[Snap Judgment]

**Glynn:** Not too far down the road from where I live, there was a notorious psychiatric facility, the East Bay Hospital. It housed all manner of people with mental illness in sometimes deplorable, cruel, wretched conditions. And when this place finally closed in 1997, advocates for the mentally ill, they celebrated. The citadel of misery finally forced to shutter its doors, freeing people to seek desperately needed care at responsibly run, accredited mental health institutions. The only problem was responsible, accredited institutions delivering mental health services to a marginal population at scale, didn't really exist. So, lot of these people had nowhere to go. Similar episodes happened all over the country. Sending folk into a system unable to help them get well.

And so today, Snap Judgment proudly presents Bates & Stokes. My name is Glynn Washington. Either sent everyone away or tell them, they can sit down next to you if and only if they don't make any noise because you're listening to Snap Judgment.

Now, our story, our amazing story gives a rare first-hand glimpse of mental health treatment in prison. Real folks talking in their own words about real experiences. As such, contains descriptions of difficult topics, like violence, suicide, and racism. WBEZ investigative reporter, Shannon Heffernan, takes us into a maximum-security prison, about 90 miles south of Chicago. Snap Judgment.

**Shannon:** Damaria Bates is a licensed professional counselor. But she'd never thought about working in a prison until she saw posting at Pontiac Correctional Center in Illinois.

**Bates:** I was like, "Wow. I didn't even know they had these types of jobs there." So, I applied, they called me, came in for the interview, loved me, I was kind of hired on the spot.

**Shannon:** So many people in prison have mental illness, and she thought the kind of therapy she studied could help.

**Bates:** Just thinking, "Okay, who's a better fit?" I knew it will be a struggle, but I'm like, "Hey, God is sending me here. I'm going to help these guys and I'm going to really make a change in somebody's life." Giving them proper coping skills, trying to keep them from coming back into the system, because I figured most inmates probably never talked to a therapist a day in their life.

**Shannon:** Do you remember your first day, do you remember getting up and getting ready what that day was like?

**Bates:** I do. I was so excited because one was paying me $10,000 more than what I've made in my last job, so that was a great thing. I got up, I was nervous. I'm like, "Wow, I'm going into a prison," and I've got all the things, like you have to bring a bag that you can see through, no phones, no this, no that. So, I get up. It was like an hour drive from my house. So, I drove there, came in, of course, I got searched, went through all of them, I'm like, "Okay, this is different. I'm not used to having to do this." Everyone was so nice. So nice, so pleasant. I met the warden that day. [voice fades away]

**Shannon:** Even though everyone was nice, Bates pretty quickly that she stood out as a black person on the mental health staff.

**Bates:** It concerned me because majority of the population is African American. So, I'm like, "Oh, okay then." And I'll never forget, this young lady, she said, "No one can last longer than three months." I said, "Well, how long have you been?" She's like, "I've been here for three years." I'm like, "Oh, that's interesting." I come and learn down the line that she meant someone of my skin color.

**Shannon:** She was paired with this guy, one of the seasoned mental health workers, to shadow him while he made his rounds, talk to patients, see how they were doing.

**Bates:** He will make derogatory comments. Calling the guys "assholes," "you shit," "turds," and, "I'll fuck you up," like things of that nature. And he's talking to guys who are on suicide watch.

**Shannon:** Wait. The mental health worker is saying this?

**Bates:** Yeah. He would laugh it off and the inmates will laugh it off. So, I thought, "Oh, maybe this is their relationship." But after the third day of going out with him, I was like, "Hey, I don't feel comfortable with you saying those type of things." And he's like, "Oh, don't worry about that. These fuckers know what's going on," blah, blah, blah. And so, I was telling him, "But I feel offended by this."

**Shannon:** This coworker had been around a long time, and everyone there seemed to know each other. Pontiac is a small town. This nurse's dating that guard, so and so is so and so's mom. So, she just left it alone, didn't raise an issue. Bates went on with her job, built relationships with her patients and other staff.

**Bates:** They made me feel comfortable. Even when we had lunch times, they invited me to lunch like, it was okay. I felt, "Okay, I can do this. I can work in the prison."

**Shannon:** Still, she was relieved when another counselor, Jimia Stokes, joined the mental health staff.

**Bates:** And with her being an African American, I saw her dreadlocks, I said, "Oh, you're African American African American. So, you're really not going to stand for this."

**Shannon:** Jimia Stokes also felt relieved to see Bates on staff.

**Stokes:** Well, I thought, "Oh, this is going to be really good, because I know that she and I can connect in ways that maybe my other counterparts probably couldn't connect."

**Shannon:** The two women had pretty different dispositions.

**Stokes:** I mean she's funny even when she doesn't know she's funny.

**Shannon:** Stokes loved how even with a strict dress code, Bates found a way to show her personality.

**Stokes:** She loves tennis shoes, she loves like to dress, that was her thing. And so she would always come in and be fashioning her shoes. She was just real light. In a very heavy situation, she made it fun. As a matter of fact, when I started, she had taken off a few days, but when she came back, everybody was so excited to see her. It seemed like her infectiousness was all over the room.

**Shannon:** And Bates loved how Stokes immediately felt like a trusted adviser, a good listener, who always knew the right thing to do.

**Bates:** Mia is what I call her. She's a very wise woman, she was more of a calm one like, "Hey, let's kind of work through it." She was my therapist there actually--[chuckles]

**Shannon:** Bates and Stokes started having lunch together. And they realized they were both from the same area, [unintelligible 00:06:43] Chicago. It was a long drive, over an hour, and they started carpooling. Bates drove one week, Stokes the next.

**Bates:** Mia will have [unintelligible 00:06:54] a gospel radio station. So, we did a lot of that, and the news. In my car, I may play some rap or some of the stuff that I like, but because we had conversation so much, the music just kind of faded out in the background.

**Stokes:** I don't speed, period. Bates, she likes to drive fast. She was like, "We've got to get through this traffic. You're going so slow." She would get so annoyed when it would be my time to drive because we were going to get there real safe and calm, versus she's going to go full throttle. So, it's pretty much the same. Our driving is the same way as we kind of dealt with situations. [chuckles]

**Shannon:** And by situations, Stokes mainly means the times guards or mental health staff said disparaging things about black people.

**Bates:** I just noticed, they would say things like, "Oh, yeah, they're hood and they're homeboys," just terms like that. And I'm like, "Hey, why are you guys saying that?" When I would advocate for them, they will say, "Oh, well, that must be your brother. That must be your friend." "No, I don't know these guys."

**Shannon:** Once when they were driving in, they got caught by a train. And they saw their coworker, the guy Bates had shadowed early on also driving into work.

**Stokes:** We saw him on his motorcycle, and we were waiting at the train, because if you get caught by this train, everybody's stuck at this train.

**Shannon:** When they all arrived at the prison and saw each other again, Bates teased this coworker a bit.

**Bates:** I was joking. Like, "Hey, you tried to act like that you didn’t see me when Stokes pull up on the side of you this morning." And he was like, "Shit, I started searching for my gun when you guys pulled on the side of me."

**Stokes:** He was like, "Ah, shit. I forgot my gun."

**Bates:** And I was like, "Wow, that's an insult. Why? Because we're black?" He was like, "No, I'm not saying that, but--" just shrugged it off.

**Stokes:** Yeah. And we reported it immediately, and nothing happened to him.

**Shannon:** I reached out to this coworker to ask him if he'd talk to me about accusations he'd made racist statements. But he declined and referred us to prison administrators. The Department of Corrections did not answer our questions about this incident. What struck Bates and Stokes about the whole thing was how little their superiors had reacted. They were also starting to notice that the situation for their patients was maybe even worse than they originally thought. Serious problems. Like the issue with the cells.

**Stokes:** So, the conditions of the cells were horrible. Again, you'd have mentally ill inmates, and so a lot of the practice of some of the inmates would be to cover their cells with feces, so the officers couldn't see inside of it, and it's also a way of them not having to be bothered with the officers. So, that would happen often.

**Shannon:** Stokes says these filthy cells will not always get cleaned. So, a guy will get moved out of his cell, and another guy will get put in it while it was still dirty. She remembers doing a cell-side mental health visit. It was someone who it was particularly rough on.

**Stokes:** He loved to clean, like to keep everything-- his cell itself was clean. And so, he was one of the ones that would adamantly every day, "Ms. Stokes, they still haven't moved me out of this cell. It's still a mess. I can't even walk around on it, and I can't even clean it." He'd become very anxious and very agitated, because he really liked to keep a clean environment. He would point out there was like chunks of feces that was on the floor. And I looked and I was like, "Ugh, that is gross."

**Bates:** If they didn't like an inmate, they would not give them their psych meds, and they will tell them, "I haven't had my meds. They're lying. They're lying." "Why would they lie, saying you didn't give them their meds? I'm looking at this man decompose every day. If you would give me his psych meds, he wouldn't be psychotic." But if they didn't like them, they would not give their meds. And I've witnessed that. And I've said, "I was walking behind you, you skipped him." "Oh, oh, I didn't know."

**Stokes:** A lot of the officers, including the mental health staff, would say things like, "Oh, he's not schizophrenic," or, "He's not bipolar," or, "He's not major depressive. He just has a behavior problem." I said, "But that's documented in his file, that he's schizophrenic, that he's bipolar. So, we need to treat him as such, regardless of whether or not you believe that he's feigning symptoms or whatever. It's in his chart, that's a psychiatrist has diagnosed him with schizophrenia, bipolar or major depression or oppositional defiant, but they'd always say that it was because they're just behavior issues.

**Shannon:** When I asked about this allegation, the Department of Corrections said they do not "disregard the mental health diagnoses of the individuals in our custody." They said, "Such allegations would be investigated and taken seriously." But Bates and Stokes said these kinds of things kept coming up.

**Stokes:** I thought that I was going to be actually being able to provide like therapy and actually work with people when they're in crisis and things like that, but that's not what you're doing. You're actually literally just going in, and you actually don't have time to do anything, but just ask these standard questions. "Are you suicidal?" "Do you feel like hurting yourself?" "Can you guarantee your safety?" That's pretty much it.

**Shannon:** But still, the reality was their presence made a big difference to their patients.

**Automated:** Prepaid collect call from Carey Pettigrew, an incarcerated individual at the Champaign County Jail. This call is subject to record-- [crosstalk]

**Shannon:** People like Carey Pettigrew.

**Carey:** Ms. Stokes was fucking awesome. She was really upbeat and positive.

**Shannon:** Pettigrew was at a county jail when we talked. So, the phone line is a little fuzzy. He said most mental health staff weren't as helpful as Stokes.

**Carey:** For example, they'll tell you do diaphragmatic breathing or walking meditation where you count your steps inside of your room and they’ll leave it at that. It’s that easy to suddenly grab hold of a coping skill. And for example, I brought to Ms. Stokes' attention, I’m like "Well, what about someone like me who starts to experience rapid thoughts where my mind gets to moving so fast, that I can't grab a hold of a coping skill? When I told her that, she asked me a question, she was like "Well, when you get like that, generally, what happens?" I said, "Well, I get to the point where I start to have suicidal thoughts and thoughts of harming somebody else, and I asked for a crisis team." And she told me, "That’s a form of a coping skill, asking for help when you need it."

**Shannon:** Just like Stokes advised, Pettigrew asked for help. He stopped getting letters from his mom which send him into an absolute spiral, even stashing away pills. He said he told a guard he was feeling suicidal and requested a crisis team. Crisis teams are mental health staff who are supposed to respond quickly in an emergency, when someone says they want to hurt themselves or others. The guard said he would right after he handed out the meal trays. But then everyone had eaten and the guard came back to pick up the trays, he still hadn't gotten the crisis team.

**Carey:** I'm thinking, "You know what, man? Fuck that." And I step to the back of my room, and I started taking the pills. And now, shit, it got serious now. He's, "Hey, stop doing what you’re doing? Hey, what are you doing? " And then left from the front of my cell, and practically broke his neck running off to the gallery.

**Shannon:** Pettigrew Guru said the officer came back with another guard who had a canister of OC spray, pepper spray.

**Carey:** And he’s screaming and hollering at me, telling me to, "Cuff the fuck up, now." And I told him, "I'm not cuffing up, dude. I don’t feel safe cuffing up with you. I’m not cuffing up until mental health comes." When I told him that, he pulled a mace can out and started shaking it. And I’m like, "What you got that for?" And he sprayed me, it wasn’t nothing to talk about. When he sprayed, he got the right side of my face, my neck, my back. I’m like, "Dude, what the fuck you sprayed me for" He sprayed me again.

**Shannon:** Guards took Pettigrew outside. That's where Stokes saw him.

**Stokes:** And I remember him just coughing, choking, and he looked like he took a shower in CO spray. It was like he was covered-- it was dripping off of his head.

**Shannon:** Pettigrew wasn't the only incident. Patients told them they'd been beaten, or that staff had tampered with their food trays. As this kind of thing was happening, Bates and Stokes were writing up official reports about what they saw, or about what their patients had told them.

**Bates:** I made sure that I not only did what was right to do, I also made sure that I knew I had a license that I wanted, that I worked really hard for. And I really want to keep my license, and I also want to have some integrity about my job.

**Shannon:** They said their bosses had told them to report what they saw. "Let us know what's happening, so we can fix it." But then, supervisors called a meeting, gathered everyone together, the whole mental health team. Stokes said a supervisor gave a really mixed message. "You should keep reporting incidents with correctional officers. That's your ethical obligation."

**Stokes:** "But at the same time, you want to be really cautious about how often and what you're saying, because these are the same people that we're asking to protect us when we go into these cell houses." So, while the message was being communicated to us, I think everybody in the room knew, "Okay, well, I ain't writing nobody up."

**Shannon:** They said that while the meeting was for the whole mental health team, everyone knew who they were really talking to, because Bates and Stokes said they were basically the only ones speaking up.

**Bates:** They start telling me that I'm over identifying with these offenders. And I'm like, "I'm not a male. I'm not in prison. Is it because I'm black?" "Oh, no, no, no. Race has nothing to do with anything." I'm like, "Well, how am I overidentifying with these offenders?"

**Stokes:** I don't get it.

[somber music]

**Glynn:** When Snap Judgment returns, Bates and Stokes, face a difficult choice. Speak up or stay silent. Stay tuned.

[somber music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Bates & Stokes episode. When last we left, Bates and Stokes, two licensed professional counselors, they had been warned about documenting abuse they witnessed at Pontiac Correctional Center. Now, they must decide whether telling the truth is worth the consequences. Snap Judgment.

**Shannon:** They kept reporting despite the warnings. Some of the patients would tell them the rumors they heard.

**Bates:** The guards were talking about following me home. And so, they started telling me, "Stop taking up for us, Ms. Bates. Stop advocating for us. They're going to come after you." And I will tell them, "I want them to come after me."

**Shannon:** Were you scared for your safety? I mean, these feelings of somebody telling you that they thought somebody might follow you home, were you scared?

**Bates:** To be honest, me personally coming from the Southside of Chicago, no. I'm not worried at all if they're going to come to my part of town. Because they were all from downstate, so you guys don't know Chicago at all. So, to be honest, I was not scared. [chuckles]

**Shannon:** There were other things that let them know they had a reputation too. Shortly after Stokes reported another guard, she was coming into work and the woman who searched staff's bags before they came in, stopped her.

**Stokes:** And she said, "I want to see your bag." So, I hold it up like this, because that's what I normally do. So, she said, "I need to see it." Now, mind you, there's like four items in there. So, there was nothing that was obscuring the items or anything. She literally took each item out and turned it and inspected it. Took that item out, turned it and inspected it. Again, I knew that they have this family system, that they are very protective of one another. So, if you do something to one, then you've done it to everyone. So, that was her way of holding me up. Our time clock is across the yard. So, you have to make it across there in time. And so, she knew that.

**Shannon:** I could not find any Pontiac guards that work with Bates and Stokes and would talk to me, but I did get my hands on emails from some fellow staff. And they say, very clearly, that they needed to search Bates and Stokes more thoroughly. In emails, they said they thought the two women might be sneaking in contraband. One guard wrote that she would "personally handle the pat down with pleasure." Stokes said sometimes staff also kept her waiting inside a cell house, delayed opening the doors for her to leave. That scared her. In one report to her superiors, she wrote that she was concerned that she was being placed in unsafe conditions, as retaliation for writing the report.

Bates and Stokes morning drives together became kind of like strategy meetings. Little huddles to plan for the day, where they each coach each other on how they were going to get by.

**Stokes:** When you're two African American professional women working in a place where your leadership looks different from you, you kind of already know that going in. And so, I would definitely be that person like to remind her of that, like, "Yeah, you know what we're dealing with. Let's be a united force, and let's think about what's happening here."

**Bates:** Mia would always give me that pep talk, like, "Look, don't go in there, don't let them get under your skin on today, tomorrow. You've got to stay cool, you've got to stay calm." I'm going in ready, like, "They're going to do something. I know they're doing something." I just felt like it's something going to happen every day.

**Shannon:** And then that spring, they were both in a staff meeting, a routine meeting where they all gathered around a big table. The two women were across from each other.

**Bates:** I was dreading the meeting, because there was always some BS.

**Shannon:** That day, the group was talking about a patient who Bates was worried about.

**Bates:** From what I was hearing, I guess he just had a very bad stomachache. He had told him he swallowed a spork, but no one was believing him.

**Shannon:** Even though he said he'd swallowed a spork and looked in bad shape, they said he wasn't sent to the hospital. The staff members in the meeting didn't seem to take it seriously.

**Bates:** But then, they started saying, "He's lying," just like, "Okay, let's move on to the next." It was nothing that was being addressed at all.

**Stokes:** He's just trying to go to medical and all of this, they were just dismissing it.

**Bates:** I cannot believe this is their response versus going to get them to medical. I felt like I have to report this, like have to escalate this to somebody higher because this is a human who possibly can and die, and this is their response.

**Shannon:** Bates got up, grabbed a form to write a formal report and started writing up everything, right in front of everybody.

**Bates:** You guys are licensed therapists and registered nurses here, and psychologists. How are you guys overlooking these red flags? Well, I'm going to report everyone here. This is how I felt.

**Shannon:** Bates told the staff members they should be worried about losing their licenses. Stokes said she remembers people being offended. The meeting ended not long after that. Stokes found Bates in a little side room.

**Stokes:** I'm just telling her, I'm like, "Bates, you're right. You're right." At that point, I'm just letting her know that what she's saying is not unreasonable. All you can do is report it and you do you're writeup and let that just be that.

**Shannon:** The next day, a staff psychologist wrote a report complaining about Bates' behavior in the meeting. In the report, he wrote that he thought the comment about staff losing their licenses was, "very inappropriate, and also threatening." The one coworker who allegedly made the comment about pulling out a gun also wrote a report. Just after that, Bates got a notice from her supervisors, laying out concerns about her performance. It said, once again, that she was, "overidentifying with the offender population." And that Bates who once said she felt safer in a cell with her patients than with staff, which Bates doesn't deny. The report also said that she'd encouraged her patients to go on a hunger strike.

**Bates:** So, I was off for two days. And when I came back, nine offenders were on hunger strike. They went on a hunger strike, because they knew that that will bring the state in, and then they will be finally heard. They thought there they are. I never even thought of that.

**Shannon:** After the complaints were filed, and the notice was sent, Bates was placed on leave and an investigation was opened. Bates said her supervisors invited her in for a meeting to respond. And she went through each accusation, defending herself.

**Bates:** After everything was done, I told them, "I did want my job, but it's overwhelming for me." They said, "We'll be in contact with you."

**Shannon:** You just never showed back up or--?

**Bates:** I never showed back up. After a week of not hearing anything, I just went to the unemployment office.

**Shannon:** How did you react, do you remember?

**Stokes:** I felt so alone, I really did. I really felt really alone because [pause] I felt really alone. [sobbing] Because I knew I was on the losing end.

**Shannon:** After Bates left, Stokes said the treatment from other staff just got worse. She said she got a nickname, crude enough I'm not going to repeat it here.

**Stokes:** I started feeling fearful that since they feel like I'm the enemy, that at one point-- [voice fades away]

**Shannon:** She worried that with the power the guards held, they might be able to talk an incarcerated person into assaulting her.

**Stokes:** And I shared that with my husband, and my husband was like, "I don't feel comfortable with you going in there either," because I thought the same thing. Plus, I would drive an hour and it's like an hour and 30-minute drive. And so, it's desolate, a lot it is blank land. So, he was thinking, "You don't know if somebody's going to follow you home one day, run you off the road, whatever, you don't know."

**Shannon:** We didn’t find evidence that there were any plans to attack Stokes or have her attacked by an incarcerated man. But she was feeling afraid. Stokes started noticing something change in her. One day one of her patients told her guards beat him.

**Stokes:** Yeah, I saw the bruising. Yeah, and I told him that I would write it up. And I don't think I did. I don't think I did though--

**Shannon:** Do you remember why you didn’t--?

**Stokes:** And I don't know what stopped me from writing it up. I don't know why I didn't write it up. I don't know whether-- I was really almost just ready to just get out of there for real. And I just think I just probably-- it's just a sea of many.

**Shannon:** That moment of seeing him in such a state and then not writing it up, was that a turning point in any way for you? Did that affect you in any way, that specific incident?

**Stokes:** It probably was. It just makes me upset when you say that too, because like I said, it's just [sobbing] not feeling, like there's anything that I could do. And then, of course, I just felt help-- almost just so conflicted, and I think that's really why I really want to get out of there because either you were going to go along, or you were just going to get mistreated, picked on, bullied. I was just tired of that.

[somber music]

**Stokes:** I was at work. I don't remember if there was an incident that happened, other than just the build-up. I just decided, I said, "Today's the day, I'm not coming back here no more."

**Shannon:** She walked around the prison and said goodbye to her patients. Ms. Stokes went to her desk and wrote an email to her supervisor and hit send, and walked out the gates.

**Stokes:** I felt free, and I also felt kind of like I gave up on them too. If I'm really honest about it, I have something nice to go to. But if I think about it, I could hear the sound of the prison itself. You can oftentimes hear people on the yard, you can hear gates clanking, you can hear all of that. It kind of almost felt like out of a movie almost, like a movie that's happy but sad, like you wonder what happened in the end. You know that the person is walking out, and, oh, you're just so glad that they got out. But then, you're also wondering about the people who are behind.

[lively music]

**Glynn:** Since leaving behind Pontiac Correctional Center in 2018, Jimia Stokes and Damaria Bates have stayed friends. Stokes now works as a therapist in private practice, and Bates is a manager at a healthcare company. The Illinois Department of Corrections did not answer a detailed list of questions we sent them about this story. But they did write a brief statement. It said, "The Federal Court recognizes the department has made great strides in improving the quality of mental health care. But reporting done via WBEZ shows there are still people in prison with mental illness reporting physical abuse."

This story came to us from WBEZ new season of the Motive podcast. This season, they're looking inside the Illinois Department of Corrections, which is a story about how tiny rural towns states competitions with parades and chili cook offs to win a prison for their very own and all the jobs and goodies that come with it. Another story is how help people with just a few years left on their sentence end up serving decades. Check out Motive podcast from WBEZ.

Original score for this story was by Cue Shop and Renzo Gorrio. It's produced by Jesse Dukes, Marie Mendoza, and Joe Deceault, Nancy Lopez, John Fecile, and Annie Nguyen. The reporter for this story is Shannon Heffernan.

And Snappers, it is not over. Stay tuned.

[upbeat music]

Okay, today on Snap, we meet Brody Young. Brody Young has one of those jobs, which only the truly tough should apply. He's a state park ranger at a place called Dead Horse Point. Deep in the Canyonlands of Southern Utah. And the thing is, when you're a ranger in those parts, it also means that you're the law enforcement. Now, Brody, of course, he takes that part of the job seriously. But his real love, his first love is the desert, canyons, the rivers, the place. Please note, this piece does contain graphic elements. Snap Judgment.

[pensive music]

**Brody:** You can see all of the stars, it's just so clear and so dark. It's considered dark sky country. When the sun rises and you go on the cliff's edge up at Dead Horse Point, you can see mountain ranges that are 100-150 miles away. It's just desolate and vast. And if you don't go out prepared, it's going to bite you. I have recovered a lot of bodies, whether they were on the river or got lost in those canyons, and they just weren't prepared. So, you're putting yourselves on a tight rope and it's easy to fall.

In Desolation Canyon on the Green River, there's a few places you can go see a skull which is odd, isn't it? But someone dies in the desert, they're going to stay there for a long time before they're found. And some people choose to go die alone in a beautiful place. That happens actually kind of frequently. And that's something I have a hard time understanding, how can life get so bad that you want to end it.

November 19th 2010, I was on patrol. I was on an extra shift. I worked that day but there was some overtime money available. And it's a really warm, warm night. It's kind of the warm before the storm. Then, I went down this Colorado River corridor to these trail heads to see if anyone is still up on the trails. And the first trailhead I went to is Poison Spider Mesa Trailhead.

So, I found this lone car in kind of back of the parking lot, and it was parked really awkward like. I was worried someone would be out on the trail still that hadn't made it back. It was kind of late, and late in the season too. So, I couldn't see a plate. And I kind of rolled up to it and turned on my overhead white lights and got out of my truck and walked around to the driver's side and I see this lump in the backseat. And I think, "Oh, man. Someone's sleeping in there." And so, I knock on the window. I knock on it several times.

This gentleman wakes up and he opens the door. And I tell him who I am and ask if he's okay. And then, he said he was, and then we talked about where he could go camp, because camping wasn't allowed in that parking lot. And he was in a sleeping bag. So, I didn't get a good look at his face. His face today still doesn't mean much, but I needed to get some ID on him and he doesn't have any or doesn't want to give me ID, so I asked him to wait there and I walked back to my truck and I looked back once, which is what you're supposed to do when you're on a traffic stop. But my night vision was blinded from the lights, and I couldn't hear anything but the noise of the truck. Just as I got to my truck door and just as I was about to get in, that's when the first shot rang out.

[sinister music]

It hits me in my left arm, I'm left-handed. It shatters. Man, I screamed out, and I turn and I just see muzzle flash and him advancing on me, firing one shot after the other.

[gunshots]

Three more rounds hit my back. Two of those rounds were stopped by the vest, but the third round broke through and went into my vertebrae. I fell to the ground at that point, and he is just standing right over me, hitting me with round after round. There was a lot of gravel bouncing around. Eventually, he stops.

[eerie music]

And then at this moment, it's a terrible cliche, but it was either you lay down and die or you get up. And man, I wanted to live. So, I got up. It startled him and he ran to the front of my truck and I ran to the back of mine. In the meantime, I'm looking at my left hand and telling it to grab the gun, but it won't grab the gun, it won't move. And I finally just said to myself, "You idiot, use your other hand." [chuckles] And that's when I began firing back at him through the windows of my truck.

[gunshots]

I was also counting my rounds because I knew my reload was going to be with my arm dangling [sighs] nontraditional. So, I released the mag and put the gun between my legs and I used my bumper to chamber a round and began shooting more.

[gunshots]

I fired in all about 24 rounds. And then, he raises his hands, and I stopped shooting. And he says, "You got me." And then, I began to go unconscious. I woke up a short time later. I was laying on my back and I kind of raised my head and looked down my body to see my truck running. I noticed his car was gone. And then, I thought to myself laying there, "No one knows I'm here. I didn't notify anyone that I was out checking on this car." I had been shot nine times, and I knew that the only way I was going to get help is if I got to that truck radio.

[suspenseful music]

I did not feel right inside. I felt very heavy, like someone had poured concrete on me. My right leg was numb, my left arm was numb, and it was really hard to move. And I slowly began just rolling onto my stomach, rolling onto my back towards my truck. This took some time, it felt like forever. And the exhaust is on and it's pouring out. But eventually, I reached the front door, and the front door was open.

Joe, I've always made it a point to get out of my truck leaving that door open. I've just always felt like I should. And I leaned up against it, reach for the radio and said, "Price, two, alpha, six, nine. Poison Spider Mesa Trailhead. I've been shot, please hurry." And I didn't know what to do after that. All my training, I just didn't know what to do after that.

When the ambulance arrived, it took me to the hospital in Moab. And from there, I was choppered to the hospital in Grand Junction where I underwent emergency surgery. But let me just tell you the damage. My heart was hit, small intestine, colon, right kidney, liver, diaphragm, left lung, spine, pelvis, left humerus, left triceps muscle, right forearm, right femoral nerves, right hip flexor. They told me that I shouldn't be alive, say I died a couple of times during those first few days in surgery. But after I woke up, I eventually got to the point where I asked, "Where's the suspect?"

I was told that after I was taken to the hospital, they found the car that he had driven off in, and it was definitely off the beaten path. But they've noticed that there was a blood trail that wandered off down the river corridor. They followed this blood trail for a mile to a boulder field, and it looked like he had been setting up to ambush anyone who came over the hill, because there was a backpack and a .22 rifle and food and sleeping gear. He didn't leave a blood trail from that point on, and so the trail went cold. But when they found his vehicle, they ran the license plate and found that it led them to a name of Lance Leeroy Arellano.

**Joe:** Was there anything in his backpack in the car, that his family could tell you anything that would explain why he shot you multiple times in the middle of the night on a routine traffic stop?

**Brody:** No. No explanation.

**Joe:** Did he have any kind of criminal record?

**Brody:** Yeah, it was very minor, nothing violent. So, why would someone do this? What would lead them down this path to where shoot a cop and run out into the desert and disappear? Not sure why. But federal and state and local agencies began to search for Lance over an area the size of Los Angeles.

[electro music]

**Brody:** There was a river search sonar capability in a helicopter, then there were just a lot of tracking teams, gun in hand and flashlight in the other, crawling through tamarisk bushes, they were tallest cottonwood trees. There were a lot of calls. Yeah, we've seen him. I mean, everyone wanted him found, and wanted to reward and a lot of those-- well, all of them turn out to be bogus, but they checked on all of them. They even went down to San Diego and search to see if he was being very well hidden amongst this motorcycle club. I even thought I saw him a couple of times in town, dark curly hair, and he was wearing a hat. Like at the grocery store, I would go back to that aisle just to walk past and make sure.

I don't know if he would recognize me. I didn't really get a good look at him if I would recognize him. But I had a couple of dreams, and both dreams were the same. We were at a party, and then I would see Lance come out of the corner of the room towards me. He would raise his hand and he would shoot at me. And then, I would shoot back and he would die.

One year after another would pass, and that was kind of torturous, not knowing what happened after he left me for dead and he drove off. Where did he go? I wanted an ending to it.

And then Christmas Eve 2015, we're making little vials of vanilla to give out to our friends. I get a knock at the door, and it's my lieutenant. He says, "Come outside real quick," and his face is not right. So, I go out and close the door on my front yard and snow on the ground, and he says, "We found him."

[pensive music]

Two brothers had found the body in a cave, half buried in mud. And I just broke down. I just couldn't believe it because I thought he would never be found. And I'll tell you, it's only 400 yards from where the backpack was. He went 400 yards and crawled into this crack of a cave. So, I got to see the evidence at the sheriff's office. And, boy, saw the bones, and it was still in the sleeping bag, but they had it opened and then it was kind of laid out, head, ribs, arms. It's really hard to determine how he passed away. But I imagine he was probably scared, because when you're hurt, and you're out in the middle of nowhere, and it's dark, and it's getting colder, and it's starting to snow, you can't warm up, you're cold, your breathing is getting worse. That's got to be the worst feeling in the world. And it's probably why he crawled into that cave, was just to rest.

And there was a letter amongst his stuff, and it was from his daughter. His daughter talked about, "We're finally going to be able to spend this Thanksgiving together," and she was really looking forward to it. But he didn't live beyond that night. He just laid down in that cave, and didn't get back up.

[pensive music]

I didn't know him. I didn't even really get a good look at his face. But several times, I'm told that I just shouldn't be alive. I don't know what death feels like, but I guess I know what it feels to get close to it. Laying on the ground before anyone showed up, I felt like I had help by me that night. It's hard to describe, Joe. But all I can say is that there was such a comfort. I don't know, arms wrapped around me that the other side, maybe it's not going to be so bad.

**Joe:** What do you think Lance felt? Do you think he experienced what you experienced?

**Brody:** That's a hard question. I hope so. I don't know. Maybe someday I'll get to ask the question, but it won't be in this life.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Many thanks to Ranger Brody Young for sharing his story with Snap. After a long recovery, he's back to doing what he loves, working as a state park ranger in the deserts of Southern Utah. But he's also taken to motivational speaking, helping other people figure out how to survive the unsurvivable. To learn more, we'll have links to his website, on our website, *snapjudgment.org*. The original score for that story is by Leon Morimoto. It was produced by Joe Rosenberg.

[upbeat music]

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