

## **EPISODE 5: FORESHADOWING**

CARSON: Hey, everyone. A little announcement before we jump in, if you are just now joining us, welcome. We are so excited that you're here. We'd love for you to go back and start at the "Prologue" and then jump in to Episode 1, that way you can get caught up on the story so far. We'll see you here when you get back.

[SPOKE LOGO]

JANIELLE: The scenes at the beginning of a story are trying to tell you something. Do you remember in "The Incredibles," early on, in the first movie, there's a scene where Edna Mode, the designer--

CARSON: Yes.

JANIELLE: --Is telling Mr. Incredible why she won't design an outfit for him with a cape. She says--

CARSON: "No capes."

JANIELLE: "No capes." And gives reasons why: this superhero died from their cape getting caught, this one, that one, that one, and then like 80 minutes later, when you've completely forgotten about that scene, the antagonist dies exactly that way, his cape gets caught. That information paid off later.

CARSON: So great.

JANIELLE: The scenes at the beginning of the story are trying to tell you something. So one of the scenes at the beginning of my story, I remember being like 6 or 7, and a bunch of people have their hands on me, and they're praying over me, and they're praying: "Father we ask that you would fill the hole in her heart left by her earthly father, so that she doesn't turn to men for attention." I didn't know what turning to men for attention was, but I decided I'd better not do it. Because this feels like one of those scenes that's trying to tell you something about what's going to happen later. But now I find myself interested in the Oedipus story (not for the reason you think). Early on in Oedipus' story, it's prophesied that he will kill his father and sleep with his mother, which sets a whole series of events in action of them trying to avoid this happening. But it's the exact actions they take to avoid that prophecy, that set in motion the events that end up fulfilling the prophesy, that lead to him killing his father and sleeping with his mother. And now I'm wondering, if something's spoken over you in the early scenes, at the beginning of the story, can you actually ever avoid them? Because if you're taking the steps to avoid what's foreshadowed, what's prophesied over you, are they still not determining every action you take from your plot moving forward? I want to know what this curse is that I was born with, this

prophesy of daddy issues. Because if it's there at the beginning, and if it has been determining my steps, if it has been foreshadowing, maybe it has something to tell me about my story. Welcome back to Untitled Dad Project. Chapter 5: Foreshadowing.

[MUSIC]

[AD BREAK]

CARSON: Okay, let's start with clarifying what you mean when you use the term "daddy issues."

JANIELLE: "Daddy issues" is a term that gets thrown around a lot to describe anybody who has a bad dad, but I am specifically referring to the use of this term in a zeitgeisty way that it's been weaponized against women who date men. Which is an argument tossed at you: You have daddy issues. That means, because you have a nonexistent or bad relationship with your dad, you're going to choose men poorly. You're going to be attracted to men who treat you badly. You're going to stay in bad relationships too long. It's specifically, it feels really gendered and reserved for women who date men.

CARSON: Mhmm. So with that working definition, how do we look at daddy issues as foreshadowing?

JANIELLE: I've been thinking... I've been running so hard from daddy issues and resenting that everyone assumes something about me, and like pridefully wanting credit for maybe picking good men, but... For the first time I'm wondering: maybe I've missed something. Like regardless of what I did. Like, I think of daddy issues as a curse that entered my life really early on, and it, um, it's like personified by like a man in a black hat. And so when I'm really young and they're praying over me, it's like what they're praying is: "Oh Father, we ask that you would not let her fall prey to that man in the black hat." And I'm like, oh my God, what man in the black hat? And then all of a sudden, I see a man in a black hat. And now that I've noticed him, now that they've said this thing about him, I want to try to avoid every room where the man in the black hat might be. So if I see him on the street, I turn and go the other way. Well doesn't that mean the man in the black hat has been chasing me this entire time? Even though I've outrun him in theory, hasn't he determined every step I've taken?

CARSON: Yeah, it sounds like rather than breaking a curse of the man in the black hat, you have just so far outrun the man in the black hat.

JANIELLE: Yes! And I just wanna just.. I think I want to turn to him and be like, "Hey. Dude, who are you? What do you want to do to me? If you're going to do something to me, just do it now, or go home. Okay, Daddy Issues, do something to me, do your worst, hit me with your best shot. OR have you been doing something to me this whole time and I haven't noticed it? Like, fine. What is my curse? What is my shame? Just... I'm just tired of running, do it or go home. Yeah I want to meet it. Confront it on my own terms. So in the off-chance that you don't know

what I'm talking about when I talk about just this assumption that this curse of daddy issues is just inevitable and ubiquitous, it showed up really early on in my interview with Robert McKee, who we interviewed in Chapter 1. Here's him walking directly into it and me quietly resenting the hell out of it.

ROBERT: Because when you go out into the world, as in your case, as a woman, there will be men, presuming you're heterosexual, there will be men with whom you need to have a relationship, and never having had a father, this makes men really mysterious and, um, and intimidating. Who knows. But it won't be the normal relationship that a woman would have with the men that she meets in her adult life, because she never went through that father-daughter relationship. Um, and so she may need some therapy, some help in some way. Or make some really bad choices, uh, who knows.

JANIELLE: There you go, right? Obviously! You're doomed. But then when I float this idea that like in Oedipus, Daddy Issues might be some self-fulfilling curse, running from it might set it in motion, he offers this...

ROBERT: Or you may have wonderful relationships with men and wondering: why don't I have bad relationships?

JANIELLE: That's - ha -

ROBERT: I'm supposed to have bad relationships. Why do I have good relationships? I never had a father? And that question, any question that you ask opens the door to content for storytelling. And so the key is that you ask the right questions, and that you don't settle for easy answers.

JANIELLE: Okay great, right?

CARSON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: This isn't about me proving whether or not I'm a good or bad person who deserves a verdict or not. This is about story material. So my good questions that I won't settle for easy answers for, I've got two: One, pretty basic: What are daddy issues? What are they really? What are people talking about, and is it real? And two: How has daddy issues then shown up in my life and my story? Has it shown up in ways that you would expect that I've missed, has it shown up in my romantic mate selection? Has it shown up in ways you wouldn't expect? How is it playing in my story?

[MUSIC]

JANIELLE: Jumping in, question 1, what are daddy issues? I asked you to find a therapist who might be willing to talk to me about that, and you found Shea.

CARSON: Yes, Shea Thielemann, she's an LPC here in Dallas, Texas, and this is how she responded when you brought up the idea of daddy issues.

JANIELLE: So the last thing I want to talk about is this concept of daddy issues, which I talked to at the beginning, just like this thing that is just such an absurd club that I felt like I was thrown into without like... This has nothing to do with me. Why do I have to be in this club? Like, why do I have to pay dues?

SHEA: Yeah, I think, um, before I go there--

JANIELLE: Yeah.

SHEA: Can I address the daddy issues?

JANIELLE: Yes, yes. Let's jump in -

SHEA: Because I, um, I, I don't want to burst your bubble.

JANIELLE: Okay, do it. No, ruthless honesty. I'm so into it.

SHEA: I might have a different perspective.

JANIELLE: Okay, great.

SHEA: Um, I, I think you might not be in the club that you think you're in.

JANIELLE: Okay. What club am I in?

SHEA: Umm, I would say that you're in the club of human need.

CARSON: So I want to stop there. How did you feel at that moment, do you remember?

JANIELLE: I remember feeling a little like dubious, but also validated. Dubious because I'm like, everyone's told me I'm in the daddy issues club, and I've run away from that my whole life, and now I'm FINALLY willing to look at it, and you're saying, "Oh, no, you're not in..." Like. What? What are you talking about? I'm finally willing to look at it, and you won't, like, tell me I'm in the club. But also validated, because, uh, it's really validating to hear that you're not alone.

SHEA: Well, and gosh too, I think, like, it's a little bit more vulnerable.

JANIELLE: Yeah, that's true.

SHEA: You know, to, to say, I've got daddy issues. Right? Again, it externalizes the problems. It's like, "Oh, don't we all?"

JANIELLE: Yeah, yeah, yeah!

SHEA: Rather than to go, "Hey, I'm a human, and I have deep need, and here's one of the ways in which that wasn't met, and now I'm spending my adult life trying to fill it, and so here's who I am because of it." You know, it just, I think it feels a little bit different to have that kind of conversation.

JANIELLE: Yeah. It definitely does.

SHEA: More, more authentic, and yet more vulnerable.

JANIELLE: I feel like instead of having an interview, I, I accidentally started treating this like therapy and just started like talking about my feelings, but what Shea's done is give me the opportunity to acknowledge that, like, maybe I deserved a dad? And I needed one, and not having one matters. And if I'm in the club of human need, I'm not like other. I'm not worse off than anybody else. I just didn't have a dad, all the people who were praying over me, they were in the club of human need, too. They had holes in their hearts that needed filling, too. So yeah, daddy issues is a, like, a dumb silly way of saying, "I have a real human need." That's really beautiful. It's less shamey, certainly. And the, uh, temptation for me is like to end there.

CARSON: Yeah. There could have been an episode where--

JANIELLE: Yeah.

CARSON: We play the whole interview.

JANIELLE: Yeah. Resolving beautiful cue enters here, and it's like, "Daddy issues was human need issues all along." And I don't want to do that. I want to keep this realization, but I also want to understand what daddy issues actually is, because it feels real, it's a specific thing inside the club of human need.

CARSON: So I think what Shea has done is incredible, because she has sort of fractured our idea of what daddy issues is. It is a real human need that has no shame attached to it, and then there's the second thing that Shae really didn't get into, which is daddy issues as the gendered, weird, funky, zeitgeisty thing.

JANIELLE: Yes! The thing that we, we say when we say "daddy issues" that, like, it feels hella gendered to me. Because we talk about girls who don't have dads differently than we talk about

other people who don't have a parent, like when boys don't have a dad, it's more like, "Oh, baby bear cub didn't have daddy bear to teach him how to bear." You know?

CARSON: Yes.

JANIELLE: I don't mean to make light of men who don't have fathers. But it's different because it's not so much attached to like their sexualities in the way, that other part of Oedipus that freaks me out, it's it's different, and I want someone to define that part for us. What, what are daddy issues?

CARSON: And I think, I think I can find somebody who can do that.

JANIELLE: Okay. And I also want, I think there's like a third thing which is: the man in the black hat, like, the shame. Like every snarky, dumb expression of daddy issues that's meant to sort of like flatten and shame me as a woman, like I want to aggregate all of that.

CARSON: Yes. Like every time anyone ever talks about Robin Shebatsky on How I Met Your Mother.

JANIELLE: Yeah, yeah! So maybe we can aggregate all of the places that the man in the black hat has shown up in pop culture, in a way that felt like kind of shamey.

CARSON: Hmm.

JANIELLE: We could like put like all of pop culture daddy issues in one place.

CARSON: I love that. Make a spreadsheet.

JANIELLE: Make a spreadsheet! There's nothing we can't handle if we make a spreadsheet.

CARSON: It's true.

[MUSIC]

CARSON: So while I navigate Googling "daddy issues", you listen to these ads from people who are giving us money, and when we come back, Janielle is going to face her fears by immersing herself in pop culture.

[AD BREAK]

JANIELLE: Alright, I spent the better part of 48 hours running a fever, sick in bed, and going through our giant spreadsheet of all things daddy issues, including lists of pseudo-psychological quizzes and articles. "10 signs you might have daddy issues," that sort of

thing. A bunch of songs, movies, tv shows. I have faced my fears via exposure therapy, and now I have bullet points. Here's what daddy issues looks like, according to the culture around me. It looks like a woman with a higher than average interest in sexual attention from men. This somehow can make a woman more desirable in her vulnerability to a certain kind of man, like Barney Stinson, or, apparently, The Neighbourhood. Daddy issues looks like a woman particularly desiring emotionally unavailable men wanting them most when she can't have them. (Thank you, Demi Lovato, for this confusingly fun-to-dance-to bop.) Also looks like a woman who has an inability to trust or let men in, even when they stand on her steps with their heart in their hands. (Thank you, John Mayer.) Also, a thing that, I don't have like a bullet point for it as to what it teaches me about daddy issues, but my God, I want justice for Sally Draper. I love her so much. And God bless her. Fuck you, Don Draper. Okay. So that's my working pop cultural zeitgeisty definition of what we mean when we say "daddy issues." So what's next is we need to find a therapist who has a perspective on this gendered link that is supposedly between daughters and their absent fathers and can break that down for us.

CARSON: So I know a lot of therapists, and uh, the way I know these therapists is something we haven't talked about on the podcast yet, which is during the last four years I decided to go back to school, and I am in the process of getting my licensed professional counseling degree. And my marriage and family professor was talking to us in lecture about the father daughter subsystem. So I thought, hey--

JANIELLE: Your ears perked up.

CARSON: Let's reach out.

JANIELLE: He's got bullet points.

DON: Okay. Well it's Dr Don Hebbard, and everybody calls me Dr. Don.

JANIELLE: Hmm.

DON: And I'm professor of marriage and family therapy at Amberton University, and I've also been a marriage and family therapist for about 38 years. I was adopted when I was a baby, and so a lot of the people I work with, you know, have had experiences where they've, uh, are working through abandonment and those kinds of things.

JANIELLE: Okay. Great. So this is your, this is your wheelhouse.

DON: Well, it's one, it's an area I've roamed around in a bit personally and professionally. Yeah.

JANIELLE: My question is: what is this gendered thing inside daddy issues? Which is a very specific question I have on top of a much larger question, which is, like: what is gender? Which is a very important question, but an entire other podcast's worth of inquiry and investigation. For

the sake of my very specific goal today, which is non-shamey bullet points about the gender part of this, I put my larger question aside, I take a deep breath, I carefully don't talk about myself or my feelings, so I don't treat this like another therapy session, and we jump in.

JANIELLE: What do we, what do we talk about when we talk about daddy issues?

DON: Okay, to begin, I'm going to, for *me*, I'm going to trade terms with you because the term I'm going to use as little more clinical. I'm gonna use the term "father loss."

JANIELLE: Okay.

DON: Because "daddy issues" has a bit of a "Eh, it's kind of no big deal" kind of thing. And anytime there's that loss between, um, a child and their father, it's profound.

JANIELLE: Therapists just love trading terms with you, don't they?

CARSON: Oh yeah.

JANIELLE: We get into what Dr. Don considers the essential relationship between a dad and his daughter. There are several answers...

DON: One, you're going to get this sense of, um, safety, security, and trust. This is the person that's got me regardless. Getting it from mom's very important, too. The earliest piece of personality that's in place is trust. And so the first thing it formed in you and I personality-wise was our sense of trust.

JANIELLE: There are two secure parts of the trust puzzle: that mother bond and the father bond, so dads are locking in that trust on the male side.

DON: Which leads me to the second piece.

JANIELLE: Okay.

DON: Which is this sense of enthronement and adoration. That is her knowing there is acceptance and there's love from the opposite sex. It's like a boy with his mother. You're getting that across. You get the same thing with a girl as well.

JANIELLE: Carson, every time we listen to this, the word "enthronement" sticks up as like a heebie-jeebie flag? And I'm wondering if that's unnecessary. Can you unpack?

CARSON: Yeah, I think if you can just replace the word "enthronement" with love. if you have a trustworthy parent of the opposite sex, that's the first opportunity that you get to experience love

from the opposite sex. So if that love can be trusted, you learn that love from the opposite sex can be trusted going forward.

DON: And then the third thing that you get from the dad is going to be a sense of competency and strength. And I'm going to use a real unusual word here, "courage."

JANIELLE: Okay.

DON: The daughter receives, I think from her dad, a sense of courage to face the world as a woman.

JANIELLE: None of this seems insane to me. Like anecdotally. It makes sense to me that, whereas some girls grow up with a, a highway that's already been established of how to receive, um, affection and adoration from men, I was off-roading. I was figuring out as I went, it took me a minute. And that doesn't feel awful. That just feels like, that makes sense. The trust thing, the first personality thing we learn is trust, and that that can affect your relationship if you don't have a dad you can trust, that definitely checks out. I, yeah. It takes me a minute to let a man prove he's trustworthy. And the other one were dads give you like the courage to go be who you're supposed to be in the world and that strength. I feel like I have the courage and confidence to become the woman I am. But... that's sort of the core question, which is like, like what am I missing?

CARSON: So back to Dr. Don, you let him know you had been consuming all of these instances of daddy issues in pop culture

JANIELLE: Right, and now I want to know what it looks like in real life.

DON: When there's been father loss, down the road there's, there's different things that can, that can emerge from that. There can be often times an underlying sense of grief. Almost an unexpressed kind of sadness that is, many times, holed away in the corners of her life. It's like in the house, there's a room back there that was supposed to be her father, and it never occurred or didn't occur right, or was traumatized, or whatever. And so you've got this grieving back there and that grieving has been holed off. It's been blocked out. What that leads to then, that leads to a burying of emotion or a, a tendency to not express emotions, or to not own one's own emotional life.

JANIELLE: A second way father loss can show up...

DON: It's a complex relationship with anger and rage. Well, in our society, it's not nice for girls to be angry and rageful. We got a lot of, uh, awful words for that, that we call women that are too angry.

JANIELLE: And Dr. Don says his work with female patients who've experienced father loss is mostly helping them get in contact with their buried grief and holed off emotions, whatever they might look like.

DON: And that at times may come in at anger, or come out in another way, which is just anger swallowed, which is coming out in depression.

JANIELLE: Oh.

DON: And depression is just anger swallowed.

JANIELLE: Wow.

DON: And so it'll bring her down.

CARSON: So "depression is anger swallowed" is something that I have heard more recently in my therapy journey. Um, 'cause, genetically I am prone to anxiety and depression.

JANIELLE: Yeah.

CARSON: So there are some things that just set me up for being more sad.

JANIELLE: Yeah, the nature, not the nurture.

CARSON: Yes.

JANIELLE: Okay.

CARSON: Um. The nurture part of it. Um, there have been some events in my life recently where... In trauma work, often times you don't want to engage with a person or you can't engage with a person who inflicted trauma upon you.

JANIELLE: Mmhmm.

CARSON: And so because you can't direct that anger at that person in a big yelly way, or because that's not appropriate, or whatever, like, you, you clamp it down and then it comes out sideways in depression, comes out sideways in hopelessness or feeling like you are not doing enough. You are a failure.

JANIELLE: It's got to go somewhere.

CARSON: It's got to go somewhere.

JANIELLE: Hmm. I have so many friends in my life who have, um, a relationship to pretty intense clinical depression, and that's always been helpful for me to realize, like, oh, I don't think I have that. I can see now that through a lot of the grieving part of the maybe like year of being in the pit that we talked about last episode, that was, those were the qualities of depression, but they had a specific reason: I was mourning something, and it was really bad. I guess what I'm thinking is, is part of the depth of the despair I was feeling anger, some anger that went sideways, because I haven't been able to tap -- I mean I had to throw a glass of water into another man's face that we were paying by the hour to try to even tap into some of the anger towards my actual dad. So I wonder if in the depths of the depths of a lot of that grief, and a lot of that despair, and what I guess you could call also depression-- I'm not afraid of calling it that I just don't want to invalidate like other people in my life.

CARSON: There's different tiers. So one diagnostic tier of depression would just be a situational depression--

JANIELLE: Yeah.

CARSON: As opposed to major depressive disorder.

JANIELLE: Yes. Okay.

CARSON: So you had what was very clearly a situational depression.

JANIELLE: Yeah. I couldn't clean my room. I couldn't get out of my bed a lot of the time.

CARSON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: Um, okay. So I wonder if some of the feelings I was feeling in there, um, the despair in addition to the loss, was some anger that went sideways? Huh. Interesting.

[MUSIC]

DON: So what we're trying to do, and I'm not trying to sound overly therapeutic here...

JANIELLE: Eh, it's your Gig,

DON: But we're, we're trying to help her build an authentic sense of self. She may be doing all kinds of things to try and fill that hole. That's, that's where dad was supposed to be.

JANIELLE: He gives an example from his own life: He was put into foster care when he was born, and adopted when he was a year old.

DON: Well, when you're adopted, you're told you're special. We chose you. Umm... Some adopted kids are going to detonate themselves, they're going to blow their lives up. My choice was to go out and be very, very successful. So get a degree, get another degree, get another degree, build a resume, do all this other stuff. Achievement became the way that I filled that hole. So the work that needed to be done was: One, you realize, the first step in healing is realizing there was a hole there, owning, "Okay, there's a little bit of work for me to do." Two, it's not throwing everything out in one's life, but it's, it's getting to a place where you can take out the different pieces, and you can look at them and say, "Okay, is this me, or is this something that I have acquired, because I thought it was expected of me?"

JANIELLE: He's naming the prophecy or the curse that was spoken over me as a child. "Father, we ask that you fill the hole that her father left..." And he's naming it, but he's giving me an option that I hadn't considered. There's this other room that's opening up where the hole might've been real that your father leaves, but there are a lot of ways to fill that hole that I haven't been taking inventory of. That's less scary than a curse. Also, I'm more on the hook than the original curse even said, right? The original curse was like, and she'll do bad things with boys, and she'll want their attention, or she'll crave them, and it's actually... Or she'll lead our Bible studies and please us a lot. You know? It's the one people weren't looking for. It's Oedipus again.

CARSON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: It's, they were watching for one prophecy. Okay, I'm now realizing that the point of that is: it's the door or the path that we're not watching, that's where the prophecy will be fulfilled, where we're not looking.

CARSON: Hmm.

JANIELLE: I was watching out for not filling that hole with attention from men, but meanwhile I filled that hole with being a golden child. I feel equal parts, um, thrilled by this realization (how interesting) and also just like deeply fatalistic, like are we just always screwed? If it's not your dad, it might be your mom. If it's not that, it might be a sibling that something bad happens to. If it's not that, it might be a loss that was cataclysmic that had nothing to do with your family unit. If it's not that it might be a boyfriend later. Like, like we're all doomed. We're all in the club of human need! All roads lead back to Shea's...

[MUSIC]

CARSON: Let's take a break here for an ad.

[AD BREAK]

JANIELLE: So now I'm better understanding this new thing that I hadn't been watching for. But I still want to understand this other thing, the original curse or prophecy, this linkage between girls who have father loss and men they will eventually date.

DON: There's a wonderful model of attraction and adult love that appeared, oh, back in the early 1980s by a guy who's from around here. His name's Dr Harville Hendrix.

JANIELLE: Dr. Hendricks wrote a book called *Getting the Love You Want* and in it, he breaks down his now famous theory or model of attraction, which argues that we find partners who help us complete the unfinished business of our childhoods. And Dr. Don gave me a long thoughtful example, but the short version is: Each of us will have some sense of self that isn't met by our parents, cause no parents are perfect. We'll have some thing that's been buried or some need that hasn't been met...

DON: Whenever you go out dating, or whatever, that unconscious piece inside may get projected on to the people, the person that you're kind of attracted to.

JANIELLE: So if you're a woman with father loss, that missing thing, that attraction, can show up in all kinds of ways that aren't necessarily ideal.

DON: People will often partner with people who are actually going to retraumatize the wound. They'll go and pick somebody who treats them the same way that they were treated by their dad in the family system. Because remember, growing up, it's what you got accustomed to. It's what you're used to.

JANIELLE: AKA, Demi Lovato's "Daddy Issues" (quote) "You're the man of my dreams, because you know how to leave."

DON: And I'll get women in, I'll get women in here all the time. They're picking them, they're 40 or 50 years old, and they'll come, and they'll sit down, they'll say... They'll say, "My man picker is broken." They'll say, "My radar is shot," and they'll, you know, "I've been through this guy and this guy and this guy and this guy" and it's the same pattern all the way through.

JANIELLE: And there are some specific trending patterns that can show up for women with father loss.

DON: It's called "come close, get away." Well, what do you do when you're, when you're cut or you're wounded? You, you grab it, you're grab and you hunch, and you protect. You're not gonna open it up and say, "Here, come touch you this." Well, the same thing with a psychic wound. She may pick a real good guy, and he may be fully capable of being a good partner with her, and the closer he gets, then suddenly it's, "Holy heck, someone's going to get inside of me. And if they do, what could they do? They could hurt me." And so she'll push him away.

JANIELLE: And this is a more thoughtful, analytical way of saying what John Mayer is saying in "Daughters."

DON: Might mention one other thing. It's pretty strong for everybody that's experienced loss in this area, and that is control.

JANIELLE: Okay.

DON: Uh, or sometimes perfectionism. If I never knew if Dad was walking in and going to hug me or grab the poker and start wailing, you know, if life was never predictable or whatever, then as an adult, they're going to want to control as much as they can to make sure life is safe for them, and you put them in a relationship then with a partner, they can tend to be a bit over controlling in the relationship, and they're really not aware they're doing it. It's what they were doing to maintain safety. Early on.

JANIELLE: Can mate selection ever be, uh, a corrective experience for those with father loss?

JANIELLE: Like you know, hypothetically, if you're working on a podcast about daddy issues and realizing you've always thought that you've picked exclusively great men who were nice to you, and who were kind, and who would totally be great fathers. And maybe you're realizing that maybe you picked those men, because you didn't have a nice man. So your father loss might be totally influencing your selection of mates, which is freaky to you, but maybe it could be influencing your mate selection not in a bad way?

JANIELLE: Is the work to be suspicious of that? Oh, the, your dad relationship might be in this, or is the work to be like, sure, the dad might be relevant, but the relationships seems awfully healthy.

DON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: Do you see what I'm saying?

DON: I do. And I think, I think there's dad's stuff in everybody's relationship.

JANIELLE: Mmhmm. I find myself with just enough therapeutic knowledge and self awareness, and like having done just enough the work to hang myself, do you know what I mean?

DON: Yeah, yeah.

JANIELLE: So finding myself up against something which is like, oh, is this, um is this me seeking out attention, or is this me given an opportunity to receive affection? Which is, it could

be very good and useful and part of being-- Right? I have the awareness, but I don't have, um, I'm still working on my diagnostic.

DON: Yeah. Well you're re-, you're recalibrating.

JANIELLE: Yeah.

DON: And that's a natural thing. And that's going to take some time to do, but that's, I mean, that just means you're healing up and growing. That's really good.

JANIELLE: That's nice to hear.

JANIELLE: At this point of the interview, I drop the facade of just trying to be an interviewer. From here on out, I treat it like a straight up therapy session. I tell Dr. Don about the premise of what I learned in the inciting incident, which is that I'm somebody who can be guilty of pretending and not noticing the pain.

JANIELLE: And I'm confronted with the idea that some of my life was a lie.

DON: Yes.

JANIELLE: But which parts were a lie? Am I right to be proud of myself for the things that I've done?

DON: Absolutely.

JANIELLE: Am I right to be okay with some of the men I've dated, who've been really lovely and taught me a lot, and the endings weren't great, but I think they were right people to--? I had good taste?

DON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: Do I what, what parts are the lie? And what parts are things that I can be quite proud of still?

DON: Well, let's exchange, let's exchange a word for just a second. Uh, let's take away the word "lie," and let's exchange it for "experience."

JANIELLE: Okay.

DON: So it may be that those guys that you dated were not a lie or wrong. They were what you needed at that point in time. And that got you to where you are today.

JANIELLE: Hmm.

DON: And that's a really good thing. They may not be who you would pick now, uh, but it got you to the point where you're ready to, you've gone into that room, and you're doing the work.

JANIELLE: Ah. So like the... So I could be proud of myself for a lot of the choices I've made that I think have been pretty positive.

DON: Oh gosh. Yeah.

JANIELLE: And also aware that along the way I've picked up some coping mechanisms that have asked me to pretend that that room wasn't there.

DON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: But either way, I'm still here at the point where I'm unpacking the room, and I can be grateful for the experiences that got me here.

DON: Yeah. And what I tell to my clients who are like you, and I'm not trying to make you a client here at all, but what I tell the folks who have insight, and you have some insight here: You listen to your gut, you listen to your intuition, you listen to what I call your inner voice. And that inner voice is going to guide you to the parts of yourself that you want to hang on to. And there'll probably be some that you go, "That doesn't work for me. Don't have to do that."

JANIELLE: I did notice a lot of my personality changed after my father died and that door, that closet went kablooeey. My, my tolerance for bullshit got a lot lower. I became really incapable of pretending for people's benefit after that.

DON: Yep.

JANIELLE: I like acted out of his funeral in a way, that in hindsight, I'm kind of proud of.

DON: Yeah. Yeah.

JANIELLE: You know, like I, I sort of couldn't quite, um, bullshit the same way.

DON: That's really good. That authentic self is coming out.

JANIELLE: Yeah.

DON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: Huh.

[MUSIC]

JANIELLE: Like I hear this question that has been inside the whole question around daddy issues as a theme in my life this whole time, which is: Am I okay? Like, am I okay? And um, am I right for being proud of myself, and being proud of who I am, or have I been deluding myself? Is it one of the lies that I've clung to, and I didn't examine closely enough and is going to shatter underneath me? I think the first question, which is, am I okay? The answer is, like, of course you are, and also, of course you're not, right? Like, I think that's the experience that me as Jan Character is having. Of course you're okay, you're doing fine. Also, you're not okay. There are some things that aren't fine. And the other question: can I be proud of who I am? I think that answer is yes. I like myself. I don't know many people who do. I'm going to be proud of that, and I think the more important question, though, because there's going to be times where I don't like myself is: Can I be proud of who I am, even if I am guilty in the court of daddy issues? And I think that answer is yes. The point isn't, I'm proud of myself because I've managed to avoid them. I'm proud of myself for how I've managed to move through life *with* them. That's actually something to be more proud of than having out-chased your daddy issues. I'm giving Jan Character permission to be proud of herself and to be okay, even if she's not always okay. Yeah. Do you hear any other questions inside all the questions I was asking?

CARSON: No. Those are the big ones. Um. I have an idea.

JANIELLE: What's your idea?

CARSON: And it's, it's an activation idea.

JANIELLE: Oh, okay.

CARSON: A way I think I would like to try to activate this is, um, can you tell me what you're proud of about yourself?

JANIELLE: Um... Um... I'm proud of the fact that I'm a trustworthy friend. Um, I'm proud of myself, because sometimes I can find the right words to put to something that make people feel less alone or make them go, "Ah, yes. I'm so glad someone described that, that way." I'm proud of myself that whenever I can be cynical, I often choose to try to be tender instead. I'm proud of the braver person I've become since my dad died. I'm proud of the fact that I made it through the purity movement with my sexuality intact, and it's mine, and I like it. Um, I dunno. What else?

CARSON: Will you tell me things you're proud about with men?

JANIELLE: Oh, yeah. Um... Um...

CARSON: While you think about it, I'm going to play you, um... So in the last four years, not only did you go through your dad's death, but also really hard breakup, and, um, this audio that I'm going to play for you is immediately following kind of the final end to the relationship. And as you think about things that you're proud of with men, um, I just want to play you this.

JANIELLE: Um. yeah. I became fixated on when did you stop loving me? And he, of course ,didn't know exactly how to answer that. I was just thinking like, well, whenever you stopped loving me, that's when it all became fake. My happiness was fake. I should've started protecting myself then. Like how humiliating that I didn't notice? How humiliating it was that I was just happy. Everything in me tells me that you have to go into protection mode then, right? You, you notice that somebody doesn't want you anymore, and you protect yourself, so it doesn't hurt very badly to realize they don't want you anymore? And like, that's like obviously how I felt with my dad, right? Like I'll build a whole life that doesn't require your love or require you wanting me. So that the fact that you don't seem to want me won't hurt. Um, I didn't do that this time. I just was all-in and loved somebody. And um... I guess that's the invitation here. Right? Um... Welcome to what it feels like to love people wholeheartedly and feel pain when they don't want to be with you anymore. I've had the experience of loving someone all in... And falling flat on your ass. That's kind of brave. Yeah. So I guess I'm proud of myself, uh, for having my heart... annihilated.

JANIELLE: It's really hard for me now, um, to see that as a win. Uh, but I guess the concern I had had before, literally before this day when he called me and dumped me, a real concern that I had had was that there was some fundamental part of me that was broken that would never be able to let a man all the way in. But now my concern is something different, which is, will I ever be able to do that again? Like, that guy was, um, really wonderful, and I, I thought he might be somebody who would never leave me. And then he ended things and dumped me, which is fine, you're allowed to dump people, and he didn't have a good enough reason, and you never do. You don't have good enough reasons for breaking someone's heart. There's no good enough reason for breaking someone's heart. But then he stopped talking to me after this. Um... He just went dark and didn't tell me he was going to when he vanished. Um, I felt really abandoned. Like that Jan who that doesn't know what's about to come, which is about to be months and months and months and months of his silence. So in terms of daddy issues and how they've shown up in my life and how they had been a theme, it's interesting to me that the heartbreak was bad, but the silence and the refusing to acknowledge me was worse, because it, like, I'll turn and face the man in the black hat, right? Like, here's the thing that I think the curse was trying to tell me, which is like there's something about you that sort of inherently abandonable. And men that you couldn't really trust, like your dad, they'll abandon you upfront and never give you a reason why and won't ever acknowledge you. And that was a man that I couldn't trust, my dad. But then I met this man that I thought I really could? And then he disappeared and wouldn't acknowledge me. That man in the black hat, it starts whispering to you like, "See? You're just

the kind of person who's kind of abandonable..." So, I thought I was going to get that corrective experience. Turns out no, it was as the prophecy foretold.

CARSON: I want to challenge that that was what the prophecy foretold, because what was, what was foreshadowed for you was an inability to trust men, and you trusted him.

JANIELLE: I did. And that come-close-get-away thing. Like, I let him inch close. I don't think my picker was broken. He was still a good guy to pick.

CARSON: And so I think moving forward with your story, the thing to take with you is: You have a lot to be proud of, not just in that relationship, but in that relationship, too. Whether you knew it or not, you were stepping out from your old patterns into new ones that brought you close to a partner.

JANIELLE: Yeah. But they hurt so much more. They didn't work, you know?

CARSON: But like what's working? You know, like--

JANIELLE: Yeah, I guess so. They just hurt a lot worse. They hurt a lot worse than the ones where I have control. I just don't know if I'll ever have access to that, "I'm going all in, and I see a future with you." That wild vine. Hmm. Uh. Yeah?

CARSON: Can I foreshadow?

JANIELLE: Yeah. Foreshadow.

CARSON: I don't think it was cut off at the root. The vine grew roots, and those roots are still there, because I think the roots are allowing someone in, and I think the roots are recognizing when control isn't useful. And I think the roots are trusting, and maybe it takes a long time for you to learn to trust men, and that's not a bad thing. That's not bad.

JANIELLE: That's not like a dysfunctional curse.

CARSON: No.

JANIELLE: That's just like a character quality.

CARSON: You're fine.

JANIELLE: You think I'm okay?

CARSON: If your question is, "Am I okay?" You're okay. I agree with past breakup Jan. I'm, I'm on her team.

JANIELLE: Yeah. So I don't have a disease. I just have some interesting character qualities, based on the fact that there was a hole when I was born, and I figured out how to fill it with some like high-performance whatever. And I have some relevant character qualities that show up in my relationships with men - that are very much so in conversation with my lack of relationship with my dad, which is: it hurts really bad when you don't acknowledge me. That's a character quality that definitely comes from my daddy stuff. And, yeah, it'll take me a while to trust you if you're a man. And it'll take me a while to see if I have a future with you. And I'm okay. That's okay. Me and Sally draper are going to be okay.

CARSON: You're gonna be okay.

JANIELLE: We've got a shot at healthy relationships with men. Okay. So all of us have a hole, if you have a shitty dad, you have a dad-shaped hole, that's fine. I have to believe that there is no dad shitty enough to disqualify you from finding a way to be okay.

CARSON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: Yeah.

CARSON: Yeah.

JANIELLE: Okay. Yeah. Alright. Yeah. I don't know what to do now.

CARSON: I don't either.

JANIELLE: How do we activate this?

CARSON: I think we did.

JANIELLE: We did.

CARSON: I think that was it. I'm proud.

JANIELLE: Me telling you all the things I'm proud of?

CARSON: Yeah. I think we activated it, and then we examined the activation and how it made you feel.

JANIELLE: Could we activate it with something else? Like.... I think we should activate it by a bunch of men being nice to me.

CARSON: I think that's a great call.

JANIELLE: How do we do that?

CARSON: You're activating it tonight.

JANIELLE: Yeah. I'm spending time with the boy, and he's going to be nice to me. Okay. Do I tell him that he's activating it?

CARSON: Why? It's for you. You can, it doesn't matter.

JANIELLE: Yeah. Okay. Okay. So y'al, I tonight I will be activating this by going on a date and letting a boy be really nice to me.

CARSON: And we'll just have to trust that you did it.

JANIELLE: Yeah. I will, it's going to be nice, and I will acknowledge that my dad might live inside all of this....

[MUSIC]

CARSON: Next time on Untitled Dad Project, Janielle finally talks to one of her dad's friends and learns what he was like, both as a dad *and* a Rick. It's Chapter 6: Character Development.

JANIELLE: My dad smoked pot?

CHARLEY: Oh yes.

CAROL: "Number One Dad." Did we send that to him?

CHARLEY: Nobody in a room who met him would forget him.

JANIELLE: And I'm just a different kind of sad today.

CARSON: But first, another extra special minisode, where we speak to an objectively good dad. My dad.

JEFF: This is-- I've never done anything like this before. This is cool.

CARSON: We'll see you then.

[CREDITS]

JANIELLE: Untitled Dad Project is co-hosted by me, Janielle Kastner, and Carson McCain. Please head to Apple Podcasts and just leave us a some stars and write a really review. It

means the world to us and helps so much, and also, it's chapter five. If you haven't done it now, when are you gonna do it? We only have a few more!

JANIELLE: And we would love to hear how "foreshadowing" has shown up in your life. Has it shown up in the form of daddy issues as well? Because please, tell me, I can't be the only one. Tell us @untitleddadproject on Instagram, or email us [untitleddadproject@spokemedia.io](mailto:untitleddadproject@spokemedia.io). We think that your story matters, and we would love to hear it.

JANIELLE: Untitled Dad Project is a Spoke media production. We're produced by Carson McCain, with associate producer Kelly Kolff, and "sweet baby intern" Lauren Floyd. Special thanks to Shea Thielemann. Thank you for helping all of us fellow man in the club of human need. If you're in that club as well and need help, you can find her at [sparrowhousecounseling.com](http://sparrowhousecounseling.com). And to Dr. Don Hubbard, thank you so much for your encouragement, and I hope you give Carson good grades. More of Dr. Don's work, and speaking engagements, and his books can be found at [donhebbard.com](http://donhebbard.com). This episode was mixed by Evan Arnett, our head of post-production is Will Short.

JANIELLE: The music you heard at the end of today's episode was composed, of course, by Rat Rios. She also wrote our theme song, "Flora vs. Fauna". The songs you heard in our pop culture montage are "Daughters" by John Mayer, "Daddy Issues" by The Neighbourhood, and "Daddy Issues" by Demi Lovato. Our executive producers are Alia Tavakolian and Keith Reynolds. And thank you for listening. It means the world.