

## **Episode 102: Dee's father crawled toward him**

Right now, I'd like you to take a minute, and imagine this scenario.

I live in Florida, in the southeast area of the United States. I like it here. We have good weather most of the time, which means I can get out and bike almost every morning year round. My area is highly populated, so anything I need is readily available – grocery stores always stocked with food, lots of doctors and hospitals for medical care, and paved roads so I can drive my car anywhere I want. And if I need to go any distance, I have a major international airport about 20 minutes from my house. And like most Americans, I tend to take all these things for granted.

Then one night, a large group of rebel fighters, heavily armed, lands on Clearwater Beach. They start going through the residential neighborhoods, throwing rocks through windows and setting houses on fire. People wake up in confusion, not understanding why they are hearing explosions and gunfire. Parents grab their children and run outside to escape their burning home, only to be shot to death in their front yard.

News spreads quickly, by social media and by friends and family members calling to warn each other about what is happening. I get a phone call and realize we need to get out of the area as quickly as possible. My mom lives close by, so I call her and tell her quickly what's happening and that we'll pick her up in about 10 minutes.

Then we frantically try to decide what to bring. For me, this would be very difficult. Whenever I go on a trip, I have a checklist of things way ahead of time, to make sure I don't forget anything. Now I have just a few minutes to decide what to grab. Our dogs, obviously. My laptop. Some clothes, a toothbrush...but how do you even decide what to bring, when you don't know where you're going, or how long you'll be gone? I don't even know how much gas is in my car.

But we're able to escape, and we drive north. After about 7 hours in the car, we get to Atlanta. What we find is a large area where makeshift tents have been set up for the people who were forced to flee the state of Florida. This is where we live now. Our life is a tent community of Florida refugees, and we can never go back to where we used to live.

For Americans, this sounds pretty far-fetched. We don't really think about a situation like this, because it just doesn't happen here.

But for my guest today, Dee, it's not just a made-up story. Dee lived with his parents and his siblings in a refugee camp in a village called Gatumba. This is in the country of Burundi, in Africa.

Their community was attacked one night, and the violence that was carried out was so vicious, it made worldwide news. Even to this day, that massacre is what the village of Gatumba is known for. Dee witnessed some horrific things that night, and he was only 5 years old.

And a note about listening. Dee speaks fluent English, but he still has that strong African accent. If you'd like to listen while reading the words on the screen, you'll find the full transcript of our conversation at [WhatWasThatLike.com/102](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/102).

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**Scott**

You go by the nickname, Dee. How do you actually say your first name?

**Dee**

My first name is Dieudonne - it's a French name - which is not a common name, I would say. Most people would call me Dee, so I'm used to that name more.

**Scott**

Much easier, for sure.

**Dee**

Much easier. Yeah.

**Scott**

Before this happened, would you say your early childhood was pretty normal?

**Dee**

Yes, I would say it was a very- I wouldn't say that I was spoiled, but I had a very good life. I was very happy. I never ever, like, felt down. It would always be a good day. I had 2 loving parents who I really love. That was a very, very happy moment in my life.

**Scott**

And you were born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in Africa. Later, your family moved to Burundi, which is in a different country. Can you explain why did your family move?

**Dee 5.56**

In Africa, in Congo, there are a lot of tribes and most of those tribes don't really get along. My dad raised us - his kids - in a way to love everybody. We just love every single human being. We love all people. My dad would open our house and welcome students. Many students would come and stay at our house - it was like a squatter house. Everyone was welcomed. If people didn't like it, no one would call the police because they would always be kicked out of Congo to a different country. Then, some of them decided to go to a neighboring country called Burundi where there are refugee camps there. For some reason, my parents moved there, too. They wanted to move there, to stay with people there, and to maybe have a better life, I guess.

**Scott**

This is, kind of, a foreign concept for us here in America. So you had to leave where you were born and where your family was living to move to another country and live in a refugee camp in a tent?

**Dee**

In a tent. Gatumba is, literally, like, right beside the border of Congo. So, it's not in Congo, but it's like right there after you leave the border, which is normally the safest thing to do. So our refugee camp was right there and people from Congo could come anytime because we can see the border from where we were. If you look very closely, you could see the border of Congo. It was literally-- like, you can walk to the border or to Gatumba - it wasn't that far at all.

**Scott**

And who was in your family at that time?

**Dee**

At that time, I had two older brothers. My oldest brother is Andre. Then, there is Remi. Then, there is me. I had a younger sister named Diemo. At that time, my mom was pregnant - I didn't know that she was pregnant at that time. She was 7-months pregnant, but I didn't know that at that time because I was 5 years old. So I wasn't really looking or paying attention to that stuff.

**Scott**

Right. You were 5 years old. You don't really notice stuff like that.

**Dee**

Yeah.

**Scott**

Okay, So, there were your mom, dad, and four kids - 3 boys and 1 girl.

**Dee**

Yes.

**Scott**

And a baby that hadn't been born yet?

**Dee**

Yes.

**Scott**

And you were 5 years old. What happened on Friday, August 13, 2004?

**Dee**

I wanted to say normal, but it felt a bit off and weird.

**Scott**

Maybe, it's worldwide. Friday, the 13th - or whenever the 13th of the month falls on a Friday - is considered to be unlucky or something odd. Do you guys think that as well?

**Dee**

I do not know. I've heard of that. I'm aware of that - I'm aware that 13 is an unlucky number, but it's not really a thing back home. No, I wouldn't say that people are scared of that number.

**Scott**

Okay, but something just felt, kind of, off that day?

**Dee**

Yeah. It just felt really-- I don't know. Sometimes, like, your body knows something is not right - you know? We were just eating our last meal of the day - I think it was around 8 or 9 o'clock. I was a kid then. Like, I would like my dad to feed me - I don't know why. So, he would always feed me. My sister was there and we talked a bit. We're like, "I love you so much! You're like my best friend!" And she would always get me, like, on her back. If I did something wrong, she would always say she did it so that I don't get in trouble. She knew that she could get away with it more easily because my dad or mom wouldn't be mad at her but they would've been mad at me because I'm the boy. So, she would say all of this stuff even though it was me who did it.

That day, my dad fed me - I don't know why. I remember that we were going to bed at around 10-ish. Some people were still awake, talking, and stuff like that. We were sleeping on our beds and stuff. I think I was already passed out. I think I've already gone to sleep. Then, we just started hearing gunshots outside. My mom would ask my dad about those gunshots. My dad said, "No. Those were just hunters. They're probably just killing some cows or other animals." I was like, "No. Those are actual gunshots outside." My mom ran outside because my sister wasn't inside. I didn't know where my other brother was, but he was not there. My older brother was asleep with his other guy friends. So, there was just my dad and me in that tent.

I remember that he was looking at me. I've never seen my dad cry. I've never seen him sad. I remember just seeing him there. He was trying to, like, come to me like how soldiers would crawl - they don't, like, crawl on their knees but they would pull themselves with their arms. So, he was doing that. I could tell that he was in pain. I could tell that it was really hard for him to do that. He just kept telling me, like, "Go see mom! Run to mom!" At that time, I didn't know that he was shot. He was shot at the hip area - like, on your waist. Usually, when you get shot there, you get paralyzed immediately. So, he can't walk. Or if you're on the ground, you won't get back up because that's it - you're paralyzed right there. I didn't know that then. I was, like, wondering, "Well, why isn't he getting up?" He was just stuck there. For some reason, I don't know why I left him. I don't know why I ran. I really regretted running away from him. I regretted not staying there with him. I just wish to stay there with him, but if I stayed there with him, then maybe I wouldn't be here today.

So, I ran and ran. I usually hear helicopters flying by but what I heard was not a helicopter. As I was running away from Gatumba, I heard something that sounded like a helicopter, so I thought it was a helicopter. I didn't know what it was then, but I knew now that those are actual automatic machine guns - like, the sound didn't stop, they just keep running like how a helicopter would sound. I thought those were helicopters, but those were actual automatic guns that sounded similar to a helicopter - I don't know why.

### **Scott**

Because of the continuous firing?

### **Dee**

Yes, continuous firing. Like, there are no breaks in between them. So, I really thought that it was a helicopter. It was very dark. I was just running and running. I saw so many bodies - I don't know why I saw so many bodies and people were crying and yelling. I stumbled onto bodies. I saw people's brains on the floor. Blood was splashing everywhere. For some reason, I tasted blood actual human blood. At that time, I was alone - I didn't meet up with them yet. I mean, I didn't meet up with my brother or sister - I was alone. I met up with them after-- as I was running, I was by myself and I witnessed rape - like, I heard words of a woman being raped. As a 5-years-old, I didn't know what was going on at that time, but I could tell that she didn't want it...

(Sobbing)

She was just a babe. She was crying and screaming so that he doesn't kill her. He can do whatever he wants as long as he doesn't kill her. I didn't know what was going on at that time, but now I know that it was rape. She was raped by a couple of guys.

(Sobbing)

They were raping her and it scared me. I didn't know that someone's capable of that. It was a miracle that I met up with my brother and my sister. Then, he held me and I started asking him, like, "Where's mom? I want to see my mom!" At that time, my sister was very quiet. My brother was carrying her on his shoulder and she was just there looking very calm. I wish I had talked to her but I didn't. I looked at her but I didn't say anything to her.

(Sobbing)

I couldn't tell if she was alive - she was just there. That was the last time that I will ever see her looking back at me. I just wish that I had said anything to her but I didn't. As we were walking and running away, we met up with some soldiers - they aren't really soldiers but people who would kill other people. My brother was scared. I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know who they were but he knew who they were - they weren't bad people. We said, "We're innocent! We're kids! Just let us go!" They said, "Okay. Keep going. Don't come back. Keep running."

At that time, I didn't know that my sister was injured and shot, like, in the lower side of her stomach. She went on so long without medical attention or anything like that. So, the bullet just sat there in her and it slowly killed her. We didn't know that she was dead. We thought she was sleeping, but she was already gone, she was already dead. After my sister died, I didn't know what happened - most of it is blur - or how we ended up at the hospital. I don't know how we got there but we just appeared there for some reason.

Then the next morning, they found my mom. My mom wasn't in a good shape at all. She was laying there some of her intestines and insides outside of her out. At that time, she was pregnant. Some people really thought, "This woman is dead. She's not alive. Take her to the dead people and go bury her." Some people were, like, "No, can't you see that she's alive?" They're like, "What's going on? She's definitely dead. Her insides are out. Her baby is definitely dead also." They took her to the hospital. My other brother was looking for us. We found our way to the hospital. Then, they asked him, "Are these your family members?" We were, like, "Yeah, that's my two brothers, my sister, and my mom. Then, the nurses were just amazed and were, like, "How is your life?"

They couldn't explain how she could be alive after all that. She was shot in the leg, so one of her legs was literally broken - she couldn't walk. She was also shot right in the middle at her belly button with the baby in her stomach. So, we can't explain how that happened or how she was alive. The bullet that went through her stomach was never found. They couldn't see where it went so they could never trace it. As we were in the hospital this whole time, my brother had to go identify the bodies that were found. They found my dad's body outside a tent where we were sleeping. So, that means that he crawled all the way out of the tent. He was burned from, like, the waist. His hair was still on his head and his back was burnt. He was trying to escape but it was just-- it haunts me knowing that he died in pain - he was in so much pain when he died.

**Scott**

And the reason he was burnt was because they set the tent on fire?

**Dee**

The people who did that had gas on them. They set the tents on fire. They threw gas on people and burn them alive. The bullets that they were shooting were not just small bullets - those were

long bullets. They came to kill, injure, and eliminate everybody that was there. They didn't come just to joke around. Those are actual long bullets shot with machine guns. They kill more women and children than men. I don't really know if they came more for women, but they killed more women and children. Some women were pregnant also. A lot of women were found with the baby out of them. So, if they caught a pregnant woman, they took the baby out of her and kill the baby also. It sounds like it came from a movie but this actually happened. I have a hard time believing it too but I was there to witness this. So, my dad was found burned in the back. And it's harder. He was shot in the waist so he couldn't walk - he was crawling outside. Knowing that I was the last person who saw him and the fact that I couldn't help him or stay there with him haunts me to this day. I didn't kill him but I left him to die - so I'm the one at fault here - I've abandoned my father, a person whom I loved so much.

**Scott**

But at five years old, you wouldn't have been able to help him...

**Dee**

Of course. But at 5 years old, you think you're so strong and you're the strongest person in the world. I have a nephew who's 5 years old today. Looking at him reminds me of myself at that age. There's no way I could have done that because he's, like, so small. He would say, "Dee, look at me, I'm so strong! I'm Superman!" I was like, "Wow. You're very strong!" At 5 years old, you think you're the strongest person in the world. So, I was thinking, like, "Why didn't I help him? Why didn't I carry him with me or pull him? I should have pulled him but I just left him there and started running away."

At the hospital, my mom was doing okay, but the baby kept growing in her stomach. The doctor tried to close the wound but whenever the baby moved or kicked a bit, they just had to close it again. So, it was just a hard, hard process. The baby was exposed all the time outside and they didn't know if they could save both of them. So, they said to my brother, "We are not sure if we can save both of them, but we got papers here for you. You can choose to save your mom or your sister because we don't think we can save both." He just told them, "No, I will not choose or decide who I want to kill or murder - God will decide that. Just do what you can and God will decide what happens. I'm not going to take that sin because we're raised as Christians." My mom is a very, very religious person. I remember growing up looking at her, like, "This person is so religious. Like, she's really into God." She would always sing gospel songs. She's like the happiest person. She was really, really happy. I never once saw her in a bad mood or crying. She was always extremely happy. At that time, I couldn't go see my mom very much. I was there for a few seconds and they took me out. If brother went to see her, they would tell him to not tell her about his father and little sister. At that time, they told me that my father will come back and that he is at the hospital in Kenya. Kenya is a country in Africa. Some people there were also flown into Kenya so that they can get operated there because the hospital was full at that time. Some people who went through this were taken out to another country to go to another hospital. So, they told us that our dad was in Kenya but I knew that he wasn't - I know that he died. For some reason, I didn't believe them, but I wanted to believe them, like, "Okay, maybe, he did survive and get operated in Kenya."

**Scott**

But your mom didn't know anything about that?

**Dee**

She had no idea. She was in a coma, in a way, but I'm not sure of that. I don't think they would put a pregnant woman into a coma. They didn't want her to know because if she freaks out or gets scared, there's a chance of killing her and the baby inside of her. So, they wanted to avoid that at all cost - not to scare her, not to spook her in any way - because she was very sensitive.

### **Scott**

That is such an unusual situation. I mean, for her to be shot in the stomach-- I mean, having her and her baby surviving that is amazing. Now, she's in the hospital not knowing that her husband and daughter have died - that's just such a bizarre situation.

### **Dee**

That's the thing. The nurse said that some of them were, like, "I don't think I will ever see this again in the history of my whole career." They couldn't explain how she was alive. The baby is healthy. There was not a single scratch on her. Nothing touched her. She was a completely healthy baby. She was just okay. She was perfect. Some nurses couldn't explain it. They're just like, "How is this possible? The bullet went into her stomach. Did it curve? Did it disappear? Where did it go?" They couldn't find it. They don't know where it went. They couldn't find it at all. So, they kept telling us to never talk about it close to her - keep that away from her at all cost. So, I would go see her sometimes. They wouldn't let me stay for lunch. She would look and talk to me, like, "Oh, Dee. Where's your sister?" And whenever she asked me about my dad or my sister, they would just take me out and say, "Oh, he has to go. He's hungry."

October 2 came. That was the time when they were saying, "Her baby's coming. Her tummy is getting way too big. It's been 9 months, so she should come out now." So, they took the baby out and she came out healthy. She's just a miracle baby. She's alive today. She's 17 years old today. She will graduate this year from high school - class of 2022. When she was born, the nurses and doctors were in tears. They're like, "This baby's alive! She's here!" Most of them were very religious Christians. They were just saying, "We didn't do anything. God did this! We're not trained to save a baby that was literally in the stomach!" At that time, she was outside of the womb most of the time. If she moved, the wound would open and the baby would be exposed to the world which is not common. The baby needs to be in the womb of her mother but she wasn't - she was outside most of the time. The more she grew, the more the wound opened but they both made it. My mother also became very healthy. They closed her womb and stomach. Her leg was getting better. So they taught her to walk properly again. She had to learn how to walk. She can walk normally today but she cannot walk for too long. She can climb the stairs. She doesn't use a cane. She doesn't use a wheelchair. I think she's perfectly healthy.

The thing about my father is he was a person who carried all his belongings - like, he carried all the documents, all our pictures, and everything about us. So, when they burned down the tents, they burned all of our documents and everything that we had about us - our history, our pictures, our baby pictures. So, we do not have any pictures of my dad or my sister. It's literally as if they've never existed. Usually, when a lover passes on, they will go and find a picture of him. I can't do that. I can't ever go somewhere and look at a picture of them because we don't have that picture of them. We have nothing at all. I have lost my memory of him. I've lost his face - I don't know what it looks like - which really hurts me. I wish I really knew what he looks like.

About late October, we had to tell her - I wasn't there but my brother was - "Your husband is not in Kenya. Both your husband and daughter didn't make it. They both passed away and died. He was shot in the leg, paralyzed, and burned. Your daughter was shot so she didn't make it either.

Only you. your 3 sons and newly-born daughter made it.” When I saw her, she was very broken and very lost. My mom is a strong woman - she pulled through that. I mean, she was never okay even until today. She said she thinks about him every day because my dad was her best friend, he was her partner in life, he was the one that was meant for her. Even when I asked about him, like, “How was he?” Because I only got 5 years with him, I didn't know much about him which also hurts. So whenever I asked about him, I've never heard a bad thing about him. He was a great, great person. He was a great loving person. Nothing that I heard about him was bad. Everyone liked him. Everyone loved him. So, they were really happy. They were extremely, extremely happy. I remember the day that I never saw my mom crying - she was always just in a good mood, always extremely happy, always helping out the neighborhood and picking what they need. The same goes for my dad. They were really into helping others. They were really into providing for others in need - they would help out people who don't have much. They would give food and give clothes - they work for God.

In late September, we went to move to another neighboring refugee camp that is a bit far from Gatumba. We were there for a few months or years. The United Nations asked us to move and reside at a city called Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada and we said, ‘Yes.’ Most people were taken to the States. Our people were taken into Chicago and New York City. People were taken into Canada - some in Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, or Manitoba. We went to Winnipeg, Manitoba which is a very, very cold place - it was extremely cold.

**Scott**

Yeah. I was just thinking about that. You came from Africa - which is one of the hottest places in the world - to Canada, which is one of the coldest. So, that would have been such a shock.

**Dee**

It was a big shock. Yeah.

**Scott**

So this was the program by the United Nations. The United Nations was placing political refugees at other places just for protection and safety?

**Dee**

Yeah. So they were the ones that were providing safety at that time. They were the ones that was protecting us there, but they felt that protection didn't protect us because we were attacked there. They didn't try to evict us, they just tried to help us and compensate us by providing better protection by moving people to different countries. United Nations were the ones that were supposed to protect us and they were supposed to be this umbrella for us. But they felt that they failed miserably that they couldn't help us. So, they came looking for other survivors and wanting to give them a better life away from all that has happened - just leave all those behind.

**Scott**

How did you feel about that - leaving the only country that you've ever known to come to Canada? I mean, were you guys - your mom and the kids - all okay with that?

**Dee 38.12**

I'm pretty sure they were all okay with that. Yeah, they were all okay with it because I guess it felt safer what happened here won't happen again there. At first, I was like, “Yeah, let's go.” but it was cold. I didn't like being around people much because I was scared of people. I developed this thing where I didn't like being in large crowds or around a lot of people whom I don't know.

Even today, I still have that phobia. If many people come into the room, I would just leave or hide. I remember just not being comfortable in school. If we are put into teams for activities, I didn't like being watched by other people or being around other people. So, I would always like to be alone but no one understood how I felt and I couldn't really tell them how I felt. I'm a person who would teach myself more than be taught stuff. So, I would learn things on my own.

It's so sad to know that people are still suffering in the world. I always think, "Why isn't anyone there helping people?" Why are there no people who are helping others who are in need?" There are people watching, crying, and suffering. I'm sure that I'm not the only nice person out here because I'm raised to be a nice person. Most of the time, I would think of my dad who would say, "Man, I love that person. Why don't I go back and eat with them?" That will always haunt me. Sometimes, I think I'm at fault for that. I don't talk much of myself often. So like, no one has ever told me, like, "Oh, it's not your fault. You're just 5 years old." There are days when I think that it's my fault and I was the one who cause that because I didn't go back for him and stayed there with him. Like, I wish that it was me instead of him.

My younger sister... I just wish that she got to experience life. I wish, like, she actually got to explore life. At 4 years old, she had her life taken away from her out of the blue. I remember being, like, really mad with God. I really hated God at that moment because I was taught at a young age that God is a good person and a good being, but He allowed all of that to happen. So, I was like, "You are an evil person! I want nothing to do with you!" I don't want to talk to you ever again! You killed a kid who is 4 years old! She was just there and then you took her away! You took her away! Like, why did you leave me? Am I better than her?" So I was very mad with God, I really hated him.

**Scott**

These are mental issues that could be helped by therapy. Have you had counseling or therapy at all to help you with this?

**Dee**

At that time, I didn't know what therapy was because therapy isn't really a thing in African culture. For us, we don't talk about therapy, so it doesn't exist. It's not there. It's not accessible. There's no talk about it. It's just unknown. Nobody really talked about it or ever felt that they needed it. But I'm doing better. I've seen people who were survivors - there are people who lost both parents and there were parents who lost their kids. So like, I'm doing good. I'm doing good with God now - I'm on good terms with God. God helped me to see, "Even though you lost your father, there are other people who lost both parents. You got a parent who loves you. She's there for you." There are kids out there who are alone. There are 4 girls and 2 boys who live in Edmonton, Alberta - they lost both parents. I'm grateful that God provided and helped me through that. We have all united. We have all helped each other. We talk about this stuff every August 13 of each year. This year would be the 17th year.

**Scott**

And your 2 brothers are married and have kids now?

**Dee**

So my two brothers are already married and they both have kids. My oldest brother, Andre-- the coolest thing is his wife was also in Gatumba. His wife lost her mother in Gatumba. So, he married a woman named Beatrice. She's just the most wonderful and beautiful sister-in-law that I would ever ask for. She's wonderful and I love her. She's a great person. She had lost her

mother in Gatumba also. When we came, they moved to Newfoundland and Labrador whereas we moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba. So, we somehow got connected there.

**Scott**

Did they know each other back in Gatumba?

**Dee**

They didn't. They met after Gatumba. We move to another place in Burundi - they met there. Then, we just got separated - some people went to the US and they were sent to Newfoundland. So, he married her. There's a well-known history that they know each other very, very well because they've been through the same thing.

**Scott**

So, do you all live near each other so that you can see your nieces and nephews and brothers?

**Dee**

So we all moved to Edmonton, Alberta, which is in Canada. We were there for a while. We all live there and all of that. I went to high school there. In my early high school years, I worked at a restaurant called McDonald's for a few years. While working there. I met this really beautiful girl named Gloriya. When she looks at you, you would feel very, like, 'Wow!' When she looks right at you in the eyes, it just opens and swallows your soul in a way - very, very glowing. We talked for a while for a few years. We were talking and just seeing each other and all that. Then, I remember that she would always ask me, "Do you know that we can date? We can date!" I remember that I couldn't answer her. I would just look at her and tried to answer her but my words couldn't come out of my mouth. I couldn't answer for some reason - I don't know why at that time, but I just couldn't answer her. She just said, "We can date. We can do this." I could tell that she was in love with me - it was true love - and I was in love with her. I really love her but I don't know why I couldn't express that.

What I came to find is that I was scared of losing people in my life. I was scared that if I bring her into my life, either she will die or I will die and, maybe, leave her behind. I was scared of losing people and letting people go - I mean 'go' as in passing away - that would just hurt me. I wish she understood that. I wanted to be with her but I just couldn't answer her for some reason. I couldn't tell her how I felt. I was scared that she could pass away or I could pass away and leave her behind someday.

My mom has days when she doesn't feel very-- we all have those days when we feel a bit down. I just look at her and told her, like, "You're so strong. You're a strong woman. Like, you raise 3 boys on your own. You raise a girl on your own. No one came to help you. You did that all by yourself. I'm really proud of you. I'm so, so proud of you. You're a great woman. You're a great mom. You don't have the right to feel this. Like, we all have this feeling. You should be proud of yourself. You did so much for us and I'm forever grateful for that. Thank you for this life." We all lived in Edmonton for a few years. I didn't want to be there anymore because it was just too big and too crowded. I'm not a fan of big crowds so I move to a smaller city - I moved to New Brunswick. Since I moved here, my whole family came here so that we can all be close to each other. We've never really lived far from each other. We've always been close to each other. We've always been near each other. I love my family so much that there's nothing I wouldn't do for them. We've always been there for each other and we will always be there for each other.

I'm a mama's boy, so I love my mom very much. She's someone that I really, really honor. I love her so much. There was never a day in my life that I felt hungry or that I needed food and clothes. I just asked her, like, "How do you do all that? Like, we always had food, we always had clothes to wear, and we're always under a roof." There was never a day that I felt hungry. She has always provided for us. She's such a strong, strong woman. It haunts me to know that, one day, she will have to leave me behind or pass away. I will not be able to take that very well. It scares me every day to know that it's very possible that she can leave me alone at any time. She has just taught me so much in life. I'm so grateful for her. There's nothing that I would not do for her. She's just an amazing person

**Scott**

What are your hopes and dreams for your life now?

**Dee**

So I've recently told my mom that I wanted to help people outside. I've always been helping out. I've always been donating to charities. I've always gone to see the homeless, talk to them, be there for them, see how they're doing today, and get them to eat. Scott, you recently talked to a person who donated his kidney to a stranger.

**Scott**

Yeah, it was one of my earlier episodes.

**Dee**

Yeah. That man said that he felt uncomfortable telling people about how he helped other people - I understand him. Like, I would never go out there and say, like, "Oh, I help this person! I donated to this person." That doesn't feel so comfortable. Like, that makes me feel guilty in a way. I've seen people who went to help homeless people with their phones and cameras and I'm like, "Really?" You're not really helping. You're just doing that for your viewers to see that you're a good person which just makes me so uncomfortable." So, I want to do this thing anonymously where I would help provide homeless shelters, provide for people in need, and women who have been abused or who have gone through a lot in life. There are a lot of women out there who have gone through a lot. It hurts and scares me. I want to help these women and show them that not all men are the same - because most of the time, I've heard women saying that she hates men, men are disgusting, men have this - which is not true. We're different. There are men out there that actually want to help you and be there with you. For some reason, in my life, people would talk and open up to me and I was like, "Why is that? Why do you always tell me secrets?" Some of the things they said were, "You actually listen. What you ask me 'How are you?', you actually mean it. It's a common thing to say, 'Hi, how are you?' and the answer would be 'Good'. But if I'm not okay, you would say 'No, you don't seem okay. What is it?'. So that's the person that you are." People have told me that I actually listen to people and I actually care. I got feedback from people who told me that I actually listen to others - so, I think I'm good at that.

Adoption is something that I want to do in life. I want to have my own kids, for sure, but adoption is also something that I want to do in my life. I would take some kids that are out there. The system is pretty messed up in a way because a lot of kids would just end up on the streets also. So, I would like to help a lot of kids. If more people can do it, it'd be great if we can all adopt kids in need - they don't have any parents, they are growing on the streets, and they have nowhere to go.

The thing that also hurts and scares me - when I'm in my car, I have heated seats and a heater at home - is passing by some homeless people. It breaks my heart to know that he's out there in the cold with nothing and nowhere to go while I have my bed, my blanket, the heater, and my home. He doesn't have that choice. He can't do that. He's stuck there. I would usually avoid roads because I don't want to pass by them. I don't want to see them or else I'm gonna stop the car and start crying. Canada is a very cold place. Those people have nowhere to go. They're stuck in the cold. They're just hopeless. (Sobbing) They need to be eating and I remember seeing them walking around a restaurant, begging for food, and people would, like, throw things that they've always wanted. I wish that you would all just help out all these people in need. It would feel good. Like, I have never taken any drugs in my life. I've never smoked or dealt with anything like that. Some of them will thank you for this and it feels so good. The feeling that you get when someone said 'Thank you for helping me', 'Thank you for that food', or 'Thank you for this change' is so empowering and so powerful.

**Scott**

Something just occurred to me. You said that you don't have any pictures of your dad. All you know is what people say about him - about what a wonderful and kind person that he was. And I think the fact that you are such a compassionate person and have such a big heart to help other people is because that's probably the way your dad was too. So if you want to know how your dad was like, maybe, it's sort of like the way you are today being compassionate with other people.

**Dee**

You know, Scott... My mom said the same thing that you said. Whenever I talked about things that I wanted to do, she was like, "Your dad would love for you to do that. Your dad did that. Your dad would want you to do that because he did everything that I'm doing." I didn't know what that thing is. She was, like, "Oh, your dad did that. That totally what he would've done." The fact that you said it just proved that. Yes, you're right. He was just a lovely person. I've never heard anything bad about him. I've always heard good things. He helped these people. He helped them. He raised kids that weren't his kids. The fact that you said it just proved that 'Yes, that's probably true.'

**Scott**

And you being that way is how you honor his memory.

**Dee**

Yes. I'm glad that I have that part of him. None of us look like him. My mom would just be, like, "You have his features. You have his fingernails." But none of us actually look like him. He has brothers in the States. He has a brother in Kentucky and he doesn't look like him at all. In African culture, we don't say uncle - we would call our uncles 'Dads'. We don't call them by name - that is rude - we just call them 'Dad'. Recently, when I called my uncle in the States, I said, "Dada," - which means 'Dad' in my mother tongue - and I felt shocked because I haven't said 'Dad' for so long. It's been so long since I've called someone 'Dad' and that was a shocker. I was like, "Oh my God. I said 'Dad'. It's been so long."

**Scott**

I'm sure people are going to be moved by this story. No human should go through what you went through. Thank you for sharing it. If someone wants to contact you, I know you're on Instagram and you've got an email address. We'll have links to that in the show notes for this episode, if anyone wants to get in touch with you.

## **Dee**

Perfect. Thanks. That'd be great! And I'm here if anyone needs to talk to me, ask questions about me, or talk about you, I'll provide whatever help that you need - that's if I could help you. I'll be here for you if you need help with anything or if you have any questions about your life or my life.

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## **Scott**

Remember the young lady Dee was talking about, Gloriya? He's still hoping to connect with her and tell her his true feelings. So Gloriya – if you're listening to this – don't give up on him. And maybe we'll have an update from Dee about that situation at some point in the future.

As I got to know Dee prior to our conversation, I found out that he's a fan of The Office, like I am. And one of his favorite quotes on that show is from Andy Bernard, when he said this: "I wish there was a way to know you were in the good old days, before you left them". Lot of wisdom in those words.

Okay – what happens when you take a bunch of podcast listeners, and you put them all online in front of a camera? You get the What Was That Like Zoom chat! We've done this a few times now and it's a blast. Last time we played podcast trivia, and Laura up in Canada won a What Was That Like coffee mug. This time, it's show and tell for the family pets! You like showing off your dog or your cat, or your hamster or your snake, or your pet skunk? Well this is your opportunity because we want to see them.

And I want to make sure you understand, the Zoom chat is open to everyone – all listeners are invited. Doesn't matter if you're a Patreon supporter or not, or if you're brand new and you've only listened to a few episodes so far, or if you've been listening since episode 1. You are invited.

If you're in our Listener Community, you'll get the invitation with all the meeting details. It will be this coming Sunday afternoon at 4 pm eastern time. So you can get in the Listener Community, and it's free of course, at [Community.WhatWasThatLike.com](https://Community.WhatWasThatLike.com). Otherwise, to get the Zoom information, just email me or contact me through the website and I'll get the meeting link and everything to you. You can get on Zoom with your computer, your tablet, your phone, whatever you want to use. We'll have a great time getting to know each other, maybe talk about the episode you just listened to, and show off our furry friends! So don't forget, it's this Sunday at 4 pm eastern, and I hope to see you there!

And a reminder, I'll be at Podcast Movement, a big podcasting conference, in Los Angeles later this month - so if you'll be there, let's connect.

And that brings us to this week's Listener Story, which needs a content warning because it includes a sexual attack. And by the way, if you have a story that's interesting, funny, unusual, or just entertaining in some way, and you can tell it in a few minutes, call it in to the Podcast Voice mail line anytime day or night – 727-386-9468. Stay safe, and I'll see you in two weeks.

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### (Listener story)

This is about a time I felt the most scared in my life. It was 2019 when I had booked a work trip to Istanbul with a director friend. We wanted to film this documentary about the most historic monumental places related to the Turkish Ottoman Empire. One of our filming spots in our list was this historic landmark called the Galata Tower, which was the tallest building during the Ottoman Empire - it also showed a bird's eye view of the whole city of Istanbul. When we arrived at our location to film - we were quite late - the queue of tourists surrounding the tower was insanely long, so we decided to call it off.

We had supper at this nearby cafe where we came to learn that right next to the Galata Tower is supposed to be this beautiful remote hotel, which was a 400-year-old rickety building and was supposedly the most haunted building in the area. Tourists would avoid spending the night at this hotel, so it immediately caught our attention. We went inside this haunted hotel with my director friend and we went to the front desk to inquire further. There, we came across this rather beautiful concierge in his early 20s - a very timidly, shallow look alike if anything - and there is a reason I'm mentioning his appearance. Anyway, we told him that we didn't want to stay at this hotel, but if he can tell and confirm with us about the hauntings, which he did, that it indeed was a haunted building, supposedly - the third floor of this hotel is especially the one that scares people away. He kept insisting that he will give us a very good discount if we booked a stay in this hotel with his quite charming smile. Obviously, we were not into this. My director friend wasn't keen to talk about this, but I was very keen to film this 3rd floor because, obviously, it caught my attention.

So the following day, I decided to go ahead - my director called it off. I mean, I always had a thing for the haunted McCobb places so I went ahead solo. I thought I could film it on my iPhone and edit it in a documentary somehow. It was around sunset when I checked in at the front desk with a new concierge acquaintance. He offered me the high tea menu which came with a booking. So I had that high tea. I mean, obviously, it was dark outside now when I asked this concierge to guide me to the dreaded 3rd-floor suite that I was there for. The floor itself looked like an ordinary restored old hotel. I mean, the big suite bedroom, which was supposedly the most haunted bedroom - this building was already ajar with a very beautiful ambient lights on and everything. I mean, I was definitely nervous but the concierge had this warm, charming smile and I wasn't alone. So I went inside, immersed myself in filming everything I could about this room, and took selfies. It took me about 10 minutes to realize that the concierge man wasn't there so I had a mini heart attack, obviously. I mean, I didn't know when the hell did he took off, so I decided to take my leave as well. I mean, obviously, I didn't want to be alone in this room. At that point, I realized that the door of the room was locked. I tried to push the door open with all my force. I mean, I was having a mini heart attack. I naturally started shouting and hammering at this door.

At the very far end of this room, the bathroom door opened, and out there came the concierge. I mean, I started laughing rather relieved because, I mean, obviously, I wasn't alone. I had assumed that he had run off and locked me inside as some joke. When he came out to the bathroom, he wasn't laughing anymore. I mean, he had a poker face or, rather, a stern expression. In a way, he had quite a strange expression on his face - it was, sort of, robotic. He came to me and quickly took my phone away from my hand. Then, he forcibly thrust me towards the bed. It was this insane blur. I mean, it was this mental lapse of things as my brain was unable to acknowledge what was happening at that moment. So, I wasn't even fighting back. I mean, he was on top of me on this bed and was trying to untie both his and my clothes. So, I

was frozen, both mentally and physically. I mean, I don't think that this sort of fear can be categorized. I mean, I lost my voice. Obviously, my attempts to push him away weren't working on his violent physical force on me. All I could muster was, "Please, please, please, stop, stop, stop."

In a passing moment of trying to think my way out, I stopped struggling when he was on top of me and started getting him back which, kind of, took him by surprise. I mean, my minor cooperation shocked him and his strong physical force on me relaxed. He looked into my face with, like, a surprised look, like, "Okay, so this girl is into this assault. She's like consenting to it." I mean, obviously, I had already planned this mentally. So, I asked him if I can go to the bathroom and he was fine. He gestured 'Okay'. So, when I had locked myself in the bathroom and started shouting like a maniac, he realized my getaway plan. I think it probably took him 10-15 seconds to make a run for it out of the room before anyone came to my rescue. Thus, I saved myself from this horrible incident. I mean, in hindsight, I kind of realized that the devils who are malevolent are mostly in human forms rather than 400-year-old specters of the haunted building.