[Snap Judgment]

**Glynn:** Okay, so there is the thing you want, there's the thing in the way, and there's you. And that's life. And that’s story. That's every film, every novel. That's everything. Either you get it or you don't. What the screenwriter will tell you is that the thing in between James Bond and the secret plans or whatever, that thing can be hard, that thing can be crazy difficult, it can be absurd. It just can't be impossible. And that's great, but real life doesn't have screenwriters.

[upbeat music]

And that's why today on Snap, we proudly present Impossible Weight. My name is Glynn Washington, and this story, [inhales] cancel all of your plans, kick everyone out of the room, out of the car, leave them on the side of the road, just for the next hour or so, because right now you're listening to Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

In a way, this is a hostage story, but the one that you've never heard before. Sensitive listeners should note, there is nothing outlandish. This story does contain descriptions of drug use, medical situations, and adult language. Former chef, Jake Haendel, picks on a journey deep inside a captive mind. Producer James Reddick has a story.

[somber music]

**Jake:** It was May 20th, 2017. I woke up in a panic because I was late for work. And I know this sounds horrible, and it is, but it was kind of reality at the time. I would freebase heroin and drive at the same time.

**James:** Jake used one knee to steer while he poured out the heroin on tinfoil and took a hit.

**Jake:** Sure enough, next thing I know there are blue lights in my rear view and I'm like, "Shit."

**James:** He opened the center console to hide his drugs from the cops. But at that moment, he just kind of froze.

**Jake:** There was a huge disconnect from my brain to my body. I knew what I wanted to do, and my body would not listen to what I was trying to do. So, my arm and hand were just stuck. I got this stuff in my hand as the cops walked into the window and I just can't move.

**James:** When Jake got to the station, he felt odd, and not in his usual way. His voice was higher pitched and he had trouble forming words.

**Jake:** Bail person comes and let me know when my court date is and walking out of this station, was stumbling, really. I mean very weird shuffle I had. First thought not to go to the hospital and get checked out but to get more heroin because they took my stash. It's what it did, and then got reamed out by my wife when I got home.

**James:** She knew about his drug use and he always promised to get clean, but could never make it more than a few months.

**Jake:** If I was just totally honest about my addiction, which I never told anyone, if I was totally honest, I don't think I would have had the chance to marry my wife.

[pensive music]

**James:** They met working together at a restaurant. She rode a motorcycle and had a hippie vibe. He was sarcastic, but friendly. And they hit it off instantly. But now, years later, here they were. Her furious at his arrest and sick of seeing him high. Him, suddenly unable to control his body.

**Jake:** And then three days after I made bail, I was walking down my hallways, grabbing the walls still, make sure I didn't stumble. My wife was like, "What's wrong with you? Are you fucking drunk already? It's 8 in the morning, already drunk?" Like, "No, no. I'll be okay." "You need to go to the hospital." I'm like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

One of the first things they asked me though, any substance abuse? I told them straight up. I'm like, "Yep, I have been freebasing heroin off tinfoil for quite some time now." They're like, "Oh, okay."

**James:** The doctors told him that whatever it was would probably pass. But when his wife heard the plan, she stepped in.

**Jake:** And she's like, "No, this is not my husband. Something's wrong with him." And she takes my phone and plays my voicemail. She's like, "Listen," and they're like, "Whoa. Yeah. Something's wrong." In my mind, I thought I'd be admitted overnight and sent home with a medication and be fine. I didn't have cigarettes. I asked someone to buy me a pack of cigarettes. Last pack of cigarettes I ever got, I never even opened them because life was never the same.

**James:** They gave Jake an MRI. Then, he fell asleep around 4 AM. When he was woken up, he could tell immediately that he was about to get bad news.

**Jake:** This guy sits on the edge of my bed, puts his hand on my knee says, "I'm a radiologist. I'm here with our neurology team. I'm really sorry, but I want to inform you, you have a very rare brain disease." I remember, they wrote on a weight board, acute toxic progressive leukoencephalopathy.

**James:** Acute toxic progressive leukoencephalopathy. Imagine for a second, rock salts slowly breaking down ice. That's what was happening in Jake's brain. Except the salt in this case was a toxin, and the ice was his white matter. That's the part of the brain that communicates with the rest of the body. A toxin, probably something mixed in with the heroin, was eating away at him.

**Jake:** They laid it out for me. They're like, "This is going to happen very fast. You're going to lose the ability to walk and then you won't be able to sit. You won't be able to eat." They basically told me I had six months.

**James:** To live?

**Jake:** To live. And then, I would slip into a coma after I lost all my abilities of move and most likely die. Maybe not though, but not get better. And I said aloud, "I'm fucked." I was just like, "Whoa. I really fucked up." The thought after that was, "Well, I'm dead anyway. Might as well get high."

**James:** Sitting alone in his hospital room, Jake called up a friend, told them the news, and convinced them to bring him some heroin.

**Jake:** And I started loading it up right in my hospital bed. The nurse walked in, and I'm like smoking it up. She's like, "Uh, what? Uh, hold on. I'll be right back." She walked out of the room and I got no care in the world. And the whole team walks in, and mind you, I'm still smoking it. And they're like, "Okay, maybe you did not understand. If you continue using, forget about the six months, you're going to rapidly decline and expire. You need to figure out how you want to live the remainder of your days."

**James:** As he sat there getting high in the hospital bed, he thought about his mother, how she died from breast cancer when he was just 19, and what it was like seeing her go downhill. He decided he wanted his own decline to be easier on the people around him.

**Jake:** I put it down and I was like, "You know what? I'm going to fight this. Even if I die, I'm going to get clean not only for me, but for my loved ones because I want to spend as much time with them as possible."

**James:** Jake thought that if he did all the right things, then he might have a shot at survival. But his body didn't seem to care about his positive attitude.

**Jake:** Within 12 days after diagnosis, I went from being able to stumble and walk around a little bit, to walking with a walker, with one person, then two people, then not at all. And I started to become contracted.

**James:** What does that mean?

**Jake:** It's basically your tendons shrinking and becoming tight from not using your body. And your hands curling, fingers, wrists are down flexed, ankles. My arms started to be stuck like this, and really, in my hand, kind of my neck. And it's very uncomfortable. They have to put pillows inside to relieve the pressure. And I'm looking at myself, and I didn't even know this was possible for a body to do such a thing.

**James:** There's a video of him from this period, shot on a beautiful New England summer day. There's a lake and a boat in the background. And Jake is being helped up a hill by people on all sides. Do you remember this one?

**Jake:** Oh, boy. Yeah. It was supposed to be my last time outside ever. We knew that I would just get sicker and sicker.

**James:** And that's your wife. Is that her on the video?

**Jake:** No, she's actually on the left.

**James:** Okay.

[video playing]

**Person:** Keep going. You got this.

**Jake:** You can see they're carrying me here.

**James:** Yeah, you're looking exhausted.

**Jake:** Yeah, this was like a marathon.

**Person:** Good job.

**James:** As the toxin ate away at his myelin, the protective sheath that surrounds nerve cells, Jake could feel himself losing things by the minute. His bladder wouldn't empty and he needed a catheter. Then, he could no longer swallow and needed a feeding tube.

What was the worst thing for you to lose?

**Jake:** Speech. It became like very faint. These whispers, it'd be like [whispering] this. It was slow, slow even more, and then the whispers turned into like a faint just to nothing.

**James:** Do you know what the last thing you said was?

**Jake:** Yeah. "I love you."

[dramatic music]

**Glynn:** When we return, Jake, a prisoner in his own body, plots his escape. Stay tuned.

[dramatic music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Impossible Weight episode. When last we left, Jake had lost his ability to walk, to talk, to feed himself. And all he has left is the voice in his head. Snap Judgment.

**Jake:** Nurses, healthcare people, they would always come in and talk to me, even though I could not move or respond verbally. "Hello, Mr. Haendel. How are you today? I'm here to change your IV." This stopped and people would come in and they would just do shit.

**James:** One day, Jake is lying in bed unable to move, his eyes fixed on the ceiling. And the door opens.

**Jake:** Two nurses come in. They start having a conversation amongst themselves. And one of them is like, "Oh, my God, I've got to tell you about this really awkward hug up I had last night." You know, I haven't heard much of anything. So, I'm like, "Great. This is the most entertainment I've had all week." The other one's like, "Oh, my God. Oh, my God, maybe we should not talk in front of the patient." "Oh, don't worry, he's brain dead anyway." I hear this and I'm like, "What? I'm brain dead? But how could I think? How can I problem solve? " And I started getting fixated and really fuckin scared. I'm like, "Oh, my God, I wonder if they never know."

**James:** Jake was now locked in. His body was completely paralyzed, but he was fully present. And worse yet, he could still feel pain. When doctors looked at his scans though, all they saw was severe brain degeneration, which to them ruled out consciousness.

**Jake:** It became like a mission. I was like, "I've got to let people know." Anyway, pretty impossible to let someone know when you can't communicate verbally or nonverbally.

**James:** His nervous system would often go completely haywire, spiking his heart rate to the point of passing out. These autonomic storms, as they're called, could last up to 16 hours.

**Jake:** You kind of look like you're in *The Exorcist*, like arching your back totally possessed, like there's a demon inside you. It's crazy.

**James:** On the days between storms, he tried to orient himself and keep track of time. Latching on to clues around him. Like the TV.

**Jake:** At 4 AM, the TV, that's always on, TNT would turn to this televangelist thing.

[televangelist preaching in television]

**Jake:** I spent 4 AM to 5 AM or 6 AM with this guy every single night for six months. Just this horrible gospel he is spewing about planting a seed and by making a donation, that's your seed. I hate this guy.

**James:** He counted seconds, he did trivia, and he daydreamed about the things he would do if he got out.

**Jake:** Having a picnic on the beach. I was able to walk and get on the sand and sit down. It was something I hoped I would get to do again. I knew I was in a hospital unit where there are tons of other people in "comas." How many other people are talking in the cells like I'm talking to myself? And they think they're brain dead or whatever, and they're not.

**James:** One study conducted since then found that as many as 15% of patients with traumatic brain injuries have what's known as covert consciousness, which is invisible to routine tests. Families are always looking for some kind of proof to show that their loved one is still there. Jake's wife was there every day. She cleaned him, changed his feeding tube, gave him 50 medications a day, looking for signs of life. Her presence gave him hope, even if he could feel her exhaustion.

**Jake:** My wife did not like or want to accept help. So, instead of accepting the help and allowing loved ones, the comments like, "If you're not going to help me in the way I want you to help me, then you're done."

**James:** He could hear her bickering with his family, his dad, stepdad and brothers, and noticed that over time, he had fewer and fewer visitors.

**Jake:** And this was systematic. Started with this person, this person, turned into everyone.

**James:** He wondered if they even knew what was happening to him.

**Jake:** Yeah, it got to the point where she was the only one around, my only caregiver. I mean, I was constantly thinking about my wife throughout all this, and I used that as motivation. "I'm going to get out of this hospital, get back to my wife. I'm going to get over my issues and my addiction in time to correct everything and be a good man, good husband."

**James:** But for doctors, the writing was on the wall. They called his wife in and said, "There's nothing else we can do. It's time to think about withdrawing life support."

**Jake:** But I heard this and I was like, "No, no, no, no, don't do that. I'm here.": Again, this fixation on letting them know that, "You're wrong. I'm here." There was one night where the hospice nurse said, "Okay, I think he has hours left." In my head, I'm like, "Uh-huh."

**James:** His head propped up on a pillow, Jake's eyes pointed downwards.

**Jake:** I noticed my chest was blue. And I was like, "Holy shit. Maybe I'm dying." And you know that sound when you're looking at the floor and that’s kind of humming, this sound started happening. There was this faint hum. And peoples' voices, their volume started to lower, not because they were talking quieter, it was like they were beginning to fade. This hum started getting louder. I had enough time to think about my mom and what she went through in the hospice. This was the only moment my pain began to fade. Humming even louder, eyes fully closed, and I even am able to say to myself, "I just died." The next time I opened my eyes, I was in extreme pain once again. "Ah, fuck."

**James:** At that moment, Jake knew one thing for sure. He wasn't going to die.

**Jake:** But I very might well be stuck like this for the rest of my life. The thought of 40 more years of that was so terrible, ugh, because I couldn't take 40 more minutes.

**James:** Determined to claw his way out, Jake kept searching for ways to make himself heard. And then by accident, he soiled himself.

**Jake:** I was trying to gauge how long it had been since someone is in my room. I figured was roughly 30 minutes ago. So, I'm like I've got to lie here my own shit and piss for possibly 90 minutes, like, "Oh, my God," and it's burning me and I'm freaking out. I hear the heart monitor go off, because I'm freaking out and I'm spiking up my heart rate. And I'm like, "Oh, my God, someone's going to come in and check on me." Sure enough, they came in. And from that moment, I realized I had a call bell system. I had a way to signal for help. All I would have to do is pretend to freak out, which was in the heart because I was always in crisis. It was a small victory, small accomplishment. But it gave me a sense of control in a way, like there's something I can actually do to help myself.

**James:** But Jake had to be careful. If he sent his heart rate above 170 beats per minute, his nervous system would spin out of control, which could be fatal. But by going just over 160, he could safely get the nurse's attention.

**Jake:** So, I had like a 10 BPM beep window. So, I was really good at raising my heart rate. What I couldn't do is calm it back down. And I pushed it too far one day, and I triggered an autonomic storming episode. I had to again go to the ER, the whole thing.

**James:** Eight months had gone by, locked in. Every day, a team of doctors would do rounds to chat with nurses about Jake's condition.

**Jake:** Ask the nurse, anything changes overnight, blah, blah, blah, what are his vitals, what are his this? And they're doing their usual routine. And then, I hear, "You see that?" "See what?" He goes, "He's moving. He's moving something." "That's new."

**James:** And for the first time, he heard a voice actually addressing him directly.

**Jake:** "Hey, I don't know if you can hear me, but if you can do that again." Now, I don't even know what I did. And I'm like, "Oh, my God. This is my shot." I've done something and this is my only shot to get out of this. And I have to make this happen. Imagine you're trying to bench press an impossible weight, I say 500 pounds, and you're giving it all your might. I'm clenching all my muscles and I'm going [grunts] to move what I don’t even know I can move. I've got no idea if I move my toe or my finger. I have no clue. As I'm saying to myself, "Oh, fuck, I can't do it," I hear, "Oh, my God. He's doing it." Right after I'm about to go, "Oh, my God, I can't believe it." I get cut off by a voice going, "No, impossible. Involuntary. I got his brain scan right here. Look at his brainstem. There's no way." I'm like, "Oh, my God, guys. I'm in here. I'm in here." Just freaking out. And luckily, this man said, "No, this is different. This is new. I would like him monitored and I want someone from speech pathology in here." And I'm like, "[sighs in relief] Oh, my God." I was out of breath. And that gave me so much hope.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** When we return, Jake has hope. But hope might not be enough to pull his life back together. Stay tuned.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment. My name is Glynn Washington, and you're listening to the Impossible Weight episode. After eight months of being locked in, Jake has finally managed to signal to his doctors that he is in there. But his doctors, they're not so sure. Snap Judgment.

**James:** The next day, someone comes into the room who Jake's never seen before, a speech pathologist.

**Jake:** She had a white doctor lab coat. Very soothing, calming voice and very thoughtful with her speech, in her affect. She sat on the side of my bed. She put her hand on my chest and was like, "Hi Jake." Very positive. "I'm here to teach you how to blink." One thing I really remember, she never had any hesitation on, because everybody was wondering, "Can you hear me?" And she was never, never for a second like, "I don't know if you can hear me." There was nothing like that. I was like, "I know you can hear me." Never second guessed, like, "This is what I'm here to do with you." I'm thinking this person believes it. The whole idea of the blink is, "Blink if you can hear me. Blink for this." And I'm like, "This is the way out."

**James:** For one hour each day, she would come in to work with Jake, trying to retrain his muscle memory.

**Jake:** Even if my eyes didn’t move at all, she'd be like, "I want you to go through the motion. Feel your eyes get heavy. Scrunch them down. Feel them get heavy. Okay, very good. Very good. Good job. Now, do it again." This was the biggest mental and physical workout of my life. And I'm sure nothing was happening.

**James:** But on day four, he started to notice that something actually was happening. He could see his eyelashes entering into his field of vision. The speech pathologist said to him, "That's good. Now, blink if you can hear me."

**Jake:** This was a slow, half blink, possibly. But it was good enough, and I would blink. And she'd go, "Okay, very good. Blink if you know where you are." I slowly blink.

**James:** She jotted a note on her clipboard.

**Jake:** "Blink if you're cold," and I would blink. "Blink if you're hot." I'd slowly blink. "Blink if you know who the President is." Unfortunately, I did.

**James:** Donald Trump.

**Jake:** So, they do rounds and all these other doctors and nurses would come in. She'd be like, "Well, it's my opinion, I believe he's in there. He understands." And there was a lot of questioning. They were like, "Eh, we don't think so." And everybody started to believe, but they did not know to what extent I understood things. They still had no idea I was fully intact, like had memory, had sense of self.

**James:** So, they set up a more sophisticated communication system.

**Jake:** And then, she goes, "We're going to try something else. This is a letterboard."

**James:** A staff member would hold up to his face what's called a letterboard, in which letters are written out by row.

**Jake:** "Is it this row? Is it this row? Is the letter in this row?" I was sticking my tongue.

**James:** He would stick his tongue out to indicate the row. And then again, when the correct letter was read.

**Jake:** That's how it worked. You spell out what you want. This would take me a very long time. Sometimes, I could get the word 'yes' in two minutes because it was so slow. And first thing I spelled out is, "I can hear you." And they were like, "Whoa."

**James:** Jake listened to the doctors' debate about what to do with him. They could put them in a famous rehab center called Spaulding, where he would be subjected to a rigorous physical therapy bootcamp, at least three hours a day. But that would be too much for him to handle, he heard them say.

**Jake:** I start freaking out, my heart rate starts pounding. Luckily, my speech therapist was there. She puts her hand on my chest. "Calm down, honey. Calm down." The heart monitor is going off. "Do you want to say something? Do you want to use the letterboard?" It took 10 minutes. I spell out, "I can do three hours." At this point, this was the game changer. They were like, "Whoa. Not only is he somewhere with it, he is tracking our conversation and listening to us." And they were shocked. And within a couple of days, I was in Spaulding.

**James:** At Spaulding, he started seeing more of his wife. In recent weeks, she'd taken a pause from his care.

**Jake:** I remember her saying to me, "I needed a break," I took it as in like, "I need to recharge." I mean, the girl probably only had like four hours of sleep a night for like six months.

**James:** The slogan at Spaulding was "Find Your Strength." And when he first arrived, Jake was put through the gauntlet. His contractions had to be physically undone. So, they would coax his fingers, limbs, and ankles back to a normal angle using casts.

**Jake:** I had been horizontal and flat for so long that getting vertical, the blood hadn't been down to my legs, feet in so long that it would cause agony to the point that I would be screaming and in hysterics. The only way you get over is like you build up a tolerance. You've got to do it over and over and over again and then it will become slowly less painful over time. And that was brutal.

**James:** Jake had felt his body slowly go offline.

**Jake:** Now, started getting weight pushed through my legs-

**James:** Every day.

**Jake:** -eventually learning how to actively move certain limbs.

**James:** He got something else back.

**Jake:** Started to learn the MegaBee, which is like--

**James:** The MegaBee was a tool that kind of looked like a little kid's toy.

**Jake:** MegaBee has these color-coded buttons.

**James:** Plastic, with colorful squares, containing numbers and letters.

**Jake:** Clusters of letters and numbers.

**James:** Jake could use his eyes to signal the letters he was looking for, and his speech therapist would type them out.

**Jake:** The thing is you can go a lot faster. It went from me just saying like one more thing like "hot," so they know I'm hot. They know to take off the blankets. Went from that to me saying "Hello, I feel like shit today," or, "My left toe, I think my toenail's ingrown. Can you please look at it?" And they'd be like, "Okay," or like, "I'm really sad because of this."

**James:** Jake's needs weren't just physical. He'd been trapped with his emotions, and he needed a release valve. Using the MegaBee, he was able to talk to a psychologist, one letter at a time.

**Jake:** And I would talk about how alone I felt, how this was all my fault, how I did a stupid drug and got so wrapped up in addiction, and led me to paralysis and all this hell I'm going through. And I talk about my wife and how our marriage is a mess and how she's a mess because of me and how everything is in shambles. I don't know what will happen to me and how I owed my wife, and I would do whatever to make her happy for giving up all she gave up to care for me.

**James:** When Jake finally took his very first steps attached to a harness, his wife suddenly appeared walking down the hallway towards him.

**Jake:** I remember she had like a huge life-sized teddy bear. And my therapist, Rebecca, it was like, "Look, look what he's doing. It's amazing. He's doing so good." And I could see her face, and she did not look pleased at all. And it was weird. I don't believe she slept that night, and I could sense something was wrong. And at this point, she would communicate with me using the MegaBee. And I was asking like, "What's wrong?" I didn't get much of an answer.

**James:** Again, Jake felt his wife pulling back. He thought that if he could learn how to talk again, he might be able to fix things with her. But that meant being able to fill his lungs with air.

**Jake:** You try to make these ah, ooh sounds, but nothing would happen. The average person, 100% breathing capacity, lung capacity, I probably could do like a 5% shallow breath, and that would make me dizzy and feel nauseous and sick.

**James:** A few months later, he was lying flat on a mat practicing. And lo and behold--

**Jake:** I just let up this, "aaah," and everyone was like [gasps]. And then, my sweet therapist, she goes, "See, you did it. You are going to talk one day." And I heard that and I was like, "Ah, man, it's happening. Hell, yeah."

**James:** Next, Jake had to learn baby sounds.

**Jake:** Ah, ee, ae, eu.

**James:** Then, vowels.

**Jake:** Then, ae, ou.

**James:** And finally, blending sounds.

**Jake:** Sssss. My therapist on day is like, "What do you really want to say?" "I love you." I really wanted to say that. The goal was I'm going to call my wife and I'm going to tell her. And we probably put 15 minutes a day into "I love you." I was so motivated to learn how to speak and really do everything. There was like, "I want homework. I want you to tape exercises on my walls."

**James:** After a full day of therapy, he would lie in his hospital bed, mouthing the words.

**Jake:** I'm making sure I had enough air for three syllables. "I love you" was like a stretch, but over two months or a month and a half or three or whatever, I garbled it and said like, "Is it good enough to call my wife?" After a while, she was like, "You're good to go."

**James:** Jake had barely heard from his wife for three months. A nurse set up an iPad for him, and he made the call. It rang once, twice, three times.

**Jake:** She comes on the screen, and she looked kindly confused, and I just go, "I love you." But it was probably worst quality speech, [in a garbled tone] "I love you." And she just looked confused and hung up. I don't know. She was not excited as I was to receive them message or see me. I don't know why I'm still holding on to this miraculous, romantic recovery, sort of how we made it through this, and we're still in love and we're so happy to be together, and this whole fantasy kind of went out. And I was like, "Yeah, this is reality." Yeah, it was around then that I was really trying to get in touch with my family. It was time.

**James:** He hadn't talked to his family in almost two years, and didn't even know if they knew he was alive.

**Jake:** I had no possessions, and I had no phone. My memory was not impacted, but I literally didn't remember anyone's number.

**James:** The nurses helped him search the web, as Jake racked his brain.

**Jake:** Somehow, I remembered my Aunt Varda's number. I've no idea. I mean, that's like the last I heard that. I should have remembered. I'm calling the nurse button before hitting it, hoping someone runs in, like, "I got it. I got it. 210-862 [button beeps] [ringing]

**James:** They plugged them into FaceTime. And Aunt Varda popped up on the screen.

**Jake:** She was like she was stuck in the twilight or something. She goes, "Jake." And I go, "Hi." And she yells for my uncle. She's like, "Adam, come here. Make sure I'm not hallucinating." I'm laughing. She goes, "Are you in heaven?" And I'm like, "No, I'm in Western Massachusetts."

[lively music]

**Glynn:** Jake Haendel is the only known case of someone coming back from stage 4 acute toxic leukoencephalopathy, and one of the few people to reemerge from being locked in. He's currently living on his own in Boston.

[knock on the door]

**Jake:** Come in.

[door opens]

**Jake:** What’s up?

**James:** Hey, Jacob.

**Jake:** How are you?

**James:** Good. How you doing?

I visited Jake last winter in his new apartment.

**Jake:** [buzzing]

**Person:** And now going up. [zzzzz]

**Person:** Try again. You did better.

**James:** He was doing vocal exercises to get his old voice back.

**Person:** Where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

**Jake:** Where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

**Person:** Good.

**Jake:** The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.

**Person:** A sea we must wade.

**Jake:** A sea we must wade.

**James:** Every day, every week, he hits a new milestone, from lifting himself out of his wheelchair, to learning how to cook his own meals again.

**Jake:** I'm like essentially a newborn baby. I've got all the mental capacity. It's just like the coordination and the actual muscle memory, and the best way to do things, for some reason I have no idea.

**James:** Jake is currently working on a book and an app to help people with disabilities get around. He also regularly posts on YouTube. You can follow his progress there.

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** Thank you so much, Jake, for sharing your story with the Snap. We will have links to your videos at *snapjudgment.org*. And it is sobering to imagine there are people right now, maybe within walking distance from where you're listening to this, people who are in hospital beds with their eyes closed, maybe their eyes open, wondering how they got there. Until very recently, my dear uncle, Patnaik, he was one of them. And so, one last thing we want to say to those of you listening, who can't move, who can't speak, who can't reach out, but who are on the inside very much the person you've always been, with that same brilliant light, we see you. We hear you. And you're not alone.

The original score for that piece by Renzo Gorrio. Editorial and production support by John Fecile. Special thanks to Nikka Singh. It was produced by James Reddick.

[upbeat music]

Yes, it's about trying maybe just for an instant, trying to wear someone else's skin. In Snap Judgment, we honestly believe that stories can change the world, and maybe stories are the only thing that can. If you agree or even if you do not agree, follow Snap Judgment on any podcast platform for more incredible stories from all over the world. And what's more, if you're looking to meet the best people on the street, just look around and spy who's wearing a Snap Judgment t-shirt. Guaranteed, that person will be awesome. Yours available right now at *snapjudgment.org*.

Snap was brought to you by the team always rooting for you, no matter what. Even the uber producer, Mr. Mark Ristich. Nancy López, Pat Mesiti-Miller, Anna Sussman, Renzo Gorrio, Shaina Shealy, Teo Ducot, Flo Wiley, John Fecile, Marisa Dodge, Regina Bediako, Davey Kim, Bo Walsh, David Exumé, and Annie Nguyen.

And this is not the news. No way is this a news. In fact, you can literally do the impossible, and even that might not be enough, but you would still, still not be as far away from the news as this is, but this is PRX.

[music plays and fades away]