

Episode 132: the Listener Stories from 2021

This is a bonus episode of What Was That Like.

If you're new to the show, this is not normally what you'll hear. What usually happens is I'll have someone come on the show to tell the story of something that happened to them. Something that was very unusual. At this point we have over 130 episodes, and a huge variety of stories – animal attacks, plane crashes, mass shootings, all kinds of experiences.

And at the end of each episode, we have a Listener Story. This is a short story that is sent in by a listener. It's not an interview, it's just the person talking about something interesting that happened to them.

I started ending each episode with one of these short stories back in 2021. Just about a month or so ago, I put out a bonus episode with all the Listener Stories from 2022. And I got a lot of positive response to that. So I thought it would be good to get all of the other Listener Stories – the ones from the beginning, in 2021 – and put them out as a bonus episode as well. So that's what we have here today.

And if you have a story like this, I'd love to hear it. It can be funny, or sad, or anything really – as long as it's interesting and you can tell it in 5-10 minutes. Just record it on your phone and email it to me, at Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com. There's a good chance I'll play it in a future episode of the podcast.

I definitely enjoyed hearing these stories from a couple of years ago, and I think you will too.

My father was in an accident involving a train when I was a child. He was out late with some friends and on his way home when he came upon an uncontrolled railroad crossing, which essentially means that there are no signals or gates. It's just a crossing on a country road. He didn't see the train approaching. It hit him and he died instantly. My family really struggled with it.

To this day, I have not asked where it happened, specifically. We don't talk about it often. I know that, if I knew the location, I would never be able to cross the tracks again. Every time I cross tracks, I wonder if those are the ones where it happened. I'm still working on healing from it despite the fact that it's been 17 years now. It's still prevalent in my mind. Every time I hear a train whistle or see railroad tracks, I think of him. One strange thing about his passing was that, shortly before he died, we went to Six Flags as a family. When we were waiting in line, they had the sweepstakes that you could enter in a little plastic box. He entered us for a free trip to Hawaii. I always wondered if people ever win those things. For whatever reason, after he passed, we got a phone call and we had won. We ended up spending 2 weeks in Hawaii after he died. He was the type of person that loved the beach. In my eyes, it was a gift from him. To this day, I will forever feel that way.

I'm definitely looking for support groups if anyone else has been through something similar, family members lost in car accidents due to a train. You can reach out to me at amberrhasty@gmail.com. Thank you.

Visiting my Uncle Bob and Aunt Margie's dairy farm was something I looked forward to on our once-a-year family trip to the country. I loved the cows and the cornfield. Their dogs were a pleasure too since we didn't have any pets. Aunt Margie would cook up a great country supper when we visited. Uncle Bob once gave me and my sister a ride on the tractor that was pulling a corn harvester through the field. It was exhilarating to watch the corn fly up from the stalk and fall into the large container behind the tractor to be brought to the silo. Those were the best days and I wished I could live on a farm instead of in the city.

I had just turned 11 before this visit in the late 1950s. It was getting late in the day and we hadn't been to the cornfield yet. I wanted badly to stand next to those tall stalks and walk around a bit. The adults were sitting in chairs near the garden and I stood in front of my father and asked, "Can I go for a walk in the cornfield?" He ignored me and kept conversing with Uncle Bob. So I stood in front of my mother and asked the same question. She wouldn't answer me. These were the days of children being seen and not heard.

I decided it was getting late and we would be leaving soon, so I made the decision to go see the cornfield by myself. I walked past the silo and came to the gate in the fence. I unlatched it and walked through onto a dirt ground. The cornfield was in sight. I took 4 steps toward it and then my feet wouldn't move anymore. I didn't understand what was happening. I tried to turn around toward the gate but my feet and legs wouldn't follow my upper body. I felt desperate and tried to reach the fence for something to hang onto but it was out of reach. I was sinking fast in the mud.

I wondered how I could remedy this. Could I scream? My 11-year-old logic told me that my parents didn't hear me when I was standing right in front of them, so most likely they would not hear me now. The mud was up to the bottom of my chest and I reasoned that soon I may need to hold my breath. I knew I could hold it for a long time because I practiced at the pool in town. I wondered how much further I would sink.

The mud was up to my neck when suddenly I saw my cousin running toward me. A look of shock was on her face as she spun back around leaving a trail of dust at her feet as she ran with all her might to get help. Soon, the only way to survive was to tilt my head back as far as I could and stare at the sky. I looked down my nose and saw my Aunt Margie running full blast toward me. Then, I felt her hands reach in and grab my arms and pull my muddy body out of that sink hole. My Aunt hosed me off in the cow barn and explained that it had rained for 3 days and caused a sinkhole right where I stepped. When I asked if I would have drowned in that mud, she said, "Yes." Sadly, we never visited the farm again. It's no wonder I had nightmares and panic attacks.

Hi, this is James Clattenberg. This story is about a small plane crash in the Turks and Caicos Islands back in 1992. I went to the island with my friend Dave. We first went to Provo and were there for a few days. This big storm came in. We had already planned to go to Salt Caye for the middle of the trip and there was a pilot who was going to take us to this little island where there were less than 100 residents.

It was very stormy. We met the pilot the day before. He said, "Are you sure you guys still want to go tomorrow? It's going to be very stormy but we should be fine." We said, "Sure." We were staying at this small little guest house on Salt Caye and we got in contact with the owner of the inn because he was going to pick us up and take us to the property. We got on the plane that morning and it was very windy. The plane was a 5-seater Cessna with only 1 door on the passenger side. The pilot jumped in and then I got into the back row of 3 very small seats. My friend, Dave, got in the front. It was very windy. Granted it was a small plane, but it was just bouncing all over the place so I was holding onto either side. This was only a 10-minute flight from Provo to Salt Caye. We started to land.

I'm not a pilot but I know that you are supposed to land against the wind, not with the wind behind you. We could see this small little runway that was surrounded by barbed wire to keep out the donkeys and wild bulls that roamed the island. We were landing and the wind was pushing us extremely fast toward this runway. We basically just slammed into the ground and the pilot said, "Oh shit!" and immediately turned the wheel and the landing gear just collapsed. We were scraping along sideways toward the end of the runway. At the end of the runway, there was that row of barbed wire. The propeller flew off. We were skidding. It was like being in a car in the snow - you don't know when it's going to stop. We were just skidding along and then, all of the sudden, the plane stopped, probably, 10 feet short of the end of the runway. One wing was through the barbed wire and then beyond that was a ditch.

The pilot immediately unbuckled his seat belt, jumped over my big football player friend Dave, ran down the runway, and left us there. We were stranded thinking, "Oh my god, is this plane going to blow up?" It all happened so quickly. We just slammed into the runway. We both thought, "The plane was going to explode so the pilot ran off." We got out of our seatbelts and got out of the plane. We saw the guy who owned the inn there to pick us up. He looked at us and said, "I have lived on this island for 15 years. I have never seen a plane come in so fast. I thought you guys were goners. Now would you like a cocktail or do you need to change your underwear?" (laughs) I laughed about it now but it was very scary.

Then there were other things that happened on that island. I was chased by a donkey and sucked into the ocean. In the end, we laughed about it but we called it Death island. Hopefully, nothing like that will ever happen again. Anyways, that's my little airplane crash story.

Hi, my name is Tristan and this is the story of how I gave my parents their first gray hairs. Before this day, I had no significant health issues as a child whatsoever. This is a story from when I was 6 years old. My parents picked me up from my grandmother's house and we drove out to a clear lake for a family day of fun in the sun. At this time, my mom was 8 months pregnant with my little brother and looking forward to laying out by the water while she still had the chance before the newborn came. I had been running a fever at my grandmother's house - a fact she neglected to tell my parents before they allowed me to wade in the cold lake water.

I remember getting my life jacket on and following my dad out into the shallow part of the water where he showed me some tiny fish. I remember getting out of the water, my mom wrapping me in a beach towel, and laying back in one of the chairs we unpacked. I even remember my mom letting me have a sip of her diet coke. "Her lips are turning blue," was the next thing I remember hearing. I could hear my mom yelling but I couldn't see her or my dad. I couldn't see anything.

After another couple of seconds, I couldn't hear anything either. The next thing I remember seeing was an X-ray of my chest on the light board across from me in my hospital room.

Normally you might think, "Ok, an ambulance was called and I was easily helped." Well, keep in mind, this was 1996 - the days before everybody had a cell phone in their pocket - and we were at a lake in a part of the city where most of the homes were vacation homes, meaning they were empty at the time. My parents knew I needed to get to the hospital but we were somewhere unfamiliar and they weren't sure where the hospital was.

My dad picked me up and took me in his arms along with my very pregnant mother and ran from door to door trying to get a hold of someone to call 911. They knocked on the doors of 5 or 6 houses until they saw a driveway with an ambulance parked in it. By the grace of God, someone answered the door and it was the wife of the pediatrician who was next door playing darts with the ambulance driver.

Needless to say, they picked me up and I rode with them to the hospital. My dad followed them in the van that was almost out of gas. When I woke up and was clear to go home, we were out of gas in our van, but the doctor who we'd seen earlier had a broken gas gauge and gave us his extra gas can to get home.

When you find out that you're going to be on Shark Tank you prepare yourself for a lot of different outcomes. You prepare yourself for the euphoria of getting a deal and an investment on live TV from one of your favorite sharks. You also prepare yourself for the possibility of humiliating yourself on national TV and having all your friends see what an idiot you look like. What you don't prepare for is violence. When my business partner and I showed up in LA, it was after a long flight. Just so you know, they don't fly you in first class. They fly you in on Southwest on the cheapest ticket they can get. I sat in the center seat and was exhausted when we got there, so we went out drinking.

At the bar where we were drinking, there were a couple of other contestants - one of whom was very obnoxious and insisted on showing us pictures of his cars and watches and bragging about the money that he had made developing apps. Soon, this guy went from being a blowhard to an asshole. He started to harass the bartender. At that point, he said some things that were very offensive and I proceeded to remove him from the bar. I put him in a little arm lock and I threw him out. I'm not a tough guy. He was just a small guy, which enabled me to do this.

I returned to the bar and the nice folks who were sitting around the bar gave me a little ovation, which felt good because I never do this kind of stuff. I sat down and had another drink. Within a couple of minutes, out of the corner of my eye, I see him run out from the kitchen at me. He ran up to me and punched me square in the temple. It didn't knock me out, but it hurt and it made me dizzy. The first thing I did was put him into a headlock, and I was gonna start to punch him. My business partner said, "Don't do it! Don't jeopardize our chance at this show." The manager of the restaurant came out and said, "Hey I can have the Culver City police out here in 5 minutes." I said, "You know what? Don't worry about it. Let's just get him out of here and lock the door behind him." The manager took him out and he never came back.

The next morning in the hotel lobby, I ran into the guy. He pretended not to remember what happened, which probably was the best course of action. That way, there were no

uncomfortable “I should have kicked your ass” moments. It was just an odd exchange between me and some dude who was pretending to be blacked out. The irony of this situation was that the product that this dude was there to pitch to the sharks was an anti-bullying app. His segment never ended up airing, so he had nothing to do with shark tank so there’s no way anyone could find out who this guy is. The long and the short of it is, anything can happen when you go on Shark Tank, including getting punched in the head.

My name is Matt Franklin, and since my appearance on Shark Tank, I have started a podcast called ‘The Rogue: Retirement Lounge’ and it’s all about retirement for entrepreneurs.

Hi, my name is John and I have this story from when I was a kid. We were driving through the Verde River area in Arizona and it was the middle of spring and the wasps were all flying around. I’m terrified of anything that flies or stings. My dad got the truck stuck, so he got out to unstuck the truck. The windows were down. I was sitting there freaking out that a wasp might fly into the car. My dad got tired of hearing it so he yanks me out of the car and makes me stand in the middle of this swarm of wasps and says, “Face your fears.” Then, he went back to try to get the truck unstuck. I was about as terrified of wasps as I am of my dad. I was just sitting there freaking out and terrified to move with all these wasps swarming around me. My mom decided to come out and try to calm me down, and she ended up getting stung a bunch of times while trying to calm me down. I took this opportunity to run screaming back to the car and cover myself with a blanket until the car starts moving again. Meanwhile, my mom and dad are over there fighting about how she got stung and that’s no way to deal with your kid’s phobia. To this day, I’m still terrified of things that fly and sting, but not nearly as bad as when I was a kid though.

When I was 4, my mother and I lived in a one-bedroom apartment in downtown Vancouver. In the summer, there was suddenly a smell. Then, it was a bad smell. Soon after that, it became unbearable. My mother called the landlord about the smell and they didn’t do anything. The smell got even worse until, one day, my mom had enough and went to examine the cause.

She sniffed and smelled around on each floor of the building until she got to the apartment directly above ours. She knocked, then banged, with no answer. She came back for 2 days every few hours and banged on the door, still with no answer. She then wrote a letter and tried to stuff it under his door, but it wouldn’t squeeze through. The space between the floor and the door was so narrow and the hallway carpet was blocking the way. She went to put it in the unit’s mailbox in the front area of the building. When she got there the mailbox was stuffed full with a sticker on it from the post office, probably saying that mail could not be delivered to the box because it was so full.

When she discovered the mailbox full it dawned on her that something might be wrong. She and I went back to our apartment and she called the police. Within the hour, 2 police officers showed up and started banging on the upstairs apartment door. The building was so old and run down that we could hear everything - every bang, the dispatcher on the radios, every step, and then them coming back downstairs to our unit. They asked my mom where the landlord was. She

explained that he lived elsewhere and that she had called to complain repeatedly, only to be ignored. The officer then asked my mom to call the landlord and give him the phone. The landlord answered and the officer identified himself to him and asked for access to the unit, or for the landlord to come to do an emergency inspection. The guy was there in 10 minutes.

As soon as he got to the building my mother grabbed me in her arms and we followed the landlord and the officer upstairs. The landlord banged on the door and announced he was doing an emergency inspection, then unlocked the door. I really wish that my mother would have just left me in our apartment watching TV or something. When that door was opened, directly across from the entrance to the apartment was the guy who lived there, dead. He had slashed his own wrists and taken a bunch of pills while sitting at his kitchen table. He had been dead for weeks and was bloated so bad that his skin was splitting and he had maggots coming out of his mouth and his nose. I saw it all.

Everyone in the hallway was completely stunned. My mother couldn't even process what she was seeing - never mind what I was seeing. If we thought the smell was bad before, we were immediately proven wrong the second that door was opened. It was such a horrific smell and sight that the landlord ran outside to throw up multiple times. The police called the coroner and they took the body out of the building. After he was out, they were gone and never came back, as it was clear what had happened.

The landlord came to our apartment a couple of hours later as my mother was looking at the newspaper for a new place. He offered her a deal. She could have the next 3 months rent-free if she cleaned the apartment upstairs out and got it ready to be repainted. She reluctantly agreed but got to it that day. She took me upstairs and instructed me to sit in this person's living room while she started to clean up all the blood and other miscellaneous dried bodily fluids off of the kitchen floor.

After she did that she started going through his possessions to see if there was a family member she could call to come to collect the deceased belongings. She sadly found no such information. She contacted one of the officers that came to our apartment to see if they knew of anyone. Unfortunately, he had no known living family that they could find. She waited a week, just in case somebody showed up before she cleared the belongings and furniture out of the unit.

She eventually got everything out and scrubbed that place as best she could, but the smell just would not go away. We went to a store and bought this stuff called 'Nilodor.' It was a spray can that was supposed to remove any odor in the places it was used. My mother used 6 full cans over 4 days. Not only did it not remove the smell, but it mixed it with its own smell and created a whole new level of awful. We went back to the store and explained that it didn't work at removing the smell. They explained that we didn't use the right kind and that she should have used the odor drops. She used the entire bottle over a few days and still could not get the smell of rotting corpse out of the apartment.

It now just smelled like chemicals and death. The smell was still so awful and she couldn't take it anymore. We moved about a week later as it was just too much. She stayed in contact with someone else who lived in the apartment and found out that the building still smelled of the noxious awfulness 6 months later. To this day, if I smell Nilodor, I have vivid flashbacks to that door being opened with me in my mother's arms, staring directly at this festering mess of rotting death and the terrible realization that his whole life was shoved into bags and thrown in the

dumpster and there were no loved ones to remember or mourn him. This was my first experience with trauma that, even 35 years later, still haunts me to this day.

It was early 1986 when my girlfriend and I lived in a very small town in northern Wisconsin. We decided to move to Minneapolis. At the time, we were musicians and Minneapolis was in the Purple Rain phase - it was a global phenomenon and we wanted to get a piece of that action. We moved down there with my sister in south Minneapolis towards the inner city in the Steven's Park community in a big brownstone building. Steven's Park was a dangerous area, but we didn't know that. We were quite naive little country bumpkins with no street smarts whatsoever, but we were bulletproof and didn't know any better, so we took a lot of risks, as we all do.

In that area, it turns out there had been a couple of murders. What the perpetrator did was ring the buzzer on these brownstone buildings. When he would get in he would get up to his evil deeds which were breaking into somebody's apartment and then murdering the people - pretty nasty stuff. We moved about 2 blocks away towards the Museum Institute of Arts - a huge museum down there. The apartment complex we moved into was a small affair - only 8 units, 4 on the bottom and 4 on the top. It was the 1920s or 1930s art deco building. The front was all plate glass - quite beautiful. The owner didn't want to put locks on the doors because they were solid glass. So we were the only building in south Minneapolis without security doors, which was very, very unsafe. As a result of that, the woman across the hall from us - she was a nurse - when she would get home at night, she would knock on the door of the woman that lived below us and they would walk up together. There were two sets of stairs going up to that storey - one in the front and one in the back.

On the night that this event happened, luck would have it that they showed up at the exact time this person who fit the description of the murderer was at our door. It was the middle of the night, after 12 or 1 at night. It was the middle of summer and stinking hot. My girlfriend and I were fast asleep. We had the floor fan on high so we couldn't hear much. We did hear a very loud pounding on our door. I bolted up, ran to the door, looked through the peephole, and it was the police. I opened the door and said, "Can I help you?" With concerned looks on their faces, they said, "Are you ok? Is everything ok in there?" I said, "Yep. Everything is fine. Why? What's happening?" They said, "Well sir, there was a gentleman at your door trying to break in."

As luck would have it, the woman who lived next door came home as he was trying to break in. He had a large screwdriver in his hand with a towel wrapped around his hand so no one could see it. The woman got home and saw him and said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm here to see the girl inside." Then, he turned and took a step toward her. Luckily, she had a friend who had just come up the back set of stairs and startled the guy so he ran off. This event happened 35 or 36 years ago and it's still fresh in my mind. It actually haunted me for most of my life.

Usually, in the middle of the night, I check the doors and windows. I have lived a pretty paranoid life actually. I'm getting better though. Sometimes, it's the things that don't happen to us that can cause the night frights. I think about the event that would have happened. I think about all the things that take about a minute to do that could have been the difference between life and death for me - putting your dishes in the dishwasher, getting caught at a red light, washing your hands, putting on your shoes, talking on the phone, going to a convenience store and buying a coke. It all takes a minute. Imagine if that woman - whose name I don't even know even though she's my angel- what would have happened if they hadn't shown up at that exact moment. We were

fast asleep in bed and wouldn't have heard him come in. We would have been at his mercy and, by all accounts, he didn't give much mercy. So I'm grateful but haunted by the randomness of that.

Some people have said that it wasn't blind luck but that it was divine intervention and that I have angels. I think maybe we all have angels or not - who knows? I guess that's a matter of faith. I want to thank you for listening to this. Please be safe and be well and don't live in a building without security doors and always be careful.

When I was in my early 20s, I moved back home to my parents in my hometown. I didn't really know anyone there anymore. I didn't really have any connections or someone close to me besides family. I thought it would be a good idea to go down to the local mall, just walk around, and see if I could find someone who looked friendly that I might be able to strike up a relationship with. I did come across someone who reminded me a lot of a friend I had in the former town where I'd been living. I thought maybe I could form a connection with this person. So we talked for a while and exchanged phone numbers.

After talking for a couple of weeks he asked me out on a date. The only problem was that he didn't drive, so I would have to pick him up at his house where he lived with his grandmother. That wasn't a big deal to me because it's common to find people who don't drive in larger cities. So I waited all week and was pretty excited. When the day came, he pretty much ghosted me. I couldn't get him on the phone and he wouldn't answer my texts, so I thought maybe he wasn't as interested as I thought he was. I pretty much let it go because, sometimes, things don't work out. Then, he got a hold of me a couple of days later and explained that the reason he had not gone out on the date with me was because of his ferret. His ferret had died and he was really very upset and didn't feel up to getting out and being social. I understood that and took it as a reasonable excuse because anytime I've ever experienced something like that it can be kind of traumatizing.

So we made arrangements to go out the following weekend. When that day came, he did not ghost me. He did answer the phone and I ended up over there at his grandmother's house to pick him up. He didn't quite have everything in order so I followed him to his bedroom where he could pick up the last few things that he needed just to make sure that he was prepared - make sure he has his wallet with him and all those different things that he need. When he opened up the bedroom door, his bedroom pretty much consisted of just 4 blank walls, a blank mattress in the middle of the floor with no sheet or blanket or anything, and probably 200 empty soda cans all around the bed in little towers and stacks.

That wasn't the main thing that I noticed. The main thing that I noticed was that suddenly my eyes started burning and then the smell hit my nose. It coated the inside of my nose in a way that makes sure you'll never forget the intensity of the stench. It will be burned into your memory. He said, "Oh don't mind that. That's just my ferret." I looked over in the corner and there was indeed a ferret cage with a dead ferret in it. Obviously, I was completely shocked that he had been coexisting with the corpse of his dead pet ferret that had sat in the corner of his room for over a week at this point. He was really disappointed that we didn't get to go on that date. I wasn't that disappointed when I went home. That was enough of a red flag for me.

So about 20 years ago I was working as a security guard in the mall. The funny thing is I wasn't even supposed to work that night. I was covering for someone. I got a call over the radio saying that a female fainted in the restroom. I ran towards the restroom down the corridor. When I opened the restroom door, I didn't see anybody, but I heard someone crying. I walked in and looked under the stalls, and then I saw somebody sitting on the floor of the handicapped stall. I introduced myself, knocked on the door, told her I was going to come in, and that I was security. The door was locked so I had to crawl under the door to unlock it.

When I stood up we were both facing each other, I stood up to her pointing a gun at my forehead. She was just crying. My radio kept going off. I kept telling her that I could help her. It must have been a minute but it felt like a lifetime. She just kept crying. The last thing I said to her was, "I can help you." She just said, "You can't help me." She took the gun, pointed it at the side of her head, and shot herself. She fell back and landed between the crack between the toilet and the wall. Half of her head was missing. She was still gasping for air. I was a 20-year-old kid that had no idea what to do. I ran out of the restroom freaking out.

One of my good friends was also working there at the time. He ran to me and I just held him and told him not to go in. Long story short, this lady was a 24-year-old female who had just lost custody of her kids and decided to end it all. I was trying to get into law enforcement at the time but I couldn't do it after that. I still see her struggling and breathing for air. I just figured I couldn't help her. I was pretty lost after that and really took a different career path. That's my story.

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. Because of the heat, I get up at 5 AM to walk my dogs. It is my routine every day 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 with 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 that, 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's going to believe 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 inside the 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 every day when I pass by the spot where I found him

My first relationship out of high school was abusive and I almost died. Very early on, he told me the typical "all my exes are crazy" bit. For no good reason, I just believed it. Occasionally, he would yell at me and scream if I couldn't hang out with him and I justified that as being ok because I thought he was hurt and I felt like his actions weren't his choice. Obviously, this just got gradually worse. It went from yelling to throwing things to shoving and raising fists very quickly in under a year's time.

The time he almost killed me, we were house-sitting for my mother while she was on a trip for her birthday. We had gotten into a nonviolent fight. I decided that I was going to sleep on the couch. Before I went to sleep, I texted a friend of mine the phrase, "I don't think I'm cut out for romantic relationships." While I was asleep, he read that and it sent him over the edge. There was a lockbox in the room. Because my mom's house was a rental, that's where she still kept the spare key. Lock boxes are sturdy solid metal and heavy. I had kind of woken up when he entered the room.

I'd hardly looked at him when he threw this lockbox at my head. He was only a few feet from me so it was pretty close range. I remember it as just a sudden white flash and my body felt bad. I fell off the couch and started to crawl. That's when he picked it up and hit me again. It was another white flash and my hearing was really muffled. All I could hear was my heartbeat in my ears. That was my, "Oh shit!" moment because tunnel vision started kicking in and my body felt like it was underwater. All I could think was, "Fuck, I'm hurt. I'm hurt. I have to get help." I somehow was able to crawl to the bathroom with my phone before he could catch me. I have cuts in my memory here. I only remember shutting and locking the door. I don't actually remember grabbing my phone or anything else.

While I was in the bathroom, I was really dizzy and it was hard to move. I don't know how long I was in there or how long he was outside of the door. At some point, I realized he was just pounding on the door and screaming to be let in. I finally came to the moment where I thought, "Ok I have to call 911. I have to call for help. He's gonna kill me. I'm gonna die. I have to call for help." I picked up my phone and was trying to dial, but the screen was black. I was really disoriented, but it wasn't working. Then I realized that the battery had been removed from my phone. So before he hit me, he had taken the battery out of my home and then returned my phone to the same spot so I couldn't call for help. I remember feeling sleepy and scared.

When I finally felt my head, it was just this burning hot lump behind my ear. The swelling felt like it was as big as my hand and I didn't know what to do. So I got into the bathtub, turned on the

cold water, and sat there holding my head against the cold faucet hoping it would help somehow. Eventually, I fell asleep and he got in. At that point, he was just doing this thing where he was crying and saying, "Oh my god my life is ruined. My life is ruined." He just kept saying that. I couldn't talk. I just felt dizzy and sick. He was trying to get me to follow his fingers with my eyes and I couldn't do it.

The next day I had work and I was still really woozy and in pain. The girls at my job could see the swelling under my hair. Halfway through my shift, I went home to go into urgent care. By that time, he had calmed down and was in the reconciliation phase. He agreed to take me. For some reason, at the urgent care, they just let my boyfriend come in with me to see the doctor. Despite putting down a head injury on the check-in, I had to lie to the doctor about what happened. The doctor looked at him, then looked at me for a really long time before explaining that I had an internal contusion affecting my face, eye, and neck. I also had a temporal lobe concussion. He looked at me and told me that if my injury was just one inch forward, I would've had internal bleeding in my brain and died, but I was lucky I didn't. He told me to go to an ER immediately if my symptoms got worse, and that was it.

So we went home and I was ok enough at that time. A week later he slammed that side of my head into a door frame repeatedly when I was trying to run from him during another violent incident. Another time after that, he almost killed us both in the car driving 90 miles an hour. The abuse didn't really end until I was finally able to move without telling anybody where I was gonna go. Now, a lot of time has passed. He completed schooling to be a social worker now. It terrifies me. I still have residual effects from the concussion like brain fog and issues with facial blindness. The scariest thing for me is that he worked up to being that violent. I wasn't the only victim. I think about what could happen to someone else all the time especially because he faced no repercussions. I also think about how many others like him there are.

This happened to me a few months ago at my current workplace. Occasionally, my wife will be a very kind soul and will actually make my lunch for me for work if I don't end up having time the night before. Sometimes, when she does this, she'll include a note that she'll write on a napkin or paper towel. Usually, it says something like, "Have a great day" and such. This time, she wrote a note that said, "I love you – Love, me" in Sharpie and on a paper towel. I work in an office and it has a small break room where I eat my lunch. On this particular day, I sat down in the break room and began to eat my lunch - a normal situation. On this table, there happened to be a black Sharpie and little paper towels. I set them aside to give myself a little room to eat. I set up all my things and began eating and watching a video on my phone.

As I was eating, one of the department heads came in and, a few minutes later, so does my boss. I chat a little with them both. While talking, the department head happened to look at the note my wife wrote me on the paper towel in Sharpie, next to the roll of paper towels and a Sharpie - the same note that says, "I love you – Love, me." He then proceeds to ask, "Dave, did you write yourself a note?" I had to look at the note, the Sharpie, the paper towel, my boss, and the department head. They seemed to have a growing sense of concern for me. I quickly realized how it must appear to both of them. My mouth was stuffed with food, so I had to very quickly explain to them that I'm not in need of serious emotional help. It didn't help that I was also laughing at the time since this was a very hard situation to believe. Luckily, they both laughed and believed me and they haven't brought it up since. So, hopefully, I'm doing good there. Thank you very much for listening and have a great day.

I remember most of this story, but some parts are hazy because I was only 6. It started when me, my mom, my 3-year-old sister, my mom's friend, and my 15-year-old aunt went to the lake near us. We started packing up. After swimming for a few hours, my mom took a cooler to the car while my aunt watched us pack up. My little sister started saying she didn't want to wear her life jacket to swim, but my mom already told her she had to keep it on while my mom was away packing up. While my aunt wasn't looking and was packing up towels, my sister ran off angrily screaming, "I don't want my life jacket on!" I didn't pay any attention to her because I didn't really do that when she was throwing a fit. We weren't paying attention for two seconds.

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

Hello everyone, my name is Natalia, I'm Brazilian and I work as an English teacher here in Brazil. The story I'm going to tell you happened a couple of years ago when I was starting out in a new job in an English course. During one of my classes, I had a very bad belly ache. So, in the short break between the two classes, I ran to the bathroom to relieve myself. The bathroom was connected to the teachers' room where all of my colleagues were gathering and waiting for the next class to start. I was really embarrassed of opening the door and letting everybody smell the remaining odor of my diarrhea, so I had the idea of opening the bathroom window to let the wind circulate a little before opening the door, but the window was stuck - it was, like, glass made. As I tried to force it, it fell and broke into a million pieces on the ground and everybody heard the noise. They knocked on the door to ask if I was alright. I opened it and they not only could smell it but they could also see that I was trying to get rid of the smell by breaking the window. It was really, really humiliating, but I didn't get fired.

My whole life growing up, my mom had debilitating ocular migraines that would leave her crying afterward. During one of these migraines, my drunken stepdad, at the time, was screaming at her to shut her fucking mouth and a bunch of other nonsense. He ended up freaking out, running outside, getting a shovel, coming back in, and throwing it toward me. Then, he went into the spare bedroom and got a shotgun. He aimed it at my mom's face and said, "If she doesn't shut the fuck up, I'm gonna shoot her" and that I was supposed to go dig her a grave. So I went outside at 10 to 12 years old, probably, and started digging a hole in the woods. Sometime later, I heard a gun go off coming from my house - I wasn't that far away - so I ran off into the woods.

That night, I came back and got my dog who was always chained up out back and went further into the state game lands that were way past our property line. I stayed there for 3 days and 2 nights. Sometime later, I heard a 4-wheeler on the third day and heard my mom yelling for me - I guess she was stopping every once in a while and calling out my name - so I ran up to her. I never really talked to her about it, ever, from that point forward. It was just something that I dealt with. I blocked it out for a really long time. Years later, in therapy, it triggered back into my memory. I just want to let everybody know that shit might be rough sometimes, especially as a kid. I promise it will get better. I'm 24 years old now, so this was probably 12 to 14 years ago. I have an amazing family, a beautiful fiancée, and 2 amazing kids. One of those kids is my stepdaughter. I can promise on everything that she will never ever be treated the same way I was. So keep your heads up and enjoy life as it is now.

Hi Scott. I'm pretty much addicted to your podcast. I binge-listened to it until I was all caught up and I can't wait for each episode that comes out. So keep up the good work. You had asked recently if people had stories about regrets that they have. My regret involved a young man - I'm going to call him Joe. I heard a rumor in the community that he was kind of a reckless driver. Not long after that I heard that Joe was dating my friend's daughter. We weren't close friends - kind of, acquaintances/ We knew each other's names and each other's children. I'm going to call the daughter, Sue. Joe was dating Sue. I thought about saying something to Sue's mother about Joe's reputation of driving recklessly, but I thought, "I don't really have any facts. It's just rumors. I'm just going to try to mind my own business."

Not long after that, Joe and Sue were in a car together. Joe ran a stop sign and Sue was killed. The other car involved in the accident had 3 people in it and 2 of them died - li was a father and his teenage daughter. They were killed in that accident. Ever since then, if I've had an opportunity to speak up for someone or try to advocate for them, I am just compelled to do that. The accident happened very close to my parent's home and the family put up a little cross and memorial near that intersection. So I think about that every time I visit my parents. I'd just like to encourage other listeners to follow those little nudges or that inner voice that says, "Hey something isn't right here." You never know, if we speak up, we may be able to impact someone's life for the good. We may be able to save a life. Keep up the good work. Thanks.

I had a very unique childbirth experience with my second. I was in my first semester of nursing school. I was going to be due a month after the end of the semester which is in the summer. So I was going to have a little bit of time with my baby before I went back to school. I had one teacher, in particular, and she was teaching "The Fundamentals of Nursing" - a very beginner core course. She specialized in geriatrics. She would joke with me all the time, "You're not contracting, are you? Because if you are, I'm calling an ambulance because I don't do babies." So there were a couple of times throughout the semester that me and some of my friends pranked her and made her think I was going into labor just to make her nervous. It kind of became this joke.

Well, I was walking into my last final of the semester, which just happened to be her class. As we were getting ready to go in, my water broke. I just kind of stopped and I turned to my sister-in-law - who was also taking the class with me - and said, "My water just broke." She looked at

me and later she said that she knew I wasn't joking because she could see every single freckle on my face. I was so pale because I was scared. This was about a month before my due date. Some of the girls ran into the teacher's offices to get my instructor and they were saying, "Her water broke!" She took a little while to come to me because she said, "You guys. I'm not doing this", thinking that it was a prank again. They finally convinced her to come out. So she came out and she kind of looked at me. I was wearing a dress, so she slightly lifted it up to make sure there wasn't a big bag of saline in there or something that I was using to trick her.

Once she realized that, yes, I was in deep and was serious, she said to my sister-in-law, "Go ahead and take her to the hospital. I'll figure out another time for you guys to take your finals." So we went to the hospital and were kind of laughing and joking about it. I was told later that I did my fellow classmates a huge disservice because now they couldn't think about the answers on their tests. They were so surprised and couldn't stop thinking about what had just happened.

Anyway, I got to the hospital. I had planned on not getting an epidural, not because I disagree with them, but simply because I just wanted to see if I could do it. I labored for about 24 hours and was not progressing. I was up and walking around, and I passed this really large blood clot. Even though I had not taken OB in nursing school yet, I thought, "I don't think that's supposed to happen." We called my nurse in. She came in and checked, and discovered that my baby's cord was coming before the baby. It's called a prolapsed umbilical cord. It is a medical emergency. It is very, very dangerous because, each time you have a contraction, it cuts off the baby's blood supply.

The doctor came in and he was talking to the nurses about what was going on. I said, "What does this mean?" He said, "It means you have to have an emergency C-section right now." They started getting me prepped to go into the OR. My husband was starting to get on a suit that you have to wear to go into the OR. The doctor said, after looking at the baby's vital signs, "No, I'm sorry. You can't come back. This is dangerous. We have to take her right now." So they wouldn't let my husband come back with me.

I remember them rushing me into the operating room. I had worked in an operating room for several years. When I saw all those people and how fast they were setting up I thought, "Oh, something bad is happening. This is very serious." They put me under general anesthesia since I didn't have an epidural in place, so I wasn't even awake for the C-section. I was terrified. I went to sleep with tears rolling down my cheeks because I was sure I was not going to survive.

When I woke up and asked my nurse if my baby was ok, she said, "Yes, she is but they have to take her to a different hospital." The hospital I was at didn't have a NICU. I was told that she had lost about 75 percent of her blood volume because, along with the prolapsed cord, I also had what's called an abrupted placenta where the placenta begins to tear away from the wall. The doctor said the placenta did not look healthy and looked like it had been abrupted from days to weeks.

My baby was taken to another hospital and I started to recover from my C-section. The next day, they allowed my husband to drive me over to the hospital even though I was still a patient, and let me see my baby. She ended up being in the NICU for 11 days. She had to have a blood transfusion along with some antibiotics. She was on oxygen for 3 months after she came home and then, again, for a month when she was 8 months old after contracting RSV and bacterial pneumonia. She is 9 years old now and she is as healthy as can be. We are so grateful to have her in our family. It's definitely a memorable experience, I will never forget it.

I'm choosing to keep myself anonymous, but this is a story for kids or teenagers who struggle in high school, who struggle just as much as me. When I started high school, my father had just passed away - on my first day of high school. I was really beaten up. I was obviously sad and really mad. It was about 3.50 in the morning so I still had school that day. I decided I was gonna go to school and maybe get my mind off of it, talk to some friends, and hopefully not think about it. I headed into my Biology class and went to talk to my friends. I asked them, "Hey, let's hang out." The room went completely quiet and everyone was looking at me. I didn't think anything of it. Obviously, I was already struggling so I didn't really like the attention on me. I thought, "That's weird."

Then I asked them one more time, "Hey do you guys wanna maybe hang out this weekend? Just do something fun?" One of them said, "I'm not gonna hang out with no little bitch who's complaining about his dead dad." My heart instantly sank. To be honest, I was broken. I thought those were my friends. Everybody looked at me and the room went dead silent. I sat there in silence with my anxiety and stress and I was really broken. I left the classroom and I instantly started bawling. I started crying and bawling. Then, I heard the class getting loud and everybody started talking and stuff. I decided I wasn't going to show up for that period. I was going to head to the nurse's office and pretend I was sick. I went to the nurse's office pretending I was sick. Then, I headed off for the rest of my day hoping to forget about it. Obviously, they weren't friends.

I sat at a table and I was all alone just sitting there with my hoodie on. I thought, "You know what, maybe I just don't want to be bothered today." I didn't want to miss class, so I sat there and then heard all the freshmen talking about me, talking about my dead dad, talking about how I was a pussy for being sad over my dead dad, and how their life was much harder. I was broken. I already had severe bipolar at the time and it didn't make anything better. Every day, I struggled with waking up, having to go to the same school, seeing the same people, and hearing the same things. It hurt me - it really did. I'm 18 now. I just graduated and I've never been any better or happier in my life now that I'm done with high school.

Back in 2015, I was 16 years old. On a weekend, my dad decided to take me, as a treat, to go see the new Terminator movie. Everything was fine until about halfway through after a pretty big car chase scene. At the beginning of this scene, there was a jump scare - we didn't know it at that time, but this had actually caused an elderly woman in the audience to have a heart attack. When this happened, the lights in the theater came on and the movie paused. This caused everybody to kind of stop. We only had a second to realize what was happening before we heard her husband start yelling for help. He said that she wasn't responding. She had just sat there and stopped moving. He said that she gripped his hand really hard and then just lost consciousness.

My dad was the only one in the theater that actually had CPR experience, so he went down there, helped her husband take her, and carried her to the bottom row of the chairs. Once they did this, my dad just started going to work. He started doing chest compressions. He started doing mouth-to-mouth. While he was doing this, we realized that she still wasn't responding. My dad actually got me to go out and get the attendants to re-call the ambulance and get a proper

ETA on how long it would be for them to get out to us. While this was happening, my dad was still back in the theater doing mouth-to-mouth and chest compressions. Later, he told me he was doing them so forcefully he could actually feel her ribs crack, which is actually a pretty normal thing to happen in CPR. She still wasn't responding after a certain amount of time and we noticed she had actually urinated herself and she had very glassy eyes. My dad was pretty sure at that point that we had lost her.

At this point, the ambulance showed up and I was able to direct the people to the theater where my dad was still working on her. They were able to go to work. They had a whole machine that did chest compressions for us. We were only there for a little bit longer before they took her out on a gurney. The last thing my dad did was give his business card to the husband and told him to call us when she recovered, but we never got that call, so we are pretty sure she passed away that day and it was a very unfortunate event.

The scariest thing though, to me, is that no one else in the theater did anything at all. That is something that I think could easily be fixed if people just took the time to educate themselves and took the time to take a simple CPR class. If it had been my dad that day that actually had the heart attack, he would probably be dead because there was no one else who knew anything besides him. I just say, educate yourselves and be sure to have a little bit of medical knowledge so that, in instances like that, if it is your loved one, you can do the things you need to do to help give them a fighting chance.

Brandon

Hi, my name is Brandon. This is a story about how I had to defend someone else with a gun. My main job is a 911 dispatcher. You can imagine what kind of stress happens day to day with that. I also have a second job doing rideshare with companies like Uber and Lyft. I enjoy doing this most nights because it's a huge contrast with my regular job. At 911, everyone is calling because something bad is happening to them. With rideshare, especially here where I am, most of the people are tourists. They're just here to have a great time and I can help them out along the way by taking them back to their hotel or AirBnB when they've had a little too much to drink, or just giving them tips about local sites and attractions, good food, etc. On the weekends, I like driving very late and I like going until after the bars close up here, which is around 3 a.m.

During the night this happened, it was during the summer of 2019. I was pulling up to one of our many streets that have several bars on it and was waiting for my passengers who were on the side of the road by a hot dog stand. There were about 15 or so people hanging out around the stand outside one of the bars that had just closed. While sitting there, one person came over to my car and got in. We were waiting for his friend to get in as well. Luckily for me - and for you listening - I, like many other rideshare drivers, installed a dashcam on my car. The one I have records in front of the car for potential collisions and reckless drivers. It also has an interior camera that records everything going on inside the car along with sound. I'll play the actual audio of what happened so you can get an idea of what happened. But keep in mind, because of the time of night and where this was and what was going on, there's quite a bit of cussing at the end of this, and you'll hear why.

Brandon

Is that your address?

Passenger

Yeah, that's me. Ok. Jake! Jake!

(Gunshot is heard, woman yells)

Passenger

What the fuck?

Brandon

Hang on. Stay here.

Passenger

Jake! Get the fuck in here! Jake! Get in here now! Jake!

Brandon (in the distance)

Put the gun down now! Put the gun down!

Passenger

Jake! Get in here now! Get in the fucking car! Get in the fucking car! Get in the fucking car!

Brandon

Put the gun down!

Passenger

Jake, what the fuck!?

Jake

I didn't do shit, bro.

Brandon

So you heard the person there that was in my car. What was happening outside the car with the second passenger - his name was Jake - he was waiting for his order to be filled at the hot dog stand. Jake was smoking a cigarette while waiting, and some random guy went up to him and asked Jake to have a drag from his cigarette. Like anyone with half a brain, Jake declines since he has no idea who this person is. At this point, the random guy grabbed Jake's cigarette, pulled it out of his mouth, threw it on the ground, pulled out a gun, and shot right next to Jake's head. I wasn't sure if he was just trying to scare Jake or if he was actually trying to shoot him in the head, or what else had happened. I was afraid someone else might get shot.

So, after that, I told the passenger who was in the car to stay put. I drew my gun, walked outside, and ordered the guy with the gun to put his gun down. It was a little bit hard to hear, over all the yelling of the person inside the car but, if you listen in the background, you can hear me. The suspect in this thought he was the only one with a gun. He was waving it around and cussing really loudly. When he saw that a gun was pointed at him, he quickly turned and ran off. I could've easily just sat there and not intervened at all, but I'm not that type of person. If there was a chance to help someone that needed help, I was going to go ahead and jump in.

Police were called to the scene and a report was made, but from what I know the suspect in this was never found. I'm just glad that I happened to be there to run him off before he could hurt one of those other people standing around, wanting to wash down their booze with some hot dogs. If you want to hear more about that incident or want to hear much more about my other job as a 911 dispatcher, feel free to check out my podcast as well. It's called Music City 911 where I play real 911 calls and go over the details about the crimes. It's available to listen to on your favorite podcast app.

My father was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1990. By 2004, the situation was becoming too much for my mom to handle alone. I'm one of 4 children - the 3rd in line. Because we lived in the same town, I guess I felt more responsible for them. To make a long story short, we sold our home, built on to theirs, and I became a caregiver for the next 13 years. My parents were not the overly lovey-dovey type. Yet, here I was - possibly the least favorite kid, which is a whole other story - set up to take care of them for the rest of their lives. When I knew my dad was actively dying, the thought of even asking for Hospice help and then calling my siblings to tell them paralyzed me. I was so afraid of his death, the emotions, and all of it.

My family all came. We surrounded his deathbed and had the most beautiful send-off. 12 years later, my mom had a stroke and was in bed for 2 years. Again, I didn't know how I was going to do this. I just knew it had to be done. Caregiving is a really really hard job. Changing your parents' diapers is just something you don't expect to do in life. Fortunately, my family was great. My kids would keep my mom's spirits up and mine. One night, I remember listening on the baby monitor to my daughter singing her heart out and my mom jokingly telling her that she was really good. My siblings would also come whenever I needed them and I was graced by their gratitude.

Inside, I was still so scared of my mom dying. Her death was just as scary to me as my dad's. Giving her the morphine that was prescribed by Hospice felt like I was aiding in her death somehow. Again, calling all the family when I knew it was the end was the worst feeling I ever had. I held it together until a car ride to the hospital behind an ambulance carrying my mom where I think I just scream-cried for about 20 minutes. We took her home from the hospital so she could die in her house in peace surrounded by her family. I miss my parents terribly. I miss the life we had when we were all living together and making the best-of-their-health struggles, but I'm at peace with the death we were able to give them.

Hi Scott! I love the show. In response to your prompt on Facebook, something I did that was incredibly difficult and that I never thought I would do was a CrossFit competition. Growing up, I wasn't super athletically inclined. But, in my 30s I was diagnosed with high blood pressure and the weight was creeping up, so I knew that I needed to start some kind of physical activity consistently. I knew that, as I got older, the harder it would be to start. On a whim, I joined a gym. Unbeknownst to me, they did CrossFit style workouts as well as HIIT type workouts, and I absolutely loved it. It was the first time I had ever consistently gone to the gym. After about a year of going there, a group of members decided to do a CrossFit competition and actually asked me if I would join them. I said, "Yeah, ok let's do it!" My goal was to not place last. I actually placed 8 out of 11, so I considered that a success.

Hi Scott! Thanks for letting me be on your show. It's about my daughter. We had a wonderful relationship. Then, in 2016, I found out she was an IV drug user. Heroin was her drug of choice. Our relationship went downhill from that. I'm a tough-love kind of mom. I could not be an enabler and watch my daughter kill herself. So she was homeless for quite a while. Then, in 2017, she found out she was pregnant and she got arrested. While she was in jail, she had to go to the hospital. There, she found out she had necrotizing fasciitis in her arm, so she went for several surgeries and skin grafts - all of this while she was pregnant. It was just crazy.

When she was released from the hospital, I brought her to my house. She went on a maintenance program that would keep her from having withdrawal symptoms so that she would not lose the baby. She did wonderfully and the baby did wonderfully. We knew that he was going to have to withdraw at birth, and he did great. It was easy and we were at a wonderful hospital that took great care of him. Now, he is just a healthy, wonderful, energetic 3-year-old boy. But when he was 3 months old, my daughter relapsed and I had to take him in. It was very scary because I'm 50-ish. When you're handed a 4-month-old baby, it scares you. It's hard. There's a lot you have to do. You have to find daycare. You have to do this. You have to do that. I wouldn't change it for a million dollars.

This year, about 75 days ago, my daughter decided she wanted to get clean. She is doing absolutely wonderful. She's in a great program in our town. She's going to meetings. She's working on that program. She's helping others. She's been working out of a sober living house. She's back living with us and we are gradually working her back into his life. He absolutely loves having his mama home. So there is a light at the end of that tunnel, and you can do it if you want to do it. I'm so proud of my daughter. She will never know how proud I am of her and what a good mother she's becoming. I just want other people to know, "If you're struggling, if you have to take in a grandchild, do what you need to do. You will not regret it for one minute. Be there for your child when they say they're ready to get help." I would walk on water to help my baby and I'm so proud of her.

Hello, my name is Devon. I've always had a dream of owning rentals, flipping houses, and being involved in real estate. In the beginning, my wife and I started dating at 15. We ended up getting married, had a kid at 17, moved out, and finished our senior year on our own. As you can imagine, the place that we found was not ideal. Not a lot of people want to rent to 17-year-olds. We didn't have a stove or microwave. All we had was a hot plate and a pot to cook our single meals in.

The car we had was a 5-speed. It didn't have a starter in it, so we had to push it down the road and pop the clutch to get to work every day - the same thing on the way home. We learned pretty quickly that this was not going to be the lifestyle for us, so we worked really hard to build our credit. At 19, we were able to buy our first home. We spent a lot of time fixing it up and working on it. After we bought it, we found out that the people actually had pet raccoons, so the house was a mess.

We lived there for about 5 years. During that time we had another child and decided it was time to move on to another house. So we converted that into a rental and upgraded our life a little bit. Then, we repeated this process to the point where, just before the pandemic, I was able to have

3 rentals. The property we live in now has 25 acres and two ponds in a very beautiful area. Shortly after that, after the pandemic started, unfortunately I found out that I was diagnosed with cancer.

Although I had been working on the real estate stuff, our focus went to family stuff. So during this time all of our focus, all of my energy, all of our money pretty much went all in on the real estate thing to follow my dreams. My family was fantastic in supporting me during this time, which, by the way, totally cured me, definitely going to live many more years. Anyway, during that time I put in everything I had and was able to flip a home. As of now, we've got 9 rentals and we'll probably be able to retire by the time I'm 40. I was able to purchase the car of my dreams, which was a Tesla Model 3. We're very happy.

My name is Megan. This November 1st marked 5 years off of opiates for me. I used different pills and dabbled in heroin but my drug of choice was fentanyl. There had been a drug epidemic around the world and a large increase in deaths from fentanyl. I started drinking around the age of 11 and progressed to cocaine when I was 14 when I was hanging out with my older sister. Unfortunately, she is still suffering from her addiction. The next year was when I first started using opiates. First, OxyContin— doctors used to overprescribe so they were everywhere. When that started happening less, I progressed to heroin and hydromorphone and, eventually, I tried fentanyl. Actually, the first time I tried it, I was with my boyfriend and I overdosed. I had to be rushed to the hospital and revived with Narcan. You know what I didn't do after overdosing? Try to get sober. It wasn't until over a year later that I would decide to finally try to get off of drugs, but that boyfriend wasn't ready, so we had to go our separate ways. This January, he was shot and killed by police. I've been living with a lot of guilt. I know you can't help someone who doesn't want help, but it's hard.

So, onto the good though. At the end of 2016, I made the decision to try to better myself but it was just physically unbearable. I won't go into too much information or details, but after being so dehydrated from withdrawals, I started medication-assisted treatment of Suboxone. The doctors and nurses at the clinic were absolutely amazing. Seriously, they saved my life. I was able to taper off of the Suboxone, just in time for me to get pregnant unexpectedly. My ex left me as soon as I told him, and it was a really hard time physically and mentally because I was really sick with hyperemesis gravidarum. But I pulled through and I have a sweet 3-year-old son. Now I'm in school full-time for child and youth care. I have a great boyfriend and we're planning our future together. In my Facebook memories, I see pictures of me and you can see in my eyes how high I was. It's a good reminder that I've come a long way and I have a lot of things to look forward to in the future.

We wanted to always frame his story in as positive a light as we could, given the circumstances of being abandoned. We didn't want it to be focused on that he was left, or that he was abandoned, but that he was found. That we found each other. We wanted it to be a source— I mean we always wanted him to know his story, we never hid anything from him. He knew from the earliest of times about the creation of our family and how that all happened. We would even tell him bedtime stories. Pete put together a very rudimentary picture book telling the story of how we became a family. It was just like clip art and telling the story in the voices of the trains. They were animated trains that told the story of Danny, and Clara the C train carrying Danny

down the subway line to the station to find baby Kevin. Using all of our names and telling in a very simple way how we became a family, that's what we read to him for a few years when he was really young.

Probably when he was about 5 it finally clicked; even using all of our real names and even going through the station, it happened one night where he was sitting on the couch. He had the book in his hands, and he wanted each of us to sit on either side of him and he wanted us to read the story to him. It was a frequent bedtime story we would read. As we're reading it, at the very end he pauses and asks, "Is this about me?" We paused for a second wondering where this is going to go. We said, "Yes this is your story. This is how we became a family." He had this BIG grin on his face, and smiling he said, "Let's read it again!" It took on a different meaning for him and because of that he then took it into school for show and tell. He told the story with such pride.

I think this was probably in 1st or 2nd grade, we got a call from one of the parents that said, "Your son brought in a book about your family and shared your family's story." We were thinking it was going to be bad news, that this parent was going to have a very strong negative reaction. She said, "I just want to let you know that this had a really big impact on our daughter. Our daughter is adopted, and she has been struggling with that. Kevin was so comfortable, confident, happy and had such pride in being adopted and about his story. It's helped my daughter feel better about her being adopted, that she has a friend that is also adopted that she can talk about this with." That's just a wonderful thing. What a gift that is.

Oddly enough, in my headphones, I was listening to some courtroom analysis of a high-profile shooting case when the commotion started. Three consecutive bangs and then a fourth. Immediately. I knew there were gunshots and they sounded very close. So I went to the window and I appeared out on the street in front of my home. At first glance, it looked like a pile of laundry spilled onto the road because I didn't expect to see a body. A man had been gunned down and was sprawled out on the asphalt and his legs were still on the sidewalk. He wasn't moving.

I ran down the stairs to get a better look at what was happening and I wasn't the only one. My landlord had just come down as well and we spoke on the porch. People poured out into the fast food restaurant parking lot across the street. Some were frantic and others were calm. From my porch, I've briefly remarked about the dire situation with my landlord as we watched a passer-by administering CPR. Suddenly, I realized, "Perhaps, I could help." So I ran upstairs to get the towel. Then, I ran back down and I darted across the street between the cars stalled in the traffic. I stood over the dying man and handed somebody a towel.

When I looked down, I didn't see any obvious wounds but he did have blood on his face. While one person on the ground was pumping his chest, others were gathering around. Background voices were making emergency calls and asking each other questions, like, "What happened? Did you see anything? I was just inside. I heard shots." Most clearly, among the voices, a very distraught woman - evidently from inside the restaurant - pleaded and cried to no one in particular, "Over an order?! Over food?!"

I returned home and watched for another 20 minutes before an ambulance finally had him loaded up and drove away. My own vehicle is still stuck inside the yellow tape that marked off the crime scene. It became clear from the witnesses inside the store that an argument had

broken out between a customer and an employee, and when they took it outside, the worker pulled a gun. Unfortunately, the man was pronounced dead at the hospital. I don't know what happened to the shooter - over food, over an order.