



DEAD RECKONING

Episode 3

The History of Medical Cadavers: Never enough bodies

00:00:06.008 --> 00:00:07.388

BETH: Hi, I'm Beth.

00:00:07.388 --> 00:00:09.308

COURTNEY: And I'm Courtney.

00:00:09.308 --> 00:00:13.608

BETH: Welcome to Dead Reckoning, the podcast where death isn't the end of the story.

00:00:13.608 --> 00:00:24.828

COURTNEY: And this time, we're talking about how the bones from the pit in Fort Mason ended up there, and how the bodies of the poor became the main specimens for medical experimentation.

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COURTNEY: If you haven't listened to the last episode, you should go back and listen to that, because we're going to be building on what we covered there, where Beth talked about the pit of bones at Fort Mason in San Francisco.

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COURTNEY: Spoiler alert, if you haven't already listened.

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COURTNEY: It was from a Civil War era doctor who was dissecting the bodies of the poor to improve his surgical techniques, which were pretty good, as far as I understand.

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COURTNEY: So to understand the history of how the bodies of poor people were used for anatomical dissection in the U.S., we have to go back and look at the UK where this all started.

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BETH: Of course.

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COURTNEY: All roads lead back to the Empire, Beth.

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COURTNEY: People have always been cutting up bodies to see what's inside.

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COURTNEY: Okay.

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COURTNEY: We have records of the Greeks doing this.

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COURTNEY: Da Vinci famously is supposed to have looked at autopsy bodies to help him improve his sketches of human beings, but surgeons really got serious about this during the Renaissance era.

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COURTNEY: Grave robbing to get corpses began as early as the 15th or 16th century.

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BETH: Splendid.

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COURTNEY: It's nice, right?

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COURTNEY: Dissecting the human body, even for the purpose of understanding how it works or medicine, was extremely unpopular.

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COURTNEY: People did not like this.

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COURTNEY: People in Europe and the UK before the United States, they were Christian and they believed that they needed to be buried whole in order to be resurrected whole, right?

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COURTNEY: There's this idea that kind of like what went into the ground is what was going to appear in heaven.

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COURTNEY: So if your body is being taken apart, you could be missing some parts in the afterlife, right?

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BETH: Were they aware that decomposition occurs?

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COURTNEY: They were.

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COURTNEY: I'm trying not to get off on a tangent, but this is why in centuries and crowded centuries in Europe, when they would bury the bones and then remove them to a charnel house after 10 years, they would try to keep all the bones together.

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COURTNEY: Of the person.

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COURTNEY: So yeah.

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COURTNEY: So because of this attitude towards the body, this started off, dissection started off as a punishment.

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COURTNEY: There is a long history in the UK and Europe, I suppose, but especially the UK, of pulling apart bodies as punishments for crimes, right?

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COURTNEY: We had gibets.

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COURTNEY: People's heads were put on pikes on London Bridge.

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COURTNEY: Is that right?

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COURTNEY: London Bridge or the gates or the tower, maybe?

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CAROLYN: What is a gibbet?

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COURTNEY: Okay.

00:03:06.988 --> 00:03:08.828

COURTNEY: Beth, do you know what a gibbet is?

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BETH: In theory, yes, but I don't think I could answer the question.

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COURTNEY: You don't want to answer it because it's gnarly.

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COURTNEY: It's a fucking cage that they put at the edge of town that has your rotting corpse in it.

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COURTNEY: It's designed to deter you from committing crimes because the last person who came to town and committed a crime ended up executed and put in a cage to molder outside the town walls.

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BETH: Were people put in them after execution or before?

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BETH: I'm just thinking about the movie Willow where Mad Martigan is put in a cage at the edge of town.

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BETH: But he's not dead.

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BETH: He's thankfully not.

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COURTNEY: I mean, as far as I know after, but like, there could have been some like really gnarly judge back in the day who was like, fuck it, put him in there alive.

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COURTNEY: I don't know.

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COURTNEY: So dissection as a punishment is kind of an evolution, is part of the evolution of that.

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COURTNEY: The Murder Act of 1752 legalized dissection of convicted murderers as part of their punishment.

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COURTNEY: This was primarily used to punish murderers.

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COURTNEY: And this is where the first bodies are given to surgeons or doctors or anatomists, depending on how you want to call them, to dissect and experiment on to learn about medicine.

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COURTNEY: Originally they were convicted murderers.

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BETH: Are we assuming then that there's no biological difference at all between convicted murderers and the rest of the population?

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COURTNEY: That is a philosophical and historical question that I'm not prepared to answer at this point.

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COURTNEY: We'll get into skull measuring later.

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COURTNEY: There's some of that in this episode.

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COURTNEY: Even with the number of people that were hung in the UK at this time, which is probably quite a few, there were never enough bodies.

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COURTNEY: There was never enough supply for anatomists, especially as interest in surgery began to increase.

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COURTNEY: Now we're talking about the late 18th century and into the 19th century.

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BETH: Was this when the first medical colleges were starting to be established?

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COURTNEY: Yes, I think so, yes.

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COURTNEY: So what started to happen was to fill the void.

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COURTNEY: Some enterprising entrepreneurs, aka thieves, started to steal bodies out of graveyards, dead bodies.

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COURTNEY: I am going to try to refrain from the rest of this episode from calling these bodies fresh, because that's repulsive.

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COURTNEY: It keeps coming to mind, like, fresh bodies.

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COURTNEY: I'm going to try not to say that.

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COURTNEY: I'm going to try to say newly dead.

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COURTNEY: But I'm sorry in advance to everybody that hears the word fresh come out of my mouth in regards to human bodies in 18th century graveyards.

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COURTNEY: So these people, these thieves, were called body snatchers.

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COURTNEY: They were also called resurrectionists or resurrection men.

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COURTNEY: They're sometimes called grave robbers, although grave robbing is technically something different.

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BETH: Right.

00:06:28.888 --> 00:06:32.228

BETH: That's more like stealing the jewelry and whatever else.

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COURTNEY: Yeah.

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COURTNEY: Exactly.

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COURTNEY: Usually these guys worked in partners.

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COURTNEY: They were partners that did it.

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COURTNEY: The way they did it is pretty horrifying.

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COURTNEY: I'm going to tell you, because this podcast is called Dead Reckoning, we're going to talk about how they did this.

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COURTNEY: They would dig a hole.

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COURTNEY: So, you know, let's say the coffin is like six feet long, right?

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COURTNEY: Buried in the ground.

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COURTNEY: They would dig up the top part where the head would be.

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COURTNEY: Okay.

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COURTNEY: They would dig down to the coffin.

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COURTNEY: One guy would jump in there, smash open the top of the coffin where the head is.

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COURTNEY: Hold on.

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COURTNEY: It gets worse.

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COURTNEY: Put a rope around the neck of the dead body, and then he would scamper on up out of the hole, and the two of them would pull a corpse right up out of the hole.

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COURTNEY: Then he would throw it in a sack, throw it over their shoulders, and run out of the graveyard.

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COURTNEY: Sorry.

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COURTNEY: First, I think they would put the dirt back in, but they were trying to do this as quickly as possible.

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COURTNEY: It was always happening at night on dark nights.

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BETH: It's no wonder they wanted a freshly dead body because you don't want to think about what would happen if you tried to yank somebody's corpse out if they were not fresh.

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COURTNEY: I mean, I assume the head would just come off, yeah?

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BETH: Yeah.

00:07:54.368 --> 00:07:54.688

BETH: Yeah.

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COURTNEY: I'm sure that happened also.

00:07:56.588 --> 00:07:59.308

BETH: No value for that.

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COURTNEY: No.

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COURTNEY: No value.

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COURTNEY: Zero dollars, zero pounds.

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COURTNEY: They would sell these bodies then directly to surgeons or medical schools, and the price they got would vary based on what type of condition it was in, Beth, whether or not the head had come off or not.

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COURTNEY: Sometimes, they would pay more for, I'm sorry.

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COURTNEY: I'm sorry to tell you guys this.

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COURTNEY: They would pay more for like children or pregnant women or something like that.

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COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:08:31.788 --> 00:08:36.428

COURTNEY: Because those anatomists want to get in there and see what that's like.

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BETH: Was this legal or was the fact of great-

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COURTNEY: This was not legal.

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COURTNEY: This was highly illegal.

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COURTNEY: All this stuff was done at night.

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COURTNEY: These were definitely crimes committed by criminals.

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COURTNEY: The public did not like this.

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COURTNEY: This was bad shit.

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COURTNEY: Nobody liked this.

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COURTNEY: All segments of society were completely horrified by this, and all segments of society were at risk at one way or another of having their loved ones dug up and sold to early doctors.

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BETH: Yeah, I was going to ask whether certain income classes were targeted more often or less often, and would you steal the grave of some wealthy lord if you knew that their family might sue over it?

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BETH: I don't know.

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COURTNEY: Yeah, just good question.

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COURTNEY: That's next in my outline, Beth.

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COURTNEY: You're a psychic.

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COURTNEY: You just know that this is going to be a chance for me to scream about income inequality and how the poor always bear the brunt of these terrible policies.

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COURTNEY: Actually, everyone found ways to keep the body snatchers away from their loved ones.

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COURTNEY: There was different methods depending on how much money you had.

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COURTNEY: Rich people would build mausoleums, so like giant concrete vaults above ground that were locked.

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COURTNEY: And like durable, they couldn't be broken into.

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COURTNEY: They would use nested caskets, like multiple caskets, or they would use caskets of like a very durable material like iron or you know like really thick wood to make it harder to break into them.

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COURTNEY: They had, yeah, mort safes, which are something you'll see in Edinburgh, we'll talk about Edinburgh later, which were like cages that would go over the graves to keep people from breaking in.

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COURTNEY: They had these things called patent coffins, which were iron coffins with these like big heavy screws in them that were impossible to undo once they were in.

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COURTNEY: I actually saw one of these at St.

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COURTNEY: Bridget's, Beth, in London, they have one on display in the crypt.

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BETH: I don't remember if I saw that when I was there, but I probably did.

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COURTNEY: There were ways to make the coffins impenetrable, the graves impenetrable, they would hire guards to stand watch.

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COURTNEY: These bodies are only good for a certain amount of time, right?

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COURTNEY: Once they begin to decay too much, they don't want to buy them, they're not as useful.

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COURTNEY: So really we're talking about guarding the bodies for like a week or 10 days or something.

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COURTNEY: For poor people, there were also options.

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COURTNEY: A lot of times they would organize, so they would get their community to take turns standing watch over the grave for the first week or so.

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BETH: I kind of love that, actually.

00:11:52.088 --> 00:11:53.648

COURTNEY: It's like mutual aid for...

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COURTNEY: And they had these things called Dead Houses, also in Edinburgh, where it's basically like a locked outdoor facility that's locked up tight, maybe guarded, where the bodies would go in for a week or so until they were decayed enough to then put into the ground.

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COURTNEY: And that was kind of a community option.

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COURTNEY: Everyone could use that.

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COURTNEY: Sometimes, they would try to pay to have bodies buried extra deep, so that was too hard for the body snatchers to get down there.

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COURTNEY: That's so...

00:12:30.108 --> 00:12:34.068

COURTNEY: Those were the ways that like all segments of society...

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COURTNEY: Hold on, let me rephrase that.

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COURTNEY: Most segments of society were able to avail themselves of to prevent body snatching.

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COURTNEY: But that did not stop all the resurrection men, because there were some other options for them, which were the really, really poor destitute people, people who didn't have someone to watch over their graves for them.

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COURTNEY: A lot of times, public burials, like municipal burials, especially around this time, were pit burials, which means people were not buried in coffins.

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COURTNEY: They were kind of like...

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COURTNEY: A trench would be dug, and many bodies would be put in there.

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COURTNEY: If they had coffins, they were very flimsy.

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COURTNEY: They were sometimes buried in these overcrowded churchyards where it was kind of easy to get at the bodies.

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COURTNEY: And that's really what ended up happening, right?

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COURTNEY: As people got better at avoiding body snatchers, they just went down, further down the social and economic ladder to source material for the doctors.

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COURTNEY: That sounds terrible, source material for the doctors.

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COURTNEY: I'm like looking at Carolyn.

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COURTNEY: Could you imagine if this was an episode of Sorceress?

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COURTNEY: Okay, so several thousand bodies per year were stolen.

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COURTNEY: That's kind of a lot, right?

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BETH: Yeah.

00:14:01.808 --> 00:14:02.688

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:14:02.688 --> 00:14:06.648

COURTNEY: And I think this is really just talking about London and Edinburgh, right?

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COURTNEY: The cities in the UK and Scotland, or England and Scotland, I should say.

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COURTNEY: The public did not like this.

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COURTNEY: Again, people were pissed and they would riot over this.

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COURTNEY: Edinburgh, we're going to talk about them next, but that was kind of the area where the most advanced anatomy studies were going on.

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COURTNEY: So there was a lot of anatomical studies and dissection in medical schools in Edinburgh, and one of them was burned to the ground after a massive public riot.

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COURTNEY: An anatomy school, they burned it to the ground because they found shallowly buried body parts in the yard of the medical school.

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BETH: That sounds really familiar.

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COURTNEY: Doesn't it?

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COURTNEY: This is where you guys have to go if you haven't already listened to the episode about Fort Mason.

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COURTNEY: This is the same kind of thing, right?

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BETH: Yeah.

00:15:06.768 --> 00:15:08.028

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:15:08.028 --> 00:15:13.328

COURTNEY: So, the doctors and the surgeons, they knew it was gross, okay?

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COURTNEY: First of all, these were, surgeons and doctors were upper class people, right?

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COURTNEY: The people who were studying anatomy, like without getting into the whole fucking history of barber surgeons and all that, you guys can read that on your own.

00:15:27.808 --> 00:15:35.328

COURTNEY: People who were studying anatomy and going to these medical schools were upper middle class and wealthy people, right?

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COURTNEY: They did not want to be seen dealing with common thieves, body snatchers, trading in body parts for cash.

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COURTNEY: They didn't, that was, they knew it was offensive.

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BETH: Also illegal.

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COURTNEY: And illegal.

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COURTNEY: I think they cared more about the offense, to be totally honest with you, Beth.

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COURTNEY: They were constantly trying to find ways to hide their connection to this body-snatching trade, even though everyone knew about it.

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COURTNEY: And to try to get the bodies from somewhere else.

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COURTNEY: So like one of the things they tried to do, they tried to get hospitals to give them their bodies.

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BETH: Right.

00:16:15.048 --> 00:16:20.068

COURTNEY: But hospitals at this time, people were already terrified of hospitals.

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COURTNEY: The public was terrified of hospitals because hospitals were super fucking dangerous back in the day, right?

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COURTNEY: In the 18, early 1800s.

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COURTNEY: This is before germ theory.

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COURTNEY: They don't know how diseases are spread.

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COURTNEY: But people know that the likelihood, if they go into a hospital, they're more likely to die in there of an infectious disease than get cured.

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COURTNEY: So people were, you had to be really bad to go to a hospital, right?

00:16:48.728 --> 00:16:52.308

COURTNEY: And so they were like, no, the hospital people were like, absolutely not.

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COURTNEY: They're already afraid to come here, right?

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COURTNEY: If we sell their bodies to you, they're going to be even less likely to come in and get treatment.

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COURTNEY: So the doctors were kind of, the doctors were doing shady shit too, right?

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COURTNEY: Now we've got criminal convicted murderers who are hung, executed, I assume hung.

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COURTNEY: Their bodies are used for dissection.

00:17:23.108 --> 00:17:27.228

COURTNEY: Then we have bodies stolen out of cemeteries.

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COURTNEY: The next phase in the evolution of this is called birking.

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COURTNEY: Beth, do you know what birking is?

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BETH: I don't.

00:17:37.628 --> 00:17:40.648

COURTNEY: Do you know who birkin hair are?

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BETH: Are those the two?

00:17:43.748 --> 00:17:47.108

BETH: I want to say body snatchers, but there was a film about them.

00:17:48.988 --> 00:17:59.408

COURTNEY: They're not body snatchers so much as living body snatchers because what they did was murder people and then sell their bodies to the doctors.

00:17:59.408 --> 00:18:02.048

COURTNEY: So this is Edinburgh.

00:18:03.808 --> 00:18:10.448

CAROLYN: So side note here though, I just googled birking because I was looking at it in your outline.

00:18:11.548 --> 00:18:17.948

CAROLYN: The first one is a Merriam-Webster definition and then the second link is Burger King.

00:18:17.968 --> 00:18:18.608

COURTNEY: What?

00:18:18.608 --> 00:18:19.548

CAROLYN: No.

00:18:19.548 --> 00:18:23.208

COURTNEY: Like it thought you were typing in Burke King?

00:18:23.208 --> 00:18:25.528

COURTNEY: I thought you were going to tell me it was a sex thing.

00:18:25.528 --> 00:18:27.488

COURTNEY: I was like, oh god, what is it now?

00:18:27.488 --> 00:18:28.768

COURTNEY: What is Burke King now?

00:18:29.508 --> 00:18:30.648

CAROLYN: Just Burger King.

00:18:30.648 --> 00:18:37.668

BETH: Yeah, but associating Burger King with men who are murdering and selling bodies?

00:18:37.668 --> 00:18:39.248

BETH: Not good.

00:18:39.248 --> 00:18:42.528

COURTNEY: Yeah, they might want to check their SEO.

00:18:43.608 --> 00:18:55.808

COURTNEY: So Burke and Hare, two criminals, fucking criminals, living and operating in Edinburgh in 1828.

00:18:55.808 --> 00:18:59.808

COURTNEY: They are running an inn or like a guest house or something, right?

00:18:59.808 --> 00:19:00.548

COURTNEY: Lodging house.

00:19:00.548 --> 00:19:01.328

COURTNEY: That's what it was called.

00:19:02.428 --> 00:19:05.788

COURTNEY: And they murdered an old, sick woman.

00:19:05.788 --> 00:19:16.748

COURTNEY: And the reason they murdered her is, I think it's not important, but I think they killed her because they didn't want her spreading disease around their lodging house or something.

00:19:16.748 --> 00:19:18.468

COURTNEY: They killed her for a stupid reason.

00:19:18.468 --> 00:19:19.748

COURTNEY: I mean, don't kill anyone.

00:19:19.748 --> 00:19:20.388

COURTNEY: That's wrong.

00:19:20.388 --> 00:19:26.408

COURTNEY: But like initially they killed her for a reason other than to sell her body.

00:19:26.408 --> 00:19:29.748

COURTNEY: And then they were trying to get rid of the body after they killed her.

00:19:29.808 --> 00:19:32.648

COURTNEY: And they're like, well, maybe we could sell it.

00:19:32.648 --> 00:19:34.348

COURTNEY: And so they did.

00:19:34.348 --> 00:19:37.068

COURTNEY: And they made a lot of money.

00:19:37.068 --> 00:19:43.908

COURTNEY: They sold it to this surgeon named Robert Knox, this prominent surgeon in Edinburgh.

00:19:43.908 --> 00:19:50.548

COURTNEY: And when they saw how easy it was and how few questions he asked, they were like, fuck it.

00:19:50.548 --> 00:20:01.688

COURTNEY: And they went on and they murdered, I think, 16 people total to sell their bodies to Robert Knox specifically before they got caught.

00:20:01.688 --> 00:20:04.348

BETH: How much money were they making for a corpse here?

00:20:04.348 --> 00:20:11.708

COURTNEY: You know, it's something like the equivalent of like a year's worth of labor or something.

00:20:11.708 --> 00:20:22.648

COURTNEY: It's like a crazy, you know, a huge amount of money for these people who were running a shady lodging house, right?

00:20:22.648 --> 00:20:25.428

BETH: But making it well worth their risk.

00:20:25.428 --> 00:20:26.328

COURTNEY: Yes, exactly.

00:20:26.328 --> 00:20:26.948

COURTNEY: Worth the risk.

00:20:26.948 --> 00:20:28.408

COURTNEY: Well, yeah, worth the risk.

00:20:28.408 --> 00:20:34.688

COURTNEY: I mean, even the bodies, the body snatchers that were operating out of graveyards, it was kind of the same thing, right?

00:20:34.688 --> 00:20:40.928

COURTNEY: You could either go work in a mill and, you know, or you could take the risk and commit crimes.

00:20:40.928 --> 00:20:45.488

COURTNEY: And, you know, to them, it's like maybe a victimless crime.

00:20:45.488 --> 00:20:46.808

COURTNEY: They weren't actually killing people.

00:20:46.808 --> 00:20:48.888

COURTNEY: They were just stealing bodies.

00:20:48.928 --> 00:20:52.608

COURTNEY: Burke and Hare, this is a different kind of conspiracy, right?

00:20:52.608 --> 00:20:59.768

COURTNEY: They're actually murdering people and selling their fresh bodies to Robert Knox.

00:20:59.768 --> 00:21:00.908

COURTNEY: So they, yeah.

00:21:00.908 --> 00:21:15.368

BETH: I haven't watched it, but there is, I think I mentioned a movie from 2010 just called Burke and Hare, and it co-stars Andy Serkis, who played Gollum in the Lord of the Rings movies and many other things.

00:21:15.548 --> 00:21:19.248

COURTNEY: But I didn't know that that guy played other things.

00:21:19.248 --> 00:21:21.508

BETH: Yeah, he was in like Clannadine Apes too.

00:21:21.508 --> 00:21:22.208

COURTNEY: Oh, shit.

00:21:22.208 --> 00:21:22.748

COURTNEY: Okay.

00:21:22.748 --> 00:21:23.848

COURTNEY: I'll have to watch that.

00:21:24.728 --> 00:21:29.088

COURTNEY: I mean, I confess to having known about this long before.

00:21:29.088 --> 00:21:30.548

COURTNEY: I did the research for this episode.

00:21:30.548 --> 00:21:37.888

COURTNEY: Burke and Hare is like kind of a famous story in Goth circles.

00:21:37.888 --> 00:21:38.988

COURTNEY: I don't know what I'm going to say.

00:21:38.988 --> 00:21:41.928

COURTNEY: Somebody has a perfume called Burke and Hare.

00:21:42.348 --> 00:21:43.208

BETH: I don't know about that.

00:21:43.208 --> 00:21:44.488

COURTNEY: It's too much, you guys.

00:21:44.488 --> 00:21:49.128

BETH: So is Burke then murdering somebody and then selling their corpse?

00:21:49.128 --> 00:21:49.648

COURTNEY: Yes, it is.

00:21:49.648 --> 00:21:51.668

COURTNEY: That's exactly what it is.

00:21:51.668 --> 00:21:56.708

COURTNEY: And people, I'm getting ahead of myself, but this was started happening in London, too.

00:21:56.708 --> 00:22:06.368

COURTNEY: And so this, what we're going to get to is this is kind of like the final straw that pushes TIP's Parliament into acting.

00:22:07.808 --> 00:22:20.128

COURTNEY: So Burke was hung, hair testified against him, and then disappeared, like left for the continent or something, changed his name, got the fuck out of Edinburgh.

00:22:20.128 --> 00:22:23.308

BETH: Please tell me that Burke's body was sold to a surgeon.

00:22:23.308 --> 00:22:26.088

COURTNEY: Girl, even better, even better.

00:22:26.568 --> 00:22:30.148

COURTNEY: He was executed and his body was publicly dissected.

00:22:31.028 --> 00:22:50.848

COURTNEY: So not only did they, they had a public dissection and then his skeleton was preserved to be used in anatomy training and his parts were sold off, like parts of him as trinkets.

00:22:50.848 --> 00:22:57.908

COURTNEY: Somebody bound a book out of his skin, which you can see at this museum.

00:22:58.928 --> 00:23:01.988

COURTNEY: Probably, it's probably in Scotland.

00:23:01.988 --> 00:23:07.668

COURTNEY: So they really, they stripped him clean, right?

00:23:07.668 --> 00:23:11.048

COURTNEY: Knox, surprisingly, no punishment, right?

00:23:11.048 --> 00:23:15.128

COURTNEY: This is the Surgeon, this is the upper class guy who was buying all these bodies.

00:23:15.128 --> 00:23:23.708

COURTNEY: Here in the US, that's a criminal conspiracy, and he would also be hung and his skeleton put on display for anatomy purposes.

00:23:23.708 --> 00:23:26.008

COURTNEY: But there was no charges against him.

00:23:26.108 --> 00:23:28.008

COURTNEY: He was not held accountable.

00:23:28.008 --> 00:23:30.848

COURTNEY: So the public rioted again.

00:23:30.848 --> 00:23:33.528

COURTNEY: There's a lot of riots in this episode.

00:23:33.528 --> 00:23:43.888

COURTNEY: And they built an effigy of Knox, the doctor, paraded him through town, dissected the effigy and lit it on fire.

00:23:43.888 --> 00:23:52.408

COURTNEY: So in case anyone was confused about how the people of Edinburgh felt about Robert Knox, this is what this is it, right?

00:23:53.708 --> 00:24:04.628

COURTNEY: So, okay, so the next phase, convicted murderers dissected, stolen bodies dissected, murder victims dissected.

00:24:04.628 --> 00:24:09.228

COURTNEY: This brings us to the Anatomy Act in the UK.

00:24:09.228 --> 00:24:16.348

COURTNEY: Okay, there are some people who say that Burke and Hare are the real authors of the Anatomy Act.

00:24:16.348 --> 00:24:23.508

COURTNEY: Because the public was so sick of this shit, they were demanding that something be done about it.

00:24:23.508 --> 00:24:34.468

COURTNEY: And so British politicians and surgeons got together and proposed that the shortage in bodies be covered by poor people who died in workhouses.

00:24:35.868 --> 00:24:38.428

COURTNEY: They drafted a bill called the Anatomy Act.

00:24:38.428 --> 00:24:40.328

COURTNEY: They drafted in 1829.

00:24:40.328 --> 00:24:43.168

COURTNEY: This was right after Burke and Hare.

00:24:43.168 --> 00:24:46.888

COURTNEY: And it did not pass until 1832.

00:24:47.088 --> 00:24:51.188

COURTNEY: It had to go through multiple revisions to get passed.

00:24:51.188 --> 00:24:54.388

COURTNEY: The bill was very unpopular.

00:24:54.388 --> 00:24:58.168

COURTNEY: There were also riots about this bill.

00:24:58.168 --> 00:25:05.128

COURTNEY: The way they revised it to pass it was to make the language as vague as possible.

00:25:05.128 --> 00:25:12.308

COURTNEY: In the end, it simply said that workhouse guardians would become the executors for the unclaimed dead there.

00:25:15.048 --> 00:25:17.548

COURTNEY: This is duplicitous, right?

00:25:18.168 --> 00:25:32.568

COURTNEY: They are hiding the true rule here because they knew that there was no time or effort being made to locate family and friends of people who died poor in the workhouse.

00:25:32.728 --> 00:25:35.748

BETH: That is something that has not changed since then, frankly.

00:25:35.748 --> 00:25:36.668

COURTNEY: Has not changed, right?

00:25:37.908 --> 00:25:47.348

COURTNEY: Yeah, and then there definitely wasn't going to be a search for people from the workhouse with the anatomists banging down the door for corpses, right?

00:25:47.348 --> 00:25:53.528

COURTNEY: These workhouse guardians were then making money on this.

00:25:53.528 --> 00:25:55.608

COURTNEY: I guess I should detour a little bit.

00:25:55.608 --> 00:25:58.648

COURTNEY: Maybe you guys don't know what a workhouse is.

00:26:01.068 --> 00:26:02.708

COURTNEY: Do you know what a workhouse is, Beth?

00:26:03.268 --> 00:26:18.528

BETH: I mean, it's really, it's, if you're living in poverty and especially if you've gone into debt, you have to go to one of these places and do some sort of hard labor on behalf of the municipality.

00:26:18.528 --> 00:26:22.448

BETH: And unfortunately, they were often places where people worked to death.

00:26:22.448 --> 00:26:23.968

COURTNEY: Yes, exactly.

00:26:23.968 --> 00:26:27.328

BETH: And whole families would be sent to these places.

00:26:27.328 --> 00:26:28.628

COURTNEY: Yeah, they were like prisons.

00:26:29.468 --> 00:26:39.568

COURTNEY: Basically, they're in, around this time, it's actually 1834, but this is kind of like cooking up around the time of the Anatomy Act.

00:26:39.568 --> 00:26:41.288

COURTNEY: I think these things are related.

00:26:41.288 --> 00:26:46.348

COURTNEY: There's this, another act called the New Poor Laws that came out.

00:26:46.348 --> 00:26:53.828

COURTNEY: And this basically said, it basically codified the idea that poverty is a moral failure, right?

00:26:53.828 --> 00:26:54.688

BETH: Yeah.

00:26:54.688 --> 00:27:06.988

COURTNEY: Poor people need to be punished, they need to be disciplined, they need to be treated like criminals in order to encourage them to work, right?

00:27:08.768 --> 00:27:12.448

COURTNEY: As we all know, that's how that works, right?

00:27:12.448 --> 00:27:16.028

COURTNEY: People love to be poor, and they'll just sit around and be poor.

00:27:17.988 --> 00:27:21.288

COURTNEY: I'm not going to start screaming about this until the end of the episode.

00:27:21.288 --> 00:27:22.268

BETH: We can scream together.

00:27:22.948 --> 00:27:26.028

COURTNEY: I have some feelings, but we'll get to it.

00:27:26.608 --> 00:27:33.568

COURTNEY: The new poor laws made workhouses the only way to get relief from poverty.

00:27:33.568 --> 00:27:43.608

COURTNEY: So you couldn't go pick up bread, you couldn't get cash aid, you couldn't get free hospital care, you couldn't get any of that.

00:27:43.608 --> 00:27:47.068

COURTNEY: If you needed help, you had to go to a workhouse.

00:27:47.068 --> 00:27:49.888

COURTNEY: A workhouse was like a prison, they locked you in.

00:27:51.128 --> 00:27:52.648

COURTNEY: They separated families.

00:27:52.648 --> 00:27:59.928

COURTNEY: So if your whole family went to a workhouse, the women would be sent to one workhouse, the men to another, and the children to another.

00:27:59.928 --> 00:28:01.308

COURTNEY: Great.

00:28:01.308 --> 00:28:13.768

COURTNEY: They made you, they took all your clothing, they made you wear this nasty old sack or something that got recycled from inmate to inmate.

00:28:13.768 --> 00:28:21.128

COURTNEY: And they made you do hard labor and intentionally tedious labor.

00:28:21.128 --> 00:28:33.508

COURTNEY: So like there was this thing called oakum picking, I think that's what it's called, where they're made to pull apart ship ropes that are covered in tar in order to recycle the fibers or something.

00:28:33.508 --> 00:28:41.868

COURTNEY: It's made to be intentionally hard and pointless so that you wouldn't want to go into the workhouse, right?

00:28:41.868 --> 00:28:48.088

COURTNEY: They also, they would feed you like, I don't know, some kind of gruel three times a day.

00:28:48.088 --> 00:28:50.288

COURTNEY: These places were full of disease.

00:28:50.288 --> 00:28:51.648

COURTNEY: People were worked to death.

00:28:51.648 --> 00:28:53.788

COURTNEY: They died of malnutrition.

00:28:53.788 --> 00:28:55.548

COURTNEY: All kinds of places, right?

00:28:55.548 --> 00:29:05.868

COURTNEY: So I guess if you want to talk about a corpse factory, the workhouse is probably a good place because it was a really unhealthy and hard place to live.

00:29:07.308 --> 00:29:24.268

COURTNEY: And of course, the idea in Parliament was, you know, Parliament, these bills being passed by rich people and lords and all that, was that the poor needed to use their bodies to pay back the aid and the help that the state had given them over the years, right?

00:29:24.268 --> 00:29:32.808

BETH: Well, and this, in some respects, was very similar to the rationale behind enslavement in the Americas, yeah.

00:29:32.808 --> 00:29:34.868

COURTNEY: Yeah, I believe it.

00:29:36.048 --> 00:29:38.108

COURTNEY: It's, we'll get to that later too.

00:29:38.108 --> 00:29:49.388

COURTNEY: This is like, I feel like as I get better as a podcaster, I'll stop saying, we'll get to it, we'll get to it, we'll get to it, because, okay, I think people get the idea, right?

00:29:49.388 --> 00:29:58.148

COURTNEY: So, the United States, we're coming across the pond to the land of the free, the home of the brave, unless you're poor.

00:29:59.828 --> 00:30:06.808

COURTNEY: The American Colonies, and later the States, basically borrowed from the British model.

00:30:06.808 --> 00:30:15.268

COURTNEY: We had a similar evolution of things, of laws and ways that people were acquiring bodies.

00:30:15.268 --> 00:30:19.048

COURTNEY: It was kind of similar to what happened in the UK.

00:30:19.048 --> 00:30:22.808

COURTNEY: The first anatomy program here was at Penn in 1745.

00:30:24.168 --> 00:30:26.768

COURTNEY: Penn has its own problems now.

00:30:27.268 --> 00:30:38.668

COURTNEY: Currently, they have a whole division full of skulls that they've stolen from various graveyards across the world to conduct scientific racism on it.

00:30:38.668 --> 00:30:40.988

COURTNEY: The Stanley Morton skull collection.

00:30:42.548 --> 00:30:43.848

COURTNEY: We'll drop the link in the notes.

00:30:43.848 --> 00:30:44.448

COURTNEY: Don't worry, guys.

00:30:44.448 --> 00:30:46.148

COURTNEY: It's probably going to be a future episode.

00:30:46.148 --> 00:30:47.508

COURTNEY: Here I go again.

00:30:49.048 --> 00:30:50.668

COURTNEY: Okay.

00:30:50.668 --> 00:30:55.368

COURTNEY: Corpses were scarce in the United States as they were in the UK.

00:30:55.368 --> 00:31:01.408

COURTNEY: Most states also had laws allowing for the dissection of murderers as part of their sentence.

00:31:01.408 --> 00:31:07.008

COURTNEY: So similar to the UK, convicted murderers into the lab.

00:31:07.008 --> 00:31:13.948

COURTNEY: In the US, they also expanded it to other crimes because we love like the carceral state here in the US.

00:31:13.948 --> 00:31:15.348

COURTNEY: That's our own special invention.

00:31:16.728 --> 00:31:21.408

COURTNEY: They expanded to other crimes like robbery, arson, theft, and dueling.

00:31:21.408 --> 00:31:24.008

COURTNEY: Dueling was a huge problem here in the US.

00:31:24.368 --> 00:31:26.508

COURTNEY: The authorities hated it.

00:31:26.508 --> 00:31:28.708

COURTNEY: They did not want people dueling.

00:31:28.708 --> 00:31:42.148

COURTNEY: And so these laws, they were, expanding these laws to cover things like dueling and theft and arson were actually meant to deter the crimes, not so much to bring more bodies in.

00:31:43.108 --> 00:31:47.328

BETH: So wait, but let's say you're in a duel.

00:31:47.328 --> 00:31:50.088

BETH: You lose the duel, presumably you die.

00:31:50.088 --> 00:31:54.508

BETH: Are you the one that then gets sold to the surgeon or do they convict?

00:31:54.508 --> 00:31:55.508

COURTNEY: Both of you, I bet.

00:31:55.508 --> 00:31:55.888

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:31:55.888 --> 00:31:56.648

BETH: Oh my God.

00:31:56.648 --> 00:31:57.688

COURTNEY: I mean, I don't know.

00:31:57.688 --> 00:32:03.288

COURTNEY: You know, that's a good question because I don't know if they prosecuted people for dueling.

00:32:03.288 --> 00:32:05.408

COURTNEY: I'm not actually sure about that.

00:32:05.408 --> 00:32:07.288

COURTNEY: You would think, but...

00:32:07.288 --> 00:32:09.028

BETH: If it's against the law.

00:32:09.028 --> 00:32:09.468

BETH: Yeah.

00:32:09.468 --> 00:32:10.928

COURTNEY: I mean, yeah, that's true.

00:32:11.148 --> 00:32:13.188

COURTNEY: And we do like to put people in prison here.

00:32:13.188 --> 00:32:20.868

COURTNEY: So then again, the people who were dueling, it's like, was it Alexander Hamilton or is he the one?

00:32:20.868 --> 00:32:21.988

COURTNEY: Right.

00:32:21.988 --> 00:32:26.308

BETH: I mean, maybe the duels that we know about are the ones that are among...

00:32:26.308 --> 00:32:26.828

BETH: Yeah.

00:32:28.608 --> 00:32:31.308

COURTNEY: Aaron Burr, sir.

00:32:31.308 --> 00:32:37.068

BETH: There's probably plenty of duels that weren't among famous people that we don't know about, but who knows?

00:32:37.068 --> 00:32:38.428

BETH: Broderick.

00:32:38.428 --> 00:32:39.628

COURTNEY: That's the one I was thinking of.

00:32:39.768 --> 00:32:41.268

BETH: Terry Broderick.

00:32:41.268 --> 00:32:42.088

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:32:42.088 --> 00:32:48.208

COURTNEY: The Terry Broderick duel, which was held in San Mateo County because it was illegal in San Francisco, right?

00:32:48.208 --> 00:32:50.708

COURTNEY: So they really were trying to discourage this.

00:32:50.708 --> 00:32:51.328

COURTNEY: Okay.

00:32:54.648 --> 00:32:58.988

COURTNEY: So as demand for corpses goes up, right?

00:32:58.988 --> 00:33:01.448

COURTNEY: We don't have enough criminals.

00:33:01.448 --> 00:33:05.508

COURTNEY: Body snatching starts to happen here in the US.

00:33:05.508 --> 00:33:07.728

COURTNEY: It was illegal, just like it was in the UK.

00:33:08.568 --> 00:33:23.748

COURTNEY: And just like in the UK, this meant that marginalized populations, poor people, and here in the US, especially black people were more likely to have their bodies snatched.

00:33:23.748 --> 00:33:25.708

COURTNEY: Right.

00:33:27.408 --> 00:33:38.088

COURTNEY: The cemeteries were vulnerable, but also people in the South who owned slaves sold the bodies of enslaved people who had died to anatomists.

00:33:38.088 --> 00:33:39.028

BETH: Oh my God.

00:33:39.028 --> 00:33:47.388

COURTNEY: It's an especially harrowing part of the culture down there, right?

00:33:47.388 --> 00:33:47.668

BETH: Yeah.

00:33:47.668 --> 00:33:48.588

COURTNEY: During slavery.

00:33:49.868 --> 00:33:59.228

COURTNEY: Like, it's especially, it's just, when you think about even in death, the body of an enslaved person was still a commodity, right?

00:33:59.268 --> 00:33:59.728

BETH: Yeah.

00:33:59.728 --> 00:34:00.988

BETH: Yeah.

00:34:00.988 --> 00:34:10.888

BETH: Well, and so much, so much non-consensual medical research took place among Yes.

00:34:10.888 --> 00:34:12.248

BETH: African-American black people.

00:34:12.248 --> 00:34:13.368

COURTNEY: Marion Sims, right?

00:34:13.808 --> 00:34:15.628

COURTNEY: The father of, is that what his name was?

00:34:15.628 --> 00:34:16.208

COURTNEY: Marion Sims?

00:34:16.208 --> 00:34:18.308

COURTNEY: The father of gynecology.

00:34:18.408 --> 00:34:21.708

COURTNEY: Experimenting on black women without their consent.

00:34:21.708 --> 00:34:28.548

BETH: Well, and the Tuskegee experiments and the Henrietta Lacks cell lines.

00:34:28.548 --> 00:34:30.248

BETH: All of it.

00:34:30.248 --> 00:34:32.968

COURTNEY: That's another episode.

00:34:32.968 --> 00:34:43.208

COURTNEY: Nat Turner, who led a failed insurrection in the South, his body was dissected and his skeleton was used for anatomy.

00:34:43.208 --> 00:34:45.368

COURTNEY: Oh, no.

00:34:45.368 --> 00:34:50.048

COURTNEY: He also, like Burke, I mean, Nat Turner was not a criminal.

00:34:50.048 --> 00:34:50.888

COURTNEY: He was a hero.

00:34:50.888 --> 00:34:52.648

COURTNEY: He was led a revolution.

00:34:53.128 --> 00:34:56.368

COURTNEY: But like Burke, he was dissected.

00:34:56.368 --> 00:34:59.568

COURTNEY: His skeleton was preserved.

00:34:59.568 --> 00:35:03.688

COURTNEY: And parts of his body were cut off and used for souvenirs and trinkets.

00:35:03.688 --> 00:35:04.968

BETH: Oh, God.

00:35:06.008 --> 00:35:14.588

COURTNEY: This, I mean, in a way, it's like the anger towards Burke for what was happening with body snatching.

00:35:14.588 --> 00:35:17.668

COURTNEY: And, you know, the public kind of took their anger out.

00:35:17.668 --> 00:35:36.048

COURTNEY: In the South at this time, a slave revolt, they really, the amount of anger and hatred and the desire to punish and deter other people from rising up in this, in this treatment.

00:35:37.268 --> 00:35:47.408

COURTNEY: This is, of course, leading to the era of scientific racism and phrenology, which is skull measuring, which is what's happening at Penn.

00:35:49.068 --> 00:36:01.628

COURTNEY: And it led to like a, I mean, we get into like a pretty gnarly body trade in the, the skeletons and skulls of indigenous people and black people in the United States.

00:36:01.628 --> 00:36:05.328

COURTNEY: So back to body snatching.

00:36:05.328 --> 00:36:09.148

COURTNEY: There were riots about body snatching in the US too.

00:36:09.148 --> 00:36:12.348

COURTNEY: People did not like this.

00:36:12.408 --> 00:36:18.428

COURTNEY: In 1788, there was a riot called the Doctors' Riot in New York City.

00:36:18.428 --> 00:36:22.328

COURTNEY: So this is pretty early, 1788, right?

00:36:22.328 --> 00:36:30.728

COURTNEY: Columbia College had the city's medical school, which at that time was near several African American burial grounds.

00:36:30.728 --> 00:36:38.828

COURTNEY: I think these were freed people in New York who were being buried in their own cemeteries.

00:36:40.108 --> 00:36:47.428

COURTNEY: The students at Columbia started ramping up their body snatching in order to do dissections.

00:36:47.428 --> 00:36:52.668

COURTNEY: And of course, they were going to the African American burial grounds nearby.

00:36:52.668 --> 00:36:59.688

COURTNEY: And they got caught, one surgeon, one student got caught with a woman's arm, and a huge riot broke out.

00:36:59.708 --> 00:37:01.668

COURTNEY: 2,000 people took to the streets.

00:37:01.668 --> 00:37:03.968

COURTNEY: The doctors had to run and hide.

00:37:03.968 --> 00:37:07.368

COURTNEY: The governor sent the militia in to break it up and six people died.

00:37:08.148 --> 00:37:10.928

COURTNEY: So, it was a big deal.

00:37:10.928 --> 00:37:11.808

COURTNEY: I actually didn't know about that.

00:37:11.808 --> 00:37:13.308

BETH: Never sent in the militia.

00:37:14.828 --> 00:37:16.768

COURTNEY: Here comes the colonial militia.

00:37:18.888 --> 00:37:21.388

COURTNEY: Ben Franklin, you guys might know about this too.

00:37:21.388 --> 00:37:27.268

COURTNEY: Ben Franklin kind of has a reputation of being part of a resurrection ring.

00:37:27.268 --> 00:37:44.208

COURTNEY: When he was living in London, he had a, I don't know if it's a neighbor in his building was a doctor or a surgeon, and he was holding anatomical dissections in his basement.

00:37:44.208 --> 00:37:44.688

BETH: Wow.

00:37:44.688 --> 00:37:47.008

COURTNEY: And Ben Franklin attended.

00:37:47.008 --> 00:37:48.088

BETH: Of course he did.

00:37:48.088 --> 00:37:49.728

COURTNEY: Of course he did.

00:37:49.728 --> 00:37:50.888

BETH: The curious man.

00:37:50.888 --> 00:37:54.988

COURTNEY: In between the hookers and the, what else was he up to?

00:37:54.988 --> 00:37:58.628

COURTNEY: Recent excavations is what revealed this, right?

00:37:58.628 --> 00:38:02.548

COURTNEY: They went into probably pour a new foundation or something in the basement and they found this.

00:38:02.548 --> 00:38:04.228

COURTNEY: And it's just like Fort Mason.

00:38:04.388 --> 00:38:12.708

COURTNEY: They found 1200 human bones, different size bones, that showed evidence of dissection in the basement.

00:38:12.708 --> 00:38:19.148

COURTNEY: And historians think he was sourcing the bodies from a gallows at the end of the street.

00:38:20.988 --> 00:38:23.028

COURTNEY: So yeah.

00:38:23.028 --> 00:38:28.548

COURTNEY: So like the UK, the people in the US were pissed, right?

00:38:28.548 --> 00:38:30.648

COURTNEY: They didn't want body snatching.

00:38:30.648 --> 00:38:32.248

COURTNEY: They didn't have enough criminals.

00:38:33.848 --> 00:38:36.708

COURTNEY: I mean, they had enough, but you know what I mean.

00:38:36.708 --> 00:38:45.468

COURTNEY: So they started passing anatomy acts at the height of the grave robbing in the 19th century.

00:38:45.468 --> 00:38:47.348

COURTNEY: These happened later in the United States.

00:38:47.348 --> 00:38:49.328

COURTNEY: UK is 1830s.

00:38:49.328 --> 00:38:52.168

COURTNEY: The US is more like 1860s.

00:38:52.168 --> 00:38:54.468

COURTNEY: I think we are like a little bit behind.

00:38:54.468 --> 00:39:01.508

COURTNEY: Most states had anatomy acts after the Civil War.

00:39:03.508 --> 00:39:10.708

COURTNEY: Here in the United States, the bodies were most likely sourced from almshouses, prisons, and orphanages.

00:39:10.708 --> 00:39:18.128

COURTNEY: So by 1913, the statistic is that most of the bodies used for anatomical dissection were from almshouses.

00:39:19.468 --> 00:39:21.988

COURTNEY: Beth, you probably know a lot of almshouses, right?

00:39:21.988 --> 00:39:29.688

BETH: You know, there were a couple of almshouses in San Francisco that I have not actually studied.

00:39:30.308 --> 00:39:45.388

BETH: But the City and County Hospital, which we talked about in the previous episode, was a regular source of bodies for medical dissection, not just to this one doctor we talked about.

00:39:46.828 --> 00:39:59.408

BETH: But one of the things that I wrote about in my cemetery book is this place that was out sort of along the beach in Potrero Hill, where these body parts were stuck in the mud.

00:40:00.148 --> 00:40:01.428

BETH: What?

00:40:01.428 --> 00:40:14.288

BETH: And it looked as though somebody was working on them at the City and County Hospital and then throwing the parts into this creek that then washed down into the bay.

00:40:14.288 --> 00:40:16.988

COURTNEY: Girl, they threw everything into that creek.

00:40:16.988 --> 00:40:19.628

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:40:19.628 --> 00:40:21.408

COURTNEY: They threw cattle parts in that creek.

00:40:21.408 --> 00:40:22.368

COURTNEY: They threw their garbage.

00:40:22.368 --> 00:40:25.188

COURTNEY: That's Islais Creek, right?

00:40:25.188 --> 00:40:25.788

BETH: It isn't.

00:40:25.788 --> 00:40:27.328

BETH: I can't remember which creek it was, but...

00:40:27.588 --> 00:40:27.728

COURTNEY: Okay.

00:40:27.728 --> 00:40:29.788

COURTNEY: Well, they threw shit into all the creeks.

00:40:29.788 --> 00:40:33.408

COURTNEY: Creeks were like the natural garbage dumping ground for San Francisco.

00:40:33.408 --> 00:40:34.328

BETH: Yeah.

00:40:34.328 --> 00:40:44.328

BETH: But so, yeah, the poor people who were dying in the public hospital, nobody would come to claim them and then they became subject to medical research.

00:40:44.328 --> 00:40:46.248

BETH: It's a story as old as time.

00:40:46.248 --> 00:40:46.608

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:40:46.608 --> 00:40:49.568

COURTNEY: I mean, here in California...

00:40:49.568 --> 00:40:55.988

COURTNEY: Well, we'll get to California in a minute, but we passed our Anatomy Act in 1864, which is probably right around when Dr.

00:40:55.988 --> 00:41:04.528

COURTNEY: Bentley was doing his research, or maybe he was a little later, but around the time of the Civil War.

00:41:04.528 --> 00:41:09.188

BETH: Yeah, because he was able to get them legally from people who died in poverty.

00:41:09.188 --> 00:41:09.508

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:41:09.508 --> 00:41:11.088

COURTNEY: I mean, and we also...

00:41:13.508 --> 00:41:26.488

COURTNEY: The language they used in the Anatomy Act was unclaimed, which is kind of the same turn of phrase they used in the UK to obscure what was really happening.

00:41:26.488 --> 00:41:29.868

COURTNEY: It's a little more forthright in the California law.

00:41:29.868 --> 00:41:31.388

COURTNEY: I'll read that in a second.

00:41:31.388 --> 00:41:45.408

COURTNEY: But the idea is that somehow people will assume that poor people who died in a hospital or an alms house, that they had no one cared about them and no one cared.

00:41:45.408 --> 00:41:50.308

COURTNEY: But these places were not doing a lot of work to find the people who cared, right?

00:41:50.768 --> 00:41:56.928

COURTNEY: Especially when they had, they're turning people through these facilities, and they also have a way to dispose of them, right?

00:41:56.928 --> 00:41:59.048

COURTNEY: Who knows if they were selling them?

00:42:01.068 --> 00:42:06.068

COURTNEY: They're not necessarily people with no friends and no family.

00:42:06.068 --> 00:42:07.608

COURTNEY: They're just poor.

00:42:13.188 --> 00:42:43.268

COURTNEY: There's a section in the book that we talked about in your episode, Beth, on the archaeological work that was done at Fort Mason, where they talked about the Anatomy Act in California, excuse me, and in the United States, and they have these quotes from people who are running almshouses at the time, guardians of almshouses, like directors of almshouses.

00:42:43.268 --> 00:42:50.968

COURTNEY: And there's a quote from one who was a board of directors running an almshouse in Philadelphia.

00:42:50.968 --> 00:43:01.788

COURTNEY: And they say, and we have to use these unclaimed dead, otherwise the bodies of normal people who have people to mourn them will be stolen and used.

00:43:01.788 --> 00:43:03.308

BETH: Oh my god.

00:43:03.308 --> 00:43:08.188

COURTNEY: Talk about fucking circular thinking, but also like they don't see these people as human, right?

00:43:08.268 --> 00:43:10.648

COURTNEY: Like these are poor people.

00:43:10.648 --> 00:43:15.788

COURTNEY: We don't want middle class people to be disturbed in their graves, god forbid.

00:43:15.788 --> 00:43:27.028

COURTNEY: So we have to hand these bodies of poor people over to the surgeons so that the rest of us are not affected by this very unpopular practice.

00:43:27.028 --> 00:43:28.148

BETH: Right.

00:43:28.148 --> 00:43:31.788

COURTNEY: So California, we're a little later, right?

00:43:31.788 --> 00:43:33.068

COURTNEY: Because we're on the West Coast.

00:43:33.068 --> 00:43:35.308

COURTNEY: We don't have any medical schools in 1788.

00:43:36.848 --> 00:43:41.148

COURTNEY: So our Anatomy Act is passed in 1864.

00:43:41.148 --> 00:43:48.768

COURTNEY: And it allowed the coroner to release remains for the purpose of dissection.

00:43:48.768 --> 00:43:57.108

COURTNEY: It allowed the coroner to surrender the bodies of those persons required to be buried at public expense.

00:43:57.108 --> 00:44:04.608

COURTNEY: The anatomists were required to use the bodies for science, and they were also required to give them a proper burial when they were done.

00:44:04.888 --> 00:44:08.068

COURTNEY: And they were supposed to pay for that at their own expense.

00:44:08.068 --> 00:44:11.568

BETH: How many of them do you think actually went through with that last part?

00:44:11.568 --> 00:44:13.028

COURTNEY: I was going to say zero.

00:44:13.028 --> 00:44:21.168

COURTNEY: But then I remembered that when we were talking, you said there were some people buried at City Cemetery in the Indigent Burial Ground.

00:44:21.368 --> 00:44:29.308

BETH: And there are researchers who may know who the doctors were that were involved with those burials, but I don't know who they were.

00:44:30.208 --> 00:44:34.968

COURTNEY: So we could retroactively give them their snaps for following the law.

00:44:36.608 --> 00:44:37.408

COURTNEY: Just kidding.

00:44:37.408 --> 00:44:38.388

COURTNEY: No flowers for you.

00:44:38.388 --> 00:44:40.708

BETH: Meeting the very lowest bar here.

00:44:40.708 --> 00:44:41.968

COURTNEY: The very lowest bar.

00:44:41.968 --> 00:44:46.728

COURTNEY: And I know I'm going to be, I feel like I'm going to like show up at my doctor, and she's going to be like, oh, you want penicillin?

00:44:46.728 --> 00:44:48.428

COURTNEY: We had to use bodies to learn about that.

00:44:48.428 --> 00:44:50.528

COURTNEY: So you're not.

00:44:50.528 --> 00:44:51.648

COURTNEY: What are you talking about?

00:44:51.848 --> 00:44:55.328

COURTNEY: You didn't like the use of the bodies on the poor.

00:44:55.328 --> 00:44:58.408

COURTNEY: This was important work, and we did have to do it.

00:44:58.548 --> 00:45:02.368

COURTNEY: But I don't think it had to be done this way.

00:45:02.368 --> 00:45:05.668

COURTNEY: I think there were other ways to do this.

00:45:05.668 --> 00:45:12.988

COURTNEY: And I could spend another hour talking about those other ways, but I'm already at 46 minutes, and I got some shit to get through here.

00:45:12.988 --> 00:45:16.808

COURTNEY: So that's what happened in California.

00:45:17.828 --> 00:45:26.048

COURTNEY: It was also the penal code also allowed prisoners and people executed for crimes to be put out for dissection in California.

00:45:26.328 --> 00:45:31.268

COURTNEY: So I think that probably didn't change for a long time.

00:45:31.268 --> 00:45:41.968

COURTNEY: You know, eventually, here in the United States, we get to a point where we are gifting our bodies, donating our bodies to science, right?

00:45:41.988 --> 00:45:59.708

BETH: Or there's this sort of in-between, and maybe you're going to talk about it, where people who are in poverty can agree before their death to sell their body, and that money, they get the money ahead of time to help pay for whatever ultimate funeral expenses.

00:45:59.708 --> 00:46:00.408

COURTNEY: Oh, that's cool.

00:46:00.408 --> 00:46:02.888

COURTNEY: I didn't actually, I didn't know about that.

00:46:02.888 --> 00:46:15.968

BETH: It is and it isn't because it sort of preys on people who don't have any other means of paying for their own burials to sell their bodies in exchange for those expenses.

00:46:15.968 --> 00:46:20.248

COURTNEY: Yeah, and we do, unfortunately, that does go on now too.

00:46:21.288 --> 00:46:42.868

COURTNEY: It's not, you know, the regulate, so in 1968, the United States, they issue the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act, which all the states adopt, which basically allows you to donate your body to science and sets a bunch of parameters and regulations around it.

00:46:42.868 --> 00:46:47.908

COURTNEY: That is a, it's pretty, handled pretty well.

00:46:48.208 --> 00:46:56.648

COURTNEY: I don't know if you've ever read Mary Roach's book Stiff, but she spends a lot of time in the dissection rooms and talks to the doctors.

00:46:56.648 --> 00:47:01.788

COURTNEY: And they're very, nowadays, it's a respectful process.

00:47:01.788 --> 00:47:05.868

COURTNEY: You can donate your body to science, they'll cremate you in the end.

00:47:07.248 --> 00:47:25.168

COURTNEY: There is another situation though, which is the trade in human tissues and body parts, which is not as well regulated because dead bodies are kind of like quasi property in the United States.

00:47:25.908 --> 00:47:30.508

COURTNEY: They're in a sort of a gray area under the law.

00:47:30.508 --> 00:47:35.148

COURTNEY: And there is a trade in tissues.

00:47:35.148 --> 00:47:41.308

COURTNEY: We were talking about the jar of eyeballs last time, but it could be, these are things that are not being donated.

00:47:41.308 --> 00:47:43.468

COURTNEY: These are not donor tissues.

00:47:43.908 --> 00:47:47.448

COURTNEY: There are strict rules about donating organs and tissues.

00:47:47.448 --> 00:47:48.988

COURTNEY: This is something different.

00:47:48.988 --> 00:48:00.908

COURTNEY: This is still being used for medical research, and there's probably a lot of legitimate uses for parts when someone's dead.

00:48:00.908 --> 00:48:07.928

COURTNEY: But it's very poorly regulated, and it's often aimed at poor people.

00:48:07.928 --> 00:48:21.648

COURTNEY: So if you can't afford a cremation or a burial, there are funeral homes that will refer you to body brokers, essentially, who will cut you up and sell you for parts, right?

00:48:22.748 --> 00:48:24.088

COURTNEY: That's...

00:48:24.088 --> 00:48:26.308

COURTNEY: Beth, what am I going to say now?

00:48:26.308 --> 00:48:29.248

COURTNEY: That's an issue for another episode.

00:48:29.248 --> 00:48:29.908

COURTNEY: That is happening.

00:48:29.908 --> 00:48:43.408

BETH: Well, I'm just thinking about that amazing bodies exhibit that has toured around the world, and the revelations that the people whose bodies are in those exhibits did not consent to be included and displayed in that way.

00:48:43.408 --> 00:48:45.668

COURTNEY: No, they think they were prisoners.

00:48:45.668 --> 00:48:51.488

COURTNEY: I've heard they're come from China, and I don't know.

00:48:51.488 --> 00:48:55.388

COURTNEY: I don't know if that's a rumor fueled by racism, could be, right?

00:48:55.388 --> 00:49:01.788

COURTNEY: But also the People's Republic of China is not the most respectful fucking government in the world either, right?

00:49:03.208 --> 00:49:04.428

COURTNEY: Would I put it past them?

00:49:04.428 --> 00:49:05.428

COURTNEY: No, not at all.

00:49:07.548 --> 00:49:12.788

COURTNEY: So I saw that exhibit in Vegas, and it really disturbed me.

00:49:12.788 --> 00:49:14.888

BETH: Yeah, I saw it in Atlanta.

00:49:14.888 --> 00:49:22.748

COURTNEY: It upset me in a way that like, I mean, you know, I am on a podcast called Dead Reckoning.

00:49:22.748 --> 00:49:32.148

COURTNEY: Like, I read a 600 page book called, you know, Dissecting the Destitute, or I'll put it in the notes, you guys.

00:49:32.148 --> 00:49:37.408

COURTNEY: But like, I'm not squeamish, but that exhibit really upset me.

00:49:37.408 --> 00:49:44.928

COURTNEY: And maybe that's why, or there was just something very upsetting about it.

00:49:48.028 --> 00:49:53.908

COURTNEY: We're finally at the part where it's time to yell about our government.

00:49:56.468 --> 00:49:59.528

COURTNEY: I want to say that I first learned about this.

00:49:59.528 --> 00:50:07.008

COURTNEY: I read an article in the Order of the Good Death about an excavation of an archaeological site in London.

00:50:07.008 --> 00:50:11.468

COURTNEY: It was a graveyard that was attached to a workhouse, a former workhouse.

00:50:11.468 --> 00:50:21.388

COURTNEY: And that's the first time that I found out where they were getting, that they were using the bodies of the poor from the workhouse to do dissections.

00:50:21.588 --> 00:50:26.728

COURTNEY: And I remember reading it and being like, of course they are, right?

00:50:27.588 --> 00:50:32.568

COURTNEY: I was reading it at the time that I was writing about Dickens.

00:50:32.568 --> 00:50:34.628

COURTNEY: Okay, stay with me, you guys.

00:50:34.628 --> 00:50:40.548

COURTNEY: Charles Dickens, famous British author, was in...

00:50:40.548 --> 00:50:43.288

COURTNEY: His parents were in debtor's prison.

00:50:43.288 --> 00:50:47.668

COURTNEY: And he was sent to an orphanage, just like a workhouse.

00:50:47.668 --> 00:50:49.488

COURTNEY: Or maybe he was sent to a juvenile workhouse.

00:50:49.688 --> 00:50:50.328

COURTNEY: I don't know.

00:50:50.328 --> 00:50:55.108

COURTNEY: He worked in a boot blacking factory and lived in an orphanage until he was a teenager.

00:50:55.108 --> 00:51:01.228

COURTNEY: So his books are all about how the system grinds, pour people down and doesn't give them a chance.

00:51:01.228 --> 00:51:04.848

COURTNEY: And, you know, that's his whole, right?

00:51:04.848 --> 00:51:06.268

COURTNEY: There's a line in...

00:51:06.268 --> 00:51:13.488

COURTNEY: I was writing about Dickens, because our Christmas Carol, which I was writing about the ghosts in the Christmas Carol.

00:51:13.488 --> 00:51:18.288

COURTNEY: And I was, you know, reading Christmas Carol and watching the movie adaptations and everything.

00:51:18.408 --> 00:51:26.668

COURTNEY: And there's this line Ebenezer Scrooge says when this guy comes to his door looking for charity donations on Christmas.

00:51:26.668 --> 00:51:29.688

COURTNEY: And he says, are there no workhouses?

00:51:29.688 --> 00:51:31.788

COURTNEY: Are there no orphanages?

00:51:31.788 --> 00:51:35.448

COURTNEY: Like, I don't have to give money for poor people.

00:51:35.448 --> 00:51:37.088

COURTNEY: Send them to the fucking workhouse.

00:51:37.088 --> 00:51:38.228

COURTNEY: Put them in an orphanage.

00:51:38.228 --> 00:51:39.568

COURTNEY: It's not my problem.

00:51:39.568 --> 00:51:41.008

COURTNEY: Right.

00:51:42.408 --> 00:51:46.028

COURTNEY: We all know what happens to Ebenezer Scrooge.

00:51:46.028 --> 00:51:57.948

COURTNEY: So if you don't want to be visited by three fucking ghosts because you're a cheap bastard who doesn't care about your fellow humans, don't vote for Republicans.

00:51:59.068 --> 00:52:01.528

COURTNEY: Okay.

00:52:01.528 --> 00:52:06.508

COURTNEY: The root of all of this is the criminalization of poverty.

00:52:08.508 --> 00:52:12.548

COURTNEY: It starts with we're going to dissect murderers because they're criminals and they deserve it.

00:52:12.548 --> 00:52:19.668

COURTNEY: Then it evolves into we're going to dissect poor people because they're criminals and they deserve it.

00:52:19.668 --> 00:52:25.868

COURTNEY: They have not given enough to society, so we're going to take it out in their flesh.

00:52:25.868 --> 00:52:34.328

COURTNEY: In the US, cemeteries were often built, you probably know this, Beth, I don't have to tell you, built next to hospitals and workhouses and asylums.

00:52:36.328 --> 00:52:41.408

COURTNEY: Partly to put the dead from there in, but also these are probably in places no one wants to be, right?

00:52:41.408 --> 00:52:50.448

COURTNEY: Like, they put the cemeteries in areas where no one wants to go, no one wants to go to these fucking workhouses or hospitals even.

00:52:50.528 --> 00:52:57.748

COURTNEY: They used, a lot of times, they used inmate labor to dig graves for people who were going into those cemeteries.

00:52:57.828 --> 00:52:58.368

BETH: Oh my god.

00:52:58.368 --> 00:53:10.208

COURTNEY: So this is a continuum of, you know, you can see the evolution to how we use them to dig the graves, now we're going to use their bodies to learn about science.

00:53:10.208 --> 00:53:26.348

BETH: Yeah, I remember in writing about the Marine Hospital in the Presidio, this was a place where sailors who came to San Francisco and who were very ill, would either recover or not, and there was a burial ground behind it.

00:53:26.868 --> 00:53:34.368

BETH: And again, the graves, I think, were usually dug by their less ill friends in the hospital.

00:53:34.368 --> 00:53:41.008

BETH: And like they made it up to sound like, oh, these people are so loyal to each other, they're digging each other's graves.

00:53:41.008 --> 00:53:44.928

BETH: But I do wonder if there was an element of sort of forced.

00:53:44.928 --> 00:53:46.408

COURTNEY: I think you have to.

00:53:46.408 --> 00:53:48.948

COURTNEY: I mean, look at Heart Island, New York.

00:53:49.668 --> 00:53:54.688

COURTNEY: That's people from Rikers were digging those graves, right?

00:53:54.688 --> 00:53:55.408

BETH: Right.

00:53:55.408 --> 00:54:02.048

BETH: Well, and that's the place where, like you were talking about burying a trenches earlier, that's what they do there.

00:54:02.048 --> 00:54:15.768

COURTNEY: And, you know, Heart Island was originally a potter's field, like a municipal burying ground, but they also buried people who had AIDS out there because they didn't, they thought they would contaminate the cemeteries.

00:54:15.768 --> 00:54:16.968

COURTNEY: And there was still this stigma.

00:54:18.948 --> 00:54:20.868

BETH: And it became a COVID burial ground, too.

00:54:20.868 --> 00:54:22.268

COURTNEY: Yes, it did.

00:54:23.768 --> 00:54:34.748

COURTNEY: Let's see, so I have have another quote here from the Gems of Humanity that were running the Philadelphia Alms House, that sort of sums all this up.

00:54:34.748 --> 00:54:38.348

COURTNEY: Poppers are of no use to society while living.

00:54:38.348 --> 00:54:41.688

COURTNEY: There was no wrong done in making them useful while dead.

00:54:42.928 --> 00:54:51.168

COURTNEY: These are the people who are running the institutions that are supposed to be helping people who are in poverty.

00:54:51.168 --> 00:55:02.008

COURTNEY: You know, in America, in the alms houses, there were sick people, there were people with mental illness, there was just like run-of-the-mill homeless people, poor people.

00:55:02.008 --> 00:55:11.848

COURTNEY: The people who were in charge of helping them were, the attitude was that they almost were like animals, right?

00:55:11.848 --> 00:55:12.068

BETH: Right.

00:55:12.068 --> 00:55:20.848

COURTNEY: And that they needed to pay their way in death by sacrificing their bodies to science.

00:55:20.848 --> 00:55:27.108

BETH: Yeah, capitalism, they grind your body to death while it's alive, and then they find a use for it afterwards.

00:55:27.108 --> 00:55:27.588

COURTNEY: 100%.

00:55:29.828 --> 00:55:33.508

COURTNEY: I, you know, there were, I said I was going to talk about Bentham.

00:55:34.268 --> 00:55:37.648

COURTNEY: There were two guys, Malthus, I think it's Thomas Malthus.

00:55:37.648 --> 00:55:40.548

COURTNEY: Have you ever heard the term Malthusian?

00:55:40.548 --> 00:55:42.368

COURTNEY: Do I listen to too much fucking NPR?

00:55:42.368 --> 00:55:45.368

COURTNEY: This is like, I always didn't know what that word meant.

00:55:45.368 --> 00:55:48.468

COURTNEY: I thought that was, I don't know what I thought that was.

00:55:48.468 --> 00:55:52.068

COURTNEY: But Malthus, Malthus, fuck him, he's terrible.

00:55:52.068 --> 00:55:55.168

COURTNEY: If I said his name wrong, good.

00:55:56.208 --> 00:56:01.988

COURTNEY: His ideas, him and Bentham, who Bentham donated his body to science, Jeremy Bentham.

00:56:01.988 --> 00:56:02.608

COURTNEY: Did you know that?

00:56:03.108 --> 00:56:06.988

COURTNEY: His fucking corpse is still on display somewhere in the UK.

00:56:06.988 --> 00:56:08.228

COURTNEY: It's mummified now.

00:56:08.228 --> 00:56:11.348

COURTNEY: I have a mug with his head on it.

00:56:11.348 --> 00:56:16.028

COURTNEY: I tried to find it for this episode to show you guys, but I don't know where it is.

00:56:16.028 --> 00:56:27.048

COURTNEY: Malthus, he, his attitude was that if you help poor people, you're just going to create more poor people.

00:56:27.048 --> 00:56:30.828

COURTNEY: Like if you feed them, then they're going to have children.

00:56:30.828 --> 00:56:32.348

COURTNEY: And then those children will be poor.

00:56:32.568 --> 00:56:36.108

COURTNEY: And so you needed to kind of, it's like pure eugenics, right?

00:56:36.108 --> 00:56:43.128

COURTNEY: I mean, this is like, I guess what the 1800s in the UK was all about, right?

00:56:43.128 --> 00:56:51.808

BETH: Well, and we're still doing all of this today by like cutting off food stamps and taking away people's assets if they want any public assistance.

00:56:51.808 --> 00:57:02.408

COURTNEY: You just, you brought me to my main screaming point, which is that we just fucking cut Job Corps, WIC.

00:57:02.408 --> 00:57:07.388

COURTNEY: WIC is formula for fucking babies.

00:57:07.388 --> 00:57:09.088

COURTNEY: What are we doing?

00:57:09.088 --> 00:57:11.228

COURTNEY: Food stamps for children.

00:57:12.528 --> 00:57:17.168

COURTNEY: All of it is based on these old ideas.

00:57:17.168 --> 00:57:24.788

COURTNEY: This is like, I have this written that these laws now, this big, beautiful bill or whatever the fuck he's calling it.

00:57:25.148 --> 00:57:31.888

COURTNEY: I don't know when this episode is going to air, so maybe the US would have been nuked out of existence by the time September comes around.

00:57:31.888 --> 00:57:32.628

COURTNEY: And you guys are like, oh, big.

00:57:32.628 --> 00:57:35.068

BETH: Or at least that bill will be in the ground.

00:57:35.068 --> 00:57:36.308

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:57:37.668 --> 00:57:46.928

COURTNEY: These laws now are the bastard stepchildren of Malthus and Bentham and the new poor laws of 1832.

00:57:48.308 --> 00:58:05.868

COURTNEY: They required people to surrender themselves to prison in order to eat and to surrender their bodies and their souls to their thinking to the bonesaws to pay for their gruel or whatever they were getting to eat.

00:58:05.868 --> 00:58:06.268

COURTNEY: Right?

00:58:06.268 --> 00:58:08.568

COURTNEY: Like, hey, Courtney here.

00:58:08.568 --> 00:58:19.948

COURTNEY: This is not the best description of Malthus, but since this isn't a fucking economics podcast, I am going to put a comment in the show notes that has more information about Malthus and the Malthusian trap.

00:58:19.948 --> 00:58:22.928

COURTNEY: And you guys can read to your heart's content.

00:58:22.928 --> 00:58:29.388

COURTNEY: I guess what I want to wrap on is that this is why we're talking about this in 2025, you guys.

00:58:29.388 --> 00:58:38.428

COURTNEY: Not just because it's gruesome and delightful to some of us, but because this shit is the same shit different day.

00:58:38.428 --> 00:58:39.248

BETH: Yep.

00:58:39.248 --> 00:58:51.788

COURTNEY: The same ideas, the same toxic ideas that we inherited from the UK are still, I mean, they still have these problems in the UK too, not to let them off the hook.

00:58:51.788 --> 00:58:53.628

COURTNEY: But we're still dealing with it today.

00:58:54.008 --> 00:59:04.028

COURTNEY: And I don't think, this is maybe a dramatic example, but I think that's why we need to learn about this stuff.

00:59:06.388 --> 00:59:08.788

COURTNEY: Maybe that's why you wrote a whole book about cemeteries, Beth.

00:59:08.788 --> 00:59:09.688

BETH: Yeah.

00:59:09.688 --> 00:59:45.108

BETH: And I think, you know, a moment of silence for all these people who, through no decision of their own, helped develop the medicine that saves so many lives today, I always find that dichotomy really

frustrating because, you know, the surgeons, the doctors eventually develop techniques that saves so many lives, but at such exploitation, at the root of it, like, it makes me feel complicit and I didn't make any of those decisions, but it's just really upsetting.

00:59:45.108 --> 00:59:45.368

COURTNEY: Yeah.

00:59:45.368 --> 00:59:48.888

COURTNEY: I mean, we're all grateful for medical advances, right?

00:59:48.988 --> 00:59:53.188

COURTNEY: Like, it's good, but it could...

00:59:53.188 --> 00:59:56.328

COURTNEY: We should know where it comes from, I guess, is my hope, right?

00:59:56.328 --> 00:59:56.768

BETH: Yeah.

00:59:56.768 --> 00:59:58.648

COURTNEY: We should know about it.

00:59:58.648 --> 01:00:00.268

BETH: Exactly.

01:00:00.268 --> 01:00:01.248

BETH: Well, thank you so much.

01:00:01.248 --> 01:00:04.068

BETH: This is really fascinating and very infuriating.

01:00:05.368 --> 01:00:06.328

COURTNEY: That's going to be mine.

01:00:06.888 --> 01:00:18.928

COURTNEY: My episodes are going to be about 65 percent something gross and then 35 percent screaming about politics.

01:00:20.048 --> 01:00:21.308

CAROLYN: Good job on math there.

01:00:21.308 --> 01:00:23.848

BETH: Wouldn't have it any other way.

01:00:23.848 --> 01:00:28.548

COURTNEY: Did you see the little wheels turning in my little tiny hamster wheel?

01:00:28.548 --> 01:00:32.148

COURTNEY: Trying to put two fucking brain cells together to come up with that math?

01:00:32.148 --> 01:00:32.948

CAROLYN: Yeah, that's exactly it.

01:00:32.948 --> 01:00:34.108

COURTNEY: Just for you guys.

01:00:34.108 --> 01:00:35.468

CAROLYN: Five plus five is ten, is it?

01:00:39.488 --> 01:00:44.188

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01:00:44.188 --> 01:00:53.528

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01:00:53.528 --> 01:00:56.628

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01:00:57.788 --> 01:01:06.988

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01:01:08.968 --> 01:01:18.228

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01:01:19.668 --> 01:01:28.168

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