[Snap Judgment intro]

**Glynn:** At church, my brother used to call them “The Happies.” Rosy cheek smilers would look down at us and say things like, “Boys, hard work always pays off. And you know, the cream rises to the top. But the worst one, the worst one, the good Lord will never give you more than you can handle.” My brother grew livid, furious every single time because we lived in a world where the little sayings didn't always apply world where you could be punished for doing the right thing.

What-what? Our dad didn't work hard? 14-hour days hard? You think the cheat code for people like us is just a little bit more elbow grease? Get out of here. But I wasn't mad, really. I was more envious because I want to be just like them. Grinning, ignorant certain, certain with a warm belly full of roast beasts, talking about lazy people from the comfort of a lazy boy recliner. Yeah, I want to be a happy too. But now I wonder if maybe my brother had it right all along.

[upbeat music]

Today, on Snap Judgment, we're going to cross continents, cross commitments, sacrifices for one man, one story, to see what happens when the right thing goes wrong. Snap Judgment proudly presents No Good Turn.

My name is Glynn Washington. We're going for a ride. And in just a moment, I want you to ask yourself, what would you do? What would you do when you're listening to Snap Judgment?

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** We begin an epic tale of romance, adventure and how doing the right thing can have unexpected consequences. Journalist, Niki Kitsantonis brings us this one from Somalia to Turkey to Greece across the Aegean Sea. Snap Judgment.

[waves splashing]

**Niki:** It's dawn on the Greek island of Lesbos. A young Somali man steps onto a dock. His name is Hanad Abdi Muhammed, and he's being escorted by the Greek coast guard.

**Hanad:** No one told me what I did or why I was being held.

**Niki:** Hanad is taken to a police station.

**Hanad:** They wrote something on a piece of paper and asked me to sign it, so I signed it. Then they told me they were taking me to an interview location. Once we got there, they handcuffed me and blindfolded me, then they interrogated me, but I calmly answered them, same as I had before.

At that point, I felt like I'd failed, that I failed myself, failed Faysa and the kids, that I made the wrong decision. And I felt my life going into darkness.

**Niki:** Did you know from the beginning that it was something special? Can you just describe that first time? Seven years earlier, Hanad was living in Mogadishu. He was a driver for his uncle who'd raised him after his father died and who happened to be a big figure in Hanad's clan.

**Hanad:** Yeah, he's the spokesperson for our clan.

**Niki:** And one day, he was driving alone down the street when he saw a girl with a niqab covering up her face.

**Hanad:** And I asked her if she needed a ride. She said, yes. Once she was in the car, we started to chat and exchange numbers. We added each other on social media. When we first met, I couldn't see her face. But then I saw her photo, and I was interested.

**Niki:** Her name was Faysa.

**Hanad:** We both decided to continue talking and getting to know one another.

**Niki:** Hanad is shy when he's describing their first date.

**Hanad:** There's a place in Mogadishu, where young people go that's like a garden. That's where we met.

**Niki:** He looks down at his hands. They talked a lot. He says--

**Hanad:** In the beginning, when you're dating someone, you don't know if they'll like you or if you'll like them. But after that, it seemed like she was interested in me. I was interested in her from the start. I started to feel something for her.

**Niki:** Hanad loved Faysa's sense of humor, her gentle manner, her smile. Did you have any doubts about proceeding with a marriage, or was it something that you really wanted to do?

**Hanad:** There was no doubt in me. We both liked each other. We had an understanding and agreed to start a family together soon and sign on to whatever God had in store for us. People saw us together, walking around and sharing each other's company. You can feel what's going on. People living in the same neighborhood knew we were from different clans.

**Niki:** And what clan you belong to in Somalia dictates your whole life, even who you marry.

**Hanad:** When my uncle found out that I was in a relationship with her, he became upset. At that point, Faysa and I had agreed to get married. I told my uncle directly, “Uncle, I want to marry that girl. We're in love.” We had a big fight. He told me, “Faysa is no good for me. You're from a stronger clan. She’s from a weaker one.” He said, “I'll give you a girl from our clan who's great and is worthy of you. That's what I'll pair you with.”

**Niki:** His uncle arranged a marriage with a woman from his clan, and he made it clear that it was Hanad's duty.

**Hanad:** I was married to her for a short time. I think it was a matter of seven to eight months. It wasn't anything like a marriage. We just lived together. I wasn't satisfied, and it wasn't my choice. I felt so bad that I even stopped going to work for my uncle.

**Niki:** And how did that end?

**Hanad:** My uncle said that I had been cursed. He sent me to a place where they would read Quran on me.

**Niki:** A strict religious school in this large, imposing building patrolled by armed guards at all times.

**Hanad:** It wasn't a place I was happy to be. You were always under their control. There's a set time to sleep, set time to start studying Quran.

**Niki:** After two months there, his uncle finally came to see him.

**Hanad:** It was my aim to get out of there. I told my uncle, “Look, things are better now. I'm calm. I'm feeling better.” I convinced my uncle and they let me leave. After I got out of that place, I began to think. I looked at my uncle, who I'd given my life to, who I worked for and had helped so much. I came to the decision that I had to get away from him by any means if I was going to have my own life.

**Niki:** After Hanad went home, he started secretly planning to get as far away as possible from his uncle and his arranged marriage. But first, he needed to see Faysa.

**Hanad:** I reached out to a friend of mine who knew Faysa's family, because I wanted to ask Faysa's dad for her hand in marriage in a traditional way. I was able to get in touch and request her hand.

**Niki:** Her father brought the matter to Faysa.

**Hanad:** She knew that I was fighting my family for her. She convinced her family that she wanted to be with me and they should give their blessing. It was a small wedding. The wedding wasn't the important part. There was a small ceremony in the home. Our family gave us a sweet send off. And then that evening, I took her to our new place.

Mogadishu has a lot of neighborhoods. The neighborhood we moved to is far away from my uncle and family. They don't know where we live. I look at it from two sides. First, my life with Faysa, which was a beautiful life, but the other side was lonely. On the other side, I had left the only family that I knew and now I had a lot of responsibility.

**Niki:** One day he came back from work, and he found Faysa in the kitchen. He could tell something was up.

**Hanad:** She made me a nice dinner and she said, “I have a beautiful surprise for you.”

**Niki:** She said she was pregnant.

**Hanad:** Praise be to God. I was excited. All the struggles and problems that we went through were washed away by the thought of having children.

**Niki:** Their first child was a girl. And over the next couple of years, their family grew.

**Hanad:** One boy and two girls.

**Niki:** But without his family connections, Hanad really struggled to find work. He cycled through jobs. And just when he thought he'd gotten out of his uncle's grasp, he started receiving messages through the clan telling him to leave Faysa and to come back home, and then there was a whole new threat to deal with.

**Hanad:** The pressure I felt and the danger my life was in were real.

**Niki:** The insurgent group, Al-Shabaab, was trying to recruit him.

**Hanad:** They said, “Anyone who votes isn't a Muslim anymore.” They knew my uncle, who was in politics. They knew I'd been his driver. I felt cornered. You hear about young people who made it to Turkey or to Europe, you don't know what they went through, you don't know what the journey will be like or how much they paid. All you hear is so and so left. I made the decision that if I found the chance to leave, I would take it.

**Niki:** Hanad's chance to leave Somalia came pretty unexpectedly. An older cousin of his was traveling to Istanbul for medical treatment, and he needed a companion.

**Hanad:** He had kidney stones. He wanted me to help him on the journey and get him to the hospital.

**Niki:** Hanad knew that if he made it to Turkey, he could take a boat across the Aegean Sea to Greece, seek asylum there, and then work to bring his family over.

**Hanad:** I thought that I would get out of the trouble I was in.

**Niki:** But when he told Faysa--

**Hanad:** she was not convinced. She said to me, “You want to leave me after everything I did to be with you?” She stood her ground and said that, “Whatever God has in store for us is best and that I should stay here.” She worked hard to change my mind, but I told her that I felt like we had a good chance to change our lives for the better.

**Niki:** The night before his trip, Hanad sat down for dinner with Faysa and the kids.

**Hanad:** I felt the need to have a nice dinner at home. You can imagine it was a difficult situation, a lot of unknowns, the kids didn't understand. That night, she was crying, angry and upset. In the end, she allowed me to go, but I knew that it was heavy for her to take.

**Niki:** Early the next morning, Hanad left Somalia.

**Hanad:** I was fearful, but not for myself. I thought to myself, “What will happen to my wife and kids after I leave? What will they do when I'm away?” Up until then, I had only thought about how quickly I could make the trip.

**Niki:** In Turkey, Hanad was just one of many Somalis hoping to go to Greece.

**Hanad:** There were challenges. I knew people who turned back. COVID was around. But despite all this, this is what I had to do. I had to make this journey. There was just too much at stake.

**Niki:** After his cousin left the hospital, Hanad left Istanbul too, heading for the coastal city of Izmir. But even there, his uncle had eyes on him.

**Hanad:** There were people who saw me and knew my uncle. That's how he figured out I was in Turkey. There were Somalis trying to convince me to return, saying, “Your uncle needs you. You need to go back to your uncle.” It would have been easy for my uncle to come there and make me return. I told myself I had to get out of there before my uncle came and got the police involved.

**Niki:** Hanad learned about a beach where human smugglers loaded their boats, charging desperate people thousands of dollars for the crossing.

**Hanad:** That morning, I was told a boat was leaving. I said, “I'm ready.” From the start, I've been ready. I didn't bring a lot of clothes. I ain't even have a jacket. I was brought to a place where they had other Somalis. There were about eight people there. I was the 9th. We were put on a truck, and when we got off, we were close to the sea.

**Niki:** Hanad joins a crowd of refugees from African countries, men, women and children, all hoping to make the crossing that night.

**Hanad:** We got there around 03:00 in the afternoon. After evening prayer, when the sun began to set, we were brought to shore. We saw some Turkish men near the water getting a boat ready. We met our way out once it was dark, around 10:00 or 11:00.

**Niki:** The boat is a small black dinghy made of plastic. Everybody starts to load in, smugglers holding guns on either side of the crowd.

**Hanad:** There were five men there. They were speaking in Turkish. You could feel that this was a risky trip, completely illegal.

**Niki:** One of the smugglers asks Hanad if he speaks any Turkish. Hanad does. So, the smuggler tells him to sit down next to the steering wheel.

**Hanad:** Four of the smugglers stayed behind on shore, and one came with us to drive the boat.

**Niki:** His driver, a short young man, squeezes in next to Hanad. He starts the engine and begins to pilot them towards the open sea.

[boat revs away]

[somber music]

**Glynn:** When Snap returns, the story of the crossing and how Hanad winds up in handcuffs. Stay tuned.

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the No Good Turn episode. Just before the break, Hanad and his 33 fellow passengers are crossing the Aegean Sea on a flimsy plastic boat led by human smugglers who were just about to betray them. Snap Judgment.

**Hanad:** It was windy that night. We were in complete darkness. There were women and children on the boat and they started yelling and crying once we were in the water. I was afraid too. Yeah, I was one of those people. I had never been on a boat before. The sea started getting really choppy, but we had nowhere to turn back to, nowhere else to go, only forward.

**Niki:** After about half an hour, the dinghy slows to a stop. The smuggler piloting the boat turns to Hanad and says, “Take the wheel. You're piloting this boat now.”

**Hanad:** I was horrified. I was counting on this man to take us where we were going. I didn't think that one of us would end up having to drive the boat. He started to fight with me and took out his gun. He struck me across the face and forced me to take hold of the boat. At the same time, he was on the phone with someone. So, I knew there must have been another boat nearby.

**Niki:** Another vessel appears out of the darkness.

**Hanad:** He then jumped on board to leave with them.

**Niki:** The other boat speeds away. The smugglers have abandoned them at sea.

**Hanad:** People were screaming and praying all around me. I just grabbed the wheel, but I was afraid. I didn't even know a lot about boats. Thought that if I didn't put my hand on the wheel, it might turn off. Maybe the boat could flip over due to the weight of the engine. After a while, the motor shut off. Just like that, it turned off. We tried to work together to kickstart it. I couldn't get it to turn back on.

**Niki:** A few people pull out their cell phones, panicking. They want to go back to Turkey.

**Hanad:** We decided to call the Turkish coast guard to come to our location. After a while, they answered and said they'd be coming for us, but we didn't see anything.

**Niki:** It takes nearly an hour, their plastic dinghy bobbing in the waves, before a Turkish coast guard cutter finally appears.

**Hanad:** They didn't do what we expected at all. They started flashing a big light at us and recording a video. They circled us in the water, and you could feel that they were pushing us from behind.

**Niki:** To push you in a different direction.

**Hanad:** Yeah, so they could push us out of Turkish waters.

**Niki:** The Turkish coast guard, perhaps to avoid having to perform a rescue is pushing the dinghy towards Greek waters. And as they circle, their wake sends up five-foot waves that engulf Hanad and the other people on board.

**Hanad:** We didn't have anything to remove the water from inside the boat. It felt as if the boat would flip over. We screamed at the Turkish coast guard. Some of the men who spoke Turkish well started to shout.

**Niki:** Then the Turkish coast guard abruptly leaves.

**Hanad:** Then we saw another light coming our way. We saw the Greek flag.

**Niki:** It's the Greek coast guard.

**Hanad:** The men on that boat threw two ropes to us. Everyone stood up, wanting to get saved first. As we all began to stand up, the boat moved around, bringing in even more water. A lot of people fell into the sea. There were only about three people on the Greek ship who are helping us. Three people are helping 30 some people up. They're not going to be able to get to everyone. We all finally got on board and did a headcount. That's when we realized that there were two girls missing.

**Niki:** Two women have disappeared into the sea. It's dawn when the ship pulls into port on the Greek island of Lesbos. The Greek coast guard is asking Hanad and the others questions.

**Hanad:** They wrote down our names and some people were interviewed. What was important for them to know was who was driving the boat. “That man drove it,” they all said.

**Niki:** That man, meaning, Hanad.

**Hanad:** They even asked me and I told them the truth. I said that a Turkish man had been driving us, but at the end, I was the one driving.

**Niki:** Everyone rescued from the sea is sent to a refugee camp, except for him, that is.

**Hanad:** They made me stay behind while everyone else went on the bus.

**Niki:** They take him to a police station.

**Hanad:** They wrote something on a piece of paper and asked me to sign it. So, I signed it.

**Niki:** It's a confession to the crime of human smuggling, written in Greek.

**Hanad:** Then they told me they were taking me to an interview location. Once we got there, they handcuffed me and blindfolded me.

**Niki:** Because Hanad had his hand on the wheel of the boat, he is now, under Greek law, considered a human smuggler.

**Hanad:** They weren't paying me to take them across the sea, and I definitely wasn't making any money off of these people. I didn't put my hand on the wheel, because I was in charge. It was because I wanted to rescue them and myself.

**Niki:** Hanad is locked in a cell.

**Hanad:** Yeah. They didn't even let me change out of my clothes in that jail cell. There was no food there, no blankets. It was cold. I was absolutely miserable.

**Niki:** After five days, he's sent to prison, where he's finally able to make phone calls. But he can't bring himself to call Faysa.

**Hanad:** She didn't want me to go in the first place. What would I say to her? The phone in jail has a privacy box where you can easily make a call. When I called her, I could tell that she was aware of my situation. She had heard word around town. She began to cry and be upset with me. I told her this was our destiny, that we had to be patient and things would work out.

**Niki:** Did that attempt to reassure her work? Did she accept that, was she eventually convinced that things would be okay?

**Hanad:** The person who was her love and partner in life is now in prison. How can her heart rest?

**Niki:** Hanad is taken before a judge to receive his sentence. Greek policemen on either side of him.

**Hanad:** Once you're put in prison and have your freedom taken, your hands are bound. They already believe you're guilty.

**Niki:** The court makes its ruling. And when Hanad is sent back to prison and given a translator, he finally understands what the judge has said.

**Hanad:** I didn't know that morning that I'd been sentenced to 142 years.

**Niki:** 142 years. That's three and a half years for every person on the dinghy, plus 30 years for the two women who died at sea. Greek authorities basically use these harsh sentences to try and discourage illegal migration. But more often than not, it's the migrants who end up taking the fall.

**Hanad:** My lawyer told me that I'd have another court appearance in six months. He tried to give me hope that day. But when I got to prison, I talked to people who had more experience and who knew the system really well. They broke it down for me. That's when I felt the weight of my situation. I couldn't leave the bed. I'd be thinking all day. The only time I would get up is to grab food. The rest of the time I'd be lying in my bed just thinking.

**Niki:** So, when you actually ended up speaking to Faysa to tell her the sentence, what did she say?

**Hanad:** I didn't tell her myself, but I didn't have the strength to do that. I think someone in my family told her. When she heard what happened, she fainted and was taken to the hospital. And then the first time I talked to her, she got very upset with me, she was like, “You shouldn't have done this. I already told you this would happen. Why didn't you stay?” She was angry. She would hang up on me, and then I'd have to call her back. It was just a hard situation.

**Niki:** Hello, Hanad.

**Hanad:** Huh, how are you?

**Niki:** How are you, Hanad?

**Hanad:** Good. I'm fine. Who?

**Niki:** When I spoke to Hanad in prison, it had been nearly two years since his sentencing. Three years since he last saw Faysa and his children.

**Hanad:** This prison is made up of ten rooms. I think each room there's about 20 something people who sleep there.

**Niki:** He reads books, trying to improve his English. And every few months, he's able to call Faysa and ask about the kids.

**Hanad:** The oldest is in Quran school. We're Muslims, so it's important for us to ground our children in faith. What's important for me is to know about their health, how they're living and what's been new for them. I also want to tell them what life has been like in prison for me and what I think will happen in the future.

**Niki:** News of Hanad's extreme sentence has become something of a talking point in Greek politics, with a group of legislators in the European parliament lobbying on his behalf. Two lawyers specializing in migration cases have been representing him pro bono.

**Lawyer:** This law that sends to the prison, all these people is an absurd law. It's a law which-- [crosstalk]

**Hanad:** My lawyer arrived. He told me that on Sunday we'll meet at the police station. Right now, I've got hope.

**Niki:** Hanad's lawyer tries to track down witnesses to speak on his behalf. But most of the people from the dinghy have already left Greece. He's able to contact one man, Abdi AbdiKafi Mohammed, who settled in Austria. And I was able to text with Abdi AbdiKafi. He told me that when the situation got bad, Hanad tried to help. “Hanad was like all the other people, seeking asylum and a better life,” he told me. When Abdi AbdiKafi travels back to Greece to give a statement at Hanad's hearing, he tells the court that he never would have come to testify if Hanad was one of the smugglers. “That night he helped me live,” he says, “And I thank him for that.”

[applause]

**Niki:** When Hanad wins his case, he hugs his lawyer. He's smiling.

**Hanad:** It was like I had received the keys to life. Everything changed. The hope that I had lost came back. I felt myself coming out of the darkness. I couldn't even stop the tears that night.

**Niki:** So, Hanad, thank you very much for agreeing to this interview again. The last time I see Hanad, he's working at a laundry in Athens, washing towels for the big hotels, trying to save money to bring his family to Europe.

**Hanad:** I go to the Central Square in the afternoon. When I see the tourists come and see the families walking there, I start to yearn for my own family and remember the distance that separates us.

**Niki:** He and Faysa still talk for an hour or two every night.

**Hanad:** She had so much patience with me. She watched me get 142-year sentence. She waited for two years while I was in prison. I swear to Allah, I'm ready to do anything I can to make her and my children happy.

**Niki:** What are his plans once Faysa comes here? What would he like to do for her?

**Hanad:** I'd like to take her to one of these Greek beaches, Mykonos. I'd like to show her a beautiful life one of these days.

**Faysa:** [foreign language]

**Hanad:** I've missed her so much. My wife's conversations and jokes, that's who I chose to spend my life with. She's living inside of me right now.

**Faysa:** [foreign language]

**Hanad:** Okay.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** Thank you, thank you, thank you, Hanad and Faysa, for sharing your story with us. We hope with all our hearts that you will be together soon. That story was reported by Niki Kitsantonis. Hanad’s translation was read by Said Shaiye. Additional recording by Daphne Tolis. Additional translation by Abdi Mohammed. The original score is by Lauryn Newson, who's produced by John Fecile and Niki Kitsantonis. Storytelling with the beat continues right after the break. Stay tuned.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment. My name is Glynn Washington. We're putting in miles today. We're going to stay on the road for our next story. Traveling overseas during the swinging 60s, the storyteller, Richard Hatch, was but 12 years old and head over heels for the cool girl at the local American school. I'll let Richard take it from here.

**Richard:** I was 12 years old. Living in a foreign land, there were a hundred in my 7th grade class, about a hundred of us. And we were the sons and daughters of military men, diplomats and a few private industry folks, but mostly diplomats and military.

Jill was the new girl in school. She just was so different from everybody else. Long brown hair, big brown eyes, hands down, just stunning. If you want an idea of what Jill was like, let me tell you this one thing. Chewing gum in those days, you had five sticks in one stack and they were all wrapped with aluminum foil. She would take the aluminum foil and wrap it tight and then she'd stick it in her comb. This is in class. This is in school, okay?

When things get dull and boring, she'd go over and very secretly she'd stick both ends of that aluminum foil into the power socket, and you'd hear this tremendous boom. And a big white smoke would go up and she scoot back to her desk and it would really spook the teachers. And then those of us who were competing for her affection would, “It was me. No, no, it was me.” We'd always take the fall for. Now, that's what the kind of person. Just crazy and fun.

Now it was really important for us to communicate with each other. The only way that we could do it was to write notes to each other. And so, teachers would not know who we are if they intercepted the notes, we decided that we would all pick our own secret code names. Jill's code name was Fortuna. And I said, “Jill, why you pick Fortuna?” She'd been in boarding school. She'd lived throughout Europe. So, I said, “Fortuna? What's Fortuna?” She says, “Oh, Richard, you're such a bore.” She would kick into this English accent and she says, “Don't you know? Fortuna is the Goddess of fortune and fate and good luck.” I said, “Ah, okay, that makes a lot of sense.” She was a Goddess in my eyes, so great. I decided that my code name would be Danger 9b. “Okay, that's a good one.” Jill came up—

**Regina:** Yeah. How Danger 9b be? How'd you come up with that one?

**Richard:** I was not cool. [singing *If I Only Had the Nerve* by Judy Garland] Life is sad, believe me Missy, without the vim and verve. Sixth grade, the musical *The Wizard of Oz*, and I got cast as the Cowardly Lion. [in a singing tone] I could show my prowess, be a lion, not a mouse, if I only had the nerve.

[applause]

I had a rival and his name was Mitch. Mitch's code name was Diablo. Which I thought [chuckles] was so, so appropriate. He had the looks. He had the charm, and he could cite poetry. It was tough competition. Jill, I think, she was gravitating to him. So, he was the one I knew I had to beat.

[indistinct conversations]

We went to a dance at her house on time. And The Beatles had just come out big. I wanted to dance with Jill. So, I arranged to have a song called a *P.S. I love you*. It's a slow song. We could dance together in the old style. That was the plan. Ah, that would be so nice, swinging back and forth. A nice home, it was all carpeted. And all of a sudden, whoever's in charge of the record player, puts on *Twist and Shout*. Jill, I don't know what she learned, she could really move. Mom couldn't teach me how to do that stuff. So, you do your best, but I'm just devastated and you can't have a conversation because the song is the rowdiest one on the whole record.

The tables have turned and Diablo has probably struck again. It had to have been him that put on *Twist and Shout* because he knew it was my dance. My plans are totally tattered. I have no idea what the next step is going to be. I got to come up with something that is going to turn the tables on Mitch, give me a little bit more of an advantage because up to this point, so many things were not working out. Now, her best friend would give me advice. She said, "Well, you're going to have to go big, do something to get her attention.

The Beatles had another song called *Listen, Do You Want to Know a Secret?* And I'm thinking, "That's it. I'm going to tell her my greatest secret. And it has to be something spectacular." Trouble is, I got to come up with a secret. [chuckles] Come up with something. So, I made a time for Jill and I just to meet and to walk one evening. My biggest fear would have been, is she going to believe this?

That night when we walked together was the first time we were together alone. It's quiet. It had been raining. It was in the fall, so it was a little on the cold side. The streets were shining. You know, that smell of just after rain? It's just so refreshing. She had this little black furry hat, this black turtleneck sweater. She had a sense of style and sophistication. I reached down and I grabbed her hand and she just held on tight. The electricity holding her hand was, I don't know what it did to me, it was something new. Okay, I'm going to do this. As we're walking, I said, "Okay, Jill, I'm ready to tell you my secret. Me and my whole family, we're all spies for the US government." And she stops and looks at me, and I said, "I need your help on a couple of assignments." She stares at me, and then she kisses me.

Powwow, pop, zing zang. I'm all in now. Whoa. Although this was my first kiss, it became very apparent that it was not her first kiss, because she was really good at it. I thought I've got to do everything I can to keep this going. So, I said, "Jill, we've got to stake out the Russian embassy tonight. That's the assignment." Now my idea of a stakeout is just look around, don't be too suspicious. Just might stroll by, don't blow your cover. Don't do anything stupid. Don't say anything. Don't backtrack. Nothing. You're committed. So, act cool. This is it. I was still trying to recover from her reaction being so positive, far beyond my dreams.

I had no inkling of what was coming. We certainly knew that the Russians were our enemies. They tried to put nuclear missiles into Cuba. The Russian Embassy was not far. There was a gate, and then there was a call button right next to the gate. We're strolling by. And, again, my idea of the stakeout was to keep it simple, and just don't spend much time there. But she goes over and she pushes the call button. Nobody answers the call button, the gate opens. She says, "Come on. Let's have some fun." [echoes]

It doesn't occur to me till we're walking into the grounds, this is the Russian Embassy. I was reeling from the whole idea of her having kissed me, but also reeling from the fact that the gate even opened and that she's pulling me inside. And the biggest thing about it is, my dad was a spy for the US government. They recruited him into counterintelligence. I quickly figured out counterintelligence was spy stuff. Now, I don't remember him ever having to say, "Don't say anything." But it was just natural, if someone asked me what your dad did, I said, "Ah, he does business stuff." I had a presence of mind enough to know that you don't talk about those things. So, all this has hit me, "Wait a minute. My dad's a spy, and I'm walking on the enemy ground. What are we doing? What are we going to come up with?"

When I see the soldier coming down the steps with this intimidating uniform, and an intimidating firearm, that got me nervous. He was this big guy. But Jill takes it in stride, Jill, calmly starts talking to him. He said something in Russian to us. She says, "We are seeking the British Embassy." He only spoke Russian, he had no idea what either one of us were saying. So, he ushers us up into this little waiting room into the embassy. I don't know what the consequences, what can they do? Do they just kick us out? Do they actually take us in and use us for some kind of prisoner exchange? Holding hands is the least of my thoughts at this point. I'm thinking about survival.

This man eventually comes, some kind of diplomatic, and he spoke English and he says, "Children, [chuckles] what are you doing here? Can I help you?" And she says, "Da, spasibo," which is Russian, yes, thank you. And then, she goes on in English saying, "Do you have any brochures or pictures?" In those days, you could not visit Russia. No tourists were allowed getting information, which was pretty tricky. She describes that she's doing a school project. He did produce some brochures. They were all in Russian. But by this time, I was thinking Jill probably could read them. [laughs] Who knew?

At the end of that, as we're walking out of the embassy, it was time to get her home. So, it's such a stupor. I don't remember how I got home from her house. But when I finally did arrive, there was my dad waiting for me. Little did I know, my dad got the word from his operatives, from his contacts that his son and his girlfriend were in the Soviet compound. "What are they doing there?" I thought that my father would be very upset that I've may be blown his cover. That if the word got out in the community that he was involved in espionage, that could put him in jeopardy. It clearly dawned on me, you can't tell him. You can't tell him that you told Jill that the whole family are spies. You can't do it.

There's my dad saying, "What were you thinking?" I said, "What?" And I didn't tell him that I said I was a spy. I just said, "Oh, well, Jill had this homework assignment. I was helping her with her homework." I was grounded for a while, pretty much confined to barracks, [chuckles] was the term. Frankly, that separation from Jill, I think, only heightened her excitement about, "Well, this guy's got something to give." Being grounded was probably the best thing, because I didn't have to follow up with anything for a couple of weeks. And so, there was this mystery still about, "Wow, what's next?"

After a while, things fade. I didn't have a badge, and I didn't have cool stuff. So, it wasn't enough to keep her total interest because other guys kept popping up. My dad was being transferred back to the States. It was time to leave at the end of the school year. By that time, Diablo had had won over Fortuna, and Danger 9b was leaving the scene. What could I do? I was ready to give up and admit defeat, but there's nothing I could do, except write letters from thousand miles away. I was hoping that I could keep the contest going. But how do you chase a butterfly? I'm not sure that I could have ever kept up with her. And I just lost track of her. So, that's over 50 years.

When this all happened, I decided, if I'm talking about her, I better get her permission. I better try to find her. I found her quite quickly. No one was answering the phone for several days. And then finally, a man answers the phone. I quickly tell him, "This isn't a crank call. I'm an old friend of Jill would love to talk to her." I was so excited about talking to Jill after 50 years. I just thought that all those emotions would flood back and she would say, "Oh, Rick, I remember." She picks up the phone, and she did not. That was crushing. But she was a lovely lady, and we reminisced and she said, "Boy, I'm glad I had such a big effect on you, but I don't remember that at all." That's okay. Makes for a good story.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Thank you. Thank you to Richard Hatch aka Danger 9b for sharing your story with Snap. Rick is back in the US of A. And while we have it on good authority that he hasn't got into any spy capers of late, he is putting the finishing touches on a kid friendly memoir about his travels abroad. To find out more, head on over to our website, *snapjudgment.org.* Original score by Dirk Schwarzhoff. It was produced by Regina Bediako.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Do you know what we never outgrow? Bedtime stories, daytime stories, driving stories, grocery shopping stories, waiting in the dentist office stories, story stories. And the good news is that I've got a sack of the most amazing stories you've ever heard waiting for your listening pleasure for free. Available everywhere. Subscribe to the Snap Judgment podcast. If someone offers you a better deal than that, run away.

[upbeat music]

Snap is brought to you by the team that endeavors mightily to walk the straight and narrow path of righteousness, except for the uber producer, Mr. Mark Ristich. He endeavors to do other things. There's Nancy López, Pat Mesiti-Miller, Anna Sussman, Renzo Gorrio, John Fecile, Shaina Shealy, Teo Ducot, Flo Wiley, Bo Walsh, Marisa Dodge, David Exumé, Regina Bediako.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** This is not the news. No way that this is the news. In fact, you could have no worries at all with your each and every whim attended to and be nowhere at all, because that's not even reality. And even then, it would still not be as far away from the news as this is. But this is PRX.

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