[Snap Judgment intro]

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Okay, so when my kids were little smaller, I'd take them to the park every afternoon. At the park, the same people, parents with their little Timmy, little Rajiv, "Hello, Maria. That's a pretty flower in your hair." Kind of a club. Every day I see this guy, looks kind of like me, black dude, shaven head, good looking. Okay, maybe he looks like me if I spent more time at the gym, but I'm not on trial here. Anyway, I say hello to this guy, and he says nothing back. I don't know, maybe he's shy?

But there he is, talking to all the other mommies and daddies. Oh, he's the life of the party. So, I try again because we see each other every day. "Hey, how's it going?" Nothing. Next day, "What's up?" Ignored. The following day, I go nuclear and give him the black head nod. He keeps looking straight ahead. And I know, at long last, I have an enemy. An archenemy.

Now, he's got a funny story, he's telling everyone right in front of me while ignoring me. Really, buddy? Wow. I've got a funny story too about that time I was in that place. Now, we're battling for the affections of the mommies and the daddies, I start pushing three kids on three swings at three speeds at the same time. But now, he's running four others on the merry-go-round thingy. Oh, he's got extra snacks for everybody, in case someone forgot theirs. He says, not looking at me, but I've got plenty of snacks in the stroller and juice boxes for days, mother [beep]. Yeah, I bring a kite to the park so all the kids can play with it. Point scored. Next day, this fool brings a bubble machine. Bubbles everywhere. Bubbles, do you know? Can you even comprehend how much little kids love bubbles? Can you? Can you?

Now, if you think, I'm going to tell you how we kissed and made up. I am not. We did not. In fact, I saw that fool last week at the farmers market, asking people if they have an extra tote bag he can borrow. Hey, I'm on public radio. Yes, I have an extra tote bag, but it's in my other tote bag.

[upbeat music]

Today on Snap judgment, we proudly present Rivals. Stories from people butting heads. My name is Glynn Washington. I've got your juice box right here. Well, you're listening to Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

We're going to kick off today's Snap of the story about a time capsule, only this one was never buried. This story does deal with some adult situations. Sorry, kids. As such, listener discretion is advised.

[somber music]

My name is Jane Gillooly, and I've been an artist for decades now, and I tend to collect objects. In 2009, I found a notice about a suitcase on eBay. The listing was a picture of the suitcase opened up, and the image was fairly low res, but I could see rows of audiotape and the title of the eBay ad was Suitcase of Love and Shame.

[somber music]

I contacted the seller. I asked him where it came from, and he told me that he bought it at an estate sale. But he didn't really define what kind of an estate sale it was, so I didn't really know. The cell phone, that number that he gave me just stopped working. I have no idea, but I never did speak to him again. So, I just got it for $400. Inside the suitcase, there were 60 hours of tape. They weren't organized in a particular order, but it came with a reel-to-reel deck. I did just kind of randomly take a tape out of the suitcase and just listen to one.

[tape playing]

**Tom:** One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. Well, Jeannie, my dear darling, this is Friday afternoon at exactly 3:05.

**Jane:** The very first thing I heard was a veterinary doctor.

**Tom:** I better turn up this volume little bit more. I have to talk rather low. Here I'm at the office in the hospital, of course.

**Jane:** So, he had the sound of these hollow hallways and calls for one doctor or another on the background.

**Tom:** Life is a great big struggle.

[PA announcement]

**Tom:** Yes.

[PA]

**Tom:** All right. Just a minute. Damn. There's always some damn thing.

**Jane:** It became easy fairly quickly to discover that recordings were the sexual affair.

**Tom:** I'll register in the hotel in St. Louis under the name of Dr. and Mrs. MJ. Green. I'll be there. Don’t worry about that because I don't want anything to mess this up at all. God, I love you, Jeannie. I really do.

**Jeannie:** It'll be two months, darling, to the day. Two whole months that we haven't been in each other's arms or whispered in each other's ear or breathe the sweet fragrance of one another.

**Jane:** The doctor's name was Tom. The woman's name was Jeannie. And she was younger. She was in her late 30s, early 40s. She didn't seem to be ever as concerned about someone interrupting her. So, her tapes were, I don't know, they were fuller.

**Jeannie:** I'm just about ready to finish up with the Miss America pageant. So, I thought I get just a little bit of it on our tape. It's always quite an exciting thing. I enjoy it, seeing the beautiful girls and everything, and you're supposed to look the other way. They're coming back on now, so let's get the thrill of hearing Miss America announced on our tape here. Here's Bert Parks. Let's listen together, darling.

**[On TV] Bert:** May I have a decision? Thank you.

**Jane:** She was a widow, actually, she was a young widow and had no children and it was never clear to me exactly what he died of. In the suitcase was a list and there was a date in 1961 and written next to the date was, "Freddie dies." There's one moment when Jeannie's recording a tape for Tom and telling him that besides Freddie, he was really the only person that she'd ever loved.

[classic old song playing in the background]

**Jeannie:** Well, that was the end of the pageant, honey, and kind of late it's getting to be, but I certainly am anxious for you to get here.

**On TV:** Shewants to go back and complete her college education and become a teacher.

**Jeannie:** I don't know how much you've been able to pick up on this if we've had it turned down so low, but I'll turn it up some now, run down and talk so low.

**Tom:** I have to talk to yourself, but don't answer back.

**Jeannie:** [laughs]

[laughter]

**Jeannie:** I love it. Use your wonderful laugh on this.

**Tom:** [in a singing tone] Jeannie, I love you. I do. Yes, I do. Can't tell me what song it is.

[laughter]

**Jeannie:** I'd have to be special--[crosstalk]

**Tom:** [crosstalk]

**Jeannie:** Sound like you had a couple on your belt, but you hadn’t anything, not even coffee yet. We haven't even had lunch. You hungry?

**Tom:** Mm-hmm. You know it. [chuckles]

[classic song playing in the background]

**Jane:** Jeannie called it her Memory Library. Pictures of bedrooms that they had slept in, there's unmade beds and the curtains were always drawn. And I only have one snapshot. They must have asked somebody else to take of the two of them on a sidewalk somewhere and they're holding hands and they're just out in public.

**Jeannie:** We saw all of the city and everything by daylight. And then at night, we had some hotcakes, French toast, and coffee shop.

**Tom:** We went six or eight blocks out to the [unintelligible [00:10:18].

**Jeannie:** [unintelligible [00:10:19] [laughs]

**Tom:** [laughs] Listened to a lecture there about all the stars.

[laughter]

**Jane:** Because he was older than Jeannie, Tom had a practically grown family, and he was very seriously considering divorcing his wife. Sometimes, they were very critical of her and just kind of mean. Tom would complain about her. And then, Jeannie wouldn't discourage him.

**Tom:** She'll get up every morning just as regular as clockwork and gets my breakfast. I never have to tell her to get up. She gets up every down morning now and gets my breakfast. That's something she's never done all of our married life. All these things I've been bitching about, now she's doing them and she's doing them religiously and she is doing her very utmost to keep this family together.

**Jeannie:** If she had wanted to do these things, she would have been doing them, Tom. Now, I feel that she's only doing them because you've expressed the desire that she do so or else. I may be wrong, I'm no psychiatrist, I'm no big brain of any kind.

**Tom:** I have a feeling now that there's some information seeping to her somehow or other. She can't be that right all the time. But she guessed on the 14th, and she guessed on Monday too. But somewhere, she's getting some information, and I don't know where.

**Jane:** Lucille does have a cancer scare at one point and has to have a biopsy and everyone was afraid for her.

**Jeannie:** This concern that you had for her and the check on the biopsy and everything, I couldn't understand that, my darling. I wouldn't wish anything like that on anybody. That's too tragic a thing to happen and I didn't want anything like that.

**Jane:** But you too also get the sense that would have made things simple, that would have solved their problems if Lucille actually did have cancer and didn't survive it.

**Jeannie:** I know what a wonderful man you are and how conscientious you are about things. It would have probably put her in bad health for a long time and then you would have just stuck by out of the right thing to do. I know you, but I'm glad for her sake, my darling, and ours also, you know that, that it was all right.

**Tom:** I tried my best to make a happy Christmas when the children had come home. We did. We had a nice Christmas and I'm being perfectly frank with you, I did it. It affected me. So, don't jump on me, I can't take it from two women. I guess I'm not going to do either, that's for damn sure. I just can't take any more of this damn yakking from women. I'm not going to do it. You got a problem here that I'm married and she's not going to give me a divorce. Not right now. I know that.

**Jeannie:** I'd better get busy and say a few of these things that kind of bug me. You know how things bug you about me and so I have things that I need to ask you about. I had a paper clipping here, I'll give you later on. The Salingers, Press Secretary to President Johnson, they're getting a divorce. After all, darling, there's nothing that says that you're not any good because you have a divorce or have gotten a divorce. I mean, that doesn't make any kind of idiot not to be able to stick to the same old grind or something that's become intolerable. After all, this is a different kind of a world now anyway. What you're doing is right, darling, by trying to find happiness in life. But it frightens me, Tom, because we are losing time, darling. I don't know if I expressed things very well, but just a moment. [unintelligible [00:14:35].

**Tom:** I'm here. Yeah, it's going, that's for sure. Oh, darling, it's so good to be with you today. You know it.

**Jeannie:** [crosstalk] You're going to have this tape because I've been talking to you very seriously on here too. You must listen to what I have to say because I mean it from the bottom of my heart.

**Tom:** You're talking awful fast all of a sudden. Is there a reason for it? Oh, Jeannie, I love you, darling.

**Jeannie:** Tom?

**Tom:** I do. I do. I do, Jeannie.

**Jeannie:** I know, my darling.

**Tom:** You don't happen to know where my left hand is right now, do you?

**Jeannie:** [chuckles]

**Jane:** There were long periods of time where they didn't see each other and he didn't want her to waste her life. So, Tom at times was encouraging her to date other people. It was interesting because once she would start to see this one guy named Howard, if she happened to mention him in any way, then Tom would get jealous.

**Tom:** When this thing with Howard came up, it didn't make me mad. I didn't get mad about it. But it'd been better off if you hadn't told me about him, I guess. I said I'd be damned if I was going to wait on that no good SOB. That's for sure. I wasn't going to play second fiddle to him, that's for damn sure because Howard and I are not in the same-- we're not in the same league at all as far as I'm concerned. I actually feel if you can talk to him, you're lowering yourself. There's no question in my mind about that. He won't do at all.

**Jane:** There was a photograph from the suitcase actually, a man who looked like he might have been a truck driver. He was standing next to a big semi. Whether that was Howard, I'm not really sure.

**Tom:** Nevertheless, Howard and Lucille are the two big factors in our love affair. What's going to be the thing that triggers it off? I can't tell you. I know something's going to trigger it off one of these days.

[somber music]

[tape running]

**Tom:** Well, Jeannie, I'm going to start from the very beginning. I had a session with Lucille, and this, I didn't know and there wasn't any way for me to know. She knows everything that you ever put on tape. She had a key made. She's been coming in here when she knew I was out of town and getting the tapes and taking home and listened to them and bringing them back where she got them. She said she had seen the pictures before and put them back right where they were at. So, she knows everything we have done. She's been getting into these tapes all along, and I'm certain she has because she knows these things by heart.

She said she spent many hours. [knock on the door] Yes? So, that's how she comes. She knew all about St. Louis. The reason you couldn't get the key is this. She went to the desk and said she was Mrs. Green. She'd talked with her attorney, paid her attorney $40 for a consultation over the telephone. He said that both of us could've been arrested for registering in a hotel under a false name, not being man and wife on moral charges. We've come awful close to it, Jeannie, awful close.

[somber music]

**Jane:** I was aware that Lucille knew of the affair, but I guess I was just surprised by how extreme this had gotten because after that, he clearly had no intention of leaving his wife. Jeannie would be also oftentimes up late, alone, watching TV, drinking, and then feel like she needed to talk Tom and he wasn't there. So, she'd pull the tape recorder out and be trying to make a tape for him. She had the tape deck set up wrong.

**Jeannie:** I'm so upset I could just cry. Damnable damn thing, every time you want to do something, somebody or something stands in your way. This microphone sounds like an old hollow-- I don't know what. I'm just so damned provoked, I could just cry. Darling, I'm sorry that I've been working with this damn thing for over a half an hour trying to get started on making this tape for you. [sobbing] At 4:30 in the morning [sniffs] on February the 8th, Tuesday morning, darling, and I'm just so upset. [sniffs] I have so many things in my mind but this just doesn't sound right. [mic sound] I mean, there we go. But, darling, I'll try to slow down and get myself contained here, but I want to make it while I can and get it off in the mail this morning, darling.

**Jane:** There's one tape in particular where I realized that she's starting to masturbate.

**Jeannie:** [moans]

**Jane:** And then, after she orgasms, she just starts sobbing.

**Jeannie:** [sobbing]

**Jane:** And she's sobbing for an incredibly long time, like 40 minutes or something like that.

**Jeannie:** I'm sorry, darling, but I cry when it's not-- [dog barking] you there. [sobbing] And I just have to make out. Oh, darling. [sobbing]

**Jane:** When I was listening to that, I remember just pushing my chair back away from the speakers and I just lay on the ground, and Tom was pretty much having a nervous breakdown. He was drinking outrageous amounts of alcohol and he made some really pathetic tapes himself as well.

**Tom:** I hate to hear you cry on the telephone. I know I'm [unintelligible [00:21:36] and I told you I'd always be fair with you, Jeannie. I always have. And I haven't used you, Jeannie. I haven't used you for crutch to tell all my troubles too. I wouldn't want you to wait for me. You may just well take the chain off down, you just well, because I can't go through with it. I can't. I just can't go through with it. I just can't. I just simply can't go through with it. Not that I don't love you. It's not that at all. But I hold a very high position in my profession right now, higher than probably I deserve, and I won't give it up.

**Jane:** One of the very last tapes that I have, she kind of tearfully confessed to him that he is her world. I'm not certain whether I have the last tape or not. There's gaps in the tape, so whether things changed, I don't really know.

**Jeannie:** Tom, my darling, you can't imagine how many times during the long, long days and lonesome, cold nights that I think of you in a million, million ways. I very, very much, I love you. It's terribly hard being away from you so long at a time. You have so many, many things to fill your days and your mind overflows with the preparations that you make. But sometimes, I feel as though I'm not contributing anything anywhere to anybody with the exception of my deep love that I have for you, try to express to you. It's about really all I accomplish in the way of relations with other humans, Tom.

**Jane:** It took a little while for me to be able to track down some records and deeds, but I was able to find that Tom had died, and he was still married when he moved further south. From what I understood, Jeannie didn't have any children. She may have married again at some point, but I knew that the person that she might have briefly been married to was out of convenience. That person, I know died before she did as well.

**Tom:** God, Jenny, I hope you're able to straighten out of this terrible thing that I drug you into. You and I may never, ever be together again. I have some music in the background you probably picked up. It's the intercom that I put in the house. [humming] [in a singing tone] How deep is the ocean? How high is the sky? And if I ever lost you, how much would I cry? How deep is the ocean? How high is the sky? And if you ever hear me, how much would I cry? How deep is the ocean? How high is the sky?

[somber music]

**Glynn:** Jane Gillooly is an artist and filmmaker living in Boston. The tape you just heard comes from her documentary, *The Suitcase of Love and Shame*. To listen and see the entire film, it's distributed by Cinema Guild and available on iTunes. You can also find links at *snapjudgment.org*. The original sound design for that piece was by Snap Judgment's Leon Morimoto, and it was produced by Joe Rosenberg.

Now, Tom and Jeannie, they both passed away in recent years. But if you're wondering what happened to the love triangle between Tom, Jeannie, Lucille, and the other suitor, Howard, well, Jane says she did some snooping and she was finally able to track down Jeannie's last known address.

**Jane:** I took out a map and picked out the closest nursing home and just went there and walked in and asked if she was there. The woman looked at me like I must know something about Jeannie, and was very apologetic because she told me that there was only one person on the list of friends and family. So, I just volunteered and just asked if it was Howard. The woman told me that yes, that Howard was still in her life. From what I could tell, she never did marry him, but he was still visiting.

[somber music]

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** When Snap Judgment, the Rivals episode continues. What if you wake up one day to discover you're the most hated person in America? When Snap Judgment returns, stay tuned.

[upbeat music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Rivals episode. Now, imagine minding your own business, drinking your coffee, starting your car, and suddenly everyone hates you.

[upbeat music]

**Lynn:** I think I saw it on television. That was back when we all watched the news at, like, 6:00. I think they actually broke into whatever else was going on to say, "This just in."

**Reporter:** In Detroit today, there's been a violent attack on an American athlete. Nancy Kerrigan, the American figure skater who was widely considered a favorite to win a medal at the Winter Olympics was attacked at a practice session.

**Lynn:** Two men wielding some sort of unidentified stick-type object, something I don't know.

[upbeat music]

**Liz:** The story was these guys who knew figure skating rival Tonya Harding had plotted the whole thing. They followed Nancy Carrigan to Michigan and then clubbed her right at the knee with a metal baton. The idea was to knock her out of the running for the Olympics.

**Lynn:** They were showing that famous awful clip of Nancy injured on the floor around, near the rink, and people rushing to her aid and her crying in pain, it's awful.

**Nancy:** [sobbing profusely]Why? Why? Why? [sobs]

**Lynn:** In 1994, I was living in Boston. Nancy had grown up-- She's from Stoneham. We all had watched her rise.

[upbeat music]

**Liz:** Nancy was adored, the local kid who was going to win the gold. But Tonya--

**Lynn:** Tonya's reputation before this happened was that she was a tough, athletic, amazing, amazing skater who succeeded against all odds. She saved bottle caps to pay for her ice time. She sewed her own costume. She was like the good kind of scrappy. It was such a huge scandal. Who did it? Why? Who's to blame? After this, Nancy was the golden girl, and Tonya was the white trash. After that news broke, the next time that I left the house, I was walking down the street, I sensed a car slow down next to me. Whoever it was rolled down the window and said, "Hey, Tonya, go home," to me.

**Liz:** Lynn is holding out one piece of information here.

**Lynn:** I was taking private figure skating lessons from a coach at the MIT Rink. So, I'd often be around Cambridge carrying my skates. All of a sudden, it was constant. People would stop me on the street. "Hey, you know what you look like?" What they were thinking was that I looked exactly like Tonya Harding. And the thing is, I really did. I walked into my house one day, and there was a message saying, "Lynn, this is so and so over at the Boston Globe. I heard you look a lot like Tonya Harding, and I'm wondering what that's like for you. Can you please give me a call?"

**Liz:** Lynn's picture made it on the front page of the Metro section. Then, the story got picked up and distributed all over the country.

**Lynn:** That's when the phone calls almost broke the tiny cassette tape in my answering machine.

**Liz:** The media was Tonya crazy. One TV station wanted to drive Lynn to Nancy Kerrigan's house and have her stand on the front lawn. She declined. But Lynn did want to be on stage, to act, do comedy, do something. She was only 25 and hadn't really figured out how to make that happen. And then, she got a call from the king of daytime TV.

[upbeat music]

**Lynn:** When Geraldo called to ask me to be on the show, I called my mom and I was like, "Geraldo." And she goes, "Oh, God." Geraldo was a kind of a middle brow investigative reporter.

**Liz:** He wanted her to play Tonya for their infamous celebrity lookalike contest.

**Lynn:** A limo came to drive us to the studio. We all trickled down to the lobby one by one. So first, the Nancy lookalike. Then, the guy who looked exactly like Joey Buttafuoco. And then, of course, the Amy Fisher lookalike. The folks in the limo definitely asked me, "Wow. Do you mind looking like Tonya with your clear disdain?" So, I was like, "I don't know. What do you think, Joey? Do you mind looking like a dude who had an affair with a 16-year-old? What's your story?"

**Liz:** Lynn killed the lookalike contest. Geraldo asked her to come back to play Tonya in a mock grand jury trial to basically determine her guilt.

**Lynn:** So, he opened the show, very serious voice and very furrowed brow. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a very special Geraldo. We are here to actually consider the evidence with the help of real lawyers. And there is not conjecture here, folks."

[retro music]

**Lynn:** There were two lawyers that I remember. One of them was the lady in the turban with a big jewel in the front. She was very dramatic, and it felt like she had walked out of a movie from some other time. "Why would they do such a thing? She's got every motive in the world to destroy her rival. Of course, she's got motive. She wants to win the gold." The guy who played my lawyer was Joey Buttafuoco's actual lawyer. It was the weirdest thing. It was so weird. And I was wearing my ice skates. I was wearing my skates in the courtroom. I remember so clearly looking around the room, thinking to myself, "Jesus, where do they get these people?"

**Liz:** And then, came the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer. The showdown everyone was waiting for Nancy versus Tonya.

**Lynn:** And you see Nancy and Tonya skate out onto the ice with just feet between them as they skate in their circles, warming up. It is just the coldest, tensest thing you have ever seen. Tonya's Olympic showing was pretty much a disaster.

**Commentator:** The technical program reaches back with the right foot, single.

**Lynn:** She singled her triples.

**Commentator:** She looked like she was uncomfortable, and I think she's going to quit.

**Lynn:** She puts her skate up on the boards and she's pointing to her boot, and she's pointing to her coach, and she's kind of pointing back and forth and clearly upset.

**Liz:** She'd had a malfunction with the laces on her skate.

**Lynn:** She is just crying from all the stress and the whole goddamn world is making fun of her. Can you imagine? Man, even all the times that I felt like what I was doing was harmless, there's a little voice in my head going, "I'm sorry, Tonya. Tonya, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, sorry. I'm so sorry.

[upbeat music]

**Liz:** Nancy Kerrigan didn't get gold, but she did get silver. That pretty much cemented her place as America's sweetheart. Tonya lost. She ended 8th, and that was pretty much the end of Tonya.

**Lynn:** I remember thinking, "This has been fun, and I hope Tonya forgives me, but I can't go do this forever."

**Liz:** The spotlight might have felt good for a minute, but she decided it was time to really give it a go, to finally move to New York and take a crack at the comedy world. She told herself she'd do it on her own without Tonya.

**Lynn:** Once I moved to Brooklyn, I dyed my hair like a really beautiful, rich chestnut brown and was making my own way until one day when my roommate's friend burst in, waving a copy of Backstage magazine. He plops it down at the coffee table, and he jams his finger at this thing that he's circled, and it says something like, "The musical enquirer, a downtown musical in search of new Tonya Harding." We all look up, and I'm like, "Oh, no." What I lacked incredible talent, I made up for in looking exactly like Tonya. [chuckles] Being super Tonya was my asset. It's like this is what you do. This is what you do. You audition, you get roles, you do it. So, I auditioned, got the part, trudged shamefully back to the hair salon. I was like, "Remember that beautiful brown hair dye that you put in?" I said, pointing to my beautiful brown head, they're like, "Yeah." I'm like, "You got to take it out."

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Big thanks to Lynn Harris for her story. Lynn is an author, a commentator, an award-winning journalist, and a mostly retired comedian. She also has a new business teaching comedy to teenage girls. To learn more and watch her perform and sing as Tonya Harding, check out our website, *snapjudgment.org.* The original score and sound design by the amazing Leon Morimoto. That story was produced by Liz Mak.

[upbeat music]

Now, when the Snap Judgment Rivals episode continues, you've got a love story like you have never, ever, never, ever heard before. I promise. Stay tuned.

[upbeat music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, Rivals episode. My name is Glynn Washington, and today, we're talking to people who want the same thing as someone else but what if your rival really isn't a people? After a whirlwind romance, Brian and Vanessa, they get married and move to Kinshasa. Everything is going well until she shows up.

**Vanessa:** Brian and I had just gotten engaged, and it was a total whirlwind romance. I mean, we spent a ton of time on the phone, and we'd sent about a thousand emails, but the actual time face to face that we spent before we decided to get married was about three weeks. I quit my job and went to work with him. It was while we were working together one day that she showed up.

She was totally beautiful. I mean, she had this long, dark hair and these almond-shaped eyes, and she just knew what she was doing as well. I mean, she would bat her eyelashes, had these ridiculously long eyelashes, she would bat them. When she saw him, they just had this moment where time stopped. They were just looking at each other. And then she kind of, like, sashay past him in this little way that she had. And, I mean, from the second Brian saw her, I just knew he was gone.

I would walk up and interrupt them, giggling together, and their heads kind of really close, and he would, like, whisper little secrets to her. It was all just nauseating. They called her Malou, which is short for Marie Louise, and they said that she was the international model because she'd just come from Paris. She was found in someone's hand luggage going through the x-ray machine at the Charles de Gaulle airport. There is a thriving international black market for great apes. And Malou was a bonobo. Bonobos are an endangered species, and there's probably not enough left in the wild to fill a football stadium. Malou's mother was killed, and she was probably taken from her dead body and sold on this black market to be destined to be somebody's pet.

[tape playing]

Brian and I were working at Lola ya Bonobo, the world's only bonobo sanctuary. It's in this beautiful forest in the middle of Kinshasa in the Congo. We were studying our closest living relatives, which is chimpanzees and bonobos, trying to find out what it is to be human. Both humans and chimpanzees, we're male dominated. We kill each other, we beat our females. Sometimes we kill the infants. Bonobos who are so similar to us, they don't kill each other. They're the only great ape that doesn't kill each other.

When bonobos fall in love with you, it's a very specific experience. It's not like the relationship you have with, like, a cat or a dog and not like chimpanzees. I mean, chimpanzees, they'll just love anyone. But bonobos choose you, like they choose one person, and when they do, it's like a laser beam. When you turn up, it's you're all they can see and you're the most important person in their world.

I'd fallen in love with bonobos a ton of times before. I mean, Brian was always laughing at me. He was always kind of scornful because he was the scientist, like he was the real researcher, and he loves all apes for their minds. He wasn't going to get sucked into this kind of, like, ape-hugging-type relationship. But then, when Malou chose him, he was just helpless. Malou was with all the other infant bonobos. Malou is only five or so, and they hung out all day in this beautiful forest. Brian would go up there and he'd squeeze past this little rocky crevice and have to run past the killer bees and hope they didn't wake up. There she would be, just lounging around in the leaves or eating a mango, and she would see him and her whole face would just light up. As for me, I was the other woman, and she knew it. She would kind of squint her eyes at me and give me dirty looks, and Brian didn't see any of it.

We used to eat breakfast outside on the porch, and there was this one morning where Malou must have been watching us, because as soon as Brian went inside to get something or go to the bathroom, she ran down and just knocked over my tea, stole my toast, and then ran off. Later on, when I went to go up to the nursery, all my friends were there, the mamas, they were these amazing women who took care of these baby bonobos. I would be sitting with them, and Malou would just launch herself and just kick me in the head. And then, the mamas would just think it was hilarious. They would go, [foreign language] "She hates you." They're like, "She'd come running from Kinshasa to kick you in the head."

[laughter]

I used to see Brian play this game with her way through her up into the air as high as he could. And, I mean, he used to play baseball, so, I mean, he can pitch. And she would just laugh. She would die laughing. And she would go completely limp. She would be like seven feet in the air. I mean, if Brian had dropped to her, she would have broken her neck. But she knew that Brian would never, ever let her fall, that no matter what, he would catch her. It was this kind of trust that for me, it taught me what really being in love was, because in order to be in love, you have to completely trust that person, even though you know that you don't have control on whether they catch you or not.

After we left the sanctuary, Brian and I moved to America. Malou kept growing, kept flourishing. There was talk of her being one of the bonobos who was going to be released into the wild. I still remember it was springtime and the dogwoods were flowering. I was sitting outside at a cafe with one of my friends. And my phone rings and it's Brian. And his voice sounds very strange. It's broken. He just says, "Malou died." I could just hear it. I knew then that he would never love a bonobo again like he loved Malou. He'll never fall in love like that again.

A few years later, I found out that I was pregnant with our first baby, and she was a girl. I asked him, I'm like, "Do you want to call her Malou?" And he didn't say anything, but he smiled. And that's her name.

[somber music]

**Glynn:** Thank you, Vanessa Woods, for sharing your story with Snap. Vanessa's tale comes to us from the excellent podcast Love Me all the way from the CBC. It was produced by Mira Burt-Wintonick and Cristal Duhaime with Jodie Taylor. Subscribe to the Love Me podcast. We'll have a link on our website, *snapjudgment.org*.

[upbeat music]

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