The Last Dance - Part 2 - Debbie Flores Narvaez Flashback

Shaun Hi and welcome to Sins and Survivors, a Las Vegas true crime podcast where we cover cases that deal with domestic violence as well as missing persons and unsolved cases. I'm your host, Sean.

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

Shaun In part one of our flashback episode about Debbie Flores Narvaez, we left off with Debbie still missing and her panicked sister Celeste staying here in Las Vegas over the holidays to search for her. In part two, the search for Debbie heats up and the reality of what happened to her is discovered by Metro Police. One of the key breaks in the case came from someone who we called Jessica in this episode to protect her identity. At the time we recorded, we and a lot of other people were under the impression that she was just an ex-girlfriend of Blues.

John Since then, though, the news media have shared her identity widely, and we've decided to share it here, too. In the flashback, her real name is Kayleigh Corso, and at the end of the episode, we'll explain more about how deeply entangled with blue she really was. The case was shocking, but so was what we eventually learned about Calais. But for now, here's our remastered original coverage of part two of The Last Dance.

Shaun In part one of Debbie's story, her star was on the rise. The dance numbers she had poured her heart into was about to debut on the Vegas Strip. Debbie had worked tirelessly for months and built the performance from the ground up. Her friends and family were concerned when Debbie missed the final rehearsals, and they knew something was horribly wrong when she never showed up for opening night.

John Las Vegas Metro had questioned her on again, off again boyfriend Jason Griffith, who was likely the last person to have seen Debbie before her disappearance. He cooperated with the police, but his history of domestic violence incidents had the Las Vegas community on edge. Where was Debbie?

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.

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

Shaun Thanks for joining us for part two of Debbie's story. If you haven't had a chance yet to listen to part one, we recommend you go give that a listen. Now before diving in here. When we left off on part one, the Las Vegas Metro Police Department didn't have any new leads on Debbie's disappearance, and they needed someone to come forward with information. Debbie was last seen on December twelve, twenty ten. Debbie's car was found two days later, abandoned with no plates. Debbie's phone and computer were inside and untouched since December twelfth, but nothing on, in or around the car offered any answers as to where Debbie had gone or what had happened to her. Her roommate said that she left their condo on December twelfth, planning to go watch the Dexter finale with her boyfriend, Jason. Jason said he did see her briefly that night, but stated she had gone to hang out with friends, and he told police that she may have been considering ending her life because she was distraught over their breakup. Celeste, Debbie's sister, had forgone spending the holidays with her two young children. Instead, she felt she had no choice but to spend the holidays in Vegas searching for Debbie, Celeste was quoted by channel eight News Now saying, I don't get to see my kids. I don't get to see her. I don't get to be with my family. It's just another day for me. It's not Christmas Eve in my book. My family's incomplete, and I'm just trying to put them back together again.

John On January fifth, the police received the tip they were looking for. A witness had information relevant to the case and wanted to speak to detectives. The witness chose to approach a friend of hers who had a connection to a Metro police officer, who then brought the information to the lead detective on the case. It's a little bit of a game of telephone for reasons that will become clear in a minute. The witness who we're going to call Jessica was an ex-girlfriend of Jason's. The two of them remained friendly, although they had broken up. I want to add that this person is yet another girlfriend of Jason's that he was dating while he was dating Debbie, and while he was also married. Did we mention that? Yes, we discovered Jason was actually married this whole time. He was married in Reno in two thousand and six. According to Jessica, on December fourteen, Jason called her and asked her if it was okay for him to store something at her house for a little while. While he was getting ready to move to a new place, she told him that it would be fine if she had the room. She was

shocked when he pulled up to her house with a huge U-Haul, because she wasn't expecting to store a lot of items for him.

Shaun Jessica said Jason wasn't alone. His roommate, Luis Colombo, was with him when they opened the U-Haul. There was just one item inside a large blue plastic storage tub. The tub didn't have a lid on it, and it was filled with a gray substance that she was sure was concrete. The concrete was bumpy on the top and the tub was bulging out a little on one side. Jessica, of course, was confused and was thinking like, what's going on here? She decided to ask Jason, what's in that tub? According to Jessica, Jason hesitated before he told her. His demeanor was. Are you sure you want to know? And finally he told her, Debbie is in there. Jessica was horrified and terrified and told him to get the tub the fuck out of here. Jason and Louis left with the truck and Jessica did not contact the police right away because she was scared that whatever had happened to Debbie could happen to her. Jessica had decided to speak to a friend who had a connection to the police department, so she could feel safe in making this anonymous tip.

John The police followed up on the tip by going to U-Haul rental locations close to Jason's house. They checked rental agreements and surveillance footage and discovered that Jason and Louis had rented a U-Haul truck with two utility dollies around eleven a m on December fourteenth. The truck was returned outside of normal business hours very early in the morning of December sixteenth. Jason and Louis were seen on surveillance video leaving the keys to the truck in the dropbox. The rental truck had a GPS inside it that allowed the police to track the movements of the U-Haul during the rental period. It had been parked overnight on December fourteenth at a flying J truck stop location in Vegas. This was particularly important because it connected to another piece of evidence that the police had collected back in December, but had not revealed to the press, her family, or to the news media. On December twenty second, the police had executed a search warrant of Jason's home and recovered a receipt from a flying J truck stop that showed the purchase of sponges and bleach made on December fifteenth.

Shaun On January seven, twenty eleven, Jason's roommate Lewis was interviewed by homicide detectives. Lewis agreed to talk so long as he would be immune from arrest and prosecution. The police agreed to Lewis's conditions, probably because the police aren't the ones that make the deals the district attorneys do. But in any event, Lewis was reassured and he gave his statement. According to Lewis, Debbie did come to his and Jason's house on the evening of December twelfth to watch Dexter, as Debbie had told her roommate she was going to do. Later that evening, Debbie and Jason got into an argument and Jason grabbed Debbie by the throat and began strangling her. According to the police report, Lewis quote had to pull Griffeth off of Flores Narvaez because he was choking her with his hands around her neck. Lewis broke up the fight and was able to get the two of them to calm down. He had to leave the apartment around eight twenty p m to meet up with his girlfriend. He said that at ten thirty p m, he received a text from Jason that said not to bring his girlfriend back to the house. When Lewis got back home, Jason met him at the front door and told him this was a change your diaper moment.

John Lewis entered the house and saw Debbie lying on the floor with a plastic bag on her face. Lewis went to the bathroom and threw up, and when he returned, he could tell that Debbie was dead. She wasn't breathing and she was cold to the touch. According to Lewis, Jason then told him that Debbie had said that her throat was hurting and she wanted to call for an ambulance. That was when Jason grabbed her from behind and choked her until she died. Lewis explained how he and Jason discussed what to do with Debbie's body. They purchased a tub and concrete mixed up the concrete in their garage. Bit Debbie's body into the tub and encased her in the concrete. The combined weight of the filled tub was seven hundred pounds. Lewis confirmed the details that Jessica had shared. Lewis and Jason rented the U-Haul and the dollies and brought the tub to Jessica's house, but she refused to let them store the tub there. They had also attempted to store the tub at an undisclosed building, but were unable to move it to the second floor, probably because it weighed seven hundred pounds. They then park the U-Haul truck at the flying J truck stop overnight. The next day, Jason got the keys to a house that belonged to some friends who were out of the country. Lewis brought the tub to that house by himself and noticed that it had started leaking. When he moved it into the house, he ended up leaving it there for a few days.

Shaun This next part of what Lewis told the police is particularly gruesome and horrifying. Jason and Lewis went to a Walmart to purchase additional tubs, tools and concrete. They returned to the house where where Lewis had left the tub and chiseled Debbie out of the concrete. Dismembered her and placed her in two

separate tubs and once again covered her with concrete. They placed the tubs in a closet of the house and sealed the doors shut with spray foam insulation. They gathered up their tools and sealed those inside of a different closet in the house. They left the broken pieces of concrete and the blue bin on the floor of the living room. Lewis told the police where to find the house. The police obtained a search warrant and when they entered the home, they found the broken concrete pieces, the blue bin and the sealed up closets. Just as Lewis had described, and in one of the closets were the two bins containing Debbie's remains. The police also conducted further investigation into Jason. They discovered that in November of twenty ten, a friend of Jason's had reported to the North Las Vegas Police Department that Jason had sent him a text that indicated that Jason was contemplating ending his own life. The police did a welfare check on Jason, and they placed him on a legal two zero zero zero hold, which gives the police or medical professionals the ability to hold a person who is in a mental health crisis and a mental health treatment facility for up to seventy two hours. Jason was brought to a hospital and released a short time later. Another ex-girlfriend of Jason's came forward to the police and said that on December seventh or eighth of twenty ten, Jason had texted her and asked her if she knew where he could get a gun. She did not know what he wanted the gun for.

John On January eight, twenty eleven, the police stopped Jason as he was leaving work at the Love Show around eleven fifty p m. They told him he wasn't under arrest, but they wanted to ask some more questions about Debbie's disappearance. He agreed to talk to them, but he commented that they hadn't read him his Miranda rights. The officers read him his rights, and Jason signed a card acknowledging that that had happened and that he understood he was waving his right to an attorney and his right to remain silent. Jason said that he didn't have anything to do with Debbie's death. He denied that he killed her on purpose or accidentally. He was questioned about the U-Haul and he admitted to renting it. But he told the police that he needed the U-Haul to pick up a punching bag stand and other workout equipment from a friend, although he wouldn't say who the friend was or where they lived. The officers then tried asking Jason about Debbie's body and some of the details Lewis had given them, but Jason refused to answer those questions without his attorney present.

Shaun Police placed Jason under arrest and transported him to the Clark County Detention Center while he was being transported, Jason allegedly said to the police officer that Debbie's death, quote, was not a premeditated thing and quote, it was a heat of the moment thing. He explained that he thought Debbie had a gun and that she had attacked him. According to the police report, the officer responded to Jason that no one was going to believe that. Jason said that Debbie had, quote, forced him to do what he did. The police report also stated that Jason had said that he did all the amateur stuff afterwards. January eleventh. The coroner ruled Debbie's death was a homicide and that she had died from asphyxiation. Jason was arraigned on January twelfth on charges of murder. He pleaded not guilty and was held without bail during the arraignment. Celeste, who was of course present, made headlines when she justifiably screamed at Jason when she saw him. She shouted from the back of the courtroom, I hope you rot in hell, you fucking asshole for what you did to her, you fucking asshole! I hope you rot in hell. I hope you rot in hell. According to reporting from ABC channel thirteen, Celeste later told the press I guess I just kind of blacked out and said it.

John Very few people know what Celeste was feeling that day, but I can't imagine anyone blaming her for reacting like that.

Shaun In the midst of all this pain, Celeste and her family started a fund for survivors of domestic violence. As Celeste said, quote, it's really extremely important for women to understand that they don't have to deal with this, that they can talk to somebody. They don't have to be afraid. The funds raised were given to The Shade Tree, a shelter for women and children in Las Vegas.

John Originally, Jason's trial was filed on February nine, twenty eleven for Debbie's murder and was set to start on November twenty eight, twenty eleven. Due to various legal arguments and wrangling, the trial didn't start until May five, twenty fourteen, presided over by Judge Kathleen Delaney. That might seem like a long time, and that's because it's a very long time. But there were a litany of motions, according to court documents on both sides, that delayed the start of the trial, such as a motion from the defense attorney, Abel Yanez, to delay and give them more time to prepare because there was allegedly some evidence on a hard drive that the defense was trying to locate a motion from the defense to run an NCIC National Crime Information Center check, which is basically a criminal background check on Debbie to prove their assertion that she was violent. This one failed, and a motion to suppress the statements that Jason gave to the police in the police car on the

way to jail. This one also did not succeed. The court ruled that this was relevant and admissible. Specifically, Jason said that the murder was not a premeditated thing and it was in the heat of the moment. The trial lasted about two weeks. The way prosecutor Mark Digiacomo presented the case was that Jason had choked Debbie and asphyxiated her with a plastic bag because she was standing in the way of his relationship with Andrew. He said that Jason had stoked and amplified Debbie's frustration by lying often about his monogamy, and pulled away from her after accompanying her to the abortion clinic in May of twenty ten, only to reel her back in by offering her a gift as an olive branch on her thirty first birthday in July. One of the constants in the relationship was that they were often on broken up and together over and over, and the times were aware of it. Was Jason initiating the reconciliation?

Shaun We also want to note that Lewis was never charged with any crime connected to Debbie's death, or the subsequent events that he took after her death to conceal her body, he did testify at trial to most of the facts we've already told you here. De Giacomo also claimed that Jason had become depressed and suicidal between his arrest for domestic violence on October twenty second, as we mentioned last week and his thirty first birthday, December tenth, which would have been two days before Deby disappeared. This isn't much of a stretch when you think about the fact that in November of twenty ten, the police transported and held him on that legal two thousand hold we mentioned during the trial, prosecution called one medical expert who testified that it might have only taken seconds for Deby to become unconscious, but the death would have taken much longer. They also called the medical examiner, and as you might expect, he testified that her autopsy was the worst he had ever completed. I can't imagine how horrific that autopsy must have been, given what Jason did to Deby post mortem. It's incredibly horrific. The prosecution also included surveillance video of Jason and Lewis Louis buying the plastic tubs and concrete at Home Depot, and of course, the footage of them renting the U-Haul and dollies on December fourteenth, along with the receipts for sponges and bleach, he told the jury. You're not allowed to hold on to a woman's neck for ten minutes and have it not be first degree murder. Essentially, he's saying that at some point, Jason crossed the threshold into premeditation because, as we talked about a few weeks ago, being strangled takes seconds. But being strangled to death takes much longer. And if it wasn't in the heat of the moment, why wouldn't he just let go? They pointed out that while he was claiming this was done in self-defense, which contradicts the heat of the moment claim. By the way, he also claimed that he had called the police many times on Debbie. Why wouldn't he call the police this time?

John There was a lot of evidence here, both circumstantial and direct. On December twenty two, twenty ten, when Detective Dan Long interviewed Jason again, he made up a story about two previous partners who might have wanted to harm her. Jason spun the police, a tale about how Debbie was contemplating ending her own life because she was distraught about the breakup of their relationship, and he told detectives to go look for her near the overpass at windmill and the two fifteen Beltway. We live just a few miles from there, and two of the corners of that intersection are strip malls. One of them is a medical building, too, and the other two are on a very busy running trail that I have spent a lot of time on. That's the two fifteen trail. I've run that thing many times, and I can't think of a location where a body wouldn't be found right away. It was a lot less populated and busy in twenty eleven, but still he claimed that again on December twelfth. He had only a brief interaction with Debbie and that she didn't get out of her car. He said they talked and she drove away and vanished without a trace. Note that on the date of this interview, December twenty second, that's the day that Metro executed a search warrant on Jason's house and recovered receipts for sponges and bleach.

Shaun The defense attorneys were able. Janis and Jeff Banks. The case they presented involved four days of testimony from Jason testifying that Debbie's death was self-defense. He said that he grabbed her from behind with his arms round her neck when he thought she was reaching for a purse that may have contained a gun. As it turned out, there was no gun, and there was no testimony from anyone that Debbie knew that she had ever owned a gun, nor had she ever attempted to buy a gun or borrow a gun.

John It also occurs to me that this argument makes no sense. I'm imagining a situation where someone has their back to me, and I think they're reaching for a purse that might have a gun in it. He said that he grabbed her by the neck, but that doesn't sound logical to me. If you think about someone going for a gun, why wouldn't you knock them down or tackle them? Holding their neck might not prevent them from reaching that gun. If it exists and threatening you with it, none of it passes the smell test to me.

Shaun I agree. He also said that after she died, he panicked and asked his roommate, Lewis to help dispose of the body. This is also strange because for someone who is panicking, he certainly came up with a plan. Given the lengths he went to in order to hide Debbie's body, there's also the fact that she had the plastic bag on her head. Jason claimed he had put that plastic bag on her head to see if she was still breathing. De Giacomo also pointed out that the self-defense claim was an obvious fabrication, because if it were true, Jason would have stopped choking her when she was unconscious and or rendered some kind of aid, or called an ambulance. Jason made quite a few claims during his four days on the witness stand, such as he claimed that Debbie told him she was pregnant. He said that the fight escalated after she told him this, and demanded that he break up with Annie and devote his full attention to her. The autopsy showed she was not pregnant. This argument appears to have been a big misfire, though. On cross-examination by De Giacomo, the Da insinuated that if this was true, perhaps Jason killed her because she and her pregnancy would have hurt his relationship with Annie, or that he killed her to head off another domestic violence charge that would ruin his career. Jason claimed that on the night of the murder, Debbie told him that she had slashed his tires before coming into the house and that she had brought it with her, it presumably being the gun because she was going to kill him and then kill herself. These arguments make no sense. For one, Lewis was home the whole time, and Jason never called the police for help that night when he had in the past, when she was allegedly being aggressive with him. But most of all, why would Debbie do that? The night before, the biggest break in her career that she'd been working towards for months.

John It got even worse for Jason. The day pointed out that after the murder, Jason had claimed that he was not in possession of Debbie's phone because it had been dumped in the neighborhood near his house. However, the GPS data pulled from the phone indicated that it had. It had been near the New York, New York hotel where Angie's show Zumanity was. Jason also claimed that a threatening letter had been left on his car in which Debbie threatened to kill him. The problem here was that there were also text messages between him and Lewis proving that Lewis had written the note, not Debbie. Regardless, though, Jason's overarching defence is that he killed her in self-defense. The defense spent a lot of energy portraying Debbie as volatile and violent, and submitted a document to the court in which they claimed to have access to four prior partners who would testify to her violence. Annie was also called as a witness. She testified that she had broken up with Jason in the fall of twenty ten, after finding out about his various incidents of cheating on her, like sleeping with two other members of the love show. She was apparently under the impression she was in a monogamous relationship with him, and thought Debbie was just out of control, harassing and stalking Jason. She thought they had broken up in May and didn't know they got back together around Debbie's birthday. She did tell the court, however, that she told Jason that she would get back together with him if he broke up with Debbie, which seems to bolster the prosecution's claim that Debbie was getting in the way of his relationship with her. I mentioned a minute ago that there were text messages proving that the death threat. Notes that Debbie had allegedly written were actually written by Lewis. This came out during cross examination, and it was reported that when she learned this from the D.A., as she was being cross-examined, Annie gave Jason quite a meaningful stare. There was another thing that Annie said that was very telling. When she was asked if she thought Jason was suicidal. She replied that she did not think he was suicidal, just that he was a great actor.

Shaun On May twenty second, twenty fourteen, after the two week trial, Jason was found guilty of second degree murder. The prosecution had been hoping for a verdict of first degree murder, while the defense wanted it to be voluntary manslaughter. The sentencing hearing was two months later, on January twenty third, and it lasted about an hour. During his sentencing hearing, Jason plead for mercy from the court, saying that he had reached out for help to the police fourteen times and he hoped that she, the judge, would find it in her to give him some help. Finally, the judge, who was Unswayed, did not mince words, saying the responsibility for this toxic and ultimately tragic relationship, continuing as long as it did, is entirely yours. During their year long, on again, off again relationship, Jason had many opportunities to walk away, but he always went back. The judge said. And for no other reason that I can discern from whatever was discussed at trial, the only reason I can see was to satisfy your own narcissistic predisposition. Jason was given the maximum sentence for second degree murder, a life sentence with the possibility of parole with a minimum sentence of ten years. His first parole hearing was in twenty twenty because he had credit for almost four years, served his parole was denied, and his next parole opportunity is in twenty twenty six. Jason appealed his conviction to the Nevada Supreme Court, which ruled on it in twenty sixteen. There were several aspects to his appeal, including claims that his right to avoid self-incrimination was violated because he was forced to

present evidence at trial. On the topic of his claims of self-defense, claims that his right to counsel were violated, claims that several pieces of evidence that were not allowed should have been claims of prosecutorial misconduct, and claims that the court failed to address jury questions presented to them. The Nevada Supreme Court did not find any of the allegations warranted them overturning his conviction.

John In twenty twenty three, Jason appealed again on the grounds of ineffective assistance of counsel. He pointed to fifteen different examples where he claimed that his counsel was ineffective and all the points were denied. For example, he claimed that his counsel failed to bring in a choke expert as a part of his self-defense claim to discuss how he had choked Debbie in an evidentiary hearing, his counsel said that they were concerned that testimony about the length of time he would have had to have strangled Debbie, would have made a first degree murder conviction much more likely, and that's why they didn't pursue it. Debbie was laid to rest in Puerto Rico, but several memorials were held in her honor in twenty eleven. On January thirteenth, there was a private memorial held with her family. Her work family held a memorial performance at the Luxor. On January fourteenth, and her high school also held a vigil in her memory on January seventeenth. At her memorial service held at the Luxor, Anita Mann said there was nothing she would not do. She wasn't that fantastically trained, but she attacked dancing with a vengeance. That's the way she attacked life full out with vengeance and passion.

Shaun There was also a benefit celebration for Debbie, held at the Rio on January twenty six, twenty eleven, with proceeds raised going to help the family cover the expenses to lay Debbie to rest in Puerto Rico and also for the benefit of the shade tree. According to the website created for the event, both Vegas and LA performers donated their time and talent for a show of dance, music and art. Debbie had said, the arts are my life. It featured performances from the cast of fantasy, as well as the MGM Crazy Horse, Paris Show, Vegas, The show Thunder From Down Under, and the website lists that the event was sponsored by Penn and Teller, Carrot Top and the Golden Steer restaurant. All three of these are truly Las Vegas legends, and it just really shows how Debbie's death affected the entire community. I was able to find a video of one of the performances from The Benefit. Jennifer Ramos did a contemporary dance to the song This Woman's Work. And to be honest, this woman's work is next to impossible for me to listen to and not cry anyway. But Jennifer, who is a burlesque performer, gave this dramatic, emotion filled performance in honor of Debbie, and it was gorgeous and moving. I will share a link to it in the show notes. Jennifer is amazingly talented and continues to light up the stage here in Vegas.

John The all star cast that performed at Debbie's benefit. And the sponsors highlight what we've talked about in past episodes about how people who don't live here don't really know the ways that our community will come together and look after each other in times of tragedy. Jason has come up for parole twice since he has been incarcerated, and both times Celeste has made sure she was present to make sure he wasn't released in twenty twenty after serving ten years in prison. His parole was denied five years later, in October of twenty twenty five. He had another parole hearing. The twenty twenty episode revealed that at that hearing, Jason's wife was present to testify on his behalf. Celeste was shocked to learn, as we all were, that he had a wife. Even more shocking to us was that his wife was revealed to be none other than Kayleigh Casorzo, the woman who gave police the information that led them to discover that Jason had killed Debbie and had then testified against him.

Shaun Jason was thankfully once again denied parole and he remains at High Desert Prison. His next hearing will be in twenty thirty. At that point, he will have served twenty years for Debbie's murder. When we originally recorded this episode, the info we had access to stated that the home where Jason and Lewis had hidden Debbie was empty because the owners were out of the country. We thought that maybe they were on vacation for an extended period of time, but the twenty twenty episode stated that the people who owned that home had been deported. As Celeste has said, there is no sense of closure for this tragedy. We will continue to bring you updates whenever we have them. When one of these tragedies happened, when someone is murdered due to domestic violence or murdered, period, all of the family and friends surrounding that person are also victims of the crime. In Debbie's case, those victims included her show family and the community of performers here in Las Vegas as well.

John Thank you as always for listening. You can find resources in our show notes or on sins and survivors dot com, and be sure to like, subscribe and follow us on social media and share this episode with a friend. Because what happens here happens everywhere.