



Officers Frank Perkins and Will Fitzgerald responded within minutes after receiving a call from a woman who claimed to have made a gruesome discovery in an empty lot in Los Angeles.

The officers immediately called for assistance after discovering the naked body of a woman, who had been cut in half. They noticed that there was no blood on the body or in the area where she had been left; clearly indicating she had been murdered elsewhere.

What they did note however, was that the body seemed to have been posed. She was lying on her back with her arms raised over her shoulders, her legs spread apart in an obscene imitation of seductiveness. A chunk of flesh had been taken from her leg and stuffed up her genitals, her hair freshly shampooed and still wet. Her body was covered with cuts and abrasions and her mouth had been slashed so that her smile extended from ear to ear. There were rope marks around her wrists, ankles, and neck and investigators later determined she had been tied down and tortured for several days. The worst part was that she had been cleanly sliced in two, just above her waist.

Due to the horrible nature of the case, LAPD made it a top priority and assigned to of its senior detectives to the case, Detective sergeant Harry Hansen and his partner, Finis Brown.

By the time the detectives arrived at the scene, it was swarming with on lookers and reporters. Knowing that evidence was being destroyed, they cleared the area while the body was taken to the Los Angeles County Morgue. Her fingerprints were lifted and sent to the FBI for identification.

In the meantime, the coroner's office started an examination of the woman's body. Although the cause of death was listed as "hemorrhage and shock due to concussion of the brain and lacerations of the face," an incredible and horrifying variety of wounds to the young woman's body were discovered.

An autopsy showed several lacerations to the head and face, along with the severing of the victim's body. Everywhere on her bare skin, there were cigarette burns. It also appeared the victim had been sodomized and her sexual organs abused but not penetrated. No evidence of sperm was found on the body and it appeared that most of the injuries were inflicted before death, probably while she was suspended, head down, by ropes and wires. She might have still been alive when her murderer began the incision to cut her in half. The coroner also noted that the contents of her stomach contained human feces. The doctor's and detectives were shocked

at the condition of the woman's corpse.

The police were surprised when they received word a few short hours later and that the victim of this crime had been identified as 22 year old Elizabeth Short.

Known as the "The Black Dahlia," Elizabeth Short was incredibly beautiful in a mysterious, sensual sort of way. She had raven black hair, white alabaster skin, and startling light blue eyes. She painted her lips blood red and pinned white flowers in her hair. She looked like a porcelain doll and left an impression on the soul of any man who knew her. She wore only black - tight black dresses, black jeans, the sheerest black underwear, even black stockings. Hence, her nickname "The Black Dahlia."

Elizabeth was a product of a dysfunctional family. Her parents separated when she was only six years old, and her father moved away, leaving her mother to care for four small children in the throes of the Great Depression.

Eager to make a life for herself, Elizabeth headed to Miami at the tender age of seventeen, landed a job as a waitress in a café near an air base. It was here that she voluntarily gave her fingerprints to the FBI, and it was here that she met and fell deeply in love with a young serviceman.

She refused all other suitors when her lover went off to war, counting the days until his return. She had always maintained that she was saving herself for marriage and intended on keeping that promise. One day she received word that her lover had died on the battlefield.



Elizabeth went spiraling from the news and never recovered. She began drinking heavily, and to ease the pain, she took to men, all men. Her willingness to go to bed with any man who would buy her a drink and a meal quickly spread among the local bars and it wasn't long before she was arrested and put on a train back to her hometown.

But Elizabeth had no desire to go back home. Instead, she got off the train when it stopped at the next town. She met and quickly formed an attachment to Army Air Force Major Matt

Gordon, Jr. The year was 1944, and she was in love again. Again, she waited for her lover's homecoming from war, and the promise of marriage that would follow.

On August 22, 1946, Elizabeth answered a knock on her door. On the porch was a postal messenger with a telegram addressed to her. The message inside was from the mother of the Major. It bluntly stated, "Have received notification from the War department. My son, Matt, killed in air crash." She headed straight to the bar, returning home the next morning to pack up her few belongings and left her hometown once again, for the last time. Six months later, she would be dead.

This time, she headed for Hollywood, California, hoping to make a name for herself. She began to spend most of her spare time going to bed with almost all men who invited her. She hoped to find a producer or director who could further her acting career along. She changed her lovers as often as women change their clothing fads.

Her murder was so horrific and when the news reporters saw how beautiful Elizabeth Short was in her government application photo, they knew they had a sensational story. Wanting to juice up the story, they resorted to the most unethical thing a person could ever do. They phoned Elizabeth's mother, Phoebe Short, and told her that her daughter had won a beauty contest. After getting as much personal information about Elizabeth from her mother, they informed her that her daughter was actually dead.

The last time Elizabeth Short was seen, it was in the lobby of the Biltmore Hotel, where she had gone to meet her sister. And this is where the trail also ends for authorities. Somewhere, she met the person who would slay her. Her trail was covered so completely that police searched extensively for her clothing, in drains and sewers for miles around the murder scene, but never found a trace of it.

Then, nine days after short's death, someone mailed a package to the Examiner. In it contained Elizabeth Short's birth certificate, social security card, address book, and matt Gordon's obituary. The package reeked of the smell of gasoline, probably used by the sender to erase his or her fingerprints from the envelope. The police tracked down and interviewed all the men listed in her address book, but doing so did not bring them any viable leads.

The murder of Elizabeth Short has intrigued, mystified, and even disgusted the city of Los Angeles for more than half a century. Few unsolved murders have captured the public's attention and imagination as that of "The Black Dahlia." It's not so much that she had been killed - but the way she had been killed that horrified the nation. To this day, her gruesome, violent murder remains unsolved, and stands as one of the most celebrated murder investigations in American history

References: blackdahliasolution.org , www.bethshort.com/themurder , www.prairieghorts.com

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