

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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Episode #306
The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 |
Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money
14th Oct, 2022

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today is the start of another three-part mini-series, this time about a lady called Daphne Caruana Galizia.

[00:00:31] She was a journalist who was **brutally**¹ assassinated 5 years ago this month on a countryside road in a small Mediterranean island called Malta.

¹ in a very violent way

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:00:42] It's a story that brings together corruption, [money laundering](#)², [crooked](#)³ politicians, [bribery](#)⁴, bad policemen, casinos, passports, energy supplies, [tax havens](#)⁵, fake government jobs, [hitmen](#)⁶, gambling, and at the centre of it all, one [fearless](#)⁷ woman.

[00:01:01] In part one, today's episode, we'll learn more about the [setting](#)⁸ for this story, the tiny and unusual country of Malta, as well as who Daphne was and who might possibly have wanted her dead.

[00:01:14] Then in part two, we'll look at how the investigation progressed, or how it didn't progress, who was [implicated](#)⁹ in the assassination, how close it got to the top of the Maltese political [establishment](#)¹⁰, and how it brought down a Prime Minister.

² the crime of hiding the origins of illegally obtained money

³ dishonest, behaving in an illegal way

⁴ the act of making someone do something for you by giving them money

⁵ places where people pay minimal or low tax

⁶ people who are paid to kill someone

⁷ showing no fear

⁸ scene, background

⁹ involved

¹⁰ group of people with political power

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:01:29] And in part three, our final part, we'll find out who [confessed](#)¹¹ to the murder, what's happening next, and ask ourselves whether the person, or people, who really [orchestrated](#)¹² it all will ever be brought to justice.

[00:01:45] OK then, Daphne Caruana Galizia.

[00:01:51] Shortly after lunch, on October 16th, 2017, a 52-year-old woman left her house in the countryside village of Bidnija, in Malta.

[00:02:03] She said goodbye to her adult son, who continued working on his laptop in the house.

[00:02:10] She [strolled](#)¹³ down to her car, a rental, a Peugeot 108.

[00:02:16] She got into the car, ready to drive off.

[00:02:19] [Little did she know](#)¹⁴ that up on a hill nearby a middle aged man was watching her through his [binoculars](#)¹⁵.

[00:02:28] When he saw her heading towards the car, he made a phone call to his brother. The call didn't last long.

¹¹ admitted that he had done it

¹² planned, organised

¹³ walked in a slow relaxed way

¹⁴ having no idea about what was going to happen

¹⁵ a pair of tubes with glasses at either end used for seeing things far away

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:02:36] The brother was only a few kilometres away, out on a little boat next to Valletta, the capital, which had been given the [prestigious¹⁶](#) award of being the European Capital of Culture that year.

[00:02:50] To the left of the small boat, only a few hundred metres away, were multi-million Euro yachts owned by some of the wealthiest people in the world.

[00:02:59] To the right, up on the raised capital of Valletta, was the Office of the Prime Minister, the centre of Maltese political power.

[00:03:08] The man on the boat [tapped¹⁷](#) his phone.

[00:03:12] Seconds later, back at the car, there was a huge explosion.

[00:03:18] The vehicle was [blown to smithereens¹⁸](#), the woman inside killed instantly.

[00:03:24] After hearing the explosion, the woman's son rushed outside to see what had happened. His worst fears were confirmed as he found parts of his mother's dead body [strewn¹⁹](#) around the [wreckage²⁰](#) of the [smouldering²¹](#) vehicle.

¹⁶ respected and admired

¹⁷ connected a device to it so that conversation could be listened to secretly

¹⁸ broke into very small pieces, was destroyed completely

¹⁹ spread, scattered

²⁰ remains

²¹ burning slowly with smoke but no flame

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:03:38] It would be an event that would change everything, or perhaps, would change nothing.

[00:03:44] For the name of the woman at the centre of our story was Daphne Caruana Galizia.

[00:03:50] She was one of, if not the most famous journalists in the country.

[00:03:55] Her blog was one of the most popular websites in Malta, with Maltese people [firing up](#)²² her website first thing in the morning to catch up on the latest stories.

[00:04:06] So, if you can for a minute, imagine the most well-known journalist in your country being blown up by a car bomb.

[00:04:15] It would be a huge shock, right?

[00:04:18] An [assault](#)²³ on the freedom of the press, a direct attack on the truth.

[00:04:24] But Malta is not like other countries, so what I want to do in this first episode is to give you a little bit of background to this country, as it will, I hope, help explain but certainly not excuse the events of this story.

[00:04:40] This story is, as regular listeners may realise, more personal than many of the others.

²² loading, opening

²³ attack

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:04:46] Malta is the country that I've called home for almost 6 years now.

[00:04:51] I was a close follower of Daphne while she was alive, and I have been following this story closely ever since that [fateful](#)²⁴ day in October of 2017.

[00:05:02] Your first question might be, where exactly is Malta?

[00:05:06] Well, it is an island in the Mediterranean Sea.

[00:05:10] Imagine Sicily, the island at the very bottom of Italy, put your finger in the middle of it, then go directly south 100km and you'll hit Malta.

[00:05:21] But you could easily miss it, because it is very small, absolutely tiny.

[00:05:28] The island of Malta itself is only 246 km squared, and the entire country, which consists of two other smaller islands, is only 316km squared.

[00:05:42] To put that in perspective, the Metropolitan area of London is 8,382 kilometres squared, so you could fit almost 27 Maltas inside Metropolitan London.

[00:05:56] Why is this important for our story, you might ask?

[00:06:00] Well, the nature of a small place, especially a small island, is that there are tighter connections between people. Everyone knows everyone. The world of politics is closely [intertwined](#)²⁵ with the world of business, the judicial system and the police.

²⁴ having a very important and negative effect

²⁵ twisted together, connected

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:06:17] There is only one real university on the island, so you have a situation where a large proportion of the people who will go on to the highest positions in politics, in business, in the legal system, and in public administration, the people who control the [goings on](#)²⁶ of the country, they all know each other and have often grown up together, gone to the same schools and gone to the same university.

[00:06:44] On one level, lovely. You can do business with your friends and you have a much [closer-knit](#)²⁷ society than exists in larger countries.

[00:06:53] But this clearly means that the system is [rife](#)²⁸ for corruption, for a politician doing a favour for their wife's cousin, for someone to pass a driving test because they have connections to a minister, or for a police officer [turning a blind eye](#)²⁹ to their brother's misbehaviour.

[00:07:13] Or much worse, as we'll find out.

[00:07:17] But more than this, the nature of a small place means that if you [get on the wrong side of](#)³⁰, if you upset, important and powerful people, then your life can be made very difficult.

²⁶ events, activities

²⁷ closely linked or connected

²⁸ very likely to cause, full of

²⁹ pretending not to have noticed, ignoring

³⁰ make them annoyed or not pleased

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:07:31] Daphne Caruana Galizia was perhaps the ultimate example of both of these aspects.

[00:07:38] Not only did she make it her life's work to shine a light on the corruption, [cronyism](#)³¹ and [rent-seeking](#)³² that she saw going on in Maltese politics, but she suffered a near constant [stream](#)³³ of attacks from people in positions of power in Maltese society, making her life very difficult.

[00:07:59] So, let me tell you a little bit about this amazing lady, to give you an idea about who might have wanted her dead, and why.

[00:08:08] She started her career as a journalist at Malta's main newspaper, The Times of Malta, where she was the country's first female [columnist](#)³⁴, before she broke away and started at another newspaper called The Malta Independent.

[00:08:23] And in 2008 she went fully independent, launching a blog called Running Commentary, which swiftly became the most popular source of news in the entire country, regularly getting over 400,000 daily visitors.

³¹ the practice of giving jobs and other advantages to friends

³² the practice of using public policy or economic conditions as a strategy for increasing profits

³³ a large number of them happening one after the other

³⁴ someone who wrote regular articles for the newspaper

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:08:40] As a point of reference, Malta's population at the time was just over 400,000 people, so imagine every single adult in Malta, plus a [good chunk of](#)³⁵ people outside the country reading her writing every single day and this gives you some idea of the kind of influence she had.

[00:09:00] So, what did she write about?

[00:09:03] Corruption, essentially.

[00:09:04] And if you are thinking that there surely couldn't be enough material for her to have a full time job writing about corruption in such a tiny country, you would be [sorely mistaken](#)³⁶.

[00:09:16] She could barely keep up with all of the [dodgy dealings](#)³⁷ that were going on, and practically every day was full of a new [scandal](#)³⁸ or suggestion of corruption by someone in a position of power.

[00:09:29] There were a few major areas of interest for her.

³⁵ large amount of

³⁶ making a big mistake

³⁷ dishonest activities or agreements

³⁸ event that caused public feelings of shock and anger

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:09:32] Firstly, in 2013 Malta launched what it called its “Citizenship by Investment” programme, where wealthy people can invest a certain amount of money, around a million Euros, and become a Maltese citizen.

[00:09:48] Essentially, people from non-EU countries could buy Maltese citizenship, and get an EU passport.

[00:09:56] Secondly, after Malta joined the EU, in 2004, it became a [hub](#)³⁹ for online gambling companies, which were attracted by Malta’s very low tax rates and ability to give out gambling licences that were recognised in the rest of the European Union.

[00:10:14] Today, this tiny, tiny island is home to about 10% of the global online gambling industry, which has had the effect of bringing a huge amount of money into what is essentially a tiny dry rock in the middle of the sea, and turning what was not a very wealthy country at all into one [flooded](#)⁴⁰ with money.

[00:10:36] And thirdly, and not completely unrelated to the previous two points, Malta had developed a financial services and banking industry that was often prepared to accept clients that would not be accepted in other countries.

³⁹ centre, central point

⁴⁰ covered, filled with

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:10:51] That's perhaps a polite way of putting it - a more [sceptical](#)⁴¹ perspective would be that it had become an excellent place for everyone from Mexican drug cartels to Russian oligarchs to [launder their money](#)⁴².

[00:11:06] In Daphne's own words, "Malta is 17 miles by nine and flooded with cocaine, corruption, and [filthy](#)⁴³ money".

[00:11:17] In an [eerie](#)⁴⁴ [premonition](#)⁴⁵, a [spooky](#)⁴⁶ [foreshadowing](#)⁴⁷, cocaine, corruption and [filthy](#) money would all come out in her own murder investigation.

[00:11:28] And while the Maltese government pointed to increasing salaries, [booming](#)⁴⁸ property prices, and everyone getting richer, Daphne was prepared to look where other journalists were not.

⁴¹ having doubts, questioning

⁴² hide the origins of illegally obtained money

⁴³ illegally obtained or earned

⁴⁴ strange and frightening

⁴⁵ a feeling that something bad was going to happen

⁴⁶ mysterious and frightening

⁴⁷ warning or indication

⁴⁸ increasing greatly

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:11:41] She [alleged](#)⁴⁹ that the minister of the economy had visited a [brothel](#)⁵⁰, that he had used prostitutes, that the leader of the opposition party was getting rich from a prostitution business in London, practically every day there was a new [seedy](#)⁵¹ and nasty, [scandal](#) that was reported on her blog.

[00:12:01] As you might imagine, because she was [pointing the finger](#)⁵² at the country's most powerful men, and I'm afraid it was almost exclusively men, she was targeted.

[00:12:13] There were frequent claims of [libel](#)⁵³, that she had written untrue stories about people, she was taken to court and [sued](#)⁵⁴ by those she accused.

[00:12:23] And what's more, she was frequently attacked and [harassed](#)⁵⁵ by members of the public.

[00:12:29] Why would members of the public feel so strongly about her attacks on politicians, you might ask?

⁴⁹ said or claimed without giving proof

⁵⁰ a place where people go to have paid sex

⁵¹ involving immoral or dishonourable actions

⁵² accusing, blaming

⁵³ pieces of writing that contained untrue stories about people

⁵⁴ taken to court

⁵⁵ bothered, disturbed

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:12:35] Well, to answer this question it's useful to talk very briefly about Maltese politics.

[00:12:41] The political situation in Malta is dominated by two parties, the Nationalist party, which was in power until 2013, and the Labour party, which won the 2013 election and has been in power ever since.

[00:12:58] Politicians from both parties were the [subject](#)⁵⁶ of her attacks, but—given it has [presided over](#)⁵⁷ the era in which the greatest [scandals](#)⁵⁸ took place—her greatest attacks were directed towards members of the Labour party.

[00:13:13] And the point to underline about Maltese politics is that it is incredibly [tribal](#)⁵⁹, people are incredibly passionate about it, almost more like football teams than political parties.

[00:13:25] There are strong Labour or Nationalist areas or families, and the amount of “[floating voters](#)⁶⁰”, people who are undecided, is significantly lower than it tends to be in other countries.

⁵⁶ target, focus

⁵⁷ was in charge or in power

⁵⁸ events that caused public feelings of shock and anger

⁵⁹ showing loyalty to a group

⁶⁰ undecided voters

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:13:40] So, much like how a [die-hard](#)⁶¹ football fan might feel if their team lost or someone attacked them, for some people Daphne's attacks on "their" politicians were like attacks on them personally.

[00:13:53] And they fought back.

[00:13:56] Daphne, and her family, were [subject to](#)⁶² near constant attacks before the final attack that took her life.

[00:14:04] Other than the legal attacks, her house was set on fire, she would constantly have people driving past her house and shouting [vile](#)⁶³ [insults](#)⁶⁴, one of her dogs had its [throat](#)⁶⁵ [slit](#)⁶⁶ and another one was poisoned, she would receive text messages and letters with death threats, it was a near-constant [intimidation](#)⁶⁷ campaign.

[00:14:26] But she didn't stop.

⁶¹ strong supporter, fanatic

⁶² put through, exposed to

⁶³ extremely unpleasant, immoral

⁶⁴ offensive remarks or comments

⁶⁵ the front of the neck

⁶⁶ cut

⁶⁷ the act of frightening or threatening her

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:14:28] And the [allegations](#)⁶⁸ of corruption that she made became more and more serious.

[00:14:33] Yes, the minister of the economy going to a [brothel](#), visiting prostitutes, is bad, but it was nothing compared to what she was to discover.

[00:14:43] After the Panama Papers were released in 2016, she claimed that she had discovered [damning](#)⁶⁹ information about two very senior members of the Maltese government.

[00:14:56] The first was Konrad Mizzi, a man who had been both the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Health, before being transferred to the Office of the Prime Minister.

[00:15:06] The second was a man called Keith Schembri, a Maltese businessman and childhood friend of Joseph Muscat, the Prime Minister. Schembri now held the position of the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff.

[00:15:20] What did Daphne claim?

[00:15:22] That shortly after the Labour party had been elected to power, both men had opened up [offshore](#)⁷⁰ bank accounts and companies in New Zealand and Panama. Why would they do that?

⁶⁸ statements or claims that someone had done something illegal, made without proof

⁶⁹ strongly suggesting guilt, incriminating

⁷⁰ made abroad in order to take advantage of lower taxes or less strict laws

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:15:35] Well, the [implication](#)⁷¹ was that they were to secretly store money that the two politicians would be receiving as [bribes](#)⁷².

[00:15:44] What's more, she would go on to claim that none other than the Prime Minister's wife was the owner of a company in Panama, with the [implicit](#)⁷³ suggestion that this would be used to accept money without it being linked to the Prime Minister.

[00:15:59] This was in April of 2017.

[00:16:03] Although the Prime Minister and his wife would [vigorously](#)⁷⁴ deny it, in the already corruption-tolerant country of Malta, it was quite the [allegation](#)⁷⁵.

[00:16:13] An early general election was called, in June of 2017, and the Labour party, the party at the centre of all of these [outrageous](#)⁷⁶ corruption [allegations](#), was re-elected in a [resounding](#)⁷⁷ majority.

[00:16:28] It was, to some, a sign that either the Labour voting population didn't believe the [allegations](#), or they simply didn't care about them.

⁷¹ claim, suggestion without saying it directly

⁷² actions of making someone do something for them by giving them money

⁷³ suggested but not said directly

⁷⁴ strongly

⁷⁵ statement or claim that they had done it, made without proof

⁷⁶ shocking and shameful

⁷⁷ huge, impressive

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:16:38] But this did not [deter](#)⁷⁸ Daphne [in the slightest](#)⁷⁹. If anything, it was an even greater reason to keep pushing, to keep on searching for the truth.

[00:16:49] It would be a search that would end, tragically on the afternoon of October 16th.

[00:16:57] Her last post on her blog was [titled](#)⁸⁰ “That [crook](#)⁸¹ Schembri was in court today, [pleading](#)⁸² that he is not a [crook](#)”.

[00:17:06] A [crook](#), by the way, means a bad, [dishonest](#)⁸³ person, a criminal.

[00:17:12] And [ominously](#)⁸⁴, the last sentence of the last article that she would ever write read “there are [crooks](#)⁸⁵ everywhere you look now. The situation is desperate”.

⁷⁸ stop or prevent her from keeping pushing

⁷⁹ at all

⁸⁰ had the title of

⁸¹ dishonest person, criminal

⁸² claiming (in a court of law)

⁸³ not honest, behaving in illegal ways

⁸⁴ in a way that suggested that something bad was going to happen

⁸⁵ dishonest persons, criminals

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:17:25] She hit publish, the article went live on the blog, and just 30 minutes later one of these [crooks](#) pressed a button on a phone, [detonating](#)⁸⁶ a massive bomb and silencing Daphne forever.

[00:17:41] As we will find out in the next episode, although the bomb might have silenced Daphne the journalist, it would [unravel](#)⁸⁷ a [web](#)⁸⁸ of [scandal](#), put a black mark on Malta's international reputation, bring down the prime minister and several of his closest [allies](#)⁸⁹, and it would certainly not silence the message of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

[00:18:03] OK then, that is it for today's episode, part one of this three-part mini-series on the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

[00:18:14] Next up, in part two, we will look at how the investigation [unravelling](#)⁹⁰, look at what Daphne had discovered, look how the very corruption she was investigating got in the way of the investigation of her own murder, who has been [accused](#)⁹¹ and [charged](#)⁹² with her killing, and why.

⁸⁶ causing it to explode

⁸⁷ make known, explain

⁸⁸ network, system

⁸⁹ people that had agreed to help and support him

⁹⁰ developed, unfolded

⁹¹ was considered responsible for it

⁹² brought to trial for it

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

[00:18:32] Then in part three, the final part, we'll look at what has happened since then, the trials, the [revelations](#)⁹³, and see who, if anyone, has actually been brought to justice.

[00:18:44] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:18:48] Have you been to Malta? It's a place that lots of people visit to learn English, so I wonder, if you have been here, did you know that it had this dark [underbelly](#)⁹⁴?

[00:18:58] Why do you think that this culture of corruption and [rent-seeking](#) is so [pervasive](#)⁹⁵ in small islands, and what do you think could be done to stop it?

[00:19:07] I would love to know, you can head right into our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:19:17] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:19:22] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

⁹³ the acts of making it known

⁹⁴ hidden, criminal part

⁹⁵ present

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Brutally	in a very violent way
Money laundering	the crime of hiding the origins of illegally obtained money
Crooked	dishonest, behaving in an illegal way
Bribery	the act of making someone do something for you by giving them money
Tax havens	places where people pay minimal or low tax
Hitmen	people who are paid to kill someone
Fearless	showing no fear
Setting	scene, background
Implicated	involved
Establishment	group of people with political power
Confessed	admitted that he had done it
Orchestrated	planned, organised

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

Strolled	walked in a slow relaxed way
Little did she know	having no idea about what was going to happen
Binoculars	a pair of tubes with glasses at either end used for seeing things far away
Prestigious	respected and admired
Tapped	connected a device to it so that conversation could be listened to secretly
Blown to smithereens	broke into very small pieces, was destroyed completely
Strewn	spread, scattered
Wreckage	remains
Smouldering	burning slowly with smoke but no flame
Firing up	loading, opening
Assault	attack
Fateful	having a very important and negative effect
Intertwined	twisted together, connected

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

Goings on	events, activities
Closer-knit	closely linked or connected
Rife	very likely to cause, full of
Turning a blind eye	pretending not to have noticed, ignoring
Get on the wrong side of	make them annoyed or not pleased
Cronyism	the practice of giving jobs and other advantages to friends
Rent-seeking	the practice of using public policy or economic conditions as a strategy for increasing profits
Stream	a large number of them happening one after the other
Columnist	someone who wrote regular articles for the newspaper
Good chunk of	large amount of
Sorely mistaken	making a big mistake
Dodgy dealings	dishonest activities or agreements
Scandal	event that caused public feelings of shock and anger
Hub	centre, central point

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

Flooded	covered, filled with
Sceptical	having doubts, questioning
Launder their money	hide the origins of illegally obtained money
Filthy	illegally obtained or earned
Eerie	strange and frightening
Premonition	a feeling that something bad was going to happen
Spooky	mysterious and frightening
Foreshadowing	warning or indication
Booming	increasing greatly
Alleged	said or claimed without giving proof
Brothel	a place where people go to have paid sex
Seedy	involving immoral or dishonourable actions
Pointing the finger	accusing, blaming
Libel	pieces of writing that contained untrue stories about people
Sued	taken to court

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

Harassed	bothered, disturbed
Subject	target, focus
Presided over	was in charge or in power
Scandals	events that caused public feelings of shock and anger
Tribal	showing loyalty to a group
Floating voters	undecided voters
Die-hard	strong supporter, fanatic
Subject to	put through, exposed to
Vile	extremely unpleasant, immoral
Insults	offensive remarks or comments
Throat	the front of the neck
Slit	cut
Intimidation	the act of frightening or threatening her
Allegations	statements or claims that someone had done something illegal, made without proof
Damning	strongly suggesting guilt, incriminating

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

Offshore	made abroad in order to take advantage of lower taxes or less strict laws
Implication	claim, suggestion without saying it directly
Bribes	actions of making someone do something for them by giving them money
Implicit	suggested but not said directly
Vigorously	strongly
Allegation	statement or claim that they had done it, made without proof
Outrageous	shocking and shameful
Resounding	huge, impressive
Deter	stop or prevent her from keeping pushing
In the slightest	at all
Titled	had the title of
Crook	dishonest person, criminal
Pleading	claiming (in a court of law)
Dishonest	not honest, behaving in illegal ways

The Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia Part 1 | Cocaine, Corruption, and Filthy Money

Ominously	in a way that suggested that something bad was going to happen
Crooks	dishonest persons, criminals
Detonating	causing it to explode
Unravel	make known, explain
Web	network, system
Allies	people that had agreed to help and support him
Unravelled	developed, unfolded
Accused	was considered responsible for it
Charged	brought to trial for it
Revelations	the acts of making it known
Underbelly	hidden, criminal part
Pervasive	present

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com