

## **Episode 155: Stephanie was date raped**

Have you ever heard of Rohypnol?

In the US, Rohypnol is classified as a Schedule IV controlled substance. It functions as a depressant to the central nervous system. It's not manufactured or approved for sale in the US, but it is shipped here from other countries and used illegally. It's similar to Valium, but ten times more powerful.

A common name for it on the street is the "forget-me drug". A more generic term is "roofie" and it's often referred to as the "date rape drug". In many cases, Rohypnol is secretly put into the drink of an unsuspecting victim. The effects, including drowsiness and loss of memory, are felt within 15 to 20 minutes, and may continue for up to 12 hours.

When it's put into a clear drink, it will change the color of the liquid to blue. The color is often masked by serving tropical drinks that are already blue, or by serving the drink in a dark or opaque container.

My guest today, Stephanie, was a victim of having her food or a drink spiked with Rohypnol or something similar. But this didn't happen in a bar or a nightclub – it happened in her own home. And the perpetrator was someone she thought she knew.

Please consult the show notes for content warnings about this episode.

### **Scott**

Stephanie had moved to a new city and was, for the first time, fully independent.

### **Stephanie**

This was, like, my first round at being completely alone. It's just you there in that space. You're responsible for all the bills and everything, all the fun adult things. It was a very busy city. You could compare it to, like, New York.

### **Scott**

Once she got mostly settled in, she started to think about getting to know people.

### **Stephanie**

I wanted to see where I could possibly form new friendships and meet new people. I really wasn't sure how to really go about that, to be honest with you.

### **Scott**

Stephanie thought of one place where it should be easy to meet new friends.

### **Stephanie**

So I started to go down that route of churches. I've not always had the greatest relationship or history with the whole church thing or church community, so I was treading lightly into that.

### **Scott**

But as far as a romantic relationship, the church wasn't much help.

### **Stephanie**

I'm already a picky person, as it is. I don't know if that's a good or a bad thing. I figured that within that community, it would be a good place to meet somebody who was the type of guy you could bring home to mom and dad. They'd be a very nice guy, not a complete psycho, and would be someone that had very good values and, I guess, really to sum it all up, is someone that's not an asshole. But it was slim pickin'. It was an interesting crowd of guys, let's just say that. It was definitely people I would never really consider romantically - for sure, as friends. I don't mind bonding over, like, Star Wars trivia, but I don't think I could ever date somebody or- it just wasn't really my type of guy.

**Scott**

And she wasn't too excited about the idea of looking for love through an online dating service.

**Stephanie**

I just didn't really like the whole online thing. It just seemed very impersonal, I guess. It just feels weird to be speaking or meeting people through some kind of virtual platform versus speaking to somebody face-to-face in person. I didn't really like the online aspect as well because you just never really know who's out there, and it's hard to read a person when you're speaking to them through text or through phone. So you can't really get a grasp of who it is that you're speaking to. It also felt kind of scary. I didn't want to put myself in any scary situations. You just hear so many freak stories.

**Scott**

But as time went by, she kept coming back to online dating as maybe something she should try.

**Stephanie**

I couldn't really think of any other option where I could meet, like, a range or a wide range of people that had common interests, I guess.

**Scott**

So she started to try out some of the apps.

**Stephanie**

First, I actually started with Tinder, and that was pretty awful from the get-go. So I immediately got off that app and deleted my profile. I went over to an app called Bumble. It's very similar where you just kind of swipe left or right to your matches. But again, I was very paranoid, especially just being on my own and then being in the city that I wouldn't meet people in person unless I was speaking to them for quite some time and I could, like, truly rule out that I haven't seen any major red flags in that person. I went on maybe three or four dates in person just because, again, I guess I'm very picky or there are certainly red flags, things that I didn't really know about the person or didn't really find all that interesting.

**Scott**

Then she matched up with Josh.

**Stephanie**

So Josh was actually one of those that I swiped on just cause I thought he was cute. It wasn't really a thought. It was just, like, swipe and then it tells you when you've matched when the person has also swiped on you. I was surprised by that. I was like, "Oh, okay." Because he was a very good-looking guy and seemed like, to be honest, out of my league - very handsome. So

we just started chatting. I sent him a message and it kind of just went from there. We texted back and forth through the app. After a few weeks of that, we went into exchanging phone numbers and texting back and forth. Then, we moved over to phone calls and it was nice. Part of our daily routine was to have our evening phone calls with each other and texting throughout the day. So it was really nice to have that.

**Scott**

Stephanie still wanted to move ahead cautiously, but eventually they met in person.

**Stephanie**

Finally, I would say about two months - probably two and a half months - of phone calls and texting, we finally met up for dinner. Of course, we met for dinner in a public setting. It was somewhere that was within walking distance from me but, again, I was very sure not to even say I lived within walking distance. So we met at this really cute Taco or a Mexican fusion kind of restaurant, and we had a really nice dinner. We had a really nice time, actually. He was even better looking in person. However, he's shorter than what his profile said, but that's fine.

As we got to talking, there were a few things that bothered me. Looking back on it now, I think I was making a lot of exceptions because I guess I had that insecurity of, like, "He's really out of my league, so I'm just going to, I guess, let some of these things fly." The fact that he was in between employment, as he said, would normally bother me and that would probably be, I would say, a deal breaker. But, again, it was one of those things I kind of gave him a lot of, like, leeway. Sure, you're figuring out what you want to do. That's fine.

**Scott**

But there were some other concerns.

**Stephanie**

Also, the fact that he didn't drive. I know a lot of people would probably roll their eyes, because I sound like I'm like a spoiled brat having this little, like, checklist of things. That kind of thing bothered me that he didn't drive because - where we live, yes, we're in the city - it's very rare that people don't drive here. He said that he had actually a DUI, which again was another red flag. I was not totally impressed with that fact and that his insurance was very costly for him. So right now, he couldn't afford to pay for the insurance of his car. So he wasn't driving. He was getting rides from his friends. In fact, he even mentioned his friend had dropped him off to that date. I let a lot of those little things go that really I should have listened to a little bit better.

**Scott**

But they continued to see each other on a very regular basis.

**Stephanie**

Depending on the week, we saw each other two or three times a week, but we spoke every day on the phone. We'd go for a walk in the park. There was this huge park not far from me where we could go for a walk. We could go grab a coffee and then take it to go and just walk around the city or walk wherever. We'd go to the movies. We'd go for dinner. We'd go out for a drink and just hang out, really.

**Scott**

So after spending a lot of time together, Stephanie finally felt comfortable enough to invite Josh to her home. You invited him over to your place for dinner. That was a big step.

## Stephanie

It was a huge step. I was pretty nervous. We had actually made plans to meet up for dinner that evening. But that day, I was feeling really not up to it. I had just come back from being on a little short work trip, so I was just tired. The whole thought of having to go home and, like, unpack and get ready and dolled up just seemed really exhausting, but I felt bad canceling on him. So at this point, I thought, "Okay, maybe we'll just have a quiet night in. Maybe I'll just invite him over and we'll have a nice night where I can maybe make him a nice dinner. We can watch a movie or just hang out." So that was the plan that I proposed and he was on board with that.

So he came over that evening. We had dinner. After dinner, I guess, instead of watching a movie, we ended up just hanging out. We just talked for most of the night, just kind of, again, sharing our own crazy stories, and getting to know each other more. At this time in my life, I was still smoking. I know it's a gross habit. I don't smoke anymore, but at that time I did. He was a smoker as well. So we were kind of going from the living room to the balcony every now and then to go get our "fresh air." We had just come back inside from finishing a cigarette and we were sitting at the table in the living room - sorry, the coffee table. As we're talking I'm kind of having this, like, almost side conversation in my own head thinking that I don't feel 100% right now, and I'm kind of freaking out in my own head because I - just me as a person anyways - always sort of imagine the worst case and everything, if you hadn't already figured that one out.

I just was starting to panic because something didn't feel right, and I was afraid that I would ruin the dates somehow, like I was going to ruin the evening because like, "Oh no, it feels like I'm going to throw up. What if I throw up in front of him and he never wants to see me again?" All these things are going on in my mind and I'm starting to get sleepy as well, and I'm just trying to keep myself awake. I'm getting just more and more tired. My eyes are feeling super heavy and everything's a little cloudy. So I just thought I just need to get up, I just need to move my body, and maybe it will kind of make me more alert or make me awake. So I just said I was going to go to the washroom.

But as I stood up, when I stood up, it just felt like all the blood had rushed from my head to my body and I had to, like, hold on to the wall for a second to get my balance. It was such an odd feeling. Like, it just felt like everything was melting around me and that was it. That's the last thing that I remembered that night, which was terrifying. Yeah, it was very surreal. It was just a weird thing to even put into words, but it just felt scary to feel like you had this complete loss of control over your body.

The next morning, I had jolted awake. I don't know if you've ever had that experience where you just open your eyes and you're like, "Holy crap. I am a human." It's so hard to explain. It just felt like I wasn't in existence and then all of a sudden my life existed again. Like, it was the most odd feeling. My eyes just opened, I looked around, and I was like, "What the hell? Where am I? What the heck?" And I see the familiar surroundings. I could see my curtains or my blinds in the room. Okay, that's a relief. I'm home.

Then, I started to freak out a bit because I was like, "Wait a minute. What even happened?" I was so confused in terms of how I got here. What even happened? I'm trying to retrace my steps. The last thing I can remember was that, last night, when I stood up, that's the last thing and I'm trying to retrace my steps as hard as I could. I'm freaking out at this point and felt like such garbage too. I felt like I had just been hit by a train. It just felt so painful everywhere. My head was killing me and my stomach was killing me. I just felt super nauseous and my body just

hurt as if I had just worked out every muscle in my body. I was, like, sore or something. It just hurt.

**Scott**

When you woke up, were you clothed?

**Stephanie**

No, I wasn't clothed. I mean, this might be TMI, but I usually don't sleep clothed anyway because I'm usually like a hot sleeper. Clothing kind of annoys me. So that wasn't too alarming to me when I woke up, but it was more so, like, what the heck, because I cannot remember going to sleep. It's such a scary feeling.

So as I sat up in the bed, I looked around and like it was the most chilling thing to see. My whole room was a complete disaster. Everything that was on my dresser - I had like this little vanity table - was across the floor. I have a little vase of some little fake flowers. That was tipped over across the whole table. Some of my makeup and my jewelry, just everything was, like, across the whole room, and it was hard to even comprehend. I'm just looking at the way everything was laid out, like, "How does that even happen?" It's not like a simple bump into a table. It was all over the place. Then, the sheets on the bed were strewn all over the room. There was everything you can imagine coming out of someone's body, as gross as that sounds. There was vomit on the carpets. It was on the sheets. It was also on the drapes. I don't even know how, but it was on part of the drapes. There were some streaks of blood, like in the bed and there was—

Again, I don't know how but there were - it's going to sound really TMI again - tracks of, like, fecal matter on the sheets. Then, I looked to the ground beside the bed and there was, like, a white men's undershirt - like one of those muscle - tanks on the ground, and that had streaks of blood on it, but it wasn't like a lot. It was just like these little tiny lines of blood and little tiny droplets. Then, it had some vomit on it, too. And then a pair of men's socks on the floor.

**Scott**

You must have felt like you just woke up in a crime scene.

**Stephanie**

Exactly. That's actually the best way I could explain it. It was very odd. As I'm looking at this, I'm feeling very out of body and feeling like— I don't know. I felt like maybe this might be a dream, like this can't be real. It just felt so weird to take it all in and scary to think about how this all happened.

**Scott**

The thing that I wouldn't be able to square in my mind is all of this craziness - whatever it was, happened - and I was here when it happened, but I don't know what happened.

**Stephanie**

I really liked the way you just put that because that really articulates the feeling very well because I'm a control freak. I mean, I do have a lot of anxiety, especially anxiety around not having control of the situation or my body. So for me to look around and see that this all happened without me being aware of how this happened, I just felt so violated because, like, how did this happen? And I feel like I'm an idiot. I feel, like, embarrassed that this happened and I started to think of all of these scenarios that are going through my head. I'm thinking, "Should I

call Josh? Should I text Josh? Or do I not text him because he's going to think I'm a freak? Because what the heck did I do last night? What happened here?" I felt embarrassed more for myself that I, like, threw up in front of him. I was more embarrassed about all of that. Before I could even make any connection, I was thinking of how I am going to bring this up to him. Like, he's not going to want anything to do with me after this.

### **Scott**

Had it occurred to you that maybe you were drugged and raped? Was that a possibility in your mind?

### **Stephanie**

It came up in my mind, obviously, as a possibility, but I just couldn't believe that it would be the case for me. It was all painted there for me. I could clearly see that if this was anybody but me looking at this, I would open and shut the case. Yes, that's what happened, but I was in such denial. I wasn't really willing to accept that's what happened here or even entertain that as a possibility. I also was more so playing the devil's advocate and thinking, "Okay, well, why would someone go as far as dating me for this long just to do this now? It just seems so dumb that someone would ever make that investment of time and go on all these dates and get to know me as a person and do this now. Like, why wouldn't you just go to a club or something and just—I don't know. Like, it just seems so weird. Why would somebody do that? It doesn't make any sense."

I mean, obviously, I'm naive, but I thought things like that didn't really happen where I lived. I just thought it was something you kind of hear about in the news, but it doesn't really happen close to home. It was hard to explain, but I started to get really scared when I thought that was pretty likely what happened. After I kind of looked around and processed, again, all I could really tell myself was I just needed to get this taken care of and just pretend none of this ever happened. I'm an idiot. So let's just move on from this. I don't want to talk about this. I don't want to address this. I just got to clean up this disaster zone here. So I just got my supplies out. I mean, cleaning is one of those things that sort of calms my anxious mind. I mean, one of those freaks of nature that enjoys cleaning, but I started cleaning the carpet.

As I'm cleaning, again, my thoughts are racing and I'm trying to retrace my steps. I start to get little bits and pieces of flashes coming back to me, but not fully put together. It's hard to explain, but the best way I could explain it would be like, if you're in a very dark room during a thunderstorm, there's that jolt of lightning or that strike of lightning and it lights up the room for a second, and you could kind of see the room a little bit - like, you see the outlines of the room. It's like that. So I get these little bursts of that and I still get them to this day. I remember not being able to move. I remember being under him on my stomach, and he was on top of me from behind, face pressed into the footboard of the bed. These little bits and pieces here. I remember screaming. I remember not being able to move. All I wanted to do was get him off, but I couldn't. I even have, like, dreams where I'm stuck and I can't move.

So everything happened on Friday. This was Saturday morning. I was really not feeling safe to be by myself at that time. I just needed to get out of there. I couldn't even finish cleaning it. I decided I was going to pack up some of my things and I actually went to stay at my parents' place. My parents usually go away for the summer, so they're gone for a few months every summer. So I would typically pop by every now and then, water their plants, take care of the garden, pay their bills - like get their bills from the mail and pay it - and whatever. At this point, I

figured, no one was there at their house. It's empty. It's going to be empty for the rest of the summer. I just want to go there, a place that brings me comfort.

So I packed up some of my clothes, some laundry and things, and I brought it over, and I actually ended up staying there for the remainder of the summer. I was terrified to go back there. I didn't go back there for six weeks or so.

**Scott**

Did you contemplate reporting this to the police?

**Stephanie**

I did, but then I just had so many things going through my head at that time. The one thing was I was afraid people were going to find out and I didn't want people to know about it because I felt like people would treat me differently - like having pity on me or I don't know. I didn't want to be treated differently. I didn't want to be known as that person that had this awful thing happen to them. I was also just embarrassed. I don't even know how this happened to me. So I thought if I had gone to the police, it would become some kind of a public thing and more people would have to be involved. I also felt like they would not take me seriously, that they would kind of just blame me for even getting into this situation. And I also didn't want to really even say the words out loud that this happened to me. I still was having a hard time coming to terms with it. So I didn't report it. No.

Looking back on it, I wish I had because I think about it all the time. I think about if there are other people that he's done this to and that I could have had the opportunity or the chance to stop him from doing this again to anybody else and ruining their lives and I live with that guilt all the time that I didn't report it.

**Scott**

I think that's kind of a comment on our society because you were concerned about what if they didn't believe you - which is a common thing - and what if they actually blamed you. I mean, hey, come on, you let this guy in your house and then you could say, "I didn't drink that much." But then, of course, they're going to think, "Oh, well you must have just gotten drunk." It seems like those hesitations, or those are reasons why a lot of these things don't get reported.

**Stephanie**

Yeah, I definitely agree. It almost seemed terrifying to have to make it official and to have to repeat everything, all the events, and I didn't want to have to go through being examined and everything. I also thought it wouldn't even make a difference to do that because I had at this point, I already had showered because I just felt disgusting. So, I felt like there's no benefit because you can't really get any DNA from me or whatever because it's too late. So all they're going to do is just make me feel like crap, and I didn't want that.

**Scott**

Did you actually try contacting Josh at all?

**Stephanie**

I did. That weekend, I actually was waiting for him to message me again because, as stupid as it sounds, I felt really embarrassed for myself, like I did something wrong. So I felt like I needed to wait for his message versus me messaging him. So I originally was just kind of waiting on him

to say something like anything at all, really any kind of detail of what happened or why he did it or I waited for him to say something.

Then, by the end of the weekend, it was Sunday evening. I finally sent a text to him, but it wouldn't go through. That immediately was, like, red flags everywhere. I kept trying to resend it and resend it, but a little red exclamation mark kept coming back or whatever - that message was undelivered. So I thought maybe it was just me. I tried restarting my phone. I don't know why I thought that would work, but it was very odd. I tried calling his phone and the phone went straight to "The customer you're trying to reach is not available." It didn't have an inbox or anything. It was very odd. So I started freaking out because I'm imagining, again, every worst case like, "What the hell. Maybe he blocked me. Why is the number not working?"

I tried to go back to Bumble. So I had to re-download the app and reactivate my profile and I was trying to go back into our message history to find our message thread, but it had him as a deleted user. So that was a lot to process. I just felt so stupid for not seeing any of these red flags because I remember him having a really crappy phone and I remember teasing him about it, but he had mentioned that he had broken his phone and he was saving up to get a new phone. So he's just using this old one for the time being. I'm thinking now, like again, looking back on it, that it was probably not a legit phone that would have been, like, on a regular phone plan.

As the weeks went by, I was just, again, trying to move forward, pretending like this didn't happen. Weeks went by and we had a long weekend actually coming up. During this long weekend, my brother came over to my parents' place. We're hanging out and I remember just not feeling so great. I thought, perhaps I was getting some kind of a stomach bug or something. I just felt really nauseous and I don't know, I had this weird feeling where I was so hungry, uncontrollably hungry, but I didn't know what I wanted to eat, so I would settle for pizza. Okay, let's have pizza. Then, when the pizza came, the smell of it was just so off-putting. When I opened the box and looked at it, it just seemed so disgusting to me, and that kind of carried through the entire long weekend and I just had a hard time.

My brother was trying to convince me to go out with him and go see fireworks or whatever, or go hang out with some of our mutual friends, but I couldn't. I just felt like such garbage. I did not feel well at all. That Monday was like a holiday. I was at my parents' place - my home at the time - and the thought just randomly hit me of, "Oh shit, I'm late. Like I should have had a period by now and I haven't had one." I thought, at first, "Perhaps, it's just late because I've been really stressed out with everything that's happened." That happens to me. I'm not really always very regular with my cycle. So I didn't really think anything of it at first, but then I started to get a little bit paranoid because I had been nauseous all weekend and now I'm late. When I'm doing the backward math, it all lines up to exactly the timeline from that night. So I started freaking out, but then I'm telling myself, "No. That's so unlikely. The percentage of that happening has to be, like, 2%." I'm totally talking myself out of it like, "No, it's not possible."

### **Scott**

You're very good at self-deception.

### **Stephanie**

I am. It's like trying to sell myself on a decision and I just kept telling myself, "Nope. It's not likely that would ever happen." Just in case, I went to the pharmacy, I just picked up a pregnancy test just to, like, put it to rest. I just wanted to calm these thoughts down, get my answer, and then,

that way, I could see clear as day you're not pregnant. So I picked up the test but I couldn't muster up the courage to do it. It just sat there and I kept looking at it and I just kept thinking to myself, "Well, I don't want to do it yet because I don't want it to ruin my night just in case it is positive. I just don't want to know that yet." So I would put it off for the next day and then the next day and then the next day. Then, eventually, one day when I was getting ready for work, I just wanted to get it out of the way.

I've put it off long enough. My period still has not come as much as I have waited for it. I'm just going to get it over with. That way, I can go to my meeting and not be distracted by the thought of it. So just before leaving, I did the pregnancy test, and it was one of those digital ones. The digital ones do take some time to give you your answer. So I'm sitting there waiting for the results and it's taking forever, but it didn't end up actually giving me any result. The screen was just blank. So that was so frustrating because it was just like, "Oh my God, just give me the answer." It was agonizing. I only had gotten a single test package, so I had no other tests to go off of. So I'm just freaking out at this point, but I wanted to just get the answer so I could move on.

I ended up stopping at the pharmacy that morning to pick up another test. I didn't want to wait till later to do it, so I actually stopped at a gas station before I got on the highway to go to this meeting and I did the pregnancy test there. This result was taking forever too. I mean, maybe it just felt like forever at that moment. It honestly felt like I was waiting for 20 minutes, but it probably wasn't that long. Eventually, I got really tired of standing there waiting for this result. Then, I just wrapped the test up in some paper and I put it in my purse and walked back to my car, and I just sat there and I'm waiting and I'm waiting. I did whatever I could to distract myself from the pure anxiety that I had at that moment. I'm checking my email on my phone.

Finally, I go to pick up the test and I'm just completely shaking at this point because I think I knew what it was going to be, but I just didn't want it to be that. I looked at the test and the window just said pregnant and it said 5-7 weeks on it. I could have just died at that moment. I felt immediately like I was just going to pass out. I don't even know what I was thinking at that exact moment. All I know is I immediately just put the car into drive and went. I couldn't even, like, stop and really take it in. I'm like, "Oh my god, I just, I can't do this right now," and I just drove.

### **Scott**

You were on your way to meet with a client. How could you possibly be in a state of mind to have that meeting?

### **Stephanie:**

I don't even know, Scott. The whole time I'm driving, I'm thinking every possible thought of, "Maybe you just need to retest. Maybe it's wrong." I just got to this meeting - I don't even know - and I was on for the entire meeting, I would say, but I was also in my own little mind and, the whole time, in the back of my mind, thinking I'm never going to be the same person again. I just knew at that moment that like, "That's it for me. This is that part of the story where you can't go back and it's going to be different from this point on." I thought about that on the drive home too - the decision I make right now or the decision I'm going to make is going to impact me for the rest of my life, no matter what I do. So what am I doing from here?

I started to think of every avenue. If I'm pregnant, if this is truly a confirmed pregnancy, how am I going to raise this kid by myself and how can I raise this kid that was brought on to me in such

an evil, awful way? Am I even going to be able to have any type of motherly instinct or love for this thing in me? Because at this point, I felt like some kind of alien force had taken over my body. I just wanted it out. I didn't want anything to do with this thing in my body because it just represented so much evil. I had such mixed feelings about it. What if this was supposed to happen to me? That's so stupid to think that, looking back on it. Like, what if this is meant to be? But then, I thought of how I would never, again, be able to explain this to people. How do I explain this to the child when they get older one day? Or how do I explain this to my family and my friends? I had no idea of what my true options were.

**Scott**

That has to be such a feeling of being alone when you've got this huge thing, huge decision, but you don't really feel like you can tell anyone or get any input from other people.

**Stephanie**

Yeah. It was a lot. In a way, it felt like, when I was walking around, everybody could almost see that I'm carrying this thing on my shoulders. It just felt like people could see. Then, also, when I would be talking with people like friends and stuff, I wanted to say something. As they're telling me things going on in their life, I'm just tempted to just spill my guts and just tell them what's happening, but I couldn't. I didn't want to let anybody in on this.

**Scott**

Stephanie was at a crossroads with a big decision to make. She went to a local clinic where she was examined and was told that to terminate the pregnancy, she had a couple of options.

**Stephanie**

One is the procedure where they're actually going in and doing the DNC. The second procedure is the medication or what they would call, like, a medical-induced abortion. So they give you two pills there, which is a medication that blocks the progesterone, which is the hormone needed to keep that pregnancy going, so that would cause a miscarriage. Then, they give you another set of medications that you take home with you and that medication you take 24 hours after the appointment, and that actually would stimulate the uterus to contract so that you're able to basically have the abortion at home. So everything is coming out while you're at home.

**Scott**

And that's what you preferred to do.

**Stephanie**

Yeah. And there were a few reasons why. One being that I could just be, again, private in the comfort of my own home, that I could not have to tell people that I did. The other reason was just being terrified of medical procedures, in general. I luckily have not never broken a bone or anything. I've never had an IV or any surgery in my life, so that was actually one of my greatest fears at that time. I did not want that. No, it wasn't for me.

After the consultation, when you go back to the waiting room, you have to have like this little kind of mini counseling session with one of their nurses to really verify like, "This is the choice you want to make?" You have to verify it many times with two different people at the clinic. The doctor went through it all and I remember him asking, "Are you sure this is what you want to do? Is anybody pressuring you to make this decision? Are you making this decision, like, 100% of your own free will?" So you had to also sign their paperwork to verify that again that you are making this decision on your own and you're not being coerced in any way.

One of the hardest parts of all of that was, when they had the ultrasound portion of it, looking at the screen, I told myself that I wasn't going to look at it. I turned my head away because I didn't want to see it. It was again, like, one of the hardest things for me because, my whole entire life, all I've ever wanted in life was to be a mom and it was just awful that this was how it was happening to me. I kind of got that taken away from me - the joy of becoming a mom. Like, this wasn't a joyous event for me in any shape or form. I took a peek at the screen and I just could not stop crying just seeing that embryo on that ultrasound, and you could hear, like, a faint beat. It was absolutely awful.

So they explained that all to you, that you could take those tablets at home 24 to 48 hours after. So you kind of had your time to pick whatever time worked best for you. I took them the following morning and I'm just having a day at home on the couch resting. Nothing was happening for a few hours. Then, for a second, I thought, "Oh great." When they have, like, a 1% statistic of all these things, I seem to always be the statistic. Like, "This is now another part of this where it's not going to work because I'm like the 1% and now I have to go back and get—" all these things were going through my mind.

Then, about five hours after, it started. It was light in the beginning like it just felt like your regular period. But then, all of a sudden, it just got scary. I wasn't even sure if any of that was normal or not. Every time I stood up, there was so much blood coming out. This sounds so graphic, I apologize, but it was so heavy to the point. When I stood up and walked to the washroom, this giant trail of blood was just following. So I honestly went upstairs to the washroom and I just sat in the bathtub for a bit and just kept, like, rinsing off because my legs just kept covering in blood, and this just kept getting worse. Like, it just kept getting heavier and heavier. There were some portions that weren't too pleasant.

They warned you that there's kind of sizable, like, clots and stuff that you would pass. They would say, like, "You might notice that." It was not very pretty looking. There was some weird-looking stuff that came out - and again lots of blood - and it just wouldn't stop. It went on for hours and hours. I started to get light headed and I started to worry because I'm home alone at this point and I've told nobody about this. What if I just passed out here and just died and nobody knew?

**Scott**

You can only lose so much blood.

**Stephanie**

Exactly.

**Scott**

If you passed out and continued to bleed out, then yeah, it does sound dangerous.

**Stephanie**

They do give you an on-call phone number to their on-call after hours I mean, being the polite Canadian that I am, I'm like, "Oh, I don't want to bother them right now. I'm just going to wait it out. I'm just going to sit here. I'm just going to wait because I don't want to burden them by calling them this late in the evening." Eventually, I just got really terrified that I called the number, but the nurse wasn't very sympathetic in any way. She just kind of brushed it off. She's like, "It's normal. It's to be expected. It's normal." And I'm like, "But this doesn't seem normal. I

can't even sit down in any place in this house because it's just like a disaster. So she's like, "Well, if you're really worried, then maybe you should go to the hospital and be looked at there." She was very quick to kind of get me off the phone. I sat there and just debated. I'm like, "Should I go to the hospital or should I just, like, wait this one out? Do I try to go to sleep with all of this happening and possibly not wake up?"

So I decided I would go to the hospital. That was also a whole other decision in terms of how I should get there. I didn't think it was very safe for me to be driving. Again, I didn't want to really call on anybody to help me. So this is going to sound totally crazy, but I actually took an Uber to the hospital. It was very odd. I had to control the bleeding the best way that I could. I had to basically fill my pants with a bunch of towels just to get to the hospital without making a mess in this person's car.

### **Scott**

Did the Uber driver know what was going on?

### **Stephanie**

No. He's trying to make small talk with me - the poor guy - asking if I was going there for myself or like, "Is everything okay?" Cause the destination was, like, to the emergency side of the hospital. He had dropped me off at the hospital, but this hospital has been recently renovated, so I actually could not find the right doors to get in. It was frustrating. I'm feeling so woozy and he's dropped me off at the wrong doors. Now, I'm like walking all over this place, trying to find the right spot.

I eventually got to triage for the ER and had to explain to the triage lady everything that happened. I obviously couldn't tell her the full story of how this all even came to fruition. So I gave her pretty much the gist of it or what she really needed to know in terms of like the medical reason why I'm there. They made me wait in the waiting area and it was a crazy night in the ER. The waiting room was packed. I explained to her what was going on with the bleeding and that I possibly needed something. Like, I asked if they had something that I could possibly put under me or if they had something I could wear or anything that would just kind of hold everything so I wouldn't bleed all over their ER floor. So they gave me some, like, elderly briefs.

So I waited for a while and was taken to the next, I guess, staging area. The doctor came in. I guess you had already got most of the rundown by the nurse and he just seemed super short with me, just very angry and almost accusatory in a way. I'm not sure if it was just me reading that, but I just got this sense that he was like, "You decided to get this procedure done. That's why you're bleeding. Because you did this." The words he was choosing to use just seemed really not right. I had to basically explain to him, like, when I took the medication - the exact time. He wanted to know when I took the next set of medications and how long the bleeding started.

Then, he did a vaginal exam, but he didn't really give me any warning. It was terrifying. He just asked me to lay back and, again, he just felt super short - like very annoyed with my presence. He just went in with, like, the super cold metal - I don't know what it's called, but it's the metal thing that they would use for a typical vaginal exam. He just went right in with that with no warning and it really hurt because he went in very hard. I remember just screaming and it's embarrassing because I normally would try to contain all of that, but it just happened. It was just so painful that I couldn't even control the scream. He's examining me and I just have tears

rolling down my face, just feeling completely violated in this whole experience. Everything has just been completely gut-wrenching and violated and I have no control over anything.

They wanted to make sure that everything was clear out of my uterus and confirm that the bleeding was just normal residual bleeding of the lining being shed, and he gave me medication that would stop the bleeding. I mean, within two doses of it, it had already helped immensely. When they discharged me, the sun was just coming up. It was maybe like 5.30 or maybe 6 AM.

**Scott**

You don't regret having the abortion though, right?

**Stephanie**

I don't regret it. I still feel awful about it. I always wonder. It's so hard to articulate this without sounding awful, but I wonder what that baby or that person would have turned out to be what they would have looked like, whether it would have been a boy or a girl, or who they would have been, and that hurts to think about. But at the same time, I know 100% that I made the right decision for myself. I don't regret that. I do not regret it one bit, but I just always think about the what-ifs.

**Scott**

I think that's natural. That's human. How have you dealt with it from a mental or emotional standpoint? Have you gotten therapy or how did you handle it afterward?

**Stephanie**

At the time, I was just starting to actually get therapy. It was more related to, like, depression and anxiety that I had already been living with. My doctor actually has some friends or whatever. They have resident therapists who are doing the residency that would take on patients for therapy and it's, like, all free. It's part of this medical school campus, so I was actually luckily kind of set up that way to have free therapy for a year with this resident therapist, and she was great. However, we only had limited sessions because it's done through whatever their school year is. I think it was in the course of a few months.

So I kind of feel like a little bit of an asshole in some ways because I honestly waited to the very end of our therapy sessions to even bring up what happened to me, so much to the point when I had finally told her, it was maybe our third last session, I could see her eyes get so wide when she was writing it down in her notes. She had even said like, "Oh, you waited this long to bring it up?" I said, like, "Well, I don't know. I just didn't want to talk about it. I mean, there's so much more to me than that." There were just other things that we had done in therapy that I guess maybe I finally reached a comfort level with her that I could tell her. But yeah, I did more so towards the end. Either way, it did help to speak to her about it and we spent the last three sessions discussing it in a lot of detail and it was helpful. It was helpful for sure. But after that, I did not really pursue any more therapy or counseling. I did, over time, tell a few friends. That was helpful as well.

**Scott**

And how long ago did this happen?

**Stephanie**

This was back in 2018.

**Scott**

Okay, so about five years ago then. The thing with this guy is, you seemed to take all the smart precautions. Have you dated anyone since then?

**Stephanie**

After that, I completely would never do online dating again. I guess the funny thing is— when I mentioned earlier how I wasn't really into church guys, like I wasn't really into that, I actually met my now-husband at our church and it was nice. I didn't have to do the online thing. He was there under my nose the whole time. I had just never had a chance to meet him.

**Scott**

Are you still a leader in that church?

**Stephanie**

No, I have not gone back. I try to move on with my life as if everything was business as usual. After the whole assault happened, the weekend after I showed up to church on Sunday, I remember people kind of coming up and asking me how I was doing and people could tell that there was something off about me, like I wasn't all there, but I didn't know what to do because I couldn't really talk to them and tell them what was really on my mind at that time. I don't know. I'm just, again, making that assumption that they would completely banish me from the whole church community if they had ever known or found out. I don't think any of them would even be able to process any of it at all. So it just felt very lonely that I couldn't really rely on any of these people.

And even as time went on, there was discussion of it every now. Then, when we had some of our discussion groups, people had really strong opinions on abortion and a lot of things also that didn't sit well with me in terms of the LGBTQ community or their thoughts on, I don't know, like relationships and everything. It kind of all hit me at once that this wasn't a good fit for me, wasn't really a space I wanted to be part of, and I kind of slowly just faded out of the whole scene and community.

**Scott**

In the beginning, you blamed yourself partially or a lot. Have you been able to get past that idea to understand that you're not at fault for any of those?

**Stephanie**

No, I haven't. Even just talking with my husband about this recently before coming on this podcast, it's just kind of reliving it all as we're talking about it. He's always reminding me, "This isn't your fault. Something bad happened to you. You didn't do this." But I can't. Yes, that sounds very logical on paper but, to live it, I will not blame myself. I don't think that's something that I will ever get over. I will always live with some blame and regret that I didn't have the ability to see through and to know that. I don't know. I'm normally such a good reader of people that I'm just so disappointed that I didn't read him better, that I didn't see this coming.

**Scott**

Honestly, I'm obviously not a therapist or counselor or anything but, to me, it sounds like it's not too late for you to talk to a professional about that in order to get past that part of it, to really have a good grasp on "It's not your fault."

**Stephanie**

I definitely believe in the powers of therapy, for sure. I know it's something I really do still need to unpack in a proper way to really better myself and better my relationships with everybody in my life. I know it's something I should do and hope to do one day. We started our family and that was something else to actually be pregnant again. It felt almost scary in a way. I was overprotective and didn't want it to be taken away from me.

**Scott**

For anyone listening who's been the victim of a rape or any kind of sexual attack, what would you tell them?

**Stephanie**

I would tell them to make sure that they report it. Don't feel at all that you are being a burden in any way, that people aren't going to believe you, or they might judge you. There's so much support out there and there are people that can help you and guide you. The only way we can prevent this from happening to someone else is to really bring it forward and to get law enforcement to look into these matters because, I mean, if people don't come forward, then it's only just going to keep happening. I live with that feeling every day that I didn't come forward and I could potentially have stopped this from happening to somebody else. My hope from this podcast is to almost help me, in a way, have a little bit of closure on the fact that I never did the right thing and I never went forward. I hope this helps someone so that they know to not be afraid and please tell somebody. There are people there that will help you and you're helping so many other people by doing that. This is an awful thing that happened to you, but it's not going to define who you are.

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**Scott**

If you or someone you know has been the victim of any kind of sexual assault, the National Sexual Assault Hotline is available 24/7. Help is available – just call 800-656-4673. And I'll have that number in the episode notes at [WhatWasThatLike.com/155](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/155).

Unfortunately, drink spiking is pretty common at clubs and bars. The best way to avoid this is to be aware of what you consume, and never take a drink that you haven't seen being prepared in front of you. And never leave your drink unattended, even for a moment.

Guess what – Raw Audio 36 has just been released. The Raw Audio episodes are bonus, exclusive episodes that include actual 911 calls, and the stories that go with those calls. And they're available to anyone who subscribes to What Was That Like PLUS. In this new episode –

A 14-year-old boy calls 911 after a knife attack –

**911 Operator**

What happened to your mom?

**14-year-old boy**

He killed her.

**Scott**

A woman is kidnapped and calls 911 but her abductor is near her, so she has to speak in code to get the 911 dispatcher to figure out what is going on –

**911 Operator**

Ma'am?

**Woman**

Yes?

**911 Operator**

What's the emergency?

**Woman**

I can't really... I don't know.

**911 Operator**

You don't know why you called 911?

**Woman**

Yes, I do.

**911 Operator**

Okay, then why did you call?

**Woman**

Okay, do I have to say it right now?

**911 Operator**

Yes.

**Woman**

Okay, then never mind.

**Scott**

And a man calls 911 after committing murder –

**911 Operator**

Okay, what's going on there?

**Man**

I just killed my brother and sister.

**911 Operator**

You just killed your brother and sister?

**Man**

Yes, ma'am. I'm going to be going away for life.

**Scott**

You can hear that full episode, AND you can binge all of the previous 35 Raw Audio episodes, by subscribing to What Was That Like PLUS. On an iPhone it's super easy – just go to the What Was That Like podcast and click on Try Free. If you use an Android, just go to [WhatWasThatLike.com/plus](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/plus) and you can try it free there too.

And here's something you might not be aware of – did you know that you can get What Was That Like podcast merch? I don't really mention it much here, because a lot of people want t-shirts, and I don't really recommend them because this is all handled through a separate vendor and the t-shirts are kind of crappy. But you can get a What Was That Like coffee mug – that's what I drink my coffee from every morning. And the hoodies are really nice. I'll be getting mine out before too long, now that the weather is getting cool again. But you can get What Was That Like pillows, wall art, magnets, stickers, all kinds of stuff. If you want to check out what's available, just go to [WhatWasThatLike.com/merch](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/merch). Just skip the t-shirts.

And a quick AI voice podcast review –

### **Stephanie**

This is a five-star review from Special Person 333. Such an entertaining podcast with great stories, and you can have it on anytime while working, cooking, or working out. I listen all the time while I'm at work, landscaping, and mowing lawns. It's so great to take you away and I get super into it and time flies by. Ten out of ten.

Scott

Graphics for this episode were created by Bob Bretz. Transcription was done by James Lai.

And finally, we're at this week's Listener Story! What's YOUR story? Record it on your phone and email to me – [Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com](mailto:Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com) – and we can all enjoy it. This is how we end every episode, with a 5-10 minute story sent in by a listener just like you.

This week's Listener Story is about finding someone you never knew existed.

Stay safe, and I'll see you in a week, with our next Flashback episode.

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(Listener story)

My weird thing - surprising thing - that happened to me was back when I graduated from college. I was living in Fort Worth and working in Arlington, Texas, and I would go home to Richardson, which is a suburb of Dallas, where my parents are. If I'd go home sometimes on the weekend, we'd go to church. My mom and I go to do Sunday. We'd go to church and I'd come home. Then, we'd come home, change, and I'd go back to Fort Worth.

One Sunday, I got home and I went into my bedroom to change, and my mom kind of disappeared. My dad came out and he kind of had this little funny grin on his face and he said, "Hey, come in. Let's sit down for a minute. We have something we need to tell you." He kind of had a little spring in his step and I'm like, "Okay." Then, I went to the gym. My mom was sitting on the couch, crying - just, like, weepy, with a tissue. I was thinking it was almost like my dad was going to say, "Wee! Your mom's pregnant!" It was so weird. She was way past the age where she could be pregnant, but that might be a possibility.

They began to tell me a story. Before she met my dad, my mom was pregnant and had a baby. My grandmother and my mom went to Arizona. She had the baby. My grandmother's brother was sick and they needed to take care of him. She had it set up for adoption, came home, and it was never spoken of again. Well, he had found her, had been corresponding, and wanted to tell me. I can't even tell you the feelings I had. I was so excited. It was like they said, "We're having a baby." I don't want to say his name. I have lots of nieces and nephews that I want to talk to before this gets out, but he was wonderful. We did meet. I never wanted sisters, but I did want another brother. My brother and I, we're not very close.

Anyway, we did meet. He was marvelous. He had 7 kids. They lived in California. He was a minister and he had a talk show called Talk From The Heart and was very popular. He was very good in radio. He had lots of famous people who knew him and would call him. He counseled a lot of people. But before all that, when growing up, it made sense to me why my mom said the things she said as a kid. She didn't like it when I was a little girl and some boy would have a crush on me and I'd say, "Yeah, we're boyfriends and girlfriends." She would get very angry about that and I didn't understand that.

One time, I came home from school and I was writing a boyfriend's name on a notebook over and over again. She saw it and got mad at me and she would talk about, "Well, someday, when you get married..." and I think, "Well, why would you want to get married if you're not going to have you're not supposed to like boys?" I remember one time I asked her, "Why not? Well, how are babies made?" She said, "Oh, well, you have to be married to have a baby." And this was my dad in the room. Now, I know it's all these things together. She was doing that because she knew she made a big mistake. Back then, her family was kind of prominent In Dallas.

This thing happened to her and there's more to the story. It's very interesting how Rich and I connected and the things we talked about. We had a lot in common. I still see my nieces and nephews off and on and they're just a joy and I'm so blessed. Not only did I gain a brother, but I gained all my nieces and nephews. Sadly, he passed away from pancreatic cancer about five years ago. His legend lives on, and I miss him a lot.