

Episode 162: The Listener Stories of 2023

You're listening to What Was That Like, and this is the last episode for 2023 – which means it's our year-end Listener Stories episode.

For each episode of the show, we have a guest come on and tell their story. It might be someone who survived an alligator attack, or a person who was shot multiple times, or maybe someone who went on The Price is Right and won the showcase – those are just a few examples of the over 160 past episodes – and they are all available to binge right now for free.

And then, at the very end of each episode, we have a Listener Story. This is a 5-10 minute short story that was sent in by a listener, just like you. It can be something sad, or amazing, or funny – just something that people find interesting. If you have a story like that, I'd love to have you send it in, and you might hear it on a future episode. You can email it to me at Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com.

And for the final episode of the year, we hear all of those stories played back to back – which is what we're doing today.

And I wanted to mention this - one of these stories sort of toward the end has a discussion of suicide – so just before that story plays, you'll hear a little alert like this (sound) – when you hear that, if you want to, you can fast forward about 4 ½ minutes to the next story.

So let's get on with it – and please enjoy the Listener Stories of 2023.

Hi, my name is Sinead. I'm 33 years old. My name is spelled S-I-N-E-A-D. I know it's weird. When I was 17 years old - in about 2007-2008 - I was sent to a wilderness program for juvenile delinquents in Idaho. I was woken up in the middle of the night at about 3 AM prior to strange people I'd never met before in my life. They had handcuffs. They showed me their IDs and they said, "Hey, you need to come with us." They wouldn't tell me where we were going and I didn't know what to do - I really didn't. I asked them where my parents were and they wouldn't tell me. They're just like, "They know we're here. They let us in." I was like, "Alright, whatever."

So I got in the car with them, went to the airport, and flew to Spokane, Washington. From there, we drove to Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Like I said, I had no idea what was going on this whole time. There, I was stripped-searched. I've never been stripped-searched before. I had never been to jail. I didn't even have a felony. So this was all very new to me. I was given a bunch of things like a backpack, hiking boots, water bottle - a bunch of stuff. From there, I was shown the community area. It kind of looks like a clock - I don't really know how else to explain it. At 6 o'clock, you've got the mess hall. At 1 o'clock, you've got the wood-cutting area. At 4 o'clock— whatever. Anyway, there are all these areas around the circle. We sleep in teepees. Yes, actual teepees. One for the boys. One for the girls.

Few of the responsibilities that we were given— we had to clean the outhouse, which was absolutely fucking disgusting. We also had to saw logs. When I say that, I mean we actually saw logs. The boys would carry over these big ass logs from the forest. We didn't chop them down or anything. They would somehow pull them all over to the wood-cutting station. Me and my partner would saw this big log with a giant saw. Also, we did a bunch of, like, self-improvement

exercises, getting-to-know-you games, and all that bullshit. Then, we also had to clean up after ourselves after dinner. We had to take the trash to this dumpster that was about a mile away. Me and another person were on each side of this trash can that was, like, 80 pounds of liquid trash. We have to haul it all the way to this dumpster. I can recall many times feeling like my arm was gonna fall off at any point.

Also, in order to graduate, there were a couple of things that we had to do. The first part was we had to do this thing called "ticket to ride". If you're familiar with AA or Recovery or Fourth Step, basically, we just had to write down all the things we've done wrong in our life and then they would mail it to our parents for them to read every single last horrific detail. As soon as that was completed, we were allowed to go on this hike, which was required in order for us to get out. It's this week-long hike through Montana. Aside from the fact that I absolutely hated it, it was beautiful. It was the most beautiful place I've ever seen. At night, they let us sleep burrito-style at one time. We got to see the entire night sky. There was no light pollution out there, so we saw everything - satellites, the Milky Way. You name it, we saw it.

We were traversing across this very steep hill. I was walking across the steep incline and I lost my footing. I rolled all the way down this damn hill. The only thing that stopped me from rolling any further was my face hitting a tree, and I woke up from that. Well, not woke up - I didn't pass out - but I came to from that with blood running down my face thinking, "I'm dead. This is it. This is the end." Sadly, no, it was not the end. After that, I realized I had sprained my ankle. So, I had to basically finish the rest of the hike with a sprained ankle with crusted-out blood on my head. We came back and we were done, basically.

There was only one more thing we had to do. We had to climb this giant tower structure. I was terrified of heights. I refused to do it. I still did it, but I was like, "No, I'm not gonna do it. Fuck this." The thing was, like, 40 or 50 feet high. I'm terrified. That was done. Our parents were basically there. They showed up, I think, maybe the next day or something like that. Of course, I saw them and I was really glad to see them but, at the same time, I was just like, "Die! Fuck you for doing this to me!" So we got home.

For about 2 weeks - I think, roughly - I was an angel. You know what I mean? I did anything my parents asked me to do. I cleaned my room. I did the dishes, took the trash - just normal shit - and then I'm done. I didn't want to do this anymore, so I left and I ended up getting involved in drugs really badly. Actually, I did heroin for about two and a half years. I was shooting it and snorting it. I did go to rehab. The very last time I used heroin was May 23, 2010. I have not touched it since. I'm extremely fortunate because I stopped using it when the Krokodil and the Carfentanil stuff was coming out and people were dropping like flies. So, needless to say, I'm really grateful to be alive today.

Today, I am a nurse. I have a child of my own. I've done it. I beat the statistics. I don't mean to sound like I have control because I don't. But at the same time, I don't use heroin on a daily basis anymore. I live a good life today. I was angry at my mother and my parents, but we've learned to get through our issues. So I'm really grateful that I got this opportunity to share my story and I'm really glad you all got to hear it. Thanks for sticking along.

Are you afraid of bears? I could tell you one thing - I know my mom isn't. At least, she said she wasn't. That's exactly how I ended up in one of the most terrifying situations of my life at the fresh, young age of only 9 years old.

I grew up in Cologne. It's a little city that thinks it's a big city and prides itself in being fabulous in all four seasons. There was a ski hill close by for the winters. The spring had orchards full of cherry blossoms. There's a lake with beaches for summer and wineries to enjoy through the late fall. Now, my family took advantage of all of that. But the one thing my parents love the most was camping. We had a little boat that we'd put in the water and spend the day tubing and kneeboarding. Then, we'd find a camping spot along the shore somewhere and set up camp. When it came to bedtime, my mom and dad would usually sleep on the boat, and my sister, Carly and I would sleep on land in a tent. It was always so much fun, so I honestly never thought about what could go wrong.

One night, as we sat by the fire, probably telling stories and making fun of each other, I heard a noise on the hillside beside us. I became completely distracted from the marshmallow I was roasting, trying to strain to see where that sound was coming from. Eventually, as my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I saw it. It was a black bear. It wasn't far away from us at all. I grabbed my sister's arm and pointed at her. We both panicked for obvious reasons.

My mom rolled her eyes and told us all about how she worked at summer camps on Mount Robinson when she was a little girl. There were always bears, but they're more afraid of you than you are of them. So you just need to keep your food up high and, if you see one, make a lot of noise and it'll go away. She was so matter-of-fact about it that we almost felt silly for being afraid. So later that evening, we hugged mom and dad goodnight as we retreated to our tent and went to sleep completely oblivious as to what awaited us in the morning.

After just a few hours of rest with the sun barely rising, I woke up to my sister's nails, dug right into the skin of my arm. "Ouch. What the heck, Carly?!" She whispered, "Jayna, there's a bear." As my eyes slowly opened, I looked above me and saw that our tent had, in fact, become the bears' new play thing. He was tossing the tarps around back and forth. I remember my mom saying that we were supposed to make a lot of noise, but I was frozen stunned. Just when I thought it couldn't get any worse, a paw tore through the fabric right between my sister and I. We laid there, gripping each other's hands as the paw rummaged around from my shoulder to hers. Our hands were so sweaty.

Telling the story now, I'm actually surprised we didn't pee ourselves. I guess, eventually, he realized he wasn't going to find what he was looking for, so he retracted his paw from the inside of our tent and moved on to check out everything around our campsite. Meanwhile, my sister and I just laid there terrified with the tent, collapsed over our faces. We were only able to see orange and we were completely unsure of when it would be safe to find our way out after what felt like an eternity of lying there completely still.

We hadn't heard any bear sounds for a couple of minutes, so we decided that it was possibly time to emerge and we sprinted to our parents on the boat there. They were sound asleep, completely unaware of anything their kids had been going through. I shook my dad's shoulder abruptly and said, "Dad, a bear just tore its paw through a tent!" He said, "Haha. Okay, girls. Very funny. We need some more sleep." So we sat on the boat trembling, just waiting for them to feel like waking up.

Eventually, they did. Since we were still on the bear thing, my dad thought he would humor us and go up the hill to see what we were talking about. He said, "Okay. Alright. Let's see what this bear supposedly did to your tent." He walked with us up the hill, saw our little fabric castle collapsed, and looked down at us like, "Okay, you two are so funny." Then he picked it up, not

knowing that it was the side that the bear had torn its paw through, and saw the perfect claw marks. There was no way we could have faked that. He yelled down the hill, "Holy shit. Wendy! Come here!" My mom came up to see. I asked her, "Did that ever happen to you, a Mount Robinson mom?"

The following summer, my parents had the genius idea to go back to the same camping area again. Surprise, surprise. In the middle of the night, as we were roasting marshmallows, we heard a bear. But this time, we didn't take the chance. We packed up our camp in the middle of the night, moved to the other side of the lake, and set up there again. My parents went to sleep on the boat and my sister and I were sleeping in our now taped-up tent. "Doesn't duct tape fix everything?" This time, when we woke up in the morning, it was to the sound of sprinklers. Well, we didn't realize it because it was so dark when we made our move, but we had actually set up our tent in someone's backyard.

Retelling this story now, I'm wondering what it must have been like waking up in the morning, pouring your coffee and a bowl of Cheerios, looking out your window, and seeing a whole family camping on your lawn? Oops. As an adult, my parents love to make fun of me for being too bougie to go camping or too fancy to camp with them. But now that you've heard my story, can you really blame me?

That's my 5-minute story. Hopefully, you liked it. If you'd like to hear more from me, you can find me on my podcast at Big Lash Energy, my website at hellojayna.com and, of course, on Instagram at [@jaynamariemakeup](https://www.instagram.com/jaynamariemakeup). Again, Scott, thank you for having me on your show and for creating this platform for people to tell their stories. It's such a cool idea, and I love to hear what you have for us each week. Thanks again.

In the early 1990s, I lived in Hanalei, Hawaii on the island of Kauai. One day, I was foolish enough to let a friend talk me into going boogie boarding with him when I had no business going out there at all. I had no experience with boogie boards or surfing or anything ocean related, and the waves were enormous that day. I mean, these waves were huge. I didn't understand it at that time, but this was also a very, very dangerous shore break. My first clue should have been the fact that we were in Kauai, Hawaii and there wasn't a single surfer out there, but I didn't pick up on that for some reason. My friend explained to me how we could paddle out in the channel and position ourselves perfectly to catch a wave. My decision to go out there with him turned out to be one of the stupidest decisions I've ever made, and it almost cost me my life.

In any case, we paddled out in the channel. Pretty soon, we were out there with these giant waves rolling underneath us. I was facing toward the beach when, suddenly, I heard my friend yelling from 15 or 20 yards behind me, "I'm getting out of here! It's too late for you! You're caught! Paddle as hard as you can and try to ride one in! Hurry!" I looked back and saw him paddling frantically away from me, leaving me out there alone. Then, I saw what looked like a tsunami headed straight for me and I knew I was in serious trouble.

Terrified. I began to paddle as hard as I could toward the shore, hoping I would somehow be able to ride it and come out of it okay. When the wave got to me, the first thing I remember thinking was how high it was. It felt like it lifted me a hundred feet. I panicked and let go of my boogie board - I was not wearing a leash - and it went crashing down in front of me.

When I came over the falls, I got driven headfirst into the sea floor and was tossed around like a raggedy hand doll. The pain was so intense. I thought it broke my neck. I couldn't figure out which way was up and I couldn't hold my breath for much longer. When I finally came to the surface and got my head above water to take a breath, I was horrified to see the face of an even bigger wave bearing down on me. I was caught in the impact zone and could not have been in a more dangerous situation.

As I got pulverized into the sea floor and tossed around again, I thought I would die, for sure. After getting hammered by a third wave, the whole thing finally ended with me getting washed up on shore, bruised, battered, and crying like a child. Needless to say, I didn't get in the water again for a long time.

Hi Scott. My name is Rachel. I just wanted to call and thank you for all the wonderful work you do. I love the show. I love all the interesting stories. I just wanted to call and share one of my stories from when I was 2 years old - this is one of my first memories. I was 2 years old - almost 3. My brother and I decided we were going to go sledding on a cold, snowy day and decided the perfect place was this school across the street that had some little hills behind it. So we headed over there.

In the parking lot, there were a few cars coming and going because there were some basketball games going on that particular day. It was a Saturday, so it was REC league basketball games. As we were walking through the parking lot, all of a sudden, I was knocked and pinned down to the ground. I had no idea what had happened, but a truck had been pulling out of a parking space and didn't see my little tiny person, and ran me over - I was two years old. This truck had backed up over me. Then, my brother started to scream, "Bloody murder! You killed my sister! You killed my sister!" And the truck driver stopped.

Seeing and hearing my brother, the driver got scared and didn't know what to do, so he pulled back forward. Well, the truck knocked me down onto my belly. The tire went up my leg, onto my back, and then he stopped and pulled forward again. So the tire went back down my back and down my leg again. But if he had kept going, he could have possibly run over my head. So what ended up happening was probably better.

So, an ambulance was called and I was taken to a small local hospital a few minutes away. We just lived in a small town. This rural hospital just said, "We are not equipped to care for her injuries," so they Life-Flighted me. I remember taking off in that helicopter. They Life-Flighted me to a children's hospital in the nearby big city. There, they discovered that I had no broken bones, miraculously - kids that age are kind of rubbery anyway. So I had no broken bones, but I was internally bleeding. I had what they called a "cracked liver". My doctor was a very good doctor and he said, "The liver is a very resilient organ. If she could just hold still for a few weeks, I bet it will heal itself and we won't have to do surgery." So, not an easy task for a 2-year-old to hold still for a few weeks.

I was in the hospital for 10 days. Then, when I returned home, my parents had set up just a steady stream of entertainment - movies, books, friends, neighbors, and family coming in to play with me and to read stories to me. Tons of people brought toys and activities, coloring books, and all kinds of things just to keep me entertained and still so that I could heal. I recovered fully and I haven't had any lasting effects. Physically, I have been great my whole life.

Surprisingly, although this was one of my first memories, I haven't been very traumatized by it. I think I was so young that I didn't quite grasp the magnitude of it. But now, as a mother, my heart just breaks for my parents - what they must have gone through. Anytime I hear of a child getting hit by a car or run over by a car, oh, I'd try to reach out to them, try to reach out to the family, and try to give them some hope because it turned out so well for me and I feel very, very blessed. Someone was definitely looking out for me and I'm so grateful for that because it's been a wonderful life and it could have been cut very short.

My boyfriend wets the bed almost every night - he has a kidney disorder - and he can't help it. But he also doesn't do anything to lessen the damage besides wearing adult diapers at night that don't work for him. We almost had to get rid of our couch and my mattress from a month's worth of damage. He's a great guy and everything's perfect except for this.

He had this problem since he was young. He doesn't seem to mind sleeping in his own urine or going places smelling like it, let alone having me sleep in it and smell like it. I'm almost always the one to clean it up, even after asking him to do it. All of our clothes smell like pee even after washing. I had to beg him to get the diapers, and he's too stubborn to buy a different brand even though the ones he has isn't so great.

When he doesn't sleep on the couch, 9 times out of 10, I would wake up soaked in his pee. Every time I mention it, he gets defensive or embarrassed. I thought I could handle it because, when I was spending the night at his house, it was only a few times that happened, but when he recently moved in with me, I realize it was almost every night. I don't know what to do and I feel like I can't tell anyone about this because I don't want anyone to see him differently and I love him. But this issue is putting me in a really tough spot.

In 1981, I was a high school student with a part-time job working at McDonald's. I didn't have a car, so I had to walk 2 kilometers, which is 1.5 miles. If I worked later than 11:00 PM, the managers were required to give rides to anyone not driving to get home safely. But if I worked in the mornings, I didn't have that luxury. So one weekend, I was scheduled for the morning shift - 6:00 AM to 11:00 AM. This meant that I'd have to get up around 5:00 AM, get ready and take that 2-kilometer walk to work.

The walk to work was pretty isolated. I was walking by the backyards of houses and the last leg of the walk was nothing but high fences on one side and a huge open field on the other. I was on that last leg of my trip around 5:30 AM - it was still dark. Then, a dark Camaro drove by, slowed down, and then idled. The man driving the car looked older than me - maybe in his twenties or early thirties - and I was suddenly mindful of how alone and exposed I was.

Back in that stage, I was a very non-confrontational person. I went along with whatever was asked of me. I didn't know how to say no, which is why I was stuck doing that shift. I had low self-esteem and very low self-worth. I was a prime target for what happened next. The driver leaned out the window and said, "Hey, how are you doing?" "Fine." I smiled back meekly. He said, "Where are you going? Where are you headed? Can I give you a ride?" And I said, "No, thank you. I'm just rolling up a little further." He started to control me. He was like, "Come on, I don't bite. I can get you there faster." And I said, "No thanks. I'm going to be too early and then I'll be standing outside waiting to get in."

I don't know why I felt the need to tell this perfect stranger that - I guess it was part of my placating personality. He said, "That's okay. We can stop somewhere and go for coffee." So my inner radar was, like, ding loudly, almost definite. And I started walking faster and I said, "No thanks" a little more forcefully. He wouldn't stop asking. Now, I was scared. Suddenly, I blurted out, "No! Now F off!" He stopped the car, opened up the door, had one foot outside the car, and said to me, "You can do this the easy way or the hard way. Get in the effing car!" Do you know how fear focuses you in a second, as if a heavy wet, dark blanket just drops out of the sky onto you, buckling your knees, that metallic taste that fills your mouth and you stop breathing? This all happened to me in a nanosecond. Part of me - the meek people pleaser - almost took a step forward. I don't know where or how I got the courage, but a loud, confident kickass voice came out of my mouth and said, "If you take one more step out of your car, I will scream so loud that the entire city will hear me."

The guy stopped advancing, looked at me, and made one more "Get in the car" comment, but I said, "No." Then, he got back in the car and drove off. So, the next 5 minutes to work were the longest 5 minutes of my life. I practically flew across the parking lot of the mall and tried to open the doors, but they were locked, so I started beating them frantically. My supervisor let me in and I collapsed crying hysterically. We had the police come in and file a report, but nothing came of it. Needless to say, I never had to work the morning shift ever again. I wonder who that voice was that spoke up that day because it wasn't the "me" I thought I was, but I thank her for everything.

When I graduated high school, I was 18 and I wanted to see more of the country. I live in the US so I bought a 30-day unlimited Amtrak ticket. It was just me going alone. I got on the train. I was nervous and excited. My first leg was, like, a four-day train ride. I just wanted to get to the other side of the country far away from what was possible right away. I just had a seat on the train - no bed - and I had to somehow figure out how to sleep on the seat.

The guy sitting next to me was writing a book about how to ride on trains, which was like the perfect person to be sitting next to. Right? He knew all the tricks of riding on the train. It was just a fantastic traveling companion. There was a nice family riding in the seats in front of me. Behind me was a sweet couple who was funny and generous - like, they were passing on wisdom to me through stories and parables. Behind them was the porter - the guy who worked on the train and took care of any issues in our car and stuff. Those were who I was going to be traveling with for the next four days.

This was like my little traveler pod. The first day was great. I got to know the train and the people on it, and it was just super. I had plenty of food and things to do. Actually I had a good night's sleep that first night, which was kind of surprising. So, the next day, I was there feeling more safe and comfortable than I could have ever imagined. I could have easily sat next to someone who was, like, a horrible person, but everyone around me was just so wonderful and the whole experience was great.

But this made me start to worry things were going too well. I started to think, "Oh no. Does this mean something awful is going to happen to me? Why am I being so lucky right now? I don't want to be lucky now. I want to be lucky when the going gets tough or when I'm in some sort of weird situation. If I exhaust all my luck now at the beginning of this trip, is there going to be any leftover luck from me in the other 28 days that I have on this train? These thoughts swarmed my

brain and they started burning into my soul. Somehow, I started getting nervous about it. Then suddenly I felt lachesism. Just recently, I learned what this word means. I didn't know what it meant at the time, but I saw it and I was just like, "Oh my gosh, that reminds me of this time that I felt this way. Lachesism is a feeling you get when you want a disaster to happen to give you some sort of clarity in life - like when the arc of your life is just going too smooth and you want to be kinked a little bit just to give you a sense of purpose and a new direction that you can focus on.

I was feeling lachesism because my opportunities just seemed unlimited. Whatever I wanted to do, I could do, and that made me start to really worry that maybe I'm not going to make the best choices - if there's anything I could do, I can do - and I need something to guide me a little bit here to put me in a direction, and a disaster is exactly what I need to happen here because I've just been way too lucky on, like, the first two days of my trip. I decided I needed to create my own disaster. I was looking out the window drinking from a water bottle, and I made a split-second decision. I threw the water bottle into my huge backpack upside down with no cap on, soaking everything in my luggage - my clothes, my food, everything I had in there. Then, I acted, like, "Oh no, I just spilled my water and it's everywhere now".

And I even got the guy next to me wet a little bit by accident - I didn't mean to do that. Well, now I had a really big problem that I had to deal with. You can't just ignore this. I had to figure out a way to dry everything in my backpack when all I had was a seat on a train as my space to do it in. There were no washers or dryers on the train. It was wonderful to deal with this disaster. It was glorious and it absolutely forced me to focus on this problem, which helped me pass the time, and it gave me clarity and it got me over that lackadaisy feeling. Obviously, I have no idea if causing a disaster made me not have any other disasters on that trip or if it gave me more luck in the future - it probably didn't do any of that. But the rest of the trip did go great and that trip helped shape me into the person I am now with new perspectives and experiences in life.

I was walking my dog the other day in our neighborhood, and I saw a cop car pull up with his lights flashing probably about 20, 30 feet ahead of me and stop in front of a house - not completely unusual, but enough to be like, "Oh, maybe I'll see something interesting." As I kept walking towards the cop car with my dog, I saw a big armored car about 15 feet behind him that was camouflaged. I was kind of looking at it, like, "Okay, that's kind of weird."

Then, as I was looking at the car, I saw 3 SWAT men run out of the back of the car with their rifles drawn toward a house. Then, I looked back at the cop and he pulled his big rifle out of his car. I locked eyes with the cop and I literally say, "Nope." I turn around and I started running the other way. I was listening to a podcast as I was walking my dog, which is probably your podcast because I'm addicted to your stories and I love stories. Through my EarPods, I can hear a gunshot. Then, I really started sprinting because the neighborhood is empty right now because it was 8 o'clock in the morning. I sprinted in the other direction.

I saw a car coming up the street and I waved frantically, "No, don't go. Don't go." Then, I explained what cars were down there and, "I heard gunshots. Don't go down there." He was looking at me like I'm crazy, but I kept telling him to turn around. Then, he turned his car around for probably another two minutes before he turned around and decides to go down another street.

I'm connected with Facebook and the crime watch in the area and stuff. So I'm looking and thinking, "Surely, this is going to come up somewhere." I even posted, "Does anyone know what happened?" And nothing. No responses. It's like I almost imagined it, but I have the image of the SWAT people running out of the back of the SWAT car with their gun drawn burned into my head, so I know I didn't imagine that. I just had no clue what happened. So thanks for listening.

In 2000, my boyfriend and I bought a house where we lived with our kids from previous marriages. Life was good at first, but within a year it had changed dramatically. He had become very manipulative and controlling. His daughter was a master manipulator as well and had become a handful. Still, I thought I could make this work. My boyfriend was an only child and came to the United States in 1970. I was very unhappy and was planning on moving out with my daughter.

When he was diagnosed with cancer, I felt obligated to stay and take care of his kids. In 2004, he went through a stem cell transplant and had to move in with his parents for a month. Upon arriving home, things got worse each day and he fought me daily on taking his medications. He was in and out of the hospital weekly. I was teaching full-time, taking care of the house and kids, and making the hour drive daily to the hospital and the evenings.

During one of the visits, his parents had brought in a lawyer who was a longtime family friend. He was there to do a living will. In the will, my daughter was to receive his SUV, which she drove to and from school. I was to get the house and only have to pay property taxes. In the event of his passing, I was willing to raise his kids even though we weren't married. Shortly after that visit, he passed away. The lawyer was there the day he passed. Within minutes of his passing, my boyfriend's parents asked that I take the kids and leave the room. The very day after he died, his parents told me that my daughter and I had 48 hours to move out of the house. They had changed the will, which I don't think was legal in the ensuing days.

They went to my daughter's school where they took off the license plate so she could not drive it, and took them off my car as well, stating that their son had purchased the car and I had no right to it. My daughter moved into her best friend's house and I stayed in a motel for 10 days while looking for a place for us to live. My sister gave me her car to use until I could purchase one. They had changed the locks on the house and I ended up having to call the police and show ID so I could pack up as much of our belongings as possible under their supervision. His parents watched my every move. They also told me that at the time they took our husky to a shelter and would not tell me where. I went through a living hell for two years after he died because they totally turned my boyfriend's kids against me. They seem to take pleasure in leaving threatening hate messages on both my daughters and my phones.

I'm telling you this story because, for anyone that is listening who has gone through death or a traumatic experience, stay strong and take each day one at a time. Time does heal all wounds and life does get better. Thank you, Scott, for listening to my story.

Hey there. This is Maia. When I was 18, I was invited to go sledding with my boyfriend at the time, his aunt, uncle, cousin, and myself. On my first slide down the hill, my sled, which was one of those saucer-type sleds, spun around, so I was sledding backward. I could not see where I was going. I decided to just hang on and hold through. I ended up hitting a tree very hard.

When I came to, I was nowhere near a tree. I had bounced back from the forest and landed several feet away with a broken neck. I did not know I had broken my neck, so I stood up and walked away. In fact, I was more concerned with my boyfriend's aunt because I thought I had hit her. Little did I know that any minute turn of my head or my body could paralyze me from the neck down. Out of all the odds and throughout this whole experience, I was not paralyzed at all. Unfortunately, nine out of 10 people who experienced the same type of neck fracture are paralyzed from the neck down. Luckily, I was convinced to go to the hospital to get checked out. If anything, I probably have a concussion or whatever - it won't hurt kind of thing.

While awaiting my x-rays, I was getting in and out of bed to use the bathroom, and I walked around with a broken neck. This is crazy. Once the doctors found out that my C6 was fractured, I could not stop hearing the word "miracle" coming from the nurses, the doctors, and my family members. It still echoes in my head today. From there, I was airlifted to a bigger hospital where I laid prostrate for six whole days awaiting my emergency surgery. It was brutal, to say the least. Now, 10 years later, I still have my cadaver belt, 4 screws, and a metal plate behind my throat holding things together. I can walk, dance, and run around as much as I want. I feel like the luckiest person alive, and I'm so thankful.

A few interesting tidbits that I'd like to add from this experience— I'm going to brag for a second. This happened three months before graduating high school. I still graduated and the top 10% was honors. This is actually pretty funny. I never was a huge sweet person. I never really had a sweet tooth or anything until this happened. Now, to this day, I love sweets. The first thing I ate after coming home from the hospital was an entire box of Chips Ahoy - not like me at all. My mom said that the man I got my cadaver bone from must have been a sweet lover. So thank you to him because sweets are amazing.

It's fair to say I'm a karaoke fiend. The first time I remember doing karaoke was at Six Flags in Great America, the one in Gurnee, Illinois. To be specific, our high school class was there for a physics trip. I think we were supposed to learn how roller coasters react to gravity and different kind of angles and G-forces and things like that. I don't really remember learning anything, but I do remember performing the song Fat Lip by Sum 41 with one of my high school friends. It was a delightful time and it got me hooked. To date, I have performed over 600 songs at karaoke at places all around the world. How do I know it's over 600 songs? I have a Spotify playlist of all the songs that I have done, which is just all kinds of bananas, but never fails to produce a good song.

I also hosted karaoke when I lived in Los Angeles at a bar where Jewel, as part of a Funny Or Die video, went undercover to do karaoke. If you've not seen that video, I highly recommend checking it out. About 75% of the people in that video were still local, still regulars when I was hosting karaoke just a few months later there. I even won \$50 in a karaoke contest. One time, I sang the song My Band by D12, which features six different rappers in it. I got second place behind a woman who used to be a Chaka Khan backup singer. I still maintained that she had quite the advantage and the leg up, and it showed in the judging. All of that led to the foundation of what I consider my crowning karaoke achievement, which was performing at halftime of a WNBA basketball game. My friend was having her birthday at a bar that did gong karaoke. It's kind of, like, showtime at the Apollo, but for singers. If you get enough people that are displeased with your performance, they'll hit a gong. You'll be escorted off the stage and you don't get to finish. Little did I know that my friend's sister worked for the San Antonio Spurs

entertainment crew, and she told me about something new that they were trying for the WNBA's Silver Stars - halftime Karaoke.

One week later I was driving down to San Antonio ready for my big break. I had a friend with me. We got there about three minutes before halftime was going to happen. My friend's sister was frantically running around looking for me. We bumped into each other and got all set. She said, "Go up to the second level. There'll be people up there that can get you all set up and all that." There were three of us that would be performing during halftime. The first is a 13-year-old girl who's the daughter of one of the executives in the Spurs organization. I don't remember exactly who it was, but I remember hearing that she was the daughter of one of the higher-ups. She sang Michael Jackson's Human Nature, which I think is a challenging choice for anyone, let alone a 13-year-old. But hey, teenage years. That's probably the hardest part of our lives, right? Like, we're going through some stuff and that's a song all about that, and she nailed it. She knocked it out of the park. She did a fantastic job.

I want to lighten the mood a little bit. So the song I had chosen was I Believe in a Thing Called Love by The Darkness. It's got all the classics of a nice karaoke. It's got a guitar solo that you introduced by yelling guitar. It's got a nice high falsetto, a part where people can clap along, and it's just a great classic rock song. As I was waiting my turn, I felt less like Justin Hawkins - the frontman of The Darkness. I certainly didn't have a skin-type spandex body suit on like he often likes to rock. I was more like Eminem at the start of Lose Yourself. My knees were weak. My palms were sweaty. Thankfully, no vomit or spaghetti on my sweater.

Then, I got handed the mic. They told me where I could kind of move around to. I said all right. That's going to be my pong esque back and forth because I like to move around at karaoke. The guitar started and the drums kicked in, and I just lost myself in the song. It was a little disorienting seeing myself on the jumbotron as I was performing, but I did my best to scan through the audience and look at the people who looked like they were having fun, who looked like they were enjoying the song they were singing along to. Those were my people. When I made eye contact and gave them a grin, it was just the coolest moment. When that guitar solo kicked in, I said "Guitar" and handed my microphone to one of the employees there because I was going to go around and high-five people in the section that was closest to me. They were all enjoying it. I said, "Hey, I going to give you some dap here." They thought I was done performing though, so I didn't get to sing the end of the song, but I got through 2 verses, 2 choruses, and part of a solo. I'd say that's pretty good.

I got back down to my seat. My friend was super excited for me. She gave me a high five. Other people around me were saying how much they enjoyed it. I sat back in my chair and watched the Silver Stars play the rest of their game. I think they lost by, like, 25 points that game. They were playing the Minnesota Lynx who were the top team in the WNBA that year. So perhaps, like my battle with the Chaka Khan backup singer- not the fairest of fights, but we powered through and it was a wonderful time.

I think the takeaway that I got from that is to say yes to things I didn't know what to expect. Sure, I had done karaoke, but never in front of thousands of people, and it was just the coolest experience I got over my stage fright. I was never going to see these people again except for the one friend that I came with and maybe my friend's sister. Other than that, who cares? Let loose the wind. I think, sometimes, it's so easy to get caught up in our own insecurities and our own self-doubt. Throw it all into the wind. Try something new. Get out of the comfort zone. All the cliches- they're cliches for a reason - because they work. I felt awesome with it. I still karaoke to this day.

The next time you are out at a karaoke bar and someone is on stage and they look a little uncomfortable, they look like maybe they don't know what they've done, maybe they're even saying, "Hey, this is my first time ever performing karaoke," go up to the stage and give them a high-five. If you don't want to touch anyone, just give them some words of encouragement. They will certainly appreciate it knowing that someone has their back just like thousands of people had my back, and I am very appreciative of it. Thank you for listening and whatever you do today, whatever new thing you try today, I know you're going to rock it.

To give you a little background, my husband, Keith and I were 42 at the time this happened. Our daughter was almost six. I am a licensed practical nurse and was working in a clinic at the time. My husband is a maintenance worker employed in a foundry. We had a hard time getting pregnant and were only able to have one child. We lived in Minnesota and it was a very warm Sunday afternoon in August. We were all outside cooling off in the above-ground pool we had put up for the summer. It wasn't very large or deep, but we still had a lot of fun in it. I took a break to sit on the patio and relax about 15 to 20 feet from the pool, and Keith had gone inside to use the bathroom. Neither one of us was drinking alcohol and we don't use drugs.

Our daughter stayed in the pool doing her favorite activity - diving for toys that sink to the bottom. She would go down and gather all of them and ask us to throw them again while she closed her eyes so that she couldn't see where they landed. Keith came back outside and we started talking. It was less than a minute later when he asked me where she was. Since he couldn't see or hear her, I said she was going down for dive sticks and we started talking again. It was only another minute when we realized it had been too long, so he ran to the pool and saw her lying on the bottom. Somehow he was able to reach over the pool, grab her suit, and pull her out. We still have no idea how this happened, but are so grateful that he was able to do this.

Immediately I ran over to where he put her - on the grass - and saw that her lips were blue and she wasn't breathing. Being a nurse since I was 20 years old, I have taken many CPR classes and have done it on people, but they were patients in a nursing home, not our child, and I had others with me to help. I forgot all of my training and was at a loss as to what I should do. I started praying and screaming to call 911, but we couldn't find a cell phone. We later found it under a towel. Keith did eventually find a phone and they almost sent a helicopter to come to help us, but it turned out that it wasn't needed because it was hot. Our neighbors had their windows closed with air conditioning on and didn't see us or hear us, even though they were all home - our houses are close together. I started praying again and doing rescue breathing, not even thinking to feel for a pulse. After a few breaths, nothing was happening. So, I started chest compressions. After about 20 to 30 seconds, she started coughing and throwing up a bit. It was at that time that the first responders came running around the back of the house to help. She was conscious by this point, but not responding. I'll never forget the way this kind man instructed us to get changed and grab some clothes and shoes for her along with her favorite toy or blanket while they got her loaded.

We made sure our pets were inside and locked up our house while we were headed to the hospital. The paramedics, at first, wanted Keith in with her since he was calming her down once she came to, as she was hysterical, and they told me to drive by myself the 30 minutes to the closest hospital. The driver heard this and said I was going to ride up front with him since our town was completely under road construction and he didn't know the back road, so that is what I

did. I immediately called my family as they only live a couple of blocks away and they are also headed to the hospital. Our small town has a siren that blows for emergencies, so they had heard the siren but had no idea it was for her.

We got to the emergency room and there was a discussion of flying her to a bigger hospital, but one doctor said she was comfortable keeping her local. She does have a history of asthma and that had concerned them. She spent the night in the pediatric intensive care unit and had her own private nurse. Once she got to the floor, the nurses fought over who got to give her a new American girl doll as hundreds were donated to girls her age. She quickly learned how to use the adjustable bed and call light and thought they were the best thing ever.

I drove back home to get clothes for us because she said I would know where to find things before Dad would. When I came back, she was showing off her new skills with the bed and call light. By 2 o'clock in the morning, she was done sleeping, so the nurse took her to the nurse's station to play games so we could sleep. We went home that morning. The next day, she and I and the neighbor girls went back into the pool. I told her she couldn't live her life in fear and - she loved swimming - she agreed. She did wear a life jacket for the first few minutes, and I was right by her side.

Now, I bet you're wondering what happened. It turns out that she started twirling ballerina style, got dizzy, and fell. They told us a child will instantly panic when they go underwater by accident, and they think that is what happened. The water was not over her head. She could swim and was very comfortable around water. A month later, we put her in private swim lessons at age 6. She started out in level 2. By spring, she completed all of them except lifeguard training that she was too young for. Remember, she was only 6. She still loves swimming but gets nervous when the water is over 8 feet. We did a lot of praying and I really struggled with guilt as I was alone outside and should have been watching her better. While she was in the ICU, I asked Keith if he and I were okay. He said we both should have been watching her and we both saved her and that we were just fine. He and I are not ones to fight, and we weren't going to start then.

Most people get a part-time job to make extra money. For me, I actually lost money by choice. Let me explain. Before I tell you about my part-time job, let me tell you what I do in real life. I'm an author and podcaster. And for the past 25 years, I've also been a full-time pastor. I'm at a season of life where I'm feeling a bit sentimental, a bit reflective, and would even say somewhat adventurous. My wife and I, we have four children. Three are in college and one - a daughter - is getting ready to finish high school. She's a fun kid and I will tell you that our personalities are a lot alike. Most often, she's completely on board when I suggest we do something fun and out of the norm. I remember that, a few years ago, I had a flight canceled and I suggested that we rent a sports car and drive 15 hours to Wisconsin so I could keep the speaking engagement that I had agreed to do. With no time to prepare, she said yes, and off we went, and the trip was an absolute blast.

Well, last summer I suggested a new adventure tour. I suggested that we attempt to get hired as ride operators at our favorite amusement park, Knoebels in Elysburg, Pennsylvania. My idea was that we would commit one day a week to working there and we'd see if they'd consider training and hiring us. I knew it wasn't a conventional request, but I also knew they were having a very difficult time finding seasonal staff at that particular moment. So if this idea was ever going to fly, this seemed like the time. Also, I should probably mention that the park is two and a half hours from our home, so this would require a 5-hour round trip every Monday for 13 weeks.

Within one second of suggesting this to my daughter, Julia, she said, "Absolutely! I would love to do that."

So we applied online. We drove up to the park for interviews. We got hired. We drove back another day for training and our adventure began. The summer was filled with long drives, great conversations, and all kinds of fun experiences. We both worked in Kiddie land where most of the riders are children under the age of 10, and that's a very fun age to work with. It's also a great group to work with because you get to interact with their families as well. We were also blessed with regular visits from friends and family who would purposely visit the park on Mondays when we were there.

I'm 46 and my daughter is 17. One of our biggest surprises, as we worked there this past summer, was the age of our coworkers. A few were high school and college age, but many were in their seventies and even their eighties. Several were in their eighties. That surprised me. I asked them why they worked there. Some worked because they desperately needed to supplement their income and so they did that. It was good seasonal employment. Others worked to combat boredom. One coworker, a woman who was in her 80s, said she worked there because she didn't have a family, and the park guests and the coworkers filled that void.

I will admit that the days were long and most of the days were hot because this was in the middle of the summer. Most days were very tiring as well because of all the standing that was involved. Occasionally, not too often, we had to handle difficult guests, but the experience was genuinely fun. When the summer came to an end, I was very sad to say goodbye, and so was Julia. I have no idea if this is an experience, we'll repeat, but I'm glad we got to do it at least once.

Working at the park was fantastic, but the time I was able to spend with my daughter was the best part of all. I'm so glad she agreed to this adventure. On our final day, Nick, who was the man who hired us and he oversaw the rides department, made a point to come and visit us at our stations. He went out of his way to let Julia and I know how much they enjoyed having us on staff, and he hoped that we would apply to work there again in future years. So should we apply to do it one more time? I have no idea if we'll do it, but I have to say it was an experience we'll never forget.

I just received my tax statement from the park. So, to let you know how this worked out for me financially, it tells me that for those 13 Mondays of employment, I was paid a total of \$1,172.99. Now, the expenses I incurred for fuel, tolls, and meals came to \$1,300 for a financial loss of \$127.01. And to that, I'd say it was totally worth it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hi Scott, this is Amelia and I live in Ontario, Canada. I am dropping you a voice note to tell you about the time I went Gorilla Trekking in Rwanda. Back in 2010. I decided I needed to go on Safari. I was inspired by a photography instructor that I had. He had been on Safari and showed me some of his photos, so I decided I was doing it. I was going to go. I called my amazing travel

agent and told her I wanted to see gorillas in the wild before they were extinct, and she found the perfect trip for me. I actually went on a 3-week overland trip through Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. But, this little side trip, if you will, to see the gorillas was separate from the organized trip that everyone was on to see the gorillas.

In Rwanda, you have to apply to the government to get a permit - this was in 2010, I don't know if the rules have changed - and only 56 people per day are granted these permits. You have to show up on your specified given day at, I think it was 5.00 or 5.30 in the morning at the base of Volcanoes National Park - this was kind of close to Ruhengeri, Rwanda. I got there on the day of. I was by myself. I travel alone frequently.

It's explained that they're going to put us into— I forget now if it was seven or eight groups of people, but the groups were determined based on your fitness level, and those who were super fit would go the farthest distance to hike and see a particular family, whereas maybe some other people who had physical limitations or were limited by their age or cardiovascular fitness would go to a family that was closer. Now, I had a car accident - quite a bad one, actually - a couple of months after I booked my trip but long before the trip actually happened.

So I booked all of this and got my permit, but then I ended up having a back injury. So, for that reason, I ended up going in the “easy group”, and we had a really sort of laxical experience. We just sort of had to hike up about - I don't know - 25-30 minutes. It was barely a hill. Really easy experience. I heard later in the day from the people that were in the tough group, they'd gone hiking up the mountain for about three hours with machetes, cutting through sugar cane to get there, and I thought, “Ugh, that doesn't sound like fun.” Plus, Rwanda is, like, hot, right?

Anyway, they tell us that they're waiting ahead and they're finding out where the gorillas are and they're tracking food stuff, droppings and chewed leaves, and figuring out where these families of gorillas are. Now, if you can picture this, you're in a single file line. Once you're in your group and you're assigned to X gorilla family, you walk in a straight file line at the front of the line, there's a guard with a gun. Now, forgive my ignorance, but I'm Canadian. We don't do guns up here quite the same way that people do in the States, so I couldn't tell you what kind of gun it was except that it was big. It was black and it looked like something a soldier in the Army or the Navy or some Navy seal would carry or something. It was very intimidating. Then, you have one of the guides that's got a radio and they're talking to other guides throughout the Volcanoes Park trying to figure out where the gorillas are.

You have your 7 or maybe it was 8 - I can't remember - tourists that are there with their permits. One or more of them may have had a Sherpa. I had a Sherpa carrying my photography equipment because of my back. Then, at the end of the row, the end of your single file line is another guard with another big scary gun. So we're going up the hill, up the mountain and they find the gorillas and they tell us they're coming just over the next crest, the next little hill, if you will. Sure enough, there they were. So you got to put everything down and you approach very gently, and you find a place to sit. Basically, you kind of let the gorillas wander around you. Like, no sudden movements, no eye contact. Obviously, you're not allowed to touch them or make any threatening gestures, nor would you want to, like, “Hello.” There's a silverback there. You'd be toast in about 4 seconds.

Anyway, I found a spot to sit and settle in for the next 60 minutes of awestruck amazing beauty. Let me tell you, you get exactly 60 minutes - not 61. Like, they are very strict about not wanting these animals to be habituated to humans. So, I was sitting in the forest and I heard some wrestling up above my head and I looked up. Probably around 6 or 8 feet up above me, there

was this little juvenile gorilla. I later found out from the guides that were there that day that he was estimated to be two years old, but he was up in the tree and he was pulling the branches back looking down at me. It was really cool. We just kind of had a moment where I didn't want to maintain eye contact, but I was looking at him and he was looking at me and it was kind of cool.

Anyway, I was sitting there and I sort of— you sort of feel something in your peripheral area before you even see it in your peripheral vision, and I just sort of had this sense that something was really close by. So, I very slowly turned my head to the right and, sure enough, I'm guessing, it was the mom - I'm not sure. There was another gorilla and it was less than two feet away from me sitting beside me. If you had just looked at me from a distance, you wouldn't have been able to see it. It was camouflaged. It was hidden in the bushes, but I looked to my right and we made eye contact, so I very slowly picked up my camera and took one image with a 50-mil lens just so I would be able to capture that moment. To this day, I absolutely love that photo. It took me right back to that moment, that minute, that experience, that feeling, and it's, that is one of the top 10 days of my life. But here's where things get a little bit more interesting.

So we finished our hour with the gorillas and it's time to head back down. I'm a polite young lady, so I wanted to tip the guides and the Sherpa and the guards. Now, I want to backtrack a little bit to the gun situation. I had some really strong feelings and reservations about the guns. I felt like it was my decision to apply for this permit and walk into this park and see these natural wild animals in their natural habitat. So if I get eaten by a gorilla or a lion, or charged by an elephant, that's my fault. I absolutely did not want an animal to get hurt because of some stupid decision I made as a human. But I was told time and again that they were there to protect us because of the wild animals. So fine.

We got back to the base and I had to go find my wallet. It's locked in a safe. I went to get money, get stuff out, and figure out what I'm giving to whom and everything. It only took a few minutes - like, maybe, 5 minutes to go and do all of that. I came back and the guards were gone. The guys with the guns, not just from my group, but from another group that had come back too. They were just completely gone. They'd been wandering around that morning at 5.30 in the morning in plain sight being assigned to different groups to go for hikes and stuff. But now, whoosh. Completely and totally gone.

So I went up to the guide who I had just spent the morning with. He led us up the mountain and brought us back down. He saw me with the gorillas. I don't remember his name off the top of my head. I'm sure I have a photo of him somewhere. But anyhow, I gave him a tip and I asked him where the guys with the guns went. He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "The guys with the guns that were protecting us from the animals." And he looked at me again and he said, "What are you talking about?" And for a split second, I thought, "Am I crazy? Was I imagining all of that? What's going on? What do you mean? What am I talking about? The guys with the big, huge guns were dressed like soldiers. The one in the front, the one in the back." He said, "I don't know what you're talking about. There's nobody with guns here. It's over." That was that. I mean, I just wanted to give them money, right? I wasn't going to tell them anything untoward.

So the next night - the next day, rather - I had decided because of my back that I was leaving the truck trip and striking out on my own. So I was going to stay at a hostel in Ruhengeri, Rwanda, and figure out the rest of the trip on my own without the itinerary of this company that was essentially turning their truck around and driving back to Nairobi. I didn't want to be on the truck anymore because the roads are terrible and my back was really problematic. So that's a story for another day. I found my own way back to Nairobi and it involved an airplane and a motorcycle and a guy with no legs. But anyway, I digress.

I borrowed a copy of the Lonely Planet from someone at the hostel just to sort of see the region on paper and try to make some plans and figure out what was what. That's when I think I found out what the secret of these guards with the guns might have been. If you look at a map of Rwanda and, specifically, Volcanoes National Park, you'll see that it borders the Congo DR. Remember, this was in 2010 so I don't know if things have changed. Back then, there were still some significant issues with child soldiers in the DR attacking or holding hostage tourists for money, like, ransom. So I believe that those guys with the guns were not there for protection of animals, but rather to keep pirates at bay. And by the time we got back down to the bottom of the park, they dispersed because it was bad for business. They don't want people that come during the day inquiring about permits and visas to get an opportunity to see these gorillas, to see guards with guns.

So that's my experience. I went gorilla trekking in Rwanda. If anybody gets a chance to go, please try to make it happen because you will not forget it and it will be one of the most incredible experiences of your life. Stay cool everyone.

Scott

This is Scott again. This week's listener story is from me. This happened when we lived up in Maine. My daughter Bri was a young teenager at that time. Like most girls that age, she was kind of fascinated with certain celebrities. Her big heartthrob was Paul Walker. She was just in love with him. He was a really big star back then because he starred along with Vin Diesel in the Fast and the Furious and the very first one of those.

Now, as a little background on this, something you might not know about me, I don't remember if I've mentioned this at all on the podcast in the past but, back then - this was, like, in the early 2000s - I owned a business called Celebrity Locators. I published a big book of addresses - like 8,000 addresses - where you could write to almost any celebrity to request an autographed photo, and I sold that book online along with a bunch of other celebrity-oriented merchandise. It was my first internet-based business, which I later sold. Anyway, as part of doing that kind of work, I had some connections and was able to get some authentic celebrity-related stuff. One of the things I was able to find was one of the actual T-shirts that Paul Walker wore in that movie, The Fast and the Furious. So, I bought it.

Well, the movie came out on DVD in January of 2002, and Bri's 14th birthday was in February, so she invited some of her friends over for a sleepover that weekend. At our house in Maine, we turned the basement into a sort of home theater with a big-screen TV and actual movie theater seats that we got from a local theater that closed. The plan was to have a birthday party. We rented the DVD of The Fast and the Furious, and they would watch it that night. Later on, the movie started, but I kept the remote.

Like, 45 minutes or an hour into the movie and right in a certain scene, I paused the movie. The girls didn't understand why I did that, but I told them, "Hang on, we have to do something right now." That's when I brought out this box wrapped up as a birthday present, and I told Bri that this was the time that she needed to open that gift. Well, she was still kind of confused but, "Okay, Dad does weird things sometimes." When she opened the box and pulled out what seemed like just a random black T-shirt, she really had no idea what was going on. But then, I told her, "Look at the screen where the movie's paused. See that T-shirt Paul Walker is wearing right there? Well, that's the actual T-shirt you're holding in your hand right now." And the

reaction was probably what you'd expect. Bri and her friends thought that it was a pretty cool thing. Definitely made for an unusual birthday surprise.

Hi, Scott. First, I want to tell you, I love your podcast. I went on maternity leave last January and, during nap time, I would binge all of your episodes. I learned of your podcast from "This is actually happening" and I'm so glad that I did. I love the listener tales and I just thought I'd never have anything to contribute. But then, I remembered the night before my wedding and ooh, it was quite a surprise for this Type-A personality girl. So let me just start by saying I am a very organized person in my regular life. So, you can imagine that, leading up to my wedding day, I was pretty on top of every little detail and trying to get ahead of anything that I could possibly foresee happening.

It was a very normal night before the wedding. We had our rehearsal dinner at a local restaurant with just a few of our closest friends and family members. Dinner ended around 9 and I was determined to get back to my room, shower, and hop into bed as soon as possible. I was obviously so excited for the following day and worried that I would not be able to sleep because of it. So, I just wanted to get to bed as early as possible so that I could catch as many hours of sleep as I could. Following tradition, the groom doesn't generally see the bride before the day of their wedding, so my now husband booked a separate room for the night before our wedding. The room I was going to be staying in was also connected to the presidential suite, which we also booked. So when you're in a hotel room with adjoining rooms, there's a door between them just like that. We booked it this way so that, in the morning, I could get ready in there with my girls and also have all of my getting-ready items close by - jewelry, makeup, all that stuff.

When we got home from the restaurant, I kissed my family goodnight, already excited to see him in the morning, and I headed up to my room. So I showered. I blow-dried my hair and headed into bed. I climbed into the clean white sheet already starting to sleepily think of my beautiful wedding day in just a few hours.

However, I noticed a dim light coming through under the adjoining door into the presidential suite. I like to sleep in total darkness, so this definitely was going to be keeping me up, and I did not want that. So I got out of bed, went through the adjoining door to the presidential suite, and slammed the door literally behind me. I was not super concerned because, like I said, I booked both rooms. So obviously, the door must be able to work both ways. I was wrong. It is locked from the inside of the presidential suite. So now, here I am trapped in the presidential suite on the night before my wedding. And if that's where the story ended, you could definitely sympathize that that's a pretty crappy situation, but I am going to make it just one level worse because the truth was that I was going to go to sleep naked, meaning I had left the comfort of my room to go into the presidential sleep suite to turn off that one light and had gotten trapped in there completely naked and alone. I did not have my phone on me or my Apple watch, so I cannot call anyone immediately. My mind is reeling and I am trying to calm myself down to think about how I am going to get out of this situation.

I said, "This is a hotel room. There absolutely has to be a phone in this room." To my great relief, there was just on the other side of the room. So I sprinted over to the phone looking to call the front desk and ask for them to send someone up to rescue me. I picked up the receiver and nothing. There is no ringtone, there is no busy tone, there is nothing. I checked the back of the phone, it is plugged in. I pressed a few numbers. It's just not working great. I remember that one of our groomsmen and his girlfriend booked the opposite adjoining room to the presidential

suite. Even though I knew in my heart that he and his girlfriend were absolutely downstairs with my fiance drinking at the bar, I started banging on their door, hoping for one of them to come to my rescue but, same as with the phone, I was met with nothing but silence. So now, the panic is truly starting to set in my mind - racing. I just keep saying to myself, "This cannot be happening the night before my wedding. This absolutely cannot be happening."

But I quickly snapped myself out of it and realized I absolutely could not just let this happen. I had to get back into my room. In order to do so, I would have to leave this room. Even though, again, I am completely naked, I started to look around the room. The presidential suite is much more like an office space with just a few couches and tables and a minibar. It did have a closet though. I know that hotel rooms usually keep a few extra blankets inside of them. So I looked inside and, unbelievably, I found a nice, huge cushy blanket. I wrapped it around myself and I started to think of a plan. What exactly am I going to do? Am I going to go down to the lobby wrapped in a blanket? Then, I recall that when I stepped out of the hotel elevator earlier that day, I saw that there was a decorative table in the elevator hallway with a phone on top of it. So, that was my plan. I was going to exit the room, call for help, and I wedged a water bottle in the door because the last thing I needed was to get locked out of the presidential suite and stuck in the hallway with nothing but a blanket.

So I ran to the table. To my relief, I found it and I didn't make it up. There really was a phone on top of a table. I picked up the receiver and nothing, again. The phone was plugged into the wall and it was not working. How could this be happening again? Now, I am truly in full panic. I am out of ideas and my only possible next step would be to make the humiliating trip from my floor to the lobby in a literal hotel blanket and nothing else, and ask them to open my door for me.

Mere seconds after my defeat in realizing the phone did not work, tears were literally streaming down my face, mourning the sleep I will not be getting and already embarrassed by what I will have to do next. I heard ding and the elevator doors opened. Our groomsman, Anthony, exited the elevator. His expression was first confused and then immediately concerned because why would he be finding his best friend's fiance in such an erratic state in the hallway of a hotel? I grabbed him and I told him what happened, and he immediately ran back downstairs to get our card and let me back into my room. I was so, so, so thankful that he showed up when he did, and I still honestly can't believe that any of that happened or that he was there to rescue me, thankfully, at that exact moment.

What's even funnier is that the chaos did not end there. I woke up in the morning of our wedding day and all of my girls were in the room. My mother-in-law showed up and my mom showed up. The bellhop was in there and he was removing all of the dresses from the bellhop or whatever that thing is that they carry. I asked my mom— I was like, "I see your dress. Where is my dress?" She nearly fainted when she realized that it's the one thing that she left at home. So my dad came to the rescue and drove all the way home to get it and back to the hotel.

Later on, we had another lockout faux pas when the photographer took pictures in my room and then, like I did, got locked in the presidential suite. This time I had my key to get back into the whole hotel room. So, I exited the presidential suite. I walked around to the hotel room. I swiped my card and beep, it was being declined. I called down to client services. They sent up a master key and beeped again. The master key was being declined. At this point, I was just laughing because I was like, "This has got to be some sort of sick joke that somebody is playing on me." They literally had to call an engineer to come upstairs to let me back into my room, which, by the way, was vitally important because my wedding dress was in there. My wedding shoes, the jewelry, everything was in there.

Thankfully though, that was the end of all of the unplanned craziness. My then-fiance and now-husband went on to get married and it was, without question, the best day ever. I will never forget a moment of that day, including the chaos leading up to it, and I cherish it. I got to marry my best friend surrounded by family and friends, and we danced the night away and had the best music and the best food. We have now been happily married for almost four years. We have a beautiful one-year-old and a perfect little dog. Now, all we do is look back and laugh at the uniqueness of our day and remember it very fondly. I just want to say thank you, Scott, for taking the time to listen to my story.

To the brides and grooms out there planning a wedding, just remember, you can only plan so much and, to go with the flow, it always works itself out in the end.

Hi, Scott. I am a recent listener of your show. I discovered it maybe, like, two months ago. I absolutely love it. I've been bingeing it. I was recently listening to the episode about Adam who fell off the cliff and one of the things that he said was that his incident happened on April 1st. That reminded me of this story when I was really little. I wasn't old enough to remember it, but my dad took lots of videos, so I've seen it.

On April 1st, my mom was on the phone with my dad who was at work and she, all of a sudden, exclaimed, "Oh my God! My mother's car just blew up!" My dad was like, "What honey?! What?!" My mom had already hung up the phone and she was in the process of calling 911 at the time. My grandmother's car was in our driveway about maybe eight feet from our garage and house, so it was pretty close. My dad was just at work in his office just wondering what the hell just happened. He set the phone down, hung it up, looked at his coworker and he said, "My wife just told me that her mother's car blew up in front of her right at our house. It's April Fool's Day. If she calls and tells me 'April Fools', tell her I'm going to kill her when I get home." It was not a prank, but my dad was very well known for making lots of April Fool's Day pranks, so he thought it was.

When he got to the house, he saw that the car was in fact on fire. There were several fire trucks there already. He had just gotten his brand-new camera at the time, so he took it out. He started filming. He filmed the fire department putting out the fire. My grandmother had just gotten a full tank of gas, so there was a lot of fire that had to burn out naturally and everything. He got a lot of footage of it and, eventually, the fire department contacted him and asked for the footage for training. So, April Fool's day. It wasn't a joke. Love the podcast. Can't wait to hear more. Thank you.

Hi, I'm Christi and this is my family's experience. In the summer of 2006, my husband and I and two of our three daughters went to a family ranch resort, which was adjacent to Zion National Park in southern Utah. Our middle daughter was 20 and our youngest daughter was 11. My husband was a cowboy, a team roper, and had lived on a ranch, so this was right up his alley. We stayed in one of the rustic cabins, ate cowboy meals, and signed ourselves up for horseback riding, zip lining, shooting, etc. My husband had been shooting guns most of his life, and he was particularly excited about this excursion because, now, his family members would have the chance to shoot. At that point in time, we climbed into a big van along with another family that we did not know. Our driver was a young man about the age of 19 who went by his

camp name of Potato. There was a lot of chatter amongst riders in the van as we headed up a narrow road along the side of a mountain with a steep canyon below.

It was sunny and warm, and all of us were dressed for a hot summer day. Potato pulled into a cleared area where there was a small outbuilding, and we all got out of the van. He grabbed the loaded shotguns and handed them out. There wasn't a thing said about safety where anyone should stand or not walk. There were some young kids and nothing was mentioned about how to fold the shotgun and where not to point it. It made me terribly nervous. I made certain that our 11-year-old was either with me or my husband.

We were shooting skeet and, before long, a sudden storm hit and the rain began. This is not necessarily unusual for Southern Utah, but we had not been forewarned and were not prepared for a downpour. After about 5 or 10 minutes when the rain was then coming down in buckets, Potato told us to go wait it out in the little outbuilding, so the two families piled in there with massive amounts of heavy mud on our shoes.

After a while, when it appeared that the storm was not going to let up, Potato instructed us to get back in the van for the trip down the mountain. My husband sat in the front passenger seat. The other family - adults - were in the next row. I was seated between each of my daughters on the next row and the children from the other family were on the back row.

As Potato started to turn the van toward the road, it was sliding all over the place. This soil had a very high clay content and, when wet, was extremely heavy and slick. As Potato drove, the van slid everywhere - worse than my experiences of driving in snow - and he continued to pick up speed. We would slide right next to the edge of the cliff and, at one point, the van spun 180 degrees coming to a stop headfirst into a tree on the very edge of the cliff. The other adults were telling him to slow down but, instead, he went faster and faster. There was a lot of talking, yelling, and singing going on as we tried to cope with the fear. We felt that we might very well go off the side of this mountain. My daughter to my left was praying aloud. My younger daughter to my right was crying. When I feel that kind of fear, I get very quiet so I can focus and concentrate on keeping myself together. The kids behind us were very loudly singing a church hymn, "The spirit of God, a fire is burning." It was fearful chaos in that van.

I finally yelled up to Potato to slow down saying that if he didn't, I was going to get out. I made eye contact with my husband and he seemed to be just as calm and relaxed as could be. With all the sliding and near misses of going over the edge, we arrived back at the resort. Potato explained that because of the type of soil on the road, the only way he could keep the van moving was to speed up so that the mud would fly off the tires. Otherwise, they would cause the van to be completely stuck in the mud. I was so frightened and so angry that I really didn't care about his explanation. He had put me and my family and another family in danger and I was determined to let someone know about it. You don't go to a family resort thinking that you're going to fly off a cliff and die. I asked my husband why he was so calm during all of it, and he replied, "I knew everything was going to be okay."

We were signed up for another activity upon our return, but we were all covered in that thick and heavy mud. I was in no mood to just walk off and have fun. I was still shaking with fear and anger. I eventually calmed down enough to watch the girls on the Zipline, but I was going to have a very hard time enjoying myself for the rest of our stay. I later ran into the family that had been in the van with us and they told me that they had taken their quad up the mountain road and they showed me pictures of the van's tracks stopping right at the edge of the cliff. It was horrifying proof of us nearly flying off the edge to our deaths.

Then, later in the evening, we were in the pool. When the lightning struck near us, out we came. We were actually looking forward to our trip home. Upon our return, I wrote a long detailed letter to both the resort manager and the owner. I wanted them to understand not only how dangerous it was as we slid down that mountain, but why hadn't there been any safety rules surrounding the shooting excursion? I let them know just how frightened we had all been and felt like they needed to make some changes, that this was going to be a safe and pleasant experience for others.

Rather than call or email me about it, they actually drove to our home which was four hours away. They sat in my living room and apologized for what had happened, and then proceeded to outline the changes that they had already made and the changes that were in the works. They had made safety rules regarding the shooting excursion and had plans for putting rocks on the road up the mountain. But in the meantime, the minute the rain starts, the van drivers are to get everyone in the van and down the mountain before it gets dangerous. They invited us to come stay again at their expense.

I honestly feel a little shaky even recounting this. Other than some pretty harrowing medical experiences, this was the closest I'd ever come to losing my life. The thought of that van filled with 11 people careening off the side of the mountain and smashing hundreds of feet in the canyon below was just too much to consider. We never did make a return visit, not because we didn't want to, but because it just never worked in our schedules.

Hi Scott. My name is Cecilia and I love your podcast. I just wanted to share the story because, every time I tell friends or anything like that, it always gets a good reaction. So, I thought maybe you or the listeners might enjoy it. I will preface it by saying it may be triggering to some people who have had bad experiences with being drugged or drugs in general. I also want to say I was in an incredibly safe situation. My life was never in danger. I was with my family the whole time and everything was totally fine. This is the story of the time I got drugged with meth.

I was with my family, out of town at a very Christian wedding of a family friend of ours. My parents, my family didn't grow up super religious. We went to church every once in a while but it was never very serious, and this was a very traditional, very devoted Christian wedding, I'll say. Their first kiss was their "I do" kiss, and everyone there was very straight-laced, for the most part. They didn't have any hard alcohol - just wine and beer. Pretty much everyone was quite straight-laced, aside from our table of family, friends, and stuff that were a little bit— I wouldn't say we're crazy or anything, but there was a group of us that was more delinquent than the rest. So some of my friends or family friends brought in little shooters of hard alcohol and we were definitely the odd man out there in the very Christian environment that we were in.

From my perspective, I remember the first set of the band and nothing really after that. I have three flashes of memory. One is me looking at myself in the bathroom, thinking, "I only drank wine. How did I get this drunk? I didn't drink that much wine." The second one is me running around as fast as I can, trying to pick up all the bouquets of flowers from the table after the band had stopped to help clean up when everybody was leaving. I don't know why I was doing that. And the last one is me in bed in a ball, naked, crying, with my sisters trying to make me put clothes on.

From my family's perspective, the band played three sets. After about the first set, I start going crazy on the dance floor. You all don't know me, but I'm pretty reserved and I'm shy. I'm not a big dancer. I'm kind of in the background. I'm pretty shy. They saw me on the dance floor with my fists pumping and my jaw clenched and looking like I was— I mean, I must've been having fun, but looking like a crazy person and they were like, "What is up with Cecilia? We have never seen her like this before." And my stepmom almost immediately was like, "She's on drugs. She's definitely on drugs. That's not normal."

So they kind of honed in their focus on me. We got through the night and got back to our Airbnb at the time. They were asking me, "What did you take? What did you do?" I was like, "I didn't do anything. I'm just drunk. I don't know what you guys are talking about. I just drank wine." Eventually, I started crying because they were asking me a lot of questions. I was on meth, so it was a little emotional and I wouldn't stop crying until my sister threw a pizza on the ground, and that made me laugh for a second and then I started crying again. I didn't know why I was crying. It was very emotional

I got through the night. My family clothed me, wiped away my tears, and did as best as they could. Then, I got back to New York where I was living at the time and I took a drug test when I got back. I had methamphetamine and MDMA in my system. So my best guess is that somebody else had molly water in their wine or some sort of liquid molly in their wine or something and I actually drank someone else's wine and ended up being cut with meth. I don't know. I don't know how I got meth in my system.

Anyways, weeks went by. Then, I saw the couple post their wedding photos on a Facebook album, and I was like, "Oh gosh." So I looked through the Facebook album and, there I am, lo and behold, on meth, in the background of all these wedding photos. I look absolutely ridiculous. I'm like, jaw clenched, eyebrows furrowed, arms up, looking like a person on meth you would imagine they would look. So yeah, that's how I ended up being on meth, and probably one of the last places you want to accidentally be on meth at. Yeah, I tried meth just once and I don't think I'll ever do it again, not on purpose, at least. Thanks for listening. I love your podcast. Keep doing what you're doing.

Picnic. I find myself hungry in the middle of Newton, Massachusetts. As I left the McDonald's with my bag of burgers and fries, I asked a passerby where I could find a nice place to have my lunch outdoors. He directed me to the banks of the pond in front of nearby Newton City Hall. As I walked away, he said something cryptic, "If you're lucky, you may get to see a really good show." Not knowing what he means, I envision teenagers making out in their cars.

When I parked facing forward in the city hall lot overlooking the pond, I could see a number of picnickers sitting on their blankets at the edge of the water - some of them also had McDonald's bags. As I looked to my left and right, it seemed that the people sitting in their cars on either side of me were in a state of high expectation. The scene is idyllic. It's a perfect soft summer's day outside the Georgian Revival City Hall with its Greek temple-style portico and Corinthian columns. Just the slightest breeze ruffles the water and picnickers are lunching on the newly cut grass by the pond's edge. Then, to complete this summer pastoral, a flock of Canada geese in a V formation paddles across the pond toward the picnickers. I could be looking at a 19th-century John Constable English landscape painting, possibly entitled, "Summer's Peace."

As the geese pick up speed crossing the water, some of the onlookers in the cars around me start to toot their horns and all eyes are on the banks of the pond. I still haven't caught on yet. The guy in the car next to me jumps out, yelling, and waving his arms to warn the people of something, but he's also smiling. They all ignored him, thinking probably he's some sort of a nutjob. Then, things happened fast. The lead goose reached the edge of the pond and ran up the embankment toward the nearest picnickers with his wings spread wide and his big black bill open, hissing at his targets.

The family jumped up in complete disarray. The wife and one kid tumbled sideways as the big goose stole their lunch, gulping down their burgers and fries. Now I understand why the occupants of the surrounding cars were in such a state of readiness. Meanwhile, the rest of the flock made short work of the other picnickers. I can't help but laugh at this scene of pastoral carnage.

As they retreat, some of the panicked picnickers still have their napkins tucked into their waistbands. A few were crying, some were smiling, and all the onlookers were laughing hysterically. The lead goose was now digging through one of the overturned picnic baskets, looking for more food. I drove out of the parking lot, marveling at how this serene summer scene turned into complete chaos in the wink of an eye, and appreciated a good laugh. It occurred to me that, for the onlookers, this is a regular daily event. I guess that if no one was really hurt, why not just enjoy the show?

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.

My name is Chloe. I'm a longtime listener. I love your show, love your content, love everyone who contributes their stories. It's been such a blast listening as the years have gone on. So thank you for everything you do. I thought I might share a little bit about something that happened to me when I was in middle school.

In middle school and high school, I was growing up in the suburbs of Seattle, specifically Woodinville. It's now a very touristy kind of wine town. But at the time, it was very, like, semi-rural - just lots of horses, lots of open space. So I grew up riding horses competitively. I loved it. I was very socially awkward and was not very athletically inclined, so riding horses just really scratched that itch for me. It made me feel like I could work towards things and accomplish things. I had great coaches. It was just a win-win-win.

I wasn't able to own a horse at the time, so I just kind of semi-leased a couple for different show seasons. The one this particular year I was leasing was named Colette. She was a part quarter horse, part thoroughbred. She's about 15 years old, I want to say, and she was just lovely. We really vibed. So we went into this particular show season. I did hunter jumping. That meant we would do several different courses and we would get scored on a point basis for each course. There were three in an event. Then, at the end, all those points would be calculated to figure out, sort of, who got grand champion, reserve champion, first, second, third, fourth, fifth, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. We had been doing super well this particular day before my 8th grade year. I was so excited. I was having so much fun.

We went into this third course. You're basically given the course a couple minutes before you're supposed to go on. You have to look at the chart. Then you look at the actual way the jumps are configured on the ground and you have to sort of eyeball it and figure out your strides and your plan of attack, essentially. So I did that and I talked it over with my coach and I thought it through, and I said, "Yeah, you know what? I know what I'm going to do."

So we went in, we did our little opening circle like we're supposed to do where you sort of show off. Then, we got into the course and we were doing great until this two jump sequence where I miscalculated the number of strides that should have been between the first jump and the second jump. I thought that it was only going to take a landing stride in between stride, I guess, and then a takeoff stride but, really, there should have been another one in between there. So I knew it once we were in the middle of those jumps. My horse Colette knew it, but she was still listening to me and I couldn't back out because I had already cued her. So we're just like, "Well, let's hope this works."

So she took this enormous jump. She had to throw her head back a lot further than she normally would have if it had been a normal jump. So when she threw her head back further, she hit me in the face because of the way I was positioning my body to go for the jump. So I fell sideways off of her. We're taught to sort of unhook our legs from the stirrups so that we don't break our ankles if we're falling, so I did that and I just fell off to the left side of her. As she kept going over the jump, I fell on top of the jump and all my wind got knocked out of me instantly. My first thought was, I was just pissed because if you fall, you're disqualified.

I thought that we could have cleaned up the whole thing. We were doing so well. My second thought was that I was worried about her because she's just running around. Horses have very strong emotions. So she came kind of trotting up to me with her head hanging low, thinking she had done something wrong when, really, it was me. So I collected her. I was trying to kind of comfort her. I was gimping off of this course. Everyone's sort of pity-clapping me. I was just pissed because this was the last show of the season, the last day of the events, and I had blown it and I was sore and it just sucked.

So then I got home. My family's sort of Sunday night tradition was to all pile into my parents' room and watch Survivor with ice cream, so we were doing that. There was a commercial break. I tried to get up to use the restroom and I could not move. So it turns out I fractured two of my vertebrae, slipped 2 of my discs, and I had to wear a back brace for the most socially awkward year of my life in 8th grade. On top of that, I had some kind of allergic reaction between the pain medicine and another medicine I had already been taking that caused my top lip to blow up like Kardashian's gone wrong and caused me to break out in hives. That also happened to be on the day of our first 8th-grade dance. So I sat in an oatmeal bath the entire day with an ice pack on my lip, taking Benadryl just loopy beyond belief.

My mother - bless her heart - did everything in her power to get me into my Corduroy Hollister skirt and iridescent star-printed T-shirt so that I could go to this dance, and I made it! But that was a rough year of physical therapy and a back brace and not being able to have that athletic outlet that I had loved for so long. Finally, I was able to get back up on not only the proverbial, but the literal horse the following spring, a little bit less than a year after my accident. But that was a very tough time. 0 out of 10. I do not recommend breaking your spine when you are 13 years old.

I was harassed by a murderer. Basically, it starts out as my husband's story. When my husband was 5 years old, his dad was a police officer. What had happened was there were 2 men - a father and a son. I'm going to call them the old man and the young man for this story.

An old man and a young man had gotten into a fight with their neighbor over an old bicycle of all things. There had been some sort of an altercation with the neighbor. The police came and arrested the old man. On his way into jail, he said that he had chest pains and they took him to the hospital. While he was in the hospital, he managed to escape with the help of his son. So the old man and the young man gather up a bunch of guns and basically barricade themselves inside their house. The police there called upon my husband's dad to come help because he had plenty of run-ins with these guys. They thought maybe that he could talk some sense into them, bring them in, and have them arrested, and no further problems, but that is not what happened.

Unfortunately, while my husband's dad and his fellow police officer were trying to approach the house, they opened fire on them. There was a shootout. Both the police officers were shot and my husband's father was killed. It was a tragic, senseless murder. Very sad. Like I said, my husband was only 5 years old. He hardly has any memories of his father. But both the father and son, the old man and the young man were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The old man died when my husband was in high school.

After I got married to my husband, of course, I learned this story, I was curious, and I did some research about this case and read old news articles and court transcripts, et cetera, et cetera. In looking for this information, I ran across a YouTube channel and this YouTube channel was hosted by a man who would take phone calls from prisoners who felt that they were unjustly convicted and would basically record these phone conversations and then broadcast them on the YouTube channel. At the time, it was quite a popular YouTube channel with lots of subscribers and lots of comments. The younger man had made many Videos with this gentleman, proclaiming that he was innocent, that he had the right to defend his home and property by shooting the police officers, and was saying very inflammatory things about my husband's family. They were from a very small town where everybody knew everyone, saying some really terrible things about my husband's father and his family that were just untrue.

People have the right to their opinions, but they don't have the right to say things that are just patently false, so I made the mistake of commenting on this YouTube video. Little did I know that I was opening a huge Pandora's box. This is probably not the last time that my big mouth is going to get me in trouble - it certainly isn't the first either. I basically just said something about, "This is absolutely false. Anybody can look up the court transcripts, and their public record. These things that he's saying are not true." That caused a firestorm.

He continued to make more YouTube videos, really started kind of pointing his ire towards me directly, and then started making some threats against my husband, against his mother, against his family, and called upon the YouTube channel page to find out everything that they could about me, and I ended up being doxxed. What being doxxed means is that people find all your personal information - where you work, where you live, your phone number, et cetera. I ended up getting hundreds of phone calls. I got death threats at my job. It was really scary.

I called the prison that he was at and said, "Certainly, there's something that you can do." It turns out that they're allowed to make phone calls. They can call whoever they want, and they're not in charge of this man who runs the Youtube channel, so they really couldn't do much. But, obviously, he's not allowed to make threats against his victims and their families. So he was put in the shoe or solitary confinement several times.

Finally, I did end up filing a restraining order personally. Once I filed that restraining order, I could no longer make any sort of comments on the YouTube channels. I couldn't try to talk to him directly at all, which of course I didn't. It did simmer things down a little bit when he had gone to the shoe several times. When I made that restraining order, it certainly didn't stop him. He did continue to call into that show quite often and make some really thinly veiled threats against our family, but it did finally stop.

The reason why - I've got some mixed feelings about it - was he ended up getting tongue cancer. He kept calling in, but he became more and more unintelligible as time went on. The comments really stopped on the videos because people couldn't tell what he was saying. He kept calling in for about a year and finally just stopped because nobody could understand a word that he was saying. Like I said, I've got some complicated feelings about that. But all in all, I guess I would say karma's kind of a you-know-what. So I don't know. That's my weird story, Scott. Please keep it up on TikTok, man. You're so fun there. You are the king of dad jokes, and keep it up with the podcast. I think you're great.

Hi, Scott. I wanted to share a story with you that happened recently. A couple of months ago, my dad was terminally ill with cancer and was in palliative care. I visited him every day and we shared stories and memories the entire time until he was too fatigued to be able to communicate anymore. Before that time, I told him about a story that I had read on Reddit. It was about a young man with his father who was also terminally ill, and they created a pact that when the father died, he would come back and send a message to the son. They came up with a plan that the dad would somehow tell the son that his leg hurt.

Fast forward a few months later, and the dad has passed away, and the son is at a nightclub. He's not really drinking that much. He's awake. He's alert. Someone comes up and approaches him and says, "I'm so sorry to bother you. We don't know each other, but I had this overwhelming urge to tell you that my leg hurts." Of course, cue the son, bursting into tears, feeling, "Hey, that's my dad, he's communicating with me from the afterlife." So I tell this story to my dad and I think he kind of brushes it off. He's not really listening. Of course, he's tired too.

So we come up with our own pact, and I say, "Okay dad, when you pass, if you can send me a sign in the form of your favorite movie, which I know what it is, then I will know that is a sign that you're okay. I will also go ahead and watch your favorite movie because I've never seen it before." So he agrees. I don't really know if he's listening, but he goes with it.

Fast forward about four weeks later, he has passed away. He passed away on a Wednesday night. On Thursday morning, my cousins and family were over at his house with me. We're just kind of sharing our own stories of him. Before he passed, I had been making an effort to go through his house tidying and cleaning everything, but remembered that there was one box of family items that I hadn't yet opened. So my cousin and I sat on the floor and decided to open this box that was filled with different china items from my grandparents. They were all wrapped up in newspapers.

The first item I picked up— I opened the newspaper to look at the item, but my eyes averted to what was in the middle of the newspaper, which was an advertisement for my dad's favorite movie. The newspaper had been wrapping that china for probably about 30 years, so it wasn't anything recent. What I found particularly amusing about this was that, on the newspaper, it said, "Last days. Must finish Wednesday, as far as the viewing." And again, he passed on a Wednesday.

Hi, Scott. My name is Erica McDonald. I love your show. And I thought I'd send in a listener tale. I grew up in Seattle city, New Jersey, which is a beach town in Cape May County. And my father had a real estate company called Frida real estate. So he sold homes and he was also the commissioner of our town for many years.

One day, when I was working in our family store, it's a five and dime called Sam's Department Store, a man and his daughter walked in. He had recently bought a house from my father, and he needed to get keys duplicated for his new home. And we had a key cutting machine in my dad's store. So, he walked in with his daughter on his hip, and I said to him, That is just the most adorable little girl I've ever seen.

What is her name? And he said, Her name is Taylor. And I said, well, if you ever need a babysitter, I also babysit. He said, well, actually this weekend we do need a babysitter. So I started babysitting for Scott and Andrea and their two children, Taylor and Austin. Every summer from the time Taylor was probably about three till she was maybe six years old.

And then they moved to a different shore town. But we still kept in touch with the family because Scott was also a financial advisor and he was helping my family out with their finances. So throughout the years we kept in touch with this family and Scott would keep us updated on the kids and what they were up to and his daughter loved to sing and he would tell us, you know, Taylor's going to be singing the national anthem at the local sports arena and she's going to be singing the National Anthem at our local community, and we just thought that was so sweet, and we were so excited for them. And then one day he called and told us that they were going to move to Nashville, Tennessee. And we thought, why in the world would you move to Nashville, Tennessee? Your daughter is, you know, just a karaoke kind of singer.

And it turns out, she wasn't. She became the biggest pop star in history, and it is Taylor Swift. So, that's my... Listener Tale, what was it like to babysit the biggest pop star in the entire world? Well, they paid \$5.25 an hour, and the kids were pretty good. But I never did get a ticket to any of her shows. I never got a backstage pass, and I certainly never got front row seats.

And I actually couldn't even get a ticket in the Philadelphia show. That's my story. I hope you enjoy it.

On October 21st, 2019, I woke up feeling good. It was my favorite month. I had just quit my barista job two days before, and I had new job interviews lined up that were related to my arts management degree from College of Charleston, where I graduated from the previous May. I was still living in Charleston, South Carolina but, that day, I had to drive down to Myrtle Beach to take care of some errands with my mom. I had a nice two-hour drive.

When I arrived, we went to lunch and then went to the Sprint store as we both needed new phones. As the Sprint employee is explaining our options, I begin to feel odd. My anxiety kicks in a bit. Before I can get any more worried, I begin to see ripples in my vision. At this point, I excuse myself and go out and sit in the car. The ripples went away, but a headache settles in. I called and talked to my roommates, and they said maybe I'm just tired or dehydrated. My mom handles our phones and then drives us home.

I take an Advil and nap for a couple of hours. When I wake up, I decide I feel a bit better and I'd like to sleep in my own bed, so I get in the car and start my drive back to Charleston. Halfway through, I momentarily lose the use of my right arm and leg. I couldn't even process the way it felt. I pulled over at a Dollar General, went inside, splashed some water on my face, and bought a Gatorade. But as I'm talking to the cashier, I get the bizarre notion that the words coming out of my mouth don't really match the thoughts in my head, but I can't be sure.

So I continued driving home. Once I got home, I told my roommates I'm going to lie down again. When I woke up around 8 PM, my roommate texted me. As I replied, I couldn't quite write what I was trying to say, and the sentences I sent were incomplete or jumbled. Eventually, my sentences became more complete. I texted my best friend, Aika, and asked her if I could stay the night at her house, particularly because she had an extra bed in her room, which made me feel safer if I started to feel worse through the night. Aika picked me up. We ate dinner at her house and chit chat for a while. We agreed that it's probably just my anxiety causing all of these symptoms, and I went to sleep feeling completely normal.

The next morning, which also happened to be Aika's birthday, we woke up and she said she's going to class, but she'll be back shortly in case I'm not feeling well and would like to go get checked out by a doctor, for good measure. I tried to respond to her but realized I couldn't form a complete sentence and, when she brought me a glass of water, I couldn't lift it to my mouth without spilling it everywhere. At this point, Aika said she's taking me to the hospital now instead of later. After stumbling to the bathroom and being guided down the stairs, I tried to put my shoes on but struggled to the point that I was lying down.

Aika decided it would be too hard to get me to the hospital, so she called 911. When they arrived, they tried asking me when the symptoms started, and I responded, "Tomorrow" instead of "Yesterday". They had me take some deep breaths, took my pulse, and commented that they just thought I was having a panic attack and that my blood pressure was normal. They have a choice between two nearby hospitals and choose one at random.

When we got there and a doctor came in, he was uncomfortably jovial and chuckled when I was unable to shake his hand because I didn't have control of mine. He runs no simple tests for someone with my symptoms and tells Aika and I that sometimes severe anxiety can cause these symptoms. They hooked me up to an IV of Ativan and told Aika I'd be fine. But luckily, she had called my mom who was on her way from Myrtle Beach by this point. When I woke up after the Ativan, I was coherent enough to read my mom's texts, but not to walk or talk. They asked if

they should call me an Uber, and I expressed in my best broken sentences that my mom is on the way. They decided to wheel me into the waiting room where finally, my mom was able to find me after searching when the front desk said they were unsure where I was.

I couldn't lift my head up, say very much, or use my hand, and my mom was startled by my condition. She went back and found the doctor who refused to run any tests and assured my mom that this was just an anxiety attack. My mom took me to my apartment for about 30 minutes, but ultimately decided something wasn't right and took me to the other hospital. They immediately admitted me and ran every test possible - MRIs, heart ultrasounds, and more. Time passed. In the middle of the night, they let us know their conclusion. An ischemic stroke with a blood clot is caused by the dissection of my carotid artery. Obviously not normal for someone my age at 22 years old.

The doctors have remained undecided about the cause of the carotid artery dissection despite being tested for various genetic disorders and autoimmune diseases. So, for now, I took a daily 325 milligram aspirin and have regular checkups. It was a long road to recovery. The first few days in the hospital, it was tough to answer simple questions like what month it was and what my name was. After a couple of weeks, I was moved to a rehabilitation center to learn how to walk, talk, and write again. While I still struggled with various effects like brain fog, occasional headaches, and my hand not being able to write quite as fast as my brain wants it to, I'm lucky that my brain recovered as well as it did, and I'm able to live a great, fulfilling life thanks to the doctors, family members, and friends that took my symptoms seriously and got me the help that I needed.

I thought I'd share a simple yet heartfelt moment that happened to me about a year ago that stuck with me till today. It's a story where the universe and nature came together to create this perfect picture that changed what should have been a regular moment to such a beautiful one. I was traveling in Yunnan, China on a tour group with a good friend and travel buddy.

It was a hot summer's day. We were walking up a hill, sweating, and really quite uncomfortable. It had been a long day. I turned out to spend that walk in silence. I had my music plugged in, trying hard to ignore the discomfort I was feeling at that moment. I remember thinking on repeat, "You're supposed to enjoy this, Jen. Why is it so difficult? Get out of your head and feel the moment." My friend was right next to me shuffling around with his heavy backpack. Something must have pressed up against the speakers in his bag because it suddenly turned on and immediately disconnected my earphones and played my music on blast on these speakers. Right there, the whole mood and vibe of this hike changed.

Picture this. We're hiking up a cobblestone road, pretty high up, with views of a little colorful town far out, mountains, clear blue skies, and a local old man riding up on a horse. Its tail was moving to the beat of this happy tune. The man, aged from poverty, exhaustion, and sheer hard farm work, in his big straw hat looked at us with a big smile of joy on his face, bobbing and jiggling to the music, and everyone else around just stopped what they were doing to be in sync with the moment. It was like a scene from a movie. At that very moment, a few minutes at most, that changed the trajectory of the entire day and trip.

I've tried really hard to recreate moments like this and learned one thing. When you try hard to look and create moments, you skip the ones right in front of you. We get stuck in the race of trying to be richer, smarter, funnier, happier, more successful, more powerful, more popular, that

we lose sight of the beauty that is all around us every day in attempts to find the very thing - happiness. Sometimes, all it takes is just being in the moment and noticing what you have now, and you will simply see that you already have it all. If you just shift your mindset and attitude to see the beauty in everything around you, you will bring about even more of it.

These are some of the messages that are reinforced to me in my podcast, Multispective. There, I interview people from everywhere to share some of the most challenging and darkest moments, how they overcame them, and what they learned from their personal experiences. So many of my guests have shared this message to me, "Live in the moment, ignore the other noises, and choose every day to see the wonders. The universe will give it right back to you if you just accept it."

For those of you, if you're interested in listening to my podcast, it's called Multispective and you can find us on any podcast platform or our website, which is www.multispective.org.

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.

Hey Scott, I just wanted to start off by saying how much I enjoy your podcast. It is wonderful. I listen to it doing everything I do throughout my day. I'm a homesteader, so I'm often listening to your podcast in my garden, attending to my chickens, harvesting and canning, or even my day-to-day tasks like cleaning. So I just want to say thanks. It's a really great podcast.

My story begins when I was 5 years old. I went camping with my parents on Crown land on an island. Crown land camping was something my parents often did with me and they did it a lot when they didn't have kids. This particular time, I was five years old and we were camping with myself, my mom, my dad, my aunt, my uncle, and my uncle's son. Some of this story is the recount of my family members. I can remember being very excited to go camping with my parents, especially because it was just me. My younger sister, who would have been 2.5 or 3, wasn't going to be coming. So I was excited to have my parents all to myself and enjoy the weekend fishing and swimming.

I can remember boating out to the island where we were going to camp. It was, at the time, a big island to me, obviously, being only five years old. I can remember exploring the island and seeing where we were going to pop the tents up and where we would swim. I do have some memories of foraging for wild blueberries. We live in Ontario, Canada, so wild blueberries are very popular here and they are delicious. As the weekend went on, my parents decided to take me out fishing after we had dinner.

My uncle and his son went out fishing in their own boat, and my aunt stayed back on the island. As we were leaving in the boat, I can remember my aunt yelling to us that she was listening to the radio and they were calling for thunderstorms. I don't really think my parents thought too much of it. I can remember looking at the sky and seeing the blue sky and some clouds. I don't remember, at that point, being worried about a storm. Not that I was worried to begin with, but I don't remember the thought of a storm or rain happening because the sky was so blue.

As we were done fishing and we started to head back towards the island, the sky began to be very dark. I can remember hearing rumblings off in the distance and asking my parents what that was, and they told me that it must just be trucks or something far away. So, again, I wasn't really concerned. I didn't think I needed to be. My parents weren't concerned and just carried on with what we were doing.

As we got closer back to the island and got back on the island, there was a black sky basically on half of the island and blue sky on the other half of the island, and the thunder and lightning began. My dad had this tarp set up so we could sit under it to shade us from any rain or sun. That was something he often did when we went camping. We would have this shelter to sit

under. I can remember huddling into my dad's lap as he was crouched down. My mom was sitting close by and my aunt was sitting the furthest away from me, but still close enough. She was sitting on a chair.

My uncle and cousin were still not back yet and we're still out fishing. I can remember the thunder becoming very loud and, all of the sudden, there was a huge flash and the lightning had hit the tree that we basically were all sitting under. There was a garbage bag on that tree, that had our garbage hanging on it to prevent any wildlife on the island from getting into it, and it had exploded and obliterated everywhere.

I can remember my aunt screaming. Her hands and feet were on fire. She was knocked unconscious and flew off of her chair from the electricity. After that, I don't really have any recollection of what happened. My parents said there was smoke from the tree getting hit by lightning. Later on that night, I can remember waking up to my leg and arm hurting. There was a hole in the tent because bark from the tree had punctured the tent. I remember waking up and complaining about the pain I was in, and my dad had a similar pain on the same side of his body that I had the pain on mine, so we just assumed it was the after-effects of the electricity going through our bodies.

I can remember my uncle and his son coming back after the storm had hit, and they had no idea it had even stormed. They heard thunder in the distance but didn't realize it was over the lake at that point because the lake we were on was a very big lake.

Still, to this day, I am terrified of storms and so is my aunt. She ended up being okay. We were all okay, luckily - well, physically okay. I mean, mentally and psychologically, not so much. My entire life, I've struggled with storms. As I said, I am terrified of them. The older I got, the worse it got and still is the older I'm getting, and I'm 32. My parents brought me to the doctor after it happened just to have me checked out and make sure I was okay. The doctor told them that I should grow out of any fears I might have surrounding storms and forget about it, but I've not forgotten. It is something that still haunts me and it's something that, with every storm, the memories come back and I'm afraid. So I'm often inside my house, you will not see me camping or anywhere that I don't feel safe if a storm is to approach.

We are lucky that our farmhouse where we live right now is kind of in a little valley. So, often, any storms that happen will happen to the north of us or the south of us, but usually skips our house.

People are often shocked when I say that, when I was a little girl, I was hit by lightning. Now, I mean, I wasn't directly hit by lightning, but we were on the roots of the tree where lightning hit the tree and we felt it.

Hi Scott, my name's Lyndall and I'm sending lots of love from Australia. So going back about 10 years, my partner and I have three kids. We had a one-year-old, 4.5, and 5.5, and everything was great. We just never really got much time away. So when the opportunity arose to have a whole weekend away, we jumped at it. We took the kids up to my parents. It was about a 2.5-hour drive. On the way, the youngest one vomited and we didn't think too much of it. We cleaned her up and kept going. We got to my parents and I let my mum know and she's like, "No, it'll be fine. You go have fun." We gave her an extra car seat and off we went.

So we had a fantastic time. We did a tour of the jail - a nighttime tour - which was really great. We were getting ready to order room service and my mom rang up, and she just wanted to let us know that there had been more vomiting and more diarrhea. The youngest one had the gastro tummy bug. So we were like, "Oh dear." She's like, "No, it's okay." She's handling it really well. "We'll call you if there's any issues. You stay. You have fun. Go for it." They had plenty of help. My dad was there and my sister was there to help out as well. So we're like, "Okay, all right. No worries. We'll keep going."

We ordered room service and I started to feel unwell. I didn't say anything at first and our food came and I started eating it. My partner was a little bit annoyed. He wanted a romantic dinner and I was just trying to put that sick feeling at bay, hoping that I was just hungry, and I wasn't. I'm pretty sure I myself had my head in the toilet the whole weekend. Yeah, that was how I spent most of my Friday night. Unfortunately, we had to cancel. We had a nice tour booked for the next morning - a tunnels tour - and I spent the morning in bed. My partner wandered around the town, made phone calls, generally amused himself, came in and checked on me, and we were getting close to lunchtime and I said to him, "Look, I think I'm starting to feel better. I'll be able to push through. I'll just lay in bed a little bit longer. And I'll be up and moving and we'll continue what we're going to do."

So he decided to go to a pub and have a beer. Whilst he was doing that, he was on the phone with my mum and the kids and having a chat with them and, next thing, he heard a scream and like, "God, there's so much blood." He had to anxiously await somebody to come back to the phone and say that our son, who is a bit too curious for his own good, stuck his finger in the fan just to see what happens. And yeah, the fan got smashed and there was blood everywhere, and my dad and my sister were taking him to their local hospital. My partner hung up from my mum and he quickly rang me and he said, "This is what's happened. Grab the stuff. Let's go."

So I'm in the hotel room just trying to chuck stuff in the bag. It won't go in. So I just gathered it up in my arms and I've got bags and pillows and everything hanging off me, and I was running through the hotel and he met me in the lobby, and grabbed some stuff off me. We must have looked a rare sight from running out of the hotel like that. Jumped in the car and went to the hospital. Met up with my dad and he's like, "Yep, they've got him an X-ray and they're just trying to find out if it's broken before they start stitching it up." Thankfully it wasn't broken. There, he got some stitches and it all seemed to settle down after that.

We went back to my mum and dad's and we had a bit of a discussion. He was handling it really well and the little one was coming better with their gastro. So we decided to push on through. My mom was like, "No, go. We're going to do this." So off we went again and my partner wanted to go fishing and I'm like, "Oh, I could handle this right now." So we went and sat at the beach for a little bit and it was all good. I was coming better. I was feeling a lot better.

We went out to dinner and there was a Ferris wheel across the park. So we jumped on this Ferris wheel, and we got to the top, and he got down on one knee, and he proposed to me. He said to me later that he would never have pushed through with the weekend if he hadn't had that ultimate plan at the end. So yeah, it was quite an eventful weekend. Six months later, we flew into the States and we got married. So, nice little small wedding and we had our second time away from the kids. Lo and behold, about 5.30 in the morning, the hotel fire alarm went off. We all got pushed outside in our dress and gowns. So we just packed up our stuff and we had a nice family holiday.

My father has an older brother, my uncle Steve, and he's married to my aunt Pamela. They had three children - 2 boys and a little girl. Their middle child - his name was Chris, and he was, like, just a stud. He was so very handsome growing up all through high school and college - Mr. Popularity - and just really intelligent. My uncle is a well-known physician in his area and Chris was well on his way to becoming the same. He's just a really bright guy. He had a lot going for him, but he did suffer from depression. In college, he also started taking really heavy drugs a lot, which of course made his depression even worse and he started to spiral.

One night, he just couldn't handle life anymore, so he ended up taking his own life. He did use a gun. To make matters just horribly worse, he shot his girlfriend before he shot himself. The bullet grazed her and she survived. She was fine, but he did attempt to do that, which makes matters all the more awful. Of course, my aunt and uncle were just overwhelmed with grief. The death of a child is always horrific. Adding onto that, death from suicide is just another layer of heartache. So unnecessary. So many questions that go through their minds.

Anyway, 18 years had gone by since this had happened and life goes on - it has to. There are two other kids who are adults now with their own children. Around this time, my cousin, Jamie, gets a Facebook message out of nowhere, really, and it read, "Dear Jamie, this is Jack. I'm writing to you because my mother promised me that, when I turned 18, she would let me know who my father is. It turns out that my father is your brother, Chris." Jamie couldn't believe it. She went to his profile page and it was like she was looking at Chris all over again. This kid, Jack, was a spitting image of her brother who had passed away so long ago, and he was also such a good kid, such a sweet kid.

Jack flew out to see the family immediately and met with everyone. Of course, my aunt and uncle were just completely overwhelmed with emotion upon seeing this grandchild. They didn't know about a piece of their son right there - someone that looked exactly like their son. It was like having Chris back again. Jack now visits them every holiday and they're very close. It's just amazing that they had such a miracle happen so far after this horrible tragedy and so many years of grieving. They had this boy who was just like their baby, Chris, and I really appreciate Jack's mother for letting him know.

I understand why she waited until he was 18. The circumstances of what happened to his father and what he tried to do to her were obviously something that needed to be told to somebody who could handle it at a certain age. She did say that Chris did not know she was pregnant and she didn't know she was pregnant when the incident occurred that night. So, no one knew until 18 years later and they got reunited. It just helped my aunt and uncle, my cousins heal in a way they never thought possible to have a piece of their son and their brother there, just looking exactly like him - the same mannerisms and everything else. It's just a blessing that they're so close. So it turned out to be something really beautiful in the end.

It took a long time to get there and a lot of grieving, but I'm just really so happy for them that they had this grandson that they didn't know about, and cherish the memories of the son that they lost.

Hi, my name is Lexi. When I was around 15 years old - I'm 20 now - I had a friend who was also 15 and she had a boyfriend who was 26 years old. At the time when I was 15, I honestly knew it was wrong, but I didn't realize how long it was until I got older and he would buy me and my

friends alcohol and weed in order for us to keep quiet about their little vacations they would go on. The bad part about it— well, I mean, the whole thing is bad, but the extra bad part is that he was her older sister's baby daddy's older brother. So they would see each other at, like, family gatherings and stuff, and they would just have to keep it quiet. But the crazy part is that they're still together to this day. It's just crazy to me because when she gets older, she's going to realize that he is a child predator because he will go for somebody that is, or was her age when he did that to her.

In June of 2019, I decided it was time to propose to my girlfriend of four years. Like most guys, I had no idea how I was going to do it. I knew I wanted it to be truly special and I wanted it to be recorded somehow. I wanted to really surprise her. My initial thought was actually just to do it in Colorado while we were hiking. That's where I first told her that I loved her and it seemed like the perfect setting but, after thinking more about it, it just seemed too generic, too basic.

My next thought was to reach out to our favorite band at the time, the Lumineers, to see if they could help me propose because we were going to the Bonnaroo Music Festival a few weeks later and they were performing there. But, after a few attempts, I never got a reply from any of the band members. Then, it hit me. The ring that I was going to get Nicole was actually at a jeweler that I had a connection with down in Atlanta, and it just so happened that Nicole and her boss were getting ready to leave for a work trip in Atlanta. They were actually leaving a few days from the time I had the thought to even propose this way. So I had a lot to figure out and I had to do it fast.

So I called Nicole's boss and told her my plan. I would fly down early in the morning on the last full day of the whole trip. They would actually be at the same venue as the jeweler. So, we would have to coordinate on where they were in the venue at all the different times that I was going to be there so I could sneak in to pick up the ring and sneak back out. Then, that day, after they finished working, her boss was going to take her out to a nice dinner at STK in Downtown Atlanta, a really nice steak restaurant. Once they got seated, she would then text me and I would come into the restaurant, ask the hostess to follow behind me until my proposal. Her boss loved the plan and she was all on board to help me do anything and everything I needed to do to make sure that this proposal went off without a hitch.

Now that I had coordinated with the jeweler and I had my plan set, I needed to get Nicole's parents blessing. So a day prior to what would be the day that I ended up proposing, I called Nicole's dad to see if I could swing by after I got off work that day. At this point, Nicole was already out of town and she was already down in Atlanta. I didn't tell him what I was coming over for, but he had an idea. At that point, we'd been dating for a handful of years and he probably expected this would be about the time that I would be proposing. I told him my plan. I asked for his blessing and, of course, he said, "Yes." He couldn't have been more excited.

And he just absolutely loved the plan. I called Nicole's mom after leaving her dad's house to go over to meet with her and her husband, Nicole's stepfather, and I followed those same steps, which resulted in her mom immediately being overcome with tears of joy and a huge yes. So great. I had both blessings.

I had the plan with the jeweler and I had a plan with Nicole's boss, but now I had to put the plan into full action. So after getting both of those blessings, I booked my plane ticket for 5 a.m. the next morning. The hardest part of all this was not slipping up and giving anything away to

Nicole. She can read me like a book, but I played it cool and she never suspected a thing when I spoke to her that night on the phone.

I woke up at 2am the next day, too anxious to sleep. I put on my best suit and I got to the airport. I arrived in Atlanta. I dropped off my bags at the hotel and went to the Atlanta Apparel Market, which is where that jeweler was located, along with where my wife and her boss were already at doing all their buying for their local clothing boutique. The building is set up kind of like a huge vertical mall with an open atrium so that you can actually see all the other people walking around all the other levels. So Nicole's boss and I had to coordinate every time we were moving around the building so that I would avoid being caught. I had to get in and get out as fast as I could without my wife being able to see me from across the venue. So I did it. I got in, I got the ring and I got out as fast as I could.

At this point, I still had a few hours left before dinner. So I went and got a good workout in. Then, I came back to the hotel, took a nice shower, got fully dressed again, and just sat there anxiously sweating, waiting for her boss to let me know. When they were going to be at dinner, her boss texted me. I got in my Uber and I headed that way. I walked in like a man on a mission. I was fully already sweating through the shirt underneath my suit jacket in anxiousness.

I asked the hostess to follow me to the table while recording on my phone. I got to the table with the hostess falling right behind me filming, and I said, "Hey, Nicole." Her first response - the first thing we had on video - was, "What the fuck are you doing here?" And pure shock that instantly turned to full-on blubbering tears when she saw me get down on my knees and realize what I was there to do. I was there to propose to her away from the table, and we sat there hugging, kissing, and her crying just tears of joy. I said, "Is that a yes?" And that's how I proposed to my girlfriend.

To my amazement, that video actually went viral, both shared on mine and Nicole's Facebook and Instagram. Then, we actually had a bunch of other accounts that reshared that same video. What was awesome is that, a few days later, after flying back home to Kansas City, we then got to celebrate by going to Bonnaroo just a few days later where we got to watch our favorite band perform, who actually had never responded to me asking them to help me propose to my girlfriend.

I wanted to say thank you to Scott for allowing me to share my personal story. My name is Marcus Gates. I'm an online fitness, nutrition, and lifestyle coach, owner of Thriving Lives Fitness. I help my clients tackle their health goals through sustainable approaches, focusing on balance through weekly accountability check-ins and reflections. I hold my clients accountable and I guide them every step of the way towards their health and fitness goals.

In fact, I'm actually Scott's coach. He's been with me for most of 2023 and has done an incredible job of not only reaching his goals that he came to me with, but the most important aspect is that he's maintained those results that he's gotten and continues to strive and get better and better every single week. You can find me on Instagram at Thriving Lives Fitness. My website is thrivinglivesfitness.com. With 2024 just a few weeks away, I would love to work with you on whatever your health goals are.

Scott

If there's one thing I've learned from doing this show, it's that people have lots of stories. Some stories are so unusual, they get a full episode. And some stories are shorter, so they work as a Listener Story. Either way, I love hearing them. It's actually the reason I started doing this podcast, over 5 years ago – because I love hearing people tell stories.

And it's pretty obvious that I'm not the only one. Sometime in the next few weeks, this podcast will pass a milestone by being downloaded more than 10 million times. It's a little hard to believe honestly. When I started the show, I knew that there was power in storytelling, and obviously that's true based on the way the audience has grown.

But for this show, I want to do more than just bring you a story for the entertainment value. Now, for some episodes, entertainment actually IS the main thing. Nothing wrong with that. But for a lot of the stories we cover here, I want it to be more than that. Many of my guests have been through something tragic or traumatic, and they have a big purpose in telling their story. They might want to bring more awareness to safety around swimming pools, or organ donation, or the dangers of a child in a hot car. These are people on a mission to help others – and telling that story here on the podcast is one way they can do that. For me, I'm honored that I can be a part of getting their message out to lots of people. I always count that as a great privilege to be able to play a part in that.

For 2024, I already have some great shows in the works. And I'll be visiting places all over the country, including Los Angeles, Orlando, Nashville and Washington DC – so if you happen to be nearby, maybe we can connect. I feel like 2024 is gonna be a great year.

You can get a full transcript for this episode at [WhatWasThatLike.com/162](https://www.WhatWasThatLike.com/162).

And if you liked this episode, you might like our previous episodes full of Listener Stories. Just scroll back through the past episodes and you'll find them.

And now here's a recent review left by Amanda, in Apple Podcasts –

Amanda

I've listened to all of your episodes, but episode 151 was a game-changer. You took your interviewing skills to the next level. Great job

Scott

And if you're wondering which episode Amanda was referring to, episode 151 is titled "Laura's pain became her purpose". If you haven't heard that one, grab a box of tissues and listen to a story that you won't forget.

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

No Listener Story for this episode, because the whole episode was Listener Stories! But I've got some great episodes and more great Listener Stories lined up for 2024.

Stay safe, and I'll see you in 2 weeks with a brand new episode.