[Snap Judgment]

[lively music]

**Glynn:** If you look at the people around you right now, you may be amazed to learn that in your midst, there lives a secret, parallel community of mothers, fathers, children, all for people of all walks of life. In fact, this secret community doesn't just live next to us, or besides us, it is us. But so often, this community, my community isn't visible, shunned, hidden. We are the legions of people both affected by mental health issues, as well as the family and support their loved ones interact with. And this community often feels like we're shouting over a gulf we can never cross. And a while ago, after speaking about some of the challenges my own family faced, I got to speak to a range of people coming from very different perspectives addressing a condition near and dear to my own heart, schizophrenia, and schizoaffective disorder. And it created a brand-new project. It's called Unseen and Unheard. Today, I can't wait for you to hear just one of the discussions I got to have with some brand-new friends, Swiyyah and Dederick.

**Swiyyah:** My husband doesn't do it. He listens to me. I think that's one reason why we decided to make it through, because he did listen. So, I'll say the biggest thing for anybody that has a mental illness is to listen to them.

**Glynn:** When two people commit themselves to each other, they can never be fully prepared for the obstacles the relationship will face. They can never truly know how they will react in tandem to life's most challenging storms. In the case of Swiyyah and her husband, Dederick, their bond was tested early by a condition that everyone thought was under control.

**Swiyyah:** I went to college. I have a BA degree in psychology, and I never thought in a million years that I could have a diagnosis of schizophrenia. I was just a normal person. I mean, little weirdness here and there. But basically, all around, I was a normal person.

**Glynn:** Swiyyah is a writer, whose condition inspired her to write two books so far. Her schizophrenia, first presented itself about eight years before she and Dederick met.

**Swiyyah:** The stress started to get me. Straight out of school, I got a job in the mental health field, and it was stressful. Oh, my God. So, it was really tough. That's when I started getting headaches every day. I see that as a sign of a breakdown. Headaches every day for six months. I was laying down, and I remember looking up in the sky and there's a face. It was transparent, no color in it. It was a serious face, a male's face. It then opened his mouth, and I turned away. I didn't want to look at the face. It was scary. And my mom took me to the hospital, I got there. And it was a psychiatrist, a nurse, and a social worker, they're all sitting there. And the psychiatrist said, “Well, you have the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia.” I'm like, “No, no way. I just will keep my hair up, keep myself up. I'm educated. There's no way I have a diagnosis of schizophrenia. No way.”

**Glynn:** Lots of folks assume that schizophrenia can't be happening to a person who's educated, who's organized, and on top of things but Swiyyah soon learned otherwise.

**Swiyyah:** And only way I can leave the hospital was to take the medication. So, I took it for a little while and left the hospital.

**Glynn:** You took the medication. Did it stabilize you for a little bit? Do you remember how it worked on you?

**Swiyyah:** It stabilized me for a little bit, but I was still talking fast. And then when I got in my mom's car for her to take me home, she said, “Oh, no, you're not fully okay.” But she took me home, and then I started getting sick again because I didn't continue taking the medication because I thought, “I don't have schizophrenia.” So, I remember seeing one looked like a ghost, a woman with a dress. At the bottom, it was burned, like she died by fire. And I just got [unintelligible 00:04:54] again.

**Glynn:** Could you talk to your mother about what you were seeing?

**Swiyyah:** During that time, I really wasn't telling anybody what I was going through. She said that I was most normal child she had. She has seven kids, so she couldn't understand like, “What is going on?” She just took me out of my mind, and she grabbed my hand and took me to the hospital again. The first time I relapsed, I went to the hospital two times, in 2003, I believe was two times, and then in 2006, it was maybe two to four more times.

**Glynn:** Okay. Back then when you would get medication, would you take it?

**Swiyyah:** While I was in hospital, yes, I would take it. And then when I leave the hospital, I wouldn’t. In 2006, the doctor said, “If you come back here, I'm going to commit you,” so I just decided to keep taking it. It slowed me down and helped me to think clearer. It did work.

**Glynn:** When it worked for you, did you then accept the diagnosis of schizophrenia?

**Swiyyah:** Yes.

**Glynn:** Was there any positive that you got from it?

**Swiyyah:** The first time, yes. First time was very spiritual. For example, it felt like somebody was controlling my thoughts and it said, “Forgive yourself.” So, I would have a lot of spiritual awakening to the mental illness, which not many people talk about. When I first got sick and was refusing the medication, I did not want to realize, come to the conclusion that I had mental illness, so I didn't want to go to a hospital. And I remember the first time I went to the psychiatrist, and he saw me and came on and said, “You're beautiful. You're just mentally exhausted. It's okay to take medication.” And ever since that experience, I've been fine. I've been fine taking and I've been able to share my story. But before that, no, I didn’t want nobody to know.

**Glynn:** One person giving you permission to be yourself-

**Swiyyah:** Yes.

**Glynn:** -is what gave you that courage, that permission to lean into who you are?

**Swiyyah:** He was amazing. He's a psychiatrist. He actually talked to me. He sat down and held my hand and talked to me, like, “Whoa, people don't do this.” He actually sit down with me and talked to me, and whoa, a huge thing. It was huge.

**Glynn:** Swiyyah, you're in the middle of this. You've just been hospitalized and you decide you're going to write a book.

**Swiyyah:** Yes. It's funny. 2003, as I came home, I said, “I need to write a book. People got to know about this.” I won awards in high school for writing essays and things like that. I did little cartoon books to play when I was younger. I never thought I would write a book though. I never did. It was so much that happened that was spiritual, I had to write down because it was unbelievable, like, “Whoa.”

**Glynn:** I mean, writing books is hard. How did you get yourself together to do that?

**Swiyyah:** Writing is natural for me. If it's something that was really important, that can help a lot of people, then I pursue the writing. I don't just write anything. It has to be something that can help.

**Glynn:** And that's pretty remarkable from my perspective.

**Swiyyah:** Thank you. [chuckles]

**Glynn:** What's the name of your book?

**Swiyyah:** It's called “*Don't Call Me Crazy! I'm Just in Love*.” And then, it's *“Don't Call Me Crazy! Again,”* part two.

**Glynn:** You got a sequel to this book?

**Swiyyah:** Yes.

**Glynn:** Because you don't want nobody calling you crazy?

**Swiyyah:** Right.

[laughter]

**Swiyyah:** I’ve been telling you.

**Glynn:** Obviously.

**Swiyyah:** [chuckles] I'm not crazy. Yes, I am intelligent.

**Glynn:** Setting her diagnosis aside, Swiyyah has always had a special take on life, in her own particular flair. It's one of the things that most impressed her husband, right from the get go.

Who were you actually the day before you met Dederick?

**Swiyyah:** Man, I was together. Man, I was going to bookstores, putting my book in stores. I had my book on Amazon. I was speaking here and there. I was calling people up, and they had an event, and I was speaking at the event. I mean, oh man, I had it together when I met Dederick. He was very handsome. Very handsome man. Then, we started hanging out. We weren’t really dating, but we were just hanging out and I really enjoyed his company.

**Glynn:** When you met him, you had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia?

**Swiyyah:** Yes.

**Glynn:** When did that come up?

**Swiyyah:** I believe he knew because I promote my books.

**Glynn:** But you didn't have any secrets on that level from him?

**Swiyyah:** Oh, no. I never hid it from anybody.

[inspiring music]

**Glynn:** Dederick today is in a word, devoted, and he has been ever since he met Swiyyah. When he thinks of that moment, he recalls her openness and her passion. He was smitten.

**Dederick:** She did outreaches in the community, where she will give a story and she would go over everything.

**Glynn:** What year did you meet her?

**Dederick:** It was around 2011, something like that, I think.

**Glynn:** So, you'd met her, she hadn't had a break for a while. She's not experiencing any breaks during the time that you're courting, and things are going well between you two. You propose to her.

**Dederick:** Yes, it got to that point, because in my heart, I realized that I couldn't make her mind until what I believe she received the source of the love that I was sharing. And once it did, then I was able to make her mind. And then the proposal came, it's on YouTube, I say I wanted to make something she can look back and remember. I didn't have a bunch of money, but I tried to use the resources that I had available. So, I made a little movie called *Engagement*. And I did a little pre-thing before talking about it. She looked at me and I got on the knee, and I asked her the question, because I realized that she is the kind of woman that I do not want to walk away from.

When I asked her that question, and she said yes, I felt a piece of my destiny was fulfilled. And I knew, I mean, I've seen her present, her condition, her history, numerous times. [unintelligible 00:11:52] At the rec centers, at the library, at schools, most of the time I was her camera guy there. So, I kind of understood what was going on. But I never seen it, only heard it.

**Glynn:** When was the first time that you felt, “I'm seeing this disease, and not my wife”?

**Dederick:** Well, the first time I've seen is the challenge. I like to call it a challenge, because it's something she gets to address and overcome every day, and I watch her. I didn't realize how much she's been overcoming it until I saw it, where she had to really grab it and handle it. The first time was when we decided that we try to have a baby. And she mentioned that it could be challenging because of her condition.

**Glynn:** What did you think when you heard that?

**Dederick:** When I heard that, and I said, “Okay, well, let me know if you really want to do it,” she said, “Well, I love you. And I want you to be happy. And I want a family.”

**Glynn:** And at this time, she is off of her medication?

**Dederick:** Correct.

**Swiyyah:** I decided not to take any medication because I was thinking to do some more natural healthy products that could help me. I don't know why I even thought that, but I got off the medication.

**Glynn:** Dederick, before the birth, are you seeing her in a different light? Are you seeing aspects of the condition that are coming up that you weren't familiar with?

**Dederick:** No, because she told me everything. It was like a tamed beast. It's like a beast that knows, "I need help." It wasn't like, [roars] “I'm going to knock everything down and destroy everything. I'm going to poke in your eye [roars].” It was not an angry monster or, "Something you don't understand, I'm not a monster. I'm a situation that needs certain support systems to be able to sustain myself."

**Glynn:** After the birth of Swiyyah and Dendrick’s daughter, however, Swiyyah’s symptoms of schizophrenia seriously intensified.

Well, Swiyyah, tell me about this. You give birth to a child that was in the NICU?

**Swiyyah:** Right. Well, I was having the baby, like a month early. I mean, it was horrible. The doctor told me to rest. I go home and then I get a call from a CPI investigator next day. And so eventually, the courts got involved and they took my child from the hospital without me even knowing it. They just took her and I broke down.

**Glynn:** Oh, my God. How long after the birth do you find out that someone has taken your baby?

**Swiyyah:** Baby was born in June, so around July they took her. They just took her. I just broke down. I slept in my car for a week. I thought about divorce.

**Glynn:** You're living out of your car right after the birth of the child.

**Swiyyah:** Yes.

**Glynn:** Contemplating a divorce with your husband?

**Swiyyah:** Yes.

**Glynn:** What is your psychological state, can you tell us? What are you thinking? Do you remember?

**Swiyyah:** When I was in that car for a week, it may sound crazy, but I was playing my music, I was happy, I was driving around. The stress is off of me. I was just to myself. It was different. But when I got to the hospital--

**Glynn:** How did you get to the hospital?

**Swiyyah:** I went home, kept feeling depressed. And then, I finally said, “I need medication.”

**Glynn:** Who did you say it to?

**Swiyyah:** My husband. He tried taking me to the hospital, and that's when he first saw the real breakdown.

**Dederick:** That's when it started.

**Glynn:** Our conversation continues in just a moment, Snappers. Stay tuned.

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Unseen and Unheard episode. We're in the middle of a very intimate real-life conversation with a remarkable couple, Snap Judgment.

You have this situation going on. You find out that your baby has been taken to a foster care situation. Your wife tells you to fix it and she leaves, and you're saying this is the point your wife breaks?

**Dederick:** Yeah, she told me to do something about it, and there was nothing I can do. And that's when she got in the car, and she just went for a ride. She's in her car going for a ride. I just had to sit there. I had to sit home, pray that everything's okay.

**Glynn:** Are you having any contact with your wife when she initially takes off driving? Do you recognize that she is having a break-- you've never seen this aspect of her condition before. What are you thinking when this happens?

**Dederick:** Well, when it first happened, I was thinking, “Man, what do I do?” And I remember what she said in the training. She said you find out what the person needs you to help them or find someone who they trust that will help them. So, I call her mama, because she always mentioned how her mom was there for her, mom will say, “Do this, do that, Dederick.” I was like, “Okay,” so I did the things that she was coaching me to do, and it helped to a point, because those are the things that she can do even in that state.

**Glynn:** So, you felt that she gave you a game plan for dealing with her unfolding condition in that moment. You felt like she had prepared you for it?

**Dederick:** Kind of like, it was like somebody gave you instructions for a tornado. I mean, you know what the options are, but now actually manifesting those options during the tornado when everything is blowing around, going crazy. I'm trying to remember what to do and trying to do those things, those simple instructions can seem devastating to you, but I was able to-- the support I felt in my heart, it helped me, knowing that I have to be here for my wife, I have to be here for my daughter, and I have to be here to be a bridge to help them to connect while she's going through this. But I have to stay available and mentally sane too.

**Glynn:** How did that make you feel?

**Dederick:** I think about my feelings. I just thought about, “Okay, if this to help us accomplish our goal? Let's do it.” I realized that I had to really be the foundation.

**Glynn:** Do you feel like the authorities are dealing with you in a special kind of way, because you're poor, because you're black or because she's mentally ill? What is driving some of these decisions?

**Dederick:** I will have to say all of the above. I don't think that any people with funds would have had to went through what I went through because they would have been able to afford a lawyer who can say, "These charges are bogus. How can you say somebody's homeless and use this as a platform when you submit a subpoena to their apartment when they show you the lease?" They made me take a mental evaluation test. Something must be wrong with me because I won't divorce my wife. My wife has never been violent. She had no history of violence. So, I figured that part was probably because I'm a black man.

[sentimental music]

**Swiyyah:** I got to the hospital, they gave me a shot. During that time, I was probably hospitalized like six times. The medication wasn't strong enough. So, I kept going back.

**Glynn:** Where is your baby girl this whole time?

**Swiyyah:** They put her in this home, put her in this foster care home.

**Glynn:** I don't have your condition, but I will be losing my own stuff if someone came and got my baby out of the hospital.

**Swiyyah:** Right. That’s what lot of people say. [unintelligible [00:20:45] even if you didn't have a mental illness, you will break down.

**Glynn:** Is this a locked facility? Are you free to leave at any time?

**Swiyyah:** No. Even locked facilities couldn't get out, and that was really devastating, because you feel like a prisoner, you're angrier.

**Glynn:** Who did you think was on your side when you were inside?

**Swiyyah:** My husband sometimes because he will come every day. I really needed that. That makes a big difference, because you don't feel like you're all by yourself.

**Glynn:** You finally feel that you are getting the right amount of medication and you are actually taking the medication you're getting.

**Swiyyah:** Yeah. Oh, my God, I feel really good. I'm really good. The right medication, finally.

**Glynn:** What did you do to get your daughter back?

**Swiyyah:** We had to keep going to court. They will come into my apartment and then they would check my medication, make sure I'm taking it. [chuckles] And then they gradually let us-- They moved the baby from foster care to my aunt's and that was better because she's closer. And then gradually, they let my baby stay with me. So, it's a gradual process. And then finally, we got her back after about a year.

**Glynn:** And what was your relationship with her like, was she bonded to you?

**Swiyyah:** Yeah, she was bonded. I mean, I remember going to the car to get her, she'd get excited and try to take off seat belts, I'm like, “Wow, she really knows her mama. She really knows.”

[sentimental music]

**Glynn:** Okay, so your wife comes back. Do you feel like you can talk to her? What's your relationship like?

**Dederick:** Oh, we were talking. It was good. It was great.

**Glynn:** Are you seeing a different side of her now from the schizophrenia situation? How were you dealing with her mental health issues having just come back from the hospital for the first time, since you all had a relationship?

**Dederick:** I realized that my wife needed more tenderness from me, and things that she can have confidence in. In certain areas of life when it come to me, I say no, I won't. I showed up every day, at the hospital, no matter where she was. And when she was at the hospital for 30 days, they let me come every day. The doctor gave me a note so I can go see her early. And I was just there. Sometimes, she didn't even come out of her room. I just sat there and waited on her. I said, “I'm just waiting.”

**Glynn:** When you're the caretaker, how does it impact your relationship as a husband?

**Dederick:** It gives you hope. It gives you strength when you feel like second guessing or anything. You don't even get to that platform. It just goes to a place of like, “Wow, I get a chance to love this person who's loving me.” Like, man, this is a privilege, man. This is my family. This is mine. I'm crazy for her, I can laugh about it. It's mine. I'm going to fight for it with every breath I got. Just like she made a commitment to taking her medication, to being a good steward over herself, I made a commitment to assisting her because I found out through my research as dad, as a husband, I'm supposed to be the foundation. So, me being the husband, the dad, I'm the foundation of the family. And that revelation gave me strength to say, “Okay, I don't want to crack.”

**Glynn:** One final question before I bring your wife back on board. You have been serving as-- you mentioned that foundation, where are you getting your support from?

**Dederick:** From love. When you love somebody, and you see that look in their face, and you see that they're really receiving it and they value what you're releasing, man, you're Superman, man. Look, I'm willing to put on a mask for my family, and I'm willing to put on a cape for my family.

**Glynn:** Where's Swiyyah?

**Dederick:** She's right here.

**Swiyyah:** I'm here.

**Glynn:** All right. I just love the dynamic in your relationship. I love that you guys take turns with who's got strength now. It's all about having made that commitment, and now this us situation going on. How does this work for you all?

**Swiyyah:** It's definitely us now. We are working more as a team, and that's something we didn't do in the past.

**Glynn:** If someone gave you the chance, suppose, I don't know, right now, to tell your husband how best he can support you and how best he has, could you say that to him right now?

**Swiyyah:** Yes. He's listening. Listening to me. One reason why we were able to make it through, because he did listen. When I was having a hard time in the hospital because they're like, “You're just crazy. You're crazy. You don't need no medication. You don't need no none of this. We're the experts." So, I'll say the biggest thing for anybody that has a mental illness is to listen to them.

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** What is schizophrenia to you right now?

**Swiyyah:** Schizophrenia is the genius part of me. [chuckles] That’s what I always say, is the genius part and it's my life now. It's me. It didn't become me, and so I started telling my story. I advise anybody to share your stories. Everybody, share your stories. And once I started sharing my story, it became part of my life. I decided to start having workshops, I decided to start doing interviews, and do as much as I can to get the word out about Ms. Schizophrenia, about mental illness. We plan on doing a documentary, and we're going to keep pushing, keep getting the word out. And hopefully, we can reach a lot of people.

**Glynn:** You mentioned that schizophrenia is the genius part of you. Dederick, how does the genius part come out to you? How do you see it?

**Dederick:** Even when she had a break, it was always questioned. Like, what if? Every genius says what if. The Wright Brothers say what if. The people who created the lightbulb said what if. Tesla said what if. Now, schizophrenia is a person getting stuck in the what if, not getting to the then model of the dynamic of the question. And I saw through this challenge with my wife, her get stuck. I mean, she would sit up nights, when the thing happened in the beginning, trying to find things to support what's going on with the court system. She was like, “What if this, this, if this, if this?” It was an if loop. The spark of genius, I've noticed starts with if. It's the beginning of being available, to think something more, to do something more, and to be something more. And it takes a genius to be available.

**Glynn:** Mm-hmm. Tell me about your daughter now.

**Swiyyah:** She's a blessing.

**Glynn:** [chuckles] What do you like about being a mother?

**Swiyyah:** I like to see change. I like to see growth. And it's exciting when she says her ABCs, seeing her growth and advance, that's exciting.

**Glynn:** What perspective do you think that your mental health condition brings to your motherhood?

**Swiyyah:** I don’t want her to go through what I went through. So, it's like when I see her do something, I tried to ask, “What’s this?” Like suffering, not be thinking, “What if she suffers from mental illness too? What can I do to help her?” That I’d be thinking.

**Glynn:** Can you describe how your partnership and how you raise your child?

**Swiyyah:** We have the same ideas. Same ideas of how to raise a child. It's the same. So, that's a blessing. That's a big blessing.

**Dederick:** I wanted to family ever since I was in third grade. I was always looking for the one. The one that I was going to receive assistance when it comes to loving them to where they need to be loved.

[sentimental music]

**Glynn:** So far, the undeniable love between Swiyyah and Dederick has been a secret kryptonite against so much chaos. While they can't magic away Swiyyah’s illness, their bond forges a strength and the tools to overcome that challenge day after day. Swiyyah and Dederick’s baby is well on her way through the toddler years. And the couple vows to keep sharing their story as long as there are people to listen and people to heal.

What do you both think your future looks like now?

**Swiyyah:** I think that our future is definitely worth, our future is touching people's hearts, touching the world. It's just greatness. It's coming. It's here already. It's here.

**Dederick:** It's here.

[emotional music]

**Glynn:** Thank you, thank you, thank you, Swiyyah and Dederick. This story was produced by PRX productions, Jocelyn Gonzales, Ian Fox, with writing by Sarah Lilley, and engineering by Tommy Bazarian with assistance from our own Marisa Dodge. And this is project was underwritten by Janssen Pharmaceuticals. Yes, there are more conversations. Just dial in Unseen and Unheard on your podcast app.

[somber music]

Now, in just a moment, I'm going to tell you the truth about my brother, about myself when Snap Judgment returns.

[somber music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Unseen and Unheard episode. My name is Glynn Washington, and we have saved you the very best seat in the house, for our sellout crowd of Snappers at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Snap Judgment Live.

[somber music]

[applause]

Sunday night, and I'm sitting there not exactly waiting, but it is in the air. The phone rings. 11:15, it's too late to be anybody else. I pick up to a scream, “Hey, I have nothing to eat, man.” “Where are you?” “Hey, I have nothing to eat.” “Where are you?” The phone goes dead. 702 area code, he's in Vegas. I get on the plane. In a few hours, I'm on the strip. And I don't know this place. I don't have a plan. I look at people in the eye, and I can't help but think, “This ain't right. He wouldn't be here.” Too many lights, fountains, faces. On the strip, there's a Denny's. I go in, order up a Grand Slam. And this pretty white lady she's looking at me. So, I asked her, I say, “If you were homeless here, where'd you go?” She thinks about it, and she says, “You may want to try the library downtown.” I remember the emails, rows and rows of letter B. Threats, rants about the color blue. You've got to be writing it from somewhere. The lady says, “Good luck finding your friend.” Good luck. I want to weep.

I go to the library and start checking the rows of computer desk. And then, I asked the librarian if she minds if I check out the computer logs, and she says, “Yeah.”

[laughter]

“As a matter of fact, I do mind.” But then, it doesn't matter. I see him. He walks in looking dirty and thin, but it's him. And we don't do Hallmark moments. I go over to him, he says, “When’d you get in?”

[laughter]

“I just got here.” “Uh-huh. You told me you were hungry on the streets.” “[chuckles] No, I didn’t say that.” “Okay. Well, let's go for a ride.” So, we get in the ride, get in the car, and head out to the strip. And Caesar's Palace promises a very special dining experience. So, we wind our away to the casino and we tear up this buffet. Shrimp, lobster, steak. It's delicious, and he's eating with his cheeks bulging his fingernails black.

Three years previous, he was king of the world, a bond trader in Tokyo. Then, he started hearing the voices, and I know I've got to get him out of here. I know if I get him some help, maybe there's some medicine. He passes off his last bit of prime rib and pushes back smiles with his eyes. “I hit the spot, yo.” We walk out under Caesar's electric sky, and he says so. “So, what brings you to Vegas?” “Your black ass brings me to Vegas.” “What are you talking about?” “You need to come back with me to California.” “Wish I could.” “Why can't you?” “Wish I could.” “Why can't you?” “Some kids fake scream in front of a magic shop. “Why can't you come back with me?” And his side starts spasming, and he looks at me scared. Really, really scared. And his body, his entire body is shaking and he says, “Because the spirits say so.” And these invisible demons, they lift his chest up and down like a marionette and he's sprinting down the corner away from me.

And outside, he's waiting. He says, “I know what you're thinking. But you know I think that's the scariest shit I've ever seen. Sometimes, they've got to punish me, they've got to do that.” "Look, man, I understand. Maybe you're tired. You can sleep in the back of the car. When you wake up, we'll be in California.” His eyes roll back in his head, “They said no.”

A muscular, short man in boxing shoes, boxing shirt, boxing shorts, he rolls up and chest bumps my friend, and holds a boxing glove out to me. “Nice to meet you.” He punches in the direction of some people who are giving us some odd looks. People that don't know who they're dealing with. And walking behind this boxer and my friend, I can't help but marvel. He always had a crew, always pulled the posse. Even now, beset by unseen demons, he's got this guy who's hanging on his every nonsensical word, and punching staccato to the beat because now he's a rapper, now he wants to rap. He's got this rap going. [rapping] "Wanna beat [unintelligible [00:39:17], wanna call me a criminal. My mindset is [unintelligible 00:39:23] rhyme subliminal." And the boxer is kicking left, right, jab. And me behind trying to keep up. We find another buffet. The boxer puts a fork in each of his boxing gloves.

[laughter]

And he starts gobbling at a pace that matches my friend. They say that sometimes, the boxing coach let them hang out in the gym overnight. Otherwise, they find a patch of ground somewhere. “Look, you can stay with me tonight, but I have to leave in the morning. You should come.” “Man, you still don't get it, do you? I'm Joe. This is my trial. My reward will surpass any hardship.” “Maybe, man. Maybe your mind is playing tricks on you.” At the hotel, he pulls his hoodie up over his head, curls up on the ground and goes to sleep. I leave the room and call the cops. The man says, “Uh, yeah, is he- is he violent?” And I think about it. In a lot of ways, he's the opposite of violent. He's childlike. “No, he's not violent.” “Well, well then, I'm sorry, there's nothing we can do.” Nothing they can do.

In the morning, I put some money on the dresser and he wakes up, he sees me and he writes on a piece of paper, folded up, hands it to me. “Everything you need to know is right there.” I opened it up, and it's squiggles and lines, gibberish. “Man, you sure?” He nods, smiles, says good luck to me, “Good luck.” I hug him hard this time. Real hard. So hard. Then I walk away, leaving my best friend in the Vegas.

[applause]

[Bells Atlas song]

This is a journey we go on together. And there's no such thing as an ending to a story because stories do not end. But if you know someone who needs storytelling in their lives, someone close to you, someone maybe even not so close to you, do this. Snatch up their phone, subscribe them to the Snap Judgment podcast. Each one helps one. The gift of love, that's how we do. *snapjudgment.org.*

Snap is brought to you by the team that always picks up on the first ring. Except, of course, for Mark Ristich, talking about he don't believe in technology. There's Anna Sussman, Nancy López, Pat Mesiti-Miller, Regina Bediako,David Exumé, Renzo Gorrio, Shaina Shealy, Teo Ducot, Flo Wiley, John Fecile, Marisa Dodge, Davey Kim, Bo Walsh, and Annie Nguyen.

My name is Glynn Washington. And this is not the news. No way is this the news. In fact, you could tell the world exactly what you're feeling inside and instead of being met with rejection and revulsion, you could receive love and respect. Think about that. Even then, you would still not be as far away from the news as this is, but this is PRX.

*[Transcript provided by SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription]*