look at what they did with the case back in 2012 to 2014, Cory was the beneficiary of getting legal fees that were supposed to go to the plaintiff's attorney, we look at what we know about what Cory knows about how Forge works, we know that the check doesn't cut, we saw the email where he says cut standard check. And then we went to the disbursement sheet that he actually gets Chad Westendorf to sign in, it's got the full amount of attorney fees and it also has \$105,000 even to the most of prosecution expenses, which are fraudulent doesn't exist.

Mandy Matney 52:28



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And Creighton didn't forget to mention the utter cruelty of what Alex and Cory had done, he tells the court about how the Satterfields were in dire straits financially.

Creighton Waters 52:42

It was very interesting that during this time, family is going through hard financial times. And Mr. Fleming and his co-conspirator Alan Murdaugh are playing around the millions of dollars of money that belongs to them. It's also very interesting in that disbursement sheet that he has a full attorney fee amount. And when you work out the amount that he ultimately delivered to Alex, and the amounts that he retained the math maths, Your Honor. It works out to a fee split, it works out to about \$790 for Cory and \$750 for Alex with expenses included in it. The math maths, Your Honor. And the facts add up. And the only defense he has to say and I think that's the only hiccup we have kind of going back to is he doing 58 miles an hour? Or is he rolling hot at 90? His only defense is oh I thought that I gave those checks to my co-conspirator that all that money every time was going to (unintelligible). Didn't bother to check. I don't think he cares.

Mandy Matney 53:40

I don't think he cared. This was another BCE line that was so powerful and says everything Cory needed to hear. For years Cory didn't care to tell the Satterfield or the Pinckney's the truth. He didn't care that one of Gloria's sons was left scrambling to find a home when they couldn't afford payments on the trailer after she died. That is horrible. And the line the maths math, brilliant. Maybe we should make that a t-shirt. Finally on Wednesday, Creighton told Judge Newman the Cory isn't a man who made mistakes but rather a man who had an active role in these schemes

Creighton Waters 54:27

For Mr. Fleming to try to claim that he didn't think Alex was getting his share of this, Your Honor, the facts don't bear that out. Common sense doesn't bear



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that out. These two men looked at the cases they had as if it were pantry and they could just open the door and goodies would just drop out. If it hadn't been for the good work of State Grand Jury staff, SLED and other partners, there will never be accountability in state court that there's going to hopefully be today. Mr. Fleming might be on his boat wearing (unintelligible).

Mandy Matney 55:06

A boat, he said? Is this another easter egg that's going to make a lot more sense later? Creighton made it a point to say this and it felt meaningful, like another "we got you, Cory. And there's more coming if you don't fess up." At this point, Judge Newman asked Cory, whether he agreed with the state's accounting of the facts. Here is what Cory said.

Cory Fleming 55:32

Your Honor, I agree that there are facts that are stated in establish my guilt in each of the indictments. However, there are certain facts that are not material to my guilt that would like to be able to address at sentencing.

Judge Newman 55:52

Question, you disagree with any of the statements by Mr. Fleming and your responses? Do you disagree with any statements made by Mr. Waters? And your response is?

Cory Fleming 56:08

I do disagree with some of the some of the statements that were made by Mr. Waters, yes sir. I however, agree that there there were there are sufficient facts, providing the court that I agree with that establish my guilt on each of the indictments.

Judge Newman 56:31

As far as your response to Mr. Waters?



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Debbie Barbier 56:39

As Mr. Fleming stated, we do agree that Mr. Fleming is guilty of the offenses in the indictments that he's pleading guilty to. We agree that there have been sufficient facts put into record today to establish his guilt that meet the elements of each of these offenses. Your Honor, are we have some agreements and disagreements with respect to certain facts, but I believe it'll be appropriate to take up at sentencing. Mr. Waters has indicated throughout this presentation that he understands that Mr. Fleming disagrees with certain facts. And I would think he agrees that he's so guilty, even though he disagrees with certain facts of the sentence. I can get into any specifics of any thing we disagree with that the court would like, but I do think it's appropriate for sentencing. We'll be prepared at sentencing to address all the facts that we disagree with. But for today's purposes, we agree that he's established that establishes guilt for each of the offenses in each of the indictments.

Mandy Matney 57:44

They're agreeing to disagree with the state on certain facts. Something will apparently learn more about during the sentencing hearing. I have to wonder if the certain facts had to do with the 2012 lawsuit involving his own family. And that's why he wanted on the record that he didn't agree with certain facts. But also, he said that he believed the facts that established his guilt for each offense. Creighton had a response to that.

Creighton Waters 58:17

Yeah, Mr. Fleming wants to say I'm doing 58. Okay. He's doing more than 55. But I think the overwhelming weight of facts show that he was doing 90. And we will be arguing at sentencing, assuming the court accepts the plea, and want to make sure the court will consider the state's evidence that Mr. Fleming, in fact was doing 90. Your Honor, I do they also point out that it is the official position of the Attorney General and of SLED that Mr. Fleming has not lived up to his cooperation obligations. That obviously could be another



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matter that will be discussed at sentence. But as long as the full basis of the facts as have been presented are available to be considered by the court and argued by the court and Mr. Fleming is going to say I cross over the line and Your Honor is willing to accept that plea the state is as well. Assuming that we can still make the full case as we have here today.

Mandy Matney 59:20

Big Creighton Energy, told you! Here, Creighton drew the line between the state and the feds. He made it clear to Cory you might have helped the US Attorney's Office to secure your stay at Club Fed but this is state court and these are state crimes that you have admitted to. Here it's clear that Creighton is saying Cory didn't help us when it mattered. When it mattered, Cory claimed that he was duped by Alex. We have to remember that at sentencing. Judge Newman, unlike Judge Gergel, was quiet and patient throughout the process. He allowed the prosecution to state the facts, and then he accepted Cory's guilty plea on all counts.

Judge Newman 1:00:10

I find there sufficient factual basis to establish guilt on each of the all counts of the indictment, Mr. Fleming through counsel and individually has acknowledge guilt as each indictment. And I accept the guilty pleas to each indictment.

Mandy Matney 1:00:30

Cory's sentencing is expected to take place September 14 in Beaufort County. After this was decided, this state informed the judge that they had made arrangements for Cory to go from there, Williamsburg County, straight to the Beaufort County Detention Center. We're not sure if this is something Cory expected, because when the judge said this, he turned his head and consulted with Nathan Williams. After the judge seemed to dismiss everyone, Debbie and Nathan went to talk with the state. They're concerned was based on whether Cory would still be designated as a ward of the federal



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government. We're not sure if that distinction is important to Cory's team. But since he turned himself in a week ago, Cory has stayed in the Charleston County Detention Center, which has an agreement with the federal government to house inmates and those going to prison until they can be processed. Debbie returned to her table and told the judge, "I think we are straight on that."

Judge Newman 1:01:35

What are you straight on?

Debbie Barbier 1:01:37

Well, Your Honor, my understanding is that he's currently in primary custodial jurisdiction as a federal (unintelligible). And he's been rented out into state custody. So my question was, how is he being held in Beaufort, and their response was that it's a detainer is being held. And so with that circumstance, it's my understanding that he's still in primary jurisdiction, considering him jurisdiction of the federal government.

Creighton Waters 1:02:09

My response to that, Your Honor, is that that's all a very dense area of BOP and federal case law. And that's not my problem. I make no representations not trying to make a position one way or the other. That's for the defense to figure out. So I'm making their representations how that will ultimately play out legally. Like what she expresses is accurately how he is right here now, is this my understanding according to the law?

Judge Newman 1:02:32

Okay, very well.

Liz Farrell 1:02:39

As of Thursday afternoon, it did not appear that Cory had been booked in Beaufort County according to the jail log. It's not clear why Cory was being



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moved to Beaufort County other than maybe to preemptively deal with his transport sooner rather than later. But it's an interesting place to put him because up until almost two years ago, he had spent decades representing Beaufort county defendants. It's not far fetched to wonder if he's going to know a few of his fellow inmates. Okay, real briefly, we want to talk about Russell because yes, Russell was there too, looking bedraggled with a new crew cut. Now you'll remember that Wednesday was not the first time Cory and Russell had hearings on the same day in the same courtroom. This past May, Russell's attorneys had asked the court for more time before scheduling a trial in his 21 state charges. State Representative Todd Rutherford, you know, the guy he used his influence to set a murderer free 15 years before his sentence was over, had just joined Russell's team literally that day. Why was Todd added to Russell's case? Well, one reason might be legislative immunity because Todd is a state representative he gets to invoke a privilege that allows him to only schedule court proceedings when the legislature isn't in session. As you can imagine adding a legislator to one's case is a common strategy in South Carolina. Greg Parker, for instance, did it in the boat case. Anyway, the first thing Russell's defense team did Wednesday was ask the court for permission to get at the hundreds of 1000s of dollars sitting in escrow at Russell's former attorney's office. That money is from when Russell sold his house and moved into his vintage at best trailer the court had ordered that it be held. Interesting side note, Russell stopped paying his former attorneys after he was found guilty. Judge Newman agreed to allow Russell's escrow money be moved to his new attorney's office. The state us that that money continued to be protected and not spent. After that Russell's attorney Mark more than lobbied the judge to hold off on scheduling anything for Russell until the Fourth Circuit rules on his appeal.

Mark Moore 1:04:48

Your Honor should be aware of the Mr. Laffitte has received a designation from the Bureau of Prisons. He had a court date of September 14. Judge Gergel has extended that until September 21 to give Fourth Circuit time to



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decide the appeal. So I just want to warn the court on those facts, because I think they may be relevant to the scheduling discussion that we're about to have.

Liz Farrell 1:05:10

Creighton was like, "Well, if we don't do this as soon as possible, then we're looking at next year when you take legislative immunity into consideration," which by the way that needs to change. If legislator lawyers can't work when the legislature is in session, then they ought not take the job, plain and simple. Or if they're not willing to give that up, they need to disclose how much they're earning from these cases and what work they've done in the case.

Creighton Waters 1:05:35

I do think that it is appropriate for us to to understand whether or not Mr. Laffitte is going to be reporting to prison or not. As we look to that, I don't want to completely remove any possibility of trying to get this case scheduled sometime prior to the beginning of session in January. I do understand the defense as opposed to that, but the state also thinks that we need to have all the information about what's going to be going on with Mr. Laffitte before we make that final decision. And that wouldn't be a big factor would be obviously whether or not an appeal B=bond was granted or denied and whether or not he'd be reporting to an FCI.

Mandy Matney 1:06:15

Then Judge Newman was like "But Cory just did this very thing."

Judge Newman 1:06:21

Mr. Fleming has been sentenced already and he's on his way, it doesn't preclude activity on his case.

Liz Farrell 1:06:27



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The bottom line is this, Russell's attorney say they haven't had time to prepare at all for the state case. And the state says it's basically ready to go to trial before January. Russell's attorneys also say that they need several months to prepare if they're quote expected to try this case. They say that this is a relatively new case and that they have older cases that need to be addressed first, that there are doctor's appointments that are getting in the way and that they need to know whether the state plans to try all these cases in the same county and whether they plan to try Russell with Alex or separately from Alex. Creighton said no to the cases being tried in the same county and he couldn't answer the second question because they need to have Dick Harpootlian and Jim Griffin there to talk about scheduling. Ultimately they agreed to meet September 14 to meet with Russell, Alex and their attorneys to talk about sentencing. And finally, Mark Moore ended the hearing by telling the judge he plans to ask the court to reconsider Russell's bond agreement and allow him to use his money to pay his legal fees.

Mandy Matney 1:07:34

Creighton didn't waste much energy arguing with Team Russell. He had the vibes of a tired mom dealing with two terrible toddlers and didn't have anything left to give the one who was less of a problem at that moment. So he looked at Russell like I'll deal with you and your ridiculousness later. I was stunned at the end of court yesterday. It was a refreshing turnaround from federal court a week ago. Did that really happen? Did Creighton Waters just show the feds how to handle Alex Murdaugh's enablers. I had to watch it again to make sure I wasn't seeing things. The second time around it hit me. Wednesday's hearing was Creighton Waters best performance and it was perhaps his most defining moment as an attorney. It is one thing for a prosecutor to be on top of their game throughout the grueling six week Alex Murdaugh trial with millions of people watching from around the world. But it's another for that attorney to keep pressing on. Even after the national media vans roll out of town. When a lot of people have "moved on from Murdaugh" Creighton did his state proud by showing the world he isn't done.



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Creighton is just getting started. And he sent a message on Wednesday. That message was if you abuse the system, if you enable a monster like Alex Murdaugh, if you keep playing games until the moment your back is up against the wall, even if you're privileged and powerful in a former attorney, you will still be held accountable. And for those who haven't been charged, I think Creighton was saying the state is coming for you too. So you best be telling them everything. Now. Creighton wants accountability. He wants to fix the system, not just make a dent in it and perform for popularity. Cory Fleming wearing prison stripes looked absolutely destroyed by the end of court. He looked more broken than he was last week as he was being escorted off into federal custody. For the first time. It felt like Cory's team wasn't in control of the courtroom. It felt like even the best attorney cannot get Cory out of this mess. The message was clear to every single one of Alex Murdaugh's co-conspirators. The state isn't done here. Creighton isn't done playing whack a mole and neither are we. Stay pesky, stay tuned, and stay in the sunlight.

Mandy Matney 1:11:15

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?