

[Transcript] Sword and Scale Nightmares / Going for a Spin

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When you stay at a hotel, you're protected. There's a key card, a powerful lock, and likely a deadbolt or chain. When you go camping, the only thing that separates you from the outside world is a zipper. Sure, nylon fabric keeps the rain out, but it's easily pierced and torn.

You may feel like you've braved the elements, but really, all you've done is isolate yourself, you're vulnerable, and if something bad happens, only the shadows and the stars will be your witness.

Welcome to sword and scale nightmares. True crime for bedtime, where nightmare begins now. Is your beauty routine getting redundant? Your favorite products just not really doing it anymore? Well, FabFitFun makes it easy to refresh your beauty, hair care, and home needs by delivering full-sized products right to your door at unbelievable discounts. Sign up as a FabFitFun member today at [fabfitfun.com slash podcast](https://www.fabfitfun.com/podcast) to get exclusive access to shop thousands of curated products from top lifestyle products and brands like Fenty, Kate Spade, Glossier, and many more for up to 70% off. Join the shopping membership loved by over 1 million happy customers and named number one by Glamour magazine for 2023. Guys, I got a FabFitFun box for my girlfriend, and she knows a lot about beauty products, she knows a lot about this kind of stuff. I don't so much because I'm ugly, but she does and she absolutely loved it. I think you will too. If you're shopping for yourself or your loved one, this is a great treat. And now's your chance to get a great deal too. Sign up at [fabfitfun.com slash podcast](https://www.fabfitfun.com/podcast). Customize your box and get access to discounts up to 70% off on brands like Fenty, Free People, and Our Place, just to name a few. Not in love with this season's options. Well, take the credit to shop their exclusive flash deals of up to 70% and save on the biggest name brands out there. If you join FabFitFun as a new seasonal member right now, you'll also get 20% off your membership. So your first box is only \$47.99 for up to a \$300 value box each season, but only while supplies last. FabFitFun boxes sell out. Join FabFitFun today and save at [fabfitfun.com slash podcast](https://www.fabfitfun.com/podcast) [fabfitfun.com slash podcast](https://www.fabfitfun.com/podcast).

Back in 1976, 200 years after our nation's founding, an avid bicyclist along with his wife and his friends created a nationwide event called Bike Centennial 76. Enthusiastic bikers could travel over 4,200 miles from coast to coast, passing through 10 different states and admiring many beautiful parks, forests, and small towns along the way. The first year was a success,

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with thousands of participants getting to experience the beauty of the United States first hand. It's romantic in a way. Nothing but open roads ahead of you as you explore the country with newfound, sure to be lifelong travel companions. The following summer, 19-year-old Terry Gents was eager to have such an adventure. A group of her fellow Yale classmates decided to put a group together, but ultimately only one friend followed through to join her. Terry met Avery Goldman on her very first day of school, and they lived one room apart on the same floor of their campus living quarters. They had become fast friends despite the fact that Avery was the bubbly, optimistic yin to Terry's more introverted cynical yang. Terry had done a lot of research in the months leading up to their big trip. During that time, she and Avery purchased top of the line ultra-light 10-speed bicycles along with matching gear and everything else they would need for cycling, camping, and living on the road for the next 80 days. Based on other information they gathered about wind patterns and the steepness of the route, Terry and Avery learned it was easier to travel from west to east. And so, with the blessings of their families, the two teenagers boxed up their bicycles and took a bus from Chicago to Oregon to begin what was sure to become a life-changing experience for both of them, though not in ways either of them could have ever anticipated. The first six days of their journey had its ups and downs, both literally and emotionally. There were moments of extraordinary bliss surrounded by forest, meditative and thought, and feeling truly independent and interconnected all at once. But pushing your body to average more than 50 miles a day, day after day, is not only physically draining, it's also a mental game. Not even a weekend and Terry's friend Avery was beginning to doubt they could actually make it all the way to the east coast. And there's something else too, an uneasiness tucked away in the back of their minds, a shared experience that neither wants to remember but both would be foolish to forget. It's one month prior to the big expedition, and even though they haven't been regularly training, Terry and Avery have set aside a weekend for a test run. The roads of Connecticut are steep, causing issues with the bikes and leading to unexpected tensions. The girls still manage to pull through, and the hard work makes the site of the campground at the top of the hill all the more thrilling. They're among other campers as they take seat near a small waterfall, but their attention is drawn to a creepy blonde guy who seems to be lurking nearby. They move away but see him again and he makes a lewd gesture, spraying beer from a can like it's his penis. As Terry and Avery set up their tent, they make a potentially life-saving decision. They decide to situate the tent in the reverse direction. In other words, the zipper entrance isn't facing forward like other tents. You have to walk around back to get in. Later that night, their premonitions come to life as the wall of their tent begins to shake. There are handprints shuffling around for the entrance, which is mercifully on the opposite side. Avery shouts, leave us alone, and the hands pull away. The next moments seem critical as they stare at the nylon, essentially trapped inside. Will he return again? Tired and sore, they eventually drift back off to sleep with no further incident. As Terry and Avery were nearing the end of their first week biking across the country, they seem to forget the most important lesson from that night a month prior. When you camp for the night, surround yourself with people. If there weren't several other campers in their immediate vicinity, who knows if Avery's demand to be left alone would have actually stopped their harasser. On the seventh day of their trip, June 22nd, 1977, several decisions were made that would bring their anticipated months-long journey to an abrupt and terrifying end. Over the past week, Terry and Avery had begun socializing with a

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married couple that were also riding the bike centennial trail. This married couple were far more experienced cyclists, so even though they had all been riding together at the same pace, it was clear that Terry and Avery were holding them back. On the seventh day, the group parted ways. The married couple would proceed 20 miles to the next town over while Terry and Avery would ride a shorter distance of 16 miles and stay at an overnight campground within a place called Klein Falls State Park. But once Terry and Avery arrived at their destination, they discovered that their bike centennial guidebook had led them astray. The campground within Klein Falls State Park was for day use only. The book said they could camp for the night. There was still plenty of daylight left, and sure they could bike over to the next town, but to what end? Meet back up with the same couple they just agreed to separate from? That would be awkward. Terry wanted to stay the night at Klein Falls even though they weren't technically allowed to, and Avery, exhausted and tired of arguing about it, reluctantly agreed. Down by the day use campground, the lush landscapes of Oregon were nowhere to be seen. The green was replaced by desert brown, and even though there were picnic tables and groups of people enjoying the river, the place had an eerie feeling that neither of them could shake. They set out loud and agreed with one another, and it seemed like they were being watched. Just to be safe, they used the same strategy they had in Connecticut. They set up their tent so the entrance was facing the opposite of what you'd expect, and as the sun eventually dipped down, all the happy families and teenagers got in their cars and drove away, leaving Terry and Avery completely alone. Well, not completely alone. That night, inside the safety of the tent, if such a thing exists, Terry quietly slipped into her sleeping bag, trying not to wake up Avery. As she put away her contact lenses and hoped that tomorrow they'd get things back on track. But unfortunately, for Terry, the longest night of her life was about to begin.

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It's around 11 30 p.m. on June 22nd, 1977. Yale University sophomores Terry Jensen, Avery Goldman, are sleeping in their tent alongside the Deschutes River in Klein Falls, State Park, Oregon.

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In a split second, Terry has been pinned to the ground by a truck that has just come barreling through their tent, tearing the useless nylon to shreds. Terry cannot move as the weight of the vehicle breaks her right arm, collarbone, and ribs. She doesn't know it, but her right lung has also collapsed. For a moment, she assumes she's been struck by a drunk teenager, but the truck isn't moving and it's deathly quiet. The silence is struck by Avery's voice in the distance, shouting, leave us alone in the same forceful manner she had used in Connecticut. Terry can't see it, but a man with an axe stands over Avra, chopping at the back of her head multiple times. Terry can only hear the sickening thuds, seven in all, and wonder what terrible fate awaits her next. Footsteps approach her, and then the truck that's been holding Terry down starts backing up, unpinning her for the moment. Her entire body reacts with immense relief, but the moment is fleeting. Sharp pains pummel her again and again as the man now hacks at her head and face with the heavy blade. Terry defensively throws up her arm, which receives large lacerations, as does her palm and fingers. As Terry slips further and further into her impending death, the man suddenly stops. Rather than driving away, the man has only moved his truck forward a short distance, as if he's reconsidering what he should do next. As the man slowly re-approaches, Terry reflects on her very short life, determined to survive. With all of the will and strength she has left, Terry opens her eyes to see the man's torso, a plaid shirt perfectly tucked into his jeans, with cowboy boots now straddling her on either side. Terry cannot see his face, but she does see his two-handed grip on a bloody axe. The man is very still, and he slowly hovers the blade over Terry's heart, like a golfer lining up with a perfect shot. Somehow, Terry is able to bring her hand to her chest, holding on to the blade. Please leave us alone, she says, barely able to speak. Take anything, just leave us alone. The man quietly considers her. For whatever reason, the mysterious cowboy has shown Terry mercy and driven away. Maybe he just assumes she will die on her own. But after a few moments of laying in a pool of her own blood, Terry becomes aware of painful moaning sounds nearby. All of this time, Terry has been in her sleeping bag. Despite her life-threatening injuries, she's able to slide out and crawl her way to the river's edge, where her friend Avra is wailing in agony. Up close, Terry is shocked to see that Avra resembles a porcelain doll, with one large crack exposing bone and brain at the back of her head. Terry is certain that Avra will die if she doesn't act quickly. Terry manages to get both of her contacts back in and move toward her bicycle, but she quickly realizes how much of her body is actually broken. Riding out of here will be impossible. Headlights from a truck appear in the distance, slowly approaching. Terry weighs the two options. This is either their attacker returning to finish the job, or an angel who will save them from this desolate place. Armed with only a flashlight, Terry limps toward her potential doom. When the truck finally stopped, Terry could see the driver and passenger, a young couple. The two teens were driving into the park to talk about their recent breakup, when a blood-soaked woman ran up to their window saying she'd been hatcheted up. The teens wanted to take her to the hospital, but with the adrenaline still pumping through her, Terry insisted they first needed to load up their truck with all their biking and camping gear. Dying Avra was then carefully placed into the front of the truck moaning sporadically, until they finally made it to St. Charles Hospital. While Terry had remained conscious

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through the night's events, surgeons were working tirelessly in an attempt to save Avra's life. By some miracle, a piece of Avra's skull had settled against an important artery, stopping the blood flow and keeping her alive.

Surgeons later explained how lucky Avra truly was. The only part of her brain that was damaged was related to her vision. She was temporarily blind, but over time the optic cells would heal and her vision would return. Other than the back of her head, Avra sustained no further physical injuries. Additionally, because of the brain trauma, she had absolutely no memory of those terrible hours at Klein Falls, which she considered a blessing.

Terry, on the other hand, remembered everything with extremely vivid detail. She told police as much as she could about her attacker's features, but other than acknowledging he seemed like a meticulous and handsome cowboy, she was never able to see his face.

Terry was also shown various axes and hatchets that she didn't recognize, and blood tests for all of them came back negative. Police questioned people who had visited Klein Falls State Park that evening, as well as the bikers who had cycled with Terry and Avra in the days leading up to the attack. It was quickly becoming clear that this was a completely random attack, and there were absolutely zero tangible leads. In the years that followed, police gave up trying to figure out who was deranged enough to randomly attack two girls with an axe.

From Terry's perspective, it seemed like everyone just wanted to forget the whole thing ever happened, but the scars on her scalp and forearm were a constant reminder that the past wasn't just going away. 15 years later, in 1992, Terry returned to Oregon to retrace her steps. No one had ever been brought to justice for their attempted murder that night.

So now, she was going to solve the case herself.

For over a decade, Terry Gents had been plagued with nightmares about being stuck at age 20 forever.

She became obsessed with the morbid details of her own horror story, collecting axes she would come across at flea markets, compulsively digging through the bloodstained sleeping bag she'd kept from that night, and constantly tinkering with what she dubbed the bicycle of doom. She shared the graphic details of her story over and over again, thinking that it gave her strength, but also feeling a growing sense of terror deep down inside. This was not just some campfire urban legend. This actually happened. The only other person it happened to, Avery Goldman, didn't want to talk about it, and couldn't remember the details anyway. Somehow, Terry had never slipped into drug and alcohol abuse, but coming to terms with how much this event had impacted her life, it was warping her personality in ways that disturbed her. There were still so many unanswered questions about that night, until Terry began wondering if digging for those answers herself might help heal her troubled mind. In the earliest days of her quest, she was given access to the very thin 30-page police file that represented her case. She learned about some of the potential people of interest back in 1977, including several criminals who had attacked hitchhikers at separate

times in the area. Someone else had reported seeing Washington license plates on a red truck that night, so a connection was made to an unsolved dismemberment case from out of state. No potential suspects were ever interrogated. Terry also discovered information about an aspect of her case that never seemed quite right. Several years after her attack, Terry had been told that someone had confessed to the Klein Falls crime,

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but that a polygraph test had suggested he was lying about the confession. Back then, Terry never heard anything further from detectives, but now she was learning that a man named Bud Godwin had been arrested for molesting his daughter while on probation for sodomizing his five-year-old niece, hell of a guy. A small skull had been found in his trailer, which he was using as a candle holder. Now behind bars, Godwin was claiming that he stalked a cousin to Klein Falls that night and that he was attacking her, but instead he had attacked Terry and Avrah. The story of mistaken identity didn't make much sense to Terry, nor did the fact that Godwin was only five-six, and was in no way like the meticulous handsome cowboy that Terry remembered. Deeper detective work ultimately revealed that Godwin was lying about multiple confessions, playing the political game that prisoners often do. And there was yet another roadblock. Even if Terry could somehow retroactively prove that any person was involved with their attack, the statute of limitations had long since run out, because the case was simply an attempted murder. They could only prosecute the crime for three years. Terry and Avrah had lived through their horrifying encounter, but they would have to live with the fact that their attempted killer would always be free. Over many more trips to Oregon and many more interviews with locals and authorities personally conducted by Terry, one name continued popping up, Dick Damn. And no, I did not make that name up. Dick was 17 back in 1977, and had been charged with the assault of his girlfriend two days after the Klein Falls attack. But because he was a juvenile, he was never technically arrested. Terry spoke at length with Dick's former high school girlfriend and learned through her that Dick not only owned an ax with the initials DD personally carved into it, but the toolbox he kept the ax in seemed to have disappeared after the attack. Dick and his girlfriend who lived along the back road that entered the park had gotten into a fight. The same night Terry and Avrah were camped out. Terry surmised that after an intense night of arguing, Dick drove off and then took his anger out on two random campers. When that hadn't satisfied him, he returned to his girlfriend, drunk on vodka, the next day and attempted to drown her. While Dick was never officially connected to the Klein Falls attack, many people in town just quietly assumed Dick had done it, and somehow gotten away with it. Rumors of Dick Damn, the hatchet man, persisted over the years. And while Dick always denied his involvement, he also seemed both obsessed with and haunted by his dangerous reputation. Three years into Terry's investigation, and word had finally reached her elusive suspect. Dick was willing to take a polygraph in order to clear his name, and the results suggested that Dick was innocent. However, Dick had also tested positive for muscle relaxants and alcohol prior to the test, so the result was deemed inconclusive. During a second polygraph, Dick became extremely emotional during questioning, and the answers he provided suggested he was being highly deceptive. It was once again determined Dick had drugs in his system, and so at his request a third polygraph was scheduled. When the day finally arrived, Dick never showed up, and later threatened violence if anyone ever bothered him about it again. In the fall of 1996, four years into Terry's attempts to positively identify her axe attacker, Dick Damn was arrested for an entirely different matter. He was charged with kidnapping, unlawful use of a dangerous weapon and coercion. Dick, you see, was intoxicated again during a hunting trip. And after firing some rounds from his .357 revolver, he pointed the gun at the stomach of his 18-

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year-old

hunting partner, and ordered him to drive him somewhere else. The car was stopped and he was arrested without incident. In the summer of 1997, Richard Dick Damn was found not guilty of kidnapping,

but guilty of the firearm and coercion charges. It had been 20 years since Terry survived the infamous Klein Falls axe attack, and in that time she had gathered enough information to be absolutely certain that Dick had been the attractive meticulous cowboy who tried to kill her and her friend that night. While he was going to jail for a completely different crime, these would be Dick's first felony convictions. For the first time, the world would have legal proof that Dick was a violent and dangerous man. Terry was present for and overjoyed at the sentencing, five years in state prison, with two years of probation to follow. Terry hoped that by tearing at the stitches of her old wounds, she could actually heal herself. In the process of diligently following up with every possible source, the way state police had not, Terry discovered that she and Avra were not the only people who suffered because of that night. An entire town had been longing for the truth, and by reconnecting with every single person who had somehow been connected to this case,

Terry was able to help many others move on as well. In the years after the attack,

Terry's friend Avra got married, had children, and became a doctor. She and Terry still remained estranged, but by the time they saw each other at a Yale 25th year reunion in 2004, Terry no longer felt the compulsive need to sit Avra down and force her to remember.

By then, Terry had also been instrumental in the passing of Oregon Senate Bill 614, which meant that going forward attempted murders could be prosecuted after any period of time, not just three years. Which, if you ask me, was ridiculous to begin with.

Finally, in 2006, Terry's fantastic memoir about these events, *Strange Piece of Paradise*, was published. It was the main source for today's episode and a beautifully written, painstakingly detailed account of everything she personally experienced. There are so many more incredible details, more than we could possibly fit into a 35-minute podcast. I highly suggest picking up a copy and taking it on your next summer road trip. But before you put out the campfire and zip up for the night, all cozy in your flannies, remember that out in the woods, dangerous animals come in all shapes and all sizes.

If you enjoyed the show, please consider joining plus at swordandscale.com

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