

ARDEN, Episode 4:

“The Truck Did It”

By Christopher Dole, Sara Ghaleb, and Emily VanDerWerff

Created by Christopher Dole, Emily VanDerWerff, and Sara Ghaleb

NOTE:

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INTRO

OUTRO

(upbeat music)

BEA: Hi! This is Bea Casely from Arden, a Wheyface Radio program. Do you think you know what happened to Julie Capsom? What about Ralph Montgomery? If you have any theories or questions you'd like to ask me about send us a message through our tip line on our website, or tweet at us at @ArdenPod on twitter. I am doing a Q&A in episode 6, and any theory or question you have about the case, or the show, may be addressed in the show if you send it in before October 10th. Remember, no theory is too outlandish! Not when I have to deal with Brenda all day.

BRENDA: Rude.

(music ends)

ANDY: *Arden is sponsored by Wheyface Industries. If Wheyface Industries had been in the Garden of Eden, we wouldn't have been tempted by that fool serpent, no sir. Wheyface Industries. The good people.*

BRENDA: *Previously, on Arden.*

BEA: *It was just me that night, at 7:30, "The Wave," Eureka.*

BRENDA: *Yeah, you're so hard up that you would have the gal who "mishandles evidence" on your show?*

POINS: *And I --*

ANDY: *And you are going to go back up to their compound and tell them they can stick their lawsuit where the moon don't shine.*

VINCE: *It's nice to have that as my last memory of Ralph.*

BRENDA: *The girl had a torso in her trunk!*

NATALIE: *And who can blame her for wanting space?*

ROSALIND: *I don't know, I can store my blood in the trunk? But who thinks like that? Do you think like that - I definitely don't think like that, but maybe I should think like that?*

BEA: *When you think of California, you probably don't think of the towns of Eureka and Crescent City. It's where you live if you want to be a Californian --*

WALLACE: *But only a little bit! [He laughs at his own joke]*

BRENDA: *Gerald's vanished. Potentially another victim of the Capsom Case Curse.*

BEA: *Or aliens.*

BRENDA: *Standing out here, you can see why I entertained the notion at least.*

BEA: *Maybe.*

ANDY: *If you haven't bought your starter pack of AuralEmoji yet, you're a [horrendous sound like Cthulhu blowing a raspberry].*

BEA: *A couple of days ago, I did something I should have done right away when I started this journey. I listened to my old interviews.*

[Click-play. Brenda's voice sounds younger.]

BRENDA: *Get that thing outta my face!*

[click stop]

BEA: *I was on the scene the night Julie disappeared, with my recorder, hoping to get some soundbites for the radio. I didn't get much, but I got a few people to talk to me. Including one Brenda Bentley, then a rising star of the Eureka PD.*

[click play. Bea is younger too.]

BEA: *Ma'am, is it true what they're saying about the occupant of this car?*

BRENDA: *What's that?*

BEA: *Julie Capsom? The actress? She was driving.*

BRENDA: *I can't comment on an active investigation, ma'am. Now please back away from the scene.*

[click stop]

BEA: The thing I haven't told you yet is that I had the lead that night before anybody else did. I used to visit a forum called CelebritySpy in those days during slow hours at work. Okay, also stressful hours at work. Basically just all of my time at work.

But that Christmas day, the only thread that had any activity was on the whereabouts of Julie Capsom. See, some paparazzi had spotted her tearing north on the 101 and finally gave up trying to catch her north of LA. I know what you're thinking -- the paparazzi never give up. I guess these guys just caught a case of the Christmas spirit.

BRENDA: Maybe they were visited by the ghost of Arthur "Weegee" Fellig.

BEA: I'm actually a little impressed by that reference.

BRENDA: Thank you. I know my crime scene photographers.

BEA: In case you hadn't guessed, Brenda is somehow still employed by this podcast.

BRENDA: Hello, my devoted public!

BEA: Anyway, word about Julie's alleged flight leaked out to the community. It was all idle speculation, just having some fun. Nobody *actually* thought she had gone missing. They just thought the paparazzi had the wrong car. But when news came over the police scanner that night of a crash north of town, a crash featuring a car that was the very make and model of Julie's, well...

So I asked for the license plate number. And of course somebody there had it. I know what you're thinking now, too, but we weren't weird stalkers. Okay, we were weird stalkers, but that was more socially acceptable in 2007.

[click play]

BEA: You're sure you don't know the driver of this car? The license matches Julie Capsom's license plate number.

BRENDA: Lady, how do you even know that?

BEA: I'm a good reporter.

BRENDA: I've got a missing person to find.

[the sound of Brenda brushing past Bea, jostling]

BEA: Hey! Hey get back here! The people demand the truth! I will not be Judith Millered!

[click stop]

BEA: Yeah, I was a little bit much back then.

BRENDA: Back then?

BEA: That's right! Brenda's still using joke constructions that went out of style in 1945.

BRENDA: So shortly before you were born?

BEA: You're never funny, but you're *really* not funny today. Where's this stuff coming from?

BRENDA: Sorry. I'm not on my A-game. It's hard when I know you're going to talk about my darkest hour.

BEA: You mean when you messed up the Julie Capsom investigation?

BRENDA: No, even worse.

BEA: When you briefly arrested an innocent man?

BRENDA: Slightly worse.

BEA: All right. I give up.

BRENDA: When *somebody* -- and I'm gonna *find out who* -- burned my truck.

BEA: Glad we're focusing on what's truly important.

[theme song plays]

BEA: On December 25, 2007, somewhere around 11 pm, Julie Capsom ran her car off the road and into a tree, in the middle of northern California's most desolate stretch of major highway, halfway between Eureka and Crescent City, California. One witness saw her pacing outside her car, but by the time the police arrived, she had vanished. While dogs picked up her scent heading into the trees, it disappeared in the middle of a forest clearing. What happened to Julie that Christmas night? How could someone that well-known vanish, in the United States in the 2000s? And why has this case haunted us ever since? Each week, we'll explore a different part of the story and see if we can't untangle this web and find the answers. Join us, won't you, as we unravel the mystery... on Arden.

[end theme]

BRENDA: Before we begin--

BEA: [muttered] Oh God...

BRENDA: First, a koan.

BEA: A what?

BRENDA: It's a new feature. "Brenda's Weekly Koans". See, I feel like the audience has been getting the argumentative side of me, and I feel like that's not really representative. So, I've decided to deliver a weekly zen koan to provide some spiritual and provocative content for the show.

BEA: What? What does this have to do with the case?

BRENDA: Everything. If you think about it. Ahem. "Ryokan, a Zen master, lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut only to discover there was nothing to steal. Ryokan returned and caught him. "You have come a long way to visit me," he told the prowler, "and you should not return empty-handed. Please take my clothes as a gift." The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away. Ryoken sat naked, watching the moon. "Poor fellow," he mused, "I wish I could have given him this beautiful moon.""

BEA: ...I would bet so much that you googled that five minutes before the show.

BRENDA: Moving on! Rosalind, did you get me that thing I asked for?

ROSALIND: The tickets to the premiere of Guinevera?

BRENDA: What?

BEA: No, that's what I asked for, Rosalind.

ROSALIND: You guys ask for a lotta stuff.

BRENDA: Guinevera? The unreleased Julie Capsom film?

ROSALIND: It's being released.

BRENDA: And you knew about this?

BEA: Yes. Because I keep my ear to the ground.

ROSALIND: ...It was the top headline on literally every Hollywood trade.

BEA: Thank you, Rosalind! You got the tickets?

ROSALIND: And a pre-screening interview with director Kail McPherson.

BRENDA: ...That's not a person. That's a one-second side character in a 1940s World War II B-movie.

BEA: He made *Standing Casual*!

BRENDA: Isn't that about sad white people in Oregon?

BEA: It's a modern American classic! And *Guinevera's* supposed to be very deep!

BRENDA: Let me guess, it's about 9/11?

BEA: What? Why would you go there -- Never mind. The studios sat on it for awhile. We don't need to get into it now.

BRENDA: Rosalind, did you get the thing I asked?

ROSALIND: Sure did, boss.

BRENDA: So I've been listening to some other podcasts lately to work on my style. You know. *Limetown*. *Black Tapes*. *Bright Sessions*.

BEA: Those are all fictional. How could they possibly help--

BRENDA: Oh, and we're not fictional? You don't think this whole setup is a little preposterous?

BEA: Brenda, this is obviously real life. If I'm a character in a fake radio documentary, I might as well just...

[she sighs] You know what? Go ahead. Do whatever it is you're going to do.

BRENDA: Anyway, I noticed that they all have the same sound effect when something dramatic happens. What's it called, Rosalind?

ROSALIND: The boom of doom, boss.

BRENDA: The BOOM of DOOM. I like that. So from now on, when we talk about things that truly matter, Rosalind will be booming and dooming it up.

Like... for instance...

Somebody did it, Casely. *Somebody* hit me where it hurt. They ruined my life. They destroyed all that evidence. But worst of all--

[BOOM]

They burned. My. Truck.

BEA: We're not having fun right now.

BRENDA: No. We're not. This is very serious.

[BOOM]

BEA: Rosalind, please don't do that.

ROSALIND: The moment carried me, Ms. Casely.

BEA: All right. I'm glad you have your Boom of Doom. Now can we talk about how you're a total screw-up?

BRENDA: You make my heart go pitter-pat.

BEA: Let's return to my tapes from that night.

[click play]

BEA: Come back here, officer! I was speaking with--

[younger Bea gasps]

BEA: There's so much blood.

[the sound of people walking past]

I'm on the trail of two Eureka police officers, who are carrying two boxes with the contents of Julie Capsom's car -- what was in the glove box and such.

MALE VOICE: Ma'am, please leave. This is an active crime scene.

BEA: I'm obeying journalistic protocol!

MALE VOICE: Don't you have family? It's Christmas!

BEA: It's *December 26th* now. That's *St. Stephen's Day*. And my family is *the truth*.

[click stop]

BEA: I left that in to prove I have a healthy sense of humor about myself.

BRENDA: Definitely how I would describe you.

[click play]

BEA: What did you find in the car?

MALE VOICE: The head investigator, officer Bentley, will be offering a prepared statement in a few hours. Until then, we can't comment to press. Happy St. Stephen's Day, ma'am.

[the sound of footsteps receding]

[click stop]

BEA: You might be saying, "Oh, hey, Bea didn't get anything interesting from that interview!" And you'd be right. But you also might have noticed something: The police carried away *boxes* of evidence from the car, boxes that would be wonderful to examine right now as we track down loose ends on this cold case. Except--

[a long pause]

BEA: Except--

BRENDA: Really?

BEA: I thought you'd love to talk about the convoluted chain of custody.

BRENDA: (sighs) Dammit, Casely.

BEA: I could just read some of your Reddit posts on the matter.

BRENDA: No, no, that's fine. I didn't know it was a public forum.

BEA: You didn't know Reddit was a public forum.

BRENDA: I'm new to the internet thing.

BEA: No comment.

BRENDA: So here's the thing. This case got trapped between Eureka PD and Humboldt County PD, and both agencies claimed to have the evidence boxes. This was all fine the few days after the crash, because the boxes were housed at Eureka precinct, where we went over them on a cursory basis. But we were primarily focused on sweeping the woods to find Julie, so we didn't look at them too closely. And by the time we decided to really consider this a homicide, the boxes were gone.

BEA: Gone?

BRENDA: Gone. Lost in interdepartmental limbo. Until--

BEA: Eh eh eh!

[pause]

BEA: I'm pointing at you, Rosalind. Do the boom thingy!

ROSALIND: Sorry. I didn't think that was Boom worthy.

BEA: The phrase "interdepartmental limbo" didn't strike you as Boom worthy?

ROSALIND: I mean, I can play it if you--

BEA: Forget it. The moment's passed. This is why you don't let the assistant do the effects.

BRENDA: Look if you want me to say I destroyed the evidence--

BEA: I didn't say you destroyed the evidence.

BRENDA: But you were building up to it?

BEA: I was building to that vicinity, yeah.

BRENDA: You know I was framed. You know that wasn't me.

BEA: Do I believe you burned your own truck? Of course not. But can you concede it's a little strange all of the evidence was found in your burned truck?

BRENDA: Not *all* of it.

BEA: Okay. The contents of her car.

BRENDA: We still have the log of what was in there. Somebody didn't want it getting out.

BEA: Why?

BRENDA: Hell if I know. It was standard stuff you'd have in your car. Change for meters. Operator manual. Air freshener. That sort of thing.

BEA: So you think this is all some weird, sick coincidence?

BRENDA: You don't?

[Bea sighs]

BEA: I don't know.

[the sound of the control room mic being adjusted]

ROSALIND: Hey, can one of you back this up a little bit? I'm confused as hell right now.

BRENDA: It's simple, Rosalind. December 26. The evidence enters storage at Eureka PD. December 28. Humboldt County takes possession. January 7. I and some of the others go to take another look at the evidence, and it's gone. Then, on February 2, almost a month later, someone torches my truck.

BEA: With the evidence boxes inside.

BRENDA: Which resulted in my firing from the force. Because even though nobody suspected I would actually burn my own truck, not even Casely--

BEA: You're a strange person; you're not a completely irrational one.

BRENDA: I shouldn't have had the evidence in my possession at all. Much less out of the station. Much less driving around town with me.

BEA: So why did you? Have the evidence, I mean?

BRENDA: I know you don't believe me on anything, Casely, but I need you to believe me on this one point. I didn't have the evidence in my truck. Somebody planted it there, then set my truck on fire, because they didn't want something in those boxes being found. Someone on the inside in Humboldt PD.

[a long, long pause]

ROSALIND: [whispered] I want you to know Bea's staring deep into Brenda's eyes. She's clearly trying to ascertain whether she's telling the truth. It's a charged moment --

BEA: We're not at a golf tournament, Rosalind.

[Rosalind laughs]

ROSALIND: People playing golf? This isn't the *movies*.

BEA: I'm not ready to believe you. But I'll give you the benefit of the doubt.

BRENDA: All I ask.

BEA: That still doesn't explain why you arrested Gerald Abernathy.

BRENDA: He doesn't strike you as a *touch* suspicious?

BEA: Of course he does. But you had no evidence to hold him.

BRENDA: And the second we let him go, he slunk back into the shadows.

BEA: We'll talk about the Gerald of it all -- and so much more! -- after this short word from our sponsors at Wheyface Industries.

[BOOM of DOOM]

[commercial music begins]

BRENDA: Boy, do I hate going to the post office. There's always a long line, customer service went out the window with the Ford administration, and I hate giving any of my hard-earned money to the federal govern--

Um. Uh. I just want to state that I have no problems buying stamps or paying my taxes, especially if they're set at a fair and equitable--

ANDY: Read the copy, Brenda!

BRENDA: Right. But did you know there's a solution to sending your mail through the US Mail? It's not as expensive as other delivery services either. In fact, you can do it yourself. Just load up your letter in one of Wheyface's patented air cannons--

Air cannons?

ANDY: They're like T-shirt guns.

BRENDA: I know what they are. I just--

[heavy sigh]

Load up that letter to your beloved, or your package you have to ship, point it at the sky, then enter the address of your target. Then fire! Wheyface drones and/or carrier pigeons will do the rest.

There's an asterisk here.

ANDY: Yeah, you have to read the legal boilerplate stuff at the bottom. The lawyers insisted on it.

BRENDA: Drones do not yet exist. Carrier pigeons do not yet exist either. Legally speaking, Wheyface Industries is not responsible for the contents of your package once it leaves terrestrial airspace. Huh.

The standard cannon is just \$299, and for an extra \$50, you can upgrade, at no added cost, to a cannon that plays "Ride of the Valkyries," "Turkey in the Straw," and dozens of other public domain hits as you blast your packages into the sky.

So what are you waiting for? Get one over on Uncle Sam with a Wheyface Cannon today!

[end commercial music]

BEA: If there's anything you know about the Julie Capsom disappearance, it's that the cops fingered the wrong guy for several weeks, wasting precious time that could have been spent finding the real killer, whomever they might be.

BRENDA: He seemed suspicious!

BEA: Right. Let me just play this clip for you. It's from ACN's NewsNight.

[a female interviewer talks to Gerald]

INTERVIEWER: And what happened then?

GERALD: They came into my house.

[he's audibly overwhelmed with emotion]

GERALD: They came into my house and tore through all my stuff, and I guess they found what they were looking for, because they arrested me shortly thereafter.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know why they arrested you?

GERALD: I get that I changed some things about my story. I get that. And I should have turned over the wig to the police the first chance I got. But I was frazzled that night. We were all frazzled.

INTERVIEWER: Of course. It was a long night.

GERALD: All I ever wanted to do was help. That's all. Help. But the skunk ape got her.

[end clip]

BEA: Let's start by reminding everyone of what Gerald says he saw. That night, he's driving along the highway between Eureka and Crescent City, headed home to the latter. He'd been at a Christmas party with some friends, who corroborated that part of his story.

He hears the crash - the snow is such that he can't really see it - gets there within a minute or two. He sees a young woman standing by the side of the road and gets out to help her. This is Julie Capsom. When he sees her, she starts swinging a tire iron at him, chasing him back toward his truck.

He gets in his truck and decides something about this doesn't sit right. Instead of heading home, he heads into Crescent City and calls the police. When they get there, Julie's gone.

BRENDA: And for a while, we thought he had killed her.

BEA: Which we're about to get into. The case against Gerald Abernathy rested on three pieces of evidence--

BRENDA: Whoa whoa whoa.

BEA: What?

BRENDA: I just want to speak a little bit in my own defense here.

BEA: All right. Go ahead.

[a long pause]

ROSALIND: [whispered] For the record, Brenda has lowered her head in concentration. She is holding her breath, as if summoning--

BRENDA: Occam's razor!

[a longer pause]

BEA: And?

BRENDA: Have you heard of it?

BEA: The simplest explanation is usually the right one?

BRENDA: You've *heard* of it?

BEA: It's not a terribly obscure concept.

BRENDA: Well, okay, sure. The simplest explanation.

BEA: Is this going back to aliens?

BRENDA: This is about Gerald Abernathy. And how I still say he knows more than he's let on.

BEA: Sure. I'd buy that. But pinning the whole thing on him?

BRENDA: The case against him had three main pieces of evidence.

BEA: As I was saying.

BRENDA: The first piece of evidence is that his story changed. Dramatically. The timeline we've reported in this podcast is now the generally accepted one, but when Gerald *first* reported the crime, he had Julie crashing a half hour *later*. It took him a solid hour to make a drive that normally would take 30 minutes. He claims it was because of the roads, and he just didn't realize that it had taken him longer than it normally would. But at the time, we thought that missing half an hour gives him enough time to kill her, stash the body somewhere, then head to the police.

BEA: The problem, of course, is that if he kills her, given the amount of blood, the torso, etc., then how was he so good at getting all of the blood out of his clothes, his truck, and so on.

BRENDA: Yeah. We couldn't find a speck of it on him. But we did find the wig.

BEA: Evidence piece number two.

BRENDA: That's what he was talking about in that interview earlier. We found it stashed in his trailer when we got the warrant to search it. And it was covered in Julie's blood. He claims now that when she picked up the tire iron to come at him, it was attached, and it flew into his face. He grabbed it, forgot he was holding it, and ran back to his truck. Which is plausible, as it goes, if he tells the police about it right away. But hiding it from us? Nope.

BEA: And this is why some people still try to say Gerald was the murderer. There's never been a *great* explanation for why he had the wig. Even if you buy the clearly preposterous "flew off a tire iron" story, well, that doesn't account for why he didn't tell the cops about it right away. But the wig was probably in the trunk with the other items of clothing, and if it had Julie's blood on it, it's probably because everything in the trunk had Julie's blood on it.

BRENDA: This does establish, however, that at least one piece of Gerald's story is dead wrong.

BEA: Evidence point three.

BRENDA: He said he saw Julie, and she didn't seem to be in any physical distress. Maybe a black eye or something, but no major injuries that he could see from the crash. In fact, she's swinging a tire iron at him. But if the wig he has is covered in her blood, then he had to have seen her with a huge, gaping flesh wound. We're not talking a few drops of blood from a nose bleed or something you might suffer in a car accident. We're talking gobs of blood. The blood we found in the trunk is already exiting her body when Gerald meets her, if the wig's covered in it.

BEA: But Gerald's story, though it's shifted in some particulars here and there, has always been consistent on the appearance of Julie. He told authorities exactly what she was wearing. And he said she wasn't seriously injured in any way, beyond the black eye he thinks maybe he might have seen, depending on what day you're asking him.

BRENDA: There was other evidence too.

BEA: Oh?

BRENDA: I mean... not great evidence. But evidence.

BEA: Do tell.

BRENDA: For starters, he was a little drunk. In that way where you can tell he was a *lot* drunk a while ago. And on the icy roads...

BEA: This is why some online sleuths think maybe Gerald hit Julie with his car, panicked, hid the body so well no dog could find it, then went to call the police in hopes of making it seem like he was a good Samaritan.

BRENDA: It's a good theory.

BEA: But?

BRENDA: But it doesn't account for so much other stuff. For that theory to work, you have to assume that literally everything else in this case is a red herring. And maybe it is!

A red herring is a misleading piece of--

BEA: I know what a red herring is.

BRENDA: I just don't know how experienced you are with--

BEA: I assure you I've read the Wikipedia page for "frequently used literary devices" dozens of times.

BRENDA: There's also no sign that Gerald's car hit Julie. Like, maybe he knows how to completely destroy any evidence of having done so, but have you seen a car hit a defenseless human body?

BEA: I can't say that I have.

BRENDA: Don't check my YouTube history that closely. Anyway, bits and pieces of person go flying. And when we looked at Gerald's truck, it was super dirty -- like driving through the snow and muck and don't want to wash it because it'll just get dirty again dirty. He certainly had the *time* to have cleaned it up, but it just beggars belief this dude would know how to do it so well that we wouldn't see anything at all.

BEA: "This dude"?

BRENDA: So this is the real reason suspicion turned to Gerald. I'm not proud of it, and I don't know how to talk about it, but it came up all over the place when people were discussing this case. Gerald just seems like a murderer.

BEA: You mean he's white trash.

BRENDA: I mean he lives back in the woods in a trailer. And up here, that often means you're a tweaker or worse. The party he's at that night is with friends, but not the kind of friends you'd want. They're all drifters and the like, bonding over the fact that they've reached the end of the line and don't have too many other places to go.

BEA: Gerald was a popular scapegoat in the media, too. Nancy Grace had a field day, as you can imagine, and the Julie Capsom episode of *Cops & Lawyers* also fingered its obvious Gerald stand-in in the end.

In fact, here's a clip.

[roll clip]

TV COP: Something about your story just doesn't add up, Gerard.

OVER-ACTING GUEST STAR: My story adds up perfectly!

TV COP: Then what about *the missing half-hour*.

[silence]

TV COP: You killed her. You hid the body. Then you drove home and tried to make it seem like you were just the best helper in the world. And all the while, you were having sex with her corpse.

OVER-ACTING GUEST STAR: I didn't have sex with the corpse!

TV COP: Ah ha!

OVER-ACTING GUEST STAR: I... I mean... I don't know...

[a heavy sigh]

OVER-ACTING GUEST STAR: There's an old dryer behind my place. Check there.

[end clip]

BEA: You can see why people suspect Gerald. I've looked, dozens of times, at the photos of Gerald Abernathy, and Brenda is right. He's got long stringy hair and yellowed teeth and sunken eyes and a sort of haunted look in them, like he's seen some [bleep]. And there's the fact that his explanation for what happened to Julie is "the skunk ape did it". He is the last person you'd expect to be your good Samaritan.

BRENDA: Yeah.

BEA: Except that's the point of the story.

BRENDA: What story?

BEA: The good Samaritan? The only one who stops to help the man who's been robbed is the Samaritan? The pharisee and all of the other religious leaders pass him by? And the point is that we are defined as much by what we do, not what we say?

BRENDA: You lost me.

BEA: Never mind. By the way, he ever tell you what "the skunk ape" is?

BRENDA: Just "It's a skunk ape. It is what it sounds like."

BEA: Probably some half-sozzled combination of Bigfoot and the Native American "skookum", or monster --

BRENDA: No, it's a skunk ape. You never heard of a skunk ape?

BEA: Should I?

ROSALIND: I haven't.

BEA: Thank you!

BRENDA: Anyway, it took me a while, but I now think Gerald didn't kill Julie. But I also think maybe he knows something he's not telling.

BEA: And what makes it hard for us as we come to this part of the story is that nobody knows where Gerald is. Like several other people attached to this case, he seems to have simply vanished from the face of the Earth.

BRENDA: The last time anybody saw him, near as I can tell, is January 20, 2009. The day of Barack Obama's inauguration!

BEA: What does that have to do with anything?

BRENDA: I just think it's cool. And the reason we can definitively place him that day is because he was watching the inauguration at a local bar.

BEA: That had to have been early.

BRENDA: The people of Crescent City are nothing if not civic-minded.

BEA: What's just as interesting about the way this case fell apart are the *reasons* it fell apart, the reasons the police got so distracted by Gerald in the first place, even after much of the evidence literally burned up. To talk about that, we're going to have to talk about some uncomfortable things, like small town prejudices and police pre-judgement and the like.

BRENDA: And I want to talk about all the evidence we *don't* have for whatever reason.

BEA: But first, we need to take another Wheyface Break.

[commercial music]

ANDY: *Are you looking for a job? Do you know someone who's looking for a job? Are you a licensed deep-sea diver? How do you feel about G-forces?*

Hi. I'm Andy Wheyface, head of Wheyface Industries, and when I say we're the Good People, I mean it. I mean that when you look into our pasts, you'll find that none of us have murdered anybody! Unlike the person who murdered Julie Capsom.

BEA: *[extremely muffled] Don't drag her--*

ANDY: *Wheyface Industries is a growing corporate monolith that has tentacles in every major capitalist enterprise of the 21st century. Original scripted programming? You bet. Radio variety shows about hillbillies? Definitely. Agribusiness? It's second nature. Office supplies? And how! Diamond mines? Who hasn't dabbled in a little diamond mining?*

The important thing is that if you need a job, we've got jobs. Are they jobs you'll want? Probably! If they're not, well, you're probably not one of the Good People to begin with.

So log onto the Wheyface Industries careers page, or follow us on any number of social media sites, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twuzzler, and begin your Wheyface journey today! Wheyface Industries: Forever preparing for the next stage of human evolution!

[end commercial music]

BEA: Before we continue, let me tell you a little something about my time in Eureka. Working there as a young journalist was eye opening, to say the least. It was the kind of place where many, many people distrusted you the second they found out you were in the media, where the police were only too happy to stonewall.

Now, it's not like this hasn't been true now that I live and work in Los Angeles. The powerful are always trying to hide something, and there are plenty of people who don't like those of us in the media. But in Los Angeles, I always feel like I have another way into the story, some way around the current blockade. In Eureka, it was only too easy for the wall to keep me out constantly.

There are wonderful things about small towns and small cities like Eureka. I made lifelong friends there, and I always felt like I could have made a real home there. But I also felt like doing that would require turning a blind eye to certain things, to the way that the town made it that much easier to skip right to the part where you were judging someone else.

Someone like Gerald Abernathy.

SHERIFF JIMSON: I don't think we did anything wrong in that case. That's the long and short of it.

BEA: This is Sheriff Robert Jimson of Eureka PD. He's the officer still in charge of the Julie Capsom disappearance, nominally, since Humboldt County PD decided it no longer wanted to bother.

BRENDA: And he used to be my partner!

BEA: Something we exploited to get this interview.

BRENDA: He may or may not have told me to get off his porch.

[click play]

SHERIFF JIMSON: Gerald Abernathy was a person of interest, sure. He's still the only one we've had, unless you believe those crazy ideas that Ralph somehow killed Julie while he was also dead in her trunk.

BEA: But you see why people think that by chasing the Gerald line of reasoning, you let the real killer or kidnapper slip away.

SHERIFF JIMSON: Look, this is a case with a lot of weird loose ends, and it's going to be that no matter what the solution ends up being. No one theory will satisfy every possible loose end, will tie everything up. Hoping one will is madness.

BEA: I'm not asking about whether there's one true theory of what happened. I'm asking if you let your own prejudice about Gerald stand in the way of actual policework.

[a long silence]

SHERIFF JIMSON: You'd have to talk to the sheriff back then, but I never felt that way, no. And without a lot of the evidence--

BRENDA: Oh, here we go!

BEA: Brenda, just take it easy.

SHERIFF JIMSON: Has Brenda here told you about her late-night chat with our Mr. Abernathy?

BEA: Excuse me?

SHERIFF JIMSON: Yep. The night before her truck goes up in flames, a few days after we've realized the evidence is missing, she has a jailhouse chat with Abernathy. No lawyers present. She even turns off the camera. Says she's trying to get a confession.

BRENDA: And I was.

SHERIFF JIMSON: Is it any wonder that the next day, all of the evidence goes poof?

BEA: Look, you can say many things about Ms. Bentley.

BRENDA: Let's not.

BEA: She's a braggart and occasional [beep], sure. She leaps to conclusions in a way not exactly befitting of a detective? Definitely. She's obsessive in ways that aren't exactly

helpful? Paranoid in ways that lead her down the wrong paths? Not all that funny when it comes down to it?

BRENDA: Devastatingly good-looking?

BEA: You bet-- except for that last thing.

BRENDA: You said it, not me.

BEA: But let me tell you one thing I know about Brenda Bentley, Sheriff Jimson. I believe she'd be careless enough to leave evidence in her truck, and I believe she'd come up with an elaborate system of lies to cover up for herself. But I do not believe she'd be part of a criminal conspiracy. Not one bit.

BRENDA: Yeah, and I'd never set my truck on fire either!

SHERIFF JIMSON: Suit yourself. But for as much as you want to blame small-town prejudice for this, Gerald Abernathy was our man. We just needed a little more evidence. The only one who's suspicious here is Brenda Bentley. And the longer you work alongside her, the harder it's going to be for you when it's revealed just how deeply tied into this she goes.

BEA: I think we have enough.

BRENDA: Let me talk.

BEA: I don't think--

BRENDA: Bob--

SHERIFF JIMSON: What?

BRENDA: Bob, you know how it was when Gerald was fingered for the crime. We didn't try to figure out who did it. We tried to figure out how Gerald did it.

SHERIFF JIMSON: I don't agree with that reading at all.

BRENDA: It was a plausible enough theory. Especially once we found out about the alcohol in his system. But it didn't make sense. You know it didn't. We were grasping at straws.

SHERIFF JIMSON: We were following Occam's Razor.

BRENDA: We were forcing it to point in one direction and one direction only.

BEA: Does the razor point at things? I guess I never thought of it that way.

BRENDA: You know it, too.

SHERIFF JIMSON: This interview is over.

[the sounds of gear being packed up]

BEA: Thank you for your time. We'll almost certainly be calling on you again.

SHERIFF JIMSON: I like the podcast.

BEA: Really? We're awfully hard on you guys.

SHERIFF JIMSON: I'm used to the press. I have to say I missed this gal's crazy theories.

BRENDA: They're not crazy.

SHERIFF JIMSON: Look, this is strictly off the record, but --

[click stop]

BEA: Naturally, we can't play any of that for you.

BRENDA: Why not?

BEA: Because it's off the record. It wouldn't be responsible.

BRENDA: Then why did you leave the part in where he says, "This is off the record?"

BEA: Because if we can ever get it *on* the record, then that will be a good tease, right?

BRENDA: Sheriff Jimson thinks the call from the abandoned cabin was placed to Gerald Abernathy, who was seen looking nervously at a cell phone earlier at the party.

[BOOM]

BEA: You can't just say that! And you *absolutely* can't boom that.

BRENDA: And yet it's in the episode!

[BOOM]

BEA: How do you know?

BRENDA: Listeners, if you're hearing this, it means Mr. Wheyface's legal team cleared that bit of information to be in the episode. Or Casely here learned that you don't write the Pentagon Papers without breaking a few eggs!

BEA: The Times didn't *write* the Pentagon Papers, and--

[abrupt sound of audio switching]

ANDY: The lawyers of Wheyface Industries say... Sheriff Jimson's admission stays!

[cheers, the sound of a brass band]

ANDY: Freedom of the press! Freedom of the press! Freedom--

[abrupt sound of audio switching]

BEA: The Times didn't *write* the Pentagon Papers. And--

[awkward edit]

BEA: I am so grateful to Wheyface Industries and its legal team and its--

[even more awkward edit]

BEA: Wonderful, wonderful team of

BRENDA: Editors.

ROSALIND: Who

ANDY: Are just

PAMELA: The

BRENDA: Best!

[BOOM]

[back to normal]

BEA: Anyway, yes. Sheriff Jimson revealed that the department believed the call from the cabin was placed to Gerald Abernathy, who just “happened” to be along that road. They could never prove it because they could never find the phone.

BRENDA: The phone he placed the 911 call from was a landline.

BEA: But hey. Why not? Mystery deepened.

BRENDA: Before we end this episode, I wanted to talk about all of the evidence we don't have. Because it really chaps my ass.

BEA: Like a recording of the call from the cabin?

BRENDA: No, just stuff that we *could* have had if we moved a little more quickly. Like whatever it was Julie threw away in those gas station trash cans. Or the record of Ralph's last few hours. Or a complete list of who had access to that evidence that wound up in my truck.

BEA: Or maybe just the evidence that was in your truck.

BRENDA: Look, I get that you think I'm a stupid fool--

BEA: I don't think you're a stupid fool. We did this last episode, didn't we?

BRENDA: I know. I just wanted to hear you say it again.

BEA: ...Oh. Uh. I do think you're careless. And egotistical --

BRENDA: Yeah, well, when you're a cop, being careless is almost worse. And you're the one who *knew* Julie was in that car and could have tipped us off about her drive north in time to get all that evidence that disappeared.

BEA: I'm not in the business of telling the police--

[a pause; she collects herself]

BEA: You know what? You're right. I impeded your investigation, no matter how minorly. I'm sorry.

BRENDA: Really?

BEA: You don't believe me?

BRENDA: I think you think I'm a joke.

BEA: I think you think *I'M* a joke.

BRENDA: C'mon, Casely. You can't think that.

BEA: You treat me like the burr under your saddle, like I'm only here to get in the way of your grand solution to a murder investigation you [bleep]ed up in the first place.

BRENDA: That's it. We're handling this off-mic.

BEA: [huffs in frustration] Fine.

[the sounds of a mic turning off]

[then the sounds of footsteps]

ROSALIND: [whispered] I don't know if Bea and Brenda know this, but their personal mics are still on.

[BOOM]

ROSALIND: Because Mr. Wheyface wanted them mic'ed. And I think they just forgot?

[she turns away from the mic]

ROSALIND: This is a private conversation. I don't know if--

ANDY: You'll remove my interpersonal drama over my dead body!

[the sound of crunching gravel behind the studio]

BEA: Look. I really didn't mean to imply you were a terrible police officer. When I got to know you on the case, you seemed no better or worse than any other police officer. But you have to realize that when it comes to public opinion, it really does seem like you [bleep]ed this case up. irreparably.

BRENDA: Believe me. I know. Do you get what this case did to me?

BEA: Made you a pariah in the law enforcement community?

BRENDA: Worse. Look, what happens when you know there's a story, and you know what the story looks like, but you can't get the pieces together to *publish* the story?

BEA: It drives me nuts. And then I go back to work.

BRENDA: So you wouldn't just give up?

BEA: Of course not.

BRENDA: See? That's me. I knew I was onto something. I knew Gerald didn't do it, but I knew he knew who did. And with a little more time--

BEA: But you screwed it up.

BRENDA: Do you really think I would have done that?

[a long pause]

BEA: I really don't know.

BRENDA: No. I'm like you. I don't quit. And now I've got this ghost hanging out with me every day, that's all these questions, and no answers to give to anybody.

BEA: Brenda, for what it's worth, I really did mean what I said about you.

BRENDA: That you didn't think I would be part of a criminal conspiracy?

BEA: Yeah. Low bar, admittedly, but--

BRENDA: [genuinely touched] Thanks. That's more than a lot of people give me credit for.

BEA: I also don't think you'd set your truck on fire. I know how much you loved that thing.

BRENDA: It was stupid.

BEA: We love what we love, Brenda. You've gotta keep going somehow.

BRENDA: What do you love?

BEA: The righteous, gunmetal taste of the truth when it flows freely from the mouths of those who would otherwise lie in my face. [she laughs]

BRENDA: Ah, hell. Get outta here with that.

BEA: Okay. I love my cat Riley. I love my Prius, long may she run. I love my job. I love Virginia Woolf and modern adaptations of same set in high schools. And I love--

[muffled clothing moving]

BEA: Ah, hell, are these mics still--

[the sound of the brass band again]

ANDY: Tune in again next week for the part where Bea threatens legal action until she realizes just how iron-clad that contract she signed was! Thrill to the victory of corporate America over the little guy!

ROSALIND: All this, and the Capsom Case Curse, next week, on Arden.

ANDY: Do you like that title?

ROSALIND: I mean, it's episode four--

ANDY: I'm not sure I like the title.

ROSALIND: This isn't really the time--

ANDY: All this and the Capsom Curse, next week on Andy Wheyface Presents: Investigations of Doom!

[BOOM]

ANDY: You're right. I don't got anything better.

TODD: Arden was created by Todd VanDerWerff, Christopher Dole, and Sara Ghaleb. This week's episode was written by those same three people. Our audio engineer was Elizabeth Aubert. Our editor this week was Christina Holleran. Our cast is:

MICHELLE: Michelle Agresti.

TRACEY: Tracey Sayed.

SHANNON: Shannon Estabrook.

CHARLITA: Charlita Gaston.

BEN: Benjamin Watts.

LINDSAY Z: Lindsay Zana.

ROBERT: Robert Fleet.

LINDSAY S: Lindsay Seim.

GRANT: Grant Patrizio.

JOHN: John Rael.

MIA: Mia Drake.

TODD: The score is by Christopher Hatfield. The logo was by Dylan Farr --

(music cuts out)

ROSALIND [burst of laughter]: A ha! The moon story! I just got it. That's pretty good.

(music comes back in)

If you're enjoying Arden, or even if you're not and you want to drive us from the face of the Internet, there are two ways you can do that. You can rate/review/subscribe to us wherever you found it - Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, etc. etc. You can also look for us on Patreon, you can toss a couple bucks there, that will get you access to special exclusive episodes, other prizes, and all sorts of fun things. Tweet at us, @ArdenPod on Twitter. Our website is ardenpodcast.com. We're also on Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, you can come and talk to us there if you really want to. As always, our best boy, both in terms of the job and in terms of being our best boy, was John Rael. Come back next week for more adventures in Arden. Thank you, good night.

[Julie's Waltz ends]