

Episode 87: Victoria's neighbors brought horrible news

Hey, this is Scott with a warning about this episode. Some of the content may be triggering, and isn't suitable for children. So if you have kids in the car, you might want to skip this one or listen to it later. Okay, here we go.

I was watching a video online recently. I don't remember where it was, probably in a subreddit. It was recorded on a security camera in some business. There's no sound, but you can pretty much tell what's going on. These two men are standing there, and they are obviously in some kind of argument. You know how, even when you can't hear what someone is saying, it's easy to see that they're upset just because of their body language? That's what this was.

I don't know if they were two customers, or a manager and a customer, doesn't really matter. But they were angry. And they were getting up in each other's faces, but neither of them had touched the other one yet. It looked like it might evolve into a fist fight, but for now it was just a verbal confrontation.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, a third person enters the view of the camera. He comes up behind one of the guys, and, from behind, hauls off and closed-fist punches him right in the head. And he's out cold. Of course, he never had a chance to defend himself, or even to brace for the hit, because he never saw it coming. That's what's called a sucker punch. It just comes out of nowhere and knocks you right out.

That's kind of what we're talking about in today's podcast episode.

But this story has nothing to do with a physical fight or anyone being hit in the head. I'm talking about an emotional sucker punch. This is when someone looks you in the eye, and they deliver some kind of news that you were not expecting at all, and what they just told you suddenly changes your whole life.

As in, you know nothing is going to be the same going forward.

That's what happened to Victoria one Saturday morning, when a former neighbor showed up on her doorstep.

Scott

You grew up with both parents and your brother. Pretty normal childhood?

Victoria

Yeah, seemed like a really idyllic childhood for sure.

Scott

How would you describe your family when you were a kid?

Victoria

We were kind of considered the perfect family. It was the household where all our friends could come over and were welcome. Anyone who came over was always welcome for dinner and was brought in as a member of the household. Just an open door policy.

Scott

Your parents were married for 49 years when your mother died.

Victoria

Yes

Scott

Can you talk about the circumstances of her death?

Victoria

My parents lived next door to really close family friends. I was talking to my mom on the phone one day and she mentioned that they were going over for dinner to the neighbors house to catch up because they hadn't seen them in a while. The next thing I knew I got a phone call saying that my mom had died. It turns out she was over there visiting and when the wife was making dinner my mom was talking to their daughter and had a brain aneurysm mid-sentence and fell to the ground while talking to this young girl. She was probably dead before she hit the ground.

Scott

I can't imagine how traumatic that must have been. This family of neighbors are the Walkers, right?

Victoria

The Walkers yeah.

Scott

This was unexpected completely? Had she had any health issues that would lead to this?

Victoria

She had no health issues. She was 65 and no medication, hadn't been to a doctor recently either because nothing was wrong. My parents went camping all the time with the Walkers. My mom was very active and happy and healthy. Nobody expected anything to go wrong.

Scott

How close were they with these neighbors? Were they just really good friends?

Victoria

Well, we didn't call them friends, we called them family. Anytime there was a function, like for Christmas, we always had the Walkers come over. When we went camping, the Walkers would come. We actually would joke with them and say, "You guys aren't friends. You're family. Of course you're going to come to this wedding." So they were always included in all our family events and we were included in theirs. They lived right next door. I actually lived a few hours away and rushed down that night. They came over the next night, they called ahead and said, "Don't make dinner." They're so thoughtful that they knew we weren't going to be able to make food or take care of our daily routines. They actually showed up one by one, all four of them. One carrying a casserole, one carrying a salad, and they just put it on our table and hugged us. I'm getting choked up just thinking about the love that they showed our family. Then they just left so we could have dinner by ourselves, and then came back and picked up all the dishes. That's what family does.

Scott

That's incredible. You said all four of them. It was Mr. and Mrs. Walker and then they had 2 daughters.

Victoria

Yeah. At that time they would have been around 20 and 18 years old.

Scott

How did your dad handle that following the death of his wife?

Victoria

Not really all that well at the beginning. That was his soulmate. They had been together since-my mom was 17 when they met -and they had been soulmates. The way that we referred to it is that my dad just worshiped my mom. My mom could do no wrong. He was just heartbroken to lose his best friend in life. He had mentioned that he had been so excited that in a year they would be celebrating 50 years together. It really upset him to have that taken away from him.

Within a few months we decided to spread my mom's ashes out at our favorite camping site. We camped there all the time with the Walkers. They came with us and they stood with us while we spread her ashes in the lake, and had a little ceremony and supported us and my dad through this difficult time. It felt right to have them there.

Scott

The way you talk about them I can see why you'd consider them family-

Victoria

Yes.

Scott

-and not just next door friends.

Victoria

Absolutely. Following my mom's death, my dad wasn't able to stay living in the house anymore. My brother actually owned the house and was going through some financial difficulties and had to sell it. My dad was one of those people who would give away his money or lend his money knowing he wouldn't get it back if it meant he could help somebody. He had done that to a fault. To the point where he didn't have enough for himself for retirement. So when I found out that he couldn't live there anymore and couldn't afford his own place, my husband and I talked and decided, "He's done so much for everybody, we're going to build a basement suite and let him live there." We spent about \$60,000 building a beautiful suite for him. He offered to pay us rent but of course I'm not going to take any rent from my dad. I said, "This is just your home. This isn't your suite," cause he called it our house, I said, "It's all of our house, this is yours too, this is your home." So we built him a suite and he lived down in the basement suite for a couple of years. He ended up meeting a nice lady and is now living at her house, but still has the suite here with all of his stuff in it; in case there's a time he needs to come back.

Scott

So that kind of sets everything up, if we fast forward 6 years, and that means this year March of 2021, you had a knock on your door on a Saturday morning.

Victoria

I did. An unexpected knock on my door. I opened the door and it was John and Grace Walker. The next door neighbors that I know and love that I hadn't talked to nearly as much in the last couple years. There had been kind of a disconnect. At that point I thought it made sense because the 2 daughters had graduated, gone to college and I knew they were busy with all that kind of stuff.

Scott

And they didn't live right next door to you anymore either right? They were a few hours away.

Victoria

Four hours away. So when I opened the door and saw them standing there I thought, "Oh. Maybe they're just driving through. Maybe they're heading somewhere and they thought they would just pop in and say a quick hello." But then I saw the look on her face and she said, "I have some news, and it's not good." So I asked her to sit down on the couch. She looked me in the eye and said, "It is bad. It's actually really bad." My first thought was that one of her daughters was sick and something terrible had happened and she was coming for help. That's when she looked me in the eye and she said, "Your dad molested our daughter for 4 years when they lived next door to us." I can't even describe the feeling that went through my body of complete and utter shock. I can feel it right now as I'm talking about it. It was not just unexpected, it took my brain a moment to even understand it. As soon as it did, the weirdest thing is that I immediately went, "Yeah that makes sense." I think part of me kind of suspected that my dad and McKayla had been a little too close.

Scott

What made you suspect that?

Victoria

I don't think that I consciously did, but when she said it, it was like a couple pieces of the puzzle went together. My dad liked to go quadding when we went camping. McKayla was a bit of a tomboy and liked to quad, and the two of them would go off quadding by themselves all the time.

Scott

For people that don't know what quadding is?

Victoria

Oh, 4-wheeling, ATVing out in the country in the bush.

Scott

Ok so camping and then 4-wheeling down a trail, so they went off together?

Victoria

Quite often. They were the two people that liked to do it the most. That didn't click for me because I didn't think there was anything wrong. Once I found out I realized, all these things that seemed so normal kind of clicked.

Scott

You have to rethink everything.

Victoria

It's been a process. It's not just been a process with- just knowing that the two of them would go quadding together and he was molesting her from age 11 to 15. Then they would come back to camp together and my dad would sit by the fire and have a drink with her parents and accept their adoration and their love. I don't even know how a human being could do that to somebody else that's supposed to be family.

Scott

It kind of makes me think of- did you ever see that movie the 6th sense?

Victoria

Yep.

Scott

You know you watch it the first time and you don't know the big twist at the end. Then after you find out, you have to kind of watch the whole thing again to see, what did I miss? All those clues were there and out in the open, but not suspecting anything, you wouldn't even notice those things.

Victoria

Wow.

Scott

In rethinking that you've got to picture all those things in your head and think, "Wow that really wasn't what I thought it was."

Victoria

Wow that's a fantastic analogy. I didn't think of that. You're exactly right. I've spent the last few months going over my entire childhood, rethinking everything I've thought about who my parents were. Not just my dad, but did my mom know or suspect? This seemed to be a big secret that was kept.

Scott

This had happened years before, how did it come out in their family?

Victoria

Yeah, at the time they actually talked to me, it had actually ended 10 years prior. They had just found out 3 years prior because McKayla was training to be a police officer. She had gone to college and she decided to go through the courses. At the end of it she had passed all of the exams, but the last thing she had to do was a psych evaluation. She flew through it just fine but one of that last questions was, "Have you ever been the victim of a sexual assault?" She had never spoken a word about it. She said she just sat there thinking, "I can't lie." She said, "For the very first time in my entire life I actually spoke the words, 'Yes.'" That's when it all ended and they said, "We can't let you be a police officer when you have unresolved trauma." Then they sent her for counseling. So she failed the exam and she is not able to be a police officer, she has to wait 2 more years to try again. She started going to therapy for a little while first and got ready and prepared. Then she actually wrote out a letter to her parents and asked them if she could read it to them. She asked them, "Can you not talk until I'm completely done?" She just needed to get it all out at once to them. I can't imagine what them must have felt like for them to hear that from her. Especially from someone they knew, trusted, loved, and considered one of their family members.

Scott

That's a day that they'll always remember, for sure. Not in a good way. When this happened, McKayla was ages 11 to 15 and your dad was ages 65 to 69.

Victoria

Yes. McKayla and I have spoken about this quite a number of times on the phone since. She said she thinks she was around 11. She's a little fuzzy on the exact years, but she's got a general idea. When she was around 11 they would go quadding. She noticed when they'd go back to the truck, while she was taking off her muddy clothes he would need to reach into the truck, instead of waiting for her to be done, he would push his body against the back of her body and reach through in a way that made her feel like something was wrong. Then it escalated to, if she would give him a ride, like double where he would be behind her on the same quad, he would say, "Oh my hands are cold." Then he would warm them up by putting them underneath her shirt, but on her bare stomach. She said she thought that was weird but she didn't know. She didn't know how to stop it. She didn't know how to say anything. This was someone she considers almost a grandpa. After a few times of doing that they ended up moving up and then also moving down, till he was touching her inappropriately.

Scott

Eventually, this escalated to rape.

Victoria

It did. It did. She said that she stopped by the house thinking that my parents were home when she was walking home from school. She didn't realize my mom was away and knocked on the door and it was my dad. She said that the thing he used to get her- there's two things. It was molestation for the first couple of years and then it was rape for the next couple. If they would go quadding and she didn't want to allow that, he threatened that if she didn't do it he would do it to her little sister. So she felt like she was protecting her little sister by doing this. Then it escalated, he led her into the bedroom when she stopped by that day. Then when she didn't want to do it anymore he threatened that he would hurt her little sister if she didn't continue to comply with that. So she continued to comply for the next year or two.

Scott

What a position for a young girl to be in.

Victoria

Absolutely.

Scott

It was no win for her. She didn't know what he would be capable of. Did McKayla's parents confront him directly?

Victoria

Yes. I'm so proud of them. When they came to my house that Saturday morning in March, Grace told me that she had just come back from my dad's house. This was the whole reason for them driving four hours to my city. John waited in the car and let Grace go in, because as a father he said, "You can't let me be in the same room with that man for this confrontation. I can't be there." So Grace went in. My dad welcomed her in thinking it was a visit, and she sat down and she said, "I know what you did to McKayla. I know what you've done." He started by

denying it, saying, “No, no, no, I didn’t. I didn’t.” She said, “I’m not here asking you. I’m telling you, I know what you did.” She said his shoulders slumped and he said, “You’re right. We were in love. I couldn’t help myself.” While he admitted it, he didn’t admit it fully. She said it just made her feel better to let him know that she knew. The last words she said to him were, “You took my daughter’s virginity. You took her career. I hate you. I despise you. I’ve never hated anyone so much in my life.” Then she left and came to my house.

Scott

Did he ever do anything with the younger sister?

Victoria

Yes, it turns out that he did. Grace had got some plums that she had in her house one day, and she knew my dad loved plums. She said to the youngest, Brittany, she said, “Oh can you take this bowl of plums over to Ken? He’s working in the back shop next door.” So Brittany walked in there and gave him the plums, and he gave her a hug. When he gave her a hug, he put his hands down the front of her pants. She pushed him away. She’s a little firecracker. She pushed him away and said something to the effect of, “Go fuck yourself you fucking fucker.” Then she ran back into the house where her mom and her sister were, and she didn’t say a word. Which I think is very normal in that situation. The rest of us can’t understand it, but I do, I understand it.

Scott

It is kind of hard to understand, but you’re right. She’s a child. She’s embarrassed, she’s confused, she doesn’t understand why this happened, or if it’s somehow her fault. When that happened McKayla hadn’t said anything either?

Victoria

Nobody had said a word. Later when John and Grace knew about what happened to McKayla, they hadn’t talked to Brittany yet. When they finally got ready to talk to her about it they asked her, “Has anything ever happened to you?” She had said no. They asked her again. Three times they asked her in the last few years. She would just say, “Nope.” Then they sat her down and said, “We need to tell you something. Your sister was molested.” Then Brittany said, “Yeah, was it Ken?” She knew exactly who it was. That’s when she admitted that he had done it to her too. Grace and McKayla both said they remember her coming back from dropping off the plums and they knew something was weird about her. She was quiet. They just thought she was in a mood or something.

Scott

I’m wondering, at that time McKayla knew about Ken and what he had done to her. I wonder if she suspected when Brittany got back home that something along those lines had happened.

Victoria

Yeah I wonder what went through her mind.

Scott

This ended when McKayla turned 15. Why did it stop then?

Victoria

She said my dad actually ended it. She said that he told her that she was now a young woman and ready to get a boyfriend and that he wanted to give her the freedom to go and have a

normal relationship. The idea for when they were doing all of this is that my dad would say, "We were in love. We were going to run away together." McKayla told me later that he kept telling her, "We're going to run away. We're going to get married. You're going to have my babies." I guess when she finally became of age he realized this was not going to happen. So he set her free and told her, "You're a young woman now you need to go find somebody your age."

Scott

This had all happened before your mom died. Do you think she had any suspicion of anything?

Victoria

I think so. Looking back now. McKayla and my dad were actually quite close. When my dad got his first cell phone McKayla had shown him how to text and they started texting each other. They texted each other a little too much for my mom's liking. I remember asking my dad, "Why are you and McKayla always texting?" At the time he said to me, "Well, her parents are really strict and she's not allowed to do anything when she gets home from school. She just has to go study and stay in her room, so she has nobody to talk to. So I'm like a father figure to her. I'm giving her life advice and I'm just supporting her." It sounded so innocent to me. I had no idea what they were texting. She said to me later, "Yeah your dad kept telling me, 'Don't forget to delete these texts when we're done.'"

Scott

So what do you do when you find this out? I mean this has to hit you like a ton of bricks.

Victoria

I don't think I've ever been through something as traumatic as this. When I lost my mom, I had only spoken to her a few hours before. To have her just pulled away like that, all I kept saying there was that the shock of it was the worst part. Now when this happened, the shock and trauma of this, I don't even know how to describe it. I have to say, I didn't feel an emotion and couldn't think straight for 6 weeks afterwards. I had memory issues. There was one day, I was doing something and I thought something about it being 2021. My brain just went, "Is it 2021? Is that the current year? Does our current year start with a 2? Was last year 2020? I would remember if last year was 2020, right?" I couldn't figure it out. My brain was so overloaded, like you said, rethinking everything from the beginning. I couldn't even come up with the most basic things for 6 weeks.

Scott

Were you in therapy at that time?

Victoria

I called a psychologist immediately. I luckily found someone who could take me right away and started going twice a week at first and then down to once a week. I'm going to recommend to anybody, going through any kind of trauma, whether its this or anything else, that's what got me through this. That's what helped me not just figure out my feeling around it and how to deal with it, but also to realize what types of things weren't my problem to deal with. To take things off of my plate so I could deal with my own stuff. It was fabulous. It still is, I'm still seeing somebody and working on it.

Scott

Did they tell you that it's normal to not be able to think of things that are pretty common, like the year? Since you're thinking about so many other things your brain can only take so much? Is that the gist?

Victoria

Yeah she explained that to me. Another thing is, one day one of my employees asked me for a clipboard. I had to look at them and go, "Can you remind me what a clipboard is? Like I know what a clip is. I know what a board is. How do those two things go together?" She thought I was joking. The first thing I did was Google, "symptoms of Alzheimer's." While I was Googling that all I could think was, "Oh that's very convenient that Alzheimer's started immediately when I went through this trauma. Obviously this must be connected." But I still had to Google it. I just couldn't think straight.

When I talked to my psychologist about it she said, "Not only is that normal, but if you weren't having these kinds of memory problems I'd be concerned. Right now your brain is trying to go through your entire life and recalculate everything you've ever known. It's a huge job. So normally when you have to remember something simple like what year we're in; your brain just reaches back and grabs that information. Right now it is so overworked that when you ask it for something simple it just doesn't have the energy to reach back for that simple little thing." It made me feel better to know that that would get better. It's just like a muscle, if you overwork a muscle you can't expect it to work right.

Scott

Did you contact other family members? How did you proceed after you heard this news?

Victoria

Well I knew that this was going to change everything. My dad is one of six siblings and he's very close with all of his brothers and sisters. They camped together and two of our family members have cabins and he would go and spend summers with them. I didn't know what was going to happen after this news came out. The first thing I did was call his closest sister, Lisa, and I said to her, "I have some news, and it's going to change a lot. My dad isn't who we think he is." Then I told her what I had just heard. She sat and listened to it, and when I was done she said, "Oh sweetie, I knew who he was. He did it to me too when I was a kid." Then she continued and said, "He did it to our little sister too. There's two of them that he's done this to."

Scott

For you that's gotta be wow-

Victoria

The second shock.

Scott

-yeah, the second wave.

Victoria

Yep. The aftershock. It was not what I was expecting to hear. It turns out that that wasn't even just a small thing. With Lisa she said, "I remember him touching me, I remember a few things." But with the younger one it was actual rape. She was 9. He was in his early 20s, probably 21. He had come home to visit his mom and dad and little siblings. They didn't have enough beds, so they put him in a sleeping bag on the floor of the living room, and when the youngest sister

got up to pee, on her way back he said, "Hey come here and show your brother some love. Show me how much you love me." So she got in the sleeping bag with him, craving love, and didn't know what it was that happened. She didn't know what sex was, she didn't know what intercourse was. He did it two or three times over the weekend to her. It wasn't until she found out what sex was she realized, "Yeah that's what my brother did to me in a sleeping bag when I was 9. To show him that I loved him."

Scott

She didn't say anything at the time either?

Victoria

No, those two sisters did talk about it when they were kids, but they didn't tell family members. They kept it to themselves. Just like all of them did.

Scott

What about Lisa's husband?

Victoria

Well, that's what she mentioned. She said, "I've always loved your dad so much. That's why I married my first husband, Robert. He reminded me so much of your dad. You know how your dad, when he gives you a hug or a kiss, he always holds on a little long. He always kind of hovers a little too close. When I met Robert, I just noticed that he kind of did the same thing and it reminded me of your dad. I think that's what attracted me, that familiarity."

Then she said to me, "I have to ask you something. Years and years ago, your mom told me something. She told me that Robert touched you when you were a kid. Is that true?" I had to say, "Yes." Then she said, "Yeah that doesn't surprise me." I continued on and said, "Well, yeah it was touching, but it was a lot more than touching." Then I described what had happened. I won't get into details here, I don't think your audience wants to hear- I don't want to trigger anybody else who's been through it so we'll keep things vague. He was babysitting me and his daughter for some reason. He left the room and came back wearing nothing but a bathrobe and laid down on the couch. The assault went for, I would say 20 minutes, of different things. I remember the pain. This was not a touching incident. So as I'm describing- and I'm describing to her in detail -all she kept saying was, "Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god. I had no idea. I literally thought that he had maybe given you a hug and touched you inappropriately during a hug. I did not know that was what happened." It felt good to talk about it and to finally tell somebody. I had told my mom briefly. It felt good to get that validation of what I had gone through. A couple of days later she called me again and she said, "I just talked to your other cousin. It turns out that he did it to her too. In fact, her story was word for word what happened to you."

Scott

So Robert didn't only molest you.

Victoria

Nope.

Scott

Obviously, it's kind of common sense. Someone who has those attractions and acts on them, it's a lifelong thing, right? It's not like something you get cured of.

Victoria

Exactly. It's not something where they say, "Oh there just happens to be this opportunity, so I'm just going to do this thing once." I don't think that a normal married man of his age would be attracted to a 6 year old. I was probably around 6.

Scott

Then your dad's older sister married, I don't know her husband's name, but it turns out he was a pedophile as well?

Victoria

That was the only one that was an open family secret. My mom talked about it all the time. My aunt had been married before and already had two kids, and after she married her second husband the whole family just knew and suspected that he had molested those two kids.

Scott

Does it still surprise you that pedophilia just runs rampant in this family?

Victoria

It did at first. Now that we've uncovered 7 instances of my dad doing something to people, and there are 6 more involving other family members as well. I think what happens in a family is when you allow one pedophile in and you don't say anything, and you keep the secrets and don't let people talk about it. It's like a disease that just festers and continues because of the secrets.

Scott

Obviously I'm not a doctor or psychologist, neither one of us is. That being said, it seems like an important distinction that, being a pedophile, just having that pedophilia, is not in itself a crime. It certainly carries with it a really bad social stigma, but being attracted to minors is not breaking the law. When they take action on that, that of course is illegal and carries with it all that responsibility. Is that how you look at it?

Victoria

Absolutely. I couldn't say it better myself. It's not my dad's fault that he has pedophilia. We can't technically diagnose him, but we have to make an assumption. There are different forms of pedophilia and he must have one form of it. It's not his fault that he has that. That's what my psychologist had said, she says, "We want to label everybody as good or bad. Sometimes good people do bad things or bad people do good things. Everybody lies somewhere in between." He's not bad because he has this attraction, but he was fully aware of all of his actions and how hurtful they were. He still continued to do them and hide it from people. He made sure he hid it so you know he knew he was doing wrong, but the attraction itself is not. I don't blame him for having that.

What surprised me the most is, I think because there was one in the family, there happened to be more. I think because, like I mentioned before, there's that familiarity, that another pedophile seems familiar to others.

Scott

I wonder if your dad knew that those two brother-in-laws were also pedophiles.

Victoria

Yeah he did know about the one that was an open family secret. I didn't tell anyone about my molestation when I was 6. I didn't tell my mom for a few years afterwards. I probably didn't tell her until I was 10 or 11. She basically said, "Well, it's too late to do anything now. You should've told me back then." So nothing happened. My aunt had already divorced him and he was out of the family. They did have a daughter together though. When I talked to my aunt Lisa she said, "You know, your cousin is going through this, not just with your dad. She loved your dad and to find this out about your dad was horrible enough, but now she just found this out about her own dad at the same time." I have to admit that I have a bit of guilt that comes along with telling my story. I know what I went through when I found out all of this. Then to realize that my story caused my cousin to go through the exact thing I'm going through, that was almost as hard to take as finding out about my dad. It also made me feel good to get it out and into the light. I think the more we get the monsters into the light, the more we can protect ourselves from them.

Scott

Have you confronted your dad directly about this?

Victoria

Yeah, it took me probably a month before I even wanted to talk to him. He still gets mail at my house, he's never changed his mailing address, so I had a stack of mail for him. I thought, "I have to bring this over there, maybe it's a good time." The way it happened actually is I was driving near his house and saw him walking. Up until that time, I had just seen him as a monster for the last four weeks. I referred to him as a monster, and that I never wanted to see or talk to him again. Then I was driving and he was just walking along the road, and I saw him for the first time. Just that visual sight made me want to go see him. It humanized him again for me. So when I got the mail I thought, "You know I do need to go and hear, not his side of it because there is no side to it, I just want to hear what he has to say for himself." So I texted him and asked if I could come over and bring the mail and if maybe we could have a chat. He said sure. I drove over to his house, and before I got out of my car I got my cell phone out and I hit record on my voice recorder. I walked in and set it down on the table between us and said, "So, what's new. Tell me what's going on." I just let him talk.

He started out saying the same thing he said to Grace when she went to talk to him. He said, "Yeah we got too close. We couldn't keep our hands off of each other." He minimized it as much as he could. I just kind of wanted to let him talk. There were a lot of empty silences. I did ask him, "Yeah but she was just a kid. She was 11." He goes, "Oh no she was older than that, but not old enough." I thought, "There it is. The confession again. He's owning up to this. I think he has no choice." I knew then and there that I had it on recording. My dad admitted he knew what he did was wrong and that he did it.

Scott

And he doesn't know about that recording, right?

Victoria

No he doesn't.

Scott

Where you live it's legal to record someone without having their consent, right? I know the laws are different in different places.

Victoria

Yep. We're single party consent. Absolutely. So I told McKayla about the recording, because the biggest thing is that- she hasn't gone to the police yet, she's been wanting to. Since March she's been saying, "Soon. Soon." I think that her biggest concern, and I think this is a normal concern, is that she's not going to be believed or that he's going to be found not guilty. She said, "I'm going to put my story out there and then I'm going to feel invalidated if he's not convicted. People will think I'm a liar." That's the thing that's holding her back. So as soon as I realized I had this on recording I called her up and let her know, and she said, "That gives me some peace. It gives me peace to know that if anybody ever questions me we have this kind of proof."

Scott

He might just, when confronted with criminal charges, he might just plead guilty anyway.

Victoria

I think so, yeah. He said, and I have that on recording as well, he said, "I expect any day for them to come and get me. I've told everybody, 'Don't bail me out. Don't come get me. Just let me deal with what I have to deal with. I'll do whatever it is.'" He has offered to apologize to the family. He's offered to apologize to McKayla and Grace, and they have both said, "It's too late. If you had wanted to apologize, if you felt bad, you wouldn't have waited until you were confronted to finally apologize. So that apology is too late and it's not worth anything to us."

Scott

How old is your dad now?

Victoria

79.

Scott

Do you think there's a chance that- I mean I'm trying to think about it from his perspective. He's 79 years old. There's pretty much, I don't wanna say an open and shut case, but it's pretty obvious that he's guilty. He could be going to prison for a long time.

Victoria

Yep.

Scott

Is there any concern that he might be suicidal?

Victoria

That was an immediate concern of many family members. It was a concern of mine as well. I don't wish for bad things for my dad, but I also have compassion for him. At the beginning I went back and forth between hating him and having compassion for him. I think we need to have compassion for somebody, even for someone who did the awful things he did. To be 79 and think that he may be going to prison for a long time. I can't imagine going to prison for one day. He could spend the rest of his natural life in prison, and if he goes in there, he's a target. He'll be kept separate, but there are gang bangers and murderers in there who will look at him as a piece of shit that needs to be taken out. He's considered lower than them, in prison. So as much as of course the prison system would and should keep him safe, I can imagine how that would feel for somebody to walk into a prison knowing that there are people there who want to kill you. Then be stuck there for years with them.

Scott

The fact that you went in and made this recording of him admitting his guilt, do you feel any kind of sense of betrayal of him at all? Since he's your dad?

Victoria

No I don't. I just don't think you're ever betraying somebody by telling or getting the truth. I didn't trick him. I didn't ask him any questions. To be honest, I recorded it because I knew it was going to be a deep conversation and that while I'm emotional during the conversation I might not remember everything he says. I wanted to have that recording so that later when I was thinking back and trying to remember what all we talked about and what was said, I would have that to listen back to. That was my actual intention at the time. I'd like to say I'm a badass and was trying to get a confession, that would be a much better story.

Scott

You're wearing a wire.

Victoria

(laughter) Yeah exactly. But my reason for recording it was actually for a more innocent reason. So the fact that I just happened to get it on recording, I don't feel guilty for. I have told McKayla the existence of the recording, but I've also told her I'm not sharing it with her. I'm not sharing it with anybody. The only people who will get it will be if the police ask me for it. I don't even need a warrant, just ask me and I'll give it to them. I'm not going to let her hear it, because he didn't take full responsibility, and she doesn't need to hear that. I don't think it would help her to listen to it.

Scott

Where does it all stand now? Is he just kind of waiting day by day to wait for her to go to the police?

Victoria

Yeah, that's where we're sitting. Where he's sitting, he's scared to death. That's what he says even in the recording, he is scared to death. As much as he's scared to death about the police showing up, he's also scared to death of the father showing up, John Walker. He has told other family members, who have told me, that it's his biggest fear every time he steps out of his house, he's worried that John's going to be there to take him out. He said, "I wouldn't blame him. That's what I would do."

Scott

Any father listening to this right now that has a daughter, knows exactly, yes that's the way you'd feel.

Victoria

Exactly, and McKayla has told her dad, "Don't do it. You are my dad. You are going to walk me down the aisle one day. You are going to be there for the birth of my children. If you do this, I will lose you, and he's not worth it." So she made him promise not to touch my dad. He said that is the only reason my dad is still alive right now.

Scott

Good for her. That was a very smart thing for her to say to him.

Victoria

I think so too. I had respect for these people before this, but I didn't know they were capable of the grace that they have shown or the love that they have shown. They have been compassionate for us as a family. They are the ones who went through the trauma, and yet, they're trying to support us as we're going through learning about what happened. They're such an incredible family that I think I couldn't love them or respect them more than I do.

Scott

What's the message that you want to get across by telling this story? What do you want people to learn from this?

Victoria

I think that we all need to understand that this is so common. I think that this happens in a lot of different families and we don't feel safe telling. That's why McKayla didn't tell, she didn't feel like she would be believed. We need to have support so people can talk about this. Keeping secrets, that this family of mine has kept so many secrets. That's why these monsters were able to continue doing what they were doing. I can understand why we don't talk, but the freedom I felt when I did talk about it, and the freedom that McKayla is getting from talking about it. If somebody out there hears this story and it's safe for them to do so, they have a safe adult, it doesn't have to be your parents that you tell. Talk to a counselor or talk to someone at school. Go to a friend and tell her parents and get somebody to listen and talk about it. The more we talk about it the less it's going to happen.

There are so many aspects of this story to discuss. If you have a question, an opinion, a comment or anything to say about this story, the very best place to do that is in the podcast Facebook group. This is a private group with over 1600 people, and all of them listen to the podcast. We have some great discussions going on over there – and there's no political debate. I'd love to have you join us there! Just go over to [WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook](https://www.whatwasthatlike.com/facebook).

And I have a couple of things I want to mention before we get to the Listener Story.

First, the newest episode of Raw Audio is now live. This is the 17th episode of bonus, exclusive content that features actual 911 calls and the stories that go with them. In this episode:

A restaurant owner calls to report his daughter is missing

911 Dispatch

Ok, do you have any videos in there where you can see a video to see if she is there.

Caller

No, no no. We don't have any security cameras in the restaurant.

A NYC police officer calls from home because his son is unresponsive

911 Dispatch

What did he hit his head on? What did he fall on?

Caller

Concrete.

911 Dispatch

Concrete? Are you having him lie on his back on the floor?

Caller

Huh?

911 Dispatch

I don't want to bother you if you're busy doing CPR, I'm just trying to make sure we have all the information we need. He's on the floor and on his back?

Caller

He got himself up.

And an observant restaurant server becomes suspicious about a family

Caller

One of the kids has a lot of bruises on his arms and on his face. The parents are not getting food for him but are giving some to the other kids that are with him.

You can get full access to all of the 17 Raw Audio episodes, as well as future episodes, AND you get the What Was That Like podcast ad-free, just by becoming a supporter of the show for \$5 a month. And your support tells me that you're enjoying the show, and that's one of the big things that keeps me going. You can sign up at WhatWasThatLike.com/support.

Okay, I'm going to say the name of something, and see if you've heard of it. It's called GoodPods. That's one word, GoodPods. The website is Goodpods.com, but really it's an app that runs on your phone, and it works on both iPhone and Android.

I've just started using it recently, but it seems like it has a lot of potential. The main idea is that you connect with other people and if your podcast preferences are similar, you can find new podcasts to listen to, and they'll be shows that are right in line with what you like to listen to. You can subscribe to podcasts and listen to them right on the app. So it looks like it might be a great way to discover new shows, and I've been hearing a lot of good stuff about it. If you try it out, let me know what you think.

And if you ever want to message me, you can email me at Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com. If you want to send regular old snail mail, that goes to PO Box 5, Safety Harbor FL, 34695.

And now, this week's Listener Story. Stay safe, and I'll see you in 2 weeks.

Caller

I'm in the midst of this story, but some parts are hazy because I was only 6. It started when me, my mom, my 3 year old sister, my mom's friend, and my 15 year old aunt went to the lake near us. We started packing up and after swimming for a few hours, my mom took a cooler to the care while my aunt watched us pack up. My little sister started saying she didn't want to wear her life jacket to swim, but my mom already told her she had to keep it on while my mom was away packing up. While my aunt wasn't looking and was packing up towels, my sister ran off

angrily screaming, "I don't want my life jacket on!" I didn't pay any attention to her because I didn't really do that when she was throwing a fit. We weren't paying attention for two seconds when my mom came back and asked where my sister was. That's when it hit me. I looked down at my feet and her life jacket was on the towel. Everybody started running around like crazy calling out her name. We just heard nothing for what felt like an eternity. I started crying, because that is what any 6 year old would do in that situation. All of the sudden I hear my aunt scream my mothers name. I looked over and there was just a group of people. I walk over to the group of people, and see my 3 year old sister laying there, not responding, and she was blue. That is the scariest thing that I have probably ever seen in my entire life. My mom was in shock when she got over there, of course. My aunt kept trying to do CPR, and there was a nurse there. She had no pulse, but then they started doing CPR. Then a team of firefighters and police officers got there and they were able to bring her back to life. She was probably dead for about 4 or 5 minutes, but she is alive and ok now. I'm so happy that she is alive and that she pulled through. She is one tough fighter.