

## **Episode 148: Kat was given to a cult at 13**

I live about 20 minutes from world-famous Clearwater Beach. I do bike around that area sometimes but that's about the only time I go there, because I'm not much of a beach person. But people come from all over the world to sit in that sand, because that's one of the things Clearwater is known for.

But there's something else that makes this city famous. Clearwater, Florida is also the worldwide spiritual headquarters of the Church of Scientology.

Back in 1975, there was a Scientology-founded group that purchased the large Ft Harrison Hotel in Clearwater for \$2.3 million. On the paperwork, the tenant was listed as "United Churches of Florida", so the City Council and the citizens of Clearwater didn't realize that the new owners were actually the Church of Scientology – until after the purchase was finalized. Citizens groups and even the mayor of Clearwater at the time, protested against the church establishing a base there, and they repeatedly referred to the group as a cult. But the group stayed.

And now, the Scientologists own 185 properties in downtown Clearwater. If you drive around the city, you'll see these people walking from one place to another, doing their work or taking courses.

My guest today is Kat, and she knows about the Church of Scientology from first-hand experience. When she was barely a teenager, Kat was given to the Scientologists – by her mother.

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### **Scott**

Kat grew up in Canada and her family was religious.

### **Kat**

I grew up in the Mormon faith. We went to church every Sunday. My older siblings were part of seminary and totally involved with all that. I got baptized when I was eight. The whole nine yards. Very Mormon.

### **Scott**

And Mormons are instructed to have lots of kids.

### **Kat**

We're very Mormon. My parents were very good at doing that part. There were six of us.

### **Scott**

Kat's dad was an oil engineer.

### **Kat**

So he traveled a lot for work. I think he had a big part to do in fracking. He would travel down to the States. He did a lot of work all around Alberta and he would go to the Middle East a lot and do whatever it is oil engineers do while they're working out there on the fields.

**Scott**

And her mom was at home taking care of all the kids.

**Kat**

That was definitely her job. She was a stay-at-home mom. She was there at home with us.

**Scott**

Kat recalled one of the years when they celebrated her dad's birthday.

**Kat**

We celebrated his 42nd birthday. We had a spaghetti dinner. Sorry, my heart starts to race when I talk about it. We had forgotten to buy him presents, so we went to, like, the local drugstore and I bought him a cheese grater because what every Dad wants for their 42nd birthday is a cheese grater. Actually, funny story. I never thought I'd see that cheese grater again. One day, my brother went to my mom's house and brought home a bunch of stuff, and he brought that cheese grater home. I have it now hanging on my wall. So we celebrated his birthday. As far as I can remember, it was a really good time.

The next day I woke up and went to school. Everything was normal just like any other day. But when I came home, I got off the bus and I realized that my dad's car was in the driveway. My dad was never home before we got home. He was, like, a workaholic, some would probably say. He was definitely never home before six and his car was in the driveway. So, right away, I knew something was not right. So I get in, open the door, go to the front door, open it, and my mom's friend is there, and she looks kind of frazzled. We make eye contact. I'm like, "What are you doing here?" And she was like, "Well, your dad's in the hospital. He was having trouble breathing. Your mom had to take him in. Everything's going to be fine. I'm just going to be here to take care of you guys while your dad's in the hospital."

I was, like, a very anxious kid, and that really alarmed me. I was very shaken up by that even though she was saying everything was okay. Just the way that she was acting was very weird. She was, like, cleaning the house and just kind of erratic. She told us that we would just wait for my mom to call and give us an update about how my dad was doing. So we waited and waited for what felt like an eternity. Every time the phone rang, I would run over to it and pick up, and I would pick it up shaking just with anticipation and hoping it was my mom saying that everything was okay and that my dad and her would be coming home but, unfortunately, that call did not come.

Around 8 o'clock that night, my mom finally came home and she had another friend with her. You could just tell there was something really wrong. My 5-year-old brother went bounding down the hall towards her and she's like, "Is he dead? Is he dead?" And she laughed at him. And so, at that moment I thought like, "Oh God, okay, he's fine. She wouldn't laugh if he was dead. Everything's fine." So she called all 6 of his kids into the living room of our home. She sat us down and proceeded to tell us that she brought my dad in, he's having trouble breathing, that his heart had stopped two times, they were able to bring him back two times but, the third time, it stopped. They weren't able to bring him back and he died. The room went quiet and my sister stood up and screamed, "Daddy, no!" And then ran out of the room. Then, we all just kind of collapsed into a heap and just all started crying.

**Scott**

How does a 10-year-old child handle the sudden unexpected loss of her father?

**Kat**

I think, at first, it was pretty unbelievable. I had tears and I knew in my head what had happened, and that he wasn't coming home, but every part of my heart really wished that this was just a joke. I thought that they would be a really mean and cruel joke, but I was just hoping and praying that it was a joke, that he would come through the door again, and that the reality wouldn't be that he was dead. It was a wild experience too because, the day before, we were celebrating his birthday and everything was fine - life was fine - and then, the next day, everything changed in a heartbeat.

The two years prior, my grandparents had died and we'd gone to their funerals and I knew that there was going to be a viewing at each one. So I was mentally preparing myself for his viewing because I knew it was coming. I was, like, really nervous about it, that I was going to have to see him in his casket. Then, when the day finally came, it was very surreal because he just looked like he was sleeping.

**Scott**

After that, life went on for Kat, her five siblings, and their now-single mother. After a couple of weeks, she went back to school.

**Kat**

I milked that as long as I could. I probably could have gone back sooner, but I definitely was going to take this opportunity to miss as much school as I possibly could. Almost immediately too, I tried to just shove the feelings down that I was feeling - like, just having no way to process them. I remember, like, laughing at his funeral. I didn't cry, and that kind of carried on the weeks to follow. It came to a point where my mom's like, "You're fine. You can go back to school. You need to go back to school."

**Scott**

And Kat's mom was also navigating this new life of being single.

**Kat**

She definitely has, like, an undiagnosed personality disorder, and that definitely played into how she handled everything after he died. She was at first really sad. She'd just been widowed with six kids and it was a very traumatic thing to have happened and a big weight to have put on your shoulders. I think, for the first couple of weeks, she was handling it okay. She was somewhat present. Yeah. She was. It seemed like she was there with us.

Then, after a couple of weeks, that's when everything changed. She realized she had some newfound freedom from her husband. She got really into the drinking scene, going to bars, and separating herself from us. It was too much for her to handle, so she really just started pulling away from us and dating.

**Scott**

But Kat was still missing that big part of her life.

**Kat**

I desperately wanted a dad, so I wanted her to find somebody who would be a dad, but the men that she would pick— like, after he died, her first boyfriend she met at the bar - many people

meet at the bar, which is fine - would go to jail on the weekends because I think he just had so many DUIs. They would date during the week. They would have a Friday night date night, and then she would drop him off at jail and then pick him up on Sunday. So, he also didn't have a place to stay because he kept going to jail. So her solution to that was that he would move in with us and he would be our nanny and live with us. I wanted him to be my dad - or not to be my dad, but to fill that void - but he was not at all interested in that, and understandably so.

He was really mean. He was abusive verbally. He would yell at us a lot. He was just really mean. So I would try to hang around him, but he would insult me and belittle me. He was just really resentful, even though he was supposed to be our "nanny". Having kids of my own, I cannot imagine inviting a strange man into my home and having him nanny my children. Like, it's wild that she would do that. But that was pretty soon after he died.

**Scott**

And then she started to experience anxiety.

**Kat**

I started to have just debilitating panic attacks. I was super worried that my mom was going to die or that my mom was going to abandon us. It started off somewhat small, but very quickly progressed to, like— she would leave the room and, like, the walls would close in, my chest would get tight, and I'd have to go find her to make sure she was coming back. So it started to become a really big problem in both our lives. It's very difficult to have a child who you can't leave alone. It was something I just could not control. It was very very upsetting.

**Scott**

But Kat's concerns were kind of confirmed by her mom's behavior.

**Kat**

Having my dad die and her now having no spouse to be accountable to, she started really resenting us children. We became very quickly a burden to her. She would tell us that we were a burden and that she didn't want us around, and she wished she didn't have so many kids. She sat us down and told us that. So she was showing signs she was not happy with the situation. So I think that further played into my anxiety about everything.

**Scott**

At the same time, they left the Mormon church.

**Kat**

So my dad was the main driving force for us being in Mormonism. My parents got into Mormonism together. They both converted as adults. Then, they proceeded to have 6 kids. Then, about a year before my dad died is when my mom started questioning the Mormon faith. She couldn't find her testimony, the truth. The church just wasn't true to her, so she actually stopped going to church about a year before my dad died. We were still going to church because of him. Then, when he died and she was no longer part of the Mormon church, we just all stopped being Mormon. We stopped going to church completely at that point.

**Scott**

And then you found another religion...

**Kat**

Yes.

**Scott**

How did that happen?

**Kat**

Because I was having these panic attacks, my mom was talking to one of her friends one day and was explaining what was going on with me. Her friend was a Scientologist and she had great success in Scientology. So she told my mom that she thinks that it could really help us, and my mom was like, "Yeah, okay. Maybe we'll give that a try." In Scientology, Churches are called organizations and they shorten them to orgs. There were no orgs in Alberta at the time.

My mom's friend was actually doing Scientology services down in LA at the Celebrity Center International. That's where my mom decided that we, her and I - she picked me out of all the kids because I was having such a hard time - would go to Celebrity Center and we would go check it out, which was amazing to have, like, this one on one time with my mom. I was just ecstatic when she told me that I'd be going on a trip alone with her. I'd been to the States, but never any place like LA where there were palm trees and stuff like that. So it was just so exciting. The Celebrity Center is in Hollywood. Once I found that out, I was like, "Oh my God, this is great." It was just a dream come true. It was very exciting.

**Scott**

You're picturing yourself being surrounded by all the famous people on TV and in the movies, probably.

**Kat**

Yes, exactly.

**Scott**

Had you even flown in an airplane before this?

**Kat**

I had not, no. This was my first time flying an airplane and I was so terrified. I always had, like, anxiety about it, but we survived. Actually, the funny story is, while we were flying, a flight attendant started digging in the overhead bin above me. She was very persistent about it. Then, she looked at me and was like, "Don't worry. There's a ticking sound. We're just trying to figure out what it is."

**Scott**

Sorry, the plane is making a funny noise. We have to check it out.

**Kat**

Yeah, it was terrifying, but we made it.

**Scott**

In your mind, as a child, what did you think the purpose was for this trip to the US? Did your mom tell you why you were going?

**Kat**

Yeah, she did. She very briefly explained Scientology to me and she didn't really have a grasp of it herself. So what she knew is, basically, that they have counseling services that she thinks could help. So we were going to go down there and try and do that and see if we could help with these panic attacks.

**Scott**

Can you describe what is Celebrity Center International?

**Kat**

Celebrity Center International is actually an old apartment building that the Church of Scientology bought in, like, the 1950s or 1960s and renovated to be this beautiful— it's beautifully renovated org. There is also a hotel attached to it - it's called the Manor Hotel. So there are a number of floors that are just dedicated to the Manor Hotel and you can only stay there if you're doing Scientology services. Then, the rest of the building is course rooms and auditing rooms and all the things that you need to do Scientology. They have a restaurant. You don't have to leave to go anywhere. You don't have to leave to go to your room or do your courses and stuff like that. When you're there, you're there at Celebrity Center. The grounds are beautifully manicured. They are beautiful. It's just a beautiful building. It's very beautiful.

**Scott**

Did you see any celebrities while you were there?

**Kat**

So the first trip, I don't think I saw any celebrities but, over my extended time there, I saw John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, Jenna Elfman, and Jason Lee. I talked to Leah Remini. We were both at the reception desk in the lobby. She was very nice. I remember looking at her and I'm like, "Oh my God, that looks like the girl from 'Saved by the Bell'. There's no possible way that that's the girl from 'Saved by the Bell'. Like, no possible way." And there was totally a way, because it was totally her.

**Scott**

So you got there and you get the sales pitch, so to speak, based on a personality test.

**Kat**

Yes.

**Scott**

How did they do all of that? What happened?

**Kat**

You take a personality test. Everybody takes it when they come in to do services. Basically, the whole point of this personality test is— it sounds fun and you're going to find out what your personality is but, really, what they're doing is they're trying to find something called your ruins - the thing in your life that is causing you great upset and that is stopping you from moving forward and stuff in life. So you'll take this test and then they'll read the results, and they'll be like, "Oh, you're really good in this area but, oh my God, this area is really bad. So here is this course that can help you better so that you can improve your life," and so on and so forth.

**Scott**

How convenient that they have a course for whatever problem you might have.

**Kat**

It's great. Yes. And you don't even have to leave the grounds. The campus, as it were. My mom got a huge life insurance policy payout from my father dying, which was supposed to go to raising us kids and keeping a roof over our heads, and Scientology got wind of that. They have people there called Registers and they shorten that to Regs. The Regs' whole job is to sell you Scientology courses and auditing. They won't just sell you like, "Here. This is one course that you could do now. Then, when you finish that course, come back and we'll have you purchase another course." Their whole job is, like, to get as much money out of you as possible. So they actually were able to get at least a hundred grand out of my mom while she was there. So she prepaid for multiple courses for her to train to become an auditor.

**Scott**

Why don't you go ahead and explain what is auditing?

**Kat**

Okay. Auditing is basically their version of counseling. So you have an auditor and yourself go into a room, and this room is usually pretty small and very plain - they don't want to have any distractions. There are little pictures on the walls and stuff like that. You're sitting across the desk from your auditor and they have something called an e-meter. Now, an e-meter is this little device, this little machine, that will sit in front of the auditor and you will not see the interface. So the interface is facing the auditor and it has a couple of dials on it. Then, it also has a needle that goes back and forth. The auditor is trained to read that needle. There are wires connected to the E-meter that comes out of both sides and it's connected to these cans. So, you, as a person being audited, will hold these cans in each hand.

The idea is that the E-meter has a current lower than a 9-volt battery. When you're holding the cans, you'll complete the circuit and it'll be going around and through you. They believe that you have something called a reactive mind. The reactive mind is the part of your mind that stores all the bad things that have ever happened to you. All the painful memories, anything bad that's ever happened to you is stored in your reactive mind and your reactive mind is actually the thing that causes all the problems that you have in this world. So the goal of auditing is to get rid of your reactive mind.

As you are holding the cans, it's sending the 9-volt current through your body and you don't feel it. But, supposedly, if you have a thought in your mind, it will create mass, and that will disrupt the current that is flowing through you. The auditor who has the interface facing them on the E-meter will see the needle start to move. That's when they will know that there's a thought that you're having that they have to take up in session.

**Scott**

It just sounds like a rudimentary polygraph or a biofeedback machine.

**Kat**

Exactly what it's been compared to. Yes. It's like a lie detector machine. I did do auditing first. I think we were there for a week. I did do auditing to address the panic attacks that I was having and it helped. I don't remember any of the questions asked or any of the things that I said, but it ended up actually really helping pretty quickly, actually. When I first started, when they first called me back to do the auditing, my mom had already gone back to do her auditing, so I was left alone in the waiting room and I just, again, had a panic attack. The walls were closing in on

me. I was just thinking I was going to be homeless in LA, my mom's not going to come back, and I need to figure out what I'm going to do to survive this because she's not coming back. Like, that was just my whole thought process. As I resigned myself to being homeless and I was like, "Okay, I guess we're doing this," my auditor came back and then we were able to proceed with the auditing and it helped significantly.

**Scott**

When you get the feeling that it helped, do you think— I mean, just talking about this problem or explaining this problem to another person who's interested in hearing it seems like that would be a help. Do you think that's what was happening or was it actually whatever these courses were doing?

**Kat**

100%. I think it's because I was just addressing what needed to be addressed and then just talking about it.

**Scott**

So it was kind of just a really super expensive therapy with probably someone that wasn't trained in therapy.

**Kat**

No, definitely. Anybody who is an auditor goes through lots of training, but it's Scientology training to become an auditor. L. Ron Hubbard wrote how to do it. It's definitely not accredited or supervised or anything like that.

**Scott**

So you were helped in some way by it and you guys went back home. Was your life different then?

**Kat**

I mean, it was significantly helped because I wasn't having these panic attacks anymore and it was just kind of this cool thing. Like, I was part of this, like, cool club. Like, I was a Scientologist. Nobody had ever heard of Scientology. Like, anybody I talked to - my friends and stuff like that - had never heard of Scientology. So it was just this kind of this cool thing that I was a part of now that nobody else was a part of. In actuality, since there were no orgs and we knew nobody else who was a Scientologist, it was just this cool thing that we went to LA to do. Then, we came back home and it wasn't a part of our daily life. So life just went on as normal.

**Scott**

Okay. So you guys went back a second time - you and your mom - and then you went back a third time down to Los Angeles. By this time, you were 13 years old. What happened on that third trip?

**Kat**

Oh boy. Okay. Yes, we went back. We'd gone down there and I had started a course called the "Key to Life" course. It's a huge course that has, like, 45 pounds worth of books and it defines every word in the English language, basically. The whole point of this course is to learn every word in the English language. I was doing that course I just started. So you spend almost all of your day doing coursework. You're on course from, like, 9-12. Then, there's an hour lunch break. Then, you come back from, like, 1-6 and then there's an hour dinner break. Then, you go



back from, like, 7-9 or something like that. So your whole day is spent in the course room the first couple of days. That's what I was doing. I was doing this course. I have to say it was really boring. I was not enjoying myself.

**Scott**

I was going to say, for a kid who previously wanted to stay out of school as much as possible, this is, like, school from morning to night. That must've been terrible.

**Kat**

Yes. It was very demanding. I didn't like it too much. But again, I liked the idea that I was in LA with my mom, so it was worth it to get. For the time that I had with my mom, it was worth it to sit through, like, 12 hours of course time a day. Probably around, like, the third or fourth day, I was taking a break with my mom. We were in the Rose Garden Cafe, which is this little cafe that they have there on the grounds of Celebrity Center. My mom and I were just chatting and they had this, like, sparkling juice. This is my biggest memory of that cafe - this sparkling juice that they didn't sell up in Canada. So I exclusively got it at the Rose Garden Cafe.

So we were sitting there discussing our day and I was drinking this juice. Then, this woman walked up to me and my mom. She herself is pretty young. She was probably about 17 and she's like, "Hey, do you guys want to come down downstairs and watch a movie?" And I was like, "Sure, yeah. I'll watch a movie." And my mom's like, "Yeah, okay, let's go do it." So we had enough time left on our break before we had to get back to course to go down and watch their movie. So we go downstairs to the basement of the celebrity center, they have this really cool - again, just enchanted by this place at this point - movie theater that had, like, red velvet all over the walls and red velvet seats and this big screen which I do believe even had, like, a red velvet curtain that would open when you would start the movie. So we sit down and she hits play, and it starts to talk about the Sea Organization. For short, we'll call it the Sea Org.

**Scott**

And when you say Sea Org, it's, you're saying S-E-A - like, the big body of water - right?

**Kat**

Yes, correct. So the Sea Org is a paramilitary group that is mirrored after the Navy. L. Ron Hubbard was a naval man during World War II. So he brought a lot of what he learned in the Navy to the Sea organization. He founded that in 1967. He bought three boats and took his most loyal followers and headed to the sea. He was a big tax evader, so he was trying to get away from the law, basically. He had made a whole bunch of money with Dianetics at this point in time, and they had said that you got to start paying taxes. So, Hubbard actually said that the best way to make money is to start a religion because it's tax-free. He didn't want to have to pay those taxes that the IRS was trying to get him to pay, so he took Scientology to the seas so he could be on international waters so that he would not have to worry about any governments trying to tell him what he needs to do and what he needs to pay.

He actually did a lot of developing of Scientology while he was on those boats. The Sea Org is no longer at sea. They were able to eventually bring it to land. Now, the Sea Org is now the people who keep Scientology running. They're the most dedicated workers out there. They live and breathe Scientology. They live in Scientology buildings. They work day and night. Scientology feeds them, clothes them, and you dedicate your whole entire life to them.

**Scott**

When you went to watch this movie, were they trying to get you to join the Sea org?

**Kat**

At first, I didn't think so. At first, I was like, we watched the movie and I was like, "Wow." It was, like, a military recruitment video trying to make it sound really appealing. They made it seem like it was just this really cool thing to do. I didn't actually, at that time, realize why they were showing it to me. I thought that it was just something that they like to show people because they had this cool theater.

Then, the lady who had originally showed us the video comes in and she's like, "Can you guys talk to me about the movie you just watched?" And I was like, "Yeah, sure." So me and my mom go back into this office. So this office that she brought us into is in the basement of the celebrity center, and it just has a desk and just white walls. On one side of the desk is the Sea Org lady, and then me and my mom were on the other side of the desk. The door was to our backs.

We go into this little room and she closes the door, and she's like, "So what'd you think?" And I was like, "That's really cool. Thank you for being a Sea Org member. That seems like a really important job. So cool." And she's like, "Well, would you want to join?" And I was like, "No, I don't think so. Thank you. I'm 13. I don't live here. No, thank you." I was a big people pleaser at the time - I kind of still am - so just trying to be very polite. She was like, "Okay, well, would you be willing to come back and talk to me after course tonight?" And I was like, "Yeah, sure. I can do that. That sounds fine. I'll come back to this room after I get off course." So me and my mom leave and we go off to course and then I, by myself, go back to that room and start talking with her.

**Scott**

Why didn't your mom go with you?

**Kat**

Good question. I don't think she cared. I think she was in her own little world. She was so disconnected from me. I remember, on that trip, like, she was just there. Her body was in the room, but she wasn't there. So I go back and she starts asking me why I don't want to join the Sea Org. At the time, again, I was thinking, "This is crazy. I'm 13." In Scientology, they believe that you are a thetan, and a thetan basically is your soul. So you have a body and you are your thetan. So this is just your body for this lifetime, but your thetan can never die. Your thetan has been around for billions of years before this. It's going to go on for billions of years after this. Just this lifetime, this is the body that I inhabit, but my thetan is very old.

So she starts asking me, "Why don't you want to join the Sea Org?" And I was like, "Well, I'm 13." And she's like, "Well, you're not 13. Your body's 13. Your thetan's billions of years old. Your body is the only thing that's 13 here." And I was like, "Yeah. I guess. And so immediately, like every time I would use the excuse that "I was 13", she'd always be like, "You're not 13. Just your body. That's just your body's age." It's just heavy-duty recruitment that started to try to get me to join the Sea Org.

**Scott**

I'm picturing someone who signs up for the three-day, two-night stay at a resort, but they have to listen to the 90-minute high-pressure sales pitch to buy the timeshare. That happens to adults. Here, they are trying to recruit you as just a young kid.

**Kat**

Yes. And I was by myself. My mom was not there doing anything to help me with that. In Scientology, they believe that mankind is in a dwindling spiral and we have this but a breath of a moment in time here and within Scientology to stop the dwindling spiral that humanity has been in, and we have to do everything we can right now to save the planet because it is about to go to shit, and we are the only people who can do something about it. So, that also was brought in very heavily, very quickly that not only am I a billion-year-old thing, but also the fate of the world depends on me joining the Sea Org. Like, how could I have this knowledge of Scientology and how much good it can do for the world, and then turn my back and walk away? That was very heavily pushed on me that I would just be a piece of shit, basically, if I didn't do this. If I didn't give of myself to save mankind right now, what kind of person am I?

**Scott**

Standard part of a high-pressure sales pitch is the urgency. You got to act now.

**Kat**

Yes, exactly. The whole recruitment cycle took two days. It was me going to course and then me going back to that room anytime I had a free moment.

**Scott**

You must've just dreaded walking into that room, knowing what was going to happen.

**Kat**

Yeah, I definitely did dread it. The Scientology experience that I'd loved being with my mom, being in Hollywood, and all this stuff suddenly became just a torture situation that I was in and I didn't have a voice to say no. I wish I could have been strong enough at that moment to just be like, "No, I'm not coming back." But I didn't because I'm a people pleaser and I was 13 years. I was in the 8th grade when all this went down. So it started off with just one woman giving me the whole spiel of how I need to do this, I need to do it right now, I need to save the planet, and nothing else is as important as this.

Then, she brought in a second older gentleman to come help in the recruiting fun. I don't know if they were doing, like, a good cop, bad cop kind of thing. Like, she was very pushy, but he was more, like, "Oh, I just can't believe you wouldn't want to do this. I just can't believe you wouldn't want to save the world." I remember one time that I was like, "No, I don't want to do this. I don't want to do it. Let me go home and think about it. I'll just go home and think about it. How does that sound? I'll go home and think about it."

**Scott**

No salesman wants to hear that response.

**Kat**

Nope. He sure did not, no. He's like, "I just picture you going home, sitting in the corner, putting your head in your hands, and just thinking about it." Like, how stupid is that? And I was like, "I guess that's kind of stupid." But again, as a grownup now, I'm like, "Yeah, I should have definitely gone home and sat in a corner with my head in my hand and thought about it for a fucking second." But again, that wasn't their goal. Their goal was not to send me home. Their goal was to get me to sign their contract and get me to stay and join the Sea Org.

After two days of that where I just felt very beaten down and I just wanted it to stop— I just wanted them to stop hounding me, so I looked at them and I said, “Okay, I’ll do it.” Of course, they were very excited. Like, yes, great. Okay. Then, like in my heart of hearts, I was like, “Oh my God, I hope my mom stops this.” So I told them, “I don’t know. We’ll just have to see what my mom says. We’ll have to see if she’s okay with it.” They look at me and they go, “Your mom’s not going to be a problem. Don’t worry about your mom. We’re going to handle your mom. Don’t worry about her.” I was like, “Oh, good.” But again, that answer devastated me. The feeling that I felt at that moment was, like, just giving myself over to it after having all of my autonomy taken from me. Like, I’ll never forget that feeling. I don’t think I could ever accurately describe it, but I’ll never forget how that felt at that moment.

That night, I went to course and I remember not being able to focus at all on course because I had just made this lifelong commitment to them and they said that we’ll call your mom down at that point and then we’ll talk to her. So, that night, they called my mom down. Again, I can remember this so clearly, her sitting next to me and me just telling her that I really want to join. She looked at me, she looked at the recruiters, and she said, “Okay, you can join.” I was heartbroken. It was very, very heartbroken that she didn’t do anything about it.

**Scott**

Did you understand that this meant that your mom would be going back home and you would be staying?

**Kat**

Yeah. I did understand that what this entailed is that, yes, my mom would go home and I would stay. I would never see my friends again, or I would see them just when I came back to visit, if I could ever come visit. I wouldn’t see my family again. This would be it. This was my new life now that I am now going to be joining the Sea Org, and this is what I’d be doing.

**Scott**

So this seems like actually playing out what you had been fearing - your mom leaving you.

**Kat**

Yeah. She had to sign over guardianship of me. So they found somebody - a Sea Org member - who didn’t have anybody who they were the guardian of yet. She signed over guardianship of me as a technicality so that she could legally leave me in a different country so she could leave me there.

**Scott**

So not only is she saying verbally, “It’s okay, I’m going to leave”, she took the legal action to give you to someone else.

**Kat**

Yep. She did without hesitating. She signed the paperwork.

**Scott**

So what exactly is this contract that you signed?

**Kat**

So it’s the Seaward contract. They, again, believe you’re a thetan. So you sign a contract committing yourself to the Sea Organization for your next billion years because they believe that

you're going to fulfill this term. You're going to be in the Sea Org this lifetime. Then, you're going to come back to a different body and you have 21 years to get your shit figured out and realize that you're a Scientologist and that you were a Sea Org member. Then, you get yourself back into an org and then you sign another contract, and so you're committing yourself to the next billion years to the Sea Org. They have you sign that. So I, as a 13 year old, signed my soul over basically for a billion years to the Church of Scientology. So we did a whole bunch of paperwork and all that stuff and my mom, yep, she signed over guardianship and she got on a plane and she went back home and she left me in LA.

**Scott**

So what was the next day like? How did you start this period?

**Kat**

Before you become a Sea Org member, you have to do a program called the Estates Project Force or EPF for short. So it's basically their bootcamp. You have to do 5 courses. You have 5 hours a day where you do courses and then you do 10 hours a day of hard manual labor. Hubbard had said that the EPF should have a maximum amount of course study, maximum amount of work, manual labor, and then minimal amount of downtime. So that equated to 15 hour days, 7 days a week, until you're able to finish the EPF program. You have to run everywhere, so if you're caught walking, you'll get in big trouble. Like, it's really meant to be just—

**Scott**

—just complete control.

**Kat**

Yes, exactly. So the day after my mom left, we had to do all the paperwork to get me routed on to the EPF. As I'm doing that, they're asking me all these questions because they're filling out all their paperwork and they, "Hey Katherine, what's your social security number?" I was like, "I don't actually have one because I'm Canadian. I don't have a social security number." So the whole room goes quiet. They all kind of look at each other and they're like, "What do we do?" They looked at me and they went, "You know what? That's okay. Actually, you know what? That's fine. Your mom will just have to get you a social security number and you'll just work for free until you get a social security number." Now, mind you, Sea ORG members do not make a lot of money. They make \$50 a week and then there's tax. So it comes out to be like 48. So you don't make a lot of money at all. I had absolutely no income and no money because I did not have a social security number, but they were still kind enough to let me work for them for free.

**Scott**

This sounds a lot like prison.

**Kat**

Yeah. Felt like that too. They actually have security guards. Like, they keep track of you. Like, if you leave the grounds, people will come find you. The first night there, I was assigned to the unit that the church had just bought across the street from the celebrity center, and it was an old apartment building. They were renovating it for Sea Org members to live there eventually. So it was super rundown. We would spend 10 hours a day doing demo work. So the first night when I was delivered to my unit, they were actually tearing carpet off of the stairs. That was my first night like, really getting to it - tearing carpet off of stairs.

**Scott**

So that was kind of your days now - 10 hours of hard labor, 5 hours of studying.

**Kat**

Yeah. That just turns out to be 105 hours a week that you're working for free as a 13-year-old for the church.

**Scott**

Were you able to talk to your mom at all during this time?

**Kat**

One of the advantages of being a young body was that I got to call my mom a little bit more than everybody else. I think it was, like, 1 or 2 times a week or something like that. The first time I went to go call my mom, the EPF IC - the Estates Project Force In Charge - the person who is in charge of just everybody on the EPF brought me down to the phone booths that they have in the basement of the Celebrity Center and he's like, "Okay, here. You can go call your mom. But before you do, I want to let you know that we record every call coming in and out of here. So anything you say or tell your mom, we're going to know. So if you let her know anything, that's upsetting or anything that is going on here that could potentially 'upset her', we're going to know, and that's going to be a big problem. So don't tell her anything, basically."

I remember, in that first call, I was shaking. Actually, I was so terrified that I would say something to her that would trigger whoever was listening to me to get mad at me and then I would get in trouble. I just remember using— I was really up tone. I was really chipper. I was just trying to sound great, just using one-word answers because I was just terrified that I was going to get in trouble for something I said to her. Every conversation after that was very limited in what I could say to her because I knew that they were listening.

**Scott**

Can you talk about the one day when you were emptying the garbage?

**Kat**

I was emptying the garbage. I was on the unit that worked on the grounds at CC - at Celebrity Center - and I was emptying the garbage. I had been having so much turmoil the whole time I was there. I was not having a good time. I really missed home. I really just didn't feel good. I did not feel good in my body. I was not having a good time. So, in this particular morning, I was emptying the garbage and this, like, breeze had blown across the courtyard, and the smell that I smelled at that moment— I felt, like, in this moment, I was like, "Okay, I'm going to be okay. Things are going to be okay. You can do this. You can become a Sea Org member. You've got this."

Also part of that job was cleaning the bathrooms. They had these bathrooms outside on the grounds. So I was in the bathroom cleaning. I was in the back stall. It was just me. The bathrooms weren't open, so nobody should have been in there. There was a sign on there saying that the bathrooms weren't open. I hear the big heavy door - the outside door - open and then I hear somebody walk in, I hear the door shut, and I immediately just intuitively knew that something was not right, so I stopped what I'm doing. I go and look around the stall door and I see one of my fellow EPFers. He is a giant man, at least 6'4" in his forties.

I look at him and I'm like, "Hey. What's up?" He's just looking at me really weird and he is slowly walking back towards me. I've got my back to the back of the bathroom. He's like, "Katherine," because I went by Katherine at the time - "I'm in love with you and I want to have sex with you." I was like, "What?" He's like, "I'm in love with you and I want to have sex with you." As he's saying this to me, he's coming in closer and closer and I'm backing back as far as I can and my back hits the bathroom wall. As his big arms came in to grab me, thank God, I'm so grateful I was able to duck down underneath his arm and then run past him and run out of the bathroom to get away from him.

In Scientology and in the Sea Org specifically, you're not allowed to have sex before you're married. Also, if you get caught, even if somebody even perceives that you're into somebody or you like somebody, you can get into big trouble. So I was super worried that I was going to get in trouble for him coming on to me. As I'm running, I run to the lobby of Celebrity Center and they had a paging system to get ahold of the EPF IC. I'm shaking and telling the receptionist, like, "Please, it's an emergency, please page the EPF IC." She's like, "Okay, I'm doing it."

I didn't know what to do. You're supposed to be running everywhere and you were supposed to be working. There is no downtime. Idleness is seen as one of the worst things you could do. You're going to get yelled at, you're going to get in trouble, belittled, and here I am in this lobby, sitting down. I'm also amongst the public Scientologists - which they're not supposed to see you - sitting and I'm just trembling, just waiting for the EPF IC, and I'm worried that I'm going to get in trouble because I'm not working. I'm worried that I'm going to be in trouble because I pulled in this guy's sexual advances and that, if I don't tell, I will also get in trouble for it.

Finally, after 15 or 20 minutes, he shows up and he comes in and he's, like, not happy with me. He looks so fucking annoyed that I interrupted whatever the fuck he was doing. He's like, "What's wrong?" So I told him exactly what had happened. He's like, "Oh, that's it? Okay, well, I'll handle it. Go back to work." And I was like, "Oh, okay." He did nothing and I had to go back to work with the guy. They did switch him into another unit. He was not in the same unit as me, but we were still both on the EPF together, and I avoided him like the plague. He scared the crap out of me. Like, I was not interested in having another encounter with him again.

I was really stressed out and I had a lot of trouble eating. So my anxiety was just through the roof all the time, so much pressure. So I was having a really hard time eating and I couldn't keep my weight up. Again, I was really stressed out. I actually stopped getting my period almost right off the bat. Like, I was just very unhealthy and very much struggling. There was a fellow EPF'er who noticed that I was not eating and talked to me about it. He's like, "Well, if you don't start eating, then I'm going to have to write a knowledge report on you." They have a reporting system. Everybody you work with is watching what you're doing, and if you do anything that is not what you're supposed to be doing, they have to report you to ethics. If they don't report you, then they will get in trouble along with you because they knew about you doing something that wasn't right and they didn't do anything about it.

So that also adds a whole new level of stress because anything I did, if it wasn't for policy, would be reported. There were eyes and ears everywhere looking to report you if you were doing something wrong. So I was having such a hard time eating and this one guy was like, "Okay, well, I'm going to write a knowledge report on you." And I was like, "Okay, actually I'd appreciate that because I need some help. I would really love some help. I'm really having a hard time." So he writes a knowledge report on me.

I believe it was the next day I got called back by the ethics officer. He has me sit down in this chair and he sits on the desk in front of me, and he goes, "So you're not eating?" I was like, "No, I'm having it-", and then he cuts me off and he goes, "Let me just tell you that if you're not going to eat, then we're going to have somebody sit with you and they're going to have to force feed you like a baby. Is that what you want?" I was like, "No, I guess I don't want that." He's like, "Good. Well, if you don't eat, then that's what's going to happen." Then, he sent me on my merry way. He didn't help me. I still couldn't eat. I was still struggling.

Then, there was this extra level of fear that, if I was perceived to not be getting better, someone else would write a knowledge report on me, then I would have somebody following me around and making me eat like a baby. The stress was just like- I can feel it as I'm talking about it now. It was just so much stress and so much pressure to perform. Again, I was just a child.

It took me 7 months to complete the EPF. It's supposed to take you about two weeks, but I was such a brand new Scientologist when I joined the Sea Org. Elbert Hubbard made up a whole language for Scientology. They have hundreds of words that I had to learn that I had never learned before. I'm already just a 13-year-old with a 13-year-old education doing these courses made by a well-established science fiction author who has a wide vocabulary, much bigger than mine, plus made up all these Scientology words. So it took me a very long time to learn all the words and get through these courses. So, something that should have taken me 2 weeks took me 7 months to complete, but I did finally complete courses and I did graduate from the EPF and become a Sea Org member.

**Scott**

That must have been a really happy day for you.

**Kat**

It was, but it was also like- you worked so hard to get to this point and- basically, I just finished a course and then they're like, "Okay, Kat graduated." Then, it was off to the next thing. So there was no celebration or anything like that. It was just like, "Now, you're a Sea Org member. Now we have to get you doing that." I wish it had been a little bit more fun.

**Scott**

How did your life change now that you've become a Sea Org member?

**Kat**

Now, I don't have to do manual labor all the time. So the jobs in the Sea Org are called posts. I was not put on a post. I was an expeditor. In the division that I was in, that I was under, I would just run around and do whatever they needed me to do any extra expediting jobs that they needed me to do. I did that for two months. During this whole time that I'm there, I'm still not having a good time. I'm still really missing my mom, really missing home, and really caving under the pressure to be a Sea Org member and a Scientologist.

My mind starts going to, like, "I want to go home. I don't want to do this anymore." The lady who was in charge while I was an expeditor, I was starting to express to her that I was not enjoying this, that I wanted to go home, that I really miss my mom. The big thing is I really miss my mom and I really badly wanted to get home to her. She was very nice. Like, she was just really receptive to me. She was new to the Sea Org and I think she herself was trying to escape a bad situation, so she joined an even worse one, I guess.



So the day I told her, "I really don't want to do this anymore. I want to go home", she said, "Yeah, I think that's a good idea. I think you should go." I'm so grateful for her. Like, I'm so grateful that she didn't give any pushback because I probably would have stayed. I would have stayed if she had put any effort into trying to keep me there. So I'm super grateful that she was like, "Yeah, you should probably go home."

I had to go through the routing out of the check sheet, and they actually have something that you do. It's called a security check or a sec check. Basically, it's an interrogation and they ask you all these probing questions. They are trying to get dirt on you just in case you speak out later about Scientology, so that they can blackmail you. So, as a 14-year-old kid, there was barely anything I had done in my life. I hadn't experienced much of anything. So they started asking questions like, "Have you ever kissed somebody?" At that point, I hadn't. "Have you ever drank?" which I had at that point. All these questions.

Then, they started to get more and more invasive. They started asking me if I had ever fucked a dog, if I was going back to my room and pleasuring my roommates with dildos and just all these, like, sexual questions, and I was so uncomfortable. It was, like, very upsetting. I felt super controlled, super dirty. Again, I was just this young kid and I'd never done any of these things, and I'm stuck in another room with somebody else just hounding me with all these questions. Eventually, I did get through it. I have not fucked a dog - just want everybody to know that. Then, I was able to go home after I finished that security check.

### **Scott**

What was the reception like from your mom when you got home?

### **Kat**

She was pretty indifferent, maybe even a little upset, that I came home. I think she felt like she didn't have any choice but to take me back. I was just a problem for her. I think it was just another kid coming back into her life that she didn't want, and she was not very happy about that. So at this point, she had found herself another boyfriend and he was actually really anti-Scientology. So at that point, she was actually thinking that she wasn't going to be in Scientology anymore and that it was not a good organization. It's so like my mom to give me up to Scientology.

At some point, in the 9 months I was there, she realized that she didn't want to be a Scientologist anymore, but she didn't come back for me. She didn't try to get me out. She didn't do any of that. She just let me stay. So, I think it was a problem that I came back. I was talking about Scientology and I was talking about it with her boyfriend, and she did not like that.

### **Scott**

And you had missed school. Did you just pick up where you left off or did you skip a year? How did that work?

### **Kat**

I came back and they let me— I didn't complete 8th grade, but they moved me on to 9th grade. So I just kind of went back into life as I had known it before, but everything was different. I was different. It was really difficult to go back from what I had just been a part of and then join my peers who had just been dealing with regular adolescent stuff, whereas I had just spent the last 9 months going through what I had. So it was really difficult to integrate back into that. I was told by the church that I can't talk about it. I can't tell anybody about what happened because it was

going to be trouble for me. I mean, they couldn't have done anything, really, but I didn't know that. Like, I had just been so heavily brainwashed by them that I was scared. I was very scared. I was scared for a number of years to say anything negative about the church.

**Scott**

Hopefully, they don't hear this podcast.

**Kat**

Oh, I want them to hear it. I want them to hear it.

**Scott**

You're not worried anymore, huh?

**Kat**

I'm not. No, I'm not at all worried. I want them to hear it.

**Scott**

At that time, you were experiencing depression and anxiety. Were you ever suicidal?

**Kat**

Yes, I was. Yes, I definitely came down with anxiety and depression, and I had no words for it because, in Scientology, anxiety and depression don't exist. They're very against that kind of stuff about psychiatry and psychology. They believe that is the root of all evil. L. Ron Hubbard said that anything to do with psychology and psychiatry is basically evil. So I had these PTSD, big feelings of depression, anxiety, and a very strong desire to die. I definitely wanted to not be around anymore. Then, it crept into my mind, like, "Is this what they're talking about when they said that I would want to die if I left the Sea Org, that I would be a nobody and I'd want to die?"

I couldn't talk to my mom about it. Eventually, my mom did leave that boyfriend and immediately fell right back into Scientology. She was of the mind that anxiety and depression didn't exist. So, I couldn't talk to her about it. I would just be stuck in these moments of just losing the will to live and then having to fight myself to not do anything about it. Yeah. I just couldn't talk to my mom about it. She would get mad at me, so I would start, like, sleeping in longer. I would stay in my bedroom with the lights out and she would come in and turn the lights on and be like, "You're just sad because you're listening to sad music and you need to get up and do something." It was just really upsetting me a lot of the time. So I just had no place to go with it.

**Scott**

Eventually, you guys moved back to the United States, just not to LA.

**Kat**

Yeah, when I was 15 years old, we moved to Colorado, to Denver, where I am today. That's when she got super back into Scientology because there is an org here in Denver. So she immediately hooked up with the org here and started working for them actually.

**Scott**

But you did not get back into Scientology?

**Kat**

I didn't. They have something called a freeloader's debt. If you are in the Sea Org or you're on staff and you ever leave before your contract's up, any course that I did— the five required courses plus an additional course, they charged me full price for those. It was, like, \$15,000 or something that I owed them. So I could not get back online or do any Scientology while I still had that freeloader's debt. Looking back now, I'm so grateful I had it because, I mean, I did not do any Scientology after that.

**Scott**

Eventually you recovered, so to speak. What was it that enabled you to do that, to finally kind of get your life on track?

**Kat**

It has been a process for sure. A big thing that really helped me— I got married and pregnant when I was 21, so that, in and of itself, was just a big change. I had this baby boy. I knew I was struggling so hard. I was drinking a lot. I was suicidal. I was doing drugs. I was doing anything I could to try to make myself feel better, just running headfirst into that abyss and, when I became pregnant, I knew that I had to change because I did not want to do this to my kid. Every part of me wanted to save him from the pain that I was feeling. So I knew I had to start working on myself. Now, it took a while - it definitely did. I got into counseling around the age of 26 - my first round with that - and that's actually when I was diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety and depression. I was so scared to get help. I was so scared because of all the things that Scientology says about psychiatry and psychology. They say that if you walk into a counseling session, they're going to lobotomize you and do electroshock, like, right away, so I was so scared of that.

But I also knew that I had to get help. I needed to do something. I also knew at that point it was, like, learning a lot about Scientology. Education was actually a big thing. So, hearing other people's stories and reading books and realizing that L. Ron Hubbard was just so full of shit and that he was a conman and that Scientology just leaves destruction everywhere that they go, that really helped. So that made me brave enough to be like, "Okay, so if all that stuff isn't true, then maybe it's not true about psychology." So I was finally able to start digging into that and that really helped, actually. That was the first time I'd ever talked about my experience in Scientology, my experience with my dad, and all the stuff that happened in between, things were not good at home when I got back with my mom - just slowly starting to delve into that.

**Scott**

What about medication? Does Scientology allow that at all?

**Kat**

God no. Another thing that was taught was that psychiatric drugs will cause you to be homicidal or suicidal, and that all mass shooters have been on antidepressants and anybody who killed themselves has antidepressants in their system. And so, I was terrified of that, but I knew that, without them, I might do something to myself if I don't do something different. So I ended up actually taking an antidepressant and it really helped. It actually helped with the suicidal thoughts. They started to subside.

**Scott**

Yeah, it does help when prescribed by a medical professional. It's amazing to me that— I know childhood indoctrination is so effective but, in this case, they only had you for less than a year and, yet, they had you believing these things and scared to go against them.

**Kat**

Yeah. Then, I also had my mother reinforcing all that rhetoric in our house. She's believing it.

**Scott**

Did you ever talk to your mom and tell her what happened to you while you were there?

**Kat**

I tried to a couple of times. When I got back initially, she didn't want to hear it. She just was not interested in what I had to say. She was not interested in being a mom anymore. She was very resentful of us kids and was very vocal about it. She was just definitely mad at us all the time and she was never around. She would go out drinking. She would work Melaleuca, which is a multi-level marketing scheme. She would work that during the day and then her boyfriend would come over at night or she would go out. So I rarely ever saw her. I wasn't able to tell her.

As I got older and as just more things were creeping up and more memories were coming back up, I was getting to a point where I was starting to be more vocal with her. I was actually well into my 20s at this point. I remember she was over and I asked her, "How does Scientology get away with breaking child labor laws? I was 13. How did they do that? They didn't even pay me. Like, how did they do that?" Her response to me was, "Well, some would say that getting your room and board paid for is payment enough." So the fact that they fed me and gave me a bed was payment enough for everything that I went through. At that point I was just like, "She's not going to fucking listen to me. There's no point in trying to talk to her about this."

Then, there was actually one time prior to that too where we were actually drinking together and I was feeling a little bold, and I told her about the guy in the bathroom. I was just telling her because I wanted her to know that it was something that had happened to me that was traumatic. She just stops what she's doing, and she's like, "Well, once a priest kissed me, and then that was it." And it was because I was a Christian at that time. I was saying something bad about her religion, so she was going to say something bad about my religion. She didn't care about what had happened to me. She just had to one-up me with her experience because my religion also did bad things.

**Scott**

Did any of your siblings ever get into Scientology? Did she try to recruit them at all?

**Kat**

Each of my siblings has some experience to varying degrees in Scientology. Most of them just did some courses and didn't like it. The thing that soured almost all of my siblings on Scientology - actually all of them - is what Scientology did to my mother and what it did to our family. It took all of our money. By the time we moved to the States when I was 15, all the money that she got from my dad was gone. She donated so much of it to them. She was never good at making money herself, so I had to work two jobs through high school to help support her and the family, and my brothers had to do that. While we were doing this, she was still working for the org here in Denver, making \$50 a week. She still did 40 hours, basically, for free for the church here.

**Scott**

When's the last time you spoke with your mom?

**Kat**

About seven years ago. I knew that I had to start talking about what happened to me in Scientology. I knew that this is an evil organization. They traffic children. They bring widows for all their worth and all their money. They do bad things. I had this festering wound inside of me that I needed to start opening, so I knew I had to start talking about my experience in Scientology. I knew that would cost my relationship with my mom.

Another way Scientology controls you is that if you are connected to anybody who speaks negatively at all in any way about the church, you have to disconnect from them. You have to stop talking to them. So I knew that was going to happen, but I knew that I had to make a choice. I had to tell my story and what happened. I actually wrote her a letter after lots of consideration, and I told her that I needed a break from her and that, basically, people who had hard childhoods need time away from their moms and their parents - their abuser, basically. I told her that we couldn't talk anymore. So she actually wrote me a letter back and she said that she understood and that's what she wants for me. I was like, "Okay, cool." Then, a week later - she was actually in Clearwater at the time doing Scientology training when I sent her that letter - she started texting me saying like, "We have to fix this. We have to do something about this. I need to call you." So I just told her, "No, we can't fix this. This is it. We can't do it." Then, I told her that I've been seeing a counselor in psychiatry, and psychology is way better than Scientology ever was. I sent that and then I blocked her number and I haven't spoken to her since.

**Scott**

That is so sad.

**Kat**

Yeah.

**Scott**

But you and your mom live in the same town now.

**Kat**

Yeah.

**Scott**

What if you happen to run into her? How would you picture that playing out?

**Kat**

I have pictured that playing out many times. First of all, I think she would look at me and run. I don't think she'd talk to me. I think she would be the one who would run away.

**Scott**

Because she's not really allowed to talk to you.

**Kat**

Exactly. And I know that they know that I've been telling my story, so she would not be allowed to talk to me. So I think that would take care of that, that she would run away from me if I ever ran into her. But if that didn't happen, I don't know, a part of me wants to tell her off as I've gotten older and just more angry about everything. Part of me would really just want to yell at her. I don't think I would, though. I think I would probably just walk away too and not engage her because the relationship's gone. It's broken and it's not coming back.

**Scott**

Too much has happened.

**Kat**

Yep.

**Scott**

But you have kids now.

**Kat**

I do. Yeah, I've got two kids.

**Scott**

She has grandkids. Has she ever seen them?

**Kat**

Yeah, she's seen them when they were younger. I mean, the kind of pretty heartbreaking thing about the whole thing is, like, she was an okay grandma. So, obviously, my kids' relationship with her has gone away. In the last seven years, when I haven't talked to her, I did allow my brother to take my kids to go see her from time to time. Actually, my sister, she was in Scientology. She was in the Sea Org actually, but she was much older. My sister still talks to me. I am a suppressive person in the eyes of Scientology. So, my mom actually called up my sister one night and told her that if she didn't stop talking to me, then my mom was going to disconnect from her and never talk to her again. So my sister said, "Well, I'm not going to stop talking to Kat. I'm not going to do that."

At this point, my mom knew I had actually written out my Scientology experience and I posted it to Facebook. So she had asked my sister, like, "Have you read it? Did you read what Kat said?" My sister's like, "No, I didn't want to be caught in the middle." That's when my mom said like, "You have to disconnect from— you have to stop talking to Kat or I have to disconnect from you." My sister said, "Well, everything that she said was true. What she said was true." Then, my mom laughed and said, "What does truth have to do with it?" She disconnected from my sister.

So, with that, I realized how unsafe a person my mom could be to my kids. If she's willing to disconnect from her own daughter because of me, then how could I let them keep having a relationship with her, however mild it was? It was really infrequent that she saw them, but she would break their hearts if the church told her to and she would. So they no longer see her or talk to her.

**Scott**

It sounds like you've made a whole lot of progress.

**Kat**

Yeah.

**Scott**

Do you think Scientology does any good for anyone or is it just strictly about the money?

**Kat**

I think that any good Scientology has ever done is far outweighed by all the bad Scientology does. I think it has little bits that get you hooked like the success I had with auditing when I first went there for the panic attacks. They really help people with communication. I think that if anybody learns to communicate better, they're going to do better in life. It's just a really helpful skill to have. Beyond that, their focus is money. Their focus - and anybody who's been and worked for them will tell you - is money. It's not about helping people. There are people in Scientology who really want to help people - I want to definitely get that across - but any good that church does is far outweighed by the destruction that it causes in people's lives.

### **Scott**

You heard Kat mention that on one of her trips to the Celebrity Centre in Los Angeles, she met Leah Remini, who at the time was also a Scientologist. Just recently, Leah Remini has filed a lawsuit against the church. She was a member for 17 years, and her lawsuit claims that she was the victim of harassment, intimidation, surveillance and defamation.

If you want to ask Kat something about her experience, her email address is in the episode notes – and she is also in our Facebook group, just like a lot of our other podcast guests. You can join more than 5000 other listeners there, at [WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook).

You can see pictures of Kat, as well as get the full transcript for this episode, at [WhatWasThatLike.com/148](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/148).

And we have a voice mail from Sally –

### **Sally**

Hi, Scott. This is Sally. I felt compelled to reach out. First of all, I'm so glad I happened upon your podcast. I listen at work, in the car, and at home too. I love it and I love your voice. The compassion and respect toward your guests can be heard. I also want to say that when I listened to the bonus episode that included the Mannheim, Pennsylvania couple, the Eberly's - victims of the senseless road rage. I was reminded of when this happened, but listening to Mr. Eberly just tore my heart out. I sobbed while listening at work. It's just so heart-wrenching. Plus, I live in Marietta, Pennsylvania, about 20 minutes from Mannheim. I go there twice a day to and from work. Thank you, Scott, for my favorite podcast. I appreciate you.

### **Scott**

Thank you Sally, and I appreciate YOU! Sally is one of the supporters of the podcast, and the story she was talking about is an episode of Raw Audio – where you hear actual 911 audio and stories that go with it. If you'd like to join Sally and the other supporters, you can try it out for free at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/support).

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

And now we're about to hear this week's Listener Story, which is how we end every episode. If you have a story you can tell in like 5-10 minutes, record it on your phone and email it to me at [Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com](mailto:Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com). And as you listen to this story from Jeremy, you might notice the audio quality and think, "Wow, this guy should be a podcaster" – and he actually is. He hosts a podcast called The Teeth – which is about wild animal attacks. You can check it out at [theteethpod.com](http://theteethpod.com). In this story, Jeremy tells us about the first time he saw a bear in the wild.

Stay safe, and I'll see you in two weeks.

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(Listener Story)

### **Jeremy**

I'm dating a mule packer in Yosemite National Park - one of the most special places on earth. Spending a lot of time visiting her outdoor office over the summer, it's been an absolutely amazing year. One thing that I'm a little disappointed about is that it's October and I haven't seen a bear yet. Someone always sees one the day before I arrive or the day after I leave. I feel like I'm always just missing them.

One evening, in October, around sunset, someone in the distance yells, Get out of here! And my girlfriend comes over to me all out of breath and says, "Jeremy, there is a bear in the corral trying to eat the grain for the mules." I ran over and the other packers said that they just scared it away and pointed me in the direction that it went. I stop running and cautiously take a trail in the direction of where they said the bear went - it is still bright enough to clearly see my surroundings - and there is a large field beside the trail with a good vantage point. I walk about an eighth of a mile with low expectations and what do you know? On the edge of the field beside some trees is a black bear.

I'm so happy and excited to finally see a bear in Yosemite. Black bears are naturally active during the day but, in areas with a lot of human activity, they become nocturnal or crepuscular, meaning they are most active in the evenings and early mornings in an attempt to avoid humans. I'm on a trail a good two or three hundred yards from the bear. She is not reacting to me at all, which is a good sign. If a wild animal is reacting to my presence at all, that means I need to get back and respect their space. Could this moment get any better? Turns out, it could and does, because the bear has two cubs with her - the cutest little boogers ever. They're playing clumsily pretty close to her as she scavenges a crabapple tree. I'm so speechless with just a huge smile on my face.

A few hikers pass me and I don't even point out the bears. They just keep moving along the trail completely oblivious. How many bears have I passed in my life without even noticing them myself? After about half an hour of observing the bears from the trail, I noticed for the first time the mother was looking at me - more than looking at me. She was glaring at me and not moving at all. This was new. Even though she was a few hundred yards away, her body was squared off in my direction and glaring. It's interesting with animals. They don't speak English, but they can send a message crystal clear when they need to, and this message was that she wanted to kill me.

As I was asking myself, why would she? All of a sudden, I heard a branch break behind me. I quickly looked for the cubs. One of the cubs was right next to the mother. I didn't have to look behind me to know that the second cub was what made that branch break and I didn't want the mama to see me looking at the cub, so I didn't even turn around. This was it. This is the thing you're not supposed to do. It's literally in the Bible. Don't get between a mother bear and her cubs ever or you will die.

She rears up onto her hind legs and comes down onto her front legs and grunts as she hits the ground. I literally felt the ground shake, seriously, like an earthquake the instant her front paws hit the ground. I could see the cub next to her scramble up a tree. I could also hear the cub



behind me scrambling up a tree. Things were getting real. She was still holding that death stare towards me, but was not running towards me, which was good. I started walking slowly sideways in the direction that was going away from the mother and the cub in the tree behind me. I was kind of walking sideways away from both of them. It's bad to run or turn your back on a predator. So I kept facing the mother and slowly picked up my speed while walking kind of sideways backwards, but in a way that was not trying to look panicked. But in my mind, I'm saying, "Please don't kill me, mama bear."

She didn't react to me moving away, which I think is a good thing. I kept going, but never turned my back to her. It was getting darker now. And after a few hundred yards, I told myself that if she hasn't started chasing me, she probably won't unless she was giving me a head start. Doesn't matter. I just kept going, kept breathing, and kept facing her direction until eventually I couldn't really see her. I got back to camp, but the adrenaline pulsing through my body didn't calm down for hours. After never seeing a bear in Yosemite, I then went on to see a dozen more the next morning along that same trail in the valley.

Since this close call, I've become fascinated with bears and other wild predators and started interviewing survivors of wild animal attacks in an attempt to understand and educate others on how to peacefully coexist in the wilderness. My name is Jeremy Carberry and it's an honor to be a small part of the What Was That Like podcast.