

Episode 141: Jennifer fought off a rapist

Content warning – this episode includes discussion of sex trafficking, and graphic depiction of sexual attack. If you're in the car with the kids, you might want to save this one for later.

The situation that Jennifer found herself in is one that no one ever expects. She was away from home, and she didn't really know anyone. On top of that, she was an American in Turkey and she didn't speak much of the language.

And her attacker was strong, and determined.

But what came to her during this traumatic experience were things she had heard on a television show. Oprah Winfrey would sometimes have law enforcement specialists and self-defense experts on her show to give advice about what to do in certain situations. This is from one of those experts –

Sanford Strong

Never allow them to take you somewhere else. Never. If everyone in this room and everyone watching this program has never drawn the line and made a decision on crime protection, you better make it when they decide to move you from crime scene number 1 to crime scene number 2, because crime scene number 2 is going to be isolated. You won't choose it. You'll be the focus of the crime.

Scott

That advice, along with some other tips she remembered, may have helped save Jennifer's life.

Because even though she was able to fight him off, he came back.

Scott

You were in Turkey at the time and you said you had your dream job. What was it that you were doing there?

Jennifer

I was in London for 4 years prior to being in Antalya, Turkey. I have a fine arts degree with a concentration of focus in photography. I had met Sali who took me to Turkey. I met him through another opportunity while I was working at an art gallery, and we had a really great connection. We seemed to share the same spirit of wanting to contribute to a better world and help people, and he had a foundation that he was starting to provide fresh, clean water to young people in Africa and villages, and then also to build schools. Those are two things that I really believe in. I thought that, when I left London for Turkey– I was only supposed to be in Turkey for a short time. My job was eventually supposed to take me to Singapore. Of course, we didn't get that far. Who knows if that was even true, really, in reflection of the story we're all about to hear.

Scott

Yeah. In this story, when you get to the end of it, you got to look back and think what was real and what wasn't in that story.

Jennifer

Right. I can tell you I've spent a lot of time in the past 14 years asking myself those same questions and leaning into— as I have gained more nervous system regulation and more presence in my body, and just developed a clearer intuition, I feel like I have gotten some answers.

Scott

Okay. At the time, you were staying at a place with your boss's cousin - she spoke very little English. How did that come about?

Jennifer

I have always considered myself a very seasoned traveler. I'm respectful of other cultures when I travel and try and pick up the most basic words to say - "Please" and "Thank you" - and to have a little bit of communication. In the beginning, for the first probably two or three weeks, we were pretty solid. We were communicating as best as we could, spending time together at markets and in the kitchen, and it seemed like we were pretty cool and everything was fine. It wasn't until one day when she walked into the apartment and I was wearing my bathing suit that she really started to— she just flipped a switch on me.

Scott

It was apparently a cultural thing, right?

Jennifer

I believe so. I mean, there are windows in the apartment. Where I was sitting, I was in the apartment by myself, not in front of a window, and not parading around in my bathing suit. But when she came through the door and saw me there, she really just lost it and said some cruel things about American women. Maybe it had been pent up in her a little bit. It seemed to have come from nowhere, really. It was quite surprising. I think it surprised her even more that I wasn't standing down necessarily. I was just standing there. I was not doing anything. It quickly just escalated and I thought, "You know what? I am just going to get out of here for the weekend. I don't need to stay here and deal with this." My boss was out of town at the time, so he couldn't have come over and mediated our situation. I only knew one person who had mediated for us before, not in an intense conversation, but just so that we could communicate with each other.

Scott

Just because of the language barrier?

Jennifer

Exactly. I was spending quite a bit of time with her. As you're getting to know someone, especially from two very different cultures, I just wanted to have the best communication with her that I could and for her to understand that my intentions were good and for her to understand me a little bit better. So, Karem, the man from the IT shop, had been our interpreter before.

Scott

How did you know Karem? Did she introduce you to him?

Jennifer

Yes.

Scott

Okay. So you decided at that point that this roommate situation isn't going to work out anymore, or at least not for now anyway, so you were looking at staying somewhere else. Where did you go?

Jennifer

I had been up to the IT shop a couple of times to see Karem and I thought I was developing a friendship with this person. We were roughly the same age and he was one of the only people that spoke really good English. So we just talked about music, movies, and film. On my way back on walks to and from the beach, I might just pop in there randomly and have a conversation with him and then leave. So when I made the decision that I was going to stay somewhere else for the weekend, I made a list and then I took that list to Karem's IT shop and asked him, like, "Hey, what do you think about these places?" Because, obviously, I'm not very knowledgeable about Turkey in general - only my little area that I was in - so I took that list to him.

Scott

Is this, like, a list of hotels or hostels?

Jennifer

Yeah, a list of hotels.

Scott

So you were just kind of wanting to talk to somebody more familiar with the local area and say, "Which place would be best for me to go?"

Jennifer

Exactly. It just felt like a safer option because of the intensity of the aggression that Fatosh was putting on me. He called a place. He went all through it, like, "This isn't good. Stay here." Then, he called the hotel that he had deemed appropriate and safe, and then off we went. I already had a backpack. All I had to do was pop up to my apartment and grab my bag. As he and I were walking out, a man entered the door. He actually held it open for us. I met the gaze of this man and did not get a good feeling from him, but I didn't know who it was. I didn't smile or do anything. I just kept walking. I got out to the car with Karem. When we got in the car, I thought we were heading to the hotel, but he made a quick U-turn and said, "Hang on for just a second," and he went back into the shop.

What I believe happened now, in retrospect, was the moment when he decided that he was going to try and sell me to the man in the shop. I think that he realized, "Oh, there's another option here." So when he got back into the car with me, he sold me this story about a Russian girl that he knew - her name is Alani - and that her brother was out of town, so I could stay there for the weekend, it wouldn't be a big deal, and that I would have someone to speak English with, someone to go to the beach with, and probably a female friend. I thought that sounded cool.

Scott

That's even better. That's cheaper than a hotel, right?

Jennifer

Yeah. And I would love to meet a girlfriend. That sounds great. So off we went. When Alani opened the door, she was very warm. She hugged me. She had a great smile. She did indeed speak really good English and we were of similar age.

Scott

How old were you at the time?

Jennifer

I was 32.

Scott

And we should say, too, for people that aren't realizing this already, you're natively an American.

Jennifer

Yes. I'm from Virginia.

Scott

But you do a lot of traveling abroad, so I can tell just from talking with you that you're sensitive to other cultures and not being the obnoxious traveling American when you're in other countries.

Jennifer

No. I try to avoid that as much as I can. And Turkey is a Muslim country. I wasn't walking around in tank tops and shorts. I was wearing sleeves that were down to my elbows. I was always keeping my shoulders covered. I mean, I was being very respectful of the culture. I did stick out without— I mean, as an American in a Muslim country, you're going to stick out if you're not wearing a burka. Actually, I guess Turkey's a bit more liberal with that. The women can be educated and they don't have to cover themselves, but there is still a different way that I look.

Scott

So you got settled in there at Alani's Place?

Jennifer

The apartment was on the second floor. The house was decorated as if it was lived in - art on the walls, pictures, instruments on the ground. It looked like a space where people lived. I put my bag in the room. I didn't take too much notice of this at first. I mean, she told me that - they both had told me - that her brother was out of town but, in the room I was in— also, this is just something in retrospect. It was two single twin beds. There were both very childlike comforters on them. One looked like it was for a little boy and one looked like it was for a young girl. But in my mind, I didn't really think about it too much. I just popped my stuff in there, put my toothbrush in the bathroom, and started to make myself at home and make my acquaintances.

Karem was still there at that time and it wasn't very long before Sinan - the man in the IT shop who had given me the creepy feeling - came through the door. He was a different person when he came through that door. He was much lighter. He was smiling. He was really being very kind to me, and it was her boyfriend. So then, it was like, "Okay..."

Scott

So her brother— who knows if she even had a brother?

Jennifer

I doubt it.

Scott

He was out of town or just not there. So now, it's Alani, Karem, the IT guy, and then Sinan comes in.

Jennifer

Yes.

Scott

And he seemed really nice then. Did you have a bad feeling about him at that time?

Jennifer

No, I did not. I didn't. We were sitting around and chatting. We smoked APL together, which is like a mix of cannabis and tobacco. Karem announced that he was going back to the IT shop to close up with his partner and that he would return afterward. So the three of us were left to have dinner together. I was actually feeling quite relieved not to have Fatosh in my space after her aggression toward me. So, once Karem got back, he brought back, like, a case of beer. I've never drank beer, so I wasn't drinking with them.

At that point - I had always been a cannabis user - I could see now that they were trying to get me in some sort of a very altered state of consciousness. But with the product that they provided me versus my already familiarity with that plant, it was like, "I was fine. I was totally just fine." In fact, it kind of got to the point where it wasn't really even worth it. At one point, probably around 11:30 PM. Karem decided to take off. I was getting pretty tired as well and began to excuse myself.

Sinan and Alani pleaded, like, "No, please have a drink with us. Stay up. We want to get to know you." So they pulled out a bottle of vodka and some Red Bull, and I was like, "No, I just don't feel like drinking." Once again, I think they were just pushing substances onto me to alter my state. So I sat up with them for a little bit. During that time - the three of us - we took a picture together. Karem took off. I hung out with them for a little bit and then I was just like, "You guys, thank you so much, but I'm going to go to bed now." I was wearing some black cotton palazzo pants that had, like, a 5 or 6 inch waist on them - just really big cotton pants, wide leg, super comfy - and a T-shirt.

I went into my bedroom. When you walked through the door, I was on the bed on that wall of the door and I had just sat down. When I heard the doorknob turn and as I turned to look over my right shoulder, Sinan was entering the room and he was only wearing his underwear - like tighty whities - and I just literally said to myself, "Oh fuck. Brace yourself. This is about to happen." And it did. I mean, he came at me.

Scott

Did you say anything when he came in?

Jennifer

I didn't really have the opportunity. He was at the door. I had my reaction. I really felt my body brace and tense up because the room was very small. He was probably only 3 or 4 steps away from me once he entered the room and he did shut the door behind him. And in that tension of

my body, it was, like, not only preparing myself to defend my body but also being prepared to fight someone - a man.

Scott

Did you have anything you could grab as a weapon?

Jennifer

No, I did not. When our eyes met, I knew what his intention was. He was going to try and rape me, and that was the first battle of our evening. I mean, I was terrified and, at the same time, wildly alive and receptive to my actions and his actions. I mean, I've never been in a fight before. I've never hit anyone before. He was grabbing at my clothes to get them off and he was hitting me. He was trying to get me to shut up because I was screaming, "STOP! NO!" I was saying it in Turkish, I was saying it in English, and I was trying to hit him back but he was just getting more and more violent. He was just, like, punching me with his fist. I was trying to kick him and hit him at the same time. It's just, like, shots fired in all directions at this point and he was really struggling to get me under his control because he could not shut me up. He held my arms down and pinned my legs down at the same time. I was not conceding.

Scott

How would you describe his physical build compared to you?

Jennifer

I'm roughly 5'9", and I would say he stood out about 5' 7" stocky, sausage fingers, beady eyes. I wouldn't be able to really guess his weight. I mean, he was a stocky guy. He was stronger than me, definitely.

Scott

It was probably not the first time he had punched someone, even though it was, maybe, for you.

Jennifer

Oh no. I think, getting back to all the substances - the cannabis, the beer, the vodka - the friendliness of his nature was just like, "Put this all in her system." Like I said, I didn't really partake.

Scott

When you were screaming, did you think Alani, his girlfriend, would hear you? I mean, was this in the same house?

Jennifer

Eventually, she did hear me and did come into the room, but not in this first attack, which probably went on for 5-7 minutes. I mean, time seemed to be very extended and stopped at the same time, so it's kind of hard for me to even, in reflection, calculate that, especially with the level of energy that was being asserted. Like I was saying, I'm just wearing cotton palazzo pants. I was not wearing anything with a zipper or a button. Eventually, he did start to pull on those pants and start to take them down only partially. I was wearing underwear and we continued to fight. At some point, I don't know why he stopped, honestly, but he did. He stopped and he left the room, and I was like, "Okay, maybe he's surprised at how much I'm fighting him. Maybe he's going for more supplies. Who knows? Is he going to tie me up? Is he going to drug me for real?" Like, I don't really know what is about to happen. But the clock is ticking. I

changed my pants. I got into jeans that had a zip-up and a button on them, and I also put another T-shirt on, and the t-shirt wasn't as loose, just a more, not necessarily, fitted T-shirt, but just something that was a little tighter around the waist.

Scott

So you're making a plan to get out of there at that point.

Jennifer

Well, absolutely. I was like, "I'm going to jump out of one of these windows. I'm only on the second floor." I got to get my passport out of here. I've got to get myself out of here. Oprah and John Walsh taught me in the 80s as a latchkey kid to not go to the second location. If you go to the second location, you're fucked. I mean, I don't know. I'm an only child. I'm out there traveling in the world. Like, I can't. I don't want— I had just seen "Taken"

Scott

The one with Liam Neeson?

Jennifer

Exactly. So it was like - between Oprah and John Walsh in my head, watching that movie, I'd always been a CSI watcher - I was just ticking through a list now. So I went to both of the windows. Although I was on the second floor, there was a huge drop. I mean, I was probably really on, like, the fifth floor or sixth floor. There were no trees. There was no canopy. There was no hope for dropping out of this window. So, I decided to take my phone and my passport. I opened the window and dropped them directly below and figured, "Well, at least those two things are out of the house." So when I get out, I'll be able to find my identity and get my phone.

As I was circling the room trying to figure out the strategy, "What's going to happen? Is he coming back with something that's stronger or more effective to hold me and tie me down?" I mean, I just kind of felt like a caged animal, just waiting for what is beyond that door. I don't know if I should leave this door. I'm just in here circling. To this day, as much reflection as I've done, I have never really found an answer to what I'm about to say because I have no idea how he knew that I threw my things out the window, but he did. And he came bursting through that door pissed and he was holding my phone and my passport, and he just came at me. He was so enraged and I just thought, "Well, here we go again."

The attack this time lasted much longer. It was a lot more aggressive. Even though I had changed my pants, it was a great challenge for him, it might have slowed him down a little bit, but he just seemed a lot more prepared for the fight. I remember a memory that I had of actually watching an Oprah episode where an elderly lady's home had been broken into in the middle of the night, and a man got in her bed and tried to rape her and she had grabbed onto his genitals so hard and squeezed them that he asked her to stop, like, "Please, I'm tapping out."

I thought of that woman and I tried that same thing. I just grabbed onto him so hard but— I mean, he just punched me right in the face. He punched me so hard. That moment, I think, was when he got my jeans. Like, he got my button undone and he started to pull my pants down. I did have a moment, honestly, where I thought to myself, "I don't know how much of this I can stand. I don't know if I'm going to win this fight." What propelled me to stay engaged in that fight was that when he did get my pants a little bit down, he'd taken my underwear with him and I felt his penis touch the side of my leg - like, not inside of me, but getting too close - and that really ignited a fire within me. It was like, "Oh no." Now, I started screaming for Alani and I was really

screaming like, "Help me!" I was calling for her. Finally, she came into the room, opened the door, looked at me, we made eye contact, and then she shut the door, and I thought, "Oh my God. She's not an ally. This lady is not going to help me. Here I am on my own." But there's just no way I'm going to let this man— I mean, he's going to have to do something more to me - to rape me. I'm not going to allow that.

Once again, I mean, let's just say maybe it was 10 minutes long of a fight. Once again, he just stopped. He stopped and he left the room. I thought, "Okay, here we go again." I got dressed, put another layer on, get this back together, and now I have my phone. So I sent Karem a message, a text, and it said, "HELP ME!" in capital letters. I had a little Nokia flip phone and I sent that text message. After I did that, a little musical note went off. Well, he heard that and here he came bursting through the room. Now, he grabbed me by the wrist. He was trying to pull me out of the room. I was trying to stay in the room and I was resisting as best as I could. Like, I don't know where he's going to take me. I was terrified and he wanted me to go into the bedroom where Alani is and where she was sleeping. It looks like she was sleeping. She might be passed out. She was engaging in all of the substances as we were there that night. He was trying to drag me in there and tell me that I need to sleep in bed with the two of them and that everything is going to be okay.

He's telling me, actually, he's sorry and I was like, "What? This is a trick. Something is going on here." The master bedroom was right adjacent to the room that I was in and she passed out in the middle of their king-sized bed. He pushed me along to the faraway part of the room, to the other side of the bed. When I sat down on the bed, I made the decision to lay down. On my left side, I was facing, like, a double sliding glass door that goes to an outside balcony. I was sneaking discreet glimpses over my shoulder to watch what he was doing. Because he is kind of in and out of the room, he was making a lot of noise. I just kind of wanted to keep an eye on him, but I also don't want to be making clear visual contact with him. So, as I laid there, I saw Alani's phone on the nightstand and I was like, "Oh, fantastic." So I powered it off and I stuck it in between the mattress and the box rings and thought, "Okay. Well, now I have a phone." Because he got my phone and passport now. He took them from me when he pulled me from the room.

Scott

So he still has those things.

Jennifer

He's got those two things now. So now I've got her phone.

Scott

I'm just wondering about his state of mind at this point that he expects you, after two attempted rapes, to just fall asleep.

Jennifer

Yeah, exactly. It's so strange. I mean, it's bizarre. It's not logical behavior - I don't think at all. In one of my glimpses of watching him, I noticed that - I heard it at first - he had almost what looked like a janitorial set of keys - so many keys - and there was an ironing board on the other side of the room. Like, when you first enter the room, there's an ironing board there and then the bed is in the center. I was on the far side of the bed. He took that set of keys and he shoved it underneath some clothes there. I was thinking, "Well, that's not an ordinary set of keys. I don't

know if that's really going to be an option. How would I not disturb him? How would I even get that?" So I laid there and I just silently cried.

I put my snot on the bed sheet cover. I just cried. I thought, "Well, once again, if CSI comes in here, they're going to find my DNA. They're going to see my snot with that blue light, see my tears, and they're going to be able to find me some way." I basically laid there until the sun started to come up. I would venture to say, if Karem left the house around 11.30, it was probably 1 o'clock in the morning or something by now. So I just laid there, just waiting, listening to the snores, listening to the rhythm of what's happening in the room, trying to find a cadence, and trying to figure out, like, what my next move is going to be. Once I gathered that information and, really, the courage to even start to make my way out of the room, I grabbed Alani's phone, I crawled out of bed so slowly and started to sneak across the room because I got to cross the bed where they are. I got to open the door and I have to leave the room. Then, I have to find a weapon. I got to figure out what is going to happen here next because I got to get out of here. I got to figure that out too. So, I was just praying as I was creeping past him, like, "Please stay asleep."

I got to the door, I slid out and I made my way to the kitchen. I opened the cabinet and got a glass because I thought, "I'm just going to break this and shove it into his neck. That's going to be my only weapon here." So I got the glass, went out to the balcony, and turned the phone on. The balcony is on the second floor. So I've never jumped off a balcony from the first floor, to be honest with you, and it's tile or something like that. I don't know if it's concrete or tile, but it's a hard surface and there's nothing else there. I got the phone turned on. I set the glass down. I was surveying the area. Then, I thought of the camera. We took that picture. I got to get that. I have to be able to identify these people to the authorities.

So I went in and got the camera. I was trying frantically to, like, pop out the memory card. I couldn't figure it out. So I took it back out onto the balcony and chucked it as far as I could. I'm trying to hit an agave plant. I mean, I'm kind of laughing because it's like, "How far did I think I could throw something?" The agave plant is green. Obviously, the lawn was green, and if there is a red camera about 3 feet in front of the agave plant, I'm like, "Well that wasn't the best."

Scott

If he looks down, he would see it there, obviously.

Jennifer

Yeah, he would see it. So, in these few moments, he was on the balcony with me and he was, like, shocked. He's shocked that I was out there. He grabbed me. My glass was on the table, so I don't really have that as my weapon right now. It was, like, not in front of me. I had a moment where I thought, "Maybe I can play nice and I can get out of this. So I'm going to pretend like nothing's happening here. I'm just going to approach him in a new way and be nice and see if he lets me go." Maybe last night was a drunken mistake. I haven't really put too much together at this point. I don't really understand yet that I'm in a trafficking situation or a potential trafficking situation right now. I was just thinking that I'm going to be raped and who knows what's going to happen. Like, definitely rape is on the table but I don't know how far else this is going to go.

Scott

I got to say it's amazing to me that with the trauma that you've already been through at this point, you are thinking, "Is this logical?" I mean, you're planning ahead. You want to do the

camera. You were looking for a weapon. I mean, it's not like you're just panicking and in a state of disarray. You were thinking.

Jennifer

It was like a checklist. I mean, everything that I've ever watched, all of the crime, the Oprah, all of it is just like— I don't really know other than just, "That was a story I was intended to play out." So here we are. Now, I was like, "Hey, are we going to the beach today? You said we were going to go to the beach today. Where's Alani? Let's get her up. Let's go to the beach." I was just, like, trying to be nice, trying to see what happens here, and me being nice isn't really working. He is not receiving that at all.

So as he passed through the living room, he noticed that the camera wasn't sitting on the coffee table and he asked me, "Where's the camera?" I was like, "I have no idea what you're talking about." He was like, "No, we took a picture. Where's the camera?" I was like, "No, dude. Seriously, I have no idea. I don't have your camera." He pretty accusingly, like, looked at me. He was kind of yelling at me once again. I mean, his English is better than Fatosh's, but not as good as Alani's and not as good as mine, obviously. So I was arguing back with him. I was shaking my head profusely. "I have no idea what you're talking about!" Well, he woke up Alani over this little camera and, before you know it, I mean a full search is going on in the house. I was trying to keep him off the balcony because if you go out on the balcony, you're going to see the camera. So every time he heads for the balcony, I was trying to make a distraction.

Scott

It sounded like there was more on that camera than just that selfie that you guys took last night that was really important to him.

Jennifer

Definitely. I think so too. I think there were more women, more kids, more girls - who knows who - more victims on that camera, and that was important to them. Maybe, I think that's why they took a picture of me so that they would have that as maybe a selling point. So Alani's up now, and Sinan and her are having a conversation and he was telling her that, the night before, I threw my stuff out the window. She was looking at me and we were all looking at each other. I was just kind of watching this weird game of Turkish charades going on, like I don't know what they're saying to each other, but it was pretty surreal, honestly. That particular part was really surreal for me. I was just thinking like, "Fuck, this is not going well like this. This is not going well."

So he went towards the front door. Well, I'm right on him. I am right on his footsteps because— back to the janitorial keys, there were probably 4 locks on that front door. So he was unlocking. I was right there. He shoved me back and grabbed me. This is when he really started grabbing me by the neck and he would start pushing me back - while he was choking me out - back down onto the couch, which was probably 15 or 20 feet away from the front door. Well, every time I sat down, I popped right back up. Now, I was telling him, "I want to leave, I want to get out of here. Let me out." And the same thing again. He just got a much stronger grip and he pushed me down and he left the door. So he got out the front door. From the other side, he's locking us back in.

He went outside. I was alone with Alani. She went into the bathroom. I was using the guest bathroom where my toothbrush temporarily was and I just began pleading with her. I was like, "Alani, please, I need your help. Where are your keys?" She was just like, "Everything is okay.

Everything's fine, Jennifer." I was like, "It's not fine. I'm not safe. Please, I'm begging you. You have to help me. I need to get out of here." And she was like, "You're fine. It's okay. But stop making him so mad." I was like, "What?! Okay, once again this girl is not my ally. This is not who is going to help me."

Scott

And if she helped you, she would be paying the price later for that.

Jennifer

Absolutely. And she probably knew that. I mean, who knows what her situation was in reflection of this scenario? So I was standing in front of her in the open bathroom and here come the keys. I can hear the keys hitting the lock, and I was just like, "Okay, he's back." So he came in. Our eyes met. I made it a point then that day that if he looked at me, I would look directly back at him. There were some times in the night before when I was like, "I'm just not going to keep that visual contact. But today I'm going to look him dead in the eyes. If he looks at me, I'm going to look at him right back because I'm going to let him know, energetically, you are messing with the wrong girl." Sinan went down the hall into their primary bedroom. Now, Alani was in the kitchen looking in the kitchen cabinets for this camera. So, I had a light bulb moment. The night before, she clipped a loose string from his shirt and I know that there's a small pair of scissors underneath the coffee table. The coffee table had, like, a glass top and, underneath, there's also a shelf with a couple of little things there. On top of one of the bowls, there was a small pair of scissors. I mean, I would think the blade was probably four inches.

Scott

But it was pointed to the end.

Jennifer

Pointed, mm-hmm. Bigger than a sewing needle or, like, nose trimmer. I mean, bigger than that but not a full-size pair of scissors. So I put them underneath the back of my bra strap so that the scissors were going horizontally. When Sinan came back into the room, he handed me back my phone and my passport and I was like, "Okay, this is kind of weird. Am I leaving? Why is he giving me this?" So I stuck my phone and my passport on the right side of my bra, underneath my shirt to keep them safe.

I said to him, "Are you taking me home?" And he said, "No." And I was like, "What? What are you doing with me?" He had no verbal reply. He went to walk out the front door again. So I was right back on his heels. He grabbed me by the throat, started to choke me out, and pushed me back. I got right back up. And as he turned around, I grabbed the scissors and held them in my right hand with the blade going up my forearm. I told myself, "It's you or him now, and it is not going to be you." So when he turned around and he grabbed me with his right hand in my neck, I had the scissors and I immediately stabbed him in the nose and dragged the scissors across his face and then I got him one other time.

Scott

Where was the second hit?

Jennifer

Around his neck. It was around his neck actually. It's this soft spot here. Just for anyone who's listening, there is a reason why you go for an artery or a vein because this is a puncture wound. When I hit him, he just started to bleed out everywhere. He realized what's going on the first

time. As he let my neck go - he was doing a quick release - I stabbed him again and he immediately went to punch my neck, but I watched his hands. It's like everything's happening in slow motion, so I was able to kind of dodge it a little bit. He got me slightly, but not near as hard as he had really made a direct hit. So now he's in shock. She's in shock. He's bleeding and Alani begins to clean up the blood. She just went into the kitchen, grabbed a wet paper towel, and she was cleaning the blood up. She was trying to help him stop the bleeding. They're putting pressure on it. He was livid. He was so pissed at what just happened. I think the whole house was in panic at that moment because I realized that I didn't do the right thing. I realize now why you're supposed to slit someone's throat in an instant like that and not stab them in the neck.

Scott

But it still got his attention away from attacking you. Now he's attending to his injury.

Jennifer

Yes. He's attending to his injury. She's cleaning up and everyone's surprised. Everyone's pretty enraged. He came back at me. He was screaming. He was holding a cloth on his neck. He was screaming at me. His blood was streaming down him.

Scott

Honestly, this sounds like a Quentin Tarantino movie right now.

Jennifer

It was, like, in slow motion. I can't believe I was just standing there watching this scene and I just fucked up. I just had what felt like my one chance to get out of this house or to hurt him enough to where he is debilitated. If I've got to jump off the second-floor balcony or whatever's about to happen here, I just blew it. I was not really feeling very good about this situation right now. I was not feeling really great at all. He turned to her, shouted something at her, and then he headed towards the kitchen. When he returned in purpose and in fury, he was holding a 9-inch carving knife and he was holding it like a psycho. He was holding it with a grip, with the blade coming down. Now, I was backing away. I was back on the couch and he was over me. He was making slashes at me. He was not hitting me, but he was performing it. Like, he was basically letting me know what is going to happen to me.

He pulled me up to stand face-to-face with him. Now, I said to myself, this is exactly what I said, "Well, this is it. You're going to die here." I mean that thought finished and it was the only thing that I can describe as divine intervention. I felt this real energetic force in between us. Then, my next thought was, "No, you're not going to die." He backed off. Only moments or seconds have passed and he still got the knife, but he was not in my face anymore. He was telling me, "Now, I'm going to call the police!" I was like, "Awesome." I think this could go one of two ways, right? Like, are the police good or are the police bad? Because then, I could still end up in the ground somewhere. Who knows? I don't know, but I'm thinking, "Okay." So there was a knock on the door and a man walked in. He was probably in his 30s, clean-cut guy. He was wearing a pink Ralph Lauren Polo shirt and some shorts. I was like, "Well, this doesn't really look like the police. So who is this?" So now, I was listening to Sinan tell this man the story, and he looked at me.

Scott

Could you understand the story that he was telling him?

Jennifer

Not necessarily. Like I said, it's like watching charades. I was watching the movements. I kind of got a few words and they're both looking at me. Alani is still cleaning up and tending to Sinan wounds. I was just like, "I don't know what the hell's going on." The man in the polo shirt, literally, like, stopped talking to Sinan, faced me, took a couple of steps towards me and just stopped, and looked at me. Then Sinan said, "I'm calling Karem!" And I was like, "Okay." So here comes Karem."

Karem arrived. Once again, story. Karem came, sat in front of me, and he said, "Jennifer, what have you done? This is very bad." And I replied, "I leaned into him and I was like, 'Please get me out of here.' I will explain everything to you, but this man is trying to hurt me. You've delivered me to a bad place and I need to get out of here. Please help me." So he got up, said something to Sinan who still had the knife in his hand, he was walking around with that knife, he was still holding it. I made eye contact with Karem. I looked at him, looked at the knife, looked at him, looked at the knife. So he was the one who got the knife out of Sinan's hand.

Karem came back to me and he said, "Go get your things." I asked him to come with me. He said, "No." So I went into my room.

Scott

You mean come with you to the bedroom?

Jennifer

I was scared to go back there by myself, but I went back there. My bag wasn't really unpacked, to be honest with you. It had been a little bit disheveled in my own changing of clothes, but I didn't really have much happening there. I left my toothbrush and I think I left a couple of other things there like bathroom essentials and stuff, but nothing really personal. As Karem and I started to leave the apartment, Sinan was behind me. I was following Karem down a huge spiral marble staircase. I mean, it looked like something that you would see in the Vatican or something. It was just like this piece of art - this big staircase. I put the duffle bag so that it was in front of me, thinking that if he pushes me down the stairs, I got something soft to land on or to try and break my fall. So we got into the car and Karem said to me, "Jennifer, where's the camera?" I was like, "Dude, I do not know where this camera is. Okay? I don't know."

Scott

Did Sinan get in the car with you as well?

Jennifer

No, he did not. He was standing at the passenger side window where I'm sitting, and these two were talking through me. Karem was now asking me, "Where's the camera?" And I was like, "I have no idea." Side note, like I said, I'm a photography major. I have cameras. I was telling Karem, like, "I have cameras. I don't need some shitty SLR, some little point-and-shoot. Like, I have cameras. I don't need this guy's camera." Karem drove off and started with all these questions and I was like, "Look, please, I'll, I will tell you everything. Just drive."

Instead of taking me to my apartment, which was probably only 5 minutes away from where I was, he took me to the beach. It's morning time. I mean, it's 9:00 AM maybe at this point. He actually ordered a beer at this place. I'm not in a jersey type of material, but I'm wearing a yellow Brazil type of jersey - green, number 10, Brazil logo, bright yellow - and people were kind of looking at me funny. I didn't really understand why at this moment. He was very upset. He was

angry. He was telling me that I've done something wrong and I was floored. I was like, "I did something bad. Are you kidding me? No."

Scott

But you haven't yet told him the full story of what happened, right? He only heard it from Sinan.

Jennifer

Yeah. I really didn't go into too much. I just told him, "He attacked me. He tried to rape me." Karem asked me if I'd be calling the police and I said no. I'm going to book a flight to London. I'm getting out of here as soon as I possibly can. I had all intentions of going to the police. Honestly, I knew the mayor of the next town through my boss. He took me home. He dropped me off in front of the apartment. The way that my apartment is, when you walk in through that front door, there's a little bit of a lobby, if you will. There are stairs and an elevator. When you're in your apartment, you might get a buzz if someone's downstairs is trying to get in, but you wouldn't know who it is. So if you accept the buzz, you know who's coming up. I'm on the eighth floor.

Scott

So when somebody downstairs hits the buzzer, it rings in every apartment.

Jennifer

No, it just rings in your designated apartment, but you wouldn't be able to say, like, "Oh, it's Scott. Is Jennifer there?" You're just buzzing in who-knows-who. So I waited in the lobby and I watched for his car to drive away. I knew some people in the other apartment next door who were on the exact same floor as me. I met them several times walking to and from the beach. When Karem drove away, I went to their apartment. They buzzed me up. When they opened the door, as I went to go in, they stopped me and held me back. That's when I realized that, on that yellow shirt, I had a ton of blood on me. That's probably why everybody was looking at me so strangely when I was at the beach. I called my dad. I took all the clothes off. I didn't take a shower because I know that if you have any situations like this, you don't shower in case there's any DNA on you or any evidence whatsoever. So I changed clothes. I called my dad. Then, I called the mayor's daughter of the nearby town and spoke English - bless her heart. She was only 13 or 14 at the time. I told her what had happened and they told me to get in a cab and get there right away, that they were going to take me to the police station, and that's what we did. I jumped in a cab over there and then I went to see the police.

Scott

Did you feel safe at that point?

Jennifer

It's weird because these are the only people I know. I didn't know anyone. Now, this little girl is the only person I know who speaks English. When I got to the mayor's house, the mayor wasn't there yet. He'd been in Ankara and he was on his way back to Antalya. So it's me, the little girl, the young lady, the mayor's brother, and the mayor's wife. So when the mayor arrived, we went to the police station and I told them everything with the help of a translator. Once again, who knows how things are really being translated? I mean, we were doing our best. I handed them my bag of clothes with the evidence. After we went through everything, the lead detective, the chief of police there - I think it was the chief of police— he was awesome. He was really a godsend, honestly. He reminded me of a Turkish Tommy Lee Jones. Like, he was hip. Like, he

had great jeans on and his ostrich boots and he just had a really friendly energy, but he also had an energy that was protective. I felt really comfortable.

Once I was with him, I felt very secure and he told me, "Good job. I'm proud of you. You've done a really good thing. Do you think you could get back to the apartment?" So I said, "Yeah, I think I can." If we start at my apartment and get to the IT shop, I might be able to find my way there. So the chief of police, the lead detective, and me get into a vehicle together. I couldn't find it. I couldn't find the place. We sat in front of the IT shop and the chief of police said, "We'll be waiting here for Kareem when he opens this shop in the morning." And we went off to try and find the apartment. I couldn't find it. He said, "Don't worry, we're going to get Kareem and he's going to take us there. We're going to figure it out." I'm like, "Okay."

So he's like, "Now you have to go to the hospital. You have to have all the tests done." Instead of them taking me to the hospital, they leave it up to the mayor's brother. We got to the hospital. We were there for hours. I mean, just hours. I let them know, like, he did not put himself inside of me. He didn't have his tongue in my mouth. Like, I don't really know what you're going to find. The bruises were so fresh. They're not really coming out yet. I mean, over time, you can start to see a little bit of something coming up. It's particularly a spot on my neck. But God, I just remember sitting there and thinking just how gross I felt, to be quite honest with you. Like, blood has been on me. I've had this energetic man on me, this whole fight, this whole thing, and I just really felt terrible. I just really felt so gross. Now, it's almost 2:00 AM before I leave the hospital. So all of this has just gone on for so long. The police station, the police department, finding the IT shop, the apartment, the hospital.

Scott

And you were up all night the night before. You've got to be exhausted at this point.

Jennifer

Exhausted. I just felt kind of worn down while I was at the mayor's house. I called my old flatmate from when I lived in London. He was a trauma surgeon in the ER. So I had booked my flight to London and I was leaving the next day. I can't remember what time my flight was, but I was, "Police department and we're done. I'm out of here. I got to go." After the police officially released me after the exams, they officially released me. The mayor and his brother owned a hotel in a neighboring town, so the brother took me to the neighboring town to stay in a hotel.

This time, my mom has contacted the US Embassy and now the US Embassy is involved - I don't know this yet. I got into my hotel room. I was alone. I was trying to make myself secure. I moved furniture in front of the screen door. I got furniture in front of the door and I was trying to barricade myself in and then look for the appropriate weapons. Now, I can finally have a shower, which I'm thrilled about, but there's no soap. I had no soap. I just took a wet dry shower. If you've ever done that, you are not clean and you just don't feel real great about it. It was weird. I kept trying to cry about it. Like, I was just so exhausted and so run down, but I just had nothing in me.

After the shower, I immediately got redressed. I laid in bed and I was kind of falling in and out of sleep, but I was holding my little cell phone. Then, I got a call from the US Embassy. That's when I realized my mom had been talking to the US Embassy. They were telling me, "We don't know this mayor. We don't know the mayor's brother. We don't know who owns this hotel you're in. We got to get you out of here because we don't know who's involved. You cannot trust

anyone. Don't talk to anyone until we put you in touch with someone. You say nothing. You call no one."

There is no US Embassy in Antalya but there is a British consulate. It just so happens that the British Consulate and her husband live in the town that I'm in with this hotel. So the US Embassy contacted them. The British Consulate, the woman, she's at the British Consulate and her husband was now coming to the hotel to pick me up on the way to the consulate. I got a phone call from the police chief. He was in the apartment. They found it. They got to Karem. Karem's under arrest and Karem took them to the apartments. Alani has fled and they want me to go there. So, the husband of the consulate drove me to a meeting point where I got back into the car with the police chief and the lead detective, and he told me, "We're still going to the consulate."

So he told the man, "Go to the consulate. We're going to meet you there." I let him know at that point, like, "I have a flight to catch here in a few hours, so let's tie this up." So I arrived at the apartment and they had me put on the little booties so that my footprint wouldn't be in there. Everybody's got gloves and booties on. Back to the blue light that I knew eventually was going to come into the scene. They asked if they could film me. So I went through and I did a full interpretive dance of everything that happened the night before. Thankfully, my toothbrush was still there and there was still a little bit of blood splatter on the walls. I walked them over to where my DNA and, like, my snot and tears were on the side of the bed skirt. I looked over and saw an ashtray, actually. Alani and Sinan had smoked two different cigarettes. She had one and he had one, and so then there's their DNA on the cigarettes. It was interesting. Now I get to open doors I hadn't been in before.

Now I get a broader view of what's going on. This is when I really notice the two twin beds and I really see it for what it is. There was a room across the hall from me that had two sets of bunk beds in it and then the room next to mine where I had it was the only room next to me where I had thrown my stuff out the window. I still can't figure this part out of how he knew that because the room next to me didn't have any windows, so it wasn't like he was in that room watching my room. I don't know if there was somebody waiting out there. I don't know. That is a real mystery to me that I have not found an answer to, and I don't even know if I need one.

Scott

But the whole place had a lot of rooms and a lot of beds.

Jennifer

The camera's gone from the agave plant from the lawn in front. They found it, and it would've been a miracle if they hadn't found it. I mean, it was a red camera on a green lawn.

Scott

So you gave them all the information they needed really to investigate this case.

Jennifer

The chief of police and I— I don't know how to describe it. I mean, he had my back. He looked at me several times and he was like, "I believe everything that you've said. I believe you." He was proud of me. He told me that like an uncle or a fatherly figure looking at you and saying like, "I'm really proud of what you did."

Scott

And that was legitimate pride because you thought your way through this whole thing rather than panicking and or giving up.

Jennifer

I mean, something bigger than me saved me. I mean, something bigger than me intervened. Turkish Tommy or the chief of police and the detective and I— we all went to the consulate. She was lovely. I mean, she was just amazing, very warm and kind, and finally a woman I can trust in this space. As we're all sitting there, she told me, "They want you to go back to the hospital. They want to swab your cheeks." I was like, "This is ridiculous. There's nothing. Nothing went in my mouth, no hands, nothing." But we had to go there anyway. For some reason, they wanted to draw blood. Well, I hadn't eaten in, like, 48 hours. The consulate gave me money. She gave me food. She called the airport to let them know that I would be coming with a very heavy bag. I forgot to mention that, on my way back from Sinan and Alani's apartment, the chief of police took me back to where I lived and gave me a few minutes to pack a bag. I got to see Fatosh there for a couple of moments too. She and the chief of police were talking and she came to me and handed me some money. It was, like, coins. It just did not make a lot of sense. I just pushed her away. I was like, "I don't fucking want anything from you." I really have to question her role in it. Did she know that Karem was involved in these sorts of things? What is going on here with her? Like, I don't really know.

So I get on my plane, I fly back to London and that was a really crucial time for me because, like I said, my flatmate was an ER trauma surgeon and he really knew how to take care of me - someone who is used to trauma and directing people around. So it was, like, "Have a shower. Do this." And he put me on the tube. I mean, he put me in London. London is very jarring anyway, but he was like, "Look, you are not going to fail. You are going to get through this. I'm going to support you. You've got friends that live here in London and we're going to go and we're going to tell them this story. We are going to get on that train." I really feel like he helped me. He really helped save me that weekend.

Scott

So you spent some time there with him before you flew back to the States?

Jennifer

Yeah. After my arrival into the States, I was a mess. I was really a mess. Do you know what hypervigilance is?

Scott

Yes.

Jennifer

When you are scanning the room, you're watching faces, you can't settle down, and there's a lot of tension in the body and racing heart. I was very hypervigilant. My mom and I had gone to Kohl's a few days later because I didn't have anything. I was in the intimates department buying bras and underwear and, at the time, there was, like, a big round table where you just kind of pick your panties out. As I looked up, there was an older gentleman across from me, probably, in his 60s. I straight up told him if he didn't get away from that table, I was going to fucking kill him, like, straight out at Kohl's. So that is what I was like. I was very aggressive. I was in a very active fight response and I was not scared at that point.

I don't know if men experience this but, as a woman, there are certain ways when a man looks at you, you might think, "Oh, he thinks I'm pretty. That's nice. Great. Not a threat." And then, there's another way that a man looks at you and you're like, "Oh shit." Well, anytime I got that feeling, I was not afraid to be very confrontational. I told several people that I would kill them if they looked at me like that again. It was hard and I was drinking secretly almost all day. I was just kind of drinking in private. I wasn't sleeping. I had terrible insomnia. My bedroom in my parents' house is the room over the garage. If a car backfired, if I heard anything, I would be looking through the blinds, so I'm not sleeping. I was drinking heavily. I really didn't tell too many people -any of my friends yet - that I had been back yet.

The interesting thing I think for people who experience something like this is that there can be a lot of shame around an experience like this, thinking that I had done something wrong. I had behaved in a way that brought this on me even though, like we said in the beginning, I was dressed appropriately to the culture. Yeah, I was dressed. I was not on Instagram. I was not on Facebook. I was 32 years old. I wasn't out there dancing around and making myself very public, very visible. I had just been a traveler. I thought that I had my dream job. I didn't know. I mean, there's so much about what I know in my life, in my nervous system, and in my body now that I didn't know then, but I already had complex trauma. I already had complex PTSD. So now I've got PTSD. I've got some shock trauma on top of what I already had. I was already oscillating in 4F trauma responses and I had this thought of, "I need to get a gun." Like, that would've been a terrible idea.

Thankfully, my friend's husband who taught jiu jitsu for the SEAL team, for our air force, and for our active duty, he was like, "No, you need Muay Thai." I'm going to take you. You're going to learn how to defend yourself in a real way and you're going to burn some of that energy out. And so that's what I ended up doing for a little while. I never got a gun.

Scott

Do you now feel comfortable being in public, able to defend yourself?

Jennifer

Very, yes. I feel I have a much different experience in the world. I used to be very scared to walk in my neighborhood and very scared to not have an alarm system. That hypervigilance really stayed with me up until probably 2019. I was a mess. I was a total mess and it was really easy for me to fall back into very old patterns with alcohol, with cannabis, with bad partnerships and relationships. Like, I was hiding a lot. I was really scared. I was really scared to be in the world.

Scott

Did you ever find out what happened with the investigation?

Jennifer

Yes. About 9 months after I returned home, I testified. I had gotten a call about a week later and I testified at the US State Department in Norfolk, Virginia against Sinan and Alani. They found Sinan on the way to the airport. The police, when you rent an apartment in Turkey, you give them a photocopy of your driver's license or passport. So they had that. When the chief of police was driving me to the airport, they had a picture of him and I was like, "Yeah, that is him." But now, he is going to have a big old scar - a hole in his nose and a scar across his face. But I have no idea. I have no idea what happened. The attorney that day told me like, "Well, we don't have the best relationship with Turkey. I'm going to submit your testimony, but we really don't know what's going to happen."

Scott

So you just had to kind of let that go and hope he got justice.

Jennifer

Yeah.

Scott

Maybe your actions saved future targets that he was going to go after.

Jennifer

And maybe Alani also. It would be hard not to reflect on this story and go beyond Fatosh to think that Sali, my boss, wasn't involved in this either. Like, who knows. Maybe I was trafficked from the very beginning and I had no idea. Maybe that job was never going to happen. That is the reflection now that I feel. When I started out, in the beginning, saying like, "I'm a fully embodied person now. I have a healed nervous system. I do a lot of work to be embodied and to be present and to put myself visibly out into the world and use my voice."

Scott

Yeah. Let's talk about that. That's what you do now. You have a podcast - it's called "Trauma Rewired." What do you talk about on your show?

Jennifer

Trauma Rewired is a podcast that teaches you about your nervous system, how trauma lives in the body, and what you can do to heal. So I work in nervous system health and regulation. I help people clear emotional stories from their bodies. I work with deficits that might happen in the nervous system and I really have a specialty for complex trauma. The podcast has a heavy focus on complex trauma.

Scott

Well, it's certainly something that you can identify with when you hear somebody tell a story that's something they've gone through. So how can people get in touch with you if they want to talk to you about this?

Jennifer

Yes. There are a couple of different ways that people can reach out to me. I love when people reach out to connect with me. Of course, you can find me on the podcast. Trauma Rewired is available where any podcast plays and is available.

But also if you're interested in nervous system health and want to learn some regulation tools, and if you are someone who experiences a shock trauma, PTSD, or complex trauma, if you go to rewiretrial.com, it will give you two free weeks on the Brain-Based Wellness website where you can learn all about your nervous system and you can really change your life by changing your nervous system.

Scott

I've heard that.

Jennifer

It's amazing. Throughout these years, I had done all the modalities. I mean, even when I was in Virginia Beach and things, I was quite dysregulated. I've had healers. I've done all the things and nothing has changed my life the way that having a healthy nervous system does.

Scott

All right. Well, we'll have links to those things in the show notes so people can go find that. You know what? I just can't help but think, you talked about when you were in the middle of that situation, and you thought about things that you had seen on Oprah when she had John Walsh on, and these CSI shows. I'm just thinking that, at some point, some woman may be in a situation like that and she's going to think back and remember the story that you just told and maybe be able to defend herself in that situation.

Jennifer

I hope so. You don't even know what you would do in a situation like that. Like, it might not be safe for a woman or a person to defend themselves in the way that I did. That was a pretty dangerous move. Really, if it wasn't for that divine intervention, I don't know that I would be here. I hope this story does help someone, even in a sense of sisterhood and knowing that if you have been through something like this, you don't have to live with that dysregulation, with that hypervigilance, and with all of that energy. All that stress in the body is really dangerous and you don't have to live like that. I mean, there is another way to be in your body and to be safe.

Scott

If you want to see pictures of Jennifer and links to her website, or if you want the full transcript of this episode, you can get all of that at WhatWasThatLike.com/141.

If you liked this episode, there's another one you might want to listen to. In episode 107, Jill came on the podcast and talked about being held by a trafficker for 3 years. In this clip, Jill has just traveled for 24 hours by bus, and she has just met Jack in person for the first time. She thinks he's her boyfriend, because she doesn't yet know what his plans are for her.

Jill

I knew him through video chatting and texting but I've never seen him in person, so there was just, kind of, this awkward hour or so where I was, like, staring at his face and trying to put the voice and the face together. So, there wasn't a whole lot of talking. I just, kind of, followed him, looked at him, and took in the whole situation. I was, like, stopping in New York. I saw the New York Times building for the first time, which is huge - that was something you can't imagine until you see it.

He made it pretty quickly. Then, from the subway, I think, we took a bus. Then, we took a cab after we got off the bus. We ended up at his house. The side door opened up to a staircase - one goes up and one goes down. He took me down into the basement. There was another locked door at the bottom of the stairs. He unlocked that door. We went in. I was, kind of, trying to not look like I'm feeling suspicious, but I was feeling super suspicious. I was trying to look around, soak it in, and see, like, "How do I get back out of here? I don't know. This is a weird place. It's unknown." There was a little bit of normal nervousness there

Scott

That's episode 107, titled "Jill was kept in a basement".

And I got this voice mail from Lynn –

Lynn

Well, good afternoon, Scott Johnson. My name is Lynn, calling from Ontario, Canada. I've been listening to your program for, I guess, a few years now. Absolutely love it. And your last one— Tricia smuggled her dad - the ashes - into Disneyland. I had to laugh. I thought, "What a great story!" And I must tell you what I did to my brother's ashes. My brother passed away. Neil passed away in 2006. It was a tragic event for him, but that's another story. He always joked around that, "When I die, I want somebody to take my ashes and put it on a paint job on a motorcycle.

We're motorcycle enthusiasts. I have Harley's, he had Harley's. So I talked to my paint artist and that's exactly what we did. We put him in the clear coat and my brother is in my motorcycle, and it's really cool. I remember the first time that I took him out for a ride. I could just feel his presence. It's just extraordinary. And when I tell people the story, they'd go, "How?" Well, my paint artist, Barry, put him in a clear coat. So we always say, "Yeah, my brother is now in the clear." That's it. Thank you so much for listening. Bye for now.

Scott

Now I have a question for you. Are you on the What Was That Like email list? If you're not, you should be. Because this is not a typical boring email list with blah blah blah messages and a bunch of ads. These are emails that you might actually look forward to reading! I send out an email on the morning a new episode goes live. Just gives you a quick glimpse of what that story is, and a little bit about what the Listener Story is about – but no spoilers of course! Never any spoilers!

I'll also update you on any news about the podcast, but I also include a couple of other things. I include a recent picture from my phone – just a little peek into something I've been up to where I took a picture, and the story behind that picture. And I also come across some really interesting things sometimes that I like to share, and who better to share it with than you – my favorite listener? Like recently I came across an article written by a retired firefighter, and he said that some homeowner are unknowingly doing things that actually INCREASE the chances of a home fire. So I put that in there with a link because it's both important and interesting. I come across these things all the time, and that's where they go – in my email to you.

So if you're not already on the email list, you can do that really easily – just go to WhatWasThatLike.com/email and let me know to add you to the list. No spam of course, and you can unsubscribe any time.

Graphics for this episode were created by Bob Bretz.
Full episode transcription was created by James Lai.

And now we have this week's Listener Story. And I'm always looking for more Listener Stories, because I play one at the end of every show. That means we want to hear YOUR story – just something interesting that happened to you, that you can tell in about 5-10 minutes. Record it on your phone and email it to me at Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com. We want to hear it!

This Listener Story needs a content warning, because it includes discussion of suicide. Stay safe, and I can't say for sure yet, but there might be a bonus episode next week. See you soon.

(Listener story)

Hi Scott. This is Jenna and I want to share with you my experience one summer as a kid in summer camp. Summer camp used to be one of my favorite places in the world. It was a weekly overnight camp, nestled up in the Blue Ridge mountains, with beautiful views, a ride on a lake, and easy to make quick friends with the girls I was placed with. Most of the campers stayed in cabins, but us horseback girls got to stay in rooms off of the gym with a few bunk beds and plywood walls, and it was just the best place. I loved everything about it. I loved horses and didn't get much of an opportunity to ride them during the year. Where I lived, I didn't really have access to them.

So, this particular day on a Wednesday when most of the other campers and the other programs were away from camp, we took the opportunity to have the camp mostly to ourselves to take a trail ride. The intention that day was to go have a picnic up in a beautiful open field. So, in the morning, we were getting the horses ready, getting the tackle, getting the picnic and everything together. It was a very pretty clear summer day and we were getting ready to mount up and get down the hill. I heard something that sounded like thunder. At the time, I was more concerned about being rained out and not being able to go on our trail ride, but I didn't really think much more about that until later.

As we got down the hill and got to the trail - was located on the other side of the camp from the stables and behind the archery and rifle ranges- the trail was pretty narrow, so we went in line one-by-one single file because I have had a little bit more experience than some of the other girls. I was up in the front of the line and the trail was just beautiful rays of sun coming down through the forest, quieter than the sounds of summertime bugs. We were just enjoying having the opportunity to be up in the mountains and riding my horse.

As we came around a bend, I saw something that was blocking the path, laying perpendicular in front of us. It looked like it was a branch that had fallen. But as we got closer, I saw clothes - khaki camp uniform and it was a man - and I saw a rifle laying next to him and a pretty devastating gunshot wound to the head. I don't know how long I sat there before I said anything. I just stopped the group and called the counselors up and they called for help. We turned around and headed back down to camp, confused and shocked, and not really processing what we'd seen.

I do remember that we had plenty of support from the young adults that were there - the counselors and administration at the time. Camp administration came and talked to us - the camp director actually. I had known that his baby was delivered at the hospital where my mom was an ICU nurse, so I knew the camp director. We were given the opportunity to call our parents and explain what had happened. There was a full camp meeting that was held later, but terms of what happened were described very vaguely, which I understand because this is a group of very young kids.

Then, over the years, I finished up that session. I didn't want to leave camp. I finished up the session and returned several summers later up until the point where I was one of the oldest campers and would not be able to go back just as a regular camper. I think I was 15 and I was told a ghost story of what happened to that man. His name was Sterling Fight. I just couldn't

believe what I was hearing, but I guess I can understand why such a story would be passed around over time, but it comes up.

I'm an adult now, close to 40. Every once in a while, I'll get hung up on it and I'll think about it. I am very interested in true crime and always have been, and I think it's because I'm searching for the psychology of what was behind it, what happened to him to make him decide to do that that day, and why others do what they do. I appreciate you letting me share. I love the podcast and I'm glad I found you.