

Episode 83: Shareen was rammed with her own car

I remember the first time I was ever exposed to domestic violence.

My home life growing up was very much non-violent. I was the oldest of 3 boys, and of course we fought sometimes just like all brothers do. But really it was more arguing than fighting. We never got violent with each other.

And my parents? I could never imagine either of them even thinking about hitting the other. It's just not something that would ever be considered. They had been married for 56 years when my dad passed away in 2016.

So I guess you could say I grew up pretty sheltered from that kind of thing. I just never saw it.

But there was a time when I had a regular job, working in an office with probably 30 or 40 other people. This was quite a few years ago, and it was here in Florida, in downtown Tampa. I went in to work one day, and that morning I was surprised to see one of my co-workers, a young lady probably around 25 or so, had come to work with a bad black eye. Actually it was more than her eye – much of one side of her face was bruised and swollen.

And when I saw her, in my sheltered little world I actually wondered what had happened. I didn't ask her about it, because we weren't what you would call "close" friends, and it was really none of my business anyway. But later on as I heard others discussing it, I realized that she had been attacked by her boyfriend. And at first I was really surprised – like why would anyone do that? She's such a nice girl, always smiling, always friendly. Didn't make sense. Then I got angry. I imagined what it would be like if someone did that to my wife, or my daughter.

So that was my first exposure to the results of domestic violence. But the reality is that it's very, very common. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, more than 1 out of 3 women and 1 out of 4 men in the US will experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner.

That's the situation that Shareen found herself in. She was in constant fear of Jerome's anger and his violence. And she didn't think there was any way out for her. Finally, she confided in a co-worker – and neither of them had any idea of the terrifying experience they were gonna have that day.

Scott

Can you describe the first time you met Jerome?

Shareen

We had met on a dating site and he had come over for dinner, something simple like that. I had been single for a few months and he seemed really nice and really calm. Just like the kind of person you would want to be around. We weren't exclusive for about a week or so, but we ended up really liking each other and we had good chemistry at the time.

Scott

What was it about him that kind of caught your eye? What did you like about him?

Shareen

Me personally, whenever I meet someone I like to meet people that can keep up with me conversation wise, intellectually or politically. If I say something I want them to have an opinion. He was after a relationship, not just a meet up, so that was what I liked about him.

Scott

Do you remember the first sign of trouble? How long had you been dating when that happened?

Shareen

Let me answer that in two parts. I got pregnant very quickly, within a month of us dating. The first time that I really suspected, "Oh wow this was a terrible decision" was when I told him I was pregnant. He asked me, "When are we getting an abortion?" That just struck me to the core and I was like, "Oh no!" Then this feeling of dread that this was not good. That wasn't the only time he asked me for an abortion either, just the first time.

Scott

Obviously this was not something that you had planned out or talked about ahead of time at all.

Shareen

No, we hadn't had a conversation about family planning. But we're adults, we knew what would happen, so it wasn't unexpected at the same time.

Scott

So then, at some point after that, I assume, he began to be abusive. What happened then?

Shareen

So I noticed that whenever he was at home his phone would go off and the icon for the specific dating site that we actually met on, it was very noticeable. I had asked him about it and he would yell at me saying that I was so stupid, he already told me he wasn't on it, that I should just ignore it. Like saying, "Wow how could you be so dumb. I'm sitting here with you aren't I?" Stuff like that. After that he started getting where every day would escalate. There was one point where he would lock me in our bedroom and he would play his game on Xbox and talk to his girlfriend on the Xbox game and I'd be in the back room pregnant and crying. It was pretty awful. There was not a lot of good time in this relationship.

Scott

You had to, at that point, be thinking, "How in the world did I get myself in this mess?"

Shareen

Oh yeah. Like backed into a corner with no ladder. We both had jobs so financially we were both contributing to this apartment. Like so many situations of domestic violence that financial obligation is something that keeps women where they are. I didn't have money to move anywhere, I had no one to take me in, so I felt stuck.

Scott

Were there ever any cases of physical abuse?

Shareen

Yes. There was a situation where we were sitting on the couch. He was wearing a leather belt and he was really skinny so there was a lot of extra belt there, and he grabbed it and hit me on

the arm. I was like, "Ow!" I guess he liked my reaction because he took his belt off and just started hitting me with it. It was so awful. I ran to the bathroom and he stopped but he had this big smile on his face, it was so creepy. It was really awful.

There was one instance where we were arguing about something. My spirit wasn't broken at that point because we were still actively fighting even though he was abusive. He had hit me square across the face, again, pregnant. So I fell and was just thinking, "Wow, I need to end this." At that point I was like, "Ok, I need to start making a plan." This was about 6 months in I wanna say.

Scott

It's fairly common in abuse situations like this for the abuser to, after the incident, somehow come to a change of mind and apologize and say it's not gonna happen again. Did he make that switch or was he always in a bad mood?

Shareen

You know it's funny that you say that. I know that it's normal that they say sorry but then do it again. In this case, I think he had me so under his thumb, he didn't even feel the need to apologize or make things right. He had me pregnant, he had me locked away, and he used that power to his advantage. He never said sorry; never.

Scott

Did he eventually become ok with the fact that you were going to have the baby?

Shareen

I don't think he ever did. When I had the baby, at that point he was like, "Oh I'm a father again!" He has another daughter and they moved states away to get away from him. So he was saying, "A daughter I can actually see!" To be honest that scared me a little more.

Scott

There was one time that you were in the hospital. What happened then?

Shareen

I went to a routine doctor's visit. At that point in the pregnancy I was seeing the doctor on a monthly basis. I went in to get checked out and they said, "Wow your blood pressure is so high, go to the ER right now. Don't even wait. Leave and go to the hospital." I did. The ER admitted me. They put me in a labor and delivery room. Basically I slept all day while they had a saline drip in me. At the end of the day when it was time to pick him up from work, I was so afraid of this man and so scared of what his reaction would be if I wasn't there to pick him up, that I signed myself out of the hospital against medical advice. Three nurses came separately and tried to talk me out of it. No one could talk me out of leaving. I signed my name, left the building, and I went to go pick him up. I never told him that I was in the hospital.

Scott

It's hard to believe, this is such a dysfunctional relationship with this guy, how did you start forming a plan to get away?

Shareen

That part came later. I really didn't know what to do. Leading up to the big incident, what happened that day, I believe it was a Wednesday, he and I were talking as he was driving me in

my car to drop me off at work. He was saying, "I'll deal with you. Just wait till you get home." I felt scared. I thought, "I don't know what's going to happen. He's already done so much it only gets worse." I knew that in the back of my mind. So during my lunch break I confessed to my friend at work what was happening at home. She was appalled. I learned this later, but she had witnessed her mother and father involved in domestic violence. She took a very active stance to make sure that I did not go home with him that night. She took me to her house and she clothed me and fed me. She prompted me to call the police and file a report on him for the abuse I'd suffered of the abuses I'd suffered before. Nothing really came of it but I was glad to have a record of my report. That really was more important to me at that time than the prosecution of those charges. Just to have it written down, I said he did these things.

Scott

That coworker is a really good friend.

Shareen

She was amazing. She went through so much. She didn't even have to. We need more people like her in the world. I try to be that person.

Scott

Absolutely. Well this is a good thing for people to hear. If someone you work with, a friend, a relative or anyone even hints that something like this is going on, it's much better to be proactive. Say, "Hey, tell me what's happening and let's get you out of that situation." So many people don't really know what to do. They might say, "Well if there's anything I can do let me know." But you have to be more aggressive than that in this situation, right?

Shareen

Absolutely. One other thing to keep in mind is, you might be the only person that person tells. "If this person can't help me, no one can help me" is the mindset. So when I told her that I was taking it on faith that something would happen, it was a cry for help. I was in effect saying, "Please help me! I can't help myself." That's really what it is about domestic violence that makes it so unusual. We know we need help but we can't help ourselves.

Scott

Well you sure picked the right person to confide in. So what happened the next day?

Shareen

That whole night he was blowing my phone up and leaving threatening messages. What I did was I didn't actually listen to any of the messages that he left. I actually gave her my phone and let her listen to them. She told me that he was talking about destroying my things and saying, "Just wait till you get home" things like that. He was very angry and his anger increased with each message. So I knew that it was the right decision. That this was right for me to leave and there was no going back. We decided that before work, since we had the same schedule, we were going to drive by my house an hour early so I can go get my car. I had a set of car keys and he did too. So I was just gonna hop in my car and the two of us were going to drive to work.

We pulled into the parking lot and he was actually already in my car with the car on. It's covered parking so we pulled up right behind him. My windows were tinted so I didn't even see that he was there until I got almost up to the car. Then I saw him there and ran straight back into the car with her and said, "He's in there! We have to go." She immediately left. Before we even pulled out of the parking lot of the apartment complex he was behind us. I was on the phone with 911

because I wanted to keep a record of these things. I didn't know how bad it would get at that point, but I just knew that having 911 on the phone was essential.

We go straight down this street called Babcock. We went down a couple of miles and hit green lights the whole way, everything was fine but he was still right behind us. He was speeding up and slowing down trying to get us to pull over. She did a U-turn, got in line to take a left hand turn, trying to lose him basically. I didn't expect her to be a GTA driving aficionado or anything, but gosh he was so determined I don't think anyone could've gotten away from him to be honest. At that stop light she was at, he pulled up right behind us and started hitting her car with my car. So he was driving my car and he was ramming us. Reversing and ramming us again, right in the back. I have an aunt that works at police dispatch and she told me that this was the time that a bunch of people around me dialed into 911 to advise them that this was happening.

So he gets out of the car and comes to my window, I'm at the passenger side window, and he starts punching it. He's saying, "What did I do?! What did I do?!" I just thought, "If you can't answer that for yourself I can't help you." We had the light turn green and we drove away while he's in the middle of the street trying to talk to me. He jumps in the car, takes off, tries to hit us. So I said, "Slow down, maybe he'll drive past." No, he matched our speed. She does another U-turn about half a mile on this side street and turns onto a residential street which would have less people and vehicles on it.

What he did next was he sped up into us and turned the car into the right hand side of ours. That is an attempted pit maneuver. It's a vehicle driving technique that police use to disable a vehicle that they're chasing. We didn't spin out that time. He tried it one more time about a hundred yards ahead on the left hand side. He did end up spinning our car one time. It did not disable though. Then he turned around and actually rammed, what was my car, into my passenger side door. At this point, I am 8 months pregnant, I am heavily pregnant. He knows that I'm about to have this child and I was so scared at that point.

Again, our car was not disabled at that point. He rams her car, leaves a huge dent in the side of the passenger door. She tries to drive away. He does another successful pit maneuver and the vehicle spins 360 degrees, probably more than that, then disables. Cars have a mechanical thing where if they spin a certain amount it will actually cut off so the engine doesn't catch fire, or something like that.

Scott

A safety feature, yeah.

Shareen

Yes. So the car was in drive and off, and we were perpendicular to the road with our nose facing the ditch on the other side of traffic. What he did next kind of brought me to understand that I was about to die. At this point when the car spun I actually lost the phone and the 911 operator hung up on me actually. We ended up calling back later. We spun out, I lost the phone, I screamed, the car was dead. She can't restart it because it was in drive, but we didn't realize that yet. He came out of his car and with both hands started punching the window so hard, and I'm not kidding you, I saw this window bow in like 2 or 3 inches concave. It was crazy that it didn't break. It was a Toyota so, I don't know if that says anything special about Toyotas, but I'm so glad that the glass didn't break. He ended up breaking his hand. He had dislocated 2 fingers at the knuckle he was punching this window so hard.

Scott

He probably didn't even feel that with all the adrenaline that he had.

Shareen

Oh yeah. No way. He just kept going and there was blood on the window from where he was punching it, it was crazy. The next part takes place in about the span of 10 seconds. What he did next was he walked back to what was my car, opened the back seat, and I don't quite remember what the tool was, I think it was a crow bar or a tire iron. Then he started walking back to our car. I knew he was going to hit the window with that and it would break, obviously. So I had this moment of clarity, I don't know if it was divine intervention, but I had a moment of "Here's what you need to do step by step." I told her, "Put your foot on the brake." She did it immediately. I put her car in park, turned her keys to turn on the vehicle and said, "Go go go go go!" She spun out and drove away.

He was so close to us that when she drove away, the rear quarter panel on the passenger side of her car actually knocked him off his feet. It ended up breaking his hip bone. He walked with a can for several years because of that. We drove away. We ran like 2 or 3 stop lights. I said, "I hope they pull us over" (laughter) we were trying to get somebody's attention. We safely made sure nobody was there, we ran these lights and went right to the police substation. I fully believe he would've followed us if we hadn't run some stop lights. It was full on at that point. Either that or the pain had gotten to him where he decided to end it. I'm sure he was hurting at that point.

We ran to the substation. My door was bowed in, I was 8 months pregnant, and I'm a big lady at 5'9". So I had to climb over the seat 8 months pregnant and get out of her side because my door wouldn't even open. I ran barefoot into the substation screaming. The police there were like, "What is going on with you?" I was hiding in the hallway where I could, and we said, "We were just in a chase or something." Gosh it took so long for the police to arrive. We were literally there for maybe an hour and a half before any police showed up to the substation. It was then that I learned that police aren't usually at the substation, so weird.

Scott

That's what I was just wondering. Who even let you in? Was anybody there?

Shareen

There's a reception area, and those folks are not officers. They have detectives in the back but they aren't patrol, they are like the investigators. They don't handle street violence or anything like that. So we had to wait for uniform police to show up to actually take our report and take photos of the car and get our stories straight and everything. It was an ordeal.

Scott

He didn't follow you there at all? You didn't see him after that?

Shareen

I did remember that when we ran our first stop light that he stopped. He did not run it. At that point I think we had lost him, but adrenaline runs so heavy. We were scared for hours, we were just shaking. Her boyfriend had come and she was crying and he was holding her. I was just glad to not be in danger anymore. I had realized and had this kind of internal click thinking, "I'm going to die. I really hope that he doesn't cut me. I hope that maybe he strangles me so that my baby will live." I had those thoughts and I've never been the same. After you almost know that

you're going to die and you click that in your head; I mean I'm on meds and counseling now and that was 5 years ago. You just never get over that.

Scott

How did that change your view of death when you come that close to it? What changes in your mind?

Shareen

Well it definitely brought me closer to God. Number one, you don't realize how close you are. How thin that veil really is between you and the other side. So I am much deeper into God than I was before because it could happen at any time. It was so- gosh I can barely use words to describe that.

Scott

So the police came and took your report, what happened after that?

Shareen

I had mentioned earlier that I don't really have anyone here who could take me in, or help me. The closest person was my mother, who lives in Corpus Christi, which is roughly a 2.5 hour drive. So I called her. She left work immediately and drove from her job to that substation in her little Hyundai Tucson, and hugged me and looked at the car and just started crying. She hugged me and hugged the other girl and said to her, "Thank you for rescuing my baby." Like mamas do.

Scott

I can't imagine the gratitude that she would feel to your friend for being there for you in that situation.

Shareen

Yes. I mean she would've done anything for me. I was so happy to have her there and for her to drive me back to Corpus Christi. She kept me at her house for a couple of days during the search for him and I felt so safe there. It was nowhere that he knew about, he didn't have any contacts there and I changed my phone number the next day. I was so glad to have her.

Scott

How was he finally captured?

Shareen

To start off, my uncle is actually a Bear County Sheriff Lieutenant. He took it very personally that someone would treat his niece this way. His wife, the aunt that works in the dispatch room, gave him some firsthand knowledge about the severity of the situation and how dangerous he was. So he started a task force. Basically handpicked a number of sheriff's officers and gave them his picture and said, "We're out to get this guy today." One of those guys called me on the phone and said, "He's not at your home, do you know where he could be?" I knew exactly where he was and which friend's house he was at, so I told the officer how to get there. He ended up arresting him at that apartment. It was within 48 hours I wanna say, because it wasn't the very next day, I think it was the day after that on Friday.

Scott

It pays to know people in law enforcement.

Shareen

(laughter) Oh yes. My uncle is my hero in more ways than one. I love the guy to death. We don't talk too much but if anything happens to family we are right there.

Scott

So he was captured, and what was he charged with?

Shareen

The original charge was attempted murder. They had pleaded down to 2 counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. He was convicted on those 2 counts via a plea deal, and he took 8 years.

Scott

So he got sent away for 8 years, and when did he start doing that time? When did he go in??

Shareen

That would be the arrest date, which I know by heart, November 19, 2015. So that same day, November 19, 2023 is the day that he will be released.

Scott

2023. Seems like a long way off but seems like it will be here before you know it.

Shareen

Yeah. 2.5 years is a very short amount of time. I'm in a position where he knows my address. So I'm ready to change addresses and get us in a little different apartment just so we feel safe. He's just going to come right back. One thing he happened to mention to me one time, this was back when we were still together, was, "If they issue a restraining order, it's just a piece of paper. It won't stop me getting through your door." That scared the bejeezus out of me. So I am really focused. Being in the state of Texas, I'm going to go ahead and get a concealed carry permit. My dad took me to the shooting range to help me shoot out a pistol and a rifle so I was comfortable with it. Just for protection because you know, what's a lady to do?

Scott

You've gotta protect yourself for sure. Has he tried to get out early? Like go before the parole board or anything?

Shareen

Oh he sure did. He qualified for parole 4 years in, which was not this last year but the year before. I wrote a long letter to the parole board and they ended up denying him. The year after that, right before parole, he was still sending me letters. I sent him a letter saying, "Any further attempts will violate the 'Do Not Contact' order." That had been in place but I had never really stood up and said, "Stop talking to me." So I did that and then they turned around and denied his parole again. Now when you look at his information on the offender website it says, "Offender does not qualify for parole" and it lists 3 or 4 reasons. Bad behavior, drug use, victimization of other people, things like that are reasons they denied him.

Scott

So he stopped sending you letters? He stopped trying to contact you from prison?

Shareen

He's going on in a roundabout way. I literally received a letter from him last week. It's addressed to our daughter, and the letter is basically to her but I can read between the lines. I know that it's not to her, it's to me. Out of the 2 of us, I'm the one that reads. It's just one more attempt to get under my skin and get in my head, and I refuse to let that happen.

Scott

Can you implement an order that he can't contact her either?

Shareen

Actually that is an excellent idea. I have a court hearing on June 3rd, which is just a continuation of the child support agreement. I asked the judge, "I don't want any money from him, just keep him away." He doesn't have any visitation rights at all, supervised or not, and he doesn't have to pay child support. So I am going to ask for a restraining order and no contact order for her as well.

Scott

Yeah that seems to make sense. Did you ever get your car back?

Shareen

Yes. It took some searching. We ended up, after a few days, finding my vehicle in his mother's apartment complex in an area that she doesn't live in. It was parked in a handicapped spot, and I don't have handicapped tags. Under the hood a few wires had been cut. I don't know the name of the part but I called my dad and he came down and told me how to go to the parts guy at the dealership and ask for a specific part. It was a great learning experience for me. I bought the part for \$25, plugged it right on and the car started again. So I was able to drive my vehicle out of there and at least get access to it again. It just goes to show how determined he was to make this hard for me.

Scott

Hard to find and also, parking it in a handicapped spot, it could have been towed away by the time you got there.

Shareen

I'm really surprised it wasn't, yeah.

Scott

Well, I'm glad you got away from this guy. The happy ending, as you've mentioned already, you were pregnant at the time. The baby was ok?

Shareen

Joy Victoria is what I named her. I ended up having to have an emergency C-section. I had a condition called pre-eclampsia, which is basically a big word for hugely high blood pressure, you might have a seizure, we have to take the baby out quickly. So they ended up taking her out and they did find a heart condition. So she has something called SVT which is a malformation of her heart muscle. She had pediatric cardiologists, EKG's, all these things up until about 6-7 months of age. Then her cardiologist told me that he's not seeing any more abnormalities, her heart rate maintains by itself. We had weaned off medicine at this point, really strong medicine, poor baby. Now she is one of the best students in her class, has a great attitude, just the best little girl. Her name Joy Victoria, the reason I named her that, is that we are victorious in the joy

of the Lord. At the end of the day I have a little girl who is my world. I love her to death, she is just the best little girl. She has so much in store for her. She loves science and she is the star of the show.

Scott

Yeah. Does she know the history of who her father is? Have you thought about how to tell her that story?

Shareen

With young kids, you don't want to give them information they can't handle. I have told her, because she is old enough to ask, "Where's my dad?" I did tell her that her father was in prison. I did tell her that he was violent. She really doesn't have any interest in speaking with him. She did have him on the phone once, actually the last time they ever spoke on the phone. He used to call my phone trying to talk to her and I did let them speak. She said, "Did you hit mom?" I was like, "Whoa this is deep." The girl was like 3 or 4 years old. He said, "Yes, but I'm so sorry." Something cheesy like that. She handed me the phone back and said, "I don't wanna talk to him." That was it. So she is kind of detached from it I think. I haven't socialized her with him so she's not missing anything.

Scott

At this point, and ever since she was born, you are her life. That's the way it should be.

Shareen

Yeah.

Scott

Shareen, if somebody is listening to this and is in a situation like you were in, what would you say to them?

Shareen

I would say that you definitely need to tell someone. The dynamic of that type of relationship is power and control. You will not be able to leave by yourself and the most dangerous time in that particular kind of relationship is when the woman or the abused person decides to leave. It can be a life threatening type of situation. Any police officer will tell you that domestic violence calls are the most dangerous. It's something you are going to need help with and it's ok to ask for help. You're not weak, you're just in a situation that requires somebody else to help you. Hopefully I've reached out to someone who needed to hear that.

Scott

You mentioned part of this was being stuck financially in one place and feeling like you don't really have any resources to go anywhere. What does someone do in that case?

Shareen

What it did, and what I think a lot of women do, is say, "Well, I can deal with this. At least I have a roof over my head. We're not on the streets." Let me stop you right there. Haven for Hope is the shelter here. Being there on a concrete floor would've been safer than being at home with that man. You really need to evaluate priorities here. The children are watching and they'll learn these things. If the abused person is the woman then the girls will learn to be abused. Then conversely, if the man is the one being abused then the boys will learn how to abuse or how to be abused. It's a horrible cycle, it will just continue if you don't do something about it.

Scott

As bad as it was, what happened, it's scary to think about what if you had actually gone ahead and gone home that night.

Shareen

I've done a lot of "what-ifs" in my mind. Maybe nothing would've happened that night, maybe it would've been next week, but it would have happened. I would've been hurt. Something would have happened. It always gets worse. It never gets better.

As you just heard, what saved Shareen was the fact that she confided in someone. If you're in an abusive or violent relationship, please tell someone. If you don't have a person in your life you can talk to directly, here in the US you can get in touch with the National Domestic Violence Hotline. You can call them at 800-799-7233, or you can text the word START to 88788, or you can chat live with someone on their website at THEHOTLINE.ORG. I'll have all this information in the show notes for this episode, at WhatWasThatLike.com/83.

And if you enjoyed this episode, there's a previous one that you might like also – episode 24 was with Marina, and she too was attacked by a man, while she was pregnant. Here's a clip from episode 24, titled "Marina was stalked" –

Marina

He said, "The only way it's going to stop is if you do what I say." I told him, "No." I wasn't going to do it. The next thing I remember was the grip letting go. I heard myself scream, I don't remember doing it but I heard myself scream. Then I just went limp. I remember feeling every one of the stabs in my back, in my head the knife was going down."

At the end of the last episode, I mentioned that I post crazy stuff on Instagram a few times each week, and I told you that anyone who follows me will get a DM from me, asking if you have any crazy stories that might work for the podcast. And a bunch of you did follow me over there. One person replied to my DM and said, "Hey, I heard you say I would get a DM from you, and I actually did!" Well, of course! I'm always interested in talking to YOU, you lover of weird stories. My Instagram is [WhatWasThatLike](http://WhatWasThatLike.com).

And you've heard me talk about the Raw Audio bonus episodes. Raw Audio 16 was just released, and there are some emergency situations and 911 calls that will probably make you angry when you hear what actually happened. In this episode, an elderly woman calls because her house is on fire – and she can't move –

911 Operator

Ok, what type of building is involved?

Woman

It's a log house, with a tin roof. It's coming from the roof I think. I don't know!

A man calls 911 while he's driving, because he's chasing another car –

911 Operator

So you're chasing him because he shot your dog?

Man

Yeah, that's right.

911 Operator

Do you know who these people are?

Man

I have no idea.

And a college student calls for help because her roommate is unresponsive

(Audible crying)

911 Operator

Is there somebody else there that can do CPR?

Girl

No, no.

911 Operator

I can walk you guys through it.

Girl

(crying) Oh my god!

You can get the full 911 call AND the story behind each one by becoming a patron of this podcast for \$5 a month. You can do that at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](https://www.whatwasthatlike.com/support)

And if you'd like to contact me, you can message me through the website, or by good ol' snail mail, at PO Box 5, Safety Harbor FL 34695.

And now, here's this week's Listener Story. Stay safe, and I'll see you next time.

Elizabeth

Hi, my name is Elizabeth and this is my story of 'what was it like'. When I got out of bed on May 12th 2017 to walk my 2 German Shepherds, I could never have imagined in a million years what was about to happen to me. I live in Arizona, and because of the heat I get up at 5 a.m. to walk my dogs. It is my routine everyday to walk them on a pathway next to a desert wash behind our local library, a few miles from my home. I love the remote quietness of the area.

As I drove into the parking lot that Friday morning, just as the sun was starting to rise, I noticed a car and thought it was odd. Usually no one was there. I leashed up the dogs and began walking down the path I usually walk down. We hadn't gotten very far when I started hearing a loud rasping sound. I looked down to my left, where it was coming from, and I saw a man sitting on the ground, his legs crossed, slouched over and leaning against a brick fence pillar. I approached him and said, "Sir, are you ok?" I asked him again, no answer. He continued taking deep labored breaths. He still did not respond. He was dressed very neatly in blue jeans, a light blue striped long sleeve shirt, white tennis shoes and wearing a gold wedding band on his ring finger.

Then I noticed the front of his shirt was covered in blood and blood was pouring out of his right temple. I saw what looked like a flashlight near his leg and I thought maybe he fell. As I got closer I realized it was the barrel of a gun. I fumbled in my pocket for my cell phone and called 911. I told the dispatcher there was a man covered in blood near the library. Strange things started going through my head like, I was probably going to be late for work, who was going to believe me that I found someone shot in the head? So I took a picture. Within a few minutes police cars started showing up. I directed the first responding officer to the location. The officer leaned over and picked up a .22 caliber black revolver handgun laying next to the man's leg, and placed it in a bag. As I stood there with my 2 dogs, more and more police officers kept arriving until the parking lot was full of red and blue flashing lights. Several officers cordoned off the area with yellow crime scene tape. It felt very strange standing on the inside of crime scene tape.

An ambulance arrived and transported the man to a nearby trauma center. There was an officer assigned to stay with me and my dogs. Finally the lead officer came over to talk to me. He asked me some questions about who I was and how I came to find this man. I said, "I was just a complete stranger out walking my dogs." Several hours later I was finally cleared to leave the scene. I learned from the police that the man passed away 4 days later. To this day, I don't know his name. I always wondered if I had shown up maybe 20 minutes earlier, would I have been able to stop him? I don't know. I think about him everyday when I pass by the spot where I found him.