[Snap Judgment intro]

**Glynn:** Snappas, I have a confession to make. The truth is, the truth is that every single aspect fact of my professional life, actually, every single aspect of my life in general, has been predicated on the idea of fake it till you make it. If someone asked me, “Hey, can you act, write, dance, draft, direct, run, draw, compose, swim?” I've almost always said, “Yeah. Yeah, I can do that.”

Sometimes it worked, sometimes it absolutely did not work. Those times are called hard lessons. But generally, I'll tell the kids, “Go ahead. Give whatever it is a go. What's the worst that can happen?” Well, it turns out that there are, in fact, certain things that you might not want to fake.

Today's show, The Real Fleetwood Mac. We're going to soft rock out this piece. My name is Glynn Washington. You're going to want to turn up the volume a little bit, because you're listening to Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Our story comes from the golden age of classic rock. Tour buses, stadium, concert hall, mullets shimming under the bright, sweaty spotlight, all the rock star stuff. And as such, there might be some language and references to drug use. Bad rock stars. Bad. Producer, John Fecile grabs the mic and goes in search of The Real Fleetwood Mac. Snap Judgment.

**Rich:** I'm all good. I'm gunned up and [chuckles] ready to fire. Here we go. Three, two, one.

[rock music playing]

**John:** Rich Engler is a concert promoter in Pittsburgh.

**Rich:** Been doing this for, rough, 54 years, over 6,000 concerts.

**John:** And in 1974, he gets a call from an agent in New York telling him that the band Fleetwood Mac is looking for a venue in Pittsburgh to host the first show of their US tour.

**Rich:** I said, “Oh, did you mean the first on the whole tour? This would be fantastic.”

**John:** Fleetwood Mac.

[*Black Magic Woman* playing]

Before Stevie Nicks joined the band, they were bluesier, harder rocking, more psychedelic. Even in the early 1970s, they were incredibly popular. Maybe not as big as they eventually became, but they had hits like *Black Magic Woman*.

**Rich:** I said, “This will be big news. I'll be able to advertise, come be a part of the first date on the tour of Fleetwood Mac coming from England, wow, this is a super show.” So day of the show comes.

[applause and cheers]

**John:** Minutes before Fleetwood Mac set, Rich peers out from backstage at thousands of rock fans. He takes a deep dank whiff.

**Rich:** The whole place was smoked up. It was like an atomic bomb went off.

**John:** But there's a problem.

**Rich:** There was no appearance yet of the band. I don't see any Fleetwood Mac.

**John:** He doesn't see a single member of the band, not even Mick Fleetwood, the band's namesake. A long haired, 6’6” drumming powerhouse. He's hard to miss. Rumors have been circulating that Fleetwood Mac is breaking up, and that the band members are at each other's throats. So Rich has reason to be worried.

**Rich:** They have not arrived yet. What is going on? And all of a sudden, boom. The door opens up. I see one, two, three, four, or five guys walk in and straight back into the dressing room.

**John:** Rich doesn't recognize any of these dudes, but they are definitely not Fleetwood Mac.

**Rich:** And then the next thing I see is this guy-- He was a little older. He didn't have a suit on, but he was kind of dressy.

**John:** This guy introduces himself as Fleetwood Mac's manager.

**Rich:** And I said, “Where's Fleetwood Mac?” He said, “They just walked right by you.” I said, “What are you talking about?” I thought those were with Roadies.” He said, “No, that's Fleetwood Mac.” And I said, “Hang on, are you kidding me? I've done dates with them in the past. That's not them.” He goes, “Well, listen, this is Fleetwood Mac as it is today. Forget about those other guys. They're out. You're never going to see them again. This is Fleetwood Mac.” And I go, “Oh, no. No way.” I said, “This is not happening.” He rears back his arm to slug me. He starts to swing. And as he swings, I lunge forward. My natural instinct was to dive at him.

**John:** Rich wraps his arms around the manager's chest, and the two topple backward into a wall. A security guard comes rushing over.

**Rich:** “Whoa, whoa, whoa.” He’s like, “Guys, break it up. What's going on?” Next thing I know, the band runs on stage and they start playing. “What has just happened?” I'm in the Twilight Zone. I'm pacing around. I didn't know what to do. I know people were going to be so upset, and this is total BS.

**John:** What Rich doesn't know is that the guys in the band are feeling pretty much the same way he is.

**Elmer:** Going on stage thinking, “My God, we don't really want to be doing this. This doesn't feel right, but we didn't know how to get out of it.”

**John:** The frontman of the band billed as Fleetwood Mac that night was a blonde singer with a soulful, ragged voice who went by the name Elmer Gantry.

**Elmer:** A lot of people say, “Oh, Elmer, you were in the bogus Fleetwood Mac.” It was easier to go, “Yeah, that's right.”

**John:** The real reason Elmer was on that stage and felt like he couldn't leave was because he'd been asked to go on by drummer, Mick Fleetwood, himself.

**Elmer:** We knew what we knew, which was that we were doing it because Fleetwood had come to our house and said it all and laid it all out.

**John:** Just two months before the show in Pittsburgh, Elmer was living in South London with guitarist, Kirby Gregory. The two were writing and recording music together. When they got a call from Kirby's manager, who also happened to manage Fleetwood Mac, and he told them that Mick Fleetwood wanted to meet them.

**Elmer:** He said, “Okay. Well, Mick will call you.” So Mick did call, and then he came over to where we were living.

**John:** Mick Fleetwood parked his Morgan sports car outside their flat and ducked his head as he passed through the doorway, wiry, wearing a loose shirt, his signature pair of wooden balls hanging from his belt.

**Elmer:** But he seemed damaged, actually, very depressed.

**John:** Here's what Mick Fleetwood said in his autobiography.

**Mick:** I couldn't take it anymore. I was coming unglued emotionally. It was heartbreak heaped on heartache for me.

**Elmer:** He'd just split up with his wife. She was shagging the singer. He said he really needed a rest, needed to get his head together.

**John:** So Mick was headed to Africa for some R&R. And while he was gone, he wanted Elmer and Kirby to help him form a new lineup of Fleetwood Mac, with Elmer as the lead singer and Kirby on lead guitar.

**Rich:** And I thought, “Well, this makes perfect sense, actually.” We've got the British blues rock background. We would just slide into these positions naturally, really. So it seemed it wasn't even really a surprise. It was exciting. It was delightful. But it wasn't like, “Oh, my God, why did you think of us?” That never occurred to me. It was obvious why we would have been thought of because of who we were, and what we were doing, what we'd been doing.

[*Flames* song playing]

**John:** In the 1960s, Elmer fronted Elmer Gantry's Velvet Opera, a band known for their wild shows, and the song, *Flames*, covered by an early version of Led Zeppelin. They'd even shared a bill once with Fleetwood Mac.

**Elmer:** I was definitely known. I may not have been famous, but I was notorious.

**John:** Kirby, on the other hand, was in the band, Curved Air. He was barely out of his teens, but he could shred with the best of them.

**Elmer:** He had a kind of shit guitar, and yet, he did wonderful things with it.

**John:** Together, they were a dynamic duo. They played all over London, even though they didn't make a whole lot of money doing it.

**Elmer:** We had this old secondhand, beaten-up old truck, and literally the front was held on with gaffer tape. It was that kind of struggle and having a whip round to see what we could afford on the way home from a gig to eat. It was that kind of stuff. And is there enough money to pay for the gas?

**John:** Now, here was a bona fide rock star, a guy who'd made it big time, the very Fleetwood of Fleetwood Mac himself, offering them the biggest opportunity they'd ever had.

**Elmer:** It was like, “Oh, God, we're going to actually have roadies. We're going to have decent equipment. Well, at last, there might be a possibility of getting kind of some regular income.”

**John:** Plus, they were fans of Fleetwood Mac, and they were excited to take the band into a new era.

**Elmer:** “Would you like to join Fleetwood Mac?” “Yeah, obviously. Who wouldn't?”

**John:** So that afternoon in their flat with Mick Fleetwood, they talked about what they would play on their upcoming tour of America.

**Elmer:** We went through a whole load of numbers to include in the set, and he said, “Well, that's no problem. I obviously know all those.”

**John:** Working with Fleetwood Mac’s manager, Elmer and Kirby would enlist the musicians, keeping Mick Fleetwood and possibly one or two others from the old lineup. Did you have any reservations about the fact that it was only Mick Fleetwood?

**Elmer:** Ah, well, there'd been something like 12 lineups of Fleetwood Mac up until that point.

**John:** It's true. Not a lot of job security in Fleetwood Mac. After a couple of hours, Mick Fleetwood left Elmer and Kirby's flat, satisfied.

**Elmer:** It seemed kind of enthusiastic. It seemed like it was real and it was going to happen. And he said, “I'll be in touch before we all go to the States.”

**John:** Elmer and Kirby start phoning up musicians to join the band. Some are friends like the bassist.

**Elmer:** “We've just been offered this. It's fantastic. Do you want to get involved?”

**John:** A keyboard player signs on.

**Elmer:** He was a great pianist when he was sober, but he was rarely sober.

**John:** And finally, a temporary drummer to play with them until Mick Fleetwood has had time to get over his heartbreak or whatever.

**Elmer:** It was all supposed to be secret, all supposed to be hush-hush. We rehearsed. We rehearsed the set that we were putting together, *Stop Messing Around*, *Rattlesnake Shake*, all those old Mac numbers.

**John:** Weeks go by, and they don't hear from Mick Fleetwood, but then it's time to get on the plane and go.

**Elmer:** We were a bit annoyed that he hadn't come down to rehearsals, but I don't think the plan was ever for him to travel with us. I thought Mick would be going first class under his own steam.

[plane flies over]

**John:** January, 1974, Elmer first steps foot in America, a place he'd never been.

**Elmer:** Everything was discovery. New discovery. Exciting. It was one of those things that when you're 14 years or 15 years, it's like, “I want to have a hit record and I want tour America.”

**John:** And their first stop is that show booked by promoter, Rich Engler.

**Rich:** How are you, my friend?

**John:** At a theater in Pittsburgh.

**Rich:** It's 3,500 seats. So I go on sale. Boom, the thing sells out, like, right away.

**Elmer:** It was rammed. Fucking absolutely rammed.

**John:** The band is ready to rock, but their star drummer, Mick Fleetwood--

**Elmer:** Right. Where's Mick?

**John:** MIA.

**Elmer:** We said, “Well, where is he?”

**John:** Feeding Elmer and the boys, information is Fleetwood Mac’s manager, Cliff Davis.

**Elmer:** Cliff said, “He's not coming. He's not here.” We said, “Well, cancel the gig then. Fuck this. We're not going on, and we need to just go.”

**John:** But Cliff is not one to take no for answer.

**Elmer:** Saying, “Look, you're going to get fucking nicked. I've signed a contract for the band to go on. You can't do that sort of thing over in the States. You all end up in jail.” And of course, we felt incredibly vulnerable because we'd never been there before. We didn't know how anything worked. Cliff was the man with the tickets and the money. What do you do if you're sitting in jail in Pittsburgh? [chuckles] You don't know what's going on.

**John:** Even within the already very shady world of 1970s rock managers, Cliff Davis had a reputation. He was known to be eccentric, aggressive, even barking out orders in his thick cockney accent while practicing karate.

**Elmer:** You'd be discussing something in the office, and he'd be walking around spinning nunchuckers. He was really good at it. I saw him destroy a chair just standing there one day.

**John:** Did you know that he was a big karate enthusiast?

**Rich:** Did you just make that up?

**John:** Rich Engler, the promoter who got into that awkward man tussle with Cliff Davis.

**Rich:** Oh, my goodness, I'm glad the security guy was there. I might not have lived. [laughs] I might take me out in a stretcher.

**John:** He had to watch helplessly as a band featuring none of the original Fleetwood Mac members took the stage.

**Rich:** I couldn't believe it that I was in the middle of a bogus Fleetwood. Fleetwood Bo Mac.

[applause and cheers]

[mic shrieks]

**John:** As Elmer grabs the mic, he's feeling loose, ready. He'd already thoroughly prepared with what he called his “gig kit.”

**Elmer:** Some speed, a quarter bottle of rum and some weed, getting the balance between being disinhibited enough, but being functional enough.

**John:** The band doesn't feel like they have a choice now. They don't know what the consequences will be if they don't hold up their end of the bargain.

**Elmer:** It was just about, “Let's get on, show them what we can do. This is going to be great.” And there were some numbers. You go, “This is going to blow them away.”

**Rich:** The band went straight into *Rattlesnake* *Shake*. To my astonishment and amazement, the band was actually good. They learned all the songs and they were pulling off this coup. The audience, they're going nuts. Loving it. The crowd was going crazy.

[applause and cheers]

**John:** Not many seem to notice that this Fleetwood Mac ain't exactly Fleetwood Mac.

**Rich:** We either gave three or five refunds out of 3,500 people.

**Elmer:** Went down a fucking storm, did two encores. It was fantastic. It just went down a bomb. We played really well. It was amazing.

**John:** When Elmer gets off stage though, that's when reality hits. There's no way this tour can go on without Mick Fleetwood.

**Elmer:** Our hearts sunk. What are we going to do?

**John:** Elmer and the band are being paid by the gig. So cutting the tour short now, that'll really hurt financially. But manager, Cliff Davis, reassures them, “Don't worry, Mick is still coming.”

**Elmer:** It was just, “No, he couldn't make it for tonight. He is coming, but he just hasn't got it together. He's still in a very depressed mood.” It was like, “Well, okay, then. He could have come out before the second gig or the third gig.”

**John:** As the band makes their way up the East Coast, they don't hear word one from Mick Fleetwood, and Elmer has no way of contacting him.

**Elmer:** We weren't given any phone numbers for him. So, yeah, we were hanging on.

**John:** Meanwhile, the press is beginning to notice that Fleetwood Mac is light of Fleetwood. Articles start appearing with titles like, “Really the Mac?” and “Will The Real Fleetwood Mac Please Stand Up?”

**Elmer:** That was kind of nasty stuff, and we thought, “This is really bad.”

**John:** Many of the articles note that Mick Fleetwood is still a member of the band and intending to join them. But by the time the tour reaches New York City, he still hasn't shown.

**Elmer:** Because of the publicity in the media and the press, that kind of stuff, the worry was going on stage and were you going to get hit by a bottle before you even started playing.

**John:** Half an hour before going on stage at the Academy of Music in New York City, for the first time ever, Elmer loses his voice.

**Elmer:** I could hardly speak. I reacted really badly to air conditioning. The fact that I smoked an enormous amount of fags as well.

**John:** Cliff insists that the band go on and play anyway without Elmer.

**Elmer:** An instrumental set, no matter how good it was, was not really what the audience had come to say. I felt bad for the other boys because I just figured, “Yeah, we need to do this together.”

**John:** After limbering up with some karate moves, Cliff goes on stage to address the increasingly hostile crowd. He takes the microphone and calls for silence.

**Elmer:** He said, “I am Fleetwood Mac.” We took that with a pinch of salt and went, “He's fucking nuts.”

**John:** Cliff Davis claimed to own the rights to the band name, Fleetwood Mac, which meant in his mind, he could put anybody he wanted on stage and call them Fleetwood Mac.

**Elmer:** That kind of belief that-- if you've got a bit of paper that says that you've registered the name, then you're entitled to do that. He saw no problem with it at all.

**John:** Elmer watches from the sidelines as the band is forced to take the stage and play a 45-minute instrumental set. And he starts to realize something.

**Elmer:** That we got caught in the crossfire between the Mac and Cliff.

[intriguing music]

**John:** Across the pond, Mick Fleetwood has started giving statements to the press, saying things like--

**Rick:** “We're the real Fleetwood Mac. Yeah, for sure.”

**Elmer:** That they'd been wronged, and we know a bogus band trying to trade on their success.

**Rick:** “I couldn't allow other musicians to tour under our name, whoever they were.”

**Elmer:** I knew absolutely that he was lying. If Mick at any time had phoned up and said, “Look, I don't want to do this, not going through with it,” it would have ended. It would have ended during rehearsals. It would certainly have ended before we went. It's almost like years in the business and working towards something like this, and then it's completely destroyed and you've lost all credibility. Feeling, I don't know, more devastated than angry, I think. Felt betrayed and let down.

**John:** Mick Fleetwood practically signed them up to do this tour, and now they're stuck.

**Elmer:** Simply, we couldn't have afforded to get home. Cliff wasn't going to go, “Well, here's your ticket home. Off you go then.” He wasn't going to do that. There was no way. He was insistent that he was going to push this through, and it was going to be a success.

**John:** Cliff is already forging ahead after the NYC show. To keep the band out of legal trouble, he renames them.

**Elmer:** No, Cliff's going to change it to The New Fleetwood Mac.

**John:** They're now The New Fleetwood Mac.

**Elmer:** It’s our job to go on stage and prove how good we are.

**John:** But the bad press continues to follow them wherever they go. Articles calling the band members, phony, faceless, masquerading unknowns.

**Elmer:** These unknowns, all this cobblers.

**John:** As the band moves west, gigs start to get canceled left and right. People call in, complaining, asking for refunds. The Deputy Attorney General of Idaho even files a lawsuit after their show.

**Elmer:** But the weird thing was we carried on and we were still going down a storm. Some of the gigs, they were brilliant. Getting up and performing, everything else goes out of the window, and you're concentrating on what you're doing. It was a good line up, musicians that I could rely on to do the job. It felt great and it went down great considering the situation that we were in and all the news and the bad publicity, getting encores at gigs was quite surprising.

**John:** At one show, they lose power.

**Elmer:** The back line all went down. Everything went down apart from the PA system. I just scattered, and made stuff up for about 10 minutes, and got the audience involved and then clapping and stamping and right into it. When the sound came back on again, there was this fucking eruption of applause.

[cheers and applause]

**Elmer:** You get that kind of feel when it's all going all right. You know you've got the audience. Not so much you've got them as they're with you.

**John:** The New Fleetwood Mac shares stages and holds their own against rock legends like Kiss, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Joe Walsh.

**Elmer:** And Joe Walsh said, “I don't know who you are, man.” He said, “But you're a fucking great band.”

**John:** Sure. There are the occasional booze and people shouting, “Where's Mick?” At least one bottle gets thrown. It seems like someone, probably a member of the road crew, sabotages Kirby's guitar amp.

**Elmer:** We're about to do the sound check, and we find that the wires have all been ripped out of the back of the AC30.

**John:** They just get a new amp and press on. Still, the weight of it all being labeled as Phonies and Rolling Stone and Scabs by Mick Fleetwood slowly grinds them down.

**Elmer:** We were saying to Cliff, “We want this to stop. We want to go home. We've had enough.”

**John:** When they cross the border into Canada for a show in Calgary, Cliff finally agrees.

**Elmer:** We just wanted out. It was humiliating. The TV, the papers is just getting worse. It's all very well soldiering through and going down to 500 people or 1,000 people in a gig. But that doesn't compare to thousands of newspapers out there and the thousands of people that are being reached by snide comments on the TV. We were not going to win that one. It felt like a victory that we managed to persuade Cliff to organize the flights for us to come home.

**John:** The New Fleetwood Mac had lasted only six weeks. They get on a plane headed to London, and when they land, their problems aren't over.

**Elmer:** When we get back to England, they were suing all of us, including Cliff, Kirby, myself, everybody involved.

**John:** The old Fleetwood Mac takes The New Fleetwood Mac to court.

**Glynn:** Oh, don't go anywhere. After the break, the don't stop won't stop music continues. Snap Judgment.

[rock music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment, where our almost, not quite maybe Fleetwood Mac’s story continues.

**Elmer:** They were suing all of us, including Cliff, Kirby, myself, everybody involved.

**John:** Mick Fleetwood has to testify, and he admits that, “Yes, he'd been to Elmer and Kirby's house to talk about the tour.” “But it wasn't committal,” he says.

**Elmer:** It was just clearly bollocks, and the judge wasn't buying it. We didn't have to pay a penny. I didn't even have to appear in court.

**John:** A representative of Mick Fleetwood declined to comment on this story, and he's maintained ever since that he had nothing to do with the tour.

**Elmer:** The last time I heard anything from the Mac was when Mick Fleetwood was sitting in my living room. I'm still really angry about it. It's amazing how it all comes back with the feelings around it.

**John:** If you were going to talk to Mick Fleetwood about all this, what would you want to say to him?

**Elmer:** “What the fuck happened? And if you weren't happy, why didn't you tell us? Why didn't you just phone up and say, ‘I'm not doing it?’” Yeah, I'd like to know what was going on.

**John:** The Real Fleetwood Mac relocated to Los Angeles in order to deal with the continuing legal fallout from the tour. There, they met Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham and set about becoming the biggest band in the world.

[*Dreams* playing]

**Elmer:** I don't begrudge them that stuff. What I begrudge is the fact that it was so devastating to us. It really destroyed our potential careers, basically. We'd been tainted by the publicity. We couldn't catch a cold, really.

**John:** Back in London, nobody wanted to work with Elmer and his guitar playing flat mate, Kirby. The calls just stopped coming.

**Elmer:** I've never been particularly ambitious. It's like, even with this thing, my career has been walking through open doors, and that ceased.

**John:** Kirby was so down. He swore off the music business entirely and moved to the country.

**Elmer:** He just thought he'd never play again and went off peeling spuds and doing washing up at his father in law's hotel.

**John:** What are you doing?

**Elmer:** Ah, nothing, really, at that time. Smoking quite a lot of dope, laying around. I can't really remember, actually, to tell you the truth.

**John:** And then Elmer got another offer he couldn't refuse, from, of all people, Cliff Davis, the recently fired manager of Fleetwood Mac. Why did you say yes to working with Cliff again?

**Elmer:** We knew he was a bit of a megalomaniac, but our view was that he'd been stitched up by Mick Fleetwood. Cliff decided, “We should form a band,” and he would finance us putting a band together. That's how Stretch happened.

**John:** From the ashes of The New Fleetwood Mac rose Stretch, a group fronted by Elmer, featuring the bass player from the tour, and--

**Elmer:** Kirby came back from the deep low that he'd been in.

**John:** Kirby, Elmer's musical partner.

**Elmer:** We auditioned for guitarists, and we auditioned for drummers.

**John:** A lot of musicians who came in weren't actually interested in joining the band.

**Elmer:** People turning up not good enough or not equipped enough, but really only coming in the first thing, “Oh, tell us about the Fleetwood Mac stuff.” The attitude was, “How did you think you could get away with that?” Of course, we didn't think we could get away. We didn't think we were getting away with anything.

**John:** Finally, they had a lineup and they went into the studio.

**Rich:** We were recording down there. Kirby turned up with this track.

**John:** A song he'd written during his Hiatus from music.

**Elmer:** I didn't like the style of it much.

**John:** But Elmer really connected with the lyrics. They were about betrayal and dishonesty. Like, “*The only one who knows the truth, that’s him me and you*. *The damage is much deeper than you’ll ever see.”* Was it a very conscious comment on the Fleetwood Mac disaster?

**Elmer:** Yeah, because it was Kirby, Mick Fleetwood and me. We're the only ones that know the truth. It was a track that Kirby had written when he was in that kind of deep despair, trying to make sense of it all, just laying down the truth of the situation, how painful it was. *The damage is much deeper than you'll ever see*. Well, that's certainly true.

**John:** They decided to run through it right there in the studio, even though Elmer's throat was sore and his voice was really more like a growl.

**Elmer:** So I had [unintelligible [00:29:45] throat, which was like it adds a bottom dimension to my vocal range. It was almost like a piss take. I'm going to do a Barry White on this. While we were playing it, Jim, who was the drummer, he missed a beat, which he then realized sounded really good, so he repeated it.

*[Why Did Yo Do It* playing]

**John:** For two and a half minutes, Elmer is at a simmer, [tape forwards] and then he explodes.

*[Why Did Yo Do It* playing]

**Elmer:** *Hit me like a hammer to my head*

*I wonder were you pushed or were you led?*

*Why did you do it? Why did you do that thing to me?*

**John:** To my ears now, it's a pretty scorching track. Like, you guys’ sound pissed.

**Elmer:** Yeah, I didn't think I'm going to make this really hard hitting, I'm going to sing it like this. I just sang it straight from the guts and out of the mouth, bypass the brain at all costs.

*[Why Did Yo Do It* playing]

*The only one who knows the truth*

*Man, that’s him me and you*

It's just lucky that it ended up being a classic. I've heard loads of versions of it. You can't choose to create that stuff.

[song concludes]

You finish a track sometimes and everybody just looks at one another and like, “We got that.”

*One, two*.

*[Why Did Yo Do It* resumes]

**Glynn:** Now, you might not be surprised to learn that the song Elmer recorded with Stretch that day, *Why Did You Do It?* became the biggest hit of his career. It's been featured in commercials, a *Guy Ritchie* movie, and Mick Fleetwood has definitely heard it.

**Mick:** The song was a direct attack on me for not showing up for the bogus Fleetwood Mac tour, which I'd never promised to do in the first place. Of course, all of it was too bizarre.

**Elmer:** *I’ve been thinking about what you have done to me*

*The damage is much deeper than you’ll ever see*

*[Why Did Yo Do It* playing]

**Glynn:** Elmer and Kirby still make music together. Learn more about their tunes, past and present, on our website, *snapjudgment.org*.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Thank you, Elmer, for sharing your story with us. Thanks as well to Mike Stax from Ugly Things magazine, and the good folks at Whistle Down Studios in London, especially David Prest, who read the excerpts from Mick Fleetwood's autobiography for us. Original score for that piece was by Dirk Schwarzhoff. It was produced by John Fecile.

[upbeat music]

Now, after the break, one lucky young man gets the best job in the world in just a moment. Stay tuned.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment. Today, everyone wants the dream job, but it always goes to someone else. That is the rule. But what happens when that someone else is you?

[upbeat music]

**Davey:** This story starts back in the early 70s New York, when Merritt Riley was the Yankees biggest 11-year-old fan.

**Merritt:** I was hardcore.

**Davey:** Well, actually--

**Merritt:** My mom and dad were big Yankee fans, so I really didn't have a choice to tell you the truth. It was always extra special to be at a game, smelling the grass and smelling the popcorn. Always sought to get autographs and meet the players. But at the games, I'd be sitting there watching the ball boy retrieving foul balls, and I always wondered, “How in God's name can I become that kid?” I figured, “What the hell? I'll give it a shot,” and I wrote a letter to Yankee Stadium. I didn't address it to anybody in particular, just hoping it would get a response.

**Davey:** And he did.

**Merritt:** Pretty quickly.

**Davey:** From a batboy named Joe.

**Merritt:** Being the kid I was, I got the letter, and I was so excited. It was written on Yankee Letterhead Stationery, and I was like, “Wow, this is it.” I showed it to my mom and dad.

**Davey:** Batboy Joe, wrote back and said, “In order to join the batboy club--”

**Merritt:** “You had to have good grades, athletic ability, be 16 years old.”

**Davey:** Merritt only met one of these requirements. He was a smarty pants.

**Merritt:** Yeah. [chuckles]

**Davey:** But over the next five years, Merritt set his little mind and body to it. And bada-bing bada-boom, Joe hooked him up, and Merritt became a Yankee batboy. And even before he did any batboy things, it changed his life.

**Merritt:** I'm making fun of myself here. When I was in high school, I was like a little nerdy kid. I wasn't really one of those popular kids. You know what I mean? All of a sudden, everybody wanted to be my friend, kids that I thought would never talk to me because they were the cool kids, they were the jocks. It's funny, because a lot of those kids are friends still today.

Best part of the job was being around players that a year or two before I was watching on TV and only dreaming that it would be like a dream to meet these people. And now, I'm in the same locker room as them.

**Davey:** Being a batboy is no easy work. Merritt shined all the players' cleats, did the laundry. And during practices, he’d shag fly balls. But his most important job was during the game.

**Merritt:** During the game, you have one responsibility. Once that player that's at home plate hits the ball, whether it's a base hitter or an out, your main and only responsibility is to get that bat and get it right back to the dugout.

**Davey:** Once in the dugout, all Merritt had to do was return the bat to the bat container where the other bats hung out.

**Merritt:** During the game, the Yankees were very, very strict about not being part of the game, being invisible, really.

**Davey:** Now, Merritt was planning the rest of his life and career from his gig as a bat boy. If he did a good job, his plan was to become an umpire. Well, that was the hope, at least until July 24th, 1983, Yankee Stadium. Merritt's beloved Yankees were facing one of their biggest rivals, the Kansas City Royals.

**Merritt:** It was a Sunday afternoon in July. And back then, the Yanks in Kansas City, they saw each other a lot in the playoffs, and it was a packed house. It was hot. It was a loud, boisterous crowd.

**Davey:** Now, this game was extra special to Merritt, not because the heated rivalry, but because of one player on the Royals, the superstar hitter, George Brett.

**Merritt:** For whatever reason, George Brett took a liking to me. Even though he was a superstar, he was like a regular guy, clown around everybody in the clubhouse. He'd always be breaking my traps about one thing or another. Kidding around, not mean. He had a nickname for me, and it was Spaulding from *Caddyshack*.

**Davey:** Spaulding Smails. Not the coolest nickname. Spaulding from the movie, *Caddyshack,* is a spoiled brat infamous for picking his nose and eating it.

**Merritt:** You know what? It wasn't like I liked a nickname. I just liked that he noticed me enough to have a nickname for me. He made you feel important. That made me like him. Even if he became my favorite.

**Davey:** Yankee fan listeners, don't worry about it. His allegiance is still with you.

**Merritt:** Yeah. George Brett was one of those guys that I would secretly root for. As long as the Yankees would win the game, I was rooting for George Brett to do well. There weren't other players I could say that about that were not on the Yankees.

**Davey:** All right. So back to the game.

**Merritt:** 1st inning. 2nd inning, 3rd inning, 4th inning. The game didn't stand out for any reason. 7th inning, 8th inning. All right, here we are on the top of the 9th inning. The Yanks are up four-three.

**Davey:** And it's a very close game with the Royals at bat with two outs and a runner on base.

**Merritt:** You figured the Yanks are going to win this game. You have the Yankee closer, Goose Gossage, who basically was lights out once they brought him in. But a player from Kansas City gets on base, and none other than my favorite players in baseball, George Brett. The crowd's on its feet. George Brett is known as the Yankee killer, but also well known as the hemorrhoid guy.

**Davey:** Back in the 1980 World Series, George had to leave a game early because hemorrhoid pain. Since then, every time he came up to bat, he was the butt of all jokes and jeers.

**Merritt:** The crowd is going wild. Jeering at George Brett caused a hemorrhoidal issue. I got a big conflict going on in my head. I'm rooting for this guy, George Brett, to get the big hit. But at the same time, I want to see my favorite team win the game. So George Brett's at bat, and Goose Gossip leans in and delivers a pitch.

**Commentator:** Uh-oh.

**Merritt:** I could tell just from the sound of the ball hitting the bat this thing was going to leave the ballpark. There was a very quick moment of silence, and then all of a sudden, the place went crazy.

**Commentator:** And now the Royals have the one run lead.

**Merritt:** So right away, I get up to home plate, I grab the bat. At the time, I know that I have to get that back to the dugout, but I said, “You know what? I know I'll probably get in trouble, but I'm going to wait there.” I'm going to wait there with the bat and I want to high five him when he comes around because he was such a good person to me. I wanted to show that I'm a Yankee fan, but I'm a George Brett fan.

While I'm standing there at home plate waiting for George Brett to round the bases, the manager of the Yankees, Billy Martin, is on the top step of the dugout. The veins of his neck just like protruding from his neck because he was screaming for his catcher to, “Check the bat. Check the bat. “Right after that, the catcher of the Yankees drips it out of my hand and he begins to inspect the bat for cork.

**Commentator:** When players cork their bats, makes the ball travel further. It's cheating.

**Merritt:** The catcher checked it for cork, and then saw that there was no cork and he just dropped it on the ground right next to me.

**Catcher:** Got to be honest, I didn't know what was going on.

**Merritt:** At this time, George Brett now crosses home plate and just went right to the dugout. I did not get to high five him because now I was so caught up in what was going on. Right after that, the manager ends up at home plate screaming, “I want that bat checked. I want it checked for pine tar.

**Bobby:** Well, [crosstalk] talking about Frank is that he's got too much pine tar and the umpires are going to get together. George Brett looking around and wanting to know what's going on. And the umpires are going to--

**Davey:** Pine tar is a sticky substance that players put on their wooden bats. Basically, it helps them grip the bat, swing the bat, and hopefully hit a home run.

**Bobby:** You are not allowed to have that pine tar up that far on the bat.

**Commentator:** First time in a long, long time, I've seen the umpires huddle this long and have a meeting over it.

**Bobby:** Well, they're feeling it. See, the sifters are some sticky stuff around there.

**Davey:** But there is a limit to how much pine tar one can use. 18 inches from the tip of the handle, about the width of home plate.

**Merritt:** The umpires take the bat, they lay it down against home plate to determine if the pine tar was too far up the handle or the bat.

**Commentator:** Now they're going to [crosstalk]cross home plate.

**Commentator:** I've never seen this.

**Commentator:** I never have either.

**Davey:** The umpires struggle to make a call, and that's because the pine tar rule. It's one of those obscure rules that's rarely enforced. And here, the crafty Yankee manager was waiting until the perfect moment to bring this tiny rule down on George's head.

**Merritt:** I'm thinking, “If I would have just picked up the bat and gotten it out of there instead of waiting at home, played for the high five, none of this be happening.”

**Commentator:** That's Nick Bremigan with-- [crosstalk]

**Bobby:** This is going to be an interesting call.

**Commentator:** Brett isn't sure whether he has a home run yet or not.

**Merritt:** At that point, I stopped slinking away back towards the dugout, walking backwards. And the players were angry. And at one point, George Brett, who's now pacing up and down the dugout like a raging bull, he says, “All I know is that if they call me out, you're going to see four dead umpires. Four dead umpires. Four dead umpires.”

Right after that, almost immediately after that, the [unintelligible [00:42:02] umpire looks towards where the Kansas City Royals were and makes the out sign.

**Bobby:** They might be going to call George Brett out.

**Commentator:** Well, yeah, he's out.

**Bobby:** Yes. Look at this.

**Commentator:** Brett is out. Look at this. Brett is out.

**Bobby:** [crosstalk]

**Merritt:** George Brett just charges out of the dugout like a maniac. First couple buds on his shirt were like open. His hair was a disaster.

**Commentator:** Forcibly restrained from hitting plate umpire, Tim McClelland.

**Merritt:** Oh, it was crazy. It was crazy.

**Commentator:** The Yankees have won the ball game four to three. Red is called out for using an illegal bat.

**Merritt:** Now I position myself inside the dugout, at which point the players from Kansas City are yelling at me, “Why the hell didn't you get the bat?” You could edit this. I would [beep] my pants. [chuckles] 50,000 people and all these big baseball players. I was scared. I'm not afraid to say that I was scared.

**Davey:** At this point, all hell breaks loose.

**Merritt:** Yankee stadium security, the guys in suits and ties, they're out on the field. And one of them comes up behind the umpire, and swipes the bat out of the umpire's hand, and makes a beeline for the dugout, at which point, a pitcher for the Kansas City Royals, Gaylord Perry sneaks up behind the Yankee Stadium security and swipes the bat out of his hand.

**Commentator:** Well, a Yankee security person and one of the umpires quickly are chasing whoever has the bat. Jose Martinez is holding Brett. Bobby, I've never seen this in my life.

**Merritt:** It was some out of a movie. Really it was. It kept getting worse for me. It was like a bad nightmare. It kept getting worse.

**Davey:** The game ends. Yankee fans celebrate as they leave the stadium, while the Royal fans are still stunned.

**Merritt:** The players are gone, the umpires are gone, the whole swarm of people is gone. I'm in the dugout by myself. One of the clubhouse managers comes down and says, “You don't want to go up into that locker room right now. The Kansas City Royals don't want to see you. They're pissed off at you.”

**Davey:** So Merritt begins his post-game duties, knocking the mud out of spikes, cleaning up the Yankee locker room.

**Merritt:** At that point, I thought it was the end of the world. This is the biggest thing ever that's happened to me. The manager of the clubhouse where the Royals were came down and said, “Look, it's safe to go back down to locker room. The guys that were angry are gone. So come on down.” Argh. All I could tell you was I was real nervous. I entered the locker room very timidly, and I opened the door to the locker room. On the left-hand side is a swarm of reporters.

**Davey:** And guess who's in the center of this swarm? You guessed it, superstar George Brett.

**Merritt:** The one guy I don't want to see, and he's one of the only ones left. So I try to make my way towards the back of the locker room. I figured he wouldn't see me because there were so many reporters around him. I go walking through, and you couldn't have planned it any better. The reporters move out of the way, and all of a sudden, he locks eyes with me, and I'm thinking, “Holy [beep], you got to be kidding.” I thought I was dead. [chuckles]

Yeah, I figured my heart was broken already. So he's like, “Spaulding.” And I stopped dead in my tracks and I didn't expect that at all that he would be in the mood where he's calling me by my nickname. And I was like, “Yeah.” And he looks at me, he says, “Why didn't you get the [beep] bat?” I'm like, “Holy Christ, what do I say? What do I say?” I'm speaking to a Major League Baseball player, 16 years, 17 years old.

Before I could answer, [chuckles] he just started laughing. He said, “I'm only kidding around with you.” He goes, “Don't worry about it.” And then he said, “But you do owe me.” And I remember saying as clear as day, “Whatever you want, whatever you need.” So he says to me, “Do you want me to tell you what he says to me?” He says, “The next time I'm back here in New York City,” he goes, “You're going to get me laid.” [chuckles] And I said to him, “You want me to get you laid?” And I started laughing. He laughed, and that was pretty much it.

**Davey:** After the pine tar game, people called George Brett, a cheater for using a special bat. But George, he got the last laugh. Eventually, the pine tar ruling was overturned. George got his home run back, and the Royals won the game. Oh, and remember the hemorrhoids nickname? That was now behind him.

**Merritt:** As a result of the pine tar game, that nickname was forever gone. People don't even know about it, really. I know this whole incident could be blamed on my hero worship of George Brett. Any other player, I went up and retrieved bats probably thousands of times. The one time I didn't do it, this baseball history was made.

**Commentator:** He's out.

**Bobby:** Yes.

**Commentator:** Brett is out.Look at that.

**Bobby:** As a demon man.

**Commentator:** He is out. Bobby, I've never seen this in my life.

**Merritt:** And still to this day, I still have not gotten that high five I was looking for. [laughs]

**Glynn:** Thank you, Merritt Riley, for sharing that story with the Snap. Merritt still considers himself the Yankees biggest fan. And a big shoutout as well to Daniel Barbarisi from the Wall Street Journal for bringing us that story. We'll have a link to his story on our website, *snapjudgment.org*. Original sound design by Renzo Gorrio, and that piece was produced by Davey Kim.

Remember, don't stop the music. If you need more Snap in your life, and I know you need more Snap in your life, the Snap Judgment podcast is available, wherever podcasts are available. Let somebody know. They will be forever grateful. As well as Snap's evil twin podcast, Spooked. Snap is brought to you by the team that knows how to hide stuff on the tour bus, except for the uber producer, Mr. Mark Ristich. He's always with the, “It's in there, officer. It's over there, officer.” There's Nancy López, Pat Mesiti-Miller, Anna Sussman, Renzo Gorrio, John Fecile, Shaina Shealy, Teo Ducot, Flo Wiley, Marisa Dodge, Bo Walsh, David Exumé, and Regina Bediako.

This, this is not the news. No way this is the news. In fact, you could do like me, head out to the club, let it snip that you are part of the band, even though, of course, you're not part of the band. And you would still, still even then, not be as far away from the news as this is. But this is PRX.

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