



The Black Dahlia Case: The History of the Unsolved Murder of Elizabeth Short

Charles River Editors, Zed Simpson

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*Includes pictures *Profiles Short's life and death, and the theories and suspects *Includes footnotes, online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents “The body was just a few feet from the sidewalk and posed in the grass in such a way that the woman [who discovered it] reportedly thought it was a mannequin at first. Despite the extensive mutilation and cuts on the body, there wasn’t a drop of blood at the scene, indicating Short had been killed elsewhere. An extensive manhunt followed, but the killer has never been identified.” – The FBI The latter half of the 1940s found the major cities of post-war America in a precarious position. On the one hand, population centers were reabsorbing many thousands of returning veterans into the work force, and into a social system they had not experienced for some years. Previous relationships had changed during their absence, and many were starved for female company. While making the necessary readjustments to the war’s end, major cities such as New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and Los Angeles, were plagued by regionalized mob rule behind the scenes of the entertainment industry, from clubs and casinos to print and film media. Included in the list of supporting institutions and side markets were studios, liquor manufacturing, and all peripheral markets connected with gambling, and prostitution. In the years following World War II, Los Angeles and other large American cities were hit with a series of brutal murders that, in many ways, fit into distinct patterns across the country. The Los Angeles Police Department was overwhelmed, caught up dealing with mob activities, inner corruption, a regional press that brazenly invaded legal confidentiality within the walls of the police department itself, and a lack of advanced technology. As a result, several of the most highly publicized murders committed against young female newcomers went unsolved in perpetuity, and they have remained topics of conversation among crime enthusiasts well into the following century. That said, one of these crimes stands above the others as an iconic example of unthinkably grotesque savagery, a psychopathic act equal to any horror movie Hollywood has produced—the January, 1947 murder of Elizabeth Short, famously dubbed ‘The Black Dahlia’ by an engrossed press and public. The investigative case of Elizabeth Short was - and still is - filled with speculative suspicion so saturated with circumstantial evidence that to accuse a perpetrator outright is all but impossible without immediate qualification and backtracking from the claim. The horrific physical realities of the crime reach out in many directions, toward medical practitioners, the arts, the mob, writers, and in every case, the macabre. Conclusions are scarce and fragile, even as the possibilities seem endless. Decades after the fact, the world still cannot say for certain what sort of young woman Elizabeth Short really was, nor can anyone trace her activities or whereabouts in the timeline of her final days with absolute certainty. However, the indelible photographs of Short’s savaged body following its discovery on a clear January morning, and the scientific reports that attempt to describe her final hours, remain at the forefront of graphic human atrocities within America’s criminal files. The Black Dahlia Case: The History of the Unsolved Murder of Elizabeth Short looks at LA’s most famous murder, and the theories and speculation behind who did it. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the attempt to identify the Black Dahlia like never before, in no time at all.

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