

## THE LETTER SEASON 2, EPISODE 2: Dead Men Speak No Lies

**Amy Donaldson:** When 23-year-old Carla Booth woke up the morning of March 5, 1982 and saw fresh snow on the ground, the sense of dread she'd been feeling all week exploded into full-blown panic. The sun hadn't risen yet, but her husband Buddy was already dressing in the brown uniform that he wore for work.

Even in good weather, she hated that he had to drive a laundry delivery van through Utah's canyons.

But whatever was nagging her that morning felt different.

**Carla:** I just had a feeling something was gonna happen. I just had this feeling several days before, and it just kept getting stronger and stronger.

**Amy Donaldson:** In the moment, she blamed the overnight snowstorm. In retrospect, maybe it was the kind of warning that just doesn't make sense until it's too late.

And so, in the pre-dawn light, Carla made what seemed like an absurd request of her husband

**Carla:** I really tried to beg him not to go that day or find a different job or something like that. Where he's not going up the canyon and stuff. I tried so hard. But he liked his job.

**Amy Donaldson:** Delivering and picking up linens from local restaurants might not sound like the most enjoyable job. But Buddy was friendly with the people he met on his daily route, and he looked forward to the conversations and the scenery and it was a job that paid him enough money that his wife didn't have to work and he could help his mom with a few things. This was a Friday, so his first stop was one of Utah's most well-known restaurants Log Haven. It was located in one of the valley's canyons and that meant he had a steep, slick climb ahead of him.

He buttoned his shirt with "Bud" sewn on the chest, ran a comb through his thick, unruly curls, and shrugged off his wife's worry.

**Carla:** He always did that, but I knew something's wrong.

**Amy Donaldson:** They had only been married four years, but already she knew if there was one thing Buddy Booth was, one thing he'd always been, it was the kind of person who showed up for work. And they did need the money, with two young daughters sleeping in the next room.

So Carla reluctantly pulled on her coat and prepared to drive her husband to work. They left their children in the care of Buddy's youngest sister, and headed out into the darkness.

It was about 7 a.m. when Carla dropped Buddy off at Peerless Laundry in downtown Salt Lake City where he'd pick up the van he drove for work. She once worked there too, but Buddy preferred she stay home to care for their children. She kissed him goodbye and then she drove home to the chaos and joy of two tiny girls to their apartment and modest dreams. It had been a tough year for their young family they'd nearly broken up.

But they were young, just 23 and 24 and if there was one thing they thought they had in abundance it was time.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** After his wife drove away, Buddy climbed into his Chevrolet delivery van undaunted by the weather 27 cents in his pocket. The sun was rising as he turned onto Millcreek Canyon Road and began the slow drive to the first of his two stops in the canyon Log Haven. The high-end restaurant was nestled on the north side of the canyon in thick trees. Using police reports, pictures, and media accounts, we've pieced together what might have happened as Buddy arrived at Log Haven that morning. The driveway sloped upward from the narrow, tree-lined road, and he would have been able to see the picturesque Log cabin, a blanket of white adorning its dark wood frame. A scene worthy of a postcard. But then, just as he prodded the bulky van up the incline, he saw something lying in the snow just east of the front door. He eased the van to a stop and then turned the engine off.

He stepped out of the van, his boots sinking into the unplowed snow. And as he got closer, he could see, it was a person a man laying face down in the snow. And he saw blood, everywhere it seemed. As he leaned over the body, someone came rushing out of the restaurant. Buddy spun around and came face to face with a man about his age. Buddy asked, "What happened here?" And the man said something, but Buddy wasn't looking at the man anymore. He was looking at the gun that the man was pointing at him. Buddy turned to run just as shots rang out.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** From KSL Podcasts, I'm Amy Donaldson and this is The Letter Season 2: Ripple Effect. Episode 2: Dead Men Speak No Lies

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** Carla was only 17 when she met Buddy, but she was already living on her own.

She was the 12th of 13 children in a blended family, her parents divorced when she was so young, she has no memories of their marriage. She had almost no relationship with her biological father until she went to live with him at age 12.

**Carla:** I was kind of a brat and didn't want to live home at my mom and step dad's house anymore. And so they sent me to my dad's. And I was thinking it would be better there but it was worse.

**Amy Donaldson:** Her parents' attempts to discipline or care for her felt like a cage she had to escape. She skipped school, ran away from home oftentimes with boys, until eventually, it landed her in juvenile lock-up.

**Carla:** They call it ungovernable. I didn't want to listen. I wanted to basically be on my own. I didn't want to feel like my parents owned me. And it continued until I was 16. And then I was emancipated from my parents.

**Amy Donaldson:** Childhood held no allure for her. She dropped out of high school, moved in with a friend, and started to live life on her terms. But that turned out to be a lot tougher than she'd anticipated. So when Buddy and his cousin walked into the all-night diner where she was eeking out a living she felt drawn to him.

**Carla:** they chose to sit at the counter. And I was waiting on him. And, Buddy was talking to me. I just felt flattered because not too many people you know, guys said a word to me. They didn't even notice me, a lot of them. And so I got talking to Buddy, he was really sweet and everything and. What? Two weeks later, we moved in together.

**Amy Donaldson:** Carla said falling for Buddy was easy. She said he was handsome but not in the traditional sense.

**Carla:** Buddy had red curly hair, really thick, red curly hair. He had freckles. He was a little bit taller than me. I'm five-one. He was about five-three. When I met him, he had all his front teeth gone. Because he had been years earlier, he had been hit in the mouth by brass knuckles. Like I said, it didn't matter to me, didn't bother me a bit.

**Amy Donaldson:** She liked his unconventional looks but more than that, she liked who he was.

**Carla:** I don't fall for someone who's perfect and glamorous and all that stuff. You know, I fell for the kindness, the caring.

**Amy Donaldson:** Buddy and Carla had a lot in common. He also grew up in a blended family. He was the fifth of eight children, 14 if you counted half-siblings. And he offered Carla the same thing he'd given his mom and siblings growing up someone they could rely on.

Buddy's younger sister, Tamie Pipes, is one of the few remaining relatives willing or able to talk with us. She lives in Reno, so I talked to her on the phone. She was happy to share some memories of her brother who was, at times, more of a parent than a sibling.

**Tamie Pipes:** He was just a worker and helped my mom out because my mom had open heart surgery. She had a pacemaker. And then, you know, he made sure all us other kids were doing what we're supposed to do to help mom out.

**Amy Donaldson:** Tamie said Buddy while still a child himself, took on the role of caretaker. Especially when their parents divorced and their mother remarried a man whose demons became Buddy's to battle.

**TamiePipes:** Her second husband was an alcoholic. And when he'd drink, he'd beat on her and stuff. So Buddy took charge and took care of that. So he always helped mom.

**Amy Donaldson:** Buddy had to grow up fast because that's what his family needed. He chose a full-time job over a high school diploma. And while Buddy may not have had the luxury of a carefree childhood, he held onto a playfulness that Tamie still cherishes.

**Tamie Pipes:** He'd play cards with you, he loved to watch westerns, He loved music. Mostly Elvis Presley, Tom Jones and Marty Robbins.

**Amy Donaldson:** Money was a limited resource, but thanks to Buddy, fun times were not. She said he always found ways to have fun tubing in the canyons or just taking his siblings camping.

Oh, and those missing teeth? Tamie says her brother didn't lose them in a fight. He lost them to an infection. But in his defense, the brass knuckle story did feel like a better way to impress women.

In any case, Buddy never seemed to care that they were gone. Or that other people's choices robbed him of a childhood. He seemed content just being able to take care of the people he loved. Tamie said she thought Buddy was happy with Carla she remembers arguments but she also remembers the times they turned their living room into a dance floor.

When Carla moved in with Buddy, he was living with his mom and siblings. But that arrangement was short-lived. Carla said she and his mother clashed because his mom got involved in their arguments. But when they decided to get their own place, they chose an apartment nearby.

**Carla:** Buddy tried to stay close, because he would go over and count out the money that she needed to pay her bills. Buddy could count money and his mother couldn't. Other than that, Buddy couldn't read or write.

**Amy Donaldson:** Carla said she grew to love Buddy's family and their relationship improved after the young couple moved into an apartment of their own. But it seemed someone in Buddy's life always needed a place to say. And Buddy was more than happy to help.

**Carla:** It was kind of hard, but it was good too, you know. Sometimes we'd, you know, disagree on things. And, of course, we'd have his cousin living with us or his sister living with us.

**Amy Donaldson:** But before the couple really had time to build any kind of stability for themselves, they found out they were going to be parents.

**Carla:** I got pregnant with my daughter, my oldest daughter at 18. And when he first found out I was pregnant with her, he wanted to get married. I told him no. And when I turned 19, and had my daughter, I looked at him and told him Okay, I'm ready to get married now.

**Amy Donaldson:** They named their little girl Norma after Buddy's mother.

**Carla:** It was awesome. Oh yeah. We were just thrilled.

**Amy Donaldson:** But even the joy of Norma's birth came with terrifying challenges. Norma was born with a congenital heart defect and spent the first few weeks of her life in a hospital incubator.

**Carla:** We're both worried. You know, because here we were young parents with a child. And, and she had a heart condition and we didn't know how to handle this. It was really scary.

**Amy Donaldson:** Buddy couldn't take time off work and he was torn between being with his daughter and making sure they could pay their bills.

**Carla:** So it was tough on him because he always worried about her. She became his everything.

**Amy Donaldson:** The fear and worry made those first weeks excruciatingly difficult. But Buddy embraced fatherhood.

**Carla:** When he'd come home from work, he'd play with them on the floor. They would just have fun with each other. I loved seeing the two of them, you know, interact with each other and stuff like that. It was beautiful.

**Amy Donaldson:** And in the family, Buddy was building with Carla, he tried to do what he'd always done, work hard to provide stability for them.

But even their best days were also a struggle. Norma had multiple open-heart surgeries, each time reviving the fear they'd felt when she was born on top of the mounting expenses. The stress took a toll. They fought a lot, ordinary disagreements were exacerbated by their fear for their daughter.

They only had one car so Carla took Buddy to work every day and then headed to Primary Children's Hospital where Norma spent months of her life. They relied on Medicare to help pay for the surgeries she needed Carla had lost two sisters and a nephew to the same defect. Life felt like one long series of challenges and Carla responded the way she always had by fighting. But eventually, their constant arguments strangled any affection they had for each other and when Norma was about 2 and a half they separated.

**Carla:** I left him, and took Norma and he was not happy with that one.

**Amy Donaldson:** Cuz he wanted his family back.

**Carla:** He wanted Norma.

**Amy Donaldson:** Most of their fights were about how much time Buddy could spend with Norma. But Carla also started dating someone else, and that added to the animosity. One night, everything came to a head in a grocery store parking lot where Buddy found Carla sitting in her new boyfriend's truck with Norma. Buddy demanded that Carla give him time with his daughter. He tried to pull the 3-year-old out of the truck. And Carla pulled her back inside. As they struggled, someone saw the fight and called the police. But before officers arrived, Buddy managed to take Norma and drive away. Carla didn't know what to do. She eventually called the police and that's when she learned she and Buddy were now accused of child endangerment. Authorities had already taken Norma from him and placed her in foster care.

**Carla:** Next thing I know, we had to go to court. And so we went to court and they ordered us to go to parenting class. And so Norma was taken from us for probably about eight months, eight, nine months. It was very terrifying.

**Amy Donaldson:** During those eight months, two things happened that rekindled their hope for a future together. In parenting classes and family counseling, they learned better communication skills. And They found out they were expecting a second child.

Despite the turmoil and uncertainty of this time, Carla said discovering she was pregnant again felt like a blessing.

**Carla:** I was thrilled. I was happy about it.

**Amy Donaldson:** They welcomed their second daughter, Dana, and a month later, Norma returned home. But the family of four only had three months together before that snowy March morning in 1982. Their problems were not solved, but they felt a new sense of commitment, not just to each other, but to their two little girls.

And so, the day Carla dropped Buddy off at work that sense of foreboding faded quickly. She had a busy day ahead, full of motherly duties cooking, cleaning, and caring for their little girls.

Carla said everything about that day felt ordinary. About 3 p.m., she left her babies with her sister-in-law Tamie again and drove downtown to pick up her husband. She pulled up in front of the Peerless Laundry building and turned off her car to wait.

But when she looked up, it wasn't Buddy walking toward her car, it was Buddy's boss. Carla knew him. So she prepared for some teasing.

**Carla:** And I used to work for Peerless so I thought he was just coming out to give me a hard time.

**Amy Donaldson:** but there was something odd about his demeanor.

**Carla:** He'd come over and his, had a, you know, a serious face. And I rolled the window down and I says, what do you want? That's when he told me that Buddy had been shot. And I'm like, what?!

**Amy Donaldson:** Without thinking, she fumbled for her keys, still hanging from the ignition She needed to get to Buddy.

**Carla:** And I tried to start the car, because I was gonna go up with where he was at. Cause I was at that point, I was quite hysterical.

**Carla:** And his boss reached in and grabbed my hand, took the keys and says, Carla won't do you any good. He's dead. And next thing I knew is Buddy's family came in a different car to get me. Well they opened the door for me to get out, and I couldn't move. I couldn't move, couldn't feel my legs. couldn't all I could do is feel my hands, my arms. But I couldn't move. So they had to help me out of the car. Cuz I was just, I was numb. I was just totally numb.

**Amy Donaldson:** She was 23 and now a widow left to pick up the pieces of a life that already felt fragile left to care for an infant and a four-year-old girl alone. After the break, detectives try to piece together what happened.

**Amy Donaldson:** They are both dead. That's the first thing a Salt Lake County paramedic told Deputy Mike Wilkinson when he arrived at Log Haven the morning of March 5, 1982. Before Wilkinson could react, the paramedic added "Looks like murder. They are shot."

The rescue crew stood near a laundry van that was parked on the side of the canyon road in front of the restaurant. The back doors of the van were open, and Deputy Wilkinson could see two bodies lying face down. One dressed in black suit pants, a gray jacket and black oxford shoes. The other wore brown pants, brown hunting boots, and a blue jacket a blue comb stuck out of his left rear pocket.

Standing with the paramedics was the man who said he found the bodies, the restaurant's manager Michael Moore. Wilkinson looked him over. He was young, thin, his curly dark hair cut short, and he wore a plaid shirt tucked neatly into his jeans.

**Wilkinson:** Mr. Moore appeared quite shaken and I had him sit in my patrol car.

**Amy Donaldson:** This is a voice actor reading the police report Deputy Wilkinson wrote in 1982.

**Wilkinson:** I asked him if he knew the victims, he said he thought one was Jordan Rasmussen, the auditor for the owners of the Log Haven. He said Jordan's auto was parked at the mouth of the canyon, that he had passed it coming up. He also said he had a meeting scheduled with Jordan at 0800. He then stated he needed a drink of water, could he go up to the restaurant. He exited the car and walked up to the driveway going up to the restaurant.

**Amy Donaldson:** Deputy Wilkinson got out of his patrol car and one of the firefighters pointed out something he found strange.

**Wilkinson:** One of the firemen asked me if I had noticed the blood on that guy's face.

**Amy Donaldson:** Wilkinson had not seen the blood. He walked up the driveway, and as he got close to the front door, he passed tire tracks, shell casings, and a single cigarette butt. And about 20 feet away the only spot where asphalt was visible. Something melted the snow, and as he got closer, he could see a massive amount of "coagulated, thick, heavy, blood" a couple of feet from the blood, smashed into the freshly-fallen snow a broken pair of eyeglasses.

When he walked in the restaurant, he noticed it was extremely warm. The thermostat read more than 80-degrees. In an office adjacent to the kitchen, there was an empty shoulder holster and ammunition for a .45 caliber gun the same caliber casing in snow-covered driveway. Michael Moore emerged from the kitchen with a glass of water and a napkin in his hand. There was no blood on his face.

**Wilkinson:** He was talking about business problems, "It's all crazy", "They set up people", "They're going to fire us all"

**Amy Donaldson:** Michael asked if he could make some coffee, but Wilkinson, thinking he was acting strangely, asked him to stay seated and wait for investigators to arrive.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** From those first moments at Log Haven, police couldn't make sense of Michael Moore's story. So, once homicide detectives arrived, they took him downtown to the main offices of the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Department. That's where they'd continue their



conversation. In a windowless room on the ninth floor, Michael Moore told the detectives Jordan Rasmussen was a co-worker that they were scheduled to meet at the restaurant that morning to talk through some bookkeeping issues. But when he arrived at the restaurant he saw the van, the blood, the bodies. And then he called for help.

**TJ:** Things were not adding up.

**Amy Donaldson:** This is TJ Tsakalos. He was a Salt Lake County prosecutor at the time and was assigned to the case almost immediately.

**TJ:** The Salt Lake County detectives, the homicide unit back then they were incredibly sharp. That was the A team. They were really, really sharp guys.

**Amy Donaldson:** TJ said detectives immediately suspected Michael Moore was more than an unfortunate bystander.

**TJ:** They start seeing the jacket, the blood on him and the blood on his pants and the blood on his jacket. You know, things are, how do you get two bodies in the van and then just discover them?

**Amy Donaldson:** After about a half hour of trying to convince detectives that he was just a witness. He realized he was a suspect. One of them read him his miranda rights. He called his father and asked for help hiring an attorney. His father said that because he's an adult, he had to find legal help on his own. But Michael didn't do that. Instead, he confessed.

Around 4 p.m., Michael was taken to the same room where he met with the same homicide investigator. The recordings of this conversation have been lost to time. But we have the transcript, which you'll hear read by voice actors for both Michael Moore and the detective questioning him, Garth Beckstead.

Michael admitted he'd lied to them in the first interview. He had planned to meet Jordan Rasmussen at the restaurant but he wasn't sure Jordan's car would make it up the canyon because of the new snow.

**Michael More:** So I went down to the bottom of the canyon and I just sat and had a few cigarettes and waited and when he came, I said you're not gonna make it. And I said park there, I'll give you a ride up and we can discuss it and I'll shoot ya back down, I think I'll save you time if you get stuck or something.

**Amy Donaldson:** Michael said he'd given other employees rides from this same spot and he said that he told Jordan, it would give them extra time to discuss the bookkeeping issues. Jordan was apparently persuaded because, as you heard in episode 1, he got into that jeep. Michael told police they discussed ongoing financial issues and a check that needed to be deposited. But we can't be sure that is what the two men talked about.

Moore painted a picture of Jordan Rasmussen that no one in Jordan's life would recognize.

**Michale More:** I mean, it's not a guy I wanna mess with and I didn't realize his devious side until just recently. I mean, I was scared for my life with this guy.

**Amy Donaldson:** He said Jordan Rasmussen had been stealing from the restaurant in his capacity as their accountant. And recently he said he'd been pressuring Michael to do the same.

**Michael More:** The thing that set me off today uh, due to the fact that Jordan has been forcing me to, uh embezzle funds from my company.

**Garth:** He's been forcing you to do that?

**Michael More:** I can show you that through and, uh, to sign over American Express checks to him.

**Garth:** How's he been forcing you to do so?

**Michael More:** Uh, by threat of violence.

**Garth:** How did he threaten ya?

**Michael More:** Just bodily force. He said it'll be in your best interest. I can't remember his exact words. And this has been going on for about a month.

**Amy Donaldson:** Michael told the detective that he'd asked Jordan to meet him that morning to discuss all of this. He said he wore a .45 in a shoulder holster under his leather coat because he'd been threatened.

**Michael More:** I was carrying the, the piece for personal protection, if somebody actually did, like if he tried to run me over or tried to pull a weapon on me or somethin' I'd have some recourse of defense. I was mad as hell at the guy. I thought he was a jerk.

**Amy Donaldson:** So by the time Jordan and Michael arrived at the restaurant, Michael's fear exploded into rage.

**Michael More:** When Jordan asked me for the American Express check in the Jeep this morning. I just lost my total cool.

**Amy Donaldson:** Michael pulled the jeep to a stop just east of the front door. And when Jordan Rasmussen climbed out, Michael Moore did the same. He immediately pulled the gun from its holster and pointed it at Jordan.

**Michael More:** It's an automatic .45, cocked it, reached over the hood.

**Amy Donaldson:** Jordan saw the gun.

**Michael More:** And he said, 'No, Mike.'

**Amy Donaldson:** Moore held the gun with both hands and he pulled the trigger. The bullet hit Jordan in the right side of the head, spinning his 6-foot-3 frame around. Moore fired again the second shot hit him in the back knocking him forward into the snow.

**Michael More:** It was not a personal satisfaction, it was the fact that this guy's such a jerk that he no longer deserves to live. I mean that the rage was that intense.

**Amy Donaldson:** But almost immediately, Michael said his rage was replaced with something else, the gravity of killing someone.

**Michael More:** I was horrified. I just started shaking. I lost any semblance of control that I had. I ran back and forth. I, uh, you know, what am I gonna do with this body, what, uh, all the sudden a realization of what, what had transpired hit me. The only thing I thought of was I could sink him in the sewer.

**Amy Donaldson:** Moore ran around the yard, leaving confused footsteps in the snow until he had an idea. He thought there might be a chain in the restaurant. Maybe he could use it to lower Jordan's body into the restaurant's sump, where they dumped raw sewage and grease from the kitchen.

**Michael More:** Thought there might be something in the restaurant, so I ran back into the restaurant, looked around, searched the basement area between the bakery and the office on the downstairs flight through the freezer room and the furnace room and whatnot, uh, just running wildly. Couldn't find anything.

**Amy Donaldson:** He ran back outside into the cold to figure out what to do next only to realize, he was no longer alone.

**Michael More:** And there's the Peerless Linen laundry truck.

**Amy Donaldson:** Buddy Booth had pulled into the driveway while Moore was inside.

**Michael More:** And he's standin' there looking at this dead body. And, uh, I froze. I didn't know what to do. I said I've, called the Sheriff, He said what happened and I, I said somebody shot him, I, I don't know.

**Amy Donaldson:** Michael says, almost without knowing he changed course and stopped pretending he didn't know what had happened.

**Michael Moore:** And at that point, unconsciously I reached in, grabbed the gun, cocked it again, it jammed, dropped the shell, loaded it again and shot him.

**Amy Donaldson:** He shot Buddy twice, as he turned to run. The bullets hit the back of Buddy's right elbow and his neck, just below his right ear. He fell, like Jordan, face down in the snow.

[MUSIC]

**Amy Donaldson:** Detective Beckstead asked him why he killed a man he didn't even know.

**Garth:** Why did you shoot the guy from Peerless?

**Michael Moore:** Fear.

**Garth:** Fear of what?

**Michael Moore:** Of being put, you know, I'd, I'd just shot a man and I was afraid of getting

**Garth:** Arrested, right?

**Michael Moore:** Arrested. And, you know, dead men speak no lies, I'll put it that way.

**Amy Donaldson:** After shooting Buddy, Michael walked to where Jordan was crumpled in the snow and shot him one more time in the head. Then, he walked over to Buddy and fired a bullet into his head.

Michael Moore seemed remarkably candid, eerily clinical as he walked detectives through every graphic detail, ending with how he tried to 'clean up' the crime scene before he called police just after 8 a.m.

He said he dragged Jordan's and Buddy's bodies across the snow and shoved them into the back of the van. Michael moved the van to the road and he took a white towel off Buddy's dashboard and used it to wipe the blood off the van and off his hands. He changed his shirt and hid the bloody one in a restaurant closet. He spent time shoveling some of the blood-covered snow into a trash can and dumped it in the sump that sewer hole the one where he had wanted to dump Jordan's body.

And that's where he tossed the gun.

After that, he called the owners, a co-worker, the cops and then he waited.

It would take two interviews and eight hours, but Michael finally told police what he'd done.

No one can say whether Michael confessed out of remorse or if he thought it was his best strategic option. But he did it before securing a lawyer. He told detectives that he thought about Jordan Rasmussen's family, his children. He said he didn't know the linen driver Buddy Booth, or who he left behind.

"I shot two people today," he finally told the detective. "I've done a very bad thing."

More after the break.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** It was a Saturday morning when John T. Nielsen got a call from his office. As the chief deputy of the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office, it wasn't unusual for police to let him know about major crimes even on a weekend.

**John T:** They said, we have a really bad homicide, double homicide. We need to talk to you and get a prosecutor assigned as soon as we possibly can. We have a suspect in custody, and we need to move forward.

**Amy Donaldson:** John T, as everyone calls him, is now a silver-haired, universally beloved figure in Utah's criminal justice system. And he's the one who originally contacted me about this story. But when he first got that call at home on a cold Saturday in March, he had no idea this case would eventually change his views on criminal justice in profound ways.

Back in 1982, he was the man responsible for assigning prosecutors to criminal cases. And while the weekend call at home wasn't out of place, the crime was definitely out of the ordinary.

**John T:** It sounded unusual to me, because it was a double homicide, at a fairly famous place in the county, the Log Haven restaurant, and I knew it was going to be a very prominently covered case in the news, and that we needed to do everything right, because of the nature of the case. Of course, they told me who the victim was. But at the time, it didn't mean anything.

**Amy Donaldson:** It wasn't until Monday when John T learned more details about the murders that he realized he had a personal connection to the case. He knew Jordan Rasmussen's parents.

**John T:** And when I found out who his parents were, I was particularly incensed. Because his father Eldon Rasmussen was a high school biology teacher of mine and a person that I had become a friend with. And when I found out that it was Eldon's son that had been killed, when I found out who the family was, it just, it just made me sick. It just really hit me right in the gut.

**Amy Donaldson:** Because of his relationship with Elden Rasmussen, he did something unusual. He went to Blanche and Elden's home, sat in their living room and offered his condolences. And then, he made them a commitment.

**John T:** My recollection is, as I went over and talked to the Rasmussen family, told them that we were going to pursue this case, how we were going to pursue it. We were going to assign good prosecutors to it, and we were going to pursue the death penalty.

**Amy Donaldson:** It was a commitment, John T felt confident his office could deliver.

**John T:** This was a slam dunk it seemed to me. And I thought, an obvious case that merited the death penalty.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** While John T and his team worked to build a case that would send Michael Moore to death row. Two young widows were trying to bury their husbands, comfort their children and just come to terms with their new reality.

**DeAnn:** I distinctly remember walking up the stairs to Russon Mortuary. And the bishop greeted me. And he said, DeAnn, you need to see the body. You need to see Jordan.

**Amy Donaldson:** The suggestion that she look at the body of her dead husband came from someone DeAnn Rasmussen trusted. But she hesitated. But she hesitated because in the days after her husband was killed, she'd only been sure of a few things, one of them was that she didn't want to see Jordan's corpse. She didn't want anyone to see it.

**DeAnn:** At the mortuary, I told them that I wanted a closed casket.

**Amy Donaldson:** DeAnn never liked the tradition of viewing the body of a loved one at a memorial service. Even before she entered this disorienting new reality, she thought it was strange to gather and then gawk at a corpse. But in her situation, Jordan had been shot in the head. So until her bishop suggested she needed to see him she had no plans to view the body of her 32-year-old husband.

**DeAnn:** He said, You need it for closure.

**Amy Donaldson:** This is the same religious leader who'd delivered the news of Jordan's death a few days earlier, accompanied her as she told Jordan's family, and gone to great lengths to ease her pain. So, she listened.

And as the family gathered in a room lined with flowers at the mortuary in downtown Salt Lake City, she agreed to open the casket.

**DeAnn:** So I remember walking in the room. And they asked me if I was okay to do that. And I told them yes, I was. And I am so glad I did.

**Amy Donaldson:** DeAnn led her children into the room where the rest of the family was already saying their goodbyes. Only 8-year-old David accompanied her. Their 5-year-old daughter refused to go near her father's coffin.

**DeAnn:** Lisa didn't want to see him because she had a cold. And she didn't want to give her dad a cold.

**Amy Donaldson:** The next day, Lisa had a change of heart. So, when they arrived at the church where they would memorialize Jordan Rasmussen's short life, DeAnn asked the family for a favor before they gathered to pray. Could they open the casket one more time. And then someone lifted the little girl into their arms.

**DeAnn:** She said she wanted to see her dad, so we opened the casket again, so she could see him, and it was heartbreaking.

**Amy Donaldson:** This was their life now living every moment with broken hearts.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** DeAnn wasn't the only young widow trying to navigate grief and motherhood. Just 23, Carla Booth had been banished to this agonizing new place too.

Buddy's family picked her up after Buddy's boss delivered the news of his death. But they didn't take her home.

**Carla:** They took me to my mother in law's house. And I kept saying, I need to go to my house, I need to go to my house. And they're going no, you don't, you don't want to go there yet.

**Amy Donaldson:** When she finally went to their apartment, it was to pick up mail and a few items for her and the girls. And that's when it happened, something she still struggles to explain.

**Carla:** And I was gonna go in until I seen buddy standing in the window. And I knew it wasn't real. I was seeing him when I knew he wasn't there.

**Amy Donaldson:** Carla never did go back to living in the apartment they'd shared. The publicity surrounding the killings meant Carla consumed painful details about her husband's death the same way strangers did.

Carla remembers one night in particular shortly after the murder, she was sitting on the living room floor playing with her 4-year-old daughter Norma, baby Dana lying next to her, the TV on in the background.

**Police:** We've got two white males in this peerless laundry van.

**Amy Donaldson:** She was oblivious to what was on until she heard Buddy's name.

**Reporter:** The victims have been identified as Jordan Rasmussen an accountant for log Haven and Buddy Booth driver of the linen van.

**Amy Donaldson:** She looked up and there on the TV screen her husband's lifeless body lay face down in the back of the van he drove for work.

**Reporter:** Investigators believe Booth, the other victim, just happened on the shooting and was killed to keep him quiet.

**Police:** Both of them appear to be shot in the head with a fairly large caliber weapon.

**Carla:** I watched the news. It was devastating to me. I just, I cried through it and everything. It was hard, so hard for me.

**Amy Donaldson:** As days turned into weeks and eventually months, Carla's heartbreak hardened into something else.

**Carla:** I was furious. And I'm like, he took my husband, he should be taken.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** Next time on The Letter. As lawyers prepare for trial, no one can understand why Michael Moore resorted to murder.

**Ed Brass:** Just a pretty average normal guy with a decent job and not much of a criminal history of any kind. And all of a sudden, he's involved with killing two people,

**Amy Donaldson:** And in the courtroom, the families of Buddy and Jordan hear Michael's version of the story for the first time.

**DeAnn:** I was crying. And I think it was at that point that they stopped the trial.

[Music]

**Amy Donaldson:** Oh and one more thing, I find out I have a personal connection to this case.

**Andrea Smardon:** Want to find out about Amy's connection to the case? You can get a sneak peek right now. This is producer Andrea Smardon and I'm here to tell you all you have to do is click on the button to subscribe to Lemonada Premium on Apple podcasts, and you'll get access to the inside scoop. Bonus episodes are a great way to get a deeper dive into The Letter.



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[TheLetterPodcast.com](#)

If you like The Letter, please take a few minutes and give us a rating and write a review. It helps our show get discovered.

**Amy Donaldson:** The Letter Season 2 is written by me, Amy Donaldson and Andrea Smardon who is also the lead on production and sound design, with additional help from Nina Earnest and Aaron Mason

**ANDREA:** Mixing by Trent Sell. Main musical score composed by Allison Leyton Brown.

**AMY:** Special thanks to Becky Bruce, KellieAnn Halvorsen, Ryan Meeks, Ben Kuebrich, Feliks Banel, Josh Tilton and Dave Cawley.

**ANDREA:** With Lemonada Media, Executive Producers Jessica Cordova Kramer and Stephanie Wittels Wachs. For WorkHouse Media, Executive Producer Paul Anderson  
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