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'20/20' Investigates Shocking New Developments in One of the Most Notorious Murders in Los Angeles — Could a Convicted Killer Go Free?

In a Heinous Crime of Murder Fueled by Romance and Jealousy, Detectives Were Stunned That the Killer Was Hiding in Plain Sight



ABC News*

In one of the most notorious murder cases in the history of Los Angeles, authorities found Sherri Rasmussen, a 29-year-old nursing director, brutally murdered in the apartment she shared with her husband in 1986. Initially, detectives believed Sherri's death was the result of a botched robbery, but with no suspects, police did not make any arrests, and the case went cold for more than two decades. That is until authorities reopened the case, and new evidence provided a shocking discovery. With renewed public interest and a decision this week on whether the killer could go free, senior national correspondent Matt Gutman reports on the latest details for an all-new **"20/20," Friday, Oct. 4** (9:01-11:00 p.m. EDT) on ABC, and streaming next day on [Hulu](#).

In 2009, a Los Angeles Police Department cold case squad reopened the investigation into Sherri's murder, and using new DNA technology, detectives analyzed evidence from a bite mark found on her arm. When the results came back, detectives were stunned when they pointed directly to LAPD Detective Stephanie Lazarus, who once dated Sherri's husband and was allegedly driven by jealousy to kill Sherri.

In 2012, a jury convicted Stephanie of first-degree murder, and a judge sentenced her to 27 years to life in prison. However, after serving just 15 years of her sentence, Stephanie received a parole board recommendation for early release under California's "youthful offender" law, which applies to offenders under 26 years old at the time of their crime. Sherri's loved ones launched a public crusade

to overturn the recommendation, and just this week, California parole officials will make a final decision on whether Stephanie will remain behind bars.

“20/20” includes interviews with Connie Rasmussen and Teresa Mary Lane, sisters of Sherri Rasmussen; retired LAPD officer Rodney Forrest, one of the first responders to the Rasmussen murder scene; retired LAPD Detective Cliff Shepard, who headed the cold case investigation on the murder in 2001; Paul Nunez, a former prosecutor with the LA County District Attorney’s Office; retired LAPD captain Anita Ortega; and John Taylor, the Rasmussen family attorney.

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