

The Last Dance - Debbie Flores Narvaez Flashback

Shaun On April seventeen, twenty twenty six, twenty twenty aired an episode called death of a showgirl, bringing national attention back to the murder of Debbie Flores Narvaez, a case that has no closure for her sister, her friends, her family, and the community of Las Vegas performers who knew and loved her. This story still ranks among one of the most in-depth stories we've covered to date, and fifteen years after her death, the pain is still raw for so many. One of our friends in the entertainment industry summed it up perfectly, telling us simply, fuck blue.

John We don't often say this about true crime documentaries, but the twenty twenty episode seems to have done a thorough job covering Debbie's story. Her sister and fiercest advocate, Celeste, is featured prominently throughout the episode, sharing memories and the emotional weight of the investigation and trial. Several of her friends and coworkers took part in the episode, and we would recommend you watch it to hear about Debbie in their own words. That said, this version is much more graphic than ours was. They include crime scene details and the photos are very difficult to look at. We share Debbie's story in episode eighteen of the podcast In Two Parts, which originally aired in February of twenty twenty. For watching this episode and reflecting on the way this case affected our local community led us to think about the ways in which this story hasn't ended and will never truly be finished. It's not something people have moved on from, and we think of Debbie every time we see an ad for fantasy, and we're sure those closest to her do as well.

Shaun We're dedicating both this week and next week to Debbie's story, with completely remastered episodes and updates about where blue is now. On this week's Swing shift for our subscribers, we have a special announcement about an upcoming episode that you won't want to miss. Next week, we'll release part two of The Last Dance with several updates and changes, along with an all new Swing Shift episode. As we revisit Debbie's story in more detail and share what went into making the episode. So here is our original coverage of Debbie Flores Narvaez. Part one of The Last Dance. Debbie Flores Narvaez was intelligent, talented, and passionate and had an overwhelming urge to follow her dreams. Some people might be satisfied working in the world of high finance, or perhaps with a career in law, but not Debbie.

John Her true passion was performing on the dance stage, and there was no keeping her from something she set her mind on. She moved to Las Vegas in two thousand and eight to pursue that dream, and on the precipice of her success, she disappeared without a trace.

Shaun Hi, and welcome to Sins and Survivors, a Las Vegas true crime podcast where we focus on cases that deal with domestic violence. I'm your host, Sean.

Speaker 3 And I'm your co-host, John.

Shaun Because of the complexity and detail involved, we're going to cover Debbie Flores Narvaez case over two episodes. As always, we feel it's important to focus more on the victim of this horrific crime, along with the family members she left behind. A lot of the coverage of this one is really sensational, but we're taking a different approach, reminding everyone as we do, that these are real people and they matter. Debbie was born in Puerto Rico on July five, nineteen seventy nine to Elsie Narvaez and Carlos Flores Roman. She has one older sister, Celeste Flores Narvaez. The family moved to Maryland when Debbie was very young, just seven years old. She spent her teenage years there. Several news outlets claimed that she attended Old Mill High School in Millersville, Maryland, but she is listed among the class of nineteen ninety seven at Owings Mills High School, which is in Owings Mills, Maryland. The schools are about thirty five minutes apart by car. We're honestly not sure which one is true, but Owings Mills seems more likely. Regardless, she attended high school in Maryland and was a cheerleader. And as you learn more about Debbie, you'll realize that her being a cheerleader isn't surprising at all given her love of performance and dance.

John Debbie was also very smart. After high school, she attended the University of Baltimore and Towson University, where she studied business and law and earned her MBA. I'm honestly not sure how she managed to study all those things, but somehow she did it. While Debbie was in college, her parents and sister moved to Atlanta and finally divorced when Debbie was twenty three in two thousand and two. We came across a very cool article in the University of Baltimore Alumni magazine from the fall of two thousand and eight that we wanted to share, to give more color as to not only the type of person she was, but also some insight about how she was perceived in this case by her alma mater.

Shaun We're going to post a photo of this article from the university's alumni magazine, but we want to highlight it here, too. It talks about Debbie and how starting in two thousand and seven, she was a cheerleading ambassador for the Washington NFL team. Now the Washington Commanders, which given her history as a cheerleader and high school outgoing personality and passion for performing isn't surprising at all. Here's what the article has to say about Debbie. Anyone who believes NFL cheerleaders don't have much in the way of brains should think again. One of the requirements to be a cheerleader is to have a professional degree and a professional job, or to be a full time mother, says Debbie Flores Narvaez, BS oh three and UB Towson MBA student who has been a Washington NFL cheerleaders ambassador since fall of two thousand and seven. She goes on. We have doctors, attorneys, CPAs, and so on, Flores Narvaez explains she has year round cheerleading responsibilities. There's a lot of charity work involved, she says. Cheerleaders go overseas to entertain American troops. And when the troops come home to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, we visit them. Since the NFL pays for these appearances, this has also been a good way to pay for my MBA, Flores Narvaez says, adding that when she earns the degree, she wants to move to Los Angeles to pursue a career in fashion and dance.

John While she was working as an ambassador for the Washington Football Team, she was also putting that finance degree to work as a senior financial analyst. The cheerleader position got her out into the community but wasn't really paying the bills. In the summer of two thousand and eight, Debbie decided to make the move to Las Vegas to pursue a career in dance. She moved here with her boyfriend at the time, a dancer named Jameel McGee. McGee was a professional dancer who had been featured in music videos and appeared in two thousand and nine in Wayne Brady's Making Shit Up at the Venetian. He also appeared in the first season of So You Think You Can Dance. These two had a very tumultuous relationship. Most of the stories you'll read about Debbie will mention that Jameel had taken out a temporary protective order against her in August of two thousand and nine. But let's dig a little deeper into this to find out the rest of the story. To begin with, we could not verify that Jameel filed a temporary protective order against her in August at all. It could be that the Eighth Judicial District here in Las Vegas simply doesn't store the short term TPO as described. Or it could be that this never happened. We don't have a way to validate that.

Shaun Well, we can tell you about in detail is another lawsuit between the two. In August of two thousand and nine, Debbie filed a lawsuit against Jamil alleging that she suffered scarring as a result of a June two thousand and nine assault in which he kicked her stomach, dragged her from her car and, quote, held her hostage in her apartment while continuing to beat her. She alleged that the scarring resulted in her losing modeling jobs, leaving her with only the forty thousand dollars income from her part time dance jobs. During the trial, McGee's attorney characterized the charges as frivolous, and they offered to settle with her for one dollar. He also claimed there were no medical or police reports associated with the assault. In the end, the court ruled in Debbie's favor, awarding her two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, of which she unfortunately never collected anything. His lawyer stated that McGee had left Las Vegas a year earlier.

John A little more about Debbie. She was extremely determined, and her friends have often said that when she got her mind set on something, there was no stopping her. There were times when her passion and drive were taken for insubordination. She would always speak her mind very directly. It seems very much like people always knew where they stood with her because she was going to tell you. One of her friends said that she was one bad bitch, and you get the strong impression that she meant it in the best way possible. She would pay her friend's bills without prompting if they were in need, and offered to fight for them in court when they got traffic tickets. As you might expect, she was fiercely devoted to her friends and family and didn't play around when it came to relationships, her sister Camille said. She was a fantastic aunt who was very loving and loved a big holiday celebration, especially Christmas. On the Facebook page dedicated to her, we found a great photo of a pink Christmas tree she had. It's entirely pink and has ballerinas, purses, shoes, dresses, stars, snowmen, candy. Hello Kitty, Victoria's Secret, Pink Dogs, and a pink Cadillac.

Shaun Jason Blue Griffith was almost the same age as Debbie. He was born in Brooklyn, New York on December ten, nineteen seventy nine, and was an extremely talented dancer who attended Juilliard in New York. You may have heard the name Juilliard because it's one of the most well known and top tier schools for drama, dance and music. It's essentially the Harvard of Schools for the Arts. It has produced legends like violinist Itzhak Perlman, actress Viola Davis and movie score genius John Williams. Jason performed at The Mirage in Las Vegas in the Cirque du Soleil show love, based on the music of The Beatles. He was also a background dancer for Toni Braxton in a show at the Flamingo. Around two thousand and six two thousand

and eight, Debbie met Jason at a football halftime show in two thousand and nine, and the two hit it off and started dating soon after. It wasn't long before things went sideways for the couple. We've read several accounts from people who know the couple that Jason was known for sleeping with other dancers, which didn't sit well with Debbie. And I want to add here that according to court records, Jason got married in Reno in two thousand and six, and to this day he is still legally married to that woman. Jason only just filed for divorce from her in October of twenty twenty three, and the divorce is still not finalized as of time of recording February twenty twenty four.

John To say that Jason and Debbie had a turbulent relationship is a huge understatement. By February of twenty ten, Jason was seeing someone he met on a dating site and as Shawn mentioned, he was sleeping with a number of his co-stars. Debbie was no idiot and she was very suspicious of his cheating. In May twenty ten, however, Jason met Angie Roux, a French dancer in the Cirque du Soleil Zumanity show at the New York New York Hotel and Casino. And they also started dating right around this time. According to Jason, Debbie told him she was pregnant, and Jason said that he brought her to a clinic to terminate the pregnancy. Shortly thereafter. He broke up with her that July, though, on her thirty first birthday. Just three months after they broke up, he bought her a pair of shoes as a gift. And then they got back together.

Shaun One of the things that comes up a lot is that Jason claimed on more than one occasion that Debbie would not leave him alone, and that she was obsessed with him, but it seems like Jason was the one continually reeling her back in, just like he did on her thirty first birthday. It was as if he just couldn't stand the idea of her moving on with her life without him, so he didn't allow that. Once they were back together, Debbie was allegedly accepting of the idea that Jason was dating both her and Annie. According to her friend's comments. But it seems that Annie was not at all okay with the arrangement. We listened to a nine hundred eleven call from Annie, where she complained to the police about her boyfriend's obsessive ex and told them Debbie was constantly calling and texting him. It shouldn't surprise you to learn that. At the same time, Jason was seeing other people outside of both Annie and Debbie. Interestingly, it's also noted in the court records that Debbie and Jason attended couples counseling. It's hard to understand why that is. However, unless this was just Jason's attempt to keep Debbie on the line because it's clear that he wasn't interested in a monogamous relationship with her. Given his behavior.

John In all, there are three documented cases of domestic violence involving Jason and Debbie. In one of them, Debbie is accused of domestic abuse, but she is listed as the victim in. The other two police records indicate that on October nine, twenty ten, Jason contacted them to report Debbie's presence at his residence, where she was allegedly harassing him. When the police arrived, Debbie informed them that two days prior, Jason had headbutted her as she sat in her car, resulting in damage to the windshield wiper lever on the steering column. Police noted and documented the damage to her car. Jason also captured a cell phone video of Debbie, in which she admits to assaulting him, saying, I hit you, broke into your house, looked at your laptop, poured egg whites on your car, and slashed three of your four tires.

Shaun On October twenty second, twenty ten, there was a particularly violent domestic violence incident that resulted in Jason being arrested and charged with felony domestic violence. The arrest report is a bit of a mess, and critical elements have been redacted from it, but it's clear that Jason, Angie, and Debbie were all involved. From what we're able to piece together, the incident started when Debbie was following Jason in their respective cars and bumped her car into his. Although neither car was damaged. Debbie claimed that Jason approached her, took her iPhone, elbowed her in the chin, and took off in his car. Angie and Debbie both followed him when they stopped again. He got out of his car and threw her phone about a hundred feet away. She went to get the phone and when she did, he attacked her again, pushing her down and pulling her hair in an attempt to get the phone back from her. He pulled her hair so hard that he ripped a chunk of it out. And we know that part is true because it's explicitly corroborated in the police report with a photo. Jason then drove off again and they both followed him again, and when they arrived at his apartment, the police were called and Jason was read his Miranda rights. He confirmed to the police that he was taking her phone to prevent her from calling the police, and he was charged with domestic violence and battery, with a hearing scheduled to occur in a couple of months.

John Since two thousand and nine, Debbie had been working as a part time dancer in the Luxor show fantasy. She was what's known as a swing member of the cast, filling in on a regular, rotating basis for the full time cast members. I am sure that anyone who's been to Vegas in the last twenty years has seen the

billboards for fantasy. It's been a show at the Luxor since nineteen ninety nine. It typically has between twelve and twenty dancers in the cast, and currently they have a vocalist who performs with the dancers. It's an award winning show for categories like Best Bachelor Party, Best Female Revue, and Best Showgirls. I have not ever seen it, but after reading about it this week, it made me want to. Fantasy is produced by Anita Mann, who is an Emmy Award winning choreographer, and according to the Review-Journal, she's known for being empathetic and having a den mother demeanor. Debbie loved being a part of fantasy, and the producers and the show's creator, Anita, had so much praise for her. They said she was hard working and always willing to fill in as a swing. She would only get the chance to be in the production three to four times a month. But as we said, Debbie loved dancing and she worked hard at her craft. According to Anita, although Debbie was technically a swing member, she said she was a full member of the production. She would go to whatever charity event they asked and would volunteer any time, including at the employee talent show at the Luxor. Whenever they needed her to make an appearance, she was there. And this all sounds very much like the role she took on as an NFL cheerleader ambassador. By December twenty ten, Debbie was on the verge of her big break.

Shaun Cisco, remember Cisco? Remember Thong Song from the year two thousand? I know someone is out there listening because it has over two hundred and ten million plays on Spotify. Debbie and Cisco knew each other from Baltimore. Debbie used to dance with him before she moved to Vegas. Debbie reached out to Cisco and persuaded him to come out to Vegas and check out the fantasy show. Debbie worked her magic on Cisco and convinced him and the fantasy producers that the cast would do a special two week long performance of Thong Song with Cisco as part of the number. These special performances were scheduled for December thirteenth through the twenty fifth.

John This number was one hundred percent Debbie's baby. She worked on the choreography with the producers and attended multiple rehearsals for two weeks straight with no days off. They even flew her to LA to work with a choreographer there to create the special performance. Thong song would be Debbie's chance to finally become a main cast member, and she was so dedicated to making the show perfect. There's a video on YouTube posted on December ten, twenty ten, which shows the cast rehearsing the choreography for the Cisco number. Cisco isn't in the video, but the song is a remix that has a very retro jazz and cabaret spin to it, almost as if it was being covered by postmodern jukebox. It looks like it was a clever, unique routine and a definite showstopper.

Shaun The rehearsal schedule was grueling. On December twelfth, the day before opening night, the cast rehearse in the afternoon and took a break before coming back for a midnight rehearsal. Midnight comes and Debbie doesn't show. She's a no call, no show, and Anita was very angry at first, but knowing what the show meant to Debbie, she quickly grew concerned. She texted, Debbie, are you okay? But got no answer. The next day, a two p m rehearsal was scheduled. But it's more than just a run through. The rehearsal was also going to be used to film publicity footage to publicize the show. Anita said there was no way that Debbie would miss that, especially since the Cisco plan, the routine, the whole thing was Debbie's idea. Anita said. It was like Debbie's dream. Two p m comes and goes with no sign of Debbie. Opening night of the Cisco performance happens without Debbie because of course, as they say, the show must go on. By this time, Anita had started calling trauma centers, hospitals, and the police, assuming Debbie had been in an accident.

John The next day. December fourteen Debbie's roommate, Sonia Sonnenberg, called the police to file a missing person's report. It was pretty obvious that something had gone wrong for Debbie to miss the final rehearsals and opening night in particular, all of her friends knew that her not showing up would blow everything up for her. Not just the Cisco show, but likely her whole career at fantasy. According to Sonia, Debbie hadn't been at home either. Debbie wasn't answering texts and her phone was going straight to voicemail. There was no activity on her Facebook or her Myspace where she was very active. According to her friends, Debbie was always on her phone, and she had more than five thousand Facebook friends that she kept up with. According to Sonia, she had last seen Debbie on the evening of December twelfth, when Debbie said she was leaving to go to Jason's house so they could watch the season finale of Dexter together. Surveillance cameras at Debbie's condo showed her getting into her car alone around seven p m, wearing black knee high boots, a dark shirt and dark jeans. She was carrying a black purse and a white gym bag. She then drove off in her maroon nineteen ninety seven Chevy Prizm with Maryland plates.

Shaun The police, as you might expect, went to talk to Jason, who they referred to as her ex boyfriend. He said that he had seen Debbie, but she had only just driven by his house. She never got out of the car. He said that. She said that she was going to meet with some friends, that she was alone in the car and everything seemed to be fine. There was no clue or indication that something was wrong. The police said he was completely cooperative. On December sixteen, twenty ten, the police received a call about an abandoned car in the backyard of an empty house sixteen miles away from where Debbie lived, which was obscured from sight and the rear license plate had been removed. The car matched the description of Debbie's car, and the police ran the VIN number and determined that it was her car. The police were fairly certain nothing had been stolen. Her phone and her computer were in the car, and neither had any activity after December twelfth, and the car was in good condition and completely drivable. The police opened the trunk of the car and thankfully Debbie was not inside. They also searched the property and the home nearby, but there was no sign of Debbie at all. They processed the car at the crime lab to look for DNA, fingerprints, and blood, but nothing of note was found.

John This was all very concerning. While it was a small relief that there was no blood or signs of violence, the abandoned car didn't provide any answers as to where Debbie was. Debbie's sister, Celeste, traveled from Atlanta to Las Vegas to join the search for Debbie. She had never been to Las Vegas before, and regretfully, she had never had the chance to see Debbie perform on the strip, and she relied on friends of Debbie to show her around. She worked tirelessly to get her sister's name and face in the press, and the story of her disappearance became national news. According to an interview given to CBS news, Celeste lost seven pounds in six days. She wasn't eating, she was surviving on water and coffee and just focused on finding her sister. She was hanging up, wanted posters and started a Facebook group dedicated to finding her. Celeste planned to stay in Las Vegas as long as it took to find Debbie, even if it meant skipping Christmas with her children. She said, my kids are my first priority, but so is finding my sister. Her message for whomever had harmed or kidnapped her sister was bring her home. Let her go. Let us know something. Just tell us what you want.

Shaun Debbie's story and the circumstances of her disappearance were being regularly reported on, with abundant speculation about what had happened to her. The news came out that about two weeks prior to her disappearance, on December one, twenty ten, Debbie had sent a cryptic text message to her mother that confused her mom at the time. Debbie wrote, in case there is ever an emergency with me, contact Blu Griffith in Vegas. My ex boyfriend, not my best friend. When her mom asked her what that meant, Debbie replied, never mind mommy, just keep it for your records. When the news of this text exchange went public. It, of course, ignited many theories and questions about if this could somehow be connected to Debbie's disappearance.

John On December twenty first, twenty ten, the Las Vegas Metro Police Department held a press conference to provide an update. Lieutenant Rob Lundquist of the Missing Persons Division spoke and confirmed many of the facts we've discussed already. Debbie was seen leaving her condo around seven p m on December twelfth, and Debbie's roommate had told the police that Debbie was headed to Jason's house. They also confirmed that they had spoken to Jason. He told the police that Debbie was going to meet up with some friends, but the police didn't know which friends or if she had ever made it to that meet up. They refused to provide any details about Jason's criminal history, and they did state that other than the domestic violence incident on October twenty second, they had no evidence that Debbie had ever been the victim of a violent crime. Lieutenant Lundquist also explained that they didn't know why she decided to drive by Jason's that night. When asked, he explained that he wasn't sure if Jason had called her to invite her over to watch TV or if she had called him, or what the details really were.

Shaun The police would not reveal any details about any text messages, emails or communications that Debbie had had with anyone or that they were looking at as being suspicious, including that message she had sent to her mom earlier in the month. A member of the press asked the question if maybe Debbie could have been the victim of an obsessive fan or stalker. We heard similar points being brought up when we talked about the Shannon TFA case, that perhaps she had been stalked by someone who had seen her perform. Lieutenant Lundquist stated that they did not have any evidence to confirm that theory. One of the topics frequently being reported and speculated on in the press was a rumor that Debbie was pregnant. A question asked during this press conference was, is she still pregnant? And Lieutenant Lundquist reported that he

didn't know. Being pregnant is very dangerous for women. The number one cause of death for pregnant women is homicide.

John After the press conference, Lieutenant Lundquist stressed that there was no indication of foul play. He stated that it was possible that she may have left on her own, but they were treating her disappearance very seriously and looking at all possibilities. He stressed that this was a missing persons investigation, and he did not call Jason a person of interest. He stated they were interested in talking to anyone and everyone who had contact with Debbie or any information regarding her whereabouts. On December twenty second, the police interviewed Jason again. Jason mentioned two other boyfriends of Debbie's that might have wanted to hurt her, including Jameel McGee, who we mentioned earlier. Jason also reiterated that he only had a short interaction with Debbie on December twelfth. He also mentioned that Debbie was distraught over their breakup and that she was contemplating taking her own life. He suggested that the police look for her at the windmill overpass on the two fifteen Beltway, which is oddly specific. We also want to mention here that the police did interview Jameel, but he had a very good alibi. He was living in Baltimore, so the police eliminated him as a suspect in her disappearance.

Shaun On December twenty third, the Las Vegas community held their breath when a partially burned body was discovered by hikers just over the border in Arizona, near the Hoover Dam. The body was a woman with dark hair and a similar body type to Debbie. At the time, the police said there was nothing at the scene to indicate that it wasn't or couldn't be Debbie, but the identification would need to wait for an autopsy. Two days later, the coroner's office determined that it was not Debbie, which was understandably a huge relief to Celeste and all of Debbie's friends and loved ones. However, I want to take a moment here to pause because the woman was named Jung Park. She was thirty nine years old at the time of her death, and she was brutally murdered by two of her co-workers, Min Sung Chang and Kyung Kun Park, who is not related to Jung. They were both found guilty of first degree murder and are serving life sentences. The motive for the crime was said to be that Jung owed them combined nine thousand dollars. Unfortunately, due to the fact that so much media attention was on Jung not being Debbie, there wasn't a lot of coverage about who young was herself. My attempts to research and learn more about her were futile.

John After it was confirmed to be young and not Debbie, according to the Review-Journal, Celeste said that she would not allow herself to think negatively. She said, I'm still hopeful. I'm bringing my sister home for the holidays, safe and sound. Somebody still knows something. Somebody saw something. You don't have to say your name. Just call the police. It's the holidays. Please bring her home for the holidays. Unfortunately, as we mentioned, Celeste ended up spending Christmas in Vegas away from her kids because Debbie was still missing on December thirtieth. On Facebook, she wrote, how do I make it through? I take it one day at a time. I face my fears. I keep my promises. I deal with the challenges. I turn to caring, positive people I know will be there for me. I believe I stay strong for you, I keep the faith for you, and I make room for a brighter day that someday soon is going to shine so much serenity back into my life with you in it.

Shaun When twenty ten came to a close, there were still no answers to Debbie's disappearance. Celeste and Debbie's co-workers were struggling. Metro had made it clear that they needed someone to come forward with information. Anita Mann said that the dancers and fantasy had to fake it just to make it through their performances. Going through the motions and holding out hope that maybe Debbie just needed to get out of town for a while. Next week we will bring you part two of Debbie's story. We want to thank you, as always, for listening and remind you that in our show notes and on our website, you can find local, national and international resources for domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking. Because what happens here happens everywhere.