

## **Episode 63: Liz discovered a suicide**

Welcome to What Was That Like. I'm your host, Scott Johnson. This is a show where we talk to regular people - people just like you and just like me - who have found themselves in an extremely unusual situation. We'll hear their stories and get inside their head because we all want to know what was that like. More information about each episode at [whatwasthatlike.com](http://whatwasthatlike.com). Here we go.

Very few things in life could be more traumatic or horrifying than discovering a suicide.

The world was shocked back in August of 2014, when police announced that legendary actor and comedian Robin Williams was found by his personal assistant, having committed suicide. This was the police announcement on that day.

### **Police**

On August 11, 2014, at approximately 11:55 AM, Marion County Communications received a 911 telephone call reporting that a male adult had been located unconscious and not breathing inside his residence. The caller was distraught and indicated at that time that an apparent suicide due to a hanging had taken place and that rigor mortis had set in. The sheriff's office, as well as representatives of the Tiburon Fire Department and Southern Red Fire Protection District were dispatched to the incident with emergency personnel arriving on the scene at 12 PM. The male subject who was pronounced deceased by firefighters from the Tiburon Fire Department at 12:02 PM has been identified as Robin McLaurin Williams, a 63-year-old resident of unincorporated Tiburon, California.

Preliminary information - developed during the investigation by coroner division personnel - has revealed Mr. Williams had been seeking treatment for depression. Mr. Williams was last seen alive by his wife at approximately 10:30 PM on August 10, 2014. When she retired for the evening in a room in the home, Mr. Williams personal assistant became concerned at approximately 11:45 AM when he failed to respond to knocks on his bedroom door. At that time, the personal assistant was able to gain access to Mr. Williams bedroom and entered the bedroom to find Mr. William clothed, in a seated position, unresponsive, and with a belt secured around his neck with the other end of the belt wedged between the closet door and the doorframe. His right shoulder area was touching the door with his body perpendicular to the door and slightly suspended. The inside of Mr. Williams left wrist had several acute superficial transverse cuts. A pocket knife with a closed blade was located in close proximity to Mr. Williams. The pocket knife was examined and a dry red material was located on the blade of the knife, which appeared consistent with dried blood. It is unknown at this time if the dried red material is, in fact, blood or if it is Mr. William's blood. Scientific testing will be conducted to evaluate its investigative value. Preliminary results of the forensic examination revealed supporting physical signs that Mr. Williams life ended from asphyxia due to hanging. Toxicology testing will be conducted to determine if Mr. Williams had any chemical substances in his system at the time of his death.

### **Scott**

There are so many factors to consider in that case, but I remember that when this happened, I kept thinking about how that person, his assistant, felt as she entered that room and discovered him on that Monday morning. She had worked with him for over 20 years, and it was more than just an employer – employee relationship. They were also close personal friends. It's hard to imagine going through something like that.

Our guest today is Liz. She has experienced this as well. But the suicide she discovered was not her boss, or just a close friend. It was her husband.

Going through that would be bad enough. But for this podcast episode, Liz has even another story that is almost completely unrelated to her husband's suicide. She's been through a lot, and now she works trying to help people who have gone through similar tragedies. Check the show notes for links to her book, and the work she's doing.

A warning: this episode contains descriptions of graphic violence against a child. It's definitely not suitable for everyone.

If you'd like to support this podcast and get access to all of the exclusive bonus episodes, you can do that at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](https://www.WhatWasThatLike.com/support).

And now, please enjoy my conversation with Liz.

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**Scott**

How did you and your husband, Ben, meet? How did your paths cross?

**Liz**

I believe it was both through Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous - I can't remember which one came first. We were both going to both meetings in the same town, and he was more of a newer entry. I think I probably had 12 years at the time when I first met him. So, he was new. I just, kind of, got to know him a little bit. After about a year - because you're not supposed to date newcomers, especially someone with a lot of time- I was actually interested in learning Hebrew and one of our mutual friends said, "Ben knows Hebrew." I said, "Really? Why?" He said, "He's Jewish." I said, "He's Jewish?" He went, "Yeah." Then I thought about his name and some of these other things, and I was like, "Oh, yeah..." So that's how we got together. We dated for about a year-ish and got engaged. Then, we ended up getting married and having our baby.

**Scott**

What kind of work were each of you doing at that time?

**Liz**

I believe, through the dating, he was doing electrical and he wasn't very happy with it. So after somewhere right around the time we got married, I actually helped him find a job in patient care. He was working for, like, a family-owned and operated facility in St. Augustine for people who had been either mentally or physically handicapped, and he just loved it. He was a real helper. I was working also in the helping fields. I was a professor for the first couple of years. Then, after we had our child, I got another job and it was really one of the best things for me. I went back into the clinical world and got my clinical license and my doctorate, and that really helped me in my profession. Laboratory medicine is what I ended up doing afterwards.

**Scott**

It sounds like the story of a happy family. You guys were living in St. Augustine, Florida and life was good.

**Liz**

Everything was really good, yeah. I mean, we had the usual things, I guess, that young couples have. I wasn't as young as he was. We did have an age difference. I was 15 years older. I mean, my mom tried to help me understand some things because it seemed like he was becoming, maybe, unhappy or something. Asher was 2 years old at that time. My mom said, maybe, sometimes, men start to get uncomfortable when the child starts talking and being a little bit more of a person - they are much more comfortable when it's not as much of a personality involved.

**Scott**

So it sounded like everything was going well. Then, there was that one Friday. Can you tell us what happened that day?

**Liz**

It was just like any other day, I left in the morning. He was taking our son to school. So he said goodbye to everybody, left, and went to work. I went to work. He had just started working on the day shift because we were trying to have our marriage a little bit back together again because we were working opposite shifts to take care of the baby by ourselves, but we realized that our marriage was suffering a little bit, so we both went on day shift. He was working in St. Augustine and I was working in Jacksonville. We had a place in Jacksonville for the Sabbath for religion for the weekend. In that particular one, I was going to pick up Asher after work and bring him down to St. Augustine because we weren't going to be doing our normal weekend thing there.

We were gonna go over to Disney World that Friday night instead. Our reason was because Asher was turning 3 in a couple of months and it was going to be our last opportunity to get him into Disney World for free. Me and Ben were big Disney World fans. Even as adults, that was what we love to do. We had season tickets and everything all the time. So after Asher was born, all three of us— anyway, I picked up Asher. As I was driving down the road, Asher fell asleep, which he had really never done, so it was a very different day even from that point. It was like, "Okay, he fell asleep on the drive down."

We got to the house. Actually, I tried to call Ben a couple of times. I wanted to let him know that I had packed the food and all of that. Even though it was the Sabbath, we weren't going to be in our usual place. I had packed all of our kosher food, we were gonna go to our friend's house, then we were going to have our little sort of Sabbath meal that night, and then go to Disney during the day, on Saturday. Anyway, he wasn't answering his phone, which was unusual. I believe I called my former father-in-law and I asked him if he had talked to Ben. He said, "No, I didn't. Why?" I said, "Well, because I'm trying to get a hold of him." So I went home. When I got there, Asher was still asleep and I didn't want to wake him up. It was the first cool day out of the whole year since the summer started in St. Augustine - I know you know about that area. I said, "Well, it's cool enough. I'm going to put up the sunroof and turn the car completely off." I felt like that was safe and I just, like, popped my head in the house because I figured he was gonna be ready to go - we were going to Disney World - and was so excited.

When I went in, that was the first moment that I kind of understood the term dead silences - it was really too silent. I was like, "Ben, are you ready to go?" I saw the door of the garage was open and the light was shining into the hallway there. I thought he was getting the winter clothes out of the attic because I had asked him to get the winter clothes out of the attic up in our Jacksonville home - he had done that so I figured he was getting them out. So I said, "What are

you doing?" I walked towards the door and looked into the garage, and he was hanging from the rafters, the steps to the opening up there were down, and his feet were up about 6 inches, sort of, slightly moving a little bit back and forth above the step.

So I just freaked out. I was like, "What did you do?!" I went to the phone and called 911. I must not have dialed 911 because it was busy - my mother always told me that 911 will never be busy - so I hung up the phone, ran out the door, and screamed to my neighbors who were all out there getting ready for big Friday night party, which they did every weekend at the end of my street. I said, "Somebody get help! And call 911! Ben tried to kill himself!" I ran back into the house and then I started trying to get him down. He had actually used the arm of one of his sweatshirts to go around his neck and he used the other arm to tie it around the rafter. I know it sounds unbelievable, but that's what he did. So, I really only had to just pull one thing for it to be loosened.

He fell and I stared at him for a couple of seconds because I thought the wind was gonna knock into him because he was actually warm. I knew he had just gotten home. I knew what his work schedule was. He was warm. I just stared at him. I remember saying, "What did you do?" What When he dropped, I was staring at him. While I was staring at him waiting for the air to rush into his lungs, my neighbors came running into the house. The wife of my next-door neighbor just started yelling, "Start doing CPR!" I guess I realized I was in shock. I knew I was just trained in CPR, so I dropped to my knees over top of him. Her husband had come in and he was opening the garage door or closing the garage door or something. Then, I think she was on the phone with somebody and she was like, "15 compressions now!" Then, she'd be like, "5 breaths now!" and I was just following her orders. I was just completely in shock.

Then, another neighbor came in and he stayed with me. He was actually, like, the fiancée or the boyfriend of another neighbor across the street - I didn't even know him that well, but I did get to know him very well in that moment and after. He said, "I'll do the chest compressions." I said, "I appreciate that. I just wanted to, kind of, be around Ben's face and his mouth anyway." So he started doing those. I was breathing into his lungs and we were checking the pulse. We thought we felt something very faint and I asked him, "I think I feel something really faint." My mom was a nurse and she told me afterwards that you probably felt your own heartbeat because that happens a lot.

We were giving him CPR. Then, the ambulance came and took him in the ambulance. We went outside. The neighbors were all asking me, "Where's Asher?" I looked and I said, "He's in the car and he was still asleep." Again, it was, like, a miracle. So, I do firmly believe it was my Higher Power putting him to sleep, and he still didn't wake up. Then, one of my neighbors said something about, "Do you want me to take him" or whatever. I said, "No, he's fine." They were, like, almost criticizing me and I said, "He's fine. Just leave him alone." because I didn't want him to see all this stuff. We were trying to reach my father-in-law then.

We were all outside. Everybody was like, "What can I do? How can I help?" They were still working on my husband in the ambulance right on the edge of my property. They took my phone, so I said, "Please call my mother-in-law. Call my father-in-law." The ambulance wanted to leave, so I followed from behind. My mother asked me, "Were the siren sung?" I said, "No." She said, "He wasn't alive. They will turn the sirens on if they were alive." So I learned a lot of things that night. I was driving behind him hoping and thinking that we were going to see him again. I called my friend in Orlando on the way and I said, "I'm not coming tonight." He said,

"Why?" I said, "Because Ben tried to kill himself." That was, like, the first of this story that I started telling and it became, like, every day for me for months and months on end.

**Scott**

Did he leave a note?

**Liz**

No, he didn't. But what he did was he left his glasses on the counter of the kitchen. He told me that, a long time ago, when we were dating, he couldn't see my face if we were even more than a foot apart, so he needed his glasses for everything. Well, the weird thing was - and this is like some of those previews or clues or hints or something- he was a big CSI TV show fan - the Las Vegas one. They would just watch it the week before. In that one, this started out with somebody who has fallen from a high place. They got to the crime scene - one of them went upstairs, the other one was down below. They're trying to figure out if it was a murder or suicide. The guy automatically said, "This is a suicide." He saw the outline of the glasses on the bridge, but there was no glasses. He said, "Well, how do you know if it's a suicide right away? He said, "Because if they're wearing glasses - they're glass-wearers - they'll take them off because they don't want to see. They need those glasses to see everything else in life, but when they're going to take their own life, they usually leave them behind because they don't want to see their own death." So, that's what came to my mind when I saw those glasses on the counter. I said that was his message to me.

The other actual message that he left me, which I don't feel very good about- he took his wedding band off and he left it in the cup holder in the car before he got out of the car that night. I don't know why he did that. Maybe he just didn't want it on his finger for somebody to have to take off later or something. He knew what he was going to do when he got out of the car from work. I was told, "Don't even question that. Oftentimes, it's better to not leave a note." Although I had a lot of questions. I do believe I know everything that I need to know about why he did what he did.

**Scott**

Talk about opposite extremes. I mean, from a happy family headed to Disney World to this unexpected death. It's no wonder you were in shock. Afterward, when your in-laws arrived into town, what happened then?

**Liz**

My sister said that that turned the trauma - I think the way she said it was - into a tragedy. I mean, it was worse. I mean, whatever it was, they made it worse. If it could possibly be the imagined "worse", they turned that into even a worse situation. As soon as my mother-in-law came in- well, let me just explain as far as the Jewish religion goes. We already knew how he died because I found him and I tried to give him CPR. My father-in-law was there. They asked us about the body and everything. After we finally left, we were there for hours. People were visiting Ben and we were saying prayers over him in the hospital room. Then, they took him downstairs. We told them that they don't need to do an autopsy because we know how he passed away and we didn't want his body cut up for religious purposes, and we wanted to get him buried right away. We made that decision and we told them that.

The next day, my mother-in-law came into town, and so did my mom. I reached out to my mother-in-law, and I said, "You're gonna come over because there should be Shiva in the home. There should be visitations and all that stuff in the home of the bereaved immediate family,

which was me and Asher." She said, "No." I said, "Where are you?" She was like, "I'm in a hotel." So she wasn't even in my father-in-law's house or grandparent-in-law's house, or her in-laws. I was like, "What are you doing in a hotel? Why aren't you coming over?" She just said, "We're just gonna stay here." I thought that was weird.

Then, the next day, on Saturday, she didn't come over, I had all these people in and out. Then, on Sunday, the rabbi came to our home. Then, my in-laws came to speak to the rabbi about the burial, the eulogy, and all this. The only thing they kept saying was "Ben was so happy. Ben was so happy. Ben was so happy." So, on this day, when she came over and they were talking, the rabbi asked, "When are we going to get the body?" I said, "It should be today." He said he heard it may have been Monday. Monday was now another Jewish holiday, so we really needed to get Ben in the ground, basically, because of the way things have to be done at a certain time because this was a joyous holiday. Then, people who are bereaved can't observe and can't go to funerals and do things like that on certain holidays that are supposed to be joyous.

### **Scott**

So you needed to contact the medical examiner? Is that right?

### **Liz**

I did. He told me, "Not going to be until Monday. We have to do an investigation. We have to do an autopsy." I said, "Why? We told you 'You don't need to and we don't want to'." I was almost horrified. He said, "Somebody from the family called and said that they suspected foul play." The only person that could have been was my mother-in-law or her influence because everything was fine on Friday night before she came into town. Then, she came into town on Saturday - all the way, she was acting til Sunday. My brother-in-law was the only sibling there. The sister-in-law didn't come. He was in with Asher in the back room next to where I was on the phone. I came out into the living room. My mother said, "What's wrong?" I just started shouting it out and I looked at my in-laws and I said, "It had to be you!" They were just looking like deer-in-headlights scared because they were, like, "We got found out". The rabbi was sitting there watching everything and I just said, "How could you do that? How could you do that to me? How could you do that to your grandson and your son and the memory of your son? How could you do that? Get out of the house now! Leave. I don't want you to ever come back to this house again. Get off my property!" And they did. They went out to the car.

The rabbi said a few words to me and stayed for a little bit to console me, but that was pretty much the end of all that. We saw them the following day at the burial. When my father-in-law went to hug my mom and one of my sisters, he was saying things like "It had to be an accident." My mother said, "This is not the place nor the time to say things like that, but he was trying to tell them that Ben didn't kill himself somehow.

### **Scott**

What about all the other family members? Did they have the opinion that it was suspicious or did they know that it was actually just a suicide?

### **Liz**

Well, of course, there were no problems at all with my family. I mean, my family just watched this horrifying stuff happen in bewilderment - maybe, it's because we have had experience with death. I lost my brother in a tragic car accident years before. We had to accept very painful things. My father passed away from a rare form of dementia and things like that. We had suicide in my family as well. My grandmother's mother took her life. My mom's niece - my first cousin -

took her life by hanging, and now this. I don't know what the reason is, but it was all on his side. At the burial, they all seemed fine, except from that point forward. That Sunday afternoon, my brother-in-law left with my in-laws. He didn't stay. Asher lost his whole father's side of the family that day - not only did he lose his dad. Asher was so close with his grandpa and his great-grandparents. From that Sunday, my father-in-law started telling everybody in St. Augustine recovery community that I killed Ben. He didn't even tell my mother-in-law, my grandmother-in-law - Ben's grandmother - that Ben died. They didn't even come to the funeral. I said, "Why aren't you telling grandma that Ben died?" So I didn't feel comfortable taking Asher over there because I didn't want to answer any questions about "Where is Ben?" He told me, "She can't know" or something like that. Then, eventually, I found out somehow that he did tell her, but then he must have told her that I was instrumental in his death because she never reached out. She actually passed away 2 months after Ben.

**Scott**

What was the final report from the medical examiner?

**Liz**

Yes. He died by self-inflicted - I think they use the word - exsanguination. They did find the redness around his neck from the sweatshirt. The police actually had to do an investigation because the medical examiner had to report that to the police. So, here was the other horrible experience for me. That Monday when we buried him, I took Asher and we completely moved our daily operating life to the Jacksonville home because Ben had died in the St. Augustine home and I wasn't ready to stay there day in and day out. Then, I got a call on Tuesday that I had to come back to St. Augustine to meet with the police officer, let him in my home again, and go over the whole story again. I had to go walk him through everything again because he had to do an investigation to see if it was a homicide or suicide.

**Scott**

For a lot of people, that whole thing would be certainly a horrific experience, but that's not your only story. What's incredible about this as you have another story of something that happened completely unrelated to your husband's suicide. Fast forward 4 years, you met someone named Levi. How did you meet him?

**Liz**

His former mother-in-law was a member of our Jewish community when we were in Arkansas. She was dispositioning her father who had passed away home with all of his belongings, and none of the rest of the Jewish community was helping her. I felt like I wanted to reach out a helping hand to another woman - a widow helping another Jewish woman. So, I went over to her house, brought my son, and helped her because it was a hoarder's mess. He was an old man from that generation back during the war and he was hurting a lot of things. I was familiar with that from my former in-laws. Levi was there, and I thought, "Boy, this must be a good guy because this is his ex-mother-in-law and she never said a bad word about him." So that's how I met him.

We started visiting. He was in Memphis at that time, so he was coming about a 2-hour drive between Memphis and Little Rock. He started coming over for Shabbat but we were, kind of, going to the Chabad anyway - the ultra-orthodox community - and he was orthodox. So we started going to services together, dating-ish, and whatever. I really wanted somebody that could do the role of a Jewish male for my son because I wanted him to, kind of, have a regular Jewish family. By now, he was probably about 6. Anyway, that's how we met.

Then, we quickly got engaged because that's kind of the way that they do it in the Orthodox communities - it's a little bit faster. We can zoom all the way up to two weeks before our wedding. We had ordered the head coverings. We had ordered the prayer books all with our names on them. We had the rabbi, the synagogue, and everything.

We had a little argument, like, almost over spilled milk, pretty much literally, and I cursed. He said, "God wouldn't like that" My curse was, like, "JC..."-- I'm Jewish, so it does not really occur to me. I said that and he was like, "Well, it's whatever, whatever." Anyway, that's pretty much it. Then, he said, "My deceased mom wouldn't like to know that you're talking like this, or whatever." And I said, my deceased dad wouldn't appreciate you giving me crap about this." He said, "My deceased mom wouldn't be happy with you wearing that ring." I said, "This is not me breaking up with you." I took my engagement ring off and I put it on the table. I said, "This is just me giving you your ring back. I will get a different ring because I'm not going to be manipulated by somebody because I'm wearing their parent's ring." I told him point blank, "I'm not breaking up with you. I just gonna get a different ring." Then he said, put the ring back on. He started ordering me - that has happened to me before in a relationship and that's not healthy. He said "Put the ring back on" and I said, "No. I just told you." Then he said, "Put the ring back on. I don't want this marriage to end up like how your last marriage ended." My last marriage ended with my husband taking his life. So, I just heard this guy telling me that if I don't do what he's telling me to do what he orders, he's gonna kill himself. That was an immediate red flag, so I said, "Now, that is me breaking up. Now this ring off my finger is us breaking up. I can't go forward with a marriage with somebody that's threatening to kill himself."

Then, he started trying to backpedal and I said, "No, I can't. I will never, ever, ever put me and my son in that situation ever again. Never." He drove away with his car packed with as much as he could and he left all this stuff in my garage, and I felt very bad for him because he was very upset. I'm sure he felt humiliated in this Jewish family and community and everything like this. Now, he's crawling back to the parents' house with just his car full of stuff.

### **Scott**

So he didn't go back to Memphis where he was? He went back to his parents' place in Brooklyn?

### **Liz**

Yes, he did - to the 3-story brownstone. Two years later, there were all this information on Facebook after the weekend about this little boy in Brooklyn that went missing after he walked. The parents, for the first time, allowed the kid to walk home. He was 9. My son was about to be 9, so they were the same age. They let him walk home from the summer camp that day because he begged them to please let him walk home. They went over the route and everything but he didn't come home when he finally did it on Monday. His name was Leiby Kletzky. Messages was all around the Jewish community and Facebook "Pray for Leiby, that'll find him."

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### **Female News Reporter**

We're following a developing story in Brooklyn. Police in Borough Park is looking for a young boy missing now for almost 24 hours. Leiby Kletzky never came home from the boy and day camp on 44th street yesterday afternoon. Eye witness news reporter, Anthony Johnson is live in Borough Park now with the very latest happening.

**Anthony Johnson**

You can imagine this as a parent's worst nightmare but many people out here are still holding out hope at this hour. It's been some 19 hours since they've last seen Leiby and still, at this point, there is no clue. Leiby Kletzky is described as a friendly 9-year-old and is the only son in a very large family. He has been missing since around 5 o'clock on Monday afternoon. He was last seen leaving this daycare location and he was supposed to meet his mother when he disappeared.

**Dov Hikind**

So far, everyone is perplexed. No one can figure this out.

**Anthony Johnson**

Assemblyman Hikind has been speaking directly to family members who are waiting for word inside their apartment. Patrols have been spread out throughout the entire community. Groups of people are searching the neighborhood and looking for clues to the boy's whereabouts. They have covered a 5-square-mile area since early this morning, and so far, nothing.

**Police**

Every building, every store, every synagogue, backyards, whatever you can think of - we're doing it all.

**Anthony Johnson**

The search is spreading and some 400 to 500 people are involved. Police have rallied all of their resources and are asking anyone who saw something suspicious to call. At this point, everyone is hoping for a good outcome and hesitates to think the worst.

**Dov Hikind**

We do hope for the best with every hour that goes by— where is this 9-year-old and what happened?

**Anthony Johnson**

Assemblyman Dov Hikind and community leaders are now offering a reward of \$25,000. These are some of the flyers that you can find around this community. This little child is described as being 4-feet tall, with black hair and brown eyes - or rather brown eyes and brown hair. He was wearing black sneakers, Navy pants, and a green and white shirt. Authority say, "If you have any information on this job, please give them a call."

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**Liz**

Two days later, on a Wednesday, I was working from home and had the TV on. They said that they have a break in Leiby's case. I looked at the TV and they have a picture of a car - they're talking at the same time as I'm watching this - and I said, "That looks like Levi's car." As I was thinking that, they were saying, "The suspect is the age of 35 years old." I said, "That would have been Levi's age." All of a sudden, I was starting to get freaked out and scared because it's in the exact same portion of Brooklyn where he was living - this car. Then, when they said that he had walked out of a dentist office, I knew it had to be Levi at that time because we had talked about his teeth and we were going to get his teeth fixed when we got married with my insurance. I thought, "Oh my God. What the heck." I don't even remember right now if it was that

very day they showed a picture of him when I got a phone call about a couple of minutes later from a member of the Jewish community - the President in the synagogue's wife - and she said, "Are you watching TV right now?" I said, "Yeah." She said, "That's Levi." I said, "I'm in shock. I was wondering." She said, "I think it is." It seemed like they had a picture of him up there for hours, and it was.

He was being arrested and they started calling him the Butcher of Brooklyn because his profession was an actual kosher butcher. They did have the cameras and it was a member of the Chabad ultra-orthodox Jewish community. This little boy was a member of the Chabad community. This man was always protecting the community and always did really extensive work more than the police often had time to do— he went to the stores and started knocking on them before the police did and he asked for all the film and the footage. That's when he saw Leiby asking a man in the video - there was no sound. They saw him approach a man that had a key part - Tzitzit, the Fringes on the Prayer Shawl - underneath his shirt because he was orthodox. So the little boy looked at Levi and thought, "He is safe. I can talk to him. He is just asking for directions." Levi ended up telling the whole story after he was arrested.

Then, he went into the dentist's office. He just told the little boy to wait. The man in the Jewish community who was watching these videos overnight just stayed up all night long before the cops ever got any of this. He took it all to the cops and he saw that Leiby stood there, waited for Levi to go in, pay his bill, come back out, and then got into Levi's car and left. He was on his way to a wedding. He went to the wedding. They've interviewed the people at the wedding. They said Levi was there but he stayed for a short time. They never saw a little boy. It turns out he left him in the car and the little boy stayed because, I guess, Levi was telling him, "I'll take you home after. I just gotta go run this errand or whatever."

Well, Levi's story is that when he got home that night, it was too late. So, he got up the next morning, which was now Tuesday morning - because all this was happening on Monday - and he went to work. He stayed at work. He worked a regular shift. They interviewed all those people. Then, on his walk back home, he saw all the posters everywhere and he felt like - in Leiby's words - that he was going to be in trouble. He did. I will say that he did tell me when we were engaged that he had a head injury when he was a youngster. Levi Aron had a head injury when he was younger. He did seem to have some mental impact from that. When we were engaged, I always thought, "Well, I'm really smart." So I got enough smarts for both of us, so it didn't bother me. I wasn't worried about that. I never knew that he had, like, a personality disorder or anything like that. I did find out, after he was arrested, that he did have a diagnosis in Memphis that I was never told about.

### **Scott**

So he saw those posters and thought, "Wow..."

### **Liz**

He got scared. He went home and crushed up some of his pharmaceuticals - some of his medication - put them in a tuna fish sandwich, and he fed the medication to the little boy, and that anaesthetized him. Then, he took a pillow and suffocated him. Then, he chopped off his feet and put his feet in his freezer for some reason. I believe that he may have done something with the rest of Leiby Kletzky's body - I want to make sure I say his name - and put them in a suitcase and carry the suitcase down to the dumpster a couple of blocks away on Tuesday night. On Wednesday, when they arrested him, he just showed them where everything was and he just told them that he got scared, he didn't feel like he could take him back or else he would

get in trouble, so he did what he did. They started coming to interview me and calling me because his ex-wife in Memphis gave them an indication that he was engaged to somebody in Little Rock, and she may have even given them my name

**Scott**

Part of the investigation was to talk to you about what was he like. Did he give any indication that he could do something like this? Was that kind of what they were asking?

**Liz**

Yes, it really was. When the police called me, they told me that nobody goes from 0 to 100 overnight. I said, "I don't think my testimony is going to help you with your case. I do believe that he did go from 0 to 100." They said, "Are there any signs?" I said, "You need to come and talk to me if you want to talk to me." I didn't want to be on the phone with them. I wanted to separate and distance Asher from all this as much as possible, which I actually had been successful at doing for that long. So, they came - they flew down. I went to a different friend's house, like, 2 hours away from my home in Little Rock where we hosted the police officers. They asked me all these questions. They said, "We found a box of little girls' clothes." So they were trying to figure out if he was a sexual pedophile or something like that and there were other bodies or other babies or other kids somewhere. I said, "When he was moving, he had told me that he had found a box of his sister's clothes - the sister that died the year that we were dating. So, my belief is that those clothes are from his sister and I'm sure he kept him for sentimental value. He told me that he had little baby clothes of his own too. His mother died 5 years before I started dating him. I don't think the father was keeping the kids' baby clothes. So I think Levi was keeping his own baby clothes, maybe, for his child whenever he has one someday." Then, I told them, "There was never anything with my son and his ex-wife and Memphis." She testified as well. She had kids too. We were all just completely shocked that this happened.

**Scott**

What was the outcome of his case?

**Liz**

My understanding is that he didn't ever end up fighting it - I think that the lawyers probably tried to do some kind of insanity. I don't believe there's the death penalty in New York - if there is, he didn't get that.

**Man**

Sir Aron, is there anything you wish to say before I impose the agreed-upon sentence? The sentence of the court on your plead guilty to murder in the second degree is 25 years to life, on kidnapping in the second degree is 15 years in jail, followed by five years post-release supervision. The sentences shall run consecutive, meaning a minimum of 40 years before you would be eligible for parole.

**Liz**

The family of the little boy does have a memorial or a fund that anybody can contribute to.

**Scott**

Have you contacted him at all since then?

**Liz**

I have actually thought about it, but I don't want to appear to be sympathetic - I think it's mainly the reason why. I don't even really know what to say. I have thought about it, but I haven't acted on it.

### **Scott**

Hey, this is Scott jumping in here for just a minute. It makes perfect sense that Liz has not tried to communicate with Levi since he has begun serving his long sentence in prison because - it's true - what is there for her to say? But for me, as part of putting together this episode, I decided to reach out to Levi. I really had no idea what he would say. Obviously, nothing he said would justify what he did that day, but I still wanted to get his perspective. I contacted him at Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York, where he's being held. I asked him for his comments on what happened, and this is the message he sent back to me.

### **Levi**

I'll start by saying this incarceration had nothing to do with my relationship with Liz. It is a little hard for me to talk about it. I acted on a bad hallucination of something that happened to me 3 years prior to this case. I am trying to change and get better. Hopefully, the parole board will see that in 20 and a half years from now. The incident that happened to me was in 2008 before I met Liz. Anyway, for that incident, my younger brother was my witness. Unfortunately, he passed away 3 years ago in 2017. This incident that happened was when my brother picked me up from the airport. On the way to his house - we were in his car - someone walked up to me and spit on my face. Moving forward to the night of my crime, that is what I was seeing while he was with me. That is the reason why I snapped.

### **Liz**

Let's go back to Ben. My late husband had a mental illness and that's why he took his life. He was not in his right mind. The Catholic Church and the Jewish faith as well have put out messages and memos that people who take their own lives are not considered to be murderers, and they're not going to go to hell. They have improved that whole stigma because they're not in their right mind, and I do believe that. Even though Levi did this horrible thing and it's not to be forgiven and all this stuff, he was not in his right mind. I'm not saying that as an excuse. I'm just saying this is mental illness. This is why I wrote my book. This is why I'm going to write my second book, and these 2 stories that we're talking about are going to be in my second book. It is to help people with mental illness. 15% of the proceeds of my book are going to survivors, suicide organizations, or suicide prevention organizations. Hopefully, we're gonna put the link up for the suicide hotline.

One of the things that they asked us in AA or NA when we're going through the steps and stuff, we talked about how, sometimes, we're either at the brink of suicide or homicide - like, if I'm not going to kill myself, I might end up killing somebody else. So they are related. One of my feelings of guilt that I have for what happened to Leiby Kletzky - I know it's not necessarily rational - because it might have happened to my son - the first thing that I thought of was if I had married him, Leiby Kletzky would still be alive. That's what I felt because I felt like I would have gotten Levi some help, but everybody told me, "Then, you or your son might be dead." I do understand that but that's part of what I find.

### **Scott**

So it's pretty intense to think that you're almost married to someone who had the capability of doing that to a child. And when it actually happened, your son was about the same age as little Leiby who was killed. I'm sure that must have gone through your mind so many times.

**Liz**

Yes, it did. 7 to 10 days before Ben ended his life, he started ordering me around him and making something of nothing. He followed me out of the room because I left the bedroom to give him peace - because he told me to turn the light off, I left the bedroom and went out there. Then, he followed me out there. I said, "What are you doing?" He sat next to me and he was looking at me with a dead look in his eyes and started ordering me around like a dog. I don't even remember what he was saying. I just got up, started running to the phone, and I was going to call 911. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm going to call 911. I'm going to call the cops." He said, "Why?" I said, "Because you're scaring me right now. I'm afraid I'm going to be hurt." He said, "Okay, I'm gonna back off. Don't call them." I said, "Okay, but you need to stop ordering me around." I was trying to, like, get him back - get that look back in his eyes- not the dead look. Then, he said he was going to get in his car and he was gonna go somewhere, but nobody could find him, of course. I figured that he was probably going to try to hang himself in the woods because there was an indication of that situation, too. I said, "No, I need to be able to find you."

"Why?"

"Because I'm going to get our son out of the bed, bring him in the car, and follow you." I didn't want him to get in the car because I was afraid he might hurt somebody else too. He was so upset that he said, "I want to take a walk." He didn't end up going for the walk and into any of that stuff. He calmed down. The next morning, he reached his hand across the breakfast table, held my hand, and he said, "Thank you for not letting me leave the house last night." Then, a week later, he took his life. Then, I knew then that I had, at least, bought him another more week by whatever we had gone through that night. I knew then that it could have been me, or Asher or both of us because you always have this murder-suicide - not always, but there's a lot of murder-suicides, sadly. I realized, when Ben took his life a week later after I was worried about my safety, I was afraid he was going to kill me. Then, the same thing almost happened with Levi. He threatened to kill himself. I got out of it. Two years later, he ended up killing somebody else.

**Scott**

Well, it's clear to see why you have a passion to help people who are having mental health issues, suicidal tendencies, and that kind of thing. There's certainly a lot that you can offer them when they're going through something like that. What are your website and your book? Tell us a little bit about that and how people can find that.

**Liz**

My book is called "LIFE LAUNCH! Surviving the Storms of Physical and Sexual Abuse". Some of the physical abuse are these domestic violence and relationships that I've had in the past. It is the first 25 years of my life, so it doesn't cover these two stories that I'm doing with you today, Scott - that will be Book Two, along with a lot of other things. But yes, this podcast is perfect for me - that's the reason why I wrote the book - because I felt that my whole life has been like, "What was that like?" extraordinary situations. So many things have happened to me and my family that a normal person - I don't want to use the word "normal" to think that I'm not normal, but just in unusual situation- an adult person might only go through one or two of these things. I've been through so many traumas. My family has been through so many traumas. So that's the book and it can be found on Amazon. My website is [drlizlifelaunch.com](http://drlizlifelaunch.com). I have free healing resources on my website. You just click on the free healing resources link. In my book, I have a

lot of those same ones as well as links to the website and other meditations and prayers and things like that to try. My book has actually - I've been told by some of my friends and people that have read it - brought up a lot of things for them that they can relate to. Then, I offer prayers and meditations so that they can, kind of, tone some of that down and help people get through if it is bringing up some stuff for them in their life and, of course, all my healing resources - things that I've done personally that have helped me.

**Scott**

So your book is on Amazon. You've got your website. We've got videos on YouTube. You're on LinkedIn. So we'll have links to all that as well as, like you said, the suicide hotline link and the Memorial Fund for little Leiby - the little boy in Brooklyn - if anyone would like to contribute to that. Well, just a couple of incredible and sad stories. Thanks for sharing.

**Liz**

Thank you for having me and helping me get my message of hope and healing out to anybody that needs it.

**Scott**

Thanks to J.T. Sheerhart for providing the voiceover for the message from Levi Aaron.

And before we leave I've got a couple more exciting things to let you know about!

First up, right now I'm in the process of learning who you are. Yes, I'm talking to YOU. And I'm doing this through the 2020 What Was That Like Listener Survey. It's online at [WhatWasThatLike.com/survey](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/survey). Now, if you're in the Private Facebook group, you already know about the survey. Which is just one more reason to join that group.

Anyway, I want as many people as possible to complete the survey, and if you do, and you decide to leave me your contact information, you could win the \$50 Amazon gift card I'll be giving out LIVE on Zoom on October 30, 2020! If you're listening to this after that date, don't worry - I'll be doing more surveys in the years to come. This is open to ALL the listeners to this podcast, and it's limited to one survey completion per person. I'm doing this so that I can more accurately know what kind of stories you want to hear. So get over there and fill out the survey - it only takes a few minutes, and again it's at [WhatWasThatLike.com/survey](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/survey). Hopefully I'll see you in the Zoom live drawing on October 30!

And in the interest of sharing, I have another podcast to let you know about! This one is called the True Crime Fan Club. It's hosted by Lanie, and I'll have her tell you about it. See you back here in two weeks.

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(TCFC promo audio)

**Lanie**

Hi, I'm Lanie from the True Crime Fan Club podcast. If you're a true crime addict like I am, then my show is for you. I'll peel back the curtain and give you a glimpse into the life and crimes of some of the most demented minds. Check out the episode "Broken bonds" and listen to a brother reveal a deeply held secret. Or hear about the day that the heavy metal community will never forget in the episode "Dimebag". These episodes are just a sample of our catalogue, so

you have plenty to binge. Just search for True Crime Fan Club podcast on any podcatcher. You won't want to miss an episode.